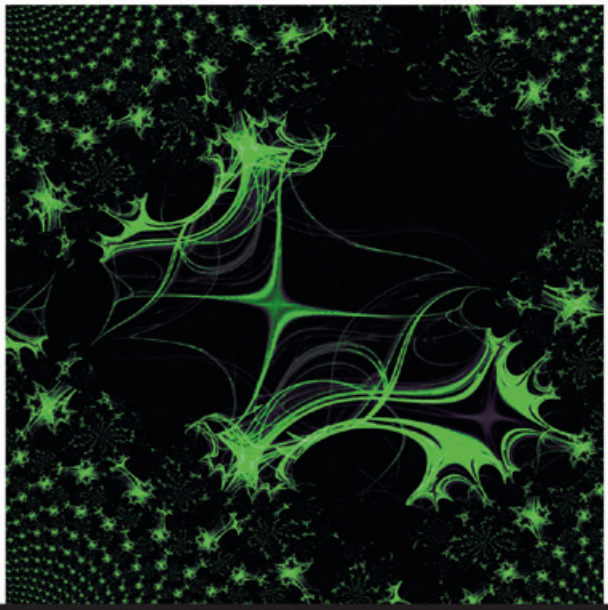
POLISH STUDIES –
TRANSDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES 36

Barbara Klich-Kluczewska

Family, Taboo and Communism in Poland, 1956-1989



PETER LANG

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The book answers fundamental questions about the processes of social negotiation of mentality shifts in communist Poland. Taking divorce, single motherhood, domestic violence and abortion as examples, it analyzes the level of acceptance toward taboos grounded in tradition, and the course of negotiating new meanings and using social exclusion when dealing with new phenomena. The author uses not only archival documents, but also ego-documents and cultural texts to prove the dictatorship in the years 1956-1989 contributed not to the revolutionization of society at the family level, but to its perpetuation. The family references made by the communist authorities, especially in the last two decades of their regime, can be treated as one of the factors legitimizing the system.

The Author
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For Ida

Introduction

"He wasn't really my husband, Boguś's father. But I do not consider that a sin," confessed Irena, the main protagonist of *A Woman Alone,* directed by Agnieszka Holland "[. . .] I left [him] when I was six months pregnant, because he beat me. And before that, my father drank and beat us. Me the most. Because I was the weakest. My sisters could stand up for themselves. Then he killed himself, while drunk on his motorbike."[1]

This famed director's film was produced in the late spring of 1981, at the height of the Solidarity carnival, and is considered the darkest, most pessimistic picture of the Polish society of the time. It languished on the censor's shelf for seven years, even though Holland had hoped that viewers would see it on screens in 1982. It was not intended to be a documentary. The tragic story of the Wrocław mail carrier, Irena, was not based on intervention reporting or radio/television non-fiction. The accumulation of misfortune, of human unkindness, evil, and social injustice, seems too much for any one life. The paradox is that, although the mail carrier was regularly working in a "good area"[2] of a bigger city, Irena lives in destitute symbolized by her apartment, which assures neither privacy nor intimacy, located in a lean-to by the railway tracks, without a bathroom or running water, far from the city. Her low income, social exclusion, and lack of friends prevent her from leading an easy life. She is having extreme trouble in making ends meet.

Most accounts link *A Woman Alone* with a critique of the growing demoralization of Polish society, its self-interest, and the vanishing of civic rights. However, since I first saw this movie many years ago, I have wondered at how far this dark vision of soulless social control was a metaphor for the state's collapse, and how far it reflected the real life of people in postwar Poland. Can we allow a literal reading of the statement by Irena's boyfriend, handicapped Jacek, in the

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1 *Kobieta samotna*, dir. Agnieszka Holland, 1981, featuring: Maria Chwalibóg and Bogusław Linda, first screened in Poland in 1987 (the "full" version was shown in 1999). Holland's film shared the fate of many other famous productions, such as Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Blind Chance* (produced 1981, premiere 1987) or Ryszard Bugajski's *Interrogation* (produced 1982, premiere 1989), see: Anna Misiak, *Kinematograf kontrolowany. Cenzura filmowa w kraju socjalistycznym i demokratycznym (PRL i USA). Analiza socjologiczna*, Krakow 2006, pp. 311 ff.

2 A "good postal area" for a mail carrier meant a great number of retirees and employment insurance collectors, who would thank the carrier for prompt delivery of their due with small tips.

key scene of the movie: "The people here, you know. . . If you're different, they can't wait to mock you"?

This book came into being as a result of reflection on the fates of those citizens of communist Poland who departed from the generally accepted model of conduct and sought to escape the power of social norms, conventions, and customs in reality defined by the political dictatorship.

Being well aware that the system of social control in every community is a mosaic of various, not always organized relations and tensions, where codified and informal norms mutually affect each other, I have focused on one particular factor, namely taboo, as an informal tool for separating of what is socially unacceptable. For this reason, I have selected the family as a field of observation in which the functioning of taboo in communist Poland reaches its full intensity. For at that time it was precisely the family that constituted the fundamental social entity and a constant point of reference for most Poles.

Although my discussion of the family tends to prioritize a perspective which might seem marginal, I do attempt to raise what I feel are crucial questions to the historian of communist Poland. Those questions concern especially the effects of the transformation of the family in an era of socialist industrialization, urbanization, and rapid development of mass society. Indeed, the decision to examine the family and the phenomenon of taboo also springs from my interest in whether the changes experienced by the Polish family and the forces which influenced it were distinctive at the time when the Western European family unit went through a major revolution, breaking with the traditional model centered around the nuclear family and the notion of marriage sealed for a lifetime. Another crucial context of my analyses are issues of dictatorship as a culturally alien or domestic phenomenon and the closely related problem of socialist modernization. All these factors shaped the functioning and transformations of the Polish family in the second half of the twentieth century.

The Family in Postwar Central-Eastern Europe in Historiography: Sketching out the Picture

Although the history of the family and private lives is, at present, a major field of research into the social history of communism in Central-Eastern Europe, this topic remains marginalized in Polish historiography.[3] This is surprising in that

3 We might add here that most historians are far from undermining the role of the family as a relatively enduring part of the sociocultural landscape. Cultural

Poland was among those Eastern Bloc countries in which sociological and ethnological research into the family enjoyed great popularity, and whose enormous number of publications and field studies in the discipline require critical reading and reinterpretation.

Despite the gradual development of research on the family in postwar Central-Eastern Europe, these studies do not form a single current with a consistent methodology, while classical research on the family, rooted in the history of social structures, is a marginal part of this group. In spite of this, *A Social History of the Twentieth Century,* published in 2013 by Béla Tomka, a distinguished Hungarian socio-economic historian, brought the Central and Eastern European family into a synthesis of the European history, effectively breaking down the Western-centric approaches that have been taken on this topic.[4] His comparative approach to the make-up and size of families hinges on, for instance, the rate of female employment and demographic and statistical data. Nonetheless, he does not list changes in religiousness, philosophy or pedagogical thought among decisive factors in transformations. Instead, he focuses on their economic and legal aspects. Despite the dynamic of changes in the picture of the twentieth-century European family that emerges from the pages of this book, it is not as geographically diverse as one might expect. For instance, Tomka shows the model of the family with a pair of children as widespread throughout nearly all postwar Europe. At the same time, however, it is not hard to see certain characteristic traits of the Central European family after the Second World War, though these were often not lasting, and often imposed by the politico-economic situation. One example might be the extended family, including parents and married children, which, by the end of the twentieth century, was a significant group that constituted up to 20 % of the population, more than in neighboring Western countries. Meanwhile, though women's employment was much the same throughout prewar Europe, after the Second World War it grew tremendously in Central-Eastern Europe, and up until the mid 1970s. Alongside East Germany, the leader in women's employment was Poland where, in 1974,

anthropologists see it differently, increasingly stressing the variability and ideological role in its history. See: J. Fishburne Collier, Michelle Z. Rosaldo, Sylvia Yanagisako, *Is There a Family? New Anthropological Views*, in: *The Gender/Sexuality Reader: Culture, History, Political Economy*, eds. R. N. Lancaster, M. di Leonardo, Routledge 1997, pp. 71–81.

4 Béla Tomka, *A Social History of Twentieth-Century Europe*, Routledge 2013.

an estimated 80 % of women aged 25–50 was employed. This was tied among others to the fact that there was no local tradition of part-time contracts, typical for Great Britain or Norway. The influence of the political-economic system also manifested itself in the conclusion based on public opinion polls of 1990, which assigned material goods a much greater role in a family's happiness in Eastern Europe than tolerance and mutual respect valued in the West.[5]

Nearly all detailed studies of the family in Central-Eastern Europe have primarily focused on the case of East Germany. For years, this has enjoyed great interest from Anglo-American socio-cultural historiographers. Moreover, German historiography can pride itself on an outstanding domestic tradition, original studies on everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*), involving a special sensitivity to the experience of ordinary citizens in a dictatorship.[6] However, one of the most important monographs on the East German family, *Revenge of the Domestic, Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic,* by the American scholar Donna Harsch, comes from a different focus of study: gender historiography.[7] We should note that the family is not a common subject when it comes to gender and women's history, as was most clearly noted by the German social historian, Robert Moeller. In a collection of studies from 2007, which gives a critical account of the impact of gender methodology on German historiography,[8] Moeller writes:

5 Ibid., "Chapter II: Family and Household," pp. 49–95.

6 Alf Lüdtke, "Introduction," in: *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, Princeton 1995, pp. 3–40.

7 Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic, Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*, Princeton 2007. Cf. Johannes Huinink, Michael Wagner, "Partnerschaft, Ehe und Familie in der DDR," in: *Kollektiv und Eigensinn. Lebensverläufe in der DDR und danach*, Berlin 1995, pp. 145–188; Annette F. Timm, *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin*, New York 2010; "Guarding the Health of Worker Families in the GDR: Socialist Health Care, Bevölkerungspolitik, and Marriage Counselling, 1945–1972," in: *Arbeiter in der SBZ-DDR*, ed. P. Hübner, K. Tenfelde, Essen 1999, pp. 463–495; Josie McLellan, "Marriage and Monogamy," in: *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR,* Cambridge–New York 2011.

8 *Gendering Modern German History: Rewriting Historiography*, ed. Karen Hagemann, Jean H. Quataert, Toronto 2007. This book is a collection of studies following a conference held in Toronto in 2003.

> In a book of eleven essays, the family comes last, [. . .] something of an afterthought. [. . .] maybe this was appropriate. Perhaps for feminist historians, family history is a topic whose time came and went.[9]

This strikes us as essential because, at first glance, it seems that, over the last fifteen years, studies in gender history have replaced family studies in the pure sense of the term. But this has been so only on the surface. We should agree with Moeller that family issues appear indirectly in narratives on gender, through an analysis of social policies, employment policies, sexuality, violence etc. Harsch's intent was chiefly to reconstruct the relations between women and the family, on the one hand, and the Party and the state, on the other. Her research focuses on women's changing situations, including the party's policies toward generation, childcare, consumption, and marriage over the first two decades of East Germany's existence, and her source documents confirm the transformation of the authorities' social policies toward the family in the face of growing social discontent. Most contemporary historical analyses of the family from the viewpoint of gender history return to the question of why the socialist project of equality did not automatically yield a revolution in private social practices, including the realm of the family.[10] Another inspiration in these studies has often been drawn from questions posed by social sciences, and their authors' have focused on issues of single parenting and divorce, such as in *And They Lived Happily Ever After: Norms and Everyday Practices of Family and Parenthood in Russia and Central Europe*.[11] In Czech scholarship on communism, the subject of the family has been addressed mainly by sociologists. Květa Jechová makes it clear in "Cesta k emancipaci. Postavení ženy v české společnosti 20. století. Pokus o vymezení problem:"

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9 Robert Moeller, "The Elephant in the Living Room or Why the History of Twentieth-Century Germany Should Be a Family Affair," in: *Gendering Modern German History: Rewriting Historiography*, p. 228.

10 See, for example: Ulf Brunbauer, "The Most Natural Function of Women: Ambiguous Party Policies and Female Experiences in Socialist Bulgaria," in: *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. S. Penn, J. Massino, New York 2009, pp. 77–96.

11 *And They Lived Happily Ever After: Norms and Everyday Practices of Family and Parenthood in Russia and Central Europe*, ed. Helene Carlbäck, Yulia Gradskova, Zhanna Kravchenko, Budapest–New York 2012. See also: Marianna Muravyeva, "Bytovukha: Family Violence in Soviet Russia," *Aspasia* 2014, No. 8.1, pp. 90–124.

> The family falls in the scope of anthropology, demography, ethnology, and sociology, but we do not avoid this topic when we embark on a scholarly journey into women's history.[12]

Studies on socialist Czechoslovakia might serve as an example of the development of another trend in family studies. However, we ought to realize that this trend functions alongside the mainstream of historical research into the latter half of the twentieth century, and, in terms of sociopolitical analyses of Czech history, it is rather marginalized. What I have in mind here is the oral history developped in Czechia mainly through the Center for Oral History at the Institute of Modern History of the Czech Academy of Sciences.[13]

The family increasingly crops up in broader analyses of private life. To a certain extent, this reflects an attempt to highlight processes of individuation.[14] The discussed trend includes a brilliantly-received book by Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*,[15] and an ethnological analysis of the Chinese countryside by Yunxiang Yan: *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village*.[16]

Regardless of these studies' advancement, it would be hard to point to a dominant center or schools of research focused on the postwar history of the

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12 Kveta Jechová, "Cesta k emancipaci. Postavení ženy v české společnosti 20. století. Pokus o vymezení problem," in: *Pět studií k dějinám české společnost*i, ed. O. Tůma, T. Vilímek, Praha 2008, pp. 69–129. Cf. "Matky a děti chtěné i nechtěné," in: *Opozice a společnost po roce 1948*, ed. O. Tůma, T. Vilímek, Praha 2009, pp. 10–74; "Postavení žen v Československu v období normalizace," in: *Česká společnost v 70. a 80. letech: sociální a ekonomické aspekty*, ed. O. Tůma, T. Vilímek, Praha 2008, pp. 176–246.

13 Petra Schindler-Wisten, " 'Kdo neokrádá stát, okrádá rodinu'. Rodina v komunistickém Československu," in: *Obyčejní lidé. . .?! Pohled do života tzv. mlčící většiny. Životopisná vyprávění příslušníků dělnických profesí a inteligence*, ed. M. Vaněk, Praha 2009, pp. 357–397; "Rodinný život disidentů v období tzv. Normalizace," in: *Antropologické sympozium*, Vol. 5, ed. I. Budil, T. Zíková, Plzeň 2007, pp. 103–111; "Family Environment Impacts on Officials of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and Dissidents Operating in the So-called Normalisation Period," in: *Small History of Great Events in Czechoslovakia after 1948, 1968 and 1989*, ed. Z. Profantová, Bratislava 2006, pp. 215–228.

14 On problems in juxtaposing processes of socialization and individuation in family studies, see: F. Schmidt, *Para, mieszkanie, małżeństwo. Dynamika związków intymnych na tle przemian historycznych i współczesnych dyskusji o procesach indywidualizacji*, Toruń–Warsaw 2015.

15 Paul Betts, *Within Walls. Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*, Oxford 2010.

16 Yunxiang Yunxiang, *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949–1999*, Stanford 2003.

family in Central-Eastern Europe. Indeed, research is scattered both in terms of methodology and diversity of addressed subjects. This is probably why we lack broader comparative research (apart from Béla Tomka). Against this backdrop, the achievements of Polish historiography seem particularly impoverished. It would be difficult to point to a monograph in which the family takes center stage. Generally, wherever it appears, it is only as a context, or one strand of analysis. The most striking example of this approach can be found in Krzysztof Kosiński's books on young people.[17] Though the institutional perspective prevails, as compared to other Czech studies on that subject, the author devotes a great deal of space to the socialization of children and young people in the family.[18] The family was also a central issue tackled by Ewelina Szpak in her analysis of the Polish rural mindset, Bartłomiej Gapiński in his studies on religiousness, and Małgorzata Szpakowska who explored the women's narrative of the 1960s; also my own study of private lives in postwar Krakow contributed to this research trend.[19] Over the past five years, the articles have appeared on images of motherhood and fatherhood, written by Piotr Perkowski, Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, and Piotr Śpica.[20] Research on family life is developing apace. Perkowski and

17 Krzysztof Kosiński, *Nastolatki '81. Świadomość młodzieży w epoce "Solidarności"*, Warsaw 2002; *Oficjalne i prywatne życie młodzieży w czasach PRL*, Warsaw 2006.

18 For examples of this approach, see the articles in: Jiří Knapík et al., *Děti, mládež a socialismus v Československu v 50. a 60. letech*, Opava 2014.

19 Małgorzata Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć. Samowiedza obyczajowa w Polsce czasu przemian*, Warsaw 2003; Ewelina Szpak, *Mentalność ludności wiejskiej w PRL. Studium zmian*, Warsaw 2013; Bartłomiej Gapiński, *Sacrum i codzienność. Prośby o modlitwę nadsyłane do Kalwarii Zebrzydowskiej w latach 1965–1979*, Warsaw 2008; Barbara Klich-Kluczewska, *Przez dziurkę od klucza. Życie prywatne w Krakowie 1945–1989*, Warsaw 2005. Other articles worth exploring include: M. Hajdo, "Wizerunek kobiety jako matki, pracownika i działaczki społecznej prezentowany na łamach prasy kobiecej w latach 1948–1956," *Dzieje Najnowsze* 2006, No. 3, pp. 57–72; M. Fedorczuk, "Rodzina w pamiętnikach nauczycieli," *Biuletyn IGS* 2008, R. 46[48], No. 1/4, pp. 35–53.

20 Piotr Perkowski, "Ojcostwo w Polsce Ludowej," in: *Mężczyzna w rodzinie i społeczeństwie – ewolucja ról w kulturze polskiej i europejskiej*, Vol. 2: *Wiek XX*, ed. E. Głowacka-Sobiech, J. Gulczyska, Poznań 2010; Piotr Śpica, "Oczekiwania – rzeczywistość – zmiana. Ojcostwo w Polsce Ludowej i w PRL," *Kultura i Wychowanie* 2014, No. 2; "Przemiany autorytetu ojca w rodzinie polskiej w XX wieku. Interpretacja z perspektywy historyczno-pedagogicznej," *Wychowanie w Rodzinie* 2014, Vol. 10, pp. 329–349; Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, "Od neomatriarchatu do szpitala-pomnika Matki Polki. Ideologie macierzyństwa w dyskursach władzy i opozycji w Polsce (1945–1989)," in: *Niebezpieczne związki. Macierzyństwo, ojcostwo i polityka*, ed. Renata Hryciuk, E. Korolczuk, Warsaw 2015, pp. 45–74; "Matki biedne, nieszczęśliwe, złe.

Stańczak-Wiślicz[21] also analyzed changes in the model of housekeeping, while Dariusz Jarosz explored the housing situation in the period of the communist Poland.[22] A full understanding of the Polish family is impossible without taking into consideration both religiousness as everyday practice and the institutional policy of the Church. Unfortunately, historians still have to tackle the Catholic Church's teachings on the family activities of the clergy and secular Catholic organizations that popularize views conforming to the dictates of religion. The research carried out to date, most often by cleric, generally reflects on the problems of today's families in the context of Church teachings, often sacrificing a historical approach in favor of theological considerations.[23]

The place of the postwar family on the map of Polish historiography probably results, to a large extent, from the broader phenomenon of the marginalization of social and cultural history of the latter half of the twentieth century. However, an equally essential cause of this state of affairs is, I believe, the long tradition of family scholarship in Polish social sciences of the communist era, which I explore in more detail in Chapter Two of this book.

Research Goals

The basic category I will be using in the present study is taboo as a tool for socially designating what does not fall in line with the prevailing structure. This has allowed me to set apart areas for which, in our day, we can find no more fitting or neutral concept. The concept of taboo also allowed me to destigmatize certain historical terms, such as "pathology" or "deviant family," widely used in communist Poland, while avoiding the currently quite widespread concept of marginalization, which does not fully express processes of social exclusion paired with silence.

Luki dominującego dyskursu macierzyństwa w popularnych magazynach kobiecych," in: *Pożegnanie z Matką Polką? Dyskursy, praktyki i reprezentacje macierzyństwa we współczesnej Polsce*, ed. Renata Hryciuk, E. Korolczuk, Warsaw 2012.

21 Piotr Perkowski, Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, "Zmiany w gospodarstwie domowym okresu PRL," in: *Kobieta w gospodarstwie domowym. Ziemie polskie na tle porównawczym*, ed. Katarzyna Sierakowska, G. Wyder, Zielona Góra 2012, pp. 311–346.

22 Dariusz Jarosz, *Mieszkanie się należy. . . Studium z peerelowskich praktyk społecznych*, Warsaw 2010.

23 See, for example: Mirosław Kosek, "Troska o małżeństwo i rodzinę w Memoriałach Episkopatu Polski do Rządu w latach 1970–1978," *Studia Płockie* 2010, Vol. 38, pp. 259–269; Adam Skreczko, *Troska Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce o małżeństwo i rodzinę w okresie Wielkiej Nowenny (1957–1966)*, Białystok 2002.

Taboo focuses our attention on the peripheries of family life, in which interesting changes are negotiated, ones that might be – depending on the convictions expressed by the participants in the debate – symptoms of progress, transformation, crisis, or catastrophe. As such, the family is chiefly analyzed in this book in terms of conflict. By this I do not mean the crucial twentieth-century conflict concerning images of women as a mother and a worker, but tensions tied to the internal, tottering hierarchy of gender and generation, and the development of marriage as a bond based on emotions. This perspective is opposed to a very strong tendency to idealize the family; for we must bear in mind that, to quote Filip Schmidt, "there are few institutions which, to the same degree as family, marriage, and intimacy (including sexuality), are so filled with such emotionally charged idealizations, in which change is so feared, and which are the field of such fierce political and ideological struggle."[24]

Using the examples of social visions of divorce, single motherhood, domestic violence, or abortion, I sought answers to how far there was acceptance for the lingering tradition of habitual taboo, the ongoing processes of negotiating new understandings, and the use of social exclusion in dealing with new phenomena. I was interested in the paths by which tensions tied to tabooization grew and decreased, and their practical effects for the members of various communities. On the one hand, I explored the exclusion and isolation expressed in the language and everyday life of communist Poland. On the other hand, I sought moments when these practices were openly criticized. At the same time, given that taboo reinforces what is considered the social norm, I believe that responses to these questions provide indirect knowledge of the strength and durability of traditional ways of thinking about the form and functions of the family in communist Poland.

In each of these cases, we should pay attention to the agents of control: social groups and state institutions that were particularly responsible for upholding customary taboos. Usually, we encounter more or less strident views on divorce and single motherhood presented by experts or institutions, such as courts or the Catholic Church. However, my aim was not to write a monograph on formal and informal institutions and their practices. In the vein of historical anthropology, I have mainly tried to observe historical processes from a subjective perspective of individual historical actors and their biographies. This situation of the individual appears to be crucial. Moreover, the study shows that images of what is undesirable are so deeply internalized by members of a community that it was

24 Filip Schmidt, *Para, mieszkanie, małżeństwo*. . ., p. 27.

sometimes hardly justified or simply difficult to attribute their presence to the strength of various institutions. Nonetheless, investigating instances allows us to observe the fluctuation or, alternately, the longevity of views when it comes to the most important participants in public discourse.

The selection of the various streams of analysis arose from the necessity of searching through varied and quite scattered source documents. As such, I arbitrarily omitted research on cohabitation, adoption, and sexual abuse,[25] though these phenomena are clearly the subject of taboo in the period we are exploring, and are visible in the available source documents, such as the egodocuments and court records. However, these require a separate and time-consuming in-depth study. Nor do I examine homosexuality in this book, though it is virtually the symbol of social taboo in communist Poland; this issue would have taken me far beyond the context of the family.

The concept of modernity will play an important role in the interpretation process. This comes, in part, from its constant presence in the discourse of the times. The concept seems omnipresent. The modern state, the modern family, modern buildings, and so forth appear in various spheres of public debate in communist Poland, and thoughts on what significance this term bore in describing privacy and the family will accompany me throughout this book. On the other hand, I will be taking into consideration images of communist regimes as "modern dictatorships." Although communism as such is not generally labeled a modern regime, and, in the wake of Johann P. Arnason, it is termed anti-modern, pseudo-modern, or an embodiment of backwardness or economic and social regression, we ought to acknowledge that the premise of communist ideology grew out of striving for modernity.[26]

Communist Poland has yet to be systematically analyzed from this standpoint. The exception is a book by Wojciech Musiał, who does, however, mainly focus on the economic dimension of modernization, which is not at the forefront of the issues of our interest.[27] This leads to a broader problem, which has been described by, for instance, Dariusz Stola: the lack of profounder and more systematic exploration of the regime's nature. Stola ascribes this to a general reluctance of the exponents of this discipline to theorize on communist Poland:

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25 Agnieszka Kościańska has published a book on this topic: *Płeć, przyjemność i przemoc*. . ., Warsaw 2014.

26 J. P. Arnason, "Communism and Modernity," *Daedalus* 2000, Vol. 129, No. 1, pp. 61–90.

27 W. Musiał, *Modernizacja Polski. Polityki rządowe w latach 1918–2004*, Toruń 2013.

> Historians got down to work on communist Poland with enthusiasm, but generally in a way that offered little systematic reflection on the nature of the regime. The vast majority of this academic work, which has proliferated especially since the founding of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), has a cause-and-effect approach or is satisfied with a simple description. More general examinations take place in isolation, as it were, from the historians' detailed work, while the historians are less than eager to marry their findings with the theoretical concepts circulating in the world literature or previously developed in Poland. In communist Poland, the papers and conference halls hosted recurring discussions on whether "communist Poland was a totalitarian state," featuring historians and representatives of other fields, but we search in vain for signs of progress in these investigations.[28]

Thus, it is a small wonder that the authors of generalizations on the subject are, in the Polish case, chiefly philosophers and sociologists. The only historian and philosopher in this group was Andrzej Walicki.[29]

Unlike the relatively uniform Polish discourse on the nature of communist Poland, German scholars were more innovative, offering historiography the concepts of "'welfare dictatorship' [...] or 'late totalitarian patriarchal and surveillance state' [...] others prefer to speak of real existing socialism, of a 'Sovietized' socialist industrial society."[30] To my mind, the most fitting concept seems to be Jurgen Kocka's notion of a "modern dictatorship." However, we should recall that the German experience was unto itself, and the constant struggle to define the character of East Germany during the Third Reich.

Rationality is considered to be basic trait of modernization, a conviction that the world is knowable, deriving from a faith in science and the capacity to control nature. The development of contemporary bureaucracies, methods of administration based on detailed and clear rules, is also associated with rationality. The catalog of modernity's basic attributes should also include industrialization and urbanization, the growth of social mobility and economism, directly linked to the growth of production and consumption.[31] Kocka stresses, however, that modernity is not and need not be synonymous with democracy, social progress, or, more broadly speaking, "what is good."[32] He discards the evaluatory aspect of

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28 Dariusz Stola, "Reżim komunistyczny jako proces," in: *Jednostka i społeczeństwo wobec doświadczenia komunizmu. Przeszłość i teraźniejszość*, ed. K. Słowiński, Lublin 2012, p. 38.

29 Ibid., p. 36.

30 Jurgen Kocka, "The GDR: A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship," in: *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-cultural History of the GDR*, ed. K. H. Jarausch, New York–Oxford 1999, p. 17.

31 Wojciech Musiał, *Modernizacja Polski*, pp. 34.

32 Jurgen Kocka, *The GDR*, p. 19.

this concept, as "carrying out an image of progress, the summit of development of Western civilization."[33] On the contrary, he reminds us that twentieth-century modernity is often tied to processes that have led to destruction and tragedy. The processes most often associated with modernization, such as industrialization or the development of education, were sometimes introduced with brutal methods, to the exclusion of entire social groups. This incompatibility of the methods applied with regard to the socio-political effects makes it enormously difficult to make an unequivocal evaluation of some phenomena tied to modernization. This makes Kocka's notion of applying this concept to the countries of the Eastern Bloc all the more apt. He believes that the modern nature of dictatorships mainly derives from bureaucratic administration, modern methods of social control and mobilization (from propaganda to extensive systems of supervision and invigilation) or the leading role of a Party for the masses.

We cannot omit one more important context for modernity, which is tied to a "wide-angle" perspective on the history of social imaginaries and practices. A fine example of this approach might be the "modern divorce" Stephanie Coontz describes in *The Origins of Modern Divorce*.[34] She uses this term to describe regulations and social practices in dissolving marriages, which began spreading in Western culture at the close of the eighteenth century, and substantially broke with previous norms and divorce practices in various cultures. These are phenomena attributed to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a modern epoch, bringing new and different understandings of the world, which were often to be identified with the narrow definition of modernization outlined above. Modernity appears in this book in its politico-economic and socio-cultural aspects. I believe it is worth trying to join everyday experiences and politics in a way that, on the one hand, stresses individual agency, and on the other hand, illustrates the complexity and dynamics of relations between people's daily life and the state.[35]

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33 Wojciech Musiał, *Modernizacja Polski*, p. 35.

34 Stephanie Coontz, "The Origins of Modern Divorce," *Family Process* 2006, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 7–16.

35 For more on the topic, see: Paul Betts, Katherin Pence, "Introduction," in: *Socialist Modern. East German Everyday Culture and Politics,* ed. Katherin Pence, Paul Betts, Ann Arbor 2007, p. 6.

The Construction of the Work

In historiographic reflections on communist Poland, political turning points take a major role, operating as constant points of reference for the social history of the epoch as well. The specifics of this material, the methodology, and the nature of the source documents led me to take more of a "longue dureé" approach, commonly found in studies of social imaginaries, than a political survey grounded in various dates, which, in most cases, did not usher in revolutionary changes in, for example, the corporal punishment of children or how a community approached a single mother. This strikes me as natural, at any rate, given the long-term evolution of the imaginaries I am exploring. I also break the chronological flow in the biographical sources and court documents I use.

The choice of 1956 or 1989 is not, of course, arbitrary, though these dates are, to a large extent, a matter of convention. 1956 marks a key turn in the public discourse on the family, ultimately bringing a return to the traditionally defined community and a backlash against the policies of employing women in the emancipatory Stalinist era. Nonetheless, the watersheds of 1955 and 1991 would be equally justified here. Even the seemingly safe phrase "in the latter half of the twentieth century" is problematic, because in this book the Stalinist era, apart from the issue of birth control, appears solely to provide a context, and my analysis does not cover the great transformations of the 1990s. In general terms, this book addresses a time "in-between." In-between great changes. In-between the postwar chaos and the Stalinist social mobilization and the great social change of the 1990s. When we compare the time frame I have selected with what comes before and after, we find no revolution in terms of social customs. This was a time of evolution and the negotiation of new meanings in society.

The construction of this book came as a result of the diversity of the changes undergone by the phenomena I analyzed. We see a lack of a clear "progressive" or "conservative" tendency to fit everything I describe. This explains the division into separate issues, and not a synthetic approach. In the various chapters, dealing with "pregnant girls," divorce, domestic violence, and abortion, I focus on the individual experience or the possible consequences of macro-scale changes in mindset for "the average person." The body of the work is preceded by a generous introduction devoted, first and foremost, to the methodological framework, that is, the concept of taboo, and a critical chapter that aims to investigate the specifics of Polish sociological study of the family. In this chapter I owe a debt of gratitude to a great many family scholars. Still, this is not an uncritical analysis. I decided to give special attention to sociological analysis, as it is of great interest in terms of studying the social history of communist Poland but still

requires critical appraisal and is difficult to assess unequivocally. In displaying its assets, I also point to the limitations that result from the sociological techniques of thirty or sixty years past.

The narrative of this book is "governed" by the sources. This does not mean, however, that I use the language of the archival document or approach these documents of the past uncritically. But I did want this book to bear testimony to the capital role of sources in historical thought of the past, which is why they have been subjectified. Every chapter opens with a concrete document which, I believe, relates something from the past with particular force. This could stand as an interesting example of a detailed description of an individual case, as in the chapter on domestic violence. Or, on the contrary, they represent cultural texts with messages that were particularly discussed in the public space. The source is not generally overwhelming here, it need not be representative of the mass of documents that were consulted for a given chapter. It is, above all, an invitation to ponder the nature of an imaginary, and bears testimony to my "struggles" with the archives. In examining this variety of sources, I also aimed to show their diversity and incompatibility, and to illustrate the doubts that accompany the historian in "reading" the cultural and social aspects of the past.

Sources

The advantage of the long view (in terms of the historiography of communist Poland) is that we can perceive the dynamics of change; the drawback is that we are unable to master the vast quantity of source materials. Moreover, the basic selection of the sources for this book was affected by a special quality of the study subject, issues which, by their very nature, are pushed to the margins. Despite the seeming overabundance of materials, their examination sometimes brought more disappointment than useful information. Not every statement on the topic of divorce, for example, interested me, owing to the research questions I have posed in this book. It was far easier to reconstruct the network of centers where a single mother could find emergency help than to locate her place in the imaginaries of small towns or the countryside.

Apart from the numerous sociological studies, which I will discuss separately, I decided to use mainly private sources or those which recorded individual experiences.[36] This is why, alongside handwritten contest memoirs,

36 For more on biographical methods, see: Tomasz Wiślicz, *Love in the Fields. Relationships and Marriage in Rural Poland in the Early Modern Age: Social Imagery and Personal Experience,* Warszawa 2018.

I use sources that detail the divorce proceedings and cases of violence, mainly court and police files. The advantage of these files is that they have been largely overlooked in social and cultural history scholarship. While it has become standard practice to use letters to institutions as excellent sources for exploring the problems of everyday life in communist Poland, court and police records have been left to studies on the state's system of repression. Meanwhile, civil and penal trials document not only cases of civil repression or subjugation but also a vast spectrum of social problems, both local and private. Although this book is not intended to be microhistorical, in analyzing the archivalia, in particular court and police records, I am trying, to some extent, to make use of my experience in doing this sort of research. Court and police files are a favorite source of some classic figures in microhistory. Like no other records, they often contain seemingly insignificant details, "supporting characters," and the language of small societies, which are generally underrepresented in history, giving us insight into the beliefs, the symbolic significance of phenomena and things, or networks of human relationships.

However, this search for "detail," which is the hallmark of microhistorical studies, is more than a sudden need to break with traditional historiography and the desire to create a new narrative approach. When it comes to the father of Italian microhistory, Carlo Ginzburg, this was a conviction that reality evades direct cognition, that it can only be discovered through traces, symptoms, and remnants. He presupposes that "the knowledge we gain in this fashion is always fragmentary and contains an 'inextricable element of uncertainty.'"[37] He called this model an epistemological "evidential worldview," from which, in turn, he developed an "evidential paradigm." What the scholar "observes, what he samples, what he smells is tied to the concrete, it concerns the individual. By Ginzburg's conviction the details are most relevant, even the trivial ones (traces, remnants), for they lead us to a deeper reality of which it is a visible part [. . .]. They indicate what is hidden, most intimate, even what is private."[38] The choice of an "in-depth" perspective is also a basic response to an accusation most often levied against this trend in historiography: the sample's lack of representativeness and its overinterpretation. I should state outright that I greatly sympathize with Ginzburg's view of the fragmentary nature of all historical knowledge.

37 Marta Zawodna, "Nauka oparta na śladach. Interpretacja tekstu Carlo Ginzburga 'Ślady: korzenie paradygmatu poszlakowego'," in: *Czy przeszłość powinna być inna? Studia z teorii i historii historiografii*, ed. M. Bugajewski, Poznań 2008, pp. 208 ff.

38 Ibid.

Trial records have the remarkable ability to "eliminate the distance" from the past, much more than ethnographic studies, field notes, activists' recollections, competition diaries, and even solicited sources. A main factor minimizing the distance between the past and the "here and now" is undoubtedly the scale of the events which involve the individual; it is emotional and highly intimate.[39]

The only "drawback" of police and court records "produced" by twentieth-century administrations is their enormity. Even when I limited my research to collections amassed in state archives (many penal records still remain in court archives), the problem was only slightly reduced. The collection in the State Archives in Krakow for 1958–1960 alone holds 1,600 divorce cases. Hence, using these collections for the aims set out by this work required a selection in terms of their detail or their motifs of violence; paradoxically, divorce files were not the basis for my examination of divorce. The tabooization of divorce was mainly recorded in the autobiographical and sociological documents, as this pertained to the fates of people after their court trial, or of those who decided against a divorce. Tracking down penal cases against perpetrators of domestic violence, in turn, involved searching through inventories and hand-over reports for cases held on Article 242 the Penal Code of 1932 and 186 the Penal Code of 1969. The specifics of surviving records of this sort are mentioned directly in the chapter on domestic violence. I managed to find numerous examples of this sort in the Katowice, Kielce, and Krakow archives. These kinds of materials, usually concerning families of Civil Militia officers, are also found in the Institute of National Remembrance. In the State Archives in Katowice, we also find an impressive collection of personal files of the wards of Dąbrówka Mała–Katowice Young Children's Home from 1945–1989, which has stored some remarkable records of social interviews with each of the families, in which we often find information concerning extremely harsh living conditions and violence in everyday life. I may add that the analysis of this sort of document, unlike more generalizing expert statements and sociological analyses, requires the historian to take a step back from the enormity of the suffering experienced by family members, often children. This is quite difficult, and sometimes impossible. This experience of delving into testimonies of cruelty discouraged me from using it in the narrative except where indispensable for proving the basic thesis regarding domestic family violence. Furthermore, I realized that focusing on the most brutal court cases would distract my attention, and the reader's, from the central issue of the

39 John Brewer, "Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life," *Cultural and Social History* 2010, Vol.. 7, No. 1, p. 88.

tabooization of everyday violence, which was considered "unexceptional" in that it did not merit an official record and institutional condemnation.

The quantity of court documents was not always overwhelming. Searching for files of abortion cases from 1949–1956, at the very beginning of my "adventure" with court archives, meant combing the odd surviving file in the vast piles of disorganized archival documents, among which most were destroyed in accordance with archive procedures (only the "type dossiers" remain).

To reconstruct the official debate on the problems of the family, I conducted a search at the The Central Archives of Modern Records, including the collections of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education, the Family Council, and the Ministry of Justice. Among the documents typically found in these institutions, I came across a large quantity of letters submitted to the Ministry of Justice by Polish Radio. These letters concern a projected amendment to the anti-abortion regulation and are mainly dated to the second half of 1955 and the first half of 1956. Among them are statements that sound like appeals – intimate letters from mothers describing their home life and statements by doctors and activists for and against the amendment. The information thus acquired was supplemented by my inquiry into the collections of Conscious Motherhood Association stored in the National Archives in Krakow and the State Archive in Poznań. We ought to emphasise that the state of these collections, and consequently, their historical value, ranges widely, with the Poznań archives the least damaged.

To conclude on the subject of archives, I would like to emphasise the special role in the reconstruction process played by submissions to the 1975 the Friends of Memoirs Society competition, *Diaries of Polish Women*, held in the Central Archives of Modern Records.

I saw popular culture, including press, film, and radio, to be of equal importance in reconstructing the public discourse. This led me to scour the Polish Radio archives, the Educational Film Company, and press archives from 1956–1989 stored in libraries.

Given the necessity of limiting my resources, I decided to forego the pursuit of archival materials from religious organizations, including the Catholic Church. I do realize that this perspective probably would have enhanced my analysis with new themes, and would have illuminated the role of religiousness in tabooization processes, as clearly suggested by Bartłomiej Gapiński's analyses of letters with prayer requests sent in to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.

My initial findings, financed in part by the National Science Center, were published as several articles. The journal *Rocznik Antropologii Historii* published "Przypadek Marii spod Bochni. Próba analizy mikrohistorycznej procesu

o aborcję z 1949 roku" [The Case of Maria from Bochnia: An Attempt at an Microhistorical Analysis of an Abortion of 1949], which I decided to include in the present book in its entirety. The same journal published "'W tym domu panuje strach'. Przemoc i porządek płci w Polsce późnego socjalizmu" ["Fear Reigns in This Home:" Violence and Gender Order in Late Socialist Poland]. A broader analysis of postwar state biopolitics, based on the example of abortion politics, is "Making up for the Losses of War: Reproduction Politics in Postwar Poland," published in the *Women and Men at War: A Gender Perspective on World War II and its Aftermath in Central and Eastern Europe* collection, published in 2012 and edited by Ruth Leiserowitz and Maren Röger. There has also been an English-language methodological article, "Taboo as a Useful Category in Historical Analysis" (in: *From Mentalistes to Anthropological History: Theory and Methods*, Krakow 2012).

Acknowledgments

Every analysis is a historiographic heteroglossia. It is a polemic, confirmation, or footnote to theses formulated by one's predecessors and contemporaries. That is why I would like to thank all those whose opinions and commentaries led me to rethink and rework my initial theses or broaden the spectrum of the issues I addressed. Above all, I wish to thank the participants in the seminar of professors Andrzej Chwalba and Krzysztof Zamorski in Dobra, near Limanowa, the joint meetings of seminar attendees, Doctoral students, and staff of the Chair of Historical Anthropology and the Chair of History of Historiography and Methodology of History at the Institute of History, Jagiellonian University. This forum gave me the opportunity to present my project and successive chapters of my book. My program for researching Polish taboo was also discussed in Prague as part of a scholarship, which I received under the *Sinnwelt: Socialist Dictatorship as a World of Meaning* research project headed by Dr. Pavel Kolař, whom I thank most sincerely for this opportunity. The final form of the "Gesture or Crime? Physical Violence at Home" chapter developed through conversations held in an international research team, *Physical Violence and State Legitimacy in Late Socialism*, coordinated by the Centre for Contemporary History (ZZF) in Potsdam. This project also allowed me to present the results of my research on domestic violence during the 44th Annual Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies in November 2012 in New Orleans. The topic of the pronatalist policy, in turn, was discussed in March 2012 during the *Gender and Sexuality in East-Central European History* symposium in Chicago.

I give my gratitude for the support of my colleagues from the Historical Anthropology Department at the Institute of History: Tadeusz Czekalski, Dr. Marcin Jarząbek, and Dr. Rafał Szmytka. I am grateful to Dr. Dobrochna Kałwa for many hours of conversations and her vital inspirations. I also thank Dr. Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz for clearing a path to a group of Polish cultural theorists and literary scholars, and Dr. Anna Czocher for pointing out the value of the archive collections of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN). Special thanks should go to Dr. Dariusz Wierzchoś and Dr. Anna Nowakowska-Wierzchoś who provided me with access to the collections of the Friends of Memoirs Society.

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Chapter 1 Taboo as a Research Category in the Historian's Toolkit

At the dawn of the new millennium, German Slavic Studies professor Michael Fleischer surveyed Poles on the presence of taboos in Polish culture. The respondents were asked to grapple with questions about the things of which they could not speak, which were taboo, and about who or what made sure this taboo was observed.[1] Research showed that, according to one-fourth of the population, everything could be openly discussed in contemporary Poland, and only two topics were unequivocally taboo. Almost one half of the subjects mentioned sex as the principle taboo in Polish culture. 30 % of respondents claimed that "one did not mention" the subject, though only 17 % were convinced that one was "not allowed" to mention sex. The questionnaire results also show that "speaking negatively about the Church" is "a collectively grounded and sanctioned" taboo in Poland. The remaining taboo subjects are negligible. Respondents only marginally indicated violence, abortion, homosexuality, Jewish themes and anti-Semitism, death, love, narcotics, sickness, politics, euthanasia, incest, pornography, corruption, anti-conception, or xenophobia. If we are to credit the survey results, these taboos are primarily guarded by society (public opinion, social norms) and the Church (the clergy, Catholicism, the Pope, religion).[2]

Unfortunately, apart from conclusions on the interrelations between taboo and those upholding it, the reader finds no reflections on these research results, and thus, is rather unsure of what to do with this knowledge. Smile in sympathy? Express polite astonishment? Nod in understanding?

Above all, reading the results. of Fleischer's survey, which was, incidentally, quite groundbreaking in Poland, conveys a social consciousness of the phenomenon of taboo. However, it causes the reader to doubt the sense in such research. Can we "investigate taboo" just as we might investigate Poles' preferences as tourists or voters? Is taboo only what one cannot or does not mention? Where does one not speak of certain things, e.g. about sex? On the radio and television? In the press? At your aunt's birthday party? At home, between man and wife, or perhaps at the office? What does it mean to speak negatively about the Church?

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1 Michael Fleischer, "Obszar tabu w systemie polskiej kultury," *Rocznik Centrum Studiów Niemieckich i Europejskich im. Willy Brandta Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego*, 2003, Vol. 1, p. 21.

2 Ibid., pp. 24, 28 ff.

Does this refer to newspaper columnists discussing agents in the Polish Church during communist times? Or critiquing a lousy sermon during a Sunday meal? These and other doubts encourage the social historian of communist Poland, whose aim is to reconstruct spaces of taboo, to reflect that we need not regret that no sociologist of the 1960s or 1970s thought of conducting such a survey (though incidentally – it is doubtful he or she would have received permission), because this sort of quantifiable sociological research only reasserts a single truth: the fact of the enormous challenges in academically pinning down taboo in contemporary society. This is undoubtedly also tied to a conceptual confusion and identification of taboo either with a ban, or with a norm, with decency, or with political correctness, superstition, dogma, silence, or discouragement.[3]

1.1. Taboo: Semantic Journeys

The concept of taboo, literally meaning "banned" or "sacred," was imported by James Cook, or rather, for objective reasons, by his successor as captain, Sir James King, in the pages of his log from the Polynesian Islands in the late eighteenth century. We can confidently call it one of the most successful imports of the time from non-European nations to Europe.[4] With the popularity of the famous captain's diary, particularly in the British Isles, this concept went on to achieve staggering success in European colloquial speech. By the turn of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, it had begun appearing in private memoirs and had carved a place in encyclopedias, thereby becoming a linguistic fact for expressing a secularized sanctity and its prohibited transgression.[5] Explorers and adventure seekers who followed in Cook's footsteps also felt obliged to pay special attention to the phenomenon of taboo. According to critical scholars of nineteenth-century travelers, the public use of the word "taboo" was noted almost as frequently as *bakshish* in journeying to the cities of the East, though

3 Kornelia Kończał, "Uniwersalny fenomen," *Borrusia* 2005, No. 37, p. 31.

4 James Cook wrote in his diary: "The people of Atooi [. . .] resemble those of Otaheite [Tahiti] in the slovenly state of their religious places and in offering vegetables and animals to their gods. The *taboo* also prevails in Atooi, in its full extent, and seemingly with much more rigour than even at Tongataboo. For the people here always asked, with great eagerness and signs of fear to offend, whether any particular thing, which they desired to see, or we were unwilling to shew, was *taboo*, or, as they pronounced the word, *tafoo*?" Quoted in: Franz Steiner, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1: *Taboo, Truth and Religion*, eds. J. Adler, R. Fardon, New York 1999, p. 109.

5 Kornelia Kończał, *Uniwersalny fenomen*, p. 33.

Captain Cook himself had said that taboos were more often seen than heard of and – as a word – it hardly stood out.

The greatest anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century racked their brains to find the overt and hidden meanings of taboo: Robertson Smith, James Frazer, Sigmund Freud, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Alfred Redcliffe-Brown, and Émile Durkheim.[6] Great Britain took a special interest in taboo in the late nineteenth century, presently explained by the Victorian thinkers' fascination for the forbidden. We could say that the publications created and discussed in the offices of Cambridge University were a response to the social need for addressing this topic.[7] Already before the Second World War, Franz Steiner noted that reflections on taboo were closely linked with the contemporary culture investigating (or observing) the phenomenon. The very fact that James Cook was first to call attention to taboo in the religious-magical societies of Polynesia did not have to mean, Steiner wrote, that his predecessors, the great Spanish or Danish travelers, had no encounter with it. Perhaps, being Northern Protestant explorers, they simply did not pay much attention to it.

On a wider scale, the concept of taboo was used by religion scholars in comparative analyses of the great cultures, primarily various phenomena in Judaism. It is not surprising that this approach helped them prove, with the assistance of the evolutionary theory, their theses on the transformation of "primitive" societies into progressive and ethical ones. According to James Frazer, taboo, in which – as scholars generally agreed – impurity and sanctity were uniquely merged, was a key element of magical thinking and, as a negative form of magic, it could prevent unwanted events. Thus, the demonic power in taboo was meant to prove the familiar if inferior character of "primitive thinking" as compared to modes of thinking typical of "developed cultures". According to Robert Marett, it could provide protection from the dangers which arose from the supernatural powers of people, things, and places. The vast importance of taboo as a component of religion was noted by Émile Durkheim. The prohibition to contact the profane was, in his view, necessary in order to contact the sacred.[8]

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6 Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, "Preface," in Franz Steiner, *Taboo*, Routledge 2004 (Reprint edition), p. 12.

7 Franz Steiner, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1, pp. 132–139.

8 Robert H. Winthrop, "Taboo," in: *Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology*, Santa Barbara 1991, 'p. 295–297.

Franz Steiner, a very pious Czech emigrant who worked at the Oxford Institute of Social Anthropology, was the first to make an in-depth and critical analysis of how this concept functioned in cultural anthropology. What he said is currently repeated like a mantra by those who research the phenomenon. He simply wrote outright that a great variety of issues are discussed and described as taboo.[9]

In Steiner's opinion, taboo can be described as a phenomenon mainly tied to mechanisms of subservience which have ritual significance, including special restrictive principles of behavior in dangerous situations, tied not only to the protection of individuals in jeopardy but also that of the entire society from people or things which may endanger it. He stressed, however, that when we consider taboo in our day, we must consider the numerous social mechanisms whose forms do not fit a single category. This contradicted the widespread practical application of this category in the social sciences, which was dominated by a narrow understanding of taboo as a negative sanction – a ban which, when broken, brings automatic punishment, without human intervention.[10] Steiner, however, rejected the unambiguous definition of taboo formulated by Margaret Mead in 1935, remarking that it was not even applicable to the peoples of the Pacific, where the term has allegedly originated. As proof, he quoted a report by Captain King about a girl who visited a European vessel and consumed some forbidden meals involving pork, and then, the notes tell us, she did not drop dead, she was simply beaten to a pulp by her countrymen as punishment. Steiner stresses that the Polynesian taboo in itself, which he does describe as fairly atypical, involved avoiding behavior that could be quite unrelated to magic: asserting a person's rights to certain objects, the power to order that grain be sown in a given place, the hierarchies of local dignitaries, authorities, etc.[11]

The most modern approach to taboo was put forward by the structural functionalists, who abandoned taboo's associations with a "primitive mindset" and – consequently – with the irrational and unenlightened. Radcliffe-Brown sought to interpret taboo in terms of rituals which reveal the fundamental values in social life. Coming-of-age, marriage, and death rituals were to play an especially key role in this system. This was also the approach of the English anthropologist, Mary Douglas, who suggested that all social structures were bound by a

9 Franz Steiner, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1, p. 107.

10 Ibid. Cf.: Margaret Mead, *Taboo*, *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 14, ed. by E. R. A. Seligman, A. Johnson, New York 1935, pp. 502–505.

11 Franz Steiner, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1, pp. 209–211.

thin and tangled thread, woven from notions of impurity, disorderliness, danger, and taboo.[12]

Mary Douglas' thoughts on taboo appeared at just the wrong moment, during the "flower power" era, when taboos were being broken left and right. As a result, her thesis found little interest and had to wait quite a while for its time. Her *Purity and Danger*, however, eventually earned the reputation of being one of the most interesting and influential works of anthropology published in the twentieth century. As Joanna Tokarska-Bakir stresses, Mary Douglas' innovation was not just to expand how we thought about taboo and its relativity, but it was, above all, the emphasis she put on the issue of dirt (impurity) as a central feature of the cultural system. The fact that she revealed the inner rationality of prohibitions and their inevitability, however incomprehensible and burdensome they might be, must have contributed to the book's negative reception when it was published in 1966.[13] To some degree, Douglas stood opposed to those who thought of taboos as atavistic social practices, and of taboo-breakers as soldiers of modernity and rationality. To her mind, a taboo is neither good nor bad in itself, neither correct nor incorrect, it simply is, and has an effect on social norms and values.[14] As such, it should not be employed in black-and-white evaluations of the world.

"One [of the book's themes] presents taboo," Douglas writes, "as a spontaneous device for protecting instrument the distinctive categories of the universe. Taboo protects the local consensus on how the world is organized. It shores up wavering uncertainty. It reduces intellectual and social disorder."[15]

1.2. Taboo, or: Organizing through Avoidance

"Taboos will exist for so long as culture exists – whether this is the culture of the African Lele, American gangs, 'international banking conspiracies' (Richard Rorty), German concentration camps, Byzantine or gay culture – taboo is required for its self-definition."[16] It is only such an unequivocal description of

12 Robert H. Winthrop, *Taboo*, pp. 295–297.

13 Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Energia odpadków," in: Mary Douglas, *Czystość i zmaza*, trans. M. Bucholc, Warsaw 2007, pp. 7–12. Cf. also B. Walczak, "Brud a społeczeństwo. Funkcja marginalizacji kategorii z perspektywy antropologii społecznej," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 2006, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 143–156.

14 Gertrud Koch, "Between Fear of Contact and Self-Preservation: Tabor and its Relation to Dead," *New German Critique*, 2003 (Fall), No. 90: *Taboo, Trauma, Holocaust*, p. 73.

15 Mary Douglas, "Preface," in: *Purity and Danger,* London–New York 2002, p. XI.

16 Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Energia odpadków," p. 9.

taboo as a universal element governing the social order that can serve the historian as a methodological basis for analyzing twentieth-century societies, even though it undoubtedly puts our investigations in a structuralist framework driven by a belief in the universal ritualization of social life. Employing this framework, one should bear in mind all reservations that Douglas herself had with regard to the general flux of social structures and thinking patterns. Taboo is present in every culture, but in a way particular to that culture, just as every culture has its own concept of dirt and defilement. Douglas, too, believes that the fear of defying taboo is universal, and tied to the conviction of the impurity of certain phenomena, things, or people.

This is how she overcomes the unresolved problem of the fundamental division between primitive taboo, which pertains to aboriginal people's exotic systems of beliefs, and contemporary taboos, which, despite their differences, reveal similarities, perhaps best exemplified by the so-called trophic taboo.

In Douglas' concept, tabooization processes are incorporated into a system of procedural methods with phenomena that defy cultural categorization and with ambiguities that elude easy description. As "anomalies," both the former and the latter are associated with dirt or, in Douglas' terms, with what is out of place, and thus potentially threatens the existing structure. The ambition to organize what is out of place or unclear prompts certain social actions. Douglas singles out five patterns of dealing with these "divergent situations:"

- avoiding the anomaly by establishing a taboo, which confirms and reinforces the definitions with which it does not conform,
- disqualifying the anomaly through reclassification, which restricts its ambiguity,
- physical control,
- labeling a phenomenon a threat, which results in its being kept at a distance, creating a *cordon sanitaire* around the anomaly,
- sacralizing the anomaly and placing it in the realm of rituals, then using it for the same purposes as it is in mythology or poetry, "to enrich meaning or call attention to other dimensions of existence."[17]

For the scholar, these conclusions are vital in that they make us aware that tabooization, as a way of dealing with anomalies, never occurs in a vacuum. It is almost always accompanied by other phenomena. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir illustrates this with the attitude toward homosexuality in nineteenth-century

17 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 49.

English society, which "physically controlled" homosexuals through punishments, such as jail terms; it ideologically controlled them by building associations with danger (the *cordon sanitaire*, in this case, was created by the stigma of sin and transgression, and later, through association with a disease that needed medical treatment); the disqualification of the anomaly (scientific discourse introduced a new norm – homosexuality began to be defined as an alternate sexual identity, not as a sinful choice), or finally, avoiding the anomaly by introducing a taboo (social ostracism, stamping homosexual men as decadents and aesthetes).[18]

Here, we may recall the words of Jerzy Wasilewski, who reminds us that regardless of whether we are speaking of the original understanding of taboo or its contemporary connotations, we cannot forget that the word is tied to a "set of vague responses: repressions, avoidance, fear of transgression, holding back, and shame," in other words, it is what he calls "an internal censor that does not abide by the authority of reason."[19]

1.3. The Morphology of Taboo

Taking Mary Douglas' theory of taboo as my basis, I assume that taboo does function merely in a complex system for the social control of phenomena considered undesirable. Instead, I believe that it has a multi-tiered structure in itself. On the one hand, it involves the realm of taboo (the "object of the taboo") and those who ensure that it is observed (something that justifies the taboo being observed). On the other hand, however, it succumbs to stratification: in public discourses and various social groups.

The above actions taken against anomalies might signal to the scholar that she is dealing with a potential object of taboo. Still, taboo is an unformalized prohibition of certain behavior or the injunction to avoid certain things. There is no code of subjects which should not be raised, topics that cause embarrassment, shame, or revulsion. Nonetheless, taboo does leave traces such as those we have seen in the above investigations, and which are called its manifestations. These are the key signals that reveal the existence of taboo in a society:

– sanctions of the open transgression of a social prohibition by an individual, or the public exposure of this fact. This draws disapproval from the environment, conflict, and even the individual's exclusion

18 Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Energia odpadków*, p. 34.
19 Jan S. Wasilewski, *Tabu,* Warsaw 2010, p. 10.

- from the society, or social ostracism (some scholars believe this kind of manifestation is tied to a narrow conception of social taboo),[20]
- a sense of shame (embarrassment) experienced by the individual breaking the prohibition or otherwise contact its manifestation,
- contemporary public comments on how the taboo operates, in various forms (academic, literary, cinematic etc.), making a critical diagnosis of the state of the society,
- the compulsion to "avoid the topic" in public discourse. Forms that are too direct, too suggestive, too "communicative," pertaining to phenomena under special social censorship, are excluded from normal linguistic use and are blacklisted. Euphemisms, metaphors, diminutives, comparisons, or substitute forms (e.g. medical terminology) appear to replace direct statements.[21]

We might take this occasion to point out that linguistic taboos have enjoyed special attention from scholars, in Poland and elsewhere, as a source easiest to pin down.

If we are to analyze taboo, we should seek its manifestations, describe the objects of taboo and the agents that monitor it, its reach, and context. In other words, there is a need to focus on the accompanying mechanisms that strengthen or weaken the impact of taboos. It is even more important to keep reiterating the question of what good it serves (apart from, of course, a general conclusion of man's universal aspiration for maximum organization or control of the surrounding world). In such case, what is "only" left to discover are the effects of taboos and changes that they bring to the lives of real Poles. When it comes to individual experience, we inevitably come across pivotal questions on the role of shame, revulsion, and fear.

