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Mechanisms of homonym transformations: on Catholic variants of Stalinist discourse in Poland

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Abstract: Despite its anti-religious character, totalitarian discourse, in the years 1949–1956 filling the entire space of Polish official culture, had its Catholic segment. Within this segment, there occurred a transformation of the religious net of concepts into semantic units of totalitarian language, a transformation of Catholic worldview narratives into Stalinist ones. This text aims to describe the semiotic mechanisms of such transformation. The relations between the initial semiosphere of language and the sub-semiosphere of its totalitarian variant are described. Presented here is a proposal for a theoretical description of the transformation of signs and texts of natural language into totalitarian ones, and an analysis of its possible strategies: renomination of signs, resemantization of texts, and incorporation of signs and texts from foreign semiotic fields. The material analyzed here comes mainly from the weekly magazine *Dziś i Jutro* and from other parts of the discursive field of Polish Catholic journalism, which tended towards the official discourse, including periodicals of the circles of Catholic priests ready to institutionally cooperate with the communist authorities.

Keywords: Catholicism; discourse; language; PAX Assotiation; Poland; totalitarianism

“The measure of the Catholicity of our team – wrote a Polish Catholic publicist in 1950 – ... is the intensity of the work on learning and translating the basic assumptions of our worldview into contemporary language” (Żegocki 1950: 4).¹ The above sentence taken out of context does not seem surprising: the postulate of speaking about the truths of faith in the language and categories of contemporary times is well established in the tradition of Catholic journalism. On closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that this postulate is accompanied by a

1 Quotations from the source material are given in my own translation.

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certain imperative to value: “the team” in question, in the author’s view, is Catholic insofar as it intensively embodies the aforementioned postulate. It is therefore an invitation to the reader to look at the achievements of “the team” in terms of translating what is Catholic into what is contemporary.

The periodical in which the quoted words appeared was *Dziś i Jutro* (“Today and Tomorrow”) – a weekly published between 1945 and 1956 by the group centered around Bolesław Piasecki. Piasecki (before the war – a prominent radical nationalist and anti-communist, and after the war – a zealous collaborator of the communist authorities of Poland) clearly articulated his attachment to Catholicism but also had political aspirations, which in the 1970s were crowned with membership in the Council of State. The circles he headed (and their most powerful significant dimension – the PAX Association) were usually successful in seeking official concession from the authorities to function in the official state space, including functioning in a concessionary Catholic segment of the official discourse. The weekly *Dziś i Jutro* is a case of exercising such a concession in a way that was extremely loyal to the state authorities but also extremely dangerous from the point of view of the authorities of the Catholic Church. The result of such a collision was a total loss of trust of the Vatican in Piasecki’s circles: in 1955 the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office included the weekly magazine *Dziś i Jutro* among prohibited books.

“Translating the basic assumptions of our worldview into contemporary language” had to mean, in the socio-political realities of post-war Poland, the presence of such discursive practices in which Catholicism gained legitimacy to remain in the official information space. In order to achieve such legitimacy, the *Dziś i Jutro* milieu developed its own identity sub-discourse, the space of which was filled by subsequent programmatic texts. I began this article with one of them, written by Stanisław Żegocki. In another, slightly earlier one, from 1949, we can read: “We consider ourselves obliged to fight together with the Marxist camp, to fight for the liberation of humanity from the now obsolete capitalist system, to fight for a new order. Our task is to instill the spirit of Catholicism into this struggle and thus multiply its intensity and chances” (Łubieński 1948: 2).

The challenge for the “fight” carried on “together with the Marxist camp” at that time, however, was the fact that the official information space in Poland was a space of totalitarian discourse, a space in which a specific and highly expansive language functioned. I am referring here to totalitarian language, often called – following Orwell’s literary diagnosis – “newspeak,” scientifically described by scholars such as Klemperer (2013) and Głowiński (1990, 1992, 2000). By using the term totalitarian language, I will mean:

A language L' , which is created based on the initial semiotic resource of the (natural or artistic) language L , generates utterances and texts on the basis of a specific grammar

subordinated to the function of transmitting the mythological system served by L' , has a privileged position on the linguistic market of the users of L (i.e., in the space of coexistence and competition of many variants of L), and seeks on this market the status of a monopolist. Such a monopoly means that something already described in L' is subject to further description only in this language – otherwise it has no right to exist in the official discourse, which – in the realities of totalitarian culture – merges into one with the discourse of power. (Sadowski 2018: 147)

In the realities of communist Poland, a discourse of language with the features described above almost completely filled the official information space in the years 1949–1956.² The journalism of the *Dziś i Jutro* milieu aspired to participate in such a discourse. In order to be effective, such an aspiration had to mean a readiness for a far-reaching linguistic opportunism, i.e., – in a given case – resignation from the autonomous language L for the benefit of L' . For while the function of totalitarian language is to transmit a mythological system (in the given case, a system of political mythology), discursive practices referring to the Catholic religious imaginary complex necessarily require the activation of the Christian mythological universe. The “fight” waged “together with the Marxist camp” by Catholic publicists in the official information space of a totalitarian state must therefore mean not only a non-antagonistic agreement of one’s own mythology with the one transmitted by the totalitarian discourse. It is necessary to subordinate one’s own utterances to the function of transmitting communist political mythology, i.e., – for example – to construct such expressions in which the figure of Christ’s resurrection serves to transmit mythologems (figures that condense mythological content in linguistic and textual units [Sadovskiy 2018]) of class struggle or socialist revolution.

We can now return to the opening quotation of this article and state that the “translating the basic assumptions of our worldview into contemporary language” postulated by the publicist means a transformation of the Catholic net of concepts into semantic units of totalitarian language, a transformation of Catholic worldview narratives into Stalinist ones. This text aims to describe the semiotic mechanisms of such transformation. The material analyzed here comes mainly from the weekly magazine *Dziś i Jutro* but also from other parts of the discursive field of

² The official discourse in Poland acquires a totalitarian nature in 1948–1949, with the homogenization of the information space, with the unification of circles participating in the exercise of power in a real way (the “unifying congress” of the Polish Workers’ Party and the Polish Socialist Party in 1948 and the establishment of the Polish United Workers’ Party) or only formally (the formation of the United People’s Party in 1949), in the linking of artistic languages with the language of power by means of the doctrine of socialist realism (conventions of creative circles in 1949). Deconstruction of the totalitarian official discourse takes place in 1956, as a result of the events of the so-called Polish October or Gomułka Thaw.

