



Fear Management. Foreign threats in the postwar  
Polish propaganda – the influence and the reception  
of the communist media (1944 -1956)

Bruno Kamiński

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to  
obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization  
of the European University Institute

Florence, 14 June 2016



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**Abstract:**

The idea of this dissertation ascends from the scholarly interest in developing the issue of the history of emotions. Among four basic emotions, this thesis explores the vital historical and social aspects of the emotion of fear. In particular, this thesis offers a complex introduction to the general problem of propaganda fear management in communist Poland. The concept of fear management is examined as a manipulation of the propaganda information, referring to both the real and artificially stimulated fears with a special focus on external dreads. The entire set of figures of foreign threats are investigated as rhetorical tropes of the 'external enemies of Poland', exploited by communist propaganda with the intention of legitimising the power of the postwar authorities and to delegitimise the alliance with the USA and its Western partners. In this thesis, the foreign threats are represented mainly by the 'German threat', 'American dread' and the 'danger provoked by Western spies'.

Along with the examination of the various ways and circumstances in which the above propaganda strategy was applied, this dissertation addresses the crucial problem of the social attitude towards communist media efforts dedicated to manipulation with fear. All six chapters of this thesis offer conclusions dedicated to popular reception of particular propaganda campaigns exploiting a given threat. Analysis of these conclusions allows tracing the dynamic of social moods in relation both to propaganda activity and socio-political circumstances shaping the atmosphere within Polish postwar society.

The parallel discussion of the implementation of, and social reaction towards, the propaganda fear management strategy allows general conclusions to be drawn concerning the effectiveness of communication between the communist authorities and society in the Socialist Bloc. Based on archival research, this thesis shows and interprets the efficiency of communist media attempts to manage the emotion of fear.

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**Table of the most frequently used abbreviations:**

**BCP** – Bulgarian Communist Party

**CPY** – Communist Party of Yugoslavia

**CPSU** – Communist Party of the Soviet Union

**ERP** – European Recovery Program

**HCP** – Hungarian Communist Party

**KBW** – Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego (Internal Security Corps)

**KKK** – Ku Klux Klan

**KPP** – Komunistyczna Partia Polski (Communist' Party of Poland)

**KRN** – Krajowa Rada Narodowa (State National Council)

**KSWNSG** – Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Niegospodarnością i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym (Special Commission for Combating Economic Fraud and Wrecking)

**LWP** – Ludowe Wojsko Polskie (Polish People's Army)

**MBP** – Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego (Ministry of Public Security)

**MDP** – Movement in Defence of Peace

**MiIP** – Ministerstwo Informacji i Propagandy (Ministry of Information and Propaganda)

**NSZ** – Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (National Armed Forces)

**PKWN** – Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego (Polish Committee of National Liberation)

**PAP** – Polka Agencja Prasowa (Polish Press Agency)

**PKF** – Polska Kronika Filmowa (Polish Film Chronicle)

**PPR** – Polska Partia Robotnicza (Polish Workers' Party)

**PPS** – Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (Polish Socialist Party)

**PSL** – Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People's Party)

**PZPR** – Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers' Party)

**RFE** – Radio Free Europe

**RIIP** – Resort Informacji i Propagandy (Department of Information and Propaganda)

**RTRP** – Rząd Tymczasowy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Provisional Government of Polish Republic)

**SD** – Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (Democratic Party)

**TRJN** – Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej (Provisional Government of National Unity)

**UNRRA** – United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

**VOA** – Voice Of America

**WIN** – Wolność I Niezawisłość (Freedom And Independence)

**WPC** – World Peace Council

**ZPP** – Związek Patriotów Polskich (Union of Polish Patriots)

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*One may control or destruct an emotion  
Only with another emotion, opposite to the first one  
And through strengthening the power controlling emotions*

Baruch Spinoza



## INTRODUCTION

*I prefer to rule my people  
through fear rather than conviction.  
Convictions can change, but fear remains.*

Joseph Stalin

In the first years after the ‘war of wars’ fear was a pan-European experience. Polish-American sociologist Jan T. Gross claims that the word ‘fear’ well encapsulates the postwar atmosphere in Eastern Europe in general.<sup>1</sup> British-American historian Tony Judt draws an even broader European context of fear stating that although the accents had depolarised, the atmosphere of fear and radicalism persisted after the war.<sup>2</sup> British historian Keith Lowe has argued that the six years of World War Two, the period during which millions of Europeans lived under the permanent pressure of fear, led to the savagery of the whole continent. The postwar moral decay and atrophy of state and social institutions exposed Europeans to a large spectrum of threats they had not faced before.<sup>3</sup>

In Poland, the atmosphere and omnipresence of fear in the Stalinist reality was perfectly illustrated by the Polish poet and novelist Czesław Miłosz in his famous essay *Captive Mind*, edited in France already in 1953. Analysing the first postwar years in Poland, this Noble prize winner noted: “(...) *The peasant who was receiving his own ground was not happy. He was afraid. Despite the constant propaganda assurances the worker (...) did not have a conviction that those factories belonged to him. (...) Small entrepreneurs and traders were facing the fear of belonging to the sphere of society sentenced to destruction in the near future (...).*”<sup>4</sup> What is important, the same point of view was shared also by the prominent members of communist elites. In a recently

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<sup>1</sup> J.T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, New York 2006

<sup>2</sup> T. Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York 2006

<sup>3</sup> K. Lowe, *Savage continent. Europe in the aftermath of World War II*, New York 2012

<sup>4</sup> Cz. Miłosz, *Zniewolony umysł*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 185-186

published set of so-far unedited interviews that Teresa Torańska recorded with former members of communist establishment in the early 1980s, I found such dialogue between the famous Polish journalist and Jerzy Morawski, an activist of youth structures of the KPP, the PPR and a member of the Bureau of the PZPR:

TT: Don't you miss the PRL?

JM: Not at all

TT: What was the PRL about?

JM: It was about fear. A total fear at the beginning. Fear of the USSR, fear of the system, fear of the omnipresent power.<sup>5</sup>

All those four conclusions and a recollection shows that soon after World War Two, fear functioned as a central context which was necessary to include in the analysis of the establishment of the postwar political order.

Given the particular conditions in which the communist dictatorship in Eastern Europe was installed, propaganda's role in the legitimization of the new rule was as important as ever. At this point propaganda as a method and the emotion of fear as a tool came together. Not for the first time, fear was a powerful motivator in politics and was used to manage political attitudes.

First of all, these discourses were employed by the communist propaganda using fear as a tool to better control the people. However, apart from the intended use of all those elements conjuring up fear, there were a number of, so to say, side factors, which contributed to the state of emotional agitation of the Poles at that time. They created an important background for this study and need to be discussed as well. Both categories of threats, intentionally procured and a natural one, are connected to a general historical context of my study - the reaction to and acceptance of the Stalinist dictatorship in Poland among the broader population. The unknown and, largely imposed by terror, nature of the new political system, together with the old anti-Russian

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<sup>5</sup> T. Torańska, *Aneks*, Warszawa 2015, p. 131

sentiment and the abrupt separation from the 'West', deepened the post-war trauma and disturbed the relief from the end of the war horrors.

Fear is one of the primal human emotions which strongly affects people's behaviour and perception of reality. It is produced by alarming associations, an unclear vision of the future, the sense of lack of control, and uncertainty about future consequences. It is usually quite instinctive. We can distinguish between threat - the effect of which may not be known by the agent procuring it, and fear - the feeling of being threatened. In this thesis threat is a central figure of investigation because one may trace its discursive or symbolic representation in the sources, whereas fear describes the atmosphere in which threat, anxiety, and phobias existed and were practised. My aim is to examine the ways and results of managing the atmosphere of fear which propagandists tried to evoke through confronting people with visions of threats.

In the period of history discussed in this thesis Polish society faced numerous literal acts of implementing this strategy. For instance, as the Polish historian and sociologist Marcin Zaremba puts it, German occupants turned out to be masters of the physical form of the fear management.<sup>6</sup> The first expressions of this policy were implemented already in late 1939 with a set of mass executions of Poles organised in Wawer and Palmiry. But for those terrifying acts, Nazi invaders managed Polish society through arresting thousands of inhabitants of Polish cities and villages. To a large extent this strategy enabled the Germans to gain control over the cowed inhabitants of Poland. The conclusions offered by Zaremba confirm the observations presented by the eminent Polish historian Tomasz Szarota. His classic study on everyday life in the capital city of Poland during the war demonstrates the variety of ways life, and decisions made by the civil inhabitants of the occupied Warsaw, were dominated by fear procured generated and channelled by Germans.<sup>7</sup>

With the end of World War Two the strategy of controlling Polish society through mass intimidation was continued by several organs of the communist

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<sup>6</sup> M. Zaremba, *O polskiej banalności zła* [in:] 'Polityka', 22.06.2011

<sup>7</sup> T. Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 381-399

authorities, mainly by the Ministry of Public Security and its secret police. Yet, in the communist authorities' attempt to win total control over the inhabitants of Poland, the strategy of physical intimidation was supplemented by a much more sophisticated policy of exposing Polish society to precisely selected propaganda with rhetorical tropes symbolising various threats. Aside from merely exposing the media receivers to fear, the communist agitators also practiced translating dread into other and more required emotions, for instance anger or hatred. The propaganda management and the attitude of Polish society towards Germans and Germany are discussed in the first and second chapters and serve as a good example of this.

The analysis of this strategy constitutes one of the most important components of this dissertation. It is supplemented by another important part of my research that is built around the investigation of the social reception of communist propaganda attempts to manage the emotion of fear. Both of those components are crucial to address the question of the efficiency of the impact that communist agitators and media juggling with various phantoms of threat had on a popular interpretation of the postwar reality.

In this thesis I interpret the concept of 'fear management' as a manipulation with the propaganda information, referring to both the real and artificially stimulated fears. Hunger, crime, extreme poverty and unemployment belong to the first category, whereas news about a pending new world war and homes endangered by external enemies belongs to the second. By 'managing fear' the authorities could play out emotions, evoking or concealing some postwar threats. Fear was an important problem the communist government had to deal with in order to retain the power they had just captured. By foreign threats I understand the rhetorical tropes of the 'foreign enemies of Poland' exploited by communist propaganda with the intention of legitimizing the power of the communist authorities (presented i.e. as a protector of peace) and, consequently, to delegitimise the USA and its Western allies (painted regularly as war provokers). In this thesis the foreign threats are represented mainly by such rhetorical

tropes as the 'German threat', 'American dread' and the 'danger provoked by Western spies'.

The tremendous effort the propaganda apparatus invested in burdening the anti-communist opposition, and other precisely selected groups of enemies of the Polish state and nation, with the responsibility for all the concerns Polish society was facing should be seen as a well-organised mechanism of fear outsourcing. This modern term, taken from business terminology, refers to a cost-cutting policy of hiring external organisations which then provide the main company with services at a far cheaper cost than those generated by the company's internal units. This way the main company reduces its own costs and burdens external companies with responsibility for activities they were entrusted with. This particular model of business relationship perfectly reflects the mechanism implemented by communist authorities in terms of reducing their own responsibility for a set of threats Polish society had to struggle with, especially in the first postwar decade.

### **Historical context**

The communist fear management strategy this thesis is dedicated to began to be implemented in Poland already in late July 1944, when the Red Army entered the territories of Poland and implemented the first forms of Polish communist administration – Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN), which was situated in Chełm and later in Lublin. The PKWN, a provisional communist government of Poland that was actually established in fact in Moscow in the summer of 1944, was mainly formed by the activists of the Union of Polish Patriots (ZPP),<sup>8</sup> a communist political body largely shaped by the activists of the interwar illegal Polish Communist Party (KPP)<sup>9</sup> - the Polish branch of the Comintern. Although the PKWN was joined by several members of

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<sup>8</sup> K. Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943-1948*, Warszawa 1984, pp. 57-67

<sup>9</sup> Polish communist Party (KPP) – it was an illegal political organisation, the Polish branch of the Comintern, an international communist organisation initiated in Moscow in 1919 with the intention 'to fight by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the State'.

the Polish government in exile on 31 December 1944,<sup>10</sup> most of the PKWN departments were headed by activists of the Polish Workers Party (PPR).<sup>11</sup> The significant role of propaganda agents, the activity of whom will be analysed in this thesis, gained or expanded their experience in those organisations.

In January 1945, after the Red Army entered Warsaw, the PKWN was transformed into the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland (RTRP) and following the end of World War Two into the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN), which again was joined by representatives of the government in exile.

At the beginning of July 1945 the TRJN was officially recognized by the USA, Great Britain and France under the condition of arranging democratic parliamentary elections within a year. The People's Referendum in June 1946 and the corrupt Parliamentary Elections in January 1947 grounded the communist dictatorship in Poland. During both of these events the communist propaganda apparatus substantially supported the activity of the Ministry of Public Security (Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego - MBP)<sup>12</sup> and the Internal Security Corps (Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego - KBW),<sup>13</sup> the task of which was to intimidate and dispose of all the

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<sup>10</sup> In September 1939, after the German and Soviet invasion of Poland, the Polish government and other vital authorities were forced to escape from the country. The Polish government in exile was moved first to France and in 1940 it was finally placed in London. The government administrated the 'Polish Underground State' that started to be organised in Poland in late September 1939. This complex underground resistance organisation had both civilian and military structures. The main role of the civilian branch of the Underground State was to preserve the continuity of the Polish state as a whole, including its institutions: the police, the courts, and schools. This branch of the state was intended to prepare cadres and institutions to resume power after the German defeat in World War Two. The main activity of the Home Army (AK), military branch of the Underground State, was focused on the sabotage of German activities in Poland. More details in: J. Karski, *Story of a Secret State*, Georgetown University Press, 2013, pp. 25-30

<sup>11</sup> Polish Workers' Party (PPR) – communist party organised in Poland in 1942 and active until 1948. It was founded as a reconstitution of the KPP and merged with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) in 1948 to form the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR).

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Public Security (MBP) - a main institution of communist internal terror in postwar Poland. The MBP coordinated the activity of the communist secret police, intelligence and counter-espionage service operating from 1945 to 1954.

<sup>13</sup> Internal Security Corps (KBW) - a special military formation established in May 1945 with the purpose of combating the formations of military opposition, mainly the WiN and the NSZ. The KBW was subordinate to the MBP.

opponents of the communist authorities.<sup>14</sup> While on the military level the MBP and KBW aimed at combating such underground anti-communist organisations as the Wolność i Niezawisłość (WiN)<sup>15</sup> and Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (NSZ),<sup>16</sup> on the political level their main target was the Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL),<sup>17</sup> which was violently suppressed as it was the most important rival of the communist authorities in the struggle to win and legitimise their power in postwar Poland. In this strategy propaganda played a central role. Apart from praising the social and economic benefits of socialism, the communist media was supposed to justify the oppressive activity of the MBP and to create an atmosphere of hostility towards the PSL, the WiN and the NSZ by accusing them of an anti-Polish and pro-German attitude.

The important targets that the propaganda apparatus was supposed to fulfil were implemented by a complex network of institutions, the activity of which will be analysed in this thesis. The first central institution responsible for introducing communist propaganda discourse was The Propaganda and Information Department (Resort Informacji i Propagandy - RiIP) of the PKWN headed by Stefan Jędrychowski, communist journalist and activist of the KPP.<sup>18</sup> The RiIP was responsible for coordination

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<sup>14</sup> R. Terlecki, *Miecz i tarcza komunizmu. Historia aparatu bezpieczeństwa w Polsce 1944-1990*, Kraków 2013, pp. 61-76

<sup>15</sup> Freedom and Independence (WiN) – a military organisation founded in September 1945 and active until 1952. The WiN as a successor of two organisations formed when the Home Army was officially disbanded in January 1945 – the organisation NIE (no) and the Armed Forces Delegation for Poland aimed at preventing the Soviet domination of Poland and to fighting with the representatives of the communist authorities.

<sup>16</sup> National Armed Forces (NSZ) – military formation formed already during World War Two as the anti-Soviet and anti-Nazi paramilitary organisation. As a vital component of the Polish resistance movement during the war, the NSZ was focused on fighting the Nazi German occupation of Poland in the General Government, and later the new Polish government established under Soviet coercion. NSZ was active until the first half of 1947.

<sup>17</sup> Polish Peasant Party (PSL) – political party established in 1918. The PSL merged with agrarian groups from territories previously occupied by Imperial Russia and formed the first PSL led by Wincenty Witos, becoming one of the most important political parties in the Second Polish Republic. During World War Two the PSL took part in the Polish government in exile. After the war, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, a PSL leader and previously Prime Minister of the Polish government in exile, returned to communist-dominated Poland, where he joined the TRJN and rebuilt the PSL. The party hoped to win the Yalta Conference-mandated elections and help establish a parliamentary system in Poland. The communists formed a rival peasant party allied with them. The 1947 parliamentary election was heavily rigged, with the Communist-controlled bloc claiming to have won 80% of the vote.

<sup>18</sup> Stefan Jędrychowski - Polish journalist and communist politician, who served as Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Finance Minister. In 1936, he joined the illegal Polish Communist Party (KPP), and in

of the propaganda production and distribution on the central and local level. It had the task of controlling all the publishing houses, radio and film production.<sup>19</sup> In December 1944 the PKWN propaganda department was renamed the Ministry of Information and Propaganda (MliP). In June 1945 MliP, headed by Stefan Matuszewski,<sup>20</sup> became part of the TRJN. The MliP, in its mission of the production and circulation of propaganda materials, was supported by the central and local propaganda units of the Polish Army and propaganda structures of two of the most important political parties establishing the new system of the city and regional committees of the Polish Workers Party (PPR) - the Communist Party and Polish Socialist Party (PPS),<sup>21</sup> the PPR's closest ally. In the spring of 1947, after victory in the corrupt parliamentary elections, the Ministry of Propaganda and Information was liquidated, transferring most of its competences to the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the PPR (WP KCPPR). From December 1948, when the PPR and the PPS were unified into the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR),<sup>22</sup> most of the decisions regarding the propaganda policy were taken by the Propaganda Department of the PZPR Central Committee. As Dariusz Stolla aptly put it in the monograph dedicated to the PZPR, this formation was a transmitter, interpreter and agitator of communist ideology. The PZPR having complex apparatus of publishing houses, press titles, public schools under the governance of the party with media and all other means of propaganda in its scope hired up to twenty thousand agitators.<sup>23</sup> Analysing archival documents produced by the PZPR and all above mentioned institutions I was able to formulate reflections on the propaganda production but also

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September 1939, he moved to Vilnius where worked as deputy editor of the local communist daily published by the Soviet authorities. He became a Soviet citizen and a member of the Soviet Communist Party. As head of RliP Jędrzychowski served as the PKWN's representative in Moscow.

<sup>19</sup> *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, vol.4, 1944, p. 19

<sup>20</sup> Stefan Matuszewski – PPS activist, former Catholic priest, head of MliP between 1944-1946. He spent the period of World War Two in the USSR where from 1943 he was recruited to the Polish troops, where he was editor of the propaganda periodical *To the West*.

<sup>21</sup> PPS – The Polish Socialist Party, one of the most important Polish left-wing political parties from its inception in 1892 until 1948.

<sup>22</sup> PZPR – Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers Party) - the Communist party which governed the People's Republic of Poland from 1948 to 1989. Ideologically it was based on the theories of Marxism-Leninism.

<sup>23</sup> *PZPR jako machina władzy*, ed. D. Stolla, K. Persak, Warszawa 2012, p. 8



on its reception, which one may find in reports on social moods prepared by propaganda officers.

After 1947 all those institutions were focused on retaining the power which had been seized by the imposed communist regime. In this policy, a vital role was played by the governmental tactic of shaping the consciousness of Polish society through confronting propaganda receivers with a precisely selected set of rhetorical tropes, representing threats and offering them internal and external protection.

Obviously one must be aware that the above presented process of the seizure of power by communist authorities to a large extent was possible thanks to various forms of social acceptance. As Krystyna Kersten put it in her classic study, the communists were able to capture and consolidate power and to build a homocentric political system thanks to the support (even if limited) they received.<sup>24</sup> Although the majority of Poles were traditionally both anti-Russian and anti-communist, a considerable minority collaborated with the Soviets for various reasons. Five groups of collaborators who assisted the communists in their seizure of power are illustrated by Kersten (compromised figures, easy to be blackmailed; pre-war civil servants and intellectuals; some returning emigrants; a group of right-wing radicals and pre-war nationalists; leftist activists previously dominated by the pre-war communists).

In all six chapters that constitute the body of this thesis I am examine the variety of propaganda means and techniques employed by the complex team of communist propagandists (mainly recruited from one of the groups indicated by Kersten) in order to mould the popular perception of reality in the desired direction. The analysis is based on the exploration of a wide range of historical sources, as well as on a broad panorama of literature dealing with the three main issues constituting the core of this dissertation.

## **1. State of the art**

### **a. Fear**

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<sup>24</sup> K. Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943-1948*, Warszawa 1984

Fear was and still is an inseparable companion of people facing various forms of crisis. The emotion of dread is a subject of research performed by representatives of numerous fields of science, mainly psychiatry and psychology. With their publications, psychologists like Rosenhan, Seligman, Walker, Klichowski, Leary, Kowalski, Fajkowska and Szymura<sup>25</sup> (to name but a few) interpret the nature of fear, discussing physiological mechanisms responsible for the creation of this emotion in the human brain and examining social dimension of fear. Psychologists point to three basic categories of dread that are crucial for this thesis: anxiety, fear and panic. Among those emotions anxiety is usually characterized as an unpleasant state of inner turmoil, often accompanied by nervous behaviour and somatic complaints. Whereas anxiety is the expectation of a future threat, fear is a response to a real or perceived immediate threat. The emotion of panic is often defined as a mixture of anxiety and fear. Panic is a sudden feeling of fear, which is strong enough to dominate or prevent reason and logical thinking replacing it with overwhelming feelings of anxiety and frantic agitation.

Aside from the psychological discussion of fear, this emotion is also a subject of research and analyses of the more practical and social aspects of this emotion. In her essay, the Italian philosopher and writer Michela Marzano interpreted the fear of unemployment, dread of losing a sense of safety, fear of immigrants and climate changes as an emotion, the omnipresence of which is reminiscent of a plague.<sup>26</sup> Marzano suggests that fear is a natural human emotion which becomes dangerous when it is being used to win control over society. Discussing various types of governmental attempts to soften social concerns Marzano concludes that in most cases such efforts turned out to be counter-efficient.

The emotion of fear has also been analysed in an historical perspective, i.e. as an integral component of stress tormenting people struggling with serious material or health problems. For instance, the American historian Ira Katznelson interpreted fear as

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<sup>25</sup> For instance: *Abnormal Psychology*, ed. by D. L. Rosenhan, M. Seligman, E. F. Walker, New York 2000; *Lęk. Geneza, mechanizmy, funkcje*, ed. M. Fajkowska, B. Szymura, Warszawa 2009; M. Leary, R. M. Kowalski, *Social anxiety*, Guilford 1995; *Lęk. Geneza, mechanizmy, funkcje*, ed. M. Fajkowska, B. Szymura, Warszawa 2009

<sup>26</sup> M. Marzano, *Oblicza lęku*, Warszawa 2013

the central context in which the complex issue of the Great Depression and its consequences must be discussed.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, British philosopher Gareth Williams presented the image of society fighting with the epidemic of polio as paralysed with fear.<sup>28</sup> Traumatic as the experiences of the economic crisis and a peril of the unknown illness were, naturally the most depressing source of stress and dread itself was war. The emotional stigma of terrifying war horrors was imprinted so deep in the consciousness of those who survived, i.e. World War Two, that it did not evaporate with the end of the conflict.

As for the Polish context of fear, with her biographical essay on family history of anxiety Agata Tuszyńska, writer, poet and journalist, demonstrates a wide panorama of dreads experienced both by the Polish and Jewish parts of her family during and after the Second World War.<sup>29</sup> With her publication Tuszyńska proves that Stefan Chwin<sup>30</sup> was right in calling fear a Polish daily bread.<sup>31</sup> What is important, Tuszyńska stressed, is the fact that fear was an extremely common emotion and practically no sphere of Polish society was free of various shades of dread, shaping social attitudes towards the postwar reality.

Recently, one of the most important and elucidating works on the subject of postwar fear was written by Marcin Zaremba.<sup>32</sup> The book is, to some extent, an answer to the much debated oeuvre by Jan T. Gross. The latter sociologist described the treatment of the Jewish community by their Polish neighbours, the memory of which was 'frozen' in the communist time. He claimed that terrible incidents of the Catholic-Jewish neighbourhood during and after World War Two resulted from a deeply ingrained anti-Semitism of the Catholic Polish society. Zaremba, on the other hand, revised that thesis pointing beyond a xenophobic background of pogroms and robbery of the Jewish community.

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<sup>27</sup> I. Katznelson, *Fear itself: the New Deal and the origins of our time*, New York 2013

<sup>28</sup> G. Williams, *Paralysed with fear: the story of polio*, Palgrave Macmillan 2013

<sup>29</sup> A. Tuszyńska, *Rodzinna historia lęku*, Kraków 2014

<sup>30</sup> Stefan Chwin (1949), Polish writer, essayist and historian of literature.

<sup>31</sup> S. Chwin, *Strach, polski chleb powszedni* [in:] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19-20.12 2015

<sup>32</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944-1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* [later: *Wielka trwoga*], Warszawa 2012

Aside from the anti-Semitic sentiment which played a role, the criminal behaviour of inhabitants of Polish cities and the countryside was a consequence of living under a constant threat during German and later Soviet domination, which brought about a loosening of the moral norms and concentration on survival. The war resulted in the utter psychological exhaustion and civilizational regress caused by the dreadful and dehumanising years of living at the 'bloodlands' (Timothy Snyder). Using a sociological and psychological methodology, Zaremba created a spectacular and depressing panorama of anxieties and threats that overwhelmed post-war society.<sup>33</sup>

In his study, Zaremba is focused on peoples' reactions to the wide panorama of fears, but he pays relatively little attention to the ways the fear was transmitted. He left room for further research on 'agents of fear' (who were interested in extending, developing and translating this emotion into the ones desired by the government), propaganda means and techniques which enabled their manipulations, and especially for the analysis of their social reception.

The highly pessimistic vision of postwar Poland presented by Zaremba was criticised by Jerzy Jedlicki, who stresses that the postwar atmosphere in Poland was not only dominated by chaos and crime, but was also full of enthusiasm of reconstruction of the destructed country. Poles wanted to believe in the promised equality of classes and resurrection of life from the ashes.<sup>34</sup> I share the view of Jedlicki who postulates the need to keep balance between the pessimist vision of postwar Poland created by Zaremba and the more optimistic observations of the same period made, for instance, by Hanna Świda-Zięba,<sup>35</sup> Maja and Jan Łoziński<sup>36</sup> and Magdalena Grzebałkowska.<sup>37</sup> In her study on Polish youth during the first postwar years, Świda Zięba stated that the strategy of the communist government aimed at involving all Poles in the process of

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<sup>33</sup> The author presented a very pessimistic picture of the emotional condition of Poles after the war, leaving perhaps too little space for the feeling of enthusiasm and joy after the end of war which had to accompany Poles at that time as well.

<sup>34</sup> J. Jedlicki, *Powojenne lęki Polaków i Żydów. Strachy polskie*, "Polityka", 08.09.2012

<sup>35</sup> H. Świda-Zięba, *Urwany lot. Pokolenie młodzieży powojennej w świetle listów i pamiętników z lat 1945-48*, Kraków 2003, p. 62

<sup>36</sup> M. Łozińska, J. Łoziński, *W powojennej Polsce 1945-1948*, Warszawa 2015

<sup>37</sup> M. Grzebałkowska, *1945. Wojna i pokój*, Warszawa 2015

enthusiastic reconstruction of the destroyed society. Otherwise it would be impossible for the communists to rule in the hostile atmosphere. In her view this strategy harmonised with the motivation of a large part of society, which, despite the disappointment, fear and bitterness, felt deep relief resulting from the end of World War Two.

The set of interviews recorded by Grzebałkowska with a wide range of members of Polish society, who had to deal with a number of obstacles they faced in the critical year of 1945, confirmed Zięba's sociological conclusions. Grzebałkowska's conversations with the witnesses of those events leads to the conclusion that although the emotion of fear was omnipresent, it also left wide space for positive emotions which fuelled the fight to survive and regain normal life after the six years of totally abnormal existence. Finally, in their study on the economic and social aspects of the rebuilding of Poland in the pre-Stalinist period, Łoziński argues that in this still understudied part of the Polish past (1945-1948), Poland experienced a sort of renaissance when social enthusiasm accelerated, i.e. the rapid development of the private sector of trade and services. According to Łoziński this sort of social attitude significantly supported the process of normalization and overcoming the postwar concerns.

The all-European scale of the phenomenon investigated by Zaremba was recently examined by Keith Lowe. In his impressive study, fear is tangible in every unit of the European postwar landscape. Analysing the traumatic legacy of war, the postwar need for vengeance, the plague of ethnic cleansings and civil wars, which broke out across Europe, Lowe concluded that all those horrible experiences derived from the postwar savagery of Europeans. In Lowes' terms the savage continent was the continent inhabited by demoralised people who became used to manoeuvring in the labyrinth constituted by famine, destruction and omnipresent violence. The need to survive under the pressure of everyday fear of losing your life during World War Two deprived people of their dignity and redefined their moral code.

Both those studies are crucial for my thesis as they are reconstructing the vital issue of the postwar emotional condition of Polish and European society stressing

(especially Zaremba) the social role that fear played soon after the war ended. Without this context it would be impossible to do research on the impact of communist media referring to numerous threats on Polish postwar society. With this thesis, I address the question on how the emotional circumstances presented by Zaremba and Lowe affected the social perception of the communist media. More specifically, I try to evaluate whether the fact that Polish postwar society was living in the labyrinth of threats increased or decreased its susceptibility to the communist propaganda.

Apart from recently edited publications, the issue of the degradation of human morality, deriving from immense pressure created by fear, was addressed in at least two vital studies by eminent European intellectuals that inspired the author of this thesis. Hannah Arendt and Georges Lefebvre<sup>38</sup> were among the first authors who in their classic essays referred to anomie, anxiety and panic as emotions that arose from the breakdown of class structures and the malfunction of state administration, characteristic for the time of war, even more so for 'the war of the wars' – World War II. Arendt identified anxiety resulting from social chaos as a vital factor that created a 'mass man'. In her view people deprived of state institutions from all social classes decided to soften their own concerns and isolation by joining the totalitarian organisations. Lefebvre recognised the atrophy of the French central, and especially local, administration as an origin of chaos in rural areas of the state, which generated hunger and fear and was later exported to Paris (and contributed to the French Revolution). Moreover, Lefebvre diagnosed panic as a factor that finally integrated cities affected by the pre-revolutionary chaos. In both authors' view fear was one of the initial factors for the deep social and political changes. With this thesis I would like to contribute to the examination of the impact of fear on the condition of society and its attitude towards mundane and unsolvable problems. What is of special importance with this thesis is that I examine the social susceptibility to propaganda attempts to channel and redirect the attention of workers and settlers from local threats to more spectacular foreign threats.

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<sup>38</sup> H. Arendt, *Origins of totalitarianism*, New York 2004; G. Lefebvre, *The great fear of 1789. Rural panic in revolutionary France*, London 1978

Apart from studies addressing the social aspect of fear there are important publications scrutinising its cultural dimension. The cultural history of fear was at the centre of works by Ronald G. Suny<sup>39</sup> and Joanna Bourke.<sup>40</sup> According to them, as an emotion, fear is attributed to each person from childhood by education, family setting and the media. It does not need to be connected to a direct threat to life, experienced by people during combat, bombardment of cities, terrorist attacks or nuclear threats. It can be an emotion related to childhood phobias (like the fear of the dark), crime, disease, pain and devastation of the environment. Bourke, similar to Zaremba, diagnosed the phenomenon of mass fear as an accumulation of individual concerns. Bourke maintains that all decisions and reactions always have a deep emotional background, although people are often unaware of this dependence.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, emotions are very individual, as what is a fear for one person or group may be only a slight anxiety for another. For instance, the phantom of unemployment might be a paralysing fear for one person, but for the other it will act as a stimulating anxiety. With this thesis I am contributing to those important voices in the debate on the relation between the individual and common character of emotions and their impact on the social attitude.

Whereas Bourke insisted on the separation of fear from anxiety, the American political theorist Corey Robin analysed fear together with anxiety and terror. The interesting point by Robin is that people experience political fear in everyday situations, e.g. the fear of a woman of her abusive husband is political as it springs from pervasive social inequities, and helps sustain long traditions of domination over women.<sup>42</sup> Widespread political fear may dictate public policy, bring new groups to power and keep others out, create laws and overturn them (just like the fear of communism during the early years of the cold war helped to roll back the New Deal program). Consequently,

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<sup>39</sup> R.G. Suny, *Why we hate you: The passion of national identity and ethnic violence*, Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, Working Paper Series, 2004, p. 5

<sup>40</sup> J. Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*, London 2005

<sup>41</sup> Author follows sociologic reflection by e.g.: J.H.Turner, J.E.Stets, *Socjologia emocji*, Warszawa 2009, p.

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<sup>42</sup> C. Robin, *Fear: the history of a political idea*, New York 2004, p. 3

fear can be interpreted as a political tool, an instrument of elite rule or insurgent advance, created and sustained by political leaders or activists who stand to gain something from it, either because fear helps them pursue a specific political goal or because it lends support to their moral and political beliefs. By making people afraid it is possible to bypass the normal political debates and directly reach political goals. The conclusion is that unless people understand how fear is used, they cannot effectively resist it. This observation is vital for my thesis as I am dealing with the problem of the propagandists' attempts to make Polish society afraid of a precisely selected group of threats in order to bypass and foreshadow the mundane concerns of Polish workers, peasants, inhabitants of cities and state clerks.

The above-presented studies dealing with sociological and cultural interpretations of fear are also supplemented by the anthropological analysis of this emotion and phenomenon. In his important study, William M. Reddy summarizes the argument of cultural anthropologists who have studied emotions since the 1970s and came up with the conclusion that emotions are culturally constructed rather than biologically based or genetically programmed.<sup>43</sup> They operate like `overlearned cognitive habits` and as such must be shaped by the environment and by different emotional management regimes. In this study I will analyse the way the communist propagandists attempted to teach the Poles the `proper socialist emotional model`. The propaganda endeavour to persuade Poles that their emotion of safety should be identified exclusively with communist rule and with the Polish-Soviet friendship are of special importance.

The literature examining the problem of fear in an historical context also discusses the cases where this emotion was evoked in society by, somehow inadvertent, governmental actions. For instance, Frank Biess, has described the reaction of the German public to the brochure which enlisted the locations of the fallout shelters in the neighbourhood.<sup>44</sup> The idea was to inform about the security measures undertaken by

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<sup>43</sup> W.M.Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, Cambridge 2001, p. 54

<sup>44</sup> F. Biess, *Everybody have a chance. Nuclear angst, civil defence, and the history of emotions in postwar West Germany* [in:] *German history*, vol.27, No.2, pp. 215-243



the policymakers. However, such an information, implying possible threats, in fact only stimulated more anxiety within the concerned communities. Biess diagnosed this situation as a symptom of communication breakdown between the government and the society resulting from the weakness of the emotional bonds between the sender and receiver of the message. This conclusion is very important for my thesis as in my research I have examined several cases which shows a similar counter-productivity of propaganda actions taken by Polish propagandists. All those cases shed important light on the problem of susceptibility of Polish propaganda receivers on the atmosphere of fear the communist press, radio and films were attempting to foment within Polish society.

In the research which combines the historical interpretation of the emotion of fear with propaganda - a transmitter of emotions, the precise formulation of a particular interpretation of the latter phenomenon applied in this thesis is essential.

## **b. Propaganda**

In the early 1930s American sociologist William W. Bidelle argued that '*the influence of propaganda makes everyone behave as if their reactions resulted from their own decisions*'.<sup>45</sup> A more recent definition of propaganda as a purposeful and systematic attempt to shape the perception and manipulate thoughts with the intention to achieve expected reactions was formulated by Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell.<sup>46</sup> They study propaganda from the angle of institutions which initiate and foster messages due to their organisational and financial powers. Jowett and O'Donnell also focus their attention on propaganda agents, who select and use the available media to send the message to the target audience and the public. In this thesis, I apply their model of explaining how propaganda functions. This model consists of institutions, propaganda agents, who select and use the available media to send the message to the target audience, and a social network (the opinion leaders, propaganda agents and people

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<sup>45</sup> D. Krech, R. Crutchfield, *Theory and problems of social psychology*, New York 1948, p. 316

<sup>46</sup> G.S. Jowett, V.O'Donnell, *Propaganda and persuasion*, Beverly Hills 1986, p. 16

who facilitate rumours throughout a social network). Finally, this model also contains a public, either a general or specific one.<sup>47</sup>

Aside from applying the above model in the analysis of discourses which evoke anxiety and is exploited by the communist propagandists, I am following Stanley Cunningham's interpretation of propaganda which, in his terms, exploits information; it poses as knowledge; it generates belief systems and tenacious convictions; it skews perceptions; it systematically disregards superior epistemic values such as truth and understanding; it corrupts reasoning and the respect for evidence, rigor and procedural safeguards; it supplies ersatz certainties.<sup>48</sup> According to Cunningham, propaganda is effective not only because it simplifies the information but also because people are absolutely overwhelmed with the messages. In Cunningham's view, preconceived notions and culturally installed biases reinforce propaganda. I share Cunningham's opinion that propaganda reinforces what people already believe and forms a 'safety net' for their norms. It allows receivers to legitimise their beliefs and it verifies if their values are correct. Wartime propaganda feeds on emotions like hate, fear and patriotism – messages that support the individual's emotions can strengthen the passion of the people. In this thesis I apply this approach to the analysis of similar features of the postwar propaganda in Poland.

Aside from Western scientists interpreting the issue of propaganda there is a number of East European authors who have contributed to the studies on propaganda. With his important publication Marcin Czyżniewski studied aspects of propaganda, including an investigation into the perspective of the receiver of the message. According to this Polish historian, all branches and agents of the communist propaganda machine intended to educate the new 'socialist man' into a representative of 'communist morals', who would focus on the social instead of the private interest with activity and productivity at work.<sup>49</sup> This quotation from the internal periodical of Polish Propaganda Department illustrates well this program:

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, pp. 263-271

<sup>48</sup> S. Cunningham, *The idea of propaganda. A reconstruction*, Preager 2002, p. 4

<sup>49</sup> M. Czyżniewski, *Propaganda polityczna władzy ludowej w Polsce 1944-1956*, Toruń 2006

*'We face a serious problem of the conversion of people's psyche, shaped by alien and hostile factors. The deep structural and political transformations that just took place in Poland created material premises for further psychological enterprises'.<sup>50</sup>*

Czyżniewski suggested that the only thing an average Pole learnt from the communist propaganda was how to behave 'for show' (to satisfy the authorities), how to avoid troubles and live in peace.<sup>51</sup> Such an interpretation of the reception of the communist propaganda in postwar Poland proposes the vision of Polish society as resistant to the manipulation, which, as I show in this thesis, is correct only to a limited extent.

### **c. Fear and propaganda**

The phenomenon of fear as an emotion with the potential to distract attention and dominate people's consciousness was also examined in the classic sociological study *Age of propaganda*.<sup>52</sup> Using, for instance, the examples of anti-Jewish and anti-communist threats evoked by Hitler's propaganda in Germany in the 1930s, Pratkanis and Aranson explore the level of efficiency of resorting to fear in propaganda. What is more, on the basis of several sociological experiments the authors concluded that fear might be a powerful psychological motivator which steers all thoughts and energy on the task to eradicate the threat. Finally, Pratkanis and Aranson diagnosed fear as an emotion that prevents people from thinking about any other problem but the source of a danger.

The strategy of evoking and soothing a given concern effectively strengthens people's submission, the authors conclude. In order for fear in propaganda to be efficient, Pratkanis and Aranson enumerate four conditions: a) the message must really horrify people; b) it should contain clear instruction how to eliminate the threat; c) the instruction must be perceived as efficient; d) the receiver of the message must be

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<sup>50</sup> Biuletyn informacyjny Wydziału propagandy KW PPR w Szczecinie, 25.08.1946, nr 1 – quote after M. Czyżniewski, op.cit., p. 8

<sup>51</sup> M. Czyżniewski, op.cit., p. 262

<sup>52</sup> A. Pratkanis, E. Aranson, *Wiek propagandy. Używanie i nadużywanie perswazji na co dzień*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 182-189

convinced that he is able to follow the instruction.<sup>53</sup> In this thesis the above set of conditions is of help in addressing the problem of efficiency and inefficiency of particular propaganda campaigns. I use this model in particular to figure out if Polish receivers of propaganda perceived the threats as horrific and if they were acting according to propaganda instructions on how to reduce anxiety.

Important as all those approaches and interpretations of the issue of propaganda are, they must be supplemented with a telling example showing the communists' own perception of propaganda. Here, the self-critical declaration read in October 1956 by a speaker of one of the most important propaganda radio stations sheds some light on its mechanisms as well as generally on the nature of the fear management strategy. The speaker stated:

*'(...) There were years when our show was often and purposefully misinforming the listeners, when it was lulling them into a false sense of security concerning important threats and defacing the mistakes of authorities. We were offering evasive or simply mendacious explanations of political events (...)'*<sup>54</sup>

This important declaration announced in the transitional moment of Polish history, the moment of the symbolic end of the Stalinist era and the beginning of the so called Gomułka's thaw<sup>55</sup> reveals the mechanisms of the communist propaganda manipulations on the emotions of Polish society. These mechanisms played a central role in the key process of gaining and legitimizing power by the communist authorities that formally started in 1944.

#### **d. Establishing the communist power in Poland**

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 187

<sup>54</sup> Archiwum Polskiego Radia [later: APR], Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 28.10.1956, pp. 1-5

<sup>55</sup> Gomułka's thaw – a political process leading to destalinization of Poland. The process started with the nomination of Władysław Gomułka for the First Secretary of the PZPR on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1956. The peak moment of this process took place on 24<sup>th</sup> October with the famous speech that Gomułka directed to a huge crowd of inhabitants of Warsaw gathered on the Parade Square. The speech announced significant changes in the policy practiced so far by the PZPR. More on the Gomułka's thaw: P. Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 145-215

Throughout the half century of communist rule in Poland, the readership received the false picture of the harmonious and natural communist takeover. On the other hand, the underground and émigré literature laid foundations for the myth of the total resistance of Polish society towards the government controlled by Moscow. One of the first historians who questioned that myth after 1989 was Krystyna Kersten in her already mentioned classic study on the establishment of the communist rule in Poland. Kersten was one of the first Polish historians who diagnosed the significance of different forms of fear within postwar society. In her terms, the disorganised fear - everyday concerns (e.g. fear of hunger, rape and banditry) had an even bigger influence on Poles' decisions and attitude towards the new authorities than the organised terror practiced by the communist secret service. Her reflections are developed and deepened by Marcin Zaremba in above discussed study on fear in postwar Poland. Although Kersten's perspective was extremely refreshing for the state of the art, it did not focus enough attention on the important role of the state propaganda as a tool employed in the dictatorship's attempts to reshape the consciousness, perception and attitude towards the postwar reality presented by Polish postwar society.

Whereas Kersten's study is focused mainly on political actors and their collaborators who introduced the communist regime, Padraic Kenney addressed the problem of participation in rebuilding the country and a perception of its new shape by Polish workers, the official vanguard of the society.<sup>56</sup> In his study Kenney analysed the workers reactions to the postwar chaos and, next to describing the difficulties people had to endure he examined their reactions and active resistance towards the new reality. In Kenney's view many Polish workers were conscious and determined enough to seek benefits from the postwar communist seizure of power. In this sense, we may partly speak about a sort of a social revolution, in which especially the workers could put their hopes and expectations forward and in this way they influenced the evolution of the communist administration.

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<sup>56</sup> P. Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists 1945-1950*, Cornell 1997

Kenney maintains that the cities where workers had weak organisational bonds like Wrocław populated anew after the war, and were more prone to the influence of the communist dictatorship. On the other hand, the cities where workers had a stronger consciousness of their class identity, like in the case of several generations of Łódź workers (the large centre of the textile industry), were more prone to strikes and were not that easily administered. Those conclusions, based on comparative analysis presented in the study, may help to understand the need for differing communist propaganda addressed to different local settings. This diversity of mutations of propaganda motifs, particularly the figure of the 'German threat', applied on a local level in different regions of Poland is examined especially in the first chapter of this thesis.

A vital international context of local events and phenomena discussed by Kersten and Kenney was stressed in the important study on Poland in the cold war era by Anthony Kemp-Welch.<sup>57</sup> His book combines the postwar history of diplomacy and interstate relations with the analysis of domestic opposition and social movements. Such a broad perspective enabled the British historian to interpret local events and decisions of the communist government as components of a larger political mosaic. With this thesis I examine the propaganda tactic of introducing the foreign international context of local policy presented by Kemp-Welch in the communist media efforts to cover and soften local concerns bothering Polish postwar society.

While Kersten, Kenney and Kemp-Welch are dealing mainly with political and social aspects of establishing the communist rule in Poland, Marcin Zaremba offers important conclusions on nationalistic legitimacy of the Soviet-backed authorities. As Zaremba put it in his study, the "national 'costume' assumed by the communist dictatorship in Poland was supposed to persuade society of the national character of the communist government and consequently to break the barrier of estrangement between the dictatorship and society".<sup>58</sup> Zaremba's own definition of nationalism

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<sup>57</sup> A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History*, Cambridge 2008

<sup>58</sup> M. Zaremba, *Komunizm. Legitymizacja. Nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* [later: *Komunizm*], Warszawa 2006, p. 7. Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined*

presents the notion as a 'specific system of imaginations, values and norms with the claim for a holistic vision of the world, attributing the whole community, that is the nation, the specific value and integration power, which may lead to discrimination or even hostility regarding other nations'. His approach to the nationalistic legitimacy of power is based on the three strategies formulated by John B. Thompson: rationalisation (based on vital national values), universalization (based on national institutions) and narration (based on national myths and symbols).<sup>59</sup> Zaremba identified those strategies as essential for the process of legitimization of power performed by the communist elites in Poland. For this thesis the first of those strategies is fundamental.

According to Thompson, the strategy of rationalisation depends on the stability of national values like national freedom, state independence, national mission, and on the identification of those values with the existing social order with the intention to justify its durability, no-alternative and final character.<sup>60</sup> In my thesis I decided to focus attention on the reverse of this strategy and examine the ways the communist propaganda attempted to convince the society that all general dangers and local mundane concerns afflicting Poles were procured by external and internal state enemies. Various strategies of stripping those enemies from patriotic and pro-Polish attributes are of the biggest importance in this thesis.

In Zaremba's view the communist dictatorship put an effort into convincing society to accept the new government controlled by Moscow by referring to its allegedly 'national character'. This thesis contributes to the above reflection by examining the nationalistic phobias fomented by the communist propaganda apparatus in Poland, which (among other targets) aimed at the legitimization of power. Yet, my arguments are ranging beyond the problem of a nationalist legitimacy of power. I scrutinise the

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*communities* stated that '(...) nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time'. In Zaremba's opinion legitimacy of power is crucial for the society's internal integration. In search for synthesis of nationalism and legitimation Zaremba refers to Ernest Gellner's theory which defines nationalism as 'theory of political legitimism, which demands the situation when political borders do not cross the ethnic borders and when ethnical borders do not separate the rulers from the rest of the citizens'.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 33

<sup>60</sup> Loc.cit.

ways the propagandists, using the figures symbolising the threat for such general values as political and economic independence, state integrity and the internal safety of Poland, attempted to win, legitimise and retain power. Furthermore, I show the variety of propaganda techniques and tactics introduced by a complex team of propaganda agents and institutions in order to justify not only the establishment of the communist regime in Poland, but also to legitimise the Soviet patronage over Poland and the socialist bloc. Finally, this thesis offers an insight into the notoriously-difficult-to-gauge-with-any-certainty issue of the reception of propaganda activity and its nature. The signs of perception of particular propaganda campaigns shed some light on the vital problem of the efficiency of communist communication with society via propaganda, especially on the issue of the vulnerability of Polish postwar society on discourses inducing anxiety.

## **2. The key problems addressed in the thesis**

The core of this thesis lies in the answers to three questions. The first question is: how did the propagandists evoke anxiety within society, how did they attempt to use it and what was the reception of their efforts. Some of the threats exploited in the propaganda discourse had a short-term character (like the warnings against the short-lived oppositional party – the PSL), while some others were based on long-term strategies of exciting and maintaining social phobias. Anti-Western sentiments are a good case in point; they were stimulated throughout the whole of the communist period. I would like to examine the dynamics of the anti-Western propaganda discourse, its main themes, changes, local mutations and continuities.

The second key question is how the propaganda ‘managed the fear’ which accompanied Polish society independently from the actions of this ministerial department. The management of fear means not only provoking and escalating it, but also soothing existing anxieties with the use of positive propaganda messages. This problem is connected to the above-mentioned ‘ingrained phobias’ within Polish society, especially, in this case, to the problem of the new power, fear of communism itself. The



representatives of the whole spectrum of Polish society reacted with natural anxiety to the radical change of political system, which brought to power an unknown political formation with the ideology burdened with many negative stereotypes. Many of them originated still in the interwar period (including the Polish-Russian war of 1920) and were escalated during the Soviet occupation of the Polish lands after 1939 and marching of the Red Army through Polish territories to Berlin since July 1944. The social anxiety and mistrust resulted from a discrepancy between the image of the communists – as the enemies and ‘barbarians’– fixed in the memory of many Poles, and the brand new vision of them as friends and ‘liberators’.

The vast majority of Polish postwar society was deeply concerned with the set of many mundane anxieties that people had to deal with on a daily basis, e.g. the lack of goods on the market, insufficiency of food supply and banditry. In this thesis I examine the way the propaganda dealt with all these fears and how it proposed substitute subjects to ease those inconvenient anxieties.

The last but no less important question refers to the problem of interpretation of social reception of the communist propaganda attempts to control the emotion of fear. This question deals with the problem of the relationship between the social approaches to the media attempts to manipulate with the emotion of fear and the problematic issue of the propaganda efficiency. In particular the question is if the mass critique of the actions taken by propaganda proves its inefficiency or vice versa? Each chapter of this thesis provides a conclusion in this field.

## **Hypothesis**

The investigation shows that first of all, communist propagandists intensified the propaganda based on threats during crucial political moments. The broad use of the language of fear based on very aggressive expressions suggests that it was perceived as one of ‘pass keys’ to people’s consciousness. The task of convincing Polish society to accept the totally new and unknown socio-political reality was a very challenging one. The senders of the propaganda must have strongly relied on its power to attract

people's attention and to discipline society. The intense saturation of the media with dreadful and aggressive expressions leads to the assumption that the propagandists created kind of 'fear communication channels'.

The messages abounding in different types of threats were supposed to be instructive about proper and improper 'socialist behaviour'. The 'fear channels' were focused around the powerful propaganda figures that were supposed to evoke fear among Poles. The figures of a German threat, 'dangerous American capitalists and war provokers', the 'phantom of the third world war' and 'Western conspiracy' constituted a vital part of the politics of fear practiced by the communist government. These figures were conjured up on the Soviet model and adapted to the local Polish reality. Moreover, these figures played an essential role in shaping the new socialist political and social discourse. Creating and proposing the whole new discursive reality, the communist agitators offered extremely simplistic models of public order, which in several cases appeared to be too naive to be efficient. The sharp dichotomy differentiating between the bad and the good was so unsophisticated that in some cases it was counter-productive. Yet, in general the propaganda strategy of fear management turned out to be effective.

My main hypothesis refers to the propaganda efficiency and consequently to the interpretation of the social reception of the media discourse exploiting figures of foreign threats. In my view the relatively weak social reaction towards several propaganda initiatives, as well as mass critique of other actions organised by communist agitators, should not be interpreted solely as proof of the total inefficiency of the propaganda fear management strategy. Paradoxically, despite the fact that Polish society in many cases did not identify with the communist ideology and did not believe in slogans promoted by official media, socialist agitators to a large extent managed to translate fear into other emotions desired by the communist government. With this thesis I am arguing that while to a large extent the ideological part of propaganda was not successful, numerous non-political aspects of the communist propaganda discourse turned out to be efficient.

The timeframe of this thesis is determined by the establishment of the first communist Polish government (July 1944) and the symbolic end of the Stalinist era (1956). This transient period was an important time, when the communist apparatus in Poland introduced a long-range strategy of reshaping the mentality of Poles according to a socialist, Soviet-like model. From the very beginning of this period the main activity of journalists, writers, caricaturists, directors, editors and other communist propaganda agents was focused on explaining the political decisions of communist authorities, on praising its economic achievements and on highlighting the advantages of the Soviet 'patronage' over Poland. Yet, parallel to this dominating positive indoctrination propagandists introduced the strategy of winning the favour of Polish society through references to skilfully channelled negative emotions like anger, hatred and fear. In this thesis I analyse the discourses aiming at evoking and controlling anxiety within the Polish postwar society.

### **3. Methodology**

The discussion of the methodology implemented in this thesis is divided into sections presenting institutions and actors, the main method of analysis and key parts of the communist propaganda discourses analysed in my research and sources.

#### **3.1 Institutions producing propaganda and monitoring social moods**

Among propaganda institutions, the activity of which is examined in this thesis, the central and local structures of the propaganda departments of the PPR, the PPS and later the PZPR play the leading role. Those institutions, together with the Propaganda and Information Department of the PKWN (till the end of December 1944), the MIiP and the propaganda unit of the Polish Army, implemented governmental propaganda policy in postwar Poland. In my research I analyse documents which show the process of propaganda production and distribution performed by those institutions. Furthermore, the central and local branches of the PPR, PPS and the PZPR edited most of the press titles examined in this thesis. Apart from them I scrutinize the editorial activity of such

institutions as *Książka i Wiedza*<sup>61</sup> and *Czytelnik*<sup>62</sup> publishing houses, which circulated the governmental propaganda discourse through books presenting the official version of the political and social reality. No less an important role in the team of propaganda institutions was played by the state Warsaw Documentary Film Studio, which produced Polish Film Chronicle, one of the most important symbols of the communist propaganda in postwar Poland. Finally, in this thesis I examine the shows recorded and broadcast by Polish Radio, one of the most far-reaching (next to the press) propaganda institutions in Poland.

Apart from producing and circulating propaganda materials several of the above-mentioned institutions produced reports monitoring social moods which give the researcher a chance to evaluate the efficiency or inefficacy of particular propaganda campaigns discussed in this thesis. Here the most helpful turned out to be reports prepared by the local branches of the PPR, the PPS and the PZPR. Further important data insight into social moods were found in the daily reports prepared by the MBP. Another institution preparing reports on social moods used in my research was the Ministry of the Regained Lands. One of the most important institutions which prepared reports illustrating directly the popular reception of propaganda was the propaganda department of Polish Radio. Finally, important conclusions offered with this thesis were drawn based on the reports made by the local Peace Defence Committees, which organised the gathering of signatures under the peace appeals in 1950 and 1951. At the same time, reports prepared by committees illustrate social attitude towards those actions.

### **3.2 Propaganda agents**

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<sup>61</sup> *Książka i Wiedza* – Polish editorial house established in 1948, affiliated to the PZPR. It was the main editor of the Marxist literature on the Polish market publishing works by Joseph Stalin, Karl Marx, Fryderyk Engels and Vladimir Lenin.

<sup>62</sup> *Czytelnik* – The publishing house organised in 1944 in Lublin by Jerzy Borejsza under the auspices of the PKWN, but formally independent. Between 1945-1948 one of the most important cultural institutions in Poland. It organised a network of libraries and bookshops. *Czytelnik* edited books, numerous press titles and periodicals.

Looking at the complex team of propaganda agents, the activity of whom is scrutinised in this thesis, one can distinguish between five main groups of authors. To the first one belong important representatives of the communist elites, interwar activists of the KPP and the PPS. Such established names as Jakub Berman, Jerzy Borejsza, Józef Cyrankiewicz, Roman Werfel, Roman Zambrowski, Władysław Gomułka and Bolesław Bierut when publishing their speeches, attracted the attention of the readership and did the propaganda great credit. The second group of propaganda agents was formed by the interwar KPP activists who were usually anonymous. They edited communist press and were directly responsible for shaping the readers' perception of the postwar reality. To this group belonged e.g. Julia Minc, Leon Kasman and Jerzy Uzdański, but also Aleksander Ford, the famous postwar director who prepared his first socialist work already in the 1930s.

The third group of authors was recruited from the journalists, writers, caricaturists and directors who had a non-communist background. Some of them, like Leopold Marschak, Mieczysław Jagoszewski or cartoonists from the milieu of the satirical magazine *Szpilki* - Eryk Lipiński, Henryk Tomaszewski and Jerzy Zaruba, published their articles and caricatures in a socialist vein already in the interwar period. Further on there were propaganda actors with no interwar political background like the writer Stanisław Brodzki or the PKF producers, Jerzy Bossak and Ludwik Perski, who gained experience in propaganda production in the USSR during World War Two. Others, like director Leonard Buczkowski cooperated with the rightists' governments of the 1920s and 1930s.

Aside from Polish authors, Western leftist or strictly communist writers and caricaturists also supported the introduction of the 'fear management policy'. To this group belonged, for example, the American writer Albert E. Kahn and the American leftist painter William Gropper. Their works significantly supplemented the local Polish media, confirming the official local interpretation of presented events. Finally, the prevailing group of propaganda agents were anonymous. This phenomenon of anonymous writing stemmed from the mass production of those texts that were often

reprinted from materials prepared by PAP, which in most cases consisted of materials sent by the Soviet press agency (TASS)<sup>63</sup> sent to PAP and later to press publishers by the MliP, thus representing the government's visions and judgements.<sup>64</sup> All groups of agents involved in the above-mentioned structures were supposed to collaborate in order to reach the common task of reshaping the political consciousness of Poles and to soften their mistrust towards the imposed authorities.

### **3.3 Key parts of the communist propaganda discourse analysed in the thesis**

The immense number of types of concerns disturbing Polish postwar society required precise selection of the most characteristic and powerful threats that gave the propagandists an opportunity to introduce the 'fear management' policy. This selection enabled the construction of the thesis body and gives it analytical precision.

One of the most important aspects of the propaganda discourse in the manipulation of the emotion of fear examined in this thesis is the rhetorical trope of the German threat. The first two chapters of this thesis are dedicated to this issue, presenting the variety of shades this figure had in the propaganda discourse directed towards Polish postwar society. While the first part of the analysis is focused on a general discussion of the way the figure of the German threat was explored in communist propaganda between 1944 and 1956, the second part is built around the examination of the way in which the anti-German threat in propaganda was implemented on the local level. Here the conclusions are drawn based on the examples of two Polish cities – Łódź and Szczecin. On the one hand, with the city of XX, I examine the case of a city located in central Poland and a huge centre for the textile industry with a significant pre-war German minority. On the other hand, I analyse the anti-German threat in propaganda circulated in the former German city of XX, one the biggest centres on the northwestern part of the so-called 'regained lands'. The social and geographical differences between these cities generated two various types of

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<sup>63</sup> TASS - (Tielegrafnoje Agientstwo Sowietского Sojuza – Information Telegraph Agency of Russia) - major news agency of the USSR (yet of Russia).

<sup>64</sup> M.Czyżniewski, op.cit., pp. 116-117

propaganda discourse exploiting the 'German threat' as well as different social receptions of media campaigns touching upon this issue that are compared in this thesis.

Apart from the German threat that is present between the lines of all the chapters in this thesis, I also examine media discourse exploring the fear of foreign conspiracy and espionage. Furthermore, a large part of my research is focused on propaganda campaigns constituted around the various types of American threat. The last important part of the communist propaganda discourse analysed in this thesis is the issue of the fear of the Third World War and the nuclear threat. All the aspects of the communist propaganda mentioned in this paragraph are examined without particular geographical focus. Such a decision is based on the lack of significant local shades of those rhetorical tropes which were diagnosed in the case of the German threat.

The examination of all the above listed key parts of the communist propaganda discourse analysed in the thesis is based on a wide range of sources allowing the assessment of both the propaganda activity and its social reception.

### **3.4 Sources**

The sources I scrutinise can be divided into two main groups – documents prepared by propaganda institutions and actors with the intention to foment and channel the atmosphere of fear, and documents which allows for the studying of the social attitude towards propaganda efforts.

On the institutional level this thesis examines archival documents of propaganda instructions and reports produced by the MliP as well as by the Ministry of the Regained Lands, Ministry of Public Security, Propaganda Department of the PKWN, and the local Propaganda Departments of the PPR and the PPS. The reports prepared by propaganda agents (collected in the Central Archive of the PPR/PZPR in Warsaw – today the Central Archive of Contemporary Records – AAN and in local branches of state archives), who regularly visited all regions of Poland, enables us to reconstruct the social conditions of the propagandists' work. A further group of vital reports on social moods prepared by

the MBP agents collected in the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) offers important knowledge on the ways the society was interpreting the political events and how it reacted to the propaganda attempts to manipulate the emotion of fear.

On the level of propaganda information directed towards average propaganda receivers, my research is grounded on the analysis of numerous central and local press titles, which constructed the vision of the desired political and social reality by the communist authorities. The wide spectrum of press titles edited or controlled by government institutions is discussed in the entire section of the first chapter of this thesis dedicated to the press channel of distribution of postwar fear.

The analysis of 'fear management policy' from press articles is also supplemented by the examination of traces of the threats emphasized by numerous propaganda pamphlets, books and sources of visual propaganda: leaflets, movies and posters produced and circulated by governmental or pro-governmental institutions supporting the propaganda apparatus. The huge collection of examples of this last type of visual propaganda, gathered in the Wilanów Poster Museum, is of help in visualizing the communist attempts to induce concerns, e.g. the phantom German threat. Important as all those sources are, in this thesis they are examined in direct connection with sources giving insight into signs of propaganda reception. Aside from scrutinizing the static forms of the visual propaganda, this study is also based on the analysis of the numerous documentary movies, especially the shows of the governmental Polish Film Chronicle (PKF).<sup>65</sup>

The issue of efficiency of persuading Poles of the palpability of several types of threats is addressed mainly through the investigation of four types of sources. The first

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<sup>65</sup> The PKF was a 10-minute long newsreel shown in Polish stationary and mobile cinemas prior to the main film. Every week a new PKF episode presented a selection of news from Poland and the entire world. The PKF was produced by Czołówka Film Studio created in 1943 in the USSR with task of preparing propaganda movies depicting the combat trial of the LWP. The PKF producers were making use of the traditions of the interwar Film Chronicle, established since 1930 by the governmental Polish Telegraphic Agency (PAT). First episodes of the new PKF were published already in the summer of 1944. Among the most important propaganda actors responsible for the preparation of the chronicle in the first ten postwar years there was a group of three cinematography experts, the PKF producers – Jerzy Bossak, Ludwik Perski (1944-1949) and Helena Lemańska (1950-1965). None of them had an interwar communist or other political background.



type is a set of reports on social moods prepared by the MliP and the central and local propaganda structures of the PPR, PPS and PZPR. These reports allow, though mainly indirectly, the assessing of the reception of the propaganda within local communities.

The main problem one faces when analysing these documents is the subjectivity of the moods of the propaganda actors when making assessments. In other words, the producer assessed his own products. I recognise this feature as an advantage which allows the capture of motivations, beliefs and values of communist agitators. Further on, this sort of analysis of signs of propaganda reception is supported by the examination of the second group of sources – memoirs of intellectuals as well as of settlers on the regained lands. The latter group of memoirs scrutinized in the second chapter of the thesis allows an analysis of the efficiency of propaganda campaigns referring to the rhetorical trope of the German threat directly through the eyes of their addressees – Polish settlers inhabiting Szczecin. The memoirs of intellectuals offers more distanced evaluation of propaganda manipulations.

Apart from memoirs, the analysis of propaganda reception offered in this thesis is based on the investigation of a third type of sources – private letters seized by the government's Special Commission for Combating Economic Fraud and Wrecking (KSWNSG),<sup>66</sup> as well as letters sent by listeners to the Polish Radio. Especially the latter group of letters, collected in the Archive of the Polish Radio and Archive of Polish Television from 1951, gives a deep insight into the way Poles were (or were not) influenced by propaganda messages. Finally, the analysis of social attitudes towards the media is also supplemented with a set of interviews, recorded for the purpose of this research, with several witnesses of the events discussed in this thesis. The interviewees were recruited from people of different educational, social and even political background.

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<sup>66</sup> Special Commission for Combating Economic Fraud and Wrecking (KSWNSG) – a state institution established by the Polish government in November 1945. Formally the KSWNSG was supposed to combat economic criminality. In fact it functioned as an institution of state oppression towards private businesses (especially kraft and trade). The KSWNSG was not subordinate to the MBP.

What is important is that a crucial and still understudied set of documents, based on private letters sent to Polish Radio, in most cases does not allow an analyses of a specific personal profile of the authors of correspondence who remain anonymous. Consequently, historians dealing with such sources may draw only initial rather than firm conclusions from them, i.e. concerning the central question: why certain groups of threats were identified by society as more plausible than others. The important interviews recorded for the purpose of this research are burdened with the age of the witnesses of historical events, the recollections of whom were examined. This is why the analysis of those recordings was confronted with the scrutiny of diaries and other memoirs prepared closer in time to the presented events.

On the technical level, the methodological approach implemented in this thesis is based on the method of confronting the selected particular propaganda motifs referring to fear addressed to media receivers with examination of the signs of reception of those motifs. This method allows assessing the susceptibility of propaganda receivers to the discourses aiming at evoking or softening the atmosphere of fear. For instance the examination of letters sent to Polish Radio enabled comparing the reactions of listeners to the alarming dispatches emitted by communist media. Furthermore the analysis of those letters helped assessing the efficiency if the propagandists aiming at translating the certain types of dreads into the stronger integration between the society and the regime.

#### **4. Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is constituted by six chapters dedicated to the most important rhetorical tropes referring to foreign threats used by the propaganda agents to control the fear within Polish society. In the first chapter I address the problem of the 'German threat' in the entire Stalinist period. While the first chapter explores the general issue of 'German threat' presented as a benchmark image of the foreign enemy in the communist propaganda, the second chapter offers an insight into local dimension of this phenomenon, its mutations and reception discussed in the context of the early postwar

communist struggle to gain and legitimise the political power in Poland. The third chapter of this thesis is dedicated to the analysis of the propaganda attempts to manage the atmosphere of fear of foreign spies, Titoist conspirators and internal enemies of the socialist bloc.

In the fourth chapter I focus my attention on the propagandists' attempts to convince Poles that the American government posed the biggest threat to peace in the world and, consequently, endangered Polish sovereignty. First of all I discuss the figure of American economic threat. The fifth chapter is dedicated to the disturbing vision of Americans presented by propaganda as an aggressive and racist society. Finally, the sixth chapter addresses the ways the propagandists exploited the theme of the 'threat of a third world war'.

On the level of each chapter the construction of this thesis is based on the panorama of various comparative micro case studies enabling to contextualize the specific aspects of the fear management strategy. While the whole structure of the second chapter is constituted around the comparison of local dimension of German threat in two Polish cities, further chapters contain entire sections comparing i.e. the exploitation of a particular propaganda motif in Polish media with the way it was addressed in other socialist countries. Many further comparative case studies enabled stressing changes in the intensity and putting accents during exploitation of particular propaganda figure in the course of the Stalinist period.

## CHAPTER I

**'German hydra is coming back to life'<sup>67</sup>. Anti-German media discourse - the benchmark image of the foreign enemy in the communist propaganda (1944-1956).**

*In the states, where cruel dictators are still reigning,  
his bloody shadow is leading the feasts of long knives!  
Where keys are grinding in the prison gates,  
Where tortured prisoners are yelling with pain,  
Where human grievance is omnipresent  
Hitler is alive!<sup>68</sup>*

Leon Pasternak<sup>69</sup>

For the vast majority of Polish society the end of the war meant the end of a direct six-year-long threat to life, but the fear – an aftermath of war – still heavily influenced people's perception of the postwar reality. The totally new imposed political system arose new concerns. From the very beginning the new authorities, brought into existence in Poland by Soviets in Lublin (July 1944) and then in Warsaw (January 1945), had a difficult task to overcome the mistrust towards the new government from large sectors of Polish society. In such circumstances communist propagandists implemented a strategy of outshining the negative social attitude towards the new government with a phantom of an even more serious threat generated by Western enemies of Poland. In this strategy a central place was given to the figure of the 'German threat' that in the postwar reality was supposed to surpass the common social adverse approach towards Soviet-backed authorities.

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<sup>67</sup> 'Głos Robotniczy' [later: GR], 16.04.1946

<sup>68</sup> L. Pasternak, *Zasady i kwasy. Satyry*, Warszawa 1948, p. 35

<sup>69</sup> Leon Pasternak (1909-1969) – Polish poet, satirist and communist politician of Jewish descent. In the interwar period Pasternak was a member of the illegal KPP. Since 1943 Pasternak served as an officer in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division of the Polish Army in the USSR. Since 1944 he was a member of the PKWN. Pasternak was an author of the famous propaganda lyrics of the song 'Oka' commemorating the establishment of the Polish 1st Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division, a first formation of the Polish Army in the USSR.

Apart from the still difficult to estimate number of the enthusiasts of the new rule, many people could not accept the way the new system was introduced. Here the example of numerous organisations practicing political (mainly the PSL and the SD) and military (the WIN and the NSZ to name the most important) resistance against the imposed communist regime suffices to show the scale and variety of the opposition the communists had to fight. Aside from the numerous activists of those organisations a significant part of Polish society traditionally resented the communist, meaning also anti-capitalist, national and, last but not least, atheist ideology whereas still others remembered the Bolshevik attack on Poland in 1920.

The communist party, not very popular in Poland in the interwar period,<sup>70</sup> owed the establishment of its role after World War Two to the USSR. The eastern neighbour of Poland functioned in the consciousness of Poles as a synonym of 'eternal enemy' at least since the last decades of the eighteenth century when Russian consent enabled and took part in the partition of the country. Further self-identification and integration of Poles around the stereotypical idea of the 'Russian enemy' took place in the nineteenth century and was reinforced by the brutal pacification of the Polish national uprisings of 1830 and 1863. Finally, the repulse of the Bolshevik invasion in 1920 served as a founding myth for the reborn second republic of Poland. In the interwar period in Poland communism – ideology propagated by the 'eternal enemy' – became a foreground antihero in the imagination of the vast majority of society. The aggression of the Red Army on Poland on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1939 and its consequences preserved the image of the USSR as a barbarian and ruthless oppressor for the next decades.<sup>71</sup> In such circumstances the communist propagandists had to implement a strategy that would soften the negative social attitude towards Soviets. The policy of deriving the attention of propaganda receivers from the Soviet threat and focusing their attention on other

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<sup>70</sup> J. S. Kopstein, J. Wittenberg, *Who Voted Communist? Reconsidering the Social Bases of Radicalism in Interwar Poland*, [in:] *Slavic Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), pp. 87-109 - communist parties earned a maximum 10 % of support during the two elections in the 1920s.

<sup>71</sup> K. Jedynakiewicz-Mróż, *Świat jest takim, jakim się go widzi. Niemcy w świadomości Polaków po II wojnie światowej – stereotypy, kontrowersje, perspektywy na przyszłość* [in:] *Trudne sąsiedztwo. Z dziejów relacji polsko-niemieckich w XX i początkach XXI wieku*, ed. K. Jedynakiewicz-Mróż, Wrocław 2011, p. 27

foreign dreads, especially the German one, was one of the central components of this strategy.

Although between 1945 and 1947 the myth of the 'Soviet liberator', who brought an ultimate end to the Nazi occupation, reduced the hostility of Poles to the communists, this was not enough to guarantee legitimization of the communist government. Having the Kremlin support the communists ensured they would not lose the parliamentary election, but to legitimise and retain power they had to improve their communication with society. Propaganda as the main communication channel was supposed to make use of existing anxieties and give a response to the social postwar concerns.

But for soothing anti-Soviet and anti-communist atmosphere in the early postwar period the tactic of juggling numerous foreign threats, as practiced by the communist media, served as a smoke screen covering the wide spectrum of acute everyday apprehensions destabilizing Polish society. As Marcin Zaremba showed with his study based on profound analysis of private correspondence, the emotional condition in which Polish postwar society lived had the form of a labyrinth of fear. This labyrinth consisted of an acute sense of temporality, chaos and anaemia of state institutions and revolutionary changes in social structures.<sup>72</sup> Anxieties resulted from the shortage of food, epidemics, extreme poverty, especially in the countryside, and unemployment. Polish villages had to grapple with looting and banditry whereas the cities had to deal with the trauma of living in a destroyed environment, between the ruins of churches, civil buildings or whole districts reduced to rubble. Finally, the seizure of power by the communists complemented this panorama.

The above sketched wide spectrum of social fears resulting from the early postwar breakdown of state administration is reminiscent of the social conditions which, according to Georges Lefebvre, to a large extent accelerated the process that led to the outbreak of the French Revolution. Such comparison clearly demonstrates how

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<sup>72</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, p. 36

serious a social challenge the communist authorities had to deal with in the first postwar months.

In Zaremba's diagnosis of the emotional condition of Polish postwar society, probably the most important is the reflection on the anomy – the kind of fear that in his view totally crashed all the natural internal social structures and connections turning most of Polish postwar society into a dissocialized group of people. Just like Hannah Arendt in her famous essay analysing interwar Nazi Germany identified anomy resulting from social chaos as a vital factor that created a 'mass man', Zaremba shows this phenomenon as a central context of gaining control over Polish postwar society by the communist authorities.

This 'landscape after the battle' would be the background for the fear management I will discuss in this chapter. Those natural fears notwithstanding, important to the use of fear as a tool of political control in Poland could be the general philosophy of power that emanated at that time from the centre of the Soviet bloc, the Kremlin. This is Stalin to whom the words of Machiavellian was kept in spirit: *'I prefer to rule my people through fear rather than conviction. Convictions can change, but fear remains'* are attributed.

In this chapter the emphasis is laid particularly on the various shades of the rhetorical trope of the 'German threat'. The anti-German discourse is treated here as a benchmark image of the foreign enemy in the communist propaganda. In this chapter the attention is focused exclusively of the propagandists' attempts to channel the Polish-German emotions in a desired direction. The vital issue of the social reception of those attempts is addressed as an integral part of the second chapter dedicated to the local dimension of the phenomenon of dread of Germans.

The effective introduction of the 'fear management policy' in media, circulated in Poland, required the close cooperation of all the groups of propaganda agents and local and central institutions mentioned in the general introduction. The cooperation reached its peak during the two political events that were essential for the new government. The propaganda campaigns of the largest range accompanied the Peoples'

Referendum and the Parliamentary Elections. In both cases the rhetorical trope of the German threat was among the most important components of the propaganda discourse aiming at winning the social support for the communist authorities. The first event was organised on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1946 on the authority of the KRN. During the referendum, serving as a test of the political mood, voters were supposed to give answers to three questions concerning the future political, economic and geographical shape of the state.<sup>73</sup> More than 84 million leaflets, posters and propaganda pamphlets were printed and distributed to convince Poles to follow governmental recommendations regarding the referendum.<sup>74</sup> Six months later, the parliamentary elections were organised as a final act of formal legitimisation of the new authorities. Both those events gave the propagandists the opportunity to introduce an ideological transformation and to educate Polish society in the spirit of socialism. The first step to reach this target was to soften the economic and political postwar concerns among Poles.<sup>75</sup>

One of the ways to overcome those fears was to point at even greater dangers looming large, both real and imagined. For instance, fear of hunger was a real concern, but would not be openly admitted, so the propaganda focused on identifying the scapegoat instead, in this case the so-called speculators – private traders selling goods with higher profit margins. Among other favourite motifs channelling negative emotions and fear there were: the vision of Germans threatening Poland anew, the home-grown rightist ‘reaction’, collaborating with ‘Western capitalists’ and the prospect of World War Three.

All four motifs of postwar fear owed their omnipresence in the public sphere to the group of propaganda institutions and team of various agitators, the complexity of

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<sup>73</sup> K. Kersten, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-221. Questions in the Peoples’ Referendum in Poland: 1. Are you in favour of abolishing the Senate (the upper house of Polish parliament)?, 2. Do you want consolidation, in the future constitution of the economic system founded on agricultural reform and the nationalisation of basic national industries, including the preservation of the statutory rights of private enterprise? 3. Do you want consolidation of the Western border of the Polish State on the Baltic, Oder River and Lusatian Neisse?

<sup>74</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych [later: AAN], MliP, sygn.94, Sprawozdanie MliP z przebiegu referendum – quoted after: M. Czyżniewski, *op. cit.*, p. 45

<sup>75</sup> K. Kersten, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-266



which was stressed in the introduction. The most common way the results of their work were directed towards the propaganda receivers was through press articles. The wide spectrum of press titles constituting the core of historical sources this thesis is based on must be at least briefly addressed before the analysis of the figure of the 'German threat'.

### **The press channel of postwar fear distribution**

Beginning from the autumn of 1944, the communist press started to decidedly dominate over the independent titles. Communist authorities monopolized the network of printing houses and press distribution, and controlled the allotment of paper introducing harsh restrictions for the editors of the opposition press. The main supplier of accounts and dispatches published in local and central press titles, Polish Press Agency (PAP), was also fully controlled by the communist apparatus.<sup>76</sup> The PAP was a government institution and the official communist mouthpiece. Furthermore, the vital process of circulation of propaganda press and literature was administrated by publishing houses fully controlled by communist authorities. Among them the *Książka i Wiedza* and *Czytelnik* played essential roles in saturating the media space in Poland. Especially the latter institution, a huge media concern created and managed by Jerzy Borejsza, played an essential role in shaping the cultural life of postwar Poland. *Czytelnik* established the most complex network of stationary and mobile propaganda shops, offering numerous press titles, books and pamphlets edited by their publishing house as well as by governmental and political propaganda organs.

In the early postwar reality of Poland, in the second half of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s, when access to other media was limited, it was the press that was the main source of local and international information. Consequently, the press became one of the main tools of the communist propaganda manipulation. The section below presents the important context of my research – the political connotation of institutions

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<sup>76</sup> The PAP was established in 1918 as the Polish Telegraphic Agency (PAT). In 1944, following the Soviet entry into occupied Poland, the company was taken over by the PKWN and set up as PAP, the local alternative to the still functioning PAT loyal to the Polish government in exile since 1939 in Paris and London.

publishing press as well as the background of some important press editors and journalists.

Here my attention is focused mainly on the press published in Łódź, an important centre of the textile industry, which due to the destruction of Warsaw, became a temporal capital city of Poland from January 1945 and for a short period remained the 'reserve capital city'.<sup>77</sup> In those circumstances many state administrative and trade offices, but also cultural institutions including publishing houses, were installed in Łódź. Along with institutions, starting from late January 1945, Łódź began to be inhabited by a group of the most important and influential artists and writers, who were forced to leave the destructed capital city after the Warsaw Uprising. Among them were such prominent figures as Władysław Broniewski, Jan Brzechwa, Stanisław Dygat, Zofia Nałkowska, Leon Pasternak, Adam Ważyk and Jerzy Zaruba.<sup>78</sup> Aside from the possibility of living in comfortable and well-furnished flats, many of those artists decided to move to Łódź when offered profitable positions in central media edited in the city just after the war.

On the one hand, many of the all-Poland press titles were printed in Łódź. On the other hand, the press titles designed for local markets gained a more universal character, as they were focused on information from the whole of Poland rather than on local issues. In those terms the press presented below were offered a very similar (often identical) set of information as central press titles like *Rzeczpospolita* (Republic – central daily organ of PKWN), *Głos Ludu*, (The People's voice – central daily organ of PPR) and *Robotnik* (Worker - central daily organ of PPS) were offered.

The most active local propaganda institution was the Propaganda Department of Voivodeship Committee of the PPR, the agent of the Central Committee. It promptly organised trainings for propagandists and arranged propaganda rallies. PPR was also responsible for the organisation and coordination of propaganda campaigns before the

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<sup>77</sup> K.G. Latocha, A. Ossowski, P. Spodenkiewicz, M. Zapolska-Downar, *Najdłuższe pół wieku. Kalendarium Łodzi 1939–1989*, Łódź 2013, p. 52

<sup>78</sup> J. Łozińska, M. Łoziński, op. cit., pp. 83-84

Peoples' Referendum in 1946 and Parliamentary Elections in 1947.<sup>79</sup> In Łódź it edited the local daily press organ, *Głos Robotniczy* (The Worker's Voice) which had the highest print run in the city. This newspaper with a very suggestive title was published every day (including Sunday) from 20<sup>th</sup> June 1945 and was directed towards a broad readership, but mostly – even through its title – to the workers. As it was a political press organ of PPR, *Głos Robotniczy* was distributed in the factories through the system of compulsory subscription.<sup>80</sup> It offered overviews of political and economic news from Poland and the whole world. The newspaper published numerous official public addresses by the local and central communist elites and clearly imposed the governmental vision of the political order in Poland. The local PPS organ, *Kurier Popularny* (Popular Courier) had very similar character, target group and way of distribution.

Another important press title published exclusively in Łódź was *Dziennik Łódzki* (Łódź Daily) edited by Czytelnik Publishing House from 1945 and continues to be published to this day. It was slightly less politically biased than *Głos Robotniczy* and offered overviews of the social situation in Łódź and other regions of Poland. It was not directed towards any particular political or social group, but rather to an average inhabitant.<sup>81</sup> The following two local evening newspapers, *Express Ilustrowany* (Illustrated Express controlled by the PPR) and *Echo Wieczorne* (Evening Echo, the organ of the SD<sup>82</sup>) offered scoops, reports on local trials of war criminals and confidants.<sup>83</sup>

The vast majority of press articles published in all those papers were based on materials prepared by the PAP. Between 1944 and 1956 the PAP was managed by Julia Minc,<sup>84</sup> a Polish communist journalist of Jewish descent, active member of the KPP and later an important figure of the ZPP. She married Hilary Minc in 1925, who was Minister

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<sup>79</sup> M. Czyżniewski, op.cit., pp. 52-56

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 115

<sup>81</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>82</sup> Alliance of Democrats (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne - SD) – was a Polish centrist party established in 1937. Since 1945 SD became a satellite party of the communist PPR and later PZPR. SD managed to sustain its non-Marxist orientation.

<sup>83</sup> L. Olejnik, *Kształtowanie się Łódzkiego ośrodka prasowego w latach 1945-1949* [in:] Acta Universitatis Lodzianis, Politologia, vol.20, Łódź 1980, p. 119-138

<sup>84</sup> Julia Minc (1901-1987). In the interwar period Minc was an activist of KPP as well as the illegal French Communist Party (CFP). In 1939 Minc moved to the USSR where she was an active member of the ZPP. In July 1944 Minc came back to Poland as a prominent activist of the PPR.

of Industry and Commerce (starting from the PKWN until 1956) and a member of the so-called 'triumvirate' (together with Bolesław Bierut and Jakub Berman),<sup>85</sup> a group of three of the most influential communist dignitaries of Poland.<sup>86</sup> Julia Minc was directly and personally responsible for the selection and publication of hundreds of thousands of dispatches undersigned by PAP printed in the Polish central and local press.<sup>87</sup>

Apart from regular newspapers there were also more specific periodicals published in Łódź that were crucial for shaping the propaganda image of an enemy and handling the emotions of press readers. Among them was *Szpilki* (Pins), a satirical magazine with pre-war traditions, which was of special importance. The first number of *Szpilki* was published in Warsaw in 1935. *Szpilki* was published till September 1939 and then it was restarted in Łódź in March 1945. From the very beginning, *Szpilki* was a socialist oriented magazine having an intention to 'pierce' the interwar rightist governments. Eryk Lipiński, a prominent Polish graphic artist and caricaturist became the first editor of *Szpilki* in 1935 and continued to work in this position again in 1946.

Although *Szpilki* officially functioned as an independent magazine with no links to any party in the postwar period, it was edited and printed by the Czytelnik publishing house. *Szpilki* recruited many talented artists, including Jan Lenica<sup>88</sup> and Henryk Tomaszewski,<sup>89</sup> the founders of the Polish school of posters in the 1950s, and famous poets like Julian Tuwim and Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński. Most of the caricaturists publishing in *Szpilki* had non-communist backgrounds, some, like Jarzy Zaruba, were known for their rightist and anti-Semitic inclinations in the interwar period, while others, like Kazimierz Grus,<sup>90</sup> had an anti-communist attitude. *Szpilki* commented on the current events with virulent drawings and poems, the analysis of which is an integral

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<sup>85</sup> Jakub Berman (1901-1984) – prominent communist in interwar Poland, and an activist of KPP. In 1948 he joined the Politburo of the PZPR. Between 1944 and 1953, he was considered Joseph Stalin's right hand man in Poland. Berman was in charge of the MBP.

<sup>86</sup> Hilary Minc (1905-1974) – Polish economist of Jewish descent, active member of the KPP and CFP, prominent activist of the ZPP and from 1944 one of the most important figures in the PPR and later PZPR.

<sup>87</sup> T. Torańska, *Oni*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 271-288

<sup>88</sup> Jan Lenica (1928-2001) – prominent postwar Polish graphic designer and cartoonist

<sup>89</sup> Henryk Tomaszewski (1914-2005) – an award winning poster artist, founder of Polish school of posters. Tomaszewski created works in poster, satirical cartoon, drawing, and illustration.

<sup>90</sup> Kazimierz Grus (1885-1952) – Polish caricaturist, drawer and book illustrator.

part of my research. *Szpilki* attracted readers with its colourful layout, catchy front pages and, no less important, with its genuine Polish content. Unlike the articles printed for instance in *Głos Robotniczy* the texts and drawings published in *Szpilki* were prepared precisely for this magazine. The reprints from the Soviet materials only complemented Polish caricatures and poems.

The satirical magazines supplemented and augmented the messages presented in the daily press. In all the above titles one may discern the discourses based on postwar fears. The phenomenon of the German threat became one of the most important threads of articles and drawings published in the above presented media.

The above presented complex group of press titles were edited and distributed in very specific social circumstances of postwar Poland victimized by six years of violent Nazi occupation. This fact encouraged agitators to make use of the German trauma, still very fresh in the memory of Polish society. Referring to the figure of the German threat, however, communist propagandists were exploiting the far older Polish experience of negative relations with Germans and Germany.

### **1. German threat in Polish tradition and culture**

Among the motifs which functioned as fear generators in the communist propaganda in postwar Poland, the anti-German motif was one of the most exploited and – in a modified form – remained powerful up to 1989. Even in the first years after the collapse of the communist system in Poland the echoes of the German threat within Poles were still palpable.<sup>91</sup> In postwar Poland this motif referred to basic categories of fear identified by Zygmunt Bauman: individual anxiety when the body or wealth is endangered and a more general fear of threatened durability and solidity of social order which affects the safety of one's life.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> 'Gazeta Wyborcza' [later: GW], 12.10.1990 – The article 'New Germany-old fear' presented the results of the opinion poll which indicated that in March of 1990 the unification of Germany was perceived by 69% of Poles as a danger for the stability of the Polish Western border.

<sup>92</sup> Z. Bauman, *Płynny lęk*, Kraków 2008, p. 9

Soon after World War Two the popular perception of Poles towards Germans ranged between reluctance, hostility and hatred.<sup>93</sup> According to Marcin Zaremba the anti-German atmosphere fomented by the communist propaganda and administration in fact reflected the authentic emotions of Polish society. Furthermore, Germans who remained in Poland could be easily arrested even for talking in their native language. Consequently, anti-German pogroms and lynchings became an integral part of the Polish social landscape in the first months after the end of the war.<sup>94</sup> Yet, comparing to the postwar wave of hostility and violent attacks on Germans in throughout Europe (especially in the Sudetes region, where numerous Germans were killed by Czechoslovakians), this phenomenon in Poland had a much softer character.<sup>95</sup>

The scene recorded in the memory of a teenage inhabitant of Bydgoszcz, Northern Poland shows the vital socio-psychological context in which the communist propaganda agents were saturating the media discourse with the anti-German rhetoric. In the mid 1960s Jolanta Przygórska (than around 15 years old) witnessed such a situation in a local stationer's store: as a German couple, probably tourists, entered the otherwise empty shop and started to talk aloud in German, a saleslady (around 30 years old) experienced an attack of hysteria. She burst into tears and hid at the back of the store as she could not stop crying for the next couple of minutes.<sup>96</sup> One can only imagine how deeply she was traumatised by Germans in the near past as her reaction was so violent.

This scene might be compared to the one remembered by General Miroslaw Hermaszewski, the first and only Polish astronaut. During the training for cosmonauts in Kazakhstan in the 1970s he came across Ukrainian officers. During this informal meeting, as Hermaszewski heard the lyrics of a traditional Ukrainian song 'the blood

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<sup>93</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, p. 561

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 570

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 561-573

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Jolanta Przygórska, 05.05.2012. Przygórska was born in Bydgoszcz in 1952. She finished the local Constructing Technical High School and started to work as an assistant architect's assistant?. In the mid-1970s Przygórska moved to Łódź where she held a similar position in the Design Office for the Textile industry.

stopped circulating in his body'.<sup>97</sup> Just as the Ukrainian words evoked a flashback to the traumatic memory of the Volhynia Massacre<sup>98</sup> that Hermaszewski survived as a child, the German words evoked a recollection of a comparably dreadful Germans' activity the saleslady from Bydgoszcz experienced during the Nazi occupation. The later example shows how strong the impact of the 'German threat' could potentially have on Polish society, the receivers of the communist propaganda.

What made the 'German threat' so important for propagandists? Andrzej Stasiuk, a contemporary Polish novelist, argues that the word 'Germans' embodies all the negative emotions within Poles, including fear, hatred and mistrust. Even the etymology of the official Polish expression for Germans – Niemcy (which stands both for Germans and Germany) derives from the word 'niemy', that is mute, and symbolises the inability of Poles to communicate with Germans. What is more, the traditional Polish rural effigies of the devil, symbolising the evil and fear of eternal damnation, were usually dressed up like Germans.<sup>99</sup>

As the Poles' perception of 'Germans' functioned as a symbol of an alien and enemy, the conclusions formulated by Yuri Lotman and Carl Schmitt seems to work as a key to the problem of the importance of the 'German threat' in the postwar propaganda in Poland. Lotman, a Soviet cultural historian and semiotician, stated that *'an "alien" is essential in shaping the image of a "friend" (...) The culture requires "the other", an analogous but at the same time different one'*.<sup>100</sup> In Carl Schmitt's terms *'the specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy'*. According to his argument, the definition of the enemy allows the emergence of a politicised world.<sup>101</sup> Concerning the role of the 'German threat' in all the

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<sup>97</sup> Focus Historia, vol.6 (75)/2013, p. 34

<sup>98</sup> Volhynia Massacre - the massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia were part of an ethnic cleansing operation carried out in Nazi-occupied Poland by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in the regions of Volhynia and in Eastern Galicia. The massacre started in March 1943 and lasted until the end of 1944. The actions of the UPA resulted in around sixty thousand Polish civilian deaths in Volhynia, and around forty thousand in Eastern Galicia.

<sup>99</sup> *Wprost*, vol.49(1504)/2011, pp. 38-39

<sup>100</sup> P. Nowak, *Swoi i obcy w językowym obrazie świata*, Lublin 2002, p. 52

<sup>101</sup> C. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 26.

press articles, novels, satirical drawings, posters and movies analysed below one can conclude that its function in propaganda was to enhance the reader's political consciousness in Schmitt's sense. The constantly exploited figure of the German enemy was supposed to attract the attention of propaganda receivers. Regularly repeated hostile images of Germans was supposed to be preserved in the memory of Poles and finally seize the place of 'eternal soviet enemy' in the symbolic pantheon of enemies of Poland.

Analysing the problem of the significance of the figure of the 'German threat' in the communist media discourse in postwar Poland one should not omit at least one more interpretation of fear, that offered by Corey Robin. According to this political scientist, the emotion of fear functions as a social stabiliser to the same extent as the sense of rationality. Robin argues that some aspects of fear might play a central role in maintaining democracy. He claims that, i.e. the fear of consequences of civil war increases the respect to the rule of law.<sup>102</sup> Following Robin's argumentation the communist propaganda tactic of regularly effusing the alarming vision of a rebuilt German empire attacking Poland anew (as well as the vision of other threats analysed in this thesis), agitators aimed at strengthening social respect and support to the new administration protecting Polish society from the nightmare of the next destructive conflict.

Among the figures evoking fear in propaganda like 'American war provokers' or 'western conspirators' the German threat was, so to say, the most rational and based on a real trauma of World War Two. Being so realistic, the German threat was supposed to divert the attention of Polish society from the other mundane problems of the postwar political transition. The exposition of the messages provoking the 'fear of Germans' may suggest that they played an important role in constructing the propaganda curtain covering the problems the government was unable to solve during the first postwar years.

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<sup>102</sup> C. Robin, *op. cit.*, p. 54



The propaganda publishers fulfilled most of the recommendations for the effective psychological manipulation of visual propaganda summarised by Lesław Wojtasik: in most cases the eye-catching scary titles like *'German troops are practicing in the British occupation zone'* were printed in big bold font at the centre of the front page. Sometimes the alarming headlines were even underlined with thick red line in order to make the readers sure that a certain message was essential that day.<sup>103</sup> The 'communication channel of German dread' became an essential part of the strategy which was supposed to create the vision of Poland as a besieged fortress and present the new authorities as an efficient protector of the country. In my opinion, this strategy was no less important than the one defined by Marcin Zaremba as the nationalistic legitimization of power.<sup>104</sup>

The fear of the Germans was natural in 1944 when German troops, although in retreat, still terrorized Poland. Soon after the end of World War Two the joy of regained freedom was disturbed by the German threat creatively developed by the propaganda. In later years the fear of the Germans was perpetuated by the provisional shape of the western border of Poland, the uncertain status of the so-called 'regained territories' and the activity of the *Werewolf*. The alarming news about the support given to the defeated Germany by Western allies, who allegedly accepted the resurrection of a Nazi army, complemented the dreadful vision of the western neighbour of Poland. Taking advantage of the war reality and the communists' position as the 'liberator' of Polish lands from Nazi occupation, the RPiP and the PPR propagandists resorted to these strong associations. They exploited the German threat in the press with an intention to: a) accredit new power, b) mobilise and integrate society with the government, and c) discredit political and ideological adversaries.<sup>105</sup> Discussing the implementation of all those three strategic aims one may indicate several important aspects of the 'German threat' stressed in the communist media.

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<sup>103</sup> L. Wojtasik, op. cit., pp. 64-67

<sup>104</sup> M. Zaremba, *Komunizm*, pp. 13-42

<sup>105</sup> M. Miodek, *Niemcy. Publicystyczny obraz w „Pionierze” / „Słowie Polskim” 1945-1989*, Wrocław 2008, p.353-446

## **2. Various shades of fear of Germans**

The preliminary examination of the anti-German postwar media discourse enables one to distinguish several categories to which the propagandists referred to when generating the explicitly negative image of Germans. Among those threads in the first postwar years, the category of the direct threat to life of Polish society massively experienced during World War Two played a special role in the communist propaganda.

### **2.1 Physical German threat**

As the result of World War Two Nazi Germany was totally defeated, but the anxiety among Poles regarding their former occupants was still alive. First of all, there was a postwar trauma connected to German deeds. Another popular theme was built around the danger that Germans posed to the Western border of Poland.

#### **The endangered border with Germany**

The motif of the German threat for the Polish border resulted from its temporary status, the result of a hesitant international diplomacy. Press articles with titles like 'The new Führer attacks the Polish border'<sup>106</sup> suggested that the leaders of the USA and Great Britain supported German attempts to revise the final shape of the border. It made use of the natural anxiety of new settlers, who had just lost their houses in Eastern Poland and now were supposed to start a new life having the worst enemies just behind the border.

The communist government was taking advantage of the position of the only protector of settlers on 'regained lands' to transform their fear of the 'German enemy' into support for the new authorities. The MliP recommended that at least one slogan referring to the German threat should be added to each propaganda publication.<sup>107</sup> Fulfilling this instruction local PPR propaganda structures in Wrocław (formerly the German city Breslau) exposed settlers to a view of effigies of Nazi soldiers installed in

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<sup>106</sup> Echo Wieczorne [later: EW], 30.01.1947

<sup>107</sup> AAN, MliP, sygn.24, Instrukcja uzupełniająca w sprawie referendum z dnia 31 maja 1946 roku

the city centre with inscription: 'They are waiting for your "no"!'<sup>108</sup> soon before the Peoples' Referendum in June 1946. Although the insecurity regarding the western border mainly affected the inhabitants of the border region, the propagandists used this motif to cover up the more mundane problems in all regions of Poland. This is why very similar effigies were also exposed throughout Poland, e.g. on the streets of Warsaw.<sup>109</sup> In this case the image of a Nazi soldier was subscribed with a warning: 'You do not want him to return. Vote three times yes'. In both cases the slogans combined with the view of effigies sounded like a compulsion to vote 'yes' according to the government's instruction.

### **Werwolf and other dangerous underground German troops**

Aside from identifying the physical German threat behind the borders of Poland in many areas of the country, communist propagandists were also warning the media receivers that some aspects of the German danger were still palpable within the country. Reporting on Silesia, the media informed readers about the partisan German troops, such as Grün Kreuz<sup>110</sup> or Freies Deutschland<sup>111</sup> which attacked Polish households to chase away new settlers. Those organisations resorting to sabotage and intimidation attempted to build a new basis for the new German Reich.<sup>112</sup>

Furthermore, the threat posed by the activity of those Nazi hit squads on the Regained Lands was augmented with the memory of fear accompanying the traitorous activity of the infamous '5<sup>th</sup> column' in September 1939.<sup>113</sup> Finally, the attacks organised by the Nazi underground lasting until around 1947 created an opportunity for the new authorities to boast about their successes in reducing the tangible German danger.

