

*Edited by
Paulina Gulińska-Jurgiel,
Yvonne Kleinmann, Miloš Řezník,
and Dorothea Warneck*



Ends of War

*Interdisciplinary
Perspectives on Past
and New Polish Regions
after 1944*

Wallstein

Ends of War

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Past and New Polish Regions after 1944

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Yvonne Kleinmann, Miloš Rezník
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The conference and this volume were generously funded by the Foundation »Remembrance, Responsibility and Future« (EVZ); the German Historical Institute, Warsaw; and the Department of History at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. This publication does not express the opinions of the EVZ or of the other funding institutions; the ideas presented are solely those of the authors.

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The editors

Note on Transliteration and Geographical Names

The transliteration of Russian and Ukrainian follows the Library of Congress system, the exception being that, for the sake of readability, »Ь« (soft sign) is represented by an apostrophe (') only in the footnotes and bibliographies, but not in the main text.

We have not held to a consistent use of place names in the case of cities, towns, and villages, as many of them were situated in varying political and linguistic contexts. Each author has decided on the suitable name(s) in the individual historical setting, e.g. Lemberg, Lwów, Lvov, or Lviv.

Paulina Gulińska-Jurgiel, Yvonne Kleinmann,
and Dorothea Warneck

Introduction: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Past and New Polish Regions after 1944

In June 1945, the photographer Ryszard Witkowski took a photograph later entitled »Women at the toppled monument of Kaiser Wilhelm I« (*Kobiety przy obalonym pomniku cesarza Wilhelma I*). It is part of a larger series of pictures Witkowski took in Danzig, Gdynia, and Sopot that same year, depicting architectural sites, everyday situations, monuments, and military parades.¹



Ryszard Witkowski: Women at the toppled monument of Kaiser Wilhelm I (NAC: Archiwum fotograficzne Ryszarda Witkowskiego, sygn. 86-2-10).

In the foreground are two young women: Aniela Witkowska, the sister of the photographer, and behind her an unidentified woman, who is laughing while perched on top of the fallen equestrian statue of Wilhelm I. In the background is a wall of concrete and beyond that the

¹ The full collection is available at the Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe (NAC): <https://audiovis.nac.gov.pl/zespol/86/>

ruins of houses at the Coal Market (*Kohlenmarkt/Targ Węglowy*) in Danzig. The two women are focusing on a small container, in which something is burning, on the head of the horseman. The image is bewildering, evoking a tension from the juxtaposition of normal activity and extreme circumstances. Here are young, cheerful people by a fire on a cool early summer evening, their shoulders draped with rain capes. Yet the setting indicates that this activity takes place during a time impregnated by destruction, and fundamental political, social, and cultural upheaval.

The history of the monument renders the presence of the three young people (the documenting photographer included) into something symbolic. The statue, designed by Eugen Brömel, a German professor of art in Königsberg, had been erected in Danzig at the High Gate (*Hohes Tor*, later *Brama Wysoka*, today ul. *Wały Jagiellońskie*) in 1903. The German inhabitants of the city enthusiastically integrated the statue of the former Kaiser into their social and political life. It became a popular meeting point and a central place for national manifestations, including protest actions against the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and the conspiracy against Adolf Hitler in June 1944.² During the Soviet conquest of Danzig, soldiers of the Red Army pulled down the monument of Wilhelm I with a rope attached to a tank, thereby symbolically putting an end to German rule. When Witkowski took this photo, the statue was lying in a provisional fire protection water tank at the Coal Market. Sometime later it vanished, and eventually so did its severely damaged pedestal.³

The gathering of the young Poles at, and on top of, the collapsed monument can be seen metaphorically as a second victory over NS Germany, a victory not accomplished by force of arms, but by play. They engage in a mockery by physically occupying the former German ruler, and at the same time demonstrate vitality in front of ruins. The very act of taking a picture of young Polish women on a wrecked German monument as such can be seen to mark the beginning of a new, not yet clearly defined Polish chapter in the city's history. In any case the photo had great potential for being used for propaganda purposes in the new political system.

Like a multi-focused lens, Witkowski's photograph reflects the major topics of this volume. It exemplifies the enormous destruction of cities, cultural heritage, and infrastructure during World War II, and by

2 Chwin, *Stätten des Erinnerns*, 17.

3 Grün, »Pomnik Wilhelma I.«

doing so raises the question of reconstruction. At the same time, it is an emblem of the architectural remnants of the former German residents of Danzig. Most of these, several hundred thousand, had fled the city or fell victim to forced migration and resettlement during the summer of 1945.⁴ Other refugees – mainly Poles from the former eastern territories (*kresy*) – along with rural people from various Polish regions entered the city and, lacking accommodation, moved into the flats and houses of the former German inhabitants.⁵ As in other former German territories, a wild appropriation of objects took place, which in turn obliged the invention of new, Polish stories for these objects.⁶ A radical population exchange was carried out, at the end of which German-dominated Danzig had turned into overwhelmingly Polish Gdańsk. The city's population during the post-war years, however, was an »atomized society,«⁷ consisting of many disparate elements.⁸

The cheeky young woman climbing on the monument, beyond the playful victory over the German conqueror, also represents a series of legal problems. How could the appropriation of foreign property be legitimized? By which legal means could war crimes be punished? And how could a new legal order be established?

The photographer and his family stand for the often invisible traumatization of a large part of the Polish population by military operations as well as by other sources of violence and terror during occupation. Witkowski himself had served in the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*) as a distributor of underground press and as a war photographer for the London Polish government-in-exile. Because of his resistance against occupation, his sister Aniela and his mother were incarcerated in the notorious Pawiak prison in Warsaw.⁹ The frail appearance of Aniela in the photo might be a result of this experience.

4 For a documentary history see »*Unsere Heimat ist uns ein fremdes Land geworden ...*«, vol. 4, 38–355.

5 Loew, *Biographie einer Stadt*, 229–233; Chwin, *Stätten des Erinnerns*, 36–40.

6 A differentiated reflection on the appropriation of German material culture by the new settlers is provided by Bazuń, »Veränderungen in der Beziehung zum Kulturerbe.« The topic of how to deal with foreign property is also addressed in fictitious literature, e.g. in Joanna Bator's novel *Sandy Hill* (*Piaszkowa góra*) for the region of Lower Silesia.

7 Chwin, *Stätten des Erinnerns*, 39.

8 In this volume, Anna Zielińska provides a linguistic analysis of the heterogeneous population in the former German territories after World War II.

9 <https://www.1944.pl/fototeka/kolekcja/ryszard-witkowski-romuald-orlinski,26.html>.

As if embarking from the moment of Witkowski's photograph and its historical context, the articles of this volume focus on the reconfiguration of the Polish state and society in the aftermath of the Second World War. They delve into the fundamental question of how European societies recovered and partly reinvented themselves after the traumatic experience of war, occupation, coerced labor, genocide, and forced migration. Just as with the example of the small performance at the imperial monument in Danzig, the future Gdańsk, we see that this endeavor can be approached from the perspectives of various disciplines, and most successfully through a process of cross-fertilization. As such, the contributions to this volume involve the expertise of historians, philologists, legal scholars, sociologists, ethnographers, specialists in cultural studies, museologists, and film scholars. It is striking that, during the last decades, though all of these disciplines have undertaken research into the Second World War and its social consequences,¹⁰ only rarely were they in communication with one another.¹¹

Ends of War

There are many ways to define the end of a war, in this case the end of the Second World War. From a European viewpoint the easiest and most common way is to consider the capitulation of the German Wehrmacht on May 8 (or 9), 1945, which ended all military actions, as the end of war. This perception is based on criteria of international law that regards the surrender of one state or the signing of a peace treaty as the turning point from war to peace.¹² As public commemoration shows, May 8/9 also hold a strong position in controversial memory culture and politics.¹³ The symbolic meaning of the two dates notwithstanding, scholars have for some decades already been regarding the

10 Among others, Kurilo, *Der Zweite Weltkrieg im Museum*; Matwijów, *Walka o łwowskie dobra kultury*; Rippl, *Haunted Narratives*; Steinmetz, *Political Languages in the Age of Extremes*.

11 One example is Baraban et al., *Fighting Words and Images*. However, the volume focusses on representations of war across epochs. The Polish case is not taken under consideration.

12 Hoffmann, *Seeking Peace*, 7.

13 Brockhoff et al., *Der 8. Mai 1945*; Hurrelbrink, *Der 8. Mai 1945*; Klei et al., *8. Mai 1945*; Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 95-118; Troebst, *Erinnern an den Zweiten Weltkrieg*.

end of the Second World War in a wider perspective as a process and period of transition.¹⁴

Literary voices even doubt that the war has ended at all. In the mid-1980s, the Polish journalist and writer Ryszard Kapuściński in »Ćwiczenia pamięci« (memory training) went so far as to say:

In a certain, but essential sense, for me the war did not end, neither in 1945 nor shortly after. In various ways something of it continued, an even continues to this day. I think that for those who have survived it, the war will never end in a definite way.¹⁵

This suggestion of long-term emotional consequences of the war is taken up by more recent historiography that focuses on the chaos, violence, and fear impregnating European societies for years after the official cessation of military action.¹⁶ Tony Judt, in *Postwar*, has praised and also criticized synthesis of the political emergence of Europe from the Second World War, even covers the years up to 2005.¹⁷

The Polish case that is at stake here exemplifies these considerations and at the same time, because of the specific history of German and Soviet occupation of Poland, reaches beyond them. In particular, the end of military action cannot be determined unequivocally. While the Red Army had already conquered the eastern territories of pre-war Poland by July 1944, thus paving the way for the provisional communist government, the underground Home Army was still fighting a desperate battle in the Warsaw Uprising against the German occupiers. Underground warfare of the Home Army, from 1944 directed against the new Soviet-backed political system, continued into the late 1940s.¹⁸ When we consider the most recent statements of some historians in Poland, the view that war and occupation ended only in 1989

14 E.g. Broszat, *Von Stalingrad zur Währungsreform*; Herbert, *Kriegsende in Europa*; more recently Echterkamp, »Wege aus dem Krieg«; Kleßmann, »1945.« This point of view is also taken in the most recent popular Polish outline by Maja Łozińska and Jan Łoziński, *W powojennej Polsce*.

15 Kapuściński, »Ćwiczenia pamięci,« 13 (translation by the editors).

16 E.g. Lowe, *Savage Continent*; Buruma, *Year Zero*; Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*; Grzebałkowska, 1945.

17 Judt, *Postwar*.

18 Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy*; Paczkowski, *Historia Polityczna Polski 1944-1948*. For an interwoven analysis of the establishment of the provisional Lublin government and the Warsaw uprising see the article by Jacek Chrobaczyński in this volume.

with the collapse of Soviet-dominated state socialism in East Central Europe has to be taken into account as well.¹⁹

A single end of war is also challenged on the demographic level, as millions of people had been geographically uprooted either during the war or in its aftermath. For the survivors, the end of war was first of all a dream of a free life,²⁰ which in some cases could be realized only after a time of transition.²¹ Between 1944 and 1950, seven million people from the territory of interwar Poland were involuntarily on the move.²² Because of a lack of infrastructure and financial means, and even of sufficient physical health, hundreds of thousands of forced laborers and other displaced persons in defeated Germany could not simply return to their own countries or their families, or reorient themselves in some other way. They were involuntarily stranded amidst a persistently hostile German population, and therefore did not perceive the official surrender as the real end of war.²³ To exacerbate their situation, they could neither be sure that their families had survived nor that their former home regions were part of post-Yalta Poland. This is why for many the return to the new Polish state was drawn out until the early 1950s.²⁴

The redrawing of both the eastern and western borders of the country by the Allies during the conferences of Yalta and Potsdam in February and August 1945, along with the ideal of ethno-linguistic homogeneity, resulted in the forced migrations of Germans from the newly obtained western territories and of Poles from the former east-

19 This position is presented most prominently in the Museum of the Second World War (*Muzeum Drugiej Wojny Światowej*) in Gdańsk, where from autumn 2017 at the end of the exhibition a new film on Polish heroism (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFGCoqovemw>) on behalf of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) has replaced the original one (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNbftaZPdb8>), which had focused on Polish as well as global aspects of peace and war from 1945 to the present.

20 See the articles by Katarzyna Woniak and Joanna Hytrek-Hryciuk in this volume.

21 Boehling, *Freilegungen*; Karner et al., *Zwangsarbeiter in Österreich*.

22 Łozińska and Łoziński, *W powojennej Polsce*, 18. For a detailed analysis see Piskorski, *Wygnańcy*.

23 Pustoła, *Wspomnienia*, 38–58; Cieszkowska, *Erinnerung bewahren / Zachować pamięć*, 175–184. For a comparative approach to the experience of forced laborers from various European countries in NS Germany see Plato et al., *Hitler's Slaves*.

24 Boehling, *Freilegungen*; Pohl, *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa*; Hensel, *Arbeit in den nationalsozialistischen Ghettos*.

ern territories, which also continued into the 1950s.²⁵ Ukrainians living in Poland were resettled either in the western territories of the Soviet Union or, from 1947 to 1950, during »Operation Vistula« (*Akcja Wisła*),²⁶ in the western and northern territories of Poland, areas which had been annexed from Germany (*Ziemie odzyskane*). Poles who had been deported to Asian Soviet republics during the war were expelled from the Soviet Union,²⁷ as were Poles living in the eastern territories (*kresy*) of Poland, which had now become part of Soviet Ukraine. The psychological consequences of this »extended« war, which was marked by violence, appropriation, and plunder,²⁸ can be evaluated only on an individual basis.²⁹

Beyond political history, it is at least problematic to speak of a definite end of the war. For example, up to the late 1940s the works of visual artists – their conceptions as well as creations – reveal as expected a strong presence of traumatic war experiences. At the same time they strongly evince avantgarde concepts of the interwar period, thereby reclaiming a »warless« continuity. In yet another vein, artists enthusiastically participated in the establishment of a new dynamic society.³⁰ The Exhibition of the Regained Territories (*Wystawa Ziemi Odzyskanych*) in Wrocław in 1948 was just one example of visual legitimization of the new geopolitical order.³¹ As in other historical post-war eras, artists and architects were ambivalent about material destruction. Obviously, this meant enormous cultural loss, but at the same time it offered the rare opportunity to build something from scratch. The most significant case in post-war Poland was the (re)construction of Warsaw from 1945 to 1952.³²

These varied perspectives reveal that for different people and in different places the war ended at different times. Moreover, the individual

25 Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene*, 38-45.

26 The *Akcja Wisła* also involved other Ruthenian ethnicities, e.g. the Boykos and Lemkos. For a documentation of Polish and Ukrainian sources see *Akcja »Wisła« 1947*.

27 *Umsiedlung der Polen aus den ehemaligen polnischen Ostgebieten*; Ciesielski, »Einleitung.«

28 Kończal, »The Quest for German Property.«

29 The uprootedness and search for identity of the heterogeneous resettled population is mirrored in *Mój dom nad Odrą*, and analytically approached by Halicka, *Polens Wilder Westen*; Traba, »(Nie-)powroty,« 17-59.

30 Kordjak and Szewczyk, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 22-30.

31 *Ibid.*, 25.

32 *Ibid.*, 26, 28-29; Majewski, *Budujemy nowy dom*.

experience of war and occupation – in a labor camp, in a German factory, in exile, in a ghetto, in the underground, in the capital, in various rural environments, and so on – had a strong impact on the duration and the types of physical and mental accommodation after the war(s).³³ Thus the articles of this volume also reflect the connection between individual and group involvements in the past and specific conceptualizations of the future.

Past and new Polish regions, or which Poland?

But what exactly can be considered Poland after 1944? As the divided history of occupation and liberation³⁴ indicates, the new Polish Republic could not be identical with its interwar predecessor. Through decisions on the redrawing of borders made at the Conference of Yalta in February 1945, Poland lost its eastern lands (*kresy wschodnie*) along with the historical centers of Lwów and Wilno to the Soviet Union, gaining as compensation German territories, namely Silesia, Pomerania, Warmia, Mazuria, and the area of Danzig.³⁵ These territorial transformations are easily recapitulated on a political level; however, the process of cultural, material, and economic appropriation in both cases requires deeper analysis. Many of the surviving inhabitants of interwar Poland found themselves in other Polish regions after the war, or even in other states, whether as expellees or as exiles.³⁶ At the same time they left material culture behind. Therefore, the question of how the new western territories were polonized deserves as much attention as the question of how the former eastern territories were de-polonized³⁷ or sovieticized. The phenomenon of not yet being Polish or of no longer being Polish is the reason regional and transnational dimensions have to be taken into account.³⁸

33 On the mental afterlife of war see Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*; Leder, *Prześliona rewolucja*.

34 We are aware that the term *liberation* is still highly contested in the case of the territories conquered by the Red Army.

35 Łozińska and Łoziński, *W powojennej Polsce*, 11-12, 17-18.

36 Friszke, *Losy państwa i narodu*; Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski*, 52-55; Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski*, 138-141; Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene*, 50-88.

37 By de-polonization we also mean the appropriation of Jewish property and material culture.

38 See the articles by Anna Zielińska and Iryna Horban in this volume.

The uncertainty of the state's political identification is also mirrored in its name. When speaking about Poland as it was newly configured in late 1944 and early 1945, historians today commonly use the name People's Republic of Poland (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*). However, this name was introduced officially only with the adoption of the Stalinist constitution of July 22, 1952.³⁹ It is telling that the Soviet-backed Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN) in its »Manifesto for the Polish Nation« of July 22, 1944, still spoke of the Polish Republic (*Rzeczpospolita Polska*) in continuity with interwar Poland.⁴⁰ This terminological carefulness indicates that the initiators of the new political system were not at all sure about the success of their endeavor. Yet the popular name for Poland in the aftermath of the Second World War was People's Poland (*Polska Ludowa*), a term that originally designated the peasants' political movement, but was adopted by the supporters of Communism.⁴¹

The reconfiguration of Poland after the war concerned not only the territory of the new state and its political system and name but also other institutional structures, the most prominent being the Roman Catholic Church. In the eastern territories of the former Polish Republic it lost five dioceses – Pinsk, Wilno, Lwów, Dohiczyn, and Łuck – while in the newly annexed western territories the former German dioceses persisted, because, in the absence of a peace treaty between Poland and Germany, the Vatican saw no need to change the jurisdictional situation. To free itself from this German dominance, the Catholic Church in post-war Poland used an administrative device: to replace the dioceses, apostolic administrations were established in the regions of Warmia, Gdańsk, Silesia-Opole, and Wrocław, which remained in force until 1970, when the Treaty of Warsaw, the agreement between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany concerning normalization of mutual relations, came into effect.⁴² The formal problem

39 Paczkowski, *Od sfalszowanego zwycięstwa do prawdziwej klęski*, 6.

40 Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski*, 25.

41 For a detailed inquiry of the communists' political tools see Jacek Chrobaczyński's article in this volume. The most relevant studies in this field are Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule*; Eisler, *Zarys dziejów*, 12-32; Rzepliński, *Die Justiz in der Volksrepublik Polen*; Friszke, *Losy państwa i narodu*, 105-114; Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski*, 24-27, 60-62, 94-95; and Paczkowski, »Crime, Treason and Greed.«

42 Żurek, *Die katholische Kirche Polens und die »Wiedergewonnenen Gebiete« 1945-1948*. The formal disconnection from the former German dioceses can

notwithstanding, the new apostolic administrations were faced with a heterogeneous group of immigrants that had to be integrated into the new structure.

On the level of society, it has to be stressed that the post-war population had little in common with the social demographics of the Second Polish Republic, even though the thesis of complete extermination of the Polish *inteligencja* and lack of continuity in the elites is no longer valid.⁴³ Against the background of political confrontations, a substantial reconfiguration of Polish society took place. During the war several million people had perished, among them around three million Jewish citizens. For the Jewish survivors the end of war did not mean security, as antisemitic violence reemerged from new sources, most prominently during the pogrom in Kielce in July 1946.⁴⁴ As a consequence, most Jews left Poland during the first years after the war, leaving behind social and economic vacuums.⁴⁵ This created opportunities for previously underprivileged groups, which in the young communist system were given the chance of fast social advancement, mainly through free access to education – but also by appropriation of possessions of those who had been exterminated, expelled, or expropriated.⁴⁶ Massive migration of the rural population into the cities meant that professional ambitions could be realized, and extensive social mingling occurred. This social reconfiguration was most evident in Warsaw, which had become the goal of systematic settlement of the proletariat, whereas registration of pre-war inhabitants as residents was limited.⁴⁷

As the reconfigurations on many levels might suggest, it has been a long-term endeavor to redefine the entity known as Poland.⁴⁸

be deduced from the German acceptance of the border along the Odra and Nysa in the *Treaty of Warsaw*, article I.

43 An intervention against a ›tabloidization‹ of Polish post-war history and the application of black-and-white schemes was formulated by Friszke, *Między wojną a więzieniem*, 6-7.

44 Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, Komunizm*; Gross, *Upiorna dekada*; idem, *Fear*. On the dilemma of Jewish survivors in post-war Poland see also Datner et al., *To Stay or Go?* and Kichelewski, »To Stay or to Go?«

45 On these demographic voids see Traba, »(Nie-) powroty,« 35-42.

46 On the psychological consequences of this silent appropriation see Leder, *Prześlona rewolucja*.

47 Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski*, 43.

48 This is in line with more recent research on the reconsolidation of European countries in the aftermath of the Second World War. See Hoffmann et al., *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War*, 11-12; Peers and Balcar, *1945 – Niederlage, Befreiung, Neuanfang*.

Structure of the book

This volume is divided into three thematic sections: 1. *Material and Mental Breakdown – Efforts of (Re)construction*, 2. *War is Dead, Long Live the War! – Emotions and Uncontrollable Actions*, and 3. *Past Injustice – Imaginations and Concepts of Law and Justice*. Each section is introduced separately by one or two specialists in the respective fields who have developed key questions. Section 1 explores the material, social, and moral reconstruction in the post-war and pre-war territories of Poland, and the mechanisms of constructing memory and new communities. In section 2, the authors concentrate on emotional aspects of the war experience and the ways they were integrated into post-war life and artistic work. Finally, the contributions to section 3 investigate theoretical reflections on how to define and punish war crimes, and closely examine the establishment of a new legal system.

We offer here a multi-dimensional investigation that aims at furthering a differentiated understanding of the end(s) of war in and beyond newly created Poland.

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1. Material and Mental Breakdown – Efforts of (Re)construction

Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, Dorothea Warneck

Material and Mental Breakdown – Efforts of (Re)construction: Introduction

On July 22, 1944, the Soviet-backed Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN) laid the foundation for a new political post-war order in Poland by signing the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Manifest Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, Manifest PKWN) in the Polish city of Chełm; only ten days later and less than 200 kilometres away the Warsaw Uprising started. This meant that for hundreds of thousands of people in the Lublin region the war had come to an end and the new communist government was opening schools and offices, while in the fighting in Warsaw hundreds of thousands of people were dying or being deported, and the capital, with its cultural and historical institutions, was being systematically destroyed.

The complexity of the situation in summer 1944 reflects on the one hand the mental and material breakdown, and on the other the enormous efforts of reconstruction and the establishment of a new political and social order. The reconstruction and re-organisation of the Polish state and society began in Lublin right after its liberation.¹ This involved the reconstruction of the material realm and the political transformation of the country, as well as the creation of a new society, for example through a central narrative of memory in a common language.²

Breakdown – towards a social anomie

The breakdown of the country and its people is most visible in the Warsaw Uprising – a symbol of struggle, violence, resistance, expul-

1 Leon Chajm, from July 1944 deputy head of the Ministry of Justice in the Polish Committee for National Liberation and from 1945 to 1949 undersecretary of state in the Ministry of Justice, conveys a literary view of this time in his book *Kiedy Lublin był Warszawą* (When Lublin Was Warsaw). Czesław Miłosz describes this time from a Warsaw perspective in his novel *Zdobycie władzy* (The Seizure of Power), published first in French in 1953.

2 Zaremba, *Im nationalen Gewande*.

sion, and deportation, and of the systematic destruction of the Polish infrastructure and the country's architectural, historical, and cultural heritage. After the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising, the German occupiers systematically destroyed important historical sites in the city: large parts of the Royal Castle, libraries, archives, representative buildings, and monuments.³ What remained was a »monotony of destruction, the infinity of its spatial extension [and] the absence of any human dimension.«⁴

War, violence, expulsions, and genocide ruined Poland materially, atomising Polish society and changing it substantially in the long term. The killings of large parts of the Polish elites during the war led to the post-war Polish population becoming dominated by peasants and workers. The notable lack of elites and non-ethnic Poles as a consequence of the Holocaust and the shift of borders necessitated a radical social reorganisation, which the Polish philosopher and psychoanalyst Andrzej Leder calls »the sleepwalking revolution«.⁵ An outcome of this »revolution« was that the early post-war Polish society became suddenly homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and to a large degree of class.

What were the medium- and long-term physical effects and psychological burdens of different experiences of violence and coercion after the war? What were the strategies for coping with the experiences of violence? Alexander von Plato, who studied individual biographies of war survivors, emphasised that the official end of war was by no means identical with private endings.⁶ It is apparent that members of particular ethnic groups and social milieus experienced the events of 1944/1945 differently.

Anna Wylegała in her article elaborates on the various layers of war and its endings regarding who was affected, when, and where. Focusing on memoirs of both intellectuals and of less educated people, she gives a voice to individuals representing various social groups and thus provides an impressive piece of social history along the lines of Alf Lütke's concept of history »from below« or »history of everyday life« (*Alltagsgeschichte*).⁷ While some of the elements of the social structure that had been destroyed during the war could have been reconstructed

3 Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens*, 206-208; Maciej, *Warszawa*.

4 Heydecker, *Die Stille der Steine*, 18.

5 Leder, *Prześliona rewolucja*. English translation of the title as proposed by Leder.

6 Plato, »Erfahrungsstrukturen«, 9.

7 See for example Lütke, *Alltagsgeschichte*.

afterwards, others – primarily human lives – were irretrievably lost. In her view on the destruction of social life, Wylegała follows Marcin Zaremba's thesis that the early post-war years were dominated by fear.⁸ People were traumatised, afraid of losing their homes, their families, and their health. Despite the end of occupation, some of their anxieties concerned their physical existence. Pogroms against Polish Jews still occurred in the early post-war period. In her study on the pogrom in Kielce on July 4, 1946, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir emphasises that it was not a provocation of the Communist administration, but a spontaneous murder committed by Polish »neighbours«.⁹ Many of the Jewish survivors in Poland were thus anything but safe after the war officially ended.

Moreover, all people, regardless of their ethnicity or social milieu, were affected by the epidemics in the early post-war months and years. Thousands of people, especially in the western territories of Poland, suffered from infectious diseases, among them diphtheria, typhus, and tuberculosis.¹⁰ The most widespread was tuberculosis: in May 1945, 1.2 million people in Poland (about five percent of the whole population) suffered from TBC.¹¹ Similarly dangerous were venereal diseases. Around two percent of the population was said to suffer from gonorrhoea or syphilis in 1945.¹² This means that even after the war ended the number of people who died remained at an abnormally high level.

Although the occupation had ended, Polish citizens were anxious about their safety and about the new political development in Poland – a country that not only became part of the Soviet Block but also had lost large parts of its territories. According to Wylegała's description, the Polish social structure corresponded to the model of anomie which, as Robert Merton claimed in 1938, was characterised by the lack of predictability, calculability, and regularity of human behaviour.¹³

(Re)construction: Establishing »normalcy« and creating memory

The anomic phase in Poland – as in many other European countries – occurred simultaneously with a phase of intense reconstruction and re-

8 Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*.

9 Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą*.

10 Kozłowska, *Organizacja zwalczania chorób*.

11 Ibid, 121.

12 Barański, »Walka,« 21.

13 Merton, *Social Structure and Anomie*, 682.

establishment of the basic infrastructure, such as education, healthcare, and religious services.¹⁴ It was also a time of reordering and awakening into a new era.¹⁵ Paradoxically, the destruction of social norms, as described by Wylegała, facilitated the introduction and legitimisation of the new political system.

The new Polish government was not the only institution to re-establish ›normalcy‹. In her article, Małgorzata Krupecka argues that the Catholic Church was an important institution involved in the reconstruction of the country. She focuses on the Congregation of the Ursulines, and her research concerning a specific group is twofold: to give insight into the situation and role of the Church as a moral institution, and to portray specific female experiences. Based on contemporary diaries written by the nuns themselves, Krupecka's study presents examples of the nuns' commitment to the reconstruction of the basic infrastructure in central Poland and provides evidence that the end of the war was a collective experience. People had to rely on each other to arrange their lives again.

Immediately after the war, private people as well as representatives of various ethnic and religious groups started public projects to remember and to exhibit what was still ›hot history‹ (*heiße Geschichte*) or ›living memory‹ (*żywa pamięć*) of the occupation, war, persecution, and mass murder. The politics of memory were thus no less important than activities that focused on the physical reconstruction of the country.¹⁶ As early as 1944, the forerunner of the Western Institute in Poznan (*Instytut Zachodni*) was created in Lublin. Its research in the following years contributed significantly to establishing the Communists' national Polish narrative and providing historical and linguistic ›proof‹ of the legitimacy of the Polish claim to the new western territories.¹⁷ Immediately after the end of the war, the first forms of public commemoration of the victims of the war, genocide, and destruc-

14 See for example: Saryusz-Wolska and Labentz, *Bilder der Normalisierung*. In the 2nd section of this volume Jacek Chrobaczyński argues that the post-war attempts to return to normalcy were among the main reasons the communist system eventually gained broad acceptance in the early Polish People's Republic.

15 Traba, *Aufbrüche*, 9-14.

16 There are only a few studies on mnemonic narratives in late 1940s Poland – not least because it was a time of ›living memory,‹ i.e., dominated by individual memories rather than official commemorative rituals. Traba, *Symbole pamięci*.

17 Guth, *Geschichte als Politik*.

tion emerged. In addition to individual ›wild forms‹ of remembrance, institutionalised forms of memory were established. Like the Central Jewish Historical Commission (*Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna*) founded in Lublin in 1945,¹⁸ they focused on the documentation of the war and the war crimes.

In Warsaw, the commemoration of the Warsaw Uprising, the public memory of war, destruction, and extermination, and the musealisation and historical-political use of this still ›hot history‹ began immediately at the end of the war.¹⁹ On May 3, 1945, for instance, the National Museum in Warsaw (*Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie*) opened the exhibition ›Warsaw Accuses‹ (*Warszawa oskarża*).²⁰ Organised by the Office for the Reconstruction of the Capital (*Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy*), the exhibition presented the destruction of Warsaw during the occupation and the Warsaw Uprising by means of photographs, objects, and artefacts recovered from the ruins, such as paintings with bullet holes, damaged documents, and fragments of monuments and buildings.²¹ Jakub Gawkowski has recently pointed out the broad social impact of this exhibition that, after its Warsaw opening, was shown in numerous other cities around the world.²²

Among publicly visible forms of individual and group-specific memory were spontaneously erected memorials, which usually existed only for a short period of time, such as the stone plate for the Warsaw Ghetto designed by Leon Marek Suzin and erected in 1946, and the ›wild collections‹ of the exhibition in the reopened Museum of the Polish Military in Warsaw (*Muzeum Wojska Polskiego w Warszawie*) in the same year.²³ Many museums were heavily affected by the looting, destruction, and scattering of their collections during the war. In 1945, they were faced with the task of reorganising their collections and exhibitions not only materially, but also ideologically. The experiences of

18 Aleksion, *Central Historical Jewish Commission in Poland*.

19 Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens*, 209; Napiórkowski, *Powstanie umarłych*.

20 Ministerstwo Odbudowy Kraju and Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, *Warszawa Oskarża*.

21 A short film clip by the Polish Army's Film Studio (*Wytwórnia Filmowa Wojska Polskiego*) produced July 31, 1945, gives an insight into the exhibition and the objects presented there: *Wystawa w Muzeum Narodowym*.

22 Gawkowski, »Displaying.«

23 See among others: Maischein, *Augenzeugenschaft*; Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*; Huner, *Auschwitz*.

On the new exhibition of the Museum of the Polish Military in Warsaw, see Matuszewski, *Plundered and Rebuilt*.

the war had to be integrated into new historical narratives. In numerous cases questions arose of how to deal with museums, collections, and the material heritage of ethnic and religious minorities. How did people ›repatriated‹ to the new Polish western regions acquire the collections left by the former German inhabitants? How did the socialist cultural policy of the newly established Soviet Ukraine transform the Polish collections in the former *kresy*?²⁴

Focusing on the Lviv museums and their collections, Iryna Horban examines the fundamental processes and ruptures of the cultural heritage of the multi-ethnic pre-war society in early Soviet Lviv. One of her most noteworthy findings concerns the fact that after the war ended the Soviet administration gave permission to transfer numerous art objects from these museums to other Soviet controlled states. At the same time, she states, the transfer of manuscripts, paintings, sculptures, and even monuments from Lviv to the new western parts of Poland was subsequently mythologised as an act of patriotism. This is in line with Gregor Thum, who in his book on the memory of post-war Breslau/Wrocław argues that objects transferred from Lviv to the so-called ›recovered territories‹, such as to the Ossolineum Library or Wojciech Kossak's huge painting Panorama of Raclawice (*Panorama Raclawicka*), were used as propaganda tools in the Polish People's Republic.²⁵ The myth of a heroic fight for Polish heritage appears in a new light in the context of Horban's research, which proves that it was a transfer planned and put into action by the Soviet administration. Seen from a Soviet Ukrainian perspective, after the Polish art objects had been removed from the city, a significant void remained in the museums and the city's memory. The Soviet administration, Horban argues, filled it with new contents strengthening the ideological legitimisation of the annexation of Ukraine by the Soviet Union.

War and occupation, as well as the emergence of a state socialist memory and cultural policy, had far-reaching consequences not only for the existing collections and museums and their orientations, but also for the question of how to remember the immediate past with its destruction, annihilation, and violence, and above all how they should be integrated into the newly established socialist narrative of history. Soon, however, it was no longer just a matter of individual and group-specific commemoration and remembrance, but also one of politics of history and state authority.

24 Matwijów, *Walka*.

25 Thum, *Die fremde Stadt*, 406-408.

A very special site of early post-war memory is analysed by Imke Hansen in her article about early forms of public memorialisation and musealisation in the former death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, today the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum: Former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (*Miejsce pamięci i muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau były niemiecki nazistowski obóz koncentracyjny i zagłady*). Questioning the prevailing assumption that public forms of commemoration and memory are largely influenced by politics and media discourses, she investigates how local, spatial, and material issues shape and impact memory. Hansen focuses on the first exhibition in Auschwitz, the so-called ›wild exhibition‹, arranged by former prisoners in the basement of block 4. She reconstructs how the state-run memorial site was established, and characterises the staff of the new museum. Her conclusion concerning the narrative of the exhibition is in line with Zofia Wóycicka, who in her book *Arrested Mourning: Memory of the Nazi Camps in Poland 1944-1950* states that the domination of Christian symbols in the early years of the memorial place »was not an attempt to deliberately Christianise the place and diminish the death of Jewish victims, but simply as *the* death symbol of the group, the authors of the exhibition belonged to.«²⁶ One could think that using Christian symbols was typical of the Polish memory culture owing to its Catholic tradition, but similar attempts occurred elsewhere in Europe. In West Germany, for instance, the cross was used as a universal icon symbolising death – regardless of whom it referred to: Jewish victims, non-Jewish victims, or even the perpetrators. Images depicting rows of crosses were omnipresent especially in the American and British occupation zones of Germany. Crosses were printed on posters, leaflets, and magazine covers and shown in films and newsreels.²⁷ Therefore, the controversial cross displayed in the early exhibition in Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial place must be viewed as part of a larger post-war iconography. Hansen is right, however, when she claims that the early post-war commemoration rituals were aimed at those who remembered rather than at those who were remembered.

26 Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*, 210.

27 Saryusz-Wolska, *Ikony normalizacji*, 114-163.

The myth of a homogenous nation

The Second World War and the post-war years had also serious consequences in the sphere of language, especially as a result of the westward shift of Poland. Speakers of various *kresy* dialects, of German, Polish, Ukrainian, Lemko, Belarusian, Romani, and other languages and subdialects were resettled in the new western territories of post-war Poland, among other places. In her novel *Sandy Mountain (Piaskowa Góra)*, Joanna Bator impressively describes this process and the challenges of an arrival in a foreign place: the inner disruption and uprootedness of people, as well as the multilingualism and cultural differences between the various new settlers.²⁸ Owing to the Polish People's Republic policy of a mental transformation of the multi-ethnic Polish society into a homogeneous one and its aim to justify the state's legal claim to these territories by the myth of ancient Polish lands (*Ziemie odzyskane*), people were pushed to become Poles and to speak Polish.²⁹ Using the *Lubusz Region* as an example, Anna Zielińska shows in her article that the myth of Polish monolingualism is still dominant among scholars and, above all, among the inhabitants of the region. She discusses in what manner scholars, in particular Polish linguists, took part in the scientific underpinning and implementation of the so-called ›linguistic integration‹ (*integracja językowa*) and how they generated research results in order to justify this myth. In addition to linguistics, she states, numerous other disciplines were involved in providing arguments to support Poland's historical claim to its new western and northern regions. Zielińska concludes that with the support of historiography, the Piast myth, according to which the ›regained territories‹ were ancient Piastic territories, became the state myth of the People's Republic.³⁰

Another field of linguistic research that goes hand in hand with political history is the analysis of linguistic strategies of persuasion and propaganda for strengthening the socialist system. In his article Daniel

28 Bator, *Piaskowa Góra*.

29 Dubisz, *Integracja językowa*.

30 The historian Zygmunt Wojciechowski was one of the leading ideologists of the Polish nationalists. He was the director of the West Institute (*Instytut Zachodni*) in Poznań, which was supposed to encourage scientific research on the ›regained western territories‹ and their historical-philological integration into the Polish state. Before the Second World War Wojciechowski had already published his theory of the ›Polish mother territories.‹ Wojciechowski, *Rozwój terytorjalny Prus*. See also Strzeleczyk, »Die Piasten.«

Weiss analyses examples of what was called ›newspeak‹ (*nowomowa*). He understands *nowomowa* as a readymade, a powerful political tool and a language game in the sense of Wittgenstein. Based on the term of analytical truth, Weiss explains, *nowomowa* helps to build a new social order and to »overwhelm the audience by a permanent flow of emotionally loaded and often violent, but highly repetitious speech.«³¹ As he points out, the main function of *nowomowa* as a consistent linguistic system was not about how to spread lies or hide information, but how to evoke a feeling of safety and to control the continuity of the public political discourse through the very lack of meaning and validity of the discourse itself. According to Weiss, the Polish *nowomowa*, a more or less faithful replica of the Soviet *nowojaz*, had already been introduced among the Polish communist elites in 1944, when the Soviet Army ›liberated‹ the Polish eastern territories. With its most specific features, such as semantic extremism and phraseological boundedness, the author claims that *nowomowa* was by no means typical only of the immediate post-war period in the Polish People's Republic.

The construction of an ethnically homogenous nation has had immense long-term consequences for Polish politics, society, and culture. Whereas the material destruction of Polish towns and cities is from today's perspective barely perceptible, the post-war social structure differed quite obviously and significantly from the pre-war one. Notably, the consequences of becoming an ethnically, religiously, and linguistically homogenous society, with a surplus of lower classes, namely peasants and workers, has become an issue of academic research only recently. The articles in this section contribute to the understanding of the complex processes of destruction and (re)construction in the early post-war years in Poland.

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31 Weiss, »Uniting the Communist«, 269.

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The Post-War Landscape: An Anatomy of the Breakdown of the Social World in Poland during World War II

Rebuilding Europe after the Second World War was not limited to repairing physical damages – it also meant reconstructing the social world which was ruined by years of war and occupation.¹ This latter aspect of recovery was of particular importance in Central-Eastern Europe, which suffered under two brands of totalitarianism during the war, became the site of mass ethnic purges and genocide, and was taken over after 1945 by undemocratic political regimes enforced by the Soviet Union. This article is intended to serve as a sociological view of the wartime state of Polish society – as an attempt to answer the question of how the war and occupation influenced social ties and structures, norms and values, and what the consequences were of all these changes in the context of postwar reconstruction. I intend to go beyond an analysis of the »anatomy of destruction« in order to present some hypotheses regarding the influence of these and other factors on the shape of Polish society in the postwar period. My aim is to show how people felt, evaluated, and survived the collapse of their past social world. This paper will deal primarily with how this reality affected individuals, what the experience of change was in this context, and what it meant for particular persons.

The geography of the paper's sources mirrors my research goal: to show the state of Polish society before, during, and after the war. My understanding of Polish society is inclusive rather than ethnic, hence when writing about 1939-1945 I refer to all the lands comprised by the territory of the Second Polish Republic, including Poles and Ukrainians in Galicia as well as Poles and Jews in the General Government. When writing about the postwar period I also take into account the »regained lands«. This paper is based on personal documents, both those written at the time of the war and later ones, comprising published and unpublished diaries, memoirs, letters, and oral history inter-

1 This research was supported by a grant from the National Center of Science (UMO-2012/07/D/HS3/03723) and a grant from the National Program for the Development of the Humanities (0101/NPRH3/H12/82/2014). First draft of this paper was published in Polish as »Krajobraz po wojnie.«

views – Polish, Ukrainian, and Jewish – thus allowing a presentation of the subjective facet of the described changes.

The anatomy of destruction, or how the world fell apart

How did the war change the social world in the Second Polish Republic? Undoubtedly, it was a process of destruction. Piotr Sztompka claims unequivocally that great changes and social crises are always accompanied by the atrophy of social ties and other elements of the social world that determine the shape of the community.² In my opinion, several levels of such destruction can be distinguished. First, there occurred a breakdown of social structures, with the structures of the state being the first to unravel. As the war progressed, schools, police departments, the border guard, municipal administration, and other structures under state jurisdiction ceased to function. To the average citizen, the most perilous was the period of interregnum, after Polish authorities lost control but before the occupiers managed to install their own administration. In most sources, this time is depicted as utter chaos, often resulting in violence and robbery. Michał Sobków, a physician from Koropets on Dniester, recalls that looting began when »the inhabitants of nearby villages, but also many of the locals, noticed that there were no longer any authorities around.«³ Father Józef Anczarski, who lived less than a 100 km away from Sobków, noted in his diary under the date of September 25, 1939:

Wiśniowczyk and neighboring villages are boiling over. Local councils are forming on the spot. The worst of scum are rising to the top. All sorts of riffraff are taking over: thugs, scoundrels, thieves, drunkards, loafers and bastards. They're everywhere, shouting, jabbering, back talking and threatening.⁴

Of course, not everyone in 1939 lamented the fall of the Polish Republic – for the majority of Ukrainians, not to mention Germans, it was rather a cause for celebration; but even those who were content with the invasion seemed disoriented by and tired of the chaos. Stepan Kasi-

2 Sztompka, *Socjologia zmian społecznych*.

3 AW, II/2577: Michał Sobków, *Koropiec nad Dniestrem (1425-1993)*, 50.

4 AW, II/1224/2K: Ks. Józef Anczarski, *Kronikarskie zapisy z lat cierpień, grozy, zbrodni i ludobójstwa narodu, 1939-1946*.

yan, a Ukrainian independence activist from the small town of Sniatyn, recalls Ukrainian attempts to seize power that were clearly revengeful, but which ended in people »coming back to their senses«:

A Ukrainian militia was formed in the blink of an eye [...] and began to put things in order. First, they freed whoever they could from the Polish prison system, because the police either ran away or hid. We locked them up in the same cells they kept us in. Then we hunted for Polish officers. And I got carried away by this general wave of drunken enthusiasm, though I can't say that I really enjoyed it.⁵

Apart from the state administration, all types of organizations also ceased to function when the occupation began. The majority of them were made illegal by the new authorities: associations, clubs, cooperatives, community centers, and, under Soviet occupation, also churches and religious groups. In time, the lack of an intermediary layer between micro and macro, between the individual and society, became increasingly palpable, especially in a situation in which the state was hostile. Marcin Zaremba claims that this »dissolution of bonds and cooperation on the middle level«, described in 1979 by Stefan Nowak as a social vacuum, had long-term consequences, one of which was the facilitation of the communist takeover of the country.⁶ Far more spectacular was the destruction of the class structure which in interwar Poland had still maintained a partly post-feudal character: the declassing of the landed gentry, intelligentsia, and urban bourgeoisie. Under Soviet occupation, the expropriation of the landed gentry, accompanied by repressions (deportations, executions) had already started in the autumn of 1939.⁷ In German-controlled territories, the estates of the landed gentry were dissolved only after the publication and enactment of the decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN) on agricultural reform, which took place in late 1944 and early 1945. The end of class-based society raised various emotions in the countryside. The majority of peasants were genuinely pleased with this development, although, with

5 *Vohon' rodyt'sia z iskry*, 62.

6 Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*; Nowak, »System wartości,« 155-173.

7 At the time of this writing, the only monograph describing the fate of the Polish landed gentry in the Borderlands (the North-East region) is Krzysztof Jasiewicz's *Zagłada polskich Kresów: ziemiaństwo polskie na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939-1941*.

time, they came to see its faults – primarily the insufficient size of the newly divided plots of land and the lack of inventory for new farms:

In April, we went through the agricultural reform [...] I'm happy because I now work my own land, but I find it hard because I need a horse and I don't have the money to buy one. If I had a horse, I'd be feeling like a king now. And everyone who got their own farm, they find it hard [...] but they're still happy that they're working their own land for themselves, they don't have to fear the lord's whip and they don't receive bread, they can make their own.⁸

For those who experienced declassing, it was a tragedy that consisted not only in the difficulty of earning money and the bitterness resulting from the loss of material and social status, but also the calamity of losing one's home and becoming exiled from one's homeland. However, it seems interesting that even the clear beneficiaries of this change, the peasants, were not always visibly satisfied with it. Janina Kamińska, a member of the landed gentry from the area of Ternopil, noted in her diary that the servants from her former estate complained about the disorder and wastefulness which spread there: »They're asking when we're going to return to Kurzany, because they're fed up with the mess.«⁹ Soon after the war, an anonymous peasant diarist from the village of Piekoszów near Kielce wrote about his feelings towards the agricultural reform in the following way:

Did the landowners deserve such harsh treatment, I wouldn't say so, though I'm the son of a poor farmer from a big family, there were ten of us and the parents, so I've had my share hardships as well. Were they guilty because their parents had displayed bravery in bygone battles and so received large areas of land and were able to hold on to them? And if someone now showed that he was hard-working, but the government changed and demoted him again, and exiled him from his home, would it be heroic to act this way towards a defenseless man?¹⁰

That the changes were very noticeable is confirmed by numerous entries in the sources that describe social behavior which had been hith-

8 *Wiś polska 1939-1948*, vol. 2, 292.

9 AW, II/3653, Notatki Janiny Kamińskiej od 28.8.1939 do 18.11.1945.

10 *Wiś polska 1939-1948*, vol. 2, 83-84.

erto unknown. Paweł Sulatycki, a public servant from the Białystok region who was moved to Galicia in 1939, noted in 1942: »In our area, the military government looked for women to work in the fields [...]. At that time – out of necessity – various ladies from the intelligentsia also applied.«¹¹ Sometimes the change was felt as something difficult to put into words – something was changing, something was wrong, society was different from what it had been a mere few years before, but people experiencing this change found it difficult to understand the cause of their sense of alienation. Czesław Blicharski, from Ternopil, stated in September 1939: »Something was beginning to go wrong with what had previously been considered normal. Jews were trading on Saturday, streets that had been swept until yesterday suddenly stopped being clean.«¹²

The second level of the destruction of the social world was the physical disappearance of the people who were a part of that world and who helped to create it: both ›our kind‹ and the ›Others‹. It is a breakdown of social bonds resulting from the physical absence of one side in a relationship. The Holocaust, ethnic purges, forced resettlement, and social revolutions resulted in a lack of people who had worked in certain careers and performed certain functions in local communities. The genocide of the Jews carried with it – at least for some time – an absence of shoemakers, apothecaries, and doctors.¹³ On a far smaller, local scale, a similar result was caused by deporting the Germans from their colonies in Galicia, which had existed for hundreds of years, and the resettlement of Poles and Ukrainians. The expropriation of the landed gentry carried with it the loss of the work providers, but also the material and cultural impoverishment of villages. »Personnel shortages« caused by the war were quickly filled in professions relying on craftsmanship, either by aspiring, upwardly mobile locals, or e.g. deportees from the area of Poznań (in the General Government); the situation among physicians, for instance, was worse. Baruch Milch, who had survived the Holocaust near Tovste (*Zalishchyky Raion*) in Galicia, recalls that as soon as he emerged from hiding he was overwhelmed by requests for medical advice.¹⁴

11 BJ, 9860 III.

12 BN, sygn. akc. 13483, vol. III: Czesław Blicharski, »Wspomnienia tarnopolan«, 218.

13 For works on the subject of the social implications of the Holocaust, see e.g. numerous chapters in the collaborative work: Adamczyk-Grabowska and Tych, *Następstwa zagłady Żydów*.

14 Milch, *Testament*.

Whereas in mono-ethnic areas this void had a mixed-class and -ethnic character, in the Eastern Borderlands the class of ›Other‹ (to the peasant majority) was both ethnically and religiously alien. In the majority of cases, these divisions overlapped: The Polish aristocrat was alien to the Ukrainian peasant both in ethnically religious categories and in terms of class, while in the General Government the noble's otherness was limited to a difference in class. Hence, the destruction of these special groups of ›Others‹ in the war was also a deconstruction of the enclaves of the traditional world, which had still existed in this part of Europe. The Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak writes that in contrast to Western Europe, in the Eastern part of the continent this deconstruction was not the result of political reforms or the spread of new technologies, but of bloody and radical changes, ethnic purges, resettlements, and revolution.¹⁵ The victims of these processes were the two groups which had formed the bedrock of the traditional world: peasants and Eastern European Jews, and their little homelands: villages and shtetls.¹⁶ A similar process is described by Andrzej Leder, who uses methodological tools from the fields of psychoanalysis and philosophy to claim that the revolution which took place in Poland from 1939 to 1956 consisted in the removal of all the significant groups of ethnic and class ›Others‹ – the ›masters‹, that is, the landed gentry, Jews, Ukrainians, and Germans.¹⁷ This revolutionary deconstruction and change resulted in a social void.

The specific void created by the departure of the ›Others‹ requires an explanation; an emptiness that is ›closer to the body‹, caused by the loss of ›one of us‹, is intuitively understandable. To the people of that time, it must have been palpable and painful to a far greater extent. In other words: every person who was murdered, resettled or deported had individual relationships with those who remained – he or she was a client, a patron, a neighbor, an acquaintance, a rival, an enemy, and so on. However, only ›one of us‹ could be a dear friend, a relative, a father, a daughter or a lover. The absence of the ›Others‹ might have been painful for functioning at a social level, but only the disappearance of ›one of us‹ was mourned, and the latter happened to the vast majority:

15 Hrytsak, »Tezy do dyskusji.«

16 Writing about peasants as the direct victims of these changes, Hrytsak refers to that part of Eastern Europe which was already in the Soviet Union during the interwar period, and where peasants had already fallen prey to the policy of collectivization and other Soviet repressions.

17 Leder, *Przeżniona rewolucja*.

after the war, it was difficult to find a Polish family in which no one had suffered during the conflict. This is apparent in accounts describing the absence of the two groups. Even if the ›Others‹ are missed, no one despairs for their loss.

The third level of the destruction of a stable, predictable social world was the brutalization of everyday life. It consisted of numerous elements. Among the more important ones was the violence of occupation, and especially violence that was sanctioned by the newly established law. A good example illustrating the character of this ›legalization of lawlessness‹ was the handling of Jewish property in the General Government. Estates were robbed gradually and methodically, and every step – taking away real estate, workshops, furniture, furs, etc. – was preceded by a legal act that sanctioned the crime. Witnessing the Holocaust, as well as other ethnic purges, was another aspect of the brutalization of everyday life. Attitudes towards the Holocaust were varied, but it is noteworthy that it was difficult not to witness the murdering of Jews during the war. Michael Meng accurately points out that due to the scale of the Holocaust and the sheer number of Jews in prewar Poland, the attitude of a bystander cannot be described as ›indifference‹ or ›passive participation‹ – witnesses were touched by the Holocaust in various ways, even if they did not participate as perpetrators or rescuers.¹⁸ For many people this was an experience far more extreme than simply watching from behind the window curtains as Jews were being escorted to trains. Let it be exemplified by the following note, made by a man who in 1941 was forced to dig graves for several dozen Jews who were shot before his eyes, and to bury their bodies.

All of our hands were shaking, and the older men were pale as death. When we ran maybe a half of a kilometer from the site of the crime, all of us crossed ourselves but we didn't talk, we ran on as fast as we could to get back home. My neighbor died from a heart attack the next day. He took part in the burying of the bodies, and the experience caused the sudden death.¹⁹

Death and violence were commonplace during the war. Violence was always one step away and guns were easily accessible as well. The massive scale of this phenomenon and its imprint on everyday life in

18 Meng, *Shattered Spaces*, 23.

19 AW, II/1223/2K, 13.

occupied Poland is illustrated by the example of the influence of violence and death on children. Zbigniew Kubas from Bibrka in the former Lviv voivodeship was a teenager at the time of the war. He recalls that he used to play roundup with his friends during recess.²⁰ Arnold Szyfman, the director of the Polish Theater, was hiding in estates belonging to the landed gentry around Cracow during the war. He remembered that the favorite game of the servants' children was enacting the shooting of Jews.²¹

The ubiquity of violence translated directly to a permanent sense of danger which, in turn, resulted in fear and uncertainty about the future. If they are killing Jews today, tomorrow the same thing can happen to us. In a peasant's diary from the area of Miechów that was sent to a postwar competition, we find a description of the situation after the murder of the local Jews and Roma: »There was a deadly silence in the village. People were afraid to meet with each other; they were even afraid to go to the store. Every German order was strictly and promptly followed.«²² In a situation of extreme danger social practices that served to uphold social ties atrophy. People cease to meet each other to socialize because ensuring one's own safety becomes more important. It is difficult to avoid associations with Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs – the most essential ones are safety and physiological needs; their importance overshadows the needs fulfilled by social relations: the need to belong, to feel respected and to be acknowledged.²³ Deprivation affected all layers of society – representatives of the intelligentsia were simply better equipped to describe it:

[January 26, 1945, Cracow] You just don't want to write anymore, it's all so awful and nightmarish. So crushingly sad. The life of troglodytes. The dissolution of all culture. Life without smiling, without happiness, without pleasure. Perpetual worry about having something to eat – just to have that bowl of potato or barley soup and some black bread. Because that too will be all gone in a few days. To

20 AW, II/1347/2K: Zbigniew Kubas, Dzienniczek od dnia 1 października 1942 r. do dnia 10 maja 1944 r., 14.

21 Szyfman, *Moja tułaczka*, 200.

22 *Chleb i krew*, 369.

23 Abraham Maslow, American psychologist and a representative of the so-called humanistic psychology, named his theory the »hierarchy of needs« in 1943; in 1954 he published its full version in a book. Maslow's theory of needs, supplemented by newer research, is used in social sciences and psychology to this day.

get some coal and firewood and not be cold. In the face of this every day, unbearable and persistent struggle for survival, all other problems are no longer of any interest.²⁴

Reactions to deprivation were varied, and likely dependent on its level as well as the social status of each individual. Sometimes it caused extreme discouragement and depressive states, as in the case of Stefania Olechowska, a writer from Cracow quoted above. But sometimes, it did not stop there. Father Józef Anczarski, already quoted in this paper, recalls that during the period of the greatest hunger under German occupation, in the winter of 1942, the village was in distress – people were willing to kill for a piece of bread.²⁵

The fourth level of the dissolution of the social order in my analysis is the fall of social norms, or at least their significant relativization. This is not an original thesis – processes of this type were indicated as direct consequences of the cruelty of war by Jan T. Gross and Anne Applebaum, for example.²⁶ Of course, social norms are a broad category. I would like to focus on a few chosen ones which were affected by the war the strongest. Occupation taught the citizens of prewar Poland that the law did not exist to be obeyed but to be circumvented. Breaking occupational law became a civic virtue of disobedience. People began leading double lives – a life of pretending, as it was described by Kazimierz Wyka in his literary sketches about the war.²⁷ There is a striking similarity between Wyka's reflection and the notes of a peasant from the area near Wadowice, who sent his work to a literary competition entitled »The Polish Countryside 1939-1948« organized in 1948 by the publishing house Czytelnik (this author could not have known Wyka's text, as it was first published in 1957):

The spiritual state of the village started to transform into two characteristic varieties – living for oneself and living in the eyes of the enemy. This duplicity became a necessity for maintaining one's position and was a form of self-defense against the physical and biological destruction of the population.²⁸

24 BN, Rps. Ossol. 15506/I/1-6: Stefania Olechowska, *Dzienniki z lat 1945-1970*, vol. 1-6.

25 AW, II/1224/2K, 156.

26 Applebaum, *Iron Curtain*, 13-14, 135; Gross, *Social Consequences of War*, 201-202.

27 Wyka, *Życie na niby*.

28 *Wieś polska 1939-1948*, vol. 2, 448.

The war also fostered the belief among Poles that all authority was hostile towards citizens. Obviously, the government of the Second Polish Republic was also considered foreign by some citizens – a hostile, or, at best, a disinterested and distrustful attitude towards the state was characteristic of a large part of the ethnic minorities living in Poland. However, for ethnic Poles at least, the war was a return to the point of view from the time of the partitions, which in turn, after a brief loan of trust towards socialist Poland, returned at the time of Stalinism and the People's Republic of Poland.

War also taught that in some situations theft becomes acceptable. As the war raged on, the sanctity of private property devolved to the form of a conditional norm: one which holds true only towards certain groups (primarily one's own group) and ceases to function in certain situations (e.g. when everyone else is stealing). Something unthinkable before the war was now becoming normal. The first signs of this attitude can already be seen in September 1939, when during the period of interregnum and chaos people robbed property that had no owner or was abandoned. Barracks from which the Polish army retreated were robbed, as were stores whose owners fled, and the cars of refugees escaping to the East that were left on the side of the road after the fuel ran out. Years after the event, Zbigniew Fedus, who was a teenager at the time of the war and lived in the village of Bertniki near Monasterzyska, recounts the pilfering of components from abandoned cars in a carnival tone: »We took particular pleasure in unscrewing the bolts from engines and pulling out the seats. Later came the fad for burning tires.«²⁹

The carnivalesque nature of these types of stories, visible also in the descriptions of the first weeks in the »regained lands« after the war, inescapably brings to mind the Bakhtinian carnival, with its temporary overturning of norms. But sources indicate that for ordinary people the commonality of robbery was burdensome and depressing. In the Eastern Borderlands, sometimes the Ukrainian and Byelorussian population would catch the remnants of the scattered Polish army, strip them of their uniforms and shoes, and sometimes murder them.³⁰ The estates of the landed gentry whose owners fled before the advancing Red Army were also pillaged, usually with permission or even encouragement from the new revolutionary regime. Yet another wave of plunder came during the pogroms against the Jewish population that swept through the Eastern Borderlands in the summer of 1941. Ac-

29 AW, II/2149/p: Zbigniew Fedus, 7.

30 Milch, *Testament*, 82.

ording to historians, the motive of robbery was among the leading causes of these mass events.³¹

On a different scale, the process was repeated after the liquidation of ghettos – when the Germans stripped them of the most valuable items, locals moved to plunder whatever remained in the abandoned buildings. Interestingly, this last form of theft was often justified by complex argumentative strategies aimed at proving that it was the proper thing to do:

When the Germans took the Jews from Rabka to Oświęcim – people from nearby villages came with wheelbarrows and carts to take all their possessions and divide them among each other. Furthermore, the Jews themselves gave people their things saying: »When we come back – you’ll return them.« Very soon one knew that they were never coming back. People treated this thing not as theft or robbery but as a form of fighting the Germans. Were we supposed to give them everything they could find on Polish soil? Haven’t they taken enough of our property?³²

This showed that mass-scale participation in theft in and of itself was not enough to justify the act – additional arguments were necessary. A cumulation of robbery occurred from 1944 into 1945 when the Red Army began to ›liberate‹ Poland. The Soviets stole, but so did everyone else; all layers of society participated in robbery – looting became commonplace.³³ In the so-called Lubelska Poland, freshly nationalized estates of the landed gentry were looted, and whatever remained after the civilian and military German administration left was robbed all across the country – but the peak of looting occurred in the ›regained lands‹.

The changes also concerned fundamental norms. The war showed that killing – similarly to theft and breaking the law – was not always wrong and that human life was not as valuable as it had previously seemed. The death which accompanied civilians at every step was shocking at first, but later it forced people to adapt and to become indifferent. What caused trauma at the beginning of the war seemed less and less impactful as the conflict waged on. Furthermore, wartime

31 See e.g. Mędykowski, *W cieniu gigantów*; Struve, »Rites of Violence?«

32 Oss., 16190/II (MF 35685); Maria Zawadzka, Skomielna Biała. Wspomnienia i poszukiwania. Wspomnienia z lat 1932-1970, 241.

33 Zaremba, »Gorączka szabru«, 193-220.

logic taught that sometimes killing is not only justified but also desirable and glorious – when it is done in self-defense, to defend one's homeland, community, good ideals, to secure one's continued material existence, to prevent some other act of violence ... The war expanded this list, which exists at all times, to dangerous lengths, eventually filling it up with reasons such as »just in case« or »that's just how it turned out.«

The illusory end of the war: Uncertainty and a sense of danger

This was the state of Polish society at the onset of the postwar period – a destroyed social and state structure, dealing with physical damages, moral degradation, in a state of utter anomy. Soon after the war, it became apparent that although people welcomed the end of German occupation, rebuilding the country on a social level required overcoming several obstacles. The first among these was the fact that the power in Poland was seized by an undemocratic and unwanted political system that lacked social approval and was incapable of rebuilding a sense of trust towards the state. Despite insistent attempts to convince society that the PKWN and later the Government of National Unity were real representatives of Polish interests, distrust towards the new regime was commonplace. Terror was an everyday occurrence, and it often devolved into utter chaos:

Here [in Cracow] you constantly hear about people being locked in jail. They say that the prison on Montelupich street is so overpopulated that prisoners are being held in the basement of the public security facility that they created in the old professors' home. It's said that they treat prisoners the same way the Gestapo did, but they try to »justify« it all [...] If they want to »get rid of« someone they insinuate that he »collaborated with the Germans« [...] So not only do they lock people up, they also ruin their good name.³⁴

The situation was further complicated by the fact that the war did not really end in Poland when the Germans fled. Armed resistance towards the new regime from the nationalist underground continued. It fought the communist government, but the indirect victims of their activities were common people, as was the case with the murder of alleged com-

34 BJ, przyb. 22/82: Janina Rościszewska, 1942-1946. Kraków-Szaniec.

munist sympathizers among the Orthodox population in eastern Podlasie (the infamous »case of the coachmen«) or the persecution of peasants involved in the implementation of the agricultural reform. In the »regained lands«, new Polish inhabitants – as well as the remaining locals and Germans – were troubled by conflicts between the Red Army and Polish soldiers and the Polish civilian administration, destabilizing the process of shaping new local communities.³⁵

These were still troubled and uncertain times. Everywhere there were wandering Russian troops, and insubordination was spreading among their ranks. There still occurred bloody battles between them and the Polish soldiers. Hatred towards the new occupant was visible everywhere, since even though they »fought for« these lands, they also robbed them of everything.³⁶

At the same time, violence caused by ethnic differences did not cease – the new Ukrainian-Polish borderlands became the site of bloody incidents between the two nations – not to mention the regular war between the UPA and the People's Army of Poland. All across the country, smaller-scale acts of violence against the Jews were also taking place. The most drastic among them were the pogroms – in Kielce and Cracow, but equally striking were lesser incidents directed against individuals, which compounded together to form a spiral of violence.

Hence, in 1945 the »common man« in Poland was exhausted by the war, but the war did not want to end. Apart from the raging military conflicts with various causes, Poles in 1945 were also plagued by common bandits. In his diagnosis of postwar Poland, Marcin Zaremba claims that the fear of being assaulted by bandits was one of the most common emotions in the country immediately after the war.³⁷ The moment in which a unit of guerrillas transformed into a group of criminals was often difficult to pinpoint. This is best shown by witness accounts who use the term »gang« to describe every organized group of armed individuals that was potentially threatening. As one inhabitant of Szczawnica recalls:

35 See Chumiński, »Czynniki destabilizujące«, 55-78.

36 Oss., 15387/II/7: Amelia z Paygertów Łączyńska, Wspomnienia z lat 1893-1967, part VII: Na innym gruncie 1945-1967.

37 Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, 157, 316, 330.

The very next night [after the Germans left] the gangs came down from the mountains. They burned some documents and highlanders' kennkarten right next to the municipal council. Every night from then on you could hear shouts and drunken singing, and in the morning, after they left, news would spread about people getting robbed, beaten, heavily wounded and killed. This situation continued from 1945 till 1948. In 1947 they sent in a military unit that was trained to fight gangs.³⁸

Every war naturally produces a group of »loose« people, who are »unneeded in the service of violence«, as Stefan Czarnowski described them.³⁹ In the first months and years after the Second World War had officially ended, this phenomenon produced considerable problems in Poland. People did not feel safe, and it is hard to muster the effort required to rebuild while living in a state of permanent fear. And this fear was often justified. In January 1944, Adolf Zabłocki, a teacher who had spent the war in the area of Lubaczów, was assaulted in his own home by a »Polish gang from the area of Rawa Ruska« who robbed all of his family's possessions. As the author of the diary writes: »Mom fell into a state of depression – she could not believe that the war had led to such demoralization and inhumanity.«⁴⁰ The situation was the most difficult for people who had to start everything from scratch in an unknown place and among strangers. Jadwiga Rutkowska, who came to the »regained lands« from Warsaw in 1945 remembers that she was afraid of practically everyone:

It was the worst at night, I was scared then. Me and my husband, we were afraid, I covered the windows with black drapery. (What were you afraid of?) That the Germans would storm in and kill us. I was really scared. So I only listened in if there was silence. Our nights were almost sleepless, you see, because we were afraid. [...] And we were also scared of thieves, and of the different people that came here from the East, who were maybe even worse than the Germans, you see.⁴¹

38 BN, III.10445: Maria Brzezińska, «Jan Brzeziński. Życie i praca.»

39 Czarnowski, *Ludzie zbędni*, 198-211.

40 AW, II/2947: Zabłocki Adolf, *Pamiętnik oficera*, 31.

41 AHM, 1182: *Relacja Jadwigi Rutkowskiej*.

It is not difficult to imagine that her neighbors, ›repatriated‹ from the Eastern Borderlands, were also afraid – of Soviets, Germans, Poles from the ›heartland‹ and thieves.

Other factors that disturbed the process of planting one's roots in a new place and finding a new meaning in life were political instability and its associated fears. Those who settled in the ›regained lands‹ were seriously thinking about the possibility of another border change, sometimes even counting on it, as was the case with Eastern borderlanders who continued to hope for a very long time that Poland would reclaim its lost lands in the East after another war. In addition, the situation in the ›regained lands‹ was also destabilized by uncertainty regarding material estates. Unkempt houses left in disrepair for years after the Germans' departure, and packed suitcases, which entered popular culture as a common image of the postwar period in the Polish ›Wild West‹, were not a simple result of animosity towards German material heritage or an inability to manage it. They also stemmed from a prosaic fear of losing the resources invested in renovating a home in a situation where at every moment one could lose the claim to one's new house if the old owners returned to reclaim it.⁴²

Fears and uncertainty accompanied settlers not only in the ›regained lands‹. Central Poland also feared a new war, and the political and economic systems' longevity was questionable, as was the perspective of their further development. The stability of the new order was especially doubted by peasants who, in numerous places, declined to take over plots of land carved from farms owned by the landed gentry, and if they did, they delayed any work in the field, fearing the return of the ›masters‹ or persecution from the nationalist underground:

Come spring 1945 – the fields have to be sowed. Everyone's waiting, worried, nobody starts working the retaken fields. They fear that whoever approaches first will get a bullet in the head. Finally, a few bold individuals stepped forward and one of them started tilling the field with a tractor. Some asked: »How now citizen, we will gather the crops from the field, and maybe the masters will return, then at least we'll manage half a harvest.«⁴³

42 Service, *Germans to Poles*, 209.

43 *Wieś polska 1939-1948*, vol. 3, 473.

Losses: Poverty, discouragement, lack of elites, demoralization

Fears and uncertainty were augmented by mundane difficulties of everyday life. In the first period after the war, Polish society was impoverished to a great degree. The enormous destruction made it hard to think about anything other than satisfying the most essential needs. In a letter that Waław Pietrzak received in Great Britain from his mother in the summer of 1945 we read: »Dear son, if you're doing well over there then stay and don't come back, because our entire country is very ruined. There's nothing to eat, no clothes to put on, and nowhere to live.«⁴⁴ In nearly every source from that period one can find mentions of destroyed villages and towns. Paweł Mucha reports in 1945 from the »regained lands«:

Returning through the regained territories we encounter many towns that are horribly damaged and abandoned by their citizens, and next to them settlements that look as if they were miraculously saved. In the devastated town of Kostrzyń, in the fork between the Vistula and the Oder, we see railway workers busy in the ruins of a station. They tell us that their crew was sent over to organize a railway station. They couldn't find a single undamaged house in the city. They live in tents among the mine-spiked rubble.⁴⁵

To the general destruction of the urban tissue was added the individual impoverishment of society. After years of wartime shortages, the lack of such resources as clothes and everyday items constituted the largest problem for city dwellers, and for farmers the lack of inventory and grain.

All of this dimmed the joy resulting from the end of the war, and made reconstruction seem almost impossible. In the majority of sources one can find signs of discouragement and uncertainty, often verbalized with difficulty and noted by the authors with some surprise. To illustrate this sentiment, I will quote two accounts, both largely similar in tone, but coming from representatives of completely different milieus. Jan Wyrwa-Kałuza, a member of the intelligentsia, notes in the spring of 1945: »Apart from material shortages, there were also

44 Oss., 15 635/II, vol. 1-2: Waław Pietrzak, *Z ziemi włońskiej do Polski. Wspomnienia z lat 1944-1946*.

45 BN, Rps. Ossolineum, 15 637/II, vol. 2: Paweł Mucha, *Czasy wielkich przemian: ludzie – zdarzenia – refleksje (years 1939-1956)*.

palpable moral and psychic shortages, you could feel the general low spirits of the people.«⁴⁶ In a text sent to the competition organized by *Czytelnik* in 1948, an anonymous peasant diarist comments on the general disarray and disorder in the countryside: »And also in these times, when the nation was still demoralized after the war, and you could feel those silly doubts and insecurities about what would happen the next day, the day after that, in the next month or the next year.«⁴⁷ Of particular interest is the discouragement and distrust towards the ›brave new world‹ noted honestly even by its ideological proponents:

Nazi occupation left behind it certain negative traces that manifest themselves in the fact that a considerable percentage of the inhabitants of Fajstawice have an indifferent view of the new reality, showing signs of reserve and anticipation. This indifference reveals itself in that, for example, the majority of Fajstawice are far removed from all political parties and groups, and they don't support any party.⁴⁸

Many observers of the postwar reality in Poland also wrote about the problems with switching to a normal, peacetime life style, and about the harmful wartime habits that took a significant amount of time to uproot. Sometimes, they refer to it directly as a »general demoralization«, in other places they offer specific examples, such as rampant alcoholism spreading throughout the countryside.⁴⁹ Controlling these fears and uncertainties, characteristic of a period of liminal experiences, would probably be easier if the process of raising the country from the ashes were helmed by elites held in high esteem by society. But the majority of Polish elites did not survive the end of the war: if they did not emigrate or fall victim to repressions by either of the occupying forces, they were declassed or removed from the public eye, or both. Among those who remained, only a few managed to arrange themselves with the new reality, being primarily the ones who had already been left-leaning prior to the war.

