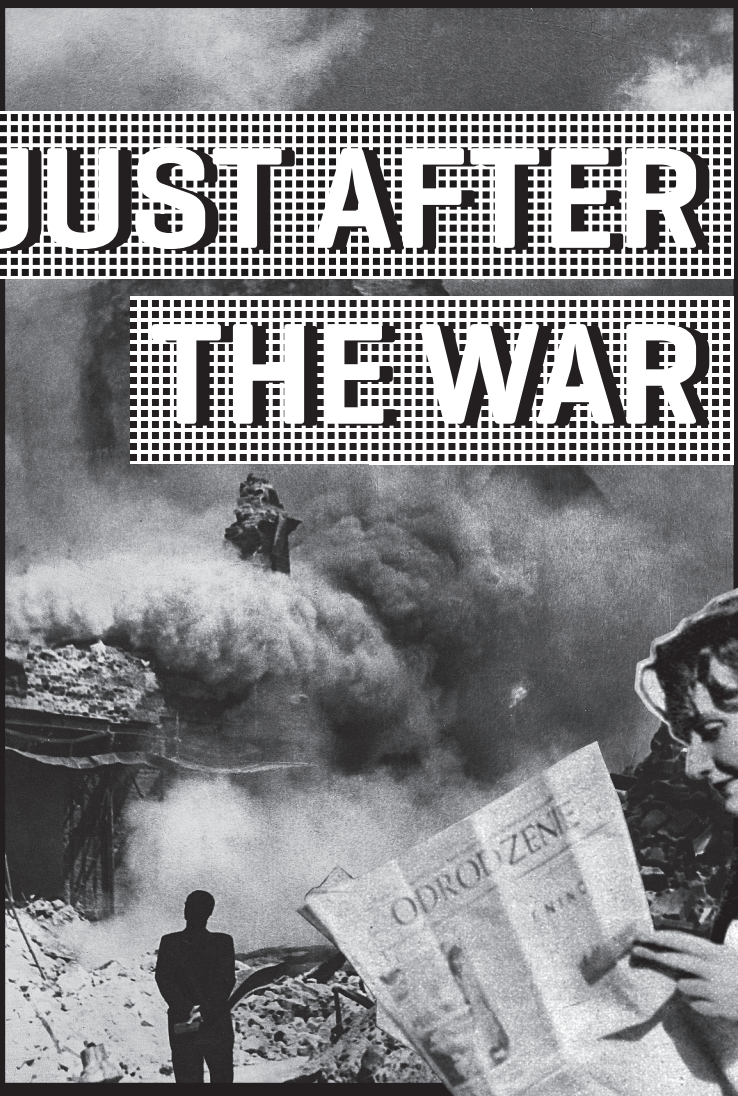
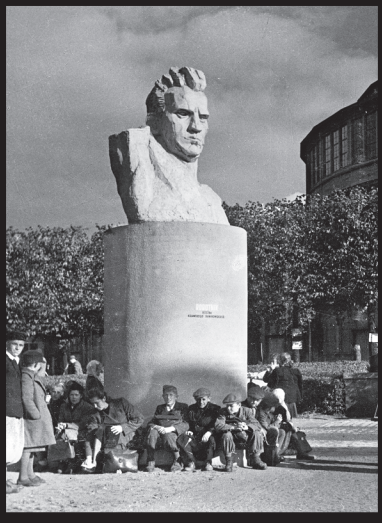
JUST AFTER THE WAR





Just After the War

edited by Joanna Kordjak and Agnieszka Szewczyk

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Just After the War

> Don't believe what they write about Poland — there's a lot of hysteria and unhealthy anxiety in that, utterly unnecessary. In any case, the reconstruction slogan is not just a slogan. There are ruins here, including moral ones. Well — it was a war. And here in its worst form. No, I haven't changed at all. But I wish to be honest. I told you why I came back. I'll say it once again: I believe it was the right thing to do. You need to see this country to believe in it.
>
> Tadeusz Borowski, 1946[1]

The period covered by the exhibition and the accompanying publication is defined by dates of socio-political history which is the main point of reference here. These rigid temporal boundaries, marked by political events — beginning with the PKWN Manifesto (PKWN — Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego [Polish Committee of National Liberation's]) and the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising a few days later in 1944, and ending with the party unification congress and the centralisation of power in 1948 — do not overlap precisely with the dynamics of cultural phenomena, but provide a time frame allowing to take a closer look at the specificity of the period's art.

Rather than attempting to prove a particular point, the exhibition seeks to answer the question of how artists found themselves in the context of a new, dynamically changing socio-political reality and an atmosphere of, on the one hand, 'reconstruction euphoria' and hope, but, on the other hand, a 'great trepidation' as described by Marcin Zaremba.[2] What function was art supposed to play in that context ? How was art influenced by Poland's new geography, mass repatriations, and the migration of artistic communities? How did it negotiate its place and language? What was the situation in which young artists made their debuts? Did the war and the year 1945 really constitute a turning point when everything began anew — a 'zero moment'?[3] However, neither the exhibition nor the book pretend to offer an exhaustive synthesis; we believe that it is too early for that at the current state of research.[4] Our goal has been to define a horizon rather than create a tight narrative. To tell about this unique time and its phenomena through the histories of selected artists — both those debuting 'right after the war' (such as Andrzej Wróblewski, Jadwiga Maziarska or Marian Bogusz) and those from the generation of their 'fathers', who had emerged before the

1 Tadeusz Borowski's letter to Maria Rundo, 12 July 1946, in *Niedyskrecje pocztowe. Korespondencja Tadeusza Borowskiego*, ed. Tadeusz Drewnowski, Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2001, p. 148.

2 Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944–1947*, Kraków: Znak, 2012.

3 Cf. *Repartir à zero. Comme si la peinture n'avait jamais existé (1945–49)*, exh. cat., ed. Éric de Chassey, Sylvie Ramond, Paris: Musée des Beaux-arts de Lyon, 2008.

4 There is still a dearth of monographic studies on such important subjects as the Warsaw Reconstruction Bureau, the Club of Young Artists and Scientists, the Production Aesthetics Supervision Bureau, the Regained Territories Exhibition, of monographs of numerous artists and architects, and especially of studies of the political archives.

war (Mieczysław Berman, Marek Włodarski, Władysław Strzemiński, Felicjan Szczęsny Kowarski, Jan Bułhak). To portray the period through the histories of selected works and projects, sometimes forgotten (e.g. Leon Suzin's Memorial to Jews Fighting in in the Second World War) and sometimes so 'well known' that, paradoxically, they have been marginalised in the contemporary art-historical discourse (e.g. Bronisław Linke). Such a structure provided for certain revaluations, to mention but the highlighting of the 1947 Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists in Warsaw 'at the expense' of the highly mythologised 1st Exhibition of Modern Art in Kraków in 1948.[5] Revising the hitherto Kraków-centric narrative about the 1940s[6], the exhibition directs attention to, among other things, the practices of the Club of Young Artists and Scientists and its driving spirit, the painter and stage designer Marian Bogusz. The Club's significance consisted, for example, in its new way of thinking about (the presentation of) modernity. What mattered here was pluralism — referring to various contemporary attitudes as well as, importantly, various genealogies of modernity, including the genealogies of Polish surrealism. Its reception took place in the 1940s not only via Paris (Jerzy Kujawski, Tadeusz Kantor) or Prague (Zbigniew Dłubak, Marian Bogusz), but also through the pre-war work of Marek Włodarski (Henryk Streng) and the Lviv-based artist collective Artes.

Working on the exhibition, we were aware that the dynamics of the selected phenomena do not always match the turning points defined by political events. The sources of the artistic choices and attitudes significant for the late 1940s date back to pre-war times, something that we note on several occasions. We present the monumental painting of Felicjan Szczęsny Kowarski, that in an unchanged form revives after the war in a new reality, or the historicising painting of Antoni Michalak, a disciple of Tadeusz Pruszkowski. The idea of the avant-garde working-class housing scheme found its perfect embodiment in Helena and Szymon Syrkus' experimental Koło II housing estate in Warsaw's Wola district; the Ład collective's concept of 'beautiful furniture for everyone', in turn, materialised, in an everyday reality defined by ruins and 'loot markets', as a utopia realised under the aegis of the Production Aesthetics Supervision Bureau created by Wanda Telakowska.

Naturally, not only specific artistic proposals but also the postulates of 'solidarity between intellectuals and the working masses', raised again after the war, had their roots in the pre-war reality. In this context, let us mention the Congress of Cultural Workers in the Defence of Peace in Lviv in May 1936, attended by many would-be prominent cultural activists and artists (e.g. Karol Kuryluk, Wanda Wasilewska or Władysław Broniewski)[7], which culminated in the participants' cheering 'Let us meet in red Warsaw!'.

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5 Cf. Piotr Słodkowski, *The Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists (1947) vis-a-vis the Exhibition of Modern Art (1948/1949). Revisioning Modernity*, pp. 87–91.

6 Ultimately established by the exhibition and catalogue: *I Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej. Pięćdziesiąt lat później*, ed. Józef Chrobak, Marek Świca, Kraków: Fundacja Nowosielskich, Starmach Gallery, 1999.

7 Significantly, the Congress's organiser, the Communist Party of Poland, fearing unexpected reactions from the Polish avant-garde (French Surrealists had refused to participate in the First International Congress in the Defence of Culture in Paris in 1935), turned down applications from the majority of artists from Kraków and Lviv. In most likelihood, only Jonasz Stern and Andrzej Pronaszko took part.

The most telling declaration of this kind of postulates shortly after the war was Jerzy Borejsza's essay/manifesto 'Rewolucja łagodna' [A mild revolution].[8] Borejsza, a communist and a visionary, expressed in it a sense, quite common for Polish intellectuals at the time, regardless of their political sympathies, that the elitist cultural-policy model needed to be replaced with an egalitarian one.

