

Marcin Zaremba

Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism

Nationalist Legitimization
of the Communist Regime in Poland



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This book is devoted to the issue of nationalism in the latest Polish history and presents the subject on the basis of an enormous amount of source files left by the Polish United Workers Party. The work is a substantial input into the knowledge on People's Poland which shows with precision how the Polish communists used nationalistic arguments to legitimize and validate the system of power introduced by them. The author researches the fascinating source material with the help of a new and innovative concept.

Die Herausgeber

Marcin Zaremba works at the Institute of History of the University of Warsaw. He is author of numerous articles devoted to the recent history of Poland, and books devoted to the latest Polish history.

Communism - Legitimacy - Nationalism

GESCHICHTE - ERINNERUNG - POLITIK
STUDIES IN HISTORY, MEMORY AND POLITICS

Herausgegeben von / Edited by Anna Wolff-Powęska & Piotr Forecki

Bd./Vol. 20



PETER LANG

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Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

This publication has been financially supported by the Ministry's of Science and Higher Education programme called the "National Programme for the Development of Humanities" in 2014-2017"



**NATIONAL PROGRAMME
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITIES**

Cover Illustration courtesy of Polish Press Agency/Mariusz Szyperko.

ISSN 2191-3528

ISBN 978-3-631-65212-1 (Print)

E-ISBN 978-3-653-04678-6 (E-PDF)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-70734-0 (EPUB)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-70735-7 (MOBI)

DOI 10.3726/b15284

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Peter Lang · Berlin · Bern · Bruxelles · New York · Oxford · Warszawa · Wien



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This publication has been peer reviewed.

www.peterlang.com

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Introduction

Issues surrounding the nation, fatherland, patriotism, nationalism, independence, national interest, and national betrayal are the foundations for the understanding of the last 200 years of Polish history. Neither can one avoid them in reflections upon the history of People's Poland. Nationalism served as one of the most important formulas for the legitimation of the communist system of power. Because of this, there occurred redefinitions of, among other things, such concepts as patriotism, the nation, and the state.

The goal I have set for myself in this study is a) the description of the nationalist legitimation of communist power in Poland between 1944 and 1980, b) and a description of the role played in the validation of the system by the communist concept of the nation and the nationalist slogans that derived from it. The patriotic red and white nationalist costume so readily donned by the authorities was supposed to convince society about the national character of their governments and break through the barrier of externality between the authorities and society.

My research question is as follows: What historical threads, national myths, symbols, and contents of national culture were selected from the past and adjusted to the purposes of those in power and what elements were negated in an effort to make them disappear from the national tradition? I am especially interested in national symbols, national phraseology, the celebration of national holidays, anniversaries of historical events, the choice and manner of presenting national heroes, and the relationship of those in power to national culture and monuments.

Above all, the approach taken in this study was decided by two factors. The first of them came from the impoverished state of research upon nationalism and the problem of the nation in postwar Poland. Our evidential knowledge is not only incomplete but, despite the research into traditions dating to the interwar period, we still have not worked out the tools that would allow us to understand the phenomenon of nationalism. I do not think a judicious analysis of contemporary Poland is possible without a discussion of issues connected to the nation and nationalism in Poland's recent past. I also do not think it is possible to understand the functioning of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) without looking at issues of the "internality" and "externality" of the elites as understood by the social groups of those times. It is also important to remember the words of Amitai Etzioni, "When elites are external (or when some are internal and some external),

societal guidance is less effective and the societal units are less active than when all the elites are internal.”¹

The second factor connected to my approach is the attempt to discover a sociological model that will allow for a description and understanding of the essence, to use a formula of Tadeusz Łepkowski, of “planned” communist nationalism.² The building of an ideologically-motivated vision of the Polish nation that was supposed to result in legitimation—meaning, the creation of a situation where the patriotism of the rulers would be acknowledged by the ruled as their own—seems especially interesting for a sociologist and historian.

Not everything that came into being in the symbolic discourse between the authorities and society from 1944 to 1980 flowed from pretensions of legitimation. Therefore, I would like to stress that I am solely interested in what national slogans were used with the aim of legitimating the power of the state.

The national question over the whole period of actually-existing socialism cannot be described only in categories of nationalist legitimation of the authorities or their de-legitimation. Here we are dealing with a whole complex of national questions that demand further separate research and analysis. This book is not a work about nationalism during the period of People’s Poland in general, but about a specific use of it. This is the reason why I devote very little space to, for example, politics toward national minorities unless they served as an object of pride for the authorities and constituted an argument for legitimation.

The primary material used in this work is composed of public appearances of party leaders, their declarations of a programmatic and ideological character. Some other especially important source-types were intra-party notes, scripts for celebrations of anniversaries and national holidays as well as transcripts and protocols of meetings of various party bodies and authorities.

These documents frequently talk directly about intentions that directed the preparation of some propaganda campaign. Since I had such materials at my disposal I took less recourse to the press. As the plentitude of press information is practically limitless I treated my forays into them as something like probes. I took them up systematically to the best of my ability. I, therefore, believe that this method did not compromise my conclusions.

The selection of, and intensity of, nationalist legitimating arguments was connected to the actual conditions of the ruling system and with the social-economic

1 Amitai Etzioni, *The Active Society* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 114.

2 Tadeusz Łepkowski, *Uparte trwanie polskości* (Warsaw: Aneks, 1989), 49–50.

situation of the country. This is why this work has a chronological structure, which permits one to follow the changes in officially sanctioned nationalism.

The pronounced rise in interest in the problems of legitimation undoubtedly dates back to the start of the 1970's. In the discussion of the time the point of reference was constituted by, above all, Max Weber's concept of legitimation—and, especially, around Jürgen Habermas among contemporary thinkers. The main object of those discussions, other than the topic of the legitimation crisis of the Western democracies of the time, was the issue of political systems patterned after the Soviet model. Likewise in Poland, especially during the 1980's, there appeared many articles and studies taking up this very problem, especially in the perspective of Polish experiences.³ Today we are going through a renaissance of interest in questions of legitimation of the communist system. This is the result of a widely-expressed conviction that without an answer to the question of the legitimation of the communist regime it is impossible to fully evaluate the recently passed period.

The following observation from Jacek Tarkowski still seems relevant even though we know much more about the communist period than we did only a couple of years ago: most of the articles devoted to the legitimation of the communist system have the character of general theoretical considerations not based upon systematic empirical research.⁴

The present work is an attempt to *combine* theory with historical empirical knowledge. As a result, it is divided into two parts. The first part consists of three chapters and is devoted to theoretical considerations of the topics of legitimation, nationalism, and the evolution of approaches to national questions from the side of the Marxists, including the Polish Communist Party. The third chapter, which seemingly strays from the rest, treats other, extra-nationalist, sources of legitimation and stabilization of the system of power. The second part, divided into six chapters, is concerned with the nationalistic legitimation of power in People's Poland. It describes the period from the roots of the PRL until 1980. The selection of this breakoff point comes from my conviction that it was precisely then that the mechanism of the PRL communist system broke down. In the succeeding years, despite appearances, nothing was the same as before. However, since some end-stage phenomena say a lot about the baseline period under consideration, in the epilogue I will suggest taking a look at certain aspects from the period between 1980 and 1989.

3 *Legitymacja. Klasyczne teorie i polskie doświadczenia*, eds. Andrzej Rychard and Antonij Sułek (Warsaw: PTS UW, 1988).

4 Jacek Tarkowski, *Socjologia świata polityki. Władza i społeczeństwo w systemie autorytarnym* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1994), 43.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the object of my interest is exclusively the means of attaining legitimacy, rather than the considerations to what degree if at all, the Polish society legitimized the authorities, the system, or its political elites. All the observations about this last topic have merely the character of more or less grounded hypotheses.

Chapter 1

The Nationalist Legitimation of Political Authority

Part I

Legitimation: The Theoretical Context

In the contemporary world, the nationalist legitimation of political authority is one of the main ways of validating authority. Emphasizing the national character of governments, demonstrative celebration of national and state holidays by the political elites, projecting oneself as one of the defenders of national values, creating a sense of threat of foreign goods flooding the country, are only some of the many different phenomena that constitute the substantial element of today's political culture.⁵ The cause of this state of things should be sought, on the one hand, through relying upon the sociology of politics in its discussions of the shaping of modern nation-states and of the crisis of the previous sources of legitimating state authority. On the other hand, explanations must be sought from the perspective of sociology, social anthropology, and finally psychology—in the universal and fundamental need of humans to interpret the social world through the categories of internality and externality.

The legitimating function of nationalism, frequently mentioned in studies dedicated to nationalism, up to this day, has not been thoroughly described by scholars. On the theoretical level, the problem of the relation between legitimation and nationalism has not been probed to this day at all. It is significant that in studies chiefly devoted to questions of legitimacy, but also nationalism, the concept of “nationalist legitimation” appears infrequently. This imposes a certain logic upon my deliberations. In order to undertake an attempt at defining “nationalist legitimation,” one must zoom-in upon the understanding of the two units that make up the concept: “legitimation” and “nationalism.” The history of research, for example, on nationalism, is characterized by many controversies and polemics. The number of concepts, and not infrequently contradictory definitions, is dif-

5 Benedict Anderson writes, “nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 3.

difficult to grasp. It is more or less the same thing when it comes to legitimacy. Out of necessity the comments devoted to clearing up the concepts of “legitimation” and “nationalism” must be limited.

Legitimation

The starting point for this study is the observation of a basic fact needed for further deliberations: in general, those who rule strive toward achieving legitimacy. The above thesis should sound more categorical if we were to limit it exclusively to communist governments, because these governments, for ideological reasons that we will invoke later, had especially pronounced legitimating pretensions. In history there were political systems—frequently created by way of invasion—where the rulers did not feel the need to gain legitimacy. Precisely because they did not have legitimacy their governments did not last very long, even though they required immense resources from the army and police in order to ensure, through the use of power, the stability and continuation of the system. Legitimation is not the result of an acceptance based upon fear of force. Violence was and still is, the most popular means for making the seizure and subsequent maintenance of power possible. It constitutes the necessary condition for maintaining social order, therefore also the legitimization of the state, but it is not a self-sufficient condition. Without terror or the constant threat of its use, it would be impossible to establish and then maintain the communist system in the Soviet Union and the remaining countries of the Eastern Bloc. However, it usually became apparent that violence lacking legitimacy is not enough. Those who led their governments thanks to violence, after a certain period, strove to both legitimate the violence and their hold on power. The history of People’s Poland gives many examples of the authorities becoming aware of the meaning of legitimacy. Those who came to power in 1944 thanks to Soviet tanks became aware of it. Władysław Gomułka noticed this in October 1956 when he said at the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish United Worker’s Party (KC PZPR): “It is possible to rule the nation with bayonets when you have lost its trust, but whoever positions himself toward such an eventuality, positions himself toward losing everything.”⁶ This principle is also attested to by the actions undertaken on institutional and propaganda levels by Wojciech Jaruzelski’s team, still under Martial Law, with the aim of rebuilding social trust, which was highly strained by the crisis of the 1980’s.

6 “Wystąpienie Władysława Gomułki w dniu 12 X 1956 na posiedzeniu Biura Politycznego KC PZPR,” in *Gomułka i inni. Dokumenty z archiwum KC 1948–1982*, eds. Jakub Andrzejewski and Andrzej Paczkowski (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krąg, 1986), 95.

Legitimation is also not the result of acceptance based upon material interests. It is possible to pay someone in order to gain their obedience. However, this does not mean that they will remain obedient to the same degree when the resources for such a transaction run out. Seymour Martin Lipset introduced the distinction between legitimation and effectiveness into scholarly circulation. He called the following effectiveness: actual achievements, the degree to which a system fulfills basic functions of governing in the opinion of the greater part of the populace.⁷ This distinction is important from an analytical and heuristic standpoint, however, in reality, both concepts are clearly mutually intertwined.⁸ One of the fundamental demands made by citizens of contemporary states is the satisfaction of their material needs. The Economic crisis is almost totally identified these days with a crisis of state authority. It is much easier to overcome such a crisis by maintaining social order when those who stand at the head of the state have social legitimation. During the 1970's Edward Gierek's team in Poland was convinced of this, when it treated its apparent economic effectiveness as practically the sole argument that bore witness to their right to rule and of the legitimacy of the system. Therefore, the natural consequence of a deep economic crisis was an almost immediate outburst of social discontent, which the authorities, deprived of wider legitimating foundations, were unable to manage.

However much one can say that most of the researchers of this issue (though not all) agree upon the great degree of relevance attached to legitimation in the relationship between the rulers and the ruled,⁹ it is equally difficult to square such an agreement with any one definition.¹⁰ While keeping in mind the need for

7 Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 77.

8 For more on the relation between effectiveness and legitimation see: Wojciech Sokół, *Legitymizacja systemów politycznych* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1997), 34–36.

9 There will be more on this topic in the third chapter. It is enough to say here that for some researchers of the concept of legitimation it is inadequate to analyze the mass subordination in countries of Eastern Europe during the period of real socialism. They point to the coercion, pragmatic calculation, apathy, and habit as sources of stability in the social order.

10 There is a great deal of literature on the topic of legitimation. Out of the latest round of works that discuss the question of legitimation one could single out the following: Wojciech Sokół, *Legitymizacja systemów...*, op. cit.; Tadeusz Biernat, *Legitymizacja władzy politycznej. Elementy teorii* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 1999); David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Hong-Kong: Humanities Press International, 1991).

further deliberation, let us, for now, accept that we are dealing with the legitimation of political authority when it is positively appraised in moral categories as being just, appropriate, and deserving of recognition.¹¹ In other words, when the authorities are recognized as internal thanks to the system of values represented by them. On the other hand, legitimation is the process of gaining or granting legitimation.¹² De-legitimation is the name given to the reverse process, that is, the erosion of legitimation. However, a deficit of legitimation is not identical with the lack of legitimation.

Here it makes sense to return to the question posed at the start: Why do rulers strive to achieve legitimation? What advantages do those in power gain from being legitimated? Above all, the achievement of a state of legitimation can be significant for the rulers because of their internal situation. It assures the maintenance of internal cohesion to the ruling elite itself, giving it a sense of the meaningfulness of the actions undertaken by it. Legitimation is also significant to the rulers in their relations with society. When those in power are legitimated the laws imposed by them are followed without any major resistance. In critical moments such rulers, thanks to the social support, will have a much greater ability to resolve crisis situations, without the necessity of applying compulsion. Legitimation is a necessary element for mobilizing society. Among other factors, this is the reason why the achievement of legitimation was so important for the rulers of mono-centric systems patterned upon the Soviet model, which have been alternatively described as being based upon a mobilizing ethos.¹³ Finally, legitimation is signifi-

11 When formulating this definition I depended upon definitions of authors such as: Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 178–179; Thomas Rigby, “A Conceptual Approach to Authority: Power and Policy in the Soviet Union” in: Archie Brown, Thomas Rigby, Peter Reddaway, eds., *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 9; Robert Lane, *Conservative Man and State*, in: *Legitimation of Regimes*, ed. Bogdan Denitch (New York: Sage, 1979), 55. Similar definitions of legitimation are given by some Polish authors: Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, *Osobowość, orientacje moralne i postawy polityczne* (Warsaw: Instytut Socjologii, 1988), 245; Andrzej Rychard, “Komu potrzebna jest legitymizacja,” in: *Klasyczne teoriei...*, op. cit., 301; Wojciech Lamentowicz, *Kulturowe aspekty legitymizacji monocentrycznych struktur politycznych*, op. cit., 70.

12 Peter Ludz, “Legitimacy in a Divided Nation: The Case of the German Democratic Republic,” in: Bogdan Denitch, ed., *Legitimation of Regimes...*, op. cit., 162.

13 Marcin Zaremba, “Komunizm jak system mobilizacyjny: casus polski,” in: *Komunizm. Ideologia, system, ludzie*, ed. Tomasz Szarota (Warsaw: NERITON, IH PAN, 2001), 110–126.

cant for society itself for its internal cohesion.¹⁴ In summary, it would be difficult to disagree with Jacek Tarkowski who wrote that, for the majority of political systems, legitimation became one of the fundamental problems they must solve, and sometimes a matter of life and death.¹⁵

The following question also must be considered: who must acknowledge the rulers as internal in normative categories, so that one can say that they are legitimized? In order to gain legitimation, every system of the exercise of governmental power must be accepted by both the subservient and the dominant groups. The significance of both of these groups might vary. Many scholars believe that, at the conclusion of this process, the deciding significance is on the side of the faith of the political elites in their right to govern and the importance of the titles which they invoke. Without a doubt, the chances of gaining the legitimation of a political system shrink to zero when the rulers themselves question its legitimacy.

The crucial importance, for political stability, of the ruling elites' feeling of self-legitimation is noted especially in communist systems. The particular role ascribed to self-legitimation is a result of the system's peculiarities: the centralization of its structures of power and its monopolistic position, also from feelings of insecurity and consciousness of the insufficiency of the legitimation of the ruling elites. How important this factor was can be attested to by the fact that during the middle of the 1960's there were around fifty thousand instructors in Poland whose task it was to strengthen members of the ruling party in precisely their belief in their own right to rule.¹⁶ Without negating the significance of the key role that fell to the political elites in the process of legitimation, it is difficult to agree with its absolutizing and the assertion, expressed by some scholars, that the auto-legitimizing crises of the party establishment were the essential and the most important cause of successive political eruptions in the countries of Eastern Europe.¹⁷ Such a stance, which trivializes the significance of other social groups, interprets crises in this region of Europe all too one-sidedly.

14 Andrzej Rychard, *Komu potrzebna...*, op. cit., 302.

15 Jacek Tarkowski, *Socjologia świata polityki...*, op. cit., 35.

16 See: *O zadaniach partii w dziedzinie dalszego doskonalenia wewnątrzpartyjnej pracy ideologiczno-szkoleniowej*, Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), zespół Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej (KC PZPR), sygnatura 237/VIII-739, karta 3

17 For example, this view was held by Joseph Rothschild: "truly critical delegitimation of a regime begins with the moral and psychological defection of elites, whose very defection, or loss of a sense of legitimacy in their own domination, communicates to the masses the onset of a general crisis" (Joseph Rothschild, "Political Legitimacy

Beyond the ruling group, a particular significance in legitimating of the political system is attached to the intellectual elite. People's Poland can be a good example here, because its rules, for the whole of its existence, strove in many different ways to influence intellectuals and writers, so that they would legitimate the system through their moral authority. The refusal to cooperate most frequently ended with action on the part of the authorities aiming to deprive a given person of the possibility of any public articulation, especially expressions of a de-legitimizing character. The voice of the social group which, for doctrinal reasons, is regarded as important for the existing social order, can also be key to gaining legitimation. For the traditional order, this could be the nobility, for industrial societies it can be the middle class, for communist systems it is the working class. Signs of discontent coming from the side of the workers in People's Poland were usually received anxiously by the rulers because they signaled their social de-legitimation. Several times such situations ended with the reshuffling of the ruling elites.

The next matter we ought to consider has now emerged: the existence of indicators of legitimation and de-legitimation. Of course, after the fact, we can say that the communist system in 1989 did not enjoy the widespread acceptance of Poles. Can we speak with the same certainty in relation to the period preceding it? Beetham acknowledged manifestations of acceptance of certain actions of the authorities by groups that are subordinate as an essential element of his definition of legitimation. The label of legitimated or legitimate authority was given by him to authority that "is obtained and exercised in accordance with fair rules and with evident consent."¹⁸ A proof of such consent might be the engagement of subordinate groups in direct action in the reference frames laid out by the authorities, for example, through making an agreement with a superior, making an oath of obedience, or taking part in elections. Such actions, above all, would depend—for

in Contemporary Europe," in: *Legitimation of Regimes...*, ed. Bogdan Denitch, op. cit., 52). The events from Poznan in 1956 are a crisis in the history of the PRL that confirms Rothschild's thesis. As is known, they were preceded by the disclosure of a "secret" party report by Nikita Khrushchev. The facts it revealed de-legitimated the Stalinist system of rule. The "flight of the elites" can also similarly be attributed as a substantial cause of the system's collapse in 1989. Also the social unrest of 1970 was preceded by—as attested by the journals of Mieczysław Rakowski—the growing dissatisfaction with the governments of Gomułka among the higher and middle echelons of the party apparatus. When it comes to the "flight of the elites" of the intellectuals, then we can speak about the 1968 protests.

18 David Beetham, *The Legitimation...*, op. cit., 3.

those who would take them up—upon creating subjective identifications with the authorities without regard for the personal motives that lie at their foundations. David Beetham writes:

And if the public expression of consent contributes to the legitimacy of the powerful, then the withdrawal or refusal of consent will by the same token detract from it. Actions ranging from non-cooperation and passive resistance to open disobedience and militant opposition on the part of those qualified to give consent, will in different measure erode legitimacy, and the larger the numbers involved, the greater this erosion will be. At this level, the opposite or negative of legitimacy can be called de-legitimation.¹⁹

Therefore, legitimation is not a zero-sum game, that is, it is not the case that legitimacy either exists or does not, instead it has a graduated character and can either be strengthened or eroded. Finally, not every element of the political system must be legitimized to the same degree. Here we can recall David Easton's conceptualizations, who, while characterizing the objects of political support listed three elements of the system: the authorities, the regime, and the political community.²⁰ Each one of these elements can be legitimated or de-legitimated to various degrees. Tarkowski, in his analysis of the objects of legitimation, went even further and distinguished six groups of elements that make up a political system: the state, the regime, political institutions, leaders, key programs and decisions, and international relations.²¹ The number of significant elements can differ depending on the situation under analysis and does not need to take on the form of a closed model. In other words, there is the possibility of a situation where the state, the regime, and political institutions are legitimated, while the remaining elements are not. With time such a situation can reverse itself.

Establishing the range of legitimation is, therefore, not an easy task. In mature liberal-democratic systems, an indicator of the degree of legitimation might be the support expressed in the election process. However, the lack of an election process does not need to mean a lack of legitimation. A mobilizational mode of legitimation is also possible.²² It presupposes that support is expressed through the long-lasting engagement of the citizens and their cooperation with the government toward the realization of specific goals. Such a manner of legitimizing is characteristic especially for power gained through revolutionary means and for

19 Ibid., 19.

20 David Easton, "An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems," *World Politics*, Vol. 9, No.3, April 1957: 383–400.

21 Jacek Tarkowski, "Legitymizacja władzy. Zagadnienia teoretyczne i opinie oficjalne," in *Socjologia świata polityki*, op. cit.

22 David Beetham, *The Legitimation...*, op. cit., 94–95.

the communist system. The mobilization resources of a system would, in this case, be an indicator of its legitimation. The problem is that political systems existed that were capable of organizing mass support, this did not, however, mean that they were really in possession of it. For those playing the game, beyond faith in the validity of the goals of mobilization, there could also be fear, the conformism of others, that is, motives that have nothing in common with the normative appraisals of legitimation. Finally, the legitimation of the mobilizing goals proposed by the authorities did not necessarily have to be identical with the legitimation of the authorities themselves. Take the following example: the actual support and successful mobilization of Polish society in answer to the communist call to rebuild Warsaw. It seems that the answer to the question about the degree of legitimation of a mobilizing system, for example, in People's Poland, is difficult, or even impossible to give granted the current state of our knowledge about that period—and if it were to be attempted then it would have to take on the form of a hypothesis laden with many qualifications.

Max Weber distinguished only three types of a legitimate political rule: traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal.²³ There is no need to discuss them in detail in this study. Yet it makes sense to remember that Weber's variations on legitimate ruling are ideal types, models, which never appear in historical reality in a pure form. All existing political systems are, in various proportions, a mix of the above types. Thus, the legitimation of a political system can have many different foundations and take on many different forms. This depends upon the cultural foundations and upon socially acknowledged norms and customs. Ways of legitimating also undergo continuous changes. The problem emerges when, as a result of a crisis, or, the birth of a new system of governance (overthrow, revolution, invasion) the rulers are deprived of their titles to exercising authority.

Besides the Weberian strategies, there are other strategies that serve to fill out lacks in legitimation. From the point of view of the later arguments of this book, it makes sense to look at legitimation based upon ideology. Establishing the semantic field of the concept of "ideology" constitutes a substantial problem. In order to avoid making an unfounded argument, it is enough to point to the typology of ideology's definition drawn up by Terry Eagleton, which is made up of sixteen propositions.²⁴ The crucial selection, therefore, must be preceded by the choice of some research stance. Jerzy Szacki distinguishes two such basic approaches:

23 Max Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," tr. Hans Gerth, in *A Sociological Reader on Complex Organizations*, ed. Amitai Etzioni (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1969), 6–15.

24 Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 1–2.

a) evaluative, an approach that aims at verifying of the worldview proposed by a given ideology (and unmasking it) and b) descriptive, an approach that points to the particular social functions of some system of convictions, their internal structure, and the eventual particular manner of their expression and propagation.²⁵ The position labeled here as evaluative is represented by the research tradition associated with the names of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and with Karl Mannheim's total conception of ideology, which depended upon capturing it as a "socially rooted" system of views.²⁶ Both describe ideology by relating it to the phenomenon of false consciousness. Ideology, which represents a falsified picture of the world, is closely associated with utopia, and its rootedness in politics makes it an important source for legitimating the limited interests of dominant groups or social classes. It is no wonder that in this conception ideology has an extremely pejorative sense. Such a stance garners widespread critique directed primarily against the interpretation of ideology as false consciousness.²⁷

John B. Thompson proposed a "critical conception of ideology" while taking into account this critique, but without entirely jettisoning his Marxist roots. He identified concentrating upon the legitimating function of ideology as the most important task. In describing the object of his interests, the author of *Ideology and Modern Culture* writes, "To study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination."²⁸ The immanent quality of ideology is not its falseness or illusionary nature. Ideologies can be false, and in certain situations, they can mystify social reality, but that is not their constitutive quality. The defining criterion of ideology is its service in establishing and upholding power relations, which Thompson calls "relations of domination."

The author names legitimation among the five most important roles that ideology can play in relation to power,²⁹ which in turn, following Weber, he

25 Jerzy Szacki, *Dylematy historiografii idei oraz inne szkice I studia* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1991), 53–55. John Thompson introduces a similar division of research directions. He distinguishes between critical conceptions of ideology and neutral conceptions of ideology in John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communications* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford, 1991), 53–55.

26 See: Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Mariner, 1955).

27 See: Terry Eagleton, *Ideology...*, op. cit., 10–31.

28 John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern...*, op. cit., 56.

29 He also names the following besides legitimacy: dissimulation, unification, fragmentation, and reification.

defines as faith in the right to rule. The legitimating pretensions of the rulers can be expressed in the language of ideology with the help of typical strategies with symbolic constructions. One of these strategies bears the name of *rationalization*. With its help, those establishing an ideology create a series of arguments that aim to defend or justify an existing social order and to convince their hearers that it makes sense to support it. *Universalization* is yet another strategy. Thanks to this strategy institutional arrangements, essentially particularistic, are presented as if they served the whole, and the institutions are considered as open to just about anyone. Pretensions to legitimation can also be expressed with the help of the strategy of *narrativization*: claims to legitimacy are embedded in stories, which, by referring to the past, treat the present as rooted in tradition. In reality, these traditions are frequently made up in order to give a sense of group belonging. Desirable histories can be told by official chroniclers, not infrequently by institutions that were created for this purpose, or members of the dominant group—all with the aim of justifying their exercise of power and making others, who do not possess it, come to terms with this fact. The form of these stories can vary: starting with speeches, articles, novels, films (including documentaries), right up to weaving symbolic element into everyday and holiday rituals and ceremonies of power.³⁰

However much paying attention to the legitimating function of ideology is empirically justified and fully convincing, it is risky to reduce ideology to those things in a worldview that are connected to the ruling political authorities. Such a limitation would mean that, for example, the views of the members of the Bolshevik party, expressed in articles and books before the Revolution, did not have any features of ideology, but became ideological when their authors gained the position of the dominant group. Furthermore, the politicization of ideology prevents all those worldviews that are not necessarily connected to the world of politics, for example, feminism, from carrying the label of ideology.³¹

Thompson's definition narrows the understanding of ideology too greatly, missing several of its substantial elements. Therefore, I will adopt a different one, which follows the earlier mentioned descriptive research strategy: ideology is a coherent system of beliefs and views that pretends to a total description of social reality and is organized around several central values, which it gives the character of absolute values, and a character that formulates a vision of a desired future. Ideology understood in such a way can be a source of legitimating claims. It is

30 Ibid., 60–62.

31 These arguments against John Thompson follow Terry Eagleton, *Ideology...*, op. cit., 6–7.

not difficult to list several ideologies most frequently used to legitimate political power: Marxist-Leninist, conservative, and racist. The nationalist ideology is certainly one of the most popular of them.

Nationalism

Here it is dispensable to consider all the existing definitions, lines of research, controversies, and discussions whose subject is nationalism. As Tomasz Kizwalter writes, “There is no way to reach a set of findings in this field that would not provoke someone’s anger or at least substantial objections.”³² It is noteworthy to point out that the causes of these controversies, also the difficulty in answering the question asked above, are the emotional reactions that the word “nationalism” awakens. These arise from many phenomena that are associated with this concept, and further by its varying content and the variety of its interpretations. The label of nationalism is given to both national-liberation movements in 19th century Europe or South America, but also to Prussian, Russian, or British state-nationalism. Manifestations of nationalism are considered, especially in Western literature on the subject, symptoms of the fight for one’s freedom (for example, the Italians during the period of *Risorgimento*), but also of the will to deprive others of freedom (for example, the fascist regime of Mussolini). The range of forms and national variations of nationalism sometimes awakens doubts about whether the one and the same phenomenon is being talked about. This is why the following hypothesis sounds so convincing: “no single, universal theory of nationalism is possible.”³³ The problem can only be resolved through analyzing the historical context. Therefore, nationalism must be viewed through a historical perspective. Only in this way are we able to judge what type of nationalism we are dealing with. This is because—as noted by the German scholar Peter Alter—there is no one such thing as nationalism, we should rather speak of “nationalisms” in the plural.³⁴ This is also why the postulate of the description of the phenomenon and accentuating the diversity of national phenomena is especially justified.³⁵

The fact that nationalisms vary in form and content does not mean that one ought not to attempt to search for a descriptive model of their common structure.

32 Tomasz Kizwalter, *O nowoczesności narodu: przypadek polski* (Warsaw: Semper, 1999), 19.

33 John A. Hall, “Nationalism: Classified and Explained,” *Daedalus* 122.3 (1999): 1.

34 Peter Alter, *Nationalism* (London: Hodder Education, 1994), 2.

35 Joanna Kurczewska, “Ideologie narodowe – stare i nowe wzorce,” in *Nacjonalizm. Konflikty narodowościowe w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej*, ed. Stanisław Helnarski (Toruń, PL: Adam Marszałek, 1994), 19.

Kenneth Minogue defines nationalism by referring to the concept of ethnocentrism and the categories of internality and externality as a political movement striving to achieve and defend national integration by “depending on a feeling of collective grievance against foreigners.”³⁶ The definition of nationalism proposed by Ernest Gellner enjoys the greatest popularity among scholars.³⁷ He formulates nationalism as “a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state—a contingency already formally excluded by the principle in its general formulation—should not separate the power-holders from the rest.” Further on Gellner writes that nationalism “determines the norm for the legitimacy of political units in the modern world.”³⁸

Gellner’s definition precisely strikes at the object of these deliberations by integrating legitimacy and ethnicity. However, with increasing frequency, it encounters serious reservations, which cannot be ignored. They are related to, above all, a too wide concept of nationalism. It acknowledges as nationalist everyone who accepts the principle of the nation-state, meaning, it attaches such a label to nearly all the citizens of such a country, including both the adherents of liberal and socialist doctrines. Such a stance has its heuristic merits, especially when we make comparisons between today’s “citizen” and, for example, with a medieval “subject”; but it loses its merit if one would want to, in relation to contemporary times, distinguish between the nationalist attitude from other viewpoints and convictions. It is not so much that the definition of nationalism awakens doubts, but the main thesis of the concept, namely, that nationalism “invents” nations where they previously did not exist. In other words, according to this way of thinking the nation is a certain thought construct, a symptom of “false consciousness.”³⁹ Thus, nations are something that is “accidental” and “invented” by intellectual elites and not an objectively existing social reality. There is no doubt that Gellner is right when he writes that nationalism helps to create nations and is a substantial element of activities aiming toward the formation of nation-states. On the other hand, the opposite stance is theoretically possible and historically based, one that claims that first there must be a national

36 Kenneth Minogue, *Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), 25.

37 For example, Erich Hobsbawm declares himself on the side of Gellner’s definition in his work *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 9.

38 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2009), 1, 48.

39 *Ibid.*, 119–120.

consciousness and at least the seeds of a nation (a proto-nation, a paeon?) in order for nationalism to come into being.⁴⁰

Anthony D. Smith considers nationalism in a different light than Minogue and Gellner. By utilizing the concept of “ideology” he sees nationalism as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation.’”⁴¹ According to Smith, the central doctrines of nationalism are as follows:

1. The world is divided into nations, each of which has its own individuality, history, and destiny.
2. The nation is the source of all social and political power and that devotion to the nation is above all other types of devotion.
3. If people wish to be free, they need to identify with a particular nation.
4. Nations need to be free and secure in order for peace and security to reign in the world.⁴²

In the context of this discussion we ought to stress how the author of *National Identities* highlights, much like Gellner does, the axiom of all nationalisms, that is, the circumstances where the nation is the most important source of political power, its legitimation, which stands above all other types of legitimizing.

To sum up these necessarily brief observations, we can attempt to define nationalism as a specific system of ideas, values, and norms that have pretenses to a comprehensive view on the world that assigns to the community of the nation a particular value and it also integrates that community, which can possibly be tied with discrimination against other nations and animosity toward them.

Treating nationalism as an ideology certainly has its shortcomings, which come from the limitation of its manifestations to exclusively to doctrinal characteristics.⁴³ The following fact shall serve as a justification: the goal of this study is not the description of all nationalistic phenomena, but only one of its functions. Furthermore, the definition illustrated here allows, to some degree, to distinguish

40 For critiques of Gellner’s work: Jerzy Szacki, “O narodzie i nacjonalizmie,” *Znak* 3 (1997): 25–26. In the same issue of *Znak*, Andrzej Walicki, „Czy możliwy jest nacjonalizm liberalny?,” 32–50; Antonina Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni* (Warsaw: PWN, 1996), 27–29; Arthur N. Waldron, “Theories of Nationalism and Historical Explanation,” *World Politics* 3 (1985): 416–433.

41 Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada, 1993), 73.

42 *Ibid.*, 74.

43 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities...*, op. cit., 19.

nationalism from patriotism. The difference depends upon the lack of worldview characteristics in the patriotic stance, which does not remain, as Szacki writes, “in a necessary connection with the idea of a nation,” and is also free from discrimination and animosity toward others.⁴⁴

In the Polish language, as is the case in other Slavic languages, “nationalism” belongs to a group of concepts with a decidedly pejorative meaning. It has a similar negative connotation in Germany, and also in the sphere of the Romance languages.⁴⁵ Things are slightly different in Anglo-Saxon countries where the word “nationalism” has an axiologically neutral meaning and covers all those political movements and ideologies for which the nation, also national ties and identities, as well as the nation-state are designated a specific place upon the scale of values.

A wide and non-judgmental treatment of nationalism can be found, above all, in the literature on the subject, especially the literature written during the 80’s and 90’s (examples are the earlier mentioned definitions of nationalism from Ernest Gellner and Anthony Smith). Yet, generally, nationalism is seen, especially in journalism, as a synonym for intolerance, political obscurantism, frequently as a sign of backwardness, and as a substantial obstacle to the peaceful coexistence of nations. Nationalism understood in this manner overlaps in meaning with chauvinism. On the other hand, the patriotic stance is valued very highly. Thus, very few people are inclined to describe themselves as nationalists. The boundaries between the two attitudes are not so sharp, because they are varieties, or shades, of the same universal phenomenon, valuing one’s own more positively than strangers.⁴⁶

My proposed definition of nationalism situates itself among these angles on, and concepts of, nationalism that see nationalism in wide and neutral manner. Animosity toward other ethnic groups is not treated as a constitutive element of nationalism, but only as a possible aspect of the phenomenon. Such a wide definition will permit us, later in this study, to describe as nationalistic not only all holidays, manifestations, or political declarations that use national symbolism, but also discrimination of national minorities, the strengthening of national identity and ties, and the legitimating of political authority through creating an atmosphere of animosity and a sense of threat from other nations or cultures.

44 Jerzy Szacki, “O narodzie...,” op. cit., 24; Andrzej Walicki, “Czy możliwy jest...,” op. cit., 34.

45 According to binding contemporary German language norms nationalism has a negative tint. See: Peter Alter, *Nationalism*, op. cit., 2.

46 Grzegorz Bobiński, “Nacjonalizmy i ich alternatywy. Zarys problematyki,” *Przegląd Polonijny* 1 (1995): 22.

One of the most important features of the nationalist ideology is its ability to integrate and mobilize people. Very few ideologies or methods of organization are capable of equaling nationalism in its ability to achieve social mobilization. Those who see this feature as widespread and most important are for the most part correct. Nationalism is a tool for achieving socially significant goals. Understood in this way in its influence upon political, social, cultural, and economic changes nationalism has revealed itself, alongside socialism, as one of the far-ranging ideologies.

Nationalism came into being and shaped itself as a political movement when modern parliamentary democracy based upon the rivalry of political parties was being born. Its attraction and power to influence caused it to be frequently harnessed into the mechanisms of exercising power, making possible the realization of specific political goals. All the subjects of political life had to respond to it and most of them acknowledged the “nation” as a marker of its sphere of action. Originally, nationalism opposed socialism and liberalism and became an ideology of the right, however, with time, both of these two political directions began to include nationalism’s slogans into their programs. In many instances nationalism served the function of legitimizing and mystifying the exercise of power, in other instances, it served to delegitimize the exercise of power.

Nationalist Legitimation of Political Power

As I have already indicated, the problem of the co-dependence between legitimation and nationalism on the theoretical plane has not been widely discussed until now. Jacek Tarkowski names patriotism and nationalism among the various legitimizing formulations, which he describes as auxiliary, used by the political authorities in People’s Poland to patch up their deficit of legitimation.⁴⁷ His, in a certain sense, dismissive stance toward this type of legitimation underwent changes with time; in another of his texts he wrote about patriotic legitimation that “for understandable reasons, . . . was treated as a far-going and effective argument.” He acknowledges the identification of Poland and its interests with socialism and the party combined with frequent references to the patriotic traditions, what the nation has earned, its culture and achievements, as the most common form of this type of argument.⁴⁸ Stanisław Gebethner also pointed to other—alongside the types of legitimation mentioned by Weber—varieties of legitimation, such as the

47 Jacek Tarkowski “Sprawność gospodarcza jako...,” op. cit., 265.

48 Jacek Tarkowski, *Legitymizacja władzy...*, op. cit., 64–65.

national, the effective, and the revolutionary.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, he did not develop the issue of how he understands national legitimation. In turn, Wojciech Sokół in his expansive monograph devoted to the legitimation of political systems (including, among others, the Sanacja regime after 1926 and legitimation in People's Poland) only marginally mentioned the nationalist ideology as a potential source of legitimation for the political system.

It is difficult to find an unequivocal answer to the question of why authors (not only Polish ones) who preoccupy themselves with legitimation have so widely avoided the question of the nationalist legitimation of power. Perhaps, this is a burden imposed by Weber's tradition of thinking; his typology of legitimized ruling did not take nationalism into account. It is also possible that here we are dealing with a symptom of a wider tendency, described by Jerzy Szacki: sociology's and political theory's fascination with the process of modernization, the rise of structures and institution of "modern" society and state—with a simultaneous forcing to the margins the interest in traditional ties and communities. As a consequence, this culminated with the long-lasting development of sociology and political science *sans* the concept of the nation.⁵⁰

Among scholars who have taken up the process of legitimation as the object of their study, Joseph Rothschild perhaps most widely addresses the features of nationalism that interest us most. According to him, "No type of society or political system is today immune from the burgeoning pressure of ethnic nationalism, with its possible legitimating or delegitimizing effects."⁵¹

The concept of "nationalist legitimation" is something I understand as a positive evaluation of a political entity, which as ethnically "internal" guards the "national interest," understood as the defense of national territories, the borders of the state, and the national economy; it also represents a national system of values acknowledged by the community, which includes the symbols and national myths, remembrance of national heroes, a common historical past and a cultural legacy, and the customs common to this community.⁵²

However, this does not mean that the legitimation of a political system, it is enough that it be ethnically identical with a majority of the society. There is no doubt that national "internality" of the rulers is a necessary condition, however,

49 Stanisław Gebethner, "Legitymizacja systemu politycznego a koncepcja ładu porozumień," in: *Legitymacja, klasyczne teorie...*, eds. Andrzej Rychard, Antonij Sułek, op. cit., 100.

50 Jerzy Szacki, "O narodzie..." op. cit., 6–7.

51 Joseph Rothschild, "Political Legitimacy..." op. cit., 46.

52 The "national economy" is understood as the economy of a country, state.

it is not sufficient to elicit a favorable disposition of the ruled groups toward their rulers. There also has never been a political system, which for the long haul, has based its legitimization solely upon the nationalist ideology. We can acknowledge as the exception moments in the life of a nation when, as a result of an external war, some sort of breakthrough, or revolution national emotions reached a zenith, when ethnic “internality” and “externality” became the basic categories for ordering the world, when all other ties and identities (for example class, political) lose their importance. In the history of People’s Poland, such an explosion of national euphoria took place when in October of 1956 Władysław Gomułka was universally acknowledged as a national hero who resisted the pressure of the Soviets and guarded national sovereignty. This was perhaps the one and only time when Polish communist authorities enjoyed social legitimation based only upon, above all, nationalism.

In its very essence nationalism is a 19th-century phenomenon, which came into being alongside the shaping of modern nations. It is difficult to point to any sufficiently strong examples of legitimating evaluation of the rulers because of their ethnic “familiarity” or “foreignness” in earlier epochs. Ties between ethnicity and politics had an accidental and ephemeral character; in no way is it possible to speak here of some systematic dependence.⁵³ The problem of cultural externality surfaced substantially only during situations of war and foreign invasion. In medieval Europe, both in monarchies and in republics, one can find traces of attachment to one’s fatherland, love for country and city⁵⁴, but one must remember the typical medieval European practice of taking over thrones by dynasties originating outside the country where they would rule.

In Poland, certain manifestations of nationalist legitimation were present already during the second half of the 16th century when the Polish nobility in their electoral Sejms demanded a native candidate for a king (“We want a Piast.”). The portrait commissioned from Louis de Silvestre by August III Saxony represented wearing a Kontush, can be seen as an answer. The matter was a lot more complex

53 Tomasz Kizwalter, *O nowoczesności narodu...*, op. cit., 19.

54 For more on this topic see: Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nationalism and communism. Essays 1946–1963* (New York: Praeger, 1964), especially the chapter “Nationalism and Multi-national Empires,” 3–35; Benedykta Zientary, *Świt narodów europejskich. Powstanie świadomości narodowej na obszarze Europy pokarolińskiej* (Warsaw: PIW, 1985); Aleksander Gieysztor, “Więź narodowa i regionalna w polskim średniowieczu,” in: *Polska dzielnicowa i zjednoczona* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1972), 9–36; *Państwo, naród, stany w świadomości wieków średnich*, eds. Aleksander Gieysztor and Sławomir Gawlas (Warsaw: PWN, 1990).

than this. The range of the concept of the “nation” was limited to one group—the nobility. Its revulsion toward foreigners on the throne was only partially the product of elementary xenophobic reactions, to a greater degree, according to Tomasz Kizwalter, it originated in worries about monarchical absolutism, which was then developing in Western Europe.⁵⁵ The ethnic origins of the dynasty had a minimal influence upon what territories it ruled, while ethnic issues did not yet become the motive of political action.⁵⁶ Loyalty toward the rulers and the faith was, above all, required from the subjects. In traditional monarchies the right to rule flowed from dynastic continuity while the authority of the monarch was sanctioned by divine law. The ruler anointed by God was only responsible to God. This model of legitimation lasted in France, fundamentally unchanged, until the outburst of the French Revolution. In other countries, it underwent erosion under the influence of the national *Risorgimento* and transformed itself into a rational-legal legitimation of the nation-state. According to Kizwalter, the significant caesura in Poland was marked by the deposition of Nicholas I during the November Uprising when his Polish crown was taken away—an act signaling that traditional legitimation had lost its significance, replaced with a new one based upon national ties.⁵⁷ In Russia, whose monarch was called “God” and “Christ,”⁵⁸ it was only the February Revolution that banished the already anachronistic tsarist regime with its traditionalist legitimation. This does not signify, after all, that the nationalistic legitimation of authority replaced the right to rule justified by dynastic continuity and religion. In contemporary Europe not a few of the democratic countries are monarchies. In the Near East, a considerable part of the political regimes rule based upon the power of dynastic continuity and the laws of the Koran. There is no doubt, however, that the main point of reference has changed. Earlier, it was the religious community and dynastic monarchy, while today the nation is the main subject of power relations.

Nationalist legitimation is typical for contemporary nation-states. It is demanded of the rulers, thanks to the possibilities that they possess by reason of exercising power, to guard the national sovereignty and defend the goods of the national culture. Not fulfilling these requirements creates the danger of the nation questioning their right to rule. Here in Poland we frequently see the radical opposition blowing out of proportion the faults of the rulers and describing them with the epithet of “traitors of the national cause”—a way of speaking that is characteristic of the fringe nationalist way of viewing the world for which the nation

55 Tomasz Kizwalter, *O nowoczesności narodu...*, op. cit., 72.

56 See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities...*, op. cit., 89.

57 Tomasz Kizwalter, *O nowoczesności narodu...*, op. cit., 161, 160.

58 Borys Uspieski and Wiktor Żywow, *Car i bóg* (Warsaw: PWN, 1992).

occupies center stage while all other loyalties are considered insignificant. Ethnic origins frequently decide whether a politician will gain public support, whether he or she will avoid being shouted down as “foreign.” There are many examples one could cite. Even in the United States during the 1988 presidential elections George Bush Sr.’s opponent, Michael Dukakis, was taken not to be sufficiently American because of his Greek origins. A similar argument based upon ethnic foreignness appeared during the 1990 presidential elections in Poland. However, there have been exceptions. The best example being the former prime minister of Great Britain, Benjamin Disraeli and the former president of Peru, Alberto Fujimori. It is another matter altogether that such exceptions are most frequent in countries With a high immigration quota of immigrants.

Nationalism is an important factor in de-legitimation, especially in countries that are differentiated ethnically and nationally. The Scots, Basques, Flemings, and the Quebecois frequently undermine the right to rule of majority national groups in the countries where they live. These are only a few examples, but we could multiply the examples of nationalist-separatist movements greatly.

However, the subject of this study is not strictly legitimacy, but the process of legitimating, that is, the strategies and arguments that lead to obtaining and guaranteeing the obedience and support of both the subordinate and ruling classes.

In order to establish what constitutes nationalist legitimation one can rely upon the strategies proposed by J.B. Thompson. The legitimizing pretensions of the rulers, expressed in the language of the nationalist ideology, can take on the form of *rationalization*. Such a strategy would have to rely upon the absolutizing of national values—the freedom of the nation, the independence of the state, the mission the nation has to fulfill, and so on, followed by their identification with the existing social order, and amounting to the same, the establishment of their continuation as inalterable and final. From such a posing of the matter comes the necessity of supporting order and defending against eventual outside enemies and any internal opposition that questions the legitimation of the ruling group. The goal of the strategy described as being *universalizing* would be the presentation of institutions serving the particular interests of the ruling parties as institutions that serve the general interest of the nation, which realize the ideal of uniting the nation. The meaning of the *narrative* strategy would lead to placing the legitimizing ambitions of the rulers in ready-made, invented legends; tales, which have all the characteristics of myth. They reveal the fact that the execution of power by an individual or a ruling group not as an accidental occurrence of fate, but as a logical consequence of mutually reinforced events that took place in the past, and simultaneously as a “historical necessity.” In these mythological tales, the past

becomes inseparably linked to the present. What occurred yesterday, legitimates what is happening today, and what will happen tomorrow—and *vice versa*. In order for the past to be useful in this way it has to undergo revision, it has to be reinvented anew. Rituals and legends, which constitute the building blocks of “reinvented tradition,” do not come into being thanks to spontaneous actions, but are planned and put into circulation by institutions, people, or groups directed by intentions that are manipulative and propaganda-based. [34] However, this does not mean that these legends must be invented in full. On the contrary, if they were, they would lose their legitimating power. They are usually cobbled together from authentic fragments of tradition, so much so that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the truth from falsehood in them. Such was the case, writes Antonina Kłosowska, with “the mechanism of manipulating indubitable traditions, authentic works and customs of national culture for legitimizing imposed rule in socialism. The tradition was not false, rather the intentions of those who exploited it.”⁵⁹ This process is similarly presented by Zdzisław Mach:

History provides endless substance, which can be used, and is used, as material for mythical narratives in which facts and people become symbols... Ideologues and protagonists of social change appeal to mythical history in order to create an image which presents the postulated changes as progress, or as a return to the Golden Age while the existing status quo is seen as a regression, reaction, and degeneration... Every group invents its own tradition to justify its ideology and its particular view of the social world. This process of “invention,” does not necessarily mean that all facts, heroes, events, symbols are created on the spot without taking into account reliable historical sources. Historiography very often provides factual material but the process of invention, the creation of an ideologically appropriate image consists in the selection of facts and people, combining them together so as the mythical structure of a desired symbolic meaning emerges. Some facts and people of the past disappear in this process, others are emphasized. Some events are interpreted in a new way. In fact, such a manipulation of history is practically universal and occurs always and everywhere whenever the past is used to justify and provide meaning for the present. Facts took place and people lived in the past, in a given space and time, but at present, they exist only in the memory of contemporary people in their present reading of historical texts. They make possible the internalization of symbolic values and integrate the cultural world of living communities. Even if a group, like certain revolutionary movements, rejects the past, this observation still applies to them, because in the very fact of stating what they reject they make possible the construction of a myth that presents an image of a social evil, which must be overcome.⁶⁰

59 Antonina Kłosowska, *Kultury narodowe...*, op. cit., 60.

60 Zdzisław Mach, *Symbols, Conflict, and Identity: Essays in Political Anthropology* (New York: SUNY, 1993), 62–64.

Symbolic elements, since they are the ingredients of these legends (myths), create not only words spoken in public appearances, articles, or radio programs, but they can also be read in public rituals, customs, and ceremonies.

I believe that the three strategies mentioned above (rationalization, universalization, and the narrative strategy), which comprise the process of nationalist legitimization were treated by the ruling elites of People's Poland as especially far-reaching and effective. History provides many examples of nationalist legitimization of political authority through many systems of legitimation, however, this manner of legitimizing only develops fully under the conditions of a monocentric system. Elites reaching for national slogans, in order to overcome their deficits of legitimation, were influenced by the following:

1. The cultural substratum
2. The situation of a legitimacy crisis
3. The relationship of ruling groups to democratic norms
4. The ideology of these groups and their ideational roots
5. The examples flowing from outside a given political system

The manner of legitimation is influenced by the culture of a given country. This pertains to, especially on the intensity national conflicts, resentments, the rootedness in the national consciousness of repulsion toward external ethnic groups, historical experiences, and so on. The dissonance between proposed visions of social order with accepted examples may mean that the acknowledgment by the ruled of the pretensions of the rulers to the exercise of their rule may become doubtful. This is why actions undertaken by the establishment must always, to a certain degree, run counter to social expectations. If we make an example of People's Poland then we can assume, with a large degree of probability, that the actions leading to the reduction of the deficit of legitimation through precisely the use of nationalist legitimation had their cause in the convictions held by the majority of the ruling elite (including in Moscow) about the meaning that Poles attach to independence, the sovereignty of the state, their history, and their cultural heritage. We should also point to the unusually strong, reinforced further by experiences of the war, national ties of Polish society, and the fact that its national identity was formed, for example, during the course of numerous, not infrequently heroic, struggles first against Moscow, then Russia, and finally Bolshevik Russia. Communist authorities, tied to a foreign, Soviet superpower, would lose all chances to gain even a modicum of social support: if they did not justify in their program, as the Marxists called it, the national question (using the vocabulary developed in this study: if they gave up on nationalist legitimating arguments of demonstrating their patriotic intentions and national character). As Milovan Đilas put it,

“No communist system, regardless of its resemblance of other systems, can exist in any other way than in the form of nationalist communism. In order to reach the goal of communism’s staying alive and functioning communism must take on national forms.”⁶¹

The situation of a lack of legitimation, or the illegality of the rulers (illegitimacy),⁶² and the crisis of legitimation are successive—not any less important—factors that influence the increase in the instrumental utilization of the nationalist ideology. We speak of illegitimacy when power was gained by breaking the rules (taking over, usurpation, *coup d’etat*). We most frequently deal with such a state of things when the crisis of legitimation becomes a permanent crisis, or when political regime is imposed by force and has not yet managed to take root, to gain even the most minimal trust and social support. The crisis of legitimation of the social-political order occurs when the appropriateness and justice of this order are publicly questioned and when the system is not able to ensure the upholding of indispensable levels of loyalty and obedience from the mass of its citizens. Such a situation occurs when there is a breakdown of the manner of conducting of politics by the rulers that has worked up until then; it is frequently the result of a deep economic and political crisis, the depletion of sources of legitimation that have functioned to that point. It forces the rulers to search for alternative ways of legitimating.

If we accept that the social order is the result of negotiations that establish the rules conducted between social (political) subjects, then a crisis of legitimation is the undermining of the negotiated social order. Its result is the breakdown of existing channels of communication between social groups. This is why most of the actions embarked upon by an establishment that is under threat of crisis can be reduced to the recreation of ties between the rulers and the ruled. This is also the principle that underpins the legitimating role of nationalism: It sets in motion a system of meanings that unites the collectivity around a single idea and it permits the creation of a universal code that is readable to and accepted by, all. Thanks to its almost uncanny ability to ease communication, to integrate people into one national community, nationalism is capable of filling up holes in legitimacy. In place of falling apart and disintegration, it offers the utopia of social unity and national unification. We could cite many examples illustrating the use of nationalism by ruling elites in moments of crisis.

61 Milovan Đilas, *Nowa klasa. Analiza systemu komunistycznego*, (New York: Związek Dziennikarzy RP. Syndykat w Ameryce Północnej, 1958), 189.

62 Irving Horowitz, “The Norm of Illegitimacy—Ten Years Later,” in: Bogdan Denitch, *Legitimation of Regimes...*, op. cit., 23–35.

One such example are the politics of the Sanacja camp after the death of Józef Piłsudski. The large role played by the previous charismatic legitimation, and the lack of deeper bases for ruling led to a situation where, with the moment of Piłsudski's death, the system was endangered by a serious crisis of legitimation. The Sanacja camp was deprived of its leader and found itself in a legitimation vacuum. The death of the marshal meant the end, and for some, the complete collapse of a world order based upon one person. For many people who were connected, in one way or another, with the Belvedere camp, it was an actual catastrophe. The crisis of legitimation in this instance did not depend upon rejection of obedience by a part of society, even though this had to be accounted for, but upon the wavering of the faith of the political elites in their own right to rule and the significance of the titles they called upon. It was, above all, a crisis of self-legitimation. The Sanacja camp was therefore forced to search for alternative forms of legitimation of their own power, because they were worried about losing it, and about the complete collapse of the group comprised of Piłsudski followers. This was done by calling upon the nationalist ideology by calling together the National Unity Front. Simplifying somewhat we can claim that this also accomplished the transition from a ruling power whose legitimation lay in Piłsudski's charisma, who, it must be noted was far from mythologizing the idea of the nation, to a form of ruling whose pretensions to rule grew out of highlighting its national character.⁶³

Both of the situations mentioned above, illegitimacy and a crisis of legitimacy, occurred in People's Poland. There is no doubting the fact that during World War II and during its immediate aftermath Polish communists did not enjoy the support of the Polish society. They comprised such a small group in the Soviet Union that the Central Committee of the Department of International Information of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had difficulty filling the Central Bureau of Polish Communists.⁶⁴ With the passage of time, the communist system gained some social support, although it did not guarantee full stability. Deficits of legitimation revealed themselves especially during moments of social crises of which the following were the most significant: 1955–1957, 1968,

63 Andrzej Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej rządów polskich w latach 1921–1939* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1979), 72–73.

64 "Pismo kierownika Wydziału Informacji Międzynarodowej KC WKP(b) Georgi Dymitrowa do członka Biura Politycznego KC WKP(b), zastępcy przewodniczącego Rady Komisarzy Ludowych ZSRR Wiczesława Mołotowa w sprawie składu Centralnego Biura Komunistów Polski w ZSRR [18.I.1944]," in : *Polska – ZSRR struktury podległości. Dokumenty WKP(b) 1944–1949*, eds Giennadi Bordiugow, Aleksander Kochański, Adam Koseski, Giennadi Matwiejew, Andrzej Paczkowski (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1995), 27.

1970–1971, 1976, 1980–1982. Even though not every one of those instances combined social protest with an open undermining of the legitimacy of the rulers (the years 1968–1976), that is how they usually interpreted it. Consequently, whenever the system was rocked by a crisis, the rulers rescued themselves with nationalist argumentation and undertook legitimating efforts, whose main axis was the concept of the “nation,” which aimed to form a symbolic community between the rulers and the society. This does not mean that during periods between crises the authorities did not strive to guarantee support for themselves from the side of the society by using national slogans and symbols. We know today that the stability of the system during the whole of its existence was not as certain as was thought earlier. Between 1960 and 1970 there were at least two times—in 1963 and 1967—when the authorities were in danger dealing with outbreaks of serious social conflict created by the raising of food prices. Each year there were many strikes, mainly with an economic substrate. If we add to this the conflicts during the period of celebrations of Poland’s Millennium in 1966 and the events of March 1968 preceded by an increasing tension between an opposition-oriented intelligentsia and academic society against the authorities, then the decade of the 60’s ought not be called a “small stabilization,” as it usually is, but as a “small destabilization.” No wonder that during the period of Gomułka’s rule one can observe a noticeable rise of the meaning attached to nationalist legitimation within the entire system of legitimation. It was also connected to the exhaustion of the fundamental, for real-existing socialism, type of legitimation based upon the Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The cited examples confirm that the use of nationalist slogans takes place especially in countries with monocentric political systems, in which power does not come from social support expressed in parliamentary elections, or where older forms of legitimation reveal themselves to be ineffective. Francois Furet notes that the cult of the nation lowers the felt lack induced by the lack of a civic-based democracy.⁶⁵ However, this does not mean that professing the nationalist ideology must necessarily mean the negation of democratic principles. The representatives of the Endecja did not always embody views that were anti-parliamentary and anti-democratic. The daily political ritual in the United States is full of varied references to the nation and its tradition. Also, it is not the case that in every monocentric system the rulers will reach for nationalist legitimation with the goal of legitimating their rule. This necessarily requires specific cultural

65 Francois Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999), 43.

and civilizational conditions and an ideological substratum of the ruling party that is difficult to clearly define. The last of these is especially significant when it comes to the communists.

The general thrust of Benedict Anderson's argument is certainly on target when he writes that we must throw off fictional convictions of the type: "Marxists as such are not nationalists."⁶⁶ He bases his opinion upon observations of essentially nationalistic conflicts and rivalries between the Communist regimes of China, Vietnam, and Cambodia during the 70's and 80's. We ought to ask: Were the rulers of these countries really Marxists? Before we can do that, we should answer the question what does it mean, or what it meant, during various stages of the communist movement's development, to "be a Marxist." Without going into the whole matter too far, here we can assume—on the basis of the *Communist Manifesto*—that this meant believing in the victory of a worldwide proletarian revolution that would abolish all class divisions, which are the cause of all conflicts, including nationalist conflicts. If we go with this definition, then the answer to the question we posed would be negative.

I do not feel competent enough to comment on the topic of Central and East Asian countries. The sentence "Marxists as such were nationalist" is not only logically meaningless and is reminiscent of the formulation "believing atheist," but it is also historically, especially, on the ground in Europe, difficult to accept. Neither Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, nor Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, nor also Joseph Stalin, were nationalists who recognized the nation as the highest value. This also cannot be said about the founders of the Socialist Democracy of the Polish and Lithuanian Kingdom, nor about the leaders of the Communist Party of Poland, nor about Bolesław Bierut or Jakub Berman. Whoever thinks otherwise does not understand what the communist movement was in the first half of the 20th century—internationalist, sometimes downright cosmopolitan, integrated by a faith in the revolution's victory over borders; and when such a victory was achieved in the borders of one country that country's eyes were directed, up to the point of self-destruction, toward Moscow, the "first victorious agent of triumphant communism."⁶⁷ This manner of viewing the world, so distant from thinking in national categories, illustrates well the confession of faith of Roman Werfel, the leading journalist, and ideologue of the Polish Communist movement, expressed in conversation with Teresa Torańska:

66 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities...*, op. cit., 145.

67 See: "Rozmowa z Romanem Werflem" in: Teresa Torańska, *Oni*, (Warsaw: Przedświt, 1985), 53.

The most important thing then for communists was not the issue of borders, nor the issue of the general European socialist revolution, whose outburst was real enough. The question of borders had to be subordinated to it, or put aside, until the time of the revolution's triumph in both countries [that is, in Russia and Germany. –MZ] and only then recognized as primary. I sense in what you said the view that the nation which is great and worthy of attention is a nation that garners the greatest possible number of territories inhabited by foreign nations. This is a false view. This is proper to the exploiting classes, which extract profits out of these lands, but from the point of view of the people? Sometimes morsels fall to them, but then they pay with blood for these conquests. I sense within you the same chauvinistic and nationalistic view that has always been eating away at the Polish intelligentsia. It is a provincial, parochial chauvinism. That's what it is!⁶⁸

But this gives rise to the question: Were Polish communists really always directed by Marxism?

One can attempt to answer the question whether the communists were nationalists by asking another one: Is it possible to be a nationalist when abandoning the sovereign being of one's own nation? Only the negative answer will be in play here. The matter is not at all straightforward. We must remember the historical context and the real efforts—let's not worry about how effective—of certain leaders of People's Poland (Gomułka, for example) aiming to widen the sphere of independence and sovereignty from the “brotherly power.” It would be an oversimplification to judge that everything which came into being in the symbolic discourse between the authorities and society during the years 1944–1989 had merely an instrumental and utilitarian character. The legitimating arguments formulated by the actors on the political scene can also have their roots in autotelic values; they can be the consequence of confessed convictions. I consider too simple the assessment that the motivations behind the actions of communist elites were only Machiavellian. It is not exactly the case that the communists took advantage, for example, of Tadeusz Kościuszko's name only in a utilitarian manner in order to manifest their ties to the tradition of independence. They most likely really recognized Kościuszko as a national hero who deserved their homage. Many of them were guided by the light of the idea of building a just and independent Poland. There is no reason to distrust Władysław Gomułka who wrote the following later in his life:

The vital interests of Poland, the working class, all working people were decisive for our party. This is not some slogan, but a profound truth. We were profoundly convinced that during the occupation, among the parties representing the camp of Polish democracy, only our party held the right stance toward the Soviet Union. History demonstrated

68 Ibid., 54.

this. How many times in the history of nations among various countries has it been the case that the majority of the populace of a given generation took up a deeply false, even damning, position with regard to their nation? The whole nation later had to pay for this dearly.⁶⁹

The ideological project did not go according to plan because it could not go according to plan, but does this give us the right to deny its creators even a little bit of patriotism? Within this context Krystyna Kersten asked the following question: “Is it possible to say that one patriotism was authentic and another false?... [Is it possible to say] about young people, frequently buried next to each other in one cemetery, who then fell on both sides that only one of them was ‘a good Pole?’”⁷⁰ I will leave these questions unanswered. I shall repeat that I am exclusively interested in how national slogans were used, and which ones were used with the aim of legitimizing the power of the state and also specific fractions battling with each other for the right to govern.

69 Władysław Gomułka, *Pamiętniki*, v. 2 (Warsaw: BGW, 1994), 505.

70 Krystyna Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy, Polska 1943–1948* (Warsaw: Krąg, 1985), 7–8.

Chapter 2

Communism: From National Nihilism to Nationalist Legitimation

The history of communism, both the movement and the idea, is passionate. It has many paradoxes and shocking reversals. One of them is the evolution from a movement proclaiming the ideas of freedom and social justice to the totalitarian state, which is a total denial and contradiction of the earlier ideas. Another such case is the total turnaround when it came to, as the Marxists called it, the national question: the movement from the national nihilism to the nationalist legitimization of communist countries. Eric Hobsbawm notes, “Marxist movements and states have tended to become national not only in form but in substance, i.e. nationalist. There is nothing to suggest that this trend will not continue.”⁷¹

At the birth of communism not much indicated that such a tendency could appear in the future. In the first chapter, I noted the outlines of an almost outright contradiction between the hierarchy of values contained in Marxism and national stances. Therefore, it makes sense to ask how this metamorphosis ran its course and what was the substrate of the tendencies Hobsbawm spoke about. There are at least two answers to the second question. One of them reveals that the two great doctrines that came into being in the 19th century, nationalism and Marxism, had more in common than they had dissimilarities. Both ideologies concentrated upon a better future, which would be ushered in by revolutions: proletarian or national. Communists and nationalists were guided by a mission to fix the world. The first were going to do it through the world’s total destruction, the second through actions in the direction of a fundamental rebuilding in the national spirit. For both ideologies the freedom of the individual was an obstacle toward realizing these goals; the subject and object of action were large social groups: the working class and nation. Despite these similarities, there remain differences that cannot be passed over. They were, above all, the result of different interpretation of the historical process in which the causative role, according to the communists, was played by economic factors while the other factors—ethnic,

71 Eric Hobsbawm, “Some Reflections on ‘The Breakup of Britain,’” *New Left Review* 105 (1997): 13.

religious, cultural—were only their side-effects without any meaning for the development of humanity. The nationalists could not agree with such a stance. This is the reason why classical Marxism and nationalism were politically contrasted as irreconcilable ideologies.⁷²

The second answer to the question of communism's tendency toward nationalism leans upon the belief that communism by itself, deprived of the national element, was too weak to generate out of itself an effective political system.⁷³ Thus, it needed an ally. In the 20th century every movement, regardless of the provenance of its worldview, that negated the importance of the national tie, thereby abandoning nationalist legitimation, condemned itself to the political margins. There are many factors that point to the fact that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels already were aware of this and agreed to the manipulation of national aspirations as a means to help the worldwide worker's movement. However, they were far from giving the movement national characteristics and seeking nationalist legitimation for it.

The process of the communist movement adjusting itself to the practical coexistence with a world overflowing with nationalisms will be the topic of this chapter.

Nationalism Neglected

Communism was born in the 19th century in opposition to the nationalist ideology. For the creators of Marxism nationalism, much like religion, was an anachronism; they argued that antagonisms between nations will disappear with the liquidation of economic divisions by the communist order, which, it was believed, would overtake the whole world. The belief in the ephemeral nature of nations, which are the product of determinate social-political relations was one of the axioms of the communist ideology throughout nearly the whole of the 19th century.⁷⁴ It was not the result of a proverbial divining from tea leaves but instead flowed from a scientific—it was stressed—analysis of the historical process.

Already the first sentence of the *Communist Manifesto* introduces the reader to the essence of the Marxist conception of history: “The history of all hitherto

72 Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1984), 5.

73 Robert Zuzowski, “The Impact of Nationalism on Communism: the Case of Poland,” *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 1–2 (1992): 9.

74 Isaiah Berlin, “Nationalism: Past Neglect and Present Power,” in: *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 2001), 333–365; Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment* (Oxford: Oxford 1996), 161–172.

existing society is the history of class struggles.”⁷⁵ All the ideals that have directed, direct, and will direct man have a class character. They are directed by economic interests and they shaped themselves in dependence upon the degree of development that has been achieved. This is also the case with nationalism, which, according to Marx, is a necessary element of the capitalist order, a part of its ideological superstructure. It constitutes the basis capitalism as its ideological rationalization and as a substantial element of the bourgeois consciousness.⁷⁶ Along with it, nationalism will be buried by an irrepressible international, cosmopolitan in nature, revolution. This is why a proletariat conscious of its class interests should guard itself against nationalism.

This is mentioned in a following, frequently interpreted, phrase from the *Communist Manifesto*: “The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.”⁷⁷ One cannot overvalue the meaning of these words, “It seems clear,” writes an expert on the matter, “that these words were supposed to describe not only the place of the proletariat but also its stance toward their country, understood, as we can judge, above all, as the state and nation. This stance is a lack of identification and, as a consequence, a lack of felt responsibilities.”⁷⁸ The ties uniting the nation into one community were therefore only an obstacle toward the common action in solidarity of the workers of various countries. Thereby Marx stood against all forms of patriotism of the working class because it should be characterized instead by an internationalist stance, the condition for the victory of the proletarian revolution. Only the gaining of political power by the proletariat will allow it to: “acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.”⁷⁹

Even though the Marxist vision of the coming society is mostly deprived of detailed predictions it still seems justified to suspect that the ideal order (communism) would totally exclude the existence of countries and nations. The place of bourgeois national ties was supposed to be taken over by an international unity and an international homeland. The words about the workers not possessing a nation without a doubt decided in great measure about the relations toward the

75 Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 2002) 219.

76 Joseph Petrus, “Marx and Engels on the National Question,” *The Journal of Politics* 33 (1971): 804–805.

77 Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, op. cit., 241.

78 Marek Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Dzieje. Idee* (Warsaw: PWN, 1992), 188.

79 Engels and Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, op. cit., 241.

national question of the communist movement whose chief slogan became the internationalist calling of the closing words of the *Communist Manifesto*, “Workers of the world unite!”

Marx and Engels never revised their theoretical stance toward nationalism.⁸⁰ They were not affected by the national character of the events of the Springtime of Nations (1848), nor by the later outbreak of the nationalist *Risorgimento*, which was witnessed almost firsthand by the creators of Marxism. Their observations did not transform themselves into a more serious theory of the nation. They also did not budge the foundations of the doctrines put forward in the *Communist Manifesto*, on the other hand, they came to fruition in the adoption of a strategy that was supposed to constitute the political interpretation of the international worker movement.⁸¹ Its attitude toward the national question was supposed to be based upon the principles of dialectic, that is, it was supposed to emerge from the presupposition that the working class is conscious of its opposition against bourgeois society and its ideology, plus the whole of the past process of history, as a movement of emerging oppositions leading to its anticipated abolition.⁸² When this condition will be fulfilled the support of the peasants and workers for bourgeois nationalist movements during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, to be precise during the moment of the national bourgeois revolutions, is commendable, because it will lead to the achievement of a higher level of development. From these same grounds, Marx and Engels officially declared their support for the fight of certain nations for independence, because they counted on this weakening the foundations of the old imperial order, which would speed up the coming of the future proletarian revolution. The authors of the *Communist Manifesto* pointed to the necessity of a tactical alliance with the nationalist bourgeoisie, but they made no concessions to the cause of nationalism. They also did not ascribe any nationalistic qualities to the worker’s movement. Their support for an alliance with nationalism did not differ from the one they lent to liberalism: they supported the national strivings of some nations as a movement leading toward a more progressive alternative.⁸³

80 This is the basic thesis of the Joseph Petrus article, “Marx and Engels on the National Question.”

81 Walker Connor, *The National Question...*, op. cit., 10–11.

82 Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P.S. Falla (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 248.

83 Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford, 1997), 26.

This thinking was accompanied by an oversimplifying, not devoid of prejudices, division of nations into two groups: a) “historical nations,” actively participating in the historical process, which are simultaneously “revolutionary nations,” and b) “non-historical nations” whose national aspirations are reactionary and their stance counter-revolutionary.⁸⁴ The first group included, above all, the English and the French, along with the Germans, Irish, Poles, and Hungarians; the second group included all the Slavs (with the exception of the Poles), Romanians, and the Transylvanian Saxons.⁸⁵ Engels says, “We have shown how such little nations, which for centuries have been taken in tow by history against their will, must necessarily be counter-revolutionary.”⁸⁶ He predicted that:

The general war which will then break out will smash this Slav Sonderbund and wipe out all these petty hidebound nations, down to their very names. The next world war will result in the disappearance from the face of the earth not only of reactionary classes and dynasties but also of entire reactionary peoples. And that, too, is a step forward.⁸⁷

The creators of Marxism officially took up a different stance toward Poland and they expressed it in many articles and public appearances. There are many reasons for this. First, the Poles had their own, nationally conscious “historical stratum” (the nobility) and a long living tradition of governing their nation, thus they belonged to the group of “historical nations.” Second, they were a numerous nation, therefore the process of centralization could be accomplished within their national territory through the polonization of “non-historical nations.” This was in accordance with, as Andrzej Walicki points out, the ideal borrowed from the Jacobins by Marx and Engels of a centralized and linguistically homogeneous state.⁸⁸ In the future, it became the ideal of Vladimir Lenin, who incarnated it by striving to create a culturally uniform Soviet state. The third reason why the creators of Marxism supported the aspirations for independence of Poland was a result of its geopolitical location. Poland, divided up by three absolute monarchies that were the foundation of the Holy Alliance, was a natural ally in the battle for the victory of the European revolution.

With time the stance of Marx and Engels toward the Polish question stiffened, because of their national bias. In their private correspondence, they formulated

84 Ibid., 152–166.

85 Friedrich Engels, “The Magyar Struggle,” in Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Collected Works*, v. 8 (New York: International Publishers, 1977), 232–233.

86 Friedrich Engels, “Democratic Pan-Slavism,” in Ibid., 366.

87 Friedrich Engels, “The Magyar Struggle,” Ibid., 238.

88 Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap...*, op. cit., 156.

assessments that demonstrated their dismissive attitudes toward Poles. Engels wrote in a letter to Marx: “The Poles’ sole contribution to history has been to indulge in foolish pranks at once valiant and provocative. Nor can a single moment be cited when Poland, even if only by comparison with Russia, has successfully represented progress or done anything of historical significance.”⁸⁹

Contemptuously and stereotypical, despite public declarations of support, they talked about the Irish as being “wild, head-strong, fanatical, light-hearted, corrupted, cheerful, sensuous, excitable, resilient, potato-eating children of nature.”⁹⁰ Similar opinions and estimations, based upon national resentments, can be found all over the works of Marx and Engels. This permits one to speculate that they were under the influence of German nationalism with its idea of a civilizational *Drang nach Osten*,⁹¹ or even modern anti-Semitism if we recall the early work of Marx on the Jewish question.⁹² It is therefore paradoxical that the fathers of historical economic determinism showed themselves dependent upon thinking in bourgeois categories of national generalizations that were based upon unchanging national characteristics and not upon class divisions.⁹³

Communism was the goal for Marx. On the other hand, nationalism could only be a means leading to it. In contrast with Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, an orthodox Marxist, decidedly rejected any compromises when it came to the national questions, even when they were motivated by tactical circumstances. She proclaimed that “the heart of the matter was a revision of the obsolete views of Marx on the Polish question.”⁹⁴ As one of the founders, and the chief ideologue, of the Social Democratic Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) she devoted much space in her writings to national themes, which led her to adopt an unambiguously negative stance toward the issue of Poland regaining its independence, which affected both the party and a whole generation of Polish communists. SDKPiL and Luxemburg shaped their views, which, in opposition to the Polish Socialist Party, saw the battle for communism not the resurrection of the Polish state as their main goal.

89 Engels and Marx, *Collected Works*, v. 38 (New York: International Publishers, 1982), 362.

90 William Connor, *The National Question...*, op. cit., 13–15.

91 Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap...*, op. cit., 15.

92 See: Julia Brun-Zejmis, “National Self-Denial and Marxist Ideology: The Origin of the Communist Movement in Poland and the Jewish Question: 1918–1923,” *Nationalities Papers* 22(1): 32–33.

93 *Ibid.*, 32.

94 Rosa Luxemburg, “Przedmowa do książki „Kwestia polska a ruch socjalistyczny”” in: *Wybór pism*, v. 1 (Warszawa 1959, s. 380.

The stance of Rosa Luxemburg toward the national question ought to be considered in the context of her views on capitalism and the prospects for revolution in Poland. She argued that rebuilding a Polish state independent from Russia was not possible because the Russian market became inseparable from the development of Polish capitalism:

Any analysis of objective social developments in Poland requires the conclusion that a campaign for the restoration of Poland this juncture is a petit bourgeois utopian fantasy, and, as such, is capable only of interfering with the class struggle of the proletariat and diverting it from its path. For this reason, the Polish Social Democracy today rejects the nationalist standpoint out of consideration for the interests of the Polish Socialist movement, and in so doing adopts an attitude diametrically opposed to that formerly held by Western democrats.⁹⁵

Social Democracy's taking up of the national question meant that it lost its class character and found itself in the camp of "reactionary bourgeoisie," thereby becoming a tool of nationalism. As Andrzej Walicki writes, "It is fair to say that Luxemburg's intransigence on the national question stemmed from her desperate struggle for the souls of the Polish workers. She was proud of them, she could not believe that nationalism might be endemic to them, so she fought like a lioness to defend the purity of their class consciousness against the external influence of nationalist intellectuals."⁹⁶

Luxemburg expressed her uncompromising stance on the Polish question by opposing the resolution of the London Congress of the Second International that proclaimed the need for Poland to regain its independence. Many more similar anti-separatist gestures came from her side.

Rosa Luxemburg's hostility toward the idea of Polish ideals of independence did not signal a hostility or aversion to Poles or Poland. She was capable of writing with great ardor about the works of Adam Mickiewicz or pour out page after page about the beauty of Polish landscapes and the Polish speech. In her articles, she opposed the politics of russification and germanization of the invaders. She felt these nationalist pressures as "a burning wound, as a disgrace."⁹⁷ Feliks Tych said of her:

She had an understanding of the national culture and believed that it ought to be cared for, but she did not have understanding for the nation. She believed in the view that there is a category more important than the independence of the nation. It was universal

95 Ibid., 394–395.

96 Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap...*, op. cit., 267.

97 Luxemburg, "Przedmowa do książki...", op. cit., 406.

freedom, freedom from pressure on national, political, social, cultural, and religious pressure. She saw the possibility of realizing this freedom in a socialist utopia. The road to it did not lead through creating new nation-states, but rather through abolishing national barriers and nations themselves.⁹⁸

The Polish Socialist Party was the party that Rosa Luxemburg accused of being reactionary throughout nearly the whole period of her political activity. As a consequence, in socialist circles of Eastern Europe “Luxemburgism” became synonymous, as Richard Pipes notes, with “uncompromising hostility toward all national movements in general.”⁹⁹

Despite the sharp criticism, among others, of Lenin himself and despite the rejection of “Luxemburgism” as a false stance, it maintained a puzzling liveliness, substantially influencing the face of the Polish communist movement ideas. This influence was not overcome by the work of another Polish Marxist-theoretician close to the PPS, Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz, according to whom, “the awakening and strengthening of national consciousness is the result of humanist and democratic efforts of the 19th century with the result being an inevitable cultural access to the masses.”¹⁰⁰ The same Kelles-Krauz rejected the previous dogma about the historically transitional character of the national phenomenon. He treated the processes of nation-creation and the resulting strivings to establish nation-states as a historical necessity, a law of history.¹⁰¹ Kelles-Krauz, unlike his Marxist theorist contemporaries, put emphasis upon the psychological side of the national phenomenon by defining the nation as an ideological-volitional community that realizes itself most fully through its own state. The rebuilding of an independent Polish state was the leading idea of his political work. It was to come to fruition through an uprising directed against tsarist Russia, preceded by the outbreak of a socialist revolution in the west. This uprising was supposed to be headed by the workers under the banner of fighting for a Poland that is independent and socialist. In other words, it was a conception of the Polish road to socialism. However, it did not gain any extended support from Polish communists of the first half of the

98 Jan Lipski and Feliks Tych, „Nierozważna i romantyczna,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 16–17, 1999.

99 Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917–1923* (Boston: Harvard, 1980), 23.

100 Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz, “Krytyka zasady narodowości,” *Naród i historia. Wybór pism*, ed. Stanisław Ciesielski (Warsaw: PIW, 1989) 304.

101 See: Marian Bębenek, *Teoria narodu i kwestia narodowa u Kazimierza Kelles-Krauz na tle refleksji marksistowskiej 1948–1905* (Krakow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1987), 23–31.

20th century even though Rosa Luxemburg's stance encountered criticism from other Marxist theorists, for example, Karl Kautsky.

Kautsky not only questioned Luxemburg's thesis that Polish striving for independence contradicted economic trends, but also, in his most important work devoted to the national question, *Die moderne Nationalität*, he stressed that the nation is one of the most important factors for social development and that this is a cultural fact.¹⁰² Kautsky recognized language as the most vital element in the process of nation-formation, or more precisely the language community, which is the foundation of the nation-state. The state, in turn, especially in the parliamentary epoch, ought to be nationally uniform. Kautsky did not formulate predictions about the future of nations after the victorious revolution. He did anticipate, like all Marxists, that national conflicts would cease to exist.

Kautsky's concepts, much like the works of Austrian Marxists, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, considerably exceeded the boundaries traced by Marx and Engels when it came to the national question. For the Austrian Marxists, who had direct contact with national problems, the solutions to national questions in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy constituted, in essence, the most important object of their deliberations. In the book *Staat und Nation* Renner defined the nation as a spiritual and cultural community, underscoring the meaning of national literature as an expression of the community.¹⁰³ He paid attention to the tendencies in contemporary capitalism, where the state plays an ever-increasing role in the economic life, while capital had lost (at that time in history!) its cosmopolitan character, taking on a national countenance. Being aware of the power behind efforts toward securing one's own nation-state, he nonetheless thought that, in the case of the nations of Austro-Hungary, because of lasting economic ties such a solution was not possible. As a substitute, he proposed granting these nations a maximal autonomy in the sphere of culture. Renner did not stray from the stance of the majority of Marxists when he described the nation-state as bourgeois and when he predicted the victory of internationalism within socialism, whose carrier would be the proletariat. Yet, he judged differently the future of nations that not only came into being before the nation-state but would exist after it. This does not mean that he designated to nations some privileged place among other human communities; from his point of view, they were one type among many. He foresaw that the future social order would not lean upon the community of states,

102 Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State 1917-1930* (Teaneck, NJ: Holmes and Meier, 1991), 13.

103 Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe...*, op. cit., 227.

but upon the community of nations coexisting with each other. In other words, the author of *Staat und Nation* was a proponent of solving national problems through the route of federations.

Otto Bauer's book *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* was published in 1907. In it, he developed Renner's ideas. According to Leszek Kolakowski, it "is the best treatise on nationality problems to be found in Marxist literature and one of the most significant products of Marxist theory in general."¹⁰⁴ The fundamental question that Bauer asked himself was: What is a nation? The answer became for him the starting point for further deliberations. His definition is: "a collectivity of human beings united by community of destiny in a community of character." The "community of destiny" designates a common history. In light of this definition the nation is therefore not a passing phenomenon, connected to a certain stage of economic development, a creation of capitalism, but is rather the product of growth over many centuries. Thereby Bauer stood against the view that nations will disappear along with the collapse of capitalism. On the contrary, Bauer thought that every national culture is an independent value and that the goal of socialism is not only making this culture accessible to all strata of society which it has not sunk into, but also strengthening and creatively developing it. He wrote, "Socialism makes the nation autonomous so that its fate is determined by its own will, and this means that in a socialist society, nations will be increasingly differentiated, their qualities more sharply defined, and their characters more distinct from one another."¹⁰⁵

He simultaneously agreed that conflicts between nations are a reflection of class conflicts and that national oppression is a function of social oppression. He saw the solution in socialism which, according to him, will destroy the source of these conflicts. The internationalism of the workers does not contradict their patriotic stance because both of these stances belong to different orders: class and nation. Since socialism will lead to giving each person the task over that which capitalism has taken from them, namely their fatherland, then social-democracy should already consider the national question in its programs (this did not at all mean that it should put forward nationalist slogans!). Much like Renner, Bauer was aware of the power of the independence-aspirations of nations inhabiting the terrains of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and saw their fulfillment through giving these nations the highest possible autonomy. Whereas, the full realization of the "national principle" would come only in socialism.

104 Kolakowski, *Main Currents...*, op. cit., 561.

105 Cited in: *Ibid.*, 586.

In his articles devoted to the national question in Russia Lenin disagreed with the theoretical conceptions of Renner and Bauer developed from their observations of the national situation in Austria-Hungary. His stance on national issues admittedly evolved over time, however, it is possible to extract a constant core in his views. Above all, he believed the national question should be subordinated to the necessities of class struggle. At the same time, he opposed the Austrian Marxist theorists' overvaluing the significance of the nation; he also thought that such an overrating was inconsistent with historical materialism. He decidedly sided with what he called the "historical-economical" conceptions of Kautsky, opposing them to the idealistic and psychological theory of Bauer about whom he wrote, "Bauer's basic mistake is refined nationalism, a nationalism which is clean, without exploitation and without fighting."¹⁰⁶ About proposals to resolve national problems by way of cultural-national autonomy Lenin spoke out unambiguously:

The main and fundamental flaw in this program is that it aims at introducing the most refined, most absolute and most extreme nationalism... Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the "most just", "purest", most refined and civilized brand. In place of all forms of nationalism, Marxism advances internationalism.¹⁰⁷

The unconditional responsibility of the Marxist is fighting against all forms of exploitation, including national pressures. However, this cannot lead, in Lenin's opinion, to supporting the development of national culture: "Combat all national oppression? Yes, of course! Fight for any kind of national development, for 'national culture' in general?—Of course not."¹⁰⁸ Consequently, all patriotic feelings out to be foreign to the proletariat, which is only interested in the fate of their country insofar as, "that they affect its class struggle, and not in virtue of some bourgeois 'patriotism,' quite indecent on the lips of a Social-Democrat."¹⁰⁹ Coming forward in the name of national culture can lead to the demoralization of the worker's milieu and clouds over the class struggle, which is the main goal. This makes it a betrayal of socialism.

The critical response to the proposals of the Austrian Marxists did not in the least mean Lenin agreed with the stance of Rosa Luxemburg, who, *nota bene*,

106 See: V.I. Lenin, "Theses for a Lecture on the National Question," *Collected Works* 41 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 313–323.

107 V.I. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," *Collected Works*, v. 20 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 34.

108 *Ibid.*, 35.

109 V.I. Lenin, "Bellicose Militarism and the Anti-Militarist Tactics of Social-Democracy," in *Collected Works*, v. 15 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 195.

described the words on the right of nations to self-determination in the 1903 program of the Leninist Russian Social Democratic Labor Party as a metaphysical phrase, reminiscent of the slogans of bourgeois nationalism.¹¹⁰ The differences between Lenin and Luxemburg in the treatment of national problems grew out of the clash between the approaches of a pragmatic revolutionary with the mentality of a doctrinaire. Lenin was primarily a tactician, not a theorist.¹¹¹ Unlike Luxemburg, he was deeply convinced that the powers of nationalism are far from being exhausted, especially where capitalism is still in its infancy. He thought that it makes sense to take advantage of the nationalisms of the nations residing in different geographical parts of the Russian empire in order to abolish nationalism.¹¹² Among other things, this is an explanation for the inclusion in the program of the SDPRR of the infamous 9th article proclaiming the right of all nations to self-determination. Lenin was pressured by non-Russian socialists, above all the BUND, for the party to undertake the national question. Lenin stood before an alternative: either a centralized party or its collapse into national factions. He chose the party. Without a centralized and hierarchical organization, he saw no possibility of the victory of the proletarian revolution. Self-determination in Lenin's understanding did not mean an embezzlement of the interests of the proletariat, but it was rather merely a function of these interests and it was unconditionally subjected to them. In the article "The National Question in Our Programme" Lenin explained:

However, our unreserved recognition of the struggle for freedom of self-determination does not in any way commit us to supporting every demand for national self-determination. As the party of the proletariat, the Social-Democratic Party considers it to be its positive and principal task to further the self-determination of the proletariat in each nationality rather than that of peoples or nations. We must always and unreservedly work for the very closest unity of the proletariat of all nationalities, and it is only in isolated and exceptional cases that we can advance and actively support demands con-

110 Rosa Luxemburg, "Kwestia narodowościowa i autonomia," in: *Wybór pism*, v. 2, (Warsaw: KiW 1959), 117.

111 Lenin's Marxism is frequently questioned for being shallow, especially on the points of dialectical and historical materialism. Leszek Kolakowski noted: "Lenin's work does not answer these [philosophical] problems or deal with them consistently, and there is no point in trying to probe more closely: the obscurities of his text are not due so much to inherent philosophical difficulties as to Lenin's indolent and superficial approach and his contempt for all problems that could not be put to direct use in the struggle for power." *Main Currents...*, op. cit., 729.

112 Pipes, *The Formation...*, op. cit., 41.

ducive to the establishment of a new class state or to the substitution of a looser federal unity, etc., for the complete political unity of a state.¹¹³

From this it is clear, and later events only confirmed it, that Rosa Luxemburg was not far off the mark when she described the slogan about self-determination as an empty phrase. Lenin himself admitted he prefers large countries. He did not specify in great detail how the national question should be resolved; he was more interested in the possibilities of taking advantage of it. He only foresaw that in socialism, nations that previously chose independent national existence after a certain time, directed by economic interest and internationalist instincts would unite into one socialist society.

Lenin left the wider adoption of national issues to Joseph Stalin. His work from 1913 entitled *Marxism and the National Question*, even though it is mediocre by all standards, played a historical role by becoming a canonical work not only in the Soviet Union, and not only until the time of its author's death.¹¹⁴ Things came to be this way for several reasons. First, Lenin, conscious of the growing power of nationalist movements was aware that previous programmatic solutions did not explain clearly enough the stance of social-democracy in relation to national issues. Thus, social-democracy had a mission, in Stalin's words, it was supposed "to resist nationalism and to protect the masses from the general 'epidemic.'"¹¹⁵ Second, the heart of the matter lay in curtailing the rising popularity of the Austro-Marxist conceptions. Polemics against these conceptions take up most of Stalin's writing on the topic.

The first part of the pamphlet authored by him is devoted to the definition of the nation. For Stalin, the nation is, "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."¹¹⁶ According to him, the listed criteria of the nation are indivisible. If only one of them is missing, then there is no nation. Because of this one cannot speak of a nation of the Swiss or the Jews. This view was in accordance with Lenin's stance for whom "Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie, the slogan of our enemies."¹¹⁷ Stalin, like Lenin, saw the solution to the Jewish question in the speeding up of assimilation. He further argued in his polemic against the Austro-Marxists that

113 V.I. Lenin, "The National Question in Our Programme," *Collected Works*, v. 6 (Moscow: Progress Press, 1964) 454.

114 Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (New York: Prism Key Press, 2013).

115 *Ibid.*, 6.

116 *Ibid.*, 11.

117 Lenin, "Critical Remarks..." *op. cit.*, 26.

the nation is not a phenomenon that appears in all historical periods, instead, it is tied up with one, the epoch of capitalism, therefore it is not necessary. The class that initiated the birth of the national movement and continues to lead the struggle is the bourgeoisie. The proletariat should not be bothered participating in this struggle because it turns its attention away from the real causes of social conflicts and makes the common action in solidarity of the workers of various countries more difficult. Yet, his interest does lie in fighting against the politics of the oppression of nations, because they can, “only serve to retard the free development of the intellectual forces of the proletariat of subject nations.”¹¹⁸

While critiquing the concept of cultural autonomy Stalin thought that in the first stages of capitalism nations unite themselves, but already when the class struggle starts to sharpen a bit the national community starts to fall apart. The workers and the employers of the same nation stop understanding each other. One cannot then, according to Stalin, speak of the unification of all the members of a nation into a national-cultural community. Marek Waldenberg notes that it is greatly revealing that the phrase “national feeling,” much like the word “fatherland,” is always used by Stalin in scare quotes.¹¹⁹

By rejecting the solution of the national question by critiquing the path of national cultural autonomy the author of the work *Marxism and the National Question* proposed in exchange territorial autonomy, but only in the case of “such crystallized units as Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, etc.” National autonomy was not useful to society of Stalin’s time, but “it will be still more unsuitable in the future, socialist society,”¹²⁰ because the general trend throughout the world is not the strengthening of national divisions, but their falling apart. In truth, Stalin did admit that there might come a situation in which some nation will strive, in accordance with the law, toward self-determination, toward state independence, but he considered such a situation very unlikely.

Nationalism Appreciated

During the First World War, also during the first years after the Leninist party takeover, the right to self-determination was a standard slogan of the Bolshevik revolution. The promise of independence for non-Russian nations of the old Empire turned out to be a propaganda bulls-eye that, to a great degree, made it easier for the Bolsheviks to maintain power. Their position on the national question

118 Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National...*, op. cit., 22.

119 Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe...*, op. cit., 120.

120 Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National...*, op. cit., 69.

had an advantage in allowing the new government to concentrate upon matters much more important for its survival: fighting against the Whites. The Bolshevik leaders, thanks to identifying with national aspirations of minorities, could expect support, and maybe even sympathy, from non-Russian minorities.¹²¹ After the victorious end to the civil war for the Bolsheviks the right to self-determination of nations, even though it was never abandoned, became limited in practice, ultimately becoming a mere propaganda slogan. As late as 1916 Lenin, in one of many articles devoted to problems of nationality explained that, actually, the right to self-determination of nations means the right to freely politically break away from oppressive nations, “This demand, therefore, is not the equivalent of a demand for separation, fragmentation and the formation of small states... The aim of socialism is not only to end the division of mankind into tiny states and the isolation of nations in any form, it is not only to bring the nations closer together but to integrate them.”¹²² The ideal for resolving the national question under the conditions of socialism is for Lenin, therefore, an immense and centralized country. This ideal was laboriously, but indeed with revolutionary consequence, incarnated into life first in Soviet Russia, then in the Soviet Union.

Many nations received territorial autonomy, which, especially in the early period of the Soviet Union’s existence, could have contributed to the rise in national consciousness (Byelorussians and Ukrainians).¹²³ Another consequence might have been the partial, at least, legitimization of the political system, especially by ethnic populations that were not numerous and which in the past were left without any institutionalized forms of national existence. The unifying pressure of Soviet culture achieved a frankly curious degree of centralization of power along with a concomitant dose of Russifying politics—all these factors meant that the autonomy of these nations, with the passing of years, increasingly began to correspond with the Stalinist formula: “national in form, socialist in content.”¹²⁴

121 See: Walker Connor, *The National Question...*, op. cit., 46–47.

122 Lenin, “The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Theses),” *Collected Works*, v. 22 (Moscow: Progressive Press, 1974), 146.

123 The issue of the politics of the Soviet state toward national minorities goes beyond the thematic frames of this study. It was thoroughly analyzed by Helene Carrere D’Encausse, *The Great Challenge...*, op. cit. and Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the...*, op. cit.

124 “Proletarian in content, national in form—such is the universal culture towards which socialism is proceeding” (Joseph Stalin, “The Political Task of the University of the Peoples of the East” in: *Collected Works*, v. 7 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 140; During the join plenum of the Central Committee

The retreat from previously announced slogans, as was the case with the right to self-determination, is nothing strange. It is usually the case, not only in the case of the Bolsheviks, that the ideology of an opposition group changes when the same group gains power.¹²⁵ There are plenty examples of practical verification of earlier ideological presuppositions on Soviet soil one could cite (i.e. the NEP period, resignation from abolishing money, liquidating the state, army). The result of the clash between an ideological vision with a resistant reality was the shaping of a social-political system, which Richard Lowenthal describes as “politically forced development.”¹²⁶ It was the birth of a system, despite earlier declarations of Lenin that Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, in which there was a gradual acceptance of relations to nationalism as one source of legitimation. Its genesis should be sought in the deep deficit of legitimacy of the early Soviet authorities.

The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks as a result of the October coup was surprisingly easy. It was much more difficult to maintain it. The communists justified their right to rule to the “historical necessity” of replacing capitalism with socialism. This was supposed to result in a “jump into the kingdom of freedom,” a liberation of the “working masses” by the new form of state and economy. Their pretensions to ruling over Russia and the whole world were not derived from support voiced by a majority in elections, nor from respecting constitutional norms, nor from maintaining the procedures of formal democracy.¹²⁷ On the contrary, the Constitutional Assembly was disbanded without hesitation; the social-democrats,

and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (29 June – 9 August 1927) Stalin repeated this thought: “. . . in its content the culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. which the Soviet Government is developing must be a culture common to all the working people, a socialist culture; in its form, however, it is and will be different for all the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; it is and will be a national culture, different for the various peoples of the U.S.S.R. in conformity with the differences in language and specific national features.” (Joseph Stalin, *Works*, v. 10 [Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954], 72–73).

125 Aleksander Hertz noted this when he wrote: “The crisis of an ideology begins with the moment when the movement serving it achieves power, which makes it possible to implement in life the commandments of its confession of faith. This leads to a practical verification of an ideology. The verification consists of the confrontation between the ideology, and the entire philosophy it rests upon, with the facts of concrete reality.” *Szkice o Ideologiiach* (Krakow: Krakowskie Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1985), 63.

126 Richard Lowenthal, “Development vs. Utopia in Communist Policy,” *Change in Communist Systems*, ed. Charles Johnson (Palo Alto: Stanford 1970), 34.

127 Wojciech Lamentowicz, “Legitimation,” *Pipers Wörterbuch zur Politik* 4 (1986): 244.

who spoke in favor of resolving social questions through parliamentary procedures, were considered the greatest enemies. The slogan “All the power in the hands of the councils,” used in the fight against the Provisional Government was thrown to the wayside for being anachronistic in favor of centralizing power not long after it was overthrown. The millenarian vision of collective immanent salvation in a communist society of the future might have been attractive—and Lenin was aware of it—only for a handful of the already converted professional revolutionaries, mostly intellectuals.¹²⁸ Attempts to unify the working masses, therefore, concentrated upon less sublimated methods: populist slogans, distributing of administrative and economic positions, giving officer ranks to workers and infantrymen. What seemed to be easiest quickly brought lamentable results. In the second half of 1918 came the full disintegration of the industrial sector.¹²⁹ The reconstruction of state power and the economy required a search for professionals that the Bolsheviks did not have. Terror, the constitutive tool of forcing compliance for the Soviet system, was not always effective in mobilizing society to fight against the White Army and foreign intervention.

Halfway through 1918, the military actions of the Czechoslovak Legion led the Bolsheviks to the brink of losing power. In such a situation they needed, even if they reluctantly admitted it, political allies. Lenin claimed that during the war one cannot ignore any help, even indirect. During this stage of the revolution he depended upon the support of such leftist groups as the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionary Party, the petty bourgeoisie, in other words, the middle class in our parlance, but especially the specialists in economics, administration, and the armed forces who came from it. Alain Besançon explains the turn to greater-Russian nationalism as a response to staff shortages. In order to take advantage of, as Lenin called it, the hesitant class, he had to take into consideration the following:

- 1) The desire for a return to order and making life bearable by putting a stop to the anarchy and reinstating a modicum of legality,
- 2) Patriotism and worries about losing much territory to foreign interventions,
- 3) Nationalism and the concomitant hopes for maintaining a unified Russia, a Russian Empire.¹³⁰

128 Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap*, op. cit.

129 Michał Heller and Aleksander Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy: Historia Związku Sowieckiego od roku 1917 do naszych czasów*, vol. I (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo CDN, 1986), 44.

130 Alain Besançon, “Nationalism and Bolshevism in the USSR,” *The Last Empire. Nationality and Soviet Future*, ed. Robert Conquest (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 3.

The last motivation was as especially dear to the leaders of the revolution whose ideal, we should remember, was a large and centralized country. The breaking apart of Russian domination, which could come after the creation of many small nation-states likewise did not suit Lenin also, notes Richard Pipes, because it undermined the economic foundations of the state that the Bolsheviks were trying to establish.¹³¹ The loss of the Ukraine was especially painful. The loss of Soviet-Russia's borderlands meant it did not have enough food, fuel, and other raw materials needed to conduct a war. Under such circumstances, on 21 November 1918, there appeared in *Pravda* an article in which Lenin gave first signs of reaching for nationalist legitimating rhetoric.¹³² This communication was a total *novum*. Never before had the Bolsheviks attempted to legitimize their pretensions to ruling through a desire to maintain the independence and integrity of Russia. On the contrary, they accepted anarchy and the destruction of the nation-state in accordance with the slogan: the worse, the better for the cause. Lenin repeated this new stance in the article, "Report On the Attitude Of The Proletariat To Petty-Bourgeois Democrats," given at a meeting of the Moscow Party Workers on 27 November 1918: "But history has veered round to bring patriotism back towards us now. It is evident that the Bolsheviks cannot be overthrown except by foreign bayonets."¹³³

There were no doctrinal truths for the leader of the revolution. He was consumed by one idea, the idea of power.¹³⁴ In order to rule he agreed to temporary compromises; he agreed to give the class revolution a national stigma. While talking to party activists he chose as the object of nationalist legitimation, not the abstract revolution, but concrete power, the power of the Bolsheviks, "Russia cannot and will not be independent unless Soviet power is consolidated."¹³⁵

Simultaneously Lenin justified the existing system of power as being final and without alternatives because it allegedly alone guaranteed the maintenance of Russia's independence. Lenin promised something more: the rebuilding of imperial Russia. He suggested this when he spoke about the disgraces connected with the peace treaty concluded with Germany (March 1918) in Brest, which made Russia lose the Baltic nations, parts of Byelorussia, the whole of the Ukraine. Even before its signing, as the commission that sat down to the negotiating table, there

131 Richard Pipes, *The Formation...*, op. cit., 108.

132 V.I. Lenin, "Valuable Admission of Pitrim Sorokin," *Collected Works*, v. 28 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 185–186.

133 Ibid., "Moscow Party Workers' Meeting, 201–224.

134 Heller and Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy...*, op. cit., 22.

135 Lenin, "Moscow Party Worker's Meeting," op. cit., 209.

were “ridiculous” fluctuations from the side of the Bolsheviks because of their class worldviews:

Above all, there was talk that a malignant prank had been played by pseudo-patriotic and nationalist prejudices—none of the members of the Commission, among them Leo Trotsky, wanted to take responsibility for putting their imprint on making the demeaning peace, upon whom the chattering idiots could comment as a “betrayal of the fatherland,” the causing of an obvious and direct harm to Russia as a state.¹³⁶

The voices of opposition were broken up by Lenin, but he certainly remembered them and it is not ruled out that the fragments we have quoted from his speech were also directed at his closest associates.