The best example here is the fate of the landed gentry. As a consequence of Soviet collectivization and the agricultural reform passed by

46 Oss., 15 608/II: Jan Wyrwa-Kałuża, *Niespełnione nadzieje. Wspomnienia z lat 1945-1975*.

47 *Wieś polska 1939-1948*, vol. 2, 430.

48 *Wieś polska 1939-1948*, vol. 3, 81.

49 BN, III.7924: Maria Rutkowska, *Struna bolesnej pamięci. Wspomnienia z okresu okupacji i lat powojennych*.

the PKWN, all members of the landed gentry lost their estates, workshops, and homes. Still, many of them were ready to actively participate in rebuilding the country, even within the new political system. In time, they discovered that their experience and good intentions were not welcome – the reform aimed not only at solving the issue of land hunger in the countryside, but also at destroying the landed gentry as a social class that was potentially dangerous for the new authorities. The landed gentry were aware of these intentions – Stanisław Turnau wrote in his diary entry for February 5, 1945: »The goal is to erase the landed gentry from the face of the Polish countryside once and for all. The goal is to ruin the landed gentry, so that they will be unable to swiftly take up work in some other field of endeavor.«⁵⁰ But not all of them were able to accept their prescribed fate. Another landowning noble noted in her diary:

The desire to adopt an active life and work was strong among us, but what kind of work could we have started »in the shadow of the agricultural reform«? We were looking at the completely disorganized and utterly devastated estate in Kowala [formerly belonging to the author], which had been, after all, a small part of Poland's economic system, and we were unable to offer neither our work nor our help, or even any productive initiative. [...] We felt that we were being pushed beyond the margin of society, that our enthusiasm and our work were not welcome by anyone.⁵¹

The landed gentry »had to go away«, an effect which was certainly reflected in the potential of a country that was painstakingly rebuilding itself after the devastation of the war. In hindsight, this was noticed not only by the representatives of the declassed group themselves, but also by individuals with radically different ideological stances. The waste of human resources was noted alongside the thoughtless destruction of valuable national heritage, including countryside estates and palaces with their inventories, art collections, and libraries. A particularly authentic sense of sorrow for these losses can be found in the recollections of a certain peasant:

50 BN, sygn. akc. 10571-10572, 10702-10703: Turnau Stanisław, Pamiętnik z wojny 1939-1945.

51 BN, sygn. akc. 14272: Maria Walewska z Kuźnickich, W cieniu ustawy o reformie rolnej. Kronika wydarzeń od 1.IX.1944 do 4.III.1945.

You could have, at that time, with some thought and planning as well as the right kind of propaganda among the people, who treated everything that used to belong to the masters with understandable antipathy and even hatred, save the palace-estates, with all their interiors intact, and create beautiful community centers, schools and libraries in them. But already in the first days after liberation, the enmity towards the upper classes that had been gathering for ages found its release. Whatever could be destroyed was destroyed. No one had taught the peasant population to regard these things as public property that should be guarded and protected for the people's own benefit.⁵²

Resettlements: Uprooting, longing, conflicts

The final group of factors that made it difficult to rebuild Poland after the war requires us to return to the issue of redrawn borders and resettlement. The mass-scale migrations, both forced and voluntary, enforced a sense of dissolution of social ties by way of disrupting local communities and sometimes also families. People removed from their natural social milieu were deprived of the support provided by their families and familiar, safe neighborly relations. They had difficulty finding themselves in a new material reality, which sometimes led them to neglect their assigned farms and workshops. This in turn sparked conflicts with the settled locals, as was the case in the situation described below, when the inhabitants of the village of Łosiniec in the Tomaszów Lubelski district were appalled by the »wastefulness« displayed by migrants from the Eastern Borderlands, who moved into houses that had previously been occupied by Ukrainians who were resettled to the Soviet Union:

They were put in houses that had stood empty, but they weren't interested in working at all. They chopped up whatever fences and blocks of wood remained in barns for firewood. If anyone asked them why they were destroying things that could be put to good use, they responded by saying that it wasn't theirs, that they didn't care because they'd return home in the spring.⁵³

52 Kaczor, *Wspomnienia*, 90.

53 *Więś polska 1939-1948*, vol. 3, 305.

However, it seems that for the purposes of creating new local communities, a more important aspect was the migrants' general sense of alienation and of being uprooted, which was particularly true for those who came from the Eastern Borderlands. Pioneer enthusiasm could hardly be expected from people who were thrown out of their homes. Among the more positive attitudes one can encounter in the memories of ›repatriates‹ – especially those who came from the territories of contemporary Ukraine to escape the violence they faced from Ukrainians in the Borderlands – is the relief stemming from a sense of safety offered by the new homeland (which, as we already know, proved to be illusory).

Yet, more often the Eastern borderlanders struggled with the trauma of losing their little homeland and the necessity of rebuilding their identity, both problems that they faced as a result of the migration. These emotions successfully prevented them from accepting their new homes as their own, which in turn stood in the way of their involvement in the creation of the social reality of their new local community. In her study about the ›Wild West‹ in postwar Poland, Beata Halicka labels this type of attitude as ›permanently ready-to-leave victims who are tired of life‹, and it seems that she is in large part justified in her opinion.⁵⁴ Contemporary research concerning the processes of creating new social and individual identities in the ›regained lands‹, including my own studies,⁵⁵ illustrate that for some migrants the process of identity adaptation continued for a very long time, and sometimes never really ended.

An additional burden influencing the effectiveness of integration in communities that accepted various types of migrants after the war consisted in mutual prejudices and stereotypes from the time of the war and before it, which ›came along‹ with the new settlers. In the beginning, these prejudices generally resulted in mutual fear. But, over time, as people saw that the ›Others‹ were not bandits or thieves, distrust and animosity still remained. The effect of such attitudes was the forming of closed groups united on the basis of their members' origin, and the spread of indifference. Maria Rutkowska, who settled in the ›regained lands‹ after the war, recalls: ›Hostility was commonplace, people were afraid of each other, they were afraid to speak, they even looked down so that no one could guess what they were thinking.‹⁵⁶

54 Halicka, *Polski Dziki Zachód*.

55 Mach, *Niechciane miasta*; Wylegała, *Przesiedlenia a pamięć*.

56 BN, III.7924.

Equal hardships were faced by people who, while not forced out of their homes, returned there after a few years of absence – only to find that nothing was the same as it had been. This was the fate of former forced laborers, prisoners of concentration camps, deportees who were sent to Siberia during the Soviet occupation, and Jews who survived the Holocaust. These people were touched by their wartime experiences in various degrees – some were able to reorganize their life in short order, others struggled for many years with undiagnosed and untreated post-traumatic stress disorder. Some never managed to rebuild their lives in postwar Poland, with the best example here being Holocaust survivors. But also the forced laborers who returned to the Eastern Borderlands after years of absence and found their hometowns changed beyond all recognition often decided to move to the West.⁵⁷ Everything in Poland changed – from the material layer, through people's places of residence, scattered across the country in its new borders, up to the Poles themselves – transformed by the war to a degree that made them difficult to recognize. Neither of these changes made the process of rebuilding the country after the war any easier.

Instead of a conclusion:

Success or ›success‹, rebuilding or ›rebuilding‹?

The picture of Polish society at the onset of long-awaited peacetime that was painted in this article is rather apocalyptic. Hence, it would be prudent to ask, after all of this, why did the process of rebuilding the social and material world in Poland mostly succeed? First, what happened in postwar Poland was not strictly the reconstruction of a social world from before the war, but rather the creation of something completely new. The destruction and changes were so radical that, under the new circumstances, it would be difficult to consider the very possibility of a return to the status quo before 1939. Instead, what was achieved was the creation of an entirely new structure on top of the old foundation.

In addition, there existed a number of factors which, despite the tremendous hurdles described in the previous chapter, made the (re)construction possible. It will be easiest to show them using a certain comparison. To make the juxtaposition clearer, one should remember that although the diagnosis of the destruction of the social world presented

⁵⁷ AHM, 1836: Relacja Elżbiety Łowkis.

in this paper pertains to all the territories which constituted Poland prior to 1939, after the war was over these lands became separated. The Eastern Borderlands became a part of the Soviet Union, while the remaining lands were used to build the People's Republic of Poland. The differences in the prospects for reconstruction on opposite sides of the new border illustrate why the postwar reconstruction of communist Poland succeeded despite the substantial challenges.

Although Galicia had almost all the burdens described above with the remaining Polish territories, it became deprived of nearly every asset that contributed to the eventual reconstruction of Polish society. For one, in contrast to Galicia (and small fragments of the Polish state in its new borders) the areas that were occupied only by Germans maintained their administrative structures somewhat intact throughout the war. In Galicia, being under Soviet occupation, it was not just the personnel but also the very framework of the local administration that changed. In territories that were incorporated into the Reich and in the General Government, the destruction of this element of the social world was not complete: although key positions were taken by Germans and loyal *Volksdeutsche*, lower positions were often left to the same people who had held them earlier. A significant portion of jobs were of course entirely liquidated, but the ones responsible for satisfying the basic needs of the population continued to function.

Another issue was the presence of civilian structures of the Polish Underground state, such as the judiciary system and secret schools, which partly took over the functions that were phased out by both occupying regimes. Although these structures also existed in Galicia, their main ›beneficiaries‹ in terms of social capital consisted almost exclusively of ethnic Poles, rarely of Jews, and never of Ukrainians. The consequence was the postwar disappearance of this social capital, which departed Galicia along with the resettled Poles.⁵⁸

The third factor, especially in the first years after the war, was that the repressive nature of the political system was far weaker in Poland than in Ukraine. Although the system did not facilitate the reconstruction of social trust, it would be inappropriate to compare the period of 1944-1948 to the same years in Soviet Ukraine, where Stalinist terror raged with twice the force it had during the war. The influx of foreign administrative personnel was also significantly lower, especially at the level of local communities, as was the change of prewar elites – nearly complete in Ukraine, and ›only‹ large in Poland. Furthermore, Polish

⁵⁸ I want to thank Maciej Melon for these observations.

society had the advantage of intermediate social structures which managed to remain somewhat independent from the state despite numerous attempts to bring them under political control. The main example here is of course the activity of the Catholic Church, but also small and chiefly local social organizations.⁵⁹ The majority of them were forced to suspend their activities after 1948, e.g. the *Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej RP* (Association of Rural Youth of the Polish Republic), or *Wici* for short – which was forced, along with many other organizations, to become a part of the Association of Polish Youth.

Nevertheless, these first few years of relatively free activity after the war played a crucial role in the reconstruction of social relations on a local level. Prior to 1948, the same was true for the education system and other elements of youth formation, e.g. the Association of the Polish Scout Movement (*Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego*, ZHP), which maintained a relatively large degree of autonomy until 1949. In other words, Polish society, in contrast to its Ukrainian counterpart, received the ›extra credit‹ of a few years of relative peace, during which natural processes of reconstruction of various social mechanisms took place without much outside disturbance. Even if this ›honeymoon‹ period of relations between the socialist state and its citizens later ended and never returned, it constituted a tremendous startup capital for a new society and new local communities, and it was an asset of which the citizens of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic were utterly deprived.

The final issue that bears mentioning is the fact that although the new layout of political power and the new economic system were forced upon Poland from the outside, a majority of the population was already before the war aware of the necessity of rebuilding the social system, and some people actively worked to achieve that aim. The changes which took place after the communist takeover, at least at a declarative level, contributed to a sense of hope for a better life in many people. Despite the lack of acceptance for all the changes, even representatives of the declassed landed gentry and that part of the urban intelligentsia which originated from this privileged class – not to mention the left-leaning members of the intelligentsia – wanted to believe that after the war it would still be possible to work for their coun-

59 Zdzisław Mach considers the necessity and possibility of the self-organization of social life as one of the conditions for successful migration. It appears that his observation can be expanded to other forms of social reconstruction – post-migrant, postwar, post-transformation. See Mach, *Niechciane miasta*.

try even under the new conditions. Paradoxically then, material reconstruction and common effort towards lifting the country from ruin could work as an integrating factor, and apparently they did.

One final remark: Tracing the processes of the destruction of the social world and the factors which inhibited its restoration after the war is fully possible by working with sources. An evaluation of what actually was rebuilt, and to what extent, is far more difficult owing to the longer perspective and the new quality of the structures that were created. Undoubtedly, what we call society, not only in its Polish incarnation, has tremendous regenerative properties, and its utter destruction is not an easy task. Dealing significant damage to it, however, is not difficult. Polish society survived the catastrophe of war and continues to exist, as do local communities. In the end, though, one is tempted to consider the question of where we would be today – as a society and as communities – if the devastation of social relations and structures caused by the war never occurred.

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The (Un)Ending War: New Challenges for the Congregation of the Grey Ursulines in Poland in 1945

The mission of the Catholic Church in Poland has always exceeded the simple notion of religious service, and its complex connection with Polish society is especially noticeable in times of crisis.¹ This is why the term *Church*, especially when used with reference to historical turning points, must be understood not only with respect to its organizational and institutional aspects or the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, but in the broad sense of Catholicism as an ensemble that unites Polish society within the spheres of religion, nation and culture.²

An interesting question that remains understudied among the wealth of themes related to the complex relationship between the Church and society in Poland concerns women's monastic communities. This includes their living conditions during World War II and the immediate postwar period.³ Their stories can be under-

- 1 Using the term *Church* we are entering a broad field that eludes definition and comprehensive characterization. The term *Catholic Church* accurately refers to all members – the laity and clergy. According to statistical data, in 1945 these members made up almost 95 % of Poland's population. However, the term *Catholic Church* is often used to refer to the clerical hierarchy alone, or to episcopate that heads church institutions in a given country. This usage may be convenient, but it is imprecise. Generally, the different meanings of the term *Catholic Church* should always be kept in mind.
- 2 The context of the events described in this article is usefully outlined in Żaryn, *Dzieje Kościoła Katolickiego* and *Kościół a władza*, as well as Zieliński, *Kościół w Polsce*.
- 3 Recent publications in the field address the Communist regime's repressions against monastic communities – a topic that researchers in Poland had long been unable to tackle for political reasons. This explains why the studies that have appeared over the last few years tend to focus on the period after 1945. Meanwhile, the 16-volume series *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne*, ed. by Chruszczewski et al., appeared over a very long time, namely 1982-2002, with a 17th volume published in 2014. Several books in this series were written under state censorship. Some were altered before they were sent to print, others show the marks of self-censorship, which results from the experience of living in a totalitarian state. What is more, the authors in the series often had very limited access to state archives. This is why the history of women's monastic communities during World War II and, especially, in the break-

stood as part of the multilayered and polyphonic history of Polish women.⁴

One contribution to this history is furnished by the Congregation of the Ursulines of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus. This dynamic Polish branch of the Ursuline Order was founded by Urszula Ledóchowska, who in most people's opinion lived the life of a saint. The order, whose members are popularly known as the Grey Ursuline Sisters, expanded quickly in the interwar period.⁵ Just before the outbreak of the war, the young congregation counted almost 800 sisters in over thirty communities in Poland, France and Italy. Urszula Ledóchowska died on May 29, 1939. Three months later, the sisters were forced to confront the war. Crucially, however, they were nourished by their vivid memories of their charismatic leader, who had instructed them in terms of both spirituality and organization. The congregation was strengthened by the enthusiasm typical of founding generations.

In July 1939, Mother Pia (Helena) Leśniewska was elected General Superior. It was her responsibility to guide the congregation through the war. For the next five years, however, her personal and written communication with the religious communities under her supervision was severely restricted. In many cases these had to make difficult decisions without her support.

Following Poland's occupation by Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939, the experiences of religious communities across the country varied, depending on whether they found themselves under German occupation in the General Government or in the areas incorporated into the Reich and intended for rapid Germanization (the

through year of 1945, ought to be studied and described anew. Piaszyk also examines the Congregation of the Ursulines of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus in vol. 16 (2002) of the above-mentioned series.

4 It is only in the last few years that a significant number of new scholarly works and memoirs have been published, thus adding valuable material to Polish historiography in this field. These new publications represent a variety of perspectives and methodologies. For a useful summary of research on women during World War II see Dufurat, »Stan badań nad dziejami kobiet w Polsce.« For a volume rooted in gender studies see Röger and Leiserowitz, *Women and Men at War*.

5 The Ursuline Order dates back to the seventeenth century and its various forms continue to be relatively well represented around the world. In Poland, apart from the Ursulines of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus, there is another branch of the order, namely the Ursulines of the Roman Union, popularly known as the Black Ursulines. The two separate organizations share a focus on childcare and education.

Grey Ursulines had fifteen houses in the Reichsgau Wartheland or Warthegau), or in the former Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland, which was seized by the Soviets in accordance with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1939 (the Grey Ursulines had twelve communities there).

The nuns' wartime chronicles would have provided valuable historical source material, but records were either not kept at all or destroyed in the war. Shortly after Germany's capitulation, however, the Grey Ursulines' Superior General took an important step: she asked the sisters to record their wartime experiences, thus reconstructing the history of their communities. Thanks to this we now have at our disposal memoirs that provide insight not only into the lives of the Grey Ursulines' everyday life in 1945, but also into their local communities, for a strong bond with their social environment is a characteristic feature of their order. These materials constitute the principle source for the present article.

The reference to the (un)ending war in the title needs clarification. Even if Germany's unconditional surrender on May 8, 1945, entered history textbooks as the official date of the end of the war, in reality people had different experiences: for some the war ended when the front moved west, while for others the end came many years later, following armed struggle against the Soviet occupation – a struggle that mostly resulted in death or a long sentence to be served in the harsh conditions of a Soviet prison.

The chronological framework of this article is basically limited to 1945, which means it concerns the territory within Poland's post-Yalta borders. Only two of the Grey Ursulines' pre-war eastern institutions survived in Vilnius and the nearby village of Czarny Bór. These communities were resettled in late 1945 and early 1946.

In this article I propose to explore only a few themes: the danger resulting from the Ursulines' inevitable encounter with retreating German soldiers and with the Red Army occupying Polish lands, the sisters' dilemma related to maintaining a Christian attitude towards wounded enemies, and finally their need to quickly re-organize in order to pursue their religious vocation and to serve the local community. The nuns confronted these situations while the communists were assuming power in Poland and conflicts with the new authorities were beginning to emerge.

The (un)ending war

In the Grey Ursulines' memoirs, a change in atmosphere becomes noticeable the moment they learned that the front was approaching. Anticipating the end of the war, they considered ways to effect a speedy return to normality. After the war, the sisters in Sieradz reconstructed their monastery chronicle on the basis of short notes recorded daily on the pages of a calendar. The entry for January 1, 1945, expresses a sense of hopefulness for rapid change:

In the name of God, we entered the year 1945 with trepidation, but also with great faith that God would not abandon us and that He would have mercy on this tormented world.⁶

The optimism with which the sisters wanted to enter the new year was already hampered by the growing certainty that Poland would be liberated by the Red Army rather than the Western Allies. For Poles familiar with the terror in post-revolutionary Russia – and some of the Ursulines had had this kind of personal experience – this implied difficulties related to the imposition of communism and state atheism. This worry can be read between the lines in the subsequent passage of the same entry:

We do not know what awaits us, but whatever may happen, we must accept it as the will of God. We must be prepared, for conditions will not be easier, and perhaps they will be even harder, therefore we must pray even now that we may be able to accept everything that God may send down upon us. We are told to pray ardently for one another that we may always remain faithful to Christ and to our monastic calling.⁷

The monastic chronicle kept by the Ursulines at Sieradz also contains an account of the celebrations of Germany's surrender on May 8, 1945:

All the townspeople of Sieradz rejoiced upon hearing the news that Germany had surrendered. As a sign of victory, the Polish flag, red and white, was hung from almost every house. Father Apolinary

6 Jaskulanka, *Kronika okupacyjna klasztoru sióstr urszulanek w Sieradzu*, 340.

7 Ibid.

Leśniewski said a festive Holy Mass on the town square, giving thanks for the end of the war. All of us attended.⁸

The Ursuline Sisters in Zakopane, evicted when the Germans seized their house in 1943, had relied on the hospitality of the Bernardines in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. A sense of optimism giving way to fear of Soviet totalitarianism is felt in their memoirs:

So to support our children we worked with redoubled energy at the Calvary. [...] At Christmas [1944] a crowd of people sat at the dinner table, more than in previous years, because apart from sisters and children, there was also a large group of our charges from the [Warsaw] Uprising. The ritual of breaking the wafer, when we wished each other that the war might end soon and that we might see a better tomorrow for Poland, was very moving. A Midnight Mass was celebrated in the Church of the Crucifixion. [...] We parted in good spirits and with confident hope that next Christmas our country would be free of our enemy. Little did we know that we would soon get rid of one enemy only to find ourselves ruled by another ...⁹

Meanwhile, on January 17, 1945, the Grey Ursulines in Sieradz witnessed the Germans rushing westwards, fleeing from the approaching front:

Soon a long line of cars and mounted guns formed on the roads, everything moving westwards. The German army is escaping from the Piotrków area. German civilians are also leaving, head over heels, on wagons and with their belongings. They kept going like this for several days, the line growing ever denser and moving ever faster. It is the same picture as in September 1939. Only the direction and the subject of the escape had changed [...].

There is also a feverish commotion at the hospital. Passing units are often very eager to leave their wounded companions in Sieradz. Our doctors explain in vain that there is no room here anymore. Sometimes they just put down a seriously ill soldier on stretchers and quickly jump back into their cars. There were many such incidents. A few civilian Germans with wagons stopped for a night in our yard

8 Ibid., 362.

9 Archives of the Ursulines: Chrostek, *Przeżycia wojenne domu zakopiańskiego 1939-1945*.

at Toruńska Street. They boiled some water for their supper and to take on their journey.¹⁰

To serve all

The war confronted Christians with the dramatic problem of praying for their enemies. A heroic deed that is hard to imagine – but that was at the same time a condition of spiritual healing – was to say the words from the Lord's Prayer: »Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.« The Church saw its role in the practical restoration of values such as love, friendship, human virtue, trust and simple decency. As the front passed, parishes and religious communities immediately resumed their regular pastoral, educational and charitable work. They provided help to those in need, whatever their worldview or religion may be, but their altruistic activities were clearly related to their mission of evangelization, whether that was carried out in an inadvertent or organized manner.

The Grey Ursulines also faced such challenges almost every day, for their internalized duty was to put themselves at the disposal of all people in need, despite the division into ›us‹ and ›our enemies‹ imposed by the war. This is apparent in descriptions of the situation in Sieradz at the end of January 1945:

22/01 [...] we were told that there were eighty wounded German soldiers in the building of the boys' primary school, left without care and hungry. Sisters Ludwika Miedzwiecka and Paulina Jaskulanka picked up some food and three cans of coffee and went to the school. Rysiek Przybylski, our long-time minister, also went along. The wounded Germans were lying in several classrooms, completely left to their fate. When we spoke to them in German, they started to question us anxiously about the position of the Russian army. We told them we did not know. We gave them coffee and bread, and after a few hours we came to feed them once more. What did they make of this gesture of mercy, which Hitler had ordered to be exterminated in human souls as an unnecessary weakness? The last time they ever encountered mercy was when it was shown to them. For the following day, when Russian soldiers entered the rooms, the in-

10 Jaskulanka, *Kronika okupacyjna klasztoru siostr urszulanek w Sieradzu*, 342.

jured Germans tried to throw grenades and all of them, to the last man, were shot dead.¹¹

Another description of the situation in Sieradz suggests an even stronger image of the sisters were reconciled with the wounded:

27/01 [...] we are working intensely at the hospital, caring for Polish civilians who were injured in the last bombardment. Wounded German soldiers, left behind by the retreated army, are also there, as well as wounded Russians. The halls and corridors are so densely packed with patients that it is difficult to serve meals. Our sisters are doing their best to help those who suffer, despite the prevailing chaos. Disregarding their own fatigue they sometimes work at the hospital for several days before returning home.¹²

Unsurprisingly, the Grey Ursulines' notes contain no attempts to relativize the atrocities committed during the war, or to blur the boundary between perpetrators and victims. Similarly, they do not address their own motivation. They seem to feel an unquestioned obligation to perceive their enemies as humans and to be merciful towards them, in tune with their own choice of Christian values. This choice was additionally reinforced by their daily spiritual and practical education within the religious community. It is also worth bearing in mind that this community was relatively young and enthusiastic about realizing the ideal proposed by the recently deceased charismatic founder and the sisters from the founding generation who were still alive.

Danger from the Red Army

Among the victims of the war were the nuns killed by Soviet soldiers between 1944 and 1945. The Red Army's victorious westward march through Polish lands involved killings, rapes and robberies on a massive scale, which was a taboo subject in historical research for many years.¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 345.

¹² Ibid., 347-348.

¹³ Of the few studies on the subject most focus on the Sisters of Saint Elizabeth who were raped and murdered in 1945. Materials on their fate have been collected with a view to a possible beatification process. For a detailed account in a wider context see Hanich, *Czas przełomu*. The French film *Innocentes* (dir. A. Fontaine, 2016) is inconsistent with historical realities, despite

The Grey Ursulines fortunately escaped rape and death at the hands of Soviet soldiers, but the memoirs they wrote after the war indicate that the danger was imminent. The situation was most threatening in Lipnica near the town of Szamotuły in Greater Poland Voivodeship. First the German convent manager and her family escaped with several carts of goods stolen from the community, then the sisters were seriously threatened by drunk and arrogant soldiers:

On Thursday, January 25th [1945] [...] waiting for the Bolsheviks, we prepared a shelter in the cellar in front of the cloister in case there would be armed struggle, which people still talked about. At four o'clock, during afternoon tea, shooting started. Thinking it was a regular fight at a crossroads, we went to the basement as fast as we could. The last one of us had not yet managed to enter when a swarm of grey and awkwardly bowed figures with rifles in their hands came rushing towards us from all sides of the garden. We came out the cellar. The Bolsheviks were stupefied at the sight of so many women, and we, too, were stupefied, but less so.

»You Germans?«

»We are Polish.«

Having obtained the necessary details, the Bolsheviks entered the palace, took up quarters around the house, and some of them threw themselves into the cloister. [...] The following morning, after the Bolsheviks had left the palace, we could not believe our eyes. The rooms had turned into some awful, unbelievable pigsties. Torn mattresses with disgusting stains lay on the floor, there were broken chair legs, overturned wardrobes (they had served as beds), equipment locks were broken and knocked out, the mirrors were shattered, the furniture mauled and the upholstery torn off, the curtains were torn to shreds with bits of fabric hanging off where they had cut them to make footwraps; we found traces of a bonfire on the large oak table; leftover meat, cucumbers, bones all over the place ... – everything trampled upon and defiled with barbarian passion.¹⁴

Some of the Ursulines had already experienced the devastation that came with the Bolshevik troops passing through the Eastern Border-

the convincing post-war set-up. See my article »W Polsce, czyli nigdzie. Po obejrzeniu *Niewinnych*.«

14 Archives of the Ursulines: Troczewska and Guttner, *Lipnica 1939-1945*.

lands of the Republic of Poland, others had heard stories from relatives or fellow sisters. The memory of 1920, when the Bolshevik army had passed through Polish lands to the east of Warsaw, was still relatively fresh. The barbaric destruction of cultural objects, which the sisters had always been taught to treat with respect, was shocking to them and must have made them feel helpless and vulnerable. That said, in the fifth year of the war the sense of mortal danger was nothing new, and they must have felt fortified knowing they belonged to a community. The sisters trusted their Superior, who had demonstrated her courage and persuasive talents many times dealing with the Germans. There were also Russian-speaking sisters in the community:

However, we had no time to do much thinking on this first day of our acquaintance with the »comrades,« whose savage appearance and primitive behaviour simply aroused fear and stupor. The Reverend Mother and Sister Troczewska went to see the senior officers to get a better idea of the situation. The officers [...] were lying sprawled in deep armchairs and had already started to drink and eat. Before they got drunk, however, the sisters talked to their most senior officer, a Jew. He assured us that they would do us no harm and that we need not fear. Returning from the palace to the cloister a moment later, however, the sisters could see for themselves how safe we were. The kitchen was already swarming with Russian soldiers, the cloister was flooded with our drunken Bolshevik guests, all roaring and clamouring for »girls«. We kept telling them that we were nuns but it was no use, they crept into to all the sisters' bedrooms and insisted that they would not sleep in the palace but in the cloister with us. [...]

The kitchen was boiling hot. Throughout the night, we peeled potatoes, tub after tub, aided by tipsy cooks, to prepare dinner, and there would be 300 or more comrades for breakfast the next morning. The kitchen was so crowded that it was impossible to turn around, and ever new and ever wilder Asian types kept squeezing in. The atmosphere was becoming more and more threatening. The Reverend Mother sent Sister Troczewska to the officer for help. The soldier on duty went in, but he returned with the news that the senior officers were all drunk and giving no sign of life. We had to defend ourselves. One by one we fled from the kitchen, where both the intoxicated cooks and the whole company of drunks were dancing and doing the Cossack »squats« to the howling of songs and the sounds of the organ. We locked ourselves into the refectory and the bedrooms, with-

out undressing of course, and we prayed, rosary after rosary, calling on the help of our dear mother, *Matuchna*.¹⁵

This went on night after night, day after day. For three weeks these wild beasts kept us in a state of constant tension, horror and disgust. There was nobody to defend us. Crowded impossibility tight in the cloister, we counted on God's protection only. Meanwhile, all around us, right next door, in the village, in every settlement, one terrible orgy of rape was taking place, with no way to escape the brutal violence; parents trying to defend their daughters were killed. Our salvation was one great miracle, another great sign that *Matuchna* is watching over us.

There was no place where those Russian savages did not enter; they kept stumbling through the courtyard – this is where the distillery was – and through the palace and cloister, shooting at us and knocking out the window panes.¹⁶

The emotional language of the last two paragraphs of the above quotation indicates that the sisters' experience was marked by great fear, which was, however, kept in check by their faith in the supernatural protection of the holy (as they believed) founder of their order. On 25 January the sisters in Sieradz witnessed acts of looting and vandalism:

It was a unit of Russian troops. The sisters came at once with the news that soldiers were looking for something in the yard. They [...] took away some parts of our wagons. Grenades were exploding in the street and we heard the shooting coming closer. We retreated into the house. Meanwhile, the soldiers started to look for passages into the ambulatory and the shelter. They were cracking the locks and breaking the doors open. We stood there in silence, helpless and very concerned about what else they might do. [...]

Meanwhile, the Soviet soldiers had gained access to the cloister garth and we heard shooting and grenade explosions everywhere. [...] The Russian soldiers called to us to come out to them. We begged them to let us take the wounded to the hospital. But they, as if not hearing us, kept storming into the monastery with bayonets, shout-

15 *Matuchna*, loosely translatable as »dear mother« (T.B.), is how the first generation of Grey Ursulines called the founder of the congregation, Urszula Ledóchowska. They also believed her to be a saint.

16 Archives of the Ursulines: Troczewska and Guttner, *Lipnica 1939-1945*.

ing »where are the Germans«. They would not believe us when we promised that there were none and kept pacing around the cloisters, cellars, the garth and shelters. There were terrible screams and people were calling out everywhere. The sisters were trembling with fear and praying ardently [...].

Well after midnight an officer arrived with provisions for the soldiers, which liberated us from this nocturnal assault. At the request of the Reverend Mother he accompanied the sisters transporting the wounded to the hospital, and he also escorted them back, since the road was so dangerous then. He was sorry that such an incident had taken place, and right after they had entered Sieradz. But the next day the soldiers turned up again at the monastery, looking for property left by the Germans! Eventually this division left ...¹⁷

The Russians entered the town of Pniewy in the Greater Poland Voivodeship on January 25, advancing on the heels of the retreating Germans. The German manager of the monastery estate, a noblewoman who had been taking advantage of the sisters as free labour, had just escaped with anything she could take away from the monastery, including the horses. This is how the Ursulines describe the Soviet's arrival:

The first Russians came to us on a tank – black with grime, filthy and exhausted. We fed them in the kitchen, then they spread out on the benches and slept for a long time. They were generally distrustful, nervous about the presence of Germans. They occupied the school [the Ursulines' pre-war school building] and set up a temporary hospital for wounded and sick prisoners of war. From there, they also sent orders and messages to other positions.¹⁸

The Ursulines' records also describe cases of successful negotiations with Red Army officers who tried to discipline their soldiers and prevent them from plundering the sisters' property. This was the case, for instance, in Pniewy, where the German estate manager von Massenbach had appropriated the horses. This story had an unexpected epilogue:

17 Jaskulanka, *Kronika okupacyjna klasztoru sióstr urszulanek w Sieradzu*, 346-347.

18 Archives of the Ursulines: Puczyłowska, *Wspomnienia z czasów okupacji, Pniewy 1939-1945*.

In late spring, when the meadow was already green, a convoy escorted by soldiers stopped at our place. When the bell called for the Angelus, one of the horses on the meadow, though emaciated, neighed joyfully. Hearing this neigh, the sisters recognized our Dama and asked the soldiers to return this horse to us, which they had apparently confiscated from the Massenbachs in the Reich. The Russian officer was somewhat reluctant and doubted whether it was really our property, but he agreed to let her into the stable after we told him what box she used to have. Dama instantly ran in and stood in her usual place. We negotiated an exchange for two other horses that had been abandoned by people passing through and thus we regained our faithful Dama.¹⁹

Despite their fear, the Grey Ursulines, some of whom also spoke Russian, sometimes managed to come to an agreement with the Russian soldiers, as in Monice near Sieradz:

26/02 [...] the Russians admired the sisters' hard work and said they were sorry for their toil. They also could not understand why the sisters were silent or praying while going about various tasks in the garden. Sister Rotter explained to the soldiers that praying, working and helping people in need was an essential part of our religious life, that we use the fruits of our labour not only for ourselves also share it with others. Unfortunately, the soldiers could not grasp the idea of religious vocation, but they were still very interested in religious issues. They kept asking Sister Rotter to tell them about God. One of them told the sisters that he had never heard of God since his pious mother died when he was four years old.²⁰

These descriptions suggest that the Ursulines gained some satisfaction from their ability not only to ensure their own safety, but also to inspire interest in their lives and religious motivation in the Soviet soldiers. Such effects, which they achieved not so much through words but through their lived testimony, represent the evangelization mentioned above. Another effect was that the fearsome Soviet soldiers were roused to positive reflexes. As the following passages in the memoir indicate, they sometimes inquired whether the sisters were hungry or if they needed any food products.

19 Ibid.

20 Jaskulanka, *Kronika okupacyjna klasztoru sióstr urszulanek w Sieradzu*, 354.

Physical and spiritual wounds begin to heal

The Grey Ursulines suffered painful personal losses, but fewer than other social groups or religious congregations. As the front moved westward, they began to reestablish contacts within the congregation and to rebuild connections between the individual communities. They welcomed with relief, even enthusiasm, the opportunity to discuss important matters concerning the congregation, its individual houses, the scope of tasks they were to undertake and the transfer of personnel. Sixty-nine Grey Ursulines returned from the German labour camp for nuns, the Nonnenlager Schmückert in Bojanów.²¹ Sisters also returned from forced labour within the Reich, as well as from exile to the east.²² The return to normality also meant that the religious education provided for by the ecclesiastical law could be continued, including the possibility for youngest sisters to begin a novitiate or to make religious vows, or, indeed, to complete their general education and vocational training. For the sisters who had survived the war in Warthegau, the moment when they were allowed to put on their religious habit again was a moving experience. In the General Government, nuns had been allowed to wear their tunics, but in the territories incorporated into the Reich habits were banned – first in public places only, then also in the nuns' own homes.

The great population movements – migrations, expulsions, deportations, displacements – in the years 1945-1948, which also resulted from the shifting of national borders, affected about 6.2 million Poles.²³ Nuns were involved in this process. In 1945, the Grey Ursulines were subject to similar migration processes as the rest of the population. They returned to their devastated and looted homes in the spring of 1945 and immediately started to clean up, rebuild, found educational and care institutions. The needs of Polish society were enormous.

21 A total of 615 sisters from 27 religious congregations passed through the camp, which operated from 1941 to 1945.

22 Another two Grey Ursulines, Sister Monika Alexandrowicz and Sister Imelda Tobolska, who the Soviets had arrested in 1941 in the Vilnius region and then taken via Starobielsk and Sverdlovsk to the »Stupino 2« camp, joined Anders' Army of Iran. From there they were sent to accompany Polish children to New Zealand in 1944. Cf. Alexandrowicz, *Z Lubcza na Antypody*.

23 According to some calculations, over 26.27% of Poland's total population changed their place of residence as a result of war and postwar migration. Cf. Sienkiewicz and Hryciuk, *Wysiedlenia, wypędzenia i ucieczki 1939-1959*, 21.

In September 1944 the Ursulines were displaced from the so-called Grey House in Warsaw's district of Powiśle, which was being pacified and set ablaze by the Germans during the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising. The nuns were first sent to the transit camp in Pruszków (*Durchgangslager* 121); 116 nuns from Warsaw and about forty women in their charge arrived, in several groups and along different roads, at the Ursulines' house in Milanówek. On January 20, 1945, only three days after the Germans had left the capital, the first sisters returned to the ruins of Warsaw to start bringing them back to life. There was a shortage of drinking water and electricity, and no sewage system. The walls of the Ursulines' house had been damaged by fire, but the solid, reinforced concrete building, which the congregation had built as a student dormitory in the early 1930s, had survived the war. In the night from 30 to 31 January 1945, two sisters tried to heat a room temporarily adapted as living quarters. They suffered gas poisoning and one of them died. Another sister died in the flames when she tried to start up a bakery. To obtain building materials and equipment bordered on the miraculous. Despite these difficulties, the house began to serve others within days after the sisters' return to Warsaw:

The house was visited by neighbours and travellers returning to their ruined homes. On the very first day we already had an opportunity to offer soup, coffee or a kind word to some forty people. Some of them stayed overnight [...].²⁴

In the nearby ruins a figure of the Virgin Mary, damaged by bullets, was found and brought to the sisters. Despite the extremely primitive conditions, women students took up quarters in the house within a few months, and at the same time the sisters continued with the hard work of renovating the building.

In the interwar period the Ursulines' Grey House had earned a good reputation across Warsaw. Now the sisters' dynamic efforts to reconstruct it were commented on in the press, which was not yet fully under the control of the communist regime. Several articles praised the Ursulines' house and its benefits to society both before and after the war. One journalist wrote with astonishment:

Not only do they cook several hundred meals a day for the poorest people of the devastated Powiśle district from the provisions of the

24 Czekanowska, »Wspomnienia z Powstania Warszawskiego«, 163.

Social Welfare Office, but they also run a boarding house for 80 university students while rebuilding their house themselves.

When the first group of Ursulines returned from exile after the war, their building in Powiśle had been devastated by fire and filled with rubble. Fortunately, the concrete floors had survived. The sisters immediately started to rebuild the house. They slept among the ashes in the basement and from the very earliest days they cooked meals for the poor while renovating the ruined building. Gradually more of their companions arrived. They cooked more and more meals. At the same time, the building was also growing as they added new floors. The sisters worked day and night. It was not uncommon to see them clean up rubble after dark. You could see about a dozen sisters, dressed in aprons and white caps, lifting buckets and carrying lime, you could hear the clinking of their trowels and the knocking of their hammers, day in, day out. Like workers. The sisters never complain about their work, although they almost never benefit from anyone's material assistance. They earn everything through their own efforts [...].²⁵

The nuns' energy flowed from their determination to bring the house back to life and from their sense of duty to share with others in solidarity. They had acquired skills in bricklaying and renovation works both before and during the war,²⁶ and they had experience organizing food products:

Our job was to clean up the rubble [...]. Every day we cooked an extra pot of soup and handed it out to our brothers and sisters, and there were always plenty of them. The soup was cooked mainly from salted common beans, which had survived the war in the deepest cellar. They could not last for much longer. So I started to look into resurrecting of the kitchen of the former Central Welfare Council [*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*, RGO], and by the end of February the kitchen of the Warsaw Social Welfare Committee [*Stołeczny*

25 (mb), »Zakonnice z kielniami, a obiadów i pięter w ruinach Powiśla coraz więcej«, *Wieczór*, September 26, 1947. Quoted in *Szary Dom w Warszawie*, 24.

26 In the early 1920s, the Grey Ursulines took over a former Dominican monastery in Sieradz and rebuilt the ruined thirteenth-century building on their own. Even in the interwar period the sisters had tried to save funds by carrying out repair and renovation works on their own wherever possible.

Komitet Opieki Społecznej, SKOS] officially opened, which by the end of April already produced about 500 meals a day.²⁷

At the same time, the Ursulines had to exhume and bury the charred corpses of four sisters whom the Germans had killed by the wall of the Warsaw University campus when the sisters, on duty as hospital wardens, were on patrol on the first day of the Warsaw Uprising, August 1, 1944.

While rebuilding the house little by little, in December 1945 the sisters officially reactivated the university hostel, which constantly grew from then on. It provided not only shelter and food, but also offered a unique atmosphere conducive to intellectual and spiritual development. The house chapel once more became a place of retreat for children, young people and adults.

The monastery chronicle contains a description of the first postwar Christmas Eve for the poor on December 23, 1945, when the Ursulines' house in Warsaw's Powiśle district was still in ruins:

A mad commotion since the early morning. [...] In the big old chapel – now cleaned out – there is a Christmas tree so tall it reaches the ceiling, beautifully dressed; we baked whole stacks of Christmas loafs, and there are baskets upon baskets of parcels. Our students, the dear young ladies, saw how much work we had with those parcels, and so, telling no one, they sneaked into the kitchen during our evening prayer and before Sister Werle came back they had finished about half of the packages. And what bounty we were able to wrap up (thanks to the US charity UNRRA, which is already in operation)! Gingerbread, candies, sweet bread, poppy seed cake, some soup powder, fat and soap. At eleven o'clock we started to let people into the chapel hall. The candles on the Christmas tree were already lit ... we had even managed to find sparklers. Of course, the children went straight to the tree and walked around it looking for gingerbread toys and various other pretty things and treats. The older people mostly wept, because their homes were empty and cold, often they were far from their loved ones, or completely alone in the world.

[...] we started singing carols, all the people sang along and over Christmas lunch a harmonious choir carolled away joyfully. The meal consisted of three courses: Polish borscht with pasties, bigos and plum compote. Everyone was so overwhelmed that they lost

27 Czekanowska, »Wspomnienia z Powstania Warszawskiego«, 164.

themselves completely in their little pots. Thank God, there was plenty of everything, no one went home hungry [...].²⁸

In 1947, the Ursulines opened a kindergarten for 70 children in their house, and between 1948 and 1951 they ran a day-care centre for school children. Their kitchen, integrated into the Warsaw Social Welfare Committee, provided for about 700 people from 1945 until 1949.

Migration and resettlement

The Ursuline community from the house at Tamka Street in Warsaw faced a longer odyssey in late 1944 and 1945.²⁹ The German occupiers expelled them at the beginning of September 1944, after the pacification of the Uprising in Powiśle. The nuns and the children from their educational institution reached Zakopane via Ożarów Mazowiecki. From there, still in the company of their young charges, they returned to Warsaw in the spring of 1945, then temporarily stayed in Radość near Warsaw before settling in the nearby suburb of Chylice.³⁰ The above-mentioned Ursulines from Zakopane, whom the Germans had evicted in 1943, had survived the war in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. They and their wards were now able to return to their vacant house in Zakopane. Their main immediate task was to run a children's home for boys aged 5-15 (until the communists nationalized the orphanage in 1950).

The Ursulines from the Łódź region, who had escaped through the so-called green border to the General Government to avoid deportation to the German labour camp for nuns in Bojanów, began to return to their homes as early as January and February 1945. They had first been taken in by the sisters in Warsaw, although their house was already bursting at the seams. But they quickly organized themselves and in 1942 they opened a house in Milanówek near Warsaw. After the Warsaw Uprising they were able to accommodate the sisters from Warsaw after the German occupants had sent them to the transit camp in Pruszków. The Ursuline sisters and the children in their care who had been displaced from the Warthegau in 1940 had

28 Quoted in *Szary Dom w Warszawie*, 25.

29 Archives of the Ursulines: *Szczepańska, Dom Serca Jezusowego Sióstr Urszulanek SJK w Warszawie*.

30 The Community leased a house and 1.2 ha of land with utility buildings in Chylice from the owners of the property, H. Pietruszewicz and T. Jacobson.

settled temporarily in the vicinity of Warsaw. Soon after the war, however, they started to return to the Greater Poland Voivodeship.³¹ The shifting of the Poland's eastern border meant that religious communities had to permanently shut down many of their houses and institutions in the former Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland. Women's religious congregations lost about 400 monasteries and institutions, such as orphanages, hospitals and nursing homes. In the case of some religious orders these represented almost everything they had managed to build over centuries.³² At the same time, valuable archives were lost forever, which is why it is difficult now to reconstruct the history of the monasteries in those regions.³³

The Grey Ursulines, too, lost all their posts in the Borderlands. The last expatriates from the Polesia and Vilnius regions arrived in Warsaw in late 1945 and early 1946. Knowing they would get support from their sister communities they must have felt safer than other displaced people (whom the propaganda apparatus labelled ›repatriates‹). Still, the emotional complexity in their accounts suggests how other people must have felt when they were forced to abandon their *mała ojczyzna* or ›little homeland‹.³⁴ One sister's description of her departure from the Vilnius region in December 1945 is a case in point:

31 On the Ursulines' houses of Greater Poland after the war, see my article ›Polityka władzy komunistycznej wobec Zgromadzenia Sióstr Urszulanek SJK na terenie Wielkopolski.‹

32 For instance, the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary lost 108 out of 160 religious institutions. Cf. Frącek, ›Rodzina Maryi‹, 69.

33 Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją, 1939-1945*. Lewandowska discusses the displacement of religious communities to post-Yalta Poland based on the case of a non-habitual congregation in *Działalność sióstr od aniołów w Polsce w latach 1945-1980*.

34 On the subject of postwar emotions in various social groups see Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944-1947*. With regard to the Church, however, Zaremba's arguments are at least superficial and debatable. The core statement is brilliant but not supported by convincing specifics: ›Keeping in mind the fate of Christian churches in the USSR, after the war it [the Polish Church] was a carrier of fear opposing the ›offensive of godlessness‹ rather than a collective psychotherapist who would reduce the nation's tensions and anxieties. To speak metaphorically, one could say that in terms of organization and institutions, post-war Poland looked like Cologne after the Allied air raids. A sea of rubble all around and an almost untouched cathedral in the middle.‹ *Ibid.*, 102.

It is difficult to describe our feelings at that time; sadness and joy intertwined. After all, we are leaving our home, where we have experienced so many difficult moments, where every corner brings back so many memories, and besides this, too, is our Polish land, for which especially in the last few years so many heroes have sacrificed their lives, which has been soaked with the blood of enthusiastic young men, which her faithful sons have guarded keenly for centuries. And now we are leaving it as if voluntarily, though we are indeed forced by the local authorities. And there is a desire to stay here as long as a single Polish heart continues to beat. On the other hand, we feel an immeasurable joy that we will no longer be so cut off from the rest of the Congregation.³⁵

Before them was a long and arduous journey. For seventeen days they would travel on freight trains, while the temperature was ten to twenty degrees below zero. Before that, they had to pack up their belongings, obtain travel documents, arrange for transport and pass through various searches and inspections. Here it was obvious to all that only bribes could effectively and quickly eliminate arbitrary hurdles. To make matters more difficult, one exiled sister arrived in Vilnius too late for repatriation documents to be arranged, and so she had to travel illegally.³⁶ The Ursulines hid her behind their luggage in the wagon. Despite several searches, the sisters also managed to smuggle several Home Army soldiers across the border – men who had no chance to enter Poland legally, as the Soviet authorities were searching for them.³⁷

35 Rauszer, »Ostatnia nasza wspólna podróż z Wilna do Warszawy«, 104. The sisters arrived in Warsaw on December 27, 1945. Rauszer wrote down her memoirs over the course of the following weeks (she finished on April 21, 1946).

36 Sister Z. Kuczyńska describes the arrest, deportation to Russia and further wartime adventures in her memoirs, *Przez wojenną zamięć*.

37 During the Second World War the Grey Ursulines belonged to and cooperated with the Home Army, but this subject has not yet been examined in detail. They were also involved in the activities of the Women's Army Services, whose head, Maria Wittek, had her staff office in the sisters' house in Warsaw's Powiśle district.

In the so-called »Recovered Territories«

Soon after the war, women's religious congregations began to open centres in the so-called »Recovered Territories«. They were not only looking for new places to live and to serve people, but also to follow the Episcopate's instructions to contribute to the religious development of the Western and Northern Territories.³⁸ The premises allocated to religious communities were rarely suitable for immediate use. Usually they had been damaged or devastated during the war. To become functional they required not just an investment of energy but also of financial resources, which proved more difficult. After the renovation, which the sisters often did unaided, the houses and chapels also had to be furnished. Nevertheless, wherever the sisters arrived, they quickly organized themselves. Within about one or two weeks they would be at work, renovating and furnishing the rooms they had received, at the same time acquainting themselves with the needs of the local community. They opened shelters for children, set up nursing centres, distributed food and so on. During the war, young women had been unable to enter or complete their regular initial religious education. Now they were able to join the sisters. The rise in religious vocations in the months immediately after the war years was conducive to the sisters' energetic activities.³⁹

It was in such pioneering conditions that the Grey Ursulines' house in Słupsk in Central Pomerania was established in September 1945. The sisters arrived in the city on September 19, and within a few days women – often single expatriates and widows – began to ask them to take care of their children so that they could take up full-time work. Within two weeks, the number of children had risen to 25 and raising funds to support them had become a problem:

Having no funds at all, we applied to the National Council for a subsidy. The children's subsidy was granted, but for as long as we

38 I discuss women's religious communities in the Gorzów administration after 1945 in two articles: »Żeńskie wspólnoty zakonne na Środkowym Nadodrzu« as well as »Odradzanie się żeńskich wspólnot zakonnych na terenach obecnej diecezji koszalińsko-kołobrzeskiej.«

39 The statistics kept at the Archive of the Department of Monastic Affairs of the Polish Primate's Secretariat indicate that the number of sisters completing their noviciates and making their first religious vows in post-war Poland increased from year to year: from 326 in 1945 to 874 in 1951.

worked at that home the sisters caring for the children were paid nothing.⁴⁰

This is how the city's only orphanage was established. Unsurprisingly, it aroused the local authorities' positive interest:

We were often visited by someone from the school authorities who wanted to see for themselves that a children's home really existed. In general, the school authorities were kind to us at the time, and the National Council offered several large buildings for us to live in. They wanted to safeguard those houses against looting.⁴¹

In December 1945, the National Council lent the Ursulines a large house in which they could run an educational facility for 60 children. The institution had to be set up from scratch, including furnishings, bedding, sets of clothes for the children, etc. The demand for orphanages was huge after the war and made it necessary to take in babies as well as older boys who had been living in the streets. Young children were placed for adoption, and plenty of families were willing to take in a child.

The local press took note of the sisters' energetic activity, writing for example: »In Exchange for a Fattened Pig the Children Will Have a Cow«. ⁴² The story was that a piglet donated by Russian soldiers had been fattened to a considerable size and sold, along with the bacon allocated for the children, in order for the orphanage to purchase a cow that would produce milk for the children.

When primary and secondary schools in Słupsk reopened in September 1945, the teachers turned to the Ursulines asking if they may be served lunch in the monastery. This marked the beginning of a canteen that provided meals for 30 people at first. Then the number of users increased, even though the sisters had to buy products, which – especially in the autumn of 1945 – was unimaginably difficult. The front had passed through the region in the spring, which is why the fields had been left untended and neither potatoes nor vegetables had been planted. As for meat, only low-quality offal was available. As one of the Ursulines notes in her memoirs, afterwards the sister in charge of

⁴⁰ Archives of the Ursulines: Miedzwiecka, *Wspomnienia siostr urszulanek pracujących w Słupsku*.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

provisions »wondered herself how she had managed to feed an ever-increasing number of people«.43

Life as a mission to help others

Given the urgent needs of the people affected by war, the Grey Ursulines did not focus on their own problems. The wounds caused by traumatic war experiences healed better thanks to religious and community support. The choice of this lifestyle, combined with regular spiritual training, meant that the sisters were able to shift the focus away from their individual difficulties and concentrate instead on helping the local community.

Religious practices were an obvious source of strength and courage, not only for the nuns. People followed their natural instincts and huddled around the sisters, finding it easier to feel safe in their presence. Various sources suggest that in the postwar era religious practices intensified, especially in areas that had been incorporated into the Reich during the war. Here religious worship was subject to the most severe restrictions, and churches were converted into warehouses or used for other non-religious purposes. One case in point is Sieradz, where the townspeople willingly joined in the restoration of the church at the Ursuline monastery in the spring of 1945. On May 8, the day of Germany's unconditional capitulation, the sisters initiated a thorough cleaning of their church:

Almost all the sisters joined in this work, and a lot of people from the city volunteered to help. Water was heated in the laundry and kitchen to scrub the floors, to wash windows and to clean the altars and doors. Young boys wiped the dust off the upper parts of the altars as well as the wall paintings and cornices. The Municipal Fire Service lent us their ladders so the boys were able to reach so high. The following day they washed all windows inside and outside.⁴⁴

The next day, people »started to bring armfuls of flowers to decorate the church« and when the nuns ran out of vases, »the good towns-

43 Ibid.

44 Jaskulanka, *Kronika okupacyjna klasztoru sióstr urszulanek w Sieradzu*, 362.

people helped out again, bringing their own vases to the church«.45 A few days later, on May 13:

Before Mass, Father Apolinary Leśniewski performed the rite of reparation at the monastery church,⁴⁶ followed by a Solemn Mass during which we saw that many people were eager to receive the sacrament of Penance. All the priests who had come to attend the indulgence kept hearing confessions, because so many people wanted to be reconciled with God.⁴⁷

Wherever they went, in 1945 the Grey Ursulines encountered tragic stories and poverty. This is why they felt an even stronger urge to share and to help reconstruct community life on various levels, for instance by supporting local communities in their self-organization. As early as January 23, when a small Russian unit was seen approaching Sieradz, the sisters and townspeople became active:

A citizens' committee was set up in the city to create some order. The young people served as patrols. We were asked to prepare a house in front of the monastery. It accommodates people returning from Germany and former prisoners released from other cities. The people who had been hiding in our shelter have now returned to their homes, and we have started to tidy it up.⁴⁸

The large number of Poles returning from German camps or forced labor camps meant there was a great need for free meals. The Ursulines in Sieradz took on this task at the end of January 1945:

30/01 [...] Crowds of people heading home keep arriving at the monastery. We must take care of them, feed them and put them up for the night. No one in the city was keen to start any service work, no shops or eating places were open. In any case, currency was not yet in circulation. We had to obtain food for the travellers and the sick in the hospital. The sisters undertook this task. They asked the

45 Ibid.

46 A rite of re-dedicating a church, most often after it was desecrated or turned over to profane use.

47 Jaskulanka, *Kronika okupacyjna klasztoru sióstr urszulanek w Sieradzu*, 362-363.

48 Ibid., 345.

Russian authorities to allow us to remove certain articles from the stocks left behind by the Germans. We were the only ones in the city who volunteered for this hard work of salvaging food, clothes and wound care products from looting. However, there was little of it left.⁴⁹

Soon the Ursulines in Sieradz were persuaded to cooperate with social care. On February 2, a meeting was held at the monastery to discuss the issue of catering for the Poles returning from camps, displacements and forced labour in Germany. The nuns volunteered to provide meals from their own stores. Within two or three months, they handed out over 40 thousand meals. In addition, they gave some people blankets and bed linen they had salvaged from German warehouses. Ursuline houses in rural areas usually had a garden or field at their disposal. As soon as the front had passed, the sisters started to tidy up their farms and to offer neighbourly assistance:

28/02 [...] In Męka the sisters lent our horses to various farmers, so they could work their fields after their own horses had been seized by Soviet troops chasing the Germans.⁵⁰

Rarely did the Ursulines receive any help, but in Sieradz several German prisoners of war were assigned to them for a short time. They willingly came to work in the monastery garden and to fill in the anti-tank trenches there, as with the permission of their guard they received a meal every day.⁵¹

Early conflicts with the new authorities

The suppression of religion was integral to the agenda of the new system being installed in Poland. For pragmatic reasons, however, the communists were neither willing nor able to confront the Church immediately. Having to prioritize suppressing the political opposition and the mass anticommunist uprising, they postponed dealing with the Church for about three years. Initially, the new government had a neutral or even positive attitude, especially towards the nuns. The

49 Ibid., 348.

50 Ibid., 355.

51 Ibid.

authorities counted on their engagement, which was key to rebuilding the country. The nuns had experience in areas such as health care as well as the management of social and educational institutions. The Grey Ursulines faced these expectations:

01/02 [1945]. We were visited by a government delegate, Jan Kościelski. He is in charge of organizing schooling for children and youth in the whole district of Sieradz. He asked us to provide meals for the teachers who were unable to run their own household. Since then, some fifteen people employed in education have been coming to us for lunch every day.⁵²

Nonetheless, in the spring of 1945 the nuns began to experience their first unpleasant clashes with the new authorities – the timing and intensity depended on the zeal of the local officials in charge of the local administration. First, problems arose in matters of education. Although there was a lack of qualified teaching staff, some Ursulines who had appropriate qualifications and experience were denied teaching positions in schools. They were only offered posts as instructors in religious education. What is more, the reactivation of the Ursulines own private schools became an issue as the authorities withdrew their licences.

Unable to find employment in schools, the Ursulines compensated their income by offering individual or group lessons preparing pupils for secondary school. Young people had to make up for time lost during the occupation. At the same time, in 1945 the sisters managed to get legal recognition for the diplomas which their students had obtained in underground education. During the war they had conducted secret lessons in eight centres across the General Government, mainly in and around Warsaw, at the level of general or primary schools, general secondary schools and secondary pedagogical schools. This allowed their students to obtain official school certificates, signed by the school superintendent's office, while secondary school graduates had access to higher education. While the Grey Ursulines efficiently went about rebuilding their house in Warsaw, they also had to deal with the new authorities' increasingly hostile attitude towards the Church. On June 12, 1945 the sisters noted in the house chronicle: »We are still unable to obtain a permit for the

⁵² Ibid., 351.

legal renovation of our house.«⁵³ They took a risk and continued to renovate without permission. All construction and renovation works had to be coordinated with the Bureau for the Reconstruction of the Capital (*Biurow Odbudowy Stolicy*, BOS), but this institution's general reconstruction plan did not foresee the Ursulines' Grey House. An extension of the Saxon Axis was planned in its place. The BOS encouraged the Ursulines to accept a »voluntary resettlement« to one of the old town houses the neighborhood. Until the early 1950s the sisters continued to appeal against the BOS's successive refusals to legalize the reconstruction of their house. In August 1954, the communists seized a part of the house, or »nationalized« it, according to official terminology. At the same time, the Ministry of Education informed the sisters that they would not be allowed to run a secondary school focused on teacher training, since the education system did not provide for religious schools.

In the spring of 1945 it was immensely difficult to create even basic living conditions for children, and yet kindergartens were set up with astonishing efficiency, as childcare always involved feeding programmes. The Ursulines, too, immediately established such institutions, e.g. in Sieradz on February 10, 1945. Kindergartens run by monasteries could count on some help from the Caritas, an international charity run by the Catholic Church and operating under the auspices of the episcopate. The Polish Caritas was reconstructed quickly in 1945 and its network covered almost all parishes. Its national headquarters in Krakow were established by a decree of Adam Stefan Sapieha, Archbishop of Krakow, on August 25, 1945. The Caritas ran hundreds of kindergartens after the war, as well as outpatient clinics and canteens for the poor. It also organized holidays for tens of thousands of children, offering summer camps away as well as day camps. The situation changed drastically in January 1950, when the administrative structures and property, and even the very name of the organization, were taken over by the Communist Union of Catholics »Caritas«.⁵⁴

53 Quoted in *Szary Dom w Warszawie*, 20.

54 Cf. Zamiatała, *Caritas. Działalność i likwidacja organizacji, 1945-1950*. The year 1950 brought more blows to the Church in Poland, such as the confiscation of church property or the establishment of the Bureau for Religious Affairs. For comparison, in the same year in Czechoslovakia, the communist authorities liquidated men's and women's religious orders in the so-called »Action K« in April 1950, and the »Action R« in August and September 1950.

Thanks to a tradition reaching back over centuries, women's religious congregations had vast experience in charitable and educational work. For instance, nuns ran 33 % of Polish hospitals (248 out of 749) in the interwar period. In 1945, they established educational and health institutions as soon as the front had passed. Their experience and skills should have been valued highly, especially given the great distress across Polish society. And yet, the authorities blocked and later even destroyed their efforts as well as those of other church institutions.⁵⁵ Not without reason, the Ursulines in Sieradz noted in their chronicle on June 13, 1945: »The times ahead promise to bring many more difficulties. May God brighten them up and crown them with lasting freedom.«⁵⁶

To face the new challenges resulting from communist totalitarianism in Poland and its oppressive stance towards religion, the Grey Ursulines had to develop effective survival strategies in cooperation with other congregations. This topic, however, goes beyond the chronological framework of this article.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The source materials in the archives of the Congregation of the Ursulines of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus provide interesting details of the nuns' life in 1945, but the scope of one article allows only to sketch out a few threads that require further development and comparison with hitherto unexplored materials from other monastery archives.

As noted at the beginning, the founder of the congregation had passed away two months before the outbreak of the war. As a result, a large group of young and inexperienced women had to live through

55 For instance, with the Law of 28 October 1948 all health care institutions were »nationalized«, including church institutions such as hospitals, sanatoria, crèches and orphanages for young children. Property was taken over and religious personnel were dismissed en masse.

56 Jaskulanka, *Kronika okupacyjna klasztoru sióstr urszulanek w Sieradzu*, 367.

57 I discuss this topic in »Zakonnice a władze komunistyczne w Polsce.« Cf. also Mirek, *Trudne lata, wielkie dni*. New material is also presented in the series »Zakony żeńskie w PRL,« which includes three books: Bazylczuk, *Inspektorja Polska Zgromadzenia Córek Maryi Wspomożycielki*; Domagała, *Zgromadzenie Sióstr św. Jadwigi prowincja katowicka*; Mendrok, *Historia prowincji katowickiej Zgromadzenia Sióstr Służebniczek NMP Niepokalanie Poczętej*.

the war without their charismatic leader. In the early months after the war they could show what they had learned from their founder. Severe limitations on the communication between individual communities made this challenge even more difficult.

The source material indicates that the founding generation of the Grey Ursulines passed the test in extreme conditions, both in terms of organization and morally. The accounts quoted in this article – with their objective language, mainly listing facts and rarely giving way to emotions – suggest that the young women who wrote them were strong and that they showed great dynamism, both individually and as a group. In 1945 they took the opportunity to rebuild their own lives while also serving people in circumstances marked by material and spiritual impoverishment. They also dealt with the uncertainty and ambiguity of their relations with the communist authorities that were beginning to assume power in Poland. The source materials add up to form a convincing portrait that does not easily yield to the deconstruction favoured by many contemporary researchers.

Translated from Polish by Tul'si Bhambry

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Reconstructing the Past: Museums in Lviv after 1944

On the eve of World War II, Lviv's museum sphere, formed thanks to the efforts of scholars, cultural workers, the City Council, and many philanthropists, was impressive with the number of museums and the diversity of their collections.¹ These museums were varied in their profiles and scales of collections, purposes and principles of their activities, social mission, legal status, financing methods, and religious and national orientation.

Under the conditions of permanent confrontation between the city's Polish and Ukrainian communities, the establishing of museums was largely influenced by the particular community's desire to emphasize its own cultural achievements and contributions to the development of the city and surrounding region, and by doing so claim rights to these territories. Because of the socio-political situation, the territorial affiliation of the city and the numerical superiority of the Polish population at that time, a significant number of the museums had a Polish character. These included the Museum of the Princes Lubomirski, the Dzieduszycki Museum, the Museum of Crafts, the Lviv Historical Museum, the National Gallery, the King Jan III National Museum, the Raclawice Panorama, the Museum of Ancient History of the Cherven Land, the Jan Długosz Museum of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese, and the Museum of Honored Polish Women.

Museums which collected and preserved the historical and cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people were less numerous. Among them were the People's Home [*Narodnyi Dim u L'vovi*], and the museums of the Stauropigion Institute, and the Taras Shevchenko Scientific Society,² the National Museum, and the Museum of the Greek-Catholic Theological Academy. The Armenian and Jewish communities also

1 Energetic development of museum practices in Lviv supported two conferences by the Union of Museums of Poland in 1924 and 1937. See: Mansfeld, »Dwa zjazdy muzealne we Lwowie.«

2 At the end of the 1930s, three museums functioned at the Taras Shevchenko Scientific Society: the Culture and History Museum, the Natural History Museum, and the Museum of Historical and Military Monuments.

had their own museums. The museums of higher educational institutions and numerous private collections were also significant.³

The Second World War and the geopolitical shifts in Europe brought dramatic changes not only in the political, economic, and social spheres but also for the cultural life and artistic scene in Lviv and its surroundings. This article discusses fundamental processes museums in Lviv underwent during the Soviet and German occupations as well as in the immediate post-war years. The analysis starts with a range of problems caused by the reorganization of the museums' network directly after the invasion by the Soviet army in September 1939. It examines how much irreparable damage was inflicted on the museums' collections by the fundamental processes of liquidation, reorganization, and Sovietization of the many public museums and private collections in Lviv, including the removal of artefacts and destruction and distribution of collections among the newly established museums and the replenishment with objects from estates and with seized church and monastic property. Since the main focus of this article is on the post-war period and as little research has yet been done on the situation of Lviv museums during the period of German occupation, this article gives only a short overview of how the German military administration used the museums as warehouses for their own interests.

In the post-war years, the main interest of the new Soviet authorities was to implement and ensure the new ideology of museum work, whose main task was to educate people in the communist doctrine. Thus museums were strictly controlled in how to exhibit and with which objects, with museum staff being trained according to the Marxist-Leninist theory and socialist realism. In the following, considerable attention is paid to the campaign of the »struggle against nationalist manifestations« in Ukrainian culture, which resulted in the disregard for ethnographic artefacts, the use of which in exhibitions was perceived by the authorities as nationalist attempts to set off Ukrainian culture from Russian, and to the campaign for the removal of »ideologically harmful« materials, during which in the early 1950s several thousand objects from the collections of Lviv museums were destroyed.

3 According to the data published by the Ukrainian researcher Alla Krutous, there were over 70 private collections in Lviv at that time. See: Krutous, »Do pytannia formuvannia okremykh muzeinykh zbirk«, 7.

The reorganization of the Lviv museum landscape by the Soviet authorities, 1939-1941

Almost immediately after the invasion of the Soviet army in September 1939, in the process of the annexation of the Western Ukrainian territories by the USSR a complicated transformation of museum practices began. Representatives of local and central authorities thoroughly inspected Lviv museums. Within a short time, all materials about the Ukrainian national movement as well as the history and culture of the Poles were removed. In particular, a report of two representatives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine,⁴ I. Siryk and Mykola Bazhan, stated:

[...] to close the museums of the Young Society [*Moloda bromada*] and of the Ukrainian Army [*Ukrains'ke viis'ko*]⁵ and hand all of their material to the Central Archive Department of NKVD⁶ [...]. In the Lviv City History Museum – to close the top floor, dedicated to the imperialist war, the wars of 1918-1920, as it is chauvinistic and anti-Soviet in general, the museum aiming to prove that Lviv has been a Polish city from the very beginning without even the smallest mention of the Ukrainian people. Therefore, it is necessary to start rebuilding this exhibition immediately.⁷

Issue of restructuring exhibitions in accordance with the new requirements were raised in other museums too. Thus, in December 1939, the Council of the People's Commissars of the Ukrainian Soviet Social-

4 The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the only legal political party in the Soviet Union from the mid-1920s to 1991. From 1925 to 1952, it functioned under the name All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks). The Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine/CP(b)U was a republican organization, which managed all sections of public life in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

5 This is how the representatives of the new authorities called the Museum of Historical and Military Monuments at the Shevchenko Scientific Society, where the monuments of the Ukrainian people's liberation struggle were exhibited. See: Boiko and Koval, »Stanovlennia ta osnovni vikhy Muzeiu.«

6 The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) was the central administrative body of the USSR for state security which, among other things, fought against national and political movements that preached the ideas of national independence and called for the overthrow of Soviet power. On March 19, 1946, it was renamed the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

7 *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraini*, vol. 1, 61.

ist Republic (*Rada Narodnykh Komisariv UkrSSR*)⁸ resolved to send to Lviv »commissions specializing in museum organization, the registration of treasures, and the systematizing themes and exhibitions of museums.«⁹ For nearly five months researchers from the Kyiv Historical Museum worked in Lviv on creating a new exhibition for the Historical Museum.¹⁰ In April 1940, »a team of museum specialists from Kyiv« worked in the Museum of Crafts.¹¹ The issue of restructuring the exhibition was also raised in the National Museum, which at that time functioned as a department for Ukrainian Art of the Art Gallery. At the beginning of the 1940s, commissions from Kyiv were working there, whose goal was to »accentuate realism« and remove objects that revealed »recurrences of the Western bourgeois formalistic style.«¹²

In order to give the museums a »Soviet appearance«, museum administrations were ordered to urgently make and install portraits of the leaders – Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin – as well as agitation posters and slogans.¹³ Along with the Sovietization of Lviv museums, a complicated process of restructuring began, which initially was received with some understanding by the museum environment of Lviv.

The directors of Lviv museums tried to reconstruct the city's museum network, primarily taking into account the available exhibit area of each museum in Lviv. In particular, the director of the Museum of Crafts, Ksawery Piwocki,¹⁴ and the long-standing director of the National Museum, Ilarion Svientsitskyi,¹⁵ who was appointed as the director of the Art Gallery, offered their ideas about the planned reorganization of the museums. On the basis of their proposals, the Com-

8 The Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the *Radnarkom*, was the highest executive body of the Soviet Ukraine between 1919 and 1946 and predecessor of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR.

9 *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraini*, vol. 1, 71.

10 DALO, fond (f.) R-2591, opys (op.) 1, sprava (spr.) 1, arkush (ark.) 13.

11 Arkhiv IN NANU, Fond Derzhavnoho muzeiu khudozhn'oi promyslovosti, papka (pap.) 1939-1941 (Plans of research work and reports on its implementation. A report of the activity of the Lviv Museum of Crafts in the 1st half of 1940).

12 Batih, »Bili storinky v istorii Natsional'noho muzeiu u L'vovi«, 14.

13 Arkhiv NM, pap. 210, ark. 4; Arkhiv IN NANU, Fond Derzhavnoho muzeiu khudozhn'oi promyslovosti, pap. 1939-1941 (Plans of research work and reports on its implementation. A report of the activity of the Lviv Museum of Crafts in the 3rd quarter of 1940).