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<sup>108</sup> E. Kaszuba, *Między propagandą a rzeczywistością. Polska ludność Wrocławia w latach 1945-1947*, Warszawa 1997, p. 230

<sup>109</sup> L. Wyszynacki, *Warszawa od wyzwolenia do naszych dni*, Warszawa 1977, p. 66; Picture 1

<sup>110</sup> Grün Kreuz – Nazi commando active near Wałbrzych, Lower Silesia

<sup>111</sup> Freies Deutschland - one of the most important commando units which gathered nearly 1,400 combatants in the region going from Upper to Lower Silesia

<sup>112</sup> More on those organisations: P. Biddiscombe, *Ostatni naziści. Działania Werwolfu w powojennej Europie*, Warszawa 2003; R. Primke, M. Szczerepa, *Werwolf. Tajne operacje w Polsce*, Kraków 2008.

<sup>113</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> column – a group of people who undermine a larger group from within. A synonym of sabotage.



Picture 1

The reports on such successes could potentially be used to convince Poles to vote for the PPR and PPS during parliamentary elections or to follow governmental recommendations in the Peoples' Referendum.

For instance, only twelve days before the latter event *Głos Robotniczy*, in the article 'Security service eliminated the German plot,'<sup>114</sup> informed readers that in the whole territory of Poland the 'NSZ bands cooperate with former German SS officers who formed the terrorist organisation *Freies Deutschland*.' It was implied that the numerous terrorist attacks performed (or planned) by the NSZ and *Freies Deutschland* were a part of the general 'German plot' (words written in a big font on the front page) – the strategy to 'tear the Silesia away from Poland and bring it back to Germany.' In this article the success of the security service was stressed much stronger than the 'dangerous plot' itself, giving the impression that the total victory of the new government over the 'embattled terrorists' was just a matter of time.

The intention of translating the fear of the 'German terrorist' into a growth of confidence towards the government fighting the 'enemy of the state' is also clear in a further text entitled: "Germans, NSZ and WIN in one group. Werewolf and a reactionist underground appeal to vote 'No'."<sup>115</sup> The same intention stood behind the propaganda decision to circulate the visual illustration of the threat posed by Werwolf in the entire territory of Poland. The poster by Zenon Wasilewski,<sup>116</sup> entitled 'Caution, the werewolves are active,' was distributed in the spring of 1946.<sup>117</sup> Translating the word Werwolf as wilkołak (werewolf) the propagandists attempted to magnify the threat posed by the Nazi partisans by comparing them to the fictional monsters active mainly during the night, just like members of Werwolf.

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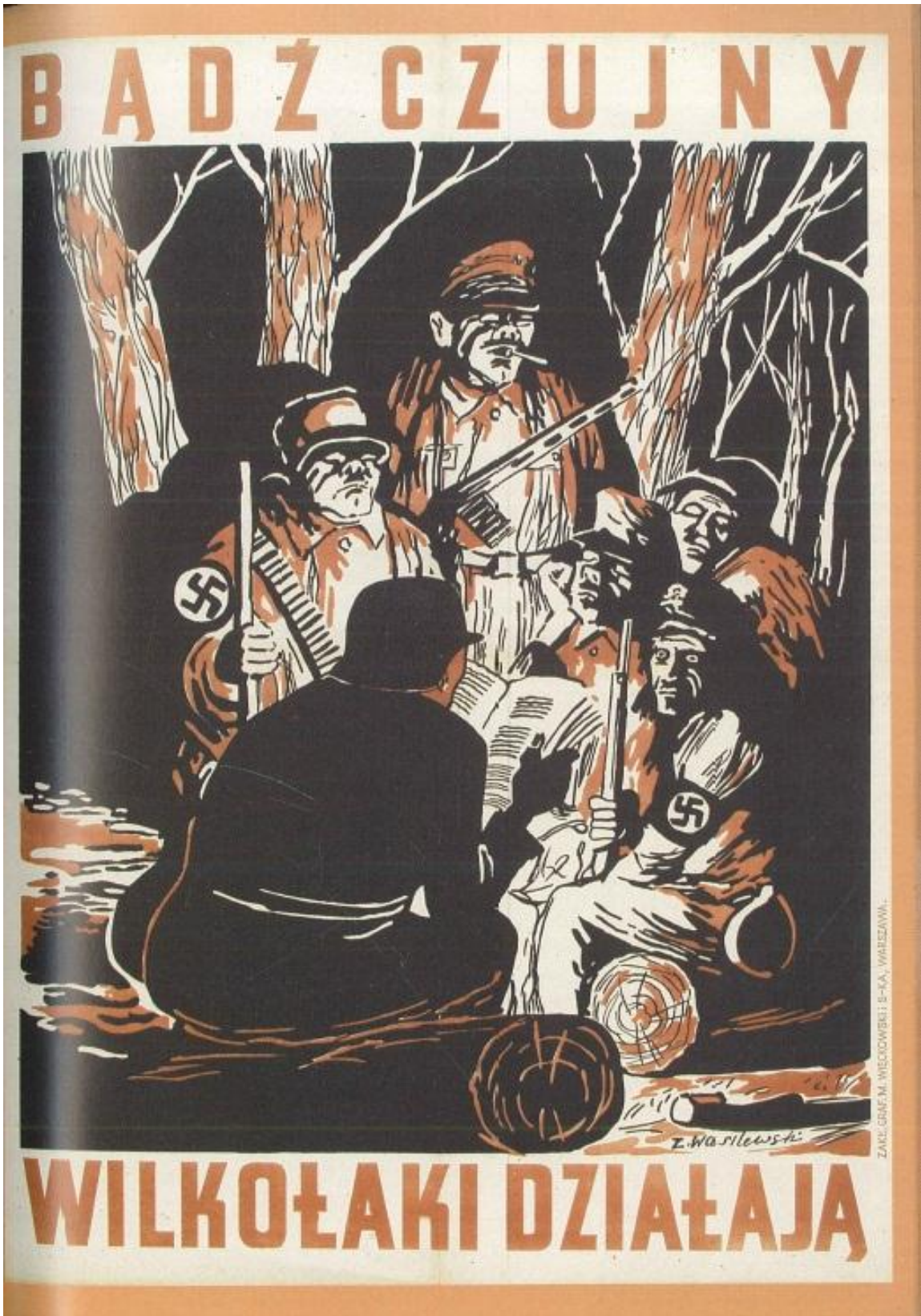
<sup>114</sup> GR, 19.06.1946

<sup>115</sup> GR, 28.06.1946

<sup>116</sup> Zenon Wasilewski (1903 - 1966)- Polish drawer and pioneer of puppet animation, painter, photographer. This artist had no communist background. Wasilewski created the first Polish puppet movie *In Times of King Krakus* in 1947

<sup>117</sup> Muzeum Plakatu w Wilanowie (Later: MPW), Pl.917/1; Picture 2





Picture 2

Just like the effigies of Nazi soldiers exposed in Wrocław and Warsaw, the poster and the article published in Łódź in the PPR local press organ only two days before the People's Referendum implied that voting 'no' in the referendum was like supporting the enemies of Poland and augmenting the 'German threat for the Polish western border.' Depriving the opposition from patriotic attributes, the propaganda presented the communist government as a formation which, in opposition to 'dangerous subversives' from NSZ and WIN, cared about safety and the Polish *raison d'état*.

What is important is that the reports on the activity of all those German terrorist organisations, which were always combined with information about their defeat in a clash with the Polish Security Service, were mostly printed in the local press of central Poland. Rarely were such articles published in the regained territories. Even in Silesia, where most of the German underground organisations were located, the motif of victories of UB or the Polish army over Werewolf was not intensively exploited.<sup>118</sup>

One may conclude that this tactic derived from the propagandists' decision to refer to the 'physical German threat' only in areas where it was not actually palpable. Those reports were supposed to keep Poles alarmed, but not terrify them. What could potentially derive the attention of workers from local mundane problems in Łódź would push the settlers of Szczecin or Wrocław to run away from the city. The danger of such counter-efficient effects of propaganda explains the fact that journalists, caricaturists and writers felt more comfortable in referring to more general and distanced symptoms of the 'German threat'.

One such less-palpable sign of the German danger was the motif of the support of the USA and Great Britain to Germany, which resulted in the process of the quick reconstruction of the 'defeated Nazi empire'.

### **Great Britain and the USA are raising the Nazi empire from the ashes**

As it was suggested by the communist media, the support of the Western allies was supposed to lead to the situation when a new powerful German government was to

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<sup>118</sup> M. Miodek, op.cit., pp. 362-364

try to revise the border with Poland. The leaflet *Attention Poles!*, again distributed in the pre-referendum period, is a good example of the way the propagandists were stressing the links between dangerous 'enemies of Poland'. The leaflet presented a 'German reptile' that was waiting on the Western border for a good moment to regain the lost territory.<sup>119</sup> The flier depicted Germany as an 'insatiable beast that could bite Poland's throat once it was left uncontrolled'. It indicated former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as a person who would like to 'feed Germany at the cost of Poland'. Here again, the connection between Germany and Great Britain as the symbol of the West and the place where the Polish political elite found its shelter was suggested. To give it the appearance of impartiality, the flier was signed by the 'Non-party group'.

Those kinds of threats were intensified by the declarations of Western leaders, like the one by the USA Secretary of State James F. Byrnes. In his speech in Stuttgart in September 1946 (quoted and commented on in the Polish press), Byrnes stated that the border between Poland and Germany had only a temporary character. Communists took advantage of these declarations to consolidate the 'endangered Poles' around the new government, presented as the only guarantor of the integrity of Polish territories. The propagandists were attempting to strengthen the consolidation of power through stressing the firm response given to the Byrnes declaration by the Polish authorities. In this situation one of the most powerful types of communist visual propaganda, the Polish Film Chronicle, appeared to be very useful.

The PKF episode shown in Polish cinemas in mid-September presented two flaming speeches by Władysław Gomułka, Minister of the Regained Lands and Józef Cyrankiewicz, leader of the PPS.<sup>120</sup> Gomułka was assuring the crowd gathered in the theatre *Roma* in Warsaw that the character of the western border of Poland was indisputable. Cyrankiewicz was persuading the crowd that the Polish western border was the 'border of peace and independence' suggesting that the communist authorities, supported by friendship with the USSR, were the only guarantors of those values. The

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<sup>119</sup>Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (Later: APŁ) Komitet Łódzki Polskiej Partii Robotniczej, Druki propagandowe

<sup>120</sup>Polska Kronika Filmowa [Later: PKF] 31/46, 17.09.1946



numerous enthusiastic applauses accompanying the speeches suggested to the PKF viewers that the crowd put trust in the declarations of Gomułka and Cyrankiewicz. This type of policy benefiting from the uncertain situation of the western border was conducted (although with smaller intensity) until the end of the communist era. The Polish-German frontier was only formally confirmed in 1991.

Important as it was, the threats of 'German enemies endangering the Polish western border' and Nazi underground troops chasing away Polish settlers was just a part of the phenomenon of the German threat in propaganda publications circulated in Poland.

## **2.2 Language of fear: 'Hangmen, murderers, bestial torturers'**

Given the common postwar social apprehensions and uncertainty regarding the economic and political situation, governments (especially in the communist bloc) commonly attempted to excite or soften various concerns in order to win social obedience. The language of fear played a significant role in this strategy. Particular words like 'bloodthirsty monster' or expressions like 'finish the ruthless capitalists' used by Polish propagandists to exploit the threat of fear were imported from the Soviet propaganda literature.<sup>121</sup>

Parallel to the Soviet inspiration one should look for the origins of the Polish postwar 'language of fear' in local propaganda from the interwar period. This is when for the first time Polish readers of the press experienced intense saturation of media with brutal and scary vocabulary. As Irena Kamińska-Szmaj put in the title of her study on the language of Polish interwar propaganda, in this period both the pro-government and opposition media aimed at 'instigating, dousing and depriving of honour'.<sup>122</sup> In the postwar reality this language became even more violent. It consisted of very aggressive

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<sup>121</sup> M.T. Hooker, *The Military Uses of Literature. Fiction and the Armed Forces in Soviet Literature*, Westport, 1996, p. 2

<sup>122</sup> I. Kamińska-Szmaj, *Judzi, zochydzta, ze czci odziara. Język propagandy politycznej w prasie 1919-1923*, Wrocław 1994

and terrifying expressions like 'Finish the hydra of reaction!'<sup>123</sup> Such terms, an essential part of the communist propaganda, were regularly used in official documents.

### **Nazi crimes in propaganda literature**

The foundations for the long-lasting cruel image of a German were laid by several documents published already in 1944. The first of those publications, the so-called *July PKWN Manifesto* from 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1944, was distributed by the PKWN agents in 'liberated' territories.<sup>124</sup> This document tried to convince society that defeating the Germans was only the first step in rebuilding the country. In the manifesto the communists assured Poles that they would take revenge for the crimes committed by German enemies. At the same time, the document informed readers that 'the Government Delegation for Poland (an agency of the Polish Government in Exile during World War Two) was illegal as it represented the government formed on the basis of a fascist constitution from 1935'.

The expressions and descriptions used in the manifesto were very emotional and referred directly to threats and terror which Poles had experienced during the previous five years. The post-catastrophic image of Poland presented in this text was supposed to excite those threats and exhorted Poles to take revenge on Germans for 'all the suffering, burned down villages, destroyed cities, churches, schools, executions, for Auschwitz, Majdanek and the slaughter in ghettos'. Moreover, it promised that the 'Polish landholders having patriotic merits in fighting the Germans' would have their acreage increased.<sup>125</sup> The last declaration was an announcement for the future rewarding of those who support the government's agendas in the struggle against 'German-like opponents'. Among them the Polish political rivals of the communists were counted, for instance, NSZ and PSL. The vivid expressions and generally the type of anti-German rhetoric presented by authors of the *July PKWN Manifesto* was later repeated

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<sup>123</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga*, p. 395

<sup>124</sup> 'July PKWN Manifesto' - political declaration of the PKWN

<sup>125</sup> Loc. cit.

in propaganda brochures like *Our current and future attitude toward the Germans*<sup>126</sup> by Mieczysław Rogalski, Polish diplomat and a member of the KRN. The same kind of anti-German phraseology was also used in the publication *Swastika over Poland* by Roman Lang, PKWN activist, published in Moscow by the ZPP and then distributed in Poland by the army and libraries.<sup>127</sup>

Those three brochures are good examples of the way in which the ‘German problem’ was being discussed in the years that followed. Not surprisingly the Germans were presented as horrifying war criminals. As the Polish philologist Sławomir Buryła presented it in his study on the Polish postwar literature dealing with the problem of Shoah, ‘*the picture of the sadist who was finding joy in inflicting pain was probably the most popular image of Nazis in Polish prose*’.<sup>128</sup> This emotional image of German cruelty was further deepened by visual propaganda.

### **Dreadful graphic images of Nazi crimes**

This criminal image of German occupants entered the communist visual propaganda discourse vigorously in the form of the documentary movie ‘Vernichtungslager Majdanek – Cmentarzysko Europy’ (Death Camp Majdanek – the cemetery of Europe) directed in July and August 1944 by Aleksander Ford. The movie’s director, a member of the KPP, was a Polish interwar film director of Jewish descent who prior World War Two had produced several socialist features and documentary movies. After the outbreak of war, Ford moved to the USSR where he produced informative movies for the Red Army. In the summer of 1943 he became head of the film studio *Czołówka*, which portrayed the combat trail of the LWP. In 1945 Ford started to work as head of the government studio *Film Polski*, which had control over the entire movie production in postwar Poland.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> M. Rogalski, *Nasz stosunek obecny i na przyszłość do Niemców*, Lublin 1944

<sup>127</sup> R. Lang, *Swastyka nad Polską*, Moskwa 1944

<sup>128</sup> S. Buryła, *Tematy (nie)opisane*, Kraków 2013, p. 270

<sup>129</sup> S. Janicki, *Aleksander Ford*, Warszawa 1967. At the International Film Festival in Cannes in 1954, Ford was praised for the neorealist in the form of the feature film ‘Piątka z ulicy Barskiej’ (The five from Barska Street). Ford reached his peak with the monumental historical fresco *Krzyżacy* (Teutonic Knights), a movie from 1960 based on the nineteenth century novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz, which depicted the struggle of

According to Stuart Liebman, Ford's short movie 'Vernichtungslager Majdanek – Cemetery of Europe' was one of the very first films addressing the phenomenon of the Holocaust.<sup>130</sup> In fact, the first shots of this movie were recorded on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1944, only a few days after the German Concentration and Extermination Camp Majdanek (Konzentrationslager – KZ Lublin) was evacuated by its Nazi administration after destroying most of its infrastructure.

The movie started with the joyful scene of the entrance of the Red Army and the LWP to Lublin welcomed by emotional crowds of Poles 'liberated' from German occupation. After this first optimistic sequence Ford redirected the viewers' attention to the depressive legacy of Nazi crimes.

First of all the director attacked the eyes of cinema auditoriums with long intense shots presenting horrifying images of the floors of Lublin Castle (turned into a Gestapo prison) covered with the massacred bodies of Poles imprisoned there and killed just before the evacuation of Germans from Lublin.<sup>131</sup> The next thrilling shots were focused on a still smoky heap of ashes – the remains of prisoners gassed and burned in crematories of KL Lublin, one of the few proofs of the horrible crimes committed by Germans, proof of the Holocaust. In a further section of the movie Ford made a radical shift and transferred the attention of viewers from the horrible view of victims of Nazi crimes to persecutors of genocide – German officers from the Majdanek administration arrested by the Red Army.

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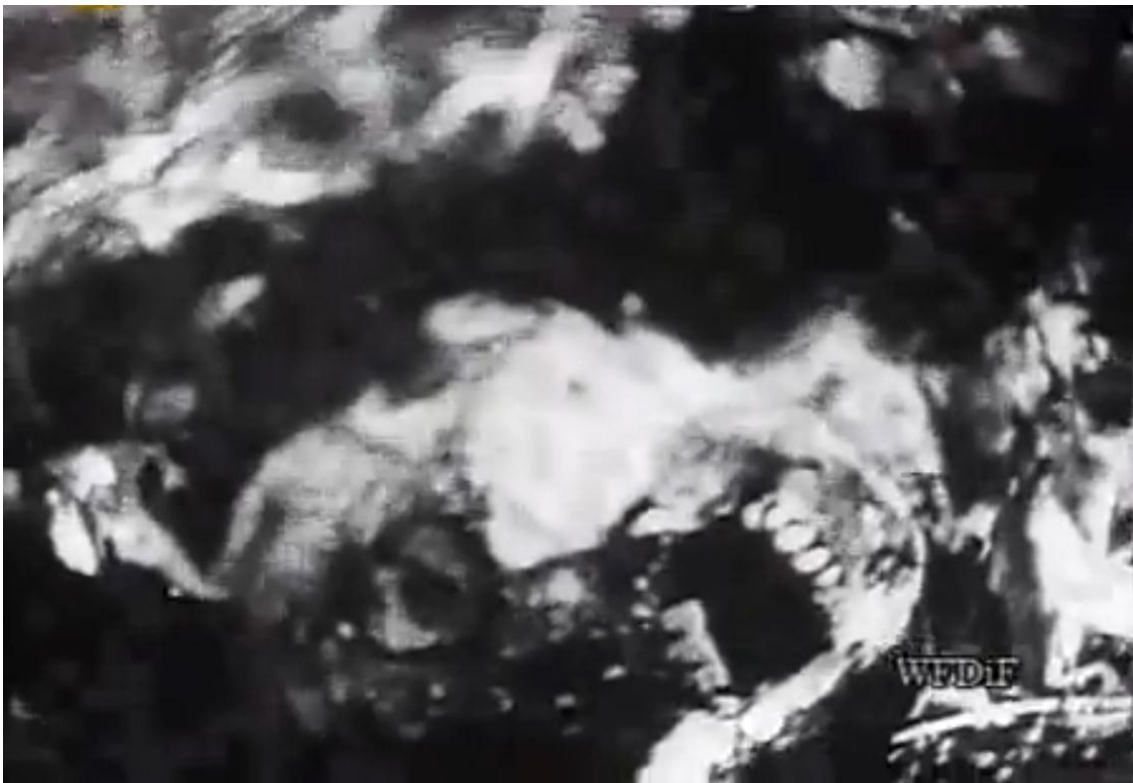
the kingdom of Poland with Teutonic Knights in the fifteenth century, ended with the triumph of the Polish knights in the Battle of Grunwald. Until 1987 the movie *Krzyżacy* was watched by a Polish audience of over 37 million, mainly due to the fact that this movie was a film adaptation of a compulsory school lecture. What is more, this movie was watched by an audience of almost 30 million in the USSR, almost 3 million in Czechoslovakia and over 1 million in France.

<sup>130</sup> S. Liebman, *Cmentarzysko Europy (1944). Pierwszy film o holokauście?* [in:] *Zeszyty Majdanka*, vol. XXV, 2011, pp. 201-225

<sup>131</sup> The emotional impression made by gruesome shots presenting executed people was strengthened by close-ups of faces of devastated mothers, sisters and wives of murdered prisoners who were looking for their relatives among bodies on the castle floors. What is important is that the movie persuaded the interpretation of the slaughter of Poles in the Gestapo prison as a 'further act of the Nazi massacre of Poles initiated in Katyn'. With those words of comment Ford's movie was involved in the communist strategy to blame Germans for the massacre performed by the NKVD in the spring of 1940 ; Picture 3



Picture 3



Picture 4

The image of SS officers testifying to the Polish-Soviet Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes on the Polish Nation was far from heroic. Officers were shown as defeated, terrified, wretched and disoriented persons. Ford purposefully contrasted the image of the German officers shown as 'cold-hearted slayers' with the picture of a lawful Polish-Soviet commission. This clear juxtaposition was supposed to persuade viewers of the civilizational superiority of communists over bestial fascists. With a further section of the movie Ford brought the cinema auditoriums to the lowest circles of the 'inferno', showing in depressing details the gruesome process of exhumation of the unburned bodies of Majdanek prisoners placed in hidden mass graves.

As the image of massacred bodies and skulls looking as if they were screaming with pain is shocking even today, one can only imagine how influential it had to be only a few months after the war.<sup>132</sup> Those appalling shots were juxtaposed with the image of a perfectly organised SS district in KZ Lublin, where according to Bossak's comment '*SS officers had their houses, bars, canteens and even brothels*'.<sup>133</sup>

One of the most important distortions of the image of genocide practiced in KL Lublin by Germans implicated by Ford's movie was concealing the fact that most of the victims exterminated in Majdanek were Jews. According to Liebman, this tactic reflected the negative attitude of communists to stressing the distinctive place of Jews in the extermination process. What is even more important is that this distortion derived from the political strategy behind the film producers and distributors.

Playing on the Christian and national chords the movie was supposed to build and strengthen the emotional bonds between the Poles living under horrifying German oppression and their liberators –the LWP, the Red Army and the PKWN. Consequently,

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<sup>132</sup> Picture 4

<sup>133</sup> S. Liebman, *op.cit.*, p. 208. As Stuart Liebman put it in his article on Ford's movie, beyond any doubt the pictures of prisoners, crematories and gas chambers were the very first visual records of infrastructure of death camps ever made. Soon they earned a status of symbols used in numerous propaganda movies directed in later decades substantially contributing to the process of shaping the visual rhetoric of the crimes against humanity and particularly the visual rhetoric of the Holocaust.

through concealing Jewish victims the movie was supposed substantially reinforce the political position and increase the popularity of the PKWN.<sup>134</sup>

In the view of many contemporary scholars represented mainly by Jan T. Gross, many spheres of Polish society were afraid of the return to their communities of Jews who survived the Holocaust. Many Polish inhabitants of the countryside and small towns, populated by Jewish minorities (or even majorities) until 1940, intended to avoid returning goods and houses they looted after the deportation of Jews to concentration and extermination camps. This is why the Jewish victims exterminated in Majdanek (over 60% of the total number of executed prisoners) were shown as one of many groups of Majdanek prisoners, not as the leading one.<sup>135</sup>

With the same aim to legitimise the just-established provisional communist government within Polish society, Ford, playing on nationalist and religious chords, culminated the movie with a long and emotional scene of a Catholic service, which showed the official respect of the communist apparatus to the Catholic faith characteristic to most of Polish society. The meaningful shots exposing Catholic nuns and holy pictures carried by priests were supposed to show the viewers the religious tolerance of the communist regime.

The very final shot of the movie was illustrated with the patriotic song 'Rota' based on a nineteenth century poem written by Maria Konopnicka to encourage Poles to resist Prussian governance in the part of Poland administrated from Berlin. The sound and words of the song 'Rota' were supposed to incline the viewers towards the alleged communists' support for the national aspirations of Poles.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, p. 219-225. The emotional picture of victims of genocide was used by communist propagandists to mobilise the viewers and consolidate them around the PKWN in a common patriotic fight with German occupants till the final victory. Most probably Ford and Bossak (both of Jewish descent) decided to pass over the Jewish aspect of the crime committed in Majdanek in order to adopt the meaning of the movie to the expectations of Polish viewers and, consequently, to win the acceptance of the largely anti-Semitic Polish population.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p. 219

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, p. 212. With all those considerably stressed accents Ford's movie was one of the first visual acts of the strategy of nationalistic legitimization of communist power in Poland scrutinised by Marcin Zaremba. Surprisingly this film was not included in Zaremba's examination of this vital aspect of establishing the communist regime in Poland.

The depressing show of genocide committed by Germans, directed by Aleksander Ford, had its premiere in Polish cinemas in November 1944. In later months and years the movie was distributed in numerous Polish cities as well as in foreign countries – in the USSR, in France and in the USA.<sup>137</sup> In Poland it was included in the educational system, being regularly played in Polish schools and in Majdanek museum where it was used for didactic purposes until 1996.<sup>138</sup>

The ‘bestial image’ of Germans instilled in the consciousness of viewers of Ford’s depressing movie was also preserved by expressive drawings like the one by Henryk Tomaszewski published in *Szpilki* in the spring of 1945. The drawing, entitled *The wild beasts*, presented a slaughter of animals in the zoo in Poznań performed by SS troops just before they retreat from the city. In the drawing the figures of SS murderers with faces full of passion in killing were less human than the terrified defenceless animals. The drawing clearly suggested that Germans were more savage than ‘bestially killed’ lions, apes, deers and wolves.<sup>139</sup> The picture was representative of the popular way the Nazi criminals were portrayed in the communist press in that period.

Apart from the general negative image of Nazi oppressors the communist propaganda also operated with particular cases of German war criminals symbolising the trauma of World War Two as experienced by Polish society.

### **Greiser, Fisher, Höss – symbols of Nazi bestiality**

Press reports from the trials of criminals, such as Rudolf Höss, the ex-commander of ‘the biggest torture chamber in Europe’,<sup>140</sup> Auschwitz, and Nazi governors on the Polish lands Arthur Greiser and Ludwig Fisher perpetuated the horrifying image of a German occupier. When the decision regarding the extradition of Greiser and Fisher to Poland was made, *Głos Robotniczy* announced in big fonts on the cover page: ‘Hangmen of the Polish nation will stand trial in the Republic of Poland’.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, pp. 215-218

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, p. 216

<sup>139</sup> ‘Szpilki’ [later SZP], 06.03.1945; Picture 5

<sup>140</sup> EW, 13.03.1947

<sup>141</sup> GR, 02.04.1946



# Szpilki

Uciekając z Poznania wystrzelali Niemcy okazy tamtejszego ogrodu zoologicznego



**Dziki bestje**

Rys. H. Tomaszewski

Picture 5

Once Greiser arrived to Poznań for the trial the headline of the press article announced: 'Arch-hangman of Poles in the dock in Poznań'.<sup>142</sup> The article quoted vivid and emotional testimonies of ex-prisoners who testified that 'among the cruel methods of German torturers, a prisoner was thrown into a cask lined with barbed wire inside. Then the cask was rolled until the interrogated pleaded guilty'. Furthermore, in the article 'Bloody hangman of Łódź' – typed in big fonts at the top of the front page – journalists quoted the testimonies which confirmed that Greiser was 'responsible for cruel tortures practiced in Radogoszcz prison and ordered it to be burned down with all prisoners inside the night before the liberation of the city'.<sup>143</sup>

In the article 'Children are accusing Greiser' the criminal was presented as a 'monster who ordered tearing Polish children off their mothers' breasts and giving them to German women in order to germanise them'.<sup>144</sup> The headline of a further article informed the reader that Greiser had a 'bestial plan to exterminate all Poles within 20 years'.<sup>145</sup> In the article 'Łódź Lays a Charge' the journalist reminded the readers of the 'public hanging of innocent people on Bałucki Square in Łódź in October 1939'. This last text suggested that 'executions were organised by Greiser in order to give local inhabitants a scare'.<sup>146</sup> The same pungency accompanied the reports on the fate of Rudolf Höss and Ludwig Fisher.<sup>147</sup>

Reading the above articles one may have an impression that their authors aimed at suggesting that the German threat was not over. The intention of keeping people alarmed is even more clear in texts informing readers that the 'criminal Germany is planning a return'.<sup>148</sup> The result the propagandists intended to achieve was perfectly displayed in a drawing by Jan Lenica, who in 1946 had just started his career. The drawing published in *Szpilki* presented an average Polish press reader carrying a

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<sup>142</sup> GR, 20.06.1946

<sup>143</sup> GR, 23.06.1946

<sup>144</sup> GR, 24.06.1946

<sup>145</sup> GR, 27.06.1946

<sup>146</sup> GR, 23.06.1946

<sup>147</sup> On Fisher: EW 07.01.1947; 09.01.1947; EW, 31.01.1947; 02.01.1947; On Höss: 12.03.1947; 13.03.1947; 14.03.1947; 15.03.1947; 19.03.1947; 20.03.1947

<sup>148</sup> GR, 30.06.1946

newspaper.<sup>149</sup> He is terrified by the scary reports surrounding his head: ‘Nazi strikes back’; ‘German Archbishop announces revenge’; ‘secret laboratories discovered in Germany’ or questions like: ‘Is Hitler still alive?’

The picture entitled ‘in the anniversary of receiving peace’ was subtitled with a catchy game of words – *nie-pokój* (*non-peace*) which, when put together, gave a word ‘*niepokój*’, that is an anxiety. It is precisely this feeling that the communist propaganda agents wanted to instil within Polish society, handling the different shades of the phenomenon of the German threat.

### **2.3 The political, military and economic German threat**

Propaganda articles and drawings in *Szpilki* constantly alarmed readers about the facts foreshadowing the dangerous resurrection of the German empire.

#### **Political threat**

In many cases communist media suggested that a very tolerant politics of Western allies towards occupied Germany resulted in disturbing tendency of rebuilding the Nazi empire. For instance, the press headline ‘The German hydra is coming back to life’ informed readers that France tolerated quasi-Nazi marches and meetings in Freiburg.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, *Echo Wieczorne* alarmed readers that once again the ‘Swastika rules Germany’.

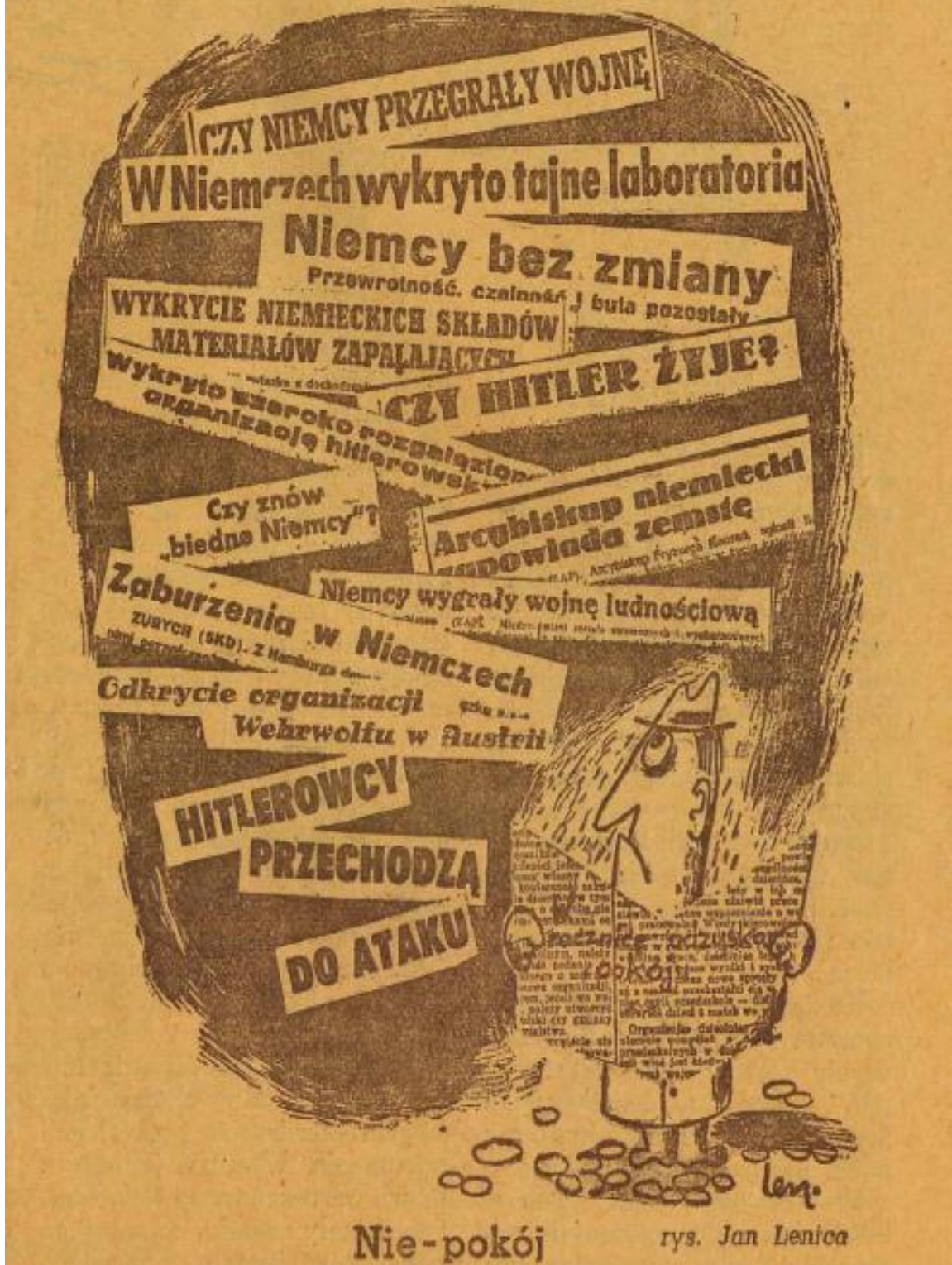
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<sup>149</sup> SZP, 21.05.1946; Picture 6

<sup>150</sup> GR, 16.04.1946; The symbol of hydra recalled by the above mentioned article well encapsulates the impression the propaganda agents attempted to instil within society. Hydra of Lerna was an ancient water beast that possessed many heads. The mythological Hercules received the task of killing Hydra, but upon cutting off each of its heads he found that two grew back. The immortality of hydra made it a convenient metaphor of fear for the propagandists. The activity of the government was presented as similar to the struggle of Hercules cutting off the heads of hydra, that is, the internal and external threats endangering Poland reborn after the war. The number of ‘hydra’s heads’ also helped the propagandists to put pressure on society to support the authorities in their effort to keep the hydra under control. In the drawing by Eryk Lipiński hydra’s heads symbolised the internal German threats jeopardising Poland – Werewolf and Green Cross – as well as the general German danger written on hydra’s necks (SZP, 06.08.1946)



W rocznicę odzyskania pokoju



Picture 6

In the communist media tactic of stressing the dangerous political indulgence of the USA, France and Great Britain towards Germany, the main beneficiary of such a policy was credited to Kurt Schumacher. In numerous press articles and satirical drawings, this leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) was described as the 'new Führer'. Schumacher became a symbol of the dangerous ambitions of the defeated Germany. His political declaration led journalists to conclude that 'Germany poses a threat to the world'.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, due to his very ambitious vision of a future Germany he was described as a 'new apostle of Nazism'<sup>152</sup> or 'rudimentary Führer'.<sup>153</sup> These sorts of expressions clearly indicate the hostile attitude the communist propagandists had towards social democracy in Germany and in general. In their terms only the Soviet-backed communist parties were authentic representatives of socialist ideas. Finally, apart from Schumacher the mayor of Tübingen, Jacob Wilhelm Hauer, was also described as 'more hitlerite than Hitler himself'.<sup>154</sup> Those two politicians are good examples of the wider tendency of presenting the new German authorities as direct continuators of the Nazi regime jeopardising Poland.

The dreadful features of the new German authorities were also attributed by the propagandists to the postwar German society. The drawings by Zenon Wasilewski and Karol Baraniecki<sup>155</sup> presented Germans as a community which still acted according to 'Hitler's philosophy'. In his drawing entitled 'Führer is gone, the nation remained...' Wasilewski shows Germans as literary 'Hitler-like' – both young and old Germans had the same dreary face of Hitler.<sup>156</sup> In Baraniecki's vision the Germans in postwar Berlin still had the reflex of raising their hands in a Nazi salute.<sup>157</sup> Although with the latter drawing an artist rather intended mocking the old habits of Germans, the only remains of Nazi power, both drawings were clearly suggesting that the new German leaders could easily recruit in German society to their dreadful plans i.e. of military revenge.

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<sup>151</sup> 'Kurier Popularny' [later: KP], 24.01.1947

<sup>152</sup> EW, 01.02.1947

<sup>153</sup> EW, 06.03.1947

<sup>154</sup> EW, 01.02.1946

<sup>155</sup> Karol Baraniecki (1911 - 1986) – drawer, satirist and cartoon maker

<sup>156</sup> SZP, 16.10.1945

<sup>157</sup> SZP, 15.01.1946

Looking at all those drawings and articles, one may realise how far the tactic of stressing the alarming features and ideas of a new Germany aimed at reducing social sentiments towards Western countries which accepted Schumacher or Hauer on their positions. Consequently, the early postwar general image of Western policy towards Germany presented in the communist press was supposed to convince Polish society that the governments in London, Paris and Washington planned to continue an imperialist policy similar to the one led by Hitler. Further press articles pointing at the Western approval for the resurrection of the military potential of Germany could only confirm such a conclusion.

### **Military dread**

Picturing the dreadful image of postwar Germany the communist media were broadly referring to the fact that in western sectors of occupied Germany Great Britain, France and the USA decided not to imprison every single Nazi soldier. The communist press regularly reported on former officers of the SS and the Gestapo as well as war criminals who were involved with Western occupants in rebuilding the German administration and army. This motif was regularly excited in the imagination of the press readers with article titles like: 'German army practices in English occupation zone', which informed readers that *'120 thousands German soldiers and officers having the Prussian spirit of imperialism and militarism are still mobilised and ready for action'*.<sup>158</sup> The anxiety-evoking words were also supported by satirical drawings published in *Express Ilustrowany* after the declaration of Byrnes in Stuttgart supported by Ernest Bevin.<sup>159</sup> For instance, the drawing entitled 'In the British occupation zone' presented Nazi troops marching in front of the British officers.<sup>160</sup> Soldiers are shown in the picture as fully mobilised and ready to fight. A few months later another article alarmed readers that there is an 'English organised German army in the region of Hamburg and

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<sup>158</sup> GR, 23.05.1946

<sup>159</sup> Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Secretary, who supported James F. Byrnes in his declaration regarding the temporary character of the western border of Poland

<sup>160</sup> 'Express Ilustrowany' (EI), 13.09.1946

Hannover'.<sup>161</sup> Such news combined with information that 'Hitler's military stuff is on freedom in the American occupation zone'<sup>162</sup> could give the impression that German militarism might be reborn again.

### **Economic danger**

The vision of a 'German economic threat' enabling the 'dangerous resurrection of German militarism' was another important motif explored in propaganda. This concern was elaborated in numerous articles. For instance, *Głos Robotniczy* published the news from the occupied zones of Germany informing readers that Western occupants (mainly the USA and England) were 'supporting the rebuilding of the German economy instead of punishing "Nazi criminals"'.<sup>163</sup> Even the articles dedicated to the sentences announced during the trial in Nuremberg in October 1946 served here as a pretext. The trials in Nuremberg were a series of military tribunals, held by the Allied forces after the end of World War Two. Those trials were most notable for the prosecution of prominent members of the military, and political and economic leaders of Nazi Germany. In the communist press in Poland the reports from Nuremberg were used to highlight the fact that through 'indulgent punishment' Western governments were 'actively supporting the development of the German postwar economy' and, consequently, 'dangerous German imperialism'.

One such text was prepared by the *Głos Robotniczy* correspondent to Nuremberg, Leopold Marschak.<sup>164</sup> This engineer, pilot and journalist belonged to the large group of propaganda agents who, similar to the majority of the *Szpilki* milieu, had a non-communist background. In the interwar period, after finishing his career as a pilot, he started to write texts as a non-political expert in aviation for Warsaw newspapers *Wiadomości Warszawskie* and *Głos Stolicy*. In September of 1939 Marschak served as an officer in the Polish Army. In 1942 he joined the AK and was active in its structures operating in the region of Vilnius. In the summer of 1944 after the Red Army

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<sup>161</sup> KP, 28.11.1946

<sup>162</sup> GR, 30.12.1946

<sup>163</sup> EI, 04.12.1946

<sup>164</sup> Leopold Marschak (1900-1983)

seized control of Vilnius, Marschak moved to Lublin where he started to work as a journalist of the just established PAP agency. In 1946 he was sent as the PAP correspondent to the trials in Nuremberg, while in 1951 he started to work in Polish Radio.

In his correspondence from Nuremberg published in *Głos Robotniczy*, Marschak accused the Western authorities of 'having a memory gap about the dangerous consequences of making Germany powerful again'.<sup>165</sup> Such observations were supplemented by drawings like the one entitled 'Heil, Bevin!'<sup>166</sup> published in *Express Ilustrowany*. It presented a group of German veterans performing the Nazi salutation to the British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin. The accompanying text informed the reader that Great Britain and the USA allowed former SS officers to accede many important positions in the new German government and state economic institutions. The article 'All started from the industry' was supposed to remind readers that 'although Germany was defeated, it could still be dangerous for Poland'.

In a similar vein, the article 'A loan for Germany!' informed readers that the 'great international capital began an action of rebuilding German imperialism'.<sup>167</sup> It accused the 'Western capitalists' of 'investing large amounts of money in the country that provoked World War Two'. Western allies were to 'make the Teutonic knights powerful again' instead of supporting the victims of Hitlerism in the whole of Europe.<sup>168</sup> The threat of a resurrected Germany waging a war of revenge was present in numerous articles and drawings.<sup>169</sup>

Looking at the below presented economic threat in the propaganda tactic of stressing the German threat one may notice how this policy was used to promote the communist authorities. In fact, to a large extent the dreadful phantom of an economic resurrection of the former Nazi empire served the propagandists as a pretext for

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<sup>165</sup> GR, 02.10.1946

<sup>166</sup> EI, 21.09.1946

<sup>167</sup> GR, 11.10.1946

<sup>168</sup> Teutonic Knights - German medieval military order, active in Poland between thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, waging numerous wars with Poland. Here – the synonym of the 'German enemy'.

<sup>169</sup> GR, 05.12.1946



highlighting the role of the communist government of Poland backed by the Kremlin as a protector of society monitoring the situation behind the Western border.

But for praising communist authorities, the figure of the German threat in communist propaganda discourse was broadly exploited in order to defame political adversaries of the Polish postwar government.

#### **2.4 German stigma on the political opponents of the regime**

Aiming at the consolidation of society around the new authorities the propagandists attempted to use the German stigma to increase the mistrust of society towards political opponents of the communist authorities. The propaganda vision of Poland as a besieged fortress endangered by the state enemies was creatively strengthened. In this strategy the phraseological pass-keys, like that of 'reaction' which is discussed here, played a fundamental role.

##### **The concept of 'reaction'**

One of the most important key words in the propagandist anti-German discourse was the concept of 'reaction'. 'Reaction' was a part of the discourse present in the communist propaganda since the nineteenth century, but it was in the postwar period that it reached the peak of its popularity. This word, essential for channelling emotions was present in almost all press articles. In the propaganda techniques, specific key-words very often referred to emotions like joy, pride or fear. Some of those words exist only in a certain language and are untranslatable. The favourite word of the communist propaganda language - 'reaction' – belongs to them. It is a noun referring to the '*reactionary*' political viewpoints (which began to be called that around the time of the French Revolution), i.e. causing people to seek to return to a previous state in a society. In the communist postwar usage of 'reaction' it earned a new meaning and dimension. Previously, the noun 'reaction' was reduced to labelling the so-called 'reactionary' as a social phenomenon, willing to overthrow the current 'progressive' political forces and return to the status quo with its unjust class relations. It was rather used to discourage society from supporting the given political party or organisation. In the new political

reality the noun 'reaction' was used in a much more brutal way. It was supposed to scare people. 'Reaction' became a synonym of threat, of enemy and dangerous political adversary not only of the communists, but of the entire country. In satirical drawings it was portrayed as a scary multi-headed dragon<sup>170</sup> or as a group of wild apes irresponsibly playing with an atom bomb and trying to 'blackmail the whole of humanity with it'.<sup>171</sup>

The adjective 'reactionist' added to any other subject was supposed to strengthen the emotional dimension of an accusation. It served to generate and magnify anxiety. The members of 'reakcja', to whom anyone could be included at virtually any moment, were presented as an enemy of Poland and the whole socialist block.

In postwar reality 'reakcja' entered the communist discourse vigorously in the form of the famous inscription on the poster 'The Giant and the Buzzed Dwarf of the Reaction' by Włodzimierz Zakrzewski. A hundred thousand copies of this poster was printed in 1945 and was distributed to every region of Poland. It presented the large figure of a soldier of the LWP and a little ugly dwarf with the inscription AK written on a plate hanging on his neck. The poster was supposed to ridicule the Home Army and present it as those who only disturbed the Red Army and LWP in the 'liberation' of Poland. The poster was very controversial as most Poles were aware of the fact that the Home Army invested a large effort into fighting the Germans. One may realize how counterproductive the poster was when reading the recollection of Edwin Rozłubirski, an officer of Ludowe Wojsko Polskie who during World War Two served in Gwardia Ludowa, a communist underground military organisation. Concerning the poster Rozłubirski confessed: *'few cataclysms caused such harm as this misfortunate poster with the 'buzzed dwarf of the reaction'*.<sup>172</sup>

The role of the concept of reaction in the communist system of power is well presented in the recollection of Maria Turlejska, historian and sociologist, member of the PPR and PZPR, and instructor in the Propaganda Department of the Central

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<sup>170</sup> SZP, 17.07.1945

<sup>171</sup> SZP, 13.11.1945

<sup>172</sup> E. Rozłubirski, *Strzelałem... i do mnie strzelano*, "Polityka" 26.04.1986, quoted after M. Kula, *Narodowe i rewolucyjne*, Warszawa, 1990, p. 95

Committee of the PPR.<sup>173</sup> Starting from 1970s Turlejska became one of the first historians publishing in Poland who began to revise the official version of the postwar history of Poland and thus she was removed from her position in academia. In 1986, in her famous study on the political prisoners sentenced to death and the judges deciding this justice, Turlejska wrote:

*'In order to justify the inevitability of keeping the state of emergency and the necessity of their own activity, the political police, that is MBP, the office of security, their Soviet advisors and superiors were creating the artificial atmosphere of threat. They were fomenting the psychosis of fear of political opponents called reaction, they stimulated the fear of the military underground and, actually, fear of the society'.<sup>174</sup>*

In the tactic of using the notion 'reaction' to justify the threatening activity of the secret police terrorising Polish society, sketched by Turlejska, the communist propaganda served as a transmitter of fear.

The same notion of 'reaction' was used to describe the Polish Exile Government, such as in the brochure *Reaction stands behind the PSL* by Roman Werfel.<sup>175</sup> Werfel was a Polish communist activist, active member of the KPP in the interwar period, and since 1939 a member of The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). He was one of the most important propagandists and ideologists, active especially during the Stalinist period. From July 1944 he was editor of the PPR daily press organ *Głos Ludu*. In 1948 Werfel became the editor-in-chief of the *Książka i Wiedza* publishing house. From 1952 Werfel occupied the position of editor-in-chief of *Nowe Drogi* (New roads) – the ideological, political and theoretical press organ of the PZPR. In 1956 for two months Werfel became the editor of *Trybuna Ludu*, the daily press organ of the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR).<sup>176</sup> In Werfel's brochure on PSL the government in London was accused of wrong decisions regarding the Warsaw Uprising and the whole PSL was depicted as 'reactionary', i.e. acting against the Polish *raison d'état*.

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<sup>173</sup> Maria Turlejska (1913-2004)

<sup>174</sup> M. Turlejska, *Skazani i ich sędziowie (1944-1946)*, [in:] *Te pokolenia żałobami czarne...: skazani na śmierć i ich sędziowie*, Warszawa 1990, p. 54-111

<sup>175</sup> R. Werfel, *Reakcja stoi za PSL*, Łódź 1946

<sup>176</sup> T. Torańska, op.cit., pp. 105-141

## The Nazi-like PSL

If the 'reactionaries' were against the Polish state, they had to – according to the communist rhetoric - have pro-German inclinations. This link was clearly suggested in the chapter *The German danger still threatens Poland*, where Werfel<sup>177</sup> accused PSL leaders of 'counting on the German revenge'.<sup>178</sup> He pointed out that they actively supported the idea of a 'third world war' in which the new German troops would fight the Soviets, who once again against this background were 'the only guarantor of Polish independence and integrity'. What Werfel stressed in 1946, Eryk Lipiński had portrayed half a year earlier in the drawing entitled 'The dreams of the reactionist' published on the cover page of *Szpilki*. Lipiński dressed the figure of the reactionist in the body of Stanisław Mikołajczyk, leader of the PSL, and showed him lying on a comfortable sofa dreaming of the new war in which British troops would fight the Red Army.<sup>179</sup> Further examples will show that linking the word 'reaction' with the Nazis and Germany was a very common practice in the communist propaganda. The exploration of the anxiety regarding the integrity of Polish postwar territory provoked by e.g. 'reactionary bands cooperating with Nazi commandos' serves here as a good example of this strategy.

Soon after the war the motif of collaboration of e.g. PSL politicians with Nazi occupants was broadly explored in the communist propaganda to provoke anxiety (regarding PSL's 'real intentions'). Special instructions prepared by the Ministry of Information and Propaganda (MliP) stated that 'the forces connected to the pre-war parties, the Home Army and the NSZ, should be defamed on every occasion and presented as Hitler's agents'.<sup>180</sup> Here the way that the infamous Trial of the Sixteen was pictured in the communist press is a good case in point. The Trial of the Sixteen was the staged trial of sixteen leaders of the Polish Underground State held in Moscow which took place between 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> June 1945. In March 1945 those most important figures of the Polish Underground State were invited by the Soviet General Ivan Serov to

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<sup>177</sup> Roman Werfel (1906-2003)

<sup>178</sup> R. Werfel, op.cit., pp. 33-37

<sup>179</sup> SZP, 22.05.1945

<sup>180</sup> AAN, MliP, sygn 25, Okólnik nr 1 z 17.04.1945

negotiate their potential entry into the Soviet-backed Provisional Government. Despite the fact that Polish emissaries were given a guarantee of safety, they were arrested by the NKVD and transported to Moscow. All but one of the defendants were forced to plead guilty and on 21<sup>st</sup> June the verdict was issued. Among the allegations of possessing forbidden devices (radio transmitter, printing machines and weapons) and membership in the underground organisation "NIE", the leaders of the Polish Underground State were accused of several crimes connected with the collaboration with the Germans: spying and sabotage at the rear of the Red Army for Germany and planning a military alliance with the Nazis.<sup>181</sup> The trial took place at the same time (and city) as the shape of the provisional government of Poland was negotiated by a Polish delegation and Kremlin authorities.

### **The fascist blemish on the underground state**

The trial was broadly described in the Polish central and local press. Articles published in *Rzeczpospolita*, the main daily press organ of the PKWN, mainly highlighted the 'collaboration of the defendants with a Nazi occupier'. This press campaign organised in late May 1945, only a few weeks after the end of World War Two, was supposed to undermine the reputation of the leaders of the Underground State. There could be no better deterrent than references to the Germans. An anonymous article informed readers that by 'acting against the Red Army the leaders of the Underground State actually acted against Polish independence'.

The next day, the same newspaper wrote extensively on the leaders who 'planned to organise common military actions with German troops against the Red Army'.<sup>182</sup> General Bór-Komorowski, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army was depicted as a traitor, who 'collaborated with the German Army in order to defeat the Red Army'.<sup>183</sup> Also, other leaders of the Polish Underground State were accused of supporting Germans in order to hamper the Soviet offensive in 1944/1945 which was to

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<sup>181</sup> K. Bagiński, *Proces szesnastu w Moskwie* [in:] *Zeszyty historyczne*, vol. XV, Paris, 1963, pp. 102-103; K. Pużak, *Wspomnienia 1939-1945* [in:] *Zeszyty historyczne*, vol. XLIV, Paris, 1977, pp. 176-180

<sup>182</sup> *Rzeczpospolita* [later:RZ], 21.06.1945

<sup>183</sup> GR, 21.06.1945

delay the 'liberation' of Poland.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, according to the article the 'leaders of the Polish Underground State were realising the political targets of Great Britain, not Poland' which 'posed a great threat to Polish independence'. The propagandist who wrote this article suggested that 'the "fascist policy of London" was actually "pro-German"'.<sup>185</sup>

The above article intended to discredit the representatives of the Polish Government in exile in London and provoke doubts regarding its 'factual intentions'. It was a vital part of the strategy of exchanging the 'figures of eternal enemies of Poland' in the consciousness of Poles. The figure of the 'Soviet enemy' was supposed to be replaced by the 'ruthless German enemy' and its 'fascist allies'. The propagandists gave the press readers clear, efficient and feasible instructions how to eradicate the potential danger<sup>185</sup> – Poles should trust the Soviets and the communists, who defeated the Germans and guaranteed Poland's independence and integrity.

The propagandists used very similar techniques one year later during the campaign before the People's Referendum. Elections and different kinds of referenda were an extremely important part of the strategy of the formal legitimisation of power. Those political acts gave the winners the official right to rule. According to law scientist Tadeusz Biernat, formal legitimisation is also very important for the imposed and unpopular governments.<sup>186</sup> The communist dictatorship in Poland, controlled by the Kremlin, required such legitimisation to prove its legality. The People's Referendum of 1946, also known as the "Three Times Yes" referendum, was the first step of the legitimization strategy. The communists formulated the three questions in a way that Poles would have no doubt to vote 'yes' three time, thus unanimously accepting the policy of the new government. PSL leaders, however, decided to recommend to society to vote 'no' in the first question as opposition on this point would be the least

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<sup>184</sup> GR, 22.06.1945

<sup>185</sup> The propagandists fulfilled three conditions of successfully referring to fear in propaganda formulated by Pratkanis&Aranson

<sup>186</sup> T. Biernat, *Legitymizacja władzy politycznej. Elementy teorii*, Toruń 2000, pp. 69-74.

important. This recommendation became one of the origins of an anti-PSL propaganda campaign organised by the communist apparatus in the first half of 1946.

During the campaign before the referendum the main strategy of the communist propaganda was to confirm to society the advantages of the proposed solutions.<sup>187</sup> Apart from this positive agenda, propagandists decided to attack their political adversaries who tried to undermine the idea of accepting all three proposals in the referendum. For this purpose, the German motif again turned out to be useful. In the anti-PSL campaign the allegedly 'pro-German inclinations of this political formation'<sup>188</sup> were disclosed.

### **PSL and NSZ – successors of German oppressors**

The below discussed set of telling examples of the aggressive anti-PSL propaganda discourse must be seen in the context of the brutal physical attack that the MBP and the KBW officers accused the members and proponents of the party of starting from the spring of 1946. The PSL memorials prepared in 1946 and 1947 indicated a total number of 1,982 PSL members and supporters who were arrested and imprisoned between March and December 1946. Moreover, documents contained a list of the PSL members who were beaten (72 cases) and murdered (110 cases), those PSL candidates in parliamentary elections who were imprisonment (149 cases), removed from work (44 cases) and households (28 cases). The document enumerated the attacks on PSL meetings (36 cases), PSL offices (41 cases), and brutal revisions (85 cases).<sup>189</sup> This brutal attack was an integral part of the phenomenon interpreted by Anita Prażmowska as a civil war. In her words the postwar melting pot led to competition between those who

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<sup>187</sup> Press articles enumerated the benefits coming from abolishing the Senate (*'the pre-war source of fascist intrigues'*), advantages of agriculture reforms and of the new shape of Polish borders in the West. The journalists enlisted famous artists and scientist who declared their support for the idea of a referendum.

<sup>188</sup> J. Cyrankiewicz, R. Zambrowski, J. Berman, *Referendum*, Łódź 1946, p. 23

<sup>189</sup> *Dokumenty fałszerstw wyborczych w Polsce w roku 1947*, Vol.1, ed. M. Adamczyk, J. Gmitruk, Warszawa 2000; *Dokumenty fałszerstw wyborczych w Polsce w roku 1947*, Vol.2, ed. M. Adamczyk, J. Gmitruk, Warszawa 2002.

entered the ruling parties and the activists from legal and illegal oppositions.<sup>190</sup> In the civil war it was the PSL next to post-AK and the NSZ underground military troops that became a main target of the communist authorities.

Such a ruthless campaign against political opponents required a proper propaganda explanation. This is why the communist media regularly exploited the motif of the alleged link between PSL activity and the 'German threat'. As a consequence of beginning in 1946 PSL members were regularly depicted as 'continuators of the politics of Hitler'.

Their activity was presented in a way that led to the conviction that the PSL's real intentions towards Poland were equally dangerous as those of the Germans in 1939 (and later) and that the political targets of Mikołajczyk precisely met the expectations of 'hidden hazardous German hydra' still jeopardizing Poland. In fact most of the articles and drawings presenting the leaders of the PSL gave an impression that the PSL was one of the hydra's heads.

The press attacks on the Polish Peasant Party and National Military Forces grew stronger in April 1946, when the idea of a Peoples' Referendum came to the fore. The PSL treated the surprising decision about the referendum as a problematic substitute of parliamentary elections. The government used this negative attitude of their political rivals to depict them as 'enemies of the unity of Poland' who 'did not want to let Poles declare their opinion regarding crucial problems'. The article with the lengthy title: "The PSL member, commandant of German police was recognised and arrested" informed readers that Józef Pietrzak, leader of PSL in Biała-Podlaska, was recognised as a former cruel commandant of the German police.<sup>191</sup> The article implied that this was not the only such instance where the PSL gave shelter to a criminal Gestapo collaborator and 'Nazi veterans'. The same motif was exploited in later months giving an impression that PSL elites, 'Nazi successors', were preparing the ground for the new German invasion of Poland.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> A.J.Prażnowska, *Civil War in Poland, 1942–1948*, New York 2004

<sup>191</sup> GR, 03.04.1946

<sup>192</sup> GR, 05.10.1946



In the same vein, the meaningful poster prepared by the PPR Central Committee Propaganda Department referred to the factual provisional and tactical allies that NSZ troops drew up with the SS in mid-1943. The poster depicted two figures who were about to vote in the Peoples' Referendum. The first one was probably a worker who read the official communist instruction for the referendum. Behind the worker there was a soldier with a NSZ inscription, carrying a gun and shouting towards the worker – 'Vote no!' On the wall next to those figures there was a shadow of the soldier with a Nazi swastika on his sleeve.<sup>193</sup>

After the failure of the People's Referendum (though officially the government decidedly won),<sup>194</sup> the communists treated the parliamentary elections organised in Poland on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1947 very seriously as it was the final act of the formal legitimisation of power. The elections were the fulfilment of the decision taken during the summit in Yalta between the three big players among the allies. The three governments guaranteed the organisation of free elections that would select the legal parliament and, consequently, legal government of Poland.

In the autumn of 1946 the communist government banned the activity of all right-wing parties (under the pretext of their pro-fascist stance). For the purpose of the forthcoming elections, the MliP prepared and distributed, through its local structures in the whole country, hundreds of thousands of copies of brochures implying that the 'German danger' was carried by the PSL.<sup>195</sup>

Among the dangerous consequences of a victory of PSL in elections the flier, *If the PSL won*, enumerated: chaos, disintegration of public life, waves of strikes, huge inflation, abolishment of important social reforms and, finally, economic dependence on Western countries.<sup>196</sup>

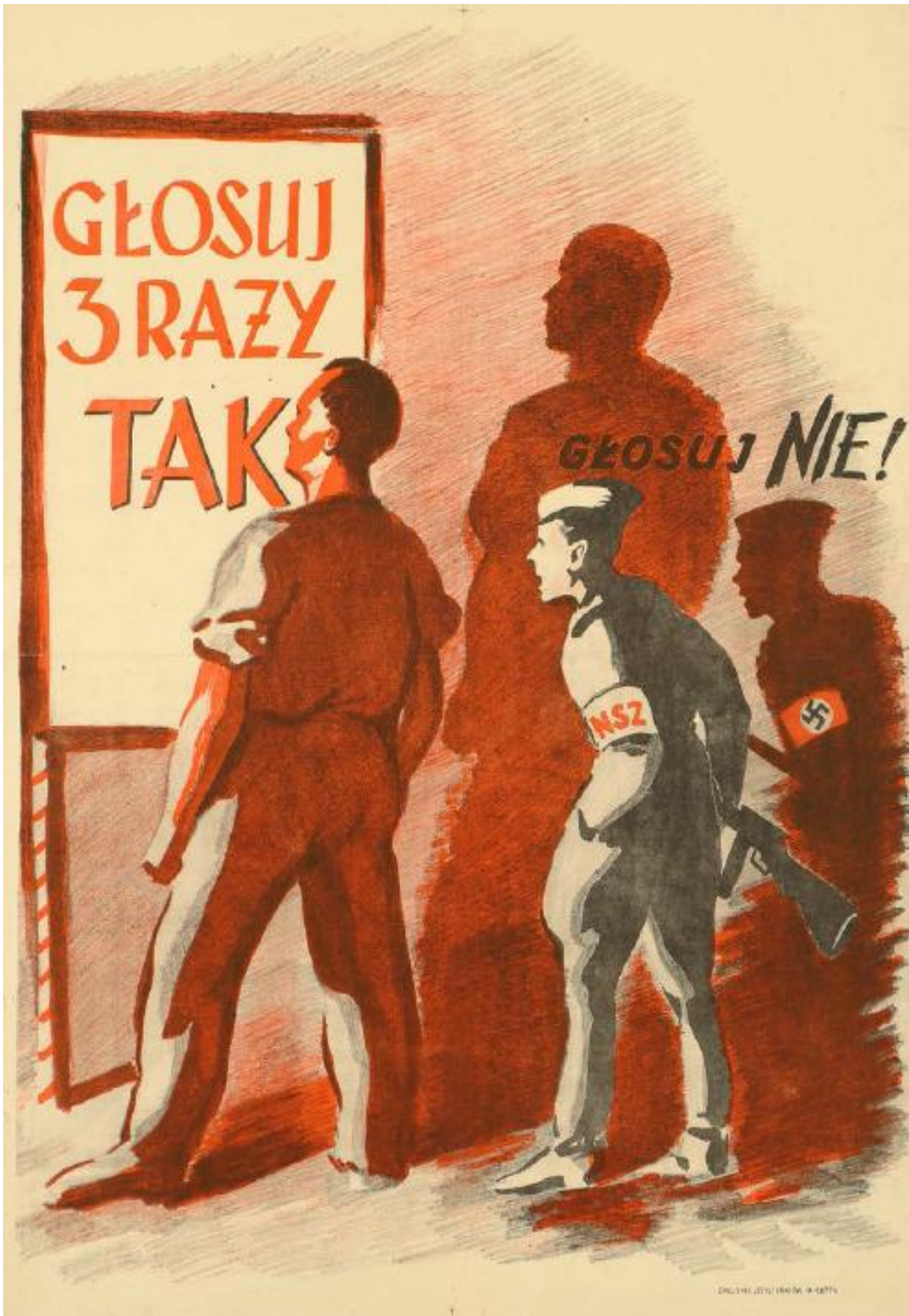
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<sup>193</sup> MPW, Pl.7963/1 ; Picture 7

<sup>194</sup> The official results of the referendum were as follow: 1<sup>st</sup> question - yes 68% / no 32%, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 77.2%/22.8% and 3<sup>rd</sup> – 91.4%/8.6%. Unofficial estimated results were just the opposite: 1<sup>st</sup> – 26.6%/73.1%, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 42%/58%, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 66.9%/33.1%

<sup>195</sup> *Dokumenty fałszerstw wyborczych w Polsce w roku 1947*, Vol.1, ed. M. Adamczyk, J. Gmitruk, Warszawa 2000; *Dokumenty fałszerstw wyborczych w Polsce w roku 1947*, Vol.2, ed. M. Adamczyk, J. Gmitruk, Warszawa 2002.

<sup>196</sup> AAN, MliP, sygn.123, Gdyby zwyciężyło PSL.



Picture 7

The last two points of this catastrophic vision referred again to the German threat: 'pro-German policy of Mikołajczyk', 'loss of regained lands'; 'Polish inhabitants deprived of their households'. The same leaflet informed readers that 'the victory of the PSL would weaken the strategic alliance of Poland and the USSR'. Consequently, 'the abandoned Poland would become an easy target for a future German attack which would end up with another loss of independence, just like in September 1939'. The catastrophic vision of Poland under the rule of the 'pro-German PSL' presented in the flier was supposed to present the communist government as the no-alternative form of power in the country.

Simultaneous to the above analysed leaflets the aspect of the 'pro-German economic policy of PSL that would put Poland in danger' was also discussed in the propaganda pamphlet 'So there will be elections'.<sup>197</sup> The author of the pamphlet, Jerzy Borejsza,<sup>198</sup> was one of the most important Polish communist activists of Jewish descent. First of all he was an organiser and head of the *Czytelnik* publishing house. As Maria Dąbrowska, Polish writer, put it in her memoir, '*Borejsza created a large organization, an organization encompassing publishing – newspapers, books and readers, created with almost an American flare. But the aim of this organization was a slow and deliberate Sovietisation and Russification of Polish culture*'.<sup>199</sup> In the early 1920s Borejsza sympathised with the Zionist radical left and anarchic political factions.<sup>200</sup> In 1923 he moved to Paris where he studied at the Sorbonne and deepened his anarchistic fascination.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> J. Borejsza, *A więc wybory*, Warszawa 1946

<sup>198</sup> Jerzy Borejsza (1905-1952)

<sup>199</sup> M. Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki*, vol.1, Warszawa 1997, p. 148

<sup>200</sup> E. Krasucki, *Międzynarodowy komunista. Jerzy Borejsza biografia polityczna*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 38-40

<sup>201</sup> In late 1920 Borejsza came back to Poland where he joined the KPP and was arrested several times for communist agitation. After the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, Borejsza became a vocal supporter of the new communist regime, publishing Polish language translations of Soviet propaganda. In 1943 he was one of the founders of the ZPP. Borejsza served in the Red Army, and then the Polish 1st Army, reaching the rank of major. He moved back to Poland in July 1944 where he organised much of the communist propaganda in the early days of communist Poland. Borejsza was a leading figure in the implementation of state control over the world of Polish culture. In 1948 he was one of the main organisers of the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace in Wrocław. After 1949 Borejsza fell out of favour with the Stalinist hardliners who saw him as too independent and not radical enough. Apart from administrating the significant part of the propaganda apparatus, Borejsza also published his own works.

In his pamphlet dedicated to the issue of the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Poland, Borejsza accused the PSL elites of 'hampering the state economy through resistance to the nationalisation of heavy industry'. In his opinion, 'nationalisation was the best way to accelerate the growth of the economy'. On the other hand, Borejsza suggested that 'the economy of Germany – supported by other Western countries – was dangerously growing'. Consequently, he concluded that 'if the PSL wins the election', the slow development of the Polish economy would 'weaken the whole country' and would 'expose Poland to the threat of a German revenge'.<sup>202</sup> Borejsza formulated a clear, efficient and achievable solution to the problem of the 'dreadful phantom of German revenge': 'the only way to reinforce the Polish economy and to accelerate the reconstruction process was to vote for the Democratic Bloc' in parliamentary elections.

The communists combined the motif of Gestapo collaborators among their political adversaries also with a Ukrainian motif. The article 'Criminal alliance' was dedicated to the alleged collaboration of NSZ and WIN troops with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA),<sup>203</sup> though these were enemies at that time. Needless to say, any mention of the UPA brought about the most horrific memories, still fresh, after the Volhynia Massacre, where between March 1943 and December 1944 UPA troops killed around sixty thousand Polish civilians in Volhynia, and around forty thousand in Eastern Galicia. Bolesław Dudziński,<sup>204</sup> the author of the article, highlighted the fact that among members of the UPA there were also former German soldiers. The article reminded readers of the nature of the massacre and created the 'criminal image' of NSZ and WIN.

The above presented panorama of the anti-German media discourse remained a vital component of the communist propaganda also after 1947. One may trace this motif between the lines of the further chapters of the thesis. Yet, it is important to

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<sup>202</sup> J. Borejsza, op.cit., p. 7

<sup>203</sup> UPA - Ukrainian Insurgent Army was a large and well organised Ukrainian nationalist military, and later partisan, army that engaged in a series of guerrilla conflicts during World War Two against Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and both Underground and Communist Poland. The group was the military wing of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists — Bandera faction (the OUN-B), originally formed in Volyn (Northwestern Ukraine) in the spring and summer of 1943.

<sup>204</sup> Bolesław Dudziński (1892-1976)– journalist and literary critic from Łódź.

discuss at least the most important rhetorical trope which the communist agitators attempted to exploit to sensitize Polish society concerning the German threat. The below presented set of visual symbols of those figures enables capturing the intentions of the propagandists.

## **2.5 The German threat after 1947**

At the brink of the 1940s and the 1950s the motif of the resurrection of dangerous German militarism still belonged to the main problems which the communist propaganda attempted to stress in order to persuade the media receivers in Poland that there was serious danger deriving from living with the German enemy just behind the border. Obviously after 1949, when on the occupied territory of Germany the USA, Great Britain and France from their occupation zones established the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the USSR established the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), the communist propaganda attacked only West Germany – both its own policy and American support dedicated to the government in Bonn.

### **Disturbing sowing and lethal crops**

After 1947, just like in the first postwar years, the tactic of exposing the Polish population to the vision of terrifying war-like consequences of a stimulating German economy and industry was regularly implemented in communist media. The caricature prepared by Boris Yefimov and published in Poland in the form of the popular (over twenty-one thousand copies were printed) poster, was circulated in Poland by the *Prasa* publishing house<sup>205</sup> in 1951, serves as a perfect example of this thread in communist visual propaganda.<sup>206</sup> With his drawing entitled 'American sowing' Yefimov, a prominent

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<sup>205</sup> *Prasa* – Polish publishing label associated with the PPR and later with the PZPR. It was established in 1947 and existed until 1973. *Prasa* edited over 50% of Polish periodicals including 90% of all the daily press titles circulated in Poland. The supervisory board of *Prasa* was recruited from such eminent and influential PPR and PZPR activists as Jakub Berman, Roman Zambrowski, Aleksander Zawadzki, Stefan Jędrychowski, Zenon Kliszko, Edward Ochab and Leon Kasman.

<sup>206</sup> MPW, PI.8720/1, Picture 8

Soviet caricaturist,<sup>207</sup> presented the huge figure of 'Uncle Sam' watering the German soil with Dollars. Instead of crops, however, what germinated from the ground was military equipment and flags with the swastika, symbols of Nazi power. This poster referred to the conception of the USA, which during a summit of NATO in New York in September 1950, suggested remilitarising Germany and including this state to the treaty structures. This decision was interpreted by the Socialist bloc as a sign of confrontation and a Western struggle to rebuild dangerous German militarism.

Aside from suggesting that American economic support for Europe could reactivate the imperialist Third Reich, the communist propaganda exploited the figure of the German military threat also to discredit the Western European integration initiatives.

### **Official integration vs factual remilitarisation of Germany**

The establishment of two German states in 1949 inclined the USA to implement the idea of rearmament of West Germany. This plan was supposed to balance the growing Soviet military power in Europe.<sup>208</sup> In response to this plan the government of France announced an alternative idea referring to the future of the potential reactivation of German militarism.

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<sup>207</sup>Boris Yefimov (1900-2008) – one of the most famous Soviet caricaturists, a chief illustrator of the newspaper *Izvestia*, an official daily of the Soviet government.

<sup>208</sup> One of the main factors motivating the USA to remilitarize West Germany was breaking the American monopoly for the nuclear weapon in August 1949.





Picture 8







Although the French initiatives, that is the Schuman Declaration<sup>209</sup> and especially the idea of the European Defence Community,<sup>210</sup> were supposed to push the phantom of direct remilitarisation of West Germany further away from Paris, the communist propaganda used it to equate them with America's disturbing plan of rearmament of the territories governed by authorities in Bonn.

This tendency was well illustrated by the anonymous poster circulated in Poland in 1952. The poster entitled 'The Schuman Plan' presented the French Prime Minister René Pleven as a keystone doing his best to tie in two military vehicles – the American transporter and the German cannon covered with Nazi signs and commanded by the former Nazi officer.<sup>211</sup> The inscription printed on the poster informed readers that *'Betraying the interests of the French nation the government of Pleven-Schuman supports the remilitarisation of Germany by American imperialists'*. The aggressive facial expressions of both the Nazi officer and the American soldier presented on the caricature aimed at suggesting that the army of Nazi Germany was eager to cooperate with the US Army in the implementation of its war-like policy in Europe. Consequently the factual intentions of Schuman and Pleven were either dissembled or distorted in order to highlight the threat by the German enemy.

The above discussed poster symbolized the communist propaganda tactic based on recruiting the figure of the 'German threat' in order to confront the media receivers with the practical aspect of the dreadful war-like policy of the USA and its Western allies. Parallel to this strategy, the numerous other pieces of visual propaganda published at the beginning of the 1950s exploited the figure of the German enemy to promote the socialist anti-war policy.

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<sup>209</sup> Schuman Declaration – a political plan prepared and announced in May 1950 by the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman. The plan assumed the creation of a new form of organisation of states in Europe. The plan was supposed to bond the economies of France and Germany and was based on the idea of coordination of common production of steel and coalmining that would enable the control of the military industry in West Germany. The main idea of the declaration was to create the economic blockade preventing the possibility of the next global conflict.

<sup>210</sup> European Defence Community (EDC) - a plan prepared in 1950 by French Prime Minister René Pleven. The idea of the EDC was announced in opposition to the American strive to remilitarise West Germany. The EDC was supposed to include West Germany, France, Italy, and the Benelux countries. Although the treaty was signed in May 1952, it was never put into practice.

<sup>211</sup> MPW, Pl.482/1; Picture 9

## **We will not allow the rebuilding of the Wehrmacht!**

The strategy of the communist peace propaganda addressed in details in the sixth chapter of this thesis started to be augmented already in late 1940. This policy was supposed to present the USSR and the entire socialist bloc as the only protectors of the postwar peace preventing Europe and the world from the war-like policy of 'Western capitalist war provokers'.

In this tactic the figure of the 'German threat', and particularly the images of Nazi soldiers, printed on posters were circulated throughout Poland and were supposed to help the communist agitators to mobilize Polish society and encourage it to support anti-war initiatives.

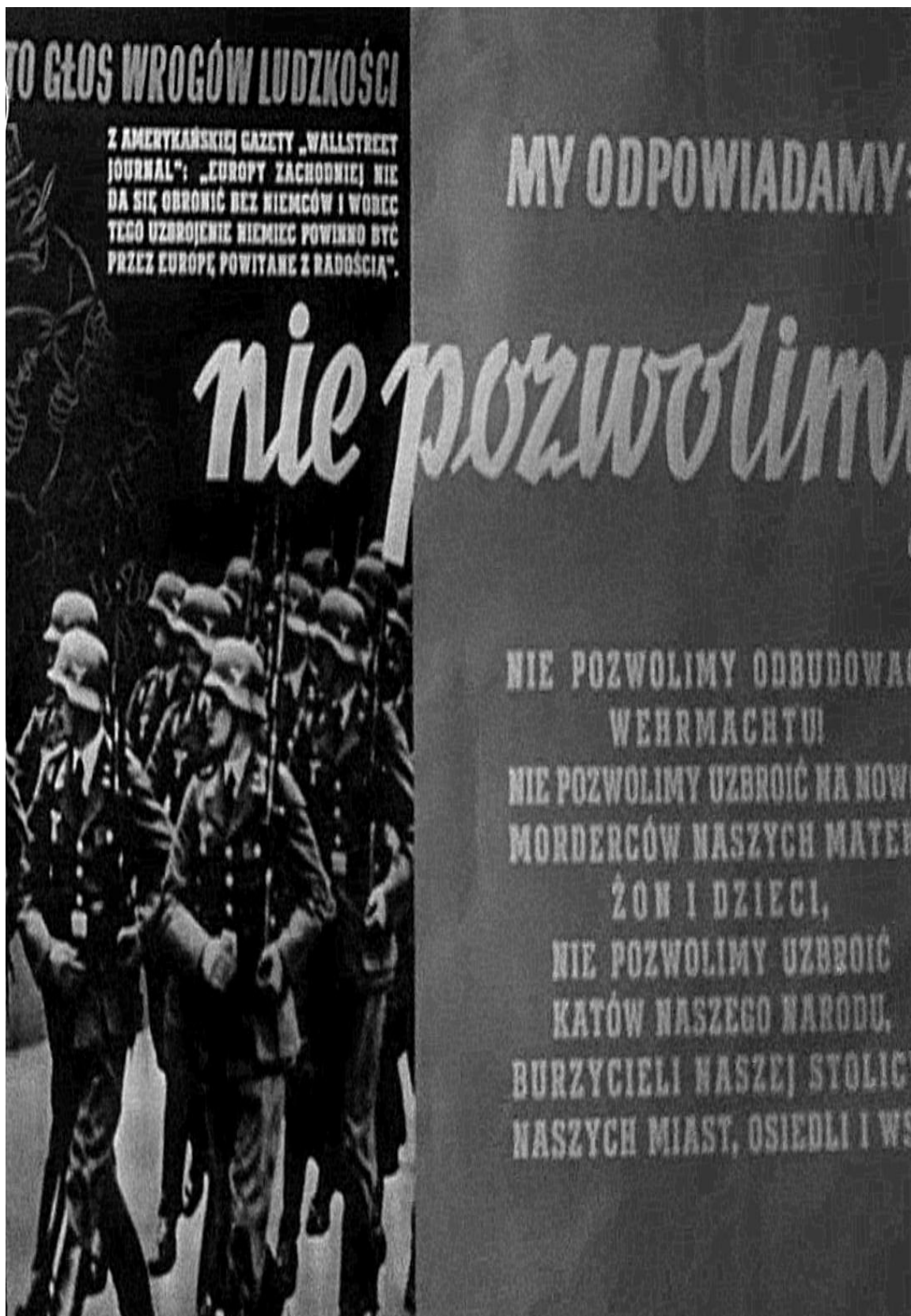
The anonymous poster published in Poland in 1951 as a component of the communist propaganda campaign persuading Polish society to sign the National Plebiscite of Peace<sup>212</sup> serves as a perfect example of this strategy.<sup>213</sup> The composition of the poster, signed with the general slogan '*We will not allow!*', was constituted around the huge photo of the marching Nazi soldiers.

The picture most probably taken during one of the military parades of the German army before or during World War Two and was supposed to suggest that the same kind of alarming demonstrations of aggressive Nazi power would take place again unless the Western war-like policy was not blocked by the socialist pro-peace movement. The right and wider part of the poster contained the firm response from the communist agitators stating that (in the name of the society) '*We will not allow the rebuilding of the Wehrmacht, we will not allow remilitarizing the murderers of our mothers, wives and children, we will not accept the rearmament of the hangmen of our nation, destroyers of our capital city, towns and villages*'.

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<sup>212</sup> More on this plebiscite and other pro-peace initiatives in the sixth chapter, pp. 378-398

<sup>213</sup> MPW, Pl.8533/1; Picture 10



Picture 10

In my view the words 'we will not allow' should be interpreted as a propaganda attempt to persuade propaganda receivers that the government and society had an identical goal – to stop the resurrection of Nazi imperialism. Consequently, with such posters agitators aimed at inclining society to identify with the communist anti-fascist ideology.

While the general strategy of instilling in Poles the conviction that they should stay alert towards the German enemies remained unchanged, the establishment of West Germany generated new personal symbols of the German threat.

### **Adenauer – a new leader of old enemies**

Analysing communist propaganda discourse present in Polish media after 1949 one may quickly conclude that the role of a new chief German bogeyman was attributed mainly to the first chancellor of West Germany, Konrad Adenauer.<sup>214</sup> In communist media, this statesmen was regularly presented as a new incarnation of Hitler having similar aggressive motivations. In general, the figure of the chancellor was exploited in communist media with the intention to symbolize West Germany as a hostile state waiting for any occasion to plot against Poland. Examining several episodes of the Polish Film Chronicle in the early 1950s, one may observe the way the image of Adenauer was used by propagandists to symbolize various aspects of the German threat.

First of all the authors of the PKF suggested that Adenauer acted as an obedient agent of American war provokers. In the episode transmitted in May 1951 the chancellor was presented as one of the figures of the satiric 'Trumanillo circus' – a parade of effigies symbolizing Western European and American leaders organized during most public holidays in the Stalinist period.<sup>215</sup> The effigy symbolizing Adenauer was covered with swastikas and had a necklace made of hand grenades. In the parade, the effigy of Adenauer walked hand in hand with its partner, a figure symbolizing

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<sup>214</sup> Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967) - first postwar Chancellor of West Germany, held this post between 1949 and 1963.

<sup>215</sup> PKF 22/51, 23.05. 1951

President Eisenhower. Such collation highlighted the aggressive Nazi inclinations of Adenauer and a war-like policy of Western Germany sponsored by the USA.

Seven months later the same juxtaposition was presented to the PKF viewers in the episode dedicated to the anniversary of the liberation of the death camp in Auschwitz. After an opening section of the movie depicting Nazi crimes committed in Auschwitz, the PKF producers showed photographs documenting the meeting of Adenauer and Eisenhower. The picture was loudly commented on as *'fascists who are threatening the entire world with their plan to provoke new war'*. Authors of the episode suggested that the chancellor allowed Nazi war criminals to leave prisons and accepted American control over a new Wehrmacht, the manoeuvrings of which were supposed to pose a threat to world peace. Consequently the movie created the vision of Adenauer as a dangerous state leader acting on the behest of the USA. The same image of Adenauer was solidified two years later with the PKF episode commenting on the idea of creating a European Army discussed by leaders of Western Germany and France.<sup>216</sup> Once again the German chancellor was shown to be a war provoker negotiating with France in order to accelerate the process of the remilitarisation of Germany.

Aside from stressing the evil intentions of the leader of Western Germany, communist propaganda also exploited the image of Adenauer to promote the president of Eastern Germany. In communist media the peaceable vision of Otto Grotewohl's presidency was juxtaposed with the aggressive rule of Adenauer. Here, the PKF episode transmitted in Polish cinemas in October 1951 serves as a good example of such a tendency.<sup>217</sup> The short movie suggested that Grotewohl tried to convince Adenauer to withdraw from his agreement for the aggressive manoeuvres of NATO troops on the territory of Western Germany. The PKF episode informed viewers that despite this appeal Adenauer allowed military exercises to be performed which were supposed to result in the resurrection of the Nazi Wehrmacht armed by the USA.

While usually the figure of Adenauer was used by agitators to symbolize a general phantom of the 'German threat', in several cases the Western German

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<sup>216</sup> PKF 7/53, 11.02.1953

<sup>217</sup> PKF 41/51, 03.10.1951

chancellor was presented as an anti-Polish conspirator posing a direct threat to the Polish *raison d'état*. For instance, the figure of the chancellor was recruited to the propaganda tactic of explaining the 'true nature' of the riots in Poznań in June 1956. Here the caricature by Jerzy Zaruba published in *Szpilki* in the summer of 1956 is a good case in point. The drawing, published on the cover of the magazine in mid-July 1956, referred directly to the dramatic events of the Poznań protests that took place in late June.<sup>218</sup> The crowd of around one-hundred-thousand workers of Poznań's Cegielski factories gathered in the centre of the city near the local MBP office. Workers demanded lower prices of goods, higher salaries and a general improvement of everyday conditions.

In response to this manifestation, the government mobilized around four hundred tanks and ten thousand soldiers and KBW officers, who were given the task of suppressing the demonstration. During the pacification, government forces fired at the protesting civilians causing the death of over fifty protestors.<sup>219</sup> Due to their character and the range of riots in Poznań, they were aptly interpreted by Paweł Machcewicz as in the category of national uprising.<sup>220</sup>

Zaruba's drawing, published around two weeks after the demonstration in Poznań, presented Chancellor Adenauer sitting in his office and making a phone call to Allan Dulles, the CIA director, with fresh news already on June 28<sup>th</sup> when the demonstration took place. According to the inscription under the drawing, Adenauer was informing Dulles that he had very promising information from Poznań. This suggestion was supposed to persuade the readers of *Szpilki* that instead of being a spontaneous act, the riots in Poznań were in fact a result of an 'American plot' coordinated by the CIA using Adenauer as their provocateur.

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<sup>218</sup> SZP, 15.07.1956; Picture 11

<sup>219</sup> P. Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 77-107

<sup>220</sup> Loc. cit.





ADENAUER: — Mam bardzo dobre wiadomości z Poznania, Herr Dulles!

Picture 11

The anti-German rhetoric and references present in all the above discussed posters clearly proves that six or even eleven years after the end of World War Two the communist agitators were still juggling the same set of anti-German clichés that were implemented in the propaganda discourse already in the summer of 1944. The huge number of references to those figures in communist media published in the 1950s shows that despite the rapid changes in the international political dynamics the stereotypical vision of 'military German dread' must still have been diagnosed by communist propagandists as one of the most effective factors enabling the management of the emotion of fear within Polish postwar society.

## **Conclusion**

All the above examples of the anti-German propaganda discourse should be interpreted as central components of the communist rationalisation strategy of the nationalist legitimisation of power defined by John. B. Thompson. While this strategy is based on the stability of national values like: national freedom, state independence, national mission and on the monopolisation of those vital values by a given government,<sup>221</sup> the mass exploitation of different shades of the figure of the 'German threat' served the communist agitators to strip their political and military opponents from all those patriotic virtues. Consequently, attributing to the PSL its alleged pro-German inclination the propagandists presented the communist government as the exclusive guarantor of independence and territorial integrity of Poland.

As it will be shown in further chapters of this thesis, the vast majority of the propaganda techniques of generating the negative image of Germans and Germany was later used to create the disturbing picture of other foreign enemies of Poland. In my view the rhetorical trope of the German threat served as a model, as a laboratory and as a prototype for all other enemy images analysed in later chapters of this thesis. Consequently, the above presented complex model of picturing the state enemy became a universal matrix consisting of motifs used by the propaganda agents

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<sup>221</sup> J.B.Thompson, *Ideology and modern culture*, Stanford 1990, pp. 60-64



attempting to generate and manage, i.e. the fear of spies, conspirators or the multifaceted figure of the American threat.

Aside from recruiting the media techniques and threads elaborated during the first postwar years, the issue of the German threat in communist propaganda in Poland also functioned as a vital motif strengthening the severity of other threats signalled by government media in Poland. Those facts enable the interpretation of the rhetorical trope of the German threat as a sort of benchmark image of the foreign enemy in the communist propaganda.

All the components of the anti-German propaganda analysed in this chapter were supposed to help the propagandists in their attempt to create the atmosphere of constant danger that would justify a harsh policy of the new postwar government. This strategy is visible, i.e. in the propaganda explanation of the activity of the secret police brutally pacifying the political and military opponents of the communist authorities as patriotic combat with dangerous pro-German state enemies. Simultaneously this media strategy aimed at consolidating society around the communist government offering media receivers protection from the signalled threat.

Knowing the role the propaganda figure of the German threat played in the communist media discourse it is vital to examine the way it was perceived by the media receivers. Here, the wide examination of the local application of mutations of the general anti-German media discourse, the main content of the second chapter of this thesis, turned out to be of help. In the specific local context this analysis allowed an investigation into the efficacy of the propaganda based on fear.

## CHAPTER II

### **Greedy capitalists and aggressive neighbours. The local dimension of the German threat with the examples of Łódź and Szczecin**

*As long as the world exists,  
a German will not be a brother to a Pole*

Polish proverb

The anti-German theme in the postwar communist media presented in a general context in the first chapter enables one to recognise the main methods and motifs which communist propaganda used in presenting the image of the foreign enemy and, consequently, foreign threat. The examination of the implementation of those methods in the specific social context of two cities: Łódź and Szczecin opens another level of the analysis. The discussion of the propaganda messages addressed to the communities living in different postwar circumstances offers the opportunity to trace the ways in which the communist propagandists were dealing with postwar fears within local contexts. What is no less important is that this comparison allows for the assessment of the popular reception of propaganda attempts to focus attention of two different communities on the vision of German dread.

#### **1. Łódź and Szczecin – historical and sociological sketch**

The choice of Łódź has been made given the particular character of that industrial centre and its socialist traditions. No less important is the fact that the new nineteenth century shape and image of the city was planned precisely with the intention of attracting Germans. Privileged as they were, Germans gained an important position in the city and played a significant role in shaping its modern character. Łódź as a town was established in 1423, but its rapid development started only in the nineteenth century when it was designated to be a centre of the textile industry in Russian Poland. The visionary plan of attracting the western weavers (mainly Germans and German Jews)

initiated the rapid economic and demographic growth of the city. The population of Łódź suddenly increased from 4,000 in 1830 to 500,000 in 1915.<sup>222</sup> The cultural heritage of the city was shaped by Poles, Jews and Germans. Following ethnic criteria, in 1939 the population of 670,000 of Łódź consisted of 60% Poles, 30% Jews and 10% Germans. The Polish, Jewish and German workers constituted the most important and the most numerous social group. Politically, the city was dominated by the socialists (mainly PPS), but also had significant anti-Russian episodes: most importantly the Revolution of 1905, when the workers joined in the Polish movement for national freedom. In 1940 occupied Łódź, renamed Litzmannstadt and was included in the German Wartheland,<sup>223</sup> an integral part of the Nazi Third Reich. The Jewish community (around 200,000 or 31.7% of Łódź's inhabitants) was imprisoned in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto (the second biggest in occupied Europe) and finally deported to Auschwitz in August 1944. After a short battle the German troops were dislodged from Łódź by the Red Army on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1945 and as mentioned before the city became a temporal capital city of Poland.<sup>224</sup>

The past and the development of Szczecin (Stettin in German) was very different from the history of Łódź. It was an age-old important port town located on the Oder River, around 65 km from the Baltic Sea and built as an eighth century Slavic Pomeranian stronghold. In the twelfth century, when Szczecin had become one of Pomerania's main urban centres, it lost its independence successively to Piast Poland, Saxony, the Holy Roman Empire and Denmark. Between 1237 and 1243, the town was rebuilt and it joined the Hanseatic League. After the Treaty of Szczecin in 1630 Stettin came under Swedish control until 1720, when it was acquired by the Kingdom of Prussia and became the capital of the Province of Pomerania, which after 1870 was part of the

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<sup>222</sup> *Łódź. Dzieje miasta*, ed. R. Rosin, t. 1: do roku 1918, red. B. Baranowski, J. Fijałek, Łódź-Warszawa 1980, wyd. 2 1988, pp. 192-220

<sup>223</sup> Wartheland – A Nazi German Reichsgau formed from the Polish territory annexed in 1939. It comprised of the Greater Poland and adjacent areas, and only in part matched the area of the similarly named pre-Versailles Prussian province of Posen

<sup>224</sup> K.G. Latocha, A. Ossowski, P. Spodenkiewicz, M. Zapolska-Downar, *Najdłuższe pół wieku. Kalendarium Łodzi 1939–1989*, Łódź 2013, p. 52

German Empire. In the late nineteenth century, Szczecin became an industrial town, and vastly increased in size and population up to 380,000 in 1939.<sup>225</sup>

Given its location, at the end of World War Two Szczecin's status was unclear and very complicated. Such a situation strongly affected Polish settlers arriving to the city starting from May of 1945 onwards. They had to deal with strong anxiety deriving from the uncertain future of this region. Social concerns generated tough challenges for local communist agitators who aimed at persuading settlers that the guarantee of safety given by the new communist authorities sufficed to stay in the city.

During the summit in Yalta in February 1945 the leaders of the USA, Great Britain and the USSR decided to include Szczecin into the new (though still provisional) western border of Poland. Szczecin was planned to be an important centre of the north part of the 'regained territory' of Poland - lands given to Poland as compensation for the eastern territories annexed by the USSR in 1939. On 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1945, after few a weeks of heavy fighting, the Red Army seized the city, which the Germans had turned into a fortress.<sup>226</sup>

The first Polish administration of Szczecin was installed only two days after the seizure of the city by Soviets, but soon the Soviet war commandant of Stettin, Aleksander Fiedotow, designated Erich Spiegel, the representative of pro-Soviet National Committee Free Germany, as a Major of the city. The Soviets forced the Polish authorities to leave the city on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1945 and established a German board in Stettin. Polish authorities returned to the city on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June and ruled in Szczecin together with Germans for ten days but were removed again from the city by the Soviets.

On 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1945 Fiedotow finally handed power over Szczecin to the Polish authorities. The German name of the city was officially replaced by the Polish one and Szczecin became part of the People's Republic of Poland. The turbulence of the Polish/German status of Szczecin heavily influenced the Polish inhabitants of the city.

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<sup>225</sup> J. Musekamp, *Zwischen Stettin und Szczecin, Metamorphosen einer Stadt von 1945 bis 2005*, Harrassowitz Verlag-Wiesbaden, 2010, pp. 11-13

<sup>226</sup> K. Wóycicki, *Kalendarium niezwykłego miasta Szczecin 1945-1989*, Szczecin 2004, p. 21

They were not sure about the city's future to a much larger extent than in any other region of the 'regained territories'.<sup>227</sup>

The significant (or even fundamental) impact of Germans in shaping the pre-war character of both cities created a unique context in which the exploration of the postwar German threat was practiced by the local propagandists. Unlike in many other cities in Poland, which were heavily influenced by Germany only under the Nazi occupation, the propagandists working in Łódź and Szczecin had an opportunity to refer to the pre-war memory of Germans within local society. The question of the way and the extent to which the press publishers and filmmakers exploited this context in central Poland and on the 'regained territories' will be addressed through the example of these two cities which were heavily influenced by World War Two.

### **1.1 Postwar conditions of the cities**

The problem of the postwar city landscape creates an important context in which the emotional condition of local societies should be analysed. In his analysis, Stefan Ludwig Hoffman concludes that the destruction of the city seriously deepens the traumatization of its inhabitants. People living in a destroyed environment, between the ruins of churches, civil buildings or whole districts reduced to rubble were much less confident concerning their future than those living in the less harmed regions of Europe.<sup>228</sup>

When it comes to Poland, the scale of destruction was very different in than other areas of the country. Szczecin serves as a good example of the post-catastrophic city. It was a target of bombardment from 1943 onwards and 40% was destroyed by the Western allies at the beginning of 1945. The siege of the city by the Red Army in April 1945 caused further damage. In the end, around 70% of civil and 90% of industrial buildings were ruined. The infrastructure of the port was turned into rubble with none of the bridges on the Oder River surviving.

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid, p. 11

<sup>228</sup> S. Hoffmann, *Gazing at ruins: German defeat as visual experience*, [in:] *Journal of Modern European History*, Jg. 9, 2011, pp. 328-350; S. Hoffmann, *Post-Catastrophic Cities*, [in:] *Journal of Modern European History*, Jg. 9, 2011, pp. 308-313

Łódź, despite the opinion still popular in Polish historiography, was also heavily victimised during World War Two, though compared to Warsaw, Wrocław or Szczecin, in Łódź the transition from war to peace had a more social and demographic than a material cost. The 'Report on the damages of Łódź resulting from World War Two and the organisation and functioning of the Litzmannstadt Ghetto' prepared in 2006 by the town council in Łódź indicated that during World War Two around 25% (440,000) of Poles living in Łódź Voivodeship were deported to the forced labour camps in Germany.<sup>229</sup> The deported Poles were replaced by Germans who were transferred from the USRR, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In June 1944 there were around 143,000 Germans living in Łódź.<sup>230</sup>

The authors of the report stated that most of the civil buildings in the city survived undamaged. Yet, they estimated the total value of damages in the city at around 40 billion PLN (that is 13 billion current US Dollars). In a similar report analysing the situation in heavily destructed Warsaw the total value of damage was estimated at around 138 billion PLN (45 billion current US Dollars).<sup>231</sup> No such report has been prepared for Szczecin so far. Despite the damaged technical infrastructure and lack of raw materials the production process in most of the factories in Łódź was restarted within a couple of months.<sup>232</sup>

## 1.2 Local societies and their concerns

Before the seizure of the city by the Red Army, Stettin was inhabited by around 238,000 passim Germans. At the beginning of May 1945 there were only 271 Poles in Stettin.<sup>233</sup> The first Polish settlers, a group of 900 people recruited from central Poland, arrived in Szczecin a few weeks later and were joined by a further 24,000 in August

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<sup>229</sup> "Straty wojenne Łodzi" – raport z oszacowania strat i szkód poniesionych przez miasto Łódź wskutek wybuchu i trwania II wojny światowej oraz wynikłych z organizacji i funkcjonowania Litzmannstadt getto", Ed. J. Baranowski, K. Baranowski, L. Berliński, A. Lech, F. Sitkiewicz, UMŁ, Łódź 2006, p. 4-5

<sup>230</sup> J. Wróbel, *Bilans okupacji niemieckiej w Łodzi 1939-1945* [in:] *Rok 1945 w Łodzi. Studia i szkice*, ed. J. Żelazko, Łódź 2008, p. 17

<sup>231</sup> Raport o stratach wojennych Warszawy, ed. W. Fałkowski, Warszawa 2004, p. 8

<sup>232</sup> P. Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland. Workers and communists 1945-1950*, London 1997, p. 75

<sup>233</sup> K. Wóycicki, op.cit., p. 21

1945.<sup>234</sup> In December 1945 Szczecin was inhabited by around 60,000 Germans and 26,500 Poles, mostly settlers from central Poland (96%), the so-called repatriates from the former eastern territories of Poland (1.6%) and Polish re-emigrants from the west (2.4%).<sup>235</sup> Between February and December 1946 most of the German inhabitants of Szczecin were resettled to the British occupation zone of Germany. By the end of 1946 there were still 17,000 German inhabitants in Szczecin while the amount of Poles in the city already exceeded 100,000 (36% repatriates, 58% settlers, 5% re-emigrants).<sup>236</sup> Between May and August 1947, as a result of operation 'Vistula',<sup>237</sup> around 50,000 people of Ukrainian descent were resettled in the region of Szczecin and soon inhabited the city.<sup>238</sup> By the end of 1947 there were around 135,000 Poles (31% repatriates, 63% settlers and 6% re-emigrants) and 4,050 Germans in Szczecin.<sup>239</sup>

Łódź, according to the report prepared by the representative of the PPR on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1945, was inhabited by around 350,000 people. In this group there were around 100,000 former inhabitants of Warsaw waiting for the rebuilding of their city.<sup>240</sup> As for other national groups, in early postwar Łódź there were only around 700 Jews and 33,000 Germans and Volksdeutsche.<sup>241</sup> This last group, according to Nazi criteria, were defined as Poles of German descent, but in the postwar reality the term Volksdeutsche became the equivalent of 'traitor' and 'enemy'. Those were Volksdeutsche to whom the PKWN 'decree on means of precautions concerning the traitors of the nation' announced in November 1944 was dedicated. According to the decree each Polish citizen being over 13 years old who signed the volksliste was supposed to be relieved of

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid, p. 22

<sup>235</sup> K. Wóycicki, op.cit., p. 27

<sup>236</sup> Ibid, p. 33

<sup>237</sup> Operation Vistula- forced resettlement of postwar Poland's Ukrainian minority (including Boykos and Lemkos) to the Recovered Territories, carried out by the Polish Communist authorities in 1947 in order to remove the support base of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the aftermath of the 1943-1944 ethnic cleansing of Poles in Galicia and Volhynia by Ukrainians. About 200,000 civilians residing in and around Bieszczady and the Low Beskids were forcibly resettled to formerly German territories.