However, the postulate of connecting art with social life, declared in the immediate post-war years by the authorities and the artists themselves, ended in a fiasco. What is more, it may have been then — in the second half of the 1940s — that the autotelic model of modern art and the modern artist as isolated from the social reality had become firmly established.[9]

The early post-war years saw the development of communist propaganda's visual strategy — the 'scenography' of the new regime. Artists such as Mieczysław Berman, Tadeusz Trepkowski or Włodzimierz Zakrzewski were among those who had directly involved themselves in the new political reality, becoming key authors of the propaganda rhetoric. For Berman, in particular, there was an uninterrupted continuity, both ideological and formal, between that work and the pre-war and wartime years.

The repertoire of motifs (e.g. the myth of 'Piast Poland') and of the formal means of expression, already established in the late 1930s[10], were implemented on a mass scale in the post-war years in the context of the recent geopolitical changes. One of the new regime's key legitimisation tools was the propaganda of the 'Regained Territories', which heavily involved the photographic community (state-sponsored photographic tours around the newly acquired lands in the west, the founding of the Western Institute in Poznań, etc.). The apogee of those efforts was the Regained Territories Exhibition in Wrocław, presented in both this book and the exhibition as a key propagandistic event, realised on an unprecedented scale and featuring a great number of artists — members of the pre-war avant-garde (Henryk Stażewski), Colourists (e.g. Jan Cybis), and pre-war statists (e.g. Felicjan Szczęsny Kowarski).

A will to live, strong despite omnipresent destruction, manifesting itself in Polish culture of the period and expressed in efforts to design the world despite everything, in introducing order, in building a new organisation of life, is something that is common for the attitudes of many artists, architects and designers seeking to find a place for themselves in the post-war reality.

In Warsaw, the city's almost complete destruction and the municipalisation of real estate in 1945 offered urban planners and architects the possibility to realise hitherto utopian visions. Razed to the ground, the area of the former Jewish Ghetto, whose 'lunar' landscape can be seen in Jan Bułhak's famous photograph, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, represented in 1945 a great challenge and temptation for architects — a modernist dream fulfilled, a 'dreamed revolution'. It was now possible to start building from scratch. On the

8 Jerzy Borejsza, 'Rewolucja łagodna', *Odrodzenie*, no. 10/12, 1945, p. 1.

9 Wojciech Włodarczyk, *Five Years*, pp. 20–26.

10 For example, Józef Kisielewski's book *Ziemia gromadzi prochy*, Poznań: Księgarnia Św. Wojciecha, 1939, served as a direct model, in terms of both visuals and the repertoire of propaganda motifs, for *Ziemie Staropolski*, published after the war by the Western Institute in Poznań.

ruins — and using the ruins — will emerge Muranów, a housing scheme-cum-memorial designed by Bohdan Lachert. Its original symbolism, conveyed by unplastered red brick walls meant to evoke the 'blood of the murdered', was eventually obscured by a Socialist-Realist 'costume'. Socialist Realism put also a halt to a public debate dealing with the experience of war and the Holocaust as well as with the language of art and how it should be formulated (in literature or painting). Thus the mourning period of the early post-war years is interrupted and the traumatic experiences repressed into the sphere of 'unspeakable' taboo, something that will continue to be felt in the successive decades, also in art. A good example of the complexities of the commemoration debate, its manipulation and eventual repression (beginning in the late 1940s) is the history of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, opened in 1947, and of the changing concepts regarding the desired shape of this particular exposition.[11] In the second half of the 1940s, the memory of war had not yet solidified and several different narratives competed with each other. The Holocaust was present in the Polish public discourse, becoming marginalised only after 1949.

The quest for an adequate language to describe the experience of war was bound up with a debate over realism in literature and painting. It was not disconnected, of course, from the political context, and concerned, in large part, the directions of cultural policy: would it follow the liberal model or adhere to paradigms imposed from above (such as Soviet Socialist Realism)?

Given initially unclear signals arriving from the Soviet Union and disturbing postulates appearing in the press, calling for a return to a 19th-century version of realism, for artists and critics the debate became a field of battle for modern art. Expanding the realist formula so that it could contain abstraction, cubism or surrealism, adopting the concept of realism for modern art, seemed to be offering a chance for its free and autonomous development (the 'enhanced realism' formulated by Kantor and Porębski). In this broad formula of realism, there was room for both Andrzej Wróblewski with his 'direct realism' and for Władysław Strzemiński with his 'realism of the process of seeing' as he attempted to design a new language to describe the experience of the war and the post-war reality.

The art of the 1940s confronted the experience of being a witness, the experience of an eye that sees. Strzemiński made that the focal point of his post-war art. His theoretical work as well as painting practice focused on the relationship between the work of the eye and the activity of the brain. There was a close connection between his *Theory of Vision*, written at the time and published in fragments, which dealt with the neurophysiology of vision, *Afterimages*, renderings of images overlapping on the retina, both remembered and actual, and the *To My Friends the Jews* series, the central theme of which are the visual perceptions of the observer, the eyewitness.

The latter series, one of the most moving artistic projects dealing with the Holocaust, acquired particular significance in the context of post-war anti-Semitism. For

11 Zofia Wóycicka, *Przerwana żałoba. Polskie spory wokół pamięci wokół nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych 1944–1950*, Warsaw: Trio, 2009.

this reason, in both the exhibition and the book it is presented next to Julia Pirotte's photographs of the Kielce pogrom. What was important for us was anchoring both Strzemiński's series and Wróblewski's *Executions* in the specific iconosphere of the 1940s, saturated with images of cruelty. Strzemiński used those images in his collages, while for Wróblewski they had served as a point of departure for studies for the *Executions*. 'Visual consciousness', the central concept of Strzemiński's *Theory of Vision*[12], construed also as an ability to derive knowledge from reality, becomes an extremely significant category in a world whose iconosphere was comprised largely of photographs documenting the atrocities of war.

The meeting of these two artists in a single exhibition space is also a meeting of Wróblewski's 'cosmogonic' compositions — constellations of planets and stars that need to be re-situated in space, an *Earth* that has to be reconstructed from fragments — with Strzemiński's paintings of the sun.

What also seems interesting in the context of the era's dominant photographic imagery, as well as deserving a reinterpretation, are the works of Jadwiga Maziarska — both her abstract collages made of torn photographs, including press photos, and her unique 1949 painting verging between abstraction and figuration, *Statue of Circulating Power*. The latter's 'photographic' colour scheme (black, grey, white) and an unclear, hard-to-decipher composition consisting of fragmented, tangled human bodies, brings to mind the era's gruesome press photographs, such as those documenting the liberation of the Dachau camp.

One of the leitmotifs of the early post-war period are ruins and their representations in painting and photography. As an image of a shattered, fragmented, degraded world, they were an extremely potent metaphor. Images of ruined Warsaw became also instrumental in writing the city's biography as well as constituting a key element of the new regime's propaganda strategy. One of the pillars underpinning fragile social confidence was the reconstruction of the Polish capital, which had been destroyed in nearly 80 percent.[13] Moreover, the reconstruction effort offered a chance for realising the utopia of a city for an egalitarian society.

Photo books or exhibitions (such as *Warsaw Accuses*, organised by the Warsaw Reconstruction Bureau at the National Museum in Warsaw in 1945) featured images of ruins, emphasising the heroism of reconstruction.

References to antiquity in photography, painting, literature and theatre, drawing parallels between the post-war devastation and ancient ruins, and between Warsaw and the Eternal City, served to ennoble the wartime experience. At the same time, the shift towards antiquity as the most universal source was an expression of hope in rising from the ruins, including the spiritual and moral ones.

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12 Luiza Nader, *Neurorealism. Władysław Strzemiński's Afterimages*, pp. 83–86.

13 Demolished systematically during the war in keeping with the Nazi strategy of destroying the Polish nation, Warsaw was so ruined that it was doubted for some time whether it would remain the country's capital; the communist regime considered leaving it as it was, a phantom city of ruins, as an anti-war memorial.

The apocalyptic landscape of the ruins — aestheticised and mythologised — was meant not so much as an expression of nostalgia for the old as a foundation of a new social order, a new state, built on the rubble of the old order and old social organisation. Serving to build a new memory and new identity, the photographs of the post-war wreckage were thus — as images of memory — ruins in themselves.[14]

The quotation opening this essay is from Tadeusz Borowski's letter to the Maria from *Farewell to Maria*, a girlfriend who had decided to remain in exile. At the time of writing the letter, Borowski had been back in Poland for over a year. After Auschwitz, Dachau, a camp for displaced persons, and a stay in Munich, he had returned to Poland in May 1946. In his biography are condensed the experiences, choices and fate of those artists who had accepted the challenge posed by the 'new' reality. The liminal experience of the war and Holocaust, political support for the new regime[15], and a search for the right language to name and describe all that. Borowski found it, but the anti-heroic, anti-moralistic, provocative and radical idiom of his short stories soon proved at odds with the socialist realist doctrine. In a self-critique[16] published in the press, the writer renounced his most important work; it was, symbolically, his first suicide. It is hard today to investigate his reasons; 'in fact, I've already stopped trying to understand what is happening inside me', he wrote in another letter to Maria.[17] Just as it is impossible to fathom the motives of his late writing, so there is no clear-cut interpretation of the first five post-war years in culture: how much of it was naivety and cynicism, how much true commitment, and how much cold calculation.

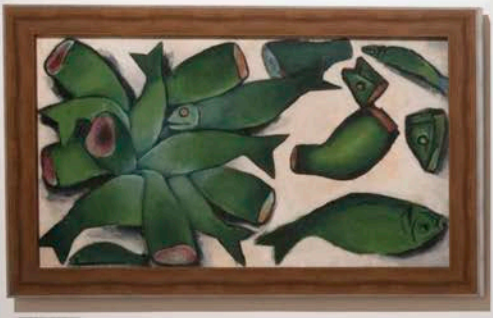
This volume concludes with an epilogue containing self-critiques offered by five influential figures of the era: Mieczysław Berman, Jerzy Borejsza, Tadeusz Borowski, Bohdan Lachert, and Andrzej Wróblewski. All were deeply involved in constructing the 'new reality', but were forced to publicly claim that they had failed, to critically review their practices to date, and sometimes disown their best works. These enunciations are an important and telling document as much of the end of this crucial five-year period as of the beginning of another era.

