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Culture in the service of politics. The German question and relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic

The politics of memory in the Polish People's Republic was from the outset characterized by concern about international recognition of the border on the Oder and the Neisse. The politics of memory in the Polish People's Republic was from the outset characterized by concern about international recognition of the border on the Oder and the Neisse. It was not until 1970 that this problem disappeared, as a result of the policy of *détente* pursued by Willy Brandt's government. The most important propaganda activities of the Polish People's Republic in the 1960s undoubtedly revolved around the issue of the border. Their traces may be found in editorial policy and generally in the intellectual climate of those years: it is with reluctance that Poles recall the era of Gomułka, which was characterized by insularity and doctrinarism. Unfortunately, in the field of cultural life for obvious reasons there were no historical treatises or media studies which attempted to make reference to the main trends in the European thought of that time, which dealt with fascism and its traditions, or which developed areas of media theory and culture characterized by reflections on the essence of power. It was in the 1960s that such intellectuals as Derrida, Foucault, Bourdieu, Deleuze, Guattari or Giddens pursued their activities and gained popularity in Europe. The Polish People's Republic, however, saw a proliferation of papers on the imperialist conditionings of fascism.

The historical discourse in the Polish People's Republic was determined by the politics of memory. Attempts were made to account for this problem on the

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European level, often through spontaneous editorial activities which seemed to have entered into relations with the German *Ideologiekritik* of the sixties. *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* by George L. Mosse was translated and published.¹ This French historian addressed the concept of *Volk* in German literature and culture, trying to diagnose fascism by means of notions close to “criticism of ideology”.

The spiritual foundations of the nation include race and a metaphysical impulse. The neo-Romantic spirit-driven attitude is possible only in individuals deeply rooted in the nation [*Volk*]. This rootedness is perceived through the category of a privilege given by the fate. A true community consists of those who live united by the spirit, here Mosse quotes Eugen Diederichs, a well-known publisher and editor of the Weimar Republic.² Diederichs uses the notion of mystical powers which unite the nation, representing a kind of fanatic idealism.³

In the Polish People’s Republic this leads to criticism of the fundamental notions of the European intellectual tradition and all this takes place, ironically, in the spirit of characteristic mystical and fanatic, to cite Mosse, neo-Romantic presentation of the course of history in the Marxist utopia. The birth of fascism is explained through the idea of imperialist expansion and the doctrine of the revolution. Fundamental studies are written on the occupation of Poland by Nazi Germany: *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*⁴ by Czesław Madajczyk published by the Commission for the Prosecution of Hitler’s Crimes in Poland and the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites, the encyclopedia guide *Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945*⁵, or *Przewodnik po upamiętnionych miejscach walk i męczeństwa lat wojny 1939–1945*⁶ published by the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites, as well as *Zbiór dokumentów polskich i niemieckich z okresu okupacji hitlerowskiej Zamojszczyzna – Sonderlaboratorium SS*⁷ edited by the aforementioned Czesław Madajczyk.

1 G.L. Mosse, *Kryzys ideologii niemieckiej. Rodowód intelektualny III Rzeszy*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1972. The book waited its turn in the queue in the publishing house, which is why it was not published until 1972.

2 Ibidem, p. 83.11

3 Por. E. Diederichs, *Politik des Geistes*, Eugen Diederichs Verlag, Jena 1920.

4 Cz. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 2, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1970.

5 *Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945*, ed. Cz. Piłichowski, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1979.

6 *Przewodnik po upamiętnionych miejscach walk i męczeństwa lat wojny 1939–1945*, ed. Cz. Czubryt-Borkowski, 4th ed., Wydawnictwo Sport i Turystyka, Warszawa 1988.

7 *Zbiór dokumentów polskich i niemieckich z okresu okupacji hitlerowskiej Zamojszczyzna – Sonderlaboratorium SS*, ed. Cz. Madajczyk, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1977.

The overriding political principles of the Potsdam Agreement included not allowing any national and socialist activity or propaganda on the territory of Germany, punishing war criminals and removing their associates from public offices as well as enabling the development of democratic ideas. The democratic ideas in question were understood in East and West Germany differently. The criticism of fascism in the Federal Republic of Germany took place through public media discussions, debates on the essence of Germany's political demise, e.g. the aforementioned discussion referred to as *Ideologiekritik*, the activities of Adorno and the Frankfurt School or the movement of 1968. In the German Democratic Republic, in turn, denazification activities consisted in unquestioned accomplishment of directives and guidelines of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. Activities directed against the Nazi as criminals were rather forcible and hard-line and they initially seemed to bring good results yet later there was no room for public theoretical discussion, which is seen as ostensible from the perspective of today. Till 1965 as many as 16, 572 people were tracked and sentenced (118 criminals were sentenced to death and 83, 952 of the accused were acquitted).⁸ Moreover, the German Democratic Republic adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and inscribed in its constitution that these crimes are not subject to statutes of limitation. The interest in Nazi crimes among vast masses of the society of the Federal Republic of Germany is illustrated by the example of the camp in Dachau, which was visited by a relatively large number of tourists in the sixties but only 60% of them were Germans.⁹ (in the German Democratic Republic the exhibition entitled 'Auschwitz Children' was visited by over 100, 000 people in just 2 months.) It was until 1979 that Hitler preserved his honorary citizenship on the area of the Federal Republic of Germany Hitler in 150 localities, whereas Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor, did not have a street of his name until the late 1970s. Eugeniusz Guz appreciates the efforts of the German Democratic Republic in combating fascism, recalling a fact in 1978 when there was a Nazi prank by a few students in one of the Berlin schools. The answer to the incident consisted in re-issuing the Swiss brochure of 1934 which contained letters to families written by first German anti-fascists sentenced to death. It became, as it is described by Guz, the basic material for meetings of all field Free German Youth organizations often held with the participation of veterans of struggles with fascism. The letters had a circulation of one million copies in *the Neues Deutschland*. Guz argues that "It is doubtful whether anti-fascist publications