<sup>238</sup> I. Hałagida, *Ukraińcy na Zachodnich i Północnych ziemiach Polski 1947-1957*, Warszawa 2002, pp. 26-81

<sup>239</sup> K. Wóycicki, op.cit., p. 35

<sup>240</sup> J. Łozińska, M. Łoziński, op. cit., p. 79

<sup>241</sup> AAN, KC PPR, Wydział Organizacyjny, Sprawozdania miesięczne, Łódź, 01-02.1945

all his property and imprisoned in a forced labour camp.<sup>242</sup> The number of inhabitants of Łódź who signed the volksliste is estimated at around 107,000.<sup>243</sup> One should bear in mind all those statistics since they show the structure of the local community to which the communist propaganda was dedicated.

### **Initial enthusiasm in postwar Łódź**

From the perspective of the communist authorities establishing the new political order in Łódź the attitude of local people towards the communists was very enthusiastic. The optimistic observation of Łódź inhabitants reactions towards the 'liberators' was noted in a report prepared in Łódź in January 1945 by Captain Józef Czaplicki, the envoy of Stanisław Radkiewicz, the head of the MBP,<sup>244</sup> as well as in reports made by voivode of Łódź, Ignacy Loga-Sowiński<sup>245</sup> and Iwan Sierow, Soviet consultant affiliated to MBP.<sup>246</sup> One may also notice the enthusiasm expressed in those days by the Polish inhabitants of Łódź watching the short movie relating the entrance of the Red Army and Polish soldiers to the city.<sup>247</sup> The short film consisted of typical scenes of people smiling, waving and even kissing the soldiers who had just 'liberated' Łódź.

The presentation of the events of late January 1945 made by Eugeniusz Ajnenkiel, socialist activist from Łódź, sheds some light on the factual nature of this enthusiasm. In his view Poles in Łódź reacted with spontaneous joy to the view of Polish military uniforms. Poles did not celebrate the fact that the PPR members or the MBP agents entered the city – they were rather 'exulting at the release from the fear and war horrors'.<sup>248</sup> The enthusiasm of 30,000 inhabitants of Łódź gathered spontaneously on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1945 to manifest their gratitude to Polish soldiers and officers rapidly dropped in the next few months as it was overshadowed by mundane problems.

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<sup>242</sup> Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, vol.11, 1944, p. 54

<sup>243</sup> B. Kroll, A. Fritsche, *Tak było. Wspomnienia łódzkiego Volksdeutscha*, Łódź 2010, p. 7

<sup>244</sup> AAN, KC PPR, Wspomnienia i relacje. Relacja J. Czaplickiego, p. 77

<sup>245</sup> *Kształtowanie władzy ludowej w Łodzi i województwie łódzkim w 1945 roku. Wybór źródeł*, ed.G. Adamczewska, M.Bandurka, E.Chobot, Warszawa-Łódź 1985, p. 27

<sup>246</sup> T. Bogalecki, *Generał Iwan Sierow o sytuacji w Łodzi* [in:] 'Kronika miasta Łodzi' 2002, vol.2, p. 181

<sup>247</sup> The movie is available under the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TONFGNJIiL4>, - retrieved 31.07.2015

<sup>248</sup> AAN, KC PPR, Akta H. Wachowicza, 1571/2, Wspomnienie E. Ajnenkiela, p. 35



Among the most important concerns the inhabitants of Łódź had to deal with were common poverty and a shortage of food. This problem is visible both in the PPR City Committee reports on social moods and in memoirs of the local workers. For instance, in his recollections Jan Baranowski wrote that usually he had to go to work without breakfast as otherwise his children would have nothing to eat for the whole day. Baranowski, though declaring himself as a fervent communist, was deeply frustrated with such situation and recognised the same symptoms among his colleagues.<sup>249</sup> Apart from acute hunger and poverty the inhabitants of Łódź had to grapple with the common acts of plundering, robbery and rapes committed by Soviet soldiers.<sup>250</sup> At least until the end of 1945 the region of Łódź witnessed a number of military encounters between Soviet soldiers and Poles defending their households. One such clash on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1945 near to Jeżów cost the lives of 17 Poles, with many others wounded.<sup>251</sup> Thrilling as it was, the criminal activity of Soviet soldiers and renegades in central Poland was far less intense compared to crimes the Red Army committed on the 'regained lands', treated by Soviets like conquered territory. In such circumstances the propaganda tactic of wide exploration of the local shades of the figure of the German threat analysed in the first chapter of this thesis became one of the central components of the media smoke screen covering the acute results of the Soviet dread.

### **Settlers surrounded by ruins and rumours in Szczecin**

Szczecin, one of the centres of the conquered territories regained to Poland experienced the whole panorama of hardships of the postwar period. The atmosphere in the city during the first months after the end of World War Two was much worse than in Łódź. The governmental report prepared on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1945 presented the condition

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<sup>249</sup> Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna im. Piłsudskiego w Łodzi, an autograph of memoirs of Julian Baranowski, vol.2, pp. 170-174

<sup>250</sup> J. Łozińska, M. Łoziński, op. cit., p. 83

<sup>251</sup> J. Wróbel, *Wyzwoliciele czy okupanci? Żołnierze sowieccy w Łódzkiem 1945-1946* [in:] Biuletyn IPN, vol.7, 2001, pp. 39-42

of the city and the level of security in Szczecin as tragic.<sup>252</sup> The non-consolidated groups of Polish settlers coming from various regions of Poland had to deal with the difficult situation of living in a 'foreign' and destroyed city located far away from the pre-war western border of Poland – much further than e.g. Wrocław. Szczecin was located almost on the border with the 'sinister', though defeated, Nazi German state, the citizens of which still constituted an overwhelming majority of inhabitants of the city.

Jan Musekamp, a German historian, compared the worries of Poles resulting from the proximity of the border to the 'psychosis of temporality'. It started in April 1945 when the first Polish administration was installed in the city and lasted at least for the next three years.<sup>253</sup> This 'psychosis' was then increased, for instance, by the speech of Winston Churchill in Fulton on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1946, where the former prime minister of Great Britain stated that: 'From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent'. As Jan Musekamp put it in his study on Szczecin, those words were interpreted by the inhabitants of the city as a dangerous portent of the forthcoming turning of Szczecin into an 'international – free city'.<sup>254</sup>

As the representative of the Ministry of the Regained Lands noted in his report, the speech caused a wave of panic within inhabitants of Szczecin, who were uncertain of the future status of the city. According to his report, many settlers started to run away from the city which caused a significant increase of prices of basic goods. The same report informed readers that local authorities were not able to regain settler's equanimity until late April.<sup>255</sup>

The 'psychosis of temporality' was also present in rumours regarding the future of the city, which local public opinion was saturated with. In August 1945 *Wiadomości Szczecińskie* in the article 'The pessimists' criticised and enumerated the most popular rumours. According to those rumours Szczecin could soon be proclaimed a free city or be given back to Germany. There were even rumours that Szczecin was to be

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<sup>252</sup> AAN, MZO, Stan bezpieczeństwa na ziemiach odzyskanych, korespondencja, notatki, meldunki, p. 19

<sup>253</sup> J. Musekamp, op.cit., pp. 122-132

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, p. 124

<sup>255</sup> AAN, MZO, Sprawozdanie ogólne Ministerstwo Ziem odzyskanych. Departament kontroli za okres 15.03.1946-30.03.1946, pp. 147-148

administrated by Czechoslovakia. This last rumour must have been an echo of the Polish-Czechoslovakian territorial conflict that almost caused a war in the summer of 1945. Although the tension between Poland and Czechoslovakia was officially softened by the end of June, the anxiety concerning the future of the territories that were the subject of the conflict remained fresh in the form of rumours.<sup>256</sup>

Among other rumours fomenting anxiety within the settlers in Szczecin the most pessimistic one suggested that Szczecin would be evacuated as there was allegedly no economic point in rebuilding it.<sup>257</sup> There was also a very popular rumour suggesting the imminent outbreak of the third world war which would dramatically worsen the situation of the inhabitants of the frontier city. Though the local propaganda actively denied such rumours, many Poles treated them seriously.

Apart from the fear of the unclear future and common acts of banditry performed mostly by Soviet marauders, Polish settlers in Szczecin had to grapple with a dramatic lack of food. Piotr Zaremba, the first Polish Meyer of the city noted in his diary that in mid-July, when the first large organised groups of Poles arrived in Szczecin, the city was on the verge of famine.<sup>258</sup> What is more, most of the workplaces were destroyed while the core of local industry – the port, shipyard and the Police enclave with a large chemical industrial park – were occupied by the Soviets until 1947.

The problem of severe hunger in the first postwar weeks affected not only Polish settlers, but also local Germans. Since they were left by the German administration of the city at the beginning of July 1945 without any supplies of food, very soon they faced the plague of starvation. The reports and private correspondence sent from Szczecin

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<sup>256</sup> J.Krzyk, *Wodzu, prowadź na Zaolzie!* [in:] *Ale Historia*, vol.31/133, 04.08.2014, pp. 8-10. Already in late May 1945 both countries engaging the armies were striving to enlarge their territories to the detriment of the neighbor. While Poland attempted to regain the territory of Zaolzie, which was occupied by Poland between the autumn of 1938 until September of 1939, Czechoslovakia had a plan to incorporate two Polish cities, Racibórz, Kłodzko and their region. The government in Prague even considered a plan to incorporate the entire territory of Silesia. At the margin of those plans the Czechoslovakian government seriously considered an idea to go further and incorporate or at least gain control over Szczecin. Finally, in late June of 1945 due to the interference of the Kremlin this conflict was resolved and no territorial corrections were implemented.

<sup>257</sup> P. Zaremba, op. cit., p. 230; 'Wiadomości Szczecińskie' [later: WSZ], 05.08.1945

<sup>258</sup> P. Zaremba, op. cit., pp. 208, 216

estimated the daily number of German casualties between sixty to three hundred.<sup>259</sup> The Polish administration, having not enough supplies even for Polish settlers, was unable to solve this problem. It was not until mid-August that Meyer Zaremba, after the dramatic appeal published in the central daily *Życie Warszawy*, managed to organise new supplies of food that were distributed among both settlers and Germans.<sup>260</sup>

In those circumstances many Polish settlers changed their plans and started to abandon Szczecin. The local press criticised their cowardice and commented that Szczecin required special, meaning 'tough', people. The propaganda presented the ideal pioneers arriving in Szczecin as belonging to the category of 'new man'. They were supposed to be skilful and energetic workers who would supplement the newly established communist managerial staff.<sup>261</sup> The 'new man' in Szczecin was expected to be ready to fight obstinately against hard circumstances. The local press highlighted that 'Szczecin is not a place for weak and lazy people.'<sup>262</sup>

It was planned that the 'new man from Szczecin' was to be a final product of the process of assimilation of the various social groups that inhabited Szczecin after the end of World War Two.<sup>263</sup> The repatriates from the former eastern Poland were perceived as 'especially required as they were forced to stay on the western lands'.<sup>264</sup> The unified and integrated society on the 'regained lands' was planned to have a shape of 'the Pole from the East' who would screen Poland from possible German aggression.<sup>265</sup> The ethos of new settlers, 'the conquerors of the "regained territories" for Poland' played an important role as the patriotic legitimisation of communist power. Patriotism was supplemented by the affirmation of the USSR and other Slavic countries presented as a counterweight to the German threat.<sup>266</sup> Although the Ministry of the Regained Lands

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<sup>259</sup> A. Kraśnicki, *Szczecin 1945. Głód i śmierć na Wałach Chrobrego. Niemcy masowo umierają* [in:] 'GW Szczecin', 18.07.2015

<sup>260</sup> Loc. Cit.

<sup>261</sup> M. Mazur, *O człowieku tendencyjnym. Obraz nowego człowieka w propagandzie komunistycznej w okresie Polski Ludowej i PRL 1944-1956*, Lublin 2009, p. 179

<sup>262</sup> *Kurier Szczeciński* [later:KSZ], 14.11.1945

<sup>263</sup> J. Musekamp, p. 109-122

<sup>264</sup> M. Mazur, op. cit., p. 183

<sup>265</sup> G. Strauchold, *Mysł Zachodnia i jej realizacja w Polsce Ludowej w latach 1945-1957*, Toruń 2003, p. 178

<sup>266</sup> M. Mazur, op. cit., p. 183

aimed at promptly covering the differences between the autochthons, settlers and repatriates in order to cement them into a nationally homogenous group, the assimilation process was turbulent. Problems resulted, for instance, from the negative attitude of the newcomers and local administration towards the local Polish autochthons.<sup>267</sup> Further problems occurred when around 50,000 Ukrainians resettled from South-Eastern Poland in 1947 and faced a hostile attitude from their new Polish neighbours and administration.<sup>268</sup>

After the early difficult months of autumn and winter of 1945/1946 the living conditions in Szczecin slightly improved thanks to the effort of Mayor Piotr Zaremba<sup>269</sup> and the local government supported by the security service. Nevertheless, the transition from war to peace in Szczecin was slow and painful. In this situation the local Polish press played a vital role in relieving the pain.

### **Local media in Szczecin**

As soon as the first Polish administration was established in Szczecin in June 1945, the local press and communist propaganda structures were organised. The Polish press in Szczecin had a specific meaning for the Polish settlers arriving in the city. Besides the Polish flags in public offices, the Polish press was one of the very few manifestations of the new, freshly established Polish character of this post-German city. Due to the long distance of Szczecin from the pre-war western border of Poland, weak communication with other cities and a practical lack of other media (until the local Polish radio was established in the spring of 1946), the press was the only source of news about the region, other parts of Poland and Europe.

The first press title that started to be circulated in Szczecin, from 16<sup>th</sup> May 1945, was *Głos Nadodrzański* (Oder Voice). It was published by Czytelnik Publishing House

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid, op.cit., p. 197

<sup>268</sup> K. Lowe, op.cit., pp. 227-228

<sup>269</sup> Piotr Zaremba was Mayor of Szczecin from the summer of 1945 until 1950, when the whole government of Szczecin was liquidated. Zaremba organised the Technical University in Szczecin where he lectured until 1953 when he was forced to leave the city. More in: <http://sedina.pl/index.php/2006/11/01/pierwszy-polski-prezydent-szczecina-2/> - retrieved 06.02.2015

until August 1945. In this period only eight volumes were published giving the readers a panorama of political news from the whole world, especially from Germany. The articles published in *Głos Nadodrzański* highlighted the necessity of removing Germans from Poland and informed readers about the development of the Polish administration in Szczecin. The next Polish press title that appeared on the local market was *Wiadomości Szczecińskie* (Szczecin News) published from July 1945 to October 1945 by the local branch of the MliP. This press title contained the political news from the world, but was also focused on the everyday problems of settlers. Another important press title in the region, *Wiadomości Koszalińskie* (Koszalin News) had a very similar character and was also published by the Office of Information and Propaganda, located in the headquarters of the voivodeship.

In October 1945 the local press was supplemented by the official organ of PPR. Soon *Kurier Szczeciński* (Szczecin Courier) became the most influential daily title in the whole region. Similarly to *Głos Robotniczy* in Łódź, *Kurier Szczeciński* often printed the official public addresses by the Polish and foreign communist elites, especially the statements confirming the final character of the western border of Poland. The articles printed in this press title minutely reported on every political summit and conference which decided the precise shape of the Polish–German border.<sup>270</sup>

In the winter 1945/1946 one more influential player entered the local media market - the local studio of Polish Radio. The journalists recruited to work in this studio prepared radio programmes designed precisely for the specific community of Polish settlers in Szczecin and its region. The propagandists working in Polish Radio in Szczecin were adopting the central and general messages for the task of softening the alienation of settlers on the 'unknown territory'. The thread of the 'German threat' played a significant role in the programmes prepared by the local broadcasting station.<sup>271</sup>

Both the political messages and information regarding everyday issues published in all the above press titles and emitted by Polish Radio in Szczecin were supposed to help the Polish inhabitants identify with the city and its hard postwar reality. The fact of

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<sup>270</sup> T. Biątecki, *Prasa Pomorza Szczecińskiego w latach 1945-1975*, Szczecin 1978, pp. 48-72

<sup>271</sup> P. Szulc, *Zniewolony eter. Polskie radio Szczecin w latach 1945-1948*, Szczecin 2011, pp. 93-97

living almost on the border with Germany and still among many German inhabitants was one of the most important factors determining the tense atmosphere the Poles in Szczecin had to live in.

## **2. Anti-German atmosphere in the cities**

The anti-German moods present in both Łódź and Szczecin founded the context in which the press publishers, writers and movie directors attempted to focus the attention of local societies on the German threat. The combination of 'natural' postwar hatred of Poles towards Germans and an often artificially excited fear of the 'resurrection of German imperialism and militarism' was among the most important factors that constituted the frame in which the propagandists intended to reshape the consciousness of Poles according to the Soviet model.

### **2.1 The problem of Volksdeutsche in Łódź**

The intense anti-German atmosphere in Łódź grew stronger as only the German troops were removed from the city. Although in January 1945 most of the Germans and Volksdeutsche left the city,<sup>272</sup> those who remained became a target of social exclusions and attacks, mostly inflicted against the Volksdeutsche. In her recollection from the first days after the 'liberation' of Łódź Bożena Piwkowska, then a young woman, noted the image of blood on the snow on the streets in Łódź as a sign of lynchings practiced by Poles on Volksdeutsche.<sup>273</sup> Beno Kroll, then a 7-year-old boy, wrote in his recently published memoir that as soon as the frontier Soviet troops left Łódź, Polish neighbours and even Polish police and soldiers started to violently intrude upon Germans and loot their property and food stocks.<sup>274</sup> Another phenomenon was the plague of rapes of German women committed by Soviet soldiers. The latter were often sent to German houses by

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<sup>272</sup> L. Olejnik, *Łódź wielonarodowa w pierwszych latach po wojnie* [in:] *Rocznik Łódzki*, vol. XLV, 1998, pp. 186-187

<sup>273</sup> M. Kozerowska, J. Podolska, *Zdarzyło się w Łodzi: historia rodziny Biedermannów* [in:] *'GW Łódź'*, 05.02.2010

<sup>274</sup> B. Kroll, A. Fritsche, *op.cit.*, pp. 39-42

Poles who tried to protect their own wives and daughters.<sup>275</sup> Many Volksdeutsche were accused of collaboration with the Nazi occupier. Consequently very often they were removed from their houses and employment positions and sent to the post-Nazi labour camp Sikawa on the outskirts of Łódź.<sup>276</sup>

Those who had hidden the fact of signing the Volksdeutsche list were stigmatized in the press. The text published on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 1945 in the first postwar press title printed in Łódź, *Wolna Łódź*<sup>277</sup> (Free Łódź), a periodical organised by the propaganda unit of the Polish Army, summarizes well the way the propagandists intended to strengthen the anti-German attitude of the local community, reinforce their mistrust towards Germans and translate it into confidence towards the new communist authorities. The three communist editors who just arrived to Łódź from Warsaw, Aleksander Litwin, Romana Pawłowska and Zygmunt Nowicki, announced that: *'There will be no place for Germans in Polish Łódź. We must not forget that not all Germans were wearing military uniforms. We must be vigilant, we must be careful. We must not let the renegades take positions in the state apparatus. We should not be deluded with the view of Volksdeutsche welcoming Polish soldiers with bread and salt. In a critical situation they may disown the Polish nation, betray it and collaborate with the Nazi again.'*<sup>278</sup>

This kind of publication evoked the spontaneous opposition of inhabitants of Łódź to the law allowing some groups of Volksdeutsche to rehabilitate simply on the condition of a formal declaration of fidelity to Poland. The act was interpreted as too generous.<sup>279</sup> The figure of the Volksdeutsche was added to the propaganda 'pantheon' of the state enemies who allegedly intended to sabotage the rebuilding of Poland (e.g.

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid, pp. 50-51

<sup>276</sup> S. Abramowicz, *Obóz pracy Sikawa w roku 1945 i w latach późniejszych* [in:] *Rok 1945 w Łodzi. Studia i szkice*, ed. J.Żelazko, Łódź 2008, p.152-155; B. Kroll, A. Fritshe, op.cit, pp. 52-64

<sup>277</sup> 'Free Łódź' - a press title printed and circulated in Łódź at the brink of January and February 1945. Only six volumes were published, each printed around 10,000 copies. Officially it was not affiliated to any political structure, though the content was prepared by the propaganda and political unit of the Polish Army.

<sup>278</sup> 'Wolna Łódź', 24.01.1945

<sup>279</sup> K. Lesiakowski, *Nastroje mieszkańców Łodzi i województwa łódzkiego* [in:] *Acta Universitatis Lodzianis, Folia Historica*, vol.71, 2001, p. 124



‘The member of PSL and Volksdeutsche – they were agitating for the strike of tramways drivers’).<sup>280</sup> The way the Volksdeutsche were perceived by the Polish inhabitants of Łódź is well illustrated in the anti-German short poem, a paraphrase of the famous patriotic poem by Władysław Bełza *Catechism of the Polish child*, which was popular in postwar Łódź:

Kto ty jesteś – Volksdeutsch cwany,	Who are you? – crafty Volksdeutsche
Jaki znak twój? Krzyż złamany.	What is your sign? Broken cross
Kto cię stworzył – zawierucha.	Who made you? Storm
Co cię czeka? – gałąź sucha <sup>281</sup>	What is your future? Life sentence

This atmosphere resulted in further incidents where the local Polish population resorted to violence to demonstrate their unfavourable attitude towards the Germans. For instance, in Pabianice, a nearby town of Łódź, a group of believers was attacked during the service in the Protestant Church (29<sup>th</sup> July 1945). Interestingly, the police decided to arrest the attacked Protestants instead of the assailants without any specific explanation.<sup>282</sup> Such behaviour of the police shows the tolerance of local authorities for the violence practiced against ‘Germans’.

In later months the same anti-German atmosphere was perpetuated in Łódź by visual propaganda. In the spring of 1946 the Propaganda Unit of the Polish Army prepared and distributed in Łódź a poster containing a slogan and a threat: “The one who is against the state and democracy is supporting Germany!”.<sup>283</sup> Owing to the fact that the interpretation of ‘state’ and ‘democracy’ was restricted by the propaganda to the ‘communist state’ and ‘peoples’ democracy’, the slogan suggested that each kind of opposition to the government’ policy had an anti-Polish and pro-German character and was an act of national betrayal. Half a year later the local PPS structure prepared the

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<sup>280</sup> GR, 29.05.1946

<sup>281</sup> L. Olejnik, *Zdraycy Narodu?: Losy Volksdeuschow W Polsce Po II Wojnie Światowej*, Warszawa 2006, p. 8

<sup>282</sup> K. Lesiakowski, *Napaść na Ewangelików* [in:] Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, vol.9, 2001, pp. 31-33; this incident shows that Poles believed that a Protestant must be German.

<sup>283</sup> Muzeum Tradycji Niepodległościowych w Łodzi [later: MTNŁ], *Materiały Propagandowe*, sygn. A-1348, 1946

poster with the slogan: 'PPS demands the removal of all Germans from Poland'. This populist slogan presented the open political declaration of the party through which PPS wanted to attract voters for the forthcoming parliamentary elections.<sup>284</sup>

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## **2.2 Settlers on alien ground in Szczecin**

In Szczecin the anti-German mood derived mostly from the alienation of Polish settlers who arrived in the city which had belonged to Germany for many ages. The estrangement resulted not only from the fact that many Germans still inhabited Szczecin, but also from the German cultural heritage of the city. A significant number of the buildings which survived war damage in Szczecin represented typical German architecture.<sup>285</sup> One of the solutions proposed was an action of 'de-germanising' the city. The action was a sign of the practical implementation of the so-called 'Piaśt ideology', according to which westward relocation of Polish borders after the war was nothing more than regaining the lands by its former natural Polish owner. This narration was supposed to recruit settlers to the programme of constructing the new-old Polish identity on these lands.<sup>286</sup>

### **De-Germanisation of the city**

The action of 'de-Germanising' was announced by the local press several times up to 1946.<sup>287</sup> Local Polish inhabitants were encouraged to cover any German signs. The action was organised in the atmosphere of 'cleaning Szczecin from the German dust'. Among the activities introduced within this action was the removal of the German monuments and signboards with German street names and renaming the salvaged representative pieces of architecture. For instance, the German Hakenterrasse (from the name of the German major of Szczecin) along the Oder, was renamed the Chrobryś'

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<sup>284</sup> MTNŁ, Materiały Propagandowe, sygn. A-1479, 1946

<sup>285</sup> J. Musekamp, op.cit., pp. 202-211

<sup>286</sup> J. Musekamp, op. cit., pp. 147-152

<sup>287</sup> WŚZ, 24.08.1945; 'Głōś Nadodrzański' [Later: GN], 25.08.1945; 'Kurier Szczeciński' [Later: KSZ]03.04.1946

Bank. The new Polish name commemorated the first King of Poland, Bolesław Chrobry (966-1025) from the Piast dynasty and referred to the time when Poland was powerful.<sup>288</sup>

The above action was a part of much bigger process of rebuilding Szczecin, which Jan Musekamp defined as “converting the code of its municipal memory landscape”.<sup>289</sup> Szczecin, just like Wrocław, was planned to be rebuilt into an everlastingly Polish and fundamentally socialist city, deprived of its German heritage. This process was instrumentally used to strengthen the symbolic legitimisation of the new socio-political order. The cityscape of Szczecin was rebuilt, redecorated and mythologised in order to let the new Polish inhabitants of the city ‘feel at home’.<sup>290</sup> This kind of transformation of the city, from a place that is foreign into one that is familiar, might be perceived as a ‘cultural appropriation’.<sup>291</sup>

All those symbolic changes accompanying the replacement of peoples, quite rapidly changed the landscape of the city which did not necessarily mean that the action was fully successful. In the Pomerania region in several cases the reception of the combined attempts of the propagandists and local administration to soften the concerns of the settlers regarding the status of the regained lands was negative. For instance many people interpreted the constant changes of the city names, like Białogród or Starogród to Białogard and Starogard (and vice-versa) as a portent of giving the ‘regained territories’ back to Germany. This interpretation derived from the German tenor of the latter forms (Białogard, Stargard).<sup>292</sup> Through its indecisiveness in terms of choosing the final names of the city streets and places the local administration in fact undermined the propaganda efforts to persuade the Polish settlers that they inhabited

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<sup>288</sup> J. Musekamp, op. cit., p. 203. Furthermore the main street of Szczecin was renamed from the German Kaiser Wilhelm Straße (honoring the German emperor) into the name: Alley of National Unity. Moreover, the choice of the name Grunwald (commemorating the Polish-Lithuanian great medieval victory over the ‘German’ Teutonic Knights in 1410) for the main square in Szczecin was also very telling as it was the symbol of the Polish military triumph over the Germans.

<sup>289</sup> J. Musekamp, op.cit., p. 19

<sup>290</sup> Ibid, p. 18

<sup>291</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>292</sup> AAN, MZO, Meldunki nadzwyczajne o stanie bezpieczeństwa, Sprawozdanie Komitetu Wojewódzkiego PPR w Szczecinie za miesiąc Wrzesień 1946

'eternally Polish cities' and to instill them with the conviction that the Polish border with Germany was final and inviolable.

Perhaps Inga Iwasiów, a contemporary novelist from Szczecin, had it right when describing the memory of the new city's inhabitants, comparing the early postwar period to putting 'face powder over the wounds, which were less visible in the mirrors of hardly comfortable bathrooms, stroked for the first time after the war with oil paint, but without scraping old layers off'.<sup>293</sup>

Besides the problem of the final status of the 'regained lands' excited by the propaganda phantom of Germans waiting on the other side of the Oder River to regain their lands and properties the postwar presence of a large German community in Szczecin was used by propagandists to blame them for accomplishing the speculation on prices of goods on the local market. The local press described the German 'dirty business' of selling the goods they robbed in Poland during World War Two.<sup>294</sup> Meyer Zaremba noted in his diary that with the money the Germans earned on the black market they were able buy food from illegal sources for prices unreachable for Poles.<sup>295</sup> Consequently, the food prices were continuously rising and increased the frustration of the Poles.

### **Out with the German enemies from Poland**

The communist propaganda regularly excited the anti-German atmosphere in both cities. It reminded inhabitants about the necessity of removing the 'dangerous and harmful Germans' from Poland. Press articles announced: '*We will not tolerate Germans on the Western Pomerania*' and suggested that this region could only be safe without Germans.<sup>296</sup> In the same vein, the local government in Szczecin announced: 'We are removing Germans' to encourage the new settlers to come.'<sup>297</sup> The local press also highlighted (with the great satisfaction) the fact that foreign governments 'supported

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<sup>293</sup> Inga Iwasiów, *Bambino*, Warszawa 2008, p. 66

<sup>294</sup> WSZ, 24.08.1945

<sup>295</sup> P. Zaremba, op.cit., p. 231

<sup>296</sup> GN, 24.06.1945

<sup>297</sup> GN, 25.08.1945

Polish postulate' and decided to remove around seven million 'Germans having a hostile attitude to Slavs' from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.<sup>298</sup> In another article: 'We must fight the German sabotage in Szczecin,' an anonymous author enumerated the problems that could be solved only through the removal of Germans from the city. According to the text, Germans still occupied employment positions that should be taken by Poles and were responsible for spreading harmful rumours about the future of the city.<sup>299</sup>

In the same vein the radio programme 'In the anniversary of Grunwald', transmitted in July 1946, intended to increase the vigilance of the listeners with the vision of the defeated German empire – just like in 1410 – which allegedly was about to 'rise up from the ashes' thanks to the help of the 'Western allies'.<sup>300</sup> This programme clearly imputed to the listeners that 'all the survivors from Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek, millions of Poles victimised by war, were shuddering with fear reading the reports on the bad and infatuated Western politicians who were repairing the spine of an iron giant'. 'Woe if the giant rises up!', concluded the programme, suggesting that Germans still remaining in Poland should be removed from the country to stop their saboteur activity.

Finally, in the autumn of 1946 the argument that the Germans were the obstacle holding Poland back from implementing proper economic and social reforms on the 'regained territories' was addressed by the central authorities to inhabitants of Szczecin and the region through the local press.<sup>301</sup> Simultaneously with this problem, the solution – the final removal of Germans from Poland – was proposed by the anti-German visual

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<sup>298</sup> KSZ, 25-26.11.1945

<sup>299</sup> KSZ, 15.12.1945

<sup>300</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie [later: APSz], KdsRiT, transcription of the audition from 15<sup>th</sup> July 1946

<sup>301</sup> KSZ, 19.10.1946

campaign organised by local structures of PPS. The closest political ally of the communist PPR covered Szczecin with purely anti-German posters.<sup>302</sup>

### **Anti-German political slogans**

Owing to the forthcoming parliamentary elections, PPS wanted to earn voters' support with a populist and very emotional rhetoric. Two slogans - 'The Prussian boot will not oppress our lands anymore!' and 'Neither the German will spit in our face, nor will he germanise our children' referred way back to a period when Poland was under partition and focused particularly on the fate of Poles in the Prussian partition. Both slogans clearly suggested that the Nazi invasion of Poland was nothing else but another stage of eternal German policy of imperialism inflicted against Poland. The latter slogan was a quotation from the very popular patriotic poem and a song 'Rota' with lyrics written by Maria Konopnicka in the nineteenth century to encourage Poles to resist Prussian domination in the part of Poland administrated from Berlin.

Another slogan was based on the threat suggesting that 'The one who feels sorry for Germans – acts against Poland'. If according to Reddy's interpretation emotions are culturally constructed and operate like 'overlearned cognitive habits', then this slogan served as a lesson of the 'proper socialist emotional model' clearly suggesting whom Poles should not trust and whom they should be afraid of.<sup>303</sup> The only emotions Poles should feel towards Germans, suggested the poster, were hatred and fear.

Two further slogans - 'We will not forget the German crimes', and 'In Poland there is no place for hangmen from Auschwitz and Majdanek' reminded viewers of the 'criminal nature of Germans' and consequently expressed an indignation resulting from the fact that any Germans were enabled to stay in Poland. The indignation was supported by the short and aggressive statements like 'Down with Germans in Poland', 'Western lands only for Poles' 'Displace the Germans' or 'The only place for Szwab

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<sup>302</sup> APSz, Wojewódzki komitet PPS w Szczecinie, [later: APSz, WK PPS] Referat Ziem Odzyskanych, [sprawozdania, referaty, dane statystyczne, korespondencja, rezolucja programowa, Związek Zachodni, instrukcje, okólniki CKW i WK] 1945-1946

<sup>303</sup> W.M.Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, Cambridge 2001, p. 54

(Swabians) <sup>304</sup> is behind the Oder'. The expressions like Szwab - an abusive Polish synonym of the German - excited the emotional overtone of those slogans even more. They suggested that the solution for the 'German problem' should be as short and firm as the slogans themselves, especially because 'The German is your enemy!' – as massive black letters on another poster 'shouted' at the pedestrians in Szczecin. That was a slogan and the motto that the entire campaign revolved around.

The constant repetition of this stereotypical image of Germans was supposed to instil within the inhabitants of Szczecin the conviction expressed on another slogan - 'As long as the world exists, a German will not be a brother to a Pole'. That was an open suggestion that it was always a German bandit posing a threat to a Pole rather than a Soviet soldier, the only 'honest brother' of a Pole. Ascetic as they were in the artistic form, posters printed and circulated in the whole city provided propagandists with catchy expressions which they repeated at rallies organised in Szczecin. Slogans offered a simple and achievable solution for the 'German threat' presented as one of the central issues that Poles in Szczecin should focus their attention on.

The atmosphere of the 'German threat' excited by the intensive visual campaign was later sustained by local press. The messages referring to the German danger directed at the local communities often varied from those designed for a general audience as they were supposed to excite specific emotions in the local context. This is why the reports on the economic resurrection of Germany – sporadically published in the central press – became a vital part of messages directed on a daily basis to the settlers on the 'regained lands'.

Starting from 1947, when the status of Szczecin became more stable, *Kurier Szczeciński* began to print the permanent rubric entitled 'The news from Germany'. It contained a short overview of all the occupation zones of Germany. In most cases it contained alarming news depicting the rapid reconstruction of the German economy, based on support from the USA and Great Britain,<sup>305</sup> stigmatising the indulgent

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<sup>304</sup> Szwab – an abusive Polish synonym for a German

<sup>305</sup> KSZ, 25.02.1947

sentences of the 'still dangerous Nazi criminals'<sup>306</sup> and exploited the motif of militarist and imperialist tendencies present in occupied Germany. Just like the posters and slogans used by PPS in their campaign inflicted against Germans, the rubric printed for almost three years in the local PPR organ was supposed to sustain the vigilance of Polish settlers towards the 'dangerous neighbour'.

### 2.3 German criminals and bandits in Nazi uniforms

Aside from stimulating the general German threat, local propaganda in Łódź creatively used certain incidents in order to evoke more personal concerns connected to the Western neighbours of the Poles. Although the half-mythologised criminal activity of the *Werwolf* took place near the western border of Poland, near Łódź, the readers were presented with alarming news about the attacks of German bandits. For instance, in September 1945 *Głos Robotniczy* reported that a 'dangerous German arsonist, who burned down a few households near Łódź, was caught by the police'.<sup>307</sup> The arsonist appeared to be a German teenager.

The presence of an anti-German phobia among the inhabitants of Łódź is visible in another accident described by the press. This time the Polish lawbreakers decided to wear German uniforms to be more efficient in their criminal activities. Most probably, they believed that it would be easier to terrorize their victims more effectively when performing the action in the German disguise.<sup>308</sup> Paradoxically, in Szczecin, where the scale of personal attacks carried out by Germans against Poles was greater, these incidents most commonly remained unreported by the press. First of all, soon after the Red Army entered the city, groups of German prowlers dwelling in the city ruins started to set the remaining buildings on fire. The wave of fires further destroyed the city

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<sup>306</sup> KSZ, 28.02.1947

<sup>307</sup> GR, 10.09.1945

<sup>308</sup> For instance, press articles depicted the case of bandits who '*pretended to be Germans and then robbed and raped people nearby Łódź*'. The bandits '*pretending to be the SS officers violently attacked small landholders, beat and sadistically raped them.*' Although the five bandits turned out to be Poles, they successfully made use of German phobia among local inhabitants. EW, 08.02.1947



additionally contributing to the problems the Polish settlers were facing at that time. The problem was solved by fire-brigades supported by the police by July 1945.<sup>309</sup>

Another danger awaiting Poles arriving by train at Szczecin were occasional attacks by German robbers, active especially at the Gumienice train station situated at the outskirts of the city and where every train had to stop on its way to the centre. The station was located very close to the demarcation line, only 200 metres from the provisional western border of Poland and was badly supervised due to the staff shortages.<sup>310</sup> This problem was solved by September 1945 with sporadic attacks on Poles continuing for around one more year.<sup>311</sup>

The physical German attacks on Poles in Szczecin authenticated the press articles exploiting the figure of the 'German threat'. Those attacks could be potentially used by the propagandists to firmly ground the new socialist definitions of 'friend' and 'enemy' and instill in local society the conviction that fear must be attributed only to the 'German enemy' while safety should be inherently linked to the new government supported by the 'Soviet friend'.

Despite this potential no reports of that kind were published. Perhaps the local police and security service were afraid that such information would provoke an uncontrolled wave of violence practiced by Poles against Germans who remained in Szczecin. Local authorities had terrible experiences in this field from the nearby border city of Świnoujście, where during the harsh winter of 1945/1946 local UB representatives, driven by the 'desire to revenge on Nazi oppressors', organised a lawless hunting for Germans who were persecuted, arrested and tortured under a pretext of collaborating with Werwolf. As a result, around forty of them were killed. The persecutors were sentenced to a maximum three year imprisonment.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> P. Zaremba, *Pierwszy szczeciński rok 1945*, Poznań 1980, p. 205

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 252-253

<sup>311</sup> For instance in September 1946 *Kurier Szczeciński* alarmed readers that Germans murdered a Polish sailor. The article suggested that the crime was a result of the speech by James F. Byrnes in Stuttgart, which was supposed to intensify the aggression of local German conspirators against Poles and revive the German hopes of regaining the territories they lost in 1945.

<sup>312</sup> GW, 28.01.2008

What is worth mentioning is that in 1952, six years after the massacre in Świnoujście, public opinion in Szczecin was shocked by the brutal activity of a serial killer, Józef Cyppek, and local authorities strictly hid the German descent of the killer. Once Cyppek, the infamous 'butcher from Niebuszewo', was arrested, accused of several murders and cannibalism, he was judged and executed within two months. The police, UB and local persecutor's office promptly closed the case of Cyppek as they were afraid that rumours of the activity of the 'German butcher' could evoke a wave of pogroms on Germans in Szczecin.<sup>313</sup>

Now that we know the nature of the anti-German atmosphere constantly fomented by propagandists in Łódź and Szczecin it is vital to discuss the specific features of Germans stressed by the local media. This specificity was supposed to help the propaganda agents to accommodate the general anti-German discourse to the local conditions in order to increase the impact of the German threat.

### **3. The local specificity of a German**

Due to the much different social conditions in both cities one may easily distinguish the characteristic motifs in the anti-German propaganda circulated in Szczecin and Łódź. In this latter city among the factors having an impact on the local type of negative image of Germans the industrial character of Łódź played the crucial role.

#### **3.1 Nazi occupants and greedy German capitalists from Łódź**

In Łódź, with a substantial German minority from the beginning of its existence, there was a high potential to play with the German card. The figure of 'a bad German from Łódź' was applied mainly to the period of the Nazi occupation and those Germans who newly appeared in Łódź at that time. Many of those who settled in Łódź during the war came from the substantial German minority in Russia and were called the 'Volga Germans'.

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<sup>313</sup>A. Zadworny, *Rzeźnik z Niebuszewa. Prawdy i mity o zabójcy, który handlował ludzkim mięsem*[in:] 'GW Szczecin', 02.05.2013

The local 'war image' of Germans was presented, among others, in the novel *Łódź in the period of threat* by the popular local writer, Władysław Pawlak. It was published in serial form in *Głos Robotniczy*, a local newspaper, between November 1945 and February 1946. The book depicted the brutality of the Gestapo and the SS, but also showed the everyday problems of workers in Łódź and highlighted the ruthlessness of the German managers of the factories. The image of the German as an exploiter was a specific Łódź thread in the Polish anti-German propaganda. One episode of Pawlak's book presented Polish workers as 'treated by Germans like slaves' who 'were forced to work in factories beyond their power'.<sup>314</sup> In another episode, Pawlak depicted a scene from a factory where a German superior forced a Pole to work in such dangerous conditions that they 'finally led to the death of the weaver'.<sup>315</sup>

What could be read in the press was additionally depicted in the cinema. The propaganda unit of the Polish Army prepared the short movie of a long title *Łódź 1939-1945. In memory of workers in Łódź, victims of German terror killed in the period of bondage*.<sup>316</sup> It was directed in 1945 by Leonard Buczkowski, the prominent filmmaker of the interwar period. Among his works there were many high-budget movies, including the most expensive movie of the Polish interwar cinematography, *The Starry Squadron*.<sup>317</sup> Buczkowski had no communist background, but he did have experience in working for the regime. His earlier productions were realised with a commission from the Polish interwar governments. Now the Ministry of Propaganda sought to use his fame to legitimise its power and win the necessary credibility for the government. It was intended to be used in the process of bridging the gap of mistrust towards the new system. The same director was given the unique opportunity of creating the first Polish postwar feature movie, the musical *The Forbidden Songs* (1946) and later the first Polish colour movie *Adventure at Mariensztat* (1953).

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<sup>314</sup> GR, 02.12.1945

<sup>315</sup> GR, 14.01.1946; 15.01.1946

<sup>316</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi [later:APŁ], Zespół nr 1235: Komitet Łódzki Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z lat 1948-1990, sygn. 13732

<sup>317</sup> It was dedicated to American pilots who supported Polish troops during the Ukrainian siege of Lviv in 1920.

## Perpetuating the memory of the war terror

The short movie *Łódź 1939-1945* referred to the long traditions of the working class in the city. The weavers were given credit for national independence and class struggle. The movie concentrated also on the cruelty of the Łódź Germans, intending to 'erase and destroy every single sign of Polish character of the city'. Moreover, the snapshots of German youth enjoying green city parks were juxtaposed with the images of Jews from the Litzmanstadt Ghetto, 'those haggard skeletons sentenced to the lingering death of starvation and to crematories of Treblinka and gas chambers in Majdanek'. Similarly, the new population of the city was contrasted with its Catholic Polish inhabitants who were replaced by the Germans after having been deported to the concentration and forced labour camps. As for those who stayed, the Nazi authorities tried to recruit them to the 'Germanness'. In the movie, signing the Volksliste was equal to joining 'the criminal community of the German lords' which was illustrated with the example of one such 'new German' turning on the screen into a Hitler-like person just after signing the list.<sup>318</sup> There were no such cases among the weavers, however.

Moreover, German cruelty was visualised in scenes depicting work relations in factories and involving, for instance, sexual and physical abuse. Yet, the workers were not presented as passive victims. Their active attitude was paradoxically symbolised by the symbol of a turtle.

They drew a turtle – a synonym of slow work – on factory walls to encourage the slowing down of the working process. 'Every minute stolen from your enemy is an important input to the future victory over Germans!' – the narrator of the movie repeated. To the still more active forms of resistance belonged damaging the factory machines, illegally listening to the radio and distributing anti-German leaflets. All those activities were punished with a death sentence. The bloodcurdling scene of a public hanging of one of the caught workers in a large spinning-mill before the fearful eyes of all other workers forcibly gathered in the room is a peak moment of the movie.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Picture 12

<sup>319</sup> Picture 13



Picture 12



Picture 13

The times of terror and resistance were over, suggested the final part of the movie where the socialist activist urges workers to take up a regular 'hard working' ethos again in the name of the memory of those 'brothers and sisters murdered in Auschwitz, Majdanek and Radogoszcz'. This new active engagement would be crucial to the rebuilding of Poland. The Łódź weavers had an important task to cloth millions of Polish citizens before the first postwar winter came. Finally, the voice of the famous, Łódź-born Polish actor Władysław Hańcza soothes the viewers with the assurance that the working and living situation of the weavers had already much improved as they became 'the co-hosts of the liberated country and the factories'.

Apart from this general criminal image of Germans referring to the period of World War Two, the communist press of postwar Łódź also contained references to the pre-war German inhabitants of that city. The novel *Give me your hand* by Mieczysław Jagoszewski, published in serial form in *Express Ilustrowany* since January 1946, is a good case in point. The novel described the social and political issues of the mill owners and workers living in Łódź starting from the interwar period until the end of World War Two. Interestingly enough, Jagoszewski had no communist background. He was a prolific second-rate writer and press journalist active in Łódź since the early 1920s.<sup>320</sup>

### **Panorama of German greedy capitalist exploiters**

In his novel Jagoszewski presented the sinister character of German mill owners, their spoiled descendants, wives and lovers. He depicted the melting pot of Łódź inhabitants in the interwar period up to the removal of the German troops in 1945. The

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<sup>320</sup> In the interwar period he worked for the independent, though pro-governmental, press. Additionally he authored the lyrics, which were deemed obscene, published novels in parts and commented on the war in Abyssinia in 1936. After the outbreak of World War Two he was engaged in the AK structures and was arrested and sent to Auschwitz (1943), then to Buchenwald and Ravensbrück. Jagoszewski returned to Łódź in 1945 and began to work for *Express Ilustrowany*. His novels in parts (at least three of them running to over 200 issues) were printed under the pseudonym Andrzej Żański, contributed to the popularity of *Express Ilustrowany*. This run of good luck, however, ended for him in 1948, when the new management of *Express Ilustrowany*, imposed by the local communist authorities, was established. It was a consequence of the decision of the central authorities to interfere deeper in the field of culture and mass media. The new management was interested only in the articles and stories devoted to current social problems. Although Jagoszewski most probably was using the anti-German overtones voluntarily, the choice of his novels to be published in *Express Ilustrowany* was naturally a part of the propaganda policy.

main character of the novel, a Pole, is torn by the emotional dilemma of whether to marry the German daughter of his boss, the mill owner, or a Polish girl born to a family of the Łódź workers. This dilemma served the writer as a pretext to portray a colourful world of German and Jewish bourgeois restaurants and luxurious parties, where 'the band of spoiled snobs wearing tailcoats'<sup>321</sup> was spending its fortunes. Those places were juxtaposed with the image of the modest houses of Polish workers.

Reading this novel from the very beginning it is clear that the Germans (called Julian Herd, Oskar Brauer and Rudolf Renner) represented the most despicable of features. They are depicted as 'greedy capitalists' constantly exploiting workers and encroaching on their rights in order to multiply their own incomes. Julian Herd is a German Jew living according to the motto: 'money is almost everything, everything can be bought'. He constantly seeks opportunities to 'reduce workers incomes as far as possible'. He regularly forces them to accept payment in goods (which he was unable to sell) instead of handing out salaries.<sup>322</sup> From the money he has saved he covers the expensive travels of his daughter. In the end she dies tragically in the factory's fire, commissioned by her father, who wanted to earn money from the insurance.<sup>323</sup>

Another character, Oskar Brauer, on the other hand, forces his employees to work overtime and constantly deceives them as far as their salary is concerned. They are losing their health working in inhuman conditions, which result in frequent bleedings, with the worker's blood 'having the colour of Urszula Brauer's lipstick' (his daughter).<sup>324</sup> What is more, Brauer tolerates many other transgressions in his factory, such as the sexual harassment of young female workers who would be 'fired if they did not succumb to his animal instincts'.<sup>325</sup> Although one of the hated managers of the factory, called Bruno Szulc, is forced by the workers to leave in 1938, he returns to Łódź as the officer of the Gestapo in the autumn of 1939 and begins his brutal revenge. He tortures

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<sup>321</sup> EI, 17.01.1946

<sup>322</sup> EI, 29.03.1946

<sup>323</sup> EI, 31.03-04.04.1946

<sup>324</sup> EI, 19.01.1946

<sup>325</sup> EI, 13.02.1946



the workers and is labelled in the novel the 'black angel of revenge' and the 'manager of death'.<sup>326</sup>

This most repugnant character, Bruno Szulc, is additionally intriguing as his name brings to mind the interwar Polish writer of Jewish descent, Bruno Schulz, shot by a Nazi in the Drohobych Ghetto. The choice of the name could hardly have been a coincidence, as Jagoszewski – also a writer – must have heard about Schulz and his famous short stories. This is a puzzling contradiction of Jagoszewski's novel. On the one hand, he expressed a deep sorrow at the tragic fate of Jews during World War Two. On the other hand, he named the cruel German sadist who killed and robbed Jews in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto - Bruno Szulc. Why? Was this twisted measure a sign of the author's anti-Semitic sentiment? One may only speculate so, as two decades later, in an article published in *Dziennik Łódzki* during the 1968 anti-Semitic campaign in Poland, Jagoszewski demanded the removal of publishers of Jewish descent from the Łódź Publishing House.<sup>327</sup> Perhaps Jagoszewski felt free to express his anti-Semitism in this semi-open way as one of the most important local political actors, the head of the UB in Łódź was Mieczysław Moczar,<sup>328</sup> a person presenting and practicing a hard anti-Semitic attitude who as Minister of Internal Affairs organised the above-mentioned campaign in 1968.<sup>329</sup>

Finally, Rudolf Renner, the third mill owner from the novel, together with his sons Willi and Waldemar, was presented as a staunch admirer of Adolf Hitler. Obsessed by blood purity he anticipated the domination of the 'superior German race'.

The above terrifying characters of Germans were served to the readers of *Express Ilustrowany* every day for almost one year. Here the Germans received a new local colouring – they were class enemies. Such an image was also confirmed by the few articles based on the authentic (as it was suggested) accounts such as in the article "In

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<sup>326</sup> EI, 12-16.07.1946; 16.08.1946

<sup>327</sup> Marzec po łódzku [in:] [http://gawot.uphero.com/s\\_podolski/autor.html](http://gawot.uphero.com/s_podolski/autor.html) - retrieved 02.02.2012

<sup>328</sup> Mieczysław Moczar – a Polish communist who played a prominent role in the history of the Polish People's Republic. He is known for his ultranationalist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic attitude which influenced Polish United Workers' Party politics in the late 1960s.

<sup>329</sup> More on those events: D. Stola, *Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967-1968*, Warszawa 2000

the factory and palace of Eisenbraun".<sup>330</sup> The text presented the interwar and postwar situation in the factory owned by Artur and Otton Eisenbraun. The German mill owners were depicted in a very similar way as in Jagoszewski's novel: as 'greedy capitalists who lived in a luxury palace' and who 'ruthlessly exploited workers'. The article informed readers that workers were 'permanently deceived in terms of salaries' and were 'paid with goods instead of money'. While workers were 'suffering hunger and extreme poverty', the German factory owners were said to 'spend their incomes on exuberant travels'.

A similar image of a German factory owners was presented in the article 'Half a century ago in Łódź'.<sup>331</sup> The text published just before the Workers' Day presented the dreadful vision of Łódź at the turn of the twentieth century. The city was 'ruled by brutal capitalism' with 'weavers working 14 hours a day', 'children involved in working processes at the age of 10, and women earning only half a ratio of a man'. It reminded readers that the 'German factory' owners did not care about the health and safety of their employees'. The recollection of those 'terrible times', when 'the factories in Łódź were ruled by the Germans', was juxtaposed with the advantages of the new communist management. It was to remind workers of the anxiety in which they lived every day 'having German superiors' and persuade them that now they found themselves under a much better socialist order where the working class was treated as an elite.

The press, literature and even the cinema were all drawn into the anti-German 'fear management policy'. They explored the motif of a possible postwar restoration of the German power on the local level and made sure that the people of Łódź would remember their wartime anxiety. Intensive as those media efforts were, the success of this sort of indoctrination was limited by one important socio-psychological factor.

### **The positive memory of local Germans**

One may have a feeling that impressive as they were, those references to the past did not fully exploit the local potential of playing out the figure of a 'bad German'.

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<sup>330</sup> GR, 11.08.1945

<sup>331</sup> GR, 30.04.1946

Perhaps the memory of a relatively good neighbourhood of Poles and Germans in Łódź in the pre-war and interwar period did not allow the communists to extensively resort to the local experience in their propaganda efforts.

Analysing this problem one must not forget the strong relations between Polish and German inhabitants of Łódź which generated the phenomenon of Lodzermensch, a term referring to local Germans steeped with the cultural and economic specificity of Łódź.<sup>332</sup> The image of this figure, mythologised in Polish literature published in the late decades of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, was decidedly negative.<sup>333</sup> Lodzermensch were supposed to be greedy businessmen, mainly a German or Polish mill owner, an exploiter abandoning any moral code in order to earn a fortune. Yet, according to Krzysztof Woźniak the myth of Lodzermensch present in literature had little to do with reality since in oral tradition the image of Lodzermensch was recorded as a hardworking person who took great care of his workers. In this tradition Lodzermensch were developing the workers' districts and equipping them with schools, kindergartens and pharmacies.<sup>334</sup>

Aside from the positive memory of Lodzermensch the rather positive relations between Poles and Germans led to numerous acts of assimilation of Germans from Łódź. Here, for instance, the example of the Biedermann family is a good case in point.

Robert Biedermann was a German manufacturer, who created his textile empire in Łódź between 1863 and 1894. His son Alfred was involved in the development of Łódź's communication infrastructure. For his merits for the development of Polish industry he was honoured with the Order of Polonia Restituta, one of Poland's highest orders. The son of Alfred, Robert Arno Biedermann married Małgorzata Kopetz-Masłowska, a Polish woman. Finally, an uncle of Alfred, Bruno Biedermann, served in

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<sup>332</sup> W. Chu, "Lodzermensch": *From Cultural Contamination to Marketable Multiculturalism* [in:] *German, Poland and Postmemorial Relations. In Search for a Livable Past*, ed. K.Kopp, J. Niżyńska, New York 2012, pp. 239-258. More on this phenomenon and on the German minority in interwar Poland in a wider context: W. Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland*, Cambridge 2014, pp. 115-248

<sup>333</sup> One of the most famous novels portraying the archetype of Lodzermensch was *Ziemia obiecana* (The promised land) published in 1899 by Władysław Reymont, a noble prize winner from 1924.

<sup>334</sup> L. Skawińska, Z. Skibiński, *Rozmowy w „Tyglu”: Lodzermensch – historia i mit* [in:] *Tygiel Kultury*, vol. 3-4, 1998, p. 33

the Polish Army and fought in its ranks in the war with the Bolsheviks in 1920. For his services to the state Bruno was twice honoured with the Gold Cross of Merit, the highest civilian award in Poland.

Polish workers held Bruno Biedermann in high esteem and it was German workers who denounced him to the Gestapo for his 'pro-Polish attitude'.<sup>335</sup> His daughter Maryla actively helped Poles imprisoned by Germans during World War Two in Łódź. For her activity in the anti-German conspiracy and for refusing to sign the Volksliste Maryla was imprisoned and tortured several times.<sup>336</sup> After the suicide of Bruno, his wife Luiza and Maryla, committed on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1945, most probably due to the fear of the forthcoming 'Soviet apocalypse', Polish workers of the Biedermann factory took care of the place where the family was secretly buried. Even 32 years later the official funeral organised in 1977 gathered around 200 former Biedermann workers.<sup>337</sup>

Examining the communist press circulated in postwar Łódź one may conclude that press editors, aware of those positive associations with pre-war Germans within part of local society, intensified their attempts to highlight the threats allegedly posed by those Germans who decided to stay in Łódź after World War Two.

### **Why do you employ German conspirators?**

The postwar anti-German sentiment was often used to blame them for the difficult economic situation of the city and the problem of unemployment. For instance, the article "Herrenvolk in the barracks" referred to German specialists who were working in Łódź factories.<sup>338</sup> First of all, it criticised the fact that 'Germans still occupied work positions that should be filled by Poles'. Secondly, it suggested that although 'Germans seemingly were correctly fulfilling their duties', they were actually 'waiting to

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<sup>335</sup> M. Kozierowska, J. Podolska, *Zdarzyło się w Łodzi: historia rodziny Biedermannów* [in:] 'GW Łódź', 05.02.2010

<sup>336</sup> W. Kuźko, *Biedermannowie. Dzieje rodziny i fortuny 1730-1945*, Łódź 2000, p. 160-167

<sup>337</sup> M. Kozierowska, J. Podolska, *Zdarzyło się w Łodzi: historia rodziny Biedermannów* [in:] 'GW Łódź', 05.02.2010

<sup>338</sup> DŁ, 08.09.1945

ambush at the right moment' to 'show their real German aggressive nature'. A similar problem was highlighted in the article 'Pro-German courtship of "Emde" company'<sup>339</sup> which was one of the German mills producing cotton. The author accused the company management of 'hiring the German specialist instead of the Polish one' leaving the latter unemployed. The same problem was highlighted in the article about Tomaszów, near Łódź, where German specialists were occupying positions in factories while 'young Polish workers remained unemployed'.<sup>340</sup>

The article with the telling title 'At least 32,000 Germans still live in Łódź. Social meetings or conspired rallies' criticised local authorities who 'let Germans and Volksdeutsche live in flats and houses which should be given to the Polish workers'. What is even more important is that this text insinuated that the Germans were conspiring against their Polish neighbours.<sup>341</sup> Playing on the chords of an anti-Polish German conspiracy, propagandists were referring to the memory of events from September 1939 which were still very strong within Polish postwar society.

During the first days of World War Two, German inhabitants who had gathered in the interwar period into pro-fascist organisations, suddenly started to cooperate with German occupiers in numerous Polish cities. For instance Łucja Skierska, an inhabitant of Grudziądz, Northern Poland, born in 1928, stated in an interview that as only German troops entered Grudziądz on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September, well organised German inhabitants of the city, wearing green armbands – members of the paramilitary organisation Selbstschutz,<sup>342</sup> – started to denunciate their Polish neighbours to Einsatzgruppen,<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> DŁ, 25.09.1945

<sup>340</sup> GR, 09.02.1946

<sup>341</sup> DŁ, 08.07.1946

<sup>342</sup> Selbstschutz – self-defence paramilitary units consisting of ethnic German members of the German minority in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Selbstschutz units were established in the early 1930s, officially to defend German minorities in both countries. After the outbreak of World War Two those units actively cooperated with Einsatzgruppen which had the task of exterminating intellectual elites of the conquered countries.

<sup>343</sup> Einsatzgruppen – paramilitary death squads of Nazi Germany that were responsible for mass killings, primarily by shooting, during World War Two. The Einsatzgruppen had a leading role in the implementation of the genocide of Jews in territories conquered by Nazi Germany. Almost all of the people they killed were civilians, beginning with the Polish intelligentsia and swiftly progressing to Soviet political commissars, Jews, and Gypsies throughout Eastern Europe.

especially several groups of local society: communist activists, Jews, and members of the Polish intelligentsia, mainly lawyers, teachers, priests, clerks and many other groups.<sup>344</sup> Similar events also took place in Łódź.

In the German propaganda film chronicling events from September 1939 the entrance of the Wehrmacht to city on 9<sup>th</sup> September and the visit by few Adolf Hitler to Łódź just after the seizure of the city, one may see the great enthusiasm of crowds of Łódź inhabitants waving to German troops and later to the Führer, throwing flowers and hailing with the Nazi salute.<sup>345</sup> According to Łódź historians, Ryszard Iwanicki, curator of the Museum of the Sovereignist Traditions in Łódź, and Professor Przemysław Waingertner from the University of Łódź, despite its propaganda character, the movie pictured authentic scenes of joy demonstrated by representatives of the local German population.<sup>346</sup>

In the spring of 1939 the atmosphere of fear of the forthcoming war resulted in the dismissal of many German workers and masters from Łódź's factories. Finally, in the summer of 1939 German inhabitants of the Łódź region experienced acts of anti-German vandalism and looting of German goods. Consequently, being treated as enemies – regardless of their political inclinations – many Łódź Germans had reasons to treat the entrance of the Wehrmacht to Łódź as a prospect of the improvement of their situation.

One should bear in mind that among Łódź's Germans there were also loyal Polish patriots, like factory owners Robert Geyer and Guido John, who denied signing the volksliste and were treacherously murdered by Nazi occupants in Łódź in December

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<sup>344</sup> Interview with Łucja Skierska, 23.12.2012

<sup>345</sup> M. Sadowski, B. Grygiel, *W 1939 roku Łódź witała Wehrmacht kwiatami. Fakt czy niemiecka propaganda?* [in:] GW, 02.09.2012

<sup>346</sup> In Waingertner's view this demonstration was determined by two factors. First of all Łódź's Germans, who settled the city in the second half of the nineteenth century, were less integrated with Poland than for instance the much deeper rooted German population of Gdańsk. Facing financial difficulties in the 1930s – period of the Great Depression – a substantial part of Łódź's Germans found the economic and social crisis solutions implemented by Adolf Hitler in Germany as inspiring patterns. The process of identification of the majority of the German population of Łódź with the Third Reich was strengthened by the second factor, that is the increasing anti-German atmosphere in Poland magnified by the phantom of the forthcoming war.

1939.<sup>347</sup> Despite an official prohibition, the funeral of Robert Geyer gathered hundreds of Polish workers, former employees of Geyer factories. Yet, in September 1939 a significant part of the German population of Łódź demonstrated their joy at being 'released from Polish oppression'. After the 'liberation' of Łódź in January 1945, local communist propagandists recognised the memory of the pro-Nazi demonstration of Łódź's Germans in September 1939 within Polish postwar society as a factor that could be used by propaganda to make Polish inhabitants of the city afraid that the same traitorous behaviour could happen again as long as Germans still inhabited Łódź.

Using a similar tone of anti-German sentiment in July 1946 *Express Ilustrowany* published text firmly stating that '*The 24,000 Germans still living in Łódź are 24,000 enemies of Poland, 24,000 provokers who have no right to stay any longer on Polish ground victimised by six years of German terror*'.<sup>348</sup> The anonymous journalists were suggesting to readers that the government was aware of the problem and was already working on its solution. The number of similar texts and their strong emotional colouring suggest this type of narration aimed at convincing readers that the serious danger provoked by the Germans, i.e. 'dangerous conspirators hidden in Łódź society', was more terrifying than mundane concerns (which the government was unable to solve).

On the one hand those purely anti-German articles which were giving a response to Poles' expectations might be interpreted as an attempt to recruit the inhabitants of Łódź to the programme of eradicating the German threat conducted by local authorities. On the other hand they served as a smoke screen covering the unpopular policy of the government towards particular groups of Germans. The practice of hiring Germans in the offices and factories controlled by the government was much more common than it was presented in the above analysed press articles. In 1947 almost 15,000 Germans living in Łódź, imprisoned in the Sikawa labour camp, were delegated to 70 and 68 private factories and to 268 state and government offices in Warsaw, Płock, Grójec and

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<sup>347</sup> A. Gronczewska, *Dlaczego zginął Robert Geyer?* [in:] 'Dziennik Łódzki', 14.09.2010

<sup>348</sup> EI, 17.07.1946

other cities.<sup>349</sup> Such a two-faced policy of the Polish government, which was making Poles afraid with the reports on the 'saboteur activity' of Germans who remained in Poland, on the one hand, and exploiting German man-power on the other, lasted until 1950 when the main phase of the deportation process was finished.

### **Polish collaborators of the German enemy**

Paradoxically, the local 'German motif' did not always refer directly to the Germans. In many cases propagandists exploited the local experience of collaboration with Nazi oppressors. For instance, the important propaganda figure of former Polish 'Gestapo spies' consecutively arrested by the local police and sentenced by the courts in Łódź, served the propagandists as proof of the efficiency of the new communist administration. Numerous press articles informed readers about dreadful Poles 'who betrayed the fatherland'.<sup>350</sup> Descriptions such as 'Judas, provocateur, traitor, spy, saboteur' were widely used in order to persuade the Łódź press readers that some of those dangerous criminals were still living within the local society posing a serious and palpable threat to inhabitants of the city.<sup>351</sup>

In order to discount the sense of insecurity potentially evoked within propaganda receivers by such suggestions the reports on dreadful Nazi collaborators were later balanced with media dispatches on catching and judging those criminals. In this way the propagandists endeavoured to instill in local society the efficiency of the police and judiciary. The special section entitled 'From the gallery of Łódź's Gestapo agents' printed in *Kurier Popularny* serves as a good example of this tactic. The articles published here, like 'The death and dishonour of the traitor,'<sup>352</sup> described in detail crimes committed during the war by Poles cooperating with the Nazi occupant as well as reports on their arrest by the efficient communist services.

Among numerous similar cases the one referring to the local PSL candidate to parliament, Antoni Marel, was especially publicised. Just a few days before the elections

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<sup>349</sup> B. Kroll, A. Fritshe, op.cit, p. 11

<sup>350</sup> EI, 02.02.1946

<sup>351</sup> EI, 15.02.1946; EI, 16.06.1946

<sup>352</sup> KP, 27.02.1946



he was accused of collaboration with the Gestapo. The propaganda department of the PPR city committee put a huge effort into voicing this particular case. Soon *Głos Robotniczy* reported about the 'Member of the Gestapo – the confidential agent of the PSL' who was caught and arrested thanks to the vigilance of the UB.<sup>353</sup> The text suggested that Marel was denouncing Polish patriots (the communists) to the Gestapo during World War Two. On the day of elections *Głos Robotniczy*, along other local press titles, informed readers that as a result of the trial Marel was sentenced to death.<sup>354</sup>

One of the main aims of the above discussed propaganda attempts was to focus the attention of local media receivers on the wide spectrum of the German threat and to mask other concerns bothering Polish society in Łódź. The growing wave of social frustration constituted a tough challenge for the local propagandists. The analysis of the radical response of Łódź's workers to their serious material problems enable not only to widen the spectrum of the social context in which local propaganda agents were working. It also allows drawing important conclusions on the impact that the early postwar propaganda juggling of the motif of the German threat had on the local Polish society in Łódź.

### **3.2 The city of strikes**

The strategy of evoking the various types of anxieties linked to the German threat was supposed to help the government to consolidate society with the government in its struggle with the 'common German enemy' and common everyday problems. Despite those efforts the frustration of workers very quickly overshadowed the 'joy of freedom'.

#### **Current historical interpretations of strikes**

On the one hand, the workers were constantly assured about the leading position of their class in the new communist social order. They were promised that the

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<sup>353</sup> GR, 14.01.1947

<sup>354</sup> GR, 19.01.1946; Dziennik Łódzki [later: DŁ], 19.01.1947; KP, 19.01.1947; EW 19.01.1947; EI, 12-15-19.01.1947

poverty and oppressions they suffered from 'greedy German capitalists' were once and for all over. On the other hand, they still worked in difficult conditions and were often unable to adequately provide for their families. As Łukasz Kamiński puts it in his studies on postwar strikes in Poland, instead of noticing an improvement of their situation, the workers commented that only new political elites reached significant personal and economic progress while their own fate did not change one bit.<sup>355</sup> Despite being constantly reminded about the oppression the workers faced from the ruthless German factory owners and managers, the desperate and starving workers regularly expressed their frustration in shouts like 'It was better when we worked for Germans!' during the numerous mass meetings in factories.<sup>356</sup>

Consequently soon after the 'liberation' of Łódź local inhabitants started to radically express their dissatisfaction with the new social and economic situation.<sup>357</sup> According to Łukasz Kamiński and Krzysztof Lesiakowski, the first waves of strikes that began in April 1945 resulted from problems with the food supply, high prices of basic goods, low salaries and backlogs with payment.<sup>358</sup> The reports from strikes in factories prepared by the economic department of the regional PPS Committee indicated hunger and poverty as the most important reasons concerning workers which led to the idea of strike.<sup>359</sup>

Aside from purely material factors generating strikes in Łódź Łukasz Kamiński indicated two more crucial reasons. First of all Kamiński indicated numerous cases of the resistance of workers towards searching and arresting their colleagues accused of

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<sup>355</sup> Ł. Kamiński, *Polacy wobec nowej rzeczywistości 1944-1948. Formy pozainstytucjonalnego żywiłowego oporu społecznego 1944-1948* [later: *Polacy*], Toruń 2000, p. 67; Idem, *Strajki robotnicze w Polsce w latach 1945-1948* [Later: *Strajki*], Wrocław 1999, p.13 – Workers commented: 'What a nice democracy when we have nothing to eat' or 'spongers gobble as always, the workers starve'

<sup>356</sup> Ł. Kamiński, *Polacy*, p.71; Idem, *Strajki*, p. 7,

<sup>357</sup> K. Lesiakowski, *Mieczysław Moczar "Mietek". Biografia polityczna*, Warszawa 1998, p. 107-108

<sup>358</sup> Loc. cit.; Ł. Kamiński, *Strajki*, pp. 6-7, 11, 39, 54, 70, 86

<sup>359</sup> APŁ, Wojewódzki Komitet PPS Łódź, Oddział Ekonomiczno Przemysłowy, Sprawozdania dotyczące strajków w zakładach produkcyjnych 1945-1948, pp.2, 19-24, 28, 34, 41-43; Between 1945 and 1947 PPR and PPS propaganda departments organised hundreds of mass meetings in most factories in Łódź. In their speeches the propagandists mostly referred to the same messages the workers could learn from press articles.

stealing materials from factories.<sup>360</sup> Workers often resorted to this procedure as a common way to deal with poverty deriving from low salaries. Later in September 1947 one of the most serious and long-lasting strikes, organised in several of the biggest mills in Łódź, was evoked by the government's attempts to increase productivity.<sup>361</sup>

Another reason for the strikes was the mistrust of workers towards the PPR, which was perceived as the party controlled by Moscow.<sup>362</sup> The well organised, integrated and experienced-in-fighting-for-their-rights group of socialists within the workers in Łódź was another important factor which helped in organising strikes. Finally, Padraic Kenney has added to these the competition between the more established PPS and the PPR. Not surprisingly, most workers preferred former factory managers and rejected those imposed by the PPR.<sup>363</sup> The local PPR and UB structures had to face the very negative attitude of Łódź workers towards the government.

The PPR report on the situation in the city from September 1945 depicted Łódź and the whole voivodeship as 'the territory of the hardest class struggle in the whole of Poland'.<sup>364</sup> It said that in Łódź 'the communist bloc was attacked not by the individual terror (like in most other regions of Poland), but by the mass strikes of workers or students'. Łódź became the Polish centre of strikes. In fact, around 77 strikes were organised in Łódź between July and December 1945.<sup>365</sup> As Łukasz Kamiński enumerates in his study, between 1945 and 1948 workers in Łódź organised 529 strikes. Nearly 45% of the total number of strikes in Poland at that time took place in the Łódź region.<sup>366</sup>

The scale of weavers' strikes in Łódź was a symptom of the inefficacy of the governmental efforts to consolidate society around the government who had been presented as the guarantor of the workers' economic progress. The optimistic declarations failed once confronted with dreary reality. But did the rebel attitude of

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<sup>360</sup> Ł. Kamiński, *Strajki*, pp. 19, 22, 25, 30-31

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 76-81

<sup>362</sup> APŁ, Wojewódzki Komitet PPS Łódź, Oddział Ekonomiczno Przemysłowy, Sprawozdania dotyczące strajków w zakładach produkcyjnych 1945-1948, p. 33

<sup>363</sup> APŁ, KŁPPR, Raport o sytuacji politycznej w Łodzi, 30.09.1945; P. Kenney, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-54

<sup>364</sup> AAN, KC PPR, Wydział Organizacyjny, sygn.295/IX/29

<sup>365</sup> K. Lesiakowski, *Strajki robotnicze w Łodzi 1945-1976*, Łódź 2008, p. 60

<sup>366</sup> Ł. Kamiński, *Polacy*, Toruń 2000, p. 137; *Ide*, *Strajki*, pp. 108

workers mean that the propaganda efforts to divert their attention from their everyday problems through exploiting the figure of the German threat were totally ineffective? In my opinion one should not directly link strikes expressing the frustration of workers with the inefficacy of propaganda. On the one hand most probably the workers in Łódź paid less attention to the 'German threat' than inhabitants of the 'regained lands' located around 400 kilometres from their own city, where the German danger was much more palpable. On the other hand Łódź's workers were not fully indifferent to the general idea of the 'German threat' deftly excited by the propagandists. Social reaction towards the famous speech given by James F. Byrnes in Stuttgart in the autumn of 1946 and the popular reception of the media news on the sentences announced in Nuremberg might be interpreted as a success of the propagandists in their effort to unite the government and local society in the struggle against the 'common German enemy'.

### **Successful translation of fear into anger**

The first success in terms of translating fear into anger was as a response to the speech by James F. Byrnes, who stated that the shape of the western border of Poland was not final, 150,000 workers voluntarily took part in a protest in September 1946 in Łódź.<sup>367</sup> In the view of Ignacy Loga-Sowiński, the first secretary of the PPR in Łódź, the party 'was able to mobilise those masses against Germany, their English protectors and against pro-London Mikołajczyk'.<sup>368</sup> Even if Loga-Sowiński's estimate of the situation was wrong and the number of workers taking part in the protest was exaggerated, the mobilisation of workers to oppose the prospect of losing the western territories of the country to Germany should be seen in itself as a sign of their attention to the issue of the integrity of the country. The fact that rebellious workers took part in the event organised by local authorities they usually resisted is also a sign of the successful translation of the sense of insecurity deriving from the 'phantom of resurrection of the

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<sup>367</sup> APŁ, KŁ PPR, Sekretariat, Korespondencja pierwszego sekretarza, skargi, dyrektywy, zaświadczenia, pp. 101-104

<sup>368</sup> APŁ, KŁ PPR, Sekretariat, Wybory do sejmu ustawodawczego, sprawozdania z przebiegu wyborów do sejmu w okręgu numer 6 m. Łodzi, p. 2

Nazi empire' spread by propaganda into support for the government in such a vital issue as the external safety of the state.

The second official propaganda success was linked to the announcement of the sentences in the Nuremberg Trials in October 1946. The fact of releasing a few Nazi criminals by the court was interpreted as a 'sentence evoking anxiety' and a symptom of 'a dangerous blindness of Western allies regarding the Germans'.<sup>369</sup> The anonymous author of an article announced that 'propaganda messages from Nuremberg managed to trigger spontaneous workers rallies of support' for the official government protest against 'indulgent sentences in the trial in Nuremberg'.<sup>370</sup> Even if these assumptions were too hopeful and referred to the propagandist's aspirations rather than facts, the PPR City Committee Propaganda Department reports stressed the fact that the sentences announced in Nuremberg and presented during mass meetings in factories made a strong impression on workers and reinforced their hatred regarding Germany and indignation against the PSL.<sup>371</sup> Biased as those reports were, they give us an insight into the workers' moods and their interest in the situation in Germany and in a lot of the Nazi criminals.

In this way, Byrnes and the Nuremberg Trials helped the communist agitators weaken the Poles' confidence in the West. Many Poles still believed that the Western allies could alter the situation in Poland and end 'the USSR's occupation.' The counter-propaganda slogans, like 'long live the Polish-English friendship!'<sup>372</sup> (mainly spread by the PSL), were still very popular in the first half of 1946 but were gradually outshone by the image of Great Britain as a 'patron of the German resurrection'. The propagandists were, however, unable to translate this short-term success into permanent support for the new power they represented. Likewise, the attempts to discredit the local PSL candidate to the parliament, with the help of the Gestapo stigma described above,

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<sup>369</sup> GR, 02.10.1946

<sup>370</sup> GR, 05.10.1946

<sup>371</sup> APŁ, KŁ PPR, Komitet dzielnicowy Bałuty, sprawozdania wydziału propagandy, p. 24. The reports suggested that PSL leaders -against Polish *raison d'état* - accepted the sentences announced in Nuremberg.

<sup>372</sup> APŁ, KŁ PPR, Sekretariat, sprawozdania miesięczne, p. 82

although intensively publicised,<sup>373</sup> failed at deterring inhabitants of Łódź from supporting the PSL.

### **The mistrust towards the anti-German propaganda in Łódź**

Although the communist propagandists were able to recruit – even if only periodically - workers to the resistance against the common enemy, other social groups raised doubts regarding the government's policy. The question which lingered in systematically aroused minds that could not be easily laid to rest was 'If the threat was indeed lurking behind the border, were the safety measures undertaken by the state enough?'. In late November 1946 during a large convention at the freshly established University of Łódź, students prepared a set of questions for the authorities. They regarded the safety of the new Polish state in the international arena and inquired about details concerning the Polish army.<sup>374</sup> Despite numerous articles, publications, PKF episodes and official declarations stating that the borders of Poland were inviolable, not surprisingly there was no real feeling of safety over that matter.

This particular aspect of the social reaction to the propaganda attempt to neutralize fear might be compared with a similar case examined by Frank Biess.<sup>375</sup> In his article, Biess analysed the attitude of a local German community in the 1970s towards the leaflet enlisting the fallout shelters. The original idea of the brochure was to inform inhabitants about the security measures undertaken by the policymakers. However, in fact such information, implying possible threats, only stimulated more anxiety within the concerned communities. Biess diagnosed this situation as a symptom of communication breakdown between the government and society resulting from the weakness of the emotional bonds between the sender and receiver of the message.

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<sup>373</sup> APŁ, KŁ PPR, Telefonogramy i szyfrogramy przychodzące z komitetu centralnego oraz wychodzące, p. 46

<sup>374</sup> APŁ, KŁ PPR, Wydział organizacyjny, sprawozdania instruktorów wydziału z inspekcji w fabrykach łódzkich, p. 50

<sup>375</sup> F. Biess, *Everybody have a chance. Nuclear angst, civil defence, and the history of emotions in postwar West Germany* [in:] German history, vol.27, No.2, pp. 215-243

In both the Polish and the German cases the information about the safety measures undertaken by the state had the opposite effect.<sup>376</sup> In Germany, it increased the feeling of atomic threat; in Poland, fear about the country's safety was intensified by stressing the Soviet-Polish military alliance and control over the western Polish border.

The attitude of the inhabitants of Łódź towards the most important political events in the first postwar years – the People's Referendum and the parliamentary elections – might be seen as a sign of their mistrust towards the official propaganda. In the referendum organised on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1946 the voters were supposed to give answers to three questions concerning the existence of the Senate, the economic system and the shape of the western border. In particular, Polish society was asked: 1. Are you in favour of abolishing the Senate (the upper house of Polish parliament)? 2. Do you want consolidation in the future constitution of the economic system founded on agricultural reform and the nationalisation of basic national industries, including the preservation of the statutory rights of private enterprise? 3. Do you want consolidation of the western border of the Polish State on the Baltic, Oder River and Lusatian Neisse? The communist government recommended voting 'yes' to all three questions.

Although according to the referendum results the majority of Łódź inhabitants voted 'yes' in terms of the shape of the border and the economy, 65% voted 'no' to the idea of liquidating the Senate, acting according to the recommendation of the PSL on this point.<sup>377</sup> This fact confirms the eagerness of local workers to support the most important opposition party, already noted in government reports monitoring social moods during the strikes in Łódź factories in March 1946. Those documents contained the information that workers chanted 'Long live the PSL', 'Long live Mikołajczyk' and 'Down with PPR'.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> F. Biess, *op.cit.*, p. 220

<sup>377</sup> Cz. Osękowski, *Referendum 30 czerwca 1946 w Polsce*, Warszawa 2000, p. 144. During the People's Referendum of 1946 in Łódź 65% of inhabitants voted 'no' to the first question, 41.5% to the second question and 19% to the third question. The results in Łódź Voivodeship were as follows: 77.4%(1<sup>st</sup>), 67.9%(2<sup>nd</sup>) and 41%(3<sup>rd</sup>) voting 'no'. The general national results were similar: 73.1%(1<sup>st</sup>), 58%(2<sup>nd</sup>) and 33.1%(3<sup>rd</sup>).

<sup>378</sup> Ł. Kamiński, *Strajki*, p. 34

The results in the Łódź voivodeship showed an even wider scale of the mistrust of local society towards the new government – 77.4% voted ‘no’ to the first question and 67.9% voted ‘no’ to the second question. Those results show, however, that in terms of the shape of the western border of Poland the communist propaganda, constantly stressing the issue of the ‘German threat’ in all kinds of media, successfully managed to win the social support for this aspect of governmental policy.

One may draw no less important conclusions from the results of the parliamentary elections. On the one hand, the reports prepared by the propaganda officers soon before the elections contained numerous declarations of support for the Democratic Block (dominated by the PPR political bloc consisting of the Polish Socialist Party, Peasant Party and Democratic Party) expressed by Łódź workers.<sup>379</sup> On the other hand, although inhabitants of Łódź declared they would vote for the communist candidates, in fact most of them voted for those recommended by the PSL. It is estimated that in the entire country the Democratic Bloc received around 50% (officially over 80%) of the votes, while in Łódź and Łódź Voivodeship the PSL could be supported even by 60% of the voters.<sup>380</sup> Such wide support for the PSL shows the limits of the communist propaganda attempts to besmirch this party with information suggesting the pro-German inclinations and shameful acts of collaboration with Nazi oppressors (the case of Antoni Marel).

The rebellious attitude of workers in Łódź derived from their resistance traditions, from the Revolution of 1905 and numerous strikes in the 1920s and 1930s. Despite the trauma of war and numerous deportations of Poles from the city during World War Two, the local community survived well consolidated. The more obedient attitude of inhabitants of Szczecin was determined by the lack of consolidation of Polish settlers coming from various regions of Poland to the destroyed city located far away from the pre-war western border of Poland.

### **3.3 The eternal German enemies in Szczecin**

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<sup>379</sup> APŁ, KŁ PPR, Sekretariat, wybory do sejmu ustawodawczego, rezolucje z wieców przedwyborczych, p. 14-18

<sup>380</sup> Cz. Osękowski, *Wybory do sejmu z 19 stycznia 1947 roku w Polsce*, Poznań 2000, p. 152



When looking through the pages of the local propaganda in Szczecin, one may identify a typical mode of writing about Germans designed precisely for the Polish inhabitants of the 'regained territories'. They were presented as having always been aggressive and expanding towards their eastern Polish neighbours, beginning in the time of the early medieval Slavic dynasty of the Piasts, founders of Polish statehood.<sup>381</sup>

### **The Piast ideology in practice**

Against this background the westward relocation of Polish borders after the war was presented as a fair regaining of the lands by its former natural owner. This narration, an integral part of the 'Piast ideology', was supposed to win the support of settlers on the 'regained territories' for the programme of constructing the new-old Polish identity on these lands. The same enthusiastic Piast rhetoric was used in Lower Silesia.<sup>382</sup> Apart from doing historical justice, by settling on the 'regained territories', the Poles were supposed to reach for life perspectives unattainable in other parts of Poland.<sup>383</sup>

No less important, however, was the anti-German thread in this rhetoric. The material serving the anti-German propaganda in the 'regained territories' was ready as soon as in December 1944. This holds true, for example, for the prospectus for the mass meetings entitled 'From the history of German crimes' which elaborated on the methods of the German pressure on the Slavic lands throughout the millennium ('lie and betrayal, treacherous knife, iron and fire, all with the intention to annihilate the Polish nation').<sup>384</sup>

Most articles regarding the history of the region, and printed in Szczecin from June 1945 onwards, referred to the aggressive and expansive nature of the Germans. The very first issue of the Polish newspaper published in Szczecin, *Głos Nadodrzański*,

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<sup>381</sup> The PPR political declaration 'What are we fighting for' published in the spring of 1943 stressed that 'Poland had a right to the Piast' western territories denationalised and Germanised with the help of violence'.

<sup>382</sup> M. Miodek, op. cit., pp. 353-360

<sup>383</sup> R. Ptaszyński, *Trzymamy straż nad Odrą* [later: *Trzymamy straż*], Szczecin 2007, p. 11

<sup>384</sup> APSz, Komitet Miejski PPR, Wydział Propagandy, Główny Zarząd Polityczny Wojska Polskiego. Referaty, pogadanki, 27.12.1944.

contained an article entitled *'We've been here for ages'* and informed readers that in Pomerania 'Slavs have suffered for hundreds of years' and 'were oppressed, robbed and raped by Germans – the ancestors of the dregs of society who brutally conquered the fertile lands of central Europe'.<sup>385</sup> Another text, *'We've come back to the old lands!'*, highlighted the fact that 'the regained territories were finally returned to their motherland after 700 years of the cruel Teutonic oppression'. The anonymous journalist informed readers that 'the insolent Teutonic systematically destroyed Polish culture in order to weaken the Polish identity of this region'.<sup>386</sup> And again, a very similar vision of the Germans was presented in the text *'We were here and we will stay here'*. It presented the history of 'Slavs, who inhabited those lands in the Middle Ages. Slavs created the peaceful society which was violently attacked, destroyed and extirpated just because they refused to give their lands to German imperialists, who dominated them with their technique and cruelty – the latter being the everlasting and immanent feature of the German nation'.<sup>387</sup>

The same type of narration was used in the article *'Poland – Germany. Ten ages of struggles'*,<sup>388</sup> as well as in the text entitled *'We were, we are, we will be'*, which announced that Slavs have been present in Pomerania for 4,000 years. 'Unarmoured Slavs yielded to the Germans in iron armours, who murdered, robbed and terrorised them'.<sup>389</sup> Another text, *'To the west, for the heritage of the Veleti'*<sup>390</sup> suggested that Poland could finally put an end to the everlasting German *'Drang nach Osten'*.

The propagandists went to great lengths to convince their audience that the safety of the 'regained territories' could be guaranteed only by a firm friendship between Poland and the USSR. The emotion of safety in general should be identified exclusively with the communist rule and with the Polish-Soviet friendship. Several articles pointed out the vigilance of the USSR's authorities who strictly looked after the

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<sup>385</sup> GN, 16.05.1945

<sup>386</sup> GN, 13.06.1945

<sup>387</sup> WSZ, 22.08.1945

<sup>388</sup> KSZ, 16.11.1945

<sup>389</sup> *'Pionier Szczeciński'*, 05.09.1945

<sup>390</sup> Veleti – Slavic tribe

process of demilitarisation, denazification and democratisation of Germany solidified by the Potsdam Agreement in August 1945. For instance, in July 1947 *Kurier Szczeciński* informed readers that the Soviet Foreign Office Minister Vyacheslav Molotov protested against not fulfilling the Potsdam decisions in western occupation zones.<sup>391</sup> The text criticised the overly tolerant attitude of the American and British administrators towards such tendencies like the 'renascent' German militarism. This kind of information conveyed an image of the USSR as a 'Polish guardian' against the German danger.

The local Piast ideology, with its strong anti-German thread, was supposed to help the new Polish settlers to reconcile with the alien area. Juggling with this sort of historical narration the propagandists had at least one more important goal to achieve. The local communist media attempted to support the authorities in Szczecin in covering the serious threat posed in the city and its region mainly by Soviet soldiers, not Germans. Banditry, in which Soviet marauders as well as regular soldiers were involved, was one of the thorniest problems in the region of Szczecin. The discussion of this social phenomenon allows an assessment, to some extent, of the impact the anti-German media discourse had on the strategic propaganda aim to support the authorities in winning total control over local society.

### 3.4 'The wild west'

Soviet soldiers treated the 'regained territories' just like the 'captured territories' in Germany. This is why the level of the organised and individual plundering committed by Soviets in this region was the highest in the entirety of Poland.<sup>392</sup> According to the governmental report from August 1945, in Szczecin Soviet soldiers attacked and robbed every train with settlers.<sup>393</sup> In March 1946 a governmental report indicated that 80% of murders and robberies in Szczecin were committed by Soviets.<sup>394</sup> Similar incidents of robbery, combined with shootings, were an everyday reality on the streets of Szczecin.

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<sup>391</sup> KSZ, 14.03.1947

<sup>392</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga*, p. 158-159

<sup>393</sup> AAN, MZO, 03.08.1945

<sup>394</sup> AAN, MZO, Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne Pełnomocnika Rządu na Okręg Pomorze Zachodnie, marzec 1946, p. 114

Inhabitants of the city were afraid to leave their houses after 9 pm.<sup>395</sup> The British medical officer deployed to Szczecin noted in his memoir that *'murder, rape, robbery with violence were so usual that nobody paid any attention'*.<sup>396</sup>

The situation was dramatic enough that the local newspaper printed a letter from a reader asking if it would be possible to let some groups of the local population possess weapons. The author of that letter, signed as a young member of the PPS, argued that the Polish inhabitants of Szczecin, especially traders, clerks and craftsmen, needed to protect themselves against 'the gangsters speaking the unknown language, against the plague of the "knights of the night"'.<sup>397</sup> The letter gave an opportunity for the authorities of Szczecin to assure the readers that the head of the local security office (UB) had already got down to solving that problem, something which was done in an open statement of this officer in the same newspaper just a few days later.<sup>398</sup>

The governmental report from September 1945 highlighted the inefficiency of the local security service in introducing peace and quiet in Szczecin. Undoubtedly, the Soviet nationality of many criminals further complicated the work of the Polish services. The sense of impunity of the Soviets in Szczecin also resulted from the fact that the Soviet command in Szczecin was subordinated directly to the Central Soviet Command for Eastern Europe in Berlin, not to the Soviet Command for Poland in Legnica. In later months, the plague of transgressions performed by Soviet soldiers spread over the whole region, which was clearly remarked in the governmental reports regarding the first half of 1946.<sup>399</sup>

In response to the acts of banditry, the local propagandists were trained to relativise the problem and calm down readers with assurances that 'the problem of marauders has always been a part of the postwar chaos'. It was also pointed out that 'one should remember the effort the Soviet soldiers invested in the liberation of

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<sup>395</sup> AAN, MliP, Sprawozdanie WUiP na okręg Pomorze Zachodnie, 21.03.1946, p. 13

<sup>396</sup> Quoted after: K. Lowe, op.cit., p. 45

<sup>397</sup> WSZ, 24.08.1945

<sup>398</sup> WSZ, 30.08.1946

<sup>399</sup> AAN, MZO, Meldunki nadzwyczajne o stanie bezpieczeństwa, 03-04.1946; AAN, MZO, Stan Bezpieczeństwa na Ziemiach Odzyskanych, korespondencja, notatki służbowe, meldunki 1945-1948, 02-03.1946

Poland.<sup>400</sup> Anyhow, the image of the enemy presented in the press was manifold and the Soviet soldiers were not the only villains of the piece. Many acts of plundering, illegal confiscation of goods and disturbances in the functioning of the local open markets, were performed by the Polish soldiers.<sup>401</sup> What is more, the settlers suffered from a dishonest policy of the new municipal clerks ('Gangsters of the public service')<sup>402</sup> stealing the city food supplies.

For the above reasons Szczecin was often compared to the 'wild west', a label which is still present in contemporary literature.<sup>403</sup> It depicted the lawlessness and the lack of security in Szczecin. This negative image of the city rather discouraged new settlers unless they were adventurers. The fear accompanied both those groups who had already moved to Szczecin and those who were considering such an option. Administrative chaos further complicated the situation. There were incidents when Polish settlers were sent to villages that were still inhabited by Germans and as a consequence had to feverishly look for another destination on their own.<sup>404</sup> Some other settlers, such as a group from Wieluń in central Poland, were informed on their arrival in Szczecin that there was no more space for them at all and they had to set out on their way back from where they came (January 1946).<sup>405</sup>

### **Do not believe in rumours**

Despite such incidents local authorities in Szczecin as well as the central propaganda machine needed to prove that Poland was able to administrate and inhabit the freshly 'regained territories'. The press tried to refute the 'fearful image' of Szczecin in the texts, such as 'The truth about the "wild west"' suggesting that the 'myth of the

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<sup>400</sup> APSz, Komitet Miejski PPR, Wydział Propagandy, Główny Zarząd Polityczny Wojska Polskiego. Referaty, pogadanki,

<sup>401</sup> Ibid, Letter to the Minister of the National Defence, 02.06.1945; AAN, MZO, Stan Bezpieczeństwa na ziemiach odzyskanych, 01.1946

<sup>402</sup> GN, 24.06.1945; P. Zaremba, op.cit., p. 134

<sup>403</sup> E.G. B. Halicka, *Der 'polnische Wilde Westen'* [in:] Terra Transoderana, ed. by B. Vogenbeck, J. Tomann, M. Abraham-Diefenbach, Berlin 2008, p. 28.

<sup>404</sup> AAN, MZO, Stan bezpieczeństwa, na Ziemiach Odzyskanych, korespondencja, notatki służbowe, meldunki 1945-1948, p. 56

<sup>405</sup> AAN, MZO, Prośby ludności Ziem Odzyskanych o interwencję, 13.02.1946, p. 32

wild west in Szczecin' resulted from rumours spread by the 'fascist pro-English reaction'.<sup>406</sup> The rumours were supposed to be spread by the adherents of the Polish Government in exile in London. The dreadful conditions were supposed to be a passing problem and many soothing assurances were offered to the prospective pioneers (concerning food supplies, security and removal of the German population).

The text 'The complete misunderstanding' aimed at overtaking the image of Szczecin as the place where horrifying assaults, regular battles and mass rapes took place every day'.<sup>407</sup> The article denied the news about the 'terrible economic conditions, high prices of goods and weak results of inhabitation of Szczecin'. It encouraged 'the valuable, honest and skilful people, the real pioneers of work from Warsaw and Krakow' to set out in their adventure. Finally, in May 1946 'Kurier Szczeciński' triumphantly announced 'The end of the legend of the wild west'.<sup>408</sup> According to this text, the level of security in the city greatly improved as a result of the efficient work of the local police and security service officers.

### **The guard on the Oder**

The voivode of Pomerania, Leonard Borkowicz, organised 'the great manifestation of Polish character of Szczecin and Pomerania' in April 1946.<sup>409</sup> The event was entitled 'We keep the guard on the Oder River' and was organised as a reply to Churchill's speech in Fulton which caused a wave of panic within inhabitants of Szczecin, who were uncertain of the future status of the city.

The manifestation was a serious logistical undertaking as the most important political leaders of Poland took part in the event. The visit of Bolesław Bierut, the head of the KRN, was to testify to the improvement of safety conditions in Szczecin. The programme consisted of ceremonial speeches given by the leaders of the communist bloc, but also by the leader of the PSL, Stanisław Mikołajczyk. The celebrations

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<sup>406</sup> GN, 25.08.1945

<sup>407</sup> KSZ, 26.10.1945

<sup>408</sup> KSZ, 18.05.1946

<sup>409</sup> R. Ptaszyński, *Trzymamy straż*, p. 20

culminated in a march of youth organisations, like ZHP<sup>410</sup> and ZWM,<sup>411</sup> demonstrating Polish youth's joy at having 'the old Piast' territories finally regained by Poland.

The Polish 'guard on the Oder River' was supposed to be a specific kind of a dam holding back German imperialism and manifesting that the shape of the western border of Poland was final.<sup>412</sup> On the one hand, the event was supposed to point to the 'resurrection of German imperialism'. On the other hand, it presented the central communist authorities as the guardians and protectors of the inviolability of the western border. The amount of soldiers gathered in Szczecin for the purpose of controlling law and order in the city and their efficiency during the event was supposed to manifest to the observers that Poland had enough means to keep the guard on the Oder.<sup>413</sup>

According to the reports of the territorial command of the Polish Army, the demonstration made an impression on many inhabitants of Szczecin: it 'decreased the people's sense of temporality' and 'released their anxiety regarding the future of the city'.<sup>414</sup> Even if the settlers became less prone to escape from Szczecin, the reception of the manifestation directly during the event was not as positive as the propagandist presupposed. This was connected to the attitude of the participants of the demonstration towards the PSL. The Ministry of Propaganda and Information decided to use the event to indicate the PSL as an internal enemy, the acts of which could allegedly contribute to the threatening of the shape of the border as they were allied with the pro-German British government.

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<sup>410</sup> The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP) – Polish scouting movement founded in 1918. Under the conspiratory name 'Grey Ranks' the members of the ZHP played an important supportive role in the activity of the Home Army. The ZHP was delegalised in 1949 and re-established in 1956 under communist concession.