Polish Catholic journalism of the years 1949–1956, which tended towards the official discourse, including periodicals of the circles of Catholic priests ready to institutionally cooperate with the communist authorities (*Głos Kapłana* [‘The Priest’s Voice’], *Ksiądz Obywatel* [‘The Priest Citizen’], *Kuźnica Kapłańska* [‘The Priest’s Ironworks’]).

1 Transformation

Żegocki’s words were presented in an extensive article entitled *Perspektywy dialogu* (‘Perspectives of Dialogue’; Żegocki 1950: 4–5) and formally³ they were a voice in the discussion on the subject of the agreement which had just been concluded between the state and Church authorities, and which with time in Polish historiography acquired the name of the April Agreement of 1950. The Agreement, giving the Roman Catholic Church in Poland a promise of freedom to worship and carry out its pastoral mission in exchange for a number of significant concessions to the state, is usually treated by historians as a tactical move by both the government and the episcopate, giving the appearance of normalizing relations between the state and the Church (Czackowska 2013: 118–122; Dudek and Gryz 2003: 38–61; Dudek and Pytel 2013: 185–187; Żaryn 1997: 311–357). In the discourse analyzed here, the text of the agreement quickly became one of the key links binding elements of the Catholic worldview with the official system of Stalinist ideology. It also proved to be one of the pillars of the stability of the Catholic language opportunists’ discourse. This is because Żegocki’s text revealed the great semiotic potential of the act of Agreement – the potential of totalitarian-language semiosis, the process of enriching the resources of the totalitarian language with new signs and texts.

As we remember, the columnist formulates the imperative of the “intensity of the work on learning and translating the basic assumptions of our worldview into contemporary language.” And by “our” he clearly means “Catholic.” Żegocki calls for “deepening, clarifying the assumptions of the Christian worldview we profess, mastering the knowledge of the Catholic Church, its theology and philosophy” (Żegocki 1950: 4). On the other hand, for him, the “contemporary language” is the language resulting from the changes taking place in Poland and from the necessity of conducting a dialogue with those who constitute the main political force in carrying them out. “Our task, he writes, is to draw all possible conclusions from the fact that we are living in the revolution. Hence the absolute

³ In fact, the text was obviously one of many programme speeches of Bolesław Piasecki’s milieu.

necessity to master all revolutionary issues, especially Leninist ones, and at the same time to take part in everything that is a real transformation of socio-economic forms” (Żegocki 1950: 5).

The above statements are accompanied by a clear reservation: “when approaching the evaluation of foreign worldview directions, we must remember that our own critical apparatus, based on a worldview in crisis, is not a sufficiently efficient tool” (Żegocki 1950: 4). In fact, this is a declaration of adopting an opportunistic linguistic ideology. This is because it assumes the incomplete value of one’s own system of thought and language, the necessity of subordinating them to the system that stands behind the changes taking place. The universalism of the Christian worldview – according to Żegocki and the entire *Dziś i Jutro* team – should manifest itself in the ability to speak about the mission of the Church every time in the language of “contemporaneity,” even when the content of this “contemporaneity” is what they call “socialist revolution.” This is why the thesis of the ability to translate what is Catholic into what is revolutionary appears as “the measure of the Catholicity of our team.” This postulate can be paraphrased with the following sentence: “we are Catholic insofar as we manage to successfully narrate our axioms in the official language of the prevailing culture.” Taking into account the historical and social context, Żegocki’s theses can therefore be seen as a specific postulate, or even an imperative, to transform a number of key Catholic notions into totalitarian language.

However, such a transformation was hindered by the incompatibility and hermetic nature of the mythological systems behind the competing worldviews. Thus, linguistic opportunism manifested itself in postulates to unseal and relativize one’s own system – as, for example, in the text “The Temptation of Integrity” by Wojciech Kętrzyński:

When one is not sure of one’s reflections, when one feels lost in the reality that surprises one, among the dynamics of the world changes that one does not understand – one feels weak and barricades oneself inside the fortress that one wants to consider Catholicism to be. Then one simply divides the world into “one’s own,” Catholic, to which as little as possible is admitted, and “the hostile,” which includes everything that is not considered Catholic. Then one looks for that sharp dividing line in the world, in history, the line which would unquestionably separate the zone of *truth* from the zone of *falsehood*, placing Catholics, without any hesitation or doubt, on the right side. (Kętrzyński 1952: 4, emphasis in original)

Kętrzyński’s words reveal an awareness that adopting a binary perspective (one’s own – hostile, true – false) makes communication impossible with those who use languages from outside the Catholic “stronghold,” but there is no reflection on the language of official culture, which represents an analogous tendency and clearly

closes itself in its own bastion. The observation of the tendency to conduct a neo-tribal discourse on the basis of the language of Christian mythology is not accompanied by the recognition of the neo-tribalism of the discourse of power, conducted on the basis of the language of the mythology of Stalinist culture. As a result, there appears a thesis of Catholic “closing in on itself” and ‘repelling ... the Church from contact with the modern world” (Kętrzyński 1952: 4). The above reasoning leads to the conclusion about the necessity of opening Catholic language to communist ideologems and mythologems – without any attempt to postulate the opening of communist language to analogous elements of Catholic language. Thus, the imperative is formulated to transform the elements of the resource of signs and texts, operating the semiosphere of Polish Catholic culture, into signs and texts of a totalitarian language. Even ready-made tools of transformation are presented – specific catalysts of such a process. One of them is the notion of Providence. It is enough to present the reality of communist Poland in terms of its orchestrations to open the way to its positive nomination:

A Catholic who delves into the history of mankind, seeking to discover the light with which God has endowed our reality, must undoubtedly be able to make the most precise use of the whole of contemporary intellectual apparatus. In the conviction that his supernatural faith authorizes him to do so, he must not interpret history in a dilettante manner. Hence, in evaluating the past or the present, in formulating social and cultural Catholic postulates, we must constantly demand a much more scientific, realistic approach than has hitherto been the case. At the same time, we must appeal not less categorically to Catholic writers and thinkers to place greater emphasis on the word *Providence* in their reflections on the development of humanity. (Kętrzyński 1952: 3, emphasis in original)

And further: “There are no accidental or doubtful decrees in the judgments of Providence. If the history of the world and the Church has developed in this way ... there is God’s wisdom in it. It is our duty to fathom it and adapt to it” (Kętrzyński 1952: 4).