When discussing the context of the Leninist turn toward nationalist legitimization one should remember the matter of the rumor (here it does not matter whether it was true, but whether it was effective) that the Bolshevik government was financially aided by the German government. In July of 1917, the Temporary Government dragged out the matter of the “German money” in order to discredit the communists as spies. We do not know the response of Russian society to this news. The course of events might have erased the memory of it. Perhaps the opposite was the case, especially after the treatise in Brest, which “called forth an understandable indignation.” Without a doubt, the label of “German spy” did not make it easier for Lenin to gain backing among the mass of Russian society inclined nationalistically. An analogy with an incident during WWII comes to mind here. There was a propaganda slogan aimed against Polish communists who were called “paid lackeys of Moscow.” Nothing de-legitimizes pretensions to power more than accusations of treason. Lenin, and later Władysław Gomułka, were well-aware of this matter.

Joseph Stalin, nominated by Lenin as the people’s commissar for nationalities, speaking in May 1918 at the Conference on the Convening of a Constituent Congress of Soviets of the Tatar-Bashkir Soviet Republic, voiced his opposition to the national nihilism “of some of our comrades” by saying,

nationalism is the last position from which the bourgeoisie must be driven in order to vanquish it completely. But nationalism cannot be smashed by disregarding the national question, ignoring and denying its existence, as some of our comrades do. Far from it! National nihilism only injures the cause of socialism, because it plays into the hands of the bourgeois nationalists. In order to smash nationalism, it is necessary first of all to tackle and solve the national question.¹³⁷

136 Heller and Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy*, op. cit., 40.

137 Joseph Stalin, *Works*, v. 4 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 93–94.

The appearance of the people's commissar for nationalities was in accordance with the idea of the right of nations to self-determination. At that point in time, it could not have been otherwise because the Bolsheviks were concerned with gaining the support of non-Russian national and ethnic groups that inhabited the former empire. The words of Lenin about the national character of Bolshevik authority were repeated by Stalin only in December 1919 when the Red Army already had established advantage on all fronts. On the pages of *Pravda*, he wrote,

in this respect the Soviet Government is the only popular and only national government, in the best sense of the words, because it brings with it not only the emancipation of the working people from capitalism but also the emancipation of the whole of Russia from the yoke of world imperialism, the conversion of Russia from a colony into an independent and free country.¹³⁸

A similar tone was used by several other Bolshevik leaders, among them, Grigory Zinoviev and Mikhail Kalinin. The former said, “[Now that Russia has become the mother of] workers and peasants we have the right to speak of the motherland. However, who now crucifies and trades the motherland? Who sells it to Englishmen, Frenchmen, Japanese, Turks, Chinese and any other buyer?”¹³⁹

Even Leon Trotsky was an advocate—the use what according to Mikhail Agursky was the Bolshevik variation on nationalist phraseology—of “red patriotism.” He gives examples of several speeches of the man second in line after Lenin as the leader of the revolution and undermines the later Stalinist stereotype of Trotsky as a cosmopolitan who underestimated national values.¹⁴⁰ Trotsky's merit lay in convincing some of the tsarist officers that by serving in the Red Army they were also fighting under the national banner. This was without a doubt *not* the most important argument of the leading Jacobin of the Russian revolution who gained attention and obedience by, above all, violence and unparalleled terror.¹⁴¹

138 Ibid., 296–297.

139 Mikhail Agursky, *The Third Rome: National Bolshevism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 205.

140 Ibid., 209–219.

141 Dimitri Volkogonov in [*Trotsky: Eternal Revolutionary* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 124] also cites an interesting example of a Trotsky-version intentional-rationalizing legitimization formula: “We shall build a unified fraternal state on the land which nature has given us. We shall plough that land and work it on a collective basis, we shall turn it into a flowering garden, where our children will live, and our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as if they were in paradise. People used to believe in the legends about paradise; they were dreams of people in ignorance and misfortune, they were the longings of oppressed people for a better life. People wanted to live more justly,

The nationalist legitimization arguments can be found not only in articles or speeches of Bolshevik leaders but also in the mass-produced propaganda. For example, in March 1919 at Odessa, the Bolsheviks distributed a pamphlet that was supposed to mobilize the residents of the city to resist the French intervention forces. “Aren’t you ashamed of supporting the French?” the pamphlet asked the Russians. A further question was even more characteristic: “Have you forgotten about 1812?”¹⁴²

The intensified use of this type of legitimization occurred during the period of war with Poland in 1920. The propaganda chiefly gave the conflict a class character, however, its background was not infrequently painted with national colors. In effect, there came to be a mixture of national and revolutionary threads—the national ones were supposed to legitimize the revolution. The war with the “Polish lords” was officially legitimized by the mission to destroy the dam blocking the outpouring of the Bolshevik Revolution onto Western Europe. Yet, such a mission could only be attractive for the few. Karl Radek, one of the leaders of the revolution, stated in an article in *Pravda* that:

While all our civil wars in the past three years... were also national [Russian] masses think that the Polish war is national first and foremost. In fact... our Civil War was above all national... Didn’t our Civil War... also have a character of national struggle against foreign invasion? All the capitalist press... realized that our Civil War is at the same time a war for independence.¹⁴³

The propaganda machine struggled to gain support for itself through these moods—through creating an unambiguously negative picture of the Polish state, Poles, and their national symbols through basing its materials upon Russian-held stereotypes and national resentments. On one of their posters, with a text from Mayakovsky, the following was tacked on: “They didn’t beat down the Pole, so he rose from the dead.” On another there was a caricature of the Polish national anthem, “Poland apparently has not yet perished, / Even though their lords are limping.” As Aleksandra Leinwald writes in the work from which I have taken those examples, “They also enthusiastically ironized on the theme of the Polish crest. The white eagle, it seems, especially aroused the aversion of the Bolsheviks.”¹⁴⁴

more purely, and people said there must be such a paradise even in the next life, in an unknown and secret place. But we say that we, the toiling people, will build paradise here in this world, for everyone, for our children and grandchildren forever.”

142 Agursky, *The Third Rome...*, op. cit., 217.

143 Ibid., 218.

144 Aleksandra Leinwald, *Sztuka w służbie utopii. O funkcjach politycznych i propagandowych sztuk plastycznych w Rosji Radzieckiej lat 1917–1922* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 1998), 151, 152.

The nationalist legitimization of the revolution, the revolutionary authorities or the goals instituted by them, were a second-order legitimating formula in the process of legitimizing the new order. The decided majority of the Bolshevik party members, still part of a cadre at that point, could not, and had no intention, of giving up on Marxism as their official legitimization, their signpost on the road to a world revolution. They used nationalism in exclusively instrumental goals, depending on the circumstances and the audience they were addressing. At this time Lenin, whenever he praised the patriotic stance, opposed defending the motherland:

If a German under Wilhelm or a Frenchman under Clemenceau says: "It is my right and duty as a socialist to defend my country if it is invaded by an enemy," he argues not like a socialist, not like an internationalist, not like a revolutionary proletarian, but like a petty-bourgeois nationalist. Because this argument ignores the revolutionary class struggle of the workers against capital, it ignores the appraisal of the war as a whole from the point of view of the world bourgeoisie and the world proletariat, that is, it ignores internationalism, and all that remains is miserable and narrow-minded nationalism.¹⁴⁵

Lenin directed these words to the international movement of workers. To his own, he said the opposite because these were the needs of revolutionary power. Thus, nationalistic legitimization played the role of a prosthesis needed by the rulers only in a critical situation, when they had to mobilize Russian society to defend the *status quo*. However, when the danger lessened the Bolsheviks rejected it not only for the reason of being faithful to their internationalist convictions but also for political reasons. They had to account for the moods of the nations that entered into the Soviet state. Too thunderous declarations in a Great-Russian nationalist tone could ignite ethnic conflicts. They threatened destabilization and the collapse of the system.

Yet, without a doubt, the period of the Bolshevik Revolution constitutes a turning point in the process of legitimizing the pretensions of the communists to ruling. They reached for nationalist legitimization for the first time. It would not be the last time, as things would turn out.

During 1920 in Charbin there appeared a collection of articles by Nikolay Vasilyevich Ustryalov entitled *The Struggle for Russia*.¹⁴⁶ The views expressed in the book can be treated as the quintessence of the ideology that came into

145 V.I. Lenin, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky," *Collected Works*, v. 28 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 285–286.

146 The condensation of the book here relies on Heller and Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy...*, v.1, op. cit, 118–122. See also: Jarosław Bratkiewicz, *Wielkoruski szowinizm*, op. cit., 41.

being among the old Russian intelligentsia already in 1918, which later came to be described as “smienoviechovstvo.” Its main thesis could be boiled down to the support for the Bolshevik Revolution because in its essence it had a national character and its intellectual roots emerged from Slavophilism. The other premise for embracing this thesis was, as claimed by the author, that the Bolsheviks did not turn out to be anarchists, as one might have suspected earlier, instead, they were statist, proponents, and builders of a strong state, capable of “rebuilding the great Russian superpower.” According to Ustryalov, the slogans about the self-determination of nations proclaimed by the Bolsheviks was nothing more than a demagogical phraseology, which hid the real intentions of rebuilding the Russian empire. This is much like the famous radish, which is red on the surface, but white inside. The ideology of “smienoviechovstvo” played into the cards of the ruling party. On the one hand, it helped to attract and infiltrate émigré circles, on the other, it legitimized the new rulers of Russia. Lenin the Marxist saw in it the dangers of bourgeois contamination of Marx and Engel’s doctrine. Lenin the pragmatist referred with approval to the founding of a “smienoviechovstvo” movement. During September 1922 *Pravda* published the results of a “sociological survey” conducted among intelligentsia who were trained in technology. To the question, “What is your attitude toward Soviet authorities?” more than half of the surveyed described themselves with the “smienoviechovstvo” label. As Michał Heller and Aleksander Niekricz write “smienoviechovstvo’ provided new legitimation to the Bolsheviks who had scooped up power by describing them as the authentic inheritors of Russian history.”¹⁴⁷

During the 1930’s, especially during the second half, nationalism stopped being a prosthesis, as it entered into the circulation of the Soviet system of legitimation. The first symptoms of this can be seen during the turn from 1927 to 1928 when food shortages began in the cities. At that time came the decision to carry out a compulsory confiscation of wheat with the immediate and full collectivization.¹⁴⁸ Propaganda kindled a wartime panic with totally fabricated threats coming from the side of England and France.¹⁴⁹

147 Heller and Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy*, v. 1, op. cit., 123.

148 Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia 1917–1991* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 150.

149 *Ibid*, 139–176; see also Robert Conquest, *Stalin* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Michał Urbański, 1996), 183–184.

As Francois Furet put it, “The most convincing part of their propaganda came from hostility to what resembled them.”¹⁵⁰ Maintaining an atmosphere of permanent endangerment by external enemies was one of the leading motives in the legitimation of the Soviet order. The imaginary danger of war or foreign infiltration aimed to maintain society in a state of continuous tension, force it to mobilize—it gave an additional legitimation to economic plans put forward by the party; it justified a system of shortages and errors in economic politics; it imposed the necessity of condensing numbers under one management; finally, indirectly, through completely baseless accusations of spying against foreign states it enabled the de-legitimation of actual or (more often) imaginary political opponents. It is characteristic that Stalinist propaganda did not accuse them of clandestine cooperation with imperialism—which, in accordance with the obligatory ideology in its decaying phase ought to be international—but with England, France, Japan, Germany, Poland. Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Tukhachevsky, that is, the “Trotsky-Bukharin Gang,” were accused, among other things, of: undermining the defenses of the country, planning the demise of the Red Army, striving toward the dismantling of the Soviet Union, giving the Japanese the Russian Maritime Province, giving Poland Soviet Byelorussia, and the Ukraine to the Germans.¹⁵¹ Endangerment from the side of “imperialism” belonged too much to the world of theater, was too abstract, to cause fear and anxiety. This purpose was much better served by an emotionally not indifferent “other” in national costume rather than a bland imperialist. Nationalism did not only serve to create a deprecating picture of the opponent, thereby invalidating their legitimacy; at the same time, it made possible a glorification, with the help of idealizing conceptions of authority and institutions of the system (party, NKVD, the prosecutor’s office, courts, and army) that identified and liquidated “foreign agents” thereby protecting national independence. Stalin used nationalism as an argument in justifying the physical elimination of eventual pretenders to Lenin’s chair. He probably was thinking of the accusations put forward by the Temporary Government against the Bolsheviks—that they were financed by the Germans. Abstracting from how things were in reality the essential difference was that in 1917, not a hair fell, while in the 1930’s the slogan of fighting the nation’s traitors became a substantial argument in legitimating the Great Terror.

150 Francois Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago, 199), 206.

151 *Historia Wszeczhwiqzkowej Komunistycznej Partii (bolszewików)*. *Krótki kurs* (Warsaw: KiW, 1949), 392.

This is when the Communists reached for the little exploited until that point nationalist narrative strategy of placing nationalist legitimating claims into crafted or simply invented, legends and tales of a mythical character. The object of these claims was the despotic power of Stalin. As Rafał Stobiecki writes, “Stalinism in historical research is an attempt to create an ideological vision of the past whose aim is the legitimation of the totalitarian system created by the party-state.”¹⁵² The past needed a ground-up revision in order to legitimize the present. The direction this reinterpretation should go was pointed out by the May 1934 resolution “On the Teaching of Historical Events in the Schools of the Soviet Union.” The ultimate interpretation of the manner of teaching history was given by a letter published in the Soviet press in 1936 by Joseph Stalin, Andrei Zhdanov, and Sergey Kirov. The task of history was showing Stalin’s reign not as simply a random historical occurrence, but as a logical consequence of mutually legitimating events that took place in the past, that is, as a “historical necessity.” A single historical interpretive scheme was imposed upon historians: that which aims to unify and build an immense state is just and progressive. This led to the rehabilitation of Alexander Nevsky, Ivan the Terrible, and Peter the Great. Stalin was recreated as their unambiguous inheritor. This was not solely used to legitimate his governing, but also his terrorist methods of ruling:

The Soviet history formulated by Stalin has taken on the shape of a monstrous hybrid—nationalism joined to Marxism. The history textbooks are permitted to have references on the introduction of Christianity to Russia, because it was “progress in comparison with pagan barbarity”; also permitted is the mentioning of the “progressive role of the monasteries in the first centuries after the baptism of Russia,” because they cultivated reading and writing and were “bases of colonization.” The building of a large country, expanding toward the sea, was also considered to be progressive. In connection with this, there was a proliferation of princes and tsars, that is, those who were a reflection of the progressive laws of history. There were also reactionary excesses of the people if they stood in the way of “progressive” deeds of a given prince or tsar. The people showed themselves to be “progressive,” when they supported the tsar. Besides this, they were “progressive” if they regularly supported the tsar and with him resisted the feudal reactionaries. The schema of orthodox Marxism concerned with class warfare was cunningly joined with the scheme of orthodox nationalism.¹⁵³

152 Rafał Stobiecki, *Historia pod nadzorem* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1993), 24.

153 Heller and Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy*, v. 1, op. cit., 243.

The partial rehabilitation of the Russian past was accompanied by an equally selective return to national symbolism.¹⁵⁴ In 1936 the Red Army reinstated the old officer ranks, epaulettes, braids, and orders. The constitution, changed in the same year, stated that “The defense of the Motherland is a holy obligation of every citizen of the Soviet Union.” That is not all: among other things, the guard units and the Cossack hundreds were reactivated. The schools returned to uniforms and discipline. There was a constant stress upon the role of patriotic upbringing. A tone of praise for the great Russian nation, the leading nation on the face of the earth, a nation of geniuses, predominated in the Soviet press whenever there were celebrations of national holidays.¹⁵⁵ There was an emphasis upon national pride and the self-sufficiency of Russia. The process of Ruthenizing (Russification) begins. Some nations, such as the Uzbeks, which previously used the Arab alphabet were forced to adopt the Cyrillic alphabet. Władysław Gomułka, who spent time in the Soviet Union during the 1930’s, wrote the following on the topic:

The old Great Russian chauvinism that reigned in the tsarist monarchy began to modernize, change colors, began to adopt ever more like a chameleon to the new Soviet reality shortly after Lenin’s death, until it incarnated itself in various forms into the general line of the Central Committee and came to lie at the foundations of the Soviet Union’s politics.¹⁵⁶

The motive behind such a wide-ranging turn toward the nationalist side was primarily the need for legitimating a centralized state and the absolute rule of Joseph Stalin. Although one cannot exclude the influence of external factors. Nationalism was an obligatory fashion in almost all of Europe of the time. Countries bordering with the Soviet Union on the west, after the example of Italy and Germany where there were upheavals in the name of slogans of national renewal. Poland was the exception, all the same, the governments of the Sanacja were taken to be fascist by Moscow. However, Stalin’s attention chiefly concentrated upon Adolf Hitler’s political successes, which, as we can suspect, impressed him at the time. Is it then the case that Stalin, by reaching for nationalism, patterned himself upon the leader of the Third Reich? The affirmative answer is tempting, but beyond the limitations imposed upon this study, there is a lack of sufficient proof for this thesis.

154 A. Powell, “The Nationalist Trend in Soviet Historiography,” *Soviet Studies* 2 (1951): 372–377.

155 Jerzy Drygalski and Jacek Kwaśniewski, *(Nie)realny socjalizm* (Warsaw: PWN, Warszawa 1992), 146–147.

156 Władysław Gomułka, *Pamiętniki*, v. 1 (Warsaw: BGW, 1994), 370.

Much more likely, but also not provable, is the hypothesis that the sources of Stalinist nationalism reside in the ideological consequence of building “socialism in one country.” Marx predicted the victory of socialism in developed capitalist Western countries, not in the “backwards” countries of the East. When the idea of a global revolution underwent a crisis and Russia became the only “bastion of world communism” two problems appeared in consequence: how to legitimate the leadership of Moscow toward an international worker’s movement to which the Germans until then had only aspired, and how to prove that the victory of the Russian revolution occurred in accordance with the logic of doctrine, not by accident. For the average “eater of bread,” this problem would not be worthy of consideration, but it was different for an orthodox follower of Marxism for whom Russia’s backwardness somewhat ruined the logic of history.¹⁵⁷ The solution depended upon recognizing that Russia was once backward but no longer is because it is dynamically developing and will shortly pass the capitalist West. The idea was admittedly not new, it was the brainchild of Lenin, but only the Stalinist Five Year Plans gave it propaganda impetus. The total innovation of Bolshevik thinking was the stress on the importance of developing in Russia the genius of the spirit sleeping in the Russian people and not capital nor capitalists, whom it factually truly lacked. The sole consequence of this thesis could only be the cult of the Russian nation and its outstanding representatives: composers, writers, scientists, military leaders. This was a heresy in relation to historical materialism, but, after all, this was not the first time (nor the last) when it became apparent that the truths of doctrine ought to be bent toward reality, at the very least to keep up appearances of congruity.

The Principled and Obedient KPP

The PPS-Lewica Komunistyczna Partia Robotnicza Polski (The Left Communist Workers Party of Poland), which later morphed into the Komunistyczna Partia Polski (Communist Party of Poland), KPP—came into being in 1918 as the result of SDKPiL and PPS uniting. It called for questioning social realities instead of bending them to the principles of doctrine. The realities were as follows: the great majority of Poles shared strong national feelings, saw the realization of their national aspiration in an independent state, which, despite all social and political conflicts, they were ready to defend. Polish communists did not understand the need for the realization of the nation’s freedom in its own state. They negated the

157 Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy...*, op. cit., 50.

reality of national sentiments, seeing in them a manifestation of false consciousness and a bourgeois nationalism. Faithful to the witness of Rosa Luxemburg, they did not tie the postulate of independence with the slogans of revolution. They also rejected as harmful the Leninist right of nations to self-determination, which the PPS supported. They did not agree to the using of nationalism in the political battle for the legitimization of their party or the goals whose realization they were fighting for. They considered interwar Poland as independent only for the bourgeoisie, but a burden for the workers. [73] They called it “White Poland,” a “bastion of the world counter-revolution,” “the independent colony of coalitional imperialism,” and the “strangler” of the German revolution. The Silesian uprisings, thanks to which Silesia returned to Poland, the communists described as a “tiny nationalist movement,” the plebiscite in Warmia and Mazury as an attempt to “barbarically loot” Germany, and the slogans of “independence” and “independent Poland” were usually put in parentheses by the authors of party proclamations and articles, so that they would not be accused of “bourgeois nationalism.”¹⁵⁸

As time passed the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) abandoned the critique of the right to self-determination, but this did not substantially influence a change of the party’s stance toward an independent Polish state. Its chief slogan was: “For a Polish Republic of Councils.” They called the 10th anniversary of Poland regaining its independence a “fascist national holiday.”¹⁵⁹

We already discussed the influence of Rosa Luxemburg’s stance upon the views and programs of the Polish communists.¹⁶⁰ However, the matter is even more complicated. The ideational identity of the KPP was shaped mostly by classical Marxism, but in some measure, it was also an accident of the singular identity of its individual members. This latter influence was smaller than in the “normal,” democratic parties, where there is a place for an internal, uncompromised, exchange of views. The KPP certainly did not belong to this group of parties, because it was conspiratorial, consisted of cadres, organized upon the principle of democratic centralism. Nevertheless, it is difficult to consider their position on the national question while abstracting from the national makeup of this party

158 For more on these topics see: Więcej na ten temat Henryk Cimek, *Komuniści a Polska: 1918–1939* (Warsaw: ANS, 1989).

159 Ibid., 97.

160 Krystyna Trembicka, *Między apologią a negacją. Studium myśli politycznej Komunistycznej Partii Polski w latach 1918–1932* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1995); “Jan Janiak, Recepcja dzieł Karola Marksa w publicystyce Komunistycznej Partii Polski (1918–1937),” *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis Politologia* 16 (1986): 135–148.

as a whole, especially of its leaders, who played an extraordinary role in this illegal cadre party. The KPP consisted of only 33% of Poles who did not belong to national minorities. From 22 to 26 percent were people of Jewish origins, and the leadership was about 50% Jewish.¹⁶¹ The rest, mainly rank and file workers, was made up of other minorities from the period of Poland's Second Commonwealth. One of the motives for joining the communist party, especially for Jews, was the desire to become Poles. Access to the organization signified leaving the Jewish religion and its rituals, a break with one's old milieu.¹⁶² When it came to some of the communists of Jewish background their national nihilism was an escape from Jewishness, a demonstration of their full assimilation, a total break with Jewish roots. In the assessment of Julia Brun-Zejmis, "the rejection of national identity played a much greater role in their entrusting themselves to the communist movement than their hatred toward social injustice."¹⁶³ The national nihilism of the whole party could have been in part a reflection of the national self-denial on an individual level. It obviously was not the only factor. The communists did not lack Poles for whom an identification with the movement was closer than with their own nation, for whom their real fatherland was the "fatherland of the international proletariat," that is, the Soviet Union. The politics of the Soviet Union, in fact, had a deciding influence upon the program of the KPP, especially when it came to national questions.

The defeat of the Red Army near Warsaw in 1920, according to the Bolshevik leadership, demonstrated the weakness of the Polish communist movement, which saturated by "Luxemburgism" showed itself helpless in a historic moment, incapable of breaking with its slogans the will of Polish society to defend its recently regained independence. Thus, Moscow gave up on the "Polish horse," and put their hopes in the Byelorussians and Ukrainians. They counted upon the irredenta of national minorities, numerous residents of the Eastern borderlands of the Polish state would more quickly lead to its falling apart. This is how one could read the appearance of Zinoviev, who was the Communist International representative at the Second Convention of the KPRP, that took place as Sep-

161 Julia Brun-Zejmis, "Nationalist Self-Denial," op. cit., 29 [Translation from Polish, original unavailable –trans.].

162 Władysław Krajewski, "Fakty i mity. O roli Żydów w okresie stalinowskim" *Więź* 5 (1998): 90–104. On the motivation directing people of Jewish origin choosing the communist option see: Marcin Kula, *Narodowe i rewolucyjne* (Warsaw: Aneks, 1991), 192–202; Jeff Schatz, *Generation: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991).

163 Brun-Zejmis, "Nationalist Self-Denial," op. cit., 21.

tember turned into October in 1923. Zinoviev began by pointing out the errors committed by the KPRP with regard to the national question. He said, “Total internationalism, without which there is no communist, too often leads to what we have called nihilism when it came to the national question.” He did not mean to suggest a change in the party’s relation to the matter of national independence. This thread did not appear in his speech. However, he did note:

In a country such as Poland, with such a tangle of national conflicts it would seem that the national moment should be a source of the greatest strength for your party... The Polish bourgeoisie faces off against five considerable nationalities: Ukrainian, Byelorussian, German, Lithuanian, Jewish—the Polish bourgeoisie must be positioned by the Communists in such a situation that it should continually feel the pressure of the communist party with regard to the national question.¹⁶⁴

In other words, the KPRP was supposed to expand its register to include formulas legitimating the nationalisms of national minorities in order to provoke ethnic antagonisms. However, the party giving up on nationalist legitimation directed at the Poles was the necessary condition for the success of this plan.

The sequel to the strategy imposed by Moscow was the shift of the organizational point of gravity of the Polish communist movement from the center of the country to its East. In 1923 autonomous peripheral KPP organizations came into being: The Communist Party of Western Byelorussia and The Communist Party of Western Ukraine. The programs of both these parties, unlike the KPP, highlighted the issue of national self-determination. Some of their members propagated the slogan of joining Western Byelorussia and Ukraine to Soviet Byelorussia and Ukraine. Under the political influence of the communists between 1925 and 1927, a “Hromada” occurred that associated over 100,000 Byelorussian peasants. Moscow also attempted to propagandistically utilize the mid-1920’s dynamic growth in the territorial autonomy of its western republics, which resulted in a short-lived rise in national consciousness among the Byelorussians and an authentic cultural Renaissance in the Ukraine.

At the same time, this was a pacification of the so-called “majority” in the KPP—the group of activists congregating around Maria Koszutska, Maksymilian Horowitz, Tadeusz Warecki, and Adolf Warski. These people came to the party from the PPS, therefore they viewed the national question with a much greater dose of realism than their orthodox comrades from the SDKPiL. They were aware that the lack of interest of the Polish communists toward national issues and that

164 *II Zjazd Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski (19.IX. – 2.X. 1923)*, eds. Gereon Iwański, Henryk Malinowski, Franciszka Świetlikowa (Warsaw: KiW, 1969), 25–26.

resignation from nationalist legitimization would condemn the KPRP to a complete political and national isolation. In order to tear themselves away from such a fate they proposed, among other things, a thesis should be integrated into the party program that the revolution in Poland should be motivated by the interests of the nation, not internationalist goals. This was written into the party program in 1923. It did not yet mean an agreement to nationalistic legitimization, nonetheless, it was a major step in this direction. This was in line with Stalin's thinking because he wanted the unconditional support of the Polish communists for the idea of Western Byelorussia and Ukraine seceding into the Soviet Union, whereas directing policies such as this one according to national interest gave this postulate a conditional character.

Besides this change, there were also other such ones, which indicated attempts to intellectually revise the party's stance toward the question of Poland's independence. The most meaningful of these was published in 1925, an essay by Julian Brun entitled, "Stefana Żeromskiego tragedia pomyłek" [Stefan Żeromski's Tragedy of Errors], whose author confronted the "Polish myths." What is important for our study is how Brun did not separate out social upheaval from national rebirth; on the contrary, he conditioned the success of the revolution by giving it a national character.¹⁶⁵ In an atmosphere of increasing internal conflicts in the KPP between the "majority" and the "minority" Brun's work was condemned by the leadership of the party. Regardless, shortly after this publication, the author himself published a brochure entitled "Czego bronimy" [What are we defending?] in which he no longer defended independence, and he wrote of the Soviet Union as the "only fatherland of workers and peasants of the world."¹⁶⁶

The deciding factor for the future fate of the "majority" was the leadership's backing of Trotsky in his conflict with Stalin. After the victory of the latter, by the decision of the Communist International, the "majority" leadership was removed from leading the party. Julian Leński took over the leadership.

The strategy of the party also changed under the influence of the Comintern. There was a return to wholly extremist (anti-independence) views on the national question with a simultaneous support for the following nationalisms: Byelorussian, Ukrainian, and German. Faith in the strength of German communist movement still lived on in Moscow. A draft of the Communist Party of Poland program from 1932 proclaimed: "The Polish state came into being after an imperialistic

165 For more on this, see: Marian Orzechowski, *Naród – ojczyzna-państwo w myśli politycznej Juliana Bruna-Bronowicza* (Warsaw: KiW, 1986).

166 Julian Brun, *Pisma Wybrane*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: KiW, 1956), 12.

world war as a rampart of the imperialist entente against the proletarian revolution that abolished the tsarate, the main oppressor of Poland; it came into being as a cell of the Versailles system.”¹⁶⁷ It was further pointed out that, “The Polish bourgeoisie rules both by virtue of imperialistic conquests and treaties Upper Silesia and the ‘corridor,’ and oppresses ‘Free Gdansk’...” It was predicted that after the victory of the revolution in Poland,

in relation to Upper Silesia and the Seaside Corridor, the victorious proletariat of Poland will cross out the verdicts of imperialistic treaties and will ensure for the populations of those lands the right of self-determination, right up to tearing themselves away from Poland. When it comes to Gdansk the KPP combats the yoke imposed by Poland and the League of Nations, it fights against the annexing politics of Polish imperialism and acknowledges the rights of Gdansk’s population, forcefully ripped away from Germany, to a reunification with Germany.¹⁶⁸

The acceptance of the new strategy caused a considerable fall in the influence of the party—to such a degree that it shrunk to a few circles of national minorities who were not especially emotionally tied to the Second Commonwealth.

Since 1935, the party, in accordance with the resolutions of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, did an about face with its legitimating strategy. The KPP began to recreate itself as the sole defender of Polish independence and accused the Sanacja of a “politics of national betrayal.” “To us communists,” pronounced the appeal of the KPP Central Committee on the 18th anniversary of Poland regaining its independence, “the independence of our nation is dear.”¹⁶⁹ Desiring a rapprochement with the PPS, earlier described with the epithet “social-fascist,” the publication *Red Standard* pointed toward the common intellectual roots of the two parties by saying, “for Polish communists the independence of their own nation is no less their path than is for the workers of the PPS.”¹⁷⁰ On the issue of Gdansk, the declaration of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Poland from June 1936 proclaimed, “Hitler surrounds Poland. The Nazi wagging in Gdansk is a prelude to the partitioning of Poland, it is a direct danger to the independence of our nation.”¹⁷¹ On the topic of Upper Silesia: “Defending

167 “Projekt programu Komunistycznej Partii Polski sekcji Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej i Zmiany w projekcie programu KPP,” *KPP uchwały i rezolucje*, vol. 3 (Warsaw: KiW, 1956), 410, 446.

168 *Materiały do programu KPP* (Moscow: 1933) 127–128, 138.

169 *KPP w obronie niepodległości Polski. Materiały i dokumenty*, eds. J. Kowalski, F. Kalicka, Sz. Zachariasz (Warsaw: KiW, 1953), 328.

170 *Czerwony Sztandar* 8 (September 1936), in *Ibid.*, 316.

171 *Ibid.*, 283.

the German populace from national oppression we at the same time declare that every attempt to join Upper Silesia to Nazi Germany will be energetically fought by us.”¹⁷²

The international situation, the growing danger from the side of the Germans, was the cause of this improbable ideological dodge. The idea of popular fronts bringing together parties of the left copied the example of the French communists. The radical change of front undertaken because of orders from the top-down nearly on a daily basis was for many, especially for the younger members of KPP, who were not familiar with the meandering nature of Soviet politics, a shock that, as Barbara Fijałkowska writes, “would in the future make them into dispositional executors of the party leadership’s will. Once for good they acknowledged that somewhere out there ‘at the top’ they know everything better and the responsibilities of communists include executing orders without playing around with discussions.”¹⁷³ However, a large part of them accepted the new line of the KPP with enthusiasm, seeing in it an opportunity for the party to get away from political and national isolation. In a situation of a growing danger from Nazi Germany, the nationalistic legitimization of the Polish communists could considerably widen their membership. The party started having its first successes even outside of Poland.¹⁷⁴

According to Władysław Gomułka, the reorientation in the politics of the KPP transvalued the attitudes of rank and file members of the party toward the fatherland:

The patriotic stance adopted by imprisoned and free Polish communists in 1939, before and after the German invasion of Poland, and under the occupation strongly associated them with the whole nation. But, after all, the KPP’s new tactical orientation, inaugurated in 1935 in great measure contributed to this.¹⁷⁵

It does seem that these words were rather a confession of the author’s faith, rather than a reliable description of the stances taken by the communists of the time. The

172 “Z odezwy Okręgowego Komitetu Górnego Śląska,” in *Ibid.*, 312.

173 Barbara Fijałkowska, *Borejsza i Różański. Przyczynek do dziejów stalinizmu w Polsce* (Olsztyn: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, 1995), 55.

174 The report of the Polish consul in Winnipeg: “The real danger of the work the Polish communists are doing among the Polonia comes from their striving to occupy the national domain, by taking the national stance they easily gather to themselves individuals who are uncritical, of whom there are many in the Polonia...” Cited in: Anna Reczyńska, *Piętno wojny. Polonia kanadyjska wobec polskich problemów lat 1939–1945* (Kraków: Prace Instytutu Polonijnego UJ, 1997), 27.

175 Władysław Gomułka, *Pamiętniki*, v. 1, op. cit., 424.

death of Marian Buczek during the defense of Warsaw, who in People's Poland was later made into a national hero, is an exception that does not confirm the rule. This is because most of the former members of the KPP, took off for the "motherland of the world proletariat," as fast as they could. Gomułka himself confirmed this:

In the party school, they beat it into our heads that the national question must be always subordinated to the interests of the proletarian revolution. This was supposed to be demanded by the basic canons of Marxism-Leninism, according to which, the national-liberatory battle for national minorities propagated and organized by the KPP under the slogan of self-determination, up to the point of detaching from the Polish state, was supposed to constitute an immense driving force of the socialist revolution in Poland.¹⁷⁶

When summarizing our necessarily abbreviated deliberations devoted to the relationship between Marxism-Marxists and national questions, we ought to stress two issues: first, in its theoretical stratum Marxism, including its Austro-Hungarian faction, had a generally hostile orientation toward the national ideology, the nation-state, and patriotic feelings. If any fatherland is presupposed, then it is only the international proletariat. Second, already in the activities of Marx and Engels, there were the beginnings of aiming to use nationalist slogans for propaganda purposes. The ability to instrumentally use national phraseology in political fights was perfected by Lenin. He rose to power thanks to the slogan of national self-determination. During the 1930's, but especially during World War II, his successor's appeals to the nation were one of the most important elements of his striving for legitimating the communist system. Polish communists, at first faithful to the legacy of Rosa Luxemburg, later obedient to Stalin, remained hostile to nationalist legitimation—and that is one of the reasons why they lost. By losing out on their chance to gain even a minimal amount of support from the Polish society they also lost out in the mind of Stalin himself. Stalin, with a decision of the Comintern in 1938 disbanded the KPP and dragged their leaders to the Soviet Union then murdered them, probably because he wanted to clear the road for realizing his own nationalist goals. Those who survived would, in totally different circumstances, legitimate their ruling titles by using nationalism.

176 Ibid., 383.

Chapter 3

The Communist System in Poland: Its Legitimated and Non-Legitimated Sources of Stability

Decades have passed since the fall of communism in Poland. However, it is still timely to ask how the system managed to survive more than 40 years in a more or less stable manner, in a substantially unaltered form, all the while maintaining the capability for social mobilization for an extended amount of time? Why were people obedient towards rulers whom they saw as unwanted or imposed? Through what sources of governance were they able to gain obedience? The answers to these questions have a fundamental meaning for understanding those 40 years. It also has explicative value for reflecting upon the state of Central-Eastern Europe societies after they regain their rights for self-constitution.

The thesis of this work is that nationalism was treated by the establishment ruling People's Poland as a particularly ranging and effective, nearly indispensable, argument that counteracted society's rejection of the communist authorities as "external." Only by changing this perception to one of "internality" could the rulers count upon gaining acceptance and obedience from the side of dominant and subordinate social groups. However, nationalist legitimation was neither the only form of legitimation nor, with certain exceptions, the most important strategy of legitimation. Since in the following chapters this form of legitimation will be the chief focus of our considerations it makes sense to first devote a little space to describing the ruling system it served and other, both extra-legitimation, as well as, legitimation-based sources of its stability.

A considerable number of Sovietologists believes that the concept of legitimation to only a small degree is helpful for understanding the mass subordination in communist societies.¹⁷⁷ The stability and survival of monocentric structures

177 See also: Peter Ludz, "Legitimacy in Divided Nation," op. cit.; Jan Pakulski, Legitimacy and "Mass Compliance: Reflections on Max Weber and Soviet-Type Societies," *British Journal of Political Science* 16 (1986); Viktor Zaslavsky, *The Neo-Stalinist State: Class, Ethnicity, and Consensus in Soviet Society* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1982); Mark Wright, "Ideology and Power in the Czechoslovak Political System," in: P. G. Lewis,

are explained by them, above all, by relying upon sources such as compulsion and violence, apathy and conformism, various kinds of rewards both material and in privileges, instrumental-calculative motives, finally, all types of psychological and sociological forms of manipulation. Without questioning the significance of all the above factors, I believe that the hypothesis about a permanent lack of legitimation is difficult to prove. In order to sustain it, it would be necessary to indicate, that at no moment of the system of exercising power (its methods, structures of power, the leaders and their programs) was there support for it in society. Even if we assume that is precisely how it was and that the main sources of obedience and stability lay outside of legitimation (i.e. in the sphere of instrumental motives), the agreement with this thesis does not need to lead to rejecting *a limine* the legitimation perspective. The deficit of legitimation does not at all mean the lack of legitimation aspirations from the side of those governing. And these, especially in Poland, were certainly not small. Second, legitimizing arguments considerably shaped the identity of the political system; they constituted the foundations of the language in which those in power formulated problems and proposed solutions. They decided what the authorities thought their calling. Finally, they also indicated to a great degree the character of institutional structures in the political sphere.¹⁷⁸ Thus, it also makes sense to take up an analysis of legitimation.

Foundations and Mechanisms

Among several substantial foundations upon which the communist order rested in Poland we should mention, in the first place, the apparatus of violence that not only consisted of the political police that was both home-grown (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, Służba Bezpieczeństwa), and, at the start also Soviet, but also of the army, the public prosecutors, and the judiciary. Compulsion more or less always existed, even in the decadent and relatively mild period. Perhaps even more important than the violence was the fear of it being exercised, which became a permanent element of the experience of Poles until the end of People's Poland.¹⁷⁹

Eastern Europe: Political Crisis and Legitimation (Edinburgh: Croom and Helm, 1984), 111–153.

178 Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism* (Oxford: Clarendon 1992), 79.

179 In the first half of the 1980's worries about repressions from the side of the authorities (formulated as: "People in Poland are obedient toward the authorities, because the authorities can punish them for insubordination") was most frequently indicated by Polish commentators as the source of obedience. Andrzej Rychard and Jacek Szymaderski, "Kryzys w perspektywie legitymizacji," in : *Polacy '84. Dynamika kon-*

Memories of the mass repressions of the years 1944–1956, of the intensification of using force with the aim of getting rid of social dissatisfaction and rebellion, persisted and inclined people to subordinate themselves and created an atmosphere of helplessness and complete dependence upon the caprices of the authorities. The authorities, in turn, possessed a whole repertoire of milder-in-form administrative means, that it could also use to punish insubordination. These are some of the potential harassments: firing from work, prohibition to work within one's profession, rejection of applications for passports, or ignoring the offender in the process of selecting for desired goods (i.e. not letting someone attend college, or refusing to give them government housing), etc.¹⁸⁰ The experience of earlier repressions and the real threat of their renewed use set into motion a mechanism of "fearing just in case,"¹⁸¹ which led to an anticipation of the expectations and demands of the authorities through undertaking actions perceived as desired by the rulers.¹⁸² The extended use of tools of repression on a large scale and the effective monitoring of almost all areas of life could also have caused the general state of social apathy and helped shape the conformist stance.

Yet another immeasurably important foundation of the communist order was the constant dependence on the Soviet Union. Because of its military presence and political "protection", the communist system was born in Poland. Its eclipse and fall occurred when the ties of dependence eased. Without consent from the ruling elite in Moscow, no serious systemic changes in Poland had any chance of success.

The still real threat of the Soviet intervention in the first half of the 1980's gave birth to fatalistic feelings about the inalterability of the existing order and a foreboding about the meaninglessness of any forms of resistance so long as the Soviet empire exists. Awareness of geopolitical conditions, frequently strengthened by a rich historical knowledge, coupled with an appraisal of the relative costs of a Soviet intervention, could have led to pragmatic acquiescence to the existing form of government. Polish communists not infrequently justified their ruling with the following formula: "We rule because this is the only system, and we are the only

fliktu i konsensusu, eds. Władysław Adamski, Krzysztof Jasiewicz, Andrzej Rychard (Warsaw: Wydział Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych UW, 1986), 307.

180 After the demonstrations of 3 May 1982 Miroslaw Milewski proposed "Using various systems of making those responsible suffer: confiscating phones, modes of transportation, ability to move, and fines" (*Protokół nr 24 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 5 V 1982, AAN, KC PZPR, 2264, k. 3).

181 Anna Radziwiłł, *Ideologia wychowawcza w Polsce w latach 1948–1956 (próba modelu)* (Warsaw: NOWA, 1981), 42.

182 Jacek Tarkowski, *Legitymizacja władzy...*, op. cit., 38.

authority, which the Kremlin will accept.” Among some of them, this created the feeling of a specific mission based upon the conviction that only the formation that they represent, thanks to its ties to the Soviet Union, will protect Poland from a loss of independence, and Europe from a Third World War.¹⁸³

Reconciling oneself to the system was abetted by the effectiveness of the structures of power. There was an export from the empire of its system of monopoly dictatorship fully autonomous and removed from social control, but aspiring to extend its full control over society. The dictatorship had at its disposal the most important instruments of the state: police, courts, army, plus the administrative and propaganda apparatuses. Power was concentrated in the hands of a narrow clique—numbering somewhere between ten and twenty people¹⁸⁴—that was autonomous not only toward the society but also semi-autonomous within the frames of the political system—with all the qualities of an oligarchic government also with its irresolvable problem of succession.¹⁸⁵

The charismatic institutionalized party was a key element, alongside the apparatus of violence, for founding the system of power. It fulfilled the function of a conveyor belt that passed down the goals of action, commands, and orders. To the top it sent information about the progress toward the realization of these tasks and signals about social moods, that is, about existing and potential dangers for the ruling system. The structure of the party was reminiscent of a hierarchical pyramid whose managerial levels were occupied by formally elected, but, in actuality, appointed functionaries.¹⁸⁶ The organizational basis of this pyramid was constituted by the basic party organizations of which there were more than 76,000 in 1971.¹⁸⁷ The handling and stability of the political system, to a great degree, depended upon the availability, performance, and obedience to party members.

183 “Rozmowa z Jakubem Bermanem,” in: Teresa Torańska, *Oni*, op. cit., 255.

184 From August 1944 until July 1956 only 19 people had gone through the Political Bureau (that’s including substitutes for actual members). Despite the transformation of the decision center toward the direction of a so-called “collective leadership,” especially after 1970, the amount of people sitting in the highest echelons did not substantially undergo change. See: Andrzej Paczkowski, “Partyjne centrum dyspozycji państwowej,” in: *Instytucje państwa totalitarnego. Polska 1944–1956. Raport* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1994), 117.

185 Thomas Rigby, “The Soviet Leadership: Towards a Self-stabilizing Oligarchy?,” *Soviet Studies* 2 (1970): 167–191.

186 Andrzej Paczkowski judges that during the Stalinist period there were about 300,000 people working in the party apparatus. Andrzej Paczkowski, *Partyjne centrum ...*, op. cit., 118.

187 *Sprawozdanie Komitetu Centralnego na VI Zjazd PZPR*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1750, k. 224.

This is the reason why the leadership put great emphasis upon the “purity” of the party ranks, periodically reviewing its ranks through purges where the criteria of selection were the dispositions mentioned above.¹⁸⁸

Besides the leading party apparatus there was a governmental administration and organizations or institutions that were non-governmental, of a quasi-social character, also structured hierarchically, whose leadership positions (the nomenclature) were staffed by a so-called “party key.” The nomenclature system allowed the party apparatus to control thousands of positions all over the country (the number of positions occupied by the nomenclature before 1 January 1970 was 115,360)¹⁸⁹ formally occupied as the result of elections and principles of competence. It was one of, as Thomas Rigby writes, “basic constituent elements of the Soviet socio-political order”¹⁹⁰ The recruitment of cadres on all levels of the party pyramid was conducted upon the principle of informal patron-client relations. This was also one of the important ways in which tying people to the system contributed to its stabilization.¹⁹¹

The stability of the communist system also arose out of its monopolistic inclinations. In the end, it was reminiscent of a monopolistic corporation and here we can indicate several meaningful similarities. Above all, they ought to be sought out in the characteristic desire to get rid of all competition, striving to concentrate

188 The last great purge began in January 1982. A fragment of the document signed by the Political Bureau (12 January 1982) entitled “Zadania partii w warunkach stanu wojennego” says the following: “The United Polish Worker’s Party, which was affected by a deep crisis, is very slowly regaining its power . . . Our party ought to be successively purged of people who vacillate and are ideologically foreign” (AAN, KC PZPR, 1829, k. 46).

189 “Informacji o realizacji wytycznych Sekretariatu KC w sprawie zasad i trybu opiniowania kadr objętych nomenklaturą instancji partyjnych: Załącznik” (AAN, KC PZPR, 2234, k. 502).

190 Thomas Rigby, “Staffing USSR Incorporated: The Origins of the Nomenclatura System,” in: *Soviet Studies* 40:4 (1988): 523. See also: Bohdan Harasymiw, “Nomenclatura: The Soviet Communist Party’s Leadership Recruitment System,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 2.4 (1969): 493–512.

191 On the topic of patronage’s meaning for the functioning of the communist system see: John Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992); Jean Oi, “Communism and Clientalism: Rural Politics in China,” *World Politics* 37:2 (1985): 238–266. On the clientele structures in People’s Poland see: Jacek Tarkowski, “Patrons and Clients in a Planned Economy,” in: *Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development*, eds. S. N. Eisenstadt, R. Lemarchand (Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1981); Jacek Tarkowski, “Patronage in Centralized, Socialist System: The Case of Poland,” *International Political Science Review* 4:4 (1983).

production and capital and directing as many social exchanges as possible from one center. Furthermore, the communist system, much like a business monopoly, demonstrated a clear reluctance to change, a far-going bureaucratization, avoidance by the leadership team, especially on the lower levels, of all self-reliance in undertaking decisions—and the accompanying stunted development and tendencies toward crises. Despite the advantages resulting from the possibilities of shaping supply and demand through eliminating competition this monopoly, in the long run, showed itself to be inefficient and costly.

In People's Poland, those in power were able to establish an economic monopoly through nationalizing the decided majority of the branches of production. However, only the elimination of the free market on the organizational level and on the level of mass communication—in the sphere of the superstructure, not the base, as Karl Marx had predicted—gave a certain warranty of the system's stabilization. The existence of un-collectivized peasant property, which nonetheless was pulled into the cycles of the state economy through obligatory contingents, the state's monopoly on the buying of goods, the government's farmer circles, etc. had a small influence upon its functioning. On the other hand, the complication, or, outright impossibility, of creating autonomous organizations that could articulate critical appraisals of reality and would also be capable of working out and propagating other social and political programs, reinforced by the isolation of society from the Western world and the party monopoly on information, led to two, important for stability and continuity of monocentric structures, consequences. Above all, it strengthened the feeling that there were no alternatives to the existing form of government. In this way, in the social consciousness, this state of affairs became not only natural but also the only one possible. Furthermore, the lack of any group or organization not tied up with the official order that individuals could identify with, and upon which it could lean, condemned it to loneliness and the concomitant feeling of internal danger. Deprived of a defensive wall that might be constituted by a "worldview-axiological community," the individual became a defenseless object of all sorts of psychological and sociological manipulations.¹⁹²

For the communist establishment the substantial decline of the "old" intelligentsia, as a result of World War II and the postwar emigration, was a considerable factor in easing the implantation of the monocentric system in Poland and its later, more or less, stable functioning. Because of its predispositions, only this group was in a position to create an alternative toward the official vision of a good social

192 Hanna Świda-Ziemba, *Człowiek wewnątrznie zniewolony* (Warsaw: Uniwersytet Warszawski, 1997), 238.

order. Mere critique coming from various sides was not able to shake the order so long as it was not accompanied by voicing of different ideas. The percentage of people with a higher education in Poland was still only 2.7% in 1970. The raising of the level of education during the 1970's in large measure contributed to the explosion of 1980 not becoming another protest against the raising of prices as was the case in 1970 and 1976, but instead, it transformed itself into a deep legitimation crisis. The emigration of people from Poland who held opposition views during the whole period of the PRL was treated by the party authorities as an important safety valve. Kazimierz Barcikowski, a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee, during one of its meetings in June 1982, spoke of this straightforwardly:

But none of us here wants to deny the desirability of the opposition's representatives leaving, that is, that right now we want someone or other to leave . . . Emigration as a method of resolving political matters is applied the world over, everywhere, here we are supposed to suddenly have inhibitions of some sort about it.¹⁹³

The party also owed the stability and endurance of the system to the strategy whose task was liquidating already existing independent organizational initiatives. One of the typical, constantly used in Poland instruments was breaking up social groups based upon "extra-systemic" values.¹⁹⁴ An example of using such a strategy to rescue a system rattled by the crisis is the recommendation of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR from January 1971 to "speed up the process of polarization among the crews and the consolidation of party activists and members of the party, thereby isolating the factitious elements."¹⁹⁵

When you consider the concentration of all instruments of governance in one center and the scope of the resources at the disposition of the elites, it is clear they could tie people to the system through the distribution of various goods and privileges. Preferences in the distribution of incomes, and in the access to privileges, depended upon the significance of a given social-professional for the efficient and stable functioning of the system of governance, the state, and the economy. We can

193 One of the people taking part in this meeting of Politburo joked that the authorities could pay the opposition so they would just agree to leave the country (*Posiedzenie Biura Politycznego KC*, 18 VI 1982, AAN, KC PZPR, 1832, k. 603, 617).

194 Hanna Świda-Ziemia, *Człowiek wewnątrznie zniewolony*, op. cit., esp. the chapter "Technika rozbijania grup jako jedna z najważniejszych metod konformizacji w komunistycznym totalitaryzmie," 237–261.

195 *Protokół nr 30 z posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC PZPR*, 20 I 1971, in: *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego. Grudzień 1970*, ed. Paweł Domański (London: Aneks, 1991), s. 139.

speak of “strategic group” in the case of the party-administrative apparatus, the leadership cadre of enterprises, higher-ranked functionaries in powerful ministries, well-qualified workers, and groups of intellectuals and writers. The strategic meaning of intellectuals, or as Gramsci calls them, “functionaries” of the ruling group, relies upon garnering “spontaneous” approval from a wide slice of the populace for the existing political system.¹⁹⁶ This is why the authorities especially vied for the attention of this group by latching onto various methods. Immediately after the war, it was common for the authorities to gain support through a bottle of vodka, sausage, and a military uniform. This does not seem like much from today’s perspective, but in those times, it was a big deal if we remember the pauperized Polish society of the time. Later methods of winning over intellectuals and writers also did not seem especially sophisticated. During the Stalinist years they frequently concluded in giving access to the consumption of goods, usually, foodstuffs recognized as delicacies (we should also remember Homes for Creative Work, apartments, making getting passports easier, and so on).¹⁹⁷

Other groups were tempted by the authorities with promises of making a fast career and the possibilities of social mobility. This was the case especially with the young, frequently unemployed peasants. Slogans of industrializing and modernizing the country were especially attractive to them. Even merely migration to the city and work upon the “great construction sites of socialism” signaled a clear social advance. The new rulers most frequently recruited precisely members of this social group as its “functionaries of the system,” giving them access to unheard of career advancement in administration, industry, the military, and the party apparatus. In merely two years (1950–1952) some 115,000 people advanced to managerial positions.¹⁹⁸

The real beneficiaries of the system were, above all, its political elites. Until October 1956 the higher up employees of the following apparatuses: party, national, union, and military were entitled to, among other things, the right to own furniture and home appliances at the cost of the state, using domestic workers who were on the payrolls of resorts, free of charge vacations abroad (most frequently to countries that were also “People’s Democracies”), covering the costs

196 Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935*, ed. David Forgacs (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 300–322.

197 Maria Dąbrowska has called attention to this. After a dinner party she wrote in her journal, “. . . it is yet another attempt to test whether you can strike the hearts and minds of writers through the stomach” (Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne 1945–1949*, [Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1996], 442).

198 Andrzej Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939–1989* (Warsaw: PWN, 1996), 231.

of maintaining a place of residence, or having two cars.¹⁹⁹ The limitation of many, or even the abolishment of some privileges with Gomulka's return—widely considered to be an ascetic who was far from using his position for personal material gains—combined with the simultaneous growing consumption aspirations of the whole society in the 1960's, and began to awaken moods of disenchantment among members of the party apparatus, especially among lower level members. In 1971 a slice of the party members openly declared that they have become disappointed “with the party when they calculated that their legitimation would help in taking care of some matters of a personal nature.” It was also said, “party members get no concessions,” thereby justifying their resignations from being members of the party.²⁰⁰

Insufficient satisfaction of aspiration pushed even long-term service party activists in the party apparatus to overuse their official positions for personal gains. In the mid-1960s corruption among party functionaries reached, as we can conclude from party documents, dimensions that were disturbing to the authorities.²⁰¹ The partial unloading of discontent was brought on by the purge between late 1967 and early 1968, which opened the path to advancement to activists from the so-called “second row.” It is only when the Gierek team implemented a change in personnel politics—consisting of diversifying the channels of advance for younger and better-educated party functionaries along with a grand opening of the privilege and honor purses—that an effective medicine was found against the frustration of the governing apparatus, guaranteeing, at least for a time, obedience and devotion. Ordinance #58 of the Minister of Foreign Trade and the Maritime Economy from 11 July 1975, regarding the customs inspections of objects trans-

199 “Sprząteczka partyjnego sekretarza’ Notatka dla Biura Politycznego KC PZPR w sprawie ograniczenia przywilejów materialnych dla działaczy państwowych, partyjnych, związkowych i wojskowych, 15 X 1956,” ed. Marcin Zaremba in *Mówią Wieki* 1 (1997).

200 *Notatka o przebiegu indywidualnych rozmów w partii. Materiał na posiedzenie Sekretariatu KC*, 16 VII 1971, AAN, KC PZPR, 2235, k. 233, 235.

201 “In nearly all Voivodeships there were instances of penal firings of workers of the party apparatus whose stances and actions deviated from statutory standards and disturbed the socialist principles of social life . . . They also ascertained the abuse of positions to get material gains, or even the indirect cooperation of the apparatus workers in economic abuses. Some workers in positions of responsibility—through intimate personal relations, taking part in parties, purchasing products at reduced prices, accepting occasional gifts, etc.—favored the creation of an atmosphere of tolerating disorders in workplaces and institutions” (*Sekretariat KC do I Sekretarza KW, KP /KM, KD/*, January 1966, AAN, KC PZPR, 2228, k. 3, 4).

ported by some people crossing the country's borders, is one spectacular example of such privilege. It was the basis for effectively releasing many people (along with members of their immediate family), who occupied managerial positions in the apparatus of the party, state, courts, public prosecution, army, military police, labor unions, "allied" parties, and the State Academy of the Sciences (PAN) from paying customs. The existence of this type of privileges, along with the position of the nomenclature tied to it, encourages searching for similarities between it and the privileges of the nobility²⁰² because it gave the real-existing socialist nation-state qualities that were "quasi-feudal."²⁰³

There were also efforts to tie the working class to the system by appropriately steering the distribution of incomes as well as privileges. The declared preference for the working class was treated as an expression of the agreement of the workers with the ideological principles of the socialist order. It is also possible to speak of a specific privileging with regard to certain sectors, above all: mining, the military, and steelworks. The role of material factors increased after the protest of Poznań workers in June 1956, during which the authorities came to realize that without economic improvements of life-conditions it will be difficult to maintain social order. In the 1970's there was a lowering of the position of skilled workers in the hierarchy of earnings, which could have fostered a feeling of relative deprivation among representatives of this category and constituted one of the causes of the explosion of social discontent during August 1980.²⁰⁴

The authorities also strove to gain the support of the remaining labor groups. The premier, Józef Cyrankiewicz, following the example of Nikita Khrushchev, in 1956 announced that, "we must devote particular care to worker's cafeterias and make indispensable investments in order to raise their efficiency."²⁰⁵ The custom of celebrating so called "days of industries" (Days of the Metal Worker, Bus Driver, Road Worker, Field-Worker, Teacher, Miner, Iron Worker, and so on) involved giving

202 Antoni Mączak, "Umowa Gdańska czyli pierwszy Herrschaftsvertrag w kraju realnego socjalizmu" in *Biedni i bogaci. Studia z dziejów społeczeństwa i kultury ofiarowane Bronisławowi Geremekowi w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin* (Warsaw: PWN, 1992), 202.

203 Ireneusz Krzemiński, "System społeczny epoki gierkowskiej" in *Spółeczeństwo polskie czasu kryzysu*, ed. Stefan Nowak (Warsaw: IS UW, 1984).

204 Henryk Domański, "Dystrybucja dóbr a stabilność systemu," in *VII. Ogólnopolski zjazd socjologiczny. Materiały*, ed. Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński (Warsaw: Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne, 1987), 323.

205 Józef Cyrankiewicz, *O założeniach planu pięcioletniego na lata 1956–1960, Nowe Drogi 7–8* (1956): 190.

medals and other decorations in the Belvedere to valued employees.²⁰⁶ Autumn was the time when onions and potatoes were sold in places of work at reduced prices. Teachers received free soap and toilet paper. They also had the right to discount rail tickets. The clear turn toward “goulash socialism” occurred during the 1970’s when Gierek’s team seemed to say “consume,” and aimed to provide not only “bread” but also “circuses,” for example, through expanding the organization of worker vacations.

The above activities can be interpreted as the expression of the system’s evolution in the direction of a paternalistic nanny state. Paternalism, according to Ferenc Fehér, constituted the substantial identity of the communist system during the Post-Stalinist era.²⁰⁷ It relied upon a peculiar transaction and a way of thinking. Thanks to it the socialist state ensured social services such as medical care, education, the guarantee of full employment, and the satisfaction of basic economic needs. In this way, the citizens were released from the necessity of taking on risk, undertaking innovative ventures, and the dangers of competition typical of capitalism. In exchange, it was expected that the citizens would give up their aspirations for freedom, would not criticize the government, and would silently acquiesce. In January 1982, that is, at the moment when the authorities were especially counting upon maintaining social peace, a member of the Political Bureau, Hieronim Kubiak recommended “Exhibiting the state as a just caretaker of clearly defined social spaces.”²⁰⁸

The system of rewards and punishments is tied to another mechanism of stabilization: the mechanism of conformism. Hanna Świda-Ziemba first turned attention to its meaning.²⁰⁹ Its spreading ought to be connected with the almost full dependence of all existing forms of organized activity upon one party-state center. Such an organization of the social-institutional system could influence the stances, reactions, and actions of those people who found themselves within it. It was also stimulated through socialization: at school and through the media. During the 1960’s the system came to be treated as part of the “natural scenery of life.” In comparison with the terror of the Stalinist years, there was a marked “liberalization.” Thanks to the passage of time people came to get used to and adapt to the increasingly bearable realities of the system. The “Small Stabilization” speeded up

206 *Notatka w sprawie wręczania w Belwederze odznaczeń państwowych z okazji 8 marca, 1 maja, dożynek i tzw. dni branżowych*, 3.IV.1965, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-606, k. 52.

207 Ferenc Fehér, “Paternalism as Mode of Legitimation in Soviet-type Societies,” in *Political Legitimation in Communist States*, ed. Thomas Rigby (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), 64–81.

208 *Protokół nr 21 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR*, 12 I 1982, AAN, KC PZPR, 1829, k. 10.

209 Hanna Świda-Ziemba, *Człowiek wewnątrznie...*, op. cit., 34.

the process of “internal conformism.” It is true that there was a rebellion against certain elements of the system, but enmity towards it, as a whole, disappeared. The conformism of a large part of the working class was, in my mind, an important factor that contributed to the fact that workers in March of 1968 did not join the student protest while Gomułka’s team steered the course.²¹⁰ Polls conducted in the 1970’s demonstrated a high degree of conformism and its correlation with authoritarianism and fear among workers and the intelligentsia.²¹¹

This paternalism and conformism are fundamentally close to the conceptions of Jan Pakulski who proposed an explanation in terms of a “conditional tolerance” to explain the mass subordination in countries based upon the Soviet model where there were also mass protests. His conceptions presuppose a social consciousness of the relative costs and gains resulting from (in-) subordination. People believe that those governing proceed rationally and in accordance with a known, but not necessarily accepted, “code.” It is widely known what type of behavior will be rewarded and what type will lead to the growth of the risk of punishment. The character and dimensions of the negative and positive sanctions are also known. If in the estimates, especially of “strategic groups,” the general costs of insubordination are relatively high, then the consequence is a systematic subordination. In this way, according to the author, the system ensured the preservation of social stability and political order despite a deficit of legitimation and without a constant recourse to using violence. The breakdown of the whole mechanism usually occurred as an effect of economic collapse, which made it impossible to maintain a high level of benefits. When they were accompanied by a high level of divisions within the elites, which weakened the ability of the elites to make “compensations,” because of falling rewards, the threat of sanctions was enough to cause mass protest.²¹²

The paternalism of “conditional tolerance,” or, as Włodzimierz Wesołowski proposes, a “selfish adaptation of the citizens to the system of power,”²¹³ allows us to explain to a great degree the stability of the Communist system despite the lack of legitimacy.

210 Marcin Zaremba, *Biedni Polacy 68. Społeczeństwo polskie wobec wydarzeń marcowych w świetle raportów KW i MSW dla kierownictwa PZPR, in Marzec 1968. Trzydzieści lat później* v. 1, eds. Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, Marcin Zaremba (Warsaw: PWN, Warszawa 1998).

211 Jadwiga Koralewicz, *Autorytaryzm, lęk, konformizm : analiza społeczeństwa polskiego końca lat siedemdziesiątych* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987).

212 Jan Pakulski, *Legitimacy and Mass Compliance...*, op. cit., 48, 49.

213 Włodzimierz Wesołowski, “Weberowska koncepcja legitymizacji: ograniczenia i kontynuacje,” in *Legitymacja: klasyczne teorie...*, op. cit., 34.

Thanks to the outlined means the authorities were able to gain subordination of both dominant and subjugated groups. However, they were not capable of forcing real support and authentic engagement upon them. Its lack meant weak safeguards for stability and the political system's ability to last. Such a guarantee could only be given by its strong legitimation. Much indicates that at least a part of the party establishment was aware of this.

The Most Important Legitimizing Arguments

The question whether the communist system in Poland enjoyed social support, and how large it was, will surely, for a long time, be a topic of controversies and polemics, which not infrequently will shift from scholarly discourse to politics.²¹⁴ Here it is enough to note that the ruling group undoubtedly in different periods felt a varied (sometimes greater, sometimes lesser) insufficiency of legitimation, which is attested to by the constant actions of a legitimation-seeking character, which were supposed to calm this demand. A system that is legitimized does not strive for legitimation, at least not to such a high degree. Meanwhile, the communists who ruled Poland continually did much to gain social support.

With this goal in mind, many procedures were put in motion aiming to change a nominal, postulated, legitimacy into real legitimacy. Georg Brunner distinguished two such basic procedures, where the first one was characteristic for the communist system: propaganda realized through socialization, mass agitation, mass media and then also a procedure realized during elections and other forms of direct democracy, which creates the illusion of realization of the principle of the sovereignty of the people.²¹⁵

With regard to socialization: it is the process of teaching communicated, directly and indirectly, substantial ideological contents. The indirect methods (i.e. in elementary instruction) in fact created a climate of affirmation for the existing social order. Direct legitimating argumentation was provided by obligatory ideological subjects that went into the stock of teaching curricula starting with elementary school and ending at the university level (i.e. citizen education, self-defense, political economy, and philosophy). The officially binding interpreta-

214 The public debate over the Polish Sejm's resolution from 1998 "about the matter of condemning totalitarian communism" can serve as one representative example.

215 Georg Brunner connects both procedures with the two varieties of legitimation: heteronomic-teological and the autonomic-consensual in "Legitimacy Doctrines and Legitimation Procedures in East European Systems," in *Political Legitimation*, op. cit., 27–40.

tions of “patriotism,” “the nation,” and “the state” and visions of national history were internalized in this way.²¹⁶

Mass agitation was, above all, directed at adults who were persuaded in their places of work, in public institutions, and on the street. The responsibility for them fell upon propaganda political agitation departments functioning in a wide range of party cells.²¹⁷ During the Stalinist period, there was also a convening of special groups of agitators. From November 1949, only in the voivodship of Gdansk, 239 such groups were created, numbering together some 4531 people.²¹⁸ Either way, according to the guidelines of the day, every member of the party was supposed to become an agitator. Their tasks included carrying out individual conversations at every available occasion “on the street, on the train, on the tram, etc. for explaining the politics of the party and the state” and “to resist hostile propaganda and agitation.”²¹⁹ The use of direct agitation (tired out during the Stalinist years) was sought out again during the second half of the 1970’s,²²⁰ and during Martial

216 Zbigniew Mazur, *Obraz Niemiec w polskich podręcznikach szkolnych do nauczania historii 1945–1989* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1995); Joanna Wojdon, “Propaganda polityczna w podręcznikach dla szkół podstawowych Polski Ludowej (1944–1989), *Dzieje Najnowsze* 2 (2000): 151–154.

217 For more on the functioning of the Propaganda Department of the Warsaw Voivodeship Committee see: Mariusz Jastrząb, *Mozolna budowa absurdu. Działalność Wydziału Propagandy Warszawskiego Komitetu Wojewódzkiego PZPR w latach 1949–1953*, (Warsaw: ISP PAN IH UW, 1999).

218 138 groups in “places of work,” 83 on the gmina level, 1 in a PGR, 11 in government offices, and 6 in the field (*Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu służbowego do województwa gdańskiego*, 22.XI.1949 AAN KC PZPR, 237/VIII – 87, k. 1).

219 “W sprawie najpilniejszych zadań w pracy ideologicznej i organizacyjnej partii. Z uchwały Biura Organizacyjnego KC PZPR,” in: *O budownictwie partyjnym. Uchwały Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej 1949–1953* (Warsawa : Książka i Wiedza, 1954), 36.

220 Fragment of a document entitled, *Materiały od tow. J. Łukaszewicza* added to the Political Bureau protocols from 30 May 1979, most likely designated for the Voivodeship Departments of Propaganda: “The basic task of all the ideological and propaganda cell fronts is the shaping of a climate of honest work and trust toward the party, faith in the rightness of the road chosen by us for the further development of the country and the overcoming of difficulties we are experiencing. This must be realized both through the mass media tools that we control from the center and through links and resources that are in your hands. Two years ago we returned to the long-time, tried-and-true, methods of direct agitation by every member of the party . . . Through good agitators acting directly in places of work we should be able to correctly discern actual moods of working people and ensure the ability to influ-

Law,²²¹ each time to counteract moods of social dissatisfaction. The main forms of the propaganda departments' influence were talks, readings, and mass rallies in places of work alongside the socialist landscape's typical visual agitation (i.e. posters and banners).

Propaganda in the mass media consisted of practically all content broadcast through the means of mass communication available then, chiefly, the press, radio, cinema, and later television.²²² It is enough to reach for any issue of the *Trybuna Ludu*, *Nowe Drogi*, *Przekrój*, or *Płomyczek*, especially from the Stalinist period, see a film made then, or a film chronicle, and any one of Bierut's speeches (later Gomułka) or some other party dignitary, in order to convince oneself how much effort and desire was put into presenting one's own right to rule. Nearly every, even the smallest, and, it would seem, most banal fragment created by the mass media (the society of the spectacle) was supposed to be a proof with legitimating significance. It was supposed to convert the dogmas of the "new Faith" into the thought that the ruling ideology, the social-economic system, the ruling elites, the party with its first secretary, all are the best possible. Texts and film reels were not the only places where legitimating contents could be found. Everything was saturated with legitimating arguments: postage stamps²²³, posters on the streets, May 1st parades, celebrations of anniversaries, new monuments, homes, and plazas.

ence them. The Voivodeship Committees must have a systematic familiarity with the geography of social moods, control them, and properly direct educative and political work. We should especially care about the high state of political work being done in the 164 largest places of work" (AAN, KC PZPR, 3120, k. 8).

- 221 "There should be a maximum expansion of groups actively working with Party committees and the greater Basic Party Organization [POP], using them for political/agitation work, organizing, initiating the fight against speculation, corruption, abuses, and controlling the distribution of basic goods (*Zadania partii w warunkach stanu wojennego...*, k. 50).
- 222 A report dedicated to entertainment programming on TVP from June 1969 clearly said, "Television is an instrument of political action. There are practical consequences related to the tasks and character of specific kinds of programming that flow from this basic higher programming formula, including programs that come from the entertainment division. Often this politicization of television appeared directly in its programs. This was the case, for example, during the recent election campaign, when entertainment programming was an integral part of a television-wide action, both by airing especially attractive selection of daily programming, and by directly attacking the imagination of the viewer with ideological content" (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII – 316, k. 84).
- 223 Włodzimierz Suleja, "Propagandowe oblicze znaczka pocztowego (do 1956 r.)," *Acta Universitas Wratislaviensis*, eds. Romuald Gelles and Marian Wolański (Wrocław: Wrocław UP, 1994), 227–246.

All of this created the symbolic infrastructure of power for which the control over symbols was the entry into control over people. This unprecedented push for legitimation can be described using the language of Pierre Bourdieu as “symbolic violence.”²²⁴ The French scholar points out that every ruling power has at its disposal the possibility of forcing upon society a specific interpretation of cultural symbols. Their choice is made in a rather free manner, although not entirely arbitrary, in order to extract from the symbols the power indispensable for ruling. This phenomenon can also be interpreted in the categories of engineering of consent. Even though this term was used by Ralph Miliband to describe the mechanisms of propagating, in capitalist societies, general stances of acceptance for the existing state of things,²²⁵ it seems much more useful in relation to countries based upon the Soviet model.

It makes sense to ask what lay at the sources of these unprecedented legitimation efforts. Certainly, as I have already indicated, the lack of actual social support. However, this single factor does not explain everything. The uniqueness of the revolutionary authorities also played a role here. The communist party, Wojciech Lamentowicz has observed, desired to base its right to rule not for four years, one term (as is the case in democratic systems), but for an indefinite amount of time right up to the moment when its “historical mission”²²⁶ would be fulfilled. Furthermore, the pretensions of the ruling elites were not limited to playing the part of a political authority. They were interested in the total rule, starting with the heights, and ending on the lowest rungs; authority in its three dimensions: executive, legislative, and the judicial (even though Montesquieu’s tripartite division was seen as a bourgeois form of exploitation and was therefore abolished in practice).

The level of legitimation claims was also very high since the ambitions did not stop at directing collective life but instead reached much further—toward creating a new institutional-normative order. Justification was needed for “the role of a demiurge of the new historical epoch, which no other non-revolutionary ruling elites ever attempted to ascribe to themselves.”²²⁷ Finally, without gaining the minimum of legitimacy, it was impossible to achieve the mobilization of society when putting into motion millions of people. It was the *sine qua non* of the system’s

224 Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (New York: Sage, 1990), 1–68.

225 Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London: Merlin Press, 2009).

226 Wojciech Lamentowicz, “Kulturowe aspekty legitymizacji monocentrycznych struktur politycznych,” in *Legitymizacja klasyczne teorie i polskie doświadczenia*, eds. Andrzej Rychard and Antonii Sułek (Warsaw: PTS UW, 1988), 81.

227 *Ibid.*, 82.

functioning. Jakub Berman was aware of this, in a letter written to Bolesław Bierut in 1952 he adverted to the too weak a “swaying of the masses, the unacceptably slow tempo of mobilizing the party, the insufficient offensiveness of our agitation, the continually weak tension of political work, and even certain symptoms of self-satisfaction as a result of a faith in administrative omnipotence.”²²⁸

The set of legitimating arguments applied by the authorities were composed of at least several ways of legitimizing. The following were some of the most important:

1. Goal-oriented rational legitimation whose basis was composed of the Marxist-Leninist ideology
2. Legitimation through the achievements and effectiveness of the system
3. Legitimation through imputing charismatic qualities to the leaders of the ruling party and the Soviet Union
4. Rational-legal legitimation
5. Traditional legitimation
6. Nationalist legitimation

The meaning of these strategies in the whole process of legitimation was varied and prone to changes over time. There is no opportunity to precisely follow all these changes in this chapter. Raymond Tarras already did this in relation to the Marxist ideology in one of his monographs.²²⁹ Legitimation through economic effectiveness over time was analyzed by Tarkowski.²³⁰ An attempt at a synthesis of the history of Poland through the prism of legitimizing processes can be found in the work of Sokół.²³¹ In this single chapter, it would also be difficult to break through the difficulty of sifting out of the propaganda the message of specific “pure” types of legitimation. They were frequently strongly tied together in the propaganda speeches, articles in the press, in symbolic spectacles, and in manifested rituals. The goal-oriented-rational legitimation was the most specific form of legitimation to the communist system. Leszek Kołakowski wrote the following about it:

228 “Jakub Berman do Bolesława Bieruta,” in *Z tajnych archiwów*, ed. Andrzej Garlicki (Warsaw: BGW, 1993), 196.

229 Raymond Taras, *Ideology in a Socialist State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

230 Jacek Tarkowski, “Sprawność gospodarcza jako substytut legitymizacji władzy w Polsce powojennej,” in *Legitymizacja: klasyczne teorie*, op. cit.

231 Władysław Sokół, *Legitymizacja systemów politycznych* (Lublin, Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1997).

Ideology is not simply an aid or adjunct to the system but an absolute condition of its existence, irrespective of whether people believe it or not. Stalinist socialism created an empire ruled from Moscow, the basis of whose legality it derived from ideology; in particular, from the doctrine that the Soviet Union embodies the interests of all working people and especially the working class everywhere, that it represents their desires and aspirations, and that it is the first step towards a world revolution that will liberate the toiling masses wherever they may be. The Soviet system could not do without this ideology, which is the *sole raison d'être* for the existing apparatus of power . . .

. . . The ideology was rigid in the sense that it was expressed in a collection of unchanging cut-and-dried formulas which all were obliged to repeat without the slightest deviation, but the content of those formulas was so vague that they could be used to justify any state policy whatsoever, in all its phases and variations . . .

. . . However, it is also exposed to a risk from which democratic structures are immune: namely, it is extremely sensitive to ideological criticism. This means, among other things, that the intelligentsia plays a part that is not paralleled elsewhere. A threat to the intellectual validity of the system, or the advocacy of a different ideology, represents a mortal danger.²³²

Legitimation based upon this ideology had a goal-oriented-rational (teleological) character because the main and ultimate goal was the building of a communist society. The necessary condition for achieving this main goal was constituted by the following: the dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialization of the basic means of production, the leading role of the party, the alliance between the workers and peasants under the hegemony of the working class. It also justified the application of revolutionary methods and means following Stalin's well-known thesis about the sharpening class struggle according to the measure of the progress made in the building up of socialism. According to the previously mentioned Rigby, goal-oriented-rational legitimation was the most universal and timeless type of legitimation in the communist system:

In the Soviet Union the supreme legitimating value is the goal of 'communism,' a concept whose contours are sufficiently vague, like those of justice, order, democracy, the national good, honour, righteousness, etc., which figure in other authority systems, to allow the leadership wide flexibility of action in seeking it, but which differs from these in that it is not seen as an existing quality of the socio-political order but as something to be worked and fought for in the future . . . It is up to the leadership to translate the overall goal into intermediate and partial goals, like five-year economic plans, indoctrination programs, etc., and of party and government agencies to break these down into concrete immediate tasks for all work groups throughout the country. In this context,

232 Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origin, Growth, and Dissolution*; v. 3 *The Breakdown* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 90, 117, 90–91.

it is not surprising that the word ‘task’ (*zadanie*) is constantly on the lips of leaders and propagandists, for it is the primary defining concept for approved social action . . .²³³

Goal-oriented-rational legitimation also played a significant role in Poland, even though it seems that the rulers did not gain widespread legitimacy thanks to it. Rigby agrees with this and does not suggest it was effective. It was a means of self-legitimation for the ruling elites. This was its significance above all. The main goal, which was the building of communism, defined the substantial identity of its members and also formed the institutional-normative structure of the system.

The use of this form of legitimation reached its apogee during the Stalinist period when it was argued that:

The working class—the class under whose leadership humanity is making a historical jump out of the land of necessity into the land of freedom—is becoming the master of nature; it starts from basing itself upon knowing the laws of social progress, and through its self-conscious will it shapes its fate.²³⁴

The analysis of the stances taken by Polish society toward the system and the obligatory ideology is not an object of this study. However, it is impossible to avoid this question. Unfortunately, the existing studies upon this subject concentrate their attention almost exclusively upon the intelligentsia layer of society.²³⁵ On the other hand, it was precisely for this stratum, or more precisely for a certain group of intellectual, especially the younger generation, that Marxism could seem to be (and did seem to be) attractive and desirable.

The group of “real” Marxist fundamentalists was not—it seems—numerous even during the Stalinist years. The majority of the intelligentsia during the early period was rather reluctant, or hostile, toward the new authorities, as they saw them as imposed from the outside.²³⁶ The widest representation along with young

233 Thomas Rigby, “A Conceptual Approach to Authority, Power, and Policy in the Soviet Union,” *op. cit.*, 18–19.

234 Roman Werfel, “Klasa robotnicza – hegemon narodu, awangarda ludzkości,” *Nowe Drogi* (April 1952): 27.

235 Krystyna Kersten, “Powojenne wybory intelektualistów,” in: *Między wyzwoleniem a zniewoleniem. Polska 1944–1956* (London: Aneks, 1993), 100–163; Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage, 1990); Andrzej Walicki, *Zniewolony umysł po latach* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1993); Henryk Słabek, *Intelektualistów obraz własny 1944–1989* (Warsaw: KiW, 1997).

236 During a conference of teachers who were members of the Polish Worker’s Party [PPR] which took place on 13 to 14 May 1945 the then Minister of Education, Stanisław Szrzeszewski stated that, “Groups of petit-bourgeois and the intelligentsia, teachers included, are occupying an irresolute and undecided position. There is a

intellectuals was constituted by the party apparatus, which before the war belonged to the Communist Party of Poland (KPP). For the first group, the breakthrough began with the thaw, whose clear signs appeared already toward the end of 1954. The unfulfilled hopes tied to the post-October changes and the shock caused by the choking off of the uprising in Hungary—all of this together led to a nearly universal erosion of the “New Faith” among this social group.²³⁷

It is much more difficult to answer the question of Marxism’s reach and the strength of its influence upon the ruling elite. The lack of studies upon this topic is especially vexing and condemns us to speculations and hypotheses rather than empirically grounded judgments. The problem deserves even more attention because, according to the opinion of many researchers, we should recall, the conviction of the very ruling elites about their own rights to rule had a deciding meaning for the stabilization and effective functioning of the system. They hold the view that the first and most important cause of all political crises that took place in Poland and other countries of the Eastern Bloc was the loss of “faith in legitimation” among the political elites, usually preceded by the so-called dimorphism of values (that is, the declaration and profession of differing values).

It is a truism to judge that the ruling elites were not uniform. It is possible to distinguish at least four groups—the party apparatus, the professional military cadre, the managerial levels of the state and economic administration, and, finally, the security apparatus. These groups differed from each other in their professional experiences, access to information, inner integration, education, and so on. Each of these groups was smitten by the “Hegelian sting” differently and their symptoms appeared at different times. It is possible to say generally that from the period of the “thaw” members of the ruling elite were characterized by an unadulterated faith in the objective necessity of the building of communism in Poland, a strong

certain reserve and waiting alongside serious increases in declarations of being on our side” (AAN, KC PZPR, 295/X – 19, k. 2).

237 Among the phenomena that made the work of the Propaganda Division of the Central Committee more difficult were, according to Szrzeszewski, “Disclosure of errors from the so-called ‘period of the cult of personality’ and other reasons caused shock and an ideological collapse, which created a fertile ground for anti-socialist agitation. There has been, and remains to this day, a disturbance of faith in socialism in a portion of the toiling masses, especially among the intelligentsia . . . particularly deep hesitation among the party intelligentsia seriously reduced the number of party propaganda cadres and limited ability to use for propaganda the necessary personnel in journalism, science, and the arts” (*Tezy w sprawie najbliższych zadań propagandy partyjnej*, prawdopodobnie przełom 1957/58, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII – 274, k. 70).

conviction that they are the purveyors of historical necessity, an avant-garde of the world revolution, the depositors of the future, finally, that the party, at whose head they stood, personifies the interests of the working class. The events of 1956 shook this faith, which influenced the process of the ruling elite's decomposition, still, the nucleus of Gomułka's team, with the First Secretary at their head, remained faithful to communist ideals. In March 1959 Gomułka said:

Our party armed with its own and international experience from our times comes to its third Congress more mature, wiser, consolidated around the immortal ideas of Marxism-Leninism. Today we move along the road of socialism with a strong and decided step and more than ever before we are sure that in a historically short period of time socialism will achieve a full and complete victory in our country. This is attested to by the inexorable laws of development for societies and humanity, it is attested by, in an increasingly convincing manner, by our own practice and the practice of the world socialist system.²³⁸

Deep auto-legitimation permitted the transition to the daily agenda and to stand above the lack of social backing, which did not mean disregarding it, or tiring in trying to convince society about the rightness of the chosen path. We can suspect that Gomułka, throughout the whole period of his governments, was aware of the small backing from the side of Polish society, a deficit of mass legitimation. In one of his speeches from June 1968, he admitted that during the wartime period and directly after it the party found itself "vastly in the minority." "It is difficult to say it today, but if we, let's assume in 1945, after the end of the war held, a general vote, a general election, based upon the principles of five-point electoral voting, then how would our party have fared?" asked the Secretary of the PZPR rhetorically. "It certainly would not have fared as a powerful party, the majority would have been held by someone else," he answered. The lack of social consent to rule was compensated by an imperturbable faith in the logic of history, which gave the right (in accordance with the doctrine) to those holding the mandate of the working class—the party. Further on Gomułka said:

So it is always that the party, every movement of progress represents the minority. The party is the avant-garde, which represents the best part of the working class and it is its task to see far ahead, to see perspectives, take advantage of the arrangement of class powers in the country and the world. This is the whole, if I may say so, mystery of the party's success. Our successes were the result of the position the party occupied. We think in nationwide categories but from a class position. This kind of thinking is lost for comrades, comrades who write and those that don't, among our wider circle of activists,

238 "Przemówienie sprawozdawcze W. Gomułki" in: *III Zjazd Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej. Stenogram. Warszawa, 10.III-19.III.1959* (Warsaw: KiW, 1959), 15–16.

and the ideological activists . . . Comrades, what will happen to the ideological backbone of the party if we will educate ourselves in such a spirit that Zionism is a great danger in Poland?²³⁹

The First Secretary of the PZPR had justified worries about the state of the “ideological backbone of the party.” The causes and symptoms of this disease will be discussed in the following chapters. Its progress was, to a great degree, correlated with the growth of the significance of nationalistic legitimation. Here we will limit ourselves to a few examples. At the beginning of the 1970’s one of the voivodship secretaries of the PZPR turned the attention of the central party to “the relatively low level of ideological knowledge in the party itself.” He thought that “familiarity with the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, and the level of this knowledge, are unsatisfactory, both among the activists and the workers of the party apparatus. I see an urgent need to organize the whole system . . . of ideological education, of functioning party activists, and the assets who are in charge of management positions.”²⁴⁰ By the end of the 1970’s an official at the strictest level of management, Andrzej Werblan, in an unofficial conversation admitted that they should take the “direction of a gradual divorce of materialist philosophy from the doctrine of socialism in Poland.”²⁴¹ This statement indicates the disappearance of orthodox Marxist auto-legitimation in the ruling apparatus. However, it is difficult to agree with the opinion about its total absence during this and later periods, especially among the group comprised of the party’s leadership. It is an oversimplification to acknowledge the stance that Poland after 1970 was ruled by technocrats who associated Marx and Lenin only with 1st May parade banners. Wojciech Jaruzelski as late as 1987 argued that, “Marxism is a fine teaching. By using its methodology, it is possible to understand everything and put it in its place.”²⁴² The order of “captive minds”—if we permit ourselves to use Czesław Miłosz’s concept—lasted until the end of People’s Poland—with the passage of time it had fewer and fewer members, but it was not deprived of influence upon the authorities.

The erosion of the faith of the intellectual and political elites in the dogmas of the “New Faith” had significant consequences for the system of legitimation. One of them, (however, this is not the sole explanation for it), was the decreasing

239 *Przemówienie W. Gomułki na posiedzeniu Komisji Zjazdowej*, 24 VI 1968, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-904, k. 58.

240 *Informacja o zjawiskach ekonomicznych i społeczno-politycznych w województwie bydgoskim*, AAN, KC PZPR, 3144, k. 14.

241 From the unpublished journal of Jerzy Tejchma. This fragment is in the possession of the present study’s author.

242 “Świat nie jest Arkadią. Polska w oczach Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego,” *Polityka*, 2.V.1987.

ideological pressure of the state. The word “communism” from 1956 onwards increasingly rarely appeared in propaganda messages, in the official speeches of the leaders, and also during inter-party discussions. As demonstrated by 1st of May slogans from the 1960’s “communism” was connected almost exclusively to the Soviet Union, where it was already built, whereas in the remaining countries of the Soviet Bloc, according to the standard propaganda interpretation, in “toil and drudgery” socialism was being erected.²⁴³ There was also an avoidance of a more precise description of the coming “kingdom of freedom,” and especially such of its features as absolute freedom, the disappearance of the state and army, etc., since the existing political and economic order totally contradicted it. They were seen as utopian and unrealistic, *eo ipso* outright de-legitimizing. It is possible to read a fragment from a paper by Jerzy Morawski, the Secretary of the KC and the Political Bureau, delivered to workers of the party apparatus in 1957, in this manner:

The free society of creators, without a state, will be realized in the future, in communism. Today, when there is not an abundance of goods, and when there are class enemies within and without the country, when there is a completely defined level of the powers of production, the degree of productivity and the degree of awareness of the working masses—the proposing of such a slogan is of course a utopia, and, taken objectively, even, a reactionary utopia.²⁴⁴

Runs of works by classic authors numbered in the hundreds of thousands could only make their way into the hands of a narrow circle of recipients. Marxism, even in the version codified by Stalin, was too complicated, its main goal not real enough, to convince wider social groups. This put the propaganda apparatus before the necessity of simplifying ideological contents, translating them into everyday language, for them to be understandable to everyone. However, legitimation did not lose its teleological character. The main goal was marked out as socialism, because it was more realistic, and it fit the constraints of the times better.

Socialism was easier to imagine than communism, and it was not abandoned until the end. In 1979, during a period of a deepening economic crisis, the Department of Propaganda and Agitation KC PZPR recommended, “[We] ought to efficiently take advantage of the immense motivational valor of a forward-looking

243 1st May slogans prepared by the Propaganda and Agitation Division of the Central Committee: “Long live KPZR—the party of Communism’s builders,” *Niech żyje KPZR – partia budowniczych komunizmu* (1961), AAN, KC PZPR, 2221, 342; “We send our greetings to the fraternal nations of the Soviet Union, which are building Communism!” (1962), AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-669, k. 154.

244 Jerzy Morawski, *Niektóre problemy walki przeciw dogmatyzmowi i rewizjonizmowi*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII – 272, k. 7.

vision of Poland in the 1970's and 1980's, the future face of a country of developed socialism—in connection with the awareness of the great creative possibilities inherent in our country.”²⁴⁵ Even after the implementation of Martial Law, there was an effort to devise some sort of legitimizing goal. In a meeting of the Political Bureau in June 1982 Wojciech Jaruzelski said:

... As I remember there once was a three-year period of satiety, which went down well in the history of Poland, we must have a three-year period of deeds, mobilization, balance, and rebirth now. We will still see what name will be given to it, but people must see in this some sort of goal for which they can fight, for which it is worth to undertake efforts and see them as not something dreamed up by the elites, but as their own participation and authorship in this regard.²⁴⁶

Both examples demonstrate that, almost until the end of People's Poland, the leadership of the party recognized goal-oriented-rational legitimation as important in the process of legitimation. They also confirm the hypothesis that the specific role of teleological legitimation, that is, referring to goals and values, and not to results, was caused by the inability to boast about political, economic, social, diplomatic, and other accomplishments.²⁴⁷

The radical modification of ideology, its attendant propaganda-vulgarization, and the banalization of the works of Marx and successors led to the loss of its meta-practical meaning.²⁴⁸ It is characteristic, as the above cited Morawski understood, that the ideological offensive of 1958,

you hear the need for an ideological offensive repeated *ad nauseam*. We are all convinced that it is necessary. What matters is that this ideological offensive should happen in a manner that is tangible and concrete . . . In short, there is a certain resource of knowledge, concrete knowledge based upon numbers and facts, concerning our country, our experiences, our development, and that is the material for a widespread ideological offensive.²⁴⁹

As is evident, ideological legitimation became a trivial juggling of statistics, which points to the superiority of socialism over capitalism. Ideological content proclaimed by mass propaganda is reduced exclusively to slogans and phrases.

245 *Główne kierunki ideologicznej i propagandowej pracy partii w I półroczu 1979 r. /przyjęte przez Biuro Polityczne KC PZPR w styczniu br./*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1809, k. 186.

246 *Posiedzenie Biura Politycznego KC*, 18 VI 1982, AAN, KC PZPR, 1832, k. 568.

247 Wojciech Sokół, *Legitymizacja systemu politycznego...*, op. cit., 101.

248 Ray Taras., *Ideology in a Socialist...*, op. cit., 33.

249 *Referat wygłoszony na naradzie Sekretarzy Propagandy Komitetów Wojewódzkich*, lut 1958, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII – 272, k. 126.

The formula of legitimating through the achievements and efficiency of the system, even though it does not square with the definition of legitimation presupposed earlier *sensu stricto* (efficiency has an instrumental character, while legitimation is a normative evaluation), it was nonetheless treated as an important supplement to ideological legitimation. The weight and importance of the revolutionary achievement was supposed to confirm the legitimacy of the right to rule. This form of legitimating depended, among other things, upon demonstrating that as a result of revolutionary changes there came about a clear improvement in the conditions of life; the phantoms of hunger, misery, and unemployment disappeared and “one lives more prosperously.”

“I’ve known the Mura Mirowska Paper Mill twenty years now,” the *Trybuna Ludu* cited the words of one of the work leaders in 1950:

Back then I hated this red building... I hated the building with the sign ‘Management.’ What can I say, I was an exploited worker, I worked, like many, I fought alongside others against the owners of the factory with strikes, demonstrations—for bread, for a steady income. This was the dark, miserable life of a worker in prewar Poland, a life of an uncertain tomorrow and the threat of unemployment.

And now: “my wife stopped complaining that there is too little money: our kitchen shelves hold everything—fats, meats, eggs, and flour. And we always somehow manage things so that savings remain. When last year I was sent to Czechoslovakia for a two-week vacation you should’ve seen how she stocked me up for the road.”

Legitimation was also sought though stressing that as an effect of the systematic change there was an opening up of access for “working people” to cultural institutions. “My wife always sets me up with tickets for cinema. I set her up with theater in Warsaw. She laughs about it—you’re wily. You pay for cinema, but you keep getting free theater tickets! We live better, more prosperously and easier.”²⁵⁰

The most significant changes, where bragged about especially willingly, included also the battle with illiteracy and access to education for children and youth from lower social strata. The speech conspectus for speakers prepared by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the PZPR for speakers taking the floor during the sessions of the National District Councils on the occasion of July 22nd instructed them to stress the following: “Thanks to industrialization a cultural revolution occurred in the countryside.

250 Antoni Skoczek, “Żyję coraz dostatniej,” *Trybuna Ludu*, 8–10.IV.1950.

Illiteracy, which in prewar Poland covered about 28% of the population, was in principle totally eradicated.”²⁵¹

One of the basic varieties of legitimation, through the achievements and efficiency of the system, nearly *ad nauseam* repeated in the press or in the speeches of the representatives of the authorities, was the citing of successes achieved by the socialist economy. During the Stalinist period, the press constantly published columns of numbers, attesting to an unheard-of growth sustained by the economy. The superiority of a rational, planned socialist economy was indicated most frequently through contrasting its achievements with the production results of industrial prewar Poland. Bolesław Bierut in his New Year’s message for 1950 indicated that

During 1949 the overall production of the manufacturing industry was around 75% higher than in the last years before the war, whereas when counted *per capita* our industry now produces nearly two and a half times more than before the war... What do these numbers attest to? The attest to... the superiority of the socialized and planned economy over the capitalist economy.²⁵²

As the 1950’s turned into the 1960’s there was an eagerness to praise the Soviet achievements in the conquest of space, which were supposed to constitute yet another argument for the chosen path of development: “The flight of Soviet man into the Cosmos—a victory for socialism, humanity, and peace!” and “The communist first reached for the stars—Parise to Gagarin and Titov” (both slogans from 1st May 1960), “The first flight into the cosmos is a symbol of the superiority socialism over capitalism” (a banner from the streets of Warsaw. In turn, the biggest propaganda campaign of the 1970’s was tied to the first flight of a Polish cosmonaut.²⁵³

In all the chief ideological and propaganda undertakings we ought to widely take advantage of the fact of the first Polish cosmonaut. It must be shown that this event and the entirety of Poland’s participation in the Interkosmos program is not only an indicator of the great possibilities of contemporary Polish science and technology but also symbolizes at the same time a general social-economic development of the country that was achieved in the process of constructing socialism.²⁵⁴

251 *Konspekt przemówienia na sesję GRN w związku z obchodem święta 22 lipca 1952*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-195, k. 29.

252 “Orędzie noworoczne Prezydenta R.P Bolesława Bieruta,” *Trybuna Ludu*, 1.I.1950.

253 Marcin Zaremba, „PRL w kosmosie. Biuro Polityczne w poszukiwaniu bohatera,” *Polityka*, 2.IV.1998.

254 *Główne kierunki ideologicznej i propagandowej pracy partii w II półroczu 1978 r. / Zaaprobowane przez Biuro Polityczne KC PZPR w sierpniu b.r./*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1807, k. 340.

The fashion for this variety of legitimation (through the allegedly greater achievements and efficiency of the system than during the 1920's) was only generational and weakened when Gomulka's crew left. For these people, the comparison with the Sanacja Poland was nearly natural. It had at least a theoretical chance to reach that part of society, which entered its self-conscious grown-up life still before the war. However, the generations already born in People's Poland treated this variety of argumentation as a pure abstraction. It also lost its ability to influence in relation to the increasing openness of the system and the flow of information about the standard of life in capitalist societies. Yet, it continued to be rolled out tenaciously by members of Gomulka's strict leadership group, which first experienced the consequences of Poland's isolation (rarely visiting Western countries) and did not really have a notion of the changes taking place there. What Roman Zambrowski said in April 1956 is characteristic:

I heard of an incident where in the neighborhood someone talking said: "What do we really need this socialism for, wouldn't it be better to have a capitalism such as in Sweden with televisions... and cars accessible widely to the masses, and so on?" This an error that is very deeply-seated at present, inhering quite widely not only in the masses, but also in the party masses, when it seems to the comrades that the alternative for People's Poland is Sweden, when it seems to them that it would be enough to choose the path of capitalism, in order to transform the country into America, Canada, or into Sweden. When it is not understood that the alternative for People's Poland . . . is pre-September Poland . . . relatively speaking: the level of a Greece, Portugal, Spain.²⁵⁵

The reinvigoration of legitimation through accomplishments and efficiency of the system fell to the new First Secretary of the party, Edward Gierek, who better read the social moods and expectations than the "decadent Gomulka." Within the frames of the Central Committee there came to be a special Interdepartmental Team of the Central Committee for dealing with the matter of the Economic Propaganda of the PZPR's Central Committee. The authorities stressed the universality of education, equality in social advancement, a fair distribution of goods—joining all these gains with the socialist order and the ruling party. We read in one of the documents from the time:

We are concerned with grounding the conviction that socialism is the only order that made possible the completion of deep social-economic changes and created the conditions for the dynamic development of our country, got rid of unemployment and guaranteed the right to work for all citizens, made possible a quick and comprehensive development of education, science, and culture, ensured social and medical care for all

255 *Z wystąpienia Tow. Zambrowskiego w Szkole Centralnej*, IV.1957, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII – 272, k. 27.

the people in our country, ensured the return of Poland to its old Piast western borders, became the guarantee of the country's strength, security, and the prosperity of the nation. This is all served by the program and all the workings of our party for which the main goal is man, his good, and comprehensive development.²⁵⁶

The sources of the popularity of the type of argumentation under consideration through nearly the whole period of the PRL should be sought, it seems, in the very intensely felt need of the party leaders to achieve success, to convince themselves, as well as their fellow comrades, about the reasonableness of the economic politics pursued by them, which—they wanted to believe and that they probably truly desired²⁵⁷—was supposed to lead to the civilizational development of the country and the prosperity of the whole of society. For the same reasons, this variety of legitimation had in part also an auto-legitimizing dimension. The data in percentages that was broadcast *ad nauseam* were supposed to attest to the nearly unheard growth in all areas of economic life (every party conference began with such a report!) and was treated like a fetish that strengthened faith in the meaning of exercising power.

Rational-legal legitimation did not play a comparable role to strategies of legitimation we have described earlier, nonetheless, the rulers who relied upon it sought to gain titles to power.²⁵⁸ Taking advantage of this variety of legitimation constitutes another example (after nationalism) of a verification of the primordial Marxist revolutionary ideology, which foresaw the abolishment of all institutions of the old order. However, once more, political practice triumphed over ideological principles. Let us note that the new system established after World War II accepted principles of organization and administration in full agreement with the Weberian bureaucratic organization. It relied upon institutions with a capitalist state genealogy—government, Sejm, ministries, courts, and so on. As one might suspect, the adaptation of old organizational forms known to Polish society was seen as a chance to take over the legitimation of the old prewar institutions—such

256 *Założenia ideowo-polityczne i organizacyjne kampanii związanej z 35-leciem Polski Ludowej oraz 40 rocznicą napaści Niemiec hitlerowskich na Polskę*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1809, k. 734.

257 “I don’t want Poland to be weak,” wrote Gomułka to members of the Central Committee (*List Władysława Gomułki z 27.III.1971 do członków KC PZPR*, in: *Gomułka i inni...*, op. cit., 206).

258 Wojciech Sokół points towards a kind of “legalistic obsession” among the ruling elites expressing itself, for example, in the desire that even Martial Law in Poland in 1981 should be according to law (*Legitymizacja systemu politycznego...*, op. cit., 107).

as the Sejm or government—thereby legitimating them, as well as the totality of the system.²⁵⁹

For these same reasons, the results of referendums and the first postwar elections had such a great significance for the new rulers. The authorities attached great meaning to them despite the way they were conducted and however much the announced results weakened their legitimating effect. In situations where other sources of legitimation failed, or, for some other reason, it is convenient, since it is possible to call upon the legal character of the rule established through the electoral path. In subsequent years, following the consolidation of the system after 1948, the significance of elections from the point of view that interests us fell. Despite this, each time much organizational and propaganda effort was devoted to giving them effectiveness as tools of legitimation.

Legitimation through giving charismatic qualities to leaders also did not belong to the leading strategies of legitimation. According to Tarkowski, there was no undertaking of larger-scale attempts to give charismatic legitimation to specific leaders in Poland. He thought that one can only talk about “popularizing the certain leaders as figures, particularly the First Secretary of the PZPR Central Committee, of surrounding them with a courtly ritual (E. Gierek), but not about striving to create charisma in the Weberian understanding of it.”²⁶⁰ We can substantially agree with this opinion, however, not entirely. The cult of Bolesław Bierut was not some exception, as the sociologist cited above might suggest; even if it is the case that not in the years preceding Stalinism, nor in those to come, was the First Secretary of the ruling party blessed by propaganda with such authority and charisma as “comrade Thomas” was. The apogee of this cult occurred in March and April of 1952 during the celebrations of Bierut’s 60th birthday. The special postal stamp series issued for this occasion represented him in a portrait surrounded by a wreath of laurels.²⁶¹ The press was flooded by a flood of letters, articles, and reports about the manufacturing commitments undertaken for the commemoration. Such descriptions were tossed about: “Our dear Teacher and leader!... our dear father.”²⁶² Edward Ochab said during the culmination of the celebrations:

The working people deeply love and honor comrade Bierut, because they know that his whole beautiful, sacrificial life is filled with work and struggle for the social and national liberation of Poland, because it sees in him the personification of the best qualities of the

259 See: Jacek Tarkowski, *Legitymizacja władzy...*, op. cit., 54.

260 Ibid., 56.

261 Włodzimierz Suleja, “Propagandowe oblicze znaczka...,” op. cit., 242.

262 “List majstra Szczepana Górnego do towarzysza Bieruta,” *Trybuna Ludu*, 7.IV.1952. Jacek Tarkowski, *Legitymizacja władzy...*, op. cit., 56.