<sup>411</sup> Union of Youth Struggle (ZWM) – Polish underground youth organisation established in 1943, attached to the PPR and supporting its activity

<sup>412</sup> GN, 25.08.1945; KSz, 7-8.10.1945; 19.10.1945; 12.12.1945; 04.01.1946; 23.02.1946; 12.04.1946; 13.04.1946

<sup>413</sup> Książnica Pomorska, memoir of Józef Roman, *Dzieje Szczecińskich rodzin w XX w.*, P-464, p. 4

<sup>414</sup> CAW(Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe), Dowództwo Okręgu Wojskowego II, sygn.IV.510.2/A.758, Sprawozdanie zastępcy Szefa Wydziału Polityczno-Wychowawczego 12 Dywizji Piechoty z 21.04.1946 r., p. 54; quoted after: R. Ptaszyński, *Trzymamy straż*, p. 66

The negative image of the PSL was later summarised in a leaflet circulated in Szczecin in the autumn of 1946 and containing slogans like 'PSL pro-English policy equals powerful Germany and weak Poland.'<sup>415</sup> Despite stressing the negative image of the PSL by communist media, around 50,000 people gathered in the centre of Szczecin to welcome Stanisław Mikołajczyk, an event which is nowadays commemorated in the city with a special plaque.<sup>416</sup> According to some witnesses of the event the enthusiastic crowd lifted up Mikołajczyk's car as an act of joy and support for the PSL leader.<sup>417</sup> The huge group of scouts who started chanting in honour of Mikołajczyk mobilised other groups of participants, even soldiers, to join them.<sup>418</sup> Most of the scouts arrived in Szczecin from other cities, i.e. from Poznań, just to take part in the event. The loud chanting 'Mikołajczyk!' was interpreted as an expression of both the political attitude of young scouts and their will to shout louder than the ZWM members chanting in honour of Bierut.<sup>419</sup>

### **The anti-governmental attitude towards the referendum and elections**

This attitude of the newcomers in Szczecin disturbed the vision of the Polish perpetuated by the media controlled by the government. The anti-government moods were not reflected, however, either in the answers given during the Peoples' Referendum nor in the results of the parliamentary elections, which in Szczecin were much more favourable for the communists than for instance in Łódź. Those results proved that propaganda's impact was strengthened by the 'natural frontier fear'. It is assumed that the results of the referendum in Szczecin voivodeship were as follows: 61.9% (1<sup>st</sup> question), 43.5%(2<sup>nd</sup> question) and 29%(3<sup>rd</sup> question) voting 'no'.<sup>420</sup> Those

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<sup>415</sup> AAN, MliP, sygn.123, leaflet prepared by MliP and circulated in Szczecin – *Facts – Results*

<sup>416</sup>J. Tebinka, R. Techman, *Raporty brytyjskiego wicekonsula w Szczecinie z 1946 r.* [in:]*Zapiski Historyczne*, vol. LXII, 1997, p. 97; They chanted louder Mikołajczyk's name than Bierut's, R. Ptaszyński, op. cit., p. 35-36

<sup>417</sup> Książnica Pomorska, memoire of Halina Pieniak, *Dzieje Szczecińskich rodzin w XX w.*, P-413/11, 2004, p. 22

<sup>418</sup> Loc.cit

<sup>419</sup> Książnica Pomorska, memoire of Roman Szymkowski, *Dzieje Szczecińskich rodzin w XX w.*, P-647, pp. 2-6

<sup>420</sup> Cz. Osękowski, *Referendum 30 czerwca 1946 w Polsce*, Warszawa 2000, p. 144



results were better for the government than in any other region of Poland. In parliamentary elections only 30% of voters in this region supported the PSL, which was one of the worst results of this party in the whole of Poland.<sup>421</sup> Hence, one can clearly see that the palpable danger deriving from the physical proximity of the former Polish enemy considerably strengthened the effects of the state's apparatus communication with society with the help of propaganda.

Despite support for the communist authorities shown by local inhabitants in the referendum and elections, it was not before October 1947 that a PPR report diagnosed something of a 'stabilisation' of social moods in Szczecin. It informed readers that the symptoms of panic almost vanished while craftsmen stopped to abandon their workshops and private enterprises and stopped moving back to the territories of central Poland. 'The rumours regarding the instability of the western border of Poland and the possibility of turning Szczecin into a free city almost disappeared', concluded the report.<sup>422</sup> This means that the propaganda efforts to soften Poles' concerns had significant, though rather temporal, results. Propaganda campaigns and actions like 'We keep the guard on the Oder' helped the local authorities to stifle the concerns of settlers, but during the first two postwar years it was unable to permanently 'extinguish the fire' in Szczecin. There were two reasons for the permanent stabilisation of moods in the city. First of all, the western border of Poland and the status of Szczecin stopped being a subject of controversy on the international forum. No less important was the factual increase of safety resulting from the efficient activity of the police and security service in Szczecin.

## **Conclusion**

In his study on the image of Germans in the press published in Wrocław Marcin Miodek shows that the general all-Poland image of dangerous Germans supported the

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<sup>421</sup> *Ibid*, p. 152

<sup>422</sup> APSz, KM PPR, October 1947

efforts of the propagandists in Silesia.<sup>423</sup> Most of the people who moved to that city went there voluntarily from central Poland to improve their economic position or were forced to settle there as in the case of the so-called 'repatriates' – Poles expelled from the former eastern Polish territories taken over by Soviet Russia.<sup>424</sup> Although this intense propaganda based on the German threat strongly contributed to what Gregor Thum called the impermanence and 'sitting on the packed suitcases' syndrome,<sup>425</sup> many of the new settlers had little choice but to live in those conditions. Their homes were distant and inaccessible, and behind the Soviet border.<sup>426</sup> Miodek maintains that hundreds of propaganda messages creating the psychosis of a permanent German threat allegedly posed on Poland, were supposed to constitute the negative background against which the benefits of the new system would be all the more visible for the inhabitants of that city.<sup>427</sup> The local Wrocław propaganda could this type of anti-German rhetoric as the city, even if freshly attached to Poland, was located further from the border than Szczecin - most precariously situated on the western bank of the Oder River.

This is why, even if Wrocław and Szczecin competed for the doubtful honour of the capital of Poland's 'Wild West', in Szczecin the figure of a 'German waiting for revenge' on the other bank of the river was almost not exploited by the local media. The propaganda authorities in Szczecin were rather focused on erasing the German character of the city, on removing German monuments and replacing German names of streets and buildings with Polish ones. This strategy aimed at softening the social concerns of settlers arriving to the alien area having an unclear political future. Thus, as

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<sup>423</sup> On the area of the 'regained territories' during the parliamentary elections Democratic Block most probably received around 70% of votes (officially over 90%); Cz. Osękowski, *Wybory do sejmu 19 stycznia 1947r. w zachodniej i północnej Polsce* [in:] *Władze komunistyczne wobec ziem odzyskanych po II Wojnie Światowej*, ed. S. Łach, Słupsk, 1997, p.109; M. Miodek, op.cit., pp. 353-436

<sup>424</sup> Repatriates – here – the huge group of Poles deported from the Eastern Poland (seized by the USSR in 1939) and settled (mostly) in Western Poland, especially at the 'regained territories'.

<sup>425</sup> G. Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions*, Princeton Univ. Press 2011, p. 171.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid*, p. 69.

<sup>427</sup> The propaganda based on the figure of a 'German waiting for revenge' was successful in Silesia: around 60% of votes supported the government (officially around 90%); T. Wolsza, *Rząd RP na obczyźnie wobec wydarzeń w kraju 1945-1951*, Warszawa 1998, p. 190

several examples discussed in this chapter shows, the mismanagement of the process of implementation of the strategy of de-Germanisation of this region rather increased the sense of insecurity of Polish settlers in Szczecin instead of reducing it.

Most probably, the initial problems with populating the territory of Szczecin with the Poles, resulting from the unclear status of the city (being also a result of playful Soviet policy towards the administration of that city in 1945) deterred the local propaganda from burdening the new settlers with additional threats. In these circumstances, the phantom of Germans attacking the Polish border was the last thing people should read about in their daily press. Instead, it was much safer to offer the settlers arriving to Szczecin the 'Piaśt ideology' presenting the 'expansive nature of Germans' and presenting the softer and more distanced version of the 'German threat'.

When it comes to the relatively positive results of the referendum and parliamentary elections in Szczecin, they might be interpreted as a reflection of the awareness of 'living with dangerous Germans on the other side of the border', which was horrifying enough to incline the Poles to vote according to the governmental instruction. On the other hand, however, the support for the communist government expressed during the referendum and elections was not synonymous with winning total control over local society. The mass demonstration showing the anti-government mood in April 1946 showed that disturbed as the inhabitants of Szczecin, living practically face to face with the 'eternal enemy of Poland', might be, they did not consider the communist government as the only protector and guarantor of state safety.

In Łódź, despite the intense anti-German propaganda the motif of the German threat attracted much less attention from the local Polish society. The further from the physical proximity of the Germans, the less likely it was to make any gains from exploiting the German threat, even if it pertained to the 'dangerous German conspirators still living in Łódź'. What seemed more important in the local context was the figure of a German 'class enemy' created especially for local purposes. This symbiosis of class and national hatred, preserved by the propagandists and directed at the workers' community, was supposed to remind them of the horrible past under the

superiority of German capitalists and to draw a promising future of the workers' city under communist rule. However, the fairly integrated community of Łódź workers was quite resistant to the propaganda manipulations. In Łódź the factor of the pressure of living in the frontier area, as in the case of Szczecin, was absent. Therefore, safety and protection from the German danger was not seen as more important than everyday economic concerns.

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All the above-mentioned, constantly repeated, expressions and even the type of satirical drawings created by the propagandists during the first postwar years, revolving around the theme of the 'German threat', constituted a propaganda rhetoric model for other propaganda motifs. The same scheme was later developed and adopted by the propagandists exploiting other figures which were supposed to evoke fear in the Polish communist propaganda of the late 1940s and 1950s. The propaganda campaigns based on the tactic of making Polish society afraid of spies, conspirators and internal enemies of the Soviet bloc were conducted precisely according to this model.

### CHAPTER III

#### The threat of spies, conspirators and internal enemies in the communist propaganda in Poland (1945-1953)

*In times of terror, when everyone  
is something of a conspirator,  
everyone will be in a situation  
where he has to play detective.*

Walter Benjamin

The issue of 'spy mania' and the general problem of hostile activity of spies have always been and still are important and popular motifs in the cultural and political discourses. On the one hand the international career of the famous American novelist James F. Cooper started with the publication of the bestseller romance 'The Spy'<sup>428</sup> from 1821, which presented the fictional story of the activity of an intelligence agent during the American Revolutionary War. On the other hand, one of the most famous political events that focused the attention of a large part of the French public between 1894 and 1899 was the deeply anti-Semitic Dreyfus Affair, where a French officer of Jewish descent was accused of spying on France for Germany.<sup>429</sup> Both these cases are only two examples of a wider tendency. They illustrate the fact that at least from the nineteenth century societies on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean were attentive to the issue of threat standing behind foreign conspiracy.

The subversive actions taken by spies were also among the integral elements of various types of conspiracy theories. In the twentieth century one may indicate at least several moments when the fear of spies and conspirators hidden within the given society evoked serious dread or even natural or artificially provoked panic. The two waves of the so-called Red Scare that American society faced in the 1920s and later in the 1940s/1950s were among the most spectacular examples of this phenomenon.

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<sup>428</sup> J.F.Cooper, *The spy. A tale of a neutral ground*, New York 1821

<sup>429</sup> A. S. Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs, Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank, 1894–1914*, Cambridge 1991

The term 'Red Scare' referred to the escalation of fear of a potential rise of communism or radical leftism mainly in the USA. It was used by anti-leftist proponents in the United States. The first wave of the Red Scare started in 1919 and was evoked by the fear of the rising influence of the anarchists and unions. This scare had its origins in the intensive growth of American nationalism during the Great War as well as in the Russian Revolution. Following the October Revolution, American authorities saw the threat of the communist revolution in the actions of organised labour, i.e. the Seattle General Strike and the Boston Police Strike, but also the bomb campaign directed by anarchist groups at political and business leaders.<sup>430</sup>

The second wave of the Red Scare occurred after World War Two and was popularly known as 'McCarthyism' after its most famous supporter, Senator Joseph McCarthy. McCarthyism coincided with an increased popular fear of communist espionage consequent to a Soviet Eastern Europe, the Chinese Civil War, the confession of spying for the Soviet Union given by several high-ranking U.S. government officials, and the Korean War.<sup>431</sup> The motif of the threat that communist spies infiltrated the American government was supposed to pose a threat to the USA became a powerful political motivator.

The original aim of 'McCarthyism' was to fight against the activity of the activists of the Communist Party USA and the NKVD agents infiltrating the state institutions. Yet, the senators cooperating with McCarthy soon started the uncontrolled procedure of investigation of all the environments suspected and accused of a pro-communist and anti-American attitude.<sup>432</sup>

The atmosphere in which Senator McCarthy and his Senate Commission verified the loyalty of Americans, i.e. state administration officers, academics, journalists,

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<sup>430</sup> M. B. Levin, *Political Hysteria in America: The Democratic Capacity for Repression*, Michigan 1971

<sup>431</sup> L.R.Y. Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left (Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America)*, Princeton 2013

<sup>432</sup> The anti-communist persecutions in the USA in the early 1950s were fuelled with the disclosure of several authentic Soviet spies i.e. directly engaged in the American atomic bomb programme. Among the most famous Soviet spies infiltrating the American atomic bomb programme (Project Manhattan) there were: Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, and Klaus Fuchs. This anti-communist hysteria resulted in groundless and career breaking accusations of anti-American activity inflicted against such eminent figures of American culture as Charlie Chaplin, Paul Robeson, Aaron Copland and Arthur Miller.

directors, writers, actors and officers of the US Army, searching for signs of communist infiltration of those environments is well illustrated by the popular poster from this period.<sup>433</sup> The central figure of the poster, entitled 'The red menace is real!', was the shadow of a typical image of spy – a scary gimlet-eyed male hiding himself under a hat and trench coat. The poster encouraged American society to inform authorities about all kinds of suspected communist activity.

In the same period, pedestrians walking along streets in Polish cities and especially workers arriving or leaving their factories and offices were exposed to the view of a poster operating with a very similar visual and symbolic threat.<sup>434</sup> The anonymous poster, entitled 'Guard your professional secrets!', alarmed its viewers with the warning that they might be the target of the enemy who tried to steal their secrets. Just like on the American poster, the figure of the enemy was symbolised by the ominous shadow of a person resembling the typical image of a spy who was waiting for any occasion to attack Polish worker.

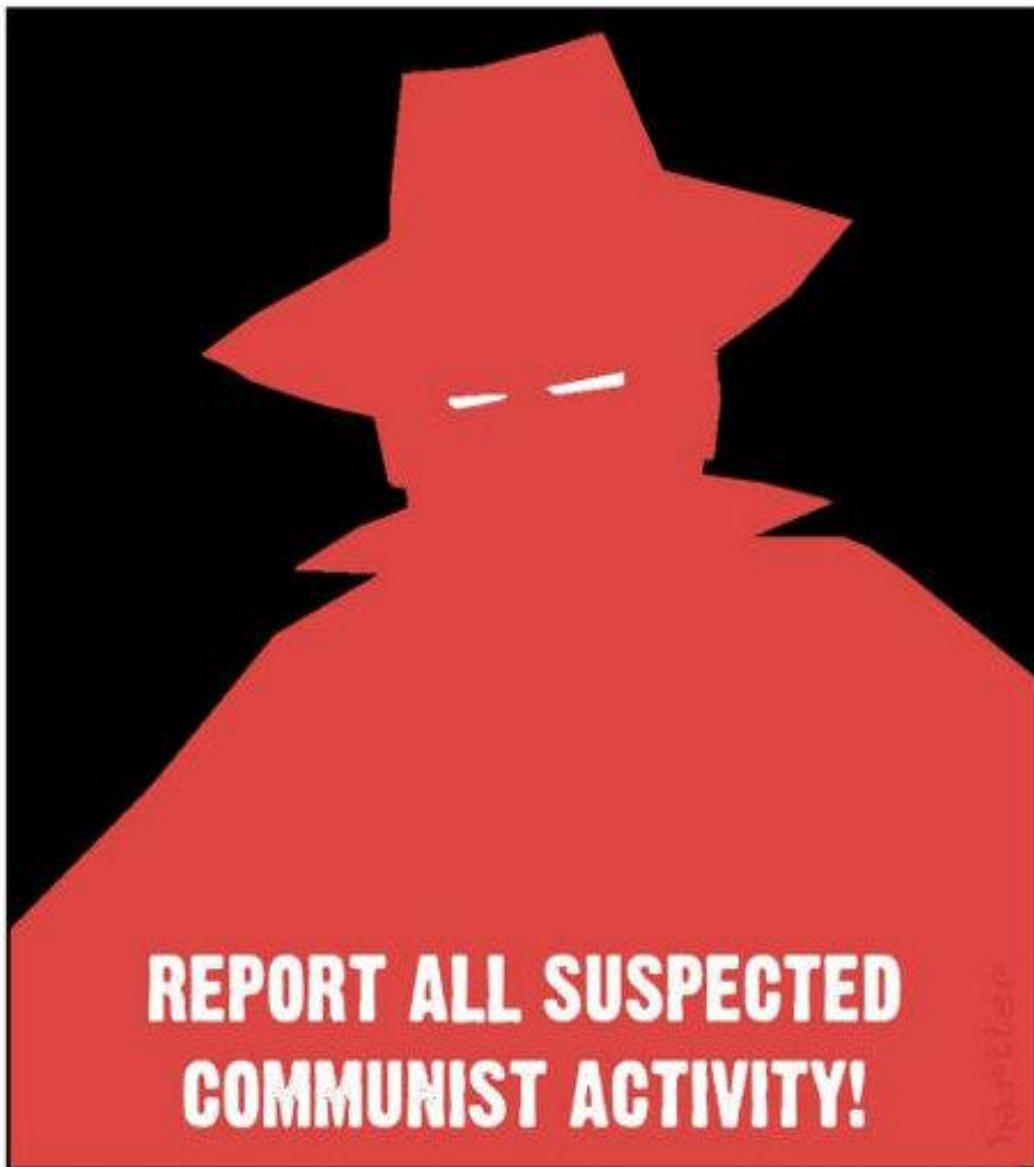
Looking at both posters, one may realise an almost identical tactic of alerting society to the threat posed by foreign spies running conspiratorial activity that was implemented by the propaganda structures working for both sides of the 'Iron Curtain'. Furthermore, in the communist bloc, just like in the USA, the issue of the threat of conspiracy and espionage exploited by propaganda was not only restricted to the tactic of alerting workers who could be targeted by the intelligence of the enemy. On the one hand, posters like the last one presented above were supposed to illustrate the phantom of the potential threat that spies could pose to the safety of postwar Poland. On the other hand, dozens of press articles announcing the discovery of entire networks of Western spies by the Secret Police, published every month in the pro-governmental press, were supposed to materialise this sort of fear and stress the palpability and scale of dread of foreign conspiracy in postwar Poland.

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<sup>433</sup> Picture 14

<sup>434</sup> Picture 15

**THE RED MENACE  
IS REAL!**



**REPORT ALL SUSPECTED  
COMMUNIST ACTIVITY!**

Picture 14





Picture 15

Described in the press, illustrated by posters and pictured by the numerous PKF episodes dedicated to the trials of spies taking place in Polish courts, the issue of spy-mania and foreign conspiracy became one of the most intensively exploited aspects of the communist propaganda fear management strategy.

### **1. Spy-mania and the postwar reality in Poland**

Even a preliminary analysis of the most important communist propaganda threads in the postwar media discourse shows that the issue of the disturbing activity of foreign spies and conspirators belonged to the basic set of rhetorical tropes regularly addressed in all kinds of media. Thus, the below presented discussion of the alarming titles of press articles, PKF episodes and books addressing the problem of espionage must be set within the wider context of the serious economic problems Polish society was struggling with at the brink of the 1940s and 1950s. In my view, one of the main reasons why the alarming press dispatches informing readers on the activity of dangerous spies or conspirators organising anti-state plots was to divert the attention of society from the serious material concerns bothering Polish society.

#### **The panorama of local fear in Poland after 1947**

Despite the positive declarations announced in communist media already from late July 1944, for large sections of Polish society the economic situation after the first extremely difficult post-war years did not improve and they still suffered poverty.<sup>435</sup> This situation resulted in a deep and common mistrust towards the economic reforms introduced in Poland already in 1944. One may realise the level of this distrust and social frustration when reading private letters sent to Polish Radio commenting on the official propaganda of success stressing the economic progress resulting from the socialist reforms. In one such letter its author claimed that no results of those reforms were available for an average Polish worker since desperate people standing in long lines and waiting for the far too insufficient food supplies commented with ironic songs:

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<sup>435</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, pp. 509-539

Na prawo sklep, na prawo sklep	Shop on the left, shop on the right
A ja w ogonku stoję	I am waiting in the long line
Tu nie ma nic, tam nie ma nic	Here is nothing, there is nothing
A dzieci głodne moje	My children are starving <sup>436</sup>

Despite the officially announced successes of the ‘three-year economic plan’,<sup>437</sup> and in spite of the growth of economic indexes emphasised in the press articles between 1947 and 1949, the average salary was actually 30% lower than in 1938.<sup>438</sup> Indeed, it was not until 1953 that incomes began to grow as rapidly as the prices of basic goods.<sup>439</sup> Moreover, five years after the end of World War Two, the number of flats available in many of the bombed cities was far from sufficient for the growing Polish postwar population. As Jerzy Eisler puts it in his essay on everyday life in Warsaw during the period of the six-year economic plan,<sup>440</sup> in 1951 almost 20% of people working in Warsaw had to commute due to the catastrophic lack of flats.<sup>441</sup> One of the most important concerns disturbing Poles from the late 1940s to the early 1950s was the lack of basic goods on the market: the empty shelves in shops selling such basic articles as food, clothes or even soap became the symbol of the inefficiency of the socialist economy.<sup>442</sup> These worries were further triggered with the increase in the prices of meat, coal and other vital products ordered by the government in 1949.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Archiwum Telewizji Polskiej, [Later: ATVP] 1050/1, Bulletin No.22, 10.08.1951, p. 8

<sup>437</sup> Three-year economic plan (1947-1949) – a centralised plan created by the communist authorities of Poland in order to rebuild the country after the devastation which resulted from World War Two.

<sup>438</sup> J. Skodlarski, *Zarys historii gospodarczej Polski*, Warszawa 2000, p. 382

<sup>439</sup> A.Jeziński, B.Petz, *Historia gospodarcza Polski ludowej 1944-1985*, Warszawa 1988, pp.182; S. Jankowski, *Warunki bytu ludności* [in:] *Gospodarka Polski Ludowej 1944-1955*, ed. J.Kaliński, Z. Landau, Warszawa 1986, p. 456

<sup>440</sup> Six-year economic plan (1950 -1955) – a second centralised plan created by the communist authorities of Poland, mainly concentrated on increasing the production of the sector of heavy industry.

<sup>441</sup> J. Eisler, *Życie codzienne w Warszawie w okresie planu sześcioletniego* [in:] *Polska 1944/45-1989. Życie codzienne w Polsce w latach 1945-1955*, vol.5, ed. J. Eisler, Warszawa 2001, pp. 33

<sup>442</sup> A.Jeziński, B. Petz, op.cit., p. 181. More on this problem in: M.Jastrząb, *Puste półki*, Warszawa 2004

<sup>443</sup> M.Jastrząb, op.cit., pp. 18-42

In such circumstances the communist government required generating vivid rhetorical propaganda figures representing external threats that could surpass internal problems. Here the problem of spy-mania served the propagandists as a convenient explanation of the problems the government was unable to solve. This is why in many cases the figures of spies were presented as agents of economic deterioration responsible for the sabotage suppressing the economic development of Poland.

## **1.2 The figures of spies and conspirators in the postwar propaganda discourse**

In the early postwar reality the escalation of the phenomenon of the so-called spy-mania in the communist bloc was one of the symptoms of the forthcoming cold war.<sup>444</sup> Dariusz Jarosz and Maria Pasztor argue that this phenomenon was an inseparable element of the Stalinist ideology intensively implemented in Poland since 1947. In this ideology the figure of the internal and external enemy played a central role in sustaining the state of constant alert both within society and within the communist party. Just like in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s in postwar Poland the motif of spy-mania fomented by propaganda served as a convenient pretext justifying the communist terror and brutal political and military fights against all adversaries of the new regime regularly accused of running conspiratorial activity.

The particular instructions towards the importance of this problem and the way it should be combated were given to all communist parties during the conference in Szklarska Poręba in September 1947 where Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) was established.<sup>445</sup> At this conference Andrei Zhdanov, a close collaborator of Stalin, postulated the 'necessity of unmasking all the internal supporters of American imperialism'. At the same conference the representatives of the communist parties of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria postulated high vigilance towards provocateurs, saboteurs and American agents within the communist parties. Finally, Władysław

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<sup>444</sup> D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *Robineau, Bassaler i inni. Z dziejów stosunków polsko-francuskich 1948-1953* [later: *Robineau, Bassaler*], Toruń 2001, p. 137

<sup>445</sup> Cominform - an Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties. It was the first official forum of the international communist movement since the dissolution of Comintern, and confirmed the new realities after World War Two, including the creation of an Eastern Bloc.

Gomułka stated that Poland must be especially vigilant as it was jeopardised by acts of sabotage and the infiltration of American and British spies.<sup>446</sup>

Among the many regions of Poland where the communist media announced the detection of the hostile activity of foreign spies and conspirators the area of the regained lands played special role. The analysis of the issue of spy-mania in this new part of postwar Poland allows, however, drawing conclusions to be drawn concerning more than just the local range of this phenomenon.

### **The time of foreign spies in postwar Poland**

In the early postwar period when the new administration and structures of the secret police were in the process of being established, the activity of foreign intelligence in Poland was especially extensive. The government spy-mania evoked by the activity of authentic Western spies in Central-Eastern Europe was additionally intensified with the omnipresent atmosphere of suspicion and hyper alertness towards real or alleged enemies and spies, characteristic of the communist dictatorship that was being implemented in Poland.<sup>447</sup>

The trial of Edmund Sieg, a Polish inhabitant of Szczecin accused of smuggling and spying, serves here as a good example of the way the issue of spy-mania was fomented by local media. In the local press edited in Szczecin this event was presented as the trial of an SS officer running anti-Polish activity and serving General Anders.<sup>448</sup> According to *Kurier Szczeciński* Sieg and his companions were supposed to have spread confusion or even warmongering.<sup>449</sup> On the one hand, this trial was supposed to denigrate one of the symbols of Polish military forces fighting on the Western fronts of

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<sup>446</sup> D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *Robineau, Bassaler*, p. 137-210

<sup>447</sup> R. Ptaszyński, *Czas szpiegów na Pomorzu Zachodnim 1945–1956* [later: *Czas szpiegów*], [in:] *Od polonizacji do europeizacji. Księga pamiątkowa prof. Kazimierza Kozłowskiego w 70. rocznicę urodzin*, ed. M. Machałek, J. Macholak, Szczecin 2012, pp. 183-186

<sup>448</sup> General Władysław Anders (1892-1970), General of the Polish Army. During World War Two Anders served as Inspector-General of the Polish Forces-in-Exile.

<sup>449</sup> R. Ptaszyński, *'Zgodny zespół andersowców, SS-manów i przemytników' – prasa regionalna wobec oskarżonych przed Wojskowym Sądem Rejonowym w Szczecinie 1946–1955*, [in:] *Prasa regionalna jako źródło do badań historycznych okresu XIX i XX wieku*, ed. J. Nowosielska-Sobel, G. Strauchold, T. Ślepowroński, Wrocław 2011, pp. 186-187

World War Two. On the other hand, according to Polish historian Radosław Ptaszyński this trial was supposed to solidify local society in the conviction that Szczecin and Western Pomerania were especially exposed to the activity of foreign spies and their Polish collaborators.<sup>450</sup>

When it comes to statistics, in 1947 the Local Military Court in Szczecin delegated to judge the spies examined 33 cases of persons accused of espionage (among 2090 other kind of cases) and sentenced 25 persons out of 854 defendants. Only one person was sentenced to death, 11 received life sentences. In 1948, 23 persons were accused of spying in Szczecin with 20 of them being sentenced, including two death sentences.<sup>451</sup> In 1949, 12 people were imprisoned for spying in Szczecin while 190 such cases were noted in the entire country. In 1950, the peak of this tendency, 24 persons in Szczecin and 352 throughout the territory of Poland were imprisoned for spying. This last number meant the growth of the rate of sentences announced for spying was around 84%.<sup>452</sup> The spiralling number of such trials was used by communist media to foment the phantom of dread posed to Poland by foreign spies.

Among numerous trials of spies that took place in Szczecin at least one gained the statewide publicity. The trial of Andre Robineau gave the communist propaganda a pretext to stress the threat that Western intelligence posed to the state security of Poland.

### **False French diplomats**

The case of André Robineau, an officer of the French Institute in Poland hired in the French Consulate in Szczecin and arrested in December 1949 for espionage became one of the symbols of the postwar spy-mania in Poland. His arrest and trial in January 1950 was the culmination of an action in which several French officers working in Poland were caught and accused of spying in 1949. Already in March 1949 the UB arrested Yvonne Bassaler, a secretary of the French Consulate in Wrocław. Together

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<sup>450</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>451</sup> Wordsem, p. 188

<sup>452</sup> Loc. cit.

with five other arrested citizens of France, Germany and Poland Bassaler was accused of espionage and as a result of a trial in Wrocław in December 1949 all six persons were sentenced for several (from six to nine) years of imprisonment.<sup>453</sup>

The trial of André Robineau was intensively explored both by local and central media. Between 6<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March 1950 *Kurier Szczeciński* published detailed reports from the court suggesting that Robineau established and headed an entire network of conspirators collecting data for Western intelligence.<sup>454</sup> The spies recruited by Robineau were supposed to collect sensitive data concerning the Polish Army.<sup>455</sup> Robineau was also accused of using his status of diplomat to practice economic espionage and of passing confidential data to the structures of NATO.<sup>456</sup> Apart from enlisting numerous aspects of the conspiratorial activity of the French network of spies, *Kurier Szczeciński* also published voices of anger of local workers declaring their indignation evoked by the activity of dangerous foreign intelligence in Poland.<sup>457</sup>

On the state level the trial of Robineau was augmented by a PKF episode, radio transmissions from the court in Szczecin and even by a propaganda book. The short documentary movie transmitted in Polish cinemas in mid-February 1950 stressed the fact that all the military and economic data collected by the French network of spies were passed to the 'aggressive NATO'.<sup>458</sup> The same motif was also the main theme of broadcasts transmitted by Polish Radio directly from the court in Szczecin between 6<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February.<sup>459</sup> The wider panorama of the 'criminal activity' of the Western network of spies was presented in the publication 'Szpieczy Wall Street' by Marian L. Bielicki.<sup>460</sup> In his book Bielicki,<sup>461</sup> a Polish writer, journalist and translator who spent the war in the USSR, presented his readers the detailed methods of espionage practiced by Robineau and his network together with profiles of the French and Polish conspirators.

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<sup>453</sup> D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *Robineau, Bassaler*, p. 136-201

<sup>454</sup> KS, 06-16.02.1950

<sup>455</sup> KS, 07.02.1950

<sup>456</sup> KS, 11.02.1950

<sup>457</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>458</sup> PKF 8/50, 15.02.1950

<sup>459</sup> Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe [Later: NAC], sygn. 33-P-1488; 33-P-1489

<sup>460</sup> M.L. Bielicki, *Szpieczy Wall Street*, Warszawa 1950

<sup>461</sup> Marian L. Bielicki (1920-1972)

In his story on dangerous foreign spies and their local collaborators, Bielicki emphasised especially the fact that the activity of French intelligence aimed at undermining the defensive capability of Poland.<sup>462</sup>

The atmosphere of the constant threat deriving from the regular infiltration of Poland by foreign spies was frequently fomented by the communist media reporting on further cases of the unmasking of hostile activity of Western conspirators. Only ten months after the trial in Szczecin in December of 1950 public opinion in Poland was alarmed with the revelation of yet another disturbing act of foreign espionage.

### **The British and American intelligence infiltrating Poland**

The second most famous show trial of a foreign spy organised in postwar Poland was the case of Colonel Claude Turner, a British Aircraft Attaché accused of espionage for Great Britain and the USA. In the relatively long PKF episode dedicated to the trial organised in Warsaw in December 1950, Turner and his fifty collaborators were presented as false diplomats who were smuggling criminals across the Polish border. In the final scene of the film the persecutor presented the British officers as *'dangerous imperialists who used every possible method to push the world into an abyss of new carnage'*.<sup>463</sup> Furthermore, all the accused in the trial were portrayed in the same vein in the radio transmissions.<sup>464</sup> Finally, an anonymous publication 'The way the foreign intelligences are acting in Poland' from January 1951 presented the case of the network of spies headed by Colonel Turner as an element of a much wider phenomenon of foreign conspiracy posing a direct threat to the security of Poland.<sup>465</sup>

The way both the trial of Robineau in Szczecin and the one of Turner in Warsaw were presented by communist media targeted not only at sensitising Polish society to the threat of hostile foreign conspiracy in Poland. The reports on the dreadful activity of Western spies in Poland also aimed at showing local cases as vivid examples of a much wider and even more serious threat posed to the Socialist Bloc, both by external and

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<sup>462</sup> M.L.Bielicki, *Szpiedzy Wall Street*, pp. 43-55

<sup>463</sup> PKF 52/50, 20.12.1950

<sup>464</sup> NAC, sygn. 33-T-740

<sup>465</sup> *Jak pracują obce wywiady w Polsce. Proces Turnera*, Warszawa 1951



even more dangerous internal enemies – the spies acting as false communist activists. As it was suggested by the communist media those conspirators had an intention to overthrow the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and to provoke a new global conflict. In this political and propaganda construct it was Yugoslavia and its leader, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, that were given the role of the ‘Trojan horse’ of the communist camp.

## **2. Titoism and its dreadful consequences**

The sequence of important political events that took place in the Socialist Bloc in the late 1940s led to strengthening the atmosphere of fear focusing on spies and conspiracies. This was done very cleverly, first of all by presenting Yugoslavia as the ‘*cradle of anti-communist espionage and conspiracy*’<sup>466</sup> through the communist press that was published in the entire Socialist Bloc (and outside) a few months after June 1948 (the peak moment of the conflict between the USSR and Yugoslavia). In 1949, the communist press announced the detection of plots against the Socialist Bloc, organised not only by external enemies but also by internal enemies – who were described as Marshal Tito’s agents. A new propaganda term – ‘Titoism’ – became the synonym for betrayal, espionage, and conspiracy.

The term ‘Titoism’ referred to the political ideology used to describe the political and ideological ‘schism’ between Yugoslavia and the USSR after the end of World War Two.<sup>467</sup> In theory, the ideology of ‘Titoism’ assumed that each country sticking to the basic goals and rules of communism should fit its own path to socialism to the local specificity. This kind of political attitude was supposed to be more important than external directives based on other (mainly Soviet) experience. In practice this ideology was the idea that communism should be reached independently (or even in opposition)

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<sup>466</sup> *Jugosławia pod terrorem kiliki Tito*, ed. A. Deperasińska, Warszawa 1950, pp. 5-9

<sup>467</sup> A.B. Ulam, *Tito-Titoism* [in:] *Marxism, Communism and Western Society. A comparative encyclopaedia*, vol.6, ed. P. L. Heath, Herder 1973, p. 183. According to Adam Bruno Ulam the genesis of ‘Titoism’ was inextricably interlinked with the Soviet–Yugoslavian conflict that erupted in January 1948 when Stalin harshly criticised the governments of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria for planning the federation of both countries without Soviet agreement.

to the policy practiced by the USSR. Yet, in the official Soviet interpretation imposed in communist propaganda circulated in the communist bloc 'Titoism' was presented as a synonym of an anti-Soviet, and thus anti-communist and pro-capitalist, political attitude. Consequently, the term was used by the government of the USSR to denote it as a dangerous heresy.<sup>468</sup>

On the brink of the 1950s in the communist media discourse the figure of the 'Titoist threat', one of the main generators of 'spy mania' supplemented and to a large extent replaced the figure of the 'German threat'. According to these new rhetorical tropes Titoist spies and conspirators posed a threat both to the basic national values, such as freedom and state independence, and to a general one – the safety and integrity of the Socialist Bloc. In addition, it was against this background of a propaganda vision of Eastern and Central Europe endangered by espionage that the USSR and Cominform were presented as the only protectors capable of guaranteeing the stability of the Soviet Bloc.

The scale of the anti-Yugoslavian propaganda campaign that saturated communist media starting from 1948 was spectacular. Yet, one may realise how surprising this campaign could have potentially been only when bearing in mind the early postwar positive image of Yugoslavia and its leader who was officially included in the pantheon of war heroes and tamers of Nazi Germany.

### **2.1 Propaganda image of Tito and Yugoslavia before 1948**

Compared to other countries controlled by the USSR after the end of World War Two, Yugoslavia had been conferred a specific status deriving directly from the way in which this part of the Balkan Peninsula was liberated from the Nazi occupation. The German troops were finally driven out of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1945, mainly thanks to local partisan units with minor support from the Soviet army. The success of Yugoslavian troops commanded by Josip Broz–Tito reinforced his political power. What is more, compared to Poland or Hungary, Tito did not have any significant democratic

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<sup>468</sup> A.B. Ulam, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-188

adversaries to defeat which enabled him to gain total control over the country much faster than the other communist regimes in the Soviet Bloc.<sup>469</sup> Soon after establishing his government, Tito, based on the Soviet model, started to implement a number of crucial reforms in Yugoslavia<sup>470</sup>

Thanks to his war merits and economic successes, Tito became a socialist hero and a model for other governments and societies in the Soviet Bloc. All the authors and editors of publications dedicated to Yugoslavia or its leader circulating on the Polish market between 1946 and 1948 held Yugoslavia in high esteem. We can specify several characteristic themes that authors or editors of books, press articles and films stressed in order to portray Yugoslavia as a model member of the communist bloc.

Tito presented himself as a great military leader of Yugoslavian nations in their struggle with German occupation.<sup>471</sup> The state under his rule was shown as 'the stronghold of democracy in the Balkan Peninsula' and 'one of the most important factors of peace in Europe that would block any festering disputes in the Balkans'.<sup>472</sup> Tito was also portrayed as a skillful political leader introducing a visionary method of political management based on the system of national fronts.<sup>473</sup> Although this system was very different from the USSR model, the Polish editors published Tito's essay without any critical preface or remarks.

Furthermore, Tito was portrayed as an efficient leader who successfully implemented the federal model of administration in his country. It was also stressed that the marshal was involved in the process of improving relations between the nations of Yugoslavia. Finally, Tito was also presented as a successful diplomat establishing fruitful cooperation between his government and leaders of other Slavic nations.<sup>474</sup>

When it comes to the early postwar popular reception of Marshal Tito in Poland one may draw some conclusions from the media reports commenting on the visit of the

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<sup>469</sup> M.J. Zacharias, *Komunizm federacja nacjonalizm. System władzy w Jugosławii 1943 -1991. Powstanie, przekształcenie, rozkład*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 66-75

<sup>470</sup> Wordsem, pp. 94-98

<sup>471</sup> J. Broz, *Republika wolnych narodów*, Łódź 1946

<sup>472</sup> Wordsem, p. 2

<sup>473</sup> J. Broz, *Front ludowy jako ogólnonarodowa organizacja polityczna*, Warszawa 1948, p. 31

<sup>474</sup> T. Rek, *Nowa Jugosławia*, Łódź 1946

Yugoslavian leader to Poland in March 1946. Polish governmental media described the ceremonial welcome of Tito by the most important communist dignitaries in Warsaw. Moreover, several articles published in *Głos Robotniczy* depicting the visit of the 'heroic leader of a brotherly nation' to Warsaw, Łódź and Silesia underlined the presence of the enthusiastic crowds of Poles gathered in the squares and along the streets to admire and salute Marshal Tito.<sup>475</sup> The scenes presented by the press were also shown in Polish cinemas. The PKF episode dedicated to Tito's visit to Poland was saturated with splendour and honours that the marshal was treated to by high-ranking representatives of the Polish Army and government.<sup>476</sup> Two years later such a positive attitude of Polish society towards Tito constituted a tough challenge to communist agitators preparing a propaganda onslaught against the Yugoslavian leader.

What is important is that the episode of the Czechoslovakian Film Chronicle from the same period dedicated to the visit of Tito to Prague showed an equally positive attitude of local society towards the leader of Yugoslavia.<sup>477</sup> Compared to the PKF episode the Czechoslovakian movie focused even more attention on the enthusiasm of the civilian crowds gathered at the train station and along the streets of Prague to wave to Marshal Tito. Both these movies demonstrate that the enthusiasm towards the leader of Yugoslavia was not just a Polish specificity. Before 1948 it was rather a common attitude of authorities and societies in the Socialist Bloc.

In all the above presented examples of the propaganda image of the Yugoslavian Marshal Tito, he was presented as an ideal socialist leader, not as a dangerous conspirator posing a threat to the Socialist Bloc. The latter image began to dominate the propaganda messages about the Yugoslavian leader starting from June 1948, when the anti-Titoist propaganda campaign planned and organised by the USSR was initiated. This new decidedly negative trend in portraying Marshal Tito had a direct link with the Soviet-Yugoslavian conflict that started at least in January 1948.

## 2.2 Stalin-Tito split

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<sup>475</sup> GR, 15.03.1946; 18.03.1946; 19.03.1946

<sup>476</sup> PKF 8-9/46, 16.03.1946

<sup>477</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyN30eQDCDg> - retrieved 04.10.2013

The reasons for the conflict between Yugoslavia and the USSR have been widely discussed in the literature.<sup>478</sup> For many years it was believed that the main reason underlying the conflict lay in the different conceptions that the two leaders had of the way to socialism. Stalin found it difficult to accept that, while enjoying his local political and economic successes, Tito started to criticise other countries in the Soviet Bloc for their insufficient pace of gaining control over local opponents. On the one hand, the Soviet leader did not want to irritate Western leaders by breaking the declaration he had made during the summits in Tehran and Yalta that all the parliamentary elections in the Soviet Bloc would be (at least officially) free and transparent. On the other, he wanted to show Tito that the Kremlin was the only place where decisions regarding the communist bloc policy were taken.<sup>479</sup> The Soviet leader did not want to accept the existence of such a powerful and ideologically dogmatic alternative regime in the communist bloc.

One of the most important principles of Cominform was to collectively work on the most crucial problems of the socialist camp. Through this principle Moscow sought to guarantee its final word in all important decisions. In addition, any critique of Stalin's ideas was treated as a betrayal of the interests of communism.<sup>480</sup> This particular form of

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<sup>478</sup> See, for instance, A. Kadic, *The Tito Conflict as Reflected in Literature*, pp. 91-106 [in:] "Slavic Review", Vol. 37, Number 1, March 1978; E.R.Terzuolo, *Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Origins of Yugoslavia's Self-Management System*, pp. 195-218 [in:] "War and Society in East Central Europe" (At the Brink of War and Peace: the Tito-Stalin Split in a Historic Perspective) ed. W.S. Vucinich, Vol. X, New York 1982; J. Perović, *The Tito-Stalin Split. A Reassessment in Light of New Evidence* [in:] "Journal of Cold War Studies", Vol. 9, No. 2, Spring 2007, pp. 37-38

<sup>479</sup> Tension between Stalin and Tito was further compounded by the private territorial ambitions of the latter. Tito planned Yugoslavia's expansion and wanted to gain autonomy from Moscow in the area of foreign policy. Without consulting the Kremlin, the Yugoslavian leader started a campaign to regain Trieste and negotiated the vision of a Balkan Federation with Bulgaria. Moreover, Tito intended to perform the annexation of Albania, to which the USSR was strongly opposed. Already during World War Two Tito made plans for the future incorporation of Albania into Yugoslavia. Indeed, in the months following the end of the war, Tirana was included into the Yugoslav economic system by means of a series of bilateral agreements, as well as by sending approximately one thousand economic specialists to Albania. All the above-mentioned actions convinced Stalin that Tito had become an uncontrollable competitor who was planning to create a local empire.

<sup>480</sup> *Jugosławia*, p. 173; *Komuniści przeciwko komunistom – z Andrzejem Paczkowskim i Robertem Spałkiem rozmawia Barbara Polak* [later: *Komuniści*] [In:] "Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej", No. 1-2(48-49), I-II 2006, p. 4

communist fundamentalism left no space for particularisms of individual satellite states, which were supposed to be standardised according to the Soviet ideal.<sup>481</sup>

Having established Cominform, Stalin required a factor that would enable him to subordinate local communist leaders to the Kremlin's policy. An 'internal enemy' was optimal. This label was placed on a Cominform member who had broken with the main principles. Stalin's aim was to stigmatise any given state which might oppose him.<sup>482</sup> Yugoslavia was condemned by Stalin as the Trojan horse of Western capitalists sent to the communist bloc, and soon after official letters with warnings were sent from Moscow to Belgrade.<sup>483</sup> In April 1948, Stalin decided to withdraw all the Soviet experts and instructors from Yugoslavia. Subsequently, on June 28<sup>th</sup>, Yugoslavia was officially excluded from Cominform.

### **Exclusion from Cominform**

The first announcements regarding the Yugoslavian exclusion from Cominform appeared in the Polish press on the same day as the decision was taken. The short message published in *Głos Robotniczy* informed readers that the representatives of the communist parties of Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, the USSR, Czechoslovakia, France and Italy, gathered in Bucharest, had discussed the situation of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) and had unanimously adopted a resolution.<sup>484</sup> The full text of the resolution was printed two days later and was prefaced by an anonymous short text entitled 'In the Defense of International Solidarity of the Workers Parties'. In this text the CPY was presented as a dangerous 'anti-Marxist, anti-democratic and anti-Soviet organisation' the activity of which posed a threat to the unanimity of the Socialist Bloc. The resolution of Cominform presented the exclusion of Yugoslavia as a symbol of the

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<sup>481</sup> However, the Yugoslav policy was still not modeled entirely on these principles. While on many general issues such as the economy, collectivization of agriculture and even the constitution of the state, it followed the Soviet example more closely than the rest of the satellite republics, in relation to ideological issues, Belgrade attempted to reconcile the Stalinist orthodoxy with a certain degree of political autonomy. This was unacceptable for Moscow.

<sup>482</sup> M.J. Zacharias, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103; Z. Rutyna, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121

<sup>483</sup> Milovan Dilas points out that Stalin warned Tito that the example of Trotsky shows that there is no point in acting against Stalin.

<sup>484</sup> GR, 28.06.1948

'steadfast solidarity of the international workers movement', which did not accept an individual and non-Soviet path to the kind of communism chosen by the CPY.<sup>485</sup>

Further comments on the resolution published in the Polish press in June and July 1948 aimed at confirming the appropriate nature of Cominform decision towards Yugoslavia and at consolidating a negative vision of Tito's activity. One of the most popular motifs exploited by the propagandists was the 'Titoist threat' for the safety of the Socialist Bloc.

Three days after the official exclusion of Yugoslavia from Cominform, Polish press readers were alerted to 'the destructive policy of the CPY leaders and Tito's megalomania, imperialistic ambitions and lack of respect towards the Soviet economic and political model of the socialist state was dangerous for the entire Soviet bloc'.<sup>486</sup> The entire set of new and decidedly negative set of disturbing features of Marshal Tito was perfectly condensed in the form of satiric drawing prepared by Kukryniksy – a team of Soviet caricaturists publishing their works in the Soviet satirical magazine *Krokodil*.

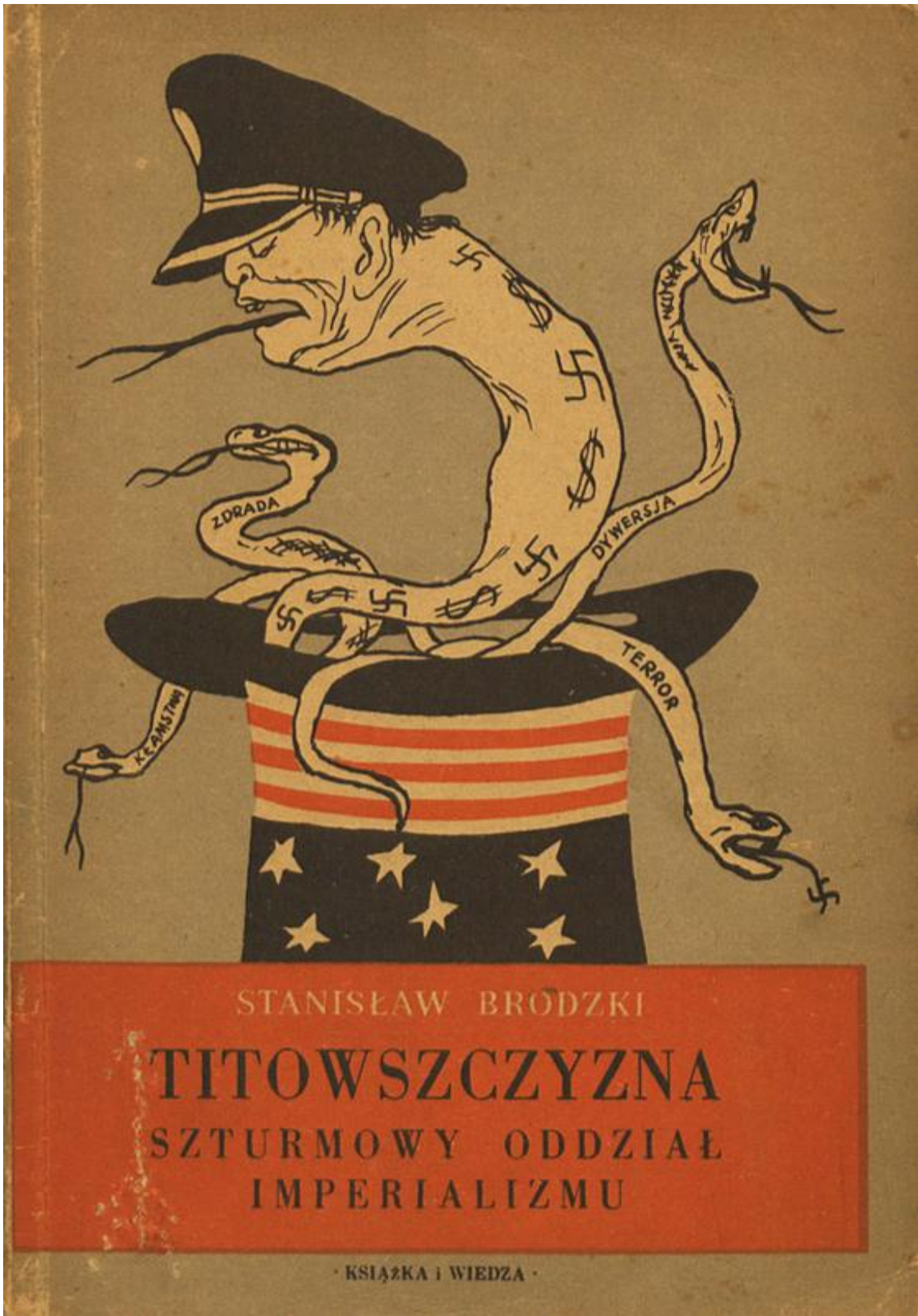
The drawing published in Poland by Szpilki as well as on the cover of the anti-Tito propaganda novel by Stanisław Brodzki presented Marshal Tito as a hydra-like terrifying monster with many heads.<sup>487</sup> The picture illustrating the cover of the book distributed in Poland in over 25,000 copies contained most of the typical symbols of threat regularly attached to Tito by agitators in that period. Pro-governmental journalists and cartoonists frequently suggested in their works that the Yugoslavian leader was a Nazi-like criminal serving at the behest of the USA.

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<sup>485</sup> Loc.cit. The entire text of the resolution: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1948cominform-yugo1.html> - retrieved 11.04.2013

<sup>486</sup> GR, 01.07.1948

<sup>487</sup> S. Brodzki, *Titowszczyzna. Szturmowy oddział imperializmu*, Warszawa 1950; Picture 16



Picture 16



Impressive as such plastic visions of Tito could be, in fact the biggest threat that Tito posed to the unity of the Soviet camp derived rather from Tito's charisma and inspiration that the Yugoslavian example could give other leaders of the Socialist states. One such inspired leader was one of the most powerful Polish politicians, Władysław Gomułka. The first secretary of the PPR shared Tito's idea of having an individual national path to communism instead of sticking literally to the Soviet model. Gomułka personally did not support the exclusion of Yugoslavia from Cominform and consequently in the summer of 1948, a few months before the establishment of the PZPR, he was officially accused of the 'rightist-nationalistic deviation' and deprived of his high position in the party.<sup>488</sup>

Since the decision taken towards Yugoslavia was so radical, the communist propagandists decided to examine how they were received by Polish society. This is why only a few days after the announcement of Cominform resolution, the PPS propaganda agents started to note down popular opinions within Polish society on the situation of the CPY.

### **Popular reception of the Soviet critique of Yugoslavia**

Among the responses collected in Łódź and its region, only three voices supported the decision of Cominform.<sup>489</sup> First of all a clerk from the local court stated that in his view Yugoslavia had been rightly excluded from Cominform given Tito's support for the politics of Great Britain in the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>490</sup> The PPS agents also noted the collective voice of several members of the Jewish community living in Łódź, who believed that Tito should be punished for his mistakes (unfortunately no

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<sup>488</sup> *Gomułka wrócił z Moskwy żywy. O październiku 1956r. z Janem Olszewskim i Wojciechem Roszkowskim rozmawia Barbara Polak* [In:] "Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej", No. 10(69), X 2006, pp. 15-16.

<sup>489</sup> Probably similar action was taken also in other cities, but so far I found the PPS report on popular opinion regarding the CPY only in the local branch of the State Archive in Łódź. No traces of such reports survived in Central Archives for Modern Records in Warsaw

<sup>490</sup> APŁ, WK PPS w Łodzi, Oddział Polityczno-Propagandowy, Raporty i wypowiedzi społeczeństwa w sprawie Komunistycznej Partii Jugosławii, 1948, p. 2

information on who the PPS agents perceived as Jews or any other details were given).<sup>491</sup>

The third collective voice of support for Tito's condemnation was expressed by the workers of the power plant in Łódź. They found Tito's decision to refrain from following the Soviet model of the socialist state unreasonable as it would cause Yugoslavia to become isolated; in the workers view, the latter could not be rebuilt without Soviet support.<sup>492</sup> However, PPS agents also visited a group of Yugoslavian female students in a student's house in Łódź. Their opinions concerning the situation in their country were quite different: they declared open support for Marshal Tito who in the students' views aimed at gaining political and economic independence.

Two other inhabitants of Łódź interpreted the tensions between Yugoslavia and the USSR as a sign of a forthcoming new world war. The PPS agents noted in their report a voice of a clerk in a regional court in Łódź who was terrified by the possible consequences of a new global conflict. On the other hand, the manager of a spinning-mill in Łódź believed that a new war would create new chances to change the political system in Poland (no further information on how this change would take place was given).<sup>493</sup>

Other opinions collected by the PPS propaganda agents expressed open support for Tito. The weavers from Łask stated: '*Finally - Tito was the first to shake off the Soviet domination*'. They also expected other Socialist states to follow the Yugoslavian example, indicating Bulgaria as the next country that would probably soon leave the Soviet bloc.<sup>494</sup> This last hypothesis was based on rumours about the Soviet–Bulgarian conflict which the weavers had heard (unfortunately they did not specify the origin of this rumour).

The PPS report diagnosed similar opinions among a group in local society entitled 'the reactionaries', who interpreted the situation in Yugoslavia as a 'first break in the

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<sup>491</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>492</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>493</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>494</sup> Loc.cit.

Soviet Bloc', raising hopes that this tendency would inspire other countries.<sup>495</sup> The farmers living near Łowicz, a small city located near Łódź, predicted that in the next two or three years Poland - influenced by Tito's policy - would also leave the Socialist Bloc.<sup>496</sup> Three other anonymous people interviewed by PPS agents assumed that the split of Cominform derived from the deep interference of the USRR in the Yugoslavian economy. One anonymous person expressed his enthusiasm towards Marshal Tito, 'the real patriot who intended to lead Yugoslavia independently both from the USSR and from Great Britain'.<sup>497</sup> This last opinion was even shared by two PPS members whose opinions were included in the report.<sup>498</sup> One of them even suspected that soon all the countries on the Balkan Peninsula would follow Tito's example.<sup>499</sup>

Aside from the PPS report from Łódź one may also find some signs of the reception of Cominform resolution in diaries and recollections of the witnesses of those historical events. One such sign was noted in the diary of Maria Dąbrowska, an eminent Polish writer.<sup>500</sup> In her note from 7<sup>th</sup> July 1948 Dąbrowska expressed her shock after listening to a radio broadcast transmitted on 29<sup>th</sup> June with information about the situation in Yugoslavia. Her reaction was very emotional: '*I heard something unbelievable! The resolution of Belgrade Cominform against "legendary Tito"*'.<sup>501</sup> From her other words noted in the diary we know that Dąbrowska reacted to the resolution with deep disbelief and anxiety. Apart from her anxiety, Dąbrowska's words in her diary shows that she had no doubt that the resolution, '*communist in form and tsarist in content*', was a demonstration of, in her own words, a '*dangerous Soviet imperialism*'.<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>496</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>497</sup> Wordsem, p. 6

<sup>498</sup> Wordsem, pp. 8-9

<sup>499</sup> Wordsem, p. 8

<sup>500</sup> Maria Dąbrowska belonged to the interwar and postwar non-communist Polish intellectual elite. After World War Two, despite the instigations of Jerzy Borejsza, Dąbrowska refused joining his team of literary propaganda agents, the milieu of Czytelnik publishing house. Her diaries, written between 1914 and 1965, are one of the most important sources giving insight into the intellectual life of interwar and postwar Poland

<sup>501</sup> M. Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne 1945-1949*, vol.1, ed. T.Drewnowski, Warszawa 1997, pp. 247-248

<sup>502</sup> Loc. cit.

Another important sign of reception of the condemnation of Tito by the communist propaganda was recorded in the memory of Adam Mikłaszewski, who as a teenager was 'repatriated' together with his family in 1945 from his native Lviv to Gdańsk.<sup>503</sup> Mikłaszewski remembered that in the summer of 1948 the local communist propagandists in Gdańsk displayed huge anti-Tito posters on the walls of the city. On the poster, against a background of the American flag, there was a terrifying image of a hangman with an angular face symbolising Tito. The hangman carried an axe over the neck of a man lying on the plank. The poster was subscribed with the slogan 'Tito – bloody hangman of Yugoslavia'. According to Mikłaszewski, inhabitants of Gdańsk passing the poster smiled instead of being disturbed by such a threatening image of Tito. Mikłaszewski's father commented on the poster: *'I am glad that Tito is killing those damned communists. How sad that he is not in Poland'*.<sup>504</sup>

As we can see from the above examination of the PPS reports, Dąbrowska's note and the recollection of Mikłaszewski, despite the intentions of the authors of the Cominform resolution, the writer, people repatriated from Eastern Poland and most of those interviewed by PPS agents felt that the USSR, and not Yugoslavia, should be blamed for the political crisis. Managers and workers, clerks and students, the inhabitants of large cities and farmers, allies of the communists as well as their opponents – all these members of Polish society interpreted the exclusion of Yugoslavia rather through categories of hope than threat (although there were exceptions). The above analysed report is illustrative of only one Polish region, yet it sheds some light on the way in which the Poles perceived Yugoslavia's exclusion from Cominform. The report, the recollection of Mikłaszewski and the diary of Dąbrowska shows that Polish society was not neutral to the significant political events taking place far from the Polish border.

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<sup>503</sup> Interview with Adam Mikłaszewski, 20.04.2014. Mikłaszewski was born in Lviv in 1930. After arriving in Gdańsk he passed the mature exam and later graduated from the Technical University in this city. For his entire professional career Mikłaszewski worked as an engineer and designer on projects on the electrical infrastructure for factories from different branches of industry. During the 1980s with his wife Aurelia Mikłaszewski was involved in the illegal activity of the underground 'Solidarność' movement.

<sup>504</sup> Loc.cit.

Since the propagandists were receiving signs of a such negative reception of the Soviet decision towards Yugoslavia, they intensified their efforts to convince Polish society to accept the 'proper interpretation' of Cominform resolution. Using a number of press articles, the propaganda agents tried to depict the USSR and Cominform as protectors of the Socialist Bloc and peace in Europe, which had managed to stop the Titoist conspiracy. One of the most important Polish communist propagandists, Roman Werfel, in his article published in late July 1948, criticised Tito mainly for undermining the position of the CPY by giving too many competences to national fronts and for restraining the process of the class struggle in his country.<sup>505</sup>

More than a year after the first wave of the harsh critique expressed by Polish pro-government media, communist propaganda implemented the second phase of the attack. This time the pretext to onslaught was given by show trials organised in several socialist countries against local high-ranking communist dignitaries accused of Titoism. Widely publicised events organised in Hungary, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia in 1949 and 1952 must be seen as vital components of the communist propaganda strategy of exploiting the rhetoric trope of the 'Titoist threat'. On the propaganda level these trials aimed at changing the vision of Tito as a local renegade and to give this figure a new, international dimension.

### **2.3 Disposable heroes. Show trials of the alleged spies and conspirators within the Socialist Bloc**

In Soviet political culture, the tradition of eliminating political adversaries through spectacular show trials traces back at least to the early 1920s. Such trials were a vital part of the general prevention doctrine in the communist theory of state and law, in which they served mainly propagandist reasons.<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> GR, 29.07.1948

<sup>506</sup> General prevention doctrine – one of the guidelines of the punishment aiming at having an effect on society through administering justice in criminal cases. There is a negative general prevention doctrine which aims at deterring potential criminals from breaking the law through indicating the prohibited activity and through penalising them. There is also a positive general prevention doctrine which aims at shaping the legal consciousness of society through administering justice in criminal cases. The latter type

This type of trial was aimed at social integration through enemy discourses. The accused, who were often tortured, always pleaded guilty and most often pointed to others as participants of a plot, thus helping the authorities to increase the wave of repression. Such a scenario was introduced, for instance, in the case of the infamous Moscow trials during the Stalinist purges between 1936 and 1938<sup>507</sup> where most of the defendants were accused of 'Trotskyism'.<sup>508</sup> The term was often used in the pages of one of the most important Soviet propagandist textbooks, the 'Short Course'.<sup>509</sup> For instance, in its final chapter, it was used to describe the fateful end of a group of enemies of the Soviet Union: the '*liquidation of remnants of the Bukharin-Trotsky gang of spies, wreckers and traitors to the country*'. As is shown later in this chapter, this kind of rhetoric inspired the propagandists who published texts covering numerous political events that took place in the Socialist Bloc after the end of World War Two.

As well as some local cases, such as the Trial of the Sixteen from June 1945, mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, in the post-war period the Kremlin authorities decided to widen the scale of show trials so that their impact would be tangible in the entire Socialist Bloc. These show trials, mostly organised outside the USSR, were directed towards defining a new type of adversary – the 'internal enemy', common to each Soviet political satellite. In the communist propaganda system show

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of doctrine is realised in the form of public trials, public announcements of the sentences and through publishing them in the press and other media.

<sup>507</sup> The Moscow trials initiated a set of similar local trials organised across the entire USSR. As intensively exploited by the press as they were, show trials became a vital part of the propaganda strategy for teaching society the proper 'citizens' attitude' by indicating the harsh consequences of an 'improper attitude'. In the Moscow trials, a group of prominent communist dignitaries, among them Grigory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev and Nikolai Bukharin, were charged mainly with being Trotskyists. More in: N. Werth, *Państwo przeciwko społeczeństwu. Przemoc, represje i terror w Związku Sowieckim* [in:] S.Courtois, N.Werth, J.Panne, A.Paczkowski, K.Bartosek, J.Margolin, *Czarna Księga komunizmu. Zbrodnie, terror, prześladowania* [Later: *Czarna księga*], Warszawa 1999, pp. 180-195; R. Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*, Oxford 2008, pp.534-535; *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks). Short course*, ed. Commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU(B), London 1939, pp. 346-348

<sup>508</sup> Trotskyism was interpreted as equivalent to betraying Marxism-Leninism, that is, it was viewed as a synonym of an anti-Soviet attitude. The term thus became an integral part of the terminology exploited by the communist propaganda.

<sup>509</sup> J. Stalin, *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, London 1976

trials had an educational purpose. As Anne Appelbaum puts it in her book 'Iron Courtain', they were used to explain the mistakes in the socialist system. In her words:

*(...) 'if communist Europe had not surpassed capitalist Europe, if infrastructure projects were flawed or delayed, if food supplies were poor and living standards low, then the show trials provided an explanation: foreign spies, nefarious saboteurs and traitors, posing as faithful communists and patriots, had hijacked progress'.<sup>510</sup>*

On the international level, trials like the one discussed below were used to legitimatise the existence of the Socialist Bloc. The Soviet patronage over it was presented as a dam, protecting socialist countries from the expansion of Western capitalism and imperialism. The trial of László Rajk, organised in Budapest in September 1949, served as an exemplar to the communist propagandists; it provided the propaganda agents with a set of figures, the use of which should evoke an atmosphere of fear of spies and conspirators who were tried in widely publicised show trials.

What was characteristic for the general discourse covering the trial of Rajk and other eminent politicians from the Socialist Bloc is in the language used by journalists the term 'Trotskyist spy' served as a synonym of 'Titoist spy' and as an equivalent to 'enemy' in propaganda phraseology. Both those expressions were used as slurs depriving the stigmatised persons of their patriotic merits. These words had an equally negative emotional charge and served to alarm society concerning the threat allegedly produced by Titoist/Trotskyists towards the safety of both the state and the nation.

### **Hungarian Titoism. The trial of László Rajk**

The Hungarian communist leaders were entrusted with the task of organising the show trial, mostly on account of their far-reaching faithfulness to the Soviet ideals. In this particular case, the general secretary of the HCP, Máttyàs Rákosi, chose László Rajk to be the scapegoat, since by doing so he could at the same time dispose of one of his political opponents with the full sanction of the law.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> A. Appelbaum, *Za żelazną kurtyną. Ujarznienie Europy Wschodniej 1944-1956*, Warszawa 2013, p. 331

<sup>511</sup> K. Bartosek, op.cit. pp. 396-397; *Historical Dictionary of Hungary*, ed. S. Bela Vardy, London 1997, pp. 575-576. László Rajk had been an activist in the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP) since 1931. Between

In the Hungarian government Rajk was responsible for the Department of Internal Affairs (from March 1946 to August 1948) and for the secret political police (the AVO). In August 1948, Rajk was moved from his previous position to that of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>512</sup> This change was decided by the general secretary of HCP, Máttyàs Rákosi,<sup>513</sup> who was anxious about Rajk's growing popularity, and who wanted to weaken his position.<sup>514</sup> In September 1949, the Hungarians (and soon after the entire world) were informed about the 'real face' of Rajk. Press articles started to describe the alleged plot and putsch against Rákosi's government, which had been prevented in the summer. Propaganda messages told people how a 'Titoist network of spies' had been revealed in Hungary and Rajk was blamed for being the brains behind the conspiracy.

In order to generate a spectacular overtone of the event a large number of foreign correspondents were accredited to the trial in Budapest in September 1949. Among them, there were forty-two journalists and reporters from the eastern bloc and many representatives of the Western media.<sup>515</sup> On the one hand, the trial was supposed to show the efficiency and ruthlessness of the socialist judiciary, while, on the other, it was to serve as the perfect instructional material for numerous officers of the secret service representing many communist countries.<sup>516</sup> Among these were two high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Public Security of Poland (MBP), Roman Romkowski<sup>517</sup> and

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1937 and 1939 he took part in the Spanish Civil War. In 1944, he became a Secretary of the HCP Central Committee. In May 1945, he was appointed as the capital secretary of the HCP and he became a deputy in the Hungarian parliament.

<sup>512</sup> Wordsem, pp. 409-411

<sup>513</sup> Wordsem, pp. 581-582

<sup>514</sup> J. Kochanowski, *Węgry. Od ugody do ugody 1876 – 1990*, Warszawa 1997, p. 131-132; J. R. Nowak, *Węgry 1939-1974*, Warszawa 1975, pp. 159-160. Rajk was arrested several weeks after the parliamentary elections in May 1949, in which the Hungarian National Front for Independence (controlled by communists) won decisively. After a coup d'état carried out in 1947 by the Communist Party against the rule of its main opponent - the Smallholders' Party – communist authorities totally dominated the local political scene. The victory in elections in 1949 owed partly to Rajk's popularity.

<sup>515</sup> *Laszlo Rajk i jego współpracownicy przed Trybunałem Ludowym*, Warszawa 1949, pp. 340-342; *Trybuna Ludu* [later: TL] 16.09.1949

<sup>516</sup> M. Bechowska, *Węgrzy patrzą na swą historię (1945-2002)*, Warszawa 2004, p. 104.

<sup>517</sup> Roman Romkowski (1907-1968). Prominent communist activist, one of the most important officers in the Ministry of Public Security of Poland (MBP), Director of 1<sup>st</sup> Department of MBP responsible for counter-intelligence. Romkowski was involved in the preparation of the planned trial of Władysław Gomułka.



Józef Światło.<sup>518</sup> There were also MBP agents among Polish journalists accredited to the trial. For instance, Józef Cywiak was sent to Budapest officially as a journalist of the Worker's Agency – a press agency affiliated to the PZPR. Unofficially, however, he served as an officer of the 7<sup>th</sup> Department of MBP responsible for foreign intelligence.<sup>519</sup> These officers were to provide detailed reports on the trial, which would serve as material necessary to formulate indictments against other 'local nationalists', alleged Titoist spies and conspirators.<sup>520</sup>

The overview of the numerous press articles and other propaganda publications depicting the trial in Budapest allows one to distinguish several characteristic motifs, highlighting which the propagandists attempted to foment a fear of espionage and conspiracy.<sup>521</sup>

First of all, from the very first PAP dispatch published in *Trybuna Ludu* the event in Budapest was presented as a trial of a network of spies headed by Tito. Communist media depicted László Rajk and his collaborators not as independent conspirators but as spies following the orders of the leader of Yugoslavia aimed at the destruction of the unity of the Socialist Bloc. The press headlines like '*Tito – the traitor and principal of Rajk*' and '*Betrayal made on Tito's orders*'<sup>522</sup> left readers with no doubt concerning the person standing behind the plot.

Furthermore the propagandists asserted that although Marshal Tito acted as principal of the Hungarian conspirators, in fact he was implementing a plot prepared and directed by American intelligence. The direct responsibility of the USA for the anti-

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<sup>518</sup> Józef Światło (1915-1975) deputy director of 10th Department of MBP. After the death of Stalin and the arrest of Lavrentiy Beria in December 1953 Światło decided to defect to the West. He was taken by the CIA and used for propaganda purposes. Due to this event the structure of MBP was deeply reformed and in 1956 removed the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Comity of Public Security.

<sup>519</sup> Józef Cywiak (1913-?). More on Cywiak's political dossier in the IPN file: <http://katalog.bip.ipn.gov.pl/showDetails.do?idx=CY&katalogId=2&subpageKatalogId=2&pageNo=1&nameId=24354&osobald=48489>-retrieved 08.06.2014

<sup>520</sup> The gathered materials were later used to organise trials against Traicho Kostov in Bulgaria (December 1949) and Rudolf Slánský in Czechoslovakia (December 1952). Both cases are addressed in a later part of this chapter.

<sup>521</sup> B. Kamiński, *The Trial of Laszlo Rajk as a Prelude to the Propaganda Onslaught on Tito on the Basis of "Trybuna Ludu" and Local Press Accounts* [in:] *The International Newsletter of Communist Studies Online* XV (2009), vol. 22, pp. 107-116

<sup>522</sup> DŁ, 16.09.1949

communist conspiracy revealed during the trial of Rajk was stressed with headlines like *'Titoist spies at American service'*<sup>523</sup> and *'At American service and under Tito's directives Rajk and his seven agents betrayed Hungary'*.<sup>524</sup> Those texts suggested that since *'Tito covered Hungary with a network of spies and saboteurs following imperialists' orders'*<sup>525</sup> his activity must be interpreted as a part of a wider meticulously organised plan, not a spontaneous action.<sup>526</sup>

Aside from the Western inspiration of the conspirators the propagandists also stressed the fascist or even Nazi experience of the 'Titoist traitors'. The references to the figure of the 'German threat' were visible in press headlines like *'Instigators, agents of the Gestapo, of English and American intelligence, fascists, Trotskyists at Tito's and imperialists' orders organised an intrigue against the Hungarians and other countries of the people's democracy'*.<sup>527</sup>

A further important motif the propagandists exposed in their reports on the trial of Rajk was the range of the revealed plot and the palpability of the threat it posed for the Socialist Bloc. For instance, the text presenting the testimonies of György Pálffy, a close cooperator of Rajk, highlighted the tangibility of the Titoist threat with the disturbing message that Titoist spies had plans to instigate riots in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Albania.<sup>528</sup>

Attempting to foment the fear of espionage deriving from the reports of the trial of the Hungarian conspirators the communist propagandists also pointed at the alarming extremism of the 'Titoist spies'. Publishing confessions of the defendants like the sentence *'I have been a conspirator and spy since I was born'* declared by László Rajk communist media in Poland suggested that the network of spies organised and trained by Tito and his American superiors was formed by a group of unpredictable and dangerous fanatics.

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<sup>523</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>524</sup> DŁ, 18.09.1949

<sup>525</sup> GR, 18.09.1949

<sup>526</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>527</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>528</sup> DŁ, 18.09.1949

Only a few weeks after the trial, the press articles were supplemented by a full account of the trial, edited on the Polish market by the *Książka i Wiedza* publishing house.<sup>529</sup> Twenty-thousand copies were published, written in a racy tone and offering insight into the testimonies of witnesses and defendants as well as the speeches by the judges. Apart from the Polish edition, the shorthand was also translated into French, English, German and Hungarian which proves that the Polish media efforts to portray Tito as a head of a network of dangerous anti-communist conspirators was part of an international propaganda campaign.<sup>530</sup>

The propagandists' most important aim was to present the Titoist plot in Hungary as just the first step of Tito's general plan to break the Soviet Bloc up. Only three months later, Polish press brought reports informing readers on the second step of this plan: the press announced the detection of another 'Titoist plot' just outside the border of Yugoslavia in December of 1949.

### **The second phase of the plot. The trial of Traicho Kostov**

Bulgaria was the second socialist country, after Hungary, in which the detection of a Titoist plot was officially announced. Just as in the case of Rajk, the show trial organised in Sofia aimed at confirming the existence of a Titoist net of spies and conspirators endangering the Soviet Bloc from within. Moreover, the trial was used by Vasil Kolarov, Prime Minister of Bulgaria, as a pretext to legally dispose of his political rival, Traicho Kostov. This leading figure of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) thus became another scapegoat of the anti-Titoist propaganda campaign.<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> *Łaszło Rajk i jego wspólnicy przed trybunałem ludowym*, Warszawa 1949

<sup>530</sup> English edition: *László Rajk and his accomplices before the People's Court*, Budapest 1949; French edition: *László Rajk et ses complices devant le Tribunal du Peuple*, Budapest 1949; German edition: *László Rajk und Komplizen vor dem Volksgericht*, Berlin 1949; Hungarian edition: *Rajk László és társai a Népbíróság előtt*, Budapest 1949

<sup>531</sup> J.F.Brown, *Bulgaria under Communist rule*, London, 1970, pp.37-40; A. Paczkowski, *Trzy twarze Józefa Światły. Przyczynek do historii komunizmu w Polsce*, Warszawa 2009, p. 123. In the postwar period, Kostov, next to Georgi Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov, was among the most active communist dignitaries in Bulgaria. He occupied the position of President of the Council of Ministers and President of the Economic-Financial Committee of the Council of Ministers until the end of March 1949, when he was dismissed. Two weeks later, he was appointed Director of the Bulgarian National Library in Sofia, but at a plenum of the Central Committee of BCP in June 1949 Kolarov accused him of anti-communist activity. Kostov was

Kostov's trial, organised in Sofia between 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> December 1949, was commented on by the Polish media, though not as widely as Rajk's trial had been. The propagandists referred to a practically identical set of motifs as had happened three months earlier. When reading the accounts of the trial of Traicho Kostov published in the Polish press in December 1949, the Polish reader could well have believed that he had read the same text only three months before. It even looks as though the communist press printed the accounts from Rajk's trial once again, simply changing the name of one protagonist to another.

Press headlines reported on the trial such as '*Traitors of the Bulgarian nation on duty for Titoist – American intelligence*'.<sup>532</sup> Kostov himself was portrayed as a close collaborator of Tito's and some dangerous Trotskyists who had served British intelligence since late 1944. Communist press consistently informed readers that just like it happened in Hungary in the summer of 1949, the criminals arrested in Sofia - spies, provocateurs, Titoists and Trotskyists, organised a plot against Bulgarian sovereignty.<sup>533</sup> Finally, PAP dispatches printed in December 1949 suggested that Kostov's activity endangered Bulgarian national unity. Kostov was alleged to have helped Tito to detach part of Bulgaria, the Pirin Mountains,<sup>534</sup> to the advantage of Yugoslavia.<sup>535</sup>

On the one hand, the striking similarity of the charges formulated against Rajk and Kostov, with the same perpetrators of the crime and identical *modus operandi* of both 'internal enemies of the Socialist Bloc' suggested that the entire Soviet Bloc could be 'infected by Titoism'. On the other hand, the show trials in Budapest and Sofia

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accused of tolerating and spreading anti-Soviet sentiment in the Party because of his nationalistic deviation. Subsequently, he was dismissed from the Central Committee and expelled from the BCP and other positions. Finally, he was arrested on 20th June 1949.

<sup>532</sup> GR, 03.12.1949

<sup>533</sup> TL, 03.12.1949; GR, 10.12.1949

<sup>534</sup> GR, 12.12.1949

<sup>535</sup> J. Tomaszewski, *Bulgaria 1944-1970. Trudna droga do socjalizmu*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 173-174; K. Bartosek, op.cit., p. 398-399. Traicho Kostov had been sentenced to death while the other ten accused prominent Bulgarian Communists, among them ministers and high-ranking BCP officials, had received life imprisonment, 15- or 12-year sentences. Based on testimonies collected during Kostov's trial, the Bulgarian communist authorities organised further trials against Kostov's alleged adherents in 1950 and 1951. These trials resulted in the imprisonment of more than 30 prominent Bulgarian communists.

helped the propagandists to solidify the unity of Cominform and to stress the need for Soviet protection and support for the Socialist Bloc.

The fact that the two anti-Socialist plots were detected and suppressed by the communist authorities within a time span of only three months could suggest that further conspirators were still active in other socialist countries. The propagandists suggested that it was only a matter of time before further acts of conspiracy would be detected in another one of the political satellites of the USSR. It took, however, three more years to announce the suppression of the third important 'Titoist plot' arranged by an internal enemy, this time just outside the Polish border.

### **Zionist conspiracy. The trial of Rudolf Slánský**

The show trial of Rudolf Slánský, organised in Prague in November 1952, was one of the last acts of the intensive propaganda campaign exploiting the *leitmotif* of the 'Titoist conspiracy'. The main protagonist of the trial was a prominent Czechoslovakian politician, who in July 1951 was still portrayed in Polish media as a statesman and a model example of a communist leader.<sup>536</sup> In November 1951 the President of Czechoslovakia, Klement Gottwald, was instructed by Stalin to arrest Slánský and 13 other people who were charged with being Titoists after a long investigation in December 1952.<sup>537</sup>

Although Slánský's trial had a similar media potential as those of Rajk and Kostov, the way in which it was presented in the Polish press was far less spectacular. This fact could derive from stagnation in terms of organisation of the similar trial in Warsaw. Since the communist authorities had significant problems with starting the show trial in Poland they could be simply have not been interested in augmenting an

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<sup>536</sup> TL, 31.07.1951

<sup>537</sup> *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, ed. I. Hochman, London 1998, pp. 128-129; Z. Jirasek, A. Małkiewicz, *Polska i Czechosłowacja w dobie stalinizmu (1948-1956)*, Warszawa 2005, p. 146; K. Bartosek, *Europa pod rządami komunizmu. Europa Środkowa i Południowo-Wschodnia* [in:] *Czarna Księga*, pp. 400-401. Between 1946 and 1951, Rudolf Slánský held the office of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC). In 1948, when the CCP seized power in the February coup, Slánský became the second most powerful politician in the country behind...WHO?

event that could provoke questions of the local dimension of the problem of 'Titoist conspiracy'.

Only one text presenting this plot was printed on the first page of the *Trybuna Ludu*. What was new compared to the previous two trials was the anti-Semitic thread which was intensively exploited in most of the texts depicting Slánský's story. This motif derived from an increase of the anti-Semitic atmosphere in Czechoslovakia at the beginning of the 1950s.<sup>538</sup> In Czechoslovakia, the propaganda texts depicting the trial emphasised the fact that most of the defendants in the trial organised in Prague were of Jewish descent.<sup>539</sup> For instance, a reprint from *Rude Pravo* - 'Zionism – the tool of American imperialism' published in *Trybuna Ludu* presented Zionism as a 'reactionary-bourgeois-nationalistic Jewish movement, the worst enemy of humanity'.<sup>540</sup> Other press accounts from the trial published in the Polish press tended to be more focused on the general character of the 'Zionist plot' leaving the Jewish descent of the defendants unspoken.

The anti-Semitic interpretation of Zionism as a synonym of betrayal visible in the above mentioned reprint was based on the instructions sent to the communist media in the autumn of 1952 by the Kremlin, where Joseph Stalin planned to organise a new wave of purges in the communist party.<sup>541</sup> This time Stalin planned to accuse his alleged rivals of taking part in an international Zionist conspiracy inflicted against the USSR and the Socialist Bloc. Slánský's trial, together with the 'Doctors' plot',<sup>542</sup> detected and stopped in Moscow in January 1953, were thought of as a prelude to the new wave of terror.<sup>543</sup>

What is important for the Polish dimension of the anti-Titoist propaganda campaign is that the reprint of the text published in the *Obrana Lidu* presented Slánský

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<sup>538</sup> *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, p. 147

<sup>539</sup> K.Bartosek, op.cit. p. 401

<sup>540</sup> TL, 26.11.1952

<sup>541</sup> N. Werth, *Państwo przeciwko społeczeństwu. Przemoc, represje i terror w Związku Sowieckim* [in:] *Czarna księga komunizmu*, pp. 232-238; A.Paczkowski, op.cit. p. 162

<sup>542</sup> Doctors' plot – a political provocation announced in the USSR in January 1953 in which a group of prominent Moscow doctors, mostly of Jewish descent, were accused of being conspiratorial assassins of Soviet leaders.

<sup>543</sup> A. Paczkowski, op.cit., p.162; N. Werth, op.cit.[in:] *Czarna księga komunizmu*, pp. 232-238

as a traitor inspired by Tito, Rajk and Kostov, but also by Władysław Gomułka.<sup>544</sup> In August 1951, Gomułka was secretly arrested with the intention of organising his show trial, but this plan never went into effect.<sup>545</sup>

The account of the anti-Titoist propaganda aimed at fomenting an atmosphere of spy-mania within the media receivers would be incomplete without addressing the problem of its efficiency. Although it is not easy to find many signs of popular reception of this particular aspect of activity of the communist propaganda in Poland, the research results allow drawing some initial conclusions.

## 2.4 Popular reception of the anti-Titoist propaganda

Apart from the PPS report on popular opinions on the situation of the CPY, prepared in Łódź in July 1948, that was already discussed in the first part of this chapter, in my archival research performed both in central and local archives of the PZPR, the PPS, the MBP and other political organisations, I did not manage to find any sizeable amount of sources reflecting signs of the reception of the propaganda campaigns commenting on the trials of Rajk and Kostov. The reports on social moods prepared by local and central Propaganda Departments of the PZPR do not contain references to the popular reception of propaganda messages exploiting the figure of 'Titoist threat'. Only a single reference to the trial of László Rajk is mentioned in the MBP report prepared in Wrocław in September 1949. In his report the MBP agent mentioned the rumour interpreting the trial of Rajk in Budapest as a factor that could initiate a new war on the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>546</sup>

Unlike in the case of trials in Budapest and Sophia, the Archive of Polish Radio contains documents in which one may find some signs of reception of the trial of Rudolf

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<sup>544</sup> Gomułka served as a First Secretary of the PPR until August 1948 when he was dismissed from this position for 'rightist deviation'.

<sup>545</sup> A. Paczkowski, op.cit. pp. 108-116, 162; A. Prażmowska, *Władysław Gomułka : A Biography*, London 2016, pp. 189-214. As a result of the trial in Prague the judges passed 11 death sentences, much more than in the Rajk and Kostov trials. The severity of these sentences was to serve as a warning to other 'Zionist conspirators' in the Soviet Bloc.

<sup>546</sup> D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *W krzywym zwierciadle. Polityka władz komunistycznych w świetle plotek i pogłosek z lat 1949-1956* [later: *W krzywym zwierciadle*], Warszawa 1995, p. 53

Slánský from December 1952. The edition of the radio programme 'Frequency 49' from late January 1953 contains direct reference to the impression that the information on the trial in Prague made on media receivers. First of all, in his letter a radio listener from Wrocław linked the trial of Slánský with the Moscow trial of doctors and expressed his hope that the accused in the latter trial would be punished as harshly as criminals in Prague.<sup>547</sup> What was important is that the listener seemed to be convinced of the propaganda vision of the threat posed to Poland by spies and other agents of the American enemy. With his letter the listener not only declared an increase in his vigilance towards potential conspirators, but also asked other media receivers to take the same approach.

The editor of the same episode of 'Frequency 49' also quoted a letter from Poznań in which a listener expressed his amazement, mixed with indignation, in reaction to the plot of doctors in Moscow and the Slánský conspiracy. The listener fully accepted the propaganda interpretation of both events and asked the radio to explain to him how these terrifying crimes could take place. In response he received a lecture on the 'American imperialists – the main organisers of both crimes'.

Two days later, in a letter to Polish Radio a young student of history from Cracow wrote that he was astonished by the news on the Zionist conspirators in Czechoslovakia and Jewish doctors in Moscow since he thought that Zionism had no criminal connotations.<sup>548</sup> The student adhered to the propaganda's negative interpretation of Zionism and asked the radio editors for further details concerning this issue. Furthermore, another listener from Warsaw asked if after the war Zionism still served as the agency of British imperialism as it had been announced by the communists before World War Two.

The most interesting reaction to the trial in Prague and the anti-Zionist propaganda discourse may be found in a letter sent to Polish Radio by two Jewish female listeners from Łukowo (a village in Northern Poland). In their letter Pinia and Masza Fiksman (probably sisters) declared their condemnation of the Zionist criminals

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<sup>547</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 26.01.1953, p. 35

<sup>548</sup> Wordsem, 28.01.1953, pp. 69-70



on trial in Prague. Both women stressed the fact that the Jewish community had nothing to do with those enemies of the people's democracy. Further on the Jewish listeners asserted that the harsh sentence in the trial would make agents of American imperialism aware that every crime against their nation would be punished in the harshest possible way. In the last sentence of the letter, the listeners asked 'Frequency 49' to pass to the Czechoslovakian nation their words of condemnation of the Zionist criminals. Reading this letter one may diagnose a strong anxiety and Jews' prediction that the trial in Prague and the propaganda onslaught on Zionists could result in a new wave of anti-Semitism not only in Czechoslovakia but in the entire Soviet Bloc.

On the one hand, the reaction of the Jewish radio listeners as well as the letters sent to Polish Radio from Wrocław, Poznań, Warsaw and Cracow, proves that the communist propagandists managed to focus the attention of Polish media receivers on the trial of the Titoist spies organised abroad. What is more, the content of those letters suggests that the listeners followed the propagandists' interpretation of the trial in Prague as well as seeming to feel alarmed by the disturbing vision of the hostile activity of Titoist conspirators within the communist bloc. On the other hand, one should not take those reactions at face value and treat them as representative for the entire Polish society. Most probably the letters quoted in 'Frequency 49' were selected precisely with the intention to persuade the desired attitude towards the events presented by communist media.

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As it was already mentioned, in Poland in the early 1950s communist authorities planned on organising a similar event in which Władysław Gomułka was to be given the role of the scapegoat. Even though the authorities invested huge effort in its preparation, this final stage of the search for the internal enemy within the PZPR was left unrealised. Consequently, communist agitators in Poland were deprived of a pretext to start a spectacular attack against the central symbol of the Titoist betrayal and conspiracy. Despite this fact the communist authorities of Poland decided to organise several minor show trials revealing the alleged infiltration of Poland by collaborators of

Western intelligences. The analysis of the social reception of the propaganda campaigns which commented on the two significant and symbolic show trials organised in Warsaw in 1951 and 1953 allows some general conclusions to be drawn concerning the susceptibility of Polish society to the discourses evoking fear of espionage and conspiracy.

### **3. Conspirators in the Polish Army, spies in the Catholic Church.**

The show trials of generals of the Polish Army organised in the summer of 1951 and the trial of Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek in September 1953 were directed against different spheres of Polish society. Both trials were widely discussed in the press and in Polish Radio, provoking its listeners to write letters which became the rare and very precious source of my insight into the reception of the communist indoctrination.

It is a great challenge to find written traces of the reactions to those campaigns. Until 1956 public surveys were conducted and these for good reasons. The government behaved as if the very posing of a question examining public moods was potentially dangerous. Therefore, the historian is left with some samples of public opinion to be found in censored memoirs and correspondence or some scarce sources such as letters sent to the propaganda organs. In those circumstances, letters from Polish Radio and Polish TV archives<sup>549</sup> give a unique, though limited, insight into the reactions to the public broadcasting.

What was common to both the above-mentioned show trials was the accusation of espionage and anti-Polish conspiracy which was inflicted against different spheres of Polish society. As it will be shown in the below section of this chapter, the propaganda attempts to make Poles afraid of the vision of confidential activity of the 'conspirators detected in the Polish Army' and the phantom of threat allegedly posed to Poland by 'dangerous spies of the Vatican' evoked very different reactions in Polish society. The

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<sup>549</sup> In the postwar period Polish Radio and Polish TV were placed in one building. Both institutions split in the late 1950s which resulted in fragmentation of the archives. This is why the correspondence to Polish Radio is today collected in the Archive of Polish TV, while the documentation of 'Frequency 49' is collected in the Archive of Polish Radio.

last three subjects, concerning the differentiated reactions to the propaganda on foreign diplomacy, the army and the church, are the focus of this part of the chapter.

### 3.1 The trial of the Generals

The show trial of a group of four generals and five high-ranking officers of the Polish Army organised in the summer of 1951 in Warsaw was announced in the Polish press as a trial of a 'subversive organisation of spies'.<sup>550</sup> The government was presented as a protector of state independence who detected and suppressed yet another dangerous conspiracy. Generals Stanisław Tatar, Franciszek Herman, Jerzy Kirchmayer, and Stefan Mossor were accused of serving as agents of British and American intelligence.<sup>551</sup> Moreover, they were accused of supporting the anti-communist underground which inflicted damage on the Red Army and communist partisans who struggled with Nazi troops.<sup>552</sup> Finally, the generals were presented as 'agents of American war provokers'<sup>553</sup> and as conspirators who participated in attempts to 'provoke the outbreak of the third world war,' which would lead to the restoration of capitalism in Poland.<sup>554</sup>

Press releases were complemented with radio transmissions and PKF footage. The chronicle caption entitled 'The Traitors of the Fatherland brought to justice' presented several resigned and powerless officers calmly reciting their testimonies.<sup>555</sup> These confessions systematised by the comment read by the popular Polish poet, writer and satirist Jeremi Przybora and strengthened by the emotional speech of the main

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<sup>550</sup> TL, 31.07.1951; J. Poksiński, „TUN”. *Tatar-Utnik-Nowicki. Represje wobec oficerów Wojska Polskiego w latach 1949-1956*, Warszawa 1992

<sup>551</sup> TL, 31.07.1951; 01. 08.1951; 02.08.1951; 04. 08.1951;05.08.1951; 07.08.1951; 08.08.1951; 09. 08.1951; 10.08.1951

<sup>552</sup> TL, 31.07.08; 01.08.1951;02.08.1951; 03.08.1951; 04.08.1951; 05.08.1951;07.08.1951; 08.08.1951; 09.08.1951; 12.08.1951; 13.08.1951. General Stanisław Mossor was depicted as a spy of American intelligence, collaborator of the Gestapo and admirer of Hitler. General Jerzy Kirchmayer was presented as a greedy officer who served Americans only for money. General Stanisław Tatar was presented as a dangerous British spy who in 1947 organised military coup d'état in Poland, only prevented due to the vigilance of the communist authorities.

<sup>553</sup> TL, 31.07.1951; 03.08.1951

<sup>554</sup> TL, 31.07.1951; 08.08.1951; 13.08.1951

<sup>555</sup> PKF 34/51, 08.08.1951

prosecutor, Stanisław Zarakowski, aimed to disclose the palpability of the threat of the officers' plot detected and stopped by the communist authorities.

The above discussed set of the most important propaganda motifs depicting the generals as anti-patriotic conspirators was also present in radio transmissions from the court in Warsaw. This broadcasting consisted of selected parts of testimonies in which defendants described their anti-Polish activity. As Grzegorz Sołtysiak put it in his book on letters sent to Polish Radio, although it was controlled by the communist regime, Polish Radio was one of few institutions that Poles placed their trust.<sup>556</sup> It received more than one hundred thousand letters from listeners a year. In most cases listeners sent their request to solve every day problems or to explain the political decisions of the government. Listeners were encouraged to send their letters by the fact that many of those letters were read and answered by the speaker of the radio. One of the most important propaganda programmes of Polish Radio, 'Frequency 49', was based precisely on the formula of reading letters from radio listeners and giving answers to them.<sup>557</sup>

Starting from 1951, the propaganda unit of Polish Radio, based on letters sent from the entire country to the programme 'Frequency 49', prepared monthly bulletins diagnosing social moods. These bulletins were delivered to the most important dignitaries of the PRL, including the First Secretary of the PZPR, the Prime Minister of Poland and the Minister of Public Security. The bulletin No.22, prepared on 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1951, contained letters sent to Polish Radio in reaction to the show trial of the generals.

Only two of the eight letters attached to the bulletin expressed opinions of listeners convinced of the authenticity of propaganda messages presenting the generals

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<sup>556</sup> G. Sołtysiak, *Księga listów PRL-u*, vol.1, Warszawa 2004, p. 5

<sup>557</sup> P.Lipiński, *Nietoperz cicho śmignął*, [in:] GW, 05.01.1996. 'Frequency 49' was a ten minute programme which started in 1950 when it interrupted a music concert transmitted in the First Programme of Polish Radio. The astonished listeners were greeted by Stefan Martyka, the speaker of the broadcast, who read texts containing excerpts from letters sent to radio by listeners. In the programme letters containing harsh critiques of the communist authorities were juxtaposed with the letters expressing support for the policy of the PZPR and the USSR. Among the themes most often repeated in the programme were verbal attacks on Western imperialists and American capitalists. The texts presented by Stefan Martyka, a Polish actor and member of PZPR, were prepared by other prominent propagandists, in many cases by Roman Werfel. The assassination of Martyka in September 1951 has recently been interpreted as an attack on one of the negative symbols of communist propaganda in Poland.

as members of a subversive organisation of spies that posed a real threat to Poland. First of all, in a letter an anonymous radio listener from Northern Poland expressed his gratefulness for the trial of saboteurs in the Polish Army and asked when similar trials would be planned against the conspirators in State Offices, State Cooperatives and political organisations. The sender of this letter conveyed the idea that the malfunctioning of most state institutions in Poland derived strictly from the activity of the *'saboteurs'* who should be arrested and tried as soon as possible.<sup>558</sup>

In a similar vein an anonymous inhabitant of Central-Northern Poland shared his happiness deriving from the fact that the *'trial of the generals - traitors of Poland, astonished the Polish reactionaries'*.<sup>559</sup> In his words, the local group of reactionaries consisted of rich farmers, village administrators and local blacksmiths. According to the letter all of them interpreted the trial in Warsaw as an act of injustice towards *'innocent officers who attempted to free Poland from the communist oppression'*.<sup>560</sup> The rest of the letters expressed opinions of listeners who, just like the *'reactionaries'* from the last letter were much less influenced by the official propaganda image of the generals.

First of all, the authors of four letters against the intentions of propagandists interpreted the activity of the accused officers as deeply positive and patriotic. For instance, an anonymous female inhabitant of Warsaw demanded in her letter to free all the defendants as she interpreted the anti-socialist attitude of the generals stressed by propaganda as deeply patriotic.<sup>561</sup> In her words the arrested officers attempted to *'cast off the communist yoke from Poland'*. The listener not only did not follow the media suggestions portraying the officers as conspirators but used her letter as an opportunity to express her general criticism towards the communist authorities. In the same tone an anonymous listener from Upper Silesia wrote to the radio that the communist authorities had no right to arrest officers. He even threatened the authorities that long sentences in the trial would result in a wave of wrath of Poles.<sup>562</sup> Furthermore, another

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<sup>558</sup> Archiwum Telewizji Polskiej, [Later: ATVP] 1050/1, Bulletin No.22, 10.08.1951, p. 3

<sup>559</sup> Wordsem, p. 4

<sup>560</sup> Wordsem, p. 5

<sup>561</sup> Wordsem, p. 1

<sup>562</sup> Wordsem, p. 3

anonymous listener from Upper Silesia asked the radio to confirm the rumour that the generals were arrested and accused of conspiring against Poland as a result of their attempts to block the decision of sending Polish soldiers to the Korean War. The author of this letter interpreted the rumour as a positive symptom of the officers' protective attitude towards regular soldiers. In his letter the listener suggested that once such a decision was taken, many Polish soldiers would desert the army.<sup>563</sup>

The author of the third letter, a listener from Eastern Poland, undersigned as 'member of the party', wrote a critical letter containing direct reference to the propaganda figure of the spy exploited in messages depicting the trial. The author of this letter interpreted the show trial of Polish officers as a final act of the Katyń massacre. In his words, the only spies who endangered Poland were not the defendants in the trial, but the authorities of the USSR, 'criminals, enemies and oppressors of the Polish nation'.<sup>564</sup> The author of the letter was convinced that the trial of the generals would not stop the Polish Army which, as he believed, in the near future should chase the communist away from Poland.

