The PUWP's Preferences

in

the Contemporary Polish Novel,

1959-1985.

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis seeks to account for the development of the Party's views of the contemporary novel and its expectations of the form after Socialist Realism (1949-1955). The course of development of Party requirements of the form is traced from 1959, when the Party announced its new operative ideology at the Third Congress, to its last major statement of demands at the Party Writers' Conference of February 1985. One of the salient features of the thesis is the attempt to reconstruct Party thinking on the novel through access to hitherto unknown materials for the period from the Party and Censorship Office archives. This enables the lack of specificity inherent in the Party's formulations after the demise of Socialist Realism to be countered, and a more definite account of the progression of Party thinking to be delineated.

Chapter 1 defines, firstly, the administrative structures within which writers were required to operate - the Writers' Union, Ministry of Culture, the Central Committee's Cultural Department and, finally, the Censorship Office. Secondly, it considers the positive mechanisms devised by the state to encourage novel-writing on favoured topics, and thirdly, the aims of the Party's cultural programme.

Chapter 2 provides a general cultural background of the period, describing the development of the term 'committed literature', which was most frequently used by writers and politicians in their deliberations on the nature and direction literature was to take. This development was influenced by the increasing restrictions which the authorities placed upon writers' freedom of interpretation. These concerned, above all, the problem of alienation in socialist society.

Chapters 3-5 discuss six works in relation to the administrative structures and the major political issues of the period. In Chapter 3, the question of the Party's initial definition of the extent of freedoms is considered in relation to Roman Bratny's *Szczęśliwi, torturowani* (1959) and Jerzy Putrament's *Pasierbowie* (1963). Chapter 4 examines the commissioning of novels on specific themes by the Army - Janusz

Przymanowski's *Wezwany* (1968) - and by the Party itself for the anniversary of the PWP's foundation - Tadeusz Hołuj's *Osoba* (1974). Chapter 5 describes the situation immediately prior to the rise of Solidarity, when limited liberalisation was promoted by the authorities, and then under Martial Law, which introduced greater instrumentality into the Party's thinking about literature. It deals with Zbigniew Safian's *Ulica Świętokrzyska* (1980) and Józef Łoziński's *Sceny myśliwskie z Dolnego Śląska* (1985), the latter of which exemplifies the authorities' misrepresentation of the character and aims of Solidarity.

I conclude that there are distinctive common trends in the construction of these novels. These trends are not, however, identical with the requirements of the Party. 'Committed literature' represented a compromise between the Party's desire for absolute conformity with its stipulations and writers' needs for creative and interpretive freedom.

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In memory of my Dad, John Hindmarsh Bates (1941-1991).

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis, 'The PUWP's Preferences in the Contemporary Polish Novel, 1959-1985', embodies the results of my own special work, that it has been composed by myself and that it does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for a degree in this or another University.

John M Bates, October 1997.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

> We do not wish to confine the concept of contemporaneity to the last few years and we do not say that we oppose historical subjects. But we are most interested in seeing reflected in artistic works the lives of the generations struggling for and building socialism, we wish to see the true image of our country.[1]
>
> Władysław Gomułka

In the Socialist Realist period (1949-1955), the novel, along with the epic drama, became the most important literary form for the Polish United Workers' Party. The Party believed that, of all the genres, these two could give the broadest picture of a society in the process of socialist transformation. The demonstrable popularity of the novel form in particular lent it supremely to the ideo-educational requirements which the Party made in respect to literature.

The most detailed studies hitherto have been in reference to this period. What happened afterwards, if anything, has been largely ignored. Certainly no study has been written on the subject of the Party's literary programme after 1956.[2] It is this question that my research intends to address. Part of the answer undoubtedly lies in the fate of the term 'Socialist Realism'. In 1956, it was explicitly rejected by the majority of writers, and although it continued to be treated seriously by some academics and Party theoreticians, the Party leadership largely ceased to employ the term.

This absence of any single and precise term to describe the kind of literature which the Party wished to see writers produce, presents the

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1 'O aktualnych problemach ideologicznej pracy partii. Referat tow. W. Gomułki na XII plenum, wygłoszony 4 lipca 1963 r'. *Nowe Drogi*, 1963 (8), p. 28.

2 The period is consigned instead to the individual memories of those who lived through it. For them, the general features of the system I describe are common knowledge, but the system itself has yet to receive extensive analysis based on Party documents; it remains instead largely in the realm of lore.

major initial problem. A plethora of definitions emphasising different aspects of the Party's literary preferences came into operation, foremost amongst which were the 'novel about work', 'socialist literature' and 'committed literature'. With the exception, perhaps, of the 'novel about work', these are of necessity vague, corroborating the Party's declarations of its withdrawal from an obligatory programme.

Studies of the period from 1956 onwards tend to focus on the innovations introduced by writers freed from an obligatory single aesthetic. Some attention has been given, however, to the 'political novel' as a potential bearer of the dominant ideology. Stanisław Majchrowksi's impressive study *Między słowem a rzeczywistością* (1988) and Stanisław Gawliński's rather more sketchy overview *Polityczne obowiązki* (1993) have attempted to define the course of development undertaken by the political novel up to 1970 and 1975 respectively. The works they analyse include a number of writers from the present thesis, such as Putrament, Bratny, Safian and Hołuj. In addition, one of the works I have chosen - Putrament's *Pasierbowie* (1963) - is discussed by both critics at some length.[3]

Their accounts of the political novel's development therefore include some consideration of the issues that interested the Party, but, by definition, their analysis extends beyond those issues. According to them, the political novel as a genre comprised works which implicitly approved the Party line as well as - and indeed more frequently - works which were largely critical of or opposed to it. Gawliński shows this more overtly by his inclusion of works hostile to the regime that were published by emigre publishing houses. Both critics reach negative conclusions about the aesthetic and cognitive qualities of the political novels produced from 1945 into the 1970s.

What they both pay homage to is essentially the idea of the 'great contemporary novel'[4] which Party theoreticians continually sought and

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[3] Majchrowski, pp. 312-314; Gawliński, pp. 117-118.

[4] Such as Ryszard Matuszewski at the 1962 Writers' Union congress, who referred to the absence of the 'great novel of social problems.'

never located in contemporary Polish literature. Literature is measured against social and political reality and the accuracy of its analysis is found wanting, whether critical of the ideology or supportive. The present thesis focuses on somewhat different concerns: firstly, on how the Party's official declarations found realisation in specific novels, which received consistent official support, and secondly, whether these works demonstrate continuity in terms of a common view of contemporary reality.

The formulation of the question in this way necessarily involves the examination of issues broader than theme or genre. On these terms, it can be seen that the authorities, with the exception of some works published during the 1940s or the early 1950s, such as Andrzejewski's *PPopiół i diament* (1948), never consistently supported the 'political novel' as such. A number of the more 'official' works analysed by Majchrowski and Gawliński - such as Putrament's *Małowierni* (1966) - had at most only two or even a single edition. Part of the reason (as I shall argue throughout the thesis) lay in the Party's reluctance to surrender its monopoly on interpretation, and this monopoly was most often challenged in the case of the 'political novel'. This dictated both the final shape of the novel, but also whether it reappeared. The works chosen up to 1980 therefore share a common publishing requirement in that they all appeared in at least three editions.

This hurdle was in my opinion a deciding factor as to the political acceptability of the work and the writer. A number of works which reflected the Party's momentary needs (Dobrowolski's *Głupia sprawa*, for instance) were never published again. While further editions illustrated the writer's standing with the regime and were sometimes a reward for political services rendered by writers in guaranteeing Party control over the Union, the fact remains that, if the works themselves were not in the first place politically acceptable (as defined by their emergence from the Censorship Office), then they would never have been reprinted. Further reasons for reprinting these works could be adduced. On a more prosaic level, it was also a question of keeping

favoured authors financially solvent.

Other works, however, represented a more clear-cut case of the Party's positive outlook that such works were artistic successes. This appears to have been true especially of Hołuj's *Osoba* (1974), which was quickly accepted into the 1970s' multi-publisher series, 'Kolekcja Polskiej Literatury Współczesnej'. In addition, alone of all the novels analysed here, *Osoba* enjoyed wide critical acclaim, which probably contributed to its rapid translation into other Eastern European languages.[5]

Although the writers examined in this thesis were supporters of the political regime,[6] this did not automatically equate with their being uncritical of its practices. This invariably showed in their discussions with other writers and the Party leadership and to some extent also in their literary works. Contrary to Gomułka's statement about not limiting the contemporary to the 'last few years', these writers were interested in precisely that period above all. They wished to deal with the 'present' in the narrower sense, to refer in their novels to the most recent political upheavals of 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1980-81.

Gomułka's statement therefore betrays, on the one hand, a desire to avoid being seen to insist on restrictive exclusive definitions, but, on the other, indicates the Party leadership's hesitation about the political acceptability of works addressing the more sensitive issues of the time.

Such 'hesitation' at the time of Gomułka's speech concerned the portrayal of the Stalinist years in prose, yet every political crisis revealed the same dilemma. The depiction of the present was - to adapt the title of Putrament's collection of essays on contemporary literature - the most 'closely patrolled sector of the literary front'.[7] In this thesis, the criterion of 'contemporary' is understood precisely in the narrow

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5 It had two Czech (Prague, 1979 and 1988), one East German (Berlin, 1983), a Bulgarian (Sofia, 1980), and a Russian edition (Moscow, 1978).

6 See the Appendices for their potted biographies, which include details of their political careers.

7 *Na literackim froncie* (Warsaw, 1953).

terms Gomułka denied: the present time of the narrative in each case precedes the novel's date of writing and publication by no more than five years.

Within official discourse, the irrevocable change in postwar history was 1956. Nevertheless, after that date successive leaders were to imply not only their continuity with the previous era, but also their distinctiveness. In some measure, that difference finds expression in the novels that each new administration came to favour.

From the mid-1970s, however, the criterion of three editions can no longer be sustained. No single contemporary novel, according to the above definition of 'contemporary', had more than two editions. This was not due to any crisis in the publishing industry, for Roman Bratny's *Rok w trumnie* (1983) had two separate runs of 150, 000 copies; it marks rather the Party's general ideological crisis in the face of the existence of an underground publishing network and, more seriously, Solidarity's challenge to its power.

Prior to 1980, the publication process slowed down considerably. The censorship controls were particularly stringent in relation to the portrayal of present-day Poland in journalism as well as in prose fiction. At the end of the 1970s, therefore, there was a distinct paucity of works dealing with contemporary Poland without the use of masking strategies. The draconian nature of censorship activity, discussed later in this chapter, severely reduced writers' willingness to write novels that dealt directly with the present. Immediately after the start of Martial Law, exactly the reverse situation prevailed: portrayal of the present, even where critical, was encouraged by the regime as it sought justification for its rule.

The second issue of whether there was a 'common view of contemporary reality' defines my approach to the analysis of the individual works in the thesis. Each novel is examined in terms of the central structural principles of the organisation of plot, characters, and their political and social arguments within the depicted reality of present-day People's Poland. My analysis of the development of these

1949-1955. In this respect, my work is most clearly indebted to the conclusions of Wojciech Tomasik's seminal *Polska powieść tendencyjna 1949-1955* (1988), which provides the most complete analysis yet of the Socialist Realist novel's components and function.

In his analysis of the consequences of the 1949 Writers' Union Congress in Szczecin, where the Socialist Realist doctrine was declared to be the official and obligatory literary programme, Tomasik determined two main issues relating to the reception of the Socialist Realist novel. The first was *instrumentality*, that is, how the reader should react on the basis of reading the text; the second issue was the assumption of the *mimetic* function of the text, that readers should consider the novel realistic on the basis of their own experience:[8]

> In Socialist Realism, what was labelled "reality" served solely those components of the extensional world which confirmed the official ideology, or at least did not question it (so they did not speak of the non-existence of the class enemy, for instance). In practice, the issue was the image of reality contained in the Socialist Realist programme of art subordinate to the popularisation and sanctioning of the obligatory world-view. The mimetic style was not connected with "truth" in the classic conception of the word. Authenticity was decided not by the relation of the literary text to reality, but by its relation to texts giving an exposition of the obligatory world-view.[9]

The Socialist Realist novel was in effect an 'intertext', dependent for its depiction of reality upon ideological statements made by the leadership and theoreticians.[10] The question was therefore not one of the work's relation to reality, but of its subordination to ideological

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[8] *Polska powieść tendencyjna* ..., p. 172.

[9] Ibid., p. 187.

[10] Tomasik analyses the consequences of the Socialist Realist novel's complete subordination to official doctrine in relation to Tadeusz Konwicki's *Władza* (1955), which deals with the question of 'right-wing deviation', i.e. the problem of Gomułka. He shows that once the ideological rationale had disappeared, with Gomułka's advance to First Secretary in October 1956, the novel's propaganda value was also at an end. Tomasik, *Słowo o socrealizmie. Szkice* (Bydgoszcz, 1991), 'Intertekstualność i tendencja. Wokół *Władzy* Tadeusza Konwickiego', p. 73.

statements about that reality. "Reality" therefore came to be a term applied exclusively to those factors which affirmed official ideology.

The consequences for the construction of literary works were two-fold. Firstly, the credibility of the novels was posited upon the acceptance of the world described as resembling the reader's own. Since they embodied a conception of "reality" potentially alien to the reader's own understanding of the world, a few details drawn from actuality were included in the attempt to establish the depicted world as a representation of a real place and time.[11] More generally, the introduction of colloquial language and the disguising of linguistic cliches and proverbs as common "truths" arising out of the characters' individual experience were intended to invoke the reader's acceptance of the depicted world as empirically based.[12] The primary function of the Socialist Realist novel was to persuade the reader of the desirability of socialism.

The second consequence lay in the organisation of the depicted world within the novel. The world of Socialist Realist novels tended towards a binomial universe, with no middle ground between the extremes.[13] The premium placed upon persuasion dictated the division of characters into two categories: those who opposed socialism ('the class enemy') and those who supported it, and whose cause ultimately triumphed. Invariably, however, as Piotr Kuncewicz has argued, this promoted an essentialist view of human nature.[14] Individual psychology was jettisoned in favour of a concept of predestination based on class origins. In the process, the class enemy's

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[11] The few details about Warsaw in Kazimierz Brandys's *Obywatele* (1955): Tomasik, *Polska powieść tendencyjna*....., pp. 94-95.

[12] Ibid., p. 71.

[13] Ibid., pp. 38-40.

[14] 'Poetyka powieści produkcyjnej', in: *Z problemów literatury polskiej XX wieku. Tom 3: Literatura Polski Ludowej* (Warsaw, 1965), p. 145.

motivation remained fundamentally mysterious.[15]

Tomasik's method focuses on the implementation of the literary programme in concrete works as a means of identifying the Socialist Realist novel's essential features. The present thesis seeks to build on Tomasik's methodology in an attempt to identify what survived of Socialist Realism, once the Party had reformulated its cultural policy in 1959.

My approach to the theme has three principal aims. Firstly, the thesis seeks to define the development of Party requirements of the 'contemporary novel', both from official statements (the most general) down to individual works. Secondly, its intention is to place these works in the context of their time, viewing them as products of key political and philosophical debates about the nature of the socialist system. The third purpose of the thesis is to analyse the features of the world depicted in each novel to determine whether there are factors common to each which enable a model of the 'preferred novel' to be constructed. A further question here is whether another paradigm can be said to have replaced the Socialist Realist model as the bearer of Party ideology.

This thesis has five chapters. In the first chapter, the mechanisms employed by the state are described to show the various non-literary factors conditioning the production of literary works. Central among these was the Censorship Office. Rather than being solely a restriction upon the appearance of literary work, it operated at times in conjunction with the Cultural Department, as I suggest, in order to see works published. The overriding concern to have a pro-socialist literature outweighed the political unacceptability of certain aspects of the works considered.

In the second chapter, the fate of the term 'committed literature', the definition for the works which the Party was anxious to see produced, is discussed. This was not a purely theoretical debate, but one illustrating the differences between even Party loyalists and the

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[15] Ludwik Flaszen's point in 'Nowy Zoil, Czyli o schematyzmie,' in: *Cyrograf* (Cracow, 1974), p. 22.

leadership. The situation in the Writers' Union, the principal theoretical debates, and the activities of Party loyalists over the period 1958 to 1985 are described in order to delineate the intellectual and political climate which conditioned these works.

In the third chapter, works by Roman Bratny and Jerzy Putrament are analysed. Bratny's novel *Szczęśliwi, torturowani* (1959) was a crucial work in view of writers' general dissatisfaction with censorship restrictions, which appeared to threaten the very existence of works depicting contemporary Poland. It coincided with the announcement of the Party's revamped cultural policy and its appearance, at least for one official in the Censorship Office, was meant to signify an act of political good will from the authorities. Putrament's novel *Pasierbowie* (1963) marked the limits of official tolerance for an increasingly dogmatic Party. The portrayal of the burning issues of the day, specifically, the nature and extent of the changes since 1956, was becoming less acceptable to the leadership. The way forward lay rather in works produced to address specific issues, primarily work, but also the place of the armed forces in contemporary life.

Chapter 4 analyses two novels from this trend of what were termed 'publicly commissioned works' ('zamówienie społeczne').[16] The first, Janusz Przymanowski's *Wezwany* (1968), exemplifies the Army's interest in demonstrating the relevance of the armed forces in peacetime Poland. Although not written specifically for a competition, the work was perceived as providing a solution to the question of how the army novel could expand beyond the boundaries of mere war stories and into the present day. Hołuj's *Osoba* (1974) by contrast was conceived with a specific competition in mind - the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the Polish Workers' Party - and in many respects was the most successful example of this approach.

The final chapter examines the nature of Party preference in the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s. Safian's *Ulica Świętokrzyska* (1980) and Łoziński's *Sceny myśliwskie z Dolnego Śląska* (1985)

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16 In reality, they were sought by the authorities alone.

represent the changing nature of Party requirements in the face of, firstly, an unofficial publishing network, whose existence compromises the rationale behind rigid state control on the portrayal of the present; and secondly, where the challenge to Party rule itself by Solidarity shakes the foundations of the political system. Both novels are characterised by greater openness about the mentality of Party officials, reflecting the Party's recognition of the need for relaxing some controls, but Łoziński's illustrates the authorities' turn to greater instrumentality in its demands of literary works, if not requiring them to be propaganda against Solidarity, in the early 1980s.

In the conclusion, the present status of loyalist writers and their works is discussed. As I aim to show, although these writers have been largely marginalised by the change in the political system after 1989 - a diametric reversal of their situation under 'real socialism' - they continue in their varying ways to demonstrate a presence greater in some respects than many of their more illustrious contemporaries.

THE DEFINITION OF PARTY PREFERENCES

> From the political point of view, therefore, the politician will never be satisfied with the artist and will never be able to be: he will find him always behind the times, always anachronistic and overtaken by the real flow of events.
>
> Antonio Gramsci. [17]

The key problem when attempting to define the Party's preferences with respect to literature, stems from the vagaries of the terminology. The Party's renunciation of the concept of Socialist Realism after 1956 means that there was no single term used to define its preferences. To a great extent, the Party elite continued to act as though the tenets of Socialist Realism remained natural practice, even if the term itself was avoided as a political liability.[18]

This nostalgia for the simplicities of Socialist Realist practice revealed itself not merely in the reversion in theoretical articles to the promotion of the theme of work ('temat pracy') as a universal panacea for the political inadequacy of contemporary prose fiction, backed up by the numerous competitions and prizes sponsored by the CRZZ (Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych - Central Trades Union Council). It was implicit also in the assumptions of literature's role as an ideological and educative tool. What broke down after 1956 was the coercive totalitarian system intended to guarantee a streamlined literary production: from the leadership's instructions to readers' consumption. Although the range of choices was still under Party control, the nature of its demands changed from being *mandatory* before 1956, to being

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17 *A Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935.* Forgacs, D. (ed.), (London, 1988), p. 396.

18 Poland was unique among Eastern Bloc countries for this rejection of the term. The administration continued to censor any derogatory use made of the term, however, on the principle that criticism suggested that the Party's policies might at some time have been less than perfect. At the same time there was always the suspicion that, by preserving it in aspic in this way, the Party ideologues could reintroduce it at some later, more propitious date.

largely *voluntary* thereafter.[19] As in other areas of state life, the Party predicated its rule upon a form of consent: the popular support for Gomułka in October 1956 and the notion of a social contract hammered out with workers in 1970, which ushered Gierek's team into office, were presented as giving national legitimacy to Party rule.

The consequence of this approach for literature was, at least in theory, to allow writers a greater opportunity to prove their political credentials. Instead of constant subordination to the Party line, defined in advance by Party ideologues, writers themselves could spontaneously demonstrate the benefits of the socialist system in their works. One outcome of such thinking was the Party's declaration of tolerance for politically non-aligned or humanist works at the Third PZPR Congress in March 1959. This enabled official accounts to claim at various points that the whole of Polish contemporary literature in print in the PRL was 'socialist',[20] or (circa 1985) 'pro-socialist literature'.[21] Quite what Party critics meant by these formulations was unclear, but they allowed the Party to pose as benevolent patron over all divergent artistic currents.

The oppositionists tended, by contrast, to underline the subservient nature of those who identified with the political system, using largely emotive terms to define the Party's requirements. At their most neutral, these included such definitions as 'official literature'; with

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[19] Symbolic of this totalitarian system of literary control were the creative circles ('koła twórcze') in the Writers' Union which criticd works *in statu nascendi* , before they reached the publisher, and thus further increased writers' inclination to self-censorship. A particularly mordant description of the reality of one such session in 1954 devoted to Konwicki's work is given in Leopold Tyrmand's *Dziennik 1954*, (London, 1980), pp. 115-116.

[20] Stefan Żółkiewski questioned at the time whether the term 'socialist literature' was adequate in an article in *Nowa Kultura*, 1960 (17 January), reprinted in Maria Kuncewicz's *The Modern Polish Mind: An Anthology* (London, 1963), pp. 373-381.

[21] Witold Nawrocki, 'Krajobraz literatury w czterdziestoleciu', in: *Literatura Polski Ludowej. Oceny i prognozy* (Warsaw, 1986), pp. 11-51.

greater disapproval, 'court literature' ('literatura dworska')[22] ; or more bluntly, 'obedient to' ('posłuszna')[23] the political leadership. The definition of Party preferences after 1956 therefore remains, on the one hand, so generalised as to include everything in print; on the other, it is demonised as a narrow and readily identifiable category. None of the appellatives is acceptable, since they underplay the element of dissent in the works of even the most pro-regime writers and the necessary dialectic between the Party leadership and writers who were Party members.

A formula prominent in literary debates and official discourse after 1956 is that of a 'literature committed to socialism' ('literatura zaangażowana po stronie socjalizmu')[24], and it may be said that the principal battles concerning Party preferences were waged around this formula. One of the reasons was that, in contrast to 'Socialist Realism', the notion of 'committed literature' - with or without the socialist qualifier - engaged a great number of writers from 1956 onwards. What they understood by 'committed literature' and the writer's own 'commitment', and what the Party did, diverged substantially. The Polish term 'literatura zaangażowana' was a direct calque of the French 'littérature engagée' and was associated for Polish writers with the French existentialists.[25] Sartre's argument in *What is Literature ?* (1947) about the need for contemporary writers to be socially involved in their works essentially defined Polish understanding of the term 'commitment':

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[22] Flaszen raised the issue first in his 1955 article 'Odwilż, pozory, rzeczywistość', republished in: *Cyrograf* (Cracow, 1974), pp. 30-46.

[23] Paweł Janowski, 'Czerwony Syzyf. Z dziejów polityki kulturalnej PRL', in: *40 lat władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (London, 1986), pp. 121-150.

[24] In the absence of any public statement on literature by the Party from mid-1956 to early 1958, the first official use of the term would seem to be Andrzej Werblan's address to the journalists of *Nowa Kultura* in April 1958, published as *O socjalistyczny kierunek działalności kulturalnej* (Warsaw, 1958).

[25] See the entry for 'literatura zaangażowana' in *Słownik terminów literackich* (Wrocław, 1976), p. 221.

> We must take up a position *in our literature*, because literature is in essence a taking of position. We must, in all domains, both reject solutions which are not rigorously inspired by socialist principles and, at the same time, stand off from all doctrines and movements which consider socialism as the absolute end. In our eyes it should not represent the final end, but rather the end of the beginning, or, if one prefers, the last means before the end which is to put the human person in possession of his freedom. Thus, our works should be presented to the public in a double aspect of negativity and construction.[26]

In Poland in 1956, as Michał Głowiński has noted, the slogan of 'commitment' unified those writers who were in favour of the expansion of public freedoms and reforms. However, as the Party reconsolidated, they lost any possibility of influencing public life, and subsequently the slogan of 'commitment' was

> taken up by the Party and given a different meaning. Official journalists began to write about writers "committed to the building of socialism", that is about those who faithfully carried out Party directives.[27]

Although Głowiński's designation of writers supporting the Party may be accurate when he was writing (1968), there are more complex ramifications in the corruption of the original meaning of 'commitment', and by extension 'committed literature'. 'Commitment' forms the focal point of the debate between the Party and its loyalists for the years from 1959 to 1985 and constitutes the centre of a web of terms which its use appears to activate. These other terms include such concepts as responsibility, truth, reality, duty, realism and idealism, humanity and the individual, and freedom - in other words, the original contexts for Sartre's own deliberations. In short, though the Party leadership's use of 'commitment' might have been cynical, indicating its desire simply to subordinate writers to its control, this was not equivalent to even its own loyalists' use of the term. Their use of these words proposed

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[26] *What is Literature ?* (London, 1986), p. 206.

[27] *Marcowe gadanie* (Warsaw, 1991), p. 21.

something more than utter subjugation to the Party line.

The fate of the term 'commitment', which is discussed in chapter two, shows that its residual meaning survived in the loyalists' arguments with the Party leadership. To some extent, this was a case of writers' adopting political language when speaking to politicians, as Jerzy Putrament recommended at the Polish Writers' Union congress in 1959. Loyalist writers continually argued for some portion of genuine responsibility and greater freedom to be allowed them at least in their works, and they did indeed often receive such allowances, albeit, technically speaking, on an exceptional basis. What exacerbated the situation towards the end of the 1950s was the absence of any clear definition by the Party leadership of what it was prepared to tolerate. The first line of state policy had theretofore been the Main Censorship Office (GUKP - Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy), whose very existence was secret and which could therefore issue no public statements concerning culture.

It was only after the Third Congress that the Party began to develop a network of institutional incentives geared towards the active promotion of its tastes in literature: state prizes, competitions on specific themes and writing grants. Following the Thirteenth Plenum in July 1963, these incentives became more closely correlated to disincentives: the extension of the responsibility for censorship of texts to publishers' themselves. Members of the leadership, who tended to be present at nearly every ZLP congress, backed up these incentives and controls with political exhortations, voicing criticisms of current Polish literature as well as approval of certain trends.

Consequently, the ground rules set by the Party for literary activity in People's Poland forestall any notion of literature as being the author's own free self-expression. It was at all stages formally 'determined' by a number of administrative factors (the rise of the 'second circulation' in 1977 represented a protest against the absolute nature of this process), and these factors need to be described before considering in greater depth what a 'committed literature' entailed.

The Institutional Regulation of Literature.

The major feature of the socialist system of literary production was its developed institutional character. This system, however, suffered from an inherent lack of cohesion in that no clear definition existed of the role to be played by each institution,[28] nor was the border of each institution's activities sufficiently precise. Its cohesion derived rather from its centralised nature, with the individual institutions tending to reinforce each other's activity.

The central role was taken by Party bodies, in the first instance the **Cultural Department** of the Central Committee (Wydział Kultury). The Cultural Department stood at the hub of the Party's interests in culture, linking the GUKP, the Ministry of Culture, the Writers' Union (ZLP - Związek Literatów Polskich), the Interior Ministry (from which it received secret police reports on the invigilation of opposition writers) and the Foreign Ministry (which supplied materials on writers' behaviour abroad as well as developments in fraternal socialist countries, especially the USSR). Its input into the ZLP lay through the Party cells attached to each union branch, although its secretaries were usually present at union congresses and often delivered the Party line on particular matters. All organisational issues were coordinated through its offices, such as the dispatch of writers 'into the field' - 'w teren' - (especially during the Stalinist period), or the publishing plan.

Notionally separate from the Cultural Department was the **Ministry of Culture**, controlled by the Party, even if the Minister himself was not a member of the PUWP.[29] Its main role lay in the

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[28] Or, in the case of the GUKP, its very existence.

[29] Such as Kaziemierz Żygulski from 1983-1986. This did not in any way diminish Party control, but reflected rather the operations of the 'nomenklatura' system, whereby all major posts of responsibility went to trusted Party nominees, regardless of whether they were actually members of the Party. See N. Davies, *God's Playground, vol. 2* (Oxford, 1981), p. 608. For a comprehensive list of 'nomenklatura' posts, see Appendix 5 in Denis MacShane's *Solidarity. Poland's Independent Trade Union* (Nottingham, 1981), pp. 163-169.

formulation of priorities in the cultural sphere; its book department oversaw the publishing plans drawn up by the various publishing houses and approved them, in accordance with the Party's interests. The Ministry also decided the allocation of funds to publishers as well as their ration of paper.[30]

With such powers, the Ministry functioned as the primary censor of literature, its decisions determined by political criteria, first and foremost. Paper and funds were allocated not according to the publisher's needs but rather to reflect his standing with the Ministry. In cases where material was published which displeased the latter, the publisher might receive less paper and funding than he needed. This meant reduced production, and hence reduced income, on which the publisher also had to depend. Consequently, another degree of pre-censorship must be defined, existing within publishing houses in response to economic pressure upon the publisher's budget, as well as, during the 1970s particularly, the director's desire to keep his privileged position in the nomenklatura.[31]

In this situation, the only official body potentially capable of representing the writer's interests was the **ZLP**. This representation took the form of protests against injustices (beginning in 1956) and, more formally and with uncertain effects, the Komisja Interwencyjna established in the 1970s to discuss books held back by the censor's office. During the Stalinist years between 1949 and 1956 it had, however, served purely as a transmission belt for Party demands on writers, taking over some of the pre-censorship controls (the 'creative circles', see footnote 19) which later passed to publishers. Formally, even after the Stalinist period, it remained officially responsible for deciding who could make a career in literature, that is, be considered a

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30 Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York, 1984), p. 39.

31 In this sense the Party publishers, Książka i Wiedza, responsible for printing political materials, enjoyed priority, whereas the smaller publishers, outside Warsaw, such as Wydawnictwo Literackie in Cracow, had constantly to wage a battle for paper supplies - particularly since they occasionally published works that displeased the authorities.

professional writer.[32] The Union's congresses continued to provide the main platform for the promulgation of official party policy towards literature, although this was then subject to debate and even rejection by some union members during proceedings. Throughout the last twenty-seven years of its existence,[33] it provided a platform for writers' protests against institutionalised censorship - in the first instance, the **GUKP**.

In some respects, the GUKP's activity bore an inverse relation to the Party's literary programme: the more specific the latter, the less problematic became the issue of institutional censorship. After 1956, therefore, with the relaxation of official strictures on Polish literature, the censorship office came to be more involved on the day-to-day level of literary production.[34] By 1963, however, the Party felt moved to off-load some of the GUKP's responsibilities onto publishers: at the July plenum that year, Tadeusz Galiński, the Minister for Culture, blamed publishers for the prevalence of revisionist and anti-socialist works and 'encouraged' them to take a more principled stand against such literature, cutting out politically unacceptable passages before they reached the censorship office. The intention was the internalisation of the system's values by all those involved in literary production, based on cooperation (współpraca) between them. The ultimate end seems then to have been a situation in which the GUKP would have been made redundant, with writers producing politically inoffensive texts spontaneously.

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[32] I say 'officially', because the decision regarding the elevation to 'professional writer' was not the responsibility of the ZLP authorities alone but also subject to Party pressure. The formal qualification of publishing two books could be waived when the Party decided in the late 1970s to impose trusted candidates such as Ryszard Wojna (the director of KiW) or to resist the advance of oppositionists such as Jacek Bierezin, who had published one book abroad.

[33] The Party dissolved it in August 1983 to replace it by a union more receptive to Party demands.

[34] Cultural Department materials from the GUKP testify to the reduction of censorship interventions after 1959; in other words, the official criteria for rejecting works had been made clearer to writers and publishers, stalling works at earlier stages of the production cycle.

The Party's general stance at the XIII Plenum marked the beginnings of an all-pervasive model of censorship, which had been realised to a considerable extent by the late 1970s. In that sense, writers' constant attacks at congresses upon the GUKP were misguided: it was only the last element in a long chain of censoring bodies which shaped the literary text - what has been termed 'supervising the supervisors of Polish culture'.[35]

At the Twentieth ZLP Congress in December 1980, Przemysław Bystrzycki bore testimony to the success of Galiński's demands, insofar as his own experience could corroborate. He outlined three stages (nine factors) of the censorship process relating, firstly, to work on the text, secondly, the production of the book itself and, finally, its distribution:

1. **The editor** in the publishing house;

2. **Internal reviewers.** A select list of reviewers of different standards and for every occasion. The artistic, objective value of the work receded into the background, against the political correctness of its meaning. Publishers would often reject a work on the pretext of its low artistic quality, although the primary objection might be political;

3. The **editorial board** in the publishing house;

4. **Political figures**, who were canvassed for their opinions and support;

5. The **Executive Board of Publishing Houses** (Naczelny Zarząd Wydawnictw), set up in 1970 to coordinate publishers. It had a card index of writers, calculating the contracts signed by them, and arranging things so that writers known for the difficulties they caused did not enjoy overmuch success. It also decided print runs in conjunction with the GUKP; allotted places in printing works; influenced the allocation of paper; and, most of all, could ban the publication of works.

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35 Urbański, A.,'Cenzura - kontrola kontroli (system lat siedemdziesiątych)', in: *Piśmiennictwo - systemy kontroli - obiegi alternatywne, tom II* (Warsaw, 1992), pp. 251-265.

6. **GUKP**;

7. The **Main Wholesale Depot** (Główna Składnica Księgarska), which stored the book prior to distribution to bookshops. This could delay the book's appearance on the market or restrict its sale to even a single bookshop in Poland. It played a crucial role, given that the first three to four months decided the book's performance on the market;

8. **Libraries**, which bought up copies to store them in special collections to which there was limited access, as was particularly the case with army libraries;

9. **Mass media** silence.[36]

These factors illustrate the features of the problem from the author's standpoint, but do not shed light on the criteria which motivated the censors. Undoubtedly, the most important of these related to political taboos, particularly regarding the Soviet Union. Apart from the general rule of not allowing fellow socialist countries to be portrayed in a bad light, it was vital to censor those areas of history which cast a shadow over Polish-Soviet relations. The Party critic Marian Stępień outlined the four primary taboos in 1985 when discussing the kinds of works published by the Polish emigres:

> (i) the Soviet invasion of 17 September 1939 (and, by extension, the clause to partition Poland in the Molotov-Ribbentropp pact);
>
> (ii) the experiences of Poles arrested at the end of 1939 by the Soviet authorities (their transportation into the depths of Russia);
>
> (iii) Katyń, the execution of Polish officers by the NKVD;
>
> (iv) certain circumstances connected with the Warsaw Uprising.[37]

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[36] ZLP Archives: 'XXI Walny Zjazd ZLP, 28-29 Dec. 1980, tom 2', pp. 176-179.

[37] *Literatura Polski Ludowej* (Warsaw, 1986), p. 428.

This list, made by a leading but liberal critic, is not exhaustive even regarding historical events. In fact, any reference to Tsarist Russia and its relations with Poland was considered potentially dubious, given the Polish propensity for 'reading between the lines' and seeing references to the past as comments upon the current political situation. Indeed, writers had consciously exploited historical parallels in order to talk about the present.[38]

The classic example of the failure to censor such associations is the 1967-68 production of Mickiewicz's *Dziady*, where the audiences cheered the anti-tsarist passages in the play, seeing them as still pertinent to the Soviet authorities.[39] Furthermore, decisive Soviet influence at certain points in recent Polish history, such as under Stalinism and in 1956 above all, could not be admitted, although they were an open secret that had slowly permeated through gossip to most of the population.

This compartmentalisation of Polish history also affected the Party's account of its own traditions. The dissolution of the Polish Communist Party by the Comintern in 1938 and execution of many of its leading members in Moscow at Stalin's command produced enormous problems for writers wishing to deal with the Party's history. Despite the PZPR's explicit condemnation of Stalinism and the rehabilitation of the prewar Party in 1956, the contradiction between Soviet and Polish Party interests remained unresolved at the ideological level. The nature of the 'Polish road to socialism' was theoretically inconsistent with the international and utopian aspects of the socialist project; furthermore, the promotion of the national aspect of Polish

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[38] This had been standard practice in Polish literature at least from the nineteenth century onwards. The Neoclassicist Alojzy Feliński's tragedy *Barbara Radziwiłłówna* (1820) is an early and fairly transparent example of the use of Aesopian language: the example of King Zygmunt August (1548-1572), who submits to the wisdom of the sejm, contains a clear message to Alexander I, the then Russian Tsar and King of Poland, to respect the Polish democratic system.

[39] See the Cultural Department materials relating to audience response published in Marta Fik's *Marcowa Kultura* (Warsaw, 1995), especially pp. 71-72, 84-87.

socialism, a key feature of the Party's ideology after 1956, and especially after 1968, ran the danger of provoking Polish chauvinism in its most politically dangerous, anti-Russian-imperialist form. The contradiction here stemmed from the Party's attempt (and need) to win some measure of public support, albeit restricted only to the nomenklatura, from 1956 onwards.

Taboos related also therefore to recent Polish history, with the effect that each new stage of the Polish Communist Party's development added to the original list described by Stępień. All changes that occurred at the top of the Party hierarchy presented an equally great theoretical (and hence censorship) problem as to both the extent and the reasons for the changes. In view of what Bromke called the 'protracted crisis' in Poland, a more complete list would run as follows:

1. The Poznań riots of June 1956 and the Party's volte face in their interpretation of their cause and significance;
2. The anti-Semitic campaigns of 1967-1968;
3. The student protests and their suppression in 1968;
4. The workers' riots on the Baltic, 1970-1971;
5. The protests at the proposed changes to the Constitution by intellectuals and the Church in 1976;
6. The workers' riots in June 1976, and the subsequent rise of the political opposition and 'second circulation';
7. Solidarity and the Party crisis of 1980-1981;
8. Martial Law.

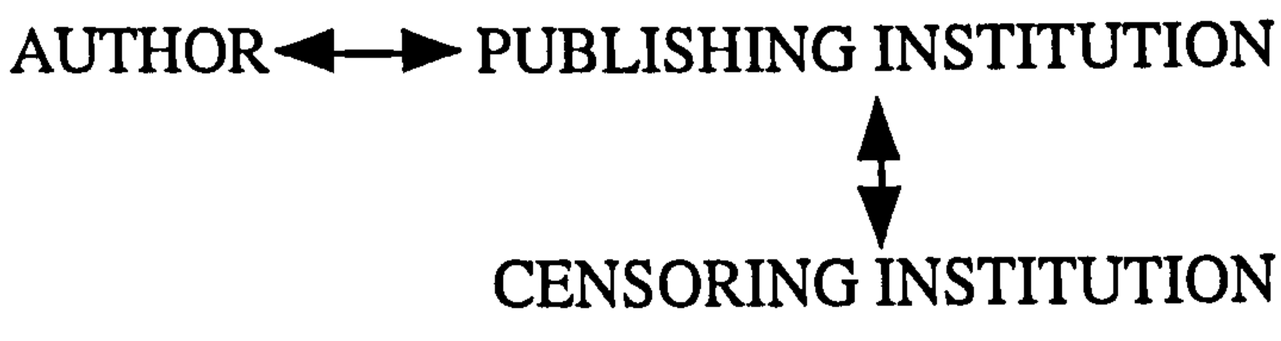
In addition, revelations of the true extent of the populace's support for the Church and any attacks on the Party as an organisation, or its leadership, could not be countenanced by the Censorship Office. The sine qua non of all versions was that, at any point, the Party itself could not be seen to be at fault, only individuals within it. This evasion did, of course, obscure the issue of how those individuals came to wield power, and what controls existed to prevent future abuses of that power.

The consequence for literary texts of these enforced evasions was the mollification of criticism of Party figures, even when depicting the

discredited practices of the Stalinist period. Loyalist writers' varying and limited ability to circumvent the requirement to present Party figures in a positive light at all times marked an acknowledgement of their usefulness to the Party. In effect, it qualifies the notion of their political orthodoxy.[40] Nonetheless, they were subject to the same censorship processes as every other writer, although their example has consequences for accounts of the functioning of the GUKP.

The essentially dynamic nature of censorship operations prior to publication has been described by Andrzej Urbański as an attempt by the censor to prove a text's political incorrectness. The text passes back and forth between the three major parties - writer, publisher and censor - until it becomes politically acceptable and can be allowed to go to press. This initial process he illustrated in diagrammatic form (shown in figure 1): [41]

(figure 1)



The nine factors detailed by Bystrzycki, however, necessitate the adaptation of his basic diagram to render the true complexity of

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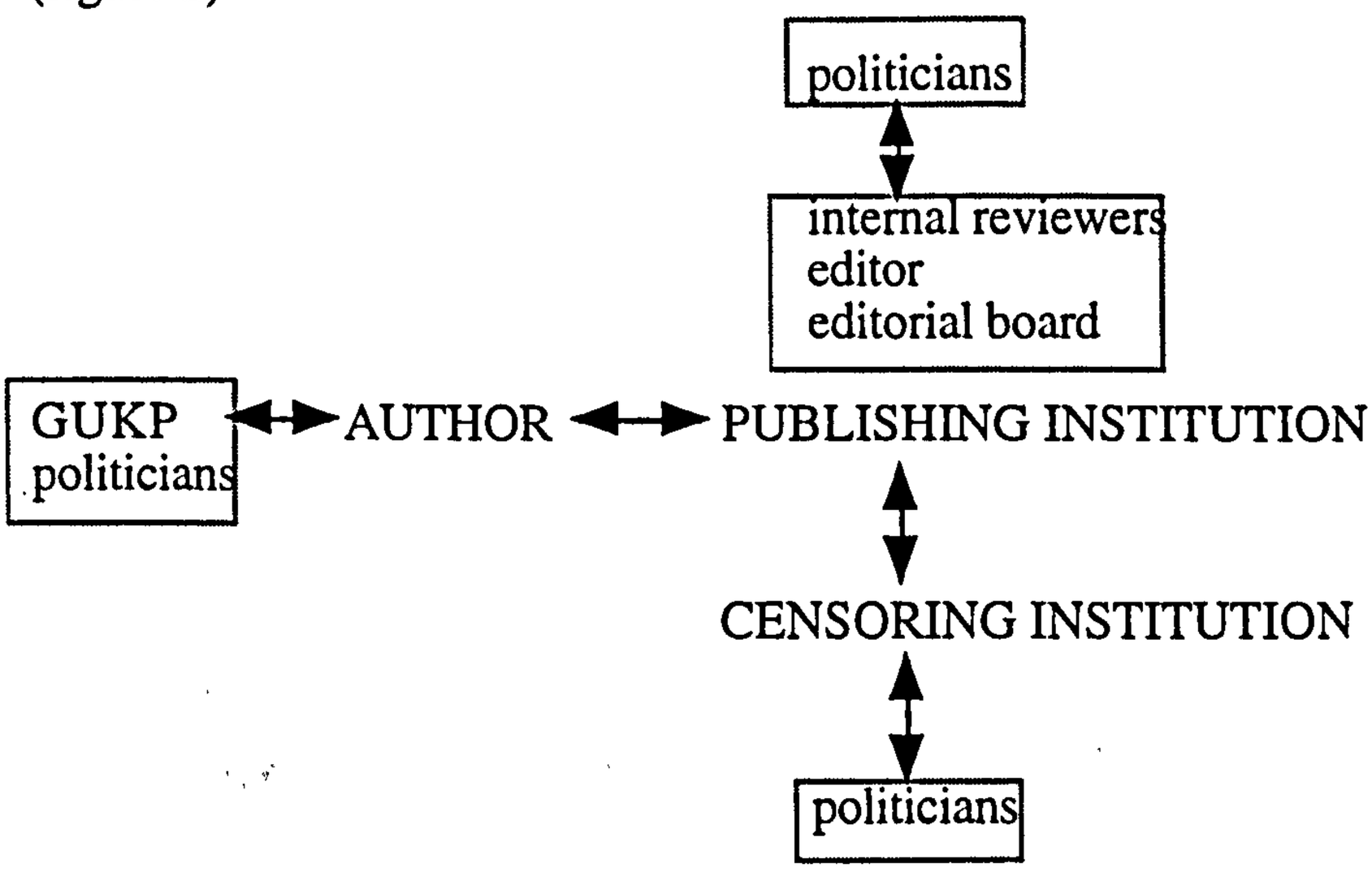
[40] The most transparent instance of special treatment given to favoured writers is evident in Jerzy Putrament's case. His 1967 novel *Małowierni*, which showed opportunism and despair as rife among socialists during the Stalinist period, although subjected to certain modifications, was allowed to appear with certain ideologically incorrect passages. Strasser, the Head of the Non-Periodical Section of the GUKP, concluded his assessment of the required changes to the novel with the following concession: 'I think that the conversation between Emma Kranz and her husband after he is released from prison (after being falsely accused - JMB) can in principle be left in its entirety. The scene shows that there were some, like Emma, who made a complete, albeit temporary, break with communism, but it also shows that there were others, like Kranz, who suffered greatly and didn't lose their faith in our cause, that they couldn't imagine life for themselves outside the Party'. AAN, GUKPPiW, II/833, 'Przeglądy ingerencji i przeoczeń w publikacjach periodycznych, nieperiodycznych, drukach ulotnych. I, II, III kwartal, 1967', p. 42.

[41] Urbański, op. cit., p. 252.

censorship operations (shown in figure 2):

(figure 2)



Invariably, politicians could play a key role in deciding whether the work appeared or not. This marked the next stage of censorship, once the printing had been completed and the text was subjected to a further examination to determine the desirability of its appearance in the current political climate. The book's distribution could be halted at this stage due to a series of non-literary considerations, which might include the following:

a) the subject proves too topical;

b) the planned expression does not exclude the possibility of uncontrolled associations;

c) in view of the appearance of new social problems, the range of distribution foreseen by the publisher proves dangerously large.[42]

In this sense, the GUKP's role had to be characterised by a certain flexibility, being not only to defend the structural principles of

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[42] Urbański, op. cit., p. 258.

the Polish state but also to respond to political changes.[43] It is not sufficient, however, to see the reasons for this flexibility as residing within the GUKP itself, since the Office did not generate the norms according to which it censored works. The GUKP was subordinate to other bodies and institutions: formally, the sejm, the cabinet and the prime minister; and informally, the Party structures, the various Central Committee departments (which had direct control) and the Ministry for Internal Affairs, the Army's Political Board, the industrial lobby, the First Secretary and the diplomatic representatives of fraternal socialist countries, supremely, the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw (all of which had powerful voices, but did not exercise direct control).[44]

In the 1970s a greater degree of formalisation and tighter controls on information came to be introduced into the censorship system, with the necessity for complaints and requests to be directed to the Press Department of the Central Committee. This brought to an end the rather impromptu nature of the censorship system under Gomułka, where guidelines was given largely verbatim. This enabled personal intervention on the part of Party officials, who required that material be censored according to their own definitions of what was undesirable.[45] Moreover, it allowed for political divisions between individual departments of the Central Committee and between Party structures and

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[43] One of the most extreme undesirable manifestations of its flexibility - from an official point of view - was the Main Office's spontaneous self-dissolution in September 1956 due to its workers' belief in the spirit of democratisation then at its height. Over-rigidity in interpreting censorship regulations - 'ingerencje zbędne' in the parlance of censorship documents - was sometimes a problem. The desire to preserve present and past Party leaders from any improper associations occasionally led to the censorship of any contact they had with normal citizens. Hence, Bierut's practice of acting as godfather to children during the 1950s was zealously cut out by one censor despite the absence of any associations detrimental to the prestige of the Party leader. A tricky example was provided by the assistance given by Soviet Army fire engines in extinguishing town fires in the 1970s, where the need to preserve military secrets (the whereabouts of Soviet bases in Poland) ran athwart the desire to give the Soviet Army good propaganda. In the end, a compromise formula was devised, which failed to explain why Soviet firemen should be in the country.

[44] Urbański, op. cit., p. 256.

[45] Leftwich Curry, op. cit., p. 17.

other bodies on cultural issues.[46] In cultural affairs, during the 1960s at least, there existed a potential diarchy between the Cultural Department, generally responsible for culture, and the Press Office, whose brief covered the literary press. By and large, because of his higher status in the party hierarchy, the secretary of the Press Department was in control, and the director of the Cultural Department, who was not a Central Committee secretary, was subordinate to him.

By the 1970s the number of people responsible for cultural affairs in the Party had expanded considerably, as the former Minister of Culture, Józef Tejchma, has commented.[47] Such personalisation of party policy obviously ignores its consistency over time, yet some account of the flexibility of party policy on the systemic level (which would therefore include periodic liberalisation) needs to be provided. The distinction between fundamental principles and operative ideology is one that Ray Taras[48] has employed to explain the dichotomy between general, long-term theoretical objectives and specific, short-term practical ones. In short, the development and ultimate failure of socialist ideology in Poland.

Ideology and Cultural Practice.

The need to account for the flexibility of ideology in socialist states, without which systemic change within Bloc countries was unimaginable, has been paramount for a number of commentators.[49]

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[46] A key point is the action of the Press Office in unilaterally changing the composition of the editorial board of the newspaper *Współczesność* in August 1959 despite its assurances to consult the Cultural Commission of the Central Committee before doing so. A tenser incident followed the publication of Zbigniew Załuski's *Siedem polskich grzechów głównych* in 1962, when the Press Office was alleged by the Army's Main Political Board to have deliberately restricted the debate in the press to criticism of the book. The latter incident is discussed at greater length in chapter four.

[47] *Kulisy dymisji* (Cracow, 1991), p. 21.

[48] *Ideology in a Socialist State* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 27.

[49] See Andrzej Walicki's article, 'From Stalinism to Post-Communist Pluralism: The Case of Poland', *New Left Review*, 1990 (12), pp. 93-121.

Their principal objection to the concept of the unchanging rigidity of Communist ideology was that it privileged the official aspects of the ideology - its most formal public face - which were phrased in terms of the original doctrine or officially sanctioned adaptations, and left unexplained the sometimes inventive, impromptu solutions Party leaderships devised to cope with problems in practice. In that respect, the leaderships could be seen to be operating a largely informal ideology, a 'compromise between means and ends or ... between power considerations and original doctrines'.[50]

In relation to Polish culture, the simplification is not so much one of the ideology's unchanging rigidity but of its absolute tactical nature. Every development tended to be regarded as proof of the impromptu nature of Party response. Such a view stems largely from perceptions of the Party's attitude towards the ZLP as solely reflecting a desire to control the political balance between Party members and oppositionists in the union ranks - in effect, to dictate the smooth running of literary affairs.[51] This is certainly true, insofar as the stated aim of building the kind of atmosphere conducive to the production of a 'socialist committed literature' never materialised. Again, the inadequacy of this view - which was principally that of writers themselves - was its over-emphasis on personalising Party policy. Writers, and particularly the loyalists, were wont to canvass for support for their works within the Party hierarchy, and to see success or failure as the outcome of their attempts to exploit personal contacts, rather than as being part of a more general plan by the Party. Nonetheless, Party allowances were calculated according to strategic considerations - the need to reward loyalists for political support at moments of crisis (1968, for instance) and in their works - rather than being simply short-term measures. As in other spheres of state activity, operative ideology prevailed at the expense of fundamental principles.

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50 Op. cit., p. 27.

51 One complaint concerning the Party's cultural policy defined it as one directed at the writers' community with the aim of staving off organised political protests, and one which therefore neglected the 'fundamental principles' of socialist culture.

Ray Taras has argued that this phenomenon was characteristic of ideological development in Poland after 1956. More concretely, the political needs of the moment could always in some measure override considerations of ideological orthodoxy: endemic to the system was the possibility of deviation from its principles. For literature, this meant the inclusion of emigre texts in the official circulation,[52] or the release of controversial texts, in censorship parlance, 'on an exceptional basis' ('na zasadzie/prawach/drodze wyjątku'). The sort of exceptions sometimes adduced included: a work's artistic complexity or communicability, its small print run, or its function as a safety-valve for the literary community.[53]

This flexibility was underlined in an interview with a former censor in 1981, where the interviewee expressed surprise at the capacity for liberalism exhibited by the Party leadership and the GUKP directors. For him, works were passed which should never have seen publication according to all the normal criteria of censorship.[54] The main reason for these 'aberrations' lay in the fact that the Office not only defended the political system's structural or fundamental principles (alliances with the USSR, the building of socialism) but was itself also governed by the Party's operative ideology and need for a flexible response to challenges and change. To this extent, the totalist pretensions of the various institutions which controlled cultural life were not completely consistent with the Party's operative ideology,

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52 The classic example of the triumph of operative ideology over fundamental principles was the publication of Czesław Miłosz's works after he won the Nobel prize for literature in 1980: the premise of publishing in the PRL all Polish authors of international value outweighed the fact that for the previous thirty years Miłosz had been made into a non-person. When the emigre writer Gombrowicz looked as though he might receive a Nobel prize in the mid-1960s, Janusz Wilhelmi argued that, in preparation for such an eventuality, the PRL should begin to publish some of Gombrowicz's most recent works, so as not to be caught off-balance.

53 There is no official documentation on this point, but the critical debate provoked in 1975 by Kornhauser and Zagajewski's *Świat nieprzedstawiony* (1974) seems to mark that work as an example of the limited criticism allowed in a controversial work.

54 Schöpflin, G. (ed.),'The Censor Speaks - "I, the censor"', *Censorship of Political Communication in Eastern Europe* (London, 1983), pp. 102-112.

which contained a recognition of the need for a certain degree of political licence to be granted to writers. However circumscribed that licence, the fact remains that only those with an interest in promoting the political system would do so, or, as one writer expressed it: 'only the convinced can convince'.

These institutional categories within which writers were obliged to operate, and which conditioned the works they produced and published, were in the final instance only external features of control. More important to the actual creation of a socialist committed literature was the issue of whether the Party's views on literature carried any conviction amongst writers (and, if they did, on what level) and the means it employed, having renounced the utterly coercive methods of Socialist Realism, in the attempt to elicit responses from writers to its preferences. In addition, amidst all of these deliberations, the question of the target audience for such works was mainly formalised; the suspicion persists that the public were destined to be treated rather as passive consumers of officially promoted products, that their tastes were largely disregarded, whoever quoted them as an arbitrator in literary matters.

The Positive Promotion of Party Preferences

It was not until the 1960s that a more structured official response emerged to the question of producing 'socialist committed works'. Eventually, after being in abeyance for seven years, State prizes were restored in 1962. At least as important was the decentralisation of the publishing industry from the "Thaw" onwards, which, whilst a concession to regional needs,[55] left ultimate control over production with the centre. Similarly, while there was no obligatory aesthetic, formulated in pronouncements 'from above' stipulating compulsory themes or styles, the Party nonetheless encouraged certain 'initiatives'

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55 It led to new publishers being set up in Katowice (Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1954), Gdynia (Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1957), Poznań (1957), Łódź (1957) and Lublin (1961). This information derives from *Słownik literatury polskiej, tom 2* (Warsaw, 1984), pp. 643 - 646.

on the part of the new publishers.

The most prominent of these resulted from the transfer of direct financial sponsorship to other state institutions, such as the Army and the Trades Unions (CRZZ). From 1959 and 1964 respectively these bodies began to organise regular literary competitions on specific themes. The CRZZ competitions awarded prizes for works, often novels, about industry which formed the backbone of the so-called 'powieść dyrektorska' (the 'managerial novel' stream). These works tended to be funnelled out to smaller publishers in Poznań and Łódź, where in the absence of systematic support in the form of large print runs and further editions, they disappeared rapidly into oblivion.

The situation with 'Śląsk' publishers was somewhat different. Its competitions tended to have a strongly regional flavour or to commemorate political anniversaries (most notably of the foundation of the PPR) given a higher public profile. These included, most famously, the 1961 competition for a mining novel (producing Wantuła's *Urodzeni w dymach*, Siekierski's *Czarne i białe pióropusze* and Pierzchała's *Dzień z nocą na trzy podzielony*) and the 1962 collection and the 1972 competition to mark the anniversary of the PWP's foundation (where Hołuj featured strongly with his short story *To* and novel *Osoba*, respectively).

Within the Warsaw publishing houses there were also significant developments, above all in the Ministry of Defence publishers, MON. From 1957, MON began to branch out, promoting popular series on a mass scale relating to war (the sensationalist 'Żółty tygrys' line, for instance) and, from 1960, to sponsor competitions to produce works of fiction on military themes.[56] The latter inspired works by leading Party writers (Bratny, Putrament, Machejek, Safian). Consequently, while it is possible to speak of a *diffusion* of literary sponsorship among both the newly created and established publishing houses, which seemed to present variety, Party policy encouraged and

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[56] In this respect, MON was merely emulating the Soviet example.

published a largely unvarying and conformist literature. The physical threats typical of the Stalinist approach to literature gave way to financial incentives: writers could earn considerable sums of money from satisfying Party requirements.

The results did not ever completely satisfy the sponsors (with the exception, perhaps, of Hołuj's *Osoba* , which met with wide critical acclaim). Writers might have been keen to produce works on specific themes, especially where they coincided with personal interests - this held true, above all, for those who fought in the war, but also of worker-writers like Wantuła - yet frequently the personal authenticity which a writer brought to bear ran counter to the express political aims of giving a positive slant to the theme. This was perhaps inevitable, given the Party's tendency to treat literature primarily as 'issue-based' and to reserve the prerogative of interpretation of these 'issues' to itself alone. This was a frequent criticism voiced by all the writers I discuss, for the application of that prerogative had a decisive influence on an enormously important related 'issue', that of the depiction of the present.

During the period of Socialist Realism, the Party had called upon writers to depict present-day Poland in the throes of the Six Year Plan. At that time, the transformation of Poland into a more industrialised country did amount to a dramatic and far-reaching social and economic revolution. This gave some justification to the leadership's appeals to writers to address what was indeed the major issue of the day. By the 1960s and 1970s, however, these changes were no longer 'revolutionary', yet official propaganda continued to speak of them as though they were. In consequence, the essential formulations employed by the leadership during the first decade after the war remained in place throughout the whole period of the People's Poland's existence.[57] Bierut's speech to mark the opening of the radio station in

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[57] Michał Głowiński's analysis in his article 'Władza mówi do pisarzy' of three major speeches given by Bierut in 1947, Berman in 1951, and Gomułka in 1964 reveals a remarkable similarity in the assumptions and phraseology used by each. *Gazeta Wyborcza* (1995), 20-21 May, pp. 14-15.

Wrocław in November 1947 was the first official Party statement on the role art was to play in the new postwar reality and it ascribed an ultimately simple instrumental function to art:

> Of the various means of affecting people, it is art that probably has the most profound and universal impact on society, improving it, enlightening and nurturing it. A work of art can profoundly affect the mind as well as the feelings and the imagination, can electrify people, persuade and captivate them.[58]

Art, Bierut declares, could act directly on consciousness and influence people's attitudes in a fundamental way, either for better or for worse. Yet the most important feature of his speech was the deliberate linking of the cultural and economic spheres: the relations which existed between the individual and society in the production of material goods should also exist in the cultural sphere: 'It is an artist's obligation in forming the spiritual sphere of a nation's life, to insert himself into the pulsing heartbeat of the working masses'.[59] It was the artist's role therefore to boost the nation's moral confidence as it set about rebuilding the country.

After 1956, that rhetorical legacy remained valid, above all for politicians. Thus, Berman's exhortation to writers in 1951 to 'show us the greatness of our times' came to be remodelled later into less mandatory forms, which nonetheless continue to make the same point: literature, and above all the novel with its panoramic scope, should be offering a vision of the extraordinary 'great leap forward' undergone by the PRL since the war.[60] The logical consequence of this stance was to

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58 'Materiały do Studiów i Dyskusji z Zakresu Teorii i Historii Sztuki, Krytyki Artystycznej oraz Badań nad Sztuką', 1952 (1), pp. 8-9. Cited in D. Pirie's 'Engineering the People's Dreams', in: *The Mature Laurel. Essays on Modern Polish Poetry* (Bridgend, 1991), p. 136.

59 Ibid.

60 Compare, for instance, Zdzisław Grudzień's speech at the 1978 ZLP Congress in Katowice (my italics): 'People are waiting for books which create [sic !] *great works on the scale of the present era*, which teach people how to overcome difficulties'. ZLP Archive, 'XX Walny Zjazd w Katowicach, tom 1', p. 13. In each case, reality preceded creation, suggesting that the writer's business was to reflect these changes and the heroism of the effort to build socialism.

make of literature an instrument for transmitting general policy in fictional form, and at times when the Party moved to impose a harder line in cultural matters (especially between 1968 and 1970), politicians frankly admitted this.[61] In essence, then, politicians never really moved beyond the vulgarised understanding of the Marxist concept of reflection that prevailed during the early 1950s: depicted reality in novels could be measured against a primary, objective social reality and judged according to an assumption of mirror-like correspondence. Thus, as during Stalinism, literature came to be dependent on the already defined Party line, and was not allowed to formulate its own independent basis.

The Party leadership and certain Party critics, by retaining this simplified view of the function of literature, could then without any qualms demand that writers compose novels on specific themes or reflect state policy in their works. Thus, speeches by Party ideologues at writers' congresses in the 1960s would stress links between Nazi Germany and the Federal Republic, thereby indicating preferences for works which illustrated that thesis; yet by the 1970s, and the changed international situation, the need to emphasise German hostility in literary works, and to demonise the West Germans (who had inherited the Nazi traditions, as official 1960s propaganda proclaimed), ceased to apply. A similar approach applied to the position of the Catholic Church in Poland. The centrality of the Church in Polish history and its continuing importance in contemporary Poland was a subject of official taboo, but operative ideology towards it changed considerably between 1960 and 1972. From 1958 onwards, the Party launched a conscious campaign in the lead-up to the Millenium (1966), in which the Church was posited as a hostile force competing for spiritual domination over the Polish nation. One of the key features of the Gierek era was the reduction of tensions with the Church and an attempt to co-opt it into

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61 As did Olszowski, Secretary of the Press Department, at the 1969 Bydgoszcz Congress: 'However, literature as a significant element in the construction of public consciousness should reflect and correspond to the main arguments of our national policy'. ZLP Archive, 'XVII Zjazd Delegatów ZLP. Bydgoszcz, 7-9 II 1969 r., tom 1', p. 27.

playing a positive role in state social policy.

The primacy of operative ideology could be perceived in literature, too; what might be termed the immediate politically utilitarian aspects of a work were often vital at specific historical moments. The classic example in this respect was S.R. Dobrowolski's 1969 novel *Głupia sprawa*, which contained diatribes against all of the regime's enemies between 1967 and 1968: Poles of Jewish descent, Czechoslovak revisionism, Polish writers, students and German revanchism. In his haste to represent the Party line on the major questions of the day, the author crossed the boundary into pure propaganda, so that the novel was subsequently disowned by the authorities.[62] In this sense, the Party remained faithful to its declaration that literature was not to be reduced to the role of propaganda.[63] The contemporary theme, which it assiduously promoted, did not necessarily entail the most recent events.

By the same token, in line with the PZPR's relative neglect of fundamental principles, the notional centrality of the working classes and their representation in literature in the shape of the 'novel about work' ('powieść o pracy'), was never substantiated by any clear promotion of individual novels. None of these novels ever crossed the three-edition threshold established as a principal criterion of Party support in my introduction.[64] Accordingly, the Party can be said to have preferred literary personalities, the "names" of Polish literature, who enjoyed a certain popularity with the public at large. At the same time, these had to be writers who were themselves prepared to identify

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[62] Tadeusz Drewnowski has remarked that the work's over-explicit intention to serve led the Party to become ashamed of it, not to mention its crude anti-Semitism. Despite receiving a substantial first run of 30, 000 copies, the book was never reprinted.

[63] Gomułka declared at the 1964 ZLP Congress: 'We know that such literature ceases to be art and at the same time does not become good propaganda'. *Nowe Drogi*, 1964 (10), p. 8.

[64] The only novels about work regularly published dated from the socialist realist era, usually where they entered the school syllabus, as, for example, Newerly's *Pamiątka z Celulozy* (1952).

with the Party and place themselves at its disposal by supporting the Party line at critical moments. By their willingness to serve they could expect some remuneration in the form of slightly greater freedom in literary expression, wider promotion of their books and other financial privileges.

The Field of Operation: Tradition and Myth

Socialist cultural policy, as Andrzej Tyszka outlines, addressed two areas: firstly, the institutional structures through which works of culture were disseminated, such as libraries, universities and publishing houses; and secondly, the content of the culture relating to its meanings, values, ideas and aims.[65] To this end, cultural policy represented a choice of the symbolic content of culture and its effective transmission to the various strata of society.

In the first instance, the socialist state moved to guarantee access to culture for every member of Polish society. This entailed total subsidisation or decommercialisation by the state of all forms of cultural activity, so that these could be freed from the dictates of consumer demand and shaped according to aesthetic criteria and the ideological principles of socialization.[66]

The state's centre of attention was focused upon the second area, with the aim of shaping the symbolic content of the national culture. It had to do this in competition with the traditional values, forms, and modes of thinking which had composed the content hitherto. This necessarily entailed a process of appropriation, or 'reprioritisation' of the past, selecting those elements which were viewed as utilizable and excluding those which were not. In reality, as Michał Głowiński argues, this meant the 'elimination of traditional symbols, which had the authority both of Polish history and literature behind them, together with the ideas preserved in them, as well as the creation of a new

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65 *Ideały i interesy kultury* (Warsaw, 1987), p. 278.

66 Ibid., pp. 254-255.

symbolic universe.'[67]

This process was most visible during the Stalinist epoch (1949-1955). At that time, the consequences for the literary tradition were that those past writers who were conservative in outlook, such as Krasiński, or whose work lay open to charges of formalism, as for instance Norwid or the majority of inter-war writers, were excluded from what the state regarded as the 'progressive traditions' of Polish culture, and hence from circulation as a whole. Similarly, some works of approved Romantics, such as Słowacki's *Kordian* (1832), were not allowed to be performed due to their criticism of Russian imperialism.

The central axis of the state's approach to appropriating culture was to legitimise Poland's geopolitical position - the shifting of Poland's postwar borders further to the West. Official propaganda phrased this political change (over which it had no control) as a return to the heartland of ancient Polish culture, the territory occupied by the original Piast dynasty (960-1370). In effect, it was presented as a kind of restoration of the Poles' original tradition, so that the whole history of Polish expansion eastwards from the mid-fourteenth century was condemned as an imperialist aberration. By implication the loss of cities like Lvov and Vilnius in the Potsdam settlement was irreversible. The Party emphasised the need to accept the postwar changes as proof of the Poles' political maturity (their ability to rise above traditional anti-Russian "complexes") and an acknowledgement of the Soviet Union's decisive role in the creation of the new Polish state.[68]

This was undoubtedly an enormous task, given the models that had operated since the nineteenth century in Polish culture. One of the major obstacles for the Party in its desire to impose its values and ideology upon Polish society was the Poles' perception that, throughout

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[67] 'Polska literatura współczesna i paradygmaty symboliczne', *Konteksty*, 1995, nr 3-4, p. 134.