14 Arkhiv NM, pap. 210, ark. 28-29.

15 *Ibid.*, ark. 42.

mission for the Protection of Monuments of Culture under the Provisional Administration of the Lviv Region decided to divide the existing collections »into ten parts and, accordingly, among ten museums.«¹⁶ But this proposal of local experts was not taken into account by the Party's leadership. In accordance with the resolution of the Council of the People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR of May 8, 1940,¹⁷ only five museums were organized in Lviv: the State Historical Museum, the State Regional Ethnographic Museum, the State Regional Art Gallery with its two branches – the Sobieski Castle in Pidhirtsi,¹⁸ and the Raclawice Panorama – the State Regional Museum of Crafts,¹⁹ and the Ivan Franko State Regional Memorial Literary Museum.²⁰

Some of these museums were subordinated to the Arts Department at the Council of People's Commissars and others to the People's Commissariat of Education of the Ukrainian SSR,²¹ which were ordered »to staff the organized museums with qualified museum workers.«²² As a result, the staffs of Lviv museums grew significantly. However, not

16 Ibid., ark. 57-58.

17 *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraïni*, vol. 1, 94-96.

18 Pidhirtsi Castle, located within the present-day administrative division of Pidhirtsi village in the Brody district of the Lviv region, was built in 1635-1640 as a residence of the Grand Crown Hetman and castellan, Stanisław Koniecpolski of Kraków. For some time, the owner of the castle was the Polish King Jan III Sobieski, who gave the castle its name. In the 1920s, the last owners of the castle, Roman Sanguszko and his wife Konstancja (née Zamoyaska), reconstructed the park, surrounding gardens, and the palace based on preserved photographs. In 1933-1939, the palace functioned as a private museum of the Sanguszko family. In January 1941, in accord with the resolution of the Executive Committee of the Lviv Regional Council of Workers' Deputies, Pidhirtsi Castle was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Lviv State Historical Museum. See: DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 8.

19 For some time, the Museum of Crafts functioned under this name as well as Museum of Art Industry.

20 Besides the museums listed in the resolution, the Natural History Museum was also established under the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR. Collections of liquidated museums and nationalized private collections were distributed among these museums, without providing them with necessary premises or appropriate storage conditions.

21 People's Commissariats were the executive bodies of the Soviet Union, analogous to contemporary ministries. The system of commissariats existed till March 15, 1946. The People's Commissariat of Education of the Ukrainian SSR was the supreme governing body of the educational sphere in Soviet Ukraine.

22 *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraïni*, vol. 1, 96.

all new employees were familiar with the methods and goals of museum work, and not all employees of the older generation were well-informed about »the principles of Soviet museology.«²³ Thus museum employees began to be trained on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist materialist theory.²⁴

The restructuring of the museum network,²⁵ which took place in the early years of Soviet rule, caused irreparable damages to the art collections of Lviv museums. The majority of museums, which functioned as original source study centers until 1939, where unique artefacts of local history and culture, in particular Polish, Armenian, Jewish, and even Ukrainian, were collected, ceased functioning altogether, their collections being scattered among other centers. The institutions that were officially recognized by the Soviet authorities were subjected to ideological pressure and forced to participate in establishing a new official policy of memory.²⁶

23 DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 8.

24 Arkhiv IN NANU, Fond Derzhavnoho muzeiu khudozhn'oi promyslovosti, pap. »Nakazy dyrektora muzeiu za 1941 r.« (Order No. 43 of March 6, 1941).

25 The situation that arose as a result of the restructuring of Lviv museums was not a unique phenomenon in the life of Lviv's artistic and scientific institutions in 1939-1941. No less impressive were the scope and methods of the reorganization of Lviv libraries. In particular, R. Bachyn's'kyi describes the events of that time: »After Nazi Germany defeated Poland and Soviet power was established in Western Ukraine, all of Lviv's libraries were liquidated in an arbitrary fashion: Polish, Ukrainian, Jewish, state, communal, private, public, scientific. The Ossoliński Institute, as a state public and ideological institution, was also liquidated. The reserves of 84 expropriated Lviv libraries were brought into the premises of the Ossolineum library, which became part of a newly created branch of the library of the Academy of Sciences of the UkrSSR. Among them were delivered, in particular, 40,000 books from the Dzieduszycki library, 25,000 books from the theological seminary, 6,000 publications from the military library, almost 1,500 copies from the library of Armenian Archbishop Theodorovych, tens of thousands of books from the library of the Shevchenko Scientific Society, the People's Home, Greek Catholic and Orthodox monastic libraries. [...] Also, the collections of manuscripts of A. Czołowski, manuscripts of W. Reymont, the archives of L. Bernacki, L. Piniński, Henrik and Jerzy Lubomirski, and the correspondence of »Kurier Lvovsky« were transferred there.« See: Bachyn's'kyi, »Navishcho lamaty spysy?«

26 On the formation and evolution of the state policy of memory during the rule of Stalin see: Iekel'chyk, *Imperiia pamiaty*.

Museum policy of the NS occupation regime (1941-1944)

On June 22, 1941, World War II entered a new phase. At the end of June, Lviv was occupied by German troops. Not many documents or direct evidence of the activities of Lviv museums under the German occupation have been discovered. For a while they continued functioning, but there was hardly any structure in their work during this period. The German authorities supported the museums only when it was beneficial for ideological or practical reasons. Such was the case with the National Museum, which regained its status and title. The Raclawice Panorama also remained open for visitors.²⁷ During the German occupation, most museums existed in a role of conservation. The occupying power considered them only in view of the value of their collections. At that time, the practice of handing over objects to the senior military commanders and German officials to »temporarily« decorate their offices and apartments in exchange for receipts became widespread.²⁸ Several receipts, signed and stamped by German officials, are now in the archive of the Museum of Crafts. As evidenced by these documents, during the first year of occupation, from July 1941 till July 1942, 223 objects of this museum's collection were given away.²⁹

Heads of the occupation administration were also attracted to some buildings in which the museums were located. In these cases, museum premises were »modified« into administration offices, reception rooms, etc. Collections were transferred to other museums. Such was the case with the Museum of Crafts, the building of the Ivan Franko Literary Memorial Museum, and a section of the Historical Museum

27 In April 1944, the Raclawice Panorama suffered significantly from Soviet bombardment: the canvas was damaged with shell splinters, and rain water started dripping through the breached roof. In early June, the Panorama was taken down, rolled up and put into a specially prepared chest, and on June 16 it was transported to the Bernardine monastery. See: Filevych, *L'vivs'ka halereia mystetstv*, 66-68. The Raclawice Panorama was never again exhibited in Lviv. In 1946, the Soviet government »donated« it along with other monuments to the Polish people. Since 1985 it has been exhibited as a section of the National Museum in Wrocław.

28 In the majority of cases, the objects transferred in this way have never been returned to the museums.

29 Arkhiv IN NANU, Fond Derzhavnoho muzeiu khudozhn'oi promyslovosti, Dokumenty periodu nimets'koi okupatsii (revers 1,3, 7, 10, 15, 17).

on Bliakharska Street (now Ivan Fedorov Street), which had been designated by the Soviet authorities as repositories.

In summer 1943, taking into account the situation at the front, the German leadership decided to evacuate the most important historical and cultural treasures – in particular those that, according to their propaganda assessment, could characterize »the state and achievements of the German colonies on the occupied lands.«³⁰ Despite their clear ideological and political motives for exporting archival and library materials and museum artefacts from the occupied territories, the occupiers did not overlook purely cultural treasures. Officially, the export of museum collections was called »evacuation« and was justified with the need to save them from destruction during bombardments and artillery shelling. Many of the objects evacuated in 1944 have never been returned to Lviv.³¹

The impact of the Soviet political system on post-war Lviv museums

The main trends in the work of Lviv museums, which had emerged in the early years of Soviet rule, continued after German occupation. Almost immediately after Soviet troops entered Lviv in July 1944, a gradual restoration of museums to their original locations and renewal of their activities began. On August 8, 1944, the executive committee of the Lviv Regional Council of Workers' Deputies adopted a resolution to resume work at the Lviv State Historical Museum.³² On the same day, a meeting of employees of the Lviv State Historical Museum, the Ethnographic Museum, and the I. Franko Literary Memorial Museum was held, which was attended by Mykola Bazhan, the deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR. In his speech, he outlined the main tasks that faced Lviv museum employees, placing an emphasis on exhibition work.³³

In accordance with the order of the Arts Department at the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR of August 29, 1944, all

30 Kennedi Grimsted and Boriak, *Dolia ukrains'kykh kul'turnykh tsinnosti*, 20.

31 Matwijów, »Ewakuacja zbiorów polskich ze Lwowa; Perelyhina, »Vtraty fondovykh kolektsiy L'vivs'koho istorychnoho muzeiu«; Filevych, *L'vivs'ka halereia mystetstv*, 65-66, 131-138; Dziuban, *Peremishchennia i vtraty kul'turnykh tsinnosti ustanov*, 12.

32 DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 1.

33 *Ibid.*, spr. 6, ark. 5.

art museums of Lviv resumed their work: the State Museum of Ukrainian Art³⁴ (director Ilarion Svientsitskyi), the State Museum of Crafts (director Ksawery Piwocki), and the State Regional Art Gallery (director Jerzy Güttler).³⁵ The first two museums were financed from the public budget of the Ukrainian SSR, and the Lviv Regional Art Gallery was transferred to the local budget.³⁶

In the first post-war years, activities in the Lviv museums focused mainly on putting collections into order and restoring exhibitions, which, according to the order of the Party authorities, had to be supplemented with such thematic areas as »The Great Patriotic War«,³⁷ »Socialist Construction«, and »Kyivan Rus – A Cradle of the Three East Slavic Peoples«. This period of Ukrainian history,³⁸ in accord with the directives of the Soviet ideologists, was now to be presented in museum exhibitions as a common heritage of three nations – Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian.

In compliance with the order of the People's Commissariat of Education of the Ukrainian SSR to create an exhibition about the history of the Great Patriotic War, the Lviv State Historical Museum started collecting artefacts of that period and constructing an exhibition entitled »The Patriotic War and Trophy Armament.«³⁹ Its opening became the most significant event of museum life in post-war Lviv. Visitors could see samples of engineering, intendance, health-care and veterinary equipment, provisions, means of communication, chemical weapons, and military equipment of various countries. Heavy weapons (planes, tanks, cannons, armored cars) were exhibited on the square near the Powder Tower. Documents, photographs, and hand-held firearms

34 This was the name of the National Museum in Lviv in 1944. In 1965 it was renamed the Lviv Museum of Ukrainian Art. Now it is the Andrei Sheptytskyi National Museum in Lviv.

35 Piwocki and Güttler eventually left their posts and moved to Poland.

36 Filevych, *L'viv's'ka halereia mystetstv*, 72.

37 The Great Patriotic War was a term coined by Soviet propaganda to denote the Soviet-German military conflict of 1941-1945 within the framework of World War II.

38 About this period of Ukrainian history see: Polonska-Wasylenko, *Zwei Konzeptionen der Geschichte der Ukraine und Russlands*; Subtelny, *Ukraine*; Balushok, *Etnohenez ukraïntsiiv*; idem, *Ukrain's'ka etnichna spil'nota*; Plokyh, *The Gates of Europe*. Many thanks for this reference to docent Andrii Kozytskyi and professor Leontii Voitovych.

39 The budget of 67,000 rubles was approved to organize the exhibition. See: DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 12, ark. 1.

(rifles, machine guns and mine-throwers of different types) were on exhibit in the Museum.⁴⁰

The process of constructing a permanent exhibition in the Lviv State Historical Museum was complicated. Controversy and ideological discussion surrounded it, and the exhibition was repeatedly restructured. Most attention had to be paid to

scientific substantiation of each theme and sub-theme by the relevant provisions of the classics of Marxism-Leninism about history; in particular, to expose the falsehood in Ukrainian history of the concept of the so-called Hrushevskyy's school [...] about the supposed classless state of the Ukrainian people, about the absence of class struggle in its history, about the superiority of the national distinction above the class and social one in its history, about the allegedly continuous flow in the development of Ukrainian culture, etc.⁴¹

In the Museum of Crafts at that time, the entire staff was mobilized to put museum collections in order, which had been hidden in various Lviv institutions during NS occupation. During 1945 and 1946, museum workers searched for museum artefacts, brought them to their original location, 20 Pershe Travnia Street (now Svobody Avenue), and prepared lists of missing objects and those known to have been taken away by the German occupiers.⁴² This took a significant amount of time, because during the early post-war years, the majority of former museum workers left for Poland. New, inexperienced employees took their place, who for the most part had neither the appropriate education nor experience in museum work.

In 1946, the Soviet government sent many artefacts from Lviv museums to Poland. This action had a clearly political coloring. According to the resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR No. 1673 of October 18, 1945,⁴³ »artistic treasures of Polish artists, etc., which are associated with the Polish culture,«⁴⁴ from mu-

40 Ibid., ark. 1-2, 5-7, 9-20.

41 DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 54.

42 Arkhiv IN NANU, Fond Derzhavnoho muzeiu khudozhn'oi promyslovosti, op. 16, spr. 11.

43 TsDAVO, f. R-2, op. 7, vol. 3, spr. 2147, ark. 121-122; Matwijów, *Walka o łwowskie dobra kultury*, 216-217.

44 Arkhiv IN NANU, Fond Derzhavnoho muzeiu khudozhn'oi promyslovosti, op. 16, spr. 12, ark. 29a. The donated monuments were placed in the State Museum (now the National Museum) in Wrocław.

seums of Ukraine, including the Lviv State Historical Museum, the Museum of Crafts, and the Lviv Regional Art Gallery, were given to the Provisional Government of the National Unity of the Polish Republic.

Further work at the Museum of Crafts was aimed at restoring the exhibition, which had to be supplemented with exhibits of Russian and contemporary Soviet art. However, difficulties arose due to the lack of works of the Soviet period. After borrowing the necessary artefacts, the exhibition was created in the renovated halls of the Museum. Its opening on November 9, 1947, was dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. The exhibition plan was designed in such a way as to show the development of artistic crafts and folk art in a chronological sequence, primarily of the peoples of the USSR.⁴⁵ Artistic works of several countries of people's democracy⁴⁶ – Poland, Czechoslovakia, and China – were also represented. At that time, Soviet art departments were opened in the Lviv Regional Art Gallery and the Lviv State Museum of Ukrainian Art, which soon abounded with artefacts brought from the museums in Moscow, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Kyiv, and Odessa.

The Ethnographic Museum, which became subordinate to the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR in November 1945, resumed its work. Two new structural subdivisions were established here: Ethnography, and Folklore Studies, for which the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences approved a comprehensive scientific theme known as »The ethnographic atlas of material culture of the Western regions of the UkrSSR.« In order to collect materials for the theme, researchers from the Ethnographic Museum spent 325 days in excursions. They visited various districts of the Lviv, Rivne, Transcarpathian, Ternopil, and Stanislaviv (now Ivano-Frankivsk) regions for field work, in which they created an extensive network of correspondents. The following quantitative indicators give an idea of the nature and scope of the collected material: 3,209 cards, 455 pages of text,

45 The exhibition was open to visitors only three days a week because the rooms were not heated; besides, there were too few caretakers and guides, and no doorman or cashier. For lack of these workers, the administration of the Museum of Crafts was forced to make their employees work in shifts. The administration of the Lviv State Historical Museum constantly complained about the insufficient number of caretakers.

46 »Countries of people's democracies« was a definition of the social and political order which was formed in a number of countries after WWII.

1,827 sketches, 998 photographs, and 202 complete and 64 incomplete questionnaires.⁴⁷

However, the results of their research were deemed unsatisfactory. In the conclusions of the commission of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, who inspected the museum's research work, it was stated, in particular, that

from its very outset this work was wrong, namely: the study of any ethnographic phenomenon is limited to the Western regions of Ukraine. It is possible to explore a certain ethnographic phenomenon within the Western regions of Ukraine, but only in connection with similar phenomena throughout the UkrSSR⁴⁸ and in mutual development of this phenomenon with the culture of the Russian and Belorussian peoples.⁴⁹

In general, the inspectors stated that the work was »performed at a low conceptual and theoretical level.« In their opinion, the main reason for this situation was that »the selection of employees was unsatisfactory, that purging the Museum of the odd people who became part of the Museum's research team was not brought to an end.«⁵⁰

As a result of the inspection of the Ethnographic Museum, the Commission of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences decreased the staff. Employees who »revealed their inability and helplessness in the scientific study of the phenomena of Soviet ethnographic science«⁵¹ were to be dismissed. To remedy the state of research work in the Ethnographic Museum, seminars were organized to study concepts of Marxist-Leninist theory. Reports and extensive discussions of the

47 Arkhiv IN NANU, Fond Derzhavnoho etnografichnoho muzeiu AN UkrSSR, op. 1a, spr. 20, ark. 38.

48 Along with spreading the myth about Russian-Ukrainian friendship and the leading role of the »elder brother«, republican ideologists vigilantly protected the concept of Ukrainian national and ethnic unity. See: Iekel'chuk, *Imperiia pamiati*, 96. This had to be taken into account not only in writing scholarly papers, but also during creating museum exhibitions. Thus, during a meeting of the Academic Council of the Lviv State Historical Museum in March 1947, it was pointed out that »the Lviv Museum is the republican museum, and it is expected to present the entire history of Ukraine, not an individual city or its sides.« See: DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 28v.

49 Arkhiv IN NANU, Fond Derzhavnoho etnografichnoho muzeiu AN UkrSSR, op. 1a, spr. 63, ark. 7.

50 Ibid., ark. 7-8.

51 Ibid., ark. 8.

methods and practices of Soviet ethnography on various topics were introduced, including the Soviet school of ethnography, the struggle of Soviet ethnography against various bourgeois ethnographic »schools«, the unity of material culture of Eastern Slavs and its influence on the culture of neighboring countries, the class character of material culture, etc.⁵² Subsequently, in research papers, priority had to be given to studying changes in the lifestyle of collective farmers and workers resulting from the socialist restructuring of the country and »processes that have emerged and are considered in connection with the victory of socialism, reorganization of labor, in connection with new means of production and new techniques.«⁵³

In November 1947, the process of rebuilding the exhibition of the Ethnographic Museum began, which was then under criticism from the higher Party authorities. The greatest reservation of the inspectors concerned the »idealization« of old peasant customs. To replenish the exhibition with new materials, new brigades were formed from the Museum's staff to study collective-farm construction, workers' lives, and the cultural unity of the Eastern Slavs. It is precisely these topics that, by the order of the authorities, were supposed to »enrich« the exhibits of the Ethnographic Museum. One of them, »Life and material culture of a pre-revolutionary and collective-farm village,« had to illustrate »new features« of the culture and everyday life of peasants who appeared in the Soviet era. The purpose of another was to demonstrate the material and spiritual culture of Ukrainians in an East Slavic context.

This reflected the general trend of growing ideological pressure on museums during the campaign of »fighting against nationalist manifestations« in Ukrainian culture, which consisted of outright neglect of ethnographic artefacts, the removal of local materials – the use of which in exhibitions was viewed as a nationalistic attempt to set Ukrainian culture off from Russian – and the persecution of figures of Ukrainian culture. The victims of this campaign were, in particular, employees of the Lviv State Museum of Ukrainian Art. In the late 1940s, the following people were arrested and sentenced to labor camps: guide Mykola Batih, senior research fellow Ievhen Kravchuk, chief guardian of the museum collections Vira Svientsitska, head of the museum library Stepan Sampara, and restorer Yaroslava Muzyka.⁵⁴

52 Arkhiv IN NANU, Fond Derzhavnoho etnografichnoho muzeiu AN UkrSSR, op. 1a, spr. 20, ark. 78-79.

53 Ibid., spr. 80, ark. 15.

54 Man'kovs'ka, »Berehynia ukrains'koï kul'tury,« 228.

The development of museum practices was significantly affected by the All-Union Meeting of Museum Workers, held in Moscow in 1948. It defined the basic principles of exposition construction: a single typical comprehensive exhibition model was proposed for all historical and regional ethnography museums of the USSR. Chronologically, it was to be divided into two sections: pre-Soviet and Soviet periods. Regardless of local historical events, the Soviet period had to begin in 1917. The attention of museum workers must be directed to the study of socialist transformation and the heroism of the Great Patriotic War, which were to be presented in terms of Soviet ideological propaganda. This made it impossible to objectively portray the events of World War II and the fate of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the national liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people.⁵⁵

In the post-war period, various commissions inspected the activities and collections of Lviv museums. In March 1949, the commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine worked in the Lviv State Historical Museum, which in its reports pointed out the lack of

clarity in the ideological orientation of the exhibition of the history of Ukraine, and especially in the topics related to the struggle of the Ukrainian people for liberation and the unity with the fraternal Russian people [...]; proper coverage of the development of culture of the Ukrainian people and ties to the national culture of the great Russian people, [... and of] the struggle of the Orthodox population against the Uniate Church.⁵⁶

The greatest controversy broke out around the newly created exhibition »The Magnate Lifestyle of the 18th and the Beginning of the 19th Century« at a branch of the Lviv State Historical Museum, Pidhirtsi Castle. In particular, the head of the Museum Department of the Committee for Cultural and Educational Institutions of the Ukrainian SSR, Yurii Lesnevskyi, noted that the exhibition actually

1) [...] presented things isolated from the history of Ukraine; 2) the objects of this exhibition are not integral collections but are gathered from different historical and cultural regions of the former aristo-

55 Museums had to not only popularize the Soviet version of Ukrainian national memory but also limit access to alternative narratives of the past.

56 DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 38v.

cratic Poland, 3) they are difficult to combine for a particular ideological orientation.⁵⁷

Commission members criticized the exhibition's magnificent design in the rooms of »Magnate Lifestyle«, which was in vivid contrast to the modest design in the section of »Socialist Construction«, emphasizing that such an exhibition »goes against the goals of the museum, which task is to show the struggle of working-class masses, not the history of generations of ruling magnates, gentry, etc.«⁵⁸ Some employees of the Lviv State Historical Museum, such as I. Sveshnikov, Z. Volodchenko, and M. Lishchyns'ka, disagreed with the critical remarks of the commission. As a result, comments about the »impurity of collections« along with »impurity of personnel« appeared in the conclusions of the commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine.⁵⁹

In March 1950, in pursuance of the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR titled »On Measures to Structure the Network and Profiles of State Museums of the UkrSSR and to Improve Their Activities«,⁶⁰ the Committee for Cultural and Educational Institutions ordered a direct inspection of all museums and an ideological inspection of their exhibitions. From that time on, plans needed to be approved by special commissions.

The committee's decree pointed out that exhibitions of museums in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR needed to »emphasize the common origin and historical unity of the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian peoples, the struggle of working people against the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the aristocratic Poland«, and sections on the history of the Soviet period must

highlight the friendship of the peoples of the USSR, the leading role of the great Russian people in the family of our homeland's peoples, the role of the Bolshevik Party and, personally, Comrade Stalin in the flourishing of the national economy and culture of the western regions of the UkrSSR and in the rise of material welfare of workers.⁶¹

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., ark. 39.

59 Ibid., ark. 43.

60 TsDAVO, f. R-2, op. 8, spr. 220, ark. 300-314.

61 DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 49, ark. 25.

This order also obliged directors of museums of the republic to submit lists of exhibits »which are not used in museums and do not meet their profile, and thus, through redistribution of collections, may be used in other museums.«⁶²

During those times, numerous commissions of various ranks checked museum collections, moving »ideologically harmful« works that were »openly nationalist in nature« to specially created repositories. In April 1950, the deputy chairman of the Committee for Cultural Institutions of the Ukrainian SSR, V. Rumiantsev, speaking at a meeting of the staff of the Lviv State Historical Museum, said:

The museum doesn't need any specialized repositories. No one needs items hidden in these special repositories, and there is no need for literature (church literature) preserved in its entirety. Only some parts from the large amount of church literature should be left, and the rest must be eliminated. [...] the display of portraits must be moderate: only portraits of Lenin and Stalin can be exhibited without any limitation.⁶³

This resulted in repeated changes of the Museum's leadership, the elimination of exhibits »which could make the viewer develop a sense of servility before the West«,⁶⁴ the closing down the museum in Pidhirtsi Castle, and the transfer of the castle to the jurisdiction of the Regional Architecture Department in June 1950.⁶⁵

Fighting against »Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism« and »admiration of foreign culture« continued in Ukraine in the years to come. At that time, not only the ideas of Stalinist-Zhdanovian regulations in the field of literature and art but also provisions and recommendations of editorials in central newspapers were considered indisputable. In the provinces they were perceived as a direct order to action.

On September 13, 1951, the newspaper *Pravda* published an article under the headline »What Do Lviv Museums Promote?«, in which the

62 Ibid., ark. 28.

63 DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 52.

64 Ibid., ark. 55.

65 DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 38, ark. 102. Subsequently, a tuberculosis sanatorium was established in Pidhirtsi Castle, which functioned there until 1997, when it was again handed over to the Lviv Picture Gallery (now the Lviv B.H. Voznytskyi National Art Gallery). Part of the collection from Pidhirtsi Castle is currently stored in the Lviv Historical Museum and the Lviv B.H. Voznytskyi National Art Gallery.

author expressed his »concern« with the development of the museum sphere in Lviv and pointed to the excessive delight of Lviv museums in antiquity, and therefore, ideological breakdowns in their work.⁶⁶ The reporter of the influential newspaper, in particular, wrote that the exhibitions of the Lviv State Historical Museum paid much attention to the exaltation of »princes, nobles, sultans, Polish landlords, Cossack colonels, starshyna, patriarchs, archimandrites, etc.«, which diverts the attention of visitors from main topics such as the class struggle and the desire of the Ukrainian people to rejoin with the great Russian people. The Lviv State Museum of Ukrainian Art gave preference to the Ukrainian artistic tradition, while only 150 works were exhibited in the Soviet department. In addition, the works of Ukrainian Soviet artists »do not reflect the changes that have taken place in recent years in the western regions of Ukraine.« The Lviv Picture Gallery was exhibiting a huge collection of Polish, German, Austrian, Dutch and Flemish paintings, while Russian classics of the 19th century were represented by only thirty-two works. There were not many more works by Soviet artists, and paintings of Ukrainian artists were completely absent.

The reaction to this article in *Pravda* was swift. On October 15, 1951, the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine adopted the resolution »On Measures to Improve Work of the Museums of the Ukrainian SSR.« The resolution, in particular, noted that

in the Lviv Historical Museum the most important historical events are reflected incorrectly, and anti-scientific. The museum's exhibitions do not reveal the class struggle of the working people of Ukraine against internal enemies and foreign oppressors, and they poorly demonstrate the fundamental striving of the Ukrainian people for unity with the great Russian people. The Lviv Museum of Ukrainian Art does not have a full-fledged department of Ukrainian Soviet art. The exhibitions of Lviv museums of fine arts and the picture gallery became poorer and do not give visitors a complete picture of the development of Russian and Ukrainian classical art, of the flourishing of contemporary Ukrainian and Russian fine arts and the art of other fraternal peoples of the USSR.⁶⁷

66 Odinets, »Chto propagandiruiut L'vovskie muzei?«

67 TsDAVO, f. R-2, op. 8, spr. 2627, ark. 79.

In addition, the resolution stressed that, in a number of museums, in particular the Lviv Museum of Ukrainian Art and the Lviv Picture Gallery, »cultural and educational work is at a low ideological and political level.«⁶⁸

As a result, the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine required the Committee for Cultural and Educational Institutions and the Arts Committee under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR to »inspect the content of museum exhibitions, to develop and approve thematic exhibition plans in accordance with the profile of each museum«, to submit proposals on »removal from museum collections of the Republic exhibits that do not have a museum significance, on the interdepartmental redistribution of museum exhibits in accordance with the museums' profiles, and on the creation of republican exchange repositories«, to review library reserves of foreign literature of the Republic's museums, and to submit proposals for their further use, as well as to improve the work on the selection and training of museum staff.⁶⁹

Consequently, the exhibitions of the Lviv State Historical Museum were completely redesigned, and »exhibits that distort historical reality« were removed. Nine scientific employees were dismissed as those who »have no appropriate education, do not inspire political confidence, were not up to their positions.«⁷⁰ The collections of the museum were repeatedly inspected by commissions, which resulted in continual removal and destruction of many artefacts and books from the collection. In 1952, a commission decided:

the following number of exhibits that have no museum value: a) Fabric – 63 items; b) Religious items – 72; c) Household items – 140; d) Pictures – 1,140. These exhibits were removed and destroyed as having no value.⁷¹

Even more dramatic events unfolded at the Lviv State Museum of Ukrainian Art. At first, commissions from the Party and Soviet institutions of various levels, ranging from the Regional Department for Culture to the Arts Committee at the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, started visiting the museum regularly. Commissions

68 Ibid., ark. 81.

69 Ibid., ark. 79, 82-83.

70 DALO, f. R-2591, op. 1, spr. 13, ark. 175.

71 Ibid., ark. 72.

thoroughly inspected the museum's collection and diligently reviewed its exhibition, which they ordered to be immediately cleared of »politically harmful works.«

At the end of 1951, the formation of a closed reserve was initiated in the museum. It consisted of »nationalistic« and »harmful« works, which included portraits of participants in the national fight for freedom, the *Sich* Riflemen, figures of the Greek Catholic Church and the Austrian Imperial Court, and the works of artists who emigrated to the West and artists condemned as bourgeois nationalists. It also contained everything that had a pronounced Ukrainian national character as well as a large number of »formalist« works, which included paintings that did not match the patterns and clichés of socialist realism. Early in August 1952, the artefacts that had been put into the closed reserve of the Lviv State Museum of Ukrainian Art were transported to the special repository of the Lviv Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR and were secretly destroyed: paintings and drawings were burnt, and sculptures were broken up. As of today, the number of lost objects confirmed by documents is 1,728.⁷²

In the post-war period, the main structural changes in the museum network of Lviv were connected with the creation of two new museums, which caused the further redistribution of museum collections. One of them was the V.I. Lenin Museum, an ideological institution that demanded the best museum location. That's why this museum was given the building of the Museum of Crafts at the end of 1949, which in turn had to quickly move into the former Galician savings bank at 15 Pershe Travnia Street (now Svobody Avenue), which was not adapted to the museums' needs.

The V.I. Lenin Museum was opened on April 22, 1950, as the Lviv branch of the V.I. Lenin Central Museum in Moscow. In its extensive exhibition, which stretched over 16 halls, copies of Lenin's photographs, paintings, and personal belongings, diagrams, charts, models, tape recordings of Lenin's speeches, editions of his works, etc. were presented. All the »unique« documents exhibited in the V.I. Lenin Museum were photocopies of originals stored in the archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.⁷³

In contrast, the Museum of Crafts, which at that time contained more than 20,000 original artefacts, did not manage to start exhibition

72 Posats'ka, *Katalog vtrachenykh pamiatok*, 18.

73 The Institute of Marxism-Leninism was a central Party research institution under the Central Committee of the CPSU (1921-1991).



Public demonstration for the opening of the Lenin Museum (from the newspaper *Vil'na Ukraina*, no. 81(2039), April 23, 1950; the headline reads: »The Lviv branch of the Central Lenin Museum is now open!« Over 70,000 people were present.

work at the new location. In 1951, in accordance with the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine, it was united with the Ethnographic Museum of the Lviv branch of the Academy of Sciences to become the Ukrainian State Museum of Ethnography and Crafts of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR,⁷⁴ now the Museum of Ethnography and Crafts of the Ethnology Institute of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

Conclusions

This overview of the development of Lviv museums in the post-war period (1944 to the mid-1950s) shows that their activities were negatively affected by the consequences of the personality cult of Lenin and Stalin, the introduction of »vulgar sociology« into museum practices, the forced implantation of ideological doctrines of Marxism and propaganda activities, and repressions and numerous campaigns to »combat nationalist manifestations« in Ukrainian culture. An inevitable loss for the Lviv museums was the removal of »ideologically harmful« materials, during which several thousand artefacts from their collections were destroyed.

Translated from Ukrainian by Olena Feshovets

74 TsDAVO, f. R-2, op. 8, spr. 2616, ark. 60-61.

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Imke Hansen

Materiality and the Construction of Memory: The Case of Auschwitz-Birkenau¹

Today the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau is the largest and most frequented memorial site in a former concentration and extermination camp. In 2016, it counted over two million visitors.² It has become the central place of Holocaust commemoration in Europe. However, right after the war, it was not at all clear what Auschwitz-Birkenau should become, or how.³ Throughout the 1940s, discussions took place at governmental levels and in the Polish press, and people expressed their diverse views on what to do with the former concentration and extermination camp.⁴ Should it become a place of commemoration? If so, what should that commemoration look like? Another discourse took place at the very site of the national socialist crimes. From the liberation on, people shaped the site through their presence, decisions, and actions. Military personnel, German prisoners of war, and members of the early museum staff lived at the site; former prisoners, family members of victims, and others visited it; and employees of several institutions did their work there. In their presence, and through their interactions, competing interests and conflicts manifested themselves on spatial and material levels, rather than in public debates or the written word.⁵

In this article, I trace processes of memory construction by focusing on physical presence and material matters at Auschwitz-Birkenau in the immediate postwar years. Questioning the prevailing assumption that memory and commemoration are determined mainly if not exclusively by political decisions, official celebrations, and media discourse, I investigate how local, spatial, and material issues shape and impact memory, and how memory relates to its physical environment.

1 This article is mostly based on chapter 3 of my book »*Nie wieder Auschwitz!*«.

2 <http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/over-2-million-visitors-at-the-auschwitz-memorial-in-2016,1232.html> (21.12.2017). For more information, see Hansen, »*Nie wieder Auschwitz!*«, chapter 3.

3 Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*; Huener, *Auschwitz*; Lachendro, *Zburzyć*.

4 For instance: Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*, 193-232; Hansen, »*Nie wieder Auschwitz!*«, 141-196.

5 Hansen, »*Nie wieder Auschwitz!*«, 75-137.

Taking an approach that is literary »down to earth«, I look at the history of commemoration and retrospective representation of Auschwitz-Birkenau on a local and micro-level. This approach locates the immediate post-war history of Auschwitz-Birkenau in the broader context of Poland after the war – a country that had suffered greatly, that was devastated and in need of reconstruction, and that lacked the financial and material resources for this enterprise.

Early commemoration

In May 1945, a Catholic mass was held at the former camp grounds of Auschwitz-Birkenau. It was intended to commemorate the victims and express gratitude for those who survived. Genowefa Przybysz, a nurse at the hospital the Red Army had established on the camp premises, recollected that all former prisoners who could walk attended – regardless of their religion.⁶ On June 14, 1945, about 25,000 people, among them many boy scouts and youth groups, commemorated the fifth anniversary of the first transport to Auschwitz. Headed by a Soviet honorary company and a Red Army orchestra, the procession marched from Kościuszko square in the town's centre to the mass grave of 450 Polish political prisoners close to the main camp.⁷ After the Catholic service at the site, several politicians gave speeches, including former prisoner Alfred Fiderkiewicz, delegate of the State National Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*, KRN).⁸

In September 1945, citizens of Oświęcim together with the Polish Association of Former Political Prisoners (*Polski Związek byłych Więźniów Politycznych*, PZbWP)⁹ initiated the erection of a cross on the aforementioned mass grave. Again the event was opened by a commemorative march, which brought the cross bearing the inscription »To the memory of the tortured brothers« from a church in Oświęcim to the mass grave. Afterwards the participants, including many clergy-

6 APMAB, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Przybysz/1745.

7 »Tragiczna Rocznic.«

8 Fiderkiewicz was also one of the earliest members and the director of the Main Commission of Research on German Crimes in Poland (Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce). See Motas, *Główna Komisja*.

9 For this history of the PZbWP, see Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*, 35-70. By the end of the 1940s the Prisoners Associations merged into the veterans' Association of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*, ZBoWiD). See Wawrzyniak, *Veterans*.

men, and representatives of different prisoners' associations, visited the former main camp and Birkenau. While the local orchestra of nearby Okocim played mourning marches, they placed flowers and lit candles at the so-called Death Wall, the main camp's execution site, and at the crematorium ruins. On All Souls' Day 1945, the principle time of the year for Catholic commemoration of the dead, 25,000 people gathered at the mass grave.¹⁰

This particular mass grave seems to have been a primary place for immediate post-war commemoration. It was probably not only its relative proximity to the town's centre that made it more attractive than Birkenau, but also the fact that mainly Polish political prisoners were buried there. Some of them had been executed during the very last days of the camp, and that added a sense of immediacy to the tragedy of the place.

Regarding the presence of people and their activities during early commemorative events at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the diversity of rituals and performances seems remarkable. Communist, nationalist, Catholic, and traditional secular narratives of war coexisted or even merged on the site. Commemoration was not so much planned from above as initiated from below, and those who took part – be it priests, scouts, the Red Army, or an orchestra from the neighbouring town – determined the practices. Missing, however, was the voice of the Jewish majority of the victims.

The »wild« exhibition

When the Ministry of Culture started to hire former prisoners to work at the former camp and establish a museum, the first exhibition was already in place. It had been built anonymously in the basement of block 4 in the first weeks after the liberation.

The exhibition consisted purely of objects and did not include any text. Several knee-high platforms placed along the walls presented belongings of people deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Each platform hosted only items of one kind: clothes, or shoes, or religious items, or hair, and so on. Barbed wire – already having become a symbol of concentration camps – surrounded the items that had belonged mainly to people deported to Birkenau and immediately killed there. This sym-

10 »Wielka manifestacja żałobna w Oświęcimiu.« See also Lachendro, *Zburzyć*, 38.



The basement of block 4, former main camp (APMAB Dz. IX, No. 3441).

bolic combination merged the fate of different groups and the histories of Auschwitz and Birkenau. It associated the fate of Catholic Poles with ethnic cleansing and genocide and suggested that all the horrors of Auschwitz-Birkenau were a part of the Polish prisoners' fate. Although many indeed were Polish, there was a significant difference between a Jewish and non-Jewish fate in German-occupied Poland. The display of mainly Jewish belongings surrounded with barbed wire in the main camp, and the lack of any explanation or comment, blurred this difference.

The essence of this exhibition – displaying former belongings of the deportees in heaps of one kind to illustrate the number of people who perished there – has not changed since then. Even though today the items are – for various practical reasons – in different rooms and behind glass, the artistic strategy remains the same. In the face of frequent changes in the museum between 1946 and 1955, and more changes after 1990, that might be surprising. In fact, the documentation of the early museum history contains no trace of a discussion or even the question whether to remove the »wild« exhibition. Keeping and integrating it into the officially designed exhibition seemed to be common sense. Admittedly, it makes a great impression on visitors, even today, 70 years after the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. And certainly, it

is difficult to change a place of commemoration once it has been established and visited, as it often comes with an aftertaste of infringing on the dignity of those commemorated. In addition, the display of belongings both documented the German mass murder and commemorated the victims. Even though the commemoration seemed to be the predominant aim, this combination constituted the particular strength of the »wild« exhibition.

The item that contributed significantly to the commemorative character was the giant illuminated cross at the wall opposite the door, an element of the exhibition that has been lost over time. In the original room, the platforms flanked the way from the door to the cross, which dominated the room through size, position, and illumination. The complete lack of explanations emphasized the commemorative flair. The former political prisoner Wincenty Hein, who collaborated in the design of the first exhibitions, claimed that visitors indeed perceived the room different from other, later exhibitions: they treated the exhibits almost as relics.¹¹

A common feature of former concentration and death camps, a challenge to all those who design exhibitions at such places, determined the nature of the exhibition: the inseparable alloy of documentation and commemoration, »of real and relic, of artefacts as carrier of information and artefacts as everlasting past.«¹² A thick layer of commemoration coated the documentation of the masses of victims through their belongings, sanctifying the place.

The cross was problematic, as it set the history of the place in a religious context. Moreover, as a Christian symbol, it does not represent the Jewish victims. It can even bestow on the mass extermination of mainly Jews an intolerable sense, since the cross as symbol of the death of Jesus Christ signifies martyrdom, resurrection, and salvation of humankind from sin. Not to mention the fact that the majority of the perpetrators were at least nominally Christians, and the various Christian churches had collaborated in their own ways with National Socialism.¹³

In spite of these connotations, I argue that this early cross was not an attempt to deliberately Christianize the place and minimize the death of Jewish victims, but was simply *the* death symbol in Polish main-

11 APMAB, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Hein/2083.

12 Knigge, »Gedenkstätten«, 380.

13 On discussions about the presence of cross at Auschwitz in the 1980s and 1990s, see Zubrzycki, *The Crosses*.

stream culture and thus for the authors of the exhibition as well. The American historian Jonathan Huener suggested that the cross might have been »a mild expression of resistance to the regime.«¹⁴ This is probably true for Christian symbols erected after 1947. However, in the first post-war years the communists did not really oppose Catholic commemoration practices, and sometimes even supported them. Not being fully settled in, they did not yet have the opportunity to impose strict memory policies, and the »soft« or less controversial field of memory offered them the chance to gain legitimacy and support.

The cross in the »wild« exhibition of block 4 was by far not the only cross or religious reference at Auschwitz-Birkenau in the first year after the liberation. The wall of crematorium I in the main camp showed a picture of a cross, as did the yard of the execution wall next to block 111. A plate at the entrance to this block said this place »is sanctified by the blood of the Poles, who fought for freedom.« Visitors put flowers at several other places and left plates with a cross and the name of a perished relative. Moreover, in Birkenau, someone had erected a cross on the crematorium ruins.

Throughout the first post-war years there was apparently also a critical discussion about the cross's legitimacy.¹⁵ In a comment on the »wild« exhibition in block 4, Zofia Żorecka claimed that it was a »universal human and most dignified symbol of suffering, regardless of confession.«¹⁶ The former Ravensbrück inmate Eugenia Kocwa argued in the Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* that the erection of a cross at an execution place was the customary form of commemoration, practiced for centuries. It would restore the dignity of the anonymous, humiliated dead. It does not matter, she writes, that

many of those who perished there did not see the cross as their emblem. The cross is not only the symbol of the Christian idea – it is a symbol of suffering. Those who died a martyr's death there deserve the cross.¹⁷

Kocwa neither sees the incompatibility of the Christian symbol nor of the term *martyr* with the faith and fate of the majority of victims.

14 Huener, *Auschwitz*, 70.

15 Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*, 204-213.

16 Żorecka, »Wiedza oświęcimska.«

17 Kocwa, »Oświęcimskie krzyże.«



The main camp's crematorium with a cross (APMAB Dz. IX, No. 21390/17).

Both statements indicate that the community that commemorates is much more decisive for the commemoration than the ones that perished. They show how neatly commemoration was fitted into the Catholic-Polish self-images and desires, leaving hardly any room for alternative interpretations and needs.

The material battle

On December 31, 1945, Alfred Fiderkiewicz proposed in the State National Council that Auschwitz-Birkenau should become a memorial, and the council agreed four weeks later. Throughout the year 1945, former political prisoners as well as inhabitants of the town Oświęcim had written letters to the head of the KRN, Bolesław Bierut, advocating the idea to make Auschwitz-Birkenau a memorial site. The KRN voted unanimously for Fiderkiewicz's suggestion, and in February, the Ministers' Council decided to put the future museum under the responsibility of the Department of Museums and Memorials of the Polish Martyrdom, a section of the Ministry of Culture and Art.¹⁸ However, it was not just the Ministry that felt responsible for the place. During the first year after the liberation, the competencies were not clear at all. Legally,

¹⁸ AAN, zesp. URM, sygn. 1100, 114.

the 18th Polish Infantry Regiment had received the territory from the Red Army. Several state institutions used parts of the grounds, and the material camp remains incited diverse desires. The Ministry of Construction wanted to recycle the building materials on the grounds for other purposes. Shortly after the liberation, barracks were already being dismantled. Even the Red Army tore down barracks and sold them.¹⁹

The Provisional Voivodship's Office, on the basis of a contract with the Red Army, claimed all building materials on the former camp grounds for itself.²⁰ As a consequence, it removed material from the premises – even material located in the part of the camp used by the *Tobacco Monopole* state enterprise. The resulting quarrel was small compared to the conflict between the Provisional Voivodship's Office and the District Liquidation Office, which was responsible for the material legacy of German occupation throughout Poland. Despite the Red Army's interim landlordship, the Liquidation Office clearly defined Auschwitz-Birkenau as a German legacy. It prevailed and took over the responsibility for the camp complex in early 1946. The responsible District Liquidation Office began to inventory material and items, estimate prices, and to sell them – including the belongings of the victims. Charitable organizations and town institutions could apply to receive things free of charge. The town of Oświęcim significantly benefited from that: the market square became paved with stones from Birkenau. Even private persons sought assignment of material. Already by April 1945 the number of people asking for material was so high that the office had to somehow regulate the distribution.

Obviously, the interests of the Liquidation Office directly collided with those of the emerging museum. Whereas the latter strived to keep as much as possible, to preserve buildings and collect potential exhibits, the Liquidation Office wanted to earn as much as possible by selling whatever was sellable. The first museum staff literally fought with the Liquidation Office staff over every piece. They hid things, or guarded potential exhibits the Liquidation Office had already destined to sell.²¹ All in all the communication between the museum and the office was characterized by mistrust and a conflict of interests. The Ministry of Culture demanded that the museum receive all remains from the Main

19 On the state of the former camp grounds, see for instance »Sprawozdanie z działalności oddziału Krakowskiego«, 84.

20 Concerning the conflict with the Liquidation Office, see Hansen, »*Nie wieder Auschwitz!*«, 83-88.

21 APMAB, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Szymański/2621, 3 f.; zesp. Wsp., sygn. 96, 61-62.

Liquidation Office without charge. Only a presentation of genuine exhibits – such as shoes and suitcases – in a considerable number would enable the museum to become a symbol »of the threat and suffering, of the victimhood and sacrifice of those who fought for Poland.«²² This claim indicated that the Ministry advocated the same exposition strategy as the first »wild« exhibition – showing many items of one kind and hence documenting the number of people murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The main Liquidation Office did not reject the museum's demand for exhibits, but still wanted to gain as much profit as possible out of the remains. The museum staff member Jan Gondek complained that the majority of things they received from the Office were broken, not usable or very dirty – hence not sellable anyway. The conflict between the Museum and the Office went on until the official opening of the museum in July 1947. Up to only a couple of weeks before, the Liquidation Office was still dismantling former camp buildings and selling the material.

It was not only the Office that threatened or menaced the material remains of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Theft and devastation were also significant problems in the early phase of the museum. The latter was mainly caused by grave robbers, who dug into the mass graves and ash fields for gold teeth and other valuables. By taking off layers of soil and ash, they significantly changed the surface of the territory.²³ They did not limit their activities to the fenced territory, but searched everywhere they expected ashes. They combed even the riverbed of the Sola, where the Germans had poured ash and incompletely burned human remains.

The municipality was well aware of the problem. In September 1945 the Voivode of Cracow reported to the Ministry of Public Administration that in Birkenau people were digging up corpses and breaking gold teeth out of jaws. Red Army soldiers as well took part in the robbery.²⁴ Even the Ministers' Council had to deal with the issue.²⁵

The press reported on the grave robbers as well. The daily *Dziennik Ludowy* complained that people who wanted to commemorate their beloved ones were confronted with the sight of plunderers, who plough and comb the ground without any shame.²⁶ Press articles used such terms as »the famous gold of Auschwitz«, »Eldorado Oświęcim«

22 AAN, zesp. URM, sygn. 5/760, 27-28.

23 APMAB, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Porębski/496, 20-21; *ibid.*, sygn. Hantz/2061, 24.

24 AAN, zesp. URM, sygn. 5/760, 18-19.

25 *Ibid.*, zesp. URM, sygn. 5/1100, 105.

26 »Oświęcim 1946 r.«

and »Goldmine Auschwitz«, indicating that the extent of the robbery was a commonly known matter.²⁷

A letter by former Polish political prisoners to Bierut requested that the Polish Army secure the former camp grounds, as otherwise they would be exposed to »permanent theft and profanation, first of all the mass grave of 450 Poles, who were shot right before the German withdrawal.«²⁸ As the explicitly mentioned mass grave was hardly more exposed to grave robbery than other graves, the letter indicates that it was of particular importance to the authors. They further expressed their concern that »the lack of care for the concentration camp in Auschwitz could become a topic of foreign media coverage, what would portray the Polish government in an unfavourable light.«²⁹ They used the notion of international attention and potential image damage to enforce their local request for a guard of the former camp.

Neither the lack of resources in post-war Poland nor the unclear division of competencies and responsibilities at the former camp grounds contributed to a timely solution of the problem. At some point, police controls intensified, hindering but not stopping the grave robbers.³⁰ However, the museum staff continued to perceive the grave robbery as a central problem.

The staff members developed some ambition to bring the situation in Birkenau under control. Some workers became famous for their results in catching grave robbers. Despite their effort, the destruction and desecration of the graves was a central issue not only in the early post-war period, but remained a problem for many years.³¹

The museum staff

Right after the Ministry of Culture and Art took the responsibility for turning Auschwitz-Birkenau into a memorial, they appointed the former political prisoner Tadeusz Wąsowicz director of the not yet exist-

27 Ibid.; »Kopalnia złota w Oświęcimiu«; »W siódmą rocznicę pierwszego transportu śmierci«; »Muzeum Martyrologii.«

28 AAN, zesp. MKiS, sygn. CZM (Wydział Muzeów i Pomników Walki z Faszyzmem) 19b, 1.

29 Ibid., 2.

30 AAN, zesp. URM, sygn. 5/760, 17, 20, 26-29.

31 See for instance: APMAB, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Hantz/2061, 24; *ibid.*, sygn. Porębski/496, 20-21; *ibid.*, zesp. Wsp., sygn. Zbrzeski/1086, 280, 285; Szymański, »Ich musste«, 48.

ing museum. In spring 1946, Wąsowicz recruited other former political prisoners of Auschwitz as staff members, mostly people he already had known during imprisonment.³² At least three of them had worked in the same place: the camp Gestapo.³³ This had also been the workplace of Ludwik Rajewski, who now headed the department of the Ministry of Culture responsible for Auschwitz-Birkenau.³⁴

As eyewitnesses, former prisoners were experts concerning at least a part of the history of Auschwitz-Birkenau. However, their recruitment might also have been motivated by Wąsowicz's wish to support his former co-prisoners. In the materially difficult post-war times, a work place that offered access to housing and a community of people with the same war experience was indeed attractive – particularly for former prisoners who often lacked vocational training or had not worked in their professions for a long time. However, later descriptions of the recruitment process are slanted towards the motivation and commitment of the early staff. Jerzy Wróblewski, director of the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau from 1990 to 2006, frames it as follows:

Right after the liberation, when they [the former prisoners] had not even celebrated that they survived this hell, that they »made it«, they came back here from all corners of Poland. They were willing to testify the truth with their presence and control the order of events, without asking for payment or living conditions.³⁵

Despite his ignoring the material gains of a job at the emerging memorial, he had a point. The early museum staff that grew to 20 people by the end of 1946 was reportedly very dedicated to dealing with the countless challenges their duties involved.³⁶ As the camp was in an unbelievably devastated state, the staff was busy clearing the grounds, renovating the buildings, and making the former camp accessible.³⁷ German and Austrian prisoners of war as well as some imprisoned

32 AAN, zesp. URM, sygn. 5/760, 26. APMAB, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Szymański/2659, I.

33 Ibid., zesp. Ośw., sygn. Szymański/2621, 2; *ibid.*, zesp. Wsp., sygn. Zbrzeski/1086, 269.

34 Ibid., zesp. Ośw., sygn. vol. 52. See also Szymański, »Ich musste«, 48; Szymańska, »Tadeusz Wąsowicz«, 52.

35 Wróblewski, »Das Gedenken«, 4.

36 Zbrzeski, »Arbeit oder Berufung?« 63. See also APMAB, zesp. RA/Smoleń, sygn. 63.

37 AAN, zesp. URM, sygn. 5/760, 28. Szymański, »Ich musste«, 49.



The museum's staff during a break from work in the former camp of Birkenau (APMAB, Dz. IX, No. 21308-3).

collaborators assisted them, as the former campgrounds also hosted a detainment camp. First located in the former main camp, it moved to Birkenau in April 1945. Under surveillance by the Red Army, and after their withdrawal the Polish army, and sometimes only the museum staff, the internees cleared the place, repaired buildings, and even took part in the construction of the first exhibition.

The early museum staff also collected exhibits – often not an easy job, and not only because of the Liquidation Office. Tadeusz Szymański recalls that Wąsowicz »ordered to bring him every little piece of paper stemming from the Germans« – an order hard to follow »in times without toilet paper«, he comments.³⁸ His joke points to the fact that the museum was created in times of general shortage, including lack of the most basic everyday items. It cannot be a surprise that for many, the reuse of material for maintaining everyday life and business had priority over the building of a museum. Szymański also mentions that the staff members had so many tasks in the early period that it was difficult to prioritize retrospectively what clearly seemed most important.

Guided tours constituted another important part of the early museum staff's work, particularly as it was not permissible to visit the grounds individually before the official opening in July 1947. The

³⁸ APMAB, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Szymański/2659, 2-3; *ibid.*, sygn. Szymański/2621, 4.

guided groups were huge, especially on holidays, when they often numbered more than 100, and occasionally over 200 people.³⁹ Every tour passed the gate crowned with the words »Arbeit macht frei« and block 11 with the execution wall in its yard. For the most part, however, the presentation of the tour was up to the guide. The qualities of the tours varied widely in didactic form and content.⁴⁰ The staff members described the camp mostly based on their own experiences, giving an authentic, vivid impression of their captivity. However, their representation of the camp's history contained gaps, was not always correct historically, and focused primarily on the fate of the Polish political prisoners. The Museum therefore started trainings for the museum staff in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Art, and the guided tours became more standardized.⁴¹

In 1946, about 100,000 people visited the former camp, and in 1947, the year the museum officially opened, the number grew to 170,000.⁴² Among the visitors were countless relatives of murdered prisoners, but also people who simply wanted to commemorate the victims of the occupation. Associations of former prisoners and combatants organized group trips to Oświęcim. The Farmers' Self-Help sent visitors in whole trains, who were picked up by staff members at the station and then escorted first to Birkenau, and then to the former main camp.⁴³

The museum tried to organize the visit of the memorial place in the best possible way. Wąsowicz approached the vice minister of communication Balicki with the request for a direct morning train from Cracow to Oświęcim, as the only early train connection stopped at every station on the way for up to 45 minutes and arrived only at 11:50. The »considerable number of groups who would like to visit the Auschwitz Camp do not manage to do so in the few afternoon hours«, he argued.⁴⁴ Groups who registered in advance for a ceremony of taking soil and ashes to their home communities were able to purchase urns.⁴⁵

From the very first day, it was not easy to balance the logistic necessities of a tourist hotspot with the maintenance of authenticity and a

39 Ibid., zesp. Wsp., sygn. Zbrzeski/1086, 285.

40 Ibid., zesp. Ośw., sygn. Brandhuber/1762, 19.

41 Ibid., zesp. Wsp., sygn. Zbrzeski/1086, 274-275.

42 See Huener and Mensfelt, »Geneza«, 28. By mid-1946 the memorial was visited on Sundays and holidays by up to 5,000 visitors per day. See AAN, zesp. URM, sygn. 5/760, 28.

43 See Szymański, »Ich musste«, 49.

44 AAN, zesp. PZbWP, sygn. 52, 47-48.

45 Ibid., 9.

dignified commemoration. In 1946, one former prisoner criticized that the former building of the Gestapo hosted a »bar with Vodka and beer« and the entrance fee had to be paid at the former guardhouse that consequently reminded him of a theatre box office.⁴⁶ Indeed, a small cafeteria offered beverages to the visitors who often spent several hours on the grounds. And a small entrance fee was supposed to increase the museum's limited financial resources. In the beginning, the museum did not even have a regular budget. When funds were used up, Wąsowicz travelled to Warsaw, presented the bills to the ministry, and received a new amount with which he had to economize.⁴⁷ Only after the summer of 1947 did the Museum receive regular payments. However, they were so low that the Ministry of Culture and Art asked the Ministers' Council Executive Committee for a one-time higher payment in order to quickly turn the former camp grounds into a place suitable and safe for visitors.⁴⁸ The museum's staff and its director were well aware that the establishment of the museum did not have priority in the country that was struggling with post-war reconstruction. Consequently, they actively sought additional sources to cover expenses. They grew potatoes in Birkenau, kept rabbits and chicken on the grounds of the main camp, and even ran a gas station close to the so-called White House in Birkenau.⁴⁹ Concerned with the working conditions of the early museum staff, the president of the Polish Association of Former Political Prisoners, Cyrankiewicz, asked the Ministry for Work and Social Issues whether they could supply the museum with 50 pairs of shoes and 50 blankets for the museum staff. He argued that the »demoralization and barbarization of the local population« would make the job particularly hard, presumably referring to the grave robbery.⁵⁰

Despite material and other difficulties, extraordinary work motivation and team spirit characterized the museum staff. Along with all employees being former prisoners, Wąsowicz's charismatic personality and leadership skills further contributed to a harmonic, informal, and engaged atmosphere in the museum. »We felt like a big family«, recalls Tadeusz Szymański. »We visited and supported each other. Of course, we also had conflicts, but »Baca« was able to deescalate them

46 Kydryński, »W Oświęcimiu.«

47 APMAB, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Szymański/2659, 1; sygn. Szymański/2621, 3.

48 AAN, zesp. URM, sygn. 5/760, 28.

49 See APMAB, zesp. Wsp., sygn. Zbrzeski/1086, 269-270; *ibid.*, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Żłobnicki/2279, 3; SkAPMAB, zesp. Protokoły, sygn. 1/5, 4,6; sygn. 1/5 Protokoły 1952, 6.

50 AAN, zesp. PZbWP, sygn. 52, 2.

just in time. He was a man with great charisma, he led the way by being a model. His personality, his personal culture, had a great influence on our community.«⁵¹

Just as his nickname »Baca« (Shepherd), Wąsowicz's skills and style of leadership can be traced back to his activities in the scout movement. He managed to integrate the staff members in decision-making processes and thus give them the feeling of individual significance and responsibility.⁵² He gave lectures on various topics to increase the general knowledge of the staff members. Moreover, he initiated sports activities – for example, 100 meter sprints between crematorium I and the villa of Rudolph Höss, as well as football and volleyball games. Wąsowicz considered sport and spare time activities necessary because otherwise the fresh memories of captivity and the intense confrontation with the place could lead to »barbed wire disease.«⁵³ Such activities were meant to help the staff members deal with camp history in general and their own traumatic experiences in particular.

The strong identification of the museum staff with the work and the work place earned respect, but also criticism. The communist publicist Jerzy Putrament complained about the fact that young people were dealing intensely with the topic and the place, instead of starting a new life and taking up a productive occupation.

The guides of Auschwitz are young, friendly, and pleasant. However, [...] these former prisoners are already experts, and that is quite horrible. Such a guide comes up to an object, and declaims: »This, ladies and gentlemen, is the only remaining crematorium. [...] It was a small crematorium with a capacity of 500 (for instance) corpses daily. And here. Here you place the corpse (the carriage is freshly cleaned) and hop! (the tracks and wheels are oiled) the corpse is in the oven.« [...] In front of a blown up crematorium, another guide declaimed with a voice full of hope: »One [of the crematoria, I.H.] is probably going to be reconstructed, as it was. The plans remain. However, (and here a melancholic undertone) maybe this is just idle talk.«⁵⁴

51 Szymański, »Ich musste«, 49.

52 Ibid.

53 APMAB, zesp. Wsp., sygn. Zbrzeski/1086, 292-293.

54 Putrament, »Notatki o Oświęcimiu.«

Putrament's observation, however sharply formulated, points to the fact that the former prisoners usually dealt with the place and its history differently from how visitors did.

Auschwitz versus Birkenau

From the very beginning, the museum was supposed to fulfil political tasks, mainly to convey the government-authorized image of history focusing on battle and victory. But how to put that into practice? The Ministry of Culture and Art decided on a rough framework in summer 1946, but left the detailed conception to the museum and its staff. Lacking a model, this task was challenging.⁵⁵ »Actually, no one of us had a precise idea how the activities of the newly opened institution should look like«, Wincenty Hein remembered.⁵⁶ Moreover, the museum was not completely free in the design of the place. All plans and texts needed approval of the Department of Museums and Memorials of Polish Martyrdom at the Ministry of Culture and Art.

The Ministry planned to install the basic exhibition of the camp's history in several blocks of the former main camp, among them block 4, where the »wild« exhibition already existed. For Birkenau, the ministry projected a memorial for the »Polish and international martyrdom« at the place of the destroyed gas chambers. Fences, brick barracks, and several wooden barracks were supposed to be preserved. The brick barracks were intended to host different national exhibitions and information on the histories of other camps. In July 1946, France had already agreed to set up an exhibition in such a barrack.

In spite of these plans, Birkenau decayed and fell into oblivion, while the former main camp turned into a memorial and museum. In 1947, Zofia Rozensztrauch, who worked at the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (*Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich*, CKŻP), wrote:

Poland and the whole world speaks about Auschwitz, but it is an uncontested fact that Birkenau is the place where the soil is more blood-soaked than any other place. In Birkenau, a camp five times bigger than Auschwitz, [the chimneys of] three crematoria smoked day and night, in Birkenau most of the prisoners suffered and died,

⁵⁵ APMAB, zesp. Ośw., sygn. Szymański/2659, 3.

⁵⁶ Ibid., sygn. Hein/2083, 13.

Birkenau is the place of mass execution of millions of citizens of Jewish nationality.⁵⁷

The situation that Auschwitz I was the first camp, and already well known in Poland before Birkenau had been established, can account for the fact that Auschwitz became the common term for the camp complex. However, why was Birkenau abandoned and neglected in the immediate post-war years, despite the plans of the Ministry?

The choice to set up the main exhibition in the former main camp reflected first of all practical consideration. After the Germans had destroyed the gas chambers and crematoria in Birkenau, the site was already in disarray. Thieves and grave robbers as well as the dismantling by the District Liquidation Office devastated it even more. Making Birkenau the centre of the memorial would have required massive clearing and construction works, which seemed too expensive given the financial situation of the museum. The Ministry did not even consider the conservation of many parts of buildings because of the limited budget. Moreover, it was foreseeable that the moist, muddy ground would complicate or impede restoration and maintenance. Last but not least the huge territory would have required many more guards to ensure the security of the place. The »stone-walled little brick houses« of Auschwitz I were solid, on dry ground, easy to oversee and thus more suitable for the establishment of an exhibition than the »decaying wooden horse stables« of Birkenau. Nevertheless, Auschwitz I was not the place of the mass killing of Jews, but rather the place of persecution and murder of Polish political prisoners. Rozensztrauch pointed out that the »famous block 11, [...] Poland's holiest relic, stands in Auschwitz.« Indeed, the emphasis on Auschwitz I corresponded with the many actors' intention to focus on the part of history they identified with.⁵⁸ Those who wanted to emphasize the persecution of the ethnic Poles could argue that the main camp was its authentic place, while the mass murder of Jews happened in Birkenau.

Apart from that, the question of property was a matter of conflict, what hampered any planning for a long time. The German occupiers had expropriated farmers and built the camp on their fields. After the war, the former owners reclaimed their property. Several institutions, for instance the Museum and the Cracow District Commission of the Research on German Crimes in Poland, advocated the nationaliza-

⁵⁷ AŻIH, zesp. CKŻP, sygn. 61.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

tion of the grounds. For a long time, the government discussed different models of compensation, and even the resettlement of locals to the »regained territories.« These considerations triggered insecurity and protest in the local community. At the same time, the former owners simply started to farm at least on those fields that were not inside the camp fence. Thus they created a status quo that later led to the nationalization of a much smaller terrain than originally estimated.

Despite the property conflict and the continuing decay, Birkenau remained an impressive place. Tadeusz Wąsowicz advocated emphasizing this part of the former camp more, to pay tribute to the historic »proportion between the main camp and Birkenau« and convey an authentic impression of the reality of the camp. In contrast to Birkenau, the main camp had been mainly a harmless facade of the original aim of the camp, he claimed.⁵⁹ Consequently, he decided that guided tours should start in Birkenau. It is difficult to assess, however, whether this order was implemented.

The Jewish community

Rozensztrauch's criticism did not only address the state of Birkenau:

Neither in Auschwitz, nor in Birkenau will you find a single word, or a single plaque documenting the suffering and death of millions of Jews. The Central Committee needs to deal with these painful issues, which affect the entire Jewish community, with no exception.⁶⁰

Already in the fall of 1946, another Central Committee of Polish Jews member had complained about the non- or misrepresentation of the Jewish fate at Auschwitz-Birkenau:

The guide who reported the national-socialist crimes in the camp, spoke solely about the suffering of the Poles. Concerning the Jews he mentioned only Jew-Hulk⁶¹ [...] and the fact that the Sonderkom-

59 Szymańska, »Tadeusz Wąsowicz«, 55.

60 AŻIH, zesp. CKŻP, sygn. 61 (ŻTKSP, Korespondencja krajowa 1947 r.); see also Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*, 176-177.

61 One of the functionary prisoners was called Jew-Hulk, who was famous for his brutality. See Sehn, »Obóz zagłady«, 98.

mando consisted of Jews. Apart from that neither the guide nor any inscriptions remembered the Jews and their suffering at Auschwitz.⁶²

During the planning process of the museum, Tadeusz Wąsowicz had identified the »Jewish question« as the most important one in the camp, and that it needed adequate attention in the museum.⁶³ However, members of other institutions involved in the planning did not support this idea. They worried that this could obstruct the view of the fate of the Polish political prisoners' suffering and give the impression that only Jews had perished in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Moreover, emphasizing Jews clashed with the plan rooted in communist ideology to present the inmates »without consideration of nationality, race, and home country.«⁶⁴ Apparently this resulted in hardly mentioning the Jewish victims at all. One month before the official opening of the museum, a Jewish delegation visited Auschwitz-Birkenau and found an astonishing lack of information on the Shoah. A Jewish exhibition was not designated, and all the artifacts that illustrate the fate of the Jews were spread throughout different blocks, according to the topical organization of the exposition. Thereupon the vice-chairmen of the CKŻP, Adolf Berman, suggested establishing a Jewish pavilion analogous to the museum at the former concentration camp Majdanek.⁶⁵

Not even three weeks before the official opening, representatives of Jewish institutions, the Ministry of Culture and Art, and the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau agreed that the CKŻP would temporarily receive one room in block 4, and after renovation two blocks of the former main camp, to establish an exhibition on the persecution and murder of the Jews in Auschwitz-Birkenau.⁶⁶ At the last minute, the CKŻP contracted the Jewish artist cooperative *Sztuka* (Art) from Łódź to design the exhibition room in block 4. It opened on June 14, 1947, together with the official inauguration of the whole new museum.⁶⁷

62 AŻIH, zesp. CZKH, Oddział w Katowicach, sygn. 349.

63 AAN, zesp. PZbWP, sygn. 13, 18.

64 Ibid.

65 AŻIH, zesp. Prezydium CKŻP, sygn. 303/I/7a.

66 Ibid.; AAN, zesp. PZbWP, sygn. 52, 41-42.

67 »Muzeum w Oświęcimiu«; AŻIH, zesp. CZKH, sygn. 109; zesp. Prezydium CKŻP, sygn. 303/I/7a.



The Jewish exhibition (APMAB, Dz. IX, No. 25122-2).

Conclusion

Initially, the memorial at the former concentration camp Majdanek seemed to become a more central place of commemoration than Auschwitz-Birkenau.⁶⁸ Established much earlier and more quickly, it aimed to present all kinds of evidence of German crimes and to »inform the whole world about the suffering of the nations, and in particular of the martyrdom of the Polish nation.«⁶⁹ Liberated on July 22, 1944, it was the first concentration camp the Allies reached. Almost upon arrival, the Red Army appointed an investigation commission that included Polish representatives starting in August. This commission not only formed the beginning of the documentation of German crimes in Poland, but also advocated the creation of a museum at Majdanek. In October 1944 the provisional government, the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN), assigned a special bureau with this task. None of the four directors who headed the bureau in the 1940s had been a

68 On the early history of Majdanek see Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*, 165-175; Kielboń and Balawejder, *Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku*; Kowalczyk-Nowak and Kranz, *Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku*.

69 Quote of the first director Antoni Ferski, quoted in Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning*, 167.

prisoner at Majdanek, and the history of the museum's establishment offered hardly any space for »wild« exhibitions. Instead, maintenance work began right away, and in September 1945, during the »Majdanek Week«, the first exhibition opened.⁷⁰ In this light, the characteristics of Auschwitz-Birkenau's development into a memorial site sharpen in contrast. Its establishment was a highly complicated and controversial matter, very much influenced by people's presence and agency.

Locals, former prisoners, and other individuals dedicated to the matter initiated the beginnings of commemoration – by writing letters, setting up the »wild« exhibition, organizing a mass in the memory of the victims, or leaving crosses and flowers at particular places within the former camp. At the same time, the museum's construction was – contrary to that of Majdanek – characterized by constant shortages: lack of time to do everything that needs to be done, lack of power in the struggle with the Liquidation Office, lack of guards to stop the grave robbery, lack of guidance or models, of material, and of items of daily use. Thus the post-war context proved of great significance for the establishment of Auschwitz-Birkenau as a memorial. Improvisation, pragmatism, and the material and spatial status quo played a major role in shaping the commemoration at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Despite early plans to use the camp grounds for farming, vocational schooling, or industrial purposes, the idea of commemoration and exhibition at the original site prevailed. Several protagonists lobbied for the establishment of a memorial museum, mainly camp survivors, but also politicians and families of victims. However, many other people as well helped bring about the commemoration and contributed to its institutionalization. Partly by action, even on a very small material scale: simply leaving flowers, a plate, or a cross changed the appearance of the place. Mainly, however, by sheer presence: it makes a difference if 250 people attend a celebration, or 25,000 – especially in a small town like Oświęcim, and without any promotion of the event. The visitors, particularly with their high numbers, gave the place legitimacy and significance, and bestowed on the memorial a matter of course that was difficult if not impossible to undo.

Quite an opposite way of shaping space happened mainly at Birkenau, where plunderers, grave robbers, and partly even the District Liquidation Office with their material interest changed the look of the place significantly, actually devastating it. This determined the early challenges for the museum staff: creating a material base for the mu-

⁷⁰ See *ibid.*, 167-168.

seum. Moreover, it tipped the scales in favor of installing the main exhibition in former Auschwitz I and prevented Birkenau from becoming more central, as the museum's resources did not suffice to clear and reconstruct Birkenau to the necessary extent.

Most people who were involved in the early commemoration and museum construction were Catholic Poles who primarily identified with the fate of the Polish political prisoners. Perceiving Auschwitz-Birkenau as a symbol of suffering and struggle, they integrated it into the historical images of a century-old Polish-German conflict and, more importantly, the continuing resistance of Poles against suppression. They designed the place in accord with these interpretations. However, the materiality they used to shape it literally belonged to the story of the murdered Jews. It was their private belongings that were used as an insignia of mass murder, but not as symbol of the murderous antisemitism. Birkenau was commemorated as the place of mass extermination, and in this context a cross was set up on the ruins of the crematoria. Certainly these material references were intended to present the magnitude and brutality of German crimes committed at Auschwitz-Birkenau. However, lacking historical explanation, they blurred the significant differences in the fates of persecuted groups, and suggested that the main victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau were Catholic Poles. The first, »wild«, exhibition had already set the tone for this practice. Makers and visitors of the museum simply related much more to their »own« fate, a political prisoner's fate, than to the fate of over a million Jews who were killed right after their deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau. More than in ill will or antisemitism, this was rooted in the fear that accounts of the Jewish fate could threaten the significance of the »own« suffering.