Authors of a further two letters were less focused on the merits of officers and stressed rather the general inefficacy of the show trials. A listener from a city near Warsaw, undersigned as a 'real communist', stated in his letter that propagandists' efforts to convince Poles that the arrested generals and officers acted as dangerous conspirators were futile.<sup>565</sup> The mistrust towards the propaganda messages depicting the trial was also expressed by a listener from Western Poland who asked the radio show why the voice of the radio speaker replaced the real voice of the defendants during the transmissions from the trial. In her words, it was impossible for General Tatar to plead guilty as all the accusations were deceitful. She treated the radio transmission from the trial as a cheap masquerade.

As one can see from the example of letters selected by the propaganda department of Polish Radio for the bulletin, the propaganda campaign presenting the

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<sup>563</sup> Wordsem, p. 2

<sup>564</sup> ATVP, 1050/1, Bulletin No.22, 10.08.1951, p. 2

<sup>565</sup> Wordsem, p. 5

arrested generals and officers of the Polish Army as conspirators and dangerous anti-Polish spies evoked very emotional reactions. In most cases radio listeners – against the intentions of propagandists – did not follow the official image of officers as traitors and conspirators. Two years later another group of defendants faced similar charges in the court and media. This time the campaign was directed against the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Poland.

### 3.2 The trial of Bishop Kaczmarek

The trial organised in Warsaw between 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1953 was the first show trial against a high-ranking Church official, Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek,<sup>566</sup> and his assistants from the Kielce province.<sup>567</sup> This was also the peak of the anti-Church campaign, in which the head of the Polish Church, the Primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, was imprisoned on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1953, just after announcing the sentence in the trial of Kaczmarek. The final stage of the Stalinist anti-church campaign started with the show trial of priests from the Cracow Curia in January 1953 in which three priests were accused of spying for the United States. One of them was sentenced to death.<sup>568</sup>

The government perceived the Catholic clergy as political opponents giving patronage to both the active and passive anti-communist resistance of Poles. In the attempt to weaken the anti-communist stronghold, the communists tried to invent plausible accusations against the Church. To those belonged: collaboration with the Nazi

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<sup>566</sup> Czesław Kaczmarek (1895-1963) - Since 1938 Kaczmarek held the position of Bishop of the Diocese of Kielce. During World War Two Kaczmarek stayed in Poland. In 1946 after the Kielce Pogrom Bishop Kaczmarek prepared a report in which he suggested that the pogrom was triggered by Jewish communists from the Office of Public Security in order to create a pretext for the necessity of Jewish emigration to Israel and to publicise Polish anti-Semitism. On 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1951 Kaczmarek was arrested and accused mainly of espionage to the advantage of the USA. He was tortured and after two years of intensive investigation he pleaded guilty during the show trial.

<sup>567</sup> Apart from Bishop Kaczmarek the bill of indictment enumerated four more persons, collaborators of Kaczmarek: priests Jan Danilowicz, Józef Dąbrowski, Władysław Widlak and a nun, Waleria Niklewska.

<sup>568</sup> A. Dudek, R. Gryz, *Komuniści i kościół w Polsce (1945-1989)*, Kraków 2006, pp. 80-81; T. Isakowicz-Zaleski, *Księża wobec bezpieczeństwa na przykładzie archidiecezji krakowskiej*, Kraków 2007, pp. 33-36; J. Żaryn, *Dzieje Kościoła Katolickiego w Polsce*, Warszawa 2003, p. 139

forces, practicing of a pro-German propaganda during the war<sup>569</sup> and spying for the Vatican and for the USA afterwards.

The decision to arrest Bishop Kaczmarek was taken and carried out already in January 1951.<sup>570</sup> With this action the communist authorities embarked on an organised and systematic offensive against the Catholic Church and its hierarchy. Bishop Kaczmarek was selected by the MBP officers as a first scapegoat for several reasons. First of all, starting from the late 1940s the bishop was frequently accused of collaboration with the Germans. Furthermore the MBP agents decided to make use of the fact that Kaczmarek had regular contact with Arthur Bliss-Lane, the ambassador of the USA in Poland.<sup>571</sup> Both those circumstances were used by the communist agitators to construct the image of the bishop as a pro-German American spy.

After over thirty months of countless long-lasting interrogations the MBP authorities declared the bishop to be ready to cooperate and act according to strict instructions during the show trial.<sup>572</sup> As the trial started, on the propaganda level, just like in the case of the trial of the generals, communist media blamed Kaczmarek and his assistants for supporting the ideas of restoring capitalism in Poland<sup>573</sup> and of a new global conflict.<sup>574</sup> The media was also outraged that a part of the Church hierarchy criticised communist economic reforms. Further on Bishop Kaczmarek's testimonies were presented in two captions of the PKF film chronicle from September 1953.<sup>575</sup> Both sets of footage suggested that Kaczmarek's conspiracy posed an equal threat to the Polish state and nation. In this way the film director aimed at unifying the values of state and national safety and, consequently, at doubling the danger deriving from the subversive activity of the Catholic clergy. Once again one of the main roles in both propaganda movies was given to the main prosecutor, Stanisław Zarakowski, whose

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<sup>569</sup> TL, 16.09.1953

<sup>570</sup> A. Dudek, R. Gryz, op. cit., pp. 63-64

<sup>571</sup> Wordsem, p. 64

<sup>572</sup> Wordsem, p. 87

<sup>573</sup> TL, 16.09.1953

<sup>574</sup> TL, 14.09.1953; TL, 21.09.1953

<sup>575</sup> PKF 41/53, 23.09.1953; PKF 42/53, 30.09.1952



impassioned speech was supposed to leave the viewers with no doubt concerning the anti-Polish conspiratorial past of Bishop Kaczmarek.

What is important is that the final shot of the PKF's second episode dedicated to the trial uncovered the important gender aspect of the communist propaganda. The shot focused on the case of the nun Waleria Niklewska. It emphasised the merciful decision of the court when it decided to release Niklewska, commenting that the nun was only a tool in the hands of Bishop Kaczmarek and other conspirators. To a large extent the shot symbolised the way the communist regime in Poland perceived the place and role of women in society – in this particular case, the official indulgent attitude of the court towards Niklewska. The decision to suspend the sentence of a five year imprisonment for the nun was supposed to demonstrate the compassion of the communist regime. Through the softness of the sentence towards Niklewska, the PKF producers intended to soften the harsh image of communist judges and persecutors. It was a similar logic and propaganda tactic that stood behind the policy of preventing the execution of any woman sentenced to capital punishment after 1956. In this tactic, there was no official place for performing violence towards women, the expression of which was supposed to be strictly associated only with the Western or literally American culture and ethic.

All the testimonies of Kaczmarek and the other defendants published in *Trybuna Ludu*, pictured in the PKF episodes and transmitted on radio clearly suggested that starting from the beginning of World War Two spies of the Vatican in Poland were collecting confidential data that was later transferred to the American embassy in Warsaw.<sup>576</sup> This espionage performed by the Catholic clergy in Poland in the postwar period was presented as activity that supported 'American capitalists and German militarists in their effort to provoke a new global conflict'.<sup>577</sup>

Such an intensive propaganda onslaught of the Catholic Church had the potential to evoke the rage of the religious Polish society. Yet, the close reading of letters sent to

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<sup>576</sup> TL, 14.09.1953; 16.09.1953; 17.09.1953; 18.09.1953; 19.09.1953; 20.09.1953; 21.09.1953; 23.09.1953

<sup>577</sup> TL, 23.09.1953

Polish Radio in reaction to the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek shows that to a large extent radio listeners followed the official propaganda interpretation of the event.

As it is mentioned in bulletin No.47, by 26<sup>th</sup> September 1953 Polish Radio received 13 letters containing direct references to the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek – eight positive, one critical and four letters presenting hostile attitudes towards communist authorities. Among texts attached to the bulletin there were only two critical letters. First of all, a listener from Greater Poland wrote to ‘Frequency 49’ with the question of whether Bishop Kaczmarek was tried for his anti-Polish activity or rather for the fact that he believed in God. In the author’s view, show trials of Catholic priests could only strengthen the Christian faith within Polish society.<sup>578</sup>

The author of a second letter, an inhabitant of Eastern Poland, maintained that the accusation of priests of anti-Polish political activity was false. The listener personally knew the priest Józef Dąbrowski whom he perceived as a totally a-political person.<sup>579</sup> A further five letters attached to the bulletin however, presented opinions of listeners much more influenced by the atmosphere of fear of espionage fomented by propaganda accounts depicting the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek.

First of all, the authors of two letters were convinced of the propaganda image of the Vatican as a conspiratorial institution that posed a threat to Poland. In his letter, the inhabitant of small town near Łódź expressed his firm support for the harsh critique of the Vatican and the Pope that he heard in an episode of ‘Frequency 49’ commenting on the trial of Kaczmarek. In his view the trial did indeed confirmed the anti-Polish policy of the Vatican. Yet, the listener declared himself as a believer and placed his wrath between the Vatican from his own deep faith in God. This is why in the second part of his letter he asked the radio to explain why the pilgrimage to the shrine in Jasna Góra and other shrines was prohibited whereas the Christian faith was officially allowed.<sup>580</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> ATVP, 1050/8, vol.1, Bulletin No.47, 26.09.1953, p. 6

<sup>579</sup> Wordsem, pp. 6-7

<sup>580</sup> Wordsem, p. 5

In the same vein another listener from Warsaw on the one hand agreed with the condemnation of Bishop Kaczmarek for betraying Poland, while on the other hand he believed that most of the Polish Catholic clergy had a patriotic attitude. With his letter the listener postulated on the cleaning of the Catholic Church in Poland from Vatican spies. This letter resembles the text written by professional propagandists. The listener wrote about his hope that the show trial of Bishop Kaczmarek would revive the Polish nation and strengthen its political vigilance. Further on he wrote about his wrath at the Vatican for the fact that it was *'transferring to Poland its poison – the anti-Polish propaganda aimed at hampering the development of the country'*.<sup>581</sup> Finally, a listener from Warsaw postulated that Poles should help the state administration in its fight against Vatican spies, *'the worst enemies of Poland'*. Looking at the phraseology and arguments present in the letter one may suspect that either this listener was very much inspired by official propaganda, or he was a propaganda agent and his letter only pretended to be written by the average inhabitant of Warsaw.

A further two letters shows the significant impact of the propaganda image of Bishop Kaczmarek as a dangerous Vatican spy on the attitude of radio listeners towards the Catholic clergy in Poland. An anonymous woman from Łódź expressed her deep aversion to Catholic priests that she felt while listening to the testimonies of Bishop Kaczmarek on Polish Radio. She wrote that as a result of the transmissions from the trial depicting the espionage performed by Niklewska and Kaczmarek – *'wicked rascal'*, she lost all the respect for the priesthood she had held during 59 years of her life. She also indicated Sandomierz, a city in Eastern Poland, as another area of the Vatican spies' activity after Kielce.

In a similar mould an inhabitant of Warsaw, undersigned as *'doubtful'*, expressed his negative attitude towards Bishop Kaczmarek. As the author put it in his letter, the testimonies of Kaczmarek transmitted on Polish Radio helped him to reconstruct the consistent *'anti-National path the bishop was crossing since the interwar period'*. The doubts of the listener referred only to the sincerity of Kaczmarek's declaration made in

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<sup>581</sup> Wordsem, pp. 2-4

court that during the investigation he finally realised how harmful his anti-Polish activity was. The author of the letter interpreted this declaration as Kaczmarek's effort to reduce his sentence. Finally, the 'doubtful' author believed in the image of Kaczmarek as a spy as he compared the bishop to Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the famous Soviet spies arrested and executed in the USA only three months before the show trial in Warsaw.<sup>582</sup>

The last letter serves as an example of the efficiency of propaganda attempts in suggesting that the USA was a main manager of dangerous anti-Polish espionage. In her letter, a listener from Northern Poland wrote that listening to the testimonies of Kaczmarek her attention was focused on the motif of the American embassy. In her words, this institution covered, financed and instructed anti-Polish spies. According to the listener the trial of *'traitors in cassocks'*<sup>583</sup> was just another proof confirming the anti-Polish activity of American spies. Pisarska demanded the removal of the American embassy from Poland in order to *'cut the links between spies like Kaczmarek and American intelligence'*. In her words, only such a firm decision could stop the infiltration of Poland by American spies.

### **3.3 Trust vs. mistrust. Social approach towards both trials.**

As can be seen, the sharp and simplistic dichotomy distinguishing between precisely selected 'state enemies' and the communist regime presented as the only guarantor of 'state security' promoted by propaganda met with a diverse reception. The striking similarity of the 'enemy talk' used to stigmatise the representatives of different spheres of society led to – we may say – the unification of the figure of a state enemy. This tactic aimed at suggesting that the anti-state activity of both the internal and external foes was synchronised.

The analysis of the popular reception of the propaganda campaign commenting on the trial of the generals shows that in most cases journalists', directors' and radio speakers' attempts to convince press readers and radio listeners that officers were

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<sup>582</sup> Julius and Ethel Rosenberg - American citizens executed in June 1953 for conspiracy to commit espionage, relating to passing information about the atomic bomb to the USSR

<sup>583</sup> ATVP, 1050/8, vol.1, Bulletin No.47, 26.09.1953, p. 4

enemies of Poland were counterproductive. Despite propaganda effort to stigmatise the 'fascist generals', five out of seven authors of the letters sent from Warsaw and small towns and villages praised the officers instead of condemning them. The anti-patriotic image of Generals Tatar, Mossor and others evoked the wrath of listeners instead of fear. Despite the propagandists' intentions most of the authors of letters sent to Polish Radio in response to radio transmissions from the court in Warsaw interpreted the trial of officers as a trial of patriots, not traitors. Two authors of the letters openly stated that official messages published in the press and radio presenting the officers as saboteurs were '*nothing but words of stupid communist propaganda that no one put trust in*'.<sup>584</sup>

Two years later the propagandists' efforts to portray the Vatican as a centre of hostile intelligence having its agents within the Catholic clergy in Poland were more effective. The above presented analysis of the popular reception of the propaganda campaign presenting the high-ranking representative of the Catholic Church in Poland as a Vatican spy shows the relatively high susceptibility of Polish propaganda receivers towards the propagandists' efforts to combine the motif of espionage with the Catholic clergy. Five out of seven authors of letters sent to the programme 'Frequency 49' in response to the trial of Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek were critical towards the priesthood, not towards the press or radio circulating anti-Catholic propaganda. What is even more important is that those letters show that the propagandists' efforts to identify Catholic priests in Poland with the figures of spies and conspirators resulted in fomenting the mistrust of radio listeners towards the Catholic Church and the alleged superiors of Kaczmarek – American intelligence.

In two cases propagandists managed to evoke a general hatred of radio listeners towards the priesthood. In a further two cases the propaganda campaign commenting on the show trial convinced listeners that the Vatican presented an anti-Polish attitude. In one case the anti-Catholic propaganda helped the authors of the programme 'Frequency 49' to suggest that American intelligence endangered state safety. In all five

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<sup>584</sup> ATVP, 1050/8, vol.1, Bulletin No.47, 26.09.1953, p. 5

cases propagandists creating the negative image of Bishop Kaczmarek managed to foment mistrust towards the Catholic clergy. Only two radio listeners remained resistant to the impact of propaganda messages showing priests and nuns as dangerous conspirators.

One may pose a question, how come some accusations, almost identical in their nature and rhetoric, seemed to be more plausible than others. The far more positive reception of the anti-Catholic propaganda could derive from the fact that contrary to generals and officers of the Polish Army who spent World War Two outside Poland, Kaczmarek and other priests were accused of betrayal in the form of pro-Nazi activity and of collaboration with German occupants locally. Reading the letters sent to Polish Radio one can diagnose the serious disappointment of radio listeners who on hearing the testimonies of the bishop realised that representatives of the Catholic Church, an institution they put trust in, cooperated with Nazi criminals. Later on it is possible that the opposite reaction expressed by listeners commenting on the trial of the generals derived from the hope that Polish society had for the possibility of abolishing the communist regime by the Polish Army which was clearly expressed in several letters. Apart from hope and anger most of the letters expressed serious disappointment from the fact that the generals failed at eradicating the communist apparatus.

### **The critique of sources**

The analysis of the pieces of correspondence preserved both in the archives of Polish Radio and Polish TV turned out to be even more challenging than the examination of complete letters sent to the popular weekly *Po prostu* made by Adam Leszczyński.<sup>585</sup> First of all, according to Leszczyński even the number of about five hundred letters that remain from the archive of the weekly paper are not enough to offer firm conclusions.<sup>586</sup> Comparing this number the amount of letters commenting on both show trials enumerated in the propaganda bulletins should not allow any conclusions to be drawn. Aside from the insufficient amount of letters in both archives, the vast majority

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<sup>585</sup> A. Leszczyński, *Sprawy do załatwienia. Listy do 'Po Prostu' 1955-1957*, Warszawa 2000

<sup>586</sup> Wordsem, pp. 15-20

of the letters do not allow to identify, and consequently to properly analyse, the social and psychological background of the authors of the letters. Yet, what is possible, both in case of the above discussed bulletins and the correspondence sent to *Po prostu*,<sup>587</sup> is to reconstruct the atmosphere, the emotional mood, in which the letters were written and sent.

In search of more objective reasons for the diverse reception of both trials one should pay attention to the specificity of the historical source where the signs of reception of propaganda messages, exploiting the themes of spies and conspirators, were found. The bulletins consisted of a selection of letters sent to the radio programme 'Frequency 49' from the entire country. Yet, we do not know anything about the character of the selection of letters for the bulletins which were supposed to inform the most important communist dignitaries about the social moods of Poles. The selection could either reflect the authentic proportion of negative and positive letters sent to Polish Radio or it could have been prepared according to the expectations of the dignitaries and presented a distorted picture of the high susceptibility of Polish society to propaganda discourse. Finally, the Propaganda Department could distort the proportion in order to produce evidence of the efficiency of the propaganda apparatus. The proportion of positive and negative letters attached to the bulletins could reflect the real proportion of letters sent to the radio. First of all, the bulletin was prepared exclusively for internal usage of the highest elite of the PZPR which, due to lack of opinion polls (until 1958), had limited access (aside from the reports prepared by the Propaganda Department of the PZPR and the MBP) to authentic signs of popular reception of the regimes' policy. Therefore the bulletin could be expected to provide the real image of social moods.

There is, however, at least one further question essential to diagnose the nature of a bulletin. It refers to the authenticity of letters presented in the bulletin. Almost no autographs of letters survived and, consequently, the entire analysis of letters is based on their content rewritten by propagandists in the bulletins. Later on those letters were

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<sup>587</sup> Wordsem, p. 21-22

taken from the correspondence to the radio programme 'Frequency 49' where exemplary letters were read aloud by Stefan Martyka. Although the texts prepared, i.e. by Roman Werfel for Martyka, contained both critical and positive letters, the aim of the audition was to praise the government and to condemn 'internal and external enemies of the state'. This is why it is possible (and today difficult to verify) that some of the 'positive letters' were fakes prepared by propagandists in order to be present in the programme as proof of popular confidence towards government policy.

Unfortunately in the case of the trial of the generals the edition of the programme 'Frequency 49' dedicated to this event that remained in the Archive of Polish Radio does not contain any quotations from the correspondence discussed above in the first part of this chapter. Fortunately, however, in the case of the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek the episode of the radio programme that remained in the same archive is constituted around a quotation from the letter enlisted in the bulletin prepared in late September 1953. Surprisingly, contrary to my scepticism the letter from the listener commenting on the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek which intensively used the professional propaganda language was not included in the text read by the radio speaker. In the episode from October 1953,<sup>588</sup> dedicated to the trial, the communist propagandists decided to use the letter sent by a listener from Warsaw, undersigning himself as 'Doubtful' (yet in the programme he was presented simply as 'listener from Warsaw'). This letter and the speaker's comment were used in order to present the Catholic clergy as group which, contrary to the communist government, was devoid of ideals. Consequently, the church was presented as an institution, the representatives of which did not even try to defend themselves in court as the KPP activists did during the trials in the 1920s and 1930s.

What is very important is that the examples of counter-efficacy of the propaganda efforts to make society afraid of spies and conspirators shows the limited results of the fear management strategy. Moreover the examination of letters sent to Polish Radio allows us to identify a significant dissonance between the vision of state

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<sup>588</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, No.53, 08.10.1953, pp. 227-239



safety imposed by the official media discourse and the one expressed by propaganda receivers.

Important as the above examined letters commenting on the show trial were, they should be seen in the much larger context of the most important and the most frequent trends one may recognise when examining the correspondence sent by Polish Radio listeners to one of the most influential propaganda institutions. The close reading of bulletins containing letters sent to Polish Radio since 1951 shows that it was the problems of poverty and lack of food and other most basic products on the market rather than political issues that were among the most often commented upon concerns which listeners addressed in their correspondence to the programme 'Frequency 49' in the early 1950s.

Letters like the one in which an irritated breadwinner, a father of five children, declared that despite working very hard he was unable to provide for his family demonstrate the level of frustration of Polish society in the Stalinist period.<sup>589</sup> In a further letter an inhabitant of Pruszków, a town near Warsaw, stressed the anxiety of people who had been unable to buy any meat for more than three weeks.<sup>590</sup> Finally, a desperate inhabitant of Radom suggested that soon she would be forced to commit a crime in order to be placed in prison where she at least would not starve as she had so far.<sup>591</sup> Those three example letters and a short poem quoted in the introduction to this chapter shows that seven years after the end of World War Two poverty, hunger and lack of vital goods on the market were still among the most important real concerns bothering Poles and surpassing the dread of spies pushed by the media.

Aside from investigating the correspondence sent to Polish Radio in response to propaganda news on trials, when analysing the social attitude to those events one should compare those spontaneous voices with governmental reports diagnosing this phenomenon. Unlike in the case of the trial of the generals, the examination of the social reception of the propaganda attack on the Catholic Church performed in

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<sup>589</sup> ATVP 1050/1, Bulletin No.22, 10.08.1951, p. 4

<sup>590</sup> Wordsem, pp. 4-5

<sup>591</sup> Loc.cit.

September 1953 has so far been made on the basis of sources outreaching the vital set of reports containing excerpts from letters sent to 'Frequency 49'.

### **Perpetrator's point of view**

The examination of the popular attitude of Polish media receivers towards the trial of Kaczmarek, based on the close reading of the reports on social moods prepared by local branches of the MBP, confirm the diversity of social reactions. On the one hand, the reports contained several voices calling the trial of Kaczmarek artificial staging. Numerous voices reported by the MBP officers expressed serious doubts towards accusations, while other voices presumed that Bishop Kaczmarek pleaded guilty either as a result of torture or drug intoxication. Finally, in the textile plant in Żyrardów and other factories in Siedlce MBP agents noted that workers gathered spontaneously in order to pray for the release of Bishop Kaczmarek.<sup>592</sup>

On the other hand, the MBP reports prepared in Kielce enumerated voices of workers who seemed to be convinced of the official propaganda interpretation of the trial. For instance, after a mass meeting of around five-hundred employees of the health service in Kielce in October 1953 during a discussion between twelve nurses, one of them was supposed to have declared that the trial of Kaczmarek broke the trust towards the bishop and a part of the Catholic clergy among local believers. Another nurse pointed to the fact that Kaczmarek not only did not condemn the hostile activity of priests in his diocese but also took part in it.<sup>593</sup> Yet, today it is impossible to verify the authenticity of both those declarations.

The third – and the most important – conclusion that one may draw from the secret police reports on social moods concerning the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek refers to the reception of the event within the Catholic clergy. The MBP reports confirm that the propaganda campaign commenting on the trial of Kaczmarek and the sentences announced in the court in Warsaw managed to intimidate a significant part of the

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<sup>592</sup> R. Gryz, *Państwo a kościół w Polsce. Na przykładzie województwa kieleckiego*, Kraków 1999, pp. 330-331; D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *W krzywym zwierciadle*, pp. 95-98

<sup>593</sup> R. Gryz, op. cit., p. 331

Catholic clergy. Although according to the MBP report the clergy from the Sandomierz Curia (near Kielce) stated that they did not believe in the accusations against Kaczmarek, they interpreted this event as an alarming prospect of the forthcoming tightening of the governmental anti-church policy. Other members of the clergy were afraid that the trial would start the process of arresting or disposing of Catholic priests or even bishops of their positions.<sup>594</sup> The panorama of the psychosis of fear emerging from the MBP diagnosis after the trial of Kaczmarek was further deepened within the clergy after the arrest of the Primate of Poland, Archbishop Wyszyński.

### **Conclusion**

All the above presented cases of local and widely publicised foreign show trials organised against precisely selected groups of 'state enemies' accused of alarming anti-socialist espionage in favour of Western capitalist enemies suggests that the figure of the spy must have been diagnosed by communists agitators as an efficient factor supporting their fear management policy. The number of references and the intensity with which the figure of dangerous hostile conspirators was exploited in communist media shows that this issue belonged to the pantheon of the most important bogeymen implemented in the communist 'fear discourse'.

The above examination of various historical sources allows one to offer several interpretations of the problem of social attitude towards the problem of postwar spy-mania explored by communist media. First of all, the social reception of the allegedly subversive activity of Tito and his agents that one may find in the PPS local report from July 1948, as well as in the diary of Maria Dąbrowska and the letters sent to Polish Radio in response to the trial of Slánský, proves at least the partial efficiency of the propaganda.

All these sources show that communist agitators managed to focus the attention of different spheres of Polish society on vital political events taking place far away from the Polish border. Further on the overtone of letters commenting on the trial of the

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<sup>594</sup> Loc. cit.

'Titoist conspirators' in Prague sent to Polish Radio five years later may suggest that communist agitators succeeded in infecting at least part of the media receivers with anxiety concerning the activity of a subversive network of spies in the Socialist Bloc. Consequently, the propagandists managed to incline part of society observing the situation in Prague to follow (at least officially) the governmental recommendations.

When it comes to the problem of the propaganda image of the two symbolic show trials organised in Poland and their popular reception, on the one hand the above presented case studies show the decided limits of governmental control over the societal perception of the political activity of the PZPR. On the other hand, the voices of a harsh critique of the authorities organising the trials (especially in the case of the trial of the generals) did not exceed the level of declarations, slogans and verbal threats. No strikes, protests or riots took place during and after the trials. This fact shows that even if despite the propaganda attempts to show the 'real enemies of the state', part of society demonstrated its skepticism and resistance towards the government, the physical control over the state remained safe in the hands of the regime.

Finally, the number and overtone of voices expressed in response to the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek shows that the consistent propaganda effort to strip their political and societal opponents from patriotic attributes was not futile. Aside from the fact that the anti-church propaganda campaign efficiently evoked the atmosphere of fear within the Catholic clergy – the most important group of opponents of the communist authorities – the trial also affected its non-clergy observers. The above quoted examples of various kind of condemnation of the central pillar of the anti-communist defiance demonstrates the efficacy of this particular aspect of 'fear management policy' juggling with the motif of dangerous spies and conspirators.

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Reading the above examination of the propaganda campaigns fomenting the phantom of dread posed by 'Titoist spies' and Vatican conspirators one may easily recognise a vital role the agitators attributed in this narrative to the USA. While the reader of communist press started to read an article about the subversive activity of

Tito, Rajk, Robineau, General Tatar or Bishop Kaczmarek, he very often finished with reading about imperialist provocations of their alleged superiors – American intelligence and the government in Washington. Both those institutions were presented as factual organisers of ‘Titoist plots’. Polish communists suggested to their readers that through the sequence of local plots initiated in Central and Eastern Europe, the American government aimed at economic subordination and exploitation of political satellites of the USSR. The phraseological figure of the ‘American economic threat’ symbolised by the motif of ‘dangerous American imperialism’ became one of the most often exploited figures in propaganda messages addressed to Polish press readers. Together with the motif of the disturbing vision of Americans, presented by propaganda as an aggressive and racist society, it constitutes the core of the fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis.

## CHAPTER IV

### Dangerous capitalists. The fear of the American economic enemy (1945-1956)

*So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.*<sup>595</sup>

Franklin D. Roosevelt

In his monumental study on the history of Europe in the Cold War period, Polish historian Jerzy Holzer has argued that soon after the end of World War Two anti-Americanism became firmly present in the European ideological and political discourse.<sup>596</sup> The primal source of this tendency was the official anti-American attitude of the USSR and socialist states expressed by communist propaganda especially during the Stalinist period. In the Soviet Bloc the USA was treated as the main enemy, a successor of Nazi Germany. In Holzer's view, the Soviet version of anti-Americanism had two main aspects – economic and cultural. The first aspect was depicted for instance by Ilya Ehrenburg's<sup>597</sup> description of New York. In his words the inhabitants of this city had 'one common language, the language of hunger, the Dollar and wealth'.<sup>598</sup> The cultural aspect of communist anti-Americanism stigmatised American society, mainly the inhabitants of the Southern states for their racism. Writing on this phenomenon Ehrenburg stressed similarities between Americans applying double moral standards and practicing lynchings on black people and Nazi Germany's attitude towards Jews.<sup>599</sup>

The anti-American tendency was not reduced to the phraseology exploited by the Soviet propagandists. In East Germany the government of the USA was accused of partition and the incapacitation of the country. The destruction of Dresden in February

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<sup>595</sup> Quotation taken from President Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address presented on March 4, 1933. With this address, performed in the darkest period of the Great Depression, Roosevelt outlined in broad terms how he hoped to govern and reminded Americans that the nation's 'common difficulties' concerned 'only material things.'

<sup>596</sup> J. Holzer, *Europa zimnej wojny*, Kraków 2012, p. 289

<sup>597</sup> Ilya Ehrenburg (1891-1967). Soviet writer, journalist and translator, important cultural figure.

<sup>598</sup> J. Holzer, *op.cit.*, p. 290

<sup>599</sup> *Loc.cit.*

1945 became a local symbol of anti-Americanism.<sup>600</sup> In West Germany, the anti-American attitude derived from the presence of several hundred thousand American soldiers. Western Germans were afraid that due to placing an American military base in their country they might one day be at the centre of a new global conflict.

When it comes to postwar Poland the highest communist authorities were fully aware that the propaganda task of creating a convincing image of the 'American dread', that would be at least as powerful as the figure of the 'German threat', was hard. Among factors that made the task of turning the figure of the American threat into a powerful motivator a tough challenge there was a strong pro-American sentiment tracing back at least to the nineteenth century. The speech delivered in October 1947 during the session of the PPR Central Committee by Aleksander Kowalski, a former activist of the KPP and First Secretary of the PPR in Warsaw, shows that communist authorities realised how serious this problem was:

*'Among Polish youth there is a lot of sentiment towards the United States. It results from the fact that Poland never had any conflict with the USA. The fact that our peasants migrated to the USA, that many Poles receive Dollars in letters from their families in America creates the image of the USA as a state of wealthy people who even after World War Two are rich enough to send flour to their families in Poland. In Poland we have Hoover's Squares, American movies, literature. All of this is living in consciousness of our youth and generates strong sentiment towards the USA. It also generates a lack of understanding of the fact that the USA is becoming an enemy of our nation, an enemy of our sovereignty'.<sup>601</sup>*

Despite a strong pro-American attitude of most of Polish society communist leaders were determined to use the rhetorical trope of the American dread in their ideological struggle to reshape the political consciousness of propaganda receivers. For instance, Julia Brystygier, head of the 5<sup>th</sup> Department of the MBP, giving a speech next to Aleksander Kowalski during the same session of the PPR Central Committee, stated:

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<sup>600</sup> Wordsem, p. 291-292

<sup>601</sup> *Stenogram plenum KC PPR 11 X 1947*, ed. J. Jakubowski, W Kowalski, ARR, vol.11, Warszawa 1988, p. 305 – quoted after M. Zaremba, *Komunizm*, p. 178

*'New Poland was created in the fight for independence against Hitlerism, but from the very first moment of our independence we are struggling to establish and solidify democracy against American imperialism. We must make our society aware of this fact'.<sup>602</sup>*

Before the communist propagandists started to explore different aspects of this figure in late 1946, the vision of 'America' underwent a significant evolution from positive and hope-inspiring to decidedly negative and arousing fear. In the course of final months of World War Two and still during 1946 press accounts published in Poland praised the US Army input in defeating German troops and bringing the Nazi occupation of Europe to an end. The vast majority of Poles could only read about the successes of the US Army in the press, but for thousands of Polish prisoners released from the labour camps in Germany by American soldiers it was a personal experience. For instance, in the memoir of Julian Baranowski, a worker from Łódź imprisoned in the spring of 1940 in the labour camp in Melzingen, near Hamburg, we can read about the thankfulness Baranowski and other Polish prisoners felt towards the US Army which liberated the city on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1945.<sup>603</sup> Poles released from the forced labour camps in Germany were faced only with gestures of friendliness from their liberators. American soldiers who had not experienced several years of life under Nazi occupation were eager to provide the released prisoners with gifts.

Such gestures remained in the memory of Poles long after their return to Poland. The friendly attitude of Americans contrasted drastically with the behaviour of the other 'liberators' — the Soviet soldiers they met in their homeland.<sup>604</sup> In Poland, where German troops were defeated and dislodged by the Red Army supported by the People's Troops of Poland [Ludowe Wojsko Polskie], soon after World War Two ended

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<sup>602</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>603</sup> Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna im. Piłsudskiego w Łodzi, an autograph of memoir of Julian Baranowski', vol.2, p. 107-110

<sup>604</sup> The experience of the three brothers, Stanisław, Jan and Marian Kamiński from Łódź is symbolic. In early 1940 they were imprisoned and sent to forced labour in a brewery near Ottobeuren, Bavaria in 1940. In March 1945 they were released by American soldiers, who gave them leather jackets, equipment of pilots of the US Aircraft, and bicycles. When the brothers crossed the Polish-German border, the train they were riding was robbed by Soviet soldiers. The brothers lost their American gifts. [Interview with Jolanta Przygórska and Włodzimierz Kamiński, 05.05.2012]



millions of Poles living in the devastated country associated the USA with the material aid distributed in Poland in the framework of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) activity.<sup>605</sup> Providing Poles with American food, medicines and other essential products UNRRA significantly helped Polish society to survive the most difficult period of the first postwar months. One must also not forget that it was the same UNRRA that organized the mass train transport that within the entire Europe helped the victims of war move back home.<sup>606</sup> Such fact generated one more vital factor increasing the pro-American sentiment within Polish postwar society.

The second American economic initiative to aid Europe, in which Poland could potentially participate, the Marshall Plan, was rejected in the summer of 1947 by the USSR and, under Soviet pressure, by all the people's democracies. After implementation of the Marshall Plan in Italy, France and in the American, British and French occupation zones of Germany, communist propaganda started to present the plan as an American attempt to subordinate Western economies to the finance of Wall Street. Press articles and propaganda movies presented an image of Europe divided into imperialist and anti-democratic Western Europe, which embraced the Marshall Plan, and anti-imperialist and democratic socialist peoples' democracies which rejected the plan. The Marshall Plan was also presented as a synonym of American capitalism, a symbol of inequality, of oppression of the working class and antithesis of progressive socialism. The motif of stressing terrifying consequences of implementation of the Marshall Plan in Germany, France and other Western countries to justify the decision to reject the American economic aid will be one of the main problems addressed in this part of my thesis. With this chapter I will reconstruct the evolution of the propaganda's economic vision of the USA from the rather neutral image of the supplier of essential goods in the first postwar year to the negative vision of a dangerous intruder allegedly posing a threat to the independence of Poland.

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<sup>605</sup> J. Reinisch, *We Shall Rebuild Anew a Powerful Nation!: UNRRA, Internationalism and National Reconstruction in Poland* [in:] *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 2008, Relief in the Aftermath of War, p. 461

<sup>606</sup> B. Shephard, *Powrót*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 89-108

## 1. From hope to threat. Propaganda vision of American economic policy

As a result of World War Two Poland was one of Europe's most devastated countries. Due to the fact that its recovery was perceived (mainly by the USA, Great Britain and France) as central to future European stability, the government of the USA decided to support the process of rebuilding Poland with significant input in the activity of one of the first international agencies established during the war to manage the transition from war to peace.<sup>607</sup> The intensive activity of UNRRA in Poland between 1945 and 1946 created a very positive image of American economic activity in Europe within Polish society and constituted a tough challenge for the propagandists who sought to create an image of American threat after 1946.

### 1.1 Gifts from 'aunt UNRRA'

Since in the summer of 1944 German troops started to be systematically dislodged from Eastern Poland by the Red Army, the new Polish administration established and controlled by the PKWN faced the tremendous problem of providing 'liberated' Poles with the most basic food supplies. The agriculture infrastructure, devastated due to the Nazi occupation and generally due to military activities, did not allow farmers to restart cultivation and breeding animals on the prewar scale until 1948.<sup>608</sup> What is more, looting performed by the Red Army on the 'liberated' areas of Poland further worsened the terrible economic condition of Poles.<sup>609</sup> As Marcin Zaremba put it in his study, the fear of hunger, next to fear of infectious diseases and fear of high prices of basic goods, was one of the 'three horsemen of the apocalypse' – the most acute threats disturbing Poles during the last months of World War Two and at least three years after the conflict had ended.<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>607</sup> J.Reinisch, op.cit., p. 460

<sup>608</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, p. 534

<sup>609</sup> Wordsem, p. 516

<sup>610</sup> Wordsem, pp. 514-534. This biblical metaphor referred to the motif of the four horsemen and was taken from the Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse). This final part of the New Testament presented the prospect of the extinction of the old world. In this vision the four horsemen were presented as the messengers of the extinction and symbolised war, plague, hunger and death. The dramatic economic and material situation of postwar Poland seems to justify the kind of metaphor used by Zaremba.

Still, at the beginning of 1946 the representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare estimated the population of Poland that required immediate food aid as no less than 2.2 million people.<sup>611</sup> In such dramatic circumstances any external economic support for Poland was at a premium. Soon before the end of World War Two the awaited aid started to be transferred to Poland by its Western allies, mainly by the USA.

The complicated transportation of American material aid to Poland was administrated by UNRRA. This was dominated by the USA's international relief agency, which was established in 1943 in Washington as a result of the agreement between the USA, Great Britain, China and the USSR. Its main purpose was to provide liberated countries with essential material aid. In 1945 UNRRA became part of the United Nations organisation. The peak of the UNRRA activity was reached in 1945 and 1946.<sup>612</sup> After China, Poland was the second biggest recipient of UNRRA support. From a budget of over three billion Dollars, 470 million Dollars was spent by UNRRA to provide Poland with material aid. Precisely 70% of the total budget of UNRRA was financed by the USA. What is important is that UNRRA aid was fully charitable – it was not a loan to be repaid later.<sup>613</sup> Having no material incomes, however, the American government planned to use UNRRA to reach important political targets – to win popularity for the USA in Eastern Europe and consequently to reduce the Soviet influence in this part of the world.<sup>614</sup>

The first train transports of American goods arrived in Poland in April 1945.<sup>615</sup> In September 1945 the first ships with containers signed by UNRRA arrived in port in Gdynia.<sup>616</sup> On the local level, complete control over the distribution of UNRRA supplies was given to the PKWN. From July 1945 when the USA and Great Britain formally recognised the newly reconstituted Polish Provisional Government, TRJN, the

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<sup>611</sup> M.Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, p. 519

<sup>612</sup> A. Jeziński, C.Leszczżyńska, *Historia Gospodarcza Polski*, Warszawa 2003, p. 404

<sup>613</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>614</sup> J. Reinisch, op.cit, pp. 463-464

<sup>615</sup> Wordsem, p. 461

<sup>616</sup> A. Jeziński, C.Leszczżyńska, op.cit., p. 404

distribution of UNRRA supplies was controlled by the Ministry of Provisions and Trade.<sup>617</sup>

### **American help for Poland**

One of the most important aims of UNRRA activity was to stimulate the agriculture production so that Poland could reach self-sufficiency in this sphere of the economy as soon as possible. Due to the decision of the new Polish postwar administration most of the agriculture aid was distributed by the Polish administration on the 'regained lands'. In this way American gifts were helping the Polish authorities to soften the fear of hunger (and hunger itself) and acute poverty among settlers – the group of Polish society exposed to the fear of living in an unknown place as well as to the 'German threat' in the most direct way. Among Polish receivers of UNRRA support the organisation started to be called 'Aunt UNRRA',<sup>618</sup> which shows how positive the reception of the American aid for Poland was.

Apart from food, crops and animals Poland received, in the framework of UNRRA aid, such essential infrastructure as full equipment and medicines for 23 hospitals, with 1,000 beds each. UNRRA packages also contained clothes, blankets and shoes. Next to the personal items given as part of the UNRRA support programme, the American government also provided Poland with numerous vehicles and machines essential in the country where most of the technical infrastructure was damaged or destroyed.<sup>619</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> J.Reinisch, op.cit.,p. 461. The central office of the agency was open in Warsaw. In January 1946 regional offices were opened in Katowice, Krakow, Łódź, Poznan, Gdynia, and, in September 1946 in Szczecin. In following months larders of most of Polish houses were equipped with the food ration of the US Army including orange juice, condensed milk and chocolate. The UNRRA administration shipped to Poland close to 2.3 million tons of food and supplies. Around 38% of this aid was sent to Poland in the form of food, mainly flour, butter and several millions of 5 kilogram packages - food rations of the demobilized troops of the US Army. What is more, Poland received large amount of livestock: 125 thousand of chicks, over 50 thousand of chickens and hens, 112 thousand hatching eggs, 340 thousand tons of corn seeds, 140 thousand of horses and 17 thousand of cattle. The last group of products was dedicated mainly to farmers.

<sup>618</sup> A. Wąsowski, *Prezenty od 'Cioci Unry'* [in:] Wielka Kolekcja 1944-1989 Historia PRL, Vol. 1: 1944-1945, Warszawa, 2009, p. 88

<sup>619</sup> A. Jeziński, C.Leszczyńska, op.cit., p. 404. Poland received 300 thousand tons of petrol products, 42 steam engines, heavy machinery, tools, tractors, spare parts, thousand railway wagons and 17 thousands of trucks. In total Poland received around 90 thousand mechanical vehicles which were supposed to help to recover the communication and transport in Poland during first postwar years

Finally, the transportations with UNRRA aid contained large amounts of DDT, a chemical contact poison used against rats, which significantly helped to control the typhus epidemic in Poland.<sup>620</sup>

As one can see, the American economic support for Poland in the form of UNRRA aid helped the Polish communist government to reduce the intensity of the most important threats worrying Polish society during the first postwar months. Using Zaremba's terminology, to a large extent 'aunt UNRRA' helped the ministers of the TRJN to master all 'three horsemen of the apocalypse', that is to solve the most serious problems of Polish postwar society. The deliveries of free American food supplies helped to soften the fear of hunger and reduce concerns deriving from the high prices of basic goods. With the fully equipped hospitals and stocks of DDT the Polish Ministry of Health could more effectively fight the epidemics of typhus and other infectious diseases that affected Poles. Consequently, UNRRA aid substantially helped to prop up the communist regime in Poland. This latter was diagnosed and criticised by the American ambassador in Poland, Arthur Bliss Lane. In his words one of the UNRRA's chief defects was its tendency 'to whitewash the irregularities of the Communist-dominated TRJN which had control over the distribution of UNRRA supplies and was using them for its own political advantage'.<sup>621</sup>

All the above-mentioned forms of aid created a rather positive economic image of the USA within Polish society. The signs of this enthusiasm are visible, for instance, in the recollections of Adam Miłkaszewski. As he put it in a memoir, all the packages of food with the logo of the US Army brought to the new flat in Gdańsk confirmed his father's conviction that the Americans would not leave the 'repatriates' alone. The UNRRA aid gave Miłkaszewski's father hope that someday '*Americans will force the USSR to give Lviv back to Poland*'.<sup>622</sup> According to Miłkaszewski, such an association of the UNRRA aid was common among repatriates living in Gdańsk until the parliamentary

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<sup>620</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>621</sup> A. Bliss Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed: An American Ambassador Reports to the American People*, New York 1948, p. 224

<sup>622</sup> A. Miłkaszewski, *Pamiętam...*, Lwów 1933-1945, Gdańsk 1945-1952, Gdańsk 2004, pp. 46,55

elections in January 1947.<sup>623</sup> More importantly apart from offering hope, UNRRA helped the Miłkaszewski family and thousands of other to survive the harsh winter of 1945/1946 in a heavily destructed city.

What is even more important in the context of the main topic addressed by this study is that Miłkaszewski's recollections in his memoir were expanded with an interview. In the conversation recorded for the purpose of this research he was asked if the material aid his family received from UNRRA had any impact on his general postwar perception of the USA.<sup>624</sup> Miłkaszewski stated that this positive experience made him, his family and many of his school friends very resistant to the later propaganda attempts to convince Polish society that American political or economic activity in Europe could pose a threat to Poland. This recollection serves as a good example of the early postwar pro-American attitude of Polish society the communist propaganda had to fight against as from the spring of 1946.

### **The neutral image of the UNRRA in the communist propaganda**

The official image of American aid for Poland present in communist media, mainly in the press and movies, was rather neutral. The daily press organ of the PKWN, *Rzeczpospolita*, started to announce the expected arrival of the UNRRA already in March 1945.<sup>625</sup> It was presented as a form of relief that should substantially help in solving the vital problem of insufficient supplies of food for Poland. *Rzeczpospolita* informed readers about UNRRA transportations arriving in Poland by trains<sup>626</sup> and later by ships.<sup>627</sup> The short accounts meticulously enumerated amounts and type of products sent to Poland from the USA. Press articles on transports of food, clothes, cotton and livestock but also construction tools,<sup>628</sup> mining devices<sup>629</sup> and equipment for hospitals<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>623</sup> Interview with Adam Miłkaszewski, 20.04.2014

<sup>624</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>625</sup> RZ, 16.03.1945

<sup>626</sup> RZ, 08.04.1945; 20.05.1945; 24.08.1945; 30.08.1945

<sup>627</sup> RZ, 08.09.1945; 11.09.1945; 28.09.1945; 06.10.1945; 03.08.1946

<sup>628</sup> RZ, 03.08.1945

<sup>629</sup> RZ, 24.08.1945

<sup>630</sup> RZ, 23.01.1946; 19.08.1946

suggested that American material and infrastructural aid had a significant impact on rebuilding Poland from the destruction of war. The messages informing people about further increases of USA government input in the UNRRA budget could only increase the enthusiasm of Poles towards American economic activity in Poland.<sup>631</sup> Although Poles often had to wait all night long in lines for their ration of American food,<sup>632</sup> the fact that the free aid was available increased their sense of security and reduced the fear of hunger.

Neutral as those articles were, with their content they solidified in readers the positive image of American activity in Poland. The picture of representatives of American financial institutions in Europe in the communist media was also far from hostile. It had nothing to do with the tactic of fomenting an atmosphere of economic danger posed to Europe by the USA, which entered the popular discourse in media already in 1946 and with reached its peak in the second part of 1947.

### **UNRRA and the promotion of the communist authorities**

What could be read in the press was additionally depicted in several episodes of the PKF. The short movies showing the arrival of UNRRA support to Poland were used to promote the efficiency of the TRJN's own effort to rebuild Poland. Such a technique was implied in the first episode of the PKF depicting the arrival of the UNRRA aid transmitted in late August 1945.<sup>633</sup> The movie informed viewers about receiving a valuable transport of American tractors by Poland but it stressed even more strongly the information that local government 'prepared a perfectly organised assembly plant of the UNRRA tractors'. In the same movie a voiceover informed also viewers that owing to the efforts of the TRJN representative in the European Commission, the UNRRA agency decided to increase the amount of aid dedicated to Poland. In this way, in one short movie the TRJN praised its local and external successes. In a similar vein the PKF episode informing viewers about the transport of locomotives to Poland stressed the fact that those

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<sup>631</sup> RZ, 15.08.1945; 28.08.1945; 09.10.1945; 31.10.1945; 31.12.1945

<sup>632</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, pp. 549-550

<sup>633</sup> PKF, 23/45, 29.08.1945

vehicles would only *'supplement the rolling-stock already produced in reconstructed Polish factories'*.<sup>634</sup> Later, the arrival of modern fishing boats to Hel and Gdynia in the framework of the UNRRA aid was presented as *'a gift that suits the TRJN policy of restrictions of the meat ration'*.<sup>635</sup> Other PKF episodes informed viewers about transports of heavy trucks,<sup>636</sup> about the delivery of American horses<sup>637</sup> and about supplies of American clothes and school equipment for Polish pupils.<sup>638</sup> Even in this last movie no words of gratitude towards Americans were spoken. Instead of thankfulness the PKF speaker stated that *'gifts are due to Polish children for what they suffered during the war'*.

In fact all the above presented examples of movies referring to UNRRA activity in Poland were constructed precisely with the intention of praising the efficiency of the communist regime. In all those PKF episodes it was the communist administration that was acting in order to reduce the common fear of hunger. The role of UNRRA was reduced to an image of a tangential supplier of goods.

Simultaneously with the PKF productions for Polish viewers, the team of the PKF was also employed by the American and British administrations of UNRRA to direct a movie showing the activity of this relief organisation to a Western audience. Watching the film *'UNRRA in Poland'*,<sup>639</sup> from early 1946, one may observe much more enthusiasm to the American material support expressed by Polish dockers in ports, farmers and parents and their children than in any PKF episode referring to UNRRA shown in Polish cinemas. Unlike the shots placed in the PKF films, the scenes of natural and unfettered joy of adults receiving brand new clothes and milk for hungry children shown in the movie *'UNRRA in Poland'* pictured the authentic, very positive attitude of Poles towards American support. This joy and enthusiasm created a serious obstacle for

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<sup>634</sup> PKF 35/46, 17.10.1946

<sup>635</sup> PKF 14/46, 14.05.1946

<sup>636</sup> PKF 2/46, 26.01.1946

<sup>637</sup> PKF 20/46, 03.07.1946

<sup>638</sup> PKF 21/46, 10.07.1946

<sup>639</sup> Archiwum Filmowe Filmoteki Narodowej, sygn. F. 64



communist propagandists who soon started to construct a less positive image of American economic activity in Europe.

### **The propaganda critique of American material support**

The official neutral vision of American aid for Poland started to evolve into a negative one in the spring of 1946 when the TRJN was informed that the planned supplies of seeds would be substantially decreased. *Rzeczpospolita* published a letter in which president Bolesław Bierut asked the president of the USA, Harry Truman, to change the UNRRA decision that 'would push Poland to the verge of famine'.<sup>640</sup> In the summer of 1946 anonymous texts published in *Rzeczpospolita* blamed the USA government and the UNRRA administration for undermining the TRJN plan of providing Poles with food in 1946 and 1947 through the decision to reduce the food and seeds supplies dedicated to Poland.<sup>641</sup>

Finally, the information that UNRRA activity in Europe would be finished in the autumn of 1946 was interpreted as a deeply political decision.<sup>642</sup> An anonymous text published in *Rzeczpospolita* in August 1946 alarmed readers that the liquidation of UNRRA would significantly hamper the process of removing the war devastations in Poland and other countries and consequently would 'endanger the process of creating foundations for permanent peace in Europe'.<sup>643</sup> The most important part of the text was the clear suggestion that the American and British administrators of UNRRA decided to finish its activity in order to redirect the stream of aid from Poland to Germany.<sup>644</sup> Press articles suggested that the shift in American economic policy in Europe would soon result in the resurrection of Germany and consequently it would directly endanger the sovereignty of Poland.

With such texts the communist media started to create new, firmly negative images of US economic policy in Europe. This new image was visible in the last episode

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<sup>640</sup> RZ, 21.03.1946

<sup>641</sup> RZ, 08.08.1946; 09.08.1946

<sup>642</sup> RZ, 16.08.1946

<sup>643</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>644</sup> Loc.cit.

of the PKF containing references to the UNRRA aid. The movie emitted in late September 1946 informed viewers about the arrival of a ship with 60,000 boxes of gifts from inhabitants of Philadelphia. Praising the generosity of Americans the PKF speaker criticised the USA government for its intense involvement in rebuilding Germany.<sup>645</sup>

Although the regular supplies from UNRRA to Poland did not cease before April 1947,<sup>646</sup> the press accounts announcing the liquidation of the organisation published in August 1946 evoked anxiety within Polish society. As the MBP representatives noted in their report from October 1946, among the most popular rumours repeated by inhabitants of Warsaw in that period was a prediction that ‘the suspension of UNRRA supplies will result in terrible hunger as TRJN is unable to provide the entire Polish population with food without external support’.<sup>647</sup> The dramatic tone of this rumour shows the assumed importance of the American economic aid to the Polish economy and society. Owing to such an atmosphere and due to factual problems of the TRJN with proper provisions in the period directly preceding the parliamentary elections (January 1947) Stalin decided to send to Poland 200,000 tonnes of wheat as a form of a pork barrel.<sup>648</sup> Just like the numerous propaganda references to the rhetorical trope of the ‘German threat’ examined in the first chapter, the transport of wheat was supposed to encourage Polish society to vote for the communists.

In general, both this ad hoc economic support and the anti-German propaganda aimed at integrating Polish society with the new government and at side-tracking the attention of Poles from their serious material problems. In the first postwar years the German component of the latter strategy was supported by another module – the American one. The intensive anti-American media campaign stressing the ‘American economic threat’ was supposed to delete the positive memories of UNRRA support within Polish society and, what was even more important, to strengthen the vision of Poland as a besieged fortress.

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<sup>645</sup> PKF 32/46, 29.09.1946

<sup>646</sup> A. Jezierski, C.Leszczyńska, op.cit., p. 400

<sup>647</sup> *Biuletyny Informacyjne Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego 1946* [later: BIMBP], Warszawa 1996, p. 61

<sup>648</sup> A.Jezierski, C.Leszczyńska, op.cit., p. 400

## 1.2 Dollar ante portas. Propaganda's negative image of the Marshall Plan

The new American economic initiative, the Marshall Plan, was used by the communist journalists, writers, directors and cartoonists to merge the figures of the 'German threat' and the 'American economic threat' in order to confront Poles with a pernicious vision of the Marshall Plan as a phantom of the 'new invasion of Europe'.

The European Recovery Program (ERP), usually called the Marshall Plan, was an American initiative to aid Europe, in which the USA government gave economic support to help rebuild European economies after the end of World War Two in order to prevent the spread of Soviet Communism.<sup>649</sup> The ERP was a vital part of the Truman Doctrine announced in March 1947, the intention of which was 'to support free peoples who are resisting attempted suppression by armed minorities or by outside pressures'.<sup>650</sup> The Marshall Plan offered the same aid to Western allies of the USA and to the USSR and people's democracies, but Stalin rejected the plan.<sup>651</sup> Soviet leader perceived the ERP as an American attempt to win control over the communist economies. In fact the governments of Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were provisionally eager to accept American aid.<sup>652</sup> This positive attitude, however, was not expressed in communist media in Poland. Stalin suspected that such a decision could potentially cause a loss of control over the Soviet Bloc. Consequently, he forced those countries to reject the Marshall Plan.<sup>653</sup> Soon after Stalin's decision, the ERP became a target of massive attack performed by communist propaganda.

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<sup>649</sup> G. Bossuat, *The Marshall Plan: History and Legacy* [in:] *The Marshall Plan: Lessons Learned for the 21st Century*, ed. E. Sorel, P. C. Padoan, OECD 2008, p. 17

<sup>650</sup> D. Merrill, *The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity* [in:] *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, March 2006, Vol. 36(1) pp. 27–37. The ERP was announced by American State Secretary George Marshall on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1947 and then put into practice between April 1948 and June 1952. In this period around 15 billion US Dollars in economic and technical assistance was given to rebuild devastated regions of Europe, remove trade barriers, modernize industry, and make Europe prosperous again. Among the biggest beneficiaries of the plan there were Great Britain, France, West Germany, Italy and Netherlands.

<sup>651</sup> R. J. McMahon, *The Cold War. Very Short Introductions*, Oxford 2003, p. 30

<sup>652</sup> J. Holzer, op.cit., p.53; A.L.Sowa, *Historia Polityczna Polski 1944-1991*, Kraków 2011, p. 110

<sup>653</sup> G. Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe*, New York 2003, p. 138. Stalin's decision derived from striving to maintain the control over the Socialist Bloc. Officially, however, his negative attitude towards the Marshall Plan resulted from the idea enforced by the USA and Great Britain of rebuilding German industry which was an integral part of the ERP. According to economic principle of the Potsdam

## Beware of the Marshall Plan

The threat deriving from the American economic policy in Europe was signalled to Polish press readers a few months before the official announcement of the ERP. For instance, in his political caricature Jerzy Zaruba<sup>654</sup> clearly suggested that the governments of the USA and Great Britain joined their occupation zones of Germany in order to rebuild the Nazi Third Reich.<sup>655</sup> As it will be shown in later part of this chapter, drawings by Jerzy Zaruba, an eminent Polish interwar graphic artist, painter, stage designer and caricaturist well compressed the atmosphere of fear the propagandists attempted to evoke within Polish society.

In Zaruba's view American and British ministers responsible for foreign affairs were playing the dangerous game of treating their zones of occupied Germany as huge puzzles they were ready to join together recklessly. With his drawing, Zaruba aimed at alarming the readers of *Szpilki* that Western leaders, focused on their own political goals, ignored the consequences of such a short-sighted policy – the phantom of resurrection of the German threat for Europe. In other words, this picture suggested that the danger for Poland was not only a result of an evil master plan, but also a by-product of other developments.

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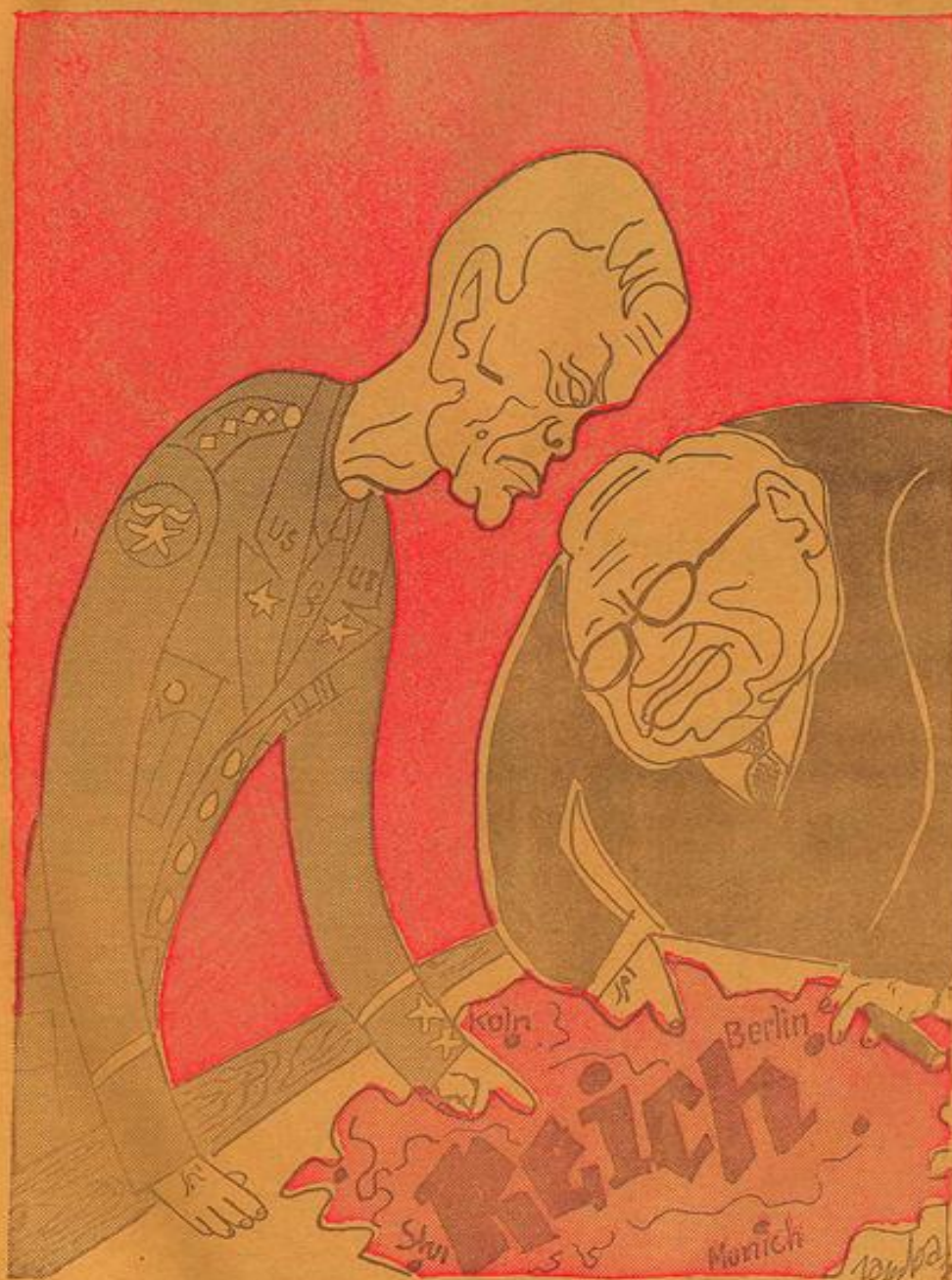
agreements from August 1945 all German civilian heavy industry with war-potential was supposed to be reduced or destructed. Western allies and the USSR agreed the exchange of industrial infrastructure, farm products and raw materials between zones of Germany, yet the process was obstructed by the USSR. Such situation inclined the USA and Great Britain to create the Bizone on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1947. This combination of the American and the British zone was established in order to advance the development of a growing German economy and industry accompanied by a new political order in North-Western, Western and Southern Germany. 15% of all equipment of metallurgical, chemical, and machine manufacturing industries dismantled in the British, American and French occupation zones were supposed to be transferred to the Soviet occupation zone in return for food, coal, potash, timber, and petrol products. The Western deliveries had started in 1946, but Soviet deliveries did not materialize. Consequently Americans seized the dismantling of factories from the Ruhr area in 1946. More in: N. Lewkowicz, *The German Question and the Origins of the Cold War*, Milan 2008, pp. 63-71

<sup>654</sup> Jerzy Zaruba (1891-1971) Zaruba studied in Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and Paris. Since 1920 Zaruba published his works in numerous satirical and literature periodic including *Wiadomości Literackie* and *Szpilki*. During 1930' Zaruba prepared numerous anti-Semitic drawings published in the rightist and nationalistic press. In postwar period Zaruba regularly published his drawings in *Szpilki* and in *Trybuna Ludu*.

<sup>655</sup> SZP, 08.04.1947; Picture 17

Marshall i Bevin robią co mogą żeby Rzeszę niemiecką postawić na nogi

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rys. Jerzy Zaruba

REICHS - MARSHALL - BEVIN

Picture 17

The atmosphere fomented by drawings such as this was deepened by the text 'The delayed proposal of Marshall' published on 10th of April 1947 on the first and second pages of *Głos Robotniczy*. The readers of this article were alarmed by the information that at the conference of foreign affairs ministers of the USSR, France, Great Britain and the USA in Moscow George Marshall proposed the correction of the western border of Poland.<sup>656</sup> The text informed readers that the American Secretary of State intended to give a part of the Polish 'regained territories' back to Germany in order to increase the agricultural potential of the latter country. In this anonymous account the vision of dangerous American attempts to support Germany at the expense of Poland was contrasted by a firm response of Soviet and French ministers who protested against Marshall's proposition. In the following days the press published further declarations of Polish and Soviet authorities confirming the indisputable character of the Polish western border.<sup>657</sup>

Starting from 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1947, the Polish press regularly informed readers about the final stage of negotiations concerning participation in the ERP. From the very beginning authors of the PAP dispatches created an atmosphere of mistrust towards the American economic initiative, depicting it in the tone of an insidious 'temptation with full cash desk'.<sup>658</sup> Furthermore, this atmosphere was deepened by the links between the ERP and the theme of the 'resurrection of Germany' stressed by propagandists. The PAP dispatch entitled 'The puzzle of the Marshall Plan is solved' informed readers, with words in bold type, that 'The USA intends to rebuild Western Germany and purchase Europe with Dollars'.<sup>659</sup> The text, based on accounts from the French press, alarmed Polish readers that George Marshall negotiated a plan to restart the production process of heavy industry in the Ruhr region in secret with France and Great Britain. Between the lines the text suggested that the USA decided to support the French and British

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<sup>656</sup> GR, 10.04.1947

<sup>657</sup> GR, 11.04.1947; 12.04.1947

<sup>658</sup> GR, 06.06.1947

<sup>659</sup> GR, 23.06.1947

economies on condition that they would agree to rebuild German heavy industry that had the potential to produce weapons.

The above presented rhetoric showing the USA as the oppressor of Europe was implemented in communist media precisely in order to erase the positive image of the USA created by the UNRRA activity. What is more, the negative image of the American economic enemy of Europe served the propagandists as a background against which they were promoting the positive image of the Soviet economic-friendly attitude towards both its political satellites and other European states.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1947 *Głos Robotniczy* published a text entitled 'Molotov against the economic dictatorship of great powers towards weak countries', which informed readers that the USSR decided to reject the Marshall Plan in order to 'protect the Socialist Bloc from the capitalist hegemony of the American economy'.<sup>660</sup> This short text defined the official position of the USSR towards the ERP. The next day an anonymous article, 'The USSR in defence of Europe', published in the Łódź daily presented the detailed explanation of the Soviet rejection of the ERP.<sup>661</sup> Finally, six days later, on 10th July Polish press readers were informed that as a result of the ERP's lack of consideration of the differences between the great economies (USA, France, Great Britain) and smaller ones like Poland, the TRJN decided to reject the Marshall Plan.<sup>662</sup>

### **Propaganda explanations of rejection from the ERP**

After such an important decision Polish readers were provided with further explanations. Most of them were based on the motif of the American intention to rebuild Nazi Germany that was supposed to be ingrained in the idea of the ERP. The article entitled 'The tentacles of the Dollar over Europe', published on 18<sup>th</sup> July in *Głos Robotniczy*, belonged to this explanatory thread.<sup>663</sup> Looking at the political dossier of Edward Uzdański, the author of the text, one can see that the edition of the local PPR (and later PZPR) daily was directed to loyal communist activists. Uzdański started his

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<sup>660</sup> GR, 03.07.1947

<sup>661</sup> GR, 04.07.1947

<sup>662</sup> GR, 10.07.1947

<sup>663</sup> GR, 18.07.1947

career in the illegal Polish Communist Party (KPP), he survived Soviet cleansing in this party in the late 1930s and gained further communist experience in the USSR during World War Two.<sup>664</sup> In his comment on the decision of Western countries to participate in the ERP Uzdański stressed that American authorities turned the idea of punishing Germany, agreed in Potsdam in August 1945, into an idea of making a business through the development of heavy industry in the Ruhr region. On the one hand, Uzdański insinuated that due to 'German priority' in the ERP, imposed by the USA, the governments of France and Great Britain could never obtain their financial credits. On the other hand, he insinuated that American greed could result in the dangerous and uncontrolled resurrection of the Nazi Empire.

In late July 1947 the PAP dispatches published in *Głos Robotniczy* started to exploit the motif of a rising conflict between the USA and France and Great Britain concerning the way the coal from German mines should be used. As it was suggested by the drawing by Eryk Lipiński on the cover of *Szpilki*, the only result of American investments in Europe was a forthcoming reconstruction of Nazi Germany.<sup>665</sup> Press articles stressed the disappointment of the French and British governments which hoped to use German coal to develop their own industries rather than to support the German economy.<sup>666</sup> The delusive American economic policy towards France and Great Britain was juxtaposed with a vision of a fair policy of the USSR towards its satellites. The texts depicting the economic agreements between Poland and the USSR and between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in August 1947 were presenting those treaties as

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<sup>664</sup> Jerzy Uzdański (1903-?) Since early 1920s Uzdański was an activist of the illegal KPP. In 1930s he acted as a representative of Comintern in Poland and Germany. He was responsible for recruiting of the candidates to the international brigades fighting in Spanish Civil War. Since 1938 Uzdański became one of the heads of the KPP. In September 1939 Uzdański moved to Lviv where he became an editor of *Czerwony sztandar* and several other communist press titles. In 1942 Uzdański joined the Union of Polish Patriots. Later as a radio editor he joined the People's Troops of Poland. Since 1945 Uzdański came back to Łódź where he edited *Głos Ludu*, central daily of PPR and since late he held a position in *Głos Robotniczy*. More information on Uzdański in the IPN file: <http://katalog.bip.ipn.gov.pl/howDetails.do?idx=U&katalogId=1&subpageKatalogId=1&pageNo=1&nameId=15154&osobald=26916&> - retrieved 08.11.2013

<sup>665</sup> SZP, 29.07.1947

<sup>666</sup> GR, 19.07.1947; 20.07.1947; 23.07.1947; 24.07.1947; 25.07.1947



factors that – in opposition to the dangerous consequences of the implementation of the ERP in Germany – strengthened world peace.<sup>667</sup>

### **The Dollar invasion of France**

Among the Western capitalist countries shown in communist media as an example of states struggling with the American intrusion in local internal affairs, the French case was one of the most often addressed. The active resistance of French unions against the pro-American economic policy of the French government in the autumn of 1947 and a violent stifling of those protests by French police and the army gave communist propagandists a pretext to create a spectacular and horrifying vision of the ‘American economic threat’.

Already in August 1947 the press started to inform readers that American efforts to rebuild German industry in the Ruhr region were hampering the reconstruction of French industry. In the article ‘Draconian condition for France’ *Głos Robotniczy* informed readers that despite the urgent requirement for coal French heavy industry would not receive coal from the Ruhr region administrated by the USA.<sup>668</sup> Five days later, the PPR daily emphasised the indignation of French society after the announcement that due to an American decision France would not receive German coal as a form of war reparations.<sup>669</sup> Starting from September the press exploited the motif of the conflict between the government of the Prime Minister Paul Ramadier and French labour unions, which derived directly from French participation in the ERP. *Głos Robotniczy* suggested that thousands of members of labour unions were angry with the fact that although France participated in the Marshall Plan, workers there were still suffering hunger while the USA was sending substantial food supplies to Germany.<sup>670</sup> Press articles accused Ramadier of passivity, submission towards the USA and of burdening French workers with the costs of rebuilding the state.

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<sup>667</sup> GR, 05.08.1947

<sup>668</sup> GR, 26.08.1947

<sup>669</sup> GR, 31.08.1947

<sup>670</sup> GR, 05.09.1947; 06.09.1947; 15.09.1947; 27.09.1947

In mid-October 1947, disturbing press accounts depicting violent clashes between French workers and French police and the army escorting the American transport of French sugar to Germany was visualised with an episode of the PKF.<sup>671</sup> The movie showed huge barricades made of felled trees which symbolised the determination of French workers to stop the pro-American economic activity of the French government. Further shots of the movie showed crowds of thousands of local workers and miners who arrived from other cities to support the blockade of the bridge in Verdun. The final shot of the movie is a scene of violent dispersion of the protesters by the police and soldiers using teargas and truncheons. At the end the PKF episode, the popular Polish actor Andrzej Łapicki, concluded that ‘although France is starving, the US government pays more attention to provide Germany with sugar than to provide France with everyday food’.

This symbolic episode of French resistance towards the Marshall Plan told the viewers that this was ‘representative of the policy of American imperialists, protectors of Germany’. In addition, the same episode of the PKF informed viewers about mass protests in Paris and the strike of drivers of buses and underground trains which blocked the capital of France. According to the PKF voiceover, the demonstrators were protesting ‘against the Marshall Plan – against the American attempts to subordinate Europe to the power of the Dollar’.

The intense communist media campaign focusing on France, where workers’ strikes against the implementation of the ERP allegedly brought it to the verge of civil war, lasted until the early winter 1947.<sup>672</sup> According to communist propaganda all those events involved over three million demonstrators.<sup>673</sup>

The horrifying vision of the ‘American economic threat’ to Europe created by the above presented press accounts was meaningfully pictured by Bronisław Linke in his

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<sup>671</sup> PKF, 42/47, 15.10.1947

<sup>672</sup> GR, 16.10.1947; GR 22.10.1947; GR, 14.11.1947; 15.11.1947; GR, 22.11.1947; GR, 24.11.1947; GR, 25.11.1947; GR, 26.11.1947; GR, 27.11.1947; GR, 01.12.1947; GR, 03.12.1947; GR, 04.12.1947; GR, 05.12.1947; GR, 07.12.1947; GR, 09.12.1947

<sup>673</sup> GR, 30.11.1947

drawing 'Dolar Ante Portas!' published in *Szpilki* in December 1947.<sup>674</sup> Linke was a Polish painter and cartoonist who started to publish his works in *Szpilki* and other leftist press titles in the 1930s.<sup>675</sup> His works were dominated by catastrophic and pessimistic motifs. One of the most important set of his works, entitled 'Stones are screaming' (1946-1956), depicted the horrifying vision of the destructed districts of Warsaw. In the interwar period Linke belonged to the artistic group 'Czapka Frygijska'(Phrygian hat) which consisted of various artists of radical social opinions and who identified themselves with communism. With their works from that period those artists criticised the government for social inequalities, for the scale of unemployment and other problems of workers.<sup>676</sup>

During World War Two Linke was deported to Orsk in the Ural Mountains and was allowed to return to Poland in 1946. Aside from *Szpilki* in the postwar period his drawings were published in such important periodicals as *Polityka* and *Trybuna Ludu*. His most famous postwar works, the previously mentioned set of paintings entitled 'The stones are screaming' presented the catastrophic vision of Warsaw, the symbolic death of the city. Apart from this sort of depressing vision many of his works formed part of the official propaganda criticising for instance Western capitalism. In many cases, however, his propaganda works were criticised by authorities for showing the problems they addressed in an inappropriate (too depressing and unclear for the average viewer) way.<sup>677</sup>

The drawing 'Dolar Ante Portas!' presented a huge monstrous Godzilla-like aggressive creature which had the potential to crush entire buildings with its feet or to tear the inhabitants of France apart with its terrifying claws. What is most important about the picture is that the trunk of the monster had the form of a giant one Dollar coin.

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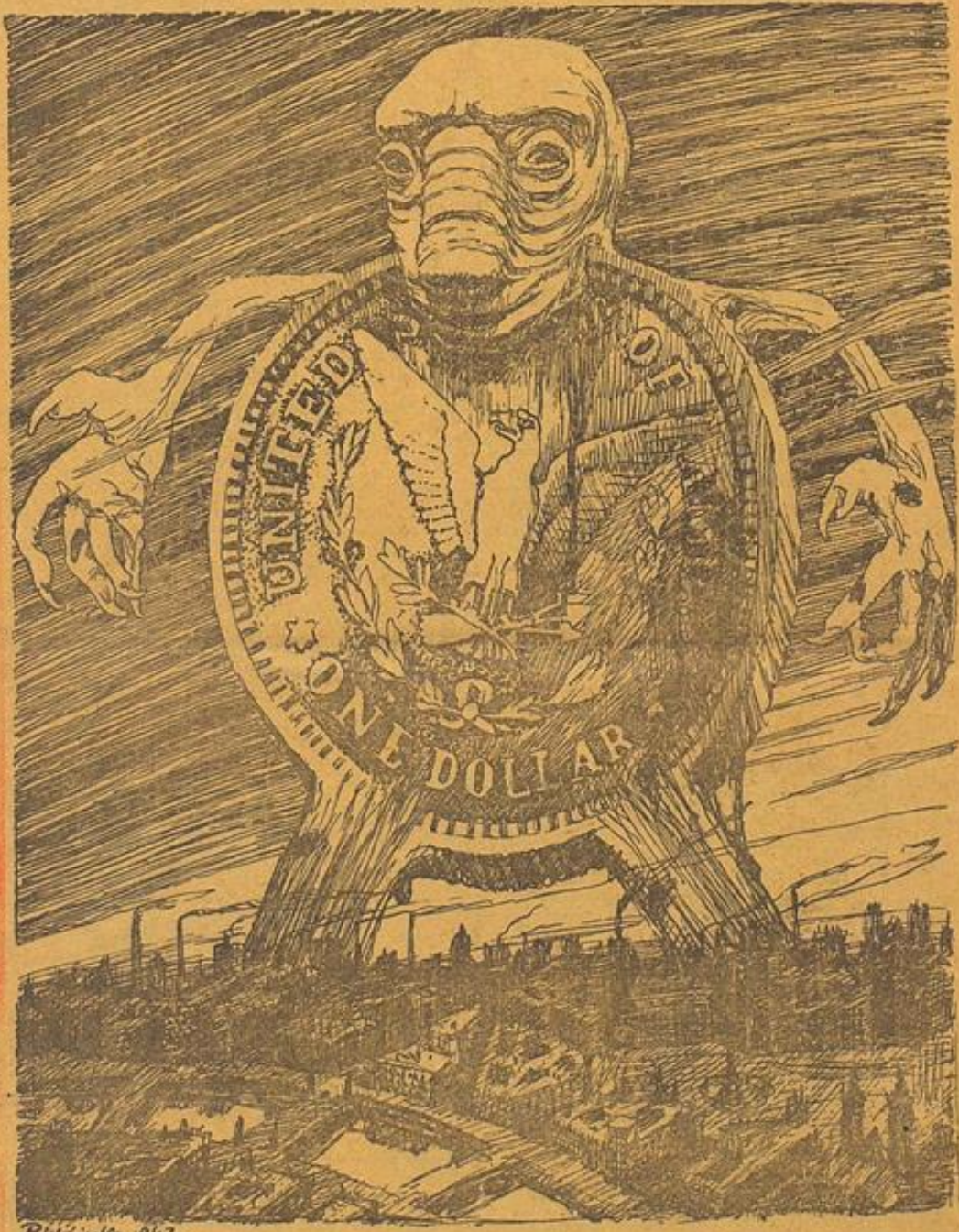
<sup>674</sup> SZP, 16.12.1947; Picture 18

<sup>675</sup> Bronisław Wojciech Linke (1906-1962)

<sup>676</sup> <http://culture.pl/pl/tworca/bronislaw-wojciech-linke-> retrieved 12.09.2014

<sup>677</sup> Loc.cit.

FRANCJA



rys. Bronisław W. Linka

DOLAR ANTE PORTAS!

Picture 18

The terrifying impression made by the drawing was strengthened by its title, the paraphrase of the famous ancient sentence 'Hannibal Ante Portas'. Linke's drawing symbolised the atmosphere of fear of the American economic invasion of Europe which the communist propagandists intended to evoke within Polish society.

The motif of threat posed to Western European economies by the 'Dollar infection', signalled with the above drawing, was also present in another graphic work by Linke published in *Szpilki* in January 1948. In his depressing drawing entitled 'Flood', the Polish caricaturist portrayed a person drowning in the abyss of American food products – mainly canned meat and boxes of pretzels.<sup>678</sup> With his picture undersigned as 'American support for Europe' Linke suggested to the readers of *Szpilki* that the American strategy of providing Western Europe with ready-made food from American warehouses, instead of stimulating local European economies to restart their own production, was actually suffocating those economies. Consequently, Linke's drawing suggested that American support posed a direct threat to the independence or even existence of 'beneficiaries' of American aid.

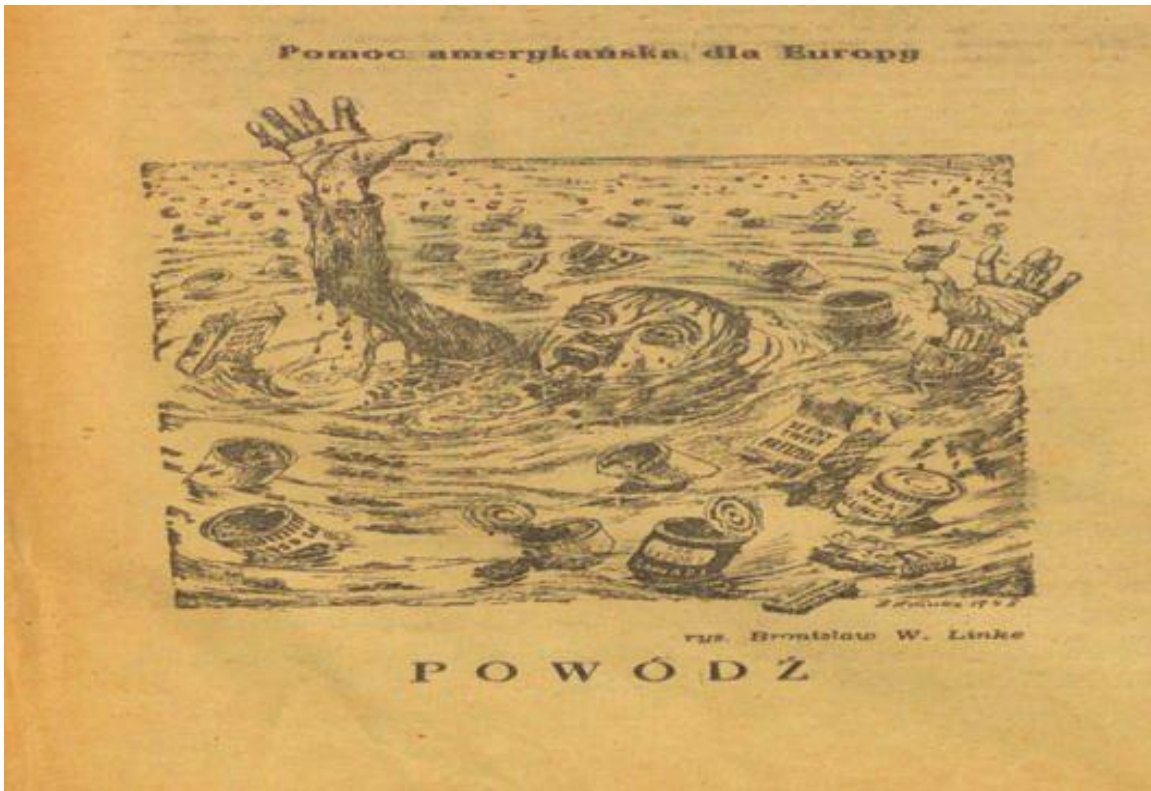
While in Linke's view European economies were devoured by the chaotic abyss, William Gropper portrayed the American economic threat as a much more dynamic and offensive issue. In his words the aggressive American economic attitude towards Europe was symbolised by a giant Dollar sack topped with a terrifying head of a monster with huge sharp fangs.<sup>679</sup> This monster was mastered by a greedy American capitalist sitting with his legs on the desk in the background of the caricature.

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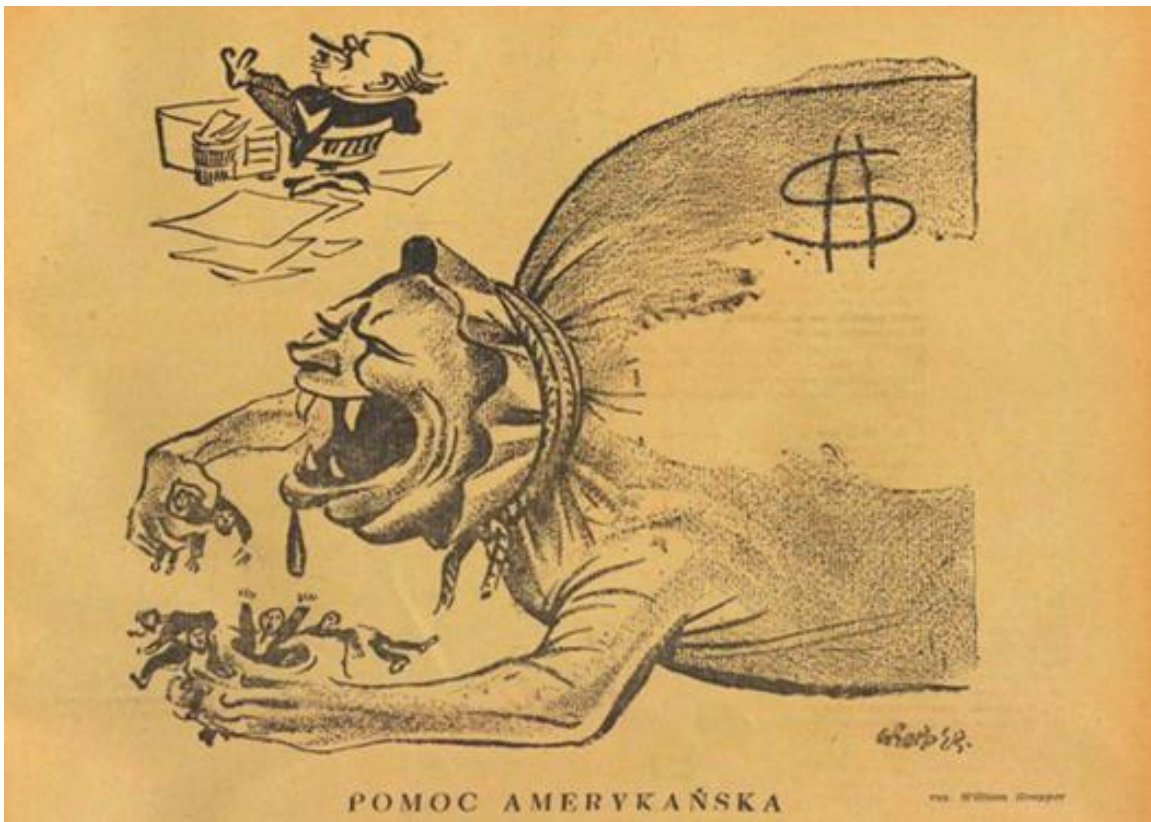
<sup>678</sup> SZP, 18.01.1948; Picture 19

<sup>679</sup> SZP, 17.07.1949; Picture 20





Picture 19



Picture 20

Gropper, an American cartoonist, painter, lithographer, and muralist of Jewish descent was best known for the political work he contributed to numerous left-wing American press titles and periodicals.<sup>680</sup> In his above-mentioned drawing, commenting on American economic aid for Europe, the horrifying creature additionally equipped with paws was picking and gobbling tiny little human beings, symbols of Western European countries.

Apart from the aggressive style, the power of Gropper's drawing derived from the fact that this depressing vision of the USA was authored by an American artist. The editors of Polish communist press titles eagerly printed his works as, despite having different a different perspective of the problem than the European one, Gropper had an identical negative conclusion concerning the threat posed by American capitalism to Europe.

On a larger scale, the attempt to foment an atmosphere of fear with the American economic threat in Europe using graphic materials was realised with the help of a popular (over ten thousand copies) anonymous poster entitled 'Miss America', printed and circulated in the entire country in 1950.<sup>681</sup> The poster presented president Truman stylised as a kind-hearted granny knitting on needles the 'support for Europe'. This positive image was disturbed by the result of the knitting – instead of a scarf or sweater 'Miss America' was preparing a huge chain, an attribute of slaves.

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<sup>680</sup> William Gropper (1897-1977) This American drawer published mainly in the socialist periodicals like *The Revolutionary Age*, *The Liberator*, in Marxist magazine *The New Masses* and in organs of American Communist Party (ACP): *The Worker* and *The Morning Freiheit*. Gropper was fascinated with Marxism and communism, but he never joined the ACP. He visited the USSR in 1927 while in 1948 he was invited by Jerzy Borejsza to the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace organised in Wroclaw in 1949. In Poland his works criticising the policy of American government were often published in *Szpilki*. More on Gropper in: J. A. Gahn, *The America of William Gropper, Radical Cartoonist*, Syracuse 1966

<sup>681</sup> MPW, Pl.16458/1; Picture 21



Picture 21



On the one hand the above presented selection of press accounts, satiric drawings, posters and the PKF episodes aimed at presenting the alarming consequences of American economic intrusion in French industry. On the other hand, this campaign was supposed to remind Poles of the tragic lot of workers in capitalist countries, which Polish workers averted owing to the fact that the communist regime resigned from participation in the ERP.

### **1.3 *And now we will starve.* The social reception of the anti-ERP propaganda**

Now that we know the scale and direction of the propaganda efforts to foment an atmosphere of fear concerning the horrifying results of the Marshall Plan, it is vital to examine the susceptibility of Polish society to this kind of propaganda rhetoric. Difficult as the task to find any sign of the popular reception of the official image of the ERP within Polish society is, the MBP reports on social moods shed some light on this issue.

The central MBP Bulletin of Information was based on local reports of the MBP agents sent to Warsaw from the entire country. The bulletin consisted of information on the political and propaganda activities of anti-communist opposition (mainly of the PSL, the WIN and the NSZ), on the activity of local representatives of the Catholic Church and on popular rumours and 'whispered propaganda'.<sup>682</sup>

The first social comments on the propaganda image of the ERP were noted by the MBP agents already in July 1947. The MBP bulletin from this period contained a report from the PSL meeting in Warsaw, where Mr. Fabisz, former PSL candidate in the parliamentary elections, stated in his speech that 'the withdrawal of Poland and Czechoslovakia from an access in the ERP was evidently a symptom of a lack of factual sovereignty of both countries'. What is important is that Fabisz's suggestions that the negative decision of both governments was compelled by the USSR met with a thunderous applause of the audience gathered at the meeting. The PSL supporters

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<sup>682</sup> The MBP bulletins were delivered to the top rank dignitaries of the communist government, including the KRN President Bolesław Bierut. Most of prevailed exemplars of the irregularly prepared bulletins contained also reports on social moods giving the bulletin readers an insight in the way the governmental policy was interpreted on the local ground.

chanted: 'Joseph prohibited!' referring to the impact of Joseph Stalin on the Polish decision towards the ERP.<sup>683</sup>

Looking at this example of the reaction to the withdrawal from participation in the ERP one may see that the opponents of the communist authorities from the very beginning interpreted the governmental decision towards the Marshall Plan in clearly political categories. Despite the propagandists' efforts to persuade society that through the withdrawal from participation in the ERP the communist government preserved Poland from American domination, there were groups of Poles concerned rather with the deep Soviet interference in Polish sovereignty than with the alleged threat of the American economic invasion.

A further comment on the ERP noted by the MBP agents in a bulletin from December 1947 shows that Polish peasants were not eager to follow the propaganda vision of the dangerous consequences of the ERP.<sup>684</sup> A group of young peasants gathered for pedagogic training organised by the Union of Peasant Youth, 'Wici' (Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej – ZMW),<sup>685</sup> in Lublin reacted with applause to the speech delivered by the coach. In her speech the pedagogue explained the nature of the Marshall Plan and stated that Poland should not resist the process of economic rebuilding of Germany as Poland was always and still is dependent on the German economy. Those words and the positive reaction of the training participants shows that despite the traumatic experience of the Nazi occupation some groups of Polish society viewed the propaganda phantom of the dangerous German resurrection, sponsored by Dollars, with reserve.

Fifteen months later, in March 1949 in Sieradz, small city near Łódź, MBP agents noted another reference to the ERP expressed by anti-communist Polish youth. The authors of fliers stuck on buildings in the city centre - the Board of Polish Youth (BPY), a local anti-communist organisation, were '*protesting against the peace under the Soviet*

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<sup>683</sup> BIMBP 1947, Warszawa 1993, p. 137

<sup>684</sup> BIMBP 1948, Warszawa 1995, p. 12

<sup>685</sup> Union of Agrarian Youth (ZMW) – an organisation of Polish youth inhabiting villages and towns established in 1928. Since 1948 the ZMW was united with the ZMP.

yoke'.<sup>686</sup> In their fliers, the young BPY activists demanded '*to unify Poland with Western Europe and economic cooperation with the Marshall Plan*'. In the view of the BPY members only such a political and economic shift of governmental policy could guarantee the suppression of the postwar economic depression.

The above presented interpretation of the terrible economic condition of Poland five years after the end of World War Two was also shared by the manager of the local branch of the Central Board of the Textile Industry in Łódź. According to the note included in the MBP bulletin from January 1950 the manager stated at a meeting with his subordinates that '*the poverty of Poles derived directly from the communist government's refusal of participating in the Marshall Plan*'.<sup>687</sup> In a similar vein in September 1950 the management of the mine 'Bytom' in Katowice, Upper Silesia, received ten printed copies of an anonymous text praising the advantages of the ERP and stressing its beneficial influence on Western Europe against the background of the devastating impact of the Soviet economic patterns implemented under coercion in the Socialist Bloc.<sup>688</sup> Unfortunately, no reaction of the mine management to those prints was mentioned in the MBP report.

The decisively negative attitude of Polish society towards the government's refusal of taking part in the Marshall Plan was also recorded in the memory of Adam Miłkaszewski. In my interview recorded with him in April 2014 for the purpose of this thesis, Miłkaszewski stressed the serious anxiety of his father, who interpreted this decision as a phantom of the forthcoming wave of hunger.<sup>689</sup> What is more, Adam Miłkaszewski remembered that his father was angry with the communist regime which, in his words, yielded to Soviet pressure and simultaneously exposed Poles to the direct threat of starvation.

The recollection of the atmosphere after the governmental refusal of joining the countries which accepted the ERP recorded in the memory of Zofia Dąbrowska shows

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<sup>686</sup> Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [later: AIPN], Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 48/208, pp. 226-229

<sup>687</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Dodatek do Biuletynu Dziennego No. 5/463, p. 22

<sup>688</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 201/658, p. 153

<sup>689</sup> Interview with Adam Miłkaszewski, 20.04.2014

that the popular perception of this decision was more ambiguous than in Miłkaszewski's vision. Dąbrowska was born in 1932 in Sanok (Eastern Poland). In 1949, she started to study economics in Wrocław and in 1953 she moved to Łódź where she started to work in an accounting office. In my interview with Dąbrowska, recorded for the purpose of this thesis in February 2015, the question of the social atmosphere after the Polish rejection of the ERP was, along with the problem of the popular reaction to the outbreak of the Korean War, one of the central issues of our conversation.<sup>690</sup> In Dąbrowska's words the social attitude towards the governmental rejection of the ERP was more or less divided in two halves. One part of society, in private conversations, openly criticised this decision. The other part, according to Dąbrowska, expressed their support for the authorities taking the final decision. Yet, in her view, the attitude of the latter group derived not from their authentic conviction but rather from the tactic according to which it was safer to demonstrate the acceptance of the official decision.

On the one hand, the above discussed exemplar cases of the positive reception of American economic activity in Western Europe show that despite intensive indoctrination there were groups of Poles present in different spheres of society who were much resistant to the official anti-American economic indoctrination. Not only did the propaganda attempts to outsource the economic concerns from communist authorities and associate them with Western capitalists failed, but also resistant Poles – youth, teachers, students, managers of state institutions and activists of political opposition – were not afraid to express their anti-government attitude.

On the other hand, the scale of anti-government voices noted in the MBP reports shows that those referring to the ERP were incidental. No mass protests against the government's economic decision were noticed. Although all the above indicated cases suggest a weakness of the propaganda strategy to solidify in Polish society the non-alternative character of the communist economic system, one cannot draw any general conclusions based on these several examples. The marginal scale of such resistant voices might be interpreted as successful propaganda imposing the official

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<sup>690</sup> Interview with Zofia Dąbrowska, 03.02.2015

interpretation of the reality. The observation recorded in the memory of Zofia Dąbrowska offers the most convincing interpretation of this issue. Even if a part of society did not accept the decision of leaving Poland outside the zone of the Marshall Plan and even if they did not follow official governmental justification of this fact, they preferred to stay silent avoiding any form of repression. In my view, such social behaviour to a large extent was a product of domination of the public space by the communist propaganda, which marginalised and actually excluded any other competing sources of information. In this regard, making use of the non-alternative media space the communist propaganda, exploiting the figure of the 'American economic threat', instructed Polish society concerning the acceptable attitude towards the economic policy of the government.

Although marginal, the negative reception of the anti-ERP campaign resulted in the intensification of the propagandists efforts in suggesting to Polish press readers that this American economic initiative could result in 'infecting Europe with the germ of American economic crisis' that was allegedly about to start again.

#### **1.4 American economic crisis strikes back**

The tactic of referring to the threat of a fearful phantom of the 'new American economic crisis' had the potential to find favorable conditions in the Polish (and European) postwar reality. It was no more than 20 years after the outbreak of the first Great Depression in October 1929, that began on the New York Stock Exchange and brought a terrible economic recession not only to the USA, but to the entire world, especially to Europe (the impact of the crisis on the USSR was weaker owing to its economic isolation).

#### **Local experience of the Great Depression**

In Poland, due to the fact that its independent economy only started developing after regaining independence in November 1919, the results of the Great Depression were devastating and acute for society. It is enough to say that the unemployment rate for the average workers increased from 150,000 in 1929 to over 400,000 in 1935, the

breaking point after which Poland finally started to rise up from the recession. Those official figures were substantially underrepresented and referred only to workers who were actively searching for a work.<sup>691</sup>

Unemployment very often led to homelessness. As I noticed in my interview with Łucja Skierska, in Gdynia,<sup>692</sup> northern Poland, already in the mid-1930s the new 'district' of the homeless was established at the outskirts of the city. The 'district' of houses built from any material people were able to find in the area started to be ironically called by the inhabitants of Gdynia as a 'funfair'. On the one hand, tourists like Łucja Skierska when they arrived to Gdynia were warned not to go to the 'funfair' as they could be robbed. On the other hand, Skierska remembered one visit to this district which her uncle treated as a kind of local 'perverse attraction'.<sup>693</sup> According to Skierska, all the poverty and financial turbulences she observed as a child were commonly associated with the USA as the country which was directly responsible for the economic depression of Poland and Europe.

What is worth mentioning is that the problem of unemployment was especially acute for the younger sphere of workers as due to the lack of work positions employers preferred to hire the experienced workers for the same salary they would previously have paid the unexperienced ones.<sup>694</sup> It was precisely this generation of young workers, who severely experienced the Great American Depression, to whom the communist propaganda evoking the threat of the new American economic crisis was dedicated.