An inquiry into realms of the extreme allows us to glean the essence of the rules that have formed the basis of social life in communist Poland. Knowledge of these rules helps us draw conclusions on the internal social tensions, the powers of modernization processes, and the durability of "traditional" thinking, as it was defined in the discussed period. I also believe that it shows the diversity of post-war worlds, which can elude us if we observe post-war Poland from the perspective of Krakow or Warsaw.

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20 Stanisław Widłak, "Zjawisko tabu językowego," *Lud* 1968, No. 52, p. 12.

21 See numerous examples of avoiding taboo: Zenon Leszczyński, *Szkice o tabu językowym*, Lublin 1988; Keith Allan, Kate Burridge, *Forbidden Words: Taboo and Censoring of the Language*, Cambridge 2006.

Chapter 2 Introduction to Sociological Discourse on the Family

Sociological work and the results of history-related research (demographics, ethnology etc.) are a fascinating historical record, and one which is often consulted at present. For this book, sociological research is an indispensable companion to contemporary studies of society in communist Poland.[1] The vast quantity of data gathered years ago using quantitative and qualitative methods create a canvas on which social historians paint a picture of the social transformation of the time. Owing to its vast importance in family histories, both as information on everyday life and part of the discourse of the epoch, I decided to explore this research as a historical resource, asking myself the classical question of its reliability, i.e. if the conditions in which it was created affected its shape, and how the time and place of the research could have determined the results and the narrative. These conditions are not only political but also purely academic, environmental, material, etc. This chapter will not exhaust the topic, which deserves a separate, in-depth analysis. Here, I shall only present several issues which are of crucial significance to this book.

The basic problem of the mutual relations between sociology and family history was raised in 2014 by Cezary Kuklo in his reflections on the work of Polish historiography in researching family structures:

> [. . .] sociology presently has a reasonably full picture of the *contemporary* Polish family and its paths of development. We might make a similar remark about the work of ethnological studies, whose main aim has been to reconstruct the family customs and rituals, a result of treating the family as a cultural phenomenon. Meanwhile, if we look at our accomplishments in the historical sciences, or indeed, at the demographics in family studies either in interwar Poland or during the Second World War and the years that

1 See, among others: Paweł Sowiński, *Wakacje w Polsce Ludowej. Polityka władz i ruch turystyczny (1945–1989),* Warsaw 2005; Dariusz Jarosz, *Mieszkanie się należy. . .: studium z peerelowskich praktyk społecznych*, Warsaw 2010; Ewelina Szpak, *Między osiedlem a zagrodą. Życie codzienne mieszkańców PGR-ów*, Warsaw 2005; *Mentalność ludności wiejskiej w PRL. Studium zmian*, Warsaw 2013; Małgorzata Mazurek, *Społeczeństwo kolejki. O doświadczeniach niedoboru 1945–1989*, Warsaw 2010; *Socjalistyczny zakład pracy: porównanie fabrycznej codzienności w PRL i NRD u progu lat sześćdziesiątych*, Warsaw 2005.

> followed, we can only conclude that it is far from the achievements of which we may boast in the present.[2]

Perhaps owing to the wide availability of sociological and ethnographic works on the family, alongside the dominance of political and event-based history, historians seldom explore the history of the family in the twentieth century.[3] If we accept that sociology has created a fairly full picture of the contemporary family, part of which is its formative period in the twentieth century, with special emphasis on the latter half, then historians – at least at first glance – have little left to do. But is this truly the case?

Until recently, family sociology was among the most fertile fields of Polish sociology. This is particularly true of the last two decades of the communist era: in the projects run by Zygmunt Tyszka alone, at the Poznań school of family studies, 190 monographs and 1,000 articles have been produced, to which we might add unpublished MA and PhD theses.[4] Thus, we cannot proceed without sociology. However, historians can rest easy, as building a coherent picture from the mass of macro-studies and case studies recalls assembling a puzzle of a thousand pieces, all the while knowing that some pieces are missing, and much of the puzzle repeats itself.

To make conscious use of the research that was conducted thirty or sixty years ago, we must learn the rules that regulated the choice of topics and interpretive schemes. To continue with the metaphor of the picture, we must try to determine why the painter choice this perspective and no other, why the light falls

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2 Cezary Kuklo, "Demograficzno-społeczna problematyka rodziny w pierwszej połowie XX wieku," *Struktury demograficzne rodziny na ziemiach polskich do połowy XX wieku. Przegląd badań i problemów*, eds. Cezary Kuklo, Piotr Guzowski, Białystok 2014, p. 132.

3 So far, research on inter-war family studies has developed the most. See: Katarzyna Sierakowska, *Rodzice, dzieci, dziadkowie… Wielkomiejska rodzina inteligencka w Polsce 1918–1939*, Warsaw 2003, and selected studies in: *Rodzina, gospodarstwo domowe i pokrewieństwo na ziemiach polskich w perspektywie historycznej – ciągłość czy zmiana?,* ed. Cezary Kuklo, Warsaw 2012*; Pamiętnik XV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich*, Vol. 2: *Przemiany społeczne a model rodziny*, ed. Anna Żarnowska, Gdańsk 1995; *Rodzina – prywatność – intymność. Dzieje rodziny polskiej w kontekście europejskim*, eds. Anna Żarnowska, Adam Walaszek, Dobrochna Kałwa, Warsaw 2005; Dobrochna Kałwa, *Kobieta aktywna w Polsce międzywojennej. Dylematy środowisk kobiecych,* Krakow 2001.

4 Barbara Wejnert, "Family studies and politics: the case of Polish sociology," *Marriage & Family Review* 1996, Vol. 22, No. 3–4, p. 238.

from the left and not the right, why the artist uses a certain palette of colors, and why the model is smiling. Fortunately, we are not alone in this sort of analysis, as sociologists themselves have engaged in meta-reflection in this field, and their opinions will be considered here.[5] At this point, I would like to assert that the critique of historical source materials in general has the undesirable quality of forcing the historian to turn detective, tracking down weaknesses and errors, though this does not alter the premise of this book, which is largely based on trust and a diverse use of sociological source materials. Nor is this chapter an overview of sociological research on the family, as this would only retread covered ground; above all, it seeks to show that, like all other historical resources, sociological research is deeply rooted in historical reality, and, like it or not, we must take this into account.[6] This is why I attempt to establish a framework for sociological family studies in Poland and a preferential research perspective. This has raised the following questions: What models have been created by family sociologists? What research questions did they set themselves? What aims guided them? Who among them attempted to break down the prevailing research models? And finally, what family issues did the sociologists identify as of prime importance?

5 Anna Kotlarska-Michalska, "Obrazy życia rodzinnego z perspektywy półwiecza badań nad rodziną polską," in: *Rodzina wobec wyzwań współczesności. Wybrane problemy*, eds. I. Taranowicz, S. Grotowska, Wrocław 2015, pp. 27–56; Anna Wachowiak, *Socjologia rodziny w Polsce: narodziny i rozwój*, Poznań 1996; "Poznańska socjologiczna szkoła badań nad rodziną w nurcie powojennej ewolucji socjologii rodziny w Polsce," *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny. Dylematy Współczesnych Rodzin* 2005, Vol. 16, pp. 227–243; *Poznańska Szkoła Badań nad Rodziną. Metodologia i zastosowanie*, ed. Zenon Tyszka, Poznań 1990; Zenon Tyszka, "Ukształtowanie się i rozwój socjologii rodziny w Polsce," *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny* (Studia Socjologiczne i Interdyscyplinarne), Poznań 1990; Barbara Wejnert, *Family studies and politics*. . ., pp. 233–257; also: Izabela Bukraba-Rylska, "Polska socjologia wsi, czyli o służebnej, usłużnej i służalczej roli nauki," in: *Służebna i służalcza rola socjologii oraz inne kwestie. Wybór artykułów z lat 2007–2009*, Warsaw 2009, pp. 7–41 (reprinted from: *Wieś i Rolnictwo* 2009, No. 2, pp. 9–31); Jan Turowski, *Przemiany rodziny wiejskiej w powojennej Polsce*, *Roczniki Filozoficzne/Annales de Philosophie/Annals of Philosophy* 1969, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 49–68.

6 See, among others: Anna Kotlarska-Michalska, *Obrazy życia rodzinnego z perspektywy półwiecza*. . .

2.1. The Discourse Framework

Sociological scholarship in Poland has an outstanding prewar tradition and, although its postwar travails were complicated, its accomplishments from this period also remain indisputable. On the one hand, the development of this discipline reflected sociologists' characteristic need to be socially involved and affect reality, in this case the revolutionary changes then occurring in Poland. On the other hand, it reflected the dominance of leftist scholars calling for profound change in Polish society, from the early post-war era. Jerzy Szacki, who was among the most interesting figures in Polish sociology, stressed that after the Stalinist era, which removed sociology from the universities, expectations that stood before practitioners of the weakened discipline were so enormous that it struggled to meet them, although there were efforts to make up for the lost time of 1939–1956. A consequence of the Stalinist experiment was also said to be an uncertainty toward what tomorrow might bring, which prompted sociologists to be constantly, almost obsessively proving that the socialist system "needed" them.[7] This had an immediate effect on the nature of the analyses of 1956–1980. For twenty-five years, Polish sociology drifted between Marxism, which, according to Szacki, was more a style of functioning in the community than a method of conducting and interpreting research, and Western sociological thought, chiefly in its Anglo-Saxon incarnation, which Polish sociologists encountered on their trips abroad, mainly through Ford Foundation scholarships. Marxism did not, therefore, manage to overwhelm sociology. Still, in providing a refuge, it paralyzed the discussion:

> A side-effect of this new situation was a growing blandness in Polish sociology, its incapability to face up to the basic macro-sociological issues around it, and a tendency to overlook the most politically pressing matters in Polish society.[8]

Another consequence of the polarization of methodological interests of Polish sociologists of this period was the dismissal of interwar sociology and, above all, the achievements of Florian Znaniecki. This situation only radically changed with the Solidarity movement, which sent a shockwave through the community. Sociologists seemed surprised not only by the course of events but also by their own inability to foresee them. According to Szacki, one cause of this

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7 Jerzy Szacki, "Polish Sociology 1940–1989. In Service of Society or in Service of the Regime?," *Polish Sociological Review* 1998, pp. 115–131.

8 Jerzy Szacki, "Wstęp. Krótka historia socjologii polskiej," in: *Sto lat socjologii polskiej: od Supińskiego do Szczepańskiego*, ed. Jerzy Szacki, Warsaw 1995, pp. 116 ff.

was a tendency to conduct detailed fragmentary research without attempting a synthesis, as the latter was possible only with the Marxist doctrine.[9] As such, throughout hundreds of studies, sociologists gathered vast, but scattered and partial knowledge on Polish society of the time. Without a vision of the whole, they could hardly propose a compelling vision for change.

The main recipient of research and commissions was the state, who thus determined the standards and scope of sociologists' field of interest. Nonetheless, as Marek Nowak states, this same government was incapable of using the sociological tools to affect social processes. In the latter half of the 1980s, it lost trust (and therefore, interest) in the work of sociologists.[10]

Thus, we come to the issue of the "usefulness" of sociological research for historiography. Is what seems to us flawed from a sociological point of view not essentially advantageous for critical historiography? Don't fragmentation and a lack of generalizations clear the way for historians, who, taking the standpoint of the objective scholar (and not only through their separate discipline), their chronological distance, and their general knowledge of the epoch, might form a more convincing picture than sociologists did decades ago? Can historians somewhat arrogantly claim that, having access to the sociologists' work and their own knowledge, they see more?

2.2. Polish Family Sociologists after the Second World War

Jerzy Szacki's general remarks can also be applied to Polish family sociology as such, though this would require we outline the path of this sub-discipline. I am using the concept of Polish family sociology here in the narrow sense most frequently used by Polish sociologists, i.e. with regard to research strictly focused on changes occurring in the family, ignoring the issues that fall within other related categories (such as alcoholism).

The work of Polish sociology is chiefly assessed at present from two polar perspectives – an affirmative and a critical one. The first, which is far more audible, is represented by the students and coworkers of Zbigniew Tyszka, the founder and director of the Family Sociology Institute at Adam Mickiewicz

9 Jerzy Szacki, *Polish Sociology 1940–1989*. . ., pp. 126 ff.

10 Marek Nowak, "Czy pokolenia socjologów? Historyczne źródła, współczesne interpretacje (na podstawie doświadczeń poznańskiego ośrodka socjologicznego)," in: *Studiować socjologię w XXI wieku. Zbiór tekstów oraz wyników badań dotyczących studiów socjologicznych na polskich i zagranicznych uczelniach*, eds. B. Mateja, B. Pawłowska, F. Schmidt, M. Weres, Poznań 2010, p. 49.

University in Poznań. The Poznań community has a great need to emphasize the center's work under his direction. This also explains the numbers of regular publications recalling his personal achievements and those of the Institute, mainly in a journal founded by Tyszka, *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny* [Family Sociology Annuals].[11] This commemoration policy, quite understandable in terms of the history scholarship, undoubtedly stemming, above all, from a need to highlight the school's legacy, has its far-reaching consequences, mainly when it comes to marginalizing the work of those outside of the Poznań school, including those who chose to emigrate in the communist era and who published work on the Polish family outside of this center.[12]

The Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) is considered the avant-garde in postwar Polish family studies; it was started by a groundbreaking Lublin sociologist, Jan Turowski. In 1971, Franciszek Adamski launched a family sociology program. Then, on his initiative, one of the first family sociology chairs in Poland was created at KUL, remaining under his direction until the late 1970s.[13] The aim of this program that researched and taught the sociology of religion was to promote a Catholic family model and support interdisciplinary sociological, psychological, legal, economic, and theological study on the family.[14] Among the center's important scholars were Father Leon Dyczewski, who joined the staff of family and cultural studies, and Piotr Kryczka, a well-known urban and juvenile crime sociologist. Religiousness, sometimes in the context of the family, was

11 Many of the publications are recollections, commemorating the death of Zbigniew Tyszka in 2003. See, among others: Anna Kotlarska-Michalska, "Profesor Zbigniew Tyszka jako badacz rodziny i koordynator ogólnopolskich programów badawczych," *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny* 2005, Vol. 16, pp. 201–212 *(Referat wygłoszony podczas XII Ogólnopolskiego Zjazdu Socjologicznego w Poznaniu w ramach grupy ad hoc "Profesor Zbigniew Tyszka jako główny badacz rodziny w ostatnim ćwierćwieczu XX wieku")*; "Profesor Zbigniew Tyszka – twórca polskiej socjologii rodziny, mistrz, nauczyciel akademicki, przyjaciel i współpracownik (1933–2003)," *Człowiek i Społeczeństwo* 2005, Vol. 25: *Tradycja jako wyznacznik współczesności*, ed. K. Zamiara, pp. 131–136; Stanisław Kosiński, "Rola Zbigniewa Tyszki w rozwoju socjologii lubelskiej," *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny* 2005, Vol. 16, pp. 213–226; "Wspomnienia poświęcone pamięci wybitnego familiologa profesora Zbigniewa Tyszki," *Małżeństwo i Rodzina* 2003, No. 4, pp. 38–42.

12 Such as Barbara Łobodzińska, whose very interesting work on the Polish family in English in the 1970s and 1980s included "Divorce in Poland: Its legislation, distribution and social context," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 1983, pp. 927–942.

13 Stanisław Kosiński, *Rola Zbigniewa Tyszki w rozwoju socjologii lubelskiej*, pp. 215 ff, 218.

14 Barbara Wejnert, *Family studies and politics*. . ., pp. 236 ff.

the focus of Father Władysław Piwowarski and Father Janusz Mariański at KUL. Despite the advanced and the very substantial research of, above all, Adamski and Dyczewski, their emphatic religious perspective, focus on religion, and KUL's position on the map of Polish academia meant that the institute could not become a center where various streams of family studies would meet and integrate.

Although in 1969, during a rally of the Polish Sociological Association, not a single session was devoted to the family, which indirectly demonstrated that the sub-discipline's time of dominance had yet to arrive, a great many sociologists were investigating the family at the time, and some outside of Lublin. Foremost among them were scholars of rural families and the transformation of rural migrant families in urban conditions. The Krakow center, the Chair of General Ethnography and Sociology at the Jagiellonian University, had a vital role to play here; from under the tutelage of Karol Dobrowolski came Danuta Markowska, among others.[15] Her work included a detailed comparison of important studies on the rural family prior to 1965.[16] The first work on the family to be published at the time was by Barbara Tryfan, whose analyses were devoted to rural women, and at a later stage, rural seniors as well. Tryfan was connected to the Warsaw school for years as a staff member at the Rural Sociology Center at the Institute for Rural Development and Agriculture at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Barbara Łobodzińska, in turn, was associated with the University of Warsaw; her research primarily focused on Warsaw families. Research into mining families in Upper Silesia was conducted by Wanda Mrozek, who went on to be director of the Sociology Institute at the University of Silesia, having studied under Florian Znaniecki, Józef Chałasiński, and Stanisław Ossowski.

The early 1970s were a turning point, a total centralization of family studies. The research head was Zbigniew Tyszka, who explored blue-collar families in industrialized regions in the 1970s.[17] While conducting studies in Konińskie, he developed a sophisticated research methodology, combining statistical methods with monographic analysis, using an enormous amount of data on families, mainly collected directly from interviews with family members and locally, observations during the interviews, children's school assignments on the family,

15 Among others, Danuta Markowska, *Rodzina w środowisku wiejskim. Studium wsi podkrakowskiej*, Wrocław–Warsaw–Krakow 1964.

16 See: D. Markowska, "Współczesne badania nad rodziną wiejską w Polsce," *Etnografia Polska* 1965, Vol. 9, pp. 122–153.

17 Zbigniew Tyszka, *Przeobrażenia rodziny robotniczej w warunkach uprzemysłowienia i urbanizacji*, Warsaw 1970.

and workplace data.[18] The breadth of the data gathered on the family might well astonish us with our high consciousness of privacy laws, showing the difference in approach to the researcher's and respondent's rights at the time.

Tyszka believed he could bridge Polish family research, and that centralization was the best path for the discipline's development. His vision coincided with the turn toward expertise in the Gierek era and the green light for a wide range of societal research which aimed to support the state's social policy.[19]

According to Joanna Bielecka-Prus:

> The task of sociology was to counteract negative social phenomena, to manipulate social processes under the guidance of the Party, to assist and lead effective social policy. The sociologist was an 'expert on the future' who generated prognoses, and spread secular principles of cohabitation and socialist morality. Sociology was meant to support the socio-economic development of the country and its modernization.[20]

The family was an important piece in the social puzzle. One such expert, the author of a very valuable empirical study on single-mother families, calling attention to the Family Council created by the government in 1978, stressed:

> In recent years, a favorable climate has been created for academic work on the Polish family. Family issues have been coordinated with those of working women, to make an interdepartmental Team for Coordination of Women's and Family Social Policy as part of the Women's Decade in 1976–1985, created by Bylaw 39 of the Chairman of the Ministers' Council of 18 June 1976. The Team gave special attention to the situations of various types of families, including broken ones.[21]

Owing to state policy, Zbigniew Tyszka received financing for a major research project to study the Polish family. As a result, his research formula was the basis for most of the work conducted as part of the Polish state programs.[22] The first of these, "The Family in the Period of Building a Developed Socialist Society," was

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18 Anna Kotlarska-Michalska, *Profesor Zbigniew Tyszka jako badacz rodziny i koordynator*. . ., p. 202. This work also contains a detailed bibliography of works used in Zbigniew Tyszka's methodology.

19 Daniel Wincenty, "Wokół projektu biografii Adama Podgóreckiego: wyzwania koncepcyjne, metodologiczne i społeczne," *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* 2013, Vol. 9, No. 4, p. 87.

20 Joanna Bielecka-Prus, "Społeczne role socjologów w PRL," *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 2009, Vol. 58, No. 2, p. 91.

21 Józefa Pielkowa, *Rodzina samotnej matki jako środowisko wychowawcze*, Katowice 1983, p. 18.

22 Anna Kotlarska-Michalska, *Profesor Zbigniew Tyszka jako badacz rodziny i koordynator*. . ., p. 204.

conducted in 1976–1980, focusing on around 100 families all around Poland. The next, "The State and Transformations of the Polish Family in 1976–1985," was carried out in 1981–1985, and continued the first program. Here, "family pathologies" became a separate block. This block became studies on "family deviance" in a third program: "The State and Transformations of the Contemporary Polish Family" (1986–1990).[23] This program also helped bring about Poznań's *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny*.

It is not an easy task to evaluate Zbigniew Tyszka's grand endeavor. It had numerous advantages and equally many shortcomings, as Barbara Wejnert noted twenty years ago. The indisputable advantages include the range of the interdisciplinary studies following to a single, rational model continuously for fifteen years. This policy meant that the researchers could interview the same families every few years, which makes the work unique, both in Poland and as such.[24] Tyszka's program also provided several dozen researchers with excellent working conditions in times of deepening economic crisis in Poland. One project participant recalled:

> There are probably many people, like myself, who have a sweet nostalgia for the time spent working in that research team, with its critical though supportive atmosphere, and above all, the academic reporting conferences sometimes organized in charming recreation spots outside of Bydgoszcz. These produced tight relationships and a compatible blend of academic discourse, elements of recreation, and the birth of close friendships.[25]

Unfortunately, what seemed an advantage of the program had a negative impact on its execution. For Tyszka, most likely unwittingly, entirely subordinated his family research to the state. Thus, the dispersal that allowed the sociologists to maintain a relative degree of independence, as Szacki stressed, was now gone. The government appointed the director of the program, financed its creation, and monitored the results. The marginalization of family research executed outside of the program also had an indirect impact on centralization; this primarily affected work at the University of Warsaw, in Krakow, at the Catholic University of Lublin, in Silesia, and in Gdańsk. As Anna Wachowiak notes:

> Finding oneself within the sphere of a centrally coordinated interdepartmental issue meant acquiring money for research. Without it, our situation often made the aims of our study impossible.[26]

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23 Ibid., p. 210.

24 Barbara Wejnert, *Family Studies and Politics*. . ., pp. 236 ff.

25 Stanisław Kosiński, *Rola Zbigniewa Tyszki w rozwoju socjologii lubelskiej*, pp. 214 ff.

26 Anna Wachowiak, *Poznańska socjologiczna szkoła badań nad rodziną*. . ., p. 236.

And the reverse – the program provided funds for centers that had no special experience in family studies. This was the case, for example, with the sociologists from the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, who had no experience in this field, and, if we are to believe Stanisław Kosiński's report, were co-opted for the program somewhat by accident, and consequently had to adapt their sociology of health research to the program's requirements.[27] Essentially, however, the program emerged through Tyszka's collaboration with Henryk Bednarski of the School of Education in Bydgoszcz, and Ludwik Janiszewski of the University of Szczecin, who made a lasting contribution to coastal sociology.

State control and the presence of a Party operative among the project leaders (Bednarski was the First Secretary of the Voivodeship Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in Bydgoszcz) must have discouraged scholarship that was contentious from a government point of view. At any rate, they were already discouraged by the case of Adam Podgórecki, whose attempt to create independent analyses of poverty levels and the scope of social pathology in Poland at the Institute of Sociological Norms and Social Pathology of the University of Warsaw concluded in 1976 with the dissolution of the unit and the staff being shifted to other institutes as punishment.[28] To varying degrees, the lack of clear theses built on substantial individual, detailed, and long-terms empirical studies derived from the paternalistic relations between state and scholar and the lack of conceptualization. Consequently, bearing in mind the vast resources and organizational activities, the output of family sociologists from the 1960s and the early 1970s seems more interesting for its diversity, better rendering social changes on a macro scale, as well as individual anxieties and problems – above all those tied to the urbanization and transformation of the countryside and the dilemmas

27 The circumstances behind Tyszka joining the team were detailed by Stanisław Kosiński: "Then I participated several times in conferences in Warsaw and its environs, where I made the acquaintance of Docent Tyszka. In the late 1970s I was traveling home by bus from a conference outside of Warsaw and he suggested I take part in the Polish research on families. I considered that quite an attractive offer, both for myself and, above all, for my coworkers. Without pausing to think I accepted the proposal with open satisfaction and gratitude." S. Kosiński, *Rola Zbigniewa Tyszki w rozwoju socjologii lubelskiej*, p. 222.

28 For more on the subject, see: Daniel Wicenty, "Socjologia nieposłuszna w PRL? O funkcjonowaniu Zakładu Socjologii Norm i Patologii Społecznej w Instytucie Profilaktyki Społecznej i Resocjalizacji w latach 1972–1976," in: *Jedna nauka – wiele historii. Dzieje subdyscyplin socjologicznych w Polsce*, eds. Paweł Łuczeczko, Daniel Wicenty, Gdańsk 2010, pp. 36–57.

in the professionalization of women. In the second phase of family research, the framework so overwhelmed its subject that even Martial Law, the extreme economic crisis, impoverishment, and mass migration were insufficiently reflected in the results of Tyszka's team. Even if people seemed more depressed, this had no impact on the catalog of issues explored and the methods applied. A change of mood and the situation of the family is evident in the research in the final decades of the People's Republic, when it even convincing Poles to let the interviewers step into their homes became problematic. Maria Łączkowska, who analyzed highly-educated urban families in 1985, stressed that, among Poznań's 450 families of doctors and teachers, far fewer agreed to participate than ten years previous. The group only managed to conduct 287 quite laconic interviews.[29] The workers reacted in a similar fashion in the spring of 1988.[30] The doctors and teachers as well as the workers often did not even want to share a few words on their living conditions.

The families surveyed in the 1980s dismantled the model rooted in the 1960s. We might consult the research on Poznań's intelligentsia once more here, diagnosed as surprisingly "passive" ("they have educated a passive person"), basing this opinion on their reduced activity outside the family and the workplace.[31] At the same time, no attempt was made to reflect on the work of the doctors holding down several jobs, or the family members' trips to do manual labor abroad (cleaning, sanitary services for the ill), of which the subjects spoke, though very reluctantly, as though ashamed.

These phenomena went beyond the catalog of a priori defined problems. Unfortunately, a great deal of team research on the family from the last decade of communist Poland fell into the framework of bureaucratized sociology, so criticized by the confrontational scholars of the 1980s, or, to borrow a concept from Jan Jerschinin, a sociology of conservation, whose aim was to confirm a vision of society imposed by the government.[32]

Despite suggestions that the individual happiness of family members was most important (their quality of life and the quality of the relationships between

29 Maria Łączkowska, "Tendencje przemian w wielkomiejskiej rodzinie inteligenckiej," in: *Analiza przemian wybranych kategorii rodzin polskich*, ed. Zbigniew Tyszka, Poznań 1990, pp. 49–88.

30 Józefa Stańko-Krajewska, "Wielkomiejskie rodziny robotników wykwalifikowanych przemysłu maszynowego," in: *Analiza przemian*. . ., pp. 9–48.

31 Maria Łączkowska, *Tendencje przemian w wielkomiejskiej rodzinie inteligenckiej*, pp. 61–64.

32 Joanna Bielecka-Prus, *Społeczne role socjologów w PRL*, p. 96.

family members), Polish sociologists represented a functional/structuralist approach – they focused on the forms and shape of the family and their functionality with regard to the larger community, as well as their links with institutions and social organizations. Attention was also paid to division of social roles in the family, and the hierarchy of power. A paradox of this era's family studies is the coexistence of the obligation to classify and the need to generalize and synthesize, which led to a blurring of regional differences. No comparative research was conducted.

2.3. The Glorification of the Family and the Paradigm of the Crisis

Sociological debates on the family in communist Poland after 1956, almost untouched by the sexual revolution that shook families on the other side of the Iron Curtain, were quite restrained. This was undoubtedly one of the basic features and weak points of the discipline. Despite the highly divergent opinions on the phenomena themselves, e.g. the transformation of the rural family migrating to the city, we search in vain for heated debate or open conflict of opinion (or at least *verbalized* conflict) between the academic adherents of social acceptance for anti-conception and its staunch opponents, between those who, at more or less the same time, studied "acceptance of divorce" and those who researched "acceptance of the permanence of marriage bonds" (the same went for the evaluation of women's professional emancipation) and, we might add, they often quoted one another, thus acknowledging the academic standing of the others' work. The coexistence of scholars representing conservative perspectives, tied to KUL, and the majority, with its preference for modern ways of thinking, is a very interesting phenomenon, whose analysis exceeds the bounds of this chapter and requires research into the social sciences communities in communist Poland.

The "crisis discourse," as Filip Schmidt called it, is ascribed to reflections on the family, as growing concerns over the disintegration of this institution had been observed since the late nineteenth century, accompanied by changes in customs chiefly tied to women's emancipation.[33] The foretelling of a crisis in the 1920s or 1960s was almost always a sign of progressive change in the organization (form)

33 Filip Schmidt, *Para, mieszkanie, małżeństwo. Dynamika związków intymnych na tle przemian historycznych i współczesnych dyskusji o procesach indywidualizacji*, Warsaw–Toruń 2015, pp. 23.

of the family and its social functions. In her introduction to a collection of contest memoirs of 1962, Mirosława Parzyńska asked:

> Is there a family crisis? What are you, oh family? These questions express not only an understandable curiosity. They also reflect an equally understandable disquiet. How should we apprehend the transformations in the traditional family model to date? Should we see them in a positive or negative light?[34]

At present, our evaluation of analyses from the 1970s and 1980s, in which important theses offering different interpretations are smothered by the tabular juxtapositions of opinions gathered in surveys, are somewhat hampered by the temperature of the contemporary sociological debates about whether we were dealing with a profound crisis of the family.[35] At the time, sociology was not positing the twilight of the family. There was talk of a crisis, of course, but in the socialist reality of 1956 the family was, for all the main experts, an inextricable part of the social fabric, and marriage and childbirth were a natural course of things, and an important aspect of the individual's sense of fulfillment. At any rate, Polish sociologists invariably spoke of family values in Poles' social consciousness until the mid 1980s.

However, an in-depth analysis of research reveals a certain schizophrenia in the sociological study on the family, in its widest terms. On the one hand, this phenomenon is tied to an unrealistic glorification of the Polish family[36] as a socialist family, which can be found in many works, especially from the last two decades of communist Poland. On the other hand, it has much in common with the vast development of research on phenomena defined as departing from the family norms, or, to use the nomenclature of the day – "family pathologies." I call this situation schizophrenic because conclusions from the first and second sort of scholarship rarely met. The research on family violence and alcoholism, ever more expansive and detailed, strictly concerned pathological families, and had no revolutionary impact on the opinion of the Polish family as such. This safe separation was abetted by the fact that it was often lawyers or sociologists

34 Maria Parzyńska, "Wstęp," in: *Jaka jesteś rodzino?*, selected and edited by Maria Parzyńska, I. Tarłowska, afterword: Antonina Kłoskowska, Warsaw 1965, p. 5.

35 For more on contemporary crisis discourse, see: Tomasz Szlendak, "Interpretacje kryzysu rodziny w socjologii. Między familijnym fundamentalizmem a rewolucją stylów życia," *Studia Socjologiczne* 2008, No. 4.

36 This is the basic thesis of Barbara Wejnert, who accuses Polish family sociology of overlooking social pathology and its ties to poverty. See: Barbara Wejnert, *Family Studies and Politics*. . ., p. 244.

of law who explored pathologies, although among sociologists studying the family, Maria Jarosz began to occupy an increasingly important position from the 1970s onwards, specializing (and continuing to do so) in social pathologies and inequalities, and publishing within the "central research programs" of the day.[37] The intensification of study on pathologies and deviations even stoked the anxiety of some observers and participants in the debate by the 1970s:

> An analysis of empirical research conducted on the family in the 1970s showed that the professional scholars and social activists focused on the pathologies and disorganization of this institution. And much as, in colloquial language, the results become the symbol of changes, in evaluating the reorganization and re-imagining of the family we are prone to list only the negative effects: the growing number of divorces and juvenile offenders.[38]

Despite the concerns of the above author, Maria Trawińska, alcoholism, family violence, and juvenile offenses never overshadowed the optimistic vision of the "social cell" that copes and has plans that reach into the future. "We are presently dealing not with a crisis of marriage and the family as social institutions, but with a modern model of existence," Łobodzińska stressed, and this approach (in the social sciences, not in public debate as such) could be considered the prevalent one.[39]

The most problematic motif seems to be Polish families' standard of living. In 2003, Małgorzata Szpakowska wrote the following on women's statements in the 1960s:

> Poverty is the backdrop for the majority of the competition entries. This is a poverty of multiple strata – of course, from before the war and the occupation, but also from after the war, people cannot write of it directly, yet it is quite tangible. It might be most visible in the small joys: from a Pionier radio, or a television set paid off in installments. Or in a teacher's comment regarding the duty to collect waste paper in schools, four kilograms per child: "Where is a village child meant to collect so much scrap paper." In these reports, poverty is not shameful, it is taken for granted as part of life.[40]

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37 Maria Jarosz is the author and editor of a great many works on family pathologies, including: (ed.), *Wybrane zagadnienia patologii rodziny*, Warsaw 1976; *Problemy dezorganizacji rodziny: determinanty i społeczne skutki*, Warsaw 1979; (ed.), *Patologia życia rodzinnego. Praca zbiorowa*, Warsaw 1990; *Samozniszczenie: samobójstwo, alkoholizm, narkomania*, Wrocław 1980; *Dezorganizacja w rodzinie i społeczeństwie*, Warsaw 1987.

38 Maria Trawińska, *Bariery małżeńskiego sukcesu*, Warsaw 1977, p. 7.

39 Barbara Łobodzińska, *Rodzina w Polsce*, Warsaw 1974, p. 199.

40 Małgorzata Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć. Samowiedza obyczajowa w Polsce czasu przemian*, Warsaw 2003, p. 107.

Szpakowska points out that living in hard circumstances was "taken for granted" in people's consciousness. She also attributes the omission of difficult living circumstances to their being taken for granted, as a context for the problems described by cultural sociologist Marcin Czerwiński in his famous *Przemiany obyczaju* [Transformations in Customs], a book which sums up the social changes in the twenty-five years after the Second World War. She is conscious of the possible interference of censorship. Wejnert is less conciliatory, apprehending the denial of poverty as the basic shortcoming of family studies in communist Poland.

The idealization of the family is reinforced by scholars directly, or indirectly linked with the political opposition of the 1980s. Hanna Bojar (critically) recalls research by Jadwiga Koralewicz, Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński, and Piotr Gliński, stressing that there is a kind of conviction of the power of the family as a "basic social unit," which could never become the "basic cell of the system" in communist Poland:

> Many scholars indicate that the family owes its prominence among other institutions of social life to the fact that, at many points in the history of Polish society, it was an asylum of sorts, a refuge from the prevailing system. Alongside the Church, the family is considered to have had the basic and decisive role in passing on many values crucial to preserving the national identity.[41]

This special form of glorification, which only grew with the tumultuous events of the early 1980s, involved casting the family as a sanctum of values and a shelter, making the small family unit a small component of a larger block "opposing" the system. Hanna Bojar herself critiqued this concept, at least in terms of the last decade of the communist era, calling it a "social myth to support a sense that life was meaningful." To her mind, the economic crisis "politicized" the family, at the cost of its right to privacy.

2.4. The Theory of the Great Change

In 1990, Zbigniew Tyszka summed up fifteen years of studying the Polish family as follows:

> The family therefore attracted attention, from scholars and other parties, as a highly important group and social institution that is undergoing sweeping changes [. . .] Changes in systems and family law, rapid industrialization and the consequent

41 Hanna Bojar, "Rodzina i życie rodzinne," in: *Co nam zostało z tych lat. . . Społeczeństwo polskie u progu zmiany systemowej*, ed. Mirosława Marody, London 1991, pp. 28, 65.

> urbanization have been brought into what was once a farming country, intensified by geographical shifts following industrial-urban changes and adjustments to the eastern, western, and northern borders of our country, the mass hiring of women, and the significant changes in the rhythm of everyday life and the social structure within the family, the swift and substantial evolution of customs – all this caused intensive processes within families, changing the family's situation in its micro and macrostructural compositions, along with the whole global society, affecting the model of family life and its value system. The positive changes were accompanied by conflicts and tensions.[42]

Since the late 1950s, finding how the Polish family changed through the modernization of the country engineered by the socio-political system is the basic task sociologists set for themselves. The fact that it *had* changed was indisputable. Were equal rights, egalitarianism, and the democratization of relationships widespread? Had the patriarchal family been replaced by the modern nuclear family? Had the citizen seized the chance for development offered by the state?[43]

The thesis of the great and indisputable change opened up many standpoints on the urban and rural family in communist Poland. Its description was, at times, emotional, and strikingly optimistic:

> [. . .] in the fates of families, in their conflicts, capacities, and achievements, we read a collective epic and an opportunity for the entire generation – a chance for the new society of People's Poland.[44]

The transformation of the family, therefore, was inscribed in the modernization of Poland: on the one hand, as an effect of economic and political changes, on the other hand – as an independent, though not isolated process of transforming social imaginations and practices in the private space. There was little doubt, after all, that the state should guarantee the family's right to privacy.[45] Analyzing the progress of modernization, Polish sociologists plumbed American sociology's family studies in industrialized areas, though the results had to be verified through Polish empirical studies. Thus, although I previously

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42 Zbigniew Tyszka, *Ukształtowanie się i rozwój socjologii rodziny w Polsce*, p. 11.

43 "Advancement solely depends on the individual's aspirations and hard work, while indicators of social status are education and personal qualifications," Barbara Łobodzińska, *Rodzina w Polsce*, pp. 1, 11 ff.

44 Danuta Markowska, *Rodzina w społeczności wiejskiej – ciągłość i zmiana*, Warsaw 1976, p. 151.

45 According to Anna Dodziuk-Lityńska and Danuta Markowska, this is an important facet of modernizing a vision. As a modern state planning a social policy, Poland should respect its citizens' rights to privacy. See: Anna Dodziuk-Lityńska, Danuta Markowska, *Współczesna rodzina w Polsce*, Warsaw 1975, p. 8.

described a choice between Marxism and Western sociological thought, when it came to family sociology we ought to stress that the latter tendency prevailed. Visible effects of the transformation were said to be: more divorces, the spread of birth control and smaller families, the declining authority of the father and husband, an increase in non-marital sex, an increase in professional working wives, an increase in family members' personal freedom, the state's adoption of care-taking functions, the secularization of customs, and changes in how the household economy functioned.[46]

This was the basis for an ideal of a modern, egalitarian Polish family, a compact, two-generational unit, with working, equal spouses creating an intimate bond, consciously raising their children (generally two) with the assistance of state child care and education. To this model, drawing again from American city researchers, Renata Siemieńska added the vital role of consumption, which eliminated the production of goods in the private space, and the importance of relationships with people from outside the family.[47] The Polish socialist family presents no special problem, therefore, when placed in the development of sociological thought at the time. In the first phase of modernity, the family in Europe and America was thought to be formed by industry and the state. "This was when the 'normal (or nuclear) family' was shaped, all divergences from which were labeled [by experts – B.K.-K.] as deviations, or even pathologies."[48]

Consequently, most research was based on comparing reality with this ideal, based on a uniform model of the urban educated family. This meant the bar was set very high, much higher than the complex socio-political and cultural reality of Poland, which struggled to meet generalizations of this sort. From today's perspective, though it pains us, we must put aside the generalizations dictated by expectations from individual research, which often openly contradicted the far-reaching conclusions. Above all, sociologists and others presently doubt the victory of the nuclear family. Even back in communist Poland, this sort of generalization was usually accompanied by a number of reservations. The "small" family theoretically dominates, Barbara Łobodzińska says, but even in the cities a lack of housing or the necessity of the older generation caring for children means that many young families live with their parents. She supplied some

46 Zbigniew Tyszka, *Ukształtowanie się i rozwój socjologii rodziny w Polsce*, p. 13. Tyszka refers to William F. Ogburn and Meyer Nimkoff, *Technology and the Changing Family*, Cambridge MA 1955. He himself resided in the USA on scholarship in the 1962/1963 academic year.

47 Renata Siemieńska, *Nowe życie w nowym mieście*, Warsaw 1969, pp. 333 ff.

48 Tomasz Szlendak, *Interpretacje kryzysu rodziny w socjologii*. . ., p. 37.

concrete examples: in the Piotrków voivodeship 67 % of the research subjects over sixty-five years of age still lived with their children. This concerned not only farmers (78 %) but also white-collar workers (55 %).[49] The prevalence of three-generation families was also indicated in the work of Kotlarska-Michalska and Maria Trawińska (up to 60 %). Thus, the majority aspired to live in a small family, but was unable to make this model a reality.

2.5. The City Vs. the Country

The family was a crucial element of the experts' models of the new, modern city and rural culture, creating a dichotomic image of a social reality, which was, in fact, more complex (as proven by the complicated family typology, largely dependent on how far they belonged to one of the worlds). A good example of this perception of the family and the practical effects of adapting a model social life rooted in utterly different traditions and times is the sociological study of Krakow's Nowa Huta district as a border area where the "urban" met the "rural."[50]

Research on Nowa Huta developed primarily, though not exclusively, under the auspices of the Sociological Commission of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow, where the main role was played by one of the leading Polish sociologists of the time – Kazimierz Dobrowolski. He headed the Nowa Huta Section, popularizing an interdisciplinary approach to social research through cooperation with ethnographers, lawyers, and geographers. He also promoted many outstanding later sociologists (such as Władysław Kwaśniewicz), including the author of one of the most important works on Nowa Huta – Renata Siemieńska. Dobrowolski supervised her MA project and PhD, which she defended at the Jagiellonian University.[51] In the introduction to the book on the transformation of a village adjoining Nowa Huta, Dobrowolski also receives acknowledgment from Jacek Wódz, a sociologist and lawyer, the author of research on pathology

49 Barbara Łobodzińska, *Rodzina w Polsce*, p. 31.

50 The name "Nowa Huta" literally means "New Steel Mill". The area, formerly a village, was incorporated to Krakow under that name in 1951. The communist government decided to build there the Vladimir Lenin Steelworks (completed in 1954). It was meant to become a model industrial district.

51 Renata Siemieńska, *Mała wiejska społeczność terytorialna. Próba analizy socjologicznej na przykładzie osiedla Grochalowy Potok w Rzepisku na Spiszu*, MA project, 1962; *Studia nad procesami adaptacji robotników Huty im. Lenina chłopskiego pochodzenia oraz ich rodzin do warunków życia w środowisku miejskim*, PhD project, 1969 (published as a monograph: *Nowe życie w nowym mieście*, Warsaw 1969).

in everyday life in Nowa Huta. Dobrowolski's role is therefore particularly noteworthy, as he commissioned studies and reviewed them, often critically, pointing out their technical shortcomings (e.g. conducting interviews with the steel mill workers in offices, in the presence of their superiors). From our perspective it is more vital, however, that Dobrowolski signaled an important paradigm for apprehending social change, which was the framework for formulating expert evaluations of the situation in Nowa Huta. This paradigm divided many scholars, including many of his own students.

Dobrowolski authored one of the theses on traditional rural culture that was most influential among Polish ethnographers and sociologists, and a pillar of thought when it came to seeing Nowa Huta as a symbol of the country in the city, and its critical apprehension from this perspective. Based on materials from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, by the 1930s he formulated a description of rural society as "small, isolated, illiterate, and homogeneous, with a highly developed sense of group solidarity." Rural society, he wrote, is governed by a conventional mode of living, in which there is no room for legislation and intellectual reflection.[52] The most important thing for the Polish countryside is kinship and family. In the countryside, the realm of the sacred prevails over its secular counterpart. As Izabella Bukraba-Rylska stresses, this was one of the dominant theses of traditional culture as archaic, primitive, enduring, and simple. The model of traditional peasant culture was meant to serve as the ideal system, in which all products, "objects, value systems, sets of social norms, and principles of institutional organization, and types of personalities significant to this culture create a coherent structure of mutually conditional phenomena and facts, or at least that we detect in them the presence of a steady, common pattern – a testimony and expression of their subordination to a certain style."[53]

This model, which permeated the work of Dobrowolski and the community gathered around him, was the first factor that had an impact on the almost total dominance of the expert, model approach to phenomena in Poland, taking a dichotomic view of the cultural clash between the traditional countryside and the modern city. The historical experiences of internal and external migration, the development of pop culture (apart from Franciszek Adamski), and the creation of new hybrid cultures were not considered.

52 Izabella Bukraba-Rylska, "Na styku kultur: kategorie poznawcze i dylematy moralne," *Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne* 1997, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 149.

53 Ibid., p. 150.

The enduring and coherent model of traditional rural culture was the first pillar of Nowa Huta research. It was closely linked to anti-ruralism, a conviction of the "rural environments as a bastion of conservatism and forces that opposed progress, [. . .] condemned to destruction."[54] This vision of the countryside is marked by a formulaic and simplified image of rural populations, which ignores its diversity and marginalizes the social movement that has always been there. In effect, sociologists created a stable and formulaic image of the countryside, which, according to Bukraba-Rylska, never existed. Włodzimierz Mędrzecki also wrote of the "simplified portrait of the country" or a certain static perspective in its analysis, stressing that the rural family experienced change owing to the migrations of the late nineteenth century.[55]

Renata Siemieńska applied this dichotomy quite consciously. In creating an opposition between the rural and the urban inhabitant, she situated rural migrants somewhere between the city and country models, which, she herself admits, is difficult to locate in history. On the one hand, she evoked historical descriptions of the late-nineteenth-century countryside, from over fifty years before her time of writing, and thus, likewise, before the experiences of the Second World War. The enormous diversity of the Polish countryside was an obstacle to creating a full and satisfactory image for half of the twentieth century. On the other hand, this model contrasts with that of the city based on analyses of large American and European cities. She consciously rejects Krakow as a point of reference for her studies. Nor are any of the Soviet cities her model. All this goes to prove the Polish sociologists' aforementioned tendency to look toward the Anglo-Saxon school of social sciences. With reference to the urban models of family life, which we have listed above, Siemieńska reconstructs the process of adapting migrants to urban living.[56]

This model was assumed by other scholars. For Jacek Wódz, Nowa Huta residents' approach to divorce was an indicator of the respondent's rurality or urbanity. At the beginning of the 1970s, Wódz was treating this phenomenon as a natural part of life for a modern, egalitarian urban family, based on emotions and tolerance. In this case, religion played a major role in dividing the population

54 Izabella Bukraba-Rylska, *Polska socjologia wsi*. . .

55 Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, "Kobieta w warstwie chłopskiej i przemiany jej pozycji w II połowie XIX i pierwszej połowie XX wieku," in: *Pamiętnik XV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich*, pp. 33–37; "Intymność i sfera prywatna w życiu codziennym i obyczajach rodziny wiejskiej w XIX i w pierwszej połowie XX wieku," in: *Rodzina – prywatność – intymność*. . ., pp. 105–121.

56 Renata Siemieńska, *Nowe życie w nowym mieście*, pp. 333 ff.

into two isolated realms. Consequently, the contrast between urban and rural meant opposing the modern with the traditional, while the modern was tied to secular culture, and the traditional with values associated with religion. This contrast is, in turn, most visible in studies by Franciszek Adamski, who took a very critical stance against changes occurring in society. He believed the modern, or urban models of living undermined the traditional Catholic models associated with rurality, by which the aim of marriage is to raise children, take care of one another, and prevent "lustfulness." The culprit for what he viewed as such an undesirable transformation was popular culture, which was generally secular in nature. In Adamski, we clearly see the Catholic family model (as opposed to the secular relationship model) repeatedly stressed in Cardinal Wyszyński's letters and homilies, wherein the family is, on the one hand, a community summoned by God, while on the other hand, it contributes to creating the nation, defined as a "community of families." Wyszyński invokes the folk ethos of the farmer, conceived in terms of working the land and the traditional multi-child family. With this came the apotheosis of the woman as the mother, who devotes herself to her family and ensures that it continues.[57]

Basing their analyses on a dichotomic, model image of the world, sociologists raised the bar very high for the societies they studied. We might venture the thesis that their expectations significantly exceeded the experiences of both rural emigrants and city-dwellers. The road to Nowa Huta or to Płock traveled by peasants from the Tarnów or Miechów areas was often longer and more fraught with challenges than the path across the ocean "to put some bread on the table," as some of their grandparents and great-grandparents had done several decades before. This was because the experts viewed the migration from the country to the city as "the transformation of a nation dominated by the countryside (the peasants and nobility) into a nation with a primarily urban profile."[58]

There was no escaping urbanization. "I take it as evident [. . .]" – wrote Marcin Czerwiński, one of the most influential Polish sociologists of the 1960s – "that it is a part of every possible and beneficial variant of development."[59]

57 Bartłomiej Gapiński, *Sacrum i codzienność. Prośby o modlitwę nadsyłane do Kalwarii Zebrzydowskiej w latach 1965–1979,* Warsaw 2008, p. 112.

58 Marcin Czerwiński, *Życie po miejsku*, Warsaw 1975, p. 6.

59 Ibid., p. 8.

2.6. Narrative Strategies

Family sociologists' narrative strategies were overwhelmingly subordinated to a functionalist or structuralist approach. In practice, this generally means inserting the analyses of social processes in fairly formalized frameworks created according to a predefined formula. It is of great assistance to our day that family scholars conducted questionnaires and reported their research methods in detail and, in most cases, honestly, in the introductions to their articles and books. However, because their methods and family typologies were reiterated, reading these works "as a whole" increases a sense of the sociological interview as formulaic. It is a small wonder that, on an analytical level, a static analysis dominates the sociological narratives, despite the stress on the importance of the changes occurring (the time perspective); this is supported by statistical data that takes into consideration the space of the city and/or village (the spatial perspective). This is not the norm, though. One example of an author whose work is deeply rooted in history is Danuta Markowska. There was also substantial political censorship when it came to synthetic concepts, though not always. In their publication for a more popular readership, *Współczesna rodzina w Polsce* [The Contemporary Family in Poland, 1975], Dodziuk-Lityńska and Markowska offered a critical evaluation of "reductionist policy" toward the role of the family introduced in the early 1950s:

> [. . .] The growing symptoms of this crisis have not been accompanied by parallel attempts to create a new normative model for the married couple and family. Laws [. . .] have defined the family only in the most general categories, while the official propaganda of the mass media has more promoted the model "citizen" than a member of the household family group. While the social import of the family was highly accentuated, its private aspect was omitted. In addition, roles outside the family (social, professional) were given precedence over family roles.[60]

Family reality was subjected to analysis, using several key concepts, among which the most important, apart from urbanization and industrialization, was equality and reduction of cultural differences (mixed marriages), social advancement, social mobility, the patriarchy, procreation policy, and finally, feminism. Reference was also made to a proposal by Antonina Kłoskowska, a model and standard of a normative nature, which, as such, is essential to propaganda and teaching, where the model is socially applied.[61] We should point out that research

60 Anna Dodziuk-Lityńska, Danuta Markowska, *Współczesna rodzina w Polsce*, p. 24.

61 Antonina Kłoskowska, "Wzory i modele w socjologicznych badaniach rodziny," *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 1962, Vol. 2, pp. 35–55.

on the family has often focused on the experience of emancipated women, though this generally only applied to working women. The scholars noticed that professional work, despite the lack of equality in the workplace (women were paid 60 % of men's salaries and occupied lower positions), significantly bolstered the woman's place in the family.

As I have mentioned, the hundreds of available works on the family are dominated by objectivized forms of narrative, subordinate either to a research program formula (e.g. Tyszka's team), a family typology, promoted models (in women's magazines, for instance), or particular case studies.

Although many sociologists have spoken up as experts in the press, they have seldom succumbed to the temptation to write in a journalistic style. There are, however, exceptions, including Barbara Tryfan, a very important Warsaw rural family scholar. Reading Tryfan requires the historian to make a leap of faith, because she did not much supply the sources of information behind her knowledge. She made no secret of her personal commitment to women's emancipation, deeply persuaded of the swift advent of equal rights, particularly where rural women were concerned. She enjoyed quoting Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, and her works are built on quite bold theses. In our day, we might call Tryfan a feminist sociologist. Barbara Tryfan readily and frequently collaborated with journalists, in her publications with Józef Grabowicz, for example,[62] whose thorough analysis applies popular narrative models from novels to describe women's situation in the country. Thus, we have unhappy relationships, romantic love, and cardboard figures. It seems that her use of certain stylistic and narrative tropes from pop literature in the statements of (expert) scholars in the communist period was a conscious tactic. These texts are deeply rooted in the above-described dichotomic model of "modernity" (toward which the family strives) and "rural backwardness" (which must be discarded). Tryfan's signal of modernity in the rural context is, above all, openness to emotions and a rejection of economics as foundational to the marital bond. Analyzing attitudes toward divorce in the country, Tryfan and Grabowicz consulted court documents and often quoted archival materials, though without supplying the case numbers, surnames, or names of the places where the often highly dramatic incidents occurred. We

62 Józef Grabowicz, Barbara Tryfan, "Na wsi rozwody," *Polityka* 1962, No. 44, p. 2; "Wzrost rozwodów a kryzys małżeństwa," *Wieś Współczesna* 1962, No. 8, pp. 82–93; see also: Józef Grabowicz, "Konflikty małżeńskie na wsi w świetle spraw rozwodowych. Informacja o spostrzeżeniach reporterskich i zamierzeniach badawczych," *Roczniki Socjologii Wsi* 1964, Vol. 2, pp. 130–135.

might well cite a fragment of an atypical narrative (for the oeuvre of family sociology as a whole):

> Surveying the acts of divorce proceedings, it seems strange that, among the diverse, trivial and serious causes, the word 'love' very seldom appears. Among eighty divorcing couples not a single one justifies his or her decision by love for a third party. Could it be that feelings for another person, which, as we know, often play a major role in divorce cases, did not exist here at all, were pushed to the margins of life?[63]

Tryfan and Grabowicz readily brought up particular cases to illustrate their thesis of the need to change the model of rural marriage, reporting the reconstructed events with the flow of a fictional narrative. Another example could be the story of girl reconstructed on the basis of court documents, which might be called the story of "Borynowa of Białystok," the protagonist engaged in relations with a married man, resulting in her punishment by the appalled rural society:

> Along the way they came across the target of their anger, carrying a basket of chocolate, wine, and eggs. They jumped her and began hitting her with sticks. They broke the eggs over her head and stomped the chocolate into the ground. She tried to flee. But they grabbed her arms, tied them with rope, tore her clothing, and shouted: 'We'll make you beautiful!' Bewildered and suffering, lying face down, she pleaded for her life. But the women were riled up, and not eager to relinquish the right to vengeance they had gained by force. The bit and kicked her, scratching, clawing her face and pulling out her hair, and when the pain made her begin to pass out, they poured turpentine over her. 'We'll pour it down her backside and set it on fire, so that she'll never go looking at someone else's husband.' They tossed her half-dead onto a railway track, and then, satisfied with their act of justice, they went home.[64]

The waning of the communist era, with its socio-political crisis, also favored the "spicy" narrative. On the one hand, sociologists had to critically define the phenomenon of the forced return to "traditional social roles" in the family. On the other hand, their conclusions did not shy from surprisingly unequivocal moral judgments of their protagonists. In conducting research into blue-collar families under Tyszka's guidance, Poznań's sociologists even singled out a group of respondents, "women who destabilize the family," who: "[. . .] are unbalanced. They often lock horns with other family members. They easily make social contacts and new friends. They succumb to the temptations of extramarital

63 Józef Grabowicz, Barbara Tryfan, *Wzrost rozwodów a kryzys małżeństwa*, p. 84.
64 Ibid., pp. 90 ff.

erotic escapades. The resolve the conflict between their husband and extramarital partner to the advantage of the new partner."[65]

Kwilecki and Łączkowska also wrote of "a tendency to life without regard for ethics, in search of their own definition of comfort and pleasure, forming a relationship with a new partner without considering the best interests of the child, and without so much of a sense of guilt toward it, making these women morally repulsive."[66]

They call young working women "deserving of sympathy," as "seeing the uncertainty of a marriage bond, and the obstacles that lie on the way, they decide to have several consecutive abortions. These decisions, which promptly fix a tight situation, have unfortunate long-term biological and health-related effects (as the diarists themselves note) and a negative impact on later family life, which, in turn – as a reading of the diaries demonstrates – is not acknowledged by the authors themselves."[67]

To my mind, these quoted fragments show the sociologists' active participation in creating a particular kind of discourse in the crisis era.

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Polish family sociologists are presently inclined to describe this field of research in terms of constant development, from the mid nineteenth century to the present; meanwhile, we ought to stress that, in 1956–1989, family sociology created fairly singular models of analysis. As such, the work of this sub-discipline requires reinterpretation, which coinsiders the political and environmental factors that influenced the functioning of sociology at the time, and the prevailing scholarly perspectives. These demanded that sociologists focus on certain phenomena and marginalize others which, from our point of view, seem particularly crucial. While we may agree that the shadow zone, consciously omitted by family sociologists in their theses on development in communist Poland, was quite extensive, this does not mean that no research ventured there at all, as shown by numerous studies in the present book, not only by sociologists but also by the lawyers, criminologists, and teachers who collaborated with them.

65 Andrzej Kwilecki, Maria Łączkowska, "Problemy rodziny robotniczej w świetle najnowszych materiałów autobiograficznych," *Studia Socjologiczne* 1987, No. 1, p. 111.
66 Ibid., p. 112.
67 Ibid.

Chapter 3 "Unmarried Girl with Child:" Beyond a Hybrid System of Social Aid

Introduction: *We Begin Just the Two of Us*

In the first year of Martial Law, on 4 May 1982, listeners of Program Three of Polish Radio, the popular *Trójka*, might have tuned in to the Family Magazine series to hear *We Begin Just the Two of Us* by Hanna Liszewska, which the journalist dedicated to young single mothers. Liszewska paired conversations with women she met at centers throughout the country with extensive interviews with the heads of two institutions, including a nun. The ninety-minute broadcast opened with a conversation with a mother at the orphanage on Książęca Street in Warsaw:

Mother: [. . .] I come from a provincial town. In the seventh month I left home. . . I had to leave home. . . my parents knew nothing about the pregnancy. I spent the whole time walking around depressed. I was mostly afraid it would take its toll on the child. Only a girlfriend and my sixteen-year-old sister knew about the pregnancy. I walked around so upset. . . I was so worked up. I didn't know what to do next. I would give birth, and then what? Where would I go? I couldn't just leave it on the street.

Hanna Liszewska: And your family didn't suspect anything?

M: No. I left just in time, in the seventh month. I looked fairly slim right till the end, so no one noticed a thing.

HL: How old are you?

