

Marzena Woźniak-Łabieniec\*

**Ritual as reflected by censorship**  
**The Control Bureau as the custodian of the cultural image**  
**of the authorities in the early days of the People's**  
**Republic of Poland**

The ritualisation of life in communist states was mainly used for maintaining the influence of the authorities to ensure the undisturbed operation of the totalitarian system. The rituals resembled religious rites, thus diminishing the important role of religion. The similarity was particularly significant as it naturally removed any opportunity to question or dispute the system since, first of all, religion should be accepted “as a God-given truth”, and secondly, it placed the persons in the centre of the cult above ordinary mortals, and you do not question the highest authority. When referring to the theory of ritual formulated by J. Cazaneuve<sup>1</sup>, Michał Głowiński emphasised that it is a symbolic activity closely following its own principles. Repetition is the essence of a ritual. In political reality, rituals were created through the apologia of the people's rule (the cult of the leader), the organisation of state holidays (functioning as alternatives to Church holidays) with, substituting sermons, speeches by state officials, ceremonies in honour of important people or events, community projects, and propaganda initiatives. In this study, I discuss the aspect of ritual which refers to the cult of the broadly defined authorities: starting from the head of the Soviet state, through the cult of the leaders of the People's Republic of Poland, dignitaries and state officials of all rank, to police and army enforcement bodies. A fixed repetitive principle, which characterised the propaganda policy of the authorities, was the prevention of any criticism directed towards any and all its bodies in order to amalgamate and strengthen its position.

A special role in defending the thus understood ritual fell to the Chief Control Bureau for Press, Publications and Performances (GUKPPiW), which was the authorities' tool for efficiently eliminating all forms of criticism, and ensuring the

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\* Marzena Woźniak-Łabieniec (Prof. of the University of Lodz, e-mail: marzenaw@uni.lodz.pl; Chair of 20th and 21st Century Polish Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Lodz; 90-236 Łódź, ul. Pomorska 171/173).

<sup>1</sup> J. Cazaneuve, *Sociologie du rite (Tabou, magie, sacré)*, Paris 1971, cited after: M. Głowiński, *Rytuał i demagogia*, Warsaw 1992, p. 106.

maintenance of its (self-perceived) image. The goal of this article is to present texts rejected or “corrected” by censors which sometimes ironically or humorously presented the ritualisation of rule in the People’s Republic. The examples presented below came from the GUKPPiW archives, mainly censor “intervention summaries”<sup>2</sup> in selected literary and cultural journals, mostly from the late-1940s and 50s when it was considered paramount to maintain the proper image of the socialist state through maintaining severity towards the secular “sacred realm”. The presented materials are not organised chronologically, but rather synchronically, which was a result of the conviction that, regardless of the differences in state policy in the late-1940s and the early 1950s, the basic assumptions and the direction of propaganda initiatives of the new system were the same as in the old. Two works devoted to the issue of the ritual offer an important point of reference: a study by Michał Głowiński who analyses the conditions and the rules of the functioning of totalitarian art in Socialist realist Poland<sup>3</sup>, and one by Piotr Osęka who approaches the Stalinist period from the point of view of an historian.<sup>4</sup>

### Defending the state’s ritual

Though the cult of Stalin was not always expressed through pompous rites (according to Osęka: in 1944, the Generalissimo’s birthday was celebrated festively while a year later, it received almost no celebrations; the same applied in the following two years<sup>5</sup>), censorship unwaveringly, within the discussed period, ensured the name of the Soviet leader was properly maintained. It was also important that the appropriate image of him reached the wider masses. When in 1949 *Czytelnik* published an anthology entitled *Strofy o Stalinie*, censors carefully verified whether his image was presented properly<sup>6</sup>. The volume, though accepted, did not gain complete approval. Surviving GUKPPiW documents include a report on the activities of state-owned and community publishing houses as of December 1949; the notes on the publication read:

*Strofy o Stalinie*. Collective work, p. 48 “Poems by Polish poets devoted to Stalin in celebration of the 70th anniversary of his birth. Ideologically positive – formally at a high literary level. Some may be unintelligible for a regular reader due to their complex symbolism”<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> In my study, I used materials held at the Archives of New Records (AAN) in Warsaw and in the State Archive in Poznań (APP).