To conclude, material concerns and spatial circumstances played a significant role in the establishment of the memorial. The spatial and material approach to the early commemoration at Auschwitz-Birkenau has shown that the State Museum and Memorial emerged from competing interests, conflicts, and compromises. The practices were coined by the realities of a devastated post-war country, and by the fact that the majority of the population, and more importantly the majority of the people present and active at the former camp site, had a Catholic-Polish mainstream background.

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Anna Zielińska

Languages of the Territories Incorporated into Poland in 1945: Arguments against the Thesis of Linguistic Integration

The dialect map of Poland, in addition to the areas of the four main dialects of the Polish language and the regional language Kashubian, covers large linguistic areas – the Lower Silesian Voivodship, the Lubusz Voivodship, the West Pomeranian Voivodship, the north-western part of the Pomeranian Voivodship, and the northern part of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodship – all of them containing what are called *new mixed subdialects*.¹ This notion encompasses the areas located on the historical Polish-German contact area, which belonged to Germany until 1945. Both the map of dialects and the classification of these areas through the new mixed subdialects obscure what is most interesting here: the diverse and active multilingualism of the inhabitants of the borderland region. Thomas Krefeld, in his book *Einführung in die Migrationslinguistik* (Introduction to Migration Linguistics), asserts in the chapter entitled »Was die Sprachenkarten verschweigen – und was der Untertitel sagen will« (What the linguistic maps leave unsaid – and what the subtitle would like to say) that the maps are not able to reflect the specificity of multilingualism because they only present languages and not communicative communities, and they do this only from one perspective: the geographical one. Maps show only those linguistic features that are constitutive elements of the linguistic topography of a particular territory.² The phenomenon of multilingualism, however, is passed over by the authors of the maps because they are interested in languages and not speakers. Yet specificity can be discovered only through the adoption of an anthropological perspective: an interest in and focus on the speakers (and not social and linguistic structures) and intensive field studies that consist in carrying out a large number of in-depth autobiographical interviews with the people of the region.

The new mixed subdialects, though found within Polish borders, are named in such a general manner that they are outside of the range of the Polish dialect map, which shows only the indigenous dialects. This is because the new mixed subdialects are within the renamed territory.

1 See: Karaś, *Dialekty i gwary polskie*.

2 Krefeld, *Einführung in die Migrationslinguistik*, 111.

The renaming of places became common practice in the twentieth century, as noted by Alastair Bonnet. A great many places were given new names, from small villages to entire countries. This act, seemingly simple and innocent, had an overwhelming impact on inhabitants, because it often imposed a new ethno-national identity on an old location.³ Well-known examples include Turkey in 1923 (from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire), and Thailand in 1949 (from Siam). East Prussia is also a such place, being divided between Poland and the Soviet Union in 1945. The rest of the German territories incorporated into Poland as a consequence of the Second World War are as well.

In the years 2009 to 2013, I headed a research project in the areas incorporated into Poland in 1945, in particular in the Lubusz Region, which should be understood as the territory of the current Lubusz Voivodeship. There are two large cities situated in this voivodeship: Gorzów Wielkopolski and Zielona Góra.⁴ This area is referred to as *Ziemia Lubuska* (Lubusz Region/Lubusz Land) in Polish academic literature. This name beginning with capital letters is an orthographical exception, because according to the norms of the Polish language, names of historical regions should be written in lower case – *ziemia kujawsko-dobrzyńska*, *ziemia łódzka*, and *ziemia kaliska*, for example. This exceptional notation suggests that this is not a historical *ziemia lubuska*, but a region artificially created by administrative actions.

Ziemia Lubuska differs from other regions within the territories incorporated in 1945. Historically, it was the area situated on the middle Oder/Odra River, which did not belong to Pomerania, Silesia, or Greater Poland. There were no autochthonous groups speaking a Polish subdialect there. It was the poor and small fragments of the lands which were still unnamed after the division of the new territories of Poland into districts based on historical regions. It was decided that this area should be expanded by connecting it to the lands belonging to other historical regions and to unite them under one common name. The name *Ziemia Lubuska* appears in 1946 in the book by Maria Kielczewska and Andrzej Grodka. It referred to the medieval

3 Bonnett, *Off the Map*, 8-9.

4 I conducted the research on the Lubusz Voivodeship in the years 2009-2013 in the framework of the grant NN104 079739 of the National Science Centre. During the studies I carried out in-depth biographical interviews with 137 inhabitants of the region in 52 places. All the informants belonged to the oldest generation. The results were published in Zielińska, *Mowa pogranicza* (2013).

bishopric in Lubusz⁵ and the Slavic tribe *Lubuszanie*. The new geographical concept concerned the aspirations of Poland to also obtain the territories lying on the left bank of the Oder River. The campaign was justified by the Slavic Lusatian population there.⁶

As already mentioned, the Lubusz region was incorporated into Poland in 1945. At the end of January 1945, the exodus of its inhabitants began as they fled the Red Army by crossing the Oder River. People continued to abandon this land as a result of exile, resettlement, or emigration. As early as the spring of 1945, new residents started to arrive: those displaced from eastern voivodeships of Poland and from the northern districts of Romania (from the area of the historical Bukovina), which were incorporated into the Soviet Union, and settlers from other regions of Poland (mainly from Greater Poland and Mazovia), as well as Ukrainians and Lemkos from south-eastern Poland, displaced during 'Operation Vistula' in 1947. Thus the area became diversified ethnically, culturally, and linguistically. In everyday life, the people of the region spoke German, Polish, Ukrainian, Lemko, Belarusian, and other languages, including Romani. These were not the standard variants of these languages, rather their geographic and social variants.

While undertaking linguistic field studies in 2009, I posed the question to myself whether this diversity still exists today. I found puzzling the opinions among linguists that in the areas incorporated in 1945 only the general Polish language is spoken, and, moreover, the purest Polish.⁷ I frequently encountered this view also during my research in the Lubusz region. This belief is popular among the inhabitants of the region, who considered this to be an obvious and undisputed truth. Yet during my investigation, I realised quite quickly that in fact the linguistic diversity in the Lubusz region persists to this day. So why do the people in the region not want to recognise this? Why do linguists also not recognise it?

In my opinion, the mental transformation of the multi-ethnic and multilingual structure into an ethnically homogeneous land is a continuation of the post-war policy of the Polish People's Republic. After 1945, the inhabitants of the Lubusz region were put through a social engineering project the aim of which was to change their identity. They were expected to no longer be Germans, Gypsies (Romani),

5 Today the town of Lubusz (German: Lebus) is in Germany near Frankfurt (Oder).

6 Toczewski, *Ziemia Lubuska*, 25.

7 Bralczyk, *Mówi się*, 15.

Ukrainians, Lemkos, Poleshuks, or Bukovinian – to no longer be people of dual or local identities. All of them had to become Poles, members of the new society of »regained territories«, proving – by means of standardised national culture and the standardised purest Polish language – that Poland had the rights to the German territories incorporated in 1945. The authorities officially depicted the incorporated northern and western lands as an integral part of Poland, although the issue of the Polish-German border long remained unresolved.⁸ That is why the myth of »regained territories« was created after the Second World War, the central idea of which was the great return of the Poles to the ancient Polish lands. This communist myth is deeply rooted in the nationalism and in the vision of Poland as a country homogeneous ethnically, religiously, and linguistically. The image of linguistic unification and standardisation of this region, which had nothing in common with the actual linguistic diversity,⁹ is included in a larger cultural picture of ethnically Polish and Catholic Poland. This image functions as doxa – thus what is considered natural and common beliefs, truths about how the social order should look, and binding judgements. These opinions are indisputable, beyond judgement, because they are held to be obvious. The presence of indisputable truths is a symptom of symbolic violence. Pierre Bourdieu considered symbolic violence as imperceptible; it is a »gentle, disguised form of violence«¹⁰ located in the least suspicious areas of life such as religion. Bourdieu shows how political and religious organisations appropriate and control people's views, legitimising the binding social order as »natural«.¹¹

Grażyna Szwat-Gyłybowa, in the panel lecture entitled »The Conscience of Borders« (*Sumienie granic*) at the conference *Konstrukcje i destrukcje tożsamości V. Granice stare i nowe* (Constructions and De-

8 The ratification of the borders between Poland and Germany was finally achieved nearly half a century after the end of World War II, during the meeting of the Bundestag on December 16, 1991. The decision of the German parliament became valid and entered into force one month later: January 16, 1992. There is a voluminous literature concerning the subject of determining the Polish-German border. See, inter alia, Czubiński, *Problem granic*.

9 I document this by means of the collection of transcribed texts of various linguistic variants in my book *Mowa pogranicza*.

10 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*.

11 Bourdieu, *Genese et structure du champ religieux*; Pasieka, *Wielokulturowość po polsku*.

structions of Identity V – Old and New Borders),¹² asserted that the borderlands that were populated by displaced persons under duress are a special case, illustrating the fictitiousness of the ideologised narrative. This type of strategy of the formation of buffer zones is known to historians of all periods. In post-war Poland it was implemented in the west of the country. The arrival of new groups that were to acknowledge the right of the country to the Oder and Nysa rivers frontier was tearing the connective tissue of the German-Polish borderline. To validate the political-demographic fiction in terms of propaganda, it was necessary to create the great historical-philological narrative, one that had to ignore the local cultural reality.

Scholars participated in creating this narrative. Academic research after World War II focused on two issues: first, the process of proving the Polish autochthony of these territories; and second, the cultural and linguistic integration of this area with the rest of Poland. The post-war studies carried out by archaeologists, ethnographers, historians, and dialectologists, and numerous articles and monographs published in the post-war decades, aimed at documenting the Polish heritage in the incorporated territories and at finding artefacts confirming the Polishness of these lands, thereby justifying the right of the Polish state to them. An example is the 1950 collective work entitled *Ziemia Lubuska* in the series *Ziemie Staropolski* (Lands of Old Poland).¹³ Propaganda films were made as well, such as *Ziemia Lubuska* from 1947.¹⁴

The pre-war Polish inhabitants of this territory were of particular significance in the creation of this propagandist ethnic image. In the post-war period the remaining members of the general population purged of Germans were called *autochtoni* (autochthons), a word which had here a specific political connotation. Communist ideologists proclaimed that all the Germans had left the areas incorporated into Poland and that the people who remained were the Poles who had preserved their Polish identity despite unfavourable political conditions when this territory belonged to Germany. Villages such as those in the vicinity of Babimost (Bomst in German), which were inhabited by a Polish minority, played an important role in the creation of the

12 The conference was organised by the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Western and Southern Slavic Studies of the University of Warsaw and the Slavic Foundation. It took place on May 12–13, 2014, in the Staszic Palace in Warsaw.

13 Sczaniecki and Zajchowska, *Ziemia Lubuska*.

14 Brzozowska, *Ziemia Lubuska*.

propagandist image: they were to represent indigenous and pure Polishness, which had resisted Germanisation. In these villages an intensive dialectological research was conducted, the results of which were published in the form of a dialectal text with comments¹⁵ and monographs.¹⁶ The works elaborated by dialectologists are informative about the phonetic, morphological, and syntactic systems, and about the part of lexis of local subdialects belonging to the Greater Poland subdialect, presenting the diachronic evolution of sounds, a collection of inflectional and morphological features, selected vocabulary, and syntactic constructions.

In this dialectological research, however, the bilingualism of informants was consistently omitted, regardless of the fact that even today in everyday life these people speak German as well as the Greater Poland subdialect and/or the common Polish language. The interviews I carried out in these villages show that the active bilingualism was a reality in the 1930s and throughout the war years. In the post-war period this was the reason for the persecution, denunciation, and humiliation experienced by the inhabitants of these villages, such actions being committed by both the authorities and new settlers arriving in the western lands.¹⁷ Moreover, in the Polish subdialectal texts I recorded, there are numerous influences of the German language.¹⁸

The methodology of linguistic research was modelled on the sociological research, which was regarded to be of particular political importance in the incorporated lands. The social situation was examined by sociologists gathered at the Institute for Western Affairs (*Instytut Zachodni*) in Poznań, the Silesian Scientific Institute in Katowice, and the Silesian Institute in Opole. The Polish word *integracja* (integration) was one of those propagandist words (as *autochtoni* mentioned above); this word also derived its special meaning in its relation to the incorporated areas, and it was used to create a fiction. It meant that the new inhabitants of this territory quickly and voluntarily resigned their own culture brought from their places of origin, and accepted all-Poland ideological patterns.

The sociological studies oriented in such a way as to prove its particular perception of integration were carried out systematically, and their results were published in many works, such as the collective vol-

15 Sobierajski, *Polskie teksty gwarowe*; idem, *Dialekty polskie*.

16 Gruchmanowa, *Gwary*.

17 Zielińska, *Mowa pogranicza*, 68-123.

18 Ibid., 100-123.

umes *Tworzenie się nowego społeczeństwa na Ziemiach Zachodnich. Szkice i materiały z badań socjologicznych w województwie zielonogórskim* (The Creation of the New Society in Western Lands. Sketches and materials from the sociological research in the Zielona Góra Voivodeship),¹⁹ and *Spółeczeństwo Ziem Zachodnich. Studium porównawcze wyników badań socjologicznych w województwie zielonogórskim w latach 1958-1960 i 1968-1970* (The Society of Western Lands. A comparative study of the sociological research results in the Zielona Góra Voivodeship in the years 1958-1960 and 1968-1970).²⁰

The research on linguistic integration was developed similarly to the assumptions of the sociological research on social integration. Linguistic integration was defined as the process of changing the subdialect into the general language. The process called social and linguistic integration was aimed at the various groups of settlers adopting the standardised versions – preferred by the State – of national culture and the general Polish language, to such a degree that the traces demonstrating the diverse origin of settlers and the Polish-German bilingualism of the local people would be erased. The goal of this research was to demonstrate that the areas incorporated in 1945 did not differ socially or culturally from the rest of Poland. To ensure this, the results of the studies carried out in these areas had been fabricated beforehand, and some methods and scientific terms simply had to be adjusted to achieve the desired results. Scientists assumed a priori that the integration had already occurred there. Construed in this way, integration is synonymous with such concepts as *polonizacja* (Polonisation), *wynarodowienie* (deprivation of national identity), and *asymilacja* (assimilation).

The term *linguistic integration* became widespread in the academic works on language in the western and northern territories. In *Encyklopedia języka polskiego* (Encyclopedia of the Polish Language) a separate entry is included on this: »The linguistic integration in the western and northern territories« (*Integracja językowa na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych*):

The process of standardisation of a language, erasing differences in speech in those areas which were inhabited by mixed population after the war, has been occurring here ever since settlers of different regions and of different dialects met. This interesting process has not been thoroughly examined yet, but two statements appear to be

19 Dulczewski, *Tworzenie*.

20 Idem, *Spółeczeństwo*.

certain: 1. Subdialectal features disappear here faster than in the areas where the population is uniform and had been settled for a long time; 2. Of the different characteristics, those persisted which are in accordance with the general literary language or those most similar to this language.²¹

I contend that tying research categories and scientific notions and terms to one specific object – in this case, a part of Poland, incorporated in 1945 – hinders the progress of the research. The research oriented this way was based on at least two problematic assumptions: 1) that languages other than Polish may be ignored and should be ignored, and 2) that this territory may be researched and described by means of the methods of linguistic cartography.

I have discussed earlier the matter of ignoring local variants of the German language. However, the languages of settlers from various regions of Poland were ignored as well. Still unaddressed is the fact that of the settlers from eastern voivodeships of the interwar Polish Republic, which were incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1945, some did not speak Polish. In spite of this, the linguists have made the false assumption that all settlers who came from the former eastern voivodeships of the Second Polish Republic to the western lands of Poland during the so-called repatriation were Poles. This understanding of Polishness was naive and simplistic – it was taken for granted that they were all Poles, and because they were Poles, they spoke Polish.

This assumption is visible in *Mały atlas gwar polskich* (The Small Atlas of the Polish Subdialects):

The western and the parts of north-eastern areas where there was no original population after the war are diagonally hatched. In the frame shown here we provide relations obtained from the Polish people living there today, who were displaced from Ukrainian, Belarusian and Lithuanian areas remaining on the east of the new People's Poland, therefore representing the speech of the Poles who had lived in these territories for ages.²²

The same is true for many subsequent works of dialectologists. One example would be an article by Basara, Horodyska and Kupiszewski, published in 1960, *Z badań dialektologicznych na ziemiach zachodnich*

21 *Encyklopedia języka polskiego*, 126.

22 Nitsch, *Mały atlas gwar polskich*, part II, XIV.

(From the Dialectological Research on the Western Lands).²³ The linguists of the Dialectology Department of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw have set themselves the goal of capturing the current state of the subdialectal vocabulary in the researched villages. They assume that they are examining the language of the Poles, and thus the Polish language. Yet they state that visitors from central Poland laugh at some words used by displaced persons from the former eastern voivodeships of Poland. The linguists maintain that these words are Polish, while the phonetic traits of these words indicate that they belong to the phonetic system of the Ukrainian language.

These linguists – specialists in Polish studies – were not interested in the diversity of languages in this area, but in the standardisation of the language landscape, that is, in moving away from this diversity. An example of such an approach is *Mały atlas językowy województwa gorzowskiego*, volumes 1 and 2 (The Small Linguistic Atlas of the Gorzów Voivodeship).²⁴ The authors of the description of the lexical phenomena applied cartographic and quantitative methods, which were to make the results of field studies on the linguistic integration more objective. The maps show the sets of words used by inhabitants of a particular village according to the variant of the language with which they arrived or which they learned in place, but not according to the synonyms of a subdialectal system, an aspect that, of course, does not exist in the points being researched. The authors of the atlas are aware that the linguistic material is diversified, yet they have generalised it as if it were a single system. The lexical equivalents originating from different linguistic systems, collected from multilingual informants, are wrongly called synonyms by the authors.²⁵ Ignoring languages other than Polish has led to the situation in which all the words obtained from the multilingual informants are written down and then morphologically and phonetically adjusted to the Polish literary language.

The authors of the work *Polskie atlasy dialektologiczne i etnograficzne* (The Polish Dialectological and Ethnographic Atlases) do not recognise this problem.²⁶ While commenting on *Mały atlas językowy województwa gorzowskiego*, they do admit that some subdialectal

23 Basara, Horodyska, and Kupiszewski, *Z badań dialektologicznych*.

24 Zagórski, Sieradzki and Grzelakowa, *Mały atlas językowy województwa Gorzowskiego*; Zagórski, *Mały atlas językowy województwa gorzowskiego*.

25 Zagórski, *Mały atlas językowy województwa gorzowskiego*, 318.

26 Reichan and Woźniak, *Polskie atlasy dialektologiczne i etnograficzne*.

words are difficult to »interpret [...] to a phonetic and orthographic form of the literary Polish language«, an example being the word *byłyń* (>swipple of a flail, < *bijak do cepów* in Polish), recorded from the informant of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship.²⁷ The authors of this commentary, similarly to the authors of *Mały atlas językowy województwa gorzowskiego*, simply do not want to recognise that this is a Ukrainian word found in Polish dictionaries.²⁸ There are many similar examples, e.g. the conspicuous noun *doczka* instead of *córka* (>daughter<). This interpretation is just the purification of linguistic elements. The authors of *Mały atlas językowy województwa gorzowskiego*, despite placing the list of informants at the beginning of the work together with the places of their birth and descent, later blur the geographical origin of the linguistic material.²⁹ They are not interested in the diversity of the subdialectal material. Moreover, they intend to prove the process of its disappearance.

Ignoring other languages and blurring linguistic diversity is evident also in other linguistic works about the Lubusz Region, as well as other territories incorporated into Poland. An example would be the article written by Józef Radkiewicz in 1968 about the vocabulary in the village of Biazków, located at the Polish-German border.³⁰ The inhabitants of this village came in 1945 in a transport from the Pruzhany District in Polesie.³¹ Even today the oldest inhabitants are bilingual, speaking the Polesie region subdialect of the Belarusian-Ukrainian transitional type.³² Nevertheless, Radkiewicz considers this transported subdialect to be the Polish language of the Eastern Borderlands. He writes that already while in the Pruzhany District:

People living in these mixed villages spoke the Polish subdialect, soaked in Belarusian, and even Ukrainian influences. These influences affected the phonetics and inflection, and especially the lexis.

27 Ibid., 58.

28 See the entry »bylyn', bych« in Grinchenko, *Slovar' ukrais'koi movy*, vol. I, 58, as well as the entry »byleń« (shorter part of a flail that a thresherman hits with) in Janów, *Słownik Huculski*, 21.

29 Zenon Leszczyński draws our attention to it in his review of the atlas: Leszczyński, »Zygmunt Zagórski.«

30 Radkiewicz, *Słownictwo »kresowe«*.

31 Today this is an area belonging to Belarus.

32 Zielińska, *Mowa pogranicza*, 180-204.

He gives examples of vocabulary related to reptiles and amphibians: *hadztwo*, *uż(y)e*, *jaszczěrki*, *czerepacha*, etc. Similarly to the aforementioned works, it is obvious that East Slavic words are interpreted as Polish.

Conclusions

The recent field studies in the Lubusz Region have shown that many displaced persons from the former eastern voivodeships of Poland did not know Polish at all, and after resettlement they continued for a long time to speak variants of the Ukrainian and Belarusian languages.³³

I have demonstrated how the adoption of ideological assumptions – communist as well as nationalist – by linguists has led to: first, the erroneous interpretation of linguistic examples, such as assigning East Slavic lexemes to the Polish language system; second, the incorrect usage of linguistic terms and notions, as in the example of the alleged synonymy cited in *Mały atlas językowy województwa gorzowskiego*; and third, the application of inadequate methods such as the mapping of the vocabulary in an area heterogeneous with regard to languages.

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Daniel Weiss

The Newborn Polish *Nowomowa* after 1944 and Its Relation to the Soviet Original

This study portrays a domain of the Polish post-war period that provides a sharp contrast to the overall theme of this volume. As will be shown, the official idiom of the new socialist authorities exhibited no trait whatsoever of a transitional period. On the contrary, it entered the political scene in 1944 as a pre-existing, consolidated linguistic system. This is not to deny the general impact of historical changes: the years after Stalin's death and the de-Stalinisation starting in 1956 brought about quite significant modifications of the previous vocabulary and phraseology. This finding is completely in line with the theses outlined below in section 2: the official vocabulary was indeed subject to changes according to historical periods, but these changes were the result of major caesurae in Soviet party politics, such as the transition from personality cult to collective leadership in 1953 and the subsequent de-mythologisation of Stalin in 1956. A second aspect to be explored here fits better into the general framework of this volume: to demonstrate to what extent the new Polish ›officialese‹ was a faithful replica of the Russian (Soviet) original, and to examine what structural and sociolinguistic divergences between the two languages may have interfered with this imitation process.

Since the late seventies, the official discourse of the Polish People's Republic (PRL), henceforth for the sake of brevity called *nowomowa* (›newspeak‹, without any Orwellian connotations), has been examined in many articles and monographs of both scientific and popular scientific character and published in and outside Poland. To mention the most relevant titles: After the pioneering study by W. Pisarek,¹ there appeared a few minor sketches,² a special issue of the journal *Aneks*, and the proceedings of two conferences dedicated to propagandistic manipulation.³ The most comprehensive, in-depth linguistic analysis of the *nowomowa* was published in Uppsala and re-edited

1 Pisarek, *Język Służby*.

2 For instance Chmielewska, »Kampania« and Karpiński, *Mowa do ludu*.

3 Amsterdamski, *Język propagandy* (this collection of papers was reviewed in Weiss, *Sprache und Propaganda*) and Rokoszowa, *Nowo-mowa*.

twenty years later in Warsaw.⁴ The prevailing approach in these analyses was a mixture of lexical and sentence semantics, often combined with pragmatics. Owing to the prestige of its author, Wierzbicka's sketch⁵ gained wide attention in the broader public. The same holds for a series of more impressionistic observations by the literary critic M. Głowiński,⁶ who also authored the article on *nowomowa* in the Encyclopedia of Polish Culture.⁷ Bogusławski essentially represents an extended version of a paper he gave at the Warsaw conference on manipulation; it deserves special attention by the key role ascribed to the lack of negatability.⁸ Jeziński's monograph focuses on General Jaruzelski's speeches under martial law in 1981 and 1982.⁹ The last years of *nowomowa* from 1982 to 1988 are portrayed in the first chapter of Bralczyk.¹⁰ Among accompanying materials, a collection of documents elucidating the functioning of censorship in the PRL deserves special attention, as it was the first publication on this topic related to a socialist country.¹¹

Most of the said analyses cover the period of the seventies and eighties, whereas the early years after 1944 are examined only in two monographs,¹² of which the one by Nowak combines traditional methodology with elements of cognitive semantics. Weiss¹³ narrows the scope down to the very beginnings by focusing on the possible Russian origins of the *nowomowa*. This study was part of a broader research project on the history of verbal propaganda in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Poland, which eventually engendered more than 40 publications.¹⁴ Works by Weiss (in 1986, 1998, and 2003) are entirely or partly pertinent to the structure and functioning of *nowomowa* and its reception in Polish society.¹⁵ Moreover, a volume on

4 Bralczyk, *O języku polskiej propagandy*.

5 Wierzbicka, »Język Antytotitalarny.«

6 Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie; Końcówka*.

7 Bartmiński, *Encyklopedia kultury*.

8 Bogusławski, *Sprawy słowa*.

9 Jeziński, *Język przemówień*.

10 Bralczyk, *O języku polskiej polityki*.

11 *Czarna księga*. A first analysis of its contents was presented in Gross-Grudzińska, »Świat zaaresztowanych.«

12 Thiriet, *Marks czy Maryja* and Nowak, *Swoi i obcy*.

13 Weiss, »Uniting the Communist System.«

14 The outlines of this project may be found in <http://www.research-projects.uzh.ch/p471.htm>. Accessed on November, 2017.

15 Weiss, »Was ist neu«; idem, »Die Entstalinisierung«; idem, »Uniting the Communist System.«

death in propaganda contains two lengthy contributions on the structure and typology of official obituaries in the PRL.¹⁶ Their author also published a study on the common origin of rumours and political jokes in socialist Poland.¹⁷ The focus here being on Poland, the impressive bulk of literature on the Soviet equivalent of the *nowamowa* (*nowojaz*) has to be left aside;¹⁸ the same holds for works that include other socialist countries and the post-socialist period.¹⁹

Understanding socialist propaganda²⁰

The functioning of socialist propaganda still constitutes a riddle. As it has been shown by a multitude of authors, this discourse is highly predictable, hence far from serving an informative purpose. What could be its main functions? Opinions used to be divided between experts and laymen; moreover, the stance of the individual authors often reflected their political convictions.

According to the first interpretation, the socialist type of propaganda is based on lies. This implies that whenever the speaker S of a propagandistic message utters U with the content p addressed to the hearer(s) H, then (i) p is not true, (ii) S knows that p is not true, and (iii) by uttering U, S wants to cheat H. This kind of analysis is clearly beyond the scope of linguistic competence: (i) concerns political scientists and historians, whereas (ii) matters for a legal investigation or a psychological analysis. Legal practice shows that lawsuits on slander very often end without a conviction because of the impossibility of proving the perpetrator's awareness of his false statement; in the case of our propagandist, the proof of (ii) would be a particularly challeng-

16 Schwendimann, »Der Tod«; idem, »Das sozialistische Pantheon.«

17 Idem, »Gerücht und Politwitz.«

18 To mention but a few: Thom, *Newspeak*; Gorham, *Speaking in Soviet Tongues*; Kupina, *Totalitarnyj jazyk*; Mokienko and Nikitina, *Tolkovyj slovar*?. The analysis coming closest to my own approach is Sériot, *Analyse du discours*.

19 Kreß, *Totalitarian Political Discourse*; Vakhtin and Firsov, *Politic Debate*.

20 For reasons of historical correctness, throughout this article the term »socialist« will be used instead of the nowadays more current label »communist« when referring to the political system in Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1991. As it is well known, none of the countries belonging to the Soviet camp ever claimed to have reached the state of communism, which would have implied the existence of a classless society and the disappearance of the state.

ing task. On the other hand, the lie argument offers a plausible explanation for using *nowomowa* in public discourse. A few Polish linguists initially shared the opinion that *nowomowa* was conceived of and served as a manipulative device (hence the organisation of two conferences dedicated to this connection),²¹ which would be related to the concept of lying. I will return to this at the end of this section.

The second interpretation posits that socialist propaganda is simply nonsensical and semantically empty. The following game, which was created in Poland more than 30 years ago, illustrates this idea succinctly: the ready-made syntactic blocks (noun phrases, verb phrases, combinations thereof, adverbials, etc.) arranged in a table composed of four columns and 10 rows allow every item from one column to be freely combined with any item from the other columns. This amounts to 10,000 possible combinations, which would be sufficient for a speech of 40 hours' duration.²² The following presents but a part of this table. Connect any phrase from column I with any other phrases from columns II, III and IV and you will obtain a universal text.

I	II	III	IV
<i>koleżanki i koledzy</i> Dear colleagues	<i>realizacja nakreślonych zadań programowych</i> the realization of the tasks of the program	<i>zmusza nas do przeanalizowania</i> forces us to analyse	<i>istniejących warunków administracyjno-finansowych</i> the existing administrative-financial conditions
<i>z drugiej strony</i> on the other hand	<i>zakres i miejsce szkolenia kadr</i> the domain and the location of the staff formation	<i>spełnia istotną rolę w kształtowaniu</i> plays a crucial role in the formation	<i>dalszych kierunków rozwoju</i> of the further directions of development
<i>podobnie</i> on a similar way	<i>stały wzrost ilości i zakres naszej aktywności</i> the permanent increase of the amount and the domain of our activities	<i>wymaga sprecyzowania i określenia</i> require the specification and the definition	<i>systemu powszechnego uczestnictwa</i> of the system of general participation

21 Amsterdamski, *Język Popagandy* and Rokoszowa, *Nowo-mowa*.

22 See http://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Uniwersalny_kod_przemówień. Accessed on November 15, 2015.

<i>nie zapominajmy jednak, że</i> but let us not forget that	<i>aktualna struktura organizacji</i> the current structure of the organisation	<i>pomaga w przygotowaniu i realizacji</i> helps prepare and realize	<i>postaw uczestników wobec zadań stawianych przez organizację</i> the participants' stance toward the tasks defined by the organisation
<i>w ten sposób</i> thus,	<i>nowy model działalności organizacyjnej</i> the new model of organizational activity	<i>zabezpiecza udział szerokiej grupie w kształtowaniu</i> secures the participation of a large group in the creation	<i>nowych propozycji</i> of new proposals
<i>praktyka dnia codziennego dowodzi, że</i> everyday experience demonstrates that	<i>dalszy rozwój różnych form działalności</i> the further development of different forms of activity	<i>spełnia ważne zadania w wypracowaniu</i> fulfils important tasks when elaborating	<i>kierunków postępowego wychowania</i> the directions of progressive education
<i>wagi i znaczenia tych problemów trzeba szerzej uzasadniać, ponieważ</i> there is no need of motivating the weight and the importance of these problems since	<i>stałe zabezpieczenie informacyjno-programowe naszej działalności</i> the permanent providing the informational-programmatic of our activity	<i>umożliwia w większym stopniu tworzenie</i> enhances the creation	<i>systemu szkolenia kadry odpowiadającego potrzebom</i> of a system of staff training that meets our needs

It should be emphasised that this little experiment demonstrates not only the complete arbitrariness of the whole type of discourse but also the essence of its internal structure: it is mainly made up of prefabricated chunks (phrases, clauses, sentences, sequences of sentences). This points in the same direction as the criterion of phraseological boundedness to be discussed below. The extent of such ready-made segments varies depending on the genre at hand: for example, a speech on New Year's Eve delivered by the First Secretary of the Communist Party (CP) will contain more formulaic language than the first reaction to spontaneous on-going mass riots. All this lends itself easily to linguistic analysis, especially since the rise of corpus linguistics, which allows

quantitative analysis of huge bulks of text. However, the question of its functional load remains open: if the whole discourse was deprived of any sense or informativeness, why did it continue to exist for the whole period of »real socialism«?

A third interpretation was offered in Weiss (1986).²³ It treats the *nowomowa* and its Russian equivalent as a separate language game (in the sense of the late Wittgenstein) based on analytical truth, which implies that it cannot be contested within this discourse. This was exemplified by an utterance by Leonid Brezhnev: *Sovetskii uchenyi, esli, razumeetsia, èto podlinno sovetskii uchenyj, vo vsej svoei nauchnoi deiatel'nosti iskhodit iz nauchnogo mirovozzreniia marksizma-leninizma* (A Soviet scientist, if he, of course, is a true Soviet scientist, bases his whole scientific activity on the scientific philosophy of Marxism-Leninism).²⁴ By rephrasing the official lexicographic definition of the adjective *sovetskii* in its third, qualitative meaning, this sentence contains all we need: it refers to an allegedly well-known fact (cf. *razumeetsia*), divides the world axiologically into true and false Soviet citizens, and functions as an indirect request, if not a warning, to act like a real Soviet scientist.

For reasons of space, this interpretation cannot be elaborated here. It raises the same question as the nonsensical reading: what do we gain by uttering such tautological content? Many authors have pointed out that the absence of change serves as a stability marker: it informs the people that those in power are in full control of events. In contrast, new elements would signal discontinuity, rupture, and even dreadful changes; this occurred both in the Soviet Union and Poland after Stalin's death.²⁵ More specifically, if lower-ranking civil servants or party members employ this kind of speech, they implicitly assure their superiors that they are still reliable members of the community. And finally, the omnipresence of *nowomowa* may prevent the intrusion of different discourses: thus it functions as a kind of verbal cotton wool that protects our ears from undesired draughts.²⁶

As can be seen, there is no mention of manipulation in this little overview of possible functions. Indeed, what should be manipulative in a linguistic variety in which almost every single formulation turns out to be predictable? Even the most sophisticated euphemisms lose their concealing effect very soon if repeated too often. Of course,

23 Weiss, »Was ist Neu«, 313-327.

24 *Kommunist*, 1979, no. 14, 21-22.

25 Weiss, »Entstalinisierung«, 464-469.

26 Bogusławski, *Sprawy słowa*, 217.

this does not imply that those in power never resorted to manipulative techniques. For instance, the fabrication of a greeting address of the Catholic Pope to the Polish government was no doubt intended as a manipulative trick, but even if it succeeded in deceiving at least part of the recipients, this was not due to the use of *nowomowa*. In a similar vein, the concealment of undesirable facts may be effective in a political system where one party has the monopoly of public opinion (which in the first years after the war was the case in the PRL),²⁷ but again, the use of *nowomowa* is not a prerequisite here. Thus, I would maintain that »the essence of totalitarian speech does not lie in its manipulative force; its main goal is rather to overwhelm the audience by a permanent flow of emotionally loaded and often violent, but highly repetitious speech.«²⁸

How to recognise *nowomowa* – The main diagnostic criteria

This said, we may now proceed to formulate five theses about the linguistic makeup of the official socialist discourse, including the Polish *nowomowa*:

1. The political discourse in socialist countries – »newspeak« for short²⁹ – was a mixture of elements that also occurred in other varieties, such as bureaucratic, scientific and colloquial styles, special languages, and even argot and slang.
2. The distinctive feature of this discourse was the specific use of some of these linguistic features and strategies.
3. It constituted a peculiar hyper-style consisting of agitational, bureaucratic, and ritual components.
4. This mixture varied according to a) the genre, and b) the historical period, but less so to the individual speaker/author.
5. The Soviet *novojaz* appeared as a nearly ready-made whole after the October Revolution. Its equivalents in other countries, such as the Polish *nowomowa*, emerged as more or less faithful replicas from translation and borrowing.

27 Recall, however, that in such systems the importance of rumours as a non-official source of information increases.

28 Weiss, »Uniting the Communist System«, 269.

29 For the lexicographic history of the Russian equivalent *novojaz* and its different meanings in today's Russian political discourse, see Krongauz, »Russian and Newspeak.«

Every thesis actually calls for a range of commentaries, which for reasons of space have to be omitted here.³⁰ Some of them will be illustrated below by suitable examples. Here, it may only be noted that historical variation (cf. thesis 4) does not necessarily create a separate style. For instance, the short-lived frequency of such key words as *syjonizm* (Zionism) in March 1968, or *teroryzm strajkowy* (strike terrorism) and *ocalenie* (salvage) in 1981-1982 did not mark a new period in the history of *nowomowa*. As for personal style, Jaruzelski's speeches would be the only suitable candidates, since not all in them is totally predictable: Jaruzelski successfully ›variegates‹ his message by inserting individual metaphors, intertextual references, rhetorical questions, etc. However, the omnipresence of the usual ritual and repetitive features unequivocally points to the ›newspeak‹ diagnosis.³¹

In what follows, an outline of the most essential characteristics of *nowomowa* will be presented. This inventory does not claim to be in any sense exhaustive, nor are the features included organised hierarchically. This does not, however, imply that they are all of equal weight: besides trivial, easily observable lexical features (they will be discussed first), the list comprises a complex of nontrivial sentential-semantic characteristics involving quantifiers, modality,³² temporality, etc. related to the referential opposition of ›us‹ and ›them‹. Thus, the socialist ›officialese‹ should not be treated as a more or less accidental cluster of stylistic features but as a systematically and consistently organised whole ›où tout se tient‹. The majority of textual examples will be taken from press sources related to the first period after the war.³³ A final remark concerns methodology: an in-depth data-driven analysis of *nowomowa* actually calls for a corpus linguistic approach which would allow a quantitative analysis of the huge bulk of data available. So far, to my knowledge, nobody has undertaken such an endeavour. A noteworthy exception is provided by Cvrček, who presents a key-word analysis of Czech presidential New Year's addresses from 1975 to 1989 by statistically contrasting them with the same genre in the post-socialist period.³⁴

30 For a detailed discussion of an extended version see Weiss, »Was ist Neu«, 265-269.

31 Jeziński, *Język przemówień*, 58-84.

32 Modality will not be discussed in the present study. See Weiss, »Vozmožnost'« for the repartition of necessity and possibility in Soviet propaganda.

33 Most of them are quoted from Nowak, *Swoi i obcy*.

34 Cvrček, »A Data-Driven Analysis.«

Perhaps the most salient (and certainly the most often discussed) feature of socialist official discourse is its marked preference for phraseological boundedness. This means that such key words as ›masses‹, ›people‹, ›enemy‹ and the like never come alone: they are always accompanied by highly predictable modifiers, as in *szerokie masy* (the broad masses), *lud pracujący* (working people), *wróg klasowy* (class enemy), and *przewodnia rola partii* (leading role of the party). The ›prognostic arrow‹ points from the noun to the modifier, for example *jarzmo* → *kapitalistyczne* (the yoke of capitalism), *rewolucyjna* ← *czujność, zbankrotowany* ← *zdrajca* → *klasy robotniczej* (bankrupt enemy of the working class), *bezgraniczna* ← *miłość (do wodza)* (unlimited love for the leader), *zapluty* ← *karzeł* → *reakcji* (spat on reactionary dwarf). As in ›unlimited love‹, many of these modifiers serve as intensifying markers, such as *skuteczna pomoc* (effective help). As has often been observed, this produces a general tendency to semantic extremism, which finds its expression on the lexical and grammatical (superlative) level. In the following citation, all modifiers boost the significance of the entity referred to by the noun:

*Pomnóż to wszystko przez wiele milionów obywateli, przez bogactwa narodowe, przez olbrzymie sumy, które lokujemy w Wielką Odbudowę, przez zawrotne cyfry i ambitne dążenia naszych planów. Wtedy przekonasz się, że sprawa oszczędności jest ogromnie ważna.*³⁵

Now multiply this by many million citizens, by the national riches, by gigantic sums which we invest in the Great Reconstruction, by fantastic numbers and ambitious aims of our plans. Then you will realise that the issue of saving is tremendously important.

Semantic extremism characterises not only the ›own‹ achievements, but also the evil properties of the enemy:

*Titowscy agenci występują w swej prawdziwej roli najbardziej wiernych psów łańcuchowych Waszyngtonu, w roli głównego narzędzia podżegaczy wojennych w Europie południowej.*³⁶

35 *Przyjaciółka*, 1950, no. 11.

36 *Trybuna Ludu*, May 12, 1950, 6.

Tito's agents appear in their true role of Washington's most faithful chain dogs, in the role of the main instrument of warmongers in Southern Europe.

On the other hand, some attributes help to minimalise the harmful effect triggered by the head noun, as is the case of well-known euphemisms, such as *przejściowe trudności narynku* (temporary difficulties on the market) and *choroba wzrostu* (growth sickness). Quite a few phraseologisms serve an abusive purpose, such as the ›reactionary dwarf‹ (see above) or *niedobitki reakcji* (not yet destroyed reactionary elements). Some of them have unique reference: for instance, *zapluty karzeł reakcji* always refers to the *Armia Krajowa*, the non-communist Home Army. Others turn out to be simply meaningless.

The importance of set phrases in socialist discourse may be best illustrated by the omnipresence of slogans as the most salient text genre. As every cliché, such slogans invite parodies, jokes, etc.

Another property never missing in descriptions of *nowomowa* is the constant rhetoric of growth. In the ›own‹ camp, its vector always points upwards, be this in statements about already realised achievements or goals still to be achieved:

*Ale musimy ich budować coraz więcej, tak by jak najszybciej rosły, rozszerzały się piękne dzielnice mieszkaniowe warszawskie, by prędkiej urosły Tychy, by szybciej budowano domy dla robotników w setkach ośrodków przemysłowych.*³⁷

But we have to build more of them for the beautiful neighbourhoods of Warsaw to grow as quickly as possible, for Tychy to grow more rapidly, for the quicker construction of workers' housing in hundreds of industrial centres.

If semantic extremism finds its grammatical expression in the superlative, its natural counterpart is the comparative as marker of growth illustrated in this example.

Referring to the political enemy, the vector of growth has, of course, to be turned downwards:

37 *Przyjaciółka*, 1951, no. 25, 3.

*Spadek produkcji przemysłowej – miliony bezrobotnych – kryzys w rolnictwie [...] rok 1949 przyniósł St. Zjednoczonym dalsze kurczenie się produkcji i handlu, kryzys rolnictwa i wzrost bezrobocia.*³⁸

The decrease of industrial production – millions of unemployed – crisis in agriculture [...] 1949 has brought the US a further shrinking of production and trade, a crisis in agriculture and a growth of unemployment.

Thus, the only growth in the Western world is the growth of negative indicators. Markers such as *dalsze* ›further‹ underscore that this is an already ongoing process.

The next example offers a contrast (marked by *W przeciwieństwie do*) of the Western and the ›own‹ camp:

*Imperialiści szukają synonimu słowa kryzys [...]. W przeciwieństwie do zacieśniającej się zwartości obozu antyimperialistycznego, ubiegły rok dostarczył mnóstwo przykładów wzrastających konfliktów wewnętrznych – wewnątrz obozu imperialistycznego na tle sprzeczności gospodarczych i rywalizacji politycznej.*³⁹

The imperialists are searching for a synonym of the word crisis [...]. Contrary to the ever tightening cohesion of the anti-imperialist camp, the past year provided a multitude of examples of the growing inner conflicts within the imperialistic camp, fuelled by economic contradictions and political rivalry.

As can be seen here, growth rhetoric is intertwined with another crucial semantic opposition of the *nowomowa*: socialist societies may boast ideal cohesion, while the capitalist world is haunted by heavy socioeconomic conflicts. In other words, the socialist side is characterised by total harmony, the enemy by total disharmony. In this way, we have finally come across the central axis of every political propaganda: the binary division of the world. In referential terms, it reads as the distinction of *my* : *oni* ›us‹ : ›them‹ or *swoi* : *obcy* ›the own‹ : ›the other‹, which is immediately reinterpreted in axiological terms as the opposition of ›good boys‹ vs. ›bad boys‹. What makes the case of socialist discourse so specific is the systematic exploitation of this di-

³⁸ *Trybuna Ludu*, January 2, 1950, 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

chotomy by assigning a positive or negative load to entire seemingly neutral word classes (quantifying pronouns, existential predicates, modals, temporal adverbs, etc.) and distributing them among the two aforementioned referential classes. The following table captures this axiological polarisation:

	us / <i>my</i> = <i>swoi</i> good guys	them / <i>oni</i> = <i>obcy</i> bad guys
Predicate logic interpretation	Universal quantifier $\forall x$	Existential quantifier $\exists x$
Reference	lexical and grammatical markers of totality / unity / homogeneity	lexical and grammatical markers of partiality / diversity / heterogeneity
Temporality	lexical and grammatical markers of stability / continuity	lexical markers of temporariness, transitoriness, limited stages
Physical condition	metaphors of health, vitality, force, youth	metaphors of illness, weakness, declining age
	LIFE	DEATH

The impact of negation may also be calculated by means of predicate logic: $\neg\forall x$ or else ›not all‹ points to the opposite of ›us‹, whereas $\forall\neg x$ ›all not = no one‹ must be ascribed to the ›own‹ camp. The same holds of ›not always‹ vs. ›always not = never‹.⁴⁰

The next table presents possible lexical fillings, including those that contain internal or external negation. Moreover, it accounts for the repartition of affirmative and negative existentials and the variation of tenses (cf. V-ed, V-s and will V):

⁴⁰ The impact of inner and outer negation is described in Weiss, »Alle vs. einer«, 253-266.

	Good guys	Bad guys
Reference	<p><i>każdy, wszyscy, wszelki, ktokolwiek; żaden, nie ma; jedyny, jedność; pełny; nie tylko, ... no i ...</i></p> <p>Every, each, all, whoever; none, there isn't; single, unity, full; not only ... but ...</p>	<p><i>niektóry, pewien, niejaki, jakiś, różny, wiadomy, określony, kilku, nieliczny, grupa, izolowany, nie wszyscy; są (u nas tacy, co ...) / istnieje (przekonanie, etc.); konflikt</i></p> <p>Some, certain, some sort of, different, well-known, several, not numerous, group, isolated, not all; there are (such people who ...)/there exists (the conviction, etc.); conflict</p>
Temporality	<p><i>stały, trwały; zawsze, nigdy; V-ował, V-uje i będzie V-ować; wierny, niezmienny, nieugięty, niezłomny, nierozzerwalny, niezwyciężony</i></p> <p>Permanent, persistent; always, never; V-ed, is V-ing and will V; faithful, unchangeable, unbending, unbreakable, untearable, invincible</p>	<p><i>nie zawsze, nieraz, czasem, niekiedy; jeszcze, przejściowy, tymczasowy, były, pozostałości</i></p> <p>Not always, sometimes, from time to time; still, transitional, temporary, former, remains</p>
Physical condition	<p><i>zdrowy, młody, silny, trzeźwy, nowe pędy</i></p> <p>Healthy, young, strong, sober, new sprouts</p>	<p><i>chory, stary, słaby, zmurszały, bolesny, ruina, rozkład, rozpad, gasnąc, podupadać, umierać</i></p> <p>Ill, old, weak, rotten, painful, ruin, decomposition, decay, be extinguished, decline, die</p>

My own analysis of Soviet texts revealed a high statistical reliability of these patterns.⁴¹ Moreover, they proved to be constants, no matter

41 Weiss, »Stalinist vs. Fascist«, 257. The statistics comprised approximately 6000 referential and temporal expressions taken from Khrushchev's and Stalin's writings.

what historical period or genre of discourse was involved.⁴² There is no reason to assume that the Polish data would yield a different result.

The following examples illustrate the assignment of universal quantifiers to the ›own‹ system. In the first case, an ongoing congress combines with a geographical marker of totality:

*Ze wszystkich stron kuli ziemskiej przybyliśmy tutaj, żeby zdemaszkować podżegaczy wojennych.*⁴³

We have arrived from all sides of the globe to unmask the warmongers.

The next example switches to referential totality: a timeless request addresses the whole nation:

*Niech każdy Polak, miłujący swój kraj, wzmacnia swą czujność przeciwko podstępnyom knowaniom wroga. Niech nie szczędzi wysiłku w wzmacnianiu sił gospodarczych Polski Ludowej.*⁴⁴

Every Pole who loves his country should enhance his vigilance towards the enemy's insidious intrigues. S/He should spare no effort in enhancing the economic forces of People's Poland.

Note the intensifier ›spare no effort‹ and the marker of growth ›enhance‹. The following example combines the idea of total unity within the socialist system with a marker of temporal stability (›invincible fortress‹):

*Złączona przyjaźnią i wspólną ideą z ZSRR, z krajami demokracji ludowej i światowymi siłami obrońców pokoju — Polska Ludowa staje się niezwyciężonym bastionem, o który rozbijają się wszelkie zbrodnicze zakusy imperialistycznych agresorów.*⁴⁵

42 The early beginnings of the Russian *novojaz* suggest a more differentiated view. As my recent investigation of Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's ›ABC of Communism‹ (*Azbuka kommunizma*) from 1919 showed, the inventory of linguistic markers of the good guys were already fully developed, whereas the correlations between indefinites and bad guys postulated above worked considerably less well.

43 *Przyjaciółka*, 1952, no. 28, 3.

44 *Przyjaciółka*, 1951, no. 29, 32.

45 *Ibid.*, 2.

United in friendship and by the common idea shared with the USSR, the countries of people's democracy and the forces of defenders of peace all over the world, People's Poland turns into an invincible fortress, on which all criminal attempts of the imperialist aggressors' crash.

In addition, we find the totality marker applying to the enemy's evil deeds, which, however, will come into non-existence (<crash>). Thus, the final clause demonstrates the impact of lexical negation, which allows for assigning the universal quantifier to the bad guys.

Explicit negation with narrow scope (>all not<) combined with built-in lexical negation (>destroy = bring into non-existence<) produces a positive result: the >own< achievements will all be preserved, for example:

*Stanowi on zapewnieniem dla tych, którzy Polsce szczerze i z zapalem oddaja wszystkie swe sily, ze zadna akcja szpiegow, dywersantow i sabotazystow nie doprowadzi do zniszczenia owocow ich pracy.*⁴⁶

It becomes a confirmation for those who honestly and enthusiastically devote all their efforts to Poland that no action by spies, diversionists or saboteurs will cause the destruction of the fruits of their work.

In the next example, the universal quantifier (*wszystkich*) encompasses four noun phrases and is preceded by a culmination of three different negated referential and temporal universal quantifiers (*nikt, nic i nigdy*):

*9 maja 1945 pozostawil w swiadomosci setek milionow ludzi na calej kuli ziemskiej przekonanie, ze nikt, nic i nigdy nie zdoła poruszyc wspanialej twierdzy pokoju i postepu – ZSRR, ze droga [sic!] wszystkich nasladowcow Hitlera, wszystkich zbrodniarzy wojennych, podzegaczy, szantajstow atomowych czy wodorowych, jest droga prowadzaca [sic!] do aktu bezwarunkowej kapitulacji.*⁴⁷

May 9, 1945 convinced around the globe that nobody and nothing will ever be able to shake the splendid fortress of peace and progress,

⁴⁶ *Przyjaciółka*, 1950, no. 44, 8.

⁴⁷ *Trybuna Ludu*, May 10, 1950, 1.

the USSR, that the way of all those imitating Hitler, all war criminals, warmongers, nuclear and thermonuclear racketeers is a way that leads to unconditional surrender.

The overall effect of such culminations is emphasis; in the case at hand it underscores the unshakeable stability of the Soviet system. Thus, lexical means (>fortress<, >never<) and the impact of double negation work in the same direction: the expression of continuity.

Continuity marks not only states, as in example 10, but also activities and processes. In the following case the adjective *stały* >continuous< occurs no less than three times:

*W ten sposób współzawodnictwo pracy, to znaczy stały postęp w metodach pracy, w metodach produkcji. To znaczy nie dreptanie w miejscu, ale stały marsz naprzód, stały rozwój.*⁴⁸

Thus, competition at the working place means continuous progress in working and production methods. It means no water treading, but a continuous march ahead, continuous development.

Since the modified nouns (*postęp*, *marsz naprzód*, *rozwój*) are also quasi-synonyms, emphasis turns into redundancy, boosted by the tautological rephrasing with the negated idiom >tread water<.

Such examples invite a general remark about the typical syntactic format of *nowomowa* sentences. The idea of totality finds its ideal expression in coordinative constructions of the following type:

*Fala wielkiego entuzjazmu ogarnęła wszystkie fabryki, wsie, szkoły i zakłady pracy.*⁴⁹

A wave of great enthusiasm seized all factories, villages, schools and firms.

Here, the universal quantifier together with the coordinative syntax renders the idea of total geographical coverage. Thus, the propagandist's striving for totality helps explain why *nowomowa* as well as its older brother, Soviet *nowojaz*, simply abound in such exhaustive enu-

48 *Przyjaciółka*, 1950, no. 44, 3.

49 *Nowa Wieś*, 1950, no. 45, 3.

merations. What results is a peculiar species of ›fat syntax‹, for example:

W ten sposób siły zrodzone z Rewolucji Październikowej, moralno-polityczna, gospodarcza i wojskowa siła Związku Radzieckiego przyniosła nam skuteczną pomoc w nowym, tym razem prawdziwym odrodzeniu, w zrzuceniu nie tylko jarzma hitlerowskiej okupacji, ale i pęt imperialistycznych, i pęt rodzimego faszyzmu.⁵⁰

Like this, the forces born by the October Revolution, the moral and political, economic and military strength of the Soviet Union have brought us effective help in a new, this time real rebirth, in dropping not only the yoke of Hitler's occupation, but also the chains of imperialism and home-made fascism.

In this example, the connector ›not only ... but also‹ functions as an additional syntactic marker of totality. Moreover, syntactic stacking created by embedding coordinative constructions in one another adds to the complexity of the structure.

In the following example, a proverb expresses the idea of continuity:

Kobiety wiedzieć powinny, że praca ich służy nie tylko rodzinie, lecz także krajowi, że produkty ich ręką wypracowane to cegielki do odbudowy naszego kraju i jego dobrobytu. »Ziarnko do ziarnka, a zbierze się miarka« – stare przysłowie jeszcze jeden raz więcej okazuje się prawdą.⁵¹

Women should know that their work serves not only their families, but also the country, that their hand-made products are little bricks for the reconstruction of our country and its prosperity. »One small grain after the other makes up a whole bag« – once more the old proverb proves true.

Nowak's overview⁵² suggests that the preference for proverbs marks the whole post-war period of *nowomowa*. At the same time, Jeziński notes a similar preference in General Jaruzelski's speeches;⁵³ some of

50 *Przyjaciółka*, 1950, no. 45, 3.

51 *Przyjaciółka*, 1952, no. 6, 5.

52 Nowak, *Swoi i Obcy*, 160-264.

53 Jeziński, *Język przemówień*, 69-71.

his examples even coincide with those of Nowak. Given the lack of pertinent statistical data, the question remains open whether the use of such folk stereotypes was typical of any specific period or rather of the whole lifespan of *nowomowa*.

Specific characteristics of the Stalinist period

So far, my little overview has merely highlighted some fundamental traits that may be considered constants throughout the existence of both Polish *nowomowa* and Soviet *nowojaz*. Do we also find temporally limited characteristics typical of the first years after the Second World War? As may be expected, the impact of Stalinism makes itself felt in this period. Linguistically, it manifests itself in a higher emotionality with both positive and negative evaluations. The former category relates above all to Stalin's personality cult. Here, we find such appraisals as *Największy człowiek i bojownik naszej epoki* (>the greatest human and fighter of our epoch<), *Tytan myśli rewolucyjnej* (>titan of revolutionary thinking<), *niezłomny Chorąży wszystkich narodów walczących o pokój* (>unbreakable standard bearer of all nations fighting for peace<), *bezgraniczna miłość narodów do wodza światowego obozu pokoju i postępu* (>unlimited love for the leader of the world's camp of peace and progress<), *wielki Przyjaciel – ukochany i szczególnie bliski* (>great friend – beloved and especially close<). The news about his serious illness provoked a wave of emotional heat in the press:

*W imieniu narodu polskiego, wstrząśniętego do głębi wiadomością o ciężkiej chorobie Towarzysza Stalina z całego serca życzymy poprawy w stanie Jego zdrowia. Ciężką chorobę kochanego gorąco wodza i nauczyciela wszystkich ludzi pracy odczuwają jako nieszczęście postępowi ludzie na całym świecie.*⁵⁴

On the behalf of the Polish people, which is shaken to the core by the news about the serious illness of Comrade Stalin, we wish an improvement of his health with all our heart. Progressive people in the whole world consider the heavy illness of the warmly loved leader and teacher of all working people a disaster.

⁵⁴ *Trybuna Ludu*, March 5, 1953, 1.

After Stalin's death, total compassion turned into total mourning; the dead now earned the epithet »*nieśmiertelny Wódz*« (»immortal leader«). Stability semantics suddenly ceases to fulfil a ritual function; it becomes a signal of fear and anxiety in an uncertain political situation:

*Otaczajmy troską i miłością Wojsko polskie – wierną straż naszych granic i wolności Ojczyzny. Wzmacniajmy nieustannie czujność wobec wszelkich nikczemnych zakusów imperialistycznych podżegaczy wojennych – wrogów Polski!*⁵⁵

Let us treat the Polish Army with care and love, this faithful guard of our frontiers and the liberty of our Fatherland. Let us permanently reinforce our vigilance towards the attempts of the imperialistic warmongers, the enemies of Poland!

The first and second anniversaries of his death were still marked in the press, but manifested a gradual shrinking of the emotional overload.⁵⁶

The language of hatred also reached its peak during Stalinism. The world was crowded with disgusting beings such as *zadżumiona pchła* (pest-stricken flea), *zatruta żaba* (poisoned toad), *zdradzieckie szczury* (treacherous rats), *międzynarodowe szakale* (international jackals), *wilcze stada* (packs of wolves), *ślugusy imperialistycznych podżegaczy* (servants of imperialistic arsonists), *mikołajczykowska szmatka* (Mikołajczyk's little rag), *dywersanty i szkodniki* (diversionists and vermin), and the aforementioned *pies łańcuchowy imperializmu*, *zapłuty karzeł reakcji*, *niedobitki reakcji*, etc. Some of them, such as the »chain dog« and the »packs of wolves«, are faithful replicas of the Russian original. Others follow the overall rhetorical patterns of Stalinist abusive vocabulary by combining physically repulsive and/or morally condemnable properties, while at the same time belittling their bearers, e.g. »dwarf«, »flea«, »little rag«.

After the loss of the great leader and even more so after the twentieth Party Congress in 1956, one observes a considerable reduction of emotional language in general and the disappearance of some of its most salient elements. Thus, such epithets as »(warmly) beloved« or »close« vanished immediately after Stalin's death. A similar picture obtains with hate speech. Because of the lack of corpus linguistic research, this

55 *Trybuna Ludu*, March 6, 1953, 1.

56 Weiss, »Entstalinisierung«, 464-469.

statement cannot be buttressed by robust statistics. Yet one still finds remote echoes of the former rhetorics in the early seventies:

*Naród powinien rozdeptać zatrute żaby, skorumpowane elementy towarzyszące imperializmowi przy jego grobowcu. ... Zniszczcie to robactwo!*⁵⁷

The people should tread down these poisoned toads, the corrupt elements accompanying the imperialism at his tomb stone ... Destroy this vermin!

The rise of Soviet-Polish tensions in the autumn of 1956 also saw a striking change of tone.⁵⁸ As a reaction to an attack by *Pravda*, *Trybuna Ludu* engaged in a sharp counter-attack against the Soviet side by launching a polemic meta-discourse on the way how not to treat one's socialist brothers. This episode marks the border between the post-war period and the remaining lifespan of *nowomowa*.

Polish *nowomowa* – A faithful replica of Russian *nowojaz*?

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to an aspect that is closely linked to the topic of this conference: did the establishment of a new, Soviet-style social order bring about a similar Soviet-like linguistic innovation? In other words, was the Polish *nowomowa* in its immediate post-war shape really an imitation of Russian *nowojaz*, and if so, to what extent? What has been outlined in this paper points to a far-reaching one-to-one correspondence between the two idioms. Before re-raising this topic, it should be emphasised that the origins of the Polish idiom certainly cannot be traced back solely to the emergence of the new socialist state in 1944; its roots have no doubt to be searched for in the history of the Polish Communist Party. However, nobody has adopted this strand so far. Thus, its relationship to the possible Soviet source may only be elucidated from 1944 on. To my knowledge, the only study that treats his question systematically seems to be Weiss.⁵⁹ The following observations are mainly based on this investi-

57 *Polityka*, October 20, 1971.

58 Weiss, »Entstalinisierung«, 498–503.

59 Weiss, »Uniting the Communist.«

gation and some scattered observations on lexical units (words and set phrases).⁶⁰

To begin with, textual fidelity to the original may be inhibited by structural divergences between the language of the original and its replica. Word formation provides several instances of such divergence. Russian admits adjectival compounds of the type *miroljubivyyj* (lit. peace-loving) that cannot literally be rendered in Polish. Nevertheless, translators tried to imitate it as closely as possible by coining the phrase *pokój miłujący*, which is no longer a single word and replaces the adjective with a participle, but preserves the original order of morphs. What results is an unsatisfactory violation of normal Polish word order. Not surprisingly, besides the artificial variant quoted, the correct inverted order *miłujący pokój* [*naród radziecki*] (lit. loving peace Soviet people) was also attested and eventually became the only available variant. Another phraseme that did not fit into a regular pattern was *budownictwo socjalistyczne* (construction of socialism, lit. socialist construction), whose meaning should actually be expressed by *budowa socjalizmu*. Again, this phraseme imitates the Russian original *sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo* (this time with the exception of word order) and later became obsolete in its intended meaning; nowadays it simply denotes housing constructions dating back to socialist times (and therefore of bad quality). In other words, such artificial imitations were doomed to extinction.

In other cases, Polish did possess a structural equivalent to Russian but made only limited use of it. The most remarkable example are stump compounds. This type of abbreviation lent itself easily to the creation of proper names referring to collective bodies (institutions, companies, etc.), such as *Budimex* or *Mostostal*. In some cases, it also functioned as a common name, for example *sanepid* (sanitary epidemiological station). On the other hand, we do not find Polish stump compounds referring to persons. This marks a sharp contrast to Russian, which during the Soviet epoch, especially in the pre-war period, abounded in formations such as *narkom* (minister), *polpred* (ambassador), *genssek* (general secretary, the functional equivalent of the president of the country), *seksot* (secret collaborator), *politruk* (political Army officer), and *partorg* (party organiser). These examples belong to the political and administrative sphere, but Russian also has *chlenkor* (correspondent member of the Academy of Sciences) and even *upravdom* (house administrator). A more radical abbreviating procedure

60 From Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie*.

is provided by stumps. Here, standard Polish offers only a colloquially marked example with human reference: *spec* (specialist), whereas in Russian, stylistically neutral examples, such as *zav* (chief) and *zam* (deputy, vice-), are of common use. And finally, acronyms did exist in socialist Poland, functioning mainly as proper names, such as *cedet* / CDT (central department store) and ZUS (Social Insurance Agency), but once again they did not refer to human beings; only in informal speech and with appropriate suffixes could they become an anthroponym, as in *ubek*, later *ubol* (secret service agent) from the institutional name UB. In contrast, the Soviet repression apparatus produced the ill-famed acronyms *zek* (political prisoner of the GULag), SVO (socially harmful element) and the like. The *GULag* (Main Administration of the Camps) itself represented a mixed type composed by an acronym and a stump.

These structural divergencies call for an explanation in terms of political history. The Soviet abbreviations denoting persons owe their rise to three different factors. First, their roots lie in the army jargon of World War I, when military ranks tended to be shortened simply for brevity. Second, the marked preference for shortened designations was fuelled by the fascination of speed, inspired by the futurist vision of the new technology-based society. And third, the new Soviet political system strived by all means to underscore the rupture with the past and the different character of its political roles and institutions, hence the replacement of such traditional terms as ›minister‹, ›ambassador‹ and ›president‹ with neologisms. In the Polish case, times had changed, and said stimuli ceased to be effective. Moreover, many Soviet designations were associated with the repressive character of the whole Soviet system and thus extremely unpopular in the Polish society.⁶¹

Earlier borrowings from Russian experienced various fates.⁶² While *sowiecki* had become completely discredited in pre-war Polish and had now to be substituted by the calque *radziecki* derived from *rada* (council), which is the synonym of Russian *soviet*, in the case of *bol-szewicki* the former unofficial derogatory use co-existed with a new official, ennobled meaning of the word. Still different is the case of *demokracja ludowa* (people's democracy), which only partially imitates Russian *narodnaja demokratija*. **Narodowa demokracja* would have been available in Polish, but renders a different concept of peo-

61 Note that acronyms are not alien to Western languages, to mention but CEO and CIO, which have both become of international use.

62 Weiss, »Uniting the Communist System«, 260-265.

ple: *naród* denotes the whole nation, whereas *lud* singles out its lower classes (workers and peasants), which the new system promised to emancipate. A similar splitting of the seemingly single concept ›people‹ is represented in all West Slavic languages, as in Czech *lidová demokracie*. Contrary to a widespread opinion, these terms are by no means pleonastic, since they point to a part of the whole ›demos‹.

Polish also offers an additional grammatical choice relevant for the calquing of Russian political language. In Polish slogans there exists an option of omitting the copula: thus, besides the poster caption *Wzorowa kobieta jest chlubą państwa polskiego* (An exemplary woman is the pride of the Polish state), we have *Leninizm naszym ideowym drogowskazem* (Leninism is our signpost), *Huta Katowice stalowym filarem Polski Ludowej* (The iron plant of Katowice is the steel pillar of People's Poland) and *Naród z partią* (The people with the party). This creates a source of temporal and modal vagueness,⁶³ as the empty slot may be filled in by either ›is‹ or the untensed reading ›was, is, and will be‹; moreover, ›the people with the party‹ also allows the reading ›the people should be with the party‹ instead of the indicative. What is ideologically decisive is the impossibility of negating such slogans, as *Naród *nie z partią*; recall that non-negatability is one of the most salient characteristics of *nowomowa*. At first glance, this procedure is reminiscent of the omission of the copula in Russian. Yet, the latter is not restricted to one single genre, but universally available, stylistically neutral, and grammatically obligatory; moreover, it has a precise grammatical meaning (present indicative) and usually does not combine with predicate nouns in the instrumental case, as in the first two Polish examples quoted above.

After this brief overview of lexical and syntactical obstacles inhibiting a faithful replication of original *nowojaz* expressions, let us now turn to the analysis of translated texts from the early post-war years. First, I will focus on Polish translations of Stalin's works, which due to their ›holy‹ character required especial diligence. Here, the translators decided on an artificially archaising style, for example⁶⁴

Nie mam możności w danym wypadku dać wam więcej ponad to, com wyżej powiedział.

63 Bralczyk, *O Języku*, 102-103.

64 Stalin, *O Leninie*, 20. Both examples on this and the following page are also discussed in Weiss, »Uniting the Communist System.«

In the given case, I do not have the possibility of giving you more than what I have said above.

Both the comparative marker *ponad* (to) instead of *od* (tego) and the verbal ending *-m* postfixed to the pronoun *co* instead of the verbal stem (the unmarked variant would be *co powiedziałem*) impart an archaic flavour to this sentence. Note that the Russian original *Ja ne imeju vozmozhnosti* (I do not have the possibility) is likewise marked stylistically, but has rather a bureaucratic ring. Both Polish examples occur elsewhere in this text. A similarly old-fashioned translation employs the verbs *zwać się* instead of *nazywać się*: *Choroba ta zwie się lękiem przed masami* (This disease is called fear of the masses).⁶⁵ Even more obsolete is the verb *ostać się* in the following citation: *by ostać się przeciwko napadom żandarmerii* (in order to withstand the attacks of the police).⁶⁶ The choice of the short form *mych* of the possessive pronoun in the next case (instead of the more common *moich*) sounds rather poetic: *Z jednym z mych bliskich przyjaciół* (with one of my closest friends). And finally, the adverb *jednako* instead of *jednakowo* is no longer attested in modern Polish dictionaries: *stare kajdany zmieniały się na nowe, jednako ciężkie i upokarzające* (the old chains were replaced with new ones that were just as heavy and humiliating). Thus, the translators obviously wanted to enhance the extraordinary status of the original by surrounding it with a historical patina.

In all these cases, the Russian original is free of similar archaisms. Moreover, the aforementioned Polish expressions cannot be explained by paronymy or any other close similarity to the corresponding Russian wording. In rare cases, however, such interferences do occur. In the following quotation, the Russian adverb *po-svoemu* is rendered by its exact Polish equivalent, which sounds too colloquial: *Ale mieńszewicy rostrzygnęli zagadnienie po swojemu* (But the mensheviks resolved the question in their own way) instead of the stylistically neutral *na swój sposób*. Another instance is the neologism *całkowicie i w zupełności*, which imitates Russian *celikom i polnost'ju* (totally) three times in an interview given by Stalin to American workers.

If it were not for the sacral status of Stalin's writings, one would be tempted to ascribe such deviations to the translator's insufficient command of Polish. This explanation seems plausible, given that many Polish post-war communists had spent a considerable part of their lifes-

65 Stalin, *O Leninie*, 29.

66 *Ibid.*, 13.

pan in the Soviet Union. The attrition of the author's first language makes itself felt in the party press, where one finds striking lexical and grammatical mistakes, some of which are clearly based on lexical interference from Russian. In *Od Szczecina na Bałtyku do Triestu na Adriatyku opadła na kontynent ›żelazna kurtyna‹* (From Szczecin on the Baltic Sea up to Trieste on the Adriatic Sea an ›iron curtain‹ fell on the continent),⁶⁷ the correct preposition would be *nad Bałtykiem*.

The next example contains a morphological deviation, which, however, is noted as such in dictionaries and not influenced by Russian:

*Senator amerykański Mayer wezwał wszystkich Amerykan [instead of Amerykanów] ... do walki przeciwko garstce podżegaczy wojennych.*⁶⁸

The American senator Mayer appealed to all Americans ... to struggle against the handful of warmongers.

The Polish translation of the *History of the Soviet Communist Party*⁶⁹ offers similar deviations. Another clear interference from Russian prepositional use is *Imperialiści Ententy nie wątpili o nieuchronności Władzy Radzieckiej* (the imperialists of the Entente had no doubts about the inevitability of the Soviet Power); the correct version would be *wątpili w nieuchronność*.⁷⁰ An incorrect light verb imported from Russian is represented in *Imperialiści wystawili Krajowi Radzieckiemu bezczelne żądania* (The imperialists confronted the Land of the Soviets with insolent demands). The most hilarious quote is the following: *Nie znaczyło to, że Państwo Radzieckie załatwiło się całkowicie z interwencją* (This did not mean that the Soviet state had got rid of the intervention); the verb *załatwić się* nowadays functions only as a colloquialism meaning ›relieve oneself.

67 *Głos Ludu*, no. 210, August 2, 1946.

68 *Głos Ludu*, no. 72, March 13, 1946, 2.

69 *Historia WKP*.

70 Note, however, that similar deviant prepositional uses and faulty collocations are also typical of Lech Wałęsa's speech, which raises no suspicion of Russian interferences: cf. Bralczyk, *O języku polskiej*, 53-54, who interprets them as the outcome of sheer negligence.