14 Krzysztof Pijarski, 'Wunderblock Warsaw. The Ruined City, Memory and Mechanical Reproduction', http://widok.ibl.waw.pl/index.php/one/article/view/150/252 (accessed 11 August 2015).

15 Borowski knew the Soviet regime from personal experience: he was born in Zhytomyr, Ukrainian SSR, and his parents were deported to Siberia.

16 Tadeusz Borowski's self-critique, pp. 153–159.

17 *Niedyskrecje pocztowe . . .* , p. 150.







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Wojciech Włodarczyk

Five Years

The years 1944/1945 and 1949/1950 define such a suggestive time frame that it is easy for us to say that we are dealing with a period politically distinct from what preceded and — to a lesser extent — followed it. The same is true for art. The wartime years and the Socialist-Realist period are like brackets around the second half of the 1940s. We easily notice links between the 1930s and the immediately post-war period: the institutional position of the Colourists rose, and the Regained Territories Exhibition in Wrocław in 1948 was a continuation of the Polish Pavilion exhibits at the 1937 and 1939 world expos. It is a similar case with the subsequent years. Both the 1948 Regained Territories Exhibition and the same year's Exhibition of Modern Art in Kraków had significant consequences for the Polish modernity of the second half of the 1950s. These connections serve to further emphasise the uniqueness of the five-year-period of interest to us here.

The 1940s thus appear as a necessary element of a chronological sequence. In it, political factors (war and Stalinism) are obstacles on art's path of development. The achievements of the 1930s and post-October 1956 artistic production mark the expected line of changes. Art of the late 1950s can be seen as a fulfilment of the promises of the previous decade, a victory over the political restrictions of Stalinism, an erasure of the cut-off points of 1944 and 1950. But such a view seems questionable. In 1944, a legal Polish government in exile was still holding sessions in London, the western borders were uncertain, and the memory of the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941 and the Polish-Soviet war of 1920 remained fresh. Struggle against the new occupying force was under way. The Warsaw Uprising was a tragic token and political interpretation of that situation. A sense that the status quo was only temporary and that things would soon change is aptly captured by a forbidden rhyme that circulated widely in the post-war years: 'Mister Truman, drop that bomb, this can't be allowed to go on / One A-charge and into Lwów will ride / All burnt out but it's home all right / And if you give another boo / We'll be back in Wilno too.' Some 48 percent of pre-war Poland's territory was now part of the Soviet Union. At the opposite end, a particularly drastic example was the city of Szczecin, whose national status hung in the balance into the early 1950s as German, Russian, and Polish interests wrangled.

The popular consciousness of the era is best summarised by the word *uncertainty*, conveying a dissonance between recent memory and the reality at hand. For the communists, who were ruthlessly consolidating their power with the help of the dreaded NKVD, the main goal was to win popular support. Their playing field was demarcated by the dispossession of the aristocracy, a land reform, the nationalisation of major industry, and a struggle against political opposition, but also by a cultural offensive supporting a social revolution. The (superficial, in fact) erasure of the pre-war class structure strengthened the position of the artist and, indirectly, enhanced the significance of

art.[1] Addressing a predominantly left-oriented intelligentsia, Jerzy Borejsza, who had experienced Soviet rule in Lviv in 1939–1941, formulated the idea of a 'mild revolution'.[2] Radical social reforms were also postulated in the London-based Council of National Unity's *Testament of Fighting Poland* of June 1945.[3]

And of course no one thought of the need for or readiness to join the reconstruction effort in terms of political struggle.

Borejsza's text, 'Rewolucja łagodna' [A mild revolution], was published in 1945 in the issue no. 10/12 of the literary weekly *Odrodzenie*. A year earlier, the same periodical featured Jerzy Putrament's article, 'Odbudowa psychiczna' [Mental reconstruction]: 'Let us not allow for non-writers to tell us what to write. We are holding a delicate instrument in our hands',[4] Putrament wrote. Though he referred specifically to writers, his message was aimed at all artists, including visual ones.

Among the latter, the drama of political subjugation and social revolution wasn't felt that painfully because recent political developments (the establishment of a Ministry of Culture and Art, government preoccupation with the needs of the artistic community, greater role awarded to artists' unions, pledges of higher spending on culture) had been a fulfilment of postulates voiced by artists even before the war. Institutional guarantees for the culture sector were a compensation for the resignation, or actual impossibility due to potential reprisals, of axiological and political debate. The radical views of artistic innovators and the participation of avant-garde artists such as Leon Chwistek or Tadeusz Peiper (who wrote texts about the Katyń massacre) in the creation of Polish political structures in Moscow played a role too. In the public discourse, 'independence' was supplanted by 'freedom', though such changes of vocabulary in the arts community were evident already before the war.[5] In two or three years' time, 'freedom' itself will be supplanted by (controversially defined) 'culture'. In an atmosphere of general uncertainty, a modernist notion of art as isolated from the political context yet open to experimentation, characteristic for the moderns, the avant-garde, or the Colourists, responded to at least two needs: it offered an illusory sense that art was strong in itself, and provided a justification for artists who distanced themselves from current events. The *separation* of art from the political context created a stable, inward-oriented point of reference in the 'poor times', guaranteeing the safety of the 'delicate instrument'. The logic of Julian Przyboś's argument in a much-publicised press debate in June 1946, triggered off by the publication of Tadeusz Dobrowolski's

1 Zdzisław Krasnodębski, 'Modernizacja po polsku', in *Drogi do nowoczesności. Idea modernizacji w polskiej myśli politycznej*, ed. Jacek Kłoczowski and Michał Szułdrzyński, Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2006.

2 Cf. Eryk Krasucki, '"Rewolucja łagodna" (1944–1948)', in idem, *Międzynarodowy komunista. Jerzy Borejsza — biografia polityczna*, Warsaw: PWN, 2009.

3 'Testament Polski Walczącej', in *Węzły pamięci niepodległej Polski*, Warsaw and Kraków: Znak, 2014, pp. 990–993.

4 Jerzy Putrament, 'Odbudowa psychiczna', *Odrodzenie*, no. 4/5, 1944, pp. 1, 3.

5 Wojciech Włodarczyk, 'Niepodległość i nowoczesność', in *Sztuka wszędzie. Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie 1904–1944*, exh. cat., Warsaw: Zachęta — Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie, 2012, pp. 40–55.

article, 'On the Hermeticism and Social Isolation of Today Painting', was highly telling, not to say humorous: 'First of all, it is not true that the painting of today is hermetic and isolated from society. This isn't and wasn't the case particularly in the West. Matisse, Picasso, and Bonnard are en vogue.'[6]

Helena Blumówna commented bluntly on the surrealism-inspired works featured in the Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists in end-1947: 'They are detached from real life, but who knows where real life ends and something else begins?'[7] The exhibition was in fact the most interesting and most representative presentation of new art in the whole period in question. Art was becoming a defence mechanism, an escape from the new political situation, and, besides uncertainty, was the other element defining the sphere of culture in the second half of the 1940s. The overvaluation of art, so characteristic for the People's Poland period, the overestimation of the intellectual and the artist, continuing to this day, had received its strong, non-Romantic impulse precisely in those years.

Fundamental choices and questions were replaced with superficial problems that fuelled the discourse of power. The limited space of public debate was demarcated by an image of the German occupation (and later also of the 'imperialistic West') and an ideological dictate of transformative reconstruction (scientific and technological achievements plus egalitarianism as the indicators of modernity). The historical experience and everyday reality were off the artistic radar. The crucial phenomenon of a new, criminal system pressing forward from the east and threatening the very foundations of European culture, a phenomenon of potentially grave consequences for not only Polish but also global history, found virtually no expression in the visual arts. Among the few exceptions was Waldemar Cwenarski's painting *The Blaze* (1950), informed by what the young author had seen in Lviv, its title inspired by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka's popular debut novel and its iconography by the Four Horsemen motif and by propaganda posters from the 1920 Polish-Soviet war.[8] The painting, which was featured in the Arsenal exhibition in 1955, sent an unambiguous message. Another important theme — the Western democracies' stance towards the place and role of Poland, condemned by the communists as treacherous, and fundamental for the definition of the country's geopolitical and cultural identity — was likewise ignored in art. One might venture to interpret Felicjan Szczęsny Kowarski's 1947 *Electra* as a reflection on the shared roots of European culture, which from the very beginning was haunted by the ghost of European non-solidarity. Such an interpretation is supported by the figure of the Amor which repeats a motif (albeit in reverse) from a plafond (also by Kowarski) at the Brühl Palace, where the Polish Foreign Ministry was located before the war. For it is not love, but intrigue and treason that are the main themes of the ancient myth.

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6 Tadeusz Dobrowolski, 'O hermetyzmie i społecznej izolacji dzisiejszego malarstwa', *Odrodzenie*, no. 23, 1946; Julian Przyboś, 'Próba oka', *Odrodzenie*, no. 27, 1946.

7 Helena Blumówna, 'Wystawa młodych plastyków', *Twórczość*, no. 2, 1948.

8 Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, *Pożoga. Wspomnienie z Wołynia 1917–1919*, Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1922.