<sup>3</sup> M. Głowiński, *Rytuał i demagogia. Trzydzieście szkiców o sztuce zdegradowanej*, Warsaw 1992.

<sup>4</sup> P. Osęka, *Rytuały stalinizmu. Oficjalne święta i uroczystości rocznicowe w Polsce 1944–1956*, Warsaw 2007.

<sup>5</sup> P. Osęka, *Rytuały stalinizmu...*, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> “Though,” wrote Głowiński, “in propaganda initiatives, poetry did not play the main role, «it was ritually necessary, as if it elevated the propaganda practices,» even more successfully if a poem was written by a well-known poet people liked.” (M. Głowiński, p. 109).

<sup>7</sup> *Sprawozdanie z działalności wydawnictw państwowych i społecznych za okres 1 XII–31 XII 1949* [APP, ref. no. 14, l. 56].

Censors found the excessive poetic complexity of the poems to be a flaw of the anthology. A poem had to be simple and intelligible, just as the text of a prayer is. The political demand for such a collective work indicated a gradual radicalisation of culture leaning towards Socialist realism, which subordinated poetry to the “communist liturgical calendar,” which included both fixed and moveable feasts. It was that calendar that defined the method according to which they operated and it specified their form.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, as Osęka wrote:

The rituals surrounding the cult of Stalin were an example and a portent of a trend in Socialist realist rites which in the following years dominated public life and which treated state holidays not as a tool for captivating the masses, but as an instrument of subjugation or a total subordination of the society to the state. From that perspective, the actual thoughts and feelings of the participants did not matter. What was important was for them to play the roles they were given.<sup>9</sup>

Any violation of the ritual was treated as questioning the socio-political order, which in turn resulted in actual consequences. An example of that was the fate of *Tygodnik Powszechny* weekly, which for not publishing an extensive obituary of Stalin in 1953 was closed down until the Thaw period.<sup>10</sup> Censors also removed all critical remarks directed at the Generalissimo. From an article by Karol Małcużyński entitled “Najlepsze są” published in *Nowiny Literackie*, the censors removed a fragment recalling the events during the defence of Warsaw:

When the Red Army was crossing the Polish-Soviet border, when in the besieged Warsaw people shared the news that there was Stalin hand in hand with Rydz Śmigły marching with relief for the Polish capital, when later the rumours gave way to dejection and vehement accusations towards the USSR, a Soviet man sat with his wife by the radio and cried with true non-propaganda tears over the last speech by president Starzyński.<sup>11</sup>

The message for the receiver had to be simple. The leader of the Soviet Union is a friend of Poland, so one cannot remind the public opinion of any Soviet-German alliances or strategic politically motivated manoeuvres during the final stage of the war.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Głowiński, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> P. Osęka, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> *Tygodnik Powszechny*, being a Catholic magazine presenting a rather independent attitude, was subjected to particular supervision of the Control Bureau. During briefings, censors raised the issue of the need to include extensive interventions in the Krakow-based magazine and other ambitious periodicals addressed to the intelligentsia. (Cf. *Stenogram z III odprawy krajowej kierowników Woj Urz KPPiW w dn. 12–14.01.1946* [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 421/vol. 2, l. 76].

<sup>11</sup> *Sprawozdanie z cenzury przewencyjnej Nowin Literackich nr 14 z dnia 14.06. 47*, censor Stawczyk [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 15 (1/32), l. 236]. Eventually upon an intervention, the article was included in issue 14 dated 22.06.1947 (the censor probably stated the periodical’s issue incorrectly).

<sup>12</sup> It will suffice to digress that not only was any form of criticism towards the Soviet authorities forbidden. It was also forbidden to praise the Tsar’s rule. That is why in the April issue of

Stalin's protective cloak also covered other Soviet leaders, a fact that is confirmed in a report on preventive censorship of *Film* magazine. From its special issue (1959, issue 41) presenting Khrushchev's Hollywood visit, censors removed (during preventative control) from the article entitled *Premier Chruszczow w Hollywoodzie* the following sentence:

From a specially built jetty Mr and Mrs Khrushchev observed the shooting of several scenes to the film *Can-Can* based on Cole Porter's operetta (photo).<sup>13</sup>

The censor decided to remove, as well as that sentence, a photograph of the First Secretary and his wife as they sat in the audience watching girls lifting their airy dresses as they danced. Even though the article was not critical towards the Soviet dignitary, censors feared that such a view of the chief of the allied government would affect his image, and show his weakness (the monumental figure indulging in common entertainment), even more so since the entertainment was produced by the imperialist industry.