[68] This issue informed one of the most famous reappropriations of Polish history, Zbigniew Załuski's *Siedem polskich grzechów głównych* (1962), which is discussed in chapter four.

the nineteenth century, all authority ('władza') had been alien. Under those circumstances, the position of writers had been that of spokesmen for the victimised collective against its historical 'oppressors'. The notion of literature as serving the state therefore came into direct conflict with the Romantic and post-Romantic models that dominated Polish literature which emphasised its social obligations. In recognition of the power which these models exercised, Party critics in the early 1950s strove to harness elements of the national tradition by formulating Socialist Realism as a synthesis between the visionary nature of Romanticism (whilst tempering its heightened subjectivity) and the social objectivity of critical Realism. This was in large measure an act of wishful thinking in the light both of the primacy of political controls , which radically limited the scope of artistic "vision", and of the finished literary product itself.[69] The adaptation of the literary tradition in this way bore out the general myth promoted by the Party that the new Poland constituted a break with a thousand years of Polish history: since the struggles informing Romantic and post-Romantic writing had achieved their fulfilment in the form of the post-war Polish state, writers should now serve that state in their activity.

The purpose of literary activity became the transformation of social consciousness in a direction desired and indicated by the Party - in the spirit of Stalin's dictum that writers were 'engineers of human souls'. Accordingly, one of the key tasks for writers was to implant what Jan Prokop has termed the 'founding myths' of People's Poland in the collective imagination.[70] The chief objective of these myths was to realign Polish culture, downgrading its links with Western Europe in favour of its Eastern European connections, and in particular to

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[69] As Wojciech Tomasik argued in his *Polska powieść tendencyjna 1949-1955*, tracing the genealogy of the Polish Socialist Realist novel back to the tendentious works of the Positivists in the mid-nineteenth century.

[70] 'Mity fundatorskie Polski Ludowej', *Wyobraźnia pod nadzorem (z dziejów literatury i polityki w PRL)* (Cracow, 1994), pp. 15-42.

reinforce the idea of the primacy of the Soviet experience.[71] Prokop's analysis follows Georges Sorel's definition of myth as 'a means of acting on the present,'[72] but the irrationality which characterises Sorel's conception of myth is alien to Prokop's representation of the deliberate manipulations central to the establishment of Communist power in Poland after the war.[73]

A more empathetic assessment of the place and function of myth in post-war Polish culture is provided by Zbigniew Kubikowski.[74] His series of articles entitled 'The Glass Wall', published in the monthly *Odra* in 1983-84, analysed the passage of certain myths into public circulation, which 'defined the fundamental features, causes and effects of the historical situation' and influenced both the development and the reception of literature.[75] Like Prokop, Kubikowski stressed the importance of the immediate post-war years, and particularly the centrality of 'founding myths.' Unlike Prokop, however, he viewed

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[71] Prokop defines four spheres among the 'founding myths': (i) the 'iconization' of the founding fathers as models to emulate and thus the creation of a new pantheon of heroes, with Stalin at their head; (ii) 'founding events', particularly victorious battles alongside the Soviet Army over the Germans; (iii) the 'symbolic taking possession of space' via monuments of Lenin and those expressing gratitude to the Red Army for liberating Poland, and the renaming of streets and cities (for instance, between 1953 and 1956 the renaming of Katowice as Stalinogród); and finally, (iv) the substitution of religious festivities by new secular state festivities. Prokop, op. cit., pp. 21-24.

[72] 'Reflections on Violence', *From Georges Sorel. Essays in Socialism and Philosophy* (New Brunswick and Oxford, 1987), p. 210.

[73] As William Richter puts it: 'For Sorel myth is the incarnation of those marvellous and special forces that move men to the most extraordinary and special forces - a mysterious spring of creativity like the Bergsonian *élan vital*', *Myth and Literature* (London & Boston, 1975), p. 11.

[74] Since Kubikowski's pieces appeared in the official circulation and were thus subjected to censorship, his criticism was of necessity milder. Nonetheless, Prokop, writing in the 1990s, frequently falls prey to tendentiousness, as the titles of his later collections of essays reveal: *Writers in the Service of Brute Force* (1995), and *Sovietisation and its Masks* (1997).

[75] 'Szklany mur', *Odra*, 1983 (10), p. 36.

even the 'founding myths'[76] as having a certain degree of social support. The 'myths in circulation' or 'current myths' ('mity obiegowe') at different times, as Kubikowski terms them, were open to appropriation by various players, including the authorities, and thus represented more than the authorities' manipulation of an oppressed populace. Consequently, Kubikowski's conception of myth is more ambiguous and complex than Prokop's, for whom myth in its socialist variant is synonymous with falsehood. Although Kubikowski certainly never fully explains his use of the term 'myth', his approach on the whole may be defined as 'functionalist': he describes myth 'in terms of its operation within a social structure',[77] the 'social structure' in this case being post-war Polish society. The ultimate function of these myths might be described - to use George Schöpflin's words - as 'the maintenance of collectivities.'[78]

In the aftermath of the collapse of Socialist Realism, it might be more accurate to speak of the reformulation of 'collectivity', particularly on the part of writers. It was they who vigorously promoted the two key post-1956 myths through their works: that of **universal injustices** occurring under Stalinism,[79] where everyone suffered from repression and no-one could be burdened with the blame for those injustices, and its complementary myth of **clean hands**,[80] which was eventually appropriated by the authorities to absolve themselves of responsibility. To a certain extent, these might be understood as myths justifying writers' own participation in the Stalinist project of the early 1950s. By the 1960s, Kubikowski sees a new myth of the

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[76] The equivalent myths in Kubikowski's scheme for the period Prokop describes are the myth of a **New World** (*Odra*, 1983 (10), p. 37) and that of **universal progress** (ibid., p. 44).

[77] Richter, op. cit., p. 15.

[78] George Schöpflin, 'A Taxonomy of Myth', resumé for a paper given at the conference 'Myths and Nationhood', SSEES, London, 11-12 October 1996.

[79] Ibid., p. 48.

[80] 'Szklany mur', 1983 (11), p. 45.

stabilisation of Communist rule gaining ground,[81] with Poland attaining the status of being 'very nearly Europe'. With the rise of Gierek to First Secretary, the dominant myth, rigorously enforced by the state authorities throughout the seventies, was that of a **modern civilised society** with high living standards in the aftermath of the new social agreement struck between the state authorities and the rest of society in 1970.[82]

Although Kubikowski did not extend his analysis into the 1980s, the principal myth, which the military regime in particular was keen to promulgate, was that of Martial Law's being a **lesser evil.** The authorities implied that they were left without any alternative in the face of Solidarity extremism than to impose Martial Law, since Poland would otherwise have been invaded by Warsaw Pact forces.

At all points, the overriding impact of these officially sponsored myths was to bestow legitimacy upon the Party, to validate its own part in the collectivity. Loyalist writers, although they operated these myths in their works, did not conform entirely to them. The credibility of their writing was posited at least in part (as Strasser's comments about Putrament's *Małowierni* have shown - see footnote 18) upon their non-conformity, reflected in their capacity for broaching the political taboos outlined on pages 11-12.

The basic premise of their works was a commitment to the socialist order, but this was not always or ever identical with orthodoxy. As Leon Kruczkowski, one of the most orthodox Party figures, declared at the Third PZPR Congress, 'the writer's vision is always potentially at odds with generally accepted versions'.[83] To a great extent the freedoms allowed to writers depended on their place in the political and literary hierarchy as well as on the magnanimity of their superiors. Just as much time seemed to be spent convincing the latter

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81 'Szklany mur', 1983 (12), p. 43.

82 'Szklany mur', 1984 (5), p. 57.

83 *Nowe Drogi*, 1959 (4), pp. 433.

of the need for 'seeing differently' as upon following Party instructions.

Loyalists' arguments were motivated by their feeling that absolute political orthodoxy, even if possible, would make their works unreadable for the general public. Their notions of the readability of their works were formulated in terms of political daring - defining the boundaries for the discussion of systemic problems in the building of socialism.[84] For that reason, a successful 'committed work' must be understood not merely as the implementation of official policy, but as a development upon it. The nature of this development was the key issue for Party loyalists between 1959 and 1985.

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[84] And, to an increasing degree, descriptions of sex, after the sexual puritanism of Socialist Realist works.

CHAPTER TWO

The Development of 'Socialist Commitment' between 1959 and 1985.

> There is no question that literature is least of all subject to mechanical adjustment or levelling, to the rule of the majority over the minority. There is no question, either, that in this field greater scope must undoubtedly be allowed for personal initiative, individual inclination, thought and fantasy, form and content. All this is undeniable; but all this simply shows is that the literary side of the proletarian party cause cannot be mechanically identified with its other sides.[1]
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> Everyone is free to write and say whatever he likes, without any restrictions. But every voluntary association (including a Party) is also free to expel members who use the name of the Party to advocate anti-Party views.[2]
>
> V.I. Lenin

The above quotations from Lenin's 1905 pamphlet 'Party Organisation and Party Literature' largely define the parameters of Party debates on literary issues between 1959 and 1985. Loyalist writers would invariably stress the need to be given scope for personal initiative, while the leadership would insist on the primacy of discipline. It has been argued on numerous occasions that Lenin had in mind only the Social Democratic Party's local conditions in 1905 and that his terms should not apply to later Communist parties.[3] Nonetheless, the PUWP leadership was not alone in behaving as though they did.

In effect, it would seem that the debates concerning 'committed

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1 'Party Organisation and Party Literature', in: *Collected Works*, vol. 10 (London, 1962), p. 46.

2 Ibid., p. 47.

3 A. Kemp-Welch comments: 'His article thus becomes an index of alternating phases in Soviet literary policy, and the uses to which it was subsequently put reflected, rather than determined, what Party leaders of the time thought policy should be'. *Stalin and the Literary Intelligentsia, 1928-39* (London, 1991), p.15. G. Bisztray argues that two diametrically opposite interpretations of the article are possible, one dogmatic, the other liberal, depending on whether 'literature' is understood as every kind of writing or simply party-political literature, in: *Marxist Models of Literary Realism* (New York, 1978), pp. 35-36.

literature' were lost by writers even before they began. This was not the case, since the major concession resulting from 'Październik' was the prevalence of the notion of compromise in literary affairs. The crucial debates for the majority of the intelligentsia during 1956 were being conducted within Party structures,[4] not independently of them, and were indeed encouraged and sometimes instigated by the Party itself.[5] Writers regarded themselves as equal players in public affairs: writing, whether journalism, philosophy or fiction, was reformulated as an essential means of public control upon the political process.

In this atmosphere of fundamental debate concerning the future of socialism, the notion of a 'committed literature' became synonymous with fierce criticism of Stalinist abuses. The sense of public responsibility for the future of socialism inspired writers to speak out in a spirit of 'negativity and construction', as Sartre put it, and this view received confirmation right across the literary spectrum even from Party loyalists.[6] By 1959, the authorities would emphasise the negative aspects of this writing over the constructive, and accuse writers such as Andrzejewski of promoting the concept of the 'immanent evil' of socialism in works like *Ciemności kryją ziemię* (1957). Until the Secretariat published its 'Decree on the Situation in the ZLP' at the beginning of 1959, there had been no definitive statement by the leadership since 1954.

Instead, a mass of conflicting signals had emerged. The setting up of *Polityka* in February 1957 in competition with *Po prostu*, the most radical newspaper during "Październik', seemed to herald a return to dogmatism. The latter's eventual closure in October 1957 served to

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[4] This was particularly true of the Primary Party Organization (henceforth, POP - Podstawowa Organizacja Partyjna) of the Warsaw branch of the ZLP, which was constantly engaged in the political ferment of 1956, criticising anti-Semitism, bureaucratic methods and any attempt to curtail freedom of speech.

[5] The most famous was the Klub Krzywego Koła in Warsaw, established in 1955 because the ZLP had become, for the Party, too hostile to the Party line.

[6] See Roman Bratny's article from 1956, 'Jezu Maria - wszystko nieaktualne !', discussed in chapter three.

confirm these fears. Despite a demonstration against the closure, Gomułka refused to concede, making the affair an issue of Party discipline in a conference criticising 'revisionist tendencies in the press' in the Central Committee a few days afterwards:

> the time of decision has arrived. Journalists and newspaper writers have to choose either to be with the Party or against it, with socialism or against it (...) Discussions on this matter have come to end (...) Now we shall draw all the necessary Party and political conclusions.[7]

In general, from late 1957 the authorities vacillated as to the eventual shape of their cultural policy, floating both more and less liberal options. *Trybuna Literacka*, set up shortly after *Po prostu*'s demise and edited by Leon Kruczkowski, the ZLP chairman during the Stalinist years, belonged to the latter. The paper's approach consisted of a fairly dogmatic approach to literary matters, refusing to concede the demise of Socialist Realism. The closure of the paper in 1959 largely reflected its inability to defeat the boycott of its columns by the majority of writers, who had regarded it as neo-Stalinist.[8] Of the more eminent Party writers, only Kruczkowski and Putrament wrote frequently for the paper.

The other major development was the foundation of the Cultural Commission in October 1957 to advise on the means for disseminating culture and to help in the formulation of a new Party cultural policy. The participants were aware of the consternation that the body's existence caused the majority of artists, who considered it to be a facade for a return to Stalinist practices. Its creation coincided with the rejection of a number of individual initiatives for new literary magazines, which included *Europa*, whose main editor was to be Andrzejewski; *Rzecz*, the initiative of the critic Artur Sandauer and the avantgarde poet Julian Przyboś; and Tadeusz Drewnowski's *Krytyka*.

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[7] *Przemówienia. Wrzesień 1957- grudzień 1958*. (Warsaw, 1959), p. 21.

[8] 'Notatki i informacje dot. literatury i sytuacji w środowisku literackim', 1959, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-234, pp. 7, 77-78.

Seven writers, including Andrzejewski, left the Party in November in protest at the decision not to publish *Europa*. Subsequent fears of a possible mass exodus by writers from Party ranks seem to have ensured that the verification, which took place between November 1957 and May 1958, was never as stringent in the case of Party writers as it was in other areas of the Party organisation.[9]

More rigorous Party control began to be exercised over the remaining sections of the literary press. The next newspaper subjected to the leadership's attention was *Nowa Kultura*, which had also played a considerable part in the renewal process. In April 1958 Andrzej Werblan, one of the Party's chief ideologues, was detailed to a meeting with the editorial board to criticise the newspaper's 'revisionist tendencies'. Werblan stressed the need for discipline in each Party newspaper and for defending the Party line in all questions:

> The elementary duty of such a paper is to defend the Party's policies and its Marxist ideology. But the publication of views which contradict Marxism obviously has a different force in a Catholic newspaper, for instance, than in one edited by Party members.[10]

Werblan's criticism stood as a direct repudiation of the hopes of many writers who had been involved in the political changes of 1956. He asserted the primacy of discipline over the freedom to criticise. For the first time since the "Thaw", specific examples of the kinds of works unacceptable to the regime were provided. Werblan concentrated his fire on the 'retributionary' novels promoted by the paper, which he described as 'anti-socialist'. At the same time he insisted that Socialist Realism should not be uniformly dismissed, despite its inadequacies, because the works it had produced expressed a positive attitude towards

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[9] 'In relation to this type of people, especially artists of great individuality and talent, the maximum patience and wisdom must be shown'. 'Notatka z plenarnego posiedzenia Komisji d/s Kultury przy KC PZPR'. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-167, p. 2.

[10] *O socjalistyczny kierunek działalności kulturalnej* (Warsaw, 1958), p. 5.

socialism.[11] In those circumstances, the correct response was not 'retributionary', 'pessimistic' literature, but a 'better literature, committed to and fighting for socialism, for the Party's cause'.[12]

Werblan also defined for the first time what the Party ideologues understood by the term 'committed literature': 'committed literature' was one which focused its attack on capitalism and the bourgeoisie; it could not be a literature for judging socialism, since the Party had already made the necessary judgments. As at the introduction of Socialist Realism, the past was decreed to be a closed matter.[13] In this way, the concept of a 'literature committed to socialism', which for Sartre had presupposed the questioning of the methods used to implement socialism, was appropriated by Party ideologues and became synonymous with rubber-stamping the Party line.

The charges brought against *Nowa Kultura* by Werblan (and, by extension, the Party leadership) were followed up by a change in personnel in May 1958, aimed at strengthening the paper's fidelity to the Party line. Some of the more liberal members of the editorial board were replaced by more trusted Party figures, such as Kruczkowski and Putrament. Thus, Woroszylski, Wirpsza, and above all Kołakowski, who had published a number of articles critical of the Party's ideological approach, departed.[14] The post of chief editor was taken over by Stefan Żółkiewski, Minister for Secondary Education and the

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[11] Ibid., pp. 56-57.

[12] Ibid., p. 57.

[13] Ibid., p. 59.

[14] The essays 'Historia i odpowiedzialność' ('History and Responsibility') above all. See chapter four for a fuller consideration of these essays.

major Party "fireman" of the time.[15]

The Party leadership was therefore moving towards a definition of the limits of its tolerance in literary affairs by the middle of 1958. In the main, writers themselves regarded this as a development preferable to the current situation, in which their first contact with official structures was the Censorship Office. From November 1956, when Antoni Słonimski had replaced Kruczkowski as ZLP Chairman, union congresses had been dominated by criticism of the inconsistencies and rigidity of censorship. By the time of the Wrocław congress in December 1958, proceedings consisted of a continuous barrage of complaints against the workings of the GUKP.

The Party leadership's response to the protests at Wrocław was unbending. In early 1959 the Secretariat published its "Decree on the Situation in the ZLP", which denounced attacks on the Censorship Office as being merely a pretext to attack the Party itself:[16]

> The Secretariat of the Central Committee states most emphatically that all deliberations about 'creative freedom' are totally unjustified in connection with publishers' rejection of several works by contemporary authors. It was not aesthetic and artistic, but political considerations which dictated their decisions.[17]

The wording of this declaration is significant for the notion that the 'artistic' or 'aesthetic' aspects could be separated off to leave an essentially political statement. The 'several works' mentioned included

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[15] He had been the chief editor of the Marxist literary paper *Kuźnica* in the late 1940s, gave the key address launching Socialist Realism at the Szczecin ZLP Congress in January 1949, and was later head of the Institute of Literary Research in the Polish Academy of Sciences before becoming Secretary for Cultural and Educational Affairs in 1955. With the splitting of these departments in 1956, he took over Education and became the first editor-in-chief of *Polityka* before being sidelined during the early 1960s. His support for the students at Warsaw University in March 1968 resulted in his expulsion from the Central Committee at the end of that year.

[16] 'Uchwała Sekretariatu KC w sprawie sytuacji w ZLP', AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-173, p. 108.

[17] Ibid., p. 110.

some of Hłasko's 'black realist' stories and Stanisław Wygodzki's expose of the Stalinist years *Zatrzymany do wyjaśnienia* (*Detained for Questioning*). Such works were, in the authorities' monopolistic interpretation, 'objectively ... anti-socialist propaganda'.[18]

The major thrust of the 'Decree' was against the current Main Executive of the ZLP, who were called 'renegades'. Słonimski's definition of the Party's preference as a literature 'ku pokrzepieniu serc (...) aparatu administracyjnego' ('to boost the administration's morale') was especially aggravating for cultural officials.[19] Events in Wrocław gave an impetus to the administration's desire to find a replacement for Słonimski, particularly after the Main Executive had rejected the Secretariat's accusations.[20]

The document was also revealing as a record of the leadership's current thinking on the political situation. The preamble to its attack on the union's Main Executive spoke of the threat which the establishment of the Bundeswehr in West Germany presented to the so-called 'Regained Territories', former German lands in the north and west of Poland ceded to Poland after World War Two.[21] In those circumstances, writers' dissent became magnified into disloyalty to the state, and from 1958 the Congresses of Writers from the Western and Northern Territories began to assume prominence in the Party's drive to enforce orthodoxy.

This drive for orthodoxy was to an extent part of Gomułka's strategy to consolidate his power and reduce his dependence on his liberal supporters. But it was also influenced by the Party's campaign

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[18] Ibid., p. 111.

[19] 'Stenogram obrad IX Walnego Zjazdu Delegatów ZLP odbytego w dniach 15 i 16 grudnia 1958 roku we Wrocławiu', AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-180, p. 15.

[20] Tadeusz Galiński's information to the Cultural Commission in February 1959. 'Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Kultury KC w dniu 16 II 1959 r.', AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-230, p. 52.

[21] Op. cit., p. 108.

against the Church in the lead-up to the Millennium in 1966. This campaign was to see an end by the early 1960s to the concessions made to the Church after "Październik", above all, concerning religious education in schools. The culmination of hostilities with the Church occurred in November 1965, with the Polish bishops' letter to their German counterparts at the Vatican Council appealing for reconciliation.

The leadership was keenly aware of the weakness of the Party's situation within the country, in view of the popularity of the Church and the failure of collectivisation. In June 1963, at a meeting with writers to explain the reasons for the merger of *Nowa Kultura* and *Przegląd Kulturalny* to form *Kultura* , Gomułka made clear the leadership's own anxieties on that score:

> We've still a long way to go on the road to building socialism in Poland, and as far as transforming social consciousness in a socialist spirit is concerned, we haven't really begun.[22]

In this sense, the leadership's constant call for writers to conform was informed by political realism about the extent of the Party's weakness. Writers themselves argued the opposite case that their works and conduct should be governed by the imperative of persuading the unconvinced, for which they needed greater margins for manoeuvre.

In 1959, however, the leadership remained amenable to the notion of compromise, and Party cultural officials warned against too dogmatic an approach to the question of guaranteeing Party control in the writers' community. Dogmatism won out in the choice of ZLP chairman, insofar as Słonimski was considered unacceptable, but the proposed candidature of Iwaszkiewicz was an implicit recognition that the

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[22] Protocol from Gomułka's meeting with the editorial teams of the two newspapers on 5 June 1963. 'Narodziny "Kultury"' in: *Z tajnych archiwów* (Warsaw, 1993), p. 281.

imposition of a Party member would polarise the union.[23] Party control was to be guaranteed by the post of one of the vice-presidents going to a trusted Party figure.[24]

The leadership's considerations in the purely literary sphere were invariably more vague. The major change in operative ideology in culture was signalled at the Third Congress in March 1959. There, Gomułka declared the PUWP's cultural policy to have three principal features: *for* socialist literature and *tolerant of* what he termed 'progressive literature', so that past, non-Marxist works could be published if they served the cause of man's liberation.[25] The only restriction was to operate *against* 'black literature', which amounted to nothing more than 'the political propaganda of anti-socialist forces'.[26] The 'brutal realism' which characterised Marek Hłasko's prose was thus placed under prohibition.

In the aesthetic sphere, the Party abjured control over all stages and aspects of the creative process, reserving for itself solely judgment of the 'political dimension' of a literary work. Artistic styles were therefore a matter of indifference to the Party,[27] whose sole concern was the political interpretation that might be placed upon any work.

Once again, whilst the stress remained upon the values of socialism and realism, the spirit of compromise was evident in the

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[23] There was some support for Słonimski's continuance in office on almost exactly the same terms as Iwaszkiewicz. A report from early 1959 presents him as 'highly tractable' and as one who 'carries out instructions loyally', concluding: 'we believe that, for all his faults, he can be useful at the present time, provided that the Party manages union affairs in a proper, political manner'. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-234, p. 13.

[24] In December 1959 this was Putrament.

[25] 'Referat sprawozdawczy Komitetu Centralnego wygłoszony w dniu 10 marca 1959 r. na III Zjeździe PZPR przez I Sekretarza KC Władysława Gomułkę', *Nowe Drogi*, 1959 (4), p. 77.

[26] Ibid., p. 78.

[27] 'Current cultural policy guarantees creative artists [...] the freedom of creative experimentation without administrative interference in artistic matters', ibid., p. 77.

avoidance of the term 'Socialist Realism' in Gomułka's address. The problem lay rather in the delimitation of the categories 'tolerated' and 'anti-socialist', a problem which the speech left open.

The absence of any reformulation of Socialist Realism did not mean its utter repudiation by the leadership. In advance of the ZLP Congress, Stefan Żółkiewski, the Party's main theoretician on cultural affairs, launched the concept of a 'deepened Socialist Realism' in the columns of *Nowa Kultura*. The article 'Przygoda intelektualna czy walka ideowa'[28] was a version of his speech at the congress itself, which had been described by Zenon Kliszko as 'basically representing the Party's position, even if not officially approved by the Politburo'.[29] The leadership was therefore not prepared to jettison Socialist Realism as rapidly as writers, because it preferred to stress the continuity of Party cultural policy and to this end directed the Censorship Office to excise direct attacks upon Socialist Realism and 1950s' cultural policy in general.[30]

Żółkiewski's concerns were slightly different. As a theoretician, he opposed the notion that Socialist Realism be discredited on the basis of the imperfect works it had produced. But the politically liberal dimension of his relaunch of Socialist Realism could not be overlooked. Indeed, he had been one of the critics foremost in challenging the dogmatism of *Trybuna Literacka*'s approach.[31] Despite writers' hostility in the main to any reversion to the use of the term 'Socialist

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[28] *Nowa Kultura*, 1959 (29 November), pp. 1, 7.

[29] The meeting took place on 2 December 1959 to discuss Żółkiewski's speech before the congress. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-245, p. 81.

[30] Further indications of the administration's concern that the breach with other Bloc countries should not appear too great were the Polish embassies' reports on Polish writers' comments on Socialist Realism in the foreign press. The Soviet Writers' Union severely curtailed its exchanges with the ZLP towards the end of the 1950s, demonstrating the unacceptability of the Poles' deviation from the Soviet model. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-251.

[31] Specifically the idea that literary discussions should be organised along Party-approved lines. 'Głos z miejsca na lewicy', *Nowa Kultura*, 1959 (1 March), p. 1.

Realism', the subtleties of Żółkiewski's approach were appreciated at the ZLP congress by the Catholic critic Stefan Kisielewski, who expressed a preference for the 'dominant of the time' to be 'Żółkiewski's dialectical music, rather than Werblan's specifics'.[32]

The principal effect of Żółkiewski's argumentation was to render Socialist Realism into a term so theoretically imprecise that it could encompass any writing or author:

> the literary phenomenon known as socialist realism also comprises the creative work of artists of varying individuality and with different artistic biographies, as well as works which are often stylistically dissimilar ....[33]

His role rather resembled that of devil's advocate, using politically acceptable terminology to introduce politically unacceptable matter into critical debate. By doing so, he could steal a march on dogmatic tendencies within the cultural apparatus, which might use the term as a source of political definition.

This practice was current within liberal Western Marxist critical theory at the end of the 1950s and into the mid-sixties. This tendency crystallised in the works of the Roger Garaudy, the French Party Secretary, and Ernst Fischer of the Austrian Communist Party. Their respective books, *D'un réalisme sans rivages* (1963)[34] and *Von der Notwendigkeit der Kunst* (1959),[35] broke down the political divides between socialist and 'bourgeois' art and allowed Marxist critics to reclaim access to the important non-socialist art of the past and the present as a matter of fundamental interest and concern for socialists. The target cultures for their ruminations were the countries behind the

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32 'Materiały dot. X Zjazdu ZLP', AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-247, p. 254.

33 'Przygoda intelektualna czy walka ideowa', op. cit.

34 *Boundless Realism* (Paris, 1963).

35 (Dresden, 1959); first published in English as *The Necessity of Art* (London, 1963). Fischer's article 'Problem rzeczywistości we współczesnej sztuce' appeared in *Nowe Drogi* in May 1958.

Iron Curtain.

For Fischer, the ability of socialist art to carry conviction was predicated upon its depiction of the struggles inherent in socialist construction, that is, he was arguing for a socialist literature with a licence to be critical about the system in which it arose:

> The theory (originating in Stalin's time) which ordered the 'conflict-free' novel, which claimed the existence of non-tragic solutions to all problems that could arise in a socialist society, and which consequently demanded a happy ending to every story, has fortunately been cast aside - along with the equally false theory of increasing class differences under socialism. But there is still a tendency to sidestep the portrayal of conflicts and to substitute wish-fulfilments for reality.
>
> The less socialist art confuses its vision of the future with the idealisation of the present, the more it gains in authority and conviction.[36]

Central to Fischer's argument was the assumption that art was a means of winning the uncommitted over to socialism. 'Conflict-free' socialist art was inadequate for the purpose of convincing the uncommitted in two respects: firstly, on the aesthetic level, if 'happy endings' and other simplifications were uniformly imposed on every story, they would alienate readers with more sophisticated tastes; and secondly, on the political level, because concealing the difficulties necessarily involved in the process of building a socialist society would render the depiction of that society as one lacking in credibility.

Garaudy's book, with its advocacy of an 'open realism', capable of incorporating both classic realism and the avantgarde, came at an important moment for Polish liberals, when the Polish leadership was moving towards a more dogmatic line.[37] There was little in the book that was new for Polish critics: Garaudy's rehabilitation of Kafka's writings, important for Czech critics' struggle against dogmatism in

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36 *The Necessity of Art*, op. cit., p. 216.

37 Żółkiewski reviewed Garaudy's book in his 1963 article 'Nowy spór o realizm', published in *Zagadnienia stylu* (Warsaw, 1965), pp. 84-106.

literature, was something of a dead letter in the Polish context.[38] Nonetheless, the ground had to be fought over yet again, because the 'discussion with the vulgarisers' had not finished.[39]

The Situation in the ZLP, 1959-1965

After 1960, the general trend in Party policy was towards 'integration', that is, consolidation of Party control over literary life. The replacement of Słonimski by Iwaszkiewicz was achieved largely without a hitch, and appeared to confirm the authorities' command. Jerzy Putrament assesses this smooth transfer of power as a short period of grace granted by the majority of writers to the Party organisation.[40] Since overt protests had failed, the initiative passed to Party writers to see whether they could ease pressing issues, like censorship, through consultation. Over the next two years, it appeared that Party writers were no better placed to solve these problems.

One of the key problems lay in the much reduced allocation of paper for literature. The "paper shortage" became the focus of attention at the December 1962 ZLP Congress, and was seen as a further restriction upon contemporary prose. The other was the perennial issue of censorship restrictions. Although the criticism of the GUKP was more veiled than at Wrocław, the consequences of the Office's activity for 'committed literature' were made clear by numerous participants. Witold Wirpsza, one of the Party liberals, traced the problems back to the leadership's monopoly on power:

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38 See the interview with Edward Goldstücker, the former Chairman of the Czech Writers' Union, in A.J. Liehm's *The Politics of Culture* (New York, 1973), pp. 278-308. I am grateful to the late Igor Hájek for directing me to this source.

39 The 'vulgarisers' whom Żółkiewski had in mind were the 'Partisan' group, which had pushed for a new cultural freeze at the XIII Plenum of July 1963. At the time Gomułka's unwavering support for Socialist Realism represented a concession to these dogmatists. Culture seemed the last bastion of liberal tendencies within the Party, but even there a liberal rearguard action was in process.

40 As Putrament states: 'We - the Party members - received a certain amount of time and trust on credit to improve relations [between writers and the state authorities], to find the optimal modus vivendi'. *Pół wieku, tom 5: Poślizg* (Warsaw, 1980), p. 287.

The touchstone for the existence of a genuine civic society is control over rulers exercised by the ruled. And only from this fundamental requirement, from the right to full criticism, can any kind of commitment in art be derived: be that aesthetic, cognitive or moral. For it would be a mistake to suppose, for example, that socialist literature is identical with pro-government literature, even when that government is socialist.[41]

Wirpsza went on to argue that the socialist government needed to preserve writers' independence from, and frequently against, itself. Without such guarantees, there could be no 'committed literature', nor any variety in literary trends.[42] His plea for the authorities to demonstrate some magnanimity went unheard. The Party leadership was concerned instead to tighten its control, as it had demonstrated by closing down the Klub Krzywego Koła in February 1962, and this trend continued into the following year with the merger of *Przegląd Kulturalny* and *Nowa Kultura*.

One of the key sources of hope for writers had been the impetus given to de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union by Khrushchev at the Twenty-second Soviet Party Congress in October 1961. The literary symbol of the serious nature of the process was the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* in *Novyi Mir* in the autumn of 1962, which had to be personally sanctioned by Khrushchev.[43]

The Polish leadership, bent on a more dogmatic course, had experienced some discomfort as a result of these developments, so that Khrushchev's subsequent rapid retreat from cultural liberalisation fell more into tune with its outlook. At two meetings with Soviet writers, convened in December 1962 and March 1963, Khrushchev reasserted his dedication to Socialist Realism and warned against any further attempts to deal with the abuses of the past. The PUWP's Cultural

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41 'Stenogram obrad XIII Zjazdu Delegatów ZLP w dniu 7 grudnia 1962 r.', AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-211, p. 129.

42 Ibid., p. 130.

43 It was published in *Polityka* at the end of 1962.

Department was interested in importing onto Polish soil - in (what it described as) a suitably modified form - some of the ideas expressed by the Soviet leadership at those meetings.[44] The attempt to reintroduce Socialist Realism, and the general attack on 'bourgeois experimentalism' at the XIII plenum, indicated however that those modifications had changed little from the Soviet original.

Intolerance towards 'different ways of viewing' invariably had catastrophic effects for any genuine 'commitment'. The notion of a 'committed literature' came to be identified for the authorities with the approval of the current Party programme, and they viewed liberal writers' use of the term as 'bad faith'. This much had been suggested by the leadership's hostile response to the manner in which the issue was treated in the last few numbers of *Przegląd Kulturalny*.[45]

Andrzej Kijowski and Jan Strzelecki had given a liberal exposition of the concept of 'commitment'. For Strzelecki, the most valuable feature of any kind of 'commitment' had to lie in the questioning of values, a receptive 'anxiety' about one's own activity:

> Without this anxiety, any organisation will be threatened by a kind of integrationism, by a mania for omniscience and omnipotence. I regard this anxiety as one of the most important features of socialist commitment, as that feature without which our longtime hopes that socialism will be a system of cooperation, harmonising the principles of organisation and liberty, would prove to be in vain.[46]

Kijowski applied the conclusions of Strzelecki's argument to literature. For him, 'commitment' meant fidelity to artistic vision,

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44 'Wystąpienia przedstawicieli kierownictwa KPZR w sprawach literatury i sztuki, a węzłowe zadania pracy ideologicznej w polskich środowiskach twórczyc.' Cultural Department report dated 23 March 1963. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-196, pp. 199-207.

45 Gomułka ironised about the sort of 'commitment' Andrzej Kijowski defined in his article discussed below, 'It was a very muddled article, and what exactly was 'commitment' ? In fact, it doesn't exist, a writer is an individualist, he's committed to himself, but he's always committed to a specific ideology' [sic !]. 'Narodziny "Kultury"', op. cit., p. 324.

46 *Przegląd kulturalny*, 1963 (21), p. 4.

wherein each (true) work of art represented the creation of a world from its foundations and necessitated the artist's going beyond conventions.[47] This had artistic as well as ethical and (although Kijowski did, or could, not state them) ultimately political consequences:

> [Art] has its own superior law, which is experimentation, choice, anxiety; it has its own ethic, a contrary ethic, one of disbelief and inconsistency.[48]

Kijowski reserved the right for the artist to criticise, not merely reality, but the forms which 'commitment' itself took. In the final analysis, his art's credibility was premised upon its capacity to generate critical thought about the nature of 'commitment' and, by extension, to convince others.

The central tenets of these arguments were shared by Party and non-Party writers alike. Freedom to debate the issue concerned all of them.[49] The leadership's intransigent refusal to distinguish between 'commitment' and 'subordination' led it to class any dissenting opinion as political hostility and to take reprisals against its subject. In effect, the leadership resisted the idea of problems endemic to Party rule.[50]

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[47] *Przegląd Kulturalny*, 1963 (22), p. 8.

[48] Ibid.

[49] As Bohdan Czeszko did in reply to Kijowski and Strzelecki: 'The boundary between commitment and subordination is sometimes difficult to perceive. (...) Can literature be committed ? Yes, but it is a long, laborious and obviously dialectical process'. 'Nieśmiałe uwagi do niektórych zagadnień związanych z pewnymi aspektami problemu literatury zaangażowanej', *Przegląd Kulturalny*, 1963 (22), p. 6.

[50] At the meeting in June 1963 Gomułka was particularly hostile towards the idea of a 'generational struggle', seeing it as an obfuscation of the class struggle and as internally divisive: 'This is the essence of what you were aiming at (...): 'Let's stir things up a bit more, let's fall out with each other, let's egg on the young". 'Narodziny "Kultury"', op. cit., pp. 285-286. What Gomułka had in mind was a series of articles in *Przegląd Kulturalny* throughout 1962 and 1963 discussing crime among the young and their indifference to 'socialist values', e.g. 'Polak model 1962' and 'Przestępczość nieletnich', 1962 (32), 'Trudna młodzież', 1963 (1), 'O nieletnich inaczej', 1963 (6). At the same time Jerzy Putrament's *Pasierbowie* was being serialised in the paper and directly addressed the issue of a generational struggle within the Party itself, which caused considerable problems for the GUKP when the novel came to be published in book form. See Appendices.

The central problem for the Party leadership was the lack of any compelling ideology to lift the Party out of stagnation. The move towards 'real socialism' after 1956 had led to a situation termed somewhat contemptuously the 'minor stabilisation'. This term encompassed the effects of the opening up of Poland to Western Europe after 1956, with the introduction of a 'socialist consumerism'. The younger generation in particular was seen as having 'lost its bearings' and submitted to a penchant for all things Western at the expense of 'native' socialist values.

The crux of the problem was undoubtedly the perceived inability of the ideology to mobilise the populace, once the teleological aspects of socialism had been shelved in favour of short-term material achievements. The problem was compounded by the general resistance within the leadership to any return to Stalinist methods, whilst liberalisation on the other hand simply contributed to that very loss of Party cohesion and control. Its response was to move towards a qualified patriotism in its official discourse, which stressed the 'national' character of socialism in Poland.

Central to this shift was the rise of the 'Partisan' faction, whose unofficial leader was the later deputy Interior Minister, Mieczysław Moczar.[51] Their basic philosophy consisted of the promotion of the importance of the Polish military tradition, and consequently prized discipline as the supreme value in public life. Its foray into culture was contained in two of Zbigniew Załuski's works, *Przepustka do historii* (1961) and *Siedem polskich grzechów głównych* (1962). These provided a classic example of the Party's attempt to reappropriate history.

The focus in the *Siedem polskich grzechów głównych* , the more renowned of the two works, lay in Załuski's emphasis on the centrality

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51 François Fejtö's summation expresses the faction's essential character: 'They were mostly former resistance fighters who had been pushed into the background if not actually imprisoned under Bierut. They were held together by a curious mixture of Communist orthodoxy, authoritarianism, demagogic nationalism tinged with anti-Semitism, distrust of the liberal intellectuals and reverence for the army'. *A History of the People's Democracies* (2nd edition) (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 178.

of the military to the national struggles for independence from the end of the eighteenth century. Załuski saw this tradition as being ridiculed by the films of the 'Polish School' in cinema and the works of satirists such as Sławomir Mrożek, which bore the brunt of his criticism. He alleged that they fostered the illusion that all Polish military endeavours had been doomed from the outset, being driven by the Romantic cult of martyrdom ("martyrology") and not military realism. He refuted this charge by demonstrating the political and military rationale behind seven such allegedly suicidal incidents.

The key element not addressed by the author was the extent to which the military tradition should be seen to supplant the conspiratorial and Party tradition. Załuski sketched out a genealogy for People's Poland in the manner that emphasised the military contribution over the conspiratorial, which rather diminished the role of the Party organisation. This in itself suggested the demise of the socialist elements in the Party's ideology, but Załuski's analysis offered no substantial solutions to the current impasse. Insofar as he called for a 'properly socialist upbringing' for the young, his conclusions were regarded as unexceptionable.

The first public demonstration of the intellectuals' growing disillusionment with the Gomułka regime was the 'Letter of the Thirty-Four', sent by leading intellectuals to prime minister Cyrankiewicz in March 1964.[52] Faced by silence from the authorities, Jan Józef Lipski, one of the signatories, handed the letter to a French correspondent, who then saw to its publication in leading newspapers around the world. In the letter, the intellectuals criticised the authorities' reductions in the provision of paper for books and periodicals, together with the increasingly stringent censorship restrictions.

The leadership's immediate reaction was to apply sanctions

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[52] It was also essentially an invitation for the Party leadership to discuss cultural problems.

against those signatories whom it could not persuade to recant.[53] It also organised a counter-letter by six hundred writers and intellectuals to deny the Thirty-Four's criticisms.[54]

The whole affair threatened the increasingly precarious equilibrium achieved in the ZLP in 1959. Iwaszkiewicz objected that sanctions undermined his own position as mediator, and that forbidding writers to write was illogical and only made them into heroes and martyrs.[55] The intervention by the respected author Maria Dąbrowska further challenged the leadership's resolve to punish the offenders.[56]

The crisis brought out the particular character of the ZLP under Iwaszkiewicz's chairmanship. He strove to deny access to politics, whether of an oppositional or Party nature, thus promoting the notion of the autonomy of literature. His resistance to opposition protests, which was more frequently required, was more attuned to the authorities' thinking. But the Main Executive, under his guidance, tempered the more drastic retaliation demanded against oppositionists by the regime in 1968 and 1969.

The proof of the reconciliation between the Party leadership and the writers' community came with Gomułka's attendance at the ZLP Congress in Lublin in September 1964. The revitalised concept of Socialist Realism, strongly in evidence at the previous year's XIII plenum, did not reappear in his speech. Instead, he struck a tone of magnanimity, drawing on his own experience of Stalinist repression to suggest the need for complexity in the genuine Communist's response to the early nineteen-fifties. At the same time, he reaffirmed the shift in

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53 About a third repudiated the letter, once it was published in the foreign press. The remainder were banned from publishing or travelling abroad on various engagements.

54 The number of signatories of the official response was not proof of support for Party policy, since many who agreed to sign agreed with the Thirty-Four's criticism.

55 'Notatka w sprawie spotkania Towarzysza Wiesława z Prezydium Zarządu Związku Literatów', AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-267, p. 170.

56 So much so that Kliszko responded personally before a meeting of the Warsaw branch of the ZLP. Dąbrowska had been courted by the Stalinist regime and was treated with respect by the Gomułka regime.

the Party's operative ideology made in 1959, denying that the authorities intended to reduce literature to political propaganda:

> We do not intend to simplify or vulgarise the duties and role of the writer, or the social functions of literature. and reduce them to the tasks of political propaganda. We know that such literature ceases to be art and at the same time does not become good propaganda. The Party does not need flattery or the varnishing of reality. Our Party needs a literature which would participate in the great work of transforming man's consciousness....[57]

The truce in intellectual life did not endure. As far as the ZLP was concerned, the regime's attack became more focused on those who wrote under pseudonyms for emigre publications in London and Paris, or who dared to criticise Poland's situation in private letters.[58] These cases seemed to be intended as warnings to the writers' community.[59] Thereafter the leadership's attention turned increasingly to what proved to be the final throes of 'revisionism' within the Party itself.

Internal Party Debates, 1965-1967

The problem of alienation within socialist society became crucial to many theoreticians' thinking during the 1960s. In their analysis of the economic and social crisis in the country contained in the 'Open Letter to the Party' in May 1965, Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski provided a radically Marxist analysis of the post-Stalinist system. They argued that Polish society was divided into working classes and a Party bureaucracy that exploited them just as efficiently as under capitalism, and that this bureaucracy was entirely free of any form of public control. Kuroń and Modzelewski were imprisoned for their views, and their letter was not widely read, but their analysis was symptomatic of

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57 'Przemówienie tow. Władysława Gomułki na XIV Zjeździe Związku Literatów Polskich w Lublinie', *Nowe Drogi*, 1964 (10), p. 8.

58 January Grzędziński, Jan Nepomucen Miller and Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz came under the first category; Melchior Wańkowicz, the second.

59 Miller and Wańkowicz were given suspended sentences; action against the others was dropped.

the general dissatisfaction experienced by left-wing intellectuals regarding the developments since 1956.

In *Marksizm a jednostka ludzka* (1965),[60] Adam Schaff, the leading Party theoretician, explored the problem of alienation in socialist society from a different angle. Although he was far from exploring the issue in the radical manner that Kuroń and Modzelewski had done, he nonetheless agreed that alienation could arise under state socialism. Whilst denying that the political elite which had taken shape in Poland since the war constituted a new class, as Kuroń and Modzelewski had insisted in their acknowledgement of the Yugoslavian revisionist Milovan Djilas, he accepted that this elite enjoyed a privileged social position:

> although [this privileged social position is] natural, and even inevitable at a certain stage of development, it is fraught with danger and for that reason alone should be examined and considered with care. The danger lies in the fact that exceeding certain boundaries of privilege when there is nothing to prevent this from being inevitable has negative consequences from a socialist viewpoint, above all for people's upbringing.[61]

Schaff's equivocation did not save him from the leadership's ire. During a discussion arranged specially by the editorial board of *Nowe Drogi*[62] and the Central Committee's Science and Education Department on 12 October 1965, Zenon Kliszko, the Politburo member responsible for ideological matters, accused him of failing to take into account the 'theoretical achievement' of the PUWP.[63] In a word, Schaff had committed the heresy of denying the Party's leading role in the building of socialism.

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60 *Marxism and the Human Individual.*

61 *Marksizm a jednostka ludzka* (Warsaw, 1965), p. 288.

62 The proceedings were later published in *Nowe Drogi*, 1965 (11), pp. 57-186.

63 'The chief political and theoretical defect of Comrade Schaff's work is that he has eliminated from his deliberations the Party and its role both in developing socialist theory and in shaping the practice of socialist construction'. Ibid., p. 175.

Evident in outline in Schaff's work was the distinction intellectuals had begun to introduce between socialist theory and the Party and the increasing need that was felt to return to fundamental principles. Critical thinking could not be done within PUWP structures any longer, and the changes associated with October 1956 were being eroded by the Party's growing illiberalism. This process came to be known as the 'retreat from October' and the most complete expression was provided by Leszek Kołakowski in a speech marking the tenth anniversary of "Październik" at Warsaw University on 21 October 1966.

The central tenet of Kołakowski's speech, which exists only in fragmentary form in Party archives, was that the changes heralded by "Październik", though real, had no legal safeguards which could guarantee their survival. The freedoms won at that time could be rescinded at any moment by the authorities. For that reason, Kołakowski argued, there had been no progress over the past ten years, because 'the system of repression and universal terror could be reintroduced, as it had once been introduced, on the basis of existing legislation'.[64] No public controls existed to curb the authorities' use and abuse of power.

The repercussions of this speech shook the Party's relations with its own liberal writers. Six days after the speech, the Central Commission of Party Control expelled Kołakowski from the Party, which brought a letter of protest from 15 (eventually 17) writers in the Warsaw organisation. When other writers expressed their support for Kołakowski, the Party leadership convened a commission to discuss the matter individually with each signatory and to insist on their conformity with Party discipline.[65] The refusal of the writers to submit resulted in the expulsion of four (including Bocheński and

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64 'Materiały dot. L. Kołakowskiego', AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-268, p. 7.

65 The bulk of these materials were published in *Res Publica*, 1991 (7-8), pp. 14-58, although no source was given by the compiler, Barbara N. Łopieńska.

Konwicki) and the resignation of eleven (including Kazimierz Brandys, Newerley, Woroszylski and Stryjkowski), who had all been key writers under Stalinism.[66]

The leadership also took the unusual step of meeting Party writers' organisations in Warsaw and Cracow during December to underline its intransigence in the face of protests. The response in Warsaw was far more critical than in Cracow, where the loyalist stalwarts Hołuj and Machejek were unfaltering in their support of the decision. In Warsaw, Starewicz made clear the extent of the leadership's determination:

> regardless of the quantity and forms of comrades' involvement in the Kołakowski affair, the decision to expel him from the Party cannot be changed. Comrades should (...) rid themselves of any illusions that pressure on the leadership will bring any results. The leadership makes decisions according to its own evaluation of the political situation and is responsible for those decisions to the Party Congress.[67]

Starewicz's statement provided the final confirmation for many of the leadership's gravitation to a hard line in cultural affairs. Discipline had won out over freedom to criticise and dissent within the Party structures. In its dealings with writers, the leadership evinced a considerable psychological complex, giving the impression, as Putrament commented, that literature was the only problematic area of Party policy.[68] The interest of 'hostile foreign centres' in Polish

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66 A point which the regime was quick to use as proof of their 'bad faith' towards the socialist order in Poland, stating that when abuses were at their height during the Stalinist era, they had been keen to identify themselves with the Party programme, but in more liberal times they attacked the Party. This technique became widely adopted after March 1968, Wincenty Kraśko's pamphlet *Głos w dyskusji przedzjazdowej* (1968) being a prominent example. Andrzej Mencwel's series of articles 'Kryzys w literaturze polskiej' from September 1969 in *Współczesność* represented the literary-critical version of the same, analysing leading oppositionists' works as the genealogy of their 'political betrayal'.

67 AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-268, p. 68.

68 At the PZPR's Twelfth Plenum in July 1968 Putrament said that the Fourth Congress in 1964 had given the impression that, apart from the situation in the ZLP, 'everything else appeared all sweetness and light'. *Nowe Drogi*, 1968 (8), p. 100.

literary affairs, because writers were seen as an unofficial opposition,[69] made the leadership peculiarly sensitive to criticism from that quarter. Nonetheless, the leadership continually ignored even Party writers, refusing either to respond to their initiatives or to meet a delegation to discuss the situation in culture.[70]

From December 1965, after the ZLP Congress in Cracow, Party writers were particularly keen to organise a nationwide conference. It was not until May 1968 that the leadership conceded to their demands, but it took place under quite different circumstances. For the authorities, it was to re-emphasise the necessity of discipline; since the Party was at last to be purged of revisionists, loyalist writers, by contrast, saw the conference as proof that the moment had arrived to press their own claims for special treatment.

Clampdown: 1968-1970

Only the direction from which the major crisis in literary affairs arrived in 1968 was unexpected. The repression of Warsaw students, who had protested at the closure of Dejmek's production of *Dziady* in January, was the immediate cause. An Extraordinary Meeting of the Warsaw branch of the ZLP was convened on 29 February. The motion was supported by some of the most renowned Party loyalists, like Bratny, who strove in this way to maintain the appearance of Party control over events by their participation.[71] In effect, it became another occasion for writers to manifest their dissatisfaction with state cultural policy. Party writers attempted to control the excited atmosphere of the proceedings but made no headway against the more

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69 As Putrament put it: 'particularly in literature, the political struggle which is stifled elsewhere can find some outlet'. *Literatura na rozdrożu* (Warsaw, 1968), p. 39.

70 The 'Newerley Memorandum' of 1965, which was an attempt by the Warsaw Party Writers' Organisation to voice some disquiet about the cultural situation.

71 *Marcowa Kultura*, op. cit., p. 112.

militant mood of the majority.[72] In fact afterwards, Party writers were reprimanded for their attempts at moderation.

The events of March 1968 fully confirmed the Party leadership's prejudices about writers. The slogan 'Studenci do nauki, literaci do pióra !' ('Students, to your studies ! Writers, to your pens !'), [73] encapsulated their attitude towards writers at the time. Writers were to desist from political activity, a rebuke that extended even to Party loyalists.

Józef Lenart reflected the uncompromising spirit of the leadership's views on political activity by writers in his article 'Wobec zjazdu literatów' ('In the face of the Writers' Congress') prior to the ZLP's Bydgoszcz conference in February 1969. He restated the Party's operative ideology towards culture, but failed to explain what constituted the politically unacceptable in a literary work:

> The criticism of existing reality displayed by literature and art is not synonymous with journalistic criticism and the negativism of propaganda. It becomes a political problem only when - through dominating literature - it crosses its "political threshold" and is thus transformed from an artistic into an improvised political fact requiring action by means appropriate to political struggle.[74]

Lenart suggested a political 'de-centring of the author', saying that an author's political stance could not be equated with his literary works. In theory, this might have led the way to a more liberal treatment of writers, with works seen apart from their authors' political comments or actions. The real point was the authorities' pragmatism, however, since it was used to justify the republication of works by

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[72] Putrament spoke of Gomulka's particular aversion to writers, but neither these confidences, nor the resolution sponsored by Dobrowolski, placated the rest.

[73] The authorities launched it at the first organised meetings in factories on 11 March 1968 as part of the public campaign against the Warsaw branch of the ZLP. *Kultura polska po Jałcie, t. 2* (2nd edition), (Warsaw, 1991), p. 529.

[74] 'Wobec zjazdu literatów', *Nowe Drogi*, 1969 (2), p. 42.

writers currently under opprobrium.[75]

This tactic gave some basis to the kinds of resentments that had been aired at the Party Writers' conference of May 1968, and specifically the leadership's willingness to accommodate 'oppositionists' at its loyalists' expense. Tadeusz Hołuj, in particular, seized the opportunity to further the case for greater freedoms for an unambiguously 'committed literature', implicitly rejecting the leadership's cordoning off of aesthetics and politics:

> ... we want our work to be useful, not only in the aesthetic sphere (by shaping artistic tastes and responses, etc.), but also in the political (by influencing social consciousness). But it must be stamped with an individual analysis of reality - our own analysis and our own judgments - in our literary works and in our journalism. In saying this, we have in mind, first and foremost, committed literature, fiction and journalism that addresses the main intellectual currents of the Communist movement, its principal problems, and its conflicts old and new. For we believe that without the further extension of creative freedom in these areas, the continued and complete development of socialist literature and journalism may be seriously impaired. (...) a committed book (...) cannot give up any human problem and avoid any subjects which are socially delicate or have yet to be solved by the authorities.[76]

Hołuj also attempted to raise again the issue of systemic problems inherent to building socialism (which were not simply the results of anti-Communist sabotage) and the inadequacies of the Censorship Office as an institution for judging the ideological content of literary works. These contentions were forcefully rejected by Kliszko, who rebuked Hołuj for failing to mention the main enemy, which was

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[75] Above all this affected Jerzy Andrzejewski, whose novel *Popiół i diament* (1948) was a school set text. In 1968 he was the first to publish a novel with the emigre publishers Instytut Literacki under his own name. A letter from Wasilewski, the Director of PIW, which published *Popiół*, to Kraśko, the Head of the Cultural Department, in January 1969 shows that the Party considered banning *Popiół* in retaliation. AAN, KC PZPR, PZPR 237/XVIII-331, p. 87.

[76] 'Narada pisarzy członków partii w Wydziale Kultury KC PZPR - 25.V.1968', AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-314, pp. 50-51.

revisionism.[77] Hołuj's plea for greater freedoms was out of keeping with the leadership's mood, which was, as ever, more concerned with pacifying the Warsaw branch of the ZLP.

To this end, Putrament was charged with the responsibility of forcing through the Party's list of candidates for the coming congress. All opposition candidates were crossed off, or boycotted the proceedings, while many moderates stayed away. The hardliners in the Party thus showed that they were no longer prepared to make concessions and that complete subordination of the union was now their sole concern.[78]

The most significant change made to the Union statutes at the congress granted to the Main Executive the power of expelling any member from the Union for publishing work in emigre publications.[79] The main targets of this change were the three oppositionists who had led the attack on the Party in March 1968, Kisielewski, Grzędziński, and Jasienica, whose expulsion had been voted for by the Warsaw branch POP and the ZLP's Main Executive. But this sanction was never used, and never insisted upon by the Party leadership. Even before Gierek's accession to power, liberalisation was again enveloping culture.

A significant absentee at Bydgoszcz was Iwaszkiewicz, officially due to illness. In retrospect, this had beneficial effects for his own

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[77] Ibid., p. 226. Kliszko had evidently expected an easier ride from the conference and criticised the Cultural Department for passing Hołuj's speech. So much is indicated by Kraśko's side of the correspondence, in which he stated that the speech had been very much toned down, with 'the sharper fragments being crossed out by the Department'. 'Notatka o krajowej naradzie pisarzy-członków PZPR', ibid., p. 324.

[78] Marta Fik presents extensive material from the Party archives concerning these events in *Kultura Niezależna*, 1991 (70), pp. 116-136, and a commentary on March 1968 and the Bydgoszcz Congress in the light of these documents in her article 'Marzec '68. Za kogo się wstydzimy ?', *Puls*, 1991 (50), pp. 83-99.

[79] The atmosphere of the congress is best illustrated by the fact that there was only one opposing vote (Krzysztof Mętrak). However, Zbigniew Kubikowski argued against executive and judicial power being placed in one body (the ZLP Main Executive), stating that expulsion should be decided by the ZLP's own Court of Arbitration. ZLP Archive, 'XVII Zjazd Delegatów ZLP, Bydgoszcz, 7-9 February, 1969, tom 3', pp. 305-307.

status: Putrament had initiated the hard line after March, leaving Iwaszkiewicz untainted. The new Party leadership looked to the latter to continue to represent the compromise in literary life.

The Gierek Years, 1971-1980.

By the end of 1968 revisionism as a creative strand in Party thinking may be said to have been defeated: all major dissenters had been expelled or else had quit the Party. The intellectual ferment it had generated died down, so that the most interesting debates were thereafter outside Party structures, in the interstices between the tolerated and the illegal.

This was reflected in writers' muted response to the events of December 1970. The Party authorities themselves were surprised, indicating that they had underestimated the success of their pacification of the ZLP throughout 1968 and into 1969. Intellectuals tended rather to view the changes in 1970 as a change of management, not as a fundamental change to the political system itself. And so, while being pleased by the absence of political demonstrations, the Party was at the same time somewhat disappointed at the lack of enthusiasm shown by the majority of writers towards the new leadership.[80] They were waiting for an indication of the new leadership's approach to cultural affairs.

This amounted to a test of faith by writers and related to two principal areas. The first was the rehabilitation of prominent figures (Stefan Kisielewski, Leszek Kołakowski and Paweł Jasienica), who had been vilified by the regime during the March campaign and subjected to official sanctions afterwards.[81] The second issue revolved around writers' hopes for some relaxation in censorship to

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80 'Aktualna sytuacja środowiska literackiego i ogólne wnioski w sprawie zasad i kierunków działania przed Walnym Zjazdem ZLP', 7 October 1971, AAN, KC PZPR, PZPR, Sekretariat KC, paczka 276, 1710/34, teczka 35, p. 1.

81 The issue was felt with particular keenness in the case of Jasienica, who had died still blacklisted in 1970. Members of the ZLP canvassed for some form of public apology. This did not materialise, but the publication of Jasienica's works on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth suggested a posthumous semi-rehabilitation.

enable them to deal with events from recent history.[82]

The Cultural Department regarded this as being the main bone of contention between writers and the Party, but sought to stave it off by improving writers' general living conditions. It concentrated upon raising print-runs, increasing translation rates and settling the issue of pensions, so that these did not add to the customary political grievances. In effect, it adopted a strategy of bribing writers or massaging egos by granting them token representation on discussion committees (such as that convened to debate the new constitution) and delegations abroad. Contrary to the habitual complaint expressed during the 1960s that the Party leadership did not heed writers' voices, the Gierek regime could then point to the high public profile which leading writers, and above all Iwaszkiewicz, the ZLP chairman, enjoyed.

Although the Gierek regime moved to dissipate tensions between the leadership and writers by promoting its consultative approach in this way, it retained some of the political aims of the previous regime. Thus, whilst Gomułka's divisive policy of promoting the congresses of writers from the Western and Northern Territories was dropped,[83] the Warsaw-regional divide remained. In its desire to control the ZLP Main Executive, the Party attempted to boost the representation of its views in the milieu by having branch chairmen co-opted onto the Main Board.[84]

The Party leadership reiterated its commitment to the operative ideology adopted in culture since 1959, whilst 'high artistic quality' in artistic works came to assume a position equal to that of their socialist

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82 'Notatka nt. spotkań z sekretarzami POP pionu kultury', AAN, KC PZPR, Kancelaria Sekretariatu, op. cit., 28 April 1971, p. 3.

83 It had lost its rationale in any case with the signing of the border treaty in 1972.

84 This aim was eventually realised at the Poznań Congress in March 1975, before being jettisoned at the Congress of December 1980. Afterwards, the latter was cited by the regime as an example of the Main Executive's gerrymandering.

character in official discourse.[85] With continuity being more important than change in cultural policy, the period of liberalisation proved to be a brief one.[86] As on previous occasions, there was no place for 'retributionary works'; past abuses had been corrected by the leadership and did not require further analysis by writers.[87]

The leadership's principal desire concerning culture was to raise suitable artistic monuments to its achievements. Specifically, it required works about the beginnings of People's Poland to mark the thirty years of its existence,[88] as the new Minister of Culture, Stanisław Wroński, explained:

> what should be emphasised is the need for works about our beginnings, about the key transformations, about the difficult experiences of the past quarter of a century, from which we have emerged victorious.[89]

Although theoreticians linked their demands for such 'committed works' with the notion of greater margins for interpretation, cultural

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[85] The XI Plenum in September 1971 defined the PZPR's guidelines for culture: 'The Party will create conditions conducive to cultural creativity and innovative artistic experimentation. Artistic works and trends which combine a high artistic level with content that shapes society's consciousness in the spirit of the humanist ideals of socialism will be supported first and foremost'. *Nowe Drogi*, 1971 (10), p. 72.

[86] It encompassed the publication of a few stigmatised writers and works from the previous era, such as Kuncewicz's *Strefy*. While Andrzejewski was not allowed to publish his celebrated novel *Miazga*, he was at least allowed to return to a regular column in the literary press.

[87] As the VI Congress determined: 'The Party will resist attempts to return to incorrect political attitudes or to entangle the artistic communities in barren arguments about the recent past'. *Nowe Drogi*, 1972 (1), p. 42.

[88] These included television serials and literary competitions to mark the anniversaries of the PWP's creation and the foundation of the country itself. The critical success of the works produced by these competitions (by competent writers, such as Kawalec, Hołuj and Auderska, after all) bolstered the Cultural Department's view that officially sponsored topics could generate works of high artistic quality. See the February 1975 document 'O polityczno-ideowej inspiracji twórczości literackiej i artystycznej. Ocena i wnioski', AAN, KC PZPR, paczka 340, 47/855, teczka 13. This is quoted in chapter 4.

[89] 'Ranga kultury w polityce partii. Wywiad z ministrem kultury i sztuki tow. Stanisławem Wrońskim', *Nowe Drogi*, 1972 (6), p. 63. What is also significant is that Wroński uses the Soviet Union as the model in this case (ibid.).

practice did not match those declarations. 'The basic compatibility of the author's vision with the Party's ideology and a Marxist-Leninist outlook', in Jerzy Kossak's formulation,[90] never became the fundamental consideration when officials judged literary works. In reality, the prize-winning novels were subject to the same restrictions as all others.[91] These limitations aggravated Party writers in particular, as Tadeusz Hołuj revealed in an interview in 1972 (his censored comments are in italics):

> It is non-literary factors that decide the issue to a large extent. (...) Some say that it's unfeasible to write about recent history because it's too fresh, it hasn't been sweetened. *So the Stalinist period is out ! October is out ! 1968 ! What era is left ? The Nazi occupation ? And here, too, different kinds of warning signs immediately appear.* I think there are too many problematic areas and historical events hedged about with reservations, that are not for literature to touch.[92]

The 'non-literary factors' to which Hołuj referred were the censorship restrictions, to which his own comments were subjected. What came to dominate in the 1970s to a far greater extent than earlier was what Kubikowski termed the 'iron law which guaranteed the official image of the present'.[93] In time, only positive images of the present were tolerated, in line with the 'propaganda of success' enforced by the GUKP as Poland fell into an economic crisis.

The issue of interpretative freedom surfaced in the works of younger writers after 1968. The weaknesses of contemporary Polish

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90 'Refleksje o polityce kulturalnej', *Nowe Drogi*, 1972 (12), p. 44.

91 Hołuj's *Osoba* took nearly two years to reach the public. Professor Wojciechowski, the Director of the State Archives, told me in 1992 of rumours that Auderska's novels caused great controversy within the GUKP, but I have found no reference to them during my research in the archives.

92 'Jest czas myślenia': a conversation with Hołuj in *Teatr*, 1971 (22). AAN, GUKP, II/887, 'Przegląd ingerencji', 1971/3, pp. 93-94.

93 'Szklany mur', *Odra*, 1984 (5), p. 56.

literature were analysed by Zagajewski and Kornhauser in *Świat nieprzedstawiony* (1974), which was viewed as the principal literary manifesto of the 'Nowa Fala'.[94] They posed the question as one of a confusion of values and the absence of criteria which could give order to the world in the present. The 'real world' could not be represented, because there were no standards by which its validity could be judged. This had led to the disappearance of the realistic novel after 1956 in favour of works which spoke indirectly about the major concerns of the age.

The strategy in literature they proposed was one of 'straight talking' ('mówić wprost'). This was a term with a number of ramifications. On the formal level it assumed the existence of an external reality which could be 'expressed', and involved 'expressing experience directly, adducing the spontaneity of the subject experiencing the world in different ways'.[95] This presupposed the existence of an external reality which could be 'represented' in language. On the level of vocabulary, 'straight talking' entailed the reduction of metaphor, indeed of any literary devices which might create distance between the 'real' and the 'represented' world.

It was then a strategy aimed at producing works grounded in present commonplace social reality, but which through the definition of a common hierarchy of values could provide an integral vision of contemporary reality. To a great extent, this was a utopian argument: the solutions they envisaged were rather pious hopes than specific proposals.[96] As they freely acknowledged, the only synthesis of which socialist art had hitherto been capable was (the evidently

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[94] Although ostensibly limiting itself to literary issues, the work had obvious political ramifications: the representation of reality in the way they argued had necessarily to be postulated upon a less intrusive censorship and greater freedom of information.

[95] Ibid., p. 141.

[96] 'The removal of hypocrisy, healing the split between language and reality, between body and mind, is the task of the new culture', ibid., p. 205.

unacceptable) Socialist Realism.[97] Their argument thus suggested that the challenge issued by Ernst Fischer in *The Necessity of Art*, where he stipulated a non-idealised socialist art as the way forward from the distortions of Stalinist practice, had not been realised. The cardinal problem continued to be the rigidity of state control over the portrayal of the present.

The programme itself foundered against the rock of the GUKP,[98] which forced them to discuss problems precisely in that allusive style which they elsewhere denigrated as merely prolonging the state of chaos in Polish literature. Their proposals were then merely desiderata as long as the authorities refused to concede greater freedom:

> The way of solving the contradiction between literature which describes reality with an optimistic duplicity and literature which schizophrenically severs all links with the world is to create a literature which whilst thriving on the concrete does not submit to it, does not wholly accept its material, observes a certain distance towards it, retains its critical dignity but sites it in a real living environment [...] The unmasking of today's duplicity and split creates conditions for a cultural and social reality free of duplicity. It is a programme for socialist art. [99]

Part of the attraction they intended their views to hold for the authorities lay in their use of Marxist terminology.[100] These also coincided with assumptions that had been made in official discourse in the 1960s, but were somewhat out of step with the Gierek regime's

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97 'Since the retreat from the false apotheosis of Socialist Realism, no synthesis has ever occurred which would justly encompass the complexity of our world, its sublimity and baseness simultaneously', ibid., p. 193.

98 Fragments eliminated described the 'lack of democratic freedoms, of any possibility of having genuine polemics and a free clash of views'. AAN, GUKP II/2091, 'Biuletyn kwartalny o dokonanych ingerencjach (5 II 1974-21 I 1975)', p. 90.

99 Ibid., pp. 207 - 208.

100 'Unmasking reality' was a term meaningful only within Marxist discourse, where the subjective impressions of the individual concerning reality are replaced as inadequate by an economic and structural analysis of the social system in which his subjectivity arises.

cultural policy.[101] Although Zagajewski and Kornhauser ended their work with a declaration underlining its Marxist spirit, the authorities did not receive it as such. Indeed, the critique sponsored by the authorities involved a sophisticated Marxist dismissal of the methodological basis of Zagajewski and Kornhauser's programme.[102] In the new climate created by Gierek, simple declarative works were not sufficient to win Party approval.

The defeat of the 'Nowa Fala' strategy marked the end of any attempt to present a critically serious strategy for 'committed literature' in Poland. In rejecting the terms of *Świat nieprzedstawiony*, the authorities, by default, provided implicit support for works which eschewed the political dimension, what Michał Głowiński has termed 'socparnasizm' ('socialist parnassianism').[103] According to Głowiński, the first feature of 'socparnasizm' was its avoidance of any contact with its readers' everyday concerns. Its central concerns were therefore the exotic corners of Polish history - the borderlands or 'kresy'.[104] Its second feature was a conventional experimentalism, visible in the works of the 'village prose' trend, whose principal patron was Henryk Bereza in *Twórczość*.[105] By respecting these two

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[101] The tracing of the current confusion in Polish prose to the adoption of Western models after 1956 (the 'sickness of Europeanism', p. 127) echoed the attacks made against Western models at the XIII Plenum in July 1963.