M: I'm twenty-three. I came here, to 21 Książęca Street in Warsaw. I was redirected to Lublin. I was there for a time and then a week before giving birth I came to Warsaw, to give birth here, because after the child was born, we were to travel to Włocławek. I had a home arranged there, where I could stay with the child. But it didn't work out. The woman who arranged it had been misinformed. What had been set up for me in Włocławek was a hotel run by nuns and there was no place for the child. I only spent three weeks there, and then came here to Warsaw with a nun, who helped me arrange a place for the infant on Nowogrodzka Street. For the time being I'm here with my daughter. I can stay here for as long as I'm feeding her. When the feeding ends, I don't know what I'll do, I haven't arranged an apartment or anything. I don't know where I can go. I can't really predict how my parents would react. I know my mother would be very worried, because she's particularly sensitive to public opinion. It's a fairly small town, everyone knows everything about what's happening around them. There's some especially annoying neighbors around there. I guess that's everything. . . I've gone through. . .

HL: Were you working or going to school there?
M: I was working, but just before the birth I was taken on for a limited time. I only worked for three months. So I don't have any vacation time, any benefits. I don't know. . . If I could find an apartment, maybe I could work out of the house? I could stay by the child and do some kind of work.
HL: And if you don't find an apartment, what will you do? And where will you go from here, because you can't stay here forever?
M: I don't know.
HL: You can't go back to your parents?
M: Not really.
HL: Does the father of the child know about your situation? Does he know you've given birth?
M: The father is abroad. When he left he knew I was pregnant and he encouraged me to have an abortion. I said I wouldn't. But now he doesn't know if the child is born or not, because I haven't replied to his last letter. So he doesn't know the child exists. He'll probably be back in three years. . .
HL: And he won't know he has a daughter.
M: I'll try to make sure he never sees the child. . . Because of what he did. He left. He left me at the worst moment. He knew about the situation. He knew I had nothing set up. No home. Nowhere to stay. He has no right to the child, not even to see her. Although the child has no father, I'd like to be her father and mother in one. So she'll be happy.
HL: What do you miss most lately?
M: I guess a home. Although recently things weren't the best at home, I still miss it.[1]

This source is a special one in terms of its form, because the tape lets us hear the voices of the women with whom Liszewska spoke. The audio medium makes the testimony from the past even more powerful. At the same time, it is a fairly typical record of a social problem seen through the lens of the protagonists: young mothers of children born out of wedlock. Defining these women as a problem is a major part of why they featured in this public medium.

To be sure, we cannot respond, at present, to the direct dependency of this message on state policy, as we cannot analyze the process by which it came to be, e.g. through censorship. What was possible for the more or less famous film productions of the day was almost impossible for one of a thousand radio broadcasts. As such, we

1 Archive of Polish Radio in Warsaw (hereafter – APR). Pr III 84042+a, *Zaczynamy we dwoje*, Hanna Liszewska (Magazyn Rodzinny Programu Trzeciego), broadcast 4.05.1982. For other mothers' reports: APR, F 29594 + ab, *Matka – Matieria – Mother* (from the *Wieczór Muzyki i Myśli* series), M. Kandefer, M. de Latour, M. Kownacka, D. Malkiewicz, M. Tułowiecka, I. Thune-Sagan 1984, broadcast 26.05.1984; APR, Pr III 76963, *Równanie kukułki*, E. Góral, broadcast 15.01.1980.

are left to assume that the reporter was following the station directors' instructions, certain awkward subjects were cut out, and of others Liszewska did not ask.

Program Three was in a special situation at the time. To be sure, Polskie Radio had returned to broadcasting the show according to the pre-December-13th framework in 1982. However, like television, it underwent militarization and a verification process for journalists. And because *Trójka* was famous for its employees' involvement in creating Solidarity, this process touched it in a particular way. The station was reactivated in April, under the direction of Andrzej Turski, but unlike other media, it did not succumb to the Newspeak that was ubiquitous at the time. From then on, the program's audience was meant to be young people, and not the urban intelligentsia who had been the main listeners.[2]

Situating the public radio broadcast in the first months of Martial Law, which brought many challenges, and the broader context of the Gierek-era political populism, naturally undermines its credibility. This is only partly true, though. We might suspect that the broadcast was bound by censorship and that it was subordinated to political priorities. However, both common sense and knowledge of the media of the time tell us that the single mother, though present in political discourse, was not a subject of capital importance. If indeed this particular broadcast was manipulated, it seems most likely that the topic was promoted on the air as safe and relatively politically neutral, like Jerzy Broszkiewicz's multi-part novel *Happily Ever After*, a reading of which came before Liszewska, or the classic jazz by Duke Ellington which came through the speakers when she was finished.[3] This was a problem about which we could publicly speak as much as we pleased, because, given the civil rights being broken during Martial Law and the vendetta cleansings in the government, it could hardly make much of an impression on the listener.

However, we approach the core of the issue here: the broadcast, like most of the notes, analyses, and research used in this chapter, is a part, or a clear extension of state policy. We see mothers from Książęca in Warsaw because the state

2 On history of media during Martial Law, see: Adam Ruciński, "Instytucje medialne w okresie stanu wojennego," *Przegląd Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Społeczny* 2013, No. 2, pp. 56–72; Aleksandra Bagieńska-Masiota, "Prawne podstawy cenzury prasy w okresie stanu wojennego w Polsce (1981–1983)," *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 2015, Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 185–204; *Polskie Radio i Telewizja w stanie wojennym*, introduced and edited by Sebastian Ligarski and Grzegorz Majchrzak, Warsaw 2011; Jolanta Muszyńska, Aneta Osiak, Dorota Wojtera, *Obraz codzienności w prasie stanu wojennego: Gdańsk, Kraków, Warszawa*, Warsaw 2006.

3 "Program Polskiego Radia," *Dziennik Polski*, 04/05/1982, p. 6.

institutions wanted to see them, for reasons we shall soon detail. Of course, we do have content here whose genealogy is less plain; I have in mind the personal content, found in various epistolary anthologies, journals, and memoirs, and above all, in the collections of the Friends of Memoirs Society *(Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Pamiętnikarstwa)*. Unmarried women, widows, and divorcées are generally overrepresented among the participants of memoir writing contest. The need to share their fate, the conviction of the singularity of their experience, loneliness, and perhaps also the struggle for real intervention were their basic motives for describing their lives. Among these, tales of "single mothers" unite in a chorus, speaking of solitary efforts to overcome series of hardships. The emphasis here is on "solitary." However, reflections on their own situation and their strategies for dealing with adversity differ enormously. Despite their unique value, these messages vanish in the voices of women whose situation was analyzed by social policy specialists and whose letters and opinions were therefore gathered for state programs. Publications based on them were printed in small quantities in state research institutions directly answerable to the ministry. This was the origin of much of the content I have used, a fact which is of key significance to the conclusions of analyses of the situations of single mothers in Polish society after 1956. My assumption is that their analysis is, to a major extent, the story of the official discourse, yet even considering these limitations, I still accept that individual experiences are held in the stories behind the discourse, including everyday anxieties. Thus, based on personal accounts preserved and filtered by the experts, and on an analysis of the experts' debates and the circumstances behind them, I will try to ascertain how single mothers were excluded from everyday life in communist Poland and in the public debate of the time. For the sake of narrative transparency. I will be using the concept of the single mother, though I do, of course, realize the broader semantic field that this concept conceals, as explained below.

3.1. "Pregnant, Single, and Far from Home:"[4] Crisis and Coming out of the Shadows

The Radio Three reporter investigates the most dramatic, not the most common incidents of young women who have lost the financial and emotional support of

4 The title of this sub-chapter alludes to an article by Rachel G. Fuchs and Leslie Page Moch, "Pregnant, Single, and Far from Home: Migrant Women in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *The American Historical Review* 1990, Vol. 95, No. 4, pp. 1,007–1,031.

their families through pregnancy, and sometimes also their jobs, and thus, their home. They experience rejection, and ultimately, (near) homelessness:

> At central station, Liszewska says on the air, I once met a girl who had been bunking there for several days, emaciated and weak; she was asking about the nearest birth clinic. By tracking them down, I met more of these girls. [. . .] Seeking help, they often leave their communities, afraid of their parents' rage or a malicious neighbor. [. . .] They have nowhere to stay and no one to confide in.[5]

Seen from the viewpoint of the statistics of the day, these girls were typical unwed young mothers who had decided to leave their families. First, they came from the city. Second, like many women and girls in this situation, they began a forced migration to other cities. They abandoned their families, supposing they would bring shame down on their mothers and fathers. They left the communities that rejected them or, as they personally believed, could have done so. Thus, they entered the tradition of pregnant women forced to migrate, ranks filled in the modern era with servants, seamstresses, and cooks in Paris, London, and Krakow, causing distress for social activists, politicians, and religious workers, who assumed it remarkably easy for them to take the path of crime and sin, primarily when it came to prostitution and infanticide.[6]

At the same time, Liszewska's protagonists clearly reflect the Polish economic and political situation at the time. The stories of the young mothers do not stray into politics as such, as was the case with Irena, the "single woman" of Agnieszka Holland's famous colonel, who ineffectually stormed the Wrocław Polish United Workers' Party headquarters, and whose family urged her to seek support in Solidarity.[7] If these themes had appeared in the broadcast then, like Holland's film, would have been shelved. In fact, however, their absence has a real justification, as it is hard to imagine that twenty-year-olds were very conscious of these paths for finding help. The Polish reality of the early 1980s makes itself felt in another way. The woman is left alone because of her potential future husband, who met a fairly widespread Polish fate in the 1980s: he emigrated abroad. This was probably for economic reasons, as he was planning to return to Poland after approximately three years. He could not have imagined what would happen in

5 APR, Pr III 84042+a, *Zaczynamy we dwoje.*

6 Rachel G. Fuchs, Leslie P. Moch, *Pregnant, Single, and Far from Home*. . .

7 *Single Woman*, 1981, directed by Agnieszka Holland.

December 1981.[8] Of the mother, we only know she is a working young woman, and not a teenager. The protagonist is thus an adult, but has a deep sense of double exclusion: from the family circle and the city society. She is not entirely helpless, as we can see from her awareness of the realities of the time and the most effective ways of operating during a crisis:

> I had a home **arranged** there, where I could stay with the child. But it didn't work out. The woman who **arranged** it had been wrongly informed. What had been set up for me in Włocławek was a hotel run by nuns and there was no room for the child. [. . .] I came here to Warsaw with a nun, who helped me **arrange** a place for the infant on Nowogrodzka Street. [. . .] When the feeding ends, I don't know what I'll do, I haven't **arranged** an apartment or anything.[9]

In only a few minutes the girl suggests informal ways of acquiring things five times, whether this might concern a care center or church unit, which the broadcast presents as closely tied to the state policy system, and quite financially dependent on it. At the same time, the young woman is not a subject. Rather, she remains a passive element in this system. She was not doing the arranging, things were arranged for her. She is at the mercies of the state welfare system, which works like a shortage economy, on the fringes of formal rules, or the Church's charity. In both cases, however, the key to acquiring something in particular, even essentials, like a bed in an aid institution or assistance for a newborn, is meeting the people who occupy the right positions in the welfare system.

These women's extremely difficult situation, equally due to rejection from their families as the first line of defense in a crisis, and the incompetence of the state and its social aid system, led to this issue gradually gaining publicity and to single mothers coming out of the shadows. In this respect, "girls who had lost their way," as the journalist calls them, became, only in a symbolic sense, of course, beneficiaries of the crisis at the end of Polish communism. The fortunes of Agnieszka Holland's film about a pair of outcasts, a single letter carrier and a handicapped pensioner, deprived of an audience for many years because of censorship, might have opposed this thesis, were it not for the fact that the film was

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8 As Dariusz Stola established, in 1981 the number of temporary trips to the West increased by eighty per cent, and private trips by over one hundred per cent compared to 1980. The government registered more trips than during the entire twenty years of 1949–1969. See: Dariusz Stola, "Migracje zagraniczne i schyłek PRL," in: *Społeczeństwo polskie w latach 1980–1989*, eds. Natalia Jarska, Jan Olaszek, Warsaw 2015, p. 58.

9 APR, Pr III 84042+a, *Zaczynamy we dwoje*.

shelved for seven years, as it decidedly went beyond the interventional appeal for single mothers, becoming a bitter reflection on the state of Polish social consciousness and a bold statement on the country's political situation.

In fact, the growing interest in the plight of single mothers came from tensions which arose between the family and the state, chiefly seen in terms of a goods distributor. The family was an unquestionable facet of the socialist structure and a pillar in the state's image, without which, it was widely supposed, the whole system would have swiftly eroded. On the one hand, this contradicted the processes of individualization that marked the latter half of the twentieth century. On the other hand, visions of modernity from a Stalinist perspective, abandoned in 1956.[10] Justifications for this approach to the family might be found in the traditional social practices during the Thaw period, and then the adaptation of this approach to the social policy system, based on the workplace (which conferred goods) and the family (their main receiver).[11] Subsequent actions that were legal, political, and also symbolic, indicated the rebuilding of trust in the family as factor partly responsible for the success of the state as a whole. More crucially, however, these actions went hand in hand with imposing a whole range of responsibilities on the family, particularly compared to the model Soviet system. Cooperating with the socialist state system, I believe, led to a Polish hybrid model, in which the family was jointly responsible, above all, for the upbringing of the child at preschool and elementary-school age, and ensuring care to the elderly.[12] In this system, mutual care was particularly vital in rural environments. The family was the main recipient of especially desirable (potentially) available goods (e.g. apartments, vacations) in the state prescriptive distribution system. The position of the family member who played the role of the individual link with the workplace, guaranteeing certain goods, particularly a higher standard ones, had a crucial impact on his individual position within the family hierarchy, generally reinforcing the traditional set-up with the dominant male provider.

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10 For more on the return to the idea of the "male provider" during the Thaw, see: Małgorzata Fidelis, *Kobiety, komunizm i industrializacja w powojennej Polsce*, Warsaw 2015, pp. 223–237.

11 Barbara Klich-Kluczewska, "Social Policy and Social Practice in People's Republic of Poland," in: *Social Policy and State Socialism (1945–1989): Ambitions, Ambiguities, Mismanagement*, ed. S. Hering, Opladen 2009, p. 166.

12 The thesis of the Polish specificity of this system is a hypothesis and requires further comparative study.

As such, the situation of Polish society was quite remote from the Soviet model, to which it has often been "tacked on," even in gender history studies. The "hybrid model" revealed itself to be a lasting alternative to the model sometimes described as "etacratic gender order," in which family relations and discourses are almost entirely subordinated to the state through "ensuring a home, child care, a job, and a regular salary."[13] This theory hinged on the conviction that the state had effectively coopted the role of the "family provider," which, in traditional societies, was attributed to the man. Meanwhile, appealing to the family was highly important in Poland, and, after 1956, it was a way for the communist powers to legitimize their rule in postwar Poland. The serious economic and political crisis also precluded transplanting the state-dictated model of gender roles into the Polish conditions.

Ultimately, the social institution unable to refuse certain assistance to its members accepted a growing scope of responsibility in this hybrid system, in step with the increasing systemic dysfunctionality of the state in the latter half of the 1970s and the 1980s. In this way, the catalog of family social obligations expanded to include new, unwritten duties. According to Jacek Tarkowski, who quite critically assessed the growing role of the family and the network of informal dependencies, as a result of this turn an "amoral familism" began to govern family relations. The most characteristic feature of "amoral familism" is double standards in morality: one for the family and one for the outside world, and an intensification of egoistic standpoints. The concerns of the family or the small group began to take precedence:

> This [crisis] situation undoubtedly reveals the role of the family. Now, various strategies to ensure the maintenance of family living standard come into the center of the individual's efforts. The long-term crisis and constant shortages of goods could hone the role of the family and its small group, perhaps even in caricature fashion, against the alien, and sometimes hostile outer reality.[14]

Edward Banfield's theory applied by Tarkowski in the late 1980s mainly served to critique how the public space operated in late-communist-era Poland, but it

13 Elena Zhidkova, "Family, Divorce, and Comrades' Courts: Soviet Family and Public Organization During the Thaw," in: *And They Lived Happily Ever After. Norms and Everyday Practices of Family and Parenthood in Russia and Central Europe*, eds. Helene Carlbäck, Yulia Gradskova, Zhanna Kravchenko, Budapest–New York 2012, pp. 47–64.

14 Jacek Tarkowski, "'Amoralny familizm,' czyli o dezintegracji społecznej w Polsce lat osiemdziesiątych," in: *Socjologia świata polityki*, Vol. I: *Władza i społeczeństwo w systemie autorytarnym*, Warsaw 1994, p. 266.

failed to explain the derivation of the family's power in this period or at least point to certain advantages of informal actions that Małgorzata Mazurek highlighted (in particular, the development of individual resourcefulness, which could have served to break apart the existing social hierarchies).[15] Janine Wedel had a similar take on Polish crisis society, which she even called a "family society" in the book resulting from her anthropological study in Poland in 1982–1984:

> Informal networks of relationships that begin with the family and spread out in concentric circles create a mechanism that allows an informal system of private deals to function. To survive in a shortage economy, the family members create a socio-economic unit, helping each other to negotiate private arrangements in the informal economy. Even if relatives are not interested in close contact, they cannot disavow themselves without regard for political views and connections.[16]

Wedel, like Tarkowski, observed the unsettling privatization of the public space. Still, she also noted positive phenomena, such as better-off relatives sharing their belongings with those who were struggling. However, she was astonished by the younger generation's financial dependency on the older generation, and the fact that, in the mid 1980s, nearly half of young married couples needed assistance from relatives and friends to make ends meet, and then later accepted responsibility for their parents and grandparents.[17]

All those who required assistance in the late 1970s and 1980s and had slipped outside the magic circle of the basic "socio-economic unit" – and thus were both deprived of family support and had no alternate circles of friends – essentially found themselves in a "no-win" position. As a result of the insufficiency of the social care system, there was no safety net, and these people were left to a kind of "no man's land." It is not surprising, then, that the issue of single mothers problem became crucial at a time when the system became so inefficient that women without family support had no chance of receiving even basic assistance:

> Line-ups, for instance. It is very difficult to stand in line with a small child. Normally a family has a mother-in-law, or an aunt, some other women, but single mothers really are very much on their own here.[18]

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15 Małgorzata Mazurek, *Społeczeństwo kolejki. O doświadczeniach niedoboru 1945–1989*, Warsaw 2010, p. 69.

16 Janine R. Wedel, *The Private Poland*, Facts on File 1986.

17 Ibid.

18 APR, Pr III 84042+a, *Zaczynamy we dwoje*, interview with Daria Plaskacz of the Catholic Clinic in Warsaw, ul. Książęca 21.

Thus, this went from being a marginal problem to an urgent one, and the topic of more and more research, corresponding to the policies of the Social Issues and Labor Institute. This situation – except that we are speaking of a much smaller group when it comes to single mothers – recalls the predicament of some of the elderly, a group recently studied by Dariusz Jarosz, who focused on the economic welfare of retirees and pensioners.[19] The overall number of people at a post-productive age in 1990 reached over sixteen million, and although, statistically speaking, their standard of living had improved in the forty-five years after the Second World War (particularly as compared to the first decade after the war), retirement payments did not cover everyone, although the number of recipients had grown. There was a group of people entirely devoid of income, and even a roof over their heads, living on the margins of society, whose circumstances require more in-depth research.[20]

3.1.1. The Framework of Social Politics

These tales of young mothers hit the airwaves in the first six months of Martial Law, as if in response to Edward Gierek, who, a year before, in one of his last speeches, had declared that the government's plans for the year to come aimed to solve four main problems:

> First, to increase family benefits so as to improve the situation of multi-child families to more than an average degree; **second, we regard it as necessary to come with increased assistance to mothers raising children alone** [my emphasis – B. K.-K.]; third, we see the great need to increase pensions from the "old wallet"; fourthly – although the economic situation does not, at present, allow for pay increases across the board, it is vital we increase minimum wage.[21]

19 See: Dariusz Jarosz, "Emeryci i renciści w polskim systemie ubezpieczeń społecznych lat 1944–1958: sytuacja materialna i strategie przetrwania," *Roczniki Dziejów Społeczno-Gospodarczych* 2012, Vol. 72, p. 199.

20 According to a study of 1975, two-thirds of pensioners claimed to lack the minimum needed to survive. See: Dariusz Jarosz, "Old Age and Poverty in Poland, 1945–1989: The Status Regarding Knowledge And Research Problems," *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae* 2014, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 50 ff, 56, 67 ff. Dariusz Jarosz also points out that the first division into the "old and new wallet," symbolic for imagining poverty, goes back to 1949. See his: "Emeryci i renciści w polskim systemie ubezpieczeń społecznych lat 1944–1958: sytuacja materialna i strategie przetrwania."

21 A speech by Edward Gierek, *Sztandar Ludu*, 10.07.1980, No. 151, p. 3.

Despite the downfall of the First Secretary and his party, his political sense is like a spotlight pointing to a centrally-governed, propaganda program to focus attention on marginalized groups: above all, pensioners receiving benefits from the "old wallet" and single mothers.

The Gierek epoch did usher in solid projects to evaluate the state of the family as such. Of course, the family returned to the discourse in 1956, as we have mentioned, though in moderation, and since the mid 1960s, it was increasingly taken over by the antinatalist policy of Gomułka's staff.[22] Gierek realized only too well that the notion of the family could be nearly as powerful as that of the nation, and as such, it became an indispensable part of his ruling rhetoric. According to Wincenty Kawalec:

> Since 1971, the state's social policy has been marked by an intensification of activities to ensure families conditions to foster development and strengthen them in childrearing and caretaking. The focuses of these activities were presented in the resolution of the Sixth Congregation of the Polish United Workers' Party and was developed in later Party and state documents.[23]

While the turn toward consumption, regardless of its cost, was the ace up Gierek's sleeve, the slogan "family" was a perfect match for his policy of acclimatization and building social confidence, thus legitimizing his power.

Let us recall: Gierek's policy went in two seemingly conflicting directions – while the average Polish quality of living was rising faster than ever before, a polarization of wages occurred. The state supported some families more than others. Social stratification grew, the "large industry" working class was privileged in selected branches of the economy (miners, factory workers, metal workers etc.), who earned incomparably more than the average manual worker in other fields, or white-collar workers, to say nothing of retirees and pensioners.

We should also bear in mind that the modernization of the state by Gierek's staff had various aspects. And although this process is generally associated with the surge in industrialization, Gierek also made a turn toward a modern social policy, at least in theory. A component that indicated the modernity of this policy's premises was trust in expertise. The authorities became more open to

22 See: Barbara Klich-Kluczewska, *Social Policy and Social Practice*. . ..

23 Wincenty Kawalec, "Przedsłowie," in: *Socjalne i prawne środki ochrony macierzyństwa i rodziny*, Warsaw 1976.

the academic community and, as Daniel Wicenty claims, they attempted to hitch sociology to mechanisms legitimizing the policy of the leap in modernization.[24]

Implementing ideas on the sturdy foundation of sociologists' and economists' work was meant to lead to a structured and extensive institutional system. Faith in demographics, or the need for the constant development of the country's "human potential," was an extremely important frame for both the commissioned experts and the projects initiated. This presupposed a departure from spontaneous interventions to carrying out specific social aims. Social policy was also meant to play a much more essential role in inspiring economic policy. The goal was for the policy to include the country's entire population.[25] This was meant to be the foundation for a great welfare state. Another characteristic feature of this vision, or rather, its consequence, was the extensive bureaucracy. The Ministry of Labor, Wages, and Social Affairs was created in 1972, and the Social Security Institute fell under its supervision.

This is how the bureaucratic system emerged that began to be known as the "state social administration."[26] Finally, a return to "an active demographic policy" was declared. Once again it was believed that rational (read: slow) population growth could drive progress, and, in 1974, a special Government Commission for coordinating interdepartmental affairs in population policies was called to life.[27] Motherhood also found itself in the gears of modern engineering. The population policy was closely tied to the internal migration policy, presupposing that population movement could be engineered so that Poles migrated to smaller centers, and decided to set up a family with a single child, or preferably two (the "moderate concentration policy").[28] To ensure employment for the young, nearly a million people were removed from the job market.

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24 Cf.: Daniel Wicenty, *Jedna nauka – wiele historii*.

25 Jan Danecki, "Kilka uwag o polityce społecznej," in: *Polityka społeczna. Uwarunkowania demograficzne, zadania, potrzeby*, eds. Mikołaj Latuch, M. Namysłowska, Warsaw 1980, pp. 54 ff.

26 Jan Rosner, "Podmioty polityki społecznej," in: *Polityka społeczna*, ed. Antoni Rajkiewicz, Warsaw 1975, pp. 66 ff.

27 Mikołaj Latuch, "Wpływ przeobrażeń demograficzno-społecznych na politykę ludnościową w Polsce Ludowej," in: *Polityka społeczna. Uwarunkowania demograficzne, zadania, potrzeby*, pp. 67, 70–72.

28 Kazimierz Dziewoński, "Problemy ludnościowe w polskim planowaniu regionalnym," in: *Polityka społeczna. Uwarunkowania demograficzne, zadania, potrzeby*, pp. 103–106.

3.2. Single Motherhood and Young Mothers: Language and Numbers

The long marginalization of the problem of single motherhood had its consequences, in the widespread conviction that there was no reliable data on the subject:

> Their [single mothers' – B. K.-K.] situation is not fully recognized [states the aforementioned Hanna Liszewska]. Statisticians are unable to say how many of them there are, because they elude the surveyors' attention, they attract no press. We might pass them on the streets, in the bus, without suspecting their private dramas. We know nothing of their place in society, their personal lives, their future prospects.[29]

The journalist was correct in saying that the situation of young women and girls who chose single motherhood or, even more frequently, had it foisted on them, had not been fully explored, but she was quite wrong in claiming that nothing was known about them. More or less from the mid 1970s onward, Maria Jarosz began researching single motherhood and fatherhood, followed by scholars affiliated with the departmental Institute of Labor and Social Policy. Danuta Graniewska, Bożena Balcerzak, and Krystyna Krupa were not the only ones. The topic was explored earlier by teachers and psychologists, but they approached the phenomenon from the perspective of young children – preschool and daycare attendees and elementary school students.[30]

I will be analyzing the issue of exclusion based on mothers whose children were born out of wedlock, but there are also, of course, single mothers following the divorce or the death of their husbands. They remain outside the realm of my

29 APR 1 and 2. Pr III 84042+a, *Zaczynamy we dwoje*.

30 See, for example: Maria Jarosz, "Samotne matki we współczesnym społeczeństwie polskim," in: *Polityka społeczna. Uwarunkowania demograficzne, zadania, potrzeby*; Danuta Graniewska, Krystyna Krupa, Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Samotne matki, samotni ojcowie: o rodzinach niepełnych w Polsce*, Warsaw 1986; Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, Barbara Konwerska, *Sytuacja społeczna i materialna matek niezamężnych*, Warsaw 1983; Ewa Kozdrowicz, Tadeusz Pilch, "Rodzina wielkomiejska matki samotnej jako środowisko wychowawcze," in: *Rodzina a struktura społeczna*, ed. Zbigniew Tyszka, Warsaw 1984; Józefa Pielkowa, "Przyczyny powstawania rodziny samotnej matki," *Chowanna* 1981, Vol.. 25, No. 4; *Rodzina samotnej matki jako środowisko wychowawcze*, Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, No. 116, Katowice 1983; Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, "Sytuacja środowiskowa matek niezamężnych," *Problemy Rodziny* 1984, No. 5.

interests, because, while their financial situation was not unlike these husbandless mothers, their social predicament was quite different.

Contemporary scholars of this phenomenon use the anachronistic concept of independent motherhood and fatherhood, and, by dint of necessity (owing to coincidence), single out single parents and those whose decision to raise a child alone was fully conscious.[31] This model was not even present thirty or forty years earlier in the expert discourse, though we find an echo of conscious choice even back then in women's individual biographies.

To emphasize the importance of the family, sociologists and educators often use the telling concept of the deficient family. In 2014, Klaudia Korzeniecka wrote:

> The term 'deficient family' [presently] has many synonyms: 'single parents,' 'partial family,' 'incomplete family,' 'one-parent family,' 'ailing family,' 'broken home,' and 'broken family.' Depending on the accepted criteria, the concept of the deficient family is equivocally interpreted. We are presently seeing a departure from the old negative connotation of the deficient family as disintegrated or pathological. Scholars like Krystyna Slany aim to display the deficient family as a new form of family life, stressing its diversity, its different lifestyle.[32]

Despite the awareness of the transformation in the discourse of independent motherhood over the last twenty-five years, the author cites theories from the 1980s concerning reasons for births out of wedlock: "In the literature, we come across the view that women have children out of wedlock after flings with the first man who comes along, because of the woman's way of life."[33] Meanwhile, the transformation of the modern discourse involved not only avoiding negative evaluations of phenomena ("independent," not "single" motherhood) but also giving importance to the experience of fatherhood ("independent motherhood and fatherhood") and withholding ethical judgments in terms of how the pregnancy came to transpire.

In the 1970s and 1980s, when Polish expert discourse on young unwed mothers began to take shape, much like today, they used the blanket concept of deficient families, where a mother or father was raising a child or children alone. Mothers and fathers raising children after a divorce, the families of widow(er)s, and the families of unwed mothers fell into this group.[34]

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31 Klaudia Korzeniecka, "Samodzielne macierzyństwo – wybór czy konieczność," *Forum Pedagogiczne* 2014, Vol. 2, p. 105.

32 Ibid., p. 107.

33 Ibid. On women's responsibility for sexual life and its consequences, see: Agnieszka Kościańska, *Płeć, przyjemność i przemoc. Kształtowanie wiedzy eksperckiej o seksualności w Polsce*, Warsaw 2014.

34 Maria Jarosz, *Dezorganizacja w rodzinie i społeczeństwie*, Warsaw 1987, pp. 81 ff.

However, this situation becomes more complex when we make a more detailed analysis. The two dominant analytical categories here in practice almost entirely ignored fathers as independent parents, primarily due to their modest number compared to mothers, which, it seems, sanctioned women's responsibility for children from unformalized relationships. Studies focused on (often legal or economic) social policies, referred to a family with a sole (female) breadwinner, a concept that mainly applied to statistics. Families of "single breadwinners" included: "[. . .] biologically incomplete families, made up of a mother with children of sixteen years or less, though this concept can also expand to include families where the woman supports her husband (in 1970 there were around 37,000 such urban families), as well as those supporting younger siblings or their parents."[35]

The concept of the "sole breadwinner" emphasizes the most crucial aspect of the issue in terms of the central socio-economic policy: burdening the mother with all the family duties and functions, and the fact that, in these families, the standard of living was equal to the mother's earnings.[36] Despite the broad definition of "sole breadwinner," in practice it generally implies a lonely existence without a man ("an incomplete family"), and not the woman independently supporting of a household of children and a jobless husband. This is unlike the case with men, who, as the statistical "breadwinners," remain a variant on the social norm, and thus still fall into the category of "full family." These connotations were favored by statistics in which the number of men raising their children alone was very low as compared to mothers, and their problems were not, according to scholars and journalists, important enough to merit separate studies.

In education, psychology, and sociology, we generally find the titular concept of single motherhood [Polish: solitary motherhood], which, in turn, emphasizes how the family group functions in the local community. It is also used by the author of the first extensive study on the subject – Maria Jarosz. In her research in the Katowice voivodeship, Józefa Pielkowa used "incomplete family" and "single mother family" interchangeably; these she divided into "separated, divorced, widows (and widowers) and unwed," depending on the parent's legal

35 Krystyna Wrochno-Stanke, "Potrzeby rodzin jedynych żywicielek a polityka społeczna," *Problemy Rodziny* 1975, No. 4, p. 1. Cf. A. Chobot, "Aktualny stan prawny w zakresie uprawnień i ochrony jedynych żywicielek rodziny," *Praca i Zabezpieczenia Społeczne* 1980, Part I: No. 8/9, pp. 27–31, Part II: No. 10, pp. 12–24.

36 Krystyna Wrochno-Stanke, *Potrzeby rodzin jedynych żywicielek*. . .

status. Pielkowa also made an overview of the typologies used by teachers and psychologists. For example, an "incomplete family," according to Kowalski, could only refer to an unmarried mother with a child, a family "made incomplete" was a family with a widow (or widower), a "broken family" was one with divorced or separated parents, while a "reconstructed" family (which may presently be associated with a patchwork family) included families with an adopted child, as well as families that had once experienced single parenthood, but now decided to live together. To this assortment we add the concept of the "problem family," which, according to Natalia Han-Ilgiewicz, is one incapable of independently overcoming its hardships. This concept was overused in public debate at the time, and was often identified with a "pathological" family. Such proposals as "abnormal family" and "socially ailing family" ultimately lost out, it would seem, to the pathological family.[37]

As such, the specialists tried to define family situations as unambiguously as possible, cataloging them by this formula. They increasingly perceived the diversity of the world of Polish families, though they generally took a negative view of this diversity. "Normalcy," to quote Stanisław Kowalski, was still represented by families based on biological ties between parents and children, with a "positive child-rearing atmosphere."[38] This conviction had all the force of a dogma, providing a sense of stability and stoking hopes for a real chance to put the "damaged" reality back on track.

Unwed mothers and children born out of wedlock were seldom the subject of independent, individual studies. Both Pielkowa and Maria Jarosz and scholars from the Institute treated their experience as one more group of single mothers to be analyzed. Pielkowa studied 180 families of "unmarried mothers" in 1976–1979 among 820 families with single mothers in Upper Silesia, in the Katowice voivodeship.[39] Singling out this group of families (studied in 1974–1975), Maria Jarosz writes fairly consistently of "unmarried mothers,"[40] though during the same period many scholars put this concept in brackets ("unmarried mothers"). Equally vital here are the categories applied to the child: Jarosz also uses the traditional concept of the "illegitimate child," like Barbara Tryfan, who takes quite

37 Józefa Pielkowa, *Rodzina samotnej matki jako środowisko wychowawcze*, Katowice 1983, Prace Naukowe UŚ, No. 116, pp. 18 ff.

38 Ibid., p. 19.

39 Ibid., pp. 29 ff.

40 Maria Jarosz, "Status społeczno-ekonomiczny samotnych matek w ich samoocenie i opinii publicznej," in: *Opinia publiczna i środki masowego przekazu a ujemne zjawiska społeczne*, ed. B. Hołyst, Warsaw 1981, pp. 169.

a critical stance toward the rural situation, writing: "There is one more problem, the fate of illegitimate children and children in incomplete families [. . .] In times past, raising extramarital children [my emphasis – B.K.-K.] was particularly difficult in rural environments. They were plagued by the stigma of their birth, and, without institutional security, their financial conditions could be bleak. Does this phenomenon remain a pressing social issue?"[41]

Pielkowa consistently avoids these stigmatized concepts, interchangeably applying the terms "maiden's child" and the more neutral "child of an unwed mother."[42]

3.2.1. Families of Unwed Mothers in Statistics

Children raised by single parents and born to unwed parents were therefore not as uncommon in communist Poland as one might think. According to Piotr Szukalski, "extramarital births" and the single motherhood that followed were never exactly a marginal phenomenon in postwar Poland; 1,800,000 children were born into such families. He also notes that the columns illustrating the statistics of these births in Poland are, "in the long view," generally quite stale compared to the constantly transforming relationship between the environment and mothers and their children, which ties in to changing views of relationships with regard to sexuality, reproduction, and marriage.[43]

Research on birth certificates in the pre-modern era confirms the universal migration of pregnant women from the country to the city. Historians explain this, in part, through the vast disproportion of extramarital births between the country and the big cities like Warsaw, where, in the seventeenth century, "illegitimate children" made for around 10 % of all those baptized, while in rural parishes they accounted for only around 0.5–1 %. Births were seasonal, which meant that children were conceived in the spring and summer months, and during carnival season. A growth in numbers of illegitimate children generally occurred in times of war and unrest, which deferred the decision to formally sanction a bond. At the threshold of the eighteenth century, historians also noted a growing tolerance for offspring of "illegitimate conception." In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the situation shifted diametrically, and despite the widespread promotion of sexual restraint, up to one in four or

41 Barbara Tryfan, "Socjalne i prawne środki ochrony macierzyństwa na wsi," in: *Socjalne i prawne środki ochrony macierzyństwa i rodziny*, pp. 126 ff.

42 Józefa Pielkowa, *Rodzina samotnej matki*. . ., p. 74.

43 Piotr Szukalski, *Płodność i urodzenia pozamałżeńskie w Polsce*, Series a, Łódź 2001, p. 3.

five children were born out of wedlock in the large cities (such as Krakow or Poznań). During this time, extramarital births, as demographers scrupulously recorded, amounted to: 5.2 % births in the Great Principality of Poznań, 4.6 % in the Polish Kingdom, and 11 % in Galicia. In the interwar period, extramarital births came to a fairly solid 6 % of the total, though here, too, regional differences were marked. In some areas, the birth of illegitimate children was tied to their much higher mortality rate. In Warsaw, where Russian law forbade "the search for paternal figures," the mortality rate of illegitimate children was five times higher than that of children born in wedlock.[44]

According to the micro-surveys of 1974 and 1984, the "partial families" accounted for more or less 14 % of all families in Poland. The majority of these were, of course, single mothers, not fathers. Taking a closer look at the data, we conclude that, in the mid 1980s, there were around 650,000 mothers raising children twenty-four and under and solely responsible for them. Of course, we might well question the study's age limit of twenty-four years for a child, for research shows that, in the majority of cases, these children, and boys in particular, were encouraged to become independent by learning a trade. There were far fewer fathers raising children aged twenty-four and younger – fewer then 68,000. As such, we are dealing with around one million children being raised in these families.[45] Most of these were single-child families, and most lived in the city, which was explained by the higher urban divorce rate. Analyzing the statistics in 1986, Jarosz was unnerved to find that "the negative phenomenon that interests teachers and psychologists is the continuing growth in numbers of partial families, and by the same token, the increasing number of children raised in partial families, and therefore, in conditions of material, emotional, and intellectual deficit."[46]

The number of these families was growing, as Ewa Leś proved for the 1970–1978 period, though not only because of the growing number of divorces; another important factor was the soaring mortality rate for men of working age.[47]

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44 Ibid., pp. 4–11.

45 Maria Jarosz, *Dezorganizacja w rodzinie i społeczeństwie*, pp. 81 ff. In 1974 – 928,000, in 1978 – over one million, and in 1984 – 1,100,546.

46 Ibid.

47 She provides the following statistics for 1970 and 1978: the number of single-father families in 1970 was 116,000, and in 1978, 139,000. Families with single mothers amounted to 926,000 and 1,107,000, respectively. See: Ewa Leś, "Charakterystyka demograficzna i społeczno-zawodowa rodzin niepełnych w świetle danych statystycznych," *Problemy Rodziny* 1984, No. 5, p. 9.

Unmarried mothers were always the smallest group. Their number was practically constant. The exceptions were the beginning and close of the epoch. The war had an effect on the number of mothers and children with no formalized marriage bonds, but their number successively dropped after 1948. This drop was particularly evident in 1955–1968, when their number fell from 6.3 % to 4.9 % live births. According to data from 1970, one-third of these births were delivered by mothers nineteen and younger, and over a half of all births were delivered to women aged 20–29.[48] From then until the mid 1980s, the number of extramarital births in Poland did not exceed 5 %. After the mid 1980s, a slow rise in extramarital births was again noted, though these numbers remained small in comparison to the following decade, when the growth in number of births in unformalized relationships could less reliably be tied to a growth in the actual number of incomplete families.

On the average, in communist Poland's last two decades, 24–29,000 "extramarital births" were recorded annually, or some 4 % of live births.[49] After 1977, a small rise was noted, stabilizing at around 32,000, which, in 1982, was 4.6 % of the live births. As Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska aptly notes, the fates of these children are so varied that it would be a stretch to treat this number as equivalent to the number of fatherless families, as the mother could get married at once, or leave the child in an orphanage. A precise assessment in this case is extremely difficult.[50] We should also note the discrepancy between the country and the city, though this is not as large as one might expect. According to data from 1970, mothers of twenty-nine years or less had altogether 22,635 extramarital births, of which 10,984 were in the countryside. Two years later, there were 271,835 live births in the cities, 14,732 of them extramarital (5.5 % of the total), and in the country, there were 13,022 out of 303,890 (4.3 %). Analyzing this data, Barbara Tryfan expressed her surprise in a sub-chapter significantly titled "Deviant Situations:"

> Illegitimate children – all those "foundlings" and "bastards" – are mainly attributed to the countryside; but a comparative analysis of statistics shows that there is a much greater number of extramarital births in the city than in the country; their frequency is 30–40 % greater in the cities.[51]

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48 Barbara Łobodzińska, *Rodzina w Polsce*, Warsaw 1974, p. 156.

49 For more on the subject, see: Marlena Kuciarska-Ciesielska, "Urodzenia pozamałżeńskie," *Wiadomości Statystyczne* 1988, No. 5; Edward Rosset, "Urodzenia pozamałżeńskie w Polsce," *Problemy Rodziny* 1973, No. 3.

50 Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja środowiskowa matek*. . ., p. 24.

51 Barbara Tryfan, *Socjalne i prawne środki*. . ., pp. 126 ff.

Tryfan seems to entirely ignore migration processes, which were difficult to read from the statistics, and assumed a priori that: first, these children were only stigmatized in the country, and second, this stigmatization was directly tied to the frequency of the phenomenon. Unfortunately, although we are generally aware of where Barbara Tryfan conducted her research, and on what groups, the results are infrequently analyzed in detail in the text, and her far-flung conclusions may presently raise doubts. However, we have no cause to undermine many of her valuable observations, such as those on the importance of alimony trials for recognizing the situations of these families and the specifics of families in the west and north of Poland (in particular the Koszalin voivodeship), where more children of unformalized relationships were born in the country, an exception on a nationwide scale.

Around 11,000 mothers annually decided to establish fatherhood in court. Many more trials were held to secure financial security for the child from the father, particularly before the establishment of the alimony fund in 1974 (in 1971, for example, there were 59,789 cases), as these cases principally concerned divorcees.

What is most interesting in the Polish case is the unchanging number of extramarital births in an era of increased industrialization, which, according to historians, has almost always been accompanied in Central-Eastern Europe by a sudden increase in numbers of children in unformalized relationships. Throughout twentieth-century Europe, the highest number of extramarital births was registered in Sweden, where it came to 11 % in 1900. It was only the revolution of 1917 that put Russia out in front: it went from 3 % in 1900 to a record-breaking 24 % of live births forty-five years later, which was closely tied to the wartime chaos and loss of human life, mainly among men. However, the sources of this phenomenon should be sought much deeper, above all in the legal changes that stood at the core of privatizing the institution of marriage, guaranteeing equal rights for children born inside and outside of marriages, and making a divorce far easier to acquire ("postcard divorces"). Hand in hand with this phenomenon, there came the swift curtailment of the father's role in the Soviet family. In 1944, a law was amended in the spirit of pronatalism, and, hoping to encourage men to have children (including extramarital ones), fatherhood inquiries were banned from the courts, which in effect meant the end of fighting for child support. The state alimony fund took the place of the child's father; the former did pay support without the court battles, but these were lower sums, and only available before the child was twelve. The place for the father's

surname was to remain blank on birth certificates, a solution that was more controversial than the financial issues.[52]

With the end of the Great War, therefore, the Soviet government stood before an army of husbandless mothers, who, just when the political system was changing in neighboring Poland, were quite a visible social group, part of the public discourse in the 1950s. Of course, these changes did not occur in the same way in all the republics. The pronatalist law of 1944 to support pregnant women, many-child mothers, and single mothers was received extremely poorly, though for quite different reasons, in the Baltic countries, seized during the war. As shown by studies in Soviet Lithuania, their bureaucrats were not even able to define who might qualify as a "single mother," as a valid beneficiary of the law. While in the USSR the concept had been a functioning part of the law since 1917, and included both mothers raising children independently and those living in unformalized relationships, in Lithuania this form was unfamiliar, and husbandless mothers were excluded from society; the only "single mother" who was accepted in the conservative Lithuanian society was one abandoned by her husband. Lithuanian bureaucrats were unable to understand why the state should financially support "mothers of bastard children," which is why, regardless of their political convictions, they effectively circumvented Moscow's recommendation here.[53]

The Moscow-Vilnius situation is an exceptionally fine illustration of the vast difference in imagining women and families in spite of the uniform laws – or aspiration to make the laws uniform – not only in the Eastern Bloc, but even within the Soviet Union.

3.3. The Great Breakthrough That Never Happened: The Situation after the Second World War

In the first decade after the Second World War, Polish authors of memoirs or letters evoking the experience of single motherhood treat this situation as an indelible trauma. A retired worker at the Ursus factory outside Warsaw, who submitted a thick memoir in 1975 to the competition announced by the Friends of Memoirs Society, devotes only half a page to her single motherhood; one

52 Helene Carlbäck, "Lone Motherhood in Soviet Russia in Mid-20th Century – In a European Context," in: *And They Lived Happily Ever After*. . ., pp. 26–33.

53 Dalia Leinarte, "Why Does Public Policy Implementation Fail? Lithuanian Office of State Benefits for Mothers of Large Families and Single Mothers, 1944–1956," in: *And They Lived Happily Ever After*. . ., pp. 113 ff.

gets the impression that she is moved by a chronicler's sense of duty, to help the reader understand what led to her problems. In 1945, Maria, then twenty years old, returned from forced labor in Germany and, on coming home to the village near Ursus, met an officer "in Polish uniform." This is what she says:

> I was [. . .] so naive and sentimental that it makes me ashamed after all these years. [. . .] The officer so melted my heart that I believed all his words. A daughter was the fruit of this contact, born after her father fled abroad, to the Soviet Union. There were no civil weddings, and church ones were forbidden. So I was left with my pain, my shame, and my misery. Only those who have had a similar experience will know what I endured. That was how I flirted with the love of my life. I tried to end it all. They saved me. I lived through several years of hell. But a person can endure a lot. I decided to cope on my own. I rejected a few suitors. They were widowers and divorcees. [. . .] I adored my daughter, but when she grew up, I had nowhere to put her. There were no daycares or preschools. She was raised in part by her grandmother.[54]

Maria's thick memoir is full of contradictions and ellipses, as if the author, speaking only indirectly about her experiences, were trying to deal with the incompatibility between her memories and the official canon. In the case of her relationship with the "officer," it is difficult to make out who this man in the "Polish uniform" was, and what his flight to the USSR signified. The language would seem not only to indicate a strategy of concealing his national identity but also to justify the writer's reluctance to marry, as source of her personal hardship. In addition, it would seem reasonable to deduce that, while this situation took place before the law on civil marriages came into force (01/011946), the betrothed did not succeed in gaining consent for a church wedding in the journal-writer's parish. Perhaps this is how we should read the spare if generalizing comment that: "There were no civil weddings, and church ones were forbidden." In this way, the author transferred responsibility for this important episode in her life to the outer political reality, which she could not directly affect.

Maria's tale is driven by emotions only slightly faded through time. The occurrence of this watershed moment in her life, to which she devotes but a few sentences in an entry of several pages, still seems quite painful to the writer. The prospect of bearing a child from a short relationship with a soldier, amid the chaos of the war, ended with an attempted suicide. Still, all details of these experiences remain a mystery. She briefly summarizes them: "Only those who have had a similar experience will understand what I endured." The experience

54 The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw (hereafter – AAN), the Friends of Memoirs Society (hereafter – TPP), *Pamiętniki Kobiet Polskich* 1975, No. 2801, Diary of Maria Gwardzińska, b. 1923, p. 9.

of "teenage pregnancy" and then lone motherhood seems to deprive the writer of all chance for personal happiness, which further complicated her relations with her daughter, whom she rarely saw and whom she called "a problem child."

In an internal review, the members of the competition jury primarily appreciated the sincerity and frankness of Maria's confessions, rating her work very highly, awarding her eight out of ten points: "This work deserves special mention. It is the diary of a worker who found happiness through honest work and who naively trusted all those around her. She is less than resourceful, which makes her fate hard to envy."[55]

In this individual biographical statement, we see no sign of the effects of the wartime transformation, which – it seemed at the time – was to make a fundamental change to the fortunes of Polish unwed mothers in the "new Poland." The postwar legal changes had yet to arrive. Perhaps, they came even before the birth of Maria's daughter, but the narrator, unsurprisingly, does not note them in the saga of her day-to-day life, as central to her fate and that of her child.

The disruption in the established gender relations caused by the Second World War and the conscious policy of the new rulers at least theoretically undermined a system where, according to Małgorzata Fidelis, civil status joined gender, class belonging, and nationality to define a citizen's position. She recalls that, although single mothers had the right to work in interwar Poland, their property rights were limited, and their material and social status remained extremely poor. This apparently arose from a conviction of their equivocal status, in between male and female. They were strongly associated with a space of deviancy, of social "disorder."[56] Meanwhile, having taken the main breadwinners from the homes, the war forced a reassessment of women who ran households on their own, independently supporting their parents and children. The single woman was such a widespread phenomenon during and after the war in Europe that it might be even called a new demographic phenomenon. Owing to their vast numbers, they could only cease to be marginalized, and civil status had to lose significance. This situation had major consequences, above all it gave permission to be socially active and forced independence, although, as Fidelis stresses, women were still seen as being made exceptional through motherhood. The situation in Poland did not differ considerably from the European average. In 1946, there were 2.3 million

55 Ibid., review sheet.

56 Małgorzata Fidelis, "Czy 'nowy matriarchat'? Kobiety bez mężczyzn w Polsce po drugiej wojnie światowej," in: *Kobiety i rewolucja obyczajowa*, eds. Anna Żarnowska, Andrzej Szwarc, Warsaw 2006, p. 421.

more Polish women than men (one million more than in 1931). Four years later, among 9.5 million women over twenty, more than four million (44.5 %) were alone: they were single, widowed, or divorced. Even if we assume some of these were living in partner relationships or had only taken church vows, the number is still very large, and, during the postwar crisis, concrete action must have been needed to ensure their families the basic necessities.[57]

Nonetheless, the legal changes introduced in 1946 more reflected the political change than this demographic shift. Both married and unmarried women were granted equal property rights. Single women could also seek to establish fatherhood and child support before the court. The postwar legal codes did not differentiate, at least in theory, between children born in or out of wedlock. In practice, however, by the power of laws on families and guardians, "a child born out of wedlock deserves full rights either to be acknowledged by the father or to receive a court ruling on paternity."[58] As such, a great deal depended on the good will of the father, for only a child he acknowledged had the right to appeal for support and a limited inheritance. This acknowledgment gave equal rights to both categories of children, as guaranteed by the family law of 1946. Minor changes were later added concerning parental authority and parents' use of these children's property, but they were dropped by the family codex of 1950.[59]

Fidelis stresses not only the emancipatory quality of this law but also the demographic situation and the disadvantageous potential of these phenomena. When, in 1950, the discussion on lone motherhood was coming to an end, "wartime emancipation was now translated into the familiar language of motherhood," with the Mother as the bedrock of the family. The single woman, including the single mother, did not turn the traditional gender roles upside-down, as things went in the USSR.

Still, the question remains: How far did changes shake up the established world of the social imaginary, and how far did the evident changes on a macro scale affect the individual experience? Even a cursory look at the biographical sources gives us cause for doubt, though they are too scattered and too few to clearly set apart this study group for the postwar and Stalin eras. We can only risk the hypothesis that this period was much too brief, and the need for stability and a return to "normalcy" was too strong to foster a profound change in people's mindsets, even with the mass mobilization, industrialization, and

57 Ibid.

58 Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja środowiskowa matek*. . ., p. 23.

59 Ibid.

internal migration. Reading a letter to Polish Radio written by the single mother of two small children ten years later, in November 1955, we may note certain changes, a forerunner of a process which I might call the "citizenification" of unwed mothers.

A woman lives in a single room measuring 4.5 × 2.5 m, in the attic of a building in Opole, and her letter assumes the form, fairly popular at the time, of bemoaning her tragic living circumstances: "damp, stuffiness," "the sun rarely peeks in, low pressure in the pipes makes it difficult to draw water, the kitchen stove gives smoke," and "the children are horribly ill."[60] Most important here is that the letter-writer chiefly attributes her and her children's standard of living to the stigma of "the single mother:"

> My children bear the stamp of illegitimacy, which is why they are condemned to slow perdition and destruction. My own health has taken a turn for the worse, I have heart tremors, my lungs are quite darkened, and I have sciatica in the left leg. [. . .] it is hard for me to make ends meet, and even harder to haul two children and a carriage up and down the stairs to the fourth floor. To give you some idea, every day I have to walk up and down 1,600 steps to take the children and the carriage, and this is not counting the coal and wood I bring up from the cellar or the shopping. A single woman's life is so hard.
>
> Before the war, the priests railed against a woman with illegitimate children from their pulpits, people avoided her like the plague, she had trouble finding work, her hardships often brought her to end her life along with her child's, or to abandon it on someone's doorstep. It seems that times have changed, but a woman like me is sadly held in the utmost contempt, not in an outward fashion, but behind closed doors; these women are diplomatically made to feel that they are societal outcasts. When it comes to apartments, for instance, they manage to find decent arrangements for all other children, but when my children and I need one, they've run out. Let this fact serve as an example:
>
> I work at the Voivodeship Cooperative Work Union as an Organization Inspector [. . .]. At present I have discovered that, unofficially, I have received no merits because I lead an immoral life and have two children. [. . .]. I should mention that Opole has plenty of three- or even five-room apartments occupied by only two people, and I even know of a case where one person has two rooms with a very comfortable set-up. But unfortunately my children and I cannot get a better apartment, because they have been branded as illegitimate; but I would like to know if, when they grow up, they will not be soldiers and citizens.
>
> Dear Polish Radio, these are my grievances. Do not be angry with me, I have only described the circumstances that await mothers with illegitimate children.[61]

60 AAN, Ministry of Justice in Warsaw, No. 285/1837 Penal Code. Special Section. Abortion 1948, Letters to Polish Radio, letter by the mother of Wiesio and Daruś, 15 November 1955.

61 Ibid.

This letter was written in response to a radio program of 5 November 1955 on the topic of aborting pregnancies, though try as we might, we find no mention of that subject. This is more of a typical complaint – the struggle for a better apartment a great many Poles waged through pen and paper at the time. The author also seems to skillfully, though not necessarily consciously, use the fact of raising children from an unformalized relationship to her own advantage in her attempt to gain an apartment. Nonetheless – and this is crucial to us – in the midst of describing her difficult life in detail, she clearly stresses her own social identity. She does not mention her Polishness, industriousness, or political commitment, but points out that she is "a mother of illegitimate children."

"The mother of Wiesio and Daruś," to use her own description, is not ashamed of her experiences (at least under the cover of her anonymity), but she does seem to resent that, despite her expectations, the new Poland does not ensure her equal treatment, which would have been a radical shift from the prewar stigma of an "immoral life." Although people do not avoid her "like the plague," she meets discrimination at work, where she is "quietly and diplomatically" accused of immorality. This is a very interesting aspect of the report, shifting the focus of her accusation from the local society, which was so evident in the diary of the Ursus worker, to the state, or the institutions representing it, which have failed to meet her hopes of equality.

In the context of this letter, we might find some fragments of a diary from 1962 less credible; a thirty-something man recalled the experiences of his wife (of which he was not an eyewitness, as he was enlisted for the army) in 1951. The young people were married at the Registry Office in Warsaw, opting against a church wedding for ideological reasons. Then the woman had to go visit her parents, who lived in a provincial town.

> As might be expected, her parents treated her like a degenerate daughter, and her surroundings soon branded her as an 'unmarried mother.' A civil wedding carried no weight in this environment, and following the priest's example, it was contemptuously called a 'contract.' Thus began a two-year period of hell for my wife. At her job, which she took in order to be financially independent, she was the subject of gossip and cutting remarks (a bit later, of course, when the pregnancy grew visible). The whole town, and in particular a fairly large group of god-fearing aunties, missed no opportunity to show their contempt for the 'unmarried girl with a child.' She was persecuted at every step, even in her own home, where she is still morally harangued, threatened with the wrath of God, with prophecies that a child born in sin would surely be a cripple; she was given long descriptions of the hellfire that awaited her.[62]

62 *Pamiętnik "Szczęśliwa trzynastka"* [pianist, partial higher education, thirty-three years old, wife – accountant], in: *Jaka jesteś rodzino?*, eds. Maria Parzyńska, I. Tarłowska, Warsaw 1965, pp. 154 ff.

In the end, the man decided on a church wedding, to end his wife's sufferings. Curiously enough, this case suggests that women with only civil marriages could, in traditional environments, be perceived as "unmarried girls with children." Unfortunately, the narrative of this memoir utterly conforms, first, to the model of the hardships faced by Union of Polish Youth members, who, in 1951, had to grapple with a hostile local environment, and second, it is written by a man who appears to be justifying his surprising decision to have a church wedding in this way. According to the author, being branded an "unmarried girl with child" was a relic from the foreign past, from traditions and superstitions (the author himself puts the concept in inverted commas), but we may in fact join the mother of Wiesio and Daruś in doubting if this was so.

3.4. Exclusion through Omission and Avoidance (1956–1989)

3.4.1. Unmodern

We can only formulate more in-depth conclusions on the situation of unwed mothers, backed by the relevant sources, in the period after the "expertise revolution" of the Gierek era, in part owing to the biographical sources collected at this time, which I am backing with voices from memoir writing contest. One of the more interesting pieces of research was carried out in 1981 by Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, as part of the Independent Workshop of Family Problems at the Institute of Labor and Social Affairs. In the survey she sent to 2,505 unwed mothers, 30 % responded in letter form. This is not a record of the experience of representatives of a certain generation, as women of quite different age groups responded. Some of the responses were published in full by the Studies and Materials Institute, and the findings of the research, which the author inserted in "Family Problems," were fairly upbeat. However, Balcerzak-Paradowska did feel that the situation of young mothers was fraught with financial hardships and childrearing problems:

> [. . .] generally speaking, our society has become more tolerant in evaluating certain facts and situations that were once seen as 'shameful.' One example of this situation is the possession of a child out of wedlock. The woman who is to become the mother of the illegitimate child feels anxious about how the local surroundings will react. Research shows that fear of parents' response, neighbors' reactions, and gossip at work were foremost among unmarried mothers' worries before the birth of a child. Although they were most anxious about their parents' reactions, in most cases these were essentially positive and expressed themselves through understanding and offers to help. Parents offered assistance, even though news of their daughters' pregnancy generally

> came as nothing short of a shock. One in four unmarried mothers was, however, left to her own devices.[63]

The scholar presupposes, as if to confirm the conservative state approach, that the birth of the child and its support are – here quite explicitly – the private affair of the young mother's family, and it turns out that, however reluctantly, the family meets its obligations. No postulates emerge from the study in the state agenda in favor of institutional activities. We only find: "We should aim to limit extramarital births in very young women (especially minors), whose situation leads us to believe that it can bring about special difficulties in the correct functioning of the family, and we should take action to reshape attitudes toward single motherhood."[64] If mothers make any demands of state institutions, they are qualified, as they represent a passive or restitutionary position. Nor is the issue of paternal problems raised.