This watchfulness when it came to the status and the proper image of the authorities was one of the major objectives of the Control Bureau. A review of censorship interventions throughout the years offers insight into the formation, through removing or approving specific texts, of the images of specific decision-makers within various periods. Thus, censorship was a tool of elevation, yet it could also, through approving critical texts, become a tool of persecution according to the political situation, as happened in the late-1940s in the case of Mikołajczyk<sup>14</sup>, and PSL and PPS activists. Another intervention offered a good example of such a policy: a censor removed from *Odrodzenie* this description of ambassador Kot's<sup>15</sup> dilemma:

Having returned to Rome after a visit at the central office, ambassador Kot departed for a vacation in Sicily.

There, the guide showed him two rocky shores.

"This one here is the famous Scylla! And that one – the less famous Charybdis!"

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*Dziś i Jutro* an entire poem by Gałczyński entitled *Zegarek* was removed as the characters listened, engulfed in emotions and sentiment, to *God Save the Tsar!* The poem was perverse and witty but the censors did not utilise their sense of humour in its case. [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 2, l. 16].

<sup>13</sup> Instruction and Documentation Team ZI-057, Category "A". Intervention report in magazines: *Dialog, Ekran, Film, Wiadomości Filmowe* Warsaw 1959 (AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 1813).

<sup>14</sup> In *Stenogram z odprawy Naczelników Wojewódzkich Urzędów Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk w Warszawie w dniach 4 i 5 czerwca 1948* (typescript); [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 421, vol. III; l. 7], there appeared a suggestion to place more attention on the "Catholic stretch," after the censors had lost very valuable clients; Mikołajczyk's PSL to which it has grown accustomed in the previous years."

<sup>15</sup> Stanisław Kot was a Polish activist of the peasant movement, a politician, and a historian. During the interwar period, he was a professor of the Jagiellonian University and a lecturer at College de France. In 1945–1947, he was appointed by Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej (Provisional Government of National Unity) ambassador in Rome. In 1947, he re-emigrated. After 1955 he presided over the Supreme Council of the Polish People's Party Abroad.

“I understand,” said the ambassador, “back in Poland, I was in a similar situation...”

“So what are the names of your Scylla and Charybdis?” asked the intrigued guide.

“Scylla is Mikołajczyk, Charybdis: Gomułka!”<sup>16</sup>

The anecdote was supposed to be included in the 1948 July issue, i.e. after the fraudulent election to the Legislative Sejm the previous year, which in crude ways marginalised Mikołajczyk’s PSL, and also after the party’s chairman had fled abroad evading possible arrest. The censors did not want to *remind* society of those circumstances which put the state authorities in an ambiguous light, even more so since Gomułka himself together with Bierut and Soviet dignitaries participated in a meeting where they discussed the details of how to fix the results of the people’s referendum.<sup>17</sup> Besides, Gomułka himself fell in 1948 into disgrace having been accused of “rightist and nationalist inclinations.” Studies of censorship documents indicate that the task of safeguarding the status of the authorities was not only limited to persons in high state positions. It was also forbidden to disturb the images of other, lesser representatives. Some of the more interesting interventions were those which applied to people governing culture, literature in particular (Leon Kruczkowski, Stefan Żółkiewski, Jerzy Borejsza). The following text, originally included in *Szpilki*, was crossed out with the censor’s red pencil in its entirety:

Apparently Leon Kruczkowski, Deputy Minister of Culture and Art, intends to step down from his position and devote himself to work as the chairman of the board of the *Książka* publishing co-op. Which is why some are saying that it is the best “book” by Kruczkowski.<sup>18</sup>

Stefan Żółkiewski featured in an anecdote submitted to *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a disobedient magazine which disputed Marxism, and was often attacked by *Kuźnica* or *Dziś i Jutro* magazines, which were supported by the party. Among all the censor interventions there was one which applied to a note on new professor nominations. The text was removed in its entirety:

#### NEW PROFESSORS

Apparently, the Ministry of Education is soon to nominate new professors of the University of Warsaw. Mrs Żanna Kormanowa is to be nominated professor of pedagogy, and Mr Stefan Żółkiewski, editor-in-chief of *Kuźnica*, professor of contemporary literature.