Conclusions

To sum up, the Polish *nowomowa* originated from a replica of the Russian *nowojaz*. Its origins have to be traced back to the Polish Communist Party in the pre-war period; after 1944, it was already showing its final design. The degree of faithfulness to the original depended on a) structural divergences between the two languages in word formation and syntax, b) the genre (e.g. the ›sacral‹ texts, which produced many artificial and sometimes even incorrect translations), and c) the historical period. As for the impact of the latter, the rampant de-Stalinisation after 1953 brought about a parallel de-emotionalisation of both Soviet and Polish official discourses, whereas the year 1956 saw a spectacular metalinguistic clash between the Soviet and Polish party press due to diverging interpretations of the twentieth Party Congress's resolutions. Later campaigns, such as in March 1968, or during the *Solidarność* movement and the ensuing martial law in 1980-1982, provided further specific accents in Polish propaganda that had no Soviet equivalent. And finally, in the first years after 1944, one sometimes observes verbal deviations from standard Polish norms that were obviously due to the insufficient command of individual authors for various biographical reasons.

Against the background of this volume, this study features a range of particular characteristics. The sources examined so far do not exhibit any indications of a transitional period: as mentioned above, the Polish *nowomowa* presents itself as a readymade and fairly homogeneous whole meant to serve as a powerful tool for the building of the new social order. There is also no evidence of its regional diversity. Nonetheless, the impact of different genres remains to be explored on the basis of an appropriate corpus. For instance, it might be a rewarding task to analyse the Catholic daily newspaper *Słowo powszechne*, founded in 1947 by the pro-communist PAX association, for its linguistic closeness to the *nowomowa*: although not recognised by the Catholic church, it would not have simply replicated the ›officialese‹ of those in power if it had wanted to gain access to the believers.

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**2. The War is Dead, Long Live the War! –
Emotions and Uncontrollable Actions**

Joanna Hytrek-Hryciuk

The War is Dead, Long Live the War – Emotions and Uncontrollable Actions: Introduction

The title of this section refers to the state monarchy and to the proclamation »The King is dead, long live the King!« However, in the context of a book on the ends of World War II only part of this proclamation is justified. When the Marshall of the Royal Court announced »The King is dead, long live the King«, he communicated not only the happy fact of the transfer of power to a new monarch, but also the assurance that this had happened in a peaceful way. The twentieth century, however, did not take its course under the sign of the monarchy.

The American historian Robert Cowley has characterised the past century in the following way:

In the twentieth century, there were four turning points in an off-and-on conflict that was, in a sense, a continuous war. The first was 1914 and the beginning of World War I. The second was the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan in 1945, the end of World War II, and the beginning of the Cold War the next year. The third was the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991 and the end of the Cold War. To those we must add a fourth, the Korean War. It made the Cold War a global phenomenon and led to the militarization of Asia and Europe.¹

As you can see, the author did not consider May 8, 1945 – the day of the official capitulation of NS-Germany – to be a significant date synonymous with a major turning point or historical caesura, but rather links the end of World War II with the start of a new war, the Cold War, the following year. We can thus state that Cowley dates the temporal extent of World War II from September 1939 through 1945/1946, with the beginning of the Cold War as its definite end.

The years 1945/1946 are of specific significance here. It is worthwhile to ask whether the war, in the context of global conflicts from 1939 to 1945, was really over then, and whether May 8 (in the countries of the Soviet bloc, May 9) is the moment in which the souls and

1 Cowley, »Strategic View«, 157.

minds of Europeans, exhausted by long-standing conflict, reached the condition of an Aristotelian or Johannes Scotus ›tabula rasa‹. In many countries of Central and Eastern Europe, a phenomenon known as *second conspiracy* occurred: an armed, independent, anti-communist underground. In relation to the title of this section, we might consider Keith Lowe's suggestion for talking about war and the numerous sub-wars in Europe during the years 1939-1945 and afterwards.² If we do so, is it consequently worth asking what emotions and uncontrollable actions accompanied them?

The ›second conspiracy‹

In the countries of Central and Eastern European, the victory of the Soviet Army did not mean liberation but the beginning of a new conflict. In the case of Poland, many underground groups and their armed forces were part of the anti-communist league. Researchers estimate that 80,000 soldiers of various political orientations fought in its ranks.³ Their biographies, though similar as a result of the circumstances of the first years after the war, were not identical. In many testimonies, narration of the fight for independence is interspersed with information about nationalist aspirations and a phenomenon that researchers call ›banditry of undergrounds‹, i.e. common crimes by partisans.⁴ We have to stress that soldiers of the ›second conspiracy‹ after 1945 were fighting in a completely new country. Almost half of the eastern territories of pre-war Poland had been annexed by the USSR. The new western borders, marked by the rivers Oder and Lusatian Neisse, incorporated into Poland former Germans territories which were culturally and politically alien.

In addition, the composition of the population changed tremendously. During the Holocaust almost 90 percent of Polish Jewry – former Polish citizens – had perished. In the aftermath of the war, Germans were expelled from the reshaped Poland, and Ukrainians and Lemkos were forcefully resettled. After 1947 the anti-communist underground lost its military significance. Some of the soldiers were murdered or detained in prisons or labor camps under the administration of the Soviet intelligence (NKVD) or the Polish Security Office (*Urząd*

2 Lowe, *Dziki kontynent*.

3 Jaczyńska, Śladecka, and Wnuk, *Zaplute karty reakcji*, 15.

4 Wnuk, »Problem bandytyzmu«; Motyka et al., *Wojna po wojnie*.

Bezpieczeństwa, UB). Others, hiding their true identity, attempted to start new, relatively normal lives, hoping for a change of the political situation brought about by military intervention from Western European countries or the United States.

The underground fight for political independence was not at all unique to Poland and the Poles. A strong partisan movement operated in Ukraine, which had been integrated as the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic into the Soviet Union. Such troops were integrated into the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. The former had fought against the Soviet Union from the outbreak of the German-Soviet war in summer 1941. But, as Grzegorz Motyka emphasises: »The real test for the resistance came at the moment when western Ukraine was annexed by the USSR.«⁵ In this case, we cannot speak about a »new beginning« of the fight, but rather about a change of tactics.

In Lithuania, 30,000 soldiers were engaged in anti-communist actions. In the Vilnius region, since 1945 part of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, a significant number of non-displaced Polish inhabitants participated in skirmishes and sabotage. Ethnic Lithuanians were also involved. The least influential participants of the underground movement were the »forest brothers« (*leśni*) in Western Belarus.

None of the fighting groups managed to create a legal government or to effect a detachment of territories. Therefore, while also taking into account the participation of the Soviet Army in the fights, it is not adequate to talk about a civil war or »sub-wars.«⁶ Most recently, historians use the terms *anti-communist resistance* or *independence underground*.⁷

Emotions

We can clearly answer the question about war after war from a military perspective, but it is a greater challenge to answer the question from a socio-political or an emotional perspective. Replacing the word »war« with the term »independence underground« does not mean that the significance of emotions and uncontrollable actions dissolves.

5 Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka 1942-1960*.

6 Mingst, *Podstawy stosunków*.

7 Poleszak and Wnuk, *Zarys dziejów*.

There may be as many answers as there are life stories. For some people, the first post-war years were a chance to start normal lives through social advancement, for others these years went hand in hand with a new Soviet occupation, and for still others the time they chose to leave their region or even their country. It is the emotions of people that unite these biographies.

The Hungarian writer Sándor Márai, known as the ›prophet of totalitarianism‹, who survived German occupation in Budapest, wrote in his journal that one day, after the arrival of the Soviet Army in the ruined capital, he met his former housekeeper. »I would be happy to come back to you, Sir,« she said. »I would also like to come back to myself,« answered the embarrassed writer.⁸ This quote is on the one hand a testimony to the crisis of the individual, and on the other a testimony to emotions that were triggered by the observation of the implementation of a new order in the Hungarian capital that still seemed more a place wallowing in lawlessness than one experiencing a peaceful interlude.

My own research as well as current literature on the subject has revealed that emotions such as hope and fear, arising from aversion and confusion, were common determinative elements in contacts between Poles, Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, and Germans. A woman quoted by the authors of the project *Kobiety wobec totalitaryzmu* (Women Facing Totalitarianism)⁹ remembered that after her liberation from the women's concentration camp Ravensbrück she had to pinch her hand, because she did not believe that it was over. The author of the introduction, Sylwia Chutnik, commented:

One, two, three, we cancel the war and everything that it brought. It is difficult for a change, so suddenly to go back to the old paths of previous life. That from before the camp, before hunger, before dying.¹⁰

Ursula Waage, a German DP from Wrocław in 1947, described after many years her worries about her family, hunger and misery as her biggest trauma ever.¹¹ A soldier of the underground Home Army,

8 Márai, *Dziennik*, 386.

9 Project oral history by *Ośrodek Karta* and *Dom Spotkań z Historią*, the result of which was the publication of the volume *Przetrwałam*.

10 *Przetrwałam*, 8.

11 Testimonies of Ursula Waage, in the author's collection.

Colonel Ryszard Filipowicz, described similar emotions when he remembered the expulsion from his native Vilnius region and his new life in Wrocław.¹² Poles who had survived the war in the USSR brought their own traumas, as Teresa Drzal recalled after she returned to Poland from exile in Uzbekistan in 1946:

We felt so small, so humiliated, because we did not survive the war here. The [Warsaw] uprising, concentrations camps, those were the topics – my father sitting in the camp, only that was important.¹³

The above-quoted Márjai, who closely watched the seizure of power by the communists, in 1947 described the evolution of these emotions:

A result of the force of intense, artificially induced stress [...] the original meanings of concepts and their corresponding physical states transmuted. There is no longer joy; mere pleasure has taken its place. Sadness, worry – such beautiful, romantic concepts! They are transformed into pain and fear. Justice has become simple revenge.¹⁴

Márjai analyses here the changes taking place through the perspective of the two years of the post-war government in Hungary. It seems, however, that he must have realised that the behaviour of the society was under the influence of, among other things, war events.

As Marcin Zaremba sums up, in Poland, along with the typical ›post-war carnival‹, we have also had the times of great fear, revenge, people's hatred, hostility on ethnic grounds, behaviour intensified by lack of certainty, temporary solutions, and relativity of punishments. At best this led to chaos and at worst to bloody revenge, lynchings, and pogroms. According to Zaremba, the atmosphere of tension and fear, as well as the all-present violence during the war, gave rise to aggressive behaviours, both rational (self-defence) and irrational (attack). It was a common belief that a new world conflict would break out any day.¹⁵ This atmosphere resulted in surprising, irrational, or uncontrolled behaviour – selling out goods, raising prices, farmers ceasing to work their fields – but also in ethnic phobias, which had their sources in prewar xenophobia and anti-Semitism, and in a new quality of art.

12 Testimonies of Ryszard Filipowicz, in the author's collection.

13 *Przetrwałam*, 394.

14 Márjai, *Dziennik*, 415.

15 Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, 17, 47.

In the post-war Poland the hostility towards ›others‹ was extended to the Germans, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, and to smaller ethnic or national groups. The violent events, which today symbolise the outcome of such hostility, include the Polish camps in Świętochłowice-Zgoda and Łambinowice and the conflict between Poles and Ukrainians in the Lublin and Rzeszow regions (1945-1948); the ›Vistula‹ action – the burning by Captain Romuald Rajs, aka *Bury*, the commander of the 3rd National Military Unification Brigade, of over 80 inhabitants of villages in the Podlasie region; and pogroms against Jews.¹⁶ A writer from the Mazurian area, Erwin Kruk, remembered:

I know that post-war fear in the Mazurian and Varmia area. In some counties there were such things happening that you do not want to talk about them loud even now. Worse, your listeners will not believe your stories. After all the Poles are honourable. This is the majority opinion.¹⁷

While one can look for an element of the ›victims' revenge‹ in the hostility towards the Germans or Ukrainians, it is difficult to justify this attitude towards the Belarusians or Jews. Nor is it possible to say that all Poles agreed to the violence used against the ›others‹. According to Zaremba, such behaviour – or at least part of it – was caused by lack of tolerance brought by the ideas of communism as implanted in Poland after 1945. Other behaviours were caused by various traumas of these times, emotions, and official propaganda.¹⁸

It is expressed, among others, by this quotation from a speech by Władysław Gomułka: »Great social changes cannot take place without a fight and therefore without victims. New life is always born in pain and in blood. This is how our new life comes into being.«¹⁹

16 See also: Hytrek-Hryciuk et al., *Internacjonalizm czy ...?*; Jankowiak, *Wysiedlenia i emigracja ludności niemieckiej*; Motyka, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej do akcji »Wisła«*; Konieczny et al., *Akcja »Wisła« – przyczyny, przebieg, konsekwencje*; Moroz, »Konflikt pamięci na pograniczu polsko-białoruskim«, 61-69.

17 Kruk, *Spadek*, 114.

18 Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, 560.

19 Gomułka, *Artykuły*, 426.

Is poetry possible after Auschwitz?²⁰

A historian and art critic, Anda Rottenberg, looking for the roots of the contemporary art in Poland, remarked:

Polish artists coming back from their war journeys, fronts, offlags, work camps and death camps were welcome by Warsaw deserted and burnt to the ground. Even if after their war experiences in their minds there were doubts boiling down to the famous statement by Adorno, that writing poems after Auschwitz is a barbarian thing, the imperative to bear witness was stronger.²¹

According to her, the mark of war became one of the best-known features of Polish contemporary art. And even though Rottenberg meant visual arts, it seems that this comment can be extended also to films and poetry. In the mixture of hopes and fears a safety valve appeared in the form of modern art. Before official socialist realism was established in Poland, artists tried to translate war and post-war traumas into the language of painting, books, music, film, and poetry, which are also channels for emotions.

Tadeusz Kantor, an artist whose war biography was strongly influenced by his Jewish origin, after the war created works in a surrealist spirit that challenged conventions through immediate visualisation of traumatic experience.²² According to Kantor, »An idea of man disappeared, that had so far been considered the only credible one,« which meant that it is not the gaze that determines the construction of the image, but »the organism, internal tensions, traumatic experience, imagination filled with resentment after the catastrophe.«²³

In literature as well a model was sought that would help to overcome war and post-war traumas. This is the reason for the numerous literary reports of war that referred to the German occupation while tabooing experiences of Soviet camps. It is worth paying attention to Jerzy Andrzejewski's novel *Ashes and Diamond* (*Popiół i diament*), which entered the canon of world literature thanks to the filming directed by Andrzej Wajda (1958). The plot of the book is based on the fate of a Home

20 An allusion to Theodor W. Adorno's statement from 1949 in »Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft«, 30.

21 Rottenberg, *Sztuka w Polsce*, 9.

22 Piotrowski, »Polska sztuka między totalitaryzmem a demokracją.«

23 Quoted after idem.

Army soldier who, on the last day of the war and the day after, wonders whether his life is already over or is just beginning. The novel, though popular among the communist authorities, is no simple propaganda, but rather reflects the complicated and agitated condition of Polish society as Andrzejewski saw it at the time. It is important to mention this fact in the context of post-war literature and cinema analysed in this volume.

Joanna Sulikowska-Fajfer, a literary scholar who examines the role of the poet as both a voice of conscience and an analyst of post-war reality, delves more deeply into the mental state of Polish society. Analysing the works of Leopold Staff, Tadeusz Różewicz, and Kazimierz Wierzyński, she recognises that topics related to the war experience were ›natural‹ for poets, as a reflection on it reveals the whole spectrum of human emotions. These include hope, which is the main motif of Leopold Staff's poem ›The First Walk‹. Several times we can read: ›we will live in our home again / we will tread on our own stairs.‹ It is important to emphasise that this phrase is completed with a definite full stop and not a doubtful ellipsis.

Expressions of hope and fear also find a reflection in Katarzyna Woniak's article about the emotions of forced labourers in Germany during World War II. The author claims that this form of slavery has rarely been considered from the perspective of emotional history. She fills this void by choosing the hope for the end of war as the dominant emotion among a broad range of emotions. In an original approach, she focuses on seemingly incomprehensible emotions. The material basis of her analysis are letters of forced labourers to their families and friends, confiscated by the German administration and later used as evidence in court trials against them. The passages quoted by the author form a picture full of hope for the end of war that according to Woniak served as a source of inspiration in a time of crisis. Through the analysis of multifaceted sources, variegated *Lebenswelten* of the forced labourers evolve. Moreover, their visualisations of the future were already giving an impression of the energies to be set free after the official end of the war.

Monika Talarczyk addresses the artistic representation of war and occupation in the immediate post-war period, paying homage to Wanda Jakubowska, the forgotten forerunner of female directorial art in post-war Poland, who during the war had been a prisoner in Auschwitz. She contributes a contextualised analysis of Jakubowska's once internationally renowned film *The Last Stage (Ostatni etap)* from 1948, the first artistic effort to process the concentration camp experience in a movie. Talarczyk throws light on the formation phase and the production of *Ostatni etap*, and then places Jakubowska's psychodrama in the post-

war context of the former concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. She thereby connects the emotional experience of the former prisoners with the current plundering of the camp and the protection of the terrain and the buildings for the nascent museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The many time layers and perspectives examined here render Talarczyk's article into more than simply a report on Wanda Jakubowska and *Ostatni etap*. The author constructs a narrative of simultaneous actions that does not allow an unambiguous reading of the end of war in Poland.

In the last article of the section, Marcin Zaremba examines the phenomenon of ›war panic‹ in the decades after the official end of the war. He claims that one source of mass panic was the widespread fear of global conflict augmented by rumours about international events or about developments in Poland. He identifies another source in the communist government's propaganda that instilled fear of international armed conflict, or of possible annexations of territories in the west and north of Poland, in order to strengthen its own ideological position. In Zaremba's opinion, ›war panic‹ in varying forms accompanied the citizens of Poland through the 1980s, although the picture of war and occupation, and even of the post-war years, changed both as a result of the passage of time and of the effect of mass culture.

Conclusions

In summing up, it should be emphasised that the slogan ›long live the war‹ – beyond the word play – has to be read as a metaphor. Throughout the post-war years, and even longer, war was still alive in people, regardless of on which side of the front they had survived the Second World War. The varying war experiences evoked extreme emotions in human beings and directed their future actions.

As alluded to in Katarzyna Woniak's article, there were people who tried to suppress negative emotions in order to make up for the time lost during the war. This was true for Stanisława Bafia, who as a seventeen-year-old girl had been imprisoned in the women's concentration camp at Ravensbrück, where she spent four traumatic years. After the liberation from the camp, despite the physical disabilities that would afflict her for the rest of her life resulting from the medical experiments she had been subjected to, she pointed out in her report from 2003: »When I was young, after the war, I was very busy with life.«²⁴

24 *Przetrwałam*, 185.

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Joanna Sulikowska-Fajfer

The Voice(s) of Polish Poets during the Immediate Postwar Years: Capturing the ›Spirit of the Times‹¹

»What did the end of the war really mean for Poland,« Edward Balcerzan asks in his book *Poezja polska* (Polish Poetry). He points out that opinions on this matter were – and continue to be – divided.² For some, the end of the war stood for liberation and victory; for others it amounted to yet another occupation, this time by the Soviets; for others still it meant survival. Polish poetry of the immediate postwar years also reflects different attitudes towards the experiences of the recent past. It reflects different attempts at interpreting historical events and at retelling them in one's own voice.

This article aims to capture the »zeitgeist« by exploring issues in the poetry of the immediate postwar years (1945-1948). In his lectures on poetry, Czesław Miłosz writes that the »zeitgeist« is difficult to capture and that »nobody is able to define it.«³ However, in a more precise discussion of the immediate postwar era, he adds:

To define in a word what had happened, one can say: disintegration. People always live within a certain order and are unable to visualize a time when that order might cease to exist. The sudden crumbling of all current notions and criteria is a rare occurrence and is characteristic only of the most stormy periods in history.⁴

My aim is to examine selected poets' works published between 1945 and 1948 while focusing on artistic expressions of what Miłosz calls »an exceptionally trying collective experience«,⁵ namely World War II.

1 This article is based on research funded by the German-Polish Science Foundation (DPWS/FWPN).

2 Balcerzan, *Poezja polska*, 59.

3 Miłosz, *The Witness of Poetry*, 101.

4 *Ibid.*, 81.

5 *Ibid.*, 80.

Preliminary assumptions

I propose to look at the works of poets whose voices were heard most distinctly in the years after the war. My analysis will focus on selected works by Leopold Staff, Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Różewicz and Kazimierz Wierzyński. This is not an exemplary selection; rather, I follow the method of »most different cases«,⁶ trying to consider poets representing different styles. The deciding criterion is the date of their debuts, which allows me to select poets whose careers, in the period in question, were at very different stages; they represent different poetic generations, and, by extension, different styles of poetic expression. These poets' works allow me to examine the topic from a broader perspective. What is more, Kazimierz Wierzyński, working in exile, represents a trend that is key to our understanding of »the poetic spirit« of the postwar period. The poets in my selection have experienced the war in different ways, which also leads to unique poetic positions. What are their distinctive characteristics? Do they share a common denominator? Since the key theme of this study is the reality represented in postwar poetry, and a detailed discussion of poetic devices would exceed the limits of my analysis, I will focus on the content rather than the form of the poems in question. Among others, I will discuss the works of poets who had been forced laborers in the Third Reich and who integrated this experience into their work. They represent one of the Poles' most universal wartime experiences.

The historical context: Polish poetry before socialist realism

My analysis focuses on poems published in the years 1945-1948, a short period marked by relative creative freedom. Poetic expression was able to achieve artistic differentiation before the official doctrine of socialist realism was introduced. As Leszek Szaruga aptly puts it, »the years 1945-48 were a period of state-controlled literary polyphony.«⁷ The authorities' intentions with regard to literature were formally announced at the Congress of the Polish Writers' Union in January 1949 – a date that marks the official beginning of socialist realism in Poland. From then on, writers – »the engineers of the human soul« according to Stalin's oft-cited phrase – were bound to work in the spirit

6 Otner, »Most Different System Design«, 570-572.

7 Szaruga, *Walka o Godność*, 48.

of this doctrine. Its key premise was adherence to Marxist principles that art ought to serve the simple people and that it should not draw on sophisticated means of expression, as it should be accessible to the masses. Socialist realism was understood as the sole – and perfect – model for all creativity. Thus literature was deprived not only of the right to freely choose its means of expression, but also of the right to form independent judgements.⁸

The statements made by poets in the early postwar years suggest that the germinating doctrine of socialist realism had no significant impact on their work. Indeed, many of them did not imagine it could support their own poetic expression. Stanisław Burkot argues that art in the years 1945-1948 cannot be said to fulfil those principles.⁹ It is also meaningful in this context that socialist realism was officially proclaimed only four years after the war. Burkot explains that Poland's Stalinization took place step by step, as a democratic model of culture prevailed among the Polish intelligentsia, who still remembered the interwar period. The soil had to be prepared gradually for the new socialist ideology.¹⁰

The poets' voices

In the immediate postwar period, poetry naturally focused on themes related to the war. Writers were interested above all in the effect that recent history had on individual consciousness, but they also explored the state of culture and traditions in the face of the disintegration of universal values. In the field of literary production, we must not overlook the question of language itself, of the form that carries the meaning. How, now, should we write? And is it not inappropriate to write, given that we have survived? »What is poetry which does not save / Nations or people«,¹¹ Czesław Miłosz asks in the poem »Dedication« in the collection *Rescue (Ocalenie, 1945)*. Let us examine the answers that the poets developed in their works.

8 Wilkoń, *Polska poezja socrealistyczna*, 11-21; Tomasik, »Realizm socjalistyczny«, 50-68; Olschowsky, *Lyrik in Polen*, 109-126.

9 Burkot, *Literatura polska*, 56.

10 Ibid., 58-59.

11 Miłosz, »Dedication.«

Leopold Staff: Faith in humanity

I will begin my survey of the different positions and poetics by examining Leopold Staff's lyrical poetry. Staff, born in 1878, had his debut in the Young Poland era and was already a mature poet during the occupation. In 1946 he published *Martwa pogoda* (Dead Weather), a collection of poems written during the war. The volume is far from one-dimensional, as it includes poems that represent the lyrical subject's differentiated stance towards wartime experiences. The poem »Mitologia« (Mythology), for instance, presents a vision of European cultural traditions being subject to drastic reevaluation, while their models, including mythological ones, carry the stigma of ruination.

*Nie pamiętam gór. Dawno już ich nie widziałem.
Pewnie znikły i pono wyschły wielkie morza.
W niskich bagnach odbija się zachodnia zorza
I oświeca mrok kłęski, co stała się ciałem.
[...]
Zdejmijcie wędzidła świętym rumakom. Powrozem
Spętane, nie pogonią – skubiąc trawę w rowie.
Wyłupiono bogini mądre oczy sowie
I ogień na ołtarzu zgaszono nawozem.¹²*

I don't remember the mountains. I haven't seen them for a long time. They've probably vanished and they say the great seas have dried up. In the shallow swamps the western twilight is reflected And illuminates the darkness of the calamity that has become flesh [...]
Remove the bits from the holy steeds' mouths. Tied up
With ropes they will not race – nibbling grass in the ditch.
The goddess's wise owl eyes have been gouged out
And the fire on the altar has been put out with manure.¹³

Another poem in the collection *Martwa pogoda*, however, suggests hope for the return and stabilization of the social order. »Pierwsza przechadzka« (The First Stroll) describes a homecoming after the war. While the poetic image of the recovered home can be seen to express a return of the social order, a literal reading of this work also opens up an

¹² Staff, *Poezje*, 337.

¹³ All English translations, unless indicated otherwise, are by Tul'si Bhambry.

entire hermeneutic field. One interpretation revolves around deported Poles, forced labourers in the Third Reich, and their hope for a return to Poland and the beginning of a dignified life.

*Będziemy znowu mieszkać w swoim domu,
Będziemy stąpać po swych własnych schodach.
Nikt o tym jeszcze nie mówi nikomu,
Lecz wiatr już o tym szepcze po ogrodach.
[...]
Kot się pod murem przeciąga leniwie,
Na rogu człowiek rozmawia z człowiekiem ...
Znowu w sklepiku zjawi się pieczywo
I znów zabrzą rano bańki z mlekiem.¹⁴*

We will live in our homes again
We will step on our own stairs.
No one talks about it yet,
But the wind is already whispering about it in the gardens.
[...]
The cat is lazily stretching by the wall
Near the corner a man is talking to a man ...
Once more baked goods will appear in the little shop
And the jingle of milk jugs will be heard again.

It is noteworthy that the lyrical subject's faith is unshakeable: despite the cruelties of the war and the fact that »people dealt this fate to people«,¹⁵ he believes in a moral renewal that would allow individuals to see the human element in each other. Even though the ellipsis suggests that the words »a man is talking to a man« are uttered with a pinch of doubt, they carry a strong load of hopefulness for the return of values – such as the ability and readiness to enter into dialogue. This poem therefore suggests an overcoming of the catastrophic mood. Instead, Staff expresses his humanistic position.

14 Staff, »Pierwsza przechadzka«, 341-342.

15 Nałkowska, *Medallions*, v.

»Campo dei Fiori« by Czesław Miłosz: reaction to the Holocaust

Czesław Miłosz wrote »Campo dei Fiori« over Easter 1943 and published it in an underground volume the following year.¹⁶ The poem circulated in the form of transcriptions, which lead to countless modifications.¹⁷ The best known version is the slightly modified one from the collection *Rescue*, published in 1945. Joanna Gromek-Illg argues that the variations are insignificant, but Miłosz himself put much store by them. According to Gromek-Illg, this was »not on account of formal or artistic matters [...]. The topic of the ghetto uprising was tremendously important and painful to him and remained so until the end of his life.«¹⁸ This is also corroborated by the fact that variations are manifest in different editions published over the years. The version cited in the present study is based on a bilingual edition of Miłosz's poems published in 1996. I chose this version because the poet participated in the translation, enhancing its quality. Although there are only a few differences between the versions of 1945 and 1996, it is worth examining them closely, for they are significant. A comparison will allow us to sharpen our perspective on the version available to readers in 1945. Before I move on to my discussion of the most telling differences, however, let me outline the context in which the poem was composed.

»Campo dei Fiori« is not only among Polish literature's earliest reactions to the Holocaust and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; for Jan Błoński it continues to be »one of the handful of reactions to this horrible event in Polish literature.«¹⁹ According to Miłosz's account, the poem's composition was influenced by the emotions that stirred in him when he sat on a tram and saw a carousel while hearing shooting within the walls of the ghetto.²⁰ The image of Giordano Bruno's martyrdom in the Roman market square Campo de' Fiori, which opens the poem, served Miłosz to express the timeless truth about the »loneliness of the dying.« Just as Giordano Bruno could not count on the empathy of his contemporaries, so the Jews who fought in the ghetto were dying while Warsaw's citizens exhibited perfect indifference. As

16 The poem was included in the anthology *Z Otchłani: poezje* (De Profundis: Poetry) edited by Tadeusz Sarnecki and published by Ż.K.N. in Warsaw in 1944.

17 On the poem's different versions see Gross, »Dzieje jednego wiersza«, 78-84, and Wołk, »Język nasz, język ich«, 21-32.

18 Gromek-Illg, »Ludzkość, która zostaje«, 399-400.

19 Ibid., 400.

20 Ibid.

Jan Błoński points out, this is one of the essential questions that arise after reading the poem:

Does this poem turn against Polish society in any way, is it an accusation of indifference? [...] This is an upsetting image. The problem of loneliness arises here, the problem of some historical distance, a historical misunderstanding, a parting of the Polish and Jewish communities [...].²¹

Jerzy Turowicz's discussion of the poem similarly touches on the key issue of the Poles' collective responsibility, which for him lies in their passivity and, worse still, their indifference.²² To me, a passage that appears in almost identical form in both the 1944 version from the anthology *Z Otchłani* and the 1996 version quoted below presents the most shocking illustration of the Poles' indifference, thoughtlessness, passivity and insensitivity:

*Czasem wiatr z domów płonących
Przynosił czarne latawce,
Łapali skrawki w powietrzu
Jadący na karuzeli.*²³

At time wind from the burning
Would drift dark kites along
And riders on the carousel
Caught petals in midair.²⁴

The version that early readers would have encountered differs by one word: in verse 27 the riders of the carousel do not catch *skrawki* (scraps) in midair but *płatki* (petals).²⁵ This one word changes the impact of the passage: I associate *skrawki* with fire, with airborne flakes of charred clothing, objects, and in this case human bodies. Thus on the one hand we have not simply death but its more horrifying dimension – genocide. On the other hand, the people on the carousel catch those scraps in midair, so despite this encounter with death and geno-

21 Ibid., 402-403.

22 Ibid., 407.

23 Miłosz, *Selected Poems*, 28.

24 Ibid., 29. Translated by David Brooks and Louis Iribarne.

25 Translator's note: in his English version Miłosz uses »petals.«

cide we see a complete lack of awareness or consideration of the unfolding events as well as an utter lack of self-reflection: what am I doing while this is happening, and do I see what is happening and call things by their name? What is more, this passage as well as the following words, »Rozwiewał suknie dziewczynom / Ten wiatr od domów płonących« (That same hot wind / blew open the skirts of the girls), indicate that the reality unfolding behind the ghetto walls is palpable to the Varsovians who are enjoying themselves; after all, if you are able to catch something you will do it knowingly, and you cannot ignore the wind that blows open your skirt. Reality, therefore, is unmistakably making itself felt, there is no way it could be overlooked. Continuing in the same vein, this reality also has an actual influence on us, on our choices and on how these choices might be judged. Even years later we might question if those were the right choices. In this context it is very interesting that years later Miłosz would criticize his own position as a poet and observer. Jan Błoński writes:

Why? Because – let me quote – it was a poem ›about dying written from an observer’s position‹. And indeed: the poem is written in such a manner that the speaking persona – the poet – comes away unscathed. Some are dying, others are having fun, while he ›kindles rage‹ with his words and then leaves, pleased with himself for having written a beautiful poem ... Years later he feels that he copped out too easily.²⁶

And what images do I see in my mind’s eye when I imagine people on a carousel catching *płatki* in midair? *Płatki* in Polish can also mean flakes, immediately making me think of snowflakes. But the poem describes a concrete event that took place on April 25, 1943, so I must concede that this is unlikely. So what *płatki* can this be about? Flower petals? But the people on the carousel must be too high up. I would venture to propose that this word was to take the place of the *skrawki* or scraps from the version composed during the war, and this is why it is so hard to ascribe it an unambiguous meaning in the context of this sentence. *Płatki* or petals (e.g. snowflakes) do not allow us to see the essential problem of the co-existence of these two worlds – the Poles having fun and the Jews dying – in one and the same reality, and the effects they have on one another. I cannot help thinking that in the postwar version *płatki* took the place of *skrawki* because Miłosz was

²⁶ Błoński, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto*, 12.

careful and had a realistic idea about the public's readiness to accept such a radical evaluation of wartime reality and of the Poles' stance – meaning a complete lack thereof.

The sixth stanza also confirms this argument. In the collection *Rescue* from 1945, Giordano Bruno cannot bid farewell to humanity because »Nie znalazł w ludzkim języku / Ani jednego wyrazu« (he could not find / in any human tongue / words for mankind). In the 1996 version, however, we have »Nie było w ludzkim języku / Ani jednego wyrazu« (there were not / in any human tongue / words for mankind). There is an important difference between something not existing in objective reality and an individual's subjective sense that he cannot find something in it. Language, which is the perfect tool that allows us to assimilate reality by naming things, becomes powerless in the face of such brutality perpetrated by humans. Thus, Bruno's inability to say goodbye to the world is not a result of his inability to name the reality that surrounds him – it is that this reality is so inhuman that it simply cannot be described in ›human language‹. More importantly, there is no one to whom he could address his farewell – there is not a single listener. The same goes for the insurgents within the Warsaw ghetto: what could they, fighting for their lives, say to the carefree Varsovians? Their indifference nullifies the meaning of words. The theme of having no communication reappears in verse 59, which in the 1945 version reads: »Język ich stał się nam obcy« (their tongue has become strange to us). In the later versions we have: »Język nasz stał się im obcy« (our tongue has become strange to them).²⁷ Both versions suggest that mutual understanding used to be possible; after all, the verb »stał się« (it has become) implies a change in a given state of affairs. Thus the two sides had not previously been divided by the metaphorical ›strange tongue‹. The difference between the two versions – and this is the crux of the matter – lies in the answer to the question *why* this has happened. When we read »Język ich stał się nam obcy« (their tongue has become strange to us), we clearly feel that it is us, »ta ludzkość, która zostaje« (mankind who live on), outside the ghetto walls, who do not understand and do not want to understand or become aware of what is happening inside. It is the world beyond those walls whose existence

27 Translator's note: Miłosz's English version reads:
Those dying here, the lonely
forgotten by the world,
our tongue becomes for them
the language of an ancient planet.

we repress. By contrast, the words »Język nasz stał się im obcy« (our tongue has become strange to them) indicate the ghetto fighters' desperate situation. Not only have they been placed in a brutal reality, but the world they had known before the ghetto – a world that had belonged to them, too – continued to exist. Now it was not only out of reach for them, but it had also become strange. Thus the words in the first version emphasize the Poles' indifference, while the second version foregrounds the loneliness of the insurgents. In the fifth stanza the poet explicitly outlines possible interpretations of the poem:

*Morał ktoś może wyczyta,
Że lud warszawski czy rzymski
Handluje, bawi się, kocha
Mijając męczeńskie stopy.
Inny ktoś morał wyczyta
O rzeczy ludzkich mijaniu,
O zapomnieniu, co rośnie,
Nim jeszcze płomień przycisnął.*²⁸

Someone will read as moral
That the people of Rome or Warsaw
Haggle, laugh, make love
As they pass by martyrs' pyres.
Someone else will read
Of the passing of things human,
Of the oblivion
Born before the flames have died.

Through his references to possible readings Miłosz suggests the force of his work, which after all these years has lost none of its relevance. According to Marek Edelman, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, this is not an incidental poem. It contains the image of the world as it is today. Fifty years on, it is more pertinent than it was then.²⁹

Let me point out another aspect of the poem. This work not only allows Miłosz to highlight the moral question, but also serves as a statement on the role of poetry. In this context it is significant that Giordano, sentenced to be burned at the stake, does not find words to bid

²⁸ Miłosz, *Selected Poems*, 30. English translation, *ibid.*

²⁹ Gromek-Illg, »Ludzkość, która zostaje«, 407.

farewell to »ludzkość, która zostaje« (mankind who live on), including future generations. The poet, therefore, has a unique role: he must talk about events such as those on the Campo di Fiori or by the Warsaw Ghetto. The task of poetry as a medium is to convey the most difficult and at the same time most important messages. Poetry is also a moral force that should give a voice to victims and save them from the loneliness of forgetting. This is how Błoński puts it:

And [the poet] ends with a reflection on »the loneliness of the dying«, a loneliness that the »poet's word« wards off. Only in this way, he seems to suggest, can the poet's word »save« what can still be saved, but in this act of saving he purifies our memory through his revolt against passing by and »forgetting« what grows »before the flames had died.«³⁰

The importance of the little collection from which this poem is taken is not merely based on the fact that it was one of the first poetic volumes published after the war. Its value is also rooted in the fact that the problems on which it touches are timeless and continue to be relevant.

Czesław Miłosz's »Moral Treatise«:
A warning against »the New Mythology«³¹

Despite the universal message of the collection *Rescue*, the majority of the poems in it were written during the occupation. This is why the theme of the war, of the apocalypse unfolding before the poet's eyes, transpires in many of the poetic forms that take up a prominent position.³² Another – equally important – work, though written after the war, is Miłosz's »Moral Treatise« (*Traktat Moralny*), a commentary on the socialist realities emerging in the postwar era. Here, the lyrical subject's attitude is different from the passive position that can be observed in »Campo dei Fiori«. It is as if the speaking subject had gone a step farther: he not only comments on the reality with which he does not agree, but also refuses to accept indifference or inaction. Thus the posture assumed in the »Moral Treatise« represents a development, a transition to the next stage in relation to the posture in »Campo dei Fiori«: then, by the ghetto walls, it didn't work out, now we must try again.

30 Błoński, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto*, 12.

31 Szaruga, *Walka o godność*, 34.

32 For instance, in the cycle »Voices of Poor People.«

The »Moral Treatise« was published in 1948 in the monthly *Twórczość* (Output).³³ Its force lies not only in the broad range of its themes but also in its very form. According to the literary critic Krzysztof Dybciak, one of Miłosz's literary breakthroughs was his discovery of new means of poetic expression,³⁴ including a way of speaking in the form of a treatise.³⁵ The »Moral Treatise« has a regular metre of nine syllables, which supports its persuasive tone. Joanna Zach highlights the variety of styles used in this work:

At the risk of generalizing, let me suggest that this poem presents a peculiar combination of *philosophy, criticism and theatre*, whereby each of these categories ought to be read as if in quotation marks. These are or seem to be different, overlapping perspectives on expressions. Together they amount to an interpretation of ›moveable wisdom‹ that represents the core and the ›energy‹ of this innovative poetic form.³⁶

This ›moveable wisdom‹ is the opposite of stoical wisdom, which is insufficient in times of war. It is characterized by a historical consciousness, and, by extension, by the ability to act and to distance oneself from the present:

Distance does not signify freedom from moral unease, nor an escape from historical time. But knowing about history allows us conceptually to run ahead and look at current events from the perspective of the future. This is why the ›Treatise‹ contains many examples of events and beliefs of the past, which we now look at ›askance,‹ from a distance.³⁷

Thus the poet does not justify a passive attitude. Even in difficult historical situations, the individual must work to influence them, for »historical fatalism is also cemented by a passive acceptance of the status quo and it offers an excuse to those who have silently made their peace with their circumstances.«³⁸

33 A literary critical monthly published from August 1945, initially in Cracow. Cf. *Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku*, 1131.

34 Chrzastkowska, *Poezje Miłosza*, 53.

35 »[A] poetic work in the fashion of a scholarly treatise,« cf. *Encyklopedia Literatury Polskiej*, 725.

36 Zach, »Traktat Moralny,« 183.

37 Ibid.

38 Fiut, *Moment wieczny*, 144.

*Nie jesteś jednak tak bezwolny,
A choćbyś był jak kamień polny,
Lawina biegnie od tego zmienia,
Po jakich toczy się kamieniach.
I, jak zwykł mawiać już ktoś inny,
Możesz, więc wpłynąć na bieg lawiny.
Łagodź jej dzikość, okrucieństwo,
Do tego też potrzebne męstwo.³⁹*

You're not as numbed as you think,
And even if you're like a pebble on the ground,
Together with many other pebbles
You can change the course of an avalanche.
And, as someone else used to say,
If you can change its course, then do so.
Blunt its ferocity and savagery,
That also requires courage.⁴⁰

Here Miłosz directly addresses his reader, insisting that »every person is individually responsible for history.«⁴¹ In another passage he highlights our individual responsibility for shaping the reality that surrounds us while at the same time polemicizing with this notion. What emerges between the lines is a negative assessment of the passive position:

*Ktoś mówi: zło jest bezimienne,
A nas użyto jak narzędzi.
Ma rację. I ku zgubie pędzi.⁴²*

As someone said: evil is anonymous,
And we've been used just like tools.
He's right. And he's doomed.⁴³

Here the poet describes the kind of reasoning that allows us to separate the perpetrator from his act. For if we are only tools in the machinery of evil, then it is as if we had not committed the offence. There is a very

39 Miłosz, *Traktat*, 10.

40 Translated by R. E. Pyplacz, see: Dudek, »Miłosz i Conrad«, 144.

41 Chrzastowska, *Poezje Czesława Miłosza*, 102.

42 Miłosz, *Traktat*, 15.

43 Dudek, »Miłosz i Conrad«, 144.

interesting contradiction in the third verse: it would be impossible entirely to dismiss this line of thinking as wrong, and yet it is disastrous. To those who look at the event in question from a historical perspective – future generations – this »Ma rację« / »He's right« also indicates the need to think deeper while judging seemingly indisputable positions.

The »Moral Treatise« is mostly read as a warning against the totalitarian system and its effects. Kazimierz Wyka, editor of *Twórczość* at the time, wrote to the Polish poet, essayist, dramatist and writer Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz: »It is a mystery to me that Czesław's »Moral Treatise« has failed to provoke any attacks on the author or editor who printed »That«. They're ready to hang you for a mere trifle, after all!!«⁴⁴ As these words suggest, Miłosz's text is deeply rooted in Polish post-war realities and touches on questions that were urgent and important at the time. The »Moral Treatise« is »an exceptionally insightful warning against [...] »the new mythology« and its effects.«⁴⁵ Let us examine the passage in which the lyrical subject tells us what those effects of the current political system might be. A very interesting device is used here, as a passage of the main part of the »Moral Treatise« is supplied with a footnote in the form of an asterisk (*). The poet elucidates this portion outside the main strand of his reflections:

*Przeciwnie, bo w mojej teorii
Herezja w wielkiej chodzi glorii.
Bo sól epoki jest w herezji,
Zwłaszcza, gdy to pisarze nieźli*.*

**Jednakże jestem tego zdania,
Że mogą być prześladowania
I chcę przestrozę dać rodakom,
Z góry opowieść pisząc taką:
W Krakowie zdarzył się wypadek:
Ktoś przyniósł pannie czekoladek
I tak na łóżku, en passant,
Znalazł tam »L'Être et le Néant«.
Widzę tłum egzystencjalistek,
Nagie, a każda drży jak listek.
Na Plac Mariacki je wywlekli,
Szydzili i różgami siekli*

44 Wyka, »Z listów do Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza«, 34.

45 Szaruga, *Walka o godność*, 34.

*I dali każdej, mimo swobód,
Pięćdziesiąt pięć lat ciężkich robót.
Nie wiem, czy stara książka Sartre'a
Tak wielkiej kary była warta,*

*A choć to żart, rzecz jest możliwa.
Tak to egzystencjalistom bywa.⁴⁶*

On the contrary, for in my theory
Heresy walks in great glory.
For the salt of the epoch lies in heresy,
Especially when the writers in question aren't too bad.*

*And yet I am of the opinion
That persecutions might occur
And I wish to warn my compatriots
By writing the following tale:
The event occurred in Cracow:
Someone brought chocolates to a young lady
And on her bed, en passant,
He found *L'Être et le Néant*.
I see a crowd of lady existentialists,
Naked, and each one of them trembles like a leaf.
They've dragged them out onto Mariacki Square,
Mocking and flailing them with rods
And each of them got, despite all rights and privileges,
Fifty years of hard labour.
I don't know if Sartre's old book
Was worth such severe punishment
But even if this is just a joke, it still is possible.
These things happen to existentialists.

Thus the lyrical subject imagines the brutal reality to come, where not only there will be no place for freedom to express one's worldview, but any deviation from the broadly accepted doctrine will be severely punished. Thus Miłosz's »Moral Treatise« outlines the spectrum of Polish behaviors and mentalities, which makes it a timeless work for the Poles. On the other hand, the stanzas that touch on the disenfranchisement of the individual and his passive stance can also be read in

46 Miłosz, *Traktat*, 12-13.

a broader, universal context. As Zach points out, »I even fear that as a ›critical‹ text, the ›Moral Treatise‹ has aged more than we should have hoped for.«⁴⁷

Tadeusz Różewicz's »Survivor«: An image of postwar identity

We just saw how mature poets pictured the dynamics of their experiences during the war. Our next poet started writing during the occupation and had his debut in 1944 at the age of 23. As it was with other poets of his generations – such as Tadeusz Gajcy or Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński – the war had a profound impact on his work. In Różewicz's case – for he is the poet in question – the voice we hear differs from Staff's or Miłosz's. It is a voice deprived of all hope. The collection *Niepokój* (Disquiet) from 1947 suggests that the occupation's psychological and emotional impact on his work that was different compared to the work of poets of the older generation. This collection is the most telling and dramatic expression of the ethical crisis of the young generation who survived the »epoch of the ovens.«⁴⁸ There is what the poet himself says:

Ladies and gentlemen, various outstanding connoisseurs and excellent critics often write newspaper articles stating that I am ›an excellent, outstanding, wonderful poet‹. Not one of those gentlemen has detected the trace of the wounded human looking for shelter. Not even human, but creature. The human, after all, was murdered in Auschwitz. Of course, I speak ›symbolically‹. [...] I want to say a few words to you about my generation. ›A generation infected with death.‹ Not just infected but consumed by death.⁴⁹

Thus the experience of World War II had a deciding influence on the development of Różewicz's artistic personality and on the creation of a new form of communicating with the audience. »Różewicz discovered non-poetic language in poetry after the war.«⁵⁰ He transformed

47 Zach, »Traktat Moralny«, 182.

48 Translator's note: this is a reference to *Epoka pieców* (Epoch of the Ovens), a story collection by the Polish-Jewish writer Adolf Rudnicki.

49 Różewicz, *Przygotowanie do wieczoru autorskiego* (Preparations for an Evening with the Author), 182.

50 Piotr Śliwiński in the film *Dorzecze* directed by Artur Burszta and Jolanta Kowalska, 5'35''-5'40''.

lyrical expression into prose, avoiding such popular stylistic devices as the metaphor and strophe for the greatest possible conciseness.⁵¹

For many years writers would have recourse to very odd language, and that was supposed to be poetry. Now some of them have learned to say what they actually mean. But they're still messing around with those ›beautiful things‹ that ›make‹ poetry.⁵²

This does not mean that the poet has completely negated his predecessors' achievements or way of writing; after all, he has ›taken on the avant-garde poets' [...] principle not to name feelings in a poem but to express them through image-based equivalents.«⁵³ This is how the poet Piotr Matywiecki describes his encounter with Różewicz's post-war poetry:

And here suddenly I stumble across Różewicz's brutal war poems. And I experience this shock such an incredible shock of extreme poetization with extreme moral asceticism and such an uncompromising ethics concerning the war, well here's something you don't forget as long as you live.⁵⁴

In one of Różewicz's best-known poems, »Ocalony« (Survivor), the lyrical subject describes not only dramatic wartime experiences, but above all his postwar identity. Zbigniew Majchrowski aptly points out that in this power Różewicz »has transformed his biography into a symbolic one – he has spoken in such a way that an entire generation was able to identify with him, even though he was only talking about himself, in the first person.«⁵⁵ This all is expressed in a very sparing language stripped of traditional poetic devices,⁵⁶ as is characteristic of Różewicz's poetry.⁵⁷

51 Matuszewski, *Literatura polska*, 424.

52 Różewicz, *Przygotowanie*, 184.

53 Matuszewski, *Literatura polska*, 424.

54 Piotr Matywiecki in the film *Dorzecze* directed by Artur Burszta and Jolanta Kowalska, 1'47"–2'10".

55 Majchrowski, *Różewicz*, 110.

56 Różewicz's use of anaphors is an exception, with three successive verses beginning with the same word(s) ›niech/let him.

57 Translation by Joanna Trzeciak, <http://www.vqronline.org/survivor>, accessed January 15, 2018.

*Mam dwadzieścia cztery lata
ocalałem
prowadzony na rzeź.
[...]
Pojęcia są tylko wyrazami:
cnota i występki
prawda i kłamstwo
piękno i brzydota
męstwo i tchórzostwo.⁵⁸*

I'm twenty-four
led to slaughter
I survived.
[...]
Concepts are only words:
virtue and vice
truth and lie
beauty and ugliness
courage and cowardice.⁵⁹

Arguably, the poem's protagonist has lost all points of reference: the division between good and evil is suspended, everything is relative. Even the penultimate stanza, where a hopefulness for the world's possible rebuilding seems to make itself heard, in fact diagnoses the end of the world.

*Szukam nauczyciela i mistrza
niech przywróci mi wzrok słuch i mowę
niech jeszcze raz nazwie rzeczy i pojęcia
niech oddzieli światło od ciemności.⁶⁰*

I'm searching for a teacher and a master
let him give me back my sight hearing and speech
let him name objects and concepts again
let him separate the light from the dark.⁶¹

58 Różewicz, *Niepokój*, 110.

59 Różewicz, *Poezje wybrane/Selected Poems*. Translated by Adam Czerniawski, 6.

60 Różewicz, *Niepokój*, 110, 112.

61 Translation by Joanna Trzeciak, see Footnote 57.

Tomasz Kunz highlights the problem of the poet's linguistic consciousness, which cannot be studied in a purely literary context:

[The poet's linguistic consciousness] does not arise from his critical position or a loss of trust in this or that concept of poetic language, but from his reflection on the condition of language as such: language understood as a tool of expression and interhuman communication. [...] A deeper source of this diagnosis would be his belief in the general crisis of language, which, most of all, was about the breakdown of the process of signification.⁶²

Thus when Różewicz writes »To są nazwy puste i jednoznaczne: // człowiek i zwierzę // miłość i nienawiść// wróg i przyjaciel // ciemność i światło« (These words are empty and equivalent: // man and animal // love and hate // foe and friend // dark and light), he describes the semiotic catastrophe that causes names to be stripped of their original meaning, while »antonyms turn out to be equivalent in meaning. [...] The semiotic catastrophe has a historical and ethical motivation, but above all, it has a metaphysical dimension.«⁶³ After all, there is no such thing as a »metaphysical sanction« anymore that would guarantee »stable meaning«.⁶⁴ Keeping this in mind it is easier to understand the condition of a person »consumed by death«:⁶⁵ his struggle – paraphrasing Różewicz – is to ensure that concepts would cease to be mere words. After the experiences of World War II, basic ethical and philosophical categories are meaningless: humankind is not the same anymore as before the war. This is why for me the fact that Różewicz gave poetic expression to this »semiotic catastrophe« is among the most important aspects of his poetic voice after the war.

Kazimierz Wierzyński: A seismograph recording the plight of the nation

The voice of yet another poet, Kazimierz Wierzyński, who lived and worked in exile, is no less important in the context of this study, for one of the consequences of the European order as laid out during the

62 Kunz, *Strategie negatywne*, 95.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., 95-96.

65 Różewicz, *Przygotowanie*, 182.

Yalta Conference was that Polish literature was split into literature produced in Poland and literature produced in emigration. In this period, the latter took upon itself to rescue culture and to defend its values and meanings. Tymon Terlecki, the doyen of Polish émigré literature, offers the best illustration:

We must do the homework on European consciousness on behalf of the whole thinking class in Poland, which in this war was deprived, for the second time, of the freedom of thought, of word and of action. We must intensify Polishness, tie Polishness with Europeanness.⁶⁶

Terlecki, a prominent literary and theatre critic, is biased and his statement should not lead us to believe that cultural production in Poland was worthless. Yet his words indicate not only the existence of exile literature, but its significance.

For Zbigniew Herbert, Kazimierz Wierzyński was a poet who recorded the plight of the nation like a seismograph.⁶⁷ The same opinion is offered by literary historian Waldemar Smaszcz: in his radio show for Polskie Radio he names Kazimierz Wierzyński as the poet whose output – and his career spanned fifty years – presents the fullest account of the Polish experience.⁶⁸ Before his emigration in 1939 he had gained recognition not only among the critics in Poland but, as one of the five great Skamandrite poets, he was also popular among readers.

In the collection *Krzyże i miecze* (Crosses and Swords) of 1946, the two main themes are nostalgia and politics. According to Ryszard Matuszewski, the first theme was related to the poet's longing for his home country, while the second touched on topics that poets in Poland were forced to pass over in silence.⁶⁹ The poem »Księżyc« (The Moon) explores nostalgia:

*Za czym ja krążę?
Za księżycem.
Czym on mnie wabi?
Drohobyczem.
[...]*

66 Terlecki, *Emigracja naszego czasu*, 31.

67 Zabłocka, *O poezji i życiu Kazimierza Wierzyńskiego*.

68 Polskie Radio, *Finezje literackie: Kazimierz Wierzyński*, 5'27''-5'32''.

69 Matuszewski, *Literatura polska*, 235.

*A ten, co dmie tu
Wiew skrzydlaty?
To młodość, miłość
I Karpaty.⁷⁰*

What is it I circle?
The moon.
What does it lure me with?
Drohobycz.
[...]
A that, blown here
By the winged wind?

That's youth, love
And the Carpathians.

The poet's longing has two dimensions: the lyrical subject longs for Poland as well as for his native regions, which now lie outside of Poland's borders. In August 1945 Wierzyński's home town Drohobycz was annexed by the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

As the above-mentioned Ryszard Matuszewski points out, other poems from this collection, such as »Na zajęcie Warszawy przez Rosjan« (On Warsaw's Occupation by the Russians), »Na rozwiązanie Armii Krajowej« (On the Dissolution of the Home Army), »Na proces moskiewski« (On the Moscow Trials) or »Do sumienia świata« (To the World's Conscience) described a political reality that no other poet in Poland touched upon.⁷¹ The extremely suggestive titles attract attention. Stylized to resemble an ode,⁷² they have nothing to do with that literary genre: »Wierzyński creates negative odes [...] that unmask, that are full of anger or disgust.«⁷³ In »Do sumienia świata« Wierzyński presents his poetic vision of the Yalta Conference. Its agreements appear as partitions, and he expresses his sense of injustice perpetrated by the Allies who sacrificed Poland's self-determination.

⁷⁰ Wierzyński, »Księżyc«.

⁷¹ Matuszewski, *Literatura polska*, 235.

⁷² »A lyrical genre [...] a work with a festive, solemn tone, usually celebrating great ideas, [...] important events, outstanding individuals, [...] characterized by a lofty style.« *Encyklopedia literatury polskiej*, 488.

⁷³ Dybciak, *Kazimierz Wierzyński*, XL.

*Aż trzaśło! Targu dobili i gwałtu:
Raz Teheranem w łeb, drugi raz Jaltą
I kraj rozcięli, jak przedtem, z dwu stron,
I nocy owej, za zmową szakali,
Gdy, jak nad trupem, nad nami szczekali,
Świat w inny, wielki uderzył znów dzwon.*⁷⁴

A loud crack! It came to haggle and violence:
Once they beat us over the head with Teheran, another time with Yalta
And they cut up the country, as had been done before, from two sides
And that night, as per the jackals' collusion,
While they barked over us as over a dead body,
The world, once again, tolled another big bell.

Krzysztof Dybciak questions the literary value of such work, characterized as it is by »a juxtaposition of innocent Poland and the evil world [...] as well as a sentimental celebration of pain as morally valuable – a concentration on one's own suffering«:

The poet sometimes enters the rather uncreative path of imitating Romantic models. Then he conceives of Poland as a victim of the world's wickedness, sometimes even a Messianic tone makes itself felt [...]. We have known for a long time that the transposition of so-called historical truth into literature does not automatically lead to good results.⁷⁵

In his introduction to Wierzyński's *Wybór Poezji* (Selected Poems), Dybciak rates those poems more highly that draw not only on pathos but also use irony or satire.⁷⁶ In the above-quoted »Do sumienia świata« we find a somewhat less emotional passage that uses irony:

*Wirtuozowie od pióra, od fletni,
Mędracy wpływowi, uczeni szlachetni,
Tak zawsze czuli na okrutny los,
Na wyrok sądów, na murzyńskie krzywdy,
Nawet na dolę psów – czemuż to nigdy
Wasz owej nocy nie podniósł się głos?!*

74 Wierzyński, *Poezje zebrane*, 406.

75 Dybciak, *Kazimierz Wierzyński*, XLII.

76 *Ibid.*

Virtuosos of the pen, of the flute
 Influential wise men, noble scholars
 Always so alive to cruel fate,
 To the judgment of the courts, to the wrong done to the Blacks
 Even to the suffering of dogs – how come
 That night you never raised your voice?!

The poem that opens the collection *Krzyże i miecze* (Crosses and Swords) is titled »Do Poetów« (To the Poets) and touches on the role or mission that God designed for the poets, namely to give witness of their faith, including their faith in the world, despite the evil done before their eyes:

*Bóg wziął nas do swojego na termin rzemiosła
 I nakazał w niem służyć wśród burz i rozgromu,
 By wiara nasza góry nad światem przeniosła
 I u stóp mu je kładła, pod próg jego domu.
 [...]
 I tak padać w tej służbie będziemy do końca,
 I tylko gorzka prawda ośodzi konanie,
 Że w nas był wiary świata jedyny obrońca,
 Bo minie nawet wojna a słowo zostanie.⁷⁷*

God has made us apprentices of his craft
 And commanded us to serve in it amidst storms and defeat,
 So that our faith would transport mountains over the world
 And lay them at His feet, at the threshold of his house.
 [...]
 And thus we shall perish in this service until the end,
 And only the bitter truth will sweeten our dying,
 That in us the faith of the world had its only defendant,
 Because even the war will pass, while the word will endure.

The lyrical subject compares poets to soldiers in combat in that they shall fulfil their mission »until the end.« The fact that poetic creativity was decreed by God testifies to its status. Its power also lies in the fact that »even the war will pass, while the word will endure.« Thus, not unlike what we saw in Miłosz's »Campo dei Fiori,« the poet's word plays the role of the witness testifying to future generations about the tragic experiences of human fate. And he takes care to save them from oblivion.

77 Wierzyński, *Wybór poezji*, 238.

Forced labourers in the Third Reich: Patriotic work?

In her study *Wiersze i pieśni* (Poems and Ballads), Irena Sikorska argues that the poetry of Polish forced labourers in the Third Reich is unique and has »no precedent in the Polish literary tradition.«⁷⁸ There are shared features with poetry by »soldiers and partisans, inmates of camps and prisons, with the poetry of the war and occupation,«⁷⁹ and yet these commonalities are superficial, for

the fate of the actively fighting collective cannot be [...] compared with the fate of those deprived of their freedom. The natural optimism of a soldier must be seen very differently than the optimism maintained in slavery. The condition [of forced labourers] harbours something tragic by nature. But the tragic situation is different in the case of a prisoner in an extermination camp and in the case of someone deported for forced labour.⁸⁰

It would be hard not to contend with these pronouncements. Sikorska's criterion of originality of war poetry is the degree to which the fate of the different writers (soldiers, forced labourers, extermination camp prisoners) was tragic; it also seems absurd to assume that soldiers have »natural optimism« or that individuals deprived of their freedom find themselves in a situation that is »tragic by nature«. Still, Sikorska's main argument that »in the mosaic of works conceived in conditions of war, we must carefully distinguish its different genres based on the situation of the individuals who produced them«⁸¹ seems justified – not only for the sake of the order of things, but to ensure that the work of forced prisoners should have its own place in readers' eyes. The recurring motifs of fatherland and loss of freedom allow us to group poetry by forced labourers within the category of patriotic poetry.⁸² But this body of work also includes love poems and works that explore the meaning of life. I propose to present examples of poems that suggest the diversity of lyrical positions and motifs.

78 Sikorska, *Wiersze i pieśni*, 20.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., 23.

In a poem based on the Lord's Prayer,⁸³ the lyrical subject turns to God with a prayer for a return home and for peace:

*Ojcie nasz, który jesteś w niebie,
Wysłuchaj modłów Polaków wygnanych,
Którzy w swoim cierpieniu wzdychają do Ciebie,
Kłęcząc przed Tobą, łzami zalanych.
Powróć nas biednych na łono Ojczyzny,
Oszczędź nam bólu i naszej krwi,
Niech z woli Twojej zakwitnie kraj żyzny,
Nasz polski, i dziękczynna pieśń niech brzmi.⁸⁴*

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hear the prayers of the exiled Poles
In our suffering we appeal to thee
Kneeling before thee, wet with tears,
Take us poor souls back into the lap of our fatherland
Spare us the pain and our blood,
Let a fertile land blossom, as is thy will
Our Polish land, and let our song of praise resound.

There is no room for a call for revenge here. In the patriotic poem that follows, however, the lyrical subject believes that the suffering will come to an end at some point and at the same time promises and argues that reparations must be made:

*Lecz my to jeszcze więcej wytrzymamy,
Bo trwać to będzie li tylko do czasu,
A swoje krzywdy z procentem oddamy –
Przygotowujmy się zatem zawczasu.*

But we will endure much more
For this will last only until the moment
We repay our wrongs with interest
So we're getting ready early.

83 Also called the Our Father (Latin: Oratio Dominica, Pater Noster), the oldest Christian prayer. According to the New Testament (Lk 11, 2-4; Mt 6, 9-13) Jesus himself taught it to his disciples.

84 Sikorska, »[Ojcie nasz, któryś jest w niebie]«, 71.

The next poem shows a similar sentiment, where the notion of revenge inspires hope:

*Więc się chłopcy nie przejmujemy
[...]
Bo jak wojnę my wygramy,
Wszystkich Niemców wywieszamy.*⁸⁵

So, boys, let's not worry
[...]
For once we've won the war,
We'll hang all the Germans.

The following poem also expresses faith that the forced labourers' tragic fate will be averted, but it is also tinged with longing for home:

*I choć ciężką mam tu pracę,
Wcale się nie skarzę tu,
Lecz wciąż myślę, wołam, płaczę,
Wciąż myślę o kraju swym.
[...]
Na tym kończę swoje żale,
Co wypełniają serce me,
Bo dziś, jutro, może kiedyś
Powrócę ja w strony me.*⁸⁶

And though my work here is hard
I do not complain at all
But I always think, call, weep,
I always think about my country
[...]
Here I end my lament,
Which fill my heart
For today, tomorrow, or maybe one day
I shall return home.

The reality in which forced labourers find themselves inclines them to reflect on what is most essential in life. In the next poem the lyri-

85 Sikorska, »[U Baora piesek wyje]«, 74.

86 Sikorska, »[Wyjechałam w obce strony]«, 51.

cal subject not only claims that freedom is more valuable than life itself, but also that to deprive a person of freedom is the greatest crime:

*W klatce tak smutno, czyż nie wiecie?
Żalem me serce wciąż wzbiera,
Lepiej ten robi, co bierze życie,
Niż ten, co wolność zabiera.⁸⁷*

It's so sad in the cage, don't you know?
My heart keeps swelling with grief
He who takes another one's life does better
Than he who takes another one's freedom.

In the next verses we learn that »though you may live the life of a prince« without song and love, »day after day will go by in anguish.« The reference to song (*piosenka*) can be understood to signify art, but also optimism and the carefreeness that allows us to withstand life's most arduous trials:

*Choćbyś miał bracie kłopoty i troski,
Buty dziurawe i forsę czuł brak,
Gwiżdżesz na wszystko, bo miłość i piosenki
Idą wraz z tobą przez życia twego szlak.*

*Jakże przesmutnie, bezradnie, dni płyną
Jak w jakimś obłądnym i złym śnie,
Gdy z twoich ust słowa piosenki zginą
I ten ktoś, co kochasz go, zapomni cię.*

*Wtedy, co choćbyś miał życie księżące,
Los drogę życia różami ci stał,
Dzień za dniem będzie upływał w udręce,
A twarz smutną, ponurą będziesz miał.⁸⁸*

Though you may have the same troubles and worries as our brothers
Shoes with holes while sorely broke
You couldn't care less, because love and songs
Walk the path of your life with you.

87 Sikorska, »Ptaszyna«, 68.

88 Sikorska, »[Jakże jest dobrze, radośnie i błogo]«, 72-73.

How very sad, helpless, the way the days go by
Like in some mad and horrible dream,
When the songs are gone from your lips
And the one you love has forgotten you.

Then, though you may live the life of a prince,
And fate decked your life's path out with roses,
Day after day will go by in anguish
And your face will be sad and grim.

A different, more pessimistic message marks a poem in which the lyrical subject calls himself a modest poet – »With simple words I make this toast.« He wants to give a little bit of beauty – as a gift to his beloved? on a special occasion? But he fails to find anything in the world that surrounds him, for »the world has long since squandered them.«

*Jedni składają kwiatów naręczą,
Inni myśl sycą złotem ...
Ja słowem prostym toast ten spełniam,
Przyjm go od swego poety.
Z sennej jesieni wiatr zgarnął wszystko,
Zmierzch szary, szary świt goni,
Skądżeż mam piękna na drogę uszczknąć,
Gdy świat je dawno roztrwonił ...⁸⁹*

Some bring armfuls of flowers
Others steep their thoughts in gold ...
I, with simple words, make this toast
Kindly accept them from your poet.
From the sleepy autumn the wind has swept up everything,
The grey twilight chases the grey dawn
Where am I to pinch some beauty for the way
When the world has long since squandered them ...

The poets who created the works presented here experienced the loss of their fatherland in two ways: first, they were taken to a foreign land against their will, and second, their fatherland was occupied. But the tragic aspect of this situation is not the main motif in their work, for despite the bleak realistic descriptions of their everyday lives, their po-

89 Sikorska, »[Jedni składają kwiatów naręczą]«, 73.

ems still express hopefulness for a return home or at least for revenge. There are also reflections on the question of what is most important in life, with love and the lightness of being taking on the most prominent position. There are also poems that express a loss of faith in beauty, but they represent a minority. Besides melancholy works we also find satires, mostly in the form of song lyrics:

*U bauera dziś wesele,
A tu Niemców przyszło wiele
I po izbie harcowali,
Dziewczyny powciekały
[...]
Poweselić się zechcieli,
No, przecież na to wesele
W kąć karabiny stawili.
Partyzanci im zwędzili.⁹⁰*

The bauer is throwing a wedding party
So many Germans have turned up
And they cavorted around the house
The girls have taken to their heels
[...]
They felt like having a wedding party
Yes, but for that party
They left their rifles leaning in a corner
And the partisans pinched them.

The works of forced labourers belong to the genre of folk art. Their means of expression are unsophisticated, their outlook on reality is narrow, describing mostly individual experiences that »are not presented in relation to one another or generalized.«⁹¹ In this context Edward Balcerzan draws on the concept of folklore and argues that war poems »belong to art as much as folklore belongs to art.«⁹² Folklore, meanwhile, »is art and non-art.«⁹³ That »non-art« of these works is due, among other things, to the way in which it is based on a single means of using words, namely on the »reduction of artistic aspirations,

90 Sikorska, »[U bauera piesek wyje]«, 75.

91 Sikorska, *Wiersze i pieśni*, 34.

92 Balcerzan, *Poezja polska*, 16.

93 Ibid.

on the organization of the repertoire of means of expression to a minimum. The wealth of poetic devices that prewar poets had developed is rejected here.«⁹⁴ Interestingly, this kind of poetic expression is found not only in anonymous works but also in those by poets who had shown immense literary skill in other contexts. Adam Ważyk,⁹⁵ for instance, was broadly known before the war as »the author of poems with a refined instrumentation and astonishingly daring imagery,«⁹⁶ but once he put on a uniform he started to write poems in the wartime »folklore« tradition. Thus a key aim of wartime poetry was to be acceptable to others, and not to imbue one's works with one's individual language, for »the deciding voice was the audience, who was at the same time the *performer* of the text.«⁹⁷ A rich poetics would have hampered the simplicity of the message, which was essential to realizing the most important function of these works, namely to maintain readers' morale, to express the longing for home and perhaps also to offer a brief escape from the harshness of their everyday lives.

Conclusions

In the poetic works discussed above, how could we describe the lyrical positions and what are their characteristic features? Do they have a common denominator? And, by extension, what themes did the poets explore in their postwar works?

Taking into account the fact that the poetic output of forced labourers focused on describing their immediate lived reality, it seems justifiable to conclude that they have much in common with the work of Staff or Miłosz. The power of poets of such rank, however, lies in their ability to transpose their personal experience onto universal human experience while at the same time expressing it in their own poetic language and style. But the themes explored in all these works overlap in some ways. Reading the works of Staff we sense a certain despondency about the demise of values, but it immediately gives way to hopefulness as we listen to the sounds of the street, now filled with people talking rather than gunfire. With great impatience we await the

94 Balcerzan, *Poezja polska*, 17.

95 Adam Ważyk (1905-1982), prose writer and poet, one of the main proponents of Socialist Realism after the war.

96 Balcerzan, *Poezja polska*, 16.

97 *Ibid.*, 17.

moment where we may cross the threshold of our own home, where we finally find the calm we had longed for. The motif of hope – hope for a return to the fatherland, for a return home – also appears in the work of many forced labourers.

The common themes of rescue and survival are also easily detectable. They appear in the title of Miłosz's collection »Rescue« as well as in that of Różewicz's poem »Survivor.« In Różewicz's work, however, we detect a painful paradox: although the lyrical subject has survived, in the times in which he now lives he has lost all points of reference. Surviving is therefore an expression of the tragic fate of the individual who must live in a world without moral foundations, in a world that was not able to survive. In Miłosz's case, the motif of survival can be seen in his focus on poetics, which according to Balcerzan

signifies going beyond *pure lyricism* [...]. The poem ought to imbue a wealth of devices – the philosophical treatise and comedy, ballads and countless forms of persiflage, i.e. texts that apply a lofty style ironically to convey their mockery.⁹⁸

It is tempting to argue that the very form of the treatise allowed Miłosz to introduce into the world of literature views that were censurable at the time. For Różewicz, similarly, poetic language is transformed into prose as he searches for new forms of poetic expression.

The poets also thematise the role of poetry itself: it is to *save* the experiences of the war from being forgotten. We have already seen how Miłosz's »Campo dei Fiori« and Wierzyński's »To the Poets« place the responsibility for collective memory in the hands of poets. But poetry not only helps us remember, it also calls things by their name – even those we generally do not become fully aware of:

What if the lament so widely spread in poetry today proves to be a prophetic response to the hopeless situation in which mankind has found itself? In that case, poetry would have proven once again that it is more conscious than the average citizen, or that it simply intensifies what is always present but veiled in people's minds.⁹⁹

It seems that the great force of the poetic word after the war was rooted in the poets' and readers' shared experience as well as in the great need

98 Ibid., 65-66.

99 Miłosz, *The Witness of Poetry*, 101.

they felt to name that which for most remained ›veiled‹. But it was also due to the poets' awareness of the fact that their works express not only their own emotions and ideas but also the truths that concern all of us.