To a state institution, an unmarried mother meant many years of "trouble" and a constant need for support. This meant that the state's assistance was encouragement to abort a troublesome pregnancy or to give the child to a care center:

> By my fifth week of pregnancy I was instructed to go to the hospital [wrote a mother who became pregnant at twenty-two]. At the hospital they asked me several times if I wanted the child. I had made my decision to keep it, and was very happy about it. Finally I could have someone to build a home with [. . .] In the sixth month I was summoned by the head of the professional unions. I heard that I should go and abort the pregnancy, because I had no need for it, if only considering the fact that I had no home, and they were not about to give me one [. . .] Life is hard and brutal, but I have one desire – that no mother who loves her children should hear that the state might put them in an orphanage.[65]

Women complained of the passivity of the aid institutions:

> Well, because I. . . I wanted to commit suicide [said one woman], and I was found in a real jam. I had no other way out. I had no apartment. I had nowhere to go. I applied to an agent for work, I was on social welfare. They didn't want to arrange anything for me. They gave me no help. They just caused me trouble.[66]

Although sociological research showed that single mothers "tended to their duties" an average of sixteen hours a day, 80 % of them slept fewer than eight

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63 Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja środowiskowa matek*. . ., p. 24.

64 Ibid., p. 28.

65 Woman aged 28, divorced, professional school graduate, employed, one sixteen-year-old child, in: Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja życiowa matek*. . ., pp. 159, 161.

66 APR, Pr III 84042+a, *Zaczynamy we dwoje*.

hours, a large percentage had only five to six hours, and all the specialists agreed that they endured conditions far worse than those of "full biological families," little was done to address these glaring inequalities. Although single mothers should have theoretically been employed as a matter of priority and helped to find at-home work, their starting situation, i.e. their low-level education, meant that the vast majority of them took badly-paid or manual work.[67]

As such, the typical problem of the Polish mother, having to reconcile work with the duties of a mother and housekeeper, grew to an unsolvable conflict. Unlike in neighboring countries, Polish maternal leave, when it was granted, was the same as for mothers who had support from a husband and family. Nor did it preclude work after hours (this was only forbidden for pregnant women and mothers of infants). There was no special family support system. Most women bitterly recall a seventy-five-zloty family bonus. The other Eastern Bloc countries were far more generous; in Czechoslovakia, for example, maternity leave was sixty-three days longer. But things were best in East Germany, where single parents (including fathers) received one free day a month to tend to household affairs. They also received support payments from their workplace in the form of days off to mind their children. The USSR, in turn, offered a whole range of privileges when it came to child bonuses, which rose, as a matter of course, after the fourth child, and for single mothers, from the first child on. Bulgarian women raising children alone received child support 100 % higher than the standard. Similar financial support strategies were applied in Hungary.[68]

In Poland, mothers were given material support and helped to take vacations. The problem was that poor mothers could seldom afford to go. Their children were also prioritized for day cares and preschools, but quite often there were too few centers, or they operated for too short hours for the mother to drop off and pick up the child before and after work.[69] This situation led to a more frequent use of closed centers (i.e. orphanages) than was really necessary, as temporary places to leave their children. Little Ania's single mother decided to leave her in the Orphanage in Katowice until she was three, that is, until she had a chance of being accepted to a preschool. The documentation of the girl's stay at the

67 Andrzej Chobot, *Aktualny stan prawny w zakresie uprawnień i ochrony jedynych żywicieli rodziny*, Part I, pp. 29 ff. The idea to help "women with hardships" through labor centers also appears in radio programs, see: APR, F 29594 + ab, *Matka – Matieria – Mother*: "In such cases, employers should label the job application and next the application for social housing as 'to be handled first.'"

68 Ibid., Part 2, pp. 12–14.

69 Ibid., p. 18.

center, including numerous letters the mother wrote to the director, and traces of her visits to Dąbrówka Mała, also pay testimony to her profound attachment to the child, and the child's isolation from the family, which was purely a result of the circumstances of the family's sole breadwinner. It was only in a letter of 6 November 1966 that the mother joyfully informed Ania's caretakers:

> I wrote a request to have Ania longer 'cause I've got no other way out 'cause Ania's not even three years old but things worked out different I never thought they would take her to preschool at this age but I went to pick up my son and talked with the head of his school and she said there's no room but anyways she would take my Ania to the preschool I told her everything, that I've got four kids that two go to school, that little Romuś goes to preschool and little Ania is in the Orphanage and she was very sorry to hear that this little child was so far from me that she teared up and said bring her in we'd be happy to take her. I start work at 7 in the morning and I'll be taking them to preschool myself, and my manager at work agreed to let me start at 7 so I can take her [. . .]. You have no idea how I was overjoyed, I was so afraid I'd always be taking care of her, I couldn't even sleep at nights [. . .] my heart was aching so badly.[70]

In Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany there was also a law against firing single mothers. In Poland, in 1961 and 1975, the Supreme Court twice resolved that a worker could not have job protection only because she was the sole family supporter.[71] Poland's moderate pronatalist politics did not, therefore, translate into a positive approach toward unmarried mothers and their children, as it did in the USSR. This was apparently because Polish needs were not so severe. Furthermore, it was seen as inhibiting the development of a "healthy Polish family." In Polish conditions, a modern socialist family had to be a full and "rationally fertile" family. This was an important part of the Polish modernization discourse of the time, which included transforming the family and sexuality. Due to the changes to occur in "Polish childbearing," from natural to rational fertility, communist Poland was to join "the developed countries, abandoning primitive living conditions, low-level culture and civilization, the almost total absence of health care, low sanitary and sexual standards, insufficient education, and a procreative mindset and lifestyle shaped under these circumstances."[72] This

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70 State Archives in Katowice, 1717 Dom Małego Dziecka Dąbrówka Mała Katowice, pupils' files, 1945–1983, file 912, mother's letter of 6 November 1966 [all documents are quoted in their original written form].

71 Ibid., pp. 20–24.

72 AAN, Press excerpts from the Center for Documentation and Program Collections of TVP SA 2514/21/4, Z. Smoliński, "W kierunku nowoczesności," *Trybuna Ludu*, 20.12.1977.

was an optimistic view of the modern world (which might be regarded as universal in Europe at the time) as "civilized," based on knowledge, and medical knowledge in particular, and belief in an average living standard as egalitarian, ensuring almost universal access to the benefits of growing knowledge. The change in "approach to procreation" might be seen as a pillar of social modernization in socialism (ensuring an egalitarian approach) and an important signifier of its modernity as a socio-political system.

The unwed mother, particularly in her most widespread, stereotypical rendition, in no way fit in this imagined modern world. Given the challenges of many young mothers when it came to the dearth of knowledge about sexuality, this portrayal, although a stereotype, had some basis in fact.[73]

In 1974, Barbara Łobodzińska wrote:

> Extramarital children are generally unwanted children. They are consummated by chance, as a result of sexual promiscuity, thoughtlessness, the inability to use anticonception. Most 'parents' of these children are intellectually primitive and have low-level educations. Some pregnant girls refuse to have an abortion, to exert pressure on their more-or-less chance partners and force them to get married.[74]

This factor of incompatibility with the modern world – even if it remains, to a large degree, imagined or postulated – seems far more crucial than the widespread, overused, and undersupported general argument of the conservatism of the state administration. Therefore, I believe that, paradoxically, at the heart of the exclusion of unwed mothers and illegitimate children in the public space, there was the pursuit of an imagined, though distant modernity, and not the top-down conservatism of the government.

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73 One respondent wrote: "In 1969 I graduated from elementary school. That same year I wanted to begin studies at a medical secondary school, but my parents objected. [. . .] And when I met a boy with a dark beard, eight years my elder, with a well-paid job, then they were quite satisfied. And I, a young, sixteen-year-old girl, had no notion of sexual or married life. No one told me that a girl has to have a period every month, because after getting close to a man she can get pregnant, then give birth to a child. [. . .] Back then I didn't know that pregnancy lasts nine months." A twenty-seven-year-old woman, married, with elementary school education, no employment, two children aged six and seven, in: Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja życiowa matek*. . ., p. 168.

74 Barbara Łobodzińska, *Rodzina w Polsce*, p. 157.

3.4.2. "Citizenization:" Symptoms of Change

Regardless of the actual causes of the experience of exclusion, everyday life was a clear source of frustration, owing to the unfulfilled promise of non-discrimination. In many statements by respondents born in the postwar period we see an awareness of equal civil rights that was absent between the wars. State institutions perceived young mothers as irresponsible, untrustworthy, and demanding. Still, they believed this was justified by the hardships of their life, which required the state's firm support. A frequent argument was the future of their children as citizens who would be working for the common good of the nation. The better educated or more experienced the mothers, the higher these expectations. One example of this attitude is a forty-year-old teacher, the mother of three-year-old Danusia, for whom single motherhood was basically an independent choice. This was not a particularly frequent phenomenon, but reports of this nature do crop up in journals and survey responses, which, like citizenization, might by the sign of a transformation, however limited.

This teacher's knowledge of the system is much greater than the average single mother's, and her actions to improve her family situation explore all her opportunities. She was financially prepared for the maternity period, had her own communal apartment for which she had saved for years, in the future she also intended to finish her MA. "I got by as best I could," she wrote "because the child could not be wanting for anything."[75] Back during her pregnancy, she "arranged" herself sick leave for teachers' health emergencies, because she was "embarrassed to be seriously pregnant in front of my class."[76] When the situation unexpectedly took a complicated turn after the birth of the child, as the father in no way supported her, loans struck her as a threat to her financial stability, and the child, passed on to the weekly day care, was always falling ill, she successfully applied for invalid support. At her school, she also made a point of collecting sick leave payments.[77]

In response to the survey question on how single mothers ought to be helped, a range of concrete actions are proposed to resolve her basic (chiefly financial) problems. These suggestions included: an added fund for single mothers (1,500 zloty), a higher family payment (500 zloty instead of 75). She believes that the employer should cover 70 % of day care and preschool costs, and 80 % of

75 A woman aged 39, unwed, unfinished higher education, employed, one three-year-old child, in: Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja życiowa matek*. . ., p. 166.

76 Ibid., p. 164.

77 Ibid., p. 166.

camps. This chiefly pertained to mothers who wanted to study. The organization of society should support the mother or, twice a year, a sum of 1,000 zloty for the purchase of clothing, and the Society of Friends to Children (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci) should organize St. Nicholas Day, Christmas gifts, and Child's Day parties. Moreover, it should provide her with a long-term loan at PKO Bank for furnishing the home.

What interests us in this case is her full confession to the state and her total resignation from the pursuit of alimony and paternity claims, although Danusia's father was, to her mind, a wealthy man who could have supported her without much trouble. Furthermore, she maintained regular, though less close contact with him.

> Now that I'm on state support, I don't know if I did the right thing [she confessed] in never establishing fatherhood for Danusia and her child support, I would have been taken care of. I did not go after Danusia's father for child support because I did not want to wreck his marriage, and he told me that if his wife found out, that would be it for him, his wife would surely leave him. This is their second year living in a single-family home and they own a small Fiat.[78]

At this point, we should note that the mother sees no need to ensure her daughter contact with the father. His lack of initiative proves sufficient to discourage any battle to have the child acknowledged. The woman believes she can handle the situation on her own. The choice of the state institution as a source of family assistance is, in her case, prompted by a desire to take the easy way out, or to shift responsibility for the family from the father to the state. In a crisis, however, she turns to both the father and to social security.

Another example of motherhood which might anachronistically be called independent is in the story of a thirty-two-year-old inhabitant of a Masovian village, who lived with her mother, a heart-disease sufferer, and eighteen-month son in 1975. She herself ran the farmstead (2.5 ha) and worked professionally thirty-eight kilometers from her home, commuting by bus. The family lived very humbly, with no electricity. The diary depicts a different strategy for facing the hardships in life. While the teacher stressed her civil rights, which, as a mother, should have been ensured by the state, thirty-two-year-old Bolesława framed her story in the widely accepted image of the Polish mother. Her report is a narrative based on a clear declaration:

> The home has to be a foundation, and in family life, that foundation is the woman. When she fails or is absent, there is no harmony in the family, only chaos and disorder,

78 Ibid., p. 167.

> in a word, the ruination of the family. [. . .] If the foundation plays its role well, the family is a beautiful home, full of joy. . .[79]

The diary's author makes effective use of this stereotype, eliminating the need for a man and father in the family stable. This strategy allows her to weave all the difficult experiences into a narrative of success, in which, despite adversities, a single woman copes brilliantly, not only as a mother but also as the head of the family and the household:

> [. . .] life is not easy. When my child came into the world, it was seriously ill. [. . .] No one came to help. The countryside still has the habit of dashing the reputation of even the most decent girl if she's expecting. In my case, it happened both in the country and in the city. Nobody stopped to think that I was not so young, I was a thirty-year-old woman, who longed for a baby to live and work for like anyone else. My workplace, where I was liked and respected for ten years, suddenly turned its back on me. My boss became distant, the regional doctor would not come to my aid, because he too had notions about me. People wondered whose it was, they made suppositions, finally arriving at thirteen possible fathers of various ages, even ones I had never met. They just made me into a prostitute, people who had found my conduct blameless for ten years, people of whom I was mutually fond. I didn't tell anyone that my boyfriend had had a fatal accident, because who would have believed me, and why should I have. Let them say what they want, what they like. It was all the same to me. I was happy inside that I was having a child. [. . .] You might think: girl, how will you get by? And yet so far I've been fine. I dream of better living conditions by increasing productivity per ha, and thus increasing the head-count for the swine. After all, I feel responsible for the lives of the two people I love most: my mother and my son.[80]

This woman was so determined that she renovated the house on her own and built a wooden cowshed, and the following pages of the diary include a detailed description of her farm's development, her problems breeding cattle, and the farm's productivity, seeking to prove her effectiveness not only as a loving mother, but above all, in running the farm. Both situations also go to prove that, faced with independence on a modest budget, unmarried mothers effectively and quite quickly rebuilt their social capital, despite initial resistance from their close surroundings. Bogusława says flat out that after a year of intensive work, fighting her son's illness and making the household pan out, no one seems to recall how badly she was treated right after she gave birth.

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79 AAN, TPP, "Pamiętniki Kobiet Polskich" 1975, No. 2783, diary of Bolesława Dobrzeniecka, 32, Kozice, p. 1.

80 Ibid. p. 2.

Balcerzak called this respondent's attitude "optimistic" and gave the following report as an example:

> Up till now I have not felt worse off psychologically than my friends with full families. To tell the truth, I don't know how my situation is any different from a divorcee's; I even think I've got it easier than if I were raising a child in a full family that was always quarreling. I would advise all unmarried mothers to treat themselves and their children as if it were normal, with no complexes.[81]

Some women directly verbalized their refusal to be condemned through exclusion:

> You shouldn't condemn single women with children [. . ..] there is a lot of work to be done in this department, and things will not change overnight [. . .] That has to end, they shouldn't treat our children like orphans or castaways.[82]

3.4.3. The Stamp of Immorality and Coping Strategies

The great majority of unwed mothers could not boast of such resourcefulness and strength of character as the women we have just seen, though almost all the women in challenging financial situations repeat, like a mantra, that their children have a right to a home:

> Why is it that we unmarried mothers with children to support, who want to keep their children near them, to raise them and still earn a living, have such difficulty finding a place to live?[83]

Young as they were, often in their teens or twenties, they were not often financially secure enough to meet the challenge of raising a small child. However, they all chose strategies to help them deal with the exclusion, convinced that they had broken rules of behavior. These rules arose from the prevailing stereotype of the young woman as prudent, and responsible not only for her own sexuality but also, and above all, for the sexuality of an often immature partner – as the experts of the day liked to stress.[84] The results of this widespread model for

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81 Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja środowiskowa matek*. . ., p. 26.

82 Ibid.

83 25, unmarried, finished primary school, employed, two children – 2 and 3 years old – 0716, in: Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja życiowa matek*. . ., p. 172.

84 For more on the subject, see: Agnieszka Kościańska, *Płeć, przyjemność i przemoc*. . .; Małgorzata Fidelis, "Młode robotnice w mieście. Percepcja kobiecej seksualności w Polsce w latach pięćdziesiątych XX wieku," in: *Kobieta i małżeństwo. Społeczno-kulturowe aspekty seksualności. Wiek XIX I XX. Zbiór studiów*, eds. Anna Żarnowska, Andrzej Szwarc, Warsaw 2006, pp. 453–475.

girls and young women, who could have emotions, but were to be exceptionally restrained in terms of their sex life, corresponded with the religious injunction to remain pure before the wedding, and resulted in the image of the unmarried woman with a child as uneducated and uninventive.

The strategy best illustrated by the mother in the Polish Radio story that opened this chapter was the flight from the family home when the pregnancy could no longer be hidden from the family. This was how young women normally attempted to avoid signs of disapproval for themselves and their children. Research also shows that their circle of friends drastically shrank, as they tried to keep from revealing their situation to their friends and acquaintances:

> While pregnant with my first child, for instance, I really felt my parents change toward me. When my son was born, things superficially went back to normal, but something still remained. They scolded my child for the slightest thing, and called me the worst names. On the one hand, my parents helped me out, staying with the child when I was at work; on the other hand, they harassed me.[85]

Isolation from the family brought attempts to stay anonymous. Future mothers consciously kept a low profile, moving to somewhere outside their hometown and giving birth there. This was also the reason for moving pregnant girls from regular studies to adult education. Even the older working women, like the teacher mentioned above, decided to quit their job to avoid the gossip in their professional environment, though in her case we also have the very interesting phenomenon of seeing the pregnancy itself as shameful, or as disruptive to her work with young people.[86] Even in Warsaw's teaching community, which might be considered one of the more progressive, an unmarried, educated woman becoming pregnant could have caused a furor in the 1960s, though in this case, as one mother confesses, "no one has had the courage to make a remark to my face, afraid of seeming backwards."[87]

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85 24, unwed, unfinished professional school education, employed, three children – 4, 6, and 8 years old – 0073, in: Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja życiowa matek*. . ., p. 170.

86 In interwar Poland, this conviction was allegedly sanctioned by a famous law passed by the Silesian Parliament in 1926. This law obliged teachers to be celibate, and an important argument raised by its supporters was that pupils might ask their parents to explain their pregnant teachers.

87 Only the writer's superior allowed himself to comment: "I understand what you are going through and I tolerate it, but. . . it is unfortunate it happened. You have been an authority figure for the others until now," "Danuta's" Diary (white-collar worker, 40 years old), in: *Jaka jesteś rodzino?*, p. 343.

This left them staying indoors. They vanished from public spaces, recognizing their position, as Liszewska described it, as "inferior, as second-class citizens."[88] This remained true regardless of their walk of life. The people engaged in helping them stressed that, contrary to what Tryfan concluded, the stigmatization was not confined to the small towns and villages, but it also concerned parents "with higher positions," financially secure, who "absolutely refuse to accept an unwanted – I hesitate to use the word, but none other fits – child of their unwed daughter. Unfortunately, this occurs, though it might seem that such people should be given a helping hand. Most often the problem with these families is that they do not want to hear that this girl needs to hide away, as it brings shame in the society, in the community, and the family often pressures the girl to give up her child."[89]

This space of excluded people has traditionally been under the care of the Catholic Church, which, operating as a charity institution, offered spaces in centers run by nuns, where future mothers can stay until they give birth, receiving help from a psychologist, doctor, and lawyer. The state offered no special centers where women in special need could wait for the birth, with the exception of places in some state orphanages, where, as one director stressed, they were guaranteed "a birth in private, without the knowledge of their family and friends."[90]

There were centers run by the Catholic Church in Lublin, Katowice, Krakow, Biała (near Płock), and in Kąty Wrocławskie, some of which had a very long-standing tradition. The Lublin center had been active since 1958. Nuns also ran some state family care centers. There was an awareness, of course, that there was no point in creating these centers in every city, given that girls sought to travel as far as possible from their place of residence. Help was also available in Catholic counseling centers in Warsaw on Książęca Street, and the diocesan family ministries. In the institutions run by the Church, preventing abortions was a crucial part of their continuing existence. The Polish Church's discourse stated that single mothers deserved assistance because they had decided against having an abortion. Support was provided to women who, as one center director put it, came from outside of Warsaw, from the Polish provinces, "where there is still respect for life that has been conceived, and an abortion is not the first solution."[91]

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88 APR, Pr III 84042+a, *Zaczynamy we dwoje*.

89 Ibid. A conversation with Irena Rewińska, director of the Orphanage in Warsaw, ul. Nowogrodzka 75.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid. Conversation with Daria Plaskacz of the Catholic Counsel Clinic in Warsaw, ul. Książęca 21.

Women again faced the problem of homelessness right after giving birth. Even if they wanted to be independent, life was very hard, as confirmed by one orphanage director. Laborer hotels did not want to house women with children, and in town no one wanted to rent to girls with small children, because this was associated with problems, such as washing diapers. A weekly day care was an option, but almost all reports confirm that this solution failed, because the children were forever getting ill. As a last resort, the children were given up for adoption or to orphanages.

If the child was to be kept, family support was needed. In practice, this generally came from the mother. Regardless of whether the women had reached adulthood or not, workers in both church and state institutions encouraged them, above all, to return to their family nest (no reports or diaries by mothers mention the possibility of adoption). A nun who directed the Lublin center stressed that she always tried to convince the girl's parents to take care of the grandchild:

> We often call on the parents to help with the child. [. . .] I brought that girl to her family home. Just recently. Two weeks ago. And her mother was not very open to talking. She had a terrible approach to the girl. But she said: I'll get through this time. I met her a week ago: Everything's all right now [my interlocutor smiles]. I helped supply her with diapers, with various things we get – even from abroad and from the Church.[92]

Attempts to get by alone, despite considerable efforts, often did not bring the expected results either, and then, a few months later, mothers of infants were prone to look for help from relatives, although a return home often entailed a kind of humiliation:

> My son often fell ill, so I took unpaid vacation time and returned to my mother, but I was denigrated every step of the way. I was at my wits' end, but I endured it all. My heart bled when my child was called a "reject," and he, unaware of what his grandfather was saying, kept going to the old man. The situation was so tense that I finally went to see a prosecutor [. . .] My father called me all kinds of things, whatever popped into his head.[93]

In these situations, fear of rejection became a very intimate reality, in which the duty to help one's own child was tied to emotional rejection. The young woman was stigmatized as "morally impure" and cast a dark shadow across the entire family, who put the blame for their stigmatization on both the mother and the child, perhaps on the latter above all. "Not everyone casts a favorable eye on love

92 Ibid.

93 Woman aged 28, divorced, graduated from professional school, employed, with one six-year-old child, in: Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Sytuacja życiowa matek*. . ., p. 160.

out of wedlock," as one diary writer put it, "and 'illegitimate children' are even worse."[94] Through established and widely known "substitute" names like "foundling," "reject," and "bastard," the child was symbolically excluded from being a full-fledged member of the family, showing a refusal to allow the prevailing structure to collapse, and reinforcing its status as "a shameful child."[95]

We should also turn our attention to a characteristic relationship that Dorota Kałuża explored in terms of statistics. This is a phenomenon that demographers call a "repaired" marriage, or a relationship forced by non-marital pregnancy. This concept was tied to the requisite canonical law – "repairing damage."[96] The phenomenon is fairly easy to pick out in the mass source materials, owing to the brief time period between the wedding and the birth of the first child, though in communist Poland our calculations are complicated by the almost universal two-phase (church and civil) wedding process. Kałuża's research suggests that the lion's share of unwed pregnant women fairly soon went to stand before the altar, fast enough so that even their loved ones might not realize that the express wedding was "a product of circumstances." These women of whom we now speak are the smaller number, those "who did not make it." Indeed, a data analysis for a longer period indicates that the number of such marriages grew, which shows, on the one hand, a liberalization of sexual behaviors (more couples becoming sexually active before marriage), and on the other hand, a continuing strong pressure to legalize bonds.[97] Many might be surprised by the conclusion that in the mid 1980s over 46 % of childbirths were the cause, and not the effect of a marriage bond. If, therefore, one half of married couples broke the prevailing moral principles, why the harsh condemnation toward those who, for various reasons, did not wind up getting married?

Weddings forced through pregnancy are kept alive in memories of a family's past, as demonstrated by contemporary research on matrimonial decisions in the 1970s and 1980s, conducted by Małgorzata Potoczna in Łódź. One of her

94 "Araukaria's" Diary (unemployed, higher education, 32; husband a technician), in: *Jaka jesteś rodzino?*, p. 302. For a similar outlook, see: "Danuta's" Diary (white-collar worker, 40), ibid., p. 337: "When one of my friends decided to have her child out of wedlock, I couldn't get over it. I couldn't understand how she could [. . .] dare to give life to a child who would be sentenced to complexes, trauma, and sad experiences."

95 APR, F 29594 + ab, *Matka – Matieria – Mother*. Conversation with the director of the Orphanage in Krakow.

96 Dorota Kałuża, "Małżeństwa 'naprawcze' w powojennej Polsce," in: *Dziecko – Etyka – Ekonomia*, eds. E. Ozorowski, R. C. Horodeński, Białystok 2008, pp. 294–305.

97 Ibid., pp. 300 ff.

respondents replied: "I became pregnant with my eldest son, I suppose my husband and I made love. That's why it happened. The pregnancy hastened our decision to legalize the bind. It [the dating – M.P.] might have lasted longer, but as it was, we had to be married. My parents wanted it as soon as possible. People look at you differently if you get married and then give birth. It's quite the opposite when you're a single woman."[98]

There is one important factor to separate the past and present: "We wanted to be together, and in those days that was impossible without a wedding; if it was now, I'm not sure we would have decided on a wedding right away."[99]

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The history of unwed mothers raising their children alone is an excellent, though not an isolated example of the role that the family played in the complex sociocultural system of postwar Poland, along with unformalized forms of social control within it. Those with no family backing were, theoretically, at the mercies of the state, though it never played the role that might have been expected in Poland, given the country's place in the broader context of communist culture. Paradoxically, the lone Polish mother experienced full equal rights, as she was not privileged in any way in Poland, despite the added challenges of her material and social conditions and the pronatalist policy that held from the 1970s onward. The lack of demographical problems, to the extent of the USSR or East Germany, was probably a basis for the policy of "overlooking" unmarried mothers. Another basis was built on ideas of modernization, which paradoxically worked to Polish women's disadvantage. In the relationship between the community and the unmarried mother, we are thus dealing with a complex system for pushing women onto the margins through strategies of passing over or overtly stigmatizing them. A very powerful and relatively lasting effect of rejection came as a result of accumulated fears and social expectations on various levels: first, and probably most potent, in the discourse and experiences of everyday life, was the image of women as sexually attractive creatures and a fully accepted link between sexuality and marriage in terms of norms (but not social practice). Of course, this was tied to religious injunctions, though it also simultaneously went beyond the social impact of the Catholic religion as such. The stability of

98 Małgorzata Potoczna, "Uwarunkowania decyzji matrymonialnych," in: *Rodzina w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie polskim*, eds. Wielisława Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Piotr Szukalski, Łódź 2004, p. 202.

99 Ibid., p. 203.

the imagined world in Poland in the latter half of the twentieth century favored upholding the status quo when it came to the family and its realm of sexuality.

However, if something undermined this imagined world, it was precisely the processes which depended on the democratization and citizenization specific to communist Poland. Indeed, these processes made individuals demand their rights, with a particular stress on the right to access to goods that were more or less available. Still, it is of singular interest that these reluctantly acknowledged single mothers hid a much deeper taboo. For each of them lived in an unsanctioned relationship, whose absence and lack of acceptance was, to the general public, a fact which arose principally from a simple relation – the partner incurred no added social costs and could remain unnoticed as long as those involved were careful to keep it that way.

Chapter 4 Divorce: On the Criminalization Process and the Power of Popular Culture to Disarm Taboo

Introduction: *Minutes*

In 1975, the Educational Film Production House began producing four short films on problems in Polish families, under the joint title *Before a Family Is Made*.[1] These included short fictional films and documentaries, and a hybrid of these genres that was fairly characteristic of documentary films during this era,[2] namely – the staged or fictionalized documentary. Like other short films dealing with social issues at the time, the series was shown on both the big screen, chiefly in discussion film clubs, and on television.

The fourth film in the series, titled *Minutes*, is for the most part a reenactment of the courtroom. The documentary aspect of the production comes from its use of authentic court minutes and the head of the trial, the presiding ensemble of the Regional Court in Bydgoszcz. The main characters in this divorce drama are the husband and wife, who are played by professional actors. Although the eighteen-minute film is set chiefly in the courtroom, it opens with a presentation of the actors in this family drama. The second, more considerable part of the film shows the court proceedings. The scene is static, the camera only wanders between the husband, the wife, and the judge. There are no witnesses, nor any particular conflicts. It is a dialogue with the judge, who echoes the words of the husband and wife for the minutes, changing the tones of some statements:

Her: We met during vacation, at a student camp, it was the Second Year.
Him: The marriage was sealed through some help from our parents. . .
Judge: Sorry?

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1 *Nim powstanie rodzina*, film series 1975–1976, produced by: Educational Film Production House in Łódź: *Dostojeństwo rodzinnego domu*, short film, 1975, by Zbigniew Rebzda; *Oczekiwanie*, short film, 1975, directed by Ryszard Rydzewski; *Jeszcze nie dorośli*, educational film, 1976, by Wanda Rollna; *Protokół*, short film, 1976, by Antoni Bogusławski.

2 Such films were also made by Poland's most well-known directors of the time: Marcel Łoziński and Krzysztof Kieślowski.

Him: . . .help from our parents. In other words – they interfered.
Judge: The marriage was inspired by your parents.
Him: Maybe not entirely. At any rate, our parents tried to make the marriage happen.
Judge: Whose parents?
Him: On both sides.
Judge: Before getting married we only knew each other from the vacation period till December, the month when we got married. . . There you are. . .
Her: We were financially set up to live fairly comfortably. My parents gave us an apartment.
Him: My wife – ex-wife, of course – likes comfort, so the situation was to her liking. I had trouble with it.

The viewer learns precious little about the couple's story. They have a child. They met during studies. Both seem rather average. They are not particularly cruel to one another, nor are they kind or empathetic. The husband mentions having hit his wife, though neither his statements nor his wife's seem to show that this was a case of marital abuse:

Him: [to his wife's excuses] I behaved like a man and I hit my ex-wife. Causing no physical harm. It was not a blow that could have caused physical harm. I guess there's no sign of it. . . [turning to his wife] Correct?
Judge: Please address the court.
Him: Right.
Judge: Did you strike with an object?
Him: No. With my hand.
Judge: Where did you hit her?
Him: I don't know. Somewhere on the back. Then there was a touching scene. Sorry, I should put that in inverted commas, because today it leaves a bad taste in my mouth. After it happened.
Judge: What was that touching scene?
Him: The sort that made us come together physically after a while [. . .] After some two hours has passed.

For a long time, the judge examines whether "physical intercourse" transpired between the two "parties," and then asks where they believe the child should stay:

Judge: Should the child stay with you or your wife? Would you like to hold onto the child?
Him: Yes. I would like to hold onto it.
Judge: And what kind of living conditions do you have for the child?
Him: Hotels.
Her: The child is staying with my mother.
Judge: And you don't live with your mother?
Her: No.

The last scenes are played out in the empty, dark corridors of the courtroom, where the camera follows the lost woman, and in the court cafe, where, we are to assume, the little boy is searching for his parents.

The voice of the head judge is heard from off camera:

> I hereby announce the verdict. On behalf of the Polish People's Regional Court, after becoming acquainted with the case of Ewa Żuchcińska versus Jan Żuchciński, I declare the annulment of their marriage sealed on 26 December 1969 before Krakow civil state official number 1824/69 and entrust the claimant, Ewa Żuchcińska, with parental care over their little boy, Jacek Żuchciński, born 8/10/1970, reserving the husband's right to maintain personal contact with him, through twice-monthly visits, and the opportunity to jointly decide on his education and upbringing. The cause for the breakdown of the marriage was either party's lack of preparation for the tasks that come before this and every marriage. . .

The judge's voice is gradually drowned out by the swelling music, which simultaneously helps create the dramaturgy of the scene. This is the waltz from Aram Khachaturian's *Masquerade* orchestral suite, which was highly popular at the time.

This film was unlikely to have stirred much discussion, and in the materials of the Head Cinematography Council, which called a special commission for the artistic assessment of almost all educational films, even the most practical (e.g. on fishing in exotic waters), there is no documentation for this series.[3] Despite this, owing to its didactic nature, it could indicate special interest in divorce in the public discourse of the time. *Minutes* was, after all, one of few film productions of a practical or didactic nature that focused solely on this issue.

In feature films, divorce dramas appeared long before but were quite rare. In general, divorce served as a sub-plot.[4] While marital conflicts and the threat of divorce were constantly found on the big screen, divorce as a sad fact appears in only a few productions, such as Kazimierz Kutz's *Whoever Knows*. . ., where we find a classic and quite credible conflict over dividing a home.[5] The home is also

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3 Archival materials from the Head Press, Publications, and Spectacles Control Agency in Warsaw collected in The Central Archives of Modern Records were not made available as this book was being prepared.

4 My thanks to Dr. Karol Jachymek from the School of Social Psychology for pointing me toward divorce in Polish cinematography of the 1960s.

5 *Ktokolwiek wie*. . ., directed by Kazimierz Kutz, 1966. The divorce theme is central to one of the chapters. The message is unequivocally critical toward the two ex-spouses waging a war over the home they spent years building together. The kitchen cupboards are padlocked, hours are allotted for either of them to have private use of the home,

the main motif in what is probably the only story of the 1960s entirely devoted to divorce. What I have in mind is*Divorce: Polish Style*, the first part of *Three Steps on the Earth*, which does flirt with comedy, however, and where divorce turns into an artificial performance featuring a big-hearted social activist. It is particularly telling that Wiesław Michnikowski plays the judge.[6] Divorce was also a marginal presence in *Matrimonial Handbook*, *Othello of M-2*, *Marona's Lovers*, *Encounter with a Spy*, and *Julia, Anna, Genowefa. . .*[7] Much greater and more serious significance is attributed to divorce in the 1960s in films for young people, in which adult conflicts are generally shown through the lens of a child's suffering (*Bar of Dreams*, *Beata*, *The Penguin*, *Poznań Nightingales*).[8]

With documentaries and short films, the Polish family in its widest definition, alongside patriotism, agriculture, protection of the natural environment, Polish cultural accomplishments, and youth (however curious this assortment may seem), was to be officially supported by the programming policy of the film production houses of the 1970s. Consequently, it became a theme most often chosen by documentary filmmakers.[9] Still, it would be unfair to explain the production of films focused on the family through strictly political motivations.

We should realize that productions like *Minutes* were generally marginal Polish documentary productions of the 1970s, where most things were happening around the Krakow school, a group of non-conformists with a profound belief in the power of the camera, which they used to paint a critical picture of the socio-political reality of the day. Krzysztof Kieślowski, Marcel Łoziński, Tomasz Zygadło, and Paweł Kędzierski grew famous for their particularly uncompromising take on social reality, and their turn from an in-depth and empathetic though "passive" observation of reality that was chiefly associated with their teacher and mentor, Kazimierz Karabasz. They not only knew how

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and mutual spying accusations make up an image of divorce which brings no relief; it does not quell hatred, it only aggravates conflict.

6 *Trzy kroki po ziemi*, directed by Jerzy Hoffman, Edward Skórzewski, 1968. The film is in three parts: *Rozwód po polsku*, *Dzień urodzin*, *Godzina drogi*.

7 *Poradnik matrymonialny,* dir. Włodzimierz Haupe, 1967; *Otello z M-2,* dir. Julian Dziedzina, 1968; *Kochankowie z Marody*, dir. Jerzy Zarzycki, 1966; *Spotkanie ze szpiegiem,* dir. Jan Batory, 1964; *Julia, Anna, Genowefa. . .,* dir. Anna Sokołowska, 1967.

8 *Tabliczka marzenia,* dir. Zbigniew Chmielewski, 1968; *Beata*, dir. Anna Sokołowska, 1964; *Pingwin,* dir. Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, 1964; *Poznańskie słowiki*, dir. Hieronim Przybył, 1966.

9 Joanna Szczutkowska, *Polityka kulturalna PRL w dziedzinie kinematografii w latach 70.*, Bydgoszcz 2014, p. 47.

to talk to workers about their employment conditions, they could also cross the threshold of the "homestead" and take an equally critical look at the Polish family. Numerous family-related themes thus appeared in high-quality documentaries, including those made by women. Here, too, we find the subject of divorce, though it tends to get lost in the themes of orphanages and poverty, both urban and rural. Apart from Danuta Halladin's *The Family*, Tadeusz Pałka's *The Farm*, Grażyna Kędzielawska's *Michał,* or Krzysztof Kieślowski's *First Love* of 1979, there was Paweł Kędzierski's documentary *The Breakdown of a Marriage*, in which he used scenes filmed during hearings before the city of Warsaw Regional Court.[10] It would be hard to suppose, in this case, that the filmmakers were commissioned from above. Film critics attribute this interest more to tendencies across Europe and America, above all with the emergence of the multi-episode documentary, in which American and British filmmakers attempted to present family life in the 1970s.[11]

Regardless of certain trends and the political incentives driving makers of short films (including educational ones), production houses imported their own ideas alongside the commissions, even dipping into the catalogue of shop-worn motifs, social problems, and "needs of the moment," as they were termed by the evaluating commission, while attempting to assess – as is characteristic for documentary filmmakers – social moods and viewer needs. The social climate favored discussion on divorce, and the film *Minutes* would seem to be a response to the interest in "broken families" that emerged in public discourse around 1974. It is one voice, less audible, but fairly characteristic. After all, this is the tale of a soulless couple of wealthy egoists, who, for some unclarified reason, have decided to deprive their child of happiness – as such, it is the failure of a model modern family. On the one hand, the filmmakers gave the main actors human faces, those of normal, civilized people. On the other hand, they focused

10 Documentary films made by women in this brilliant period of the Polish documentary are generally described as more intimate and, as such, "strike an interesting contrast with the rapacious, dynamic productions of the 1970s and 1980s, such as those by Krzysztof Gradowski, Marcel Łoziński, or Grzegorz Królikiewicz," Gabriela Nastałek-Żygadło, "Kobieca perspektywa w polskim filmie dokumentalnym na przykładzie twórczości Krystyny Gryczełowskiej, Ireny Kamieńskiej i Danuty Halladin," in: *Kobiety na zakręcie 1933–1989*, eds. Ewa Chabros, Agnieszka Klarman, Wrocław 2014, p. 324.

11 In 1974, the BBC aired a successful series documenting the private life of the Wilkinsons, see: Mikołaj Jazdoń, Piotr Pławuszewski, "Polski film dokumentalny lat siedemdziesiątych. Nic o nas bez nas," in: *Historia filmu dokumentalnego (1945–2014)*, ed. Małgorzata Hendrykowska, Poznań 2015, p. 276.

on the dramas of the child and the single woman. Finally, with ruthless sincerity they exposed a reality of divorce trials unfamiliar to Polish citizens, focusing on the spouses' mutual disdain and the public confession of several years of intimate shared life in the presence of a soulless courtroom. All these ingredients were characteristic of the public discourse that marked a breakthrough in how people approached divorce in the mid 1970s.

I have chosen this film as a metaphor for this chapter's main thesis on the power of popular culture (press, radio, television, and film), which, I believe, played a major role when it came to the discursive processes of negotiating the boundary between what was acceptable in divorce, between the safe and the familiar, and what evoked revulsion or disquiet, and what could unsettle the structure of the community. It became a safety valve, a way of regulating social tensions arising from the widespread unwillingness to accept divorce. I treat these examples from popular culture less as a faithful reflection of the social imagination of the day and more as factors contributing to the process of negotiating social meaning and shaping the attitudes and identities of individuals. The messages that came pouring out of the press, the images present in public space that confronted the reader or viewer, began to mediate meaning in a manner equal or near to personal experience.

4.1. Divorce as a Legal Ritual

According to Paul Betts, divorce is a special public ritual, a ceremony of closure, which, apart from its intersection between the private and the public, tips the scales of power toward the public. The public ritual begins to govern intimacy here.[12] In the Polish case, the mental transformation tied to the acceptance of this ceremony and its results in social life is, to my mind, interesting in its associations with modernity ("an accomplishment of civilization," the secularization of civil law, unification), and simultaneously, corresponds to the beginning of a new socio-political system and the end of the war as a historical experience. This explains why we must outline the introduction of divorce law in Poland, not only in the context of Soviet marriage law, as it is generally presented, but more broadly, in the development of marriage law in European states, within which Polish family law has historically evolved. Today it is accepted that the vast majority of standards introduced by the evolving Soviet family law were chiefly

12 Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic,* Oxford 2010, p. 115.

known in Europe before 1917 mainly through the legal changes in revolution- and Napoleon-era France.[13]

4.1.1. Divorce in Modern Europe

Divorce is generally perceived as a symptom of changes that a family undergoes, which explains the special place often attributed to statistics showing divorce patterns, particularly on a national level. The number of divorces are placed alongside those of births; the former slowly but continually ascends, while the latter, on the contrary, slides downward. These were and remain the clearest indicators of subterranean changes occurring within the family. The transformation of the European family did not follow a straight line, it succumbed to political and religious pressure and a range of cultural factors that coincided to create a historical social reality. Nearly every national culture in Europe developed a slightly different set of regulations when it came to divorce, and these were deeply rooted in both the prevailing religion and the traditional approach to the family.

The control of marriage by the Church and state had gradually been growing in Europe since the sixteenth century, butt the nineteenth century it undoubtedly tipped the scales in most countries in favor of the state. New laws in Europe from the late eighteenth century deprived the Church of its unquestioned authority in the private realm. Civil, modern family law was introduced gradually, often as an important part of codification processes: in the Hapsburg state in 1784 and 1811, in Prussia as part of the civil code in 1784, in France during the revolution (1791), and in the Napoleonic era (1804). Portugal and Spain received civil codes in 1867 and 1870 respectively. Civil marriages were introduced in Great Britain by an act of 1837.[14] As Claudia Kraft stresses, "the modern territorial state

13 In this context, Piotr Fiedorczyk lists "the secular nature of marriage, extensive divorce laws, monogamy, spouses' joint ownership, [. . .] a ban on establishing fatherhood" among the original Soviet legal ideas, as well as equal rights for women and children, regardless of their descent, and a marked division between family and civil law. Polish family law was ultimately inscribed in socialist family law in 1950 as part of the Stalinization processes. See: Piotr Fiedorczyk, *Radzieckie prawo rodzinne jako przedmiot recepcji w Polsce i innych państwach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, No. 3154: Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi, Vol. 31, Wrocław 2009, pp. 375 ff.

14 Josef Ehmer, "Marriage," in: *Family Life in the Long Nineteenth Century 1789–1913*, eds. D. I. Kertzer, M. Barbagli, New Haven 2002, p. 284.

tried to claim as many rights and control mechanisms as it could,"[15] limiting the competencies assigned to the head of the family, i.e. the father, whose position was generally sanctioned by religious law. This is a very interesting aspect of the modernization of the time, which essentially aimed to limit the competencies of religious, status, neighbor, and relative unions in favor of a centralist and bureaucratic state. Most of the codes, including the Russian *Svod Zakonov* of 1832, now defined a marriage as a kind of contract between citizens, regulated by concrete legal principles to maintain order in the public space. Paradoxically, this is why, in many cases, these contracts lost their originally liberated (Enlightenment) flavor, coming to stress the woman's inferiority in the marriage. Even more interestingly, despite these great legal changes, in the public discourse, marriage as a civil bond was still treated as an institution subordinate to Christian religious principles, and this meant a conflict could only arise between the state and the Church.[16] Thus, despite the ongoing efforts to give the state decision-making authority, increasingly acknowledging the family as an important element in stabilizing reality in the nation state, the various changes in the legal bases for the family in no way proceeded in a linear fashion in nineteenth-century Europe.

Introducing a civil contract need not have meant sanctioning divorce, as best exemplified by the English *Marriage Act*. In spite of its introduction, a citizen of the British Empire was practically incapable of acquiring a divorce, as he or she would have had to have taken it to the floor of the parliament, paying an enormous sum of money. In practice, parliament granted only around three divorces annually. It was only the *Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act* of 1857 that introduced divorce, though it sanctioned women's inferior position in society. An argument in favor of divorce might have been the wife's adultery, but when it came to the husband, only incest or bigamy were reasonable motives. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the divorce rate rose very slowly (in 1858, there were 148, and in 1914: 580), partly because of their very high cost. For a divorce "by mutual consent" one paid fifty pounds, a "trial" divorce it was ten times more.[17] Access to divorce or separation became easier in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, with new laws punishing cruel husbands who abandoned their wives

15 Claudia Kraft, "Państwo wobec rodziny – polityka państw europejskich w XIX i XX wieku – Polska na tle europejskim," in: *Rodzina – prywatność – intymność. Dzieje rodziny w kontekście europejskim*, eds. Dobrochna Kałwa, Adam Walaszek, Anna Żarnowska, Warsaw 2005, p. 145.

16 Ibid., p. 147.

17 Lloyd Bonfield, "European Family Law," in: *Family life in the long Nineteenth Century*. . ., pp. 116–118.

or denied their families financial support. Most important was the law whereby impoverished women suffering cruelty from their husbands could acquire free separations.

Nonetheless, the legalization of divorce did not mean that it would be "for all time," as shown by the winding path of divorce law in France, a country considered exceptionally liberal in this regard. The powerful blow struck by the law of 20 September 1792, extremely tolerant for its day, as it permitted divorce through mutual agreement and because of personality conflicts (previously only the annulment of marriages were permitted), expired after only twelve years, as first Napoleon restricted the law (introducing, for example, a double standard for the husband and wife in seeking a divorce), and then lifted it in 1816. The right to divorce only returned to France with Naquet's law in 1884, but it could only be applied when one spouse could prove the other's guilt, e.g. through betrayal or abuse (by 1913, 13,000 couples had been granted a divorce on its basis). The French grew accustomed to this form of divorce for almost one hundred years, until 1975, when divorce by mutual consent was introduced. After that, more or less 30,000 couples were divorced annually in France, with the count reaching 100,000 by the 1980s.[18]

In German family law, the vast local differences resulting from the regions' prevailing faiths were maintained for a very long time. For example, the Prussian legal code of 1794 permitted divorce, while in Bavaria, obviously, it was unthinkable.[19] The first act that attempted to standardize family and divorce law across the nation was the German Civil Code of 1900, which, following the Protestant tradition, stressed the importance of marriage for the stability of the public realm and reasserted the man's dominance as the head of the family. Spouses had the right to a divorce, but only when the other party was proven to be guilty.

Just as diverse were the "divorce experiences" of the countries of Central Europe, which found themselves in the Eastern Bloc in 1945. At the threshold of the twentieth century, Hungary and Czechoslovakia (previously as the Czech Republic) found themselves among Europe's forerunners when it came to dissolving marriages (apart from the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain), a position they maintained in the interwar period and after the Second World

18 Gerard Vincent, "Historia sekretu?," in: *Historia życia prywatnego*, Vol. 5: *Od I wojny światowej do naszych czasów*, eds. A. Prost and Gerard Vincent, Wrocław 2000, p. 311.

19 In 1875, the Prussian legal code was extended to other German-speaking countries as a state law, with the exception of the Catholic countries, which were obliged to grant divorces in cases where court separations had theretofore been given. See: Lloyd Bonfield, *European Family Law*, p. 145.

War. In the 1980s, this group was joined by the Eastern Germans, whose divorce rate had always been slightly higher than in the neighboring West Germany.[20]

For the citizens of those countries where the right to divorce had a history reaching back to the nineteenth century,[21] the opportunity to dissolve the contract emerged in the mid twentieth century as a natural part of the social image of marriage bond, which eventually supported the existence of various forms of the welfare state, the emancipation of women, and strengthening of the notion of relationships as based on feelings.[22] However, as we wander to the south of Europe, we come to countries mainly inhabited by Catholics, including Italy, where there was no opportunity to legally dissolve a marriage until 1970, or Spain, where divorce was only legalized in 1982.[23]

Therefore, the Polish civil law of 1 January 1946, which introduced divorce to the law, saw the intersection of modernization, the secularization of the law, the freedom of the individual, and political obligation. The resulting law was necessary, it had been discussed and desired since the 1920s by the influential part of public opinion, consistently discarded by the Catholic Church, and still evokes quite unfortunate associations, owing to how it was introduced. Its opponents had no opportunity to openly voice their criticisms. Its adherents were not asked for their signatures in support.[24] If we assess this phenomenon in the broader

20 In 1945, the legal code of 1909 was restored in the occupied territories, thus negating the fascist law that Hitler introduced with his policy of eugenics, a racist and pronatalist approach offering unprecedented ease in dissolving marriages (e.g. the right to dissolve a marriage owing to the inability to bear a child).

21 Scandinavia's tradition of divorce is older still. In Norway, the basis for a divorce law was introduced by Christian V in the late seventeenth century, but in administrative practice it has existed since 1790 (it required three years of separation or six to seven years without cohabitation), while, in the early twentieth century, through a law of 1909, divorce through spousal agreement was introduced. After the First World War, the Scandinavian countries jointly developed a uniform law to permit divorce through spousal agreement (1915).

22 Hartmut Kaelble, *Społeczna historia Europy. Od 1945 do współczesności*, trans. J. Antkowiak, Warsaw 2010, p. 37.

23 Béla Tomka, *A Social History of Twentieth-century Europe*, Routledge 2013, p. 84.

24 For more on the subject, see: W. Czachorski, "Przebieg prac nad kodyfikacją prawa cywilnego PRL," *Studia Prawnicze* 1970, No. 26–27; Piotr Fiedorczyk, "Prawo rodzinne Polski Ludowej jako przedmiot badań historycznoprawnych (1944–1964)," *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 2003, Vol. 55, No. 2, pp. 141–155; "Wykorzystanie dorobku Komisji Kodyfikacyjnej Drugiej Rzeczpospolitej w pracach nad unifikacją osobowego prawa małżeńskiego w 1945 roku," *Zeszyty Prawnicze Towarzystwa Biblioteki Słuchaczów Prawa UJ* 2005, No. 13, pp. 89–96; "Z prac nad unifikacją osobowego prawa

context of the above long-term changes, we note that the modernization of the Polish family occurred in a nineteenth-century spirit, by which the enlightened state interfered in the family system through modern law. The social reality of this time was different, which is why the processes of assimilating "foreign" elements transpired in a was fundamentally unlike, for example, one hundred years earlier in Wales.

4.1.2. A Unified Polish Marriage Law, 1945

The marriage law passed on 25 September 1945, which came in force only three months later (on 1 January 1946), unified the marriage law by introducing the right to divorce (Chapter V) throughout the country. This law was prepared by three people: Seweryn Szer, Jan Wasilkowski, and Aleksander Wolter, but legal historians give Seweryn Szer the lead role. They represented the Legislative Department of the Ministry of Justice. The seven subsequent drafts of the law and the "socio-political theses" were prepared much earlier, in early 1945. These theses quite generally accentuated the social dimension of marriage, which "must be [. . .] the state's means for guiding citizens' behavior,"and evoked a marriage's durability, treating it less as a contract than as a social institution. Divorce was described as a "necessary evil, which must be granted in certain circumstances."[25]

Work on the project, already underway during the war, involved no public debate in the first half of 1945. The project was not published. Instead, it remained the knowledge of a privileged few, including Minister of Justice Henryk Świątkowski, who practiced as a lawyer before the war, specializing in religious matters, including divorce. The secretive nature of the work impeded, or rather precluded any polemic from opponents of the new law and created an exceedingly disadvantageous aura, while hampering the operations of the regional courts in several issues that required interpretation when the new law was introduced (e.g. only midway through the following year did the Supreme Court declare that "the basis for a divorce can only be the steady disintegration of married life, provoked by the actions or the state of the spouse not requesting the divorce").[26]

During work on the project, divorce law was steadily evolving, as might be demonstrated by the discrepancies in its creators' views. Work on the text initially

małżeńskiego w 1945 roku," *Miscellanea Historico-Juidica* 2003, Vol. I, eds. A. Lityński, Piotr Fiedorczyk, pp. 65–80.

25 Piotr Fiedorczyk, *Z prac nad unifikacją*. . ., p. 99.

26 Ibid., pp. 104 ff.

moved toward complicating divorces, but then the scales tipped toward making the proceedings as simple as possible. Transitionally, one project included a law for declaring one-year temporary disunion (not a separation), and, in the course of discussing various proposals, the suggestion arose for divorce by mutual request, without either party shouldering the blame. This latter issue in particular raised doubts in terms of the overriding principle of a marriage's duration, and was ultimately rejected.

Article 24, finally passed in 1945, established that a divorce could be granted by one of the spouses' application, as long as married life had disintegrated entirely and the divorce would not threaten the well-being of small children. In eleven points, the law lists causes for divorce, which have been interpreted as examples, and not the sole possible causes. In granting a divorce, the court decided if one of the parties was responsible for the breakdown of the relationship (mental illness and sexual impotence were exceptions). As such, it could, in practice, grant a divorce without either side being to blame.[27]

In fact, most of the divorces granted in the first year of the new regulations were based on a different act, Article 13 of the "introductory regulations" (for transitional purposes). This aimed to settle the postwar social situation and permit the divorce of marriages that dissolved in its aftermath (this law held for three years). In this case, a divorce could be granted by mutual request. The spousal agreement did have to include, however, assignment of blame, damages, alimony, and child support. Cleverer citizens took advantage of this loophole to acquire a relatively swift and painless divorce, as long as they managed to resolve the details between themselves.

In law and ideology, divorce, for all the reservations concerning the durability of the marital bond, was a desired innovation. Did the same go in 1945 for divorce in the "mass consciousness"? Was it an "innovation" at all? For whom? Was the legal starting point indeed a starting point for how people imagined the subject? As such, is it possible to work out its range of associations through various spheres of experience – prewar, wartime, and finally, 1945?

Or, perhaps, it is justified to assume that, in the everyday postwar chaos, between the search for relatives and the acquisition of furniture, few average

27 Adultery, threatening the defendant's life, withholding the means to support the family, abandoning the shared home, committing a disgraceful crime, leading a corrupt or profligate lifestyle, involvement in disgraceful deeds, drunkenness, narcotics, contagious venereal disease, mental illness lasting a year or more, sexual impotence before fifty. Quoted in: ibid., p. 102.

citizens really noticed what was going on? There were things and prospects that were more essential and urgent in the "there and then." The complexities of family law generally interests citizens at moments when they are directly concerned: when they get married, they want to register a relative, or when a child is born. Legal knowledge, therefore, comes in interacting with institutions that operate based on the law. At the same time, however, one source of knowledge in particularly sensitive issues, including divorce, could be various educational or propaganda activities. Discussions on the interpretation of the law were mainly held in *Prawo i Życie*, a trade magazine targeted at a wider group of readers. Still, in my view it had no real impact on the average citizen's knowledge. Critical views of the secularization of marriage laws must have had a far greater effect, and above all, the condemnation of divorce formulated by the Episcopate, in part through pastorals.[28]

First of all, we can attempt to establish who came in contact with this phenomenon prior to 1945, where, and how often? Unfortunately, we have no deeper historical analyses on this topic; we mainly have fragmentary data from legal sources.

4.1.3. The Legacy of Interwar Poland: *Divorce? What's That?*

Inhabitants of interwar Poland inherited five different legal systems after the partitions, religious or secular, and despite numerous tactics, attempts, and parliamentary efforts, the chaos was still not settled at the outbreak of the Second World War. Thus, Eastern and Central Poland, which had been part of the Polish Kingdom and the Russian partition zone, still used religious laws introduced by the tsar almost one hundred years before (the Civil Code of 1825). The Austrian model, based on the code of 1811 (amended in 1914) was secular and religious; it did not grant Catholics civil divorces. For other faiths, one spouse needed to be found guilty. Only in the German partition zone, in the Civil Code of the Reich, was divorce fully regulated. In this region, divorce was permissible only by one of the provided conditions, joined with a confirmation of one side's guilt.[29] All the

28 For more on the subject, see: Piotr Fiedorczyk, "Kościół katolicki i opozycja polityczna wobec unifikacji osobowego prawa małżeńskiego w 1945 roku," *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 2004, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 97–111.

29 On divorce in the legal system of interwar Poland, see: Zbigniew Zarzycki, *Rozwód w świetle akt Sądu Okręgowego w Krakowie w latach 1918–1945. Studium historyczno-prawne*, Krakow 2010; Andrzej Gulczyński, "Cywilnoprawne skutki cudzołóstwa na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku," *Studia z Dziejów Państwa i Prawa Polskiego* 2002, Vol. 7, pp. 235–255; Anna Karabowicz, "Świecka forma małżeństwa na ziemiach

systems acknowledged separation, the division of property caused by the end of joint marital possession.

Regardless of how one had to proceed before the law to legalize the disintegration of a marriage, in the majority of cases divorces were unlikely to have been tolerated in the very religiously and culturally diverse lands of interwar Poland (Jews were the exception, as, in particular cases, their tradition allowed, and even encouraged this option). Divorces were even shameful among the Warsaw intelligentsia, which might otherwise have been considered the social avant-garde. Actual divorces took place more frequently between artists or officers than members of the intelligentsia. One easily finds divorcees among the leading lights of Polish literature (including Zofia Nałkowska), or famous military men, such as Henryk Dobrzański or Stefan Rowecki. The latter independently (with no help from his first wife, though assisted by his mother and second wife) raised his daughter, Irena. This was consistent with the rules of the era, which, in this situation – considered quite the exception – supported entrusting care of the child to only one parent. Of course, the woman's living situation underwent a radical change after divorce in interwar Poland: she had to find a job, which complicated child-rearing. This prospect must have weighed heavily on the decision to divorce.[30] Detailed studies on divorce trials before the Regional Court in interwar Krakow show that, before the Second World War, it was primarily Jews who divorced, or had the capacity to, for legal and cultural reasons; their suits make up over half of those submitted. Trials begun by Catholics should be treated as marginal events. Catholic married couples that ultimately acquired a divorce can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Of course, this arose, to a large degree, from divorces being forbidden by the power of the Austrian code of laws. The Regional Court in Krakow divorced seven Catholic couples (out of 100 surviving cases and seventeen Catholic couples, with 76 % of couples emerging from the trials intact). This came from examining the applications of couples who were married by the power of the Reich code of law. Evangelists also seldom divorced, but the percentage of what we might call "success" in court was greater. Almost all of them ended in divorce. The remaining cases involved mixed Christian/

polskich pod zaborami," *Zeszyty Prawnicze Towarzystwa Biblioteki Słuchaczy Prawa* 2005, No. 13, pp. 33–55.