<sup>16</sup> *Sprawozdanie z cenzury przewencyjnej tygodnika „Odrodzenie” nr 29 z 20 VII 1948*; censors: Karpowska/Karpowski [AAN, GUKPPIW, ref. no. 15 [D-O] (1/32), l. 256.

<sup>17</sup> It referred to the referendum (3 x yes), regarding, e.g. the agricultural reform, held a year before the Sejm election. To protect the forged voting, the Political Office of PPR established in March 1946 the State Security Commission, which was tasked with coordinating the operations of police and army units. The goal was to eliminate the pro-independence underground and physically eliminate various politicians of PSL.

<sup>18</sup> *Sprawozdanie z cenzury przewencyjnej tygodnika „Szpilki” nr 7 z dn 16 II 48*; censor Landsberg [AAN, GUKPPIW, ref. no. 29 [S], l. 51].

In relation to the honourable distinction of the leading journalist of *Kuźnica*, a meeting in the office of the magazine was organised, during which Żółkiewski was congratulated by his colleagues.

“I’m not sure how it’s going to be,” the freshly nominated professor said with embarrassment. “I do not possess a Ph.D. or a habilitation.”

“So what?” said Jastrun. “Those are reactionary relics. Also, if you want to write a doctoral dissertation, I’ve got a topic for you right here: From Legion Młodych to Związek Walki Młodych. Recently, I wrote on Mickiewicz’s legion myself and it turned out that it is not so difficult. Fear not, you’ll do well. The topic of the dissertation is highly sociological.”<sup>19</sup>

The censor intervened not only “in defence” of the new regime professors, but also of less significance, from the point of view of the activities of the authorities, figures yet important for propaganda reasons: true udarniks. One of the most important elements of the ritual was paying tribute to the udarniks, who were model followers of the new liturgy. Their existence was supposed to prove the sense of the system’s assumptions. The extolled hero had a collective (following the model) biography, which had to be free of any cracks. Therefore, when Stefan Kisielewski tried to question in *Tygodnik Powszechny* the point in reaching 300% of the work norm, censors removed the text:

[...] The entire press is writing in admiration about Pstrowski; so am I, sure – 300% of the norm is quite something – well, well. But sometimes I think to myself that we should also view the flip side. What if everyone followed Pstrowski’s example? Utterly exhausted, they would not have the time or strength to read books, listen to music or view paintings. What would happen then with culture? Coal is nice, but the man extracting it even better. Why in the age of democracy and humanism should we not view the matter from this side too?<sup>20</sup>

### **Police and the army – ritualised tools of the authorities**

The Army of the People’s Republic, just like Milicja Obywatelska (the police), was a tool of the authorities. Therefore, censors safeguarded its proper image. Presenting them in a critical light or ridiculing them was considered an indirect attack on the entire system and the authorities. Therefore, when “Notatnik z podróży po górach” by E. Dobrzańska and R. Wojna published in *Nowiny Literackie* included

<sup>19</sup> *Sprawozdanie z cenzury przewencyjnej „Tygodnika Warszawskiego” nr 27 z 4 VII 1948 r.* [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 29 [S], l. 112.

<sup>20</sup> *Stenogram z odprawy Naczelników Wojewódzkich Urzędów Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk w Warszawie w dniach 4 i 5 czerwca 1948* (typescript); [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 421, vol. III; l. 14]. During a briefing, deputy director Wojtyga used that intervention as an example confirming that “Catholic ideas lead to proving that the so-called «Christian democracy» remains in opposition to people’s democracies – a humanist democracy.”



a humorous account of the events associated with crossing the border, the censor removed a fragment describing their encounter with a border patrolman:

The soldier got tangled up in questions and answers. He knew, in fact, that the law supported him all the way, but that did not seem much of a consolation for him. How right was Gotzy when he cried: "Give me power, and I shall turn all books to Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the official rules and regulations!"<sup>21</sup>

End this mockery...