The postulate of the “duty to fathom the wisdom of God” in the context of political changes in post-war Poland opens the way for a number of phenomena to be positively nominated in the language based on the Christian mythological system – for example, the nationalization of industry in 1946, the fight against the anti-communist armed underground or the annulment of the concordat of 1925. Thanks to such a “duty” in the above actions of the authorities, one can perceive the intention of God Himself. Kętrzyński’s postulate opens the way to taking over the powerful sign-textual resource of totalitarian culture into the (nominally) Catholic discourse. This is because in Kętrzyński’s argument the “contemporary intellectual apparatus” based on this resource also received divine sanction, and the addressees of his text – the imperative to study it and use it in order to name a

number of emanations of their own worldview. That is, the imperative to transform a number of concepts of their hitherto autonomous language L into units of language L'.

Transformation is one of two mechanisms for filling the content of the semiotic field of a totalitarian language. Although this mechanism is responsible for the emergence of the vast minority of semantic units of L', without it this language will not emerge at all. The majority of such units are signs taken in their existing form from the semiosphere of the initial L language, which function as a building block for totalitarian messages not requiring new nomination. They are not used as individual carriers of mythological messages. The mythological function may be obtained by them in more complex structures built with their help. The noun "watchdog" acquires a mythological function, e.g., in the phrase "watchdog of imperialism," which becomes not only a political invective used against the US Allies but a metaphorical figure of the description of the world. In such a world, "imperialism" is one of the key mythologems, a condenser of narratives of evil and chaos. The noun "watchdog" will thus be part of the "technological" resource of L' language, as will other lexemes of L that will be admitted for neutral use in L'. Certainly, not all lexemes will be admitted for it. In the language of Stalinist culture in Poland it would be impossible to use the word *fabrykant* ('factory owner') or *sklepikarz* ('shopkeeper') in a neutral, non-mythological way – in the totalitarian semiosphere they have found themselves in a transformed form. Totalitarian language, or – more broadly – totalitarian culture thus possesses mechanisms of filtering out the pre-totalitarian linguistic resources. It should be added that the signs and texts of L-language semiosphere, which – filtered – find their way into the semiosphere of L', may be transformed over time.

The term "transformation" appears in Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics* in the context of such sign- and text-making processes, which include invention and mapping: "We may define invention as a mode of production whereby the producer of the sign-function chooses a new material continuum not yet segmented for that purpose and proposes a new way of organizing (of giving form to) it in order to map within it the formal pertinent element of a content-type" (Eco 1976: 245, emphasis in original).

Eco's invention, in other words, is the establishment of a particular semantic model (of a particular sign or text) by superimposing on the received stimuli (on what constitutes a perceived phenomenon) a perceptual model – a "dense representation of a given experience" (Eco 1976: 248), and then, for the purpose of the created semantic model, by extracting only certain properties of that experience. Mapping, in turn, is a mental "adding up" by the user of a sign or text of all the rest of the properties. It means, for example, that when a red circle with a diameter of

several centimeters is perceived, distinguished from the surroundings and recognized, a glass filled with red wine is mentally “added” to it. However, the essence of the process of invention does not consist in the fact that the process of deduction can lead even an averagely intelligent detective to a conclusion such as “here stood a glass filled with wine.” It consists in the fact that the sender proposes (or imposes) that the red circle each time acts as a semantic model, decoded as a glass with red wine. However, a specific kind of mapping is necessary for this kind of semiotic process. Eco, recalling the statements of Volli (1972: 25), writes of it:

[This] kind of mapping should be identical to that which governs the production of a triangle that is similar to another, given certain spatial parameters and conventions (such as that size is irrelevant, but sides must be proportional and angles “equal”). Let us call this procedure a transformation: “every biunivocal correspondence of points in space is a transformation. What concerns us is the existence of particular transformations that leave certain prominent properties of the geometrical entities to which they are applied unchanged.” (Eco 1976: 248)

In our argument, when talking about the transformation into a totalitarian language, we will be referring to an even more specific mapping process than that of Eco and Volli. It will be such a mapping that, in the semiosphere of the target language L' , maps the parameters of a sign or text derived from the semiosphere L , while giving it a mythological function. Let us consider an example referring to the poetics of Volli’s statements. As an “equilateral triangle” are defined the lines, distinguished from the surroundings, connecting three equally distant points. Now let us imagine a situation in which such a triangle acquires a side of length that is recognized as having mythological significance (e.g., when the number of units of measurement coincides with the number of years of life or the year of death of a cultural hero). Next, let us imagine that each recognized equilateral triangle will be considered in terms of whether it meets the criterion of “mythological” side length. Then we are already dealing with an “equilateral triangle” not in the original sense but in a transformed one, condensing mythological narratives. This is how the concepts that enter the semiosphere of L' language are transformed.

The abstractness of the above situation disappears in the face of the example provided by Vladimir Paperny discussing the function of inverted commas in the language of Stalinist culture:

Quotation marks begin to be used ... as boundaries separating words from the rest of the text – which happens every time a word is connected in some way with the world of evil. Quotation marks are used to indicate that, in the antiworld, everything is just the opposite, that an ordinary, neutral word there cannot mean what it does here. For example: “The high buildings of Moscow are erected according to principles directly opposite to the ‘principles’ of construction of American skyscrapers.” (Paperny 2002: 230–231)

It is clear that the noun “principle” contained in Papierny’s example, used in the context of contrasting Soviet and American construction, formally remains one and the same linguistic sign but functionally acquires the features of antonymy. The word “principle” itself is deprived of its mythological function and in the totalitarian semiosphere it serves as a neutral lexical unit. However, the introduction of the distinction between American and Soviet construction gives the message a tribal context, which in turn makes it necessary each time for the word “principle” to be associated with one of the two poles of the binary description of the world, i.e., to obtain a negative or positive mythological nomination. The inverted commas in totalitarian language emphasize formal homonymy at the mythological antinomy and are testimony to the mythological function with which the neutral word is equipped in the process of transformation. Equipping a word with such a function is – in Eco’s terms – the invention of a new semantic model. It should be stressed that such an invention transforms the sign into a text because the mythological function adds to the sign a narrative about the structure of the world. The transformation type in question – the totalitarian transformation – is thus such a positioning of the signs or texts of the semiotic field of language L in the field of L' , which is accompanied by a formal homonymy of the initial and target signs or texts ($S_L, S_{L'}, T_L, T_{L'}$ respectively) while simultaneously equipping $S_{L'}$ or $T_{L'}$ with a mythological function – different from that possibly possessed by S_L and T_L .