The below discussed propaganda exploitation of the thread of the economic crisis in the economies of the Western participants of the ERP must be seen within a particular historical and sociological context. This negative propaganda image of the material crisis in Great Britain, France and Italy was served to a society struggling with

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<sup>691</sup> Z.Landau, J.Tomaszewski, *Gospodarka Polski Międzywojennej, vol.3, 1930-1935*, Warszawa 1982, p. 119. The estimation of the factual number of unemployment workers and intellectuals in that period prepared by Jędrzej Moraczewski in 1938 indicate that the unemployment rate in 1935 exceeded 1,1 million of Poles, that is over 4% of the entire population (approximately 34 million in 1935).

<sup>692</sup> Gdynia - a new Polish port on the Baltic sea built in late 1920s next to Gdańsk, one of the symbols of the reborn Poland

<sup>693</sup> Interview with Łucja Skierska, 23.12.2012.

<sup>694</sup> Z.Landau, J.Tomaszewski, op.cit., pp. 118-120

the repercussions of a deep postwar economic crunch and a serious material crisis resulting from the crippling policy of the industrialisation of Poland imposed by the Kremlin. Since the government was forced to focus on reaching the macroeconomic goals (i.e. building huge complexes of steel plants), communist authorities recruited propagandists to solve the problem of the rising wave of poverty within Polish society. Here the examples of other societies dealing with even worse economic problems served as a very convenient background against which the propaganda agents endeavoured to soften the material concerns of Polish society. In the tactic of relativising the poverty of Polish workers the British case was the first that started to be discussed in this context.

### **The British victim of the ERP**

The tactic of fomenting the atmosphere of fear of the American economic crisis that could soon 'infect Western Europe' was based on publishing the vivid descriptions, caricatures, pictures and movies presenting the recent results of American economic involvement in the rebuilding of economies of the signatories of the ERP. Among many countries described in the Polish press it was the British postwar economy, struggling with postwar depression, that became one of the symbols of the expansion of American economic crisis in Europe. First of all, already in January 1948 Jerzy Ganf in his drawing published on the back page of *Szpilki* focused the attention of readers on Great Britain with a picture based on a simplistic contrast.<sup>695</sup> His caricature, entitled 'American support for Great Britain', presented the elegantly dressed 'uncle Sam', the symbol of the USA and in this context also a symbol of the American crisis that was tightening the belt on the miserable looking body of a typical British gentleman wearing, however, a shabby and patched outfit. With such a telling picture, Ganf suggested that the USA government, instead of providing the ERP participants with economic support, was rather forcing the capitalist states to reduce their expenses.

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<sup>695</sup> SZP, 10.01.1948

What is important is that the drawing by Ganf was not an exceptional case. It represents a typical way the communist propagandists depicted 'American economic oppression' towards Great Britain. The image of the 'British victim' of American economic policy became a popular thread in the communist propaganda discourse. Together with the already examined motif of the British support for resurrection of German imperialism, this thread became another vital component of the strategy of erasing the sentiment of Polish society towards the government in London.

Later on the problem of a devastating impact of an American economic crisis on Britain was demonstrated with satirical drawings referring to the symbols of the British Empire. Here, one of the most illustrative pictures was the one by Kukryniksy, printed in *Głos Robotniczy* in September 1949, showing a skinny and miserable lion, a symbol of the decayed power of the British Empire, brutally shaved by Harry Truman. The image presented the USA leader as a brutal American 'hairstylist' who deprived the British lion of its honour and dignity, represented by the thick mane cut with huge sharp scissors carried by president Truman.<sup>696</sup>

Apart from vivid pictures of the 'British case' mentioned above, Britain was also addressed in an article by Stanislaw Brodzki published in *Trybuna Ludu* in August 1949. The short text with a meaningful title, '49<sup>th</sup> state of the USA', stressed the total economic subordination of Great Britain to the USA. In Brodzki's words it was a great irony of history that a former colony of the United Kingdom turned it into its own dominion.<sup>697</sup> An anonymous author of a text published in the PZPR daily in November 1949 went even further in its conclusions calling Paul Hoffman, the representative of the American government for economic affairs in London, 'Truman's gauleiter for Great Britain'.<sup>698</sup> Touching once again on the chords of anti-German sentiments in Polish society, that is, using a well-known German term referring to Nazi administrators of occupied lands during World War Two – a synonym of brutal repressions – the author

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<sup>696</sup> GR, 15.09.1949

<sup>697</sup> GR, 18.09.1949

<sup>698</sup> TL, 02.08.1949



intended to emphasise the deeply oppressive character of the American economic attitude towards Great Britain.

The depressing and fearful image of Western Europe plunged into the economic crisis presented in press was augmented in several PKF episodes giving insight into the 'tragic lot' of Western workers directly affected by the American crisis. Here, the case of France was chosen as giving the PKF producers a good opportunity to provide the Polish cinema viewers with a vivid portrait of a society grappling with the consequences of economic crisis.

### **'Ami go home'. The French resistance towards the economic crisis in communist propaganda**

The PKF footage from October 1950 was dedicated to the problem of yet another wave of workers strikes in France.<sup>699</sup> The movie presented the mass strikes of French workers who gathered on the streets and demanded they be given any job position. The comment added to the movie focused on the suggestion that the American government forced the French authorities to close down the local factories and thus paralysed local industry. According to the PKF comment, this strategy aimed at opening the market for American products and, consequently, at protecting the American economy from crisis through its exports to Europe. As it was declared in Łapicki's voice, the only organisation that gave firm resistance to the pro-American government and took care of French workers was the PCF. The French Communist Party was supposed to fight for 'bread, work and social justice' and for 'the liberation of France from the yoke of American imperialism'. With this movie its producer, Helena Lemańska, attempted to convey the idea that in France, just as in the Soviet Bloc, the only progressive part of the 'political market' was the communist party which had the lot of workers at the top of their priorities.

The French case was also stressed two years later when the PKF producers presented the progressive stagnation of the French economy caused by the pressure of

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<sup>699</sup> PKF 44/50, 25.10.1950

the USA government to keep the huge French factories closed.<sup>700</sup> This time the movie director focused his attention on the problem of the 'homeless vegetation' of the French workers due to the 'Americanization of the French government'. Quoting slogans from the street walls, especially 'Ami go home' which expressed the demand to remove American soldiers from France, the PKF commentary attacked the government of Prime Minister Antoine Pinay, presented as a government of unemployment, war and hunger.<sup>701</sup> Playing on very emotional chords, Helena Lemańska decided to place in this footage some depressing shots presenting the terrible living conditions of unemployed French families. Several shots pictured ruined houses. Further shots, the most important part of the movie, were focused on the starving children wandering around their households and searching for any food. Showing the 'tragic fate of these innocent victims' of the alleged 'export of the American crisis to Europe', the PKF producers wanted to instill the 'barbarian' image of the US economic oppressor of Western Europe.

The choice of Great Britain and France as the states most often discussed in communist media in the context of the material crisis was not accidental. The common positive association of Great Britain and especially France in Poland dated at least to the Napoleonic Era. Furthermore, in the twentieth century both these countries were traditional allies of Poland in the interwar period. Finally, both gave asylum to the Polish government-in-exile after September 1939 and to troops of the Polish Army. Aside from the Polish government and army, both countries became places of mass civil emigration from occupied Poland.

The decision to focus the attention of the Polish public on those two countries had different motivations. On the one hand, Great Britain after the end of World War Two still hosted the Polish government-in-exile, located in London. Although it was not recognised as the official government of Poland anymore, it became one of the last institutions giving political and military opponents of the communist authorities in

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<sup>700</sup> PKF 40/52, 24.09.1952

<sup>701</sup> Antoine Pinay (1891-1994) a French conservative politician. He served as Prime Minister of France in 1952.

Warsaw hope and moral support in the fight against the imposed regime. The propaganda image of Great Britain immersed in economic crisis was supposed to strangle all hopes for any British support for Polish anti-communism as this country was supposed to be unable to solve its own problems.

On the other hand, France, with its powerful communist movement and the PCF, which despite gaining mass support in parliamentary elections was blocked in taking part in ruling the country, served the propagandists as a perfect example of a country where despite material and political obstacles the working class was fighting for the socialist ideal. The French case, apart from solidifying the disturbing vision of American economic policy in Europe, was supposed to mobilise Polish workers and persuade them that in Poland they had far better conditions to put the ideas of communism into practice.

Aside from the British and French cases the motif of a negative impact of the Marshall Plan as a generator of crisis in Western capitalist countries was also used by the communist propagandists to present a wider scale of this tendency. Here the case of the economic crisis disturbing the inhabitants of the Apennine Peninsula is worth discussing.

### **The epidemic of poverty in Italy**

The tactic of referring to the most emotional aspects of the impact of American capitalism was also used in January 1952 in the PKF footage dedicated to the problem of the 'epidemic of poverty' in Italy.<sup>702</sup> As it was presented in the movie, five years after signing the ERP Treaty, the vast majority of Italians still did not enjoy the benefits of the Marshall Plan. The PKF producer decided to present the shots of the 'district of poverty' placed, as it was suggested, near the centre of Rome. This way Lemańska wanted to show how far the distance between the declarations of Italian economic progress announced by the government of Alcide Di Gasperi and the gloomy reality of Rome's

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<sup>702</sup> PKF 5/52, 23.01.1952

slums was.<sup>703</sup> The PKF footage, released and circulated in Polish cinemas in January 1952, presented extremely poor inhabitants of Rome cooped up in shanties. Depressing as the view of local people living in shoddy shanties in the centre of the capital city of Italy was, the most shocking shots presented starving and resigned Italian children wandering around with empty pots with desperation in their eyes.<sup>704</sup> According to the PKF commentary prepared by Małcużyński, 'due to the pro-American economic policy of De Gasperi these children are doomed for hunger, illnesses and demoralisation'. Later on Małcużyński wrote that the participation in the ERP and 'import of the American crisis doomed five million Italian workers to unemployment'. Just like in the French case, the final section of this PKF episode focused on praising the Italian Communist Party (PCI) for its struggle against the government and for the improvement of the living condition of Italian workers.

Depressing as the images of the foreign capitalist countries struggling with the consequences of the economic crisis could be, Polish propaganda agents also referred to local experience of the crisis.

### **Own reflection in an old mirror**

Apart from giving insight into the panorama of negative results of the export of the American crisis to Europe based on examples too abstract for most of Polish society, journalists attempted to also refer to the local experience of fear the interwar Polish workers faced during the period of the Great Depression. Such was the intention of an anonymous author of an article published in February 1952 in *Trybuna Ludu*. The text, entitled 'Under the reign of capitalists', was illustrated with huge pictures correlating the image of starving and unemployed French miners (picture made in 1952) with a picture showing the miserable and desperate Polish unemployed miners in interwar Poland working illegally in bootleg mining.

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<sup>703</sup> Alcide di Gasperi (1881-1954) an Italian statesman and politician and founder of the Christian Democracy party. From 1945 to 1953 he was the prime minister of eight successive coalition governments.

<sup>704</sup> Picture 22



Picture 22

With this article and pictures the direct parallel between the two stages of the American crisis that harmed the European economy and confronted the working class with the fear of unemployment (linked with the threat of famine) was signalled.<sup>705</sup> In the same vein, the pictures illustrating the anonymous text 'In the shadow of Dollar', published in the central PZPR daily six months later, confronted readers with the image of the tragic lot of unemployed and homeless Swiss workers who had no other place to sleep but the crappy terminal of the train station.<sup>706</sup>

Such a tactic aimed at mobilising Polish society to work harder in factories, offices and other workplaces in order to avoid the repetition of the traumatic situation from the near past. This mobilisation was strengthened with constantly repeated information suggesting the long-lasting character of the crisis.

### **Never ending economic crisis**

The motif of accusing the USA of exporting an economic crisis to Western Europe was present in anti-American media discourse in the entire period of Stalinism. This fact shows how important the propaganda thread based on stressing the American 'economic infection' evoking serious material turbulences in capitalist countries must have been for the propaganda authorities. Still in 1954 this problem was highlighted by a telling caricature by Jerzy Flisak,<sup>707</sup> a prominent Polish painter, author of praised film posters and illustrator of books. His drawing, placed on the back page of the *Szpilki* magazine from May 1954, was entitled 'A monster for sale' and presented a giant skeleton-like barefoot figure in a shabby uniform carrying a huge mended sack described as crisis.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> TL, 06.02.1952

<sup>706</sup> TL, 24.08.1952

<sup>707</sup> Jerzy Flisak (1930-2004)

<sup>708</sup> SZP, 09.05.1954; Picture 23



UPIÓR NA SPRZEDAŻ

Picture 23

With his picture, Flisak suggested that American Businessmen were directly responsible for 'infecting Western Europe with crisis'. In his view, the scary figure wearing a crumpled American top hat, keeping his feet in the USA and hands on Western Europe, symbolised the 'real intention' of the USA hidden under the mask of the ERP. Flisak suggested that American finance was actually forcing the economic crisis out of America to the detriment of Europe. The figure was illustrated in the pose of a symbolic bridge, using which the American bankers pushed the monster in the direction of Europe, tried to get rid of the economic ballast and to encumber Europe with it. What is important is that the sack on the back of the monster was filled with rifles, which suggested that the USA used the false pretext of providing Western Europe with material support when it was actually arming the capitalist governments.

In all the above examined texts, drawings and PKF footage one may easily diagnose the special attention communist media devoted to the concerns of the Western working class, which was presented as the main victim of both the Marshall Plan and later of the alleged 'European import of American crisis'. Yet, apart from the critique towards Western European pro-American economic policy and the words of sympathy offered to oppressed workers, the fear management policy referring to the economic aspect of the postwar reality was also based on the strategy of contrasting the depressing results of the Marshall Plan with the dynamic progress of economies managed according to the Soviet model. In this tactic the image of the Marshall Plan, which allegedly evoked '*a wave of fear and riots in all capitalists countries triggered by the brutal dictatorship of American capitalism which placed the capitalist Western Europe in the orbit of the acute economic crisis*',<sup>709</sup> served as a perfect background against which propagandists could praise the achievements (at least the official ones) of the communist economy.

### **1.5 In progress you should trust**

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<sup>709</sup> TL, 21.09.1949



The references to the concept of progress present in communist propaganda derived directly from the fact that this notion was deeply ingrained in the communist ideology. As Robert Nisbet puts it in his book on the history of the idea of progress Karl Marx applied the ideas of Hegel,<sup>710</sup> especially his conception of linear-progressive history based on the modernisation of the economy through industrialisation.<sup>711</sup> Marx criticised the social class structure of industrial capitalist societies which lead him to the development of the communist ideology.<sup>712</sup> In Marx's words the concepts of progress and industrialisation were inseparable – the process of industrialisation served as a determinant of the progress. Later on, the concept of industrialisation as a flywheel of the economic and civilisational progress became the core of the Leninist-Stalinist ideology.<sup>713</sup> Soon this ideological notion was incorporated by communist propaganda where it was regularly used as a rhetorical trope contrasting the features of the socialist and capitalist economies.

In the 1920s the correlation between industrialisation and progress was intensively exploited by the Soviet media to promote the superiority of the progressive socialist economy over the regressive capitalist economies of the USA and Western Europe. In the postwar era this motif was exploited in the entire communist camp. The intensive process of industrialisation of Eastern Europe, presented in communist media as a symbol of civilisational progress, was juxtaposed with the negative process of closing numerous factories in the capitalist Western Europe. In that period, however, in the communist propaganda discourse the notion of industrialisation as an indicator of economic and social progress of communist states was supplemented with a strong emphasis that was put in media on a general development of the socialist economy. This progress was praised against the background of the capitalist economy plunged into crisis.

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<sup>710</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1771-1830). Among his numerous important ideas this German philosopher was influential in promoting the idea of progress in European philosophy by emphasizing a linear-progressive conception of history and rejecting a cyclical conception of history

<sup>711</sup> R. Nisbet, *History of the idea of progress*, London 1980, pp. 265-266

<sup>712</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>713</sup> Wordsem, pp. 259, 265

## **Socialist progress vs. capitalist regress**

The first symptoms of the tactic based on contrasting the dynamic regression of the Western capitalist economy with the successful communist economic policy can be found in communist press only a few months after the Parisian negotiations concerning the participations in the ERP. Here, three articles published in the autumn of 1947 serves as a good illustration of the way this aspect of communist propaganda was introduced to the anti-American media discourse.

First of all, in September 1947 an anonymous text published in bold type on the cover page of *Głos Robotniczy* informed readers that unlike the US government's attitude towards the ERP participants facing economic difficulties, the Soviet government supported Czechoslovakia, which faced a disastrous crop failure, with the transportation of rye and wheat.<sup>714</sup> Later on an anonymous text from October 1947 suggested that the government in London, dissatisfied with the short-term results of participation in the ERP, started negotiations with Moscow in order to restart trade between the two countries.<sup>715</sup> Finally, 11 days later the same daily paper quoted a speech of Maurice Thorez, the leader of the PCF, who claimed that while the USSR was transferring its wheat to France, the Marshall Plan administration was interested only in the reconstruction and remilitarisation of Germany.<sup>716</sup>

As one may see from the above-mentioned examples, the figure of the American economic threat was recruited to promote the progressive character of the Soviet economy and to praise the generosity of the USSR towards the Socialist Bloc and also capitalist countries treating the Kremlin as a reliable economic partner. The propaganda exploitation of the motif of American material dread for Europe was also used to remind the media receivers of the existence of the the 'German threat' to which the Marshall Plan, according to communist propaganda, substantially contributed.

## **Friend vs. enemy**

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<sup>714</sup> GR, 24.09.1947

<sup>715</sup> GR, 03.10.1947

<sup>716</sup> GR, 14.10.1947

The sharp and simplistic dichotomy differentiating between the Western capitalist economic regress and Eastern industrial progress presented in press articles was meaningfully illustrated with satirical drawings published in *Szpilki* in April<sup>717</sup> and July<sup>718</sup> 1950. With the first caricature, entitled 'The enemy of plenty', its author, the Polish interwar and postwar artist and caricaturists Karol Ferster,<sup>719</sup> referred to the well-known Greek mythology *Cornucopia*, the horn of plenty, symbol of abundance and nourishment.<sup>720</sup> Ferster played with the similarity of two Polish words: *róg* (horn) and *wróg* (enemy) in order to show the 'American financial support for devastated European economies' as the antithesis of efficient help. In Ferster's words 'Uncle Sam' overwhelmed Western Europe with military equipment instead of agriculture machines or any other equipment necessary to reconstruct ruined industries and improve the living conditions in European societies.

Apart from the symbol of Uncle Sam expressing satisfaction with being enabled to flood Europe with tanks, bombs and other weapons in his drawing, Ferster placed three people – a husband, wife and their infant – in the picture. Their faces expressed deep concern. Looking at their outfits this young family symbolised the average representative of the working class with no specific association to any particular country. The sad eyes of the young parents was supposed to express the anxiety and disappointment characteristic to Western workers affected by the results of the Marshall Plan and the acute economic crisis imported from the USA.

Three months later, in the same magazine, Jarzy Zaruba published an answer to the Ferster's satirical picture. The drawing, 'The horn of plenty', presented Hilary Minc, the Polish Minister of Industry and Commerce, and his Soviet counterpart who were providing both societies with tractors, tools and engines necessary for the development of industry and agriculture.

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<sup>717</sup> SZP, 09.04.1950

<sup>718</sup> SZP, 16.07.1950

<sup>719</sup> Karol Ferster (1902-1986) – Polish drawer, caricaturist and satiric, alumni of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Using the nick name 'Charlie' Ferster was publishing in *Przekrój*, *Ilustrowany Kurier Polski* (interwar period), *Szpilki* and *Zycie Warszawy*.

<sup>720</sup> Picture 24

In Zaruba's words, all these results of communist economic progress derived directly from the increase of Polish-Soviet commodity trading. In the caricature, this correlation was symbolised by a huge sheet of paper tagged with the inscription 'The protocol of the increase of Polish-Soviet commodity trading' shaped in a horn-like form used by Minc to distribute all the tools and other goods.<sup>721</sup>

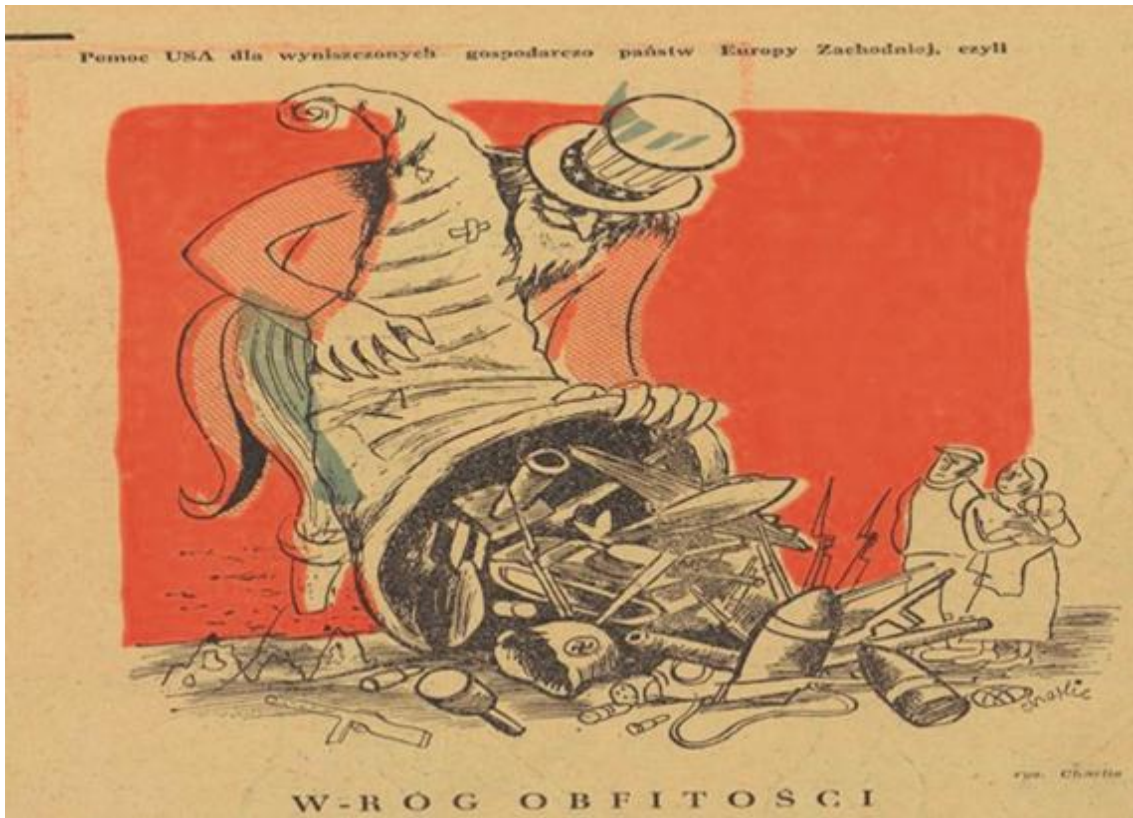
As vivid and telling as these pictures were, they must be seen in a certain economic context in which they emerged. They were published in the period of the so-called 'Stalinist acceleration' of the economy, that is, the period of intensive industrialisation of Poland mainly focused on the development of heavy and military industry.

This process made the social and microeconomic assumptions of the Six Year Economic Plan (1950-1955) practically impossible, significantly slowing down the process of reconstruction of the country on a level noticeable for most of society. Against this background the publication of both drawings resembled 'waving away the reality with a magic wand'. On the one hand, with his drawing Ferster attempted to solidify the image of the communist regime supported by the USSR as generous providers of necessary equipment required by society struggling with a lack of basic goods on the market. On the other hand, Zaruba endeavoured to confound the myth of broad access of Western European societies to American economic support which – in his vision – was dedicated exclusively to the military sectors of the European economy.

Due to their intensity and expressiveness all the above presented examples of the anti-American media campaign had the potential to focus the attention of Polish media receivers on the issue of the 'American economic threat'. Yet, the factual results of confronting the Polish society with the various components of this propaganda rhetorical trope were not as positive as expected.

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<sup>721</sup> Picture 24



Picture 24

## 1.6 'Why do you keep slandering the USA?' Social reception of the 'American economic threat' in the communist media

The detailed analysis of the correspondence sent to Polish Radio in the early 1950s shows that despite propaganda efforts, the number of letters containing any references to American economic activity in Europe was rather limited. Based on this fact one may conclude that this particular aspect of the anti-American propaganda to a large extent was ignored by the Polish society. Such an attitude of Polish media receivers substantially hindered the achievement of the propagandists' aim to sway press readers and radio listeners in Poland to the idea that workers in Western Europe struggled with depressing results of the 'American economic invasion' and had more threats to deal with than workers in the Socialist Bloc.

There are at least two important reasons explaining why in many cases the radio listeners had such a passive attitude towards the tactic of making Poles afraid of the 'American economic threat'. The first reason had its roots in the strong pro-American sentiment linked to the UNRRA activity. One may realise how solid this sentiment was when reading two letters sent by female listeners to Polish Radio in March 1950. Both authors expressed their irritation with the constant attempts to induce society to fear the phantom of the threatening economic impact of the USA on Europe. The first female listener from Warsaw wrote:

*'You are still slandering the USA. I want to ask - Isn't that boring and stupid to repeat the same nonsense in the press and radio? You are using every occasion, you are using even "Frequency 49" to defame America on and on. Why do you keep slandering the USA which helped and is still helping thousands of Poles?'*<sup>722</sup>

In the same vein the second listener, from Eastern Poland, articulated her anger with the constant defamation of the American economic activity in Western Europe, wrote:

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<sup>722</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 12.03.1950

*'America was so good for us. The USA government sent entire ships filled with packages containing food and clothes to Poland'.<sup>723</sup>*

The second possible reason explaining why most of Polish society was not interested in the media campaigns creating the vision of a forthcoming 'American economic threat' for Europe is that this kind of information did not touch upon problems referring to the sense and sphere of safety of Polish society. The content and tone of letters sent to Polish Radio shows that Polish society had too many serious material problems of their own to worry about the situation in other countries.

The analysis of numerous letters sent to Polish Radio at the beginning of 1950s shows the constant lack of significant improvement of living conditions resulted in the radicalisation of the atmosphere within Polish society. For instance, in October 1951 a male listener from Warsaw wrote to the programme 'Frequency 49':

*'(...) Around 95% of workers are the enemies of the inept communist regime which is blindly following Soviet orders. The salaries are far too low making the task to provide for family impossible. We do not need further investments in transport infrastructure or in culture. We do not need new common houses or escalators if we must live in fear of losing our job position once we are ill or injured. The worker is exploited to his limits and then you forget about him. (...) This is the real image of a communist paradise the propaganda is presenting. Even the biggest supporters of communism are losing their faith in this system. The entire nation, including the working class, now has a hostile attitude towards the government. Two days without the secret service and Soviet army would be enough to hang all the communist leaders on gallows with the hands of the Polish working class. This is the reality. It is only a terror that prevents the nation from a desperate decision'.<sup>724</sup>*

The above quotation shows how efficiently serious material problems generated a deeply anti-government atmosphere within Polish postwar society. What is equally important is that it was the same permanent poverty that stood behind the argumentation of authors of numerous letters sent to Polish Radio in the early 1950s, in

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<sup>723</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>724</sup> ATVP, 1050/1, Bulletin No.43, 03.11.1951, p. 7

which listeners questioned the propaganda view that, unlike the regressive Western capitalist economies following American patterns, the Soviet-like economy of Poland was in a phase of rapid progress. One such voice was expressed in a letter sent to 'Frequency 49' by a female farmer from Radomsko, central Poland, in late February 1952. The letter consisted of a long list of complaints regarding the poor quality of the agricultural equipment manufactured according to the new 'progressive socialist rules of production'. The farmer also complained about the permanent lack of basic tools and means against pests in shops. In the final sentences the frustrated farmer wrote:

*'To get half a kilogram of sugar for children I must walk 5 kilometres in snow and frost to visit several cooperatives having no guarantees that I will manage to buy it. I may wait several hours in line and leave the shop with empty hands. This is the socialist equality of law – we have a right to stand along the wall. This is progress.'*<sup>725</sup>

Reading this bitter and ironic comment about the postwar reality in Poland one may have an impression that the factual reception of 'socialist progress' differed from the optimistic interpretation of this notion promoted by the communist propaganda. Furthermore, there were also symptoms of counterproductivity in the repetition of the anti-American economic motif in the propaganda discourse. Despite constant propaganda attempts to instill the alarming image of the USA in the consciousness of the Polish media receivers, in several letters sent to Polish Radio one may identify signs of a strong pro-American attitude. For example, in May 1950 an anonymous listener of Polish Radio wrote in his letter to the broadcaster: *'You are defaming America all the time, but if I only could, I would run there, even barefoot!'*<sup>726</sup> Later on, another listener in his letter to Polish Radio from December 1951 questioned all the propaganda efforts to assure Polish society that the American economic model leads to financial crash. In his letter the male from Warsaw formulated a rhetorical question:

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<sup>725</sup> Wordsem, p. 58

<sup>726</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 11.06.1950



*'Do you know why the USA is such a wealthy country? The reason is that this state allows and supports the development of huge private concerns and monopolies. And what about us?'.<sup>727</sup>*

Dramatic as such opinions might seem, they were dominated by the opposite opinion. Most of the radio listeners deciding to write to Polish Radio were not only articulating their support for the governmental economic policy, but also expressing their understanding of the difficult material situation of the state still rebuilding industry after World War Two. This is why, due to the little amount of critical voices, it is hard to consider such negative attitudes towards the governmental economic policy as representative of the attitude of the vast majority of Polish society. In fact, the analysis of letters sent by listeners to Polish Radio shows that the vast majority of opinions expressed by listeners were repeating the opinions formulated and published in propaganda press articles and PKF episodes. The radio listeners wrote about the 'fascist government of the USA' practicing an 'oppressive policy within the USA' as well as in France, which was even presented as an 'American colony'.<sup>728</sup> Listeners also attacked the rare negative voices presented in the programme 'Frequency 49', accusing their authors of an anti-state attitude. All these positive voices sharing word for word the propaganda version of the American economic policy in Europe may suggest the efficiency of the communist media in persuading society of the only acceptable perception of the reality. This is why the signs of serious frustration, visible in the above quoted letters, to some extent could be representative of the reception of the economic decisions of the government, but not for the official social behaviour.

Through its omnipresence, consistent and non-alternative character, communist propaganda successfully pacified the rebellious moods of Polish workers having constant problems with providing for their families. Despite the increasing wave of social frustration, until the dramatic events in June 1956 in Poznań, no form of organised resistance comparable to workers' strikes in Łódź in the first postwar years took place.

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<sup>727</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 12.12.1951

<sup>728</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 30.12.1953

While, as it was aptly diagnosed in one of the above quoted letters, it was the secret police and army that put physical pressure on society, communist media juggling with the figure of the 'American economic threat' and other generators of fear served as a supplier of instructions of a proper socialist attitude. Using terminology applied to the analysis of emotions by William Reedy, we may say that propaganda agents used the 'emotional factors' to shape the cognitive habits of Polish society. In other words, the propagandists indicated to society which emotion should be officially and exclusively associated and expressed in accordance with the economic policy of the government (trust and joy) and to the one practiced by the capitalist enemies (fear and hatred).

Now that we know the ways and some results of communist media efforts to sensitise and alert Polish society to the disturbing results of American economic activity in Western Europe, it is important to compare this campaign with the propaganda strategy referring directly to the sense of safety of most of Polish society. The motif of the 'American invasion' on an essential part of Polish crops could substantially strengthen the fear of hunger still present in Polish society in the early 1950s. The next section of this chapter is built around the examination of press articles, movies and radio announcements suggesting that American aircrafts dropped thousands of tonnes of the Colorado Beetles on Polish, Eastern German and Czechoslovakian potatoe fields. The media campaign exploring this motif could potentially have helped propagandists to associate the fear of hunger with the American economic policy in Europe.

### **1.7 Colorado Beetle invasion. The American threat to the Polish economy and its social reception**

The motif of alleged American attack on one of the symbols of Polish cuisine and a vital component of the diet of average Poles, that is the potato crop, is one of the most powerful symbols of communist propaganda in Poland. In numerous conversations that I had in the last few years concerning the scope of my research I was always asked if in dealing with the phenomenon of fear management in postwar Poland I am going to address the problem of the 'Colorado Beetle'. The PKF episode presenting the 'invasion'

was and still is placed in numerous DVD editions dedicated to the humorous aspects of life in communist Poland. What might be funny from the current perspective, however, could have had a totally different meaning and overtone in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when Polish society, grappling with insufficient provisions, was informed that their food situation could be worsened as a result of American interference in the Polish economy. The propaganda campaign stressing American responsibility for the mass invasion of potato beetles in Poland is a classic example of an outsourcing strategy for practicing fear aimed at reducing the communist authorities' own accountability for the difficult food situation of a large part of Polish postwar society.

The problem of exploiting the motif of the 'Colorado Beetle invasion on potato fields' was not only restricted to communist propaganda circulated in Poland. A very similar propaganda campaign was organised at the same time in Czechoslovakia. Documentary movies depicting the alleged invasion contained not only similar, but identical shots which were recorded in one country and then distributed throughout the Socialist Bloc. Moreover, in both countries the regular propaganda indoctrination dedicated to the adult part of society was supported with comic books translating the propaganda information about American beetles into a language accessible to children. These findings encouraged me to analyse this aspect of fear management from the comparative perspective linked to the specificity of propaganda dedicated to children.

### **The genesis of the invasion**

In second half of the nineteenth century the Colorado Beetle, a crop pest, reached Germany and later its presence was noticed in most European countries. According to the Polish edition of the Guttenberg encyclopedia from the 1930s, the potato fields in Poland faced only a sporadic presence of the pest. The substantial threat for crops posed by the pest and its American origin started to be augmented by the communist propaganda in the late 1940s and especially at the beginning of the 1950s. The problem of the threat this pest posed to Polish crops for the first time was mentioned in Polish communist media in the form of a vivid drawing by Karol Baraniecki

published in *Szpilki* in early July 1948.<sup>729</sup> The drawing, undersigned 'Stonka' (beetle), presented the threat posed by the pest as a worldwide problem. In Baraniecki's view, the Colorado Beetle had a body resembling that of a mutation of the 'Uncle Sam' figure. The creature, wearing a typical top hat with an American flag pattern, was pictured as an aggressive predator equipped with sharp teeth and tentacles giving the monster a literally global range.

Interestingly, the PKF episode circulated in Polish cinemas only a week later did not contain any references to the American origins of the pest.<sup>730</sup> This episode showed the presence of the beetle in Polish fields as a natural phenomenon, not an artificially produced one. The commentary attached to the movie informed viewers that the pest that previously attacked crops in France and Belgium now reached Polish fields. Unlike in the PKF episodes from 1950 and 1953 the commentary read in this film did not use the term 'Colorado Beetle', instead replacing it with the Polish equivalent 'stonka ziemniaczana' (potato beetle). The overtone of this footage was very similar to the Netherlands' film chronicle from August 1947.<sup>731</sup>

Both the movie produced by the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision and the PKF episode used the problem of the pest to manifest the vigilance and efficiency of Ministries of Agriculture which eliminated the threat.

One year later, communist media started to emphasise the close link between the presence of the pest in Europe and American interference in Western European economies. An anonymous drawing published in September 1949 in *Głos Robotniczy* suggested that the invasion of the pest detected in Italy was caused by the export of American potatoes to the Apennine Peninsula in the framework of the Marshall Plan programme. The drawing, which brought the term 'Colorado Beetle' to the popular phraseology used in Poland for the first time, served as yet another illustration of the deeply negative impact of American capitalism on European economies.

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<sup>729</sup> SZP, 04.07.1948; Picture 25

<sup>730</sup> PKF 29/48, 14.07.1948

<sup>731</sup> Aardappelvijand nr. 1, De coloradokever Weeknummer 47-37 - Open Beelden - 14387.ogv, 01.08.1947



Picture 25

It was less than a year later when Polish cinema viewers and press readers could notice a radical shift in the propaganda discourse touching upon the problem of the Colorado Beetle.

### **American origin of the pest**

In May 1950 *Trybuna Ludu* published an anonymous text entitled 'The incredible crime of American imperialists', which suggested that the pest was a 'subversive-conspiratorial activity inflicted against socialist Poland through mass consumption of potato crops'.<sup>732</sup> Two weeks later, the same daily published an official document edited by the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Reforms clearly stating that the Colorado Beetle was supposed to have been massively dropped into the Baltic Sea by American aircraft and later invaded the entire country.<sup>733</sup> The Colorado Beetle was no longer presented as a passive pest that appeared en masse in potato fields by accident, but as part of an American economic attack on the entire Socialist Bloc.

The American origin of the pest was also stressed in the PKF episode from June 1950, which suggested that the masses of dangerous pests reached Polish fields with the help of wind after being dropped by American aircraft over Eastern Germany.<sup>734</sup> As one may see watching this PKF episode its main aim was to mobilise the whole of society in the fight against the 'capitalist attack on Polish crops'. Furthermore, apart from praising the human effort of the Polish working class, the movie was used to manifest the technological achievements of the socialist economy – to show rows of tractors and agriculture technicians equipped with modern tools designed to fight against the pest. Finally, the motif of burdening the USA with responsibility for the pest invasion became one of the most common arguments used by propagandists to explain problems with food provisions.

### **The expansion of the beetle invasion**

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<sup>732</sup> TL, 17.05.1950

<sup>733</sup> TL, 01.06.1950

<sup>734</sup> PKF 25/50, 14.06.1950

In the same period, a very similar short documentary movie was produced and circulated in the cinemas of Czechoslovakia.<sup>735</sup> The episode of Czechoslovakian Film Chronicle (CFC) prepared in the summer of 1950 presented a sinister view of ‘clouds that arrived over Czechoslovakia from the West bringing millions of Colorado Beetles, a new criminal tool of American barbarians sent by capitalists’. The CFC episode stressed the fact that this time the presence of the beetle was artificially produced as pests and were found on buildings, streets and other places distanced from the natural environment of beetles. Just like the PKF episode, the CFC footage emphasised the high fertility and voracious character of the pest.

The CFC episode emphasised the evil intention of the American government which ‘intended to destroy a well-developed Czechoslovakian potato industry and reduce the food resources of the Czechoslovakian nation’. This footage labeled the Colorado Beetle invasion as a product of ‘American atomic culture of war provokers’. Unlike the PKF episode, the Czechoslovakian movie also stressed engagement in the fight against the pest shown by socialist youth and children associated with the ‘Pioneer’ movement.<sup>736</sup> In the Polish case, the shots showed the general mobilisation of every age of society while in the Czechoslovakian one the commitment of Pioneers (unlike in Czechoslovakia this organisation has never replaced the scouting movement in Poland) was especially praised. Finally, both movies culminated with the firm declaration that both the Polish Czechoslovakian governments ‘will not stop fighting the American invasion until the problem is ultimately solved’.

Watching both movies one may easily recognise a very similar script, a characteristic style of shooting the scenes, similar close-ups and similar dramatic music illustrating the palpability of the threat posed by the beetles. Furthermore, the section of both movies showing the perfectly organised action of spraying the fields with DDT

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<sup>735</sup> <http://www.stream.cz/vtipky-a-srandicky/389224-mandelinka-bramborova-americky-brouk> - summer of 1950. - retrieved on 10.03.2014

<sup>736</sup> Pioneers - was a mass youth organisation of the Soviet Union for children of age 10–15 that existed between 1922 and 1991. Similar to the Scouting organisations of the Western world, Pioneers learned skills of social cooperation and attended publicly funded summer camps. After World War Two the Soviet model of pioneers organisation was implemented in many socialist countries where it was supposed to replace the interwar apolitical scouting movement.

water solution, film producers used not similar, but literally the same shots. The detailed analysis of both these sequences included in the Polish<sup>737</sup> and Czechoslovakian<sup>738</sup> film chronicles leaves no doubt in this matter. The idea of picturing many propaganda themes by the communist media in the same way in the entire Socialist Bloc was a popular tactic practiced in the Stalinist period.

In the following years, the atmosphere of fear deriving from the destructive activity of the pest was sustained in Poland with two more PKF episodes and several drawings published in the press. The PKF footage from August 1951 stressed the fact that ‘the American beetle invasion posed a real threat of mass destruction of potato fields in Poland’.<sup>739</sup> This episode put a special emphasis on the ‘voluntary commitment of women and soldiers in the fight against the results of the “landing operation of American capitalists”’.

Just like the famous communist slogan ‘women to the tractors’, such movies were supposed to demonstrate the progressive character of communist societies. This trend in the propaganda discourse that women were actively engaged in all spheres of social activity, unlike in the conservative Western societies. What is even more interesting is that this film shows that although, in general, communist propaganda strived to unify society, there were exceptions to this principle. The gender aspect of the film, that is the special role of women in socialist society, was stressed in order to emphasise the civilisational superiority of communist states over ‘traditionalist and backward’ capitalist countries.

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<sup>737</sup> Picture 26

<sup>738</sup> Picture 27

<sup>739</sup> PKF 35/51, 22.08.1951





Picture 26



Picture 27

The intensity of attempts and the amount of means engaged by the propagandists to propagate the information on the direct American threat for the Polish economy shows how important this thread was in the general strategy of increasing fear to gain control over society. Yet, despite this effort the readiness of Polish society to recognise the threat posed by Colorado Beetles was limited. The analysis of the signs of the reception of the 'pest motif' in communist propaganda presented in the next part of this chapter proves such a conclusion.

### ***I cannot stand such slander. Social reception of the propaganda news on the American origin of the pest***

Despite the intensity of the propaganda campaign confronting Poles with the direct aspect of the American economic threat, Polish society had many doubts concerning the American origin of the pest. For instance, in a letter sent to Polish Radio in June 1951 Antoni Marylski, an inhabitant of Skierniewice, a small town near Warsaw, expressed his anger with the propaganda press efforts to make the USA responsible for the pest invasion.<sup>740</sup> Marylski wrote:

*'Dear "Frequency 49". I can stand everything, I can stand any absurdity, but I cannot stand such slander. The USA possess an atomic bomb and it may use it anytime instead of pests. I am sure that the USA government did not transfer Colorado Beetles to Polish fields.'*

In my research I came across a very similar negative approach towards the propaganda exploiting the motif of American responsibility for the Colorado Beetle invasion recorded in the memory of representatives of three different social groups. First of all, Adam Miłkaszewski, who in that period was a student of the Technical University in Gdańsk. In my interview with him, Miłkaszewski stated that the first time he came across the propaganda messages on the Colorado Beetle was in a press article published in the summer of 1950 in *Dziennik Bałtycki*, a local daily. In Miłkaszewski's words, this article suggested that the Colorado Beetle was placed by American planes in

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<sup>740</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 21.06.1951

Gdańsk Bay, a shallow part of the Baltic Sea, near the coast. Miłkaszewski remembered that local radio programmes called on the inhabitants of Gdańsk to go to the city beaches to collect the pests emerging from the sea in order to stop the invasion that could reach the entire country.

Furthermore, according to Miłkaszewski inhabitants of the city who were commenting in shops and markets on the invasion of the American pest announced by propaganda were decidedly doubtful concerning the artificial character of the plague. Miłkaszewski also remembered that he came across several cases of people laughing when the idea that the USA would use their airplanes to distribute pests over Poland.

Finally, Miłkaszewski remembered that the task of collecting the pests from the beaches was also announced by the university authorities as a compulsory activity for students. In response to this order a fellow student of Miłkaszewski's shared with him and other students an amusing (in Miłkaszewski's words) idea of placing American flags on the beach to attract the American pests. According to Miłkaszewski the idea was just an ironic joke and no one took this idea seriously.<sup>741</sup>

The doubtful attitude of the inhabitants of Gdańsk recorded in the memory of Adam Miłkaszewski to some extent was also shared by Zofia Dąbrowska. In 1949 she began studying economics in Wrocław. Dąbrowska remembered that when she heard about the action of transferring pests by American airplanes she was decidedly sceptical. Dąbrowska was brought up in Sanok, a city in Eastern Poland surrounded by agriculture areas. From her early years she remembered that although in the 1940s the presence of pests was already a serious problem for the local peasants, this phenomenon had a natural, not artificial, character. On the other hand, Dąbrowska remembered that in her academic society there were not many students commenting on this issue. In such an attitude one may recognise an efficient imposition of the binding attitude towards the official propaganda interpretation of the issue of the invasion of the pests.<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>741</sup> Interview with Adam Miłkaszewski, 20.04.2014

<sup>742</sup> Interview with Zofia Dąbrowska, 03.02.2015

What is interesting is that the above-mentioned doubts were also recorded in the memory of an officer working in a local branch of the PZPR. According to Łucja Skierska she assumed that this particular anti-American propaganda campaign was false. In Skierska's case the doubts derived from contact with her family who ran a small farm in the Kaszuby region, near Grudziądz. From the late 1930s Skierska helped her family during the potato and wheat harvests each year, she knew that the problem of potato pests had natural origins. Skierska did not share her doubts with colleagues from the PPR Committee, as the entire staff of this institution was instructed to repeat the official version of American responsibility for the pest invasion. In her words, it was only in the second half of the 1950s that Skierska, her colleagues and even superiors in private conversations started to openly express their doubts concerning American responsibility for the plague of the Colorado Beetles.<sup>743</sup>

Surprisingly, two years later listening to the commentary attached to a PKF episode from August 1953 one could not find a single reference to the American origin of the Colorado Beetle.<sup>744</sup> This motif, still present in communist media in the summer of 1952,<sup>745</sup> suddenly disappeared. It was replaced by the mobilising and rather apolitical discourse characteristic of accounts on the beetle published in 1948. Once again the commitment of women, children and youth was emphasised by PKF producers aiming at encouraging the entire society to cooperate with the communist apparatus in the face of the threat produced by the dangerous, but no longer American, beetle. This tendency prevailed in the communist propaganda discourse until 1956 (and later) when in two more press articles dedicated to the problem of the potato beetle, published in *Trybuna Ludu*, one could not find any information suggesting that the presence of the Colorado Beetle in Polish fields was in any way produced by the American government.<sup>746</sup>

Although as of 1953 the motif of American inspiration and management that allegedly stood behind the invasion of the Colorado Beetle in Polish fields vanished from

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<sup>743</sup> Interview with Łucja Skierska, 23.12.2012

<sup>744</sup> PKF 36/53, 15.08.1953

<sup>745</sup> SZP 17.08.1952

<sup>746</sup> TL, 26.06.1956; 04.07.1956

the popular discourse present in communist dailies, magazines and movies, this association was already durably inculcated in the consciousness of societies living in the Socialist Bloc. Owing to the fact that the motif of the American Colorado Beetle also entered the discourse and propaganda phraseology used in texts indoctrinating children, one may conclude on the rank of this motif in the hierarchy of symbols of the threat posed to the Socialist Bloc by capitalist enemies. There were at least three authors publishing in the Socialist Bloc who translated the language of conventional propaganda dealing with the beetle invasion into didactic fairytales. Here, once again, the Czechoslovakian example of such a fairytale enables a comparison of this kind of publication in the Socialist Bloc.

### 1.8 The fairytales designed to indoctrinate children

The fairytale *O zlém brouku Bramborouku*<sup>747</sup> (Story about an evil potato beetle) printed in Prague in 1950 was a story written and illustrated by the eminent Czechoslovakian writer and painter Ondřej Sekora.<sup>748</sup> Apart from his skills in literature and art Sekora was also an entomologist who used his expert knowledge on insects to create the figure of Ferda Mravenec (Ferda the Ant), a popular Czechoslovakian animated character which began to appear in the central press already in 1933 and was also published in Czechoslovakian children's books in the late 1930s.<sup>749</sup> Similar to the several previously mentioned cases of Polish artists whose interwar fame was used by the communist propaganda to legitimise the new regime, the common recognisability of Sekoras' interwar works encouraged the Czechoslovakian communist propaganda authorities to commend him in an important task in the local visual propaganda.

His popular (120,000 copies printed) publication had the form of a comic book, telling the story of the 'enemies that arrived from the West in order to ravage our

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<sup>747</sup> O. Sekora, *O zlém brouku Bramborouku. O mandelince americké, která chce loupit z našich talířů*, Prague 1950

<sup>748</sup> Ondřej Sekora (1899-1967) Czech painter, illustrator, writer, journalist and entomologist. He is known mainly as an author of children books.

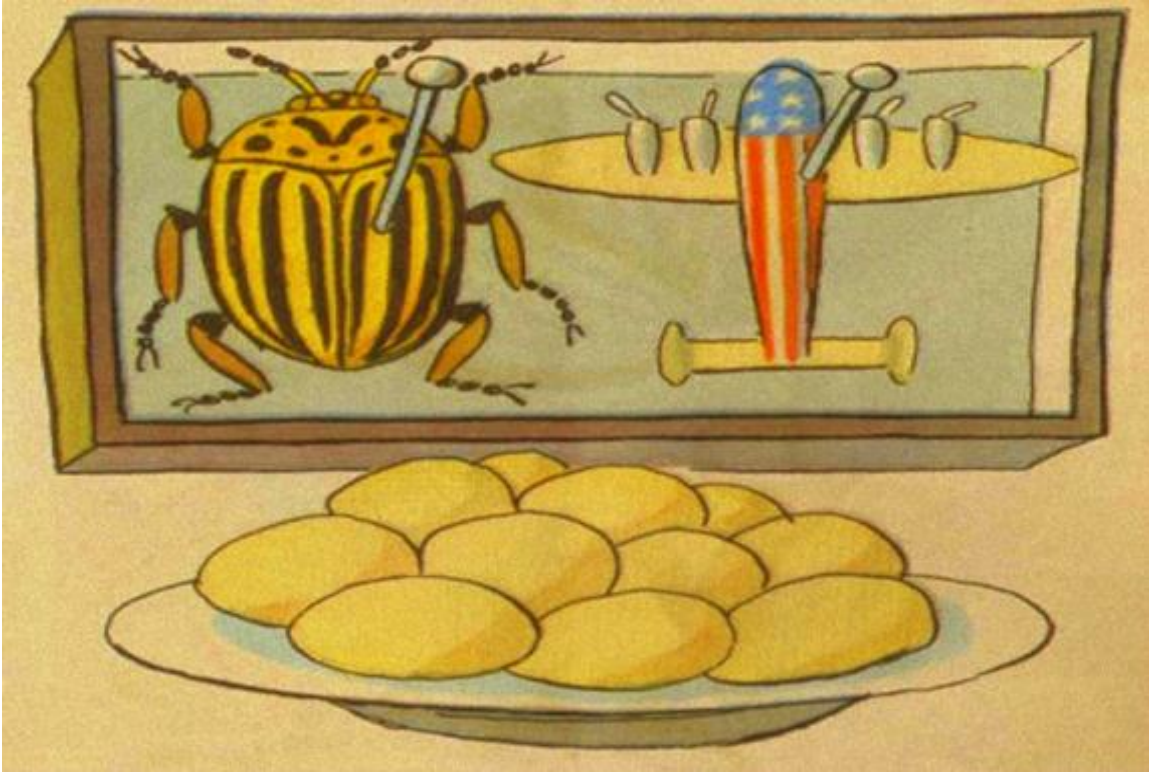
<sup>749</sup> [http://relax.lidovky.cz/ferda-mravenec-je-80-let-od-sveho-vzniku-stale-popularni-pge-zajimavosti.aspx?c=A130101\\_143912\\_In-zajimavosti\\_ape](http://relax.lidovky.cz/ferda-mravenec-je-80-let-od-sveho-vzniku-stale-popularni-pge-zajimavosti.aspx?c=A130101_143912_In-zajimavosti_ape) - retrieved 08.11.2014

potatoes'. Using very simple words the tale clearly explained that the pest was dangerous due to its incredible fertility. Children reading this book could learn that the beetle was eating the leaves and roots of potatoes, thus killing the entire plant. They could also read about the way the adult beetles developed from the larva stadium and about the voracity of pests. It was also suggested to young Czechoslovakian readers that *'destroying all the potato plants in the country the Colorado Beetle would satisfy its superiors, Western enemies, as Czechoslovakia would be deprived of food'*. Further on the tale encouraged children to engage in fighting the pest. Sekora explained to his young readers that they were short enough to help adults observe the low parts of the potato plants where beetles placed their eggs and larva. The tale culminated with the declaration stating that *'We will never surrender to this invasion organised by the enemies of peace. We will fight the Colorado Beetle until the last pest is destroyed'*.

All the above texts were illustrated with cheerful and instructive drawings which supplemented the narrative of the book. Two of those drawings directly suggested that the invasion of the pest was produced by the USA. One of them perfectly encapsulated the anti-American atmosphere in the book and the above examined propaganda campaign it fomented. The drawing presenting a small showcase of specimen of the Colorado Beetle was placed next to small model of an airplane painted like the American flag, which was hanging on the wall over the plate filled with potatoes, could easily serve as an icon of this particular propaganda campaign.<sup>750</sup> Similar iconic illustrations covered the pages of a fairytale published two years later in over 600,000 copies in Poland.

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<sup>750</sup> Picture 28



Picture 28



Picture 29



The comic book *Stonka i Bronka*<sup>751</sup> (Stonka and Bronka) was written by Jan Brzechwa,<sup>752</sup> a Polish lawyer and poet of Jewish descent. In the interwar period Brzechwa worked as a lawyer as an expert in copyright. Yet, most of all Brzechwa is famous in Poland as one of the most popular authors of fairytales. The writer published his first set of poems for children in 1938 and continued writing works dedicated to the youngest group of readers during World War Two. After the war Brzechwa cooperated with the communist regime. Although he did not become a member of the PPR or the PZPR, he prepared numerous propaganda poems glorifying communism and the new regime in Poland. *Stonka i Bronka* belonged to this sort of publication. After 1956 Brzechwa decided not to engage in politics anymore. Yet, in 1964 the writer decided to sign the letter in which a group of Polish pro-government writers declared their protest to the famous letter of 34 from the same year, in which the elite of Polish intellectuals accused the government of increasing censorship.<sup>753</sup>

The vivid illustrations of most of the fairytales by Brzechwa, including *Stonka i Bronka*, were prepared by Jan Marcin Szancer,<sup>754</sup> a friend and close co-operator of Brzechwa. Szancer was a painter, drawer and illustrator of literature dedicated to children and youth. Unlike the story by Sekora, the plot of Brzechwa's publication had one particular protagonist, the young girl Bronka (a diminutive of the female name Bronisława).

Brzechwa used the child's perspective to clarify to his readers the American origins and the palpability of the threat posed by the pest to Poland. First of all, his fairytale, written in the form of a long rhyming poem, explained the vital role of the potato in Polish cuisine and diet. In Brzechwa's words, the activity of the Colorado Beetle was presented as a sort of 'family business' in which each pest encouraged its wives, husbands, aunts, uncles and numerous cousins to take part in a great feast based

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<sup>751</sup> J. Brzechwa, *Stonka i Bronka*, Warszawa 1952

<sup>752</sup> Jan Brzechwa (1898-1966)

<sup>753</sup> More on this issue in: J. Eisler, *List 34*, Warszawa 1993

<sup>754</sup> Jan Marcin Szancer (1902-1973) Szancer illustrated over 200 fairy tales and books authored by such iconic Polish writers as Henryk Sienkiewicz or Adam Mickiewicz



on devouring potato leaves. This familiar atmosphere was disturbed by four lines presenting the background of the feast:

Tak panoszą się szkodniki	So the pests are spreading
Słane do nas z Ameryki,	Sent to us from America
Które nadto wróg jest gotów	The enemy is so determined
Zrzucać stale z samolotów	That he transfer the pest by airplanes <sup>755</sup>

The above lines were meaningfully illustrated by a drawing in which Szancer presented Colorado Beetles jumping from American aircraft in parachutes and landing on potato fields.<sup>756</sup>

In a later part of the fairytale, in the same familiar tone, Brzechwa presented the biological development of the pest. This knowledge was supposed to encourage the children to help adults in fighting the invasion of pests. In the final part of the story a teenage Bronka mobilises her parents and other adults to fight against the beetles, showing them a good example with her own commitment. The mobilising motif was also present in the additional text attached to the fairytale. The text, entitled 'Read to your father and mother', had the form of instruction of the proper behaviour that each peasant should practice in the face of the invasion of the pest. The instruction begins with long sentence suggesting American responsibility for the invasion.

As Mariusz Urbanek wrote in his biography of Brzechwa, *Stonka i Bronka* won much critical acclaim. Critics were 'delighted with Brzechwa's style and convincing drawings by Szancer, which made the fairytale clear and readable both for children and adults who were probably given the first occasion to see what the Colorado Beetle looked like'.<sup>757</sup> This last sentence printed in *Słowo Powszechne* might be interpreted as

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<sup>755</sup> J.Brzechwa, op.cit., p. 6

<sup>756</sup> Picture 29

<sup>757</sup> M. Urbanek, *Brzechwa nie dla dzieci*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 145-146

proof of how artificial the issue of the mass Colorado Beetle invasion was if one had to read the book to learn the image of the pest.<sup>758</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The frequent use of the images of the 'American economic threat' shows the significant role of this rhetorical trope in the communist propaganda strategy of fear management. The early postwar American material support for Poland (the UNRRA activity) made the propagandists' aim to instill mistrust towards the American economic activity in Europe within Polish media receivers even harder to achieve. Although in several cases the propagandists managed to suggest to media receivers an anti-American attitude, many more examples discussed in this chapter represented negative perceptions of the economic thread of the anti-American discourse. There were at least three factors generating such an attitude of media receivers.

First of all, the memory of the packages filled with food, clothes and other necessary products sent to Poland from the USA in the framework of the UNRRA was still very fresh within the memory of Polish society. Important as this factor was, it explains only partially the cases of a critical letters sent to Polish Radio and recollections presented above. The second, and rather more important factor, was the very difficult economic condition of the vast majority of Polish postwar society. Polish press readers were disappointed with the lack of significant improvement in their own standard of living promised by the communist propaganda. Consequently, their vulnerability to trust the communist media suggesting that the situation of workers living in countries which took part in the ERP was even worse than in Poland was rather limited. Finally, as one may read in several examples of the reception of the propaganda campaign dedicated to the Colorado Beetle invasion, some aspects of the anti-American propaganda discourse evoked serious doubts of media receivers. In two cases the propagandists'

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<sup>758</sup> Słowo Powszechne – Polish governmental catholic daily established in 1947. The intention of the daily editors was to attack the catholic clergy and to capture the readers of such traditional and independent catholic press as 'Tygodnik Powszechny'.

efforts to persuade Polish society that the mass presence of pests in Polish potato fields had a political explanation was in conflict with their personal experience.

What is important is that this last case shows the limits of propaganda. As Chiara Bottici, an Italian historian and philosopher, put it in her essay on the philosophy of political myth, 'such a myth cannot simply be fabricated around a table. Instead, political myths must insert themselves within certain conditions, and are mostly intermingled with other kinds of discourses, although they must not be conflicted with them'.<sup>759</sup> Following Bottici's point of view, one may conclude that the myth of the American responsibility for the 'pests' invasion of Poland' was far too artificial and alienated from local reality to be efficient. Most probably this is why this myth was repeated in official communist mass media for only three years.

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The above presented propaganda vision of various economic threats that the US government was supposed to pose to Europe and Poland became an integral part of a postwar anti-American discourse communist media was saturated with. Apart from stressing the palpability of the American external and internal economic peril, the journalists, writers and cartoonists also endeavored to alert Polish society to the treacherous impact of American culture and habits. In this tactic the plague of cruel racist persecutions practiced in the USA was presented as the most vivid example of the pro-violent character of American culture. The deconstruction of those components of the anti-American propaganda, as well as the analysis of its social reception, constitutes the core of the next chapter.

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<sup>759</sup> Ch. Bottici, *A philosophy of political myth*, Cambridge 2007, p. 185

## CHAPTER V

### **'Nazi racism is raging in the state of Mississippi'. The threat of intolerance, aggression and hooliganism inspired by American culture (1945-1956)**

*Southern trees bear strange fruit,  
Blood on the leaves and blood on the root,  
Black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze,  
Strange fruits hanging from the poplar trees.*

Abel Meeropol<sup>760</sup>

The above quoted text of an American protest song 'Strange Fruit', published in 1937 in the journal *The New York Teacher*, expressed the indignation that the a significant part of society living in the Northern and Eastern states of the USA felt towards the plague of lynchings practiced on African-Americans in Southern states. As Samuel Grafton, a journalist of *The New York Post*, put it in his article from October 1939, picturing the legendary performance of this song by the famous jazz singer Billie Holliday recorded in 1939: '*If the anger of the exploited ever mounts high enough in the South, it now has its Marseillaise*'.<sup>761</sup>

The simple and telling text of the song, compared by Grafton to the revolutionary anthem of France, articulated the protest against racism as well as the extreme forms of violence the representatives of the Southern states resorted to. In prewar USA both these problems were the subject of harsh social and political tensions across the continent. In postwar Eastern Europe the issue of racism and violence practiced in the USA became an integral part of the anti-American propaganda permanently exploited by the communist media.

#### **1. Racism – the source of fear and violence**

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<sup>760</sup> Abel Meeropol (1903-1986) – American teacher, writer and songwriter.

<sup>761</sup> *The New York Post*, 15.10.1939

The entire set of negative features of American social policy and culture, which communist propaganda resorted to constructing, was perfectly encapsulated in the disturbing image of the USA in the expressive caricature 'American Newspaper' from 1951.<sup>762</sup> With his telling drawing, Bronisław Linke presented a fictional American daily announcing the news saturated with almost all types of violence – from racist crimes through to regular brutal banditry ending with suggestions that American external military policy posed a direct threat to global peace. Furthermore, the relaxed posture of the reader suggested that Americans became used to being exposed to a similar set of horrific news on a daily basis. With his gloomy picture Linke depicted the dangerous tendency of accepting the aggression by American society as an integral part of the political and social language used in the USA.

Among the thrilling scenes pictured by Linke, the view of the black male hanging on a rope 'attached' to the slogan 'America for whites' was probably the most depressing. This picture suggested to its viewers that aggression, violence and intolerance were deeply ingrained in the mentality of the vast majority of the population of the United States, leading to the formation of a dangerous war-like society.

The below discussed problem of the disturbing propaganda image of racist violence practiced in the USA was not an unknown phenomenon in Europe. Although on this side of the Atlantic Ocean the problem of violent racism referred in most cases not to black people (except for the colonial states, especially Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and Germany), but to Jewish communities, the nature and symptoms of violence expressed towards both groups of 'aliens' had a lot in common. Thus, although it was especially the Nazi form of anti-Semitism that had an openly racist character, the local experience of hostile attitudes towards Jews in other countries, including Poland, constituted a vital context in which the propaganda references to the brutal attitude towards the black part of society must be analysed.

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<sup>762</sup>B. Linke, *Amerykańska gazeta* [in:] B. Linke, *Podręczaczom Wojennym Mówimy: Nie!*, 1951; Picture 30



Picture 30



## 1.1 Anti-Semitism in Europe – local experience of racism

The problem of anti-Semitism perfectly exemplifies the trajectory of the hostile attitude Europeans had towards the communities representing different ethnicities and religions within local societies. Jews represented the European archetype of alien in both those spheres. Up to the twelfth century the situation of the European community of Jews was relatively good.<sup>763</sup> Yet, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the first pogroms began to be practiced by the Christian neighbours of Jews in Western Europe.<sup>764</sup> In Eastern Europe, where Jews migrated from Western countries, the main wave of anti-Semitic pogroms started in the 1880s and in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>765</sup> The second series of pogroms on the territory of Russia, between 1903 and 1906, was far more violent.<sup>766</sup>

Although violent anti-Semitism dominated Eastern Europe, the Western part of the continent was not free from the atmosphere of open hostility towards Jews. The spectacular, incidents like the infamous Dreyfus Affair from 1894 in France, shows how

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<sup>763</sup> There were around 450,000 Jews living in Europe – 200,000 in Spain and Portugal, 100,000 in France and another 100,000 in Germany

<sup>764</sup> This wave of violence was motivated with negative images of Jews who, in the common perception, were the ancestors of the assassins of Jesus Christ. In numerous rumours Jews were also accused of having contacts with Satan, of acting against Christians and of poisoning water and food. Furthermore, starting from the thirteenth century, Jews began to be accused of practicing ritual murders. Finally, in the fourteenth century Jews were expelled from France, Spain and German-speaking territories. In France, the numerous edicts of kings forced Jews to leave the country while in 1492 the biggest Western European community of Jews was expelled from Spain. The same lot was shared by the Jewish community in German-speaking regions of Europe. More details in: J. Kłoczowski, *Młodsza Europa. Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w kręgu cywilizacji chrześcijańskiej średniowiecza*, Warszawa 2003

<sup>765</sup> S.M. Berk, *Year of Crisis, Year of Hope: Russian Jewry and the Pogroms of 1881–1882*, Greenwood, 1985, p. 54; The first wave of anti-Semitic violence was caused by the totally false accusation of the Jewish plot behind the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. The death of the tsar evoked a wave of around 250 pogroms (i.e. in Warsaw, Balta and Rostov-on-Don) which lasted until 1884. Pogroms cost the life of numerous Jews with the property of many others being stolen or destroyed.

<sup>766</sup> J.D. Klier, S. Lambroza, *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 216-230; The anti-Semitic violence was fuelled mainly by the rumour suggesting that Jews were practicing ritual murders. This rumour was repeated by governmental press, thus increasing the anti-Semitic atmosphere. The wave of violence ranged across 64 cities and 626 towns and villages. Between 1903 and 1904 alone there were 45 pogroms in which 90 Jews were killed and 4,200 seriously wounded. In the winter of 1905 the next series of pogroms ranged across 575 places in Russia.

important a role the anti-Semitic moods played in the political life of Western Europe.<sup>767</sup>  
This sort of atmosphere grew stronger after the Great War.

### **Anti-Semitism in the interwar period**

As Tony Judt put it in his 'Postwar', '(...) *From Brussels to Bucharest the polemical journalism and literature of the 1930s abounded in racism, anti-Semitism and ultra-nationalism*'.<sup>768</sup> The country where the mixture of all these three social attitudes shaped the leading ideology was Germany. The Nazi ideology, supported by propaganda exploiting the false myth of Jewish betrayal as the central reason for the German failure in the Great War, earned the NSDAP dozens of thousands proponents. Furthermore, this purposefully and consistently constructed anti-Semitic atmosphere served the Nazi as a powerful social tool skillfully recruited to gain political targets. No less important is the fact that after 1933 this ideology sanctioned the practice of racist violence on an unprecedented scale.<sup>769</sup>

After the outbreak of World War Two the Nazi government expanded the process of extermination of German Jews to Jewish communities in all the conquered European countries. This way the experience of violent racism was spread and shared by local societies almost all around the part of the continent occupied by Nazi Germany. A

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<sup>767</sup> In this political event the Jewish descent of the officer of the French army to a large extent served as an informal pretext to accuse him of betrayal in favour of Germany.

<sup>768</sup> T. Judt, op. cit., p. 197

<sup>769</sup> R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Yale 1961; After the takeover of power in 1933 by Hitler, Nazism became an official ideology incorporating anti-Semitism as a form of scientific racism. The introduction of this form of the fear management strategy was also supported with the institutionalisation of anti-Semitism in the form of numerous social and political organisations resorting to direct and indirect violence inflicted against Jews. Finally, anti-Semitism in Germany was formalised with the deeply racist Nuremberg Laws from September 1935. According to Raul Hilberg, with this set of anti-Semitic laws treating Jews as sub-human and followed by defining Jews as anti-human, Nazi Germany started the process of extermination of the non-Aryan part of German society. Jews were gradually burdened with high taxes while their access to financial resources was blocked. Later on Jews were deprived of their job positions and were forced to start forced labour. Finally, Germans restricted the place where Jews were allowed to live to the territories of ghettos – the Jewish districts walled off from the other parts of the cities. In further stages of the extermination Jews were transferred from ghettos to the concentration camps (where they died mainly from diseases, hunger and emaciation caused by the extreme work conditions) or (especially after 1942) directly to the death camps.



large majority of European Jews were annihilated by Nazi perpetrators on 'blood lands', outside the prewar borders of Germany.<sup>770</sup>

### **Jews and anti-Semitism in Poland**

The situation of Jews arriving to Poland from at least the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was relatively good and almost free from organised symptoms of hostility. What is more, there were many signs proving the deep integration of Jews living in Poland with local society and their engagement in state policy.<sup>771</sup> In the interwar period, the Jewish minority was regularly represented in the Polish parliament.<sup>772</sup> Yet, at the same time Jews were accused of servility towards the tsar and his administration in the territory of the Russian partition.<sup>773</sup>

As the Polish sociologist and historian Paweł Śpiewak put it in his study the hatred of Poles towards the Jews in the nineteenth century was of both a religious and cultural nature. Śpiewak indicated five threats that Jews allegedly posed to the Polish nation: Jews were supposed to wait in hiding wearing false costumes to gain domination over the world; Talmud was supposed to instill hatred towards Christians; Jews who converted to Christianity were supposed to organise plots against Poles; Jews were

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<sup>770</sup> T. Snyder, *Skrwawione ziemie. Europa między Hitlerem a Stalinem*, Warszawa 2011, p. 279; It was mainly the territory of Poland where German occupants decided to place the biggest system of concentration and death camps. Places like Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek became the tragic symbols of the Holocaust, which caused the deaths of around 5.4 million people. Among other factors, this decision derived from the fact that one of the biggest European Jewish communities (around 3.5million – 10% of the entire society) were living in this country.

<sup>771</sup> On the one hand, starting from the nineteenth century the Jewish community in many cases represented the deeply pro-state attitude to enumerate their contribution to all important Polish insurrections, including the Kościuszko Uprising (1794), the November Uprising (1830-1831) and the January Uprising (1863). Furthermore, Jews also voluntarily served in Polish Legions during the Great War and later in the Polish Army during the Polish–Soviet War in 1920.

<sup>772</sup> S. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2004; J. Fałowski, *Mniejszość żydowska w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej: (1922-1939)*, Kraków 2006

<sup>773</sup> P. Śpiewak, *Żydokomuna. Interpretacje historyczne*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 30-31; For instance, the case of the Jewish banker Leopold Kronenberg, one of the leaders of the 'Whites', a faction among Polish insurrectionists before and during the January Uprising, which generally opposed the idea of an armed insurrection against Russia, functioned in the public opinion as an example of the 'anti-Polish attitude' of Jews.

supposed to inspire destructive revolutions; Jews were supposed to collaborate with Satan against Christians.<sup>774</sup>

All the above racially-based threats became the integral components of the anti-Semitic myth of Jews as amoral dangerous socialist (and later communist) revolutionaries which entered the centre of the Polish political discourse after the Revolution of 1905 for good. After the Great War, the anti-Semitic rhetoric was still exploited mainly by the rightist and nationalist political parties.<sup>775</sup> Yet, in 1920, in the face of the Bolshevik invasion of Poland, the threat of the *żydokomuna*<sup>776</sup> became a central issue which entered the official governmental propaganda, suggesting that the attack of the Red Army was in fact performed by Jews striving to erase Polish statehood in the name of the world communist revolution. One may realise how far the propaganda identified the Bolshevik with the 'Jewish threat' looking at the poster entitled 'Jewish Paws Again? Never!' circulated in Poland during the Polish-Soviet War (1920-1921).<sup>777</sup>

According to Marcin Zaremba, the chimera of *żydokomuna* was to a large extent one of the most important perils defining the emotional condition of Polish society in the first months and years after regaining state independence.<sup>778</sup> The myth of *żydokomuna* was also fuelled by the conviction that Jews played a central role in the anti-Polish character of the Polish Communist Party (KPP).<sup>779</sup> In nationalist press and ideological manifestos formulated by for example Dmowski, Jews were presented as dangerous internationalists – '*deadly enemies collaborating with communists against Polish statehood who should be removed from Poland*'.<sup>780</sup>

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<sup>774</sup> P. Śpiewak, op. cit., p. 32

<sup>775</sup> A. Cała, *Żyd-wróg odwieczny? Antysemityzm w Polsce i jego źródła*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 337-357; J. Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present*, Nebraska 2006, pp. 48-56

<sup>776</sup> *Żydokomuna* - an anti-Semitic stereotype referring to alleged Jewish-Soviet collaboration in importing communism into Poland where communism was sometimes identified as part of a wider Jewish-led conspiracy to seize power over the world.

<sup>777</sup> Picture 31

<sup>778</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga*, p. 71-85

<sup>779</sup> P. Śpiewak, op.cit., pp. 105-130

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38



Picture 31

Aside from such acts of symbolic violence in several cases Jews were also a target of physical violence performed by the activists of the National Radical Camp (ONR)<sup>781</sup> and National Party (SN), the political wing of National Democracy.<sup>782</sup> Although the scale of violence practiced against Jews in, for example, Przytyk and Myślenice<sup>783</sup> was far lower than those taking place in Germany (to indicate only the case of the *Kristallnacht* from November 1938),<sup>784</sup> both incidents show that within Polish society there was a high potential to resort to racist violence. The anti-Semitic crimes committed during World War Two by Poles proved this diagnosis.<sup>785</sup>

### **Polish rescuers of Jews, bystanders and perpetrators of anti-Semitic crimes during World War Two**

Under the Nazi occupation the fate of Jews living in Poland was very difficult. On the one hand, they were targets of the official and systematic German policy of extermination realised through the previously mentioned system of ghettos, concentration camps and death camps. On the other hand, the Polish inhabitants of the territories occupied by Germany (unlike any other country under Nazi occupation) were threatened with a punishment of death for any form of help towards Jews. Despite this extreme risk there were many Poles who tried to rescue Jews from extermination.<sup>786</sup>

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<sup>781</sup> The National Radical Camp - a Polish extreme right anti-communist and nationalist political party, formed in 1934 by the youth radicals who left the National Party of the National Democracy movement.

<sup>782</sup> A. Cała, op.cit., pp. 368-382

<sup>783</sup> In June 1936 one of the propaganda activists of the SN in Cracow, Stanisław Doboszyński, organised a violent attack on his paramilitary troop on the Jewish properties and synagogue in Myślenice (a town near Cracow). Jewish shops were damaged, supplies were burned down and the aggressors also tried to set fire to the local synagogue. Three months earlier, as a result of the infamous clashes in Przytyk (a town near Radom, Eastern Poland where 90% of the local population were Jews) between Polish and Jewish merchants on the local town fair three people (two Jews, one Pole) were killed and twenty (mostly Jews) were badly injured.

<sup>784</sup> *Kristallnacht* - a series of coordinated fatal attacks against Jews throughout Nazi Germany and Austria between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November 1938, carried out by SA paramilitary forces and non-Jewish civilians. This pogrom resulted in 91 casualties, around a thousand damaged synagogues and the demolition of over 7,000 shops belonging to Jews.

<sup>785</sup> A. Cała, op.cit., pp. 419-452

<sup>786</sup> Here the case of the activity of Żegota is the most important and unprecedented in Nazi-occupied Europe. Żegota was a codename for the Polish Council to Aid Jews, an underground organisation of Polish resistance in German-occupied Poland, active from 1942 to 1945. The Council to Aid Jews operated under the auspices of the Polish Government in Exile through the Government Delegation for Poland, in

Picturing the panorama of social behaviour of Polish society during World War Two the postwar communist propaganda constructed a myth presenting Poles exclusively as victims of Nazi oppression and as rescuers of Jews. Yet, recent historical research proves that the proportion of the positive and negative attitude of Polish society towards Jews was far more pessimistic. While the vast majority of Polish society were passive bystanders of the tragedy of their Jewish neighbours, in many cases they also acted as perpetrators. The case of the pogrom in Jedwabne in July 1941 serves as an example of the process of moral decay generated by war.<sup>787</sup>

In his essay analysing crime in Jedwabne Jan T. Gross highlights the fact that the myth of *żydokomuna* served as a trigger for perpetrators of anti-Semitic behaviour. Polish inhabitants of Jedwabne acted in a symbolic revenge for the anti-Polish collaboration of Jews with the Soviet occupant of those lands after September 1939.<sup>788</sup> Historical research carried out after the exposure of the crime revealed a much wider scale of similar anti-Semitic crimes committed by Poles during World War Two.<sup>789</sup> In his recent book on this phenomenon Mirosław Tryczyk examined 128 cases of pogroms which took place in the summer of 1941.<sup>790</sup> In their character one is reminded of the pogrom in Jedwabne. Aside from taking part in the physical attacks on Jews, their Polish

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Warsaw. Żegota aided the country's Jews and found places of safety for them in occupied Poland. Apart from this organisation many Poles decided to rescue Jews on their own, both in the cities and in the countryside. The scale of this support for Jews is visible in the fact that the biggest number of the titles Righteous Among the Nations avowed by the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem to non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews from extermination by the Nazis was avowed to Poles. More in: Z. Schnepf-Kończak, *Pomoc Polaków dla Żydów na wsi w czasie okupacji niemieckiej. Próba opisu na przykładzie Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata* [in:] *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów, 1942–1945*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, Warszawa 2011, pp. 195-258

<sup>787</sup> In Jedwabne (Eastern Poland) soon after gaining control of this territory by Nazi occupants in late June 1941 a group of Polish inhabitants of the small town forcibly gathered almost the entire local Jewish population of over 300 people into huge a barn which was then set on fire. The German inspiration of this crime did not have a form of complicity.

<sup>788</sup> J.T.Gross, *Sąsiedzi*, Sejny 2000

<sup>789</sup> More on this issue: *Wokół Jedwabnego*, ed. P.Machciewicz, K. Persak, vol. I and II, Warszawa 2002; B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień*, Warszawa 2011; B. Engelking, *Wydawanie i mordowanie Żydów na wsi polskiej 1942-1945* [in:] *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, ed. M. Trębacz, A. Sitarek, E. Wiatr, Łódź 2013, pp. 221-244; J. Grabowski, *Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942-1945*, Warszawa 2011; J. Grabowski, *Strażacy, wiejska straż nocna i ghanatowa policja a zagłada Żydów na obszarach wiejskich w dystrykcie krakowskim* [in:] *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, ed. M. Trębacz, A. Sitarek, E. Wiatr, Łódź 2013, pp. 245-264

<sup>790</sup> M. Tryczyk, *Miasta śmierci. Sąsiedzkie pogromy Żydów*, Warszawa 2015

neighbours were also involved in the procedure of the mass plundering of Jewish properties.<sup>791</sup> All these types of hostile acts towards Jews in Poland were also practiced after the war.

### **... *those are Jews and we must beat them!* Postwar anti-Semitic violence in Poland**

The traditional anti-Semitic rumours, popular within Polish society, played an equally important role in verbal and physical attacks on Jews that also occurred soon after the end of World War Two. On the one hand, in postwar reality in popular conviction Jews were accused of the installation of the communist regime imposed by the USSR. The vision of Jews as establishers of the new anti-Polish communist system derived from the fact that many Jewish officers served in the ranks of the communist Secret Police. This popular conviction generated a very intensive anti-Semitic atmosphere which exploded in the form of brutal attacks on Jews that took place in most regions of Poland, i.e. in Radom, Rzeszów, Cracow, Włocławek, Częstochowa<sup>792</sup> and Szczecin,<sup>793</sup> to enumerate only the most violent tensions. On the other hand, the most brutal assault in postwar Poland, the Kielce Pogrom that took place on July the 4<sup>th</sup> 1946 in Kielce (South-Eastern Poland) was evoked directly by the false rumour that local Jews kidnapped a Polish boy for the purpose of ritual murder.<sup>794</sup>

All the above mentioned types of aggressive attitude of Poles towards Jews during and after World War Two show how far the experience of observation of the Nazi crimes encouraged part of Polish society to practice a hostile attitude towards the local 'aliens' on a scale unprecedented before the 'war of wars'. This experience generated an important background against which the communist propaganda narrative created a

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<sup>791</sup> B. Engelking, *Czarna godzina. Rzeczy żydowskie oddane na przechowanie Polakom* [in:] *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939-1950*, ed. J. Grabowski, D. Libionka, Warszawa 2014, pp. 387-437

<sup>792</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, pp. 587-643

<sup>793</sup> E. Krasucki, *... to są Żydzi i trzeba ich bić. O tumulcie szczecińskim latem 1946*, [in:] 'Odra', 2008, vol.4, pp. 31-35

<sup>794</sup> In Kielce, a group of Jewish survivors from the Holocaust placed by the local administration in one tenement were violently attacked by Polish mob soon after the end of World War Two. As a result of one of the most depressing episodes of the entire postwar history of Poland, 37 Jews and 3 Poles were killed by the furious mob.

vision of the USA as an oppressive country, where authorities accepted exerting Nazi-like racist violence against black people. Furthermore, propaganda agents made parallels between the Nazi system of segregation of European societies, experienced during the occupation by Poles, and the still divided American society. This last model was regularly juxtaposed with the Soviet system shown as just and equal for all. Without this context it would be hard to understand what sort of local experience the communist anti-American propaganda discourse, imputing to media receivers, the plague of violent racism in the USA referred.

## **1.2 'Racist savagery of the USA'**

American racism, a bleak legacy of hundreds of years of slavery practiced in the United States was recognised by the communist propagandists as a convenient target of a harsh critique. The tactic of persuading Polish readers that the news on numerous lynchings reflected a general tendency of practicing violence towards other nations or social groups was implemented through highlighting the scale of racism in America, especially the increasing number of lynchings and alleged common adhesion to those cruel acts. Furthermore, in order to attract the attention of readers to the problem of American racism, the repeated press reports presenting the thrilling brutality of persecutions practiced in the USA against African-Americans were supported with vivid graphic materials.

One of the first drawings confronting Polish readers with the pure aggression allegedly characteristic to all Americans was the caricature entitled 'The dark' by Stanisław Cieloch, published in *Szpilki* magazine in October 1948.<sup>795</sup> This drawing combined the motif of an aggression allegedly naturally ingrained in the nature of the average American and the motif of the American economic threat. The latter one was represented by a creature wearing an elegant frock coat and top hat, symbols attributed by communist propaganda to greedy American financiers from Wall Street.

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<sup>795</sup> SZP, 17.10.1948, Picture 32





Picture 32



In the view of Cieloch, the Polish cartoonist who regularly published in postwar editions of *Szpilki*, this creature – a monster with sharp fangs and fury in his eyes – violently attacked an astonished and terrorised black man flipping him on a pavement and strangling a scared person almost to death. Furthermore, the scene took place not in a dark alley, but on a bright, wide avenue among the skyscrapers of Manhattan giving an impression that such brutal behaviour was commonly accepted in the USA. The title of the caricature referred to the dark intentions of the bankers from Wall Street towards African-Americans rather than to the dark colour of the skin of the latter group of society.

Bearing in mind the Poles' own experience of observing and taking part in racist crimes committed by Nazi occupants on Jews during World War Two one may realise that the scene of violence pictured by Cieloch had little chance to shock its viewers. Yet, potentially it could attract the attention of readers accustomed to the view of similar scenes of pure violence practiced on the streets of ghettos within Polish cities by the Nazi criminals. In such a case the caricature by Cieloch was supposed to alert readers of *Szpilki* that the nightmare of the Holocaust did not end with the end of World War Two as later it took the form of racist aggression and violence practiced in the USA against local 'aliens', that is, black people. In other words, this picture suggested that white Americans resorted to forms and intensity of physical violence very similar to the one that Polish press readers observed, and in many cases personally experienced, for the six long years of the Nazi occupation of Poland.

Vivid as it was, this iconic drawing picturing the aggressive attitude of the American financial elite towards African-Americans exemplified only one type of reference to the problem of American eagerness to resort to violence. In fact most of the press articles and drawings reported on crimes committed against the black population of the USA by organised groups of bandits, especially by members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).<sup>796</sup> In many cases communist media endeavoured to focus the attention

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<sup>796</sup> The term KKK referred to two distinct movements in the United States. They first played a violent role against African-Americans in the South during and after the American Civil War. The second was a very large controversial nationwide organisation active from the 1920s (in the peak of their popularity in the

of Polish society on the problem of American racism stressing the strong link between this issue and crimes that in the near past were part of the local Polish experience.

### **Nazi inspiration for American racism**

In the communist propaganda, from the very beginning the criminal activity of the KKK was directly compared to the crimes committed by Nazi Germany before and during World War Two. This tactic aimed at connecting and unifying the just signalled threat deriving from aggressive behaviour of racist Americans with the constantly reminded 'German threat'. The phantom of the German and American threats emerged not only from the offensive policy of German and American policymakers, but also from the aggressive attitude of those societies which was regularly stressed by press and other public media. This kind of propaganda was supposed to promote the alleged civilisational superiority of the peaceful social patterns practiced in the Socialist Bloc. Communist propagandists attempted to persuade Poles that the cultural and social isolation from American influences prevented Poland from the new wave of a Nazi-like American threat.

The below presented examples of the propaganda attempts to compare the aggressive behaviour of racist Americans to the criminal actions taken by Nazi Germany and illustrate well the trajectory of this propaganda pattern in time. First of all, in the late 1940s communist press started to inform its readers about the mass killing of blacks in the USA performed by American Nazis. For instance, in March 1948 *Głos Robotniczy* announced: 'Nazi racism is raging in the state of Mississippi'.<sup>797</sup> In this text Polish press readers were informed of the terrible acts of Nazi-like violence practiced by white Americans against black people in one particular state of the USA. Later in 1951, the same newspaper in an anonymous text clearly suggested that with their crimes

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USA there were up to six million members of the KKK) onwards. All the KKK activists were equipped with characteristic costumes including white hoods covering the faces of the assailants. The KKK openly called for the purification of American society.

<sup>797</sup> GR, 06.03.1948

American fascists appeared in the 'Racist savagery of the USA'.<sup>798</sup> This article created an image of American fascist crimes as phenomenon characteristic not to one single state, but to most regions of the USA.

The suggestion that the wave of fascist crimes against black inhabitants of the USA was spreading across the USA was also published in April 1952 in an article informing readers that KKK activity was so violent that the German Nazi racists moved to the USA to be trained by Americans.<sup>799</sup> Finally, in 1956 one may talk about the culmination of the propaganda tendency of showing the problem of the Nazi character and inspiration of American violent racism as a phenomenon universal for the entire USA. This culmination had a form of a large drawing, 'Racism' by Bronisław Linke, printed on the back cover of the *Szpilki* magazine in October 1956.<sup>800</sup> This picture presented a couple of African-American pupils terrorised by an American policeman who was about to beat them with his club. The shape of the shadow of the policeman towering above the pupils had the form of Adolf Hitler's face. Using this symbol of the German threat and terror Linke intended to ensure the readers of *Szpilki* that the waves of brutal racist persecutions practiced in North America had the same character and posed an equal threat to the USA (and beyond) as Nazi terror did just seventeen years before. What is important is that the drawing by Linke serves as a good example of a much wider tendency of depicting officers of American police forces and the army as Nazi-like oppressors, imagies which were regularly used by communist media especially in the Stalinist period.

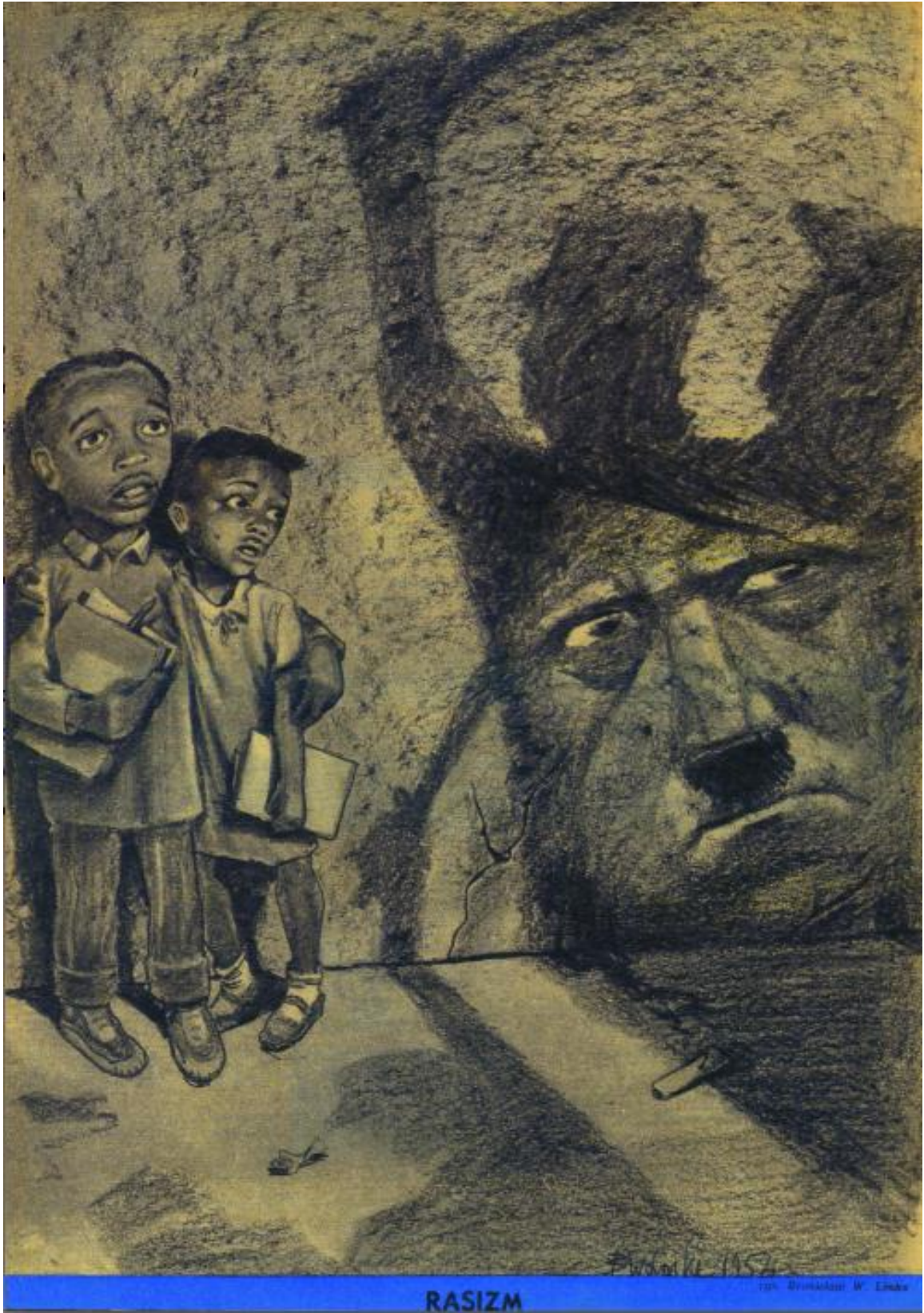
Apart from alarming readers to the intensity and luridness of the racist crimes committed by the KKK in the USA, the communist press stressed the information that this fascist organisation had a substantial impact on the American internal policy.

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<sup>798</sup> GR, 02.12.1951

<sup>799</sup> GR, 08.04.1952

<sup>800</sup> SZP, 30.09.1956; Picture 33



Picture 33

## Racism – a common social standard supported by the American authorities

In the text from September 1948 an anonymous journalist wrote in *Głos Robotniczy*: *'The murders from the Ku Klux Klan are running the bloody elections in the South of the USA'*. The text suggested that the terror unleashed by the KKK in southern states helped several governors to be elected. Later on, communist media suggested that not only local authorities, but even the American president was involved in running a racist policy. Here the case of Paul Robeson, a popular African-American singer, was used to show the real face of President Truman.

First of all, the story of Paul Robeson served the communist propaganda as a symbol of the civilisation superiority of the Socialist Bloc over the USA. While in May of 1949 *Trybuna Ludu*<sup>801</sup> informed readers about a warm welcome and crowds of enthusiasts attending Robeson's concert in Warsaw, only three months later *Głos Robotniczy* announced the tragic event: *'The brutal assault of American fascists on Paul Robeson. The murders from the Ku Klux Klan carried out a massacre on the crowd of listeners of the great singer'*.<sup>802</sup> Finally, one year later in August 1950 an article printed in *Głos Robotniczy* stressed the fact that President Truman decided to deprive Paul Robeson of his passport to stop his activity in the international movement for peace.<sup>803</sup>

While in the above text the American president was presented as a politician taking a single racist decision, with his drawing 'The portrait of President Truman'<sup>804</sup> Walerian Borowczyk<sup>805</sup> used the image of the American leader as an universal symbol of general agreement given by the highest central authorities to practice racist violence in the USA.

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<sup>801</sup> TL, 31.05.1949

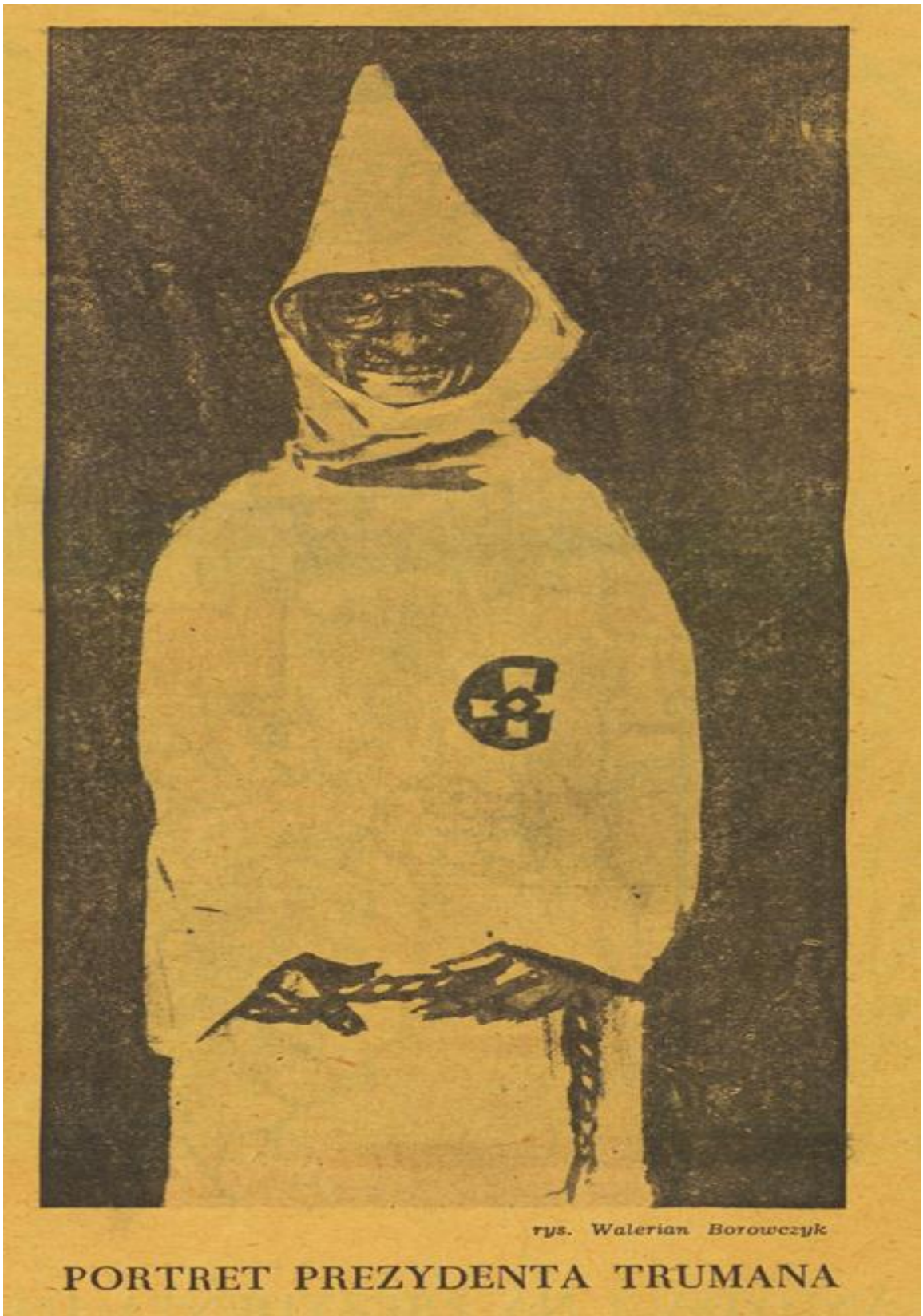
<sup>802</sup> GR, 30.08.1949

<sup>803</sup> GR, 18.08.1950

<sup>804</sup> SZP, 06.04.1952; Picture 34

<sup>805</sup> Walerian Borowczyk (1923-2006), an eminent Polish postwar artist, director and one of the founders of the Polish school of posters who had no communist background.





Picture 34

The above discussed tactic of stressing the civilisation and social backwardness of the USA combined with inducing in Polish readers the depressing consequences of American racism was also used to support the propaganda scenery of particular local political events.