Censorship defended the positive image of the guardians of order and considered any criticism of the authorities' incompetence as particularly detrimental. Upon removing in another publication the following fragment: "MO officers are not always expert writers or readers, and they sometimes have trouble reading documents they are given", the censor made a note that the remark was a "Vicious slander of MO."<sup>22</sup>

A different situation occurred in the case of a report by Ryszard Wojna, one of the authors of *Notatnik*. In that case, it was, for the censors, unacceptable to shatter the protagonist vs. antagonist model of presentation, indicating the competences and the "human face" of the enemy, and turning them in some sections of the text into an equal partner for the representative of the new authorities. It did not comply with the so-called negative dimension of ritual according to which it is necessary to limit oneself to "strictly regulated insults directed towards the enemy."<sup>23</sup> *Ludzie czarnego lasu* was a report-style piece regarding the emergence of partisans during the amnesty of 1947. It presented the Home Army community according to the system's expectations. That was visible both in the construction of the presented world, and the narrator's comments. A clear division into good characters, bad characters, and naive characters who were tricked or used by the bad characters was further amplified by the use of value-laden vocabulary (partisan formations were referred to as "gangs", their operations as "raids" and "plunderings"). The leaders ("Ogień") were conniving, sometimes criminals, using simple peasants who feared them; they used violence or blackmail during recruitment. The structure of the report was aimed at making the message plausible: the reporter initially did not make comments, "the truth" about the people from the forest was to be communicated through their own words, so he gave the characters voice. He placed them in an inn to, according to the *in vino Veritas* principle, amplify the reliability of the account:

As they drank vodka, resentment towards the London émigrés grew. "The money they had for us those sons of bitches spent on whores in London, and made us fight in utter misery, sometimes sending liaison officers to find out what's going on here."

<sup>21</sup> *Sprawozdanie z cenzury przewencyjnej Nowin Literackich nr 49 z dnia 05.12.48*, censor Fajer/Landsberg [AAN, GUKPPiW; ref. no. 29 [N-O], l. 73].

<sup>22</sup> [AAN, GUKPPiW; ref. no. 1, l. 110].

<sup>23</sup> M. Głowiński, p. 106.

The quote emphatically indicated the coming Socialist realism doctrine, though it was officially introduced only a dozen or so months later (the article was published in 1947). What was interesting in the report is the skill in reaching for the reader's emotions (a young boy blackmailed by "Ogień" cried: he did not want to fight, he wanted to help his solitary mother on the farm; partisan fights bore fruit in the form of "burnt down huts", "orphans and widows", "blood", and "human tragedy"). What was significant is that the author presented his interviewees from the forest as simple peasants who did not understand what they were fighting for. They became partisans somewhat by accident ("[...] others fled to the forest, so he also went with them [...]"), somewhat through their indolence (peasant Mateja did not want to work on the farm ([...] "Let the hag worry" [...])). Then, after revealing themselves, they wanted to lead normal lives, work, and build the new future. However, that was a slightly different approach to that in strictly Socialist realist works, as there was no mention of work for the country, of the collective perspective. The characters conducted a sort of a profit and loss account only in personal terms. That was what the reporter seemed to lament when in the end he revealed his attitude to one of the forest characters who did not understand the tragic nature of his struggle, only "peered straight at the forest blackened with the thaw, and thought that spring was coming and manure ought to be taken to the meadows."

The author sometimes strived to make the psychological image of the characters more complex or make the reality more objective, but that raised the censor's objections. Censors removed those fragments which stressed that the partisan known as Góral (Highlander), one of the commanders subordinate to Ogień, was highly esteemed by the Nowy Targ community ("Many nodded kindly before him"), and a record of an almost *friendly* talk between him and a captain, a representative of the new rule, to whom Góral reported as a result of the amnesty:

Góral and the captain reconstructed their combat memories. They compared operational directions which both sides received before the actions. They felt closer already. Góral was intelligent. He liked the army. He pointed out to the captain strategic errors of the KBW. The captain wondered to what extent Ogień could have emerged with the whole gang from Kościeliska when the entire village was surrounded by the army. Their conversation was becoming more and more lively. It was free of any animosity. It was filled with curiosity. Mainly curiosity.

(...)