8 E. Guz, *Łaba dzieli*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1982, p. 9. In the Federal Republic of Germany only 6, 464 criminals were sentenced till the end of 1979, and only 14 of them were sentenced to death. The overwhelming majority of the accused obtained 'a denazification certificate' or the so-called 'Persilschein' In: *ibidem*, pp. 9, 15.

9 *Mausoleum in Dachau* (without author), *Die Zeit* 1979, 6 April. p. 4.

released in the Federal Republic of Germany in the whole post-war period had in total the same circulation as the letters of anti-fascists” in the German Democratic Republic.¹⁰ Some Polish authors were permanently ironic about the fact of anti-fascist cleansing of the German Democratic Republic and doubted the efficiency of such activities. Henryk Piecuch does so in his sensational novel *W smudze śmierci*.¹¹ He writes about the coup against the communist party members meeting in Szklarska Poręba in 1947 which the French intelligence was planning with the help of *Wehrwolf* members in the following way¹²:

The war was conducted by several million Germans. Yes indeed, several million Germans having at their disposal the most terrible weapon invented by the human kind before the atomic bomb. We were very close to having the bomb as well. There is a great deal of uranium here at our feet. There were some properly prepared plants in the Western Sudetes, scientists were working, they were successful. Are you trying to convince me that a group of people centred around Hitler could have terrorize millions? It was like a drug which captured the whole nation.

‘But in the end these millions understood what they were taking part in.’

‘They understood it late. It wasn’t until we began to get our asses kicked. It was then that anti-fascists began to proliferate. Today you’ll find loads of them. Every other elderly man in the German Democratic Republic is an anti-fascist. That’s ridiculous.’¹³ (own translation)

A freeze in the relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany took place after the Berlin wall had been erected on 18 August 1961 and inspections on the border with West Berlin became tighter. In its politics of memory the German Democratic Republic intended to shape, through building socialism, a sense of East German identity as a citizenship in the socialist country of workers and peasants, which was also reflected in the cultural policy. This was also an attempt to go in the direction of some undefined German-German differences visible in the works of many East German authors, such as, for instance, Christy Wolf or Stephan Hermlin. These endeavours were supported by works by theoreticians of literature and culture including Dieter Schlendstedt, Klaus Jarmatz or Klaus Träger. A question remains whether it was possible to preserve this different identity in the face of critical attitude of the majority of major German intellectuals, including those of communist provenance (Wolf

¹⁰ E. Guz, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹¹ An author of sensational novels, including *Portret szpiega*, *Desperat* and *Szpiegowski syndrom*.

¹² Cf. J. Bartosz, *Fanatycy. Werwolf i podziemie zbrojne na Dolnym Śląsku 1945–1948*, Agencja Wydawnicza CB, Warszawa 2012.

¹³ H. Piecuch, *W smudze śmierci*, Studencka Oficyna Wydawnicza ZSP, Warszawa 1989, p. 246.

Biermann). In his book *Łaba dzieli* Eugeniusz Guz notices, citing the newspaper *Welt der Arbeit* (21 December 1978), that the ideological dispute about the identity of the German Democratic Republic does not find understanding in Poland although it is worth acknowledging. As a matter of fact “are there any other ‘new’ people in the German Democratic Republic? Rather not. There are, however, certain differences as compared to the Federal Republic. Both here and there one may see aspirations to welfare, though in the German Democratic Republic human values seem to be more important.”¹⁴ (own translation)

In his book *Za murami Sodomy*¹⁵ Andrzej Szczypiorski undertakes to analyze the mentality of a contemporary German: the main protagonist in his relations with the contemporary world. He may not reconcile with the world and suffers as a result of memories from the past. In the final scene the protagonist of the novel tries to clear his conscience in a conversation with a Security Service officer:

We need silence. There is nothing that burdens this country more than the memory of the past. I’m completely frank. We conducted war. Not always the way it should be. I also took part in this war and also not always the way it should be. Each German of our age has some black mark from those years. What is it that you want? That the whole nation should beat their breasts? This will never happen.¹⁶ (own translation)

It was already in the 1950s that some German literary works were translated in the Polish People’s Republic.¹⁷ The authors from the German Democratic Republic occupy a separate position on this list. The authors of German emigration literature published in the German Democratic Republic were widely read between 1948 and 1956, particularly Willi Bredel, Anna Seghers or Friedrich Wolf but also Lion Feuchtwanger and Arnold Zweig. As many as 34 authors and 54 titles were published in 1951.¹⁸ Typical works of socialist realism absorbed by Polish readers include the cycle *Verwandte und Bekannte. Die Väter, Die Söhne, Die Enkel* by

¹⁴ E. Guz, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁵ A. Szczypiorski, *Za murami Sodomy*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1963.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

¹⁷ Between 1946–1948 only pre-war re-issues were published, mainly literature for children and youth: the Grimm Brothers and Karl May, as well as the novel *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri. It is worth noting the fact of translating E.M. Remarque’s novel *Arc of Triumph* by Wanda Melcer as *Łuk Triumfalny* in 1947.