Polish revolutionary, patriot, and internationalist, a faithful continuator and inheritor of the progressive traditions of our nation, a reliable teacher, friend, and leader of the workers and peasants, intelligentsia and youth, all the progressive classes and layers of the liberated Polish nation.²⁶³

What's paradoxical is how, for a short time, Bierut really did nearly become a national hero, because he died in Moscow, as if to spite the USSR ("he left in a fur coat, and came back in a coffin"). Andrzej Kijowski noted during those days:

I am totally crushed; human Reason fell victim to the greatest swindle of history. People on the street in Warsaw hailed Bierut as a national hero. The masses needed a hero. They nominated Bierut, because he died in Moscow, to spite the cult of Stalin as if to spite the reserve with which his commemorations began, or in spite of the expected general reserve. The funeral took place with a parade for a general. The masses were delighted.²⁶⁴

The voluntary, as it seems, queue of Warsaw residents before the building of the PZPR Central Committee to see the coffin of Bolesław Bierut can be taken as a confirmation of the working of this charisma and certain legitimating achievements. However, one must remember that Bierut was only a "faithful student of Lenin and Stalin." Therefore, Władysław Gomułka was certainly quite right when he said the following at the VIII Plenum in 1956:

Stalin stood at the top of this hierarchical ladder... The First Secretaries of the individual countries sat on the secondary rungs of the ladder for the cult of the individual, where they clad themselves in imperial robes of infallibility and wisdom... Their cult can only be called a reflected glow, borrowed light. It glowed much like the moon glows.²⁶⁵

"A man who infinitely dear to all," "The source of creative inspirations for working people in Poland," "The greatest genius of the civilized world," "Immortal," these are only a few of the epithets that made up the material for Stalin's cult,²⁶⁶ one of the key elements in the process of the legitimation of the Stalinist order in Poland. The cult of Stalin and his most faithful student Bierut was a part of the

263 "Przemówienie Edwarda Ochaba na akademii w Warszawie w dniu 18 kwietnia 1952 r.," *Trybuna Ludu*, 19 IV 1952.

264 Andrzej Kijowski, *Dzienniki 1955–1959* (note from 20 March 1956), eds. Kazimiera Kijowska and Jan Błoński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1998), 92.

265 Władysław Gomułka, "Przemówienie na VIII Plenum KC PZPR," *Trybuna Ludu*, 21.X.1956.

266 Robert Kupiecki, „Natchnienie milionów”. *Kult Józefa Stalina w Polsce 1944–1956* (Warsaw: WSiP, 1993). See also: Bronisław Baczko, "Stalin, czyli jak sfabrykować charyzmę," in: *Wyobrażenia społeczne. Szkice o nadziei i pamięci zbiorowej* (Warsaw: PWN, 1994), 173–192.

society of spectacles created through the party chaplains upon lies and fictions. Stalin did not exist in a definite empirical order, but, and perhaps above all, took on a transcendent dimension. Thereby his governments were similar to religious revelation. As Stanisław Filipowicz puts it: “Sacralization... makes possible the implementation of hierarchy, to give order in a world of values, the creation of a certain normative system that legitimizes the empirical order.”²⁶⁷

The descriptions of the attempts of charismatic legitimation of later leaders are difficult to compare in scale to the propaganda procedures connected with the cults of Bierut and Stalin. Nonetheless, they did take place and we cannot forget about them, all the more because we can speak of their partial legitimating success. We should mention Gomułka in the first place, a person devoid of charisma, yet, in October 1956 he enjoyed the results of an unpremeditated legend of being a leader, who in the name of national interests could stand up against the dictates of the Soviet Union. During this time, for the only time in its history, the system gained a qualified support of the clear majority of Polish society, precisely as a result of the coexistence of both nationalist and charismatic factors. Several years later, when the magic was gone, Gomułka’s propaganda apparatus this time crafted organized celebrations for the 60th birthday of the First Secretary—something decidedly outside the boundaries of accepted practice in such situations in democratic countries. From all over the country came good wishes and production obligations, clearly taking their cue from earlier commemorations of the sort. A similar mass character applied to the mailing of expressions of support for the First Secretary in connection with the events of March 1968.

The next First Secretary, Edward Gierek, did not lean upon the examples of his predecessors so much, recreating himself, above all, as a good landlord, but not without paternalistic aspirations. During his “reign” the hanging up of portraits of party-state leaders was abandoned.²⁶⁸ He did reign in all varieties of television and radio information programming.

An example of partially successful attempts at giving charismatic qualities to a leader may be noted in the propaganda efforts connected with the person of Wojciech Jaruzelski, who had a certain gift of charismatic influence anyway. One can risk the judgment that in a great measure thanks to the person of the general

267 Stanisław Filipowicz, *Mit i spektakl władzy* (Warsaw: PWN, 1988), 149.

268 “At the request of Comrade Gierek the Bureau decided to only place the national emblem in state offices, whereas in party offices only portraits of Lenin, and, eventually, other outstanding activists from the history of the worker’s movement” (*Protokół nr 24 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 29 XII 1970, AAN, KC PZPR, V/90, document pointed out by Krzysztof Persak).

and through the mission marked out by him for saving the nation, which was supposed to legitimate the introduction of Martial Law, and strengthened by a specific climate of military obedience that appeared when the general took over the helm of the government, the elite was able, to a certain degree, to break through the intra-party crisis caused by the creation of Solidarity. There was an attempt to amplify the impact of Jaruzelski's charisma also for the external audience, which, was supposed to be served by the rumors circulated (by the security apparatus, it seems) about nominating the general as the Marshal of Poland. The invariably high marks Jaruzelski received in countrywide popularity and social trust polls can be attributed to his personal self-created image, the high prestige of the military uniform in Polish society, and finally the quiet, but all the more effective, efforts of the propaganda apparatus of the 1980's.

Propaganda bestowed charismatic qualities not only upon the First Secretaries of the PZPR but, above all, upon the ruling party itself. The party turned itself into a charismatic leader, who, because of extraordinary qualities it is endowed with, had the right to "lead." We can, therefore, speak of a kind of "institutional charisma," or else of a "charisma of an institution," as Tarkowski calls this phenomenon, citing an apposite fragment from Bolesław Bierut's article "Sources of Our Party's Power"²⁶⁹:

The source of the intellectual and moral power, the source of the growth and development in all of us, are the ideas for whose incarnation our party struggles—when we are united with it in deed, heart, and thought into a unity in every moment of our lives, if we constitute a part of the party's power, if we are unboundedly faithful to its ideological indications... What's more, it is an irreplaceable and uninterrupted school of life, a teacher of fortitude, a source of strength and encouragement even in the most difficult moments of life... The party is the source of shaping and strengthening of the most noble feelings in man.²⁷⁰

The Soviet Union was also treated like a charismatic leader. The achievement of the highest goal, socialism, was only possible through the precise imitation of the USSR, which chose this azimuth earlier and has happily reached it. Therefore, everything that issued from the Country of the Soviets was the best, a model that should be immediately incarnated in life. Regulations and directives recommended to particular industries the studying of the Soviet Union's example. It was not only the model of all virtues but also the liberator from Hitler's occupation and the guarantor of peace on Earth. Bierut said about it:

269 Jacek Tarkowski, *Legitymizacja władzy...*, op. cit., 56.

270 Bolesław Bierut, *O partii* (Warsaw: KiW, 1952), 324.

We are proud that we draw from the experiences and output of the Soviet nations, which in a brotherly manner share with us their great achievements in all the areas of industry, technology, farming, healthcare, their deeply humanistic arts, and leading sciences. We see it as a boon that in a time of increasing fascist savagery and moral decay in capitalist countries, in times of genocide and at a time when the imperialists are using biological weapons, we can benefit from the experiences and aid of the great Country of the Soviets, which is changing the face of the Earth, is harnessing atomic power for peace, is building canals and changes the courses of rivers, and is erecting the great structures of communism.²⁷¹

It is no coincidence that we left traditional legitimation for last. In part because it overlaps with the nationalist mode of legitimating. Traditional elements of legitimation in socialist countries, according to the above cited Rigby, were only a deviation from teleological legitimation based upon the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Another Sovietologist, Richard Löwenthal, expressed a similar view.²⁷² Christel Lane took the opposite tack on this question. According to her, the legitimation of the Soviet political system corresponded to the classical type of traditional legitimation.²⁷³ The goal that was the communist society sketched itself out too hazily, abstractly, and distantly to be able to awaken active support among masses of citizens, even in the USSR. This does not mean that ideology stopped marking out the coordinates for action, especially among the political elites, as much as it means that it was transformed into myth. Its Marxist-Leninist contents were joined to, or even overshadowed by, the contents of the Soviet tradition and patriotism. The continued existence of the regime over time became, and this is still Lane's argument, one of the arguments for its legitimation. The continuation of Lenin's political thought was an extremely important justification for the reign of the communist elites. Traditional legitimation finds its embodiment in an extended system of rituals. It became a method of social communication between the dominant groups and their subordinates for whom the meaning of ideology (i.e., goal-oriented-rational legitimation) as a guideline for action was marginal. Ritualism manifested itself most strongly in rituals of initiation into the Vladimir Lenin All-Union Pioneer Organization, the young communist league

271 Bolesław Bierut, *O konstytucji Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej* (Warsaw: KiW, 1952), 37

272 Richard Löwenthal, "The Ruling Party in a Mature Society," in: *Social Consequences of Modernization in Communist Societies*, ed. Mark Field (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 107.

273 Christel Lane, "Legitimacy and Power in the Soviet Union Through Socialist Ritual," in: *British Journal of Political Science* 14 (1984): 207–217. See, by the same author: *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society – The Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

(Komsomol), working class, army, the status of gaining citizenship, and it also dominated mass political celebrations.

References to the Soviet revolutionary tradition in Poland, despite cyclical attempts, such as celebrations of the anniversary of the October Revolution and the birthday of Lenin, had a limited chance for legitimizing success, because of the lack of connections with the history of the nation, or even its outright foreignness (the Polish-Soviet War of 1920). Therefore, inspiration was also drawn from the tradition of the Polish revolutionary and communist movements. Thanks to the official blessing and propaganda publicity in 1958 there were celebrations of the anniversary of the founding of the KPP, which recalled the “everlasting values of [this party’s] tradition.” The date of the proclamation of the PKWN (Polish Committee of National Liberation) manifesto became the most important state holiday. Through boisterous celebrations of significant anniversaries of this event (20th, 30th, 35th anniversaries, etc.), references were made to the passage of time as a legitimating element (otherwise silencing the third part of the Manifesto). The history of People’s Poland was presented as a monolithic and uninterrupted continuity, an unstructured collection of events, which were put together into the “achievements of People’s Poland.” The goal of these procedures was, among other things, “the extending of perspective,” recalling the characteristic traditional point of view, which is convinced that “it has always been thus” and will always continue to be.²⁷⁴ However, all of this did not eliminate serious problems.

The revolutionary tradition in Poland was never an especially politically attractive argument, which can be attested to by the epithets “Bolshevik” or “Jedno-Communist” applied to it. Until 1944 Communists in Poland existed far out on the margins of political life. They did not have their own Lenin and their truly own heroic revolution to which they could refer to. Their convoluted fate (declaring themselves on the side of the Bolsheviks in the War of 1920, the dissolution of the KPP in 1938) also did not make it easier for them to reach for their own history. In Poland, there never was a standard and a binding interpretation of the movement’s history, even partially reminiscent of the *History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Short Course*. The cyclical crises (1956, 1970, 1980) undermined earlier achievements and the charismas of succeeding First Secretaries made the grounding of the new PRL tradition (on the Soviet model) very difficult. Furthermore, the tradition of revolutionary struggle did not suggest models and norms of action in a monopolistic system, in this sense, it was not only anachronistic but also damaging. In other words, the rulers had a problem, especially

274 See: Wojciech Sokół, *Legitymizacja systemów politycznych...*, op. cit., 171.

toward the end of the system's existence, with "inventing" their own tradition that would be significant for a circle wider than a small group of communists. There was talk about this in the previously mentioned session of the Political Bureau in June 1982 dedicated to propaganda. The Chief of the Press Department of the Central Committee attempted to cheer up those gathered by saying:

I would like to say here that when it comes to historical education then we can obviously regret that we have two good names, for now, Gomułka and Bierut, but I should say that perhaps now we have two good names, Gomułka and Bierut, but not so long ago we had none, as far as I know. Therefore, I think that we should also slowly rebuild this personified, in a positive sense, history of ours.²⁷⁵

For the afore mentioned reasons, when the party's leaders wanted to aim to meet the cultural codes of the Poles, they stood before the necessity of making the tradition of the movement nationalistic, uniting themselves with the tradition of the nation, so that they would form an indivisible whole. This will be frequently discussed in the chapters that follow. Here I will give one example from the words of a party memorial of 1979:

In the upcoming months, we have several important political anniversaries: the 35th anniversary of the Polish People's Army, the 60th anniversary of regaining independence, the 30th anniversary of our party and the 60th anniversary of the founding of the KPP... We celebrate these events and we will continue to do this with respect and in forms proper to people and matters that are the contents of our history. This is a form of shaping and strengthening the political culture of the nation and the respect of society for its traditions. At the same time, it should be a lesson in disseminating the contents of our ideas and historical knowledge. We should concern ourselves, above all, with gaining through these celebrations good marks for our recent history, to remind that everything that was salvific for our nation, what protected it from destruction, what created for us the best chance for development, all that had its source in the ideology of our movement, in the actions of Polish communists in the Great Socialist October Revolution. What's more, we should extract everything that confirms the patriotic stance, the sacrifice, and dedication of the Polish nation. These anniversaries give us a great opportunity to work for the strengthening of the patriotic unity of the nation around our party's program.²⁷⁶

It seems to me that the final sentence above leads into the heart of this study. The earlier mentioned legitimization formulas occupied an important place in the legitimization of communist rule from 1944 to 1989, but they do not exhaust the full spectrum of the arguments that the authorities utilized. The references to the nation and the national tradition were one aspect of them.

275 *Posiedzenie Biura Politycznego KC*, 18 VI 1982, AAN, KC PZPR, 1832, k. 544, 545.

276 *Materiał od tow. J. Łukaszewicza*, AAN, KC PZPR, 3120, k. 9.

Chapter 4

“We Are by Blood from the Blood and Bone of Pułaski’s Bone”

“The Communists must adjust the intensity and manner of executing their power to national conditions if they desire to win and perpetuate their existence.”²⁷⁷ Milovan Djilas wrote these words at the start of the 1950’s; Polish communists inevitably could not have known about them when they founded the Polish Worker’s Party (PPR) in 1942. Wanting to gain the trust and support of Polish society they still had to take into consideration its moods in order to adjust their legitimating arguments to them.

One of the most important consequences of World War II was the deepening and sharpening of national identification. The war forced a division of the world into “ours” (Poles and allies) and “strangers” (Germans, Ukrainians, and Soviets); it awakened a feeling of community through ratcheting up the feeling of otherness and antagonism in relation to strangers. National belonging decided about life or death. As Krystyna Kersten has noted:

The war, by sharpening, and bringing to the surface, national divisions, shaped the national consciousness. Thanks to a situation of threat the nation became the most widely dominant category of thinking, the basic tie, and the main subject of action. Simultaneously, external factors that determined nationality grew in importance. The life of a man hung in the balance depending upon whether he was a Pole, Jew, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, but he did not decide whom he was, instead it was decided by a higher authority equipped with the power of dispensing with life and death. That externally imposed community of fate formulated national self-identification, cemented ties, and gave birth to solidarity within each group. It was possible to negate the legitimacy of such a conception of nationality, but it was difficult to ignore—since it carried weight, it shaped reality.²⁷⁸

277 Milovan Djilas, *Nowa klasa: analiza systemu komunistycznego* (New York: Związek Dziennikarzy R.P. Syndykat w Ameryce Północnej, 1958), 189.

278 Krystyna Kersten, “Polska – państwo narodowe. Dylematy i rzeczywistość,” in: *Narody. Jak powstawały i jak wybijały się na niepodległość*, ed. Marcin Kula (Warsaw: PWN, 1989), 462.

This state of national consciousness was reflected in the programs and ideological concepts that emerged from the Underground.

In addition to public sentiments, the choice of legitimating arguments put forward by the communists was also influenced by their rivalry with the Underground, which was connected to the rightful government in London. It is no accident that the Council of National Unity, the parliament of Underground Poland, entitled its most important document, which came into being after the Polish Worker's Party's programmatic declaration "What Are We Fighting For?", was entitled "What Does the Polish Nation Fight For?" The extreme wartime situation, perceived as a conflict between nations, and the "by any means possible" battle for control over souls in the country meant that it was almost the daily order to see accusations of national betrayal. Among other things, you could find written on the walls of the city statements such as "PPR: Paid Paupers of Russia."

We should stress that a large part of the Polish society, especially the part that lived in areas covered by the Soviet occupation, had no illusions about the communists. The incursion of the Red Army into Polish territory on 17 September 1939, the later deportations and transports, put the Soviets on par with the Germans. The memory of the War of 1920 was still living. News about the discovery of graves in Katyń only deepened the perception of Polish communists as foreign and hostile to Poland. Above all, they were nationally external and unilaterally identified with Russia, which was perceived as an aggressor, which for over 100 years sought the annihilation of Poland.²⁷⁹ The PPR's agreement to give away Vilnius and Lvov practically closed the party's path to a wider influence upon the society. Władysław Gomułka, in a letter from March 1944 sent to Moscow, put it in this way: "If in Poland the Brotherhood of St. Anthony stood for the revising of the eastern borders, then it also would be shouted down by the reactionaries as Soviet agents, acting because of Moscow's money in exchange for putting the Polish nation under the Stalinist boot."²⁸⁰ The negative image of the communist, a "Russian beggar," was filled out by yet another stereotype, which in

279 They were aware of this state of things anyway. Alfred Lampe noted in 1943, "With the exception of the communists all traditional Polish movements were anti-Soviet: this included all varieties of the followers of Piłsudski, the Endecja, and the Socialists. Where there was not a traditional anti-Russianness then an anti-Soviet-system sentiment played a role. The orientation toward the USSR that we see in Czechoslovakia never existed and will not exist in any party. And it cannot exist (Notatki Alfreda Lampego," ed. Antoni Przygoński, in *Archiwum Ruchu Robotniczego* [subsequently ARR], v. 9 [Warsaw: KiW, 1984], 32; underlining in the original).

280 "List KC PPR „do tow. D'"; 7 III 1944, *Zeszyty Historyczne* 26 (1973): 189.

time came to dominate Polish thinking about communists: the Jew-communist and the Judeo-Commune.²⁸¹

In this context, it seems somewhat understandable why the leadership of the PPR reached for national slogans and searched for such legitimating arguments that could convince the nation that the native communists are in essence, true Polish patriots. The creators of the party were aware that only through underscoring their ties with the national tradition and calling upon “national solidarity” could they have a chance to begin to exist in the consciousness of the Polish society and leave the very constricted circle of true believers in the New Faith.²⁸²

The ideological party line also had to have the blessing of Joseph Stalin, although we cannot eliminate the possibility that he was its co-author.²⁸³ As I wrote in the second chapter, already in the mid-1930’s there was a rehabilitation of the imperial past of Russia. The war with the Germans was called by Stalin the “War for the Fatherland,” thereby giving it a national character, and not an imperialistic or class character. On 7 November 1941 Stalin concluded his speech to soldiers going to the front with:

May the image of our great heroic forefathers light your way in this war—Alexander Nevsky, Dimitri Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dimitri Pozharsky, Alexander Surovov, Mikhail Kutuzov... Death to the German occupiers! Long live our great Fatherland, its freedom, and its independence!²⁸⁴

Besides several mentions of Lenin and a reference to the tradition of the November Revolution, nothing indicates this was a speech made by a communist leader who should derive his right to rule from the promise of a collective earthly

281 Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy Żydzi Komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939–1968* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992).

282 In his *Notatki* Lampe writes of “the principles of national solidarity,” whose incarnation in life, as one might suspect, constitutes the substantial condition for the victory of the new political formation in Poland (*Notatki*, op. cit., 30).

283 “Stalin represented the reasonable line and braked our perhaps too revolutionary formulations during the period of formulating and preparing certain documents. This is consistent with Stalin’s overall line, who, for example, when it came to the farming reforms, put forward the matter of the Church’s wealth, so that Catholic Poland would not be aggravated, and suggested not resolving the matter in the first document. His position took a line so that nobody could bring up the accusation that some kind patch onto the Soviet Union is being created, rather than a self-sufficient country (Wspomnienia Wandy Wasilewskiej, in: ARR, t. VII, KiW, Warszawa 1982, 417).

284 V. I. Lenin, *Dzieła wybrane*, v. 1 (Warsaw: KiW, 1949), 57. [Unable to locate in standard English translation in the *Collected Works*, translated from Polish –trans.]

salvation in the communist society of the future. The mobilization of the society for a defense against the German invader took place, above all, on the basis of patriotic slogans; the cult of the charismatic father-founder of the Soviet nation or references to the Soviet tradition had a secondary legitimating meaning—to say nothing of communism itself, because the word disappeared for the duration of the war from the dictionary of official propaganda. The slogan “Proletarians of the world, unite!” was removed from the first page of *Pravda* and replaced with “Death to the German invaders.” The “International” ceased to be the official hymn of the state and was replaced by the “Song of the Fatherland,” which has historical contents.²⁸⁵ The Secretary of the Communist International, Grigori Dimitrov in a telegram sent to the First Secretary of the PPR, Paweł Finder, insisted that the leading thought of the first version of the PPR’s programmatic declaration, “What Are We Fighting For?,” created in March, and finally published in November 1943, was the “lasting freedom and independence of Poland, the rapid rebuilding of the country and ensuring freedom for the nation.” Dimitrov wrote further:

To define the democratic character of the organs of power, which will be elected after the Germans are driven out. The government should base itself upon an anti-Fascist national front. To define the Polish political order in accordance with the direction of the party’s platform as a democratic order, not as a Soviet one.²⁸⁶

However, behind the new approach, of at least a portion of the new party’s members, toward the national question stood not only social realities or political instructions. The change in values took place, it seems, also in the consciousness of the former members of the KPP themselves. The sources of these changes in values should be sought in the experiences of Polish communists during their stay upon terrains occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939. For many of them, who never earlier came face to face with Soviet realities, the idealized fatherland of the international proletariat showed its true, if not altogether happy, face.²⁸⁷ These disillusionments later became the starting point for the search of their own, Polish, path to socialism. However, for most of the PPR’s leadership, the change of colors to white and red had, one can suspect, a purely tactical goal.

285 See: Jerzy Drygałski and Jacek Kwaśniewski, *(Nie)realny socjalizm* (Warsaw: PWN, 1982), 101.

286 *Korespondencja między sekretarzami PPR a sekretarzem Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej*, ed. Czesław Madajczyk (Warsaw: Wojskowa Akademia Polityczna im. F. Dzierżyńskiego, 1967), 28–29.

287 *Wspomnienia Wandy Wasilewskiej...*, op. cit., 341–342.

A visible sign of the reorientation of Polish communists toward the national question was the name of their new political organization. The name of its predecessor began with the word “Communist,” and ended with “Polish,” signifying only a territory for the party’s activities; not its ties with the nation or state. On the other hand, such a tie was suggested by the name “Polish Workers’ Party.” Changes upon the semantic level were accompanied by a totally new content on the programmatic and ideational levels.

The PPR expressed its legitimization pretensions with the language of nationalism using three strategies characteristic for the ideological type of legitimization: rationalization, universalization, and the narrative strategy. Since in the programmatic documents and press articles they overlap and mix with each other it is difficult to separate them out precisely. When reading the programmatic texts of the PPR one gets the impression that the sources of this confusion lie in the frankly desperate desire to prove that the Polish communists are more papist than the pope, that their party truly is national in *content*, and that they themselves are true Polish patriots. This is the source of their ridiculous overload of national symbolism and phraseology. The first programmatic proclamation of the PPR, elaborated in the USSR, published in Poland in January 1942, can serve as an example. The less than four-page text features the word “nation,” in all of its adjectival and nounal permutations appears a staggering 30 times.²⁸⁸ Categories of a social character such as peasant, worker, and working class are always accompanied by the adjective “Polish’.”²⁸⁹ The authors of the appeal acknowledged Copernicus, Mickiewicz, “Szopen,” and Maria Skłodowska as great Poles that the nation has given to the world. The polonizing of the last name “Chopin” and the mention of the name Skłodowska without “Curie” are perhaps coincidental. However, it is conceivable that the Polish forms were used intentionally. In such a scenario we ought to search for explanations in Slavic ideas, which were beginning to be intensely propagated in the Soviet Union just after the start of the German army’s offensive upon the Soviet Union. Already in August 1941, there was in Moscow a Pan Slavic Congress. Therefore, even though the appeal mentions many nations (among them “the great English nation”), the war is perceived as a conflict between the “German horde” and all the Slavic nations—Czechs, Slovaks, sub-

288 “Do robotników, chłopów i inteligencji, Do wszystkich patriotów polskich!” in: *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Dokumenty programowe 1942–1948*, eds. Marian Malinowski, Ryszard Halba, Bogdan Hillebrandt, Ryszard Nazarewicz, and Tadeusz Sierodzki (Warsaw: KiW, 1984), 51–55.

289 Krystyna Kersten, “Język dokumentów programowych 1943–1944,” *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis* 1636 (1994): 318.

Carpathian Ukrainians, Serbs, Slovenians, Bulgarians—united in a common front under the leadership of the great Russian nation. Slavic unity was at the forefront of communist propaganda until the end of the 1940's when, with the victory of communism in the world, they were replaced by more internationalist slogans.

The appeal presents the worker's party as national, which is tied by "a thousand threads with the life, fates, and future of its nation, directing itself in accordance with the good of the Polish nation." The legitimating tie of the party with the nation is, therefore, the result of a common fate; joining them with a "thousand threads." The tie with the nation is actually stronger because it bases itself upon a common origin, an "inheritance of blood":

We are by blood from the blood and bone of Pułaski, Kościuszko, Traugutt, Henryk and Jarosław Dąbrowski, Ludwik Waryński and other famous warriors for the freedom of the Polish nation. Westerplatte and Warsaw live in the hearts of Poles.²⁹⁰

The authors of the appeal possibly used the phrase "We are by blood from the blood and bone" exclusively as a rhetorical device. However, the context of this sentence, and also the saturation of the communist propaganda of the time with nationalist motifs suggests that it was used consciously. Furthermore, the communists evinced an almost Talmudic cult of the word and it is doubtful that in a programmatic text would use such a formulation unwittingly. Whatever the intentions that would have guided this, they put into play the genealogical myth, based upon a faith in the emergence of the Polish communists from Polish national heroes. By creating the myth, the communists desired to avoid being rejected by the nation. The identity of "blood and bone" also means that the ideational identity of the party is identical with the identity of the nation. And if this is the case, then the communist pretensions to leadership are legitimated. The blood of Pułaski and Kościuszko had legitimating power.

The Polish heroes mentioned in the appeal constitute the germ of a *mythological narration*. The PPR presented itself as the inheritors of liberation efforts and movements of previous generations. Its ideologists pointed toward a continuity of the tradition of fighting for national liberation from the insurrections up to World War II; a tradition whose carrier was supposed to be the party. Halina Winnicka, the author of a work devoted to explaining the relationship to the tradition of the conspiratorial publishing, notes that however much in the publications of the PPR one might encounter a whole series of articles devoted to the theme of fighting for the independence of Poland, far less space in the party press was devoted to exclusively the working-class tradition and its parties in history. Winnicka presup-

290 "Do robotników, chłopów..." op. cit., 52.

poses that this was the result of class traditions being well known to the majority of the PPR members, therefore there was no special need for party authors to reach more widely for the deposits of this tradition. It would be difficult to agree with this interpretation. Familiarity with one's own tradition does not exclude being interested in it. The fragmentary presence of the communist movement's tradition in the publications of the PPR seems to be better explained by its inadequacy to the accepted legitimizing strategy. The PPR fought for the big prize, gaining the support of the majority of the nation, rather than a small handful of already convinced members of the party. Whereas, for example, references to Rosa Luxemburg, Feliks Dzierżyński, or Julian Marchlewski would have only made things much more problematic. However, Winnicka rightly points out that the historical journalism of the PPR was endowed with certain qualities:

. . . it was exceedingly up-to-date and was consciously actualized politically. Its authors presupposed that history should teach and educate, especially it should help in tactically deciding the battle over current issues and the foreseen, in the near future, battle over political power in the country . . . historical tradition became for the ideologists of the PPR a weapon in the political fight and also served as the basis for outlining the vision of the future of Poland.²⁹¹

The *Głos Warszawy* article published in 1943 for the anniversary of the 3rd May Constitution's promulgation can serve as an example of such reference to national tradition and the bringing-up-to-date of its issues for the needs of current political battles:

We are the inheritors of the nation's past. Everything from the history of our nation that was good and beautiful we accept and bestow with recognition. We consider the May Constitution as an expression of Polish progressive thought . . . We desire to learn from the nation's past. What lessons can we draw from the 3rd May Constitution? When for high-minded slogans and goals there is lack of strong support, no mass movement, then they remain a dead letter . . . Today the slogan of the armed battle for a Free and Independent Poland finds an increasingly wide support in the nation. That is why today the nation cannot be helped by a contemporary Targowica Confederation.²⁹²

291 Halina Winnicka, *Tradycja a wizja Polski w publicystyce konspiracyjnej* (Warsaw: LSW, 1980), 269. See also: Marian Orzechowski, "Przeszłość i tradycje narodowe w myśli politycznej Polskiej Partii Robotniczej (1942–1948)" in: *Polska, Naród, Państwo. Z badań nad myślą polityczną Polskiej Partii Robotniczej 1942–1948*, ed. Marian Orzechowski (Wrocław, 1972) 7–61; Marian Orzechowski, *Rewolucja, Socjalizm, Tradycje. Przeszłość narodowa i tradycje myśli politycznej rewolucyjnego nurtu polskiego ruchu robotniczego* (Warsaw: KiW, 1978).

292 "Rocznica Konstytucji 3-go Maja," *Głos Warszawy* 23 (1943): 3.

I leave the further interpretation of this allusion for later.

Now it behooves us to return for a while to the first programmatic appeal of the PPR because the idea of a national front appeared in it. The appeal called for the unification of all powers to battle the occupier to the death and the creation of a “national front for the struggle for a free, independent Poland,” however “without traitors and capitulators.”²⁹³ Under the influence of Moscow all communist parties in Europe, already from the mid-1930’s, with a slight pause during the German-Soviet alliance, incarnated into life the concept of a national front launched by the Communist International, which was discussed in the second chapter of the present book. During wartime this conception foresaw the unification of all independence-oriented groupings conspiring together, this also included, when it came to Poland, the émigré government and its delegates in the country. From 1942 the idea of a national unity was the main theme of the majority of the PPR’s communications.²⁹⁴ It was threaded through many articles and documents published by the party press. A resignation from class struggle was even declared for the sake of a general national front.

In the *Trybuna Wolności* article, “In the Name of the Nation,” from October 1942 we read, “It is not our thing to be concerned about possibilities for gain and exploitation by the oppressors of the people. We conduct our fight not in the name of class interests, but in the name of the whole nation.”²⁹⁵ Another article assured that:

Our national program is not a cliché, nor a nationalist aberration. It is a realistic and necessary combat program. Against all the efforts of the native reactionaries, a uniform national front is increasingly becoming a fact. Despite all the difficulties, all the powers of the nation are uniting in a common fight for liberation. But, with the moment when the occupier is expelled will this cooperation disappear? It should not be this way. The Polish nation can and should remain united for positive undertakings, for the social rebuilding of the country.²⁹⁶

The PPR, despite assurances that its national program is not a nationalistic aberration essentially utilized one of the most important elements of the nationalist

293 “Do robotników...” op. cit., 53 (bold-type in original).

294 Czesław Lewandowski, “Koncepcja jedności narodowej i frontu narodowego w myśli politycznej Polskiej Partii Robotniczej,” in: *Polska, naród, państwo. Z badań nad myślą polityczną Polskiej Partii Robotniczej 1942–1948*, ed. Marian Orzechowski (Wrocław: Ossolinemum, 1972), 62–100.

295 “W imieniu narodu,” *Trybuna Wolności* 17, 1.X.1942, in: *Publicystyka konspiracyjna PPR 1942–1945* v. 1, ed. Marian Malinowski (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1961) 102, 109.

296 “Wyzwolenie narodowe i przebudowa społeczna,” *Trybuna Wolności* 29, 2.IV.1943.

ideology. The postulate of national unity appears in all the programs of groups that accept the nation as the indicator of their action. It depends upon the conviction that the whole community should be imbued with the “national spirit.” The one who breaks away from the responsibility of national cooperation and breaks down national unity becomes a traitor to the “national cause.” In the service of legitimating the party a strategy, we here call *universalization*, was put into motion. Let us recall, it depends upon the presentation of an organization that serves particular political interests but as a national organization that realizes the ideal of unifying the nation. This gave birth to the legitimizing myth of national unity, which will accompany communist propaganda until the end of the PRL.

The recourse to the idea of national unity constituted such a *novum* for the political thought of the Polish communist movement that for the rank and file members of the former KPP, brought up in an atmosphere of a sharp class battle, this was a very controversial notion. One of the party members wrote in his recollections from the period of occupation:

We encountered great difficulties among the so-called old communists... The transition from an abstractly understood class conflict and gung-ho revolutionary rhetoric to thinking in terms of categories such as the country, nation, and state was not an easy thing. They were wary about these “national feathers.” Even the name of the party caused doubts. Why not communist? Why are we concealing our goal?²⁹⁷

In response to such questions, posed by rank and file members, the leadership of the PPR had to explain through a special document why in the new party name the word “communist” was missing and explain the new strategy of the party.²⁹⁸ However, the reservations remained for some time after the war.

Besides organizing legitimation around the nation as a value there were also efforts to deprive opponents of legitimation, most effectively by using words clearly indicating their national betrayal. The above-cited article dedicated to the anniversary of the 3rd May Constitution suggested precisely just this. The declaration *What Are We Fighting For?*, which was written several months later, spoke of it without any understatement: “The sordid civil war began by the blackest reactionaries, in which the Sanacja divisions of the Home Army are taking party finds its ideological sources in Nazism.” Władysław Gomułka, the main author of the declaration, further wrote:

297 Jerzy Morawski, “Wspomnienia z lat okupacji” in: *Władysław Gomułka we wspomnieniach*, ed. B. Syzdek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1989), 87–99.

298 “Dokument nr 2,” in: *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Dokumenty programowe...*, op. cit., 56–59.

These traitors who dream of creating a fascist dictatorship in Poland, fearing like fire the growing power of the Polish people, they went on to formally or factually to serve Belin, calling for the cessation of fighting against Germany and for turning weapons against their own brothers who were conducting the fight with the occupier, against the Polish Worker's Party...²⁹⁹

According to this concept, since the whole opposition movement (the PPR excluded) directly or indirectly is connected with fascism, and only the communists are battling against the German occupier, the nation should owe its liberation to them. The logic of this argument was connected to the frequently repeated propaganda slogan: the Home Army stands around with their weapons at the side of their legs. It was supposed to, on the one hand, de-legitimize the Home Army, and on the other hand, glorify communists as the true patriots, writing their fight into the romantic ethos of suffering and dedication for the fatherland.

The unavoidable consequence of this argument was the claim of outstanding abilities to lead and direct, which allegedly predestined the party, and the institutions created by it, to play a special role in the nation. This legitimating strategy, which after the war morphed into the typical Marxist slogans about the remarkable leading or managerial qualities of the PZPR, appeared, among other places, during a speech given by the First Secretary of the PPR during the first plenary session of the National Council on 1 January 1944, "The National Council, which came into being here, in order to point the nation toward the right path during difficult times of war and enslavement, must do everything to save the nation from destruction, save the country from utter destruction."³⁰⁰ The myth of the extraordinary predispositions of the communists was not only supposed to legitimize them, but also create the impression of the lack of any alternatives to the proposed order and the manner of achieving it. It carried on its coattails a conviction about the necessity of the mission that the members of the PPR are supposed to fulfill toward the whole nation. The faith of a narrow group of communists in the mission for the salvation of the nation therefore also had a self-legitimizing character, because it gave meaning to the fight they were conducting.

We should add that communists acting on the territories of the Soviet Union, united in the Union of Polish Patriots, did everything to convince their countrymen back home, those in the USSR, and the international community, that they are "blood from blood, bone from bone" of Polish national heroes. This is

299 "O co walczymy? Deklaracja programowa Polskiej Partii Robotniczej," in *Ibid.*, 161–164.

300 Władysław Gomułka, *Artykuły i przemówienia* (Warsaw: 1962), 52–60.

witnessed by the name of the organization, proposed by Stalin himself.³⁰¹ In the Soviet-published *Free Poland*, a press organ of the ZPP, Alfred Lampe wrote that “the rejuvenated Polish state will be a national state,” suggesting that what he was after was a country exclusively populated by Poles.³⁰²

The initiative of the ZPP led to the creation, under the auspices of the communists, of the first large military formation. One of the basic problems facing its creators was the question of the Polishness of the division coming into being. The soldiers who found themselves within it did not have any special reasons to shower sympathy upon the communists and the Soviet Union that stood behind them. The legitimating arguments used then were exemplary and later became a blueprint for propaganda in People’s Poland. Above all, whenever it was possible, everything was surrounded by national symbols. Włodzimierz Sokorski recalls, “The red and white standard, Polish uniforms, and the eagle upon the cap were indisputable attributes, much like the outline and obvious Polishness of Colonel Berling. The whispered propaganda of the skeptical did its thing anyway.”³⁰³ As we can see, even the silhouette of the colonel became an attribute of patriotic *decorum*. “Poland Has Not Yet Vanished” remained the state hymn. Whereas the hymn of the military divisions became Maria Konopnicka’s “Rota.” The soldiers sang it twice a day. The First Division was named in honor of Tadeusz Kościuszko, a national hero, undisputed by any Pole. The same name was given to the radio tower that sent its transmissions from Moscow. The next divisions received names after Romuald Trągutt and Henryk Dąbrowski. The decided majority of the military formation, acting under the auspices of Polish communists, both in the country and those that came into being in the territories of the Soviet Union, carried the names of Polish national heroes, mainly from the 19th century. The swearing in of the First Division took place on 15 July 1943, the anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald, and the two succeeding ones on 11 November. The Grunwald Cross was also established in 1943.

The complexes over an insufficiently expressed Polishness felt by the Polish communists meant that in every possible situation they demonstrated their Pol-

301 “Stalin himself proposed the name Związek Patriotów Polskich [Union of Polish Patriots]. At first I really did not take a liking to it and said the name “patriot” is quite compromised in Poland. To this he replied that every word can be given new content and it will depend upon you what content you will give it” (*Wspomnienia Wandy Wasilewskiej...*, op. cit., 383).

302 Alfred Lampe, “Miejsce Polski w Europie,” *Wolna Polska* 7, 16.IV.1943, in: *O nową Polskę. Artykuły i przemówienia* (Warsaw: KiW, 1954), 249.

303 Włodzimierz Sokorski, *Tamte lata* (Warsaw: KiW, 1979), 46.

ishness *ad absurdum*. In divisions of the People's Army acting upon Polish lands in 1944, the red and white pennant placed upon the cap right next to the eagle became popularized. According to the intentions of its initiators, this emblem was supposed to more forcefully underscore the patriotic and national character of the partisan division.³⁰⁴ The same goal was to be achieved by the name of the whole partisan grouping: "Poland Has Not Yet Perished." The particular divisions carried the names of Stanisława Brzóska, Bartosz Głowacki, White Eagle, Stanisław Żółkiewski, the Podlaski Lands, Kazimierz Puławski, Jan Kiliński, Zawisza Czarny, Stefan Czarniecki, Henryk Dąbrowski, Romuald Traugutt, Adam Mickiewicz, Emilia Plater. The grouping had a standard with a crowned eagle and the Mother of God. It was especially put on display during meetings with divisions of the Home Army.³⁰⁵

The Polish communists did not stop being faithful to the homeland of the international proletariat alongside all this exhibited patriotism and commitment to the national tradition. This gave birth to a situation of suspension between a total identification with communism and the obedience to the USSR that goes with it, and an identification with Polishness and the nation. This essentially schizophrenic state had its painful consequences for the communist formation. Some of them were, extremely bothersome for the Communist movement in Poland, moments of polarization between these two identifications. The attempts at reconciling them ended with a convoluted selection of the national symbols, or, in their reinterpretation in accordance with the obligatory Soviet reading, however, the latter undermined the credibility of national legitimization. Jerzy Putrament reminisced:

I don't remember who came up with this: we will return to the Piast eagles and reject the Jagiellonian ones. The Piast eagles gaze to the left and they have folded wings, the Jagiellonian ones look to the right and have spread wings, ready for flight. The symbolism is clear: the first set looks toward the West and does not have imperialistic temptations, the second set is looking at the East and are their wings are itching for a fight³⁰⁶

The War of 1920 underwent a similar transformation. As Sokorski wrote, "The Miracle on the Vistula," there was no way of avoiding it. In agreement with the chief of the Main Political Board of the Soviet Army, General Shcherbakov, a meet-

304 Kazimierz Satora, *Emblematy, godło i symbole GL i AL* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1988), 24.

305 Piotr Lipiński, "Nie należę do nikogo," *Gazeta Wyborcza: Magazyn*, 26–27.VI.1998.

306 Jerzy Putrament, *Pół wieku. Wojna* (Warsaw: KiW, 1984), 174.

ing of soldiers was arranged on 15 August 1943, ‘in order to explain that a similar situation in the parameters of the Polish-Soviet friendship cannot repeat itself.’³⁰⁷

Giving up the lands to the east of the Bug River line to the Soviet Union left the Polish communists with the necessity of finding an argument that could legitimate the change in borders. This became as if directly lifted from the texts of the *Endecja*, the conception of a *Piast* Poland. That was not, as we know, the sole inspiration taken from the programmatic thinking of the Polish national right. It is the opinion of Jadwiga Kiwerska that “The ‘*Piast*’ conception came to be... promoted as the interpretation of the politics of the communists (as an example of their ties to tradition and history), and later the Polish state. In other words, it was a way of legitimating Communist power in Poland.”³⁰⁸

The Polish communists who entered Polish lands in 1944 alongside the Soviet Army were aware of the weight of the national question and had legitimating arguments prepared, which aimed to positively attune the society to the new leaders. Nationalist legitimization was not only the most important but practically the sole, formula for justifying their pretensions to rule.

307 Włodzimierz Sokorski, *Tamte lata*, op. cit., 66.

308 Jadwiga Kiwerska, “Niemcy w polityce PPR/PZPR. W atmosferze wrogości (1945–1970),” in: *Polacy wobec Niemców. Z dziejów kultury politycznej Polski 1945–1989*, ed. Anna Wolf-Powęska (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1993), 49.

Chapter 5

“Let them attack us as Polish Communists” (1945–1947)

Efforts to gain, maintain, and then to monopolize power were the basic motives of Polish communists' actions. Władysław Gomułka spoke of this directly to his opponents:

Once we gain power we will not relinquish it... We grew out of the Polish nation, from its fight for freedom and independence, and we have always led the hardest life. We will destroy all reactionary bandits without scruples. You can still yell that the blood of the Polish nation is being spilled, that the NKVD rules Poland, but this will not turn us back from our path.³⁰⁹

Gomułka can be accused of cynicism, but not of lacking pragmatism. He was aware that, above all, one must have power in order to later attempt to legitimate it. This does not at all mean that he was ignoring social legitimation. It only occupied a secondary place after the seizure of power on the list of his goals. It appears the whole leading elite of the PPR shared this conviction. Obtaining social support was important to them for several reasons: doctrinal (the alleged mass participation in a revolutionary movement) and psychological (the feeling of isolation of the ruling elite). The new authorities also needed legitimation because of international reasons. In accordance with the agreements in Yalta, the communists were obligated to carry out free and democratic elections. It would, however, be difficult to gain a favorable result if the new authorities should come to be perceived by the majority of the nation as yet another occupier. Thus, when the communist leaders chose legitimating arguments they needed, to a certain degree, to account for the attitudes of society. As Bronisław Baczko notes:

Every society must invent and imagine a legitimacy it ascribes to those in power. In other words, every authority must face up to its arbitrariness and control it by mak-

309 “Rozmowy polityczne w sprawie utworzenia Tymczasowego Rządu Jedności Narodowej (czerwiec 1945),” in *ARR*, v. IX, eds. W. Góra and A. Kochoński (Warsaw: KiW, 1984), 110.

ing reference to some legitimacy... it has to show that it is not only powerful but also legitimated.³¹⁰

To be frank, the Polish communists owed their power to Soviet tanks. They gave them power, but they could not give them legitimacy. Bolesław Bierut said in a meeting of the KC PPR on 9 October 1944:

Comrade Stalin warned us that in this moment we have a very favorable situation thanks to the presence of the Red Army on our lands. "You have such power that if you say two times two is sixteen then your opponents will confirm it," said Comrade Stalin. But it will not always be this way. Then they'll remove us and shoot us like partridges.³¹¹

This was an unambiguous suggestion that the communists must strengthen themselves organizationally, institutionally as well as eliminate the opposition, and gain social backing.

Until not too long ago the answer to the question how much Poles were inclined to legitimate the new order during its initial period of existence was only based upon estimates that did not allow for the drawing of more serious conclusions. Today, thanks to the access to the Ministry of Public Security and PZPR Central Committee archives, we can fairly accurately determine the scope of the system's legitimation by reading through the actual results of the referendum that took place on 30 June 1946. The declassified documents show that during the referendum, not more than 26.9% voted "for" (answered "Yes" to all three questions), and those who voted "against" (answered "No" to at least one question) amounted to no less than 73.1%.³¹² This also means that, of the twelve million people who participated in the voting, nearly three-fourths of expressed their disapproval toward the communists. However, we must remember that the referendum had the character of a poll. The lack of acceptance for the whole system did not have to signify a lack of legitimation for specific parts. Everybody was glad about the rapid rebuilding of Warsaw from the rubble. The economic reforms, undertaken in the first postwar years, especially the agricultural reforms, were not contrary to the expectations of the majority and were substantially in accordance with the ideas of other political formations. Nevertheless, it seems that, because of various

310 Bronisław Baczek, "Stalin, czyli jak..." op. cit., 40–41.

311 "Protokół z posiedzenia KC dnia 9 października 1944 r.," in: *Protokoły posiedzeń Biura Politycznego KC PPR 1944–1945*, ed. Aleksander Kochański (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1992), 22–23.

312 *Referendum z 30 czerwca 1946 r. Przebieg i wyniki*, ed. Andrzej Paczkowski (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1993).

reasons, in part covered earlier in this tome, the new authorities were perceived by the greater part of the nation *en bloc* as foreign,³¹³ primarily nationally.

The communists themselves were conscious of this. Gomułka belonged to those PPR activists who were aware of the marginal support for the party and was able to point out the sources of its weakness. At a PPR gathering in Lublin in August 1944, he said, “the reactionary side rained attacks against our party, juggling all sorts of phrases, that we are Soviet agents, and that we have nothing to do with the interests of the Polish Nation. Some of the reactionaries have succeeded because we were not able to form a national front.”³¹⁴ During a meeting of the Central Committee of the PPR on May 1945, he widened the circle of those responsible for the anti-Soviet attitudes of Poles. Gomułka said the following to a select group of listeners then:

The Sanacja succeeded in making the whole nation anti-Soviet... The deepening of the mistrust also is influenced by the fact of the changed borders. This is a difficult matter. We are Marxists and can understand the chain of events, but the average Pole comes from the presupposition that Russia took a substantial part of Poland’s land. This fact has a substantial, profound, meaning. The mistakes made by the Soviet organs with regard to Poles (the deportations), also influenced the formation of opinions... The agitation of the reactionaries about the Sovietization of Poland deeply bores into the Polish soul, it bores into a substantial portion of the nation... We affirm that the terrorist action has intensified in both depth and breadth. Furthermore, enthusiastic attitudes of society toward the Red Army are greatly falling... with these moods, there is a danger that the accusations of being Soviet agents might take root, that there might come isolation. **The masses should regard us as a Polish party, let them attack us as Polish communists, not as foreign agents.**³¹⁵

The reluctant attitudes of the society toward the new authorities, especially during the Lublin period of its existence, caused it to act in a complete social vacuum—to such a degree that anyone who cooperated with them was risking infamy. Leon Chajm, at that time the Deputy Head of the Ministry of Justice, had many conversations with lawyers from Lublin, however, none of them wanted to work for the PKWN. “The situation looked nearly hopeless,” recalled Chajm. The two lawyers they employed in the end told him that,

313 Krystyna Kersten, “Polacy wobec rzeczywistości 1944–1947. Tezy pod rozwagę,” *Res Publica* 2 (1990): 2–13.

314 “Protokół zebrania delegatów PPR z Lubelszczyzny – 5 sierpnia 1944, Lublin,” in: *ARR*, v. 1 (Warsaw: KiW, 1973), 355.

315 *Protokół obrad KC PPR w maju 1945 roku*, ed. Aleksander Kochański (Warsaw: ISP PAN, Warszawa 1992), 13 [emphasis mine].

From the time they started working for the PKWN, everyone turned away from them, nobody wanted to talk to them, nobody wanted to greet them, colleagues and friends boycotted their company. One of them even admitted to me that his wife cries continually because acquaintances and friends don't want to know her anymore, while her family does not let her into their home.³¹⁶

There were advisories about decreasing the legitimization deficit in connection with this situation in May 1945. Gomulka turned his attention to the meaning of the Western lands and the land reforms.³¹⁷ However, he pushed the “question of sovereignty” (as did Edward Ochab and Julian Finkelsztein) to the forefront. Ochab said then, “Our central issue is state sovereignty. This question causes all sorts of difficulties... The propaganda is weak in posing the question of sovereignty”³¹⁸

The communist camp did everything to bring at least part of the society onto their side. They grasped at various arguments. The name *Rzeczpospolita* was given to the new state newspaper. It was acknowledged that one of the other proposed names *Nowa Polska* would “encourage all sorts of inappropriate comments.”³¹⁹ Some two days before the official creation of the PKWN the adjective “Polski” was added to the name “Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego” (by the way, coined by Vyacheslav Molotov), in order to stress the sovereignty of the organization. The case of Andrzej Witos is an almost desperate witness attempts at legitimization. The brother of the famous Wincenty Witos was hastily pulled out of the Gulag and installed in the PKWN as Vice-President. The appearance of the name and person of a universally known politician, in the opinion of those who took up this initiative, was supposed to be proof of the PKWN's legitimacy.³²⁰ Half a year later a similar role in the shaping of the government of the time was to be played by Zofia Nałkowska, Józef Chałasiński, or even Cardinal Adam Sapieha—all of whom were taken into consideration by Bolesław Bierut.³²¹ Furthermore, Bolesław Piasecki was released from prison, which was totally incomprehensible to those sympathizing with the left, but probably was intended to at least neutralize the supporters of the pre-war Endecja.

316 Leon Chajn, *Kiedy Lublin był Warszawą* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1964), 40, 45.

317 *Protokół obrad KC PPR w maju 1945 roku...*, op. cit., 11.

318 *Ibid.*, 20.

319 *Jakub Berman podczas posiedzenia Delegatury Krajowej Rady Narodowej dla terenów wyzwolonych* [Moscow 20.VII.1944]. They also considered the name „Naród i Wojsko” [Nation and Army] (AAN, ZPP, 1/4, k. 4).

320 *Wspomnienia Wandy Wasilewskiej...*, op. cit., 423.

321 “Borejsza sonduje Witosą,” ed. Jerzy Stępień, *Rzeczpospolita*, 15–16.VII.1995.

The *PKWN Manifesto* itself was totally emptied out of communist accents. What it proclaimed did not substantially deviate from things put forward by other political groups in the country and among the immigration. It called, as did previous programmatic declarations of the PPR, for the building of a “great Slavic dam” with the aim of counteracting the pressure of “German imperialism,” and also for the unification of the nation. It foretold the following: “The hour of revenge against the Germans, for the martyrdoms and sufferings, the Polish Army will revenge the September crisis and with the armies of allied nations will give the Germans a new Grunwald.” Revenge upon the Germans would take place when Polish standards “will be unfurled in the streets of arrogant Prussia, in the streets of Berlin.” Krystyna Kersten thinks that the language of the manifesto differs “from previous documents written by the communists through its recourse to anti-German resentments rooted in the tradition; in previous texts, the accusations were not directed at the German nation, the Germans, but at German imperialism, fascism, and Nazism.”³²² We cannot fully agree with this opinion, since already in the PPR’s first programmatic appeal the war is presented as a clash between the “German horde” and the Slavic element, but not a word is said about imperialism. The manifesto concludes with the following slogan: “Long live a Free, Powerful, Independent, Sovereign, and Democratic Poland!”³²³ [140]

In order to convince the nation that the new Polish state is really “sovereign” and “independent” there was a series of propaganda and institutional operations. The range of these activities was very wide, beginning with surrounding oneself with national symbols, using the language of Roman Dmowski rather than Rosa Luxemburg, manipulating history, instrumentally treating the achievements of Polish culture, and it was all capped off with the strengthening of a xenophobic national community through arousing an atmosphere of national endangerment. The first thing that stood out was the immense amount of manifestations, rallies, readings, celebrations of historical anniversaries, and national holidays—even those, it would seem, that were uncomfortable for those in power. The celebration of the anniversary of the “Miracle on the Vistula” in Lublin in 1944 cannot be explained in any other way than by a deficit of legitimation. There was a high Mass attended by the chairman of the PKWN, Edward Osóbka-Morawski, and

322 Krystyna Kersten, “Język dokumentów programowych 1943–1944,” eds. S. Ciesielski, T. Kulak, and K. Matwijowski, *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis* 116 (1994): 323.

323 “Manifest PKWN” in: *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Dokumenty programowe*, ed. Zofia Polubiec (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1984), 554–561.

also General Nikolai Bulganin, the representative of the Soviet Union's Council of People's Commissars to the PKWN.³²⁴

A variety of national symbols and patriotic slogans written upon banners were indispensable elements of these celebrations. A lot of such rallies began with a Mass attended by the highest functionaries of the ruling party. The Central Committee of the PPR even circulated a special note calling for the "observation of All Souls' Day." It recommended that, at the graves of the fallen, speeches should stigmatize the "anti-national character of reactionary politics." It was also emphasized that local party organization for these circumstances should prepare red banners with the text "PPR" and red-and-white ones. There was to be no creation of separate PPR columns, but rather they were to make appearances together with other organizations.³²⁵ The celebrations of Independence Day on 11 November 1944 were organized especially solemnly in an attempt to stress the continuity of the state. In the *Głos Ludu*, an organ of the PPR, we read:

On the day of 11 November, there was in Jakubów a celebration of Independence Day that included the active participation of the PPR. The service at the local church was celebrated by the local parish priest. After the service, there was a procession to the Freedom Monument, which was decorated with national flags... Those gathered cheered in honor of the Polish Army, the heroic Red Army, and its leader, Marshal Stalin.³²⁶

Actually, many such manifestations, against the intentions of their organizers, morphed into protests against the authorities.³²⁷ At first, nearly all historical anniversaries and state holidays were observed out of those for which celebrations were organized during interwar Poland. Some of them were: anniversaries of insurrections (January, Greater Poland, and Silesian), the anniversary of the proclamation of the 3rd May Constitution, and the 11th November Independence Day. With the passage of time, after new holidays were implemented, May 3rd and November 11th celebrations fell to the wayside. Jakub Berman, during a confidential meeting of party propagandists, on 6 April 1945 said the following:

There is no doubt we are striving to get rid of 3rd May, striving so that the national holiday be connected to a new state action, one which will supplant 3rd May, but this

324 Edward Osóbka-Morawski, *Dziennik polityczny 1943–1948. Polska droga do socjalizmu* (Gdańsk: Wydział Kształcenia Politycznego ZW ZSMP, 1981), 40.

325 PPR, *Rezolucje, odezwy, instrukcje i okólniki Komitetu Centralnego VIII 1944 - XII 1945*, v. 1 (Warszawa: KiW, 1959), 72–73.

326 *Głos Ludu*, 21.XI.1944.

327 Tadeusz Żenczykowski, *Polska lubelska 1944* (Paris: Editions Spotkania, 1987), 202.

a perspective for the future. For now, 3rd May is a moment of pulling in, and means of mobilizing, wide masses of the nation.³²⁸

This statement leaves no doubt about the instrumental motivations of the authorities for taking advantage of such celebrations.

We have at our disposal data available regarding the themes and numbers of rallies inspired and co-organized by institutions connected to the ministry of propaganda solely in the month of January 1946 all over the country. Altogether, the following took place at the time: 240 rallies celebrating the foundation of the KRN, 339 for the celebration of the anniversary of the January Uprising, 194 for celebrating the anniversaries of the liberation of individual cities, 969 in praise of the Red Army, 426 for celebrating the anniversary of Vladimir Lenin's death, 1089 in protest against the "activities of NSZ gangs," and 653 rallies in protest against the presence of Germans in Polish territories.³²⁹ This data illustrates the main direction of propaganda politics. The intensity of celebrations of the January Uprising is especially interesting. Never again in the history of the PRL were there so many celebrations at the same time on the occasion of the anniversary of this uprising. We should, however, remember that they constituted only one-third of the rallies organized to honor the Red Army. Yet, even the latter took places draped out in national symbols and were supposed to influence a change in the society's attitudes to values foreign to them through the use of a patriotic *decorum*.

Commemorations of the victory at Battle of Grunwald became one of the most pompously organized patriotic celebrations. During the PRL period, they were a fixed point in the calendar of anniversaries celebrated by the authorities. So much meaning was attributed to it because the Battle of Grunwald allowed them to create a mythical history of Polish-Russian brotherhood against a common German enemy. This brotherhood, which was interrupted by centuries of misunderstandings, was supposed to have been reborn thanks to the communists. The main merit of the Battle of Grunwald for communist propaganda was also, thanks to Henryk Sienkiewicz, a system of meanings connected with the battle that was legible to nearly every Pole. 1945 marked the 535th anniversary of the battle. For this occasion:

On the fields of the historical Battle of Grunwald, there were ceremonies that included the participation of the highest state dignitaries: President Bierut and the Supreme Commander Marshall Rola-Żymierski. On the fields of the Battle of Grunwald, an altar

328 AAN, KC PZPR, 295/X-2, k. 18.

329 Andrzej Krawczyk, *Pierwsza próba indoktrynacji. Działalność Ministerstwa Informatyki i Propagandy w latach 1944–1947* (Warszawa: ISP PAN, 1994), 32.

was erected made from white pine wood. Nearby, there was a tribune of honor for state dignitaries with the image of the Grunwald Cross with the inscription '1410–1945.' The president's flag waved on the highest mast above the tribune, which was decorated with the Polish national colors along with the colors of other Slavic nations. The celebrations began with Mass...³³⁰

We also have information about the number and topics of all kinds of events (rallies, mass rallies, academies, evening events, and so on), which were organized under the patronage of the Regional Office of Information and Propaganda of Poznań in 1946. Here are some of them: the anniversary of Greater Poland's liberation 754 events, the anniversary of Tadeusz Kościuszko's birthday – 259, the anniversary of the Red Army's creation – 258, the anniversary of the adoption of the March Constitution – 681, the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – 17, the anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald – 72, the anniversary of the Warsaw General Uprising – 23, the anniversary of the German invasion of Poland – 128, the anniversary of the Greater Poland Uprising – 8.³³¹

The number of different kinds of events in Poznań alone could create an image of Poland in 1946 as a country where various kinds of patriotic holidays were constantly celebrated. However, this not an entirely true image. A large part of these events were creations that came to be only on paper, made up by bureaucrats forced to report something. Furthermore, we do not know whether these rallies were mass rallies.³³² We should also remember that in some measure they were an answer to social needs. The eruption of national feelings, which occurred after the conclusion of the war, was a natural response in a society that during six years of occupation was deprived of the possibility of expressing them publicly.

Nationalist legitimization was frequently intertwined with the construction, through propaganda, of a charismatic picture of Bolesław Bierut. During this period, he was presented as impartial and he participated in all the more important

330 *Głos Ludu*, 17.VII.1945.

331 Andrzej Krawczyk, *Pierwsza Próba Indoktrynacji: Działalność Ministerstwa Informacji I Propagandy W Latach 1944–1947* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1994), 42–43.

332 “The enthusiasm that we noticed at the beginning has weakened considerably. The populace does not gather at public events, academies, and rallies. You hear the words, ‘do more, chatter less.’ For example, the celebration of Grunwald in Mogilno was attended by only seven people. The solemn blessing of the cross, which took place on the same day in the afternoon, was attended by nearly the whole city. The authority of the PPR is beginning to fall, the number of its members is starting to decline...” (*Szef Oddziału Org. – Instrukc. Gł. Zarządu Pol. Wych. WP ppłk Minecki do KC PPR płk Romana Zambrowskiego*, August 1945, AAN, KC PPR, 295/VII – 269, k. 83).

patriotic celebrations, which in those times nearly always began with a religious service. As the main actor in the “spectacle of power,” he always entered a stage filled with national props. How the scenography was prepared can be glimpsed through reports from a meeting of the National Council, whose president was Bierut himself:

The hall of the Roma Theater, where the meeting of the National Council took place was an imposing sight. The stage, designated for the State National Council Presidium, sinks underneath a flood of national colors and flowers. There were white eagles on the side columns and in the middle. Over the Council there hung the coats of arms of cities that had been returned from slavery to the motherland: Wrocław, Gdańsk, Kołobrzeg, and others. The mood was solemn, sublime, one could feel the immense importance of the meeting that was supposed to start there.³³³

Thanks to Stefan Korboński we have at our disposal an excellent description of the patriotic character of the procedures and gestures, which were supposed to legitimize Bierut as the true Polish leader not only in the eyes of the Poles but also of international opinion. The fragment from it cited below describes a moment when Bierut, after his election to the presidency on 5 February 1947, arrives at the Sejm to make an oath, which, *nota bene*, concludes with the words “So help me God”:

In the courtyard, in front of the Sejm, there is already a military band and an honor guard from the infantry in freshly sewn uniforms and a banner. There are several rows of healthy, young, Polish peasants without expressions... A squadron of the cavalry, in the midst of them, in a big shining car, is Bierut and Osóbka. Flags wave in the wind, beautiful, carefully picked horses shake their heads and chomp at their bits. The company presents its weapons, the banner is lowered, and the orchestra plays “Poland has not yet lost.” Bierut and Osóbka get out of the car, are greeted at the entrance by Szalbe, who leads them into the interior of the building... Nothing has changed on the scene I saw, except for the people. If not for Bierut and Osóbka I could fall into the illusion that everything is as it always has been. The prewar ceremony is copied right down to the tiniest detail... But I understand the meaning of all this. The major thing is to maintain the external appearances of an independent state. Thanks to it Poles, or others, will more easily digest this sorry reality. Besides, you have to do it for those abroad. Let the only external difference be that instead of Mościcki it is Bierut who arrives in a black Cadillac.³³⁴

However, even though the cult of Bierut reached its apogee in the first half of the 1950’s, even from the very beginning, while the chairman of the KRN, Bierut, was still being groomed by propaganda as the highest national authority. The decision

333 *Głos Ludu*, 4.V.1945.

334 Stefan Korboński, *W imieniu Kremla* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1956), 257.

to rebuild Warsaw was supposedly indebted to him.³³⁵ The mobilization of the society in connection with Bierut's slogan "The whole nation rebuilds its capital," was probably one of the largest mass actions organized by the authorities in the history of the PRL. Bierut, in his youth connected with Jan Hempel, who listened to the lectures of Ludwik Krzywicki, probably had truly great cultural ambitions and we cannot deny him an authentic engagement with the cause to rebuild Warsaw.³³⁶ However, during that time this was overexploited. Film chronicles from those years repeatedly show as he follows with great interest the projects of rebuilding the capital. Moving the seat of government from Lublin to Warsaw, and not to some other undemolished city, had a symbolic dimension with a strong legitimating aspect.³³⁷ The new government, which was seen as foreign, could not afford a comparison with the Germans who intentionally made Kraków the capital of the General Government.

The change in the society's attitudes toward the communist order was not only influenced by numerous patriotic ceremonies attended by party leaders but, above all, by the language that they used. The new reality required the creation of a new language, which would make possible the coherent description of the new order in a light favorable to the authorities. The word that appeared most frequently during the first period was "nation." This is because the concept of "nation" does not result in a rational description of the world. It is a lived-value. Since it has a symbolic meaning it can easily become an ingredient of political magic. The use of such language encourages the shaping of a pre-reflexive take on reality without distance. It allows for the construction of myths that legitimate the system. The

335 Robert Jarocki is convinced that the idea to rebuild Warsaw came from Stalin, "... during yet another stay with Stalin, under his influence, the position of the president of the National Council changed radically. Stalin was supposed to have said, 'if you want to be acknowledged by Poland and the world, then you have to install yourselves in Warsaw quickly and rebuild the city as the capital of the country.' Bierut understood Stalin's tip as a directive to strive for the legitimization of the new rulers through emotions that would come from the quick rebuilding of Warsaw—he became their energetic spokesman" ("Ruiny i życie," *Rzeczpospolita*, "Plus Minus" section, 22–23.VII.1995).

336 Antonina Kłoskowska, "Socjalistyczna polityka kulturalna," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 3 (1990): 50.

337 21 January 1945, during a meeting devoted to the problem whether to rebuild Warsaw, or to move the capital to another Polish city, Bierut said: "... the government of all of Poland must only be located in Warsaw, a city that will quickly rise from the ruins. If we move it to Łódź, then the government will be treated by the nation as the 'Łódź government,' and not the government of Poland" (Henryk Róžański, *Śladem wspomnień i dokumentów [1943–1948]*, [Warsaw: PWN, 1987], 180).

communists who ruled Poland probably must have noticed this pattern, because one of the unique features of their declarations and public appearances from this period was the overuse of the word “nation” on every possible occasion. Whatever a speech was about the noun “nation,” and adjective “national,” had to appear in it. The meaning of these practices seems obvious. It was about identifying the concept “nation,” endowed with the highest positive value, with everything connected to the new communist order: institutions of the new authorities, the party, Polish Army, economic programs, and political concepts. A good example of the use of the strategy we have called *universalization* is the speech given by the Minister of Defense, General Michał Żymierski, given at the beginning of January 1945 at a meeting of the National Council:

Sosnowski’s and Bora-Komorowski’s Army was formed to stand above the Nation, created with the goal of subduing the nation... The Polish Army is a child of democracy, that is why it is truly national, the army of a new Poland. It is a national army because it was formed in the nation’s fight for freedom, in real fighting both at home and abroad, everywhere where Polish hearts beat. It is a national army because it is tied to all the most noble Polish army traditions, to all that was beautiful and heroic in the deeds of the Polish soldier who fought for freedom... It is a national army because it serves the nation because it fights for its independence and guards its freedom and sovereignty, it guards the democratic rights of the nation because it is the armed refuge of the democratic order of the Commonwealth.³³⁸

This speech can only be understood in the context of the army’s situation between the end of 1944 and the start of 1945. During this period there were many desertions by individual soldiers and entire squads. The army was perceived as non-Polish because of the large number of Soviet officers. This is also why Żymierski was so insistent about repeating that the Polish Army is a national army.

Not only the army was the object of legitimating action, but so was its leader. Before the elections to the Sejm in 1947, the Army Operational-Propaganda Groups were encouraged to pass out publications with a picture of Marshall Michał Żymierski with the words “Marshall Michał Żymierski – Officer of the Legions – Leader of the Partisans – Victorious Leader – Our Candidate for the Sejm on List #3.”³³⁹ This was not the sole example of reaching to the tradition of fighting for independence from the World War I period. In 1947 the funeral of Lucjan Żeligowski took place with great pomp and was shown in newsreels from the Film Chronicle. This is the very same person who in 1920, following the orders

338 *Głos Ludu*, 5.I.1945.

339 Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, Główny Zarząd Polityczny,teczka 89, k. 300.

of Józef Piłsudski, occupied Vilnius and the surrounding areas. The ceremony was attended by representatives of the state authorities, including Deputy Defense Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz.

The PPR was a particular object of legitimizing action. Its General Secretary, on many occasions, stressed that “we stand upon a basis of independence, freedom, and the sovereignty of the Polish state,”³⁴⁰ that Poland “will not go the way of *Sovietization*,”³⁴¹ but is instead taking steps upon its own, “Polish way,” without the necessity of applying the dictatorship of the proletariat, without collectivization.³⁴² People were encouraged to join the ranks of the party with slogans such as, “A Polish patriot joins the ranks of the PPR,” “If you want to maintain the borders on the Niesse, Oder, and the Baltic, then join the ranks of the PPR,” “The Polish Worker’s Party fights against Germanizing. Your place, Pole, is in its ranks.”³⁴³ Slogans from 1st of May 1946 are a good example of how there was an effort to root in the social perception a tie between the party and nation. Among the forty slogans then approved by the Central Committee of the PPR, three contained the name of the party, but all of them had references to the nation and Poland: “Long live the PPR – the leading branch of the nation in the struggle and construction!,” “The PPR was the first to move into armed battle with the occupier,” “The PPR was the first to work for the rebuilding and happiness of Poland!,” “Long live PPR, the party of the fighters for and the builders of the Fatherland.”³⁴⁴ A year later after “winning” the elections to the Sejm, when nationalist legitimization stopped being in such need, the word “nation” appears in a substantially changed context—socialism and the mobilization for executing the Three-Year Plan.³⁴⁵

The word “nation” was not the only one to be overused. This was the case also with the name of Tadeusz Kościuszko, given to every possible institution, square, and street, or with the word “freedom.” Andrzej Panufnik noted the following:

The use of the word “freedom” was an insult to common sense because it was used with the aim of convincing Poles that they should be grateful and happy with the new freedom under the rule of the people’s authorities. The administration generously lavished this magical label: the square nearby where I live was called the “Freedom Square.” There

340 Władysław Gomułka, Referat na I Ogólnokrajowej Naradzie PPR, 27 V 1945, in: *O naszej partii* (Warsaw: KiW, 1968), 113.

341 Władysław Gomułka, “O uchwałach plenum majowego KC PPR,” in: *Ibid.*, 98.

342 For more on this topic see: Jerzy Jagiełło, *O polską drogę do socjalizmu* (Warsaw: PWN, 1984).

343 AAN, KC PZPR, 295/X–84, k. 13.

344 *Głos Ludu*, 18.IV.1946.

345 *Głos Ludu*, 13.IV.1947.

was a Cinema called “Freedom,” “Freedom” cigarettes, “Freedom” chocolate . . . “Freedom” soap, and so on. There was only no “Freedom” toilet paper, which was always out of reach anyway, regardless of its name.³⁴⁶

The continual use in public statements of words such as “nation” and “freedom,” that is, vernacular appealing to collective emotions rather than to descriptive judgments, facilitated the execution of the political struggle in a brilliant way. The revolutionary absolutization of the will of the people-nation, making reference to the “Nation” (frequently written with a capital letter) as an absolute value, mystified the new order. Veiling oneself with the will of the nation made it possible to take away any possibility of objecting from the opposition by placing it outside the bounds of national collectivity. If something was in accord with the party line, and the politics conducted by it, it thereby had a national character, if on the other hand, it was in conflict with it, then it was automatically considered anti-national (treacherous, fascist, reactionary). For example, in connection with the illegal transformation of the PKWN into an interim government in December 1944, there were campaigns that were supposed to prove that the new government has legitimation from the nation. *Głos Ludu* wrote at the time, “The nation demands the proclamation of an interim government,”³⁴⁷ or, in an article entitled, “Interim Government: The Nation Demands,” they wrote “The transformation of the PKWN into an Interim Government is required by the interests of the Polish Nation, it is required by a Polish *raison d’etat*.”³⁴⁸

Similarly, the nationalization of the industry sector was not justified, as one might expect, with historical justice, or, the necessity of transitioning from capitalism to a communist social-economic order, but with the “will of the nation”:

The liberation of the Polish national economy from the rule of big capital monopolized in the hands of a small layer of industry and banking magnates was the desire of **the majority of the nation**... Therefore, big and middle-sized industry in Poland... is becoming the property of the nation.³⁴⁹

The vagueness and symbolic nature of the concept “nation” is very useful in making such declarations. The lack of reference to concrete reality allows for manipulation. The inability to legally confirm the right to power creates the necessity of relying upon a mythical “will of the nation.” According to Andrzej Walicki, this concept was an element of the heritage of aristocratic democracy. On the one

346 Andrzej Panufnik, *O sobie* (Warsaw: NOWA, 1990), 154.

347 *Głos Ludu*, 2.XII.1944.

348 *Głos Ludu*, 10.XII.1944.

349 *Rzeczpospolita*, 5.I.1946, bolding in the original.

hand, the ideal of a sovereign and unanimous “national will” mobilized individuals to fight for “social subjectivity”; on the other, as a myth, it was “used as a tool of unrelenting moral-political pressure aiming to force total conformity, not external only, but also internal—intellectual and moral.”³⁵⁰ For the communists, their arbitrary treatment of the “will of the nation” became a key argument in the legitimation of the new order. The concept was used in July 1944 by Władysław Bieńkowski justifying the need of rejecting the April Constitution. He called for searching for “extra-constitutional paths.” “Such an extra-constitutional way,” he wrote, “will introduce a factor not foreseen by the constitutional law—namely, the will of the people.”³⁵¹ Before the referendum one of the slogans proclaimed, “3 times ‘yes’ is a quick realization of the will of the nation.”³⁵² Through the falsification of the social reality in this way a “society of spectacle” was being built, one feature of which were simple divisions, giving easy and homogeneous answers to the meaning of social life. The good is on the side of the party because it “grew out of the working class and the Polish Nation, it is connected to this class and the nation with all the roots of its existence, all of its activities.”³⁵³ Whereas the evil that exists is named and thrown out beyond the national community. “They” are evil, traitors of the nation, foreign too is the romantic tradition of suffering and struggle.

Of the many speeches that follow this trope, we can cite a fragment of a speech delivered by Osóbka-Morawski on the radio in connection with the Soviet winter offensive during January 1945 where he said the following:

During these days of celebration for the whole of the nation let the national unity be strengthened even more. Let there be no honest Pole who would obey the voices of the instigators in exile in London who are trying to stir up Poles against each other, breaking up the unity of the nation with their subversive work, thus, as a result, they are helping the Germans.³⁵⁴

Besides the opposition, whose actions, in the eyes of Władysław Gomułka, “are foreign to the vital interests of their own country,”³⁵⁵ the traitor was frequently,

350 Andrzej Walicki, *Trzy patriotyzmy* (Warsaw: Res Publica, 1991), 36.

351 “Nasze stanowisko,” *Trybuna Wolności*, 1.VII.1944 in: *Publicystyka konspiracyjna PPR...* v. 3, op. cit., 305.

352 *Protokół nr 2 zebrania Międzypartyjnego Komitetu do Spraw Głosowania Ludowego*, 2.VI.1946, AAN, KC PZPR, 295/VII-173, k. 23.

353 Helena Kozłowska, “Praca polityczna w masach,” *Głos Ludu*, 4.XII.1945.

354 *Głos Ludu*, 19.I.1945.

355 Władysław Gomułka, *O uchwałach plenum majowego KC PPR*, in: *O naszej partii...*, op. cit., 87.

for example, a speculator, “The speculator disorganizes our economic life—today he is an enemy of the nation.”³⁵⁶

The new authorities were not only described as “growing from the will of the nation.” Their existence was also tied to Poland’s independence. The rulers, therefore, used the strategy of *rationalization*. They created a string of arguments with the aim of legitimizing the existing system of power because it was supposedly the only guarantor of independence. In an editorial of the *Gazeta Ludowa* entitled, “Unity,” from June 1945 we read:

The crisis of our government and Polish democracy, which some want to see as a result of a breakdown of our rebuilding work, would be simultaneously a crisis for Poland, the end of the independence we achieved through blood. In the camp of the reactionary remnants, there is a call to sabotage the reborn Polish state. It is to be a struggle for the “independence of Poland” ... To cover the fact that what is at stake is only about power for itself [for the reactionaries –M.Z.]... **To fight for Polish independence, for its independence and power, means fighting for the national front, for the unity of all Poles, it means actively participating in the work of rebuilding Poland. We will have the kind of Poland that we build ourselves.**³⁵⁷

Slogans about the necessity of unifying the nation and deepening this unity were a stable element occurring in speeches and press articles. The meaning that was attached to national unity is attested to by the fact that probably the first poster printed by the Ministry of Information and Propaganda, with a circulation of 36,000 copies, was the print “Down with those who break up national unity.”³⁵⁸ In the slogan “national unity” we ought to see an injunction that says that nobody can stand on the side and be a passive observer of the national struggle. There is no morally neutral space. The struggle and defense of a united nation are an imperative for every member of the national community. Consequently, if the government is a government of national unity then it is the responsibility of every Pole to help and support it. Władysław Gomułka, the main proponent of the national front in the PPR, said this during a manifestation for National Unity in June 1945:

The Government of National Unity has the full right to demand the support of the nation. This is because it is the government of the nation. There can be no Polish patriot, a democrat, and a Pole, who shall evade the duties of the great and difficult labor of rebuilding our country. Poland cannot afford the fracturing, cannot afford its own internal feuds and quarrels.³⁵⁹

356 *Głos Ludu*, 11. I.1945.

357 *Głos Ludu*, 2.VI.1945, bold-type in the original.

358 Andrzej Krawczyk, *Pierwsza próba...*, op. cit., 29.

359 *Głos Ludu*, 3.VII.1945.

This hostility toward the free individual, who is not subjected to discipline, means that a person can only become realized through and for the national community. A community, we should add, in accordance with the ideological project of the party and directed by it. Hannah Arendt wrote,

total loyalty is possible only when fidelity is emptied of all concrete content, from which changes of mind naturally arise. The totalitarian movements, each in its own way, have done their utmost to get rid of the party programs which specified concrete content and which they inherited from earlier, nontotalitarian stages of development.³⁶⁰

That is why in the PPR program, implemented during the war and immediately after it, little can be found outside the then obvious slogans: the rebuilding of the country, land reform, peaceful settlement of international relations, and unification.

In many nationalist ideologies, unification of the nation is treated as a postulate, the most important goal toward which members of the national community should strive. The unification of the nation is like a union with God, it is the promise of fullness, national perfection, and melting into national selfhood. This, among other things, is the expression of the mystical and messianic character of nationalism. In general, the ideologues of nationalism speak of the unity of the nation during an as-not-yet-perfected time, as a potential state, which can be reached through sacrifice, sweat, and blood, and, above all, obedience and loyalty to the national leader. Its final form would require a total acceptance of the leader, or, of the mission the nation has to fulfill. This is what Bierut suggested, when he said in an address delivered on 31 December 1944, that the unification of the nation has already taken place through National Council. The speaker interpreted it as a miracle:

Our case is as certain as it probably ever was in our history, because never before has the Polish nation been so united in its aspirations, thinking, and its will to fight for its freedom and independence as it is today. The invaluable and imperishable merit due to the National Council comes from the fact that it managed to unite the nation in the most critical moment of its existence, firing up its will to fight, by pointing out to it the way toward a heroic march through the struggle for freedom and rebirth . . . Only Polish democracy could perform this miracle, only it proved itself capable of uniting the nation in a selfless struggle against the invaders, only it managed to arouse popular enthusiasm for work on the reconstruction of Fatherland, its economy, and democratic forms of state power.³⁶¹

360 Hannah Arendt, *The Roots of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), 324

361 *Głos Ludu*, 3.I.1945.

If the government camp could unite the nation and be so successful in the economic and political spheres, naturally, according to this reasoning, it had the right to feel legitimated.

The postulate of national unification was not the only one taken over from nationalist ideology. The language of personifying the nation typical for this philosophy was also transferred. Comparisons to living organisms also frequently occurred in nationalist symbolism. Ideologists of nationalism commonly used many phrases borrowed from the language of biological and medical sciences. This was partly the result of the strong influence of positivist philosophy at the time of the birth of the nationalist position. This tendency was also present in the language of communist propaganda. For example: “The Polish people understand the importance of a fraternal alliance with the Soviet Union,”³⁶² “the Polish nation turns with contempt from those incorrigible brawlers and pests,”³⁶³ “The Polish nation has felt it with its own legitimate instinct,”³⁶⁴ and so on. It was not exclusively a unique style, aiming to give greater expression to what it wanted to say. Apart from its obvious falsity, as if the Polish people truly understood the importance of their fraternal alliance with the Soviet Union, it is striking how it treats the nation as a unity, an undivided being guided by instincts and even reason, but always in accordance with the party line. This type of instrumental use of the word “nation” in communist propaganda was to convince the hearer that everything the rulers do has the mandate of social support.

The escalating use of nationalist language for legitimating the new government took place in the period preceding the referendum in June 1946. The reason was obvious: the fear of losing. At the assembly of the PPR, which took place four months before the referendum, Gomułka expressed his concerns:

I do not need to justify broadly, that this chance, the chance for a PSL victory, is there. The factors contributing to this are our economic difficulty, great economic difficulties, to all of this is added the whole tradition, the legacy of the past, the Sanacja past, which educated the Polish nation in the spirit of sincere hatred toward our eastern neighbor. These, and other reasons point to the high possibility of a PSL victory.³⁶⁵

We have at our disposal a set of slogans officially adopted by the leadership of the Ministry of Information and Propaganda to distribute before the referendum.

362 Głos Ludu, 6.I.1945.

363 Głos Ludu, 19.I.1945.

364 Głos Ludu, 3.V.1945.

365 *Protokół plenarnego posiedzenia KC PPR 10 lutego 1946 r.*, eds. J. Jakubowski, W. Kowalski, in: *ARR*, v. IX, op. cit., 249.

Among the slogans, they invented many referred to the patriotism of voters, while few of them referred to radical social reforms. Some of the slogans were: “YES Polishness is your badge, you are a Pole – Say Yes,” “Remember the people of Silesia – Silesia was Polish, will be Polish, The Pole’s badge – three times YES,” “3 times YES – an expression the unity of the Polish nation,” “3 times YES – is an expression of our vigilance against the German danger,” “Every Pole vote 3 times YES,”³⁶⁶ “3 times YES will not be to German taste.”³⁶⁷ The press linked to the ruling camp also published its “own” slogans beside these: “Three times YES is a manifestation of the unity of the nation!” “Do you want peace and harmony in the nation? Vote YES three times.”³⁶⁸ Exactly the same scheme was used by the active underground opposition. The difference, however, was that “every Pole” had to vote three times “NO.”³⁶⁹ Party agitators supposedly had spread the rumor that when issuing new identity cards, the voting lists would be taken into account. Whoever did not participate in the referendum would not receive their identity cards “because [such a person] would not be considered to be a Pole.”³⁷⁰

After the referendum, we can observe a gradual transition away from nationalist legitimation, which takes on merely ritual characteristics. Still, at the assembly of the Central Committee of the PPR, which took place in April 1947, Edward Ochab suggested a bolder pushing forward of national unity slogans in order to broaden the party’s influence and “finish off the reactionary opponent.” The proposal under discussion was immediately discredited by Sokorski, for whom throwing around national front slogans would only obscure the struggle for a new cultural face of Poland. We can more clearly see how Sokorski had a better feel for the upcoming changes.³⁷¹

Propaganda’s interpretations of the new government’s achievements indicated that the changes made are a breakthrough in the history of the nation and will define its development “for many generations, for hundreds of years.”³⁷² It

366 Andrzej Krawczyk, *Pierwsza próba...*, op. cit., 87

367 Jerzy Holzer, “Uraz, nacjonalizm, manipulacja. Kwestia niemiecka w komunistycznej Polsce,” *Rocznik polsko-niemiecki* 1 (1992): 10.

368 *Rzeczpospolita*, 28.VI.1946.

369 Krystyna Kersten, *Miedzy wyzwoleniem a zniewoleniem. Polska 1944–1956* (London: Aneks, 1993), 34.

370 *Instrukcja dla instruktorów agitacyjnych*, AAN, KC PZPR, 295/VII-173, k. 10.

371 *ARR*, v. VII, op. cit., 235, 238.

372 “This year, the powers of democracy . . . that rule in Independent Poland, have achieved changes that circumscribe the path of development for our nation for many generations, for hundreds of years. The democratic camp in Poland brought about

was considered a great success that the newly formed Polish state is a single-nation state, as opposed to a multi-national state full of internal dissent—as was the Republic until September 1939.³⁷³ Krystyna Kersten points out that public declarations did not quite incite for a “Poland for Poles,”³⁷⁴ but evidently they wanted to do it since among the slogans prepared for the referendum were the following: “3 times YES is a Poland without national minorities.”³⁷⁵ Actions against German, Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities in this period tended toward this direction. [155]

Reference was clearly made to pre-war models for strengthening a xenophobic national community through the exaggeration of anti-Polish restrictions for Poles living in the Zaolzie region. This form of legitimating, by appearing as the defender of allegedly threatened compatriots living outside the native country, was common in pre-war dictatorial systems, especially in Germany. At the previously mentioned assembly in May 1945 Julian Finkelsztein lamented that “we neglected the matter of the Zaolzie.”³⁷⁶ Less than a month later the Polish Army General Staff

such an immense national victory, which is the REMOVAL OF GERMANISM BEYOND THE ODER, WHICH HAS CREATED OUT OF POLAND A NATION-STATE, in distinction from a multinational state, which is internally divided, such as the Commonwealth was before September 1939” (“Referat Romana Zambrowskiego na wojewódzkiej naradzie aktywu partyjnego w Łodzi,” *Głos Ludu*, 17.II.1946; capitalization in the original).

373 “The Ukrainian and Byelorussian populace, separated from its native matrix, as a result of artificial divisions, and from the past, is now returning to them. In principle what is happening is that Polish lands are being left by populaces that are nationally foreign. Poland has rid itself of the hotbeds of continual unrest, continuous internal strife. In this way the matter has been resolved in the spirit of mutual interests, in the spirit of the idea of a mono-national state. This has immense significance for the development of Poland not only as the basis of a friendly cohabitation of neighboring nations, but also as the basis for a lasting peace in Europe in general” (“Przemówienie Bieruta na konferencji prasowej w Belwederze w związku z polsko-radzieckimi umowami zawartymi w dniu 16 VIII 1945 r. w Belwederze,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 27.VIII.1945); “As a result of wars and territorial changes the Polish nation is transforming itself from a multinational state into a mono-national state.” (“Noworoczne orędzie Bieruta,” *Głos Ludu*, 1.I.1946. For more on the topic see: Kazimierz Pudło, *Powojenna Polska państwem jednonarodowym?, Sprawy Narodowościowe 2* [1997]).

374 Krystyna Kersten, *Między wyzwoleniem...*, op. cit., 34.

375 This slogan was approved on 21 June 1946 during a meeting of the Inter-Party Committee for the Popular Vote, however, it probably was not published in any form (AAN, KC PPR, 295/ – 173, k. 23).

376 *Protokół obrad KC PPR w maju 1945 roku...*, op. cit., 33.

prepared an order for the military seizure of the disputed territory.³⁷⁷ We do not know what exactly guided its authors. However, it is highly likely that an important motive was the lack of legitimation for state power. Reports from this period show an increase in resentment and dissatisfaction associated with the robberies committed by Soviet soldiers and serious shortages in the food supply. Political repression resulted in the armed underground's growth in numbers. There was widespread frustration associated with the loss of lands in the East. Therefore, the communist authorities, remembering the Sanacja's propaganda success associated with their entry into Zaolzie in 1938, might have wanted to repeat the achievement, in order to compensate Polish society for the loss of Vilnius and Lviv, and thereby also prove their own national character. The military objectives of the undertaking were not realized. Propaganda attempted to make up for it with a series of articles on the situation of Polish minorities in the Zaolzie.³⁷⁸ *Głos Ludu* published, for example, a series of articles entitled "Polish Stations of the Cross beyond the Olza," and one of them was entitled: "Beyond the Olza, there is no resurrection yet." Printing such texts in the press organs of the Communist Party testifies to the legitimizing aspirations of the ruling camp.³⁷⁹

Without a doubt, one of the most important elements of the nationalist legitimation of the new order were its anti-German sentiments. This is indicated by, at the very least, the already mentioned, number of rallies to express "hatred towards Germans."³⁸⁰ We must remember that they represented only a part of the

377 *Naczelne Dowództwo Wojsk Polskich, Sztab Główny do Dowódcy 1-go Korpusu Pancernego*, 16 czerwca 1945 r., ("Nieznany rozkaz Roli-Żymierskiego. Na Zaolzie!," ed. Marcin Zaremba, *Polityka*, 23 August 1997).

378 Roman Werfel answered the question he posed in the title, "Who is behind the anti-Polish campaign in Zaolzie?," with the following: ". . . It is being conducted by all those who for many decades have served German nationalism, it is being done by people poisoned by a Hitlerian, fascist, sting . . . The settling of the Zaolzie matter, putting a stop to the persecution of Poles in the Zaolzie region, the taming of the Nazi thugs of yesteryear, of the Svoboda or Verdicek variety, the acknowledgment of the right of the Polish population of the Zaolzie to decide its fate, is demanded not only by the interests of Poland, not only the interest of Zaolzie Poles. To no lesser degree, it is demanded by the interests of Czech democracy, the interest of the Czech people" (*Głos Ludu*, 12.VIII.1945).

379 Marek Kazimierz Kamiński, *Polsko-czechosłowackie stosunki polityczne 1945–1948* (Warszawa: PWN, 1990), 374.

380 "Such rallies can be arranged at family graves, at ruins destroyed by the Germans, towns, and villages. These rallies should adopt a resolution, a letter to the population of a given place, which should be a promise of revenge and fighting until victory is

whole spectrum of forms and means of expressing the unfavorable stance of the authorities towards the Germans. Therefore, it makes sense to ask what were the domestic political functions of the German issue in postwar Poland.

Bronisław Pasierb singled out five such functions.³⁸¹ The first is the instrumental function, present both in the propaganda undertakings in the country as well as abroad. Next, the author mentions the compensatory function, which constituted an outlet for strong emotions, the desire to take revenge and recouping their losses against “the Germans”; the defensive function, expressed in constant reminders about the possibility of German aggression; and the educational function. Finally, there was the integrating function. At this point, we will let Pasierb speak:

The centers of revolutionary political thought, mainly the PPR, undertook purposeful actions to exploit the German problem to achieve their political goals. Their primary task was to give life to the idea of the nation’s unity, whose broadest platform was supposed to be a unity of action, not only of the working classes but for most people. A variety of arguments were used to achieve these goals, including the German question, which fulfilled an important function because of its emotional intensity.³⁸²

It is impossible to disagree with the author when he notes that the integrative role of the German problem was especially important for the ruling party. However, doubts are awakened by his artificial separating off of the instrumental, especially from the defensive and integrating functions, but also to some extent, education. Socialization is often, after all, treated instrumentally, and, not only in totalitarian systems. It seems that both the creation of an atmosphere of threat from Germany, as well as consolidating and mobilizing the nation, often on the basis of this threat, had, for the ruling communists, one primary instrumental purpose—the legitimation of their political power as “our,” national, guardian of the country’s independence and the integrity of its state borders. The government camp was well aware that slogans directed against the German part of the populace would result in a positive response in the society-at-large and that this would enable its integration and mobilization. At the assembly of the Central Committee of the PPR, which met in February 1945, the First Secretary of the party said:

achieved” (“Wytyczne ZPW I Armii dla pracy pol. wych. w zw. z wyzwoleniem nowych terenów Polski, [15.I.1945],” cited in: Edmund Dmitrów, *Niemcy i okupacja hitlerowska w oczach Polaków. Poglądy i opinie z lat 1945–1948* [Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1987], 89).

381 Bronisław Pasierb, “Funkcje problemu niemieckiego w pierwszym okresie Polski Ludowej,” in: *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie. Integracja i rozwój ziem zachodnich i północnych*, eds. Bohdan Jałowiecki and Jan Przewłocki (Katowice: Śląski Instytut Naukowy, 1980), 109–124.

382 Ibid., 119.

History has given us the best conditions to create such a front. First of all, it must be emphasized that all of the society is **engulfed by hatred of Germany**. It provides ample opportunities for the unification of society in into one general national front. Especially now, after the liberation of the central and western stretches of the country, these possibilities present themselves with full force... **We have to awaken among the Polish people a desire to unite, resulting from an awareness of the dangers that threaten or may threaten, the Polish nation after the defeat of Germany, because of a desire for revenge that will live in the German people for a long time.**³⁸³

The mobilization of the nation around the hate of a common enemy, the Germans, had a good chance of success because the memory of war crimes committed by the occupying forces was alive and well in the Polish society. Writing “Germany” in lowercase was practiced not only in official state forms but also in the texts emerging from those inspired by the opposition associated with the London camp. Hostility and hatred were dominant and widespread. These feelings, which grew from national experiences, fueled revenge. The belief that Nazi crimes accrued to the entire German nation was shared by almost all Poles. They also agreed with the fact that the only solution of the German problem is the expulsion of the Germans from Polish borders. This postulate was also put forward by all of the political parties. Only the communists, due to being in control of the instruments of power, however, put it in force, and read its fulfillment as an important and supporting legitimating argument.³⁸⁴

In August 1947 the party initiated another action, strictly speaking, a raid, which aimed at the disclosure of the not yet uprooted “undercover” Germans,

383 „Nowa sytuacja, nowe zadania”, z referatu I sekretarza KC PPR wygłoszonego na rozszerzonym plenum KC, luty 1946 r., in: *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Dokumenty programowe...*, op. cit., 287 (emphasis in the original).

384 Much has been written on the topic of the image of the Germans in the Polish society, in political programs, and the press, see: Piotr Madajczyk, *Niemcy polscy 1944–1989* (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2001); Jacek Piotrowski, *Niemcy w świetle polskiej prasy na Śląsku w latach 1945–1948*, in *Wrocławskie Studia z Historii Najnowszej* v. VI, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński (Wrocław: Instytut Historyczny Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1998), 113–134; *Polacy wobec Niemców. Z dziejów kultury politycznej Polski 1945–1989*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1993); Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Od Poczdamu do Szklarskiej Poręby. Polska w stosunkach międzynarodowych 1945–1947* (London: Aneks, 1990); E. Dmitrów, *Niemcy i okupacja...*, op. cit.; Bronisław Pasierb, *Polska myśl polityczna okresu II wojny światowej wobec Niemiec* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1990); Andrzej Rudnicki, *Problem niemiecki w publicystyce Polski Ludowej w latach 1944–1949* (Warszawa: Instytut Historii Ruchu Robotniczego, 1988).

and their expulsion from Polish territories—all of this within the frames of the policy of “de-Germanization” in Upper Silesia³⁸⁵ (started in 1945). Edward Ochab, then Secretary of PPR in Katowice, recommended directing the action by the following guidelines:

1 / The use of the German language, apart from some very justified need, must be considered as one of the proofs of German nationality.

We do not want to liquidate the German language by applying penalties, as a result we'd push the Germans into deeper conspiracy.

Instead, we must be determined to establish and register those entities that use the German language in public or in private, and as the Germans eliminate them from Polish society – that is expel them from the borders of the Republic . . .

3 / You should also expose people who bestow compassion upon German prisoners of war . . .

4 / One should be interested in signs of sympathy for the Germans and the spirit of the families and entities under the influence of the German underground. Sympathy is expressed by using the German language, reading German books in public places, tending to the graves of German soldiers, maintaining German inscriptions in private homes, paintings, tapestries, cookware . . .

If any of the above are encountered each citizen has not only the right but the duty to react immediately. There is an obligation to stop and take an individual speaking in German in a public place to the nearest military police or UB station . . .

In relation to the specific manifestations described in point #4, an awareness campaign should be developed, with a clear emphasis that these kinds of actions or behavior offends the dignity of a Pole.

This action is a serious effort of the whole of society, especially of our party, which is the leading party and preside over all social work . . .

Let our slogan be: We will not surrender a single Polish soul, and will not let a single German remain in Poland, such will be the leading guideline in this work.

Let the elimination of the German remnants be the crowning work of the Silesian insurgent, which will satisfy all the Poles who suffered, fought, and died for the Polishness of Silesia.³⁸⁶

This slogan was not a communist-internationalist slogan, for which ethnic divisions are irrelevant to class divisions.³⁸⁷ The passage quoted here from the docu-

385 Bernard Linek, “‘Odniemczanie’ Górnego Śląska w latach 1945–1950 (zarys problemu), Polska 1944/45–1989,” *Studia i materiały* 4 (1999): 149–160.

386 *Wojewódzki Komitet PPR Katowice do wszystkich powiatowych i miejskich Komitetów PPR na terenie Woj. Śl.-Dąbrowskiego*, 2 August 1947 (“Nie oddamy polskiej duszy,” was prepared for print by Marcin Zaremba in *Polityka*, 13.I.1996).

387 Ochab, in his conversation with Teresa Torafińska, presented himself as a “real communist,” whereas the displacement of the population he described as counter-

ment is a testament to thinking in nationalist categories. The nation is presented in it as a spiritual community of people,³⁸⁸ the essence of which is a collective national self-consciousness—the soul of a nation, which is a being superior to individuals. This self-awareness is not limited to the statement: “We are Poles.” It should be expressed in meeting the national duty to “immediately respond” by “eliminating” foreigners from Polish lands. They can be recognized by language, compassion for German prisoners of war, sentiments for national souvenirs and trinkets, and finally by a “family spirit.” Tolerating these “remnants of the German,” according to Ochab, offends the dignity of the Pole. In other words, Poland must be only for the Poles, because only then will their national pride not be exposed to compromise. The party is an emanation of the spirit of the nation, which directs and leads for the good of the Fatherland. Its efforts to liquidate “the remnants of German” should satisfy all Poles who, obviously, should give it their public support. [160]

Ochab’s letter addressed to all District and Municipal Committees of the PPR, was confidential, although the sender recommended that the news of the planned actions should reach “every Polish home.” However, in the government press similar pronouncements in the spirit of nationalism could also be encountered fully:

It is indisputable that we must strive to create there [that is, in the Recovered Territories – MZ] a uniform population while eliminating the German element, which is, and always will be, a factor in the disintegration of the internal cohesion of society. At the same time, we must strive to ensure that our biological potential is particularly heavily concentrated in the western areas because precisely that decides whether the borders will be lasting.³⁸⁹

At this point, we ought to recall Gellener’s definition of nationalism as being the “theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries do not in-

revolutionary: “The nationalists are attempting to justify it from the position of the so-called ‘nationalist egoism,’ whereas the communists feel themselves as the brothers of all working people without regard for their nationality, and they look for the justifications of their actions in the superior interests of the international and nation-liberating communist movement. We communists recognize the right to self-determination, all the way up to secession, but this does not mean that we are for seceding in every situation, for displacement of populations . . . Displacement is fundamentally counter-revolutionary. Such was the displacement of Poles by the Germans” (*Oni*, op. cit., s. 22, 23).

388 Ernest Renan, “Co to jest naród,” in: *Być w narodzie. Szkice o idei narodu*, ed. Lech Zybdel (Lublin: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1998), 210.

389 *Rzeczpospolita*, 24.III.1946.

tersect with the political borders.” The above-cited passage from an article entitled “A Plan of National Politics,” was featured by *Rzeczpospolita* in March 1946. Still, neither the plan nor the myth of the so-called Recovered Territories, were original, because the Communists did not invent it. However, taken over by them it played an important role in their efforts to gain nationalist legitimacy.

The Communists, tried at all costs, to monopolize the anti-German sentiments, and repeated *ad nauseam* that only “we” have merit for the defeat of the Third Reich and the return “to the perennial Polish Piast lands,” and that “we” are the guarantors of Poland’s defense against the German deluge. Gomułka, among others, frequently spoke in this tone, for example, he claimed that:

During the occupation, the struggle for the liberation of Poland pushed our party to the forefront of the nation. The great military effort, organized primarily by our party, and the great tribute of blood made by thousands of our party’s members in the fight against Germany to liberate Poland, underpins our leading position.³⁹⁰

The unparalleled dedication of the Polish communists in the struggle for liberation from the Germans during the occupation, as well as after its completion, was therefore supposed to legitimize the party in its pretensions to leadership.

The communist authorities were not only banking on Polish fears learned from their experience of war and the feeling of insecurity associated with the transfer of formerly German lands for the consolidation of society and the legitimization of their governments, but with this purpose in mind, they also fueled this fear, awakening an atmosphere of threat. For example, the manual for agitators before the referendum recommended the organization of gossiping propaganda about how: “Churchill is in cahoots with Germany and sends money so that we vote NO and thereby lose the Western Lands.”³⁹¹ On the streets hung a poster entitled “To the Polish nation,” which read: “Every NO of the Pole is a YES for German aspirations for retaliation, it is a YES for the protectors of Germany.”³⁹² The press reminded everyone: “Remember: The German is from the West! YES is a vote for the united national front.”³⁹³ On the day of the referendum clear reference was made to rooted post-occupation fears: “Germany again sings *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* and *Horst Wessel Lied*, today, when there is no lack of forces in the world that would willingly serve the Ger-

390 “Nowa sytuacja, nowe zadania,” in: *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Dokumenty programowe 1942–1948*, op. cit. , 280 (emphasis in original).

391 *Instrukcja dla instruktorów agitacyjnych*, AAN, KC PZPR, 295/VII – 173, k. 10.

392 AAN, KC PZPR, 295/VII – 173, k. 60.

393 *Rzeczpospolita*, 25.VII.1946.

mans, rewarding them at someone else's expense, just think for a moment how would all these friends of ours judge the majority voting NO."³⁹⁴

Creating an atmosphere of fear of the German threat directly preceded the launch of the legitimization strategy of *rationalization*, which consists in absolutizing the meaning of the "Western Territories" and then convincing everyone that their remaining within the boundaries of the Polish state is only possible within the existing political order, thus strengthening a fatalistic feeling of no alternatives. Similarly, it justified the need for an alliance with the Soviet Union, which was supposed to be the only guarantor and protector of the Oder-Neisse line, the only force able to effectively resist the German claims to re-vindicate these lands. At the same time, it called for common sense and the necessity of outlining new principles of relating with the eastern neighbor:

In the case of the Soviet-Polish alliance, we should look soberly, purely, and simply from the point of view of real interests of our state. We still have to remember that the rights of Poland to the Recovered Territories have been fully recognized and supported by the USSR. The closer Polish-Soviet alliance will be, the more unreliable will the Germans hopes to reclaim these lands prove to be.³⁹⁵

In this way, Germanophobia, coupled with "pro-Sovietism," gained further legitimacy.³⁹⁶

The main condition of the alliance with the Soviet Union was Polish *raisons d'état*. It also was constituted by the ethnic proximity of the Slavic nations, which was then strongly emphasized. The solidarity of all Slavs was treated as a historical duty in the face of the German threat. The legitimacy of the reorientation of the reborn Polish East and rapprochement with the USSR was being accomplished not on the basis of proletarian internationalism, but on the principle, which profaned the well-known slogan of the Communist Manifesto, "Slavs of all countries, unite!"