The Polish people's determination in opposing the Soviet-backed regime (which is also the theme of Jerzy Andrzejewski's novel *Ashes and Diamonds*) was hidden under a historical costume in Jan Lebenstein's *After the Incidents in Modena* (1950). The 1820 and 1831 events in then-Austrian Modena, including the denunciation of the insurrection's leader, Ciro Menotti, are considered as the beginning of the *Risorgimento* (unification of Italy). Lebenstein's painting, drawing on the iconographic motif of entombment, is also a reference to the artist's personal experiences: his fight against communism and the death of his brother who died (perhaps betrayed) in a shootout with secret police agents at one of the stations of the Warsaw–Otwock commuter train line.[9] Themes of social revolution were exploited (particularly in official satire and posters) to produce a one-sided, propagandistic, and confrontational image. The dramatic changes in Poland's ethnic makeup, a result of political decisions made elsewhere, found no independent artistic representation either. The secret meaning of Jerzy Nowosielski's *Battle of Addis Ababa* (1947) as a commentary on the resettlement of the Łemko people was revealed by the artist only towards the end of his life. The painting preceded, by a year, the artist's father's decision to change his nationality.[10] The exhibition in early 1947 of Władysław Strzemiński's expiatory compositions from the *To My Friends the Jews* series coincided with the closing of a long-standing case against the artist over his signing of the 'Russian list' in 1940.[11] Those are the most important works, and they are few. Through their context, their authors' dramatic biographies, and their approach to the subject, they differ from the dominant, stereotypical idiom, and are missing from, or at the margins of, art-historical narratives.

The period's two most sensational exhibitions, to this day considered its flagships, took place in a particular political context. The Regained Territories Exhibition in Wrocław, its Jewish Pavilion removed on Soviet orders a few days before the official opening, inscribed itself in the propagandistic spectacle of the concurrent World Congress of Intellectuals.[12] It was an element of Stalin's policy aimed at disciplining the Eastern Bloc countries, subordinating them to the Moscow central, as well as setting a new line towards the European democracies, notably France, with the West's largest communist party (co-financed by Moscow). The rejection by Poland and Czechoslovakia, under Soviet pressure, of the Marshall Plan, the establishment of the Cominform, the expelling of communists from the French government, the liquidation of the Beauregard transit camp for Soviet citizens in France, and the indictments the French Communist Party sought (unsuccessfully) against planned publications revealing the scale of the Soviet Gulag system and its crimes, all contributed

9 Wojciech Włodarczyk, 'Warszawskie lata Jana Lebensteina', in *Jan Lebenstein. Demony*, exh. cat., Warsaw: Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza w Warszawie, 2005.

10 Krystyna Czerni, *Nietoperz w świątyni. Biografia Jerzego* Nowosielskiego, Kraków: Znak, 2011.

11 *Władysław Strzemiński 1893–1952. W setną rocznicę urodzin*, exh. cat., Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 1993.

12 Andrzej Kostołowski, 'Biegi z przeszkodami. Wystawy: *Ziem Odzyskany*ch (1948) i *Wrocław moje miasto* (2000)', *Quart*, no. 1 (11), 2009.

to the decision to hold the Congress in Poland.[13] Given the domestic situation in France and the communists' waning popularity, organising the Congress there might have not produced the desired results. 'I'd rather have ten years of jail time in France than five years of freedom in Russia!', exclaimed the famous veteran of the Spanish Civil War, Valentín 'El Campesino' González, in a Paris courtroom in 1951, encapsulating the awareness change occurring among the French public.[14] Moscow profited from the Congress by successfully waging a full-scale attack on existentialism and demonstrating the power and visual attractiveness of communist Poland to the international press. The Congress wasn't meant to unite, but to divide. The Exhibition of Modern Art in Kraków, organised, like several other visual-art shows, to honour the unification congress of the Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR) and the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS) (15–21 December 1948), opened in the middle of its proceedings. The date wasn't neutral and it's unlikely that it hadn't been deliberately chosen by the organisers in an attempt to meet the government's postulates for 'truly committed art'. The regime's gain was that artists agreed to play along.

One of the crucial landmarks on the ethical map of choices in the second half of the 1940s was Czesław Miłosz's 'Treatise on Morality', completed in Washington in 1947 and published in the literary monthly *Twórczość* in 1948. Researchers situate the work in a sequence traced out by the poem 'You Who Wronged' (1950) and the nonfiction work *The Captive Mind* (1953).[15] Miłosz's poetic diagnosis confirms the above reflections on the visual arts. Gamma from *The Captive Mind* is the already mentioned Jerzy Putrament. The inevitability of fate, determinism of behaviour, and art that saves complete the picture. Art is a remedy for a time of disaster. But also, as the poet advises, '. . . the only salvation', a 'healthy heart and balanced emotions'.[16] But the 'way of life' suggested in the poem doesn't open itself to larger-scale world-transforming processes and concerns only a narrow intellectual elite, for 'to know how society will develop it is sometimes enough to follow the ideas of a few most sensitive individuals'.[17] The decision to leave the fettered country protects the poet from silence. Culture, Miłosz says, is legitimated by freedom. In *The Captive Mind*, the author settles the matter: 'Inner emigrants are eaten up by hatred until they have nothing else left and are like empty nuts'.[18] It is only full freedom that protects the poet from the influences of the Marxist dialectical 'method', which in the conditions of unfreedom cannot be resisted. Without

13 On the various versions of who initiated the Congress, cf. Eryk Krasucki, 'Kongres wrocławski', in idem, *Międzynarodowy komunista . . .*

14 Herbert R. Lottman, *Lewy brzeg. Od Frontu Ludowego do zimnej wojny*, Warsaw: PIW, 1997.

15 Czesław Miłosz, 'Traktat moralny', *Twórczość*, no. 4, 1948; Czesław Miłosz, 'Który skrzywdziłeś', from the volume *Światło dzienne*, Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1953; Czesław Miłosz, *Zniewolony umysł*, Paris: Gallimard, 1953.

16 Miłosz, 'Traktat moralny'.

17 Miłosz, *Zniewolony umysł*, Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1980, p. 196.

18 Ibid., p. 20.

losing the power of moral judgement, art distances itself from reality, and above all from its simplistic critique: 'it is a shame that those who oppose the regime are no par to it intellectually', 'the peasants are an inert mass'[19], and so on.

For others, it was not leaving but returning to Poland that offered a chance of becoming part of art history. Ryszard Stanisławski is a symbolic example here. A refugee in France, he was, as he declared himself, politically indifferent, but with time warmed up to leftist ideas. In June 1949, he joined the 'Grunwald' Union of Polish Youth (Oskar Hansen was a member too), affiliated with the French Communist Party, and after its disbanding, the FCP itself. He returned to Poland in early 1951, exactly when Miłosz was leaving. Describing the rather large Polish community in Paris, he wrote, 'Some of them came here, having been granted two-month scholarships — and left after a month, saying that the place was good for nothing, morally corrupt, that Picasso and bad art'.[20] The East-West divide, built up after the rejection of the Marshall Plan alongside slogans of 'struggle for peace', was already doing its job. Those returning to Poland reached conclusions opposite to Miłosz's, but on the basis of the same criterion of simple dichotomous division.

This process will intensify following a cultural policymaking conference at the State Council building in October 1951 where, after two years of Moscow-style doctrinal Socialist Realism, identifying art with the State and the Party, a return was hailed to the late 1940s model. After 1951, the Stalinist regime continued to pursue a hard line against the 'kulaks' and the Church, but softened its stance on the visual arts, creating a situation where the spheres of culture and political experience grew rapidly apart. 'Fortunately' for artists, October 1956 redefined the embarrassing proximity of art and crime, turning art into an accuser of politics.[21] Thus the 'long' 1940s go well beyond the decade itself, and their ostensible artistic 'innocence' may seem questionable. Socialist Realism was inherent to the 1940s — not as growing political pressure, but as a time when a particular notion of art's place, its social isolation, and (contrary to declarations) exclusivity had become established. It was a paradigm of choices that would long remain valid, a path from the separation of experience to the *isolation* of art and its confinement to an autotelic formula.

Thus *provincialism* became a cultural code of Polish art. I don't use the term here in its usual meaning. Provincialism is the impossibility of defining your own situation without referring to what is outside, to an external 'centre'. It is an inability to define art in the context of Poland's new political, social, cultural, and civilisational situation after 1944. One can construe and judge provincialism in a twofold way, but always as a function of a dichotomous modernisation model that problematised the West and

19 Ibid., pp. 187, 196.

20 Piotr Rypson, 'Dwie rozmowy z Ryszardem Stanisławskim', *Obieg*, 11 January 2007, http://www.obieg.pl/rozmowy/1391, accessed: 6 August 2015.

21 Wojciech Włodarczyk, 'Po co był socrealizm?', in *Doświadczenie i świadectwo totalitaryzmu na obszarze kultur środkowoeuropejskich*, ed. Joanna Goszczyńska, Joanna Królak, Robert Kulmiński, Warsaw: Instytut Slawistyki Zachodniej i Południowej, Uniwersytet Warszawski, 2011, pp. 43–55.

defined its difference.[22] And as an attempt to find decisive arguments within the field of art rather than in the deepest strata of the new reality or popular consciousness.

Artistic choices in the 1940s are determined by values such as uncertainty, separation of experience, and, in consequence, art's isolation and provincialisation. And therefore, according to me, not resistance against Socialist Realism, not creative development of artistic inspirations, visionary projects, or new programs, as researchers to date have argued. A certain model of culture and of understanding the world became entrenched in Poland shortly after the war. What, therefore, was significant and had long-term consequences for Poland was not visual-arts production construed as an opposition against totalitarianism, but all that truly changed the country in the subsequent decades: social groups ignored by artists or perceived solely through the prism of Socialist-Realist clichés (peasants and workers), the Church, whose leader was nominated in 1948, and a resistance model derived from common sense and the everyday experience. Such themes are not to be found in the art of the second half of the 1940s.

22 Miłosz, 'Zachód', in idem, *Zniewolony umysł*. On links between history and provincialism from an emigrant's perspective: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Eryk Krasucki

‘Mild Revolution’. A Fuzzy Cultural Programme of the First Post-war Years

In January 1945, when the end of the war was still some time away, the weekly *Odrodzenie* published Jerzy Borejsza’s text, ‘Rewolucja łagodna’ [A mild revolution], which was in fact a political offer for the intelligentsia made by a leading representative of the regime that was installing itself in Poland.[1] The text probably wouldn’t have appeared in that particular form had it not been for a sense, widespread among intellectuals, that cultural policy had to be reformed. That need, felt already before the war, had become even more urgent and pronounced during the wartime years. Reforms had been postulated by intellectuals of all political hues, e.g. Czesław Miłosz, Bolesław Miciński, Andrzej Bobkowski, or Andrzej Trzebiński. Also the programming statements of émigré political organisations contained numerous references to the desired shape of post-war cultural policy. But it wasn’t its credibility or popular appeal that ensured the victory of the left-wing agenda. It was never subjected to democratic verification, and the model of the cultural revolution had been determined by the course of political events.