30 K. Sierakowska, *Rodzice, dzieci, dziadkowie… Wielkomiejska rodzina inteligencka w Polsce, 1918–1939*, Warsaw 2003, pp. 105–107.

Jewish couples. The applicants for divorce mostly lived in Krakow and were of the intelligentsia or the middle class.[31]

Altogether, in 1918–1945, 1,344 people in Krakow either received a divorce or a separation. This was then a mere fraction of the total inhabitants (0.7 % of the city's population), and generally limited to Krakow's Jews and mixed marriages. Meeting a divorcee was just short of a miracle, which meant that they all the more became grist for local gossip and scandals, even on a smaller family scale. It is hard to judge how far rumors and press gossip on the political elite affected the collective imagination of divorce at the time.

We can therefore assume that, for the citizen of Poland at the end of the Second World War, divorce perhaps existed in the collective consciousness as a thing that was unfamiliar and rather dangerous, and it practically did not exist at all as a real resolution to a marital conflict. After the war, article XIII was supplemented wit a provision that allowed one to swiftly and conveniently terminate one's marriage, but this was chiefly in order to sanction a special situation, a long-term separation during the war, often made indefinite through migration. The wartime experience might be regarded as favoring groundbreaking family decisions; in the end, however, the overall situation of demographic imbalance and the predominance of women was not likely to favor divorce.

We should stress that the interwar law was and is interpreted as contributing to a system of unequal opportunities for women. While women had gained full political rights and equal access to public posts, the civil code was far more decisive in everyday life, and in practice, this made a wife's employment dependent on a husband's permission, for instance. Nineteenth-century civil codes, upheld in the 1920s and 1930s, subjected wives to their husbands' authority in managing

31 Just over half of the analyzed cases ended with a divorce ruling. For our purposes, the most interesting part is the almost intuitive judgment on the nature of the societies the couples came from. Only five cases involved rural inhabitants, and 83 % were inhabitants of mid-sized or large cities. The husbands had higher or middle education, and the wives, elementary or middle. The men came from the middle class, mainly businessmen (23 %), and the intelligentsia, including bureaucrats (16 %), doctors (10 %), and lawyers, they were teachers at middle schools and colleges. Among the defendants and claimants, Zarzycki counted only four artists (a painter, an actor, a pianist, and a stage director) and four military men, which contradicts the stereotypical image (which, I believe, is chiefly built through artists' memoirs). In terms of creed, those pursuing a divorce were mainly Jews and those who, at the time of the wedding, declared no religious affiliation and therefore had a civil wedding. See: Zbigniew Zarzycki, *Rozwód w świetle akt Sądu Okręgowego w Krakowie*. . ., pp. 573–596.

their property, and asserting parental authority and care, which was tied to the conviction that, for the good of the family, the husband had to have "special rights toward his wife."[32] Still, there were ongoing attempts to revise the outdated laws, such as the wife's duty to serve her husband.

The new law utterly cut religious institutions, primarily the Catholic Church, from affecting the institution of marriage (at least formally). This could only have sparked protest, and it did. We ought to remember the political context for this conflict (of which much has been written). The Polish church invoked the encyclical of Pius XI in 1930, making the marriage bond an institution in the eyes of God, which was meant to give the Church the sole authority as to its function. Secular law was meant to guarantee the permanence of Catholic marriages.

Much as in 1929, in 1945 the Church responded with a criticism of the new law. This protest could not, however, have such persuasive power as in the interwar period, when the Church's criticism was supported by the right-wing community, who stopped Lutostański's legislative process that assumed the unification of marriage law, including the permission for divorce. At any rate, the creators of the reform in 1945 invoked this tradition. As Świątkowski apparently said, what the Sanation movement failed to achieve before the war was now to be arranged within a year.

Here, we ought to cite the findings of Piotr Fiedorczyk, presently the top authority on the unification process and the history of family law in Poland. Information concerning work on the law probably reached the Episcopate in June, as on the 27th, Metropolitan Sapieha and Bishop Dymek wrote to the President and the Prime Minister to express their concern over the pace of work on the reform or marriage law. Above all, they protested against the prospect of introducing obligatory secular weddings and against divorce. In a pastoral of 16 July, the Archbishop also called on believers to be particularly vigilant on this count.[33] This issue was also widely discussed in *Tygodnik Warszawski* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* by Father Eugeniusz Chomrański, Father Baranowski, and Michał Święcicki. Chomrański wrote openly and anxiously, with a belief in impending catastrophe:

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32 An exception to the rule of the March Constitution was the legal situation of women in the Silesian voivodeship. See: Michał Pietrzak, "Sytuacja prawna kobiet w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej," in: *Równe prawa i nierówne szanse. Kobiety w Polsce międzywojennej. Zbiór studiów*, eds. Anna Żarnowska, Andrzej Szwarc, Warsaw 2000, pp. 79–82.

33 Piotr Fiedorczyk, *Kościół katolicki i opozycja polityczna wobec unifikacji*. . ., pp. 100 ff.

> The new civil law [. . .] shows a tendency to stretch the possibility for divorce to the outer limits, to a far-reaching facilitation of divorce proceedings. [. . .] We might well be concerned that all marriages from now on will end in divorce, as this law will always sanction some reason. And it is no consolation that the courts will impede this process, especially if these cases arrive with the civic factor at the forefront.[34]

Fiedorczyk notes that the harshest statement in this matter was made by Father Zygmunt Kaczyński in *Tygodnik Warszawski* in 1946, describing the introduction of the new law as the greatest blow delivered to Catholics after the Second World War. At the same time, Fiedorczyk aptly noted that the actual position of the Church was less occupied with the law than with its real impact on churchgoers.[35]

4.1.4. The Reform of Divorce Law in Communist Poland

It was characteristic of the law passed in 1946 that the side responsible for the breakdown of the marriage could not apply for a divorce, a premise that sparked further debate on family law in Poland.

However, lawmakers' overriding problem was the fact that divorce law had to reflect two essentially different approaches to the issue of divorce, which demonstrates the kind of paradox that was rife in communist Poland. On the one hand, divorce is defined as an individual matter, the individual freedom of either partner in a relationship, as the opportunity to express true feelings and a tool for emotional stability. In short – it is an accomplishment of civilization. On the other hand, this same divorce undermines family stability, a threat to a child's security, and consequently, it weakens a socialist state.

Barbara Łobodzińska stresses how difficult it was for lawmakers to reconcile these images of divorce and contain, in a single codex, a law that guaranteed the durability of marriage, equality for the partners, the good of the child, and the right to divorce. This required a major juggling act, which was attempted in the codex of 1950. Basically reiterating the law of 1946, it also stressed that only a marriage sealed at the Civil Office would be acknowledged as legally binding.[36]

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34 Father Eugeniusz Chomrański, "Nowe prawo małżeńskie," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1945, No. 41, p. 2, quoted in: Piotr Fiedorczyk, *Kościół katolicki i opozycja polityczna wobec unifikacji*. . ., p. 106.

35 Piotr Fiedorczyk, *Kościół katolicki i opozycja polityczna wobec unifikacji*. . ., p. 111.

36 After 1958, a priest held a church marriage before a civil one at the risk of punishment. See: Adam Skreczko, *Troska Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce o małżeństwo i rodzinę w okresie Wielkiej Nowenny (1957–1966)*, Białystok 2002, p. 43.

Priests had no right to conduct marriages without previous evidence of the couple's civil union, and thus, most couples now had two weddings – one before a clerk and another before a priest. The basic cause for divorce was the long-term and total disintegration of the marriage, but a divorce could only be administered if it did not endanger the well-being of young children. Around 35–40 % of divorces ruled on the basis of this codex in 1951–1953 were for young couples who had cohabitated for a year or less.[37]

This alarming data and the lack of clarity arising from the codex of 1950 sparked a fierce public discussion around family law in 1960–1963. Apart from relaxing or tightening divorce law, another source of debate was alimony rights for those who did not cause the disintegration of the marriage. The basic problem was having to establish the guilt of one of the spouses on every occasion. Some, invoking "socialist morality," proved that granting a divorce to a person guilty of a marriage falling apart, on his or her request, conflicted with the morality of the working class, while opponents stressed the reverse, that not granting a divorce in such a situation would contradict the same socialist morality, as it attempted to sanction living a lie.[38]

Ultimately, the Family and Caretaker Codex was passed by Parliament in 1964, raising the former marriage threshold for men to twenty-one.[39] This mechanism was meant to cut back on divorces without interfering in the right to divorce. The new codex did not alter the basic rules for granting a divorce:

> Art. 56.
> § 1. If a total and long-term end of cohabitation has occurred between the spouses, either one may request that the court dissolve the marriage through divorce.
> § 2. Despite a total and long-term end of cohabitation, a divorce will not be granted if it should have an ill effect on the well-being of the spouses' shared children, or if, for other reasons, granting a divorce should go against the principles of social cohabitation.
> § 3. Nor will a divorce be permissible if it is requested by the spouse guilty of the dissolution of the marriage, unless the other spouse consents to the divorce, or if the refusal of consent to divorce, under the circumstances, contradicts the principles of social cohabitation.[40]

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37 Barbara Łobodzińska, "Divorce in Poland: Its Legislation, Distribution and Social Context," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 1983, Vol. 45, No. 4, p. 929. For more on the subject, see: Jan Górecki, "Recrimination in Eastern Europe: An Empirical Study of Polish Divorce Law," *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 1965, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 603–629.

38 Barbara Łobodzińska, *Divorce in Poland*. . ., pp. 930 ff.

39 Earlier, in 1963, the age at which a young man was enlisted for the army was lowered, from 20 to 19 years old.

40 A law passed on 25 February 1964, *Family and Caretaker Codex*.

Article 57 also stated that "the court also will rule if and which of the spouses is responsible for the dissolution of cohabitation, but it acknowledges the possibility that, at the spouses' request, the court will dismiss any finding of guilt. In this event, things will proceed as though neither of the spouses is at fault."[41]

The second paragraph of Article 57 is key. Divorce with no assignment of guilt was soon to become the basic tool for couples seeking a "civilized" divorce.

An amendment to the law came ten years later, in 1975; it reflected new concerns arising from growing numbers of divorces. This explains the obligatory reconciliation sessions, and the obligation to bring witnesses to the dissolution of the marriage if children were involved. Above all, however, it added a paragraph which was meant, in theory, to resolve the drastic housing problems divorcing couples faced:

> Art. 58 § 2. If the spouses occupy a shared home, the court will also state in the divorce ruling how the home is to be used while it is being shared by the divorcees. In rare cases, when one of the spouses, through overtly blameworthy behavior, makes shared accommodation impossible, the court may order his or her eviction at the other spouse's request. At the consent of either side, the court's divorce verdict can also rule the sharing of a mutual home, or may award the domicile to one of the spouses, if the other spouse agrees to forgo it without receiving a substitute domicile in exchange, if sharing or awarding to one of the spouses is impossible.[42]

After 1964, Polish law also made provisions for the obligatory support of underage children, and in July 1974, the Child Support Fund was created, managed by the Social Security Institute, which sought to improve families' lot when child support payments were not honored.[43]

All the above changes will be pivotal for us, as they create a kind of framework for the public discourse, which tended to gain momentum alongside the planned amendments to civil law.

4.2. Divorce in Numbers

Edward Rosset, who was famed for his emotionally-charged demographic analyses of Polish society, made no secret of the fact that studying divorce evoked a mix of anxiety and irritation:

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41 Ibid.

42 A law passed on 19 December 1975 on changing the law in the *Family and Caretaker Codex*.

43 A law passed on 18 July 1974 on the Child Support Fund.

> In an article in 1964, I could write quite calmly about divorce: there were few of them in Poland, and nothing seemed to indicate that the following years would bring an **adoption of the Western fashion** [my emphasis – B. K.-K.] for "trial marriages" – as we might call marriages that are entered with the thought that, should they be unappealing, there can always be a divorce. It is this unsettlingly rapid growth in divorce numbers (from the mid 1960s onward) that has compelled me to return once more to the subject of divorces in Poland, and to phrase my opinion in harsher terms – I have exposed its deeply harmful impact on the life of the nation. The statistics [. . .] show that from 18,000 divorces in 1962, the number in Poland has grown to 46,700 in 1982. This is more than growth – this is a social catastrophe.[44]

Indeed, 8,000 in 1946 or 18,800 in 1962 were very few. Ten years later, on the cusp of the 1970s, slightly over 36,000 couples out of 300,000 were getting divorced. In 1978, this number held more or less steady (35,764), but it still stoked major concerns.

> In 1950–1970, divorce rates in Poland rose more than **three times** [emphasis – M. Jarosz] per 1,000 citizens [. . .]. The 1970s showed a relative stabilization of the phenomenon: the divorce rate per 1,000 people oscillates between 1.1–1.2, dipping to 1.0 in 1978.[45]

In the Gierek period, for every 1,000 new marriages annually, there were 120 divorces (the "marriage dissolution rate"). Of course, this figure is not precise, as divorces ruled in a given year seldom pertain to marriages sealed the same year, though they do, to some extent, indicate the scope of the problem, when, for example, we consider the number of divorces in Poland in 2010, when there were 268.5 divorces for every 1,000 marriages.[46] Except that, in 1980, a record number of 307,000 new marriages were sealed, and in 2010 – 228,300. Thus, the marriage/divorce ratio is far smaller at present, and continues to decline.[47]

The Main Statistics Bureau (GUS) initiated research into divorce in 1949, when the Ministry of Justice began collecting and distributing data on legally binding verdicts. After 1960, every divorce also had an individual statistics card, where all the data of the family to be divorced was registered, meaning that the data

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44 Edward Rosset, *Rozwody*, Warsaw 1986, p. 13.

45 Maria Jarosz, "Rodziny dysfunkcjonalne," in: *Rodzina polska lat siedemdziesiątych*, ed. Maria Jarosz, Warsaw 1982, p. 156.

46 Henryka Bogacka, Alina Sobieszak, "Rozwody w Polsce w latach 1950–1974 w świetle badań statystycznych," in: *Wybrane zagadnienia patologii rodziny*, ed. Maria Jarosz, Warsaw 1976, pp. 99 ff.

47 For more on the marriage dissolution rate, see: Edward Rosset, *Rozwody*, pp. 173 ff.

was far more detailed, though curiously, the cards have no information on the ultimate cause of the complaint. For this, GUS conducted additional surveys.[48]

We know from GUS's data that divorce was typically an urban phenomenon; by the statistics, one might even say metropolitan. The larger the city, the more the lawsuits – the most were generally in Warsaw and Łódź. Rural data showed that the formalized dissolution of a marriage in small towns was exceedingly rare. In 1950, the rural divorce rate (per 1,000 people) was 0.16, and twenty years later, it was not much higher: 0.35. According to Łobodzińska, women's liberation, which mainly affected urban environments, had a massive impact here. While in the 1940s and 1950s the husband was generally able to avoid a lawsuit, and the woman was "abandoned" and "damaged in a moral sense," in the 1970s, she often filed for divorce, too. This radical step was mainly taken by spouses who had a chance of fending for themselves after divorce. In 1960, 90.5 % of divorced men worked professionally, and 83.1 % of divorced women.[49] Those not working professionally had a great deal of pause for thought before they filed a lawsuit. And ultimately, they probably decided against it, unless they had the support of the family or the man was exceptionally abusive. Sociologists also noted that couples were marrying older, in part due to changes in the legal marrying age, which limited the number of nuptials at a very young age. In the 1970s, it was chiefly couples who had been together for at least five years who got divorced. While in the late 1940s it was mainly people around thirty getting divorced, in the mid 1960s the statistical divorce age was thirty-something or men just under forty.[50] The length of marriage before divorce thus grew: in 1960, 23 % of couples filing had been together 2–4 years, 28.5 % – 5–9 years, and 36.3 % – over ten years. In 1974, the numbers were 21.7 %, 23.7 %, and 46.2 %, respectively. Longer-term couples were thus getting divorced, with the average rising to eleven years in 1974.[51]

About one half of applicants received a divorce. The courts tried to appease both sides by claiming insufficient cause for the dissolution of the marriage or by taking the children's welfare into account, thus dismissing 40 to 55 % of lawsuits, generally based on claims of adultery, alcoholism, lack of financial support for the family, or physical abuse, i.e. what the journalists called "marital hooliganism," as well as the refusal to cohabitate and a lack of civility in mutual

48 Ibid., p. 101.
49 Barbara Łobodzińska, *Rodzina w Polsce*, Warsaw 1974, p. 149.
50 Ibid., p. 151.
51 Henryka Bogacka, Alina Sobieszak, *Rozwody w Polsce w latach 1950–1974*. . ., p. 105.

relations. According to data from the 1970s, 62.3 % of divorces were settled without establishing blame.[52]

As such, divorce existed as a real strategy in a family conflict situation, the number of separations was on the rise, but there can be no denying that their growth dynamic was never too great, particularly when compared to the numbers we observe in other European countries at the time, let alone the USSR and the United States. Thus, Rosset's anxiety at the increase of families whose dissolution was sanctioned by the courts in 1982 was premature. In the latter half of the last decade of communist Poland, the divorce rate again stopped at 1.3 per 1,000 inhabitants, and in the 1990s, the number dropped considerably, for a time at least. The Polish population was on the rise, and people were migrating to the cities. The consequences of urbanization were inevitable.

4.3. Rituals of "Criminalization"

4.3.1. "This Question was a Kind of Trick"

In writing about society's reception of divorce, sociologists have nearly unanimously drawn from the research performed in 1962 by the Polish Radio and Television Center for Studying Public Opinion on the social perception of divorce. This questionnaire was created by Jan Górecki and Adam Podgórecki with Andrzej Siciński and Zbigniew Sufin. It was evaluated by Maria Ossowska herself.[53] Research by the Center, conducted in 1958, is increasingly used as present, chiefly as a source of information on social moods.[54] For the latter half of the 1980s, in turn, we may consult the opinions gathered by the Center for Public Opinion Research (OBOP). Of course, like other sociological resources, or more generally speaking, resources that use sociological methods to gauge public opinion, we might question if they can be fully used in a professional way by a historian.[55]

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52 Ibid., pp. 99, 109.

53 Adam Podgórecki, *Zjawiska prawne w opinii publicznej. Studia socjologiczno-prawne.* Warsaw 1964, p. 27.

54 Cf. Marcin Zaremba, *Zimno, ciepło, gorąco. Nastroje Polaków od "zimy stulecia" do lata '80*, http://solidarnosc.collegium.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Zaremba-07-01-2013.pdf [accessed: 20.02.2014].

55 For more on this subject: Dariusz Jarosz, "Sondaże Ośrodka Badań Opinii Publicznej (OBOP) w latach 1957–1989. Refleksje historyka," in: *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i*

While the number of divorces in our day arouses no doubts, the results of the above research strike us as astonishingly optimistic, and, in this regard, they are a significant departure from the moods we glean in other sources. Nonetheless, the research itself is a very important voice in the debate on the new family codex. The question remains if we can see it as a true expression of the public opinion at the time. Divorce also appeared as a subject for OBOP study in questionnaires in 1974, but only as one topic in a wider study on family-related legal issues. The survey takers briefly asked Poles what they thought about granting a divorce applied for by the party guilty for the dissolution of the marriage, where the other spouse was opposed (other questions concerned establishing paternity, obligatory prenuptial medical exams, and solutions for adoption); sociologists examined their responses in terms of the presence of "moral-legal rigor and rationality of thinking."[56]

The book which a co-author of the survey – Adam Podgórecki, a law sociologist and one of the most interesting figures in postwar Polish sociology, the creator of the University of Warsaw's Chair of Social Prevention and Resocialization[57] – based on the results of researching the perception of divorce in 1962 shows details and interpretations deeply rooted in the modernizing discourse of the era. Adam Podgórecki did not reckon with certain doubts that appeared in the course of the studies, and he sometimes interpreted the results of questionnaires in favor of ongoing social transformations.

The survey takers pointed out that "the questionnaire was not easy to conduct, owing to the sensitivity of the questions, which people sometimes refused to answer," which undermines the author's blanket thesis that it was "well received." We should also note what may seem a detail, a remark by one survey taker who suggests that the survey will surely bring a "range of responses of interest to the government," which shows it to have been prepared "on government

materiały, Vol. 6, Warsaw 2003, pp. 66 ff. Ibid. also on the history of the institution. Cf. also: Janina Sobczak, " 'Polski Gallup' – powstanie i pionierskie lata Ośrodka Badania Opinii Publicznej," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1999 and *Społeczeństwo polskie w badaniach ankietowych ośrodka badania opinii publicznej przy «Polskim Radio i TV» (lata 1958–1964)*, ed. Andrzej Siciński, Warsaw 1966.

56 I. Krzemiński, Marek Safjan, *Problemy prawno-rodzinne w opinii społecznej*, Warsaw 1974, pp. 6–8, http://www.tnsglobal.pl/archiwumraportow/1974/02/11/problemy-prawno-rodzinne-w-opinii-spolecznej/#more-3484.

57 For more on the biography of Adam Podgórecki, see: D. Wicenty, "Wokół projektu biografii Adama Podgóreckiego: wyzwania koncepcyjne, metodologiczne i społeczne," *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* 2013, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 82–102.

commission," and not by anonymous researchers, which may have affected the responses.

This initial reservation notwithstanding, the whole of the survey undoubtedly shows that the Pole who emerges from this research, fifteen years after the introduction of the new law, is conscious of his or her right to dissolve a marriage. But this same survey, given that it showed real divorce experiences of Poles, shows that this consciousness was quite theoretical. The data shows that almost 1,500 of the respondents (out of 2,500 surveyed) had never participated in a court case. If some had entered a courtroom, it was generally as a viewer (284 people) or a witness (232). Only 101 people had been directly involved in a case (divorce or otherwise).[58]

The majority of those surveyed suggested raising the marriageable age for men to twenty-three, which, interestingly enough, fully conformed to the expectations of lawyers engaged in the legal reform in 1958–1962. Today we have cause to doubt Podgórecki's thesis that this was a show of society's optimism and faith in marriage, as opposed to the view of the grave crisis in this institution, "declared by many journalists, authors etc. [. . .]."[59] This view, Podgórecki believes, was to be apt only "with regard to those journalists' own circles, as the nearly unanimous criticism of the present law in terms of the lower age limit for marrying seems to show that society's overall opinion does not take a critical view of the institution of marriage as such. This critique, on the contrary, seems to address certain aspects of this institution, in this case, the age at which it can be legally sealed."[60]

Regardless of doubts concerning the crisis of the family in this period, which are shared by the present author, this conclusion from the results of the OBOP surveys seems insufficiently grounded.

Concerning the permissibility of divorce, Podgórecki goes further still:

> An analysis of the results of more careful research inclines us to believe, however, that people with views that run contrary to the present law [on the permissibility of divorce – B. K.-K.] amount to fewer than one-third of those surveyed. This conclusion comes from respondents' answers to Question 9 [. . .] This question was a kind of trap. Those respondents who said that divorces should not be permitted under any circumstances should have consistently answered "no" when asked for detailed reasons, and should not have consented to specific reasons.[61]

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58 Adam Podgórecki, *Zjawiska prawne w opinii publicznej*. . ., pp. 31–36.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., pp. 42 ff.

61 Ibid., p. 44.

In this case, Podgórecki counted the unambiguous and uncertain responses and formulated the thesis that 80.2 % of society was in favor of divorce, altogether 1,892. The group of those against was estimated by subtracting those who faltered or had no opinion. Ultimately, only 7 % of those surveyed were opposed to divorce as such. According to Podgórecki, the results were clear. "The legal institution of divorce," the scholar wrote, "has a considerable degree of social recognition and acceptance."[62]

It turned out that four-fifths of a society in which only a small number of couples were divorcing – and in the country, a mere handful – was in favor of permitting divorce, and that 62.5 % of the rural population was decidedly "for."[63] Perhaps this strong showing for divorce in a country with practically no divorces was the result of the question being very theoretical ("Are you in favor of making divorce acceptable?"). The authors did not ask if the survey-takers would themselves consider a divorce.[64]

Based on the results of research from 1962, historians promoting traditional values still complain about the progressive changes in mindset in the 1950s, to the detriment of a Catholic morality,[65] while sociologists and demographers contemporary to the studies saw them as confirming the thesis that the family was swiftly transforming and becoming secularized.[66]

Given this research's later capacity to determine syntheses on transformations of the Polish family, we ought to think twice about what it tells us, and if we are not overestimating its significance. It certainly confirms the existence of a social consciousness of divorce being present in the law. This is already quite a lot. However, somewhat contrary to what Podgórecki suggests, I believe that this was still a time when divorce's meaning was being negotiated, a time when the consequences of divorce for private life were not yet fully conscious, and public opinion studies, also embroiled in the public debate around the change in the law, do not fully render the complexity of how people imagined the issue. We

62 Ibid., p. 52.

63 Ibid., p. 50.

64 This sort of question was asked (significantly) to Warsaw respondents in the 1970s by Maria Trawińska. To the question "Would you give your spouse a divorce in a critical situation?", 78.8 % responded "yes," only 11.5 % said "no," and around 10 % had no opinion. The sociologist attached special importance to hesitation tied to doubts especially arising from the fate of the children, see: Maria Trawińska, *Bariery małżeńskiego sukcesu*, Warsaw 1977, p. 288.

65 Adam Skreczko, *Troska Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce o małżeństwo i rodzinę*. . .

66 Barbara Łobodzińska, *Rodzina w Polsce*, pp. 153–155.

might hazard the thesis that, outside of Warsaw or Krakow, divorce remained an abstract theory, that responding to when it could take place would bring equally theoretical replies, suspended in a vacuum, all the more in that the respondents, much like the above-named survey taker, realized what the "authorities" expected. Thus, the key to understanding the questionnaire results lies in the contradictions. Where the respondents were forced to choose one answer, it is quite probable they would choose both. One example might be the juxtaposition of theoretically mutually exclusive opinions on divorce, such as: "It is better to divorce than to have a bad coexistence or adultery" and "divorce is immoral," which, we venture to suggest, coexisted in many people's heads.

The research shows – though this Pogórecki does not emphasize – a conviction that divorce is an extreme resolution. It is mainly justified by violence, family abuse (80.0 % replied "somewhat agree") and steady drinking (66.4 % – somewhat agree). Other reasons were much lower down the scale (e.g. adultery), and incompatibility came out at only 2.2 % (somewhat agree).[67] This confirms that people thought of divorce as a phenomenon that was decidedly marginal, although, we should stress, in the courts adultery invariably dominated as the actual cause of divorce.[68] As I will go on to show, we are dealing with more than marginalization; this is a process we might call criminalization. Sociologists both recorded and unconsciously provoked this process.

4.3.2. "One of my colleagues got divorced, now he drinks"[69]

Podgórecki's optimism of the early 1960s did not go hand in hand with statements by other experts.[70] The personal testimonies they studied did not confirm that Poles were not coming through divorce in good shape. While in communities where this was a more common experience, i.e. the larger cities, divorce was a more painless experience, people who dissolved marital bonds in the countryside experienced rejection, which I believe arose from the criminalization

67 Adam Podgórecki, *Zjawiska prawne w opinii publicznej*. . ., pp. 44 ff, 53.

68 Jan Malanowski, "Rozwody w 1958 roku w Warszawie," *Studia Socjologiczne* 1962, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 242.

69 "There are divorces in Nowa Huta, though religion forbids it; people no longer worry about religion, they get divorced. One of my colleagues at work got divorced, now he drinks [man, age 25]," quoted in: J. Wódz, "Rozwody w świadomości społecznej mieszkańców Nowej Huty," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1972, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 138.

70 Podgórecki's later work, considered his finest, paradoxically focused on pathology in social life in communist Poland, see: D. Wicenty, *Wokół projektu biografii Adama Podgóreckiego*. . ., pp. 87 ff.

process that divorce underwent as a social phenomenon. This lasted at least two decades, after the Thaw of 1956. Criminalization is a way in which taboo often copes with phenomena that are socially equivocal, particularly in a moral respect. Perhaps, where divorce was concerned, its intensity resulted, in part, from not having a transition period, a time of social negotiation around the legal changes suggested in 1945. I believe an equally large role came from nearly all the public institutions promoting the family as a community that served the political and national society. The process itself was highly complex, involving the participation, to varying degrees, of Catholic priests, demographers, sociologists, lawyers, and journalists – though not all of them. Critically, however, we must not treat this process as a top-down message from the elite. Of equal importance was not only the way in which various communities imagined society but also the common knowledge that was often fortified by migration and direct contact with a phenomenon that had long been no part of first-hand experience. The voices of various participants in thus process affected each other, with the overlap of expertise and common knowledge. It is quite interesting that those who sought to "normalize divorce" and reveal the marginalization of divorcing couples in some communities (see, for instance: Jacek Wódz) paradoxically reinforced the prevailing discourse. The courts also played an important role in the process. While experts' and respondents' statements could be called pathologization, the policy of the institution responsible for the divorce ritual convinced me of the aptness of criminalization as a concept.

This phenomenon was noted in 1983 by Barbara Łobodzińska, who claimed in an English-language article:

> [. . .] Circumstances of marital breakdown indicate that, in some instances, divorce is associated with socially negative, unacceptable, or marginal behavior (e.g. juvenile delinquency, crime, prostitution). Experts describing family problems have the tendency to place divorce issues in chapters dealing with social pathology. Divorce is not solely linked to pejorative phenomena, though in some cases its undesirable nature could be taken for granted.[71]

This conviction came together with a broader, mainly journalistic opinion concerning the family crisis in Poland, which was either ongoing or impending. The image of public discourse on the family in this time is by no means strictly polarized, whether between the Church and the secular experts or between the modern state and the traditional society.

71 Barbara Łobodzińska, *Divorce in Poland*. . ., p. 939.

Although many experts consented to labeling divorce a "necessary evil" or a social pathology, the images of divorce trafficked by priests were vivid indeed. Their statements, which we can connect with the opinion of the Catholic Church (it would be difficult to reduce experts and the state to a uniform opinion), were consciously formulated in a harsh manner, particularly in the years of the Great Novena in 1957–1966, when the Church raised the specter of divorce as a social ill of special importance, alongside abortion ("woman's sin") and alcoholism ("man's sin").[72] It is especially interesting that divorce statistics became the bible of priest, sociologists, and lawyers in equal measure. "Homo Dei" and "Biblioteka Kaznodziejska" at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s wrote of the harm done by divorces, often using the metaphor of the epidemic:

> The number of divorces in Poland is constantly on the rise. In 1951, the courts received 21,774 files for divorce, the next year, in 1952, the number of couples filing for divorce was 22,933, and in 1953 the number rose to 25,712, and in 1957 again to 30,788 divorce cases. As we see by comparing these sad figures, over seven years, from 1951 to 1957, the number of couples filing for divorce grew by 9,014. If we consider the fact that many (sic!) estranged couples no longer living under one roof are not seeking to file for divorce, the count of 30,788 divorce cases in 1957 is quite high, and requires commentary, from both a moral and a religious perspective. [. . .]
>
> This wave of divorce is also swamping Silesia. In 1957, 5,068 couples filed for divorce in Silesia, while in 1955 there were 4,289, and in 1956 – 4,719. Over the space of three years, from 1955 to 1957, the number of divorce cases grew by 779. **The courts may be unable to keep up** [. . .]
>
> **The epidemic of divorces which has been raging** [my emphasis – B. K.-K.] in cities is presently taking over the countryside, wreaking its havoc.[73]

72 See, for example: W. Majewski, "Kryzys życia rodzinnego," *Homo Dei* 1959, No. 6, pp. 458–467; J. Anczarski, "Niedobrane małżeństwo," *Biblioteka Kaznodziejska. Miesięcznik Homiletyczny* 1960, No. 64–65, pp. 419–422; "Szkodliwość rozwodów," *Biblioteka Kaznodziejska. Miesięcznik Homiletyczny* 1960, No. 64–65, pp. 9–13; W. Borowski, "Dobrodziejstwa nierozerwalności małżeństwa," *Biblioteka Kaznodziejska. Miesięcznik Homiletyczny* 1960, No. 64–65, pp. 5–9; J. Majka, "Przyczyny rozpadu życia małżeńskiego," *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 1960, Vol. 61, No. 52/1 (309), pp. 79–98; J. Zaręba, "Niektóre przyczyny nietrwałości małżeństwa," *Homo Dei* 1960, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 274–277; K. Pielatowski, "Rodziny niepełne," *Biblioteka Kaznodziejska. Miesięcznik Homiletyczny* 1962, No. 68–69, pp. 129–120; J. K. Pytel, "Rozwody przyczyną rozkładu rodziny," *Biblioteka Kaznodziejska. Miesięcznik Homiletyczny* 1962, No. 68–69, pp. 10–12.

73 E. Jerominek, "Epidemia rozwodów," *Homo Dei* 1959, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 62 ff.

The statistics were used for rhetorical purposes. The numbers inevitably became a kind of metaphor, to visualize for the reader or listener the inevitability of the coming catastrophe. The real value of the statistical data or indicators was unimportant. The numbers played a supporting role. The rows of numbers used by priests were meant to terrify readers and audiences of homilies.

It was not only the interpretation of hard data on the frequency of divorce in rural areas that was geared to astonish. The Church also stressed reasons for the collapse of relationships other than those indicated by the court and the divorcees themselves. The chief cause for divorce was deemed to be differences in world views (quite marked at the time), which led them to discourage mixed marriages, mainly between Catholics and atheists. They list also included: "focusing on sexual gratification," lack of psychological compatibility, "sexual gratification" before marriage, alcoholism, and finally, housing shortages and financial problems. Interestingly, the threat seen in spouses' individual contacts on holidays and during training sessions very clearly reflects changes in leisure behavior. This explains the recommendation to vacation together, and when impossible, to maintain correspondence during vacation and to pray for holiday-makers in the parishes.[74] Clergy agreed with secular experts that getting married too young was a bad sign for the future, which led them to discourage such weddings even when the bride-to-be was expecting.

However, the fault for the spread of divorce was indirectly ascribed to the victim (the wife), who, according to many priests, was unable to create a stable home and a peaceful family environment. Clergymen indirectly tied the majority of contemporary family problems to women working. As the religious sociologist, Father Władysław Piwowarski, wrote:

> . . .the fact of women working outside the home led to many unexpected consequences, such as depreciating the father's place in the family and leveling him with the mother, a drop in the birth rate (which transformed big families into small ones), a rise in extramarital affairs, separations, divorces, orphanage, underage crime, etc.[75]

The sermons often used the model of the heroic woman who decides not to abandon or divorce her alcoholic husband, because leaving would topple the father "to the depths of human misery, from which there is no return."[76] They urged responsibility, conceived as silent suffering and prayer.

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74 Ibid., pp. 64 ff.

75 Władysław Piwowarski, "Duszpasterz wobec kryzysu współczesnej rodziny," *Homo Dei* 1960, No. 4, p. 577.

76 J. K. Pytel, *Rozwody przyczyną rozkładu rodziny*, p. 12.

Divorce was most closely linked to the margins, poverty, alcoholism, and abuse in the family studies of Jacek Wódz in Nowa Huta in 1970. Wódz presupposed that "divorce [. . .] is a thoroughly normal phenomenon, as it provides a legal means of dissolving a marriage bond."[77] Research among the physical laborers in Nowa Huta, migrants from the countryside, showed a social consciousness quite different from what Podgórecki portrayed. Among the surveyed residents, 37.9 % unconditionally approved of divorce, 27.5 % only in special cases, and 32.5 % were adamantly against divorce in any circumstances. Wódz knew he was approaching people who were for the most part religious, but in his view, "as a subject of religious scrutiny, divorce is partly dependent on religious views."[78] This thesis was confirmed by the research: the conviction that one went to mass on Sunday went hand in hand with disapproving of divorce. His research also highlights a group who share his opinion of divorce as a "necessary evil:"

> I would not praise divorce, because it complicates your life, but it should be there for special cases, you just have to make it hard to get (man, 28 years old).[79]

> In some cases it's necessary, because sometimes children really suffer when there are arguments at home (woman, 35 years old).[80]

The evil-doers were meant to be mainly the women who stooped to betrayal, whether they worked as housekeepers ("when the husband's at work they want to play the lady in the bars; they came from the countryside, and now they want to play the lady, neglecting the home, spending all day dressing up"),[81] or took a professional job ("they have work, money, and nothing can stop them; women must have professional jobs. Men in the factories often drink, and drag women along. Offices are often scenes of trysts").[82] But the surveys also mentioned alcoholism, mismatched partners, or bad housing conditions.

These statements reveal a terrifying picture of people deciding to divorce. The picture of the family after divorce is equally bleak. Divorcees, according to those surveyed, much more often succumb to addictions: "or the drinking begins, and the women start slumming around bars."[83] One man said outright that "the results of divorce are pitiful, because women begin to stray off the narrow

77 Jacek Wódz, *Rozwody w świadomości*. . ., p. 137.
78 Ibid., p. 138.
79 Ibid., p. 140.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., p. 141.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., p. 142.

path."[84] Children of divorced couples were also lost.[85] The respondents, mainly men (73 %), not only blamed women but also were likely to almost automatically assume their moral depravity after divorce. Unfortunately, we do not know the source of this conviction, i.e. how far this comes from their own experience or their neighbor's, and how far it expresses anxiety of divorces heard in sermons or read in newspapers.

The question of the permanence of marriage was raised two years earlier (1967–1968) in the same place by Franciszek Adamski, a sociologist from the Catholic University of Lublin, during his questionnaire studies of Nowa Huta families. Unlike Wódz, however, he apprehended the family as the "natural" space of women, and chiefly selected women for his respondents (around 52 % of them worked professionally). 23 % of those surveyed accepted divorce without reservation, and 25 % were categorically in favor of the permanence of marriage, come what may. 36.2 % of women were "somewhat in favor of" permanence. 80 % of respondents would have justified divorce by the "husband's worsening behavior," in other words, "drunkenness and quarreling."[86] A much smaller group considered betrayal and incompatibility as sufficient. While the general data indicated the enduring convictions of the impermissibility of divorce for most rural women in the city (altogether around 60 % "for" or "somewhat for"), we should still agree with Adamski that there were clear signs that this certainty, largely tied to outlook, was starting to falter. When Adamski asked the women to place themselves in similar circumstances, it turned out that even among women convinced of the permanence of marriage, one in four would decidedly demand a divorce, and over one half were unable to even say what they would do. All in all, four out of five declared themselves ready to pursue a divorce. Religion was no obstacle here.[87] There is no radicalism in these statements, as we find in Wódz's studies, either reflecting the test group (women) or the nature of the survey, which required choosing answers, not free statements. Much less space was devoted to divorce here.

Nonetheless, both surveys confirmed the existence of two approximately similar-sized groups, those in favor and against divorce, and an equally large

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

86 Franciszek Adamski, *Rodzina nowego miasta. Kierunki przemian w strukturze społeczno-moralnej rodziny nowohuckiej*, Warsaw 1970, pp. 111–115.

87 Ibid., pp. 116 ff.

group of those who, while condemning divorce, thought it permissible in difficult cases.

It may not surprise us that a negative image of divorce and divorcees clearly existed in the rural communities that had once been home to the Nowa Huta residents surveyed by Adamski and Wódz. According to Ewelina Szpak, who summed up the transformation of the mentality in the Polish countryside in postwar Poland: "Divorce, particularly for the older generation in the countryside, was a much greater tragedy and disgrace than migrating to the city or becoming an old maid."[88] In her opinion, it was the option of divorce that changed the family's relationship to the choice of spouse in the 1960s. Parents' and matchmakers' interference could increase the risk of choosing the wrong spouse, and therefore, of divorce.

Despite what the priests may have feared, there were very few rural divorces; they were obstructed by both religious and economic concerns, whose strength was, however, dependent on the local environment. In the late 1960s, in the rural homes near Ciechanów, where divorce remained an urban oddity, of whose existence the residents learned from the pulpits, radios, televisions in school day rooms, or films screened at traveling cinemas, Warsaw ethnologists noted the following statement as typical: "When a woman gets hitched, that's the end of the story. The guys bring the girls to tears, but she has to raise her kids, or how else could she show her face in public."[89]

The enormity of the role played by religion in excluding divorce as a solution to family conflict is shown by Bartłomiej Gapiński's analyses of prayer requests sent to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Letters from women inhabiting the Żywiec and Podkarpacie regions reveal a total identification of the requests' authors with their social roles – mother and wife. Betrayal, like alcoholism and violence, were seen as equivalent to their husbands losing their faith, and thus their spouses' requested they turn over a new leaf and come to their senses. Gapiński stresses that, among these letters, none ask for punishment or retribution: for many years, many women sent in letters requesting a miracle, and while their fates remained the same, they never lost hope for a brighter future, understanding that children require sacrifices.[90]

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88 Ewelina Szpak, *Mentalność ludności wiejskiej w PRL. Studium zmian*, Warsaw 2013, p. 180.

89 Anna Zadrożyńska, *Zawarcie małżeństwa. Analiza systemu wartościowania*, Warsaw 1974, p. 49. Research conducted in 1968–1970.

90 Bartłomiej Gapiński, *Sacrum i codzienność Prośby o modlitwę nadsyłane do Kalwarii Zebrzydowskiej w latach 1965–1979,* Warsaw 2008, p. 115.

The internalization of the religious image of the family and identification with a social role was quite strong, not only in traditional rural families, but in working-class families as well, in which the wife was also burdened with work on the farmstead.

The rural sociologists of the day tended to marginalize the religion factor, preferring to focus on the "conflict between love and acres," which remained a touchstone in the Polish countryside. This was also why, in the context of rural married couples, there emerged an extraordinary thesis on the insufficient number of rural divorces, formulated by Barbara Tryfan and Józef Grabowicz: "The low divorce rate in the countryside is a fact, but it is not entirely positive. We ought not to be pleased that people are often unable to be free of their suffering."[91] They believed rural residents would soon begin divorcing, and this would be a positive transformation, not indicating a crisis of marriage as such, but a crisis of relationships based on economic advantage. When rural marriages that were sealed to gain an extra pair of hands to work the farm fell apart, the problem would resolve itself and the situation would return to normal:

> **Satisfaction in the low number of divorces in the countryside** [. . .] **is** [. . .] **of dubious value** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K]. For we know that the durability of marriage in the country is too often founded on economic, not emotional bonds. Durability is not a praiseworthy humanist value when achieved in a marriage based on a shared economy and property. The price two people pay for such durability is too steep.[92]

Tryfan and Grabowicz drew this very strong conclusion after visiting the courts in Łódź and Białystok in 1960–1962, tracking down the very few rural divorce cases (in Łódź they were twenty-five cases out of eighty).[93] Their analyses confirmed that betrayal was not considered a major reason for divorce. Even the anonymous requests for the family sent in to Kalwaria did not use the concept of "betrayal" in reference to a cheating husband. It seemed too unequivocal and shameful to the senders, and most of the letters prefer the characteristic

91 Józef Grabowicz, "Konflikty małżeńskie na wsi w świetle spraw rozwodowych. Informacja o spostrzeżeniach reporterskich i zamierzeniach badawczych," *Rocznik Socjologii Wsi* 1964, Vol. 2, p. 134.

92 Barbara Tryfan, Józef Grabowicz, "Wzrost rozwodów a kryzys małżeństwa," *Wieś Współczesna* 1962, No. 8, pp. 92 ff.

93 Ibid., pp. 83–92, also see: Józef Grabowicz, *Konflikty małżeńskie na wsi w świetle spraw rozwodowych*. . ., pp. 130–135.

phrase: "and beyond that, God only knows."[94] Thus, it is hard to imagine that they would decide to divulge (or confirm) this information among relatives, friends, or neighbors. The main cause of divorce in the country was "spousal hooliganism" or various kinds, i.e. beating and abusing the wife or drinking up salaries.

In these cases, it was normally the wife who filed for a divorce:

> My husband turned out to be an alcoholic. He would disappear from home for several days and turn up in a drunk tank. He hocked his army booklet to get money for vodka, which got him a month in prison… After I gave birth, he was always cursing me, that I was a pig who produced these brats and he wasn't able to feed them. I want to leave him.[95]

When betrayal (love and sexual fascination) appears, the husband generally initiates the divorce, motivated by "undermined authority:"

> For several years, my wife has maintained relations with Walenty K. Went I went out to exercise, she would invite Czesław K. over for evident reasons. She hosts other guys and undermines my authority especially with rank-and-file militiamen.[96]

In their field work, scholars organized a meeting with women from the Rural Household Circle and Women's League in the secret location of B. and gave them an anonymous questionnaire with three questions:

1. Would I get a divorce if my marriage became a living hell?
2. Would I condemn two people who were cohabitating, but who for essential reasons could not be married?
3. What would I do (as a wife) if I suddenly met the love of my life?

The responses confirmed their thesis about the economic bond:

> If you've got means of support you can think about a divorce. If I earned 1,500 zloty a month and my husband didn't love me, then he could take a hike. But if we share the land and we share the cows, when I took out a loan on the house for 22,000 zloty, then how am I supposed to leave that shared home, even if he treats me rotten? Where am I supposed to go?

There were also those who resented the stigma of divorce:

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94 "…that my Son-in-Law who wed my dawter will come to his senses and live with her without quarreling, and beyond that God only knows," see: Bartłomiej Gapiński, *Sacrum i codzienność*…, p. 125.

95 Barbara Tryfan, Józef Grabowicz, *Wzrost rozwodów a kryzys małżeństwa*, p. 83.

96 Ibid.

> What would people say about me if I left my husband? Some would stop shaking my hand in public, and others would spit in my face.[97]

It is also significant that, when it came to divorce, in Jan Górecki's view "the totality and permanence of the break-up" was more often decreed in disputed trials. Almost all of the disputed divorce trials (with blame necessarily attributed) gave the judges no room for doubt in terms of the "degree to which cohabitation had disintegrated." In the verdicts, the "atmosphere of the conflict" was key, providing "eyewitness" perspectives into the marriage. According to the judges, this atmosphere could most fully testify to the "frustration and harm wrought by the break-up of a marriage, the lack of feeling between spouses, anxiety, repulsion, the desire to humiliate the other, and above all, to hatred."[98] Thus, the judges were left with no doubt when it came to couples whose separation had lasted decades, or spouses who hated one another and showed it sincerely in the courtroom. Disputed cases, and some cases that were settled amicably but where the spouses let their emotions run wild, turned courtrooms into theaters of hatred. If the lawyers did not succeed in convincing the sides to settle things amicably, there was no point in tempering these emotional scenes, because a sharp tongue (e.g. "I was afraid of him, he's a dreadful bastard, I hate him and I won't live with him"[99]) was compelling proof that a marriage had broken down. Among the cases that were deemed open-and-shut, were those with criminal evidence or proof of borderline sanity. The court was to be supplied with testimonies of a criminal record, chronic treatment, time in prison or psychiatric facilities, etc.[100]

In amicable cases, the chances for divorce diminished. Civilized people could, after all, agree to get along for the good of the child. Of course, it is hard to say if the court decisions that saw broken marriages as relations that engendered social pathologies had a real impact on the social imaginary.

A summary of the consequences of this legal situation could be a scene from one of the films mentioned above, *Divorce, Polish Style*, in which a waitress serving the court barroom comments on the divorce trial of a local party, blurting out: "What's THAT kind of guy doing here?"

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97 Ibid., p. 91.

98 Górecki observed 153 trials, of which 128 ended in divorce, which gives a much higher average of divorces being granted than the nationwide statistic. J. Górecki, *Rozwód. Analiza socjologiczno-prawna*, Warsaw 1965, p. 104.

99 Ibid., p. 118.

100 Ibid., pp. 108 ff.

Here, we ought to point out another context that was decisive in the way divorce was painted. The place where the "separation ritual" occurred, the courtroom, was chiefly associated with penal offenses and land ownership conflicts etc. It was a place marked by criminality and suspect behavior.

The rising divorce rate was thought to be caused by abuse of divorce, which led to the creation of marriage counseling offices and the organization of mandatory reconciliation sittings in the mid 1970s, as one of the best ways of improving the statistics, thus making the society healthier. There was even an attempt to follow the Romanian example, raising the price of divorce from 1,200–2,000 zloty to even 2,000–10,000 zloty per trial.

4.4. Public Psychotherapy: On the Humanization of Divorce

In the public discourse, divorce is primarily "a hell for women." The notion of divorce as a women's tragedy, supported by statistical data of the men being predominantly to blame (with certain exceptions), was enormously popular among journalists. The woman was most often the abandoned partner, to quote Edward Rosset, the third party "condemned to spending the rest of her life a broken woman."[101]

As such, the woman's suffering was twofold. First, it was the harm the woman experienced from the man (which was openly described), and second, the harm she received from her environment as a divorcée, which at first was mentioned only parenthetically in thoughts on divorce (in villages and small towns), but was expressed more directly in the 1970s. There was a curious turn in this debate, as the narrative became more and more nuanced and focused on the subjective experiences of the *dramatis personnae*.

Divorced women's predicaments began to be publicized in the wake of debates initiated by women's magazines in 1974. In all probability, these were part of a navigated discussion on changes in family law in 1975. It is true that divorce was not a hot topic in the press, but the simple question "How do you feel after your divorce?" triggered an avalanche of letters from readers of *Kobieta i Życie* [Woman and Life] magazine, which led to certain changes in the language of the debate on divorce, "democratizing" and "humanizing" it. Ordinary women and men began to stand behind divorce.

It is none too relevant here if these quite emotional stories, more often tragic than not, were authentic or (co)produced by the editors. As emphasized by the

101 Edward Rossett, *Rozwody*, pp. 68 ff.

postwar women's press expert, Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, the editors of the leading women's magazines quite consciously, almost as a matter of course used didactic scripts and various forms of "real-life tales," including for the most frequently cited letters to the editor. This was the case with *Przyjaciółka*, which, despite following the official socio-political line of the authorities, according to some spiteful critics depicted a vision of the world much like the "Catholic tabloid" vision of the world from the interwar period. It targeted a mass readership, the "simple, uneducated woman," and was thus culturally conservative and often appealed to common knowledge. This was best served by narratives called "pictures from life," in the "Joys and Sorrows" column, which aimed for simple messages and a literary appeal.[102]

Women's magazines in communist Poland continued the prewar traditions of speaking about events and phenomena that were not fully interpreted or assimilated. In these cases, appeals to feelings and emotions in the pictures from life were more effective than rational arguments. These pictures portrayed people's individual experiences as normal, while subsuming them into the experience of the collective and suggesting, or rather demanding, an interpretation.

> They spoke like about experiences and problems like ordinary women, they helped them make decisions, they provided support and comfort. Their topics often came from the numerous letters sent to the editors. Then, as in the prewar didactic tales and pictures, they turned the letter-writer's experiences into the typological truth of a story. The pictures from life and the letters to the editors were, according to *Przyjaciółka*, a 'kind of document of the times,' a 'bridge' between the journal and readers, 'a compass to show the interests, pains, and accomplishments of the women of Poland *en masse*.'[103]

These did not trespass beyond what was permitted, or what was also mentioned in journalistic articles.

Similar confessional narratives from the "I'll tell you my story" series were inserted in various forms in other magazines: *Kobieta i Życie*, *Nowa Wieś*, *Gospodyni*, and even *Zwierciadło*, a magazine pitched toward educated readers. For didactic purposes, they used stories – diaries and confessions – sent in to the editors in response to the numerous competitions and surveys.[104] They had no need to emulate the "confidential first-person confession," as they already were confessions. Or at least they were convincingly stylized as such. They did not

102 Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, *Opowieści o trudach życia. Narracje zwierzeniowe w popularnej prasie kobiecej XX wieku*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 168 ff.

103 Ibid., p. 170.

104 Ibid., p. 179.

usually use rational evaluations, they did not list arguments, they appealed to emotions, which only enhanced the aura of confession.[105]

The brains behind the *Kobieta i Życie* surveys, which we shall examine in a moment, and which were inaugurated in the early spring of 1974, adhered to the traditions of competitions of this kind; they were looking for responses to particular questions, and promised prizes to selected authors: ten PKO savings bonds, each valued at 1,000 zloty.[106] The editors referred to the current discussions concerning "reconciliation" trials.

> In 1972, out of nearly 68,000 cases in regional courts, nearly 40,000 divorces were granted. Are these numbers a response to the accusation fired at the courts? We know from sociologists' research and Central Statistics Office figures how many couples divorce and why. After that comes a mystery. No one asks the protagonists of the divorce spectacle if they played their roles to the bitter end. Were they pleased with how it went? [. . .] We want [. . .] to fill this gap, to ask the participants themselves. We want to pass your experiences on to potential divorcées.[107]

Of special interest is the direct address to divorcées, asking for their reflections on the issues, in which we hear a clear echo of the legal debate on divorce reconciliation sittings and the attitudes of judges too hastily issuing divorces:

> If you had to do it again today:
>
> 1. Would you go through the divorce again, knowing, as you do, the effects of breaking apart a family? If, before the divorce, you had known what would happen later, and once more you stood before that 'to be or not to be,' what would you decide? The same as before? If not – why? What later surprises do you believe were decisive in changing your view about divorce being the right decision?
> 2. Do you still believe divorce is the right way to solve marital problems? Do you partly blame someone or something else (apart from yourself and your husband) for your family falling apart? Whom? Maybe overly lax laws? A judge who was unable to reconcile you, or did not try to? Was it easy to get a divorce? Who was more set on dissolving the marriage? You or him?
> 3. Did you get a divorce to be with another man? And so was the divorce caused by an unsuccessful marriage or by the prospect of a relationship with a new partner? Did it meet your expectations? Was it worth it?[108]

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105 Ibid., p. 40; see also: D. Czubala, *Współczesne legendy miejskie*, Katowice 1993; *Opowieści z życia: z badań nad folklorem współczesnym,* Katowice 1985, Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, No. 677.

106 Krystyna Chrupek used the materials gathered in the survey in a book. See: *Życie po rozwodzie*, Warsaw 1976.

107 "Życie po rozwodzie," *Kobieta i Życie*, 17.03.1974, No. 11, p. 4.

108 Ibid.

Divorced women, it turned out, had a great need to share their experiences. They were over-represented, much like lonely people, in many postwar journal competitions. Most of the letters they submitted in response to surveys, or rather, letters quoted by the editors, told tales of extreme loneliness and tragedy after divorce, not of liberation from a difficult situation caused by alcoholism or violence.

This letter from a nurse is a typical example:

> Now, five years after my divorce, I would say it was the biggest disaster of my life. I am alone, dreadfully alone. It is not true that a woman is free after a divorce, that she has plenty of opportunities to lead an interesting and free life. If she wants to replace both the mother and the father for her children, then after work she dashes home, cooks, washes, sews, helps with the homework, and talks to the kids. Where is the time for a social life and the chance to start things over? And those awful, lonely nights. Let's be straight with one another. If a woman my age is suddenly without a man, then sooner or later her body has to respond to that void. . . When I read your painful statement "if it were today," I wept like a fool. I've been carrying it inside me for a long time. [. . .] I am forty at present, I have two children and no chance to set up a private life. I shudder to think what will happen when my children leave home. If only I could turn back time. . . If only at that moment there was someone who had explained the error of my ways.[109]

This last sentence, in particular, seems to have been written at the editors' behest. Someone should have explained things, encouraged temperance.[110] This someone, we assume, should be an enlightened and "active" state bureaucrat, or here, a judge. One of merely a few men quoted in the magazine spoke in a similar tone:

> I deeply regret that it all happened, but it's too late. In court, during our divorce, there was a moment where one tender remark would have turned things around. But no one said it. My wife, who did not want to divorce, would have certainly backed down. I don't know why absolutely nothing is done to save such a disintegrating marriage.[111]

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109 "List czytelniczki z Poznania," *Kobieta i Życie*, 21.04.1974, No. 16, p. 17.

110 A similar narrative with the rhetoric of an appeal: "In certain drastic situations, divorce is the only way out, but far too little is done to reconcile couples in 'placatory hearings.' If the whole family stands up for one of the sides (especially when children are involved), the judge should do everything in his power to convince the other side that he or she voluntarily decided to embark on marriage, to raise children. One husband's statement several months before divorce strikes me as significant: 'I'll do whatever the court rules. Well, and the court decided. . . In our group of friends, I met only one person who did not support us parting. If I had only listened to her. . .'," *Kobieta i Życie*, 26.05.1974, No. 5, p. 5.

111 "List Kazimierza, lat 42," *Kobieta i Życie*, 2.06.1974, No. 22, p. 11

In the 1970s and 1980s, even the most empathetic toward marital conflicts believed that divorce could often be avoided and efforts should be made in this direction. Journalists and reporters made appeals to this effect. Krystyna Chrupek, who addressed this topic in several books in the 1970s and 1980s, also wrote on the subject for *Kobieta i Życie*, and was responsible for the aforementioned survey; she had a very critical opinion of concealing the true reasons for divorce under the "guise of 'incompatibility'."[112] In her view, this was a typical way for quarreling Polish couples to avoid dragging out their dirty laundry and involving witnesses. Chrupek saw this as not only consciously breaking the laws and duping the court, but above all, obstructing the court from carrying out a "vivisection" of the relationship, and then a reconciliation process, which could keep the dissolution from occurring. Some relationships did introduce, of course, a risk of conflict. Her divorce reportage cited examples of "risky" marriages that ultimately ended in divorce. Their "original sin" was being mismatched, either in terms of class (an intellectual woman and a blue-collar worker), a focus on consumption (rampant in the 1970s), or, for example, an upending of social roles, when there was a relationship between an ambitious working mother and a shiftless husband, who was overly focused on their daughter. We should not read this in terms of a reliable picture of actually existing causes for divorce in Poland at the time, but as a veiled critique of the social transformation, both the officially promoted one (relationships between communities and classes, the improving living standard of the 1970s), and the one that came with women's emancipation.

Notwithstanding the clear "political" subtext of the letters published in magazines, their unintended side-effect, much like the numerous journalistic pieces published in book form, might have been to soften the image of divorcing couples and show the subjective experiences of women, revealing the difficulty of living with the stigma of divorce.