Propaganda frequently made use of the Polish soldiers participating in the capture of Berlin and the planting of the red-and-white flag next to the flag of the Soviets at the Brandenburg Gate. The symbolic significance of the gesture had its power, of which Stalin must have been aware, by agreeing to the participation of Poles in the capture of the German capital. The use of this event and the organization of the legitimacy of the system around the German threat proved to be one of the most enduring elements in the process of legitimating communist rule in Poland until its very end.

394 Krystyna Kersten, *Narodziny systemu...*, op. cit., 195–196.

395 "Między Niemcami a Rosją," *Rzeczpospolita*, 7.IV.1946.

396 Edmund Dmitrów, *Niemcy i okupacja hitlerowska...*, op. cit., 286.

An interesting example of the use of national slogans to demonstrate that something is just (or not), is an article which appeared in the *Głos Ludu* in May 1945. It pointed out the need for changes in the Polish law because it had arisen under the influence of “German science and jurisprudence.” It was so, argued the author of the article, because:

... most of our senior lawyers were educated in Prussian and Austrian universities... in opposition to traditional ties with Latin culture, and despite the common interests of the Slav nations, especially those of the close by Soviet neighbor, which extended the lofty ideals of French humanism—the impact of the legal institutions of these countries and their reception in Poland were completely negligible. In contrast, the German spirit has imbued our Code of Civil Procedure, liabilities, and others . . .

Therefore, the author proposed rejecting everything unnecessary, and basing the new law on simplified structures and saturating it with “folk elements.”³⁹⁷ Six months after this publication there came into force a decree on “crimes particularly dangerous during the reconstruction of the State.” In a sense, it actually “simplified” the law by increasing the number of offenses for which the death penalty was imposed. The quoted article can thus be regarded as an expression of the legitimacy of the emerging legal order. It accomplished this by reaching for national arguments whose meaning boils down to the argument that the good, just, and morally right is what grows out of an arbitrarily plotted out cultural circle.

The consequence of the instrumental use of the German problem for the goal of legitimating political power was the consolidating of a very negative stereotype of the Germans, the German state, inherent in the historical consciousness of the society, resulting from concrete historical experiences. As noted by Rafał Stobiecki, this stereotype, born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had its prototype in the writings of Ludwik Popławski and Roman Dmowski.³⁹⁸ Its usefulness in creating an atmosphere of threat, and its claim to legitimize the government, meant that the PRL’s propaganda and cultural policy did not cease in its efforts to use it until the end of the Polish People’s Republic to create a poor image of the Germans in the eyes of the Poles—it continued unabated and unchanged.

The official texts and statements from that period instrumentally treated not only words like “nation,” “freedom,” and “Pole,” but also all the stages of Polish history. “The social function of history,” says Witold Kula:

397 Marian Muszkat, “Nowe drogi prawa polskiego,” *Głos Ludu*, 14.V.1945.

398 Rafał Stobiecki, *Historia pod nadzorem. Spory o nowy model historii w Polsce – druga połowa lat czterdziestych – początek lat pięćdziesiątych* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1993), 73.

... was for many centuries, the providing of historical legitimacy for certain phenomena in the present and for their rights [to be used] in the future. For the royalty and aristocrats, for church institutions, for certain customs and rules, for the current hierarchy of social values, and for rating social criteria. This assertion is undoubtedly a simplification, but there is no generalization without simplification. The proof from antiquity had its power force for millennia. The argument that "It was always so" had its evidentiary value in society, often even before a judicial forum. Social life was built upon it. Hence there was the need for history. However, despite the doctrine of immutability, life had to change—hence each of these changes had to, in turn, seek legitimacy in the past, it had to "prove" that it is not a stranger to the past, that, in a word, change is not in fact really a change.³⁹⁹

It seems that the special role played by chiasm in the case of the communist ideology should exclude historical resentments in legitimizing. The first post-war years showed how wrong this belief was. I earlier discussed the "Piast conception," which already came into being during the war. The use of the Piast trope for legitimizing the changes to the borders increased after its conclusion. Slogans of returning to Piast lands did not only serve to distract the public from the lost Polish eastern lands of the Republic. The Polish Communists were faced with a dilemma whose solution all their revolutionary predecessors had problems with. Two paths were at the forefront. The first was marked out by the revolutionary mentality. It ordered a complete break with the pre-revolutionary governance, with pre-September Poland. The second way was marked out by the political realities. They forced a reckoning with a national consciousness of the Poles heightened during the war. What was at stake was a belief, shared by a part of the Polish Communists, that the complete rejection of tradition is a revolutionary utopia possible only in theory. By wanting to maintain a revolutionary identity, without losing the opportunity to gain and maintain power, they had to join these two paths. This posed for them the question of finding a national tradition that could be invoked. The only tradition they had of their own, to which they could refer, was a tradition of revolutionary struggle in the Marxist understanding. This was rather alien to Polish society. In addition, it did not propose a system of positive values that would permit the construction of a new order. What in fact happened, as time passed, was that Communist propaganda identified revolutionary struggle with the struggle for national independence, the patriot with the revolutionary, but in 1943 and 1944 the ground was not yet fully laid for such manipulations. So they reached for the historically most distant tradition of the Piasts. A similar

399 Witold Kula, *Problemy i metody historii gospodarczej* (Warszawa: PWN, 1983), 12.

mechanism of seeking patterns in the mythical past was at work during the French Revolution, when it invoked the ideals of the Roman Republic.

The Piast tradition suggested good solutions. First, it did not lead to the apotheosis of the existing order just before the revolution. Second, it referred to the deepest roots of Polishness, the purest Polish values, and meant a return to the Slavic and international community, to the myth of the Polish state's creation, to the myth of the single-nation nation-state. Third, it meant moving away from the Jagiellonian conception, which was supposed to be expressed by the establishment of friendly relations with the Soviet Union. In other words, it allowed for the creation of myths that legitimized the new order.

Witold Kula writes that, in connection with the occupation of the Western Lands in the years 1945–1948, there,

... prevailed in Poland a widespread increase in references to the first Piasts ... Society's emotions with regard to Bolesław the Brave or Wrymouth were supposed to increase trust in the contemporary policy. The freedom of action on these kinds of fronts was complete. Bolesław the Brave's trip to Kiev was of course forgotten in such a situation.⁴⁰⁰

While echoing this opinion one cannot deny Stanisław Bębenek was correct when he drew attention to the fact that the constant appeals to the era of the Piasts were also fulfilling a genuine social need.⁴⁰¹ Rafał Stobiecki, in turn, considers the determinants of the Polish Piast idea inherent in a particular historiographical tradition. The author of *Historia pod nadzorem* writes that "Reducing its role to an instrumental function, aimed to provide legitimacy to the new reality, would be a gross oversimplification."⁴⁰²

Certainly, not everything that came from the pens of historians, journalists, and writers (see: Antoni Gołubiew) on the Polish Middle Ages was commissioned by the authorities. However, they were able to take advantage of the social demand and authentic interest of the authors in history for their political purposes. The lack of a history that could be invoked would have deprived the rulers of an identity. It would have rendered them people from nowhere, "external," and their political programs and concepts of governance imposed without regard for the traditions of the nation. Therefore, references to the national tradition, giving a sense of continuity, were important for the communist authorities. Moreover, they did reach not only for the Piast tradition, and each time they reached for the past they put into play the same simple procedure of legitimation. It was consistent

400 Witold Kula, *Rozważania o historii...*, op. cit., 111.

401 Stanisław Bębenek, *Myslenie o przeszłości* (Warsaw: PIW, 1981), 27.

402 Rafał Stobiecki, 73.

with the Marxist dialectic of history, according to which (and we are simplifying here) in each historical era, there emerge forces that undermine the existing order and lead to the creation of a new, more progressive socio-economic formation. The propaganda-version created pre-figurations, judging that the right ideas already existed, but only recently, thanks to the creators of the new order, the possibility of their full realization has finally opened up. Similarly, they argued that there are spiritual bonds between the Polish heroes of the past and their communist heirs. At the same time, there was the phenomenon of “foreshortening historical time.” Selected Polish traditions of the people were portrayed in such close analogy with the contemporary events that they blurred the boundaries between historical events and what followed—something possible only in mythical reality—the intertwining of the past with the present. Here are a few examples taken from speeches by members of the leading elite. Marshall Żymierski said in one his speeches:

I declare 1946 the Kościuszko Year, and us the implementers of the political testament of Kościuszko. The Polish People’s democracy is not only a spiritual heir but the continuator of the social and political thought of the great leader in peasant garb. When we carried out the land reform and nationalization of industry we accomplished the “Gentle revolution” of which Kościuszko dreamed, this is not a coincidence, but clear evidence that we grew out of the spirit and tradition of Kościuszko, so that our people’s democracy can boast a pedigree of the noblest Polish social thought . . . Kosciuszko did not fight against the Russian nation, but against both the Polish reactionaries and the Tsar, who in Targowica allied himself with the Polish magnates against the Polish people and the Polish nation. Therefore, the opponents of the People’s Democracy do not have the right to usurp the figure of Kosciuszko for themselves. He will always carry the banner for the democracy of the Polish People’s Republic.⁴⁰³

Intensive references were made to the ideas of the Enlightenment, especially the tradition of the May 3 Constitution. It is no coincidence that the most important Marxist socio-cultural weekly bore the name *The Forge*. Bolesław Bierut said on 3 May 1945:

We begin the meeting of National Council... in order to celebrate, the first time in a Poland free from the occupier, the anniversary of the Constitution of 1791. **With this, we not only want to elevate the solemn nature of this anniversary. We also want to emphasize the connections between our ideological task with the tradition’s efforts, intentions, and impulses, which revived 150 years ago in the hearts and minds of our ancestors, paving the way for progressive and democratic thought.** We believe

403 “Przemówienie Żymierskiego na otwarciu Roku Kościuszkowskiego w Krakowie,” *Głos Ludu*, 14.II.1946.

ourselves, in fact, to be the proper and worthy heirs of those very progressive currents, which were paid tribute by the framers of the 3rd May Constitution.⁴⁰⁴

However, communist propaganda failed to appropriate the traditions of May 3rd. From May 1946, when they first banned public celebrations of the anniversary of May 3rd, it came to be seen rather as a celebration for the opponents of the system.

The exact same mechanism was used to legitimize the new order by referring to the tradition of the January Uprising. Roman Werfel found in it, “of course, only *in ovo*,” “a whole range of features and moments that will be characteristic for the next period of the liberation movement, the period where the Polish working class comes into play as the leading force for the liberation of Poland.” The author emphasized with this the fact that the current image of the insurrection has been falsified by careful censorship of the “nobility, bourgeois pseudo-patriots.”⁴⁰⁵

Władysław Gomułka also treated history instrumentally, writing in an article “The idea of the Silesian uprisings realized”:

Today, the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Mount St. Anna, we can proudly point out that thanks to a just policy of the Democratic Government, thanks to the alliance of the Polish people with the peoples of the Soviet Union, Poland has returned to its Piast lands. We have realized what the Silesian insurgents fought for so heroically.⁴⁰⁶

In the same way, the authorities attributed to themselves the traditions of the Greater Poland Uprising, thinking it a lie to give merit to the Endecja for its outbreak.⁴⁰⁷ Even if this type of falsifications of national history cannot be compared with the practices of the later period, they should be treated as a kind of prelude.

Already at the assembly of the Central Committee of the PPR, which took place in April 1947, many speakers pointed out the need for a new Marxist-style textbook in Polish history to be written.⁴⁰⁸ This was not, however, only about

404 *Głos Ludu*, 4.V.1945, emphasis in original.

405 Roman Werfel, “1863–22 stycznia – 1946,” *Głos Ludu*, 22.I.1946.

406 *Głos Ludu*, 19.V.1946.

407 Czesław Broszkiewicz, “W rocznicę powstania wielkopolskiego,” *Głos Ludu*, 27.XII.1944.

408 “It is my opinion that it is very important to devote more attention to the history of Poland in the education of our activists and members of our party. Without familiarity with Polish history it is difficult to understand the essence of socio-political changes undertaken in our nation, the change in borders of our state, it is difficult to fight against the reactionaries . . . Until now we have not, in truth, had a Marxist take on Polish history, but we cannot wait for it, we must fragmentarily shed light, in a Marxist way, upon various moments of our history . . . The Marxist party must be a national party. If we simplify the matter, we can say that we ought to teach our

bending history to legitimate the new order. Their intentions reached much further and were linked with an ideological project to create a new society and a new Polish nation. For this purpose, in addition to organizing a cult of national uprising heroes, and making themselves the only true priests of this cult, the ruling Communists eventually began to create their own pantheon of heroes with revolutionary pedigrees. What was at stake was a calling forth in the collective consciousness automatic associations of the revolutionary with the patriot, who would become a personal model for Poles.⁴⁰⁹ They placed Marian Buczek and Karol Świerczewski on a pedestal.⁴¹⁰

Instrumental treatments of Polish history went hand in hand with a similar taking advantage of artists and works of national culture for legitimating the system. Although one cannot negate the achievement of the new system in promotion and printing works of Polish classics, this does not change the state of things, meaning, that the decision to release all the works of Adam Mickiewicz was only a crowning propagandist legitimation argument. It was meant to be a demonstration of the new government's concern for the good of the cultural heritage. However, above all, the role of culture was to reflect the changes and legitimizing them. Even before decreeing socialist realism as official, and without pushily using the vocabulary of imperative, Władysław Gomułka said the following in early June 1946 about the role of culture on the occasion of the Days of Polish Culture:

party a Polish Marxism." (*Wypowiedź Gomułki na plenum KC PPR 13–14 IV 1947*, in: *ARR*, v. VII, 220. See *Ibid.* for statements by R. Werfel, J. Tepicht, H. Kozłowski, 239,242, 260).

409 "The history of the worker's movement takes on color when we are able to situate it in the whole history of the nation. It is time to be able to tie, to organically join, the history of our party and the worker's movement with the history of the nation, to at least lay the foundation upon which to fight this battle. Then it will become closer to all those who not so long ago joined the party" (*Jakub Berman podczas narady Wydziału Historii Partii KC PPR nad kwestią niepodległości w historii ruchu robotniczego w Polsce*, 15 IX 1946 r., AAN, KC PZPR, 325/12, k. 69).

410 Władysław Gomułka, "Marian Buczek – patriota i rewolucjonista," *Głos Ludu*, 10.IX.1946; "Nasze sztandary były sztandarem twego życia," *Głos Ludu*, 1.IV.1947, in: Władysław Gomułka, *Z kart naszej historii* (Warsaw: KiW, 1982), 161–172 and 185–190. Also the statement by Mieczysław Bodalski given at the PPR Central Committee plenum on 13 April 1947: "We ought to put forward General Świerczewski as a model fighter for the freedom of the nation. This would be a good history lesson our youth should know. The propaganda of the Central Committee. Should turn its attention to making connections with these things in an organized and well thought-out manner." (*ARR*, v. VII, op. cit., 265).

The spiritual countenance of a nation is shaped by science, art, literature, poetry, and so on. When social relations, which are in decline, imprint themselves upon these elements of culture when, so to speak, cultural development has not kept pace with the development of social relations, especially at the time when it falls behind and sings to the nation a faded song—this occurrence means that some of its arteries are calcified, as a result of this culture does not produce the creative force needed for the development of the national organism . . .⁴¹¹

Since culture—it was argued—cannot keep up with changing social relations, the decision was made to help it, for example, through reinterpretations of the works of bards.⁴¹²

1948 marked the 150th anniversary of Adam Mickiewicz's birth and a year later came the 100th anniversary of the deaths of Juliusz Słowacki and Frederic Chopin. This gave rise to the phenomenon of demonstrating the relationship between the greatest Polish creators of national culture and the contemporary creators of the Polish People's Republic. With language typical for contemporary newspapers, *Głos Ludu* reported that "news about celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Adam Mickiewicz's birth are coming in from all over the country." In connection with this Warsaw held a special academy attended by Bolesław Bierut and Józef Cyrankiewicz. Mieczysław Jastrun and Włodzimierz Sokorski spoke and the latter said:

Adam Mickiewicz is for us a living symbol of creative thinking that breaks ever-forward through the darkness of backwardness and ignorance, of Polish progressive thought, which in the next generation absorbed and vivified new knowledge about man, a revolutionary current of worker thinking, thus making the great bard the property of the working masses and the entire nation . . . And although Mickiewicz was not a socialist in the strict sense of the word, as we understand it today, his heart was beating with the pulse of history—with the warm pulse of current events—he was a prophet of progressive national-liberation struggles . . . Mickiewicz's work is characterized by a deep patriotism, but Mickiewicz was always foreign to—even during breakdowns, mystical wanderings—a narrow-minded nationalism.

Both speakers emphasized the take that the anti-Russian stance was foreign to the bard.

411 Ibid., 154–155.

412 The need for such a reinterpretation was pointed out by Władysław Bieńkowski during the April plenum of the PPR Central Committee in 1947: "If literary scholars before the war put the main emphasis upon Towiański while evaluating Mickiewicz, then we, without changing the research tools, will direct their gazes to other questions, and this will be the first step toward changing the mood." (*ARR*, v. VII, op. cit., 263).

Jastrun's article devoted to Słowacki was formulated in a similar vein. The poet indeed strayed toward mysticism in a certain period of his life, but that did not bother the editors of *Trybuna Ludu* who claimed that "Słowacki is ours." Despite such forceful assurances about the identity of the ideological builders of the new order with Mickiewicz and Słowacki, the works of the poets were embarrassing for the authorities to such a degree that the decision to postpone the staging of *Forefathers' Eve* was made by Bierut himself.⁴¹³ A similar fate befell Juliusz Słowacki's *Kordian* and many other romantic dramas.

However, the use of Frederic Chopin for legitimating the system did not present any such difficulties. Thanks to the specificity of the musical language, Chopin's works could be used as the proof for almost anything. Therefore, it is not surprising that this made him the most revered Polish artist. The transporting of Frederic Chopin's heart to Warsaw in October 1945 was the occasion for many celebrations and lectures. Bolesław Bierut participated in one of them, which took place on October 17 in Żelazowa Wola. From an account that we have from *Głos Ludu*, there emerges a picture of a nationalist mystery ritual rather than an ordinary ceremony that involves the representatives of the Marxist party. First, there was a ceremony of transferring the urn with the heart to Bierut. Bierut then made a solemn speech, loaded with words about the nation and love for the fatherland, which began with him thanking the Bishop for the patriotic deed of transferring the heart. On the same day in the hall of the Roma Theater there was a lecture by Osóbka-Morawski in which he said:

Today marks the ninth month since the liberation of the capital by our soldiers, together with the soldiers of the fraternal Red Army, and already upon the ruins of Warsaw, the red rose of Frederic Chopin's heart has bloomed. Today is a day of tribute to the heart of Frederic Chopin. It is also a testament that our days, the days of victorious democracy, the harbingers that even in the most difficult conditions we strive to fulfill Mickiewicz's desires that art wander into the great masses. Democracy will realize this burning desire of the bard.⁴¹⁴

We might consider the curious comparison of the Red Army to the red heart of Chopin as an aesthetic expression of the new order. More than three years later, at the Warsaw exhibition commemorating the centenary of Chopin's death, the likeness of Karl Marx, not Chopin, will dominate.⁴¹⁵ The victorious powers stopped

413 Marta Fik, *Kultura polska po Jalcie. Kronika lat 1944–1981* (London: Polonia, 1989), 105–106.

414 *Głos Ludu*, 18.X.1945.

415 Andrzej Panufnik, *O Sobie...*, op. cit., 197.

needing the national costume. Legitimation went from being national toward becoming more revolutionary.

This does not mean that nationalist legitimation between 1944 and 1947 was the only manner of legitimating the system of Communist rule in Poland. However, in my opinion, it played a decisive role, even though legitimation has also been attributed to Poland's liberation by the allied Soviet Army, the intense reconstruction of the country, and a democratic non-Soviet social order. The land reform was also considered to be a weighty legitimizing argument.⁴¹⁶ Stalin repeatedly stressed its importance for obtaining the support of the Polish peasants for the communist government.⁴¹⁷ At the same time efforts were made to avoid revolutionary slogans. Moreover, Stalin himself, several times between 1943 and 1944, recommended refraining from openly manifesting communist goals and symbols.⁴¹⁸ Although the charismatic image of Stalin in the Polish mass media as a legitimating argument for the ruling camp appeared already in early 1945, it was only in 1947 that the cult of Stalin began to truly grow.⁴¹⁹

A similar legitimizing was in force in all of the Communist parties and movements in Europe and Asia, except for one, China. All of them used the threads of native national culture and national resentment in their propaganda (in Czechoslovakia anti-Germanism, anti-Japanese sentiment in China). It would be hard to say to what extent this strategy was simply imposed by the Kremlin, or, to what extent it was the result of the independent thinking of elites of each party. It is characteristic that members of the party most independent from Moscow, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia officially, as evidenced by the name of the party, identified themselves as communists, did not hide their communist symbols

416 Before us stands the task of responding to terror. It is high time to move into counter-attack mode. This does not mean ignoring moral forms of influencing the masses. The land reform will be one such action." ("Wypowiedź Gomułki na posiedzeniu KC PPR dnia 9 października 1944 r.," in: *Protokoły posiedzeń Biura Politycznego...*, op. cit., 21).

417 "The Polish peasants," said Marshal Stalin, "after receiving land will value their state" ("Delegacja Warszawy u Marszałka Stalina," *Głos Ludu*, 21.XI.1944 [bolding in the original]); Bierut summarized Stalin's precuse intentions thus: "Later there was a conversation about the land reforms, during which Stalin intelligently referred to the fact that the poor peasants and agricultural workers took a colossal majority of the lands. He stressed that the land reform will tie the masses to the PKWN—it will secure our power as lasting" (*Protokoły posiedzeń Biura Politycznego...*, op. cit., 74).

418 *Wspomnienia Wandy Wasilewskiej...*, op. cit., 417.

419 Robert Kupiecki, *Natchnienie milionów. Kult Józefa Stalina w Polsce 1944–1956* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1993), 43.

(i.e. on caps), which in 1944 Stalin, in conversation with Milovan Djilas, considered premature.⁴²⁰ It is possible that not hiding communist goals and ideals while downplaying the importance of national identity (with hatred for the Germans excluded), was the only rational strategy in a national cauldron such as Yugoslavia.

In Poland, Władysław Gomułka should undoubtedly be acknowledged as the main initiator and the most durable executor of the concept of a nationalist legitimation. However, his predecessor Paweł Finder, and his successor Bolesław Bierut were both aware of the role of the national element. Bierut was in no way inferior to Gomułka in the use of national-patriotic phraseology and even exceeded it many times, if only by taking part in countless Masses and church ceremonies.

Is it possible to say that, for people like Bierut, patriotic slogans and symbols were used exclusively as a tool to gain and maintain power, that was only exploited in a cynical and calculating manner? It is not easy to answer this question. The answer seems to be affirmative, because, the communists quickly stopped using national language when it ceased to be needed. On the other hand, Andrzej Werblan is probably right when he writes:

It would be absurd to suspect those people of national nihilism, or of plain out-and-out opportunism. In the fight against Nazi occupiers, they showed a lot of courage and sacrifice. They simply understood the good of the nation differently, in different categories. They were ready to emulate the Soviet Union and follow Stalin's pointers, but they wanted to use this Stalinist mold to build a state ruled by Poles, who are supporters of communism. They hoped to gain the support of the majority in the nation, since they harbored a deep conviction that socialism, such as they understood it, will bring the country development and progress, and for the masses progress and justice.⁴²¹

They believed that they could manage to convince the nation, through references to patriotic traditions, the national cultural heritage, and the language of the Polish pre-war right-wing nationalists. Did they succeed? It seems that the Poles generally were not inclined to believe in the patriotic declarations of the Communists, although some of them managed to be convinced by those in power.⁴²² Most likely, a large part of the Polish society was close to the views expressed in this leaflet from May 1947:

420 Milovan Djilas, *Nowa klasa*, op. cit., 29.

421 Andrzej Werblan, *Stalinizm w Polsce* (Warszawa: Fakt, 1991), 44.

422 "All of it was in ruin. I knew, from the start, that only the authorities can rebuild the cinematography. They were Polish authorities, not Soviet. I did not resist. On the contrary, I still believe that if there was no people's power there would also be no Polish cinematography" ("Z Jerzym Toeplitzem rozmawiają Katarzyna Bielas i Jacek Szczerba," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26–27.XI.1994).

Down with the PPR. Gomułka is a Jew!!! No Catholic will join the PPR! Poles! Russia is robbing us, and taking our coal and gas! We do not want communism! We want a Catholic Poland! Poland was and will be from the Oder to the Neisse right up to Lviv and Kiev! The PPR are the minions of Stalin!⁴²³

Gomułka knew about this, as in the original version of the paper meant to be presented at the famous June plenum of the PPR in 1948 he wrote, and then deleted, the following observation:

If we were to pose the question of why the majority of Polish people were wary about the Polish Workers' Party during the occupation and the first months after the liberation of Poland, then the cause of this can be found in their doubting the sincerity of our slogans for Polish independence.⁴²⁴

Gomułka was aware why Poles doubted the sincerity of the slogans of independence and sovereignty. Therefore, he repeatedly denounced the "sectarian trend" in the PPR, whose ideal was a Republic of Polish Soviets.

423 *Biuletyn Informacyjny* nr 8. 14 czerwca 1947 r., cyt. za *Biuletyn Informacyjny Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego 1947*, tom 1, MSW, Warszawa 1993, s. 91.

424 Andrzej Werblan, "Okoliczności formowania się opozycji wobec Władysława Gomułki w Komitecie Centralnym PPR latem 1948 r.," in: *Kultura – Polityka – Dyplomacja: Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Jerzemu Maciszewskiemu w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę Jego urodzin*, ed. Andrzej Bartnicki (Warsaw: PWN, 1990), 483.

Chapter 6

“Dmowski Probably Wasn’t a Marxist” (1948–1955)

The gradual process of departure from nationalist legitimation can be seen after the referendum “victory” of the communists. The statements of the PPR leaders contained a decreasing number of words directly related to the nation. Yet, this does not mean that these disappeared completely from the language of propaganda. Their use, however, became largely schematic. Gradually, the “nation” was losing its cultural and historical context, becoming a noun describing large crowds of people, the equivalent of “society” or “the people.” It increasingly began to resemble the Russian word “nation” semantically, which is closer to the Polish word “the people” more than the Polish word for “nation.” Despite the semantic modification of the term “nation” it clearly retained a positive connotation on the scale of official values. Press articles mentioned the Chinese, Korean, and other nations as those which unambiguously supported the idea of proletarian revolution. In other words, in the society of the spectacle non-progressive nations did not exist. The nation is always right, it, therefore, has the right, said Boleslaw Bierut, “to make demands of its creators.”⁴²⁵ These requests, or, more precisely, orders, were *de facto* put forward by the party, therefore, it was only as if they were legitimized by the people. Thus, nothing ostensibly changed in the legitimation of political changes through using the “national keywords.” However, its use decreased. It was not coincidental that the Czestochowa-published *Głos Narodu* (since 1945), after being taken over by *Czytelnik*, changed its name in 1947 to *Życie Częstochowy*. *Nota Bene*: The first title of the newspaper was proposed by an officer of the Red Army in January 1945. It was called *Golos Naroda*. Only a mistake by an interpreter prevented the newspaper from starting out as *Głos Ludu*.⁴²⁶

References to the national tradition also become increasingly rare. In July 1947 commemorations of the Warsaw Uprising were banned throughout the country,

425 *Twórczość* 5 (1952): 10.

426 Waclaw Rousseau, “Czas tworzenia ‘Głosu Narodu,’” *Nad Wartą* 3/135 (1970), cited in: Witold Mielczarek, *Propaganda i prasa Polskiej Partii Robotniczej w Częstochowie* (Częstochowa: 1977), 15.

the only exception being Warsaw. The ban also applied to the press, which, when talking about the uprising, was supposed to limit itself to simple short notes “in a tone of mourning.”⁴²⁷ In a famous speech given at the opening of a radio station in Wrocław on November 1947, interpreted as an announcement of a turn in cultural policy, Bolesław Bierut clearly put the emphasis upon “modernizing cultural creation, that is, its liberation from old superstitions, namely, the creation of new cultural values, emerging from new social forms, from a new reality, but tied to the most valuable elements of our cultural heritage.”⁴²⁸

Appealing to the national cultural heritage also started looking like a process of duplication. Socio-cultural problems, literary problems, and the history of Poland were perceived through the following Marxist opposition: progressive/regressive. It became an essential tool, not only for the propaganda but also for the interpretation of both the historical past, as well as social phenomena. It affected, among other things, the publishing politics of the state. Stefan Żółkiewski judged that there are “two cultural-political traditions: that of political backwardness and the nobility and the tradition of social progress. The tradition of Sienkiewicz and the tradition of Kołataj.” At this point, Żółkiewski added: “The policy of reissuing books up to this point caused public awareness to identify the first tradition with the concept of what is actually Polish. The plan for reissuing books, which we await, should do justice to the other, progressive, tradition of the Polish people.”⁴²⁹

All previous interpretations of history revealed themselves to be backwards, not created on the basis of historical materialism. It was argued that “idealistic concepts, searching for the origins of the foundations [of the nation – MZ] in the ‘national temperament,’ in the ‘cult of heroism,’ etc., lost all pretense of being scientific.”⁴³⁰ Historical events, ordered by the principle of progressive-regressive, created a myth—an image of reality that facilitated the exercise of power. It was a source of a very comfortable and irrefutable legitimating argument.⁴³¹ With the help of political symbols, which are the material of myth, basic demarcations were made that set a framework of reality. Political enemies were branded and new national heroes were canonized.

427 *Kierownik Wydziału Propagandy i Prasy KC PPR M. Wąglowski do Wydziału Propagandy KW PPR*, 16 VII 1947, AAN, KC PZPR, 295/X-6, k. 88.

428 *Twórczość* 5 (1952): 8.

429 Stefan Żółkiewski, “Kronika kulturalna,” *Nowe Drogi* 4 (1947): 200.

430 Celina Bobińska, “Tradycje teraźniejszości,” *Nowe Drogi* 4 (1947): 75.

431 Ireneusz C. Kamiński, “Legitymizacyjna funkcja mitu,” *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 2 (1993): 33–49.

The tendentious exploitation of national history for legitimating the system was, of course, already practiced earlier. However, now, more frequently, a simplified and characteristically schematized picture of the past came to dominate:

There is a continuity in history. From the Czartoryskis there is a path to Sosnowski, from the Hotel Lambert to the Hotel Rubens, from San Domingo to the Polish Auxiliary Corps. There is a continuity in history. There is a path from Mickiewicz's Legion to the forts of the Paris Commune, the defense of Republican Madrid, from the Proclamation of Połaniec, to the PKWN manifesto.

Upon this path, the figure of Karol Świerczewski appears as a milestone.⁴³²

Starting with 1947 the official stance toward Germany also changed. Until then propaganda intentionally attempted to spark an atmosphere of endangerment from the side of the Teutons. This was supposed to ground the necessity of existence of communist governments, which, thanks to their friendly relations with the Soviet Union, guaranteed the unthreatened existence for Polish statehood. The new tone was connected with the creation of the German communist party in the Soviet occupation zone, and later the birth of the German Democratic Republic. In this domain, the change in language occurred gradually and with a clear feeling for social moods.⁴³³ What was wanted was a gradual weaning of the Polish society, in which, for obvious reasons, anti-German stances prevailed. A decided shift of the propaganda onto a new track toward Germany occurred halfway through 1948. The place of the enemy held by Germany up to that point was beginning to be taken by England, and, above all, the United States, because of the increasing chill between the USSR and its satellites toward Western countries.

During a plenum of the PPR Central Committee in October of 1947, which took place in Szklarska Poręba to discuss the results of the consultation between nine communist parties, Jakub Berman said:

Until not very long ago, throughout an entire historical period... the dividing line was: against Hitler's Germany, or, for Hitler's Germany... Today we are to shape a new dividing line, surely less clear, in more adverse conditions, nonetheless, this is a historical necessity, it is the leading task that stands before our party.⁴³⁴

As evidenced by, at the very least, Berman's speech, the authorities were aware that the creation of a new enemy will not be easy, not only because of the deeply rooted,

432 "Nekrolog Karola Świerczewskiego," *Nowe Drogi* 3 (1947): 5.

433 Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne 1945–1949* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1996), 223.

434 *Stenogram plenum KC PPR 11 X 1947*, eds. J. Jakubowski and W. Kowalski in *ARR*, v. XI (Warsaw: KiW, 1988), 305.

particularly negative, stereotype of the German, but also, and, maybe, above all, because of the highly positive, and common, stereotypes of everything that was associated with America in the social consciousness of Poles. During the plenum quoted above, it was debated, among other things, what to do to adjust national sentiments to the demands of the party.⁴³⁵ A solution was seen in institutional actions, which were supposed to make life more difficult for American cultural and charity organizations functioning in Poland, and through an anti-American propaganda campaign.

When it comes to the imagined identity of the party, the authorities during October 1947 still put greater emphasis upon identification with the nation rather than with communism. Berman even thought that the PPR is not a communist party:

It is our great achievement as communist that we create a national party, which set deep roots in Polish society... This is our biggest treasure, which we must protect, and not let ourselves be again pushed into the haunted circle of the KPP. This was our biggest crisis . . . We are not a communist party. We are the PPR.⁴³⁶

It is a fact that in the PPR, alongside the communists, there were many people who did not identify with communism, something which Berman interpreted as a proof of the party's force of attraction. No less, it also pointed toward the need for educating its new members in Marxism.

However, just a few months later, within the inner circle of the party patriotic feelings began to be treated like a relic of the bourgeois epoch. For the party mem-

435 Two interesting statements from this plenum, "There are many sentiments in favor of the United States among Polish youth. It is a fact that we did not have any competing interests within the United States, throughout the history of our nation there were no sharp conflicts with the United States. The departures of Polish peasants to America, their mailing of envelopes full of dollars, all of this created a picture that America, that your uncle from America is very rich, that after a World War they sent flour to us, the so-called 'monkey lard,' and so on. In Poland we have Hoover squares, American films, literature, all of this is alive among the youth and has created a huge sentiment in favor of America, and also a total lack of understanding how the United States has now become an enemy of our nation, an enemy of our sovereignty . . . We must fight for our youth against the penetration of Americanism through the cinema, literature, and so certain moves from the top down will be indispensable" (Aleksander Kowalski) "The new Poland was shaped in the fight for independence against Nazism, but already after the first moments of our independence the fight to gain and maintain democracy is taking place against American imperialism. Society should be made aware of this fact" (Ibid., 283, 286).

436 Ibid., 307, 308.

ber the national identification should be secondary in relation to the identification with the working class, and, above all, with the party and the goal it is fighting for—communism. Although such judgments were not formulated directly, they could be read from within internal party instructions. The PPR school program, which came into being in 1948, reads:

Exercises for Polish instruction have as their goal teaching students proper writing and the correct formulation of thoughts. Teaching should be modeled upon party writings (minutes of meetings, reports, work plans) and upon the model of administrative papers. Expressing thoughts should be taught using oral summaries by the students of short stories, the lives of the leading native and foreign representatives of socialism (Waryński, Buczek, Wiesław [Władysław Gomułka], Marx, Lenin), and the more noteworthy articles from the press. The study should be led by a Polish Studies teacher who is specially trained with these goals in mind.⁴³⁷

In the propaganda society of the spectacle, there remained national relics, but their legitimizing role clearly decreased. At the same time, there was a much wider reaching for other legitimation arguments: Stalin's charisma, the "achievements" of Soviet society, the superpower position of the Soviet Union in the international arena, negative legitimation pointing toward the crisis of the West, and so on. The party and its program began to be described as Marxist, something that was avoided earlier. On 1 May 1947 Gomułka pointed out how **"deep and unshakable the Marxist teaching is."** However, he stressed that **"Marxism has ceased to be a CLASS ideology, and has become a NATIONAL ideology, an ideology expressing the interests and strivings of the vast majority of the nation."**⁴³⁸

However, Moscow found that the changes were occurring too slowly, and, in addition, in the wrong direction. The document "On the Anti-Marxist Orientation in the Leadership of the PPR"⁴³⁹ reached the desk of Mikhail Suslow, Secretary of the Cominform and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in April of 1948. In it we read the following: "The fear of the PPR leadership of being accused of the *Sovietization* of Poland manifested itself in the adapting the Polish Worker Party's theory to Polish nationalism and to

437 AAN, KC PZPR, 295/XVIII- 13, pagination missing.

438 Władysław Gomułka, "Na drodze do pełnej jedności polskiej klasy robotniczej," *Głos Ludu*, 2.V .1947 (emphasis in the original).

439 "Memoriał kierownika Biura Informacji KC WKP (b) Leonida Baranowa oraz instruktorów KC WKP (b) Nikołaja Puchłowa i Władimira Owczarowa," 5.IV.1947, *Polska – ZSRR. Struktury podległości*, ed. Andrzej Paczkowski (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1995).

nationalist practice.”⁴⁴⁰ The authors of the report identified Gomułka as the main culprit; the main accusation against him was not valuing enough the decisive role of the Soviet Union and the Red Army. They also accused the secretary of the PPR of wanting to substitute the “teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin” with a “Polish Marxism.” They cited the following statement from Gomułka at the VII assembly in April 1947 as proof: “The Marxist party has to be a national party. To simplify the problem, one could say our party should be taught Polish Marxism.”⁴⁴¹

The list of those accused of “Polish Marxism” also included Hilary Minc, Minister of Industry and Trade, Marian Spychalski, a member of the Politburo, Janusz Zarzycki, head of the Chief Political Administration of the WP, and even Piotr Jaroszewicz, Deputy Defense Minister, who had said that “we shall strengthen the eastern border of Poland, just like the western.” Spychalski was reproached for the following words, “it is better to not have political workers within military units than to have Russian ones! Mikołajczyk will jump down our throats for Russian political workers.”⁴⁴² The authors of the document were well-aware that most of these statements and similar ones were dictated by tactical considerations. Why then did they suddenly notice something that was much more visible earlier? Why did they put the whole blame on Gomułka and a couple of other people who, besides Minc, essentially constituted the second ranks of the party establishment? Why did they not point at least at Berman, who, just a few months earlier, said that the PPR is not a communist party? There is one answer to these three questions: the above document was by order, and its thesis was imposed “from above.”

The report of the Romanian consul in Warsaw, Joseph Kishinevsky, which was also sent to Suslov, contained a similar assessment of the situation in Poland. “At the May 1st demonstration I saw only one portrait of comrade Stalin, and it was of quite modest dimensions. The demonstration itself went by dully, their faces seemed to reflect compulsion,” reported the clearly disgusted Romanian diplomat as he recorded his impressions from a stay in Poland from January to September 1948.⁴⁴³ He wrote the following about the celebrations of July 22nd:

440 Ibid., 205.

441 ARR, v. VII, op. cit., 220.

442 *Memoriał kierownika Biura Informacji...*, op. cit., 209.

443 “Pismo kierownika Biura Informacji KC WKP(b) Leonida Baranowa do sekretarza KC WKP(b) Michaiła Susłowa wraz z raportem konsula rumuńskiego w Warszawie o sytuacji w Polsce, 25 X 1948,” in: *Polska – ZSRR. Struktury podległości*, op. cit., 222. Does not comment upon the fact of the Romanian diplomat’s reporting to Moscow is not commented upon.

On this day massive celebrations across the country were organized, but very little, criminally little, was said and written about Soviet heroes who spared no blood to save the Polish nation from the destruction Hitler was cooking up for them. The name of the great Stalin was scantily mentioned, the man under whose wise leadership the Soviet Union rescued humanity from slavery and death. On the contrary, there is the impression that it all moves away into the background, disguises itself. There was talk of a “new Poland,” about a “free Poland,” about a “liberated (no longer known by whom) Poland,” etc., etc.

It is possible that, had the Romanian consul stayed longer in Poland, and had been an observer of events occurring after 1945, then his indignation would not be so great. Nevertheless, his report tells a great lot to us about the reception of the “Polish otherness” that at the time was relatively small compared to years following 1956. Both documents are a clear signal of dissatisfaction with the insufficiently Soviet direction of changes in Poland, including the unsatisfactorily Stalinist legitimating arguments; dissatisfaction expressed by the highest political elites of the Soviet Union, to which the recipient of these reports no doubt belonged. They are a harbinger of an impending crisis.

The turning point, not only for the place of nationalist legitimation in the entire system of legitimation, came during June then August and September plenary sessions of the Central Committee of the PPR in 1948, which took up the right-wing nationalist deviation in the PPR.⁴⁴⁴ In fact, the party crisis had been growing since September 1947, when the conference in Szklarska Poręba took place. At that time Gomułka opposed the vision imposed by Stalin for the future Information Office of the Communist and Workers Parties. Stalin, who called to life the Cominform, wanted to deepen control over the burgeoning “folk democracies” and the international communist movement. This meant abandoning the idea of a “national path to socialism,” which was put forward by the Soviet leadership even during the Civil War in Spain. Until then Stalin supported Gomułka in the hope that by highlighting the national line Communists would be able to overcome public resistance to the new regime more quickly. In the autumn of 1947, when all the political institutions, as well as all of industry and commerce, were under control, legitimation that resorted to nationalist content was no longer needed.

444 The topic of the “right-wing-nationalist deviation” in the PPR see: Andrzej Werblan, *Władysław Gomułka Sekretarz Generalny PPR* (Warsaw: KiW, 1988), and his “Okoliczności formowania się opozycji wobec Władysława Gomułki w Komitecie Centralnym PPR latem 1948 r.,” in: *Kultura, polityka, dyplomacja: studia ofiarowane profesorowi Jaremi Maciszewskiemu w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę Jego urodzin*, ed. Andrzej Bartnicki (Warsaw: PWN, 1990); Czesław Kozłowski, *Rok 1948* (Warsaw: KiW, 1988).

An open conflict came after the First Secretary of the Party delivered a paper on June 3, 1948, at the plenum of the Central Committee of PPR.⁴⁴⁵ Gomułka pointed to the need to reevaluate the tradition of Polish workers' movements in light of the imminent unification of the PPR and the PPS. He accused the precursors of the PPR, the SDKPiL, and KPP, of adopting a "false position" on the issue of Polish independence. He searched for its roots in the influence of "Luxemburgist theory" on the programmatic objectives of the SDKPiL, and, in part, on the KPP. The slogan of the latter in favor of the "Polish Soviet Republic," he considered a manifestation of "sectarianism," "abstract revolutionism," without excluding the possibility of a "provocation of Piłsudski's agents."⁴⁴⁶ When it came to the PPS, he first reproached its not exactly first-class position, then he said, that "in the case of Polish independence it showed a great deal of political realism, it had a better feel for political reality than the SDKPiL."⁴⁴⁷ According to Gomułka, the independence-traditions of the PPS should lie at the programmatic foundations of the newly formed party. This was the only way it could, as was the case with the KPP, avoid separating itself off from society and gain legitimacy for its governments. He obviously couched this view in a style that had a better chance of catching the ears of full-time members of the Communist Party:

The fact that the working class picked up the banners of independence and sovereignty greatly raises its role in every nation and makes it easier for it to gather around itself all the powers of progress and democracy, it greatly multiplies its abilities to battle with reactionaries and imperialism.⁴⁴⁸

Gomułka, however, failed to convince those taking part in the assembly to adopt his vision. Even during the course of the assembly, the theses presented by Gomułka met with strong opposition from the majority of those discussing them.⁴⁴⁹ Gomułka was accused of one-sidedness in looking at the question of Polish independence, of a too harsh critique of the SDKPiL and the KPP, and a too mild evaluation of the PPS.

Politburo members, apart from Roman Zambrowski, did not speak during the plenum. Bringing to light discrepancies among the party leadership would

445 W. Gomułka, *Referat na plenum KC PPR z 3 czerwca 1948 r.*, w: *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Dokumenty programowe...*, 594–613.

446 *Ibid.*, 602.

447 *Ibid.*, 600.

448 *Ibid.*, 604.

449 *Stenogram obrad plenum KC PPR z 3 czerwca 1948 r.*, AAN, KC PZPR, 295/II-10.

be a decidedly premature move. Gomułka's position expressed in the paper was the subject of a meeting of the Political Bureau, which had gathered already a day after the assembly, but without the Secretary-General. The majority assessed his appearance critically and undertook to formulate complaints in writing. The authors of the letter argued that:

. . . actually, the notion of the PPS' independence is bankrupt, since Poland regained its independence in 1918, not as a result of the victory of one of the partitioning powers, but as a result of a victorious revolution in Russia . . . the basis for a united party should not be the chauvinist-bourgeois PPS concept of independence, an agency of the nationalist-bourgeoisie within the working class, but in the many heroic moments of the struggle of the masses from the PPS for national and social liberation, and the achievement of the leftist mainstream of the PPS obscured by right-wing PPS historians.⁴⁵⁰

In turn, the "assessment of the tradition of the labor movement in Poland by comrade Wiesław is a major concession to the nationalist-bourgeois and reformist traditions, represented by the PPS." As a consequence, the Political Bureau recommended that "vigilance among members of the party . . . for any deviation within the party, especially deviations of the nationalist type," and demanded that Gomułka submit a self-criticism.⁴⁵⁰

Gomułka responded to the position "taken by the members of the Bureau" in writing, but he did not in any way change the views he expressed in the paper.⁴⁵¹ Thus, the conflict in the party elite was becoming a fact. At one of the meetings of the Politburo devoted to "the Gomułka matter," Alexander Zawadzki, in the language of the party's newspeak, said, "The enemy wants to see in Comrade W. [Comrade Gomułka – MZ] an ensign of 'national communism.'"⁴⁵²

As August was turning into September the next meeting of the PPR Central Committee came, in which the decisive paper, "On the Right-wing and Nationalist Deviation in the Leadership of the Party, and on the Ways of Overcoming It," was given by Bierut, who thus officially took over the helm of the party.⁴⁵³ The paper, as noted by Andrzej Paczkowski, was actually a long political indictment

450 "Stanowisko Biura Politycznego KC PPR w sprawie referatu Władysława Gomułki wygłoszonego dnia 3 VI 1948," in: *Gomułka i inni: dokumenty z archiwum KC 1948–1982*, ed. Andrzej Paczkowski (Warszawa : Wydawnictwo Krąg, 1986), 13–16.

451 Ibid., "Odpowiedź Władysława Gomułki z dnia 15 VI 1948 na stanowisko Biura Politycznego KC PPR," 16–28.

452 *Stenogram posiedzenia Biura Politycznego, sierpień 1948 r.*, AAN, KC PZPR, 2728, k. 10.

453 *Posiedzenie Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Partii Robotniczej 31 sierpnia – 3 września 1948 r. Stenogram*, ed. Aleksander Kochoński (Warsaw: Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych, 1998), 19–45.

of Gomułka⁴⁵⁴ (written under Stalin's dictation⁴⁵⁵). Among the many allegations made against Gomułka, the heaviest allegation concerned his erroneous assessment of the Polish labor movement's independence traditions, resulting from its rejection of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and consequently leading to the adoption of nationalist attitudes and distrust of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Bierut's paper was the trigger for the fight against the "right-wing-nationalist deviation." It was by no means nipped in the bud by the discussions of the plenum, although, formally, Gomułka retained his posts in the party and state. The response in the party after the plenum, expressed at meetings of activists at various levels, as historians estimate, was generally one of approval,⁴⁵⁶ even if the assessments that were not spoken in public forums were probably more restrained and marked by a lack of understanding towards the new party line. For example, a young party activist wrote the following in his journal under the date of 20 September 1948:

Upon reading materials from the extended Central Assembly "On the Right-wing and Nationalist Deviation in the Leadership of the Party, and on the Ways of Overcoming It," I cannot understand the phrasing: "opportunistic and right-wing fluctuations before they passed into a deviation" and "Overcoming right-wing, petty-bourgeois opportunism and nationalism." This is a very confusing matter for me. I cannot figure out what these formulations are actually about. It's been said that the activists, the whole party, accepted this valuable ideological achievement with deep relief.

Wanting to figure out these incomprehensible ideological problems I went for advice to one of the comrades and I asked him, "Can you tell me what it means to say, "deviation of the right-wing nationalist deviation?" I did not learn anything concrete. He shrugged and said dismissively: "From a theoretical point these are differences in views, and from the practical point of view, it is better to bend than break." Try making sense of such answer. All I have left is reading everything again from the beginning.⁴⁵⁷

454 Andrzej Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939–1989* (Warsaw: PWN 1998), 221.

455 "Comrade Tomasz declares that the resolution was agreed upon with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After the meeting on August 12 Comrade Tomasz visited Comrade S. [Stalin – M.Z.] to whom he presented the situation and agreed upon a course of action. Organizational conclusions: the agency should not maintain the position of Comrade W [Wiesław – M.Z.], but eventually, after a self-critique, leave him in the Politburo and within a state position" (*Stenogram posiedzenia Biura Politycznego, sierpień 1948 r.*, AAN, KC PZPR, 2728, k. 19).

456 Andrzej Werblan, *Władysław Gomułka...*, op. cit., 581.

457 Feliks Siemiankowski, *Trudne dni. Dziennik aktywisty PPR 1945–1948* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1974), 122.

A massive propaganda campaign was launched to resolve all doubts. The ranks of the party were “cleansed” of all suspected of the “nationalist deviation” or promoting “Gomułkaism.” Approval for the new line was aided by a propaganda-fueled faith in the infallibility of the party, its charismatic power, and divine wisdom. On 5 December that same young party activist noted:

When I looked around, I realized that other comrades also had, just as I did, doubts about the rightist-nationalist deviation. However, these doubts passed when one thinks about how the Central Committee knows precisely what it is doing. After all, the people there are communists, enlightened people, with experience. There is no doubt then that they have rightly considered the matter of the deviation.⁴⁵⁸

In December 1948 Gomułka met with Stalin. The conversation came about through Stalin’s initiative. He wanted to incline Gomułka to agree to a new party becoming a member of the Political Bureau, one that would unite the PPR and the PPS. Andrzej Werblan suspects that:

It was clearly counted upon, that just his presence there would be a witness of bowing before the new political line, what’s more, in accordance with the customs of the Stalinist era, he would remain a concrete and visible “opponent,” something like a shooting target for propaganda exercise purposes.⁴⁵⁹

After the meeting, Gomułka issued a letter to Stalin, which was a recapitulation of the conversation. He repeated in it his arguments against including his person in the Political Bureau. One of these arguments were the improper, according to him, cadre politics in the party, consisting of the disproportionate filling of senior posts with activists of Jewish origins. According to Gomułka, it made it more difficult for the party to gain wider social acceptance. Here is what this part of his letter said:

All members of the Politburo know my stance on the matter of cadre politics in the Party with regard to Jewish comrades. I expressed it repeatedly during meetings of the Bureau and in personal conversations with members of the Bureau. The personal staffing of senior positions of the state and party apparatus with a nationalist bent creates, in my opinion, a major obstacle, making it more difficult to widen our base, especially among the intelligentsia and in the country, and, to a certain degree, among the working class. It is indeed possible to even make me responsible for the high percentage of Jewish elements in the leadership apparatus of the party and the state, but the main fault for the resulting state of affairs falls, foremost, upon Jewish comrades. As the Secretary General of

458 Ibid., 135.

459 “Ostatni spór Gomułki ze Stalinem. Nieznana korespondencja z 1948 r.,” ed. Andrzej Werblan, *Dziś* 6 (1993): 102.

the Party I did not find among them either understanding nor support for my position on cadre politics which the party should practice, but, on the contrary, the systematic practice of their cadre politics proved that only a serious deficit of Polish party cadres makes it impossible to practice a cadre politics that is different than the one we have. The cadres will never mature if the Party will not create the appropriate conditions for it, that is if it will not extend positions of responsibility to the most talented comrades that it has at its disposal from its ranks.⁴⁶⁰

We do not have, apart from small and disputable data, any reliable statistics on the national/ethnic composition of the party, state administration, security organs, and the army during this period.⁴⁶¹ According to Olga Brystyier, in the ZPP personnel report of 1944 25% of the people were of a Jewish origin.⁴⁶² One year later a report by Stanisław Radkiewicz landed upon Bierut's desk, which contained numbers concerning the employees of the Ministry of Public Safety (without the militia and the KBW). They concluded that the ministry employed 1.7% Jews, however, in managerial positions there were more than 13% Jews. They were, therefore, overrepresented in relation to the number of Jews in the country's whole population at the time. However, this data does not confirm the circulating myth which proclaimed that all UB are Jews.⁴⁶³ The fact remains that a large proportion of Poles equated the authorities with the Jews, in other words, it denied national legitimation to the communists. Gomułka suggested a revision of the personnel politics of the party justifying it with, among other things, considerations about legitimation. Even though he did not say this directly, he justified it by the need to account for the relatively strong anti-Semitic mood in the Polish society. Yet he himself used arguments that bordered on the anti-Semitic:

Based on a chain of observations I can responsibly say that a portion of the Jewish comrades does not feel tied to the Polish nation, therefore also with the Polish working class, it appears to take up a stance that might be described as national nihilism. But such stances are not taken under consideration while choosing candidates for various positions.

460 Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, Komunizm. Anatomia półprawd, 1939–68* (Warsaw: NOWA, 1992), 84.

461 An essay by Andrzej Paczkowski appeared right after the present volume was completed. His book specifically analyzes the ethnic composition of the UB, however, without altering the general conclusions of my argument (“Żydzi w UB. Próba weryfikacji stereotypu,” in: *Komunizm. Ideologia, system, ludzie*, ed. Tomasz Szarota [Neriton: Warszawa, 2001] 192–204).

462 *Protokół nr 17 posiedzenia Prezydium Zarządu Głównego ZPP*, 26 IV 1944, AAN, ZPP, 216/9, k. 45.

463 Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, Komunizm. Anatomia półprawd, 1939–68* (Warsaw: NOWA, 1992), 84.

Gomułka turned Stalin's attention to the fact that such personnel politics could become a hotbed of conflicts in the party, and is therefore dysfunctional for the ruling system in Poland:

I have ample evidence that the existing state of things on the dividing up of managerial position both in the party and in the state apparatus is causing severe frustration and dissatisfaction. At the same, such an atmosphere has been created in the Party, especially after the August Plenum, that nobody has the courage to loudly voice words of criticism directed against the present personnel politics. Dissatisfaction is, therefore, discharging itself discretely.⁴⁶⁴

Werblan believes that Gomułka did not want to play the humiliating role that Stalin attempted to impose upon him. Therefore, because he was not able to afford full sincerity, his rejection of the PZPR becoming part of the Political Bureau was not justified by authentic motives, but by essentially secondary motives related to the fundamental differences that existed in the leadership of the PPR. A certain role was also played, as indicated by the biographer of the First Secretary, by disillusionment rooted in the abandonment he experienced as the leader of the PPR at the moment when he opposed Stalin, by standing up in defense of the independence of the politics of his own party and reasons of state. Nobody from the top ranks of the leadership backed him. Among the so-called Gomułkists, that is, a few people, along with Gomułka, accused of the nationalist deviation there was not even one activist with a Jewish background. One can risk a different hypothesis that is probable, under one condition, that in the moment when Gomułka met with Stalin he knew about the impending anti-Semitic propaganda campaign in the Soviet Union combined with an anti-Semitic purge (more on this topic later). If so, then Gomułka, by pointing out to Stalin „the high percentage of Jewish elements,” was essentially giving him a new solution for the crisis in the party, namely, an anti-Semitic purge in the ranks of the PPR. I have no proof to confirm this hypothesis. It also has a certain drawback of a psychological nature—Gomułka was not the type of a political player straight from the pages of Machiavelli's *Prince*. On the other hand, he was not naïve and was aware of the rules of the game that held in the Kremlin. Regardless what motives directed Gomułka, Stalin did not undertake the solution suggested to him, even though they both, as it became apparent later, did not forget about the problem.

Thus, Gomułka's meeting with Stalin did not change the officially binding line of fighting against the “right-wing-nationalist deviation.” One of the many consequences of its launching was a determined move away from nationalist legitimization of the system of power in favor of other legitimating arguments. The party

464 *List Władysława Gomułki do Stalina*, op. cit., 108.

ceased to dazzle with its connections to the nation. Even Roman Zambrowski, during a meeting of the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee, noticed that “1st May marches did not connect to our best cultural traditions enough. I would like to mention that the anniversaries of Mickiewicz, Chopin, and Słowacki found no expression in parades, at least when it came to Warsaw.”⁴⁶⁵ Zambrowski had in mind celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Adam Mickiewicz’s birthday in 1948 and the one-hundredth anniversary of the deaths of Fryderyk Chopin and Juliusz Słowacki. The celebrations, planned much earlier, were supposed to demonstrate the ties of the party leaders to national culture. However, this type of legitimation was already in decline. Mickiewicz, as can be surmised from the party meeting devoted to the celebrations of the poet’s birthday, was no longer needed as the most outstanding national bard, mystic, but as a revolutionary, whose output is saturated with radical social content. Thus, although it was accepted that not performing the third part of *Forefathers’ Eve*, “would serve as a propaganda asset for the reactionaries,” it was clearly claimed that the possible staging could not be a mystical and national spectacle.⁴⁶⁶ Consequently, this condition excluded the staging of Mickiewicz’s drama in the theaters until 1955. Therefore, the meaning of tradition in the legitimating process did not change, however, it was no longer a national tradition, but a revolutionary one.

Following the 1st May parade model of the Soviet Union, the decision was made by the Secretariat of the PZPR Central Committee to add a military parade in 1949, which was supposed to symbolize the strength and power of the communist state. The same committee decided “to have the departments of the National Councils reach schoolchildren and preschoolers by giving them 1st May gifts in the form of sweets.”⁴⁶⁷ Simply put: Mickiewicz was going to be replaced with sweets and a demonstration of power.

465 *Stenogram posiedzenia Biura Organizacyjnego KC*, 7 V 1949, AAN, KC PZPR, 1626, k.24.

466 That were also aware that “The preparations for *Forefathers’ Eve*, the inserts, introductions, historical commentaries presented an artistic threat, which could later become a political threat.” This is the reason why it was proposed that: “*Forefathers’ Eve* can be staged as rhapsodic theater, given in whole, with a speeded-up tempo, and with the fragments read in their entirety.” The “party [council] for celebrating the Mickiewicz anniversary” took place in October 1948 and the following personalities participated in it: Żółkiewski, Kott, Kubacki, Andrzejewski, Michalski (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/ XVII – 94, k. 71–76).

467 *Protokół nr 13 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 28 III 1949, AAN, KC PZPR, sygn. 2205, k. 209.

The position toward the “rightist-nationalist deviation” was sealed with a speech about “The Tasks of the Party in the Fight for Revolutionary Vigilance in Light of the Present Situation,” with which Bierut opened the plenary session of the Central Committee of the PZPR in November of 1949:

... we must liquidate the right-wing and nationalist deviation completely. It is why we ought to, without reservations, derive political and organizational conclusions about these carriers of the right-wing deviation, who did not wholly disarm before the Party and are still helping the party battle the dangers that put the party at risk, but without wanting to contribute to clearing out all the elements of the ideological deviation without remainder.⁴⁶⁸

The plenum turned into a Gomułka trial. Hilary Minc asked:

And what is nationalism? Nationalism is not seeing beyond one’s country, not believing in the proletariats of other countries. Comrade Wiesław did not believe that the German proletariat, saddled with the many faults of Nazism, can be reborn thanks to the brotherly aid of the Soviet Union based upon the teachings of the great Stalin, that it could mount a furious campaign against reactionaries, and acknowledge, as legitimate and fair, our borders upon the Oder and the Neisse.⁴⁶⁹

Gomułka, Marian Spychalski, and Zenon Kliszko were removed from the Central Committee and arrested soon thereafter.

In an atmosphere of “liquidating the remnants of the right-wing-nationalist deviation” symbols and emblems were disappearing from the streets. An administrative order was issued to remove flags on May 2nd.⁴⁷⁰ The holiday of the promulgation of the 3rd May Constitution, already not observed since 1947, was replaced by the Days of Education, whose celebration was planned for May 2nd or 4th.⁴⁷¹ Although the circular issued in connection with the celebration of the 5th anniversary of People’s Poland instructed that for decorations the color red should not predominate over red-and-white, these types of calls were of little help.⁴⁷² “Polish eagles are increasingly disappearing, more and more you see only the emblems of the Soviets,” noted Maria Dąbrowska during the last days of December 1949.⁴⁷³

468 Stenogram III Plenum, AAN, KC PZPR 1159, k. 66.

469 Ibid., k. 272.

470 Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji (dalej MSWiA), 76/6, pagination missing.

471 *Relacja na temat Dni Oświaty*, MSWiA, 17/IX/71 t. 3, k. 4–7.

472 AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-195, k. 2.

473 Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne*, op. cit., 505.

Fear of being accused of nationalism was predominant. Jerzy Putrament, at that time the secretary general of the Association of Polish Writers, recalled years later:

I wrote that Polish literature, the literature of Kochanowski and Krasiciki, Mickiewicz and Słowacki, Orzeszkowa and Prus, Żeromski... I was very careful in this calculation because I most certainly avoided the uncertain sources—Norwid, and Krasiński (a count!), Sienkiewicz I passed on—remembering Prus's sharp judgment against the *Trilogy* . . . And for this, I was attacked by two pimple-faced kids, among them Borowski. They accused me of . . . nationalism.⁴⁷⁴

The category of “socialist in content, national in form” became obligatory with regard to cultural phenomena. The sources of this formula, which was part of the doctrine of Socialist Realism, should be sought out in Lenin's conception of national culture and in the works of Stalin devoted to the Bolshevik politics toward national minorities.⁴⁷⁵ Yet, despite a relatively long history, the category of “national form” was not developed into a more coherent concept. In Poland, the slogan of a “national form” began to be used first during meetings of artist unions that took place at the turn of 1948 into 1949.⁴⁷⁶ During a meeting of musicians and composers the Vice-Minister of Culture and Arts, Włodzimierz Sokorski, pointed to the necessity of making music more national through reaching for the progressive traditions in Polish classical music and leaning upon peasant and worker music.⁴⁷⁷ During a meeting of architects, which took place in November 1949, it was argued that, “socialist content in architecture cannot be expressed otherwise than through national forms and that without these national forms it is not possible to express socialist content.” In order to achieve this, “the architecture of People's Poland must lean upon a foundation of the historical achievements of Polish architecture, which it must exploit, transform, and develop.”⁴⁷⁸ In practice, this was realized through the decoration of socialist-realist houses and buildings with an allegedly uniquely Polish Renaissance Attic. It is easy to agree with Wojciech Włodarczyk, the author of a book about socialist-realism, who argues that what was at stake was the grounding of a socialist-realism imported from the East. “National form” was supposed to fulfill the function of camouflaging the Stalinist culture that was being pumped into the Polish bloodstream, which only

474 Jerzy Putrament, *Pół wieku. Literaci* (Warsaw: KiW, Warszawa 1986), 36.

475 See: Footnote 52 in Chapter 2 of the present book.

476 Barbara Fijałkowska, *Polityka i twórcy (1949–1959)* (Warsaw: PWN, 1985).

477 Włodzimierz Sokorski, “Ku realizmowi socjalistycznemu w muzyce,” *Kuźnica* 46 (1949).

478 AAN, KC PZPR, 237/ XVIII-35, 24, 27.

under such a cover could guarantee stability and continuity.⁴⁷⁹ In other words, the “national form” was supposed to legitimize so-called socialism, but it did not prove useful. In a situation where an excessively zealous overuse of the “national form” could threaten being accused of nationalism and promoting “Gomułkaism,” the slogan “national in form and socialist in content” proved itself to be simply useless, becoming thereby a mere appearance.

The contemporary picture of Stalinism has many qualities of a stereotype when it comes to the national question. Attention is usually turned upon the anti-national character of the politics of the rulers, the sovietization of Polish culture, and a break with the West. All of this is true, however, despite this, we still are dealing with an incomplete picture, one that is oversimplifying in its one-sidedness. It especially passes over the so-called “small thaw,” actions undertaken during the VI plenum of the party in 1951, which aimed to join selected national content with Marxist-Leninist historiography.⁴⁸⁰

At that time the party made, not for the first time in the history of the communist movement, a surprising ideological jump, reminiscent of the one from 1935. The change of line happened during a plenary meeting of the PZPR Central Committee on the 17th and 18th February 1951. The proceedings begin with Bierut’s delivery of a four-hour paper, “The Battle of the Polish Nation for Peace and the Six-Year-Plan.”⁴⁸¹ Just the fact that the speech used the word “nation” in its noun and adjective forms about 130 times suggests that there was a clear change in the official approach to the national questions. We ought to familiarize ourselves with the content of the first secretary’s speech in order to understand its meaning. The point of departure for him was a description of the international situation, indicating the dangers arising from the “imperialist” politics of the United States. He argued that the United Kingdom, and, above all, the USA, already since World War I, strove for a solution of the independence question which would not be advantageous to Poland. The stance of the Western countries toward Poland was contrasted with Lenin’s and Stalin’s care for the fate of smaller nations. Bierut legitimized his words by referring to a book by a participant in the Versailles Conference, Roman Dmowski, *Polish Politics and the Rebuilding of the State*. He quoted Dmowski many times, mentioning his last name thirteen times.

479 Wojciech Włodarczyk, *Socrealizm. Sztuka polska 1950–1954* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1991), 36.

480 I take the concept of a “small thaw” from Tadeusz Drewnowski; Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne...*, op. cit., 197.

481 *Stenogram VI. plenarnego posiedzenia KC PZPR, AAN, KC PZPR, 1168.*

This was, at the very least, surprising for those taking part in the assembly.⁴⁸² One probably does not have to especially explain what official stance was obligatory toward that former leader of National Democrats. Although, it must be said that Bierut did not leave any doubts about this by saying, “But Dmowski was probably not a Marxist, not an atheist, not a supporter of our ideology, but its determined enemy,”⁴⁸³ nonetheless he broke the, accepted at the time, principle of exclusively quoting the Marxist classics.

Wanting to better document the ruthlessness of American imperialism Bierut recalled the extermination of American Indians perpetrated by white colonizers, this time by using the appropriate extracts from Henryk Sienkiewicz’s *Letters from America*. He also “skillfully” pointed to the ties between American and Nazi imperialism. He did all of this in order to come to the following conclusion:

The following are the factors defining the content of life under the dictatorship of American imperialism: the rashness of imperialistic politics, uncertainty about tomorrow, deceit as the main weapon of ideology and propaganda, contempt for people and the ambitions and national goods of vassal states, and a deep ideational and moral fall.⁴⁸⁴

In a situation of growing endangerment from the side of American imperialism, Bierut acknowledged the main task as fighting for peace, which “must have its basis in the stances of entire nations” and “must have the character of a broad pan-national front.” Beirut said that “The fight for freedom is the kind of fight where our nation should be as much of one mind as possible. From what I have already said it is clear that the fight for freedom is under present conditions the highest patriotic and universal obligation.”⁴⁸⁵ Victory in this fight is possible after a prior “liquidation without remainder” of all those who stand in the way to full unification.

It was Bierut’s intention to unveil the true nature of the world. According to him, there is in the world an all-important division between the camp of the good and the camp of evil. These camps, “from the beginning,” are locked in a fight to the death. On the side of evil is “deceit,” “contempt,” and an “ideational and moral fall.” Whereas all the varieties of the good are concentrated on “our” side. This way of thinking was characteristic for totalitarian gnosis. Political conflict was presented as a cosmogonic conflict. The existence of absolute evil is the condition for the existence of the absolute good. Only then the rulers who are on the side of the

482 Jerzy Putrament, *Pół wieku*, op. cit., 38.

483 *Stenogram VI. ...*, op. cit., 33.

484 *Ibid.*, 48–49.

485 *Ibid.* 51–52.

good can be irradiated by holiness. American imperialism is, thus, inscribed into the order of things. It legitimizes communist rule, which is solely able to protect the world from chaos. This is why the nation, wanting to prevent annihilation, should unite, believing in their leaders to the end. *Hannibal ante portas*. Those who break away from the patriotic duty of standing up against evil will break the national unity, will become traitors to the national, as well as the universal cause.

The postulate of a nation on alert against national enemies was always one of the most important elements of the nationalist ideology (one can see that Bierut read Dmowski's work very carefully!). Bierut also borrowed from the leader of the National Democrats the concept of a "national interest," which indubitably stands as the total opposite of "class interests."⁴⁸⁶ He remembered them well since he used them a mere two months later in a special letter he edited himself to the Central Committee to members of the party in the Będziński Powiat. It pointed toward the importance of coal mining, and the introduction of overtime work was justified precisely by the national interest.⁴⁸⁷

Later on in the paper for the VI plenum, Bierut attempted to explain the meaning of the national front. He, therefore, stressed ideational and class differences from the nationalist conceptions of the "Enedcja, the Piłsudski camp, the right of the PPS, and later the Polish bourgeoisie." "The idea was," he explained, "to put a fig leaf on such caricatures of the national front, to cover up the hideous nakedness of betrayal and apostasy of the ruling class of exploiters." Then, in a manner typical for the propaganda language of the time, he accused his opponents of all possible crimes: the September defeat, cooperation with the Germans during the war, and so on, while giving "our party" the palm of primacy in fighting against the occupiers and all the credit for Poland regaining its independence. Bierut explained harkening to the slogans of the national front by the transformation of the Polish nation into a socialist nation. The concept of a "socialist nation" was then used in Poland for the first time. This is why, for understandable reasons, Bierut devoted to it a lot of space. The character of a nation is decided by, he explained, the dominating class in society. In this way, in the history of Poland, there was at first a "nation of the nobility," from which in the 19th century a "bourgeois nation" was formed, whereas:

486 Ibid., 58.

487 *Do członków partii powiatu będzińskiego. List KC, w: O budownictwie partyjnym. Uchwały Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej* (Warsaw: KiW 1954), 226.

The Polish working class's rise to power in 1944 began a new historical period—the transformation of the bourgeois nation into a socialist nation with a new economic structure, with a new class composition, with a new moral-political face.⁴⁸⁸

Thus, Bierut summoned in his presentation the myth of a totally new beginning after the revolutionary break with the continuities of history—something typical for post-revolutionary systems. These kinds of statements appeared already earlier. This time, however, the clearly national character of the revolutionary breakthrough was stressed. Its direct effect was the beginning of a national *genesis*, the birth of a new nation, a socialist nation. The concept of a “socialist nation” was taken by Bierut from Stalin's work *The National Question and Leninism*, which he referred to numerous times. The final shaping of the Polish socialist nation was dependent upon the “liquidation of the remains of capitalism.” The slogan of the national front was supposed to accelerate this process.

The discussion over Bierut's paper did not have a lively character, although we can assume that for the majority of those taking part in the plenum the contents of the paper were a big surprise. It took place in a typical for the period, “Byzantine” style with a certain zeal of granting validity to “Comrade Thomasz” arguments. Several comments on the role that was supposed to be played by the national front stand out. They speak directly about intending to instrumentally use national slogans for legitimizing the party's dictatorship. Special attention was paid that the national front be, above all, a good tool for fighting against the class enemy, especially the rich peasantry, which until that time put up substantial resistance against the authorities. Leon Finkielsztajn acknowledged that:

I understood Comrade Bierut's statements in the sense that the question of the national front he posed immeasurably enriches the arsenal of the Party, it arms it with the possibility of reaching all those circles that, which are left to conquer in the fight for peace and which we have not yet sufficiently conquered, that it immeasurably enriches our arsenal giving us a whole chain of elements available for the wide mass of the peasantry . . . approaches, arguments, which make it easier for us to isolate the political kulak, and through this, they will contribute to the efficient weakening of his power, which he still has today.

This speaker next came to the conclusion that since the working class solely expresses the interests of the whole nation, then this means that it has already constituted itself into a ruling class, “that is, the nation.”⁴⁸⁹ In this way, he alluded to the famous fragment from the *Communist Manifesto* in which Marx and Engels

488 *Stenogram VI...*, op. cit., 57.

489 *Ibid.*, 159, 187.

argued that only when the proletariat gains political power will that allow it to “raise itself to the status of a national class, constitute itself as the nation.” He, therefore, went considerably further than Bierut for whom the Polish nation was only on the way to transforming itself into a socialist nation.

Another one of the paper’s discussants, in order to return to the goals put before the national front, understood Bierut’s message in this way: “The fight for the national front in the country is the fight about isolating the kulak, and we can achieve this only through gaining the middle and isolating the kulak.”⁴⁹⁰ The slogan of a national front was supposed to testify to the fully national character of the political authorities, putting all those who oppose these authorities beyond the pale of the national community. These plans become even more transparent when we remember that the first ever nationwide action of purchasing wheat, which was *de facto* mandatory, in February and March 1951.

This did not exhaust the tasks that the slogan of uniting the nation was burdened with. It was recognized that the enrichment of existing legitimizing formulas with national elements would further, then it has been so far possible, mobilize the society to execute the presuppositions of the six-year plan. This topic appeared in Hilary Minc’s paper devoted to the results of the socialist economy. The picture outlined by it was all too optimistic. Minc only casually mentioned the necessity of increasing investments in the defense industry and improving work productivity. All that was necessary for this, in his opinion, was an “effort in the domain of political mobilization.”⁴⁹¹ The intentions of the authorities were more clearly expressed by Józef Olszewski who argued that:

The slogan of the National Front will permit us, more deeply than until now, and more specifically, put before the masses the matter of socialist construction in the six-year plan, it will allow us to bring out new reserves of patriotism and self-sacrifice from the working masses of Silesia and Dąbrowski, from our technical intelligentsia, it will allow us to put on a broader plane the matter of mobilizing for fighting against difficulties. We have these difficulties and they are not insignificant.⁴⁹²

The main reason for pushing out the slogan of the national front, however, lay elsewhere; it was connected to the international situation. The Korean War began in June 1950. There were justified worries that the conflict would spark the embers of World War III. The party authorities weighed this eventuality

490 Ibid., 246.

491 Ibid., 105.

492 Ibid., 252.

seriously.⁴⁹³ Jakub Berman talked about this to Putrament several days before the beginning of the plenum.⁴⁹⁴ There were worries that, in the face of an international conflict, the society would now demonstrate the appropriate amount of zeal for the defense of the communist order. Hopes were fed that giving the conflict a national costume would make Poles more willing to stand in its defense. This is why Bierut so evocatively presented the plans of American imperialism, in that it “. . . threatens our independence, would like to transform Poland into a colony of raw materials, a hinterland ruled by Nazi Gauleiters.” He then asked,

. . . will we find at least one honest Pole, a true patriot, who would tighten their fists in response to these nefarious attempts and plans? Could there be a different answer than closing ranks in the national front of fighting for peace and the six-year plan, guaranteeing our industrialization, our power, and sovereignty?⁴⁹⁵

We should sum up the causes of such a substantial change of language. Until the 6th Plenum the fight against the “right-wing-nationalist deviation” continued. It seems that, above all, a crisis of mobilization hid behind this turn. The authorities were no longer able to activate sufficient energy from the society. The mobilizing reserves of the system were exhausted. The return to nationalist legitimization was supposed to procure new strength, enrich the previous legitimating argumentation. Gomułka and his supporters were already defeated anyway. The “remains of the nationalist deviation” were destroyed. It was possible to return to the language of propaganda of the first post-war years when Gomułka was still the first secretary of the PPR.

Furthermore, the new line of the party had to enjoy the approval of Moscow. This is eloquently attested to by the changes made by Stalin in the draft of the PRL Constitution, sent to him for approval in early Autumn of 1951. Among other things, this is what he changed: “the conditions for revival” to “the conditions for national revival” and “slavery” to “national slavery.” Culture and education similarly became national. It can be seen from this, as Andrzej Garlicki noted, that the word “national” was a word liked by Stalin.⁴⁹⁶

Nationalist legitimization during the period of the Bolshevik Revolution, during the second part of the 1930’s, and during World War II, was already discussed

493 8 August 1951 the Secretariat of the Politburo undertook a decision to extend the length of mandatory army service (AAN, KC PZPR, 1646, k. 176).

494 Jerzy Putrament, *Pół wieku...*, op. cit., 38.

495 *Stenogram VI...*, op. cit., 55.

496 “Zatwierdzenie Konstytucji PRL,” in: Andrzej Garlicki, *Z tajnych archiwów* (Warsaw: BGW, 1993), 189.

earlier in this volume. The national direction in the compulsory ideology of the Soviet Union was further strengthened when Andrei Zhdanov put forward the slogan of fighting cosmopolitanism.⁴⁹⁷ Initially, this term was used to head off fascination with the culture of the West. Being infected with it was something that was suspected of those citizens of the Soviet Union, mostly soldiers, who had the ability to meet with Englishmen, Americans, Frenchmen, mostly on the terrain of occupied Germany. Stalin applied the remedy of a “silent purge” in the armed forces. At the start of 1948 five admirals were convicted of spying for the Anglo-Saxons.⁴⁹⁸ During the same time sharp battles against “cosmopolitanism” were directed by Stalin against the Jews, which led to a wave of Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. They were presaged by the treacherous murder of Solomon Mikhoels, a Jewish director, and actor, the chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist committee.

The propaganda campaign against “uprooted cosmopolitans” began with an article in *Pravda* from 28 January 1949, entitled, “On the Anti-patriotic Group of Theater Critics,” where everyone mentioned by their full name came from a Jewish background. There were numerous arrests followed by numerous executions. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was disbanded.⁴⁹⁹

The roundup of the “cosmopolitans” (read: Jews) also moved to other countries of the Soviet Bloc. Rudolf Slánsky, the Secretary General of the Czechoslovak communist party, was arrested in November 1951, along with a group of fourteen dignitaries of Jewish origin. Besides the typical, by then, accusations of Trotskyism, Titoism, or of cooperation with foreign intelligence in a campaign directed against “Slánsky’s Band” there also appeared strong Anti-Zionist accents, giving it strong Anti-Semitic overtones.⁵⁰⁰ The XIX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the last one in which Stalin participated, took place in October 1952, and it stressed the national line.⁵⁰¹

497 Werner Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics. The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation, 1946–1953* (Ithaca, RI: Cornell University Press, 1982).

498 *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future*, ed. Robert Conquest (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press), 281.

499 Michał Heller and Andrzej Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy. Historia Związku Sowieckiego od roku 1917 do naszych czasów*, v. 2 (Warsaw: CDN, 1986), 140, 144–148.

500 Artur London, *Byłem członkiem bandy Slánskiego* (Warsaw: Nowa, 1987).

501 Even though Stalin’s statement sounded like a grim joke, it was an unambiguous pointer toward the direction of legitimizing arguments of the communists in vassal states: “The banner of national independence and national sovereignty was tossed overboard [by the bourgeoisie – Marcin Zaremba]. There is no doubt that it will fall

Echoes of the fight against cosmopolitanism, on the official level devoid of anti-Semitic accents,⁵⁰² also reached Poland. They were most visible at the already mentioned III Plenum in November 1949 in the paper of the First Secretary.⁵⁰³ But the recently begun fight against the “rightist-nationalist deviation” made it more difficult to simultaneously begin a new wider ideological-propaganda campaign.⁵⁰⁴ The resistance of the party elites also played a role and blocked the literal incorporating into the life of the insane ideological ideas flowing in from the Soviet Union.⁵⁰⁵ Much indicates that the VI Plenum became a process of making up

to you, the representatives of communist and democratic parties, to pick up this banner, and to carry it forward, if you want to be patriots of your countries, if you want to become the leading power steering the nation” (“Przemówienie J. Stalina na tym Zjeździe,” *Nowe Drogi*, a special edition devoted to the XIX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [1952]: 7).

- 502 There are two voices on how to interpret the concept of cosmopolitanism in Poland from a seminar on journalism, which took place on 17 July 1949, and was organized by the Department of the Press and Publishers: “The last form of cosmopolitanism is that of undervaluing the contribution of our Slavic nation, especially the nations of the USSR, to human culture in general. We do not showcase our scholars, and from there comes the myth of one nation of scholars—the Americans” (Roman Werfel). “Here in Poland cosmopolitanism breaks through as anti-Sovietism. It exists in Polish cosmopolitanism, and it is not something from the period of captivity, something like a degradation, it serves foreign interests. Our intelligentsia is infected with an English cosmopolitanism. (Leon Finkelsztajn). AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XIX-1, k. 118, 119.
- 503 “Our party opposes cosmopolitanism and nationalism with true patriotism and proletarian internationalism. In this light a particular meaning attaches itself to the critical reworking of our cultural heritage, the unveiling and popularization of the whole richness of our national achievement, our contribution to universal culture, our revolutionary battles and our most recent achievements. The ideology of cosmopolitanism leads to economic, political, and cultural degradation, to colonial slavery. The ideology of sovereignty and of a people’s and socialist patriotism, based upon a proletarian internationalism leads to the optimal development of creative powers, for the dissemination and blossoming of national culture to a versatile development of all the creative powers of the nation. The essence of the ideological battle for peace against partitioning and imperialist aggression resides in this opposition” (Bolesław Bierut, “Zadania Partii w walce o pokój,” *Nowe Drogi* 2 [1949]: 49).
- 504 The article “Przeciw nacjonalizmowi i kosmopolityzmowi” (*Nowe Drogi* 3 [1949]: 65–85) by Roman Werfel was an attempt to mitigate the contradictions that grew out of the simultaneous condemnation of nationalism and nationalism.
- 505 “In the latter part of February there arrived, addressed to us, an article by a Soviet author, Oleg Moshensky, entitled, ‘Kosmopolici zdemaskowani.’ We placed this article in a ‘Special Soviet Bulletin’ on February 22nd, but not one party newspaper reprinted

for existing backlogs. Toward the middle of December 1951, the Secretariat of the Political Bureau established the procedures for changing last names.⁵⁰⁶ “A number of people among the leading party, administrative, and economic activists,” had reportedly made requests for the undertaking of a formal change of names of their dead parents and birth names of their mothers.⁵⁰⁷ There is no documentation that anyone was forced to make such changes. However, something must have been hanging in the air since “a number of people” made such decisions, we should add, in a country building up socialism, in which the fact that someone’s father had the name Isaac or Stanisław should be meaningless. There are also justified reasons to think that in this period there were preparations to begin Anti-Semitic purges on Stalin’s orders in Poland.⁵⁰⁸

it. I noted this to the assistant director of the Press Department of the Central Committee, Chaber. In his answer Chaber gave me a whole lecture on the topics of the specific nature of the Polish intelligentsia, about the fact that Polish cosmopolitanism is not a threat, and that the fight against cosmopolitanism in Poland is only needed by the enemies of democracy and socialism, that it would cause great harm. After this introduction Chaber stated that the Central Committee of the united party thinks it is right that the Polish press does not feature any materials about the battle of the Polish nation against the cosmopolitans. What is needed first is the extended and persistent work of explaining the erroneous state of this matter, so that by the end of March and the first part of April the first articles about the reactionary essence of cosmopolitanism can appear in the Polish press (“Informacja przedstawiciela Radzieckiego Biura Informacyjnego w Warszawie Władysława Sokołowskiego dla I zastępcy kierownika Wydziału Propagandy KC WKP(b), kierownika Radzieckiego Biura Informacyjnego Borysa Ponomariowa o niewłaściwej polityce informacyjnej Wydziału Prasy KC PZPR w Zakresie popularyzacji osiągnięć ZSRR,” in: *Polska – ZSRR. Struktury podległości...*, op. cit., 245).

506 *Protokół nr 138 posiedzenia Sekretariatu Biura Politycznego KC*, 17 XII 1951, AAN, KC PZPR, V/15, k. 530.

507 *Tryb postępowania przy zmianie imion i nazwisk w wypadkach szczególnych, grudzień 1951*, AAN, KC PZPR, V/15, k. 557, 558 (document pointed out by A. Paczkowski).

508 In the report of the so-called Mazur Commission, which came into being in December 1956, to study the responsibility for the Stalinist period of the Main Directorate of Information of the Polish Army’s employees, we read: “The Main Directorate of Information of the Polish Army bears responsibility for . . . suggesting to Intelligence Officers the alleged fact of the existence of hostility towards the regime among circles of returning emigres from France, Yugoslavia, followers of Dąbrowski, prewar officers, and **soldiers of Jewish origins**, and so on (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22.I.1999, bolding is mine). See also footnote 35 in chapter 7, and the commentary on the statement by Zenon Nowak cited in this chapter.

A day after the conclusion of the plenary session of the Central Committee Secretariat of the Organizational Bureau “adopted a resolution on the matter of transferring the resolutions of the VI Plenum into the field” and recommended paying “special attention to the popular working out of the issues of the VI Plenum into brochures for the working and peasant masses.”⁵⁰⁹

The new legitimizing argumentation which was supposed to “immeasurably enrich the arsenal of the party,” was tried out already two months after the Plenum, which announced a national loan. Its very name, the National Loan for the Development of Poland’s Powers, was supposed to play on the patriotic feelings of the society. The newspapers tried to convince that subscribing to the loan was a “patriotic obligation of every Pole.”⁵¹⁰

The propaganda campaign connected to the loan was not the only occasion when words such as “progress” and “power” were used. The notion of “progress,” which was part of the outlined vision of the socialist future of the state, made up a significant element of revolutionary legitimation. Formulations referring to the power and might of Poland were also directed toward gaining a specific legitimizing effect. Their widespread use in propaganda language might lead us to the hypothesis that the party propagandists remembered the Sanacja slogan “Strong, Close, and Ready” very well. It seems they were convinced that similar means will allow them to reach out to the Polish society. Such similarities with the interwar period can also be found even more frequently in the Stalinist propaganda. It makes sense to recall that right after the war the editors of *Głos Ludu*, reached for the Sanacja-superpower phraseology, giving one of their articles the title, “Poland a Superpower: Szczecin, Oder, and the Western Neisse Make up the Borders of Poland.”⁵¹¹

Likewise, the idea of a national front, whose institutionalization occurred before the Sejm elections of October 1952, although it was genealogically tied with the Comintern’s conception of a national front, in some measure is reminiscent of the Sanacja BBWR, especially the OZN. The electoral circumstances were similar as was the main goal, that is, the broadening of the base of the government. They

509 *Protokół nr 68 posiedzenia Sekretariatu Biura Organizacyjnego KC*, 19 II 1951, AAN, KC PZPR, V/9, k. 61.

510 In reality, employees of the state and its institutions were forced to make deposits to support the loan, most frequently by writing off the desired amount from their pension. The peasants, on the other hand, decidedly refused to make deposits (*Instrukcja dla Komitetów Wojewódzkich, Powiatowych, Miejskich i Dzielnicowych w sprawie Narodowej Pożyczki Rozwoju Sił Polski*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-153, k. 6, 7).

511 *Głos Ludu*, 3.VIII.1945.

were concentrated in the National Front, as proclaimed by press releases—all the political parties and mass social organizations, and “the whole of decent society which loves the Fatherland.” They were supposed to be complimented by a patriotic stance and awareness of the main needs of the country and Poland’s reasons of state, “All... Polish patriots—whatever their differences in views might be—are united by one common goal, the realization of the only legitimate program pursued by the authorities of the people.”⁵¹² In order to convince the populace that this is “only legitimate program,” all existing means of propaganda media were activated, engaging, according to the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the KC, some 800,000 agitators.⁵¹³ This attests to the sweeping dimensions of the pre-election agitation.

The leading slogan of the election campaign was the unification of the nation for the further economic development of the country and the realization of the basic presuppositions of socialism. The achievement of these goals, it was stressed without fail, was supposed to be in the objective interest of the whole nation, ensuring the power and happiness of Poland. This could become possible only after a prior unification of the entire country, “The Polish nation strong through the unity of the working masses will achieve its historical tasks, realize its economic plans, will build a new, better, and just social order—socialism.”⁵¹⁴ The necessary condition for the full unity was the complete internalization of the socialist ideal, following the steps of the Soviet Union, and directing oneself by following the voice of the party and its leaders. At the same time, there was a clear stress on the fact that the unity of the nation does not mean “being in alliance with the kulak, the speculator, or exploiter.” “The moral-political unity of the nation”⁵¹⁵ (a formula also used at the time) could only occur in the fight for socialism. The full unification of the nation was, therefore, a potential state, which had to be striven for constantly. In this way, a new goal was added to those already indicated by the party. Teleological legitimation of the communist power became supported by a national element.

The birth of a “socialist nation” was supposed to be the culmination of the country’s unification. When defining the concept of the “nation” one did not go beyond the known Stalinist formula. The adjective “socialist” meant the postulate of a total break of continuity in all spheres of social life, the destruction of tradi-

512 *Trybuna Ludu*, 31.VIII.1952.

513 *Uwagi do oceny wyborów do Sejmu*, XI 1952, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-155, k. 38.

514 *Trybuna Ludu* 8 IX 1952.

515 *Wytyczne dla KW i KP w sprawie przygotowań do kampanii wyborczej*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-112, k. 1.

tional bonds and the demolition of the historical heritage of the nation. The first changes were especially noticeable: “Our nation is now more ‘nationwide’ than ever... the words ‘the people’ and the ‘nation’ are increasingly overlapping. The interest of the nation increasingly means the interest of the working masses.”⁵¹⁶

A patriot, according to the above reasoning, could only be someone who was actively engaged in the building of socialism in the version outlined by the party. This was expressed by the support for the National Front: “Whoever stands in the ranks of the National Front, whoever strengthens its unity and contributes to the best of their ability in the achievement of its great and just goals—is a patriot. Whoever consciously breaks apart the unity of the nation—is an enemy.”

The National Front concentrated, as the propaganda stressed, all the advocates of peace and the independence of Poland, all patriotic, democratic, and progressive elements of the nation. This is why a testament to a patriotic stance should have been the support for the National Front expressed through participation in the elections. It was supposed to be, “a manifestation of an unbreakable will for increasing the power and defensibility of our Nation,”⁵¹⁷ an “occasion to demonstrate to enemies how great our love for the People’s Fatherland is.”⁵¹⁸ Work for the “People’s State” was also considered to be patriotic:

The condition of our victorious march forward, the condition of our power and safety is also both the patriotic stance of our workers and our intelligentsia, their sustained daily effort and continual growth of their work’s productivity, as well as the patriotic stance of the peasant masses, their care for their work and their thrift, and the full and timely fulfillment of their obligations to the People’s State.⁵¹⁹

“The tractor driver who cares about the conservation of the tractor gives a witness of his patriotism.”⁵²⁰ One can see from this that the words of Hilary Minc on the need for effort “in the domain of political mobilization,” uttered during the VI Plenum, were clearly being attempted to put into action. The patriotic love for the fatherland was supposed to mobilize people to realize the tasks of the Six-Year Plan.

Joining the work of building up socialism was not the only thing considered patriotism, but also the matter of Polish independence was identified with the new order. “Our class program, a program of proletarian ideology, is grafted tightly

516 *Notatnik Prelegenta* (Warsaw: Wydział Propagandy i Agitacji ZG ZMP, 1951), 35.

517 *Trybuna Ludu*, 13.X.1952.

518 *Trybuna Ludu*, 20.X.1952.

519 *Ibid.*

520 *Notatnik Prelegenta*, op. cit., 37–38.

and inseparably upon the basic interests of the nation, with the essence of its independence . . .⁵²¹ There could only be one conclusion to end this chain of reasoning: the path to independence leads exclusively through socialism. Without a doubt, the judgment about the lack of alternatives to the existing political order, which constituted the guarantee of the existence of an independent Polish state, became for a long time a substantial element in stabilizing the political system in the country.

The process of uniting the Polish nation proceeded not only by identifying positive goals (socialism), but, above all through creating a negative stereotype of the enemy (imperialism). When it came to the latter, Stalinist propaganda saw as the main source the perennial threats to the independence of Poland:

American imperialism was always, and will always remain, a deadly foe of Poland, the enemy of our independence, the enemy of our nation. American monopolists, their generals and politicians, always treated, and would like to now treat, Poland as a thing freely at their disposal, for use in auctions, to throw it around like a ball in the international field of imperialist monkey businesses, to move it around the chessboard according to the interests of the imperialists.⁵²²

The fight against imperialism, even though it was conducted in the name of peace and international friendship between nations, essentially had all the qualities of a nationalist campaign, which shaped xenophobic attitudes. The wall being erected was supposed to divide not only antagonist political systems, but also nations. Only then could it be effective. As a consequence, the arousing of hatred toward imperialism occurred through the use of nationalist language.

The anti-American battue frequently encroached upon the absurd. Jazz was forbidden because it was American. There were even no textbooks for learning English and books that might show the Anglo-Saxons in a positive light were removed from libraries. Many more similar examples can be found.

Nationalism as a means for de-legitimizing the political opponent was also used by the authorities against the Catholic Church. It is characteristic that the battle against it was motivated by “national interests” and “Polish reasons of state.” In the “Theses on the Matters of the Church’s Politics” we read:

In its blind hatred for People’s Poland the episcopate attacks in its memorial all the gains and achievements of our nation, all that has become sacred and inviolable for every decent Pole. It interferes with the unity of the nation, in its peaceful, creative work, in the principle of the sovereignty of the state and its full independence from foreign imperial-

521 *Trybuna Ludu*, 31.VIII.1952.

522 *Trybuna Ludu*, 13.X.1952.

ist centers and from the Vatican, into the principle of the primacy of the nation's interests and the state as the highest good. The attack of the reactionary hierarchy against the basic interests of the nation is the result of the fact that it does not represent the Polish reasons of state, but of a location that is foreign and hostile to Poland.⁵²³

The meaning of these actions can be only read only in the context of the propaganda and legitimizing attractiveness of such a manner of uniting the nation, resulting from at least four reasons.

1. The strategy of conduct was based, above all, on emotional content, which can be very effective in propaganda actions. It is markedly easier to reach a propaganda goal speaking to the emotions rather than to reason. This is also why the picture of an imperialist enemy, which was supposed to reach the audience, was deprived of concrete and rational features. The American dollar sufficed for a symbol, frequently appearing along with a Nazi swastika. Imperialism presented this way was perceived as a foreign and demonic power that carried a threat to world peace, the integrity of the borders, economic achievements, and so on.
2. The ability to create an atmosphere of threat is the next reason. The excitation of anxiety very frequently functions as a means of playing on the emotions. It makes the consolidation and mobilization of the society possible, which is actively supposed to prevent the threat.
3. Third, a nation united in readiness to defend a common enemy needs a strong and firm leader. This situation legitimizes the repressions of the system.
4. The fourth reason is the ease of exciting negative opinions because people tend to accept negative attitudes more easily than positive ones. This is also why propaganda clearly focused its attention upon the aggressiveness of capitalist state and most of its terminology oscillated around this theme, thereby creating a negative stance.

The avant-garde of the working class, that is, the party, according to doctrine, was supposed to stand at the head of a united nation. However, its right to lead was not motivated solely by "historical necessity," and this argument was anyway used surprisingly infrequently. Legitimation claims were derived from the national-liberation tradition, of which the party was supposed to be the sole inheritor, and the contributions toward Poland regaining its independence. The predecessor of the PZPR was defined as:

523 This document was created in June of 1953; four months later Primate Wyszyński was arrested (AAN, KC PZPR).

The leading division of the Polish proletariat, the inheritor of the most beautiful patriotic and revolutionary traditions of our nation, the continuator of the heroic Communist Party of Poland—the Polish Worker’s Party (PPR)—during the dark night of enslavement by Hitler, under the banner of Marxism-Leninism, it undertook a death and life struggle to throw off the fascist yolk, the fight for the freedom and independence of our Fatherland, for the power of the people.⁵²⁴

Once again, a comparison imposes itself, with the interwar period and the legitimation of the right to govern in the Piłsudski camp, one of whose legitimating arguments was the “legion act” and Józef Piłsudski’s thinking about independence. In the conception below the merits of Polish communists go even further, because to them was owed the existence of an ethnically compact and unified Polish state:

The people’s authorities under the leadership of the PPR returned the ancient Polish lands in the west, created an ethnically compact and unified Polish state, strengthened the economic and defensive potential of the country, and, by leaning on the Soviet Union, it defended these lands from the grasping plans of the American-English warmongers and the Neo-Nazi agents.⁵²⁵

The resolution of the Central Committee of the PZPR from December 1951, from which the two quotes above were taken, was created at the height of the Stalinist period in Poland; the contents of the second one are a prime example of the nationalist legitimation of power. In it, there is talk about territorial expansion, the building of a nation-state without ethnic minorities, and, finally, about defending the independence of the country and its economic sovereignty against intruders. In order to ensure that this argumentation would reach the masses, the Political Bureau recommended in the resolution to propagate the “historical merits of the PPR” in the press and radio and through lectures and talks at places of work and institutions. Regional and district [powiat] committees of the party were supposed to organize memorial tablets in places where battles and deaths of PPR members, and soldiers from their battle formations, took place.⁵²⁶

524 “W sprawie 10-lecia Polskiej Partii Robotniczej. Uchwała KC PZPR,” in: *O budownictwie partyjnym* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1954), 7.

525 *Ibid.*, 9.

526 On how the instructions of the Political Bureau were realized on the level of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Warsaw PZPR Voivodeship Committee see: Mariusz Jastrząb, *Mozolna budowa absurdu. Działalność Wydziału Propagandy Warszawskiego Komitetu Wojewódzkiego PZPR w latach 1949–1953* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1999), 108–109.

Nationalism served in legitimizing not only the party but also its First Secretary. On the occasion of Berman's 57th birthday in 1949 *Trybuna Ludu* published his biography where we read:

And thus the fight to liberate the working class and to liberate the Polish nation are coupled together into a unity, which fills out with its content the whole life of Bolesław Bierut. Socialism and patriotism—it is the sole idea, the sole path, along which he strode from the memorable year of 1905 to the present moment.⁵²⁷

The national accents in the propaganda picture of the First Secretary underwent a clear intensification after the VI Plenum. The manner of presentation left no doubts that Bierut is a great individual and the most outstanding Pole: “Bolesław Bierut is one of the best sons of the Polish nation, he is the blood from the blood and bone from the bone of the Polish people.”⁵²⁸

The extraordinary qualities with which he was supposedly blessed made him a model for emulation for the whole nation. This is why he had the right to lead and point out to the nation its goals and tasks. He was also the cause of the “happiness and wealth of the nation.” “The name of President Bierut, a leader, and teacher of the nation, the builder of our happiness... he is our standard, which we will take to the polls.”⁵²⁹

The propaganda devoted a lot of space to Bierut's fatherly care for national culture, especially the rebuilding of Polish cities, above all, Warsaw.

Finally, Bierut was also supposed to be the guarantor of the nation's unity, “The boundless trust that the whole nation has in President Bierut, his great authority among all levels of our society, have today become that great moral power that cements the unity of the nation.”⁵³⁰ Bierut was owed for not only the unification of the nation but for directing its fight for independence. In this hagiographic article Edward Ochab, while referring to the words from the national anthem, proclaimed:

Under his command, the National Front developed into an immense and decisive power, directed by the working class, a front of fighting against the Nazi occupier and his related minions leaning upon our alliance and friendship with the Soviet Union.⁵³¹

These types of statements, creating Bierut not only to a revolutionary leader but also a national leader, were many. Charisma grows faster on nationalist soil.

527 *Trybuna Ludu*, 16.IV.1949.

528 *Trybuna Ludu*, 20.IX.1952.

529 *Trybuna Ludu*, 24.X.1952.

530 *Ibid.*

531 Edward Ochab, “Żołnierz i wódz klasy robotniczej i narodu polskiego,” *Nowe Drogi* 4 (1952): 10.

The person of Konstantin Rokossovsky was also a particular object of legitimating procedures. He was a Pole by birth, who, in the Red Army, attained the rank of Marshall, and on November 1949 was appointed the Marshall of Poland, assuming the office of the Minister of National Defense. He reminded Poles of the hated Prince Konstanty whom tsarist Russia appointed as the leader of the Polish Army. Foreseeing the negative reception of the new Marshall the propaganda undertook a whole series of actions that were supposed to make of Rokossovsky a real Pole. His Polishness, his connections to national culture, and his excellent knowledge of the Polish language were stressed at every turn. The published biography enigmatically said that the new Marshall is a son of Warsaw, which came to be literally read that he was actually born in Warsaw. The actual place of his birth was Wielkie Łuki, a town in the depths of Russia. In the initial phases of the propaganda campaign, one “s” was removed from his last name, in order to make it sound more Polish.⁵³²

Equally, propaganda-driven presentations of other members of the power elite took on, during the period of the “Small Thaw,” a Polish red-and-white coloring. The following words issued from the lips of an actual, or maybe not, student of the Gdansk Polytechnic: “The working masses of the Voivodeship of Gdańsk see in Stanisław Radkiewicz a warrior who sacrificed, who stood and guarded the national interests...”⁵³³

Thus, the mobilization of society combined many legitimization formulas: teleological-rational, charismatic (the charisma of Stalin, Bierut, of the party), elements of paternalism, nationalism, and others. At the same time, everyone was assured that the existence of a “national-communism” was ruled out since it was “some kind of unnatural symbiosis between nationalism and Marxism-Leninism.”⁵³⁴ The so-called “national communism” was connected to Gomułka and Tito and designated the worst of all possible heresies toward the mandatory ideological line, therefore it could not be the official epithet. But in reality, this concept best describes the period of the “Small Thaw” between February 1951 and October 1952, and not because nationalist legitimization of those in power played the most important role in the system of legitimization, but because the symbiosis of nationalism with Marxism went the furthest in precisely that period. It was visible not only in the press or propaganda publications but also in the symbolic sphere, on the streets of cities:

532 Wiesław Białkowski, *Rokossowski. Na ile Polak?* (Warsaw: Alfa, 1994).

533 *Trybuna Ludu*, 20.X.1952.

534 Leszek Krzemień, *O ojczyźnie, patriotyzmie i internacjonalizmie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1953), 38.

In Olsztyn alone this year there were fewer deficiencies in decorations, there was a stronger compliment of national colors, which were lacking last year. There was a bit of an overload of stars and emblems (sickle and hammer) on our masts and homes.⁵³⁵

In the remaining period of People's Poland's history either there was no reference to communist ideals or symbols (the period until 1947), or there was a millenarian belief in the realization of these ideals that underwent progressive erosion, leaving nationalism as one of the most important sources of legitimation (the period after 1956).

The "Small Thaw" was not only truly small but also very short. The strategy of *universalizing* nationalist legitimation was ultimately snuffed out after the election. But the use of the remaining strategies was not abandoned. Here I have in mind the *narrative* strategy of the nationalist ideology.