In order to better understand what the ‘mild revolution’ was about, let us describe its key characteristics. At its root lay a radical critique of the pre-war cultural paradigm, which was considered elitist. That, it was argued, was the main cause of the paresis of Polish culture, which had sometimes excluded entire social groups from its field. But the critique of the old cultural model noted that radical cuts, serving to create a wholly new culture, would be nonsensical. Instead, existing legacies needed to be integrated with the new agenda if their underlying ideas hadn’t lost their currency. There were postulates for the popularisation of culture, for making it less elitist and accessible for the broad public; this also meant opening the cultural sector to classes previously excluded from it as cultural producers (peasants and industrial workers). The priority should be education, due both to the need to popularise culture and to the huge loss of life among the Polish intelligentsia during the war. It was believed that there existed and could be found, or rather brought to light, a ‘latent standard of Polish culture’, leading to the development of a specific national culture of individual character, reflecting the Polish national character. Hopes were pinned in this regard on the intelligentsia, which was divided into the ‘old’ and ‘new’. The difference was generational experience and awareness of the revolutionary changes taking place. Cooperation between the two groups was to reflect the intelligentsia’s progressive attitude and confirm its special role in the country’s cultural life. In return, the state promised all kinds of material support. The literati, Borejsza wrote, had a special role to play, namely finding the right language to describe the new reality. This language should be realistic. Statism in the culture sector, as a factor that might stifle creative processes and cause undesirable divisions among culture professionals, was renounced.

1 Jerzy Borejsza, ‘Rewolucja łagodna’, *Odrodzenie*, no. 10/12, 1945.

To a large extent, Borejsza's offer enlarged on and specified pledges that had been made in earlier government and Party documents, such as the PKWN Manifesto, which stated that 'scholars and artists will be a subject of special concern', or a resolution of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR) of 29 September 1944. The difference was that in Borejsza's version the intelligentsia became a subject — as opposed to instrument — of change, though of course a victory of the concept of the clerk over that of the activist was out of the question. The purpose was to produce a perfect synthesis of both. The new regime worried also that the populace considered the communist ideology as outlandish and that support for the revolutionary changes taking place was very low, which writer Leon Kruczkowski summed up at one of the Party conferences by saying that the 'revolution in Poland hasn't been a collective national experience'.[2] The communists realised that they had to win the hearts and minds of the people, to convince them that the revolution at hand wasn't just a Soviet transplant but a response to true and genuine social needs. Culture was to add credibility to their declarations, to legitimate their claim to power. And so Borejsza appealed for the Party, in its efforts to win the public over for the new regime, to emphasise even more clearly the role of culture and artists. Artists, he believed, were better ambassadors of the 'new reality' than dull agitators. Reading documents and press comments from the era, one sometimes gets the impression that the hyperactivity of the state bureaucracy was the main obstacle in the way of the 'mild revolution'.

It was said openly that 'to manage literature means to murder it', and it wasn't an isolated opinion. To circles that sympathised with the vision promoted by Jerzy Borejsza, the head of Czytelnik it seemed clear that the desired results could be achieved only through unconstrained freedom of artistic expression. At the same time, artists were to be supported by the state. The vehicle for that would be artists' unions. It was there that consciousness of the gravity of the historical moment should develop, it was there that an impulse addressed at the masses should originate from. The renowned literary critic, Jan Kott, argued in fact that 'neither the Culture Ministry nor any other bureaucratic structure is suited to run cultural policy'.[3] So the institutionalisation of the culture sector had to be postponed. This changed only in 1947, following Bolesław Bierut's speech in Wrocław, and from now on the ominous postulate that 'patronage of literature must be exercised by the ruling class'[4] could be heard increasingly often. The 'mild revolution' was usually considered as a strictly partisan programme; the notion was shaped not only by anti-communist writing, but also by opinions such as that of Stefan Żołkiewski, who argued that the first post-war years had seen the implementation of a coherent cultural agenda informed by Lenin's theory of the cultural revolution. But the reality was different, as evidenced, for example, by an interview granted in March 1947 by Kruczkowski, then the Minister of Culture and Art. Asked whether the Ministry had a 'precise ideological and

2 Minutes of a conference of writers-PPR members, held on 24 July 1945 at the Department of Propaganda, Central Committee, Polish Workers Party, Archiwum Akt Nowych, KC PPR, sign. 295/X-2, 25.

3 Jan Kott, 'Podstawy polityki kulturalnej', *Odrodzenie*, no. 25, 1945.

4 *Tezy w sprawie polityki kulturalnej warszawskiego koła literatów PPR*, Archiwum Akt Nowych, KC PPR, sign. 295/XVII-15, pp. 23–24.

organisational conception of its work, a conception of a democratic state's policy in the field of art and artistic culture', the author of *Kordian i cham* replied, 'No, we don't, and I don't see anything embarrassing or surprising in that.'[5]

The specificity of Poland's cultural policy in the first post-war years is elucidated by Kott's essay, 'Urzędnicy kultury' [Culture officials], where he argued that it could be pursued in two ways:

One is to try to influence art-making directly by praising and reprimanding, starting periodicals and establishing schools, suggesting themes, and devising ad hoc ideologies. The other is to organise the material base for the development of culture and art, to rebuild libraries and promote reading, to provide material assistance to artistic institutions and unions, to maintain buildings and rooms, to provide books, instruments, paints, and paper. The first method is easy and impressive, the other tough and arduous.[6]

There is no mention here of programmes, plans, or Leninist principles, but instead a praise of concreteness and a definition of the ideological space broad enough to accommodate people of diverse socio-political views. On the general level, therefore, that was an adaptation — to the era's socio-political needs — of a tradition of cultural thought shaped by people like Ludwik Krzywicki, Stanisław Brzozowski, or Edward Abramowski, to name but a few. The vision of culture projected by Borejsza was pretty much identical with the pre-war socialists' idea of 'public culture' that would override social divisions through a revolutionary transformation.

How close Borejsza was to tradition is demonstrated by his 1947 brochure, *Na rogatkach kultury polskiej* [At the tollgates of Polish culture]. Both the publication's title and its intended audience are symbolic. This time the author wasn't speaking to intellectuals, artists, and scientists, but to cultural workers, people doing ground-level work to make the cultural revolution happen. For Borejsza, in was natural to evoke the figure of the educator who spreads the light of education among the common people. His favourite author was Stefan Żeromski, and he insisted on publishing his works, saying that 'we need him like Russia needs Tolstoy'. In the brochure, he directly referred to the author of *The Coming Spring*, quoting extensive fragments of his dissertation, *Snobizm i postęp* [Snobbery and progress], which, ironically, was banned in People's Poland. Citing Żeromski, Borejsza was sending a clear message: the revolution he was advocating in culture was not of the sort described, for example, in the reportage *Na probostwie w Wyszkowie* [At the Presbytery in Wyszków]. It was mild, and tailored to the historical circumstances and the Polish tradition. In the brochure, Borejsza seeks to pacify young zealots condemning everything that had been done before the war, criticising their position as inconsistent with ideas that had informed generations of Polish educators. He cites significant authors, symbolising the best achievements of the old intelligentsia, namely Wacław Berent and Bolesław Prus. In doing so, he draws a clear common line, though without forgetting important differences. 'For us, the man in cultural-educational work has to be a real and concrete man',[7] he writes.

5 Leon Kruczkowski, 'O program w polityce kulturalnej', *Trybuna Wolności* , no. 7, 1947.

6 Jan Kott, *Postęp i głupstwo*, vol. 1, Warsaw: PIW, 1956, p. 26.

7 Jerzy Borejsza, *Na rogatkach kultury polskiej*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1947, p. 8.

The 'tollgates' mentioned in the title are symbolic, but also literal: 'Tollgates still exist in Poland; not those where you pay the toll charge, but cultural ones, between the country and city, tollgates that should and will be removed'. This is as general a statement as most propaganda slogans of the era. But Borejsza doesn't stop at that and cites specific numbers. 'Can we choose to ignore the fact', he asks rhetorically, 'that the sphere of cultural influence includes only 6 million people out of a total population of 23 million, that 17 million people remain practically outside that sphere?'[8] Illiteracy and certain social groups' poor access to education remained real problems, even if the communists skilfully exploited them for political gain. That, plus the fact that it drew extensively on pre-war socialist ideas, is why the cultural policy of the early post-war years met with success. Another source of satisfaction for Borejsza was that in introducing the reforms, the new authorities managed to avoid the 'Paris scenario' of unnecessary shocks, which, given the cultural losses Poland had suffered during the war, would have been disastrous. The time was such that one might expect words of triumphalism, victorious declarations, or conditions laid down for those who couldn't, or wouldn't, accept the new reality. But there is nothing of the sort here. Borejsza was consistent in formulating his cultural proposition, though he knew that an ill time was coming for him and for it. Several months later he will lose his position, and a 'mild revolution' will be cast away on behalf of a Socialist-Realist 'transplant'.