Translated from Polish by Tul'si Bhambry

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Monika Talarczyk

Don't Let Auschwitz Happen Again! The Reception of Wanda Jakubowska's Film *The Last Stage* (*Ostatni etap*) in the Late 1940s

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the film *The Last Stage* (aka *The Last Stop*; *Ostatni etap*), directed by Wanda Jakubowska,¹ globally ranks among the most important films of the postwar period. The film touches on the most disturbing aspect of World War II, namely the planned and industrialized genocide. Its title suggests the scale of the crime – the last stage, where to go any farther was an impossibility.² Documentary films such as *Majdanek: The Cemetery of Europe*, directed by Jerzy Bossak and Aleksander Ford (1944), or *Death Mills* (*Todesmühlen*) by Billy Wilder and Hanus Burger (1945) had thematized the Holocaust almost simultaneously with the liberation of the concentration camps. Jakubowska, however, was the first to make it the subject of a feature film.³ Her means of expression were different to those of a documentary film – most notably, she combined cognitive goals with emotional effects. This risky take on the subject of the death camp met with a variety of reactions.

Given the stormy reception of Jakubowska's well-known narrative film, I shall use a broad definition of reception for the purpose of this

- 1 Film director and screenwriter Wanda Jakubowska (1907-1998) cofounded the Society of Film Art Devotees (*Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Filmu Artystycznego*, START, 1930-1935), the film cooperatives The Circle (*Krąg*, 1933) and the Cooperative of Film Authors (*Spółdzielnia Autorów Filmowych*, SAF, 1937). During the occupation she was active in the Polish Socialist Workers' Party (*Robotnicza Partia Polskich Socjalistów*, RPPS); after the war she headed the Film Unit (*Zespół Autorów Filmowych*, ZAF) as well as START; she was a lecturer at the Lodz Film School (*Państwowa Szkoła Filmowa w Łodzi*) and cofounded the Polish Filmmakers Association (*Stowarzyszenie Filmowców Polskich*, 1962). Her feature film debut was *On the Niemen River* (*Nad Niemnem*, 1939, lost). As a survivor of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, she directed the world's first feature film to be shot at a concentration camp – *The Last Stage* (aka *The Last Stop*; *Ostatni etap*, 1948) – which brought her international fame. She was an active filmmaker until the late 1980s.
- 2 Alternative titles can be found in drafts of the screenplay at the National Film Archive in Poland: *Odcinek Birkenau melduje* (The Birkenau Front Reports) and *Auschwitz*.
- 3 Reimer, *Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema*, 6.

article. Besides the opinions of film critics, jury members and viewers – in Poland and internationally – I will also take into account how Jakubowska's fellow prisoners reacted to the very idea of fictionalizing the concentration camp experience in the form of a film – an idea that had already emerged in Auschwitz. Moving on to the film's postwar reception, I will examine institutionalized forms of reception, such as consultations and work on the screenplay, the film team's experiences over the course of the film's production, as well as the public reception from the film's premiere in March 1948 to the libel action against Wanda Jakubowska in the exile Polish newspaper *Narodowiec* (The Nationalist) and her being awarded the International Peace Prize in 1950.

The film's reception, which models its message, includes the voices of artists, former prisoners, film critics, journalists and politicians on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Reconstructed after many years, the debate clearly suggests that the dispute concerned the realism in the film's portrayal of the Holocaust, the motives for the decision to soften the image of life in the camp and the political justification for the film's humanist message. At the same time, the film's international tour was a triumph accompanied by enthusiastic reviews in countries in the Eastern Bloc as well as in Western Europe and the United States. The context of contemporary Holocaust Studies – a discipline attuned to the question of gender – allows us to appreciate the role of women in this film. Most remarkable are the pioneering role of this superproduction's woman director and the collaboration of two women screenwriters as well as the female collective heroine, although the sexual violence women experienced during the war was passed over in silence.

The idea

The idea to make a film about the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau was born as soon as Wanda Jakubowska walked through the camp's gate.⁴ Aged thirty-five, she had already co-directed short films with Jerzy Zarzycki, Eugeniusz Cękański and Stanisław Wohl, colleagues from the Society of Film Art Devotees START (*Stowarzyszenia*

4 For more information on this subject see for instance Lubelski, »Dwa debiuty oddzielone w czasie: Wanda Jakubowska«, 11–28. See also my monograph exploring the rich archival material on Jakubowska: Talarczyk, *Wanda Jakubowska od nowa*.

Miłośników Filmu Artystycznego START): ›Autumn Impressions‹ (*Impresje jesienne*, 1932), ›The Sea‹ (*Morze*, 1933), ›We're Building‹ (*Budujemy*, 1934). She was the sole director of ›Edison Street‹ (*Ulica Edisona*) as well as co-director, with Karol Szołowski, of the feature film ›On the Niemen River‹ (*Nad Niemnem*, 1939) based on Eliza Orzeszkowa's novel and produced by the Cooperative of Film Authors (*Spółdzielnia Autorów Filmowych*) whose chairwoman she was at the time. During the occupation she had engaged in the underground activities of the Polish Socialist Workers Party and was elected secretary of the Party's Warsaw district just before her arrest by the Gestapo. On 28 April 1943, after six months in Warsaw's Pawiak prison, she was put on an overnight train to Auschwitz-Birkenau. There she received a secret letter from her fellow conspirators, the Polish Socialists in the Warsaw district of Żoliborz, urging her to apply for work as a photographer in the subcamp at Rajsko. After about six weeks at Birkenau itself, she was moved to Rajsko on 12 June 1943, when a women's brigade was established under SS commander Joachim Caesar, doctor of agricultural and botanical sciences. Jakubowska remained at this model subcamp until the evacuation in January 1945. Better living conditions increased the prisoners' chances of survival. These women were mostly trained in the natural sciences and, given the foresight of the employment office, political prisoners. Jakubowska was assigned to head the photography studio that documented the experimental cultivation of the rubber-producing Russian dandelion.

The nature of Jakubowska's forced labour – in contrast to the hard physical labour that other female prisoners were subjected to – allowed her to maintain her physical and mental health. After the war, the fact that she had used her skills as a film director and cinematographer in Rajsko inspired her to think about the role of photography in the Holocaust, e.g. in the film *The End of Our World* (*Koniec naszego świata*),⁵ where she used photographs from the so-called Auschwitz Album⁶ as well as photographs taken by the *Sonderkommando*. Various historical sources indicate that Jakubowska carried messages between the women's camp and the communist conspiracy

5 A feature film directed by Wanda Jakubowska, based on Tadeusz Hołuj's novel of the same title, produced by the film society START in 1964.

6 The Auschwitz Album is a collection of photographs taken by the SS in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in 1944 and 1945. Consisting of close to 200 photographs, and known to the public since 1960, it was used as evidence in the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials in 1963-1964.

in the central camp.⁷ In *Zeszyty Oświęcimskie*, Anna Zięba from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum describes the living and working conditions as well as planned acts of sabotage at the sub-camp in Rajsko.⁸ Jakubowska's plan to make a film after the war – a plan developed in and spread throughout the camp – inspired many prisoners to share their stories from various parts of the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex with her. The memoirs of other prisoners, such as the film scholar Bolesław Lewicki⁹ or Krystyna Żywulska, author of *Przeżyłam Oświęcim* (I survived Auschwitz),¹⁰ testify that regardless of the artist's cultural competence, film seemed best suited to give artistic expression to this particular time and place. Jakubowska's decision, therefore, was in tune with the general belief that it would be possible to inscribe the experience of the Holocaust, the extreme product of a logical, industrialized modernity, into modernity's most popular medium – cinema.

The screenplay

The creation of the screenplay resulted from a collaboration between Wanda Jakubowska and the German communist Gerda Schneider, a fellow prisoner at both Birkenau and Rajsko. With the evacuation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, both women were sent on a death march to Ravensbrück, where they stayed until the camp's liberation. In the spring of 1945, they moved to Berlin, sharing a flat at Bornholmer Straße 20 and participating in the investigation of Nazi crimes. A pass permitting Jakubowska to travel to Poland on 4 December 1945 indicates that she had joined the Communist Party of Germany (KPD).¹¹ This we might attribute to her collaboration with Schneider as well as the possibilities a membership might have afforded in terms of collecting documentation for their film, but it also suggests an internationalist outlook. Jakubowska never publicly mentioned her KPD membership in Poland, probably aware of the controversy this might cause. She also recalled that during their stay in Berlin, she and Schneider

7 Garliński, *Oświęcim walczący*, 114.

8 Zięba, »Podobóz Rajsko.«

9 Lewicki, *Wiesz jak jest*, 134.

10 Żywulska, »Nareszcie film.«

11 AP WJ, KPD-issued pass for Wanda Jakubowska, dated December 4, 1945.

attempted to interview SS-*Lagerführerin* Maria Mandl, then under arrest, but Mandl declined.¹²

On her return to Poland in late 1945 Jakubowska submitted the screenplay to Aleksander Ford.¹³ She encountered various hurdles trying to move the film on to production. These she addressed in her correspondence with employees of various ranks at *Film Polski*, the state-run film production and distribution organization of Poland, and later in her notes to the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. According to Jakubowska, these difficulties were due to her male colleagues' attempts to appropriate her theme. Historians, meanwhile, ascribe the delay to Poland's poor cinematographic infrastructure as well as the film authorities' concern about producing a film about camps: this theme might upset the Soviets, who had their own history of forced labour camps. It was Jakubowska's journey to Moscow and her successful attempt to gain support from Mikhail Kalatozov, vice-minister of cinematography, that eventually secured the film's production. On 26 March 1947 the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs received a telephonograph from Moscow offering Soviet support: operator Boris Monastyrski as well as actors Tatiana Górecka and Maria Vinogradova would participate in the film's production.¹⁴

The screenplay of *The Last Stage* was published in book form in 1955,¹⁵ but two early versions dated 1946 survive in the National Film Archive in Warsaw.¹⁶ They both include a narrative frame that portrays the main part as a terrifying flashback. The first alternative version, titled *Oświęcim* (Auschwitz-Birkenau), opens with a scene from the death march after the evacuation in January 1945. Female prisoners share their experiences from the camp and ask one of them, a Pole, to record their stories in writing. In the version titled *Odcinek Birkenau melduje* (The Birkenau Front Reports) the same protagonist testifies in court in a scene modelled on the Belsen Trial in Lüneburg.¹⁷ The truthfulness of her statements is called into question and a scene

12 Madej, »Jak powstał *Ostatni etap*«, 14.

13 Ibid.

14 AP WJ, Telephonograph from Moscow to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Polish People's Republic dated March 26, 1947.

15 Jakubowska, *Ostatni etap*.

16 AFN, S-3034 Wersja II *Oświęcim-Birkenau*; *ibid.*, S-364 *Odcinek Birkenau melduje*.

17 The Belsen trial against former functionaries of the Bergen-Belsen camp took place before a British military tribunal in Lüneburg, Germany, from September 17 to November 17, 1945.

from Birkenau appears in her mind's eye. The final version, however, presents the story from an omniscient narrator's objective point of view, beginning with a round-up scene as a prologue. The differences between these two versions indicate a tendency to soften graphic images, including images of sexual violence against women. Many years after the war, Jakubowska would also confirm this tendency. For instance, she indicated in interviews that she and her fellow inmates in Birkenau were mostly naked throughout the spring of 1943. That said, she never referred to Red Army soldiers raping liberated female prisoners – her screenplays present these men as heralds of the liberation. As for sexual relations between women in the camp, she claimed there were none.¹⁸ In her film she avoided images of humiliating nudity, stylizing female suffering on the iconography of Christ's passion.¹⁹

The production

One asset of *The Last Stage* was unquestionably the filming location of the former camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, which had not yet changed under the authorities' management. The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, founded on the grounds of Auschwitz I, was officially opened, along with a part of the final exhibition, on 14 June 1947.²⁰ Location shooting began in mid-July and continued alongside those events. The film crew's work had not only symbolical but also material effects, translatable into the work of museum staff, as it took place in the sphere of material culture. The pre-production overlapped partially with the work planned by the organizers of Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, such as preventing further looting of the camp's remains by the local population, tidying up the devastated grounds and securing objects such as striped prison uniforms, dishes, memorabilia – objects that now form the museum's collection. In March 1946, Jakubowska, alarmed by the devastation of the grounds, wrote to Jerzy Turbowicz at the Production Department of *Film Polski* asking for additional funding and personnel to clear the camp before the shooting.²¹ Still, a full-blown psychodrama

18 Mruklik, »Wierność sobie«, 21.

19 Talarczyk, »Untouchables.«

20 Wóycicka, *Przerwana załoba*.

21 AP WJ, Copy of a letter from Wanda Jakubowska to Captain Jerzy Turbowicz, Production Department of *Film Polski*, June 8, 1946.

played out over the course of the actual production, which relied on the participation of former inmates (in the film team and among the actors and extras) and the inhabitants of a nearby village. According to Jakubowska's assistants, Jan Rybkowski and Jerzy Kawalerowicz, the women who were former inmates were deeply affected by their return to the very bunks they had slept on. They shared what they knew about the camp's functioning, and they relived their traumatic experiences, though in a therapeutic way; those who had no camp experience, meanwhile, developed defence mechanisms to protect themselves from the aura of the place.²² The film team decided to lodge in the brick buildings of the administration of Auschwitz I. The wooden barracks were reconstructed from what was left at the camp, while prison uniforms were found in the surrounding villages. The film crew's tasks went as far as taming the weeds that had overgrown the muddy grounds of Birkenau.

Jakubowska instigated an application by *Film Polski* to the Polish Ministry of Public Security, requesting the Prison Department to make female German prisoners available to appear in the roles of Germans. This request was denied with reference to the legislation and on the grounds that »this would be an insult to the memory of millions of Poles murdered by the Germans« (March 1947).²³ For Jakubowska, the involvement of German actors would have enhanced the production's realism, which would benefit the film's international reception. Her correspondence, however, indicates that the Art Council (*Rada Artystyczna*) of the Association of Polish Artists in Theatre, Film, Radio and Television (ZASP) denied their permission.²⁴ Many Poles, deeply hostile to their recent occupants, saw Jakubowska's collaboration with the German Gerda Schneider – in the screenplay as well as on the set – as something of an extravagance. Members of the film crew later recalled that technicians from the German film and television production company UFA also participated in the production. These experts, who knew how to operate the UFA equipment seized in Berlin, were highly sought-after at the time. They were treated with respect and even became friends with Jakubowska for years to come.²⁵ Fol-

22 Figielski and Michalak, *Prywatna historia*, 20.

23 AP WJ, Copy of a letter from the Prison Department of the Polish Ministry of Public Security to the directors of *Film Polski*, March 24, 1947.

24 Ibid., Copy of a letter from Wanda Jakubowska to the directors of *Film Polski*, May 14, 1947.

25 Stanisław Wohl's recollections based on my interview with Jakubowska's grand-daughter, Katarzyna Rudomino, Warsaw, November 10, 2012.

lowing the premiere in the GDR, the press praised the film as part of the process of coming to terms with Fascism. One reviewer for *Neues Deutschland* wrote: »This film must get to the cinemas as soon as possible. This is essential, if for no other reason than the scandalous pardoning of Ilse Koch.«²⁶ Jakubowska enjoyed a good rapport with East Germany. She was a member of the *Deutsche Akademie der Künste* (German Academy of the Arts) in East Berlin, and what is more, it is this institution's press, the *Henschelverlag*, that published Danuta Karcz's German-language monograph *Wanda Jakubowska* (1967) – the first and until recently the only extensive study on the Polish filmmaker.²⁷

After the premiere: Poland

After the premiere of *The Last Stage* in Poland, Jakubowska made the following statement:

[...] I could have made something à la Céline,²⁸ something pathologically criminal. This is no doubt how some formalist would have gone about it, or a sensationalist. I deliberately tried not to portray humankind's downfall at rock bottom as I didn't want to shift the weight of the film onto the tracks of the macabre or stir unhealthy emotions in the viewer. [...] I didn't care about the Auschwitz theme as a cinematic attraction.²⁹

Fellow former inmates who contributed to the screenplay supported Jakubowska's decision. Pelagia Lewińska, for instance, explained: »We spared the viewer the whole monstrosity that exceeds what people's nerves are able to take. These are images from which even we, the inmates, had shielded our senses to keep them from falling apart.«³⁰ In Poland, the documentary dimension of *The Last Stage*, which was

26 Jakubowska, *Ostatni etap*, 143.

27 Karcz, *Wanda Jakubowska*.

28 Louis Ferdinand Céline (1894-1961), French writer. His most famous work is the novel *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932), inspired by naturalism and expressing a pessimistic outlook on interhuman relationships. Céline is known for his sharp and provocative style that does not shun vulgarity, irony or black humour.

29 Jakubowska, *Ostatni etap*, 18-19.

30 Lewińska, »Ostatni etap.«

stressed in the film's promotion, quickly became the basis on which accusations were made against the film's visionary parts, which distorted or attenuated the real image of the camp. Leon Bukowiecki, for instance, called the actors' good looks into question, while Jan Nepomucen Miller pointed out that the symbolic finale was inconsistent with the epoch. Some viewers regretted the absence of gruesome details from Auschwitz-Birkenau – the struggle for survival, fighting for a slice of bread or a spoonful of soup; the horror as well as the indifference at the sight of dead bodies, but also the absence of everyday details such as people playing cards or engaging in sports tournaments, or the reality of prostitution at the camp. Writers publicly praised Jakubowska's artistic vision. For instance, Kazimierz Brandys wrote about the »deformation of a higher order« in the weekly *Kuźnica*;³¹ Jerzy Toeplitz lauded Jakubowska's »ideological position, which dominates the organization of the work.«³² Maria Dąbrowska's private notes, by contrast, contain scathing criticism – she describes the film as »pro-Soviet propaganda trash.«³³ For Dąbrowska and other commentators, the film's anti-Polish position was evident from the representation of two cruel Polish characters – a *kapo* (played by Barbara Rachwalska) who bullied prisoners while helping herself to an abundance of goods from »Canada«³⁴ and Lalunia, who posed as a medical doctor and smuggled medication for the *kapo* and other functionaries at the cost of the sick from her ward. Indeed, only Poles and Germans were portrayed in positive as well as negative roles, i.e. resisting or collaborating with the Nazis. This position towards personal choices in relation to nationality continues to be sensitive to this day. The Poles' participation in the Holocaust has recently become a prominent issue in public debates on World War II as well as theme in films such as *Pokłosie* (*Aftermath*, 2012), *Ida* (2013) or *Demon* (2015).

In 1948, *The Last Stage* won the Crystal Globe at the International Film Festival in Mariánské Lázně. Without attempting to list all the cities and countries where it was distributed, let me just mention that it was shown from Brazil to Indonesia, and that between 1948 and 1950 it was shown in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and North and South

31 Brandys, »Pisarze o filmie«, 9.

32 Jakubowska, *Ostatni etap*, 7.

33 Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne*, 209.

34 Translator's note: »Canada« was a nickname for the large warehouses where prisoners' essential belongings were stored ahead of being sent to Germany.



An exhibition on the world tour of *The Last Stage*, undated (Fototeka, 1-F-1966-349).

America. Its rank was confirmed when the United Nations Film Board awarded it the protection of an honorary status in December 1948. Jakubowska conceived the film in an eclectic mix of conventions based on the aesthetics of socialist realism but also inspired by neo-realism. To her great surprise, during the congress of filmmakers in the Silesian town of Wisła in December 1949, when socialist realism was proclaimed in Polish film, *The Last Stage* was critiqued from an ideological as well as artistic point of view. According to the new authorities of cinematography, the film was not consistent with the poetics of socialist realism, while the international crew – including Gerda Schneider (German, co-writer), Boris Monastyrski (Russian, operator), Huguette Faget (French, actress) and Tatiana Górecka (Russian, actress) – was said to throw doubt on the film being ›Polish‹ at all.

After the premiere: France

In Europe, the film's great champions were the Hungarian-Jewish film critic Béla Balázs as well as Pablo Picasso, in his quality as a pacifist and member of the French Communist Party. Balázs emphasized the film's documentary value, reinforced by the two screenwriter's personal testimony. For him, the film fit in the category of the docudrama: »Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is not only a new work of art, but also a work of a new genre.«³⁵ Picasso, who met Jakubowska at the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace in Wrocław in August 1948, gave introductory lectures when the film was screened in France. The festive premiere of *The Last Stage* took place at the *Salle Pleyel* on 23 September 1948, in the presence of president Vincent Auriol and Jerzy Putrament, Poland's Ambassador to France. The Marseillaise was performed, as well as Paul Eluard's poem *Liberté*. In Poland, the use of documentary aspects led to disapproval of its visionary parts. International audiences, meanwhile, understood this usage to be a »euphemism,« as Jean Thévenot put it.³⁶ In his review »Art et vérité« (Art and Truth) for *Lettres françaises*, Georges Sadoul praised Jakubowska's »sensitivity and restraint, her skill as a director.«³⁷ The French press cited another former prisoner's opinion:

This was a tricky problem. The difficulty was to make a film that was both real and credible, and that people could watch through to the end without having the cowardly urge to run away right after the first sequence. And for that we had to choose, to neglect certain aspects of camp life, the most sordid and the most realistic ones, those that might have seemed outrageous to the public, or that basic decency would have made impossible to film. Not to lose those human characteristics – that's what distinguished the best among us. That's what we had to share.³⁸

In her discussion of the film's French reception, historian Annette Wieviorka underlines its broad impact – the solemn premiere at the *Salle Pleyel* in Paris, simultaneous screenings at various film clubs, showings in several hundred French towns. Wieviorka writes that con-

35 Balázs, »The Last Stage,« 66.

36 Wieviorka, *Deportation et genocide*, 309.

37 Jakubowska, *Ostatni etap*, 143.

38 Ibid.

centration camp survivors might have felt deep gratification knowing that a film was being shown to people who did not share their experience and who otherwise could not bear to hear their stories: »Neither the mass graves at Bergen-Belsen nor the insistence on the sadism of the SS after the war reflected their everyday suffering.«³⁹

It is unsurprising that for Wanda Jakubowska, France became »the second home of *The Last Stage*.« What is more, in the history of French documentary film, *The Last Stage* inscribed itself with concrete shots in the poetic documentary of the epoch. Alain Resnais, director of film *Night and Fog* (1956), which includes archival material depicting victims in concentration camps, included two shots from Jakubowska's fictional film. The first shows the arrival of a night train at a ramp in Auschwitz. The second scene shows a lorry taking prisoners to the smoking crematoria.

Those viewers who had seen Jakubowska's film might have associated this shot with that of French political prisoners who, while being taken to their certain death, started singing the Marseillaise. Given the wealth of archival documentary material used in *Night and Fog*, it would not seem unlikely that scenes from *The Last Stage* might have been included by mistake. And yet, this was a conscious choice on the part of filmmakers Alain Resnais and scriptwriter Jean Cayrol, and it is known that they met with Wanda Jakubowska in Warsaw to discuss this question.⁴⁰

The film's reception in France also included an episode in court. On 23 June and 9 July 1949, the émigré Polish daily *Narodowiec* published two letters by Wanda Ramond, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Drawing on Seweryna Szmaglewska's autobiographical novel *Smoke over Birkenau* (*Dymy nad Birkenau*, 1945), she claimed that the cruel *kapo* whom Szmaglewska names named Wanda – without a surname – in fact represents Wanda Jakubowska, who, Ramond claims, consorted with certain Jewish prisoners and abused her power as a *kapo* to obtain food and clothing.⁴¹ Jakubowska sued *Narodowiec* for libel and in early 1950 was awarded 500,000 francs in damages, of which she made a donation for the cause of »the fight against fascism.«⁴²

39 Ibid.

40 Lindeperg, »*Night and Fog*«, 58.

41 AP WJ, Transcript of a letter from the editors of *Gazeta Polska* to Wanda Jakubowska, Paris, February 13, 1950.

42 Mruklik, »Wierność sobie«, 20.



Huguette Faget and others in a scene showing French women leaving for the crematorium. *The Last Stage*, dir. Wanda Jakubowska, 1948 (Fototeka, 1-F-1966-14, license KADR Film Studio / www.sfkadr.com).

After the premiere: USA

On its international tour, *The Last Stage* premiered on 21 March 1949 in the World Theatre in New York. The premiere was broadly advertised in the press and followed by enthusiastic reviews in *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker* expressing admiration for the director's mastery and the fact that her ingenuity made up for technical deficiencies. At the same time, however, the reviewers expressed their moral shock. The reviewer for *The New Yorker* was so affected by the sweeping scenes showing women being beaten, kicked, strangled and shot that he confessed to feeling doubtful whether it was worthwhile belonging to human society at all.⁴³ *The Last Stage* was also shown in diplomatic circles. In February and March 1949 it was explicitly mentioned in reports on foreign films shown in the United States, and it continued to be screened until the end of the year. In New York it continued to be part of the repertoire for a relatively long time given that it appeared in the niche section of foreign film.

43 Carr, »To Encompass the Unseeable.«

The fact that *The Last Stage* was shot at the former camp with the participation of survivors among the main creators, in the production team, e.g. Wilhelm Hollender, as well as among the extras, and using authentic objects (prison uniforms, the wood from the barracks, the furnishings of the brick buildings) imbued the film with the aura of the location and conferred on the fictional film the status of a document of the time and place. William Friedberg used concrete figures in his review for *The New York Times*, mentioning »45 crew members using obsolete and inferior equipment; 27 performers; 3,500 extras who were actual prisoners of Auschwitz agreeing to relive their experiences.«⁴⁴ In North America, *The Last Stage* was seen as a European anti-fascist film. Reviewers and film curators of big city cinemas mentioned Jakubowska in one breath with Roberto Rossellini: »Like *Paisan* and *Open City* and other predecessors at the World, this latest import from Europe is a stark and uncompromising film.«⁴⁵ In Italy, too, the film was received enthusiastically. Umberto Barbaro wrote: »I saw *The Last Stage*. This was exactly the film we need. It spoke more strongly to the conscience of the world than many appeals on paper have done.«⁴⁶ The fact that the plot was based on historical events, the authentic filming location and costumes, the involvement of non-professional actors, the observation of individual positions leading to wider generalizations, and finally the director's engagement in an international movement against fascism and the film's enthusiastic reception among Italian filmmakers – all this placed *The Last Stage* in a context that was much broader than postwar cinema in Poland or the Eastern Bloc. As Steven Alan Carr argues, neo-realism constituted the interpretive framework that allowed American audiences to assimilate and appreciate the film's aesthetics.⁴⁷

It is worth recalling that in the United States, the first fictional film to confront viewers with documentary footage of the Holocaust was *The Stranger* (1946), directed by Orson Welles, who had written about his antifascist views in *The New York Post*. This was, however, a question of tiny fragments in the classical film noir,⁴⁸ and the plot is set in

44 Ibid.

45 Crowther, »Last Stop.«

46 Barbaro, »Polonia, Il film del dopoguerra.«

47 Carr, »To Encompass the Unseeable.«

48 Film noir is a subgenre of the detective film, developed in the USA in the 1940s. While these films were influenced by German expressionism on the visual level, they were also based on original screenplay or classic detective novels, such as Raymond Chandler's novels. Classics of the genre include



A scene from a roll call. *The Last Stage*, dir. Wanda Jakubowska, 1948 (Fototeka, 1-F-1966-117, license KADR Film Studio / www.sfkadr.com).

the US. According to Wulf Kansteiner, it is only George Stevens's *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959) that was the first international Holocaust-related message to express a consensus between the historical cultures of various nations: »No camps, no brutality, and no Jewishness, but a distinctly generic representation of innocence and tragedy in times of crisis.«⁴⁹

What does that have to do with *The Last Stage*? It is that Stevenson managed to include in his film a message with which he strongly identified, as the leader of the film crew in the United States Army Signal Corps in 1944-1946. Besides the Normandy landings, his team documented the liberation of Paris as well as that of the Dachau concentration camp. This material would later be used in the Nuremberg trials. In 1964, Stevenson said in an interview: »It must have changed my outlook entirely. Films were very much less important to me.«⁵⁰ *The*

The Maltese Falcon (John Huston, 1941), *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946) as well as Orson Welles's films, such as *The Stranger* (1946) and *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948).

49 Kansteiner, *Sold Globally – Remembered Locally*, 163-164.

50 Cronin, »About George Stevens.«

Diary of Anne Frank contains no graphic war scenes; the action is set in the attic of an old building in Amsterdam where Anne Frank and her family are hiding. And yet, there is a nightmare scene where Anne dreams of a concentration camp. She sees female prisoners swaying during a morning roll call – a scene evidently based on a remarkable shot in Jakubowska's film.

The Last Stage initiated an entire series of films about the concentration and extermination camps – films whose narratives and visual dimensions included references to the iconography of Jakubowska's film. This explains why she was nicknamed »the mother of all Holocaust films.«⁵¹

Conclusion

To sum up, *The Last Stage* was the most broadly distributed and the most discussed films that emerged from Poland in the immediate postwar years. Its impact exceeded the Polish film authorities' expectations, while negative assessments were rare or expressed in private. Jakubowska's interpretation of socialist realism, inspired by neo-realism and based on the participation of an international team and an internationalist outlook, would not have been possible to realize after 1949. While no other Polish film has been so successful internationally, in Poland *The Last Stage* is still seen as controversial on account of its political message. Produced by the film industry of a country on whose occupied soil an unprecedented genocide had recently been perpetrated using industrial methods, *The Last Stage* has a unique status. Its production relied on the participations of survivors and witnesses in Auschwitz-Birkenau itself. The film generally functioned as a unique audiovisual account that transgressed the boundaries of fiction and documentary, providing a record of the era and an emotional vision of resistance against the Holocaust.

Translated from Polish by Tul'si Bhambry

51 Loewe, »Mother of All Holocaust Films.«

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»I am Waiting for the End of this War, Day after Day, Week after Week.« Hopes of Polish Forced Labourers in Germany, 1939-1945

The end of the war on the European continent on May 8, 1945, closes an almost six-year period of German occupation of Poland and repressions related to it, including deportations for forced labour in the Reich. The deported workers knew neither when the war would end nor what its outcome would be. From their varying perspectives, it might last only a couple of weeks more, or a dozen years. Depending on the moment in time, their hope for the end of the war and, above all, for their return to their homeland, reuniting with families and having a good life after the war, either brightened or dimmed. For many, their hope for the end of the war was matched by their hope for returning home.

Forced labour has not been a major object of interest for Polish historiography.¹ Historians are currently focused on issues that could not have been discussed in socialist Poland due to the prevalent ideology. The basic area of current research has thus been focusing on the history and consequences on the Soviet occupation of the country. Additionally, we can see that Polish researchers have shifted the focus of attention from the history of events to the memory area. This is in contrast to German historiography, where over the last two decades a number of studies on forced labour – mainly of local character – have been published. In Poland there have been very few such publications.² Moreover, there is a trend to publish autobiographical mem-

1 In the period of the People's Republic of Poland there were many historical studies on this topic. A number of analyses were published by the Main Committee for the Research of NS Crimes, research centres in former concentration camps (for example in Majdanek), and the Poznan Western Institute. Also worth mentioning are Rusiński, *The Situation of Polish Labourers*; Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*; and Łuczak, *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi*. These were mainly the analyses of recruitment mechanisms for Poles deported for forced labour, based on records collected in the Polish archives. A well-known publication issued towards the end of the 1960s, entitled *When We Were Letter P*, still quoted today, was the result of a nation-wide competition for memoirs of former workers.

2 E.g.: Bonusiak, *Polscy Robotnicy Przymusowi*; Kwieciński, *Polscy Robotnicy Przymusowi*; Bartosz, *Zapomniani Ludzie*.

oirs by forced labour victims rather than to conduct empirical studies devoted to the history of events.³ There are a number of issues which require intense scientific research. One of them is the area of social life of Poles who were such labourers in Germany. There is a lack of studies on the conditions of everyday life and only a few studies analysing the mechanisms of survival or the experience of forced labourers from the perspective of individuals. In the majority of works prepared so far, the researchers have focused on summary and structural description, in which people were hidden behind numbers and by a reality described by complicated accounts of structures and processes. Lagging behind in research are questions concerning commonplace experiences and the perception by individual workers. This is certainly a consequence of there being very few autobiographic sources dating to those times.

For this reason, we want to demonstrate that it is possible to extend the research on the history of the Polish forced labourers through an individual perception of this war experience, and we shall try to analyse the feelings of such labourers through the perspective of their hopes for the end of the war. Methodologically speaking, this article is concerned with the history of emotions, and concrete feelings are examined here not only as objects from the past but also with a view to their impact on the course of events.⁴ It must be kept in mind, however, that it is often difficult to recognise particular feelings, especially in situations in which the individuals themselves are not aware of them or when feelings are manifested in an ambiguous way. Because emotions are at the base of every cognitive process and thus condition ev-

3 Anthologies of memoirs published by the Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation, frequently sent by the very interested persons in response to the competitions announced, have only a short historical outline and there are no attempts to make critical comments about the specific character of these subjective sources, which were typically written several dozen years later – for example, *Ostpreussen*.

4 The term ›history of emotions‹ was introduced in 1941 by French historian Lucien Febvre. This current was strongly developed in the USA in 1980s. We should point out a five-volume study on 19th-century emotions by historian Peter Gay (*The Bourgeois Experience*). An advantage of the Anglo-Saxon research on emotions is its interdisciplinary character, in particular its strong reference to psychology. Currently, in the area of historical sciences, we can refer to the research by Ute Frevert, e.g. *Vertrauen*. However, only recently have historians begun to treat individual emotions as analytical categories; for example, a Polish historian, Marcin Zaremba, who in his work *Wielka Trwoga* (*Great Fear*) examined the feeling of fear in the first years of the post-war Poland.

ery action taken in a society, it is worthwhile to analyse historical events from the perspectives of individuals and to make use of a concept closely involved with emotions: lifeworlds (*Lebenswelten*). This is rooted in the phenomenological ideas of Edmund Husserl, who understood it as a set of common values, notions, and assessments as seen from the perspective of an individual. This current was further developed by the social scientists Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann, who expanded it to more strongly take into account social and cultural factors.⁵ The concept of lifeworlds, having been successfully applied in the social sciences, is becoming used increasingly more by historians. The German historian Heiko Haumann has proposed integrating individuals into this structural system.⁶ In a practical application of this, the nature of feelings can be seen as a draft of a temporary, substitute reality as determined by the conditions imposed by an imagined reality. The description of feelings of analysed individuals will never be holistic or complete, because the social and cultural structures which condition feelings are too complex.⁷

With the concept of ›lifeworlds‹ in mind, this article will examine and describe the feeling of hope for the end of the war accompanying almost every Polish worker employed on foreign soil in the economy of the German enemy. Hope is a complex feeling; it corresponds closely to other feelings. Hence in this analysis we shall pay special attention to uncertainty, hopelessness, apathy, and homesickness.

If we want to examine the feeling of hope held by Polish forced labourers, we should realise that we cannot simply delve into their minds and assess unequivocally their convictions or ways in which they perceived the surrounding reality and how they dealt with it. All we can do is to analyse and interpret the thoughts disclosed either in writing or by the spoken words. The susceptibility of people to changes in mood and to the varyingly strong influences of factors determining their behaviour means that the feeling of hope can change significantly. As a result, any individual will thus make corrections to his or her beliefs and expectations – and further actions.

In this article, the analysis of the hope nourished by Polish forced labourers is based on personal documents of several individuals from those times. We have analysed letters and depositions by various persons found in the collections of NS court files law and penitentiary sys-

5 Schütz and Luckmann, *Strukturen der Lebenswelt*.

6 Haumann, »Geschichte, Lebenswelt, Sinn.«

7 Vierhaus, »Die Rekonstruktion historischer Lebenswelten.«

tems in the *Landesarchiv Berlin* and *Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv Potsdam*. Court files belong to a very special type of source. They were drafted in the course of court proceedings to document the case, and their descriptions of events do not necessarily concur with the actual events. While court files are the main and well-established instrument to examine the history of courts – and more frequently political history as well – their potential for examining contemporary cultural and social history is only now being discovered.⁸ They can help us find answers about an individual's socialisation, wealth, ideological position, and, in general, the horizon of his or her experiences. The main advantage of this category of sources is that they were drafted directly after the offence committed.

These court cases refer to Poles who were prosecuted by the law. The most frequent offences were sabotage, thefts, intimate relations, contacts with war prisoners, illegal trade, and attempted escape. In the courts, just as in their everyday life, Poles were subject to the racist hierarchy. Sentences given to Poles by judges were often more severe than those issued to other defendants. Frequently they were to deter other Poles from acting against the German ideology of national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*).

The interrogations of the claimant, suspects, and witnesses contain descriptions of individually perceived reality. The descriptions of emotions found here frequently exist only in outline form, and perceived against the background of a given case. When we work with this type of source we must not treat information contained in there in a normative way. Rather we should try to notice the complexity of the reality described: conditioned by personal beliefs and experiences of those persons as well as by the circumstances of the court case itself. If we read between the lines, we can see their ambivalent everyday life, accompanied by feelings with various intensity. These court files are characterised not only by a special language, but primarily by the perspective of perception of the surrounding reality, dominated by NS racist and social ideology. In the centre of the cultural and historical analysis of the court files is not a reconstruction of an offence, but instead all the circumstances accompanying it.⁹ Based on court files, we

8 Lehnstaedt, »Mehr als nur die Verbrechen.« Court files were used much earlier by historians of the early modern period. See for example Schwerhoff, *Köln im Kreuzverhör*.

9 Compare the work based on analysis of court files: Keller, *Volksgemeinschaft am Ende*.

can get an insight into human relations, group dynamics, and identity questions. On the other hand, hardly ever are we able to learn about the conditions in which the persons in question made their depositions. Sometimes the official comments suggest that there was some violence used. The court files make it possible to examine the way in which individuals perceived the reality surrounding them, what terms they used, and to what extent they tried to break away from the dominant ideological narrative. In many court files we can find letters of the defendants, translated by court experts, addressed to their families or friends, which also show the subjective perception of the surrounding reality. Usually such letters had been intercepted to obtain additional evidence incriminating the defendants.

Along with interrogations of workers and letters written to them or by them, this article makes use of sections of memoirs by a young resident of Warsaw. In accordance with German occupational policy, in the autumn of 1944 he was sent to work for the German Reich Railway in Berlin. Unlike interrogations, this type of ego-document was drafted by its author without him being forced to confess.¹⁰ The basic problem with all autobiographic sources of those times is both what these personal confessions do not disclose, and why. In other words, it is the issue of auto-censorship, which cannot be excluded in letters or memoirs. Where was the border between what was said and what was thought? What could one write and think? Despite the difficulties specified here, analysis of personal documents makes it possible to understand the horizon of experiences of Poles employed in the NS economy, in particular the feeling of hope for the end of the war.

From the perspective of a researcher, we can easily make an error of tracing some phenomena based on the knowledge we have about some actual historical experience and then transferring current moral categories onto the actions taken by individuals at the time. However, in examining the feelings of individuals, we have to take into consideration not only their state of knowledge about the analysed phenomenon, but also the social framework and beliefs surrounding them.

Historical context

After the attack on Poland, the Germans began mass deportations of Poles for work in the Reich, first to the agricultural sector and later to

10 Schulze, »Ego-Dokumente.«

heavy industry. Soon this policy of obtaining workforce became the main mechanism used to terrorise the population of occupied Poland. Since the second half of 1941 forced labour had been part of everyday life in German towns and villages.¹¹ The German policy towards alien workers (*Fremdarbeiter*), as they were called, corresponded closely to the racist ideology and introduced a hierarchy reflected in the system of controls and restrictions. Forced labourers in NS Germany first experienced being torn away from their reality (which some irrevocably lost), and then later, while working in the Reich, they had to create for themselves a new, ›make-believe‹ life. In the atmosphere of all-encompassing fear, this was their form of escape from their unbearable reality.

Poles were forced to wear armbands with the letter ›P‹ demonstrating their origin. This excluded them from cultural, social, and religious life of the communities they found themselves in. At the very root of the experiences of forced labourers was the sense of alienation and of injustice. Each of these generated further sentiments and emotions. However, workers' everyday lives were more a struggle for survival than for making their dreams and hopes come true. Yet even this endeavour was not deprived of emotions and values such as friendship, loyalty, fear, and hope. For Poles, forced labour became a painful experience, which frequently translated into post-war trauma. In many cases this trauma led to the appearance of permanent negative images of Germans and of the German nation, as well as an anti-German approach, which in some is still felt today.

Nicholas Stargardt, an Anglo-Saxon historian, in his book *The German War*, published in 2015, asked a number of times the question what the Germans' attitude was towards the war and what their hopes were for its quick end.¹² Stargardt devotes much space to the examination of changes in Germans' beliefs at that time from an individual perspective. The central categories of his analysis are patriotism, solidarity, and perception of the so-called national German community (*Volksgemeinschaft*). A metamorphosis of these values was demonstrated by the author, who examined to what extent over time some selected representatives of the German society believed in victory and were proud of the ruling elite. During the first two years of the war, among the Germans the mentality of being a victor was dominant.

11 Stefanski, »Polnische ZwangsarbeiterInnen in Deutschland.« Also see: Stefanski, *Zwangsarbeit in Leverkusen*.

12 Stargardt, *Der deutsche Krieg*.

The situation changed in the second half of 1942. The lack of positive news from the Eastern Front displeased many Germans and began to give rise to feelings of bitterness, anger, and disappointment. More and more frequently they mustered the courage to publicly accuse the ruling elites, saying openly: »Hitler cheated on us.«¹³ Propaganda activities aimed at turning Stalingrad into a myth of German heroism did not succeed. The result was widespread expectation of a long-lasting position war. The war itself did not lose its sense or purpose: people still believed that it was to the benefit of their homeland. Even in early 1945 there was a group of optimistic Germans convinced that they would win the war.¹⁴

Victor Klemperer, a chronicler of Jewish origin, writing on September 27, 1939, had a similar impression: »Everywhere there is an absolute certainty of victory and inebriation with it. You have the impression that the war is over.«¹⁵ Just as, according to him, German society was convinced about an immediate victory over Poland, it also believed in victory directly after the attack on the Soviet Union. On August 22, 1941, that is, two months later: »In two weeks' time Russia will have been defeated.«¹⁶ But already in the winter of 1941/42, when German soldiers at the Eastern Front were dying en masse of cold, hunger, and exhaustion, the mood turned to the worse. The Wehrmacht's soldiers experienced growing fear and began hoping for the war to finish as soon as possible so that they could return home to their families. Their letters from the front were full of anxiety about further developments of the situation. Klemperer noticed that what dominated the German *Volksgemeinschaft* was the feeling of fear. »As long as the strongest feeling of people is their fear, the war will go on,« he concluded in early 1945.¹⁷ Paradoxically, creating the all-encompassing fear enabled not only a real functioning of this ideological community, but also a mobilisation of the society throughout the entire period of the war.

Almost all the time, the Polish forced labourers were feeling a different kind of fear. When considering them, we could risk the following hypothesis: The more difficult their fate, the stronger their hope for the end of the war and therefore their hope for freedom from fear and repression.

13 Ibid., 398.

14 Ibid., 569.

15 Klemperer, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen*, vol. 1937-1939, 169.

16 Ibid., vol. 1940-1941, 156.

17 Ibid., vol. 1945, 8.

Hope in the first stage of the war

The beginning of the war abruptly tore apart the everyday lives of the Poles. At the same time, it forced them into actions and strategies to overcome the newly imposed order. Stefan L. from Warsaw, aged 21, in 1938 graduated from a vocational gardening school and began his work for a Warsaw gardening company. When the German army entered Warsaw he moved to Lublin, hoping to avoid occupational repressions. »After a short time, however, I came back to Warsaw because I feared for my parents.« As he had no permanent employment at that time, he lived off selling various products.¹⁸ The poverty his parents suffered forced Stefan to register with the Job Centre for finding employment in Germany. On April 1, 1940, he ended up working as an agricultural aid on a farm in Friesack. His hopes for decent earnings and good working conditions were drastically different from the reality he encountered. He worded his luckless fate and his desire to change his workplace to a German investigation official in the following way:

Due to that my landlord constantly imposed hard work and once he even beat me, I ran away from him and contacted the Job Centre for a new job. I was sent to a gardening enterprise where I earned peanuts.¹⁹

Already in the first months of forced labour, the workers were writing in their letters to families or friends that they were waiting for the end of the war and for the Germans to surrender. Their hopes were all the larger the more they felt persecuted and abused by their employers. Piotr K. from Częstochowa came of his own will to a Job Centre, and in June 1940, at the age of 25, he was sent in a mass transportation to Berlin. The Berlin Job Centre sent him to work in a zinc plant in Berlin-Johannisthal. For his hard work he was paid weekly – after deductions for his board and food – 16 Marks, the equivalent of two

18 BLHA, Rep. 12 C Berlin II, no. 6782, *Minutes from the Hearing of Stefan L.* dated 29.7.1942, kk. 7. The entire text specifies individuals, both ›victims‹ and ›passive perpetrators‹, who are quoted here without their full names to protect their privacy. Focusing this analysis solely on men is a result of the selection of sources available and does not mean that Polish women who were forced labourers did or did not have hopes for the end of the war. Tracing differences in this area would require asking questions concerning the gender aspect, which was not able to be discussed in this article.

19 Ibid.

loaves of bread on the grey market.²⁰ Two months later he sent a letter to his friend in Częstochowa, warning him against voluntary travel to work in Germany: »Dear Geniek, you write to me that you were advised to go to Germany to work. I am giving you a good piece of advice: do not go.«²¹ Further on in the letter he wrote about the joy he had from the English air raids on Berlin and the damages Germans suffered. The bombing was coded by Peter as »scandal«, and English as »antek«. This young Pole deluded himself that intense air raids by the British would force the Germans to surrender quickly and that the end of the war would enable him to give up his work in the steelworks and to return home:

Now I believe stronger and stronger that in the days to come there will be a great scandal [i.e. air raid], it just seems so and those storks [i.e. Germans] are already afraid of it. When there is no scandal they feel strong but when it comes, they just crap their pants. Dear Gienek, if you were here you could see how courageous they are when there is no scandal. But this will finish soon because they treat us like wild animals.²²

In his letter, Piotr sent two messages to his friend. He strongly discouraged him from contacting the Job Centre for finding work – because the treatment of Polish workers in the Reich was drastically different from what the propaganda in occupied Poland suggested. And, as a first-hand witness, he described the attitude of the German population towards air raids, expressing his solidarity with the allies. This young Pole assumed optimistically that the Reich would soon be defeated and that the war would end well for Poland. For his views he had to pay a high price, because his letter was intercepted in the camp for foreigners where he lived and translated into German. After three months of arrest, on January 23, 1941, the Berlin Special Court sentenced this Pole to nine months in prison. Piotr could do nothing else but admit to his anti-German views, which spared him two months of additional arrest. The justification of the court ruling emphasised the inciting tone of his letter, in particular his reference to the seemingly fearful attitude of German society, as well the »cowardliness of the

20 LAB, A Rep. 370, no. 1782: Court verdict against Piotr K. dated 23.1.1941.

21 BLHA, Rep. 12 C Berlin II, no. 4888: Letter in Polish written on 3.9.1940, in the files in its German translation.

22 Ibid.

nation, which defeated Poland in the recent military campaign in the course of 18 days.«²³ The letter was considered an impertinence against »the German people and the Third Reich created by the Führer.«²⁴ According to the judge, such statements can undermine the people's trust in the political authority.

The basis for the accusation was an Act (the *Heimtückegesetz*) dated December 20, 1934, banning deceitful attacks on the state and the party and concerning the protection of party uniforms. Piotr served the entire term in the Berlin-Tegel prison, but instead of being freed he was then handed over to the Gestapo and taken into »police protective arrest« (*Schutzhaft*). Usually this meant sending released Poles to concentration camps. The sources we have analysed do not tell us anything about the further fate of this Pole, hence we can only suspect he was indeed sent to a concentration camp. This case reveals hopes for the end of the war held by a young forced labourer even at its beginning. British air raids on Berlin in the autumn of 1940 did not shorten the war, nor did they finish it. Moreover, it shows that an open presentation of one's feelings by some forced labourers could have had painful consequences.

Uncertainty concerning further fate

The feeling of hope was accompanied by uncertainty concerning one's own fate, in particular in a situation in which workers ended up in the hands of the German police. Poles sent to concentration camps or to prisons often had false hopes that their incarceration was only short-lasting and that their good behaviour would contribute to faster release from prison or camp. They did not realise that the protective arrest used in their case was assumed to last until the end of the war. Only companies employing Poles knew the Gestapo procedures, and so they were aware that with any denunciation of a Pole to the police they would lose him or her from their workforce. When 26-year-old Edward G. from Warsaw, employed by the German Railway, was handed over in December 1944 to the police for secretly taking into his possession a jumper he had found on the platform, the railway directorate deleted him from the register of Polish forced labourers since »there was

23 LAB, A Rep. 370, no. 1782: Court ruling against Piotr K. dated 23. I. 1941.

24 Ibid.

no hope for his return before the end of the war.«²⁵ The procedure described here resulted from a decision by the Reich's Minister of Justice dated March 11, 1943, on sending all Polish (alleged) perpetrators of even the smallest offences not to the courts, as was the case until then, but to a local Gestapo unit, which placed such individuals in concentration camps »for the duration of the war.«²⁶ In practice this internal administrative shift of competences was often the difference between life and death for Poles, since imprisonment in a concentration camp afforded much slimmer chances of survival than in a prison.

Some workers experienced such great pain and destitution that only the hope for a quick end of the war kept them alive. The result of the war itself played a much smaller role. Tadeusz K. from Zduńska Wola, aged 17, was arrested on the April 14, 1943, in his forced labour camp in Berlin-Rahnsdorf and sent to an investigative prison in Berlin-Plötzensee. He was accused of buying a suitcase containing clothes from another Pole. The suitcase was stolen but he did not know that. The penal court sitting took place as late as January 1944. During the eight months of arrest this young Pole feared for his fate and regretted his naive purchase. In his letters sent from prison to his parents we can see the great uncertainty of that teenager about his expected punishment. In one of these letters Tadeusz complained to his father about the hunger and repressions he was experiencing in the prison. Only the hope for the end of the war gave him courage, which he wished also to his father.

You can imagine that it is not good in prison; I'd eat potatoes without peeling them if I only had any [...]. I am very weak, just a bag of bones. Do not tell anyone but do not be ashamed that you brought up a son who is serving his prison term; do not think too much and do not worry. Soon the Germans will win the war and it will be better for all of us. Write me back if you will, it not, just don't write. I have already served 7 months and I am still alive; and all that is from my stupidity. Why, oh why did I have to buy that suitcase, what stupid idea came to my mind? That is why I ended up in prison.²⁷

25 LAB, A Rep. 358-02, no. 134720: German Railway Report dated 29.12.1944.

26 LAB, A Rep. 057-01, Letter of the Reich's Minister of Justice to prosecutors dated 21.4.1943, 21.4.1943, k.18.

27 BLHA, Rep. 12 C Berlin II, no. 3682: Letter by Tadeusz K. to his father, Edward K. Letter translated by a court translator on 19.11.1943, k. 201. The Special Court in Berlin on January 25, 1944, sentenced Tadeusz to nine months of correction camp for fencing stolen property, and that without

The letter above shows, apart from hope for a quick change of one's fate, the feeling of shame in front of one's parents for one's deeds. Tadeusz realised that the information about his imprisonment would not only sadden his parents, but also make them feel bitterness. He knew that while buying that suitcase on the grey market he broke the moral norms instilled by his parents, which – in his understanding – he should have obeyed even while in forced labour. Hence in his letter he blamed himself, even though his action resulted from a situation of need. The reality was that in occupied Poland German repressions against civilians and the penalty of prison for the smallest misdemeanours became a rather common tool of direct terror.²⁸ Yet Tadeusz, like many of those who found themselves in a similar situation, felt deeply ashamed because of his naive behaviour and the penalty he got. Moreover, he was tortured by his belief that when he ended up in prison, he not only failed his parents but that additionally he added them even more fear in the difficult reality of the occupation.

Hopelessness, apathy, and homesickness

Polish forced labourers had false hopes that their deportation for forced labour was short-lasting and that they would be able, any time, to just stop working there and come back home. The fact is that they had work contracts with most employers, but these were binding only for the workers. This is why Poles were not allowed to change their positions or quit them without the consent of the Job Centre. Some contracts were to be terminated automatically with the end of the war economy (*Kriegswirtschaft*), and they did not require termination by both parties.²⁹ Just like in occupied Poland, Poles in the Reich were fully dependent on decisions by the NS administrative ladder. Neither Job Centres nor employers informed workers when there was no more need for them or that they would be transferred to a different place. That lack of knowledge about the end of forced labour, the inability

calculating in eight months of the investigative arrest. He served this term in the penal institution in Wronki. After he had served his time, he was not freed, but on October 22, 1944, he was handed over to the Poznan Gestapo for protective arrest.

28 Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni*.

29 LAB, A Rep. 034-08: Letter of Municipal Gardens' Manager dated 4.6.1943. Contracts for Poles issued by the Office for Town Gardens (*Kleingartenamt*), k. 322.

to change one's employer, and a general helplessness in the context of a number of discriminating and persecuting regulations all contributed to creating an uncertainty – of tomorrow and of one's further fate. The greater a worker experienced such hopelessness, the greater his or her hopes for a quick end of the war and the end of persecution.

Fifty-two-year-old Franciszek B. worked for the German Railway as a handling agent at various Berlin train stations. In a letter to his wife, dated September 7, 1943, we can find his hopes for the end of this work and a quick return home:

Dear Wife, this is to let you know that thank God I am in good health and that we are doing rather well. It is being told that in two weeks' time we are to go back home but I do not know whether this is true or not. I will write how I am doing.³⁰

Franciszek K., aged 18, who was sent to work for the German Railway in Berlin in May 1940, in November 1943 handed his employer a request to transfer him to the branch of the German Railway in hometown of Leszno. Due to the war economy, which required every pair of hands fit to work, his request was rejected. He was advised to apply again after the end of the war.³¹ Also in this case the Pole had to deal with his hopelessness by nourishing hope for the war to end quickly.

Another type of feeling accompanying hope was that of indifference. The fact that workers had no idea how long they would remain working in the Reich and when they could go back home, along with lack of news from their close ones, sent them into a state of apathy. They fulfilled their duties in this emotional state, all the time waiting for the end of the war. Many workers were particularly worried about their family members because of the movements on the Eastern Front and the occupation of Polish lands by the Soviet army. This can be seen in the memoirs of young Jerzy S. Before he was sent to work in Berlin, he had worked for the railway in Wyszaków, near Warsaw. As a result of the Warsaw Uprising, his team was moved to Berlin, where on September 6, 1944, he was assigned to work for the German Reich Railway as a handling agent. The 23-year-old Pole was placed in a bunkhouse for foreigners near the S-Westend railway station in Berlin-Charlotten-

30 BLHA, Rep. 12 C Berlin II, no. 1295: Postcard in Polish to Julia B., never sent, dated 7.9.1943.

31 LAB, A Rep. 080, no. 180: Application by Franciszek K. and reply to it dated 11.11.1943.

burg. Starting January 1, 1945, Jerzy kept a diary, in which he noted down his reflections and feelings. In this way he could deal with his longing for his fiancée Alina.

The current and future situation. What will happen to you in connection with the front and in mid-winter [...]. Yes, my darling, there are such grey and hopeless days. But maybe that is better as in my colourless life there are no changes for the worse. I do not care about anything, I am not interested in anything, I am indifferent to everything, if only God puts us together, if we only could be together.³²

This entry demonstrates the feeling of indifference resulting from lack of self-determination about one's fate, which was the share of Poles employed in the Reich. This feeling could evolve into bitterness, in particular in the face of worries about family members and friends who remained in Poland.

The thought about the end of the war at the same time amplified homesickness and inflated fear for one's family and other loved ones who were left in the occupied homeland. On January 12, 1945, the above quoted Jerzy S., pondering about the end of war, fell into melancholy, which quickly turned into anger caused by inability to change the situation and return home immediately:

In general, my mood is neither bad or good. When one reads and hears what could happen in the near future, how are things there, with you, one loses all hope, feelings and despite one's strong will and reason one becomes numb, swears badly and drops on one's bed, fearing for you.³³

Workers realised that the Eastern Front moving towards the Reich must mean a drastic change of the situation in NS-occupied Poland, and not necessarily for the better. Therefore, their worries about the living conditions of their loved ones were well justified.

Not only workers waited for the end of the war and thus for the end of their labour that was benefitting the enemy. Families worried about the fate of relatives sent off to work, at the same time hoping that the war would end soon. Letters were sent to comfort and encourage, as revealed by letters between a young Polish worker and his mother.

³² FPNP, *Pamiętnik Jerzego S.*, vol. 1, 74.

³³ *Ibid.*, 61.

Zygmunt P. from Siąszyce near Konin was sent to the Reich at the age of 17, in March 1940, as a farm worker. Two years later he was employed by the German Railway in Berlin as a handling agent. Throughout the entire time of his forced labour he was in touch with his mother. In a letter dated April 1943 addressed to her son, the mother expressed her worries: »I am worried about you, I pray that you make it till the end of the war.«³⁴ Also the family of another Polish worker waited impatiently for the end of the war and his return home, as expressed in a letter dated November 19, 1942:

There is nothing else to do but to come to terms with fate; after all this damned war will not last forever. Everything has an end and its end will come, everybody thinks that it will come in less than a year. If they only kept their word and let us go in February – this is the hope we live by.³⁵

Families separated by the war tried to stay in touch at least by writing letters. In difficult situations there was a greater need to be in touch with one's family. Brothers Tadeusz and Ryszard K. from the area of Pułtusk had special hopes for the end of the war, as they both were victims of the German judiciary system. In one of their letters, sent in July 1942, Ryszard tried to comfort Tadeusz and give him courage by writing about the end of the war:

Dear Brother. You suffered a great misfortune, so did I. But do not let it get to you, just pray to God for good health. I have been three years in captivity and also I cannot see my family and children. I am very sorry and sad all alone in this slavery. I am waiting for the end of this war, day after day, week after week. Three years have passed and I just cannot wait for the end of the war. Dear brother, just imagine what misfortune happened to us at our tender age. But dear brother, do not worry. What will happen, will; maybe this war will finish soon.

The letter included a photo of his, showing him working on a farm with a visible letter P, obligatory for Poles in the Reich.³⁶ This young Polish worker on a farm in Welzin, Mecklenburg, felt deep distress

34 BLHA, 12 C Berlin II, no. 2956: Letter from the mother, no date, k. 19.

35 DZSW, no. 1374.4-1: Letter dated 19.11.1942.

36 LAB, A Rep. 370, no. 1729: Letter in Polish to Ryszard K. from Welzin to Tadeusz K. in prison in Berlin-Tegel dated 21.7.1942.

for that he had been sent into forced labour. His only stronghold was praying to God and offering his life to Him. In fact, many families who were torn apart by forced labour were characterised by deep religiosity. The family of 23-year-old Władysław K. from Grodzisk Mazowiecki, who also worked on a farm in Mecklenburg, in their letter sent him a religious picture with a prayer and the following inscription: »I pray for you so that you can survive and see me again. On August 1, 1943, there will be a holy mass for you so that you can come back to us.«³⁷ Reference to faith was frequently aimed to quench, if only seemingly, the feeling of loneliness and homesickness and to give courage to oneself and one's close ones. Hence there was a frequent need among Polish forced labourers to pray to God.

Hope in the final stage of the war

The end of the war was one of the main topics discussed by Polish workers throughout the entire period of forced labour, towards the end of the war as well. One of such discussions was recorded by Jerzy S. in his journal under the date January 7, 1945. It took place on Sunday, a free day, on which people of the same nationality spent much time together in their bunkhouses:

At some point my neighbour, Staś of Hubertów, came to me, and the same old topic again: end of war. They determined that in a year's time we would be home. Nice prospects for us, right? Yes, but that does not depend on us.³⁸

This description confirms the aforementioned interdependence: the end of the war was identified as the end of forced labour and returning home, reuniting with one's relatives, and beginning a new chapter in life. Towards the end of January 1945, Jerzy was more optimistic about the end of the war and estimated it would take place in May of that year.³⁹ He counted the days impatiently: »It is so good that the time is passing by, if only February was over.«⁴⁰

37 LAB, A Rep. 370, no. 1806: Letter to Władysław from his family of Grodzisk, in Polish, dated 1.7.1943.

38 FPNP, *Pamiętnik Jerzego S.*, vol. 1, 51.

39 *Ibid.*, 84.

40 *Ibid.*, 83.

Together with constant air raids already in 1943 and 1944 and the incursion of the Red Army into the outskirts of Berlin in April 1945, the vision of the war took on a very tangible form. Polish workers became participants of these events in that they had to risk their lives to do the work assigned to them by their employers. Enterprises sent them on a regular basis to clear the damages resulting from bombing or to dig trenches, which increased even more the risk at work of being fatally wounded. And though while hope for quick return home was growing, from the nearly constant bombardments and direct military actions on the streets the feeling of living in fear of one's life increased. On April 17, 1945, Jerzy wrote: »Imagine that the ones from the east came here. It begins badly. In a while an alarm once again. They banged some eastern districts. They were just gone, an alarm – It's the English. And to the shelter again.« One day later we have information about more air raids by both allies: »A night air raid by the Bolsheviks, then the English = over 3 hours, apart from that nothing special.«⁴¹ This dry and emotionless entry in his journal is evidence that Poles gradually fell into disinterestedness concerning the constant air raids and hopelessness about their own fate.

Almost throughout the entire war there was gossip concerning its scope, duration, and outcome. With the beginning of the fighting in Berlin people began guessing how long the Germans would defend their capital. The fact the war would end any day with the Allies' victory presented the workers with the dilemma of whether they should go back to Poland on their own or whether they should wait for a decision of the new authorities. This very mood was shown by Jerzy in his journal entry of April 23, 1945:

Half an hour ago I came back from my night shift. Of course, there are no alarms as they would have to last 24/7, one constant alarm. Only the artillery shells closer and closer to where we are. In the evening all you can see is fire all around you [...]. You get a headache because of the problem whether to wait or not. It is a serious thing, rather simple but all depends on the issue of food. We are still thinking, still waiting. The decision will come suddenly [...]. For 3 hours we have been getting important news from everybody: *Stillstand* – in the west and end of the western war. On the other side of the ›sun‹ it does not look like that yet. We are waiting, who knows

41 Ibid., vol. 2, 45 and 47.

what to think about it. It matters a lot and impacts our personal situation. I'll take a break, we are to play poker.⁴²

In view of this constant feeling of hope and lack of self-determination, workers were looking for various things to do, for pastimes which would divert their attention from homesickness. In many analysed descriptions and depositions, we find information about various forms of passing free time, including gaming, as in the above-quoted excerpt from Jerzy S. With his countrymen in a forced labour camp of the German Reich Railway, he adopted the strategy of waiting for the development of events. Going through Berlin with ongoing battles would be too risky in view of the sustenance and political situation. But five days later they left their work and set off on foot to Poland: »We are on our way. We finally set off from this damned Westend. On our way we are cordially welcome by the Red Army. It is somewhat hard to walk but that does not matter.«⁴³

For many Poles who were forcefully employed in the Reich their return home was possible only with the end of the war. For companies employing them it was not that obvious, as many companies would still be willing to employ a Polish workforce, especially since the destruction in Berlin made it impossible to continue operation of farms and industrial companies. The German Reich Railway, which employed Poles for handling cargo trains on all Berlin train stations, had detailed registers of Polish forced labourers. Managers found to their surprise that the day after the German surrender, the Poles did not show up for work. The Railway management, on May 9, 1945, noted in the register of 51-year-old Waclaw S., who was sent to heavy handling works after the Warsaw Uprising:

After the end of the war the Pole never turned up for work. It should be assumed that he returned to his homeland. On May 31, 1945, he will have been deleted from the register of the railway service, terminating his employment relationship.⁴⁴

This approach shows the lack of empathy German employers had towards the forced workers. With official precision they noted only the

42 Ibid., 59.

43 Ibid., 74.

44 LAB, A Rep. 080, no. 220: Note of the German Reich Railway's Directorate dated 9.5.1945.

end of employment, never expressing any compassion or feeling of guilt about the abuse of Poles.

Conclusion

In summary, we can say that the hopes of Polish workers for the end of the war grew with the suffering experienced. For most Poles, working was not a voluntary decision. Hard physical work and difficult living conditions during the work made workers depressed and fear for their lives and for the fate of their families left behind. Many realised that only the end of the war would end their hard lives in a foreign land and enable them to return to the beloved home and free motherland. Hence they studied the course of military operations and the development of the situation on the fronts. German failures on the Eastern Front or stronger air raids by the Allies automatically gave them hope. Yet in many cases their joy was premature. Instead of the end of the war they experienced a radicalisation of the German policy towards the Polish forced labourers, which left no hope that they were considered more than anything but workforce.

In view of constant abuse and fear, waiting for the end of the war was the dominant feeling among forced labourers. It was strongly dependent on uncertainty, hopelessness, apathy, and homesickness. Both in the beginning and towards the end of the war, these four layers of hope were typical for the emotional condition of Poles deported as labour. Their hope gave them courage and diverted their attention from their hard life. Many workers lost their lives in the war. Their hopes for the end of the war would never come true.

Translated from Polish by Mariola Guzy

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Marcin Zaremba

Fearing the War after the War: Poland from 1945 through the 1960s

Sugar, flour, lard, salt – these are the indicators of general anxiety in the Polish People's Republic. They disappeared from the shops along with soap, kerosene and matches, raincoats and winter boots whenever rumours appeared about an imminent increase in prices and every time the Poles were preparing for war – which was often.

Alfred Eisenstaedt's photograph of a U.S. Navy sailor kissing a random stranger – a nurse – on Times Square is a twentieth-century icon. It was taken on August 14, 1945. Americans were celebrating the end of the war. At the same time in Poland thousands of people were waiting for another war. They believed that the United States and the United Kingdom would deal with the Soviets. One person wrote in a private letter: »Here people are talking, apparently on 15 September the Americans will start chasing out that horde of Russkis.«¹ Following the nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll, there was a rhyme that became in Poland: »Truman, Truman, drop that bomb, as it is we can't go on.«² Until about the mid-1950s, Poles had high hopes that the outbreak of World War III would reverse the results of the Teheran and Yalta agreements. At the same time, millions of Poles feared another conflict. The way this was often manifested in the postwar era was through various products getting sold out in the shops, while at home people hoarded not only foodstuffs but also winter clothes and gold. During moments of the greatest uncertainty they would also withdraw their savings; the black market dollar would soar, queues in front of shops would get longer. How are we to assess those behaviours? Is this a case of panic?

The problem of definition

The most popular definitions of panic refer to individuals or masses fleeing because of their fear. But the behaviour patterns described

1 AIPN, MBP 3378, 109.

2 »Truman, Truman zrzuć ta bania, bo jest nie do wytrzymania.«

above were rarely linked to flight. Of the settlers in Poland's so-called ›Recovered Territories‹ (which had previously belonged to the Third Reich) most decided to move to the central regions in the second half of the 1940s. Later, for instance during the Berlin Crisis of 1961, they may have considered to move but rarely did they actually do it. At any rate these were never cases of mass exodus such as in 1914 and 1915, during to Polish-Soviet War, or in September 1939. We might settle on a definition of panic that gives up the notion of ›flight‹ and instead focuses on situations marked by intense fear in combination with reactions that psychologists call sympathetic. Or we might define panic as a sudden onrush of overpowering fear. Still, the situations described here involved more than this. As Joanna Bourke points out, there is a strong component of adaptive behaviour,³ frequently resulting in complex longterm preparations: preparing a list of necessary items, purchasing them, preparing a place to store them. In other words, they were a sign of resourcefulness. The behaviour of a person who panics is usually described as irrational, chaotic and selfish. Does it make sense to buy soap while fearing a nuclear attack? This is of course a valid question. Still, it would be hard to dismiss as irrational or selfish the general tendency to prepare for a war or to worry about one's children. Describing the behaviours that form the focus of this article we should also acknowledge the remarkable contagiousness of the fear of war. But can we call it »an epidemic of the self-preservation instinct«, as Zbigniew Herbert described the spread of conformist attitudes? Apparently, there is no perfect solution. It is hard to let go of the notion of ›panic‹, but it is also hard to use it, given the reservations outlined above. I propose therefore to use the term ›war panic‹ to refer to all the social behaviours mentioned above when they are attributable to the threat of an outbreak of armed conflict.

War panic can be understood as a sort of ›communicative situation‹⁴ in which rumours play a key role. Most often it was the word on the street that motivated people to act, to stand in queues. Rumours also heightened the general atmosphere of nervousness and kept the population from developing a sense of stability after the war. They contributed to the ›waiting syndrome‹ – a term used to describe people operating as if in a standby modus, with a general feeling of suspension and incertitude. The mix of hope and fear related to the anticipation of another war reveals the Poles' collective neurosis at the time, their war

3 Bourke, *Fear*, 274-275.

4 Łukaszewicz, »Społeczne komunikowanie się i społeczna zaradność«, 77.

trauma and their postwar confusion and fear. It also reveals that the cold war, waged in politicians' offices as well as in Korea, had a social echo. It led to waves of war rumours and panic in Europe as well as the United States, prompting people to buy up goods in case there would be another war. A study on the fear of war can also be seen as a contribution to research on the longterm social memory of the war. In this article, therefore, I will combine social history with the history of international relations against the fabric of the sociology of memory and collective behaviours. My analysis will focus on instances of war panic in the first decade after World War II.⁵ The origin of the behaviours in question leads straight to the core of how Poland's inhabitants experienced the twentieth century, and this is where we ought to start.

Determinants of instances of war panic

Historians lack the necessary tools to resolve dispute about the biological and cultural basis of emotions.⁶ We can, however, contribute arguments to support the idea that emotions are socially constructed, that they result from people's experiences and that they are subject to social communication and transmitted to younger generations through cultural frameworks. One such emotion is a specific kind of fear – the fear of war. In postwar Poland it was among the emotions most keenly felt and most broadly shared across society. This is unsurprising, given that more than twelve years of the first half of the twentieth century were marked by war and occupation in Poland: World War I, the Greater Poland uprising of 1918-1919, the Silesian uprisings of 1919-1921, border conflicts with Ukraine and Germany, the Polish-Soviet War and World War II. In the spring of 1949 one Cracovian summed up this situation in a private letter:

With all our willpower we resist the idea of war, which would be the third in our short lives and which would probably mean the grave for all of us. The effects of the first war weighed on our youth, the effects of the second war we continue to feel until this day, so do ordinary people need war? Always and everywhere we pray for peace

5 On war panic in Poland in the years 1946-1956 see Jarosz, »Kriegsgerüchte in Polen, 1946-1956.«

6 Keltner, Oatley and Jenkins, *Understanding Emotions*; Turner and Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*.

and perhaps the good Lord will take pity and not allow the city to be destroyed.⁷

The years of armed conflict had left traces – experiences and fears⁸ – that would influence Polish national identity for years to come. They also had an impact on the Poles' relationship to strangers, on highbrow and lowbrow culture. Memories of the war and emotions such as anxiety and fear were the key component in the mixture that fuelled war panic. That mixture also contained a particular type of belief, one that Neil J. Smelser in *Theory of Collective Behavior* (1962) calls ›generalized‹. It refers to the belief in supernatural powers – threats, conspiracies – affecting the world. People become convinced that superpowers are using the world as their arena and that ›ordinary people‹ have no means to influence their games. For Smelser, this kind of attitude has much in common with magic belief systems.⁹ In other words, panic-related behaviours were not only rooted in war trauma or in anxiety and fear reaching back to the war, but also in a specific *Weltanschauung*.