¹⁸ E. Połczyńska, C. Załubka, *Bibliografia przekładów z literatury niemieckiej na język polski 1800–1990*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Poznań, vol. 3: 1945–1990, p. 9.

Bredel in the translation of Anna Linke¹⁹, the novel *The Seventh Cross*²⁰ from camp literature, *The Revolt of the Fishermen of Santa Barbara*²¹, a collection of short stories by Anna Seghers or a novel by Bruno Apitz *Naked Among Wolves*, which was published in the translation of Jerzy Rawicz in 1960.²² An important role was played by the critics and reviewers of this literature, including Wilhelm Szewczyk, Jan Koprowski, Witold Wirpsza, Egon Naganowski or Marcelli Ranicki, who published over 100 reviews of German-speaking authors in the most popular magazines such as *Twórczość* or *Świat* as well as in *the Trybuna Ludu* between 1951 and 1956. The reception of Brecht's literary output was extremely characteristic of this period in Poland. His *Threepenny novel*²³ was translated by Marcelli Tarnowski in 1949 and the play *The Good Person of Szechwan*²⁴ by Włodzimierz Lewik in 1956. Considered an author of the European avant-garde, Brecht became an object of attacks and accusations of formalism in the German Democratic Republic. His play *Mother Courage and Her Children*²⁵ staged in 1952 provoked huge discussions. German literature was popularized thanks to Warsaw publishing houses such as PIW and Czytelnik as well as Wydawnictwo Poznańskie and Wydawnictwo Literackie in Krakow. It is also worth recalling the following publishing houses: MON, Iskry, Nasza Księgarnia or Ossolineum as well as Śląsk. 60 titles by 45 writers were translated in 1957.²⁶ Poets, such as Mieczysław Jastrun, Julian Przyboś or Stanisław Jerzy Lec played an important role in translating lyrical poetry from the German Democratic Republic. As it may be presumed, in the face of the deficiency of the working class culture and demand for the working class literature in the fifties, the Polish People's Republic tried to offer the Polish reader the literature of the German Democratic Republic in its whole. This literature was sponsored by the state, authors were instructed and educated in special writing schools, and there were attempts to transfer this model to Poland yet they failed. After the formation of the German Democratic Republic there was a lot of heated discussion on political, cultural and literary subjects in two magazines, *Kuźnica* and *Odra*. Erwin Axer, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz and Leon Kruczkowski went to

¹⁹ W. Bredel, *Krewni i znajomi. Ojcowie, Synowie, Wnuki*, PIW, Warszawa 1950 (vol. 1), 1951 (vol. 2), 1955 (vol. 3).

²⁰ A. Seghers, *Siódmy krzyż*, transl. M. Wołczacka, J. Marecka, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1950.

²¹ A. Seghers, *Bunt rybaków i inne opowiadania*, transl. Z. Petersowa, A. Sowiński et al., Czytelnik, Warszawa 1953.

²² B. Apitz, *Nadzy wśród wilków*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1960.

²³ B. Brecht, *Powieść za trzy grosze*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1949.

²⁴ B. Brecht, *Dobry człowiek z Szechuanu*, PIW, Warszawa 1956.

²⁵ The play was translated into Polish in the 1960s. B. Brecht, *Matka Courage i jej dzieci. Kronika wojny trzydziestoletniej*, transl. S.J. Lec, PIW, Warszawa 1967.

²⁶ E. Połczyńska, C. Załubska, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

the fourth Cultural Association Congress to Berlin and the writer Friedrich Wolf became the first ambassador of the German Democratic Republic in Poland. The remaining East German authors published in the 1950s include Eduard Claudius *Menschen an unserer Seite*, Louis Fürnberg *Die Begegnung in Weimar*, Stephan Hermlin *Die Erste Reihe* or Hans Marchwitza with his novel *Die Kumiaks*. Works by Christe Wolf, Johannes Bobrowski, Hermann Kant and Günter Kunert were translated into Polish in the sixties.²⁷ Publishing *Der Aufenthalt*, a novel by Hermann Kant, in 1983²⁸, sparked a discussion in the Polish People's Republic on the topic of the attitude of Poles to German people after World War II, and both the form and the content of the work were criticized. Similar discussion was triggered by the publication of *Patterns of Childhood*, a novel by Christy Wolf.²⁹ Not only the classics were rendered into Polish. The translation of *The Hunt For The Scarface*³⁰ by Julius Mader, the East Berlin author, was published in 1966. In his sensational book Mader describes the escape of Otto Skorzeny, the last leader of the SS intelligent service, from an internment camp in Darmstadt, suggesting that intelligent services helped the Obersturmbannführer to escape, allegedly using the economic, intelligence and smuggling routes to America and Western Europe organized still by Himmler. The book once again supports the thesis advanced in the Polish People's Republic from the 1950s about "imperialist conditionings", or interests of the German heavy industry represented by the fascists. As Julius Mader writes, Adolf Eichmann, the murderer of Jews, regularly received remuneration from the Argentinian Mercedes-Benz factory, a branch of the Flick conglomerate, until he was arrested, whereas Josef Mengele, an Auschwitz doctor, was supported financially by the IG Farben conglomerate.³¹ A similar thing happens to Skorzeny, who flees to Austria after his escape. The inhabitants of Vienna, as Mader writes, read in *the Neuer Kurier* one day that:

Austria's largest nationalized company, the United Austrian Iron and Steelworks (VÖEST), has been employing for years now, as we now find out, Otto Skorzeny, a former prominent SS officer and rescuer of Mussolini, as an ingenious representative of the Austrian steel industry for Spain and South America. Interestingly, this has been kept in secret up till now. The Madrid-based Steinbach company was the official VÖEST representative, but it turned out that Skorzeny is the sole owner of the Steinbach company. It seems that after the war Skorzeny found influential protectors

27 Ibidem.

28 H. Kant, *Pobył*, transl. S. Błaut, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1983.

29 Ch. Wolf, *Wzorce dzieciństwa*, transl. S. Błaut, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1981.

30 J. Mader, *Śladami człowieka z blizną*, transl. W. Piwowarczyk, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 1966.

31 Ibidem, p. 152.

abroad but is also looks as if he had them also in Austria. When Skorzeny set up the Steinbach company in Madrid, VÖEst made him its general representative for Spain and South America. This brought Steinbach millions.³² (own translation)

The year 1963 marks the Polish debut of another writer from the German Democratic Republic, Horst Beseler, who gained popularity in the fifties with his volume of short stories *Im Schatten des grossen Jose* and the novel *Im Garten der Königin*, which brought him the Theodor Fontane prize in 1957. It is published in Poland under the title *W ogrodzie królowej* in the translation of Irena Naganowska.³³ The novel is one in an array of books dealing with the Wehrmacht. The topic is discussed in the literature of the ally, the German Democratic Republic, which does not question the existing European borders and is politically correct about the war. The plot of the novel is set in France and the protagonists are Wehrmacht soldiers fighting there. The principles which they believe in are simple at the beginning. Having obtained a gold badge for his wounds received in battle with partisans, heroic Harry Salandt arrives at a conclusion that “Each war is harsh. Some hit, others strike back. That who strikes harder is the winner”³⁴ or “war is not entertainment.”³⁵ (own translation) Harry puts into practice his Hitlerjugend war philosophy, which came down to uncomplicated relations with the world:

Earlier at school or in Hitlerjugend he always believed that it is best to make excuses rather than rebel. He often made excuses and then he was left in peace. His consciousness was trained in such a way that he saw law in authority. Harry was not, in fact, a coward. But things would have to get really far so that he started to defend himself, bursting in an uncontrolled manner.³⁶ (own translation)

Yet, with time, after the death of two brothers of a friend called Eisermann³⁷ and another partisan attack, Harry says: “In those hours even the most stupefied private was paralyzed by fear. A new strong blow was delivered to the sense of superiority of the nation of «masters and commanders». It was delivered by the fist of the legal master of this country. It was invisible, which made it even more terrifying.”³⁸ (own translation)

³² Ibidem, p. 153.

³³ H. Beseler, *W ogrodzie królowej*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1966.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 44.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 107.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 121.

³⁷ An aptronym meaning ‘a man of iron’ (M.O.).

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 200.

The novel ends with an equally simple conclusion formulated by a priest in a conversation with the aforementioned Eisermann: "Murderers must be recognized early enough."³⁹ (own translation)

In October 1959 a book on a similar topic was published in Warsaw. The author is Richard Gross, another writer from the German Democratic Republic,⁴⁰ and the title of the novel is *Die Flucht*.⁴¹ The protagonist named Rett⁴² reflects on soldier life, which sums up the state of mind of many German soldiers who are fighting and dying in the unfair war:

'Was my struggle something wrong?', Rett ponders, 'Why is the same struggle of the opponent, the enemy, not essentially wrong? Why is it murder if a German kills the enemy but it is a praiseworthy deed if a German is murdered? (...) Are heroes these two small soldiers who do not always shoot just because their armies are struggling on the streets of Berlin? How could a German question the news spread by his own government? Even if it was impossible to verify it? Wasn't he supposed to believe when he didn't lack bread or home? Somebody whose stomach is full does not oppose his government! Was there anyone who said this and this when it was necessary, and this is precisely what the danger of war has in store? Somebody who would scream that this war is wrong, murderous, that it is a barbaric attack, a figment of insane imagination?'⁴³ (own translation)

Another military novel by Dieter Noll, a popular East German novelist, entitled *Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt*⁴⁴, was published a few times in the Polish People's Republic. Fritz Erpenbeck is a writer from the German Democratic Republic whose name is known in the circles of theatre theoreticians as he participated in the discussion on Brecht who was accused of formalism. In the early 1950s Fritz Erpenbeck was known in Poland for his ideologizing novel *Gründer*.⁴⁵ With time he abandons political subjects for the benefit of detective literature. In his detective novel *Der Fall Fatima* published in Poland in 1973, the protagonist, lieutenant Becker, belongs to the party and the main accused is an artist, a Bronto, whose

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 346.