[102] Jan Kurowicki's *Dzień powszedni wyobraźni* (Warsaw, 1976), which took issue with what he terms their error of a naive correspondence between literature and the outside world based on common sense (p. 12). This allowed them to identify their agenda with the reader's (p. 131), but because it was not based on precise knowledge and had no precisely defined object it led to purely utopian solutions (p. 139). In short, they failed to acknowledge that literary works 'were the artistic organisation of that which Althusser called ideology, a system of representation existing and fulfilling a specific role in the social sphere' (p. 146).

[103] 'Socparnasizm'. Originally published in *Polityka*, 1981 (6). Reprinted in *Rytuał i demagogia* (Warsaw, 1992), pp. 157-160.

[104] *Rytuał i demagogia*, p. 158.

[105] Ibid., p. 159. Głowiński does not mention Bereza's name in this connection, but the inference is plain. For more detailed consideration of Bereza's significance, see chapter 5.

conditions, 'socparnasizm' could provide a facade of cultural liberalism for the authorities. The reverse side of the promotion of 'high-quality' works was publishers' rejection of politically unacceptable works on the grounds of their 'poor artistic quality', a phrase which characterised numerous writers dealings with the GUKP in the 1970s. Eventually, the domination exercised by the GUKP during the 1970s contributed to the development of the underground publishing network - the 'second circulation' - in 1977.[106]

Censorship and the ZLP, 1972-79

At the Bydgoszcz congress of February 1969 the idea was first raised of a body to mediate between writers and the censorship office under the title of the Komisja Interwencyjna (Commission for Intervention). The purpose of this body was to facilitate the passage of works through the censorship process by negotiating directly with publishers and the Main Censorship Office. In this way, it was assumed that political tensions within the Union stemming from writers' anger at the vagaries of censorship might be alleviated. The Commission was eventually set up under the aegis of the ZLP Main Executive at the Łódź congress in 1972, as part of the general consultative approach which characterised the Gierek regime's propaganda.

Given that the Censorship Office answered solely to the Party, the Komisja Interwencyjna seems rather to have been an additional smokescreen for the censors. Invariably, it was a trusted Party dignitary (first Andrzej Lam, then Wasilewski) who chaired the

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106 A 'second circulation', or samizdat, had been operating on a small scale since the late 1960s, but it assumed even greater significance after the events of the mid-1970s. For an exposition of the ethos of underground publishing, see Barańczak's article 'Dlaczego *Zapis*' in the first number of *Zapis*,: '..truth, whether it be mistaken or faulty or badly diagnosed, may not be concealed, suppressed within ourselves, subject to self-censorship, softened, veiled in allusions, or lent to abridgement or deformation. It should be faithfully recorded - if only to confront it with other truths, submit it to criticism and enrich it in accordance with our own consciences and discernment. Without the certitude of this obligation, literature is meaningless'. Republished in *Etyka i poetyka* (Paris, 1979), p. 227.

Commission, and his work amounted to testing the water to establish the likelihood of publishing a 'controversial' text. Rather than being a pressure group or properly consultative body, it was yet another screen for official controls.[107]

The protests over the Constitution in 1975-76 led to the drawing up of an extensive blacklist of eminent writers.[108] The authorities' retaliation against some writers took the form of extreme political discrimination: they were not permitted to publish and all reference to them was expunged from public and literary life. The precise degree of official discrimination became clear only with the publication in the underground network of extracts from the *Czarna Księga cenzury PRL* (*The Black Book of Polish Censorship*) in 1977. This awareness gave additional force to opposition attacks upon Party policy and censorship at the March 1978 ZLP Congress in Katowice, where the rift between loyalists and the remainder became pronounced.

At the congress, both the leader of the Party's five-man group, Wacław Sadkowski, and Marek Nowakowski, one of the co-founders of *Zapis*, concurred about the need for action to curb censorship. As Nowakowski said, the schism that had come about since 1977 worked to the detriment of Polish literature, forcing writers to make a choice between writing on sociopolitical issues without restrictions or, essentially, being widely read.

The official response was to create another, rather nebulous body to mediate between the ZLP, publishing houses and GUKP. This was the 'Rada Literacko-Wydawnicza' (Writers and Publishers' Council) announced at the Congress with the blessing of the hard-line Secretary

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[107] The case which illustrated its impotence was Kazimierz Orłoś's *Cudowna melina*, rejected in 1972 (*Historia 'Cudownej meliny'* (Białystok, 1990), p. 27). Orłoś's arguments that he was merely answering the Party's call for critical works were brushed aside because his portrayal of small town official corruption, based on real events at the end of the 1960s, was still too close to current reality for the authorities' comfort. Tiring of official prevarication, he published the novel in Instytut Literacki in Paris and became a non-person, sacked from his job with Polish Radio and unable to publish in the press.

[108] The original blacklist provided by Tomasz Strzyżewski (*Czarna Księga cenzury PRL, tom 1*, pp. 66-67) has yet to be discovered in the GUKP archives.

for Ideology, Jerzy Łukasiewicz, and chaired by Andrzej Wasilewski, the Secretary of the Warsaw Union branch Party cell, who coincidentally also headed the Komisja Interwencyjna. The desire to be seen to be offering a fresh alternative apparently outweighed consideration of what this new body could do that the latter had not.[109] Nevertheless, the initiative had considerable support among writers, who looked for representation on official bodies to negotiate on a par with officials from the Ministry of Culture.

The new body finally came into existence only in May 1979,[110] comprising trusted writers such as Auderska and Żukrowski, which tended to forejudge its effectiveness as a body independent of the authorities. The list of works held up in the GUKP was nonetheless significantly reduced over the following two years and credited to the Council's and specifically Wasilewski's ministrations.

The basis for enabling, or rather impeding, publication was exclusively political. Writers had to renounce underground activity, so that those who 'happened' to be associated with the second circulation could be distinguished from its 'die-hard' supporters. Whilst enjoying some success, the Council could not persuade the more outstanding writers of the older generation back into the 'fold': Konwicki, above all, continued to publish in the 'second circulation', much to the Party's chagrin.

The authorities' approach thus amounted to the tried and tested method of 'divide and rule', but it possessed the secondary advantage of enabling the Party to restate its interest in works of 'high artistic quality'. The criterion for appearing in the 'official circulation' was then one of non-involvement in non-official political activity, a direct reversal of the Party's call for a 'committed literature' throughout the 1960s. The opposition could accordingly be accused of sponsoring a

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109 Szczepański points out the absurdity of Wasilewski's position, given that as chairman of the Komisja Interwencyjna he had to intervene in PIW, where he himself was director. *Kadencja* (Cracow, 1989), p. 18.

110 Iwaszkiewicz removed it personally from the agenda in May 1978, undoubtedly stalling the initiative until the Party could supply trusted figures.

purely politicised literature - a kind of anti-socialist Socialist Realism, where the intention was not to support the state's policies but exclusively to expose them.[111]

This 'demi-liberalism' typified the Party's approach at the end of the 1970s. Party policy aimed at the neutralisation of the opposition. Apart from working to reduce the number of works still held in the Censorship Office, the Party writers' organisation strove to increase its own flow of information to what it regarded as the apolitical majority. By providing them with 'the facts', it hoped to preempt any controversies stirred up by the opposition. Despite Party optimism about the success of these measures,[112] it was all too little, too late. By the middle of 1980, Party influence over the union's affairs had been decisively lost.

Central to this process was the dissatisfaction amongst writers about the recurrent paper shortage,[113] the persecution of the opposition, and frustration at censorship restrictions, whose rationale was further undermined by the existence of the underground press. In the months prior to the rise of Solidarity this dissatisfaction inspired an increasing willingness to give open support to the underground.[114]

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111 Not that the idea of resuscitating Socialist Realism in some form did not cross Party ideologues' minds. The tenor of articles in *Nowe Drogi* on literature indicated a desire to reheat fifties' standards: Wilhelm Szewczyk's 'Temat człowieka pracy w literaturze', 1975 (7), Witold Nawrocki's 'Temat pracy - szansa dla literatury współczesnej', 1977 (5), and Włodzimierz Sokorski's 'Realizm i romantyzm w kulturze', 1975 (3). In addition, in 1978 the Party's Ideological Commission considered the possibility of reintroducing Socialist Realism.

112 'Informacja o przebiegu rozszerzonego plenum ZG ZLP odbytego w dn. 30 XI 1979 w Radziejowicach', AAN, KC PZPR, Kancelaria Sekretariatu, paczka 356, 945/137, teczka 5, p. 6.

113 Treated with contempt at ZLP congresses, as the paper shortage did not seem to affect popular crime fiction or the ability of Polish Radio and TV publishers or KAW (Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza) to put out large editions of its works, both of which publishers were seen as regime favourites.

114 A petition against the arrest of Mirosław Chojecki, the founder and director of NOWA, led to his release in March 1980; at a Warsaw branch meeting in May, Jacek Bocheński, one of the older generation who had co-founded *Zapis*, read out a report on the second circulation's activities.

As Szczepański noted, the dividing line between what constituted 'secret' and 'public' was becoming eroded.[115]

The death of Iwaszkiewicz in March 1980 had already left a power vacuum in the ZLP and brought to an end the compromise - the depoliticisation of literary affairs, largely in the authorities' favour - which had characterised his chairmanship. During Iwaszkiewicz's illness, which had enforced his long absence from union affairs, Putrament had acted as chairman. His could only be a temporary role, given the anathema attached to his person in the writers' community. As ever, the Cultural Department sought a compromise candidate capable of withstanding what it viewed as the excesses of the opposition, but in doing so it had to move towards that opposition.

Solidarity, Martial Law and Liberalisation: 1980-1985

In keeping with its narrow concentration upon the political balance within the ZLP Executive, the Party acknowledged its loss of control only after the Warsaw branch meeting of November 1980. Party representation among candidates to the ZLP Congress in December was minimal, with Wasilewski being the only prominent hard-liner among the delegates from the Warsaw branch. The strategy of limited concessions associated with his activity towards the end of the 1970s continued to operate, but in the new political climate created by Solidarity its effectiveness was outstripped by events. The Party as a whole was on the defensive, and its concessions were proof of its weakness.

This much had been expressed in the opposition's dismissal of Wasilewski at the Warsaw branch meeting in November. As a result, the Cultural Department prepared for the 'catastrophic' scenario of complete opposition domination of the Main Executive at the December congress. Prior to the congress it devised a defensive strategy in preparation for what it expected to be the inevitable rout of the Party

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115 *Kadencja*, op. cit., p. 37.

from union life.[116]

The extent of the Party's loss of control related also to the clear failures of its cultural policy, not only to head off the rise of the underground publishers, but also towards emigre writers. The latter was underlined by the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Czesław Miłosz in October 1980, which brought about a complete reversal of state cultural policy towards the author.[117] The recurrent emphasis in Party operative ideology on the promotion of everything of value in Polish culture could no longer ignore the contribution of an author whom successive regimes had regarded as an implacable enemy of the socialist order in Poland.

Altogether, the state's cultural policy underwent considerable liberalisation during the sixteen months of Solidarity's initial public existence, and indeed survived largely intact into 1983. At the final ZLP congress in December 1980 Józef Tejchma, restored to the Ministry of Culture, expressed the hope for a 'great literature', capable of acting as a 'barometer of important social and individual issues, as a signal of approaching unrest, a witness to deep-rooted values and one of the main currents of the nation's intellectual life'.[118]

The key change, however, was that a literary work's original place of publication - whether that be the underground or abroad - was no longer cause to disqualify its appearance in official channels. In the first instance this affected Miłosz's works, but other famous works came into this category, notably Andrzejewski's novels *Miazga* and *Apelacja*, the first of which had been on the list of banned works since

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116 Three options were floated: the victory of the Catholic centre, keeping out 'KOR extremists'; the launch of a rival organisation to challenge the power of the Warsaw branch; or dissolving the ZLP and replacing it with a more pliable body. In the short term, the first won out as Szczepański took the post of chairman. 'Sytuacja w ZLP przed XXI Zjazdem ZLP', AAN, KC PZPR, Kancelaria Sekretariatu, paczka 314, 1929/106, teczka 8, pp. 5-7.

117 In the monthly censorship reports from that time, one of the principle phrases removed from articles commenting on the Nobel committee's decision was that of its being a 'kick in the pants' for the state's cultural policy.

118 'Literatura i sprawy narodowe', *Kultura i polityka* (Warsaw, 1981), p. 69.

1968.[119] A vital moment for reinforcing the liberalisation process was the Solidarity demand for the abolition of censorship included in the Gdańsk Agreement of 31 August.

The major impact of this demand, which saw the revision of the law concerning censorship to allow for appeals to be made against the Main Censorship Office's decisions, was felt by journalists. Censorship transparency meant that official disinformation could be countered to some extent by revealing the degree of the censor's interference in any text. The new law was regarded as a half-measure by many opposed to censorship, since in essence it did not change the fact of political censorship, but only made its effects more visible. The censorship administration itself viewed the new legislation as an opportunity to legalise the business of censorship.[120] With the definition of the criteria for making interventions being thus publicly formalised, the Censorship Office's very existence was intended to become an accepted feature of the cultural and political landscape.[121] Publicising the conditions under which cuts were made did not significantly alter the scale of those interventions.

The general turn of events marked another stage towards the regime's de-ideologisation of literature. By publishing works which had formerly failed to pass the censorship process, albeit with cuts, the Party aimed to signal its more liberal outlook. By bringing as many of these works as possible into the publishing mainstream it hoped to give the lie to opposition criticism that unacceptable official restrictions were

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119 *Miazga* was first published in the underground (NOWA, 1979) and abroad (London, 1981), before reaching the official circulation in censored form in 1982. *Apelacja* was published officially in 1983, after appearing in Paris in 1968.

120 M. Wereski, the Director of the Lublin office, declared for the shift towards legal arguments in making censorship decisions at a meeting of GUKP officials on 6 March 1981. AAN, GUKP II/1659, p. 15.

121 A point made by Andrzej Urbański in his perceptive article on the nature of censorship in the 1970s. He mentions Bratny's *Pamiętnik moich książek* (Warsaw, 1983) as a key factor in the drive to normalise the operations of censorship. Another aspect of the Censorship Office's desire to see itself legalised were Jerzy Bafia's guides to censorship in Poland published in small print-runs in the 1980s: *Prawo o cenzurze* (Warsaw, 1983) and *Prawo o wolności słowa* (Warsaw, 1988).

placed upon literature. The tendency of this more liberal trend was exclusively retrospective, however, encompassing works which had already been known about, and read, by most of their potential audience. In short, it was a political step intended to undermine the rationale behind the existence of the underground publishers.

It is against the background of these manipulations that the regime's growing interest in works from the 'artistic revolution' that Henryk Bereza had launched during the 1970s can best be understood. During the 1970s, in accordance with its sponsorship of the avantgarde, the Party's attitude towards the Bereza school had been a kind of bemused toleration. It confirmed the privileged place that *Twórczość*, where Bereza was editor of the prose section, occupied within the cultural landscape, which was generally that of a flagship for the regime's public facade of liberalism.[122] As elsewhere, the condition was that such works did not breach political taboos. Within these strictures, Bereza's approach was to stress the primacy of linguistic experimentation in literary works, suggesting that the main obstacle for Polish literature was the deadness of standard Polish (rather than the Censorship Office).

By the 1980s, however, this kind of experimentation began to enjoy more active favour with the Party, as it moved into the more class-conscious areas that the regime preferred. Two writers associated with Bereza, Tadeusz Siejak and Józef Łoziński, dealt respectively with the political situation towards the end of the 1970s and during the Solidarity period in a manner which offered an ambivalent endorsement of Party rule. The indifference towards the form in which these political issues appeared seemed to underline the continuity of the Party's operative ideology since 1959: only the political content of a work held any interest to the Party. By the early 1980s, however, in the new highly polarised political situation, this approach was imbued with utter cynicism. In the works it promoted the Party apparently

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[122] By and large, the regime acknowledged the journal as the personal fiefdom of the ZLP chairman, Iwaszkiewicz, and freed it from the need for any overt declarations of support for Party policy.

acknowledged that its approach had been discredited - that literary works could not promote any positive image of its role - but it could suggest, by misrepresenting Solidarity's ethos, that there was no serious alternative to its continuation in power.

This cynicism pervaded the authorities' handling of all aspects of literary life, and chiefly the ZLP. As with all other creative unions, the ZLP was suspended, officially as a temporary measure. After the declaration of Martial Law loyalist writers seized the chance to vilify the Union's Executive on television (Żukrowski) and in the Sejm (Przymanowski),[123] claiming that loyalists had been subjected to 'moral terrorism'. Furthermore, the Main Executive came under constant pressure to submit to the regime's demands, primarily to sanction its own dissolution so that a new and more pliable board could be chosen.

According to official propaganda the Main Executive had lost the confidence of the majority of writers by exceeding its authority when it had signed a cultural agreement with Solidarity in September 1981 and had also acted illegally in curtailing the participation of branch chairmen on the Main Executive. Both had, however, been ratified at the last congress. These accusations were founded less in reality than in the grievances of the hardliners, who had been marginalised throughout 1980-81. But the charges also illustrate the duplicity of the Party's approach throughout Martial Law: on the one hand insisting on the Board's illegal acts, whilst, on the other, ignoring the statutes in its attempts to get rid of the Board.

In August 1982 the Cultural Department issued instructions to Party organisations and regional institutions to pursue a strategy of 'stratification' towards writers, putting them under continual pressure to change the Main Executive. The autumn of 1982 appeared to mark a shift towards a harder line in the Party's stance towards the ZLP. In September Tejchma was replaced by Kazimierz Żygulski, who was more attuned to harder-line policies, and in October Witold Nawrocki

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123 Lengthy extracts from their speeches are given in A. Roman's *Paranoja. Zapis choroby* (Warsaw, 1990), pp. 175, 192-200.

took over as Head of the Cultural Department.

In the short term, however, the Party, or certain writers at least, still seemed to favour some form of 'negotiated' solution in advance of the Party Writers' Conference of 25 February 1983, which was to debate the continuing existence of the ZLP.[124] In the end, no decision was reached about the union's fate. The authorities waited until the Main Executive's term of office expired, before finally dissolving the union on 19 August 1983. A month later a renascent Union, with Halina Auderska as its chairperson, took over the facilities of the former ZLP.

By the act of dissolution the authorities had conceded the final division amongst writers between those who actively supported the regime - which membership of the new union symbolised - and those who were opposed to it. The political logic of this situation required that all dissenters also be ousted from the official publishing network, and indeed the authorities moved towards banning all those who did not overtly support the regime. In February 1984 Party officials met official publishers to condemn too-liberal practices in publishing; the deputy head of the Cultural Department, Kazimierz Molek, proposed publishing only those who had 'associated themselves incontrovertibly with socialism'.[125] This meant that anyone publishing abroad or in the 'second circulation' would be banned from the official circulation, as Jerzy Urban specified at a press conference in March 1984.

This pressure was largely resisted by publishers, however, presumably on economic as well as moral grounds, since of the key writers identifying themselves with the regime only Auderska could be said to have guaranteed sales of her more recent works.[126] As on previous occasions, the Party's attempted 'clearance' of Polish culture

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[124] Zbigniew Safian and Aleksander Minkowski proposed themselves as mediators between the union board and the authorities.

[125] Cited in *Polish Realities: The Arts in Poland 1980-1989* (Glasgow, 1990), p. 143.

[126] Her mid-seventies novels, *Ptasi gościniec* and *Babie lato,* were school texts.

and drive towards the political definition of writers foundered on the weakness of its supporters.

At the Party Writers' Conference of 14-15 February 1985 the dogmatic approach had its swan song. The optimism of Nawrocki in assessing the course of Polish literature since the war, which was at one with the regime's attempts to deny that the Party had turned Poland into a cultural desert, could not disguise the paucity of positive examples of Party works in recent literature. Writers whom he specified as representing the future development of Polish prose denied any positive validity to the regime in their works. In effect, the Party's approach was shot through with a political opportunism born of increasing desperation, as other delegates made plain. Zbigniew Safian provided a cutting critique of Party cultural policy in terms which echoed the criticisms Party writers had made of cultural policy over the previous quarter of a century.

The central issue, according to Safian, was the lack of any serious consideration given to the substance of a 'literature committed to socialism'. The oft-repeated official exhortations to produce a literature 'critical of Polish reality' amounted to little more than phrase-mongering, given the Party's refusal to surrender any modicum of its monopoly upon interpretation: 'in essence, it came down to a literature which confirmed current political and economic achievements'.[127] Party writers and other loyalists could win no concessions from the authorities so as to portray current reality in a manner even slightly divergent from the officially propagated and positive version:

> Flimsy, illustrative, worthless cinematic and literary works were supported, which the reader and viewer did not hesitate to reject, and cultural politicians functioned in a state of constant fear of history and of every more daring interpretation, both believing and not believing that if something wasn't written about, then it didn't exist, and that by avoiding any analysis of crises and portraying them in literature, they could be eliminated from public

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127 *Literatura Polski Ludowej. Oceny i prognozy*, op. cit., p. 206.

consciousness.[128]

Safian's criticism of past practice was intended to demonstrate the Party's present capacity for change. The participants of the 1985 conference believed it would mark the beginning of a new stage in 'committed literature', when the value of the loyalists was finally recognised. But literature had become an irrelevance for the leadership, and the need for orthodoxy was rendered immaterial by the launch of glasnost' in the Soviet Union.

The recurrent complaint of the loyalists was that their true political significance went unappreciated by the authorities, which material advantages did little to assuage. The latter's focus on an 'open cultural policy' had, they argued, led to a neglect of left-wing interests; the concern with demonstrating a liberal approach to culture, allowing the play of different artistic trends, had been a gesture designed mainly to raise the profile of the Polish state abroad rather than emphasise its socialist character. In that situation, Party writers were acting as the keepers of the repository of socialist cultural values.

The 1985 conference thus represented yet another occasion when the state authorities had a chance to revert to true socialist values, an opportunity persistently squandered since 1959. The general drive towards a 'freeze' proved untimely, a fact which isolates the conference as the last major statement of Party demands relating to literature. With the promotion of Gorbachev to the post of First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in March 1985, the rationale behind a clampdown lost its attraction. By late 1986, the PUWP was set back on a liberalising course, which made itself felt in culture primarily, where the positive preference of 'works committed to socialism' gave way once more to an 'open cultural policy' that was largely anathema to Party loyalists.[103]

In the new international situation, where criticism 'from below' was implicitly sanctioned by glasnost', the Party no longer considered it necessary to issue explicit directives on the direction it thought contemporary literature should be taking.

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128 Ibid.

The course of Party practice in the cultural sphere over the years 1959 to 1985 oscillated therefore between minor freezes and mini-thaws. After the definition of the Party's operative ideology at the Third Congress in 1959, there were sporadic freezes in 1963-64, 1968-69, 1975-78, and 1982-85. These alternated with relative liberalisation in 1971-72 and 1979-82, until the decisive thaw arrived in 1986. The six works analysed in the next three chapters coincide with these major phases and thus both reflect and define the context in which they were written, as well as the overall trends in Party thinking about the functions of the contemporary novel.

CHAPTER THREE

"October" and After:

Roman Bratny's *Happy, Tortured* (1959)[1]

Jerzy Putrament's *The Stepchildren* (1963)

That generation is as interesting as it is tragic. It is tragic, not only because its fate took the shape it did, but because it could not be fulfilled in the course of history. Not only because its best representatives crumbled away so tragically, but also because the survivors had so many problems with adapting to the new Poland that they remained an unfulfilled generation. At this very moment we can see the sap being drained from the younger generation. [2]

Bratny, the 'bard of his generation', as Zenona Macużanka terms him, is the single most important writer of those we shall discuss. From the Party's standpoint his great value derived from his readiness to deal with contemporary issues, a readiness rare among other writers in view of the strictures placed upon the interpretation of the present by the administration. Antoni Pawlak has described him as knowing precisely where the political boundaries lay, but it is more accurate to say that Bratny's works were very much a co-production with the censorship. The astute political footwork in his novels was not a reflection of his prescience but the result of compromises with the censors as he strove to address the major political events of the postwar

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[1] *Szczęśliwi, torturowani* (1959). All references are to the third edition, published in *Kontrybucja* (Warsaw, 1969), pp. 200-319.

[2] 'Rozmowa R. Bratnego z K. Nastulanką o polityce, epice i połowaniu', *Polityka*, 1970 (33); cited in: Macużanka, Z., *Roman Bratny* (Warsaw, 1982), pp. 97-98.

era. [3]

Jan Walc underlines the special position of Bratny in postwar Polish literature, namely as the only writer who was consistently capable of dealing with, and indeed dealt with, sensitive political issues:

> Roman Bratny is a writer who in his books wrote about the security forces of the Stalinist years, about the riots in Poznan in June 1956, about March 1968, December 1970, Gerhard's murder, Janusz Wilhelmi's death and the seventies' opposition. Finally, he wrote about Solidarity, Martial Law and the underground. 'You've got to be the only one', and indeed there is no other Polish writer who could boast of such a list of unpublishable themes.[4]

The price of that position, for Walc, was the utter mendacity of Bratny's depiction of reality. What moved Bratny rather was the desire to be the exception amongst writers, the 'only writer' with the licence to address such themes. Certainly, Bratny understood the authenticity of his writing to derive from the vividness of the political events he described and for that reason was generally unwilling to omit them from his works, even where the Party held them to be taboo. In assessing the whole of Bratny's oeuvre, Walc summarises the array of forbidden themes as a canon upon which only Bratny can draw, but this leads to mystification in that it fails to register the tortuousness of the process whereby Bratny establishes himself as that writer. Without wishing to underplay Bratny's mendaciousness or his servility towards the regime,

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[3] His eagerness to deal with the Poznań uprising in June 1956 is a case in point. Bratny himself states that both *Życie raz jeszcze* (1967) and *Losy* (1973) described these events, but in their published form there is little sign of this. In relation to the former, the changes which the censorship forced upon Bratny required ten years' work before the novel saw the light of day. His portrayal of the riots in Poznań in *Życie raz jeszcze* was particularly unacceptable to the censor: 'The events in Poznań are shown exclusively from the angle of the bloody happenings on the streets and society's reckoning with the people responsible for the status quo. The author crosses his "t"s and dots his "i"s, writing with rancour that the army, whose power derives from willingness to make sacrifices, was employed against those citizens'. Review of the novel by Halina Zyskowska and Aleksander Stępowski, 22 June 1964, AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-285, pp. 5-9.

[4] 'Cena obecności', in *Wielka Choroba*, p. 146. This essay was originally published in *Kwartalnik Polityczny "Krytyka"*, 1984 (18).

it is fairer to say that in his dealings with the censorship and upper echelons of the Party concerning his books, there is something of a political 'trade-off'. The price for broaching politically sensitive issues in one work was often one of avoiding them in a later work.[5]

In the aftermath of October 1956, and the re-establishment of Party control over literature, Bratny's loyalty acquired special significance. Even though Bratny participated actively in the heady days of the 'Polish October', when writers regarded their most important role as that of safeguarding the liberalisation process and thus claiming an equal responsibility with the authorities in the dynamic of change, he nonetheless remained relatively cautious in the phrasing of his reformism. His article 'Jezus Maria , wszystko nieaktualne !', whilst endorsing the changes, reads very much as an appeal to the authorities to hold fire temporarily whilst writers 'recover' from their wilder ideas:

> I believe that only now will literature revive of its own accord, inspired by a life that is truly rich, that it will not run away from life.
>
> (...) I assume that writers, without being ashamed of political commitment, for that is the same as feeling ashamed of the fact that man is a social being, will deal with politics on the level of the psychology and morality of man as he is shaped by time.
>
> Wisdom in the present period lies amongst other things in desisting from giving orders, in moderation in delivering sermons.
>
> The experienced activist - not the conveyor belt kind - will understand the importance of the wise "disobedience" which should characterise the artist, that's what originality is - disobedience towards conventional opinion, whoever represents

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[5] What Tadeusz Drewnowski defined in a conversation with the author of the thesis in February 1992 as a case of the Party's 'limited magnanimity' towards loyal writers. Accordingly, the allowances granted him in the novel *Losy* were a 'reward for services rendered' in both union affairs and in earlier, more "orthodox" works such as *Trzech w linii prostej*. In *Losy* Bratny was able to deal with the Poznań events to a degree which had been forbidden him in the earlier *Życie raz jeszcze* , but could not depict the riots of 1970-71 on the Baltic Coast.

it. [6]

This claim of special considerations due to literature is not far removed from Leon Kruczkowski's formulations as Union President at the Sixth Congress of the Writers' Union in June 1954, where the first steps were taken to elaborating a broader definition of Socialist Realism. Bratny likewise argues that literature had to be judged by a different set of criteria from that of Party practice, since disobedience was innate in literature's very development in the sense that progress consisted in a revolt against tradition. At the same time, however, Bratny is careful to suggest that the kind of political literature which the Party desired would remain a principal concern for writers, given that politics was central to writers' lives as Polish citizens. Finally, he offers cause for optimism: the treatment of politics in literature could only differ for the better, in that writers might show the action of political change occurring on the profounder level of human psychology, not merely in the declarative spirit of the early fifties. None of these factors could evoke controversy; they were all remarkably close to the Party's later formulations concerning literature.

The loyalist position, which Bratny expresses in the above article, is indicative of the kind of 'mature re-evaluation' with regard to Stalinism that the Party in retrospect was to underline as its preferred response from writers. Writers, such as Kruczkowski and Czeszko, who did not deny their socialist realist past and agreed to the re-publication of works from that period after 1956, were closer to the Party's own stance regarding the early fifties. The Party could not define the entire period as purely destructive because that would have entailed utterly compromising its own authority. The corresponding stance amongst writers at the time was, however, exceptional.

By the end of 1958 the increasing limitations placed upon writers' freedom to address and interpret recent history were beginning to act for many as a disincentive to write about contemporary Poland in a direct

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[6] *Polski socrealizm, Antologia publicystyki społeczno-kulturalnej z lat 1948-1957, tom 2* (Warsaw, 1988), p. 87.

manner. The range of critical literature was becoming more circumscribed by the authorities. This threatened to have the consequence that writers would desist from portraying the present at all. Accordingly, literature would cease to demonstrate the superiority of the socialist system. The crisis grew to major proportions, as shown by the concern expressed in internal Party discourse that even writers loyal to the Party might renounce contemporary issues altogether:

> We must however appreciate the difficulties which a writer encounters when he takes up current social problems, even when he wishes to serve socialism with his pen.
>
> The demand for politicised literature, committed to socialism, at times leads in practice to many clashes and conflicts with the current requirements of the party leadership. The Party is right to support and recently underline the ideal of a critical literature which does not avoid telling the whole truth, since we are keen to see the confrontation of the assumptions of the building of socialism with reality. An example of the clash between the general requirements on the issue of committed critical literature is the history of works which have been held up either in editorial offices or in the censorship office, such as works by Newerley, Wygodzki, Bratny and others. Writers assert that it is not possible to put up artificial barriers between the present and the past and between sensitive and uncontroversial issues. That's why honest writers often face difficulties when they want to deal with the burning problems of the present and have to refrain from turning the distressing pages of the history of our nation and Party. These difficulties have repercussions on the intellectual atmosphere in the writers' community.
>
> The crisis in the atmosphere amongst writers finds expression in a one-sided focus on the past, in obsessive analysis of moral opportunism. A crisis of ideology is appearing, belief in the superiority of the socialist system is being undermined.[7]

The crux of the matter lay precisely in the extent to which the Party might concede its monopoly on interpretations of reality. This document shows that there were tendencies within the Party which did not shirk the ramifications of its demands upon literature. It is

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[7] 'Informacja o głównych nurtach i tendencjach ideologicznych w literaturze polskiej okresu 15-lecia', AAN, KC PZPR, XVIII-234, p. 65. (January ? 1959; authorship unknown.)

acknowledged here above that politicised literature had its own dynamic - if 'telling the whole truth' was genuinely meant - which would invariably conflict at certain points with the Party leadership's requirements. After 1959, when the Party leadership outlined its official policy at the Third Party Congress in March, the dichotomy was never again confronted in official discourse in all its implications, for the Party never in principle conceded ground on its exclusive right to interpretation. The expressed ideal of 'a critical literature which does not avoid telling the whole truth' remained only a rhetorical requirement during the remainder of the period.[8] Instead, the idea of a genuine political literature was reduced to the legitimation of Party rule in a more illustrative sense, effectively 'idealising the present', as Fischer put it.

This dilemma can be seen in a censorship report on the Bratny novel with which we shall deal in this chapter. The censor identified *Happy, Tortured* as a novel which fulfilled most of the demands that the Party made of literature. At the same time, however, his stance implied a large dose of pragmatism: an absolute insistence on the work's complete acceptability from the Party standpoint would have far-reaching negative effects in the sense that it would indicate a refusal to make even the most minor concession on the interpretation of the present. The sparsity of texts dealing with the current order necessitated a certain leniency to writers like Bratny. In this sense, *Happy, Tortured* was presented as a novel which would be viewed as a test-case by the wider literary community; passing the novel, the censor argues, could serve as an incentive to others:

> These two novels [*Happy, Tortured* and Kazimierz Koźniewski's *Winter Flowers* - JMB] are the only works on the current list with reference to which we might discuss whether the criteria employed by the Censorship Office are not so much over-restrictive as too inelastic in relation to the current situation in literature. After all, they are novels which deal with contemporary issues, neither of which assuredly is completely satisfactory in its treatment of such issues, but at least they are not

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[8] The notion of 'telling the whole truth' was alternately disparaged and promoted, as I discuss later in this chapter in relation to Putrament's novel.

written from standpoints hostile to our own. A preliminary negative response to the proposal to publish these novels, were it to become a final decision, could have incalculably harmful consequences in the form of a complete desertion from writing about contemporary issues. In these cases it is imperative that we increase our efforts to have these novels by Bratny and Koźniewski published. After several long conferences with the authors, to whom the publisher conveyed the Censorship Office's comments and reservations, we have managed to introduce changes which, by modulating the sensitive issues, have finally made it possible to release the books for printing. It should be indicated that the discussions with the authors were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and that the whole problem - once a certain amount of resistance had been overcome (understandable since it resulted from an attachment to their own vision) - lay in finding with the authors more suitable formulations to resolve difficulties in the texts. [9]

The distinction made in the above passage between criteria being 'not so much over-restrictive as too inelastic' is so fine as to be imperceptible. Nonetheless, it sheds interesting light on the active role played by the censorship in the promotion of Aesopian language. This practice of paraphrase or allusion, whereby the writer smuggled his 'message' through to the reader, tended to be seen as a conspiracy against the censor, but here this is all too clearly not the case. Indeed, the censor's report constitutes a tour de force of Aesopian writing, where it stresses the positive aspects of the discussions with Bratny. In the final analysis the most important consideration was that the 'official version' prevailed, authorial subterfuge notwithstanding.

Bratny's willingness to accommodate the authorities' demands is here underlined as a valuable quality by the censor. On Bratny's own admission, being read was more important for him than an insistence on the inviolability of his work in the form he had conceived it. His readiness to compromise derived, no doubt, from his calculations of the limits of the possible at any particular time, yet over the longer term his

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9 'Wykaz interwencji GUK w książkach autorów polskich w PIW (W okresie lipiec-grudzień 1958): 9, Roman Bratny, *Szczęśliwi, torturowani*; 10, Kazimierz Koźniewski *Zimowe kwiaty*'. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII- 250, p. 15.

compliance enabled him to build up credit with the authorities and thus gain greater licence for himself at more favourable junctures. In discussing *Happy, Tortured*, we shall be analysing the beginning of the process whereby Bratny developed into the regime writer par excellence.

This was not Bratny's sole intention, however. The justification of Party rule was perhaps secondary to the more topical concern of the rehabilitation of the Home Army in the new realities of postwar Poland, particularly in respect of the persecution suffered by its soldiers under Communist rule. Bratny here positioned himself at the forefront of the movement for reform. His focus on the Home Army was a central one at the time (the early months of 1956, to be specific), in the train of the greater press freedom allowed from the end of 1955. The issue of the Home Army formed part of the general re-evaluation of the war years and the abuses implemented under Stalinist practice, a campaign which was waged particularly by the more radical newspapers, *Nowa Kultura* and *Po prostu*. One of the most famous articles from *Po prostu* expressed the central concerns:

> The great and noble impulse of the young war generation, instead of becoming a model for elementary behaviour in life, became almost synonymous with error. (...) Let's be honest about it: we have to free history from all the lies which have accumulated around that generation. We should understand that we do so in the name of truth. "History is the mother of wisdom of the masses", said Marx, but only when that history is true. It is time that we gained a factual picture of that period based on Marxist methodology (...)
>
> We should give the heroes of that struggle their due recognition. Its traditions should be harnessed by all possible means, with the aim both of rectifying the injustices that have been done and of educating those who will come after us. [10]

At all points the authors were careful to define themselves as good Communists, underlining the necessity of a Marxist interpretation, for

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10 'Na spotkanie ludziom z AK', Jerzy Ambroziewicz, Walery Namiotkiewicz, Jan Olszewski, *Po prostu*, 1956 (11), in: *Na czołówce: Prasa w październiku 1956 roku* (Warsaw-Łódź, 1989), pp. 180-181.

instance, and drawing a distinction between the discredited leadership of the Home Army, which was regarded as hostile to the Communists, and the common soldiers, who had fought in good faith for the nation. Nonetheless their demands were quite radical, given the Stalinist regime's treatment of the Home Army. The rehabilitation of the Home Army soldiers was viewed as a necessary condition of restoring social equilibrium. Others traced the cynicism and ideological indifference of the younger generation to the falsification of the Home Army's role and the authorities' discrimination against its soldiers. A notable feature of the calls for rehabilitation, however, was the limits imposed upon that rehabilitation: it was not to encompass those who fought on after the war. In the end, it was predicated upon the soldiers' apolitical outlook and their innocence of active hostility to the regime, even where continued resistance might have been explained as justifiable self-defence.

In Bratny's case, there was no small measure of self-justification involved in his treatment of the Home Army issue, since he had participated in the wartime conspiracy in Warsaw and the Uprising itself. Moreover, after the war he had started up the newspaper *Pokolenie* in an attempt to bring the remnants of the Home Army out of the underground, thus supporting the official Communist stance of the time which aimed to create the broadest possible base for supporting the regime. Obviously the paper was closed down as the regime became more Stalinist, and Bratny was sidelined in the process.

His writings on the subject of the Home Army are therefore directed at two audiences: firstly, the Party in view of his unacceptable past (though it never seems to have been a particular drawback for him, even under Stalinism) and in retrospective justification of his immediate postwar activity; and secondly the Home Army, with a view to justifying his assimilation into the new regime. Thus it was highly symbolic that in the spring of 1956 he received a platform for his views in the Party's theoretical journal, *Nowe Drogi*:

> People don't want to write about the past. Unfortunately there is no possibility of understanding the present if we do not

understand history. And it is not only the Nazi occupation which belongs to history but also the tragedy of errors and mistakes which attended the demobilisation of the Home Army in the new Poland. Recent history has presented it in a simplistic and largely untold way, journalism trivialised the issues, art was silent and the administration employed crude practices against its participants. And these too already belong in some respect to the past, but to that past which we need to understand and evaluate in order to know properly where we stand in the present. [11]

Bratny makes clear here that the principal justification for the rehabilitation of the Home Army should be political. Stalinist practices - the unjust discrimination against the members of the non-communist resistance who were not ideologically hostile to the regime - had been detrimental for the Polish nation as a whole, because they had necessarily led to a waste of 'human resources':

> It was a period which caused enormous and incalculable damage to the capital of the nation's moral strength, a period which discouraged a great number of the intelligentsia of the "Home Army generation". [12]

The process of rehabilitation constituted an attempt to reintegrate the nation behind the Party, conditional upon the Party's being able to revise its previously inviolable political categories. Essentially, Bratny was proposing an act of imaginative political opportunism with the intention that the Party might then have a better claim to represent the nation and further reduce the moral authority of the London government-in-exile, the erstwhile official commanders of the Home Army. At the same time his call was phrased in qualified patriotic terms, seeing the country's principal treasure as residing in its people, not - in an implicit sideswipe at the Stalinist plans to rebuild national monuments - in its material culture:

> We must return to the nation the untold pages of its history. ...We should break with the old state of affairs, in which the

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11 'Karta demobilizacyjna Armii Krajowej', *Nowe Drogi*, 1956 (4), p. 41.

12 Op. cit., p. 52.

compromised leaders of the London government alone have the book of national memories at their disposal. The nation's priceless treasures are not the tapestries in Wawel Castle, but its history told in blood. ...We must call upon art and literature to examine the past more deeply than they have done until now.

> Rectifying the old discriminatory methods used in dealing with the former Home Army soldiers is not such an important matter now. The Party's leaders have been calling for this to be done for years now. When their directives create the right climate, when our academics prove them right, when art agitates on their behalf, more than one tired heart will beat more quickly for the fatherland that is People's Poland. [13]

Bratny's final frame of reference, however, was literature, and, even more precisely, the novel *Kolumbowie* which he was writing at the time. Bratny regarded his generation of the Home Army as an important stratum in Poland's social composition, and only by dealing with it in literature, where the full force of its heroism could be rendered, could their self-sacrifice be fully acknowledged. Implicit in the process of reintegration was recognition by those soldiers of the irreversible transformation which that society had undergone since the Second World War: the 'Fatherland' was no longer the prewar state but the Soviet-sponsored People's Republic established at Potsdam in 1945.

It is a curious, though, given its place of publication, perhaps not unsurprising feature of Bratny's article that political justice is perceived as the least important aspect of the process of rehabilitating Home Army members. Redress in that sense is an example of the functioning of the administration in almost the same way in which the injustices were carried out - a purely mechanical process. Bratny lays stress instead upon the agitational role that art can play in sentimental terms highly reminiscent of Sienkiewicz's strategy of writing 'dla pokrzepienia serc', to inspire Poles under the Partitions to remember their former statehood. Bratny's stance ultimately then is rather that of patron to the Home Army members vis-à-vis the Party: politically speaking, he implied that he could "bring them back on board" in a deeper sense,

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[13] Op. cit., p. 53.

because he can win their hearts and minds to the new reality. His interest therefore lay largely with securing a place for his own artistic work, by underlining primarily its political usefulness to the authorities.

One of the aspects of his usefulness to the regime lay in his novelistic technique, which was really a kind of faction, with key figures of the time appearing under easily decipherable pseudonyms. In *Kolumbowie*, his most famous novel, the respected critic Irzykowski and the young poet Baczyński were portrayed, giving events an almost documentary-like conviction. This had political implications, for the verisimilitude of the events described in Bratny's works could disguise the promotion of an ideologically correct interpretation of current reality. In the case of *Kolumbowie*, however, Bratny was perhaps too successful in depicting his own generation: the credibility of the realistic level largely displaced the ideological (the Party viewpoint). Certainly, Bratny was not critical in his depiction of the 'Columbus' generation, the tenor of the novel was instead essentially retrospective: to lament the destruction of the hopes of the prewar generation of Polish youth which had fought heroically during the war but found itself displaced in the postwar state.

Bratny's term, the 'Columbuses' or the 'Columbus generation', expressed their position succinctly, if pretentiously: in their search for a new Poland - their 'New World' - after the war, they resembled the explorer Columbus, yet like him they found themselves in a different place from where they expected to land. In this respect, Bratny's main purpose may be seen as fulfilling one of the criteria he mentioned in the *Nowe Drogi* article, of 'returning the untold pages of the nation's history', bearing witness to the heroism and self-sacrifice of his generation. His portrayal was not in tune with the Party's own outlook; as Żółkiewski stated, the narrative was 'sentimental rather than critically historical',[14] tending towards an apotheosis of the Home Army.

Unfortunately the third part, where the new realities came into play, failed to carry the same conviction. The tendentiousness evident

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[14] 'Polska proza, poezja i dramat po wojnie', *Zagadnienia stylu*, op. cit., p. 60.

in the simplifications of the emigres' story, together with the self-contradictions inherent in the idea that the only justifiable stance for former Home Army soldiers was to support of the regime that persecuted them, worked against the aim of showing the desirability and necessity of the new order. Bratny's final treatment of his heroes seemed perfunctory after their depiction during the occupation.

This conclusion was undoubtedly shared by the Party and informed its reservations about Bratny regarding the acceptability of his view of contemporary reality. Over time the Party began to perceive a challenge to its own authority in the enthusiasm shown by writers for the process of rehabilitating the Home Army, and perhaps feared that the Home Army would overshadow its own role in postwar Polish reality. By the late nineteen-fifties it had adopted the stance that the stream of works dealing with the Home Army, of which *Kolumbowie* was the most renowned example, should be curtailed. A report on E. Schuster's novel *The Men from the Woods* exemplifies the official response of the time to the literary depiction of the Home Army:

> [the novel] contains no phrases meant as an apotheosis of the Home Army, possesses [sic !] no drastic problems to which relations between the Home Army and the Communist People's Army or Guard might give rise, nor does it deal with the issue of the Eastern borderlands, and from a political point of view presents no problem for discussion... The essential issue, however, is the point of publishing this book at all, since it is but one more in a long series about the Home Army. [15]

This was an attitude remarkably similar to the one that had been taken by the Party concerning camp literature and works dealing with September 1939 as it moved towards socialist realism. Once again, albeit in a less absolute manner, the Party decided that the period of settling accounts with the past was over and that it was now time to move on to more constructive activity, the building of socialism.

This shift in focus also finds reflection in Bratny's work, which

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[15] '*Leśni*, E. Szuster, W. Łódzkie', Wydział Kultury. Notatki, informacje, recenzje i in. Gł. Urzędu Kontroli Prasy i Widowisk, 1958-1959', AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-250, p. 16.

from the late fifties on began to concentrate on the postwar period with a corresponding reduction in the importance of the Home Army elements. *Happy, Tortured* marks a key stage in this development, although according to his original intentions, *Życie raz jeszcze* (published only in 1967) was to have appeared shortly after *Kolumbowie*. In this scheme, *Happy, Tortured* would have functioned as the third part of a panoramic view of recent Polish history spanning the years from 1943 to 1958. This order seems to have been disrupted by the renascent censorship which debilitated the radical criticism of Stalinism which Bratny had in mind. As a result, *Happy, Tortured* was the first large-scale work he published after *Kolumbowie* and came to function as a low-key coda to the preceding novel, albeit with different characters.

> *Happy, Tortured* [was] based on the plot of a man returning to Poland, after leaving it in the postwar years, and seeking here the climate, issues, and sense of solidarity with the people in whose company he lived through the Nazi occupation. And it turns out that these people have been affected by the new system and recent history, (...) In a word, everything has changed. I called those who have taken part in life the "happy tortured", in the sense that they have met with various moral torments in life due to their situation, yet they were happy owing to their very participation, by their presence in their calling, in society, in the nation. I returned to the attempt at that demythologisation in *Kiosk on Dębowego Street*, perhaps in *Flight to Earth* as well. [16]

The crucial admission by the author in the above passage is his express purpose in writing the novel, which was to demythologise the Home Army. The particular device he employed in *Happy, Tortured* was to view the situation of the survivors largely through the eyes of one who has been absent from Poland for fourteen years and who therefore has preserved the war years in Poland most completely. The changes which have taken place are consequently greatly magnified from his perspective. The war and its attendant concerns have become

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16 *Pamiętnik moich książek, tom* 2, p. 146.

remote in time for his colleagues, whereas for him they are close; more recent events, specifically the Stalinist era, have assumed greater prominence for them. His return is then the catalyst for a decisive reckoning with what the legend of the Home Army means for himself and for his colleagues.

Whatever has happened in the meantime, the suggestion remains that the West does not provide enough spiritual sustenance for him. Siwy is searching for excitement in a Warsaw which during the Nazi occupation was the dangerous playground of his youth, yet even from the outset this enterprise is fundamentally misconceived, as Siwy admits to Magda:

> I came here to do a bit of real living. Over there everything seemed to me to be only pretend, and what I was looking for wasn't there, but here ... it simply doesn't exist. (238)

Leaving Poland means absence from the changes that have taken place in the meantime. His return leads to the discovery that the new Poland cannot sustain him either. The ending of *Kolumbowie* did not presage this double exile as it presented the image of 'Columbus' on board the ship taking him away to the West:

> He is alone in the vast, boundless wilderness of the world. He stands motionless, in a sort of blank amazement. Suddenly he raises his head. He thinks he has heard someone's voice or whisper. He strains to hear. It is only the waves which, stirred by the breeze, splashed against the side of the ship. [17]

This passage derives greater resonance because of the encoded reference to *The Akerman Steppes*, the opening sonnet of Mickiewicz's sequence *Crimean Sonnets* (1825). The Romantic poet defines his attitude as that of one who, whilst moving into foreign climes, nonetheless remains attentive to the needs of his nation and is prepared to return at any moment. At the moment he describes, however, he is not summoned and is thus free to go on his way into a new and exotic

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[17] *Kolumbowie. Rocznik 20, tom 3* (11th edition), (Warsaw, 1969), p. 229.

clime. [18] 'Columbus' is similarly not summoned, and is therefore also free to travel on his way, but the force of the reference is ironic, because he really wishes to return. In distinction to Mickiewicz, the moment suggests his final redundancy to the present nation. In the case of *Happy, Tortured*, there is no possibility of real return for emigres - their experience is redundant by definition - but the sense of redundancy extends also to the experience of those who remained in Poland. It is to the redundancy of the 'Columbus' generation as depicted in *Happy, Tortured* that we shall first turn as we assess the development of Bratny's portrayal of his contemporaries and their place in the new Poland of mid-1958.

Redundancy in the "New World".

Siwy: the Committed Playboy

In *Happy, Tortured* the redundancy of the past is most implicit in Siwy's case. The implication of the novel is that the supreme defining experience can no longer be the Warsaw Uprising - as it is for Siwy - but October 1956, the moment when socialist Poland was firmly set upon a new course. The subtext of the novel suggests that it is necessary to have lived through Stalinism in order to recognise the new Poland as the homeland.

This experience is clearly not available to Siwy. The premise of his very trip - that he returns to Poland to rediscover his past - is fundamentally mistaken, firstly because of the physical, and secondly because of the spiritual changes which have occurred in the intervening fifteen years. As he admits to Magda:

> I took a crazy leap into the unknown by returning. You can always return to a place, but I did something else. You see, I returned to places which represent my youth... I'm in a place where I don't exist. Because I'm no longer "Siwy" and twenty years old, I'm your average type of guy, only going bald.. .

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[18] The closing couplet runs: 'W takiej ciszy - tak ucho natężam ciekawie,/Że słyszałbym głos z Litwy. - Jedźmy, nikt nie woła !'

(237)

His frame of reference throughout the work is the memory of what existed. He returns in particular to two scenes from the war: his night with Ina in a fisherman's shack and an assassination attempt on a Gestapo officer. The former symbolises the perfection of the love he had known with Ina; the second, the intoxicating adventure of conspiracy and solidarity in the face of mortal danger which he had known with his friends Henryk and Andrzej.

On a more fundamental level, however, Siwy experiences delight on entering Poland due to his realisation that he is back in the country where his native tongue is the language of everyday communication. This carries the assumption that since he speaks the native language he can understand what is truly happening, but it becomes increasingly plain in the course of the narrative that he does not. At his own admission, the constant references to him as a foreigner ("the Frenchman") are borne out; he cannot understand the workings of life in the new Poland: ' "I'm a foreigner", Siwy thought. "I don't understand this. I can't do anything about it. A stranger".' (304)

To some extent Siwy's initial assumption is a legacy from Polish Romanticism. After the Great Emigration the Romantics reformulated Polishness as a linguistic construct so that the Polish language could serve as the source of Polish identity in the absence of a Polish state. The subtext of Bratny's novel is precisely the opposite: that in the postwar period Polishness is more than a linguistic construct, given that a legitimate Polish state exists. This is intended to preempt the emigration's claim to represent the Polish nation in the Romantic tradition. Although Siwy is not to be understood as representative of the reactionary emigration, his experience reinforces the idea that emigration makes the Pole little more than a tourist in relation to the new Poland:

> He parked the car and walked towards the market square. He could not understand his own feelings - he was dazed by the quietness of the streets. At every step he remembered what he had left here: an enormous crater full of death and mud. His

bewilderment increased with every step. He thought that people were looking at him - the tourist ! He was glad that, when he turned back, he would sit behind the wheel of Andrzej's dilapidated taxi. It would somehow suit the banality of the town. (230)

This is underlined here by the fact that he views the city in a dual focus: firstly in its present form, and secondly in his memories. Accordingly the new city seems artificial, since it registers nothing of the Nazi terror. He cannot accept the city in its present guise, moreover, because the differences emphasise his exclusion from the processes which have brought about that change. A key moment in this respect is his entry into Warsaw city centre, where he confronts the most visible symbol of the mark left by the Stalinist era on the Polish psyche:

> At the corner of Marszałkowska, the Palace of Culture and the square on his left riveted his attention. He looked so intently at what was for him a new view that he missed the changing lights and only moved when the car behind him hooted impatiently. Then, as if disturbed by something, he raced away at high speed. (203)

The transformation of the city's landscape is parallelled by the transformation in its inhabitants' outlook. This is a point which the text is careful constantly to reinforce. Siwy is an irrelevance because the intervening period constitutes experience which has fundamentally altered the meaning that the war holds for his former colleagues. For Siwy, the war represents his ultimate standard for defining what is important in life; he is deprived of the knowledge which his former colleagues have gained in the postwar period.

At the same time, however, we do not know what Siwy has done in the intervening years in France, apart from getting married. That experience, which might provide him with a certain authority, given that he has had to make his living in a foreign country largely by dint of his own resourcefulness, does not impinge within the novel's framework. His friends' judgment is nonetheless presented as more mature and

reliable. The crucial difference is located in Stalinism, which provides a frame of reference at least as important as the war years and simultaneously qualifies that wartime experience.

Siwy's absence from Poland disqualifies him from understanding the new reality, and also from participating in it. This disqualification is ultimately a political judgment on his character, but throughout the novel this remains only implied:

> Suddenly a nasty thought struck him: "I'm even lower than the level of the people here, I'm not here at all. I'm just a tourist sitting here. *They didn't leave", he thought in sudden despair, "they built this city up again..."*
>
> This feeling of indulgent self-pity was all the more unbearable since it prevented him from living. He glanced at Magda and noticed her watchful eyes.
>
> "There's nobody and nothing here for me, and I'm selling off the things I did bring back - my memories ! How quickly they're going !" He thought. (251 - my italics)

Siwy's italicised thoughts are a recurrent theme in the novels we shall consider and possess an unmistakable political subtext: only active participation in the process of building socialism allows individuals the right to criticise. Bratny casts the theme in its most democratic form to the extent that only those people who stayed behind to live in Poland and build and suffer under the political system have any right to criticise. Usually this right is the preserve of the intelligentsia, or more narrowly the Party, that is, those who are most committed to the system. However they are defined, these figures gain moral superiority through suffering injustice; at the same time they are also privileged with the knowledge of the superiority of the socialist system. As a consequence their criticism exonerates the system, which is never fundamentally at fault but, rather, perverted by individuals acting from less than pure motives. The nature of their criticism therefore endorses the continuance of socialist rule in the country.

This role is not given to Siwy, however, because he is essentially ignorant of the real issues and thus cannot contribute to the new order. His presence in Warsaw merely threatens disruption and harm to his

friends and to himself[19] because of his reckless search for the adventure he associates with 'real life' - the years of German occupation.

His main purpose is to serve as a negative example, incompatible with the new order. He also highlights the obsolescence of dedication to the legend of the Home Army. In the course of his trip he compromises the principal ideals of the underground: heroism, solidarity and loyalty. His principal motivation is revealed to be the pleasure of intoxication which adventure arouses, but in modern Warsaw there are only prosaic substitutes: a love affair with Magda, punching Pudel, a car chase. The original conditions which made his commitment to the Home Army ideals meaningful (and by extension those ideals themselves) no longer apply. His search for profounder experiences merely exposes the shallowness of his own nature.

Ina.

Siwy's inadequacy also reflects upon his former lover, Ina, since she has lived in expectation of his return. Accordingly, although she has known a lot of men, she has not committed herself to any of them. They are incapable of emulating Siwy, are endured in the absence of someone better. She designates them as "yetis", half-human creatures, whom she occasionally deigns to associate with and dispenses with once they bore her.

Like Siwy, her point of reference is the war. Her memory focuses on a night when Siwy had to remain at her flat during a curfew. The sound of a rifle shot as they made love transformed that act into an assertion of human defiance in the face of death:

> She took Siwy into her at that moment as though they were running away and she were saving him from the whole world. She had the sensation that they existed separately from the world due to her horror, and she felt that something final was taking

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[19] At the time of the accident involving Pudel, Andrzej is quick to inform the policeman present that Siwy is a foreign citizen and that arresting him would merely cause a diplomatic incident, p. 298.

place between them, something which went beyond death.(223)

However, this moment then casts a shadow over the rest of her life, because she, like Siwy, seeks to rediscover it, and all subsequent affairs are adjudged failures. Her dependency on the past is also a form of psychological compensation for her later denunciation of Siwy's mother: at that moment during the war, she was 'saving' him.

Siwy's appearance in Warsaw disrupts her ability to maintain the past at a safe distance but equally brings her to realise how she has lived in a state of limbo over the years since his departure:

> "Tinned memories. Tinned memories", she thought as she rushed down the stairs. "Twelve years in a tin can. A tin can. In a baking tin." She rebuked her memory for preserving Siwy so faithfully.
>
> "Fidelity always smells of vinegar. It isn't fresh..." (310)

As she realises, her whole life has been geared to waiting for something unattainable because irrevocably past. Her fidelity to his memory is exposed as mere habit, a defence strategy: "Tinned memories and yetis. What was I really looking for ? I was looking for a way to sit it out. But what ? Life itself ?" (311)

Siwy is no longer what he was during the war, so the life she conceived for herself no longer has meaning. The inadequacy of Siwy helps to reorientate her towards the one remaining source of stability, which is Andrzej. Her awareness that he had always felt more than friendship for her makes him the only person to whom she can now turn:

> I can go to him as I am, all broken up. He knows, he can see, after all. But I have been waiting, just as he has. I was waiting for Siwy ... Andrzej, you're not a tinned memory. No, you are like an iron ration. Only to be opened when all else has failed. (311)

By a final irony, however, her flight to Andrzej brings her once more into contact with Siwy as he stays at Andrzej's making love with Magda. Her discovery, we are led to infer, makes her succumb once

more to the tyranny of memory, for she flees the reality of Siwy's betrayal, pursued by Andrzej.

Andrzej: the Moralist Despite Himself

Andrzej stands at the opposite pole from both Siwy and Ina. He is one of the "unbroken", who has kept faith with the ideals of the underground in spite of persecution and thus presents a moral example. He is nevertheless equally diminished in the present reality, because his moral purity has made him callous. In contravention of his express desire to protect Ina, he causes her the greatest grief by recalling her actions during the Stalinist period:

> And suddenly, without forethought or preparation, in the haste to hit out, to wound her, he added: "You know, Siwy is really taken by Henryk's new book. There's a story about some girl who signed a confession implicating someone and later, on the way back from the interrogation, threw herself out of the window... Funny, isn't it ?
>
> God, why did you make me such a bastard ? She'll never forgive me. And everything was lost. Say something, speak to her, so that she understands that I didn't mean to. Well, bloody say something. If only she'd slap my face. God, what a bastard. But it's you who made me like that, Ina... Out of fear for you I'm getting even with you and destroying... What exactly...
>
> "Siwy wants to clear his mother's name..." she said severely and courageously.
>
> He looked at her strange smile: suddenly he felt contempt for himself and such profound disgust that it enveloped even his past. In the end, even the time when he had signed nothing had made him so hard and stupid, so mercilessly stupid and despicable, that he could not look into the eyes of her, who had then... (295)

The suggestion here is that Andrzej's moral rectitude is a fossilised stance, a reflex of habit, since he is no longer sure of his own rationale ("I'm getting even with you and destroying ... what exactly ?"). As such, his response reduces him to the status of being morally inferior to those, like Ina, who did compromise themselves in the previous era. By inference, the very superiority of moral

incorruptibility is questioned by this passage: it is more human to have capitulated, because such fallibility and weakness are more typical of human nature.

At the same time Andrzej's response reflects his mental outlook, not his everyday practice. His present activity, like their former Captain's, is unheroic, since his attention is devoted primarily to material concerns, such as finding spare parts for his taxi and meeting repayments. The only person with whom he appears to have any kind of regular contact is Pudel, a figure from the edges of society, to whom moreover he is in thrall. Pudel's dubiousness underlines Andrzej's own marginalisation in society, and the fact that Andrzej needs him casts a dubious light on the nature of what he does.

Andrzej is therefore presented in a way which inclines the reader to regard his situation as a direct consequence of his personal qualities, and these have led to his becoming an archaism in the new political situation. He has been overtaken by events: the "New World" Andrzej and his friends had dreamed of proves to belong to those who can manipulate others without qualms. The fact that Pudel thrives in present-day Poland makes Andrzej's sacrifices appear all the more pointless. Pudel's generation has succeeded where the "Columbus" generation could not, because it is unaware of the dimensions of social and political changes and merely accepts the new Poland as its natural environment.

A telling moment illustrative of the gulf in psychology between the two generations occurs when Andrzej searches for terms in which to explain to Pudel how the Captain's honesty stands in the way of his taking bribes. The Captain works in state insurance, and Pudel is trying to make a claim for his uninsured car after the accident with Siwy:

> Pudel appraised people's honesty in terms of how much it cost to buy: the greater their honesty, the more it cost to buy.
>
> "Pudel, he's the sort of bloke who..," Andrzej thought about how he could make Pudel understand. Suddenly, he broke into a smile. "When he wants to make a bit extra, he mends

women's stockings". (292)

Andrzej assumes that Pudel now understands that because the Captain's needs are minimal he cannot be bribed. In the event, Pudel simply uses the information to denounce the Captain to his state employers for running a private business. Pudel emerges therefore a biologically more ruthless specimen than the 'Columbus' generation.

Obviously, Bratny is however not being completely candid in presenting these changes as generational. It would be more accurate, for instance, to see Andrzej's situation as the consequence of administrative hostility towards his past, and that it is this which has marginalised him. His significance consists in his validation of the post-1956 course and the related idea of a fresh start, in which it is incumbent upon every individual to make the best of the new conditions. This necessitates a recognition of the limitations of his unbending stance, as he admits to Siwy:

> "I don't mean anything", Andrzej interrupted him, "except that *you should understand that there are few innocent people among us. It stained everybody, in different ways, but everybody...*"
>
> "What about you ?", Siwy asked warmly. "What about you ?", he repeated.
>
> "I could get my hands dirty through my taxi. Yes, mate, *I've got no reason to boast: I did time without doing the dirty on anyone during the investigation and that's that.* I was one of those who didn't want anything any more, who didn't want to change tack again. *But now everything is different. They've not only given our past back to us. Now we have to care about this bloody country. And it wasn't only our honour that they gave back to us. All that score-settling is over.* And if I can't stand the sight of Henryk, it isn't because of what he did, but how he did it. You get me ?" (302-303, my italics)

Non-participation is expressly condemned here. According to Andrzej there is no longer any reason for inner exile in this society, because the discrimination which characterised the preceding era has ended. Moreover, nearly everyone was implicated in Stalinist practices to some degree, so that the new start cannot be made on the basis of

criminalising those who were guilty of minor offences, such as Ina. The force of Andrzej's argument extends beyond denying Siwy the right to seek rehabilitation for his mother: the ideas in italics are formulated in almost identical terms to the official response to Stalinism, that with the exception of a few scapegoats (Berman, above all) no-one was to blame for the abuses. These assertions are meant to acquire additional force since it is a person who suffered under Stalinism who utters them. Andrzej's authority is intended thereby to be even more enhanced, but rather at the cost of his credibility as a character: it is somewhat inconsistent with the frustration which is elsewhere his distinguishing feature.

Andrzej is ultimately responsible for encouraging Siwy to desist from his search for retrospective justice for his mother. The argument echoes Bratny's article from *Nowe Drogi* in 1956, that reparation is somehow less valuable because it is merely a mechanical form of justice. The argument is reinforced in the form which Bratny gives it in this novel, because the would-be recipient of justice is already dead and therefore cannot hold a personal interest in the matter. By contrast, the living, who stand to suffer again if this mechanical justice is instituted, have a passionate interest in the matter and so *should have precedence*.

The argument here is loaded with political resonance beyond the framework of the text and constitutes part of the focus on 'life', instinctual and remorseless, which is one of the most salient features of Bratny's writing. Somewhat ingenuously, Zenona Macużanka has seen Bratny's fondness for the term as indicative of his vitality. But Bratny's endorsement of 'life' cannot be seen separately from the phenomena he depicts as manifesting life in his works. In other words, his use of the term tends to transform it into a political category with the purpose of sanctioning the current political order. Again, it is Andrzej - the torchbearer of moral standards - who provides the categorical statement of this outlook in the novel:

> I advise you not to go looking to rehabilitate your mother, for the sake of the living. You've come here and everybody is different from what you remembered. But they're alive. Do you

understand what that means ? They have a right. The right has been restored to them. You saw what the captain was doing for work - repairing ladders in women's stockings. You remember how he pushed us into doing mechanic courses in the underground? Now he's in cars again. A tank man in insurance, I ask you ! (285)

Siwy has invalidated any claim he may have had for justice by emigrating. He does not understand any longer what his friends have undergone and so does not have the right to disrupt their lives. Significantly, rights are presented as something "granted" by superior authorities to Polish society; and since Siwy is not a member of that society, he cannot enjoy those rights. Justice is for the living, who can demonstrate the bounty of that justice by their activity in the new Poland. Needless to say, this argumentation begs more questions than it can answer.

Naturally, the whole question of the mother's rehabilitation turns on the assumption that it is a legal possibility in Poland. Siwy is not vigorous in pursuing the matter, so the credibility of that action is not raised. Nonetheless doubts must be entertained as to the possibility of his being able to institute proceedings to clear the mother's name in a system where civil cases against the state were rare. Bratny's tendency here is to suggest, in line with his general portrayal of present-day Poland, that normality had returned and that the same standards applied as in the West.

The spirit of those times is reflected in the novel, in the sense that Poland was returning to Europe after the isolation imposed by Stalinism and, moreover, that the process of change would lead Poland to 'catch up with the West'. This is the gist of Bratny's portrayal of late fifties' Warsaw. Poles are shown as having access to consumer goods; similar problems exist with social undesirables; and above all the principal concern is doing business. The 'Polish road to socialism' seems to be premised first and foremost on material improvement, and for the vast majority rehabilitations, justice or the past appear irrelevant. The only thing that matters is how best to take advantage of the new liberal

conditions in order to do business. This point is made repeatedly through the narrative in relation to Siwy:

> He remembered the conversation in the bar in Wola when, deep in memories of the war years, he asked the barwoman what people were whispering about. "Business", she had replied. He was becoming convinced that in certain places people spoke about business in whispers. The only foreigner here was him - "the Frenchman" - and all the Poles, even those drivers waiting in their long row of "Warszawa" cars, were in on the secret and gave up part of their time to the boss of the petrol station on the principle that "business" came first. (265)

The chief player in this respect is the petty entrepreneur, Pudel, a manipulator who is constantly in search of an opportunity to gain an advantage over others. The symbol of the new (relative) affluence is Henryk, a consumer par excellence. What links the two is their opportunism: neither is committed to any greater cause; both adapt to the demands of the moment and both thus seem to be in differing degrees products of the corrupting and enduring influence of Stalinism.