Men's letters do not contain this element of social exclusion and anxiety about being slandered, which, if we believe the letters and journalistic pieces accompanying the survey, was most difficult for women in small towns:

> I left my town. I took a job, my husband also left, though somewhere else. We didn't write. That was it, but it was not yet a divorce. I didn't want it, I didn't see the need. I had decided never to take another husband. I worked, visited my son regularly, because I missed him horribly. I felt like a leper around people. People here are superstitious, and a woman without a husband is suspicious. I was young and decent looking, but I was terribly afraid of what people would think. And so I lived. A barren, lost six years.[113]

112 Krystyna Chrupek, *Nazajutrz po miłości*, Warsaw 1984, pp. 17 ff.
113 "List A.B. (Poznańskie)," *Kobieta i Życie*, 5.05.1974, No. 18, p. 13.

> If I were now faced with this dilemma, I would never break up my family. The child is the most important reason. The second reason is that my feelings for my husband had not totally died. Let's be frank – the place of the divorced woman in society is far worse than others. A divorced woman is seldom given a managerial position, she is rarely promoted or rewarded. Divorced and making the worst impression, almost every man "tries his luck" with her; he even sees it as his male duty.[114]

The social status of divorced women, unlike men, was not entirely clear. They were seen as "undefined," as it was phrased by one female respondent to an Institute of Labor and Social Affairs survey in the early 1980s.[115] On the one hand, both men and women thought they were easy prey for men. On the other hand, they were thought to be helpless, (probably) abandoned, which explained the frequent advances made by potential "caretakers." This woman did not fit the essentially stable and secure world of married couples. As such, she was a threat to the stable matrimonial life in her immediate surroundings:

> Life after the divorce was not easy. Especially in the first months. For a long time I couldn't cope with the thought that it was he, and not I who broke those pathetic bonds. It was all the more difficult for me in that, almost at once, I found out what it meant to be single woman. Understandably, my social life got reshuffled. Incomprehensibly, my family also distanced themselves from me. And men? It was only then that I, a thirty-year-old woman, heard that in a town of several thousand I was the only one worthy of their interest and affections. Love – that was the sofa my husband left behind. Their proposals offended me. So I told one 'amour' after another that the couch was free, but I didn't care for 'mandatory favors.'[116]

In extreme cases, when criminality was involved, there was not only open stigmatization of the divorced woman, but even violence.[117]

In their diaries and letters, women often complained that their close family and friends had turned away from them, seeing them as too independent (or even unstable), or the reverse, as incompetent losers. On the other hand, it was

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114 "List Iny, 36 lat, wykształcenie średnie," *Kobieta i Życie*, 26.05.1974, No. 21, p. 5.

115 "Odpowiedź na ankietę: kobieta, wykształcenie średnie, rok uzyskania rozwodu 1979," in: Danuta Graniewska, Krystyna Krupa, Bozena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Samotne matki, samotni ojcowie: o rodzinach niepełnych w Polsce*, Warsaw 1986, p. 95.

116 "Optymistka," *Kobieta i Życie*, 12.05.1974, No. 19, p. 5.

117 This Hajnówka resident was said to file a complaint that she was "tormented in her village. The neighbors would not let her go in peace, they would harass her, hurl the worst insults at her, and then beat her, and only because she wasn't living with her husband and intended to have a divorce," quoted in: Barbara Tryfan, Józef Grabowicz, *Wzrost rozwodów a kryzys małżeństwa na wsi*, p. 89.

the family that most often came to help mothers,[118] the vast majority of whom were left to take care of the children from the old relationship. The author of one competition journal has this to say about her divorced sister:

> I don't think Bożena is too smart. She doesn't realize, or won't admit, that in a way she's lost the game of life. Still, I admire her. In her place, I would have broken down right away [. . .]. Bożena says, for example, that her main satisfaction comes from being independent. That's easy to say. Above all, it's our mother who helps Bożena. Mother even takes care of her boys when Bożena's at work, Mother adds her retirement money to her pay, and, for the children's sake, Mother hasn't gotten married a second time.[119]

Other important themes include the child's tragedy, though this was no longer a child from a shelter, going to make up the picture of a "broken family" in times of the "criminalization of divorce:"

> But most of all, the child. Small at first, 'stealing glances' at other children on Sunday walks, play-fighting with their fathers – look how strong! Then, when he's a bit older, he knows what divorces are, that Dad's with another woman, and there's one man who visits us who like to stare at Mom. Children are great observers. When the word 'divorce' dropped in our family, the child was shocked. I didn't imagine or expect such a response. Nor did his father. That was the most horrible day of my life. I think that little guy's scream will ring in my ears until the day I die. Never! I would never, ever make my child go through that again.[120]

Kobieta i Życie liked quoting children's statements, such as this young teenage girl, who wrote:

> Calling out to all married couples! If you say right from the start that you're mismatched, then get a divorce, don't wait till your children grow up, like me. Do you know how they suffer? Dad, I think that you are better than before, Mama would definitely take you back, she'd do it for me. Then you'd both have to mend your ways.[121]

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118 See, for example, the "Ośmiornica" diary in: *Jaka jesteś rodzino?*, selected and edited by Maria Parzyńska, I. Tarłowska, Warsaw 1965, p. 346. "I have a mother who helps me when she can, unless she's sick. So as not to be a burden, she takes the purses in to be glued. But I generally glue those purses myself right after coming home from work, because her hands shake and it's easier for her to wash, sew, or take care of the child than to glue. So I spend eighteen (8 + 10) hours a day sitting. But that's better than getting married again, than more disappointment and abuse."

119 "Barbara Marcinowska" [librarian, high-school education, 27; engineer husband], in: *Jaka jesteś rodzino?*, pp. 13 ff.

120 "List Iny, 36 lat, wykształcenie średnie."

121 "List Ani," *Kobieta i Życie*, 9.06.1974, No. 23, p. 17.

In the Polish context, divorces were inextricably bound with housing problems. The two following fragments of letters that reflect the conditions in residential buildings are particularly indicative of the Polish economic situation:

> Three years since the divorce. Believe it or not, for three years I've been sleeping in a partitioned kitchen, keeping sharp objects under my pillow. That was to protect me from my husband, who was taking terrible vengeance against me for filing for a divorce. He beat me, made things up, cursed, wrecked my belongings. But in such a sly way that I have no proof. I applied for eviction, but lost the case for lack of evidence. And my ex-husband won't give permission to have our home partitioned. What am I supposed to do? Six months ago I had a heart attack. And I'm only 35.[122]

> I got a divorce in 1971, but I still had to live with my husband and children in one room, and my in-laws in the kitchen.[123]

Tragic tales of women who divorced "Polish style" were a favorite topic for journalism, including when it came to housing issues. The situation seemed unsolvable. Where to find 40,000 apartments annually for divorcées, it was rhetorically asked; it was dishonest when there were others waiting. Responsibility was shifted onto the militia, the prosecutor, the housing committees, conciliatory commissions, and finally, employers.[124] The huge role of the apartment as almost a separate actor in the divorce drama is also confirmed by studies on divorced women from just before the 1980s at the Institute of Labor and Social Issues.[125] The apartment was also the villain in the divorce, as one of its compelling causes, according to experts and diarists alike:

> Another vital cause [of divorce] – a female diarist stated in analyzing the break-up of her marriage – is in the conditions we had for beginning our lives together. Our grim accommodations did not forecast that our marriage would develop positively, but then we didn't realize it, we believed the future would be happy. A young married couple should have a separate living space at once, so that they can begin shaping their personalities from day one, learn about each other, without worrying about where to live. Waiting too long for an apartment can poison a marriage… The best thing would

122 Krystyna Chrupek, "Mieszkania po rozwodzie…," *Kobieta i Życie* 1971, No. 20, p. 11.

123 "List Teresy (3 lata po rozwodzie)," *Kobieta i Życie*, 21.04.1974, No. 28, p. 13.

124 While such situations emerge in the sources, the reliability of statistics is a huge difficulty for divorce research in Poland, as are the causes leading to divorces, which do not appear in most sources: these are divorces to keep an apartment, travel abroad etc., which are a further indication of the areas where society was accustomed to the conditions the system created. See: D. Jarosz, *Mieszkanie się należy…: studium z peerelowskich praktyk społecznych*, Warsaw 2010.

125 See: Danuta Graniewska, Krystyna Krupa, Bozena Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Samotne matki, samotni ojcowie: o rodzinach niepełnych w Polsce*.

> be if the young couple received the keys to an M-3 right after signing their marriage certificate.[126]

In contrast to the contents of many journals, the repercussions of the *Kobieta i Życie* survey were unambiguous, and the choice of letters "met expectations." Although many divorced female readers were content, most answered that they regretted their decision, that they were dismayed.[127] Here, the streamlined content is not the most important thing. What is vital is that the divorcées came out of the shadows. The film mentioned at the opening of the chapter had a similar cultural impact; moreover, it gave a detailed look at the human, though tragic dimension of the divorce court ritual.

Despite the dark colors in which divorce scenes were painted, in diaries of the 1960s we detect certain symptoms of change. Above all, in some narratives the "unfortunate divorce experiences" are accentuated as belonging to "the old days:"

> During the occupation we met with Piotr – my first young love. He was just separating from his wife and beginning his divorce (his wife was at fault). Despite the objections of my entire family – in my circles and **in those days** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K][128] marrying a divorcé was hard to swallow – after two years we were wed. His daughter stayed with her mother. It was 1943.[129]

In Warsaw 1975, when the women's magazines and cinema let you follow the stories of "real" and "average" married couples in strife, divorce did not have the stigmatizing power it had over thirty years before; nonetheless, it was still

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126 "Rozwód jest jedynym naszym osiągnięciem" diary in: *Moje małżeństwo i rodzina*, selected and edited by Anna Dodziuk-Lityńska, J. Radziejowski, supervised by A. Musiałowa, Warsaw 1974, p. 42.

127 Krystyna Chrupek calculated that out of the 500 letters submitted in response to the survey, 200 declared outright that they regretted having decided to divorce, see: K. Chrupek, *Życie po rozwodzie*, p. 80.

128 "In the old days" is a concept used quite often by the diarists when it comes to both divorce and single motherhood, to signify the social transformations they believe they are witnessing. Interestingly, however, the phrase appears more often in the context of an "averted tragedy," e.g. "[. . .] I was terrified to learn I was pregnant. Please don't be surprised that I write 'terrified,' **as in those days** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K] a child 'out of wedlock' was still a disgrace, and my situation was most unusual. I was a teacher in a village, where all eyes were on me and everything was significant." The author of the diary was married a few months later. See: "Jesteśmy wciąż jednako szczęśliwi" diary, in: *Moje małżeństwo i rodzina*, pp. 14 ff.

129 "Magda Warszawianka" diary (office worker, secondary education, 47, husband: engineer), in: *Jaka jesteś rodzino*?, p. 43.

regarded as an unusual event, tragic and unnecessary. At that time, particularly in the woman's case, divorce was not a ritual for beginning a new life; it only meant closing a chapter of one's private life.

4.5. A Marital (and Thus National) Crisis

Literally a few years later, at the height of the Polish crisis at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, divorce, and thus, we might stress, people's choices, underwent metaphorization in a cultural sense and became part of the myth of social disintegration diagnosed by the rebellious intellectual elite of the day. Divorce as an individual experience "hit the screens," becoming part of the public discourse, which could, at least in theory, have caused the social assimilation of the phenomenon, though the symbolic message carried by those highly evocative images was unequivocally negative. Still, I do not believe that it worked to create a taboo, as the message was too elitarian.

Divorce and, in broader terms, the metaphor of family disintegration was taken up by the creators of the cinema of moral unrest. Ultimately, this representation did not have the repercussions of pop culture, but its echoes began to appear in productions that were less ambitious, though still niche.

The most powerful image of divorce is found in Andrzej Wajda's *Rough Treatment* (also translated as *Without Anesthesia*) of 1978, where divorce is the crowning moment of the sudden crisis in the main protagonist's life. Only death can come after it. This rendition was so powerful that it became a reference point in reality. Krystyna Chrupek, a journalist for *Kobieta i Życie*, sought to render the drama experienced in court by one of her interviewees by writing: "For two years in court, there was what Andrzej Wajda showed in a two-minute sequence of *Rough Treatment*."[130]

The script was written by Agnieszka Holland, for whom the family-in-crisis motif was a favorite metaphor for the socio-political decay of the latter half of the 1970s (e.g. *Provincial Actors*). The divorce of the "Solidarity" era (1981) was the subject of works by younger artists, graduates of the Łódź Film School. Three presently little-known directors were undoubtedly influenced by Wajda's film, while trying to show the optic of various participants in the family drama. Thus, *On, ona, oni* [He, She, They] breaks down into three segments: the wife's perspective, the husband's, and then their meeting in court. Unlike *Protocol* or *Rough Treatment,* in this film the viewer is not a first-hand witness to the trial. The

130 Krystyna Chrupek, *Nazajutrz po miłości*, p. 102.

drama takes place between them in the gloomy corridors and filthy cafeteria of the regional court, in spaces which practically inspire revulsion for the public institution.

Wajda's *Rough Treatment* is one of the darkest pictures of divorce in Communist-era Poland. Wajda explained the circumstances behind the film in conversation with Aleksander Zagańczyk:

> At the moment the script was confirmed, there was a period of total freedom in Polish cinematography. No one monitored what we were doing in the making of the film. Bear in mind that the film groups were between the Culture Department of the Central Committee and the Ministry of Cinematography. And it was not like in the Soviet Union, where the 'editor' sat on the set, the informer checking that what happened on the set matched the script. First a long time was spent reading and discussing the script. Then changes were required, which were the conditions for the film going into production. But when shooting started, total freedom began.[131]

Therefore, Wajda faced various problems with confirming a script that had been "read and discussed" since 1977. Ultimately Janusz Wilhelmi, the head of the cinematography committee, demanded corrections to which Wajda could not agree. However, Wilhelmi perished in an airline disaster in 1978; he was replaced by the more liberal Jan Mietkowski, which meant the director could make the film in its original version, which, as was often the case with Wajda, differed considerably from its original script.

The film tells of the downfall of a well-known and highly talented reporter (modeled on Kapuściński); Wajda's original intention was to make it a tale of "divorce Polish style" and a study of a man "abandoned by his wife." The main protagonist is also losing his job at the newspaper, he is fired from classes he depends on at the university, and he cannot travel abroad, though as Wajda noted in March 1978:

> One way or another this has to be 'divorce Polish style,' even if the film has a different subject. It must be a snapshot of reality. And so the protagonists and the situation must be local, specifically Polish. [. . .] I see no room for political drama. I could make it depressing, but what would that mean for the central theme of Man/Wife. If the wife is an oppressive force, that can only be constructive. [. . .] the middle of the film is a search for a sequence of causes. The husband wants to and must find out why he was abandoned by his wife! He visits his friends, asks others. He tries to understand. Well, and eventually there are a few new thoughts on divorce and marriage. At least a few paradoxes![132]

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131 Aleksandra Zagańczyk, "Prywatne i polityczne. O powstaniu filmu 'Bez znieczulenia'," *Dialog* 2005, No. 6, p. 83.

132 Ibid., pp. 79 ff.

Two vital conclusions come from the director's premises. First, if film is to be a snapshot of reality, then divorce is an integral part of that reality. Second, Wajda did not achieve his aim of creating a family drama. It was not only his temper but above also the atmosphere in the X Film Group that pushed him toward politics and a study of Polish social consciousness, that is, *Rough Treatment*.

Concern over the political repercussions of the film resound in on-set reports by secret service agents:

> The [script] contains a range of highly controversial statements, thoughts, and reflections on contemporary Polish reality. The situation in the journalists' community has consciously been depicted in a biased fashion. A key moment is in the range of highly allusive, demagogical statements pertaining to domestic life – from economics to the mechanisms behind a career in journalism. According to the author [Agnieszka Holland – B. K.-K.], the present situation and reality of the system we live in have led to a state of profound hopelessness, an ideological void, and the only correct approach is passively waiting for a chance to be 'cunning,' which is only superficially criticized. The circumstances shown in the script blatantly diverge from the facts.[133]

The film, which even Wajda called "dry and political," was made at the breakneck speed of thirty-two hours, and by the fall it had received the Grand Prix at the Film Festival in Gdynia. The industry press, which in 1979 had written about *Rough Treatment* quite reservedly, stressed the film showed marital conflict and the tragedy of divorce:

> Debate over Andrzej Wajda's new film began even during the discussion period [. . .] Some saw it as chiefly a passionate critique of the blustering phraseology found in public life, a critique of the rules of the game here and there applied toward people of independent viewpoints, and thus a dissertation on shortcomings in our society. Others accentuated the marital drama, the protagonist's vain efforts to regain his wife and family, the dire accumulation of misfortunes, ending in death. The filmmaker encouraged the latter interpretation, stressing that it was not his intent to create an interventional or journalistic film.[134]

Today we might agree that an interpretation in the spirit of "the cinema of moral unrest" decidedly took over, and in the near-parallel images of professional and private disaster, the latter, which concludes with a dishonest, tragic divorce, is chiefly a metaphor. Wajda and Holland needed a powerful image; that is what divorce is here for. The "routine, superficial cohabitation" mentioned by the wife's lawyer and the staged divorce trial where everyone lies speak of social

133 Witold Bereś, Krzysztof Burnetko, *Andrzej Wajda. Obejrzany*, Warsaw 2013, p. 188.
134 R. Koniczek, "Lustro powiększające," *Kino* 1979, No. 1, p. 13.

crisis. Divorce was not a snapshot of reality, though it was undoubtedly inscribed in the social memory as an inevitable catastrophe, and a tragedy that ends with the suicide of the protagonist. This tragedy is not particularly grounded in anything, because Wajda and Holland consciously avoided sharing the protagonists' deeper motivations.

The above-mentioned 1981 film *He, She, They* paints divorce in similar colors, though with far less talent; here the blame rests with the chimeric wife of the main protagonist, a young, overworked engineer involved in creating "Solidarity" in his factory.

This film made practically no ripples, although it featured Teresa Wójcik, Krystyna Janda, and Jerzy Radziwiłowicz. It was created just before Martial Law and premiered only two years later, in December 1983. The fates of the main protagonists are less tragic than Wajda's reporter. They do not receive a divorce and walk out of the courtroom hand in hand. Their efforts to get a divorce seem unjustified and half-baked.

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Despite clear symptoms of changing visions of divorce that we observe in the 1970s, thought to have been a cultural watershed, we search in vain for signs of the "great transformation" in the final decade of People's Poland. There was still talk of divorce as a "necessary evil."[135] One novelty was psychotherapists' declarations of expert assistance for women undergoing a divorce, which we may, with probable exaggeration, see as an institutional response to public media statements by people either divorcing or who had experienced divorces, as after the middle of the previous decade. The true breakthrough occurred in the post-communist transformation period, accompanied by the most profound social upheaval. Thus, acceptance for divorce (other than cohabitation) ultimately became a symbol of the great changes which occured after 1989, and not in the period of communist Poland.

Crow: Caw, caw, caw. What kids the neighbors have, good-for-nothings and low-lifes, someone should beat them with a stick. Caw, caw, caw, I'm so mad at them. Caw, this can't go on, punish them, father, this minute, they stole the eggs from my nest and replaced them with sparrow's eggs. Caw, caw, caw, everyone in the forest is sick of them.

135 APR, F 29261, "Divorce – A Necessary Evil," from the radio series *Seeking Harmony*, ed. J. Mróz, broadcast 19.04.1984.

Hare: Dear sir, please give your boys a stern beating, they dunked my poor daughter in the mud. She very nearly drowned. Punish them, Father, this very moment, for this cannot go on.

Crow: Beat them, beat them![136]

136 J. Kozieradzka, *Dzieci taty Abecadła*, Warsaw 1959 [reprint: 1969, 1971, 1984, 2008, Tonpress 1983 (as an audio recording)].

Chapter 5 Gesture or Crime? Physical Violence at Home

The prevailing opinion among scholars is that domestic violence, i.e. the intentional act of causing physical suffering to another family member, was discovered through public opinion, lawyers, psychologists, and social workers, and only then by scholars in the closing decades of the twentieth century, as a result of the social revolution of the 1960s and the work of second-wave feminists. Prior to that, accusations of family abuse were said to be a catalog of extreme incidents, and only extraordinary cruelty or irreversible effects of acts of physical violence were capable of interesting public officials and brought their offenders to justice.[1] As Anna Clark writes:

> Before the 1970s, judges and police officers still saw wife-beating as a trivial offense—policemen would tell husbands to calm down and wives to stop annoying them, and cases rarely came to court. Popular culture depicted wife-beating as a joke, and psychiatrists saw it as a mental illness of the underclass or of individual women. In general, the problem was denied or explained away.[2]

A particularly telling transformation is illustrated by feminist communities, which began calling women who experienced domestic abuse "survivors," and not "mere" "victims of violence," which, in terms of the original semantic field of the word, called special attention to people who had been harmed. This tactic shows the complexity of the situation, wherein the relatively clear image of the culprit/victim relationship, with its direct translation to gender roles, is undermined.[3]

Unfortunately, it does not seem we are presently capable of unequivocally confirming this thesis of the breakthrough, or that we can see it as universal for Western or European culture as such, not to mention a wider research perspective. We still know too little about the transformation of the social imaginary

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1 Nicholas Bala, "An historical perspective on family violence and child abuse: Comment on Moloney et al, Allegations of Family Violence 12 June 2007," *Journal of Family Studies* 2008, No. 14, p. 272.

2 Anna Clark, "Domestic Violence, Past and Present," *Journal of Women's History* 2011, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 193.

3 Ibid.

of violence in the home, including sexual violence. Nonetheless, it should not surprise us that in Western Europe and the United States the highest importance is presently attributed to transformations that occurred in the late 1960s, above all to the actions of feminist organizations at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, which gave financial and legal aid to children and mothers who had been molested or raped. Women's shelters, demands for protection from police, and the first telephone crisis lines for victims were chiefly the work of women's organizations.[4] The documentation of cases of violence against women also proved that the problem was not confined to working-class families.

The 1970s were a time not only of giving aid to victims but also of profounder psychological and sociological inquiries into the mechanisms by which domestic violence erupts. Feminism had a practical aspect on the one hand, making help for the victims an obligation; on the other hand, it was a factor that encouraged theoretical reflection on the phenomenon as such. The most oft-cited example of this research was by American scholar Lenore Walker, whose 1979 multi-award-winning volume *The Battered Woman*[5] is considered the first attempt to build a comprehensive psychological theory around violent dependency in the family and overcoming it. Her cycle of violence theory, based on the premises of a feminist psychology, explains the presence of violence in a family with a patriarchal position of the man, who felt obliged to use violence to exert and maintain total control over the other family members.[6] When it came to researching child abuse, the 1960s are again regarded as a breakthrough, with the introduction of the academic concept of Child Abuse Syndrome by Henry Kempe.[7]

Without detracting from the "revolution" of the late 1960s and 1970s, which allows us to piece together how knowledge has developed, including our knowledge of domestic violence, we must recall that the study of family abuse contains many strands with variously developing analytical paths, based on various sources, theoretical inspirations, and often evolving from different disciplines. For there are a variety paths that lead scholars to child abuse or violence against women, which most often comes to mind when we think of family abuse. This also shows the various paths of individualization and emancipation of women and children in the family. Child abuse had been studied fairly early in the field

4 Ibid.; Nicholas Bala, *An historical perspective on family violence and child abuse*. . ., p. 273.

5 Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman*, Harper & Row 1979.

6 Nicholas Bala, *An historical perspective on family violence and child abuse*. . ., p. 273.

7 Anna Piekarska, "Przemoc, kary cielesne i krzywdzenie dzieci," *Dziecko Krzywdzone. Teoria, Badania, Praktyka* 2003, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 9.

of education (corporal punishment), though mainly in the context of care-taking and educational institutions (which can be much easier when it comes to historical studies, owing to the diversity and availability of institutional resources in the modern era, left behind by schools, boarding houses, assistance centers, orphanages, and shelters).[8] Undoubtedly, one consequence of the sexual revolution was furthering research into domestic rape and sexual abuse of children, but even here there is doubt that the vow of silence smothering public debate of the topic was only broken in the 1960s and 1970s. Carol Smart claims that we cannot speak of a widespread taboo in the first half of the twentieth century. Rather, it was a discursive battle over the understanding of childhood and the "innocence" of the maturation period.[9] For instance, debates between English and Welsh psychoanalysts, lawyers, and politicians in the first half of the twentieth century prove that, between 1908 and 1960, the reformers made many attempts to define sexual contact between adults and children as cause of extreme suffering, first of all moral, then physical, and perhaps most importantly, psychological.[10]

Over the past two decades the issue of domestic violence has also become popular among historians. The use of force to gain control over another person, and above all, the line between cruelty and routine and fairly innocuous behavior is culturally defined and tied to a whole gamut of ideas about family relationships and the roles of discipline and order. Thus, we are "taught" to use force (or not) for a particular purpose or aim. Meanwhile, in social life the line between abuse and routine punishment is fluid, and depends on the subjective assessment of the historical figure.

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8 See: Paul Axelrod, "No Longer a 'Last Resort': The End of Corporal Punishment in the Schools of Toronto," *The Canadian Historical Review* 2010, Vol. 91, No. 2, pp. 261–285; Jacob Middleton, "The Experience of Corporal Punishment in Schools, 1890–1940," *History of Education*, March 2008, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 253–275; Dirk Schumann, "Legislation and Liberalization: The Debate About Corporal Punishment in Schools," *German History* 2007, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 324–350; Eric Margolis, Shila Fram, "Caught Napping: Images of Surveillance, Discipline and Punishment on the Body of the Schoolchild," *History of Education*, March 2007, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 191–211; Moira J. Maguire, Sé Ó Cinnéide, "A Good Beating Never Hurt Anyone: The Punishment and Abuse of Children in Twentieth Century Ireland," *Journal of Social History*, Spring 2005, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 635–652.

9 The same period saw widespread debate on the paths by which venereal diseases spread, as this was then the most irrefutable source of information on sexual violence in care-taking institutions.

10 Carol Smart, "Reconsidering the Recent History of Child Sexual Abuse, 1910–1960," *Journal of Social Policy*, January 2000, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 55–71.

The growing number of publications is closely tied to the development of research into gender relations throughout history and the widening of perspectives in family studies.[11] This group includes a modest number of Polish scholars.[12] Domestic violence in the Socialist Realist period, including postwar Poland, was the topic of an article by the women's rights scholar, Isabel Marcus. She managed to formulate only tentative hypotheses on our present topic,[13] but

11 See, for example: Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of American Social Policy against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present*, Urbana–Chicago 1987; David Peterson del Mar, *What Trouble I Have Seen: A History of Violence against Wives*, Cambridge 1998; Elizabeth Foyster, *Marital Violence: An English Family History, 1660–1857*, Cambridge 2005; Frances E. Dolan, *Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy*, Philadelphia 2008; Sara Butler, *The Language of Abuse: Marital Violence in Later Medieval England*, Leiden 2007; Sarah B. Pomeroy, *The Murder of Regilla: A Case of Domestic Violence in Antiquity*, Cambridge 2007; *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*, eds. Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin, A. Wills, Basingstoke 2009; Dorothea Nolde, "The Language of Violence. Symbolic Body Parts in Marital Conflicts in Early Modern France," in: *Violence in Europe. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. S. Body-Gendrot, Pieter Spierenburg, New York 2008, pp. 141–159; M. V. D. Heijden, "Women as Victims of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seventeenth-Century Holland: Criminal Cases of Rape, Incest, and Maltreatment in Rotterdam and Delft," *Journal of Social History*, 1 March 2000, Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 623–644; Eliza Earle Ferguson, "Domestic Violence by Another Name: Crimes of Passion in Fin-de-Siecle Paris," *Journal of Women's History* 2007, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 12–34; Jeffrey Merrick, "Domestic Violence in Paris, 1775," *Journal of Family History*, October 2012, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 417–427.

12 The issue of violence is raised by Tomasz Wiślicz, see: *Upodobanie. Małżeństwo i związki nieformalne na wsi polskiej XVII–XVIII wieku. Wyobrażenia społeczne i jednostkowe doświadczenia*, Wrocław 2012. Also: Maciej Ziemierski, "Przemoc domowa w Krakowie w latach 1650–1763 w świetle mieszczańskich testamentów i inwentarzy," *Rocznik Biblioteki Naukowej PAU i PAN w Krakowie* 2010, Year 15; Aneta Bołdyrew, "Kara i strach w wychowaniu dzieci w polskich rodzinach w XIX w.," *Dziecko Krzywdzone* 2009, No. 3, pp. 1–8.

13 Isabel Marcus, "Wife Beating: Ideology and Practice under State Socialism in Hungary, Poland and Romania," in: *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, eds. Shana Penn, Jill Massino, New York 2009, pp. 115–132. The author focuses her study on violence in post-communist societies. Her theses on family abuse in Poland, Hungary, and Romania after the Second World War are mainly intuitive and quite general. The first speaks of acceptance of violence as a means of exerting power and control in the family, as a result of the socialist gender order, which she believed facilitated and justified violence. She undermines the thesis of the passive female victim consenting to violence. Finally, she believes that, although the systemic naturalization

they demonstrate the necessity of in-depth source research and analytical reflection on violence in private spaces in communist Poland. On the one hand, social historians' publications seldom mention "domestic violence."[14] This is one of the most literal omissions; it is difficult to define instances of taboo or sketch out paths of how the imaginary transformed. It is particularly difficult in 1956–1989, as the first decade after the war is easier to ascribe to wartime and postwar traditions, and then the Stalinist culture of violence and social chaos. On the other hand, however, violence was increasingly intuitively included in pop culture depictions of the family in postwar Poland.[15]

Court documents are a fundamental reference point in my attempt to respond to questions on the presence of physical violence in the family and the social acceptance for it, not only those directly tied to accusations of criminal "physical and moral abuse," but also divorce papers that remove parental rights.

The main problem with this source is selectiveness (the cases are overwhelmingly extremely brutal) and repetition. The vast majority simply confirm the available statistics. Nonetheless, we do find examples of content so detailed that it gives us a better understanding of less the *act* of violence than its social reception. Although I also refer to legal and sociological discourse, only documents of this type allow the reader some (for these are always second-hand statements) awareness of the relations between victims and abusers, and external observers. I also refer to court documents to deal with the impotence of the historical narrative when it comes to violence. I believe model-worthy narrative procedures to describe the phenomenon have yet to be developed. In Polish society, where the formula of the noble victim and executioner is deeply inscribed in a context of national liberation and martyrology, there would seem to be special difficulties.

In our day, psychologists and sociologists mainly investigate what models of social relationships, including parental models, lead to the use of violence,

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and treatment of violence in the family was treated as the norm, things were much the same in East and West Europe.

14 Bartłomiej Gapiński devoted a great deal of attention to this issue in *Sacrum i codzienność. Prośby o modlitwę nadsyłane do Kalwarii Zebrzydowskiej w latach 1965–1979*, Warsaw 2008. On the thesis of the growing family crisis and the increase in alcoholism, references to source texts on violence appear in works by Krzysztof Kosiński: *Nastolatki '81. Świadomość młodzieży w epoce "Solidarności"*, Warsaw 2002; *Oficjalne i prywatne życie młodzieży w czasach PRL*, Warsaw 2006; *Historia pijaństwa w czasach PRL*, Warsaw 2008.

15 *Dom zły*, directed by Wojciech Smarzowski, 2009; *Pręgi*, directed by Magdalena Piekorz, 2004.

and the long-term effects of the experience of physical and psychological violence on the victims, given the consensus on the negative consequences of both corporal punishment and abusive relations between adult family members. Adopting this premise, and being aware of a contemporary view of the world, as a historian I chiefly investigated the transformation of the social imaginary of violence, presupposing that it was fluid, and as such, could be quite incomprehensible (foreign) to me. Both in reading the source materials and in writing this chapter, I was dogged by the question of whether abusing a wife, father, or child was indeed taboo, that is, if it could be thus interpreted, and if so, when: as an anomaly, i.e. as disquieting, or as not fully accepted by society. Family abuse was not debated widely, it was not the subject of sociological reflection, and this created a coherent image of the Polish family in the People's Republic. But was this a conscious omission (tabooization) of the problem, or the reverse – a full acceptance of battery as a form of communication? Contemporary Polish scholars of violence, for whom communist Poland is only a historical context for contemporary phenomena, tend to conclude that violence was passed over in silence in People's Poland. According to some sociologists, domestic abuse in communist Poland, as part of the realm of the family, is automatically a "special sort of taboo." This was also meant to explain why functionaries of the Civil Militia were slow to respond to such matters.[16]

An analysis of the historical records shows that the problem was far more complex. In postwar Poland, a whole range of physical and psychological violence was accepted with no special reservations; this makes it hard to classify them as taboo. A fine example is the quote from a film I included in the chapter on divorce: "[. . .] – I behaved like a man and I hit my ex-wife. But without doing physical harm. It was not a blow that could have caused physical harm."[17] Slapping, shoving, and pushing were, it seems, an accepted part of family life, just as often prompting laughter as they did social concern. A fine illustration of this approach to violence is found in the film *Koniec nocy* [The End of the Night] of 1956, with a plot reminiscent of the "black series," in which the family members hurl invectives at one another and slap each other over the slightest misunderstandings.[18] We might well ask, therefore, if this indicates a culture of

16 "Przemoc w polskich rodzinach. Rozmowa z profesor Anną E. Michalską," in: *Przemoc na ekranie*, ed. Małgorzata Hendrykowska, Marek Hendrykowski, Poznań 2001, pp. 67–68.

17 *Protokół*, by A. Bogusławski, 1976.

18 *Koniec nocy*, dir. J. Dziedzina, 1956.

violence. This concept is used, some would say reductively, to describe the connection between traumatic long-term experiences of violence (most often linked to the experience of war) and "acceptance of violence as a means to solve interpersonal conflict or deal with frustration in everyday life."[19] Here, however, I will refer to a broader understanding of this concept, in a sense evoked by Charlin Steenkamp. To her mind, this is:

> a system of norms, values or attitudes which allow, make possible or even stimulate the use of violence to resolve any conflict or relation with another person [. . .]. The concept emphasizes that the use of violence is embedded in the broader shared values and norms of a community. Violence thus loses its political meaning and becomes a way of dealing with everyday issues: it becomes 'trivialized' or 'quotidian,' a socially acceptable mechanism to achieve power and status in society.[20]

Nonetheless, what we observe in communist Poland after 1956 is a slow process of cultural negotiation of the line between what is and is not acceptable – a result of an increasing perception of problems with the abuse of power; the culmination of this process only came in the 1990s, in the transformation period. Unfortunately, it is hard to say if the rising statistics of apprehension of assailants in the last two decades of communist Poland was a result of a growing awareness of the problem, chiefly among public servants, or if it reflected a real growth in family violence, seen as a symptom of the gathering crisis. In favor of the second idea is the rise in alcohol consumption, leading to loss of control over the use of force and the crossing of acceptable boundaries. We might lay down the hypothesis that the growth of the problem, or perhaps its increasing presence in the social discourse of the 1970s and 1980s, and the more and more unambiguous association of violence with the social margins, could have had side effects, in spreading ambivalent attitudes toward the common use of force. Hand in hand with this development, there came the gradual tabooization of battery in everyday life, as an act that suggested inequality, weakness, and humiliation, and a symbolic debasement, through its association with the margins of society. Violence was generally defined as undesirable, pushed to a region of behavior that was fairly widespread, but not to be boasted of in public. Fear of legal punishment did not, I believe, play a deciding role here. Crucially, however, this tabooization came more swiftly to cover adults than children, toward whom the law of using force was sanctioned by care and educational institutions. We

19 C. Steenkamp, "The Legacy of War: Conceptualizing a 'Culture of Violence' to Explain Violence after Peace Accords," *The Round Table*, April 2005, Vol. 94, No. 379, p. 254.

20 Ibid., p. 255.

might hazard one more hypothesis, tied to the ongoing process of the weakening of the father's position and authority in the latter half of the twentieth century. Historians have shown that, following social changes, this role was sharply redefined: "It became increasingly difficult for young people to accept paternal authority based on power, severity, and a lack of emotion."[21] This shift largely came from children's waning financial dependency on their parents and women's professionalization. Legal changes also played a certain role, particularly the introduction of widespread rights to a divorce. If fathers and husbands were the main assailants in domestic abuse, then ought we not see the long-term negotiations over laws on the use of physical force in terms of a symbolic struggle to maintain or undermine the authority of the head of the family, with its basis in discipline?

Introduction: The Case of Ewa Świder, Nowa Huta, June 1956

In the fall of 1956, *Przyjaciółka*, one of the most popular Polish "women's magazines," published a letter signed by Wiktor Bilski. This machinist from Nowa Huta was writing in defense of eight-year-old Ewa Świder, who was beaten by her parents. The magazine printed this letter in the "Black List" column, with a long commentary from the editor, based on the report from a *Przyjaciółka* correspondent sent to Nowa Huta to investigate the case. Thus, Alina Budzińska swiftly turned from a passive observer to an active participant:

> [. . .] our correspondent began demanding that the prosecutor in NH took steps in the Ewa Świder case to limit the impunity of the degenerates and ensure the child's safety and health. The Świders' neighbors must be reassured that the indictment bodies of Nowa Huta do indeed stand behind the law, justice, and civil peace in every matter, even seemingly 'minor' ones. Why do we speak of 'reassurance'? The case of Ewa Świder is no great bribery or sabotage affair, nor does it represent any serious financial crime. Nonetheless, the document submitted in July to the Nowa Huta prosecutor against the man guilty of the bestial abuse of a nine-year-old, defenseless citizen of the People's Republic should and could not simply disappear. But that is what happened. Perhaps because of the prosecutor's sympathy for the parent? Or perhaps through neglect, or the dismissal of 'minor,' 'insignificant' cases. Hard to say. Only after the intervention of *Przyjaciółka* was the case again brought to trial. [. . .] If the mother continues to beat the child, she will be convicted under Article 246 of Penal Code. [. . .] As we see from the

21 Piotr Śpica, "Przemiany autorytetu ojca w rodzinie polskiej w XX wieku. Interpretacja z perspektywy historyczno-pedagogicznej," *Wychowanie w Rodzinie* 2014, Vol. 10, p. 334.

> above, evil stepmothers and abused orphans are not only in fairy-tales. [. . .] We expect that the case of Ewa Świder – like many fairy-tales about poor orphans – will have a happy ending.[22]

The subject of the magazine's solicitude was a child whose fate was clothed in a narrative of a child born without a mother ("an orphan from a fairy-tale"), as the caretaker was not the biological mother. In this, child abuse became an issue of capital importance, and was grouped with a range of political topics that were raised after the death of Stalin, as part of settling scores with Polish Stalinism in a period of high social tension.[23] This was one of the "maladies of our reality"[24] that gained special attention. 1956 brought open debate on social problems, which were thought to have piled up in the Stalinist era, although the roots of many problems were also sought in the corruption of the wartime and afterwards.[25] All this notwithstanding, 1956 generated a climate that could not be compared with any other period in terms of discussions about what plagued the impoverished society. The desire for improvement was not limited to the political space; equally if not more important, the need for social reform and healing touched on some social practices that had been marginalized, but now were labeled "harmful," but also "dirty, shameful, and ill."

It was above all the state that was to secure this rebirth, through its bodies, prosecutor, and courts, which had all failed, as they had not appreciated, according to Budzińska, the gravity of a minor case, concerning a single, underage, defenseless citizen. In terms of the child's safety, regardless of the family's walk of life, the state can and should intervene. It is crucial here that Ewa's parents were sober, and the father had an important place in the Steel Mill, which sets it apart from most such efforts. The editor unequivocally condemned their cruelty toward their daughter, calling them "degenerates" who bestially tormented the child. This was motivated by a desire to generate as much social response as possible. This effect was achieved. Many weeks later, letters were still being written to *Przyjaciółka* in defense of young Ewa. At the same time, however, it is no accident that this case was printed under the "Black List" rubric, which, like

22 A. Budzińska, "O sierotce Ewuni nie-bajka," *Przyjaciółka* 1956, No. 47 (453), p. 12.

23 On letters to the institution as proof of "revolutionary ferment among the masses," see: Adam Leszczyński, *Sprawa do załatwienia. Listy do "Po prostu" 1955–1957*, Warsaw 2000.

24 Ibid., p. 18.

25 It is true that Marcin Zaremba does not mention postwar anxieties in his book, nor the dangers tied to the wartime corruption of children and young people and the rise in aggression, but this topic recurs like a mantra in the specialist journals from 1945–1948 and 1956–1969. Cf. Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944–1947*, Krakow 2012.

the documentary and literary series of the same name, evoked the everyday, ugly, dark side of Polish reality that had been negated by Stalinism.[26] It was part of a movement of disenchantment with ugliness that had been reserved for the political enemy for years. If Ewa's story had come to light a year earlier, it could have been added to Ważyk's *Poem for Adults*. With stabilization, the need for cleansing began to wane; this was reflected in relationships within families as well.

Even if we take the unfair perspective that this was only one of dozens of random cases tied to abuse or misuse of power that made outraged listeners write in to the radio, and readers write to *Po Prostu*, alongside cases of wire being stolen from a construction site and the boss' nepotism, what keeps us from ignoring this case is the sources documenting that the letter perhaps only accidentally attracted the attention of the editors, and the editor who was sent to the scene only *randomly*. The case of Ewa's abuse – for this is how it is filed in the court records – did not end up in the courtroom because of the letter to the editor or the journalist's intervention. That was merely a postscript. The most important events took place in June 1956. This allows us to go beyond public discourse and descend to social practices, to assess the tensions that emerged where these two levels intersected, insofar as we may make this artificial division.

I have decided to highlight this case as exceptional, to isolate it from dozens of other court cases concerning domestic violence. If similar events occurred, we no longer have detailed records of how they transpired, or at least I have been unable to find them. Domestic family violence also became a public affair when it had a tragic conclusion, with the death or lasting disfigurement of the victim.

Ewa's case was a local scandal that hastily revealed what was generally guarded within the home. In revealing what was kept secret, emotions played a major role; especially at the beginning, they helped decide on the behavior of many participants in the events in Nowa Huta. There can be no doubt that the main protagonists of the events had a major impact on the growing tension: a defenseless eight-year-old girl and the accused, who was Ewa's stepmother. This did not mark a major watershed in approaches to domestic violence, as in People's Poland there were no socio-cultural shifts in the discourse on violence comparable to the founding of the blue line and the debate around Wojciech Kuczok's book *Dirtbag* in the transformation period of the 1990s. However, I stress once

26 Wojciech Tomasik, "Między trasą W-Z a Pałacem Kultury (O przemianach polskiej kultury stalinowskiej)," in: *Październik '56. Odwilż i przełom w życiu literackim i kulturalnym Polski. Materiały Ogólnopolskiej Sesji Naukowej Rzeszów 23–25 września 1996*, ed. A. Kulawik, Krakow 1996, p. 13.

again, it was no accident that this case happened in 1956. For all the commentaries on this case show that, without the growing atmosphere of unrest and the need for social reform, Ewa would not have received this spontaneous external intervention.

As such, I am lingering over Ewa's case not because it marked a turning point, but because it reveals certain mechanisms in thinking about domestic violence that were unnoticed, or somehow transparent for the historical actors.

Eight-year-old Ewa lived with her natural father, Władysław Świder, a mechanic and graduate of a mechanical school in Krakow. He was employed at the Steel Mill, in the heart of Nowa Huta, in the Center B2 district. After her mother's death, he remarried. His new wife was Józefa, from a peasant family in Karwin, in the Miechów area. After the war, the girl had come to Krakow to seek her fortune, graduated from a cooperative secondary school, and before becoming pregnant, had worked in business. In 1955, at twenty-six years old, she gave birth to her first child, who was sickly and in danger of dying from the very outset.

Some light is cast on Ewa's domestic situation by the testimony of Sabina – a family friend who stayed with the Świders for some time. In her opinion, Józefa initially treated the girl quite well, but everything changed when she gave birth to an ailing child. Then Ewa began to irritate her. Things became so unpleasant at home that Sabina decided to move out. She could no longer stand the beatings with a nylon strap that was kept on the kitchen radiator. In June 1956 it transpired that Ewa was lashed three times over the course of ten days, once by the mother and twice by the father. Trouble most often started during mealtimes, because Ewa ate slowly, and would vomit during a meal.[27] Galant's testimony was confirmed by Ewa's grandmother Maria, with whom the girl lived for a time:

> [. . .] I seldom visited my son at home, because my daughter-in-law seemed to resent it. Once I pointed out that she ought to show her stepdaughter more love, and she was furious with me, saying that the child was stubborn and she was forced to be a caregiver. Then I saw how the child would kneel in her room, awaiting punishment.[28]

Neighbors also confirmed that the stepmother would dunk the girl in cold water or lock her in the wardrobe. On 16 June, the girl was thrashed so terribly that, when she went to school, the teacher had her examined, taking notes on her state of health, i.e. the "numerous traces of beatings [. . .] on either buttock, numerous

27 National Archive in Krakow [hereafter – AN Kr], Regional Court for Nowa Huta [hereafter – SP NH], II Kp 88/57, witness examined: Galant Sabina, pp. 64–66.

28 AN Kr, SP NH, II Kp 88/57, witness examined: Świder Maria, 12/11/1956, p. 20.

bruises on the right thigh and side, and on the left temple," which were passed on to the Women's League, the parent's committee, and the Lenin Steelworks. The case of the beaten child began to spread, shaking public opinion to such a degree that it ended up in *Przyjaciółka*. On that critical day of 23 June 1956, the story of Ewa's abuse crossed the threshold of Apartment 34 and became a public affair. A Nowa Huta militiaman noted that:

> [. . .] Citizen Widomski informed me that in housing block No. 34, apartment 24 in Estate B2 Citizen Świder Józefa is abusing her child, beating her, and that screams can be heard. I immediately reported to the site, where I confirmed that around housing block 34 a wide range of people have observed how Mrs. Świder beats the child.[29]

Neighbors and passers-by demanded that the door to the apartment be broken down, reiterating information from the school about the bruises, and reporting having heard screams from the stairwell. They finally stated that they would not disperse:

> [. . .] until the militia intervened to find out what was happening with the above-named child, Świder Ewą, who could have been murdered or otherwise harmed, as Citizen Świder Józefa would not open the door to the militia.[30]

Finally, the militiaman was able to calm the situation and disperse the crowd, pressured by the local prosecutor.

A considerable role in the process of publicizing the affair was played by the directors at Ewa's father's workplace. Adam Vogelsinger, the senior inspector of Investment Directors at the Lenin Steel Mill, lived in estate Center B2; he decided to look into the matter as the secretary of the Local Council. Information on the mistreatment of the child probably reached him through two channels. Medical information about Ewa's wounds traveled by official channels to the Steel Mill; in private he must have known about the events, being Świder's neighbor.

Świder was summoned to a session of the Local Council in the Main Energy Investment section, where he was to officially explain the beating and abuse of the child in his home. When he was shown the doctor's testimony he first denied it, and then admitted that once that sort of child beating had taken place, but he said this was his "own business." As a result, the Local Council, "nominated a two-person commission to come to an objective conclusion and investigate the child's living conditions [. . .]."[31]

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29 AN Kr, SP NH, II Kp 88/57, service notes, 23/11/1956.

30 AN Kr, SP NH, II Kp 88/57, service notes, 23/06/1956.

31 AN Kr, SP NH, II Kp 88/57, minutes of the interrogation of: Vogelsinger Adam, pp. 22 ff.

This commission of two employees went to the Świders. The women found Ewa's highly nervous mother, who was tending to a sick infant. Józefa was asked why she had beaten the eight-year-old, to which she said that Ewa was headstrong and disobedient and had been particularly irritating at the time, because she was late with her chores. She testified that:

> [. . .] she **slightly beat the child** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.] (16 June), and only when the father returned from the delegation and she told him about it did he really beat Ewa and then the militia and neighbors intervened (23 June).[32]

Mrs. Świder initially denied that she beat the child at all, but when she got talking she recalled that:

> [. . .] sometimes she spanked her with a hand, then with a linen strap, and then with a leather strap, and then again she denied everything. Throughout the interview Mrs. Świder tried to convince us that she was educated and that she knew what she was doing.[33]

She stressed that Ewa vomited during meals and that this was the most frequent cause of arguments. Bujakowa's conclusion was unequivocal. Mrs. Świder was not going to mend her ways and would not build a "proper home environment" for Ewa. She felt no regret, only anger toward her neighbors, stepmother, and Ewa's deceased mother. Moreover, she tried to persuade her listeners that the girl was a bad child.[34] Before the court, Józefa did not admit to having beaten the girl. She claimed to have struck Ewa only once, with a rag. She was only forcing Ewa to eat, because she wanted the girl to have full meals, not just bread and butter, as she had at her grandmother's. She also stressed:

> The militiamen told me that they phoned the prosecutor, who told them that this was not a case for the courts, because the testimonies did not mention if the beating was light or heavy, and this **could be regarded as normal punishment of a child** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.].[35]

Forty-year-old Władysław Świder told the court:

> I was not abusive [. . .]. I will clarify that in 1956 I **reprimanded the child** by striking her lightly with a nylon belt from my wife's pants. [. . .] **I had good reason** to hit the child. The child had come home scratched and I asked her where she had been. She explained

32 AN Kr, SP NH, II Kp 88/57, minutes of the interrogation of: Bujak Ludwika, 29/11/1956.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid, p. 27.

35 AN Kr, SP NH, II Kp 88/57, interrogation of the accused: Świder Józefa, Dec. 1956.

> she had been in the garden, she had climbed a tree and fallen. I pointed out to her that I was getting hot under the collar and she better watch out. When I saw the next day that Ewa was drawing in books, I ordered her to give me the belt. Ewa did. I ordered her to lie down on the sofa and I hit her with the belt, maybe three or four times. Then I asked her if she knew why she was being punished, that she should understand I wasn't doing it for pleasure. [. . .] But since this June **I haven't hit Ewa, because she hasn't deserved it** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.].[36]

The court did not believe these explanations. The father spent eight months in prison. Józefa received six months on probation. They were stripped of parental rights for two years. The verdict deserves our special attention. The judge stressed that the parents had ensured Ewa's intellectual development and taken an interest in the child, and yet gave her harsh physical punishment. In her justification, she wrote that it seemed logical that if the child had been polite and obedient, she would not have required such frequent and severe beating.[37] The sentence closing the verdict concerns Józefa, who, in the opinion of the court, abused her stepdaughter with her beatings. Then there is a handwritten addition to the printed text. It is as if the documentation of the beating was insufficient basis for a prison sentence. The minute-taker or judge, on her own behalf, wrote in a single word: "excessive."[38]

The Fine Line between Good and Bad

In the end, every one of the neighbors and acquaintances without exception stood in defense of the beaten and abused child, as did even the mother of Mr. Świder, the accused. The same went for the public institutions – the schools, associations, and the steel mill. The trial demonstrated that both parents abused Ewa, but the witnesses mainly blamed the mother-in-law, and this view was chiefly reflected in the press reports. Mr. Świder's workplace took the opposite view – it focused on the responsibility of the father, who took the brunt of the punishment, though this may have been due to Mrs. Świder's maternal duties to the younger child. Both lost their parental rights to Ewa. We search in vain for moral panic in the proceedings. Neither of the accused were stigmatized by society. Nor were they alienated in the estate community, made up of migrants, after all. It might have seemed that the social monitoring system worked, and that child abuse was unequivocally condemned by society and effectively punished

36 AN Kr, SP NH Kp 88/57, minutes of the interrogation of: Władysław Świder, Dec. 1956.
37 AN Kr, SP NH, II Kp 88/57, Verdict 11, March 1957, p. 206.
38 Ibid.

in public. But things are not that simple. We see this not only from the parents' statements, which might not have been seen as sufficiently reliable. Their words reflect what was best expressed in the court's verdict. Ewa was allowed to be beaten, though this was not recommended when it came to children as calm and polite as her, but she should not have been beaten "excessively." As such, the court and the accused chiefly differed when it came to the permissible intensity of the punishment. The beating itself did not prompt any reservations if the child deserved it. The screams and bruises of little Ewa were seen as signs of physical violence, and not a deserved reprimand, as the vaguely defined "norm" had been exceeded.[39] As to where the border should be – this remained unclear. A situation could equally be interpreted by observers and participants in the events as "unpleasant" (as stated by family friends), "menacing" (neighbors), or within the "norm" (the parent). The accused were convinced of their innocence, mainly because of the intentions behind their actions. According to Świder, who, like his wife, never showed remorse, the girl deserved corporal punishment, because she was naughty. "I had good cause" (read: I was not abusive), as Świder testified. The (institutional) message from above is even more unambiguous. The language of the institution, in this case, the judge, confirms we are dealing with a somewhat equivocal moment, a case of doubt and uncertainty, which could mean a future breakthrough. The handwritten note concerning the "excessive" beating and the standpoint of all the participants in the event confirm that child-beating itself in no way opposed the social norm, it was still not seen in terms of violence, or as bad from a moral perspective. The court's moment of indecision tells us that the line between punishment and child abuse remained fuzzy.

When we read the statements of witnesses who called in to the police station, we find that they decided to speak up because they feared the worst – the death of the child. Although the beating had been known for some time by the grandmother, and by Sabina, who had lived with the Świders, and the latter had been dismayed by the situation to such a degree that she had moved out, neither had reported it to the police. This had been up to a teacher. As I mentioned above, a readiness to intervene in June 1956 might be interpreted at present as part of the socio-political context. The gathering and calls to the police, probably made by several people at once, and finally, or perhaps especially, the involvement of the workplace, could be unequivocally seen as a sign of social unrest, and it may have generated anxiety in the Steel Mill administration and militia functionaries at

39 Pieter Spierenburg, "Violence: Reflections About a Word," in: *Violence in Europe. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*.

the spread of tensions. Were it not for all this, Ewa's case would not have received so much publicity and Świder would certainly not have found himself in jail. Apart from the general atmosphere abetting social unrest, several other factors were working in Ewa's favor: Center B2 was largely inhabited by village migrants, probably accustomed to neighbors intervening in family lives. Here, social monitoring did not only involve the space of the housing estate's private lives, on the contrary – in Nowa Huta private and professional life intermingled. The same people who worked together in the Steel Mill met on the staircase in their building, or in the courtyard. At that time, family stability was coming to Nowa Huta, and in practice this meant many of the wives in the district were present at home, not being professionally employed.[40] In light of this individual statement, it would be hard to deny that the public services (the militia, the Women's league) were trusted by society.[41]

Public opinion especially condemned the child's mother-in-law, who, as a woman, was expected to show a warmhearted and empathetic approach to the child. In the father's case, the violence was probably deemed more understandable and was still, to some degree, in line with the "natural state of things" (the father as the personification of strictness). We should recall that with the Thaw came reflections on the social role of women that departed from the Stalinist era. Many journalists pointed out the space of the home was neglected by women who were forced to work professionally.[42] This was a clear backlash against the changes of 1949–1955, when no attention was paid to the transformation of the father's cultural role, nor to expanding the social assistance system for families in education and child care. As such, Polish families were said to be facing a crisis of rampant alcoholism and "domestic hooliganism," and much of the blame fell squarely on the shoulders of the women, who were said to be incompetent in running a household. This was part of a process whereby women's housework took prevalence over professional work in Poland. One important consequence of this turn

40 See: F. Adamski, *Rodzina nowego miasta: kierunki przemian w strukturze społeczno-moralnej rodziny nowohuckiej*, Lublin 1970.

41 Investigations into the social response to the militia in Nowa Huta do not yet allow us to come to a clear opinion on this matter. In his study on the Citizen's Militia and Security Services in the district, Wojciech Paduchowski writes that militia functionaries did not command the same fearful respect as Security Service workers. See: Wojciech Paduchowski, *Nowa Huta nieznana i tajna. Obraz miasta w materiałach Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego i Milicji Obywatelskiej*, Krakow 2014, pp. 311 ff.

42 Małgorzata Fidelis, *Kobiety, komunizm i industrializacja w powojennej Polsce*, Warsaw 2015, p. 235.

was transferring, or perhaps strengthening, the woman's responsibility for the home and the family.

The media statements about Ewa stress that there were no blood ties between the assailant and the victim ("the mother-in-law syndrome"). Thus, the cruelty was explained in terms of a familiar and customary structure, in which the family remains a guarantor of security. Not being tied to Ewa, the mother-in-law was capable of doing things a natural mother would probably never have committed. Child abuse committed by women was generally favored by the media, and generated the most public outrage. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the symbol of domestic violence in communist Poland became, at least to Polish memory, a Warsaw teacher who abused her stepchild to death in 1982.[43] Practically all other assailants pale before such a compelling symbol, as we shall find in the coming chapter.

5.1. Legal and Educational Discourse on Corporal Punishment

Violence is not one-dimensional, it reverberates widely in social practice. Following microsociological investigations into violence, even if sociologists themselves confess they are rather scant,[44] we ought to suppose that, in domestic violence, we are dealing with a great diversity of violent relations:

> A husband can attack his wife, adults can beat their children, or the reverse. The adults involved can be biological parents or step-parents, chance partners of one of the parents, or caretakers. Adult children can also be violent toward their older parents. And finally, the most widespread is violence between siblings.[45]

From a historical perspective, almost each of these interpersonal relations redirects us to a different social discourse.

One of the first Polish scholars to conduct in-depth psychological research into physical child abuse in communist Poland was Anna Piekarska.[46] This only

43 Barbara Seidler, "Metody wychowawcze [Proces o dzieciobójstwo]," *Życie Literackie* 1982, No. 7. The case of Renata K. was recalled just a few years ago by Mariusz Szczygieł. See: "Śliczny i posłuszny," *Gazeta Wyborcza. Duży Format*, 25.06.2013.

44 Jeff Hearn, "The sociological significance of domestic violence: Tensions, paradoxes and implications," *Current Sociology* 2012, No. 61 (2), pp. 152–171.