Let us remain for a moment in the poetics of abstract considerations of an equilateral triangle. If, as a result of the transformation, a triangle of side length X is equipped with a mythological function, this does not mean that such a function will be decoded by all participants of the L -language semiosphere (although it is to be expected that such a triangle will begin to affect the status of its homonym secondarily). It is possible, however, that in the same triangle with the same side length some L participants will recognize a completely different mythological message. This means that the use of the same lexeme in the discourses of L and L' languages may be of varying intelligibility and different credibility for the participants of the L and L' semiospheres.

This phenomenon was, of course, a significant problem for the actors of the concessionary Catholic totalitarian sub-discourse in Poland, forced to combine within it two separate mythological systems and, moreover, two clearly antagonistic worldview orders. That is why the constant space for building and maintaining structures of credibility for messages created in this way was for Piasecki’s circles the identity sub-discourse, which was a fascinating arena for the transformation of notions. For the purposes of its self-definition, the PAX milieu developed, among other things, the category of “socially progressive Catholicism”

and “socially progressive Catholics.” In the Stalinist totalitarian discourse, the category of progress was one of the key ideological notions, and in its narrativized form – one of the key positive mythologems. Catholicism on the other hand, in official interpretations⁴ described as “the open ally of the most reactionary imperialist forces,”⁵ in the totalitarian-linguistic model of the world was a contradiction to the idea of progress. In turn, the fact that the word “progress” was linked in official discourse to socialist changes caused Catholics to distrust the category itself. Hence, the formulation “socially progressive Catholic” needed to be made credible both to Catholics and to Marxists.

“Progress ... occurs when there is a development of social relations in a direction deliberately chosen and recognized as approaching a reality more perfect than the previous one” – wrote Kętrzyński (1949: 1), using a Marxist interpretation of the concept described. Consequently, it served to demonstrate that such a Catholic attitude could have existed, the aim of which was to realize progress. Helpful in constructing the notion of such an attitude was the category of social evil, easily applicable to the Catholic worldview:

The socially progressive is the Catholic who, seeing social evil, fights against it and strives concretely to achieve a socially better state of affairs. The fight against evil is never in itself a creative or ... mature attitude ... For us, only a positively defined task is important. It is the active realization of social justice – in the concretely constructed norms of social life. (Kętrzyński 1949: 2)

“Concretely constructed norms of social life” have in the above text the function of filling with content the open and dynamic category of the systemic struggle against social evil – they directly refer to the programme of the realization of the socialist order. In this situation, the noun “Catholic” is “tamed” for the totalitarian discourse through the positive mythological nomination of the phrase “socially progressive Catholic.” The noun “Catholic,” in the semiosphere L bearing either a neutral or positive character, and in the L’ being under constant threat of negative nomination, thanks to the epithet under consideration acquires the status of a positive S_{L’}.

⁴ Due to the fact that the totalitarian period in the social history of Poland lasted only a few years, the state of the totalitarian language was not recorded in the lexicographical and encyclopedic works of that time, which aspired to a normative description of the presented matter. However, since the official Polish culture of that time typologically did not differ from the Soviet one and to a large extent transmitted the same corpus of political mythology, in this article I refer to Soviet publications of this type.

⁵ *Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, vol. 20, s.v. ‘katolitsizm.’ Moskva: Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1953.

2 The polarization factor

Totalitarian discourse develops its own tools for “taming” signs and texts that are either threatened with negative nomination or have already obtained it (without such tools this discourse would have a very limited field of expansion). The “taming of a hostile concept” itself is not a process peculiar only to totalitarian culture; Lotman classifies it as a general semiotic process taking place on the border of two different semiospheres. As the researcher points out, it is enough that in a certain Christian semiosphere the possessive pronoun “our” appears next to the noun “pagan” – and the resulting phrase “our pagan” definitely transforms the Christian meaning of the word “pagan,” depriving it of a number of negative connotations (Lotman 1990: 137). Whereas the specificity of the totalitarian transformation would consist in the fact that the phrase “our Catholic,” “our priest,” uttered by a user of the communist totalitarian language, would not only deprive “Catholic” or “priest” of negative connotations but, by equipping it with a possessive pronoun, would give it a neo-tribal status,⁶ consequently inscribing it in the universe of positively nominated concepts of the L’ semiosphere. There is, of course, a whole spectrum of functional substitutes for such pronouns, possessing enormous semiotic and transformative potential. It is enough, for example, for a legitimate user of L’ language to use the attribute “patriot,” strongly emotionalized and directly referring to the world of values of the community, in order to positively nominate the subject. Such is the semiotic provenance of the term “priest–patriot,” denoting a clergyman officially collaborating with the communist authorities. The totalitarian messages addressed by the authorities to the priests associated in the specially established section of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (the only official veterans’ organization controlled by the state) unambiguously placed them within the neo-tribal socialist community, as in the following excerpt from the speech of Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz:

You, priests–patriots ... walk the path of struggle for peace together with the entire Polish people.

A defector is anyone who today, in the period of further struggle against the sowers of war, does not take the path of common fight with the whole nation for peace and happy future of the People’s Republic of Poland.⁷

⁶ Neo-tribal – in the sense I use to describe totalitarian culture (i.e., referring to a collective identity founded on a binary description of reality and the suppression of alternative identity reference points; Sadowski 2018: 148–149).

⁷ “List Przewodniczącego Rady Ministrów R.P. do Księży biorących udział w pielgrzymce do Oświęcimia,” *Głos Kapłana* 1950, 10. 1.

The above words implicitly characterize as “non-patriotic” those priests, who are denied the status of “those who walk on the road of struggle for peace” by the subject of the statement. Moreover, the categories of “entire Polish people” and “the whole nation,” semantically not identical with the society as a whole, are supposed to represent the neo-tribal community and the world of its values. In such a situation, it is clear that obtaining a positively nominated label connected with the perspective of the totalitarian-cultural “we” guarantees the semiotic status of belonging to the community. The actors of the Catholic discourse, representing an opportunistic linguistic strategy⁸ (not only “priest–patriots” but all those who share their attitude), obtain, thanks to similar signals, the legitimacy of the status of sender in the official discourse, conditioned, however, by the synchronization of the values they profess (more precisely: the values transmitted in their discourse) with the values positively nominated by the totalitarian-cultural community. The very fact of printing Cyrankiewicz’s speech within the priestly discourse licensed by the authorities constitutes one of the possible discursive acts enabling such synchronization.