"Getting Ahead" in Modern Socialist Poland

Henryk: the Opportunist

From the very outset Henryk's attachment to his own material welfare is underlined: his first words, even before he is seen, are about the new fridge being moved into his flat (216). In a sense the material world - the world of appearances - is the only one which exists for him. It is a significant feature of Henryk's portrayal that the reader does not receive anything like the degree of direct insight into the workings of his mind as with Siwy, Ina or Andrzej. Only at the end of the novel does the reader gain access to Henryk's thoughts, and they are shown to be utterly trivial, as he strives to regain self-control in the presence of his wife after receiving the anonymous letter from Pudel:

> How cosy peace is. That's the reward you get for being decent. Because decency means not insisting on decency from others. Particularly from your own wife. Yes, the reward for

decency ... And if only they had tact, ordinary human tact. But they don't, they foist themselves on passers-by. They flaunt themselves in public. After all, that brute writes in his letter that they are the talk of Warsaw cafes. Not only your Union cafe - one of my friends wrote it. Friends. Where are these friends then, if Siwy does that sort of thing to me ? (313)

Beyond material things he is concerned to the point of over-sensitivity with his own reputation, with not appearing ridiculous. His fastidiousness in this regard seems all the more inappropriate because his Stalinist past entailed jettisoning all moral standards. He thus reveals himself to have lost all sense of values; he automatically believes the insinuations of the letter since it confirms his own worst fears, that he is merely ridiculous.

Henryk is the most controversial character in the novel because he has reneged on his past in the Home Army. His denial related not only to his personal involvement but extended to the orchestration of certain aspects of the campaign against the Home Army during the Stalinist period. As Andrzej informs a typically naive Siwy, Henryk betrayed everything:

> "Listen, I told you about Malinowski. You remember, he was that accuser of steel who provided the damning evidence in many trials. When it came to the rehabilitations, it turned out that he had "fixed" about twenty cases. He was the record. He was the record, and Henryk was the record library, do you get my meaning ?"
>
> "No."
>
> "Malinowski smashed individual people. *Henryk smashed everything*. If you only knew his commentaries to the trials at which Malinowski gave evidence. Anyway, today he's playing a different tune."
>
> "It was a difficult time... And after all, he might have believed sincerely, and now .."
>
> "All right, all right. Only I ask you, you just look at how that belief of his always "pays off". Maybe he is sincere, but he always makes a bloody mint. ..." [My italics - JMB] (245)

Henryk was instrumental in the persecution of the Home Army and, more importantly, in providing the ideological justification for that

persecution. As such he is the embodiment of opportunism, for, regardless of whether his changes of course were motivated by sincere beliefs or not, they always resulted in personal material benefits. He is accounted a success because he possesses all the trappings of success: a beautiful wife who is devoted to him, a prominent career, foreign travel and the latest modern conveniences.

The course of the plot, however, exposes his success as largely superficial. He learns of Magda's infidelity from Pudel's anonymous letter; Pudel furthermore plays on his desire for the prestige of owning a Western car by getting him to exchange the new Russian model he has managed to import illegally into Poland for a much inferior Western car. His opportunism has guaranteed him a career, but at the cost of his independence of judgment. His own fictions, which deal with the key moments in his generation's existence, represent moral subterfuges and serve as justifications of treachery. His fictional version of Ina's interrogation is a spuriously tragic version of events as a kind of consolation for his own treachery.

Henryk's version is also hypocritical, since he currently exalts in print the ideals which he denied and denounced during the Stalinist trials. His true past is a source of embarrassment, something he seeks to conceal because it would undermine his version of events as a rewrite intended to disguise his own part in the persecutions. The irony of his situation is that his material success results directly from his dubious past: the money for his Russian car stems from a translation of his first novel, of which he is ashamed since the central character was a secret policeman who had lost his legs. The scheme Henryk devised for getting the car out of Russia depended moreover on the cooperation of a man from the Repatriation Commission responsible for repatriating Poles (including former members of the Home Army) from the Soviet Union after October 1956.

In keeping with the general tenor of the novel, 'real life' is much harsher than the fictions Henryk seeks to promote. He is ultimately condemned to awareness: Magda's infidelity perhaps signals the collapse of his universe.

Pudel & Magda: Stalin's Offspring

The obsolescence of the 'Columbus' generation is underscored by the younger generation, for whom the Warsaw Uprising seems not to have existed. For them, the formative experience appears to have been the practices and atmosphere of the Stalinist years. In brief, this implies cynicism in tow with the obligatory idealism, the need for duplicity in dealing with others, and the employment of state-sanctioned deceit in gaining the upper hand.

Of the two members of the younger generation, it is Pudel who is more clearly influenced by Stalinist practices, particularly in the matter of writing anonymous denunciations to the state. At the same time, the damage which these practices caused individuals is no longer the same under the post-1956 regime. The Captain, for instance, feels Pudel's letter as an inconvenience in his state job, probably thwarting further promotion but not jeopardising his liberty, as it would have done during Stalinism. Pudel exhibits an almost Machiavellian cynicism about humankind, a materialist reductiveness as far as human motivation is concerned. In the case of every person he encounters his essential interest lies in finding how that person can be manipulated:

> "Man really is a fine piece of work", he thought of himself, "the money waiting for him is of less interest than getting revenge on another man. Yes, the Captain is well and truly out of the way. And even Andrzej's little friend can be fixed." (300)

In the present political climate Pudel's destructiveness does not extend as far as the total ruination of peoples' lives; he is, rather, an irritation. The point about his activity is that it is ultimately pointless. He is parasitic, but as such his only victims are the socially demoralised 'Columbus' generation who play only a minor role in the current system.

Henryk's wife, Magda, occupies a place at the other end of the Stalinist spectrum. She maintains a fragile balance between her idealisation of Henryk - necessary for her to go on living with him - and

effectively undermining him. In this, her actions seem almost psychologically dissociated from her professed views. In her confession to Siwy she explains that she cannot leave Henryk, because he represents her need for something greater than herself, a kind of idol. The fact that she met Henryk in 1950 makes her dedication to him part of the idealistic atmosphere of the initial stages of building socialism:

> "When did you meet ?" he asked in a loud voice.
> "In 1950."
> "*Yes. The "Ideal". Ideals can't be replaced. Ideals are lost. If she loses him, I won't be the same for her as he was*". (282)

She appears then to be acting in bad faith, stifling the obvious question of how sleeping with Siwy can be squared with her concern for Henryk. Her love life in consequence serves as the focus for the most important political issues, specifically the question of loyalty and betrayal. It is precisely around this issue that the core of the novel revolves.

* * *

The issue of treachery unites the two planes of the novel, the political, which is admittedly rather muted, and the personal. The first relates to the question of fidelity to the Home Army traditions and the cost of remaining faithful. The second refers to the romantic adventures which Siwy enjoys in Warsaw on his return and their consequences for his friendship with Henryk. At the same time, as indicated earlier, the issue is close to the author's heart also in respect of his own history. The crucial passage is Siwy's reflections on his group after he has made love to Magda:

> It is only now that Ina has died inside me. Only she [Magda] has buried her. And if there'd been no Magda ? Time destroys what connects people, anyway. Oblivion is in the nature of life, which allows no empty spaces, museums, places dedicated to "memory". Life billets the first passer-by she comes across. That whole ossified world of former relations between us, he began to think of Henryk, what is it worth ? Treachery.

> What nonsense. Henryk betrayed nothing. He answered the call of life, whose essence is change. There is a type of fidelity which cannot be distinguished from sclerosis: they too are "faithful" who go untouched by any new idea, whom no new person will love. Treachery - his thoughts returned to Magda - when a person is alive, in that sense treachery is inevitable. Would her "fidelity" to Henryk not be "treachery" towards me ? Towards that feeling which she awoke in me.. ? There is no such alternative of treachery or fidelity, there is only the alternative of the kind of treachery, whose treachery against whom. Someday that will happen to us also, someday we will again be strangers to each other, and she is no more than human... (280-281)

'Fidelity' and 'treachery' do not constitute moral absolutes, but are relative in the sense that they acquire meaning - so Siwy implies - only in relation to concrete people or causes. But this is further qualified by the assertion that there exists something called 'life', according to whose dictates continuity of behaviour (habit) signifies ossification. A person is truer to the spirit of life if he constantly changes and proves to be continuously unfaithful to the causes he previously espoused.

Insofar as this argument relates to emotional honesty and the strength of passion between human individuals - neither of which seem adequate terms for the affair between Siwy and Magda - it possesses a certain force. The intention, however, is to extend that argument to political issues, specifically the case of the Home Army, and to deny the values it propagated - solidarity, loyalty, self-sacrifice. Bratny reveals each character as failing to live up to those values, with the implication that only under extraordinary conditions (the German occupation) can they have any application. In peacetime, human beings return to their lesser natures and are right to do so. The banality of everyday existence renders the heroic attitude inappropriate.

Bratny's approach in dealing with the 'Columbus' generation as a whole is diametrically opposed to the Stalinist definition of them as a decrepit social formation. In *Kolumbowie* and *Happy, Tortured*, he shows them as individuals making choices with all the limitations human beings possess. In the earlier novel he showed their heroism

uncritically; in the latter work he demonstrates that their heroism no longer really matters, for Polish society has moved on in the intervening years.

All the principal characters in different ways continue to live on the experiences and ideals of the war years, for want of something better in their personal lives. They are displaced in the present, demoralised by the political changes; furthermore, these changes ensure that there is no way back to the idealised past. Memory thus constitutes a trap for them all, since -in vulgar terms - it prevents them from "getting on with their lives".

Bratny's strategy in *Happy, Tortured* is to demythologise the cult of the Home Army, in line with contemporary official policy. He achieves this aim by showing them not as the tragic figures killed in the Warsaw Uprising or tortured by the authorities but as ordinary people without any greater cause to serve. Their survival has made them banal. In this sense they have become subject to the action of Time: the myth of the underground is shown as eroding naturally as the younger generation cease to understand or to care about the issues which so absorbed the 'Columbus' generation. Whilst treachery during the war was unthinkable, in peace it is in the normal course of things. Time, not Nazism nor Stalinism, proves to be the ultimate and irresistible enemy of humankind.

This point is constantly foregrounded in the novel, chiefly in relation to Siwy, who reveals an almost chronic phobia of growing old. 'Przemijanie' and 'mijanie' (the passing of time and loss of illusions) are ever-present terms in his reflections:

> The war generation knew death as the result of enemy activity, but then, when he was lost in the fishermen's shack, listening to Ina's breathing, he had felt the passing of time at its most threatening. (212)

> Even the attachment to some old rags is only a struggle against time, a desire to preserve something so that it remained exactly the same, so that it existed, so that it didn't end... In love, as in life, tradition is simply man's incompetent attempt at blackmail in the face of the laws of time ! (298-299)

This focus on the operations of time is a mystification when employed to justify political changes in Poland after 1945. It renders ideology and the eventual political victory of the Communists as a consequence of the natural progression of time. This is misleading in the Polish context, precisely because more than the operations of time are involved in the historical process: the place of the Home Army in public life was largely determined by conscious political decisions on the authorities' part to the end of counteracting its influence. The 'erosion' of the myth of the underground, insofar as it cannot be neutered and exploited by the state, represents a deliberate policy.

This concern to present the postwar period as part of a natural process echoes a feature of Stalinist historicism, which Zbigniew Kubikowski defined in relation to Andrzejewski's *Popiół i diament* as a kind of 'biologism'.[20] The Communists' myth of the need to build from scratch after 1945 interpreted the war as a purifying process which swept away the redundant political forms of prewar Poland. Their assumption of power was presented in terms akin to Darwin's theory of natural selection: the prewar Sanacja regime had proven biologically unfit to resist Nazism and therefore was condemned to extinction. Communism proved victorious not primarily due to historical inevitability but because it was best fitted to survive.

Earlier social formations were accordingly condemned to the 'rubbish tip of history', an image deliberately exploited by Wajda at the end of *Ashes and Diamonds*. This finds an echo in *Happy, Tortured* with Siwy's thoughts about himself:

> Down below, the darkness of the Vistula looked ominous. Somewhere there were deserted shores.
>
> "I'm just like them, full of useless papers, string, packaging of everything which has happened. Everything which is a remnant of the past is rubbish. The only thing that counts is what exists. What has been only counts if it makes a difference to what exists. Then it exists, really exists. When it's breathing alongside you..." (270)

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[20] Zbigniew Kubikowski, 'Szklany mur', *Odra*, 1983 (10), p. 43.

In this respect Bratny had only slightly modified Stalinist modes of thought: the course of history was justified subliminally through the negative experiences of the individual characters. The transition to Communism coincides with their adulthood and, by sleight of hand, Bratny attempts to present the change as if it were a necessary part in the process of maturity. He proposes the recognition of this change as the acquisition of experiential wisdom, as one of the tough realities of the human condition: the truism that 'people get old' is of the same order of inevitability as the establishment of Communism in Poland after the war. In other words, both are a result of the natural processes of time.[21]

This conclusion is not optimistic and informs Bratny's angle of presentation of the new reality, which demonstrates the inevitability of change but not its desirability. His attention lies too much with the remnants of the past, the negative aspects, than with the more constructive elements of socialist progress. The frustration and bitterness of the 'Columbus' generation consign it to the past, but only imply by default that socialism is the future of Poland. Hence, perhaps, the authorities' dissatisfaction with the novel. [22]

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[21] On the issue of the naturalization of ideology, compare Roland Barthes's comments about myth in bourgeois society: 'What the world supplies to myth is a historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality.' 'Myth Today' in: *A Roland Barthes Reader* (London, 1993), p. 131. Bratny's achievement in 'Happy, Tortured' directly contradicts Barthes' assertion in the same essay that 'left-wing myth is inessential' (ibid., p. 136).

[22] The only concrete information I have discovered concerning the nature of the changes enforced by the censorship relates to disparaging comments made about the Rada Ministrów, or cabinet, during the Stalinist period.

'From Cult to Taboo':

Jerzy Putrament's *The Stepchildren* (1963).[22]

> Nobody should be allowed to make a heroic event out of this tragedy. Tragic accidents happen even in a family. (...) And although the family afflicted by such a misfortune can never forget about it, it always tries in its grief to draw as deep a curtain of silence as possible over its tragedy. [23]
>
> Władysław Gomułka

> The most difficult point in the socialist writer's aesthetic is a critical view of socialist construction, which would not at the same time be a nihilistic view. We may call it positive criticism. Such literature has a chance of reaching a broader readership only if the writer can see what is weak in socialism. If the writer only enthuses and closes his eyes to the shortcomings, then his writing isn't worthwhile. [24]
>
> Jerzy Putrament

The function of 'positive criticism' defined the intention of almost all Party works. While for the majority of writers Putrament remained synonymous with orthodoxy and his statements identical with the Party line in literature, he more than any other writer discussed here [25] was able to criticise ruling practice, and his works marked the extent of tolerable dissatisfaction with the political system. This was due to his always lofty position in the official hierarchy. [26]

Putrament's works, much like those of Roman Bratny, were

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22 *Pasierbowie*. All references are to the first edition (Warsaw, 1963).

23 At a meeting with the teams of the Cegielski Plant in Poznan, 5 June 1957, on the anniversary of the riots in Poznań. The speech was reported in *Życie Warszawy*, 1957 (133). Quoted from *Kultura polska po Jałcie*, *tom 1*, op. cit., p. 345.

24 'Pozytywny krytycyzm: Rozmowa z Jerzy Putramentem', in: *Rozmowy z pisarzami*, op. cit., p. 83. The conversations took place in 1972 and 1976.

25 The only comparable figure in this respect was Władysław Machejek, the editor of *Życie Literackie*, who was a deputy member of the Central Committee and author of novels about the secret police, such as *Czekam na słowo ostatnie* (1975).

26 See the Appendix for a potted biography.

produced in close cooperation with the Censorship Office, but because of his importance to the regime Putrament enjoyed even greater allowances. As a 'literary politician' he was less concerned by the leadership's pretensions to make declarations on literary matters than by their abrogation of interest to bureaucratic bodies such as the Censorship Office. In a key speech at the XIII Plenum in July 1963 he made a characteristic statement of this view, distinguishing not between a political and literary outlook, but between bureaucratic and political perspectives.[27] At the plenum he argued for the greater incursion of the political sensibility into literature, trusting in politicians' ability to find a longer-term view of the role that literature might play in the socialist project. Bureaucrats, to his mind, were more concerned with adherence to closely defined guidelines to avoid bearing the responsibility for wrong decisions.

In the early 1960s this strategy of courting the Party leadership may be said to have enjoyed a certain amount of success. Gomułka was the last Party leader to address writers in person or to deem them worthy of public condemnation.[28] At all events, for the last time the Party gave some clear indications of its preferences and expectations vis-a-vis literature.

At the time, Party interest seemed to herald a hardening of official policy towards writers. This turn to a more instrumental and totalitarian approach accompanied the first serious attempt after 1956 to reintroduce the concept of Socialist Realism as the defining aesthetic in literature. This was made plain by the First Secretary's speech, which, whilst

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[27] Ryszard Matuszewski's summary of proceedings (printed as 'Problemy rozwoju kultury na XIII Plenum KC PZPR' in *Nowe Drogi*, 1963 (8), pp. 137-150) gives considerable space to Putrament's contribution: 'As far as methods of dealing with writers were concerned, comrade Putrament distinguishes between the political approach and one that he termed "not political but bureaucratic". The politician evaluates events from a viewpoint of whether they help the cause or not. The bureaucrat - from the viewpoint of whether he will have to answer personally for them. Before taking even a correct decision, the latter is afflicted by fear of the responsibility and risk involved'.

[28] He appeared at the XIV ZLP Congress in Lublin in September 1964. At a meeting of Party activists on 8 March 1968 he was moved to condemn the recent Extraordinary Meeting of the Warsaw branch of the ZLP.

acknowledging the flaws of the aesthetic, gave a classic Stalinist exposition of the same:

> The Party does not wish to interfere in matters of craft and has no intention of giving prescriptions for the way in which books should be written or other works of art carried out, but at the same time the Party supports most of all the creative work of socialist realism, which is profoundly ideological and represents the highest artistic level, is comprehensible to and serves the masses.
>
> Such art - *realistic in its form and socialist in its ideological expression* and in its attitude towards the world and man's lot - is what we support above all and consider worthy of the widest distribution.[29] [My italics - JMB]

The use of the term 'Socialist Realism' itself, by dint of its very unacceptability (it had been thoroughly discredited in the period after October 1956), seemed to sum up the Party's determination to initiate a clampdown in culture. At the same time, as other members of the Party leadership made clear (Ochab and Starewicz), Polish writers were felt to be out of step with other socialist countries where the term still held great currency.[30]

The use of 'Socialist Realism' as a defining term of Party policy, however qualified, together with a declaration of the desirability of closer cultural ties with the USSR, seemed to hark back to Stalinist times. This impression was compounded by the nature of the criticism of writers as 'divorced from reality' and guilty of submitting to cultural

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[29] 'O aktualnych problemach ideologicznej pracy partii (referat tow. Władysława Gomułki na XIII Plenum KC PZPR, wygłoszony dnia 4 lipca 1963)', *Nowe Drogi*, 1963 (8), p. 29.

[30] Ochab spoke of the avoidance of the term 'socialist realism' as a 'concession to opponents' and 'an attempt (on the part of the Polish press and critics) to distance themselves to some extent from the press and critics of fraternal socialist countries'. Starewicz criticised the 'ignorance of and dismissive attitude towards the achievement of the Soviet Union and other socialist states' implicit in Polish artists' 'pro-Western snobbery'. 'Problemy rozwoju kultury ...', op. cit., pp. 140, 142.

'fads' - a charge akin to 'cosmopolitanism' during High Stalinism.[31] In contrast to these deviations, the Party's proposals offered a chance for writers to be close to the 'pulse' of contemporary life.[32] Almost inevitably, being 'close to the pulse' - as during the early 1950s -meant participating in a project of 'field trips' ('w teren') to discover what the workers were doing for socialist construction. Indeed, one of the few practical developments to emerge from the plenum was the eventual signing of a sponsorship agreement between the ZLP and the CRZZ in December 1963, with a specific view to giving annual prizes to novels on themes related to work.[33]

Although the general trend at the Plenum appeared to be one of unanimous support for the resuscitation of socialist realism and its imposition on writers regardless of their wishes, shades of dissent were apparent in the stress that was placed on different aspects. Gomułka alone declared openly for a return to socialist realism, while others merely acknowledged the durability of the concept in other countries. Of the more liberal voices, Starewicz admitted that a literary programme

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31 See Galiński's criticism: 'many people from these milieux are to some extent stewing in their own juices... and often the cafe imposes judgments and views'. ('O dalszy rozwój kultury socjalistycznej', op. cit., p. 55.)

In addition Lucjan Motyka, First Secretary of the Cracow Party Committee, denounced the fashion for what he termed 'modernism' in art, synonymous for him with excessive experimentation for its own sake, as artists strove to show themselves equal to fellow artists at keeping up with fashions. ('Problemy rozwoju kultury...', op. cit., p. 149.)

It was Bolesław Jaszczuk who served up the most bizarre argumentation, however, as he announced that Poland's role as cultural intermediary between the West and the USSR was at an end, since the USSR had developed its own dynamic cultural exchange with the West after 1956. Consequently the Polish assumption of cultural superiority vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and the sense of a Polish mission in this regard no longer applied. In fact Poles were sometimes guilty of being a threat to the USSR by their 'smuggling of unsocialist content in native packaging to certain milieux of Soviet society'. (Ibid., pp. 147-148.)

32 The metaphors used at the plenum speak volumes of Party attitudes, particularly its division of artists into (essentially) worker-writers, performing a vital economic function, and effete aesthetes malingering in cafes.

33 The criteria directly echoed the terms used by Gomułka at the XIII Plenum, i.e. 'works realistic in form and socialist in their ideological expression...'. The prizes were to be awarded on the first of May, International Labour Day: 'Notatka w sprawie nagród CRZZ za twórczość artystyczną' (December 1963), AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-258, p. 4.

could not be realised without writers' good will:

> What is needed is a broadly understood "social commissioning" of literature - one which will suit us and will be acceptable to writers. (...) Words of trust and recognition are needed, albeit a little on the credit side. [34]

The other main dissenting voice was that of Putrament, who implicitly criticised the use of any overly bureaucratic approawch as a means of guaranteeing the success of Party policy. Of equal concern to him was the general attack on 'retributionary literature', particularly where this dealt with the Stalinist era and the changes after 1956. For the Party leadership, especially Gomułka and Kliszko, this mode was becoming identical with revisionism itself. Gomułka accordingly placed the main accent in his speech on the inadequate representation of other trends (literature about the Army or work), as against the rather too frequent appearance of 'black' and 'retributionary' literature.[35] The indication to all subordinate levels of the system was plain - these kinds of works were to be more severely restricted. In these straitened circumstances, Putrament argued for treatment on the basis of individual merit, not wholesale condemnation:

> Equally, in relation to 'retributionary literature' comrade Putrament stressed that its proper treatment lay not in the sphere of prohibitions but of a single, individual evaluation of what the writer who undertook those issues had to say to the nation and the Party in a given case that was wise and revelatory. [36]

Putrament was very much defending a personal interest in the matter, since the works that occupied him and continued to do so for the rest of the decade fell precisely into the category of 'retributionary literature' and indeed marked the furthest extent of the Party's tolerance of the treatment of sensitive political issues. Furthermore, his novel

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34 'Problemy rozwoju kultury...', op. cit., p. 142.

35 'O aktualnych problemach ...', op. cit., pp. 25-27.

36 'Problemy rozwoju kultury...', op. cit., p. 145.

The Stepchildren was to appear only a few weeks after the plenum and its appearance owed much to official flexibility.

A certain flexibility entered the leadership's outlook also, at least to the extent that Gomułka did not insist on using 'Socialist Realism' at the XIV ZLP Congress in Lublin the following year. The reasons for this were to be found both in the Party and outside it. The most outstanding Party critics countenanced with reluctance the resuscitation of the socialist realist aesthetic. They attempted to soften dogmatism by stressing the importance of such dissenting writers as Kazimierz Brandys to Polish literature, besides defending 'retributionary literature', even in its most purely 'revisionist' or experimental variants.[37]

A characteristic moment was the report on the current state of literature for the Party's Cultural Commissiom at the end of 1963 in time for the IV PUWP Congress (May 1964). Initially, Janusz Wilhelmi, main editor of the literary magazine *Kultura* and renowned for his hard-line attitudes, provided the overview. Yet in the version that finally reached the leadership, his assessment had undergone considerable modification, and his attacks on the leading revisionist authors had been greatly toned down by a committee of liberal Party critics (Żółkiewski, Drewnowski, Matuszewski).[38] Not that the leadership found the document entirely satisfactory in its final version,[39] but the implications were unambiguous: a renewed dogmatic concept of socialist realism or attacks on retributionary

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[37] Most notably at a session of the 'Zespół do spraw Literatury, Wydawnictw i Czasopism z dnia 20 XII 1963', Żółkiewski defended the publication of Andrzejewski's *Idzie skacząc po górach* with the same print run as Hołuj's *Drzewo rodzi owoc*. His justification was the book's criticism of features of the capitalist world. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-226, p. 53.

[38] Wilhelmi's original and a revised version are to be found in AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-206. Matuszewki's article 'Polityczna wymowa dzieła literackiego', in *Nowe Drogi*, 1964 (6), argued for a more liberal approach to literary works.

[39] As Starewicz indicated when sending the report to Gomułka: 'Although some of the judgments provoke reservations, there is nothing more complete and absolutely pertinent at the moment'. AAN, KC PZPR, XVIII-267, p. 153.

literature were fundamentally misguided.

By the time of the Writers' Congress, while not surrendering the Party's 'right' to make demands of literature and writers, Gomułka came to refrain from using 'Socialist Realism'. Other factors undoubtedly came into play at this time, first and foremost, the 'Letter of the 34' in March 1964. At the XIV ZLP Congress, although Gomułka did not mention the letter, his whole speech was geared towards promoting reconciliation with writers.

His more conciliatory approach was reflected in the fact that his declarations on the subject of 'retributionary literature' became slightly less condemnatory. Now he distinguished between a current that could be termed 'retributionary' (that is, had an anti-socialist political intention as defined by the Party) in contradistinction to works which sought to deal with the Stalinist period in 'all its complexity'. The point of this distinction was his demand that the positive transformation of the country during the Six-Year Plan be shown, not merely the abuses.[40] At the same time he added another condition for such 'non-retributionary' literature dealing with the Stalinist period, which was the privileging of Party writers as the only people capable of doing the era justice. Indeed he presented the era itself as the all but exclusive interest of Party members. His main rhetorical device was to underline his own suffering under Stalinism as the source of his authority for making these assertions:

> Others may have suffered, but the period of the personality cult was particularly hard on communists. For a writer to be able to render the experiences of a communist wrongly subjected to severe repression by his Party and its authorities, he must himself be a communist to the depths of his soul. I doubt whether anybody else could do it. But to represent the experiences of a non-communist, who was visited by persecution and punishment through no fault of his own, it is not at all necessary to use the period of the cult of the individual. Human injustice hurts the

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40 'Przemówienie tow. Władysława Gomułki na XIV Zjeździe Związku Literatów Polskich w Lublinie', *Nowe Drogi*, 1964 (10), p. 10.

same, regardless of where and when it is suffered. [41]

In other words, Stalinism could be considered the legitimate concern of Party writers alone. And such works would be published, if they reflected the 'true reality' of those times:

> If creative work devoted to this theme is not "retributionary" literature, but can become an artistic reflection of the true experiences of man and the nation, of the true reality of that period, then these works will certainly not encounter any publishing difficulties. However, all attempts to revert to a literary "contest" with socialism must be doomed to failure. [42]

Gomułka's stance at the congress was then one of relatively benevolent paternalism. In this spirit he could play down the differences arising even between the Party and its own more illustrious writers; there was to be no return to the dictates of the Stalinist period, no rehabilitation of socialist realism by name. The Party's expectations of writers were issued as a challenge, not as dogma: Gomułka 'doubted' the ability of a non-communist to penetrate the communist experience but would have been happy to be proved wrong. At all points, however, literary activity was secondary to political action: writers at most could 'help the Party to solve problems connected with the country's development'. [43]

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., p. 11.

The Stepchildren as preferred retributionary literature.

And today, in 1963-64, under the slogan of "exposing evil" or "the whole bitter truth", we observe attempts to revert to a retributionary literature. On the whole, they are superficial attempts that reduce the whole complex issue of the period of the personality cult and the break with it to "good" people (devoted to the cause and honest to the end) and "bad" people (base characters, careerists, etc.). We are opposed to any such reversion to "retribution", for more than once, as we said at the XIII Plenum, it has served as an occasion to fire on our own ranks. [44]

By 1964 the Party had moved back largely to a prescriptive approach to literature. Its operative ideology in this sphere led it to impose a general prohibition on 'retributionary' works, whilst at the same time granting concessions to specific works and authors, usually in the Party, on a largely one-off basis. The effect of the institution of this policy was to make every work an exceptional event, where the author's intention could be defined as a comment enveloping the whole of the political system. In effect, the flexibility of the term 'retributionary literature' enabled it to mean all things to all men. What lay behind the apparent simplicity and unambiguity of the term was the Party's operative ideology - ultimately, how acceptable any criticism might be according to the specific political needs of the moment and the extent to which the Party leadership might consider it desirable to demonstrate its magnanimity towards writers producing such critical works.

The quotation from the Warsaw writers POP meeting reveals the development of some sophistication in the Party's approach to critical literature, a narrowing of the terms.[45] It was no longer sufficient to be able to point to single positive figures as moral examples and load the

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[44] 'Materiał na zebranie POP przy ZLP', Warsaw, 17 Feb 1964. One of two notes sent by Artur Starewicz, Head of the Press Office of the Central Committee to 'Comrade Wiesław'. AAN, KC PZPR, XVIII-267, pp. 160-161.

[45] The intended audience for the speech was the Warsaw POP, making it an authoritative statement for Party writers, above all.

blame for abuses onto isolated individuals who showed undesirable traits (careerism). The logical consequence was to construct complex and ultimately ambiguous fictional characters. The simple optimism of the socialist realist period had been superseded by an altogether more subtle aesthetic, more in line with the Party's own increasing equivocation about the Stalinist years: 'evil', together with 'good', lay in everyone. The rehabilitation of 'psychology' in socialist works was thus complete; character motivation should be sought not in class determinants but in the ambivalence of the individual psyche.

Putrament seems to have taken this to heart in a series of novels about the formation of the 'personality cult', beginning with *The Stepchildren* (1963), continuing with *The Men of Little Faith* (1967) and culminating in *Bołdyn* (1969). These dealt respectively with the survival of the 'cult' into the present day (the early 1960s); the development of the Stalinist system during the early 1950s, focusing on the upper echelons of the Party hierarchy; [46] and the process whereby a 'cult' or myth is generated around the leader of a band of communist partisans in the closing stages of the war.

In each case Putrament sought to render the complexity of the political and psychological conditions under which the 'cult' arose, rather than to score political or moral points against the abuses that occurred during the Stalinist period. [47] One of the key motifs in each novel was the duping of the younger generation's 'faith' by an older generation that is either incompetent or acts duplicitously. The main perspective is therefore usually provided by a young man, initially ignorant of the true complexity of the network of relations in which he finds himself, who comes into his maturity in the course of the novel.

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[46] The work represents a 'roman à clef' where real major political figures appear under cryptonyms.

[47] Given Putrament's own role in the events of the time, it would have been difficult for him to disclaim responsibility. In consequence, 'all' he could do was provide a more complex picture to justify his own part. He did nevertheless exact retribution against fellow writers, like Ważyk and Andrzejewski, particularly in *The Men of Little Faith*, which was sanctioned by the authorities since those writers had gravitated towards the political opposition after 1956.

In each novel Putrament strove to account for the rise and development of the 'personality cult', and explain why the leader became divorced from his surrounding reality. In effect, his approach explored (as an area of particular interest) the mentality of those who held or strove for political power.[48] *The Stepchildren* in some respects was the most universal work of the three in that it investigated the consequences of the 'cult' in three related spheres: the political, the philosophical and the psychological.

POLITICAL

The situation prevailing in Zaborze possesses all the features of the 'personality cult' at its height. These include the absence of any freedom to criticise, the highly formal character of justice and governmental procedure, and, above all, the identification of the 'success' of the system with a single individual - Jan Pociej.

Jan Pociej: the Nature of the 'Personality Cult'.

The corner-stone of Pociej's attitude is the identification of his every utterance and action with the Party and the cause. This enables him to consider himself irreplaceable, yet his initial justification is not political but familial - he is carrying on the traditional role of the Pociejs in the town which is their spiritual birthright. He and Leon exist, he argues, in order to exercise control over the town:

> The place of the Pociejs is here ! What I have done needs to be taken further. (...) There is a Pociej tradition. Whether you like it or not, you have to make use of it. (...) You're not to waste a single ounce of our authority, the cause in which we act is too great. (18)

Jan Pociej considers his authority to be synonymous with the Party's. Because of the subsumation of his own will to the greater

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48 In conversation with Taranienko he stated: 'in the twentieth century, the equivalent [to Moliere's collective types such as the miser or religious hypocrite - JMB] is the man who has disturbances and conflicts with himself due to an excess of power'. Op. cit., p. 82.

cause he cannot conceive of any other position for himself than that of local ruler in Zaborze ('outside this hole, I'm nothing', he states to Jadwiga, 174). That the Party itself might regard him as redundant is unimaginable to him, even though he finally comes to realise that the Party at least tacitly supports the actions directed against him:

> It's a blow to my authority ! It's the signal for an attack on me ! (...) Analyze my behaviour, investigate my actions. Whose ? Mine ! Jan Pociej's ! The one whom the whole of Poland knows ! And what am I supposed to do ? Agree to it ? Throw my authority on the rubbish heap ? Mine ? Not mine ! The Party's !! (169-170)

The assumption that an individual can represent the Party exclusively is one which Party works generally undermine; this kind of declaration is made by those who have no basis for their claim. But Pociej is sustained in this belief by those around him, particularly Chylikiewicz, who tries to persuade Leon not to seek Truszkowski's rehabilitation:

> The young, they're ambitious, oh yes, subjectively honest. But they don't understand that Jan Pociej is not just a personality, albeit the most outstanding. He's a symbol ! His overthrow would have unforeseeable consequences ! There are single columns upon which the whole cathedral cupola rests ! (132)

Such inflation echoes the style of the Stalinist era. Instead of reinforcing the notion of Pociej's immovability, these assertions suggest the fragility of his position (as Jadwiga does: 'He's in such a position that any reproach can topple him', 176).

Pociej's fate is not a calamity for the Party, merely the changing of the guard.

The Origins of the Cult.

There is almost no attempt to explain the 'cult' in terms of its historical and psychological determinants within the novel. But there are ruminations which possess a certain credibility, such as Leon's during an imaginary conversation with his father:

(Pociej) "Don't accuse me of promoting the cult ! I've denounced it just as completely as you have".

(Leon) "No you haven't, because you think that it's all about an individual. It isn't, it's about an era. The cult was born out of privation. Privation demanded privileges. Privileges couldn't survive without force. Force presupposed a hierarchy. The hierarchy required a boss."

"You think that we've gotten over privation ?"

"No, but the reason which gave birth to it has disappeared. We're no longer a stronghold under siege. The besiegers have withdrawn, they themselves are on the defensive." (164-165)

Leon's presentation of his father's side emphasises the highly Stalinist elements, such as the notion that Poland was under serious armed threat from the West. This was no longer credible in the early 1960s, when the forces of socialism were in the ascendant, according to Party discourse; consequently the military arguments for concentrated power no longer held. The father is therefore a relic from an era that is past, but he continues to operate as though it had not passed, as he explains to Leon when justifying his domineering manner at council meetings:

> I've been in this place so many years, I know them all and every time I have to prod them anew. Until I shout at them they don't move, even when it's a self-evident matter like that one. (84)

He has grown so accustomed to assuming sole responsibility that he fails to see that they are now living in more liberal times. His position and stance is that of a Stakhanovite hero-worker on the ideological front-line. Such an attitude militates against any greater democracy in his rule, despite the fact that his attitude's political justification has withered away. Pociej has not changed his outlook, despite the altered economic and political situation, and thus comes into conflict with the younger generation of Party members who wish to reflect greater openness and accountability in their decisions.

Generational struggle as a question of political style.

A central problem identified by numerous critics when reviewing the work lay on the level of the rationale behind removing Pociej.[49] Why, they asked, if he was doing a good job, should he be ousted ? Pociej's good work is acknowledged by Pociej's principal rival, Sawko, when he talks to Leon:

> I tell you, he even does things, makes an effort... But it's all at the expense of stifling others ! That's the horrible thing ! Others won't open their mouths in front of him, they're afraid ! Is this supposed to be the socialism we were building ? We have heard so much, first of all, that it's for everyone, that it alone guarantees comprehensive development and so on, and secondly that the personality cult has been done away with. (...) But we all want to do something, not just carry out instructions ! Perhaps we'll even make some mistakes to start with. Well, at least we can learn from them. (93-94)

Sawko wants to be rid of Pociej, not because he does not do his job well or act in the best intentions, but because his methods allow no scope for others: he arrogates the decision-making process to himself alone, so that there can be no collective leadership. The younger generation, the Party's base in the future, is not being properly co-opted into the power structures, and is thus being denied a necessary early grounding in political responsibility, which will after all ensure the continuance of dynamic Party rule.

Sawko also has a more ideological objection to Pociej, centred on the building of a much needed new school. Pociej's rejection of the project stems from a dogmatic adherence to the budget regulations. Sawko accuses Pociej in good Marxist terms of neglecting the system's 'superstructure' in favour of the economic 'base' (37). Pociej supports the construction of new shops, because their construction costs can soon be recovered directly; the new school does not offer such possibilities to recover the outlay and thus is rejected (38). He has

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[49] See Włodzimierz Maciąg's review, 'Konflikt polityczny czy intryga personalna ?' *Życie Literackie*, 1963 (44).

therefore made a new dogma of material well-being, sacrificing education - the longer-term perspective - for a riskless high-profile project. For Sawko this is all the more heinous because one of the clarion calls of 1956 was the young people's demand for education as part of their desire for truth.

Pociej is also accused of nepotism when taking decisions. This primarily concerns the former secret policeman Niemtus, who as head of the local trade collective appears to be the major beneficiary of Pociej's favour (105). The attack from this quarter is formulated by the private businessman Szyszkowski, who is disadvantaged by Pociej's favouritism towards Niemtus. He formulates the most critical (because practical) arguments against inertia in Zaborze life, which he defines as arising from a formalised concept of equality ('Inequality is the most powerful element in human progress. It is inequality which enables you to bring out the best in men,' 103).

Equality is merely a dogma that has no chance of realisation in human life, he argues; there is only the possibility of having an equal start in life. In the circumstances which prevail in Zaborze, rife nepotism excludes all possibility of such equality. In order to function at all, Szyszkowski is forced to conduct his activities in a way that borders on the illegal: 'All our dances on the edge of legality are due to the fact that we don't have equal chances. Niemtus possesses the heart of your old man' (105). The new order established at the end of the novel incorporates Szyszkowski, who saves the situation for the Party when he restrains the cooperative workers from mounting a public demonstration against the District Council (195). The implication is that he will play a greater and more legal role in Zaborze society henceforth.

The change is not initiated by politicians, however. The spur is provided by those who feel moral repugnance for Pociej's role or find it philosophically inconsistent with the new political spirit of 'Październik'. This is respectively Kamila and Leon, who between them are responsible for causing Jan Pociej's fall.

PHILOSOPHICAL

The philosophical dimension relates to two principal questions in the novel, those of justice and truth, two key terms of 'October 1956'. These are central issues for Leon, whose views develop from what is essentially a relativist position to one akin to their assertion as absolute values. He does so only under the influence of Kamila, whose role in the novel is to goad the current hierarchy out of their complacency.

The relationship between the two on the philosophical plane seems to indicate that Putrament appropriated and adapted the terms of Kołakowski's influential essay 'The Priest and the Jester' (1959). Leon resembles the 'priest' of this essay, concerned with absolute, unchanging values ('Truth', 'Justice'), while Kamila stands at the opposite pole, criticising the very idea of the existence of these values within Zaborze society. In Kołakowski's essay, these figures represent the two principal antagonistic strands of which philosophical thought is capable at any point in history, that is, 'absolutism' and 'relativism':

> The antagonism between a philosophy that perpetuates the absolute and a philosophy that questions accepted absolutes seems incurable, as incurable as that which exists between conservatism and radicalism in all aspects of human life. This is the antagonism between the priest and the jester, and in almost every epoch the philosophy of the priest and the philosophy of the jester are the two most general forms of intellectual culture. The priest is the guardian of the absolute; he sustains the cult of the final and the obvious as acknowledged by and contained in tradition. The jester is he who moves in good society without belonging to it, and treats it with impertinence; he who doubts all that appears self-evident. [50]

Ultimately Leon attacks the relativism in respect of truth and justice which he perceives as rife in Zaborze, above all in the figure of his father. Initially he attempts to expound a standard Marxist qualification of these values in his conversation with Kamila - that there

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50 'The Priest and the Jester' (original title 'Kapłan i błazen'), first published in*Twórczość*, 1959 (10). Published in English in: *Marxism and Beyond* (London, 1969), p. 55.

are truths, particularly of a class or collective nature, but there is no single truth. For Kamila this is mere sophistry; she criticises the ruling elite for their hypocrisy in claiming to represent justice, while having treated her father unjustly ('You go on about the people, justice, equality, a great turning point...', 45). Her provocative acts and mockery of official language are inspired by her sense of injustice; she is radically opposed to the notion that perfection has been achieved in Zaborze. It is precisely the stabilisation of society that she seeks to undermine, which echoes the role Kołakowski ascribed to the jester:

> He is motivated not by a desire to be perverse but by distrust of a stabilised system. In a world where apparently everything has already happened, he represents an active imagination defined by the opposition it must overcome.[51]

It is her fate in Zaborze, without Leon's assistance, merely to be accepted and ignored as an isolated aberration. The jesters ('fools') at Pociej's court are regarded at best as providers of additional local colour, with indulgence, or else viewed as mere inexplicable deviants. In each case their stance is one of impotence, because its motivation is misrepresented:

> 'Young people,' Marciniak said in answer to Leon's look.
> 'Fools,' growled his father.
> 'You're not right, comrade chairman !' Chylikiewicz shouted. 'One of the proofs of the correctness of your policies is precisely the development of a spontaneous movement of the local young intelligentsia...'
> 'At any rate that young intelligentsia will give you enough work to be getting on with, at least to start with,' his father said, turning to Leon. (14-15)

The only way in which they might command attention is if they were backed by more significant forces, as the local Party chief Marciniak declares:

> (Jan Pociej) 'You think we can't live without fools ? Perhaps we can't.' (...)

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51 Ibid., p. 54.

> (Marciniak) 'Of course they're fools. But what does it matter ? Who's behind them ? The working classes ? The intelligentsia ?' (16)

Kamila's group has no political support and hence can be dismissed by the politicians. Sawko's principled political opposition is equally impotent. It is finally that very lack of political motivations which leads to the political changes in the town, when larger metaphysical issues impinge to give change its dynamic.[52]

'Justice'

Leon is directly implicated in these issues by virtue of his profession. He is obliged to operate both a general concept of 'truth' and 'justice' as well as to ensure that they have a specific application. Neither can exist without an abstract notion of the functioning of law. During Stalinism, as Leon states in a lecture to his old school, this abstract notion was submerged by a concern with immediate needs - to punish those who were defined as class enemies - which contravened the spirit and hence the application of the law:

> ... the public interest reflected in legislation is abstracted from present-day life and serves society precisely by virtue of the fact that it is not of immediate service. He might have added here: just as, let us say, literature isn't either. (...) It is precisely that imposition of immediate political service upon the law which made possible the rise of legal abuse, not as an exception but as a disease: because it allowed arbitrariness in the interpretation of that public interest. (87-88)

'Justice' is never qualified by Leon throughout the novel. He perceives that it must apply equally to everyone and be disinterested, even where it conflicts with political agendas. This point is made most forcefully when he probes Bruszczyński, a representative from his

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[52] Sawko fails to appreciate this, suggesting that Leon compete to win the favour of the authorities in Warsaw when his father tries to undermine his position there. Sawko reveals his purely political understanding of the process of rehabilitating Truszkowski when he criticises Leon's refusal to do so as pure 'unworldliness'. Leon retorts: 'to be in the right is our last chance. At least once, at least on one issue, to be in harmony with our consciences, just this once to the very end, to the last full stop...' (186).

ministry, about whether to proceed with the rehabilitation:

> (Leon) 'Justice is the same for...'
> (B.) 'It is, certainly...'
> 'Either any violation must bring satisfaction or else it becomes meaningless.'
> Bruszczyński remained silent.
> 'There is no level which is exempt from justice.'
> Bruszczyński looked at him, and Leon corrected himself:
> 'Or rather there should not be. You know, comrade,' he exploded, 'we have so many difficulties that we find it hard to spur our dedication, for that precise reason.'
> 'What reason do you mean ?'
> 'This one ! That *immediate concerns obscure fundamental ones.*'
> 'Sometimes it's one and the same thing...'
> 'It never is, ever ! Is that what you say, too ? You, of all people ?' (149-150 - my italics)

Here the crux of the argument lies in the possibility of achieving justice when other concerns, above all of a political nature, militate against it. Leon understands Bruszczyński's identification of 'immediate' and 'fundamental' as a hint that he should not proceed. Instead, the opposite is intended: the political interest is best served by the removal of Leon's father. The Centre does not identify Pociej with the survival of socialism.

Exactly the opposite case is made by Niemtus, who questions the reliability of an 'absolute justice'. He doubts the idea that an infallible justice can be achieved; only Leon's subjectivity enables him to harbour such delusions:

> 'Those are very fine words: making good an injustice. But at whose cost ?'
> 'At the cost of those who committed it.'
> 'And do you know who did ? Didn't it happen to be everyone altogether ?'
> 'Definitely not, definitely not ! Only don't talk to me about collective responsibility.'
> (...) 'In putting one right, you make a mistake even so. When will you make good those violations ? (...) And secondly, do you believe in that one and only justice ? Unqualified ?

Classless ?' (160)

This is basically a pragmatic argument about the possibility of objective justice. As such it resembles Andrzej's attempt to make Siwy desist from seeking retribution for his mother in Bratny's *Happy, Tortured*. There the utilitarian arguments win out: the living would only be damaged by proceeding, and it is of no interest to the dead. By contrast, Leon insists that justice needs to be implemented disinterestedly, regardless of who stands to gain or lose, if the legal (and political) system is to appear credible. The denouement bears out Andrzej's argument in *Happy, Tortured* about the damage that would result to the living, but the system is nonetheless vindicated. In *The Stepchildren* this is the central issue for Leon, as he explains to Jadwiga why it is necessary to rehabilitate Truszkowski, in spite of all the personal arguments that can be mustered against doing so: 'Precisely because he was an enemy ! It is precisely in such a case that the fact that something has changed can be shown...' (178).

The death of his father demonstrates his point.

'Truth'

The other major philosophical consideration in the book is more complicated, though less evidently problematic. The spectrum of the meanings of 'truth' is the same as that for justice, between an absolute, unified position and the merely subjective, contradictory and plural.

In his supposition that the absolute truth about the fate of Truszkowski can be known,[53] Leon is merely following Lenin's own statement that 'human thought ... by its nature is capable of giving, and does give, absolute truth, which is compounded of a sum-total of relative truths.'[54] Leon sets out to build up those relative truths, the partial accounts of other individuals, into a cohesive whole. Those to whom he speaks constantly deny the very possibility of ever knowing the 'truth'. Contrary to orthodox Communist conceptions, for them relative truths are essentially equivalent, neither more nor less true than each other.[55] This is the line taken by Leon's old schoolteacher Domaniecki, who disputes the sense of Leon's undertaking, saying there are only disparate 'truths', no single unifying truth: 'You say 'truth' (...) Unqualified ! That's what they used to say in my day. Then precision came along, truths multiplied...' (137)

Leon rejects these qualifications as quibbling. He is concerned rather with the consistency of words and actions - if socialists say 'truth', they should mean it. To that extent the issue appears unproblematic:

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[53] 'He knew that (...) he would have to achieve - as in a chemical experiment - absolute purity of hands and thoughts. That is, to start from absolutely pure truth.' (136)

[54] *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (1908) in: *V. I. Lenin. Collected Works*, vol. 14 (Moscow, 1962), p. 135.

[55] Compare Zbigniew Jordan's account of Adam Schaff's exposition in *Z zagadnień marksistowskiej teorii prawdy* (Warsaw, 1951): 'truth admits of degrees and the concept of partial truth involves the concept of degrees of truth. Partial truths can be differentiated and ordered in accordance with a uniform scale, one partial truth being more or less true than some other partial truth', *Philosophy and Ideology. The Development of Philosophy and Marxism-Leninism in Poland Since the Second World War* (Dordrecht, 1963), p. 375. As Jordan points out in his conclusion, however, 'Institutional Marxism-Leninism' collapsed in Poland in 1956, and, as I have pointed out in Chapter 2, Schaff's later development took him in a less orthodox direction.

> 'We shout about being for the truth. Well, then, for once I want it to be not to someone's convenience, but the truth.. For once let it be as truth intends...' (138)[56]

Domaniecki sees these categories not in absolute terms but as having specific and dangerous political consequences which are ignored by those who assert the primacy of absolutes such as 'truth' and 'justice':

> I see the consequences of actions. I can see that one unworthy man brings revenge in his train, which is even more unworthy. In this there is the terrifying mechanism of the avalanche. I can see one necessity: to stop the avalanche, it doesn't matter at what moment, to stop it before it sweeps everything away here... (144)

To some extent Domaniecki merely reiterates the line others have taken, identifying Pociej with socialism as realised in Zaborze. But he also suggests some notion of justice and truth as balance: those who deliberately initiate events with a view to particular ends cannot know their ultimate consequences. Absolute values accordingly require qualification in an imperfect human world. For Leon the only conclusion is to tear down the whole edifice and rebuild it with greater adherence to its structural principles ('Leninist norms'). Since the older generation has abused all values, the only solution for the young is to aim for absolute consistency between words and actions - a complete insistence upon principles, as Leon's exchange with Jadwiga makes plain:

> (Jadwiga) 'Where do you get that feverish adherence to principles from ?' (...)

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[56] This was, in fact, the young intellectuals' political slogan in early 1956, a clarion call for a break with Stalinist practice in all areas of public life. Leon's assertions echo the title of an important *Po prostu* article by Jerzy Ambroziewicz and Walery Namiotkiewicz from April 1956 entitled 'Niech prawo zawsze prawo znaczy', about the need for the return to proper legal standards. The title comes from a poem by Tuwim, an extract from which prefaces the piece: 'But above all to our words/ Changed craftily by prevaricators/ Give back uniqueness and truthfulness/ Let law always mean law/ And justice, justice'. This could equally well describe Leon's stance in *Pasierbowie*. The article appears in the collection *Na czołówce*, op. cit., pp. 204-214.

> 'And what else have they left us ? They took power for themselves, fame, infallibility. They have swaggered through life, everything they touched they varnished over, turned into slippery, elusive generalisations. What have they left us ? Just that ! (...) An adherence to principles ! Just a petty-minded and absolute adherence to principles. I've had enough of word-mongering ! I want at last to do what we say, but precisely, to the very end ! When we say 'justice', let's have justice ! When we say 'law and order', let's have law and order, but to the very end, with no wriggling out of it, with no specific, even minute qualifiers ! Once, just once, like that ...' (177)

In this definitive expression of early 1956 ideals the political arguments are presented as a generational conflict. The young have been deprived of normal development - the older generation has misused and compromised every value they invoked. In these conditions the young have to provide the moral authority which would normally accrue to their elders. What the outburst also demonstrates is the envy which the young feel towards the older generation; the latter have experienced everything, exhibiting a kind of spiritual voracity that leaves nothing new for the young to discover.

PSYCHOLOGICAL:

Power as Generational Conflict.

There is a distinction in the novel between the representatives of the younger generation, even within the Party members, like Leon and Sawko. Sawko is interested above all in the practical implementation of socialism: his objections to Jan Pociej remain on the level of praxis and youthful ambition - he wishes to advance in the new post-1956 Poland, and Jan Pociej impedes his progress. Leon, by contrast, is more concerned with the meaning of the different historical experiences of the generations. He identifies with Sawko's aspirations because he also experiences his father's presence as intolerable, albeit in a more

personal, psychological sense.[57]

His response is inspired by a sense of resentment against his father's generation as a whole. That generation has preceded Leon's in every area of experience, and thus deprived it of any chance of significance:

> He felt shallow and small. That envy oppressed him most of all. He tried to defend himself, placing the blame on the era. Theirs had been the era of victors. They had been triumphant in a back-breaking struggle. They had started out without any chance, and so their victory was even more staggering. It is victory which gives man confidence in himself, and an awareness of his strength. (...)
>
> But what could that second wave take praise for ? Behind the backs of its parents it had grown up as in a hothouse. It had had an easy start, it hadn't had to torment itself in the process of forming its own faith. It had received faith ready-made. A faith that is bequested doesn't give birth to martyrs.
>
> That faith had been given as a present and then undermined. If only they'd been able to live through that process for themselves. But their fathers proved to be still young enough to take the sons' place even there. If it had happened six or perhaps ten years later, then perhaps they would have been too old. But as it was, they still managed. (67)

The older generation still dominates the 'limelight'. It was also responsible for denouncing the values it espoused, which has meant that the young could not define themselves in natural opposition to them. In effect, the older generation has supplanted the younger in every respect, leaving them 'only' the stance of moral superiority to inherit. Since they have lived through nothing of significance, that stance threatens to be a pose, as the imaginary Pociej objects to Leon:

> 'You magnify our faults in order to make yourselves superior.' (...)
>
> 'But didn't you do the same thing with the enemy you defeated ?'
>
> 'That was the enemy. You're my son.' (167)

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[57] Both refer to being 'crushed' or 'stifled' by Pociej. Physically they are diminished by comparison with him.

The imaginary Pociej hits on the underlying resentment of his son: his generation is identified as the enemy because it inhibits the young's development. The latter are always in their shadow, unable to claim anything as their own. In Leon's case this is exacerbated by his almost Oedipal sexual jealousy, which Putrament suggests lies at the root of his decision to take action to rehabilitate Truszkowski. Leon is obsessed by the idea of sleeping with his stepmother, in which he is therefore a rival to his father. [58] This compounds the complicated relations in the family, given that Leon's father competed with Truszkowski over Jadwiga. Both Leon and Kamila betray pathological symptoms of hatred towards their surviving parent, of being constrained by their very existence.[59] For them to progress as adults, they have in some sense to supplant the parent.

For Leon, this chance comes with the rehabilitation. The alliance with Kamila also allows him the opportunity to escape from his sexual obsession with his stepmother. The question is therefore presented as a mixture of the need to confront family taboos (particularly in the light of the statement that 'Truszkowski was one of the numerous family taboo subjects', 64) and of a political and personal maturity. By being appointed to serve in Zaborze, Leon is forcibly returned to the world of his childhood, filled with fear of an overbearing father and sexual guilt stemming from his desire for Jadwiga. At the crucial moment of his sexual union with Kamila he can escape for the first time his identification with life's winners. The experience is the fulfilment of his dreams, an expiation of his sense of guilt for always being

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[58] This is rather coyly suggested on numerous occasions throughout the work: Leon feels safe from the attractions of the young women in Zaborze because he is 'immunised by his secret attachment' (62); when Kamila comes to his room to talk he sees her shadowy outline, which is 'much smaller than the one he desired' (69).

[59] If Leon's complex is Oedipal in character, Kamila's is that of Electra, in love with a dead father and striving to punish the mother for the 'murder' of her father, encouraging her brother (or stepbrother, in this case) to avenge the father.

apparently on the 'winning side' in life: [60]

> He felt himself alienated from the world of victors, thrust into the world of the vanquished. And what he held in his hands was his own salvation from loneliness, his only ally (...) Suddenly everything turned over in his consciousness. From the depths of disgust, despair and impotence a means of escape shone through, radiant and victorious. Everything that crushed them disappeared in the blink of an eye. (75)

The victory which Leon experiences when having sex with Kamila is simultaneously a political one over his father. His father's espousal of triumphal socialism, relentlessly rolling towards its final victory, negates the individual's role in the realisation of socialism. Leon has found, however, a new set of oppressed people within the socialist order; fighting for Kamila restores relevance to his struggle for socialism. Kołakowski expressed the inadequacy of triumphalism most succinctly in *The Opiate of the Demiurge* when he wrote:

> Those who think that socialism is as inevitable in the future as an eclipse of the sun scheduled for tomorrow can find nothing to lend moral worth to deeds performed with an absolute certainty of success. Moreover, it is not true that such certainty can rouse anyone to action, for the goal in that case will be achieved "anyway", no matter how one person or another may act. [61]

Leon has discovered a cause to engage him, in which the political elements cannot easily be disentangled from the pathological. The imaginary conversation that Leon conducts with his father in an attempt to justify his actions emphasises this. The crux of the matter is power and the retention of it. The father argues for Leon's gradual induction into a position of authority, acknowledging his 'hunger for power' as a sign of vitality but asking him to restrain his impatience until he has

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[60] In this respect Putrament confirms the paradigm implicit in these Party novels of using sexual encounters to provide the greatest challenges to, and frequently undermine, the ruling ideology (compare Bratny's Siwy; Hołuj's Krzyżakowski). His use differs from that of the other writers I discuss, in that the ideology under question is not that of socialist rule per se, only the father's version of it.

[61] Printed in *Marxism and Beyond*, op. cit., p. 137.

proved himself *worthy* of possessing it:

> Here I begin to understand you. You feel a hunger for power. It's a noble feeling, which only comes to the person who is worthy. But why all the haste ? Don't you think I understand the need for an injection of youth ? I brought you here precisely to teach you power and how to deal with it. But you have to go through its primary and secondary schools... (166)

This approval undergoes a transformation where Leon's motives are concerned: the imaginary father implies that something unnatural lies behind Leon's action against his father: power also means possessing his stepmother.

> 'How I envy you ! Your struggle was so much simpler !'
> 'Harder ! Crueller ! But purer. You're right.'
> 'Are you accusing me of having dishonest motives ? (...) Do you think that it's all only a desire for power ? You said yourself that that's a healthy feeling.'
> There was no answer. Now he felt great shame. A blush covered Leon's cheeks, his brow, his neck. Even his hands seemed red.
> 'It isn't true, it isn't...', he whispered. (167)

The father's struggle in respect of Jadwiga and to bring about socialism were purer because they were defined against a legitimate rival - another, unrelated man, who was also an enemy of the new political system. By contrast, Leon is guilty of nurturing a desire for vengeance against his own father, demonstrating filial ingratitude. Moreover his ostensible ambition to achieve an absolutely pure truth stands compromised in its very conception. His imaginary father imputes to him, with some cause, motives of sexual jealousy. Contrary to Bruszczyński's assertion and justification of the choice of Leon for the job of rehabilitating Truszkowski ('the motives will be pure', 151), Leon's motives prove to be impure. In effect, the suspicion that Pociej may have eliminated Truszkowski as a former rival for Jadwiga's affections attaches in the present at least in part to Leon as well. This ambiguity illustrates that nothing Leon does can derive from a concern with pure truth: the personal elements always pollute the ideal.

CONCLUSION

The primary question that exercised the Censorship Office was whether parallels could be drawn between the family conflict and Poland as a whole.[62] Certain features of the text suggested that it did not, as reviewers were quick to point out - especially the anachronistic elements of streets being named after Jan Pociej and the essentially Stalinist parade taking place in the early 1960s.[63] The political, philosophical and psychological elements of the novel do not reinforce each other but conflict and operate against any single, unified reading of the work.

Stanisław Majchrowski has concluded that *Pasierbowie* is a 'novel with a warning: for those who actually possess power and those who aspire to it'.[64] The warning relates to the 'impossibility of perceiving or taking into account the diverse factors that shape their reality'.[65] In effect, it implies that the leadership's control is only conditional, not absolute. The sense of setting it in the early 1960s, when there was officially no 'personality cult', seems to imply a covert message to Gomułka. By this time the First Secretary had begun to arrogate to himself most of the responsibility for executive powers and took no cognizance of others' advice - in short, he was becoming an absolutist who stifled discussion within the Party in the same way that Pociej does (see p. 10). His authority derived from saving the Party from collapse after 1956, and the support he enjoyed from Polish

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62 See Appendix 4.

63 Compare Janina Preger's review in *Twórczość*, 1964 (7) - 'only then [before the XX Congress - JMB] could officials exist who named streets after themselves', and Wacław Sadkowski, who criticised the veracity of this detail in *Kultura*, 1963 (21), saying that only the writer Gustaw Morcinek had the opportunity in Poland to walk down a street bearing his name. Both points argue against any simple relation of the novel to the present.

64 'Od "Małowiernych" do "Pasierbów" i "Bołdyna"', *Prace Polonistyczne* (1978), p. 159.

65 Ibid.

society stemmed from his legend as one who had suffered under Stalinism and was thus unassociated with the crimes committed at the time. Noticeably, Pociej's 'crimes' precede the Stalinist period and he possesses a similar legend and aura, as Domaniecki describes:

> When you see him you know immediately that he's going to win, and when you listen to him you know he's right, even before he has begun to speak.. And then there's the martyr's aura, of a man who has gone through prison. (140)

In a sense, Gomułka himself gave the lie to the notion that the events within one family could not be related to the state of the whole nation. His comments about the need for the Poznan riots to remain 'within the family' was an express call to accept the existence of taboos in the post-1956 period, in addition to those that attended the birth of People's Poland.

The real taboo in Putrament's novel relates similarly to the operations of political power. The merits and indeed necessity of change remain unresolved. The father's guilt is unproven, action against him seems politically unjustified. In the final instance Leon's work seems to be cleverly manipulated by his superiors in the ministry in order to guarantee the safe transfer of power. In effect, Leon has become a victim of the political game being played out between all parties whose overriding interest lay not in justice but in achieving a smooth political succession. Although, as Pociej says (40), there may be no natural changeover in the present system, one is guaranteed by the determination of the centre to impose its will.

The departure of Leon and Kamila suggests that in the new order neither the jester nor the priest has a role to play. Changes are unaccountable, managed by diktat from behind the scenes.

CHAPTER FOUR

'Back to the Future'

Janusz Przymanowski, *He Who is Summoned* (1968)

Tadeusz Hołuj, *A Personality* (1974)

The works examined so far were chiefly spontaneous responses by authors to the call for a 'committed literature'. These were made largely in the absence of any Party statement of positive preference, with their authors' attention fixed primarily on the major theme of the times - the consequences of 'Październik'.

Although the turning point of 1956 continued to be of great interest to Party writers, it became with time something of an embarrassment to the authorities. Firstly, the massive personal support which Gomułka enjoyed for a short period did not really extend to the Party itself or prove enduring, and secondly, any account of the changes was predicated upon showing the abuses that occurred under Stalinism. This, as I have shown in the previous chapter, the Party preferred rather to forget about. The formalisation of 'October 1956', its passage into official myth and the silence about Stalinism became one of the key features of preferred works from the mid-sixties onwards.

The 1960s marked the beginnings of a more structured official response to the question of producing more declared socialist works. Eventually, after being in abeyance for seven years, State prizes were restored in 1962. While there was no obligatory aesthetic, formulated in pronouncements 'from above' stipulating compulsory themes or styles, the Party nonetheless encouraged certain 'initiatives' on the part of publishers.

This was perhaps inevitable, given the Party's tendency to treat literature primarily as 'issue-based' and to reserve the prerogative of interpretation of these 'issues' to itself alone. The representation of contemporary life was accordingly subject to severe censorship restrictions as soon as it began to suggest any general analysis of the

present. For that reason the war was a popular subject, because it had been interpreted in advance, as Kubikowski stated,[1] and thus left freedom for play within the taboos outlined by Stępień in chapter one. Moreover, the war could be de-ideologised as a time of real, non-political conflict, with the stress on excitement and adventure. Consequently the tailing off of interest in the present-day army was not surprising - there was no armed conflict in which the Poles were currently engaged.

This was something of which the Army's political authorities were well aware. They considered the rarity of the contemporary military novel to be a major deficiency in modern literature, particularly since they attributed to literature immense powers of mobilising readers. The question turned on national defence, wherein literary works should promote army life. As in other areas of contemporary life, writers' failings were seen primarily as technical:

> Writers' interests are understandably limited in the main - to put it most generally - to the struggles of the Polish nation during the Second World War. There are considerably fewer literary works (novels, extended literary reportage, plays, long poems), however, connected with present-day army life and current defence issues. This subject is taken up reluctantly and only by very few writers. The main inhibitory factor appears to be an inadequate knowledge of army realities, a belief that there are few possibilities of dramatising the plot and a fear of censorship restrictions. The fundamental aim of our inspiration should therefore be to extend artists' interests in the present day and to win over young writers to this subject.[2]

Undoubtedly, from the writers' viewpoint, the most important factors were precisely 'dramatising the plot' and censorship restrictions. The problem of contemporary relevance, however, was one that beset

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1 'Szklany mur', *Odra*, 1984 (1), p. 39.

2 'Notatka służbowa dotyczaļca problematyki patriotyczno-obronnej we współczesnej literaturze pięknej', from Stanisław Korman, Deputy Head of the Board for Culture and Education, Main Political Office of the Polish Army, to Wincenty Kraśko, Head of the Cultural Department, dated 21 April 1967. AAN, KC PZPR, XVIII/297, pp. 26-27.

most of the official structured 'initiatives' after 1956, certainly for the writers themselves.

From the official perspective this issue seemed unproblematic: the main concern lay in the writer's demonstrating the legitimacy of the postwar state. The very fact of the competition entries proved writers' commitment and the vitality of the theme. Here, though, lies the crux of the real problem: whether the commissioning of literary works on specific themes could produce genuine literature, capable of being read beyond the requirements of the initial competition. For most of these works, even on the Party's own limited terms, this was not the case.[3]

This is evidence of the formalism inherent in the Party's approach to literature: the content of literary works was secured by the competition's remit and, at the final stage, by the censorship office, which left only the form of the work as an area of legitimate interest for the author. In effect, this reduced literary works in competitions to the status of variations on a theme, leading inevitably to the deterioration of the political, if not the artistic, value of the works submitted and rewarded. The competitions posed questions of relevance which could be solved only on the level of technical artistry: for example, how to underline the importance of the PWP's foundation to the present-day reader necessitated a degree of formal inventiveness rather than profound historical insight, as *Osoba* reveals. Furthermore, over time the producers of such competition works came to constitute a fairly closed circle - the older generations - who identified with the formation of the state from its inception: the arguments of power were also to some extent their arguments as self-justification. Thus the attempt to interest younger writers in the production of such works failed doubly - to engage them as a subject and to match their experience.

This formalism coincided with the Party's own ideological drift, the intellectual vacuum at its heart which began to make itself felt in the mid-1960s. The two novels I shall now consider represented different responses to this situation, although both returned to the roots of the

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[3] Prize-winning novels were seldom given large print runs or reprinted.

postwar state in the search for values applicable against the current drift. But both are part of the official structured response, novels on a desired theme.

'Between the Central Committee and the Church':

Janusz Przymanowski's *He Who is Summoned* (1968). [4]

Historical research evaluates events, actions, outcomes. Research grants a "degree of acknowledgement", puts forward the motion that something should not be plunged into oblivion. But only literature can guarantee it a permanent place in the nation's memory, can issue that "pass into history".

Zbigniew Załuski. [5]

The principal ideologue of the Army's role in 1960s' Poland was Colonel Zbigniew Załuski. His two most renowned works, *Przepustka do historii* (*A Pass into History*, 1961) and *Siedem polskich grzechów głównych* (*Seven Polish Cardinal Sins*, 1962), became regarded as the cultural manifestos of the Moczar-led 'Partisan' faction in the PUWP. [6]

There, Załuski inveighed against what he termed the de-heroicisation and mockery of the Polish military tradition inherent in these works. He argued that they implied that Polish military endeavours over the last one hundred and fifty years, when the Poles had struggled for independence, had been inspired by the idea of national martyrdom ('martyrologia') and were therefore irrational.