According to the logic of the revolution, the revolutionary authorities should derive their right to rule from the newness and suggestive power of the goals and ideas that it is proclaiming, whereas national traditions should only be treated as a dispensable ballast, which only makes the march forward more difficult. They feed upon the hope of an Absolute Beginning and the New Time. Reaching for traditional legitimation, which is, after all, a total negation of revolutionary messianism, would be for them a betrayal of the idea of revolution.

The example of the legitimation of those in power during the Stalinist period shows that ideological reasons frequently—and not for the first time in the history of the Marxist movement—have little in common with political pragmatism. It hinted that one ought not to hastily turn one's back on the national tradition as an element of legitimation, but instead to domesticate it and use it as much as possible. Political reasons spoke for the past of the nation, that its heroic history and cultural achievements should be treated as one of the arguments that legitimize the present and the future. The new order was therefore supposed to be rooted in history, but only as much as was needed, "We should especially strongly highlight the damaging nature of the tendency of fixating upon the past, on getting drunk exclusively on our past, being inattentive and undervaluing the great, sublime, historical events that are taking place right now..."⁵³⁶ The fields of interest and their boundaries were sketched out by a few people on a committee of party leaders.

The role marked out for history depended upon legitimizing the Stalinist order. We should note that it was not a role saturated with much content. On the

535 *Sprawozdanie z przygotowań i przebiegu uroczystości 1-majowych na terenie województwa Olsztyńskiego*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VII-230, k. 31.

536 Leszek Krzemień, *O ojczyźnie, patriotyzmie...*, op. cit., 94.

contrary, the concrete task history was burdened with excluded more complex intellectual constructions. Besides, what was at stake was not textbook history dressed upon as scientific discourse. Stanisław Filipowicz writes, “Historicism in all its varieties is connected to rationalism, it inspires a stance of intellectual openness, and implies pluralism.”⁵³⁷ They wanted to avoid this at all costs. Therefore, the historical narrative was fully replaced by a mythical tale. Vacillation between one and the other, with a marked tendency toward inclining to the side of myth, was constantly present in Marxist thought. However, only during the Stalinist period, the scales of victory tipped toward the side of myth. Its advantages for the authorities came from the fact that, as Filipowicz indicates, it:

... offers a vision of the world that is well-defined and ordered in which there is actually no place for freedom, but also no place for uncertainty, dilemmas, disputes, and controversies. Myth not only liberates from doubts, but also from all risk. It guarantees the meaningfulness of all our actions ... Myth makes possible the overcoming of ambiguity to which history condemns us.⁵³⁸

The essentially totalitarian authorities could only feel well in a totally unquestioned unambiguity. This was possible solely with myth, which, by simplifying historical reality, monopolized the truth about it. Thanks to that, it became a useful instrument for the manipulation of the social imagination.

The truth of myth was supposed to be the truth of the authorities. “The historical revolutionary experiences of the Polish proletariat are, throughout their course, a confirmation of the appropriateness, truth, and deep learning that is contained in the Marxist-Leninist theory.”⁵³⁹ Historical myth comes into being through the transformation of history. Its materials are historical threads that it chooses and combines according to need, thereby compiling an entirely new story. Furthermore, myth, as Filipowicz writes, “deactualizes the experience of historicity.” Temporal categories known from history cease to apply. This is why by using historical myth it is very easy to show that the path followed by the ruler, nearly simultaneously, shoulder to shoulder, is being trodden by the national heroes and that they are dedicating themselves to the same ideals and goals. “Dąbrowski, the hero of the Commune, dies on the barricade, but the banner he has raised is seized by Dzerzhinsky, the hero of the October Revolution, but then this standard will be carried to a free country by ... Rokossowski and Świerczewski, heroes of the fight against fascism.”⁵⁴⁰

537 Stanisław Filipowicz, *Mit i spektakl...*, op. cit., 75.

538 Ibid., 77–78.

539 *Trybuna Ludu*, 16.XII.1948.

540 Jerzy Piórkowski, “Na barykadach Komuny,” *Nowa Kultura* 11 (1951).

National heroes—always the same ones *ad nauseam*, recalled always in the same order as if they wanted them to be memorized easily—were supposed to make the communist pantheon of the worker’s movement more attractive. They were presented in this manner so that the banner carried by them would always be simultaneously red and red-and-white. As Florian Znaniecki writes, “The hero personifies the most valuable common values of a given social group, while the continuity of their cult contributes to the consolidation of the group’s solidarity.”⁵⁴¹ Thus, the move was simple and had a legitimizing character. The anniversaries that fell to the first half of the 1950’s were connected to figures such as Copernicus, Kołłątaj, Żeromski. These were great occasions to arrange the collective cult of heroes under the leadership of the party, especially, if their biographies and work were somewhat adapted to the party’s needs. The materials of the Central Committee Division of Propaganda attest to the immensity of the work put into the preparations for the celebration of each successive anniversary. The weight attributed to the cult of national heroes can be attested to by the fact that not even once during the meetings of the Political Bureau and the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee, meaning, the highest levels of the party, was this ever questioned. For example, the first point of order during a meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee’s Organizational Bureau on 10 November 1950 was devoted to the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of Stefan Żeromski’s death. The Secretariat adopted the following resolution, “To recommend to the Managerial Board of the Writer’s Union, the organizing, in the Theater of the Polish Academy, under the protectorate of the President of the Commonwealth, a commissioned lecture by Comrade KRUCZKOWSKI or PUTRAMENT.”⁵⁴² The role of the chief priest of the cult of Żeromski fell to Bierut. The “protectorate” for the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Hugon Kołłątaj’s birth was taken over by Premier Józef Cyrankiewicz.⁵⁴³

National symbols rooted in history were supposed to make the positive identification of those in power easier. They made possible the placement of the installed political order on a scale of values and in this way domesticated it. “The holy souvenirs of the past,” monopolized by the new authorities became their relics, attributes of holiness. The ambitions of those in power to shine out with the glow of the sacred were limitless. This is witnessed by an order issued by the strict circle of the party leaders, “We should announce a closed contest for the

541 Florian Znaniecki, *Współczesne narody* (Warszawa: PWN, 1990), 124–125.

542 *Protokół nr 43 posiedzenia Sekretariatu Biura Organizacyjnego KC*, 10 XI 1950, AAN, KC PZPR, 1630, k. 39.

543 *Trybuna Ludu* 10 II 1951.

Castle Square and the compound of the Warsaw Castle. The principle that the Warsaw Castle, as the headquarters of the highest authorities of People's Poland should **dominate artistically over its surroundings**, should be the guideline for the contest was accepted.⁵⁴⁴ However, since the royal tradition did not especially fit into the popular attributes of the new authorities, the "King's Palace" changed its name to the "Warsaw Palace." In the official nomenclature, this name held out until the beginning of the 1970s.⁵⁴⁵

If history was supposed to execute the task put before it, then it had to go through a process of selection. It ran on two tracks. On the one hand, it depended upon erasing from collective memory events, facts, and questions that were inconvenient for the authorities, above all, those that had the power to de-legitimize and could become an argument that undermined the legitimacy of their title to govern. In connection with the fact that legitimizing aspirations had a totalizing character, and were related to all aspects of the new institutional-normative order, it is also a fact that, as potential de-legitimizing arguments, even the tiniest events from our national history were taken under consideration. The authorities put on display a remarkable meticulousness in hunting down the enemies in history. On the other hand, there were also efforts to dig out of history and the national tradition events that were advantageous to the authorities, which after the proper treatment could be useful in the process of legitimation.

There is plenty of evidence we could marshal for the scrupulous erasing of the pages in history that were disadvantageous to the authorities. Many of them were already described here in order to fill out "blank spots." Three examples will suffice. In each example, decisions were undertaken by the highest leadership of the party. Until May 1951 on Victory Square in Warsaw on "The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, right next to plaques and texts related to the battles of the Army of People's Poland, and the progressive traditions of the Polish Army," there were also "plaques and texts of a politically harmful character." Among them were: a plaque referring to the battles of Piłsudski's Legions and a plaque devoted to Polish divisions that fought in Russia between 1918 and 1920. Besides this, on other plaques there were texts about the Home Army and the Army of General Anders.⁵⁴⁶ The motion "with

544 *Protokół nr 136 A posiedzenia Sekretariatu Biura Politycznego i Biura Organizacyjnego KC*, 6 XII 1951. Those present were: Bierut, Berman, Cyrankiewicz, Zambrowski, Ochab, Nowak, (AAN, KC PZPR, 1641, k. 237) [emphasis mine].

545 Józef Sigalin, *Warszawa 1944–1980. Z archiwum architekta*, v. 2 (Warsaw: Biblioteka Syrenki, 1986), 116, 229–230.

546 *Notatka w sprawie Grobu Nieznanego Żołnierza w Warszawie podpisana przez gen. bryg. Mariana Naszkowskiego generała brygady*, 22 V 1951 r., AAN, KC PZPR, 1645, k. 144.

regard to the matter of removing from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier plaques with politically harmful texts and the conducting in connection with this a small renovation of the monument” was approved by the Organizational Bureau’s Secretariat.⁵⁴⁷ The second example had to do with finding an independent tradition for the communist movement. In combination with a volume of documents prepared by the Department of the Party’s History the Polish Communist Party’s Secretariat of the Central Committee decided to skip the chapter entitled “Self-Determination of Upper Silesia Until the Separation” and the matter of the “seaside corridor.”⁵⁴⁸ Only by removing the de-legitimizing episodes from the history of the Communist movement could the party imagine itself as the leader of the nation in its fight for independence. Finally, the third example, not any less characteristic, connected with the earlier ones, begun already in the second half of the 1940’s, the action of “cleansing” public libraries of books with a “politically hostile and harmful content.” All the books acknowledged as politically “harmful” underwent selection, from fine literature to professional literature, Polish and foreign history, also textbooks and books for kids. All work was removed that could stand in the way of the realization of the ideological project of creating a new man, whose imagination, trained from childhood, would culminate in the class struggle. In 1950 the Secretariat of the Organizational Bureau approved the request to “remove *Konrad Wallenrod* from obligatory middle school readings.”⁵⁴⁹ What mattered was the building of a new nation, a socialist Polish nation, whose memory of the past would be scrupulously programmed through party propagandists. In order to do this, it was necessary to change the canon of Polish literature, for example, through the removal of all book summaries whose interpretation of a literary work did not distinguish the base from the superstructure. It was necessary to amputate memory.⁵⁵⁰ When throwing away everything that did not correspond to the Marxist vision of the ideal order the empty places were filled with an appropriate prosthesis, which was supposed to guarantee legitimacy.

The criteria for selecting acceptable historical contents in the whole operation were not complicated. They did not undergo substantial changes compared to the postwar period. Only the verbal presentation changed, which was marked by a

547 *Protokół nr 96 posiedzenia Sekretariatu Biura Organizacyjnego KC*, 30 V 1951 (those present included: Berman, Mazur, Nowak, Ochab, Zambrowski), AAN, KC PZPR, 1641, no pagination.

548 *Protokół posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 10 VIII 1954., AAN, KC PZPR, 1659, k. 161.

549 *Protokół nr 20 posiedzenia Sekretariatu Biura Organizacyjnego KC*, 30 VI 1950, AAN, KC PZPR, 1631, k. 141.

550 Marcin Zaremba, “Amputacja pamięci,” *Polityka*, 23.XI.1996.

schematism taken to the extremes. The key role in the interpretation and organization of the picture of national history fell to, in line with Marxist doctrine, the category of progress. It permitted for the valuing of past events, and with this their ordering in such a way that they fit into a general vision of history.

As Andrzej Szpociński, author of an analysis of radio history plays for elementary school, noted: there was a narrowing of the propagated historical canon in comparison with the postwar period. The period of the Piasts stopped being the main topic of legitimizing legends and myths. After 1948 there is a disappearance, for example, of Mieszko I, Bolesław the Wry-mouthed, and Władysław the Short. Incidentally, the rest of the Polish rulers remain in the propaganda transmissions. The set of places of memory that withstood are events chiefly connected to the cultural heritage of ancient Poles: Wojciech of Brudzewo, Florian Unger (the Renaissance printer of Krakow), Copernicus, the Corps of Cadets, Ignacy Krasicki, and the national uprisings. Polish culture was exclusively represented by events from the periods of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, other epochs, i.e. Romanticism, were passed over in silence. Szpociński notes that “When it comes to the national uprisings, then the characteristic feature tends to be operating with the general names of the events (January Uprising, the year 1848, Kościuszko Uprising), rather than with the names of historical figures.” The sociologist continues, “I think that this phenomenon boils down to avoiding operating with the names of figures and putting in their place the names of general events, which are connected to the greater susceptibility of the latter to reinterpretation. It is possible to ascribe much more values to events as general as the November Uprising than to concrete figures such as Chopin, Prądzyński, or Sowiński.”⁵⁵¹

The tasks set for radio plays are talked about in a report for the second half of 1951 prepared by the Polish Radio for the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee:

When evaluating the literary programs in their entirety it is possible to say that even with all the shortcomings and lacks it generally fulfills the postulate of keeping up with the changes in our times and makes available quite widely the achievements of our national culture, clearly points out who is our friend, and who is our enemy.⁵⁵²

551 Andrzej Szpociński, *Przemiany obrazu przeszłości Polski. Analiza słuchowisk dla szkół podstawowych 1951–1984* (Warszawa: Instytut Socjologii UW, 1989), 51–52.

552 AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-45, k. 56. This specific shape of the Polish Radio programming was decided by the Organizational Bureau Secretariat on 22 June 1951: “The Secretariat has given instructions for further anti-American propaganda work, the strengthening of counter-propaganda in response to Polish foreign programming,

The idea to use national history in order to legitimize the new institutional-normative order was imported from the Soviet Union. From there also came the hermeneutic matrix for the selection of “proper” and “improper” tradition. The source of this historiographical interpretation was Stalin himself. Bierut modelled himself upon him when outlining the vision of the Fatherland’s history.

Poland took its beating for being backward, it was beaten over nearly two centuries by neighboring invaders: Austria, Germany, and tsarist Russia, it was beaten by the imperialists, who nearly made of her their quasi-colony during the interwar period, during a period of a formal, but essentially merely sham, independence under the Sanacja-fascist governments, it was beaten terribly and destined, in fact, for destruction during the period of the barbarian Nazi occupation. But the Polish working class, by gaining power and strengthening our people’s democratic state, stated this firmly and ultimately: we don’t want to be beaten anymore.⁵⁵³

In 1931 Stalin expressed his view about the history of Russia much in the same way, however, Russia was “beat” by Mongol Khans, feudal Swedes, and Polish-Lithuanian aristocrats.⁵⁵⁴ The Stalinist interpretation of the history of Russia underwent a radical change, as we know, during the second half of the 1930’s. At that time there was a great inflation of the achievements of the Russian nation, idealizing of its past, creating a cult of its most outstanding representatives. In effect, there was a fusing of revolutionary messianism with the national one, and this compound was supposed to legitimate the pretensions of Russia and the Russians to lead the Soviet Union as well as the international worker’s movement.⁵⁵⁵ The

and the saturation of radio programs with themes deepening patriotic feelings” (AAN, KC PZPR 1646, k. 653).

553 Bolesław Bierut, “Nasze najbliższe zadania,” *Nowe Drogi* 1–2 (1952): 4.

554 Joseph Stalin, *Dzieła*, v. 13, (Warsaw: KIW, 1952), 38 [not enough information to locate in standard English translation].

555 Already in 1924 r. Jan Stanisław Bystron noted the following: “It has become apparent that national megalomania has outlived the czarate and the great empire, and its triumphs still glow in a time of collapse, in the fire of the revolution, on the ruins of the old prosperity, in the mad fury of Bolshevik Russia. It is enough to look at the publications and appeals of the Soviet government, to read the contemporary output of Soviet writers, in order to immediately notice deep conviction that Russia, the best and chosen nation, thanks to a sea of blood, unprecedented destruction, an immensity of human sufferings, and is leading the world toward a better future, and that the new social forms, which are coming into being in such difficulty, will with time lead us to an ideal society . . .” Bystron wrote the following about Soviet messianism: “If, however, the nation is experiencing misfortune, then there appears the idea of sacrifice: the chosen nation fulfills its mission by suffering for the salvation of

national-revolutionary messianism served to justify the supposedly unavoidable victims of the revolution, collectivization, the Great Terror. Similarly in Poland propaganda awakened a national megalomania, with the exception that the legitimating aspirations did not reach that high:

The Polish nation is proud of its progressive and revolutionary traditions. The Polish nation is connected to the noble tradition of the peasant war conducted under the leadership of Stefan Czarnecki . . . against the Swedish invaders, to the fight of the Polish peasants against serfdom, against the captivity of the nobles under the leadership of Kostka Napierski . . . It is proud of the heroic fight of the peasants in the Kościuszko Insurrection, or the burghers of Warsaw under Kiliński's lead. It is proud of its leading representatives in the Enlightenment epoch: Staszic and Kołłątaj. We are proud of the contribution of our nation to the work of human culture. The brilliant scholars Copernicus and Maria Curie-Skłodowska were Poles... The great world-renowned poets Mickiewicz and Słowacki, or the brilliant musician Chopin (read: Szopen). We have good reason to celebrate the fact that the representatives of our nation fought for the freedom of foreign countries, that Kościuszko and Puławski fought for the liberation of the American nation, and that Józef Bem fought for the freedom of the Hungarian people. That Poles in the hundreds defended the barricade of the Paris Commune and that Dąbrowski and Wróblewski were among its leaders. Our nation is connected to the great traditions of working class battles for national and social liberation, to the fights of the SDKPiL and KPP "Proletariat." We are filled with pride by the fact that among us were people such as Waryński, Okrzeja, Rosa Luxemburg, Marchlewski, Dzierżyński, Buczek, Nowotko i Świerczewski. We make a connection with the battles of our nation under the leadership of the working class against the Nazi occupier. Our nation is finally proud of its magnificent successes in the work of building the foundations of socialism.⁵⁵⁶

In the Soviet Union, as an effect of enacting the Stalinist formula "socialist in content, national in form," there occurred a centralization of power, politics of ethnic cleansing, extermination of intellectual elites of the nations constituting the Soviet Union, a process of uprooting, forgetting one's tradition, weakening of national awareness, and national ties. National awareness was being replaced by the awareness of the "Soviet man." National culture was flushed out by a homogenic Soviet culture. The proposed Soviet nationalism was taking root there, as it seems, quite well.

the world. Russia, plunged into calamitous misfortune is this victim, is the Messiah announcing the coming day" (Jan Bystróż, *Megalomania narodowa. Źródła – teorie – skutki* [Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolf, 1924], 24, 25).

556 *Notatnik Prelegenta*, op. cit., 44, 45.

A similar process started during the Stalinist period in Poland, but the nationalism promoted by the communists did not have great success there. It was interrupted by the fundamental problems of installing a new order. At the same time, the faith that the Polish society could be torn away from the culture of the West was naïve. At the start of the 1950's very few wanted to believe in the demonic monster from Wall Street. For the majority of the citizens of People's Poland the culture of the West was much closer; especially its popular version, which was much more attractive than what was drawn from the East. Memories from inter-war schooling, the choice, and interpretation of national culture's contents, were strong during this period. Memories of the Home Army ideology, which was a national movement during a time of occupation, also remained, plus the memory of the propaganda actions of underground Poland. Above all, we can search in these factors for the cause of the poor effectiveness of communist legitimation attempts, based upon the national content promoted under the "Small Thaw."

It is necessary to also recall one additional factor behind the failure alongside these substantial causes. The nationalist program was put into life halfheartedly. Truth be told, Putrament, in his reminiscences, enthusiastically noted that from the time of the VI Plenum, "militant national nihilism had fallen," but soon it became apparent how wrong he was.⁵⁵⁷ Already during the discussion at the Plenum several speakers recalled embarrassments, "here and there," among local activists when it came to putting forward national questions. In practice, this came down to avoiding national problematics at all costs.⁵⁵⁸ Fear of being accused of nationalism and "Gomułkaism," when the fight with it during the time of the "Small Thaw" was not trumpeted.⁵⁵⁹ Furthermore, the Stalinist prop-

557 Jerzy Putrament, *Pół wieku*, op. cit., 38.

558 "... the problem of the socialist nation. None of the discussants grasped this term, although some of their statements highlighted the new situation of the peasants and women. It seems that the national question must be put on the agenda of party training, because it is little known to the activists" (*Sprawozdanie dla Wydziału Organizacyjnego KC PZPR z podróży służbowej do KP PZPR Itawa, woj. olsztyńskie w dniu 17-19 III 1951*). "Another lack, and a substantial one, was the omission of the matter of the national front in the discussion. Only one speaker mentioned it, but only in passing, as an argument pointing toward the guarantee of the six-year plan. I had the impression that the discussants were not considering this question, and only accepted it as a general slogan of national solidarity" (*Sprawozdanie z zebrania POP węzła kolejowego Olsztyn*, 17 III 1951 in: AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VII-230, k. 15, 16.

559 "Spsychalski, who was double-faced, was acting at Gomułka's behest, he was a bourgeois nationalist who cunningly masked himself" (Marian Naszkowski, "Nauki procesu bandy szpiegowsko-dywerysyjnej," *Nowe Drogi* 4 [1951]: 27).

aganda's complete lack of finesse and intuition, its clichés and its stereotypical language, influenced the nationalist-legitimation argumentation. There was no richness of content hiding behind the baroque richness of the linguistic means used. It was in fact quite impoverished. Calling to life the State Song and Dance Ensemble, "Mazowsze," in 1949 and "Śląsk" four years later, despite the great merits of these artistic groups later, was, in fact, a poor substitute for opening the doors to Polish culture, even to Polish peasant culture.

All the above does not mean that the politics of the communists did not have consequences for the national benchmarks set for the populace dominated by them. Because of the national politics of the postwar authorities, the rapid industrialization, and concomitant migrations, there was a disintegration of regional links and the speeding up of the process of homogenizing of Polish culture. The nationalization of all cultural institutions, the imposition upon them of a nationwide program, and the control of its realization by the political center caused the disappearance of an authentic peasant culture and the local colors expressed by, for example, in territorial varieties of the Polish language (*gwary*).⁵⁶⁰ The mechanism of a totalitarian system, which rejected all differences, against the survival of national minorities and their regional customs—even if some party activists were aware that the speeded-up top-down enforcement of cultural unity in Silesia, Kujawy, Warmia, and Mazury could be one of the causes for the inhabitants of these regions for rejecting the system. All in all,

560 "The Silesian *gwara* was ousted from mass agitation. It does not appear either in the newspaper, nor on the radio. When we asked Comrade G. of *Trybuna Robotnicza* he does not even feature a weekly satirical column in the Silesian *gwara*, he explained it away with technical difficulties, but he then judged that the Silesian *gwara* matter was considered in the Voivodeship Committee leadership and that the comrades are against cultivating the *gwara*, because it strengthens Silesian separatism. The same view was expressed by Comrade P. The results of adopting this position are not entirely clear. Comrade P., a Silesian, one of the deputy chairmen of the Voivodeship Boards of the ZMP told us that in his time working in Bytom he started being ashamed of his *gwara* and he consequentially strove to remove all traces of *gwara* from his speech. On the other hand, the indigenous people with whom we spoke about the *gwara* matter, enthusiastically responded to the project of newspaper columns and radio programs in their *gwara* (*Sprawozdanie z pracy wśród autochtonów*, sierpień 1952 r., AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-75, k. 9).

during the period under consideration the communists effectively realized the idea of an ethnically uniform state, found in the intellectual program of Roman Dmowski—even if their most effective instrument in this respect was not playing the notes of his ideology.⁵⁶¹

561 “Among dozens of directors from both bigger and smaller workplaces there is only one indigenous person, Comrade N. in the steel-processing mill. For 200 KG secretaries there had not been, until that time, even one indigenous person employed. Presently the Voivodeship Committee is supposed to confirm four of them. In the Poviát Government of the ZMP there is only one indigenous person, the same in the ZPLK. . . Indigenous youth generally stop their education at the elementary level, after that they go into vocational training, either in workplaces or vocational schools. They explain this by the necessity of making money, in order to help their families, which frequently lack a father, or, they explain it by their aversion to higher studies, since it is not the tradition of their milieu. However, when, last year, several indigenous people after completing their high school studies (*matura*) sent applications for the medical academy in Rokitnica, then, even though they passed at all points, and there were no reservations against them of a moral or political nature, they were nonetheless rejected by the selection committee. Only thanks of a forceful intervention of the KM in Bytom did one of them get accepted.” (*Materiał o autochtonach na Górnym Śląsku nadesłany przez tow. Kasmana*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-75, k. 31, 32).

Chapter 7

“Every Country Should Have Full Independence and Self Determination” (1956)

The political crisis of 1956 can be placed within the categories of a legitimization crisis. It began with the death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953. It did not, however, also signify the death of his cult. On the contrary, there was an intensification of mass enthusiasm, in part spontaneous. In all the countries of the Eastern Bloc it was officially declared that the historical mission of the Great Stalin will be continued since he left behind faithful and worthy inheritors in the persons of the local party leaders. The cult of Stalin was needed by them to legitimize the Stalinist order. Inevitably a process of routinizing charisma followed. The place of charismatic-revolutionary legitimization almost imperceptibly began to be occupied by tradition. The process itself worked out differently in the Soviet Union, where after Stalin's death (typical for charismatic power) the problem of succession and a fight over the inheritance immediately appeared and finally ended with Nikita Khrushchev's victory.

The death of Stalin did not become an impulse for faster political changes in Poland. On the contrary, the authorities, who learned from the experiences of Czechoslovakia and East Germany, fearing similar manifestations of rebellion and dissatisfaction, took up precautionary actions. There was no stop to the accelerated Sovietization of the country. The spiral of repressions was put into motion even more forcefully. In September of 1953 the bishop of Kielce, Czesław Kaczmarek, was sentenced to twelve years, and, in the same month, the Primate of Poland, Stefan Wyszyński, was imprisoned. The hit against the only institution that was independent from the one-party rule was supposed to be a sure signal that there will be no changes.

It cannot be ruled out that the party authorities would have succeeded in repelling the threat of the system's destabilization using only terror and fear, and that the crisis of legitimization commenced by the death of Stalin would have taken on a gentler dimension for the political elites, if not for the fateful events that followed it. The first of them was Col. Józef Światło's defection to the West, followed by the cycle of his stories broadcast on Radio Free Europe in September 1954. The legitimization myth of the just, ideal, flawless, and in a sense nearly divine authori-

ties, lay in ruins. Even if the myth never worked completely, it now turned out that the emperor had no clothes.

The leadership began the rebuilding of their authority by looking for a scapegoat because it could demonstrate its clean hands in this way. Already in October 1954, the Political Bureau undertook its first personnel decisions with regards to the Ministry of Public Security.⁵⁶² In December the Political Bureau decided “to discontinue the case against Gomułka,” and to release him from arrest.⁵⁶³ The same body of the party decided on December 20th to remove, from libraries and bookstores, all books and brochures that contained “drastic anti-Tito formulations.”⁵⁶⁴ The order to remove books steeped in Stalinist phraseology can be interpreted as taking leave from the Stalinist model of legitimating the system of power, however, in its own unique way, it was a continuation of the previous methods. Simultaneously, on 29 December 1954, in connection with the 100th anniversary of Adam Mickiewicz’s death, and the declaring of 1955 as the Year of Mickiewicz, the Secretariat of the Central Committee approved a program of events for celebrating the memory of the great poet.⁵⁶⁵ Permission was given for the staging of *Forefathers’ Eve*. Its performance in 1955 on the boards of the Warsaw Teatr Polski of Mickiewicz’s drama, and the simultaneous unveiling of the bard’s statue in Krakow, was one of the signs of a thaw in culture.⁵⁶⁶

However, it would be an exaggeration to think that the legitimating strategy of the communist authorities underwent some radical change. In his short speech, given at a meeting of the Committee for the Celebration of the Mickiewicz Year, Aleksander Zawadzki, Chairman of the Polish Council of State, and member of the top management of the party, compared the Romantic poet not only to socialism, but also to the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the creation of the Soviet Union,

562 *Protokół nr 14 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 19 X 1954, AAN, KC PZPR, 1659, k. 296–297.

563 *Protokół nr 19 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 7 XII 1954, AAN, KC PZPR, 1659, k. 308.

564 *Protokół nr 39 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 20 XII 1954, AAN, KC PZPR, 1659, k. 159.

565 *Protokół nr 40 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 29 XII 1954, in: AAN, KC PZPR, 1659, k. 298.

566 Mieczysław Jastrun noted in his journal under the date 5 December 1955: “It was the premiere of *Forefathers’ Eve*. Despite the mediocre presentation and quite weak—with the exception of young Gogolowski—actors, it was an earth-shaking event. How contemporary this tragedy is! . . . *Literaturnaja Gazeta* had an extensive review of my book on Mickiewicz coinciding with the publishing of this play in Russian. Miracles are happening” (*Dziennik. Wybór z lat 1955–1960* [London: Puls, 1990], 34).

and with the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, and the Six and Ten-Year Plans of People's Poland, "The path to the Fatherland's freedom and the liberation of its masses, which the Great Pilgrim sought until the end of his great life, the Polish people found under the leadership of the working class and its party."⁵⁶⁷

As late as October 1954 the Political Bureau was making decisions about mock-ups for a statue of Stalin. The intention was to put it in front of the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. The newspapers did not forget about the second anniversary of Stalin's death, even though his name was pronounced without emphasis and incomparably less frequently.

There were no new accents—besides the Mickiewicz celebrations—in the sphere of national "contents." Among the goals of the celebrations of the "300th anniversary of the victorious battle against the Swedish Invasion," which was supposed to begin in November 1955, was still seen by the Central Committee Department of Propaganda and Agitation as, above all, the visualization of the struggle of the people:

The goal of the campaign would be familiarizing the whole nation with the heroic and patriotic movement of the masses, which were awakened by the social and national-liberational struggle of the people of the Ukraine under the leadership of Bohdan Chmielnicki and Kostka Napierski, who were the first to begin, and steadfastly continued, the fight against Polish and foreign oppressors for national and social liberation, for the freedom and independence of Poland.

The falsification of this period of fighting by bourgeois historiography, this campaign will have immense meaning not only in the sense of a return to the facts of history their true content but, also, on the other hand, thanks to pointing out the treacherous role of the magnates, it will make possible the deepening of knowledge and love of honorable national traditions in our society, thus influencing the strengthening of its true folk patriotism.⁵⁶⁸

567 *Trybuna Ludu*, 22.II.1955. Zawadzki also spoke during the main Mickiewicz Academy, which took place several months later. Maria Dąbrowska was also a participant and wrote the following in her journal: "When inaugurating the academy Zawadzki called Pushkin 'the greatest Slavic poet.' This made a horrible impression, because, other than the fact that this is untrue, when, say, celebrating someone's name-day, one does not say that another person celebrating the same is greater than the person under consideration. When we went out during the intermission, everyone talked about it. Słonimski made a joke during the break that the government will lay a wreath under the Mickiewicz monument with the words, 'To the creator of Forefathers' Eve [Dziadów] – the creators of bums [dziadów]' (Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne*, op. cit., v. 3, 60).

568 *Notatka w sprawie obchodu trzechsetnej rocznicy zwycięstwa z najazdem szwedzkim*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-233, k. k. 104.

The far-reaching selectivity and unbearable banality of the programmatic vision of national history remained unchanged judging by this and other similar texts. National consciousness in propaganda representations is treated as if it is timeless. There is no discussion of a process of nation-creation. The “masses of the people,” according to the authors of the script for the celebrations, already had a fully formed national consciousness back in the 17th century. They also constituted the “nation proper”; they were the carriers of the nation’s best values. The legend of Princess “Wanda, who didn’t want a German” was replaced by the communist propaganda with a much less epic legend about “the masses of the people who didn’t want a Swede.” However, we should underscore the fact that during this period such celebrations were wholly outside the interest of the highest party authorities and on the margins of the work of the Division of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee. Shortly, the whole idea was forgotten in the rush of events and changes.

The changes came with the XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The most important legitimating formula uttered by Khrushchev in the report opening the congress was: “Our certainty that communism will win is based upon the fact that the socialist mode of production has an overwhelming superiority over capitalism.”⁵⁶⁹ This argument, which can be called the “efficiency argument,” illustrated by the economic achievements of the Soviet Union, became the leading legitimating argument of Soviet power in the coming decade. Legitimation through the achievements and efficiency of the system was accompanied by paternalism, equally strongly accentuated in the speech given by the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He spoke about developing housing, about making food-distribution policy more efficient, which “would make the liberation of millions of women from many domestic cares possible,” improving healthcare, state aid for widows whose husbands died in the war, and so on. He promised a move into a seven-hour workday during the sixth five-year plan. At the same time, he stressed the necessity of strengthening the rule of law. In other words, the state of unbounded terror was being replaced by the almost over-protective state. With Khrushchev’s speech the Soviet Union was entering the phase of paternalism.

When it came to international politics the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union acknowledged the variety of transitions into socialism. He questioned the previously binding view that so long as imperialism exists wars are unavoidable. Two hitherto prevailing Soviet dogmas were overturned.

569 *Materiały XX Zjazdu Komunistycznej Partii Związku Radzieckiego, 14–25 lutego 1956. Referaty, wybór przemówień, uchwały i rezolucje* (Warsaw: KiW, 1956), 37.

The hitherto obligatory line on the national question remained intact. Khrushchev repeated Stalin's famous phrase about "national culture in form, socialist in content." Words were uttered about the Soviet nation and socialist patriotism. Khrushchev, the former First Secretary of the party in the Ukraine, was aware of the threats to the stability of a multi-national empire, which Great Russian nationalist slogans might lead to. Therefore, during the period of his leadership, nationalism did not play an important role in the process of legitimating the system of power. On the other hand, there was much talk about the "Soviet man." Yet, it is no accident that the Kremlin authorities launched first a Russian into space.

It was not the only speech that the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union gave during the XX Congress. The second, entitled, "On the Cult of the Individual and Its Consequences," given to a select group of listeners, was devoted to the crimes of Stalin. Khrushchev destroyed the myth of the Great Builder of Socialism.⁵⁷⁰ The revelations of the secret paper contributed, to an extent difficult to estimate, the erosion of the legitimating faith in the validity and justice of the communist order. Even though the author of the manuscript did not mention the leaders of Soviet Union's satellite states, it was obvious that by battering the myth of Stalin he was also undermining the right to rule of his "faithful students." It is no wonder that in no country of the Bloc, besides the Soviet Union and Poland, were the contents of Khrushchev's paper disclosed. I will risk the hypothesis that it would have been similar in Poland, if not for the death of Bolesław Bierut.

Bierut died on 12 March 1956 in Moscow. In the mechanisms of governance in the countries modeled upon the Soviet model, as in Imperial Rome, there was no systematic set of regulations dealing with the problem of succession of power. It was a real time bomb. It always activated itself during changes in the post of the First Secretary. Bierut's death not only deepened the ferment, especially in the party apparatus but opened the path toward changes by the reform-minded parts of that apparatus.

Khrushchev came to Warsaw for Bierut's funeral. One of the participants in the meetings with him, Andrzej Werblan, recalled:

There were rumors that Khrushchev wanted to remove Minc, Berman, and Zambrowski from leading the PZPR. The argument was supposed to be [based on] their 'origins' and the hope that getting rid of Jews in the leadership would positively boost the authority of

570 Khrushchev's secret paper is discussed by: Zbysław Rykowski and Wiesław Władyka, *Polska próba Październik '56* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1989); Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Mówią Wieki), 1993.

the party for the masses. These rumors caused a great outcry among a part of the central party activists, both among those touched by the threat of a *numerus clausus*, and among those who could not, and did not, want to accept ethnic discrimination.⁵⁷¹

Six years later Khrushchev, while addressing an outstanding Russian poet, evaluated the ethnic situation in the Polish party in the following way:

And you, Yevtushenko, even you don't always go in the right direction. You write lines such as the ones in "Babi Yar." Who needs them? What do you want to revive? I am not an anti-Semite, but what do you want? To violate proportion? Take Poland for example. Do you know how many Poles there were in the government in 1952? Two? The rest were Jews. More than once I asked Bierut, "How will this end?" And you know how it ended? In 1956 a nation turned against precisely these people. And what happened in Hungary? There Rákosi [Mátyás] was a Jew and so was Gerő. How did it end? Do you want the same here?⁵⁷²

Abstracting from the rather simplified interpretation of the events of 1956, what stands out is Khrushchev's concern for the nationalist legitimization of the communist system of power in Poland—a concern that he attempted, as he claimed, many times to engrain in Bierut. It is difficult to say how far these suggestions went, whether they took the form of pressure and in whom else Khrushchev confided his anxieties. One thing is certain: a way of doing politics was unveiled, which had been taboo in the Polish communist party. The fact, that these revelations were made by the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was not insignificant. For many members of the party apparatus in Poland, it was a way of doing politics that was unacceptable. Yet, there was no lack of those for whom the argument of "origins" seemed sufficiently attractive enough to use it for the legitimization of the existing system and to strengthen their place within it at the same time. This occurred especially in situations where other legitimating arguments were losing their power, or, as in the example of personal biographies, they were becoming a ballast that made remaining in power more difficult.

Since he was in Warsaw Khrushchev also took part in a plenary session of the Central Committee, which took place on 20 March 1956 to choose a new First Secretary of the PZPR. Edward Ochab was chosen for this position without any discussion. When it came to the selection of the remaining members of the Cen-

571 Andrzej Werblan, "Po śmierci Bieruta. Zapiski autobiograficzne," *Polityka*, 15.VI.1991.

572 Khrushchev's statement is a fragment from Michał Łucki's (a correspondent of *Trybuna Ludu* in Moscow) account of a meeting of representatives from the artistic milieu with members of the Politburo in 1962 (Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1963–1966* [Warsaw: Iskry, Warszawa 1999], 11.).

tral Committee Secretariat Roman Zambrowski was announced “from the floor.” This candidature was met with opposition from Wiktor Kłosiewicz, a member of the Central Committee, who reminded everyone that Zambrowski is already a member of the Political Bureau. Furthermore, he said, “we have to look not only at how this will be taken by the Central Committee, but also how the whole party will take it, and how the nation will take the elections that take place here.”⁵⁷³ Years later Kłosiewicz interpreted his statement as consistent with earlier arrangements not to accumulate party-state positions.⁵⁷⁴ Whatever else he had in mind, his words were received as a camouflaged anti-Semitism, because Zambrowski came from a Jewish background. With the same Kłosiewicz was proclaiming a main thesis of nationalism, that political entities should overlap with ethnic entities.⁵⁷⁵ Khrushchev also took part in the discussion—he indirectly backed the opponents to Zambrowski’s election as Central Committee Secretary.⁵⁷⁶

The incident we have described had immense meaning for delineating the lines of division in the ruling elite into the supporters of Zambrowski, who were later called “Puławianie,” and those who counted upon Moscow for their advancement, the “Natolińczycy.” The latter strove to unify the party masses and the middle-activists through anti-Semitism.⁵⁷⁷

One of the first decisions of the renewed leadership was the translation of Khrushchev’s paper into Polish and mailing it out to the party activists. Ochab, as a freshly minted First Secretary, did not feel powerful enough in his position, because he lacked charisma and a political base. Paweł Machcewicz thinks that it all had to do with cordoning off the legacy of the previous period, giving credibility to the new leadership, that is, about legitimizing the rulers. However, the actual effect was the opposite of what was expected. The meetings where the audience was familiarized with the Khrushchev’s paper became “an impulse toward formulating general diagnoses of the political situation, frequently taking on the form of a comprehensive critique of the system.”⁵⁷⁸ The crisis of legitimation was deepening.

573 For more on the discussion during the VI Plenum see: Zbysław Rykowski and Wiesław Władyka, *Polska próba Październik...*, op. cit., 125–127.

574 Teresa Torańska, *Oni*, op. cit., 131.

575 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, op. cit., 9.

576 *Wystąpienie N. S. Chruszczowa na VI Plenum KC PZPR (1956 r.)*, ed. B. Brzeziński, *Z Pola Walki* 1 (1989): 126–135.

577 See more: Andrzej Friszke, “Rozgrywka na szczycie. Biuro Polityczne KC PZPR w październiku 1956,” *Więź* (September 1996): 188–212.

578 Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, op. cit, 34.

In this situation, even the fight within the elites was taking on momentum. Aleksander Zawadzki, one of the Natolińczycy, accused Berman of not having Polish roots during a meeting of the Political Bureau, which was called on 2 May 1956, in order to consider the “matter of Comrade Berman.”

When I think of the case of Comrade Berman, I ask myself two questions, does hate speak through me, or maybe anti-Semitism? Comrades, I must admit to you that my heart ached badly for many years when I looked upon what was happening. All the leadership positions were filled by Berman with Jewish comrades and not simply by good old comrades. Światło, Romkowski, Fejgin, Różański, Brystygier, Czaplicki. How can one explain it to oneself? I looked at the figure Comrade Berman cut, a Jewish intellectual from a bourgeois family who did not come from revolutionary conditions. All of this together gives a very muddled picture.⁵⁷⁹

Zawadzki did not remember, or did not want to remember, that one could also say about Marx that he was “a Jewish intellectual from a bourgeois family who did not come from revolutionary conditions.” Paradoxically, Zawadzki, a member of the highest leadership of a Marxist party, used a “bourgeois nationalist” argument to deprecate one of his comrades. He repeated his accusations the next day, additionally accusing Berman of Jewish nationalism:

Is a Jew truly more trustworthy than a Pole? This is how these trusted cadres grew, and this is how Światło appeared on the scene. Comrade Berman did not find one trusted Pole with whom Comrade Berman could discuss these matters. . . . The unlimited power and role of “his” Minc and Zambrowski in the state grew, later Zambrowski crumbled and there remained the “big three,” which leaned upon a certain category of people. Why do we speak of a Polish nationalism, but we don’t say anything about Jewish nationalism, which is very dangerous Even today there’s a whole bunch of comrades in positions in Security where human lives are at stake, the fate of the country. Are there bases for putting Jewish comrades into places where there are positions that require trusting people? Would it be possible to search for other Poles in the factories? Why was the political apparatus in the army completed by Jewish comrades? Nobody paid attention to the fact that by staffing positions with Jews were are planting the seeds of anti-Semitism. Berman and Minc have despotic characters, they assailed people and have reacted nervously. It is the same thing with personal Departments. It was rare to find Polish comrades occupying these positions. There was such a reaction with Comrade Jakub that whenever he met a woman Jewish comrade [who would say], a lot of Jews perished, we must help those who survived, but then I came to believe that nationalism speaks through him.⁵⁸⁰

579 *Protokół nr 91 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC, 2 V 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 1673, k. 10.*

580 Those who belonged to the “Big Three” were Jakub Berman, Hilary Minc, Bolesław Bierut.

Józef Cyrankiewicz was the only one who protested such a *dictum* among those taking part in this meeting of the Political Bureau:

We must be very careful not to unleash a wave of anti-Semitism in Poland (and it is easy to unleash). We know and we all understand that Aryan staff should grow and our responsible Jewish comrades observed this more than others. Can we really now throw around the slogan of fighting against Jewish nationalism as Comrade Zawadzki is doing?

I think that a Jewish nationalism exists in certain circles, but this is not a political phenomenon and we cannot speak about the attitudes of our comrades from this angle. We must reckon such statements and be more careful. I know that there are groups of comrades who come to the matter of “thinning out” supposedly from a party point of view, but behind this frequently hide certain personal intentions and settlements of accounts, and this in some instances becomes a substantial matter for the Party.

We have all weighed Comrade Jakub’s degree of responsibility for the Security matters, but none of us have held the position that Comrade Berman represents Jewish nationalism in the Political Bureau and I, comrades, cannot agree with this and it cannot be the right level for our discussion, but that is how I understand Comrade Zawadzki.⁵⁸¹

Cyrankiewicz’s concerns proved to be true. The country was swept by a wave of anti-Semitism, and, in some ways, it was a reflected wave. Echoes of “war at the top,” in the form of rumors, reached the “bottom,” arousing emotions, including negative ones. Berman actually stepped down from fulfilling the function of the first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and from the Central Committee Political Bureau, which for some was a good predictor for the future (“one less Jew”). It does not seem, however, that the overall picture of power improved thanks to this.

It is possible that the “Berman matter” only poured oil onto the fire. It strengthened and established, after disclosures of lawlessness in Security, the existing stereotype of burdening the Jews and the Judeo-Commune with blame “for everything.” At the same time, the more was said about “mistakes and distortions,” the more the overall evaluation of the system was becoming negative.

The crisis was especially pronounced in the party. The erosion of faith in the rightness and justness of the goals staked out by the party, its charisma, its closeness to communism, touched the party apparatus the most, consequently leading to its demobilization.⁵⁸² A similar process was taking place in the security appara-

581 *Protokół nr 91 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 2 V 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 1673, k. 22, 23, 24.

582 Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, op. cit., 58–59.

tus.⁵⁸³ The system was noticeably weakening and its existing seams were breaking. Its repressiveness was decreasing and people were no longer afraid.

The wave of criticism made voices that undermined the ethnic identity of those in power louder, pointing toward a lack of Polish sovereignty, a façade of independence. “During the last meetings of propaganda activists and during question and answer evenings . . . there was a large vacillation in the understanding of national matters and a certain enlivening of nationalisms of various stripes,” reported the Department of Propaganda and Agitation in a note from 30 May 1956:

In many industrial districts, especially in Stalinogród [Katowice] there is a revival of anti-Czech sentiments: comparisons of the levels of technology, especially the standard of living, between us and Czechoslovakia, and the drawing out of conclusions about the backwardness of Poland in trade relations with other countries of our camp.

However, further on, it said that “The main direction of oscillations of the nationalist type were anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic moods. Anti-Soviet moods were expressed mainly with statements about our dependence both in the economic and political fields upon the USSR. . . .” During the meetings in Warsaw “there was support for theories about the colonial exploitation of the country by the USSR, about the too steep price of friendship with the USSR, and so on.” The whole country was asking: “Does it have to be here as it was in the USSR? We did not have a Beria here,” “How did Beriaism reach the countries of people’s democracies, distant and sovereign countries?” “Were there attempts by Stalin to take the helm of our Central Committee?” “Why did we uncritically accept the cult of personality?” “Does the present search for those at fault (Berman, Radkiewicz) have the aim of hiding the fact that our sovereignty was a fiction?” “Why do Soviet citizens work in the administration of Poland?”⁵⁸⁴

Information about increasing anti-Semitic moods also reached the party headquarters:

In the Capital Center for Party Training, during an evening of Q&A led by Comrade Tepicht, there were unbelievable questions coming from activist milieu, for example, “Certain leaders of the Polish worker’s movement, members of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee are hiding their origins and national affiliation from public opinion. Is this in line with the internationalism of the proletariat?”

During a different meeting, employees of the party apparatus asked Andrzej Werblan, “Why now, like before the war, is the economy in the hands of the Jews—for

583 Andrzej Paczkowski, “Aparat bezpieczeństwa w latach odwilży: casus polski,” *Zeszyty Historyczne* 114 (1995): 3–33.

584 AAN, KC PZPR, 1679, k. 157, 158.

example, Comrade Minc—a prewar industrialist.”⁵⁸⁵ The authors of the note attempted to avoid overestimating the scale of the anti-Semitic mood. They stressed that the questions that doubted the ethnic familiarity of those in power did not make up “a too large” part of the questions posed in general during the meetings. On the other hand, they urged people not to close their eyes to the rise of nationalist moods. “Volatility in national matters,” the Central Committee Department of Propaganda and Agitation explained as being the result of a superficial education in internationalism of party members. “We too frequently avoided problems, painted over the situation of the USSR, this led to great difficulties in the face of the USSR’s own self-criticism.” “There was no consequential fight against anti-Semitism as a phenomenon,” it was admitted, “this was an embarrassing issue that was not deeply explored by us, although it should have been highlighted precisely in Poland.” Fingers were pointed at leaks from plenary meetings of the Central Committee, even meetings of the Political Bureau. The Khrushchev speech from the VII Plenum and his talks with the Polish leadership, which were supposedly being discussed in Warsaw a day later, were cited as examples. The proposed remedy for nationalism were readings in proletarian internationalism, which were dedicated to the question of national minorities in Poland. The party teachers were supposed to “resist anti-Semitism.” Attention was also directed to the necessity of a “proper” exposition of the relations, especially in the economic sphere, with the Soviet Union. Finally, the authors of the report wrote:

We should not pass over the difficulties and errors of the past—recalling, however, Lenin’s teaching about the bilateral obligation of the proletarians in the national question, about that principle that everyone is battling, above all, against their own nationalism, and that our main task in the ideological sphere of the national question is fighting against Polish nationalism.⁵⁸⁶

Thus, the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee did not foresee the use of national elements for the legitimation of the system in a situation of a deepening crisis of trust—even if parts of the party (*Natolińczycy*) would have willingly run to them. On the contrary, the department was promising a fight against Polish nationalism, and the main weapon in this fight was going to be Marxist internationalism. This idea attests to the fact that the central propaganda apparatus not only created a society of spectacle but was also its first inhabitant. One need not explain that the above strategy was not able to break the ongoing legitimation crisis whose scale the authorities—at least on this level—were not, it seems, aware of.

585 Ibid., k. 159.

586 Ibid., k. 161.

Changes in this field came about only with the events in Poznań. As Lipset writes, "After a new social structure is established, if the new system is unable to sustain the expectations of major groups (on the grounds of 'effectiveness') for a long enough period to develop legitimacy upon the new basis, a new crisis may develop."⁵⁸⁷ Nearly the whole propaganda campaign connected to the implementation of the six-year plan awakened social hopes and expectations. Its realization was one part of the goals of the teleological legitimation of the new system (the myth of a heroic industrialization).⁵⁸⁸ The communist authorities did not live up to the expectations they themselves awakened. The fiasco of the plan meant not only the lack of relative improvements in living conditions but sometimes even their deterioration (for example, in housing), which gave birth to social frustration that transitioned into moods of discontent and rebellion. It was more dangerous for the system because, since the end of the war, it was not able to gain a wider social legitimation, it owed its stability to other factors. When they weakened it, it would have taken only a spark to lead to an explosion.

Economic postulates dominated in Poznań among the shouts raised by the demonstrators in the first phase of the protests. The radicalization of the crowd's behavior slogans of an openly political character, with a strong national accent, started appearing. The most frequently repeated ones were: "Down with the Bolsheviks," "Down with such freedom," "Down with the communists," "Long live Mikołajczyk," "Down with the Muscovites," "Down with the Russians, we want a truly free Poland," "Down with slavery, down with the Russians, down with 17 years of bondage." There were also cries of, "We want God," "God in school," "We demand religion in school." They sang the national anthem and "God, who Poland."⁵⁸⁹ As Paweł Machcewicz has noted:

Religious language and religious symbolism played an important role in the process of the crowd's communications. Along with the national symbolism they most contributed to the building of an emotional and ideational community opposed to a state viewed as anti-national and anti-religious, it constituted the dominant language of communication for the burgeoning mass movement, making it easy to distinguish between "our own" and "foreign," to distinguish the space acquired and developed by the movement from the outside space, which continued to be potentially hostile.⁵⁹⁰

587 Seymour Lipset, *Political Man*, op. cit., 78.

588 Jacek Tarkowski, "Sprawność gospodarcza jako...", op. cit., 76–79.

589 Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, op. cit., 86–88.

590 *Ibid.*, 89.

The events in Poznań weakened the legitimation of power not only on the grounds of economic efficiency, but they also rejected its ideological foundation, and, finally, using the language of anti-Soviet phraseology, the new order was defined as external, imposed from the outside, ethnically “other.”

The official interpretation of the Poznań incidents was in accordance with the ideological model, which proclaimed that the working class cannot deny obedience to the people’s authorities. However, the rulers were aware of the scale of the crisis. This is attested by their statements made during a meeting of the first secretaries of the Regional [Voivodeship] Committees that took place on July 7th.⁵⁹¹ Its participants, at least in part, were able to define the causes of the events in Poznań. They pointed out errors in economic politics and the resulting dissatisfaction of the masses. However, they were not able to propose new ways of getting out of the crisis because they were enslaved to ideological ways of thinking.⁵⁹²

The VII Central Committee Plenum, which took place on July 18th, did not bring a resolution.⁵⁹³ It would be difficult to find anything new, when it comes to legitimation strategies, in Ochab’s paper that opened the proceedings. It repeated the old formula:

Our party is the party of the working class, it is the blood from the blood and marrow of the proletarian masses of Poland. Our party is bound, in life and in death, with the working class. It led it through a number of decades into battle and historical victories. Disturbances in the relations between parts of the working class and its party can only be temporary.⁵⁹⁴

The discussions during the Plenum confirmed and strengthened the existing lines of division in the power elites. The state of threat and uncertainty mobilized everyone to search for escape routes of the crisis. The Natolińczycy presented demands for limiting the freedom of the press, keeping the collective farms, trotting out theses about “class struggle,” raising wages by 50%, and introducing Gomułka into the Political Bureau. Zenon Nowak, seen as the leader of the Natolińczycy group, also called for the reduction the number of Jews in the leadership of the PZPR. Interestingly, in his speech, some “we” were engaged, and for a long time by then, in tracking people of Jewish descent (it was perhaps a dodge, so as not to say “I”).⁵⁹⁵

591 AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-237.

592 For more on this topic see: Zbysław Rykowski and Wiesław Władyka, *Polska próba Październik...*, op. cit., 189–192.

593 For more see: *Ibid.*, 195–213.

594 *Ibid.*, 197.

595 At the start of the 1950’s Zenon Nowak, as secretary of the Central Committee, oversaw the Organizational and Cadre departments. Is it possible that upon a wave

Comrades, when I was still working for the party, we conducted an analysis . . . almost the entire Main Political Directorate of the Army, almost the whole Military Prosecutor's Office was staffed by comrades of Jewish origins. Comrades, I do not want to say that these were bad comrades. They were good comrades, although not all of them. I assume that they all were good comrades. I am not asking whether it is a normal situation when the leadership of the party is represented solely by Jewish comrades. I believe that such a situation is abnormal and that the Political Bureau saw these things and evaluated them. And nobody else here had a different position, nobody, neither Comrade Zambrowski, nor Comrade Minc, nor Comrade Berman, just to cut through everything . . .

I am asking, comrades, whether it is good, that we arrested Romkowski, Fejgin, and Róžański for security abuses—is this good or not? I believe that it is good that we arrested them, but very bad because these are people of Jewish origins. And if you want to know, the situation in security was, I don't know what it's like today, but it was such that all the department directors, deputy directors, and so on, were comrades of Jewish origins. I am asking, is this good or bad? When the people say: the Jews are putting on the Poles . . . Comrades, what kind of situation did we have, let us say, even in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and what kind of situation did we have in the PKPG? If we look at it this way, comrades, then something else emerges. Not for me, not for us sitting here, maybe not for a thousand, or for tens of thousands, or a hundred thousand, but for those 27 million it seems that one cannot trust a Pole either and that a Pole should not be employed in security. He is too stupid to be taken into the PKPG. Well, this is what it comes to, whether we want it or not, whether we like it or not.⁵⁹⁶

Nowak took a stand against the ethnic differences between the rulers and the ruled. By imputing to others the stance that a Pole “is stupid”, he hit upon a ton of wounded national pride. In mentioning several state institutions dominated, according to him, by people of Jewish origins he suggested that the rulers as a whole would gain back the trust of 27 million Poles if it cleansed itself of Jews. It was a strategic program of legitimation, even though it was packed with convoluted language.

Nowak's appearance was met with violent opposition from many members of the Central Committee. Nowak was accused that, in raising the issue of Jewish participation in the leadership of the party, he was opening the path toward anti-Semitism in the country. Cyrankiewicz spoke of snakes of anti-Semitism released from Pandora's Box. The guiding thought of the speech, which can be reduced to the slogan “Poland for Poles,” was not questioned perhaps for tactical

of fighting against cosmopolitanism in the Cadre Department prepared a proscription list of people with Jewish origins?

596 Zbysław Rykowski and Wiesław Władyka, *Polska próba Październik..*, op. cit., 210–211.

reasons. I believe that many members of the power elite, and not only among the Natolińczycy, shared his thoughts.

Nowak probably knew what he was saying when he said that in the past the whole Political Bureau was involved in the “dilution.” Cyrankiewicz was certainly no anti-Semite. However, he was in agreement with Nowak on one point: that too large a number of people of Jewish origins in party-state positions will make the regaining of social trust difficult, if not impossible. Such convictions must have circulated through the halls of the Central Committee since Cyrankiewicz, when answering Zawadzki, during a meeting of the BP admitted that, “We all know and understand that the Aryan staff should grow.”⁵⁹⁷

However, when the process of “diluting” “non-Aryan staff” was put into action, this should be stressed, it was not an action on a massive scale. Only the “Jewish comrades” from security were removed in the spotlight, whereas in other institutions they were removed quietly, without any fanfare. Many were transferred to other positions because of their origins in the framework of the so-called “staff carousels.” Thus, it is possible to risk the thesis that the controversy surrounding the question of origins was in large measure apparent, it related to the form of expressed views, rather than the arguments themselves.

It was no different with the idea of Władysław Gomułka’s return to political life. It was not to the taste of the party liberals that the Natolińczycy stepped forward with the proposition. They saw in Gomułka not only a chance for regaining social legitimacy but also as a limitation upon the influence of those who once supported the theory of “national deviation,” while now passing as the supporters of democratization.⁵⁹⁸ However, in both of the competing camps, the conviction about the necessity of Gomułka needing to return to power was slowly growing.

As the final resolution of the VII Plenum a promise was made to “observing a socialist rule of law” and giving equal rights to former soldiers of the AK and the Polish Armed Forces in the West. By agreeing to the last point, the authorities were falling to the widespread pressure to restore the good name of soldiers of non-communist armed formations from the time of World War II.⁵⁹⁹ Thanks to it the authorities were recreating themselves as being more nationwide in appeal.

597 See footnotes 19 & 20.

598 “Rozmowa z Edwardem Ochabem,” in: Teresa Torañska, *Oni*, op. cit., 37.

599 “O sytuacji politycznej i gospodarczej kraju i zadaniach partii,” *Nowe Drogi* 7–8 (1956): 218. In the same resolution we also read: “The party decidedly opposes all manifestations of nationalism and manifestations of national chauvinism, especially all manifestations of discrimination against citizens belonging to national minorities, its stance is that of respecting the complete equality of citizen rights independent of

The VII Plenum also repealed the resolution of the KC from 1949 with regard to the responsibility of Gomułka and his associates for the “right-wing-nationalist deviation.”

However, it was a halfway measure and late from the starting blocks. The party “bottom” was increasingly insistent about the return of Gomułka to the political scene. He was associated with the “Polish road to socialism” he was slowly growing into the role of a national savior, a Polish Tito, who alone dared to oppose Stalin and paid the consequences. His personal fate was the personification of the nation’s sufferings during the Stalinist period. Through shared experiences he became “ours,” Polish. The leadership of the PZPR was aware of the growing popularity of Gomułka, seeing in him a chance for exiting the crisis. As Ochab said years later, with some bite, about the party liberals in the ruling elite, “they fell for Gomułka’s vocabulary, patriotism, independence, all basically phraseology. They thought that by taking up Gomułka’s phraseology we’ll gain the hearts and trust of the masses.”⁶⁰⁰ At the same time, the “top” of the party knew that Comrade Wiesław is a communist, a co-creator of the system of power, when push came to shove he, was inclined to stand up and defend it. Gomułka himself assured the envoys of the management, who visited him several times in order to gauge his political stance of his commitment. The effect of the talks was the unanimous decision of the Political Bureau, undertaken on 1 August 1956, to return the membership in the PZPR to Gomułka.⁶⁰¹ Three days later information was given that he received his membership card from the secretary of the Central Committee’s POP [Basic Party Organization].

A month later the party authorities ascertained the pointlessness of Soviet consultants further remaining in the Voivodeship Departments of Security and in the departments of the Committee for Public Safety.⁶⁰² The hated “arm” of the people’s authorities—the political police—was supposed to become, at least that was the thought, more “ours.” The authorities were also entering upon the path of nationalist legitimation with this point.

nationality, ensures them conditions of unimpeded development of education and culture in their native language and their full participation in the state, social, and political life of the country.”

600 “Rozmowa z Edwardem Ochabem,” in: Teresa Torańska, *Oni*, op. cit.

601 *Protokół nr 111 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 1 VIII 1956., AAN, KC PZPR, 1674, k. 121.

602 *Protokół nr 119 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego i Sekretariatu KC*, 7 IX 1956 r., AAN, KC PZPR, 1674, k. 141.

But these gestures did not amount to much, all the more because the PZPR leadership did not discount its propaganda decision. The system was ceasing to be steerable; at the start of October, it was already becoming clear that without decisive legitimating moves the authorities would not succeed in overcoming the crisis. In the first days of October, the Political Bureau decided to invite Gomułka to one of its nearest upcoming meetings. At the same time, a step was taken backwards by not giving permission for returning to the city of Stalinogród its former name of Katowice.⁶⁰³ Was it then acknowledged that Moscow would have taken such a gesture as anti-Soviet? Maybe they were worried that a name change would be also a symbolic crossing-out of the existing order? Or maybe it was a unifying giving way by the Puławianie to the conservative wing of the party?

The Political Bureau came to the following conclusion during a meeting on the 8th and 10th of October:

The situation in the party is very difficult, there appear elements of crisis, distrust of the party leadership, the undermining of the authority of the leadership of the party and the government, demagogic demands for pay raises, growth of anti-Soviet sentiments, and the widening little anti-revolutionary theories. In discussions taking place in party organization and among non-party ones, two currents are taking shape—one is an orientation of Western-type democracy, liberal-democratic, and the 2nd current is a democracy in a socialist spirit. There is no fighting between these directions, there is no resistance against hostile views, there is no polemics against false ideological problems. The party press did not stand up to the gravity of the task, it did not go into an ideological offensive, on the contrary, it frequently occupies the wrong stances and deepens the existing ideological confusion. The Political Bureau judges that the inappropriate appearance during the Plenum of Comrade Nowak on the theory of ‘regulating’ the cadres of comrades of Jewish origins, caused a lot of harm, it derailed the discussion after the VII Plenum onto inappropriate tracks and called forth a giant wave of antisemitism in the country.

The following were enumerated as causes of the crisis:

1. The formal unity of the leadership, or, rather the lack of unity in the B.P., dissonance in the matter of some questions of democratic life.
2. The lack of ties between the Leadership and the activists, the lack of closer cooperation with the party masses.
3. The lack of an authoritative voice from the leadership.
4. The increase in anti-Soviet moods was influenced, besides hostile propaganda, by an improper arrangement of mutual relations between the PRL and the USSR—(such as

603 *Protokół nr 122 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 1 i 2 X 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 1674, k. 149.

the price of coal; the fact that the higher cadre of officers in the army very frequently doesn't know the Polish language, and does not have Polish citizenship, the interference of the Soviet ambassador in the internal matters of the country).⁶⁰⁴

Eo ipso the rulers admitted (between themselves) to a crisis, a lack of legitimation, including among the party apparatus. They pointed to the sources of the legitimation deficit, of the rejection of the system, also because of its ties with a foreign power. Among the decisions they then undertook, two had a legitimating meaning indicating movement along a road that interests us in this study. There was a recommendation to prepare a report on the topic of the repatriating Polish populations from the USSR. Until then the communist authorities were only interested in the return of Poles from the West seeing in it a way to improve its image—whereas the so-called repatriation from the East was, above all, a political and financial problem.⁶⁰⁵ It made itself felt along with the release by the Kremlin's new team, in order to mitigate the rigors of the regime, hundreds of thousands of exiles and prisoners, also Poles, with whom something had to be done. The authorities in Warsaw were therefore faced with an accomplished fact and forced to take care of the matter. The lack of enthusiasm from their side also influenced the relatively small, although growing, wave of returns. Under the influence of social pressure, the relationship of the rulers to repatriation underwent a change in October 1956. It came to be seen as also a weighty legitimating argument.⁶⁰⁶ The concern about the fate of the thousands of “ours” in the East expressed from this time on and the real actions aiming at getting

604 *Protokół nr 124 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 8 i 10 X 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 1674, k. 172–173.

605 Małgorzata Ruchniewicz rightly notes that the term “repatriation” signifies the return to one's fatherland, but the Poles who had lived in what in the past were the Eastern Borderlands never technically left Poland. (“Tzw. repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSRR w latach 1955–1959,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 2 [1999]: 171–177).

606 “Taking care of repatriating Poles from the USSR liquidates an abnormal situation, which is contrary to our sense of justice and strikes at the national feelings of large layers of society, and it will contribute to the strengthening of Polish-Soviet friendship. This is the political statement made by the repatriation action. This positive result will be all the more rapidly achieved, the faster the repatriates are absorbed by our society, and the faster their needs are met” (“Pismo sekretarza KC PZPR Jerzego Albrechta do komitetów wojewódzkich w sprawie nadzorowania pomocy repatriantom przez instancje partyjne,” 11.III.1957, in: *Repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSRR 1955–1959. Wybór dokumentów*, eds. Bożena Kącka and Stanisław Stęпка [Warsaw: Wydawnictwo SGGW, 1994], 88).

them back home contributed to the improved impressions of the authorities in the society.⁶⁰⁷

The second decision was similarly characteristic. During the already mentioned meeting of the Political Bureau it was also decided to:

Turn to the USSR, and to interested generals who are in army positions, with the proposition to accept Polish citizenship. Soviet officers who don't speak Polish should be moved to advisory positions, and Polish officers should be put in their place. Comrade Rokossoski will hold a conversation with them and will make the appropriate proposals.⁶⁰⁸

This was a lot to ask, but it still was not enough for the Poles, for whom the Polish uniform was associated with the best patriotic and liberatory traditions, and Russians dressed in them personified not only the subservience of Poland to the Soviet Union but also the falsity and mendacity of the system.

On 12 October, for the first time in many years, Władysław Gomułka participated in a meeting of the Political Bureau as a guest. Discussions on the situation in the party and the country were opened by the acting First Secretary. The picture given by him was highly unfavorable for the authorities. Ochab did not present anything new when it came to paths for leaving behind the crisis. He spoke in favor of “democratization in the interest of the worker and peasant,” but against “integral democracy.” Ochab said the following about relations with the USSR: “We must decidedly fight against anti-Soviet moods. Friendship with the Soviet Union is a foundation of our politics, always, in all situations, we will follow the Soviet Union.”⁶⁰⁹ Ochab spoke as a pragmatic vassal who knows that rebellion against the sovereign must end in defeat. On the other hand, a decisive fight with the anti-Soviet moods made it impossible to gain legitimacy in a nation frequently, especially during that time, anti-Soviet and aspiring to a full sovereignty and inde-

607 On the topic of repatriation see: Andrzej Skrzypek, “O drugiej repatriacji z ZSRR (1954–1959),” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 4 (1991): 63–74; Mikołaj Latuch, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej w latach 1955–1960 na tle zewnętrznych ruchów wędrówkowych* (Warsaw: Polskie Towarzystwo Demograficzne, 1994); Małgorzata Ruchniewicz, “Społeczeństwo polskie wobec tzw. drugiej repatriacji ze Związku Radzieckiego. Działalność Ogólnopolskiego Komitetu Pomocy Repatriantom 1956–1959,” in: *Wrocławskie Studia z Historii Najnowszej* v. 5, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński (Wrocław: Instytut Historyczny Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1998), 157–178.

608 *Protokół nr 124 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 8 i 9 X 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 1674, k. 174.

609 *Protokół nr 125 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 12 X 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 1674, k. 187.

pendence. What to do, in order for the wolf to be full and for the sheep to be safe and whole; neither Ochab nor the other members of the Political Bureau, knew.

Gomułka suggested a solution. He began his speech like a “real Marxist” by saying that the sources of the crisis are not in the superstructure, that is, in the political situation, but in the base, that is, in the state of the economy. Therefore, he devoted the first part of his paper to the analysis of the economic politics of the last years, the second to political problems. He denied he was the carrier of the right-wing-nationalist deviation in 1948. On the topic of relations with the Soviet Union he said:

Today nobody questions that in the past these relations were unsuitable. Now we faintly speak about the matter of the coal. Why did we actually pay reparations for the Germans? It was explained to us that a certain part of the German territories became Polish, but we were not allies of the Germans during the war, so the changing of the borders took place, but we do not have to pay for that. The representatives of our Government at the time signed such an agreement, but I would not have signed it and would not have expressed approval for it. What about the dismantling of factories, the devastation of those factories?

The need for requesting compensation from the USSR for reparations paid for the Recovered Territories, and for the coal sent to the USSR at a discount, was justified by Gomułka with Polish reasons of state and the reasons of state of the Soviet Union, which was vitally interested in the building of socialism in Poland,

Reparations for the Recovered Territories were taken both in the form of coal and in the form of disassembles. It is true that we gave both under conditions of certain compulsion. I am of the opinion that the Soviet comrades should understand and return the assets to us. I would not raise this matter if the economic situation did not force us into it. If the Soviet comrades do not take this into account then things will go badly, we will not patch up our holes. Polish reasons of state, and that we, like them, are building socialism here demands that our relations be conflict-free, but not like they have been until now.

Gomułka also pointed to the necessity of solving the problem of Soviet advisors. “These are not normal relations. After 12 years of people’s rule it was possible to learn much, but not to still have advisors. If it is so then because we did not groom our own cadres. Polish-Soviet relations are a big problem and it is tied to complexes related to anti-Soviet sentiment, with the theories of the Stalinist period and so on.” Gomułka called for greater courage in relations with the Russians:

We had advisors but they are not needed, and, so, it is clear that every government has to solve matters that pertain to it. We are turning to those who gave us the advisors and are saying that we are letting them go. We are not agreeing upon anything with them.

Nobody will respect you if that's how you act! You have to solve great matters, not little ones, and what are you debating about anyway?⁶¹⁰

Since the time of the “majority” group in the KPP, nobody from the leadership of the Polish communist party spoke so boldly about the relations with Moscow. He was proposing a change of the nature of the subordination toward the USSR: a move from a protectorate to a sovereignty limited by a mutual coordination of solving problems.

During the next meeting of the Political Bureau (15th October), this question became one of the objects of controversy.⁶¹¹ It was not only about changing the model of relations with the eastern neighbor but also an answer to the question whether the party authorities while searching for paths for exiting the crisis, should reach for national contents and demonstrate to the society their sovereignty and independence toward the Soviet Union. Thus, what was at stake was also the content of legitimating argumentation. Ochab avoided unequivocal answers to these questions:

There is a class enemy, and he is preparing himself, then we have spoken more strongly about an increase in anti-Soviet moods, then it will be a matter of life or death. We have to oppose these anti-Soviet stances more strongly, this should not interfere with our talks with the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, putting before them the matter of regulating some of the irregularities in our relations.⁶¹¹

On the other hand, Jerzy Morawski, counted among the party liberals, pointed toward the necessity of removing the symbols of subservience to the Soviets, which were de-legitimizing the authorities in the eyes of the society, “We say that we must conduct a fight against anti-Soviet sentiments, but we must remove the causes of these sentiments. Without this, we cannot heal these relations.” Jerzy Albrecht pointed to the lack of chances for getting out of the crisis if the national character of authority is not accentuated, “The nation is restless about whether we are capable of fighting for equality in relations with the USSR without undermining our friendship. If we do not do this, then we will not concentrate the activists around us.” Rossokowski did not show great understanding for national sentiments:

Recently there has been sharp talk about Soviet officers in the Polish Army. When we were enlarging our army we turned to the USSR to commandeer to us a certain amount of generals because the situation was difficult, right now a small group of these generals and advisors remain in the army. We are training Polish officers and the situation has

610 *Gomułka i inni...*, op. cit., 85–90.

611 For more see: Andrzej Friszke, “Rozgrywka na szczybie...,” op. cit., 201–206.

changed totally. Whence then comes this cry, after all in our traditions we have leaders who fought in other countries such as Kościuszko who fought in America, Kossuth in Hungary [sic!], Dąbrowski in Italy, Świerczewski in Spain. During the war, when soldiers were perishing on Polish soil, they were not asked whether they are Poles or Russians. 770 officers of Russian origins became Polish citizens, others applied for Polish citizenship. Whoever will not take on Polish citizenship before the end of the year will leave Poland.⁶¹²

The Natolińczycy spoke against any gestures that could disturb the existing model of the Polish-Soviet relations.

The party conservatives lost the ongoing duel. There was a decision for the press to publish a communique about the date for convening the VIII Plenum and about Gomułka's participation in the meeting of the Political Bureau. On 16 October Mieczysław Jastrun noted that "The return of Gomułka to political life is widely noted... All this seems to me an attempt to return authority to a compromised matter."⁶¹³

A day later a commission made up of members of the Political Bureau proposed a new roster for the Political Bureau and the Central Committee Secretariat. Ochab was supposed to step down, while Gomułka was supposed to take the position of First Secretary.⁶¹⁴ On the same day the Soviet leadership, worried that the turn of events in Poland was getting out of control, was supposed to have called the whole Political Bureau to Moscow.⁶¹⁵ Robert Łoś notes:

The trip of the leaders of the PZPR to Moscow would compromise them in the eyes of the society. In *normal* times the appearance of a Polish delegation in Moscow on the eve of a Plenum would not have been anything extraordinary, but in the conditions of 1956, it would have decimated the attempts of legitimating the authorities in the eyes of the society.⁶¹⁶

However, that author doubts the authenticity of the invitation for the Polish delegation to talks in Moscow, seeing them as a fragment of an October legend that demonstrates the determination and resistance of the leadership of the PZPR. In-

612 *Protokół nr 126 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 15 X 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 1673, k. 37, 40, 45, 47.

613 Mieczysław Jastrun, *Dziennik. Wybór...*, op. cit., s. 53.

614 *Protokół nr 127 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 17 X 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 1673, k. 65.

615 Such rumors were noted by Western diplomats. See: Marcin Kula, *Paryż, Londyn i Waszyngton patrzą na Październik 1956 r. w Polsce* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1992), 123, 132.

616 Robert Łoś, *Przełom 1956*. "Od protektoratu do ograniczonej suwerenności," *Więź* (January 1995): 119.

stead of Polish authorities flying to Moscow, unexpectedly, on 19 October, shortly before the commencement of the VIII Plenum, Khrushchev came to Warsaw along with a large part of the Politburo.⁶¹⁷

Hours of negotiation began in a break in the Plenum proceedings during which Gomułka convinced Khrushchev of the necessity of personnel changes in the Polish leadership and of Poland's loyalty toward the Soviet Union.

Simultaneously, there was a march of Soviet armies toward the capital. Information about this reached the inhabitants of Warsaw as rumors and put social emotions into a state of boiling insurrectionism. Paweł Machcewicz writes,

Anti-Sovietism and Russophobia were the axle around which a social movement was coming together; these comprised the most significant part of the language that the movement communicated with. The October movement in many instances was interpreted as a great anti-Russian national spurt whose goal was the regaining of independence, the rejection of the Soviet yolk.⁶¹⁸

The growing feeling of uncertainty and threat to the nation inclined not only to integration into an ethnic community but also toward a search for a leader capable of opposing the Russians and saving the country from catastrophe. There was nobody on the political scene, besides Gomułka, who could play this role. He was deprived of charisma, but he was surrounded by a legend of being an unbreakable anti-Stalinist who was forgiven for being one of the main engineers of the system. When put under the pressure of the Kremlin Gomułka gained in credibility, becoming, in the eyes of the Polish society, a leader of the nation, and when he had successes, he became an outright national hero.

After the VIII Plenum resumed Gomułka gave a programmatic speech whose primary subject of discussion was the communist system. He devoted a lot of space to the causes of the legitimation crisis, giving a crushing critique of the period of "errors and distortions." He said the following in it:

The ruling of a country requires that the working class and the working masses should credit their representatives at the helm of state power with trust. It is the moral foundation of exercising power in the name of the working masses. The credit of trust can be extended without interruption only under the condition of being able to untangle oneself from the commitments made to their lenders. The loss of the trust-credit of the working class means the loss of the moral basis of exercising power.⁶¹⁸

617 On the topic of the causes, course, and con Khrushchev's visit see: Robert Łoś, *Przełom 1956*, op. cit.; Krzysztof Persak, "Kryzys stosunków polsko-radzieckich w 1956 roku," *Polska 1944/45–1989, Studia i Materiały* 3 (1997): 19–44.

618 Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, op. cit., 170.

When we substitute “the working class” and the “working masses” with “society,” then the above fragment would sound like a textbook definition of legitimation and the crisis of legitimation of ruling power. Gomulka defined as morally evil those forms of government that owe their existence to bureaucracy, breaking the rule of law, and violence. He also said that the working class could “take away its credit of trust from certain people.” This was a big, fat euphemism. The crisis of trust was a lot more serious. “We must,” said Gomulka, “replace all the bad parts of our model of socialism, replace them with better ones, improve the model with the best ready models and put into it our own more perfect constructions.” It was an allusion to the “Polish path to socialism,” whose hallmark was supposed to be the existence of private ownership in agriculture.” On the topic of Polish-Soviet relations he said:

In the context of such relations, every country should possess full independence and autonomy, and the right of every nation to sovereign self-rule in an independent country should be fully and mutually respected. Things should be like this, and, I would say, they are beginning to be so.⁶¹⁹

Gomulka did not say, “The Polish nation has the right...” Nevertheless, this was the most important public statement of the time by a representative of the authorities (repeated later in the final resolution of the Plenum) to which we can ascribe a legitimizing meaning of a nationalist character. Gomulka read the social sentiments perfectly. He expressed the desires and expectations of millions of Poles who wanted to live in a truly independent and free country. However, he spread the accents out evenly, giving the Soviet Union its due as well: “If someone thinks that it is possible to succeed in kindling anti-Soviet sentiments in Poland, then he is deeply mistaken. We will not let damage happen to the vital interests of the Polish state and the construction of socialism in Poland.”⁶¹⁹

Gomulka presented the rulers as defenders of the interests of the Polish state; at the same time, he made it clear that there is no alternative to the existing political order whose guarantor is the Soviet Union. He was striving for independence in making decisions, however, within the frames of the socialist system. He was suggesting sovereignty for Poland, but it was limited sovereignty.

In the emotionally overflowing days of October, not everyone understood this, while some understood it differently. “Joy overwhelms me, joy that this terrible enslavement will end,” wrote Jastrun on 21 October,

The impulse of the whole nation is impressive. Resolution of the army. KBW is saving the situation, the most fantastic improbabilities are being fulfilled. I am coming home in a taxi, late at night. The driver says, ‘Now they will probably get it done with the Jews.’ I

619 *Trybuna Ludu*, 21.X.1956.

answer, 'Only one still remains in the Political Bureau.' What am I supposed to say on an empty street, alone with a driver?⁶²⁰

However, Gomułka was mistaken when he said that the leadership of the PZPR will not allow for the spread of anti-Soviet sentiments. They were already a fact. A wave of speeches, rallies, and demonstrations that were anti-Soviet and anti-Russian swept through the country. Everywhere people were demanding the removal of Soviet officers. From many cities throughout the country, there were news about demands for the removal of the Soviet armed forces from the territory of Poland. In Legnica, demonstrators attempted to destroy the Monument of Gratefulness to the Soviet Army. There were demands for the return of the lands lost to the USSR. The postulate of "returning Lwow, Wilno, and Królewiec" appeared in Olsztyn. On 23rd October, during a rally in Poznań there were shouts such as, "Down with Rokossowski," "Down with the Russians," and "We don't want friendship with Russia."⁶²¹ Wanting to stem these sentiments the authorities decided to have a rally in downtown Warsaw with the participation of the First Secretary. This step was also dictated by the need to confirm the possession of social legitimacy—in order to with the mandate of social support, gained through acclamation, undertake effective actions to stabilize the situation in the country. During the rally, which took place on October 24th Gomułka said the following:

... every country should have full independence and self-determination and the right of every nation to sovereign self-rule in an independent country should be fully and mutually respected.

We last received from the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, comrade Khrushchev, assurance that he sees no obstacles to our mutual state and party relations playing out according to party and state principles pointed out by the VIII Plenum of the Central Committee of our party.

All the specific cases related to our internal matter will be resolved according with the stance of the party and government.

It depends only upon our discretion whether, and for what period, Soviet specialists and military advisors are indispensable in our army.

At the same time, we have gained from comrade Khrushchev a guarantee that Soviet armed forces on Polish terrains will return to their places of station where they reside on the basis of international agreements under the Warsaw Pact.⁶²²

620 Mieczysław Jastrun, *Dziennik. Wybór...*, op. cit., 54.

621 On the topic of social sentiments in October see: Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski Rok 1956*, op. cit., 153, 159, 160.

622 *Trybuna Ludu*, 25.X.1956.

The characteristic applause of the crowd strengthened the effect of the words cited above. Gomułka recalled the presence of NATO bases on the terrain of Western Germany and the threats arising from the existence of a “new Wehrmacht” in order to change the object of ethnic aversion and to legitimize the necessity of stationing Soviet forces on Polish territory. The argument of a thread from revisionist forces in Western German, which appeared earlier, became from this point on a leitmotif for the legitimation of the system.

From the end of October 1956 until January 1957 the party frequently reached for nationalist legitimation in both its more and less public statements. It is useful to mention two of them because they took place in threatening situations. Both were also characterized by the sharpness of the formulations used. Each time the same legitimation strategy was utilized (rationalization). First, the meaning of national independence and sovereignty was stressed in order to then demonstrate that their maintenance is only possible under the condition of the existence of socialism in Poland and the stationing of Soviet armed forces on its territories.

In a confidential document, meant only for party members, which came in to being in the first days of November, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee said in response to the invasion of Hungary by the Soviet army: “The first and main responsibility of the Polish government and out party, the holy obligation of every Pole and the whole of society is concern for our state, our nation.” “German militarism” was mentioned once again, in order to conclude with the following:

On the other hand, the presence of Soviet armed forces in several points of Western Poland is in the current transitional period a Polish national and state necessity. Every Pole who loves his country and has a feeling of responsibility for the safety of his nation understands this historical necessity.⁶²³

The communique from which the two quoted fragments come was sent to voivodeship committees by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee. Even though it was designated for members of the party it was not written in the Marxist language. After all, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee was not calling for a defense of the revolution’s ideals, socialism, and so on. The defense of the nation-state was acknowledged as the highest value, wellnigh holy.

623 “Informacja Biura Politycznego KC PZPR dla organizacji partyjnych PZPR o sytuacji na Węgrzech i stanowisku partii w kwestii stosunków polsko-radzieckich [1 listopada 1956 r.],” in: *Rewolucja węgierska 1956 w polskich dokumentach*, ed. János Tischler (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1995), 136–138.

We can see from this how Gomułka must have been worried about an explosion of an anti-Soviet uprising and how thoroughly he was convinced that only with a language whose subject will be the “nation,” has he a chance to reach members of the party.

Gomułka also used the strategy outlined above on the eve of the Sejm elections in January 1957. In a dramatic appeal delivered on the radio, he called for voting exclusively for party candidates. While making the “enemies of People’s Poland” the subject of what he was saying:

They know full well that the Polish United Workers’ Party is the guiding power of People’s Poland. They know full well that only a socialist Poland can figure on the map of Europe as an independent and sovereign state. They know full well that the Polish United Workers’ Party is the first guarantor its independence... They know that the German Wehrmacht and revenge-minded Germans are stalking our lands, that their protectors have still not recognized our western borders.⁶²⁴

Gomułka recognized this type of argumentation as effective to such a degree in the process of the legitimating the system of power that he recommended its use to party organizations.⁶²⁵

Thus, Comrades, we do not know how to arm our party organizations, but when it comes to these fundamental issues, which have generally bothered and still bother the nation; the issue of independence, the issue of sovereignty, the issue of the nation being the master of its own home, all this can be realized here solely by using the concepts that we have. In other words: the independence and sovereignty of our country are inseparable from socialism. There is no other, and nobody can come up with, a different program, because every other program is unrealistic, every other one must lead to some quarrel.

Gomułka treated the merits of the party for widening the scope of national sovereignty and the creation of a new model for relations between Poland the USSR as a weighty legitimating argument:

But the issue of equality of our relations with the Soviet Union, the issue of sovereignty, and so on, the liquidation of all forms of interference in our internal matters, all those demands that have become prevalent in our nation and party—were set down during the VIII Plenum of the Central Committee. Who did this? We did, nobody else, but us. We must take this both to the party organizations, the working party, and show them

624 “Przemówienie radiowe Wł. Gomułki,” *Trybuna Ludu*, 20.I.1957.

625 Gomułka’s use of legitimating argumentation in the propaganda campaign was taken over by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the PZPR Central Committee. See: *Zagadnienia i materiały dla aktywu propagandowego* 1 (January 1957).

that it is the work of the party, a party that represents the will of the nation, the interests of the working class, and having their support was able to realize these demands.⁶²⁶

Much was right on target in the article by Czesław Miłosz whose excerpts were eagerly published by *Trybuna Ludu* on October 27th: “One dramatic night completely changed the situation . . . I believe that the crowd in Warsaw felt the same and now when speaking about the government it was saying ‘we,’ instead of saying ‘they.’”⁶²⁷

The rulers really achieved an astounding success. And yet, let us recall, just a few days earlier they defined the situation as highly critical. At the time they were not even able to mobilize party members to defend the existing order. However, they did not owe overcoming of the crisis to Marxist internationalism whose firm presentation was proposed by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee as late as May 1956. On the contrary, they gained social trust and support by affirming, or even proclaiming, the slogan of national sovereignty and independence from the USSR.

October sealed the final victory of the idea of a nation-state for the duration of Poland’s communist period. Granted, they did not resign from proclaiming the slogan, “Proletarians of the world unite.” However, it was becoming more part of a closed circle of party rituals, an element of a language that served communication between “fraternal” parties, while no longer being the expression of anyone’s identity. The crisis of internationalism indeed engulfed many parties that described themselves as Marxist.⁶²⁸ In *Nowe Drogi* there was talk of the national roots of the revolution that was supposed to take place in Poland.⁶²⁹

However, speaking about the revolution was a big exaggeration, it was certainly an attempt to give the breakthrough that had taken place qualities that were as national as possible. Everything seemed to confirm it. On November 6th *Trybuna Ludu*, on its front page, informed about “further changes in the Polish Army” and the recall of 32 Soviet officers and the appointment, in their place, of Polish officers.⁶³⁰ In order to satisfy the general pressure to remove Rokossowski from the position of Minister of Defense, the Political Bureau made a decision to dismiss him on November 10th.⁶³¹ Three days later the Sejm dismissed Rokos-

626 “Fragmenty przemówienia Władysława Gomułki na naradzie I sekretarzy KW PZPR [23.XI.1956],” in: *6 lat temu ... /Kulisy polskiego października/* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1962), 80, 81.

627 *Trybuna Ludu*, 27.X.1956.

628 Jerzy Wiatr, “Kryzys internacjonalizmu?,” *Nowe Drogi* 11–12 (1956): 109–117.

629 Jerzy Piórkowski, “Suwerenność – rzecz realna i znana,” *Nowe Drogi* 11–12 (1956): 123.

630 *Trybuna Ludu*, 6.XI.1956.

631 *Protokół posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 10 XI 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 1674, k. 209.

sowski from the post of Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defense and appointed Marian Spychalski in his place. Stalinogród returned to its former name, Katowice. They returned the old uniform designs for railwaymen and sailors. Before the elections to the Sejm, in January 1957, there was a show of the new armed forces uniforms. The newspapers reported that they were supposed to maintain “certain traditions, which stress the national character of our army.”⁶³² They did not dare return the four-cornered cap, but the new cap had a noticeably smaller rondo than the Soviet one. Repatriates returned to the country (in the period between 1955 and 1959 nearly a quarter of a million). There were few who returned from the West, but they were significant political emigres. The propaganda showcased the return of personalities such as Melchior Wańkowicz or Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz not only as evidence of the liberalization of the system but also as the expression of acceptance for the existing social order. As late as January 1955 the Political Bureau decided to call into life the association “Polonia.”⁶³³

Among the main tasks of the association was the infiltration of Polonia circles and the marginalization of their influence upon the country.⁶³⁴ However, its existence also had a propaganda and legitimizing role, because it illustrated the thinking of the ruling class using nationwide categories, going beyond the bounds of the socialist state, and, in the case of successes, was to prove the support of the emigres. The proof of such thinking was supposed to be the efforts of the government to bring back to the country the Wawel tapestries. This was also accompanied by a propaganda campaign.

The new staff did not decide to officially undertake the issue of the Katyń massacre. Gomułka spoke of the premises, which directed things in this regard, during one of his meetings with youths. The record of this meeting was never published. One can only surmise that this was the case because of the content of the question posed to Gomułka and the following answer of the First Secretary:

I would not hesitate if the facts were checked, I would not hesitate to turn to the Soviet Union and say: so many, many crimes were committed during the time of Stalin, admit to them, it will only contribute to the strengthening of our relation with the Soviet Union. But in such matters you cannot work from conjectures. Another matter: even if we were to establish the facts and come to the conclusion which the commission in the USA came to, that the perpetrators of this crimes are the Russian authorities—is this

632 *Trybuna Ludu*, 5.I.1957.

633 *Protokół nr 41 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 8 I 1955, AAN, KC PZPR, 1662, k. 131.

634 Jan Lencznarowicz, “Rola Towarzystwa „Polonia” w polityce PRL wobec Polonii w krajach zachodnich,” *Przegląd Polonijny* 1 (1996): 43–60.

really necessary for us, for Poland, for our relations. Will this new thorn in the crown of thorns, which surrounds us and the Soviet nation, be needed and appropriate. It is not needed comrades, and it is not appropriate. We will not take even one step of a demonstrative character in relation to the Soviet Union, not even one step that is not needed, one which would weaken our relations with the Soviets, just as we will not make even one concession that would put our country under the control or interference in our affairs, the affairs of self-rule, in our affairs we will defend ourselves and I don't see that we will encounter any obstacles from the Soviet Union. They also have a process of democratization. But we will not go into any demonstrations, and posing the matter of Katyń would be a demonstration.⁶³⁵

The motif of not teasing a lion was certainly the most important, but probably not the only reason that caused the rulers to decide against using the Katyń issue to legitimize itself in the eyes of the nation. Gomułka must have been aware that undertaking the problem of the Katyń massacre, thereby accusing the Soviet Union, even if it would be beneficial in the beginning for the picture of the authorities in society, without a total break of ties of dependence with the USSR, would sooner than later turn against the authorities. It would mean the undercutting of the moral basis of the system, a questioning of its revolutionary genesis, since admitting to the war crime would also cast a shadow upon the communists ruling Poland. It seems that for these reasons neither Gomułka nor the succeeding regimes, until almost the end of the system, did use Katyń to legitimize their governments.

October also became, to a certain degree, the victory of the idea of a single-nation state. The repatriation agreement struck between the USSR and Poland, in accordance with earlier agreements from the years 1944–1945 granted a right to repatriation to Polish citizens, but only of Polish and Jewish nationality.⁶³⁶ Was Poland then supposed to be a two-nation state? Not entirely. 1955–1959 were years of a mass wave of people of Jewish and German descent leaving—the second one after the one immediately following the war. One thing is certain: the communist authorities did not prepare any plan for eliminating national minorities by encouraging them to emigrate from Poland. On the contrary, they sought to limit the departures of Germans, who were, frequently, good professionals. The October thaw brought a flowering of cultural activity, the press, and schooling of

635 *Protokół rozmów I Sekretarza tow. Wiesława z przedstawicielami młodzieży*, 29 X 1956, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-280, t. 1, k. 25, 26.

636 *Umowa między rządem Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej a rządem Związku Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich w sprawie terminu i trybu dalszej repatriacji z ZSRR osób narodowości polskiej*, 25 III 1957, w: B. Kącka, S. Stęпка, op. cit., s. 92–95.

all national minorities living in Poland.⁶³⁷ I will, however, risk the hypothesis that the tendency to leave among Jews could have been in line with the thinking of party authorities. Back in October 1955, the Political Bureau recommended the following to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “the gradual, wider than until now, granting of permissions to leave for Israel to Polish citizens of Jewish nationality.” First in line for consideration were requests of persons who were “older, lonely—incapable of working, who have in Israel family members who want to support them.” It was decided to “make possible leaving for Israel to other people if they did not have close family in Poland and their closest family (father, mother, brothers, sisters) lives in Israel.” The permission for Jewish emigration given by the Political Bureau was a reaction, as it was put, “to provocative actions, which are being developed by nationalist Jewish organizations abroad with the cooperation of some employees of the Israeli embassy in Poland through the means of giving monetary aid from abroad to some citizens of Jewish nationality. . . .”⁶³⁸ This was something like programmed behavior for authorities in the communist system, whose constitutive feature was the lack of acceptance for all differences: ethnic, religious, cultural, especially when relations with the West were in play.⁶³⁹

However, in 1955 only 251 permissions were issued for emigration to Israel when 2482 requests were made. From July 1956 there was substantial growth in the number of requests, whereas the number of permissions granted started to grow from August on. In December 1956, 2,130 of them were issued.⁶⁴⁰ Why? The

637 Piotr Madajczyk, “Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce w 1956,” *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały* III (1997): 197–220.

638 Bolesław Bierut, Edward Ochab, Franciszek Mazur, and Jerzy Morawski participated in the meeting (*Protokół posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 19 X 1955, AAN, KC PZPR, 1662, k. 261, 262).

639 Similar motives lay behind a decision from May 1951 on starting repression against Jehovah’s Witnesses. It was decided then that: “1. Our repressive politics should limit itself to elements from the imperialistic agents and the command center of the underground apparatus 2. Our politics should aim to **direct the sects toward national feelings. The fight for the national character of their activities**, an immunization of sect members against penetration by the agents of foreign intelligence, sabotage, can be achieved through the help of publishing houses [bolding is my own].” The following people participated in this meeting of the Secretariat and the Political Bureau: Bierut, Jakub Berman, Józef Cyrankiewicz, Hilary Chełchowski, Hilary Minc, Franciszek Mazur, Zenon Nowak, Aleksander Zawadzki, Roman Zambrowski (*Protokół nr 95 posiedzenia Sekretariatu i Biura Politycznego KC*, 22 V 1951, AAN, KC PZPR, 1641, no pagination).

640 *Informacja dotycząca emigracji do Izraela*, 19 II 1957, AAN, KC PZPR 1682, k. 323.

opening of the borders was certainly the result of the general liberalization of the system. Much indicates that the matter was much more complicated. We should recall the previously mentioned letter to Stalin from December 1948 in which Gomułka referred to the national nihilism of some of the “Jewish comrades” and the “high percentage of Jewish elements in the leadership apparatus of the state and party.” The experience of the communist leader from the Stalinist period could have strengthened his earlier observations.⁶⁴¹ It is difficult to not suspect that he knew the oneiric myth about the Judeo-Commune that was circulating with regard to the authorities.⁶⁴² He probably was not an anti-Semite, but he certainly was also no philo-semite. The departure of people of Jewish origins solved the problem of nationalist conflicts, in accordance with the reasoning, which was later proven wrong, if there are no Jews then there is no anti-Semitism. Secondly, Gomułka, by opening the borders, was projecting himself as a liberal in the eyes of the international opinion, at the same time he avoided accusations of anti-

641 Mieczysław F. Rakowski wrote the following in his journal in 1968: “G.[omułka] is not an anti-Semite, but you would be hard-pressed to say that he likes Jews. The rumor is that whenever anyone speaks about recent history, then he expresses his grievances against the Jews in the UB, who abused him since 1948” (Mieczysław F. Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1967–1968* [Warsaw: Iskry, 1999], 319).

642 In *Informacji o przebiegu kampanii wyborczej opracowanej na podstawie sprawozdań Komitetów Wojewódzkich PZPR* (This was with regard to the elections for the Sejm in January 1957) we read: “The main goal of the reactionary propaganda attacks was our alliance with the Soviet Union, slogans about chauvinism and anti-Semitism, whose blade was mainly directed against the PZPR, especially against the leadership of the party.” As evidence they gave a “widely distributed” leaflet from the Zielona Góra region signed by the “National Party” with the following contents: “Poles, don’t give power to the present ministers, because they are agents of the Jewish and Soviet international. The Soviets took half of prewar Poland’s land . . . Remember that the Soviets are murdering people in Hungary, here they have muffled everything and we are forced to watch the murders in Hungary without doing anything. The same people who sat around in Warsaw under Stalin are also sitting there now, standing behind a new Kádár—Gomułka. Remember, that the most Jews lived in Poland and Hungary, and recently largest amount of these former capitalist Jews, ruled Poland and Hungary. Remember that before the war there were five million Jews in Poland who owned 80% of the capital and none of them worked hard. They were the first to murder the flowers of the Polish Army in Katyń. Remember that the Polish national movement is not the same as the compromised German one. Down with the fraud. Long live the change of government from bottom to top, without the band of Jews and Soviets.” Leaflets similar in content were also distributed in other voivodeships, among them Wrocław and Bydgoszcz (AAN KC PZPR, 237/VIII-385, k. 9, 10).

Semitism and of committing ethnic cleansing. Thirdly, workers of the security apparatus of Jewish origins leaving Poland finally closed the issue of punishing of those responsible for the crimes committed during the Stalinist period, which Gomułka promised during the VIII Plenum, and which was frequently demanded during rallies and meetings. Eventually, the trials of functionaries could have become not so much a judgment on the people as on the system. The establishment desired to avoid this. Finally, a large part of those striving for permission to emigrate occupied positions in the power apparatus, especially those in the middle ranks. Then leaving their jobs, and then leaving the country, could be treated as an easy way to improve the image of the ruling apparatus. Therefore, an element of legitimation was probably in play.

For many people of Jewish origins, frequently deeply assimilated, the decision to leave Poland was highly dramatic. According to conversations with them,

some members of the party broke down psychologically to such a degree that they started doubting the appropriateness of the political stances they held until then. However, for many comrades the making of the request for permission to leave is a difficult experience, where they make it understood, speaking of it openly frequently, that they would abandon leaving if they were convinced that the party needs them.⁶⁴³

However, the party never publically said that it needs them. Only during internal meetings members of the new staff, frequently forced into it by the questions posed, admitted that the phenomenon of anti-Semitism must be fought.⁶⁴⁴ There

643 *Informacja dotycząca emigracji...*, op. cit., k. 326, 326.

644 Jerzy Morawski: "The boldness in revealing these moods doubtlessly occurred in connection with the improper statements made about this topic from the side of some comrades from the old leadership of the party during the period of the VII Plenum. The party is fighting against these moods, but it is fighting inadequately. This matter at this moment is especially painful and I agree that we ought to energetically battle this phenomenon." ("Niektóre problemy walki przeciwko dogmatyzmowi i rewizjonizmowi. Stenogram wykładu, wygłoszonego na Centralnym Kursie Partyjnego Aktywu Propagandowego [16.II.1957]," in: *6 lat temu ...*, op. cit., s. 159). See also: the question posed to Zambrowski at a forum of party activists: "I would like an explanation why the party and the government are not strongly actively resisting the anti-Jewish affair which is going around our country. Why does our theory speak about fighting against nationalism, but at the same time in the Soviet Union and in Poland there is no lack of examples then and now that it is only a theory? Do you in the leadership of the PZPR know that Jews are leaving Poland, because, among other things, the authorities giving away their apartment allotments to other people, but these Jews have no intention to leave, but those managing the allotments are exerting pressure on these Jews—threats, writings, etc. You comrades are touching

was an attempt to do this, but, what's important here, not according to the party line. There were a couple of court cases against people accused of public calls to nationalist strife.⁶⁴⁵

In April 1957 the Secretariat of the Central Committee turned to party committees (voivodeship, city, powiat, and precinct) with a letter "on the discrimination against the ethnic Jewish population."⁶⁴⁶ It is a strange document. On the one hand, it condemned anti-Semitism, on the other, it suggested ethnic cleansing in the party. The letter began with, "The last months have revealed nationalist phenomena more widely than before. Unacceptable instances of discrimination based

upon these topics, because they are not only significant to Jews." Zambrowski replied with: "I am in complete agreement with the final observation, that this matter does not only concerns the Jews, but it is a nationwide matter in the sense that it is a great evil, that reactionary forces have been able to take advantage of the changes that are happening here to stir up anti-Semitic moods to a great degree. The Party sees these moods, the party with its full attention, and I would say great pain, reacts to this and when it comes to the leadership of the party—it is striving to overcome it. This is why it seems to me that that you are right to say that the party is not resisting. I would agree with saying that we did not, from the start, give the appropriate resistance in this matter. This is a result of the fact that generally the activities of the party in the preceding period left much to be desired. We were actually incapable of motivate the party into action for about a week before the elections and we still have serious lacks in this area. Either way, this is not a result of party positions. You know that these matters were completely explained during the VII and VIII Plenums. All tendencies to various hidden crypto-anti-Semitic theories were condemned and our party will undoubtedly do everything in order to combat this undoubtedly passing, although extremely painful, phenomenon also, and above all, ideologically, because that is the surest guarantee, also on the administrative level, because one cannot only speak to the conscience of hooligans and thugs, they have to be punished" (*Z wystąpienia Tow. Zambrowskiego w Szkole Centralnej*, IV 1957, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-272, k. 36, 37).

645 *Trybuna Ludu*, 22.II.1957: "Prison sentences for fomenting nationalist discord. Wrocław, Before the Court . . . there were several trials against persons accused of publicly calling for nationalist discord in Wrocław. The Voivodeship Court handed out sentences . . . condemning for these crimes; suspending the execution of the rulings for a period of two years. Kazimierz M. from Dzierżoniowo received a year of prison with suspended sentencing for publicly, during a soccer match, heckling people of Jewish origins. For the same crime Wilhelm L. received six months of prison with a suspension . . . three months, also with a suspension, were given to Stanisław M. from Bielawa who publicly insulted his 70 year-old neighbor of Jewish extraction."