Synchronization of values occurs whenever the sender indicates a fact or phenomenon by nominating it in terms of the community’s value or antivalue. However, a much more effective tool of synchronization is to build messages in such a way that not only leads to the nomination of a specific fact or phenomenon on the basis of a binary mythological template, but also points to the fact or phenomenon nominated in an opposite way, and in addition presents the very principle (or template) of nomination and derives from it a moral imperative. A sentence is constructed in this way: since A is positive, then $\sim A$, is negative, therefore not favoring A is favoring $\sim A$. I will illustrate this mechanism with a fragment of a text by Mikołaj Rostworowski:

The objective fact which ... confronts us with the necessity of ideological definition of our attitude is the observed clash between the capitalist world and the socialist world. In this clash *there are no politically neutral positions*, no “third” standpoints. Regardless of our intentions, by our attitude we serve – objectively speaking – either the capitalist camp or the socialist one.

As Catholics, who have the ambition to integrally bind our practical actions with an ideological attitude supported by the indestructible foundation of the professed worldview, we do not resolve the dilemma “on which side” on the plane of opportunistic tactics. Moral-

⁸ In this case, “strategy” can be understood as the application of a particular linguistic ideology in Silverstein’s sense, thus as the projection of a “sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein 1979: 13). An example of the set of beliefs that rationalize the use of Stalinist language to describe the Catholic worldview can be seen in the opening quote of this article.

historical justifications must decide on which side of the political barricade we see space for effective Catholic social activity.

The moral justification of the socialist revolution is above all its aspiration to realize an order in which the social position of man will be determined by man himself with his talent and his effort.

The historical justification of socialism and its historical superiority over the capitalist system is the awareness of the real possibility of a planned shaping of social life.

Both justifications are objectively right justifications for us. (Rostworowski 1951: 2, emphasis in original)

In the above text it is necessary to note the presence of an overarching, essentially cosmological view of the world as an arena of struggle between the good represented by the “socialist camp” and the evil in the form of capitalist forces. The assertion of the “objective rightness” of the good is here the leading element in the synchronization of the Catholic and communist symbolic universes. The thesis of the absence of “politically neutral positions” implicitly contains a tool for the nomination of political attitudes. Thanks to this tool, totalitarian signs and texts referring to such attitudes may already have an unambiguous mythological characteristic and be assigned to one of the two poles of the mythological-tribal image of the world.

Such polarization in the description of the world is a constitutive feature of totalitarian discourse. Moreover, it is inextricably linked to the process of transformation of the units of the initial semiosphere. It is both its condition and its effect. In the realities of neo-tribal culture, it catalyzes mythological nomination (as the participants of such culture automatically apply binary oppositions to construct and transmit images of the world), while such nomination reinforces the effect of polarization. Let us now analyze an example of polarization taking place explicitly. In his introductory article in *Dziś i Jutro* before the 1952 parliamentary elections Bolesław Piasecki writes:

The maturity and responsibility of an ideological and political standpoint requires that everyone who decides to be “for something” should at the same time be “against something.” It turns out that it is easier to support a right programme, and more difficult to oppose factors that obstruct its execution. In Poland, for example, one can still find individuals who are in favor of the border on the Oder and Neisse but find it difficult to condemn American policy. (Piasecki 1952: 2)

Here we see a ready-made tool of nomination: every hypothetical subject who would support the post-war shape of the Polish state, while at the same time refraining from condemning whatever – in the neo-tribal optics – threatens that

state, would automatically acquire the negative nomination of “ideologically and politically immature.” Thanks to such a nomination, the signs or sign structures denoting such an attitude (e.g., “a follower of the former Mikołajczyk’s option”) undergo a totalitarian transformation and no longer mean what they did in the initial semiosphere (“a follower of the Polish People’s Party”) but acquire a meaning enriched with a distinct evaluative component: “a follower of the former Mikołajczyk’s option, that is a person ideologically and politically immature.” The tool of nomination is thus already useful for the purposes of political persuasion, but Piasecki enriches it with an aspect that deepens polarization and further disambiguates the characteristics of the “politically immature.” “One must,” he writes, “choose between strengthening the independence of one’s own nation ... and betraying the nation” (Piasecki 1952: 2). As a result of the mutual complementation of the sentences of the PAX leading ideologist, the transformed formulation under discussion will already obtain a totally unambiguous semantic charge, fully inscribed in the system of political mythology: “a follower of the former Mikołajczyk’s option, that is a person ideologically and politically immature, and thus a supporter of the camp of national betrayal who harms his state.”

3 Mechanisms of transformation

The polarized description of the world is a factor that intensifies the neotribalism on which totalitarian culture is founded. By implying a mythological description of the world, it catalyzes the process of totalitarian transformation of signs and texts. This transformation can take place through the mechanisms of renomination, resemantization and incorporation.

Renomination of the sign S functioning in the initial semiosphere L is to give it a different semantic value. This other value the target $S_{L'}$ will obtain first of all by equipping its non-totalitarian homonym with a mythological characteristic; moreover, some meanings of this homonym may not be admitted to the semiosphere L' . Such non-admission is the effect of a transformation-coupled filtering. The effect of the co-occurrence of these two processes will never be the semantic value of $S_{L'}$ equal to any of the meanings of S_L . On the other hand, a side effect of renomination will be the secondary appearance in the semiosphere L of a sign homonymous with $S_{L'}$ but equipped with a metatextual marker of a sign belonging to L' . It is thanks to such metatextual markers that narratives of totalitarian language signs are possible in natural language. Such narratives include, for example, the present argument.

A procedure analogous to renomination but transforming not the sign, but the text from the initial semiosphere, I will call resemantization – a change in the

corpus of meanings transmitted by T_L . Also in this case the creation of $T_{L'}$ can be accompanied by a reduction of the meanings of T_L in the process of filtration coupled with the transformation. Also here, the corpus of meanings associated with the transformed text will not be equal to any of the meanings before the transformation, and furthermore, also in this case, the initial semiosphere will obtain texts bearing a metatextual marker. It should be noted here, however, that in the case of complexly structured and programmatically ambiguous texts (such as art texts) it is difficult to speak of a group of base meanings. In the case of the transformation of such texts as literary works, for example, we will be dealing with a significant unification of the conventions of reading the text but also with a complex semiosis resulting from the imposition of a mythological overlay on the initial text.