45 Randall Collins, *Violence. A Micro-sociological Theory*, Oxford 2008, p. 137.

46 Anna Piekarska published the results of her research in *Przemoc w rodzinie. Agresja rodziców wobec dzieci. Przejawy i psychologiczne uwarunkowania*, Warsaw 1991. Partial results of her psychological studies into aggression and wider reflections on world research on the topic are contained in articles from 1983 and 1984: "Przemoc w rodzinie: socjopsychologiczne uwarunkowania i zakres zjawiska," *Psychologia*

occurred in the mid 1980s, when mainly criminological studies indicating the results of violence were available.[47] She based her study on research of 100 Warsaw families with educations that were decidedly higher than average (82 % of the subjects had at least a secondary-school education), above-average standard of living in terms of financial status, and finally, in most cases (56 %) their children (usually two) presented no special problems in upbringing. Piekarska therefore was studying families who, by the standards of the time, represented the model modern family. Piekarska's research was psychological (questionnaires and a projective test), as it concerned both the parents' and the children's perspectives. They almost universally showed tolerance for the use of corporal punishment:

> 14 % of the children reported having been beaten by their parents (a "thrashing" had been experienced at least once), receiving a variety of wounds, such as bruises or scratches. 12 % of children admitted that their parents generally used corporal punishment (even for petty incidents), while over 30 % said that they knew at least one child who had been beaten heavily by their parents or even those who were beaten for the slightest thing.[48]

Piekarska herself stressed that her studies from 1982–1984 document "the widespread use of physical and psychological violence as a problem-solving method in raising children, but also the high frequency of corporal punishment, going beyond what the law allows."[49] Parents would hit when shouting was not enough. 81.7 % spanked, 66.8 % hit with a hand, and while half the parents claimed to resort to it only infrequently, one in four said they did it fairly often. One in three homes gave a "solid beating," albeit seldom. Over 44 % admitted to sometimes using a belt or some other object. The survey revealed that children were pushed, yanked by the hair or ears, slapped, or their parents would throw various objects

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Wychowawcza 1984, No. 1, pp. 44–54; "Uwarunkowania, rozmiary i skutki zjawiska przemocy wobec dziecka. (Przegląd ważniejszych współczesnych badań w polskiej literaturze przedmiotu)," *Psychologia Wychowawcza* 1984, No. 3, pp. 301–310; "Agresywne wychowanie – analiza psychologiczna," *Psychologia Wychowawcza* 1983, No. 3, pp. 301–316.

47 Monika Płatek stresses the importance of criminological studies by Helena Kołakowska-Przełomiec and Zofia Ostrihanska here. See: Helena Kołakowska-Przełomiec, "Środowisko rodzinne w świetle badań kryminologicznych," in: *Zagadnienia nieprzystosowania społecznego i przestępczości w Polsce*, ed. J. Jasiński, Wrocław 1978; Zofia Ostrihanska, Dobrochna Wójcik, "Karalność uczniów nieprzystosowanych społecznie," *Archiwum Kryminologii* 1984, Vol. 11, pp. 143–166.

48 Anna Piekarska, *Przemoc, kary cielesne i krzywdzenie*. . .., p. 13.

49 Ibid., p. 12.

at them. One in four parents made the child go without their meal or place to sleep or limited his or her freedom, meaning they probably isolated the child, or the reverse, "threw them out of the house."[50] Over ten per cent of the surveyed Warsaw residents admitted that they seldom, but undeniably did happen to beat their child "blindly" or kick them. It is particularly interesting that the surveyed children did not question the appropriateness of this sort of punishment, from which we can deduce that it was an aspect of the child-parent relationship based on strictness, which was generally conceded to be the norm.

Tomasz Sokołowski noted that mainly younger children received physical punishment (according to Stefania Słyszowa, 10 % of younger children of school age received physical punishment at home in the 1980s). At more or less the same time as Piekarska, Sokołowski conducted surveys into parents' physical punishment of older youths. The survey was answered by nearly a thousand fifteen-year-olds, and it showed that only 2.6 % of parents gave them physical punishment. The most frequent punishment was grounding (one in four homes).[51] The survey generally showed a very low level of strictness in parent-teenager relations (for example, only 3.5 % shouted reprimands, and 3.3 % made critical remarks).

Data on social practices in late communist Poland might come as a surprise, given the long debate on the ineffectiveness of corporal punishment. Beginning in the Enlightenment, some teachers, philosophers, and spiritual leaders attempted to discourage physical punishment in child-rearing. In Polish lands, however, their voices were drowned out by a unanimous choir of adherents of child-beating as the chief means of a disciplined upbringing. We glean how widespread the use of violence was, Aneta Bołdyrew states, from the words of Ignacy Fijałkowski, who warned in 1819 that beating could be crippling or fatal: "Take care that [. . .] your fist should not strike in the mid-back, the breast, the head, or the face, and that you should not use objects which might easily injure the child, or cripple him for good, or cause a premature death."[52] More or less a century later, most teachers would agree to stand up against corporal punishment, recommending patient conversation. However, according to Katarzyna Sierakowska's research on urban educated families, "lashing" was the norm even where the experts' suggestions were heeded. Those who did not hit their children stressed this fact in their recollections, unconsciously showing they thought it

50 Anna Piekarska, *Przemoc w rodzinie. Agresja rodziców*. . ., pp. 56–58.

51 Tomasz Sokołowski, *Władza rodzicielska nad dorastającym dzieckiem*, Poznań 1987, p. 74.

52 Aneta Bołdyrew, *Kara i strach w wychowaniu dzieci*. . ., p. 1.

an exception.[53] In communist Poland, corporal punishment was seen as a lawful child-rearing method that helped to eliminate bad habits, though it was not recommended as it had been before.[54] This lack of encouragement came with the spread of modern pedagogical thinking, in which corporal punishment was deemed improper. In an important education textbook edited by Maria Ziemska, we read:

> In parents' child-rearing practice we still find plenty of children being improperly punished. We see this in current research by the Education Institute of the University of Gdańsk, which shows that 36 % of the parents surveyed administer punishment only in a fit of rage. These punishments include: yelling, threats, extra chores, shaming in front of others, grounding, and physical punishment. Here is a typical example of the improper application of parental punishment, supplied by elementary-school eighth graders. A girl reports: "At a parent-teacher meeting Mama found out that I had bad grades, and I had told her that they were. . . so-so. When she got home I got a beating, then Mama told me I would spend all night in the basement for punishment. Then she took me and locked me there for a whole hour. Back upstairs I got another beating.[55]

The teacher qualified this report as an example of a "major lack of pedagogical class," and the mother's poor understanding of the child.

Giving up all forms of child-beating, even spanking, was recommended by authors of popular books on child-rearing. These texts maintained a tone of mild advice, and not accusation, as Halina Filipczuk had:

> An adult who has hit a child – for example, has given him a spanking – has a sense of having been active, of not being passive while the child misbehaved. No one around them nor they themselves can accuse them of not having responded, of having missed an opportunity to set an example. The parent was not all talk – they acted. This conviction is especially necessary for parents who devote little time to their children, who do not remain in constant close contact. In giving a spanking now and again, they have a sense of having served their parental duties; they respond rarely, but emphatically.[56]

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53 Katarzyna Sierakowska, *Rodzice, dzieci, dziadkowie. . . Wielkomiejska rodzina inteligencka w Polsce 1918–1939*, Warsaw 2003, p. 129.

54 Halina Filipczuk, *Rodzice i dzieci najmłodsze*, Warsaw 1985, see also H. Filipczuk and J. Flisak, *Rodzina a rozwój psychiczny*, Warsaw 1981; *Rodzina i dzieci w młodszym wieku zkolnym*, Warsaw 1985; *Każde dziecko jest inne*, Warsaw 1960; *Jak rozumnie kochać dziecko*, Warsaw 1975.

55 Marian Grochociński, "Kultura pedagogiczna rodziców," in: *Rodzina i dziecko. Praca zbiorowa*, ed. Maria Ziemska, Warsaw 1986 (1st printing 1979), pp. 329 ff.

56 Halina Filipczuk, *Rodzice i dzieci najmłodsze*, p. 162.

A debate on the corporal punishment of children raged between lawyers, who also realized that the lives of Polish families departed considerably from the models promoted by psychologists and teachers. Andrzej Dobrzyński wrote:

> The issue of parents physically punishing their children is legally regulated. The modern teacher condemns the use of corporal punishment, seeing it as ineffective and as having an adverse effect on the child's development. In practice, the use of physical punishment for disobedient children at home is not a matter of isolated incidents. However, this child-rearing technique is not a crime if it is truly a punishment for a child's misdeeds.[57]

Apart from Dobrzyński, the main commentators on this issue were Igor Andrejew and Jerzy Winiarz.[58] Attempts to define the concept of physical punishment took place far earlier than the debate on family violence. The most influential legal statement on physical punishment in postwar Poland was undoubtedly Igor Andrejew's *Legal Evaluations of the Corporal Punishment of Minors*, written by one of the most important Polish judges and law professors of the postwar era, who made his name in part by sitting in the Stalinist trials. His books of the mid 1960s set the standard for corporal punishment of children permitted in Polish law. Lawyers invariably referred to his findings from the 1960s until the close of the epoch.

Andrejew considered "corporal punishment" to be permissible when it was administered to minors and only among family members. Moreover, this punishment had to have a didactic aim, that is, the parent doing the punishing had to be certain that he or she was acting to this end (a subjective evaluation). Discipline must be just, and "just" means that the disciplinarian must be sure of the child's guilt. The most interesting part of Andrejew's theory is that it calls discipline a custom, in other words, he believes that it should be administered to the degree that the customs of the environment permit, and as such, it may be harsh. If yanking a child by the ear is a local custom, then it is permissible. Still, the punishment may not threaten the child's physical or mental health; in other words, it may not be "abuse" or torture, it should be performed with a suitable implement and not exceed the child's endurance; nor should. it humiliate the child. A punishment should by no means be used to vent fury or emotions. Many points in Andrejew's reflections recall recommendations for teachers and caregivers formulated in the late nineteenth century, when corporal punishment was

57 Andrzej Dobrzyński, *Przestępstwa przeciwko rodzinie*, Warsaw 1974, p. 23.

58 Iigor Andrejew, *Oceny prawne karcenia nieletnich*, Warsaw 1964; Jerzy Winiarz, *Odpowiedzialność cywilna z tytułu nadzoru nad dzieckiem*, Warsaw 1973.

permissible insofar as it was administered in accordance with the regulations (privately, dispassionately, e.g. by using a cane).

Thus, Andrejew, and analysts after him, who returned to the problem in the late 1970s and 1980s and basically reiterated his theses, fully sanctioned whatever was the custom, despite the opinions of education specialists and psychologists on the topic. In her work from the 1980s, Anna Piekarska accused lawyers of exhibiting "superficial precision" when it came to applying corporal punishment, in particular the absence of a clear boundary between abuse and discipline.[59]

Andrejew tried to define the specifics of "corporal discipline." His definition is rather complex and its style recalls the code of law: "administering harm with the intention of raising awareness in another person as to the error in his or her behavior, so as to influence the future behavior of the same person; the aim of discipline is to instill obedience toward the disciplinarian."[60] The concept of corporal discipline, to his mind, was to emphasize that the parent's use of force had an instructive purpose, "and never approaches the severity of capital punishment."[61] The judge provided numerous examples of physical punishment in practice, various slaps on the buttocks, the hands, the face, with a belt, a stick, and a rod, as well as restricting freedom, like "locking up the child in a trough, a trunk, tying him up with rope, throwing him out of the home in sub-zero temperature, forcing him to stay in one painful position etc."[62] We might wonder how far this set of practices reflects the punishments used in Poland when the book was published in the mid 1960s, and how far they were imaginary examples of accepted physical punishment in the generation of fifty-somethings at the time (Andrejew was born in Wilno in 1915), raised prior to the Second World War. The author was conscious of the profound changes that had occurred in pedagogical thought, especially since the Enlightenment. He mentions John Jacques Rousseau, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Hugo Kołłątaj, and other educators whom he labels "progressive," paving the way for modern thought that condemned corporal punishment as ineffective. We should stress, by the way, that, unlike the sociologists and psychologists of his day, Andrejew remained highly influenced by Soviet pedagogical thought, whose approach to this topic is unequivocal. Thus, his most important contemporary education theorists include Makarenka, who, in child-care facilities, acknowledged the aptness of punishments such as

59 Anna Piekarska, *Przemoc wobec dziecka w rodzinie*. . ., p. 302.
60 Igor Andrejew, *Oceny prawne karcenia nieletnich*, p. 16.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid. p. 17

reprimands, the will of the collective, the loss of privileges, or added chores, but ruled out those involving physical suffering. Andrejew shows the negative effects of beating with reference to another Soviet pedagogue, Nikolai Boldirev,[63] who included not only humiliation among the effects of corporal punishment but also the animosity of students and internal hostility, even when they realized they had behaved badly. Meanwhile, parents were seen as "child-rearers by birthright."[64]

Historians of pedagogical thought unambiguously stress that Soviet pedagogy were opposed to corporal punishment; these recommendations pertained not only to the promoted collective behavior.[65] Regardless of what corporal punishment was indeed practiced by Soviet parents or institutions, it was condemned on a central platform, like all authoritarian behavior. From Makarenka to Azarov, pedagogues agreed that teachers and parents should be warm and empathetic toward children.[66] The ban on corporal punishment in schools was mandatory in Russia from 1917 onwards.

5.1.1. A "Teacher from the Stone Age"[67]

Information about teachers using corporal punishment leaked to the press from time to time, as was meant to be proven by numerous articles Andrejew cited, particularly from the early 1950s.[68] Indeed, contemporary accounts

63 Many of Boldirev's books were translated into Polish in the 1950s, including *Praca wychowawcy klasowego nad kształtowaniem komunistycznej moralności uczniów*, trans. B. Horoszowska, Z. Janiszewska, Warsaw 1955; *Znaczenie przykładu w wychowaniu dzieci*, trans. M. Uziembłowa, Warsaw 1951.

64 Ibid., p. 79.

65 According to 1980s statistics, in Soviet Russia only one in seven children attended daycare or preschool (a slightly higher figure has been noted for the Russian Republic), Kathryn A. Kerns, Josefina M. Contreras, Angela M. Neal-Barnett, *Family and peers: Linking two social worlds*, Westport, 2000, p. 49.

66 Ibid.

67 The title of this sub-chapter alludes to an article in the predecessor of Wrocław's *Odra*, i.e. *Nowe Sygnały*, of 1957: E. Opoczyńska, "Pedagog z epoki kamiennej," *Nowe Sygnały* 1957, No. 43, p. 4.

68 Andrejew cited press articles: I. M., "O karach," *Przyjaciółka* 1950, No. 27, p. 12; O. N., "Miotełka z rózg brzozowych," *Od A do Z* 1951, No. 36, p. 2; T. Bernaś, "Bicie jest złym środkiem wychowawczym," *Szkoła i Dom* 1952, No. 6, p. 31; T. Majewski, "Bić czy nie bić," *Dom* 1952, No. 7, p. 31; N. Dziewanowski, "Bicie to zły środek wychowawczy," *Dom* 1952, No. 8–9; M. Kozakiewicz, "Za jednego bitego," *Życie Warszawy* 1956, No. 198; A. Solska, "Krzywda wyrządzona dziecku nie jest sprawą prywatną," *Trybuna Ludu*, 28.04.1958; H. Bazarewska, "Z notatnika młodej nauczycielki," *Nowa Kultura* 1958,

by schoolchildren from those times are filled with descriptions of standard punishments in communist Polish schools, such as ear-pulling, pinching, or hitting. These were applied not only when the traditional discipline was broken but also, for instance, as part of a certain nationalist policy toward Kashubians and Silesians in the 1950s and 1960s, when they spoke in dialect or, to use a contemporary concept, ethnolects. As one witness recalls:

> Not only were the children forbidden from speaking it (Kashubian), they order the little girls to inform on the boys who spoke Kashubian during recess, and to count how many Kashubian words they used. Later, upon returning to class, they were punished with a rubber bat or a cane.[69]

The use of corporal punishment in postwar education and caretaking institutions requires a separate in-depth study. Here, I shall only point out that even a quick glance through the 1950s Ministry of Education archives shows that it was seen as a problem at the time, regardless of the aim of the violence in various Stalin-era teaching careers. The ministry received complaints of the use of corporal punishment, which the bureaucrats called "shameful methods that compromise the dignity of the teacher and caretaker and undermine society's trust in the school."[70] Investigations were meant to confirm the veracity of the complaints. In such cases, the subject was to be raised at conferences of managers, directors, at school council sittings, in child care institutions, and preschools, to mobilize "the opinions of most teachers against this sort of misdemeanor committed by some education workers." Beating was also described as incompatible with "socialist morality."[71]

The number of convictions may, to some extent, give us a sense of the local differences in approach to the use of corporal punishment, though there is too little evidence to support this thesis. In Rzeszów, out of the 467 complaints registered against teachers in 1954, only twelve concerned the use of force, only four of which qualified as pertinent. As a result, one person was transferred, one was

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No. 21; A. Łączyńska, "Pobłażliwość czy twarda ręka," *Kierunki* 1958, No. 21, p. 10; "Chodzi o los dzieci," *Trybuna Ludu*, 13.01.1959; "Za bicie dzieci katecheta odpowie przed sądem," *Życie Warszawy*, 11.04.1959.

69 G. Stone, *Slav Outposts in Central European History: The Wends, Sorbs and Kashubians*, London–Oxford–New York–Sydney 2016, p. 320.

70 AAN, Minister of Education, Minister's Office, Presidium Department, 8675: Corporal punishment administered by teachers – complaints 1955, a Letter from the Director of the Minister's Office to the head of the Education Department, Presidium of the Voivodeship Council of the National Council in Poznań, 4 December 1955, pp. 1 ff.

71 Ibid.

reprimanded, and two teachers were given warnings.[72] In Wrocław, fifty-eight people reported harm done to their children (out of a total of 810 complaints), and in twenty-five cases the plaintiffs were awarded. The most blatant cases involved orphanages and preschools, which dismissed altogether seven people for the use of force (and one more from an elementary school). The Wrocław Education Department also formulated a range of conclusions detailing the convicted teachers' and child-care workers' reasons for using corporal punishment. Unfortunately, they described neither the severity of the punishments nor the methods used. Corporal punishment was said to be largely a response to lack of discipline and "the students' spiteful refusal to do the lessons."[73] It was also chalked up to the teachers' low level of training, a lack of psychological endurance, or the anxiety of teachers who were unable to cope with a large and "challenging group of children." The accusations made by some bureaucrats stressing the ill will of some teachers strikes us as a sign of the times; in applying a forbidden punishment, they were said to be provoking their superiors to fire them from their workplace, thereby annulling the injunction to work.[74] Based on reports submitted to the ministry from across the country, we can arrive at the conclusion that the teachers about whom parents or child-care workers complained were mostly younger, inexperienced, or poorly educated.[75]

5.1.2. If He Hits Me It Means He Loves Me

Despite the forthright recommendations for teachers, physical punishment by parents was not clearly covered in the penal codes in socialist countries, including Poland. It was a delicate subject. In the penal code of 22 January 1946 (Art. 25, Par. 2) the entry on "physical punishment" spoke of restricting corporal punishment to "the limits implied by the educational aim," which meant, in practice, the acceptance of such methods in the home. In the child-care law of 14 May 1946,

72 Ibid., Report of the Education Department of the WRN Presidium in Rzeszów, 25.01.1955, p. 6.

73 Ibid., Report of the Education Department of the WRN Presidium in Wrocław, 27.01.1955, pp. 8–10.

74 Ibid.

75 Altogether, out of 10,785 complaints made to education departments in 1954, 436 concerned corporal punishment, and 60 % were decided in favor of the child. Teachers mainly received disciplinary punishments: firing – 24, transfer – 30, other disciplinary punishments – 61, warnings – 10, AAN, Ministry of Education, Minister's Office, Presidium Department, 8675: Physical punishments used by teachers – complaints 1955, *Podsumowanie*, pp. 49 ff.

in turn, its use was forbidden when it came to wards, which we can read as emphasizing that only parents had the right to "discipline" the child. In further editions of the code the issue was ignored, which meant – as Tomasz Sokołowski stated in 1987 – it was "purposefully neglected,"[76] or circumvented, for we may not assume that a lack of regulations signified a ban. He claims lawyers found that upholding the right to physical punishment was meant to abet parents in their duty to prevent children going "wayward." At the same time, Sokołowski approved of this approach, stressing that the law acknowledged the controversy behind corporal punishment, but did not ignore the social reality and could not interfere in family life:

> Physical punishment by parents is deemed acceptable on the premise that, in the family, the probability of inflicting harm is quite negligible, and it is **necessary to respect the autonomy of the family's private life** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.], including the means of discipline parents employ on their children.[77]

Two decades earlier, this indirectly phrased principle of non-intervention was justified rather differently. Corporal punishment was deemed contrary to the socialist family culture and it was supposed it would vanish "with the overall civilizing of society."[78]

An in-depth reading of Andrejew's arguments, which were oft-repeated in communist Poland, reveals a highly characteristic conflict. The contradiction can be expressed as such: study shows that corporal punishment brings only negative results, but experience tells us it is inevitable. Andrejew justifies his thesis of the propriety of physical punishment with reference to a range of specialists, but he ultimately accepts it as an "accepted custom," without providing a concrete instance this custom being responsibly administered:

> The scope of the punishment is a function of the mutual love between the punisher and the punished. Because a parent's love for a child, based in part on biological factors, is basically among the strongest of emotions, the harm or the danger of harm that could arise from corporal punishment and its abuse are relatively slight. If we are speaking of the harm caused by physical punishment, we ought not to lose sight of the fact that it **sometimes prevents the greater evil, which is, in general terms, the wayward child** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.].[79]

76 Tomasz Sokołowski, *Władza rodzicielska nad dorastającym*. . ., p. 72.
77 Ibid., p. 83.
78 Igor Andrejew, *Oceny prawne karcenia*. . ., pp. 66 ff.
79 Ibid., pp. 80 ff.

Thus, with regard to the child at least, the saying "if he beats me it means he loves me" received an expert stamp of approval.

According to Andrejew, parents were insufficiently educated in the mid 1960s to use other pedagogical strategies, and were too occupied with their professional and social lives. Who was meant to teach parents alternate forms of child-raising, and how – this Andrejew does not specify.

Most importantly, however, he concludes: "restrictions in relations as delicate as those between parents and children are difficult to execute and control in practice."[80]

Legal consent to the administration of corporal punishment within the home, which was guaranteed its autonomy, had measurable consequences in schools, where (illegal) use of such "methods" was justified through students being accustomed to their parents' beating. This generated a vicious circle of consent to daily "just" and "non-harmful" everyday physical violence against children.

5.2. Domestic Violence as Alcohol-Induced Violence

When it comes to domestic violence, unlike divorce, which encountered a fairly wide range of opinions, the practices applied by the legal/punitive system and the images present in the public discourse, including the expert discourse, coincided. Scanning most of the statements pertaining to domestic violence, we note that it is chiefly rooted in alcoholism and the margins of society. We see a sign of openness to this approach in a staged fragment of the documentary film *The Children Accuse* in the "Black Series" shot by Jerzy Hoffmann and Edward Skórzewski. The conversation between the doctor and the beaten boy could symbolize the prevailing image of family violence:

Boy: Dad came home drunk and wanted to beat Mama. I was in bed. I jumped up and wanted to pull Dad away. But Dad hit me on the forehead.
Psychologist/doctor: And does your Dad drink often?
Boy: He does, almost every day.
Psychologist/doctor: And Mama, Andrzej, does she drink as well?
The boy hangs his head, but says nothing.[81]

Although social criticism in the spirit of the "Black Series" ended with the 1950s, the conviction that alcoholics were perpetrators of domestic violence was further instilled by Gomułka and Gierek. This opinion swiftly became unequivocal

80 Ibid.
81 *Dzieci oskarżają*, dir. Jerzy Hoffman, Edward Skórzewski, 1956.

with the statement: Violence is a problem of alcoholic families. To use a concrete example, Ewa, the orphan who was "excessively" beaten by solicitous, but "immoderate" parents, lost a public battle with Andrzej – the son of an alcoholic who was immoderate because he drank. The statistics bore this out. Today it is estimated that 70 % of such crimes are committed under the influence of alcohol. We can only guess at these statistics in communist Poland. On the one hand, alcoholism was a widespread problem. On the other hand, however, the use of force did not give rise to the indignation it does today. Regardless of how large or small that increasingly tabooized (I believe) minority who used violence in all sobriety on a daily basis virtually vanished from sight of the public services. This situation was sanctioned by the changes in laws on domestic abuse introduced in the same year of 1956. With the introduction of the law of 27 April to combat alcoholism, responsibility for this sort of crime was limited, in legal practice, to those who were intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol. Although the penal code of 1932, which held good in Poland until 1969, contained an article on abuse, the sentences that were passed were nearly 100 % based on the "alcohol" regulation. The law of 1956 was made more precise (e.g. in terms of the level of drunkenness required) when it was thoroughly amended in 1959.

In communist Poland, the concept of domestic violence was never used. Until the penal code was adopted in Polish lands in 1932, the concepts of "anguish," "torments," and "severity" were applied. These terms functioned, for example, in the penal codes of the Kingdom of Poland as part of Russia; in the Austrian partition zone the term "bodily harm" was used for the abuse of corporal punishment. In the Reich, "abuse" was a heavy aggravated physical injury.

In the codex of 1932, which held good, once again, until 1969, violence against family members was covered by Art. 246, by which: "Whosoever should physically and morally abuse a minor of seventeen years or younger or a defenseless person in a temporary or ongoing fashion is subject to imprisonment for up to five years."[82] In response to doubts concerning the concepts of "abuse" and "defenseless person," the Codification Commission replied that "criminal acts described as 'abuse' have been supplied without defining casuistic examples due to a conviction that the term is clear and capacious enough to encompass cases of maltreatment that are difficult to list."[83] It was stressed that abuse could involve beating, lashing, or causing physical suffering, as well as "causing serious moral

82 Ordinance of the President of Poland, 11 July 1932 – *Penal Code*.

83 A. Ratajczak, *Przestępstwa przeciwko rodzinie, opiece i młodzieży w systemie polskiego prawa karnego (zagadnienia wybrane)*, Warsaw 1980, pp. 122 ff.

stress," whether once or repeatedly.[84] Apart from "active" abuse, the term came to include neglect, the refusal of nourishment, in other words, "in amenable conditions," every action meant to cause physical harm.

This was missing a precise definition of the adult persons experiencing the abuse, that is, those who were defined in the old German codex as "members of the household" (although the Polish lawmakers drew from the codex of 1871). Nonetheless, the lawmakers explained that "defenseless" simply meant unable to oppose the abusive family member. As I have mentioned, between 1956 and 1969 verdicts of abuse were made almost exclusively on the basis of the "anti-alcohol" law.

The discussion on violence resumed in the late 1960s with work on a new penal code, which was meant to reflect the social changes that had occurred in Polish postwar society. The creation and introduction of the codex came with numerous controversies, including those tied to the projected Art. 184 and the zero-alimony article, No. 186.

Art. 184 was the result of joining two legal articles: the aforementioned Art. 246 and Art. 23 of the law to combat alcoholism of (1956) 1959:

1. Whosoever morally or physically abuses a member of his family or another person in regular or sporadic relations of dependency on the assailant or a minor or defenseless person will be stripped of his freedom for six months to five years.
2. If the consequences involve the victim's death, the assailant can be deprived of his freedom for up to ten years.[85]

We should add that this article was transferred from the chapter on life and health to the chapter on family protection, crimes against one's spouse and family, and thus Poland joined a group of countries in which cases of this sort were judged separately. Similar transfers took place in codexes in East Germany, Romania, Czechoslovakia (1961), Bulgaria, Italy, and Yugoslavia.

The key to this crime was specifying the imprecise concept of "abuse." It was not unambiguous and could be freely interpreted. In the years that followed, the Supreme Court stated on many occasions that, according to the law, abuse was "generally composed of many parts making up a criminal act which involves infringing on physical inviolability, [...] destroying things, causing bodily harm."[86] Separately, these acts need not even be crimes. The whole is a crime, if it

84 Ibid.

85 Law passed on 19 April 1969 – *Penal code*.

86 Marek Bojarski, *Wykładnia znamion przestępstwa znęcania się i niealimentacji w orzecznictwie Sądu Najwyższego*, Wrocław 1979, pp. 165–170.

is marked by the intent to do moral or physical harm, which is generally understood as abuse. Still, the question was repeated: how many times must harm be committed before it is regarded as violence?[87]

It was generally supposed that "abuse" as a "normative aspect of crime" had to be interpreted following the criteria accepted in a given society. It was taken as beyond discussion that abuse did not have to be physically cruel and painful. The assailant did not have to be a sadist to abuse his family. Moreover, the Supreme Court tended toward the necessity of proving that the act was recurring.

Court practice swiftly showed that it was more the alcoholism that weighed in the verdicts than the cruelty of the alcoholic. When in early spring of 1964 the prosecutor initiated proceedings against Zbigniew Geisler of Nowa Huta, following a letter from the head of the local hospital, which contained macabre documents from the medical examination of a two-year-old boy, the court ordered a character profile of the accused be taken, and that the neighbors and superintendent of his building be interrogated. An investigation was carried out, in which his wife confirmed that the father beat the child with a rubber hose, daily, whether he was sober or drunk, as a result of which the child would not speak, he was frightened and anxious, and he could not sleep at night.[88]

> I repeat that, without stating the cause, [my husband] beats his son, Wiesław. He does not beat our elder son, Andrzej. The husband uses a rubber hose to beat the child, striking his behind several times fairly hard, and the child immediately starts wailing horribly in terror. My husband has been beating the child for ten months, paying no attention when I explain that the child just wants to play, he just beats him right away. Since my husband began beating the child our son Wiesław has become quite anxious, often waking up and crying in the middle of the night. [. . .], sometimes [his father] also hits [him] with the belt from his pants.[89]

Although, as the mother testified, the beaten boy always screamed dreadfully, a neighbor on the same floor, Zofia, heard no wailing or arguments, saw no signs of abuse, never saw the neighbor coming home drunk. The other neighbors' statements were limited to "I didn't hear anything." They were probably afraid of their alcoholic neighbor, and common sense prompted silence. After their investigation the court discontinued the case of 21 July 1964, by power of amnesty.

87 Ibid.

88 AN Kr, 748 Regional Court for Nowa Huta, 1953–1971, case 610/64.

89 Ibid.

The same went for hundreds of other trials, against the official rules for such cases.[90]

The case of two-year-old Wiesław, unlike the very special trial of Ewa Świder in 1956, might be seen as a typical example of crime perceived by civil servants, of the sort where information is stored in archival materials. However, we should make one reservation on it: in practice, abuse trials mainly concerned women (90 % of the cases), and not children. Thus, cases of extremely brutal beatings ended up in court, the witnesses were silent, the accused was eventually set free, illegally given amnesty, and the wife eventually stood up for him, as the sole breadwinner in the family; or, most frequently, he received the minimum six-month sentence on probation for two years, for instance. In every case, the criminal returned home, theoretically under the care of a probation officer.

In over 70 % of the cases, the assailants were men around thirty years old. People who were confirmed to be alcoholics were automatically sentenced to obligatory cure in a closed institution, which the accused seldom attended.[91] In the 1970s, rising alcoholism and drinking problems became a simple and mandatory official explanation for the 20,000 registered cases of domestic violence.

Given the strong link between alcoholism and domestic violence, the latter underwent criminalization; the consequence was not merely the impunity of sober assailants. Polish state institutions left victims of violence with no real care. Thus, the issue of family violence was a private problem, despite the fiery expert debates in the public realm. While, until the end of the 1960s, academic interest in domestic violence was marginal, over the last two decades in communist Poland there was an outpouring of specialist articles on the harm that could be done by relatives and in-laws. In the latter half of the 1960s, domestic violence became the domain of criminologists and lawyers, joined by numerous sociologists, teachers, and social psychologists in the 1980s. To some degree this was probably Western trends seeping into Poland. The topic also garnered some media interest in the 1980s (radio programs, a documentary film, press articles), though this fell behind the specialist discourse, in which the lawyers always took the lead.[92] Growing numbers of publications, conferences, and sociological

90 "Abuse" was excluded in crimes covered by amnesty. See: Jan Bednarzak, "Amnestie wydane w Polsce," in: *Studia kryminologiczne, kryminalistyczne i penitencjarne*, ed. Bruno Hołyst, Warsaw 1974, pp. 31–52.

91 Aleksander Tobis, *Główne przestępstwa przeciwko rodzinie. Charakterystyka prawna skuteczności pozbawienia wolności*, Poznań 1980, pp. 132–135.

92 E.g. Andrzej Dobrzyński, *Przestępstwa przeciwko rodzinie*; *Przestępczość przeciwko rodzinie, opiece i młodzieży. Materiały VI Wrocławskiego Sympozjum Kryminologicznego*

studies focused on social pathology in its broadest definition, generating panic as an expression of social anxiety before impending collapse.[93] Ultimately, in the guidelines of 1976, the Polish Supreme Court stated outright that the crime of abuse strikes at the resilience of the family and causes its disintegration, and thus weakens its nurturing function.

In the 1980s, we also witnessed an upsurge of social activities to assist women and children threatened by violence, probably as part of a broader civic movement in the early decade. I will use two initiatives by way of example. The first is the Committee for the Defense of Children's Rights, established in 1981 by Maria Łopatkowa. While the work of Maria Łopatkowa, an MP and respected professor of education, was sanctioned by the law, we should also call attention to informal initiatives, or those which were only formalized late in the decade.[94] The best example here is the work of Anna Lipowska-Teusch, a psychologist who got involved in helping women abused by family members, offering psychological aid at the Toxicology Clinic of the Medical Academy in Krakow. In working to counteract violence, Lipowska-Teusch met with the Polish feminist community of the 1980s. In 1990, partly through her efforts, the Crisis Intervention Society was created in Krakow.

18–19 październik 1979, Wrocław 1979; Andrzej Szwarc, *Przestępczość przeciwko rodzinie, opiece i młodzieży w latach 1948–1980 w świetle statystyki kryminalnej*, Poznań 1984; Tomasz Sokołowski, *Władza rodzicielska nad dorastającym dzieckiem*; Adam Strzembosz, *Zapobieganie niedostosowaniu społecznemu dzieci i młodzieży*, Warsaw 1979; Paweł Zakrzewski, "Przestępczość znęcania się nad członkami rodziny pod wpływem alkoholu (analiza kryminologiczna)," *Państwo i Prawo* 1973, No. 6.

93 E.g.: Maria Jarosz, *Dezorganizacja w rodzinie i społeczeństwie*, Warsaw 1987; Stanisław Akoliński, "Problemy patologii społecznej," in: *Polityka społeczna*, Warsaw 1979; Jerzy Kwaśniewski, A. Kojder, "Postawy mieszkańców Warszawy wobec zachowań odbiegających od norm społecznych," *Studia Socjologiczne* 1979, No. 1; W. Syrek, Maria Zralek, "Pojęcie patologii społecznej w świetle polskiej literatury naukowej," in: *Polityka społeczna*, pp. 67–72; *Rodzina a dewiacje w zachowaniu*, ed. L. Mościcka, Wrocław 1984; Jacek Wódz, *Patologia społeczna w życiu codziennym miasta*, Katowice 1988.

94 See: http://www.umich.edu/~glblfem/transcripts/poland/LipowskaTeutsch_P_P_102806.pdf [accessed: 14.03.2014].

5.3. Records of Violence

5.3.1. The Individual Experience: Woman as a Victim of Violence

Of the True Man of the House and the Lazy Wife

On 27 December 1973, in the afternoon, Jadwiga Wiekiera, an inhabitant of the small village of Trzciniec, took a bus six kilometers to Nagłowice and went straight to the Civil Militia station.

Jadwiga had been born a few years before the Second World War. In 1973, she was over forty, with seven years of elementary school and fourteen years of marriage behind her. She worked "her" land and took care of her sons.

When Jadwiga arrived at the station, she made the following statement:

> I have been living with my husband, Bolesław Wiekiera, for fourteen years. From the beginning of our marriage, my husband often started quarrels, insulting me, the children, and my mother, with whom we live, in a vulgar fashion. He begins quarreling both when sober and under the influence of alcohol. In the summer of 1973, my husband punched me in the face and head in the courtyard and on the street. This was witnessed by Kłek Mieczysław, who lives in Trzciniec. In May of 1972, my husband pushed me and my mother, Zofia Wójcik, in my apartment in the presence of Antosik Zdzisława, who lives in Deszno. On several occasions my husband drove my mother and I from the house and I had to sleep at the neighbors' [. . .]. During these quarrels, our children, Marian, thirteen years old, and Tomasz, six years old, ran from the home and stayed out all night. The children are sick with anxiety from all the arguing. The last quarrel occurred on 26.12.1973. My husband returned home in a state of intoxication, he wanted to drive my mother out of the house, he flipped over the beds and hurled vulgarities at us.[95]

Jadwiga was a well-known officer from Nagłowice. On 4 January 1974, the commander at the Civil Militia station confirmed in his notes that he had intervened at the Wiekiera home two years earlier. On that occasion, he had questioned neighbors on the couple's relationship. After this new notification, he opened an investigation, which ended up in the regional court in Jędrzejów a few months later.

Juxtaposed with the other court cases of the time, this case of the Trzciniec family of Jadwiga Wikiera and its interpretation by the various actors of the time, traces of which we find in the Kielce archive, are far from typical. Of course,

95 State Archives in Kielce [hereafter – APKi], 21/2068 Regional Court in Jędrzejów [hereafter – SRJ], List 2/2004 Regional Court in Jędrzejów 1974, 2.II Kp p71/74.

when it comes to studying violence it is generally quite difficult to establish what is statistically representative. As I have stressed, the very selection of cases which ended up in court commonly puts us in the company of extreme cases that are highly appalling or, frankly speaking, brutal, often with alcoholism involved.

However, despite – or, perhaps, precisely because of – its atypical nature, this case study allows us to observe the work of contemporary modernizing (medical and socio-political) discourse on the family and the position of the woman on the most basic social level, simultaneously revealing internal social tensions and anxieties connected to the social transformations that were to have a massive impact on the Polish discourse on the family in the last decade of communism. The case of the "rebelling peasant wife" or the "good housekeeper" shows us the clash and intermingling between the culture of violence and the modernizing discourse surrounding family issues that were characteristic of the last two decades of communism in Poland.

In this case, the protagonists do not fit the ideal model of the "problem family" whose image we find in almost all the specialist, legal, and criminological papers. To be sure, the husband accused of abuse, Bogusław Wiekiera, was a peasant worker and, like his wife, had an elementary school education, worked as a roofer in a construction factory in the area's largest city, Jędrzejów, and thus belonged to a high-risk group.[96] However, he was not an alcoholic, though he did drink from time to time; he could be just as aggressive after a vodka or sober. Bolesław seemed proud of his small farmstead and rural upbringing. When examined by the court, he stressed the size of the land he possessed and the fact that he built the house he lived in (albeit on his wife's land). His main complaint about his wife was her alleged reluctance to work the land. "When I come home from work, I work on the farm," he complained before the court. "My wife doesn't want to work the land, when I tell her to do something she says it's your farm do it yourself."[97] Almost everyone interrogated for the case stressed his love of work (he was even said to work at night), his frugality, bordering on miserliness

96 For more on the topic, see the Institute of Rememberance Memory Archive, Z. Duczyński, *Problematyka prawna przestępstwa znęcania się w świetle działalności organów ścigania i wymiaru sprawiedliwości w powiecie bartoszyckim roku 1972/1973*, University of Warsaw, Professional Administration Studies. Duczyński analyzed all the cases where, in the largely rural area of Bartoszyce, legal verdicts were analogous to the Wiekiera case. Among sixty-six sentences, sixty were alcoholics or frequent drinkers. 94.15 % of crimes were committed under the influence of alcohol.

97 APKi, SRJ, 21/2068, *Protokół rozprawy głównej*, p. 2.

(his savings book showed he had put aside 40,000 zloty, which he bragged about during the trial), and his inborn touchiness.

As was often the case with peasant/worker households, Jadwiga was responsible not only for "women's work," but also the work a farmer would generally do in the field. This is probably why Jadwiga's case divided both her village and the whole nearby vicinity. A cousin who viewed her more favorably testified that Jadwiga ran the farmstead because her husband worked and that sometimes not all the work in the field was done on time, and then the husband would accuse her of laziness, and that this was often led to their fighting: "Wiekiera is too touchy and meticulous, he could rage at his wife for not having stitched a sack."[98]

Nonetheless, most of the men testifying before the court stressed the man's industriousness and the wife's idleness. Even the main witness for the accused, who saw with his own eyes how "the accused swung his fist and hit his wife in the face or the chest [. . .] and then would grab her by the chest and flip her onto the ground," concluded his testimony with the curt statement that "[. . .] clearly the accused resents his wife for her lack of work."[99] Some witnesses stressed that Wiekiera complained he was often hungry, because neither his wife nor his mother-in-law would make him breakfast or lunch. Each of these cases confirm the thesis of the acceptance of violence in this village society when laziness and disobedience are suspected. This was the basic circumstance in which physical violence against family members, mainly the wife and children, was somewhat acceptable as an effective form of communicating the family's basic needs.

A firm and unequivocal view of the wife's duties to the husband is also confirmed by many of the abuse and divorce cases of the late 1950s and early 1960s, at the threshold of the period under discussion. This was confirmed not only by the statements of those accused of violence but also the friends and relatives called in as witnesses. Preparing meals was generally regarded as the wife's basic task, and not only in the countryside. Regardless of whether the wife worked, failure to keep her obligation to feed her husband was thought to be a shortcoming in marital duties as such.

A worker who befriended the man accused of beating his wife, and who had stayed for a time in his house, testified in court that his friend: "Often complained that his wife neither cooked his food nor washed his clothes. He said that she also refused to let him cook for himself."[100]

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 AN Kr, Regional Court for the City of Krakow, series I 1 C (1958–1960), case C 2/58.

Similar complaints were made by a railway worker from Krakow against his wife in 1959. A friend testifying for him pointed out that, when sleeping at his house, he noticed that, while the sheets were clean, "the kitchen was not especially tidy. During my stay breakfast was prepared by the plaintiff, not the accused."[101]

Husbands complained that their wives were not frugal and were unable to keep things clean. These accusations ideally matched the images of candidates for wives at the time, who were meant to be thrifty, above all. Court trials clearly demonstrate that this was not the sole image of the ideal partner, but it was to be practiced in everyday life. This conflict of images could lead to escalation and violence. At the same time, husbands did not feel inclined to help, and if they did, this undermined their sense of the home: "My wife did not take care of the home as I wished," testified the aforementioned railway worker. "Things were rough around the house, [my wife – B. K.-K.] often complained she was sick."[102] Consequently, he had to take care of the children and cook for himself, as his wife was not home. Meanwhile, he often returned home late, because he played the saxophone in the evening.[103]

Alojzy, an office worker at KWK Brzeszcze, complained in his summons that:

> The two sides had not cohabitated amicably from the very start, and in recent years, owing to character differences and constant quarrels, their relationship had utterly disintegrated. The plaintiff prefers order and cleanliness, for the accused these demands were incomprehensible and irrelevant. There were frequent spats and arguments over tidiness in the home and cooking meals. A few years ago, the accused stated that if the plaintiff did not care for her cooking he could stop eating at home, at which point she stopped cooking for the plaintiff, who was forced to cook for himself or dine out. She then stopped washing the plaintiff's clothes.[104]

Abuse and Psychological Damage

The case of Jadwiga from the Jędrzejów area was tried nearly ten years later, and here we perceive symptoms of changes in approach to the family, the household, and violence.[105]

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101 Ibid., case C 18/59.

102 Ibid., case C 10/58.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

105 State Archives in Kielce, 21/2068 SRJ, Hand-over report No. 2/2004 SPJ for 1974, case No. 2. II Kp p71/74, Minutes of the main hearing, 14.03.1974.

In this case, the conflict could also be read as a symptomatic example of a break in cultural continuity. The beating was not extreme (it did not conclude, for example, with a hospital stay), the accused was a respected farmer and worker, both the husband and wife were closely tied to the local community. Why, then, did the case emerge and end up in court? The only documented response is Jadwiga Wiekiera's determination. Her mother told the court that she had not submitted to a medical examination, because she was ashamed to admit she had been beaten by her own son-in-law. Jadwiga, the daughter of a peasant from a small Świętokrzyski village, probably reported violent incidents to the militia station every time, and fled the house with her children when the situation flared up. Finally, she made a psychiatrist appointment for one of her sons. Jadwiga would, perhaps, be a good example of effective emancipation, but we are unable to determine how it was carried out. No local women's organizations spoke up for her. We may assume she had outside support, she mentions a teacher who was meant to talk to her husband. A militia officer was also a voice for modernity. This was an exceptional figure (at least when it came to this case), especially considering how, as the years went on, there were increasing complaints about the passivity of militia men in civil security. The Commander speaks the language of the law ("the suspect morally and physically abuses the members of his family, i.e. his wife and his stepchildren"[106]), he takes the initiative in several preventive talks with the suspect, and finally, he stresses the psychological damage to the Wiekiera children.

"The present situation," the commander notes, "is that [. . .] the children are cowed by the constant arguing, and their grades have dropped at school."[107]

This may have been taken straight from Jadwiga's testimony, which focuses less on physical abuse than the psychological consequences of her husband's behavior:

> The children are afraid for me during the arguments, and for grandma, it is an ordeal for them. I've noticed the older son can't sleep at night, I've taken him to the doctor [later testimonies indicate she means a psychiatrist – B. K.-K.]. My son received medicine, he's meant to go back for a check-up, he is unable to study, he's failing five classes, and he's anxious. [. . .] I've got ulcers on my duodenum from the stress.

This surprises us, given that, in other court records, reconstructing physical harm is most important. Of course, this does not mean that far-reaching

106 AP Kiel, 21/2068 SRJ, Hand-over report No. 2/2004 SPJ for 1974, case No. 2. II Kp p71/74, Service Notes 04.01.1974.

107 Ibid.

psychological consequences had not been mentioned by plaintiffs and the lawyers who represented them:

> In early February 1958 – we read in a case against a chronic alcoholic heard by a Krakow court – coming home in an inebriated state, the defendant began a quarrel with the plaintiff, as usual, and at some point threw himself at her and began to beat her. At the sight of this scene, the couple's child, responded with a spasmodic yell and sobbing. Earnestly fearing that the defendant's behavior could cause a **lasting psychological shock** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.] to the child, the plaintiff threatened the defendant, saying that if such scenes were to recur, she would be turning to the courts.

However, the perception of violence in the statements by Jadwiga and the Commander is symptomatic of the public debate that was to occur in the socio-economic crisis of a decade later. Then too, in women's magazines, the letters they published attached special importance to the long-term psychological consequences of physical violence and the need to heal. This is doubtless one of the most convincing signs of the transformation of the social imaginary when it came to domestic violence. By the same token, the case confirms the endurance of court policy in these matters. After all, Wiekiera walked out on probation and returned to his wife.

5.3.2. Narratives of Violence

The documentation of domestic violence in the form of egodocuments is fairly rare in Poland, at least compared to the aforementioned specialist articles or court files. This does not mean, however, that such records do not exist. Primarily, we have reports of women featured in the press or in memoirs collection, most of which are from the point of view of women grappling with an alcoholic husband. Women also wrote to magazines and to city offices. Things are much the same when it comes to children. But these are rarer, unless they concern a home wrecked by a father's alcoholism. The most common records of this sort include the testimonies quoted by Krzysztof Kosiński in *Teenagers '81*, which the historian calls statements that strained the family crisis. In letters to *Świat Młodych*, children reported the arguments started by their drunken fathers, who stooped to the worst acts of violence. A fourteen-year-old shared stories with the editors about how, in one quarrel, his father doused his mother in acid, for which he went to prison. Kosiński counted that, of 302 surviving letters to *Świat Młodych*, thirty children mentioned their parents' alcoholism, most often their father's. They generally also witnessed violence against one parent ("he beats Mommy;" "he hit Mama horribly and kicked her"[108]). Most of the cases quoted, to gauge by

108 Krzysztof Kosiński, *Nastolatki '81. . .*, pp. 208–210.

descriptions of calling the militia and arresting the assailant, probably ended up in court; in other words, they were among the most brutal incidents of domestic violence.[109] It was extremely rare to find interviews with victims of domestic violence experienced in childhood, like the one published in 1985, a conversation with an adult man, the father in a family. He came from a good, educated family and stressed that neither his father nor mother abused alcohol:

– **You are an adult man, the father of a family. When did you start to be beaten?**
– As far back as I can remember.
– **What for?**
– It was always over small things; I wouldn't understand something in mathematics, and when I'd be going over the material I'd get beaten for not understanding. At any rate – it wasn't always just beating, the verbal abuse was maybe even more depressing, it still rings in my ears. . .
– . . .**Did you ever suspect at the time that maybe they were right to beat you?**
– I don't remember ever being conscious of the punishment being just. . .
– **How long were you beaten?**
– Practically until I was an adult. [. . .]
– **But so many boys were beaten and they forgot all about it.**
– Every child is different inside. For some a spanking means nothing, and for another it could be earth-shaking. Furthermore – there's a difference between discipline and abuse. Beating a child until you haven't the strength to continue ceases to be part of rearing a child. It is just venting your emotions.[110]

This man who was speaking anonymously, despite the passing of so many years, refused to rationalize his father's behavior: "his behavior was said to have come from harsh experiences in the war, but can that explain everything? This was more a question of a despotic and cowardly personality."[111]

Here we might see an attempt to sever himself from a culture of violence, allegedly justified in the war trauma of husbands and fathers. A case written in the divorce files of an employee of the Pedagogical Academy in Krakow, who brought her husband to court, attaching plenty of evidence of beating to the document, seems almost symbolic for the transfer of violence from war or postwar trauma.

The relationship began in 1953. The wife's summons mentions only what struck her as the most important details of their life together. He was older. He

109 Ibid.
110 "Życie po biciu," *Kobieta i Życie* 1985, No. 20, p. 5.
111 Ibid.

had been held in Nazi camps, and after he was liberated, until April 1953 he spent time

> [. . .] in Polish prisons, apparently as a suspect for political crimes. Those long internments in camps and jails, the woman complained, clearly had a massive impact on him, molding his psyche and his nervous system; this was undoubtedly why, from the beginning of our marriage, our life together was totally impossible, which he himself self-effacingly admits in his divorce suit of 18.02.1957, in part by saying: "Owing to experiences from this period, the plaintiff (i.e. the defendant) shows signs of psychological breakdown in everyday life, nervous temper tantrums, which are often difficult for his surroundings, whether at work or at home.[112]

The man abused alcohol, insulted and beat his wife, even when she was pregnant. Interestingly, the man did not appear in court, despite repeat summons, and ultimately informed the court that he had left Krakow for the Bieszczady region.[113]

When diaries narrate abuse by sober assailants, the women (I was unable to find records of this kind written by men) endlessly try to rationalize their husbands' behavior. For instance, the wife of a professor, who also worked beneath him, was unable to find a way out of the trap she found herself in, and found the cause of her husband's cruelty in his illness ("hysteria, early paranoia, or a brain tumor") and his rural upbringing:

> He fell into a rage. 'You won't sleep.' And then he hit me for the first time. Thus ended our social outings. I never knew what he would blame me for next. All it would take was for another man to sit next to me, and the argument would erupt. . . Damn it all, I'm only thirty-four – the worst is behind me – I've got all the makings of a happy life. An intelligent husband, a marvelous man, a good job. . . But I endure hell every day. I think he has complexes, that these are the old childhood wounds, a peasant's sense of property, deep-rooted primitive feelings. [. . .]
> Then he calms down and leaves the house, slamming the door behind him. He doesn't forget to bathe and shave. In the morning he greets me at the institute with a smile. My whole body is bruised up. 'Now you be nice and behave normally, or I'll punch you in the face in front of all these people.'[114]

112 AN Kr, Regional Court for the City of Krakow, series I 1 C (1958–1960), case I 1 C 30/58.

113 Ibid.

114 "Pamiętnik 'Co dalej?'," in: *Moje małżeństwo i rodzina*, ed. Anna Dodziuk-Lityńska, J. Radziejowski, supervised by A. Musiałowa, Warsaw 1974, pp. 132 ff, 135.

The Press Discourse in an Era of Crisis

In the daily press, and particularly women's magazines, domestic violence appeared far earlier, of course, but it was insignificant or hardly noticeable. However, the end of the 1970s and the 1980s were marked by the constant presence of women's narratives about various forms of violence in *Przyjaciółka* and *Kobiety i Życia*. The regular publication of real-life stories, investigative reporting, and readers' letters painted a dark picture of the Polish family. This image was so unequivocally negative that the editors noted readers' opinions who openly opposed what they saw as an extremely gloomy picture of the world, incompatible with their personal everyday experience. A special focus on major family problems begin in the second year of Martial Law, when, alongside the standard articles about shortages on store shelves, readers could choose between an article on preventing the spread of alcoholism, an investigative report on the tragic situation of health services (e.g. delivery wards), or examples of various acts of violence, such as adult children hitting their elder parents, husbands their children and/or wives, or mothers their little ones.

The statements in the popular press helped to create a wider discourse on the Polish family in late communism, primarily affected by the swift social transformation which came with the cultural opening to the West in the 1970s. With a general sense of instability through the growing economic crisis and the process of impoverishment in the final decade of communism, people bore witness to and participated in a relatively swift crystallization of social anxieties. This is confirmed by dozens of sociological analyses on transformations in the Polish family at the time.

Sifting through the narratives of domestic violence published in women's magazines, we should stress that, among the several dozen articles, reportage pieces on court proceedings and interventional pieces are prevalent. Readers' letters are in the minority, but when they do occur – and this partly contributes to their value as resources – they are widely commented on by readers.[115] Moreover, in the first half of the 1980s, readers' letters often served as the point of departure for articles. In the second half of the decade we see more published letters about the experience of violence, which might have arisen from the fact that reporters had ceased to describe single case histories.

These letters about violence can basically be divided into two groups. The first is women who experienced violence first-hand ("beaten wives" or daughters of

115 See: Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, *Opowieści o trudach życia. Narracje zwierzeniowe w popularnej prasie kobiecej XX wieku*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 168 ff.

tyrannical fathers); the other is letters from women who witnessed domestic violence (against women and children). One exceptional testimony is a letter from a man who resorted to violence in dealing with his wife. Of course, his authenticity (as with the other readers' letters) could be called into question, but in analyzing the meaning and significance of the issues it raises, this is not of capital importance. Letters to the press were generally accompanied by brief responses "from the editor," which allows us, to some extent, to postulate model behavior in a situation of violence.

In general, the letters which are a sort of emotional confession mainly focus on the long-term psychological effects of the experience of violence, as I have said, and not its physical dimension. The act of violence would seem to be so evident to the writer and the reader that there is no need to share the details of the physical pain. Similarly, relatively little room is devoted to describing the wounds or the details of the medical intervention. This does not mean, however, that we cannot reconstruct the individual act of violence on the basis of these letters. An unsettled reader of *Przyjaciółka* wrote of her son in 1986:

> [. . .] he beats [his son] for everything – putting down a spoon wrong, putting his shoes in the wrong place, forgetting to say 'bon appetit,' writing sloppily etc. If he tells or explains something to the child, he has no right to forget it. If the boy does forget, he won't repeat it, he'll just beat the child, calling him a fool, a blockhead, an imbecile. And he will lash him with whatever was within arm's reach, or on his feet – a slipper or a sandal. The child defends himself, and so he gets it not only on the behind but also on the hands, the kidneys, and the back – and several times a day.

Nonetheless, the same author makes constant reference to the psychological state of her son's victims:

> When my daughter-in-law fell ill, she had to get up out of bed and make the children food, he wouldn't even wash the dishes. But the problem is bigger than that, and I'm afraid my daughter-in-law will crack. My son likes to drink, and he drinks at home alone. After two shots his hands are just itching to punch someone. My daughter-in-law doesn't hassle him, or at most with a few words, because she once warned him that if he so much as touched her she'd hit him over the head with whatever she could find. And so she hassles the children, especially the elder son, who has already been treated for nervous stomach disorder, his sight is failing, and now he stutters. [. . .] He has become angry, anxious, disobedient, and stubborn. Sometimes he hates his parents, siblings, and the whole world. He often says he's had enough of life, that it would be better if he were dead. The younger one says that one day he'll jump out the window. I'm afraid tragedy might strike.[116]

116 "Dopóki nie zabraknie serca [list]," *Przyjaciółka*, 3.07.86, No. 27, p. 14.

State institutions are practically non-existent in these letters as real participants in the situations, or even potential support for the victim. In one case, the author even rules out this kind of intervention for a beaten child:

> I can no longer bear to see how my grandson is mistreated by his parents. But I won't go and complain to the militia, or to the prosecutor. We live together, and though I am financially independent, I can just imagine what it would do to our home life.[117]

An exception here are letters about divorces resulting from domestic violence, when the militia or social workers become heroes of the stories, though most often they are insufficiently effective or even helpless.

The letters take the form of calls for help or intervention, adopting the popular narrative arc in magazines. But this form, in the context of the issue under discussion, could be read as showing the witnesses and victims to be active, as consciously deciding to verbalize their suffering and to stand up to violence, which had ceased to be an acceptable mode of communication. These personal statements are also crisis narratives, part of a special, contradictory discourse around the family in the 1980s, and a sign of adaptation to a modern concept of the family as a group of individuals with equal rights, who understand the importance of mental health. The socialist understanding of modernization is absent here, as are state institutions to protect "the healthy modern family."

The discourse of the last two decades of communist Poland is typically marked by an image of the world shown in the source documents, separated into cruel husbands and beaten wives (and their children), but we must recall that, at the same time, both the press (through educators and psychologists) and sociologists were convincing female readers of their shared responsibility for the family crisis.

Men as Victims of Violence

It is quite difficult to find public testimonies of women being violent toward men. These mainly emerged in court during divorce trials, and were seldom made public. In the courtrooms, the stereotype of the strong man vanished when the court's favor was needed in a dispute. Sifting through only 200 consecutive cases (out of 1,600) handled by the Regional Court in Krakow in 1958–1960 proves that this sort of case was common enough not to particularly shock the court.

> The good of the children [said the summons of a white-collar worker for Krakow's *Miastoprojekt*] whom the plaintiff loves does not stand in his way, given the constant and

117 "Ofiara konfliktu? [list]," *Przyjaciółka*, 28.02.85, No. 9, p. 12.