A bit later the captain returned to his flat. Before leaving he put on Ogień's jacket which he had seized from him. Ogień shot his coat right through. The jacket was his reparations.<sup>24</sup>

In the removed fragment, what was unacceptable was not only the friendly conversation between the captain and the enemy presenting the strategic capabilities of Ogień's partisans (which could have elevated the enemy), but also the

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<sup>24</sup> [AAN, GUKPPiW; ref. no. (1/32), l. 228].



suggestion of reparations for a loss – a representative of the new rule should not seek personal gain in the fight for a new Poland.<sup>25</sup>

The presentation of soldiers fighting against Sovietisation after 1945 as the enemies of Poland (“bandits”) or removing them from the collective memory constituted an important part of the communist ritual, which was based on a formulaic perception of reality with clear division into heroes and enemies. Similarly to Wojna’s “report”, a text by Csato, a bright columnist of *Nowiny Literackie*, was also devoted to the amnesty of 1947. However, its focus was different. The text entitled *Ujawniajmy się* (Let’s reveal ourselves), submitted for print under the nom de plume of Ireneusz Fop in the “Z podręcznika dobrych obyczajów” (From a handbook of proper etiquette) column was removed by censors in its entirety<sup>26</sup>. Starting with a reminder of the peace conference in Moscow, the author stated that amnesty commissions were operating, the underground was laying down its weapons, and in the streets there were still people with guns. The following is a characteristic fragment of the removed article (it was completely crossed out with red pencil):

[...] It is obvious that the peace conference cannot be compared to a citizens’ amnesty commission before which the underground lays down all weapons. But maybe Poland’s positive example will radiate and will lead to... revealing new kinds of weapons, and, of course, to laying them down on the conference table. [...]<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> From the “report” censors also removed the term “Bezpieka” (a common denomination of the security office, which suggested a dependency on Soviet official structures) proposing to replace it with the abbreviation UB (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa – security office). Herbst, the chief of the Łódź Voivodship Control Bureau for Press (WUKP), called the term “Bezpieka” one of the “anti-Soviet stingers” ([A stenogram from the 3rd national briefing of chiefs of WUKPPiW held on 12–14.01.1946 [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 421/vol. 2, l. 72].

<sup>26</sup> *Sprawozdanie z cenzury rewolucyjnej tygodnika „Nowiny Literackie” nr 2 z dnia 30 III 47*, censor Panecki / Kowalczyk, censorship ref. no.: B-30253 [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 15 (1/32), l. 226].

<sup>27</sup> The article seemed in its essence close to the PSL press of that time. During a national briefing ([*Stenogram z III odprawy krajowej kierowników WUKPPiW w dn. 12–14.01.1946* [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 421/vol. 2, l. 29] largely devoted to condemning Mikołajczyk’s press, the deputy director of censorship suggested that it held the Soviet Union responsible for breaking off the peace conference in Moscow (l. 29). The same speech also included a suggestion of a somewhat ideological proximity between PSL and PPS. PSL condemned PPR yet did not criticise PPS (“It must be considered why they are doing so. Is it because PSL agrees with PPS, it respects PPS? There is one distinct goal: they wish to isolate PPR, they wish to put a wedge between PPS and PPR. [...]) Their goal – PPR’s isolation, shattering the proletarian front” (l. 22). The censor instructed division chiefs what they should focus on. Such an approach to inter-party relations, considering the PSS *Wiedza* patronage, situated *Nowiny Literackie* in close proximity to the enemy’s camp destroying the “proletarian front.” The censor recommended not only to box the questioned texts, but also to inform the party management about the abuses (l. 31), influencing the “democratic” press to dispute the reactionary forces in PSL (l. 32). Censorship was perceived in that declaration as the custodian of the new order: “For the benefit of democracy, for the benefit of the state, we must be vigilant

It seems, however, that the amnesty act is being misunderstood. [...] Because in Warsaw, Łódź, Krakow, Katowice, and other big Polish cities, we still see probably unrevealed gentlemen (still carrying guns) near tram stops, in front of the offices of industrial bodies, or some state offices. [...]. Shouldn't those gentlemen be reminded that the deadline of the amnesty is nearing and it's time to lay down their weapons? [...]

Is it really necessary for every person that gets on a tram or enters a factory office or a state building to be guarded and threatened by a fellow with a club strapped around his shoulder?

Is a person with a machine gun supposed to extort obedience towards the authorities or gain trust?

Gentlemen – we demand the fulfilment of the extensive amnesty. For us, who are done with the war and guns – most of all.