Among the simplest renominations are the already discussed examples of equipping the S_L with an appropriate attribution: the $S_{L'}$ sign becomes such an S_L about which, in the language L' , it can be said to be “ours,” “socialist,” “progressive” or “patriotic” – and thus which is equipped with the attribute of belonging to the positively nominated pole of mythological description. However, renomination of this type is not possible everywhere. While in the official discourse of the Stalinist era terms like “priest–patriot” or “progressive Catholic” could gain legitimacy for themselves, it is difficult to imagine that “our” or “socialist” could be, for example, “God.” This proper name is in fact not subject to attribution in the Stalinist version of the language. In Polish pre-totalitarian culture, the most widespread meanings of the word were obviously connected with the Christian imaginary, having its projections both on the doctrinal level (as in the Nicene Creed: “the Father almighty, maker of heaven and Earth, of all things visible and invisible”) and on the folk level (like “good Father”) – these meanings, however, were not allowed into the semiosphere L' by the filters that operated on it. “God” in totalitarian language therefore requires a more complex process of renomination. In Soviet case, this process can be traced in *Tolkovyj slovar' russkogo yazyka*, a dictionary edited by Ushakov, which documents perfectly the totalitarian stage of the Russian language. The meaning of the lexeme “God” is defined there by reference to the content of religious beliefs (while “religion” is another transformed concept, with an unambiguously negative tone): “according to religious beliefs – a supreme being, allegedly standing above or guiding the world.”⁹ The definition is followed by a precedent text (an authoritative model for the proper use of the definiendum): “[God] is ... above all a complex of ideas born of the blunt suppression of man by nature and class suppression, ideas that perpetuate this

⁹ *Tolkovyj slovar' russkogo yazyka*, vol. 1, s.v. ‘bog.’ Moskva: Gosudarstvennyj institut ‘Sovetskaya entsiklopediya’, 1935.

suppression, that put the class struggle to sleep.” The dictionary points to Lenin as the author of the quotation, which in the realities of totalitarian culture is an indicator of the high importance of the defined term in the lexical system of the L’ language (although the high position is accompanied by an extremely negative valuation). Thus, we can see that the lexeme we are interested in is defined once by means of reference to the content of religious beliefs (while “religion” is another transformed notion, with an unambiguously negative tone), and once by the mediation of a linguistic sign, which has a basic meaning passed through the filters of L’ language and subject to attribution. It is “idea”: this neutral “technological” noun can easily be assigned to the bipolar model of the world and characterized as “ours” and “progressive” or “foreign” and “retrograde.” The criterion of axiological measure for the “idea of God” becomes here the key mythologem of “class struggle.” In the process of renomination, “God” thus becomes the referent of the concept of “retrograde idea” or “hostile idea in the class struggle.”

From the point of view of the senders of the Catholic concessionary discourse, the unambiguously negative nomination of the central notion of Christian mythology is quite a problem, and its abolition – after all, the abolition which would be acceptable to the participants of the mainstream totalitarian discourse – in time becomes the driving force of the next stage of renomination, in fact – the postulate of re-renomination. It is not to negotiate the place for the name “God” in the L’ semiosphere but to negotiate the attribute with which the mediating category “concept” is equipped. Thus, Sylwester Zalewski in *Dziś i Jutro* declares that “the task of Catholics is to create works that can provide a basis for generalizations not only about the social harmlessness of the concept of God but precisely about the creative, progressive social function of this concept” (Zalewski 1955: 1). However, at about the same time – June 1955 – the Holy See, by its decree, stripped the discourse of the *Dziś i Jutro* of its Catholic credibility, so that the greater caution of the PAX milieu in linking the figures of alternative mythological systems, and soon afterwards the decay of Stalinist culture in Poland, deprive us of the possibility of tracing the further fate of the re-renomination of the notion of “God.”

The mechanism of resemantization also requires the citation of representative examples. Of the many possible resemantization strategies, we will indicate only two – with varying degrees of complexity. The first of these concerns the situation in which the transformed signs or texts have a high potential for positive nomination in the L’ semiosphere. This happens, for example, when an ideologem or mythologem is associated with a sign or text already in the initial semiosphere, and whose totalitarian homonym already has a positive mythological nomination in the L’ semiosphere. When the transformation into a totalitarian communist language takes place in the text of the biography of a historical figure, who within the initial semiotic field is clearly connected with the notions of the national liberation

struggle and the movement for the liberation of peasants, a positive nomination is achieved almost automatically – even if the described figure possesses certain features threatened by a negative nomination in the target semiosphere. This was the case with the text of the biography of Father Piotr Ściegienny (1801–1890). The founder of the Polish clandestine Peasants’ Union, sentenced to death by the tsarist authorities, who managed to avoid execution but who did serve time in a Siberian exile, could easily be described as a revolutionary. Hence the explicit nomination in the concessionary priestly press: “Piotr Ściegienny was a revolutionary in sowing good and social justice” (Ks. S. Ż. 1952: 17). However, the tendency present in Stalinist culture to build teleological narratives (Sadowski 2009: 159–175) allows not only for making such a nomination but also for the transformation of the text of Ściegienny’s biography into an element of an almost cosmogonic narrative about the emergence of the structure of the modern world: “The revolutionary activity of such people as Father Ściegienny, writes the columnist, led to the emergence ... of the Fatherland of socialism – the base of peaceful creative work, the Soviet Union with the countries of people’s democracy” (Ks. S. Ż. 1952: 16).

Let us now analyse a more complex case of resemantization, taken from the *Głos Kapłana* of 1950. The passage under analysis is an extract from an article signed Ks. J. L. 1950 (‘Rev. J. L.’), entitled *Dogmat a rzeczywistość* (‘Dogma and Reality’; Ks. J. L. 1950: 8–12). Its very title implies certain semantic operations performed on the concept, which refers to the doctrine of faith:

We must not ... so tighten ourselves up within the framework of Catholic teaching as to form for ourselves, out of Christian dogmas, a once and for all petrified worldview, ridding ourselves of all understanding and feeling for other worldviews ... We seek to give the old truths of Christianity a new, young face, the face of today, to bring them up to date, to link them to the ideals and needs of contemporary man. We want ... the fundamental Christian commandment of love of neighbor not to be found only in our devotional books and catechisms, not to resound only from pulpits but to become life, a creative and fruitful life, so that all injustice, built up by centuries of abuse, will disappear from the Church and its faithful.