Was the post-war project a genuine idea or a substitute? If we look at the dates when the Socialist-Realist doctrine was introduced in other countries of the Soviet bloc, such as Romania (1947) or Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia (1948), we may be tempted to conclude that the early post-war model was nothing but a preparation for Socialist Realism. But in doing so, wouldn't we be ignoring the specificity of the years 1944–1947 and committing the sin of presentism? How to look at the dreams of many people who got involved in cultural work despite ideological differences? Were people like Jerzy Borejsza or Karol Kuryluk merely cynical Machiavellians? It seems that the 'mild revolution' wasn't by definition a 'substructure' for Socialist Realism, even if its movers and shakers were members of the communist party. At the same time, the early post-war project wasn't a coherent cultural-policy agenda, at least not by later definitions. It was but an attempt to transpose to the post-war realities ideas stemming directly from the programme of the pre-1939 leftist intelligentsia. That is why interpreting the 'mild revolution' in terms of Leninist cultural-revolution theory misses the point and can be considered a fallacy. Nor does it seem right to refer to the achievements of the first post-war years as 'insignificant'.[9] As Czesław Miłosz put it in a letter to Melchior Wańkowicz: 'When the Soviets entered, things went the way they had to. We knew that too — only we tried to put them on a slightly different course, hoping that a grain of sand here and there means something (and it did)'.[10]

8 Ibid., p. 10.

9 Marta Fik, 'Kultura polska 1944–1956', in *Polacy wobec przemocy 1944–1956*, ed. Barbara Otwinowska and Jan Żaryn, Warsaw: Editions Spotkania, 1996, p. 242.

10 'Wańkowicz i Miłosz w świetle korespondencji', *Twórczość*, no. 10, 1981, p. 107.

The Wrocław Congress

Jerzy Borejsza developed his conception of organising the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace in Wrocław from April 1948 amid growing Cold-War tensions and the formulation of an official slogan of the struggle for peace by the Cominform (founded in September 1947): 'For lasting peace, for people's democracy!' The Congress was connected with the concurrent Regained Territories Exhibition; the two events were to prove that the 'Western Lands' had always been part of Poland, and that the new borders on the Odra and Nysa were a crucial guarantee of peace in Europe. Taking place on 25 to 28 August 1948, the Congress was attended by some 600 left-leaning intellectuals from all over the world, including Pablo Picasso, Iréne Joliot-Curie, Julian Huxley, György Lukács, Fernand Léger, Paul Éluard, Julien Benda, Bertold Brecht, Alexander Fadeyev, or Ilya Erenburg, among others. The initially friendly atmosphere turned cold when Fadeyev, the head of the Soviet delegation, had sharply (and by name) attacked manifestations of imperialism in culture and politics. Following his speech, some delegates left Wrocław.

> On Wednesday the 11th at 4 p.m. I went to the Sejm conference room to attend a meeting of the organising committee of the 'World Congress of Intellectuals' which was supposed to take place in July, but will be held only in August, in Wrocław. Having drawled out a boring report, Borejsza proceeded to read out lists of would-be attendees, with Parandowski and Szwejkowski from time to time correcting his pronunciation of particular names. Apart from that, it was utter lethargy. You saw a great fence of teeth with tongues held between them.
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> . . .
>
> Here the intellectuals' congress is basically the turf of the secret police. Rumours say that entry cards are to be handed out at the entrance so that 'unauthorised elements' don't try to forge them. Today it occurred to me that peace congresses usually take place after the war, so this one will be the first ever peace congress *ahead* of a supposedly inevitable war that will destroy mankind.
>
> . . .
>
> What was interesting in the Russian speeches was that they virtually begged the auditorium to recognise that Russia was part of European culture, and that Byzantium, on whose legacy it had drawn, was no poorer a source of civilisation than Rome, quite the contrary — for through Byzantium went the Greek influence.

Quotations from: Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki 1914–1965*, ed. Tadeusz Drewnowski (first complete edition in 13 volumes), Warsaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, Wydział I Nauk Społecznych, Komitet Nauk o Literaturze, 2009, pp. 80, 85.

Agnieszka Szewczyk

The Central Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions

The Zachęta building was one of very few exhibition venues in Warsaw to have survived the war almost intact. Renamed the Haus der Deutschen Kultur during the occupation, it was nationalised after the war and from 1945 housed the Central Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Cultural Treasures (a department of the Ministry of Culture and Art) and the State Heritage Conservation Agency (Państwowe Pracownie Konserwacji Zabytków). The building was claimed as its rightful property by the pre-war Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts, which was trying to reactivate, as well as by the Union of Polish Visual Artists (Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków, ZPAP), registered in December 1946. In end-1947, the former was refused registration, but that didn't mean that the ZPAP won the title to the Zachęta building, though serious efforts had been made to that end. At first there were all indications to believe that the ZPAP would be allotted the nearby Art Propaganda Institute building, but in March 1947 the latter was turned into the Polish Armed Forces House. Due to more pressing housing needs, plans to build an Institute for the Promotion of the Fine Arts at the site of the former Ophthalmic Hospital at Smolna Street failed too. Having failed to secure an existing venue for itself or to build one, the ZPAP decided to establish its own organ for exhibition planning and production, the Central Bureau of Exhibitions (Centralne Biuro Wystaw, CBW), founded on the ZPAP's initiative on 10 February 1949. The task of conceptualising and organising it was entrusted to Armand Vetulani, who would later become director of the CBWA. The introduction of the Socialist-Realist doctrine and the resulting changes in cultural policy created the need for establishing a central institution, reporting directly to the Ministry of Culture and Art, that would manage exhibition activities throughout the country. The Ministry decided to bring the CBW under its control. Pursuant to an ordinance dated 17 December 1949 (which entered into force on 1 January 1950), the Central Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions (Centralne Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych, CBWA) was established, overseeing an extensive network of local Bureaus of Artistic Exhibitions (Biura Wystaw Artystycznych, BWAs). It was at the time the only non-museum institution tasked with the organisation of exhibitions and promotion of contemporary art. The CBWA moved into the Zachęta building in early 1951.

Julia Leopold

Warsaw Accuses Exhibition at the National Museum in Warsaw

The first post-war exhibition at the National Museum in Warsaw took place on the initiative and under the leadership of the institution's director, Stanisław Lorentz. It was conceptualised by a team of National Museum curators working in collaboration with staff members of the Warsaw Reconstruction Bureau. Stanisław Zamecznik was responsible for the exhibition's architecture, and his brother, Wojciech Zamecznik, for its design, including wall paintings. The concept of the show, which was produced in a couple of months in the completely ruined Warsaw as a spontaneous reaction to, and gesture of protest against, the invader's destructive action, is considered to this day as a phenomenon and a kind of epilogue to another famous exhibition, the 1939 *Warsaw Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*.

> The purpose of the exhibition wasn't to become yet another display of national martyrdom, a panopticon of horrors, petrifying all that which the city as a living organism has for three months now been regenerating, cleansing and healing its wounds. Our mission is to put the common experience in an objective perspective, to show the meaning of the catastrophe amid the chaos of ruins, to expose the enemy's intentions. . . . That is why with this exhibition Warsaw not complains, not laments, but before the tribunal of nations: WARSAW ACCUSES.

The exhibition was an objective documentation of the crimes committed against Polish culture and science during the occupation, and an attempt to highlight the need for rebuilding the country. It was presented in the Museum's seven ground-floor rooms and the hall. The latter was devoted to the memory of the culture professionals and scholars who had lost their lives during the war. The successive rooms documented the German crimes, showing historical items and photographs, ruined works of art, fragments of public monuments, exhibits from Warsaw archives, libraries, and (archaeological, ethnographic, natural-science, art) museums: destructed paintings, twisted suits of armour, broken glass and ceramics items, burnt books and archival documents, cracked Egyptian mummies, boxes and crates of property prepared for shipment, the occupying authorities' documents and orders. The show began with the Destruction Room, which evidenced the vast scale of the ruination brought about by the Germans. Walls here, as in the other rooms, were decorated with images and slogans painted by Wojciech Zamecznik, such as the famous 'What the nation's love had gathered, the invader's hatred has destroyed', or 'They seized, they ruined — and this is what they have left.' The slogans had an informative function, but they also organised and structured the exhibition space. Damaged works of ancient art were presented in the Egyptian Room, under the slogan, 'It had survived forty centuries — now destroyed by German hand.' The Documentation Room contained exhibits documenting the Museum's own history, while the Warsaw Reconstruction Bureau Room was filled with documentation of the damage suffered by Warsaw's historical architecture and public monuments, combined with blueprints for the city's reconstruction. Displayed in the Museum Room were surviving works of art. Besides deliberately ruined artworks, the show presented also photographs reflecting the scale of the destruction of Warsaw's architecture compared with the end-1930s. The photographic section had been conceived by Zofia Chomętowska and Tadeusz Przypkowski. The show was on view for nine months, from 3 May 1945 till 28 January 1946, with viewer turnout reaching 43,000 (for the city's total population of 378,000). It then toured various cities in Poland and abroad.

Quotations from: *Warszawa oskarża: przewodnik po wystawie urządzonej przez Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy wespół z Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie*, Warsaw: Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki; Ministerstwo Odbudowy Kraju, 1945, pp. 23–24.

Magdalena Komornicka

Marta Leśniakowska

Confronting an Image of Ruins Spectrality and Melancholy

1.

To what extent does an experience of war, transformed into an experience of the image, become its metaphor (equivalent image) for both the individual and the collective? There is no clear answer to that. The experience of the image, one of the vaguest notions, is linked to the active and passive memory inscribed in cultural artefacts and involved in memory-generation processes through imaginary projection that is shaped by iconographic memory. War iconography has produced a whole range of conventions determined by the psychological curiosity for watching destruction and suffering, though their critical dimension is neutralised by the anaesthesia caused by the glut of such images, and the picture of war and its consequences becomes the subject of aesthetic consumption in galleries or coffee-table books.[1]

Standing next to sociology as one of the two principal themes of documentary photography, war photography is supposed to confirm that which actually happened. But the nature of such photographs is fuzzy and unobvious. They are, on the one hand, a critique of the violence present in the sensual and philosophical element of history[2], and, on the other hand, a representation of a politics of images, a political-aesthetic gaze (Philippe Ivernel).[3] If seeing does not mean believing but interpreting[4], then the image of wartime destruction is something more than a 'frozen' document of a 'fateful moment', a 'piece of evidence' relating to a historical event. What is the purpose here is not the image itself, but the universalisation of the experience of the ruin as a phenomenology of the trace[5],

1 Susan Sontag, *Widok cudzego cierpienia*, trans. Sławomir Magala, Kraków: Karakter, 2010, pp. 117, 30–31; original edition: *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. The first war photobooks were published during the American Civil War, with readers encouraged to spread them on the table in the living room; Jan Zita Grover, 'Philosophical Maneuvers in a Photogenic War', *Afterimage*, no. 9, April 1983. Thanks to powerful, perfect framing, even human misery became an object of consumption in photography; Walter Benjamin, *The Author as Producer* (1934). As Siegfried Kracauer put it, reality itself had assumed a photogenic face (*Die Photographie*, 1927).