Drawing on Smelser we can point to four other determinants of war panic:

1. Situational factors. The belief that there would certainly be a third world war had a rational background, namely the ideological and cultural differences – evident to the Poles – between the USSR and its former Western Allies. What is more, real life constantly furnished new and apparently certain evidence to suggest that military action was about to begin any day. For instance, during the Cold War there were frequent episodes of tension between the East and the West. It would also have been fair to see the Korean War as a sufficient *casus belli*. The strong sense of fear in the first decade after the war can also be attributed to events in Poland such as calls for military exercises, order for shelters to be inspected, or, from time to time, massive and multi-day Soviet troop movements.

2. The world represented. The atmosphere of panic was also influenced by Communist propaganda and its representation of the world as divided into two blocks. The Communists insisted that they were

7 AIPN, MBP 595 (Newsletter no.20/49 concerning the Światowa Akcja Pokoju, 4 May 1949), karta (k.) 11.

8 See also: Bomba and Orwid, »A Psychiatric Study of World War II Survivors«; Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, 87-140 or in English: idem, »The War Syndrome.«

9 Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, 12-17.

›fighting for peace,‹ but at the same time they fuelled a sense of being threatened by ›imperialist America‹. People's fear of the external world overlapped with their anxiety rooted in wartime experiences, resulting in an emotional state that favoured the outbreak of war panic.

3. A lively circulation of rumours. War panic was usually preceded by a wave of fear-inducing rumours. Especially in the first twenty years after the war we observe an incredible ease in their formation and circulation. This is due to several causes. First, Polish society was marked by a low level of education. It was not an illiterate society but rather a configurative, one that was just entering into modernity and its communication techniques, including media such as the radio, television and mass readership of print media. Second, World War II had favoured the development of informal communication channels. People had learned to trust in messages transmitted orally, including gossip and rumours.¹⁰ Third, their ›contagiousness‹ was also related to the limited reliability of official sources of information. Today we define a rumour as a kind of information that is spread without maintaining ›secure standards of evidence‹. The general demand for rumours rises in circumstances of uncertainty and crisis.¹¹ As Tamotsu Shibutani, who was interned in a concentration camp for Japanese Americans during World War II, writes in his study *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* that people living in confinement have a particular demand for rumours.¹² This might lead us to the hypothesis that the more a community is closed and cut off from access to reliable information, the higher its demand for rumours as a medium of communication will be.

4. A favourable structural context. No such context could be identified in the second half of the 1940s or in the early 1950s, as sources from that era do not indicate that social class had any impact on a person's susceptibility to the fear of war. In those year, war panic simply affected everyone irrespective of social rank. In the late 1950s and early 60s, however, it becomes apparent that war rumours had the greatest influence on people in the countryside. During the Berlin Crisis of 1961 one person observed in a private letter that ›villagers in particular are running from shop to shop and buying whatever they can.‹¹³ It also seems that it was in the countryside that the fear of war

10 Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, 635.

11 Fine, »Rumor in Collective Behavior and Social Movements.«

12 Shibutani, *Improvised News*.

13 AIPN, Lu 066/5 (Newsletter no. 5, Lublin 16 September 1961), k. 175.

persisted for the longest time. We can account for this in two ways at least. First, there is the pragmatism and utilitarianism that characterize peasant culture, including the notion that one should better take precautions and accumulate products that will certainly come in handy. In Poland, peasants had lived with uncertainty for centuries, and that did not change when the Communists came to power. The alternative interpretation is linked to the fact that the level of education was the lowest in the countryside. As Hadley Cantril points out, people with lower conceptual competence are more prone to panic.¹⁴

Fearing the war after the war: 1945-1948¹⁵

The first wave of rumours about the approaching World War III swept over Poland while military action was still ongoing in Europe. The arrival of the rumour in March 1945 is related to the despondent atmosphere caused by news of the Yalta Agreements. Thinking about an impending war between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union gave people a sense of hope that the superpowers' decisions about Poland's borders would not be final. There is no evidence to prove that the spring wave of war rumours in Poland was related to the operation 'Unthinkable', a plan conceived by the British Armed Forces for the Western Allies to launch a surprise attack on the USSR.¹⁶ It is, however, likely that the rumours were fuelled by the March 1945 decree to mobilize women into the auxiliary military service. What is the point of registering women when the war is supposed to end? Clearly, they're preparing for another one.

A private letter written in Lublin addresses the tension between Poland's Soviet-backed communist regime and the Polish government-in-exile:

Just as the war with Germany is ending there's supposed to be another one with Russia, as the Poles over here can't come to terms with those over there and so, once these two sides have killed each

14 Cantril and his team examined the origins of the mass panic that erupted in the United States when H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* was broadcast on Halloween 1938. See Cantril, Gaudet and Herzog, *The Invasion from Mars*, 113.

15 This section is an abbreviated version of the chapter »Jak przed Monachium« in Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, 429-446.

16 Walker, *Operation Unthinkable*.

other off, things will be alright, but the Western side has more weapons and better ones.

... and from Gdynia:

Who knows what else might happen to us, we have a long way to go, the war isn't over yet, we're going to live through another one.¹⁷

Rumours about another war came in waves. In 1945 the strongest one swept over Poland in August and September. It appears that it was set in motion by news of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. People said that the Americans now had such weapons of such destructive power that Stalin would have to ›go hide‹. Many people made no secret of their enthusiasm. One secondary school pupil wrote in a letter:

Some kind of hope is opening up for us thanks to the discovery of the atom bomb. What a shame Churchul and Rosweld [sic!] aren't there anymore. Back then the war was almost like a wall! But even now – I survive on the joy of that superiority. When I first heard about that invention I started walking on my hands. I try to remain optimistic. Perhaps in this tunnel a light will come on for us?¹⁸

A panic wave swept over all of Poland in the wake of Winston Churchill's appearance in Fulton on 5 March 1946.¹⁹ In Warsaw panic erupted on Friday, 8 March. People flooded the markets in large numbers and bought up foodstuffs that can be stored: potatoes, flour, sugar, salt, lard. Early in the following week prices for staple foods rose by 50 to 100 percent in the capital. People also bought clothes, matches, kerosene and kerosene lamps. On 14 March the writer Maria Dąbrowska noted in her diary:

In the morning the news from London were alarming indeed. When you listen to London and then to Warsaw (i.e. Moscow) it becomes

17 AIPN, MBP 3378 (Special intelligence report on provocative rumours), k. 60.

18 Świda-Ziemia, *Urwany lot*, 82.

19 Translator's note: Churchill delivered the speech known as ›The Sinews of Peace‹ at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri. As Robert Rhodes James points out, the passage on ›the iron curtain‹ attracted immediate international attention, and had incalculable impact upon public opinion in the United States and in Western Europe. Russian historians date the beginning of the Cold War from this speech.‹ See Churchill, »The Sinews of Peace.«

obvious that these are no allies anymore but mortal enemies. The atmosphere is even heavier now than it was at the time of Munich. But, my God, no one wants to live through a third war.²⁰

The wave also washed over other regions in Poland. Some people said the war would start within three days, others claimed it would be within a month. In Cracow the rumour was heard that the outbreak of the war would mean the end of the world, as the atom bomb would lead to its destruction. One journalist wrote:

The inhabitants of the city wholeheartedly believed what the whispering voices of the propaganda were proclaiming. The confessionals in the churches were packed full. Faced with the great catastrophe that was threatening all of us, everyone wanted to clear his conscience, so that in case he died he could stand before God purified.²¹

September and October 1946 saw another soar in the general tension and anxiety, and there were several reasons for it. First, between July and October the Council of Foreign Ministers was held in Paris. A report from Białystok reads: »The populace of the voivodeship attentively follows the debates on the peace treaty, an atmosphere of anticipation is emerging in the community.«²² The second impulse came from Greece, where a Communist uprising took place in mid-September. The third and most important factor was the speech James F. Byrnes, United States Secretary of State, gave in Stuttgart on 6 September 1946. Byrnes stated, among other things, that American troops would remain in Europe. He also touched on the question of the Polish-German border, describing the Oder-Neisse line as temporary.

Almost all the Communist regime's institutions charged with the assessment of public opinion reported a growing sense of panic. The fear of war was detectable across the country. And so in Łódź soldiers were beset with people asking whether »war is inevitable« and »on what side

20 Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki 1914-1965*, vol. V, 185.

21 »Plotka ...Plotka ...Plotka.«

22 AAN, MliP 77 (Inspector Stefan Makowski's report on the Voivodeship's Office for Information and Propaganda in Białystok based on a survey conducted from 7 to 12 September [1946]), k. 20.

the Polish Army will stand«. ²³ The situation was similar in Sosnowiec: »General psychosis in the city. The war is inevitable.« ²⁴ The same in Lublin: »A psychotic fear of war, despite its sheer unreality, is taking root in the general public with its weakened with emotional exhaustion. It's enough to say ›war‹ and panic breaks out ...« ²⁵ Their guesswork was bewildering. In the Lublin Voivodeship people said that in Radom 10,000 soldiers had landed under General Władysław Anders. ²⁶ In the Dąbrowa Basin gossip circulated about an American-Chinese alliance defeating the USSR. ²⁷

People remembered that every war is preceded by mobilization, so that topic also became a matter of speculation. For instance, the rumour went around that ten cohorts by year of birth would be conscripted because ›war hangs by a thread«. ²⁸ People paid close attention to the movements of the Soviet Army and tried to interpret it. In October and November, people were expecting the Soviet Army to march through the central and western regions of Poland. In many towns and cities, people worried about the requisition of goods for military use. What is more, near the Western border rumours circulated about forced resettlements. ²⁹ People also talked about the Red Army building fortifications, digging trenches and stockpiling fuel, ammunition and machinery. In November the city of Szczecin was shaken by news of the purported destruction of Oder River crossings. ³⁰

Salt, sugar and flour were bought up in various places across the country. ³¹ In the remaining regions, meanwhile, people surmised that they were having difficulties obtaining those basic goods because they had been confiscated by the Red Army as part of its preparations for the war.

23 CAW, IV.502.1.248 (Monthly report on September 1946), k. 321.

24 AAN, MliP 523 (Report by the Municipal Office for Information and Propaganda in Sosnowiec, 24 September 1946), k. 61.

25 AAN, MliP 1004, Report on September on the political situation on the territory of the Lublin Voivodeship, k. 2.

26 AAN, MliP 1004, Report from the Lublin Voivodeship on the period 6 to 13 [October 1946], k. 46.

27 AAN, MliP 523, Report by the Municipal Office for Information and Propaganda in Sosnowiec, 24 September 1946., k. 61.

28 AAN, MliP 1000, Extract from a telephonograph, k. 79.

29 AAN, MliP 184, Data on whispered propaganda. To newsletter no. 1, k. 1.

30 ›Szkodliwa psychoza«, *Kurier Szczeciński*, 1-2 December 1946.

31 AAN, MliP 77, inspector Stefan Makowski's report on the Voivodeship's Office for Information and Propaganda in Białystok based on a survey conducted from 7 to 12 September [1946], k. 20.

Another outbreak of fear occurred in March 1947, when President Truman appealed to the United States Congress to offer financial support to Greece and Turkey against the threat of Communism.

The Korean War and soap

A high level of anxiety was noticeable throughout the second half of the 1940s, and with certain international events that anxiety instantaneously transformed into fear. This happened on 23 and 24 June 1948, when the authorities of Berlin's Soviet Sector ordered a blockade of the Western sectors and cut them off from electric power distribution. In response, the UK and USA began to organize an air lift. The alarmist tone in the Polish press and Western radio broadcasts added fuel to the fire. As a result, in the summer of 1948 there was no region in Poland whose local authorities did not report on a growing 'war psychosis'. For instance, the citizens of Białystok were said to amass supplies in such quantities that shops had run out of sugar, salt and matches. In Kielce there was a rumour about American soldiers landing as well as the general mobilization of soldiers and officers. In Szczecin, meanwhile, a private letter was written with the following message:

The daily radio broadcasts and the general situation in the world are forcing me to write this letter. My dear ones, the war is inevitable and it really looks like that because the quarrel about Berlin is getting serious. That's why we must make flour without a break ... You ought to send 10kg every week by post, without a break until there's 150 kg ... I'm not writing this to worry you but out of foresight, seeing and hearing what people are doing. They're stuffing their basements with coal and storing up staples.³²

Local authorities' orders relating to draft registration or maintenance work in shelters threw people into a panic. In Silesia some shops ran out of blackout paper. The approaching war became the subject of every

32 AIPN, MBP 285, account from 1 to 31 July 1948 based on reports from the Provincial Offices of Public Security (*Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, henceforth WUBP) in Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Katowice, Kielce, Kraków, Lublin, Olsztyn, Poznań, Szczecin, the City of Warsaw and Wrocław [no page number].

day conversations across the country. People not only made guesses about when it might break out (again, September seemed most likely) but also about what course it might take. For instance, people foresaw mass desertions by Red Army soldiers stationed in East Germany.³³

The fear of war came to overlap with another form of anxiety in July 1948, when Hilary Minc, Minister of Industry and Commerce, announced the collectivization of the agricultural sector. The countryside was thrown into a state of downright psychosis which lasted until Stalin's death in 1953. Expecting the worst, the peasants took to the defence of the weak: they slaughtered their livestock and quickly sold their harvest while putting off other work in the field. In the countryside, the idea of war evoked a mix of fear and hope, as peasants expected the war to save them from the collective farming system.³⁴ One secret police report states: »It's apparent, people are saying that the peasant's only hope is a war breaking out, England and America stepping in, which would thwart the introduction of the kolkhoz.«³⁵ In September 1948, alarming news about collectivization and reports on the Berlin Blockade combined with memories of the war, bringing the tension to a crisis. Across Poland people flocked to the shops to acquire the items that would be most indispensable in case of war. In several towns, e.g. Cracow, Lublin and Wrocław, shops ran out of staple foods. On fruit and vegetable markets and in privately owned shops prices soared – especially for potatoes, which people would store »for a rainy day«.³⁶

The situation calmed down over the following months. Still, the fear of war never died and continued to make itself felt through occasional outbreaks of panic. These would spread from voivodeship to voivodeship, from town to town. In early 1949, the order for men to register for the army caused a rise in tension. In Warsaw, placards announcing this order were posted in late February. Clusters of people would gather around them and interpret the announcement as a sign of the authorities preparing for war. Shops subsequently ran out

33 AIPN, MBP 285, monthly report from 1 August to 1 September 1948, based on reports by the WUBP in Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź and Szczecin [no page number].

34 See further: Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci*.

35 AIPN, MBP 285, account based on monthly reports by the WUBP from 1 to 30 September 1948, k. 9.

36 Ibid.

of flour, sugar and other basic food items.³⁷ In Łódź, placards were posted in the streets and in municipal offices in March. Again, there were rumours and goods disappeared from the shops.³⁸ The products that were bought up most frequently were the ones that could easily be stored, such as sugar, flour, cereal grains, oil and lard. There was also a shortage of soap, which had been difficult to obtain during the German occupation – something people clearly had not forgotten. In Tuchola County, Bydgoszcz Voivodeship, the amount of soap and detergent sold within five days was greater than in the entire year of 1948.³⁹ In the town of Rawa Mazowiecka, Łódź Voivodeship, 240 kg of soap were sold in just one day.⁴⁰

The public interpreted the resulting shortages of products as an effect of their being accumulated to supply the army, which only served to bolster people's belief that the war was drawing close. People felt more and more irritated and angry as they stood in ever longer queues. In one town in central Poland a rumour went around that »the Soviet Army is going West, buying up meat and fat to store for their own use«. ⁴¹ War rumours would traverse the country several times in 1949: in February, following news of the Hungarian Cardinal József Mindszenty being given a life sentence; in March, when Andrey Vyshinsky succeeded Vyacheslav Molotov as the USSR's Minister of Foreign Affairs (people remembered that a few months before the outbreak of World War II Molotov had succeeded Maxim Litvinov in that very position); in late May and early July, when the Ministry of National Defence ordered a survey of horses as well as harnesses and wagons; in July, as news from Lublin, in which a painting of the Virgin Mary appeared to be weeping, spread across the country – this, too, was seen to augur imminent war. The rise in religiosity – especially folk religiosity, manifesting itself in a readiness to believe in miracles – should also be seen as a consequence of the growing tension in society and the general fear of collectivization and war.

All people must have come across war rumours at the time, but not all experienced fear to the same extent. Middle-aged and older people who had responsibility for their families must have felt it more keenly

37 AIPN, MBP 383, monthly report by the UBP for the capital city of Warsaw, February [1949], k. 69.

38 AAN, Unit of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (henceforth PZPR) 237/VII-116, patrol accounts, 14 March 1949, k. 244.

39 AAN, KC PZPR 237/VII-116, patrol accounts, 11 March 1949, k. 236.

40 *Biuletyny dzienne Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, 137.

41 *Ibid.*, 91.

than children and young people. Faith in socialist ideals, in Stalin and in the Communist authorities in Poland probably lowered levels of fear. Solidarity between the working classes of different countries was supposed to act as a dam against war. In a private letter written in the spring of 1949 the notion that the Cold War might turn hot is dismissed for precisely these reasons:

You write that they're preparing for war over there, but here people laugh at the idea of an American-English war, for who's going to go fight, and whom did the world have back in 1939, one enemy, Hitler, but he's been defeated. And now the international worker won't fall on another worker, and even an American worker won't strike a Polish, French or Russian worker, at best he's going to pull his capitalist's ears. They won't succeed with their propaganda in the villages, because the nation of workers across the world is getting organized against the war and demanding peace.⁴²

On November 7, 1949, however, radio broadcasts announced that Marshal Konstanty Rokossovsky would be Poland's new Defence Minister.⁴³ Now even the regime's staunch supporters were forced to admit that this was not a meaningless decision.⁴⁴ The security forces tasked its agency to assess the public's reaction to this change in the personnel of the Ministry of National Defence. Few individuals were willing to make a public statement. In one report, functionaries of the Department of Security (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB) stated that »people are afraid to talk about the change of marshals.«⁴⁵ One thing is certain: the news caused a shock wave across the country. The regime's opponents saw this appointment as a step towards Poland's Sovieti-

42 AIPN, MBP 595, Newsletter no. 20/49 concerning the *Światowa Akcja Pokoju*, May 4, 1949, k. 11.

43 Translator's note: Konstanty Rokossovsky (1896-1968) was a Soviet officer of Polish origin who served as Marshal of the Soviet Union, Marshal of Poland and Poland's Defence Minister. He was among the most prominent Red Army commanders of World War II.

44 I discuss the general mood that followed this event in »Jest marszałek, wyszedł cukier.«

45 AIPN, MBP 403 (Reactions to the decision to nominate Marshal Rokossovsky as Defence Minister based on reports sent on the evening of 7 November and during the night of 7/8 November), k. 31. The note concerns a statement on Marshal Rokossovsky's appointment as Defence Minister, November 9, 1949.

zation, until it would be integrated as the 17th republic of the Soviet Union. Prophecies of war were heard. One Tax Administration clerk in Białystok is reported to have said: »So they don't trust us after all. Apparently there's going to be a war. The Russians have appointed one of their men.«⁴⁶ A janitor in Cracow said in a private conversation: »Was there no Pole left to take that position?« He also said: »as the Spanish radio broadcast suggests, the war will certainly erupt in the spring.«⁴⁷ March 1950 was said to be the most likely date for armed conflict to begin, and given the propaganda war against ›Tito's imperialist clique«, which had already lasted a year, people tended to assume that the war would begin with an attack on Yugoslavia.⁴⁸

Panic broke out as early as 7 November. Cracow saw a rise in the number of applications for coal deliveries.⁴⁹ As before, there was an increased demand for textile products, shoes and staple foods, especially salt, sugar, cereal grains and lard.⁵⁰ Black-market money trading came to a complete halt as money changers stopped dealing with dollars or gold. Now, people said, there is definitely going to be a war.⁵¹ A gloom-laden letter from Cracow exemplifies the general atmosphere:

Make sure you have a reserve of sugar, flour, soap, salt, etc. I give the same advice to you as I give to myself. Don't hoard cash, though I'm sure you don't have any money anyway. You must have heard that Marshal Żymierski is out and a new Marshal of Poland, Rokossovsky, has come to take his place. There's a great purge in Warsaw and in the Government. We're soon going to have a Soviet Government.⁵²

Meanwhile, another Cracovian, but one with a Communist outlook, tried to soothe his correspondent's fears:

As for Marsh. Rokossovsky's appointment, don't get carried away by war panic. The war is a long way off. He's not the first Pole who

46 Ibid., k. 10.

47 Ibid., k. 12.

48 Ibid., k. 30.

49 Ibid., k. 12.

50 Ibid., k. 33.

51 AIPN, MBP 561 (First reactions to the decision to nominate Marshal Rokossovsky as Defence Minister), k. 122-125.

52 AIPN, MBP 403 (Newsletter no. 46/49 on the nomination of Marshal Rokossovsky, November 9, 1949), k. 45.

served in a foreign army and then returned home. We ought to be proud that such a great leader has become the Marshal of Poland. Rola-Żymierski got an even more important position – member of the Council of State. I'm sure that the reactionaries are going to fabricate a war out of this and that's why I'm writing to you about it. Be assured that our position and that of the USSR and all dem[ocratic]. ppl. [people's republics] is even stronger now than it was in the beginning. 750 m[illion]. people are in the peace camp's sphere of influence. Don't waste any money on stockpiling food, because there's definitely not going to be any war [...].⁵³

Again, the tension subsided within a few days, but the fear of war still remained strong and made itself felt suddenly during subsequent outbreaks of war panic. The propaganda and education departments stoked fears of a nuclear explosion and the resulting contamination. The comedian and actor Stanisław Tym recalls:

It must have been in 1950, we were lying down flat on our bellies in the long school corridor, in four rows. Boys in the first two rows, girls in the third and fourth. We'd covered our heads with our hands and schoolbags, our coats lay on our backs. The regulations strictly demanded that our faces be turned in the direction of the explosion. That's what our basic defence against an American nuclear attack looked like.⁵⁴

In 1950, the outbreak of the war was projected for 8 May and then for September 1, 1951.⁵⁵ People read as warning signs the announcement of the National Development Loan for the Polish Forces (*Narodowa Pożyczka Rozwoju Sił Polski*) in June 1951. »They're preparing for the war«, people said. The following month the death of Archbishop Adam Sapieha lead to panic (as a prophesy circulated in Cracow according to which the war would erupt the year Sapieha died),⁵⁶ in September 1951 the extension of the length of mandatory military service, and in November 1952 Dwight Eisenhower's election for President of the United States.⁵⁷

53 Ibid.

54 Tym, »Kto nam podskoczy.«

55 Jarosz and Pasztor, *W krzywym zwierciadle*, 51-78.

56 AAN, KC PZPR 237/VII-140 (Information July 26, 1951), k. 101.

57 AIPN, MBP 287 (Note produced on the basis of monthly reports by WUBP heads for the period 1 to 30 November 1952), k. 66-67.

The sense of threat reached its zenith when North Korea invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. Poles were generally convinced that World War III was near at hand. Everything that could prove useful disappeared from the shops. People bought up winter coats and boots in the summer, parents refused to send their children to summer camp.⁵⁸ Women would arrive at Primary Party Cells weeping with fear that their husbands and sons would be sent to Korea. Peasants refused to do field work. Party employees complained that »the hay is left to get wet in the meadows«.⁵⁹

Stalin's death and the suspension of military action in Korea helped calm the tension. It also appears that people got tired of the continuous alerts. At the beginning of the Big Four conference in Geneva in 1954, Germans living in Poland as well as in Germany briefly nurtured the hope that the Polish-German border would be moved back east after all. In the long term, however, when leaders of the superpowers came together the effect would be a sense of relaxation. Hopes for a third world war were abandoned, but people still remembered the war. In February 1955, news of Georgy Malenkov's dismissal and Nikolai Bulganin's succession as the USSR's Chairman of the Council of Ministers sufficed to set in motion another wave of panic in Poland. For instance, the citizens of Gdynia bought more food and soap within three days than over the course of a month.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The fear of war continued to plague the Poles even later. The two most important outbreaks took place in August and September 1961, in the wake of the construction of the Berlin Wall and the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the 1960s war panic swept over Poland a few more times. One wave arrived during the Arab-Israeli War in June 1967. For some people, the fears it evoked came with physiological reactions such as insomnia and difficulties eating. People also experienced a strong sense of fear when the armies of the USSR, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and East Germany invaded Czechoslovakia during the night of 20/21 September 1968, thus ending the Prague Spring. The Sino-Soviet border conflict of 1969 also threw Poland into a panic. The fact that interna-

58 AAN, KC PZPR 237/VII-122 (Patrol accounts, July 5, 1950), k. 11.

59 AAN, KC PZPR 237/VII-122 (Patrol accounts, July 7, 1950), k. 17.

60 AAN, KC PZPR 237/VII-3833 (Information, February 11, 1955), k. 60.

tional events lowered the public's sense of security is attested in studies undertaken by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (*Ośrodek Badania Opinii Publicznej*, OBOP). Opinion polls suggest that in 1969, as much as 59 percent of respondents thought Poland was in danger of war. Only six years later, 68 percent said they did not feel threatened by war.⁶¹ The Poles were gradually moving on from the sense of being threatened by war. Following the *détente* of the 1970s, another wave of fear appeared at the end of the decade. The OBOP also recorded a high level of the fear of war in the first half of the year 1980 (42 percent of positive responses).⁶² The events that caused these outbreaks were the placing of NATO missiles in Western Europe, the Iranian Revolution and the Red Army's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. That said, extant sources do not indicate beyond doubt that these events actually triggered outbreaks of war panic. If Poles bought up various products from the shops, it was also because the country was mired in an economic crisis. Perhaps it was because of this, and not in response to developments in international relations, that people were seen standing in queues.

In the light of this discussion we must agree with Tony Judt, who gave his book on the years 1945-1989 the title *Postwar*. World War II turned out to be – and in these concluding remarks I shall permit myself to use a metaphor – a powerful earthquake that was followed by a series of aftershocks of almost unchanging force. These aftershocks lasted until the late 1960s. International crises caused massive panic reactions in Polish society. The *détente* of the 1970s soothed those fears, and, by extension, the Poles' susceptibility to outbreaks of war panic. Other factors played a role here as well. Most importantly, the younger generations had not experienced the war at first hand. Memories of the war simply began to fade. Memories also changed with the impact of popular culture. As Anna Pawełczyńska pointed out in 1977, memories of hunger and suffering, of human depravity and betrayal – experiences that had marked the war – became pale over the years.⁶³ The details of those dramatic events and circumstances were fading away into oblivion. In the public imagination, the war and occupation ceased to resemble hell and instead came to be associated with a na-

61 OBOPSP, Notice on the research. The declining sense of being threatened by war, October 1975.

62 OBOPSP, Notice on the research. Notions on Poland's security in public opinion, October 1980.

63 Pawełczyńska, *Żywa historia – pamięć i ocena lat okupacji*, 15-16.

tional Elysium. Polish films and series such as *Czterej pancerni i pies* (Four tank-men and a dog) or American productions such as *Kelly's Heroes* depicted the war as a masculine game where there is no space for the suffering of ordinary people. And if war is such an idyll, then why bother to buy soap?

Translated from Polish by Tul'si Bhambry

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3. Past Injustice – Imaginations and Concepts of Law and Justice

Rachel Kerr

Past Injustice – Imaginations and Concepts of Law and Justice: Introduction

The question at the heart of this section is the enduring one of what states, societies and communities can and should do about past injustice when war ends. Does contending with the past involve active engagement or can a more passive approach also work, of forgetting? Can we reimagine the future without addressing the past? How do the means by which past injustice – or past atrocity – is imagined and enacted constitute the present and the future? There are many ways in which this question arises, in different contexts, but here we are particularly concerned with the question of how to contend with past injustice in the context of ending wars, and in particular how to deal with a legacy of past injustice and contested historical memory. The example of Poland is instructive, not only because it offers an alternative and novel perspective from much of the literature on transitional justice, which tends to focus on a handful of ›known‹ cases from the 1990s onwards (South Africa, Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, among others),¹ but also because it encourages more of a sustained conversation between the different fields of study relating to the problem of contending with the past – bringing together history and memory studies with transitional justice and its focus on concepts and practices of law and justice.

The impetus of much of the advocacy around transitional justice as a field of practice and study is that past injustice must be addressed as a means of paving the way to a more just, and brighter, future. However, David Rieff made a powerful argument recently in his book, *In Praise of Forgetting*, that sometimes there is an »ethical imperative of forgetting so that life can go on.«² The use and abuse of historical memory can be toxic and further entrench divisions, rather than work

1 Examples from particular countries, see: Kenkmann and Zimmer, *Nach Kriegen und Diktaturen*; Roht-Arriaza and Mariezcurrena, *Transitional Justice*; Fijalkowski and Grosescu, *Transitional Criminal Justice*; Werle and Vormbaum, *Transitional Justice*. A compact overview on Transitional Justice Studies and the German debates on coming to terms with the past: Krüger, »Transitional Justice.«

2 Rieff, *In Praise of Forgetting*, 144.

as an avenue for reconciliation. Essentially, the question is one of *how* the past is addressed. Historical memory and attempts to deliver justice can be neither positive nor negative in absolute terms, but can, as Rieff asserts, be both used and abused, usually to further particular political agendas. The process is also fluid, like ending war, pursuing justice and reconciliation is not a single endeavor, but rather occurs over time and space and in different realms of activity. The ends of war and pursuit of justice are complex, multifaceted and contested.

The problem of how to deal with past injustice, in particular involving widespread abuses of human rights and other atrocities, has spawned a whole literature and field of study.³ Various referred to under the broad umbrella term of *Transitional Justice*, it encompasses what we might also refer to as post-atrocity or post-conflict justice. The emergence of this field of study grew out of two separate, but related, developments: 1. Latin American transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy, involving varying degrees of dealing with the past through commissions of inquiry, etc., with or without international (UN) backing, and the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa to help ease the transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994; and 2. The revival of the ›Nuremberg legacy‹ with the establishment first of ad hoc tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and then the International Criminal Court, and the practice of International Judicial Intervention, with ripple effects seen in various universal jurisdiction cases brought against individuals. Both sets of developments were predicated on the idea that there should be accountability – for individuals as well as for the state – for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.⁴ Pursuing justice was championed as a means of securing long-term peace in the belief that contending with the past was the path to a better future.

And yet, the second development in particular, was predicated on an almost mythical notion of the Nuremberg legacy as the panacea for post-conflict justice, without much critical reflection on the detail of the Nuremberg trials, or indeed the many other post-World War II trials that took place under similar conditions, including in Poland. The hidden histories of these experiences, and in particular the long-term repercussions and fluctuations in experience, reveals a much

3 See, for example, De Brito et al., *The Politics of Memory*; Elster, *Closing the Books*; Kritz, *Transitional Justice*; Teitel, ›Transitional Justice Genealogy.‹

4 Zalaquett, ›Balancing Ethical Imperatives and Political Constraints.‹

more nuanced picture of how societies deal with past injustice, and in particular, how they respond to attempts to seek justice in war crimes trials.⁵

The transitional or post-conflict justice literature has revolved around three central dilemmas, which can be represented in terms of contestations between peace vs. justice or accountability, local vs. global interventions, and truth vs. justice. The first questioned the wisdom of pursuing justice in light of the danger of unsettling a fragile peace. It was argued in relation to Bosnia that the pursuit of justice risked making today's living the dead of tomorrow by prolonging the conflict.⁶ On the other hand, advocates of transitional justice argued that it was crucial to sustainable or lasting peace and to the remaining and constitution of a new legal and political order predicated on values of democracy and the rule of law.⁷ In that sense, transitional justice was entwined with the liberal peacebuilding agenda, and all that implied.

The second area of debate surrounded the respective role of international and domestic actors and interests. In the case of Poland, this is illustrated most vividly in asking who the post-war trials were for – the Allies or the victims – and in thinking about selectivity in prosecution to suit the interests of powerful actors, in particular collective amnesia surrounding Soviet crimes.⁸ Third, there are competing conceptions of justice with their own imperatives. Is it about punishment or restoration? About the individual or society? About establishing ›the facts‹ and constructing shared narratives or individual ›truths‹?⁹

Finally, the field of Transitional Justice has most recently been tied up in a contest over how best to assess impact, largely focused on the short term, with qualitative studies vying with large scale quantitative databases to demonstrate the impact of variable A (trials) on B (reconciliation, human rights, etc.). The problem with all of this is that it makes the assumption that impact is zero-sum good or bad. What is clear, however, is that there can never be a wholly satisfactory way of dealing with a legacy of injustice – whatever we do will always be insufficient, if necessary.

5 Some of these are explored in the excellent volume by Simpson and Heller, *The Hidden Histories of War Crimes Trials*.

6 Anonymous, »Human Rights in Peace Negotiations.«

7 For discussion, see: Snyder and Vinjamuri, »Trials and Errors.«

8 For discussion of the purposes of Nuremberg and the way in which the trial record was constructed, see Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*.

9 These goals may indeed be ›irreconcilable‹, as point made cogently by Lee-baw, »The Irreconcilable Goals of Transitional Justice.«

What has not been properly addressed is the arguably more complex question of legacy. Which also begs the question of what and whom it is for? Focusing on the legacies of various ways of contending with the past allows us to see the process of coming to terms as just that – a process – that shifts over time and space and not always in what we might term a forward direction. Just as responses to past injustice are contingent on historical, political and social context at the time that they are dealt with judicially – if they are – responses to both the injustice and the remedies for it are also contingent on political and social context. And the process of remembering and of constructing historical memory is both constitutive of and constituted by the prevailing political and legal order and how it is imagined, and can therefore change over time. Dealing with past injustice is, at heart, a political as well as a legal project.

The contributors to this section all address this central issue, in different ways. Ewa Malinowska discusses the discourse around the formation of a new legal order in the new Polish Constitution, which was finally adopted in 1952. By analyzing the process of contestation, Malinowska shows how a dominant discourse emerged, in which conceptions of law and justice were firmly tied to a model of authoritarian socialism, where the good of all ›us‹ was privileged over the opposition of ›them‹. Opposition views were silenced and derided as subversive, so the discourse in that way reflected the consolidation of the state and communist party. This is instructive when we consider how law and justice are imagined and how those imaginings – reflected in discourses – constitute the emergence and consolidation of a new order.

Jacek Chrobaczyński meanwhile considers the events toward the end of the war – the Warsaw Uprising from August through October 1944, and the establishment of the Soviet-backed Polish Committee of National Liberation – and their consequences for the consolidation of the post-war political order. Chrobaczyński demonstrates how competing elements at work in the process of transition, from war to post-war, from NS occupation to Soviet occupation and with the transition to a new government should be understood in the context of being caught in a tussle between East and West in the early Cold War, as well as, significantly, in light of the very different experiences of constituencies of the citizens of Poland. Those who had experienced war and occupation first hand and were focused on bare life, contrasted starkly with those who had spent the war in exile, whose imaginings of the future could be more hopeful, not predicated on a past experience of constant threat of extermination and/or persecution. Central to his discussion is the issue of legitimacy. Whose voice should be heard in this

context – those who experienced direct harm and whose imagination of the future is predicated on indirect harm, or those with indirect experience of harm? In the end, the latter prevailed.

Paulina Gulińska-Jurgiel's article, on the example of an influential publication by the lawyer Jerzy Sawicki, focuses on the particular challenges associated with legal means of contending with past crimes in post-war Poland. In particular, she documents how the punishment of German war criminals – and in particular the prosecution of the new crime of genocide – contributed to the legitimization of the new political and legal order in Poland. Together with the other authors, Gulińska-Jurgiel shows clearly how legacies of the past, and how they are contended with, weigh heavily on the present and the future. One of the main lessons of the Polish case then for the problem of transitional justice and contending with the past is better to understand how modes and mechanisms for dealing with past injustice or atrocity do not only pave the way for the political and legal order that follows but are constitutive of it.

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Jacek Chrobaczyński

How Communist Authority was Legitimised in Poland 1944: The Polish Committee of National Liberation versus the Warsaw Uprising

Many researchers as well as many of those interested in Polish society at the end of World War II may be surprised by the unambiguous *versus* in the title of this article. I will present my arguments justifying this clash of what are, after all, two different types of historical events, but which at the same time happen to be of great significance not only for this period in the history of Poland and Polish society, but similarly from a somewhat broader perspective, that of the years of the Polish People's Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL) and the present day. Therefore, I will look at the Polish finale to the Second World War and its consequences by considering the problem in *longue durée*. It is precisely both the establishment of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN) with its declaration of the »Manifesto for the Polish Nation«, and the defeat of the Warsaw Uprising, as viewed in opposition, that provides the context in which I will consider not only the problem of victory versus defeat, but most importantly the outcome of these events and their consequences for the consolidation of a new political system.

As early as in 1943, the Soviet and Polish communists had begun to create an organisational structure to compete with the Polish Underground State, which was then operating political and military institutions associated with the internationally recognised government in exile. The result was the formation of the State National Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*, KRN) as the supreme authority of legislative power and, in July 1944, the PKWN as the highest representation of executive power, both opposed to the authoritarian constitution of 1935. From this constellation evolved a fundamental Polish-Polish conflict. For its part, the Warsaw Uprising against German occupation from August to October 1944 was rooted in the political and military structures of the Underground State and ended with a terrible military as well as political disaster for the constitutional camp, which was accelerated by the Soviet non-intervention. In Polish historiography, these complex interactions are considered one of the most

important issues related to the genesis of the post-war Polish People's Republic.¹

It is crucial to elaborate on the external factors that played an important role in these dramatic events, namely the Soviet context. Behind this context was the history of the Soviet Union, fascinating to so many, and additionally the faith, reinforced by experience and memory, that »Stalin defeated Hitler«.² This idea had obviously been partly fabricated, but it was also to a significant extent authentic. During the period under consideration people had already »forgotten« or were trying to forget that the Soviet government had rejected the idea of European pluralism, imposing instead a single model originating from Moscow. Because of this, and the cautious, conservative stance of Great Britain and the United States, Eastern Europe, including Poland, was forced to adapt to this myth. This is why we must examine not only the powerful Soviet factor, including brutal military security-enforcement activities, but also the role played by the *Realpolitik* of Great Britain and the United States. It is only against this background that can we look at the internal Polish perspective on these events, which I define as the outlook of »vanquished victors«.³

The undeniable and fundamental consequence of such a configuration of events and decisions was above all else a bolstering of the legitimisation option and, perhaps more accurately, the legitimisation of the new, already communist authorities in Poland, initially present in three voivodeships, later in the form of the Provisional Government (*Rząd Tymczasowy*, RT), and eventually operating as the Provisional Government of National Unity (*Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej*, TRJN) throughout the entire territory of the Republic of Poland within its significantly changed borders.

Sources and premises

My principal point of departure is the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. However, I have also taken into account, especially when

- 1 For the origins of the Polish People's Republic see e.g. Paczkowski, *Od sfalszowanego zwycięstwa*; Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski*; Kersten, *Communist Rule*.
- 2 A widespread belief above all among European societies, but also within the American towards the end of World War II.
- 3 For more information see: Chrobaczyński, *Czas nieszczęść*.

analysing the attitudes, behaviour, and life strategies of people at the end of the war and occupation, the memory of the inter-war period, the »bill of wrongs« (*rachunki krzywd*) – as the poet Władysław Broniewski (1897-1962) qualified the outcome of this time in a poem from 1939⁴ – as well as processes and tendencies in society that continued to play a role during the war and occupation. This is an important element linking continuity with change. It was not an entirely different group of people we are dealing with, but in many regards the same as in the interwar period if we take generational factors into account. For example, those who were fifteen years old in 1939 had experienced both collectively and individually the disasters that befell the interwar state, society, and the army; during the war, they would experience the destructive actions and measures imposed by the German and Soviet occupiers that fostered a brutalisation of society. These various experiences remained in memory.

The outcome was human, material, and moral-ethical losses on an enormous scale. Yet Polish society was a society that in defending its very existence and dignity, in defending the state, did not for the most part lose hope that the war would end in defeat for the occupiers. It also did not abandon faith that, as the author of one of the accounts sent to me expressed it: »After the war things cannot be the same as they were before the war.«⁵ Only after some time did I realise that this was nothing if not a noble political programme, indeed a constitutional-structural programme, a profound reflection of the simple, so to speak, citizen of the country. For people already knew, more or less *in gremio*, what »we do not want« after the war. It was both a hope and a faith in final military victory. A faith also in change, change that was expected to be inevitable.

This problem gives rise to further questions: If we accept the presented arguments, then on what scale and to what extent within the Polish state and society did those changes occur and take root during war and occupation? And how did they influence the time of liberation? The wartime changes may have become an important point of reference for the communist authorities in their plans to establish

4 Broniewski's poem »Bagnet na broń«: *Są w ojczyźnie rachunki krzywd* («There is a bill of wrongs in our fatherland») in Broniewski, *Bagnet na broń*, 181-182.

5 Personal archive of the author: Testimony of Marian S. See also the introduction by Joanna Hytrek-Hryciuk in this volume.

the Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR), and in the context of the consequences as well.

The brutality of war and occupation, I repeat, affected everyone individually and at the same time collectively – as a nation and society. It defined, by significantly narrowing people's scope of existence and security, the conditions of everyday life. It created and consolidated a dramatic dichotomy in the new existential situation: life – death. This is because, in principle (I am neglecting various systems of collaboration and the activity of collaboration), a system of occupation was in operation that consisted of two subsystems: occupier and occupied. These subsystems essentially formed, to use Curzio Malaparte's apt phrase, »two worlds«,⁶ which existed in mutual hostility and hatred. This dichotomy never ceased to be in play, although it underwent an understandable evolution in connection with primarily military events. When we add to this the increasing poverty of society, its growing moral anomie as well as the dysfunction of the familial and social environment, we will understand how important these phenomena were in influencing projections of change and faith in the post-war period.

Seen from a socio-historical perspective, two societies can be distinguished: (i) Poles in exile – with completely different, non-occupation experiences, and (ii) Poles – more broadly speaking, citizens of the Polish state – under occupation, including the Jewish community, in which hopelessness in the context of extermination was a constant factor. It is also worth noting the difference, especially in the first two years of war and occupation, between experiences under German occupation in the »annexed« territories and the *Generalgouvernement* and those under Soviet occupation, the eastern borderlands. These dissimilar experiences polarised attitudes, behaviours, and memories. This leads to an important observation: The varied experiences of war and occupation were a major destructive factor within Polish society, but at the same time a significant integrating factor, expressing a powerful »no« towards the occupier. However, this was true only to varying degrees – taking different forms under German occupation and under Soviet occupation until June 1941.

Along with the most visible stances taken by citizens of Poland during the occupation – that is, adaptation versus resistance – fundamental social and mental processes were also taking place, which not only helped to rationalise behaviour but also influenced the strategy of choices made during the occupation and later during the watershed

6 Malaparte, *Kaputt*.

period between war/occupation and liberation. The most important of these were as follows:

1. Radicalisation – This might appear to be the way social relations should be expected to develop in the dramatic day-to-day conditions of brutal occupation. The society of the Republic of Poland, emerging as it was from the interwar period and confronted with the drama of 1939 and the occupation, was *in gremio* a society of poverty. This factor was aptly pointed out by, among others, Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004) in his *Excursion into the Interwar Years (Wyprawa w dwudziestolecie)* and Antoni Słonimski (1895-1976) in his excellent columns that appeared in *Wiadomości Literackie*.⁷ Left-leaning or left-wing and radical political parties drew attention to this. It was also evident in the country's socio-professional structure: the numerical dominance of the rural and small-town population, and numerous impoverished national minorities, excluded and downtrodden by the state and local authorities.

There was also considerable antisemitism in political, social, economic, cultural, and religious daily life at the time, which, moreover, enjoyed significant support from the Church and had advocates not only in National Democratic Party circles but also among ›ordinary‹ citizens. These tendencies would later clearly entrench the ›occupation in day-to-day life‹,⁸ which in turn would provoke a code of leftism in mentalities, attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. Radicalism, including its left-wing variant, would emerge as the dominant context, as a basis of correctness that passed for the social norm.

Moreover, the template would be social expectation, as expressed more precisely in the question ›How will things be after the war?‹⁹ The experience of war and occupation ›favoured‹ a radical political project, first from the left (in exile as well as in underground structures) and later to some extent also in the PPR when it began to assume authority. This is a controversial thesis. Nevertheless, my research confirms that it is precisely this type of evolution that occurred in societal attitudes at that time. As a consequence, it was also present in social consciousness, which needs to be taken into account in any analysis of attitudes, behaviours, and social choices at the time decisions were made, namely when the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) was imposed.

7 See: Miłosz, *Wyprawa w dwudziestolecie*; Słonimski, *Kroniki tygodniowe 1932-1935*; idem, *Kroniki tygodniowe 1936-1939*.

8 I refer to: Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy*.

9 Personal archive of the author: Testimony of Marian S.

2. Democratisation – Viewed in the light of the paradigm of democracy, it would be difficult to regard interwar Polish society – like its counterpart in the Weimar Republic – as having considerable democratic experience and sophistication. The relatively brief and not especially positive experience with a democratic state in Poland from 1918 to 1926 is poorly remembered. In contrast, the prevailing memory from that time is of authoritarian government following Józef Piłsudski's May Coup of 1926, often referred to as the *Sanacja* (›sanation‹) Regime.¹⁰ This government's actions came under greater scrutiny in Polish society following the disaster of September 1939, both in occupied Poland and in the new ruling camp, Poland ›in exile‹. As a result of the defeat of 1939, the loser was deemed to be not only the state and society, but also the army and the *Sanacja* that had been in power since May 1926.

However, *Sanacja* as a group and a movement did not simply ›melt away‹ into the mists of defeat. It would remain present in military, political, and social space, independent of the memories and experiences of many of those who regarded it as ›the regime‹. It could not be erased, despite the repression by the ›new winners‹, which were the camp surrounding General Władysław Sikorski (1881-1943) and other interwar political groups opposed to the *Sanacja*. It also provided an important context for the continuation of conflicts from the interwar period, a quarrel between mutually exclusive options. These conflicts must have also had an impact on daily life under occupation – especially in the underground.

The *Sanacja* experience was also important with regard to the post-war future and considerations of that future. The experiences of occupation, most importantly those of the heterogeneous underground – eventually known as the Polish Underground State, which was heterogeneous not only in terms of its politics and ideas, but also regarding members' memories of the most recent past – favoured *de facto* a new order, both politically and socially. This was boosted undoubtedly by the sizeable and variegated underground press that not only informed but also educated, stimulating political thought, shaping attitudes, and essentially promoting constitutional discourse. It was in favour of a more ›mature‹ state and reinforced thinking in national and statehood categories. For example, in the case of the country's quite sizeable peasant class, it is easy to observe that attitudes of interwar

¹⁰ This is how mostly the opposition press used to refer to the *Sanacja* government.

confrontation characterised by peasant strikes and strong peasant parties had softened in favour of a stronger union with the state.

A second important activity in the underground was undoubtedly the practice of clandestine teaching, more precisely the organisation of a clandestine schooling system. Many teachers, deprived of the ability to practise their profession and forced, for example, to move to the countryside, quite easily set up clandestine classes in their new rural environment. Initially, these were general schools, but later functioned as the first, or lower, level of secondary school (*gymnasium*) and sometimes as the upper level (*lyceum*). In this initiative I see not only a strong desire to educate and promote resistance towards the actions of the occupier, but also to a significant degree certain democratic features – particularly in contrast to the infamous Jędrzejewicz Reform of 1932, which had denied the majority of peasant children education at secondary and higher levels. This was an important asset, not only for the underground state, but also for the future. The PPR, with its slogan of free, universal education and the eradication of illiteracy, would be the beneficiary, making excellent use of these experiences and processes. »Poland, a country of educated people« would be a consistent and perpetual slogan used by communist governments in Poland. How educated people actually were and what real effects this slogan had constitutes a different research project altogether.

3. Elite vacuum – A third factor that would objectively benefit the PPR was the tragic fate suffered by the Polish intelligentsia, who were murdered by both occupiers, thereby making available thousands of jobs: civil servants, artists, writers, managers, etc. The most famous of PPR's slogans – »No high school exit exam will make an officer of you, only sheer desire will do« – is just one example of a much wider phenomenon, the benefits and privileges that the PPR could redistribute, which was to attract great interest.

4. Women's emancipation – Closely connected with the politics and practices of the occupation was the rapidly changing role of women.¹¹ This occurred mainly in families where the husband or father had died, was interned in a prisoner-of-war or concentration camp, or was actively involved in the underground. We can also observe a certain degree of continuity: women – at least partially »liberated« by the emancipation acts, the democratic changes that occurred after 1918, and later also by the consequences of World War II, which disproportionately

11 For more on the women's emancipation processes after war, see e.g. Fidelis, *Women*.

decimated the male population – gained new social, political, and professional opportunities, and these nurtured a growing self-confidence. The PPR addressed these issues and processes right after 1944/45, but even more significantly later, during the 6-Year Plan with slogans like »Zosia – bricklayer, Hania – tractor driver, Ula – miner.«¹² This new (self-)perception of women would play an important role in the reconsolidation of society after the war.¹³

5. Extermination – The deliberate killing of the Jewish citizens of Poland was the final major factor that had a deep impact on social developments after 1944/45. I consider this issue not only from the perspective of physical extermination, but also from the viewpoint of the »voids« created by the Holocaust. The murder of the Jewish population left an unprecedented void, especially in the middle class. The Jewish middle class, which in spite of antisemitism had played an important role in the country's economy for centuries, had perished. This, in my opinion, provides an important context for analysing a number of issues and factors, including that of legitimisation.

I will briefly mention another problem that accompanied this void – that of Jewish property and possessions:¹⁴ shops, workshops, banks, flats, as well as furniture, pillows, and clothes, and so on, plundered from their owners, not only by Germans, but also by non-Jewish Poles.¹⁵ Well known is the traumatic »digging up of Treblinka«; less spectacular were the classified ads during the occupation offering »fur for sale« or » piano for sale,« etc.¹⁶ The void caused by the Holocaust was filled by non-Jewish Poles, for better or worse; nevertheless it was filled. This marked a new stage in the process of urbanisation and the formation of a new middle class, in part also of a working class, and of other vocational groups. Private property was of particular importance during the first years after 1945. Later the communist government at least tried to place everything under state, co-operative, or kolkhoz control.

12 This refers to many poems and reports that were published in the Polish press of the time (1945-1956).

13 I refer to the well-known work: Judt, *Postwar*.

14 We certainly cannot use the term *post-Jewish* as some scholars do. See Leder, *Przeźniona rewolucja*.

15 On Jewish property under German occupation and through the post-war years see Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*. See also: Gross, *Golden Harvest*.

16 Quotations taken from: Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*.

All of these factors together produced an extraordinary yet vital ›fuel‹ which the occupiers additionally promoted and constantly strengthened through their actions. Most prominently, they fostered Polish nationalism, which had been strong from the nineteenth century, and had remained a powerful memory from the interwar years. Certain new phenomena emerged during the occupation which appeared to have ambivalent results. On the one hand, Polish nationalism had an integrating character: Poland, Polishness, fatherland united against the occupier. On the other hand, it exhibited considerable hostility towards internal ›others‹: Jews, Ukrainians, etc.

Set out above is an overview of what I believe were the most important socio-economic factors and issues affecting morality and consciousness that came to the fore under the occupation system, but also *within* Polish society under occupation. In the case of the relatively short Soviet occupation, we are also dealing with an additional factor that distinguished attitudes and behaviour from those prevailing under the German occupation: the fundamental goal of Sovietisation. Some of the occupied, however, in spite of being subjected also to the terror and brutality of the NKVD, yielded and embraced the Soviet concept of ›social justice‹ and the Leninist doctrine of »Even a cook can become a minister in the Soviet Union.«¹⁷ In addition, we have to be aware of the authentic albeit quite often superficial fascination with the Soviet Union, the pro-soviet inclinations of some members of Poland's elites, in particular its cultural elites – a fascination that was shared in part by other European elites. This awareness will enable us to understand why certain affirmative tendencies prevalent in the attitudes and behaviour of Polish society came to the fore at a moment of radical change – that is, the end of the occupation – and strengthened the PPR option.

However, the issues examined above do not exhaust all the factors that conditioned the legitimisation process referred to in the title of this article. So far I have evaluated primarily internal factors, although to quite a great extent they were connected with external ones. Hereafter I will turn to a sequence of external factors that heavily influenced the attitudes, behaviours, and voting strategies of Polish society emerging from war and occupation. The following seem to be the most important ones:¹⁸

17 This was a well-known, commonly used saying within the Leninist system of public authority (the Bolsheviks).

18 For more information, see: Chrobaczyński, *Konteksty przełomu*.

1. The development of international relations during the interwar period, which bore fruit in the Hitler-Stalin pact and the secret protocol attached to it. The Second World War, beginning with the invasion of Poland by the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, was unleashed in military and occupation actions by those two states: NS-Germany and its allies, and the Soviet Union. The feature they had in common was a totalitarian system and a rejection of the order of Versailles. Hence we have to state a problem of guilt and joint guilt. The outcome, from a Polish perspective, was the German-Soviet *iunctum* of 1 and 17 September 1939, and its consequences: aggression, state of war, and occupation.¹⁹

In this case it is also important to consider the policy being pursued by the European states, in particular the Great Powers. This policy cannot be justified in any way, as France and Great Britain were Poland's allies at the time. However, the asymmetry inherent in this joint responsibility has to be pointed out. It is not the declaration of war proclaimed by Great Britain and France against the Third Reich on September 3, 1939, and their silence after September 17 which is of significance here, but rather their unreliable assurances and the refusal of solidarity, which were already evident at the conference in Abbeville on September 12, 1939, where Great Britain and France renounced their support of Poland against the Third Reich and canceled the offensive against the substantially weaker German forces in western Germany.

The internal Polish perspective of the 1st and the 17th of September came down to this: two occupations, different goals pursued by the occupiers, and the brutal occupation practices of both states. Yet the view taken by France and Great Britain was different, if not completely opposite, in particular regarding the Soviet Union. Their view was a case of *Realpolitik*. This was made clear and borne out to some degree by the events of spring 1940. Contrary to the assumption that France would be able to quickly defeat Germany militarily, France suffered a spectacular defeat in June 1940 and signed an act of capitulation in Compiègne. In research literature this military shift is called the *Compiègne moment*. It is worth noting that in occupied Poland, the passive attitude of its allies in 1939 following the Polish defeat had still not been accepted as a basis for further thinking about and preparing for military action against the Third Reich. »The sun is higher, Sikorski is closer«²⁰ was the hope and belief shared by almost all milieus of Polish society up to spring 1940.

19 For more information, see: Chrobaczyński, *Dwie klęski*.

20 Ibid.

2. The most important issue, in my opinion, and one that still remains a source of much controversy and emotions, is the position of the Soviet Union in this war. The totalitarian Soviet Union started the Second World War in close alliance with NS-Germany, in the role of an aggressor and occupier. The western democracies did not react to this action in the same way they did to German aggression. Admittedly they were under no obligation to do so, but nevertheless their attitude indirectly articulated their scope of obligations as moral actors and allies, their state of war readiness and, above everything else, the value of the words of encouragement they had expressed to those threatened and later attacked.

Coming back to the context of the Soviet Union: German-Soviet co-operation ended on June 22, 1941 with »the treacherous attack of the Third Reich on the Soviet Union«,²¹ as was emphasised in Soviet propaganda at that time. (Today, this same line of argument is strongly echoed in the deceptive statements being made by certain leading Russian historians, and even more so by politicians, with President Putin taking the lead.) Ignoring the catastrophic defeats suffered by the Red Army, from the viewpoint of the problem we are considering here I would like to highlight one important change in the positioning of the Soviet Union: after it fell victim to the Third Reich, it joined the coalition that had been fighting against Germany since 1 September 1939. This took place with an »amnesia« of the USSR's role in the years 1939-1941, an »amnesia« experienced by every country except Poland, and an »amnesia« as well with regard to an important moral issue: the need to settle accounts with Joseph Stalin and the USSR for taking that position of having had such allies and committing such crimes.

From a Polish perspective, June 22, 1941 also provided a radical shift in Polish-Soviet relations, marked by the Sikorski-Majski Agreement, which has been controversially discussed in many Polish political and social circles. The agreement put both countries in the anti-German coalition camp. However, June 1941 is no turning point concerning the question of how the many millions of citizens of the Polish state remember Soviet persecution, murders, and deportations. This memory did not fade in the later years of the war and occupation. It persisted long after Soviet occupation had ended. This aspect of memory and its consequences would become an important constituent of attitudes formed not only at the end of German occupation in 1944/45 but also during the post-war period.

21 For more information, see: Chrobaczyński, *Dramatyczny rok 1943*.

Another watershed in the positioning of the Soviet Union during the Second World War was the defeat of the *Wehrmacht* in the Stalingrad encirclement. Once »Germany had lost the initiative on the European front«,²² Stalin and his state slowly began to emerge as a victor in the war – a reality that Soviet domestic propaganda expressed quite robustly in such slogans as »For Stalin, for the Motherland, on to battle, on to battle we go!« (*Za Stalinu, za rodinu, na boj, na boj, na boj!*).²³ This was an unquestionable asset for the Soviet Union, an asset of social faith that was also fully embraced by its wartime allies, the »Big Three«, and their peoples – the goal of liberation and the defeat of NS-Germany – and was a powerful asset as well for encouraging »amnesia« of the 1939-1941 period. It was clearly no asset for Poland and its citizens, however, but these no longer had great significance in the conflict or in the decision-making of the victors. For this reason, the turning point of Stalingrad marked the »opening« of the greatest internal Polish drama of the period that occurred in the most important year of the war: 1943. It was a decisive year in determining the fields of Polish-Soviet conflict, but also of the fields of conflict within Polish society.

3. Without going into an in-depth analysis of the problem, two issues seem to be of key importance: first, the discovery of the Katyń massacre – the mass killing of Polish officers committed by the NKVD in 1940 – and its consequences, including the breaking off of Soviet-Polish relations; and second, the rapidly growing influence of a niche party, which until then had only existed underground: the Polish Workers' Party (PPR). The discovery of a mass grave close to Katyń in 1942 polarised Polish society, with a deleterious effect on attitudes and behaviours. The PPR, however, pushed the Katyń episode »to the side lines« and managed to strengthen the communist camp by cooperating with the Soviet Union. The increasingly influential and powerful position of the PPR, and more broadly speaking of the communists, under these external and internal conditions marks the beginning of attempts to legitimise not only the party and the communist movement, but moreover of efforts at positioning itself in the future.

Krystyna Kersten's thesis regarding the »birth of the system of power« in 1943 does not appear to be debatable.²⁴ This birth is evident in such PPR declarations as »What we are fighting for«, in communist talks with the Government Delegation for Poland, and, finally, in the

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Kersten, *Communist Rule*.

appointment of the State National Council as a mirror image of the Polish Underground State. We should add to these internal Polish factors the Union of Polish Patriots (*Związek Patriotów Polskich*, ZPP) and the Central Bureau of Polish Communists (*Centralne Biuro Komunistów Polskich*, CBKP), as well as the army of General Zygmunt Berling, which gathered up those hindered by the Soviet administration from joining the army of General Anders.²⁵ Berling's army was a Polish army without a doubt, but one already organised and led differently. Although there were signs of social integration in this army, namely in the admission of chaplains, soldiers' mass, and prayers, it stood for the beginning of the communist camp's acquisition of power, of its taking control of the state and society.

This internal polarisation of Polish society was complemented by the already dominant role of the Red Army in the war and the increasingly strong political and ideological position of Stalin. We need to recall that, with Polish-Soviet ties already severed, during the night of January 3-4, 1944 the Red Army crossed the 1 September 1939 borders of the Polish Republic without reaching any prior understanding with the constitutional Polish government. To these circumstances two more international factors have to be added: military decisions concerning a second front²⁶ and, most importantly, the Big Three Conference in Teheran in 1943 with its consequences for Poland and, in a broader perspective, for Central and South-Eastern Europe. They were a significant *fait accompli* that added a new ›quality‹ to the policy of conducting the war. Their consequences would be felt for several decades, affecting many states and millions of people, without these societies having had any say in those political decisions. These developments mark the beginning of the formation and legitimisation of the Soviet European sphere of influence, also referred to as ›the exportation of the Bolshevik Revolution‹²⁷ and defiantly christened the ›Soviet camp‹ or the ›camp of the Peoples' Democracies‹.

The alliance was also a new opening for the Soviet Union and in a broader sense for the European communist camp as a whole. It acquired a new position as the unquestioned victor of the Second World War and became one of the most important beneficiaries of this victory. This narrative was confirmed by the conferences of Yalta and

25 Chrobaczyński, »Spóźnieni do Generała.«

26 Commonly used in historical scholarship.

27 Also commonly used in historical scholarship.

Potsdam, but also and quite spectacularly by the Nuremberg Trials of 1946, including the most important Polish case – the Katyń massacre.

There was a complex configuration of historical facts, (inter)national politics, and competing interests at stake in this war. In my opinion, it represented an important guideline, essentially a directive for Polish perceptions, analysis, and an understanding of these events and developments. To give just one example: Never, from September 1, 1939 through May 8, 1945, were the Polish question, the Polish state and its millions of citizens, the Polish army, Polish politicians, etc. perceived as the most important or even a significant problem. For this very reason the death toll among Polish soldiers, Polish civilians, including Polish Jews – as viewed through the prism of the overall balance of the war and occupation and agreements – was never given equal importance or even considered comparably to the fatalities in the Red Army and among Soviet civilians, or to the losses of the French, Americans, and British. The Polish finale to the Second World War was a finale of *defeated victors*.²⁸ Such was the impression of the vast majority of society when it emerged from war and occupation in 1944/45.

In one sense, the war was decided on the battle fronts, by armies of millions, and in another by interests and clearly defined aims of *Realpolitik*. Both of these factors quite emphatically deviated from doctrine, politics, and morality in international relations as extolled in propaganda by politicians, and by poets and artists as well. Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam, by legitimising the aforementioned processes and phenomena, determined and consolidated the order of everyday life in no longer sovereign countries with their millions of citizens for many years after the war. For precisely this reason, once the process of joint legitimisation was complete in this part of Europe, there remained only one victor – the totalitarian Soviet Union. Poland and its millions of citizens fell within this sphere, and would remain there for several decades.

Final game

It is within this context that I have framed the most important question arising from the main thesis of this article. Namely, how did the Communist party, which had such a poor reputation among the population because of the Stalinist crimes of the interwar period, and also a party

²⁸ Chrobaczyński, *Czas nieszczęść*.

with Soviet myths and mythology on its lips and a deeply rooted self-definition of the Soviet Union as the »fatherland of the working-class, Bolshevik Revolution«, managed to seize power in Poland, and most importantly, to consolidate that power for decades? It did so by generating, consolidating, and finally legitimising – both in the country and on the international arena – a Soviet »mirror« system. This system varied in scope and the model applied, but at all times it maintained the essence of a constitutional system that equated the party with the state. I will give an example from literature. The ideological and intellectual context of this specific equation can be gauged from an excerpt from *The Trial* by Franz Kafka, in which K says that if we accept as necessary that everything is what it is, then lying becomes a universal principle.²⁹ Hence, which of the internal factors mentioned above, including lying, was decisive? Were they symmetrical, or asymmetric, or only complementary? These questions will guide me through the final part of my reflection.

However, before embarking on any analysis I will focus on the key problem: PKWN versus Warsaw Uprising. The PKWN was a major link in the sequence of Soviet-PPR *faits accomplis*. Its position was strengthened by an »executive authority«: the State National Council,³⁰ »the underground parliament«, as was stressed by communist propaganda at the time.

The PKWN Manifesto of July 22, 1944 did not mention either communism or socialism. It spoke above all about the future, although it made use of harsh phraseology – e.g., the »fascist constitution« of 1935. Its most important feature was the future, both the near and distant future. At the same time, it did not ignore the past, which was perceived through the lens of a communist interpretation of history. But the future held sway. This viewpoint, not just highlighted in the document itself, was immediately implemented – in the decree on agricultural reform, and through other actions, including some that brutalised everyday life. Nevertheless, I believe, that the Manifesto also clearly addressed the needs of a large section of an expectant population, for example the needs and expectations of those who had experienced pre-war poverty and exclusion, and of those who had distinct memories of the disaster of 1939, who had survived the cruel acts of the occupiers

29 This passage from the book is aptly commented on by e.g. Tony Judt in *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, 208.

30 All quotations from the *Manifest* PKWN.

and meanwhile had undergone the processes, mentioned above, of primarily leftist radicalisation and democratisation.

Furthermore, the PKWN and the PPR generously and widely opened up access to privileges and ›benefices‹: positions, new jobs, promotions, both political and ideological in character, as well as social privileges important in everyday life. This was likewise widely appreciated in the aftermath of the war, in conditions that had become as normal as they could possibly be, guaranteed by the presence of the Red Army and the PKWN. The determining factor in this particular case was not ideological faith, but a perception of everydayness in which »the German, killing, murdering blindly, was no longer there.«³¹ Everyday life with the Red Army in the background was at least safer than and most importantly different from life a few months before: the life of occupation, of indiscriminate killing, a life under the Germans. The communist terror, although it existed and was aggressive, struck differently, one might say more selectively, following the principle »Who isn't with us ...«. Without any doubt, it brought fear.

Nevertheless, we also have accounts of witnesses from this time that indicate normality and safety: »The children went to school« and – what is more – »They came back safely from school.« There had been nothing like this under German occupation.³² Slowly peace returned, and the rhythm of everyday life and public holidays started to proceed differently. On the background of the trauma of occupation, memory and graves, but also hope for the future, assumed specific significance. Not only did the beneficiaries of the new system – the functionaries of the numerically growing party, officials of the state apparatus – appreciate this, ›ordinary people‹ did as well: »After all, the university had to be rebuilt and lessons with students resumed.« Another witness recalled: »On Sundays you could go to the newly rebuilt church safely.«³³ Fun and entertainment re-emerged, and people started to have children again.

These were natural post-war phenomena. After all, houses, churches, streets and villages, etc., are always rebuilt after wars. »Life resumed« – this was the rather common memory of returning Varsovians following the 63-day uprising. The Warsaw Uprising – this is important in our context – had ended in disaster, not only for the insurgents, but

31 Personal archive of the author, Testimony of Marian S.

32 All quotations: *ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

also for the city, essentially the only Polish metropolis of European standing.

In essence, therefore, the *versus* so strongly emphasised in the title indicates the equal rank of the two events. However, the defeat of the uprising objectively strengthened the PKWN members and the communists' camp, thus destroying the earlier equivalent. Only the victory of the uprising in Warsaw and the support of England and the United States could have stopped the communists. After the defeat of the insurgents, the communist camp assumed the stronger position, as the defeat of the uprising in Warsaw was also the defeat of the Underground State and of the constitutional government in exile. The initial *versus* was replaced by a hierarchy: the communist camp, supported by the Soviet Union, won the acceptance of Great Britain and the United States. This was the consequence of the arrangements of the Big Three in Teheran in 1943. The political realism of a certain time and place won over, but others, such as moral considerations, did not. *Realpolitik* prevailed.

Looking at the issue from a perspective of legitimisation, the failure of the uprising also fostered the progressive defeat of Polish constitutional authorities in exile, not only in a Polish but also in an international context. International recognition in July 1945 of the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN), the core of which was after all the PKWN, and the withdrawal of recognition of the constitutional government-in-exile was the most glaring proof of the internal defeat of the constitutional forces of the Republic of Poland. This is why in my opinion the failure of the Warsaw uprising further legitimised the communist camp in post-war Poland.

The defeat of the Warsaw uprising of 1944 had one more outcome – the progressive elimination of the country's intellectual elite.³⁴ The costs of the uprising for the intelligentsia must be added to the overall losses suffered during the occupation. These losses further increased the available social positions and opportunities, thereby broadening the privileges and ›benefices‹ that the new communist authorities already had at their disposal. An analysis of the primary sources – above all personal recollections and accounts – shows that despite the new government's controversial elimination of political opponents, of which Marcin Zaremba has provided an excellent analysis, people accepted the workers' party's offer to be ›with us‹. This was often tempting for other than ideological reasons, and was the result of vari-

34 For more information, see: Chrobaczyński, *Konteksty przełomu*.

ous attitudes, behaviours, and life choice strategies that changed almost daily »after the liberation«. ³⁵ The new and constantly changing attitudes can also be perceived from the perspective of »They're stronger than us, we can't beat them.« Furthermore, hierarchisation in daily life began to change and its new rhythm began to take root – at work, at school, and in holidays, in entertainment, and so on.

It is these factors that, in my opinion, go in line with Hannah Arendt's later analysis of totalitarianism. There is abundant evidence of a similar process in the early PRL. We are not dealing simply with a criminal, totalitarian power keeping a meek, well-disposed society on a tight leash. The counterpart of that power is a society that almost totally supports these transformations and changes, and in the end takes profit of privileges. ³⁶ This evidence notwithstanding, some researchers, primarily advocates of a black and white perception of communist authority at that time, and above all of Polish society emerging from war and occupation, do not agree with this view. However, the totalitarian development is borne out by attitudes, behaviours, moods, and life strategies within Polish society during the initial period of the Polish People's Republic and beyond, as evidenced by the following:

1. The ranks of the PPR and later the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR) increased rapidly during and after 1944/45. We are speaking initially about several hundred thousand, and later even a million party members. With some difficulty, but nevertheless for better or for worse, the Party managed to fill thousands of administrative posts – village leaders, mayors, county administrators, civil servants, teachers, even positions for artists – easily at the central level, with more effort at the regional level.

2. Schools, universities, institutions, and offices were reopened, daily life resumed – a life that was different from that during occupation.

3. Holidays were celebrated again, and new ones established, often with the involvement of the Church, the communist party, and the Red Army. The celebrations of Corpus Christi in 1945 prove that PPR functionaries and even generals of the Red Army were not prevented from participating in these celebrations alongside ordinary citizens.

In analysing attitudes, behaviours, and life choice strategies during the period under consideration, two attitudes have to be distinguished: adjustment and resistance. Research clearly shows that the first choice

³⁵ Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*. Cf. also idem: *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm*.

³⁶ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*.

made by Poles was adjustment, often understood as the ›lesser evil‹. This choice was a product of various factors, including fear rooted in the PPR slogan »Whoever is not with us is against us«, and economic circumstances, but also of growing faith and hope, based on conditions that had a positive impact on consolidating the new rhythm of everyday life and holidays. The communist authorities took advantage of these factors, entrenching and legitimising their next steps, not only via propaganda, but also through concrete measures, offers and engagement in the new order. Various tools were employed to influence society, including intimidation and terror, but also of reward – in terms of professional perspectives, promotion, social prestige, bonuses, etc. These actions were partly realised with the support of Church authorities.

How deeply these activities and processes were rooted in society is another issue. After all, the memories of the past still remained, and their importance cannot be disregarded. With time they evolved into post-memories, that is, memories handed down to future generations. The activities, referred to in propaganda terms as ›consolidating socialism‹, have been shown to be ideologically mostly ›shallow‹. However, I would once more be cautious in adopting a black and white view of PRL society. There was also a great deal of socialism in it. Genuine criticism of the system that began to function in 1944/45, the destruction of the PRL and finally its collapse, just like the collapse of the Soviet Union and its European camp, would take place only much later. This is an important observation of the historical process in *longue durée*.