We simply want to go out boldly with the old truths to meet the new times ... – to convince ourselves and others that “the Church’s mission can be carried out (and must be carried out) in the various socio-economic systems established by secular power” (p. 6 of Agreement). We want to live and act creatively for the good of both our heavenly and earthly homeland. (Rev. J. L. 1950: 12)

The term “dogma,” derived from the ancient Greek *δόγμα* (‘opinion,’ ‘decision’), evolved with the development of Christianity: in the patristic period it still had a meaning similar to ‘doctrine’ and could also refer to doctrine condemned by the Councils, considered heretical. The term “dogma” acquired its definitive meaning

for Catholic theology only at the First Vatican Council (1869–1870), since which it has come to mean a doctrinal statement of indisputable status, deriving either directly from Sacred Scripture or from the Church’s tradition of teaching. Its denial is condemned as heresy, which means that the term “dogma” belongs only to normative, official doctrine, and there can be no alternative dogmas (Sesboüé and Theobald 2003: 183–184). Therefore, the word “dogma,” when used by a Catholic and with reference to the Catholic faith, even without complements such as “dogma of purgatory” or “dogma of original sin,” has in its field of meanings components such as “our faith,” “the truth of the faith,” “a true statement,” “what distinguishes us from heretics,” etc.

Confirmation of the importance of dogmas and their binding character for all the faithful came with the proclamation of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic faith entitled *Dei Filius* by the First Vatican Council (1869–1870). We read in it:

It is necessary to preserve uninterruptedly that meaning of the sacred dogmas which Holy Mother Church has already once established, and that meaning can never be departed from under pretence or in the name of a better understanding. “Let therefore the understanding, knowledge and wisdom of all together and of each individually, both of the individual people and of the whole Church, from all generations and ages, grow and develop strongly in various ways but only in its own kind, that is, in the same doctrine, in the same meaning and in the same formulation.”¹⁰ (Baron and Pietras 2004: 905)

Although the above formulations do not constitute a definition of the term “dogma,” it is precisely these formulations, having a character obligatory for all Catholics, that to a large extent determined the complex of meanings related to it. “Dogma” thus became a semantic unit with an overwritten narrative no longer only about “our” faith but also about the content of faith not subject to negotiation or relativization under any conditions. This is precisely the corpus of the content of the term “dogma” that was negotiated and transformed in the excerpt from *Głos Kapłana* quoted slightly above.

The resemantization of the notion of “dogma” postulated in the text of the priest–publicist presupposes the breaking of one aspect of the meaning continuum of the term and the preservation of the continuity of another. Neither in the quoted passage nor in any other text is there a postulate for any theological revision of Catholic dogmatics. Rather, the demand for change concerns dogmatic thinking itself, leading to a “petrification of the worldview”; it is accompanied by an almost explicitly formulated thesis about the need to “understand and feel other world-views.” “Bringing dogmas up to date, linking them with the ideals and needs of contemporary man’ is – paradoxically – both the postulate of resemantization and

¹⁰ The internal quotation is from the Commonitorium of Vincent of Lérins.

its essential act. This act opens the transformed term to the corpus of meanings of the official, totalitarian discourse, whose representatives are both the mentioned ‘ideals’ and the word ‘youth,’ crucial for the culture of the Stalinist model both in Poland and in the USSR” (Sadowski 2009: 150–151). As a medium between the Catholic and Marxist worldviews, there is the category of love of neighbor, clearly interfering with the socialist ideology of social justice. A similar mediating function is performed here by the reference to the text of the April Agreement of 1950 (the passage on the Church’s mission, which can be carried out in various socio-economic regimes).

The semiotic effect of direct reference to the text of the Agreement is the inclusion of the entire corpus of its meanings to the resemantized category. As a result, not only the quoted excerpt of the document but its entire content enters the semantic field of the lexeme “dogma.” Point 6 of the agreement, to which direct reference is made in the text of the columnist statement from *Głos Kapłana*, contains the episcopate’s commitment to “explain to the clergy” that “they should not oppose the expansion of cooperatives in the countryside.” The justification for this commitment was the thesis of human nature naturally tending “towards voluntary social solidarity aimed at the good of the whole.”¹¹ However, two further provisions seem particularly significant:

7. The Church, in accordance with its principles, while condemning any anti-state actions, will especially oppose the misuse of religious feelings for anti-state purposes.

8. The Catholic Church, while condemning, according to its principles, any crime, will also combat the criminal activity of underground gangs and will condemn and punish with canonical consequences clergymen guilty of taking part in any underground or anti-state action.¹¹

It should be noted here that when signing the agreement with the government, the representatives of the episcopate probably perceived the content of their obligations in a completely different way than the government did. While the government authorized its representatives to sign a document generated in the language of the authorities themselves, i.e., in the totalitarian language, the Church hierarchs signing the document could look at it as if it had been written in their autonomous language, or hoping that they had the right to read it in such a way. For one who used the logic of natural Polish, the formulation about the Church’s condemnation “in accordance with its principles” of “all anti-state actions” might have seemed equivalent to the sentence “The Church will condemn all actions it considers to be

¹¹ “Porozumienie zawarte między przedstawicielami Rządu R.P. i Episkopatu Polski,” *Dziś i Jutro* 1950, April 23. 1.

anti-state.” However, the authorities, being the users of totalitarian language, most probably attributed to the above formulation a meaning resulting from the transformation, which could be reduced to the hypothetical sentence “The Church hereby adheres to the principles ordering it to condemn every action in which we do not see the approval of our values.” Similarly, the representatives of the episcopate and the government could differ in their understanding of the phrases “misuse of religious feelings for anti-state purposes,” “criminal activity of underground gangs” or “underground or anti-state action” – in the language of the document under consideration they all appeared in a transformed shape.

Thanks to the inclusion into the resemantized lexeme “dogma” of the entire text of the April Agreement, the subject of the columnist narrative adds to the corpus of the word’s meanings a context (perceptible to the users of totalitarian language) of the Church’s formal accession to the linguistic space in which norms are set by the state authority. Thus, the declaration “We simply want to go out boldly with the old truths to meet the new times” because “the Church’s mission can be carried out ... in the various socio-economic systems established by secular power” hides in fact a readiness to make the meanings of the hitherto most autonomous Catholic doctrinal statements dependent on the current content transmitted by the messages of secular power. The previously-analyzed postulate of “bringing dogmas up to date” and linking them “to the ideals and needs of contemporary man” is in fact a variant of the same declaration, since the monopoly on the definition of “ideals and needs” is held by the authorities.