646 *Protokół nr 134 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 10 IV 1957, AAN, KC PZPR, 1681, k. 151.

upon nationality have taken on an especially sharp character toward the Jewish population, creating emigration sentiments in these circles.” Further on, there was mention of the ties between Jewish and Polish culture and the advanced process of assimilation among the population of Jewish origins. Among the sources of anti-Semitism, it pointed to “the remnants of old habits of thought not only in the society in general but also among party members.” “In many instances,” it went on to say, “simplified, schematic, treatment of citizens of Jewish background as strong supporters of the people’s order in Poland led to a misunderstanding of staffing policies and created perspectives that favored use by anti-Semites.” The allusion was clear: the exaggerated staffing with people of Jewish origins in positions of the party apparatus made the party an object of anti-Semitic attacks. In the next sentence, it was pointed out that “harm came to the party from voicing theories of the so-called ‘national regulations,’ which created favorable conditions for the penetration of nationalist, anti-Semitic sentiments even into the ideologically resistant groups of our party.” In other words, the Secretariat of the Central Committee was hinting at the continuation of the politics of “dilution,” but without any publicity, which was also inadvisable because it contributed to the so-called revival of nationalism in Jewish circles:

In the last period, which is marked by a greater openness and boldness in making judgments and disclosing opinions, and when voice was given also to reactionary elements, nationalist and anti-Semitic sentiments surfaced. It is a fact that people of Jewish origins were deprived of their jobs, just because of their origins. Jewish workers and foremen are being removed from factories, highly-qualified craftsmen from cooperatives, and workers of Jewish origins from institutions and government offices. There are shameful threats and pressure to leave their homes. There are hooligan actions against citizens—Jews on the streets of our cities. There are even instances of harassing children in schools. These phenomena, along with the weak and inadequate countermeasures from the side of party organizations and the authorities, especially from prosecutors and country, have caused a dangerous and politically harmful reaction in the form of a nationalist revival in Jewish communities.⁶⁴⁷

In the second part, the authors of the letter argued that anti-Semitism cannot be reconciled with the revolutionary attitude and that it always served the propertied classes in blurring the essence of class contradictions and conflicts. It also pointed toward the “brotherhood of arms” from the time of World War II and interpreted the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as an element of the “fight undertaken by the Polish nation in the defense of its existence, independence, and progress.”

647 *Protokół nr 134 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 10 IV 1957, AAN, KC PZPR, 1681, k. 151.

There was a call to undertake decisive struggle against manifestations of anti-Semitism to conclude. There was a reminder about the rights to be educated in one's mother tongue, respecting and cultivating the national culture of all minorities. It was also said that:

We take the stance that every citizen has the right to determine their nationality. That is why we will fight both manifestations of the pressure to polonize minorities and the racist tendencies of applying criteria of national origins in relation to people, who, independently of their ethnic origins, consider themselves to be fully Polish. The party sees Jewish population's striving toward emigration from Poland as, above all, the result of weak pressure on our part against anti-Semitic phenomena that occurred even among some party members and activists. We see it as an especially urgent task for party organizations to combat these phenomena along with a parallel development of a work that explains the party line in a way that aims to convince Jewish circles to stay in the country. This responsibility falls primarily upon party intentions in towns where there is a greater concentration of the Jewish populace.⁶⁴⁸

The Instructions of the Central Committee Secretariat "in the matter of cleansing the party of elements disturbing its ideological and organizational unity" from November 1957 in its last point stated that "There can be no place in the party for people who proclaim nationalist, chauvinist, and anti-Semitic views, and oppose people because of their national origins."⁶⁴⁹ Unfortunately, I do not know how many people were actually removed from the PZPR for anti-Semitism.

Among the 1st May slogans prepared by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee in 1957 was one with the following contents: "Hold high the standards of patriotism and internationalism. We fight against nationalism, chauvinism, and anti-Semitism. People's Poland—mother of all citizens," but if we take into account the number of the slogans, more was being done to fight against speculation, corruption, and bribery than against anti-Semitism. At the head of the procession, there was a model with the following inscription, "The PZPR is the leading power of the Polish nation, the continuer of the best traditions of working people."⁶⁵⁰

Between 1956 and 1957 around 40,000 Jews left Poland, and Poles of Jewish descent, of which half were repatriates from the Soviet Union.⁶⁵¹ It seems that the authorities not only looked favorably upon it but also enthusiastically treated the

648 AAN, KC PZPR, 1682, k. 331–335.

649 AAN, KC PZPR, 2414, k. 41a.

650 AAN, KC PZPR, 1685, k. 52–64.

651 Andrzej Skrzypek, "O drugiej repatriacji..." op. cit., 69.

requests of people who decided to return to Israel.⁶⁵² It was the victory of the legitimizing strategy proposed by Zenon Nowak during the VII Plenum—as would become apparent later, it was not the last victory of the Natolińcy.

Thanks to Gomułka, his hardline in negotiations with the Russians and the language he used with the nation the communist authorities, for the first time in the history of People's Poland, were able to regain social legitimacy. More strictly speaking, the new leading staff, as personified by the First Secretary of the PZPR, solely enjoyed social trust. The consequence of the October breakthrough was also the partial reconstruction of the self-legitimizing faith of the dominant groups in the charisma of the party and its leadership—even though it did not achieve the level of enthusiasm of the Stalinist period's "storm and stress." On the other hand, the question is to what degree the state and its institutions stopped being viewed as foreign and external. It seems that the degree of their rejection due to their foreignness changed, but it is difficult to say something more concrete. Certainly, we could not speak about the positive relation of subservient groups to systemic principles (the way of organizing mechanisms of exercising power), international alliances, or the ruling party.⁶⁵³ After October there was a serious

652 "In connection with the large number of Jews, who emigrated in the years 1956–1957, striving to return to Poland the Secretariat has decided: The MSW will call together a commission that will include a representative of the MSA and the Central Committee of the PZPR with the goal of examining requests and making decisions about the return of some mixed marriages from Israel. The requests regarding the return to the country of outstanding professionals and scholars ought to be coordinated with the Central Committee Secretariat on a case by case basis. All costs connected with eventual returns to Poland from Israel ought to be completely covered by those returning. Those returning will not be treated as repatriates and will not be able to take advantage of State aid that is given to repatriates. Certain people in the party and the TSKŻ in Poland have taken advantage of returns from Israel in order to politically help Jews, especially for Jews repatriating from the USSR. The Party instructions will not take into consideration former members of the PZPR who have already returned, or will return from Israel" (*Protokół nr 145 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 8 I 1958, AAN, KC PZPR, 1687, k. 11).

653 Paweł Machcewicz's hypothesis that "The existing system stopped being treated in the collective consciousness as exclusively imposed from the outside, anti-Polish, held up by external forces, and only serving their interests—as a foreign and painful intrusion into the national body, as a festering wound" seems risky (*Polski rok 1956*, op. cit., 247). We obviously have no way of confirming this, but we can suspect that the evaluations of Poles in 1956 regarding specific elements of the system were diverse. To put it another way, I doubt that a decisive majority of non-party Poles would say that the PZPR, the most important part of the system, is "our" Polish party.

fall in the number of those who desired to join its ranks. If the party was enjoying social support, then Gomułka would not have to appeal to voting without exception for its candidates. The members of the party even admitted that the PZPR, and its politics, does not have social acceptance.⁶⁵⁴

The category that seems to best describe the relation of the society to the party and the reigning order is “pragmatic acquiescence.” The stabilizer, whose value cannot be overestimated, appeared to be a general belief, taken from the experi-

654 Roman Zambrowski: “If we judge that there is presently a weakening of the leading role of the party, then this happened as a result of very serious social-political processes, which took place among the working class and among the peasants, among the intelligentsia, processes which were taking place under the influence of not only events in our country, but also on an international scale, and that these processes created a certain arrangement of political powers in the country” (*Z wystąpienia Tow. Zambrowskiego...*, op. cit., k. 21). Jerzy Morawski: “All of us are bothered by this question: do the wider circles of our society understand and support our politics? It is obvious that our society is not homogeneous! It is torn apart by class contradictions. Besides that, within it there appear non-antagonistic conflicts and contradictions. However, if we look at the working masses, upon the working class, working peasants, the greater part of the intelligentsia—do they support us? We cannot say that a substantial majority of the working masses does not understand our politics. Clearly, they understand it and generally praise it . . . Despite this, we have not been able to secure active support to the degree we need. Their relationship toward our achievements is not hot, but lukewarm. The following stance appears even among many employees of our organs of power and among some of the workers: we’ll see what will come of this . . . Overall, there is still a clear disconnect between understanding and even acknowledging our politics, for the actions of the leadership of the party, especially Comrade Gomułka, and an active engagement of hearts and minds for its realization by people where they stand. Where do the sources of this lie? We do not reach for the deepest sources of a ‘national character’ [we know about our ‘straw fire,’ the weak habits of social discipline]. Everything also cannot be explained by the shock the whole nation has undergone in the last two years. These causes are obviously in play, but there are other actual causes, that strengthen their effects. I believe that the following, among others, belong to such actual causes: 1. Disenchantment with the fact that the improvements after October did not occur as quickly, and to the degree, as was expected 2. the impression that in our country everything gets gradually stolen, that speculators are swarming, and that the party and the government are inadequately fighting against this 3. and, this is the chief thing, there are symptoms of doubting in socialism among many people, the loss of a clear perspective for the socialist development of the country” (*Stenogram referatu wygłoszonego na centralnym kursie aktywu propagandowego*, 17 IX 1957, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-272, k. 227).

ences of October and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, that there is no alternative to the geopolitical order. This scarcity of legitimation would rebound on the stabilization of the system in the 1960's when Gomułka's staff, especially he himself, began to lose social sympathy. Toward the end of 1956, not much indicated this coming. The return of Gomułka from Moscow, where he participated in bilateral negotiations, was part of a long series of triumphs. On November 21st Mieczysław Jastrun noted:

Yes, this is a fact. We are free. It might be within defined boundaries, but free. I write these words with a feeling of great relief. And not only this: I feel how the feeling of loneliness is leaving me. About the fundamental matters the communists think like the non-communists. This is the best proof of the beginning of the end of communism as it has been understood until now.⁶⁵⁵

655 Mieczysław Jastrun, *Dziennik. Wybór...*, op. cit., 61.

Chapter 8

“But It Is Nonetheless a Progressive Nationalism...” (1957–1970)

It is arguable whether October was really the beginning of the end of communism.⁶⁵⁶ Without a doubt, in the history of the nationalist legitimization of the communist authorities in Poland, it constituted an event that cannot be passed over. Once again it was proven that without reaching for national elements the rulers could not count on grabbing the ears and obedience of the ruled. To a great degree, referring to nationalist legitimization was dictated by the ongoing social-political situation of the system, a deep legitimization crisis. However, it would be an oversimplification to only see instrumental motives in it.

Much indicates that Gomułka attempted to conduct a politics more independent of the Soviet Union.⁶⁵⁷ He certainly did not expect to abandon systematic principles (the leading role of the party, Marxism-Leninism as the basis of legitimization, alliance with the USSR). He probably only desired to take advantage of the moment and widen the margins of autonomy of the PZPR toward the USSR. Support from communist China, given during the heady days of October, was a favorable circumstance. A published dispatch from the Polish ambassador in Peking to Warsaw suggests that the Chinese were supposed to have influenced Khrushchev to seek armed intervention in Poland.⁶⁵⁸

656 See more: Krystyna Kersten, “Rok 1956 – Przełom? Kontynuacja? Punkt zwrotny?,” *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały* 3 (1997) 7–18; Andrzej Friszke, “Jakim państwem była Polska po 1956 r.? Spór historyków,” *Więź* (February 1996): 131–146

657 On foreign policy during this period see: Wanda Jarząbek, “*W sprawach niemieckich nasz głos musi mieć swą wagę...*” *Problem niemiecki w polityce zagranicznej od października 1956 do rozpoczęcia tzw. drugiego kryzysu berlińskiego w listopadzie 1958* (unpublished manuscript); Andrzej Korzon, “Kłopotliwy satelita. Stosunki polsko-radzieckie 1947–1957,” in: *Rola i miejsce Polski w Europie 1914–1957*, ed. Andrzej Koryn (Warsaw: IH PAN, 1994), 152–162.

658 “Depesza szyfrowa Stanisława Kiryluka do Adama Rapackiego, 4 XII 1956,” in: *Chiny a polski Październik 1956*, ed. Andrzej Werblan, *Dziś* 10 (1996): 127. See also: Andrzej Werblan, “Czy Chińczycy uratowali Gomułkę?,” *Polityka*, 26.X.1991., Krzysztof Persak, “Kryzys stosunków...,” op. cit., 39–40.

Gomułka considered himself to be a realist who soberly walked with feet firmly planted on the ground.⁶⁵⁹ Therefore, he was probably aware of the risks of the game he was playing. The degree of the risk was plentifully illustrated by the case of Hungary. This is why he gave up on it when the Chinese drew up the impassable boundary of their support. It was the unity of the socialist camp and the leading role of the USSR in it at the time.⁶⁶⁰ As a result, this signified a divestment of illusions about the possibility of Polish leadership leading to a more independent politics; also a resignation, in line with Russian expectations, from a liberal course in internal politics, and, what follows from this, also a departure from the October legitimation formula. This was not the only possible interpretation for “Gomułka’s retreat from October.” Another explanation, more widespread, proclaims that the retreat occurred according to the measure of the stabilization of the new leadership of the party and the country. However, this explanation does not take into consideration the fact that the same party authorities evaluated the situation as still being bad.⁶⁶¹ Why would they then give up on the sole, as it turned out, effective legitimation formula, that is, from stressing the national character of its governments?

The departure from a nationalist legitimation of power was announced during the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR, convened toward the middle of May 1957. In his paper, the First Secretary attacked revisionism while outlining a vision of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and the ongoing “class conflict.” He called talking about “national communists” and “national communism” nonsense. As if explaining himself for what he said during the VIII Plenum he stressed then that the principles of proletarian internationalism have not been disturbed. The crushing of the uprising in Hungary he called “a sad, but una-

659 Gomułka’s self-definition: “Gomułka was never a tightrope walker and always walked with his feet planted on the ground . . .” (“XX rocznica strajków chłopskich. Przemówienie wygłoszone 17 VIII 1957 r. na centralnej akademii w Krakowie,” *Trybuna Ludu*, 18.VIII.1957).

660 During conversations between Gomułką the premier of China, Zhou Enlai, during January 1956 the latter said: “We are glad that the PZPR did not publicly debate the position taken by KZPR, which could’ve weakened our camp. It is also right that the PZPR did not enflame national passions. Your tactics allowed you to settle the problems without public discussion, which the imperialists might have exploited . . . I share Comrade Gomułka’s opinions about equality and sovereignty, but we ought not forget about the leading role of the USSR. This leading role is primary, equality and errors—these are matters of lesser weight” (“Rozmowy Władysława Gomułki z Zhou Enlaiem w 1957 r.,” ed. Andrzej Werblan, *Dzieje Najnowsze* 4 [1997]: 132).

661 See: Chapter 7, footnote 93 of the present volume.

voidable necessity.” “Our independence and sovereignty,” said Gomułka, “resides, above all, in the Polish-Soviet alliance.” He defined socialism as the opposition to all nationalisms. However, it is true, that he did not negate a “national road to socialism.” The fragment on this topic he devoted to, above all, considerations about “general regularities” in the building up of socialism and the experience of the Soviet Union in this regard. The specific features of the Polish road to socialism were supposed to be worker’s councils, peasant economic councils, and the co-existence of the Church with the socialist state. The uniqueness of the “Polish Way” was also about the rulers taking into consideration the national experiences of Poles:

A specific feature in the psyche of the Polish nation shaped by history is, for example, a specific sensitivity about the country’s sovereignty. It was formed by the partitions of Poland and the century of its thousand-year statehood tradition being under bondage. At the same time, our national psyche is burdened by pernicious traditions of the nobility, an anarchist democracy, as it is also burdened by defiance of not respecting authority, of not following its orders, rooted in the period of its partitions. Our nation is marked by a far-reaching individualism in everyday life, and, at the same time, by the feeling of solidarity in standing up against an external enemy.⁶⁶²

It seems that these words from Gomułka were directed mainly toward the authorities in the Kremlin. He was attempting to make them realize that the building of socialism in Poland has no chance without taking into account the aspirations and national experiences of its citizens. Was he attempting in this way, for example, to achieve permission to step away from collectivization or achieve a greater margin of independence? It is difficult to say. Perhaps, when speaking about the deep feeling of solidarity among Poles toward the “external enemy,” Gomułka wanted to warn the “Soviet friends” against the consequences of a too far-reaching interference in Polish affairs? These are only guesses.

What counts is that Gomułka believed what he said. He considered Poles to be especially touchy about the question of national sovereignty, to have anarchic tendencies, to be contrarian individualists, and to be disobedient toward authority. He was sincerely convinced that the anarchic legacy of the nobility was not only the downfall of noble Poland, but also bourgeois Poland, and was a serious threat to People’s Poland. The negative elements of this stereotype became even stronger with the passage of time. Comrade Wiesław was convinced to the very end that Poles are characterized by “unbridled anarchism, wild willfulness, contempt for

662 “Węzłowe problemy polityki partii. Referat I sekretarza KC PZPR Wł. Gomułki na IX Plenum,” *Nowe Drogi* 6 (1957).

the law and the rule of law, and feeling any sort of responsibility for their country, for its future.”⁶⁶³ This was an exceedingly harsh assessment of his own nation and only to a small degree can it be explained by the author’s bitterness at the moment of its formulation. It was the most important premise of the mission that Gomułka was convinced he had to fulfill for Poland. He thought of himself as a providential head of state upon whom depended the future and good of the country. This conviction was, it seems to me, a significant part of his self-legitimation.

It would be easy to think that his reflections on the “national psyche” of the Poles did not come from the works of Marxist historians. He sought inspiration in Józef Szujski’s *History of Poland* and other works from the circle of historians of the Krakow School.⁶⁶⁴

The final resolution of the IX Plenum once again reiterated that “The stance of the party does not have, and cannot have, anything in common with the so-called ‘national communism’ invented by imperialist propaganda to split up socialist countries.” The authors of the resolution justified their pretension to rule on the grounds of Marxism-Leninism and the chiliastic promise of socialism’s ultimate victory,

Our party stands unchangingly upon the ground of Marxism-Leninism, which is its scientific ideological weapon in the fight for socialism’s triumph. The truth of our ideology has been confirmed by the progress of modern human history whose course is moving inevitably toward the liquidation of the capitalist system and the triumph of socialism.⁶⁶⁵

Gomułka’s paper was well-received in the Kremlin. Whereas arguments about the necessity of considering the “national specifics” did not exactly convince Khrushchev. He was, according to Russian historians, the last true believer in the mandate of the Bolshevik Revolution among the post-Stalinist generation of Soviet leaders.⁶⁶⁶

Thus, he associated the “national road” only with the betrayal of the revolution’s idea, *eo ipso* with the undermining of the Soviet leadership. A clear signal of the Soviet side’s dissatisfaction with the situation in Poland was the modest and restrained, in comparison with the national holidays of other “friendly” countries,

663 “List Władysława Gomułki z 27 III 1971 do członków KC PZPR,” in: *Gomułka i inni*, op. cit., 225.

664 He even recommended *History of Poland* as mandatory school reading, *Ibid.*, 227.

665 “Uchwała IX Plenum KC PZPR o sytuacji i najważniejszych zadaniach partii,” *Nowe Drogi* 6 (1957): 143, 146.

666 Wladislaw Zubok and Konstantin Pleszakow, *Zimna wojna zza kulis Kremla. Od Stalina do Chruszczowa* (Warsaw: KiW, 1999), 221.

course of the celebrations of 22 July 1957 in Moscow.⁶⁶⁷ However, Khrushchev also in a blunter manner, intimated what he thought about the situation in Poland. He met with Gomułka just a few days after the Plenum between the end of August and the start of September 1957 in Crimea.⁶⁶⁸

During the vacation talks, the Soviet leader did not especially hide his indignation at the leadership of the PZPR. He thought that “all members of the Political Bureau besides Zawadzki, Loga, and Jędrzychowski, about whom nothing bad can be said, have anti-Soviet attitudes and conduct their politics in such a way. Cyrankiewicz denigrated the Soviet Union during the time of his last trip through the Asian countries” (here Khrushchev was relying on information from Chinese comrades). The company of those “at fault” included: Morawski, Ochab, Zambrowski (“an enemy of the Soviet Union”), and Adam Rapacki. Only Gomułka and Kazimierz Mijal enjoyed the confidence of Khrushchev. “You people have chased away all supporters of the Soviet Union,” he said further on, “and in their place you have put the enemies of the Soviet Union, all sorts of Jews and others.”

Jews in the ruling elites were not the only accusation Khrushchev put to Gomułka. The main one was, “You do not admit to the leading role of the Soviet Union. Maybe Poland wants to lead and take over the leading role? Lead! You spit at us and then you demand help from us at the same time. Who are we supposed to help, our enemies?” After such accusations, Nikita Sergeyevich moved onto threats: “If Poland does not want friendly relations with us, then we can do without Poland. After all, we have excellent fraternal relations with the Germans, the DDR... We also have people who hate Poland, but we do not let them act... [they] think that the borders are unjust, that they should run according with the line demarcated by Curzon.”⁶⁶⁹ Even though Khrushchev’s got things mixed up, because the Curzon Line presupposed Polish ownership of Grodno and Lviv, the allusion was clear (the Soviet Union can stop backing the existing territorial form of Poland). Gomułka’s son, who was spending his vacation with his father, also remembered later statements from Khrushchev, “possibly voiced with the aim of softening a prior controversy, about the need for understanding the specifics of Poland, that longstanding grudges have their sources in the difficult and

667 “It seems this was no accident, but the result of determined attitudes” (“Notatka ambasadora PRL o obchodach 22 lipca w ZSRR z 10 VIII 1957 r.” In: Andrzej Paczkowski, *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego PRL – ZSRR 1956–1970* (London: Aneks, 1998), 85–86.

668 “Nieznana rozmowa Władysława Gomułki z Nikitą S. Chruszczowem,” ed. Andrzej Werblan, *Dziś* 5 (1993): 81.

669 *Ibid.*, 82.

frequently tragic history of the Polish nation.” The Soviet leader did not change his critical evaluation and reminded Gomułka about the lack of collectivization in agriculture.⁶⁷⁰

The Kremlin’s diktat backed by blackmail was effective. After a period of national turmoil, the authorities moved toward cooling down national emotions while simultaneously undertaking an attempt to restore Marxism—perhaps the last such serious attempt during the history of People’s Poland. There was much writing in the press about the “rebirth of our idea.” During internal party meetings, there were comments about “ideological resistance.”⁶⁷¹

The Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee in January 1958 acknowledged the “strengthening among the masses faith in socialism, deepening of the socialist worldview of the party members” as the most important task of party propaganda. With this goal in mind a strengthening of the fight against manifestations of nationalism, that is, anti-Soviet views and sentiments, was postulated. Putting greater emphasis upon the education of the masses in the “spirit of internationalism”⁶⁷² was anticipated. In 1958 there was more concentration upon the celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the Polish Communist Party of Poland’s, rather than on Poland regaining its independence, an event that they tried to pass over in silence.⁶⁷³ The year passed under the shadow of the attacks upon Yugoslavia, which was accused of “revisionism,” but *de facto* it was being called out for bad politics of independence from the USSR and going down “its own path to socialism.” Thus, speaking about the “Polish path to socialism” stopped being *une monnaie courante*. Mieczysław F. Rakowski, at the time the assistant editor of the weekly *Polityka*, noted the following in his journal under the date 24 August 1958:

670 Ryszard Strzelecki-Gomułka, “Kilka wspomnień o ojcu,” *Dziś* 10 (1996): 121.

671 “... above all, we must put up an ideological resistance, and in more visible cases we should not ignore administrative-organizational measures beginning with censorship and ending with removing people from posts.” (*Z wystąpienia Tow. Zambrowskiego w Szkole Centralnej*, IV 1957, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-272, k. 13).

672 *Tezy w sprawie najbliższych zadań propagandy partyjnej*, 9 I 1957, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-223, k. 128, 129.

673 The KPP was presented as simultaneously deeply patriotic and internationalist. “We ought to widely demonstrate the deep patriotism and the consequent internationalism of the KPP, which has always been an unbending fighter for the happiness and freedom of the Polish nation, for the fatherland’s bright, which at the same time would be a faithful division of the international communist movement” (*Uchwała KC PZPR w sprawie spopularyzowania rewolucyjnych tradycji Komunistycznej Partii Polski*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1682, k. 12).

Artur [Starewicz] was supposed to write an article for us about the Polish road to socialism. Unfortunately, nothing came of it. I don't think he is afraid. These days people *don't like* to talk too much about this road... The formulation *Polish road* is going out of circulation. I asked AW [Andrzej Werblan] whether it is forbidden to talk of a 'Polish road'. He was outraged, but later admitted 'we do not want to agitate.'⁶⁷⁴

The reluctance to speak of a "Polish road" was also established among the "bottom" of the party.⁶⁷⁵

Khrushchev could feel satisfied. He expressed it by spending (along with Mikoyan and Suslov) over three-and-a-half hours at a party hosted by the Polish embassy on the occasion of July 22nd, which was, in the opinion of a Polish diplomat, "an unparalleled precedent here." While raising a toast, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was supposed to have said, "We can hear steps in Poland in a joint march."⁶⁷⁶

However, earlier, more precisely toward the middle of November 1957, there was a meeting of representatives of twelve communist parties from the countries of the "camp" without Yugoslavia, which concluded with a joint declaration containing the list of "the qualities appropriate for all countries who enter the road to socialism."⁶⁷⁷ Among them we find theses about the revolutionary "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "class battle" between the capitalist and socialist worlds, about the Soviet union as the "first and most powerful socialist power," and about the "unity and brotherly cooperation between socialist countries," as well as about the principles of Marxism-Leninism and "proletarian internationalism" as the foundations of mutual relations. There was also a declaration of a decisive battle "to overcome the survivals of bourgeois nationalism and chauvinism."

674 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1958–1962*, (Warsaw: Iskry, 1998), 35.

675 The Propaganda Secretary from the Voivodeship Committee in Lublin: "I would like to consider . . . the problem of nationalism, upon matters such as sovereignty. It has become grafted onto our work that the question of sovereignty is improperly understood by the party apparatus itself. Some fear seems to overcome the comrades when they have to speak about sovereignty. I believe this is the result of certain habits and customs related to . . . talking about relations with the Soviet Union, when speaking about some distortion in previous periods, about some improper, abnormal relation, well, it creates a sort of dread" (*Materiały z narady sekretarzy propagandy*, 4 XII 1957 r., AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-237, k. 230, 231).

676 "Depesza Tadeusza Gede do Józefa Winiewicza, 22.VII.1958, cited in: Wanda Jarząbek, "W sprawach niemieckich..." op. cit.

677 "Deklaracja narady przedstawicieli partii komunistycznych i robotniczych, Moskwa 14–16 XI 1957," *Trybuna Ludu*, 22.XI.1957.

“These qualities,” the document goes on to say, “appear everywhere among the simultaneous great variety of historically shaped national qualities and traditions, which must be strictly taken into account... The ignoring of national qualities by the proletarian party inevitably leads it to break away from life, the masses, and inevitably hurts the socialist cause...”⁶⁷⁸

The last sentence above is especially important from the point of view of our considerations. According to Adam Ciołkosz’s opinion, Khrushchev’s conception, expressed in the declaration, “was supposed to constitute a unique compromise between the interests of the party and state bureaucracies of the Soviet Union and the interests of also bureaucracies in other countries of the ‘camp.’”⁶⁷⁹ Essentially, the authorities in the Kremlin consented to the use of nationalism for the legitimization of regimes in the countries of the bloc under two conditions: first, so long as it did not violate the cohesion of the “socialist community,” second, that it would not be directed against the Soviet Union. In a certain sense, Khrushchev had no way out. Remembering the events in Poland and in Hungary he had to take into account the national specifics of the vassal countries if he wanted to avoid similar rebellions. It was probably expected that socialism dressed upon in national colors would take root more quickly in the minds of people. According to Peter Zwick, during the period of de-Stalinization, there was, as he called it, “a letting of national communism off the leash.”⁶⁸⁰ The declaration we have been discussing played a large role in this. It would be an error to overvalue it; it sanctioned but did not initiate, evolution in the direction of a wider than before use of nationalism to legitimize communist regimes.

This might seem paradoxical when we recall that during this period, that is, at the turn of the 1950’s into the 1960’s Marxism was pulling many people from countries in Africa, Asia, and South America. The victory of the Cuban Revolution began the next phase of communism’s expansion in the world. However, things went differently in the European socialist countries, where there was an inevitable process, known from the French Revolution, of the “weakening of the revolutionary ethos.”⁶⁸¹ The weakening was running its course in all the European “people’s democracies,” although not in a uniform tempo. It was always connected with the rise in the meaning of nationalism as an instrument of legitimizing power. Max Weber already noted that “after the emotional excitement of revolution comes the return to the traditional daily grind, the hero of faith disappears, and, above

678 Ibid.

679 Adam Ciołkosz, *Od Marksa do Chruszczowa* (London: „Dokument Chwili,” 1962), 24.

680 Peter Zwick, *National Communism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983).

681 Jerzy Baszkiewicz, *Maksymilian Robespierre* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1989, s. 268.

all, faith itself evaporates or—and this is even more effective—becomes part of the conventional phrase mongering of political philistines and technicians.”⁶⁸² We should add to this Jerzy Topolski’s observations that the effectiveness of revolutionary legitimation is generally limited to the first post-revolutionary generation. People evaluate ideological contents almost exclusively from the angle of what remains of them after they are translated into the language of the everyday, what materializes from them.⁶⁸³ The first verification of ideological arguments came with the thaw. Later, its weakness was also exposed in the economic sector. As the 50’s turned into the 60’s in all socialist countries there were permanent shortages in consumer goods, especially foodstuffs. In 1959 in Poland the catastrophic results in agriculture led to a rise in the prices of meats and fats, but without any compensations elsewhere. The building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 prevented the depopulation of East Germany whose citizens were running away to the West. The situation in the Soviet Union itself, which had to continually import food, did not look better.

During the second half of the 1960’s Poland entered into a phase of structural economic crisis—the leadership of the PZPR of the time was not able to find a way to escape.⁶⁸⁴ “We currently a catastrophic market supply” said Gomułka during a September 1965 meeting of the Political Bureau. “We are supplying the populace with less meat than in 1958... I see no way out if we will not change this. These are bad habits, routine in the apparatus. This might cost us very dearly . . . We are going towards catastrophe, into a swamp, we must be aware of this.”⁶⁸⁵ Even if Gomułka was exaggerating, drawing a black picture of the situation, then it was not by much. Social attitudes could have been described as stably not the best. There were constant strikes grounded in economic issues. Periodical shortages in supplies, official and hidden hikes, and ideas from the authorities of the type “Mondays will be meatless days and construction on a budget” could not have positively influenced the reception of the propagated ideology. At the same time news about the economic achievements of the capitalist countries that reached the country ever more widely depreciated the socialist order in the eyes of society. The consequence, at the very least, was the doubt of the ruled in the “rightness of the chosen path” and the accelerated erosion of the Chiliastic faith of the rulers in

682 Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” in *The Vocation Lectures*, eds. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2004), 90.

683 Janusz Grell, *Wylanianie elity władzy w Polsce Ludowej a kultura polityczna* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1989), 130–131.

684 Zbigniew Landau, “Etapy rozwoju Polski Ludowej,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 2 (1987).

685 *Notatka z posiedzenia BP KC*, 17 IX 1965, AAN, KC PZPR, 2863, k. 14, 15.

the victory of communism all over the world. The ranks of the “true communists” melted away, even if they were never especially numerous. The party apparatus of the Gomułka era was in no way reminiscent of the generation that “with a song on their lips” built “a new Poland.” “Something bad is happening in our party,” noted Rakowski, “first and foremost idealism is perishing. The way is being made toward cynicism and an ‘I don’t care’ attitude in a big way.”⁶⁸⁶

There was also the appearance of pathological phenomena in full strength, above all, the corruption of the functionaries on all levels. In the occurrence of a “second economy,” Kenneth Jowitt proposed seeing the evolution of a system, characteristic for all countries modelled on the Soviet model, in the direction of neo-traditionalism.⁶⁸⁷ Thus, not only did the revolutionary impulse show itself to be too short-lived, but also the revolutionary reconstruction as well, which was, to a great extent, only superficial, especially in the sphere of stances and habits inherited from the past. The system deprived of the revolutionary impetus multiplied the old models instead of destroying them, it adjusted to the conditions of the country where it was fated to function. An example is the ceremonies used during the funerals of communist leaders, for example, Bierut (1956) or Zawadzki (1964), which were nearly an exact copy of the settings of funerals from the time of the 2nd Commonwealth.⁶⁸⁸

However, the revolutionary engineering underwent its greatest crisis in the sphere of national consciousness. It did not succeed in remodeling Poles into convinced internationalists. On the contrary, the isolationism of the country, and therefore the practical lack of personal contacts with the representatives of other nations and cultures, only strengthened xenophobic stances and views. The turn toward nationalism had its social conditions. Stefan Kisielewski wrote about them in his own inimitable way,

I am amused by the process of ‘Endecja-izing’ of communism, the process that I foresaw, since if Poland always had an ‘Endecja’ populace, then it has to be given a ‘national’ ideology, especially when the governments of intellectual masquerades, the products of various Bermans, etc., came to an end. The product of the ‘post-agrarian revolution’

686 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1958–1962...*, op. cit., 195. While summarizing the year 1963 this author noted: “Young wolves are growing at an accelerated tempo within the ruling apparatus, real managers for whom ideology doubtlessly has a smaller meaning than the execution of power alone” (Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1963–1966* [Warsaw: Iskry, 1999], 105).

687 Kenneth Jowitt, “Soviet Neotraditionalism: The Political corruption of a Leninist Regime,” *Soviet Studies* 3 (1983): 275–297.

688 Marcin Zaremba, “Nieboszczyk w służbie partii,” *Mówią Wieki* 11 (1999).

were party functionaries of a peasant origin. In order to calm their conscience they were given a 'national' ideology, embellished, for the sake of tradition, in anti-Semitism.⁶⁸⁹

Much indicates that sensitivity to the national values, which Poles demonstrated with such power in October 1956, did not undergo any serious changes. Nothing came of earlier councils, or the giving away of free tickets to party activists to international sporting events—during which it pretty much became a tradition for the public to boo the players from the Soviet Union.⁶⁹⁰ The movie *Knights of the Teutonic Order* brought two million viewers to cinemas over the span of a few months after its premiere. Out of the two traditions—national and revolutionary—Poles decidedly sided with the first one. The second, despite the efforts of the authorities, was rejected by them in all its forms.⁶⁹¹

The consequences of the dying of the faith in the rapid construction of communism were also combined with the much slower progressing, nearly imperceptibly, erosion of the language that described communism. The universal language of Marxism-Leninism was losing its power of influencing the masses, and its power was never really bewildering to start with. It was also ceasing to be an effective tool for describing the changing social reality. Beatlemania, or other phenomena of Western counter-culture, could not be explained in the category of class battle. Further complications came from events in, as it was frequently described at the time, the Third World. The gaining of independence of a number of nations and ethnic groups faced the party ideologues with a problem that could not be solved by using the concepts of classical Marxism. After all, how was it possible to explain the genesis of anti-colonial revolutions in countries that were, to a great degree, pre-industrial, in which there was not only no working class but also no social group that could be classified as the bourgeoisie? At the very least a partial divorce from the *Communist Manifesto* seemed unavoidable. The widespread use of the formula “national-liberationist movements,” signified at least a partial acceptance

689 Stefan Kisielewski, *Dzienniki* (Warsaw: Iskry, 1996), 290.

690 Notatka o zakończeniu XV Wyścigu Pokoju, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-710, k. 27, 28 (document pointed out by Paweł Sowiński).

691 The Secretary of Propaganda of the Municipal Committee in Lublin: “. . . it happens that managers of cinemas most frequently support Western films, whereas there is weak attendance for films from the People's Democracies. Comrade Mysłowski proposes that the National Councils should exercise their right to raise ticket prices for Western films, and to lower them for films with low attendance from the countries of the People's Republics” (*Protokół z narady Sekretarzy Propagandy i Kierowników Ośrodków Propagandy Partyjnej odbytej w Wydziale Propagandy KW z Lublina*, 5 I 1960, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-475, k. 12).

of slogans and actions with a nationalist substratum. The already mentioned declaration of twelve communist parties from November 1957 clearly said that the guarantee of victory in colonial countries is the “uniting of various patriotic and democratic powers.”⁶⁹² There was an attempt to paper-over Marxism’s defeat by arguing that, for example, the “national-liberationist revolutions” constitute one manifestation of the end stage of imperialism. However, the general impression of concessions made to nationalism could not be erased.

Despite various attempts (i.e. the XIII Plenum of the Central Committee in July 1963), the Polish authorities were not able to do anything to replace the waning ideology with anything, other than nationalism. Nothing better was happening when it came to the ideas for resolving the crisis situation in other countries of the bloc, perhaps with the exception of Romania, but more about that later. Fear of radical changes dominated everywhere, not so much political ones (these, as a matter of fact, were never taken into consideration), as they were economic-social in nature. From the middle of the 1950’s European communist countries went adrift; they were “pushed” from one side by the nostalgia of the party elites for Stalinist order, and, on the other, by increasingly clear developmental barriers for raw materials, technology, and mobilization. In Hungary, the answer to stagnation was the reform that began with 1968, which opened the stage known as “goulash socialism.” The residents of the Soviet Union could feel, even though they were in abject poverty, that they are at least the citizens of an empire. Stabilization in East Germany was achieved in large measure thanks to immense help flowing from the USSR, which, in the opinion of experts in the Kremlin, outstripped the per capita American aid to West Germany.⁶⁹³ Its redistribution was served by, hitherto unknown in size for countries of the Eastern Bloc, a system of welfare (paternalism). The East German regime did not give up, besides this, on other “classical” instruments that served to ensure stability: coercion, socialization (education), and state control over all manifestation of social life.⁶⁹⁴

In Poland, the deficit of legitimation was once again being mended by the growing significance of the security services. After the experiences that the Poznań events were for the authorities they brought to life special units for battling

692 *Deklaracja narady przedstawicieli...*

693 Władysław Zubok and Konstantyn Pleszakow, *Zimna wojna zza...*, op. cit., 304.

694 Peter Ludz, “Legitimacy in a divided nation...,” op. cit., 165; Henry Krisch, “Political Legitimation in the German Democratic Republic,” in: *Political Legitimation in Communist...*, op. cit., 111–125.

crowds.⁶⁹⁵ There was also an attempt to copy the practices of other countries in the construction of a welfare state. They pointed to the achievements of socialism in the field of social security for citizens and the elimination of unemployment. The limitation of perspectives for development characteristic for the decade of the 1960's, and living off of the proverbial 2,000 [PLN], meant that these efforts could only bring limited effects. At the same time, the existing pillar of the system: the faith in Gomułka's charisma, which he seemed to possess in October 1956, seemed to clearly wobble by the second half of the 1960's. As Władysław Bieńkowski has written:

. . . never during our thousand-year history did any leader have behind him such unanimous support of the whole nation, no man was invested with so many hopes and received such enthusiasm. This immense capital of social trust... was squandered in 14 years, the trust gradually turned into disappointment, indifference, and discouragement, and, in the end, took on the form of overt distrust and hostility.⁶⁹⁶

The process of moving away from revolutionary legitimation for the sake of legitimation based upon national phraseology was not in the least specific to the PRL. It was also running its course in the remaining countries of the Eastern Bloc, even if it was different in each and every one of them.

The conflict between two of the largest socialist countries, the Soviet Union and China, became the symbol of the 1960's. The imperial and nationalist ambitions of the leaders of both these countries lay at the foundation of this conflict. The uniqueness of the multinational Soviet Union inclined toward avoiding in politics the internal use of nationalism to legitimate the system. In the early 60's the official line that the rapprochement between the Soviet nations was accomplished and that national identification plays no role in the lives of people was obligatory.⁶⁹⁷ Gagarin was presented as a "Soviet man," not as a Russian. This does not mean that they completely abandoned the legitimation of the regime using national threads. They constituted something more like the *form* than the *content* of the new system of Soviet rituals created in the 1960's.⁶⁹⁸ An especially important place in this system was occupied by celebrations of anniversaries connected to World War II. They were overgrown with a whole complex of rituals that were

695 Antoni Dudek, Tomasz Marszałkowski, *Walki uliczne w PRL* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Geo, 1999), 59–60.

696 Władysław Bieńkowski, *Socjologia klęski, Dramat gomułkowskiego Czternastolecia*, (Paris: Kultura, 1971), 14.

697 Lapidus Gail Warshofsky, "Ethnonationalism and Political Stability: The Soviet Case," *World Politics* 4 (1984): 555–580.

698 Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers...*, op. cit., 143.

used to mobilize the whole society. The most important holidays were the celebrations of May 9th, Victory Day, which in the Soviet Union, starting with 1965, became a day off from work. According to Christel Lane, the complex of values expressed during Victory Day was part of a general “patriotic tradition,” which, in turn, took up a central place in the ideology of Soviet Marxism-Leninism.⁶⁹⁹ It would not have worked this way if not for the still authentically living memory among residents of the Soviet Union of the heroic efforts from the times of World War II. The patriotic, revolutionary, and worker traditions were tightly interwoven, and the emotions evoked by the first were supposed to influence the moral coloring of the two others. This approach could be partly effective only in Russia because communism was a native product. Celebrations of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War legitimized not only the social-political system but also, as Lane has noted, the worldwide balance of power. It affirmed the moral, political, and military advantage of the Soviet nation against the growing dissatisfaction in the Eastern Bloc (*vide* Poland) and the West’s continued underestimating of the Soviet contribution to the war.⁷⁰⁰

The rulers in the remaining countries of the bloc were not constricted, at least not to the same degree, by the multinational character of the state (Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were the exceptions). They could, therefore, let themselves more openly feed on nationalism in the process of legitimation than could take place in the USSR, however, under one condition: this nationalist could not be directed against the “fatherland of the international proletariat.” Eastern Germany constituted an interesting example of evolution toward nationalist legitimation. During the first, “heroic period,” of the East German regime the propaganda especially strongly stressed the rebuilding of the country with the goal of realizing millenarian goals. The second period, connected to the stabilization process, was characterized by the appearance of totally different goals, above all, the fulfillment of economic and social security, and also the stressing of national values.⁷⁰¹ The nationalist ideology did not immediately achieve the status of one of the most important instruments of legitimation. The beginning of this evolution was the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. The ruling party began to search for some-

699 See: Christel Lane, “From Ideology to Political Religion: Recent Developments in Soviet Beliefs and Rituals in the Patriotic Tradition,” in: *Symbols of Power: The Aesthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, eds. Claes Arvidsson and Lars Erik Blomqvist (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), 85.

700 *Ibid.*, 91.

701 Henry Krisch, “Political Legitimation...” *op. cit.*

thing that would give the people a sense of belonging to the GDR, which would become “mine” and “our” state, different and better from the West.⁷⁰² Already halfway through the 1960’s one could see clearly the first distinct testimonies to these searches.⁷⁰³ The problem of legitimating the state automatically gave birth

702 Martin McCauley, “Legitimation in the German Democratic Republic,” in: ed. Paul Lewis, *Eastern Europe: Political...*, op. cit., 42, 47, 49.

703 The observations of a Polish journalist from his stay in East Germany at the start of 1965 are very interesting in this regard: “During a four-week stay in the GDR I have made the following observations: 1. The internal politics are calibrated toward getting closer to the people. This comes through on many planes a. changes in the forms of propaganda toward more digestible ones that avoid brutal forms, contrived arguments, and associations . . . c. The development of political-social satire and criticism . . . d. The development of light music including for strip-tease . . . e. At the same time a great improvement of the market (in comparison to 1961) is visible, both in quality and selection . . . They are developing social resources, on a wide scale there are trips and vacations abroad—in the European Eastern Bloc within the limits of one monthly pension of a skilled laborer [around 700–800 Marks]. The buying power in the GDR is around two times as large as in Poland. 2. In the GDR there is a campaign, which stresses the immensity of the destruction and damages that occurred during the war and the bestiality of the Western Allies [i.e. the bombing of Dresden is called a war crime], and they also organize mass annual anniversary celebrations in connection the bombing of Karl-Marx-Stadt, Jena, and so on. There is a systematic publication of longreads in many newspapers entitled “This happened 20 years ago” . . . there is an increase in memoirs, reportages, and articles about the German resistance movement . . . 3. I have the impression its own kind of nationalist elements are coming to life in the GDR . . . When I was in the GDR in 1961 none of the people I talked to admitted to coming from Polish lands. Currently, at least half of the 300 people that I have spoken with (starting with the taxi driver and ending with the director of a factory) stress the fact that either they or their families come from our lands. These were “unprovoked” statements, it seemed as if they wanted to stress this circumstance. Not infrequently I also heard their accounts of the evacuation, and the horrors connected to it, and so on. The article from *Der Morgen* is the most striking in this respect . . . which reports on a discussion during a party meeting with a certain German from Pomerania: why did he have to leave his fatherland, ‘Warum musste er seine Heimat verlassen?’ The article announces that discussion about this topic will continue . . . one is also struck by a strange attachment to tradition. The matter of the uniforms of the People’s Army of the GDR is known, but one must see the changing of the guard at the Mausoleum of Fascist Victims in Berlin—stylistically Prussian—and so on. The main radios tower of the GDR is called the ‘Deutschlandender,’ just as it was before 1945. The railway is still called the ‘Reichsbahn.’ I asked several people involved in political work why things are this way, but they had no answer. But a retired railway worker . . . told me directly, ‘the German trains still

to the question of the German nation whose official definition was introduced into the constitution only in 1974. It was written in it that the “GDR is a socialist nation of workers and peasants.” During the 1970’s the First Secretary of the East Germany communist party, Erich Honecker, argued for the existence of two German nations, but one German nationality. The socialist state was supposed to be the inheritor of the revolutionary traditions of the German working class and everything that was connected with the progressive history of Germany. There was also a partial rehabilitation of the Prussian state. Personalities hitherto recognized as villains—Frederick the Great, Luther, Clausewitz, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau—were shown in a new light. [279]

The authorities of Romania decidedly went the furthest of all the countries in the Bloc in using nationalism in the process of legitimating the system. The new line, named after the First Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, “the Dej line,” was initiated toward the end of the 1950’s. The starting point for it was the conviction of the political elites about the backwardness of the country combined with their conviction that within the frames of the Comecon an exit from the civilizational hole would not be possible. It was necessary to open the country to the West while simultaneously finding something that would allow for the mobilization of society to undertake the modernizing effort in order to accomplish this. In such circumstances, they reached for nationalism. They began to create a national myth that pointed to a supposed direct continuity of the Romanian nation with the ancient tribe of the Dacians, which for a long time resisted threats coming from the side of Rome, but when they were defeated they did not lose their unique characteristics (which were valued very positively). This put an end to the propaganda of the 1950’s, according to which Slavic influences were the most significant for the shaping of the Romanian nation. They started to oppose the Slavic influences to the Latin roots of the country, which made it into a kind of island of the Western, attached to Rome, civilization among the Slavic and Hungarian inheritors of the barbarian nomads. This was seen as a confirmation of the rights of Romania to uninhibited contacts with the West, which were beginning not only in economic politics, but also in a certain cultural openness experienced by the Romanian intelligentsia as an unexpected liberalization. However, this opening did not mean a cosmopolitization of Romanian culture, since it simultaneously

constitutes one Reich.’ These are all but details, but very telling. 4. In the GDR there is much stress put upon the growing influence of the GDR on the international arena” (Stanisław Albinowski, *Uwagi o sytuacji w NRD*, 27 III 1965, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/ XIX-97, k. 70–73).

stressed its folksiness.⁷⁰⁴ As in many nationalisms, it was suggested that the carrier of national values is, above all, the peasantry. The up till then defense of the working class and industry was balanced out by a defense of the peasantry and traditional country life. This process was accompanied, for the time being, in the symbolic sphere, with a distancing from the USSR.

The whole development was speeded up when, halfway through the 1960's, the position of the First Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party was taken over by Nicolae Ceausescu. He constituted a hybrid form of Marxism-Leninism, as noted by Gilberg Trond, which was *sui generis* in the communist world, representing a mix of traditional values, elements of classic Marxism and certain personal aspects, which Ceausescu introduced to the development of theory.⁷⁰⁵ The "conductor" made nationalism the bond of the whole. He unequivocally referred to the great historical heroes of Romania: Stephen the Great and Michael the Great. It was announced that Trajan's Column would be brought from Rome. The new movie *Dacians* appeared on cinema screens.⁷⁰⁶ The new constitution did not contain a passage about the Red Army as the liberator of the country. Romania did not break ties with Israel after the Six Days War, and it was the first socialist country to have official ties with West Germany. The real breakthrough occurred in 1968 when the armies of the Warsaw Pact entered Czechoslovakia. Ceausescu rejected the right of certain countries to interfere in the affairs of others, condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and called the nation to close the ranks against the coming threat (those in the West took the threat of Soviet intervention in Romania seriously).

At the start of the 1970's, there was in Romania another ideological turn toward the direction of an autarchic state. State nationalism was directed against two minorities: Gypsy and Hungarian, later it also took on an anti-Semitic coloring.⁷⁰⁷ The politics of education were directed at the removal of local languages from

704 Błażej Brzostek, *Siła historii. Tradycja i zerwanie w państwie Ceausescu* (unpublished).

705 See: Gilberg Trond, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania: The Rise and Fall of Ceausescu's Personal Dictatorship* (Oxford: OUP 1990), 47–56; also: Anca Giurchescu, "The National Festival 'Song to Romania': Manipulation of Symbols in the Political Discourse," *Symbols of Power*, op. cit., 163–172.

706 Ion Ratiu, *Rumunia współczesna i jej rola w dzisiejszym świecie*, (London: Polonia Book, 1975), 58–59.

707 On the topic of Hungarian minorities in Romania see: *Kadaryzm bez maski. Wybór niezależnej publicystyki węgierskiej*, ed. Wojciech Maziarski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo CDN, 1987).

literature and art on all levels of education. The consequence of making nationalism the main formula for legitimation was a strong isolationism, which depended upon denigrating Western influences that seemed to endanger the national and spiritual development of the Romanian nation.

We ought to note that the process of moving away from revolutionary legitimation and toward the patriotic tradition in the USSR, and toward outright nationalism in East Germany and Romania, in some measure coincided with a generational change in the highest ranks of power. The plot against Khrushchev led to his removal in 1964. Power in the Kremlin was taken over by Leonid Brezhnev. Nicolae Ceausescu took over the leadership of Romania after the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in 1965. In 1971 Walter Ulbricht took over for Erich Honecker. It should be noted that the new leaders only sped up and enriched the process we have described rather than initiating it. In none of the countries under consideration did nationalism supplant Marxism as the ideological warp of legitimation. On 1st May banners in Poland you could always see the slogan: "Long live the immortal and victorious teaching of Marx and Lenin." It was no different in the remaining countries. In reality in all of communist Europe Marxism was increasingly becoming a dead ritual formula, whereas the meaning of nationalist legitimating argumentation in their systems of legitimation was clearly growing. In a certain sense, one of the natural consequences of this process was the disappearance of using internationalism to guide politics between countries of the Bloc. Internationalism was dominated by national interests of the ruling parties that strove, mostly on economic grounds, to liberate themselves from the Soviet guardianship.

During the 1960's a return to national elements could be observed in Western Europe. The best example is the president of France, Charles de Gaulle, who stressed the national interests of the 5th Republic, opposing them to the interests of the European Economic Community. De Gaulle was the propagator of the slogan "Europe of fatherlands," which also echoed in the eastern part of Europe. During the same period in Southern Tyrol, in Basque country, in the Canton of Bern (Switzerland), Corsica, Sweden, Alsace, and in many other places, a movement toward regional autonomy, which opposed the centralized state, gained a voice and came to defend neglected regional cultures and their languages.⁷⁰⁸

It would be interesting to know the answer to the question whether, and if so, then how much, the leadership of the PZPR was copying the models of other countries by using nationalism to legitimate their system of power. It might have

708 See: Urs Altermatt, "Powrót wojen etnicznych w Europie?," *Znak* 3 (1997): 98.

been just the opposite: the “nationalism of the Poles” could have been an example for emulation for regimes of socialist countries. It is very likely that in some instances there was a “brotherly” exchange of experiences in play. Khrushchev admitted once: “I have a direct line to comrade Gomułka and we frequently talk with each other.”⁷⁰⁹ The lack of comparative studies on the topic of propaganda politics, to a great degree, makes it impossible to make more justified judgments about interdependencies in this field. We can be certain of one thing: the Polish leadership closely followed all the fluctuations in the political courses of their neighbors, especially those to their East. Andrzej Friszke has pointed out a very interesting analogy in the political chapters of Khrushchev and Brezhnev to the phases of Gomułka’s politics.⁷¹⁰ When in 1958 Khrushchev began a new stage of fighting against religion, the Political Bureau in Poland undertook a whole series of restrictive decisions against the Church. When between 1962 and 1963 Khrushchev began a campaign against the liberal intelligentsia, then Gomułka did the same (XIII Plenum). In the second half of the 60’s the nationalist tendencies represented by Alexander Shelepin in the Soviet party corresponded to the veteran-currents of General Mieczysław Moczar.

The “nationalist deviation” in “fraternal countries” was not only an object of interest but, and this is something which constituted a historical paradox, also caused anxiety for Gomułka, who saw in it also a threat to Polish interests. During one of the meetings of the Political Bureau during October 1967, the First Secretary of the PZPR saw nationalism and chauvinism as precisely the main dangers pulling apart the international communist movement. “In the first place this concerns the Communist Party of China,” he said, “but I do not think that we must classify the party so that individual parties are clear as crystal, but others are nationalistic. Nationalism affects all the parties of socialist countries, even though it occupies a special position in this regard for the great parties.” Nationalism was, according to Gomułka, the source of the majority of the problems and obstacles for the cooperation within Comecon. Its expressions were “limitations in the understanding of their interests, striving to gain a better position at the cost of others, the desire to push out others in foreign trade.” “There is not even an ounce of internationalism in this,” comrade Wiesław concluded. Beyond China, which made up “a separate division” under the title of chauvinism, he accused Yugoslavia, Romania, and Bulgaria of nationalism. The main accusation he directed at

709 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1958–1962...*, op. cit., 384.

710 See: Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL 1945–1980* (London: Aneks, 1994), 113.

these countries was cooperation with foreign capital, even with West Germans, which he could especially not forgive to Romania, "This nationalism is dressed in various garbs, such as independence, self-reliance, non-conformism, and so on."⁷¹¹

The above statement gives a characteristic sketch of the First Secretary's personality. Since the content of the nationalist argumentation depended upon him to a great degree, it makes sense to look more closely at Gomułka's worldview. It would be difficult to claim he was an open person, much like the system that he helped to create. He did not know Western countries and he probably did not want to know them. He reacted with an unconcealed antipathy toward all the currents and ideas coming from there. He was a kind of traditionalist who is suspicious of new and unknown things (for example, television, whose significance he was not able to notice). During the XIII Plenum of the Central Committee (July 1963) he said about the work of a writer, Ireneusz Iredyński, that it is from "the bottom of the gutter," and he thought the sources of this author's "fall" lie in borrowings from French and American literature. The scholars, artists, and journalists who, because of their professions, had contacts with the Western world he accused of nothing less than "fraternizing with the enemy on a wide scale." Moreover, he distrusted all contacts with the West and treated them with suspicion, searched everywhere for betrayals of Poland and socialism. "We are conducting and will continue to conduct," he said,

... a fight on two fronts: with nationalism, which under current conditions is directing its blade against socialist countries, mainly against the USSR, and with national nihilism, which manifests itself mainly in pandering to the capitalist West, its ideas and way of life. Everything that directs itself against socialism, every manifestation of succumbing to the bourgeois ideology in propaganda, scholarship, and culture is in conflict with the national interests of Poland, with patriotism.⁷¹²

Gomułka also saw, above all, a threat to the economic sovereignty of the country in the idea of a closer cooperation with the West on the economic level, a danger of being sold out to foreigners. To the question of the possibility of Poland taking loans from the United States, he said that he did not exclude such an eventuality, but he warned that "the people's authorities will never trade away the sovereignty of the Polish state and nation."⁷¹³

711 *Notatka z posiedzenia BP KC, 24 X 1967*, AAN, KC PZPR, 2863, k. 20, 21.

712 Władysław Gomułka, "O aktualnych problemach ideologicznej pracy partii," 4.VII.1963 in: *O naszej partii* (Warsaw: KiW, 1968), 494–573.

713 Władysław Gomułka, "Przemówienie wygłoszone 9 I 1957 r. na spotkaniu z wyborcami w Warszawskich Zakładach Przemysłu Odzieżowego nr 2," *Trybuna Ludu*, 10.I.1957.

While searching for the sources of Gomułka's prejudices we cannot stop with the thought that just like every communist he considered the bourgeois world as an evil whose influences must be contained as best as possible, since it cannot be destroyed. Gomułka probably contracted his reluctance toward "foreign capitalists" already during the interwar period. Toward the end of the 1920's he spent time as a party activist in Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, a step away from Silesia, where German and French capital dominated Polish capital. He was probably familiar with the following verse: "Detterling has oil, Krüger has matches, I have an empty belly, and the police has batons." The Communist Party of Poland, of which he was a member, in proclaiming the postulate of polonizing industry through its nationalization in no way departed from the Polish nationalist right. In searching for the causes of Gomułka's prejudices we should perhaps dig even deeper into the peasant parochialism he took from home and the suspicion, characteristic for traditional communities, toward outsiders. In this regard the Polish leader would not have differed, for the most part, from his countrymen who lived in the countryside or came from it, for whom, we can surmise, this reluctance was strongly present.

Gomułka basically surrounded himself with people who were close in mentality to him, who had similar experiences and had a worldview like his. There is nothing strange in this. Autocratic leaders, and Gomułka was one of them, when they choose collaborators for themselves, are guided less by their competence, but more by their trust and servility. The person considered to be the second in importance for the state was Zenon Kliszko. He sometimes fulfilled the task of envoy to assignments especially tied to cultural politics, which in large measure were his domain. He directed the Ideological Commission that came into being in 1963, which, and this sounds paradoxical, almost did not concern itself at all with matters of a doctrinal nature. Since the ranges of his responsibilities also included contacts with the Church, he actively participated in preparations in the realization of the campaign for celebrating the Millennium of the Polish State. However, it seems, that his role was confined to the function of controller and censor, rather than the creator of, the main line. The general direction of the official ideology was delineated by Gomułka. The "top management" also consisted of Ignacy Loga-Sowiński and Józef Cyrankiewicz; their role in shaping the official ideology was, however, probably, not large. The "second line" was occupied by the secretaries of the Central Committee and the heads of bureaus. From the time of Jerzy Morawski's departure from the leadership of the PZPR Witold Jarosiński looked after the Department of Propaganda and Agitation. The scripts for mass celebrations, parades, and propaganda campaigns reached

his desk. Ryszard Strzelecki, one of the closest associates of the First Secretary, took over from Ochab the supervision of the Culture Department's work, *Nowe Drogi* (the theoretical organ of the PZPR), and *Trybuna Ludu* in 1962. He was also responsible for the Main Political Directorate of the Polish Army. He, therefore, had an immense propaganda apparatus at his disposal.⁷¹⁴ Walery Namiotkiewicz had a great influence, especially on the world of culture, the personal secretary of Gomułka, a frequent co-author of his lectures. We should also recall that Mieczysław Moczar belonged to his circle of political friends, but more on this topic later. The scripts for the mass celebrations were prepared by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee, which was directed by Leon Stasiak. The Press Bureau of the Central Committee oversaw the propagation of the appropriate party line in newspapers and magazines. Artur Starewicz was its director at first and when he became a secretary of the Central Committee (responsible for culture among other things) his place was taken over by Stefan Olszowski. Of course, just as in the rest of the party apparatus, there was a continuous "carousel of personnel" at the top, which would complete its partial turn every couple of years. However, in the final analysis, not much more than ten people participated in the decision-making process of formulating the propaganda strategy.⁷¹⁵

If we let ourselves generalize, then we can say that this was a group deprived of common goals and uniform strategies for action, whose strongest ties were based upon the principle of being in client-type relations with Gomułka. Most of them owed their careers and advancements to him. One of the trademarks of this group, among whom only a couple of people rose above mediocrity, was an anti-intellectual resentment—a mix of fear and contempt. It is possible this is where Moczar's later popularity in certain circles came from because he valued the role of intelligence and could fraternize with it.

714 "With regard to Strzelecki. There is a consensus that his position is continually growing. He controls the army, security services, and culture. His high qualifications are attested by, at the very least, the fact that when he talks about to the press, then he does not use odd words like 'those scribes.' He is a blunt and limited railway man, who, as can be seen, is beginning to get drunk with power. Somebody even said about him: 'Strzelecki is a Moczar in the party apparatus.' He has constant access to W.[iesław]" (Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1958–1962...*, op. cit., 493).

715 For more on the topic of Gomułka's cadre see: Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec 1968* (Warsaw: PWN, 1991); Jerzy Eisler, Stanisław Trepczyński, *Grudzień '70 wewnątrz „białego domu”* (Warsaw: Colibri, 1991); Paweł Machcewicz, *Władysław Gomułka* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1995).

Toleration, or even the outright voicing, of anti-Semitic views, was another distinguishing mark of the Gomulka cadre. The already mentioned Mieczysław Rakowski, who by virtue of his position was in contact with people from the “top management,” recorded in his journal explicitly anti-Semitic utterances from those in the First Secretary’s milieu. “A very interesting fragment of the conversation was K.’s monologue on the topic of Jews,” reported the head of *Polityka* about the meeting between Dariusz Fikus with Kliszko:

Darek had the impression that up there, at the top, they don’t very much like them. Among other things, Kliszko gave the number, probably mythical, of 150 journalists, who left for Israel, and none of them ended up with the communist press. He complained that they cannot write in Polish. He cited a *Trybuna Ludu* piece with some unsuccessful title as proof. That’s what sort of internationalists they are. They continually declaim about the equality of the races, etc., etc., but in reality they can’t stand Jews. Disturbing.⁷¹⁶

Loga-Sowiński, in conversation with Rakowski, also touched upon the Jewish matter (“look who’s escaping to Israel”) and blamed Polish Jews for national nihilism.⁷¹⁷ Olszowski also supposedly proclaimed “anti-Semitic slogans.”⁷¹⁸ Ryszard Strzelecki and Kazimierz Witaszewski, the director of the Administrative Division of the Central Committee, both associated with the Natolińscy group, were considered to be the staunchest anti-Semites among the functionaries of the Central Committee.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the PZPR Central Committee building was simply a nest of anti-Semites. Many of its permanent employees of a higher level belonged to the group of prewar communists with a KPP pedigree. Several of them still had Jewish roots. Such pigeonholing does not make much sense anyway. This is because it is not significant who was, or who was not an anti-Semite, what is important is that there was in the elites of those in power an atmosphere of moral approval for anti-Semitic and extreme nationalist stances (including anti-German ones). The problem of the roots of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism in the communist power elite goes well beyond the frames of this work. We can only suspect that they reached deeper than the Stalinist period when people such as Kliszko, Loga-Sowiński, Marian Sychalski, and finally Gomulka himself were persecuted, among others, by people of Jewish origins. The feeling of being wronged taken away from those times probably only strengthened earlier resentments. Also,

716 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1958–1962...*, op. cit., 252–253.

717 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1963–1966...*, op. cit., 55.

718 *Ibid.*, 73

not everything can be explained by the negative selection of party elites, among whom there was actually no lack of people who were uneducated and primitive.

The expansion, within the womb of the PZPR, of an activist formation gathered around Mieczysław Moczar (Minister of the Interior since 1964), frequently referred to as the “partisans,” is an important element of the Polish political climate of the 1960’s. The members of this informal group were mostly employees of locales of power and/or secondary and tertiary dignitaries of the party—secretaries of Provincial [Voivodship] and District [dzielnica] Committees. The Partisans stressed their membership in the Home Army during the occupation, and they used their own combat past to semi-officially contrast them to the biographers to those party activists who spent the war in the Soviet Union and owed their later political stature and power in Poland to it.

The worldview of the partisans was a unique variety of nationalism expressed with the language of communist doctrine. It included anti-Semitism (camouflaged under the communist-speak nomenclature of anti-Zionism), a xenophobic aversion toward everything in cultural and scholarly life recognized as non-Polish, affection for the military tradition, and, finally, a revulsion toward even a relative liberalization of political life in the country.⁷¹⁹

The natural social base of this formation was made up of frustrated activists on the middle and lower levels, also known as the “generation of the ZMP,” and during the period of March 1968 the “activists” [aktyw]. Both during the construction of the system and during the final great petrification of personal arrangements in the mid-50’s, they were a little bit too young to ensure for themselves a place in any kind of managerial structures. The life appointments for the majority of positions in the party and its administration of the state, characteristic for the real-existing socialist system, led Władysław Gomułka’s governments to a near total blockage of the channels of advancement.⁷²⁰ This problem was also of concern for those

719 For more on the worldview of the partisans and their leader: Krzysztof Lesiakowski, *Mieczysław Moczar „Mietek”. Biografia polityczna* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 1998); Jerzy Eisler, op. cit.; Paweł Wieczorkiewicz, “Walka o władzę w kierownictwie PZPR w Marcu 68,” in: *Marzec 1968. Trzydzieści lat później, referaty z konferencji na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim 6 i 7 marca 1998*, v.1, eds. Marcin Kula, Piotra Oseka, Marcin Zaremba (Warsaw: PWN, 1998), 39–57.

720 “Who are its supporters? In Warsaw they are generally recruited from average people. I know of any outstanding intellectual, writer, or journalist who might belong to them. Above all, various kinds of nobodies cling to them, people who over the past twenty years did not make a career, or who for many years are stuck in the same, not especially high—in their estimates—positions. The worst creatures from

dignitaries who were highly placed in the PZPR. Forty-year-olds who belonged to the party (also those who didn't belong to the party) impatiently awaited some event that would put an end to this state of things. People of whom it could be said to have ties to the "partisan" group formed a kind of pyramid of client dependencies with the person of Mieczysław Moczar at the top.⁷²¹

the journalistic milieu, renowned agent-types, and other suspect maniacs who suddenly present themselves to public opinion as heated patriots and 100% Poles. In these circles the anti-Semitic program is clearly voiced, even though the real social and political role of Jews in Poland does not in any way justify the raising of cries . . . that they are endangering *Polishness*. PAX is also an ally of the *partisans*. In this we have before us a (clearly incomplete) political map of the reactionary current in the Polish party" (Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1963–1966...*, op. cit., 135).

721 One encounters in historical discussions the view that the frequent use of the term "partisans" in the description of reality, and especially with ascribing concrete goals and uniform strategies for action, is a substantial oversimplification, which instead of getting closer to reality only clouds the picture of the social-political situation. I am aware of this danger and the portrait of the "partisans" I present above I treat more like an ideal form—a model of the dependency linking the managerial elites with the party masses, which does not fully describe a complicated situation. At the same time, we cannot unambiguously say who from the Central Committee belonged to the Partisans and how such an eventual membership was supposed to manifest itself. But one cannot deny that certain Comrades were connected to Moczar, tied to him more than others—even if this ties were based exclusively on a mutual hatred toward the same enemies. The combat mythology and its accompanying anti-liberal obscurantism made up a specific style of political thinking, which was a sign of the Partisan brand, and, at the same time, the main (although blurry) criterium of belonging to this group (See: Piotr Osęka and Marcin Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie – czyli polskie reperkusje wojny sześciodniowej," *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały* 4 [1999]: 205–240).

There is no doubt that during the various periods of its existence there were various constellations and coteries within the party. We also ought to remember about the specifics of the system, which left no space for unconstrained political discussion. In crammed atmosphere of the 1960's all rumors and gossip therefore gained the status of an authentic description of reality. This is what happened with Witold Jedlicki's division of the party elites into Jews and boors („*Chamy*" i „*Żydy*" [Warsaw: Krąg, 1981]). A similar thing happened with the Partisans. The existence of the group was "discovered" by Ernst Halperin, the Warsaw correspondent of the *Neu Züricher Zeitung*, and wider dissemination was given to it by his colleague Arthur Olsen of *The New York Times*. The term was then disseminated by *Radio Free Europe* by devoting a lot of airtime to the Partisans (Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, *Polska z oddali* [Warsaw: Krąg, 1989], 224–230). Was it then only a media fact, which blinded as much as it oversimplified the existing relations and arrangements in the power elites? This

Frequently in works that were journalistic in nature, more rarely in literary works, one can encounter opinions about Moczar's especially high political ambitions, that reached far beyond Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw. Franciszek Szlachcic, who since 1962 was the Deputy Minister of the Interior, thought on the contrary that:

We had no intention of taking over power. We never spoke about it, our activities were not directed against Władysław Gomułka, as suggested by hostile circles. He was the unquestioned leader of the party. Mieczysław Moczar did not do anything, and would not do anything, to weaken the authority of Władysław Gomułka.⁷²²

We can doubt the truthfulness of Szlachcic's words. The logic of the system of power tells us, however, that Moczar had to be an obedient executor of the First Secretary's commands. If he did not enjoy Gomułka's absolute trust, then his career in Interior Ministry, a crucial position for the system, would not have been possible. They both knew each other from the Communist resistance, which was not insignificant, because it created a bond of a specific character, extremely strong, based upon boundless trust, which is indispensable in a situation of constant threat. After the war they were friends and both of them had the odium of being accused of the "right-wing-nationalist deviation."⁷²³ If then we were to define the relation of the Partisans to Gomułka, they were for, rather than against, him. In conversation with Rakowski Gomułka used these same words about Kliszko, Moczar, and their close collaborator Grzegorz Korczyński (also a Partisan): "these comrades and I are one and the same thing."⁷²⁴

This raises the hypothesis that the "ideology of the Partisans," especially in its combative current, directed toward the gaining of a wider social backing by searching for new forms of legitimating the system, might have been in line with the thoughts of Comrade Wiesław and had both his blessings and the blessings of some of the remaining prominent members of the party's elite. Some confirmation of this hypothesis is contained in the resolution of the Political Bureau from

indeed seems to be the case to me. Kliszko was supposed to have said in a conversation with Rakowski about the Partisans that this "category was . . . imposed upon us from the outside, but it now lives its own life. Shortly, he said, the whole Political Bureau will have to join their group" (Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1967–1968*, [Warsaw: Iskry, 1999], 17).

In sum: I believe the Partisans have long ago entered the sphere of myth and their political influence and significance were much smaller than is frequently thought.

722 Franciszek Szlachcic, "Ze wspomnień ministra spraw wewnętrznych," *Życie Literackie*, 6.III.1988.

723 Jerzy Eisler and Stanisław Trepczyński, *Grudzień, 70 wewnątrz...*, op. cit., 55, 73.

724 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1963–1966*, op. cit., 37.

1957, that is, several years before Moczar's strengthened position in the structures of power, which recommended a wide popularization of the history of the PPR ("fighting for the national and social liberation of the nation"), People's Guard, and the People's Army in the media. The memorialization of the battles of these formations against the Germans was anticipated, and also of the places where the GL, AL, BCH, AK, and the Socialist Militia divisions fought alongside each other. From this it becomes apparent that consideration was already given to using the later "Partisan" slogan of national solidarity: blood spilled together by soldiers of all Polish armed formations.

The symbolic representation of this slogan was supposed to be the creation of the Museum of the Battle for the Liberation of the Polish Nation whose "framework should, in particular, take into account the period of the nation's struggle with the Nazi occupier."⁷²⁵ Subsequently, not much came of these plans. The Kremlin's reluctance toward the "Polish road" probably stood in its way. Still the resolution we have mentioned shows that Gomułka thought much earlier about such a formula of legitimation, which would give credit to the liberation of Poland from the Nazis not so much to the Soviet Army, and the Polish Army created in the USSR, but to the so-called "natives," activists of the PPR and the People's Army subject to it. He could have gotten his example from Yugoslavia. The regime of Josip Broz Tito was based upon, in great measure, the partisan ethos and emphasizing that the communists liberated Yugoslavia from the German occupation by themselves without any, that is, without Soviet, help. Tito, it seems, impressed Gomułka with his strong position in the country and independence from the USSR. He defended him in 1948 by striving to take over the role of mediator in the controversy between the Yugoslav leader and Stalin.

The Polish Partisans never laid out their programmatic *credo* in a compact and consistent form. Moczar rarely spoke publicly and rarely formulated his position with great care. It found its fullest expression in the 1961 publication of Moczar's reminiscences, *Fighting Colors*, along with the collection of testimonies of the People's Guard entitled *People, Facts, Reflections*. A reflection of the Partisan views can also be found in articles and feuilletons of journalists and columnists tied to Moczar ideologically. Special attention should be given to the book published by Zbigniew Załuski in 1962 entitled, *The Polish Seven Deadly Sins*.⁷²⁶ According to the Central Committee Press Bureau report from March 1963:

725 *Uchwała Biura Politycznego KC PZPR w związku z 15-tą rocznicą powstania Polskiej Partii Robotniczej*, styczeń 1957, AAN, KC PZPR, 1682, k. 5,6.

726 Zbigniew Załuski, *Siedem polskich grzechów głównych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MON, 1962).

. . . [the book] aroused great interest and the whole printing was sold out within two weeks, and, what's more, it provoked a very lively and a, from a political point of view, very important discussion in the press. Overall, there appeared about 60 journalistic pieces so far, excluding press reviews. The discussion has taken on such a great momentum, and touched upon such important questions, even ideological ones, that one presently feels a real need that we hear the voice of the party settling the dispute.⁷²⁷

Załoski, a military historian and journalist defended in his book the insurrectionist tradition and attacked those who questioned the meaningfulness of Polish freedom uprisings; he labeled them with the epithets of “mockers” and “scoffers.” He preached, praising the national and patriotic tradition. He urged people to value the “national coloring” of Polish history, also highlighted, according to him, in the actions of Polish communists. He emphasized that the strivings of the Polish worker movement were animated by the same patriotism as the national-liberationist struggles, that they are characterized by the same manner of acting, that is, marked with sacrifice and courage in realizing far-reaching collective goals.⁷²⁸ When he wrote that “history is an immense moral weapon,” he suggested that those who deny this power, disarm the nation morally, because it is the “mistress and teacher of life” and from it, the contemporary generation should draw personal standards.⁷²⁹ He additionally mocked the transplantation of foreign standards onto Polish soil by certain groups of youths, which he called “pathetic youthful parrots,” for example, the transplantation of jazz music, and the lifestyle associated with it, that were fashionable at the time.

The Partisan milieu enthusiastically welcomed Załoski's book, but it was critically received by those who rejected the “red-national” phraseology. One of the reviewers wrote, “I fear that Zbigniew Załoski would be glad to advise us to only burn candles at graves. *De mortuis nil nisi bene* . . . Meanwhile, the uncritical love of one's national history—both political and military—is a straight path to a nationalist and chauvinist education.”⁷³⁰ There is no need to cite the other voices from the discussion of the book that went on for a year. What is interesting is the “voice of the party settling the dispute,” which was stated in an unsigned article that appeared in *Trybuna Ludu*.⁷³¹

727 *Informacja z dyskusji wokół książki Z. Załoskiego „Siedem polskich grzechów głównych”, 2 III 1963, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XIX-132, k. 2.*

728 See: Stanisław Bębenek, *Myslenie o przeszłości*, op. cit., s. 160–171.

729 Zbigniew Załoski, *Siedem polskich grzechów...*, op. cit., 214

730 Kazimierz Koźniewski, “Grzech główny: bezkrytycyzm,” *Polityka*, 8.XII.1962.

731 “Spór o ideały wychowawcze socjalizmu,” *Trybuna Ludu*, 26.IV.1963.

Artur Starewicz was its author, and, according to Rakowski, he was supposed to have consulted its contents with Gomułka.⁷³² At the outset, the Starewicz-Gomułka duo admits Załuski validly “raised the [issue] of the need for educating society in the feelings of responsibility for the fate of the country and nation in a spirit of patriotic readiness for acting and sacrificing in the name of higher goals.” They also agreed that “Thinking in the categories of the state and nation... are priceless values.” However, the further one gets in the argument, the more critical accusations are leveled, even against those polemicizing with Załuski. The following was the main one: “The author has severed events and armed conflicts from their role in the clash of the powers of reaction and of the powers of progress, powers that were losing Poland and those that were carrying it toward independence.” Furthermore, their author did not notice the distinct character of the communist movement’s activities, especially the PPR, which introduced a new quality into the nation’s history. By stressing the meaning of tradition for the shaping of educational models he overlooked the present, which “most deeply and directly shapes the psyche of the nation and its social stances.” “Traditions, examples, models from the past only take on creative power... when they resound with the nation’s ideals of today.”⁷³³

This critical appraisal is not the only thing that might lead one to think that the general reaction to Załuski’s book glorifying insurrectionary uprisings did not especially work for Gomułka, who, anyway, probably only knew it from what Starewicz told him. Gomułka was far from apotheosizing national history, and the Poles, as we have already discussed, whom he judged very severely.⁷³⁴ Nevertheless, as Andrzej Paczkowski points out, “in the legitimation repertoire of the PZPR there were now found—and for the long run—new accents, which were a prefiguration of the later slogans about the “moral-political unity of the nation.”⁷³⁵

732 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1963–1966*, op. cit., 55–56.

733 For a wide-ranging summation of the article see: Stanisław Bębenek, *Myślenie o przeszłości*, op. cit., 172–174.

734 Rakowski on the topic of his conversation with Gomułka: “Later there were ten minutes of discussion of Załuski’s book. He [Gomułka] thinks that the starting point is false, dangerous, reeking of nationalism. He warned against this, advised considering the proper stance toward the polemics taking place in the press” (Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1963–1966...*, op. cit., 40).

735 Andrzej Paczkowski, *Pół wieku...*, op. cit., 336–337.

In September of 1957 Załuski gave a lecture on the “party apparatus” entitled “Patriotic Traditions and the Contemporary Shape of Socialist Patriotism.”⁷³⁶ In it, he revised the Marxist dogma expressed by the phrase “workers do not have a homeland.” But this is not the only reason why its contents merit careful consideration. Załuski began his address by recalling Marx’s critical stance toward national ties and nationalism:

Comrades we know that since the times of the *Manifesto*... the world has considerably changed, the international workers’ movement also changed . . . We ought to remember that we moved quite far away from treating this quote and these thoughts of Marx as they were treated 50 years ago, however, we have not moved away from Marx, but from grasping at half a sentence of his thoughts, and we have moved in the direction of understanding... [that] the development of the world went in this direction and that is where our intellectual revisions come from. We have moved in the direction of understanding the second part of the Marxist sentence, because we have observed the process of the proletariat gaining their national fatherlands.

Załuski thought it was naïve to think that there is a possibility for a contemporary victory for the international proletariat in the form of a worldwide revolution. According to him, it was only possible through successive national revolutions.

The author of *The Seven Deadly Polish Sins* devoted a large portion of his considerations to the utopia of revolutionary messianism, which feeds off the hope for a radical discontinuity in history, the faith in the coming of a New Time, an Absolute Beginning.⁷³⁷

The proletarian revolution in Russia occurred under the banner of the complete abolishment of all that came before, the complete ruination of all gains until then, even in a certain sense in the domain of thought. There were far-reaching excesses, somehow as the result of the general atmosphere. There were people who understood Marxism differently at this time, who saw the necessity of rescuing certain elements of the future, of certain gains made until then, Łunaczarski was one of them, who repeatedly convinced Lenin that . . . the Kremlin should not be levelled . . . Nonetheless, the general atmosphere of the revolution was this: all of human history until now has been darkness, blood, and mud—the start of the revolution begins a new history of humanity, so what came before only interests us insofar as it is still an obstacle, insofar as it must be destroyed. Destroying all those existing ties—not only ties of economic dependence, class ties between the

736 Zbigniew Załuski, *Tradycje patriotyczne a współczesny kształt patriotyzmu socjalistycznego*, 8 IX 1967, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-815, k. 63–119 (Subsequent quotes will preserve the stylistic peculiarities of the original stenograph source) .

737 See: Leszek Kołakowski, “Rewolucja jako piękna choroba,” in: *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań* (London: Aneks 1984), 230–231.

overthrown owner class and working people—by destroying all those existing ties the national ties were also being consequently destroyed.

Załoski, by using Ludwik Krzywicki's theory of the historical substratum argued that any new idea, that is seemingly tied to nothing, could not, and is not, free from the influence of the historical substructure, the historical shaping of society, and the nation. Everything cannot be blown to pieces in order to build something completely new upon the ruins, "What was before must be projected, must have a continuation, must project onto the new and must modify it by adjusting it to this encountered historical substratum."

Załoski then recalled the reaching for national-patriotic phraseology in the Soviet Union during the period of the war with Germany and pointed out its effectiveness in the mobilization of the society in the defense of the country,

From this period, we remember the exaggeration, the excessive interest in Peter, or the attempts to reach for the tradition of Ivan the Terrible, we remember Alexander Surovov, about whom we have our very particular Polish opinions, however, nonetheless, these matters are significant. This main current of history, the main current of the tradition, national custom, and finally the matter of people simply saying without shame—I am not only a socialist man, but I am a Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Kazakh, Georgian, and so on.

The conclusion to the above argument was the judgment that "The patriotic tie, the tie that binds in some way people who have one language and one historical past, one culture and also one territory, this patriotic tie has one undeniable value: it exists." Załoski said nothing about class ties. He also illustrated the consequences of breaking apart traditional ties with a Polish example. He began by sketching out a picture of the Polish village immediately after the war in order to further recall the "immense political impact" of the process of rapid industrialization, the migration of the populace from villages to the cities and the negative results of this process,

Nowa Huta came into being... as a great camp of alienated people. And we realized that this process of breaking apart of hitherto small ties, these parish-villages ties, that this process... is full of serious dangers, that this process deprives us of something, some order (positive), the order of these people feeling responsibility, who until then felt responsible for their village society. In a word, we came to realize that these small ties, broken apart by modern industry, that these small ties have a certain constructive value.

Then he once again brought up an example from the USSR:

... there is no doubt that the Soviet Union, the socialist revolution in relation to its opponent, against an external enemy was the strongest twice in its history in 1920 and in 1942–1944. These were the moments when the socialist idea, the idea of a socialist state

was in some way based upon the retrieving of the national tie, or, the very complicated Soviet tie, which is something more than the national tie, the state tie, a certain tradition of unity between nations, which could be found on the former tsarist territories [state]. On the other hand, in a certain sense, the attempts to build a non-national state led to the breaking apart of this tie, if one may say so, with the cutting off of the whole of the past, so the product of this period is the relatively large cutting off of people in Soviet society and making them into enemies during moments of crisis.⁷³⁸

The Russian Liberation Army was an exemplification of the above argument. In a certain sense, the product of breaking such a national tie were the attempts of building nationless states, if one may say, by breaking away from the whole of the past

The author of *The Seven Deadly Polish Sins* encouraged the reading of the classics. At the same time, he stressed that, with the building of socialism in Poland, not everything that was rooted in the past was destroyed. Half of postwar Poland was built, as he put it, “from bricks of demolished buildings.” He postulated basing the foundations of the New on the feeling of the national tie and the feelings for a thousand-year continuity of generations.

The second part of his appearance was devoted to tradition, which he defined as the choice of certain events, names, and facts from history, “which we acknowledge consciously today.” Among the examples he mentioned were the East German Army wearing the uniforms of the Wehrmacht. He made his audience aware this is no way about making a connection to the tradition of the Third Reich, but to the tradition of the national renewal of Prussia after the crisis it suffered at the hands of Napoleon. He gestured toward the existence of a controversy over the tradition in Poland. This controversy over whether “our tradition is part of the main current of Polish history, or, the current of the extreme left, or, whether our tradition is only the Arians . . . the Jacobins of Warsaw, the extreme elements of the November Uprising, is it only this or Kościuszko, which is the main current of Polish history—Dąbrowski, and the leaders of the November Uprising, Traugutt.” “We have officially accepted this line and . . . our tradition of People’s Poland would overlap with the history of Poland, with the main current of development.” Even though the above list of Polish national heroes created by Załuski did not deviate from the official line, later still he also added to it the Poland of the Piasts and Jagiellonians. He especially devoted a lot of space to the Jagiellonian period, which in the consciousness of the Polish nation formed a picture of Poland in a cultural, geographical, and political sense. He attributed a lot of meaning to the patriotic tradition in the “building up of people” and “leading them,” and using the paradigm of these considerations in the legitimating the pretension to rule.

738 Zbigniew Załuski, *Tradycje patriotyczne* op. cit., k. 63–119.

This Kościuszko is on the banner of the 1st Dąbrowski Division, for the 2nd it's Traugutt, the 3rd—Kiliński, for the 4th Bem in the artillery brigade, Westerplatte in the tank brigade, these signs that demonstrate to people that we have not fallen out of the skies . . . that we will not be the Soviet assault troops in Poland, that we grow out of the age-old trunk of Polish thoughts and needs, that it is our task to do what Kościuszko's Scythians failed to do, that it is our task to unite the nation as it was not possible for the fighters from November 1831, that it is our task to create for the nation a proper place under the European sun, the one the Piasts were not able to ultimately uphold, and that problem of the Piasts and Jagiellonians, the two main currents in Poland's history, the two currents, of which we choose one and finally ensure victory, that we are on the path of Bolesław – Mieszkos and Bolesławs, plays an enormous role in the sense of mobilizing people, congregating them around us and creating their self-esteem, and in this way we have also given a feeling of historical continuity, we have given them a feeling justifying their joining the communists, we have given them this historical alibi, which allows them to say, these people who are far from us, for many years enemies, it has allowed them to say—yes, I am with the communists, because they are guiding light of the next stage of Poland's history. You from London, you are not the sons of Kościuszko, only we are.⁷³⁹

After the lecture finished the audience asked a lot of questions, generally very low in merit. One of them was about the genesis of anti-Russian and anti-Czech resentments. Załuski proposed looking for the answers about their sources in historical experience. "My generation has an anti-German complex, it does, even if not everyone, then every other Pole always is saying, 'damnit Germans, good German, bad German, well something isn't right.'" However, the older generation was characterized by an anti-Russian complex. He saw the ingredients for their prejudices in the breaking off of isolation, which usually gives birth to ethnic stereotypes. The following question also fell:

How to explain that among many comrades of Jewish ancestry the feelings of nationalist ties have revealed themselves to be stronger than the program of the Marxist party they seemed to embrace for many years; how, despite the good theoretical preparation in the field of the mechanisms which rule social development, did they not see that by supporting Israeli nationalism they are supporting imperialism and betray the ideals of the working class they proclaim?⁷⁴⁰

Let us recall that it was the beginning of September 1967, precisely three months after the concluding victory of Israel in its war with the Arab countries, which were supported by the whole socialist bloc with the exception of Romania. This question Załuski answered thus:

739 Zbigniew Załuski, *Tradycje patriotyczne*, op. cit., k. 84, 85.

740 Zbigniew Załuski, *Tradycje patriotyczne*, op. cit., k. 105.

There is a selection process in which people who were in the labor movement by chance for racial reasons are selected out . . . because it was once the only movement in the world that guaranteed them racial immunity. At the moment, when a new phenomenon has come into being, the country of their nation, they decided to choose, they have decided that something . . . ties them with this country. Others left because of horrible tragedies, they were disenchanted with socialism, with the socialist world. The man who leaves the party—and this is the tragedy—the man who leaves the party finds himself in a void, a man cannot live for long in a void. Some moons, some planets that exact their pull . . . act upon him. Israel turned out to be such a planet for some of them.⁷⁴¹

At the beginning of his lecture, Załuski warned that its contents are the result of his own thinking and that they are, as he put it, “personal heresies.” But was not the number of believers in the heresy that was called “national communism” much larger? To what degree were the views of Załuski a reflection of the convictions circulating in the party at the time? How did the “top of the party” receive his paper? Jerzy Eisler thinks that Załuski was supposed to be a bard of the Partisans who desired to fill out his literary achievements with an ideological content derived from the Partisan movement.⁷⁴² But ought we acknowledge the content of Załuski’s lecture as an interpretation of the Partisan stance? Does that also mean that we can say their views were marked by a deep pragmatism in their perception of Polish realities, the rejection of the revolutionary utopia, a far-reaching selectiveness in the reading of the classics (or maybe not reading them at all?), a conviction that national ties should be the basis of the social order? Nevertheless, we cannot exclude the possibility that Załuski was speaking for himself. Maybe he was a “lone shark,” less connected intellectually with the partisans than is thought? It is difficult to deny that intellectually, and with the breadth of his horizons, Załuski greatly exceeded the average person from the Partisan group, who never had any great intellectual ambitions.⁷⁴³ He was also far from proclaiming anti-Semitic views and did not take part in the “anti-Zionist” campaign of March 1968. Yet, after all, this seems certain: “national communism,” more national than communist in its contents, was gaining ever greater popularity among the widely understood party elites and also as a formula for legitimating power.

Already in 1965, in the book *Marxism and the Individual*, Adam Schaff, still a member of the Central Committee at the time, focused upon the ambiguous relationship of the party to the main presuppositions of the Marxist doctrine

741 Zbigniew Załuski, *Tradycje patriotyczne*, op. cit., k. 105.

742 See: Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec 1968...*, op. cit., 52.

743 Krzysztof Lesiakowski, *Mieczysław Moczar “Mietek”: biografia polityczna* (Warsaw: Rytm, 1998), 222.

and nationalism.⁷⁴⁴ When recalling the slogan, “Proletarians of the world, unite!” from the *Communist Manifesto*, Schaff was pointing to a distance of the theory, expressed by this slogan, from the everyday practice of socialism: the lack of a reaction to the evils that are racism and nationalism. The leading Polish Marxist of the time almost spoke with pity about the mistake committed by Marx, who did not appreciate the meaning of the national question, however, he defended the thesis that the indispensable element of the stance of every communist should be internationalism. This is why he saw the tasks of socialist states as being their shaping the fundamentals of proletarian internationalism and fighting against the manifestations of anti-Semitism, which he recognized as a typical form of fascism for European socialist countries. One cannot, wrote Schaff, be satisfied with solidarity with the blacks, because so long as we do not have a black problem then it is merely an abstraction. However, society should be educated in the spirit of solidarity with those people who live around us and work with us. The author of *Marxism and the Individual* suggested that the socialist state is fulfilling this task badly.

The Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee, along with the editorial board of *Nowe Drogi*, organized a discussion devoted to Schaff’s work.⁷⁴⁵ It met with the sharp attacks of most of the panelists, all of them permanent employees of the Central Committee. They were, among others, infuriated by the claims about the lack of effort in fighting anti-Semitism. Andrzej Werblan, at the time the director of the Education Department of the Central Committee, said, among other things, that,

... we have achieved progress in the battle with anti-Semitism, which has become under present conditions a purely marginal phenomenon. I must also question the main premises of Comrade Schaff’s argument on the topic of internationalism. He paints a threatening nationalism, supposedly hanging over the communist movement in such vivid colors—as if our movement were totally sinking in this ‘muck.’⁷⁴⁶

Kliszko spoke at the end of the discussion of Schaff’s book. He said something that might have surprised the rest of those involved in the discussion:

There are different kinds of nationalism in the contemporary world. The Marxists never equally treated the nationalism of an oppressed nation and the nationalism of an op-

744 Adam Schaff, *Marksizm a jednostka ludzka* (Warsaw: PWN, 1965).

745 “Dyskusja nad książką Adama Schaffa pt. *Marksizm a jednostka ludzka*,” *Nowe Drogi* 12 (1965).

746 *Ibid.*, 71. It is interesting to note that Stalin spoke of nationalism in a similar way when he characterized it as a “disease.”

pressing nation. The great distortion of internationalism was the placing of an equal sign between patriotism and nationalism, which has happened during the history of our movement. Today hundreds of millions of people have awakened in the colonies. Dozens of nations have won national independence for themselves and are fighting for the sovereignty of their states, frequently under the banner of nationalism. However, this is a progressive nationalism, essentially a patriotism that comes from a burning love for their own nation, its liberated strivings and aspirations, permeated by hatred for those who for centuries brought death and unparalleled exploitation to people of color . . .

If we want to remain on the grounds of Marxism, then we must acknowledge that the only path toward the victory of the internationalist idea of friendship between nations and states in the modern world leads through the complete liberation of all nations, through eliminating all forms of dependence, through filling in the gap dividing rich metropolises and the colonies vegetating in misery. So long as this does not happen, the “nationalism” of the nations liberating themselves will have a progressive character, anti-imperialist, and cannot be seen into one conceptual pile with the nationalism of the exploiters, and cannot also be equated with the traditional nationalism of the “old” European countries.⁷⁴⁷

Kliszko concluded by repeating the slogan that all socialist countries are leading the educational work that “aims at overcoming various inherited nationalist burdens inherited from the past.” He did not give any examples, as was the custom.

Schaff’s suggestion that propagandistic internationalism is essentially not reflected in real life showed itself to be extraordinarily apt, as Kliszko’s statement illustrated. This is not the only moral to the story we should take away from the discussion we covered here. Kliszko, one of the highest-ranking people in power, publicly affirmed the nationalist stance, which he tied to, among other things, hatred toward the foreign other. Eight years earlier Gomulka said that socialism is the opposite of every nationalism, we can guess that this also applied to the nationalism of oppressed nations. Admittedly, Kliszko did not say anything that would not have been known in the past, nevertheless, he said it directly, publicly, giving up on the dichotomy that had held until then: patriotism is “progressive,” while nationalism is “regressive.” In other words, he signaled that nationalism can be good.

The “nationalist flood,” despite Andrzej Werblan, whom we quoted earlier, questioning its existence, had a lasting effect. The first signs of the coming wave could be observed at the threshold of 1960’s. Already then, in the official party ideology, there prevailed categories such as the “nation” and “patriotism.” The ruling party was publicly presenting itself as national, and incomparably less fre-

747 Ibid., 182

quently as internationalist or worker. In 1961 the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee prepared, according to custom, slogans for May 1st. Three of them contained the word “party” and all of them referred to the nation in some way, suggesting that nationalism has a leading role or support from its side: “Long live the United Polish Worker’s Party—the avant-garde of the Polish nation!,” “Long live the party—the builder of a better life for our nation!,” “Party with the nation—the nation with the party!”⁷⁴⁸ The final, concise and catchy, slogan went into the inventory of the party’s society of spectacle for two decades. Yet, it contained a hidden error, later used in many jokes, because it suggested that the party finds itself outside the nation, it therefore unintentionally confirmed the “us vs. them” antonymy.⁷⁴⁹

In 1961 the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee also authored and sent to provincial [voivodeship] departments sets of “epigrams for skillful use” in the Sejm election campaign. The epigrams were supposed to be written with the help of stencil and chalk on fences and advertising pillars. They were also supposed to be used in the press, radio, and shown before cinema screenings. Three of them were preceded with the following commentary: “For reasonable use—not in print.” Their contents were as follows: “Whoever does not vote—the Nation will say of such a one that he is not a good Pole!” “If you don’t give your vote on Sunday, then Poland’s enemies stand to Gain!” “You will harm your Fatherland by not voting! Go to the polls quick! You will be at one with the Nation!”⁷⁵⁰ The authors of these slogans abused the word “epigram” by giving this label to their texts. After all, they had nothing to do with the joking character of this type of composition. In their compositions, they instead recalled the unwitty propaganda of the Endecja, of which the propagandists of the Central Committee were, as we have seen, aware, since they recommended their restrained use in the electoral campaign. The national community became the main axis of these three slogans. Membership in this community was acknowledged implicitly as a particular value that gives meaning to the life of every individual. The proof of participating in the nation, being together with it, is participation in the elections, giving your voice. Otherwise, those shirking this national responsibility will be stigmatized as bad Poles, traitors, since “Poland’s enemies” stand to gain from it. This is because in these examples the nation is the master and it will give the final

748 AAN, KC PZPR, 2221, k. 348.

749 One such later joke reshaped this slogan into, “The party with the nation, the nation with... the pope.”

750 *Do Kierownika Wyzd. Propagandy KW, Kierownika Woj. Ośr. Prop. Partyjnej*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-647, k. 94, 95.

judgment, it “will say of such a one, that he is not a good Pole.” The cited slogans can be recognized as nationalism in a nutshell, a nationalism which could serve to mobilize society, to drag it out to the election polls, and, finally, to legitimize systemic principles of which the elections to the Sejm were a component, no matter how fictional they might have actually been. [302]

In the propaganda of the 1960’s the word “nation” appeared, as Michał Głowiński has pointed out, in two contexts:

In the first version the nation signifies an indeterminate totality of society, which is obedient and compliant like a choir in an opera, it is supposed to answer the questions it is asked in an exemplary manner. In this role, it is made up of countless clichés of the type “the nation condemns” (this cluster appears most often). The nation in the second version is, above all, a tribal unity, a mythology of blood and soil, and the past assembled in a certain way. Here is where the far-right, nationalist, and sometimes outright fascist understandings of the nation return. Within this understanding, a fundamental role is played by the opposition Pole-Jew. From it derives the love for the adjective “national,” which frequently takes the place of the more neutral word “Polish,” also the tendency toward the demagogic overuse of “anti-national.” Both of these versions have one quality in common: they aim for the identification of the matters of the nation with the actual interests of the party at any given moment. This word is used in propaganda discourse in such ways as to convince a person that if something is against it, then it is the same as being against the nation.⁷⁵¹

The second understanding of the nation, connected with the heritage of blood, was illustrated by Głowiński with the opposition Pole-Jew, characteristic of the anti-Semitic campaign of 1967–1968. We should note that it was chronologically preceded by the opposition Pole-German, based upon a different baggage of historical experiences, other, although in some ways similar, resentments. We sometimes forget that the so-called publicists of March went through a “quick course” of anti-Germanism earlier.

Let us return for a moment to the May 1st celebrations, we ought to highlight communist propaganda’s characteristic mixing of national meanings, props, and symbols with the regime, worker, and revolutionary meanings in order to make the latter more attractive. The Organizational Department and the Department Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee recommended in March 1962 that:

The cities and routes of the marches, or, places for rallies, should be broadcasted, decorated with national and worker flags, and portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and as well portraits of: Waryński, Kasprzak, Okrzeja, Marchlewski, Dzierżyński, Luxem-

751 Michał Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Pomost, 1991), 52.

burg, Waryński, Kostrzewa, Leński, Nowotko, Kościuszko, Mickiewicz, Wróblewski, Dąbrowski, and, finally, portraits of Khrushchev, the 1st Secretary of the PZPR Central Committee, the Chairman of the Council of State, and the Prime Minister of the PRL.⁷⁵²

The growth of significance of nationalism in the process of legitimating power took place carefully and gradually under the full control of the propaganda apparatus. Remembering October 1956 they were worried about awakening national emotions, letting out the “Polish demon,” which is difficult to control. Above all, any and all anti-Russian and anti-Soviet subtexts were avoided in official propaganda like fire. The way of remembering of the January Uprising is a very characteristic example of this.

1963 was the 100th anniversary of this national outburst. It was the task of those in charge of preparing the celebrations to legitimize the existing order and the alliance with the Soviet Union. The realization of this, not exactly spontaneous, goal was facilitated by the putting into motion of a process of “seeking out,” which was based upon the selection of facts and figures, and upon putting them together in such a way as to create a myth that would lead predictably to the desired meaning. The ultimate effect of this manipulation was that in the propaganda description of the uprising a crucial matter got “lost”—just against whom this uprising broke out. Since the historical event was interpreted differently than until then, it was also necessary to deprecate the historiography that had been published until then, accusing it of deceit and possessing a bourgeois character.

The campaign associated with the anniversary of the uprising was therefore supposed to concentrate upon content that, on the one hand, was supposed to make the following possible:

- stress the tie of People’s Poland with the fights for national liberation, against the tsar and the invader, with patriotic and progressive traditions of our times
- propagate the understanding of the historiography falsified by the bourgeoisie, the truth about the January Uprising, and its sources, and those at fault for its weaknesses and the causes of the uprising’s downfall,
- popularizing knowledge about the combat cooperation of Russian, Ukrainian, and Byelorussian Democrats,
- deepening understanding that the consequential support of the uprising by Marx, Engels, and the First International documented solidarity of the socialist worker movement with the fight for the national liberation of the Poles against their partitioners.

On the other hand, it was pointed out that:

752 *W sprawie obchodów 1 maja 1962 r.*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-669, k. 154.

... a certain limitation in a number of mass celebrations aims to prevent the development of anti-Russian and anti-Soviet propaganda through the activation of circles that are reactionary-clerical already in existence.

Regarding the above, it was recommended not to give the press permissions to publish about the uprising until late fall of 1962, whereas the propaganda initiative was supposed to be more widely developed only during January of the following year. There were no plans for wide scale local celebrations and events. The exception was the celebrations connected with the commemoration of events, figures of the “revolutionary current of the uprising,” or connected with its “internationalist traditions.” But even then such a project had to gain permission from the proper regional [voivodeship] party committee and be confirmed on the central level. There were also no plans for any celebrations of the uprising in schools, besides emphasizing its meaning in the context of compulsory programs of teaching history.⁷⁵³

It is worth remembering that only toward the end of the 1960’s did the building of a structure to hold the Raclawice Panorama begin. It was brought back to Poland right after the war as “Stalin’s gift,” but it only became available to the Polish public in 1983.

As much as there was an effort to uproot anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiment, when it came to the relationship to the Germans it was the total opposite, there was an effort to agitate negative national emotions by using all available means of propaganda persuasion at the time. It is no exaggeration to say that the decades of the 1960’s were marked by anti-German sentiment hidden under a mask of an ideologically correct battle against imperialism, militarism, revanchism, and so on. Anti-Germanism practically became the only officially permitted form of nationalism. The fact that during this period the politics of West Germany toward Poland were also, objectively, not friendly is not much of a justification for this. The remilitarization of Western Germany that was taking place then only deepened the concerns.⁷⁵⁴ For Gomułka’s team, it was convenient to uphold a conviction about the constant, rooted in the past, danger of German expansionism. In this way, the ruling communist party legitimated itself and its dependence upon the Soviet Union. The meaning Gomułka’s team attached to this argument is attested by Jan Szydłak’s statement noted by Rakowski a few months before the signing of a pact with the Germans in 1970:

753 *W sprawie obchodu 100-lecia powstania styczniowego*, AAN, KC PZPR, 2400, k. 36, 38.

754 Jerzy Holzer, “Uraz, nacjonalizm, manipulacja: Kwestia niemiecka w komunistycznej Polsce,” *Rocznik Polsko-Niemiecki* 1 (1992): 12–13.