### **American racism and elections in Poland**

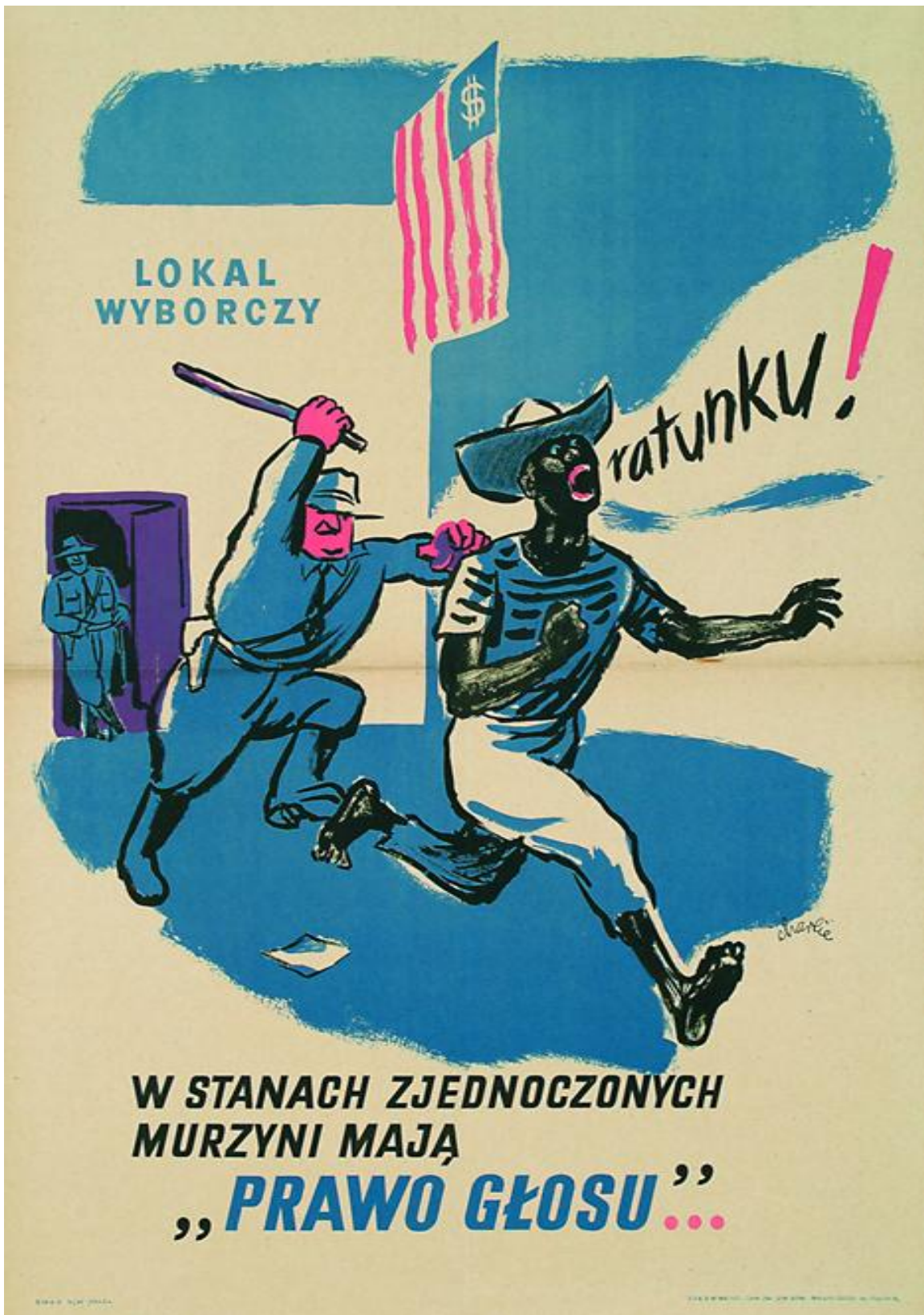
In October 1952, the year of the second parliamentary elections after 1947, when power was practically seized by the communist regime, this tactic was used to promote the common right to vote, which officially functioned in every country of the Socialist Bloc. While in Poland officially every adult citizen could vote, the propaganda posters and drawings alerted inhabitants that in the USA African-Americans were deprived of this fundamental civil right. As *Głos Robotniczy* informed readers in October 1952, 'The community of blacks in the USA (over 15 million people) is a subject of constant brutal racial discrimination. In southern states the blacks are often imprisoned just for their eagerness to take part in elections'.<sup>806</sup>

In 1952 the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the PZPR distributed over 20,000 copies of a poster entitled 'In the USA the blacks have no right to vote' prepared by Karol Ferster.<sup>807</sup> This ironic title referred to the scene where the American Policeman, armed with a club, was chasing and beating a poorly dressed black person who entered the voting office. The irony of the text placed on the poster was based on the game of words. In Polish one word – 'głos' stands both for the 'vote' and for the 'voice'. Consequently, according to Ferster the words 'help me' screamed by the chased African-American were the only 'voice' the black person as allowed to express in elections. This poster conveyed that Poles owed the communist regime for all the civil rights and freedoms they enjoyed, which under capitalist rule would be threatened just as the basic human rights of African-Americans were in the USA.

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<sup>806</sup> GR, 13.10.1952

<sup>807</sup> MPW, Pl.8640/1; Picture 35



Picture 35



Simultaneously with the tactic of confronting Polish readers with the results of commonly practiced violence, as well as the disturbing consequences of a broad approval for brutality present in American public life, the communist propaganda agents provided their receivers with texts offering explanations of such drastic behaviour of Americans. The aim of those publications was to convince the readers that the nature of the 'violent attitude' of Americans was not individual, but rather a systemic one having its roots in the violent-like character of institutions shaping the social attitude of young generations of Americans.

### **1.1 'Americans educate criminals'**

Among the institutions that were regularly accused by communist journalists and writers of encouraging young generations of Americans to resort to violence was the American educational system. According to Polish governmental media a violent-like profile of American schools was to a large extent determined by the pressure generated by the US Army.

In November 1951 the propaganda radio programme 'Frequency 49' announced that General Eisenhower, in the preface to the popular booklet *American Education*, agitated for intensifying military-like training in schools to prepare pupils and students to take part in potential conflicts.<sup>808</sup> The same programme directly accused the US's highest educational council of educating criminals. The radio programme stated that following Eisenhower's suggestion this institution was appealing to American parents: 'Remember, we need slayers and only slayers. The best age for a proper slayer is 18'.

Later in April 1952 *Głos Robotniczy* published a short anonymous text entitled 'In the school of slayers', which addressed the problem of an educational programme implemented in an 'elite school for capitalists' youth in California'.<sup>809</sup> According to the text, the young male pupils of the school were trained in the professional use of different kinds of weapons with the intention of turning boys into soldiers. The picture

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<sup>808</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 17.11.1951

<sup>809</sup> GR, 23.04.1952

attached to the text presented a group of boys training with rifles. Both the picture and the text reminded readers of similar training implemented within Hitler-Jugend, especially active in the final stage of World War Two. The text clearly suggested that the aggressive behaviour of young Americans derived from implementing Nazi educational patterns in American schools.

The problem of aggressive and war-like forms of education signalled by the above presented radio programme and press article was a central point of another essay by Albert E. Kahn edited by *Czytelnik* publishing house in 1954.<sup>810</sup> His book, *The Game of Death*, had the form of a complex attack inflicted against the American educational system. Kahn accused all American educational institutions of being formatted strictly in order to 'produce' candidates for ruthless criminals. In Kahn's view, after such an aggressive and pro-military training every American student could be smoothly turned into violent ready-made American soldiers. Kahn examined methods of accustoming pupils and students with violence and resorting to it concluding that the entire educational path of an average American student was directly subordinated to the 'need for slayers' claimed by the US Army.<sup>811</sup>

In his book, Kahn also investigated a cultural factor stimulating the aggressive behaviour of American society. Examining comic books and violent movies that encouraged American teenagers to commit crimes the writer diagnosed the problem of a negative influence American culture had on youth in the USA.<sup>812</sup> In Kahn's words, the saturation of cruel scenes present in most of the comic books and Hollywood productions resulted in the increase of the amount of crimes committed in the USA. This kind of interpretation of the wave of postwar banditry was also incorporated by communist propagandists addressing the problem of hooliganism in Poland.

## **2. American movies and comic books – a dangerous criminal inspiration for local hooligans**

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<sup>810</sup> A.E.Kahn, *Zabawa w śmierć*, Warszawa 1954

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 72-88

<sup>812</sup> A.E.Kahn, *op.cit.*, pp. 89-112

In the communist propaganda discourse the important problem of hooliganism, similar to the issue of violent racism, was presented as a phenomenon totally unfamiliar to the communist social order. Its presence in the postwar socialist reality was presented as an effect of the harmful impact of American culture. Yet, as a short sketch of local context of this issue shows, this official interpretation of hooliganism in Poland was detached from reality.

## 2.1 Hooliganism in postwar Poland

The problem of juvenile delinquency in postwar Poland belonged to important social issues seriously disturbing the inhabitants of cities and its suburbs. As Jerzy Eisler puts it in his essay on everyday life in Warsaw in the 1950s, the problem of local hooliganism one should link with the intensive influx of the non-qualified workers commuting to the capital city from the surrounding small cities like Wołomin.<sup>813</sup> Working in Warsaw those young ill-educated people were eager to socialise with local criminals and hooligans.<sup>814</sup> According to Eisler, in the first half of the 1950s this social phenomenon reached the size of a plague.

One may realise how serious this problem was reading the diary of Leopold Tyrmand, one of the most interesting sources of the social and cultural life of Poland in the 1950s. Tyrmand was a popular Polish writer, journalist and propagator of jazz.<sup>815</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> January 1954 the writer placed his reflections on the problem of hooliganism in Poland in his diary. Among those reflections there was a description of horrible accidents at the outskirts of Warsaw where a group of young hooligans threw a disabled person from one train directly under the wheels of another one.<sup>816</sup> Furthermore, Tyrmand noted information on frequent attacks with knives performed by hooligans on passengers waiting for the train on platforms, and a terrifying incident of throwing

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<sup>813</sup> J. Eisler, *Życie codzienne w Warszawie w okresie planu sześcioletniego* [in:] *Polska 1944/45-1989. Życie codzienne w Polsce w latach 1945-1955*, vol.5, ed. J. Eisler, Warszawa 2001, pp. 32-33

<sup>814</sup> *Loc.cit.*

<sup>815</sup> Leopold Tyrmand (1920-1985)

<sup>816</sup> L. Tyrmand, *Dziennik 1954*, Warszawa 2011, p. 162

stones by hooligans at an ambulance carrying a wounded person.<sup>817</sup> Finally, Tyrmand noted that even the inhabitants of decent and usually safe districts of Warsaw, such as Mokotów and Saska Kępa, people were afraid to leave their houses after dark as the risk of being robbed or attacked by violent hooligans was too high.<sup>818</sup>

Apart from Warsaw Tyrmand also noted terrifying crimes committed in Poznań, where a group of young criminals regularly robbed young pupils and raped girls as young as six years old. What is important in this last case is that the rapists turned out to be students of the Pedagogical High School. This fact clearly shows that the problem of hooliganism in postwar Poland was not limited to the ill-educated part of society.<sup>819</sup>

What is important is that in his diary Tyrmand expressed his doubts as to whether the communist authorities were in fact eager to solve the problem of hooliganism. The writer suggested that unless the scale of hooliganism endangered the state institutions, the atmosphere of anarchy and lawlessness fomented by the activity of young criminals was actually a desirable part of governance in the totalitarian country.<sup>820</sup> Tyrmand supported his conclusion by arguing that while the secret police in postwar Poland was very efficient, the regular police was terribly weak giving society only an illusion of protection.

This convincing argumentation encourages me to presume that the decision of leaving the problem of hooliganism unsolved could have more purposes than only fomenting the general atmosphere of anxiety within society. This issue gave the communist authorities a perfect pretext to communicate to media receivers the existence of particular threats – the official sources of juvenile delinquency. One such threat was the evil influence of American culture, especially movies and comic books which were accused of inspiring local hooligans.

## **2.2 The graphic instruction of violence**

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<sup>817</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>818</sup> Ibid, p. 163

<sup>819</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>820</sup> Ibid, pp. 163-165

Soon after the end of World War Two the negative influence of American culture on Polish youth was recognised by communist authorities as a serious problem the government should deal with. For instance, in the autumn of 1947 Aleksander Kowalski, the First Secretary of the PPR in Warsaw, stated in a speech:

*'(...) We must fight ideologically for our youth, we must stop the penetration of our young generation by Americanism through cinema and literature. Decided steps in this matter are necessary'*.<sup>821</sup>

The harsh criticism towards American culture, mainly movies and music, in communist Poland was not a local phenomenon. A similar attitude may be noticed when reading the analyses of the nature of European anti-Americanism ranging the interwar period. For instance, in Germany after 1918 the intensive debate on contestation (as well as on admiration) of American culture rolled mainly along literature, fashion, music and films.<sup>822</sup> As Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht put it *'American films, jazz, and swing, although officially forbidden by the Reichsleitung, remained in vogue until the end of the war, and not only in dance halls but even, in fact especially, in the frontline trenches of the Wehrmacht advertising, and movies'*.<sup>823</sup> The author argues that in Eastern Europe the communist anti-Americanism regularly led to cultural antagonism. Here we can discern the analytical viability of the former Warsaw Pact states. In her view the Czechoslovakian anti-Americanism in the communist era to a large extent was based on *'state-ordered propaganda fuelled by official political warfare that extended to both the political and cultural sectors. It focused on an aversion to popular culture as well as a traditional sentiment of Slav superiority vis-a-vis Western materialism'*.<sup>824</sup>

In her important study on German anti-Americanism, Uta Poiger deepened Gienow-Hecht's interpretation. In her words, when after World War Two the American authorities attempted to convince Germans that the USA represented a high culture,

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<sup>821</sup> *Stenogram plenum KC PPR 11 X 1947*, ed. J. Jakubowski, W Kowalski, ARR, vol.11, Warszawa 1988, p. 305 – quoted after M. Zaremba, *Komunizm*, p. 178

<sup>822</sup>J. C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Always Blame the Americans: Anti-Americanism in Europe in the Twentieth Century* [in:] *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (October 2006), p. 1075

<sup>823</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1077

<sup>824</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1087

both the East and West German officials 'grew increasingly worried about the impact that American movies, jazz, and boogie-woogie had on German youth'.<sup>825</sup> In Eastern Germany the propaganda authorities invested a lot of energy into exploiting the hostility toward American culture that existed in East and West Germany. It was especially during and after the uprising in Berlin in the summer of 1953 that the communist propaganda stressed the direct link between American culture, juvenile delinquency and political deviance that occurred on the streets of the capital city of Eastern Germany.<sup>826</sup>

In Poland, the mechanism of receiving violent inspiration by American culture was presented with the example of the young hooligans in the USA. The motif of young American criminals inspired by comic books and violent movies started to appear in communist media edited in Poland at least in the early 1950s. One of the first and the most iconic examples of this thread in the communist propaganda was an anonymous poster entitled 'This is how the American movie educates', prepared and distributed in Poland in 1951 by the *Prasa* editorial house affiliated to the PZPR.<sup>827</sup>

The poster presented the consequences of a visit of two teenagers to the cinema. It was divided into two parts showing the behaviour of the boys while entering and leaving the cinema. From the movie advertisement placed in the top of the propaganda poster one could see that the film contained scenes of extreme violence.

While in the first part of the poster the boys politely purchased their tickets, in the second part of the artwork they violently attacked the cashier with a gun. The poster implied that with their brutal assault the teenagers copied one of the scenes and types of ruthless behaviour they had just observed in the cinema.

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<sup>825</sup> U. Poiger, *Jazz, rock, and rebels: cold war politics and American culture in a divided Germany*, 2000, pp. 32-33

<sup>826</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33

<sup>827</sup> MPW, Pl.26344/1; Picture 36

# AMERYKAŃSKI FILM WYCHOWUJE



**PRZED SEANSEM  
PROSZĘ O 2 BILETY**

**PO SEANSIE  
RĘCE DO GÓRY!**

ODZIAŁ WYDAWNICTW ARTYSTYCZNO-SAMODZIELNYCH R.Z.W., WARSZAWA

STO, ZAPŁACIŁAM NA 4 NAWA K.B.N.S. ZAPŁACIŁAM NA 2 DN N/SE 31. NAWA 10100 - 2 0 0800 ZWOLUK.00 POGATU NA 06 Z DN ATZ 11

Picture 36

The title of the movie (The life and Dollar) was placed on the poster in Polish, which suggests that the picture symbolised the phenomenon of the brutalisation of Polish youth by American cinematography. Undoubtedly the mass distribution (over 10,000 copies) of such a poster in communist Poland aimed at deterring Polish parents from letting their children watch American movies which were shown in Polish cinemas.

The disturbing vision of American movies and their negative impact on youth presented by the above analysed poster was also fomented by press articles. For instance, in March 1950 an anonymous article published in *Głos Robotniczy*, a review of the Canadian Hollywood-like movie 'A city of whispers' presented it as a film 'saturated with scenes of criminal fights which aimed at instilling violent social patterns within the viewers, at educating criminals, gangsters, deviants, rapist and sadists'.<sup>828</sup> With this article its author demanded to stop showing this movie in local cinemas, arguing that few a months earlier a student from Łódź killed his colleague after watching another American movie, 'The city of lawlessness'. Those kinds of arguments were supposed to materialise the 'American cultural threat' and persuade Poles of its palpability.

The same pattern of deterring Polish society from products of American culture was used in an anonymous text published in January 1951 in *Głos Szczeciński*. The author of this article stated that: '*American cinema was involved in the activity of capitalist monopolists who use films to drug societies, to promote wars and to poison the consciousness of workers*'.<sup>829</sup>

The efficiency of underlining the threatening consequences of watching American films was far from expected. As Stefan Korboński<sup>830</sup> mentioned in his memoir: 'Crowds of Poles attended every American movie treating them as kermises. One had to wait several hours in line to buy the ticket or purchase it from a tout. Almost no one was interested in Soviet movies'.<sup>831</sup> A similar observation was recorded in the memory of Adam Mikłaszewski, who remembered that with his colleagues from college and his

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<sup>828</sup> GR, 15.03.1950

<sup>829</sup> GSZ, 19.01.1951

<sup>830</sup> Stefan Korboński (1901-1989) - Polish agrarian activist, one of the leaders of the PSL and a close collaborator of Stanisław Mikołajczyk

<sup>831</sup> S.Korboński, *W imieniu Kremla*, Paryż 1956, p .83



studies only attended American movies: 'The Polish and Soviet productions from the Stalinist period were terribly boring; they contained far too much ideology. To attend especially Soviet movies was a waste of money'.<sup>832</sup>

In a similar tone, an anonymous text published in *Głos Robotniczy* in March 1951 accused the popular comic books - another symbol of American popular culture - of turning their young readers into violent criminals. The short article entitled, 'From comic book to crime', noted that in the USA this type of literature, saturated with drawings and short text promoting the practice of violence, was published in the daily print run of over two million papers.<sup>833</sup> The text informed readers that in many cases the compulsive reading of comic books lead American youth to commit real crimes, including murder. The same alarming vision of the threatening influence comic books could have on the social attitude of young Americans was stressed with the drawing by an anonymous cartoonist using the nickname Baro, published in *Szpilki* in January 1952. The drawing presented two young boys who violently barged into one of the American offices using guns. After binding and gagging an officer who they came across inside the office, the boys continued reading the comic book in order to learn how to finish their crime. Both the text and the drawing, through stressing the high potential of inspiring the readers of American comic books to commit crimes, attempted to deter the younger Polish generation from reading comic books and consequently from succumbing to their dangerous influence.

The above presented propaganda method of linking the phenomenon of hooliganism with its American origins seems to be homogenised and flat. Yet, looking at the way this problem was pictured in propaganda movies across the 1950s one may recognise significant changes in the trajectory of the visual discussion of the nature of juvenile delinquency. Here, three cases of such movies serve as good examples.

### **2.3 The evolution of the propaganda explanation of hooliganism**

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<sup>832</sup> Interview with Adam Mikłaszewski, 20.04.2014

<sup>833</sup> GR, 26.03.1951

First of all, in the PKF episode from April 1953 entitled 'Observed by the operator', hooliganism was presented as a social attitude directly inspired by American culture – particularly by films, comic books and fashion.<sup>834</sup> The movie had a rather satirical character presenting Polish youth inspired by American culture as spoiled brats and as spongers giving bad example to socialist youth avoiding any work or other forms of engagement in rebuilding the state.

Two years later the issue of brutal attacks performed by young males became the main theme of the short documentary movie entitled 'Attention, hooligans!' directed by Jerzy Hoffman and Edward Skórzewski.<sup>835</sup> Both Polish moviemakers were young graduates of the Soviet Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography. Starting from 1954 this tandem of directors prepared a number of documentary movies directed at the order of the government. Their early movies contributed to the set of documents informally called 'the black series of Polish documentary movies', which were dedicated to the issues of social pathologies, prostitution and hooliganism. All these phenomenon were consistently dissembled by the optimistic propaganda visual narrative characteristic for social realism of the late 1940s and the first half of the 1950s.

The movie 'Attention, hooligans!' opened a new kind of critical narrative on this phenomenon in Polish documentary. What is important is that although in this movie the young criminals attacked random pedestrians with knives in dark streets, these were pictured in the identical characteristic outfit as those from the PKF episode from 1953, not a single suggestion of the American inspiration of this violent behaviour was placed in the film. The movie rather stressed poverty, alcoholism and unemployment as central foundations of hooliganism.

A similar set of the decidedly non-American factors explaining the violent behaviour of young people was indicated two years later in the documentary movie 'People from the empty zone' by Kazimierz Karabasz and Władysław Ślesicki.<sup>836</sup> This film, another classic example of the 'black series' was prepared by young graduates of the

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<sup>834</sup> PKF, 17/53, 22.04.1953

<sup>835</sup> 'Uwaga, chuligani!', direction – Jerzy Hoffman, Edward Skórzewski

<sup>836</sup> 'Ludzie z pustego obszaru', direction – Kazimierz Karabasz and Władysław Ślesicki

National Higher School of Film, Television and Theatre in Łódź. Karabasz, one of the legends and founders of the Polish school of documentary, elaborated his own directional style, which later, and still today, imposes a trademark to the several generations of Polish documentary makers. Directing the 'People from the empty zone' young moviemakers stressed the direct link between alcoholism and poverty of young inhabitants of Warsaw and their aggressive behaviour. Furthermore, they indicated the practical lack of attractive cultural offerings that could drag them away from the environment encouraging young people lost in huge cities to commit crimes.

Analysing all the articles, drawings, movies, posters and books discussed in this chapter one may diagnose one general target those pieces of propaganda were supposed to reach. They stressed the degeneration and brutalisation of the American moral code. Communist propaganda in Poland (as well as in the entire Socialist Bloc) persuaded its receivers that the new type of paramilitary education practiced in the USA, together with the deluge of popular culture with literature and films promoting brutal behavior, significantly redefined the ethical principles of the average American. Communist media induced its viewers that the pro-violent culture led to replacing the general rule of law with a sort of street justice.

Later, communist press and radio pointed to the tangibility of this form of the 'American threat' stressing that this 'savagery', a dangerous shift in moral standards, affected not only the youth living in the USA. Numerous radio broadcasts and press articles emphasised that this American ethical code, based on violence, was systematically promoted by such 'anti-Polish media' as the radio programme 'The Voice of America' (VOA)<sup>837</sup> and 'The Radio Free Europe' (RFE).<sup>838</sup> Listening to programmes transmitted by those broadcasters was strictly prohibited and severely punished.<sup>839</sup> The signal of the VOA and the RFE emitted in Poland from transmitters located in Western

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<sup>837</sup> VOA - the VOA was the official external broadcast institution of the United States federal government which started broadcasting in Poland in 1942

<sup>838</sup> RFE - the RFE was established in 1949 as an institution financed by the American Congress. The main mission of RFE was 'promotion of the democratic values and institutions through spreading the real information and ideas'.

<sup>839</sup> Machcewicz P., *Monachijska menażeria. Walka z Radiem Wolna Europa*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 81-87

Europe was constantly silenced by local governmental broadcasters.<sup>840</sup> Despite this tactic, in numerous Polish houses the programmes transmitted by the RFE and the VOA were illicitly listened to by millions of Poles. Consequently, both broadcasters had a significant impact on shaping the political consciousness of a large part of Polish society.

One of the methods of fighting the popularity of the RFE and the VOA was to constantly accuse both broadcasters of running subversive activity.<sup>841</sup> Both the press and the radio controlled by the communist regime started to blame the VOA and the RFE for being directly responsible for the disturbing increase of the plague of violence and juvenile delinquency in Poland. In this way the propaganda officers attempted to convince press readers and radio listeners that it was the anti-Polish activity of the hostile capitalist propaganda that was responsible for the fearful incidents. At the same time, the communist media attempted to hide such problems as common poverty and unemployment in Poland, the factual reasons and factors stimulating the wave of juvenile banditry, behind the anti-American propaganda. The analysis of the exemplar case of the programme 'Frequency 49' dedicated to the problem of hooliganism gives us a limited insight into the efficiency of this tactic.

#### **2.4 The reception of the cultural thread in anti-American discourse**

The episode of 'Frequency 49' from March 1952 contained quotations taken from four letters sent to Polish Radio in reaction to the problem of hooliganism.<sup>842</sup> The opening quotation was taken from a letter written by three female cashiers from the train station in Marki, a suburb of Warsaw. In their letter, the three ladies described acts of vandalism which took place at the train station including breaking banks and destroying timetables. What threatened the cashiers the most, however, were the brutal assaults on the railway offices organised by local hooligans. The cashiers stressed how terrorised they were while violent juveniles attempted to burn their office down.

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<sup>840</sup> Ibid, pp. 72-78

<sup>841</sup> Ibid, pp. 88-93

<sup>842</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 02.03.1952

According to the programme, Polish Radio received numerous similar letters from listeners alarmed by acts of hooliganism in many other cities.

After informing listeners on how serious the problem of hooliganism was, the authors of the programme focused their attention on letters sent by authors who were astonished with such brutal acts of vandalism taking place in socialist Poland. For instance, Weronika Dufaj, a student from Mysłowice, Upper Silesia, wrote to the radio programme that such incidents should not take place in the *'country that is taking so much care about the youth, its education, health and free time'*. In the final sentence of her letter, Dufaj formulated the assumption: *'Perhaps this part of our youth class adversaries has so weak a character that they are influenced by the enemies of our socialist system?'*<sup>843</sup>

In the following part of the broadcast its author confirmed to the radio listeners that Dufaj correctly recognised the reason of the activity of hooligans. The voiceover of 'Frequency 49' firmly stated that the brutal behaviour of the juvenile bandits derived from listening to the 'imperialistic radio broadcasters'. The lector accused the 'Western propaganda' of the constant demoralisation of Polish youth, of promoting alcoholism, hooliganism and other forms of anti-social behaviour. As proof, the presenter quoted a short section of a letter sent to Polish Radio by an anonymous teenager from Zgierz, a small town near Łódź. The young male, using the nickname 'The eaglet of Anders', wrote to the radio programme that while he was listening to the programmes of the VOA praising the 'reign of an atom and a fist in the USA', he felt encouraged to resort to violence on a local level. Referring to the letter from Zgierz, the speaker continued to attack the 'capitalist propaganda' for having a dangerous influence on Polish youth through the promotion of a violent fascist-like type of morality. Finally, the radio presenter quoted a letter sent by Tomasz Rutkowski, a young ZMP<sup>844</sup> activist, who stated that thanks to the state radio and press he realised how big the local scale of

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<sup>843</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>844</sup> Union or Association of Polish Youth (ZMP) - Polish communist youth organisation subordinated to the PPR and later to the PZPR. ZMP existed between 1948 and 1956. The main task of the ZMP was to practice the political indoctrination within the young part of Polish postwar society.

American-like juvenile banditry was. In his letter Rutkowski declared a willingness to fight all the symptoms of hooliganism that he came across.

The above presented exemplar programme shows the eagerness of radio listeners to follow the official propaganda explanation of the nature and 'American' inspiration of the wave of hooliganism disturbing Polish society. The last letter quoted in the programme also shows the potential to mobilise society in the common fight against the 'foreign capitalist threat'.

On the other hand, Leopold Tyrmand in his previously mentioned diary disagreed with the official explanation of the problem of hooliganism. Although he did not make any reference to the propaganda version of American roots of this social phenomenon in his diary, he disqualified the interpretation of hooliganism as the so-called 'legacy of capitalism', which was an integral part of the anti-American discourse. In Tyrmand's words, this interpretation was absolutely false since most of the juvenile criminals in the mid-1950s had no experience of capitalism. At no point of his interpretation of hooliganism in postwar Poland did Tyrmand mention the evil impact of violent American culture or illegal radio programmes. The writer concluded rather that the criminal behaviour of young people could derive from their migration to big cities in search of work, which resulted in detachment from their homes, families, customs and other factors that would naturally stop them from committing crimes.

Furthermore, in my interviews with Adam Miłośzewski and Łucja Skierska I noticed a skeptical attitude to the propagandists' attempts to burden American violent culture with the responsibility for juvenile banditry. All these three persons were rather convinced that this kind of criminality that they came across in Gdansk, Grudziądz and Łódź derived directly from poverty. As Skierska stated in the interview:

*'The hooligans that I saw in Grudziądz were rather born into poor workers' families. I don't think those hooligans or their families could afford to purchase a radio and listen to the Radio Free Europe'.<sup>845</sup>*

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<sup>845</sup> Interview with Łucja Skierska, 23.12.2012

Adam Miłkaszewski had a very similar observation. In his view the RFE and VOA was rather listened to by intellectual workers:

*'In the design office where I worked there was a custom that every morning all the engineers shared the news from the RFE they were able to listen to the previous evening or night, when the process of jamming the radio signal was less effective'*.<sup>846</sup>

## **Conclusion**

As one may conclude reading the above examination of sources the anti-American discourse on violence functioned in propaganda as a vivid supplement to the figure of the 'American economic threat'. The fact that the 'cultural' motif was less intensively exploited in press, radio and propaganda movies does not mean that this part of propaganda had no influence on Polish society. Since most Poles had very limited access to other sources of information other than communist ones, and the system of education was almost totally dominated by the communist regime, the racist and violent image of the USA was transmitted to Polish media receivers in almost non-alternative conditions.

The long-lasting results of the repetition of this kind of anti-American propaganda one may find, for instance, in several scenes of one of the most popular comedies in the history of Polish cinematography, 'Love or Let Go' from 1977. The director of this movie, Sylwester Chęciński, incorporated in his work a set of stereotypes and social motifs that were commonly recognisable within Polish society. Among these themes there was also an image of the USA as a state where everyday life was saturated with crimes. The action of the film takes place in the second half of the 1970s. In this movie, two grandfathers are traveling to the USA to visit a brother of one of them. They are accompanied by their adult granddaughter. During the cruise on the transatlantic ship the grandfathers have a conversation with a young Polish lady who warns them to take care of their granddaughter since the USA is a country where crimes are committed every day. Furthermore, the lady enumerates types of crimes including kidnaping, rape,

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<sup>846</sup> Interview with Adam Miłkaszewski, 20.04.2014

the activity of gangsters, drug criminals and aggressive black people as threats one may face on a daily basis in New York. Finally, the lady presents this city as a place where around 4,000 rapes take place every year and where one should not leave his house after dark.

Despite the comic character of the movie the above presented scene and the panicked reaction of the grandfathers after the granddaughter, who decides to visit the city on her own, vanishes later in the movie shows how influential the stereotype of violent Americans, which was reinforced by communist propaganda since the late 1940s, was.

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The analysis of the economic, social and cultural components of the anti-American propaganda discourse examined in the previous two chapters show that the strategy of burdening the USA with the responsibility of numerous threats disturbing Polish society had several short- and long-range aims. To the latter group of the communist media targets belonged probably the most important one, that is to encumber the American government for fomenting the fear of a Third World War, which the postwar atmosphere was saturated with. As the archival research made for the purpose of this thesis shows, the phantom of a new global conflict was, next to the already discussed material concerns, one of the most serious and common factors increasing the sense of insecurity within the postwar society of Poland. The communist propaganda strategy of suggesting to Polish society that only the USA and its capitalist allies strove for provoking the outbreak of a Third World War could already be noticed reading the previous chapters. This strategy was especially visible in the press articles, caricatures and propaganda films stressing the war-like character of the American economy, culture and education. In the next chapter of this thesis, however, the problem of the media discourse charging the USA with direct responsibility for pushing the entire world to the brink of a global conflict constitutes the core of the historical analysis. What is even more important is that the final chapter of my thesis addresses



the vital issue of the ability of the communist propagandists to control the emotion of fear of war within Polish postwar society.

## CHAPTER VI

### The interwar state of mind. The fear of a new global conflict and the nuclear threat in the communist propaganda (1945-1956)

*Generals gathered in their masses  
Just like witches at black masses  
Evil minds that plot destruction  
Sorcerers of death's construction  
In the fields the bodies burning  
As the war machine keeps turning  
Death and hatred to mankind  
Poisoning their brainwashed minds*

Terence Butler<sup>847</sup>

After the end of World War Two some aspects of war were not over. In March of 1945 Primo Levi,<sup>848</sup> a survivor of Auschwitz, met a Polish lawyer who told him that in fact the war was not over. The fact that the situation took place in the part of Poland where military clashes had ceased almost two months before did not change the perception of the lawyer.<sup>849</sup> In a similar vein the Polish journalist and writer Magdalena Grzebałkowska points in an interview promoting her recent book<sup>850</sup> that none of the protagonist of her reportages recognised the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1945 as the end of the war.<sup>851</sup> War continued to live in the social imagination of Poles: as a fear. The threat of the next global conflict played a central role in stimulating this atmosphere. War continued to live in the social imagination: as a threat. Reading the previous chapters examining the communist propaganda attempts to manage various types of foreign dangers one could

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<sup>847</sup> The quotation is taken from the lyrics of the song 'War pigs' by British band Black Sabbath. The text was written in 1968 by Terence Buttler, bass player and lyricist of the band. The text of this anti-war song expressed the protest against the war in Vietnam as well as a general protest against the idea of war.

<sup>848</sup> Primo Levi (1919-1987) – famous Italian chemist and writer, author of the famous novel *If This Is a Man*, an account of the year the writer spent as a prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp.

<sup>849</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, p. 555

<sup>850</sup> M. Grzebałkowska, *1945. Wojna i pokój*, Warszawa 2015

<sup>851</sup> <http://www.dwutygodnik.com/arttykul/5845-nudzi-mnie-wielka-historia.html> - retrived 01.05.2015

notice that propagandists exploiting numerous aspects of postwar foreign perils investigated so far regularly also referred to the fear of the next war.

The symptoms of fear of the next world conflict that appeared after 1945 must be analysed within the broader context of war anxieties in the twentieth century European and global history. Looking at the trajectory of this phenomenon one may conclude that its intensification either followed the end of the world war or appeared as a spectre of a forthcoming global conflict. The first intensive wave of the early postwar war panic emerged from the phantom of the expansion of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1918. In countries like Germany or Hungary the fear of the war-like consequences of capturing the political power by the local communist parties played a role in governmental efforts to throttle the activity of local communist activists or even already established Soviet Republics (in the case of Hungary). In Poland, which was just re-established after 123 years of partition, the fear of the next devastating conflict materialised in the form of the Polish–Soviet War, the peak of which took place in August of 1920.<sup>852</sup>

The European fear of the war-provoking nature of the Bolshevik Revolution had a significant impact also on the American perception of this problem, which resulted in the already mentioned (in the third chapter) spectacular phenomenon of the Red Scare which affected a large part of local society. The common hysteria accompanying the vision of the external and internal war-like invasion of the communists was fomented by government propaganda. It was used as a powerful factor mobilising society and integrating the inhabitants of the USA with the authorities in the combat against state enemies. In other words, the fear of the first war after the traumatic Civil War (1861-1865) conflict that potentially stood behind the subversive activity of the communists was used to confirm the government's legitimacy of power.

Nearly 20 years after the end of the Great War the fear of another global conflict started oppressing European societies as a consequence of the aggressive and imperialistic policy implemented by Germany and its chancellor Adolf Hitler. This time

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<sup>852</sup> One of the best studies of this war and its social consequences is offered by Norman Davies in his essay *White Eagle, Red Star, the Polish-Soviet War, 1919-20*, London 2003

the fear of the next European conflict had a central impact on the decision of the governments of France and Great Britain to accept the act of gaining the political and military control over a large part of the territory of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany in September 1938.

One may realise how intense the atmosphere of the expectancy of a forthcoming war was when looking at the picture presenting the average British family during the trial alarm in the summer of 1938.<sup>853</sup> The family attending the city swimming pool was equipped with gas masks that were supposed to protect them in case of the characteristic gas attack of the Great War. The fact that even the people spending their time to relax were trained in how to behave in the face of a direct threat typical for war shows how intense and serious the fear of the next global conflict was on the very verge of its outbreak.

### **The fresh echoes of old fear**

As recent events show, especially the war in Ukraine, this specific threat also affects people living in relatively peaceful times. At the beginning of 2014 Polish mass media started to circulate information on the forthcoming civil war in Ukraine. Due to the intense saturation of the Polish press, TV and other social media with dramatic accounts, I decided to use this circumstance as a convenient opportunity to explore if in the current reality the media suggestions creating the phantom of a serious military conflict just outside Poland may affect local society and in what way. Searching for the best alternative to the usually used method to address this issue I decided to interview a psychologist specialised in treating phobias.

In my interview with Dr. Ewa Juszcak, an experienced psychiatrist and psychotherapist running a private office in Łódź, this expert admitted that since the beginning of 2014 she noticed an increasing number of patients visiting her office with strong symptoms of panic deriving directly from the phantom of the civil war in Ukraine. Some of them were Juszcak's regular patients who, apart from their previous

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<sup>853</sup> M. Zaremba, *Strach się bać* [in:] GW, 10.05.2012

emotional problems, were affected by the horrifying news from Ukraine circulated by media, but the majority were new patients. Interestingly, the latter group of patients, heavily disturbed by the vision of war in Ukraine, were mainly traders running their businesses in cooperation with Ukrainian partners. In Dr. Juszczak words, they were terrified of the vision of losing their source of income deriving from the deepening destabilisation of the local administration, industry and trade infrastructure in Ukraine that would be the consequences of war.

The symptoms of fear of war visible in the observations of Dr. Juszczak and deriving from the conflict which erupted in November 2013 in Kiev was also detectable in countries more distanced than Poland from Ukraine. For instance, a public opinion poll prepared in May 2014 for the ZDF, a German public TV station, showed that 71% of German society was afraid that the internal conflict in Ukraine would turn into a regular war between Ukraine and Russia. Furthermore, almost half of the people asked in this opinion poll were concerned that the European Union did not possess the means strong enough to prevent the potential aggression of Russia. Furthermore, according to the same straw poll only 5% of German respondents did not feel any fear concerning the events in Ukraine while 20% were only slightly disturbed.<sup>854</sup> Both the local Polish and general German case show the high social potential to interpret the local conflicts as having the potential to escalate and consequently to reach (directly or indirectly) and endanger territories placed out of the genuine scope of the particular war.

If almost 70 years after the end of World War Two news concerning military conflict taking place next to the Polish border elicited such a strong and common (in the German case) emotional reaction, how much stronger the reaction of Polish postwar society, directly traumatised by the horrors of World War Two and exposed to the state propaganda and popular rumours suggesting the forthcoming outbreak of a new global conflict, must have been? The subject I would like to explore in this chapter is the question of how far this specific 'interwar state of mind' within Polish society could be controlled by the communist media and how could it be included in the 'fear

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<sup>854</sup> GW, 09.05.2014

management strategy'? Finally, the analysis of the governmental response to the war panic – the propaganda of peace – and especially the investigation of its popular reception allows important conclusions to be drawn concerning the extent to which Polish postwar society identified itself with the communist anti-war ideology. This analysis sheds important light on the issue of the relationship between the social attitude and the efficiency of communist media, especially in the field of fear management.

The 'interwar state of mind' – the central concept of this chapter – to a large extent expressed the emotional condition of Polish postwar society living between the still fresh memories of World War Two that just came to an end, and the phantom of the possible outbreak of a new global conflict. There were at least two important factors stimulating the 'interwar state of mind' within the inhabitants of Poland. First of all, it was a product of the grassroots whispered propaganda transmitting the mixture of fear for a new war and hope for its outbreak. On the one hand, as it was shown in the first chapter with the example of the new Polish inhabitants of Szczecin, a large part of Polish society inhabiting the 'regained lands' were afraid that the new war would force them to leave houses they had just moved into. On the other hand, the example of the reaction of the inhabitants of Łódź to the removal of Yugoslavia from Cominform shows that in Polish society there was a potential to interpret this fact as a positive sign of a forthcoming global conflict that would result in the abolishment of the communist system in Poland. In both cases the fear and hope for the war were based on rumours. This spontaneous circulation of information constituted a tough challenge for the communist media striving to gain emotional control over Polish society.

Aside from the whispered propaganda, the 'interwar state of mind' resulted from the intense activity of the communist media claiming that the USA was determined to provoke a new global conflict inflicted against the Socialist Bloc. This strategy must be seen in the context of the general communist propaganda strategy of generating and confirming emotional and phraseological blends like enemy/friend and evil/good, which were later directly transposed to the social reception of Soviet – American relations.

Additionally, the 'interwar state of mind' within Polish society was strongly affected by the terrifying vision of the results of using the new weapon of mass destruction during the next world war – the atomic bomb. The exploration of this sort of communist propaganda discourse, based on an extremely simplified dichotomy, reached its peak during the Korean War.

### **1. War was in the air**

In the part of his study on postwar fear in Poland dedicated to the dread of the next global conflict, Marcin Zaremba compared the atmosphere characteristic to Polish society starting from May 1945 to the one that tormented Poles before the conference in Munich in late September 1938.<sup>855</sup> The expectation of the next war was common, resulting from the phenomenon of the war psychosis which evoked, for example, panic shopping performed by people trying to collect supplies in case of war.<sup>856</sup> Scrutinising the private letters intercepted by the military censorship in the second part of the 1940s Zaremba analysed the social attitude of Polish society to the threat of the next war. He diagnosed a mixture of hope and fear, resulting in the common neurosis of Poles, strengthened with the war trauma and a sense of deep confusion and despair after the defeat.

What is important is that the fear of the Third World War was not an emotion completely detached from the postwar reality. As Jonathan Walker put it, the plan to organise a new global conflict in which the coalition of Western allies together with Nazi troops would attack the USSR was prepared in London already in April of 1945.<sup>857</sup> Although neither the short nor the total variant of 'Operation unthinkable' (cryptonym of the British plan to attack the USSR) ever went into effect, the fact that such plans were

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<sup>855</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, pp. 429-446. The Munich Agreement was a settlement permitting Nazi Germany's annexation of portions of Czechoslovakia along the country's borders mainly inhabited by German speakers, for which a new territorial designation "Sudetenland" was coined. The agreement was negotiated at a conference held in Munich, Germany, among the major powers of Europe, excluding the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.

<sup>856</sup> Loc.cit

<sup>857</sup> J. Walker, *Trzecia Wojna Światowa. Tajny plan wyrwania Polski z rąk Stalina*, Kraków 2013, pp. 65-107, 109-125

seriously factored in by military experts proves that the phantom of the Third World War was not just a mere illusion and object of unjustified fear.

The first symptoms of the fear of the next war appeared already in March 1945, still before the end of World War Two in Europe. When the communist authorities announced a decree on the mobilisation of women to the auxiliary service in the Polish Army, part of Polish society interpreted this fact as a disturbing portent of a new war.<sup>858</sup> After World War Two the intensity of war rumours usually correlated with vital international events. Among the words indicated in popular rumours as the most probable date of the beginning of the Third World War there was the spring of 1949 (the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1949 (near to the establishment of both German states), 8<sup>th</sup> May 1950, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1950 (the anniversary of the outbreak of World War Two) and April 1952.<sup>859</sup>

Aside from the fear of the next war there were also hopeful rumours suggesting that the landing of General Anders<sup>860</sup> troops onto the Polish coast could start the war that would abolish the communist government. Those rumours were regularly fought by the communist propaganda, which faced their first serious challenge after the famous speech of Winston Churchill in Fulton in March 1946. This speech evoked the wave of the uncontrolled panic in Szczecin which was directly mentioned by the former prime minister of Great Britain. According to Zaremba, the same phenomenon also destabilised the trade in Warsaw and Cracow, where local societies emptied the shelves in most of the stores purchasing especially potatoes, flour, sugar and bacon, but also cloths, kerosene lamps, matches and oil.<sup>861</sup> It took more than a week to neutralise this wave of panic.

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<sup>858</sup> The most detailed analysis of the early postwar trajectory of fear and hope concerning the phantom of a Third World War in: M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, pp. 429-446

<sup>859</sup> D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *W krzywym zwierciadle*, pp. 52-53

<sup>860</sup> The success of the Polish troops led by General Anders in the Battle for Monte Cassino in May of 1944 made him one of the symbols of Polish hopes for the military abolishing the communist system after 1945. Consequently, Anders became a target of the communist propaganda attacks which aimed at lampooning the expectation that General Anders would land with his troops on the Polish coast.

<sup>861</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, pp. 429-446



Examining the social attitude towards the prospect of the Third World War one should be aware that the hope of the next global conflict was mixed with fear evoked by the fresh memory of the consequences of the last world war. Polish society facing this sort of dread attempted to neutralise it with specific wishful thinking. It was present in numerous rumours on the landing operations of the American troops in Poland that would – thanks to the surprise and the military supremacy – soon defeat the Soviet Army and dislodge it from Poland.<sup>862</sup>

In the trajectory of fear and hope, the two emotions interchangeably accompanying the anticipation of the next global conflict, the latter one started stepping out of the shadow of fear around 1948 when the Stalinist economic rules started to be introduced in Polish reality. For instance, among Polish private traders the so-called ‘battle for the trade’<sup>863</sup> increased the hope for the new conflict that would release Poland from the communist rule and the Soviet zone of influence. This atmosphere escalated to the point when the new war even became the subject of fervent orations in churches. As a private letter sent by an inhabitant of Łódź suggests, churches were full of people praying with the intention of a new war.<sup>864</sup> While in Łódź people prayed for war, the workers in Gdańsk in February of 1953 went further and openly expressed their strong demand for a new war. The inscription made on the factory wall stated: *‘Attention! The day of our victory over the communists is coming. We want war!!!’*<sup>865</sup>

On the one hand, this sort of slogan could express the workers determination to abolish the communist system, even at the expense of the new war. On the other hand, the demand of the new conflict may be interpreted simply as a sign of workers’ desperation deriving from the lack of a significant improvement in their living conditions.

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<sup>862</sup> D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *W krzywym zwierciadle*, pp. 52-53, 60-61

<sup>863</sup> Battle for trade – the informal expression for the new laws and regulations introduced in communist Poland in 1948 aiming at decreasing the size of the private sector in Polish trade.

<sup>864</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, p. 445

<sup>865</sup> AAN, Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym, syg.615, p. 45; Picture 37



Picture 37

Whichever of the above interpretation is the correct one, the declaration remained only a set of words on the wall, no further action was taken by the workers while the author of the slogan was judged and sentenced to twelve months in the labour camp.

As my analysis of communist propaganda approaches to the fear of the Third World War shows, it was dominated with constantly informing Polish society about the dangerous war-like policy of Western imperialists seeking any pretext to start a new global conflict. The tactic of using the fear of the next war through saturating the media discourse with information on the foreign factors raising the probability of the outbreak of a new world war might sound paradoxical, but only apparently.

The propaganda method of burdening especially Great Britain and the USA with the responsibility for striving to provoke the next war aimed at strengthening the image of Poland and the Socialist Bloc as the camp of peace, which was supposed to function in the consciousness of the media receivers as the synonym of the camp of security. The communist propagandists could assume that the more aggressive the image of the foreign enemy was presented in media, the safer the Poles would feel protected by communist authorities whom they would support and entrust. Consequently, soon after the end of World War Two in the communist propaganda discourse started to be saturated with texts, drawings, posters and films stressing the existence of the new dangerous group of war-provokers fomenting local conflicts. In the initial phase of this strategy one of the main roles was given to Great Britain.

### **1.1 British war provokers in Greece**

In communist media edited in Poland the civil war in Greece was one of the most intensively pictured European conflicts that broke out soon after the end of World War Two.<sup>866</sup> Reading the below discussed set of examples of press accounts commenting on

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<sup>866</sup> The roots of civil war one should trace back at least in the spring of 1941, when Nazi troops started to occupy Greece and both the king and the government were evacuated to Great Britain. In this situation the new Greek government collaborated with the German oppressor while the left-wing National Liberation Front (EAM), the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) - the military branch of EAM and the Greek Communist Party (KKE) supported the growing guerrilla movement. In the meantime, during

the war one may be surprised at how intensely the course of events in Greece was reported in the Polish communist media. The communist propagandists' decision to attempt to focus so much attention of Polish press readers on the motif of dangerous war-provoking actions practiced by London in Greece must be seen in the vital local context.

The British engagement in the civil war in Greece was used by the local propagandists in Poland to undermine the positive image Great Britain had within Polish society. England as a place where the Polish government-in-exile was located during World War Two and still after the war was commonly recognised (especially within the Polish political opposition) as a state that gave hope for abolishing the communist regime in Poland.<sup>867</sup>

As one may trace it on the example of the articles printed in the local organ of the PPR published in Łódź, from the very beginning the civil war in Greece was presented as a conflict provoked mainly by Great Britain. According to texts published in

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political summits the leaders of the USA, Great Britain and the USSR decided that after the end of the war Greece would be part of the Western zone of influence. Consequently, after the withdrawal of the Nazi troops from Greece in October 1944 the role of political stabiliser in the country was given to the British troops. Soon the new government, the coalition of the royalist, rightist and leftist parties was formed. Yet, since the British Army in Greece supported the rightist royalists and demanded the one-sided disarmament of the ELAS forces, the leftist organisations left the government which consequently collapsed. As it is indicated by experts, the royalists and the British Army rather strived to open conflict with the EAM, ELAS and KKE in order to eradicate those important players from the political scene in Greece. The aggressive propaganda performed by the Greek Communist Party on the one hand, and the wave of repressions against the leftist organisations performed with the support of British troops and the comeback of the King George II to Greece on the other hand, accelerated the outbreak of the civil war. The victory of royalists in the parliamentary elections on 31st March 1946 pushed the KKE and other leftist forces to the decision to start a guerrilla war against the governmental army. In this war the army of the royalist government was supported by forces and supplies from Great Britain. Moreover since 1947 the Greek government was supported by the material help and military instructors sent by the USA. The leftist troops were supported mainly by Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria. The three years of the destructive fights resulted in the defeat of the communist insurgents. More in: C.M.Woodhouse, *The Struggle for Greece 1941-1949*, London 2002, p. 101; H.Vlavianos, *Greece, 1941-1949. From Resistance to Civil War*, Oxford 1992, pp. 113-123; A. Brzeziński, *Grecja*, Warszawa 2002, p. 132; J. Bonarek, T. Czekalski, S. Sprawski, S. Turlej, *Historia Grecji*, Kraków 2005, pp. 598-602

<sup>867</sup> As it was discussed in the first chapter soon after the end of the 'war of wars' the communist propaganda endeavoured to overcome this positive attitude of Poles towards Great Britain with suggestions that London was supporting the resurrection of the Nazi empire. In this strategy the vivid propaganda persuasion interpreting the activity of the British Army in Greece as aggressive war-like provocation was supposed to confirm the already signalled image of Great Britain as a state the actions of which could soon initiate another devastating conflict that could potentially reach even Poland.

*Głos Robotniczy*, the political tensions that initiated the civil war were caused by the troops of the British Army that were based in Greece since displacing the German oppressor in 1944. First of all, in April 1946, when the local parliamentary elections and the referendum concerning the restitution of monarchy in Greece took place, *Głos Robotniczy* stated that '*Great Britain decided not to remove their troops from Greece under a false pretext that otherwise the civil war would break out immediately*'.<sup>868</sup> Furthermore, the Łódź daily argued that '*British agents are ruling Greece*'.<sup>869</sup> This last text suggested that the Greek government was fully controlled by Great Britain. According to the article the '*British agents*' supported the Greek monarchists in rigging the elections and in '*practicing the Nazi-like methods of persecution of the Greek nation*'.<sup>870</sup>

All those articles and numerous others of this kind were printed in the Polish governmental press in the summer of 1946 claiming that the Western – in this case British – imperialists were the only dangerous war provokers that Polish society should be afraid of. Titles like '*The Civil War in Greece. British air force attacked Thessaly with rockets*' were supposed to not only imply the direct responsibility of Great Britain for provoking the civil war in Greece but also to suggest the general implication of London in provoking another devastating global conflict.<sup>871</sup>

What is important is that the involvement of the USA in the war in Greece in the first half of 1947 did not significantly change the way the conflict was presented in communist propaganda. In several articles published in *Głos Robotniczy* the American government was presented as a sponsor of the '*fascist Greek government*', which aimed at using the conflict in order to gain control over the Greek economy.<sup>872</sup> Yet, in communist propaganda discourse it was still Great Britain that played the role of the main provoker of the war in Greece.

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<sup>868</sup> GR, 03.04.1946

<sup>869</sup> GR, 18.04.1946

<sup>870</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>871</sup> GR, 28.09.1946

<sup>872</sup> GR, 02.03.1947; 17.03.1947; 25.03.1947; 08.04.1947; 11.05.1947; 21.06.1947; 17.07.1947; 08.08.1947

Emotional as the propaganda comments on the conflict in Greece were, they contained only indirect suggestions that the aggressive activity of 'Western imperialists' could turn a local civil war into a new global conflict. Three years later, Polish society was widely exposed to the phantom of such a war developing from the harsh conflict in the Far East.

## **2. The Korean phantom of the Third World War**

The Korean War was a military conflict in which the army of the communist North Korea, supported by troops sent by the People's Republic of China, fought against the army of South Korea, supported by troops (mainly American) sent by the United Nations, between 1950 and 1953. Although this conflict never reached beyond the territory of the Korean Peninsula, soon after its outbreak the Korean War achieved a global dimension.

The intense engagement in the war of the USA on the one hand and communist China on the other turned this local conflict into the arena of the first direct and physical confrontation of the representatives of the two opposing ideologies of the Cold War. Consequently, reports from the Korean War dominated the content of the world media for weeks and months.

### **2.1 The Korean War as a source of threats**

Looking at the way the Korean War was presented in communist media, one may distinguish a set of the most important propaganda motifs which the propagandists stressed to create and solidify the universal image of the danger that Western imperialism was supposed to pose to global safety. The meticulous analysis of these motifs enables one to ring-fence two major threats – American aggression and the US Army war crimes on civilians – to which the propagandists portraying the Korean War tried to sensitise Polish media receivers to. Among those threats the aggression presented as the main motivator of American foreign policy played the leading role.

#### **Aggression – the *modus operandi* of American imperialists**

In communist media the war in Korea, from the very beginning, was portrayed as the model example of imperialist aggression. In this model South Korea and mainly the USA were presented as the only aggressors. The first Polish press dispatch informing readers about the war in Korea, published in *Express Wieczorny* on June 26<sup>th</sup>, clearly suggested that the war started with the violent incursion of the South Korean army into the territory of North Korea.<sup>873</sup> Two days later *Trybuna Ludu* made a crucial shift in its rhetoric informing readers that in fact the war was initiated by the USA. The constant repetition of expressions like ‘American aggressors’ and ‘aggressive American imperialism’ in communist media aimed at attributing the threat of provocation of a new global war exclusively to the USA and its Western allies.

At the very first phase of war the American government was accused of inspiring the ‘puppet regime of Syngman Rhee’ to attack North Korea. Yet, since the American troops landed in Korea in late June 1950, communist propaganda started to write in open text about American aggression on Korea. The fact that the American troops appeared on the battlefield as a part of the UN contingent was totally misinterpreted by communist propaganda. Media published in Poland repeated the information that the US Army used the UN flags and uniforms only as an illegal pretext to start aggression against Korea. This motif was illustrated with two caricatures by Eryk Lipiński published on the covers of the *Szpilki* magazine in July 1950. The first drawing presented the American General Douglas McArthur, the Chief Commander of the UN contingent in Korea, who was trying to use the UN flag as a curtain covering the American offensive arsenal.<sup>874</sup>

Two weeks later, in another caricature by Lipiński articulated the same information in an even stronger way. This time American aggression under the UN auspices was symbolised with an image of a huge hand carrying a rifle with a bayonet covered with blood.<sup>875</sup>

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<sup>873</sup> A.Leszczyński, *Wojna Koreańska w Propagandzie Polskiej od czerwca do grudnia 1950 roku* [in:] *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. LXXXVI, 1996, p. 52. The same interpretation of the outbreak of the Korean War was repeated the next day by *Trybuna Ludu*.

<sup>874</sup> SZP, 16.07.1950

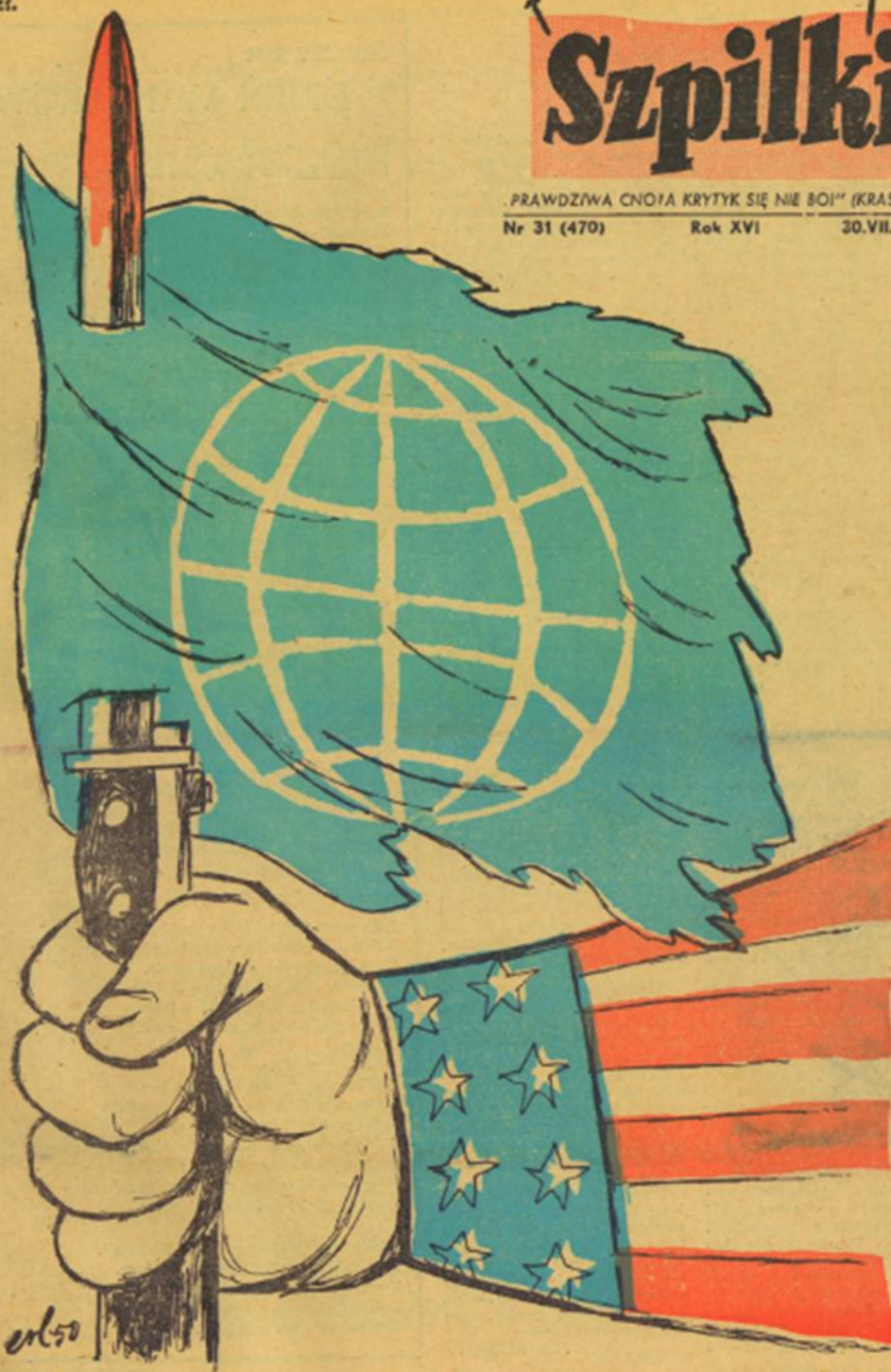
<sup>875</sup> SZP, 30.07.1950, Picture 38



Cena 20 zł.

# Szpilki

PRAWDZIWA CNOŃA KRYTYK SIĘ NIE BOI" (KRASICKI)  
Nr 31 (470) Rok XVI 30.VII.1950



Agresorzy amerykańscy w Korei posługują się bezprawnie flagą ONZ  
**POD SZTANDAREM ONZ**

Picture 38



The hand was clothed in a sleeve painted like an American flag while the bayonet was crowned with the UN flag. Since bayonets are used to attack rather than to defend, Lipiński clearly interpreted the presence of American soldiers in Korea as an act of aggression under the pretext of a UN mission.

The aggressive intentions of the American government were also stressed with suggestions that the 'American invasion in Korea' was planned long before the outbreak of the war. Already on 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1950, an anonymous PAP dispatch printed in *Trybuna Ludu* informed readers that the aggression of the USA in Korea was not a spontaneous action as it had been officially announced.<sup>876</sup> The next day this motif was elaborated in an article by Zofia Artymowska, a notable Polish painter who had just finished her studies in the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow in 1950.<sup>877</sup> In her article, entitled 'The war in Korea started in Washington', Artymowska reconstructed the genesis of the Korean War arguing that the plan of American aggression on Korea was prepared by the government in Washington at least a few years back.<sup>878</sup>

Apart from presenting the Korean War as a result of the previously prepared American plan of aggression, another set of propaganda publications claimed that this conflict had a cynical financial background. The sheer material motivation behind the decision of the USA authorities to provoke the war in Korea was presented in an article by Zygmunt Broniarek, a notable Polish journalist and commentator on foreign issues.<sup>879</sup> In his article, entitled 'Wall Street stands behind the dirty war', Broniarek presented the image of the Korean War as a conflict serving a group of American bankers and monopolists in multiplying their incomes by gaining control over Korean industry.<sup>880</sup>

In the above presented context the Korean War was not shown as a tragic event taking place thousands of kilometres away from Poland, but as a dangerous example of

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<sup>876</sup> TL, 30.06.1950

<sup>877</sup> Zofia Artymowska (1923-2000). Artymowska had no communist background and during her later career this expert in outdoor frescos and polychromies was not active on the political field.

<sup>878</sup> TL, 01.07.1950

<sup>879</sup> Zygmunt Broniarek (1925-2012). In 1950 Broniarek was just beginning his career. In 1956 the journalist joined the PZPR and soon he became one of the most dedicated proponents of the communist regime until its collapse in 1989.

<sup>880</sup> TL, 04.07.1950

the dramatic consequences of aggressive American foreign policy that could occur sooner or later anywhere else.

Comparing to the previously presented media campaigns commenting on the aggressive engagement of Great Britain in Greece, one may observe the rapid escalation of dynamic and intensity of emotions the propagandists attempted to evoke in their reports from Korea. While the first two conflicts were presented as dangerous but rather local events, the Korean War was openly presented as an event that due to the aggressive policy of the USA could billow into the Third World War. Consequently, the propaganda messages describing the war in the Far East endeavoured to foment the phantom of a new global conflict to a much higher extent than ever before since 1945.

The communist propagandists' intention to use the Korean War as a pretext to create a universal image of the USA as a dangerous imperialist aggressor was well encapsulated with the telling poster circulated in Poland in October 1950. The anonymous author of the poster, entitled 'American imperialism aims at ruling over the world', personified the threat posed to the world by aggressive American imperialism in the form of a giant terrifying monster wearing a top hat hunting for its victims all around the globe. The poster stressed the universal character of the American war-provoking threat, suggesting that the huge blood spot under the palm of the monster – the symbol of casualties of American aggression – could actually appear wherever the terrifying giant decided to place its hand. The large print run of the poster (over 25,000 copies) shows how important the Korean example of the American war-provoking threat was for the communist propaganda.<sup>881</sup>

### ***'McArthur's slayers are worse than the Nazis' – American threat to civilians***

The general way the problem of the war crimes committed in Korea was addressed by the communist propaganda was exactly the same as the issue of the aggressor responsible for the outbreak of war.

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<sup>881</sup> MPW, Pl.423/1; Picture 39



Picture 39

In the entire media discourse commenting on the Korean War the role of the persecutor of civilians in Korea was subscribed exclusively to the US Army and the troops of the South Korean Army.

What is important is that the communist media highlighted the fact that the initial victories of the North Korean Army, interpreted as a triumph of communism over aggressive American imperialism, also had other than military and political dimensions. Communist media announced that the entrance of the North Korean Army into the territory of its neighbour brought to an end the persecutions on civilians practiced by the regime of Syngman Rhee. Already in the first issue of *Trybuna Ludu* containing reports on the war in Korea, this official daily of the PZPR informed readers that as a result of the 'fascist terror of the fascist bandits destroying and burning down the cities and villages' around three million inhabitants of South Korea lost their homes.<sup>882</sup> Yet, soon the propaganda role of the main war criminal in Korea was attributed to the US Army.

The first category of war crimes credited by communist media to the US Army was the series of 'criminal bombings of civilian inhabitants of cities and villages'.<sup>883</sup> *Trybuna Ludu* informed its readers that 'American air pirates are shooting at the defenceless Korean peasants working in their fields'.<sup>884</sup>

Furthermore, a drawing by Jerzy Srokowski<sup>885</sup> published in *Szpilki* magazine in mid-June 1951 suggested that American Air Craft were carrying out attacks against Korean children.<sup>886</sup> Srokowski was a popular Polish cartoonist who cooperated with *Szpilki* and other leftist magazines from 1935 onwards. After World War Two he became the graphic manager of *Szpilki*. In his drawing entitled 'The American infanticides in Korea dropped toys filled with explosives', Srokowski presented American soldiers as ruthless, cynical slayers deriving pleasure from killing innocent and astonished children.

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<sup>882</sup> TL, 27.06.1950

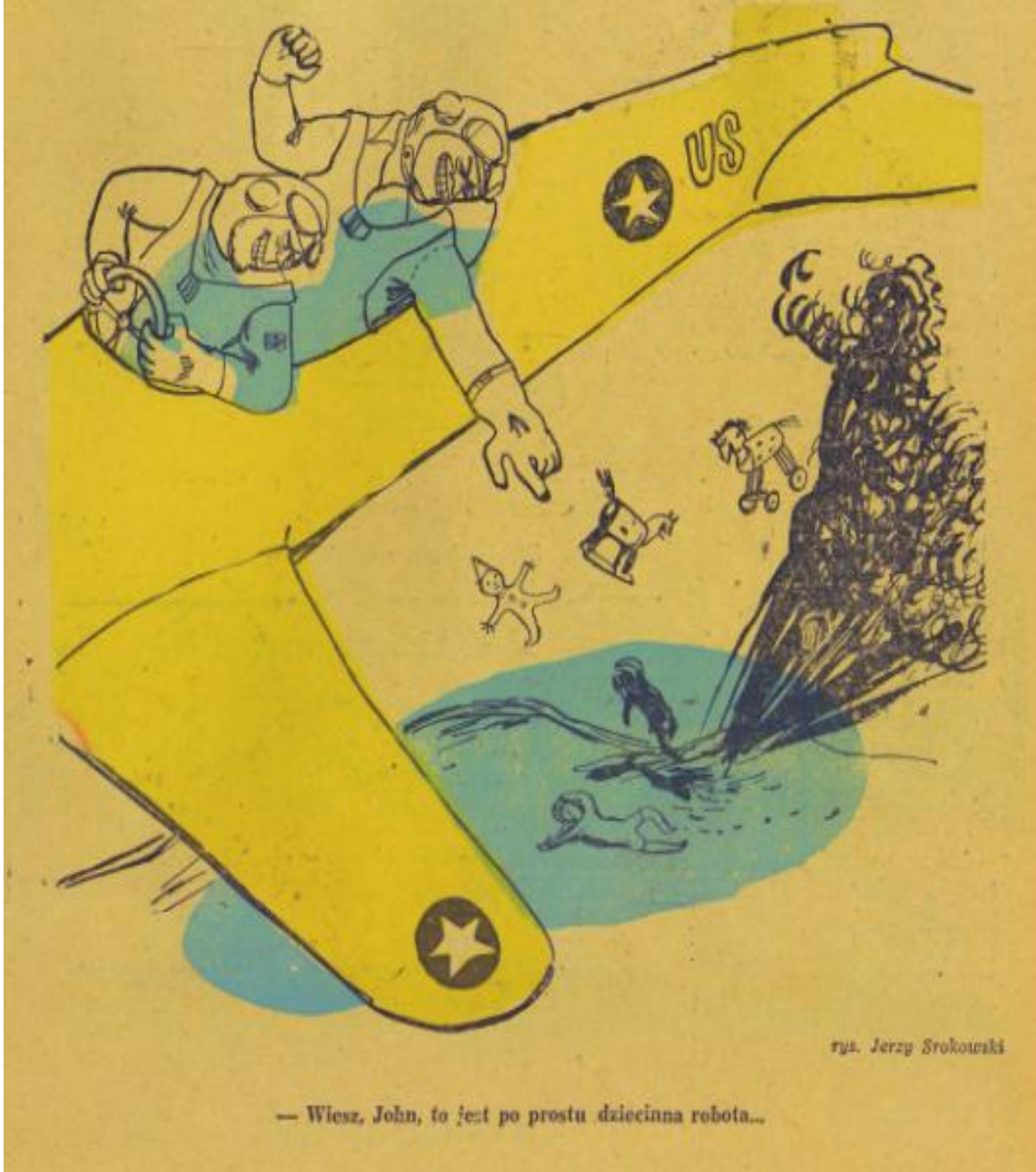
<sup>883</sup> TL, 19.07.1950

<sup>884</sup> TL, 10.08.1950

<sup>885</sup> Jerzy Srokowski (1910-1975)

<sup>886</sup> SZP, 17.06.1951; Picture 40

Amerykańscy dzieciobójcy zrzucili w Korei zabawki napelnione środkami wj buchowymi.



— Wiesz, John, to jest po prostu dziecinna robota...

Picture 40

The manic smiles of the American pilots and the inscription under the caricature, 'John, it was a childish mission' was supposed to increase the sense of dread posed to innocent people by American soldiers pictured as bestial slayers.

Stressing the image of the US Army as a band of ruthless killers of children and other civilian inhabitants of Korea the communist propagandists referred to the local experience of cruelty that Polish society faced during the Nazi occupation. Numerous propaganda articles and movies indicated the direct link between the crimes committed in Korea by American soldiers and the Nazi massacres in Europe during World War Two. American soldiers and officers were regularly presented as successors of Hitler.<sup>887</sup> Later on the title of the article from January 1951 alarmed readers that 'McArthur's slayers are worse than the Nazis'.<sup>888</sup>

Finally, the picture published in *Trybuna Ludu* in the spring of 1951 tellingly correlated the picture of the execution of civilian inhabitants of Bochnia, a small town near Cracow, performed in 1939 by Nazi soldiers with the picture of the civilian Koreans about to be executed by American soldiers.<sup>889</sup> The title of the picture, 'Different uniforms – the same crime', was supposed to stress the 'equality of bestiality of both persecutors towards the defenceless civil societies of occupied countries'.

Vivid as those numbers were, the photos of the massacred civilian casualties of the Korean War published in the communist press could make an even more depressing impression. Here especially one example of the shocking visual propaganda published in local media with the intention of manipulating the emotions of Polish women and especially mothers is worth examining. The full page propaganda advertisement printed in *Gazeta Białostocka*, a local daily edited in Eastern Poland, was published only two days before parliamentary elections.<sup>890</sup>

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<sup>887</sup> TL, 17.07.1950; 10.08.1950; 16.11.1950; 03.12.1950; 09.04.1951

<sup>888</sup> TL, 09.01.1951; According to this article such a harsh judgement was made by the former German SS officers.

<sup>889</sup> TL, 04.04.1951; Picture 41

<sup>890</sup> *Gazeta Białostocka*, 24.10.1952; Picture 42



## Różnią ich mundury – łączy ich zbrodnie



Spójrzcie na tych umundurowanych bandytów. Człowiek, który nie zna szczegółów umundurowania poszczególnych armii, nie potrafi ich odróżnić. Jednakże jest bestialstwo, z jakim postępują nad bezbronną ludnością, sieją śmierć i zniszczenie. Można o nich powiedzieć: gangsterzy z Wehrmachtu i SS albo amerykańscy hitlerowcy — to wyjdzie na jedno. Lewe z wyżej opublikowanych zdjęć pochodzi z roku 1939 i przedstawia moment rozstrzeliwania zakładników w Bochni przez morderców spod znaku Hitlera, prawe — reprodukowane za tygodnikiem amerykańskim „Time” — pochodzi z roku 1951 i przedstawia grupę rozebranych do naga, cywilnych Koreańczyków, pędzonych na rozstrzał przez morderców spod znaku Trumana. 10 lat temu mordercy hitlerowscy rozpoczęli agresję przeciw ZSRR — wiadomo, jak skończyli. Dziś mordercy Mac Arthura i Ridgway'a grasują w Korei i snują obłąkańcze plany podpalenia świata wzorem swych poprzedników. Zbrodniarze kończą jednakowo

Picture 41



**POLKO!** Rozsejraj się wokół, zobacz jak zmienił się Twój kraj, jakże inna, lepsza jest dola kobiety, nie-nieprawego obywatela Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej.

Oczywiście nasza, rześniona przez lud pracujący, zapewniona spokój Wazymu domowemu, uszczęśliwiona z nich na zawsze kochana nędza i bezrobocie, daje Wam wszelkie prawa na równi z mężczyznami, zapewnia Wazymu samemu i córkom naukę i dostęp do wszystkich zawodów, otacza troskliwą opieką zdrowie Wazego i Wazych małych portech.

„Mamy jeszcze wiele poważnych niedomagań, braków, trudności, nie różami, oczuwicie, usłane jest nasze życie, nie lekka jest nasza codzienna praca, nie szczęśliwa nam jeszcze sążnie wielu trosk, wielkie i trudne stoją przed nami zadania”.

Naszą pracą i walką pokonamy te trudności. Program wyborczy Frontu Narodowego, to program uczynienia Wazego życia i życia Wazych rodzin bardziej radoznym, dostatnim i kulturalnym, to program zwycięskiego przetransformowania – umiłkłem całego narodu – istniejących jeszcze trudności.

To program walki o szczęśliwą przyszłość Ojczyzny i Wazych dzieci, to program utrudnienia pokoju.

Dlatego oddajcie Wazego głos na kandydatów Frontu Narodowego, na program walki narodu o lepszą przyszłość.

**K  
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T**



**M A T K O**  
**PROGRAM WYBORCZY FRONTU NARODOWEGO**



to

zapewniona praca



to

nowe przedszkole



to

więcej żłobków



to

nauka dla wszystkich



to

równouprawienie kobiet



to

szczęście dzieci

*Nie odwracaj, oczuj!  
Patrz i zapamiętaj!*



Ona śmieła, kiedy była tak sama rozważna i zdrowa jak Ty. Tak sama jak Ty. Kiedy się odwróciła, gdy amerykański żołnierz strzelił w nią z karabinu automatycznego i zapanował. Nie miała złodzieja. Wtedy dla dziecka karłowatość – nie odwróciła się i nie żyła.

Jestem narodem, który nigdy nie wybaczył, odlatując amerykańsko-brytyjskich samoloty od nas na nasz kraj.

**Głosuj na wszystkich kandydatów Frontu Narodowego za pokojem, dobrobytem i szczęściem Twych dzieci!**

BARBARA BIALOSTOCKA

Picture 42



The announcement was supposed to encourage Polish women and mothers to vote for the candidates recommended by the regime. The ad contained a shocking photograph of a Korean child gravely burned by napalm used by the US Army. The image of this terribly harmed innocent victim of the war in Korea was juxtaposed with the bucolic vision of the life that children and mothers were having in Poland in the early 1950s. The ad enumerated the spheres of life of young mothers like education or the number of crèches in which 'Poland made significant progress' since the end of World War Two.

Those optimistic statistics, strengthened by the photos of smiles on the faces of Polish mothers and infants, clashed with the appalling image of the Korean child were supposed to make the female readers of the daily paper appreciate the comfort of life they were provided with by the socialist state. Consequently, the ad aimed at persuading female readers to support the communist regime giving them comfort and protection from the threat posed by the USA. What is important is that the advertisement implied that the determination of the US Army in using the inhuman weapon proved the eagerness of the USA to 'impose a new war on the world'.

### **3. Between scepticism, fear, panic and hope. The social reactions to the Korean War**

The analysis of the reaction of Polish society to the outbreak of the war in Korea gives a good pretext to draw some broader conclusions on the emotional condition of Poles five years after the end of World War Two, but also five years after the establishment of the new political regime in Poland. This analysis allows one to indicate various social attitudes that were characteristic of the behaviour of Polish society after the announcement of the outbreak of the war in Asia.

The diverse reactions to the reports on war in Korea if placed on a graph would generate a sinusoid ranging from acts of panic through neutral reactions, scepticism to enthusiasm or even signs of euphoria. The neutral or sceptical reactions have the weakest representation in historical sources. Yet, this fact does not mean that this kind of reaction was not the most common. Such a conclusion is predicated on the analysis of

the correspondence sent by the listeners to Polish Radio, one of the most revealing sources of information on social moods in postwar Poland. In most of those letters the radio listeners expressed their frustration deriving from their terrible material situation. It is a well-known fact that the material condition of most Polish families at the beginning of the 1950s was very weak. Yet, even this situation encouraged only a relatively small group of society to write letters expressing their personal attitude to this material anxiety. Consequently, one may anticipate that the problem of the war taking place on another continent would evoke a far weaker reaction. Furthermore one may conclude that the vast majority of Polish society could simply be too focused on their local material concerns to be interested in the war in Korea. This is why it is important to analyse signs of such an attitude towards the news announcing the outbreak of war before the discussion of the two extremes of the sinusoid.

### **Nothing to be worry about**

The tranquil reaction towards the communication on the outbreak of the war in Korea was recorded in the memory of the already referenced Adam Miłkaszewski, the retired engineer living in Gdańsk. In 1950 Miłkaszewski, born in 1930 in Lwiw and repatriated to Gdańsk in 1946 with his entire family, was a student of the Technical University in the same town. In an interview, I asked Miłkaszewski if the media reports on the outbreak of war in Korea evoked any fear in his family or among colleagues and if this event was interpreted as a prospect of the next world war.<sup>891</sup> Miłkaszewski said that within his family there was slight anxiety of the wider consequences of this conflict only until the moment when the US Army entered the battlefield. According to him, the presence of the American soldiers in Korea was interpreted by his father as a prospect of the prompt end of the war. *'In that period we knew that the US Army was the strongest force, that they had more atomic missiles than Soviets, who still did not have a proper transmitter of the atomic bomb'* – stated Miłkaszewski.

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<sup>891</sup> Interview with Adam Miłkaszewski, 20.04.2014

While one may define the attitude of Mikłaszewski towards the outbreak of the Korean War as rather neutral, the one recorded in the memory of Józef Hen was far more sceptical.<sup>892</sup> In a recent interview, the writer said that although the information on the outbreak of war in Korea focused his attention, this news did not upset him.<sup>893</sup> Hen, who in 1950 still served in the Polish Army, stated that he was practically free of anxiety concerning the escalation of the Korean War into a global conflict since he was deeply sceptical towards the propaganda campaign accompanying the Korean War. The writer rejected press reports stating that the army of North Korea, in defence of its lands, invaded the territory of South Korea and within several weeks occupied almost the entire territory of its neighbour. In the interview, Hen compared this scepticism to the one he felt in the late 1930s during the Moscow trials, in which Stalin accused his former collaborators of espionage. His words clearly show that for part of Polish society the disturbing reports from the Korean War were hard to believe and, consequently, hard to put trust in.

Further signs of scepticism towards the media discourse commenting on the Korean War characteristic of the recollection of Hen may be found in letters sent during the conflict to Polish Radio. Here two examples are worth discussing. In the first letter sent to the radio in January 1951 an anonymous author, signed 'Citizen A.K.', wrote to express his serious doubts towards the press and radio propaganda announcing the successes of the communists in North Korea.<sup>894</sup> *'I cannot believe that the Americans could have been defeated by the Koreans or Chinese'*, wrote the listener. In his words, one may diagnose the deep belief in the military superiority of the US Army over Asian military formations. This observation is similar to the one present in the above-mentioned recollection of Mikłaszewski.

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<sup>892</sup>Józef Hen, a notable Polish prose writer and author of numerous movie screenplays of Jewish descent was born in Warsaw in 1923. He spent the period of World War Two on the territory of the USSR and moved back to Poland in 1944 serving in the People's Troops of Poland. Reaching the rank of a captain he finished his military career in 1952.

<sup>893</sup> Interview with Józef Hen, 05.11.2014. The interview was recorded by Lidia Jurek in the frame of collecting oral material for the purpose of her scientific project dedicated to the problem of the memory of the gulags.

<sup>894</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 17.01.1951, p. 84

Over a year later, in April 1952, another radio listener, an inhabitant of Płock, a city in central Poland, wrote a letter expressing his scepticism towards the numerous propaganda suggestions that the US Army was using bacteriological weapons in Korea.<sup>895</sup> In the listener's view it was impossible that any insect or worm that was supposed to transmit bacteria could survive the freezing temperature of minus thirty degrees characteristic of the Korean winter. *'I don't believe in the story about the bacteria, it must be false'*, stated the listener.

The opinion expressed by the listener from Płock seemed to be based on deduction. The examination of further historical sources presenting the popular reception of the announcement of the outbreak of war in Korea shows, however, that most reactions were much more emotional. In particular, most of them were dominated with various shades of fear. In this scale serious anxiety was the least intense form of dread.

### ***'I'm afraid it looks like the beginning of the third world war'***

Within Polish society the symptoms of fear of war resulting from the outbreak of the conflict in Korea did not emerge out of blue. Those symptoms should be seen as the intensification of the atmosphere that already existed and already disturbed the inhabitants of Poland. For instance, in the secret police report from 24<sup>th</sup> June 1950 the MBP officer noted that on 21<sup>st</sup> June in the region of Starachowice, the city in South-eastern Poland, the number of rumours predicting the forthcoming outbreak of war substantially increased.<sup>896</sup> The factual outbreak of war in Korea resulted, however, in the explosion of the psychosis of fear of war.

As Piotr Osęka showed in his popular text on the social attitude towards the outbreak of the Korean War, in the entire country this event resulted in the strong recurrence of the atmosphere of transiency similar to the one which dominated the first postwar months especially on the regained lands.<sup>897</sup> The fear that this new devastating

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<sup>895</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 10.04.1952, pp. 348-349

<sup>896</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 144/602, 24.06.1950, p. 453

<sup>897</sup> P. Osęka, *Truman Truman spóść ta bania!*, [in:] Ale Historia, vol.17, 29.04.2013, pp. 14-15

war could soon also reach Poland revived with immense power. One of the most telling evidence of such an atmosphere was recorded in the diary of Maria Dąbrowska, who on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1950 noted such an observation:

*'(...) On Monday [26<sup>th</sup> June-B.K.] evening we were informed about the outbreak of war in Korea. According to the Soviet dispatches 'the puppet government of South Korea attacked North Korea (the Soviet one), which reacted with a counter-offensive'. According to American dispatches, however, Soviet Korea attacked South Korea (the American one). Truman delivered a speech on the military intervention in Korea, but not as the president the USA, but as a member of the United Nations Security Council obliged to defend peace, freedom etc. (...) The events in Korea made a shocking impression on us. I'm afraid it looks like the beginning of the third world war. This is how "in the defence of peace" both "peace loving" sides of the conflict started to fight. And Korea will face hell'.<sup>898</sup>*

The tone of the comment to the announcement of war noted in Dąbrowska's diary suggests that the writer considered the conflict in Korea as the threat that could soon spread over Europe and Poland. This sort of emotional reception of the outbreak of war in Korea was not reduced only to the first weeks of the conflict. Against the intentions of the propagandists, who tried to balance the American threat to world peace with the optimistic vision of the war in Asia as a triumph of the communist North Korean troops over the aggressive American imperialists, the media reports on the conflict engendered fear and sowed the seeds of social unrest.

The serious anxiety evoked by the information on the war in Asia was not characteristic only to the civilian sphere of Polish society. As the military reports monitoring the moods within the Polish Army shows, in many cases the media dispatches on the Korean War were interpreted by Polish officers, especially those located on the 'regained lands', as a clear prospect of the Third World War. Such a

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<sup>898</sup> M. Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne 1950-1954*, vol.2, Warszawa 1997, pp. 91-92

conclusion inclined numerous officers to place claims for a transfer to the formations in central Poland.<sup>899</sup>

The signs of this atmosphere may be noticed in sources in the autumn of 1950. For instance, the files of the trial between the KSWNSG and Ludwik T., an inhabitant of Zabrze in Silesia and a factory worker, contain the confession of Antoni B., a witness, who in November 1950 was advised by the accused to refrain from purchasing new furniture.<sup>900</sup> In the view of the accused the new war was about to reach Poland, which would result in losing Silesia to Germany. Ludwik T. advised Antoni B. to forget about furniture as they would hinder him in his escape.

The tendency, visible in the court data from November, to perceive the Korean War as a factor that could pose a direct threat to Poland reached its peak four months previous to the trial. In late June and July 1950, the fear of war escalated into a wave of uncontrolled hysteria.

### **The sweet taste of panic**

As mentioned above, the outbursts of the panic attacks resulting in emptying the shop shelves accompanied several political events starting from 1945. In fact the trauma of the war experience of hunger and long periods when it was extremely difficult to organise any sort of food was so strong in some cases that it affected people for their entire life.<sup>901</sup> Yet, in most cases these attacks lasted only a few days up to one week. The results of the wave of hysterical panic evoked by the information on the outbreak of war in Korea may be traced in sources for over one month.

As one may conclude from the above quoted diary of Maria Dąbrowska, common knowledge on the events in Korea was based on the news published in governmental media and from illegally listened to Western radio broadcasts. The below

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<sup>899</sup> D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *W krzywym zwierciadle*, p. 53

<sup>900</sup> AAN, Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym, syg.422, pp. 2-3

<sup>901</sup> Interview with Zofia Dąbrowska, 03.02.2015. During the interview Dąbrowska admitted that in her case the trauma of war hunger is activated even today with the messages suggesting the prospect of a new war. For instance, as the dramatic events in Ukraine in 2014 turned into a regular war, she asked her family to provide her with supplies of flour.

presented trajectory of the panic shopping most probably must have been evoked mainly by the same sources of information. Consequently one may diagnose a significant counterproductivity of the disturbing communist media reports on the Korean War, which despite the intention of propagandists, became one of the main sources of the uncontrolled war panic.

The close reading of the MBP reports enables one to reconstruct the trajectory of the war panic that in the summer of 1950 occurred in numerous regions of Poland. This process did not have a linear nature as the symptoms of panic appeared and disappeared in certain cities and regions of the country throughout this period of time.

Warsaw was the first place where the symptoms of war panic were noticed by the MBP agents only two days after the outbreak of the war in Korea. The MBP bulletin informed authorities that on 28<sup>th</sup> of June the shops in Warsaw faced an increased wave of customers making a mass shop of essential items.<sup>902</sup> The same bulletin informed authorities about the same phenomenon in Włoszczowa while further bulletins informed them again about the signs of panic shopping in Warsaw.<sup>903</sup>

The first slight decrease of the panic in shops in Warsaw was noticed in the MBP bulletin from 4<sup>th</sup> July, which informed authorities that the level of purchasing of most kinds of food normalised, yet four times more salt was still sold.<sup>904</sup> The same bulletin contained the first information on mass shopping in Cracow, where customers bought huge amounts of sugar, flour and soap. The report informed authorities that between 28<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July shops in Cracow sold 300 tonnes of sugar while during the entire month of June 400 tonnes was sold.

The next daily bulletin from the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1950 informed authorities about further regions of Poland where panic shopping was observed.<sup>905</sup> The report pointed to the phenomenon of mass purchasing of essentials taking place in Białystok, Lublin (Eastern

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<sup>902</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 148/606, 30.06.1950, p. 465

<sup>903</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 149/607, 01.07.1950, p. 468; AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 150/608, 03.07.1950, p. 471

<sup>904</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 151/609, 04.07.1950, p. 474

<sup>905</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 152/610, 05.07.1950, pp. 3-

Poland), Kielce (South-Eastern Poland) and Olsztyn (Northern Poland). The same bulletin informed authorities, however, that in Cracow the demand for sugar substantially decreased.

Two days later, MBP officers from Bydgoszcz (Northern Poland) were alarmed about the mass shopping of food and textile products in the city.<sup>906</sup> The same bulletin informed authorities that while in Cracow the level of goods sold by shops was normalised, mass shopping of food was observed in villages surrounding the city. The same phenomenon was also noticed in Brześć County (Southern Poland), as well as in the regions of Przemyśl and Rzeszów (South-Eastern Poland) where huge amounts of sugar and salt were sold. At the same time, MBP officers from Szczecin informed authorities that no cases of mass shopping in the city and region were noticed.

The alarming news from Bydgoszcz was also repeated in the MBP bulletin from 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1950.<sup>907</sup> This time officers informed authorities that apart from food and textile essentials inhabitants of the city started to purchase coal on a mass scale, which immediately emptied the stores of this product. The astonished store managers were unable to import the demanded amount of coal from suppliers. The next day the MBP bulletin informed authorities about the recurrence of panic shopping in Cracow and about the same phenomenon in Wieliczka, Tarnów and Myślenice (Southern Poland), where huge amounts of sugar were sold.<sup>908</sup> At the same time MBP officers from Białystok informed authorities that the demand for food and textile essentials was normalised.

The further cases of mass demand for sugar in Cracow and its region was noted in the bulletin from 15<sup>th</sup> July 1950.<sup>909</sup> The same document informed authorities that in Olkusz County (Southern Poland) and Zakopane the supplies of flour were finished. The lack of sugar in local warehouses, resulting from panic shopping, was also noted the next day in Krosno, Kolbuszowa, Wadowice, Bochnia, Myślenice and Michów (Southern

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<sup>906</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 154/612, 07.07.1950, pp. 7-8

<sup>907</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 155/613, 08.07.1950, p. 10

<sup>908</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 156/614, 10.07.1950, p. 12

<sup>909</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 161/619, 15.07.1950, p. 30



and South-Eastern Poland).<sup>910</sup> The bulletin from 18<sup>th</sup> July informed authorities about mass shopping still taking place in the region of Szczecin.<sup>911</sup> In Szczecinek, the lack of sugar and salt evoked the wrath of local society. Finally, the last part of the MBP bulletins containing information about panic shopping was focused mainly on the situation in Cracow, where the mass sale of sugar was noted in numerous reports until the 5<sup>th</sup> August 1950.<sup>912</sup> The last case of this phenomenon was noted on 10<sup>th</sup> August in Szczecin, where the lack of sugar in stores provoked long lines.<sup>913</sup>

The reports on panic shopping after the outbreak of war in Korea shows that this phenomenon ranged almost the entire territory of Poland. As one may see from the MBP bulletins only the Western part of Poland (except for Szczecin and its region) seemed to be resistant to this sort of hysteria pushing people to purchase huge amounts of food, textiles and coal. The character of this shopping clearly shows that inhabitants of Poland were preparing supplies for a war that they thought was about to break out in their country. The reports show that in the period of panic shopping Poles purchased only the products with a long shelf-life as these were supposed to let them survive the potential conflict.

The intriguing case of sugar as one of the most often purchased goods during the panic shopping has a simple and rational explanation. Sugar was not treated as a luxury good but as an ingredient necessary in the process of the moonshine production. During and after the war home-made alcohol functioned as one of the most popular and commonly used equivalents of money.

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<sup>910</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 162/620, 17.07.1950, p. 33

<sup>911</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 163/621, 18.07.1950, pp. 36-37

<sup>912</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 165/623, 20.07.1950, p. 43; AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 168/626, 25.07.1950, p. 55; AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 169/627, 25.07.1950, p. 58; AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 170/628, 27.07.1950, p. 61; AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 171/629, 28.07.1950, p. 63; AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 174/632, 01.08.1950, pp. 71-72.; AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 175/633, 02.08.1950, p. 76; AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 178/636, 05.08.1950, p. 81

<sup>913</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 183/640, 10.08.1950, p. 94

On the one hand, this intensive and relatively long lasting wave of panic to a large extent might be interpreted as a symptom of the weakness of the communist propaganda fear management strategy. As it was shown in the above sections of this chapter the media reports on the Korean War were used by the propagandists to make Polish press readers aware of the threat posed by the USA to world peace. Yet, no article, poster, film or caricature suggested that this threat could soon directly reach Poland. On the other hand, even this relatively long period of intense panic lasted only 5-6 weeks, which shows that the communist apparatus managed to neutralise this threat.

Obviously one should not perceive the communist media as the only factor that evoked panic shopping. The close reading of the above presented bulletins of the secret police enables not only to visualise the scale and range of this phenomenon, but also helps to reconstruct the bottom-up mechanisms of production and transmission of gossip spreading the atmosphere of war panic.

### **War rumours – the fuel of panic**

Rumours and the so-called ‘whispered propaganda’ were and still are one of the most important transmitters of emotions, especially fear. In his study on fear and rumours in communist China in the 1950s, Steve Smith argues that rumours create space in which people may express their concerns and hopes.<sup>914</sup> His analysis of such a general aspect of anxiety as rumours about nuclear attack, as well as more directed, panic-like fear resulting from rumours on supernatural forces, leads to the conclusion that the emotion of fear was and still is universal for every culture. Consequently, Smith claims that this emotion is shaped by culture. In his words, peoples’ beliefs and values are factors which (once endangered) form apprehensions of harm to their collective well-being.<sup>915</sup> The following analysis of Polish whispered propaganda on the Korean War confirms Smith’s conclusions on Mao’s China.

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<sup>914</sup> S. Smith, *Fear and Rumour in the People’s Republic of China in the 1950s* [in:] *Cultural and social history*, vol.5, issue 3, (2008) pp. 269-288

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid*, p. 270

War rumours and their direct responsibility for evoking the panic shopping are indicated in numerous bulletins prepared by the MBP. This whispered propaganda was fuelled by media reports commenting on the Korean War as well as, to a smaller extent, by the dispatches from the illegally listened to Western radio broadcasters.

The submissions that the war rumours were directly linked with panic shopping appeared in the MBP reports as soon as numerous cases of emptying of shop shelves started to be reported to the Ministry of Public Security. The MBP bulletin from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1950 stated that in the region of Kielce, Starachowice, Częstochowa, and Włoszczowa (Southern and South-Eastern Poland) whispered war propaganda inspired people to start mass panic shopping.<sup>916</sup> The next day the MBP bulletin again indicated the region of Kielce as the territory where war rumours had a significant impact on the shopping behaviour of local society.<sup>917</sup> It is possible that the intensity of war rumours around Kielce derived from the activity of the anti-governmental military underground traditionally using the Świętokrzyskie Mountains as a perfect place to hide from the KBW and the MBP troops. In 1950 this territory was one of the last places where the underground troops were active. Since from 1945 they were waiting for the next war that would demolish the communist regime in Poland, they could use the information on war in Korea to persuade local society that the war in Poland was just a question of time. This underground group could anticipate that this sort of whispered propaganda had the potential to evoke chaos that would paralyse the local administration.

In the first week of July the reports on the war rumours pushing people to panic shopping were also sent by MBP agents from Białystok, Lublin (Eastern Poland) Olsztyn<sup>918</sup> and Bydgoszcz (Northern Poland).<sup>919</sup> In this last case, the MBP officers noted that 'hostile elements' were spreading information that the increase of textile products in shops resulted from the transition of the textile industry from civilian to military production. Aside from the war rumours suggesting that the phantom of the

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<sup>916</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 150/608, 03.07.1950, p. 471

<sup>917</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 151/609, 03.07.1950, p. 474

<sup>918</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 152/610, 05.07.1950, pp. 3-4

<sup>919</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 154/612, 07.07.1950, p. 8

forthcoming war is visible in fact most of the essentials produced in Poland were sent to the USSR and China.

Four days later, in the MBP report sent from Bydgoszcz contained the dispatch that people standing in long lines were distributing the information that after the outbreak of war in Poland *'the inhabitants of Poland will be deported to the East'*.<sup>920</sup> In this rumour one may easily find the reflection of the traumatic experience of deportations to the Soviet Union.<sup>921</sup>

Among other rumours spread within among customers waiting in long lines in front of the shops, Piotr Osęka also indicated the gossip suggesting that the new recruitment to the Polish Army, the alleged evacuation of state offices and preparation of shelters should be interpreted as an indication of the forthcoming war.<sup>922</sup> People also spread rumours about the alleged landing of US Army troops in Gdańsk and Szczecin. This last type of rumour expressed the hope that the escalation of the Korean War would lead to American intervention in Poland, which would result in the abolishment of the communist system imposed in 1945 and confirmed in 1947.

Regarding the agents of the whispered propaganda, the MBP bulletin from 14<sup>th</sup> July 1950 informed authorities that in the Białogard region, near Szczecin, a person responsible for spreading war rumours turned out to be a female private entrepreneur.<sup>923</sup> Furthermore, the female gossiper was again indicated as a source of war rumours in the MBP report from Gryfino County near Szczecin.<sup>924</sup> This time the woman mentioned by the MBP agents was intensively circulating information, to a distance of 50 kilometres from her village, that the regular war was taking place. As it was noted in the MBP report, this rumour caused panic within the group of girls from the summer camp located in this area. Due to the phantom of war they demanded to

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<sup>920</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 157/615, 11.07.1950, p. 17

<sup>921</sup> As a result of Russian and later Soviet repressions starting from the sixteenth century and on a mass scale from the end of the eighteenth century dozens of thousands of inhabitants of Poland were deported to the far East of the Russian and Soviet state. It is estimated that between 1941 and 1952 alone Soviets deported around 132,000 Polish citizens.

<sup>922</sup> P.Osęka, op. cit., p. 15

<sup>923</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 160/618, 14.07.1950, p. 26

<sup>924</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 163/621, 18.07.1950, pp. 36-37

move back to their homes. Finally, on 15<sup>th</sup> July the MBP officers informed authorities that in the Radzymin County near Warsaw it was the anti-government underground that spread the war rumours encouraging people to organise supplies of essentials.<sup>925</sup>

Looking at the first two examples from the above-mentioned cases of social agents transmitting whispered propaganda one may indicate the important role of women in the production and circulation of war rumours. Obviously, rumours predicting a new war were transmitted by traditional sources of gossip. Just like the role of the main commentator of reality was usually attributed to women, it was also the female part of society who was mainly responsible for spreading war rumours. Also, the third case of rumours circulated by the anti-communist underground seems to be a part of the regular anti-governmental activity of this resistant political and military environment. The underground troops used the pretext of the common anxiety generated by the war in Korea. Anti-governmental troops attempted to escalate this phenomenon in order to mobilise society against the communist authorities

The rumours show the high susceptibility of the Polish postwar society to the fear of war, which could derive from the deep traumatising of Poles during World War Two. What is more, the popular interpretation of the communist propaganda reports on war in Korea was completely detached from the propagandists intentions. We may even talk about the misinterpretation of the media discourse portraying the war to Polish society.