2 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Strategie obrazów. Oko historii, 1*, trans. Janusz Margański, Warsaw and Kraków: Linia Teatralna, Korporacja Halart, 2011, p. 127. Original edition: Georges Didi-Huberman, *Quand les images prennent position. L'Œil de l'histoire, 1*, Paris: Minuit, 2009.

3 Didi-Huberman, *Strategie obrazów . . .* , p. 128.

4 Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'Czym jest kultura wizualna?', in *Fotospołeczeństwo. Antologia tekstów z socjologii wizualnej*, ed. Małgorzata Bogunia-Borowska and Piotr Sztompka, Kraków: Znak, 2012, p. 171. Original edition: Georges Didi-Huberman 'What Is Visual Culture?', in idem, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London: Routledge, 1999.

5 Roland Barthes, 'Théâtre capital', in idem, *Œuvres complètes, t. 1: 1942–1961*, ed. Eric Marty, Paris: Seuil, 2002, p. 503. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), trans. Harry Zohn, in idem, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, New York: Schocken, 1969, pp. 217–251.

achieved by means of visual distillation: focusing on wreckage as a site of meaning, the photography of ruins as a genre of street photography constitutes, as John Szarkowski would call it, the 'silent equivalent of an epic drama'.[6] Anchored in conventions, such images transform wreckage into solemn still-lifes composed of artefacts that as cultural/iconographic quotations directly evoke the tradition of rhyparography, as art history contemptuously calls the representation of degraded, ruined, sordid, or ugly subjects. The ruin is a visual definition of ruination, that is, an action meant to 'inflict or bring great and irretrievable disaster upon; destroy agency; reduce to a state of poverty; demoralise completely'.[7] Images of disintegration, destruction, and degradation refer, therefore, to a moment of cut, rupture, delimitation, and for that reason can be interpreted as a heterotopy of crisis[8] with its liminality: as a rite of passage leading from the order of 'yesterday', remembered as a time of harmony, peace, and life, to the reality of 'today', known as a time of ruination, chaos, decay, and death. In the Turnerian approach, liminality is a particular anthropological experience of a state of suspension, an ambiguous 'in-between' period.[9] At this point, another heterotopy comes to the fore, construed as an accumulation of time where the past ('that which was') is embalmed. From the viewpoint of the public distribution of such images, however, their experience is inextricably bound up with the time of their reading, as Paul Ricoeur wrote, pointing to the need to consider the contexts in which images are controlled, proliferated, and viewed. Images of war are perceived differently by the perpetrators of events, who consider them as 'trophies', and by their victims, for whom the sight of physical destruction is an acute trauma, whether originating in direct or mediated experience. This is the essence of the paradox of photography described by Susan Sontag: 'An event known through photographs certainly becomes more real than it would have been if one had never seen the photographs . . . But after repeated exposure to images, it also becomes less real.'[10]

2.

In the exhibition *Warsaw Accuses*, organised by the Warsaw Reconstruction Bureau in 1945 at the National Museum in Warsaw and subsequently toured around Europe and the United States, the rhetoric of the section showing wartime vandalism, called the Destruction Room, was predicated on the solemnisation of photographic diptychs that brought to mind filmic montage: Zofia Chomętowska's photos of pre-war Warsaw

6 John Szarkowski, *Gypsies*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1975.

7 *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, fifth edition, p. 1095.

8 Michel Foucault, 'O innych przestrzeniach. Heterotopie', trans. Maciek Żakowski, *Kultura Popularna*, no. 6 (16), 2006, pp. 7, 11. English edition: Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias' (1967), *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, October 1984.

9 *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor W. Turner, Edward M. Brunner, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

10 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977, p. 20. Cf. Marta Leśniakowska, 'Retoryka destruktu. Ćwiczenia z (re-)konstrukcji', in *Figury retoryczne*, Warsaw: Muzeum Rzeźby im. Xawerego Dunikowskiego w Królikarni Oddział Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie, 2015.

juxtaposed with Edward Falkowski's photographs of Warsaw as a city of ruins.[11] By resorting to a 'now and then' dialectic familiar from photography albums, the curators produced a purely melancholic form expressive of death and loss that can only be transgressed through the Freudian work of mourning so that one can go forward. At the same time, as 'witnesses in a case', those photographs had been harnessed to generate 'reverse' memory: as the physical traces of war were gradually cleared, ruins would function solely as images, primarily in photography with its ethical valuation: as a vestige, imprint, representation, 'eye of history'.

3.

The 'now and then' rhetoric as a melancholic form was also embraced by the painter and graphic artist, Stefan Rassalski, in his photomontages (1945–1950) showing fictitious Warsaw panoramas composed of images of architecture and public memorials before and after the war. The authorship of the photographs Rassalski used is not clear; they may have been the work of other photographers or his own. Montaged together, they comprise an expressively deformed imaginary world where visuality ceases to be the domain of the eyes and seeing and becomes bound up instead with fictionalisation, imagination, and the ability to depict. The high-contrast, black-and-white, *noir* compositions activate affective perception through the pathos of a devastated, unpopulated urban scenery whose condition, being the work of man, becomes a metaphor of his victims. This is an image as much of violence and humiliation as of defencelessness. But also one that does violence to the viewer, using fiction to produce its own 'truth'.

4.

In 1945, Tadeusz Kulisiewicz started work on his two-year series, *The Ruins of Warsaw 1945*, by making on-site pencil sketches which he then reworked in ink at the studio. Seventy five of those drawings were exhibited at the National Museum in Warsaw in 1947 and published in a book that was a kind of typological 'atlas of ruins'[12], meant to tally with the awareness-production strategy of the time. But Kulisiewicz's sketches eluded propagandistic categorisations. They proved controversial, for some even harmful: Kazimierz Wyka wrote that the city had been 'shorn of its tragic quality' because of Kulisiewicz's 'meekly submissive' approach to the subject: 'His Warsaw hasn't been demolished; it is [simply] in ruin.'[13] Such connotations tended towards the Leninist theory of reflection: the artist's goal should be to produce a realistic image of the demolished city to serve as a mirror, a testimony, as in documentary photography.[14] Gravitating towards dematerialisation, 'transubstantiation',

11 'Pamiętnik wystawy „Warszawa oskarża"', *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, vol. XX, 1976, pp. 599–642.

12 *Warszawa 1945 w rysunkach Tadeusza Kulisiewicza*, Warsaw: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza „Czytelnik", 1947.

13 Kazimierz Wyka, 'Noakowski i Kulisiewicz', *Przegląd Artystyczny*, no. 4/5, 1947, p. 12.

14 Helena Blumówna, '„Warszawa 1945". Rysunki Tadeusza Kulisiewicza', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 20 (113). 1947, p. 8.

Kulisiewicz did exactly the opposite, although for Helena Blumówna that precisely was the merit of his sketches: an aesthetic rendition of the ruined city produced an elusive, 'spectral' cityscape reminiscent of 'something infinite in space', a cityscape that 'verges on the metaphysical', producing a virtually biblical mood without resorting to literature, through purely visual means. Juliusz Starzyński partly agreed such interpretation.[15] Not yet infected by the Socialist-Realist rhetoric, he wrote 'from the heart' in the spirit of impressionist criticism, according to which, as Anatole France recommended, for instance, the critic should describe nothing but the emotions and moods that the work evokes in him. Starzyński, therefore, noticed in *The Ruins of Warsaw, 1945* also a particular kind of metaphysics, far detached from current politics and from what he called the 'ugly sentimentalism' of Grottgerian illustrativeness: Kulisiewicz's drawings are not a documentary story by a reporter of catastrophes and destruction, nor a 'cry of a sufferer wishing to open barely healed wounds', but an *image* combining contrasts, fantasy, imagination, and reality. What comes to the fore here is a neo-Romantic fascination with the aesthetics of ruins: the depopulated panoramas of urban wreckage were for Starzyński but beautiful images, an object of purely aesthetic, sensual contemplation of a ruined city as an elusive, spectral natural creation, a combination of realism and irrationalism, of vision and reality:

> '[Kulisiewicz's] Warsaw is simply beautiful. We perceive its beauty now in terms similar to the aesthetic effect of natural creations, now as a work of art, and most certainly in both registers at once — sensually, like animals. . . . It is the most authentic and only kind of beauty. Impermanent beauty.'

Starzyński analyses Kulisiewicz's sketches from the position of Wölfflinian formalism as the essence of art and traces his technique: 'the most subtle gradations of line and shading' as well as of depth of field, the 'contrasting of "realities" [street lamp, grave, abandoned bunker, overturned streetcar etc.] with the floating . . . phantoms of background ruins.' Inner discipline, classical moderation, emotions under control, lack of cheap sentimentality ('Instead, we get something like the style of Norwid's *Czarne kwiaty* [Black flowers]: realism suddenly illuminated with an inner glow, for a brief moment revealing a new, inscrutable perspective on things and phenomena') — those are the characteristics of Kulisiewicz's restrained aesthetic, which, Starzyński writes, produces an image reminiscent of theatre: 'a magnificent drama of forms, a *theatrum* that demands an artistic response', a 'work of art in the full sense of the word — the vision of a cool-headed artist who shows only so much of his emotion as he wants to show, as is fully contained within his own formal system and within the range of the technical means that he has developed over the years.'[16]

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15 Juliusz Starzyński, 'Piękno dzisiejszej Warszawy w rysunkach Tadeusza Kulisiewicza', *Odrodzenie*, vol. 4, no. 13, 1947, p. 3.