It was a bold text suggesting the spuriousness of the Moscow peace talks. Moreover, the author ironically compared the armed underground with the armed bodies of the new authorities. The message was clear: you call the underground to lay down their weapons while you are using guns to introduce and maintain the new order! That had to cause the censor's resistance, even more so as the intervening censor Kowalski was present at the 3rd national briefing of the chiefs of voivodship Control Bureaus for Press in January 1946, during which Osóbka-Morawski, Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity, spoke to the censors referring as an act of "questioning our foreign policy" to all "detrimental doubts" and "vicious notes covertly directed against the Soviet Union. They are nothing more than an act of questioning our foreign policy and its foundation: our friendship with the Soviet Union."<sup>28</sup> In that speech Morawski also praised, while condemning the excessive liberalism of the press, one Krakow censor whose inquisitiveness and vigilance prevented the publication of an article written by a "distinguished representative of political life, who participated in the Moscow conference." The context indicates that the article had an anti-Soviet meaning. The censor crossing the "tight framework of the shears" was supposed to be a "political advisor" for authors and editorial boards.<sup>29</sup>

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and severe in monitoring the PSL press. Particularly since PSL is a co-governing party, we have the particular obligation, as the control bureau for press, as a state body, to ensure that the press represents the main strategy of the democratic camp [...]" (l. 32) The censor is to be the editorial board's "advisor". (l. 33).

<sup>28</sup> *Stenogram z III odprawy krajowej kierowników Woj Urz KPPiW w dn. 12–14.01.1946* [AAN, GUKPPiW, ref. no. 421/vol. 2, l. 15].

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 33.

## Holiday ritual – in defence of the 3rd of may

From the very beginning of the new state, a significant role was played by the celebrations of holidays, mainly secular ones (which were to gradually oust religious holidays) and all kinds of anniversaries which were significant from the point of view of the new authorities. The associated ceremonies were planned in minute detail. Osęka wrote that the scenarios of such official celebrations as, e.g. 1st of May, were developed by party and state officials; it is surprising how detailed and how extensive the plans were – they were total in nature. The holiday of the 1st of May (as a secular celebration of workers) was prepared and celebrated in scale and with the utmost care for detail. It was the major holiday of the new state. It was supposed, in a sense, to surpass and replace the pre-WWII celebrations of the 3rd of May. In line with the policy of the central authorities, local authorities undertook actions to oust the anniversary of the passing of the constitution from collective memory.<sup>30</sup> One such action was the removal from the media of all positive references to or statements on the 3rd of May. GUKPPIW archives include an article removed by censors by the already mentioned herein Edward Csato, a journalist of *Nowiny Literackie*, entitled *O trzecim maja* (On the 3rd of May), attempting to defend the sidetracked holiday. The article was a proof of the struggles of the journalists of Iwaszkiewicz's weekly with the new reality as well as the identification of the expectations of the new authorities towards the press. Csato's text was bold. The journalist accused the "celebrants" of our holidays of indifference towards the 3rd of May, which, in fact, was a *patriotic* holiday. Csato stated that aversion towards the holiday "was also caused by (...) an ostentatious seizure of the Third of May by fractions of the society which display reluctance towards leftist movements."<sup>31</sup> It was a bourgeois, middle-class holiday, just like the French Revolution was. "Let us follow the example of the French," the author advised, "who possess a «keen sense of history» meaning:

realism in the assessment of the scale and global issues, realism which our people lack, both those managing propaganda and those who do not like it. The result is that progress in our country seems to consist of deprecating all tradition. However, if some of us can develop an attachment to traditions, they think, to hell with the whole progress.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Osęka wrote: 2 May 1946 was a particularly busy day for the communist security apparatus. It monitored the sentiments even more carefully than normally and strove to prevent on the following day any spontaneous celebrations. Even though propaganda presented the passing of the constitution of the 3rd of May as a victory over the "reactive pursuits of the clergy and aristocracy", the authorities feared the holiday knowing that for society it constituted a symbol of non-communist Poland. (P. Osęka, p. 83).

<sup>31</sup> *Sprawozdanie z cenzury przewencyjnej „Nowin Literackich” nr 7 z dnia 4.05. 47*, censor Kamieniecki [AAN, GUKPPIW, ref. no. 15 [D-O] (1/32), l. 230].