⁴⁰ Born in Królewiec in 1921, he emigrates from West to East Germany and devotes his life to writing.

⁴¹ R. Gross, *Ucieczka*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1959.

⁴² An aptronym evoking associations with the word "rat" or "Ratte" in German (M.O.).

⁴³ R. Gross, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁴⁴ D. Noll, *Przygody Wenera Holta*, cz. 1: *Historia pewnej młodości*, MON, Warszawa 1962; D. Noll, *Przygody Wenera Holta*, cz. 2: *Historia pewnego powrotu*, MON, Warszawa 1966; both parts were published together in the same publishing house in 1968.

⁴⁵ F. Erpenbeck, *Spekulanci*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1950.

name evokes associations with Brecht.⁴⁶ Also other valuable books of less known authors from the German Democratic Republic were translated and published, such as *Franziska Linkerhand*, a novel by Brigitte Reimann.⁴⁷

Works devoted to the German Democratic Republic are written in numerous research institutions of the Polish People's Republic during the whole period of its existence. Numerous analyses are conducted by the Polish Institute of International Affairs, the Silesian Scientific Institute, the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Institute for Western Affairs in Poznan. The topic becomes the subject of works of Polish specialists in German literature, such as literary analyses in the book entitled *Profilę Współczesności* by Norbert Honsza, Zbigniew Świątłowski and Bernard Wengerek.⁴⁸ In the 1980s there is an attempt to sum up Polish and German relations in a work entitled *RFN i NRD wobec problemu niemieckiego (1949–1982)*. This is a collection of papers departing from the simple thesis that there is the so-called “German question” in the relations of the Polish People's Republic with other countries. In chapter one entitled *Postawienie problemu* [Presentation of the problem] we may read that:

At the core of the German question, colloquially understood as a threat to European safety, lies historically justified and constantly recurring fear of the Germans. In 1965 General Charles de Gaulle, the President of France, showing the broader context of these fears said, among other things: “(...) since time immemorial German people experience anxiety, and sometimes they fall into a passion because they are not certain themselves what their borders are, they do not have certainty over their unity, their political system and their international, as a result of which their future continues to bother the whole continent, and especially so as it is still in question”.⁴⁹ (own translation)

The German question, as the writers put it: “continues to doom international affairs and makes an impression as if there was some insurmountable discrepancy between German interests and interests of its neighbours.”⁵⁰ (own translation) The volume deals with the origins of shaping the German state during the

⁴⁶ F. Erpenbeck, *Sprawa Fatimy*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1973.

⁴⁷ B. Reimann, *Franciszka Linkerhand*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1978. Brigitte Reiman is the laureatte of the East German Heinrich Manna prize. The novel was published after the author's death in 1973.

⁴⁸ N. Honsza, Z. Świątłowski, B. Wengerek, *Profilę współczesności. Literatura NRD*, Wydawnictwo Śląsk, Katowice 1979.

⁴⁹ *RFN i NRD wobec problemu niemieckiego (1949–1982)*, ed. G. Bożek, Śląski Instytut Naukowy, Katowice 1987, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

period of partitions when “a hegemonistic model based on violence or a threat that violence will be used was imposed initially on Germany’s neighbours in the south and east and then almost the whole continent.”⁵¹ (own translation) The essence of the problem of contemporary Germany is perceived as an issue of international coexistence whose contradiction resides in the discrepancy between being a nation state (*Nationalstaat*) and a nation existing in a certain form of unified state (*Staatsnation*). The editorial board of the volume states in the introduction that:

for the last forty years the Soviet Union, Western powers, NATO and the Warsaw Pact are not in agreement about the revival of Germany as a homogenous, democratic and peace-keeping nation state. The evolution of the aforementioned German question is therefore discussed in the volume “W świetle koncepcji politycznych i praktycznych działań RFN oraz NRD podejmowanych w latach 1949–1982” [in the light of political concepts and practical activities undertaken by the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic between 1949 and 1982]⁵² (own translation)

There is also no agreement concerning the issue of overcoming the contradiction between *Nationalstaat* and *Staatsnation* as well as the possibility of restoring state unity. The authors are aware that the German question represents a subject of rivalry between the Eastern and Western blocs about the future shape of the continent. This also results from the excessive growth in economic potential of both German states and their roles in their political and military blocs. The survey conducted by a magazine called *Capital* in 1975 shows, according to the authors of *RFN and NRD wobec problemu niemieckiego*, that 52% of French people, 48% of Italians, 47% of Swedish people, 46% of the Dutch, 42% of the Greeks, 41% of the Americans were strongly against the peaceful reunification of West and East Germany.⁵³ In the introduction the authors quote the theoretical works by M. Malinowski and J. Wiatr⁵⁴ only to arrive at the following conclusion:

Those interpretators who used well-known fragments of *The Communist Manifesto* on the thesis that workers have no country as an argument for the concept of ‘two

51 Ibidem, p. 8.

52 Ibidem, p. 9

53 Ibidem, p. 18.

54 M. Malinowski, “Kilka uwag na temat ujmowania kwestii internacjonalizmu i patriotyzmu przez Lenina”, [in:] *Współczesny kształt patriotyzmu i internacjonalizmu*, ed. J. Kantyka, Warszawa 1976; J.J. Wiatr, *Naród i państwo. Socjologiczne problemy kwestii narodowej*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1973.