For this reason, I have so expressively articulated the necessity of evaluating the beginning of the process, the establishment of the Polish People's Republic – a process that was determined and at the same time legitimised, undoubtedly, by external factors: the politics of the Soviet government that was able to erase any memory of its crimes from 1939 through 1941, as well as the positions and interests of its allies, the United States and Great Britain. On the other hand, the processes and phenomena we have defined as ›internal factors‹ undoubtedly also had an impact on the final success of the PPR, and later its successor, the PZPR, as well as on the legitimisation of the Lublin government, People's Poland, and ultimately the Polish People's Republic.

This is the reason I believe that the consequences of the Second World War from a Polish and more broadly speaking Central and South-Eastern European perspective should not be confined solely to the immediate consequences of war and occupation, which would include human, economic, and moral losses. There were consequences as

well in *longue durée* for the Polish People's Republic and all the states falling within the socialist camp. This outcome of the war would last for several decades. Its initial and over time complete legitimisation proceeded in the presence of both external and internal factors, which complemented one another, yielding the PRL, a state, admittedly independent, an entity of international law, but at the same time a state devoid of sovereignty.

Conclusions

I would like to stress unequivocally that the analysis presented here may awaken controversy, especially in places where I have questioned the well-established ›us – them‹ or ›authority versus society‹ in the aftermath of the war.³⁷ As a representative of social history, I do not adhere to a dichotomous evaluation of attitudes, behaviours, and moods in Polish society that ›emerged‹ from war and occupation, nor in the society of the People's Republic. Even less do I support a strategy of choosing between these attitudes. It is obviously not easy for a historian to make unequivocal judgements when probing into the viewpoint of ›I‹ and ›we‹, perceiving individuals and social groups through the prism of attitudes, behaviours, memories, and strategies of choices and taking into account a traumatic past.

However, the research I have been conducting for many years and the sources I have gathered, including oral history accounts, confirm my proposed interpretation of the period 1944/45 as a ›clash‹ of two different historical developments – the forceful imposition of the PKWN and the failure of the Warsaw Uprising – which both turned out to become constituents of the subsequent historical development. We should always remember not to analyse the aftermath of the war from today's perspective, even though nowadays we know much more about that period than people did at the time. Rather, we should analyse it, above all, from a past point of view, because people perceived the times they were living in not only as ongoing history, but also as the future taking shape, and thus as time of hope. The war and occupation they had experienced formed one layer, and the communists in power a second layer, whom many perceived as providers of salvation, advance, and privileges. The survivors were also aware that the world they had been born into and grown up and matured in was gone for-

37 Torañska, *Oni*.

ever. This is why 1944/45 is such a significant factor in Polish experience, including its memory and post-memory.

Another question occurs: Did this world coming to an end at that time and this reality thus signify to them the »end of history«, to use the phrase coined much later by Francis Fukuyama? The diary entries, accounts, and recollections that I have gathered from different regions of the country show that, in the vast majority of cases, Polish society at the time emerging from the trauma of war did not reckon that the world had ended. On the contrary, most people believed that occupation had begun anew, that history had not come to an end at all, but that a new stage in that history and in their lives was just beginning, and that it was precisely this period that could, and often did, offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

For this hypothesis I have substantial evidence: the growing interest and involvement in rebuilding the country, the growing membership in the ruling party, and later the active involvement of many people in the 6-Year Plan. Admittedly, it occurred under the aegis of the party and a criminal system, but nevertheless when the national anthem was played, when a Polish sportsman or -woman won Olympic Gold, the commonly held view was that this was ›our‹ athlete and not a Soviet athlete, that this is ›our‹ national anthem and not the Soviet anthem, these were medals for ›us‹, not for the Soviets. Here, too, we see the emergence of the context of ›our‹ state, rather than simply and exclusively ›their‹ state – the state of the communists and the Soviets. And although after a while people would go on strike, ›burn down party committees‹, this will happen in ›our‹ country not ›their‹ country, as many accounts and recollections confirm. After all, both in the immediate aftermath of the war and later in the PRL, there was no other country.

People in post-war Poland had only this life, a life that was ›dirty‹ but at the same time ›clean‹, a life that had passed through serious hardships, experiences, and traumas. This is why I emphatically question the dichotomous ›us‹ versus ›them‹ view of People's Poland and PRL society.

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Text in Context: The Discourse on the Legal and State System in Poland after the End of World War II

After the end of World War II, the Poles entertained a variety of different ideas regarding their future system of state. Polish society was preoccupied with fundamental questions: What kind of Poland and whose Poland would it be? Although representatives of all political groups participated in the legal-political discourse, in practice geopolitical circumstances determined the interacting subjects' verbal practices in such a way that not all voices were heard to an equal degree. This imbalance was due to the fact that in 1944, the communist authorities had founded several institutions, in particular the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN), also known as the Lublin Committee; furthermore, the Soviet Union was providing political support and logistical assistance. As one historian writes, »within the borders agreed after World War II, Poland was not a sovereign state, it was controlled by the Soviet Union, which is why it could not choose its political system freely.«¹ The post-war Republic of Poland was shaped as a communist state. Power was exercised by the communist Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR) and allied political groups that acknowledged its dominance. The communist camp was assuming power under conditions of war and the Soviet Army's entry into Poland. The authorities aimed to instil into Polish society a sense of an alliance with the Soviet Union. This plan met with considerable resistance on the psychological level, as people remembered the partitions of Poland as well as the Soviet occupation of 1939-1941. The Poles' general resistance to the ideals of communism can also be attributed to the anti-communist attitudes that prevailed among both the ruling classes of the interwar period and the organizations controlled by the London-based Polish government-in-exile during the war. The new ideological orientation aroused controversies, discussions and polemics.

In this article I draw on concepts developed in discourse analysis. Definitions of discourse vary, but in the humanities the concept usefully accentuates the shift in research attitude and direction of analy-

1 Kallas, *Historia ustroju Polski*, 268.

sis – from external conditions to forms of expression (texts and speech genres). It allows us to take into account the broader context, to approximate the postulates of the social sciences, and to go beyond the traditional subjects of linguistics. Researchers in discourse analysis share a common goal, namely to capture the relationship between the text and the context, which is situational, social and cultural. In Polish linguistics, many scholars treat discourse broadly as a social activity. For Maria Wojtak, for instance, discourse is

a way of organizing human activity, which includes a given community's communication practices; in the course of various interactions this community determines and agrees on the content it deems relevant; it preserves appropriate scenarios of communication behaviour as well as the rules that must be fulfilled by means of expression (and/or by verbal means).²

Discourse is also described in terms of a communication event,³ text in context, or a specific communication event.⁴ Thus, discourse has at least three dimensions: the dimension of linguistic usage, the cognitive dimension (communication of beliefs) and the interactive dimension.⁵ Conceptualizing discourse we must take into account all three; moreover, situational factors ought to be foregrounded as they set up and determine the interacting participants' verbal behaviours.

In this article I treat discourse as text in context and as a specific communication event. People use language to convey various ideas and beliefs, and they do so within the framework of social and political situations that are often complex. The discourse on the Polish system of governance after World War II is manifested in legal-political texts of which I have chosen three representative examples: the Manifesto of the PKWN (also known as the July Manifesto), the so-called Small Constitution (*Mała Konstytucja*) of 1947, and the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL) of 1952. Before I examine the legal-political discourse of the time, let me outline the broad political context that forms the background for the communicational events in question.

2 Wojtak, »O relacjach«, 17.

3 Duszak, *Tekst, dyskurs, komunikacja międzykulturowa*.

4 Gajda, »Tekst/dyskurs oraz jego analiza i interpretacja«, 13.

5 Dijk, »Badania nad dyskursem«, 9-44.

The political context

The process in which the new system in Poland took shape after World War II can be divided into two periods: the first covers the years 1944–1947, i.e. from the early days of People's Poland (*Polska Ludowa*, a semi-official reference to the Polish state under communism) to the adoption of the so-called Small Constitution, while the second period spans the years 1947 to 1952, the year the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland was passed. As early as January 1, 1944, the Communists established the State National Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*, KRN), declaring it a provisional parliament. In March 1944, a KRN delegation traveled to Moscow. During talks with Stalin and Molotov, they decided to establish an executive body – the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN). It was also in Moscow that a poster with the PKWN Manifesto was written and printed,⁶ although Polish communists claimed the work had been done in the city of Chełm in eastern Poland.⁷ The authors of the manifesto also declared that the KRN had been founded by the nation at war and was therefore the only legitimate source of power in Poland. In fact, their power was illegitimate and it challenged the government of the Republic of Poland in London. The KRN was established by Stalin, who found the Polish communists to be obedient executors of his plans.⁸ With Moscow's permission, on January 1, 1945, the PKWN was transformed into the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland (*Rząd Tymczasowy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, RTRP). As a result of decisions taken during the Yalta Conference in February 1945, on June 28, 1945 that body was recast as the Provisional Government of National Unity (*Provisional Government of National Unity*, TRJN).

The development of Poland's history in the aftermath of World War II was determined during the Yalta Conference (4–11 February 1945). One of the agreements was that free elections, based on universal suffrage and secret ballots, would be held as soon as possible. The fact that no precise date was named allowed the communists to choose the most convenient time. The leaders of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) were aware, in 1945, that public support was too weak to allow for their victory in democratic elections. They stayed silent about the date

6 22 July, the day the PKWN Manifesto was issued, would become a public holiday in the People's Republic of Poland.

7 See also Borucki, *Konstytucje polskie*, 172.

8 *Ibid.*, 173.

of the elections until they had had enough time to subdue the opposition. Finally, they proposed to hold a referendum in June 1946. Poles were supposed to answer three questions:

1. Are you in favour of abolishing the Senate?
2. Do you want the future constitution to consolidate the economic system introduced by the agricultural reform and the nationalization of the basic branches of the national economy, while preserving the statutory rights of private enterprise?
3. Do you want to preserve the western borders of the Polish state on the Baltic Sea, the Odra and the Lusatian Nysa?⁹

The result of the referendum was rigged so that it seemed as if the majority of Poles had voted three times yes. It was not until 1990 that historian Andrzej Paczkowski discovered archived protocols with the actual results of the referendum.¹⁰

In shaping the political scene in Poland, the communists limited the number of legal parties to six groups: the Polish Workers' Party (PPR), the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS), the People's Party (*Stronictwo Ludowe*, SL), the Alliance of Democrats (*Stronictwo Demokratyczne*, SD), the Labour Party (*Stronictwo Pracy*, SP) and the Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronictwo Ludowe*, PSL). It should be noted that the PPS, SL, SD and SP were satellite bodies in relation to the PPR. The only alternative to them was the PSL, whose leader, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, enjoyed great public support. The differences between the PPR and the PSL were fundamental; in particular, the PPR sought to turn Poland into a totalitarian state based on Soviet models, while the PSL advocated parliamentary democracy.

In February 1946, Mikołajczyk rejected the PPR's unappealing proposal to form a common pre-election bloc. Now the PPR attempted to weaken and disrupt Mikołajczyk's PSL. The parties surrounding the PPR formed the Democratic Bloc (*Blok Demokratyczny*). Supported by Soviet advisors, the communists had at their disposal the entire propaganda apparatus and the Ministry of Public Security (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB). The election campaign was brutal. The security apparatus spread terror. Without it, the PPR would not have been able

9 Quoted in Friszke, *Polska*, 123-124.

10 In fact, around 25% of Poles voted »yes« for the first question, around 44% for the second and around 68% for the third. See also Paczkowski, *Od sfalszowanego zwycięstwa*, 5-9; Friszke, *Polska*, 125.

to establish itself, to defeat the underground and to proclaim victory in both the referendum and the elections. When the leaders of the PSL appealed to the Western powers to intervene against the terror, the official press in Poland accused them of treason. During the election campaign, the communists tried not only to eliminate their political rival, but also to deprive society of any hope for change. The Poles were tired. The authorities hoped that the population would eventually succumb to the pressure and violence and accept the status quo. Various forms of repression became preferred methods of governing the country. They came to be seen as the basic means of paralysing society's resistance and forcing obedience. The election results were falsified. The Democratic Bloc (PPR and PPS) were said to have scored more than 80% of the votes, including some 10% for the PPS.¹¹

The July Manifesto already announced the impending adoption of a new constitution. On February 19, 1947, the Legislative Parliament (*Sejm Ustawodawczy*) passed the so-called Small Constitution, which pertained to the system of governance and the operation of the highest state bodies. The Small Constitution was conceived as an interim solution that would remain valid until the adoption of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland in 1952. The document consisted of thirty-two articles. Twenty-six articles of the March Constitution of 1921 were confirmed. Officially, the Constitutional Commission (*Komisja Konstytucyjna*) was not convoked until May 26, 1951. It was to be chaired by Bolesław Bierut, with ten subcommittees focusing on specific issues. In fact, however, work on the basic law had already begun much earlier outside Parliament. As early as 1949, the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (*Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej*, KC PZPR) appointed two committees. The first was to draft the constitution, while the second oversaw the work from an ideological standpoint. Their joint meetings were chaired by Henryk Świątkowski of the KC PZPR's politbureau. The first committee was composed of both politicians (e.g. Zenon Kliszko, Marian Rybicki, Oskar Lange) and lawyers (e.g. Konstanty Grzybowski, Stefan Rozmaryn). The editor and chief referee of the constitutional project was Stefan Rozmaryn. The draft was modelled on the Soviet Constitution of 1936.¹² Bierut submitted a Russian trans-

11 Marek Borucki argues that in fact it was the opposite. Thus the Legislative Parliament (*Sejm Ustawodawczy*) did not represent the entire nation. Borucki, *Konstytucje polskie*, 175.

12 Friszke, *Polska*, 181.

lation of the final version to Stalin, who introduced about fifty amendments, some pertaining to the content, some to the style.¹³ On November 5, 1951, the Subcommittee on Editorial Affairs and General Issues (*Podkomisja Redakcyjna i Zagadnień Ogólnych*), headed by Bierut, adopted the draft constitution with Stalin's amendments. Since the goal to draw up a final version of the text by the end of 1951 could not be achieved, the deadline was postponed until April 30, 1952.

On January 23, 1952, the Constitutional Committee adopted a resolution on a nationwide discussion of the draft constitution. According to official data, 11 million Poles took part in this discussion. In a speech delivered at the session of the Legislative Sejm on July 18, 1952, Bierut claims that

the project of the Constitution aroused particularly vivid resonance and interest among the working people, at meetings held in all workplaces, at the sessions of the national council (*rada narodowa*), at the meetings of social institutions devoted to discussing the draft Constitution, which, apart from workers and peasants, also attracted a wide range of members of the intelligentsia.¹⁴

Bierut's claim about the enthusiastic reception of the draft of the new constitution was false. Aiming to gain approval for the project, the authorities had launched a broad political and propaganda campaign that was proclamatory in nature. General approval of the new Constitution was publicly emphasized. A three-day parliamentary debate during which thirty-two MPs took the floor ended on July 22, 1952, the anniversary of the issuing of the PKWN Manifesto. On this day, the Legislative Parliament unanimously adopted the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland, which entered into force immediately.

According to the constitutionalist Piotr Winczorek, the way in which the new constitution was formed was problematic, to say the least. The constitution of 1935, which had not been officially repealed, was declared invalid. The ruling camp, dominated by communists, based its system on the democratic principles of the March Constitution of 1921, supplementing these, in 1947, with the so-called Small Constitution. But the political reality was very different from what

13 Marian Kallas states that Stalin intervened in the text of Poland's draft constitution in the early spring of 1951. Kallas, *Historia ustroju Polski*, 296.

14 Bierut, »O Konstytucji«, 9.

was announced in these acts. There was a clear discrepancy between the actual situation and the legal regulations.¹⁵

The cognitive and expressive dimensions of the discourse

The discourse on the legal system reflects the social, ideological and political order of the state. In the immediate postwar period, the language was strongly influenced not only by the geopolitical context, but also by the ideology of the dominant political camp. The ideologisation of the authoritarian administration's language is already visible in the PKWN Manifesto. It also marks Bierut's speech during the session of the Legislative Parliament in July 1952, as well as the introduction to and actual text of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland. Analysing the language of the administration of that period I will focus on these documents.

The Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN)

The creation of the PKWN and the announcement of its manifesto on July 22, 1944 marked the beginning of communist rule in Poland.¹⁶ The July Manifesto was a proclamation addressed to the compatriots (*rodacy*). The word »compatriot« is repeated many times in the text; almost every paragraph begins by addressing the recipient. It contains formulations that were to give the impression that a new Polish government was being born, that a people's democratic state was being established, that it was independent and worthy of the support of all Poles:

Compatriots!

The nation fighting the German occupants to achieve freedom and independence has established its representation, its underground parliament – the State National Council.

The State National Council, put in place by the fighting nation, is the only legitimate source of power in Poland.

The State National Council, the interim parliament of the Polish people, has instituted the

15 Winczorek, *O państwie*, 38-39.

16 Friszke, *Polska*, 105.

Polish Committee of National Liberation
as the temporary legitimate executive power to direct the nation's
liberation struggle, to gain independence and to rebuild Poland's
statehood.¹⁷

The Manifesto declared the National Council (KRN) to be the only
legitimate authority in Poland and denied the legitimacy of the Polish
government-in-exile:

The exile ›government‹ in London and its delegation in Poland is a
self-proclaimed and illegitimate government. It is based on the un-
lawful fascist constitution of April 1935. This ›government‹ has ham-
pered the fight against the Nazi occupant, and with its adventurous
policies it has pushed Poland towards a new catastrophe.¹⁸

The document declares that democratic freedoms would be ensured,
but those freedoms are soon limited to political supporters, not po-
litical opponents. There is also an announcement that war criminals
would be punished:

Compatriots!

The Polish Committee of National Liberation, which undertakes to
reconstruct Poland's statehood, solemnly declares the restoration of
all democratic freedoms, the equality of all citizens without distinc-
tion of race, creed or nationality, the freedom to form political and
professional organizations, the freedom of press and conscience.

But the democratic freedoms must not serve the enemies of democ-
racy. Fascist organizations, being against the nation, will be erad-
icated with the full severity of law.

The PKWN Manifesto is characterized by disinformation and propa-
ganda, as its authors aimed to create the impression that the new gov-
ernment would implement social and economic reforms. They misled
Polish society, promising an improvement in the living standards of
the »the great majority of the people«, and suggesting that an indepen-
dent, democratic Poland was about to emerge.

17 »The Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation«. The word
›compatriots‹ (*rodacy*) and the name of the Polish Committee of National
Liberation were printed in bold letters.

18 Ibid.

The text of the proclamation is careful not to reveal the PKWN's left-wing and pro-Soviet orientation. The document uses zero-one language, with positive expressions referring to the new authorities' future actions and negative ones to condemn those of the opponent:

We will continue to perform [our tasks] with firmness and determination.

[...]

We will oust the sowers of dissension, the reactionary agents, who, by breaking national unity, by trying to provoke battles between Poles, are acting to the advantage of Hitlerism.¹⁹

In this document we already notice the labelling of political opponents (sowers of dissension, reactionary agents). Almost immediately after their accession to power, the PKWN passed a special law that was to become a tool to repress political opponents. The decree of August 24, 1944 dissolved secret military organisations, while the decree of October 30, 1944 on the protection of the State provided for a death sentence for membership of an armed organisation, possession of weapons, sabotage, diversion, etc. Anyone who knowingly failed to notify the authorities was also threatened with imprisonment or death.²⁰

The figure of the enemy is further developed in another text, namely a speech by Bolesław Bierut of July 1952.

Bierut's Sejm Speech

In July 1952, the Legislative Sejm held a solemn session during which the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland was adopted. The act establishing the Constitution was preceded by a three-day discussion that was opened by a very long speech delivered by Bolesław Bierut, Chairman of the Constitutional Committee. His goal was not so much to make a case for the new Constitution to be passed but, above all, to persuade his compatriots to accept a new political and economic system. The rather lengthy text – forty-four pages – consists of five chapters. Their titles indicate both the content and the ideological issues raised:

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Friszke, *Polska*, 109.

- I. The Constitution – an expression of the desires and views of the great majority of the Polish working people
- II. The strong foundation of the country's new social relations
- III. In the spirit of socialist democracy
- IV. The Constitution – an incarnation of the nation's aspirations over the centuries
- V. The new Constitution will pave the way for socialism's complete victory²¹

The world is presented as bipolar (a dichotomy) and unequivocal: positive terms represent the vision of the new world designed by the constitution, while negative judgments refer to the enemy, the political opponent. An exemplary sentence: »Mikołajczyk and the pack of parasites (*szkodniki*) planted by him.« Common devices include the use of contrast and the dense repetition of phrases and expressions:

Today in Poland there are no large capitalists, landowners, bankers or giants of imperialist capital – they are not the ones being served by our economy, it is not for their gain that our factories, mines and steelworks are being productive, they do not benefit from the million-strong and ever-growing multitudes of workers, engineers, white-collar workers in the industry and peasants in agriculture. The Polish economy changed in its foundations the moment that control was assumed by the working people, as today its only director is the Polish nation. It is the nation's needs, its interests, the strengthening of its forces and the shaping of its future that our entire national economy serves today. This is what is most important. (Applause). And this most important truth lies at the heart of the Constitution project, pervading its entire content from beginning to end.²²

Bierut creates a sombre vision of the world of capitalists only to contrast it with the bright image of those countries that have adopted the concept of people's democracy. These people, Bierut says, »are building the socialist system« where the people's authority takes care of safeguarding the material and cultural needs of the »working masses«. The language contains frequent judgements such as »it is undeniable«, »it is obvious«, »the true basis is«, »the most important truth is«, and so on. For example:

21 Bierut, »O Konstytucji.«

22 Ibid., 19.

It is clear to every honest person that the new balance of power in the international arena after the Second World War, based on the victory of the Soviet Union, made it possible to strengthen the People's Poland (*Polska Ludowa*) within its new borders [...].²³

Bierut's rhetoric is one of arbitrary reasoning, which always poses as incontestable, exclusive and obvious. By precluding discussion this rhetoric makes it possible to impose one's reasoning instantly. It is the language of highly and unilaterally ideologised propaganda. In the following passage, for instance, the speaker formulates his theorems in an extremely apodictic way:

The inheritors of Polish fascism, those who sing the praises of the rule of the nobility and of capital, though history holds them up to shame, the cosmopolitan émigrés who have no vision and no homeland – this whole squabbling bunch of American peons, they keep on repeating the same theme over and over again: the draft of our Constitution is an imitation of the Soviet Constitution. This illustrates these American peons' hypocrisy and foolishness. It is obvious that, as a country in which socialism is just emerging, we should build on the enormous achievements of a country in which socialism has prevailed. (Applause.) But it is also indisputable and clear that our Constitution grows from the greatest depths of the Polish soil, from the struggles and the will of the Polish people, that it grows out of the history of our nation and that it is the embodiment of its centuries-old aspirations, that it is a development of its most progressive traditions, which are for us a source of pride. (Applause.) Our Constitution and the new life of the nation, of which it is a reflection, arose in combat with everything that is despicable and degenerated, against everything that is retrograde and torpid, against everything that is venal and unoriginal, in combat with the whole legacy of darkness and superstition, against nationalist megalomania and parasitism at the expense of its own people and other oppressed nations.²⁴

This is the rhetoric of hatred. Bierut does not address those who are directly affected. He speaks of them, accuses and condemns them, he arouses hatred against them: »those who sing the praises of the rule of

23 Ibid., 36.

24 Ibid., 38.

the nobility and of capital, though history holds them up to shame,« »cosmopolitan émigrés who have no vision and no homeland«, etc. He does not address them, but labels them in order to impose on his audience an unambiguously negative image of them. The frequent repetition of the phrase »our Constitution« aims to make it stick in the audience's memory; it also aims to suggest that the Constitution is indeed »ours«, i. e. Polish rather than Soviet. This amounts to deliberate manipulation, for the Polish Constitution of 1952 was in fact one of many Stalinist constitutions. As in the entire bloc of socialist countries, the Constitution was a political document rather than a legal one.²⁵ Constitutions such as these preceded parliamentary debate and the so-called consultations with the public. According to official data, more than 11 million Poles took part in those consultations, and supposedly everyone approved of the new Constitution. Bierut states that the draft prepared by the Constitutional Committee

is wholly recognized and supported by the millions of people of our nation, [...] thanks to a nationwide discussion it is now a proven expression of the real wishes and views of the broadest masses of the Polish working people. This is a particularly important fact.²⁶

In Bierut's speech, it is not only the possessive pronoun »our« that occurs with particularly high frequency – it appears most often in connotation with nouns relating to the state, the nation, the constitution (our nation, our constitution, etc.) – but also the adjective »broad« (broad support, etc.). Other common words are »the people« (always with attributes, e.g. the working people, the Polish working people), »the masses« or »the working masses«, »the working class«, »socialism«, »progress«, »the Constitution« and »democracy«. Bierut uses common formulas and ready-made cognitive schemata to impose an unambiguous interpretation of reality. His speech is a propaganda text aiming to present the importance of the political changes that took place in Poland after 1944.

25 Małajny, »Konstytucjonalizm«, 98-99.

26 Bierut, »O Konstytucji«, 9.

The Preamble to the Constitution²⁷

The language of Bierut's parliamentary speech foreshadows the preamble to the Constitution. The tone of this text is solemn, but the style also shows the characteristics of a statement conceived with the aim of agitation and propaganda. The wording is saturated with expressions of the kind we saw in Bierut's speech: »the working masses«, »the working people«, »the working people of towns and villages«, »the Polish working people«, »the broadest masses«, etc. These expressions indicate a deliberate attempt to create a new image of the world – an image desired by the authorities – and to consolidate it in the audience's mind. The preamble opens with a statement on the system of governance: »The Polish People's Republic is a republic of the working people«, which is repeated in a slightly modified form in Article 1 of the main part of the Constitution. Although the preamble makes references to history, it does so selectively, imposing interpretations and assessments: »The historic victory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics over fascism«, »the working class – the leading class of the people«, »the memorable directives of the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation«, »the historic experience of victorious socialist construction in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics«, etc. The key words that set a solemn tone include »the Polish Nation« written in capital letters, which appears six times in the text.²⁸ The government's jurisdiction is said to be based on »the alliance between the working class and the working peasants«, with the working class playing »the leading role«. The Preamble also states that the working classes would draw on the experience of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – the first State of workers and peasants.

The style changes in the final part of the Preamble, introducing an elevated vocabulary and emotional phraseology. The authors emphasise the importance of the Constitution, declaring that it would allow Poland to achieve the objectives set by the legislator. This very long statement explicitly lists those objectives. In the Polish original, each item on the list begins with a gerund; the English translation uses the infinitive form: »to consolidate«, »to accelerate«, »to strengthen«, »to

27 This section is partially based on of my study *Konstytucja*. In this article, English translations of the Constitution, including the Preamble, are taken from the website of the Sejm. Accessed May 21, 2018. <http://libr.sejm.gov.pl/tek01/txt/kpol/e1952a-spis.html>.

28 Kamińska-Szmaj, *Język polskiej lewicy*, 134.

improve«, »to eliminate«. This must be a deliberate device serving not only to highlight the goals, it also explicitly informs the audience about the state's fundamental values. The essential task is not just to strengthen the people's state but above all »to put into effect the great ideals of Socialism«. This is the first time »socialism« appears as a lexeme. The long list of values important for society must have aimed to capture the goodwill of the audience, playing the role of the rhetorical technique *captatio benevolentiae*.²⁹ The introduction to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland is not an axiologically neutral text; on the contrary, it can be read as a manifesto of a specific ideology. Besides the above-mentioned »Socialism«, the following expressions can be seen to connote key values in the Preamble of 1952: »the Polish nation«, »the authority of the Polish working people«, »People's Democracy«, »the alliance between the working class and the working peasants«, »a republic of the working people«. The values presented in the Preamble can be seen as a means to an end, especially when juxtaposed with the reality of the ruthless and violent way in which the new system was imposed at the time.

Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland

The structure of the text of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland, which differs profoundly from the constitutions of 1921 and 1935, was clearly influenced by the Soviet constitutional model. According to Marian Kallas, this was Poland's first socialist constitution and it was based on Marxist-Leninist political theory.³⁰ Montesquieu's principle of the separation of powers was replaced by the principle of the unity of state power.

The constitutional legislator's strategies and intentions are apparent not only in the Preamble, but also in the substantive parts of the document. The genre's cognitive aspects become discernible here, as well as the hierarchy of values and the key themes and manner of their presentation. Four thematic blocks deserve particular attention: the system, religion, state institutions and citizens' rights and responsibilities. In the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland, the political sys-

²⁹ Ibid., 136.

³⁰ Kallas points out that the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland was largely modelled on the provisions of the Soviet Constitution of December 1936. Kallas, *Historia ustroju Polski*, 296.

tem and the structure of the state apparatus take up the first six chapters. The main issue at the time was the transformation of the state system, which is why Chapter I, titled »Political Structure«, opens with the following statement: »The Polish People's Republic is a State of People's Democracy.« There follows the declaration that »the power belongs to the working people of town and country«, as announced in the Preamble. It is notable that the Constitution of 1952 does not yet provide that the People's Republic of Poland is a socialist state – it is »a State of People's Democracy«. Only the amendment of 1976 would change the wording of Article 1 to »The People's Republic of Poland is a socialist state«, which the authorities explained by pointing out that Poland had achieved a higher stage of building a socialist society.

In the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland of 1952, citizens' rights and responsibilities are not mentioned until Chapter VII, which contains twenty-two articles on the subject. The chapter opens with the declaration that the People's Republic of Poland »strengthens and extends the rights and liberties of the citizens«. The provisions on freedom, however, are very succinct.³¹ There is no separate chapter on religion; the freedom of conscience and religion is only mentioned in passing.³² Citizens' »freedom of speech, of the press, of meetings and assemblies, of processions and demonstrations« are also mentioned. »The right to work is ensured«, as well as the right to rest and leisure, to health care, to study, to »benefit from cultural achievements«. Women are guaranteed »equal rights with men in all spheres of public, political, economic, social and cultural life«. These are, however, acts of speech that are pure declarations, as no institution was introduced to safeguard the rights of citizens. Article 14.3, which states that Poland shall more and more fully implement the principle »from each according to his ability, to each according to his work« and Article 71.1, which ensures »freedom of speech, of the press, of assemblies«, etc.,

31 This stands in stark contrast to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1997, where the provisions on the freedom, human rights and citizens' rights and obligations appear as early as Chapter II, with freedom being mentioned first. This extensive chapter (fifty-six articles) contains information on personal freedoms and rights, political freedoms and rights, economic, social and cultural freedoms and rights, as well as the measures put in place to protect freedoms and rights.

32 The Polish Constitution of May 3, 1791 puts religion first in the hierarchy of regulations, probably because the authors had convinced the Catholic majority of deputies and the nobility as well as the institutions of the Church to take a favourable stance towards the main principles of the Constitution.

are perfect examples of the discrepancy between the declaration and reality. Four articles deal with citizens' responsibilities, whereby the obligation to comply with the provisions of the constitution and the socialist working discipline is given priority:

It is the duty of every citizen of the Polish People's Republic to abide by the provisions of the Constitution and of the laws, to maintain socialist work discipline, to respect the rules of social intercourse and to discharge conscientiously their duties towards the State.³³

The language of this article – and of the entire document – is marked by strong ideologisation. The authoritarian power uses clear and expressive formulations, the content is highly condensed and conveyed through declaratory syntactic structures, e.g.:

The Polish People's Republic fosters the allround development of science based on the achievements of the most advanced thought of mankind and of Polish progressive thought – the development of science in the service of the Nation.³⁴

The Polish People's Republic strengthens, according to plan, the economic bond between town and country founded on brotherly co-operation between workers and peasants.³⁵

Where citizens' rights are concerned, the addressee appears in the plural, e.g. »citizens«, more rarely »the population«, as in the following examples:

Citizens of the Polish People's Republic have the right to rest and leisure.³⁶

The People's Councils are elected by the population for a term of three years.³⁷

33 Art. 76.

34 Art. 63.

35 Art. 9.1.

36 Art. 59.

37 Art. 34.

When responsibilities are at stake, however, the addressee appears in the singular form (»the citizen«), sometimes in the emphatic form »every citizen«: »To defend the country is the most sacred duty of every citizen.«³⁸

Clear preferences appear in the vocabulary and certain repeated collocations which for many years would become verbal matrices in the People's Republic of Poland: »the working people of town and country«, »the working masses«, »the creative intelligentsia«, »brotherly co-operation between workers and peasants«, »increasing numbers of the working people«, »effect [...] given to this right on an increasing scale«, »the constant development of the productive forces of the country«, »the prosperity of the people«. A strong ideologization is noticeable in the language. Frequently repeated phrases (even verbal clichés) are meant to convince the public about the idea of socialism and to accept the new political and socio-economic system.

The explicit core value of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland is Socialism. Lexemes that connote this concept include equality (equal rights), community, social justice, prosperity, the alliance of workers and peasants, the comprehensive development of national culture, the rule of law, and the brotherly co-operation between workers and peasants. The term »socialist« appears in relation to the social and economic system, also in the phrase »Socialist State industry«. Article 14.1 mentions the socialist system for the first time: »the working people of town and country add to the strength and power of the Fatherland, raise the level of prosperity of the people and expedite the full realisation of the socialist system.«

Socialism is a system whose main feature in the political sphere is the dictatorship of the proletariat, so that power belongs to »the working people of town and country«. In the economic sphere, socialism entails the centralized management of the national economy. It introduces state or cooperative ownership of the means of production and the principle of dividing products according to quantity and quality of work. However, there was a wide gap between the declaration and implementation, which is why citizens did not universally approve of the socialist state.

The speaking subject in the Constitution is personified. It is the state – the People's Republic of Poland. The state is extremely active and dynamic; it takes care of its citizens, it is concerned, it organises, it secures, it guards, etc. One could say it cares for everything and everyone. Many

38 Art. 78.1.

statements are based on the same pattern: the People's Republic of Poland + a performative verb (it cares, it assures, it organises, etc.). For instance: »The People's Republic of Poland ensures a continual rise in the level of the prosperity, health and cultural standards of the people.«³⁹

The Constitution of 1952 is very concise (containing only ninety-one articles) and its provisions remain general. Only the framework of the state authorities is defined; the reader is often referred to other legal acts: »The details are established in the law.«⁴⁰

The Constitution exemplifies how the language of the ruling political force was able to permeate that of the law. Its most important function is agitation and persuasion, its goal to impose a certain vision of the world, with a particular system of values, to shape the thinking of society as a whole according to the model imposed by the authorities. Negative judgments and disparaging expressions – including plenty of adjectives – are used to mould the desired legal reality. The style of the Constitution of 1952 is marked by repetitions and ready-made verbal clichés that aim to consolidate the most important values and principles of the new system in the readers' minds:⁴¹

»From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.«
(Art. 14)

»equal pay for equal work« (Art. 66)

»science in the service of the Nation« (Art. 63)

These short sentences or maxims are easy to remember and express a general idea in a pithy manner. But these schematic formulas are supposed to have a strong impact on society and reinforce the idea that the principles of socialism are correct.

The Constitution of 1952, passed during the peak of Stalinism in Poland, meets neither the needs of society nor the requirements of a democratic state. Over the course of the history of the People's Republic of Poland, which lasted for many decades, eighteen amendments were introduced, allowing the Constitution to adapt to the immediate needs of the ruling regime. This Constitution remained in force as long as the Polish state was an authoritarian state, i.e. a dictatorship of the proletariat.

39 Art. 3.5.

40 Art. 89.3.

41 See also Malinowska, *Konstytucja jako gatunek tekstu prawnego*, 143-162.

The Constitution, passed on July 22, 1952, changed the name of the country from the Republic of Poland (*Rzeczpospolita Polska*) to the People's Republic of Poland (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*). »People's« (the adjective *Ludowa* in Polish) was added and the order of the words was changed. The 1952 Constitution abolished the office of President and the State Audit Office (*Izba Kontroli Państwa*). It restricted the independence of the judges and made it impossible for an opposition to function by prohibiting associations that challenged the socialist system.

Conclusions

A qualitative change marked the discourse on the legal and state system after World War II. This was a time when fewer and fewer people still identified with the state. The state was not seen any more as the guarantor of the nation's sovereignty. Communication was unidirectional (from the ruling sphere towards those governed) and did not allow for critical assessments of the political system or the government's functioning. The dialogue between the authorities and the public was nothing but a sham. The dominant strategies were propaganda and agitation, including manipulation and threats. Bolesław Bierut's long parliament speech and the Preamble to the Constitution abundantly show those strategies. The point of view of the institutional subject (the authorities) did not coincide with the point of view of the collective subject. The whole of Polish society did not identify with the socialist state and its highly centralized structure, where political, economic and ideological power were in the hands of a single party. If competing groups tried to communicate their views, they had to do so in an atmosphere of struggle and intimidation. The image of the world created by the dominant party was unambivalent – only what was »ours« could be good.⁴² The result of the rhetoric of hatred was the dichotomy between »us« and »them«. The absolute truth was with the authorities, while political opponents (the opposition) were denied any merit whatsoever. This is particularly evident in the authorities' preferences when it came to the vocabulary used for judgement and evaluation.

Translated from Polish by Tul'si Bhambry

42 Głowiński, *Nowomowa*, 13.

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Paulina Gulińska-Jurgiel

How to Punish National-Socialist Crimes in Poland? Genocide According to the Definition of Jerzy Sawicki

Remember this. The seed from which a tree will grow is tiny and no one can guess the shape of the tree from it. You'll be telling your grandchildren about the year 1945.¹

These are the words of the editor Baruga, a character in Czesław Miłosz's political novel *The Seizure of Power*. Miłosz hurried to complete this modest book in time for a competition in 1952. The narrative is set in Poland from the summer of 1944 to the early postwar years. The sparsely outlined protagonists and their experiences, marked by emotionality, uncertainty and constant surprise, perfectly mirror the atmosphere during the country's transition to the new postwar order, the drama of the era and the complexity that pervaded both private choices and political processes. Writing this novel, Miłosz was already outside the political apparatus of the early Polish People's Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL), having chosen to live in exile a year earlier.² Paraphrasing Baruga's words we might say that based on the processes emerging in those early postwar years, the shape of the future tree could almost be guessed already.

It is hard to write about the end of the war unequivocally. It did not happen suddenly; both conceptually and in terms of military planning it had been prepared well in advance, so that the 8th (or 9th) of May 1945 did not mark a zero point.³ The repercussions of the complex political, military and psychological processes continued to be felt long after Germany's capitulation. One example is the debate on the punishment of crimes committed by the National Socialist regime, while the Soviet war crimes were passed over in silence. To explore this

1 Miłosz, *The Seizure of Power*, 132-133.

2 On the book's composition and reception see Stanisław Barańczak's preface to the Swedish and American editions, *ibid.*, 211-216, as well as the publisher's note, *ibid.*, 221-226.

3 Among the numerous publications on complex processes that marked the postwar era see e.g. Lowe, *Savage Continent*; Hoffmann, *Seeking Peace*. Classic publications on the topic in the Polish context are Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy* and Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*.

debate in the Polish context, I focus on the definition and penalization of genocide in the lawmaking processes in the early postwar years. Here law is understood not just as a binding or created normative order, but also as a discursive process, one that includes various voices from the legal community and their interpretations of specific cases. I take into account factual arguments as well as the moral, emotional and linguistic levels of the narrative on genocide. My analysis is clearly limited, since it is based on a single example: a book titled *Ludobójstwo. Od pojęcia do konwencji, 1933-1948* (Genocide: From Concept to Convention, 1933-1948) by Jerzy Sawicki, one of the leading lawyers of the early People's Republic of Poland.⁴ Even if this article is based on just one exemplary publication, however, its scope is quite broad, for I propose to examine the role and place of the law in postwar Poland. I do this through a series of questions: How could criminal law in the early People's Republic of Poland be described? Was it a norm, expressed in the balanced language of the judiciary, or was it a tool of political power? Does Jerzy Sawicki's work betray an emotional dimension, and if yes, then to what extent does it reflect despair, remorse, or the desire to avenge the enormity of evil? Which temporal dimension determines his perspective – the past, the present, or the future? And was his perspective national or international?

The political context of the time undoubtedly influenced the creation of legal norms. But my hope is that those questions will allow me to produce a multi-dimensional portrayal of the process of making criminal law in the People's Republic of Poland and the legitimation of the political order that went hand in hand with that process.

Sawicki's book is not the only postwar Polish publication dealing with the problem of defining and punishing crimes committed during World War II, nor is it Sawicki's only contribution to this field. Related publications appeared both in the 1940s and later, though none of them undertook such an extensive analysis of a single legal term. There was great diversity in the emerging literature on the punishment of war crimes, and even as time elapsed, the publications lost none of their confrontational character. Some dealt with the trials of the perpetrators in Poland or abroad; they explored Poland's role and Polish themes at the Nuremberg trials and the activities of the Supreme National Tribunal (*Najwyższy Trybunał Narodowy*, NTN).⁵ Other

4 Sawicki, *Ludobójstwo*.

5 See for instance Cyprian, *Walka o zasady norymberskie*; Cyprian, *Procesy wielkich zbrodniarzy*; Cyprian and Sawicki, *Sprawy polskie*; Gumkowski

publications documented the war crimes. Some authors detailed the course of the trials. Many works were marred by the raw combination of biographical or memoiristic material with legal, political or historiographical reflections.⁶ They also differed in terms of style, which sometimes resembled reportage; many books were characterized by a moralizing tone and most by an intensely emotional one. The generally balanced nature of Sawicki's writing is one aspect that makes his book stand out, but most of all it is the fact that his *Genocide* focuses on theoretical aspects. He analyses the process of defining genocide as a legal term and of securing the concept's permanent place in the framework of international criminal law. This is why I have chosen this publication as my primary source of reference.

Sawicki was one of postwar Poland's most active lawyers. Born into a Jewish family in Gródek Jagielloński in 1910, he obtained a law degree in Lviv in 1931 and immediately took up a legal apprenticeship.⁷ He had leftist views and defended communists in political trials before World War II; he also participated in the left-wing underground during the war. After 1945 he played a significant role in the trial and punishment of war crimes. He was a prosecutor in the Majdanek trials in November and December 1944, and a member of the Polish delegation to the Nuremberg trials. In 1946, he became prosecutor for both the Supreme Court (*Sąd Najwyższy*) and the NTN dealing with war criminals in Poland. On the cover of his *Genocide* he is presented in this function. He was prosecutor in the most important trials of war crimes, including those of A. Greiser and the Auschwitz personnel. At the same time, he helped shape criminal law in the People's Republic of Poland, for instance as a co-author of *Prawo karne Polski* (Criminal Law in Poland), a textbook that conformed with the Soviet authori-

and Kułakowski, *Zbrodniarze polscy*; Cyprian and Sawicki, *Przed trybunałem świata*; Cyprian and Sawicki, *Ludzie i sprawy Norymburgii*; Sawicki, *Przed polskim prokuratorem*.

- 6 Cf. Kim Priemel in relation to the International Military Tribunal: Priemel, *NMT*, 17 – here in relation to the above-mentioned publications. Cf. e.g. Datner et al., *Genocide*.
- 7 Biographical information after the Polish Internet Biographical Dictionary (*Internetowy Polski Słownik Biograficzny*): <http://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/jerzy-sawicki> (access: 2.3.2018). For the print version see *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 35 (1994). Sawicki would later help shape socialist criminal law and his interests expanded to include fields such as medicine. See also his short biography in *Biuletyn Główniej Komisji XVI* (1967), 15.

ties' expectations.⁸ He also represented Poland at international legal congresses: Paris in 1946, Brussels in 1947 and Prague in 1948. He was active as a lecturer at the Department of Criminal and Material Law of the University of Warsaw, and he published reports and interpretations of specific criminal cases in popular articles in the press.⁹

The war crime tribunals: The context of time and place

Sawicki's book deals with a legal term that was new in the postwar context. The process of defining and preparing the ground for punishing war crimes, however, had already begun much earlier. Well before May 8, 1945, individuals – mostly lawyers – and various governments and governments-in-exile had been anticipating Germany's capitulation and drafting criminal law declarations – joint declarations in the case of the Allied states – that would enter into force after the war.¹⁰ Although war criminals were tried in the Soviet Union and Poland – for instance in Kharkiv and Majdanek – before the end of World War II, most trials were held after the official end of the war on May 8/9, 1945.¹¹ We should bear in mind, however, that many trials dealt not only with the perpetrators but also with political opponents as well as real or imaginary collaborators; in Poland this included, for instance, persons who had signed the Deutsche Volksliste.¹² Tangible legal grounds were provided by decrees passed either during the war or soon afterwards, such as the so-called August Decree (*Dekret Sierpniowy*) of August 31, 1944 or the decree on the Protection of the State (*Dekret o ochronie Państwa*) of October 30, 1944, which was replaced some years later by the Small Penal Code (*Mały Kodeks Karny*) of June 13,

8 Andrejew et al., *Prawo karne*.

9 These articles were first published in the press; later some of them also appeared in book form, e.g. *Tajniki dyscypliny* or *Paragrafy i żywi ludzie*.

10 Examples include: the London Declaration of the Polish Government-in-Exile of November 1942 on the Investigation of War Crimes; the Decree on the Legal Investigation of War Crimes (March 30, 1943); the Moscow Declaration (October 30, 1943). On the role of lawyers and experts see Weinke, *Gewalt, Geschichte, Gerechtigkeit*, 112.

11 See e.g. Paczkowski, »Zbrodniarze, zdrajcy i pomocnicy« and *Sprawiedliwość, zemsta, rewolucja*.

12 On the similarities and differences between these processes see Pohl, »Sowjetische und polnische Strafverfahren.«

1946.¹³ While Germany's surrender brought an end to warfare in Europe, in Poland the struggle for power would continue for some time, involving military clashes as well as legal regulations.¹⁴

Institutional forms of investigating, documenting and persecuting Nazi crimes also appeared in Poland before the end of World War II, with the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes (*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich*), later of Nazi Crimes (*Zbrodni Hitlerowskich*), and its regional units at the forefront.¹⁵ These institutions were truly the products of their epoch: on the one hand they took on the difficult and pioneering work of carrying out research and documentation, but on the other hand they were from the very beginning steeped in and dependent on the realities of Polish postwar politics. Interestingly, it is during the key stages of their work that they had no legal basis to function.¹⁶

The degree to which the postwar criminal trials were politicized or even instrumentalised by the authorities across the Eastern Bloc varied from country to country.¹⁷ In the USSR, for example, there is no doubt that the show trials lacked any of the features of a legal system functioning under the rule of law. In Poland, meanwhile, the situation was

13 The August Decree, also known informally as »Sierpniówka« (from the Polish *sierpień* for August) took into account the norms of international law and included a catalogue of war crimes and crimes against humanity. An amended version of this decree is still in force today. The August Decree allowed for the punishment of criminals, collaborators and blackmailers, but in practice it was often used against underground organizations. By contrast, the Decree on the Protection of the State was conceived to keep political opponents in check, and the Small Penal Code that replaced it and which forms the basis of the criminal law of the People's Republic of Poland, defines thirteen types of crimes (e.g. espionage, economic sabotage, possession of weapons, participation in armed organizations) that allow for action against political opponents. This decree was valid until 1969.

14 For a broader discussion see Borodziej, »Hitleristische Verbrechen.« Legal aspects are discussed in Rzepliński, *Die Justiz in der Volksrepublik Polen*, 30–62.

15 For an overview based on current research on the Main Commission see Jasiński, »Główna Komisja.«

16 On the related challenges, compare the selection of the minutes taken during the meetings of the Main and District Commission (*Komisja Główna i Okręgowe*) from the first months after they were founded: Motas, *Komisja Główna*, as well as my article »Post-War Reckonings.«

17 For example, Dieter Pohl points out the Stalinist nature of the USSR trials, where the accusations were sometimes based on defendants' self-accusations obtained under physical or psychological duress. Cf. Pohl, »Sowjetische und polnische Strafverfahren«, 138–139.

more complex. First of all, with ongoing armed struggle, the communist system was not yet as firmly established as in the USSR. Secondly, when it comes to the immediate and direct impact of the consolidating communist power apparatus on judges' decisions, the evidence in Poland's case is far less conclusive than it is for the USSR. There is no doubt that immediately after the war Poland's new authorities tried to assume control of the judiciary in order to exclude political opponents, to legalise the security service's activities, and to take charge of the private and economic sectors.¹⁸ But they faced a major challenge: the judges returning to office after the war had been professionally trained and active before 1945, which meant they were rather resistant to political indoctrination.¹⁹ In the first years of the war, therefore, the situation was not so much one of confrontation. The power balance was far too skewed in the communists' favour that we can only talk about coexisting orders and very complex realities.

The role and influence of lawyers in formulating the definition of genocide

The 1940s were marked by concrete efforts to capture and punish war criminals and to name the tragedy that Europe had experienced. The existing legal terms emphasised different aspects: »war crimes« were crimes committed during the war that violated the laws and customs of war officially defined in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919; »crimes against peace« related to the planning, preparation, and conduct of war, while »crimes against humanity« collectively described crimes against social, ethnic, religious, philosophical, racial or age groups. Although not all of these terms were new, all three were defined by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1945. A fourth concept had emerged at the end of the war: genocide. The etymology of the term goes back to the Greek word *genos* (race, nation) and the Latin *caedere* (kill). The term was coined by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer.²⁰ It was not mentioned in the Nuremberg trials verdict, but it did

18 Rzepliński, *Justiz*, 31.

19 *Ibid.*, 30-32.

20 For an introductory article on the history of the concept of genocide, Raphael Lemkin and the establishment of the Convention on Genocide see my EHRI Document Blog post, »The 1948 Genocide-Convention.« Much has been written on Lemkin; see e.g. Cooper, *Raphael Lemkin*.

appear in the accusation and was repeated during the interrogations. It is this term, not yet officially codified, that Jerzy Sawicki discusses in his book. Mostly he analyses the preparations, debates and different stages leading to the adoption of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the short period between October 1946 and December 1948. Published at a time when the Cold War was intensifying, however, the book had to be seen as part of the current legal discourse and could not simply analyse the new legal concept in a normative manner. Sawicki hints at this problem in the introduction:

At the current stage of development of human culture, it is a universally recognised principle in civilized societies that *every nation and every race has an equal right* to existence and development.

The wilful *physical* or *biological* destruction of a nation or racial group, contrary to this universally recognised principle, constitutes a crime of international law for which the perpetrators are liable, whether they acted in their own name or on instruction, be it as state officials or as private persons, and internal and national laws that impose such acts cannot be seen to exclude liability.²¹

In these first sentences Sawicki already raises the issues that would dominate debates on the crimes committed during World War II after 1945. He explicitly qualifies these crimes as crimes on an international scale. Thus the possibility of punishing responsible individuals is geographically extended beyond the borders of any single state. By highlighting individual responsibility, whether the actions in question were carried out by an official or a private person, Sawicki refers to the guidelines of the Nuremberg trials. By excluding domestic legislation – which might sanction or even prescribe the crimes in question – as a mitigating circumstance, he also strategically perpetuates the spirit of Nuremberg. His proposal, therefore, appeals to contemporary lawmakers and is forward-looking in that it meets the need for a guideline that would be binding in the future.

The next passage builds a narrative that reaches far into the past. Sawicki outlines inequalities in antiquity, the Middle Ages and the colonial world, highlighting class, national or racial differences. Against this background, he presents the »problem of genocide« as part of the struggle for human dignity and respect, regardless of racial or national

21 Sawicki, *Ludobójstwo*, 9-19, here: 11. Emphasis as in the original.

characteristics, skin colour or language.²² He describes genocide as »the principle of inequality having taken on proportions of animal-like barbarism.«²³ From here it is only one more step until the crime is made to overlap with the perpetrator, who for Sawicki is fascism. In the context of the crimes of World War II, this is an unambiguously pertinent logical conclusion, but Sawicki narratively extrapolates it to the postwar present. His stylistic devices include the use of the present tense and repetition: »fascism preaches«, »fascism aims to«, »fascism tries to convince«. As a result, the text reads somewhat like a litany.²⁴

Sawicki does not mention individual perpetrators by name. For him, the responsibility for the rise of fascism lies in factors such as imperialism, economic contradictions and the fierce battle against »the forces of social progress.«²⁵ For him, genocide can only be subdued along with the ideology and the economic and social forces from which it stems. The return of fascism remains a real threat; its latent presence suggests it is able to prepare another attack.²⁶ By highlighting the notion of a ubiquitous threat Sawicki echoes the socialist narrative of the Cold-War era – a narrative calculated to consolidate the authorities' political power, which shapes the present by fostering fear of the future.²⁷

The second part of the book presents more subtle, less politicised arguments. Subsequent chapters, interestingly, explore the role of lawyers and criminal law not in punishing genocide, but in »combating the danger of a recurring genocide.« For Sawicki, both practitioners and theorists of law ought to be involved. While the former have an obvious role – the active application of the law – the latter face more complex tasks:

[...] by devising new constructions and by analysing individual projects of the institutions of international law, the latter ought to indicate the actual content of those projects, their practical significance and their effectiveness in the community of states of different economic, social and political structures.²⁸

22 Ibid., 12.

23 Ibid., 13.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 14.

26 Ibid.

27 Cf. the articles by Ewa Malinowska and Marcin Zaremba in this volume.

28 Sawicki, *Ludobójstwo*, 15.

Based on this statement it appears that theorists as defined by Sawicki actually cease to be theorists. Their role goes beyond the analytical level. This is also confirmed in the following sentences:

There is no greater threat to the proper understanding of the issue than the separation of legal formulas from their social substance. The task of a legal theorist is to produce analyses that pierce the veil and present the mechanism by which new concepts are created in such a way that a masked game of interests can be distinguished from a real battle for progress.²⁹

Sawicki's theorists become active participants in the political discussion, also outside their own country. Next, Sawicki contrasts domestic with international law and argues that the latter lacks uniform, compact material content. He argues that domestic law shapes foreign policy, which necessarily translates into strife and competition between nations. This also affects the institutions of international law, as theorists formulate existing norms and develop new ones. Still, Sawicki writes, this competition should not interfere with the peaceful coexistence and cooperation of nations.³⁰ Thus the constellation he draws up is clearly one of competitiveness, but it is not one that must necessarily lead to confrontation.

At this stage of the argument Sawicki interestingly begins to develop a meta-narrative. While the main part of the text puts forward rather vague and evidently politicised theses, the remarks in the footnotes appear much more astute. They, too, echo the official party line, but they are placed in a much broader context than the main text. For instance, Sawicki quotes some works that contradict his own theses. His references also break with the main text's conformist black-and-white narrative by providing examples of voices from the other side of the Iron Curtain. Sawicki shows how those voices allow international law to be shaped together, despite the competition of different legal orders. Thus he provides evidence for the intense intellectual work being performed beyond Poland and the Eastern Bloc.³¹ Having outlined the complex

29 Ibid., 17.

30 Ibid., 15.

31 See for instance footnote 2 (ibid. 16) on the cooperation of states with different political systems in the development of international law. Here Sawicki references works that are skeptical of this notion, e.g. Anonymous, »The Impact of Soviet Principles – Challenge to Accepted Custom.« *Times*, December 11, 1947 and H. A. Smith, *The Crisis in the Law of Nations*, London,

historical background, Sawicki concludes that the crime of genocide has come a long way »through the fire of debate« and evolved from a loose and inaccurate concept (between 1933 and 1945) to a detailed definition of the international agreement (between 1946 and 1948 in a draft). This development, he continues, highlights two aspects of international law, namely the clear possibility of cooperation and the undeniable competition between the countries involved.³² In several passages Sawicki emphasizes the possibility for different legal orders to communicate with each other. Given that his book appeared during the rise of Stalinism, his position therefore seems at least to be balanced.

On closer examination, Sawicki's book appears to focus not on the crime of genocide but rather on the legal order concerning genocide and on what we understand the role of this legal order to be. The fact that this legal order is steeped in current policy does not come as a surprise given the historical context. One key point is Sawicki's chosen time frame, which breaks with traditional caesuras. In his discussion on genocide he reaches back long before the war; the end of the war plays a minor role in his view. Writing about injustice in history, he goes far beyond the experiences of the recent past. He thematises ancient eras and foregrounds various forms of social injustice. It is also remarkable that Sawicki does not discuss any particular victims of genocide. Instead, he focuses purely on the role of the law and the legislative process.

Genocide: The history of the term and Poland's position according to Jerzy Sawicki

Sawicki introduces the concept of genocide in the first chapter, »Outlining a New Concept, 1933-1946.« Here his periodisation differs slightly from the one presented in the introduction, where the debates are divided into two stages: 1933-1945 and 1946-1948. In the first chapter, Sawicki outlines his new concept with reference to the years 1933-1946. The year 1933 marks the beginning of international debates based on which the concept of genocide was later developed, while in 1946 the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg pro-

1947, as well as works in support of it, e.g. B. Schapiro, *The Soviet Concept of International Law*, Year Book of World Affairs 1948, 272-310.

³² Sawicki, *Ludobójstwo*, 17.

nounced its judgment. This periodisation is interesting in so far as the Nuremberg verdict itself did not mention the term »genocide«, which only appeared in the indictment and during the interrogations. The Nuremberg trials did not officially anchor the term »genocide« in normative legal language. However, 1946 was also the year when the United Nations General Assembly began to debate the Genocide Convention, and this is the book's main topic. An intriguing question – one that will probably have to remain unanswered – is why Sawicki, having analysed two years' worth of UN debates, did not include those in the phase during which the new concept of genocide was defined in his view.

Sawicki begins by explaining the concept of genocide based on the definition proposed by Raphael Lemkin in *Axis Rule of Occupied Europe* (1944).³³ Going back to the sources of Lemkin's definition, Sawicki reaches back to 1933, when the 5th Conference for the International Bureau for the Unification of Penal Law was held in Madrid. Two types of crime were identified here, namely barbarism, defined as the extermination of racial, religious and social groups, and vandalism, which connotes the destruction of the cultural and artistic values of these groups. The fact that these categories were also proposed by Lemkin is only mentioned in a footnote. Sawicki points to the inaccuracy of the original wording, which allows both proposals to be interpreted as crimes against humanity and as genocide.³⁴ He also points out that the object of genocide was not properly identified at the time. By mentioning a »social group«, Sawicki argues, the law potentially includes crimes against the most diverse groups of people. Thus, any common crime committed against several people, even if they be related only by chance, motivated by hatred or by the intention to destroy them, could wrongly be regarded as a *delictum iuris gentium*.³⁵ According to the proposal of 1933, the crime of barbarism was punishable regardless of the perpetrator's nationality or the place where the act was committed. The court of each country where the offender was apprehended was to have jurisdiction to try them.³⁶ Historically,

33 Lemkin, *Axis Rule*.

34 Sawicki presents genocide as one of the forms of crime against humanity. Sawicki, *Ludobójstwo*, 26.

35 *Ibid.*, 24.

36 Sawicki quotes a member of the United Kingdom's delegation to the United Nations saying anonymously that after the war the lack of such a formulation made it impossible to punish some of the major war criminals. *Ibid.*, 25, footnote 9.

Sawicki points out, the International Bureau had targeted primarily the USSR and not the Reich, which accounts for the USSR's withdrawal from this collaborative effort.³⁷ The Soviets argued that the law which was being formulated would turn against the real instigators of terror and war – the fascists.³⁸ For Sawicki, the Nuremberg trials, which drew on the Madrid concepts, fulfilled this prediction. Although his argument is pertinent in this particular case, however, it is a retrospective account of causes and effects and presents a logical sequence where different developments might in fact have come to pass as well.

The core of Sawicki's book consists of chapters on the successive stages on the way to establishing the Genocide Convention, i.e. the work of the different committees and subcommittees as well as UN sessions on the issue. Sawicki also provides relevant documents in the annex to his book. To present his argumentation in its entirety would exceed the scope of this article, but it is worthwhile to take a closer look at a few themes – ones that stand out on account of the emphasis Sawicki puts on them or the subtlety or language he applies in his discussion.

First of all, Sawicki repeatedly emphasises Poland's active role in the process of defining genocide as a crime of international law. He cites statements, criticism and arguments used by Polish contributors to the debate. This remarkable strategy can be interpreted in two ways: either as an attempt to foreground the contribution of the socialist bloc to the establishment of international criminal law, or as a bid to point out Poland's unique role and its active and therefore independent stance.³⁹

Sawicki considers the definition of a »protected group« very carefully. This section is clearly politicised, but it certainly does not reflect a uniquely Polish tendency. Sawicki writes:

A protected group must undoubtedly possess certain specific characteristics that allow it to be distinguished from the rest of the population in a way that is not accidental (e.g. it will not be a group of tenants, a group of residents of one street, the participants of a gath-

37 Ibid., 25.

38 Sawicki refers to *Biuletyn Inostrannoj Informacji* 1/35, n.p.

39 Contributions by Poles include the definition of a protected group (p. 44), the problematisation of cultural genocide (where a group is targeted without its members being destroyed), the definition of the boundary between forced but permissible assimilation of a group and the prohibited crime of genocide (p. 46), the possibility of holding a private individual responsible for genocide (p. 47).

ering, etc.). It should be added that these groups must have characteristics that the civilised world considers at this historical stage to have enduring cultural values. The characteristics that qualify this group must therefore be such that their loss would impoverish human culture. Such values are undoubtedly represented by all races, nations, and religions.⁴⁰

Sawicki does not define what »the civilised world considers at this historical stage to have sustainable cultural values«, thus inviting politically motivated interpretations.

Most of Sawicki's doubts, however, relate to the definition of a political group as protected. In his opinion, political groups lack the required attribute of apparent permanence.⁴¹ Besides, giving political groups protected status would entail the risk individual states trying to interfere with internal affairs of other states. Sawicki asks rhetorically if, given the current development of international law,

[...] it is practically possible or desirable for an international factor to interfere when a state is protecting its current political and social system from attacks by political groups that oppose that system.⁴²

To exemplify this dilemma Sawicki explores the ways in which a state may deal with high treason. Are the measures implemented to prevent high treason permissible under domestic law or do they already represent an excess, which would indicate genocide? To convince his readers of his position he furnishes another example, namely the possibility of defining attacks on the property of people belonging to a certain group as genocide. He argues that a political group may cause undesirable and dangerous disputes following reforms that involve, for instance, the socialisation of means of production, previously in the hands of a particular group, or the expropriation of land in the case of large estates. Sawicki asks another rhetorical question:

Can a state that eliminates great trusts and landowners through the socialisation of goods and agricultural reform allow international interference by the judicial authorities representing the interests of the goods affected by the reform? No, and a state that stifles the work-

⁴⁰ Sawicki, *Ludobójstwo*, 48.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 50-51.

ers' movement and professional unions, for instance with disproportionate fines or by confiscating trade union property, would not agree to the intervention of an international jurisdiction, either.⁴³

Sawicki stresses that his intention is not to restrict the freedom of political opinion or to subordinate it to any particular domestic order. This freedom simply need not entail the protection of an entire loosely defined political group within the framework of the Genocide Convention.⁴⁴ To support his position Sawicki refers to the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), whose congress in Paris he attended on October 26, 1946. According to their resolution, whose signatories included Poland, the USSR, Great Britain, France and the Netherlands, a crime against humanity is committed when a person is destroyed or persecuted on account of his or her political convictions. Thus Sawicki points out that countries outside of the Eastern Bloc acknowledge the possibility of protecting a political group. At the same time, however, he implies that the significance of such a resolution is limited, for the emerging UN Genocide Convention would be of much higher rank.

Another reason why political groups ought not to be protected under the Genocide Convention is their dynamic character. For Sawicki, it is impossible to speak of a political group unless it shows some activity, but every activity may, according to the law of a given country, violate that country's political structure and be considered punishable:

A political *group* therefore only exists if it is active. An *individual*, meanwhile, may have political convictions without showing any activity. These *convictions* ought to be preserved in national and international law. For it is in line with the state of development of international morality that an individual might have *private* opinions that are contrary to any legal order whatsoever. But of course no legal order – whatever ideology it may represent – can grant such protection to the *manifestations* of individuals' political *activities* of any kind.⁴⁵

43 Ibid., 52.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., 53. Emphases in the original. On political groups, see p. 54. Although Sawicki supports the stance of Poland's UN delegates, he also refers to other positions voiced in Poland, e.g. Adam Bramson's »Pewne aspekty prawa norymberskiego.« *Państwo i Prawo* 5.6 (1948). Cf. *ibid.*, 98-99.

By now the reader must have realised that Sawicki's goal is not only to clarify the definition of genocide as a category of the international legal order. He also tries to legitimise the political system in which he wrote the text. To define political groups as liable to experience genocide would put the Soviet Union and its satellite states in an awkward situation, to say the least. It would suggest that the crimes committed against political opponents fall within the remit of such a broad and internationally defined definition.

When a draft of the Genocide Convention was proposed on 26 August 1948, Polish delegates criticised not only the proposal to protect political groups, which implied the possibility of interfering in a state's internal affairs. UN delegates from Poland and the USSR also criticised the lack of direct references to the crimes committed by fascist powers, the lack of an explicit association between fascism and genocide in the introduction, the omission of individual responsibility for acts committed upon orders or according to national laws, and finally the proposal to establish an International Criminal Court.⁴⁶ Sawicki writes:

This path – towards the imposition of particular interests – seems all the more convenient as it gives certain influential reactionary countries with their expansionist intentions the opportunity to use the authority of an international court and international law for their narrow group interests. Such an abuse of the law must be opposed categorically [...].⁴⁷

But Sawicki only seems sceptical about international law interfering with national issues – not the other way around. In the next chapter he thematises the role of domestic law when it is ahead of international criminal law with regard to crimes against humanity. Here Sawicki sees domestic law as offering a new perspective for international criminal law, so that domestic law may eventually become »the basis for the binding force of new extended notions of crimes against humanity, also in international criminal law.«⁴⁸

In the next chapter, »A few remarks on systematics«, Sawicki makes a last cross-sectional attempt at outlining the subject. Just like in the

⁴⁶ Sawicki, *Ludobójstwo*, 73-74, also 102-103.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 110, cited in A. Wszyński, »Miejdunarodnoje prawo i miejdunarodnaja organizacija,« *Sow. Gosudarstwo i Prawo* [sic!] 1/1948, 15 – reference presented in a footnote without first and last page numbers.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

book's first chapter, this chapter's introduction looks back in time. Sawicki sketches out the role of international criminal law from its beginnings after World War I through the attempt to condemn war and war crimes in the Treaty of Versailles. Here he stresses both the paltry results of the Treaty as well as the idea that political leaders were mostly interested in securing their position in the face of the revolutionary movement sweeping through the East. The main parts of the chapter, however, focus on the period after 1945 and the categorisation of crimes into crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Much space is devoted to the ongoing process of drafting the Convention. Sawicki points out that delegates from the US and the UK opposed the international law in the spirit of the Nuremberg trials; he also discusses the way the Nuremberg trials failed to have a moral and political impact.⁴⁹ It is noticeably hard to define Sawicki's understanding of the role of morality in relation to the punishment of genocide. On the one hand, he has a natural, albeit very subtle, tendency to condemn crimes on a moral basis and an even stronger tendency to condemn possible threats. At the same time, however, he criticises references to morality in the proposed UN resolution:

The formulation that the crime of genocide violates moral principles was needlessly introduced into the [...] text of the resolution. For by stating the principle, in the text of the resolution of 11 December 1946, that genocide is a crime according to international law, and punishable according to that law, any mention of moral law in the introduction to the resolution can be regarded as redundant. It can only be understood as an indication of the source from which this legal norm has been developed.⁵⁰

Based on this formulation it seems that for Sawicki morality plays a role as a source and impulse to create a law, but that it becomes redundant as an element of existing law. He summarises his complex arguments as follows:

The development of new types of crimes under international law follows a tedious, winding path, shaped above all by the needs of the present day and the struggles between progress and reaction, between the defenders of peace and the instigators of new aggression,

49 Ibid., 115-116.

50 Ibid., 132-133.

between the principles of equality and the ideology of discrimination. A lack of clarity and a blurred sense of the scope of the newly established states of affairs were inevitable. The role of legal theory is to help create precise definitions of individual states of affairs, to categorise new types of crimes in international law, and to determine their material content.⁵¹

This politically one-sided quotation shows what function Sawicki assigns to the process of defining new types of crimes. Punishment was for him only one among many key aspects. This quotation also suggests that the task of defining new crimes offered a meeting place where law and history, politics and morality could be debated.⁵² To define the object and matter of the crime thus became part of the process, subject to the vectors of time and place and to the confrontation of political systems.⁵³

Conclusions

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted on 9 December 1948, did not conclude the debate on genocide as a type of crime. This is all the more true given that the Convention was not ratified for another two years and the process of punishing the perpetrators was inconsistent. Despite the changing coordinates and components, the story evolved continuously over the years and decades.⁵⁴ Its subsequent stages were usually marked by moments of threat to the legal order regulating the perpetrators' punishment. Just as in the period 1946-1948, this discussion was not confined to Poland. Although Polish contributions to the international debate often referred to specific perpetrators and their punishment and were deeply influenced by the country's political situation, they continued uninterrupted, whether in the form of extensive campaigns or international legal initiatives. This was the case, for instance, with the November 1968 Convention on the non-applicability of statutory limitations

51 Ibid., 140-141.

52 This is how Kim C. Priemel and Alexa Stiller describe the period of the Nuremberg trials in 1946-1949, but this description also fits the debate on the term genocide. Cf. Priemel and Stiller, »Wo »Nürnberg« liegt«, 13.

53 On the procedural nature of the Nuremberg trials see Bloxham, »Nürnberg als Prozess.«

54 Cf. e.g. Pilichowski, *Zbrodnie i sprawcy*.

to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Borrowing the words of Uğur Ümit Üngör, we may say that Polish voices tackled genocide simultaneously on three levels – micro, meso and macro.⁵⁵

In the light of the questions posed at the beginning of this article, how could we evaluate Sawicki's arguments? First of all, his concept of genocide is mainly a legal one, or at least this is how he tries to present it. Victims are absent from the definition. Similarly, there is little space for emotions, be they negative (e.g. revenge) or positive (e.g. hope). It is also apparent that the law which Sawicki writes about – despite the fact that it is essentially international criminal law – becomes a political instrument of the new government. This is evident in the passages about political enemies who are summarily described as fascists, or in the discussion of the protected status of political groups. Treating these passages as expressions of a specific political reality we are able to focus on Sawicki's actual message.

Sawicki seems to have a clear view of the hierarchy of the established legal orders. National law – writing about national law he clearly means Polish law – is in a much more privileged position. Only in cases where it is politically advantageous does international law take precedence. It is unclear, however, who would be in a position to judge each case. Sawicki probably has in mind lawyers, for it is theoreticians and practitioners of law in one on whom he bestows a mandate for social engagement. Sawicki's book deals with several temporal dimensions at once, and it treats each dimension instrumentally. Writing about the past, he often highlights evil, which poses a threat to the future and thus constitutes the present. Sometimes Sawicki imagines temporal relationships where they do not necessarily exist. The order of time itself becomes fluid. There is no end to the war, for it could return at any moment. Or, to put it differently, the order of time is continually postponed, showed in the years to come as the Eastern Bloc initiated various initiatives concerning the punishment of the crimes committed by NS Germany during World War II.

Translated from Polish by Tul'si Bhambry

55 Cf. Üngör, »Introduction«, 15.

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