To counter this charge, Załuski revealed the sound military rationale lying behind seven famous battles (the sins of the title) from Racławice to Westerplatte, reputedly symbolic of the nation's irrational

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[4] *Wezwany*. All page references are to the fourth edition, published in *Trójca grzeszna* (Warsaw, 1980).

[5] *Przepustka do historii*, p. 132.

[6] Fejtö's description of the Partisans (cited in chapter 2) matches exactly the hero of *Wezwany*.

romantic spirit, to the end of defending Polish military honour. The one true 'sin', from this perspective, was the Warsaw Uprising, organised without adequate preparation and leading to the destruction of the flower of the nation. This was outweighed, however, by the battle at Lenino in 1943, where the Poles had proved, after the hostility generated by the Anders evacuation, that they wanted to fight on the Soviet side in the most important theatre of the war, and thus ensured Soviet backing in the postwar negotiations. In effect, Załuski presented this battle as the culmination of the Polish military effort over the whole period since the Partitions, which he saw as the struggle to achieve a stable independent state at peace with its most important neighbour, the Russians.

The tendentiousness of his arguments is plain from the above resume. His primary concern was to counteract the myths of the importance of Polish efforts on the Western Front and the mythology of the Warsaw Uprising, which enjoyed great popularity as a result of Melchior Wańkowicz and Bratny's works. In effect, he sought to redress the political balance (and this did interest the Party, as I have shown with Bratny), insisting on the overriding importance of the Communist war effort, be that resistance within Poland (Armia Ludowa - the People's Army) or the armies fighting with the Soviets on the Eastern front (the Kościuszko Division).

Although Załuski phrased his intentions as a struggle for the imagination of the young and declared his intention to be didactic in that they should appreciate the real processes by which the modern state had been formed, no-one within the Party really contested those issues. As so often in postwar Polish literary debates, this was a surrogate discussion: Załuski's work seemed to herald another ideological freeze, which lent vehemence to the attacks upon it. In this respect, the critical stance taken by *Polityka*, which represented the more enlightened

elements in the Party, was significant.[7] The whole affair marked an internal Party debate about the origins of modern Poland.

The controversy extended, however, far into the Party itself and involved rivalry between the Central Committee's Press Office and the Main Political Board of the Polish Army. In these exchanges, the Army's sense of resentment at what it perceived to be mistreatment by the Press Office as well as a certain inferiority complex in cultural matters are all too clear.[8] The affair culminated in a protest from no less a person than General Jaruzelski, then Deputy Defence Minister, against Press Office manipulations.[9]

As the archival materials show, the Army's Main Political Board viewed Załuski's works as an authoritative statement of its own

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[7] For an account of the affair from *Polityka*'s angle, see the book *"Polityka" i jej czasy* (Warsaw, 1981) by one of its staff, Michał Radgowski, giving a history of the newspaper from its inception in 1957 to 1980. Radgowski details the development of these events on pp. 108-115, showing that the dispute read rather like an argument between rationalisms. Radgowski reaches the conclusion that the similarities between the sides were greater than their differences, given that both believed in the necessity of 'ideals, the cultivation of higher values, the romanticism of work' and the education of the young in a proper patriotic spirit (p. 114). With the exception of the reheating of accusations of *Polityka*'s lack of patriotism in early 1968, the affair is presented as over by the middle of March 1963, with a summing up of the debate in the article 'Od grzechów do cnót" (1963, No. 9). This was at the same time as the whole issue was assuming the greater dimensions of an internal Party dispute between the Army and the Press Office - see note 9 below.

[8] There are over one hundred pages devoted to these exchanges in the Party archives in: 'Materiały dotyczące dyskusji nad książką Załuskiego pt, "Siedem polskich grzechów głównych"', AAN, KC PZPR, Kancelaria Sekretariatu, paczka 133, 578/3, teczka 2.

[9] The gist of the row revolved around a complaint lodged with the Chancellery of the Secretariat in the spring of 1963 by the Army's Board of Propaganda and Agitation. It alleged that the Press Office had instructed the Censorship Office (on the 15 Feb. 1963) to limit discussion of the book, thus reducing publicity for it and obstructing the Army's attempts to contribute to the debate about socialist upbringing. The Army accused the Press Office of protecting *Polityka*, which was most vociferous in its criticisms of Załuski's book. The Press Office denied this, saying that it supported the main ideas of the book ('the defence of a principled stance of social commitment and patriotic sacrifice'), although with certain reservations: 'The main critical blow in the book against the "mockery" of the history of the liberation struggles, against the absence of ideals, against cynicism and an egotistical consumer attitude towards life and the country's affairs, is right, although it is mistaken in its analysis of the causes of these features, and the "cures" it proposes are ineffectual'. ('Notatka w związku z uwagami Zarządu Propagandy i Agitacji GZP WP o informacji Biura Prasy KC nt. dyskusji nad książką Zbigniewa Załuskiego "Siedem polskich grzechów głównych"', ibid., p. 4.)

outlook. The subtext of Załuski's works - that the Army could consider itself a bastion of national identity and strength - were not unacceptable to the military authorities. The book ultimately functioned as a coded sanction of national pride on the basis of the armed effort by the Polish rank-and-file, on every front. Although Poles might have had little active control over the course of the war, they could be proud of the existence of the Polish state.[10]

A rationalistic acknowledgement that things could not be otherwise should focus attention on the possibilities available in the Polish raison d'état, was the book's conclusion. In effect, Załuski was calling for a positivist affirmation of the geopolitical status quo, as he declared in *A Pass into History*:

> Only rationalism, not romantic delusions or 'missions', not an 'organic' narrowness of purpose, but a profound and sober comprehension of the mechanism of historical processes shaping the fate of the nation - only those intellectual qualities should designate the moral and political attitudes of citizens, including those in uniform, which are beneficial to our socialist reality.[11]

This opened the way for the expression of Polish nationalism within Party discourse, with the proviso that it did not display any overt anti-Soviet elements. With the Party seemingly in the ideological doldrums, unable to answer the lack of values and the consumerism allegedly affecting Polish society, the recourse to patriotism appeared to provide a rallying point for an 'ideological offensive'. Further, it allowed the rehabilitation of the former Home Army rank-and-file to continue, a process that had been halted after 1956. In the longer term, this development came to found an ideological basis for the anti-Semitic excesses of 1967-1968. The Partisan definition of socialist patriotism was therefore one path that could be taken from the introduction of nationalism into the socialist project in 1956 as embodied in the slogan

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10 Zbigniew Kubikowski comments that in *Przepustka* it was really a question not of the army per se but of the whole genealogy of People's Poland: 'Szklany mur', op. cit., p. 38.

11 *Przepustka do historii*, op. cit., p. 205.

of the 'Polish road to socialism'. Indeed, the association of Gierek with the Partisans seems relevant to his promotion of socialist patriotism in the 1970s, even in spite of the discredit done to the formulation by the events of March 1968.[12]

The avoidance of the notion of national martyrdom in depictions of military efforts remained a concern for the Army's Political Board long after the row over Załuski's books had died away. The terms he employed continued to define the issue of the Army's view of its own artistic representation into the 1970s:

> On the strength of censorship practice, it should also be said that some authors (artists) would like to recreate army issues and principally the war in a context, above all, of sacrifice, self-denial and suffering, which, when it omits patriotic overtones and a historical justification of the need to defend the country, is - in our opinion - unacceptable. [13]

This line also received support at conferences devoted to the Army's patronage of culture which were organised by the Army's Political Board and the Writers' Union, the most publicised being those held in 1968 and May 1978 (at Warsaw University).[14] As with most public official expressions of the need for a 'committed literature', these occasions abounded rather in desiderata than any practical hopes for their realisation. Their significance lay in the ritual symbolism of the meeting of loyalists and their official patrons and the codification of works which showed promise (thereby justifying the principle of the whole enterprise) but could not yet be regarded as great

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[12] Cf. Jerzy Holzer's assessment of the arguments used to justify the events of 1967-1968 as being in some way beneficial, in Jerzy Eisler's book *Marzec 1968*, p. 8. Likewise Ascherson, *The Polish August*, p. 90, on this point as the particular contribution of the Partisans.

[13] AAN, GUKP, II/978, Samodzielny Wydział Wojskowy: 'Przegląd ingerencji, 1973 r.', p. 16.

[14] The 1968 session, organised to mark the XXV anniversary of the 'Reborn Polish Army', produced the book *Literatura w służbie ojczyzny* (Warsaw, 1969). Information about the latter session comes from G. C. Malcher's *Poland's Politicised Army* (New York, 1984), p. 87.

achievements.[15] As in Załuski's works, the basic premise was the didactic benefits for the young, where such literature could illustrate:

> the choice of the highest arguments, the sacrifice of one's own safety, property and life for the good of the Fatherland. Those experiences, the attitude of heroes commemorated in print, enable the young reader to have a better understanding of the nation's fate, of the grounds which governed choices and decided the political alliances which brought revolutionary change.[16]

Furthermore, such literature was to be directed against the temptations of 'an easy life' ('wygodnictwo') and egotism, precisely the failings that the young tended to be accused of by those who had fought in the war. In this sense the ethos behind the promotion of army literature was a universally held conviction that the young did not appreciate the sacrifices that the older generation had made during the war, nor realise that, to adapt Harold Macmillan, 'they had never had it so good' as in the present.

While these were certainly the general concerns for the military sponsors, more immediate short-term aims were also indicated. In the publication from the 1968 session, the final word was given to the Division General Józef Urbanowicz, who focused on the current military threat presented by Western imperialism, in the shape, above all, of the Americans in Vietnam but also of Israel's aggression against Egypt. Of greater urgency, however, for Polish interests was the situation in West Germany:

> We want (...) our literature to increase awareness to an even greater degree of the threat to peace and to our country inherent in the imperialistic policy of the Federal Republic of Germany.[17]

During 1968, this perception of threat found sustenance also in

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15 As at other such 'academic' events, a major criticism was the failure of Polish literature to keep pace with requirements. As Żukrowski put it in his introduction, Polish writers had yet to exploit the full 'moral capital' of the topic, unlike the Soviets or the Yugoslavs. Op. cit., p. 7.

16 Żukrowski, ibid., p. 6.

17 *Literatura w służbie ojczyzny*, op. cit., p. 233.

domestic developments, particularly the tensions between the state and the Church in the aftermath of the celebration of the Millennium. The Party's ire had been provoked initially by what it saw as the Church's presumptuous venture into foreign policy-making with the letter sent by the Polish bishops in November 1965 to their German counterparts at the Second Vatican Council asking for forgiveness.[18] The Party took the line that it had not been consulted on the matter of this letter, let alone sanctioned its dispatch.[19] More recently, the campaign Wyszyński launched in February 1968 against the dangers to the Church of atheist propaganda led the Party to expect it to become even more involved in political activity. At the height of these events the Cultural Department was instructed to draw up a programme for a counter-offensive in the cultural sphere against the Church, an attack which returned to the fundamental principles of the Party's cultural activity - the laicisation of Polish society:

> The formation of a scientific outlook and the winning over of new masses of active supporters to the socialist programme and ideology, which implies direct and indirect activity with a view to deepening the laicisation of society and reducing the influence of the reactionary clergy, comprise the primary task of Party cultural policy and therefore of the Department's activity. This finds expression in:

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[18] The letter concludes: 'In this most Christian, but also most human, spirit, we stretch out our hands to You, seated here on the benches of the Council that is now ending, and grant and ask for forgiveness. And if You, Bishops of Germany and Fathers of the Council, clasp our hands extended in brotherhood, only then shall we be able to celebrate our *Millenium* with a clear conscience in a most Christian manner.
We invite You most cordially to Poland for those ceremonies. May our merciful Saviour and our Lady Mary, Queen of Poland, *Regina Mundi et Mater Ecclesiae*, guide us in this.' Ed. Zymunt Hemmerling and Marek Nadolski, *Opozycja wobec rządów komunistycznych w Polsce 1956-1976. Wybór dokumentów* (Warsaw, 1991), p. 263

[19] In March 1966 the Central Committee sent a letter to all Party organisations lambasting the temerity of the Church. Reprinted in: *Uchwały KC PZPR od IV do V Zjazdu* (Warsaw, 1968), pp. 396-411. Compare Eisler, however, who suggests it knew of the letter prior to its dispatch (op. cit., p. 120). The whole affair cannot be seen independently of the campaign around the Millennium which the Party launched in 1958 and which was predicated upon such conflict.

1/ A constant verification of the national heritage and historically formed artistic culture, the customs and life style from the point of view of contemporary ideo-political processes and the prospects for socialist development of the Polish nation ... [20]

In fact, the Party's fear of activity by what it termed the reactionary clergy proved to be exaggerated. An alliance of the opposition - intellectuals, students and Church - did not materialise in 1968, because the ecclesiastical hierarchy remained aloof from the wider political developments within Poland, most notoriously observing almost complete silence on the subject of the anti-Semitic campaign being waged in the press.

The context into which Przymanowski's novel was intended to be inserted was precisely this friction between Church and state. It represented the continuation by literary means of the Army's general involvement in the events of 1966.[21] Since Wyszyński had mounted a direct ideological challenge to the basis of Party rule by asserting that the Polish state and nation had always been Catholic, the introduction of patriotic military struggle - particularly where it played on anti-German sentiment - might at least confuse the issue of allegiance.

It seems to have been on this level that the Army authorities believed they could provide ideological competition for the Church. In essence, the Partisan programme - if there was one beyond a drive towards political supremacy - operated primarily on this instinctual level, with socialist internationalism taking second place to a narrowly formulated patriotism within formal Party structures.

The Army Novel: *Wezwany* as Formal Solution.

When it appeared in 1968, the novel was hailed in some quarters

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[20] 'W sprawie przeciwdziałania reakcyjnej działalności kleru', dated February 1968. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII-308, p. 30.

[21] Compare Malcher on the Army's 'enlightenment campaign' of 1966, where he quotes from the Army mouthpiece *Wojsko Ludowe*: '"One Thousand Years of the Polish State and History of Polish Arms" was the theme of the meetings of the population with lecturers from the army. It was presented against the background of the German problem and of church-state relations', op. cit., p. 233.

as innovatory, since it seemed to offer a solution to the problem of integrating the army (positively) into contemporary reality.[22] The innovation lay in its presentation of the Army and its men as a political and social entity, not just a fighting force.

The device the author employs is that, in the main, of the first-person monologue: Regan's fear that one of the crimes he has concealed has come to light generates his confession, or rather his defence speech against the prosecutor Kmita, whom he assumes may know nearly everything. This is a necessary conceit since Regan as a proverbial man of action is not given to reflection or self-justification: on the journey, in view of the increasing anxiety he experiences, there is no alternative for him except to examine his past.

The narrative structure does not allow a clear distinction between this past and the present. The span of history which the work covers is that of the fifty-or-so-year-old Regan from the 1930s to September 1966, albeit not consequentially, for the present is finally most closely juxtaposed with the events of 1946 which present the greatest threat to the hero.

His course over those years is nonetheless typical for his time, marking the advance of the prewar peasant and working classes to eminence under the postwar socialist state. He can therefore serve as an objective illustration of the fundamental social progress that had been made in People's Poland. His representative status stems also from his putative ordinariness: he is able to offer a phlegmatic view of historical events.

The novel is organised on the level of plot to provide insight into the darker recesses of Regan's conscience, in which respect his fellow passengers and surroundings are simply spurs to remembrance. Yet on the principle that the most credible testimony is provided by others, these fellow passengers also illumine certain positive features of his character which would otherwise pass unremarked.

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[22] Cf. the review by Stanisław Zieliński, 'Antrakt', *Życie Literackie*, 1968 (30): 'Regan's journey by car and train releases a past so artfully entwined with the present that it would be difficult to speak of a separate retrospective part mounted to give the appearance of framing contemporary events'.

As a panoramic view of Polish society in the mid-1960s, the novel's range of characters is remarkably narrow, reduced further by the fact that all the other figures possess more than a casual link with Regan. This does at times rather strain credibility: Regan happens to travel on the very train as the man he saved twenty years before; similarly, the prewar activist Jaraczewski, whom the policeman forced Regan to accuse, turns up after the war to discuss Kuba's fate with him; finally, Justyna marries Siciński. Similarly, within the confines of two carriage compartments the occasion arises for two major expositions of outlook contrary to Regan's own: the priest, who reveals the liberal face of the Church (therefore providing an opportunity for a broadside also against intellectuals), and Ewa, who voices the disaffection of youth (but also the dilemmas facing women). The narrow range therefore enables the disputes to emerge much more clearly, despite the complex interpenetration of past and present; Regan demonstrates his commitment to the political system by confronting the system's ideological opponents (the Church and intellectuals) as well as its demoralised putative allies (youth and women).

The Political Landscape.

The novel's guiding principle is limitation: each figure in Regan's life seems to reappear at some later date in a different capacity. His hero knows one thing supremely well - army life - and all aspects of contemporary life are judged in relation to that. The people with whom he engages on his train journey are all in some way connected with army issues.

This has two consequences: first, it allows their utility to be defined at a time of an allegedly great threat to the nation, in which civilians are passive figures needing to be defended by more competent bodies. Even where those civilians do not appreciate the significance of Regan's role and the essential precariousness of the peacetime existence

they lead, they still merit this protection. [23] However, implicit in this attitude is the assumption of the primacy of the protectors - Regan is superior because he understands the conditional nature of peaceful human activity, and the system depends on his ability to retain his fighting edge, although military manoeuvres themselves resemble a charade in their official version. [24]

Secondly, militarisation of people allows their political affiliations to be defined in tactical terms as hostile or friendly. In effect, their allegiances are being sounded out as though the country were on a war footing. In this respect the distinction between Regan's two main fellow passengers, Ewa and the priest, is military and political: Ewa represents demoralised youth, essentially acting in good faith but lacking direction; the priest, by contrast, is objectively hostile since he had fought against the new system at its inception and works to undermine it in the present. His place in the Church is, then, an example of waging war by other means, especially in the light of the current antagonism between Church and state.

Ewa: 'Feckless Youth'.

> Contemporary life demands an active stance, commitment, imagination, freedom, even dreams. But dreams that spring from real life, that lead to new discoveries, not ones that express a flight from reality.[25]

Ewa has succumbed, in Regan's opinion, to the tyranny of convention. Her discovery that romantic love is not enough to sustain her through the ennui of being an army wife led her to seek another interest by organising plays. These were thwarted, however, by the petty-mindedness of the other married women, who accused her of

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[23] The exchange between Regan and Ewa (134-135) about the 'jobsworth' ticket collector who fines them for smoking underlines Regan's magnanimity in this regard: even official pettifoggery has a right to exist.

[24] He takes them sufficiently seriously to attempt to win at all costs, which may not be 'politic' in modern peacetime Poland (81). The theme of Regan's political unorthodoxy is dealt with later in this chapter.

[25] Division General Józef Urbanowicz,*Literatura w służbie* ..., op. cit., p. 234.

cavorting with soldiers during rehearsals, which caused her to abandon the productions. For that reason her instinct is to desert; she views with sympathy those who emigrate abroad, deciding that there may be circumstances in which such action is justified, that although the native soil exercises a strong pull on Polish emotions, individuals may not feel part of their society (113).

Her principal cause for regret, as she explains to Regan, is that she feels she was born at the wrong time, that this sentiment constitutes common ground for the whole of her generation. She, like they, has had no formative experience which could shape her character and inculcate self-sufficiency or sustainable values in life, as it had with Regan:

> Even the Union of Polish Youth, the teams to establish contact with the countryside, collective social actions, all of that passed me by, in October I was only fourteen. I've had a boring life, there's nothing to write home about, it's like everyone else of my age, but your generation had a different life, a more interesting one. (125)

Regan dismisses the notion that fate is to blame, stressing individual responsibility for shaping life. Although a Marxist outlook inspires the rebuttal of her lament, he phrases his counter-charge in the language of experience: material well-being does not bring happiness, the only things that human beings achieve in life generally come about through a degree of personal suffering. Accordingly, for Regan, Ewa's stance is one of defeatism, her cynicism about human possibilities to influence events merely the programmatic and unwarranted world-weariness of her generation:

> Where do you get that aptitude for giving up from, that desire to throw in the towel at the first setback ? Who told you that you receive a life story when you register for permanent residence, that you can buy success as you would a fridge in a shop, that civilised comforts bring happiness ? That's nonsense, don't you see, absolute nonsense !
>
> (...) Life begins with pain, cold and hunger, and joy comes precisely when the first obstacle is overcome, when you achieve

> your first aim. Each human being, when he reaches maturity, when he begins to look at himself from outside and asks the question: who am I and what do I want ? should choose a difficult and far-off aim for himself. Near enough so as to be achievable, and far enough so that it needs a whole life of struggle and ambition, of victories and defeats, because there's no light without dark, no life without death, love without hate, you can't be happy for a second without knowing the taste of defeat. (131-133)

The 'truths' Regan voices are universal to the point of banality: they could equally well be made by any older generation in any time or place. His invective against the materialism of the young focuses on their alleged lack of moral fibre: now that life has improved after 1956, they have lost all awareness of the basic struggle for existence. Modern consumerism has made them 'soft', in that they expect to receive what they want from life without effort.

Regan regards Ewa as one who is on the point of realising the sickness of consumerism, that is, she is still savable. The angle from which she is threatened is domesticity: the desire to make the home her central source of value and meaning. This entails a pursuit of material happiness, an accumulation of possessions that prevents people from seeing what is truly important and deprives them of superior purpose in life:

> ..many women simply cannot understand that for their happiness vases are more dangerous than grenades, and that getting your own place, in which you can build a nest, is sometimes the beginning of the end, inasmuch as eyes resting on flowers and wall-hangings stop seeing the world outside the window; the plumbing and the bath, gas, electricity, the telephone and fridge assume gigantic proportions, the washing-machine swells, as does the television, the radio, the iron, the toilet grows, the pan, lamb, the most important things are frozen veg, shoes, floor-polishers and all the needles, bibs and bobs, jams swell up, grow, cover everything over, become alienated, come to be a means and not an end, an abstraction, in comparison with which Kantor[26] is a naturalist. (129)

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[26] 'Kantor' is a reference to the famous avantgarde artist, Tadeusz Kantor, who was a dominant personality in the Polish visual arts till his death in 1991.

Regan, with a nod to feminism which does not accord with his approach to women elsewhere, decides that she must first of all establish her independence, if her love for her husband is to survive. Love may be a higher and more worthy cause than consumerism, but it is not yet enough on its own to imbue life with meaning:

> You forget that there's something more, and you suffer defeat, failing to see that you must first be somebody so that you can then be wives. Being a wife is not a profession, you must have your own circle of friends, your own problems, your own work, if your choice of husband or partner is to have any value. (129) [27]

Since Regan concurs with her view that love is the supreme value (128), Ewa stands as an example of the better aspects of the younger generation. She is out-of-step with the even younger generation, which is underlined from the outset with Regan's perception (while admiring her legs) that she fails to keep pace with the latest fashions:

> On the right were a pair of stilettos carefully cleaned so that the fact that they were last year's would be unnoticeable, were it not for this year's fashion being round-toed casuals. Legs of earth and air, slim, won't go out of fashion anything like as quickly. (99)

This detail strikes a slightly pathetic note, the care given to her shoes seeming to derive from an attempt to disguise the fact that they are not new. In this respect, Ewa is contrasted with the truly young who do keep pace with fashion, with whom Regan does not engage.

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[27] Regan's replies make him at times resemble an agony aunt, advising Ewa on how to save her marriage, although the real intention seems to be to provide an argument to encourage women's participation in the building of socialism. Interestingly, the Party felt a need to address this issue in February 1966, in the document 'O pracy partyjnej wśród kobiet (Instrukcja Sekretariatu KC PZPR)'. Here, we read that 'women's increasing role in the life of the country and the activity of women's organisations have contributed to the elimination of traditional, incorrect views of the limited possibilities of women's work and their participation in social life'. *Uchwały KC PZPR od IV do V Zjazdu*, op. cit., p. 287. The main proponent of 'traditional, incorrect views', though nowhere stated as such, would appear to be the Church. The latter's anti-abortion, anti-contraceptive stance ran directly against the state's desire to control population growth, so there were pragmatic reasons in the aim to harness women's energies for the benefit of the socialist state.

On the second stage of his train journey another young woman is defined by her shoes:

> (she) had crossed her legs, her thigh line giving way gently to the bend of her knees and running down to ridiculous little red booties with a bow. (138)

Ewa's essential demureness is set against the girl's obvious coquettishness, exemplified by the latter's clothes (red shoes, cherry-coloured mini). The girl's boyfriend ('Maniek') spends most of his time trying to fondle her, behaving like a lout, although Regan holds out the possibility that this might be a pose characteristic of the young's general cynicism. [28]

Nevertheless, despite Regan's general disapproval of the young, which he locates primarily in their susceptibility to consumerism, there is a distinction drawn between the fact that they have Communist products (an East German suitcase), while the real opposition possesses Western goods. Regan's greatest disapproval is reserved for the priest and centres precisely on his high quality Western possessions. The moral superiority to which the priest might lay claim - that of other-worldly interests - is undermined from the very beginning by his implied attachment to the good things in life.

The Priest: 'Ecclesiastical Materialism'.

This sensitivity to material objects and readiness to judge on the basis of the very little information they provide, is not without its (intentionally) comic side. Regan's initial suppositions both prove to be wrong: first, his assumption that, on seeing a wire trailing from the priest's ear, he is deaf, whereas he is listening to a small radio; second, in his immediate conclusion that this radio must be of Western manufacture, whereas it turns out to be Soviet (139). In a sense, these are exceptions that prove the rule. The priest's breviary is bound in expensive leather by an American firm (161). Finally, his fob watch is

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[28] 'The obsessive and rough-cut Maniek, who may be only pretending to be a bit of a lad, since it's what youthful fashion demands'. (154)

an expensive one that customs had released into Polish jewellry shops from its confiscated stock.[29]

The main plane of Regan's argument against the Church is the fairly standard accusation that, in contrast to its declared spiritual role, the Church has diligently amassed unimaginable wealth throughout its history. In the Polish context, its attachment to money is evoked by the practice of charging double the rate when mass is said for Communists (120); accordingly, the notion that it has suffered under Communism is belied:

> And who cares more about Mammon and worldly goods than the Church ? Have you ever flown across Poland, father ? One-storied villages, in the main grey like a covey of partridges, and over them grand churches with towers like bony fingers stuck in the sky, but with those bricks such houses and schools might have been built... No, they shouldn't be demolished or closed. Let them stand. (...) Let those churches stand tall in their mediaeval essence, but food and clothing need to be provided, schools, houses, barns and byres need to be built... (159)

Regan's assertions have some basis in fact, yet the implication that the PUWP exhibited benevolence towards the Polish Church involves a certain misrepresentation.[30] The deliberate juxtaposition of churches and schools suggests that the state funded them in the same way, that it skimped on more urgent and utilitarian projects to do so. Since they are presented by Regan as a luxury Poles can ill afford, the question arises as to why an atheistic state should do this, if it is true, and runs counter to the fact that the regime tended rather to obstruct plans to build new churches.

The force unacknowledged here is the will of the majority of the populace to see those churches built and also to contribute towards their

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[29] This motif occurs twice: the arbitrator of the army manoeuvres possesses a similar watch which, by implication, disqualifies him as an adequate judge of Regan's activity (79).

[30] This argument is one used by the central figures from the Stalinist period interviewed by Teresa Torańska for her book *Oni* (2nd edition), (Warsaw, 1990). Jakub Berman, responsible for ideological matters in the early 1950s, openly claims that the authorities' mild treatment of the Church during Stalinism - their avoidance of the kind of total repression characterising the USSR in the 1930s - indicated that their subordination to Soviet influence was not absolute (p. 123).

upkeep. Regan's vehemence admits as much in his cliched denunciations of the Church's practice in pure Marxist terms. Thus, the whole purpose of the mass, conducted in Latin, is not to increase people's understanding of what is going on but to keep them in ignorance; that is, 'religion is the opiate of the people':

> '..nine out of ten believers don't know exactly what's going on during mass and what they should be doing at any moment'.
>
> 'You're right. Amongst priests there's a running joke that everyone looks at the Party official who listens to the sermons and knows the liturgy like the back of his hand. However, I'm consoled by the fact that at Party meetings the majority doesn't understand what Marxist philosophers are on about.'
>
> 'A minority, but even if that is the case, we've been working on a broad front only for a quarter of a century, changes in consciousness are slow, just give us a chance, father.' (158)

The insincerity of the priest, to Regan's mind, lies precisely in his attempts to reduce the distance between himself and Regan and also between the state and the Church in a way that suggests the process can be anything other than hostile. The notion that the two should be regarded as equivalent is insupportable to him, because the Church has existed for hundreds of years and has exerted more extensive power over that period than the Party has yet been able to attain. This rejection of such identification is repeatedly made by Regan, both on the level of the actual and of the symbolic. An example of the former is provided by the priest's proposal that the sort of co-existence be observed which heralded Gomułka's accession to power in 1956:

> 'We both wear uniforms, discipline is binding on us both, and yet we know that neither all Party members, nor even all colonels in the Party, represent identical views. The same goes for priests. Don't you think that, if we dropped the mutual grudges we hold against each other which have accumulated over the years, we could as Poles, sons of the same mother, determine our spheres of influence, certain rules of play, both in terms of competition as well as cooperation, or as the coexistence proposed by you ?'
>
> 'We make continual efforts in that direction. We have had power for twenty years and we do you such terrible wrongs and

> restrict you so much that there are more priests now than before the war.' (157)

The priest argues that, although both of them represent different causes, they can still reach an understanding due to their being Poles, that is, having the national interest at heart. For Regan, however, this is evidence of mere sophistry, an attempt to steal the opponent's ground by appropriating and misusing his terms, although this is precisely what he, Regan, does in dealing with Christianity:

> 'We don't beg for our sins to be forgiven, nor that they be forgotten - that's just how it was. The God who might have restrained Abraham's sword raised above his son was absent. Our enemies and certain nylon intellectuals liberally prostituting themselves with our enemies are prone to say: what difference was there between your prisons and ours ? We answer: the difference between an error and a programme, between a crime of passion or one committed during a temporary loss of sanity and premeditated murder. We don't want to forget about it, so that we can safeguard the system built in the name of justice and humanity from falsity, torture and blood-letting in the future.' (161)

The point here is the fondness for drawing parallels between the mediaeval Church and the Party in the works of those who were termed revisionists (the "nylon intellectuals" of Regan's diatribe), such as Andrzejewski (*And Darkness Covered the Earth*, *The Gates of Paradise*) and Kołakowski. The counter-suggestion that the Stalinist period should be likened to a momentary lapse of reason, or to a crime of passion, is an extraordinary one. This is as opaque as the use of Biblical imagery (Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac) suggesting that Stalinism was akin to a test of obedience, the point of which was not to carry out the sacrifice but for it to have been averted at some point.[31]

At all events, suggested parallels between the two social forces are unfair to the Party, Regan implies. More importantly, however, there is

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[31] The idea of the absence of God is reminiscent of certain Jewish interpretations of the Holocaust as justifying the necessity of creating the state of Israel - curious in the absence of any reference to the Jews in the work.

a lack of regret that it took place; in some sense (and here the incomplete analogy with God's imposition upon Abraham is meant to back up this assertion) what happened was necessary and inevitable: *that's just how it was*, as he tells the priest.

This attitude obviously obscures more than it explains. It coincides with the myths adopted by the regime in reference to Stalinism, particularly that of 'clean hands' and of nobody specifically being responsible for the crimes committed then, let alone of the events being a logical consequence of the system's organisation.[32] The reduction to the individual level implicit in the view that Stalinism was a 'crime of passion' obscures the existence of any system. The implication is that analogies with the Catholic Church are unsustainable, because the Church acted as an institution in committing crimes against humanity (that these were endemic to its activity), and not as a number of misguided individuals.

This fact also disqualifies the treatment of the Church as an ally in the present. Whilst the Church no longer possesses the secular power to carry out its schemes, it continues to exercise psychological terror to the end of trying to ensure moral behaviour. The priest's boast that the Church could be useful in guaranteeing citizens' good behaviour - bluntly so that the Plan can be fulfilled - is denied by Regan with a sense of moral repugnance: the Party aims at the conscious and willing commitment of the populace in building Poland; terror was a temporary aberration. In this respect, the ends do not justify the means:

> 'You have so many worries with satisfying material needs, with the economy, with politics, so why should you reject our help in people's upbringing ? Certain laws are unchanging, timeless: don't lie, don't be unfaithful, don't lust after revenge, don't steal, don't harm others, don't kill. From the social point of view, it's important that people live in accordance with the law, and whether they understand it to be divine or temporal, whether they observe from fear of the police or to improve their souls, or to endear themselves to the Creator, that's important for us alone,

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32 This practice of imputing guilt to everyone during the Stalinist period is a recurrent motif of these works, intended to carry conviction through the fact that those expounding it were not personally implicated in the crimes they condone.

not for you.'

'It might equally be said that they observe it as thinking beings, or out of fear of the Auschwitz of the Catholic hell, the concentration camp for sins, from which there can be no escape, even by throwing yourself on the electric fence, and in which the devils - those mystical SS men - disembowel people with forks and boil their entrails in pitch on a low flame. Is that supposed to condition the actions of contemporary man ? Your ethical discipline requires fear on the one hand and, on the other, the promise of the abstract miracles of salvation, but contrary to appearances it is a vulgar thing, unworthy of anyone above a certain intellectual level.' (159-160)

The line that the priest adopts here identifies him, for Regan, as a sophist, willing to use any argument to advance his cause. Regan's objection is that the antique institution that is the Church may be allowed to exist in the socialist state, but that this is not synonymous with any acceptance of its outlook. The Church, he asserts, remains essentially locked in its mediaeval world view, which is fundamentally alien to the enlightened world view that the Party wishes to promote. Christian doctrine on Hell is simply not worthy of modern man's intelligence.

This extract underlines another key aspect of Regan's antipathy towards the Church. At this point, the novel interlocks with official propaganda: the association of Catholic images of Hell with concentration camps implies a symbiotic relationship between the two. In short, the Church is accused of disloyalty to the nation and the state.[33]

Although this accusation coincides with current party propaganda, the final invective against the priest's olive branch has been prepared throughout the whole narrative. Regan constantly identifies him as someone who fled into the Church from the underground that fought against the new regime after 1944. This charge therefore implies a logical connection between the acts of one individual and the authority

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[33] A major motif of the works that I discuss in the thesis. Particularly during the Gierek era patriotism was stressed quite as much as socialism. In this way people acting against the regime could be defined as anti-patriotic, an accusation far more wounding than any accusation of being anti-socialist.

he seeks to serve. They are, to echo Stalinist language, objective class enemies of the state. This type of association is prefigured by the example of Siciński, the later underground partisan leader, who is consistently defined as 'the organist's son'.[34] Class origins still function as a definition of allegiances in the militarised landscape of 1966 Poland.

In consequence there is a consistent over-simplification of the complexities of Church-state relations in an area - the Army - where they are unavoidable. Instead, the scale of the problem presented by believers' serving in the Army is denied from the outset, as Regan's use of understatement in his reply to the priest indicates:

> 'We have to be aware of contemporary problems. I think that you too, colonel, must have more than an inkling about issues of faith...'
>
> 'I have to, if I'm to educate people. Among the recruits there is a certain quantity of practising Catholics. You guessed rightly.' (139)

Regan merely mouths anti-Church propaganda in a constant stream of invective against the 'absurdities' of doctrine:

> ..and that treasury of excess production of all kinds of virtues and good deeds achieved by Jesus and Mary, by saints and martyrs, that savings bank, whose assets are at the Pope's disposal as he distributes indulgences. There's no need for any regret, any good deeds or faith, even I can be saved for all eternity, if you only wished ex opero operato. (149)

The terms on which Christianity is presented demonstrate a deliberate misrepresentation, based on stereotypes and gross distortions of Church teaching. The result is to make even its concept of salvation into a kind of spiritual materialism, in which all need for contrition has been removed by the sacrifices undertaken by others; in effect, the

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34 In his review of the novel in *Nowe Książki*, 1968 (19), Żukrowski challenged the demagoguery of this technique: '.. the hint that there is a logic in the drift of the organist's son towards the band of terrorists, and in the priest who admitted that he had used a machine gun, so "he must surely have been shooting at us"... particularly since he has a leather-bound breviary printed on fine paper in the States, is simply ridiculous'.

Church could absolve sinners on demand, Regan implies. In that case, reductio ad absurdam, the rationale for its usefulness to the socialist state has disappeared.[35] Socialism, by contrast, is able to offer the chance of meaning that endorses moral norms without recourse to some transcendent reality. In the person of Regan, it has its ascetic consummation.

Regan: The Unorthodox Member of the Establishment

The major change after 1956 in Party ideology was the perceived need to develop some account of the role of the individual in Marxist philosophy. The re-evaluation of the notion of History - from irresistible monolith to the construct of individual human beings and social formations or classes - became an integral concept in the drive to ensure that there was no return to Stalinist practice. As Kołakowski defined it in the late 1950s, 'each individual's participation in any specific form of political life is a moral act for which that individual is wholly responsible'.[36]

The empowering of the individual that this entailed is a constant factor in the arguments used by Regan throughout the novel. His thrust against the apocalyptic aspects of Church theology seems to be that of one who has lived through the excesses of Stalinism, and has been profoundly scarred by the experience, so that he can thereafter tolerate no belief which bases its authority upon terror. Herein lies the rationale behind Regan's misuse of the Biblical metaphor of the flock of sheep. As he declares to the priest in a positive statement of his own ethos, human beings must rise out of the undifferentiated mass if they are to realise their potential and, by extension, fully to serve that mass:

> We want contemporary man to understand his power, to

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35 It is again Żukrowski who supplies the counter-arguments: 'In the army, that great school of historical thinking, of discipline and responsibility for the soldiers entrusted to you, you can meet various people full of good will to serve the Fatherland, both believers and indifferent, with stubborn characters and shallow careerists, and they have to be sounded out to know with whom you can build and on whom you can rely at difficult moments'. Op. cit.

36 'The Opiate of the Demiurge', *Marxism and Beyond*, op. cit., pp. 136-7.

> recognise the limits of his freedom, to become the subject of history, not just its object, to be the shepherd of his own fate, not just a sheep in a flock. (160)

It is not surprising that, in view of his desire to create a case in his own defence to argue against Kmita, Man should be the constant reference point for Regan. 'Socialism with a human face' is a necessary belief for him at the present time if he is to inspire compassion in his as yet hypothetical accuser, Kmita:

> ...we were concerned about people, we believed nobody should go hungry in the new Poland, that nobody should have the right to punch someone's face in and get away with it, that there should be work for everyone and education, and if that's how it was supposed to be, how could it be socialism, where bureaucratism is always on top, crushing people, chapter and verse ? Both you and I know that it can't be like that, and that if it crushes them then it isn't socialism, only an unadulterated bastardry in the guise of socialism. So if you don't want to be a bastard, if you don't want to betray People's Poland, then you, Kmita, have a duty to see that no harm comes to me, since even though I'm a colonel, I'm also a human being, do you see ? A *human being*. (147)

This return to the first principles of the socialist state is in keeping with Regan's perception that in the new post-October Poland socialist values have been forgotten. His crimes were committed either before the war or, more importantly, in the process of founding the modern state. Regan's guilt in the Przetak affair stems merely from his preempting the state's own policy towards the underground: he allowed Przetak's group to reintegrate into Polish society as they would have done under the later amnesty. In terms of the human lives he saved, Regan is right. 'Humanity' is what Regan himself represents, understood supremely as the demonstration of civic responsibility or the ability to know when regulations may or even must be broken.

Regan argues that total conformity means stasis, that it is impossible if individuals are to achieve anything. In army life, the leader cannot be bound totally by regulations since ultimately, in war, there are none, only the need to win at all cost. The niceties of legal

codes are therefore a luxury affordable only during times of peace, if even then:

> So if a man wants to be the leader of a combat unit, and to direct a group of armed men capable of defending and attacking the enemy, not puppets posing as such, then to carry out an order he must take risks, must trust his aides not to crowd him, must trust in the good sense of his superiors, who know equally well that often, *in order to get anything done, the regulations have to be circumvented in one way or another*, some prohibition has to be by-passed, an instruction disregarded, and he has to trust in their forbearance and good will, because *anyone who wished to act in complete obedience to the regulations, according to the letter, won't get out of the starting-blocks.* (141 - My italics)

Regan's principal inclination is to assume responsibility, even where that entails what from the official standpoint may seem dangerously unorthodox.[37] His stance is supported by the plot: his manoeuvre on the army range is entirely successful, thereby justifying the outlook which informed it. Furthermore, no demonstrable material benefit accrues to Regan through his actions. Regan does not bend the system's rules for his own benefit, he is only concerned with being able to serve the socialist cause, and to that end is open to attack only by those who act in accordance with the baser motives of political pragmatism.

The crucial moment in this regard is his refusal to sit out the war with Justyna. Here again, the conflict between sex and ideology arises - or, rather, in this case, between domesticity and political commitment - as Justyna implores him to stay with her:

> ...stay, we love each other, we'll be together, the rest is unimportant, everything is rotten, everything is done for and there's even no God, or if there is, I don't want to believe in Him, I was in Warsaw when they marched down Aleje Ujazdowskie from Belvedere Palace (...), if He is all-powerful and allows that to happen, then He Himself must be a Nazi, stay, don't go to the Bolsheviks, there'll never be another Poland, love

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37 Żukrowski took a highly positive view of this aspect of the novel: 'One fresh and audacious formulation has flitted through the mind of Regan, the hero of the novel - that to be allowed to disregard regulations you have to live and breathe them. It's a dangerous thought, but one that so often saves human dignity'. Op. cit.

is the most important thing in life. (127)

Regan does not stay, because he had decided before the war (133-134) that the most important thing in his life was socialism. His instinct for social justice proves stronger than those values which might be said normally to constitute the best things in life. In effect, Regan rejects a conformist existence in favour of a life full of uncertainty, embarking upon a course which involves more self-sacrifice than evident gain.

At the same time, however, his character, in which sensuality is foregrounded, is designed to forestall any attempt to dismiss him on the grounds of otherworldliness. In this sense, the eroticism in the novel may be viewed as a device to make the political palatable, which is a common thread throughout these Party novels. The erotic strands in the work do, however, sit somewhat uneasily with the moralising on the role of women in society.

Ideology and Sex: The Woman's Place

The Party's need to advance the women's cause in Poland was, as I have suggested, motivated partly by an attack on the Church. In the document quoted, the function of women as mothers is not mentioned, for that reason. Similarly, Regan does not consider the role of motherhood for Ewa, but rather that of working woman or partner.[38]

This relatively enlightened stance runs largely counter to Regan's essential sexism, so that he may be described as 'ideologically' though not 'politically' correct. In fact, he demonstrates a considerable amount of traditional male courtesy in his public dealings concerning women, underlaid by more deeply held prejudices. Central to these is the motif of women as a temptation for the man to let down his ideological guard.[39]

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[38] This is the woman's lot in the novel. At the same time Ewa is the only one to comment on the status of being a sex object, when she describes having good legs as 'bringing little joy, only lots of trouble'.

[39] This motif occurs three times: Justyna's plea to remain in Poland; Kuba's permission for the old Ukrainian to pass through the road block which leads to his execution; Helena acting as a lure to get her uncle a lift.

Regan's standards are contrasted with those of Helena's 'uncle' (her dead mother's lover), who is vulgar. The 'uncle' recommends Helena's charms because he has watched her taking a bath: 'She's got all the right equipment, I've sometimes happened to see her bathing. I didn't have to put a pillow under her mother's hips either, when I...' (95). At that point, Regan orders him to be thrown out of the car. The offence to his aesthetic sensibility is too great.

Regan's preference is for surreptitious glimpses, for suggestion rather than exposure or overt expression, and images which leave an area of play for his imagination. To some extent, women exist principally as breasts and legs clad in stockings. As he moves into more intimate regions, the metaphors become more dubious (Ewa's jersey, which is 'the colour of damp seaweed', forces him to think, 'by way of contrast' as her hands move over it, 'of thighs as slippery as fish' (130). Generally, he demonstrates a particular ability to poeticise that prevents details from becoming too specific.

The poeticism of sexual activity reaches its apogee in the love scene with Justyna, with the attendant cliches of making love in the countryside as man's return to a natural state. The scene is self-consciously literary, orchestrated in Regan's memory as a beautiful experience:

> 'Untie the horse,' she said and then there was only silence, the bay snorted with satisfaction when he could spit out the bit, she sat there, gazing at the sky between the oak's branches, leaning back on her elbows, the slippery little buttons let themselves be shelled like sunflower seeds, and when her tiny round breasts adorned with wild strawberries emerged into the moonlight, Justyna sighed with relief, stretched out her arms and that is the last thing remembered with photographic precision, and then the picture loses focus, an undulating noise remains, a feeling of joyous ascent ever higher into the sky of darkening crimson, a feeling of sailing out into a bay the colour of mellow honey over which a mist is breaking up and through its thinning streaks comes the smell of a horse blanket mixed with something else, moist, similar to the buds of white honeysuckle growing by the gate of her house, ... (126-127)

The liberation from the social self that occurs here is not a serious threat to Regan's ideological choice: it is brief, insufficient to last a lifetime. It marks a temporary idyll to which there is no return. In effect, it simultaneously demonstrates his receptivity to beauty and underlines the depth of his political commitment, since he can renounce the attraction it exerts.

The Grey Zone of Polish-Soviet Relations

Criticism of Polish-Soviet relations in the novel obeys the general tendency in postwar literature of remaining on the level of allusion. Whereas Regan can give full vent to his animosity towards the Church, the situation with the USSR is diametrically opposite. Silence dominates: for one who fought on the Soviet side, Regan is remarkably cool towards the Soviet military machine. This silence together with the nature of the allusions is highly resonant in the novel.

The formative years - in terms of Regan's later career in the army - are the three years he spent in the USSR (from 1939/40 to 1943). However, only four facts are given: his treatment at the border by the Bolsheviks, his transport to the East, his work in a sawmill, and his call-up after the Sikorski amnesty in 1942. Effectively this amounts to a single paragraph in the novel. Regan's terror, however, stemming from the execution of Kuba, is at all points Soviet-inspired. At the same time, his salvation is also due to the USSR: no case is brought against him over his father's anti-socialist political allegiances because of the de-Stalinisation process announced at the Twentieth Congress (92). This illustrates the ambiguity even of Party-minded accounts of Polish-Soviet relations, and particularly of those written under the influence of the Partisans, who promoted a nationalism discreetly critical of Soviet influence.

Whilst crossing the border, Regan reacts vigorously to a Russian's mockery of the Polish military effort, defending the Poles' national honour by fighting with a border guard, for which he is not shot (a large dose of wishful thinking, given that the Soviet Union had invaded Poland and they were technically at war), but put with the

common soldiers:

> 'Everyone who comes here says he likes the Communists, you lost the war, you Polish lords, in two weeks, French and English capital didn't help you,' sneered the commander in a white fur coat and the devil possessed me to tell him: "you'd have lost the war in one week, because you don't know which end to hold a rifle.' The young soldier stood alongside him with his bayonet ready, but his legs were stiff, and by grabbing hold of the barrel it was a simple matter to throw him into the snow and *that helped me, because before that they'd thought I was an officer*, and now the one in the fur coat turned his head and ordered me to go to the left with the rank-and-file, since anyone who knows how to use a bayonet isn't an officer, and that same day they loaded me onto the "teplushka", in which it was as cold as hell, and they transported us, singing about Katiusha and apple and pear trees.' (125 - my italics)

The italicised clauses are particularly loaded for Polish readers, because the inference of different treatment for Polish officers implies but one thing in the Polish context - an allusion to the murder of Polish officers in Katyń woods in 1940. The passage illustrates the paradoxes of a 'national' socialism, particularly of the kind promoted by the Partisans, in that the national or patriotic elements begin to predominate over the socialist. Although the officers belonged to the wrong social class, they were still Poles, and the Russian's mockery is directed against the Poles as a nation. National pride is the main issue here, especially on the sensitive point of military honour.

The other significant factor here is therefore the anti-Russian slant, evident in the irony of the wagons in which they were transported being termed 'heated goods vans' and the use of the clichéd Stalinist folk song, 'Katiusha'. Inappropriate also is the description of Regan as a 'lord' ('pan'), a cliche of Bolshevik propaganda of the 1920 war, used in respect of all Poles. The use of Russian words generally indicates irony in the text. Regan describes himself as working as a 'volunteer' ('wolnonajomnyj') in a saw mill (126). In the circumstances this is a grotesque definition, because the decision to be in that part of the USSR did not depend on him - he is effectively a

forced labourer. As with the Church, Regan proves to be more conversant with the thinking of the other side than it is with his.

For the younger generation there are only memories of Russian kindness towards the end of the war, such as the lieutenant who gave Ewa his doublet and left food for her, besides teaching her Russian children's songs (124). For Regan's father the Russians were guilty of attacking Poland perfidiously, and he denounces his son's decision to go to Soviet territory: 'if that's how it is, then get out of my sight, they stabbed Poland in the back, I don't want to see you again before I die' (125). The Soviet Union therefore provokes an intensely complicated mix of responses from Poles in the novel; in the present, it remains in the background as a benign force. However, the situation with Federal Germany produces the impression that the Poles face the struggle on their own, rather than having the help of Soviet power to counter German demands.[40] Regan embodies the Partisan line, promoting the peculiarly Polish nature of socialism above the internationalist perspective and hinting at criticism of the Soviets.

Conclusion: Mary Quant and the Polish Army

Under the guise of accusing the young generation of excessive materialism - the line promoted by Załuski's works in particular, but common within the Party also - and which has universal force (over-attachment to the things of this world being criticised by Christianity too), Regan's views smack of neo-Stalinist resentment of this diversion of funds away from the Army. On his travels, in his thoughts, he constantly brushes up against the Westernisation of contemporary Poland, a process for which he evinces little sympathy. Insofar as it devalues the role of the armed forces, his perceptions resonate with indignant irony, as his comments on Mary Quant reveal:

> The magazine *Profile* is promoting skirts ten centimetres above the knee, but when a girl has good thighs she wears them

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[40] The Party tended to fear any rapprochement between the USSR and the Federal Republic of Germany. Gomułka clearly criticised Khrushchev's overtures to the Federal Republic of Germany at the 1964 Writers' Congress in Lublin, offending the Soviet writers present.

> higher, ignorant of the fact that, if she'd been born ten years earlier, she might have been thrown out of school due to her brightly-coloured, low-cut dress, and now people in high positions kick themselves for being unable to find something in that line, even a remaindered bra, *because the most important calculation is the benefit to the economy*, mini-skirts gave the state coffers in England two and a half million pounds and brought their designer, the thirty-two year old Mary Quant, an OBE from the Queen, *a medal bigger than those given to pilots after their tenth down*... (98 - my italics)

The reference here is in the first instance to those Polish pilots who fought for the RAF, particularly during the Battle of Britain, whose effort seems to be diminished by the size of the OBE bestowed upon the fashion designer. Implicit in the charge, however, is the notion that fashion per se is trivial and that Poland is also endangered by a similar degradation of values.

The above comment about the economy as the primary definition of value functions not only as a Marxist critique of the primacy of the profit-motive in Western capitalist countries but equally as a criticism of the current state of affairs in Poland too. In the midst of all this Western-style plenty, Regan implies, there is a neglect of the army's basic needs, which forces him to be a wheeler-dealer.[41] In short, the Westernisation of Poland has been at the army's expense, and is leading to the 'ideological disarmament' of the mass of society.

The characteristic motif here is resentment at the system's alleged bias towards those who do not serve its best interests and neglect of those who are truly loyal. This perception inspires Załuski's works, as it does Przymanowski's novel, and echoes the complaints of Party loyalists after 1956. It centred on the allegation that the system demanded loyalty but did not give it in return. The concern with pragmatic policies devised only in response to the current situation could render the faithful surplus to requirements. This was evidence that the Party had forgotten 'socialist basics' and even the purpose of its

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[41] The red tape involved in the repair of barrack walls is presented as being so obstructive that, without Regan's nous in arranging things privately, his young recruits would still be living in unhealthy conditions (88-89).

own struggle:

> .. Przetak could be the end of everything, the Republic's amnesties and clemency are only for enemies who have been converted, but there's no mercy for her own ... (175)

'Through a Maze, Darkly':

Tadeusz Hołuj's *A Personality* [40] (1974).

> What was needed was a piece of pure fantasy. Suddenly there sprang into his mind, ready made as it were, the image of a certain Comrade Ogilvy, who had recently died in battle, in heroic circumstances. There were occasions when Big Brother devoted his Order for the Day to commemorating some humble, rank-and-file Party member whose life and death he held up as an example worthy to be followed. [41]
>
> George Orwell.

> It is difficult to change the image of someone whose name and reputation have been fixed for all time in a work of drama, even though the play may be politically unfair (...).
>
> This is exactly what the authorities fear: that the artist will portray the world according to his own vision without taking into account historical necessity, the dilemmas of power, the 'extremely complex' political circumstances. [42]
>
> Andrzej Wajda.

George Orwell's influence on Polish postwar literature was guaranteed through the appropriation of his concept of Newspeak ('nowomowa') by opposition academics in order to define official discourse. The fascination which the concept exerted stemmed from its purpose of impoverishing language in accordance with the needs of state ideology, that is, ultimately to prevent the expression of unorthodox thoughts. In Orwell's novel the full implementation of 'Newspeak' still lay in the distant future, but the implications were already present in 1984: the rewriting of history in line with the Party's current needs, and what was, for Orwell, a recurrent idea - the death of prose literature under totalitarian regimes. [43]

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[40] *Osoba.* All references are to the novel's second edition (Warsaw, 1976).

[41] *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London, 1988), pp. 40-41.

[42] *Double Vision - My Life in Film* (London, 1989), p. 121.

[43] See 'The Prevention of Literature', in *Inside the Whale and other Essays* (London, 1982).

This idea finds illustration in the novel in the passage quoted above, where Winston Smith invents the character Comrade Ogilvy. Permissible literature has here been reduced to a subsidiary role, one of an adjunct to state propaganda. Smith's fictional invention is designed solely to provoke the immediate response of unthinking patriotism which the Party desires from the population at large.

The degree of control exercised by the Party in *1984* - or rather desire for such control - was frequently attributed to the communist authorities. However, the reality, particularly after 1956, is better expressed by Andrzej Wajda. Instead of exercising absolute and apparently serene control, the authorities were forced to struggle with artists in order to have the "correct version" portrayed. As Wajda implies, the difficulty for the authorities lay in producing a positive and attractive figure in justification of their exercise of power, for what they lacked was precisely the *myth*, and it is this problem which Hołuj's novel *Osoba* addresses.

* * *

Hołuj's work won first prize[44] in the national literary competition organised by Śląsk publishers to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the Polish Workers' Party. Party documents indicate that this competition was conceived as an important element of Party cultural policy in the early nineteen-seventies and did not constitute a spontaneous initiative by the publishing house itself:

> Competitions are an effective form of creative inspiration with a long-established and successful tradition. They have concentrated artists' interest on the problems of our present, have shown the achievement of thirty years of People's Poland as a source of inspiration for the most ambitious intellectual and artistic plans, and have required artists to pay heed in their artistic work to working people, who created this achievement. On the whole, they have satisfied the expectations of the organisers and have given society a series of valuable works. The following competitions deserve particular mention:
>
> ...- the Śląsk publishers' competition for a literary work, or a work for television or the cinema, linked to the thirtieth

44 Sharing it with Julian Kawalec's *Szara aureola* (1973).

anniversary of the foundation of the Polish Workers' Party.[45]

The use of this form of literary promotion assumed greater prominence in the early part of Gierek's rule. What is evident in the case of Hołuj's novel is the increasing sophistication of the kinds of fiction rewarded in competitions. *Osoba* seems to indicate the redundancy of expectations that the classic realistic novel, with its omniscient narrator, could be adequate to the description of postwar reality. Hołuj instead deploys a number of competing narrators and pseudo-objective sources, whose veracity is assessed by a researcher, who is in turn in contact and often in conflict with participants in events. This montage effect is a lesson seemingly derived from the abandonment of classic realism by writers such as Maria Dąbrowska and Jerzy Andrzejewski. In their respective novels, *Przygody człowieka myślącego* (1965)[46] and *Miazga* (1976),[47] it is precisely by the method of juxtaposing third-person narrative and documentary materials that they attempt to solve the inadequacy of the realistic mode in rendering postwar reality.

At each stage of the postwar period the emphasis fell on different aspects of that history. Under Gomułka, although criticism of the Stalinist years was officially limited, there was no doubt that he intended a clear break to be made with the preceding era. This mirrored the preferences of Gomułka himself, whose view of the period was influenced by his own imprisonment. Upon his demise, however, the need for the Party to distance itself quite so clearly from the early 1950s was no longer imperative for the ruling elite. Amongst their number were key figures from the Union of Polish Youth (ZMP - Związek Młodzieży Polskiej), such as Józef Tejchma, the liberal-minded

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[45] 'O polityczno-ideowej inspiracji twórczości literackiej i artystycznej. Ocena i wnioski', p. 8; AAN, KC PZPR, Kancelaria Sekretariatu, paczka 340, 855/47, teczka 13.

[46] *Adventures of a Thinking Man* .

[47] *Pulp*.

Minister of Culture between 1974 and 1978, whose overriding experience of the Stalinist years was essentially positive, and who had no desire to see the 'era of heroic construction' - the central experience of their lives - demeaned.[48]

This 'delicate rehabilitation' - as Piotr Piotrowski puts it - of the Bierut era is one of the key features of Gierek's rule.[49] In cultural terms it meant the adaptation of certain Stalinist forms: the promotion of rock stars and sportsmen in a monumentalist fashion reminiscent of the treatment of 'shock workers' in the 1950s; the stress placed upon links between working people and avantgarde artists leading to installations in the workplace. These were not in themselves developments that originated with the Gierek regime, but under his rule they reached their climax.[50] Writers, although not required to take up residence in the workplace as they had been during the early fifties, formed part of a number of delegations which visited the major industrial sites around Poland (Katowice Huta, the Baltic shipyards). The premise remained the same, however, in that these visits were intended to inspire writers to take up working class themes to guarantee the Party-mindedness of their art.

The Party's thinking about literature, whilst it had undoubtedly become more sophisticated, nevertheless betrayed its predominantly occasional nature. Anniversaries provided occasions upon which appropriate work could be produced essentially as an act of commemoration. In this sense, the logic behind the competition which gave rise to Hołuj's novel had changed little from Stalinist times -

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[48] Compare Tejchma's advice to Wajda before starting out on *Man of Marble*: 'For us the two key issues are: first, that it was in Polish history a period of great hope, initiative and movement, as well as one of mistakes and setbacks. The idea of Stakhanovite work (both literally and metaphorically) was an attempt to lift ourselves from the bottom of Europe, to create a symbol of Polish progress, and not merely manipulation. Second, we look upon our mistakes as dramatic, not as stupid. Nowa Huta, in which I was personally involved, was a symbol of action'. *Kulisy dymisji*, op. cit., p. 193.

[49] *Dekada* (Poznań, 1991), p. 12.

[50] A sponsorship agreement had been signed by the artists' unions with trades unions in 1967, primarily concerning the fine arts and installations in the workplace.

commemorative literature to illustrate specific themes - with the signal exception that there were no restrictions regarding the form.

In the early 1970s the Party's attention was focused primarily upon the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of People's Poland,[51] wrongly dated back to 1944.[52] The thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the PWP in 1942 was equally important. Gierek's address at the VI Congress defined the significance of the organisation: 'The PWP became the leading force and main spokesman for the Polish nation, since its programme alone answered the real national interest'.[53]

The legitimacy of the Party's claim to be the leading force within Polish society had to be re-established following the riots of the winter of 1970-71. The emphasis played on the conditions in which it arose played a significant role in this process of rehabilitation: the 'real national interest' during the war entailed national survival; in 1971, the Party was concerned to foster a similar myth of national unity and develop closer links between itself and the workers. The anniversary therefore had a double purpose: as an act of remembrance, but equally as a moral instruction to the Party in its present condition. The war, it may be said, represented a kind of 'Golden Age', a topos of political virtue, to which nostalgic reference could be made in current, less morally certain times.

Nowe Drogi accordingly devoted a considerable number of articles to the anniversary of the foundation of the PWP.[54] These

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51 'Kierunki i metody działalności w realizacji Uchwały VI Zjazdu PZPR w dziedzinie literatury', AAN, KC PZPR, Kancelaria Sekretariatu, paczka 281, 1733/57, teczka 17.

52 Rather than the declaration of the First Constitution in 1952, when the state received its official name.

53 'Referat programowy Biura Politycznego wygłoszony przez I sekretarza KC PZPR, tow. Edwarda Gierka,' at the Party's Sixth Congress, 6-11 December 1971, in *Nowe Drogi*, 1972 (1), p. 68.

54 'W XXX rocznicę powstania PPR', *Nowe Drogi*, 1972 (1), pp. 217-272.

illustrated the general political criteria which any literary work on the theme had to fulfil in dealing with the circumstances in which the new party was created. Without implying any hierarchy of value, we may define these criteria as follows:

(i) The Communists as the **major force** in contemporary Polish history. This period occupied 'an exceptionally important place in the history of the Polish state and nation'; [55]

(ii) The Communists as **true Poles.** The antecedents of the PWP were left-wing parties set up spontaneously in occupied Poland independently of Soviet influence and, crucially, the prewar Polish Communist Party, 'whose history had been so unexpectedly interrupted by the erroneous decision to dissolve it'; [56]

(iii) Poland's existence guaranteed solely through an **alliance with the USSR.** 'Only the politically conscious part of the nation saw that Poland's future (...) and its salvation and liberty could be guaranteed only by a union with the USSR'; [57]

(iv) Communists as providers of **moral example.** The qualities required of those by the circumstances of the war were 'great strength of foresight, unbending self-sacrifice and ideological fervour, and a profound understanding of the correctness of the historical process'; [58] these qualities were to serve for succeeding generations as examples of moral excellence'; [59]

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55 'Kontynuacje i przemiany', editorial article, *Nowe Drogi*, 1972 (1), p. 217.

56 Ibid., p. 217. This marks a move by the regime to co-opt the national tradition as a source of legitimation for the Party.

57 Ibid., p. 217.

58 Ibid., p. 217.

59 Ibid., p. 218.

(v) Communists in **union with the masses.** Individual party members were motivated by a 'profound sense of serving the deepest interests of the people, with which they completely identified their own aims and ambitions'; [60]

(vi) History as the **construct of individuals.** In contrast to the Stalinist view of the historical inevitability of socialism: 'History does not run its own course on the basis of the action of anonymous forces. It is always the work of living, authentic people'. [61]

Each of these points expresses the Party's perception of the way in which it needs to reform after December 1970, and is applicable to *Osoba.* Since it was written for a specific competition, the novel was intended primarily to have an ideological purpose - to demonstrate the legitimacy of the Party's claims to lead Polish society. The means which Hołuj employed in order to convey this ideological content were broadly similar to those used by Winston Smith - the invention of a fictional comrade who embodies the desired qualities of heroism and self-sacrifice - whilst being located in the matrix of considerations which Wajda outlines.

* * *

The hero of Hołuj's novel is Wacław Poturecki, the leader of a left-wing resistance group in the south of Poland. Poturecki's story does not end with his death, however, which is more than the simple moral invocation to his fellow citizens that Ogilvy's signifies. His posthumous fate symbolises the vicissitudes endured by Communists in postwar Poland, and precisely what he signifies is not defined. Indeed, he is the subject of contrary claims; there are multiple and disparate accounts of his activities and importance. In Wajda's words, the 'extremely complex' political circumstances are registered at every stage.

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60 Ibid., p. 219.

61 Ibid., p. 219.

Poturecki's development is representative of certain trends in the Polish intelligentsia, which gravitated towards social radicalism before the outbreak of the Second World War, to be co-opted into the PWP leadership later in the war. It is noticeable that, although he starts from an internationalist standpoint, that is, from a position of viewing the Soviet Union as the desirable model and necessarily the establishment of a European Socialist Republic as the outcome of his activity, Poturecki is shown evolving towards a more particular, 'national' type of socialism. The Soviet Union remains in the background as a bastion of socialism, but the Polish situation requires Polish Communists to devise a brand of socialism appropriate to local conditions. The Polish road is the ultimate destination of Poturecki and his colleagues, in spite of all the vicissitudes of the war and postwar era.

The fundamental change brought by Polish Communism was not 'historically inevitable' in a mechanical sense; it depended upon individuals who consciously strove to build the new state. The qualities which Poturecki exhibits demonstrate that he is a person who is committed to the idea of social change and strives to realise that idea even when times and circumstances are unpropitious. The basic value of his example is undoubted; the acceptability of elements within his biography, from the viewpoint of the elite in control at different junctures, is however subject to change. He continues to exert an influence on his colleagues' subsequent development in that, generally speaking, every character who knew him regarded him as an authority to be acknowledged or rejected ultimately in justification of their own actions and attitudes.

This appropriation is not limited to his colleagues alone. The unnamed researcher, compiling information about Poturecki in time for the PWP anniversary, seems also to want to exploit Poturecki's reputation. In his case, it is as a scourge for his father, who was active as a prosecutor during the Stalinist period, which appears to discredit him morally as a socialist in the son's eyes. Poturecki serves as a morally pure example who demonstrates the desirability of socialism despite the abuses which have occurred in its name since the war.

Although Hołuj deliberately fragments the linear development of his novel, the influence and indeed necessity of the example of Poturecki in the postwar period is implicit in the fates of the three central characters, Jan Dobry, Piotr Mańka and Leszek Krzyżakowski. Their experience is representative of the trials which confronted Polish socialists after 1945 as they worked to build People's Poland. We shall consider, first, the biography of each in terms of the role they serve in the novel's presentation of history.

The Posthumous Life of Wacław Poturecki.

Each of the three characters is in his own way a typical figure in the postwar Polish political landscape. Dobry and Mańka, who were founder members of the fictitious Polish Revolutionary Union with Poturecki, continued their political activity in the PUWP. Leszek Krzyżakowski, by contrast, achieved prominence as a writer, gaining fame outside Poland, was a party member 1948-56, but left the Party in 1956 for reasons which are not explained.

Jan Dobry enjoys two periods of acclaim, firstly in the early nineteen-fifties as a high Party official, a 'Hero of Labour'. After some years of obscurity , he re-emerges in the early years of the Gierek regime as an abstract painter, the creator of colossal, almost Dwurnik-like canvasses inspired by his wartime experiences. Piotr Mańka occupies a less elevated position in the Party, but is treated as an important source when it seeks initially to incriminate Poturecki in the 1950s and then when it wishes eventually to rehabilitate him in the 1960s.

Jan Dobry: Hero of Labour/Worker-Artist.

Jan Dobry is the only member of the former ZPR leadership who had been in the prewar Polish Communist Party. He exemplifies the elevation of people of working class origin particularly under Stalinism, when he is much decorated and lauded. In 1956, however, he suffers from what we assume is too close an identification with the preceding

regime and is removed from his high position in the party hierarchy. From that point he takes up painting, his subject being what he regards as the major experience of his life - his association with the Polish Revolutionary Union and the PWP in the period up to Poturecki's death. His work reinterprets the significance of these events for his own life in mythic, pseudo-Christian form - his characters are presented as angels, literally given wings through the inspiration of the socialist utopian visions of Poturecki.