states and nations' should be reminded of the truth that the fact that the proletariat has its state as part of the nation before it manages to win power for itself is not the same as an undocumented thesis that there is nothing like nation as a homogenous whole in a class state. It is the proletariat that is national but not in the bourgeois sense, argues J. Wiatr, commenting the standpoint of Vladimir Lenin who condemned nationalism. It is typical that the authors of the publication confirm the thought that the idea of the nation may be found among proletariat masses: "Patriotism was formed together with the nation in the conditions of division of the society into hostile classes and it never existed in the abstract nation-wide form".⁵⁵ (own translation)

This shows the appreciation of the idea of the national path to communism in the political thought of the Polish People's Republic. The authors stress the research by J. Chlebowczyk *Procesy narodotwórcze we wschodniej Europie środkowej w dobie kapitalizmu*, claiming that transformations in the consciousness bursting the proletariat's hermetic attitude opened the opportunities for vertical, or national, integration. Then the proletarian masses began to understand and accept the nation's historical continuity.⁵⁶ The belief of J. Chałasiński⁵⁷ is also cited about folk dimensions melting into the national culture and their nationalization.⁵⁸ On the basis of the discussion on Marxist dogmas the volume attempts to assess the development perspective of the reunification of the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany and development of the situation in mutual relations between these two countries.⁵⁹

The tone of discussion on the German Democratic Republic in the Polish People's Republic is well reflected in the works included in the publication entitled *PRL-NRD. Sojusz i współpraca*, written to mark 30 years of the Polish People's Republic and 25 years of the German Democratic Republic and published by the Editorial Board under the supervision of Jerzy Sułek and Werner Hänisch.⁶⁰ The

⁵⁵ J.J. Wiatr, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁵⁶ M. Malinowski, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁵⁷ J. Chlebowczyk, *Kultura i naród. Studia i szkice*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1968.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁹ It is worth realizing that the propaganda of the German Democratic Republic did not acknowledge the notion of German nationality and was striving to come up with 'East German nationality' as the aim of national and ideological identity within the communist movement. Cf. "Kształtowanie się zachodnio- i wschodniemieckiej świadomości narodowej", [in:] *RFN i NRD...*, p. 254.

⁶⁰ J. Sułek, W. Hänisch, *PRL - NRD. Sojusz i współpraca*, the Polish Institute of Foreign Affairs, Staatsverlag der DDR, Warszawa 1974, with a preface by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Polish People's Republic Stanisław Trepczyński and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the German Democratic Republic, Herbert Krolkowski.

issue of the existence of the German Democratic Republic is raised in the categories of strengthening the unity and solidarity of socialist countries within the alliance with the Soviet Union and the collaboration of the Polish United Workers' Party with the Socialist Unity Party of Germany as the foundation for shaping mutual relations. The authors of the Polish People's Republic continue reminding in their publications that the Potsdam Agreement forms basis for the relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic. It is also the case with these treaties which the German Democratic Republic signed as an independent state. This is what is said in the publication by Sułek and Hänisch. The settlement of the border issues between the two countries is believed to have been the most important treaty. The agreement on the border on the Oder and the Neisse of 6 July 1950 is of key importance. The Polish People's Republic recognizes the provisional government of the German Democratic Republic in the agreement of 18 October 1949 as a natural consequence of this agreement (previous statement by Otto Grotewohl of 12 October 1949). Consequently, the recognition of the Polish Western border has a considerable impact on the way the relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic were shaped. This is also a reason for maintaining constant international relations with the German Democratic Republic by Władysław Gomułka. In the context of tense relations with the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1960s the German Democratic Republic was a guarantor of stability of Polish borders. We may read in the publication that:

Signing the treaty (of 6 July 1950) was a testimony of social and political transformations in the German Democratic Republic, and an essential turnaround in the foreign policy of the German state located east of the Laba River being the function of these transformations. The preamble to the treaty stressed that cooperation between the Polish nation and the German nation was possible due to a complete defeat of German fascism by the Soviet Union and development of democratic forces in Germany. It pointed to the responsibility of Hitlerism for the tragic experiences of World War II and referred to the treaty alone as a foundation of amicable and good neighbourly relations between the Polish nation and the German nation as well as a prerequisite for stabilization and strengthening of mutual relations "on the basis of the Potsdam Agreement setting borders on the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse."⁶¹ (own translation)

The publication discusses not only the vast economic as well as technical and scientific collaboration with the German Democratic Republic but also cooperation in culture. One guideline in this field is Brezhnev's report at the Congress of the

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 62.

Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1971 on “a cohesive and strong family, in which the people of the world will see the prototype of the future world community of free peoples”⁶². The cultural policy naturally highlights the class character of culture and art and its basis is formed by

the more and more dynamic process of rapprochement in understanding the basic aims and principles as well as the social function of culture and art. (...) The chauvinist ideology of German imperialism led, according to Brezhnev, to ignoring the cultural accomplishments of the Polish nation through continual attempts to negate them or even the Hitlerian policy of genocide. The greatest historical strengths of both countries’ working class include initiation and perseverant continuation of the process of overcoming this overwhelming legacy of the past.⁶³
(own translation)

In addition, it is worth mentioning the journalistic cooperation between the Polish People’s Republic and the German Democratic Republic. Decisions were made with regard to intensifying the cooperation between editorial boards of partner magazines so as to boost the efficiency and propaganda impact of mass press. The GDR Union of Journalists (VDJ) makes an assessment of contact between editorial boards in April 1973. It shows that under the agreement between the Polish Journalists *Association* (SDP) and the GDR Union of Journalists (VDJ) of 28 July 1972, 46 newspapers and magazines from the German Democratic Republic entered into collaboration with 50 titles in the Polish People’s Republic in the early 1970s. East German journalists stressed that “the news from the Polish People’s Republic occupies one of the major places in all mass media in the German Democratic Republic, following news reports from the Soviet Union. The same may be said with regard to information from the German Democratic Republic in Poland.”⁶⁴ There was close collaboration between many institutions from the Polish People’s Republic and the German Democratic Republic at that time. Cooperation was established by party organizations, universities, the Polish Writers’ Union and the Writers’ Union of the German Democratic Republic. The share of East German literature in the mass culture of the Polish People’s Republic was relatively high.

Józef Fiszer’s publication entitled *Niemiecka Republika Demokratyczna 1945–1949* from 1984 includes and copies almost *verbatim* all the dogmas of initiating mutual relations between the Polish People’s Republic and the German Democratic

⁶² L.I. Brezhnev, *Otoczony dokłada CK KPSS XXIV Sjezdu KPSS*, Moskwa 1971, p. 16., as cited in J. Sutek, W. Hänisch, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, pp. 159–160.

⁶⁴ J. Sutek, W. Hänisch, p. 188.

Republic. Also for Fiszer “the destructive role of the German question”⁶⁵ is decisive for the evaluation of the position of Germany in Europe. This involves a necessity of shaping the situation in the post-war world in such a way that Germany will lose the capability to wreak a new war. That is a prerequisite for permanent peace. Christian democratic governments, according to Fiszer, have been putting forward a thesis for many years that Germany will not represent any threat to the peace in Europe if nationalistic desiderata of restoring the fully sovereign Reich within the boundaries of 1937 are fulfilled.⁶⁶ Fiszer stresses that:

The division of Germany into two countries represents now a permanent element of Europe’s political and economic structure, with implications going beyond our continent. Each of them is a sovereign subject of international law and international relations and an important element of the social and political system whose member it is.⁶⁷ (own translation)

One thesis is often regurgitated in the context of giving rise to the German Democratic Republic, saying that three Western powers are responsible for breaking the unity of the German nation and state as a result of abandoning the provisions of the Potsdam Agreement and giving rise to the Federal Republic of Germany.⁶⁸ As Fiszer argues, the rise of the German Democratic Republic was just another element of the progressing revolutionary process on the European continent.⁶⁹ The author fails to see the complexity of the process of social transformations in the German Democratic Republic, writing from the characteristic propaganda perspective represented by the Polish People’s Republic, e.g. about the agricultural reform, or depriving East German peasants of land. This difficult process riddled with crisis situations and personal tragedies was depicted in the literature of the German Democratic Republic e.g. in the novel *Ole Bienkop* by Erwin Strittmatter. Fiszer, in turn, writes:

65 J. Fiszer, *Niemiecka Republika Demokratyczna 1945–1949*, Instytut Krajów Socjalistycznych PAN, Warszawa 1984.

66 Ibidem, p. 5.

67 Ibidem.

68 This is exactly what Fiszer does: “The process of giving rise to the separatist West German state was not stopped by either the Soviet–American compromise on West Berlin reached on 4 May 1949 or the conference of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs convened in Paris as a result of the above in order to discuss the German issues which was held between 23 May and 20 June 1949” (own translation), *op. cit.*, p. 104.

69 Ibidem, p. 8.

Political life revived in the course of preparations for the agricultural reform and its accomplishment in the Soviet occupation zone. The Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) kept growing, the cooperation between these two parties and radical peasant organizations became tighter. (...) The Soviet Military Administration and Red Army soldiers contributed greatly to the efficient accomplishment of the agricultural reform, ensuring safety to parcellation commissions (...).⁷⁰ (own translation)

The rise of the two German states is associated in the Polish People's Republic with the notion of the cold war. It is treated by states of the Eastern Bloc unequivocally as the policy "from the position of strength" by imperialist world powers closely connected with military pacts, political sabotage and economic discrimination aimed at "hampering the revolutionary processes of our epoch." (own translation)⁷¹ In this context the propaganda of the Polish People's Republic uses the term of "the struggle for Germany". Western European countries wished to include the potential of Germany into the western orbit and make it an anti-communist bastion in Europe whereas the Soviet Union was striving, as it is claimed by political scientists in the Polish People's Republic, to regulate the issue of Germany after the war in order to prevent "the revival of German imperialism, ensure safety and people in Europe." (own translation)⁷² The national thought appears in the context of reflection of the German states as stressing the endeavours of communists from the German Democratic Republic to improve the theory of Marxism–Leninism through giving rise to a county without a defined national identity – creating "DDR-Bürgerschaft" or East German citizenship.⁷³ In the context of reflections on the essence of the national ideology with regard to the Federal Republic of Germany, referred to as the German Federal Republic till the treaty of 1970, "revisionism", "nationalism" and "conservatism" are referred to as phenomena which are ideologically hostile. The propaganda of the Polish People's Republic unanimously places them at the other end of the spectrum, creating a division into WE and THEY. Anna Wolff-Powęski's work, *Polityczne i filozoficzne nurty konserwatyzmu w Republice Federalnej Niemiec*,⁷⁴ is devoted to conservatism. According to Wolff-Powęski, conservatism voices the need for

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 68.