> bitter quarrels the defendant initiated, **the vulgar slurs, active offense, and battery of the plaintiff** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.], which did not provide an atmosphere conducive to raising children, or rather, caused their corruption, so that, in this case, divorce could only have healthy repercussions, at least in terms of the children's family life. Moreover, the defendant does not create the opportunity for the plaintiff to meet with his children, and only the Court's regulation of this matter along with the ruling of a divorce could allow the plaintiff to return to peaceful paternal contact with his children.[118]

Certainly, the specifics of divorce cases do not allow us to predict how far the unsubstantiated medical evidence or militia reports of violence by either the husband or the wife corresponded to the family's life. Still, the husbands, when they were the plaintiffs, had no special scruples about recalling these events to discredit the defendant. This was no cause for shame, though it stood in contrast to the model of the domineering husband:

> Because the plaintiff had no desire to sign over further possessions to the defendant, she **began mistreating** the plaintiff and quarreling fiercely with him, using the obscenest language. And so, for instance, on 24 July 1954, thus sixteen months after their wedding – when the plaintiff refused to sign over his possessions to the defendant, the latter hurled this remark at him: 'despotic pig'. . . In December 1957 **she threw herself on the plaintiff and attempted to kill him**. [. . .] Twice **she lunged at the plaintiff with an ax and a knife** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.].[119]

Apart from these spectacular descriptions of madness, which were even meant to conclude with the defendant being sent to a mental hospital,[120] the divorce documents are full of "slaps in the face" and "lunging in to start beating," as forms of violence women use against their husbands. What is evident in the court files, however, is the presence of witnesses and the militia when it comes to husbands or their lovers beating wives.[121] For this reason, too, the sketchy complaints of beaten husbands who did not undergo a medical examination were generally seen as less reliable by the court.

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In the period of relative social stability after 1956, we observe an increasing taboo of domestic violence. This phenomenon largely arose from the evident

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118 AN Kr, Regional Court for the City of Krakow, series I 1 C (1958–1960), case 1C 1/58.

119 Ibid., case I 1 C 11/58.

120 Ibid., case 1 C 10/58.

121 Sometimes parallel to a divorce case a penal case was started against one spouse for abuse: cf. AN Kr, Regional Court for the City of Krakow, case I 1 C 16/58.

discrepancy between the more officially manifested lack of tolerance for this behavior and the very slow process of change in the family itself. This discrepancy could not be overcome, what with the state's policy of minimal intervention in family life and the understandably minimal presence of civic movements, which played a key role in counteracting domestic violence in democratic countries. The increasing tabooization may have been a sign of a changes in mentality in the society at large, where a reluctance to reveal violence reflects the slow transformation of how marital relations, childhood, and physicality were imagined. The tabooization of acts of domestic violence in communist Poland was thus, paradoxically, the first step in bringing them into the light of day and condemning them in the transformation period – a process in which grass-roots social movements played a major role.

Chapter 6 Abortion – An Example of Breaking a Taboo

Introduction: The Case of Maria from near Bochnia[1]

Reconstruction of Events

On 21 February 1949, platoon leader Jan Cholewa of the militia investigations office nearby Bochnia received word of a crime. The Civic Militia Regional Command in Bochnia had employed, to judge by the surviving materials, conscientious and effective workers, including the platoon leader, who had "female intelligence workers" in the field. From his office notes of 21 February we find that, on that day, "through classified information from a trusted source," he had discovered that "Citizen Konsek Maria [. . .] during last year, i.e. 1948, while pregnant, went to a woman who perform an abortion for a sum of around 3,000 zloty. This abortion was less than successful, and the recovery was long and difficult."[2] The informer in this case was probably an investigator for the Civic Militia Regional Command, Józefa P.[3]

Maria, the daughter of a local carpenter, lived in a small village which, in the 1970s, was absorbed by the expanding town of Bochnia. She was nineteen, unmarried, and childless. She had a grade-four education and when asked about her profession she said she worked "with her mother." Later investigations revealed that she had spent some time as a maid in Krakow. She had probably been seeking work there, not having found any in her home village. The countryside around Bochnia was overpopulated. In the village of Zbydniów, twenty-five kilometers from Bochnia, presently known through a description by the head of the regional commune in 1948, people generally had an "average"

1 The names of the protagonists have been altered.

2 AN Kr, Regional Court in Krakow (Sąd Okręgowy w Krakowie, hereafter – SO Kr) 29/1989/0/5367, Office notes, 21.02.1949.

3 Classified information and reports were, statistically speaking, a secondary source of information about illegal procedures. According to lawyers' estimates, 98 % of cases were initiated through reports by hospital workers. See: L. Bogunia, *Przerywanie ciąży. Problemy prawnokarne i kryminologiczne*, Wrocław 1980, p. 14.

existence: "They mainly eat what grows in the fields, such as potatoes, cabbage, bread with milk, tea, or coffee, very little meat, first because there is nowhere to buy it around here, and second because they put more work and money into the farm than, as they say in the country, into 'good eats.'"[4] People were dressing better than before the war, mainly owing to aid from relatives in America and France or, when it came to the very poor, the regional social assistance bureau. They were short on books and radios, but whoever cared to could go to the local cultural center to read select papers and magazines, including *Przekrój*.[5] We can assume that the circumstances of the inhabitants of Maria's village were slightly better off, owing to the proximity of the town. Hunger in these parts was still widespread, though, owing to the lack of larger land properties, the agricultural reform divided even those plots that were not subject to the reform. Most peasants still worked 2–3 morgens of land.[6]

Militia officers patrolled the village and asked about Maria, and so the girl reported to command office the same day. "She did not want to confess to the further circumstances of the abortion," the platoon leader noted in his log after the interrogation, "but when I had asked a few more questions she slowly began to change her story, and after a full hour she had confessed,"[7] and in Cholewa's presence she went into further detail:

> I do not recall the exact day. I know that, in the summer of 1948, I was one month, or even one and a half months pregnant, and I did not want to let it show, because if my mother found out she would have been angry with me, and so, being at the house of a friend, Baran Anna, who resides in Bochnia, I confessed I was two months pregnant. After she had heard me out she told me there was a woman in Bochnia who performs an abortion, so she suggested I go to the aforementioned woman, who would do it for 3,000 zloty. [. . .] The aforementioned woman told me that she would do it so I was not pregnant, in other words, she would get rid of /terminate/ the pregnancy if I came the next day because then her husband was around and she was wary of him, because she could get five years in jail for this kind of thing. The aforementioned woman informed me that the whole business would cost 3,000 zloty [. . .] The next day I went again to the woman, [. . .] The woman had me lie down on a couch, get undressed, and she washed her hands with spirit and picked up something that looked like a syringe, stuck it into my vagina,

4 *Wieś polska 1939–1948. Materiały konkursowe*, Vol. 2, eds. K. Kersten, T. Szarota, Warsaw 1968, p. 225.

5 Ibid.

6 *Bochnia. Dzieje miasta i regionu*, eds. Feliks Kiryk, Zygmunt Ruta, Krakow 1980, p. 489. Out of 18,240 farmsteads in 1946, over 10,000 had fewer than two hectares, and 6,206 measured twenty-five hectares at most.

7 AN Kr, SO Kr, 29/1989/0/5367, Minutes of the suspect's interrogation, 21.02.1949.

> then took out a second object which she put inside the previous instrument and pushed it inside the vagina, asking if it hurt. I kept telling her that it did hurt, which worried her, and then blood came gushing out and I was scared and then fell faint, but she quickly ordered me to go home and then take a hot bath. After I left the woman I headed for home but by now I was very weak, and I barely made it. [. . .] The next day I lay there all weak for seven days running with a high fever and even fainted. [. . .] In this severe illness, seeing my health was sliding, I admitted to my mother what I had done, telling her the whole thing, but I begged her not to tell a soul, since that woman could get a big punishment for the abortion [. . .]. I should say that the guy who got me pregnant [. . .] told me not to worry, telling me to go terminate pregnancy, giving me two thousand zloty in cash to arrange it.[8]

After the interrogation, the platoon leader filed a report to the head of the Investigation Bureau. The latter immediately informed the local prosecutor, and then recommended the Civic Militia hold an "exhaustive and detailed investigation, apprehending suspects, submitting an application to the Prosecutor of the Regional Court for a temporary arrest."[9]

The militia officers worked late into the night. Late that same evening (at 10:00 and 12:00), they managed to interrogate two more people and picked up the trail of other women. They attempted to arrest the suspects as quickly as possible, so that no one could communicate and work out their stories. By the end of May, they had a full indictment against seven people.

Apart from one person, the accused were sentenced by the court. Their appeals were denied. The court did not consider mercy pleas. The President did not use his power to absolve, despite letters signed by numerous residents of the region local to the condemned midwife, whose loss was keenly felt. The harshest sentences went to two women who were proven to have performed illegal operations (one and a half years in prison). The women who underwent the operation were punished with six months in jail, with four years' probation. A harsh sentence went to Maria's "fiancé," who turned out to be married with a pair of children. For "urging" the girl to get an abortion he received four months in prison, and sat the entire sentence. The verdict sentencing the midwife who performed the operation contained the telling statement: "The accused [. . .] is a diploma-bearing midwife, and thus it is her vocation to ensure the proper and vigorous natural growth of a population winnowed by war; she has abused her profession to the impediment of public interest."[10] We find a similar statement in documents

8 Ibid.

9 AN Kr, SO Kr, 29/1989/0/5367, Report from the investigation by the PKMO, Investigator's Bureau in Bochnia, 1.03.1949, p. 1.

10 AN Kr, SO Kr, 29/1989/0/5367, Sentence from a trial of 21 September 1949.

from the verdict published a month earlier, in the case of Wacław J., on his urging to "terminate pregnancy" "moreover, we must take into account the damage that the accused inflicted on the State population policy, an act which, given these postwar times of lax customs and the ubiquity of these crimes, should meet particularly severe punishment."[11]

Controlling Fertility

In the archival documents of the Krakow regional court of 1945–1950, which released the verdict in the matter of Maria, we find nine court cases from Articles 231–234 of the Penal Code of 1932, i.e. with accusations of abortion."[12] I have also managed to find similar trials presided over by the Regional Court in Kielce (five cases from 1946–1948) and one before the Kielce provincial court (1953). According to the penal code of 1932, which was in force in Poland at the time, a woman could be arrested for up to three years for termination of pregnancy[13] up to five years for assisting the termination or conducting the operation, and, if the woman were to die, up to ten years.[14] Legal policy in the 1940s was thus an extension of the prewar policy, while until 1956 it conformed to the pronatalist policy of the postwar state.[15]

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11 AN Kr, SO Kr, 29/1989/5570, Sentence from a trial of 3 August 1949.

12 Owing to the lack of court documents and the sole preservation of "normative acts," there is a relatively small amount of documentation currently available. At this stage, a quantitative study is precluded by the lack of case registers, which were not passed on to state archives for practical reasons, perhaps, and remain in the court archives.

13 "Art. 231: A woman who terminates pregnancy or has it terminated by another person is subject to arrest for three years. [. . .] A pregnant woman can commit this crime in a dual fashion a) either by her own actions or by conspiring to terminate pregnancy or b) or by (conscious) passive behavior in termination of pregnancy termination of pregnancy is any action whose aim is not to allow the child to enter the world, all actions to prevent the normal development of the fetus and its turning into a child. [. . .]."

14 "Art. 232: Whosoever terminate pregnancy or assists in doing so with the consent of a pregnant woman is subject to up to 5 years in jail. [. . .] Assistance means supplying the means to perform the operation, providing a bed or an apartment for the purposes, while working together with the contracting mother, necessary manual aid, or working with her permission is not assistance, and the person is not an accessory to termination of pregnancy. If the person is operating from the desire to make a profit [. . .] a fine should be applied as an added punishment. [. . .] An exceptional alleviation of the punishment is practically impossible. [. . .]".

15 On the discussion on abortion that went along with the destalinization of the country, see: Małgorzata Fidelis, *Kobiety, komunizm i industrializacja w powojennej Polsce*, Warsaw 2015.

The image of the power in numbers of the national community and the necessity of making up for losses in population incurred during the Second World War became the axiom of the public discourse in postwar Poland.[16] Interestingly, the pronatalist policy developed in times of a constant demographic rise, chiefly the result of postwar compensation trials. This was despite the fact that increasing numbers of people pointed to numerous threats to this rise, among which, experts believed, mother and infant mortality and the spread of abortion were especially urgent. Concerns of depopulation caused the diversification of Stalinist policies toward women, which chiefly sought to promote the image of the professional woman and the female social activist.

An analysis of the epoch's social discourse surrounding the promotion of multiple-child mothers, the project to spread midwifery in the countryside, and the struggle against the illegal abortion market, show that, in attempting to improve the country's demographics, the government perhaps quite consciously focused on rural citizens, seeing traditionally multi-child families as an opportunity to guarantee swift and continual growth of the society. Despite official reassurances of the possibility of combining the roles of mother and industrial worker, there must have been an awareness that, in those social circumstances, it was quite impossible for the working mother to have a multi-child family. This is why the only way to reconcile the idea of employing women and attaining the highest possible birth rate was limiting the operation to rural women.[17]

The investigative material from 1949 is exceptional in its own way, in part because the case immaculately reflects the transformation of Polish social policy at the threshold of the Stalinist epoch.[18] In light of Krakow's court documents of 1945–1948, most of the trials from Articles 231–234 were discontinued, even when the accused admitted he was guilty.[19] The harsh punishments of the spring

16 Barbara Klich-Kluczewska, "Making up for the Losses of War: Reproduction Politics in Postwar Poland," in: *Women and Men at War: A Gender Perspective on World War II and Its Aftermath in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. R. Leiserowitz, M. Röger, Osnabrück 2012, pp. 307–328.

17 Ibid.

18 We should note that in other Eastern-Bloc countries there were examples of show trials for those who had had an abortion. On Hungary, see: A. Petö, "Women's Rights in Stalinist Hungary: The Abortion Trials 1952–1953," *Hungarian Studies Review* 2002, Vol. 29, No. 1–2, pp. 49–75.

19 As in case 29/1989/0/5105, whose verdict reads:"the accused did confess to her guilt, but the trial did not supply evidence that she was definitely pregnant and allowed the the pregnancy to be terminated. [. . .] The juxtaposed testimonies of the two accused [. . .] generate a suspicion that Janina's confession was intended to force the other accused

of 1949 could be interpreted as a visible turn with regard to making abortion policies stricter, in the spirit of: "We must make the mothers feel a sense of duty and demonstrate that she must make a sacrifice for the nation, even if she pays for it with her life. She should understand this greater necessity much like a soldier on the front lines."[20]

Between the Lines

Arriving at the station, Maria probably never suspected that she was being investigated for the abortion. She expected (as we deduce from Cholewa's notes) that it was about a theft accusation by her Krakow employers. The confessions are, of course, made under duress, and the suspect was mortified, as the platoon leader mentions in his notes. Maria did not have time to prepare, and so her tale processed by the militia system has a certain spontaneity. The typical phrases and grammatical forms found in police reports ("aforementioned woman") blend with an emotional focus on the events of 1948 (e.g. concerning the midwife's family). The suspect's testimony is a dialogue with the interrogator, which is not, of course, reflected in the report; the platoon leader's questions have been removed.[21]

Unlike other accused women, Maria did not think over her situation or consider her line of defense, and had no chance to select events to build her defense. Interestingly, she did not mention the child's father once in her main account. It was only when it was finished that she provided his name and the sum he gave her for the operation, when specifically asked by the officer. Nor did Maria speak of "termination of pregnancy." This was a legal phrase used by the writer of the report or suggested by the interrogator. The following sentences use phrases like "[the woman – B. K.-K.], who does it," "[the woman – B. K.-K.] does it so that I won't be pregnant," "the whole business," which certainly came from the mouth of the suspect. The inventiveness of the minute-taker, in turn, is shown when compared with other women's testimonies, who used phrases like "dispensing

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to marry her." The verdict of case 29/1989/0/4523, in turn, declared both the pregnant woman and the midwife guilty, but automatically annulled their punishments (three and ten months in prison), on the amnesty law of 2 August 1945. Case 29/1989/0/4615 was discontinued when no connection was established between the woman's death and the possible abortion of the pregnancy.

20 Benon Henke, "Ankieta w sprawie walki z przerywaniem ciąży," *W Służbie Zdrowia* 1948, No. 4, p. 113.

21 While this is the rule in the cases whose files survive in Krakow's court materials, some of the documents from the Kielce region have minutes transcribed in dialogue form.

of the pregnancy," (*sporządzenie ciąży*) suggesting a confusion of terms heard from the militia.[22] In a case of 1947, a nineteen-year-old worker from Bronowice spoke, in turn, of "doing an operation to abort the pregnancy." However, the original (handwritten) statement by her friend, accused of being an accessory, features the sentence: "after arriving at the doctor's I told the doctor I had taken [. . .] [her – B. K.-K.] to be scraped out."[23]

The women most often tacitly understand each other and this lack of a language to suit the description of the events is quite evident in the testimonies. Only the interrogation forces them to call a spade a spade.

At the same time, although no information is provided on the people doing the operations, it seems widely known. The women's testimonies generally say that they met "someone," went "somewhere," but it later turns out that they know the names and addresses, as Maria did. The "office" was easy to find, through a mother, a friend, or a chance acquaintance. In Bochnia, it sufficed to go to the main square and "in any conversation mention a person known from sight," who sold second-hand clothes, that she had gotten pregnant. "She agreed right away," one of the accused said, "and explained further that times were so tough it was the only thing to do."[24]

In smaller places and villages, the person who could "help" in a hard situation was generally a woman with no specialized training who helped out with births, a *babka*. As indicated by the statement of an inhabitant of a small village outside Kielce, there was no doubt who to approach in a "jam:"

- How did the witness find out that K. was a 'babka'?
- Nobody told me anything about a 'babka,' I knew myself that she did that kind of thing, ever since I came [. . .] [here – B. K.-K.] to work in 1951.
- Let the witness state whose pregnancy K. ruined.
- As far as I know, she ruined the pregnancy of the daughter of S., who was in her sixth month, but I can't tell you what year it happened, I just found out from people whose names I don't know.[25]

The network of informal contacts and information built a kind of mutual dependency and a strong need for women who had the abortion to be loyal those who

22 AN Kr 29/1989/0/5367, Minutes from the interrogation of a suspect, 21 February 1949.
23 AN Kr, SO Kr, 29/1989/5090, Minutes from an interrogation: Adela N., 31 March 1948.
24 AN Kr, SO Kr, 29/1989/0/5367, Minutes from the interrogation of a suspect: Franciszek N., 25 February 1949.
25 AP Kiel, Regional Court in Kielce (hereafter – SP Kiel), 212 (IV Kp 160/53), the case of Władysława G.

did the operations. This had a purely practical aspect – it was in case they got pregnant again.

Pain and Shame

In the early 1950s, an estimated 300,000 women made the decision to have an abortion, 80,000 of whom ended up in critical condition in the hospital, where it was said the symptoms resulted from artificial miscarriage, allegedly from a faulty operation or infection. The midwifes and nurses generally used a rubber catheter and injected a soapy solution or iodine into the uterus, and administered quinine or medicine to make the uterus contract. The *babkas* mainly used a soapy solution with iodine, sharp instruments, pressed down on the stomach until they caused bleeding, or "opened up the uterus with a 'glass wire' and blew in air," as one of the accused testified in the case under discussion.[26]

Despite the complications, the physical suffering, and even the threat to their lives, women generally refused professional medical assistance. Maria did not want to agree to visit the Bochnia hospital, as that would have meant confessing to the operation and revealing the midwife's name. It was only after nearly a week of physical suffering, high temperature, and passing out that the girl told her mother she was pregnant and had decided to have an abortion "In my severe condition, seeing that my health was getting worse, I admitted what I had done, explaining the whole thing to my mother, but telling her to keep it a secret, as the woman could get a harsh punishment for removing it."[27]

We should note, incidentally, that Maria was not aware of the punishment she faced for the operation. She only knew that the midwife faced jail time for her actions.

In two agonizing cases involving a burst peritoneum, women refused to reveal the fact of their abortion until their deaths; nor did they reveal the names of the people who did the operations. If they gave damning testimony in the hospital, before a crackdown, when they were not anxious for their lives, they later took everything back, explaining they had been feverish and were unaware of what they were signing.

The women took their risks consciously and did not contact a doctor, generally waiting out the complications at home, in hiding, hoping to convalesce, even if their lives were in danger. They stayed in, without telling their husbands, children, or other relatives the reasons behind their illness. Sometimes, however,

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26 Helena Wolińska, *Przerywanie ciąży w świetle prawa karnego*, Warsaw 1962, pp. 111 ff.
27 AN Kr, SO Kr, 29/1989/0/5367, Minutes of the suspect interrogation, 21 February 1949.

hidden and suspicious suffering emerged, even on the way home from the surgery. During one court testimony, witnesses confessed they had seen the accused returning home, swaying as she walked. In another case, a witness informed the court that the woman began bleeding in the train. Physical suffering and bleeding immediately aroused the suspicions of neighbors and distant family, especially when the women were young and seemed healthy.

The Abortion Taboo

Pregnancy is a special state of the female body. According to folk beliefs, the soul of a woman who dies during pregnancy or childbirth is packed with demons, as is the soul of the dead fetus, a child who died during birth, and an unbaptized child. According to Ludwik Stomma, who analyzed nineteenth-century peasant statements, dead fetuses were as demonic as hanged men, and was second only to those who were unbaptized, miscarried, or drowned. Dead fetuses, like women who were pregnant and giving birth, were intermediaries in the folkloric imagination. Of such "dead categories" Ludwik Stomma wrote that "they were beyond any one state, or from another point of view, in several states at once, and thus, in constant mediation [. . .]. In a biological sense they had left their previous state, but they had not left it in a ritual/magical sense; and in a biological sense they had entered another state."[28]

A pregnant woman was impure, sway to the sacred, and as such, she could not fully take part in the village's social life. The transformation of pregnancy, above all her body's physical transformation, unnerved the rural community, giving rise to symbolic isolation, and in the time of childbirth, literal isolation, owing to the unspecified status of the newborn child. Only a "conclusive" childbirth cleansed the woman of the bodily pollutants, or the "transitory" period."[29] Ethnographers have found traces of this phenomenon in our day, confirming a wealth of rituals in mid-twentieth-century rural life.

"Impurity," mediation, and the need for isolation take us into the realm of taboo. However, the case of Maria could be a cross between secular and ritual/magical taboo traditions, joining the worlds of the *babka* and the "midwife" on the threshold of the rural medical/hygienic revolution. The midwife and the *babka* were to symbolize the process of modernizing the village initiated in 1949, an important aim of which was to reduce fatalities of women in childbirth,

28 Ludwik Stomma, *Antropologia kultury wsi polskiej XIX wieku*, Gdańsk 2000, p. 102.

29 Elżbieta Weremczuk, "Zakazy i nakazy obowiązujące kobietę ciężarną na przykładzie dokumentacji z Wojciechowa i okolic," *Twórczość Ludowa* 2009, R. 24, No. 1–2, p. 13.

newborns, and small children. The aim of the six-year plan was to "make up for shortcomings in this regard," and ranks of schooled specialists were sent to do battle with quackery, whose emblem was the *babka*. These specialists were meant to help the rural mothers experts believed to be young and helpless, to organize regional birthing chambers and to combat home childbirth customs. The midwife was to "bring the light of education" to the "superstitious" countryside; she had special expectations, and the penalties for conducting abortions were high. Punishment was not only for not "monitoring proper and intensive natural growth," but also for betraying the ideals of modernization and supporting an unconscious need for *babkas*.[30]

When it came to Maria, the sudden "interruption" of the pregnancy, preventing the maternal transition process from concluding, caused fear of how the family and society would respond, and consequently, ostracism (additionally through fear of premarital pregnancy). Maria was conscious of how the village society was unsettled by her transgression, which qualifies as impure and sinful both in folk tradition and religious injunctions. An example of extreme fear accompanying abortion is found in the above-mentioned statements by witnesses in other cases, who were especially vigilant (a traveling woman could raise suspicion if she showed clear symptoms of an illness, but all by herself, reluctant to take help, and finally, the presence of blood).

At the same time, the termination of pregnancy was associated with physical monitoring, such as incarceration, as is characteristic of a macrosocial structure. Interestingly, the official propaganda did not put this problem on display, and the trials were not used in political campaigns. Thus, ideological control – by labeling abortion unsafe, an epidemic threatening to depopulate Poland further after the losses of the Second World War – is, until 1955, mainly present in religious content.

Therefore, when it comes to abortion in the mid twentieth century, we have a special accumulation of taboo processes. Paradoxically, I believe these were strengthened when abortion was not publicly stamped as a threat. This situation only changed in 1955, when the discussion on abortion returned to the press and appeared on the radio, and with the amendment to the law of 1956 modeled on the USSR, which allowed divorce for social reasons. There remained a high number of illegal abortions done "outside of the system." But the discussion on abortion in the post-Stalinist Thaw could serve as a splendid example of the

30 See: Barbara Klich-Kluczewska, *Making up for the Losses of War*. . ..

detabooization of a phenomenon passed over in silence, soon bearing fruit in the progressive social "assimilation" of abortion as a birth-control method.

6.1. "The Segment of Pregnant Women:"[31] Abortion in Citizens' Words 1955–1956

When the public debate on abortion began in the fall of 1955, it swiftly turned out – as confirmed by the parliamentary discussion of 27 April 1956 – to be quite exceptional. No cultural taboo had been discussed with such intensity, so fiercely, and with lively civic participation, as the sources testify. This was probably due in part to the fact that sexual culture in its everyday, practical dimension was a particularly burning issue in daily Polish reality. Secondly, it was because the discussion occurred during a liberal thaw. During the parliament debate there was a particular divergence of opinions among MPs, which strikes us in the context of the last five years.[32] Of course, it was also haunted by the "spirit of Maria from Bochnia" in press reports of dramatic stories of girls whose attempts to deal with unwanted pregnancies met tragic finales. By the same token, abortion was nearly always a point of departure in reflecting on "conscious motherhood" as a fundamental problem requiring thought and education.

A particularly interesting record of the public opinion of the day, which might lead us to reflect on the social imaginary of abortion, birth control methods, and indirectly, sexuality, is the 170 letters preserved in the Central Archives of Modern Records, in the Ministry of Justice collection. The great majority of these are letters sent to Polish Radio and then to the Ministry on a rolling basis, as the voice of people on the amendment to the law. As such, we should

31 "Man is struggling against the illnesses that plague him with increasing success, in the name of fighting randomness and the destiny that awaits him. But in terms of the segment of thousands of pregnant women he is helpless, chance governs all that happens to them. To what end does he fail to allow pregnant women to shape their destinies according to their own will, and force them to become mothers? In the name of Christian ethics?" the Central Archives of Modern Records, Ministry of Justice in Warsaw, No. 285/1837 Penal Code. Special Part. Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to Polish Radio [hereafter – AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letter to PR], J. Osiatyńska, Warsaw 17.11.1955.

32 This led to a clash between Polish Catholics representing the PAX Association, Jan Dobraczyński and Andrzej Wojtkowski, and supporters of liberalization, see: Aleksandra Czajkowska, "O dopuszczalności przerywania ciąży. Ustawa z dnia 27 kwietnia 1956 i towarzyszące jej dyskusje," in: *Kłopoty z seksem w PRL. Rodzenie nie całkiem po ludzku, aborcja, choroby, odmienności*, ed. Marcin Kula, Warsaw 2012, pp. 150 ff.

realize that this is only part of the avalanche of correspondence that flooded central institutions and the press on this topic. Considerable response came on the heels of, for example, Maria Parzyńska's articles for *Życie Warszawy*, mainly "W sprawie niedozwolonych zabiegów. Nie tylko wskazania lekarskie" [On Illegal Operations: Not Just Doctor's Orders] (No. 265, 1955) and "O młodzieży, małżeństwie i odpowiedzialności" [On Young People, Marriage, and Responsibility] (9 September 1955, p. 3), which radio listeners also mention repeatedly. *Przyjaciółka* also printed reader responses to the "To było przed ustawą. . ." [Before the Law Was Made. . .] series of articles.[33]

The letters collected at AAN are interesting in that they do not allow us to formulate a thesis as unambiguous as the letters to the press. Consequently, it is less than evident if, as Aleksandra Czajkowska writes, "there was a demand to liberalize regulations viewed as outdated."[34] Or, perhaps, it is possible to relate this thesis to the press (apart from the Catholic periodicals), but this cannot be mistaken for the social opinion of the time. The situation here was enormously complex, and quite interesting from a historical perspective. The nearly two hundred letters, which were not censored, at least, in terms of selecting which were considered of interest to the Ministry, are neither predominantly for or against the law. Both sides are more or less equally supported, and the dividing line is not always a simple "communists" against "Catholics." Most of the writers are women, but there are also plenty of men (30 %). There are doctors' letters both for and against the amendment. However, in both cases (Dr. Leśniewski[35] and Dr. Hanke[36]), the doctors recall having written a great many letters on the subject, and both ask for information concerning their radio appearance on "conscious motherhood." Unlike the aforementioned doctors, who sent in current reports and those from years past, ordinary listeners wrote spontaneously to "their beloved radio station." The dates show that they wrote on the day of or following the broadcast. Surprised and moved by the experts' statements, they felt the need to share their opinions or even intimate marital problems, as reflected by the opening lines: "I listened with great interest. . .," "as a young wife [I would like to] speak up. . .," "it was with great interest that I followed the discussion. . .," "with great interest my husband and I listened to two broadcasts on

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., p. 137.

35 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Dr. J. Leśniewski, undated.

36 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Dr. Antoni Benon enke, Grodzisk Wlkp., 14 November 1955.

conscious motherhood. . .," "I could not keep from expressing my opinion. . .." At the same time, many surviving texts adopt the familiar tone of intervention letters to public institutions, with their characteristic descriptions of tragic living conditions, housing problems, unjust managers etc. In others we can find responses to an organization's call, though it is not possible to unequivocally state that it concerns the Women's League. These are letters that read like typical appeals written by a group of women:

> We, the undersigned, have read the article in *Życie Warszawy* on the day of 05.01.1956 concerning the four fatalities of women in Łódź, whose lives were ended by malpractice. It was not long ago that we saw the trial of Citizen Kazimierski, a pseudo-gynecologist who received seven years in prison and also caused the death of a patient, barely saving a second, there must be countless such cases not covered by the press. Should this not raise an alarm for the punishment against women and doctors for abortion to be lifted. Or do we need more victims before we open our eyes to this urgent matter. The Soviet Union has confirmed it is lifting the ban on abortion. It is high time that our Minister of Health also gave some time to women's issues; lifting the abortion ban and punishment should occur as soon as possible.[37]

This letter points directly at two forces standing behind the discussion, and the amendment to the law on abortion in Poland. This is equally an external impulse, a Soviet amendment, and growing internal problems tied to the development of the abortion black market. In many letters supporting change, we find reference to legalizing abortion, which took place in 1955 in the USSR. Interestingly, however, the authors all erroneously give 7 February 1955 (and not 23 November) for the change in the law. Some authors also accuse the Polish government of purposefully failing to mention changes in the Soviet Union, as in the following example:

> On 7 February 1955, the High Council of the USSR decided to lift the penalties for terminating pregnancies. **Why has not a single word been written or said in our parts?** Regulating motherhood is a serious problem for all women, and has taken on such dimensions and resonance that I will take the liberty of quoting a piece from *Życie Warszawy* of 30 August 1955, with the headline "The Prosecutor Has Saved a Victim from the Mortal Hands of Charlatan Doctor on Hoża Street," which states: "The Emergency workers called in Warsaw have confirmed the death of 18- year-old Teresa D. It was revealed that the patient perished following an operation by the pseudo-doctor Zbigniew Kazimierski, a resident of Hoża Street 68. In a second operation on a seventeen-year-old girl, he caused an infection, and the prosecutor has recommended that she be hospitalized."

37 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letter to PR, Letter from fifteen residents of Warsaw and its environs, 6 January 1956.

> **There are many such tragic events and the medical courts could have a great deal to say on these issues, except they are prevented by A PACT OF SILENCE** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.] which continues to this day.
> The abscess swelled, begging to be operated on, and who could profit from women dying in the flower of their youth. Many are taken ill, but also there are those who perish tragically – this is truly shameful for us all, and we, in the name of all women, call out, hear us, stop shielding yourselves with this Pact of Silence and regulate motherhood and may the example of the [word scratched out] Soviet Union be a beacon for all women – this we eagerly await.[38]

One listener even noted with astonishment that the participants in the discussion had become so fired up that public debate had crossed the acceptable limits for critiquing the system and the authorities:

> It is incredible that the bar on the discussion on conscious motherhood and lifting the ban on abortion was raised so high – the mothers' personal comfort – at a time when there is so much talk about how our priority ought to be the interests of the general public, of the nation as a whole, and not the personal interests of individuals.
> This enthusiasm has gotten so carried away that there was no hesitation to quote letters that might be seen as directly accusing the government and the system we live in, such as the one by a citizen from Wrocław, who said that, when one already has four children in a single room, how could she consider a fifth, given that the four children she has are already short of breathing space.[39]

The letter-writer, a declared communist and atheist, did not make direct reference to what were then called "anti-Malthusian" ideas characteristic of the Stalinist epoch. However, this and other letters by opponents of the amendment resound with claims of the damage caused by the suggested changes to a nation demographically crippled during the war. While the adherents of liberalization appealed to ongoing changes in Soviet legislation, opponents appeared to be oblivious. They preferred to glorify the pronatalist Soviet policies, recalling the titles awarded to mothers of many children, and the extensive state support system. Frequent references were made to geniuses who only lived because of the restrictive legislation:

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38 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, letter signed: Babczyńska, Renata Makolska, Maria Orzych, Maria [first letter of the surname illegible] itocka, received by the Ministry of Justice on 9 November 1955.

39 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, letter from a man, Gliwice 5 December 1955.

> Could anyone deny that, due to its solicitude for people both living and still unborn, the Soviet Union has a great abundance of outstanding individuals, so many talents and geniuses?[40]

This same motif of "wasted talent" is found in letters written by people stressing their piety. The same goes for the motif of the pronatalist policy, or the necessity to compensate losses from the war:

> The nation will feel the pinch of unpunished or severely restricted abortion in a few decades, with a sharp drop in the natural birth rate. As a result of the First (!) World War, the Polish nation shouldered the greatest losses in population and it is unthinkable that, ten years later, we should behave as though we were threatened by overpopulation.[41]

The popular theme of praising many-child families inclines us to question the effectiveness of Stalinist propaganda to professionalize women. The letters of 1955 seem to indicate at least equal effectiveness of multi-child propaganda and women's social role as mothers:

> I'm a simple woman with no education but I understood my calling and I am proud to have a big bunch of healthy and ruddy-cheeked children, who can make our country prosper. I may not be wealthy but the greatest riches are strong and healthy children, since I never had to take them to the doctor and I don't know what it means to lose sleep, even though I once had twins – a boy and a girl weighing 3.60 kg and 3.50 kg, and three years back I gave birth to a daughter, that was the seventh child and there was so much joy in the home. [. . .] You need to keep your chin up and not think about where it hurts and just be joyful when a child is born, because that's the future of the nation and a tough, devoted, healthy mother is the rock-solid foundation for our beloved Poland. Maybe this topic will keep repeating throughout the broadcast, I'm interested to know how other women look at it, that will show us how strong Poland is.[42]

The letters that contain political and ideological declarations from the fall of 1955 and the early spring of 1956 form a highly ambiguous picture, documenting a muddle of concepts and images. Many listeners could not come to terms with the unexpected change, which opposed not only the political norms in the official propaganda, but above all, the social norms sanctioned by religion and custom. Perhaps, this chaos triggered public response, along with official encouragement

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40 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Maria Łukanowska, Oborniki, 13 November 1955.

41 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Jerzy Kozdrowski, Warsaw 17 November 1955.

42 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Franciszka Szlachta, Kniastno [?] 15 November 1955.

to voice opinions. These were so effective that, despite the prevailing ban, there were wives who signed their first and last names to letters that confessed to repeated abortions or knowledge of them. I believe this is less a sign of naivety than faith in inevitable change.

6.1.1. Between a "Harmful Operation" and the "Ogino-Knaus Method"

Among the moderate critics of abortion were the most fervent advocates of sexual education. Here, we frequently find the opinion of the medical damage caused by the operation, which should only be a last resort. Though ultimately permissible, abortion here qualifies as belonging to the past, not to modernity. It should be replaced by effective means of anti-conception. "Interested in the fate of newborns" wrote:

> In the twentieth century, I have the feeling that no one ought to have to "hide" sexual secrets from mature sixteen-to-eighteen-year-olds, because otherwise we're regressing instead of making progress, keeping things as they were for at least 500 years, under King Świeczek. [. . .] The question is why, in times of progress in other fields, we are taking a step backwards here; we can safely say we have locked sexuality in the closet and only the church has slightly dealt with the issue in terms of Christian morality. [. . .] In the twentieth century, we have enough technology to provide the preventive steps, which, with the right level of awareness, neither do harm nor force us to sacrifice human beings and prevent great pain and human sorrow. I believe that it is prevention, not abortion, that will lead us to right the wrongs.[43]

In this way, statements critiqued what Stalinism had neglected. However, the employed language was still characteristic of the era.[44] Listeners appealed for the topic to be discussed not only on the radio and in the press, but on television as well. If sexual education failed to appear in schools and workplaces, warned Pola Wertowa, a listener from Łódź, then we would be left with "brutal and harmful operations" or the "flawed Ogino-Knaus Method" promoted by the Church:

> It seems that, in People's Poland, making young people sexually aware and broadening sexual culture have been horribly neglected. We speak and write too little of these

43 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, letter from "A regular listener interested in the fate of newborns," undated.

44 "The new and 'beautiful' (in every sense of the word) person should be born in new, improved, and wiser times with a full awareness of who gave him his life," see: AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Pola Wertowa, Łódź, 11 November 1955.

> things. We might recall the widespread interest in the Italian film *Tomorrow Is Too Late* – I remember what the critics said in the press. I remember the long line-ups of readers waiting to borrow books on the subject from libraries. To give a general idea, in 1948 A. Dryjski's book *Sexual Matters* cost 200–300 zloty in used-book stores, and it is near-impossible to find. It would be worth reediting and publishing once more. [. . .] Doctors claims that in England there is a modern pharmacological substance to prevent pregnancy (hesperidin phosphate in pills – if memory serves).[45]

The state's effectiveness was beyond dispute, which proved, at least to some degree, how the imaginary had transformed under totalitarianism. Some statements lead us to conclude that birth control methods were purposefully concealed from citizens. A woman who recalls that her husband gave her a year's salary for operations over the course of ten years writes:

> It seems our government should step into the shoes of women and make preventive measures accessible for women to use, and have as many children as they want and as their conditions allow. A woman is not a machine for bearing children she has equal rights to work, relax, take in some entertainment. Not only to weep, worry, and wait and see if she gets her period. . .[46]

An awareness of one's own body and of sexuality was, according to many readers, their religious convictions notwithstanding, a natural part of morality, and should have been part of an education that was not only at school but also spread by the media. In the case of women, who remain moralists' central focus, a correct "moral attitude" chiefly means sexual restraint:

> Alongside consciousness-raising in married couples, we ought to teach them of the sublimity of a high moral standard for them and their children. [. . .] In our present system I have never heard of a lesson being devoted to feminine hygiene or the important matter of sex life. This once took place in middle schools, and even elementary schools before the war. Girls receive only the insufficient information their mothers provide. They fail to tell them that girls who do not succumb to erotic and sexual experiences are far prettier, healthier, and happier. They are more attractive and more loved by their husbands. I write about this because I know that the radio presently has enormous potential to spread high moral standards and hygiene.[47]

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45 Ibid.

46 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Z. B., Warsaw, received 6 November 1955.

47 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Helena Strojnowska, P.G.R. Godurowo p. Zalesię, Pow. Gostyń (Poznań region), undated, pp. 2 ff.

The sexual restraint of young women was meant to be decisive not only for family happiness but also for the moral upbringing and physical health of young people of both sexes and thus the whole future of society.

The statement by a twenty-something law student at the University of Warsaw quoted on the radio was referenced by what we might call secular opponents of the legalization of abortion, expressing what was likely a general conviction that fear of an unwanted pregnancy was the sole impediment to the moral debauchery of the unwed segment of society. The future lawyer even writes of "illicit sexual relations between young people."[48] This claim matches the orthodox, though non-religious belief in the necessity of controlling the sexual relations of the unmarried, who were said to be, by their very nature, "illicit," wild, and in the case of young people, even destructive:

> In my view pregnancy can be, in practice, a factor which in many cases impedes the initiation of illicit sexual relations between young people. [. . .] And thus permission for termination of pregnancy with impunity is the only impediment to the moral ruin of society – above all the young people – and the beginning of the breakdown of the family. It leads to tragedy and broken lives for many, many people.[49]

The Catholics, in turn, argued that concern and fear were poor guarantees of morality:

> Better to consider how to raise a young person in purity and strive for moral perfection. I am not sure if any ethical upbringing other than a Christian one is achievable. You will call this religiosity, obscurantism, ignorance, and superstition. But allow me to say one thing: when it comes to conscious motherhood and birth control, Catholicism has shown itself to be far more progressive in promoting natural regulation than the secular world view, which, as you express it, recommends artificial methods of protection and discussions on legalizing the murder of the most defenseless – unborn children.[50]

The main weapon in combating unwanted pregnancy was the "calendar," the Ogino-Knaus Method accepted by the Catholic Church. Its popularity is shown by numerous women's statements:

> [. . .] for this [an unwanted pregnancy], with some good will, there exists the tested Ogina-Knaus Method, which ought to be recommended over killing unborn children, because that's what you could call "terminating a pregnancy." [. . .] I think I am not alone

48 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Jerzy Kozdrowski, Warsaw, 17 November 55.

49 Ibid.

50 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, anonymous letter, 30 November 1955.

> in this conviction, I have a whole bunch of friends who are mothers of several children and think like I do. P.S. My sister and sister-in-law wanted to show their solidarity by signing the bottom of the letter as well.[51]

For many women, the calendar seems a blessing that will allow them to take control of their fertility. Though they admit to having studied the book *Z tajników pożycia małżeńskiego i jego społecznych powikłań* [Secrets of Married Life and Its Social Complications] "with great difficulty,"[52] the effects are satisfactory:

> And I just have a look at the chart to see when there are days to restrain and when we can couple without any problem. I have given birth four times – three children are alive, the eldest is six and the youngest is two. We have no fear of me getting pregnant. My husband and I wonder why the book is not more popular.[53]

For many, the Calendar is a synonym for modern birth control:

> Knowledge and science are making great strides, we could set up counseling centers for mothers, where a doctor would do a check-up to find a woman's temperament and mark out the infertile days to prevent pregnancy, that would be a good approach.[54]

6.1.2. "Dear Radio, Help out Us Women. . ."[55]

The most interesting statements in terms of the experience of everyday life are the intimate confessions. The great majority of them were written by women, which again confirms the thesis of women's near-full responsibility for the expansion of the family. I say *near* because, in the letters concerning the marital calendar, we do come across declarations of shared responsibility.

A characteristic attribute of the intimate confession is the special treatment of the addressee. The medium is personified. "Dear" Polish Radio not an ordinary medium, it is particularly trustworthy and so intimate that listeners do not hesitate to share problems they would not dare to express to the family, friends, or a doctor:

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51 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Sojka Rozalia, Stalinogród, undated.

52 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Renata Mrówczyńska, Wojrzyce, 13 November 55.

53 Ibid.

54 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Franciszka Szlachta, Kniastno [?] 15 November 55.

55 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, H. C., Bielsko-Biała (the letter contains a request for anonymity).

> Dear Radio:
> I was very glad to hear the broadcast about removing pregnancies. It is my worst fear that I do not know how to protect myself from getting pregnant. Every year I have to give birth. At present I am pregnant with my fourth child. This one can be born, but neither my husband nor I wants more after that. **And so I beg of you, Dear Radio, if possible, to send me advice by mail** [emphasis mine – B. K.-K.], because me husband is always getting mad at me that it's all my fault, and I say it's his, so who knows whose fault it is. So again, please send a response by mail.[56]

Although the protagonists of the dramatic media reports of 1955 and 1956 were generally unwed girls, the opening of public debate on abortion (and birth control) mainly got married women talking, inhabitants of towns and villages, for whom multiple children was not a matter of choice. Here, the duty to bear children is a key part of the individual experience. As in the above-quoted letter, they admit to a lack of knowledge and request advice:

> [. . .] I would be very grateful for some information to make young wives aware of what they should do to get pregnant only when they want.[57] I come to Polish Radio with a personal request to be informed by letter on methods of preventing pregnancy, or the name of a doctor I could consult in this matter.[58]

> And so, dear editors, I come to you as I would my own mother, to teach me, a young and uninformed mother, about how to proceed in this situation so that I won't have children for the next few years, so that I'll be able to bring up my little daughter. [. . .] Because I have not been taught about the latter, I breastfeed my daughter and (from the beginning) I haven't had my time of month, so sometimes I'm afraid I might already be pregnant.[59]

While the above letters stress a lack of knowledge, in a few, less numerous cases, the authors see no effective birth-control method apart from abortion:

> Dear Radio,
> I am the mother of five living children, three dead ones, and four miscarriages, I'm 32, my youngest child is seven months old, I am in my fourth month of pregnancy, and I am filled with despair at the thought of this child about to come into the world. I got married in 1945 and ever since then I have been constantly pregnant, I give birth and get sick

56 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, Genowefa Sucharek, Legnica, undated.
57 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, anonymous letter, 1 December 1955.
58 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, H. Cendera, Tychy, 16 November 1955.
59 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, M. Josiujewicz, Kalisz Pomorski, undated.

> and bring up children. I love my children more than life itself, but wouldn't it be good if, after five children, a doctor could professionally remove a pregnancy, and I wouldn't have to put my health at risk doing it as I have in various ways, like chemicals, baths, and other things which I can't even believe. My lungs have been sick for a year now and I am recovering in our Anti-Tuberculosis Clinic. I've been given a referral to spend the next two months in a sanatorium, but I was there less than a month because the kids had no one to look after them, and my husband couldn't take the time off work to take care of them, because that's how we put bread on the table. My husband is a physical laborer, he earns 900 to 1,100 zloty a month. Dear Radio help us women who are prone to frequent pregnancy.
> Dear Radio come to my aid, I'm in a terrible mess, I can't even tell you how I feel.

Poverty is, in light of these letters, an inevitable companion of a multi-child family. A tragic housing and financial situation is a basic argument in favor of limiting numbers of children in the family. Another is the lack of opportunities to devote the necessary attention to older children and personal health. A thirty-year-old mother of four, with a fifth on the way, writes: "I am young, but I look like an old woman – I no longer have strength to deal with it."

In her letter, too, we find no effective way of dealing with pregnancy, and "getting by" is a synonym for abortion, which is a "woman's business:"

> The moral effect of my childbearing is that my husband calls me stupid, quite literally: "I can't even touch you, because you'll up and get pregnant, other women are smarter and deal with it somehow." I'm afraid to deal with it myself and the doctors I've gone to in tears for advice were also afraid. . . I don't go to *babkas* because I haven't got the means (money) and I don't want to risk my life, since my four children need me. My personal life is a shambles in every sense because I am forced to give birth. Please believe me when I say that if I had the means I would even have ten children. My apartment is twenty square meters, there's nowhere to put a crib, not to mention a place to play or do homework.[60]

This non-expert discussion of 1955–56 may, of course, to some degree, be a measure of knowledge of contaception in Poland in the mid twentieth century,[61] or another interesting source of research of religiosity. Still, my main intent was to show a rare moment in communist Poland when a social taboo was revealed. This phenomenon was tied, first of all, to the special role of the media as an intermediary in initiating change and the very high social activity,

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60 AAN, Min. Spr. 285/1837 Termination of Pregnancy 1948, Letters to PR, a letter from A. O. (request for anonymity), undated.

61 For more on the historiography devoted to anti-conception, see: Sylwia Kuźma–Markowska, "Stan badań nad historią antykoncepcji w XIX i XX wieku," *Przegląd Historyczny* 2009, Vol. 3, pp. 603–619.

characteristic of the 1956 Thaw. This activity proves the enormous role played by social tensions in daily and private life, which created a "crisis" atmosphere in 1955 and 1956.

The letters sent in response to press articles or radio broadcasts are, at present, a testimony to axiological or political chaos, which, in my view, derived from years of tabooization. They show the complexity of motivations and convictions determining the "silence around abortion" and the individual need to break it, which is now difficult to boil down to a single denominator. As such, we may hazard the hypothesis that chaos is what emerges when a taboo "is revealed" and is preceded by a stage where opinions are reconciled. The presence of abortion in the everyday lives of Polish women in communist Poland in 1957–1989 requires a separate study. However, all signs seem to show that such a reconciliation of views (which does not mean making them uniform) probably never occurred.[62]

62 Family planning handbooks distributed by the Conscious Motherhood Society (later known as the Family Planning Society and the Family Development Society) never supported abortion and presented it as damaging to the health of the woman and her future children. In spite of this, and the teachings of the Catholic church, the operation became an accepted way of dealing with an unwanted child, which did not mean that illegal abortions altogether disappeared. See: Agata Ignaciuk, " 'Ten szkodliwy zabieg.' Dyskursy na temat aborcji w publikacjach Towarzystwa Świadomego Macierzyństwa/ Towarzystwa Planowania Rodziny (1956–1980)," *Zeszyty Etnologii Wrocławskiej* 2014, No. 1, p. 91. See also: Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska, "Międzynarodowe aspekty działalności Towarzystwa Świadomego Macierzyństwa w latach 50. i 60. XX wieku," in: *Problem kontroli urodzeń i antykoncepcji. Krytyczno-porównawcza analiza dyskursów*, Wrocław, pp. 263–282.

Conclusion

"Family life is transforming before our very eyes. Marriages are in decline, and divorce rates rising. In many countries, same-sex marriages have been institutionalized, with the right to adopt children. People are increasingly choosing single lifestyles, many are also uninterested in parenthood. One in five Polish children is born into an informal relationship (GUS 2012 – 22 %, 1990 – 6 %). Growing numbers of children are raised by single parents (in a monoparental family) or have several caretakers (e.g. in a patchwork family)."[1]

Seen from the perspective of the shifts in customs occurring in contemporary Poland, the anxieties exposed in 1965 or 1980 may seem incomprehensible or highly exaggerated. True, the experts, politicians, and journalists of the day who diagnosed Polish family life were divided, much as today, into those who anticipated something new, and those who fought the crisis because of their anxieties,[2] but the scale of the changes that occurred does indeed seem incomparable. This analysis of the Polish family in 1956–1989 shows stability, and not only in terms of formal structures or childbearing. The space of social taboos, the margins forming a steady framework for the mainstream of family development, though it did evolve, avoided major tremors that would have indicated radical change in the social imaginary of the norm, apart from abortion. The effect of public attempts to share the experience of exclusion, in the press, for instance, presently suggests the thesis that a lack of free debate, grass-roots social initiatives, and the opportunity to defend one's rights were probably the main stabilizing factors, as some would phrase it, or constricting factors, as others may prefer. In this sense the dictatorship, albeit "modern," remained a dictatorship and initiated a strengthening of the social status quo, at least in the time frame under discussion. An analysis of the expert discourse reveals, in turn, that it often "funneled" voices of historical actors, subordinating them to the decreed social policy, as was the case with single-mother families, though this, we should stress, in no way undermines the independence and authenticity of most of the individual statements experts relied on.

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1 Anna Jawor, "Kobieta w rodzinie ponowoczesnej na przykładzie Polek," *Rocznik Kulturoznawczy* 2016, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 43.

2 For more on the topic: Tomasz Szlendak, "Interpretacje kryzysu rodziny w socjologii. Między familijnym fundamentalizmem a rewolucją stylów życia," *Studia Socjologiczne* 2008, No. 4, pp. 5–41.

The history of the phenomena analyzed in this book does not, therefore, fall in line with the transformation cliches anticipated by scholars. It is neither unequivocal progress nor full hibernation. Undeniably, the changes in imagining the decision to dissolve a marriage, which I am calling detabooization, or – paradoxically – the tabooization of domestic violence, lay the foundation for change after the transformation of 1989. Single motherhood has a long history, tied to deeply-rooted negative social images (here mainly observed from the mother's perspective). This is a case of upholding a social taboo, of historical continuity which, despite major political transformations, was only toppled in the last decade of communist Poland. Divorce is a threshold phenomenon that had little social acceptance at the outset of relevant epoch, yet was legally accepted in communist Poland. Thus, in terms of widespread availability, this is a novelty that stands as an example of assimilation, moving from tabooization to very slow and conditional acceptance. Domestic violence is the hardest to pin down in the source documents. Although it was defined in terms of crimes and misdemeanors, i.e. it was legally condemned, it thrived outside of the law, and communities of family and neighbors avoided unequivocally stating their positions in the matter. The officially promoted waning acceptance for the culture of violence in regulating family relationships or, more broadly, human relationships, contradicted prevailing convictions on the use of force in relationships and the hierarchical structure of the Polish family. This contradiction between condemnation and tolerance, particularly visible in the latter half of the twentieth century, gave rise to progressive tabooization of a phenomenon which, unlike the case of divorce and single motherhood, endured, in spite of some scattered signals that it had been overcome. These were deeply rooted social practices that did not succumb to the system of legal injunctions and prohibitions. An analysis of the public debate on abortion gives us an example of a promoted open debate, rare in communist Poland, on a phenomenon that became a religious, political, and social taboo, and which serves as a counterpoint to our other examples. This debate was surely a turning point in the history of abortion in communist Poland. As to whether this debate was indeed a breakthrough in the history of the social imaginary concerning abortion as such – this requires separate, in-depth research.

This conclusion that communist Poland triggered no revolution (at least in the segment I have studied) may seem rather banal. Still, it teaches us, as scholars, something I signaled back in the introduction – that we should reconsider separating social research on communist Poland into decades and focus on the differences and changes, lest we lose sight of what was most characteristic of post-Stalinist Poland, the slow pace of change in society, particularly evident in what happened before 1956 and after 1989. The "immobility" in spite

of migration, stability in spite of constant political change, might confirm an opinion once expressed by Janusz Żarnowski, who pointed out the economic determinants behind such a situation: "family changes were seriously impeded by material hardships and low earnings, supply shortages, and difficulties in securing housing."[3] Indeed, we might say, by way of simplification, that poverty also reinforced the existing system in the cases I have studied, while insufficient incomes and their unequal distribution not only marginalized single mothers bringing up their children or divorcées but also affected decisions when it came to staying in families touched by the tragedy of domestic violence.

The source documents reveal a whole range of factors that have affected the course of events, including the development of expert discourse as a sign of modernity and the role of popular culture, which should not be read strictly as a representation or forerunner of change, but as a concrete actor on the stage of the historical past. As to whether popular culture and expertise of the time ought to be read primarily as a function of politics, I leave the question open; I tend to think that the social world of the twentieth century is inextricably bound to the state as a political system, though not necessarily in a passive relation of simple subordination.

Based on the phenomena I have explored, we clearly see a clash between modernizing and conservative viewpoints, which to some extent represent a single ideological front called functionalist, i.e. agreeing to perceive the family in terms of its usefulness to the community. The family is important as part of a larger whole. In Poland, substantial forces have never joined to fundamentally undermine this collective and functional approach to the family.[4] Differences can only be sought in terms of the imaginary community meant to serve the family, whether it be a national and state community, or a national and religious one (the nation as a "community of families"). This lack of individualistic thinking had an enormous impact on the perception of the individual's suffering, and placing the family before the individual meant that things that did not reinforce

3 Janusz Żarnowski, *Rodzina w latach cywilizacyjnego przyspieszenia: Polska i Europa 1918–1989*, http://jazon.hist.uj.edu.pl/zjazd/materialy/zarnowski.pdf [accessed: 6.12.2015].

4 This is tied to my thesis, which is somewhat marginal to the present discussion, that Poland never underwent a sexual revolution in the sense as understood in the West. For more on the topic, see: Barbara Klich-Kluczewska, "Młodzież, seks, cenzorzy i ludzie. O debacie wokół filmu 'Seksolatki'," in: *Kultura popularna w Polsce w latach 1944–1989. Między projektem ideologicznym a kontestacją*, ed. Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, Warsaw 2015, pp. 130–149.

the family were doubly stigmatized as a sin against morality, on the one hand, and against modernity, on the other. This is probably why, in communist Poland after 1956, it is hard to find examples of systematic reform of social structures that could be defined as traditional. In none of the examined cases was there successive change that could be called unequivocal progress.

A parallel analysis of tabooization currently allows us to undertake a tentative analysis not only of social behavior but also the inconsistent and never entirely specified policy toward what is called "family pathology." The stubborn attribution of many divorces or single parenthood to "pathogenic factors" yielded a lack of response to domestic violence which had been passed over in silence or marginalized in the historiography of the family in communist Poland. Imagining a model, "normal," complete, and autonomous family linked by biological ties as a socialist family facilitated the spread of a mindset by which views on divorce and single parenthood could breed tolerance for domestic violence.

It was not my intention to write a book about women. However, as it turns out, the great majority of realms of taboo have been reconstructed on the basis of women's statements and primarily concern them, which, it seems, allows us to assert a general thesis of the feminization of the space of taboo in post-Stalinist Poland. This book has not broached the issues of homosexuality, sexual violence, sexuality as such, or adoption, however, and thus this thesis is essentially hypothetical; its defense requires further study and more arguments.

When I was finishing a book about private lives in postwar Krakow in 2005, I had the sense that I had only touched on some fields of research that required more in-depth analysis, on a nationwide scale, in a broader comparative context, and finally, taking into account some motifs that were consistently omitted by diarists and interviewees.[5] This book about social taboos is thus a natural consequence of questions that have haunted me for years, concerning the possible sources of studies into private lives, their reliability, their distance from the investigated phenomena, and the links between contemporary discourses and the assessment of the past. Conclusions from this research do not essentially contradict my theses of ten years ago, which mainly proved the stability of private life, including the family. I have tried consistently to follow contemporary socio-cultural studies on the countries of people's democracy and the USSR, with the aim of overcoming divisions between the state and the political, and

5 I voiced my doubts in: "Historia życia prywatnego z perspektywy źródeł publicznych," in: *Rodzina – prywatność – intymność. Dzieje rodziny polskiej w kontekście europejskim*, eds. Anna Żarnowska, Adam Walaszek, Dobrochna Kałwa, Warsaw 2005, pp. 173–181.

what belongs to the culture of everyday life. I have been guided by the words of the editors of *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, Kathrin Pence and Paul Betts. They wrote of the need to bridge average experience and politics so that, on the one hand, the individual's agency is accentuated, and on the other hand, we see the complexity and dynamics of relations between the everyday lives of people and the state.[6] However, we must bear in mind that, in communist Poland, a highly important additional "player" is religion and the Catholic Church, factors that both affect the subjective decisions of individuals and construct the frame of public discourse in postwar Poland.

6 Paul Betts, Katherin Pence, "Introduction," in: *Socialist Modern. East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, eds. Katherin Pence, Paul Betts, Ann Arbor 2007, p. 6.