Dobry is haunted by the idea that during the Stalinist period something essential was lost. Unwittingly, he contributes to the defamation of Poturecki by the Stalinist regime. which he attempts to undo by returning in his artistic work to the war years. Describing his views in a letter to the researcher, he acknowledges the development of his career as a lamentable paradox, given that the course he took led finally to the negation of what he held dear:

> ...I was in favour of what was later called the Polish road to socialism, or right-wing nationalist deviationism, except that I followed that road, like many, to its negation. Besides, they didn't hold it against me, that PWP stance, and they only dug it up when they wanted to wipe the floor with Poturecki - to this day I don't know why - and they convinced me then, they really did, that it was the wrong course, you see. (75)

A key moment here is the sense of personal responsibility which Dobry exhibits. He does not attempt to gloss over his own participation by using generalisations such as 'historical inevitability'. This enables him to stand as a foil to Piotr Mańka who, like Dobry, was equally convinced that the course which Poturecki represented was wrong. The difference between them lies in Dobry's 'bad conscience', which signals his ethical disagreement with the authorities' treatment of Poturecki. This is not an issue which troubles Mańka to anything like the same degree, given that, for him, *the Party is always right*, and that there are no ethical dilemmas in adopting a diametrically opposed view from one moment to the next - if the Party requires that of him.

In the present time of the novel, Poturecki is largely

unremembered outside reference books, the memories of his surviving contemporaries and the Party archives. In this situation, Dobry performs the vital function of facilitating his rediscovery. As the younger generations begin to show an interest in Dobry as a painter, he is able to direct them to the most important influence in his life, and the subject of his work, which is the organisation he founded during the war and where he met Poturecki, his spiritual mentor.

Dobry plays the role of guide to the researcher, whose work we understand is ultimately to make recompense for Dobry's own crucial failure during the Stalinist era, when he denied Poturecki. His moral failure at that time does not disqualify him as an authority, however, due to his self-awareness: he remains valuable to the Party because, although it reprimands him, he nonetheless retains his faith in the transformation which it has wrought in Poland. His experience serves as a moral warning against the deformation of an individual's own personal beliefs, even where the ultimate end seem to justify the means.

Piotr Mańka: The Party Man.

Mańka is associated almost exclusively with the methods of the Stalinist era, due to his reports to the Central Committee concerning Poturecki. His initial statement, made at the height of Stalinism in 1952, is a standard denunciation of another individual against whom the Party has turned, which then sanctions a whole series of unproven accusations and suggestive implications. This treatment of Poturecki 's reputation appears to be part of the persecution of 'National' socialists, such as Gomułka, who dared to assert a degree of independence from the Stalinist line in the aftermath of Tito's break with Stalin. Mańka casts doubts upon Poturecki's prewar allegiances, suggesting that he was a Sanacja 'plant':

> He was given his post despite being registered with the police for his involvement in student disturbances, and the authorities knew that he wrote in left-wing publications, putting forward anti-government views or, as they put it, communist views. (...) I'm simply stating a fact, which provides a lot of

food for thought. (67)

Piotr Mańka paints Poturecki in the blackest of colours, imputing Trotskyite views to him, whilst attempting to claim the credit for representing the ideologically correct line in the wartime organisation. At this stage he defers to Jan Dobry, quoting him in support of his evidence, because of the latter's current great prestige in the party. Like Krzyżakowski he is motivated by a sense of grievance, his feeling of intellectual inferiority towards Poturecki, and similarly seeks to belittle Poturecki's contribution, insisting that he was an impractical 'theoriser'.

A crucial role is played by Kromer's account of his interrogation during the Stalinist period. Faithful to the general paranoiac spirit of those years and the logical absurdities inherent in the accusations, the fact that the terms on which the interrogation is conducted no longer apply, modifies the force of the portrayal - it is absurd, but it belongs to the past:

> 'The USSR was treacherously attacked, it didn't want that war, but you wanted it. Why ? If you wanted it, and you did beyond any doubt, then, as activists, pah - as an organisation - you had to act in a way which would bring that war about. Isn't it logical ? It is. And if we follow that logic further, it means that you helped the Germans, the side which wanted the war. Didn't you ? I'll tell you why - it's because you were Trotskyites.'
>
> 'You're wrong,' I objected, 'Poturecki's views evolved, it's true, but first of all he always thought of the Soviet Union as our hope, as the hope of the whole world, and he linked the future war with a general European uprising; secondly, as early as 1941 he represented views all but identical with the PWP programme, which is still binding today, I think.'
>
> 'Precisely, you're talking about Gomułka-ism, aren't you ? It all fits. From Trotskyism to nationalism. We know that road too well from the movement's history, and you set out along it.'
>
> ...Jan Dobry, then at the height of his fame, admitted the truth, from what was read to me, but now, on Rakowiecka Street, it sounded ominous. The plain clothes man read out the charges: a pseudo-communist organisation founded by non-communists (he meant the Potureckis), without any instructions from the centre (the Comintern), leading people astray from a European

revolution to a Front of National Unity in the bourgeois spirit.

'And so, logically, Dobry confirms that you set up an organisation against the "Soviets", against "influences from Moscow", and that's why you were in such a rush. In 1939, I ask you !' (113-115)

The political terms on which the interrogation is conducted, specifically the condemnation of Gomułka's 'nationalism', are no longer valid. Similarly, these practices have ceased; the Party has learnt from the experience. Moreover, Mańka himself does not survive into the present day - the tendency which he represented has, we are to infer, become a historical detail.

Mańka himself denies that the Stalinist years were an aberration. By 1963, the time of the second report, he has turned full circle, placing himself in the main behind Poturecki. The corollary of this change is his presentation of Dobry, now out of favour with the party leadership, whom he describes as someone constantly seeking to 'impose his sectarian views on Poturecki' (206). In doing so he risks revealing himself to be a mere political opportunist, obsequiously following the party line, without betraying any qualms about the double-think which this involves. In each situation, whether under Stalinism or after October, Mańka seems to adapt his version of events to what he believes the authorities wish to hear; his 'failing' is that he is a conformist.

Mańka cannot simply be dismissed. Jan Dobry exonerates his later behaviour by setting it against his obvious bravery during the war - by implication, a far more important event. In his letter to the researcher, where he discusses Mańka's statements to the Party archives, Dobry effectively reduces the whole of the Stalinist era to a personal disagreement between two individuals ('It's a pity he's no longer alive, I'd give him a punch in the mouth', 75). At the same time Jan Dobry's consciousness of his own inadequate response to the Stalinist assault on Poturecki prevents him from being more condemnatory about Mańka:

> Please don't believe that Mańka was your usual bootlicker. Whoever joined us during the occupation was no bootlicker, and he wasn't either, he believed it all, that is, in the correctness of everything he did. (75)

Mańka is not discredited in the novel, because at all points he remains faithful to the Party line. His limitation is a lack of moral imagination: he addresses his interrogators in the terms which are politically current. He desires to remain faithful to the Party and its outlook at every stage. In that sense he is an opportunist, but his opportunism is condonable since it is that of a conformist whose sole concern is to serve the Party.

Leszek Krzyżakowski: 'He of Little Faith'.

This is not the case with Leszek Krzyżakowski, however, who is implicitly and explicitly condemned throughout the novel. The principal reason why this should be so is that in a work whose ostensible justification is to document the truth about Poturecki the weight of accounts is necessarily very much against the artistic licence which Krzyżakowski flaunts as his literary right. Given that he is prone to write himself as a central figure into situations where he was not even present, his credibility as a witness, when he wants to be accepted as such, is also severely qualified. All of which establishes him as the most psychologically complex and interesting character, given that he tries most of all to lay claim to the legacy of Poturecki.

His relationship with Poturecki is an ambivalent one, being governed by his sense of intellectual inferiority towards his former teacher. In his novel he adopts a compensatory strategy: the manner in which he appears in events emphasises the importance of his contribution and his intellectual parity with his teacher. Depending on the circumstances he, and not Poturecki, is the idealist, or the realist, and consequently always right. Thus, when Wojciech Dobry arrives to confirm Poturecki's position (which Krzyżakowski was suspected of

trying to undermine) he expresses a truth that is equally as valid as Poturecki's comment:

> 'Listen,' said "Lech", 'I'm young, I don't intend to take the responsibility for anything which was "before me", and I'm not bothered what the general line of institutionalised communists was. For me the most important thing is the cause of Man and the creation of conditions in which he can be truly free. All theories and dogmas must take into account man's first need, the need for freedom.'
>
> [Poturecki] 'Unfortunately man's first need is not freedom, my friend, but grub... We need to create conditions in which people are fed, and that too is the basis of social justice.' (221)

He is motivated by a desire to 'co-opt' Poturecki, to solve his inferiority complex by dictating the terms in which Poturecki is presented. This commences immediately after the war, when he edits and arranges the publication of the latter's poems in the collection *Jestem* (1946). The title of the collection is ambiguous, since it contains different implications for Poturecki and for Krzyżakowski. In Poturecki's case it signifies his defiance of the Nazis during the war and his ability to survive as a moral and political example after his death. In Krzyżakowski's, it seems rather to mark the relief he feels at his own physical survival - his main concern in his autobiographical novel.

His psychology is further complicated by the sense that, in rewriting wartime events, he is also attempting to remove the stain on his fiancee's (and, by implication, his own) reputation. He recasts these events as a story of love and adventure, as a supremely individual response to the existential terror of war, which forces the individual to recognise the necessity of 'living for the moment'. The portrayal of his fiancee, who is the most likely suspect as informer against the organisation, shows her as totally dedicated to him - an illustration of Krzyżakowski's implicit thesis that love conquers and is superior to all other matters, even political commitment.

Objective corroboration of this picture of Krzyżakowski is furnished by the pseudo-documentary source, *The Dictionary of*

Contemporary Polish Literature (Czytelnik, 1958), which lists his literary output between 1945 and 1956:

> *Essays on Freedom*, Czytelnik, 1946
> *Stories of Life and Death*, E. Rubin, 1946
> *The Course of Postwar Polish Literature*, Książka, 1947
> *Three Short Novels*, Czytelnik, 1948
> *The Account* (A Trilogy: 1. *Fire*; 2. *Earth*; 3. *Sky*), Książka i Wiedza, 1951
> *Marxism Accuses*, ZG ZMP, 1952
> *The Book of Hope*, Czytelnik, 1953
> *A Tale of Spring*, PIW, 1956
> *Stories of Dead Hopes*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1956
> has completed a political novel about the years 1939-44, with the working title, *The Crossing* ... (60-61)

Krzyżakowski's postwar career is thus seen to develop from a position of support for the regime in its pluralistic phase through total public identification with its programme at the height of Stalinism to eventual disillusionment with the renewal initiated by Gomułka. In the last instance we receive the information of his break with the Party after 1956 from Jan Dobry - 'just as things were getting better'. In short, Krzyżakowski appears as an opportunist, writing to order in the different political circumstances and, it is implied, without ever believing truly in socialism at any stage.

Whilst Jan Dobry, Piotr Mańka and Leszek Krzyżakowski are the central characters in the novel's delineation of the attitudes which contributed to, and even deformed, the building of the new socialist state after the war, they are in the main static, 'historical' figures, examples to be argued over rather than active participants. The present context for the assessment of their activities is provided by the conflict between the unnamed researcher and his father in their correspondence, of which only the father's side is given. Their 'dialogue' is essentially an argument about the course of socialism in postwar Poland, and, as far as the son is concerned (from what can be read between the lines), how it might have been different. The force of the son's argument is

augmented by the crises of March 1968 and December 1970. Certainly for him, the issue of the nature of socialism is a burning one, because, by inference, if socialism is to remain valid the Party must repair the damage caused by its brutal suppression of the students' and workers' valid protests against systemic abuses.

This conflict leads into broader issues. The question of individual responsibility is at least partly an area which is treated in the novel, together with a debate amongst Marxist philosophers that was particularly vital in the years immediately after the renunciation of Stalinist practices - the question of ethical socialism.

Polish Socialism in 1972: The Father-and-Son Conflict.

It is well documented[62] that the fathers of some of the leading student protesters during the so-called 'March events' of 1968 had occupied prominent positions in the Party in the early fifties. At the same time it was noteworthy that the protesters were concerned to stress their loyalty to the system, and that their protests did not constitute an attack on the ideological principles which lay at the foundation of the postwar Polish state. Hołuj appears to have had these in mind when creating his father-son relationship in *Osoba*. What is never in doubt is the son's intellectual seriousness and loyalty to the system. The nature of the disagreement with his father stems from what he perceives to be his father's unapologetic stance about the Stalinist years, and from the fact that he regards his father as somehow a traitor for not holding on to his original ideals. The father had been incidentally involved in 1952 in the interrogation of Tadeusz Kromer, one of the members of Poturecki's organisation.

The principal concern for the unnamed researcher is to discover an alternative authority to that of his father, who for the son was implicated in the abuses of the nineteen-fifties. The question of whether he committed any crimes is not addressed.

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[62] By Teresa Torańska in *Oni* and Jerzy Eisler in *Marzec 1968*, to name but two.

> ...you condemned me with all the brutality of youth, and now you are groping about for an "alternative" in this business with Poturecki. How do you know what he would have been like today, and do you know full well who I was at his age and in his day ? I think you turned to me to prove that you haven't changed and to annoy me, to gloat over me. All right, but it's too early for all that just yet. Once you get to grips with history, you can't gloat over it. (18)

The son seeks a morally purer socialism and to this end returns to the war years when motives were apparently less complicated and the enemy unambiguously evil. Poturecki is attractive for the researcher, because he is motivated by a utopian vision of a socialist Europe, which obviously has as yet no counterpart in a compromised reality. In this respect the son emerges as something of an 'angry young man', an idealist who condemns his surrounding reality for not living up to his ideals. His father is the principal object of his attack because he is the closest target of that moral dissatisfaction he experiences.

The father, however, explains the change that took place in his views as inevitable and free of any moral opprobrium. Poturecki can remain a hero, because his revolutionary outlook was possible only during the war, when the business of building the new state had yet to begin. He consequently escaped the test of the mundane.

> I have to remind you that you broke with me, your own father, precisely because I changed my views, and you regard that as shameful. If your Poturecki were alive today, do you think that he would still represent such utopian pseudo-theories ?
>
> I'm not writing that to discourage you. Besides, I have no fear that you will soak up Poturecki's views, and all those ideals in capital letters, like Fraternity, Revolution, Rebirth, and I believe that I shall have the possibly bitter satisfaction of soon hearing you say, "Dad, I know what you mean". (143-144)

The father argues here that the ideals which inspired him to become a socialist are not sustainable with the same ardour over time. Realism qualifies idealism, particularly when the struggle or revolution to establish a socialist state has been successful and the work of

building the edifices and institutions which are to regulate that state require organisation, not primarily revolutionary fervour. The father has lost that fervour, but regards this almost as a necessary part of achieving maturity as a socialist, and for him all socialists are subject to the same process, if they are burdened with the responsibility of office - the revolution cannot continue in perpetuity. That degree of knowledge has not yet been revealed to his son, but achieving such knowledge would automatically vindicate his father. Once more we find the standard justification of those in power who arrogate to themselves alone the authority to decide how things should be and why they could not be otherwise, thereby legitimating any decision they choose to make. The question of personal morality naturally tends to be obviated by this kind of reasoning. The crucial question which the father eventually poses is the effective one of hypothesising different courses other than that actually taken. By what authority does the son presume to judge ?

> I'm not going to answer your attacks and I won't have any stupid conjectures and criticisms. You're too young to judge anyone. (...) So in whose name do you make these accusations ? Who are you defending ? Those who are already long in their graves ? Leave the dead and the living in peace. And don't bother me either. (275)

The final position of the father is then one of rejection: he refuses to accept any challenge to account for his role in the early fifties. The matter of his own moral responsibility is not one he will countenance. Nor is this an area of which the researcher's sponsors have much awareness. In a letter from his superior, the content of the work he has undertaken and its further repercussions are secondary to its being evidence that their institution is fulfilling its political obligations:

> I think that we shall be able to correct and supplement this work later; the most important thing is for us to demonstrate that in our scientific activity we have taken the right direction. (309)

There is an obvious danger here that socialism may be reduced to

an act of lip service, that adherence may become only superficial. Coupled with the father's recalcitrance, the question of moral responsibility may be ignored. Nonetheless, this issue resonates throughout the work; the questions it raises are not merely rhetorical, as the father implies, but continue to remain valid at every stage of socialist development. Does the realisation of socialism in the postwar state necessarily involve the modification, if not surrender, of utopian ideas ? Furthermore the problem inherent in moral judgment for Marxists is unaltered: given that an absolute morality characteristic of Christianity, for instance, is insupportable, because suprahistorical, how can Marxists make moral evaluations of human actions ?

The historical context for these deliberations is not merely the Party's ability to withstand the trauma of the Stalinist period and its denunciation in 1956 but the more recent crisis of the workers' riots on the Baltic Coast at the end of 1970, which challenged the very basis of the legitimacy of Party rule - its leadership of the workers.

As I have suggested, these deliberations are somewhat belated. Moral responsibility was treated extensively by Leszek Kołakowski in numerous writings from 1956 onwards, and Adam Schaff dealt with the related issue of the place of the individual in Marxist thought in a series of works during the 1960s. These works were identified by the Party leadership as revisionist, but they represent the Party's main constructive thinking in relation to these issues. To an extent they were partially absorbed into and thus served to revitalise official discourse, where their suspect revisionist sources received no acknowledgement. The assumption implicit in this process was that Stalinist practice, which Kołakowski's writings in particular sought to denounce, would not return, and this became one of the tenets of official discourse. Its presence is marked in the criteria we defined above from *Nowe Drogi* in the statement that 'history is the construct of individuals', not an impersonal monolith.

In a series of articles entitled 'Responsibility and History' which he wrote after 1956, Kołakowski questioned the very concept of

historical inevitability. The danger with that concept, as he saw it, lay in the possibility that it could be exploited in justification of current immoral practices. It introduced moral relativism and diminished the human individual in the sense that none of his choices was properly his own, so that consequently he was deprived of responsibility for his own actions. Every historically inevitable event reduced man's creative role in the shaping of history, effectively rendering him less than fully human:

> Ethical socialism can be summarised as follows: socialism is the sum total of social values whose implementation is incumbent on the individual as a moral duty. It is a body of imperatives regarding human relations that an individual or a group sets itself. To what extent these values can be implemented is a question altogether distinct from that of whether one *ought* to work toward their realisation.(...) If we were convinced that socialism was impossible, our duty to fight for it would not dwindle or weaken; on the contrary, only then would our efforts acquire the halo of heroism that fully points up their moral worth.[63]

Kołakowski's reinterpretation meant that the individual's role in bringing about socialism could be restored. Since it was an area of human activity, the inevitable success of socialism could not be assumed; its values were still to be fought for. The different stress in this argument fell also on the element of choice, of necessary recognition by human society of the desirability of socialism. Only in this way could it be perceived as a 'moral duty'.

Kołakowski considered the question of morality in a later essay, where an absolute as well as a relativistic morality is expressly rejected by him. The morality of an action depended upon the individual's involvement in building socialism. The historical process could not sanction actions which contravened socialist values; the end of achieving socialism did not justify every means employed to achieve it:

> Real social involvement is moral involvement. For

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63 'The Opiate of the Demiurge', *Marxism and Beyond*, op. cit., pp. 136-7.

although a great political movement that seeks to shape the world in its own image is called to life by the world's needs, and though its fundamental direction is determined by the development of social relations, nevertheless each individual's participation in any specific form of political life is a moral act for which that individual is wholly responsible.

> No one is relieved of either positive or negative responsibility on the grounds that his actions formed only a fraction of a given historical process. [64]

The historical process cannot sanction actions which would not be acceptable if they contravened socialist values per se; the end of achieving socialism may not justify every means employed in doing so. Thus, for instance, the economic exploitation of one stratum of society by another is impermissible even if the former is the 'leading force in society'. On the individual level, unjust denunciations of other people under Stalinism are reprehensible, although that may have been the common practice of the time.

This furnishes an answer to the final questions posed by the father in the novel. It is in the name of socialism that the son demands an account of the father, since the historical process, even as it claims the lives of people, does not preclude a moral evaluation of those who participate in it. To repeat what Kołakowski wrote: 'each individual's participation in any form of political life is a moral act for which that individual is wholly responsible'. Significantly, this is not the overt conclusion of Hołuj's novel: the implication is softened, because the son is ultimately unable to provide an alternative vision to his father's.

Kołakowski supplies terms describing the level upon which the father-son debate is conducted. His father's stance is one of 'extreme realism':

> We call extreme realism an individual's belief in the fundamental inevitability of the historical process - with all its details - in the midst of which it is his lot to live, as well as the belief in the futility of all attempts to set any *moral* postulates against current reality. Realism thus understood brands all

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64 'Conscience and Social Progress', *Marxism and Beyond*, op. cit., p. 160.

> moralising about the existing world as sterile and utopian, and does so in the name of the demiurge of history which does not suffer moralists. [65]

The son adopts a diametrically opposed stance of 'utopianism' as a critic of his surrounding reality since it fails to measure up to his utopian ideal:

> On the other hand, utopianism in the sense we are using it consists in taking the attitude of a permanent critic of reality, in measuring reality exclusively against arbitrary yardsticks of good and evil. The sole protest of the utopian confronted by social reality is to assert that it is morally faulty. [66]

Neither, by implication, is satisfactory; in fact, both are condemned to perpetuating the status quo. Utopianism is ineffective because it has no real proposal for implementing change, whilst extreme realism denies any possibility of devising change. By the end of the novel, the son has moved some way towards a realistic stance, though this is not synonymous with absolving the father or accepting his view that things could not have been different. His final admission is of the improbability of ever knowing the full truth about Poturecki, so that what he has discovered must thereafter stand on its own terms. The issue of morality, likewise, cannot be settled decisively. What can be posited, however, is the place which the individual occupies in the socialist order.

The question of the individual's role in Marxism was one which excited great controversy during the 1960s, centred on two books by Adam Schaff, who served as the principal original Party thinker, particularly as Kolakowski veered ever more towards unorthodox positions.

It was on Adam Schaff's *Marxism and Existentialism* (1961) and *Marxism and the Individual* (1965) that the discussion within the Party focused. Schaff was concerned to answer the challenge of the appeal

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65 'The Opiate of the Demiurge', ibid., p. 142.

66 'The Opiate of the Demiurge', op. cit., p. 142.

which existentialism had begun to hold in Poland from 1956. Schaff saw existentialism's appeal as deriving from its willingness to address fundamental human questions, such as the purpose of existence, which Marxism had neglected. For existentialism, the individual was the only measure of value; his fate and experience constitute the central problem. The individual is isolated and tragic because of his senseless struggle with the irrational forces of the surrounding world. This concept, as Schaff illustrates, is internally contradictory: on the one hand, the individual was a 'sovereign figure', completely free and dependent only on his own will in the decisions he makes; on the other hand, he is defenceless and tragic by virtue of his hopeless struggle against a vindictive fate. [67]

Marxism's weakness lay in its apparently exclusive concentration on man as a communal being who *works*. The individual per se seemed to have little place in Marx's deliberations in the period of his mature writings. Józef Tischner located Schaff's contribution as a search for indications to the contrary precisely in these later works, as evidence that there were germs of a philosophy of the individual in Marx's thought. [68]

He found it in Marx's arguments in the sixth thesis of his *Theses on Feuerbach*: that 'the essence of the human being is not an abstraction residing within a particular individual. In reality, it is the entirety of his social relations'. As Schaff went on to elucidate: 'man as a "human individual" is the "entirety of social relations" in the sense that we may understand his genesis and development only in the social and historical context, that it is a product of social life'. [69] This interpretation was vigorously opposed by the Party leadership (as shown in chapter 2), which concluded that Schaff's treatment of existentialism was effectively a compromise with bourgeois ideology. Nonetheless the

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[67] *Marksizm i egzystencjalizm* (Warsaw, 1961), p. 23.

[68] *Polski kształt dialogu* (Paris, 1981), p. 60.

[69] *Marksizm i egzystencjalizm* op. cit., p. 26.

question of the relationship between the 'young Marx' and the 'mature Marx' remained an important one, as well as this concept of the individual unearthed by Schaff.

Echoes of this debate are visible in Hołuj's novel in a less complex and controversial form. In *Osoba*, the struggle lies between the individualism of Krzyżakowski, which takes the form of survivalism during the war, and the dedication of Poturecki to the collective - the Polish nation in the first instance, but ultimately that of the communistic ideal. Poturecki represents a consistent 'mature Marxist' outlook at all points of his development. His stance entails the denial of the old humanist outlook, understood as the supremacy of the individual, which is inadequate to meet the threat posed by the Nazis. The individual is able to resist this threat only in conjunction with others, whose activity has necessarily to be predicated upon a new social order - Communism - which will bring equality to all men.

Poturecki constantly stresses the primacy of the collective. It is precisely - in fact, solely - through the collective that the individual receives a guarantee of his rights and of his basic humanity. Under these conditions the individual cannot be isolated, because he makes common cause with other individuals in the face of the Nazi threat. The last factor represents an explicit criticism of Krzyżakowski's attitude, that the individual is existentially isolated. His position is essentially vulgar existentialism, for the individual is the supreme value, a tragic being who acts on his own volition but who is engaged in an absurd struggle with a hostile universe and is at the whim of outside forces beyond his control:

> "Lech", staring at the big map, at the red circles by the Volga near Stalingrad, strained his mind's eye to see the million-strong armies of corpses, but he could see nothing, only the signs on the map. How many millions had perished in those little circles of attack and defence ! (...) How was it that millions of individuals, of persons, obeyed orders, knowing that they could mean their extinction. Why ?
>
> At such moments a man has a desire to demonstrate that he is a separate being, an autonomous individual in the world. (287)

Krzyżakowski's stance is nonetheless vulgar in the sense that all he is concerned with is his own physical survival. Although he refers to others, Krzyżakowski is in the end merely self-centred: his individualism is without responsibility, hedonistic. This stance is patently inadequate in the face of the atrocities being carried out by the Nazis against the Jews and, indeed, the Poles. Given that he is a Pole, his attitude marks a complete abnegation of responsibility. The most resonant criticism in that regard is unwittingly furnished by Krzyżakowski himself. When Poturecki's group is concerned with an attempt to save Jews from the local ghetto, Krzyżakowski is making love with his girlfriend in a cornfield near the German airstrip where Jewish slave labour is employed:

> Does not everything in the end come down to existence ? Others perish, die, depart, but we are still here, we always exist, since "always" marks the time of our existence, beyond which there is nothing else. We exist and everything which serves our existence is good and blessed. (158)

Later, when he is arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned, he falls back to a position of abjuring all responsibility for his involvement in the struggle. He presents himself as someone whose naivety has been exploited by an unscrupulous Poturecki. In so doing, he reveals by default the inexorability of the moral choice which the war forces upon human beings and the overriding value of the collective which he otherwise denies. His stance is exposed as merely a posture of independence, for in reality, in those circumstances, he is not free.

> He had been drawn in by "Stern" and he had not even had any choice, since even before "Stern" came along there were events and anonymous lessons, the lessons of the collective to which he belonged, whether he liked it or not, and he was unable to free himself from them after September, from literature, from his upbringing, from the common feelings of his generation. "Stern" had simply exploited all of that. (172)

These ideas about the collective underpin the very structure of the

novel. The effect of the researcher's activity is to reconstruct the personality of Wacław Poturecki through the accounts of others and the few materials he himself left. It reflects, on the one hand, Polish patriotic sentiment, that Krzyżakowski cannot escape his national heritage; on the other, it exemplifies Marx's concept of how the individual is constituted, that he is 'the entirety of his social relations'. Poturecki exists primarily through his relations with others, through the effect he has had on his colleagues and by the force of his own theoretical writings, which can be seen to drive his practice. By these means he carries conviction in a manner inaccessible to Krzyżakowski, because his personality is unified in action. The different versions may deny his importance, the reasons behind his actions, but they largely concur on the central points of his story and on his character. He emerges as consistent in word and deed.

This consistency in word and deed, or rather the deed as the logical outcome of the word, is a key tenet of Polish Romanticism from Mickiewicz on. The literary protest by the poet against the enslavement of his people was a social obligation binding upon each individual. It did not in itself suffice, however, and needed to be supplemented by the political act - in Mickiewicz's case, the raising of a legion in Italy to fight against the Russians in the Crimean War. In this sense Poturecki is operating within the Polish Romantic tradition as the Communists appropriated it: a progressive stance based on a moral aversion to social injustice. The centrality of the collective, particularly to Mickiewicz's mature work, facilitated such an interpretation and was particularly convenient since it assumed the subordination of the individual to the higher cause of the nation.

These basic assumptions are consequently also evident in *Osoba* . What constitutes a certain novelty in this work, however, are the pseudo-Christian overtones evident in Poturecki's poetry and Dobry's paintings. The implications of this practice are what we shall now consider in relation to the place occupied by the Catholic Church in the modern socialist state.

Christianity in a Socialist State.

Relations with the Church relaxed during Gierek's rule, where a concerted effort was made by the Party to court the interest of the Church in playing an integrating role in public life. In return for concessions relating to the building of churches and property confiscated during the early 1950s, the Church was to refrain from attacks on the political establishment and was to play a key role in the formation of moral behaviour of society:

> In the course of talks we should underline that we see a broad range of problems where the Church can and should develop an active role. This includes such issues as: the attitude to work and public property, drunkenness, hooliganism and even abortion (we view legal abortion as a necessary evil). The Episcopate may approach the government with different problems which lie beyond the purely religious sphere on condition that it does not take them up in a way which implies public criticism of the state authorities.[70]

The Church was thus conceived as a force for social cohesion which could enhance the economic programme of the Party and theoretically guarantee its proper implementation. It is a prop for the secular state. This essentially subservient role accorded the Church in Gierek's Poland is borne out by *Osoba*. In relation to the war, the Church is not presented as a force of cohesion in Polish society; it is rather marginalised, a source of embarrassment for Communists, even where it plays a supportive role.[71] The clergy are largely absent from the narrative. It is not until the end that the Church impinges actively on the world of the novel, when Wanda Poturecka, having become acquainted with the Mother Superior of a local monastery, takes refuge there as a last resort.

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70 'Aktualne problemy normalizacji stosunków między państwem a kościołem', 'Załącznik do punktu 1 protokołu z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR z 23 lutego 1971 r.', in *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego, Grudzień 1970* (London, 1991), pp. 210-211.

71 As Jan Grygier says in his interview with the researcher: 'Then his [Poturecki's] wife Wanda went into hiding in the town - I'm ashamed to say, in the convent', (282).

Instead the novel presents a world in which Christian terms and mythology have been absorbed or rather stolen by the Party. This is evident even on the plane of the characters' names: Jan Dobry ('John Good'), Piotr Mańka ('Peter Left-Hand'), Lesław Krzyżakowski ('Cross' - the character responsible indirectly for the hero's death; or Krzyżak, a member of the Teutonic Order, which provided the greatest threat to Polish territorial integrity during the Middle Ages, i.e. the person responsible for Poturecki's death through his association with the Germans). Or indeed the constant parallels drawn consciously by the author between the members of this organisation and figures from the Bible, particularly relating to Jesus and his disciples.

Indicative of this is the description of the group by Jan Dobry as a kind of religious movement: 'Our Union did have something of a sect about it, but in a good sense - a feeling of brotherhood in a small group which wanted to save the world' (75). Much of their activity is characterised by generally millenarian overtones. This stems from the group's sense of isolation within the community they seek to serve - the Polish nation - and their concern that few share their perspective. Accordingly they possess an unshakeable sense that they alone are right and that the rest of society simply needs converting or to be 'shown the light'.

In the novel's present day, Jan Dobry's paintings are saturated with Christian iconography. Their distinctive feature is the transformation of abstract but obviously human characters into angels. This appears to be the only manner in which he can indicate the feeling of inspiration emanating from Poturecki, and which he explains in such terms to the researcher:

> He [Poturecki] wasn't a politician in the sense we mean today, perhaps he did have his head in the clouds a bit, but we needed that to avoid getting bogged down in the day-to-day business and to have some image of what we were aiming for, what was to be - not right after the war, but generally. *That gave us strength, gave us wings.* (75)

This practice of appropriating Christian iconography and terms typifies Poturecki above all. His poems consistently utilise and even overplay Christian imagery. These include otherwise fairly unremarkable references to the 'New Man' which socialism will create but which are located in the landscape of Christmas carols, as in his poem *Christmas Eve, 1939*:

> The meek and the small in the clamour of war
> will get up from their knees
> to take the empty place at table
> with fire
> and with torches they move into the blackness
> proclaiming
> that the new man is born
> And the newborn will not be murdered
> by those armed with sword and with gold.
> After the star which rose over the manger,
> after the torches which we are
> the fire of peace will come,
> and the mighty tremble.
> 25 XII 1939 (73)

Here Poturecki exploits the terms of typical Christmas carols - even directly lifting his last line from a carol ('moc truchleje') - to make what is ultimately a political point. An even more resonant example is his use of the terms 'Liberator' and 'Redeemer' in connection with the Red Army:

> *Song*
> Storm and fire play
> across the skies of our country,
> the earth steams
> with the fumes of blood.
> Take your rifle
> from the cradle of the forest,
> when the party of your days
> calls upon you.
>
> The Great Redeemer is coming
> with the purple emblem of insurrection
> through the war and the hell of slavery -

it is the Red Army

So make ready your weapon,
your heart and will.
O morning-star of revolt,
light up the world !
We shall be brothers
when peace rules the earth,
but this day let your enemy
meet his death.

The Great Liberator is coming ... (160-161)

This raises another question concerning the Christological elements in this poetry, namely the extent to which Hołuj treats these elements seriously as useful for political purposes, or whether they are meant to be indicative of Poturecki's occasional ideological oddity.

The negative elements of Biblical stories are also appropriated by the narrative. The figure of Judas, which attaches most clearly to Krzyżakowski for the researcher, raises the question of the existence of a traitor in the group, and whether this is endemic in all political organisations. The notion of fratricidal struggle (that is, divisions within the Party leadership and the attempt to oust Poturecki as First Secretary) is treated as the gravest offence. The true point of reference, although not admitted in the novel, is the Nowotko affair in 1942, when Nowotko, one of the leaders of the Communist underground movement, was assassinated by another member of the leadership, Bolesław Mołojec, in mysterious circumstances.

Finally, this parallel is evident in the apparent point of the researcher's task, which is to consider the legacy of the PWP thirty years after its foundation. The motivating force for him, however, is to accentuate the contribution of a hitherto little known figure, who represents qualities which have since disappeared from the established organisation, the utopian aspirations implicit in socialism of universal brotherhood and equality. In this sense the distinction seemingly drawn by the researcher is that between the 'established church' of the Polish

United Workers' Party, the practices of which after coming to power have, for the researcher, corrupted it irrevocably, and its wartime antecedents which are still pure as far as the exercise of power is concerned. Objectively he is nevertheless creating a kind of testament for that 'established church' as a means of spreading the 'good news' of socialism and extending its authority.

The Myth of National Unity.

In any work purporting to deal with the Second World War one of the most important taboos which could not be breached was the myth of national unity. It could not be admitted that Poles collaborated to any extent with the Nazis. The Party might seek, for instance, to diminish the role of the Church during the war, but it never suggested that it was anything other than a focus of resistance to the Nazi occupation. The intention behind this approach was to absolve the Polish nation of any responsibility for the failure of the prewar state. Poles remained morally pure, if at times misguided; this is so that they could be credited with the free will and political wisdom to accept the new order - patriotism could appear to be in conflict with the correct political choice.

Consequently characters who might constitute a dissenting view from this myth are toned down. Thus, the Polish policeman, Jurgowski, who obviously did work on a day-to-day basis with the Germans, is remembered only for his aid to Poturecki's group in their attempt to liberate Jews from the town ghetto. The members of the non-communist underground who attack Poturecki are juveniles and he punishes them for their temerity by belting them like schoolchildren. The more serious doubts relate to Krzyżakowski and, above all, his girlfriend Maria Dohm.

Maria Dohm's influence on Krzyżakowski is seen in an exclusively negative light. She encourages his survivalist instincts and the attitude that the war is not their concern. After his first release from prison she makes clear her own stance with regard to the war:

> Say what you like, what is important is that we are alive. I

hate everyone who makes that difficult for us... (181)

Her concern is only for him. Accordingly, whilst he feels residual guilt about the prospect of non-involvement, owing to his education and the 'feelings of his generation', she is unaffected by such qualms. At times she is - on Krzyżakowski's own admission - barely human; her desire to receive sexual gratification is paramount, and she descends to the animal level:

> She had behaved just like that when Cena's unit had left for the woods, before there'd been a mass search of the houses, when her uncle, a ZWZ officer, had been seized, and even earlier, when the Jews from the Castle were to have escaped. She had shouted and sworn, had knelt in front of him and had crudely encouraged him to take her to bed, and then in bed she had behaved like a whore. (169)

This indifference to the collective is thus presented as a moral failure which could extend to informing the Germans about Poturecki's group, particularly in situations where her boyfriend is likely to be endangered. It is one of the anomalies of Krzyżakowski's account that, although he shows Maria to be morally ambiguous, he reveals no awareness on this score in his narrative. His ambivalent behaviour towards the researcher, making available his autobiographical novel yet refusing to answer further questions deriving from his account, may indicate his belated recognition of the truth about Maria. At any rate he performs inadequately the duties expected of him as a Pole - dissonance arises between his words and his actual deeds.

Within the ideological matrix of the novel Maria Dohm represents a threat to the myth of Polish unity in the face of Nazi aggression which Hołuj, in line with official propaganda, was keen to promote. To counter this potential subversion of the official line, Maria's credentials as a Pole are questioned at several points. Her sense of identification with the Germans since her family was originally from Austria, and her own doubts as to whether she is Polish, enable her to function as a kind of scapegoat - the Pole to whom blame can be imputed since she is in

essence a non-Pole.

> I've no intention of dying for others. I know what you're going to say: I'm a Pole. I don't know, I suppose I am... (194)

Inevitably she comes under suspicion as the person responsible for the final disintegration of the group. Krzyżakowski's blameworthiness lies in his submission to her will, which marks his failure to be fully Polish (self-sacrificing) as circumstances require. Nonetheless, incriminating Maria, which simultaneously exonerates Krzyżakowski, allows Hołuj to maintain the myth of national unity intact.

The real context for this myth was not the war, but the aftermath of the workers' riots in 1970-71. The war serves as a paradigm of the political unity which prevails in the current climate. The intention of Hołuj's novel was not then to evoke anti-German sentiments, as was part of the purpose of literature under Gomułka, where the anti-German tone reflected state fears of German revanchism. In the Gierek era, after the Treaty of 1972 had been signed, neutralising such fears, the focus of the myth was not external threat but recent internal disunity between the Party and other sections of society.

The promotion of this myth is assisted by the time scale covered in the novel regarding the war. Poturecki's life ends before the gravest issues emerge which threaten the particular national unity that the Communists were seeking to promote. By dying in early 1943, before the discovery of the bodies in Katyń forest and the Warsaw Uprising, Poturecki allows the focus of the novel to shift immediately to the postwar period. His figure is not qualified by those events; he can represent a morally purer socialist example by virtue of his non-involvement.

This is a kind of pre-censorship of the historical events which can be dealt with in the novel, imposed by the competition's stated criteria of novels about the foundation of the PWP. Nevertheless the novel is obliged to reflect at least some of the true historical conditions if it is to

appear credible, specifically Soviet aggression in the early months of the war. An equally fundamental problem is that presented by the portrayal of Gomułka's role in recent years, given that he, more than any other person, was responsible for rupturing the unity between Party and nation propagated in official discourse. It is these issues that demonstrate the degree of censorship employed by the Party in relation to its own history.

The Censorship of History in *Osoba*.

(i) Polish-Soviet Relations

The treatment of the more controversial aspects of relations with the Soviet Union was always necessarily oblique. The fact that the Soviet invasion in 1939 is alluded to by Krzyżakowski is highly significant in the light of the reservations which the reader is invited to hold increasingly throughout the novel about his reliability of his account. Moreover Krzyżakowski's freely admitted espousal of artistic licence begs the question of whether the exchanges he describes are not being described for their inherent artistic drama alone. The possibility exists that his version may be disqualified in retrospect by the reader. An extract from his autobiographical novel allegedly depicts Poturecki's agony of doubt in September 1939 as he learns from Dobry that the Red Army has invaded:

> Now, however, he knew that faith was not enough; *in any case his faith had been shaken by the Berlin-Moscow pact.* But he still went on. Let Dobry explain it all. But Jan Dobry could only speak for himself. *Was the dissolution of the Polish Communist Party by the Comintern only a trick ? No, it wasn't, such things weren't done for tactical reasons.* (56-58)

> 'So you didn't know,' said Dobry, 'that *the Red Army had crossed the border and is occupying the Eastern territories.* The radio announced it.'
>
> "Stern" turned pale; he knew now what Dobry meant but he couldn't take it in: *Dobry's voice gave no indication that the Red Army had moved against the fascists.* So what had happened ?

> He was afraid to ask, he pretended that he wasn't surprised, that he knew what was going on. (58) [My italics - JMB]

The critical passages in these examples refer to the fact of the cooperation between Germany and Russia which led to the invasion of Eastern Poland in 1939 by the Soviet Army, in accordance with the provisions of the secret clause of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty of August 1939. The sense of confusion in Polish Communists at the news of the German-Soviet pact in August 1939 had necessarily shaken any faith in the idea of political hostility between the Nazis and Soviets. This was compounded by the idea that the two powers could cooperate in the partition of Poland, which was inconceivable to Polish Communists according to their understanding of the utterly alien nature of their ideologies. The fact of invasion raised the question of a conscious strategy being adopted by a Bolshevik Party aiming at the destruction of the Poles: firstly it had dissolved the Polish Communist Party, then it had connived in the removal of Poland from the map of Europe.

The political opportunism which informed the Soviet decision was an uncomfortable fact for the Party, and the convolutions it underwent in an attempt to justify this decision did not disguise the act of aggression against what was now an ally.[72] The standard justifications tended to stress the Soviets' foresight in invading Poland in readiness for an invasion by German forces which they saw as inevitable, but this is at least doubtful in terms of the historical evidence. More critically, it begs the question of whether Polish interests should have been subordinate to Soviet rationale.

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[72] The general instructions for censors in the 1970s concerning information about the fate of the prewar Polish Communist Party indicate the continuing political sensitivity of the question:

'The evaluation of materials dealing with the fate of Polish Communists after the dissolution of the Polish Communist Party is unquestionably a complicated and difficult task. ... Each text taking up the complex and painful problems associated with the history of the Polish Communist Party should be examined individually, and a decision must take into account the character of the publication, the type of material, the author, the level of the potential audience, the time of publication, etc. (*Instructional Materials*, No. 1, February 1974)', Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship*, op. cit., p. 338.

Piotr Mańka, who is far more orthodox, accepts the Soviet rationale without qualification, thus confirming the fact of the Soviet attack. He is also more credible in his claims to have objective confirmation - a meeting in 1939 - of greater access to Poturecki's thoughts, even if he is prejudiced against him:

> Poturecki provocatively reminded us of the decision of the Comintern about the dissolution of the Polish Communist Party. I say it smelt like a provocation because Poturecki took no stance on the facts, he simply stated them. Worse still, he said bluntly that he did not understand the German-Soviet pact and its consequences, in a word he did not trust Stalin's leadership, although, as I freely admit, he counted very much on the Soviets coming out against the Germans. In Poturecki's opinion, our organisation had to base its programme on two axioms: the Nazi attack on Poland was only a prelude to an attack by fascist imperialism on the whole of Europe, and fascism would lose because it must also attack the Soviet Union. Second, the entry of the USSR into the war would cause a socialist revolution throughout the whole of Europe... . (70-71)

Ambiguity remains, however, regarding the true intentions of the Soviets. This is evident also in the elusiveness of the character Stefanik, who seems to be working for the Soviets. The vehemence of the Stalinist attacks on the figure of Poturecki later can be explained only by their instigation by Soviet advisors.

The general unease about the Soviets is not then entirely assuaged by the conviction that the Soviet Union was the source of Polish salvation. However, the positive character of declarations about Poland's great ally conform to the general drift of Gierek's policy in the 1970s, which was to insist upon the stability of relations between the countries whilst following more unorthodox policies in relation to the Catholic Church and the economy. It was Gomułka who 'set the trend' in both these spheres, and since he was now in disfavour the question arose of how he might be portrayed in fictional works. This is the second aspect of the censorship of history.

(ii) Poland without Gomułka.

Kruczek: Nobody wants to get even with Gomułka.

Gomułka: The celebrations of the thirtieth anniversary of the PWP are soon going to be with us - what are you going to do about Gomułka ?

Szydlak: We'll be objective about him. Wait till the celebrations take place, and you'll see for yourself.[73]

As the above exchange makes plain, Gomułka was concerned about his prospective treatment on the anniversary of the PWP's foundation, particularly that the importance of his contribution would be acknowledged. His formulation of the Polish road to socialism heralded a turning point in political practice in Poland, but the man himself had ruined his own reputation and compromised party authority by sanctioning armed attacks on workers in Gdańsk and other Baltic ports. Thus, according to the official line, having saved the Party in October 1956, he very nearly wrecked it in 1970.

The defining atmosphere of his period in office is largely unrepresented in the novel, unlike the fifties and the early seventies. This undoubtedly reflects the fact that a comprehensive official version had not yet been devised; in addition, permitting too explicit an attack on the figure of Gomułka would implicate members of the current ruling elite. As Szydlak states, the Politburo wanted to take an objective attitude towards Gomułka, which entailed a proper evaluation of his achievements but would also be qualified by criticism of the increasingly autocratic manner of his last years in office.

In the main, Poturecki tends to be identified with Gomułka in a positive sense, that is with respect to the idea of the Polish road, which remained the general direction approved by the Party leadership. In Stefanik's account, Poturecki is credited with extraordinary prescience, for his political outlook in 1943 was that of Polish socialism in 1956:

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[73] 'Notatka z rozmowy przedstawicieli Biura Politycznego KC PZPR z Władysławem Gomułką w dniu 3 września 1971 r.', in *Tajne dokumenty* ..., op. cit., p. 314.

And so that you don't go back to the question of Wacław's views, I'll tell you, and you can believe me or not, that when he lived with me he was, if I can put it like this, at the 1956 stage, you see. (314)

This is reinforced by the manner of his rehabilitation after 1956, although the concept of the Polish road to socialism had become the official party line. In the novel's present time, the causes of the 1970 crisis are not indicated. The necessity of change is assumed, but recent events are rapidly reduced to a mere backdrop for the discovery of Jan Dobry and the story of Poturecki:

> Jan Dobry had never exhibited his work before and perhaps we should never have known about it, were it not for the tragic events of the winter of 1970 on the Baltic Coast (...) the workers had returned to work, but there was a certain sense of anxiety in the air and its results could be seen everywhere... (5)

The equally problematic events of 1968 are even more concealed in the narrative. Kromer seems to allude to disaffection with Gomułka in an otherwise cryptic remark where he appears to lament the fact that he followed Poturecki again after October 1956:

> In 1956 I followed in his [Poturecki's] footsteps again; although he had been dead for a long time, he was still present in me. Unfortunately. (120)

The force of 'unfortunately' can be understood as a reference to the eventual outcome of pursuing what Poturecki symbolised, a predominantly Polish socialism. By the time he publishes his account of the foundation of the PWP, Kromer is in London, presumably driven there by the excesses of the anti-semitic campaign of 1967-68, which Gomułka set in motion and condoned.

Recent history tended rather to obscure the positive aspects - from the Party's standpoint - of Gomułka's rule. Consequently , although he is present in the narrative, he resembles a cipher. The objective treatment which the Party promised him in the celebration of the PWP's foundation amounts merely to a formal acknowledgement that he was of

central importance in postwar history. Instead, in the novel, his role and experience are largely transferred to Poturecki. The latter serves as an acceptable surrogate, because he prefigured what was best about Gomułka but is unassociated with recent events and thus facilitates the continuity of the Polish road into the present.

Here the novel demonstrates its implicit ideological purpose of justifying the current elite's assumption of power: as with all such turning points in Communist regimes, the notion of change is subordinate to that of continuity. Criticism of preceding First Secretaries is limited by respect for the office itself, and the transfer of power must be seen to be seamless, at least in written accounts. The fact of that power, however, is unchanging.

'Truth' in *Osoba*: the Implications of the Novel's Structure.

The most striking feature of the work is the technique of fragmentation employed by the author: it involves the juxtaposition of very diverse materials from different parties throughout the period right up to the present day of the novel, 1972. At that point the researcher strives to order the materials in a meaningful way, which is only his version of events.

At all points Hołuj appears to be suggesting the relative nature of truth. None of the versions, not even the researcher's own - despite his original pretensions - can provide the absolute truth about Poturecki. The difficulties of interpretation stem from the variety and quantity of incomplete versions, through which the researcher (and the reader) has to delve. There are, of course, versions which are more credible and witnesses who are aware of the necessarily partial nature of their ability to furnish evidence. At bottom, nonetheless, there is a political slant here, evident particularly in relation to Krzyżakowski, and the credibility of characters' testimony is to some extent identified in political terms. This has political implications beyond the framework of the novel, namely the desire to absolve those who might be considered responsible from blame and to cast doubt upon the reliability of certain

paths taken by individuals after 1956.

The implication of the novel is that Poturecki's posthumous treatment is therefore also a means of viewing the historical changes in postwar Poland. There are nevertheless profound ideological repercussions resulting from the adoption of what is essentially an open-ended structure. The novel presents a panorama of angles from which history may be viewed, ranging from the primarily fictional to those which are intended to be the most scrupulously objective. Further, it reveals the stages of the process, whereby the Party promotes or excises from its history outstanding individuals. In this way even objective sources are revealed to be biassed in relation to the very same materials. The most illustrative example is seen in the accounts of how contacts were established between Poturecki's group and the organisation in Cracow:

"Contact with Cracow": *The Cracow Region during the War*

(a) Cracow, KW PPR 1947

In May 1941 Wacław Poturecki, "Stern", made contact with the left-wing "Liberation" group in Cracow and the editorial board of the newspaper "Revolt" published by the group of former Polish communists. Both organisations, whilst maintaining their separate status, established a common programme and means of communication.

(b) Cracow, KW PZPR 1952

At a meeting in the flat of the tailor Karasiński one of the comrades, the editor of "Revolt", S. Rydzel, pseudonym "Kowalski"-"Młot" introduced Wacław Poturecki, a teacher and journalist, who had ties before the war with the social left and who suggested merging our organisations in one union. The motion was rejected, since Poturecki's programme could not be reconciled with the Stalinist line and the principles of internationalism. Only "Hammer" voted for the merger.

(c) Cracow, Wydawnictwo Literackie 1962

The first man to open our eyes to the possibility of a Polish

> road to socialism was Wacław Poturecki, who appeared in Cracow in late spring 1941. He made a great impression on us, and the programme he brought with him we put into the sixth number of our "Revolt". (141-143)

Example (a) above, from shortly after the war but before the imposition of Stalinist structures on Polish society, functions simply as a statement of fact and thus remains the most objective of the three. Example (b) from the height of Stalinism denies the existence of any common link between the Cracow organisation and that in Górniki, coinciding with the censorship of the existence of any independent national organisation which did not spring into being at Stalin's direct behest. The third example (c) more than restores the balance in favour of Poturecki. At this point, the official line is the Polish road, and Poturecki acquires significance by being reinterpreted as a very early exponent of this outlook, and in this serves as confirmation of the correctness of the Gomułka line.

The implication of these examples is that the Party will now be able to deal more objectively with its past, without regarding it as necessary to eliminate figures from the past who do not conform to the current political line. However, revealing 'objective' sources to be partial severely qualifies the certainty of this conclusion. It introduces relativism, or temporality, into the Party's history: the present is merely another stage of development, the current leadership only temporary.

This may well be objectively true, and a correct statement of the dialectical process through history, but it is of little consolation to that leadership. The novel which is supposed to serve as a standard justification of Party rule in its current form nonetheless exposes the relative nature of that rule. Hołuj's achievement remains ambiguous. The fact that the blank spaces of the past cannot be rendered exposes the express intention to bear witness to the complexity of history as a mystification hatched by the author and censor.

Truth is complex is the final impression which the novel leaves. But truth needs to be fully shown before the reader can concede the

justness of that assertion. The consequence of Hołuj's approach is to obscure events. The purpose behind it may not differ from that expressed by Stanisław Majchrowski's assessment of Hołuj's earlier novel, *Drzewo rodzi owoc* (1963), that 'only an actively committed stance, on the side of the forces embodied in the Polish Workers' Party, was and remains (...) the proper civic stance'.[74] Undoubtedly the maturity which the researcher attains in the course of his search for the truth about Poturecki represents the fullest manifestation of that 'actively committed stance'. Despite the inaccessibility of that absolute truth, he will exhibit the 'proper civic stance'. The researcher's words in his final exchange with Stefanik are meant to be a definitive statement:

> 'I suppose we'll never really know the truth now. ...Do you want to add anything ?'
>
> 'No, that's all I have to say.' (317)

In the final analysis, as usual, this left much unsaid. But the structure of *Osoba* works against any such simple reading of characters' statements. The time when those statements are made is seen to be at least as important as what is actually said.[75] In this sense Hołuj builds into his narrative the institutional as well as the personal factors which shape and ultimately restrict the Party's discourse about its own history. By far the most important was the institution of censorship, a point he made and which was inevitably censored in an interview in *Polityka* in 1972 (italics mark the censor's interventions):

> we have heard it said that, *if after every change in our Party we erase the previous era, we shall be threatened not only with contempt for the revolutionary tradition*, but also with a loss of faith by the Party, by society and especially by the young in

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74 *Między słowem a rzeczywistością* op. cit., p. 248.

75 A point taken by Kazimierz Koźniewski in his review, where he proposed that the novel should be retitled 'Daty' ('Dates'), *Polityka*, 1974 (20), p. 10.

history itself.[76]

Hołuj felt this most keenly in the case of the recent events of 1968 and 1970, events which could barely ripple the surface of his narrative. Rather than the simple celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the PWP's foundation intended by the competition's organisers, the very open-endedness of the novel was capable of inducing radical doubt.[77]

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[76] AAN, GUKP II/1099, 'Przeglądy ingerencji 1971-1972', p. 74.

[77] As it did momentarily in the case of one of its reviewers, Sławomir Kowalewski: 'the figure of Poturecki is "unknowable" on the basis of subjective accounts, whereas in the particular ideological perspective he appears quite unambiguous'. (In other words, the competition's brief provided the ultimate criterion for judging the novel's purpose.) 'Polityka wartości', *Miesięcznik Literacki*, 1974 (11), pp. 125-126.

CHAPTER FIVE

'A Question of Reality'

Zbigniew Safian, *Holy Cross Street* (1980)

Józef Łoziński, *Hunting Scenes from Lower Silesia* (1985)

> ...you can find similarities in the regimes of Gierek, of Haile Selassie, and of the Shah; because all such regimes finish up corrupt. It is a very simple mechanism: in the authoritarian system, few people have real political power, sometimes only the secretary general or the emperor, but there are lots of ambitious people around. These people can't get *political* power, so they try to get power through material means, the courtier becomes economically powerful. It's a sort of equivalent, a sublimation.
>
> Ryszard Kapuściński.[1]

The question of the reality, or rather unreality,[2] of modern Polish life under socialist rule became a major concern in critical debates towards the end of the 1970s. The central issue was invariably the disinformation strategy of the 'propaganda of success', which enforced a positive image of Polish life in direct contradiction of the experience of the majority of the population. Thus, official corruption, the growing economic crisis and resultant consumer and industrial shortages went unreported in the official media and, worse, uncontrolled.

The Party leadership was naturally aware of the situation, receiving reports from the censorship office which indicated the universal disaffection of the intelligentsia. The report of its own loyal opposition (subsequently censored), the 'Experience and the Future' group set up with Stefan Olszowski's support in November 1978, made only too clear the general disaffection created by the mendacity of the official channels of information. The overwhelming conclusion was

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1 'Images and Revolutions': Ryszard Kapuściński talking with Chris Miller, *Edinburgh Review*, 1991 (85), p. 87.

2 Key titles include Kazimierz Brandys's *Nierzeczywistość* (*Areality*, 1978) and Barańczak's article 'Fasada i tyły' (published in *Zapis* in 1977).

that nothing could be trusted and that everything was sham:

> The playing of this game [of appearances - JMB]...has become so widespread that no one, not even the highest levels of government, can distinguish any longer between what is real and what is unreal. [3]

Although in 1978 the Party had moved to legislate against people who provided false information about industrial output, it proved generally incapable of acting decisively against the erosion of its own credibility. Undoubtedly the reasons lay in the nature of the compromises it had made between East and West - dependent on Western credits while at the same time paying obeisance to socialist ideology - and in the fact that it was trapped in its own ideological contradictions. In the cultural field this entailed tolerating the existence of an underground opposition whilst striving to curb its increasing influence. In official channels there was a drift towards loosening some of the restrictions to enable key issues to be aired.[4]

A renowned example in literature was Ryszard Kapuściński's *Cezarz* (*The Emperor*, 1978), an account of the last years of Haile Selassie. The work details very precisely the unreality enveloping the Ethiopian court, but Kapuściński himself made clear that the features described had wider relevance and could apply to other regimes.[5] The crucial factor was the restriction of 'real political power' to very few people within the authoritarian system. As a result, ambitious people then begin to search for substitute forms of power, particularly through the accumulation of material wealth, exploiting their public positions for

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[3] Quoted from Neal Ascherson's *The Polish August*, op. cit., p. 126.

[4] For example, Church-State relations following the election and visit to Poland of Pope John Paul II. One of the GUKP's so-called rulings 'on an exceptional basis' concerned the eminent journalist Stefan Bratkowski's article 'Czas pytań', in *Kultura* in November 1979. Instruction no. 49, 13 November 1979 in: AAN, GUKP II/2279, 'Informacje instruktażowe 1979 (31-53, 10 VII-23 XI)', p. 171.

[5] Reviews drawing specific parallels with Poland, however, were removed by the GUKP: *Literatura polska po 1939 roku, tom 1* (Warsaw, 1989), p. 39.

personal gain.[6] The implication of *The Emperor* was that this process was inevitable, endemic in the kinds of systems that lacked an effective means of public control. The crux lay in public access to information, in which area the 'second circulation' had begun to challenge to a small but significant extent the monopoly enjoyed by the state.

The debate was one which carried across the political divide between loyalists and oppositionists, between the official media and the underground. Stanisław Barańczak's statement of the reason for the creation of *Zapis* as deriving from 'the conviction that it is not only the right but the duty of a writer to *record*, to preserve in written form, everything which for him has the value of truth'[7] had lain behind loyalist protests against an over-rigid Party control of culture since the 1950s. The rise of the 'second circulation' was a sign that the younger generation in particular refused to continue the historical compromise that had prevailed since then in literary affairs.

The existence of an uncensored publishing network was to produce a gradual relaxation in censorship stringency towards works that appeared in official channels, as I have shown in chapter 2. The other consequence was the perception at least on the part of loyalists, and in some measure within the Cultural Department also, of the need for the supply of information to non-involved and loyalist writers to be increased. This relatively limited practice had been dictated by the realisation that, if the Party did not put across its version, then the underground would ensure that its own triumphed.

A key moment in this change in approach had been the underground publication of *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* in 1978.[8] From that point it became de facto Party policy to compete with

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[6] In 1970s' Poland the major symbol of such corruption was the head of state television, Maciej Szczepański, expelled from the Party in April 1980.

[7] *Etyka i poetyka* (Paris, 1979), p. 227.

[8] *Czarna księga cenzury polskiej* (London, 1977) - the censorship notes smuggled to Sweden in October 1977 by censor Tomasz Strzyżewski. Extracts were published by KOR in its 'Biuletyn Informacyjny' in November 1977 and later by the 'second circulation' in 1978.

the opposition in the provision of information on what it regarded as controversial topics. Such was the case with the extended ZLP plenum in Radziejowice in November 1979, where Party representatives briefed the hall beforehand about the alleged maltreatment suffered by Zbigniew Załuski at the hands of the police:

> ..these [opposition] voices did not find any great response, which was evident both in the manner in which the speeches were received and the absence of applause from the hall. This was a consequence of the great discipline of the Party team and its allies and, what is particularly deserving of emphasis, of the fact that a large number of those present had been well prepared with information beforehand so that these speeches did not surprise them, the facts being known to them and having been already explained.[9]

If the Party was to gain greater support, then it had to trust more people. This was the subtext of Cultural Department documents at this stage:

> The experience gained in this work indicates the great effectiveness of providing constant and complete information to large groups of ZLP members on the current political situation, particularly in culture, as the Party sees it. This will permit matters introduced by the Party to become their own concerns, on which they not only have their own opinion but are able to defend it logically and factually. [10]

These passages also reflect the fact that ideology was no longer the issue at stake. Tactical considerations occupied most of the authorities' attention, so that while the phraseology of Communist ideology might continue to be preserved in official discourse, it ceased to play any serious active role beyond signifying the Party's legitimacy to rule. In daily affairs the Party viewed issues in much more material terms, certainly throughout the seventies as a whole, yet even more so

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[9] 'Notatka o przebiegu rozszerzonego plenum ZG ZLP w dn. 30 XI 1979 w Radziejowicach', AAN, KC PZPR, paczka 356, 945/137, teczka 5, pp. 8-9. In fact, Załuski had been guilty of drunken and disorderly behaviour.

[10] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

towards the end of the decade. In effect, this meant an attempt to buy support amongst writers through the practice of preferential treatment:

> In this area we should adopt a clearer and more consistent policy. In the first instance this concerns the treatment of writers, including non-Party writers, who are well-disposed towards us. That feeling should be reciprocated in a more pronounced way by means of better and more frequent information about the country's problems, by paying greater respect to their opinions and by more numerous and direct contacts with representatives of the authorities, preferential treatment in publishing houses, in reference to grants and trips abroad, and also with regard to flats. In connection with this there should be a fairly precise definition of who is who and against whom we may have real grounds for complaint. It seems that in the current situation, where we have to deal with an overtly hostile opposition which questions the fundamental principles of our system, the Party's leading role and our international alliances, we should not treat people negatively just because they have criticised some or other fragment of the practical implementation of Party policy.[11]

The necessity outlined above of establishing more sensitive criteria for judging opposition is a recurrent feature of Party discourse after 1959, although there is little evidence that it was ever realised. Party treatment tended towards heavy-handedness even at the best of times. By mid-1980 this policy is suddenly acknowledged by the Party to have been a complete failure. The exclusive concern with pragmatic solutions appears to have been misconceived. In line with the diagnosis of the 'Experience and the Future' group, the major problem was not economic or material but rather a question of civil liberties. The Cultural Department's accounts of satisfactory conditions at Union assemblies during the decade proved in the end to be as fictitious as the official economic figures.

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11 'Niektóre wnioski wypływające z przebiegu XIX Zjazdu Związku Literatów Polskich oraz z sytuacji w środowisku pisarskim', AAN, KC PZPR, Kancelaria Sekretariatu, paczka 331, 2041/106, 'Literaci' (probably 1978), p. 1.

Literature and Social Reality

When all is said and done, our contemporary literature is basically polite to an excessive degree. Each political change really provokes only new attempts at viewing the history of the Second World War, and is concerned not with our interpretation of the present but of the past. Where a novel interprets the present, it is polite on the whole because the writer is rarely interested in evaluating events, only in showing the "way people live". [12]

Zbigniew Safian

The criticism expressed above by Safian echoes standard Party criticism of the failings of contemporary prose. The 'politeness' he detects in literature is not determined by the censorship office, which prejudges any 'evaluation of events', but is merely a defect in writers themselves - a characteristic misrepresentation practised by the political authorities.[13]

His observation that each political change in the country provided an occasion only for writers to adopt a different perspective on the Second World War is supported by other 'committed' works, such as Hołuj's *A Personality* and Bratny's *Happy, Tortured*, where the continuing relevance of the heroes' wartime values is questioned. It is a comment pertinent to Safian's own works *Zanim przemówią* (1961) and *Potem nastąpi cisza* (1963),[14] whose focus was the struggle for power in 1944, as well as to the renowned television serial *Stawka większa niż życie* about the Soviet superspy Captain Kloss, first transmitted in the late 1960s, which he co-wrote with Andrzej Szypulski under the joint pseudonym of Andrzej Zbych. However, his two late 1970s' novels, *Pole Niczyje* (1976) and *Ulica Świętokrzyska*

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[12] Interview with Zbigniew Taranienko, Nov 1972: 'Człowiek wobec historii' in *Rozmowy z pisarzami*, op. cit., p. 384.

[13] Though also practised by Kornhauser and Zagajewski in *Świat nieprzedstawiony* (see chapter 2).

[14] *Before They Speak* and *And Then There will be Silence.*

(1980),[15] belie this assessment in that they deal respectively with the last year of the Sanacja regime and the 1970s without offering a new perspective on the war.

The first novel is a historical novel, in that it deals with a period which had drawn to a close, whilst the latter defines the new order as established from the late forties, and, as such, justification for the Communist regime falls not on the defeat of Nazism but on the terms which the regime had defined after the war. What links them is a similarity of theme: the attitudes to social reality of those in authority and their capacity for change.

In *Pole niczyje*, Safian analyses the world in which the Sanacja authorities lived in 1938 immediately prior to its collapse. The events he describes, which revolve around a planned coup d'etat in late 1938 or early 1939, have a certain basis in reality.[16] Safian's main concern, though, was with the situation's general application, as he admitted:

> I deal with the problems of power and helplessness in the face of threat; it is the search for the source of that helplessness which actually interests me most of all. [17]

In *Pole niczyje*, this helplessness stemmed from the sense of unreality which surrounded the authorities. Safian was thus diagnosing a general condition in the same way that Kapuściński had done in *Cesarz*, a lack of reality as one of the characteristics of a particular form of power:

> *The creation of a false reality is the essence of that power*: it is precisely in such a world that Napierała and the whole of the "Intelligence Department" live. They scrupulously remove

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[15] *No Man's Land* and *Holy Cross Street*. Holy Cross Street is a real street in the centre of Warsaw with a number of ministerial buildings and the National Bank.

[16] The central figure, Wacław Jan, a right-wing politician thinking about a coup and former member of Piłsudski's Legions, was modelled on the real politician and former prime minister Walery Sławek. There were indications that such a coup was being planned, although nothing materialised. The novel is not a roman à clef, however, since the real Sławek is in the background.

[17] 'Człowiek wobec historii', op. cit., p. 384.

anything which might undermine their conceptions. *That reality, made up of illusions and incomplete or wrong information, must imply mistakes, they become inevitable. And it could not develop otherwise, since too many people are connected with the mechanism of making mistakes.* [My italics] [18]

The mechanisms of power and the isolation of the ruling elite from social reality also provide the focus of interest in *Ulica Świętokrzyska.*[19] The question of the 'creation of a false reality' identifies the concerns of Safian's novels as closely linked with the debates about the political system at the end of the 1970s in both unofficial and official channels.

The manipulation of reality lay at the heart of these deliberations. For the opposition this was a practice which had to be resisted, whereas for a loyalist like Safian the stress fell upon rectifying the faults within the system and saving it from collapse. The assumption shared by both Safian and the underground was that these mechanisms could develop a logic of their own. The falsification of reality would lead to the acceptance of that falsification as the truth, and generate a 'false consciousness' - the identification of 'subjective imaginings' with actuality.

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[18] Ibid., pp. 388-389.

[19] At the time of this conversation with Taranienko (March 1978), Safian said that he was finishing a contemporary novel (presumably *Holy Cross Street*) which dealt with similar issues. Ibid., p. 393.

'This Dance on the Edge of Honesty and Appearance':

Zbigniew Safian's *Ulica Świętokrzyska* (1980)[20]

Ulica Świętokrzyska is the final work in this analysis that was written before the rise of Solidarity.[21] It is set in the mid-seventies and constitutes a panorama of the bureaucratic and artistic elite of the time. In this sense, the work is imbued with the assumption of the Party's monopoly on power; the myth of unity under the Party remains unchallenged. After August 1980 this was no longer the case, in view of the mass civic opposition to Party rule.