⁷¹ R. Frelek, *Historia zimnej wojny*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1971.

⁷² Ibidem, p. 43.

⁷³ Cf. H. Wuttke, *RFN i NRD wobec problemu niemieckiego (1949–1982)*, chapter: *Koncepcja socjalistycznego narodu niemieckiego na tle normalizacji stosunków z RFN w latach 1970–1982*, Śląski Instytut Naukowy, Katowice 1987, pp. 167–218.

⁷⁴ A. Wolff-Powęska, *Polityczne i filozoficzne nurty konserwatyzmu w Republice Federalnej Niemiec*, Instytut Zachodni, Poznań 1984.

and sense of order and social relations based on private ownership of production means, as for the historical perspective it advocates a selective attitude to the past in which it accounts for imminence of certain changes and consequently accepts only the recognized elements of it, it assumes in the social sphere that society is an organic and hierarchical structure in natural development, is it for the strong state of authority and it trusts such institutions as monarchy or church.⁷⁵ The political situation after world War II changed the landscape of German conservatism, the author writes. Fascism and its legacy permanently transformed the nation's mentality and forced conservatism to evolve. It is best manifested in political programmes of Christian democracy which manager to "break through the traditional division into Catholics and Protestants and unite them in one political force."⁷⁶ This gave rise to new "Christian democratic" conservatism which tries to win public opinion with such issues as noise in urban agglomerations, protection of the natural environment, protection of man in the era of scientific and technological revolution or the issue of the German nation, social policy or the dialogue between the East and the West. The focus of this political programme also consists in the problem of spiritual and moral revival of aesthetic and religious forms.⁷⁷ The author tries to unambiguously diagnose the attitude of conservatism in Germany:

The situation of post-war Germany only created seemingly unfavourable climate for the restoration of conservative ideology and policy. Hostile and critical attitudes towards nazism were commonly considered synonymous with the option for democracy. The directions of Christian and democratic thought paved their way the label of declared distance towards fascism. Supported by conservative circles they acted as the ideological back-up of anti-communism.⁷⁸

The book, written after signing the treaty on the normalization of relations and accepting the borders on the Oder and the Neisse by the government of Willy Brandt, highlights the anxiety which appeared in Germany at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. "Fears arose with regard to the durability of the economic and social system"⁷⁹ (own translation). It seems that the propaganda of the Polish People's

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

⁷⁷ As the author writes, *Neues Abendland*, a conservative German magazine comes into being already in 1946. The first issue includes declarations concerning the reconstruction of conservatism in Germany to protect the endangered unity of Christian culture in Germany. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 18.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

Republic deliberately stressed fears of politicians from the Federal Republic of Germany concerning democratization of life as a threat of revolution and anarchy. The author quotes Ludwig Erhard, who is in favour of law and order in the face of the anxieties:

Anyone who really wants to protect democracy and strengthen it from the inside should come up with something better than democratization as a means of recovery. (...) Anyone who wants to oppose the developing collectivist forms of life must oppose the state intervening into private life and reject the centrally planned policy.⁸⁰ (own translation)

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⁸⁰ L.E. Erhard, "Demokratie heißt Freiheit, Recht und Ordnung", [in:] *Grenzen der Demokratie? Probleme und Konsequenzen der Demokratisierung von Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, eds. von L. Erhard, K. Bruess, B. Hagemeyer, Econ-Verlag, Düsseldorf–Wien 1973, pp. 24–25, as cited in A. Wolf-Powęska, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

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Marek Ostrowski

Kultura w służbie polityki. Problem niemiecki a relacje NRD – PRL

Streszczenie

Z przyczyn polityczno-strategicznych jednym z głównych partnerów PRL, wobec którego jest w stanie realizować wytyczne swej polityki w wymiarze kulturowym jest NRD. Następuje intensywne wymiana kulturalna między tymi krajami. Na podstawie strategii wydawnictw PRL publikujących niemal każdy utwór literacki napisany przez pisarzy NRD można by sądzić, że kultury obu krajów rozwijają się równolegle. Jest to jednak oczywisty wytwór propagandowy.

Słowa kluczowe: Polityka kulturalna, stosunki NRD – PRL, propaganda, literatura.

Culture in the service of politics The German question and relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic

Summary

The politics of memory and culture of the Polish People's Republic alludes to Ideologiekritik in its idiosyncratic way characterized by Marxist utopianism. In reality, this leads to reversing this theory. The causes of fascism are seen in "German imperialism". For political and strategic reasons the German Democratic Republic becomes one of the main partners of the Polish People's Republic, with regard to which it is capable of accomplishing the guidelines of its policy in the cultural dimension. This is accompanied by an intensive cultural exchange between the two countries. In the language of official politics manifested, for instance, in the strategy of publishing houses of the Polish People's Republic the culture of the two countries develop in a parallel fashion, which is an obvious product of the propaganda.

Keywords: Cultural policy, GDR – Polish People Republic relations, propaganda, literature studies.

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