Finally, it remains to discuss the mechanism of incorporation as a third possible transformational strategy. In the case of signs, it consists in assigning meaning to a sign S_F hitherto located in a foreign semiotic field F , thus outside the L , and introducing it into the L' and thus also into L . In the case of texts incorporated from F , we are, of course, dealing with assigning to them not an individual meaning, but a set of meanings which find their way into the semiosphere L' , and then – as a previously-mentioned “side effect” – also to L . Incorporation is not a strategy applied to all signs and texts from foreign cultures but only to those that remain “untamed” by L , and which reach L' without mediation of L . Such a mechanism will take place, for example, in the case of press comments on the speeches of foreign politicians or reviews of newly made foreign films and published books. Such comments and reviews will have a very clear focalizing function – they will act as instructions for reading the given text. It is worth analyzing in this context an excerpt of a review of a collection of short stories entitled *Prince of Darkness* by the American writer James Powers. This text accompanied the introduction of the book (Powers 1953) on the publishing market by the PAX Publishing House in 1953:

There is a country on earth where man is hunted in a battue. In this country the willow and the elm, the pine and the oak do not invite you to rest in the hot summer, for they cast the shadow of a hanged man. In this country golden youths make bets on who will spit further. There is a country on earth where Maxim Gorky and Thomas Mann were burnt at the stake. In this country the only books that are protected are those that teach how to kill. And this is not some remote corner of the world where savagery and barbarism are measured only by the noose tightened around the innocent neck. This country has a broader, civilized measure – a network of wires encircling the electric chair. (Krzysztoń 1953: 4)

Each story in Powers's volume, devoted mainly to the American clergy community, read in accordance with the focalization key proposed by the columnist of *Dziś i Jutro*, will be a narrative of a veritable hell on Earth. Thus, for example, the nuns residing at the parish described in the story *The Lord's Day* become witnesses and victims not so much of the parish priest's self-indulgence and callousness, not so much of the micro-social arrangement produced and preserved in the clergy house but of the "savagery and barbarism" as a feature of the entire political and social space in which the work is set. The default way of decoding any sign or sign structures referring in Powers' work to the events of World War II or to the memory of it will be the one that takes into account the thesis of the lust to kill that characterizes the whole American society. Let us analyze the functioning of the focalization key with the example of an episode from the title story of Powers' book. During the war, Father Burner has the idea of establishing a "victory altar." As soon as, in conversation with Father Quinlan, he mentions putting vigil lights there with the names of the men who are at the front, Quinlan says without embarrassment: "At a dollar a throw" (Powers 1951: 231). While the above episode can be read as a testimony to simple greed, the interpretative template from *Dziś i Jutro* makes one see it through the prism of lust for killing. In this optic, the dialogue of the clergymen becomes a testimony to the instinct to make money from war and death.

Moreover, due to the incorporation of Powers' text into a semiosphere structured by neo-tribal mythologies, the American writer's texts, transformed by totalitarian culture, while conducting narratives about a world embodying mythological evil, implicitly refer to the world of values of the community of L' language users. The reviewer states:

Powers' attitude is that of a moralist. A reading of the volume *Prince of Darkness* imposes an irresistible impression that the writer considered it his duty to show what are the ethical consequences of the system whose name Powers would perhaps define with the word industrialization, but we define it clearly with the word: capitalism. (Krzysztoń 1953: 5)

Thus, a synchronization of Powers' depicted world with the negative pole of mythological description takes place. In this way, the transformed stories from the

Prince of Darkness begin – via inversion – to lead a narrative about “our,” socialist, model world. This conviction is confirmed by the content of the editorial note opening the Polish edition of Powers’ book. The note incorporates the text of it into the totalitarian-cultural semiosphere even more explicitly than the review in *Dziś i Jutro*:

If Powers’ book for American readers is one of an indictment of capitalism but makes no attempt to point to effective ways of transforming conditions, the Catholic reader in Poland finds himself in a fundamentally different situation. He is entitled to the optimism that comes from his own life. His work is included in the building of the well-being of the whole nation ... The prosperity of his fate is not bought at the price of the exploitation of other peoples ... it is not “illuminated” by the hope of war. (Powers 1953: VI)

These words are in fact an obligation on the part of the reader to make an effort to map the surrounding reality using a polarizing key, and to find in it axiological oppositions of what has been presented as a pattern of evil.

It is time for a final illustration of concessionary Catholic discourse in this argument – an excerpt from the editorial introduction to the 1949 Easter issue of *Dziś i Jutro*:

The Resurrection of the Lord is the most powerful testimony given to the Truth ...

Easter should make us aware of the truth of everyday personal and social life of every Catholic.

One must live in the truth ... We must not cease in our efforts, we must not lose our watchfulness to be precise in formulating the truth.¹²

Let’s look at two categories that appear right next to “Resurrection of the Lord”: “Truth” and “watchfulness.” Immortalized in the title of the official newspaper of the Soviet communist party (*Pravda*), “Truth” is in L’ language one of the key mythologems, being semantically linked exclusively with what is “ours” in the totalitarian semiosphere, what is “just,” “progressive,” and “socialist.” “Everyday personal and social life,” in turn, refers to those mythologems, which in the text acquired the form of “concretely constructed norms of social life.” In such a context, the “testimony given to the Truth” from the editorial preface and the imperative “one must live in the truth” refer to such a truth which can be regarded as a tribal-socialist one. “Watchfulness” is a category of a simultaneously tribal and mobilizing character, taken directly from the Stalinist dictionary. On the other hand, the meaning of the phrase “to be precise in formulating the truth” becomes clear when combined with the analyzed in the article transformed category of

12 “Zmartwychwstanie pańskie,” *Dziś i Jutro* 1949, April 17–24. 1.

Providence. As a result, “watchfulness to be precise in formulating the truth” acquires in the above text a meaning close to “precision in seeing God’s will in the socialist transformations in Poland.”

In this paper, I have proposed theoretical models to describe the transformation of the signs and texts of the natural language semiosphere into the signs and texts of its totalitarian sub-semiosphere. Since totalitarian language and discourse, in the sense adopted here, are phenomena inseparable from the transmission of mythology, the material that has been analysed must be considered special. Its specific status lies in the fact that the senders of the individual messages have to refer to two separate mythological systems, while at the same time accepting that the readiness to transmit the contents of communist political mythology remains a condition for the transmission of Christian threads. It seems, therefore, that the Catholic discourse concessioned by the authorities of communist Poland is an indicator of the ability of the totalitarian discourse to expand. The effectiveness of the mechanisms of such expansion may be evidenced by the excerpt analyzed above. It shows that even the key categories of Catholic theology – such as the Resurrection of Christ – can be transformed in such a way that they become linked to narratives about social reality, conducted from the perspective of supporters of Stalinist socialism.

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