Severe as the panic reactions to the outbreak of war in Korea within Polish society were, they constituted only a part of the landscape of the social attitude to the propaganda dispatches on the war in the Asia. This panorama, composed so far with neutral behaviour, scepticism, serious anxiety and panic, must be complemented by the various positive reactions towards the war ranging from hope to euphoria.

### **War as a source of hope**

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<sup>925</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 161/619, 15.07.1950, p. 30

As Leopold Tyrmand wrote in one of his books, in Warsaw the outbreak of war in Korea was interpreted by many inhabitants as a prospect of the forthcoming collapse of the communist regime in Poland. Pedestrians on the streets of Warsaw expressed this hope by taking their hats off while passing the American Embassy.<sup>926</sup> What is more, Maria Dąbrowska noted in her diary that the wave of euphoria deriving from the image of the next war reaching Poland was so strong that many Poles could hardly prevent themselves from manifesting their joy and happiness of the successes of the US Army in Korea.<sup>927</sup> Dąbrowska also noted the telling dialogue between two drunken workers riding the tram in Warsaw. One of them said to the other: *'Those bastards, damned Americans, why did they attack Korea, why did they send their forces there? They should arrive here!'*

The atmosphere of hope of abolishing communist rule in Poland after the next war is also visible in political jokes popular in that period. The below satirical dialogue well represents this sort of humour:

- What is the fastest way to regain independence?
- We must declare war on the USA and surrender the very next day.<sup>928</sup>

Another revealing historical source showing the nature of optimism that part of Polish society had towards the vision of the next world war that would reach Poland is a set of court files of the Special Commission for Combating Economic Fraud and Wrecking (KSWNSG). For instance, during one of those trials the witness, a young apprentice in the abattoir near Czarnków (Western Poland), stated that in July 1951 his manager informed workers that the Red Army would soon confiscate the supplies of meat planned for local civilian distribution. The manager pointed out that the confiscated meat would be sent to Korea. According to the witness, in August 1951 the same manager told his workers that the difficult material situation would improve in the

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<sup>926</sup> P.Oseka, op.cit., p.15

<sup>927</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>928</sup> Loc. cit.

spring of 1952 when American troops would enter Poland. The witness stated that the manager's interpretation of the future was based on information from the 'radio emitting the imperialistic propaganda'.<sup>929</sup>

One may also observe the optimistic attitude towards the war in Korea in several cases of the voluntary recruitment of candidates to the Polish Army with the intention of being sent to Korea. According to Piotr Osęka, one of the popular rumours in that period suggested that the Polish Army would form a military corps which would be sent to Korea to fight against the US Army. This rumour resulted in mass recruitment of male youth to the Polish Army. Those young people planned to surrender to Americans as soon as they arrived in Korea.<sup>930</sup> Other young candidates for the army perceived the recruitment to the army and transfer to Korea as a chance for a great adventure. For instance, Edward Szydłowski, a former soldier who served in the underground Home Army, stated in his recollection:

*'We will visit a huge part of the world. Perhaps one of us will be killed, perhaps not, who cares. With our good or even lofty intentions we arrived to the local Army Recruiting Command in Sokółka (Eastern Poland-B.K.) where the officer informed us that no recruitment for volunteers to Korea was taking place'.*<sup>931</sup>

What is more, according to the MBP bulletins from July 1950 the mass recruitment of volunteers who wanted to be sent to Korea was also noticed in Słupsk (Northern Poland)<sup>932</sup> and Warsaw.<sup>933</sup> Finally, according to Zofia Dąbrowska many of her colleagues from the university considered joining the Polish Army to be sent to Korea and earn good money by deserting to the US Army.<sup>934</sup> According to Dąbrowska, those plans of the students derived from the lack of prospectives for an ample life in communist Poland.

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<sup>929</sup> AAN, Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym, syg.374, pp. 2-3

<sup>930</sup> P.Osęka, op.cit., p.15

<sup>931</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>932</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 163/621, 18.07.1950, pp. 36-37

<sup>933</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 172/630, 29.07.1950, p. 66

<sup>934</sup> Interview with Zofia Dąbrowska, 03.02.2015

The above presented examples of social interpretation of events in the Far East may suggest that the propaganda efforts to manage the emotions provoked by the Korean War failed. Thus, the scale and results of propaganda actions aiming at reversing this trend shows that the propaganda authorities actively reacted to the dynamics of social behaviour. The variety of ways of translating the fear of war into emotions helping the authorities to integrate society with the communist regime was impressive. So was the amount of inhabitants of Poland involved in the propaganda anti-war initiatives. The analysis of this aspect of fear management gives a unique opportunity to correlate the production and distribution of different forms of communist propaganda with its reception.

#### **4. Neutralisation, mobilisation, indoctrination. The state management of emotions evoked by the Korean War**

One of the most important tasks of the communist administration facing the disturbing atmosphere evoked within Polish society by the war rumours was to neutralise the anti-government moods. First of all, this task was performed by the MBP officers eliminating the agents of the whispered propaganda from society. Obviously this action was implemented way before the outbreak of the Korean War, which only intensified MBP repressions inflicted against the gossipers. The information about the arrest of two persons spreading war rumours in Włoszczowa (Southern Poland) was included in the first MBP bulletin informing authorities about the cases of panic shopping in late June 1950.<sup>935</sup> Later on, in first days/weeks of August 1950 MBP agents arrested two students of the Technical University in Gdańsk who were taking pictures of the long lines of people waiting for sugar.<sup>936</sup> Finally, in the same month MBP officers in Łódź arrested a student of the vocational school for a similar reason.<sup>937</sup> This young person was assuring his colleagues that the war would begin in Poland in the spring of

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<sup>935</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 148/606, 30.06.1950, p. 465

<sup>936</sup> AIPN, Gabinet Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych, Biuletyn Dzienny No. 184/641, 11.08.1950, p. 97

<sup>937</sup> P. Osęka, op.cit., p. 16



1951 with the arrival of the US Army, which would improve the material situation of Polish society.

Aside from this sort of ad hoc activity the communist authorities decided to also involve the communist youth organisations, especially the Association of Polish Youth (ZMP) in the fight against the phenomenon of panic shopping. According to Piotr Osęka, starting from July 1950 the brigades of the ZMP activists started to walk through the cities and villages with the task of reducing panic and convincing society that there was no reason to empty shop shelves.<sup>938</sup> Osęka concludes, however, that the ZMP efforts to calm society down were counterproductive. Communist youth agitating on the streets fomented rather than reduced panic. Facing this situation the communist propagandists implemented the parallel programme of mass meetings in factories, which aimed at the mobilisation of society in the common fight against the imperialist enemy.

#### **4.1 In response to imperialism we increase the work dynamics**

As Marcin Zaremba argues in his article on the issue of mobilisation in communism, to a large extent this political ideology and practice was constructed as a mobilisation system.<sup>939</sup> In postwar Poland this social and political attitude referred not only to the members of the PPR/PZPR regularly mobilised to support their local and central leaders, but also, or even especially, to the average inhabitants of Poland. The new postwar authorities quickly realised that the ethos of constant mobilisation of society to the common effort of rebuilding Poland could potentially soften workers' distrust towards the communist government.

Using vivid slogans, like e.g. 'The entire progressive humanity protests against the imperialist aggression in Korea',<sup>940</sup> the propagandists introduced a strategy of translating the fear of war into anger towards the 'war provokers'. The communists agitators encouraged workers to express their anger in the form of mass protests organised in all regions of Poland. This tactic turned out to be quite efficient as, for

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<sup>938</sup> Ibid, p. 15

<sup>939</sup> M. Zaremba, *Komunizm jako system mobilizacyjny: casus Polski* [in:] *Komunizm. Ideologia, system, ludzie*. Ed. T. Szarota, Warszawa 2001, pp. 110-126

<sup>940</sup> *O trwały pokój, o demokrację ludową*, vol. 35, 01.09.1950, quotation after: A. Leszczyński, op.cit., p. 57

instance, in first days of July 1950 the propagandists managed to organise a protest of 100,000 people in Warsaw. According to *Trybuna Ludu* the crowd, gathered to protest against American aggression, reacted with enthusiasm when the military victories of the communist North Korean Army were announced.<sup>941</sup> Although this crowd did not gather spontaneously, the propagandists managed to manifest directly to the workers the official interpretation of the war on a mass scale.<sup>942</sup> Communist press informed readers that similar protests took place throughout Poland.<sup>943</sup> The intensity of this form of direct propaganda reached its peak during the 'Week of the defence of Korea' which took place between 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July 1950.

The further stage of translating fear into more a 'useful emotion' was the propaganda attempt to transform the anger into an increased fervour to work. In this tactic the communist media claimed that the workplace should be seen as a battlefield where each worker, using his regular tools, could efficiently fight against war provokers. As Piotr Osęka put it, '*everyone was supposed to be a soldier on the great front of confrontation with the enemies of socialism*'.<sup>944</sup> This tactic was introduced long before the war in Korea, the outbreak of which intensified the propaganda efforts to mobilise society to work harder in response to the 'imperialist attempts to provoke a new war'. A satirical drawing by Stanisław Cieloch, published in *Szpilki* in July 1949, illustrates well the intentions of the propagandists.<sup>945</sup> The picture presents workers building a new house confronted with an aggressive figure of the capitalist businessman, suggesting that despite his attempts the 'war provoker' was 'unable to intimidate workers'.

Slogans like 'With the increased efficiency of work the Polish working class responds to American aggression against Korea'<sup>946</sup> appeared not only in titles of press articles, but were also included in numerous resolutions announced by workers in thousands of workplaces across Poland.

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<sup>941</sup> TL, 14.07.1950

<sup>942</sup> A. Leszczyński, op.cit. p. 56

<sup>943</sup> TL, 03.07.1950; 05.07.1950; 07.07.1950; 08.07.1950; 09.07.1950; 10.07.1950; 11.07.1950; 12.07.1950; 13.07.1950; 14.07.1950; 15.07.1950; 16.07.1950; 17.07.1950; 09.08.1950

<sup>944</sup> P. Osęka, op.cit., p. 15

<sup>945</sup> SZP, 03.07.1950; Picture 43

<sup>946</sup> TL, 03.07.1950



rys. Stanisław Cieloch

« - Psiakrew, jakoś nie dają się niczym zastraszyć!

Picture 43

In most cases, the declarations publicising the workers' commitments to improve their work were announced within the framework of the activity of the local branches of the Polish Committee in Defence of Peace. The establishment of this institution in Poland in 1949 and its intensive and complex activity shows how vital the issue of peace and the problem of defending it from the imperialist threat were for the communist propaganda.

#### **4.2 Communist peace defence movement**

In the postwar reality the issue of the peace defence was intensively exploited by communist propaganda as one of the most important symbols of the division between the peaceful Socialist Bloc and the aggressive capitalist imperialists, between friends and enemies. This simplistic dichotomy was supposed to win and increase the support for the 'peace-loving' communists among societies throughout Europe victimised by World War Two. Soon after the end of the 'war of wars' the communist propaganda of peace grew stronger and was popularised with such international initiatives like the cycling Peace Race organised in the Socialist Bloc from 1948.<sup>947</sup>

The race, organised by the communist dailies -*Trybuna Ludu*, *Rudé Právo* and from 1952 also by *Neues Deutschland*, was supposed to manifest the importance of peace in the communist system of values. As Jakub Ferenc argues in his study on sport in the communist system, this race was intensively exploited by the communist propaganda in order to mobilise society and draw it into the common symbolic anti-war activity.<sup>948</sup>

Apart from the spectacular sporting events, the idea of peace was also massively popularised directly by the communist parties across Europe. This process was strengthened through its institutionalisation. First of all, in late 1947 one of the leaders of the French communists, Charles Tillon, delivered a plea to create an organisation aiming at supporting the republican regime and preventing the return of fascism and dictatorship. Consequently, in February 1948 a group of supporters of this idea

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<sup>947</sup> More on this race in: J. Ferenc, *Sport w służbie polityki. Wyścig Pokoju 1948-1989*, Warszawa 2008

<sup>948</sup> J. Ferenc, *Sport w służbie polityki. Wyścig Pokoju 1948-1989*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 15-27



established an organisation called 'Les Combattants de la Liberté'.<sup>949</sup> Later, this small institution developed into 'the Mouvement mondial des partisans de la paix', which was formed after the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace organised in Wrocław in August 1948.<sup>950</sup> Finally, in 1951 this institution was turned into 'le conseil national français du Mouvement de la Paix', popularly known as the 'Mouvement de la Paix'.<sup>951</sup>

With the congress in Wrocław, Poland became one of the centres of the global movement for the defence of peace. The congress, organised by Jerzy Borejsza, was a huge cultural event which initiated the creation of national committees of peace defence.<sup>952</sup> To a large extent this congress was subordinated to the directives sent directly from the Kremlin, which aimed at mobilising the world's public opinion against 'American imperialism'.<sup>953</sup> In fact, the congress was a part of the Stalin-supported movement aiming at slowing down the development of the nuclear weapon by the West.

In April 1949 the second Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace was organised in Paris. This event resulted in the establishment of the Movement in Defence of Peace (MDP), later coordinated by the World Peace Council (WPC), which was founded in the spring of 1950 in Warsaw as a result of the Soviet policy to promote peace campaigns around the world in order to oppose the American war-like policy. In the 1950s further congresses took place in Vienna, Berlin, Helsinki and Stockholm.<sup>954</sup>

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<sup>949</sup> J. Ślusarczyk, *Ruch obrońców pokoju w latach 1948-1989*, Warszawa 1996, p. 33

<sup>950</sup> The World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace organised in Wrocław - international conference organised between 25 and 28 August 1948 at Wrocław University of Technology. It was a propaganda conference organised in the aftermath of World War Two by the Polish and Soviet communists. The Congress was inflicted against the 'American imperialism'. The Congress was officially proposed by Polish communist activist, Jerzy Borejsza. In fact, however, the main concept of the event was prepared and approved by the USSR.

<sup>951</sup> J. Ślusarczyk, op. cit. pp. 43-45

<sup>952</sup> Among notable participants of the congress in Wrocław there were: Pablo Picasso, Louis Aragon, Frédéric Joliot, Irène Joliot-Curie and Aldous Huxley to enumerate few. Among Polish representatives were for instant writers Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (leader of the Polish delegation) and Maria Dąbrowska.

<sup>953</sup> <http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,203868,60-lat-temu-we-wroclawiu-obradowal-swiatowy-kongres-intelektualistow.html> - retrieved 06.02.2015

<sup>954</sup> <http://santibox.ch/Peace/Peacemaking.html#5.%20A%20New%20Start> - retrieved 06.02.2015

Already in 1949 the ideas promoted in Wrocław and Paris started to be put into practice in Poland by the central and local structures of the MDP. This network ranged across both huge cities and very small towns where thousands of propagandists encouraged the local societies to support numerous governmental pro-peace initiatives. What is important is that the MDP propagandists also recruited from the non-communist part of society. For instance, in Cracow voivodeship 70% out of 80,000 MDP agitators did not belong to the PZPR.<sup>955</sup> Most probably this fact was supposed to increase the credibility of the MDP as a not fully politicised initiative. What is more, propaganda agents exploiting pro-peace slogans mobilised Polish society not only with press and posters, but also directly during mass meetings. Their organisers stressed that peace was one of the central values of the communist ideology.

One of the mass forms of the pro-peace initiative aimed at involving possibly the largest part of Polish society by collecting signatures in support of international and local anti-war appeals. These initiatives served the communist propagandists as an efficient factor encouraging society to support the idea proposed not even by the communist government, but by the branch of the international institution of.... At the end of the day, however, most of the inhabitants of Poland followed the instructions and yielded to the pressure of the direct and indirect governmental propaganda. Here the case of the Stockholm Appeal serves as a good illustration of this issue.

### **The Stockholm Appeal**

The idea of the Stockholm Appeal calling for a total prohibition of the production of the atomic arsenal was launched in March 1950 by the WPC. The appeal was initiated by the French Communist physicist Frédéric Joliot-Curie. At face value the content of the appeal seemed to be just pacifist and not politically engaged.<sup>956</sup> Despite its officially

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<sup>955</sup> AAN, KC PZPR, Wydział Propagandy i Agitacji, Sprawozdanie z przygotowań do przeprowadzenia Narodowego Plebiscytu Pokoju w Województwie Krakowskim, p. 148

<sup>956</sup> The content of the Stockholm Appeal: 'We demand the outlawing of atomic weapons as instruments of intimidation and mass murder of peoples. We demand strict international control to enforce this measure.' 'We believe that any government which first uses atomic weapons against any other country whatsoever will be committing a crime against humanity and should be dealt with as a war criminal.' 'We call on all men and women of good will throughout the world to sign this appeal'.

anti-war character the Stockholm Appeal is today perceived as one of the first propaganda articulations opening the period of the cold war.

In Poland the idea and content of the Stockholm Appeal was announced at the beginning of April 1950,<sup>957</sup> with signatures collected from 11<sup>th</sup> May. Starting from 17<sup>th</sup> April, communist press in Poland regularly encouraged Polish society to sign the appeal.<sup>958</sup> Press articles pointed out that all the spheres of Polish society (workers, students, state officers, teachers, the clergy) should be engaged in collecting the signatures.

In most cases the MDP agitators collected signatures in factories and other places of work, but they also visited private homes and flats. Workers refusing to sign the appeal faced repressions including losing their job. In late April 1950, apart from preparing the action of collecting signatures, MDP propaganda agents started to organise the so-called 'guards of peace' in numerous factories in all regions of Poland. These actions included additional commitments of workers to increase their output of production. As *Trybuna Ludu* suggested, this initiative was fully spontaneous and involved thousands of workers, including in Łódź, Stalowa Wola, Lublin, Wrocław and Wałbrzych, who '*manifested their will to fight against the criminal plans of the war provokers*'.<sup>959</sup>

In May 1950, communist media started to inform Poles about the millions of signatures collected on all continents.<sup>960</sup> Furthermore, Polish press readers were encouraged to sign the appeal by the voices of Polish intellectuals: eminent writers (Julian Tuwim, Leopold Staff) and chancellors of universities in Warsaw and Cracow who stressed the value of this anti-war declaration.<sup>961</sup> Aside from arguments given by the intellectual authorities, Polish propaganda receivers were also mobilised to sign the appeal by the telling visual propaganda. Here the two cases of drawings printed on the cover of the *Szpilki* magazine are worth examining. First of all, in the issue of *Szpilki* from

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<sup>957</sup> TL, 01.04.1950

<sup>958</sup> TL, 17.04.1950; 18 ; 19; 26 ; 27

<sup>959</sup> TL, 27.04.1950; 29.04.1950

<sup>960</sup> TL, 11.05.1950

<sup>961</sup> Loc.cit.

the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1950 Eryk Lipiński placed a drawing representing the power standing behind the supporters of peace.<sup>962</sup> This power was symbolised by a commanding hand carrying a huge red banner with the word 'peace' at its centre. The leaders of the capitalist countries practicing the war-like policy were presented as terrified dwarfs running away from the proponents of peace.

What is important, this drawing presents a practically identical pose as the one used again by Eryk Lipiński three months later in the already analysed drawing symbolising the American invasion of Korea under the auspices of the UN (see page 350).

Both pictures show powerful hands carrying banners, thus the first hand, the friendly one, carries the resilient flag symbolising the power that should comfort the viewers. The second one, the hand of the enemy, held the jagged standard representing the weakness of the UN and the threat posed by the USA in misusing the sign of this institution.

Two weeks later, in mid-May 1950 another telling drawing referring to the peace propaganda was published on the cover of *Szpilki*.<sup>963</sup> In his drawing Jerzy Zaruba presented pens having the function of spears inflicted against the terrified war provoker. This drawing implied that every single signature on the Stockholm Appeal was a part of a global action of cornering the dangerous enemy. Both the drawings of Lipiński and Zaruba suggested to viewers that the pressure on the leaders of the countries practicing the war-like policy generated by the signatures was efficient since it was making the war provokers afraid that their plans were doomed to fail. In a symbolic way these pictures attempted to transfer the fear of war from Polish readers of *Szpilki* to the war provokers pictured in the drawings.

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<sup>962</sup> SZP, 01.05.1950; Picture 44

<sup>963</sup> SZP, 14.05.1950; Picture 45

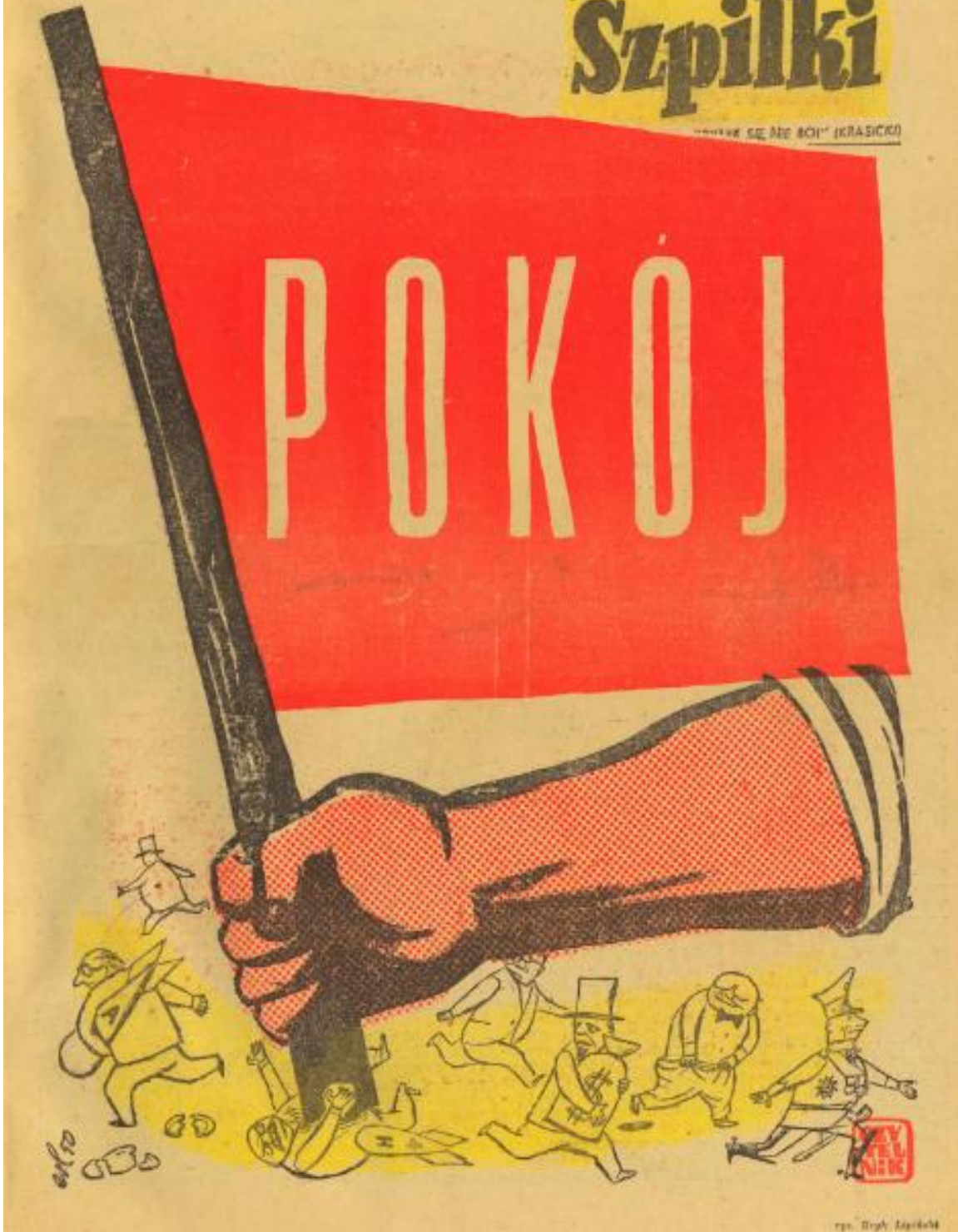


Cena 20 zł.

Nr 18 (457) Rok XVI 1.V.1950

# Szpilki

„...KRE ŚCIE NIE BOI” (KRASICKI)



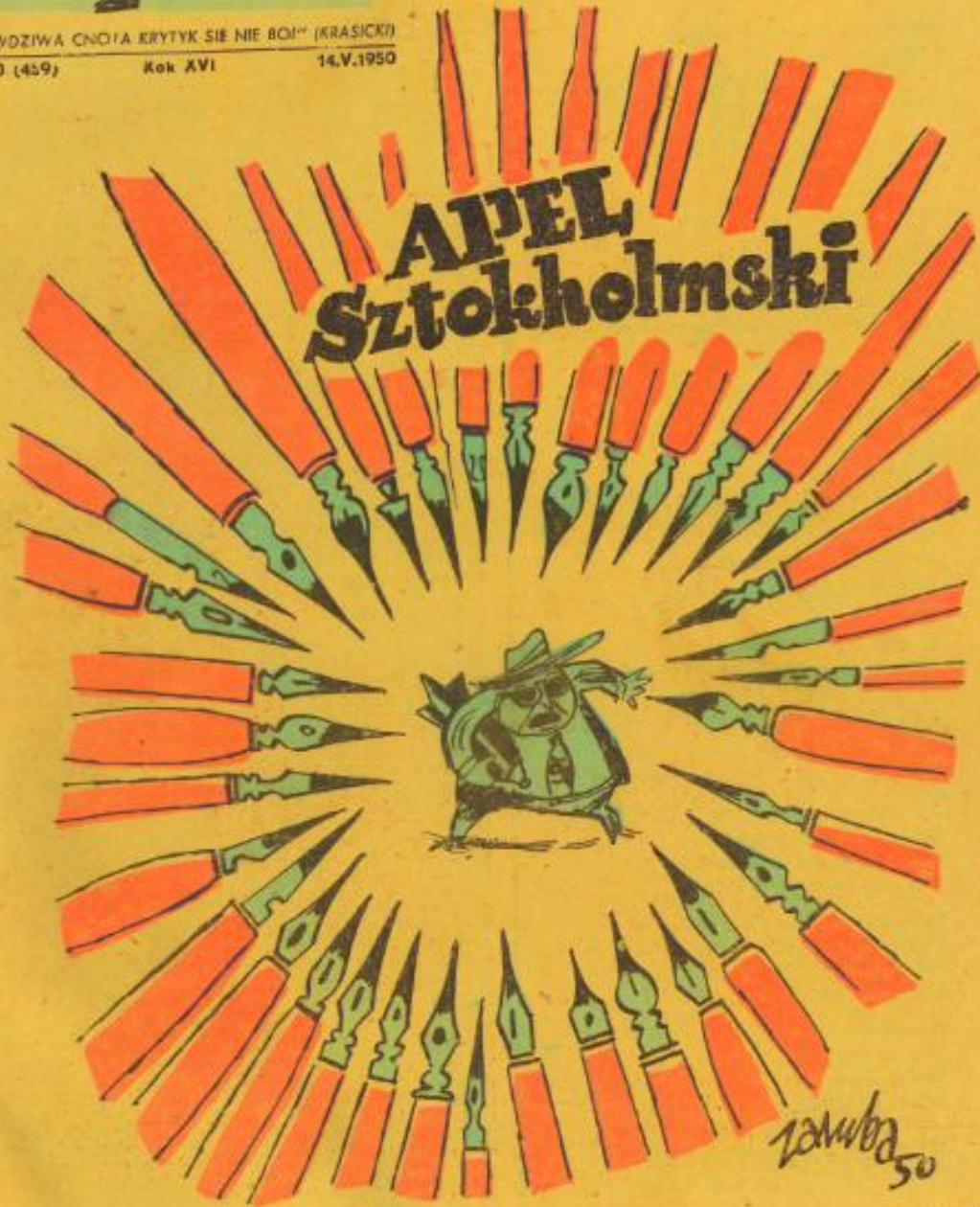
Picture 44

# Szpilki

Cena 20 zł.

W NUMERZE:  
ZBIGNIEW LENGREN  
TARGI POZNANSKIE

„PRAWDZIWA CNOTA KRYTYK SIĘ NIE BOI” (KRASICKI)  
Nr 20 (459) Rok XVI 14.V.1950



*20 maja 50*

rys. Jerzy Zaruba



PODŻEGACZ OSACZONY

Picture 45

The symbolic pro-peace discourse expressed with drawings was also supported by Polish Film Chronicle. Five episodes of the PKF from late April to early June 1950 were dominated with agitation encouraging the viewers to sign the appeal.<sup>964</sup> Relatively long movies presented scenes of signing the document by the highest authorities and artists as well as by workers and students expressing their enthusiasm towards the idea of peace. All these shots were supposed to involve the viewers in the process of stabilisation of peace in the world by signing the appeal. Finally, until 18<sup>th</sup> June 1950 in every issue of the communist press vivid titles informed readers about the increasing amount of signatures. That day, *Trybuna Ludu* announced that 18 million signatures had been collected in Poland.<sup>965</sup>

The propaganda campaign that enabled the Polish government to gain such a huge support for the idea of an anti-war appeal had an impressive scale. For instance, in Łódź and its region in the direct propaganda campaign almost 50,000 agitators of the MDP were engaged.<sup>966</sup> According to official reports, until the end of May 1950 this group of agitators encouraging people to sign the appeal managed to organise various meetings visited by almost 500,000 inhabitants of this area.<sup>967</sup> The same report informed authorities that the main mass meeting organised in Łódź in order to support the anti-war initiative gathered around 300,000 people, that is nearly half of the entire local population.<sup>968</sup>

A similar involvement of anti-war agitators, and results of their work, were noted in the entire country. In total, around 578,000 agitators of the MDP, organised in almost 100,000 local committees, propagated the idea of peace in all regions of Poland.<sup>969</sup> Even if in most cases the participants of the meetings with agitators did not take part voluntarily and were obliged to attend by their superiors in factories, this direct action

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<sup>964</sup> PKF 18/50, 26.04.1950; 20/05, 10.05.1950; 21/50, 17.05; 22/50, 25.05.1950; 23/50, 01.06.1950

<sup>965</sup> TL, 18.05.1950

<sup>966</sup> APŁ, Wojewódzki Komitet Obrońców Pokoju w Łodzi [Later: WKOP]. Apel Sztokholmski, ankiety sprawozdawcze miejskich i powiatowych Komitetów Obrońców Pokoju dotyczące przebiegu zbierania podpisów pod apelem, 30.05.1950, p. 2

<sup>967</sup> Ibid, p. 4

<sup>968</sup> APŁ, WKOP. Protokół z zebrań, sprawozdania z działalności, plany pracy, skład 1950-1951, 16.06.1950, p. 24

<sup>969</sup> Loc.cit.

supported by the media campaign created the impression of the omnipresence of the 'peace ideology' and thus had to have an impact on the attitude of Polish society. This impact was strengthened by further mass actions of this kind.

### **The National Peace Plebiscite**

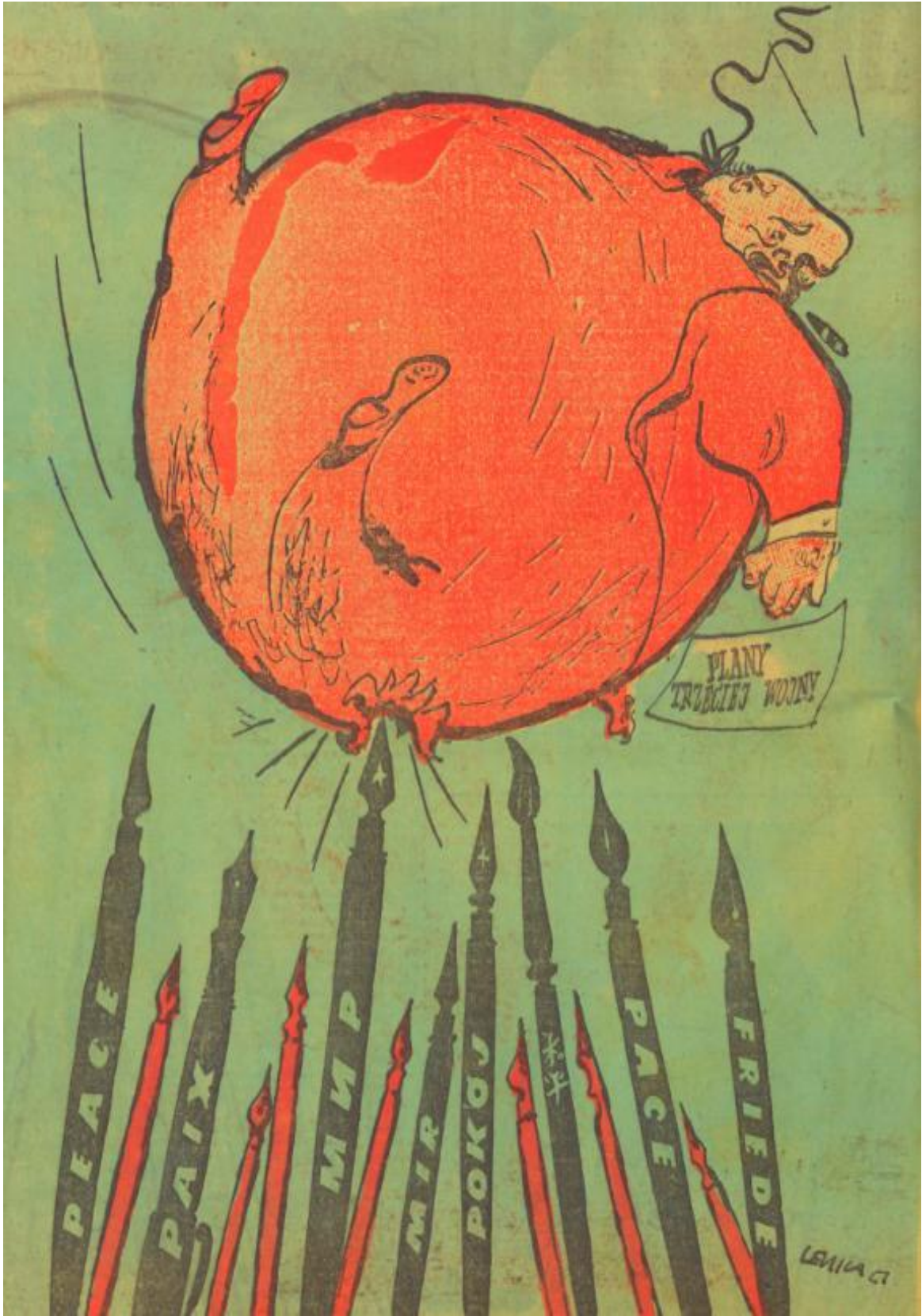
The second most important action of collecting signatures on the anti-war appeal took place in May 1951. Again, the Polish pro-peace initiative was part of an international enterprise. The global character of the gathering of signatures in support of peace was highlighted, for instance, by a caricature that Jan Lenica published in *Szpilki* in May 1951.<sup>970</sup> In his drawing, the figure of Winston Churchill, swollen like a huge balloon, symbolised the determination of the 'Western imperialists' to implement the plan of the Third World War. The caricature suggested that each pen signing the appeal had the function of a weapon deterring war provokers. Furthermore, the word 'peace', written in many languages on spears, symbolised the global nature of the fight for world peace. Finally, the face of Churchill expressing fright and helplessness once again seemed to attempt to perform the symbolic transfer of fear of war from the readers of *Szpilki* to the figure drawn by Lenica. This time such a trick was even more important than a year before, since the communist propaganda was struggling with the emotional consequences of an authentic war, not a potential one like it was in May 1950.

The National Peace Plebiscite had a similar propaganda impetus as the action discussed above. Once again, 100,000 MDP agitators encouraged Polish society to sign the anti-war appeal. This time, however, they were acting almost a year after the outbreak of war in Korea, which happened despite the millions of signatures collected in May of 1950.

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<sup>970</sup> SZP, 20.05.1951; Picture 46





Picture 46

One may realise the impressive scale of this propaganda when looking at the numbers and figures noted in the report from the campaign in Łódź. For instance, the MDP agitators were obliged to circulate 126 kilograms of satirical posters, 1,024 kilograms of the leaflet '17th May – National Peace Plebiscite', 1.6 million of the plebiscite papers and 177 kilograms of portraits of Bolesław Bierut and Stalin.

Starting from early April 1951 communist press started to mobilise society to take part in the plebiscite. The signatures on the National Peace Plebiscite were collected for ten days between 17<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May 1951. As it was officially announced the next day over 18 million Poles decided to support the anti-war idea of the plebiscite.<sup>971</sup> This number shows that regardless of the fact that only a few weeks after the anti-war campaign in May 1950 the conflict in Korea started, one year later communist agitators once again managed to mobilise practically the same amount of proponents to the idea supported by the government.

The social responses to the both actions of collecting signatures on the anti-war documents were systematically monitored by the MDP propagandists. The below presented analysis of the MDP reports and letters sent by listeners to Polish Radio listeners allows vital conclusions to be drawn on the efficiency of the propaganda efforts to manage the interwar state of mind.

## **5. Peace sells, but who is buying? Social reception of the propaganda of peace**

The vast majority of social responses to the governmental pro-peace initiatives recorded in the reports of the propaganda institutions and in correspondence sent to Polish Radio were positive. The huge amount of resolutions in which thousands of factory workers declared their commitments to work harder in the name of peace helps to realise how efficient the propagandists were in communicating and implementing this aspect of the communist ideology within society. The examination of hundreds of letters of support for the 'anti-war' activity of the communist government sent by Polish pupils and students to the local and central branches of the MDP confirms such a

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<sup>971</sup> TL, 27.05.1951

conclusion. Yet, the signs of various types of negative responses are even more revealing in terms of the impact of propaganda on Polish postwar society and thus they should be discussed first.

***'We are against the war, but we will not sign anything'***

From the very beginning, the communist 'propaganda of peace' was presented as the only possible alternative to the threat posed by the 'imperialist policy of war'. Although the agitators and authorities constantly used the pacifist rhetoric, mentioning the word 'peace' in every sentence, attentive observers recognised in this tactic intentions opposite to the declared ones. For instance, Maria Dąbrowska, a participant of the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace in Wrocław in August 1948, noted in her diary:

*'Undoubtedly this congress was organised not to oppose the war as a general threat, but as a demonstration against the potential outbreak of a Soviet-American war that in this moment is inconvenient for the USSR (...) This congress proved that the USSR still did not possess the nuclear weapon (yet I am sure they will soon prepare it). Consequently, the USSR attempts to mobilise all the powers in its range so that readiness for war could be distributed to all countries except from the USSR'.<sup>972</sup>*

This observation shows the distance the notable writer had towards the propaganda tactic of offering society the 'peace doctrine' as the alternative to the dangerous war-like policy of the 'Western imperialists'. The critical attitude towards the communist propaganda attempts to employ the 'peace rhetoric' to neutralise the fear of war within Polish society was not characteristic only to intellectuals like Dąbrowska. Two years after the congress in Wrocław, far more words of scepticism towards initiatives mobilising Polish society to take part in the anti-war actions were expressed. The signs of this negative social attitude towards pro-peace events were noted in numerous propaganda reports and correspondence sent to state institutions.

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<sup>972</sup> M. Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne 1945-1949*, ed. T. Drewnowski, Warszawa 1996, pp. 272-273

The analysis of the critical voices collected by MDP agents, propagandists working in Polish Radio and officers serving in the Propaganda Department of the PZPR allows one to distinguish between several types of negative social attitudes towards the anti-war actions organised in Poland. A close reading of popular opinions on the propaganda of peace noted in the MDP reports shows that the first group of negative voices towards both mass initiatives was motivated by a deep mistrust towards the communist government organising both actions. In particular, the MDP reports on social moods during pro-peace campaigns shows that a large part of Polish society (especially peasants) were afraid that their signatures would soon be used for other purposes. The MDP reports informed authorities that many peasants were afraid to sign the pro-peace documents as they thought that in fact they were signing an agreement for the compulsory implementation of the production cooperatives.<sup>973</sup> Furthermore, the MDP agents stated in their reports that other peasants were afraid that under the pretext of the peace appeals they were being asked to sign an agreement for collectivisation.<sup>974</sup> Those concerns were not irrational as from September 1948 the plan of the Soviet-like collectivisation started to be introduced in Poland.

Aside from such types of dread, MDP agents noted in their reports that Polish society was also influenced by rumours suggesting that those actions could have an impact on the personal future of signers or on the shape of the country. For instance, a group of inhabitants of a village near Łęczyca (a city near Łódź) anticipated that after signing the Stockholm Appeal they would be deported to Siberia.<sup>975</sup> A year later a village head living near Kielce dissuaded the peasants from signing the plebiscite paper telling them: *'I heard that soon there will be a war and those who signed the paper will be sent to Siberia'*.<sup>976</sup> Both these views referred to the traumatic experience of deporting Poles by Russia and then the USSR to Siberia as a form of repression. Later on, MDP activists monitoring social moods during the plebiscite in June 1951 in Łódź, noted in their report

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<sup>973</sup> APŁ, WKOP, Apel Sztokholmski, Ankiety sprawozdawcze, pp. 4-5, 12, 50; APŁ, WKOP, Apel Sztokholmski, Łęczyca, p. 9; AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951, p. 23

<sup>974</sup> APŁ, WKOP, Apel Sztokholmski, Skierniewice, p. 49

<sup>975</sup> APŁ, WKOP, Apel Sztokholmski, Łęczyca, p. 9

<sup>976</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951, p. 33



that many people considered as realistic a rumour suggesting that young males who signed the plebiscite papers would be recruited to the army and sent to Korea.<sup>977</sup> In 1951 the PZPR propaganda agents sending reports from Kwidzyn,<sup>978</sup> Gdańsk<sup>979</sup> (both Northern Poland) and Zielona Góra<sup>980</sup> (Western Poland) noted that many inhabitants of those regions were afraid to sign the plebiscite paper as they thought it could decide on including Poland to the USSR as the 17<sup>th</sup> republic. Among other factors making the inhabitants of Poland afraid to sign the anti-war appeals there were also bad experiences with signing other papers in the interwar period.<sup>981</sup> The MDP agitators also noticed cases of people expressing anxiety that their signatures would be used as an agreement to increase taxes.<sup>982</sup> Propaganda reports also contained numerous cases of people treating pro-peace actions with serious doubts expressed in declarations like the one noted by the MDP agent from Łęczycza: *'We do not want war, but we will not sign anything'*.<sup>983</sup> Serious as all those concerns regarding the consequences of signing the pro-peace appeals could be, however, the vast majority of the Polish adult population decided to support both initiatives.

The third and most common type of sceptical attitude was expressed by inhabitants of Polish cities and villages, who were deeply frustrated with their terrible material situation and recognised the 'peace propaganda' as another method of pulling the wool over their eyes. For instance, a peasant living in a village near Gdańsk said to the MDP agitator: *'I was already deprived by the state of all of my grain, they left me only 160 kilograms and they treated me worse than the Gestapo, so there is no point talking about peace'*.<sup>984</sup> Among other voices the one expressed by an anonymous

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<sup>977</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951,p. 22

<sup>978</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951,p. 22

<sup>979</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951,p. 23

<sup>980</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951,p. 23

<sup>981</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951,p. 119. People were telling the MDP agitators that they do not want to sign the plebiscite paper since they were already deceived signing the papers distributed by the state officers in the 1930s

<sup>982</sup> APŁ, WKOP, Apel Sztokholmski, Łęczycza,p. 9

<sup>983</sup> APŁ, WKOP, Apel Sztokholmski, Łęczycza, pp. 3,5

<sup>984</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951,p. 23

listener from Northern Poland in May 1951 is worth discussing as it encapsulates all the social frustrations revealed during the state pro-peace initiatives:

*'You are talking about peace all the time on the radio, in the press, at meetings, everywhere, but we know that instead of this you are preparing the country for war. This propaganda, this plebiscite, those signatures, all is nothing but windup. You are talking about how to behave and then you behave in totally the other way. All of us want peace, no matter to which social class we belong, what is our position, proficiency – we all need peace without all those noisy slogans and without propaganda. Yet, all of us need a real peace, freedom, peaceful life and the opportunity to work for our children, our families and our fatherland. You are talking about welfare and peace, but poverty is increasing. The 3 year economic plan is finished, the right plan of satiety is done even with the surplus, but where is the satiety? Only on paper. Millions are starving and only the privileged people are having a good life. One is crying walking across cities watching the long lines starting from four in the morning and standing till the late evening. There is no meat, no coal, no textile material.(...) All those products were available still in 1947, 1948. Where did they disappear to now? It is not several people, as you suggest, but the vast majority of society that is fed up with this situation and that desire a war that would finish all those lies and can't. (...) I will sign the plebiscite paper as I have no other choice. I am fully aware that I would be sent at least for six months to prison if I refuse signing'.<sup>985</sup>*

In the above words the deep material concerns played the central role. The listener from Jabłonowo assumed that even the level of mass frustration exceeded the critical mass as the vast majority of society preferred the next war which would finish this sort of peace. Furthermore, another listener, Hugo Jasna Głowa from Ostrów Wielkopolski (Greater Poland) shared the above view stating that *'90% of Polish society is fed up with this distorted communism, where norms of work are still being increased, salaries are decreased and you keep on talking that our living conditions are*

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<sup>985</sup> ATVP, Komitet Do Spraw Radiofonii i Telewizji, Biuro listów i korespondentów, Biuletyn No.5, 01.06.1951, p. 1

*improving*'.<sup>986</sup> Both diagnoses made by radio listeners indicating millions of Poles being angry with their economic condition and the flood of empty anti-war propaganda slogans sounded alarming. Yet, in fact neither the 90% of Polish society decided to organise any form of protest against their situation, nor did they pelt Polish Radio or other institutions with millions of similar letters. A small amount of correspondence preserved in archives inclines one rather to conclude that communist authorities efficiently pacified such moods, leaving society with the conviction that any form of protest was pointless.

The fourth group of Polish society expressing scepticism towards the 'propaganda of peace' consisted of people having serious doubts in its efficiency. For instance, as it was noted in the PZPR report from May 1951 an inhabitant of Tuchola (Northern Poland) stated: *'The signatures will not decide on war or peace'*.<sup>987</sup> Later on another anonymous voice noted in this report stated: *'The issue of peace is still being debated. I am against war, I could not stand yet another war, but do you really think that those signatures matter anything?'*<sup>988</sup> In the same tone, a radio listener from Warsaw, commenting on the Stockholm Appeal, asked rhetorically in his letter from August 1950: *'I am asking if to stop the new war it is enough to announce the resolution stating that the government using the atomic bomb will be accused of a war crime? In my view it is not enough as the government striving to start the war does not give a damn about such resolutions'*.<sup>989</sup> Serious as those doubts concerning the efficiency of pro-peace actions could be, the fact that an overwhelming majority of Polish society decided to sign the appeal and plebiscite papers shows that in fact such qualms remained rather declarative and had almost no impact on the final decision of signers.

The archival data allows one to indicate at least two more spheres of Polish society which actively opposed signing the anti-war declarations. The first group were recruited from people declaring religious reasons that did not allow them to sign the

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<sup>986</sup> ATVP, Komitet Do Spraw Radiofonii i Telewizji, Biuro listów i korespondentów, Biuletyn No.5, 01.06.1951, p. 2

<sup>987</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951, p. 34

<sup>988</sup> APR, Odpowiedzi Fali 49, 25.08.1950

<sup>989</sup> Loc. cit.

appeal and the plebiscite. Here the vast majority of opponents were Jehovah's Witnesses. Although their attitude was classified in reports as an approach of state enemies, the nature of their decision was purely religious. As they explained to the MDP agitators, they could not sign any governmental documents since according to their faith only God could decide on war or peace.<sup>990</sup> The Jehovah's Witnesses consequently refused signing the anti-war declaration throughout Poland. Such an attitude was used already on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1950 by the Director of the Office of Religious Issues, Antoni Bida, to refuse the official registration of Jehovah's Witnesses as a religious organisation.

Unlike the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Catholic clergy's attitude towards pro-peace actions was far less homogenous. There was no general instruction given by the Primate of Poland. On the one hand, several bishops instructed their priests to prevent parishoners from signing the anti-war declarations. On the other hand, there were cases where priests took an active part in promoting these governmental initiatives.

Aside from the above-mentioned religiously motivated part of Polish society the last important social group of Polish society who did not support the anti-war state actions was the German minority living in the Northern and South-Western territories of Poland. In the Region of Koszalin (Northern Poland) 800 out of 8,000 Germans (that is one sixth of the entire local population including Poles) refused signing the papers. As it was stated in the MDP report from this region, Germans were motivated in their decision by the fact that their local problems and requirements were ignored by the state. In particular, Germans argued that since they did not have enough schools or text books in German for pupils, they did not feel obliged to support any governmental initiative.<sup>991</sup> In the region of Olsztyn (Northern Poland) local Germans, 30% of the entire population, stated that they would sign the plebiscite papers if they were living in their homeland, on the other side of the Odra River.<sup>992</sup> Furthermore, in Szczytno (Northern Poland) local Germans were afraid to sign the plebiscite papers after receiving letters from families in Germany. This correspondence informed them that after signing the

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<sup>990</sup> The Jehovah's Witnesses still do not participate in the political life. They do not attend any elections.

<sup>991</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951, p. 144

<sup>992</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951, p. 28

papers they would not have another chance to see their relatives in Germany.<sup>993</sup> Finally, in the region of Opole (South-Western Poland) the propaganda agent noted a case of a demonstration organised by German pupils. Children were alleged to have refused signing the plebiscite papers and ostentatiously performed the song 'Deutschland über alles', that is, the former anthem of Nazi Germany.<sup>994</sup> The above examples show how deeply disintegrated Polish postwar society was in the first years after World War Two.

The above presented examples of the negative social reception of attempts to present the communist government of Poland as a world anti-war vanguard show the social distance from the official discourse. Yet, a relatively small amount of signs of such attitudes are available in sources, combined with the fact that the vast majority of society (even if forced) signed anti-war declarations without organised forms of protest, leads me to the conclusion that this aspect of propaganda fear management was efficient. The below presented discussion of the voices of those who seemed to buy the governmental pro-peace arguments from the agitators confirms this view.

### **In the name of peace we oblige to work harder**

As it was already mentioned in this chapter, one of the main propaganda forms of managing the interwar state of mind was the tactic of translating fear of a new conflict into anger towards war provokers. Further on agitators attempted to turn anger into hard work as a replay to the dangerous war-like activity of Western imperialists. In this strategy, the issue of the defence of peace was used as a pretext for the propagandists to announce the need to increase the already exorbitant norms of work in the name of the fight for peace. In many cases those attempts were granted with a positive response.

The numerous workers' resolutions, collected in archives, supporting the idea of working harder in the name of peace show the significant impact of the 'anti-war propaganda' on Polish society. Some particular numbers are of help in illustrating the scale of success of the communist propagandists. For instance, in late April of 1950 in

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<sup>993</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951, p. 91

<sup>994</sup> AAN, KCPZPR, WPiA, 1951, p. 25

Gdańsk and its region the MDP propagandists mobilised workers to organise 7,800 'guards of peace' in 900 workplaces. Thirty-eight of those guards in Gdańsk generated over one million PLN. Furthermore, after the outbreak of war in Korea this issue immediately appeared in the workers' resolutions. Here the declaration announced in the factory in Zduńska Wola, near Łódź, serves as a good example:

*'The team at the factory of the cotton looms in Zduńska Wola, at the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1950, undertook to fight to fulfil the 6 year economic plan through mobilisation of all possible powers and political explanation of political goals to all workers in order to solidify peace in the world and to increase the living conditions of the working class.(...) At the same time we are condemning the barbarian bomb attacks of the American forces on the innocent population of Korea'.<sup>995</sup>*

The archival data of the MDP and the Propaganda Department of the PZPR contain hundreds of very similar resolutions made by workers from all regions of Poland. Some of them consisted of general statements like the one above, especially in 1950 and 1951 (but also later). Many others enumerated the particular economic aims the workers declared their aim of achieving in the name of peace. Even if those resolutions were not an effect of the spontaneous initiative of workers encouraged by the pro-peace media campaign, they should be interpreted as the successful implementation of the propaganda strategy of translating the fear of war into rage and later into hard work performed by Polish workers. Even if this group of Polish society did not believe in the anti-war impact of their resolutions, they were successfully involved in the policy realised by the communist authorities. Although they could be fed up with being surrounded by all forms of the 'peace propaganda', they had almost no alternative mass media that could help them find release from this tremendous pressure of the pro-peace media discourse.

The impact of the propaganda of peace was not limited to workers. As many other sources show, the communist agitators managed to convey the importance of the issue of the peace defence in practically all spheres of Polish society. Here the cases of

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<sup>995</sup> APŁ, WKOP w Łodzi, MKOP w Zduńskiej Woli, Protokoły, Sprawozdania, Meldunki, Rezolucje, Wykazy własne i nadesłane, 14.08.1950, p. 52

the declarations noted by Polish pupils during the National Plebiscite for Peace in May 1951 serve as a good illustration of this tendency. For instance, the MDP report from Piotrków Trybunalski, a city near Łódź, contains six very similar voices of young people declaring, for example, that:

*'I am signing the Appeal of the World Council of Peace because I know that my signature is a pertinent shot inflicted against the political aims of the criminal war provokers, who with their net of intrigues are attempting to snare humanity and turn it into slaves. I know that my signature, together with the other millions of signatures, is able to prevent the usage of the nuclear weapon. Being aware of that I am signing the appeal'.<sup>996</sup>*

The other case noted by the propaganda agent of the PZPR in the region of Lublin (Eastern Poland) is even more spectacular. As it was noted in the report: *'(...) the teacher of religion in elementary school in the village near Lublin refused to sign the plebiscite paper. After this fact he did not appear in school for several days, but once he finally arrived at school the pupils invited him with screams: Out with war provokers! Additionally children were chanting for Stalin and Bierut'.<sup>997</sup>* Both these examples show how far young pupils identified themselves with the governmental anti-war propaganda discourse. This fact well demonstrates the high efficiency of the propaganda fear management policy implemented in Polish society from the earliest stages of education.

Important as the propaganda target to win social support for the governmental anti-war initiatives was, this task was part of a wider political strategy aimed at gaining complex control over Polish society. As the head of the MDP committee in Pabianice (a city near Łódź) noted in his report:

*'As one may judge from the course of the National Plebiscite for Peace, our society will warmly support every decision of our government and our party (PZPR-BK).*

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<sup>996</sup> APŁ, WKOP w Łodzi, MKOP w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim, Protokoły, Sprawozdania, Meldunki, 21.05.1951, p. 31

<sup>997</sup> AAN, KC PZPR, WPIA, 19.05.1951, p. 157

*The results of the plebiscite show that the politics of the government won full reliance’.*<sup>998</sup>

Actions like the gathering of signatures on the anti-war declarations served the communist authorities as a convenient yardstick, enabling measuring the social acceptance of the government’s politics. Bearing in mind the fact that until the dramatic events in June of 1956 in Poznań no serious wave of strikes took place in Poland, the conclusion of the MDP officer from Pabianice should be interpreted as an accurate assessment of reality at the beginning of the 1950s.

In the above discussed part of this chapter I left one of the main official generators of propaganda of peace – the nuclear threat – nearly silenced. Since fear of the consequences of using the atomic bomb was one of the central factors determining the social atmosphere during the entire Cold War period, this issue requires discussion in a separate section.

## **6. The threat of the atomic bomb**

The nuclear dread deriving from discovering and using the atomic weapon by the US Army in Japan in August 1945 became one of the symbols of the Cold War. The image of the nuclear mushroom appearing after the detonation of the atomic bomb became one of the most popular icons expressing the popular anxiety of the total annihilation of the human race that accompanied all generations in the Western and Eastern world especially up to 1989.

In communist propaganda the issue of the atomic bomb appeared with the comments on the American nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Very soon the communist-controlled media in Poland started to exploit the problem of the American monopoly on the atomic weapon.<sup>999</sup>

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<sup>998</sup> APŁ, WKOP w Łodzi, MKOP w Pabianicach, Protokoły, Sprawozdania własne i nadesłane, 09.06.1951, p. 60

<sup>999</sup> Starting from 1940 the atomic bomb was being constructed by the international team of scientists collaborating together in the frame of the top secret American programme - Manhattan Engineering District. Since 1942 the laboratories were located in Los Alamos, New Mexico. The first complete bomb was constructed and detonated on July 16th 1945 on the firing range near Los Alamos. The only two



## Dangerous imperialists and their nuclear bogeys

The postwar communist media were highly saturated with dispatches suggesting the disturbing intentions of the only possessors of atomic bombs. First of all communist press claimed that Americans having a monopoly for atomic bombs treated its nuclear arsenal in extremely irresponsible way. This sort of propaganda discourse was well encapsulated by the drawing by Zenon Wasilewski printed on the back cover of *Szpilki* in November 1945.<sup>1000</sup> The caricature entitled 'The game of apes' portrayed the leaders of the Western states as a bunch of wild apes treating the atomic bomb as yet another toy they were playing with paying no attention to the threat such game could provoke. The comment attached to the drawing: 'International reaction attempts to blackmail the humanity with the atomic bomb' additionally stressed evil intentions of 'Western imperialists' equipped with nuclear weapon.

One of the first direct references to the nuclear threat aiming at achieving political targets had the form of a huge banner displayed in the ruins of Warsaw in June of 1946. This piece of graphic design presented an image of the atomic bomb targeting the city with the expressively written word Nie! (No). The banner supported the governmental campaign leading up to the People's Referendum.<sup>1001</sup> On the one hand, this banner could have meant nothing but the general protest against the war and the usage of the nuclear weapon would be natural in the postwar reality. Yet, since the communist authorities strongly recommended to vote 'yes' in all three questions in the referendum, the banner should be interpreted as a clear sign stressing the catastrophic consequences of voting 'no'.

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nuclear attacks took place on August 6<sup>th</sup> on Hiroshima and three days later on Nagasaki in Japan. The American total monopoly on the nuclear weapon lasted until 29<sup>th</sup> August 1949 when the USSR performed their first controlled atomic bomb explosion. In 1952 Great Britain became the third state possessing its own nuclear arsenal.

<sup>1000</sup> SZP, 13.11.1945, Picture 47

<sup>1001</sup> L. Wyszacki, *Warszawa od wyzwolenia do naszych dni*, Warszawa 1977, p. 66, Picture 48

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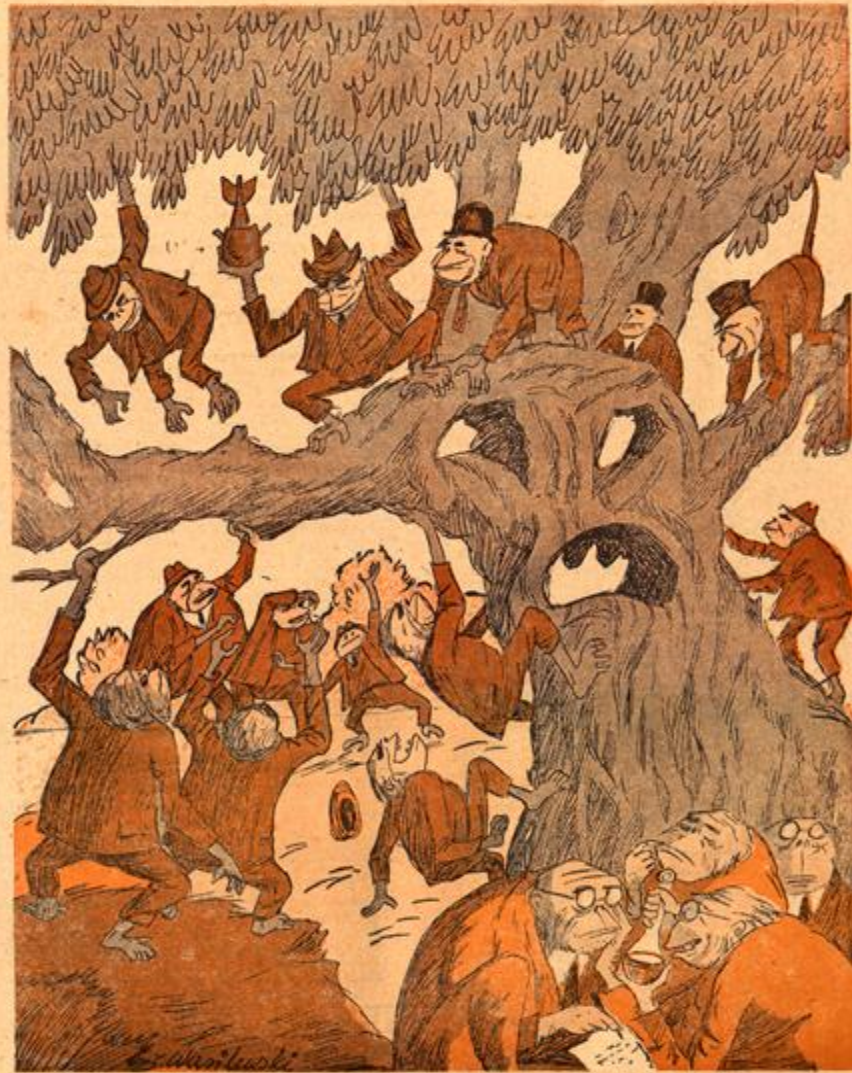
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# Szpilki

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Międzynarodowa reakcja usiłuje szantażować ludzkość  
bombą atomową



rys. Zenon Wasilewski

## Malpia zabawa

Picture 47





Picture 48

Consequently, the atomic bomb threat expressed with the banner was included in the pantheon of vital propaganda rhetorical tropes, in referring to which communist agitators highlighted the non-alternative character of the new government.

Expressive as this banner was, the communist propaganda strategy of managing the atomic bomb dread was not limited to confronting Polish society with the phantom of nuclear annihilation triggered by Western war provokers. The communist media tactic of exploiting the atomic fear discourse was based on balancing between fomenting and softening this emotion. Next to demonstrating symbols of nuclear destruction, communist propaganda agents suggested that the military potential of the new weapon was in fact highly mythologised.

### **American atomic bluff**

At the beginning of August 1946 Polish Film Chronicle transmitted an episode containing a short report dedicated to the problem of the American atomic bomb tests performed on the Bikini Atoll in the summer of 1946.<sup>1002</sup> The PKF episode presented 'American experiments with atom' as a pointless manifestation of violence and aggression and as a waste of arsenal and valuable materials. According to the commentary read by Władysław Hańcza, the outcome of the huge effort invested in tests were miserable and far from the expectations of the American Army. Such a conclusion was stressed with the final telling statement: (...) *'the only result of dropping the atomic bomb on battleships placed around Bikini Atoll was the fact that goats gathered in cages on one of the ships receded'*. Such a comment aimed at lampooning the problem of the nuclear threat. Thus, on the emotional level this PKF episode was supposed to soften the threat generated by the nuclear weapon and reduce the image of the atomic bomb to a useless expensive toy of imperialists and an ineffective bogey that no one should be afraid of.

The media tactic of downplaying the danger deriving from the American monopoly on the nuclear weapon was supported by the propaganda dispatches

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<sup>1002</sup> PKF, 25/46, 06.08.1945

informing inhabitants that the USSR was about to produce its own atomic bomb. The caricatures, like the one by Jerzy Zaruba published in November 1947, presented the Soviet experiments with the new weapon of mass destruction as making a huge impression on leaders of the USA and Western Europe.<sup>1003</sup> Zaruba's drawing was subscribed with the comment: *'The Molotov statement that the secret of the atomic bomb does not belong exclusively to the USA evoked a serious dismay among the war provokers'*. In my view, such texts aimed at a symbolic outsourcing of this sort of anxiety to Western societies.

Until 1949, when the USSR officially gained its own nuclear arsenal, both the above discussed kinds of propaganda discourse were regularly repeated in all communist media. Yet, even after 1949 the communist propaganda in Poland did not loudly display the fact that the USSR possessed atomic bombs. This kind of manifestation was limited rather to the military parades organised in Moscow during public holidays, e.g. the anniversaries of the Bolshevik Revolution and the end of World War Two, when trucks carrying bombs and later rockets with nuclear missiles were exposed on the Red Square. Those manifestations were, however, officially presented as a display of the Soviet defensive arsenal. It was only the Western atomic bomb arsenal that was always pictured as the aggressive one.

Aside from exploiting the motif of the nuclear threat in order to strengthen the anti-American propaganda discourse, the problem of the atomic bomb was also recruited to the strategy of mobilising Polish society to support the governmental anti-war initiatives.

### **The mobilisation against the nuclear threat**

The idea of focusing the attention and to mobilising European (and not only) societies against the American monopoly on the atomic bomb was mainly animated by the already mentioned Movement in Defence of Peace and the World Peace Council.

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<sup>1003</sup> SZP, 18.11.1947, Picture 49



Cena zł. 15

# Szpilki

PRAWDZIWA CNOTA KRYTYK SIĘ NIE BOI  
Nr 46 (329) Rok XIII 18. XI.1947



rys. Jerzy Zaruba



Oświadczenie młn. Mołotowa, że tajemnica bomby atomowej nie jest wyłączną własnością USA,  
wywołało konsternację wśród podległych wojennych

## A T O M O W A !

Picture 49

From the very beginning, one of the main targets of these organisations, supported by the USSR, was to put pressure on the USA to stop the production of the nuclear weapon. The main activity of the MDP and the WPC was the organisation of international actions of protests against the production of the atomic weapon.

The first and most famous of such actions was the Stockholm Appeal, calling for a complete prohibition on production, possession and usage of nuclear weapons. As it was already mentioned, in communist Poland this action was used as a pretext to implement the higher norms of production. Among the most popular slogans composed by the communist agitators precisely for the purpose of this action there was '*Wodpowiedzi na atomy budujemy nowe domy*' (In response to atomic bombs we are building new houses), chanted at the numerous mass meetings in Polish factories and offices.<sup>1004</sup>

While the above sketch demonstrates the way the communist journalists, writers and agitators played out the issue of the atomic bomb threat, the below section discusses some of the most characteristic and often unexpected signs of perception of the situation in which the fear of a sudden and mass annihilation was more palpable than ever before.

### **Truman Truman drop the bomb**

The propaganda reports prepared during the action of collecting signatures on the Stockholm Appeal in 1950 and the National Plebiscite for Peace one year later, as well as letters of listeners sent to Polish Radio in response to both actions, provides the historian with important data concerning the popular reception of the atomic bomb threat.

When it comes to the positive reception of the communist anti-American media discourse accusing the USA of intimidating the world with its nuclear arsenal, the first important conclusion should be drawn from the results of collecting signatures under the pro-peace appeals. The fact that the vast majority of inhabitants of Poland decided

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<sup>1004</sup> P. Oseka, op.cit., p. 14

to support the demand to ban the nuclear weapon to some extent shows that they recognised the threat of the atomic bomb as a source of serious and palpable dread. Obviously, in many cases the decision to sign the appeal was not voluntary. Workers were signing the lists in order to protect their working places rather than to demonstrate their authentic anti-nuclear bearing. For instance, in his letter to Polish Radio a factory worker from Łódź clearly stated that refusing to sign the plebiscite paper in May 1951 would definitely lose him his job.<sup>1005</sup> Despite this fact, the lack of organised and mass forms of defiance against the appeal in 1950 and the plebiscite in 1951 inclines me to interpret the 'positive' attitude of a large part of Polish society towards the anti-nuclear initiatives as a sign of social acceptance for the government-backed campaigns inflicted against American nuclear bullying.

Important as the above conclusion is, it must be supplemented by several characteristic examples picturing the alternative attitude towards the nuclear threat. One of the most telling expressions of the fearless attitude towards the problem of the atomic bomb threat, stressed by communist media, had the form of a short poem that was very popular, especially in the late 1940s:

Truman, Truman, spuść ta bania,  
Bo jest nie do wytrzymania

Truman, Truman, drop the bomb,  
We can't stand it anymore

According to Czesław Miłosz this rhyme appeared for the first time as a slogan written on the factory wall in Silesia probably soon after the end of World War Two, although the precise time is impossible to indicate.<sup>1006</sup> The poem might be interpreted in at least two ways. First of all, it may be seen as a sign of total desperation leading to the idea of asking President Truman to bomb Poland just like it took place in Japan. In this case, the desperation expressed in words 'we can't stand it anymore' must be seen in the context of the terrible economic and social conditions Polish society had to

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<sup>1005</sup> ATVP, Komitet Do Spraw Radiofonii i Telewizji, Biuro listów i korespondentów, Biuletyn No.5, 01.06.1951, p. 3

<sup>1006</sup> M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, pp. 434-435



grapple with in the postwar reality, at least until the second half of the 1950s when the situation slightly improved. Such an interpretation is based on particular voices expressed in that period in letters sent to Polish Radio. For instance, a radio listener from Ostrów Mazowiecki (Central Poland) stated in his letter: '(...) *Polish society cannot stand this poverty and slow agony anymore. It is better to die than to live in such peace. Let the atomic bomb turn everything into ashes*'.<sup>1007</sup> On the other hand, the same words could refer to the unbearable Soviet occupation of Poland. In this case the words 'Truman drop the bomb' should be interpreted as a demand to attack the USSR by the US Army equipped with the nuclear weapon.

As I noticed in my interview with Łucja Skierska,<sup>1008</sup> the above poem also had a popular continuation:

Jedna bomba atomowa,	One atomic bomb,
I wrócimy znów do Lwowa.	And we can return to Lviv.
Choć zastaniem same zgliszcza,	Although we will find only cinders
Jednak ziemia to ojczyzna	This is still our native ground
Druga mała, ale silna,	The second small, but powerful bomb
I wrócimy też do Wilna	And we can return to Vilnius

These six lines expressed the strong and very fresh sense of nostalgia to the Eastern part of Poland that was just lost to the USSR. The rhyme shows that the society circulating the poem expected that after the nuclear attack on the Soviet occupant it would be possible to regain Lviv and Vilnius, the lost centres of the Eastern Borderlands. What is important is that the popularity of the rhyme suggests that a large part of Polish society accepted even the destruction of the cities as a consequence of an atomic bomb attack. In this sense the aim to recover the Eastern lands to Poland seemed to outstrip

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<sup>1007</sup> ATVP, Komitet Do Spraw Radiofonii i Telewizji, Biuro listów i korespondentów, Biuletyn No.5, 01.06.1951, p. 2

<sup>1008</sup> Interview with Łucja Skierska, 23.12.2012

the depressing consequences of yet another destructive war of a new, even more terrifying type.

Telling or even shocking as these poems might seem, one should not forget that to formulate such slogans was far easier than to put them into practice and face its consequences. This is why, although both rhymes as well as the private letters and inscriptions on the walls expressed the hope or even a demand of a new war that would abolish the communist system, they remained in the sphere of declaration and did not push society to any form of coup or even riots until the June and autumn of 1956.

Both the above presented discussion of the propaganda attempts to manage the emotion of fear of the next war mixed with the nuclear threat, and the examination of the social reception of this policy, show high social susceptibility to the phantom of the next global conflict. To make this emotional panorama complete, this analysis must be collated with at least a short investigation of the ways the communist media commented on the war-like events of the autumn of 1956 in Poland. In that particular period it was a Soviet threat (not the Western one) that made the phantom of a new war very realistic. The examination of the popular reception of these local events allows assessing both the common attitude towards the serious and palpable war-like crisis and the ability of the state propaganda to manage the fear that spontaneously emerged within society.

## **7. Soviet tanks heading for Warsaw. Propaganda reaction, social reception and further consequences of the prospect of war in October 1956**

Searching for roots of the deep political crisis that occurred in Poland in the autumn of 1956 one must go back at least to February 1956. In Moscow, during the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev announced the famous secret report 'On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences'. Khrushchev's speech was critical towards Joseph Stalin and his model of rule, based on regularly repeated harsh purges. Apart from the symbolic critique of the cult of Stalin the speech was inflicted directly at the leaders of states in the Socialist Bloc who

implemented Stalinist rule in their countries. Khrushchev's Thaw, initiated by the Soviet leader with his speech, posed a direct threat to the position of such adoptees of Stalinism as Mátyás Rákosi in Hungary and Bolesław Bierut in Poland. The First Secretary of the PZPR took part in the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU and passed away in Moscow two weeks after the event. Officially Bierut died from a heart attack or pulmonary embolism, yet his sudden death was widely commented on as the result of a plot organised by Kremlin authorities. Bierut's death, a symbolic end of Stalinism in Poland, initiated a process of internal struggles for leadership within the PZPR. The decision to indicate Edward Ochab as a new First Secretary of the communist party did not release tensions between the two main wings inside the PZPR – the so-called 'Puławianie' (adherents of liberalisation of the political line of the party) and 'Natolińczycy' (the conservative wing supported by the Soviet leaders), but rather began a fight to gain full control over the state.<sup>1009</sup>

The political crisis within the PZPR was doubled with the events of June 1956 in Poznań. As Paweł Machcewicz concluded based on his detailed research of the MBP reports scanning social moods, the societal atmosphere in Poland after the unprecedented scale and brutal suppression of the mass workers demonstrating ( as discussed in the Chapter I, pp. 105) remained tense all summer and autumn.<sup>1010</sup> Despite the demonstration of violence performed by the MBP and the Polish Army in Poznań, in numerous other towns and villages groups of local inhabitants started to announce their own demands and postulates similar to those chanted in late June by the workers of the Cegielski factory. Apart from workers, peasants formed the second most important group of society that started to demand respect for their rights, mainly for the right to act outside the cooperatives that many peasants were forced to join in the late 1940s.<sup>1011</sup>

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<sup>1009</sup> W. Jedlicki, *Chamy i Żydy* [in:] 'Kultura', vol.12, 1962, pp. 3-41; In this conflict Puławianie decided to support Władysław Gomułka as a candidate for the position of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR. Gomułka, the unrealised scapegoat of the show trial, was released from prison in December of 1954 and restored to the PZPR in August 1956

<sup>1010</sup> P. Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 145-150

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid, pp. 146-147

The final stage of the political crisis of October 1956 started with the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Central Committee of the PZPR, organised on 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1956, which was supposed to indicate the new First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR. In the early morning of the same day an unexpected Soviet delegation, including Nikita Khrushchev, Vyacheslav Molotov, Anastas Mikoyan and Lazar Kaganovich, landed at Warsaw airport. Soviet leaders were also accompanied by a group of high-ranking officers, including General Ivan Konev, the Chief Commander of all troops of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>1012</sup> At the same time, two large armoured formations of Soviet troops, located from 1945 in Poland, started their march to Warsaw. Soviet troops were also supported by Polish armoured formations led by Soviet officers.<sup>1013</sup> Finally, the local KBW troops, led by General Wacław Komar, hijacked the important public offices in Warsaw. All these political and military actions were supposed to generate the serious threat of military confrontation with the Soviets if the KC PZPR decided not to follow the Kremlin suggestion concerning the new leader of the PZPR. After intensive negotiations with leaders of both wings within the PZPR, on 20<sup>th</sup> October the Soviet delegation accepted the candidature of Władysław Gomułka. Soviet leaders and generals left Poland the same day.<sup>1014</sup> Consequently, the threat of military interference of Soviet troops leading to a new war was neutralised.

The official media remained totally silenced on the critical situation. No word on the sudden visit of Khrushchev was printed in the press or announced on Polish Radio. In this way the communist media attempted to manage the common anxiety deriving from the alarming view of the Soviet tanks heading, in organised columns, for Warsaw. According to Paweł Machcewicz, despite this blockade of official sources of information Polish society was aware of the proximity of war.<sup>1015</sup> The view of columns of Soviet

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<sup>1012</sup> P. Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, Warszawa 1993, p. 151

<sup>1013</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>1014</sup> Ibid, p. 152; According to Paweł Machcewicz the serious political crisis was solved both due to efficient negotiations performed by the leaders of the PZPR and the attitude of the Communist Republic of China the leaders of which refused to approve the Soviet plan of military interference in Poland.

<sup>1015</sup> P. Machcewicz, *op. cit.*, Warszawa 1993, p. 152

artillery heading for Warsaw was interpreted as the Kremlin attempting to block the process of change within the PZPR, which was not fully controlled by Moscow.

The official decision to nominate Gomułka to the position of First Secretary was taken and announced on October 21<sup>st</sup>. The symbolic end of the Stalinist era in Poland was marked with the famous speech of Władysław Gomułka on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1956 on Parade Square in Warsaw. The triumphant return of Gomułka to power evoked a common wave of enthusiasm within Polish society. To a large extent, this positive reaction derived from Gomułka's declaration of moving away from the policy of strictly sticking to the Soviet model of communist policy for a more individual and democratic path to socialism. According to Jan Olszewski,<sup>1016</sup> a young (then 26 years old) witness of this event, in that particular moment Gomułka was trusted by an even larger part of Polish society than Marshall Józef Piłsudski had been in 1920, then the political leader of the just reborn Poland on the brink of the Polish–Soviet War.<sup>1017</sup>

The meticulous analysis of the social consequences and popular attitude towards the serious Soviet military threat in October 1956 made by Paweł Machcewicz allows several important conclusions to be drawn. First of all, the palpable phantom of the military conflict with Soviet troops in Poland evoked a wave of spontaneous street demonstrations and mass meetings across the entirety of Poland. Soon these individual events would turn into a mass social movement of defiance against Soviet intrusion posing as a war-like threat to Poland.<sup>1018</sup> Despite the anti-Soviet character of demonstrations, neither central authorities nor local administrations acted decisively against this spontaneous movement. In many cases the directors of factories organised mass meetings with the clear intention of supporting Gomułka. Usually the course of such events exceeded their previously planned character, ending up with anti-Soviet

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<sup>1016</sup> Jan Olszewski – Polish lawyer and politician, prime minister of Poland between 1991 and 1992. In 1960s Olszewski acted as one of the most important defense attorney in political trials. Olszewski defended the leading figures of the anti-communist opposition.

<sup>1017</sup> *Gomułka wrócił z Moskwy żywy. O październiku 1956r. z Janem Olszewskim i Wojciechem Roszkowskim rozmawia Barbara Polak* [In:] "Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej", No. 10(69), X 2006, pp. 15-16

<sup>1018</sup> P. Machcewicz, op. cit., pp. 152-153

slogans and postulates spontaneously chanted by the crowds of workers.<sup>1019</sup> Although the communist agitators were only partly responsible for this phenomenon, the decision to let the workers and other spheres of society express their frustration and critical point of view was dexterously used. It enabled the communist apparatus to skilfully translate the fear of Soviet troops crushing the independence (even if illusive) of Poland into an authentic support of Polish society for new communist authorities. Without this support it would have been far harder to legitimise the new composition of the Central Committee of the PZPR.

Aside from this relatively short pro-governmental phase of the spontaneous social movement that erupted in the autumn of 1956, soon after the withdrawal of Soviet troops numerous demonstrations started to attack symbols and institutions of the oppressive Stalinist regime in Poland. As Paweł Machcewicz shows in his study, after 21<sup>st</sup> October 1956 the new Central Committee of the PZPR faced a difficult situation in all regions of Poland. Many spontaneous demonstrations chanting for Gomułka simultaneously threw stones and broke windows, i.e. in local offices of police and the MBP.<sup>1020</sup> The most intensive wave of such demonstrations lasted in the entire territory of Poland until December of 1956.

This episode of Polish postwar history demonstrates the flexibility of the communist agitators managing fear within society. In this case the propaganda fear outsourcing strategy made use of the authentic threat provoked by the Soviet troops. Playing with a positive social attitude towards the new figures in the Central Committee of the PZPR agitators accepted anti-Soviet slogans at demonstrations and consequently transferred the responsibility for generating the war-like threat to the Red Army. Against this background, the communist propagandists managed to increase and sustain social support for the unpopular, and in fact only refreshed, government. The decision of the communist agitators to take advantage of this grassroots social movement and to allow society to express their demands and criticism towards the USSR and Polish authorities turned out to be a specific safety anchor. At the same time, despite the

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<sup>1019</sup> Ibid, pp. 152-153

<sup>1020</sup> Ibid, pp. 153-163

number of demonstrations and violent attacks against the police and the MBP offices at no point did the government lose control over society.

## **Conclusion**

Looking at the sinusoid of emotions within the Polish society being exposed to the phantom of the third world war, one must notice significant discrepancies of reactions to the outbreak of the Korean War. On the one hand, starting from the late 1940s the hopes for a new war that would abolish the communist rule were rising. At the same time, however, the waves of panic, e.g. after Churchill's speech in Fulton and especially after the outbreak of war in Korea, shows that the vast majority of Polish society was terrified by the vision of another devastating conflict that would turn all those things that survived World War Two into rubble.

The traumatic memory of this conflict was still very fresh in the memory of Poles and played a central role in generating the interwar state of mind of Polish society. For instance, panic shopping reflected the difficult experience of a permanent lack of goods during the war. This trauma was skilfully used by the state propaganda shaping the social attitude to the problem of the portent of a new global conflict.

As for the efficiency of the propaganda attempts to translate the interwar state of mind into a controllable social attitude, these examples allow two major conclusions. First of all, the scrutiny of the negative responses noted by the propaganda agents after the two mass anti-war actions shows that at least part of Polish society found these actions pointless, while in the other part the pro-peace initiatives intensified the sense of insecurity instead of soothing the fear of war. On the other hand, however, the fact that part of Polish society did not identify with anti-war propaganda slogans does not prove the inefficiency of the propaganda management with the fear of war within communist media receivers. Since far more than half of the postwar population of Poland signed the Stockholm Appeal and National Plebiscite for Peace, voluntarily or not, I conclude that propaganda agents managed to involve all those people in supporting the initiatives indirectly formed by the communist government. The fact that

only a few weeks after the first anti-war initiative the terrifying war in Korea broke out did not decrease the amount of those who signed the plebiscite the following year. The symbolic failure of the Stockholm Appeal did not weaken the support for the second peace declaration. Only around 93,500 inhabitants of Poland refused to sign the plebiscite paper in May 1951.<sup>1021</sup>

Furthermore, although in many cases the resolutions proclaimed in hundreds of factories announcing the increase of the production norms most probably were not spontaneous but rather imposed, they should still be interpreted as a propaganda success in translating the fear of war into the increased fervour to work. Here, the foreign threat was successfully employed as an efficient mobiliser. In this case, one may even talk about the successful management of two kinds of fear – the fear of war and the fear of losing the job position in case of refusing to work according to the new norms established in the name of peace. The combination of these dreads helped the agitators to mobilise society to support the government.

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<sup>1021</sup> J. Ślusarczyk, op. cit., p. 45



## General conclusions

The following final remarks on the concept of fear management seek to relate my specific empirical findings to the overall issue of the relationship between dread and propaganda in the Stalinist dictatorships.

The first reflection refers to the role fear played in the process of establishing and legitimising communist power in East Central Europe soon after the end of World War Two. Undoubtedly, the emotion of dread stimulated by the activity of such institutions as police, the MBP and the KBW supported by the NKVD troops played a central role in gaining and solidifying power by the Soviet-backed governments. Numerous historical studies analysing the activity of those formations<sup>1022</sup> leave the reader with the conviction that the responsibility for generating the atmosphere of fear in socialist states soon after the war ended rests practically only on institutions practicing various forms of direct physical terror. With this thesis I demonstrate how far the creation of the atmosphere of constant dread deriving from actions taken, by i.e. the secret police, was supported by communist propaganda. Aside from exploiting positive emotions recruited to explain and promote the political goals and actions taken by the new government, communist propaganda turned out to be an efficient transmitter of fear. On the one hand, the analysis of archival documents shows that the set of threats permanently stressed by the pro-governmental press and Polish Film Chronicle was not always taken seriously by the propaganda receivers. On the other hand, the propaganda impact on shaping the social attitude towards given concerns derived from the high saturation of media space by rhetorical tropes examined in this thesis.

While the threat of physical terror targeted precisely selected groups of opponents of the communist government, the propaganda fear management ranged across the entire society flooding media space with enemy discourse. As it was shown with numerous examples in this thesis, such discourse aimed not only at sustaining the

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<sup>1022</sup> On Polish ground for instance: R. Terlecki, *Miecz i tarcza komunizmu. Historia aparatu bezpieczeństwa 1944–1990*, Warszawa 2013

permanent sense of anxiety as such, but also at legitimising the communist power. Here, my analysis of propaganda materials shows that in many cases the strategy of fear management boiled down to using figures symbolising foreign threats as a background against which agitators argued the non-alternative character of communist rule.

The second general conclusion refers to the methods with which the communist propaganda implemented the rhetorical tropes of threats in its effort to shape the emotional standards of the Polish postwar society. Adam Schaff, one of the leading figures in the communist propaganda apparatus, at a meeting of the local PPR Propaganda Department in Szczecin in August 1946 referred to the necessity of changing the existing social interpretation of political reality: *'The poison, that throughout hundreds of years was applied to the nation, must finally evaporate'*.<sup>1023</sup> Numerous examples discussed in this thesis show that the fear management strategy was instrumental in the general policy of persuading the new Soviet-like model of Schmitt's dichotomy of friend and enemy. In particular, all the examined rhetorical tropes were exploited by agitators with the intention of highlighting the border between safety and threat, between protector and enemy. With this thesis I also demonstrated that it was a figure of the 'German threat' that played the role of a general matrix that was later regularly used by agitators attempting to generate the 'proper socialist attitude' (a mixture of fear and anger) i.e. towards foreign spies and conspirators. A complex rhetorical trope, the German threat served as a universal emotional stigma regularly attributed to all other symbols of foreign threat in order to give them a more palpable character and augment the sense of threat posed by them. This tactic was especially important in the case of the 'American threat', enabling agitators to demonstrate the USA as not a distanced state, but as a dangerous intruder putting into practice an alarming Nazi-like policy just behind the Polish border. Furthermore, the entire set of the phraseological anti-German blends elaborated by communist agitators already since 1944 (Nazi slayers, Fascist imperialism, German threat etc.) was later literally copied and adjusted to the enemy discourse producing the fear of spies and

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<sup>1023</sup> APSz, Biuletyn informacyjny Wydziału propagandy KW PPR w Szczecinie, 25.08.1946, nr. 1

conspirators, as well as dread of the next war triggered by Nazi-like Western war provokers.

Aside from being recruited in media attempts to instruct society on what it should be afraid of, the fear management strategy turned out to also be an important motivator used by communist agitators in order to actively integrate society with the Soviet-backed authorities. Stressing the threat posed to Poland, i.e. by Western war provokers or nuclear attack, the communist propaganda agents generated the vision of the unified perception of dangers posed by foreign enemies both to authorities and society. Consequently, demonstrating its vigil-like attitude towards 'serious foreign threats', the communist government attempted to create its image of a trustable protector guarding not only the general *raison d'état*, but also taking care of the comfort of life of each and every inhabitant of Poland. In other words, the tactic of placing the government and society on the same side of the barricade served as an efficient pretext to involve society in the implementation of the political actions taken by the government. The same tactic was aimed at softening the common mistrust towards the imposed authorities.

Whereas the above major reflections referred to the governmental attempts to generate and highlight the group of rather artificial threats, the third conclusion relates to the equally important problem of propaganda management of the everyday concerns Polish society faced during the first postwar years. Since the dramatic economic condition led to social frustration and anger (expressed, for instance, in mass strikes), the communist government decided to turn the phantom of precisely selected foreign threats into a dense smoke screen clouding local problems. The saturation of media space with images of external sources of fear and relatively little space dedicated to such acute everyday concerns as poverty, hunger or banditry shows that the propaganda aimed at surpassing the mundane anxieties tormenting Polish society. Furthermore, the propaganda figures of external threats were often used to outsource the government's own responsibility for various alarming phenomenon taking place in postwar Poland. Just like the well-known local figure of 'speculators' (*spekulanci*) was

accused of causing the lack of goods on the market, the issue of foreign cultural threat, symbolised by American movies (allegedly giving 'criminal inspiration' to Polish youth), was supposed to obscure the factual depressing local roots of hooliganism.

Finally, the vision of foreign enemies posing a threat to the Polish state and society was regularly used by agitators with the intention of translating fear into more 'beneficial' emotions, especially anger. In this tactic the stimulation of rage against, i.e., 'war provokers' aimed at mobilising Polish workers to work harder in response to the 'hostile activity of imperialist enemies'. In this way, as it was demonstrated in this thesis, rhetorical tropes of German or American threats were successfully employed by pro-governmental media to encourage Polish society to take part in a common (hand in hand with communist authorities) effort of rebuilding the country and improving the living standards of society.

The fourth, and in my view the most important, conclusion concerns the problem of the social attitude towards fear management and the popular reception of the propaganda attempts to shape the emotional standards of society. As for the results of those attempts, one may observe a specific sinusoid demonstrating the changes in social approach to the enemy discourse along the Stalinist period. It would be disputable to conclude that the early postwar tactic of spreading a fear of Germans was fully efficient. In my view, however, the huge number of workers' strikes in Łódź between 1945 and 1947, as well as the massive anti-governmental attitude of inhabitants of Szczecin manifested in the spring of 1946, showed not the social criticism towards the anti-German propaganda discourse, but rather its limits in overshadowing serious local problems. Although soon after World War Two the natural anti-German atmosphere was at its most intense, the efficiency of propaganda referring to those emotions was narrowed by an extremely difficult economic and social situation of the state. Yet, one must remember that even in this critical period, at least several times agitators managed to activate hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of Polish cities to protest hand in hand with the authorities against, e.g., 'dangerously indulgent sentences' announced in Nuremberg. Such successes revealed a high potential to

mobilise Polish society with the use of 'fear rhetoric' that on the brink of the 1950s became a powerful motivator.

At the beginning of the 1950s, several other propaganda campaigns based on managing the figure of the foreign threat turned out to be much more influential. Yet, the interpretation of their impact constitutes a tough challenge. For instance, the popular reception of the propaganda figures of dangerous spies and conspirators (especially the responses to local show trials organised in 1951 and 1953 in Warsaw) shows that the results of this strategy were very different. Most probably the reception of particular events depended on specific factors, i.e. the behaviour of the accused during the war. Furthermore, in terms of social attitude towards media attempts to foment fear deriving from the 'American threat' we may distinguish two types of social reactions. On the one hand, the critical voices recorded in the memory of the interviewees and archival documents shows that some spheres of Polish society were against visions of prosperity as conveyed by the communist media. On the other hand, the small scale of such decidedly negative voices shows that until June 1956 communist authorities efficiently deterred and dispirited society from expressing any mass form of social disobedience. The number of critical voices was outstripped, for instance, by the amount of adult citizens of Poland who decided to support the pro-peace and anti-American initiatives in 1950 and 1951. The fact that the vast majority of inhabitants of Poland decided – even if under pressure of e.g. losing their employment position – to sign the lists should be interpreted as a sign of the efficiency of the propaganda fear management strategy.

Even if most of the signers did not identify themselves with these anti-war propaganda slogans, it does not mean that the propaganda attempts to manage the fear of war within communist media receivers were inefficient. The mass social support expressed towards the political actions under the informal patronage of the communist authorities reveals that 'fear communication channel' efficiently solidified the communist ideology in the consciousness of Polish society. In particular, the constant repetition of slogans stressing the palpability of the threat of a new war saturated the

media and public space to the point that they became an integral part of the obligatory interpretation of the political and social reality. One may realise how efficient the implementation of this strategy was when examining the huge number of official declarations of support for the governmental anti-war activity, signed in hundreds of factories in the entirety of Poland. The amount of those documents shows that this support to a large extent was not as forced as it was suggested in letters sent to Polish Radio.

As for the European context of the popular attitudes towards communist fear management, one of the most revealing discussion of this issue was offered by British historian Kevin McDermott, in his examination of local popular reactions to the Slanský process.<sup>1024</sup> McDermott asks whether the concept of 'polyphony of voices' well encapsulates the popular approach of societies within the Socialist Bloc towards the propaganda attempts to exploit the threat of conspiracy. According to McDermott, the image of the social reception of the trial present in institutional reports (*'the vast majority express agreement with the trial'*)<sup>1025</sup> was too simplified.<sup>1026</sup> In several cases, McDermott argues, the initial governmental intentions to generate a vision of Zionist conspiracy inflicted against Czechoslovakia failed to convince not only workers,<sup>1027</sup> but also the activists of the CPC.<sup>1028</sup> A number examined by the author, voices of local society, reflected the lack of a consensus in terms of the popular reception of the communist propaganda presenting Czechoslovakian Jews as a community posing a threat to the rest of society. Yet, McDermott argues that such voices were isolated and outshined by the anti-Semitic approach expressed in response to the trial.

McDermott diagnosed a similar dichotomy within the public reception in the attitude towards other than anti-Zionist accusations in local media. His research shows both the mass declarations of open condemnation of 'spies and traitors' and the voices

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<sup>1024</sup> K. McDermott, *A "Polyphony of Voices"? Czech Popular Opinion and the Slanský Affair* [in:] *Slavic Review* Vol. 67, No. 4 (Winter, 2008), pp. 840-865

<sup>1025</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 849

<sup>1026</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 850

<sup>1027</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 855

<sup>1028</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 854

expressing serious doubts towards the accusations. There were even interpretations suggesting that *'if Gottwald did not know about Slánský's traitorous activities . . . then it is clear he carried out his functions as chairman of the party incorrectly'*.<sup>1029</sup> Consequently, as numerous secret police and internal party memoranda shows, factory workers started to *'sign resolutions demanding the resignation of the entire government and the establishment of a new government composed of people whose past life is unambiguous and well-known to the public'*.<sup>1030</sup>

In contrast to Czechoslovakia, in my archival research on the social reception of Stalinist propaganda in Poland I did not come across any signs of organised criticism similar to those triggered by the Slánský trial. Instead of mass action of signing petitions demanding the removal of at least several members of the communist government, most forms of critical attitude towards governmental policy had a strictly individual character in Poland until June 1956. In the case of Poland, it would be difficult to talk about the polyphony of voices as this term suggests the existence of at least two significant groups of society representing different attitudes. Even if a large part of Polish society did not accept governmental policy or did not follow the propaganda division for friends and enemies, the vast majority of propaganda receivers remained silent. The biggest 'demonstrations' of such a mute attitude took place during the two major anti-war campaigns in 1950 and 1951, when comparing to the amount of those who decided to support communist authorities signing the lists, to the scale of voices critical towards the constantly repeated pro-peace propaganda discourse, was marginal. In my view, this fact should be interpreted as a propaganda contribution to the effective pacification of the anti-governmental atmosphere and, consequently, as a sign of the efficiency of some aspects of the fear management strategy.

The analysis of all the propaganda materials and signs of their social reception examined in this thesis lead me to a general assumption. The relatively weak negative response to the fear management resulted, to a large extent, from the fact that communist propaganda discourse imposed a restricted group of threats towards which

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<sup>1029</sup> Ibid, p. 860

<sup>1030</sup> Ibid, p. 861

it was openly allowed to express strictly defined reactions. In my view, the tactic of constantly exploiting these specific socialist emotional standards aimed at alerting society. It was supposed to warn the propaganda receivers that a manifestation of emotions deriving from threats exceeding the canon were treated as a hostile and anti-state attitude that was severely punished. The activity of the KSWNSG sentencing people for long months in labour camps for such 'crimes' as expressing anti-governmental opinions or condemning official propaganda, e.g. in private letters, only preserved the sense of fear of openly expressing criticism towards the government and its media policy. Consequently, the propaganda fear management strategy contributed to petrification of the public discourse, efficiently blocking any mass expression of an anti-governmental attitude. Until June 1956 a complex team of communist propaganda agents turned out to be efficient in generating the atmosphere of dread that strongly supported the pressure posed to society by state institutions practicing physical terror.

In terms of general methodological conclusions concerning the examination of the propaganda documents, the most fruitful results one may gain investigating the content of the propaganda in close correlation with the scrutiny of its reception. Such a combination allows the most efficient examination of the impact the propaganda had on its receivers. Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates the fact that the exploration of such understudied historical sources as letters sent to Polish Radio substantially enriches the investigation of the social reception of particular propaganda campaigns. The meticulous investigation of this correspondence reveals a wide range of specific interpretations of particular propaganda campaigns. Such analysis enables the researcher to reconstruct an exact motivation of radio listeners standing behind their critical attitude. Furthermore, the examination of the correspondence sent to *Frequency 49* in response to particular events demonstrated the susceptibility of the media receivers to the manipulation much more precisely than the analysis of the MBP reports on social moods. Here, the letters commenting on the show trials of Polish officers and Bishop Kaczmarek, on the Korean War and on anti-war media discourse were the most revealing. On the one hand, those letters demonstrated the intensity of social



frustration triggered, for instance, by constantly repeating the anti-war propaganda discourse. On the other hand, the same letters expressed rage resulting from the authorities ignoring such acute concerns like empty shelves in stores. Dramatic as some of those critical voices were, however, their marginal amount confirms that between the end of the wave of early postwar workers' strikes and June 1956 communist authorities efficiently discouraged society from expressing mass forms of a critical attitude.

Writing this thesis my intention was to offer a complex introduction to the general problem of propaganda fear management in communist Poland. This strategy was definitely not rolled down with the end of Stalinism. All the mechanisms and even rhetorical tropes discussed in my dissertation were exploited by communist agitators practically until 1989. Yet, while the propaganda tactic of referring to the fear discourse was only slightly modified, after 1956 one may observe a radical shift in popular social attitude towards official propaganda. Starting from the dramatic events of March 1968, when a mass anti-Semitic propaganda campaign stressed the threat posed to Poland by Zionists, the communist government started to face a massive wave of protests in many Polish cities inflicted against the official policy of authorities. Further propaganda failed in diverting public attention from the fear of hunger, triggered by the drastic increase of prices in December of 1970 and in the summer of 1980, which leads to another conclusion. The efficiency of the fear management practiced in the 1940s/1950s to a large extent was linked to the atmosphere of constant pressure generated by institutions practicing physical terror. The changes within those institutions, introduced after 1954 and especially with the Gomułka's thaw, heavily weakened the impact of propaganda on Polish society. Propaganda receivers became far more eager to express their disagreement to the vision of reality offered by communist media. Even the assassination of dozens of workers in Gdynia in December of 1970 and the introduction of Martial Law on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1981 did not allow the propaganda apparatus regain its impact on society comparable to the one before 1956.

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