... for twenty years we integrated the nation with the fear of Germans. We squeezed tears into the eyes of the elderly and we had the young, in part, on our side, but what now? Now the German card is played out and we cannot use it anymore. What will we use now to integrate the nation? This is a very serious problem. I agree with him . . .⁷⁵⁵

Gomułka dictated the tone of the official propaganda with his speeches, whose peculiar obsession was the assumption of the continued threat to the western borders of Poland. According to Gomułka, the threat should be seen *sub specie aeternitatis* and it was not going to be reduced even by the West German governments signing of a pact recognizing the *status quo*. During the 3rd General Assembly of the PZPR its first secretary said, “German militarists, revisionists, and those seeking revenge, so long as they are at the helm in their country, will never reconcile themselves with the borders of Germany established in Potsdam, they will not even agree if forced by the circumstances to formally accept these borders.”⁷⁵⁶

Formulations such as “German militarists, revisionists, and those seeking revenge,” were markedly negative for many years, and entered into the language of propaganda helping to create an atmosphere of national threat from the side of the “eternal enemy.” Even though the official line was of stressing the membership of the GDR in the “bloc of brotherly socialist countries” and its friendly politics toward Poland, which were different from those of the Western Germans, in reality, the relations between the two countries could hardly be recognized as exemplary. Either way, a revision of anti-German sentiments would be suicidal, since such an effort would turn to nothing the legitimizing myths carefully constructed by the party authorities.

It is possible to bring up countless examples from this period—articles, reportages, books, or popular and documentary films—which had as a goal the maintaining of a blackened picture of Germany and Germans. The hero of *Stakes Higher Than Life*, an example taken from one of the most popular Polish television series, frequently visited German homes, met with “ordinary Germans,” but maybe only once with one that the reader could see as a good, decent human being.⁷⁵⁷

The legitimizing myth of the German threat concretized itself not only in the form of an image, and not only in films. It was no less visible in ceremony, in the celebrations of holidays and anniversaries of historical events. Those people forced

755 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1969–1971*, v. 4 (Warsaw: Iskry, 2001), 249.

756 “Referat sprawozdawczy KC wygłoszony przez I sekretarza KC PZPR tow. Wł. Gomułkę,” in: *III Zjazd PZPR. Stenogram* (Warsaw: KiW, 1959), 40–41.

757 For more on this topic see: Tadeusz Wróblewski, “Tematyka niemiecka w polskim filmie fabularnym,” in: *Polacy wobec Niemców: z dziejów kultury politycznej Polski 1945–1989*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1993), 336–364.

to take part in them stopped being passive participants in the “spectacle of power,” they in part became active participants, legitimating the imposed normative order with their presence. *The Plan of Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Attack Upon Poland* prepared by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee foresaw, among other things, starting with August 23rd until the end of September 1959, in all county [powiat] cities, larger places of work, and in “country milieux” lectures on the topic: “The causes of the September crisis” and on the “Effort of the Polish nation during World War II.” Workplace intercoms were supposed to broadcast “talks and reminiscences of September in the light of current achievements and gains during the peacetime period.” In Warsaw, and in some voivodeship cities, there were plans for organizing big antiwar manifestations. One of the goals of the anticipated propaganda campaign was pointing out “the meaning of the alliance and friendship with the Soviet Union, the main power in the anti-Nazi coalition, a friendship that guarantees our independence and constitutes one of the main achievements of People’s Poland.”⁷⁵⁸

The celebrations of the “20th anniversary of the attack” were used also as an occasion to weave the tradition of the communists with the patriotic tradition of the nation into an indivisible unity. The death of Marian Buczek in September 1939 was supposed to be the symbol of this unity, which was described using the conventions of myth. The poverty of the heroic pantheon joining national and revolutionary (communist) elements was compensated by moving to prepare the collective cult of Buczek in full force, creating him into a new national hero (whose sole sad merit was the fact that we perished in the fight against the Germans). In 1959 workplaces carrying his name were to organize educational academies. There was a vigil with the participation of workers and “local people” by his grave. One of the millennium-celebration schools was given his name. Newspapers were required to feature “a photograph and remembrances of the life and deeds of M. Buczek.” “The radio and television were also to have programming devoted to this anniversary,” the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee announced.⁷⁵⁹

Despite the efforts of party propagandists, Marian Buczek did not inscribe himself for the long haul in the collective memory of Poles.⁷⁶⁰ In 1956 radio signal

758 *Plan obchodów 20 rocznicy napadu na Polskę, W sprawie obchodu 20-tej rocznicy najazdu hitlerowskiego na Polskę*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-729, k. 5, 22, 23.

759 *Wnioski w sprawie form obchodu 20-tej rocznicy śmierci M. Buczka*, 4 IX 1959, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-687, k. 6.

760 The results of sociological studies undertaken toward the middle of the 1960’s prove that Poles only rarely (3.8%) referred to “heroes of the worker’s movement” as valued

jammers came to be called “Marian Buczek radio stations.” Things turned out differently with the Battle of Grunwald, which, at the very least since the completion of Jan Matejko’s allegorical painting, belonged to the mainline of national symbols. The communist attempts to monopolize the Grunwald tradition during World War II, and immediately after, were already discussed. However, the celebrations of the 550th anniversary of the battle in 1960 overshadowed earlier such “achievements” in its scale and degree of symbolic manipulation. The party authorities were aware that there were “in Polish society living ‘traditions of Grunwald’ up to this day,” and began preparations for the celebrations as early as 1957. At that time the Secretariat of the Central Committee received the *Proposal about the Matter of Celebrating the 550th Anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald*. It was proposed that the political campaign that was going to precede the celebrations, and the celebrations themselves, should be based upon four ideological pillars:

1. On the basis of historical materials, to popularize . . . the truth about the Polishness of Western lands and the struggles of its residents, stretching over many centuries, against germanization. This campaign should contribute to the further unification of the local populace, especially in Warmia and Mazury, with the populace that came to live on those lands after the regaining of independence in 1945. This will also constitute an essential element in the fight of the party for the mobilization of the whole nation’s efforts in the full management of the Western lands.
2. To strengthen and deepen the traditional ties, which have lasted through the ages, of the Polish nation with the nations of Russia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, and Czechoslovakia. The Battle of Grunwald is an example and symbol of the possibility and meaning that is given to these countries by a brotherly unity in action.
3. The celebrations of the 550th anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald will be a manifestation to the whole world that the Polish nation, along with the brotherhood of all the socialist nations, . . . is a power capable of decidedly and effectively resisting the “Drang nach Osten,” and that the unity of socialist countries and the creation of the GDR, the first German country of workers and peasants is a guarantee of the inviolability of our borders on the Oder and the Neisse.
4. The celebrations of the anniversary . . . should become a patriotic holiday for the whole nation and contribute to, among other things, the deepening of the ties of millions of Poles living outside the borders of the country with their motherland.⁷⁶¹

The script of a patriotic celebration was worked out in the finest detail. The participation of 60,000 people in the celebrations was expected, half of whom were

figures (Barbara Szacka and Anna Sawisz, *Czas przeszły i pamięć społeczna* [Warsaw: UW Instytut Socjologii, 1990], 20).

761 *Wniosek w sprawie obchodu 550 rocznicy bitwy pod Grunwaldem*, 8 XI 1957, AAN, KC PZPR, 1691, k. 73, 74.

supposed to be youths and members of the military.⁷⁶² The later, official estimates, according to which 200,000 people participated, must be heavily embellished.⁷⁶³ This does not change that fact that this was a gigantic spectacle in which the role of the main actor was assigned to the party-state authorities. A tribune for 100 people was erected for them. The terrain for the manifestation was decorated by red and white and red banners. The celebrations began with the singing of the national anthem. Then the First Secretary, along with the Chief of the Council of State, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of National Defense accepted the report of the commander of the youth rally and representatives of the Olsztyn voivodeship concerning the completed social actions. There were speeches by Gomułka and others. The culminating point of the celebrations was the unveiling of a monument and the placing of four urns containing earth taken from around 100 places of battles against the Germans in the country and abroad at its base. The “wedding vows” for youths were read. Its text gave the symbolism of Grunwald a new, socialist-internationalist dimension:

We wed thee Poland: the unity of city and country youth in the service of the nation, socialism, and peace . . . Joining all the powers of our generation under the ideational leadership of the United Polish Worker’s Party . . . Joining all the powers of our generation in the battle against backwardness, ignorance, and regression . . . in brothership and unity with socialist countries, in solidarity with working people of the whole world.⁷⁶⁴

The official part of the celebrations concluded with an artillery salute and the International.

Over 30,000 doves took flight over the Grunwald fields. Next came a great parade of the Air Force, which was received with an ovation from those assembled. In the afternoon there were shows of the best artistic groups from the whole country and folk games on several stages.⁷⁶⁵

The Aleksander Ford film *Knights of the Teutonic Order* premiered in the afternoon in the Olsztyn “Polonia” cinema. One of the film’s copies contained a black-and-white scene montage presenting the Nazi terror.

It was officially emphasized that the return to the battlefield of 1410 was not motivated by a desire to “awaken nationalistic boasting.”⁷⁶⁶ This is correct, accents of national megalomania were negligible. More attention was directed toward the

762 *Przygotowania do uroczystości grunwaldzkich w dn. 15 VII 1960 r.*, AAN, KC PZPR, 2220, k. 348.

763 *550 rocznica bitwy pod Grunwaldem. Grunwald 17 lipiec 1960*, Warszawa 1960, 3–4.

764 *Ibid.*

765 *Ibid.*

766 Henryk Jabłoński, “Tysiąclecie Państwa Polskiego,” *Nowe Drogi* 3 (1960): 9.

fact that the victory at Grunwald only temporarily stopped the German territorial expansion, and that the fight with the “eternal enemy” continued. This was symbolized by the urns placed under the monument. The first contained earth from the battlefields starting in 963 and ending in 1918; the second contain earth from the battlefields of the Silesian and Greater Poland Uprisings; the third from the battlefields of the Polish Army during World War II; and the fourth earth from the partisan battlefields. The Grunwald victory was treated as a lesson, which said that the Polish nation facing the German threat can only be saved by unity and the “appropriate politics that unify all the interested powers in the fight against the enemy.” Even though nobody said it outright: it was clear that the PZPR was continuing the “good fight” of King Władysław Jagiełło. The unification of the nation was also owed to it. However, the enemy remained the same: Germany, where Teutonic Knight traditions were also supposedly still living. As proof of this, the audience was reminded of Chancellor Adenauer’s appearance in a white cloak with a black cross. All in all, the celebrations at Grunwald were used as one of the instruments of governance. It was used to mobilize social energy and to legitimize the social order on the basis of a national myth created for this purpose.

The social-engineering intervention at Grunwald was seen as especially successful, since a decision was made to repeat it in connection with the 630th anniversary of the Battle of Płowce in 1961. In the program of the celebrations prepared by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee read as follows:

The victorious battle finale broke the myth about the invulnerability of the Teutonic monks and had had serious repercussions for strengthening the unity of Polish society around the efforts of Łokietek to unify the Polish state. Therefore, the battle, alongside its strictly military aspects, also found political resonance in the shape of heightening and strengthening national unity . . .

. . . The Teutonic invasion of Poland that ended with the Battle of Płowce occurred in September 1331. It can be seen as the prototype for the September 1939 campaign in which aggression toward Poland was committed by the rightful successors of the Teutonic Knights—the Nazis. The association of reminiscences of the Battle of Płowce with the reminiscences of the breaking out of the war in 1939 should sober society into awareness about the continuous threat from the side of German militarism, represented presently by Western Germany. The waves of revisionist excess must be countered by presenting, in a scholarly manner, all the historical facts that point toward the tragic ending of all such doings.⁷⁶⁷

767 *Program obchodów związanych z 630 rocznicą bitwy pod Płowcami*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-641, k. 14.

Once again the authorities used, but clearly hurriedly this time, a cobbled-together myth. Using historical facts to build it up “in a scholarly manner” was supposed to legitimize its truth. The myth actualized this truth and treated it as a concretization of reality. The story about the Battle of Płowce placed the fight against the Teutonic Knights, Nazis, German militarism within the dimensions of an eternal conflict of the good with evil, a conflict in which the “uniforms” of the Germans change, but whose meaning remains the same.⁷⁶⁸ We need not add who in this conflict was supposed to represent the present day good side.

The Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee foresaw the participation of Aleksander Zawadzki, Chairman of the National Unity Front Committee, in the celebrations because of the “nationwide meaning of the battle.” They also pointed to the necessity of saturating the celebration with “military elements, alluding to the laudable traditions of the Polish army.” Therefore, General Marian Spychalski also received an invitation to participate in the celebrations.

It was proposed the spectacle should have the most festive mood:

During the unveiling of the monument, the batteries should give a gun salute. Then citizens should lay a wreath at the feet of the monument. There should be an honor guard and candles. There eventually should also be a parade of air force units [jets, helicopters]. Then a multitude of choirs will sing an appropriate song.⁷⁶⁹

The celebrations on the fields by Płowce was part of the celebrations of the 22nd anniversary of the start of World War II, which were then connected by the authorities with the popularization in the society of the idea of a peace treatise with the Germans.⁷⁷⁰ Party documents point clearly that at the forefront lay the legitimation of the ruling party and its international alliances.

Our Marxist peace plan for resolving the German question, systematically popularized with all the means of propaganda, constitutes one of the most important factors bringing together the masses around the party and the people’s authorities . . . When it comes to this treatise, we are striving to show the difference between the Polish situation in 1961 from 1939, the convergence of Polish national interests with the interests and the firm politics of the USSR and the unity of the socialist camp.⁷⁷¹

768 Stanisław Filipowicz, *Mit i spektakl...*, op. cit., 77, 86.

769 *Program obchodów...*, op. cit., k. 18.

770 For more on this topic see: Jadwiga Kiwerska, “Niemcy w polityce...” op. cit., 74–75.

771 *Plan kampanii wokół traktatu pokojowego z Niemcami*, 14 VIII 1961, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-458, k. 92.

The propaganda campaign was prepared on an unheard of scale. In Gliwice and Wrocław there were to be rallies in which 70,000 people were to participate. Similar manifestations were planned in many other cities of Poland. Monuments in honor of those killed during the war were being unveiled, something that became a universal ritual during the 1960's. Monuments cropped up all over the country like mushrooms after the rain and other expressions of memory (i.e., memorial tablets) were unveiled with pomp and were supposed to symbolize the ties between the authorities and the nation and its heroic history. The rulers in this way monopolized the honorable role of the guardian of national memory, which they could almost freely manipulate, reversing those events and facts from history, which fit into the party's vision of the past. This was not the only way for recalling the martyrology of the nation from the period of occupation. Bookstores prominently displayed wartime literature and works about German topics. Solely during the first half of 1961, twenty-one new books were published on those subjects. The next year there were supposed to be fifty-three of them. The German theme was weaved "in a skillful manner" into the content of more important celebrations and propaganda actions: the harvest festival, the start of the school year, and youth rallies.

The anti-German "crusade" also hit those people of German extraction who lived in Poland. In the Opole region, residents of villages were encouraged to change the writing on tombstones from German to Polish.⁷⁷² "Where this was not possible whole tombstones were taken down."⁷⁷³ National Councils examined the repertoires of orchestras, thanks to which the "amount of incidents of playing German hits at parties" fell. There was the maximum effort of limiting cultural and sports exchanges with the GDR. It was postulated that sports teams from Opolian Silesia should not play matches with German teams. "We should send

772 We ought to note that the re-polonizing action did not begin toward the end of the 1950's. As a matter of fact it started already in 1945, also in other regions of the country: Warmia, Mazury, and Powiśle. The problem of the state's relation to national minorities is treated by many books. I will only mention the latest books here: Leszek Belzyt, *Między Polską a Niemcami. Weryfikacja narodowościowa i jej następstwa na Warmii, Mazurach i Powiślu w latach 1945–1960* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 1998); Jan Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa na Śląsku Opolskim 1945–1950* (Opole: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Śląskiego, 1984); *Ibid.*, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa na Ziemiach Odzyskanych* (Warsaw: PWN, 1990); Piotr Madajczyk, *Przyłączenie Śląska Opolskiego do Polski 1945–1948* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1996).

773 *Informacja o realizacji listu Sekretariatu KW PZPR w Opolu do powiatowych instancji partyjnych z października 1959 r. odnośnie rewizjonizmu zachodnio-niemieckiego*, Wydział Propagandy KW PZPR Opole, luty 1960, AAN, KC PZPR, 2220, k. 7.

our sports teams as much as possible to the Soviet Union or to other democratic countries.”⁷⁷⁴ The ethnically homogeneous country was the ideal. “In the Opole region, a new united society is growing, which is erasing the boundaries imposed by origins. This is why we cannot artificially create such situations that would mark these boundaries, we have to do everything in order for these divisions to disappear completely.”⁷⁷⁵

The growth of the meaning of nationalism in the legitimation of the communist system, beyond the already mentioned factors, was also guided by the rivalry between the state authorities who were celebrating the Millennium of the Polish State and the church authorities who desired to celebrate the Millennium of Poland’s Baptism. To a great degree this was the reason why, in the process of legitimation, the party more frequently drew on tradition and the official nationalism was more focused upon the past rather than the future. The main cause of the conflict was the ten-year pastoral program of the Church, the so-called Great Novena, connected to the upcoming Millennium of Poland’s Baptism.⁷⁷⁶ It was supposed to “lead to the spiritual transformation of the whole nation,” bring people into the Church and show its role in the social life of the country.⁷⁷⁷ The party authorities, above all Gomułka, read the Novena program as a political and ideological calling, an attempt to question the national legitimation of the party and its achievements in the building of socialism in Poland.⁷⁷⁸ In the monocentric system there was place for one “leading power of the nation,” and,

774 Ibid., k. 8.

775 Ibid., k. 9.

776 For more on this topic see: Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce 1945–1970* (Kraków: PiT, 1995); Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec 1968*, op. cit.

777 *Notatka w sprawie kampanii Tysiąclecia i środków przeciwdziałania akcji Episkopatu*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-899, k. 64.

778 “The basic directions sketched out in the program: to establish the conviction that the Polish Episcopate is acting in accordance with the program of the Council, in the spirit of reform, adapted to the needs of the modern world, and at the same time to deepen clericalism and devotion; 2) to counteract the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the PRL by passing over actual socio-cultural changes and achievements and presenting contemporary ‘national defects’ with an ideal model of ‘national virtues’ in previous epochs 3) to awaken discontent among the believing part of society by proving that, as a result of the existing social conditions and because of the lowering of living standards, there has been a deepening in the last twenty years of such ‘national defects’ as: alcoholism, laziness, and recklessness. 4) to contrast ‘national virtues’ against ‘influences that are foreign to Polish spirituality’” (*Aktualne problemy polityki Państwo-Kościół*, 1964, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-738, k. 47).

according to Gomułka, this could only be the party. Its First Secretary discussed this *expressis verbis*.⁷⁷⁹

During meetings of the Political Bureau, which took place on June 26th and July 16th of 1958, there was a wide-ranging discussion of the matter of relations with the Church against the backdrop of the “aggressive actions of the episcopate, especially among the young.” It was acknowledged that it was indispensable to “undertake steps to counter the extensive actions by the clergy.”⁷⁸⁰ It would start with a purification, and they decided to expand the “terrain of activities aiming to eliminate clerical elements from the party apparatus.” The next step would be mobilization and it was decided that “the party apparatus, party organization, state apparatus, and social organizations should be mobilized in the anticlerical action.” Only then these powers would be thrown “into a worldview offensive” that would secularize the society. A whole series of restrictions against the Church not only as an institution but also as the community of the faithful was undertaken then.⁷⁸¹

Besides actions aimed directly at the Church, the party authorities stepped in to prepare their own celebrations that would compete with the Church. The name

779 “We are not looking for a war with the Church . . . But we will not tolerate a certain part of the Church hierarchy and clergy, which remains under the influence of Vatican circles that are hostile to People’s Poland, and are striving toward goals that have nothing to do with the religious mission of the Church, undermining the socio-political order of the country” (Władysław Gomułka, *Aktualne zadania szkolnictwa. Przemówienie wygłoszone 24 IX 1958 r. na Krajowej Naradzie Partyjnych Działaczy Oświatowych*, w: *Przemówienia, wrzesień 1957-grudzień 1958*, KiW, Warszawa 1959, s. 322). The speech Gomułka gave at the III Meeting of the PZPR was even stronger in tone, “The Church hierarchy was observed for violating state laws and regulations, which is something that is happening again. We advise them to stop provoking the people’s authorities, because it will not end in the Church’s favor. The times of the medieval domination of the state by the Church have long passed. We must adopt to progress and renounce hopeless thoughts about fighting socialism” (*Referat sprawozdawczy KC wygłoszony przez I sekretarza KC PZPR, Wł. Gomułkę*, in: *III Zjazd PZPR* [Warsaw: archived stenograph, 1959] s. 115).

780 Jerzy Sztachelski *na posiedzeniu Biura Politycznego KC*, 26 VI 1958, AAN, KC PZPR, 1687, k. 124.

781 They resolved to: take down crosses in schools during vacations, limit religion lessons to once a week, revoke the permission for monks to teach religion, make the organization of pilgrimages more difficult, institute entrance fees to Częstochowa, give no permissions to build churches and to open new parishes, stop the flow of aid to the Church from abroad, and so on. Finally, to “stringently monitor the implementation of these measures,” *Ibid.*, k. 129–134.

given to them—The Millennium of the Polish State—did not mean that some new ideology was created whose central value would be the state.

The party authorities had many ideas for organizing the celebrations of the anniversary. For example, they wondered whether the celebrations for the Millennium of the State, laid out over several years, should be culminated with celebrations during 1965. In the *Note on the Matter of the Celebrations of the Millennium of the Polish State* composed in 1958 we read that:

... the year 1965 (when “Dubrovka ad Misconem venit”) is the most certain date about which we can talk about with the utmost certainty, it closes, on the one hand, a process of self-formation, on the other, it begins the written history of the Polish state . . . The years 1960–1965 should also be used for organizing celebrations connected with the 1000-year anniversary of the existence of Christianity in Poland. In order that the distinction between it and the state should not melt away in these church celebrations, it must be celebrated a few years earlier regarding historical sources.⁷⁸²

In accordance with this project, there were plans to organize upon the model of interwar France, Belgium, and Poland a great domestic exhibition, which would make it possible to present the gains of People’s Poland in many different areas of life. Furthermore, there was a proposal for three separate exhibitions: the first exhibition was supposed to be about the pre-Romanesque and Romanesque periods on Polish lands, that would cover the artistic achievement from the period of tribal states that preceded the emergence of the state, and also from the early period of the state. This exhibition prepared by the National Museum in Poznań was supposed to be the introduction to the cycle of events of the 1000-year anniversary. The opening of the exhibition was planned for 1958–1959. The authorities also took into consideration the possibility of sending a part “of the historical material abroad as a signal of the upcoming anniversary to the world and for Polonia abroad.” The second exposition organized by the Archaeological Museum in Warsaw was to be the main historical exhibition entitled, “The Beginnings of the Polish State,” which would depict the development of tribal societies leading to the establishment of a tribal state and would show “the development of studies about the question and the great scope of the contributions to this of People’s Poland.”

The third exhibition was supposed to be the exhibition of the Souvenirs of Polish Statehood in the National Museum in Warsaw. It would cover the “original relics of state distinction . . . acts of constitutions in the originals, all the way to the Constitution of People’s Poland and the leading Sejm records, and finally the

782 *Notatka w sprawie obchodów Tysiąclecia Państwa Polskiego*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1691, k. 56–65.

works of the great Historians of the Polish Nation.” The widening of archaeological studies and the preparing of monographs related to these studies were also planned. The “scholarly-exhibition event” we have described above was supposed to begin with a propaganda cycle whose culmination was supposed to come in 1965 with a Scholarly Session of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Session of the 1000 Year Anniversary of the Polish State).

The authors of the *Note* focused upon the necessity of taking into consideration the act of Poland’s baptism during the proceedings of the Scholarly Session of the Polish Academy of Sciences. “This act had an important influence upon the further development of our country and it ought to be acknowledged as a progressive factor, which eased the cementation of the Polish nation.”⁷⁸³ For the years 1960–1965 there were plans to organize in Warsaw an International Congress of Slavic Archaeology, or a solemn meeting of the Sejm, or the Council of State and Government, and many events “depicting the question of the Millennium and the achievement of the whole of its history including the achievements of our state and our generation . . . Attention should also be turned toward the possibility of joining the celebrations of the Millennium with the celebrations connected with the 20th anniversary of People’s Poland in 1964.”⁷⁸⁴

This project came into being on the wave of the November normalization of relations between the state and church authorities. The party authorities knew the plans of the Episcopate regarding the organization of the celebrations surrounding the Millennium of the Baptism⁷⁸⁵ and knew that they would mainly take place in 1966, which is why they wanted to organize their own celebrations a year earlier, instead of combining the anniversary of Polish statehood with the fact of adopting Christianity. However, making the millennium of the Polish state take place in 1965, rather than a year later, would have been a serious distortion of the national mythology. The idea was scrapped probably for this very reason.

The escalation of the conflict with the Church occurred toward the end of 1965 at the time of the publishing by the Episcopate of the letter of reconciliation addressed to the German bishops. The coming celebrations of the millennium were the official pretext for the sending of the letter. The bishops were informing German Christians of the celebrations of the Millennium of Poland’s Baptism and invited them to the commemorations. In this letter there were also references to the far and near past history as it relates to Polish-German relations. According

783 Ibid., k. 41.

784 Ibid., k. 47.

785 Ibid., k. 44.

to the clergy, the Germans were no longer eternal enemies. The borders on the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse were called a “bitter fruit” for the Germans, the suffering of German refugees and displaced persons was also mentioned. Postwar Poland was recognized not as a victorious state, but as “utterly exhausted.” Finally, the most important part of the letter followed: “We extend to you who are sitting here on the benches of the Council, which is coming to an end, our hands and we grant you forgiveness and ask for it.”⁷⁸⁶

The different interpretation of the historical facts in the letter caused consternation and made the authorities boil. Gomułka, who considered matters related to Polish-German relations as restricted to the party leadership, especially to himself, fell into a fury. “According to Gomułka, the German question was such a delicate matter that the involvement of additional parties could only harm it,” recalled Stanisław Trepczyński, the chief of the chancellery of the Central Committee’s Secretariat between 1960 and 1971. Gomułka carried on a very subtle game toward the GDR, the USSR, and toward the West, and realized that the Church joining the mix weakens Poland’s position. While playing this game for Poland’s borders he held various trump cards. One of them was supposed to be Poland’s resolve, which blocked any solution in Europe that did not agree to the borders between the Oder and Lusatian Neisse. Gomułka acknowledged that if the Church takes steps against this perspective without settling the *imponderabilia* of the borders then it would weaken Poland’s position. The party authorities saw the letter of the bishops as an attack upon their monopolistic position, an attempt to question their supposed rights to speak in the name of the nation.

Naturally Gomułka as a convinced communist thought that the Church’s contribution to the Polish national cause was not as unambiguous as the Church presented it, that it frequently took the side of powers, which were not powers of progress, which did not always understand the national interest well, and he was not convinced about the unambiguousness of the identification of the Church with Poland. And this obviously already had an ideological foundation.⁷⁸⁷

The people’s authorities reacted immediately: they recalled the primate’s passport, they denied the pope permission to visit Poland and stirred up the press into a rapid propaganda campaign against the bishops, accusing them of “betraying national interests.” Speaking during a rally Gomułka said that “the mind of the head of the Polish episcopate” is “limited and lacking the national feel for the state.”

786 Piotr Madajczyk, “Orędzie biskupów z 1965 r. jako element obchodów milenijnych,” *Więź* 1 (1997): 144–152.

787 Jerzy Eisler and Stanisław Trepczyński, *Grudzień ’70 wewnątrz*, op. cit., 70–71.

He accused the Primate of betraying Polish reasons of state, which are identical with the people's state, and "deluded pretensions to the spiritual leadership of the Polish nation," and placing them above the independence of Poland. "Imagine the kind of blindness of that head of the Polish episcopate and his ninnies," continued Gomulka, "peddling the bow-legged anti-national idea of the 'antemurale,' whose political content in our times leads to the pitting of the Polish nation against the Soviet nation, to the breaking off the Polish-Soviet alliance, toward building a wall between Poland and the Soviet Union, to a national catastrophe."⁷⁸⁸

The authorities' propaganda storm in response to this letter was one of the main elements of the activities undertaken against the Church during the period of celebrating the millennium. In January 1966 the Press Bureau of the Central Committee, in a letter to Zenon Kliszko, pointed toward the letter resulting in "a new situation in which it will be indispensable to fill out our program for the celebrations with new elements."⁷⁸⁹ These were supposed to be national elements:

The Church hierarchy, by working with the powers and propaganda circles hostile to People's Poland, with the Polish diaspora, and so on, will attempt, at any price, to widely propagate the view and opinion that a Pole and a Catholic are the same thing, that today the Church, not the socialist state, is the inheritor and guardian of the real national tradition, that Poland always had its face turned toward the West, and only the communists want to direct it toward the East, and so on.

Since the main Church celebrations were supposed to take place on 3 May 1966 on Jasna Góra on the 175th anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution of 3rd May, it was thought "outright damaging . . . if, as a result of this, the Church and diaspora would appear as the inheritors, spokespeople, and defenders of the 3rd May tradition and the Kościuszko traditions." For the party authorities the rivalry with the Church was, therefore, a conflict for nationalist legitimation, for determining who, the Church or the party, is the inheritor of the national tradition.

What is at stake is not outbidding the hierarchy about the question who is the real inheritor of national traditions, but about using the appropriate festivities and celebrations with an appropriately wide political reach, propaganda framing, and attractiveness for our society and those abroad—to isolate the clerical slogans and undertakings, to dem-

788 Władysław Gomulka, "Przemówienie na manifestacji w Poznaniu w związku z obchodami 1000-lecia Państwa Polskiego, 17 IV 1966," in: *Przemówienia, lipiec 1964-grudzień 1966* (Warsaw: KiW, Warsaw 1967), 426–427.

789 *Do Zenona Kliszko, członka Biura Politycznego KC PZPR, 13 I 1966, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XIX-83, k. 41.*

onstrate their falsity and their actual political goals, to take away their exclusivity and attractiveness, which come from calling upon feelings and sentiments of Polish society.⁷⁹⁰

The proposals of the Central Committee's Press Bureau went in the direction of shifting the main weight of the celebrations from July 22nd, as was planned earlier, to the 1st through the 3rd of May:

It appears that the countrywide celebrations, which will refer to the 175th anniversary of the 3rd May Constitution can take place on May 1st and constitute the joining of two traditions—the worker-peasant work holiday and a holiday for the Millennium, a holiday of the progressive social tradition of our country, which is well-symbolized by the Kościuszko Uprising, the Four-Year Sejm, and the Constitution of 3rd May.⁷⁹¹

Thus, national symbols were supposed to make the worker symbols more attractive and legitimate them. It was proposed that an extraordinary session of the Sejm take place on April 31st. During this session, the Sejm was supposed to accept an honorary resolution about the moving of the urn containing Kościuszko's heart from the National Museum in Warsaw to the underground of the Royal Castle. They planned upon a star-studded parade for the 1st of May originating in all of the districts of Warsaw and converging upon the Royal Castle square. Throughout the whole country, and in places connected to the Kościuszko Uprising, for example, in the Krakow Square and Raclawice, great patriotic manifestations were supposed to take place. "We can also consider the matter of laying a cornerstone on the 3rd of May under the rebuilt Warsaw Castle. In the eventuality of undertaking this decision, without specifying a date for the completion of the rebuilding we should not hesitate to start a collection of money in Poland and abroad for this very goal."⁷⁹²

Nothing came of these proposals. They did not get Gomułka's approval. Already during a meeting of the Central Committee Secretariat on 22 December 1965 it was decided to organize the main celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State on May 1st and July 22nd, "We spoke out against undertaking the decision to rebuild the Warsaw Castle and the construction of the 1000-year-anniversary mound."⁷⁹³ What guided Gomułka to not give his approval to rebuild the Royal Castle in Warsaw can be gleaned from a letter that he directed to members of the Central Committee in March 1971, that is, after he already left the leadership of the party. He wrote:

790 Ibid., k. 42, 43.

791 Ibid.

792 Ibid., k. 44.

793 *Protokół nr 13 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 22 XII 1966, AAN, KC PZPR, 2225, k. 670.

I never was, and never will be, a proponent for the rebuilding of the castle, more strictly speaking, the building of a new castle, since nothing was left of the old one. The country has different, more important, needs than the building of a castle, which would absorb immense resources, and after it would be built, if it ever came to that—it would require an annual investment of millions for maintaining and conserving this museum. The building of the castle is being justified by an inexorable need for a living tie to old traditions. The castle is supposedly the living symbol of the continuation of Polish statehood, and so on. I ask: What traditions do we desire to connect with? What progressive elements from the life of Poland does the Royal Castle represent besides the Constitution of 3rd May, whose supposed defender, and the host of the Castle, Stanisław Poniatowski, left for the Targowica camp after its promulgation? But this Castle is a symbol of anarchy, nearly every Sejm that presided between its walls was interrupted by the *liberum veto* of the magnates, it was inhabited by easily bought and shady kings of Poland, there, finally, under the bayonets of foreign powers, were signed the resolutions that led to the partitioning of Poland . . . The Warsaw Castle is not a symbol of Polish statehood. However, it is a symbol of confusion, both of the magnate state and the Polish nobility, and the state of the Polish bourgeoisie . . . We Poles love our national traditions, we cultivate and cuddle them, as a consequence this brings us fruits of the type seen in December on the Coast. The Japanese love modernity and, as a result, they are building the economic power of their country at a rate unparalleled in any country of the world. We are very jealous of them for this, we wonder where they get it, but we continue to follow the path cultivated by our national traditions. Who will tear the Polish nation away from this lost path when the party that is supposed to be its historical leader is still not capable of understanding the whole of these complex problematics?⁷⁹⁴

Whatever happened to Gomułka, the hero of the “Polish revolution,” who in October 1956 was capable of reading the aspirations and direction of the nation, but a little over a decade later was no longer able to do so? His closest co-workers noted the consequences of the process of aging were noticeable, he was clearly losing something of his feel for politics and the ability to act flexibly. In politics, Gomułka used very narrow schematic thinking which he was incapable of transcending. He was aware that national independence and sovereignty is a matter of the first-order for the Poles. He held onto this and acknowledged it as one of the axioms of his internal and foreign policy. However, he did not understand other national sentiments, including the ties to national symbols, such as the Royal Castle in Warsaw. He treated them as something that is anachronistic, non-progressive, an expandable and cumbersome baggage that only made the march along the road to socialist society more difficult. He made a serious mistake by not agreeing to the restoration of the Royal Castle. We can suspect that a rebuilding would have met with the social approval not only of the residents of Warsaw, and the authorities

794 *List Władysława Gomułki...*, op. cit., 227–228.

would have gained several points in their rivalry with the Church. He committed a similar mistake, but much more dramatic in its effects, in 1970 by making the decision to go through with the raising of prices days before Christmas, which irritated people to such an extent, that they took to the streets. Again, the cause of the erroneous decision was the lack of feeling from Gomułka's side and a lack of understanding for national tradition, in which the Christmas holidays are something extraordinary and holy.

The apogee of the conflict with the Church took place in 1966. The authorities undertook their technical preparations for the coming celebrations. The organization of the festivities was the culmination of an almost ten-year effort of the party propaganda, which was supposed to result in the secularization of the society. A special "party-government" commission was called, in which the party was represented by Witaszewski.⁷⁹⁵ It was under his lead that the administrative and propaganda departments prepared the *Note on the Matter of the Celebrations of the Millennium and the Means for Countering the Actions of the Episcopate*, whose title itself suggests the intentions of those in power. Their goal was not only making more difficult the organization of the Church celebrations, but also the preparation of their own competing offering, which would not lack national and nationalistic accents.

Throughout the whole millennial year, the authorities adorned all their ordinary events with the phraseology of the "thousand years": 1st of May, Pentecost, harvest festival, the October Congress of Culture, and they also devoted the scholarly sessions of the Jagiellonian University and the State Academy of Sciences to it. All anniversaries were celebrated more loudly than before.

- In April, during the "Month of Remembrance," and during the "Week of International Solidarity of the Opposition Movement," there were plans to organize throughout the country, on the grounds of concentration camps, manifestations of the populace in protest against: "the militarist politics of West Germany" and the "politics of revenge and the lack of punishment against Nazi war criminals."⁷⁹⁶
- On 3rd of May in Katowice there was a rally with the participation of the central government authorities that was combined with cementing of the foundation under the monument devoted to the Insurrectionist Deed, "the District [Voivodeship] Committee predicts the participation of about half a million

795 See: Andrzej Paczkowski, *Pół wieku...*, op. cit., 345.

796 *Notatka w sprawie kampanii Tysiąclecia i środków przeciwdziałania akcji Episkopatu*, k. 57.

people.” “During the rally the relays will set down the earth taken from all the terrains of insurrectionist battles from Upper Silesia and Opole and other places where battles for the freedom and independence of Poland took place. The great Katowice rally will inaugurate a campaign that will stress the role of the working class of Silesia in the insurrectionist battles, its patriotic stance and its contribution in the building of socialism.”⁷⁹⁷

- On 8th May there was a rally in Wrocław and the laying of a cornerstone under the monument of the Return of the Western and Eastern Lands to the Motherland. Furthermore, in connection with Victory Day there will be the laying of wreaths throughout the country on the graves of those who fell between 1939 and 1945, festive collections by scouts in front of the monuments dedicated to the Fighting and Martyrdom of the Polish Nation, the handing out of orders to the scouts for being “Guardians of Places of National Memory,” and the lighting of scout “Candles for the Millennium.”⁷⁹⁸
- On 18 June celebrations in Cedynia “for the commemoration of the victorious battle of Mieszko I with the German invaders.”⁷⁹⁹

The places where the various celebrations took place were saturated with national symbolism, “In the upcoming year more talking point materials will be published [posters, slogans, hangings, and portraits of outstanding figures from the history of our nation, and so on].”⁸⁰⁰ The national *sacrum* was accompanied by a populist *profanum*. During all of the celebrations, there were festivities and markets where it was possible to buy things that were not usually available in stores. There were also performances by folk artistic groups and sports matches, all were attractive entertainments that were different from the gray everyday reality.

The celebrations of the Millennium were a great spectacle of power. Party dignitaries were present at manifestations in Poznań, Gniezno, or Katowice when, at the same time, Church festivities were taking place. The authorities attempted to limit the number of the participants in the latter by organizing simultaneous state celebrations in the larger cities. Thus, in Krakow, a rally on the occasion of Victory Day, in which Cyrankiewicz participated, took place at the same time as Church celebrations. In Gniezno, during a Mass celebrated by the the Archbishop of Krakow, Karola Wojtyła, there was the sudden sound of cannon shots, signifying the arrival of Marshal Spychalski for state celebrations that were taking place

797 Ibid, k. 53, 54.

798 Ibid., K. 55

799 Ibid., k. 58.

800 Ibid., k. 51.

simultaneously. The inauguration of the central official celebrations precisely during the anniversary of Poland's baptism was justified with the 21st anniversary of the Oder and Neisse crossing by the First and Second Armies of the Polish Army.

The culminating point of the state celebrations was the extraordinary session of the Sejm on 21 July 1966. A substantial talk was given by Władysław Gomułka. It was essentially a short "Marxist analysis of Polish history." The history of Poland was presented as a teleological process that was inevitably leading to the triumph of the socialist idea. The socialist state was supposed to constitute the final stage in the thousand-year-old history of Poland. Furthermore, its contemporary rulers were presented as the inheritors of the previous generations of Poles, including the nobility and clergy. The First Secretary said:

We, the generation building socialist Poland, are closest to the traditions and the historical achievements of the working people . . . But, since we are the political representatives of the working people, the guardians of its ideals and strivings, we are simultaneously with the whole nation, the inheritors of everything that happened in Poland's past for the development and good of the country has been done by other classes, states, and social strata—monarchs, nobility, the urban patricians, and the clergy, people of science and culture.⁸⁰¹

The speaker did not utter anything about the contributions of national minorities to Polish culture and the civilizational development of the country. He did not have to, but he could have. The fact that he did not, probably is not a coincidence. He only mentioned the fact that Ukrainian and Byelorussian peasants had the Polish magnates and noblemen as their oppressors. However, he stressed that People's Poland had "become a single-nation state." In his wide-ranging speech, Gomułka also did not mention an event whose anniversary was being celebrated on that day—the baptism of Poland.⁸⁰² However, he did say that the baptism was an act of the state and the new religion one of the arms of the state power apparatus. A relatively large space was devoted by Gomułka to the governments of the last Piasts. The names of Władysław Łokietek and Kazimierz Wielki are mentioned four times, while the remaining leaders of Poland once, if at all. "It is worth stressing," said the First Secretary, "that the Poland of the Piasts undertook many wars against the Germans, without ever reaching for German lands, because it was always a defense against aggression. At the same time, except for

801 Władysław Gomułka "Nadzwyczajna sesja Sejmu z okazji 1000-lecia Państwa Polskiego. Przemówienie wygłoszone 21 lipca 1966 r.," in: *Z kart naszej historii* (Warsaw: KiW, 1982), 370–371.

802 Wojciech Roszkowski, *Historia Polski 1914–1990* (Warsaw: PWN, 1991), 280.

the struggle over the Cherven Cities, it did not undertake wars against its Slavic neighbors from the south and east.” This is not the only fragment which attests that, out of the whole of Polish history, the Piast period suited Gomułka’s tastes best. One of the many accusations he levelled against the Second Commonwealth was making the country dependent upon foreign capital. As the greatest victory in the history of “our nation” Gomułka saw the return of Poland to the Oder, Niesse, and the Baltic after World War II. He said about the national unity that, “we will guard and defend it like an apple of our eye.” Even though there was no lack of reference to class-related elements, the speech itself was one immense apotheosis of the nation-state, which had found its most perfect embodiment in the PRL:

It is a democratic country that respects the rights of citizens and cares for the common good, free of willfulness and anarchy, based upon a conscious social discipline, a state that we are building thoughtfully for 22 years now—it is the basis of all the achievements of the Polish nation, the guarantee of its development in the future.⁸⁰³

On 22nd July there was a “millennial military parade,” which was received by Marshall Spychalski in the company of the highest authorities of the PZPR. A portion of those marching was dressed up in historical costumes, which all the more stressed the national character of the state holiday. Among those marching were the warriors of Bolesław Chrobry, Hussars, soldiers of the January Uprising, the cavalry from before 1939, soldiers of the First Polish Army, and so on. Supposedly, there were even plans for a march of the Partisans. In the end, the party authorities did not give their approval.⁸⁰⁴

One of the last chords struck by the celebrations of the anniversary of the Millennium of the State was the return of the ashes of Cyprian Kamil Norwid to Poland. This was the brainchild of Kliszko, a lover of Norwid’s poetry. He was not in the least worried about using the bard to legitimate the state authorities. The ashes of Norwid were supposed to rest in the Aleja Zasłużonych in the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw, that is, where Marchlewski and Bierut were buried earlier.⁸⁰⁵ Returning and burying the remains of Norwid in Poland would become the occasion for a great patriotic manifestation, understood as a seance for the public adoration of the authorities for their gesture for national culture. We ought to also see in this an attempt by the authorities to unite with the intellectual and

803 Władysław Gomułka, *Nadzwyczajna sesja Sejmu...*, op. cit., 402.

804 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1963–1966...*, op. cit., 380.

805 *Projekt uchwały Prezydium Ogólnopolskiego Komitetu Frontu Jedności Narodu w sprawie sprowadzenia do Polski prochów Cypriana Kamila Norwida*, sierpień 1966, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-639, k. 28, 29.

artistic milieu, with whom relations were worsening from year to year. The idea did not convince Gomułka, who was worried about nationalistic “exaggeration.” During a meeting of the Political Bureau, he was supposed to have given a “long monologue that today everybody wants to be nationalist, and only he himself has to be class-based. “This confirms my suspicions,” noted Rakowski,

... that both he and some of the other members of the leadership clearly see the dangers of nationalism, but this simultaneously brings on a substantial question, why are they not fighting it? Maybe I’m mistaken, but it seems to me that on the one hand they see the need to constantly accentuate the national element, but on the other hand, they don’t really know how to fight against nationalist tendencies. I also do not exclude the possibility that it is too late for a bold opposition to nationalist tendencies.⁸⁰⁶

This was a very accurate appraisal of the situation.

1966 was the year when the two visions of Polishness and the nation collided. The authorities underscored the image of the nation united by interests, strivings, and views with the people’s state and the ruling party—a nation living in constant alert because of the German threat, a nation whose most important task “is the strengthening of Poland’s power on all sides by tightening the brotherly ties with the Soviet Union,” and finally a secular nation. This conflict was the ground of a long-lasting ideological rivalry. In the eyes of the communist authorities, the millennial observances were only a “devotional action” and posed the danger in the form of a clericalizing of the society.⁸⁰⁷ The fight for the collective memory, and over social symbols and imaginations, undertaken because of the Millennium, was a classical struggle for legitimacy—even if it was strengthened by ideological differences. The authorities felt that to win they had to raise the national banner higher to reach the goal of marking upon the symbolic level their very own national identity. The propaganda campaign therefore repeated *ad nauseam*, following the leading thoughts of the Central Committee’s Secretariat, the main idea of the Millennium celebrations that “People’s Poland is the crowning of the historical process of the nation’s and state’s development, the inheritor of the patriotic and progressive traditions of the whole millennium of the nation’s achievements.”⁸⁰⁸ At the same time, the legitimization efforts from the side of the authorities were accompanied by a massive attempt to de-legitimize the “enemy” by excluding him

806 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1963–1966...*, op. cit., 382.

807 *Do egzekutyw Komitetów Wojewódzkich, Powiatowych i Miejskich PZPR, AAN, KC PZPR*, 1690, k. 153.

808 *Notatka w sprawie kampanii Tysiąclecia i środków przeciwdziałania akcji Episkopatu*, op. cit., k. 49.

from the circle of the national community by accusing him of betraying national interests and of the anti-national resonance of the Bishop's letter. However, the party only extremely rarely, and very superficially, used argumentation based upon Marxist ideology during the celebrations. There was a clear leaning in the process toward favoring nationalist legitimation.

The anti-Semitic campaign from March 1968 became the coronation of this process. In order to locate its genesis, it would require stepping back to 1956, when things led to the eruption of anti-Semitic sentiments in society and through all the levels of power, but also to 1945. March, as Feliks Tych has pointed out, had quite a long prehistory.⁸⁰⁹ Immediately after the war, it was noted that there was a widening of anti-Semitic stereotypes among functionaries of the security apparatus, the belief that all Jews, independent of their residence, language, and way of life, are essentially a disciplined community whose most important goal is the ruling over the world and Poland.⁸¹⁰ Diving into the causes behind March through going all the way back to the birth of the system of power in Poland is certainly historically justified, however, it would transform this book into an entirely different study. It is enough to say that the process of "dilution," preceded by a recognition, which consisted of establishing just who is a Jew, had persisted for a long time, and periodically gathered strength. The example that confirms the particular attention the authorities paid to people who came from a Jewish background was the census

809 Feliks Tych, "Kilka uwag o Marcu 1968," in *Marzec 1968: trzydzieści lat później*, eds. Marcin Kula, Marcin Zaremba, Piotr Osęka (Warsaw: PWN, 1998), 17; on anti-Semitic sentiments in Polish society right after the war see: Danuta Blus-Węgrowska, "Atmosfera pogromowa," *Karta* 18 (1996): 87–107; Maciej Pisarski, *W nowej Polsce*, *ibid.*, 108–119; Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy – Żydzi – Komunizm...*, *op. cit.*; Jan Gross, *Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów 1939–1948* (Krakow: Universitas, 1998).

810 This is how a party speaker presented this situation in September 1945: "During a lecture that took place on 19 September 1945 for lead investigators of the Civic Militia of the Regional Headquarters near 56 Wilcza Street in Warsaw on the topic of 'Racism and Antisemitism'—I noted the especially low political level of the audience. Their comments during 'discussions,' with which they interrupted my lecture were of this variety: 'so long as the Jews will occupy positions in Poland then things will be bad . . .,' 'we are being harmed by the Jews—our low pay and those of workers are the fault of the Jews, it's their politics,' 'we must destroy and throw out the Jews.' There were muted whispers in the lecture hall of the variety: 'out with the Jews,' 'Throw the Jews out of security services,' etc.," AAN, PPR, 295/VII-267, k. 19 (passage pointed out by Jerzy Kochanowski).

of workers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in foreign locales, undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May 1959. The Jews on this list were marked with red.⁸¹¹ We cannot definitively say that similar surveys of employees with regard to their nationalities were undertaken in other areas, especially in the army, Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade. We can only suspect what dictated them. They might have reflected the unabated striving of the communist elites to rid themselves of the etiquette of the “Judeo-Commune.” It is most probable that a rather prosaic anti-Semitism of many members of the ruling elite came into play and was combined with an obsession with spy characteristic for communist regimes. The defection to the West of two officers from a Jewish background—Paweł Monat in 1959 and Władysław Tykociński in 1965—certainly did not fail to influence the atmosphere of suspicion toward the Polish Jews who remained in the country. They were the only ethnic group (with the exception of a small smattering of Greeks) in Poland potentially tied with a state that did not belong to the socialist camp, which, all the more, made them the objects of counter-intelligence attention of the Security Forces.⁸¹² We ought to stress the fact that, since June 1967, anti-Semitism found no reflection in the party propaganda. It is true, as was said by Jan Józef Lipski, that people “who had a certain sensitivity” to this question could see its elements in the new nationalist ideology.⁸¹³

A characteristic symptom of it was the unique silence about the Jewish questions at the start of the 1960’s—one wants to say that it came before the storm. The Polish Jew became a taboo subject in the public discussion. Such silencing was clearly visible earlier.⁸¹⁴ It is enough to cite one very telling example. In 1963 twenty years had passed since the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. The

811 AAN, KC PZPR, 2502, k. 70–73 (the document was pointed out to me by Krzysztof Persak).

812 See: “Wojna po wojnie...,” op. cit.

813 Jan Józef Lipski, “Kwestia żydowska,” in: *Marzec ’68. Sesja na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim 1981* (Warsaw: Sowa, 1981), 39.

814 Artur Starewicz in *Notatka w sprawie 8-jej rocznicy powstania w Getcie* from April 1951 spoke out against the organization of annual lecture-academies. He wrote, “The great inflation of these types of celebrations, especially during the month of April of the current year speaks against academies. The necessity of maintaining of proper proportions in connection with other anniversaries.” In a word, he was making it understood that one ought not to exaggerate Jewish topics. We ought to remember that at this time there was an anti-Semitic campaign lasting already two years in the USSR. (*Protokół nr 81 posiedzenia Sekretariatu Biura Politycznego i Biura Organizacyjnego*, 6 IV 1951, AAN, KC PZPR, 1644, k. 409)

very fact that the project of the celebrations was prepared by four departments of the Central Committee (Propaganda and Agitation, Administrative, Cultural, and Foreign)—which is a sensation—indicates that the authorities treated their organization with a curious amount of care. It is even more astounding that the project itself did not indicate the nationality of those who participated in this uprising. The word “Jew” does not appear in it. What then was the goal of the projected celebrations? The Central Committee apparatus said the following:

When taking into consideration that even the anniversary is a serious occasion to remind the world public opinion of the horrendous crimes of German militarism and imperialism, in order to unmask the powers that are striving to create a new war—[we ought to] give the celebrations of this anniversary a more stately and wider reach.

Since the Uprising in the Ghetto is part of the fight for the liberation of the Polish nation against the Nazi occupation, since the preparations and execution of it was undertaken strictly in connection with the Polish resistance movement, especially the PPR and the People’s Guard, the organizers of the celebrations should be the Association of the Fighters for Freedom and Democracy with the co-participation of the Socio-Cultural Society of Jews in Poland [TSKŹ] . . .⁸¹⁵

The second of these opinions could be found, in many different forms, among the majority of the press publications that appear in connection with the celebrations. In a moderately-sized article that appeared on the pages of *Trybuna Ludu*, located off to the side, and successfully dimmed from view by a highly visible picture of Nikita Khrushchev, who was celebrating his 69th birthday, we read:

The events that took place in occupied Warsaw, the fight of the residents of the Ghetto, with whom the Polish resistance movement was in solidarity, passed into the history of the efforts of Poland against the Nazi occupant . . . The tragic, heroic history of the Ghetto and its defenders, which are an indivisible part of the Polish nation’s fight for liberation from the Nazi folk, are simultaneously a warning against the threat of fascism whose powers are coming back to life in West Germany. This is also the reason why the coming anniversary has a deep resonance in the country and abroad.⁸¹⁶

This article also did not contain even a single mention of the word “Jew.” The hero of the Uprising is as vague as the event itself—the enemy is in sharp focus, what’s more, an enemy “whose powers are coming back to life in Western Germany.”

815 The project was undersigned by: Jerzy Czesak (director of the International Department of the Central Committee), Wincenty Kraško (director of the Culture Department of the Central Committee), Leon Stasiak, and Kazimierz Witaszewski, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-726, k. 1.

816 *Trybuna Ludu*, 17.IV.1963.

Both passages are an excellent example of legitimation through the use of national elements in a way that was characteristic for the 1960's. Above all, what stands out the most is the pushy actualization of history, which depends upon creating a bridge between the past and the present. The significant element which, for example, did not appear during the Stalinist period, is the highlighting of the martyrology of the Polish nation and its struggle during the occupation. It further suggests that the communist party led and guided this fight alongside its armed forces. The appeal of those who perished, pronounced under the monument of the Heroes of the Ghetto, went even further:

Sons and daughter of the Polish people, who, in civilian uniforms, carried out, for five and a half years, a deathly battle for the life and freedom of the nation, for the reputation and honor of our Fatherland . . .

All of you who gave the last drops of blood in the armed battle with the genocidal Nazis, invaders of the Polish lands, for the freedom of our Fatherland, for the freedom of the nation and society, for People's Poland.⁸¹⁷

The program of the celebrations foresaw, among other things, the laying of wreaths under the monuments to the Heroes of the Ghetto, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the Mausoleum of the Red Army in Warsaw. In Congress Hall, there was a stately meeting and lecture where the representatives of the highest authorities were represented by Józef Cyrankiewicz, Czesław Wycech (Marshall of the Sejm), and the First Secretary of the Warsaw Voivodeship Committee. However, there was not even one representative from the highest leadership of the party. Cyrankiewicz was obviously part of this group, however, he was widely viewed as the Premier, rather than as a member of the Political Bureau. The representatives of the authorities were also accompanied by “deserving participants in the armed battle against the occupier, and among them, there were outstanding leaders of the partisans: Mieczysław Moczar, Grzegorz Korczyński, and others.”⁸¹⁸

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was snapped up by the authorities and thrown into one urn with the inscription, “Polish resistance movement.” Why did they undertake such a falsification? It seems they did that, above all, because they were attempting to remove from Polish consciousness the stereotype “the authorities are Jews.” The party so very much wanted to be perceived as “ours,” Polish, that it strove to give the anniversary celebrations as much a Polish character as possible. This is probably the reason why nobody from the leadership took part in the meeting and lecture. Second, thanks to a falsified Polish messianism, whose significant

817 *Apel poległych w XX rocznicę Powstania w Getcie Warszawskim*, 237/VIII-726, k. 63.

818 *Trybuna Ludu*, 20.IV.1963.

element was certain convictions about the sufferings of the Polish nation, the party did not suffer any consequences. Many years later Ireneusz Krzemiński's team posited an interesting hypothesis, which presupposes that "Polishness" circumscribes itself for itself, through the opposition against, and competitive attitudes toward, others, especially toward Jews. It was also assumed that the image of the Poles contains an aspect of "messianic" competition for moral-cultural superiority with others, chiefly with the Jews. Simply put, "a common victim and blood in common" quarrels with Polish messianism.⁸¹⁹

If the Krzemiński's conclusions are correct, which the PRL propaganda might have sensed intuitively, then a public admission that the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto was a Jewish uprising, would put into question the moral-cultural superiority of the Polish nation, it would be a slap in the face of Polish national pride. Furthermore, it would destroy the narrative prepared by the PZPR. Its essence consisted in mixing the messianic patriotic tradition with the tradition of the communist movement, thanks to which the latter gained morally. The celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were a reflection of the complexes of the ruling establishment about its Polishness and its nearly unlimited legitimating pretenses in this regard.

This hypothesis explains the lack of a picture featuring the German Chancellor Brandt's symbolic gesture of kneeling before the Monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto in Warsaw in the December 1970 *Trybuna Ludu*. The newspaper instead featured a picture representing the moment of the laying of flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Basing ourselves on Krzemiński's hypothesis it is easier to explain the attack upon the authors of the PWN Great Encyclopedia as more than just as an Interior Ministry conspiracy. The attack was initiated halfway through 1967 within the circles of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy, who were outraged by the content of the entry for "Nazi concentration camps." The editors were accused of the following: 1) making an unjustified distinction between concentration and extermination camps, stating that in the latter 5.7 million Jews died, that is, 99% of all who died 2) it gave no numerical data about the Poles who died in the camps, which supposedly suggested that only Jews died in the German camps 3) when writing about extermination camps all of them were located "upon present Polish lands," allegedly thereby accusing Poles of cooperation in the Holocaust.⁸²⁰

819 *Czy Polacy są antysemitami?*, ed. Ireneusz Krzemiński (Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa, 1996), 102–103.

820 Piotr Oseka, "Encyklopedyści," *Magazyn Gazety Wyborczej*, 6–7.III.1998.

In other words, the crime of the entry's authors was based upon questioning an auto-stereotype according to which the Poles suffered the most during World War II, since they were the "Christ of nations" and that they truly deserved the palm of martyrdom.

The picture of the suffering Pole subject to German violence grew so deeply into the Polish psyche that it almost became an archetype, one of the fundamental elements of national identity. It was treated as a key ingredient in the integration of the society with the authorities and was present everywhere during the 1960's: in school curricula, party propaganda, symbolic representations (monuments), plus, in the journalism devoted to the war and occupation that was so popular then. At the same time, within the rivalization in suffering no chances were given to the Jews, effectively erasing their martyrology from memory. There was something of a bidding war in this. Witold Kula wrote the following about it:

The bidding war (both in Poland and the USSR) also has, good grief—a character that is anti-Semitic. When faced with Jewish martyrology Polish propaganda (Soviet as well) gives itself the lofty task of proving that we were also exploited—and not any less than the Jews. Two communities outbid each other about which of them permitted the greater amount of their fellow citizens to be slaughtered. In the past the Jews were envied for their money, qualifications, positions, and international associations—today we envy them for the furnaces. . . . A distinguished guest who comes to Paris is taken to Versailles or to Fontainebleau. In Poland you take them to Auschwitz. Four million "Polish citizens" were incinerated there. Happily, they weren't asked earlier to emigrate in exchange for renouncing their citizenship!⁸²¹

These sentences were penned toward the end of 1970, but the bidding war the historian points to did not start then. The erasing of memory about the Holocaust was already undertaken during the Stalinist period. In 1950 one of the main errors in the exhibition in the Auschwitz Museum, according to the "lustration committee sent there" came from "the isolating of the sufferings of Jewish, Polish, Soviet, and other nations from each other." At the time the exposition was accused of being "non-Marxist and obscuring the historical truth with its presuppositions" and of nationalism, which "breaks through nearly all exhibits, descriptions, and drawings."⁸²² From then, Jewish elements of the exhibition were limited to a minimum, and it was widely proclaimed that in

821 Witold Kula, *Rozdziałki* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Trio, 1996), 213.

822 One of the ironies of history is that the first thing the commission noticed is the "desire to make Auschwitz into a museum of the 1000-year relations between Poles and Germans," and that "the German nation is presented as the eternal enemy of the Slavs" (AAN, KC PZPR, 237/VIII-55, k. 2, 7).

Auschwitz, when taking all the groups into consideration, the most of those who died were Polish citizens, which implicitly meant Poles. In 1967 a Sejm resolution decreed that the terrain of the camp was acknowledged as a Monument of the Martyrdom and Fight of the Polish Nation and Other Nations. If we add to this the complete of a politics of information about the Holocaust, then it is easier to understand the outrage of the combatants involved in contesting the entry in the PWN encyclopedia. The matter reached Moczar, since 1964 also the chairman of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy. It gained steam through the director of the Council of Ministers, who, apparently inadvertently, formulated the above three accusations in a ministerial paper, which automatically gave the matter a higher rank than it deserved.⁸²³ At first, there were articles full of outrage. Then came the anti-Semitic purge in the editorial board of the PWN in March and April of 1968.

If we generalize this whole history, and refer it to the genesis of the anti-Semitic campaign from March 1968, then we should not only stress the anti-Semitism among most of the political elites, but also the evolution of the legitimation system toward nationalism, which influenced the strengthening of ethnic, rather than national, ties between citizens, the rise of a pained national megalomania and the viewing of the world through the prism of ethnic stereotypes as well as auto-stereotypes. Finally, it seems that March would not have happened if not for the earlier non-stop anti-German campaign, the celebrations of the State's Millennium and so on.

The initial spark, which directly preceded the events of March of 1968, was the appearance of Gomułka on 19th June 1967 at the VI Congress of Trade Unions. During the speech, which was transmitted via radio and television, he excluded the possibility of a double national identification, saying that, "every citizen of Poland should only have one fatherland—People's Poland." He compared the Jewish minority to a Nazi 5th column. Even though this passage was later removed—after a motion of the Political Bureau's members—from the printed text and never made it into the press, it deeply branded itself into the consciousness of hundreds

823 This was the version of events presented by Tadeusz Walichnowski, at the time an employee of the III Department, during a conversation between himself and Dariusz Stola and Marcin Zaremba that took place on May 29th and June 16 of 1998. He said that the note about the Encyclopedia was put together by Stanisław Kończewicz, Director of the Minister's Cabinet, accidentally and through inattention, upon the letterhead of the Resort. This is supposedly the beginning of the storm, which they later tried to quiet. Unfortunately, Walichnowski did not agree to a recording of the meeting.

of thousands of listeners.⁸²⁴ It instantly became a popular turn of phrase, gladly used in all kinds of assaults against the Jews.

It makes sense to ask what caused the First Secretary to go so far in his accusations. Exactly ten days earlier, during the fourth day of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, at a hastily convoked meeting of the Advisory Political Committee of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow, it was decided to break diplomatic ties with Israel. There is reason to doubt that Gomułka brought home from Moscow instructions regarding beginning a fight against Zionists also on the terrain of his own country. This hypothesis does not seem probable, especially if we take into consideration the fact that in the USSR itself there was no anti-Semitic campaign like the Polish one until the start of the 1970's. Nonetheless, Gomułka might have been under the influence of the authentic shock and panic evoked at the Kremlin by the crisis of their Arab allies.⁸²⁵ This is the reason why, after returning from the Moscow meeting, he wanted (or had to) demonstrate his loyalty to the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—to show that he treats the fight against Jewish imperialism with no less principle than his Soviet comrades. At the meeting with the First Secretaries of the Regional [Voivodship] Committees and the directors of Central Committee departments on 12 June, he gave a “live” presentation of the obligatory interpretation of the conflict in the Near East. He said the Israeli leaders are putting on “the laurels of the genocidal Nazis,” and he compared their soldiers to the soldiers of the SS. While referring to the situation in the countries of the Eastern Bloc he noted a numbing of vigilance toward the dangers of war. “Our propaganda continually repeated the same slogans on the topic of war and peace and many people no longer believe in the threat of war, whereas this threat is real.” This anticipated the later anti-Semitic campaign but we ought to note that the authorities, much as they did during the Korean War, pushed the “nationalism” button during a situation when the interests of the Soviet Union—thousands of kilometers away from Poland—were endangered.

When speaking about Poland, the First Secretary of the PZPR pointed toward “dangerous signs of liberalization,” which also appeared during the conflict in the Near East. “We must not tolerate similar anti-party stances, which are opposed to our politics.” “We cannot,” said Gomułka:

824 Władysław Gomułka, “O nowej prowokacji Izraela na Bliskim Wschodzie,” *Trybuna Ludu*, 22.VI.1967.

825 Więcej na temat reakcji Kremla: Piotr Oseka, Marcin Zaremba, “Wojna po wojnie...” op. cit.

. . . make it our agenda to make events such as organizing parties to celebrate Israel's victory in some institutions, or, to make such statements as the one made by a writer who declared that he has two fatherlands: Israel and Poland. They do not fit in the class, anti-imperialist, politics of our state.

The fight against imperialism he also justified with "our vital national interests."⁸²⁶ From Gomułka's words it is clearly apparent that, first, he was already informed—perhaps by Moczar himself—about the supposed expression of enthusiastic support for Israel by some citizens⁸²⁷; second, it shows that he thought through already a week earlier the most important words from his appearance at the Union Congress.

On June 19th he clearly gave an internal dimension to the conflict in the Near East by making it known that Israel has hidden allies in Poland, and that sympathy with Israel is simultaneously a betrayal of Poland. "The state's authorities," said the First Secretary,

. . . treat all of People's Poland's citizens equally without regard to their nationality . . . But we cannot remain indifferent toward people who, in the face of a threat to world peace, therefore also the safety of Poland and work for the peace of our nation, talk of their support for the aggressor, for the destroyers of peace, and for imperialism. Let those who feel these words are addressed to them—independently of their nationality—derive the right conclusions for themselves.⁸²⁸

We will never really know what the First Secretary had in mind while speaking at the Union Congress, but we do know how his words were interpreted: all Jews are conspiring enemies. For a section of the society, this was an anti-Semitic slander, but others received the speech with enthusiasm and satisfaction. It is a fact that Gomułka supported with his authority those circles that for the longest time desired a purge in the ruling elites.

There remains the question whether the anti-Zionist purge from the years 1967 to 1968 really played itself out without the knowledge and agreement of the First Secretary. The thesis that Gomułka was not aware of what was happening in the Interior Ministry in the summer of 1967 seems very unlikely. In turn, the lack of resistance toward these actions can be interpreted as permission for the

826 *O sytuacji na Bliskim Wschodzie. Na podstawie wystąpienia tow. Gomułki na spotkaniu Sekretariatu KC z I sekretarzami KW i kierownikami wydziałów KC*, 12 VI 1967, AAN, 237/V-706, k. 31.

827 Information about social attitudes was sent by the MSW to the Central Committee only halfway through July 1967. For more on this topic see: Piotr Osęka, Marcin Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie. . .," *op. cit.*

828 Władysław Gomułka, "O nowej prowokacji. . .," *op. cit.*

nationwide SB [Security Service] plot against the Jews. On the other hand, it would be vain to search for any anti-Semitic accents in the speeches and notes of Gomułka. Not much also indicated that “Wiesław” really believed in the existence of a Zionist conspiracy reported by the Interior Ministry.

Let us repeat the question: Why did the First Secretary suddenly turn against Polish Jews in 1967 and use such a brutal parable, such as the formulation about the fifth column? Gomułka’s closest co-workers remember him as a volatile person who was unwilling to listen to advice, and in political matters inclined toward improvisation; they admitted that “when he could not control his nerves, he did not choose delicate words.”⁸²⁹ It is known that Wiesław did not consult with the Political Bureau about his appearance in June; he wrote it himself in secret.⁸³⁰ The shape of the speech from June 19th was probably not decided by political strategy, but oratorical zeal. However, the First Secretary did not invent the Jewish threat. Somebody had to push this theme upon him; something must have happened to make Gomułka treat the whole matter so emotionally.

The Interior Ministry started an active fight against Zionism on July 28, nine days after Gomułka’s speech.⁸³¹ During a meeting of the Collegium for Operational Matters, devoted to the “evaluation of the situation in the country in connection with the conflict in the Near East,” there was a final evaluation of the opponent. It was decided what resources should be used to deal with him. The tone of the statements likened the meeting to a war meeting: the Jewish Hannibal stands at the gates of Polish socialism, therefore we must act in a manner appropriate to the scale of the threat.

A logical and coherent picture of the enemy was created earlier where the central position was occupied by the assertion that “Jewish circles almost uniformly take a pro-Israel position.”⁸³² Their unity was also stressed: “Jews in Poland, can influence, to a great degree, the shaping opinion about the conflict.”⁸³³ Because of this, there was nothing spontaneous about their support and every step was

829 *Władysław Gomułka we wspomnieniach*, ed. Bronisław Syzdek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1989), 285; See also: Andrzej Werblan, *Władysław Gomułka Sekretarz*, op. cit., 621.

830 Teresa Torańska, *Oni*, op. cit., 47.

831 *Protokół nr 002/67 z posiedzenia kolegium do Spraw Operacyjnych Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych*, 28 VI 1967 r., AMSWiA, II/101.

832 *Informacja o działalności stowarzyszeń narodowościowych*, Departament Społeczno-Administracyjny MSW, marzec 1967, AMSWiA, II/50, k. 245.

833 *Informacja za okres od 5 czerwca do 12 lipca 1967 roku (tajne spec.[jalnego] znaczenia)*, Kazimierz Światała, lipiec 1967, AMSWiA, II/1976, k. 38.

supposed to have been planned ahead of time, “in the period preceding the outbreak of the Six-Day War the actions of Zionist circles and the long-term work they have undertaken were... properly organized and synchronized. The military actions were preceded by extensive propaganda preparations with the aim of consolidating all Jews around the cause of Israel.”⁸³⁴ They were supposed to realize the postulate of the World Jewish Congress that every Jew in the diaspora should serve the interests of Israel.⁸³⁵

The sketching-out of the enemy’s picture also led to a remarkable discovery: Zionists were not only people who declared their solidarity with Israel but also those who voiced completely contrary views. Moczar formulated it best: “In this situation the [opponent] can pretend to be an ally, but do his own thing, can officially make statements that he agrees with Comrade Wiesław, but unofficially counteract these matters in a sly manner. We have to know how to distinguish our many different opponents.”⁸³⁶ The Deputy Minister Kazimierz Światała presented such a situation in his report: “pro-Israel circles in Warsaw declare opinions about avoiding engagement in public declarations and not revealing their real views.”⁸³⁷ Even though the propaganda, following the path laid out by Gomułka, stressed that nobody should be discriminated against because of nationality, the Interior Ministry employees created a situation in which the sole possible criterion allowing for the discernment of friend from foe became not views, but origins.

Witaszewski, the head of the administrative department, while listening to the meeting said the following unequivocally, “every cloud has a silver lining. We knew the situation . . . but we did not think that it is so acute . . . I think that after 23 years of the people’s rule it is high time to resolve these thorny problems.” He broadly approved of the idea of a purge,

We cannot say this about all Jews, but there is a certain section among them that, if you remove them from their office, then they stop being communists and go to Israel . . . In conjunction with recent events the Comrade revealed a whole line of people who discovered their true face. These people should not get out of our sight. Our party will purge itself from accidental and indecent elements.⁸³⁸

834 Ibid., k. 43.

835 *Informacja o działalności stowarzyszeń narodowościowych...*, AMSWiA, II/50, k. 244.

836 *Protokół nr 002/67 z posiedzenia Kolegium do Spraw Operacyjnych Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych*, 28 VI 1967, AMSWiA, II/101, k. 169.

837 AMSWiA, II/1976, k. 38.

838 *Protokół nr 002/67 z posiedzenia Kolegium do Spraw...*, AMSWiA, II/101, k. 185–186.

While summarizing the discussion Moczar foretold that the Interior Ministry will be more strict, and more uncompromising, against the Zionists than hitherto:

We have entered a new period and we will need a new gaze upon some matters. It is necessary to fundamentally recognize some fields in our administration and economy. We have to know who dwells in these fields . . . we shall remind about it, and if this will not help, then we'll demand it. Let the comrades deeply recognize those cells which today demand some kind of a deeper gaze and let them present their conclusions.

As one might expect the chief of the Resort left the most important matter for the conclusion:

There are manifestations here and there of passions that must be put out, it is said, for example, that something will happen now, meaning, that certain personal orderings will take place. We ought to convince the comrades, workers of the Interior Ministry, that their work cannot be wasted, that it will be useful, if not today, then tomorrow.⁸³⁹

Moczar was behaving at that moment in a way befitting a charismatic partisan leader, when speaking to his people he chastised the disobedient, calmed the impatient, and spurred on the doubters. He convinced them that the attack against the Zionists will shortly, even if not immediately, begin. In the meantime, he ordered them to wait and be ready. The purge, when it took place in 1967 touched the Army above all, to a lesser degree other institutions—whose turn would come in March 1968.⁸⁴⁰

Gomułka's speech at the Union Congress was also a turning point for the media. However, until that point, they laconically reported about the course of the military actions in the Near East, after this date appeared texts in the press that widely discussed the genesis of the war in accordance with the only correct stance of the Polish authorities, as presented by the First Secretary. Current interpretations were enriched by a brochure pretending to be scientific, entitled "Israel-West Germany and Poland," which linked "Zionist scheming" to the thesis about the supposed alliance between Israel and the Federal Republic.⁸⁴¹ Its author, Tadeusz Walichnowski, before its publication in the fall of 1967, gave a lecture on a similar topic during one of the meetings in the Central Committee. Gomułka found

839 Ibid.

840 Michał Chęciński, „Ludowe Wojsko Polskie” przed i po marcu 1968,” *Zeszyty Historyczne* 44 (1978): 14–31; Tadeusz Pióro, „Czystki w Wojsku Polskim 1967–1968,” *Więź* 6 (1998): 152–171; Edward Jan Nalepa, „Wydarzenia 1967 roku w wojskach OPK,” *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 1–2 (1997): 3–18.

841 Tadeusz Walichnowski, *Izrael a NRF*, Warsaw: Interpress, 1967.

out about this and invited Walichnowski to visit him.⁸⁴² A dozen or so works by the author that appeared in print between 1967 and 1968, and their enthusiastic reviews in the press, testify that the thesis of the above mentioned brochure was very much in line with Gomułka's thinking.

It is apparent that the exact reverse happened with the editors of *Trybuna Ludu*, since the following people were removed from its roster in November: Leon Kasman (editor-in-chief) who resigned formally, his deputy Wiktor Borowski, and the head of the international department Kazimierz Golde. Those let go were accused, among other things, of deficient information and of pieces about international events that were written during the period of Israeli aggression against Arab countries and expressed, among other things, an inadequate demonstration of the connections between Zionism and imperialism.⁸⁴³ The change in party legitimation taking place during this period was sometimes used to remove members of the party for having, as it was described, a "Pro-Israeli stance." The application of such restrictions toward four workers from the Supreme Audit Office was discussed during a December 27th meeting of the first secretaries of Work Committees of the most important Warsaw institutions (including the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).⁸⁴⁴ A different source, which remains unverified, said that until the end of September 1967 there were 30 people with a Jewish background removed in Warsaw for showing pro-Israeli sympathies, 50 were moved to lower positions, while 250 had an open "case" before the party control committee.⁸⁴⁵ Throughout the whole country, there were probably more similar anti-Semitic incidents. Even though they were not broadcast in the propaganda, knowledge of them without a doubt, reached the party activists, awakening their hopes for speedy changes in staff. The pressure to carry them out became one of the key mechanisms driving the events in March.

842 Walichnowski told the present author about this personally, see: footnote 170 of the present chapter.

843 "On 28 November 1967 a member of the Central Committee Political Bureau, Zenon Kliszko, in the presence of the Secretary of the Central Committee, Artur Starewicz, and the director of the Central Committee of the Central Bureau, Stefan Olszowski conducted a talk with the editor-in-chief of *Trybuna Ludu*, comrade Leon Kasman" (*Notatka o zmianach w redakcji „Trybuny Ludu”*, AAN, KC PZPR, 2229, k. 400–402).

844 *Notatka z przebiegu spotkania z I sekretarzami KZ /POP/, 27 XII 1967*, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XIV-282, k. 12.

845 Following Rakowski, who depends upon a speech given by Stanisław Kociołek at a plenum of the Warsaw Voivodeship Committee in September 1967 (Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1967–1968...*, op. cit., 82).

Everything started with a seemingly trivial matter. 27 November 1967 was the date of Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* premiere in the National Theater in Warsaw, directed by Kazimierz Dejmek. From the time of the first staging of this national drama in People's Poland in 1955, it took place 16 times in the whole country. This, however, does not mean that the ruling class's allergy for all symptoms of anti-Russian sentiments gave way. This is why Dejmek's idea of the staging of *Forefathers' Eve* to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution sparked a panic among people responsible for cultural politics. They were only convinced by the idea of the spectacle as a document of the brotherhood and community between Polish and Russian revolutionaries against the Tsar. The whole was supposed to be crowned by being "for our friends the Muscovites." During the preparations Dejmek did change the final scene. It ended with Konrad walking out in chains. The spectacle was enthusiastically received by the public. On the other hand, Zenon Kliszko, who was present at the premiere with Marian Sychalski, received it coldly. He was supposed to have flown into a rage and during the intermission he shouted: "Why is it so religious?! Why the hell is there so much religion?!"⁸⁴⁶

The matter was taken up by the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee, which, besides Kliszko, was staffed by Starewicz and Werblan. Wincenty Kraśko, chief of the Culture Department of the Central Committee, in a note intended for Kliszko wrote: "The *Forefathers' Eve* spectacle . . . has a tendentious character that is politically harmful. This is the result of the choice of texts, the matter of how the actors are directed, not to mention the 'inserted' final scene of a certain ideational-political symbolism."⁸⁴⁷ The spectacle was accused of anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiment plus religiosity. During a New Year's cocktail with the creators and activists of culture, Gomułka was supposed to have said that *Forefathers' Eve* will stick a knife in the back of Polish-Soviet friendship. Toward the middle of January 1968, it was decided (it is nearly certain at Kliszko's initiative, who must have had the *placet* of the First Secretary) that January 30th would be the last performance of Mickiewicz's drama.⁸⁴⁸ The protest evoked by the decision of the authorities led to the events described as March '68.

846 Irena Happen, "Pół jawa, pół sen Teatr Narodowy – „Dziady” w sezonie 67/68,” *Res Publica* 3 (1988): 31.

847 "Notatka Kierownika Wydziału Kultury KC PZPR Wincentego Kraśko, w sprawie inscenizacji „Dziadów” Adama Mickiewicza w Teatrze Narodowym w Warszawie [13.XII.1967],” in: *Marzec '68 między tragedią a podłością*, ed. Grzegorz Sołtysiak and Józef Stępień (Warsaw: Profi, 1998), 47.

848 I have already written on the topic of the whole affair caused by Dejmek's *Forefathers' Eve* and the motivations for the suspension of staging the spectacle, which is why I limit

Amidst the demonstrations, which took place after the last showing of *Forefathers' Eve* by the monument to the poet, the students that participated in them shouted things like: "We want Mickiewicz." In a certain sense, the writers and intellectuals were demanding the same during the February 29th meeting of the Extraordinary General Meeting of Warsaw's chapter of the Polish Writer's Union. The resolution that was accepted called for the following: a change in the cultural politics of the state, which were breaking the country's development and taking away its authentic character: "to restore, according with our centuries old tradition, creative tolerance and freedom," that is, to return Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* as produced by Kazimierz Dejmek.⁸⁴⁹

The text of the resolution, but above all the speeches made by artists who took part in the discussion, were taken by the authorities as a hit where it hurt most, right into questioning their Polishness, into the problem of national sovereignty, and their subordination to Russia, in other words, they read it as an attempt to question their national legitimacy.⁸⁵⁰ This is the key without which it is impossible to understand the propaganda campaign that was unleashed in March and April of 1968. Its aggressiveness and the type of arguments used, reflected the greatest complex of the authorities when it came to their own patriotism and Polishness. It is clear that March had multiple threads. Nonetheless, it is possible, and seems necessary, to see it also as a conflict about the character of legitimation through which the authorities, at any price, desired to convince the public of their own patriotism, while simultaneously deprecating the Polishness and national intentions of their real or imagined opponents.

This is how the First Secretary of the PZPR read the meaning of the resolution of the Warsaw chapter of the Polish Writer's Union while speaking during a meeting with the Warsaw party activists in the Congress Hall on 19 March 1968:

myself here only to its nationalist elements. Marcin Zaremba, "Partyjne *Dziady*," *Polityka*, 24.I.1998.

849 Andrzej Braun, "Co się działo na Nadzwyczajnym Walnym Zebraniu Oddziału Warszawskiego Związku Literatów Polskich?," in: *Marzec '68. Sesja...*, op. cit., s. 21; Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec 1968*, op. cit., 171–172.

850 Statements by Paweł Jasienica, Leszek Kołakowski, Antoni Słonimski, Jerzy Andrzejewski, Stefan Kisielewski, Mieczysław Jastrun, January Grzędziński and others are frequently cited, which is why I will refrain from citing them again. See: "Zebranie warszawskich literatów," [Paris] *Kultura* 4 (1968); Artur Międzyzrzecki, "1968: wspomnienia i dokumenty," *Więź* 7–8 (1988); *Literaci i „Dziady*", ed. Jacek Moskwa, *Res Publica* 3 (1988); Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec 1968...*, op. cit.

The intentions of the organizers of the meeting of the Warsaw chapter of the Polish Writer's Union are testified to by not only the resolution undertaken there, but, above all, the course of this meeting, the contents of the speeches given there. Those who gave the inspiration for calling an extraordinary meeting of the capital's writers were not at all about gaining clarifications in the matter of *Forefathers' Eve* being removed. They were after organizing a demonstration of writers, about igniting an atmosphere of excitement and anxiety and to move it beyond the milieu of the writers. They wanted to ignite a fight directed against the leadership of our party, against the people's authorities. These reactionary goals of theirs were covered up by a fraudulent slogan about defending national culture.⁸⁵¹

There is one more key factor indispensable for understanding the anti-Semitic campaign. There came a wave of student protests throughout the whole country after the student rally in the courtyard of Warsaw University on 8 March 1968, which also included the participation of high school students and working youths. Many workers from the Gdansk Shipyards took part in the street rioting in Wrzeszcz on March 15th.⁸⁵² The authorities had to consider the danger of the widening of the protest to other social groups, above all, the workers, especially since the student committees were trying to accomplish just that. It is difficult to gauge the possibility of such a plan. Party and police reports from November 1967 spoke of very bad moods among the workers in connection with the rise in food prices just then; they make apparent a lack of social backing for the rulers. Until November 1967 the security services noted 25 "work stoppages," they also took place in April 1968.⁸⁵³ A large amount of bitterness among the workers prevailed on the territories of the Tri-Cities. A nationwide rebellion, if it ever happened, would have meant the end of Gomulka's cadre. We should therefore not be puzzled as to why the authorities tried, at any price, to channel social discontent as far away from its actual causes. The Jews served as a security valve. Since many of them worked in intellectual professions and in managerial positions it was easy to contrast them with the workers, among whom not only anti-Semitic but also anti-intellectual, resentments were common, which is confirmed by party reports from the 1960's.⁸⁵⁴ Already after the fact, Stefan Olszowski said the following in a private conversation: "It is clear that we will not

851 Władysław Gomułka, *Stanowisko partii – zgodne z wolą narodu, Przemówienie wygłoszone na spotkaniu z warszawskim aktywnym partyjnym 19 marca 1968 r.* (Warsaw: KiW, 1968), 12–13.

852 On the topic of the reaction of workers and peasants to the student protests see: Marcin Zaremba, "Biedni Polacy 68..." op. cit.

853 On social attitudes as 1967 turned into 1968 see: Marcin Zaremba, "Gdzie jest mięso," *Polityka*, 21.II.1998.

854 Marcin Zaremba, "Biedni Polacy 68..." op. cit.

stuff the gaping mouths of the people only with Zionism.”⁸⁵⁵ This statement unambiguously points toward the instrumentalist motives for the use of anti-Semitism and awareness of its limited utility for keeping social order. At the same time, the authorities did everything to demonstrate their national character.

In a paper given on the 19th of March, entitled (*nota bene!*) “The Stance of the party—Consistent with the Will of the Nation” Gomułka attempted to prove that the actual and sole defender of national parties are the communist authorities and only them. The proof was supposed to be, among other things, the volumes of Mickiewicz published in People’s Poland. There were also other arguments, frequently repeated earlier, testifying to the national character of the communist governments. Examples from history—the egoism of the nobility, the September crisis, etc.—were the background for outlining the apotheosis of the PPR, which had the sole “appropriate program and only it pointed out to the nation a reliable path toward independence and the rebirth of the state.” The merits of the party were supposed to be the building of a lasting nation-state, the development of the economy, the return of western and northern lands, and the Baltic. This is why, according to Gomułka, the rulers enjoyed the support of the nation, which was supposed to be a witness of its political wisdom. While speaking about this the First Secretary used the epithet “ignoramuses,” which Stefan Kisielewski used during the Extraordinary Meeting of the Union of Polish Writers. Thanks to this Gomułka’s statement took on humorous qualities:

It reflects well on the political wisdom of the Polish nation that in the most crucial period of its history it did not listen to the reactionaries, that it followed the voice of the working class and its party, that it entrusted its fate to those “ignoramuses.” It was those “ignoramuses” who based their foreign policy upon an alliance with the USSR and built an unshakable foundation for the independence of our state. Poland owes its return to the Oder, Niesse, and Baltic to our party. It was those “ignoramuses” who led Poland down the road to economic development and resolved the basic problems of national existence, which for many generations the propertied classes could not cope with.⁸⁵⁶

The First Secretary bolstered his theses also by using argumentation that bordered upon metaphysics: “If in our times the spirit of Mickiewicz were to find an expression equal to its greatness—then he would be certainly inspired to write an immortal epic devoted to those who with the sacrifice of their life and blood spilled upon Polish lands saved the Polish nation from Nazi destruction.”⁸⁵⁷

855 Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1967–1968...*, op. cit., 336.

856 *Ibid.*, 27.

857 *Ibid.*, 11.

During his speech in Congress Hall Gomulka did not limit himself to legitimizing the ruling party, and, in a certain way, himself (in the hall there were signs with the following words: “Whoever is with Poland, is with Gomulka”). He delegitimized his political opponents as “foreign.” He reminded his listeners that the real name of Paweł Jasienica, one of the active participants of the Extraordinary Union, is Lech Beynar.⁸⁵⁸ He also accentuated the Jewish origins of the supposed inspirers of the events at Warsaw University. “During the events that took place part of the participants were young students who were either of Jewish origins or nationalist.” Gomulka asked, “Are Jewish nationalists in Poland, adherents of the Zionist ideology?” and answered “For certain.” He confirmed the existence of a problem that he called, “the self-definition of some Jews—citizens of our country.” He divided Polish Jews into three categories. Counted among the first were people of Jewish origins who during the time of the Near-Eastern conflict proclaimed themselves on the side of Israel. “In the past year, during Israel’s June aggression against the Arab nations, a number of Jews revealed their desire to leave for Israel with the goal of participating in the war with the Arabs in various ways.” Gomulka used this to base the following conclusion:

There is no doubt that this category of Jews-Polish-citizens is not tied to Poland in their feelings and reasoning, but with the state of Israel. These are Jewish nationalists for certain. Can we be angry at them for this? Only in the way that communists are against all nationalists, without regard for their nationality. I suspect that this category of Jews sooner or later will leave our country.

In the lips of the leader of the party and state, this was not a suspicion, it was a clear suggestion or even an order.

The second category of Jews was supposed to be composed of Jewish cosmopolitans. He foretold an ethnic cleansing against them:

There is no doubt that presently in our country there is a certain amount of people, citizens of our state, who neither feel that they are Poles or Jews. We cannot be angry at them for this. Nobody can impose a sense of nationality upon someone if they do not already possess it. Because of their cosmopolitan feelings such people avoid professions in which a national affirmation is indispensable.

The third, and most numerous, group was made up of people of Jewish origins who set their roots in the soil where they were born, and for whom Poland was their only fatherland, “Many of them with their fight and struggle have meticulously served People’s Poland . . . The party values them highly for this.”

858 Ibid., 15.

The sole criterion for evaluating in which an individual that would count, or, to put it differently—whether they would be forced to leave the country, lose their job, or be “rewarded” by remaining in their current position—was supposed to be their relationship toward socialism, interests of the state, and the Polish nation. However, the selection would have to be preceded by resolving the question of which the First Secretary must have been aware—ethnic rather than class origins. Therefore he immediately swore that: “Anti-Semitism takes place when somebody stands against Jews because they are Jews. Zionism and anti-Semitism are the two sides of the same nationalist coin.”⁸⁵⁹

When Gomułka mentioned the three kinds of people of “Jewish-national origins” those activists gathered in the Congress Hall egged him on: “more boldly, more boldly” (someone supposedly yelled out “To the gallows with the Jews). There was also a sign that said, “All the power in the hands of people who have one fatherland.” It was supposed to be an encouragement to more radical formulations. In fact, in this fragment of the speech, there was a marked lack of name-mentions that would permit for the composition of a list of targets. It is possible that the creation of the category of the “deserving” was not to the liking of many party activists. Their First Secretary was clearly attempting to cool down anti-Semitic hysteria. This does not change the fact that if one were to create a ranking of the most nationalistic (in content) public appearances of the representatives of the authorities during the whole period of People’s Poland, then Gomułka’s speech in Congress hall would find itself near the top of the rankings. Years later Jan Józef Lipski commented:

I must say that when Gomułka spoke of two fatherlands (not the same thing as the feeling of having a double nationality), it was like being hit in the head with a truncheon. To say in this country, this nation, which gave us Marie Curie, that a person cannot have two fatherlands, is the most patent absurdity ever said in Poland from such a high position. In particular, this also relates to those Jews, or people from a Jewish background, who feeling themselves Poles did not lose their emotional ties with the nation that they left. If we wanted to consequently take the position formulated by Gomułka then we would have had to acknowledge that every Pole in the United States, who has two fatherlands and feels loyalty not only to the American nation but also to the Polish nation, is a scoundrel. Very frequently these are people who have Americanized, or have taken on French or English customs, but they still love Poland—and we are amazed by it, even consider it a positive phenomenon. Only when it comes to Jews, some people, mercifully only some people, think that this is negative.⁸⁶⁰

859 Ibid., 38–40.

860 Jan Józef Lipski, “Kwestia żydowska...” op. cit, 47.

Gomułka's paper was confirmed by members of the of the Central Committee Political Bureau⁸⁶¹ before it was delivered, even though it was supposedly read to them in a hurry and they did not have time to familiarize themselves with its last pages.⁸⁶² A decisive majority of the party leadership nonetheless supported the strategy of legitimation expressed in the speech. The only ones to break with it were the Minister of Foreign Relations, Rapacki, who as a sign of his opposition resigned from all of his functions, and also Ochab. The latter wrote a letter to the Political Bureau and the Secretariat of the Central Committee, which, and this is noteworthy, began with a national, rather than a class, self-definition, "As a Pole and communist I protest, deeply disturbed, against the anti-Semitic fiasco organized in Poland by various dark powers."⁸⁶³

We can find out from Stefan Olszowski's paper, which was given during a meeting of editors-in-chief, who "dark powers" these were. We can learn from it that the student protest surprised the authorities, which caused their delayed reaction. "The situation was radically changed by the decision of the party leadership who recommended the development of a press campaign against political muckrakers and losers with the goal of unmasking their political allegiances with reactionary, revisionist, and Zionist powers."⁸⁶⁴ During a meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, it was decided that:

In connection with Israel breaking the ceasefire agreement and leading to an armed provocation against Jordan, the Secretariat recommended development in the press, radio, and television of an action that would shed light upon this new act of aggression by Israel. In this action we ought to put emphasis upon explaining the essence of this aggression taken from a position of power with the support of American imperialism, and properly highlighting of the questions of Zionism and Jewish nationalism.⁸⁶⁵

This formula was more an expression of what was happening in the country than a factual decision to put into play the mechanism of a propaganda campaign. After all, for at least ten days an anti-Semitic roundup was taking place. Its background is

861 *Protokół nr 51 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 19 III 1968, AAN, KC PZPR, 1739, k. 180.

862 Teresa Torańska, *Oni*, op. cit., s. 49.

863 *Ibid.*, 47–48.

864 *Tekst zagajenia na naradę redaktorów naczelnych przesłany Wł. Gomułce, St. Olszowski*, 5 IV 1968, 237/V-717, k. 3.

865 During this meeting of the Secretariat a decision was also made to remove the following professors from the University of Warsaw: Włodzimierz Brus, Bronisław Baczko, Stefan Morawski, Leszek Kołakowski, Zygmunt Bauman (*Protokół nr 28 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 21 III 1968, AAN, KC PZPR, 2229, k. 403).

still not entirely clear to historians.⁸⁶⁶ The question who really was pulling the strings remains unanswered. Certainly, the events of March should be seen, in part, as an elemental reaction of the middle party activists, “second level people,” interested in finishing the personnel changes which began in 1956. Jakub Karpiński, when describing the behavior of this group, used the formulation “a movement of irate functionaries.”⁸⁶⁷ For the longest time people saw, above all, the intrigues of Moczar in the March events. Without a doubt, many shrill articles based upon information from “confidential” files would have never appeared without the inspiration and help of the Interior Ministry.⁸⁶⁸ It would be difficult to doubt in the connections of some suddenly loud journalists to these circles. However, nothing, or close to nothing, is known about the role Moczar actually played, it also seems that he was demonized. Without an active participation and support for the anti-Semitic campaign from the “top leadership” of the party (i.e. Kliszko, Strzelecki, Olszowski), and without the permission of Gomułka himself, it would have never happened or would have been nipped in the bud. March was not the product of only one group, or faction, but of nearly the whole party establishment.⁸⁶⁹

The anti-Semitic action in the press began, and this is telling, with an article in *Słowo Powszechne*, an organ of the PAX Association, who was led by Bolesław Piasecki, the prewar leader of the ONR-Falanga, one of the most extreme factions in the Polish nationalist right.⁸⁷⁰ The Press Bureau of the Central Committee, as of March, the actual center of the propaganda campaign,⁸⁷¹ commissioned the printing of this article (and later similar ones) in the press not formally associ-

866 See: Piotr Oseka, “Komitet Centralny PZPR wobec Marca. Rok 1968 w świetle archiwaliów partyjnych,” in: eds. Marcin Kula, Piotr Oseka, Marcin Zaremba, *Marzec 1968...*, op. cit., 58–69.

867 Jakub Karpiński, *Ustrój komunistyczny w Polsce* (London: Aneks, 1985), 145.

868 Tadeusz Walichnowski, in the earlier mentioned unrecorded interview, pointed, above all, toward Franciszek Szlachcic as especially engaged in the anti-Semitic campaign. He was supposedly the driving force behind the creation of many anti-Semitic flyers that flooded the country in March. As it stands, there is no way of ascertaining of whether this was really case.

869 “I cannot change this decision by myself, because we undertook it within a group of secretaries,” Kliszko told Rakowski. He was talking about the decision to print an article in *Polityka* from 1924 penned by Antoni Słonimski, which was supposed to compromise the poet (Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1967–1968...*, 148).

870 “Do studentów Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego,” *Słowo Powszechne*, 11.III.1968.

871 Historians know of only one document, entitled “Plan for Upcoming Publications in the Press” (*Plan najbliższych publikacji w prasie*) that points toward the leadership of the Central Committee Press Bureau as playing the leading role in the March

ated with the party, in this way attempting to misinform the readers about the actual parties responsible for the propaganda, absolving them from the eventual accusation of a “nationalist deviation.” The example set by *Ślowo* was followed by nearly all the newspapers and journals published in Poland, in the end, even those with the header “Proletarians of the world, unite!” did too. The whole country was engulfed by a wave of rallies and mass worker protests under the slogans of “Down with Zionism,” “Down with the new fifth column,” “cleanse the party of Zionists” [sic!], “Zionists go home—get out of Poland.” Television aired a rally during which a sign featured with the following written on it: “Moishe—aggressor.” In this way, a synthesis of nationalist/racist heritage and the tradition of communist propaganda was capped off.⁸⁷² By referring to the society’s dominant resentments the authorities attempted to gain legitimacy without even halting at criticizing their own ranks, which was an infringement upon a taboo that was binding since 1957. The hits were generally against the former members of the leadership of the PZPR who were chiefly in power during the Stalinist period and had Jewish origins. In a highly publicized article “A Contribution to the Genesis of the Conflict,” Andrzej Werblan, the same person who in 1965 spoke of anti-Semitism as a phenomenon of the margins, put forward the thesis that the prewar KPP was not able to work out an appropriate stance with regard to the question of independence of the Polish state, because it had too many members of Jewish origins in its ranks:

We must openly say that the national composition of the KPP on native Polish lands was not appropriate . . . The Communist Party of Poland consistently opposed all discrimination against national minorities, meaning, also the Jewish population, and even pulled into the KPP a certain part of the youths from the wealthy, and those from the bourgeoisie, and the Jewish bourgeoisie all who were far from the left in their class-affinities . . . The distortion of the national composition of the KPP would not have been a serious problem, if it did not remain in a certain relationship with ideological issues. The programmatic stances of the KPP in the matter of Poland’s independence were burdened by Luxemburgist errors for a long time. The characteristic quality of this stance was underestimating the role of state-independence in socialism, an overly simplified understanding of the socialist system within the bounds of a single country.

campaign (237/XIX-347, k. 3–9). Many valuable pointers on this topic can be found in Rakowski’s *Dzienniki polityczne 1967–68*, op. cit.

872 For more on the anti-Semitic campaign of March 1968 see: Piotr Osęka, *Syjonści, inspiratorzy, wicherzyciele. Obraz wroga w propagandzie marca 1968* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Wydawniczy, 1999); Anna Barbara Jarosz, “Marzec w prasie,” in: Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, Marcin Zaremba, *Marzec 1968*, op. cit., 99–125; Michał Głowiński, *Pismak 1963 i inne szkice o różnych brzydkich rzeczach* (Warsaw: Open, 1995); *Ibid.*, *Marcowe gadanie*, op. cit.

Werblan, as Piotr Osęka points out, was suggesting that already before the war communists of Jewish origins wanted to deprive Poland of its independence. Therefore, he used one of the most important, and certainly the most convincing for the Polish society, formulas for de-legitimizing communists from before 1944, “They want to make of us the 17th republic.”⁸⁷³ He says, “among a part of the KPP activists there began to spread a simplistic understanding of cosmopolitanism, expressed both in undervaluing the national aspirations and obligations of the left, and in the mechanisms subordinated to these aspirations, their national goals and obligations.” This lack of understanding for national sentiments also revealed itself during the wartime and after its conclusion:

Unfortunately, a relatively small—but exerting considerable influence upon the political leadership of the ZPP, and, in part, upon the leadership of the First Polish Army—group of political activists showed itself incapable of properly understanding the new needs of the nation and the new tasks of the party . . . Thus, the activists spoken of above, especially J. Berman, R. Zambrowski, H. Minc, and others did not guard against this danger. They were characterized by a unique sense of superiority toward the fighters back home. They felt called, once they returned to the country, to stake out the political line of the people’s state upon their return to the country. Without liberating themselves from oversimplifications and the cosmopolitan deviation in the interpretation of socialism, they pretended to decree upon what is nationalism or what is internationalism. This false political stance gave bitter fruit already after the liberation of People’s Poland . . . the group of which I speak, represented in the leadership by, among others, Berman, Zambrowski, and Minc . . . undertook a fight against that part of the leadership, which during the period of the occupation created the PPR and shaped its political line.⁸⁷⁴

Werblan’s text created a storm of protests among Central Committee members.⁸⁷⁵ However, Moczar spoke in a similar spirit, in one of the interviews he gave at the time. He put emphasis upon:

. . . the fact of their coming to us, along with heroic soldiers, of certain politicians garbed in officer uniforms, who later thought that because of their titles they—Zambrowski, Radzewicz, Berman—are owed the right to rule, a monopoly for defining what is right for the Polish nation. These facts, at the time, were an expression of a lack of faith in us. With this began the evil that lasted until 1956.⁸⁷⁶

873 Piotr Osęka, *Syjonści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele...*, op. cit., 30.

874 Andrzej Werblan, “Przyczynek do genezy konfliktu,” *Miesięcznik Literacki* (June 1969).

875 Piotr Osęka, *Syjonści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele...*, op. cit., 31.

876 “Wywiad z Mieczysławem Moczałem,” *W służbie narodu*, 21.IV.1968.

The message of this and similar texts was clear: the Jews, “them,” are evil, while “we” are a “healthy” national current in the Polish party, which, by purging itself of “external elements,” gets closer to the nation, becomes fully Polish, “internal.” As Feliks Tych noted:

The action that was undertaken was accompanied by a certain attempt to change paradigms, to connect into a conversation, if not with society, then with the party masses. They wanted to create, among the conditions of a growing political and economic crisis—a new legitimization of the party, using anti-Semitism to create a kind of national front, thereby concentrating people of different political provenances.⁸⁷⁷

The above thesis converges upon the central thesis of this work. We ought to note that in March '68 we were not dealing with an attempt to create a completely new strategy of legitimization. It was old and used many times before. The enemy was new (although not entirely): this time it was the Jews. “Polish society was given a specific sign,” continues Tych, a historian:

... see, it is us, the new powers in the party, we are chasing away the foreigners and their minions, and they are at fault for things going bad in the country after 1944, and also their continuing to be bad, because of them our socialist egalitarian ideals are so weakly incarnated into life; they are also the main perpetrators behind the crimes of the security forces during the Stalinist period; we indeed cannot free ourselves from the guardianship of the USSR, but at least here, within the country, we will deal with things ourselves; a Pole will not hurt a Pole. This is how this political message sounded like in a nutshell.⁸⁷⁸

We can only add to this that in 1968 Jews were considered apostates who contested the system during a time when it was, to a certain degree, accepted by a relatively large part of Polish society.⁸⁷⁹ This magnified their “guilt.” Once again, after a short period of time, they “betrayed” the Polish nation, as the installers of the Stalinist terror in March. On the one hand, it was acknowledged that they were responsible for imposing a foreign system on Poland; on the other hand, they were faulted whenever they undermined it. Thus, the Jews were stuck “sitting astride the barricade,” if I may borrow a phrase used by Zygmunt Bauman to describe their relation toward Christianity.⁸⁸⁰ This double guilt was exploited by the March propaganda to legitimate the system and to de-legitimize the opposition, all the while piling onto it a rich arsenal of nationalist and populist slogans. The authorities received the society’s agreement to conduct a purge in the politi-

877 Feliks Tych, *Kilka uwag...*, op. cit., 19.

878 Ibid.

879 On conformism in the 1960’s see Chapter 3.

880 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 2001), 65.

cal and economic apparatus, which, and we must stress this, was conducted very quickly and surprisingly smoothly. The mass layoffs began under the heading of a national and ideological sanitation, and they touched factories, offices, research institutes, universities, and editorial boards. Irreparable damage was done to various branches of Polish learning because many of those researchers working in them were forced to leave the country. Thousands of Jews emigrated from Poland when they could not bear the slander and persecution.⁸⁸¹ All of them were forced to renounce their Polish citizenship beforehand. At the same time, on all levels, there was a partial exchange of party elites—an atmosphere of scandal saw the prewar communists with a KPP lineage leaving their positions and they were replaced by a generation of forty-year-olds. The PZPR was getting rid of people who built it from the ground up, and was simultaneously noting the massive influx of new candidates.