The present time in the novel is unclear, although it seems to be in the mid-1970s. If the reader associates Mieczysław in all his frosty intransigence with Gomułka, then Osada is the archetypal manager 'coming good' in the Gierek years after 1971.[22] However, the time has been positioned as late as the end of that decade,[23] which in effect testifies to the interweaving of issues from different points during the 1970s.[24]

A sense of unreality seems to envelop most of them, but particularly the principal figure, Tadeusz Osada, through whose consciousness the narrative is presented (with the exception of a single diversion into the thoughts of Michał Witkowski). Osada, a Party member who is now beginning to experience uncertainty about his own position and the course taken by the Party in present-day Poland, can

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20 *Ulica Świętokrzyska* (Warsaw, 1980).

21 Its incubation period (the time between being passed by the GUKP and its publication in November 1980, when Solidarity was registered) spanned the seven month period after the PUWP's VIII Congress in April 1980, the final opportunity for the Party to reform itself of its own accord.

22 The last specific date is 1957, when Małecki seeks rehabilitation.

23 By Feliks Fornalczyk, op. cit.

24 Even so, there is no mention of the constitutional amendments of late 1975 which caused the first major protest under Gierek's rule and which would undoubtedly have been crucial for the characters in the novel. This would no doubt have been excised by the Censorship Office.

focus the major issues of the time through his connections with writers in a private capacity and bureaucrats in his professional life. The principal concerns are detachment from reality and the question of what is really happening in contemporary Poland.

The Party Bureaucracy

Osada: 'In Society but not of it' ?

No individual, regardless of his profession or sensitivity, stands above society. [25]

The array of Party figures bears out Kubikowski's general prescription that no one higher than a district secretary can be depicted in contemporary Polish novels. In *Holy Cross Street* a certain vagueness obtains concerning Jan's position, and indeed that of Mieczysław. The fact that they alone are identified by Christian names seems synonymous with a high position in the official hierarchy.[26] For Osada they constitute moral and political authorities.[27]

The arguments about the nature of Party rule form an internal debate which chiefly takes place inside the protagonist's head. In this sense the novel is profoundly solipsistic, an example of 'socialist Hamletising', as one (unsympathetic) critic termed it.[28] For Osada, who has hitherto allegedly acted without any serious qualms about his

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[25] Antoni Juniewicz and Zygmunt Janik, 'Doskonalenie pracy ideowo-wychowawczej organizacji partyjnych w środowiskach twórczych', Instytut Podstawowych Problemów Marksizmu-Leninizmu KC PZPR. 'Konferencja partyjno-naukowa nt.: "Rola i zadania organizacji partyjnych w aktywizacji i pogłębianiu zaangażowania ideowego środowisk twórczych"' (probably 1977-1978), AAN, KC PZPR, Kancelaria Sekretariatu, paczka 234, 1555/142, p. 18.

[26] On the basis of Gomułka's being known by his wartime pseudonym, Wiesław.

[27] Party membership brings a responsibility that implies moral authority in the world of these preferred novels; non-Party figures may hold a certain emotional appeal for the reader but they generally do not exert moral force to the same degree.

[28] Bohdan Czeszko, 'Przepychanka na Świętokrzyskiej', *Nowe Książki*, 1981 (3), p. 76.

activity, the present has suddenly developed into a crisis. In the first instance, Małecki's usurpation of authority to make a decision contrary to institute policy has provoked doubts as to the stability of his authority and the correctness of his own conduct. This is compounded by the break up with his partner Elżbieta, a personal failure symbolising his distance from reality. In consequence he begins to reassess the assumptions which have governed his life.

Foremost amongst these was his belief that it is contingent upon the individual to behave ethically, whatever the exigencies of the situation. In his own case this had meant a refusal to proceed against a Party member (Klimiak) in the 1950s despite the political situation. Osada placed the man's probable innocence higher than Party discipline, a trait which characterises his habitual conduct: personal morality, 'moral purity', is superior to Party discipline. The return of Gomułka in 1956 ultimately justifies his stance, but he is worried by the lack of response on Mieczysław's part to the moral issues raised by de-Stalinisation.

The second major feature of Osada's character is an ascetic reluctance to enjoy the material benefits attached to his post, to an extent which strikes others as merely ridiculous posturing:

> 'It still seems to me,' Jan had said at the time, 'that there's too much posturing about you, you haven't even settled down decently but live in only a makeshift sort of way, as though it were only temporary, without any thought for Wanda's comfort. You're too severe and at the same time sometimes too lenient. You see, my dear fellow,' and he hesitated as though he were about to express a particularly onerous thought, 'in our refusal to compromise, the most important thing is not fidelity to our consciences or to our own views in any matter, because we can always be mistaken, but fidelity to something considerably greater.' (53)

Jan here denies even the slightest validity to the individual conscience. Only the greater cause - the Party and History - can be right, because human beings have a propensity to prove fallible. His

stance is also challenged by his artistic colleagues, Piotr and Elżbieta. They ridicule his material modesty because he nonetheless enjoys the status of power, if not the privileges:

> 'I don't make use of my position,' he replied.
> And she had laughed: 'You really are convinced that you don't make use of it, and you think that in that way you will preserve... What exactly ? Appearances ? Naive, ridiculous appearances.'
>
> How could I talk to Piotr on that subject ? I wouldn't have admitted it to Jan or even to Rosowski.
>
> 'This dance on the edge of honesty and appearance,' Piotr expounded, 'is the most dangerous thing you could do. You're not responsible for everything.'
>
> But that was precisely it ! He was. (53)

In effect, Osada is attempting to live up to a supreme moral standard, whereby no suggestion of corruption can be admitted if he is to be worthy of the right to wield power. In his case, though, this has become a conscious act; his ideal, Mieczysław, exhibits no such effort - his purity, Osada surmises, is the result of an inner harmony, a perfect balance between word, thought and deed (53). In a sense, however, this is presented as being a quality of the older revolutionaries, for whom luxury was anathema. For them, in distinction to Osada, the individual conscience did not assume primacy: as Jan implies, they were devoted to the Party to the extent that the organisation's rationale took prevalence over their own preferences. Osada therefore is aping the external signs of their calling whilst lacking their spirit.

On the whole Osada acts in the name of ideals, rather than out of human sympathy. A key moment is his inability to face Klimiak in October 1956, although he has behaved irreproachably towards him. Osada's leniency in rejecting the call to expel Klimiak was idealistic, not concerned with the individual man but the case he represented - the possibility of an injustice.

This also informs his notions of the meaningfulness of his own institute's activity. The provision of living quarters for the masses stirs in him a sentimentalised picture of family life which is basically an

abstraction, indeed a cliché:

> In every metre there is also a piece of our labour, he wanted to say. He saw thousands of people entering the new blocks, opening the windows in flats still smelling of paint, moving the furniture onto the floors, hanging chandeliers, inspecting each metre of space with concern: where shall we put the kids' beds, where shall we put the sofa ? The repetition of gestures, joy, emotions, as on a factory conveyor belt. There was no way of distinguishing M block in Stegny from M block in Bielany, the lamps were switched off, thousands of men and women saying 'at last'. The same gestures, hands reaching for each other, warmth as the final product. (74)

His concern is again not for the realities of what is, after all, a very prosaic situation, but rather with the ability to realise these miniatures of bliss on a mass scale. Tellingly, warmth is viewed as 'a product', the essence of human relations is here mechanised, revealing Osada's own failings as father and husband. The euphoria of planning is what he finds attractive, but this brings its own problems, as Mieczysław warns him:

> 'Just remember,' Mieczysław had said, 'that there always comes a moment when everything will be put to the test. Like on the site; the building is reaching the end but you need another final effort, when you must ask your people to give you everything, when costs suddenly rise. You need to bear that moment in mind and know whether you've not overrated your abilities, whether you've not been carried away by your euphoria in planning. You all get carried away, you're crazy about your piers and motorways and tower blocks...' (65)

Mieczysław descries here a passion peculiar to Osada and Larski, which is their fetishisation of production. The point for them is not really to achieve an end product but to enjoy the process, because it confirms their power and potency. In Freudian terms, it serves as a

compensation for their inadequacy in other spheres.[29] Larski, who functions chiefly as an alter-ego for Osada in a negative sense, expresses this fetishism most explicitly:

> I know what I felt when the first diggers went onto the site in Olęck. I didn't think about the people who were to benefit ! That would be lying ! Construction consumes a man, fascinates him like a drama played for its own sake. What does its purpose matter to you in the long run ! Massive earthworks are dug and people lay foundations, the cranes come and you have your big day because you've got the biggest crane in the country; the walls go up, the constructions of concrete and steel enchant you, you can't tear your gaze away from them (...)*You are the creator, a demiurge, a demigod changing the shape of the world.* (56-57, my italics)

The demiurgic pretensions which Larski demonstrates here, and with which Osada identifies, sit uneasily with Marxist ideology. Osada tends to promote the individual as a supreme value and acts as though he bore sole responsibility. This is a form of self-aggrandisement which also finds an outlet in his thinking about the nature of his own role in the socialist system.

He considers himself exceptional, above society, and thus feels a corresponding attraction for the tragic portrayal of the manager Ryszard Z. in Piotr's film. This is because he senses that tragedy offers the individual the possibility of acquiring universal significance. In an argument with Jan he states with some justification that it might be more useful to have tragic images of Party members than unadulterated success (102). What he does not admit is that this may be a self-image.

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[29] A more pertinent, socioeconomic analysis is provided by Kuroń and Modzelewski in their 'Open Letter to the Party': 'It may be said that the nature of the task of industrialising a backward country called to life as a ruling class a bureaucracy that was able to achieve this task, since it alone, through its class interests, represented the interest of industrialisation under such conditions - production for the sake of production'. *Solidarność: The Missing Link* (London, 1982), p. 36.

Małecki: His Unfaithful Servant.

He is not a man who carries out senseless activities. He is a man from behind the scenes where the mechanism of power operates and without which the mechanism would be impossible. He amasses information which somewhere, at some time, will be used by someone. [30]

Małecki is at the greatest remove from Osada in terms of character and outlook. He strives to be as close to 'reality' as possible, to what is actually happening from the street level to the lofty heights of power. To that end, he assiduously accumulates information, so that once a decision has to be made it can be as informed as possible. For that reason he can never discard others, as Osoba tends to do, since they can either furnish information later or present a threat if they harbour a grievance. Accordingly Małecki comes to be regarded by Osada as an opportunist.

Osada conceived an active dislike for his deputy after replacing Mieczysław. Out of respect for Osada's feelings towards Mieczysław, Małecki delivered a speech criticising one of Mieczysław's subordinates, who thus served as a scapegoat. When Osada saw them drinking together afterwards he began to regard Małecki as unprincipled, a man who could attack another in public but then sought him out in private to make good the damage. In contrast to Osada's understanding, this reflects Małecki's desire to help where he can, and the enormity of his knowledge and ability to reach an understanding with people enable him to be useful.

This marks the principal distinction between them: Osada has an idealist outlook, whereas Małecki is driven by utilitarian notions. Usefulness is his defining characteristic, as Osada himself acknowledges:

> Małecki had a particular ability to patch things up, fix

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30 Safian's comments on Juryś, the spy in *Pole niczyje*. Taranienko, op. cit., pp. 390-391.

matters, as he said himself: 'to reach an understanding with people', because, he explained, sitting in the chair in Osada's office, 'people have to be promised something absolutely definite, something they can believe in, which is neither too far off, nor unattainable. Larski, de mortuis nihil nisi bene, dreamt first of great shopping arcades and then put in hot-dog stands. We put the hot-dog stands in first.' (73)

For him the utopian elements of the socialist project are secondary to the practical. The grand designs are desirable, but pragmatic concerns assume priority. This is evinced by his ability to survive change in the institute. Małecki's overriding interest lies in safeguarding his career, and most importantly in staying in the Party.

Survival in the political sphere assumes primary status, since loyalty and honesty, where they become values in their own right regardless of the actual conditions, lead to expulsion from the Party. This was certainly his final experience of the Stalinist years, when he was left to bear the full responsibility for the chaos created at the factory by his boss, as he asserted to Rosowski in his search for rehabilitation in 1957:

> He accepted the changes which were being made in the country in complete honesty, unreservedly, just as he condemned the mistakes, but that condemnation concerned mistakes which had been committed jointly, by the collective, to an extent anonymously. He, Małecki, was in no way different from thousands of others, he bore part of the responsibility, and this he consciously took upon himself, but he had not deserved to be expelled from the ranks .. . (137)

Małecki resists the drive to make him into a scapegoat for the abuses committed under Stalinism. He insists that the responsibility was collective and that consequently only part of the blame should be apportioned to him. In this respect he is more orthodox and modest than Osada, who tends to see responsibility as his sole prerogative and to act as though he were in heroic isolation. At the same time Małecki seems to exhibit a trait characteristic of those who lived through the early fifties, which is to tone down their own role in events and to argue

historical necessity as a justification for their actions (the myth of universal injustices defined by Kubikowski). As such, he emerges as a far more ambiguous (and even amoral) figure than Osada. The decisive argument presented by the majority of the other characters in favour of Małecki is his *usefulness*. Liking him is secondary to being able to utilise his knowledge, as Rosowski implies:

> I suppose you are well acquainted with Małecki's especial usefulness. He can in all confidence be entrusted with any ticklish matter; he knew everything that ought to be known about people, but it may be said of him with utter certainty that, unless there were some obvious greater necessity, he would do no-one any harm. (135)

Rosowski here underlines the danger which Małecki can present to the incautious: his knowledge can be used in Osada's favour as well as against him - the point is to make use of him in the awareness of his essential desire to survive (a point underlined by Jan also, 38). As long as his security is not threatened, Małecki will continue to operate for Osada's benefit:

> Małecki's dilemmas are basically those which face any honest man, while your dreams about complete and utter harmony, which no-one will ever achieve, are only a utopia. *Małecki, left to his own devices, will never be ruled by any fascination or dogma, only by good sense. But he will fight tooth and nail for his place...* (139, my italics)

Osada objects to Małecki fundamentally because he refuses to state definitively what he believes in and stand up for those beliefs, since a change in circumstances or Party policy may necessitate a change in his own views. In this, Małecki subscribes to Jan's views about the fallibility of human beings and the primacy of the greater cause (53). Osada may be right that, in a crisis, Małecki would sooner save his own skin, but, as Jan puts it, the point is not to let conditions deteriorate to the extent where such a choice becomes necessary.

There is the underlying rhetorical question of who would not

move to save themselves and their own career, if no one else could ? Furthermore it begs the question as to whom Małecki ultimately owes allegiance. Certainly, on the practical level, Osada is indifferent to Małecki's fate, but it obviously remains a primary consideration for Małecki. In a sense, then, Osada wants it both ways: for Małecki to be concerned about his interests, whilst he feels no corresponding interest in Małecki's. However, for a Party member this question is already prejudged: individuals can be proven to be wrong, the organisation cannot. On those terms Małecki is right, not Osada.

In this way Małecki demonstrates a more ideologically correct attitude to the Party than Osada. He subordinates his own views in essential matters in order to support the Party on the assumption that it is the only force capable of running Polish society. The final conclusion is clear: Małecki is essential if the system is to survive, because only he can distinguish objective phenomena from subjective imaginings. Expediency and utility are more appropriate criteria by which to judge employees in the institute than are Osada's notions of moral purity, as Rosowski and indeed the majority insist. Osada's divorce from reality is visible in his use of the wrong categories in dealing with Małecki, as Rosowski argues:

> 'Perhaps,' he said at length, 'it's all about effectiveness, not people's life stories; perhaps now we should rid ourselves of some of our illusions, for only that which is verifiable really matters. Małecki remembers being drummed out once. But what about you ?' (140-141)

The inference here is that Osada has never had to test his standards against reality, that he has been protected from the consequences of power by being Mieczysław's acolyte. Under Stalinism Osada undoubtedly behaved better but he could afford to, in the knowledge of Mieczysław's patronage, Rosowski argues. Consequently he has never been obliged to face the personal dilemma

which confronted Małecki when he had to denounce his own teacher. Małecki's career has been the outcome of years of persistent toil, with none of the advantages which Osada knew through being associated with Mieczysław. Therefore Osada does not appreciate that he is in a state of what may called 'moral luxury', that his privileged status allows him to think in terms of an ideal 'purity'. In his professional capacity, however, these considerations are an irrelevance, for efficiency is the sole criterion.

On the moral plane Małecki ultimately exhibits higher standards than other colleagues such as Adamiak and Chabrowski, because he is free of corruption, he does not exploit his own position for personal material profit. He also demonstrates a kind of consistency distinct from the absolute opportunism of Bożkowski, the hardened Stalinist, who gravitates towards the opposition after being dismissed in 1956. Bożkowski provides a classic definition of moral expediency unacceptable under any conditions, as Osada recollects:

> 'Osada,' he told me in October, 'you still don't understand the logic of history. They say that I am performing almost a circus trick, that yesterday I broke people and today I mouth off about democracy, about the people's will, that I'm opening the way to demonstrations, to lawlessness, perhaps even to the counterrevolution, that I'm recanting. And how do they know what I really stifled in myself ? And what I continue to stifle ? Yesterday we could not be other than we were, that was the logic of reality, therefore we acted rightly and were right to regard anyone who thought differently as our enemy. Today we are also acting rightly and we condemn not ourselves, that's absurd, but yesterday's necessity which was assuredly an inevitable stage in the development of history.' (95-96)

Małecki, by contrast, does not cite this kind of superior justification (the myth of 'clean hands' described by Kubikowski), only justice in acknowledgement of the real dimensions of his responsibility and of his utility. Undoubtedly part of Małecki's force lies in the fact that he never attempts directly to justify himself: his reticence is more

effective than the loquacity which characterises the majority.

Larski: the Ascetic Corrupted.

Osada's pretentiousness is undermined by Larski, who serves to some extent as a negative alter-ego for Osada. Larski is even more obviously ascetic and scrupulous about enjoying the privileges of his office until the moment when he realises the extent to which he has contributed to precisely those practices which he despised and sought to eradicate. The crux lay in his refusal to acknowledge that his ideal of incorruptibility was merely an obstacle which others circumvented, whenever it threatened the smooth running of the site:

> I wanted to bring a very able engineer to Olęck, but his condition was to be given a one-family flat without having to queue, without waiting. I didn't agree, because I couldn't, and then I learnt that they'd found a house... The man was really needed, so I just turned a blind eye. (164)

In this situation moral purity becomes compromised, since it is based on a de facto acceptance of other people assuming the responsibility. Larski's hands remain clean, but his ideal gradually degenerates into a fiction. He becomes aware of the untenability of his standards, particularly after he meets Katarzyna. Her natural need for comfort forces him to face up to the anomalies of his position and involves him in corruption. His colleagues, knowing of his situation, secretly arrange for a house to be built for him, thus implicating him in their schemes and leading him into moral compromise.

Larski's experience functions as a warning of the dangers inherent in striving first and foremost to be pure. Where purity is the only yardstick of human behaviour, it can lead simply to the isolation of its exponent: Larski's disapproval of any dubious practice does not mean the cessation of such practice, merely its concealment from him. He necessarily becomes isolated from 'reality'. Moreover, the danger exists that the exponent becomes fixed in a kind of automatic reflex, that his response begins to be unauthentic. Larski sees this as happening to himself, that he merely repeats the same attitude from years ago:

> Sometimes it seems to me that it isn't me standing in front of the mirror, not me sitting in this damned office, not me... And I don't know when a different Larski replaced me, Larski. Tell me, how many times has it happened to you at a meeting, or elsewhere, in Jan or Mieczysław's office, that you suddenly know and that knowledge seizes you by the throat: 'I didn't say that, I didn't make that movement to approve or condemn, I, the true me, would have behaved quite differently, for what I think is.. .' (55)

Larski defines here an existential nausea reminiscent of Sartre's hero Roquentin, as the repetition of the same gesture leads ultimately to the questioning of basic assumptions about life and behaviour. Larski had assumed that he was in control of reality, as at the time of his speech in the 1950s. Instead he becomes aware of how conventions take precedence over the individual, even when the convention has been created by the individual himself. This contrasts with his above-mentioned pretension to be a demiurge. That image of himself is not supportable in reality. In effect, reality creates him as though he were a passive object. Larski discerns in himself the existence of two different characters, one his public face and the other private, unknown.

This discovery has implications for Osada, who is left with the challenge of harmonising them, of healing the rift with reality. This is a question not only of personal significance but one which has a political resonance beyond the work, relating to responsible leadership generally. The evidence of the novel is that real individuals in positions of authority function in a charmed circle along with the rest of the elite, whose most vocal representatives are the literary intelligentsia.

This group is undeniably closely interested in the portrayal of reality, and their variety in the novel indicates the range of the official perceptions. As ever, the great mass of workaday writers is ignored in favour of the assiduous supporters of the regime and their opponents.

Writers: The Exhausted Mission.

The three main figures are Rosowski, Piotr and Brzecki.

Rosowski is a consistent supporter of the regime from Stalinist times to the present; Piotr may be defined as a loyal critic of the regime; whilst Brzecki has shifted to the outer fringes of literary life in the sense that he is published only abroad. The central issues which engage them all are their ability to depict social processes in Poland and writers' continuing relevance to the nation. In this respect Safian's focus closely follows the authorities' own: to retain relevance, writers have to deal with the regime's concerns, which presupposes submission to the borders of permissible criticism.

Rosowski and Piotr observe the official demarcation lines. They both answer the injunction of the 'party-mindedness' of literature which the authorities were attempting to resurrect from the concept of Socialist Realism at the end of the seventies:

> A writer's party-mindedness should be decipherable from what he creates, through the content and spirit of his reflections which he preserves in his work [...] Nor is it a question of any restriction of the areas which the artist may deal with. What matters is that the creative artist and Party member should be the Party's special ally in the organisation of the life of the nation in accordance with its deepest and most enduring interests.[31]

As such, there were theoretically no aspects of contemporary life which they could not address, as long as their basic approval of the system had been signalled. This was, in fact, as loyalists had continually argued, somewhat far from the actuality. Official tolerance of criticism was limited, even if it was intended to alert the rulers to defects in practice. This is outlined to some extent in the novel.

Piotr's film demonstrates the limits of the authorities' tolerance rather in the manner of Wajda's *Man of Marble*: it is allowed onto the screen, but only after a protracted struggle within the Party as to the acceptability of the image it promotes of the regime.[32] Its release enables the authorities to claim that there is no major censorship, an

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[31] Antoni Juniewicz and Zygmunt Janik, op. cit., p. 7.

[32] In terms of plot, *Ryszard Z.* - the isolated Party member in a small town - is however closer to Kieślowski's *The Scar*, regarded as launching the 'Wave of Moral Anxiety' in Polish cinema in the mid-1970s.

illusion which Rosowski and Piotr both promote to differing degrees. In an exchange with Larski, Rosowski denies any power to the censorship office; what matters is his own stance:

> I'm not bothered about external limitations, that's a whole different story, I have created my own standard for myself: utility. As long as what I do is useful. (43)

Piotr also plays down the pervasiveness of censorship under Gierek, as he admits in conversation with Osada:

> '...I'm not afraid of the truth and I don't wish to conceal it, I fear damaging lies.'
>
> Piotr remained silent.
>
> 'And your resentments about censorship are only sham as well.'
>
> 'Perhaps,' muttered Piotr. 'But if a crisis becomes a minor crisis, and a doubt a doubtlet, the magnificence of construction and the effort involved also become problematic. That affects history as well. (...) The polite idealisation of socialism and history leads to an outcome where every difficulty, every upheaval, is treated as something out of the ordinary and shameful and not as an element of normal development.' (114)

But he provides the most reasoned account of the deleterious effects of censorship, that it transforms every problem into a crisis because it does not allow reality to be portrayed in all its complexity. It forces upon writers precisely the situation defined by Zagajewski and Kornhauser wherein substitutes replace real phenomena. Piotr is honest in that he accepts this as a problem; Rosowski minimalises these difficulties, stating that a simple picture can be as truthful as a more complex one - the essential problem lies in finding a symbol which will unify the various levels of the narrative and suggest the hidden complexities of the depicted world:

> 'I need a key to open various drawers,' the writer continued, 'the one I can open myself and whose contents please you. You say it's necessary. Of course it is - not for Osada or Larski, because you know more, but your knowledge is the next drawer. (...) Is there anything dangerous in the drawer ? Nonsense ! Just the same as in mine, only more complex (...) A

more complex picture of reality need not at all be more truthful than a simplified one, but between the bottom and the top drawer a vacuum may arise, an unidentified space, as though the flow of information had been broken. And that's what the world of bevitrons is for.' (42-43)

In his desire to serve the authorities according to what he sees as his most vital attribute - the desire to be useful - Rosowski nonetheless experiences a certain disappointment in the sense that his fidelity is not altogether appreciated by the authorities. Perversely, from his viewpoint, the authorities really prefer the type represented by Piotr. This echoes the general grievance expressed by most loyalists, that Party writers are not given the same credit as oppositionists:

> You say aloud that you like Rosowski, but it's Piotr who really fascinates you, you would like to receive something cruel about yourself, you feel that in the portrait of Osada tragedy is needed, I seem too literal for you and at the same time, by virtue of that literalness, unauthentic. But you accept inauthenticity and you praise my Zagada, you will even vote for a prize should the occasion arise, and yet at the same time you repeat with pleasure Drwęcki's words about a surrogate reality. (127)

The authorities seem to want to receive the flattering image of themselves which they find in Rosowski's work, but at the same time to derive a kind of illicit thrill from Piotr's more critical portrait, since it gives them tragic dimensions. In other words, Piotr's works provide the authorities with more credibility among readers, a certain intellectual kudos.

In the end this does not bother Rosowski so greatly, since he has the benefits of a fairly comfortable life and nothing Piotr says has any novelty for him. Their positions have been defined years ago, and all they do, as far as Rosowski is concerned, is trade political banalities (90). This reflects the familiarity of writers who started out during the fifties in Socialist Realism. Some, like Rosowski, stayed with the regime, whilst others, like Piotr, gravitated towards opposition. Rosowski's accusation that Piotr faces isolation (90) expresses the standard Party line on oppositionists that while society advances under

socialism, opponents will simply be left behind. The only standard is whether they serve the Party.

Rosowski presents their discussions essentially as a statement of obvious positions, not as an expression of serious issues. Interestingly, the platitudes they exchange are presented as equally inane by Rosowski: the justifications he employs out of loyalty to the Party are as redundant as Piotr's criticism of economic and publishing problems. It is a form of intellectual sparring, devoid of deeper significance, as Rosowski goes on to explain:

> When we declaim against each other from the podium, as happens, we both lose. His platitudes, my platitudes... What does it matter that they applaud him more than me, because everyone wants the discussion to be sharp, to hear about the freedom of speech, of taboo subjects... And then below the belt, straight to the jaw, about meat, queues and publishing policy... But in all honesty no-one takes it too seriously.. . (90-91)

His conclusion is rather one of healthy and complacent common sense: political controversy is reduced to the status of an intellectual diversion, ideological divisions do not matter. Piotr in these circumstances merely represents an anachronism, for the writer's traditional role as social conscience is now antiquated.

What Rosowski has in common with Piotr is a sense of the supreme importance of matters which are exclusively Polish. The writers depicted in the novel are fundamentally inward-looking on the political plane. The significance of Polish writing derives from its treatment of exclusively Polish themes: Polish emigres, foreign readers of Polish literature, civilisation as a whole are matters of complete indifference to them. This emerges as inverted national chauvinism in Piotr's case, as he snubs the oppositionist Bożkowski who wants to publish him in Paris, untrammelled by censorship:

> He had worked himself so beautifully up to a pitch and then Piotr's 'no' had stopped him in his tracks. Anyone would have been stunned...
>
> 'It's very simple,' Piotr said at length. *'I don't write for any Herr Schmidt, M. Duval or Nowak who is in emigration, but*

for the Kowalskis in this country, and I only have them in mind. If they publish me here, then I'll talk.'

(...) 'So you want to give up without a fight ? You accept censorship, cuts, toning down parts of the work ?'

'No,' replied Piotr, 'I don't accept them.' And he added that every writer plays his own game, that the results tend to be different, but that there were also games he didn't like, just as he didn't like oversimple plots in novels. (110-111, my italics)

Bożkowski's argument coincides with the regime's on certain points, above all in his assumption that a writer needs to define himself politically. A writer cannot bear isolation, and a Polish writer needs to break out into the wider world of European culture. Piotr's response, which deflates Bożkowski, premises the superiority of the native audience over all others. For that reason he regards his own responsibility as being to remain within the official 'circulation' and to fight with the censor for the sake of his native audience.

His stance becomes self-contradictory in his view on publication abroad. He will agree to it only once his book has been accepted by Polish publishers: a French edition therefore functions as a kind of optional extra for the serious Polish author, which badly misrepresents the role of emigre publishers and the opportunities available in the official circulation for works critical of social conditions in Poland.[33]

The greatest obfuscation occurs, however, in the depiction of Brzecki, the opposition writer who finds himself exactly in those straits.

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[33] It implies that all truly serious Polish authors are able to reach their own domestic audience, although Orłoś (*Cudowna melina)* and Andrzejewski (*Miazga*) disprove this line, finding their works unpublishable in the country after years of trying.

Brzecki

The most harmful group is one with extreme anti-Party and anti-Soviet views. In relation to the most implacable, a policy of flirtation or compromise has no purpose. At the end of the day, literature is also a sphere of political struggle.[34]

Brzecki largely corresponds to the group defined above in official discourse. In the novel there are discussions about the merits of publishing him, but nothing concrete is decided.

Brzecki, like Piotr and Rosowski, was a socialist realist in the early 1950s. Since then he has gone further than either in opposition to the regime by publishing solely in London and Paris, presumably because of the absence of outlets in Poland. His reasons for doing so are not explained in any depth. Publishing abroad simply allows him to do what he pleases, as he declares to the film director Hajduczek:

> 'Now I do what I want, I have my own little plot and nobody tramples my patch, while you suck up to them and that's why you would like most of all to hear that I'd lost my head, for I get right up your nose, right up it.'
>
> 'Well, long may you continue to do so !,' Hajduczek laughed good-humouredly. And Piotr brought the bottle around again. 'You think that you're writing the truth ? Nobody reads you, even if there were no censorship, if they published you in a million copies... Who gives a damn in Poland about your moods of despair and your dilemmas ? People have got real things to worry about, they don't need bards. Who still remembers your name ? A few connoisseurs in cafes ? A few kids who left school the day before yesterday and do your novel *Reds in the Sun* as part of their school reading ?' (151)

Doing as he pleases does not seem to have any major ideological motivation. The image of the 'small plot' which he works suggests rather some literary idyll, not political activism. Hajduczek meanwhile responds with the classic Party line of the irrelevance of what he does, since he is demonstrably read by few people (as though being read on a massive scale were the sole proof of significance). His disparagement of opposition writers repeats the untruth that they were all nostalgic for

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34 'Niektóre wnioski...', op. cit., p. 3.

the traditional role of 'bard'. The crucial blow is his imputation that Brzecki is forgotten in his own country, that the only work which gave him a certain renown was produced under Socialist Realism. This strikes home, as Brzecki admits in his later lament to Osada:

> I'm a nobody, Osada. Like a word crossed out by the censor... That's your bloody ability to transform a human being into nothingness, to erase him from history, from literature, from people's awareness. (154)

This heavily qualifies the validity of his oppositionist stance, although it is in fact an accurate statement of his situation. The censor's operations did make a considerable number of writers into non-persons, often leaving them only emigre publishers. His despair thus bears out the regime's public line about opposition being synonymous with social redundancy (even if the degree of state attention they received suggested quite the opposite).

The final confirmation of the correctness of the regime's assessment comes with his taking part in an official trip to a steelworks and finding that none of the workers know anything about him. Shortly afterwards he is killed in a car accident (like the former ZLP president and leading oppositionist, Antoni Słonimski, in April 1976), with a strong suggestion that he committed suicide. The implication of the text is that he had no other option.

In all three cases the question of whether the Party really needs writers is left open to doubt. Literature is essentially a sphere for political manoeuvring with the authorities. A sense of mission ('posłannictwo') still appears to motivate them, but their activity is basically predictable; they are all to a greater or lesser extent clients for favours from the Party bureaucrats, with fond memories of the 1950s when their works had a more immediate political impact and their appearances before workers gave them a feeling of importance since lost. In this respect they are all afflicted by nostalgia for the kind of impact they enjoyed under Socialist Realism, which constituted their common ground, and thus in the present are condemned to sterile

arguments without any prospect of reaching a solution. In terms of being creators of reality they perform a secondary role to that of the bureaucrats and scientists. Indeed, the most potent organising image in the world depicted in the novel is that created by the cybernetics professor, Drwęcki.

Drwęcki: the 'Mad Professor'.

Professor Drwęcki is credited with the so-called 'cybernetic theory of control over social reactions', a theory which despite its outlandishness and the evident lightness with which the professor is taken, identifies him as being central to the concerns of the Gierek regime in the 1970s. As Ray Taras has remarked, 'cybernetics-inspired concepts were the quintessence of Gierek's new political style'.[35] This reflects the pretensions to technological advance generally, but particularly in the sphere of systems of social control, and generated the use of terms such as 'regulation', 'exchange of information' and 'feedback', which suggested that the Party's role was rather that of arbitrator than dictator in relation to social processes. What is assumed by the use of these terms is the relative autonomy of all social spheres with the Party as monitor, positioned to intervene where necessary.[36] By the mid-1970s this position had been undermined, and the Party moved to impose yet more rigorous control over society.

Drwęcki's theory is, however, still relatively benign and provides the key terms for the reflections of other characters, particularly the writers, on their own activity and Polish society. The main pillar of his theory is the concept of a surrogate reality or 'SURE' ('rzeczywistość zastępcza' or 'rzet'), which enables rulers to predict and manipulate society's responses:

> The professor roared, 'Why has an Institute of Surrogate Realities never been set up ? In other words, "INSURE". It has

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35 *Ideology in a Socialist State*, op. cit., p. 117.

36 Taras, ibid., p. 122.

never occurred to anyone because they don't ask cyberneticists but just go ahead producing surrogate realities in an ad hoc, disordered and illogical fashion. I'm not talking about primitive everyday lies, which you can find even in Piotr's films (forgive me, Piotr). A surrogate reality, or in short, a "SURE", must be an autonomous, faultless system. For instance, before a Schmidt, Dupré or Angelotti delivers a speech, "INSURE" is consulted. "INSURE" creates with all the means at its disposal - the press, art, culture - in accordance with precise scientific reports, a "SURE" in line with the premier's pet theories, promises and opinions. Can't you see ? Nothing ad hoc about it. A great building has to be put up, but you aren't sure either of the results or of people's reactions. A "SURE" is indispensable. A logical, accurate, precise "SURE" preserves the feeling of well-being on the part of the rulers and the trust of the ruled. You can live a long time in a "SURE" - if it has been constructed on scientific principles - and not be aware of the fact. In this way the errors due to the reactions of the ruled can be remedied.' (85)

The 'surrogate reality' constitutes an implicit parody of the Gierek regime's 'propaganda of success' in that it is a perfect mechanism for enforcing the regime's version of events. The superiority of the 'SURE' lies in the fact that it adapts itself in accordance with the feedback it receives from society. Society therefore cannot distinguish this 'virtual' reality from the 'real' one, and as a result does not grow dissatisfied with present day conditions since the 'surrogate reality' automatically modifies itself to accommodate society's reactions.

The ultimate hope for the Party was then that methods of absolute social control could be devised and placed at its disposal. Drwęcki's concept therefore takes to their logical absurd conclusion certain pretensions which the Party entertained about the possibilities of manipulating social response.

The regime writers by contrast offer only a second-rate solution; they are comparatively primitive 'engineers of the human soul'. They attempt to accommodate the ramifications of Drwęcki's theory into their own thinking, Rosowski most directly and superficially of all. He absorbs pseudo-cybernetic vocabulary in a very literal fashion to produce *Bevitrons*, essentially a neo-production novel for the 1970s.

His primary intention in the novel of relating the new technology in a meaningful way to human experience fails because of the banality of his technique. The bevitrons, a fictitious phenomenally powerful electronic component, play a similar role in electronic systems as human beings do in socialist society. By extension, difficulties in production are therefore expressive of problems in society at large. Those problems however remain concealed, as Kornhauser and Zagajewski diagnosed, since they are not dealt with in their own right but only in a 'surrogate' symbolic form.

For Piotr and Osada, Drwęcki's theory defines a process which they perceive within themselves - the creation of 'defensive realities'. In Osada's case this has personal consequences relating to his concentration on the business of planning and construction to the exclusion of his emotional life. On the professional level it signifies his tolerance of a basically optimistic image of the institute's work, although he is aware of the accumulating problems. For Piotr, the 'defensive reality' defines the purpose of his work from the regime's perspective. His portrayal of Polish reality, although he is allowed a certain leeway to criticise, diminishes the magnitude of the social problems so that they are palatable to the authorities. He explains this to Osada:

> ...They're building socialism, so if a crisis occurs I should protect them from it, make it into a minor crisis, if a tragedy happens - then at most a little drama, if genuine doubt arises, I show it as a tiny and barely perceptible question mark. (113)

Although Osada denies the accusation, the drift of the novel tends to support Piotr's view. The degree of criticism which the authorities are prepared to tolerate is minimal, despite their invocations to the contrary. The reality shown by Safian is essentially stagnating; Osada, who had prided himself on his dynamism, has become introspective, as the reality he perceives around him grows ever more opaque.

People's Poland in the late 1970s: Midlife Crisis or the 'End of the Line' ?

Safian's depiction of the situation within the institute conforms with the general discussions in the novel as to the means of representing reality. The characters of Osada and Mieczysław are comprehensible as expressions of the differences between Gomułka's approach to Party rule, which was basically paternalistic and ideologically driven, and that adopted by Gierek, which tended more to consensual politics and thus to making itself more attractive to society. Osada's isolation in the mid-seventies accordingly parallels that of the Party leadership itself, and the atmosphere of stagnation beginning to envelop the institute mirrors the regime's situation.

The problems confronting the elite indicate that its practice has become a complete contradiction of the aims it espoused at the outset. Safian identifies these, first, as the degeneration of the policy of openness and dialogue into a holding strategy of disinformation; secondly, the move to improve living standards has led to an expansion of corrupt practices among managers, who exploit the principal material benefits for themselves; thirdly, accountability is unrealisable in the absence of an effective self-regulatory mechanism.

Censorship

The functioning of censorship in *Holy Cross Street* links the concerns of all the figures in the novel. The writers are most directly concerned, since their works are subject to the censorship office. Rosowski shows the extent to which self-censorship can operate: he denies any validity to external restrictions. Censorship has made Brzecki into a non-person, while Piotr functions on the boundaries of legality.

Censorship is actively practised within the institute, too, as in the case of Witkowski's unsanctioned press release. Osada's deliberations reveal the extent of the difficulties behind the euphemisms of official

statements:

> In the information there was one sentence about the difficulties confronting them; the usual dodge about being 'in the process of overcoming...'. Nothing about what really bothered them, nothing from the known catalogue.. the real reasons for the fluctuation in staffing levels... the bribery. The organisation of supplies.. (...) On Estate II a strike had narrowly been avoided; changes in management were demanded, and the removal of standstills affecting wages, supplies... It wasn't just the facts but even more the method of selection. I know, of course, what I'm struggling against, but conventions, principles and regulations continue to tie my hands.. . (74-75)

None of these facts will appear in the press, however, without the audacity of a Witkowski, and the express permission of the unknown quantity unmentioned here - the censorship office. The true picture given by Osada's thoughts shows the situation to be far worse than the authorities themselves allow. Part of the reason was the abrogation of responsibility by individuals, as Larski admits:

> I decided not to notice things. Consciously and consistently I decided not to accept what was going on, although I should have known from the outset and I suppose I did know that I was becoming a ridiculous figure. (163)

Choosing 'not to notice' becomes a representative trait amongst the authorities. The deliberate censoring out of unacceptable features of current reality leads automatically to widespread connivance at the existence of the second factor in seventies' Poland - corruption.

Corruption

This is associated particularly with the opportunism of Larski and Osada's younger colleagues, Chabrowski, Kojtych, and Adamiak. Małecki, who, for Osada particularly, seems to operate without principles, is not indicted in corrupt practices, although he knows of their presence in the institute. Larski's experience offers a psychological explanation for the tenacity of corruption, which lies in the interdependency of the corrupt. Everyone who exploits the system

for their own gain is keen to implicate others and thus contribute to the extension of corrupt practices, and the pervasive censorship, both by people and by institutions, allows this state of affairs to continue:

> A reality which is hidden or concealed affects our consciousness. In both large and small matters. Before you commence any endeavours in the usual, proper way, you investigate whether matters can be arranged by using connections, contacts, backstairs influence, since you cannot believe that you can do without them. And if you can, you are ready to treat this case as out of the ordinary. (You will even write to the press about it, thanking your lucky stars.) (170)

Under the conditions defined above, there is a mutually binding interest in both concealing and extending corrupt practices. Indeed, the more likely way to succeed lies in the use of personal contacts rather than legal means. As a result, all standards become relative in the morass of 1970s' social reality. This could not occur, however, if there were a mechanism for exposing corruption. Ultimately this would necessitate an independent press, judiciary or parliament, but Safian does not lead in that direction. Rather, the emphasis is placed on an internal Party mechanism, indeed personal conscience, as Larski and Osada's example bear out.

Self-regulation

Larski expresses the dangers of this deficiency most clearly in a conversation with his former teacher. At the time, Larski is fully confident about the Party's capacity for self-regulation (166), but later he comes to doubt the security of his declaration:

> we have excellent people, and while I was among them, not as I was in Olęck, but working up close on a day-to-day basis, although I still wanted to go on ignoring, I couldn't but know that concessions and compromises were essential for the mechanism to function. (167)

The implication here is that self-regulation located in the individual conscience is unstable. As Larski acknowledges, when the desire for friendship took priority, compromise and concessions proved

inevitable.

This suggests a very pessimistic prognosis of the current political situation: those who possess the necessary information suppress it out of personal considerations. In the absence of efficient public bodies of control, transparency in public life is dependent upon individual voluntary acts, such as Witkowski's unsanctioned press release. These may endanger the individual's livelihood, which argues against their frequency.

The key figure in this instance is Małecki, who accumulates exhaustive information on every subject. The transmission of this information to his superiors depends on his reading of the likely cost to himself as well as his estimates of his superiors' receptivity. In effect, the flow of information is again stymied by personal considerations. Thus the almost inevitable decline of the system seems foreshadowed, for, as Kołakowski noted in 'Tezy o nadziei i beznadziejności' (1971), the element of disinterest necessary for maintaining it is being eroded.[37] In one respect, however, the situation may not be as hopeless as it seems. The young people in the novel represent a source of hope, supporting a possible optimistic reading of the novel. The critic Feliks Fornalczyk ascribed a symbolic value to Beata's activity, suggesting that the young are not as yet Party to the game played by their elders and may consequently find a way out: 'the young people who have been educated in the state system prove ultimately to be more valuable and morally purer than their parents and teachers'.[38]

Their accession to power is still distant, however, and the solution to the system's survival until that time is seen to reside in a reconciliation between the two major figures of Osada and Małecki. On the political level this signifies the modification of utopian aspirations by political realism. Significantly, it is not brought about by the two men themselves but only through their children, Beata and Bolek, who decide to get married.

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[37] *Kultura*, Paris, 1971 (6), p. 18.

[38] *Rocznik Literacki* (Warsaw, 1980), p. 100.

Towards a Reconciliation

The reconciliation of Osada with Małecki embodies the hope of restoring equilibrium. Małecki is necessary to Osada because he can keep him in touch with reality; Osada meanwhile has the leadership qualities essential for him to work in the institute. The novel's perspective implicitly excludes the eventuality that Małecki might become director, except as a makeshift choice; he appears to be rather one of nature's deputies. The decision he took in Osada's absence, although perceived by him to be a usurpation of his authority, is completely justifiable in political terms, given the social situation. The workers, for whom the blocks of flats are intended, are close to striking over the issue of provision of accommodation. Małecki's decision was motivated by the practical consideration of defusing social tension.

In this light Osada's objections are an irrelevance and must be subordinate to the greater issue at stake. But the crucial change must occur in Osada's outlook.

The beginnings of this process are indicated at the end of the novel, where Osada approaches Małecki to discuss the future of the married couple (211). This reconciliation takes place against the background of the wedding dance, echoing the significance of this motif throughout Polish literature. The dance traditionally marks the closing of an old era and the opening of a new one in which the different forces in the nation are reconciled. This idea is given its most extensive treatment in Stanisław Wyspiański's *Wesele* (1901), where the wedding symbolises the unification of the two principal classes in the Polish nation, the szlachta and the peasantry, the necessary precondition of the rebirth of Poland.[39] This explicitly suggests the symbolic significance of Osada and Małecki's reaching an understanding.

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[39] *Wesele* functions as a paradigm in the novel. Larski laments the fact that he has lost the 'Golden Horn' (167), which in Wyspiański's play was to summon the nation to arms and liberation. Piotr's party recalls the atmosphere of Act I of *Wesele*, where the intellectuals are obsessed with their own eloquence (151).

Safian leaves the matter poised at the end of novel. The immediate future held the workers' riots of June 1976, thus forestalling an overly optimistic conclusion. The intended context undoubtedly, however, was the Party's activity after 1976 and the possibility of reform in the aftermath of the June riots. The events of 1980 gave an even more pessimistic overtone to the novel's final exchange:

> 'You,' Małecki said savouring this first familiarity between them, 'will never really accept me. But perhaps you'll feel inclined to at some point ?'
>
> Osada said nothing. (212)

The uncertainty evoked by Osada's lack of response, though no doubt indicating reluctance on his part rather than outright refusal, may have appeared at the time of writing as realism. The rise of Solidarity made the issue of whether the Osadas of the Party accepted the Małeckis an irrelevance.

'The Degraded Revolution':

Józef Łoziński's *Hunting Scenes from Lower Silesia* (1985)[38]

Everything that is currently appearing in print (...) indicates that (...) literature is truly striving to gain knowledge about man, about the limitations upon his liberty and responsibility, about the truth and dissemblances of individual solutions and choices, about the price that must be paid for involvement in politics and the wielding of power (e.g. Siejak, Bratny, Łoziński), about the personal cost of an active engagement in life and the immeasurable distress that results from passivity, and about the internal tensions that divide Poles.

Witold Nawrocki.[39]

Łoziński doesn't want to be a moralist. He doesn't give advice, since he participates in the culture he describes. First and foremost, he's a witness to our times, who shows how "torment and ecstasy, dung and Arcadia" mingle in the great mechanism of History.

Krzysztof Pysiak.[40]

Reality for this generation of writers is an unrecognizable chaos, in which there is no order, no hierarchy, and where consequently there can be no talk of truth, lies, good, or evil.

Andrzej W. Pawluczuk.[41]

By the end of the 1970s the concept of 'real socialism' was being appropriated by oppositionists and used in quite the opposite sense from the meaning it possessed in official ideology. Whereas, for the

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38 *Sceny myśliwskie z Dolnego Śląska*. All references are to the second edition (Bydgoszcz, 1989).

39 'Krajobraz literatury w czterdziestoleciu', in: *Literatura Polski Ludowej. Oceny i prognozy* (Warsaw, 1986), p. 51.

40 *Przecena dla młodej literatury* (Warsaw, 1988), p. 62.

41 *Rozbiory* (Warsaw, 1983), p. 183.

Party after 1956, the employment of the term was intended to mark a positive achievement - the existence of a socialist state which satisfied the needs of its citizens - the opposition were suggesting that socialism per se amounted to the corrupted system. In effect, it signified a shift towards the focus on short-term, realizable goals, with the creation of the truly socialist state postponed to an indefinite future.

As Jacques Rupnik has remarked, the concept of 'real socialism' meant the decline of the teleological or utopian aspects of the socialist project, the 'deflation of ideology':

> This deflation of ideology has a double advantage over the utopianism of the past. It conveniently removes the possibility of questioning policies in the name of ideals. The lack of illusions also presumably spares the pain of disillusionment, which had been one of the main factors in the 'revisionist' pressure for change in the de-Stalinisation era.[42]

The term betokened a regrouping strategy and held defensive implications. Socialism could thus be seen as an already achieved condition, identifiable with any of the Bloc countries, which came to be synonymous with its only genuine manifestations. In short, it could not be dismissed as a purely utopian and thus unrealizable project. Furthermore, the disillusionment generated by the revelations of the Twentieth Congress was theoretically no longer possible: there was no ideal to be exposed.

This represented an enormous shift in Communist ideology, whose consequences Leszek Kołakowski was one of the first to diagnose. In his 1971 article 'Tezy o nadzieji i beznadziejności' Kołakowski termed the new system that had evolved after 1956

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[42] *The Other Europe* (2nd ed.), (London, 1989), p. 143.

'bureaucratic socialism'.[43] The process of de-Stalinisation, with its surrender of absolute control over society by one man in favour of collective rule ('an oligarchy'), opened the way for competition for power within the ruling apparatus itself and in the longer term for the growth of challenges from outside the Party.

The benefits of the flexibility it introduced were therefore more apparent than real. Although shocks of the magnitude of the revelations at the Twentieth Congress might no longer be possible, the ideology had lost a considerable part of its mobilising force. There were no unifying distant goals to act as a spur to overcome the hardships of the present: socialist ideology within Poland had lost the vital element of disinterest, which extended its support beyond the ranks of the Party and nomenklatura:

> Bureaucratic socialism has lost its ideological support. Despite all the monstrosities of Stalinism, the Stalinist apparatus, at least in People's democracies, was incomparably more dependent in its activities on its ideological links with the system than are the present apparatuses. It may seem that the cynical apparatus, whose members measure the achievements of socialism in terms of their own privileges and careers, is more effective since it is free of such liabilities and inhibitions, is invulnerable to ideological upheavals, is capable of making lightning changes whenever it pleases and lends itself better to manipulation. But that is not even half the truth. Not only is such an apparatus deceptive in moments of crisis and not in a position to survive a genuine test, not only is it more prone to self-disintegration through the conflicts between cliques, but it is itself a manifestation of the historical decay of the system it serves. The system, which no-one defends disinterestedly, is doomed - to quote a sentence from Victor Serge's book on the Tsarist Secret Police... [44]

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[43] 'Theses on Hope and Hopelessness', op. cit.

[44] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

Change could result from conflicts between individuals within the ruling elite but, after Stalinism, these individuals could not claim an absolute personal legitimation on the basis of the ideology. The Party apparatus, fearful of a return to methods of terror, would resist any such claims. Instead they were clients for the support of the different Party factions. In that sense support for the ruling elite hinged on its success in co-opting people into its network of privilege, on appeasing their interests. But this occurred at the cost of ideological fragmentation and Party cohesion.

Ideology continued to be necessary to the regime as the sole source of legitimacy in the absence of a social consensus, but it underwent a process of creeping ossification. What could not be predicted was the tenacity of the system to survive. For oppositionist writers at the end of the 1970s, the infinite flexibility of Party rule - its purely tactical responses - seemed to guarantee it a long future. In *Mała apokalipsa* (1979) Konwicki outlined a situation in which, while the Party had ceased to matter to the rest of society, the opposition offered no distinctive alternative. As the hero says to Bulat, the professional oppositionist (a parody of Kuroń):

> You use the prudent language of a Marxist. You don't perceive the moral and ideological imponderables which have decided our nation's fate. You are just a shadow cabinet of the crew in power.[45]

The final gesture of Polish defiance which the hero is asked to commit is self-immolation on the steps of the Palace of Culture as the Polish and Soviet First Secretaries meet to sign an agreement marking the absorption of Poland into the Soviet Union. Although the act is

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[45] *A Minor Apocalypse* (London, 1983), p. 139.

presented as Romantic and hence intended to appeal to the Poles' spirit of defiance, it remains doubtful whether this will be achieved. Totalitarianism has eroded their ability to answer calls for national resistance. In effect, the hero's act is a futile sacrifice.

Konwicki's analysis in 1979 and Łoziński's in 1985 share certain key assumptions, particularly regarding the essential character and ambitions of the opposition. Taken together, the members of the opposition constitute a political class, whose interest in power is no different from that of the Party leadership. Dr. Kamill in *Sceny myśliwskie* seeks to rise to power on the backs of the working classes, but in order to establish a properly socialist system:

> Doctor Kamill was a professional oppositionist and knew the Party inside out. He had been struggling against it for years and he had day-dreams about a rebellion which would be a true people's revolution. (22)

What had changed in the intervening six years was the perception of the potency of national traditions and the opposition's ability to manipulate them. In the 1985 novel, which adopts more of an official perspective, the problem lies not, as in *Mała apokalipsa*, in the moribundity of the Romantic model, but in its vitality, which inspires insane acts liable to threaten the limited sovereignty of the Polish state. The Polish Romantic tradition of resistance is thus viewed by many of the characters as an extremely pernicious source of national identity. The most forceful exposition of this line of thinking is presented by the pillars of the establishment, as Komendant, the old police chief, states to Lieutenant Michalko:

> There's no need to get worked up about what's going on in Poland, it just needs a sober look to be convinced what Poland is sick with: the cess of Romanticism, as you so kindly put it.(93)

This is a succinct expression of the state authorities' position in the early 1980s. Their own attempts to appropriate the Romantic tradition (from the concept of Socialist Realism as the synthesis of Romanticism and Realism onwards) had failed. They were now forced onto the defensive in their attempts to deconstruct Romantic ideology as a fount of opposition mythology.

Resisting the Romantic Paradigm.

The central plank of Party strategy up to, but even more markedly after, the suppression of Solidarity was the insistence upon the need for a rational approach to the solution of the crisis and for tactics designed to undermine the opposition's use of Romantic mythology against the regime. One of the key topoi of resistance to the authorities in the early 1980s was the promotion of an image of the Jaruzelski regime as an occupying power. This harked back to the Partitions, suggesting that the current elite was yet another in the long line of historical oppressors of the Polish nation.[46]

In general the regime strove to make the Polish love of historical analogies untenable. As Stefan Chwin has noted, the regime geared its policy towards intellectuals in ways intended to disable any such

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46 'In one of the variants they employ, the situation in modern-day Poland is presented as analogous to the situation under the Partitions, and the norms of the nation's life devised by patriots of that period are treated as obligatory principles today. The psychosis of captivity thus created is maintained with the aid of unsophisticated theatricals, appropriate symbolism, cliched gestures and thus by means convenient for determining the expected psychological reactions amongst their audience, people who trust authorities shaped on religious principles'. Jerzy Ładyka, 'Literatura i polityka', *Nowe Drogi*, 1985 (7), p. 159.

response.[47] This was signalled moreover by the renewed priority that Party ideologues gave during Martial Law to the de-mythologisation of Polish history.

Their hope of neutralising Polish history as a repository of opposition patriotic appeals informed their arguments at the First All-Poland Ideological and Theoretical Congress on 2-3 April 1982 about the necessity of a 'proper' analysis of recent history. National unity, in the authorities' version, could not be established until opposition appropriation of national symbols was blocked, as Marian Orzechowski explained:

> Only a historical education which "explains and does not simply describe history and which lays bare the myths" can contribute - as J. Topolski has rightly noted - to the building of unity between Poles.[48]

Thus the patriotic force of figures such as Marshal Piłsudski, who were being appropriated by the opposition as symbols of Polish patriotism, needed to be negated by a proper rational analysis. Invariably this would severely qualify their historical contribution to the development of Polish nationhood.

The need to appropriate history had been implicit in the Party's cultural policy from the outset, with its stress upon the laicisation of society through literary works and specifically by its determination to limit the influence of the Church. In the 1980s the authorities' launch

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[47] One of its most pointed practices was to ensure that internees during Martial Law enjoyed far better conditions than did the mass of the population. A similar intention was evident in its choice of Jerzy Urban, the satirist, as government press spokesman. 'Dlaczego upadek komunizmu zaskoczył literaturę polską ?', in: *Teksty drugie*, 1994 (1), p. 23.

[48] 'Świadomość historyczna jako płaszczyzna walki ideologicznej', *Nowe Drogi*, 1982 (4), p. 58.

of pseudo-consultative bodies like PRON (Patriotyczny Ruch dla Odrodzenia Narodu - the Patriotic Movement for National Revival)[49] in September 1982 and the National Council of Culture (Narodowa Rada Kultury) in January 1983 marked an attempt to appeal to national patriotism. The vigour of their attacks on opposition models indicated, however, that the latter were more successful. The opposition proved much better at manipulating history than the state authorities because of its exploitation of society's deep-rooted fears regarding the Russian threat and the populace's traditional hostility towards centralised authority:

> Anti-socialist demagogues, who exploit the misfortunes brought on by the crisis and at the same time want to deepen them, refer in their ideological manipulations to complexes, prejudices and obsessions fixed in social consciousness.[50]

Certainly no positive vision of the Party's role could be provided, beyond the argument that the decision to impose Martial Law represented a 'lesser evil' in the face of a likely Warsaw Pact invasion. The notion of a 'lesser evil' in itself presupposed a fairly dispassionate view of events, one which was not readily available in the polarised atmosphere of the early 1980s. It represented, rather, a mystification, a projected stance of impartiality, from which the faults of both the Party and Solidarity could be judged fairly.

The most notorious work from the period takes precisely this stance. Roman Bratny's *Rok w trumnie* (1983) satirised the pretentiousness of Solidarity activists among the Warsaw acting fraternity, though having obvious application, it could be inferred,

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[49] It included such loyalists as Safian and Żukrowski.

[50] Ładyka, op. cit.

beyond that community.[51]

The hero belonged neither to the Party nor to Solidarity. He is therefore able to achieve an ostensibly objective position of non-involvement, enabling him to view events dispassionately. For him, Solidarity represents another example of Romantic martyrology:

> I suppose I'm exceptionally resistant to any kind of public enchantment. Hence my distance from Solidarity and the holy insanity of our would-be revolution of 1980. And even more so from the Party.[52]

The slant in the narrative is therefore towards the Party, in accordance with its stated intention to demythologise national traditions. At the same time the novel misrepresents Solidarity's ethos by reducing it to its representatives' actions. The Party, by comparison, is absent from the narrative and therefore not subject to the same reductionism.

The suggestion of moral equivalence between Party officials and Solidarity's leaders was a key motif of the Party's preferred works in the first half of the eighties. 'Panświnizm' ('universal bastardry'), the term coined by Michał Głowiński to define the nature of loyalist polemics against the opposition during the period of Martial Law,[53] best conveys the spirit of these works. The 'reality to be unmasked' was the concern of all factions, regardless of ethos, with political power. The only justification for the Party lies in its ability to guarantee the country's limited independence, which Solidarity cannot. This

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[51] The context for the attack was the almost complete boycott of Polish television by actors in protest against the imposition of Martial Law. Bratny's novel was therefore almost entirely utilitarian in its aims - discrediting actors, albeit in a more direct way, to the same extent that he had contributed to the erosion of the Home Army myth in *Szczęśliwi, torturowani.*

[52] *Rok w trumnie* (2nd ed.) (Warsaw, 1984), p. 161.

[53] 'Żukrowski i inni', in: *Rytuał i demagogia* (Warsaw, 1992), p. 169.

constitutes the main implicit charge laid against its representatives, which is that of political irresponsibility. Oppositionists endanger the very existence of the Polish state.

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Łoziński's *Sceny myśliwskie z Dolnego Śląska* has been described as a faithful photograph of the authorities' state of consciousness after August 1980.[54] In contrast to works analysed earlier, the arguments in favour of Party control derive not from any considerations of social justice, but are simply based on the raison d'etat. The Party controls Poland, because it was chosen in 1947, and it alone assures Polish statehood - that is the fundamental assumption of the regime's supporters.

State officials remain locked in the past: 1944-47 were the decisive years, when the new regime fought and defeated the underground forces to establish a socialist order. For them, the activities of Solidarity constitute an impossible attempt to 'turn back the clock' to a struggle that has long been settled. As Michał Głowiński has commented in relation to the Jaruzelski regime's official discourse, this assumes that authority, once given, is 'unchangeable, inviolable, established for once and all'.[55] This point is made most clearly in the thoughts of Mizera, the police chief, as he considers Wałęsa:

> It was the same enemy he had fought as a young policeman back in '45, '46, '47, it was the same band of retrograde reactionaries from the underground in the pay of international capital, that all-too-obvious scheming devil of the propertied classes disguised as a monkey with a moustache.(84)

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[54] Andrzej W. Pawluczuk, 'Lekcja martwego świata', op. cit., p. 110.

[55] 'Władza mówi o sobie', *Pismak 1863* (Warsaw, 1995), p. 184.

Mizera's thoughts demonstrate the unreconstructed Stalinist cliches which typified the regime's thinking regarding those it designated its enemies. These caricatures betray the assumption that behind any opposition there must be greater 'imperialist' forces hostile to the regime, because the postwar order has given no cause for their actions. The state authorities were legally elected in 1947 and no revision is possible.[56]

The official view of the legitimacy of socialist power is sustained by all the regime's supporters throughout the novel. Resistance to its rule stems therefore from ingratitude, a point made most forcibly by Komendant in an exchange with Florek, a former Home Army soldier beaten by the authorities. Komendant implies that, as an enemy of the state, he has more reason than most to be grateful:

> 'You're stupid, stupid,' hissed Komendant. 'They didn't beat you enough, because you deserve a bullet for all of those slanders, for the sacrifices made by fellow comrades, so that you had something to stuff your face with...'(57)

The assertion that the authorities have provided a normal state and high living standards forms the crux of official arguments in the novel. The political system itself is not viewed as a source of discontent. Instead, to its defenders like Komendant, it appears as historically the best that the Poles have ever known:

> He nodded when the locals greeted him; here people could live normally, could live well, concerning themselves with day to day living and not thinking about any revolt against their leaders, who were legally elected in 1947. What other Party can boast such a long period in power, what other political force is capable

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[56] As Głowiński notes: 'since the Poles decided on socialist authorities in 1944, they have no right to change their decision'. Op. cit., p. 183. It was a transparent untruth that 'choice' was involved, given the magnitude of the coercion and threats needed in 1947 to provide a positive result.

> of maintaining independence ? There isn't any apart from us, there's no better arrangement than in the shadow of Big Brother... (53)

The geopolitical realities of Poland's position do not obtrude here, specifically the idea that no threat to its alliance with the USSR could be tolerated. What is uppermost is the standard official defence of dependency upon the Soviet Union as the guarantor of Polish statehood. The impossibility of changing the alliance is not admitted, only the undesirability of doing so, for Poland must be aligned on one side of the Cold War or the other. Since the West 'betrayed' the Poles in 1945, support is not going to emerge from that direction.

Lieutenant Michalko views the Solidarity activists' conception of a future Poland as blind to the realities of the nuclear age. The non-alignment they are promoting is unfeasible, for the only realities are those of power:

> He did not understand how it was possible not to comprehend the nuclear age, which discounted the wishes of small defenceless nations and gave them no chance, for there wasn't any support in the shadow of the superpowers, and Poland in the shadow of the Soviet Union had that support, Poland was powerful and indestructible in the socialist bloc... (86)

Accordingly the assumption common to all Party members in the world shown in the novel is that the Party cannot and should not do other than continue to rule. It is the only force which can provide Poland with stability.[57] Even Dziuba, the more liberally-minded Party secretary in the locomotive repair shop, approves the all-encompassing nature of Party control without qualifications:

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[57] Although the fundamental argument that the Soviet leadership would not tolerate non-Communist rule in the PRL is never explicitly stated.

'We'll have to give those "Solidarity" mushrooms a bit of a trim,' secretary Dziuba said warmly. 'People are born, live and die in the Party's embraces, because it has existed for a long time and will always exist, until the end of the world.' (79)

The core of Party rule, the rank-and-file, is presented as remaining pure. The Party is not to be identified solely with the lofty elite, but also with the ordinary members, whose example is completely different:

> The Party isn't just the all-high Politburo, as the doctor said, but me and those like me, who do care what's going to happen to the fatherland.(77)

Like Małecki in *Ulica Świętokrzyska*, Dziuba is concerned to ensure the effectiveness of his contribution, not its ideological justification. He remains in the Party, keeping his eyes on the everyday concerns of his remit, and he argues his knowledge of the real interests, both of the country and implicitly of the workers in the factory.

The police perspective - by definition, the most informed and realistic - supports this diagnosis. Michalko diagnoses the crisis as a perennial one, in which the Party executive has mistaken its slogans for reality and become isolated as a result:

> The whole joke is that the language of socialism's opponents is sustained by the thinking of the grey potato eaters, while the state and Party's language is a reflection of the unrestrained delusions of comrades from the Central Committee, who deign to take it for reality. There's nothing dangerous in this up to the moment when the system is in crisis. It's that moment which finishes off every regime, and if it isn't radically repaired it can end in catastrophe. The state and Party's language must express the logic of the day and not the dead wood of roadside slogans. (83-84)

Significant here is the admission of the greater success that the

opposition enjoys in the war of propaganda. As the Party ideologues argued in reality, the Solidarity activists generate support by appealing to the historical complexes of their countrymen. But this admission of the ineffectiveness of the moribund bureaucratic language ('dręt wa mowa') that typifies the leadership's public statements is qualified by the assumption that crisis is always surmountable. There are no systemic problems inherent to Party rule, only the leadership's periodic isolation from the rest of the Party and society. Eventually, Michalko suggests, the leadership's language moves closer to the political reality and the Party defines an effective programme.

In effect the crucial question is that the security infrastructure remain intact. The ultimate sign of the leadership's shift back towards reality will then be its decision to licence the use of force against Solidarity. The present confusion will be resolved by resorting to force, as Komendant suggests:

> They'll have something to fear, when the time comes. It won't be a stroll, fighting with us, my friend, and there won't be any long-winded democratic talk. It's the most serious question of the age.(14)

The decisive argument, as Stalin asked concerning the Pope, is the number of divisions each side commands. On this basis, Solidarity cannot substantiate its dreams of power.

The Struggle between Solidarity and the Party.

The depiction of the political situation obtaining in the novel, because of the apocalyptic overtones given by nearly every one of the participants, suggests that the struggle is moving into its decisive final phase. For Komendant and the other Party members, Solidarity marks an attempt to seize political power which must be resisted. The utopian collective spirit of August 1980 has given way to a radical political

struggle which sidelines moderates like Piotr. The original ideals behind Solidarity's protest are seen as being expropriated by purely political operators and degraded.

The real exposé in the novel relates therefore to the true intentions of the professional oppositionists, like Kamill. They are exploiting the 'genuine workers' movement' to achieve their own agenda of acquiring political power. For Kamill, the realisation of this ultimate aim will make the workers' participation redundant:

> 'Yes, yes,' thought Doctor Kamill lazily, looking at the delicate face of the mediocre village oaf, 'we'll have to force them to take active power, and the rest we'll think about in good company, the rest will be, as Shakespeare wrote, silence.' (24)

In this sense the angle of the narration betrays the political bias in the novel. None of the Party members' thoughts compromise them to the same extent. Their private thoughts are essentially the stuff of Party propaganda, as are the private thoughts of the Solidarity activists.

This is borne out in the exchange between Piotr and Kamill about the political realities in the factory. The time has come for Solidarity to demonstrate its greater power; the truce between it and the Party has ended:

> 'Yes, yes, Doctor,' Piotr cried. 'In the Party there's no shortage of wise heads, even if I find many in the locomotive repair shop who are clear-headed.'
>
> 'The Party doesn't have the confidence of the masses, Piotr,' said Kamill, pinning him down sharply. 'We do. And what's the conclusion ? It's obvious. There can be no diarchy in the factory.'
>
> 'I don't understand. What are you talking about ?'
>
> 'It's very simple, Mr. Branch Chairman of "Solidarity". It's either you or the Party secretary. Tertium non datur.' (27)

The key terms in Kamill's argument are derived from Lenin's reading of the period between the February and October 1917 revolutions. The existence of a 'diarchy' cannot be tolerated in a revolutionary situation: power must be taken by Solidarity or else it will be defeated. This is a purely revolutionary view of the situation obtaining in late 1981 which denies the largely evolutionary and gradualist character of the movement, but, most importantly, it coincides with the Party's own analysis of Solidarity's ultimate aims.[58] The factory where Piotr is Branch Secretary of Solidarity has been chosen by Kamill as the site upon which the trade union will demonstrate its superiority. He insists that the Party secretary Dziuba be driven out of the factory, thus pushing the situation towards an open struggle.