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Csato expected the decision-makers to “understand and consider the feelings their nation has towards certain items and phenomena.” The course of the argument indicated contexts in which the matter of that holiday was debated. It seems significant that the 3rd of May was not only a celebration of the constitution, but also a holiday of the Holy Virgin Mary Queen of Poland celebrated by the Catholic Church. It was established at the request of Polish bishops when Poland regained independence after WWI.<sup>33</sup> In a situation where the state attacked the church, it was politically unacceptable to elevate a holiday which had been established and cherished in the interwar period. In order to emphasise his defensive arguments, Csato had to refer to a figure whose authority no one would dare to question. That was the highest state official:

When we heard president Bierut utter the words of his oath: “So help me God,” no one even thought to ask about the depth of his religiousness; we consider such behaviour as a gesture which is private, not state-sanctioned, in nature. President Bierut made the pledge because a large part of Polish society is religious, Catholic; it is I who is now writing about it, a non-believer, and, though personally I would prefer for the oath to be different, I write about it with utter respect. Respect for the decision of the Polish Nation.

The above fragment was marked on the side with a pink wavy line; the second censor struck it in black ink. The notes on the sheet which included the interventions proved hesitation and uncertainty on the part of control officers regarding the final decision about the text. Csato rebuked the decision-makers: the government should think about the feelings of the nation, it is a mistake to combat traditions, values which are important for the society, that is short-sighted. The aversion of the “current Reform Camp” to the 3rd of May anniversary is based on a superficial assessment of phenomena. If the image of the holiday had been corrupted, it should be uncorrupted, i.e. “introduced in a different framework, combined with a different emotional context, and not bashfully hidden in the shadows.” [underline by the censor in black ink]. Further in the text, in a part marked on the side in pink wavy line, Csato wrote that “out of all the state holidays, the Third of May is clearly the oldest. It is important for us not to be ashamed of our traditions if we do not want our traditions to be ashamed of us.” By referring to the still applicable at that time political traditions of a bourgeois state (liberalism and parliamentarism), he moved for retaining the celebrations of the holiday:

Based on our own and other peoples’ experience we attempt to fulfil the future shape of our political system through a new and mild revolution: economic and social reforms, but also through some economic compromises which have proven necessary, and through constructing political unity in society. And such a programme could be perfectly harmonised with the highest care for maintaining the entire splendour that the democratic spirit of the Great Sejm and the patriotic attachment of many generations of Poles have assigned the Holiday of the Constitution of the Third of May.”

<sup>33</sup> Sanctioned by Pope Benedict XV in 1920, it was officially celebrated in Poland from 1923.

Defending traditions and seeking cultural continuity constituted an approach characteristic for *Nowiny Literackie* in various debates on the new realism from its very first issue. Csato's article was not published, though the censorship documents do not include any final decision regarding its fate. In the published issue it was replaced, according to the applicable press policy at that time, by two articles devoted to the celebrations of the 1st of May.<sup>34</sup>

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### Ritual as reflected by censorship

#### The Control Bureau as the custodian of the cultural image of the authorities in the early days of the People's Republic of Poland

(Summary)

The ritual as a series of actions specified by traditions or a given political system, defined in detail and repeatable, was also fulfilled in the communist system. There it was aimed at introducing and amalgamating the order imposed on Poland by the Soviets after WWII. It could only be achieved by strictly observing the rules of Socialist rites. And that did not only apply to, however important, the celebrations of holidays according to the communist calendar, but also to the master principles which the enforcers of the new order used towards society. The indicated research material, extracted from censorship archives, shows that regardless of the changing media policy in the first decade after WWII, from the very beginning there existed invariable rules which constituted a compass for specific choices: the ban on criticising or disturbing the good name of the authorities, starting with Generalissimo Stalin, through the leaders of the states subordinate to him, higher-ranking officials, police and the army, to udarniks. The Control Bureau for Press, Publications and Performances was one of the most active bodies in the field. In the privacy of their offices, without the publicity so common for the clamorous ceremonies and rallies, censors worked to maintain the Stalinist rituals.

**Key words:** Polish literature after 1945, censorship, newspapers in Polish Peoples Republic, politics and literature

<sup>34</sup> B. Hertz, “Pierwszy maja ongi”; E. Ajnenkiel, “Łódzkie maje (wspomnienia)”, *Nowiny Literackie*, 1947, issue 7, p. 2.