March crowned the work of the system's evolution toward nationalism. Gomułka's decade essentially brought the breakdown of Marxism in its hitherto form. The vacuum was filled by those in power with a nationalism in its most extreme form. In 1969, for the first time in the history of the Polish communist party, it included in the personal survey, which was part of the system of evaluation and documenting cadres falling under the party nomenclature, a rubric labeled "nationality." This section for ethnic origins was placed in the questionnaire right under the date and place of birth. The placing of "Social origins" (class) two places lower in the rubric renders the hierarchy of importance that then became binding in the party.⁸⁸² The national element became the leading source of legitimation for the party establishment and even shaped its self-consciousness.

According to Jakub Karpiński, "Patriotic-national phraseology fulfilled mainly decorative functions and was supposed to cover up the docility toward Moscow."⁸⁸³ This was not a nationalism that could be described as modern, set on the future. On the contrary, there were in it very strong traditionalist elements. The title for

881 From the beginning of 1968 until the end of August 1969, passport bureaus received 11,185 requests to leave for Israel (*Informacja nr 0225 z dnia 2 października 1969 r. o przebiegu emigracji do Izraela [stan na dzień 31.VIII.1969 r.]*, Dyrektor Biura Paszportów i Dowodów Osobistych MSW płk M. Glanc, in: Krzysztof Lesiakowski, "Emigracja osób pochodzenia żydowskiego z Polski w latach 1968–1969," *Dzieje Najnowsze* 2 [1993]: 120).

882 *Pismo Sekretarza KC Zenona Kliszko do I sekretarza KW PZPR*, 2 IX 1969, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-757, k. 1, 6.

883 Marek Tarniewski (Jakub Karpiński), *Płonie komitet (Grudzień 1970 – czerwiec 1976)* (Warsaw: MYŚL, c. 1990), 121.

ruling was supposed to be the national past, rather than the future. An important trace of the official nationalism was anti-Germanism, anti-Semitism, and alluded, in form, to anti-Ukrainianism. This nationalism owed its shape, above all, to Gomułka. In a letter directed to him by one of the “young” secretaries of the Central Committee, Józef Tejchma, regarding a paper prepared for the V Congress of the PZPR, we read:

We speak frequently of, for example, World War II, the German problem, and so on, but I am afraid that an increasingly high percentage of our society will understand less about what is the going on because of their lack of historical awareness. The lack of this awareness makes it difficult to understand the main truth that only socialist Poland can exist and develop safely.⁸⁸⁴

It was a clear suggestion that the current legitimation formula is exhausted, that it is no longer socially viable. The student incidents and the beating up of students had to be explained somehow. It was argued that the “foreigners” caused disagreements between the Polish militia and the Polish youths. The matter became more difficult to explain two years later when the Polish army fired upon Polish workers. The new First Secretary then put the blame upon his predecessor while continuing the nationalist legitimation efforts—even if he struck a different note.

884 AAN, KC PZPR, 2914, k. 51.

Chapter 9

“The Party, Poland, Gierek the Party, Poland, Gierek” (1970–1980)

During the events of December 1970, there appeared nationalist elements on the Coast, although not with the same power as in 1956. For example, in Gdańsk, somebody wrote with red paint on a wall, “Paid stooges. Moscow’s stooges.”⁸⁸⁵ During a street demonstration you heard the yells: “We want bread,” “Down with the red bourgeoisie,” and “Down with Gomułka.”⁸⁸⁶ Portraits of Lenin and Gomułka underwent defenestration, thrown from a balcony overtaken by demonstrators from the Gdańsk Regional [voivodeship] Committee. The following were sung frequently: “Poland has not yet perished,” “Rota,” “God Thou Hast Poland.”⁸⁸⁷ After the army used guns there were cries of “Executioners! Murderers.”⁸⁸⁸ One can substantially agree with Paweł Machcewicz that the conflict “was not seen generally in national categories (in the way, to a great degree, both the Poznań June, then October, were seen), but above all, or exclusively, in political and socio-economic categories, as an internal conflict between the ruled and the rulers, who single-handedly broke the reigning social consensus.”⁸⁸⁹ Among the postulates

885 “Relacja Henryka Jagielskiego, pracownika Stoczni Gdańskiej im. Lenina (czerwiec 1981 r.),” in: *Grudzień 1970*, ed. Piotr Jegliński (Paris, Editions Spotkania, 1986), 115.

886 “Relacja Henryka Pieturka, studenta Politechniki Gdańskiej (czerwiec 1981 r.),” in : *Grudzień 1970...*, op. cit., 136.

887 “Somebody in the crowd started singing ‘Poland is Not Yet Lost.’ When it was sung . . . something was awakening . . . moments earlier everyone was overcome by fear. It seemed to me that all the guns were aimed at me . . . The crowd stood united and sang ‘Poland is Not Yet Lost.’ Try to imagine for yourself when the words, ‘March, march, Dąbrowski,’ came, the crowd, as if by orders, moved forward. Then I became aware how powerful the words of the national anthem are that they in this momentary torpor, out of their resignation . . . but then when ‘March, march, Dąbrowski’ came I felt that it is a command, everyone felt as if they were standing face to face with the enemy” (“Relacja Romana Detla, pracownika ZNTK w Gdańsku /listopad 1980 r./,” in: *Grudzień 1970...*, op. cit., 174, 175).

888 Ibid., 139. See more: Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity. A Political Sociology of Poland’s Working-Class Democratization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1991), 23, 27, 35.

889 Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, op. cit., 246.

voiced by those striking in Gdańsk and Szczecin in 1970, later in February and March 1971 in other parts of the country, actually, none straightforwardly touched upon the matter of the legitimation of the authorities, including their national identity. They were concerned with a whole list of matters to be resolved in connection with the living situation of the workers.⁸⁹⁰

On the streets of the Tri-Cities, Szczecin, or Elbląg the authorities were not questioned because of their national and ideological foreignness, for serving Soviet interests. There was no yelling of (or at least, not recorded) “Down with the Russians,” “We demand Vilnius and Lvov” (the latter can be explained as the effect of a generational change in the PRL). There were no shouts demanding for the backing out of Soviet armies from Poland, nor Russian lessons from the schools. There were also no demands to bring back into schools religious instruction (liquidated in the 1960’s), and the presence of religious symbolism was also weaker in the collective emotions, which can probably be acknowledged as an effect of a progressive secularization of Polish society.⁸⁹¹

The party leadership noted, probably with a bit of satisfaction, that “there were in principle no anti-Soviet slogans and pamphlets.”⁸⁹² Their absence obviously does not need to signify a nationalist legitimation of the authorities by the subordinated groups. Nonetheless, it seems that their relationship to the authorities between October ’56 and December ’70 had undergone a change. Much points to the fact that they stopped being perceived as an un-Polish, imposed from the

890 See: Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity...*, op. cit., 57–82; *Postulaty 1970–1971 i 1980. Materiały źródłowe do dziejów wystąpień pracowniczych w latach 1970–1971 i 1980 (Gdańsk i Szczecin)*, eds. Beata Chmiel, Elżbieta Kaczyńska (Warsaw: Archiwum Solidarności NOWA, 1998). Also: “Sprawozdanie komisji Biura Politycznego powołanej dla zbadania kwestii szczegółowych związanych z wydarzeniami grudniowymi 1970 (listopad 1971 r.),” in: *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego Grudzień 1970...*, op. cit., 429–464; “An analysis of the causes of the downturns and interruptions in the work of the crews indicated that the sources of the conflicts in workplaces under study, expressed as downturns and interruptions of work, were internal to the workplaces, unresolved for years by management, administrative and social-political problems that were economic and social-existential. The downturns were also an expression of dissatisfaction with the attitudes of the administration and foremen toward the workers and the consequence of a lack of sufficient information and political-explanatory work among the crews in many workplaces. There were no political demands during the interruptions and downturns of the surveyed workplaces” (*Ocena sytuacji politycznej w zakładach, w których miały miejsce przerwy i przestoje w pracy po 15-tym lutym 1971r.*, AAN, KC PZPR, 2234, k. 481).

891 Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956...*, op. cit.

892 *Materiały na VIII Plenum KC PZPR, Projekt*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1745, k. 388.

outside, group of “Russian agents,” and after March '68 as Judeo-Communists by those who accepted the March propaganda, even if the dependence upon the USSR was still visible to them.

However, the interpretive scheme, which, in the first days of the crisis the authorities used to explain its causes, did not change. The soldiers who were supposed to pacify the Coast were supposedly told that they are going to fight against the Germans.⁸⁹³ In a speech given in front of television cameras on 17 December 1970, actually foretelling the introduction of a state of emergency, the Premier Józef Cyrankiewicz was desperately leaning upon the supposed existence of a “moral-political unity of the nation.” He also asked, “Who might be served by provoking these tragic events?” and he answered with “the enemies of Poland, and nobody else.”⁸⁹⁴ Since ten days had passed from the signing of a pact between People’s Poland and Western Germany, it did not benefit Cyrankiewicz to point with his finger and simply say who this “real inspiration” for the events might be. There could be only one interpretation of the Premier’s words: the protest of the Polish workers is inappropriate, because it is directed against Poland. It is characteristic that in such situations “People’s” was never added.

There was a partial change in the legitimation formula when Edward Gierek took over the position of the First Secretary and there was also a change in the leadership of the PZPR. It was necessary. The use of weapons on the Coast compromised the party, it was irrefutable proof that it owes its rule to violence, and not legitimation. The regaining of the society’s trust in the authorities became a matter of great importance for the new team. Gierek recalled years later, “I had to incline people to believe in me and my plans.”⁸⁹⁵

The authorities did not have an especially wide range of choices for the formula of legitimation in 1971, notes Wojciech Sokół. This is why, from the beginning, their situation was much worse than the team’s that came before them. The basis of legitimation could not come from the December events, which were solely the expression of protest against the politics of the previous team. The return to ideological legitimation had small chances for success, as we have already discussed. At first, it was also not possible to lean on the personal authority of the First Secretary, because political practice did not permit for the creation of an alternative authority, against the previous leadership, in the womb of the ruling team. Sokół also points out that the choice of possible social bases of power was also limited. It was not possible to

893 “Relacja Henryka Jagielskiego...” in: *Grudzień 1970...*, op. cit., 120.

894 *Trybuna Ludu*, 18.XII.1970.

895 Jakub Rolicki, *Edward Gierek. Przerwana dekada* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Fakt, 1990), 59.

lean either upon the party itself nor upon certain chosen social groups as was the case in the 1950's. The PZPR not only underwent thoroughgoing changes, above all, it lost the character of a worldview but it also came out of the December events extremely weakened. The possibility of offering a collective advance to some large, disadvantaged group was already exhausted. Therefore, it was necessary to search for a legitimation formula that would address the widest masses possible. In this a situation, they reached for the legitimating formula, which, in Lipset's understanding, is merely the economic efficiency of the system.⁸⁹⁶

At the VIII Plenum of the Central Committee, which deliberated on 7–8 January 1971 Gierek presented an introductory sketch of the economic program, drawing an optimistic vision of a renewed acceleration of industrialization. The modernization of the country and the raising of living standard of its inhabitants became the nationwide goal. The chief slogan of the decade became: "So that Poland grows in power and people live prosperously"

There was a partial liberalization, and with it an opening onto the West. Trade exchange with Western countries grew immeasurably. After many years of Polish isolation from the rest of the world the borders were opened. Poles began to travel, at first mainly to countries of the Eastern Bloc, but toward the end of the decade to the West as well. Products of Western mass culture were allowed to become available in general circulation. Western movies appeared in cinemas and television more often than before. Quite a bit of Western popular music was broadcast over the radio. 1972 marked the beginning of Coca-Cola's production—a drink that was earlier the subject of an ideological anathema. Marlboro cigarettes became available in kiosks. After a period of "peasant socialism" from 1956 to 1970, the turn toward consumerism in the now corresponded with the expectations of the society frustrated with the earlier stagnation of life that was justified by Gomułka's forward-looking asceticism.⁸⁹⁷

The marking out of the primary position in the system of legitimation to a legitimation depending on highlighting the successes and effectiveness of the

896 Wojciech Sokół, *Legitymizacja systemów politycznych...*, op. cit., 164.

897 Along with the progress of the economic crisis in the second half of the 1970's the authorities stepped up to cool down the early social aspirations, which manifested themselves, among other things, in the critique of consumerist stances. They recommended, "creating an atmosphere of a social condemnation of consumerist stances, parasitism, irresponsibility, and toward models of life and systems of value transplanted from capitalist reality" (*Główne kierunki ideologicznej i propagandowej pracy w II półroczu 1979 r. /Przyjęte przez Biuro Polityczne KC PZPR w lipcu br./*, 1979, AAN, KC PZPR, 1811, k. 466.

socialist economy did not signify the resignation of the authorities from using national phraseology. Gierek, in his first appearance transmitted through the radio and television, strove to tie a thread of mutual understanding with the society by making the national community his main axis. He began with the words “Comrades! Citizens! Countrymen!” He also said, “Dear Countrymen,” and he used the phrase “nation and Fatherland” several times. He also said, “The matters we are undertaking are related to our whole nation—those in the party and those outside the party, believers and non-believers, and every citizen has their place in the resolving and realizing these matters.”⁸⁹⁸ The models of rhetoric applied in the taking over the highest party administration remained, as Jakub Karpiński argues, the same as had been already shaped,

In such situations the communist party does not move toward the foreground, the talk is rather of the nation, about matters that are supposed to be the common care of society. This type of talk does not cost much, but it is used as a sign of renewal. What is shown is that something has changed: the language of the speeches.⁸⁹⁹

In the message given during the last days of December 1970, Gierek used warm tones to turn to Polish emigres, which was a total novelty. In the 1960’s it was only possible to speak coldly of the emigres officially. “To our numerous countrymen in foreign lands,” wished the First Secretary, “that their beat with the rhythm of the whole Polish nation, may they be proud of their country and its accomplishments.”⁹⁰⁰ In October 1979 the Council of Ministers negated a promulgation from 1946, thereby depriving five generals and seventy officers of the Polish Armed Forces of their Polish citizenship. Information about this decision was not passed onto the public.⁹⁰¹ It was acknowledged that it was obvious that the speech above and other gestures toward the emigres was a sufficient proof of the thinking behind the new leadership along nationwide lines, that they are close to the idea of national reconciliation.⁹⁰²

898 *Trybuna Ludu*, 21.XII.1970.

899 Marek Tarniewski [Jakub Karpiński], *Płonie komitet* (Wrocław: Constans, 1988), 88.

900 *Trybuna Ludu*, 1. I.1971.

901 Nota bene: Gierek thought that Polish citizenship had been returned to Generals Władysław Anders and Kazimierz Sosnkowski (Jakub Rolicki, *Edward Gierek...*, op. cit., 83), but he was mistaken. The resolution of the Council of Ministers from 1946 about depriving General Anders of Polish citizenship was repealed only in March 1989 (Aleksander Kochański, *Polska 1944–1991. Informator historyczny*, v. 1 [Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 1996], 167).

902 In 1976 gestures toward the emigres were acknowledged as being superfluous, since the Political Bureau undertook a widely-publicized decision to deny the widow of

The rebuilding of the Royal Castle in Warsaw became the flagship example of the authorities' care for national imponderables. On 19 January 1971, the Political Bureau expressed its approval of "an initiative of cultural circles regarding the matter of beginning the rebuilding of the Warsaw Castle." It was decided that the reconstruction of the castle should be conducted, above all, with the support of gifts collected through Polonia abroad and then from the sections of the society who stayed in the country. They also accepted the proposed roster of the Citizen's Committee for the Rebuilding of the Warsaw Castle. It was headed by the First Secretary of the Regional [Voivodeship] Committee in Warsaw. The participation of a representative of the Church in the proceedings, who was supposed to legitimize the whole undertaking in the eyes of public opinion, was made dependent on the stance of the Church side. They also recommended the working out of a program of using the castle for social, cultural, and representational needs.⁹⁰³ The idea of the reconstruction, not new in itself, was put forward by the Political Bureau of the Warsaw Regional [Voivodeship] Committee and the Cultural Department of the Central Committee. They wrote the following in the joint request, "The undertaking of the rebuilding of the Warsaw Castle will become a new expressive symbol of the contributions of People's Poland into the development of national culture . . . it will strengthen the ties joining the homeland with the millions of Poles spread throughout the world."

To increase the prestige of the new First Secretary it was proposed that he be the messenger of the good news.⁹⁰⁴ And so it was. *Trybuna Ludu's* reporting from Gierek's meeting with "representatives of artistic circles" said the following:

Stressing the need to increase the efforts of the whole nation around a constructive deed, aiming to overcome present difficulties, the PZPR's First Secretary pointed toward the necessity of liberating and animating a creative initiative among all social circles without exception. Edward Gierek informed that the Political Bureau has responded positively to the proposal of the authorities and representatives of Warsaw's society to begin the rebuilding of the Warsaw Castle—this symbol of national culture, which Nazism sought to destroy, which has been reborn and is developing in People's Poland.⁹⁰⁵

General Felicjan Sławoj-Składokowski the right to move the ashes of her husband to Poland (*Protokół nr 37 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 12 X 1976, AAN KC PZPR, 3112, k. 33).

903 *Protokół nr 27 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 19 I 1971, AAN, KC PZPR, 1745, k. 65, 66.

904 *Notatka w sprawie odbudowy Zamku Warszawskiego*, Wydział Kultury KC, Egzekutywa Komitetu Warszawskiego PZPR, 14 I 1971, AAN, KC PZPR, 1745, k. 199–202.

905 *Trybuna Ludu*, 21.I.1971.

The Citizen's Committee for the Rebuilding of the Royal Castle in Warsaw met in Łazienki several days after this meeting.⁹⁰⁶

Before the exit gate to Łazienki park, from the side of the Agricola, the honor guard of soldiers in the historical uniforms of the "Czwartki" [Thursdays]. From here right up to the Palace Upon the Water, there are burning candles. From the dark of night, reflectors highlight the finessed classical architecture of the palace erected by the last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski. The Palace Ballroom, which centuries earlier was the site of the famous literary feasts of King Staś, is slowly filling up as it is lit with the light of hundreds of candles in old candelabras.⁹⁰⁷

The spectacle of authority, therefore, moved into a new symbolic space connected to a royal tradition that hitherto had been foreign to Polish communists. We can suspect that such a spectacle increased national pride and might have been to the liking of Poles gathered before their televisions.

The committee made an appeal to Poles at home and abroad:

For seven centuries the Warsaw Castle rose proudly upon the Vistula slope. For nearly half a millennium it was the witness to great historical events, a symbol of national ties. Within the walls of its oldest section Zygmunt August prepared the great work of the Lublin Union. The Commonwealth's Sejm deliberated here. The idea for the National Education Committee was born here—the first European ministry of universal education. The constitution of 3rd May was ratified in the Castle, and the highest authorities of the Commonwealth were located here. Trophies from winning campaigns were offered in the Castle, here the majesty of the Commonwealth shone with a great glow.

From the very start of the communist rule in Poland national history was never spoken of in this way. Stress was put on the liberational and progressive character of national outbursts, the "correct" politics of the first Piasts, the national martyrology, and "the fight against the Nazi occupiers." However, a whole mass of facts was glossed over, events and historical figures, which did not fit into the ideological pattern of the puzzle. The authors of the appeal, on the other hand, put their accent on the hitherto forgotten part of Polish history. They talked about Zygmunt August's contribution to the preparation of the "great work of the Lublin Union," about the victorious war trophies, among which there were also those gained during wars with Moscow, about the majesty of the Commonwealth personified by the king with pride and admiration. These several sentences contained

906 The authorities characteristically were unable to decide whether to keep the current official name "Warsaw Castle," or, to return to the historical name "Royal Castle." This is the reason why both names were used for a time.

907 *Trybuna Ludu*, 27.I.1971.

an apotheosis of the national past, something Gomułka never did. The appeal also contained an allusion to an 1861 manifestation put down by the Russian authorities, during which people were killed, “The castle shared the fate of the nation, both good and bad. All the invasions, starting from the Swedish Deluge, which brought it destructions and victimhood. During national manifestations of the people of Warsaw before the January Uprising Polish blood was spilled not far from its walls.”

The authors of the appeal did not hide the fact that the rebuilding of the castle was dictated by instrumental factors; it was supposed to contribute to the regaining of social support, whose lack was highlighted by the December crisis.

Our country, People’s Poland, found itself during the days of December at a difficult historical turning point . . . If during this difficult time, when every zloty must be counted, we are undertaking a nationwide work of resurrecting the Castle in Warsaw, then that is not an accident. By building a better tomorrow we hope to creatively draw from the glorious past. By delineating the prospect for the future, we make indirect ties to the valuable and fertile national tradition.

The rebuilt castle was to become a symbol of national unity and a monument to independent Polish statehood. It was an anti-Soviet allusion, even if veiled (perhaps the only one in Gierek’s epoch):

Let everyone bring a brick, together we will create out of the rebuilt Castle a great new symbol of national unity. Let every zloty be a symbol of being tied to national traditions and a feeling for the national ties of all Poles.

Against all historical storms, on the Vistula slopes, a monument to our uninterrupted statehood will rise once again—the Royal Castle.⁹⁰⁸

One must admit that the slogan of rebuilding the Royal Castle thrown around by Gierek demonstrated itself to be a propaganda bullseye. Even though the authorities regained systemic stability, above all, thanks to shifts in the social and economic spheres, then, after all, this does not exclude the possibility that the idea of rebuilding the castle also could have played a part in this.

Thousands of people made extraordinary sacrifices: transferring savings, jewelry, antique furniture, paintings, and valuable collections. In the span of a year the Citizen’s Committee for the Rebuilding collected 11,695,00 zlotys and \$64,000, and in 1974 this sum rose to over 400 million zlotys and more than \$410,000. “The

908 *Trybuna Ludu*, 27.I.1971. A copy of the appeal can also be found in the materials of Gierek’s Secretariat, which proves that its contents were also consulted with the First Secretary (AAN, KC PZPR, 3170, k. 2, 4).

appeal fell on fertile ground,” wrote Andrzej Friszke, “because Poles were greatly tied to national symbols and the Castle—because of the longtime opposition of the communist authorities against its rebuilding—they thought an extraordinary symbol.”⁹⁰⁹ Ireneusz Krzemiński evaluated the social reception of the rebuilding idea differently, seeing in it an attempt to take national symbolism hostage by the party-state system of bureaucracy. According to him, it received the approval of only some groups from the older generation: “these attempts met with a clear passive resistance from society, which infallibly discerned its ambiguity.”⁹¹⁰

National unity was not only mentioned during the occasion of the castle’s rebuilding, which was supposed to be this unity’s symbol. It became a key element of the propaganda vision of the 1970’s of national development and a civilizational leap whose necessary condition was supposed to be this national unity. “Our steps,” recalled Gierek, “stemmed from the concept of widening the social base of power, therefore in moving away from the dictatorship of the proletariat in the direction of a general national-state.”⁹¹¹ A large section of the official ideology, previously occupied with phrases about the leading role of the working class, was taken over by slogans about national solidarity. They resounded with full, for perhaps the first time, during Gierek’s meeting with the Warsaw party activists a day after the conclusion of the VIII Plenum (9 February 1971). It took place in the same Congress Hall where the comrades scandalized everyone with “more boldly, more boldly” and “Gierek, Gierek.” Most likely Gierek desired to express with this meeting his thanks to the Warsaw party organization for their support. The announcement for Warsaw of the Łazienkowska Thoroughfare, Central Station, and a metro can be read as Gierek ingratiating himself with those present in the auditorium. However, these promises are not as important as the patriotic-national contexts into which they were fit. The only slogan to adorn the hall said, “The party with the nation—the nation with the party.” This was not, as we know, an especially original slogan “but how expressive” (*Trybuna Ludu* noted). “These words fully render the direction of the present mutual action of millions of people in Poland, and, at the same time, they are the answer to the question: what ought we to do today and tomorrow?”⁹¹² Gierek called for national solidarity in work for the good of the fatherland, “There is a place for all Poles in working for the

909 Andrzej Friszke, *Polska Gierka* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1995) 21.

910 Ireneusz Krzemiński, “System społeczny ‘epoki gierkowskiej,’” in: *Spoleczeństwo polskie czasu kryzysu* (Warsaw: UW, 1984), 205.

911 Jakub Rolicki, *Edward Gierek...*, op. cit., 83.

912 *Trybuna Ludu*, 10.II.1971.

Fatherland, believers and non-believers, for all patriots independently of where and to what road to them to the country, to Poland. We are united in common difficulties, joys, and troubles, in our love for our country.”⁹¹³ These words were then emanated in the slogan repeated constantly during the 1970’s, which, *nota bene*, was already invented during the Stalinist period, about the “moral-political unity of the nation.”⁹¹⁴

There were no attempts to strengthen the national unity through creating an atmosphere of threat, as was typical for communist governments since their beginning. The institutional nationalist of the “Gierek era” was clearly mellowed. Because of this if we are to posit an interruption in the approach and use of national elements by those ruling the PRL, then it seems that it ought to be posited in 1971 rather than 1956. The new team created itself as modern and open. It emphasized the cultural and economic advances Poles made since the time of the war. This is why xenophobic nationalism of threat and fighting against the “foreigner” seemed anachronistic, and not fit for the “new epoch.” The opening onto the West, especially efforts to obtain favorable foreign loans also were not conducive toward officially taking up the topic of threat. Slogans of being “anti,” directed at imperialists and revisionist were replaced with slogans emphasizing unity, common work, and creating prosperity. Friszke writes that in less official circumstances,

... appeals were made to the common good and material success; they maintained their worries about the Germans, and aversion to Ukrainians and Jews. However, the final conclusion should also be the same: the party’s leadership is naturally, essentially, objectively right, guarantees internal peace, and the maintenance of existing borders.⁹¹⁵

At the same time, they did not abandon the “old” legitimation argument, which consisted in highlighting of the fact that the Polish state is mono-national. In a speech given on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the PRL Edward Gierek argued that “Socialism ensured Poland’s return to its ancient Piast lands on the Oder and the Baltic, once severed by violence, and made possible the rebuilding of a single, compact, Polish nation-state.”⁹¹⁶

913 Ibid.

914 “One of the most terrible slogans... Terrible, because the more false it was, the more frequently it was repeated. Against reality, it provoked reality” (Witold Kula, *Rozdziałki...*, op. cit., 387).

915 Andrzej Friszke, *Polska Gierka...*, op. cit., 41.

916 “Przemówienie I sekretarza KC PZPR Edwarda Gierka wygłoszone 22 lipca 1974 r. na uroczystym posiedzeniu KC PZPR, Sejmu i Rady Państwa,” *Nowe Drogi* 8 (1974): 6.

Permission was given to the indigenous populations of Silesia, Warmia, and Mazury to leave for Western Germany in exchange for monetary credits. This was not made into a propaganda motif, but these actions were in accord with the overall orientation.

When it came to the using of nationalism for legitimating the system, one can point to other, differences between the “Gomułka epoch” and the decade of his successor. Besides the idea of rebuilding the Royal Castle, thrown out *ad hoc* during a situation threatening the system of power, the Gierek establishment rarely, which does not mean not at all, reached for national history in order to formulate its right to rule by leaning upon it. In comparison with Gomułka—Gierek was completely uninterested in history. In his speeches, which were much shorter than his predecessor’s (and if only for that reason more modern), connections to history were occasional and had a merely ritual character. War/partisan themes wore out their propaganda use, especially since in the public consciousness to a great degree it was connected with the person of Comrade Wiesław. The national martyrology stopped being the leading theme of press articles. At the start of the decade Bogdan Poręba and Ryszard Filipiński, commonly recognized as the representatives of national communism, filmed *Hubal*. Toward the end of the decade there came the TV series *Polskie Drogi* [Polish Roads]. All in all, films thematically tied to World War II were now few and far between. The celebrations of jubilees stopped being celebrated “against somebody,” they were given, above all, an educational goal. This was the character, for example of the great celebrations of the World Copernicus Year in 1973. “He issued from the Polish tribe / He moved the earth, and stopped the sun in its stride,” this thought was repeated every time Copernicus was mentioned and thereby was made as a first-rate national hero. The figure of the astronomer was used in the propaganda in order to present him as an example for people in the present to emulate, in whom, as the Secretary of the Central Committee Andrzej Werblan said, “who combined scientific technical progress, economic dynamics, high humanist values, and a civic attitude.”⁹¹⁷ The example of the great builder who modernized the country was Kazimierz III Wielki. In 1974 the 200th anniversary of the Commission of National Education was celebrated, which was tied to a declaration about the meaning of learning for the development of the nation.⁹¹⁸

917 Andrzej Werblan, *Nowe Drogi* 9 (1973): 104.

918 See: Andrzej Friszke, *Polska Gierka...*, op. cit., 39.

The Gierek establishment saw the most significant argument for legitimizing the system of power not in the past of the nation, but in the vision of its future. In November 1972, during a plenum devoted to matters concerning youths, Gierek pitched the slogan “We will build a second Poland.” The vision of a “second Poland,” a “second economy” (they also spoke of a “second industrialization of Poland”) was a promise that would make possible a social, bottom-up, mobilization to execute the program laid out by the party. In order to give it a higher rank, to nationally sacralize it, the First Secretary said that it is a “program for the whole nation.” From that time the slogan: “program of the party—program of the nation,” became a further leading slogan of the epoch.

There was a development of the patriotic ethos at the same time. Working toward completing a plan drawn out by the party was seen as a witness to a patriotic stance. During the plenum Gierek, while pushing the romantic tradition of fighting to the wayside, outlined a new national mythology.⁹¹⁹

Our nation is industrious. Continually, through the ages, it husbanded its lands with the utmost difficulty, it raised the country from the ruins of war, accomplished great things in the industrialization and the reconstruction of its fatherland. Nonetheless, in the patriotic tradition, the dominant factor was, in great measure, and still remains, fighting—heroism and devotion to the fight. Today, more than any time before, our socialist fatherland needs the heroism and devotion to work. And such work—sacrificial, well-organized, effective, and solid—must be made into the highest precept of patriotism.⁹²⁰

Not only was the “program of the party” supposed to be the “program of the nation,” but there was an effort to connect the notion of an ever-present state with the idea of the nation in such a way that “serving the people’s state” would be identified with serving the “nation,” which, in order to emphasize these ties, was given the adjective “socialist.” Thus, they returned to a conception of the Polish nation as socialist. Gierek reminded his listeners that, “The historical process of identifying the new socialist Polish nation, a nation of working people, with the people’s state was led by, inspired, and directed by our Marxist-Leninist party of the working class.”

919 The use of “Gierek” as the subject of this sentence is a conscious, oversimplification that flattens out real life. This is because Gierek was not the author of his speeches. As opposed to Beriot, and especially Gomułka, who frequently wrote their own speeches, Gierek did not do so at all, he improvised if there was a need.

920 “Przemówienie I sekretarza KC PZPR Edwarda Gierka na VII Plenum KC, 28 XI 1972 r.,” *Nowe Drogi* 12 (1972): 11, 16.

In turn, in his speech, given on 22 July 1974, he identified the fatherland with the people's state: "We are building a modern and wealthy Poland. Long live our fatherland—The Polish People's Republic."⁹²¹

The contemporary hero, the model of a "patriotism of work," was recognized as the engineer and the "socialist manager." To a lesser degree, the Polish peasant was also this, however unmodern or non-socialist, which somewhat destroyed the overall picture. Nonetheless, the authorities persisted in their efforts in order to—through the right slogans and framing, especially during harvest festivals organized with great pomp—present themselves as the supposed defenders of folk culture. Television showed Gierek reverently kissing the harvest festival bread according to tradition. But this was merely a show ritual, without content, a commercialized folksiness deprived of all authenticity, just like the Cepelia stores (with folk souvenirs), whose chain in the 1970's was experiencing its second youth. When it was needed Gierek turned to the farmers: "We Poles must do everything in order to develop our own production of agricultural articles,"⁹²² but when the audience was the party activists he said, "We, communists, concentrate on the problems of the present and the future, upon tasks that must be completed."⁹²³ The disparity of the self-definitions in the above sentences is not the proof of a bifurcation in the self of the "leader of the party and state," but another one of the examples of the authorities toying with different symbols, going into different roles in order to gain social backing and to achieve a state of social mobilization.

They attempted to accomplish this also by appealing to national ambition. It was served by the propaganda slogan "A Pole can do" in newspapers, written on banners, and factory walls. The nationalist zeal was supposed to become the driving force of a speeded-up industrialization of the country.

There were also attempts to rouse national pride in the achievements of the socialist state. "The propaganda of achievements should awaken optimism, give satisfaction to people who work diligently, strengthen the feeling of national goodness, pride in the effects of the whole nation's work, giving Poland a meaningful place among the industrialized countries of the world," we read in a party document.⁹²⁴ Poles were supposed to be proud of the "Polish Fiat," later of the

921 "Przemówienie I sekretarza KC PZPR Edwarda Gierka wygłoszone 22 lipca...", op. cit., 15.

922 *Spotkani z rolnikami gminy Drobin*, 24 IX 1975, *Nowe Drogi* 12 (1975).

923 *Wojewódzka Konferencja w Katowicach*, 27 X 1975, *Ibid.*

924 *Zadania partii w pogłębianiu socjalistycznej świadomości i patriotycznej jedności narodu oraz umacnianiu więzi ze społeczeństwem /Tezy na VII Plenum KC PZPR/*, 1977, AAN, KC PZPR, 3100, k. 4.

“Polonez” car. We also ought to mention that the production of the “Dacia,” a car treated nearly as a symbol of the national rebirth of the Romanians, began at nearly the same time as the “Polish Fiat.” Following the example of Eastern Germany, where sport was already earlier acknowledged as an advertisement for the socialist state, Poland also used nationalist emotions connected to the successes of native sports figures, who met with the leadership of the party “in front of the cameras.”⁹²⁵ However, Poles were supposed to be especially proud of the building of the Katowice Ironworks and the North Port—symbols of an “industrial leap.”

It was emphasized that Poland’s significance in the international arena was growing substantially as an effect of the active foreign policy of the party, meaning, of Gierek. National prestige was supposed to rise thanks to numerous visits by heads of state in Poland (in the 1970’s three successive presidents of the USA visited). Citizens were supposed to be proud of the achievements of the nation in spite of the West. In the document entitled “Information About the Participation of *Trybuna Ludu* in the Mobilization of Society to Realize the Resolutions of the VI Congress of the PZPR” we read:

A motif that continually appears in articles of *Trybuna Ludu*, especially after the VII Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR, is the shaping of concepts of socialist patriotism and internationalism. This trend requires a further explication and deepening. The shaping of pride for the achievements of the nation and the socialist Fatherland should be accompanied by a fight with phenomena that offend the feeling of national dignity, both with manifestation of defaming the country and the uncritical yielding to the myth of the West’s superiority in some circles. An especially important meaning is attached to counteracting the infiltration of bourgeois ideology and anti-communist propaganda.⁹²⁶

Thanks to successful party politics Poles were supposed to stop being the economic parvenus of Europe, join the most civilizationally developed nations of the world, and take up their rightful place in the family of nations. It was proven by calling upon economic indicators that Poland already occupies the 10th place among the most developed countries.

925 This propaganda trick began to be used already toward the end of the 1960’s. After the Olympics in Mexico City in 1968 Cyrankiewicz, Loga-Sowiński, Moczar, Jarosiński, and Tejchma met with sports players. However, only in the 1970’s was sport and the emotions associated with it were seriously used as a significant propaganda instrument (*Notatka dot. powitania powracającej z Meksyku polskiej ekipy sportowej*, 1968, AAN, KC PZPR, 2229, k. 571–572).

926 Redakcja „Trybuny Ludu”, Wydział Prasy, Radia i TV KC PZPR, październik 1975, AAN, KC PZPR, 1787, k. 194.

This is how the world of spectacle looked, the semantic contents of a propaganda of success. This in part hid complexes about provincialism and feelings of underdevelopment, characteristic not only for Gierek's team. As Marcin Kula thinks, with the captivating, pleasing to the nation, vision of building a "Second Poland" there was an effort not only to solve but also to suppress the growing problems. They wanted, in this way, to channel social energy to goals other than remodeling of the existing structures. The slogan of development was supposed to be replaced by the slogan of reform.⁹²⁷ Without regard to what goals were set, in the Poland of the 1970's, there was an implementation of a model of accelerated industrialization, for which nationalism was not only a product but also an important instrument. Gellner saw nationalism in this light. It was similarly described by Kingsley Davis, who categorically thought that:

. . . in a world organized such as ours nationalism is the condition *sine qua non* of industrialization, because it provides compelling, easy to assimilate secular motives for making painful changes. National power or prestige become the leading goals, industrialization the main means. The costs, scarcity, austerity, and the loss of traditional values can be justified for the sake of collective ambition, which is more important than all others. The new collective creation—the nation-state, which arises from these aspirations, and is fixed by them, fulfills the conditions of industrial organization; it obligates every citizen to direct loyalty, organizing the whole populace as one community; it exercises control over the crossing of state boundaries by people, goods, and information; it particularly regulates economic and social life. If the process of industrialization meets serious difficulties their overcoming requires the intensification of nationalist tendencies.⁹²⁸

The model of an accelerated industrialization, powered by bureaucratic nationalism, was not especially original; it was used earlier by, among others, East Germany and Romania. The numerous similarities allow us to judge that during the 1970's we were dealing with a far-reaching imitation of ideological contents, most likely, in part, imposed from on high.⁹²⁹

927 Marcin Kula, *Narodowe i rewolucyjne...*, op. cit., 19.

928 Kingsley Davis, "Social and Demographic Aspects of Economic Development in India," in: *Economic Growth: Brazil, India, Japan*, (Durham NC: Duke, 1955) 294 [original unavailable, therefore re-translated from the Polish –trans.]; see also: Neil Smelser, "Przyczynek do teorii modernizacji," in: *Elementy teorii socjologicznych*, eds. Włodzimierz Dereczynski, Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, and Jerzy Szacki (Warsaw: PWN, 1975), 329–330.

929 During the 1970's, ever so often, there were consultations between the Central Committees of "fraternal parties" responsible for ideological matters and devoted to "coordinating politico-propaganda actions." One of them took place in Sofia in 1977. The PZPR was represented by Jerzy Łukaszewicz, Ryszard Frelek, plus the managers and

The model we are describing was also unoriginal in the sense that it was, so to say, a modernized version of Stalinist industrialization. The rehabilitation of Stalinism in the USSR started at the time when Brezhnev took power. However, the Polish re-validation of that period was not, it seems, only an expression of obedience and loyalty toward the Kremlin. Passing the responsibility onto Gomułka for the events in December, and the slowing down of the tempo of development, faced the new political team with the problem of continuity and their own tradition upon which they could rely. In looking for the roots of the problem they reached as far back as the Stalinist period. For the people who were the core of Gierek's team, it was somewhat natural, since the period of Stalinism was the time of their youth. They did not associate it, or rather, not exclusively, with the persecutions and the absolute terror, but with an unheard-of mobilization effort and dreams about building a "new Poland." The Stalinist vision of a universal enthusiasm and devotion, zeal for work, and the heroic industrialization of the "Bierut epoch," that was their myth. This is why, more or less consciously, they returned to the period 1949–1956 to seek for inspiration and models. This should be used to explain how already in March 1971 the Political Bureau declared, for example, a "proposition to lay wreaths on 12 March for the 15th anniversary of the death of Bierut, including one from the Central Committee of the PZPR."⁹³⁰ It is also the reason why shortly after that bookstores stocked a hagiographic biography of Bierut, albums and brochures about Rokossowski, and much was also warmly written about Wasilewska.⁹³¹ The partial rehabilitation of Stalinism also led to the unearthing of old forms of legitimation. The similarities are striking when it comes to the legitimating strategies of the 1970's and the first half of the 1950's. They can be seen, above all, in the teleological promise of the six-year-plan and

deputy managers of the Ideological Departments of the Central Committee (AAN, KC PZPR, 1797). Another one took place in Berlin in July 1979 and was dedicated to the ideological fight against the Church. Łukaszewicz was joined by Werblan. In both instances detailed notes were drawn up, including fragments of conversation stenographs. Michaił Ziemianin who participated in the conference in Berlin for an arm of the PZPR said, among other things, "Relations with the Church and clergy no doubt require great political tact. However, in all instances, it is necessary to unshakably strengthen our scientific-materialistic worldview, which is opposed to religious irrationalism. It is necessary to fortify the strength of reason, form social and moral convictions, which place the ideal of social progress **in service to the nation and fatherland** above all" (AAN, KC PZPR, 1811, k. 365, my own bolding).

930 *Protokół nr 38 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 2 III 1971, AAN, KC PZPR, 1745, k. 787.

931 Andrzej Friszke, *Polska Gierka...*, op. cit., 60.

the Gierek slogan of building a “second Poland,” the use of nationalism in both periods for social mobilization and a return to old concepts and slogans (sacrificial work as a witness to patriotism, the moral-political unity of the nation). Much as it was during the period of the “small thaw,” the national phraseology served those in power in the 1970’s to stimulate the effort of people to execute ambitious economic plans. The concept of a “socialist Polish nation” also was not innovative; Bierut used it much earlier, as we might recall. On the 20th anniversary of the First Secretary’s death there appeared on the pages of *Nowe Drogi* a hagiographic article devoted to Bierut. Its author, while reminiscing about the February 1951 plenum wrote, “Bierut emphasized the weight of patriotic, liberationist, and progressive traditions of the nation, and the need for a constant reconnection with them.”⁹³² In sum: the nationalist legitimization of power in the 1970’s in Poland was, in part, a copy of the nationalism of its neighbors, and, in part, a repeat of the “small thaw.” In this way the history of the PRL completed a circle, and, as would become apparent during martial law, this wouldn’t be the last one.

As noted by Kingsley Davis, “If the process of industrialization meets serious difficulties their overcoming requires the intensification of nationalist tendencies.” It would be useless to repeat these observations if not for the fact that they precisely reflect the situation that began to outline itself in Poland already near the end of the first half of the 1970’s. That is when the first signs of economic crisis made themselves known, of which one of the first symptoms was the exhaustion of reserves. In practice, this meant the necessity of replacing, or strengthening, the so-called system of material stimuli, as a leading factor for eliminating tensions, with some legitimating formula. The ideological offensive that took place was also an answer to the protests of the Church, and part of the intelligentsia that was in the opposition, in connection with the intentions of the authorities to constitutionally confirm the socialist character of the state, the “inseparable” ties with the USSR and the communist camp, the leading role of the party and the factual limitation of citizens’ rights through tying them to the execution of responsibilities toward the fatherland. The protests influenced the softening of some formulations, nonetheless, the constitution included a note on the “inseparable ties of friendship” with the USSR, which in certain circles was received as a decreeing the lack of national sovereignty.⁹³³ As a matter of fact, we do not know why

932 Józef Kowalczyk, “Bolesław Bierut (1892–1956),” *Nowe Drogi* 3 (1976): 127.

933 “Changes in the Constitution resulted in considerations about the concept of the Sovietization of Poland. Some give it a classical content, that is, the limiting of sovereignty, others, not excluding members of the party in intellectual circles, have in mind processes of likening Poland to the Soviet Union in socio-political and intel-

the authorities decided to take this step. It was probably not dictated by pressure from Moscow.⁹³⁴ The protest surprised the ruling party and highlighted how the achieved stability was not certain at all. In such a situation the party authorities decided to make an ideological offensive that would confirm their nationalistic legitimation. Józef Tejchma, who at the time was the Secretary of the Central Committee and the minister of culture, wrote of the III Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR: “it would not be necessary to have today at the Plenum of the Central Committee a national-patriotic exaltation if pointless corrections had not been made in the constitution.”⁹³⁵

The plenum he mentioned took place in February 1976. Gierek gave at it a paper entitled, “On the Deepening of the Patriotic Unity of the Nation: Strengthening the State and the Development of Socialist Democracy,” in which he clearly played the notes of a new “state mysticism.”⁹³⁶ “Our state” was acknowledged by Gierek as an intrinsic value, the highest good of the Polish nation, representing its interests, realizing the principles of national sovereignty. The power, performance and its effectiveness were supposed to be the basis of the successful realization of the tasks delineated by the party. The main principle of the state’s power was the supposed “moral-political unity of the Polish nation.” According to Gierek, this unity had become a fact. Nonetheless, its continuation continually remained at the center of the party’s attention. Even though Gierek never explicitly said that the state is a “national state,” that was the meaning of his whole statement. The problem of how it is possible to understand the leading role of the working class in this context was solved through the confirmation of the total agreement of the interests of the working class with the interests of the nation. The latter “through deep social-economic changes” becomes the “socialist nation of the working people.”⁹³⁷

lectual life” (Józef Tejchma, *Kulisy dymisji. Z dzienników ministra kultury 1974–1977* [Krakow: Oficyna Cracovia, Kraków 1991], 194).

934 If there was something of the kind, then Gierek certainly would not have failed to mention it, since in his reminiscences he was always inclined to throw responsibility off onto the USSR. However, he instead put the blame on Andrzej Werblan, who was supposed to have formulated the project of the changes in the Constitution. He also suggested that it was Werblan’s (at the time the Deputy Marshall of the Sejm) fault that it was made public, ‘got out,’ which forced the party face up to a *fait accompli*” (Jakub Rolicki, *Edward Gierek...*, op. cit., 104).

935 Józef Tejchma, *Kulisy dymisji...*, op. cit., 196.

936 Ireneusz Krzemiński, *System społeczny „epoki gierkowskiej”* op. cit., 205.

937 Edward Gierek, “O pogłębienie patriotycznej jedności narodu, umacnianie państwa i rozwój demokracji socjalistycznej,” *Nowe Drogi* 3 (1976): 10.

The First Secretary of the PZPR not only acknowledged that state as the highest value of the nation, and, therefore, of the working class, but also pointed to the necessity of deepening in society of a “state-consciousness.” For an “authentic communist” this could only be an outright heresy. Much can be found about “state-consciousness” (also “state instinct”) in the political thought of the Piłsudski camp, slightly less in the writings of the father-founders of National Democracy. “State Instinct,” is the title Bolesław Piasecki gave to his article from October 1956.⁹³⁸

The ideal of the Endecja was the monoethnic country. But this only ultimately became the work of Polish communists, “the collective work of all patriots of the whole nation,” said Gierek, “is the new, socialist, ethnically uniform, safe in its power, and in the reliability of its alliances—Polish statehood,”⁹³⁹ and also that, “the nation, the Fatherland and state are an indivisible unity.” It was a risky thesis. If one were to take it *à la lettre*, one could say that the falling apart of the state signifies also the destruction of the nation, which evidently contradicts the historical experience of the Poles, who were, for over a century, deprived of their own nation-state. It was the premise of the following thought: “love for the Fatherland is best expressed in the proper relation to the state.”

How to understand the word “patriotism” in this context? The First Secretary of the PZRP interpreted it thus:

It is expressed in a deep attachment to the achievements of previous generations, to all that in our history was progressive, heroic, and creative, to the material and cultural achievements, in other words to the historical national heritage. We should refer with respect—and we should demand this from generally—to our native language, to the beautiful Polish speech, which was the strongest bond of the nation, allowed it to continue, to enrich its culture, develop patriotic and progressive thought even in the most difficult times.⁹⁴⁰

However, above all, Gierek defined patriotism as “caring for the interests of the state and the conscientious fulfilling of responsibility towards it. It is at the same time everyday work and its effects, which should become the basic source and main criterion of evaluating the stance of every citizen.”⁹⁴¹ To put it plainly, to be a patriot meant for him to serve the socialist state. Gierek also used the phrase “patriotism of work,” whose shaping is supported by the party with all its power. The leader of the PZPR only mentioned internationalism on the margins of his speech.

938 Bolesław Piasecki, “Instynkt państwowy,” *Słowo Powszechne*, 16.X.1956.

939 Edward Gierek, “O pogłębienie patryjotycznej...,” *op. cit.*, 17.

940 Zbigniew Załuski, *Tradycje patriotyczne*, *op. cit.*, k. 105.

941 *Ibid.*, 18.

It was an important speech. Granted, most of its threads had already appeared earlier, but it would be difficult to find a similar deification of the nation-state. However, the speech really was actually not about that. The recognition of its supremacy was the first road to the apotheosis and sacralization of power. Loyalty toward the imagined nation and fatherland was identified with loyalty toward a concrete socialist state and its rulers, who used the myth of the nation-state to legitimate its power and the existing normative-institutional order. Then came the time for the next step: to anchor this myth in the social consciousness. This task was assigned to the system of education and propaganda. The myth was supposed to concretize itself in the new state ceremonies, its truth was supposed to be expressed by cultural institutions and the appropriate publishing policies.

During March 1970 the Political Bureau reviewed the *Party Plan for Disseminating Contents and the Realization of the Resolutions of the III Plenum of the Central Committee*.⁹⁴² The main goals were listed in order of importance: strengthening the “moral-political unity of the nation,” “the leading role of the party as the party of the nation,” and the shaping of a “socialist patriotism and internationalism.” Even early on these goals were supposed to be discussed during meetings on the basic party organization and organizational courses for the party-state apparatus.

Youth organizations were ordered to supplement their educational programs with the following topics:

- the shaping of consciousness of the youth, teaching them to think in terms of the state and nation, the strengthening of the moral-political unity of the whole young generation around the task of building a developed socialist society in Poland;
- the shaping of the self-knowledge of the young generation, awakening pride in progressive historical traditions, achievements of culture, and the achievements of our state and nation, spreading the class evaluation of historical phenomena, explaining the leading role of the Marxist-Leninist party in the fight for liberation, the rebuilding and strengthening of our people’s statehood, and making them more aware of the internationalist ties and the alliance that join Poland with the Land of the Soviets . . . ;
- Strengthening the authority of the state among the young, respect for its laws and institutions, awareness of citizens’ responsibilities toward the state and society.⁹⁴³

942 *Protokół nr 9 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 10 III 1976, AAN, KC PZPR, 1790, k. 225.

943 *Plan pracy nad upowszechnieniem i realizacją treści III Plenum KC*, Ibid., k. 230, 231.

The propaganda campaign was supposed to include participation by, obviously, the press, radio, and television. Their “basic task” was supposed to be “strengthening the patriotic unity, strengthening the Polish state, raising the effectiveness and quality of action in all areas of life, concentrating all of society around the program and line of the party.”⁹⁴⁴

The Department of Ideological-Educational Work of the Central Committee and the Ministry of Culture and Art were both obligated to create a list of works that are “fundamental to national culture, and also works that are that most educationally valuable,” which should be continually on sale.⁹⁴⁵ Among the publishing reprints, the primary consideration was supposed to be given to those items in which there is an “emphasis upon the strong organization of the Polish state.” Publishers were told to launch book series devoted to civic and patriotic education.

The Ministry of Culture and Arts [MKiS] was also obligated to prepare a thematic program of popular and short movies, which, using “historical materials and contemporary undertake the problem of civic and patriotic stances, the building and strengthening of the state, socially valuable analyses, and of negative national traits.” The ministry was also faced with the task of a “long-term and systematic” work directed at “raising the intellectual and educational qualities of entertainment to counter the cosmopolitan tendencies within this field. We must perfect the educational function of national Polish song festivals,” recommended the party propagandists, “to strengthen their ideological and artistic status.”⁹⁴⁶

The authors of the *Party Plan* thought it indispensable to work out the principles of the new system of state ceremonies, but especially:

- the rules for handing out state medals;
- the rules of ceremony for political-propaganda parties;
- the ceremonial rules for giving names to collectivities;
- introducing solemn elements and national symbols into sessions of national councils;
- the principles for using emblems, hymns, national colors, and the flag;
- uniform principles for the introduction of new employees to their places of employment;
- perfecting ceremonial rules in youth organizations
- a full system of ceremony in elementary, middle, and high schools;
- the overall shape of the ceremonies that accompany sports events;

944 Ibid, k. 232.

945 The author, unfortunately, does not know of any such list.

946 *Plan pracy nad...*, op. cit., k. 234.

They also foresaw working out the principles for officials making their vows when taking over their positions.⁹⁴⁷

Unfortunately, I do not know of any concrete party development pertaining to the specific rites. However, on the basis of the above, we can tell that the meaning of ritualized forms of ceremonial rites in the “Gierek state” were supposed to rise immeasurably. As indicated by Christel Lane, quoted earlier in this work, ritual activity arises in social situations where there is a lack of clarity or conflict related to social realities, and its resolution, or covering-up, is then served by ritual.⁹⁴⁸ It is worth noting that in the planned codification of state ceremonies emphasis was grafted upon the nation-state tradition, rather than the revolutionary one. The new system of rituals was supposed to play a similar role to the one it played in the USSR: to shape the social reception of the image of the authorities, legitimate not only themselves but also affirm the whole system of “quasi-feudal social hierarchy.”⁹⁴⁹

Since symbols are the basis of ritual, they are simultaneously the most significant element of the social bond, therefore care was devoted to them as well. The Departments of the Press, Radio, Television and of Culture (Central Committee) were commissioned to study, “with regard to artistic and reporting creativity,” the principles of protecting state, national, and political symbolism and “concepts especially important for a patriotic and internationalist education.” They were also instructed to prepare organizational concepts for the functioning of “offices for tradition and perspective” and a list of names of outstanding Poles, “and names conceptually tied to the ideals of People’s Poland, as a basis for naming places of work, new streets, schools, and so on”.

The elections to the Sejm and the Voivodeship National Councils that took place in March 1976 were seen as an important test of social support for the leadership of the party. The Organizational Department of the Central Committee prepared for the Political Bureau information about their course and results. In it we can find the following:

The mass participation of voters in the elections ensured the achievement of a higher level of participation than in previous elections. In the elections to the Sejm votes were cast by 98.27% of those eligible to vote, whereas during the previous elections to the Sejm in 1972 the participation rate was 97.94%, and 97.38% in the elections to the National Councils in 1973. The FJN [Front of National Unity –trans.] received 99.43% of

947 Ibid., k. 241.

948 Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981); Christel Lane, “Legitimacy and Power..,” op. cit., 207–215.

949 Ireneusz Krzemiński, *System społeczny „epoki gierkowskiej...,”* op. cit.

the Sejm votes of those eligible. There was a visible increase of participation in the election among residents of large urban agglomerations, above all, in clusters of the industrial working class.⁹⁵⁰

The party authorities read the results of the elections as an expression of the social affirmation of their politics. During a discussion of a Political Bureau Meeting, “it was emphasized that the elections, in which society’s participation was greater than ever before, point toward its political maturity, widespread acceptance of the new constitution, and the acknowledgment of the PZPR as the party of the nation.” This evaluation seems funny from today’s perspective, on the other hand, it is an example of the party leadership’s escapism, their unadulterated faith in their own legitimation, and the nation’s as well. During this meeting, they “unanimously adopted a proposal that all party locales be decorated with the state emblem—the white eagle.”⁹⁵¹ This was yet another symbolic example of making the system of power more national.

It can be assumed that the optimistic evaluation of the election results became one of the premises for the authorities of undertaking—as it would come to pass—the hasty decision to raise prices in June 1976. It led to strikes and street demonstrations that were brutally put down by the militia. The mix of social and national motives made itself known once more in Radom.⁹⁵² During a demonstration the workers carried red-and-white flags and sung the national anthem. Militia units showered them with the epithets “Nazis,” “Gestapo,” and “Murderers.”⁹⁵³ The authorities answered with rallies of support for “Comrade Gierek,” that condemned the “brawlers from Radom.” The First Secretary participated in one of them, on 2 July 1976, in Katowice. The rally was broadcast by television on both of its channels and also on all three radio channels. The national emblem was placed on the wall of a Katowice sports complex, and under it the words: “With people—for people.” The rally began with the national anthem. Among the things Gierek said were, “The people’s authorities are our authorities” and called to fighting for “our contemporary patriotic consciousness . . . For such as moral and civic stance that the conversation between Poles with Poles about the Fatherland will ever be

950 *Informacja o wynikach i przebiegu wyborów do Sejmu i WRN w roku 1976*, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR, 22 III 1976, AAN, KC PZPR, 1790, k. 294.

951 *Protokół nr 10 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 23 III 1976, AAN, KC PZPR, 1790, k. 282.

952 Marcin Kula, “Polska 1980–1992: splot motywów społecznych i narodowych,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 2 (1993): 221–231.

953 Piotr Tusiński, “Wydarzenia radomskiego czerwca 1976 r. /próba analizy historycznej/,” *Biuletyn kwartalny radomskiego towarzystwa naukowego* 1–2 (1990): 66, 70.

disturbed by anyone.”⁹⁵⁴ Gierek did not speak of “a conversation of the people’s authorities with the working class.” He acknowledged that dialogue—let us overlook how this was understood at the time—should take place on a level higher than the class level, that is, at a national level. Four years later, at the end of the Gdańsk negotiations, Deputy Prime Minister Mieczysław Jagielski repeated the well-known words “We talked like Poles should talk with each other. Just as a Pole talks with a Pole.”⁹⁵⁵ In both cases he was concerned with the same thing: emphasizing that the rulers and the ruled are members of the one and the same nation.

In Katowice the assembled activists interrupted Gierek’s speech with ovations several times, and, at the end, they began chanting, “Par-ty—Gierek, Par-ty—Gierek.” Then the First Secretary responded with “Par-ty, Po-land.” The hall responded with the chant, “Par-ty, Po-land, Gie-rek, Par-ty, Po-land, Gie-rek.” “These chants were probably supposed to convince everyone that the party is Poland and that Gierek is, and should be, at the head of the party and Poland. The ovations and applause went on uninterrupted.”⁹⁵⁶ Shortly, the media began to call the First Secretary of the party the “leader of the Polish nation.”

The worsening of the economic situation since the mid-1960’s was accompanied by a rise in the meaning of nationalist legitimation. During 1st May marches, and during other state holidays and celebrations, there were fewer red flags and more of the red-and-white ones. The ritualization of social life through state ceremony took on caricatural dimensions. The place of concepts such as “socialism,” “socialist order,” and “society” were progressively replaced by the concept of the “state” and “statehood.” Michał Głowiński notes, “It is conceivable that the place of the old pseudo-nationalism is supposed to be taken over by the programmatic nationalization of consciousness. There is, therefore, talk of work for the state, responsibilities toward the state, and so on.”⁹⁵⁷ What is significant, they abandoned proclaiming that the form of the ruling order is the dictatorship of the proletariat in favor of stressing the qualifications of the bureaucratic apparatus, thanks to which the political elites rose into the position of power.

954 Edward Gierek, “Miłość Ojczyzny przekuwamy w czyn,” *Nowe Drogi* 7 (1976): 45–46.

955 Jagielski uttered these words on August 31st after signing the so-called “August Agreements.” He was repeating the words of Lech Lecha Wałęsa, uttered a few moments earlier: “We got along like a Pole with a Pole” (Andrzej Drzycimski and Tadeusz Skutnik, *Gdańsk sierpień ’80. Rozmowy* [Warsaw: Aida, 1990], 433–434).

956 Marek Tarniewski [Jakub Karpiński], *Płonie komitet...*, op. cit., 179–180.

957 Michał Głowiński, *Peereliada. Komentarze do słów 1976–1981* (Warsaw: PIW, 1993), 8–9.

Our people's state has successfully fulfilled the historical function of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is presently transforming itself gradually into a nationwide socialist state under the leadership of the working class. An inseparable quality of our state is the consequential realization of the principle of the rule of the people and the harmonious joining of democracy with a modern and efficient administration. The socialist state serves the nation, realizes its goals, realizes its interests, and functions under its control.⁹⁵⁸

Socialist patriotism, inculcated by propaganda, was supposed to tie the nation with the socialist state. The key role in this process was assigned to tradition, although it is not entirely certain what sort of tradition. The instrumentalization of tradition, by concentrating upon goals rather than the means, made it so, that somewhere the answer to this question was lost.

The continually actual task is the shaping of a socialist patriotism, whose indispensable ingredient is internationalism and class. This requires an active approach to tradition, which we make into an instrument of a patriotic education, shaping through it an active relationship to contemporary social, class, and political processes. We must perfect educational and cultural politics in the spirit of a class and socialist patriotism. Citizen discipline, along with an upbringing of readiness for the state, a desire to have good working skills for the fatherland, should play an increasingly greater role in a patriotic education.⁹⁵⁹

It was invariably pointed out that the source of the party's power (legitimation) is—to a great degree to its merit—national unity, that the party “fulfilling its leading role,” fully realizes the interests of the nation. “The cells of the ideological front” had the following as its chief task: to “accent how the moral-political unity of the Polish nation has a decisive meaning for our quick development—it constituted and constitutes one of the main sources of our power, successes in the social-economic field and relevance in the international arena.”

In connection with the rebirth of an organized democratic opposition in the second half of the 1970's, the party authorities dictated “unmasking” it as anti-nationalist, breaking apart national unity: “we should continue to show the actual intentions and mechanisms of the ideological diversion directed at our society, exposing how the main goal of this hostile activity is the weakening of the moral-political unity of the Polish nation . . .”⁹⁶⁰

958 *Zadania partii w pogłębianiu...*, op. cit., k. 15.

959 *Główne kierunki i plan ideologicznej i propagandowej pracy partii w pierwszym półroczu 1977 r. /zatwierdzone przez BP KC PZPR w dniu 1 II 1977/*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1796, k. 354.

960 *Główne kierunki ideologicznej i propagandowej pracy partii w I półroczu 1979 r. /przyjęte przez Biuro Polityczne KC PZPR w styczniu br.*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1809, k. 189.

In materials made by the Security Services of the Interior Ministry the persons engaged in opposition activities were described as “being known for many years for presenting stances that are revisionist-Zionist, social-Democrat, right-clerical, cosmopolitan, and liberal-bourgeois.”⁹⁶¹ Stanisław Kania, at the time, the First Secretary of the Central Committee and a member of the Political Bureau, in a confidential conversation with Archbishop Bronisław Dąbrowski called those from the opposition who, as a sign of protest against the politics of the authorities, began a hunger strike in St. Martin’s church in Warsaw “Jews from the margins.”⁹⁶²

This sort of thinking, it seems to me, was still present within the ruling elite, finding its reflection in its propaganda, even though it did not opt for such an overt anti-Semitism as in March 1968. To de-legitimize the opposition as foreign to the nation the propaganda gravitated toward various maneuvers, recalling Jewish last names, using various periphrases such as “those who probably stepped into a church for the first time in their lives.”⁹⁶³

They also frequently used the phrase “real Poles,” which was counterpoised by party authors to the opposition, for example, Adam Michnik and Seweryn Blumsztajn.⁹⁶⁴

The leadership of the party needed a spectacular success in a situation of worsening social moods and put a lot of its hopes in a Polish cosmonaut flying into space. The most important document that the Political Bureau debated about the expedition was, “The Information on the Findings of the Secretariat of the PZPR Central Committee with Regard to the Political-Propaganda Evaluation of the Flight of the First Polish Cosmonaut,” and it left no doubts as to why a Pole was sent into orbit.⁹⁶⁵ The party authorities urgently desired that the first Pole go into space, rather than the representative of some other country among the “people’s democracies,” since it was supposed to be a proof of the prestige and importance of Poland. However, things happened differently. The first of them to go into space was not a Pole, but a Czech. Because of this, during a meeting with

961 *Informacja o realizacji „programu działania na rzecz dalszego umacniania ładu, porządku publicznego i dyscypliny społecznej w kraju”*. This document was discussed during a Central Bureau meeting on 28 March 1978, AAN, KC PZPR, 1805, k 208.

962 “Sprawozdanie z rozmowy w Sulejówku z p. Stanisławem Kanią, Sekretarzem KC, dnia 25 maja 1977,” in: Peter Raina, *Rozmowy z władzami PRL. Arcybiskup Dąbrowski w służbie Kościoła i narodu*, v.1 (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo „Książka Polska,” 1995), 308.

963 Michał Głowiński, *Peereliada...*, op. cit., 59.

964 *Ibid.*, 67.

965 *Protokół nr 102 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 30 V 1978, AAN, KC PZPR, 1806, k. 184, 261–267.

Brezhnev, Gierek asked that the flight of the Polish cosmonaut take place during the “national holiday of July 22nd,” and that the time spent in space not be shorter than the Czechoslovak cosmonaut’s.⁹⁶⁶ The party leadership clearly thought that a Pole’s shorter flight would be a slap in the face of national pride.⁹⁶⁷ The list of objects the cosmonaut was supposed to take with himself was composed of 16 (!) items. Among them were the following: a Polish flag, the state emblem, “portraits of Com. E. Gierek and Com. L. Brezhnev,” pins from the VI and VII Meetings of the PZPR, the emblems of the Voivodeship capitals, miniatures of the *Communist Manifesto*, the *July Manifesto*, and the Constitution of the PRL, a plaque with earth from Grunwald, Lenino, and Warsaw, the first book of the *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies* of Copernicus and a “mascot with elements of national symbolism.”

The last item included an annotation, “the comrades make no comment about the ambiguities of the matter.”⁹⁶⁸ The Pole’s stay in space was given an immense propaganda framing. It had as its goals:

The shaping of pride in the historical achievements of the Polish nation, and its achievements in the building of socialism, and the realization of the VI and VII PZPR Meetings’ program of social-economic development. Using this background to show the scale of changes from a backward country as it develops economically and technologically, followed by the destruction of war, right up to the modern socialist nation that is a world-player—a collaborator in the peaceful conquest of space in the interest of all of humanity. The revealing of the meaning for the development of our country, of the Polish-Soviet alliance, friendship, brotherhood of arms, also the membership in the socialist community. The deepening of the social consciousness of the conviction that participation in the space flights of a Polish representative is proof of the internationalist politics of the Soviet Union, whose new, qualitatively higher form is represented by the realization of the “Interkosmos” program and the mixed crew space flights.⁹⁶⁹

966 *Informacja o rozmowie I Sekretarza KC PZPR Edwarda Gierka z Sekretarzem Generalnym KC PZPR, Przewodniczącym Prezydium Rady Najwyższej ZSRR Leonidem Breżniewem*, AAN, KC PZPR 3317, k. 6.

967 Mirosław Hermaszewski’s was launched into space on 27 June 1978. The flight actually lasted as many days as the Czechoslovak cosmonaut’s, even though it did not take place on July 22nd.

968 *Wykaz proponowanych przedmiotów-symboli zabieranych w Kosmos przez polskiego kosmonautę wraz z uwagami zgłoszonymi przez kierownictwo Rady „Interkosmos” przy Akademii Nauk ZSRR w rozmowach w dniu 18 maja 1979 r.*, AAN, KC PZPR, 2251, k. 36–37.

969 *Informacja o ustaleniach Sekretariatu KC PZPR w sprawie polityczno-propagandowego zdyskontowania lotu pierwszego polskiego kosmonauty*, AAN, KC PZPR, 1806, k. 263.

People's Poland needed a hero rooted in an actual contemporary event. A hero who would personify nationalist values and the real-socialism of the "late Gierek" variety. Buczek and Świerczewski were already too anachronistic and did not fit into the modernizing vision of a "second Poland."

This was not the only event with which the party attempted to gain nationalist legitimation and which showed itself not to be especially fruitful, something that was clearly shown by the events of 1980–1981. Perhaps things would have turned out differently, if not for the dramatic worsening of the economic situation toward the end of the 1970's. However, we can risk the hypothesis, which is not empirically verifiable, that the solidarity revolution would not have taken on the character of a national rebellion against the authorities, if the latter had, in the 1970's, given up on an ostentatious demonstration of its dependence upon the USSR. Gierek's decorating Brezhnev with the first class medal of the *Virtuti Militari* in 1974, and the acceptance of the correction to the PRL Constitution about the alliance with the Soviet Union, are only the best known, and at the time the most puzzling to public opinion, symbols of state dependence. We could bring forth many more examples of servility toward the Soviet Union. It is, as if the rulers lost sight of how thin the ice they were treading on was, an intuition that had characterized Gomułka. On the one hand, they were aware of the power of Polish nationalism and attempted to use it to legitimate their power, on the other, they deprecated their efforts with their manifest friendliness toward the USSR. One example of this is the directive published before a holiday officially acknowledged as national: "The Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR has indicated a need for a deepened popularization, in mass communications, of the message of friendship with the Soviet Union, especially before the anniversary of July 22nd."⁹⁷⁰

970 *Protokół nr 13 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 11 V 1978, AAN, KC PZPR, 2250, k. 378.

Epilogue

The Third Crusade Against Poland

I took the title for this epilogue from a poster that appeared on the streets of Polish cities not long after the introduction of martial law in 1981. The poster featured the following (starting from the top down): a Crusader knight on a horse, chancellor Adenauer in a Crusader cape, finally, president Reagan in a cowboy outfit with a revolver pointing toward the viewer. This was accompanied by the words: “The Third Crusade Against Poland.” I admit, at the time, this proof of aberration in propaganda puzzled me so much that I wanted to take it as a personal trophy. Unfortunately, the poster was glued-on so well that I could not take it down. One can see that the “official” poster-glueers, not pursued by the militia, could practice their trade more thoroughly than the “underground” glueers who, not only for these reasons, preferred to write on walls things such as “Wron Go Back to the Don [River]”⁹⁷¹ and “A crow will not defeat an eagle.”

These two slogans are examples of a symbolic war first conducted in 1980–1981, later, with much greater determination, after the introduction of Martial Law. It was a war in which each one of the sides wanted, at any price, to deprive their opponents of nationalist legitimization. “National phraseology was always [directed] toward the elimination of the PZPR from the role it fulfills,” said Wojciech Jaruzelski at one of the meetings of the Political Bureau in April 1982.⁹⁷²

The 1980’s were a time of one of the biggest legitimization crises ever to face the communist authorities.⁹⁷³ The sphere where this de-legitimation made its biggest steps was precisely the sphere of national values. Those in Solidarity widely saw the party as not having any basis in the nation as a Soviet tool of reigning over

971 Wron [wrona, crow in English –trans.] was short for the Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego [Army Council for National Salvation].

972 *Protokół nr 29 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 14 IV 1982, AAN, KC PZPR, 1830, k. 290.

973 This is also how the party understood its situation. Jaruzelski thought: “No leadership, nor Central Committee of our party, ever had such a beginning, such a starting situation as we do” (Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Przemówienie na zakończenie obrad XII Plenum KC PZPR*, 31 V 1983, in: *Przemówienia 1983* [Warsaw: KiW, 1984] 135).

Poland.⁹⁷⁴ The party establishment was well-aware of a nationalistically-motivated rejection. We read in the party's evaluation of Solidarity's First Congress:

For example, the representative of the Greater Poland region, J. Pałubicki, said that power is exercised by a group of several hundred prominent figures who took over power after a series of occupations (German and Russian) and got in line with the party, he postulated depriving them of all possibilities of influencing society. The authorities are treated as imposed upon a society . . .

The author of the analysis summarized further, “. . . who ought not to be respected ‘When the authorities will be ours, then we will listen to them.’”⁹⁷⁵ On the other hand, a party report devoted to the contents of Solidarity publishers pointed toward, “. . . a direct manner of positing . . . the thesis, in the workplace and regional bulletins, arguing that socialism was imposed on Poland externally, and that the ideology from which it originates is foreign to Polish culture and the national tradition.”⁹⁷⁶

After the implementation of martial law the rulers were in private conversation frequently called “Russikies,” “Moscovites,” and less frequently “Jews.”⁹⁷⁷ People wondered whether the soldiers patrolling the streets were Russians dressed in Polish uniforms just like during the Poznań June. The Russian bear, whose features were reminiscent of Brezhnev, guarding order in Poland, became one of the main protagonists of underground caricatures. Stefan Bratkowski wrote: “They cannot force me to do this one thing: to acknowledge them as decent Poles, or Poles at all, to recognize them as the legitimate Polish authorities.”⁹⁷⁸ Many more similar examples of perceiving the authorities as un-Polish and foreign can be cited from this period.

Irritation was the response of the authorities to the instances of national rejection we cited above. Kazimierz Barcikowski, giving an interview as a member of the Political Bureau and the Secretary of the PZPR Central Committee said, “For us, for me personally, for example, it is an extremely sad thing that our action—it is my deepest conviction it was the only one possible—is assessed by some of the

974 For more on the nationalist dimension of the Solidarity rebellion see: *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement 1980–1981*, eds. Alain Touraine, Jan Strzelecki, Francois Dubet, Michel Wieviorka (Cambridge: CUP, 1984).

975 *Wstępna ocena dotychczasowego przebiegu I Zjazdu „Solidarności” /w dniach od 5 do 8 września br./*, AAN, KC PZPR, 4798, k. 3.

976 *Uwagi o zawartości prasy wydawanej przez NSZZ „Solidarność”*, AAN, KC PZPR 4799, k. 598.

977 Examples can be found in Marcin Kula, *Narodowe i rewolucyjne...*, op. cit., 109, 110.

978 Stefan Bratkowski, *Dlaczego nie pójdę głosować*, *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, 7.VI.1984.

people as anti-national.”⁹⁷⁹ Jaruzelski, in turn, recalled *post-factum* that he drew attention to the “politically instrumental use of national symbols. The red and white flag, the national anthem—was this the appropriate setting and accompaniment for the strike campaign that was ruining the economy?”⁹⁸⁰

It took the authorities about half a year to shake off the shock associated with the creation of Solidarity, and, at the start of 1981, they proceeded to make an ideological counter-offensive. The main formula of legitimation became the belief that the party is the sole guarantor of Polish independence, which was supposedly threatened from the West through German revisionism, and from the East by the Soviet Union. The last accent was formulated more quietly, oftentimes cautiously, but very clearly. What is characteristic—Roman Dmowski sometimes served as a classical master. Stefan Olszowski, at the time a member of the Political Bureau, a secretary of the Central Committee, said:

I would like to remind you that even if Roman Dmowski understood that Poland, as a nation and state, on this scale and with this power can exist and function only on the basis of relying on one of its neighbors . . . And let no one be deluded: it is true that if the Soviet Union will not guarantee our independent existence, our borders, then nobody will guarantee them. A few years will pass, maybe a dozen, and these lasting borders might no longer exist. These aren't empty threats, it is, unfortunately, the truth.⁹⁸¹

The party authorities expressed approval for the creation of the Patriotic Union called “Grunwald,” which was ultimately led by Bogdan Poręba. The organization, which by October 1981 allegedly numbered over 250,000 members, fulfilled the function of an informal nationalist annex of the PZPR. Its program can be described as nationalist-communist, in less official statements about it—strongly anti-Semitic. It seems that in calling “Grunwald” into life the authorities had in mind the legitimizing success of the anti-Semitic campaign from March 1968. Similar intentions guided the founding of the weekly *Rzeczywistość* [Reality], connected to the part of the party establishment described at the time as the “concrete of the party.” The publication frequently published such sentiments,

We cannot understand why in the mono-national Polish state of 35 million—thinking, talking, and writing in Polish and about Poland—affirming Polishness, inquiring into

979 In an interview given to J. Stankiewicz (“Bez cudownych lekarstw,” *Kontrasty* 2 [1984]).

980 Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Stan wojenny, dlaczego...* (Warsaw: BGW, 1992), 88.

981 “Fragmety przemówienia tow. Stefana Olszowskiego na Wojewódzkiej Konferencji Programowo-Wyborczej w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim, 24 VI 1981,” *Rzeczywistość*, 7.VII.1981.

historical truth, so far blurred in such a sophisticated manner—especially when it comes to the period 1944–1956—causes an immediate, spasmodic, direct counter that this is anti-Semitism.⁹⁸²

The main programmatic line of the publication was resistance against “further decay of the state” and “toward activities that threaten Polish national existence.” The main slogan around which the creation of a “wide patriotic front” was proposed was: “The Fatherland in Danger!”⁹⁸³

From October 1981 on, the party began to officially proclaim the idea of national agreement for the “sake of saving the fatherland.”⁹⁸⁴ Its spokesman was Wojciech Jaruzelski, the new First Secretary of the PZPR. He proposed the creation of a Council of National Understanding. He also said, “there are words in our tongue that will never wear out their luster. ‘Fatherland’ is such a word. ‘State’ is such a word.”⁹⁸⁵ We ought to have no illusions about the intentions that directed the authorities by putting forward the concept of a national understanding. At the time, among the leaders of the party, nobody seriously thought about any kind of understanding. What they were concerned with was exclusively how to, after the declaration of Martial Law, whose preparations were going full steam, put the full blame on Solidarity, which supposedly rejected the idea of a national understanding. In this way, those in power painted themselves as a national coalition, while putting Solidarity in the role of a traitor to the national interest. Once again national elements were, therefore, becoming the basis of legitimation of the rulers and the de-legitimation of their political opponents. In a statement by the government’s spokesman, delivered on 8 December 1981, we read, “Poland has no other chance than national understanding . . . Whoever, in these difficult moments for the country, puts himself outside the national understanding, he thereby harms the national interest of all Poles.”⁹⁸⁶

982 “Wypowiedź przedstawiciela Zakładów Mechanicznych „Ursus” na III forum partyjnego środowiska robotniczego w Warszawie, 19 czerwca w Zakładach Mechanicznych im. Nowotki,” *Rzeczywistość*, 28.VI.1981.

983 Ignacy Krasicki, “Siła państwa siłą Polski,” *Rzeczywistość*, 7.VI.1981.

984 “Uchwała IV Plenum KV PZPR (fragment) [16–18.X.1981],” in: *Władza wobec „Solidarności” sierpień 1980—grudzień 1981. Podstawowe dokumenty*, ed. Bronisław Pasierb (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1993), 220–221.

985 “Wystąpienie Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego na posiedzeniu Sejmu Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej (fragment), [31.X.1981],” *Ibid.*, 223, 227.

986 “Oświadczenie rzecznika prasowego rządu,” in: *Władza wobec „Solidarności”* . . . , op. cit., 239.

Martial law and its authors were legitimized almost exclusively by reaching for national and patriotic elements. Jaruzelski's speech given on 13 December 1981 is the best example of this. Right from the beginning, the general stated that "Our Fatherland finds itself hanging over a precipice."⁹⁸⁷ The whole appearance was overflowing with phrases about Poland and the nation. The speaker addressed his words to "Polish men and women," "brothers and sisters," "Polish mothers," "Polish workers," and so on. He mentioned the "initiative for national understanding," which was supposed to gain "the support of millions of Poles." These hopes allegedly failed because the leadership of Solidarity was at fault. Jaruzelski justified his decisions, as a rescuing of the state from disintegration and anarchy (he announced the creation of an Army Council of National Salvation), and also with blood spilled for the freedom of the country ("my generation fought on all the fronts" and "gave [Poland] the best years of our lives"). He devoted a lot of space to the army (he spoke with an army banner in the background): "The Polish soldier is and has faithfully served his country . . . and has no other aim but the good of the nation." The internment of many people, including luminaries of Polish culture and scholarship, only ideologically connected to Solidarity, was justified by the general using the national interest, "In the name of national interests a group of people threatening the safety of the country has been preventively interned."⁹⁸⁸

Jaruzelski said the following about his formation:

We wish for a great Poland; great in its achievements, culture, forms of social life, its position in Europe . . . We must put an end to the further degradation, which the international position of our country is undergoing. A country with 36 million citizens in the heart of Europe cannot remain indefinitely in the degrading role of a supplicant. We cannot but notice that there is again a new life to mocking opinions about "a commonwealth that stands in fornication." We must do everything so that such opinions fall into the dustbin of history . . . We desire that the word "Poland" always awakens respect and sympathy in Europe and the world.⁹⁸⁹

Therefore, Jaruzelski took away from the opposition the right to direct themselves by the good of the fatherland and nation, while ascribing to his own political formation patriotic intentions of the highest order. He said of Poland, "We are only a drop in the stream of Polish history. It is made up of not only praiseworthy pages. There are also dark pages in it: *liberum veto*, self-interest, and strife. As a result—downfalls and defeat. This tragic circle must be broken one day. We cannot

987 Wojciech Jaruzelski, "Przemówienie radiowe i telewizyjne wygłoszone 13 grudnia 1981," in: *Przemówienia 1981–1982* (Warsaw: KiW, 1983), 213.

988 *Ibid.*, 216.

989 *Ibid.*, 218, 220.

afford another repeat of history.”⁹⁹⁰ This fragment is reminiscent of Władysław Gomułka’s opinions on national history. We do not know whether the authors of the speech (most likely Wiesław Górnicki) consciously reached for the thoughts of that onetime First Secretary. Nonetheless, it is a fact that, at this time, the party authorities especially frequently evoked his figure, shrouded in legend—the only truly national leader of the party in its history. Jaruzelski visited him in the hospital, which television showed willingly (in this way Gomułka was supposed to, in a way, bless Jaruzelski and the Martial Law he marshalled in). The speeches of Gomułka were republished in book form. Numerous articles and reminiscences devoted to him appeared in the press. The headstone on his grave, it seems to me, not incidentally, features the national colors.

Jaruzelski’s appearance, which was broadcast on radio and television concluded with the following words: “Countrymen! In front of the whole Polish nation, and in front of the whole world, I desire to repeat these immortal words: Poland has not yet perished, so long as we still live.”⁹⁹¹

The retrieval of nationalist legitimation was acknowledged by the authorities as one of the priorities of political propaganda. At the same time, they were aware that after the national revolution of 1980–1981 this would not be easy. The main obstacle was seen in national emotions still heated by the introduction of Martial Law, which made it more difficult, or downright impossible, according to party analysts—to offer a rational evaluation of the Polish situation. In a document from February 1982 entitled, “The Overcoming of the Influences of the Opponent in the Social Consciousness: An Appraisal of the Situation and an Outline of Strategies,” we read:

The patriotism of the average Pole is relatively weak based upon rational factors, instead it contains a very strong emotional load. This is why it is not difficult to take advantage of it in favorable situations for manipulative goals that are far from the actual interests of the nation. This national quality was exploited by the opponents of socialism without scruples in large measure.

The propaganda actions of the party lead to the conclusion about the necessity of supplementing the emotional sphere of patriotism with a rational element. This seems all the more necessary since, until now, not much has been done about this matter.⁹⁹²

990 Ibid., 218.

991 Ibid., 221.

992 The document emerged from the Information department of the Central Committee of the PZPR (*Przewyciężanie wpływów przeciwnika w świadomości społecznej/ocena sytuacji i zakres strategii*), AAN, KC PZPR, 1829, k. 551).

How are we to understand this “rational element”? It was acknowledged that Poles, when they direct themselves with patriotic emotions, do not see where their “actual national interest” resides. To make Poles realize its essence, and to convince them that the only guardian of the national interest is the Polish United Worker’s Party, was the task set forth for propaganda. In other words, they proposed the use of the strategy we have described in this work as *rationalization*. The authors of the analysis wrote:

We must fully consciously accept the thesis that however much patriotism, understood as a defense of the country from outside threats, is the result of a historical process, then patriotism suited to today’s needs of our fatherland must be shaped in a planned way. We must then undertake educational and propaganda work to make society aware that the interests of the fatherland can also be endangered upon the economic, technological, cultural, and ideological planes.

Using this background, we must also concretize the Polish undertaking of the fight for peace by shaping a consciousness that the safety of the country must be cared for continually. We must make it a clear and understandable thesis that the process of progress in the world is, on the one hand, a suppression of imperialist expansion, and, on the other, is in fact in accordance with our national interests.

From the above we can draw the following conclusions: first, that the category of national interest was recognized as an important tool in “overcoming the influence of the enemy in the social consciousness.” Second, that the national interest was equated with belonging to the socialist camp. They were also aware that, and the fragment cited below testifies to this, the building of legitimacy only upon the thesis of no alternatives to the existing order would not bring the expected legitimizing effects.

It is necessary to undertake a more in-depth understanding of the problem of the friendship that binds Poland with the USSR and other socialist countries. The thesis about the geopolitical position of Poland and the reasons of the state connected with it—is not a thesis that is capable of shaping lasting convictions.⁹⁹³

These suggestions were realized by the propaganda in practice, which documented the alleged benefits flowing from the fact of Poland belonging to the socialist community. At the same time, the media created an atmosphere of a threat to the state and nation from the side of the Western world, especially the USA and West Germany, which became one of the characteristic elements of the politics of propaganda of the 1980’s. A small element of this campaign was the poster mentioned at the start of this chapter. It testifies well that not only reason was called

993 Ibid.

upon, but also the emotions. *Rzeczywistość* published a text of Walichnowski with the telling title, “Europeanization: A Doctrine Against Poland” [„*Europeizacja*” – *doktryna przeciw Polsce*].⁹⁹⁴ Television did not allow viewers to forget about the West German revisionists and American Cruise missiles, Pershings, and Star Wars.⁹⁹⁵ The First Secretary was especially an enthusiast within the Political Bureau of using mass media to build an atmosphere of national threat. During one of the meetings in June 1982 he noted that,

Comrades, among us there is too weak a concentration upon the important topic such as fighting for freedom—this is a matter of threat. We have already reminded ourselves about this topic during the last meeting, but this must be workshopped, not only on the principle that there is Libya, that there is some meeting or statement, some demonstration, but this requires serious [voices] by serious journalists, columnists, among them, there should also be people from the military—and in such discussions we must present the whole panorama of the threat. The process, which is currently happening, which can at some moment lead to unforeseen consequences.⁹⁹⁶

994 *Rzeczywistość*, 27.VI.1982.

995 Alongside the Polish Radio and Television there was a “Workshop center for counter-propaganda activities.” There were also plans to call together a “Team for counter-propaganda, which would continually coordinate actions within this sphere” (*Protokół nr 49 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC*, 12 IV 1984, AAN, KC PZPR, 2270, k. 383, 385).

996 *Posiedzenie Biura Politycznego KC PZPR*, 18 VI 1982, AAN, KC PZPR, 1832, k. 556. It would be difficult to not cite another fragment from Jaruzelski’s appearance, devoted to the world of capitalism as presented by propaganda: “It is also significant to make visible, and show in sharp relief, all the problems of the capitalist world, obviously not again in an oversimplified way, because we have all that behind us and know that such cheap tricks cannot take care of these matters, rather, in a form that people will accept and which will stick with them. During the Falklands the people waited for the nightly news and read in the press what was going to happen. Have they started fighting or not? . . . But we here give them one and the same communique about how there was a meeting of some committee, there some consultation, then something in the Belvedere, there something about Jaruzelski, and then, right at the very end, appear the Falklands in passing. And why should we not show—since Poland has always been on the first page of the news as the first information, the biggest sensation—but why should we not make sensations out of their problems? When in ’73 there was the war between Egypt and Israel, when it began it was a great event, but it appeared fourth, only after Gierek was at some PGR with someone or other, a great event—he held a cow by the tail, something else, something else, and only then did you get the big war” (*Ibid.*, k. 557).

On the occasion of Miner's Day, Jaruzelski said, "The Nazi Luftwaffe at the time needed several dozen minutes to reach the main centers of Poland. American rockets from bases in Western Europe will be able to achieve their objectives in our country in the span in just a few minutes."⁹⁹⁷

The thesis about the threat to Poland from Western propaganda was invariably linked with another one about the "anti-national function of the political underground in Poland." During one of the meetings of the Political Bureau Jaruzelski pointed to the necessity of the propaganda pointing out that the concepts of Solidarity led all the way to the regression of national culture.⁹⁹⁸ The anti-communism of the opposition, we read in the auxiliary materials for the ideological meeting of the POP from November 1984, "... cannot be treated in ideological categories—it is, and must be understood as directed against the nation, against Polish society." It continues, "The realities of today's world as such that anti-communism excludes patriotism and the fight against socialism excludes slogans about the good of the nation. One cannot separate concepts of patriotism from class interests and one cannot speak of just any kind of Poland, because it is socialist."⁹⁹⁹ The activities of the underground were therefore contrary to the Polish national interest, whereas converged with the interest of Western countries, that were supposedly interested in the destabilization of the Polish situation. The leaders of the opposition, it was proclaimed officially, were supposed to be cooperating with foreign intelligence forces. "Many prominent activists of Solidarity, when they visited the West, were guests of people connected with intelligence forces." They considered taking money as an anti-Polish activity, "those who in a manifest manner have accepted foreign remuneration, for example, Jerzy Milewski, who stands at the front of the so-called Coordination Bureau of Solidarity in Brussels, or Seweryn Blumsztajn and Mirosław Chojecki who are active in Paris." They were "traitors to the Polish nation" like Zdzisław Rurarz or Zdzisław Najder who was given the death penalty *in absentia* for "betrayal of the Fatherland." All of these examples come from one brochure, similar judgments of the opposition can also be found in the all the official media of that time.

Besides *rationalization*, the authorities did not forget about other legitimization strategies, for example, *universalization*. They presented themselves as national in

997 Wojciech Jaruzelski, "Przemówienie na Centralnej Akademii z okazji Dnia Górnika [3.XII.1983]," in: *Przemówienia 1983* (Warsaw: KiW, Warszawa 1984), 335.

998 *Protokół nr 24 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC*, 20 II 1982, AAN, KC PZPR, k. 336.

999 *Antynarodowa i antykomunistyczna funkcja podziemia politycznego w Polsce. Materiał pomocniczy na zebranie ideologiczne POP* (Warsaw: Wydział Ideologiczny Komitetu Centralnego PZPR – an imprint of *Trybuna Ludu*, 1984).

form and content. After the introduction of Martial Law by the Central Committee building in Warsaw, a white-and-red flag appeared right by the red one. During a meeting of the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior on 15 December 1981 Czesław Kiszczak announced the introduction of a peaked cap [rogatywka] in parts of the Polish Army (at first in the honor guard) and he relied upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister, “to more frequently than previously use the national colors and the flag,” and, to simultaneously publicize matters related to the profiteers.¹⁰⁰⁰ The party surrounded itself with national symbols and also demonstrated its care for national tokens of remembrance. Jaruzelski said during a meeting with the youth activists of the PZPR in Gdańsk:

The rebuilding of the country has become a particularly significant measure of our party's patriotism, above all, our care for all the national values being saved and enriched . . . It is from the initiative and will of the party, against pusillanimous opinions, that the rebuilding of our country started from the regeneration of our outstanding monuments.

The old town streets and Artus Court and everything that came into being with such great effort is also an outstanding proof that our party, the communists, acknowledged that recreating all that constitutes our national treasure and great historical achievement is a leading value. This patriotic line of action, this patriotic mandate, cannot be taken away from the party by anyone.¹⁰⁰¹

We can cite in droves similar reassurances and declarations from the 1980's that the communist party with its authorities is the only authentically national party.¹⁰⁰²

Such words frequently fell during the, at the time numerous, ceremonies and celebrations of historical anniversaries and state holidays (*narrative strategy*). The year 1983 was special in this respect, when the Siege of Vienna and the outbreak of

1000 AMSWiA, t. 251/1, k. 189 cited in Jerzy Holzer, *Ekspertyza o stanie wojennym, sporządzona dla sejmowej Komisji Odpowiedzialności Konstytucyjnej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 1997), 51.

1001 Wojciech Jaruzelski, “Przemówienie na Krajowej Naradzie Aktywu Młodzieżowego PZPR [3.VII.1983]” in: *Przemówienia 1983...*, op. cit., 160.

1002 They also legitimated themselves abroad as the true defenders of national sovereignty and independence. These are the slogans and phrases prepared by the Interior Ministry in connection with Jaruzelski's trip to the United States: “Hands off Poland!” “Let Poland be Poland – not a U.S. Colony,” “Jaruzelski saved Poland what Reagan did,” “What general Kosciuszko began, general Jaruzelski continues. Get off his back.” The general presuppositions were: no slogan should refer to religious and Church matters; none should refer to the USSR; the German matter could be exploited more widely, since it had traction even outside of Polonia circles; “PRL” should never be used, only “Poland” (“Załącznik do Instrukcji nr 1/85 dla „Maros””, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23.XI.1990).

the January Uprising were being celebrated. At that time Jaruzelski also, the first leader of the party of such rank, went down to the Wawel Cathedral underground and saluted the tomb of Sobieski. They also outlined, even though less frequently than during earlier periods, parabolas between the past and the present. Such unsubtle motives were also aimed at in the fragment below (“A Note on the Matter of Celebrating the Anniversary of the Vienna Victory) from the Chief Political Board of the Polish Army:

The patriotic traditions of Jan III Sobieski, and especially the positive role, which in the consciousness of Polish society is played by the Siege of Vienna, should be skillfully used in the present, difficult, and complicated socio-political situation of our country, as a significant element for uniting all the patriotic powers of the Polish nation with the program of the Military Council of National Salvation whose main goal is the socialist rebirth of Poland as a strong, democratic, and modern state.¹⁰⁰³

In December 1987 the Department of Propaganda prepared a 41 (!) page *Calendar of the Most Important Anniversaries and Historical Events to Include in the Politico-Propaganda Work in the Year 1988* [*Kalendarz najważniejszych rocznic i wydarzeń historycznych do uwzględnienia w pracy polityczno-propagandowej w 1988 roku*]. It contained, among other things: the 46th anniversary of the founding of the PPR, 75th anniversary of Gustaw Husak’s birthday, 110th anniversary of Bolesław Leśmian’s birthday, 515th anniversary of Copernicus’ birthday, 45th anniversary of the founding of the 1st Armored Division under the leadership of General Stanisław Maczek, 120th anniversary of Walerian Łukasiński’s death, “32 years ago it came to worker strikes in Poznań,” 62nd anniversary of Feliks Dzierżyński’s death, and so on. The calendar contains no guidance about the meaning of particular anniversaries. We can only guess. Nonetheless, by placing side-by-side both the 76th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung and the “115th anniversary of Wojciech Korfanty’s birth, a national and political activist in Silesia” indicates that the hitherto catalogue of figures and historical events used by the authorities was growing. In the same year the Propaganda Department of the Warsaw Regional [Voivodeship] Committee of the PZPR proposed a greater degree of the following:

In distinction from past years we propose the establishing of honor guards by the following: headquarters of the Polish soldiers who died in 1920, a boulder commemorating those murdered in Katyń, a commemorative slab for the soldiers of the 1831 Uprising in the Powązki cemetery, and in front of the monument for Those Who Perished in the Service and Defense of People’s Poland.¹⁰⁰⁴

1003 AAN, KC PZPR, 1830, k. 600.

1004 *Notatka dot. Święta Zmarłych*, AAN, KC PZPR, V/368, k. 59.

Perhaps the last attempt to demonstrate the national character of the communist authorities was the directive of the Central Committee Secretariat published before the June elections in 1989. It said, “prepare an appropriate communique about the Comrade-General in East Germany, to skillfully diffuse propagandawise the matter of delimiting the waters in the Pomeranian Bay.”¹⁰⁰⁵ We need not add how ineffective these recommendations turned out to be. Already after the election the authors of the party analysis of the causes behind the crisis saw them in the actions of the opposition, which “sought to weaken, even discredit the social position of our candidates by voicing slogans of rejecting of everything that is not ‘theirs.’” It continues,

They took advantage of the state of social awareness by referring to political myths and symbols fixed in consciousness and constituting values many Poles identified with, i.e., the myth of fighting for liberation, the cultural unity of Poland with Europe, the myth of Solidarity, the Catholic church as a spokesman for the national interests, and so on.¹⁰⁰⁶

1005 *Pilne decyzje „roboczego” Sekretariatu KC PZPR w dniu 17 maja 1989 roku /”angażujące” tow. B. Kołodziejczyka*, (lack of further details, document pointed out by Andrzej Paczkowski). More widely on this topic: Tadeusz Jasudowicz, *W obronie dostępu do morza (na tle sporu polsko-niemieckiego o prawnomiędzynarodowy status wód Zatoki Pomorskiej)* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Polskie, 1989).

1006 *Informacja o działaniach propagandowych w kampanii wyborczej do Sejmu i Senatu*, (lack of further details, document pointed out by Andrzej Paczkowski).

Conclusion

“Let us finally say it here:

The party is the inheritor of the ONR”

Czesław Miłosz, *Treatise on Poetry* (1957)

Let's summarize: the Polish communists were aware from the beginning that if they wanted to guarantee controllability and stability to the system they were building, then they had to be recognized by Poles as “internal,” even as communists, so long as they would be Polish communists. They were aware of the imperative encoded in Polish culture requiring the defense of independence without regard for the price paid. They knew the Polish experience and national struggles. They saw a chance for breaking the barrier of externality in nationalism, which took on the form of three strategies (rationalization, universalization, and the narrative) that belonged to nationalist legitimation. They took advantage of it cynically and instrumentally without regard for the social costs. They especially reached for nationalism in situations of threat for the system of governance they created themselves, only minimally changing their arguments as the years went by. When one follows the propaganda campaigns initiated by the communists, one gets the impression that they used templates created *ad hoc* right after the war. If there is a division between nationalisms, let us say, between those with intellectual pretensions and those characterized by intellectual primitivism, then the nationalism in the edition of the Polish communists ought to be counted among the second group. They did not even create a comprehensive concept of the nation butted upon the Stalinist concept of the nation in times of need. They borrowed much from the political thought of National Democracy and other currents of the prewar Polish-nationalist right (monoethnic state, postulate of uniting the nation, state consciousness, anti-Germanism) and, actually, their edition of nationalism did not make up a doctrine to rally around, but was instead a patchwork of slogans, underdeveloped concepts, and ideas. The intellectual immaturity in national matters can be explained by the “class consciousness” of the communist elites and their fear of being accused of the “nationalist deviation.” In my opinion, however, this came, above all, from the goals that they posed for nationalism. It was supposed to serve as a medium to gain followers, ensure social peace, and to legitimate the system of power. What counted was power, first gaining it, then maintaining it. Nationalism was only supposed to aid this process.

However, nationalism in the communist edition demonstrated itself to be an exceptionally ineffective medicine for the deficit of legitimation in Poland. The

striving of Polish communists for the exchange of a potential nationalist legitimation into real legitimation did not bring the expected results. Today 1989 is nearly universally seen as the year when Poland regained the independence it lost in 1939¹⁰⁰⁷—much as is the case in other communist countries. I also do not think that it would be extremely abusive to judge that the communist authorities, for an extended period of their existence, were seen by a considerable part of the Polish society as factually nationally “external” (Russians, Muscovites, Jews, Judeo-Communist), or/and as non-Polish in the sense that they were subservient and dependent upon authorities from the Kremlin (paid stooges of Russia).

Obviously, the relations with the party and its authorities underwent changes over time. The rulers managed sometimes to gain limited social support, precisely under the national banners. This is what happened in 1956 and 1968, and perhaps also in the first half of the 1970’s. However, it is difficult to say anything certain about the degree of legitimation/de-legitimation of the authorities. The lack of sociological polls during the first thirty years of People’s Poland is a substantial obstacle toward accomplishing this. We can only infer indirectly the scope of nationalist legitimation by analyzing the intensity of action, and the types of arguments used, that were supposed to lead to the gaining of legitimation, and eventually strengthening it. We ought to repeat that those in power who already have legitimation do not strive for legitimation, at least not to this degree. Whereas, the communists ruling Poland, in fact, did a lot to make Poles stop treating them as foreign, as “them.” We can come to the same conclusions from the strength of the explosions of accusations of foreignness when successive crises came. Even in the USSR, where the feelings of dominated nations were even more strongly muffled, the collapse occurred because of national explosions directed against a foreign power, or one seen as foreign.¹⁰⁰⁸

Even though the nationalist legitimation of power in the version of the Polish communists proved itself to be so ineffective, it did not fail to influence the lives of Poles themselves, or their relation to the world, other nations and cultures. In this measure the consequences are frightening. The party, through propaganda and

1007 Only politicians who come from the PZPR publicly say that: “I will never say: People’s Poland was not a Polish state. If someone will require this from me, then I will not be able to dialogue with him” (“Wolałem szybko zapomnieć, z liderem SLD Leszkiem Millerem rozmawiają Adam Michnik i Paweł Smoleński,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15–16.I.2000).

1008 See: Michael Dobbs, *Precz z wielkim bratem. Upadek imperium radzieckiego* (Poznań: Rebis, 1998); Ben Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union: A Study in the Rise and Triumph of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1997).

its politics toward national minorities, shaped a xenophobic, ethnic, rather than a national, community of citizens, not only closed to the world but antagonistic toward it. By imposing one vision of national history they eliminated the national discussion of Polishness, patriotism, the nation, thereby impoverishing the thinking of the nation about itself. Krystyna Kersten said the following about it:

There came a coagulation of the national community in old forms as a natural reaction to the threat, the continuation of forms and ideas that were frequently anachronistic. By undertaking the work of transforming Poland and Poles according to their doctrine, the communists achieved an effect opposite to what they intended. They strengthened precisely those elements of Polishness that they wanted to eradicate. They tightened the age-old connection of Polishness with Catholicism, this very important element of national identity . . . In the two-century-long discourse an advantage was gained by the tendency to apotheosize the nation and its past. In the vision of Poland—a heroic and tormented victim of the indifference of the world and the scheming of world powers—there is no place for criticism toward national history.”¹⁰⁰⁹

There is also perhaps no place for shaping an open stance toward other nations, including those, and maybe, above all, for those that live in the Polish territories. While officially voicing slogans of internationalism, the brotherhood of people, the party’s politics essentially conserved the negative national stereotypes. Especially after the war, and in 1968, it relied upon the lowest instincts of the masses, only so, in their eyes, to finally become Polish, “their own.”

In this way, it was reminiscent of the most extreme factions of Poland’s pre-war right. Therefore, nationalism in the version of the Polish communists was mostly blunt, coarse, xenophobic, anti-German, and anti-Semitic, for the most part traditional, anti-civic, saber-rattling, and brazenly instrumental. It was probably not an accident that, during the end-stages of communism, in the bosom of the movement itself, not only in Poland, there came into being groups that were strongly chauvinistic. It became apparent that the politically “red” is capable of being very close to the politically “brown.”

1009 Krystyna Kersten, *Między wyzwoleniem a zniewoleniem*, op. cit., viii.

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