The idea of compromise embodied in Piotr, who feels able to talk to the more moderate Party representatives like Dziuba and thus to arrive at responsible decisions, is being jettisoned by Kamill. The politicians in Solidarity favour a showdown with the Party which they expect to win. The Christian ideals which inspired the Solidarity ethos are being betrayed for the sake of power. Piotr's disillusionment after being ousted by Kamill therefore marks the final degradation of the 'limited revolution' taking place in Poland since August 1980:

> Oh, how he suffered and suffered, inexpressibly and tragically, since honour and righteousness had been trampled down and thrown onto the rubbish heap of humanism and man's sense of dignity defeated by the dirty, unthinking concerns of Doctor Kamill and his band. (79)

The principal values which gave rise to Solidarity are thus

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[58] The idea of the revolutionary potential of Solidarity is a central feature of Socialist Worker analyses, such as Barker and Weber's book *Solidarność: From Gdańsk to Military Repression* (London, 1982).

abandoned by the extremists who have come to control its operations. But even they possess fundamental delusions about the extent of what they can achieve. The workers prove susceptible to Kamill's demagoguery, yet this does not signify their absolute confidence in Kamill.

In essence, Kamill simply wants a better, more socialist social revolution; he wishes to go back to the foundation of the PRL and build it up again in closer accordance with socialist ideals (22). Piotr, who is closer to the workers, believes that they show themselves to be equally resistant to Kamill's schemes. The radical change Kamill envisages endangers their principal concern - their own comfort - which the present system in any case guarantees them. In this way Piotr, the lone idealist among the characters in the novel, descends into absolute cynicism. The nadir is his arrival at conclusions similar to those of Komendant about the system's convenience for all who live in it:

> I know them, I know what they think about, rabble that they are, when they've stuffed their bellies. They don't want to overthrow the system, Doctor Kamill, they don't want any freedom, but they think how they can cheat, wangle, steal something from the factory to sell for booze. The system is wonderful because it doesn't drive them hard at work, and each of them knows all too well how you have to pile it on in a parliamentary democracy. That's how the cookie crumbles, whether you're at the front, at the top, or the back. The system is comforting. (80)

The extremists underestimate this factor. Because workers are able to manipulate the system so easily, Piotr maintains, they will not

seek to destroy it.[59] On the whole the Solidarity activists betray the same degree of delusion that Michalko ascribes to the Central Committee. At bottom, however, they exhibit profound contempt for the workers and peasants, who are simply base material to be moulded and controlled by the intelligentsia.

'Panświnizm' in *Sceny myśliwskie*.

The masses are viewed with contempt by both sides. In Solidarity's case, however, the depth of the contempt is more forcible in view of its ideal of social unity. In effect, Solidarity activists share the same utilitarian approach to the workers as does the Party, seeking to exploit them whilst raising them on an ideological pedestal in the social order. The female Solidarity activist Zofia demonstrates this train of thought very clearly in her fantasises about the transformation of the prosaic men she sees about her into romantic heroes:

> She saw these defeated men in her romantic daydreams as Knights of the Cross fighting the evil empire to their last breath, to their final thoughts, being consumed by a cosmic conflagration. Was that not the only justification for their villainous souls ? (20-21)

The masses are essentially untrustworthy, not capable of the long-term self-sacrifice which the Solidarity activists require of them in order

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59 This fundamental acceptance of the system was a key motif in Tadeusz Siejak's works also, as Stefan Chwin noted: 'In his novels, Siejak described the phenomenon of 'district socialism'. In his interpretation, it was a morally corroded society, hostile towards communism, but also wonderfully adapted to the system, which revolted in 1980 against its primitive, imperfect authorities, who had emerged from the lower classes', 'Dlaczego upadek komunizmu...', op. cit. [footnote 47], p. 18. In the stream-of-consciousness ending of *Oficer* (Warsaw, 1981), Siejak's hero conveys a despairing vision of the everyday corruption of the system, which everyone exploits to his or her advantage: 'after all, they steal things if not by the truckload than in their briefcases or under their co and nothing's judged from a moral standpoint only don't get caught and everything's all right or even better' (235)

to overthrow the system.[60] Kamill, like Komendant, betrays similar genetically-based thinking when he considers the postwar generations, who are for him 'inferior stock':

> This spawn of people made degenerate by totalitarianism tormented him, this subjugated mass, which the spectre of starvation had roused from its drunken disgrace and forced to rebel. How long would its strength last ? How long would faith in the Pope be enough ? (22)

Poles have been corrupted by Party rule to such an extent that they cannot mount a challenge to their oppressors. Kamill seizes every hope of the continuation of the struggle against the Party, whether it is basic bodily needs or the patriotic inspiration drawn from the Polish Pope. He perceives their revolutionary fervour to be short-lived, and therefore the prospect of worsening conditions is preferable because it radicalises the workers, making them more inclined to revolutionary solutions.

The same preconceptions concerning the postwar generations are voiced by Komendant. The war represents the decisive test of character; those who lived through it demonstrated their worth and their right to enjoy all the subsequent pleasures of peacetime:

> That whole generation born after the war is a mongrel formation not worth a kick in the arse, never mind the lustful thighs of women like Basica. (91)

This view is reinforced by Michalko, whose experience in his job has led him to dismiss all oppositionists as merely devious:

> Through having to deal with the scheming enemies of the

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[60] For the representatives of Solidarity and the Party in the novel the masses generally tend to display 'political immaturity' and cannot be trusted to act properly without the 'proper' guidance.

> socialist state he had arrived at the firm opinion that all people were scum. (83)

The ultimate conclusion of these various ruminations on the nature of Poles is that the nation needs to be strictly controlled. The mistake of Solidarity in Michalko's eyes is to renounce the traditional violent means of enforcing authority to stir them up with words, without taking responsibility for their consequences:

> that swindler, who takes no responsibility for anything, vomits up philosophical mishmash, (...) vomits up the remains of national mythology and delights the crowds, enriches them inwardly to such an extent that the sticks fly out of their hands. And without the whip and the stick you can't rule Poles, the Partitioning powers knew this all too well, they can't be ruled because they immediately leap for your throat and bite, the mangy swine, worse than a wild mongrel. (119)

Unusually, in view of the authorities' desire to identify themselves as Poles, Michalko betrays his position to be here closer to the Poles' historical oppressors. The Polish nation is merely a source of trouble for its rulers. In this sense Michalko corroborates Gomułka's complaint about the Romantic tradition of resistance.[61] But the Party administration in the 1970s is shown to be utterly brutal and corrupt, secure in its privileges and licence. Nonetheless, this does not impinge on the imagination of the Party's representatives as sufficient cause for the national revolt against Communist authority. Their reflections are concerned solely with their continuance in power.

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61 'Although our historical development has removed the reasons which justified and even decreed disobedience toward the law, the tradition has remained and leaves a deep impression on society's attitudes. We can't choose our traditions; we just inherit them as they are. But they can die out or remain alive, depending on how they are approached', 'List Władysława Gomułki z 27 marca 1971 r. do Biura Politycznego KC PZPR', *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego. Grudzień 1970*, op. cit., p. 268.

'Something Rotten in the State of Poland.'

The main revelations about the privileges of the ruling elite under Gierek come from the memories of Komendant, who used to go hunting with senior dignitaries visiting the area. The dilemmas over whether to enjoy official privileges, which characterised the Party figures in Safian's novel, have no validity for Komendant. The Party officials' hunting trips are rather a ceremonial ritual whereby they mark their superiority to the rest of the populace:

> The luxury cars sped from the Town into the forest, leaving behind them the dignitaries' car fumes, which the peasants, called farmers, breathed in like the smell of holy oil, because everything depended on the whims and free will of those lords and masters.(45)

The dignitaries enjoy privileges similar to those of the old aristocracy; they are the new owners of the lower classes.[62] The socialist system is run for their benefit, first and foremost. In the bluntest terms, such as Komendant uses to chasten a defiant forester who snubbed one of the dignitaries, Party membership brings immunity. The authorities can do what they like with civilians:

> ...you're a complete zero if you're not in the Party, you're a social zero, forester, not worth a kick in the arse.(46-47)

These naked arguments of power set the Party characters apart from the somewhat cautious examples in the novels analysed hitherto. Similarly, the corruption rife in the system is presented in much more blatant terms than those which prevailed in earlier Party novels. For Komendant some of their distinctions continue to apply, particularly between the prewar generation (his own) and the postwar 'milksops':

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[62] Thus bearing out Kuroń and Modzelewski's thesis of the existence of a new class.

the 'old guard' of the revolution is evidently superior to the new technocrats, who are merely social climbers without moral fibre. His superiority stems also from his awareness of possessing 'real power' in the district as Chief of Police:

> it was he, Komendant, who possessed the real power, power over their filthy rotten thoughts, over their iniquitous sluts, who had been led astray in a childhood devoid of all values, queuing on the reserve list of the Nomenklatura, worthless, pointless people, for whose souls even the Church had stopped praying, because what's the point of resurrecting such moral nonentities, such asocial bastards ... (49)

Komendant's contempt derives from his belief that the younger generations have betrayed the socialism for which he fought. In essence, however, he states his superiority as a proof of manhood. He is the 'dominant male' with genuine authority in a world of surrogates. The concept of masculine vigour underlies his contempt, but typically he makes no attempt to relate effect back to cause: his defining experience of the war and immediate postwar struggle was a historical accident, by definition not available to the younger generation. The notion that the postwar system's development might be viewed as a success, under his steady tutelage, constantly conflicts with his view of the inferiority of its representatives.

The attitude of the security establishment is consistently paternalistic. Thus, the only people who can retain sufficient distance from the current situation to take an 'objective' view of events are the police, Komendant and his protege, Michalko. They alone are unaffected by the 'virus' of Polish Romanticism, because of their awareness of political realities, as he states to Michalko (93). The recourse to history as a means of explanation fundamentally obscures the more recent reasons for the crisis, which lie within the system itself.

The crucial arguments in this respect are those between the old men about the origins of the postwar state.

Komendant delivers the standard Party explanation of the masses' political immaturity. In consequence they need to be ruled by an enlightened government which can divert them from the dangerous delusions generated by Romanticism:

> The masses in our country are ignorant and stupid, and the government's role (the government is the state and vice versa) is to enlighten them, so that they don't live with delusions. That's what Solidarity does, only the other way round - so that they have them.(55)

Zachariasz lends his support to these arguments by suggesting that People's Poland is the work of all its citizens, who have an equal say in the shape it has assumed. Consequently they all bear responsibility for its failure:

> Here you are talking about our country as if it were some colony in the tropics, where you lead the life not of citizens but of filthy natives. Those kids from "Solidarity" can get away with such nonsense, but not you, with one foot in the grave, you know how hellish the war was and how good it felt to have a homeland. We've made a mess of running the country, we've run it badly and fouled it up, and it doesn't matter who's more to blame: the authorities or society. We're all guilty ...(56)

Zachariasz's harking back to the war intends to invoke a sense of unity among all parties by reference to the horrors of the German occupation.[63] By implication this was the crucial experience determining the building of a socialist Poland in order to ensure that war never occurred again. The reason for the country's subsequent decline from those high ideals must therefore lie in the mismanagement of its

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63 An increasingly threadbare form of argumentation, but often utilised in these works, as in the case of *A Personality*.

affairs by the nation as a whole. The authorities are Polish, as are its citizens; thus, Poles of one kind or another bear the blame.

This inclusive definition completely ignores the historical situation wherein the political system was largely forced upon the country, not simply adopted as Zachariasz suggests. The main counter-argument comes from the former Home Army member, Florek, who disputes the capacity of Polish citizens to influence the decision-makers, or indeed to be anything other than a passive body acted upon by the political apparatus:

> What do you mean: we ? Did I run up billions in debts ? Were the People's authorities ever kind enough to ask me, a citizen of this country, for my agreement with the great work of building socialism ? Were we ever a society of free subjects for those authorities ? No, we weren't. We always were and still are a population terrorised by the apparatus of repression. (...) No, our guilt is nothing in comparison to the enormity of the misfortunes which Party comrades brought upon the country. (56-57)

Florek expresses the idea that Polish citizens were always victims of the regimes imposed upon them. He denies any notion that he assented to the establishment of Communist rule in Poland, because he fought in the non-Communist underground and was beaten and interrogated by the secret police. For him, Communist rule was the usurpation of power with the connivance of Stalin (57), and no genuine choice was permitted.

The exchange alters nothing; in effect, the continual return to the past emphasises the sterility of their arguments. For the Communists, the decisive argument was won in 1947 and there is no going back. Whether from convenience or geopolitical realities, the Poles are condemned to socialist rule. By default, even without a convincing ideology, the Party can expect to hold on to power. Yet its irrelevance

to the concerns of the majority is underlined by some of the women in the novel. Male pride in notions of fidelity to the fatherland, or moral ideals, such as those which Komendant and Piotr exhibit, give way before the political indifference of their partners. The notion of fighting for the survival of Polish nationhood is explicitly mocked.[64]

Basica, Komendant's lover, and Piotr's wife, Anetka, are indifferent to their men's political attachments. Komendant's pride in rebuilding his district and ensuring that Lower Silesia remained Polish reduces Basica to laughter (49). Anetka, meanwhile, wishes simply to emigrate from Poland; for her, being Polish has no innate value:

> It's always: the Party this, the Party that, the Party everything, as though our country couldn't exist without the Party. And even if it did disappear from the map, I'd be glad to become a German, so as finally to stop living in fear of not getting a crumb to eat...(61)

The Party, for Anetka, has overstated its case for defending the Polish state's integrity. On a more fundamental level it fails to provide Poles with the basic necessities for living. But she, too, effectively confirms Komendant's argument about the Romantic disease which affects the Polish psyche. Poland is essentially a product of the Poles' fevered imagination:

> oh, my incomprehensible and stupid life, in a country doomed to annihilation, unreal in the ominous shadow of real socialism, filled with the fantasies of the terminally ill ...(66)

The melee of Romantic obsessions, historical, political and religious mania in the presence of increasing threat give apocalyptic

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[64] A repeated trope consistent throughout the novels analysed. Women's ideological threat is centred in their power to seduce the men from the right political course. Thus, Regan's trial in *Wezwany* occurs as a result of Maria's plea to remain uninvolved in the war; Maria Dohm in *Osoba* seduces Krzyżakowski from Poturecki's orbit of influence.

overtones to the sequence of events in the novel. The single most striking aspect of the apocalyptic atmosphere relates to the nature of Komendant's death at the hands of Nogaj.

What Nogaj appears to symbolise in the world depicted in the novel is the Poles' atavistic fears of the East and of cultures utterly alien to Christianity. His name, the reason for which is not explained in the text, has associations with the Tartars. His systematic humiliation of Komendant prior to killing him suggests a morality completely opposed to the values of the other characters. More striking still, however, is the final mental state of Komendant prior to his death. In effect, he returns to his childhood and the impoverished conditions which had inspired him originally to fight for socialism. His final moments transmute his father's critical words about God's being everywhere[65] into his own mythology about the revolution in Poland:

> the universal revolution of the Proletariat will come and ignite its terrible fire in the throats of the masses, the boot of the Divine Hunter will curb the inflamed desires of sick individuals and at last transform the knaves into good and noble people, and we shall drink from this most wonderful world the waters of life for ever and ever...(128)

His final words begging forgiveness as he lies in the thrall of his vision of 'true socialism' are misunderstood by Nogaj as a plea for mercy (128). Komendant, however, has in mind forgiveness as a prefiguration of the change that he believes is to come. Nogaj's last words seem to repudiate that hope: 'That's you done, Komendant' (129). But, in contrast to Piotr, he at least receives that ambiguous

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65 '.. that whole deception, son, that whole Christian religion, that whole unearthly grind serves only the rich. God doesn't need churches, he is everywhere, in every living being on earth, in every honest man'. (127)

moment of transcendence.[66]

* * *

The End of the 'Artistic Revolution' ?

Witold Nawrocki's approving references to the change in the literary language, together with his mention of such writers as Łoziński, Myśliwski and Siejak at the 1985 Party Writers' Conference, marked the entrance of the 'Bereza school' into the centre of Party thinking about literature in the 1980s. Characteristically this interest reflected a concern with the political use that could be made of these writers first and foremost. The 'plebianisation' ('plebeizacja') and 'popularisation' ('uludowienie') of the Polish language,[67] which Nawrocki noted in these authors' literary works (though, significantly, not the mockery of Party-speak evident in their novels), indicated their political acceptability to the Party, understood as a desire to deal with the classes that were most crucial in official ideology.

This was, of course, a particularly narrowly focused reading of the Bereza-sponsored 'artistic revolution' of the 1970s. The revolution was not one that possessed primarily political consequences, indeed it would not have been tolerated if it had. Politics was largely a matter of indifference or rather of individual choice: the focus fell instead upon the renewal of the literary language, which in Bereza's eyes had become ossified, stuck in the nineteenth century. Consequently he promoted works which moved closer to everyday spoken language - in the first

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66 Piotr's final moments are rendered thus: 'He swam out to the middle of the lake in an ever slower rhythm, his clothes weighed him down like a stone tied to his feet, he turned onto his back, a high wave washed over his head, and in utter darkness he went to the bottom'. Drowning is a recurrent fate for Łoziński's idealistic heroes - compare Juliusz Widok in *Paroksyzm* (1988, p. 352).

67 'Krajobraz literatury...', op. cit., p. 41.

instance, writers of 'peasant literature' employing often highly stylised peasant dialects in their works. Invariably this had formal consequences for the narrative, such as the breakdown of plot and polyphonic narration, but these were all secondary to the change in language which Bereza regarded as the primary necessity.[68]

In the highly polarised situation of the mid-1980s the posited non-alignment of the 'artistic revolution' was viewed by underground writers with great suspicion. Łoziński's critics fell essentially into two opposed camps, those in favour stressing the linguistic inventiveness, above all, while their opponents, like Pawluczuk, stressed the absence of any moral centre. This was reflected in their respective reviews of *Sceny myśliwskie*. For the supporters of the 'artistic revolution',[69] Łoziński had given an objective, unbiased portrayal of the reality of the autumn of 1981. The pro-Solidarity and emigre circles tended to see it in exactly the opposite terms as a gross misrepresentation of the actuality. The author's refusal to endorse Solidarity was for them tantamount to moral bankruptcy.[70]

Bakhtin's concept of 'polyphony' informs Łoziński's artistic works generally.[71] *Sceny myśliwskie*, where the characters think and speak constantly without any authorial frame, bears out Bakhtin's definition of polyphony as

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68 'Suplement', in: *Bieg rzeczy* (Warsaw, 1982), p. 14.

69 For example, Leszek Bugajski: 'Dzieci epoki', *Pismo literacko-artystyczne*, 1986 (2).

70 Pawluczuk is a representative voice, 'Lekcja martwego ...', op. cit.

71 Although most radically in his first novels. See Jan Galant's excellent article, 'Młoda proza polska lat siedemdziesiątych wobec narracji klasycznej', *Pamiętnik literacki*, 1994 (2), p. 99.

> the *plurality of equal consciousnesses and their worlds*, which are combined here into the unity of a given event, while at the same time retaining their unmergedness.[72]

No one view is ultimately endorsed or condemned. However, the novel's reduced social and political vista qualifies its apparent objectivity. Solidarity's motivation in the closing months of its first phase of existence is distorted, while the implicit assumption of the desirability of continuing Party rule - if only to save the Poles from themselves - conditions the course of the plot. 'Polyphony' marks the novel as 'aligned' in the same way as the specifically formulated 'common sense' of Bratny's *Szczęśliwi torturowani* demonstrated alignment. In each case, the minimal requirement of writing from the Party's perspective had been observed. By implication, after the upheaval, normalisation could resume.

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[72] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Ann Arbor, 1973), p. 4.

CONCLUSION

The General Characteristics of the 'Committed' Novel.

> Writers have always been divided into those who write "for" the reader and those who write against him. (...) Success and defeat lie in both categories. These are normal literary games. But in People's Poland they took place within the closed circuit of writer-state, with the reader as passive onlooker.[1]

Despite their being written by different authors, being published at different times, and displaying different styles and techniques, the six novels analysed in the thesis betray remarkable similarities. To some extent, as I have indicated, this was due to the operations of the cultural administration, above all the censorship office, which imposed considerable restrictions upon the portrayal of the present. These concerned, first and foremost, relations with the Soviet Union and the depiction of recent history, particularly where the author's intentions might compromise official accounts. Administrative factors alone, however, do not explain the recurrence of situations and moral dilemmas in these works.

The Depiction of History.

None of the texts diverged significantly from the official version of recent history; indeed, their very time structures mirrored the weight attached by the Party leadership to each stage of the postwar state's development. The decisive era is the years between the Red Army's liberation of Poland and the establishment of a socialist regime. In accordance with the authorities' tendency to draw a veil of silence over Stalinism in Poland, the portrayal of the early fifties, although understood as a central experience for many characters in these works,

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[1] Andrzej Kijowski, 'A literatura ?', in: *Kroniki Dedala* (Warsaw, 1986), p. 231.

is reduced to a few allusions or absent altogether. Thus, Kromer's interrogation and Mańka's statement in *A Personality* are presented as typical documents of the Stalinist era, which itself however constituted a single exceptional aberration in postwar history - a 'crime of passion', as Regan in *He who was Summoned* so misleadingly puts it.

The Stalinist years, as the state continued to insist, remained a vital stage of the system's formation, not merely a dreadful aberration. This is borne out by the fact that those who do not experience Stalinism - such as Siwy in *Happy, Tortured* - are prevented from ever understanding latter-day Poland. The early 1950s are a source of character definition: what the figures did then defines their subsequent positions. The gravitation of the opposition away from the Party is traced to their ardent zeal in propagating the Party's cause under Stalinism. They are presented as acting in 'bad faith', because they subsequently leave the Party. Faith in the Party therefore remains the touchstone of all moral standards.

The Nature of the Opposition.

The key oppositionists emerge as intellectual and moral renegades. Their situation is no longer that of the Socialist Realist novel's 'class enemy', who was implacably hostile to the socialist project from the very outset. In a sense, their motivation remains as mysterious as the 'class enemy' of the Socialist Realist novel, since no reason is adduced for their conversion other than the standard accusation of moral opportunism. Over the course of the twenty-six years from 1959 to 1985, this type undergoes some development reflective of the changing political circumstances.

The starting point is marked by Henryk from *Happy, Tortured*, who is guilty of a double betrayal: firstly, of the ideals of the Home

Army, and secondly, of the Party, as he writes his new novel in the attempt to glamourise the tragedy of the Home Army under Stalinist oppression. In *A Personality*, Krzyżakowski demonstrates a similar outlook, leaving the Party precisely when normality returned to the political system. Bożkowski in *Holy Cross Street* gives a further twist to this theme by insisting on the 'absolute relativism' of moral standards in the face of historical necessity. Finally, Doctor Kamill in *Hunting Scenes* demonstrates the logic of this development at its fullest: the former vehement Stalinist has changed into the equally vehement oppositionist. In none of these cases is there any 'rational re-evaluation' of the role they played in the Stalinist years,[2] merely a complete volte-face and adoption of a diametrically opposed position.

These transformations demonstrate the existence of the 'current myths' (as identified by Kubikowski) of 'universal progress', 'universal injustice' and 'clean hands'. The Party's official line insisted upon the first factor, ruling out any presentation of those years which was framed in totally negative terms. Nonetheless, it acknowledged to a lesser degree the second and third factors: that injustices had been suffered by society as a whole and that no-one, or rather everyone, was responsible.

The preferred novels represent a development upon this theme. They suggest, by contrast, that specific individuals, inspired by political opportunism, were principally to blame. Over time, this motif of the 'bad faith' of old Stalinists came to be adopted as the official explanation of the rise of an organised opposition in the form of the 'second circulation' and the intellectuals who advised Solidarity. The accusation of 'bad faith' enabled the responsibility for Socialist Realism

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2 The response favoured by the Party, and seen as being exemplified by the dignified reappraisal of their Socialist Realist contribution by Iwaszkiewicz and Kruczkowski, above all.

and Stalinism to be transferred from the political system to individuals currently opposed to it: in the simplest terms, the opposition was responsible for Stalinism and Socialist Realism.[3] Inevitably, though, this practice was a gross misrepresentation of the reality.

In a number of cases the works demonstrate the authors' own lives' 'thesis' of the need for a proper, 'objective' appraisal of Stalinist abuses: although they 'suffered' at the time, they nevertheless retained faith in the Party and continued afterwards to work within official strictures. This served to underline their usefulness and reliability for the Party, in contrast to the unpredictability of their more illustrious contemporaries, like Andrzejewski, who had abandoned the 'cause'.

The Real Audience for the 'Committed' Novel.

The autobiographical elements of these works and indeed their self-referentiality raise the question of their ultimate target audience. The opening quotation from Andrzej Kijowski describes what he regards as the normal literary order prevailing between writer and reader, where the most important audience for a literary work is the public. In the PRL, this 'normal' relationship was therefore subverted by Party control over literature, and at the same time the 'reader' was supplanted by the administration.

This was not quite true of the preferred novels. In their case the 'reader' was plural. The 'committed' writer was just as interested in engaging the attention of the decision-makers and his fellow-writers as the wider public. The self-referentiality - the constant presence of literary concerns in these novels - stemmed from the writer's desire to provide self-justification for his own political choices in relation to other

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[3] A development noted by Andrzej Osęka in his article 'Gdyby tylko chcieli mówić' (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1995, 5-6 August) on the chief post-Communist cultural newspaper, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* , where Bratny and other former Party writers work.

writers.

With the exception of Przymanowski's *He who is Summoned*, each novel either has a character who is a writer or uses literature as a frame of reference. The chief example of the latter is Pociej's reflections in *The Stepchildren* on the similarities between justice and literature, neither of which serve the social interest by being treated in an impromptu fashion in accordance with current needs.[4] Writers in these works are characterised by moral ambivalence and therefore usually oppositionists (Henryk, Krzyżakowski and Brzecki). By definition, they therefore generate most of the political arguments in these novels about the nature and failings of the system. The penultimate novel, *Holy Cross Street*, demonstrates the widest panoply, from regime-supporter, through loyal critic, to outright dissident. At all stages, the importance of what writers have to say is underlined. It is an indication of the moral nihilism prevalent in Łoziński's *Hunting Scenes*... that this tendency is openly disparaged. Piotr's wife, Anetka, denounces writers' pretensions to any sort of moral authority.[5] This is significant, because in the world of the 'committed' novel it is often from 'non-committed' women that the principal ideological challenge comes.

The Role of Women.

The female characters in these novels tend to fall into one of two categories. On the one hand, there is the positive, long-suffering and essentially passive example of Ina and Ewa in particular, at sea in a

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4 *Pasierbowie*, op. cit., p. 87.

5 'When I see them on television with a mouth full of platitudes, (...) when they show their little books, which no-one reads, (...) you loathsome library drones, you utter degenerates, stop teaching your mothers how to suck eggs...', *Sceny myśliwskie*..., op. cit., p. 61.

reality that they cannot comprehend, but nonetheless a repository of virtue. More common, however, is the attribution of demonic qualities to women characters so that they come to fulfil the third role which Katerina Clark ascribed to them in the Soviet Socialist Realist novel, that of 'the woman [as] witch and temptress'.[6] As she goes on to say:

> It is only in this variant that explicit sexuality is permissible. As in hagiography, the hero must overcome his sexual temptations if he is to achieve "grace" and be initiated.[7]

This paradigm does not hold, however, for the post-1956 'committed' novels, even as they activate the Socialist Realist scheme. Nearly every character who experiences sexual congress fails the implicit ideological challenge it contains. Siwy sleeps with Henryk's wife Magda and overturns the central Home Army value of loyalty towards comrades. Similarly, Maria Dohm uses sex as a means to overcome Krzyżakowski's scruples about disengagement from the underground's struggle. On a less dramatic level, the temptation is one of normal domesticity. Regan rejects his lover's entreaties not to participate in the war not merely out of patriotic pride but also because of his fear of the loss of revolutionary zeal. Contrariwise, Larski feels his revolutionary asceticism compromised by the need to provide creature comforts for his partner Katerina.

The threat posed by female characters is directed not only towards the socialist ideology. Repeatedly they challenge the core of national identity. Ewa sees the only possibility for realising herself lying in emigration; Maria Dohm doubts her Polishness; Anetka finds it an irrelevance when the basic necessities of existence are lacking. This

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6 *The Soviet Novel. History as Ritual* (Chicago and London, 1981), p. 183. As far as I am aware there has been no treatment of the role of women in Polish Socialist Realist novels.

7 Ibid.

questioning of the relevance of Polish identity by women is all the more serious given the tendency within the heroes to identify patriotism and the Polish national character with socialism. Patriotism, indeed, represented a potentially more cohesive force than socialism: being accused of 'un-Polish activities' carried far greater opprobrium than any accusation of being 'anti-socialist'. The nebulousness of the term reflects, however, another essential feature of the outlook of the preferred novel - its fundamental opacity.

Effect without Cause in the Depicted World.

No definite reason is provided for the decisions or actions of the heroes; the moral dilemmas in which they are embroiled are ultimately unresolved. The notion of the complexity of truth - the obligation placed by Gomułka on any writer seeking to depict the Stalinist years - is borne out by all these novels insofar as no-one's rationale assumes supremacy in the depicted world. The works are *par excellence* equivocations on the nature of Party rule, which, once opportunism has been exorcised from the system, cannot provide any further account of the reasons for the continuing crisis. At each point the paramount need is for a 'return to basics', to the fundamental principles of the socialist order.[8]

The form that this 'return to basics' takes on the plot level is that of the quest. Nearly all the major characters are engaged in the search for the precise moment when the revolution went astray. In the case of Leon Pociej and the young researcher of *A Personality*, the crucial issue is to identify an alternative to the authoritarian socialism which their fathers espouse. The outcome of their search is the acquisition of knowledge for the first time. By contrast, the more mature figures of

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[8] In this respect they bear out Taras's analysis of the failings of Party ideology in Poland as stemming from the primacy of 'operative ideology' over 'fundamental principles'.

Regan and Osada, on the basis of their experience, come to regard the present system as flawed; the postwar edifice does not match their prewar ideals. For that reason the depicted world of these novels proves to be highly ambiguous, and even threatening, for the main characters. The moral certainties associated with the period immediately after the war and under Stalinism are no longer in evidence.

The four protagonists are left instead to face the imponderabilia of human existence. They share an overriding concern with the concepts of 'justice', 'truth' and a non-relativistic morality. A key motif of all these works is the status of latter-day Poland as a degraded and diminuendo version of the social revolution at its height during the Stalinist years. At that time, action was still possible; in the present, in stark contrast, they are largely limited to reflection.

One aspect of this tendency lay in what Czeszko termed 'socialist Hamletising',[9] essentially navel-gazing on the part of the Party officials. Another consequence, however, was outlined by Paweł Siekierski in relation to the language of the characters in *Holy Cross Street* , which is in many ways the summation of the 'committed' trend:

> It is a language which by its very essence is incapable of dialogue - it is as closed as the reality in which the heroes live. For that reason it is understandable why nothing actually happens in the novel right up to its end: its linguistic and ideological structure rules out in advance any sort of real change, any transformation within the framework of the world created by the author.[10]

Each work thus served by default as a justification of the status quo. But such a justification did not constitute an absolute endorsement

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[9] See chapter 5 on Zbigniew Safian.

[10] 'Śmietnik idei', *Literatura*, 1981 (12), p. 12.

of the political system: these novels are remarkable in the ambivalence of their closures. There is no optimistic conclusion, as was contingent upon the Socialist Realist novel. By implication, this was intended to make the works more 'realistic'; the image of the complexity of current reality positions these works midway between opposition and total conformity. Indeed, as I have shown, the authors of preferred novels sought to incorporate ideas from criticised and heretical thinkers into their narratives.

The political opposition therefore provided a point of reference at least as important as that of the state authorities. The arguments in favour of greater allowances for 'committed literature' were in essence attempts by the writer to distance himself from the authorities, whilst not closing off the avenues to state support. His ulterior motive in thus stressing his independence was to generate greater conviction, both for his depiction of reality and for his own alignment. The uncertain light in which the Soviet Union, for instance, was presented in these works indicated the author's need to be seen to be dissenting from the official viewpoint, together with the authorities' implicit recognition of that need. But the very fact of the focus on the present, and the ambivalence characteristic of these works, consigned them to a lowly position in the state's estimation: the preferred contemporary novel was widely promoted only at the rare moments when the Party reverted to a more overtly instrumental use of literature, as during the early eighties. At other times it was accepted by the regime as a literature of political and some artistic prestige, one which suggested the political authorities' tolerance of limited criticism.

The ambivalence inherent in such novels remains their lasting characteristic. The Party's role was never sanctioned in an unqualified manner after 1959. Similarly, the opposition was seldom shown in a

completely negative light. The binomial, black-and-white universe of the Socialist Realist novel gave way to a depicted world of gradations of grey in the 'committed' novel.

The key author in this respect was Roman Bratny. The strongly autobiographical elements of his works - their basis in historical fact and their realistic nature - in theory made the assimilation of their political 'message' easier,[11] as German Ritz has argued:

> The point of entry into political literature distinguishes autobiographical literature in Poland from parallel forms in the West, which are, in total contrast, rather an expression of a private literary understanding. The connection with politically committed literature demands that autobiography be dependent on realistic literary depiction. This realistic representation enables the reader firmly to gain his bearings, facilitates direct communication, and in particular helps to carry out the above task of providing a framework of cultural models of behaviour. The dependence on realism is reinforced by the fact that the contemporary Polish novel after 1956, which represented the same aims, remained committed to the model of realistic popular literature (as in the case of Bratny or Kisielewski), regardless of its political alignment.[12]

It is a commonly expressed Marxist position that the essence of the realistic mode permitted ideology to be disguised as any complex of universal abstractions, such as 'nature', 'time' or 'history'. Bratny's realistic fiction demonstrated that point by its attempt to seduce the reader into an acceptance of its world view by its verisimilitude, on terms familiar to the reader. His approach was then to translate

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[11] It is noteworthy that oppositionists were particularly keen to deconstruct Bratny's arguments and works. See Jan Walc's 'Cena obecności', op. cit., and Stanisław Barańczak's two articles devoted to Bratny in *Etyka i poetyka*, op. cit.

[12] German Ritz, *Die Polnische Prosa 1956-1976, Modellierung einer Entwicklung* (Bern, 1990), p. 262.

ideology into the human condition and thereby naturalise the regime's outlook.

A key element in this naturalisation was signalled by the use of the term 'przemijanie' - the irresistible passing of time, which renders all causes obsolete. His depiction of late fifties' Warsaw shows a somewhat distorted picture of a society concerned with business to the exclusion of all questions of morality and social justice - one which still has resonance today. Invariably this 'truth' does not reflect any great insight on Bratny's part; rather, the practice of phrasing human fate in such universal terms as the inevitability of growing old must finally be borne out.

Tadeusz Hołuj's *A Personality* reflects diametrically opposed concerns. Instead of the mystifications which Bratny promoted about the political system, Hołuj attempted to analyse the process whereby such mystifications occur. The greater backing given to Bratny's work suggests that the Party rated his approach more highly,[13] although Hołuj was more often feted as the artistic success.[14]

What these novels ultimately expose is the nature of Party thinking about contemporary reality. In *Hunting Scenes...* the unrestrained language of the Party figures reveals that the regime's sole concern was the retention of power at all costs. Characteristic also is the projection of the Party's rationale onto the opposition, and vice versa. The opposition is therefore always self-serving and opportunistic; the Party, by contrast, is peopled by ascetics with fine moral scruples.

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[13] The print runs for their respective novels are given in the Appendices. Bratny's novel was relatively minor and unknown, yet was still more widely published than Hołuj's prize-winning work.

[14] Compare their potted biographies in the Appendices.

These novels illustrate the degradation of the political ideology over the years from October 1956 to the mid-eighties. The myths of a system in which all had a political share, which were prevalent in October 1956, are reduced finally to arguments of power. In this sense, the novels exposed the real thinking of the decision-makers, even as they operated the official propaganda.

The most telling comment on them was their ultimate fate. If they were read, they are no longer remembered. The issues which they addressed are now largely irrelevant. The limited after-life which some of the authors discussed here enjoy is due to their work in television and cinema. Przymanowski and Safian's 1960s' series are still shown on Polish television, but they are viewed as 'socialist kitsch', enjoyed for their clichéd situations and Communist platitudes.[15] The ideo-educational purpose with which they were originally credited no longer applies.

These loyalist writers retain a certain notoriety in present-day Poland, due largely to the vehemence of the anti-Communist hostility of the political right-wing. Their continuing relatively high profile is seen as symptomatic of the fact that political life has reverted to the pre-1989 phase, following the return of the ex-Communists to power. To that extent the major tenet of their works - that the socialist system survived because of its acceptability to the populace[16] - finds some corroboration. The old opposition-regime divisions, which provided the rationale behind the equivocations of their novels, are, however, rapidly fading into oblivion.

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15 And, in this respect, cherished - in contrast to the imported American variant.

16 Whether it is formulated as social security or, more positively, as the equality of Polish citizens under socialism.

GLOSSARY

AAN:	Archiwum Akt Nowych (New Records Archive, Warsaw)
GUKP(PiW)	Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk (The Main Office for the Control of the Press, Publications and Public Performances)
KC	Komitet Centralny (Central Committee)
Kancelaria Sekretariatu	Chancellory of the Secretariat (of the Central Committee)
literatura rozrachunkowa/ obrachunkowa	'retributionary literature', critical particularly of Stalinist abuses.
'nomenklatura'	The Party's preferential system of appointments to the key posts in all sectors of public life, in theory guaranteeing Party control beyond its own organisational boundaries. The appointees did not have to be Party members.
"Październik"	"October 1956" - the liberal reform process throughout 1956, after the Twentieth Soviet Congress in March, including the riots in Poznań, Gomułka's accession to the post of First Secretary in October 1956, and the new Church-State concordat.
POP	Podstawowa Organizacja Partyjna (Primary Party Organization or party cell in non-party organizations such as branches of the Writers' Union)
PPR	Polska Partia Robotnicza (The Polish Workers' Party, extant 1942-1948, when it merged to become the Polish United Workers' Party)
PRL	Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa (The People's Republic of Poland, or People's Poland)
PWP	Polish Workers' Party
PUWP	Polish United Workers' Party (1948-1990)
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (as PUWP)

WK	Wydział Kultury (The Cultural Department of the Central Committee)
ZLP	Związek Literatów Polskich (The Polish Writers' Union)

APPENDICES

1. PLOT SUMMARIES.

1. *Szczęśliwi, torturowani (Happy, Tortured).*

In the summer of 1958 Siwy returns to Poland for the first time since the war in search of his friends from the Home Army, particularly his former lover Ina. He also intends to clear his mother's name. However, Ina tries to avoid him, and his friend Andrzej, who is now working as a taxi driver, refuses to help him.

Henryk, the other survivor from his group of friends, has just come back from an official trip to the USSR with consumer goods bought with the proceeds of the translation of his first novel. His wife Magda starts an affair with Siwy. Through her (she serves as a surrogate for the elusive Ina) Siwy manages to realise something of his ulterior aim in returning to Poland, which was to rediscover the sense of adventure he had known in his youth in the conspiracy against the Nazis. All the other figures, such as his former superior, the Captain, an employee in state insurance with a sideline in mending women's stockings, are a disappointment to him in this respect.

Siwy discovers that the reason Ina is avoiding him and Andrzej is reluctant to help is that Ina denounced Siwy's mother under interrogation; thus the rehabilitation would cause Ina further distress and incriminate her all over again. He does however meet her again due to Pudel, a black-marketeer, who binds together all the strands of the plot. It is he who provides Andrzej with the taxi on credit, but since the latter is unable to keep up the repayments Pudel decides to steal the car back, also keeping Andrzej's deposit in the process. When he does this, Siwy pursues him and causes him to crash the car. Ina attends the scene of the accident as a doctor.

Siwy is no longer the man she thought he was and she realises that the only one left is Andrzej. However, he lends his flat to Magda and Siwy; Ina discovers this and runs away, chased by Andrzej. Henryk tries also to spend the night at Andrzej's but is rejected. Disillusioned, he returns home, where he finds Siwy. In fury, he slaps Siwy; Magda breaks off with Siwy, who returns to his family in France, convinced that he no longer has a place in the current Poland.

2. *Pasierbowie (The Stepchildren).*

At the end of the 1950s the young prosecutor Leon Pociej is recalled from Warsaw by his father, Jan Pociej, head of the local council in the provincial town of Zaborze, to assume the position of public prosecutor. He arrives to find the 'personality cult' (in respect of his father) in full swing, despite the denunciation of such practices after the XX Congress. His uneasiness increases when he meets his stepmother, Jadwiga, whom he secretly desires, and her daughter Kamila, who continually ridicules the cult that envelops the Pociej family.

This uneasiness gradually affects all areas of his life in the town. The official reports of little crime in Zaborze seem too perfect to be credible. Although his father wants him to investigate the activities of Kamila's group, Leon finds himself drawn into the more mysterious question of his father's involvement in the capture and eventual death of Truszkowski, a local Home Army leader in 1946, and Jadwiga's former husband. This leads Leon to suspect that Truszkowski was betrayed by his father (which the ease of his capture would indicate) and was denied basic human kindnesses (being refused release on humanitarian grounds when dying in prison). Leon therefore resolves that if justice is supposed to have real meaning after October 1956, even the state's early enemies should be able to benefit from posthumous rehabilitation. He consequently sets in motion the official procedures which would lead to Truszkowski's rehabilitation.

When his father learns of this, he attempts to frustrate Leon's application in Warsaw. He fails, however, and, unable to bear any challenge to his authority, commits suicide. In the aftermath of his death, the cult surrounding him rapidly collapses; his political rivals rapidly take control of the town and institute their new order. Leon leaves, and as the train pulls out of Zaborze Kamila cautiously joins him in his compartment.

3. *Wezwany (He who is Summoned).*

The action takes place between the second and third of September 1966. Whilst leading a division during army practice manoeuvres, Karol Regan, a colonel in the Polish Army, is summoned to appear before the military prosecutor, Colonel Kmita. Regan leads the operation to the point of success, outflanking the opposing force by unorthodox means, and then sets off to meet Kmita.

On his journey, Regan turns over in his mind the possible reasons for his summons, immediately attributing it to the unorthodoxy which characterises his life generally. Although he came west with the First Polish Army, his biography includes having a father who fought in the underground against the communists up to 1946; the murder of the policeman stepfather of his first love, Justyna, when his link with the prewar socialists is threatened with exposure; as well as minor bending of regulations in order to provide for his subordinates. In addition, although supposed to provide a moral example to recruits, he continues to have an extra-marital affair with Justyna.

On the first stage of his train journey he meets sergeant major Zakrawacz, whose life he saved in 1946, and Ewa, the young wife of a lieutenant. On the second leg of his train journey he meets a priest who fought in the underground against the communists till 1947. They argue about relations between the new state and the Catholic Church.

In the course of their conversation Regan realises that only one of his past misdemeanours presents a serious threat: the handing over of documents for horses to the leader of the local underground group fighting the communist forces in 1946, his childhood friend Jerzy Siciński. These documents enabled the group, who wished to give up their struggle, to settle down more easily into postwar Polish life. Nonetheless, it was technically an act of treason, carrying the death penalty, and the interval of twenty years which would render the charge invalid elapses in a few days' time. Furthermore, the fact that he has a long-standing affair with Justyna, now married to Jerzy, suggests that the latter has discovered the truth and wants revenge. Regan consequently believes that the urgency of Kmita's summons reflects the proximity of the legal deadline.

The final scene in Kmita's office ends quite differently, however: the prosecutor merely wishes to celebrate the awarding of his doctorate with a group of old friends. Regan realises though that he cannot assume he is safe, since action against him may already have begun.

4. *Osoba (A Personality)* (the wartime plot).

In September 1939 Wacław Poturecki, serving as an officer in the reserve, leads his platoon in disciplined retreat back to his home town, Górniki, and meets up with the stranded Władysław Cena. Realising that the Polish Army has been defeated, but resisting despair, he instructs his men to bury their weapons so that they may be retrieved for any future armed action. Once back in Górniki, he begins to set up a resistance network with a former pupil, Lesław Krzyżakowski, and fellow teacher, Tadeusz Kromer, in the local second-hand bookshop.

His first action, which is aided by Jan Dobry, is to free Polish soldiers captured by the Nazis who are on their way to prison camps inside the Reich. He encounters Staszewski, who is demoralised by the military catastrophe but who becomes inspired by Poturecki's refusal to admit defeat. Poturecki's wife Wanda has at this time fled to Lwów in the Soviet sector with their daughter Anna. They are eventually ferried back to Nazi-occupied territory by Konstanty Stefanik, who appears to work for Soviet Intelligence.

On Christmas Eve 1939 the group founds its initial organization, the ZPR (Związek Polskiej Rewolucji - Polish Revolutionary Union), to fight the German occupiers, with the ultimate aim of a European-wide revolution. Its leadership includes Piotr Mańka, Dobry, Cena, "Grzegorz" and "Nastek". They decide to publish an underground newspaper, "Gwiazda", as a symbol of their resistance.

The advent of the Nazi terror in the town over the summer of 1940 is marked by the murder of leading figures and the creation of the ghetto. Maria Dohm, Krzyżakowski's girlfriend, is arrested and then freed in mysterious circumstances. The Germans start to concentrate their forces prior to the invasion of the USSR, employing Jews as slave labour to build an airstrip (November).

In March 1941 local workers, guided by the ZPR, start a successful strike for higher wages in the local quarry and in a factory producing agricultural machinery. Seeing the strike as a localized protest, the Nazis do not employ repressive measures. In June, after an initial reconnaissance mission by Poturecki convinces him of the urgency of their plight, the ZPR begins its operation to liberate Jews from the ghetto, amongst whom there is Kromer's illegitimate son. However, the scheme fails when Jurgowski, the policeman who was to help them, is betrayed. A group of Jews is shot, while he is arrested and sent to Auschwitz.

In October Krzyżakowski and Kromer are arrested as part of the Nazi operation to terrorise the populace. In reply the ZPR kidnaps the local German commander, Fenske, which brings their release. The local Home Army leadership, including Captain Dohm-Domański - a

relative of Maria's - is captured by the Nazis.

In January 1942, in the aftermath of the foundation of the Polish Workers' Party, Wojciech Dobry, Jan's brother, comes to enlist the group. Poturecki has doubts about the correctness of his own approach, but these disappear when he is appointed local First Secretary. The concept of the National Unity Front unsettles the group, above all the priority given to liberation over international revolution.

In July three young right-wing partisans attempt to assassinate Poturecki. He disarms his assailants, chastises them and sends them to Warsaw on pain of death should they return. With Anna, Wanda and Mańka he sets off for the south to start setting up partisan bases. In August Cena takes his platoon off to the south. Kromer builds a mine for the organisation; it is used to blow up a railway bridge.

In September 1942 Wojciech Dobry rebuffs an attempt to oust Poturecki from his post. Poturecki is forced to adopt a lower public profile as the German retaliations against the partisans intensify. He continues to operate, however, bringing in Grygier, Staszewski's brother-in-law, as his bodyguard from Cracow. Cena's unit carries out their first major operation with an attack on an oil refinery. In October Poturecki avoids arrest during the massive Nazi operation in Cracow which destroys the PWP's district leadership. Wojciech Dobry is killed in Warsaw.

The situation becomes ever more dangerous as the Nazis trace the PWP organization to Górniki. In February 1943 a number of the group are seized at Krzyżakowski's wedding to Maria Dohm, which Poturecki just fails to attend. Maria is soon released; Krzyżakowski escapes in improbable circumstances, and they flee together to Warsaw. In March Cena's unit blows up a train, taking part also in the fight against the clearance of the Zamość district for German settlement. The Potureckis are arrested. Wacław dies a week later in prison; Wanda is shot. In retaliation, Cena and Grygier assassinate the local chief of the Gestapo. Piotr Mańka takes over command and passes a death sentence on Stefanik (the last person to see Poturecki alive), who disappears.

5. Ulica Świętokrzyska (Holy Cross Street).

The main action appears to be set in the spring of 1976. Tadeusz Osada, the director of a government institute on Świętokrzyska Street in the centre of Warsaw, attends a reception for the writer Rosowski, having just returned from an official trip to Sofia. In his absence his deputy Małecki has given the go-ahead for the construction of blocks of flats instead of a planned leisure complex - in contravention of institute policy. Osada intends to sack him, moved by long-held antipathy. Rosowski advises him against any such step.

While travelling to Rosowski's place in Żoliborz some days later, Osada reflects on his dealings with Małecki and Mieczysław, the former head of the institute. He considers recent political storms, such as the case of Larski, a reputed Party ascetic who seems posthumously to have been involved in corruption; that of his young protege, Michał Witkowski, who had leaked information to the press about the deficiencies in building, but whom Osada defends against dismissal; and finally, his friend Piotr's controversial film The *Loneliness of Ryszard Z.*, about the authorities' ignorance of reality, which Osada had also defended.

Rosowski proves anxious to illustrate the usefulness of Małecki, but fails to move Osada. Piotr invites Osada to a party, where a cross-section of regime and opposition artists gather. The following day Małecki hands him a letter he had found among Larski's papers effectively incriminating a number of the institute's board.

Osada decides to discover the recipient, since he had been remiss in not informing the institute of this evidence of corruption. So he visits Jan, a superior, who criticises what he sees as indecisiveness and confused values on Osada's part (especially regarding Witkowski and Piotr). Jan, too, advises against sacking Małecki, whom he views as essential to Osada. The letter's real recipient turns out to be Mieczysław, who had dismissed it as insignificant.

Osada is further surprised by his daughter Beata, who works as a psychologist for difficult children. She reveals that she is to marry Bolek, one of Małecki's sons. Małecki organises the wedding celebrations, which see Osada's attitude towards him turn into uneasy acceptance.

6. *Sceny myśliwskie z Dolnego Śląska (Hunting Scenes from Lower Silesia)*

The story is set in a small unidentified town in Lower Silesia in autumn 1981. Komendant, the old former chief of police in the town, is mourning the death of his last lover, Basica. She has been murdered by her husband, Nogaj, who has escaped from prison, intending to wreak vengeance upon Komendant.

The old police chief had been in control of the town since the war; he is an old-fashioned and unapologetic Stalinist. In his arguments with Zachariasz, his friend and old maths teacher, he inveighs against any form of resistance to the regime, and most recently Solidarity activists. Poles need an authoritarian and strong regime, backed by the Soviet Union, to have any place in Europe.

Zachariasz's son, Piotr, is the chairman of the Solidarity branch in the local locomotive repair shops and a moderate, who favours negotiation with the state authorities. His position is undermined, however, by the professional oppositionist Dr. Kamill, who decides that it is time for more resolute action against the Party.

Kamill orders Piotr to oust the Party secretary from the factory. At a meeting in the factory this motion is presented in an extremely demagogic way by Kamill, who persuades the workers to throw the Party out of the factory. Piotr is sidelined, and his earlier hopes for the humanitarian and unifying spirit of Solidarity are dashed. He drowns himself in the local lake. Nogaj finally meets with Komendant, kicks him senseless and stabs him to death.

2. BIOGRAPHIES:

1. Roman Bratny (1921-)

Bratny's real name is Roman Mularczyk; he adopted a pseudonym to distinguish himself from his brother, Andrzej, the film director. During the German occupation he was active in Warsaw underground cultural life, working with two journals, *Kuźnia* and *Dźwigary*. His literary debut was a volume of poetry, *Pogarda* (*Contempt*). He fought in the Warsaw Uprising, where he was taken prisoner, and spent the rest of the war in prison camps, finally in France.

He returned to Poland after the war and studied at the Warsaw Academy of Political Sciences. From 1946 to 1947 he was the main editor of *Pokolenie*, a newspaper for young writers who had been associated with the Home Army, effectively a sign of postwar normalization to those writers who were still in the underground. In 1950-51 he was a member of the staff of *Nowa Kultura*, before travelling to Szczecin, where he worked in the theatre. This represented a kind of internal exile for Bratny, who at the height of Stalinism was tainted by his Home Army past. His other major posts include: Literary Director of the Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw (from 1975) and deputy editor of *Kultura* (between 1963 and 1971). In 1972 he won a State Prize for Literature (II Class).

Bratny's work is largely autobiographical, focussing mainly on the fate of former Home Army soldiers in postwar Poland. The most famous of these was *Kolumbowie* (1957), which is still on the national school literature syllabus. The next most famous are *Życie raz jeszcze* (1967), *Losy* (1973), his autobiographies *Pamiętnik moich książek* (volume 1, 1978; volume 2, 1983), and his 1983 novel *Rok w trumnie*. Many of his works have been made into films.

Bratny continues to write and is currently associated with the left-wing *Wiadomości Kulturalne*, which is revising the reputation of many writers vilified as regime supporters during the PRL.

2. Jerzy Putrament (1910-1986).

Between 1930 and 1934 Putrament studied Polish Literature at Vilnius University. He was active in student literary and artistic life, centred on the paper *Żagary*, where his colleagues included Czesław Miłosz, the future Nobel Prize winner. Putrament began his career by writing avantgarde poetry. In 1936 he published a theoretical study of the shorter works of the nineteenth-century realist writer Bolesław

Prus. During his student years Putrament was a member of the clandestine Student Left Union, "Front", which had been initiated by the Polish Communist Party. In 1935-36 he co-edited *Poprostu* and *Karta*, being accused in 1937 of promoting Communist propaganda and put on trial.

After the outbreak of the war Putrament fled to Lwów, before heading further east to Moscow after the German invasion. In 1943 he helped to found the Union of Polish Patriots and the First Polish Army, which was to fight on the Eastern Front. He became political and educational officer of the First "Kościuszko" Division and co-edited *Nowe Widnokręgi*. He helped to set up newspapers on Polish liberated territories in 1944-45, becoming editor of the Lublin daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* and Cracow's *Dziennik Polski*. Between 1945 and 1950 he worked in the diplomatic service as the Polish emissary to Switzerland, the ambassador in France and the Polish representative on the UN Security Council's Balkan Commission. He returned to Warsaw in 1950 and began to play an active role in literary life. From 1950 to 1956 he was General Secretary of the Writers' Union and subsequently vice-president of its Main Executive. He co-edited *Miesięcznik Literacki* between 1966 and 1971, then served as main editor of *Literatura* from 1972 to 1981. A member of the PUWP, he was candidate member of the Central Committee from 1948, before being a full member from 1964 to 1981. In the years 1952-56 he was a deputy in the Sejm.

His works won him State prizes in 1953 and 1955 (II Class) and in 1964 (I Class). In 1974 he received the Order of the Builders of Peoples' Poland.

3. Janusz Przymanowski (1922-).

Przymanowski graduated in history at Warsaw University. He took part as a volunteer in the September campaign before joining the Red Army in 1943, in which he fought in the Crimea and then in the People's Army as an artillery officer. He participated in the forcing of the Vistula and in the liberation of Praga and Warsaw in 1945; he was also a correspondent for the front-line newspaper *Zwyciężymy*.

After the war he edited military journals and was an officer in the Main Political Executive of the Polish Army. His literary debut came in 1950, and during Socialist Realism Przymanowski wrote tales about army life for young people. His novel *Czterej pancerni i pies* (1964-1970) became the basis for the script of an enormously popular television series in the 1960s which in a feature film version brought him a joint Ministry of Culture prize in 1968. He wrote a monograph on the battle of Studzianki (1966). His novels for adults deal largely

with the Army: *Wezwany* (1968), and *Znużony* (1974), although his 1972 novel *Zawzięty* is set in Paris in 1968.

From 1980 to the mid-eighties he was a member of the Sejm.

4. Tadeusz Hołuj (1916-1985)

During the interwar period Hołuj was active in the democratic youth movement, organizing and co-editing the paper *Nasz Wyraz.* Whilst studying Law and Polish at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow he worked in the Workers' Institute of Culture and Education in the town. He took part in the September campaign, and then in the underground ZWZ (Związek Walki Zbrojnej). In 1942, whilst working for German Radio, he was arrested and sent to Auschwitz, spending the remainder of the war in concentration camps, where he was active in the international organization of the resistance movement.

After the war he did not join the Party, and his play *Dom pod Oświęcimem* (1946) was poorly regarded by the authorities. It was only during the "Thaw" that he came into active Party and literary life. Until 1965 he was General Secretary of the International Auschwitz Committee; and from 1972 a deputy in the Sejm. He received the following prizes: the Cracow Territory prize (1948), the prize of the City of Cracow (1958) for his works about Auschwitz; the Ministry of Culture prize in 1962 (II Class for the short story *To*) and 1975 (I Class for his novels *Osoba* and *Róża i płonący las*), as well as the keys to the City of Cracow (1975). In 1975 he helped to found the discussion club for Marxist writers "Kuźnica".

His novels comprise three main strands: firstly, works drawing on his experience in the concentration camps, such as *Dom* (1946), *Koniec naszego świata* (1958) and *Raj* (1972). Secondly, he wrote works dealing with the issue of socialism in the contemporary period: *Drzewo rodzi owoc* (1963), *Zawstydzenie* (1966), *Osoba* (1974). Thirdly, historical novels: *Róża i płonący las* (1971) about Ludwik Waryński, *Próba ognia* (1946) about the peasants who took part in the 1831 Uprising and *Królestwo bez ziemi* (1954-1956) about Polish soldiers between the Uprisings of 1831 and 1863. *Osoba* was translated into Czech, Russian, Bulgarian and German.

5. Zbigniew Safian (1922-),

Safian graduated in political sciences at the Academy of Political Sciences in Warsaw. Between 1944 and 1951 he was a soldier in the Polish Army, making his literary debut as a journalist in 1952. In 1956 he became main editor of the fortnightly *Nowiny Literackie i*

Wydawnicze and of *Książka dla Ciebie*, and from 1958 to 1963 he was the secretary of the editorial board of the monthly *Polska*. He received the Ministry of Culture's prize for on two occasions: in 1965 (II Class) for *Potem nastąpi cisza* and in 1977 (I Class) for the novel *Pole niczyje*. His most famous work, *Stawka większa niż życie* (1969-70), which had formed the basis for a long television series, was written with Andrzej Szypulski under the pseudonym Andrzej Zbych.

He became a member of the ZLP's Main Executive at the Bydgoszcz Congress in 1969, but was not re-elected in 1972 at the Łódź Congress. In September 1982 he joined PRON. After the fall of Communism Safian appeared in the news with the discovery of a document purporting to show his involvement in the execution of a young Home Army soldier. Safian promised to sue for libel, but nothing further has materialized. His television series continues to be transmitted.

6. Józef Łoziński (1945-).

Łoziński, who lives in Wrocław, made his debut as a writer with *Chłopacka wysokość* in 1972. His career to that date was remarkably unliterary: after finishing secondary school he spent some time at technical college learning to be a metal-worker, before changing to smithery. He gave up these studies for a life of itinerant work, eventually returning to complete his education at night school.

Following his debut he came under the wing of Henryk Bereza, the editor of *Twórczość*'s prose section, in whose monthly prose review laboratory, "Czytane w rękopisie", he began to appear frequently. Numerous novels followed at regular periods: *Paroksyzm* (1976), *Pantokrator* (1979), a satire on the avantgarde theatre director Grotowski, followed by *Za zimny wiatr na moją wełnę* (1981), and *Apogeum* (1982). His other nineteen-eighties novels are: *Sceny myśliwskie z Dolnego Śląska* (1985), *Paolo Apostolo Mart* (1986), and *Statek na Hel* (1988), which won first prize in the 1988 Lublin All-Poland Prose Competition.

3. The Censorship Office and *Pasierbowie*.

The single most important change was an apparently innocuous alteration of the intended date of the novel's events. This occurs in one of the last speeches by Domaniecki, who argues for a rationale behind the events, specifically in relation to Leon's own family. Domaniecki attempts to take the death of Jan Pociej beyond the issue of Leon's guilt into the context of the family's history in Zaborze. For the next generation to come into its own, the previous one has always had to die. Just as Leon has been responsible for Jan's death, so, before the war, Jan was responsible for his own father's demise. More generally, since the point is change within socialist Poland, it is a matter of the generational transfer of power from the revolutionaries who built the foundations to those who now bear the responsibility for running the country (Sawko). The original passages are indicated by italics and their replacements are in brackets:

> In the 'thirties a force was born which was to lead the country after the war. *In the 1960s, that force had to be reborn because it was incapable of surviving the change in the historical era* (› A quarter of a century later it had to be reborn), and the first condition of the birth of the new is the decay of what has become fossilized. *Someone must make that change* (›If it hadn't been you, somebody else would have made the change). (202) [1]

The reasoning behind the changes is fairly clear, because the original suggested that the present day authorities (in 1963) needed to be renewed, not that everything had been renewed in 1956, as official myth decreed. The second sentence contained an invocation to the present, suggesting that change was still required, which was equally unacceptable for the current leadership. As a result of these changes, it became extremely difficult to decide when the novel was sited, which found reflection in the reviews. However, the general point remains the same, which was to underline the survival of certain features of the supposedly bygone era into the present. Putrament suggests that Gomułka's leadership was prone to some of the absolutist tendencies prevalent under Stalinism, that if there was any cult of the individual, it was more true of latter-day Poland.

The censors' attention was drawn mainly by what they saw as excessively vehement political assessments of the failings of the present (the original is shown in italics). The main culprits here were the young

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[1] Review by W. Zawistowska, 19 March 1963. AAN, GUKPPiW, 772/tom 1, p. 121.

in their denunciations of the older generation:

Kamila's diatribe against the communists (45):

You all lie, every day, every step you take...I don't even want to look at you. I don't want to live, to look at you... [2]

You go on about the people, justice, equality, a great turning point ... *one, two, three. You're bent over double in every direction, your spines are twisted this way and that, after every turning-point there are crowds of hunchbacks and you mock them above all, you do them in, although they earned those humps by listening to you, and not anybody else.*

Leon's hatred of his father's generation (67):

They made a gift of that faith and then they *took it back* (› undermined it).

On top of that, great. On top of that, omniscient. On top of that, infallible. *Even their self-criticism sounds like triumphal fanfares. They have gone through so many twists and turns, they've contradicted themselves so many times.* Perhaps in this lies the secret of their inaccessibility ? [3]

Leon's denunciation of his father's generation to Jadwiga (177):

They took power for themselves, fame, infallibility. *They even made triumphal hymns of their mistakes.*

When we say 'justice', let it be justice. When we say 'law and order', let it be law and order. *I've had enough of those who pull out their crimes, recite how awful they are and then are delighted with themselves about how just they are and how principled, that it was they after all who condemned those terrible crimes.*

Kamila's denunciation of official abuses and privileges (45):

..she enumerated the series of contradictions: poverty - villas, cars, parties, dignitaries, their wives, swindles, thefts ... *abuse of their positions, getting rich at every stage at somebody else's expense, leaving them poor.* [4]

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[2] Review by W. Zawistowska, op. cit., p. 122.

[3] Review by Halina Zyskowska, 15 March 1963. AAN, op. cit., p. 111.

[4] W. Zawistowska, op. cit.

The necessity of the above cuts and the general tenor of censorial objections to the work were explained by W. Zawistowska in her summary:

> The unjust exaggeration and wrong generalizations with which the author lavishes his work in the fervour of his polemic should be removed from the book. The book is powerful, forces us to think and undoubtedly provokes broad discussion.(...) Some interpret it as an illustration of changes immediately after October 1956, others (including myself) as an image of changes currently taking place in our country. That doesn't have any great significance, in any case, because the struggle to realize socialism doesn't proceed in ideal conditions at any period and people's education is a continuous and unrelenting process regardless of the political system. [5]

All three reviewers for the Censorship Office were in favour of the book's publication, after what they regarded as the necessary cuts had been made. The debate among their superiors, however, revealed more profound reservations about whether the book should appear at all, and also fears regarding the great number of suggested cuts. A fragmentary summary of their comments has been preserved in the Censorship Office archive:

> **Skwiecki**: is against the book's being printed. It's not up to us to instruct the author how to write books. The book is bad, falsified. Everyone who is against socialism would enjoy this book. Marciniak is an idiot. There is no Party (...) Pociej is a poor sort. Jadwiga is more important for him. The main thread of the book is Pociej-Truszkowski. Leon grows out of this conflict. Putrament's novel is unsuccessful. The issue of generational struggle teaches us nothing about that struggle. Many invented details. Leon's welcome is an artificial scene. There is no district in which Pociej would be the Chairman of the District council. He should have a different death. He has become ideologically bankrupt (in his ambitions) [6]
>
> **Frank**: The author's proposals go too far (...) Is there a conflict between the generations ? (...) Pociej's role may be discussed with the author. I took fright at the number of excisions. They

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[5] Op. cit., p. 125.

[6] AAN, GUKPPiW, 772/tom I, p. 124.

make the book less spicy.

Kałucki: The book mainly represents the problems and not reality.

Zaręba: We aim to make everything correct. Is the book Poland in miniature ? (...) Should the Coms. be smoothed out ? - No.

Gutkowski: Change won't solve the situation for us. It would be necessary to remove.... Are there remnants of the Cult in district towns ? Change Pociej ? If we follow the excisions on pages - we'll defend the book's conception.

Sowadski: is afraid of this book because it hammers out the struggle between the generations. The older generation hasn't made the grade. "We and You". [7]

The general tenor of their reservations about the novel is positive, even while they regard the book itself as problematic. The main issue was whether to allow the book to appear largely as written, so that it would stimulate discussion (as Gutkowski and Frank suggest), or whether it should appear in a heavily expurgated form (Skwiecki). In essence, the meeting raised the whole question of preferential treatment for party writers whose support for the political system could not be doubted. It must be said on the basis of this novel that the censors did exhibit leniency towards Putrament, both in terms of specific passages (the comparison made in Leon's mind between his father and a South American dictator did not please the censors but survived in the published version) [8] and in terms of the general effect - which was critical of 'socialist reality'.

Although the censors' work was predicated upon everything they allowed to appear being ideologically correct, they did have an interest in the attractiveness of socialist literature. In this sense, absolute ideological correctness gave way at times to other considerations - readability, for instance. This was borne out by *Pasierbowie*, which was widely read and quickly ran into three editions within just over a year from the date of initial publication. The key issue of allowing Communists to appear in a not entirely favourable light - which gave the work greater credibility - was resolved in this instance in the writer's favour.

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[7] Ibid., p. 126.

[8] See Zawistowska's comment (op. cit., p. 122): 'The comparison of his [Pociej's - JMB] tragedy to the drama of a South American dictator goes too far, however'. The passage appears on p. 111 of the first edition.

4. Dates of Publication and Print Runs.

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1. PIW, Warsaw,	1959	20, 253
2. Czytelnik, Warsaw,	1963	10, 250°
3. Iskry, Warsaw,	1969	10, 257†
4. Warsaw,	1976	30, 290±
5. Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow,	1985	20, 283~

° Published in *Wybór opowiadań.*
† Published in *Kontrybucja.*
± Published in *Opowieści współczesne, tom I.*
~ Published in a collection of four short novels.

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1. Czytelnik	1963	10, 250
2. Czytelnik	1964	10, 200
3. Czytelnik	1964	20, 250
4. Czytelnik	1970	20, 265
5. KiW, Warsaw	1980	40, 000°

° Published as volume IV of *Pisma*

Przymanowski, Janusz: *Wezwany* (1968).

1. MON, Warsaw	1968	10, 305
2. MON	1969	20, 180
3. MON	1972	10, 336
4. MON	1980	30, 333 *
5. MON	1986	30, 280 *
6. KAW, Warsaw	1988	26, 350 †

* Published under the title *Trójca grzeszna* with two other novels.
† Published as *Siedem powieści.*

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1. Wydawnictwo „Śląsk", Katowice	1974	20, 281
2. Czytelnik	1976	10, 290
3. Wydawnictwo „Śląsk"	1979	20, 145
4. Wydawnictwo Literackie	1985	20, 283

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1. PIW	1980	30, 315

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1. PIW	1985	20, 250
2. Pomorze, Bydgoszcz	1989	10, 000

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