16 Ibid.; cf. also M. Suchodolska, 'O „Warszawie 1945"', *Dziennik Literacki*, no. 9, 1947, p. 3.

5.

What is crucial in this detailed analysis, as in Blumówna, is the notion of spectrality. As we read in the dictionary, a spectre is a 'ghostly apparition; a phantom' or a 'haunting or disturbing image or prospect'; spectrum, in turn, is the 'entire range over which some measurable property of a physical system or phenomenon can vary'.[17] The poetic of spectrality in images of a ruined city allows us to refer to Jacques Derrida's reflections on spectre, hauntology, the 'sharp distinction between the real and the unreal, the actual and the inactual, the living and the non-living, being and non-being'[18]; on haunting which corresponds with the ontological status of the past that 'haunts' society, building a new aesthetic system, that poetic of spectrality, using adequate means of expression: the choice of sceneries and landscapes (cemeteries, memorial sites, sites of suffering, ruins) or visual qualities (light and shadow, point of view, montage and so on). For Starzyński, Kulisiewicz's drawings are not a mirror of reality, and he means what Hito Steyerl or Jacques Rancière write about today: that fiction and fictionality are inherent in every image, which means that reality can be cognised at all (the real must assume the shape of fiction to be thinkable).[19] As a Rancierian fiction, the spectrality of Kulisiewicz's drawings, Rassalski's photomontages, or Leonard Sempoliński's and Edward Falkowski's photographs made it possible for one to think about what had happened. One could deal with the sight of the post-war ruins by contemplating them as 'beautiful images', still-lifes consisting of natural and man-made objects, and situated, as Starzyński put it, 'in a wonderful stretch between the lyric, the dramatic, and the epic'.

6.

The post-war, neo-Romantic fascination with destruction as an aesthetic category can be traced back, of course, to the Romantic cult of ruins with their indexical capacity, i.e., as a sign evoked by what such images show, as well as with the entire semantics of fragmentary form as an authentic testimony of expression, an image/metaphor of a shattered, fragmented, degraded world, a graveyard of history (the communist authorities considered the idea of leaving Warsaw, a spectral city-ruin, forever in its desolate condition to serve as an anti-war memorial). Images of this kind, each in its own way, were a representation of the sensual experience of the ruined city, causative in building its biography and confirming that 'there can be no image that does not emerge from the wounds of time and history'.[20]

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17 *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, fifth edition.

18 Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, London–New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 10–11. On Derrida's hauntology, cf. T. J. Demos, 'Colonial Hauntology: Vincent Meessen's *Vita Nova*', in idem, *Return to the Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013.

19 Hito Steyerl, 'Documentary Uncertainty', *Re-visiones*, no. 1, 2011; Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, London: Continuum, 2004.

20 Eduardo Cadava, '"Lapsus Imaginis": The Image in Ruins', *October*, vol. 96, Spring 2001, pp. 35–60.

Dancing in the Ruins

'In the drifts of snow (which no one clears), Warsaw looks like a fantastic city from Andersen's saddest story — like a huge, unhappy and injured, match girl', Maria Dąbrowska wrote after a walk among the ruins in December 1945. Travelling by train, in a special carriage for diplomats, the Italian journalist, Alceo Valcini, saw 'very few lights shining through the icy shroud that had enveloped what was left of the city. At first we thought the train had stopped in the middle of nowhere. . . . You could see nothing, and everything seemed like a giant surreal painting that, by some damned magic, accompanied us down to the very hotel, suggesting that Warsaw didn't exist'.

But the city was coming back to life quickly. 'Almost everywhere the ruins are surrounded by a ground-level band of light and life', Zofia Nałkowska noted in December 1946. 'Elegant, brightly lit shop windows. Bags as big and beautiful as in Paris, silk blouses, textiles. . . . And above that mundane sphere of shops there stand, untouched, burnt-out ruins with empty black windows. . . . it must be phantoms who come to shop here'. Many of those 'phantoms' wore striped concentration-camp uniforms. In May 1945, Dąbrowska described young women who had returned from Ravensbrück: 'Everything on them and about them is charming. They wear the camp uniforms (which open all doors for them and give them the right to ride the trains for free) like beautiful pyjamas, like sportswear. I thought it was some new style of travel clothing'. To wear a camp uniform elegantly seems impossible. And yet women had the incredible power to change the rags that symbolised their suffering into not just ordinary, everyday garb, but into a stylish costume reminiscent of pre-war fashion.

Despite their wartime traumas, despite the ruins and deficiencies, women wanted to look smart. Though they probably faced similar problems as Zofia Nałkowska, who wrote in September 1945: 'My last pretty crocodile-skin shoes take in water through their leaky soles'. But fashion in Warsaw thrived despite all the difficulties. 'It was an imaginative and inspired fashion, full of unexpected combinations of both cut and colour', *Stolica* reported in its first issue in November 1946. 'A slightly quilted duvet pulled out from the ruins, thrown over an evening blouse borrowed from a cousin in Kraków, a skirt made from a blanket, and hand-made shoes laced with a paper string — here comes the charming Warsaw lady of 1945'.

The Warsaw women and Warsaw fashion made a strong impression on the guests of a charity ball that took place in 1946 at the Polonia Hotel. One of them, the journalist Valcini, remembered an 'amazing miracle':

> A crowd of women who had emerged from ruined houses and remnants of old tenements brought into the lobby a sense of elegance and good taste in dress, combined with an easygoing manner and a radiant smile, as if they were princesses awoken from a dream in an enchanted forest. They entered the ball . . . with their heads raised and in silk dancing shoes, having left their boots in the cloakroom. The ingenious tricks . . . which they had employed to secure the most suitable fabrics were truly brilliant. Black-velvet or plaited woollen skirts were combined with lace or silk tops, white or with small floral patterns; several girls wore plaid skirts and soft fluffy sweaters; some ladies appeared in low-necked Chinese-crepe dresses, while others sported exotic tunics adorned with wrinkled furbelows; finally, the youngest girls had tied coquettish bright-colour kerchiefs around their necks. Long silk evening dresses, tied in the waist with turquoise sashes, were not missing either. Some women, whether blondes or brunettes, wore colourful combs in their hair . . . youthful braids or soft curls on both sides of the face could be seen. There were plenty of necklaces and chains, swinging merrily to vigorous rhythm of the charleston.

Valcini noted also that diplomats' wives and generally all foreigners knew that they should avoid 'extravagant or luxury outfits'; ladies had virtually been forbidden to 'wear Nina Ricci or Balenciaga dresses which the Poles, for obvious reasons, wouldn't have been able to compete with'. Even if such haute couture apparel had appeared at the ball, it would have surely been overshadowed by the unique Warsaw fashion, the one-of-

a-kind style, or styles, of Varsovians, present in its diversity also on that particular occasion.

In December 1946, *Stolica* wrote about fashion again:

> Wartime need created in Warsaw a new fashion that keeps growing, winning the admiration of foreign visitors. Fashion crafts, based clearly on purely Polish formulas, have seen tremendous growth. Thus a distinct Polish fashion style is crystallising, to which Warsaw has contributed greatly. The city's atmosphere is obviously conducive to ingenuity in this field, and as long as there are women in Warsaw, finery and trinkets will continue to preoccupy them.

Fashion amid the ruins was an interesting phenomenon of great beauty that reflected the spirit of the times. Imaginative, charming, and full of humour, it helped people confront a shattered world.

Quotations from: Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne 1945–1965. Tom 1 [1945–1949]*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1997, pp. 52, 95; Alceo Valcini, *Bal w hotelu „Polonia"*, Warsaw: PIW, 1983, pp. 19, 134–135; Zofia Nałkowska, *Dzienniki VI. 1945–1954. Część 1 [1945–1948]*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2000, pp. 369, 100–101; Grażyna Woysznis-Terlikowska, 'O warszawskiej modzie', *Stolica*, no. 1, 1946; A-ga, 'Światło mody. Z dziejów warszawskich magazynów mód', *Stolica*, no. 8, 1946.

Monika Micewicz

Bronisław Wojciech Linke's *Screaming Stones*

The *Screaming Stones* series was created after the artist's return to Poland in 1946. When Linke had left Warsaw in 1939 with his family, he went first to Lutsk, then to Lviv. From there he was deported to Kazakhstan and then repatriated. The artist and his loved ones had reasons to flee: he was on German proscription lists because of his anti-Nazi caricatures, and his wife was Jewish. Linke's studio at Plac Zbawiciela was demolished by the Germans right after their capture of Warsaw. What would have happened to his wife had she stayed in Poland is a rhetorical question. And yet throughout the time Linke missed the city, which wasn't even his native place. A series of nocturnes he painted in Lviv in 1940 eulogised Warsaw, not Lviv, and it is Warsaw that *Screaming Stones* are devoted to. After their return, the Linkes stayed with Maria Dąbrowska at her home at Polna Street, and it was from there that the artist set out on his peregrinations, sketching and photographing the city's ruins. 'Walking around the regenerating city, he made notes constantly. He was delighted with all kinds of details. . . . He filled his notebooks with signs and symbols barely legible for the uninitiated', and in the evenings listened to Dąbrowska's and Stanisław Stempowski's accounts of wartime Warsaw. As his wife remembered, 'amazed by visions of Warsaw heroism . . . and hungry for intellectual stimulation, we devoured every little world, the flood of new situations — all that filled with meaning, alive, fascinating!'. Hence the series' two principal themes: the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the Warsaw Uprising. She also remembered their first 'walk together through the desert of Plac Napoleona, with heaps of rubble half a story high. . . Several paths had already been trodden amid the hills and plateaus of the debris, and there was even a "walkway", a few metres wide, running down the middle. A dead cityscape. Only a few leaves were moving here and there. . . . Suddenly a young woman came slowly along the bumpy walkway, pushing a pram with a baby. A new life.'

The series consists of 15 works dating from the years 1946–1956. Made using various media, but mostly watercolour on paper, they present mature metaphors, personifications of ruins, houses, and stones, which bespeak as much of suffering and passion as of a truly phenomenal, vivid imagination. These are not visualisations of literary metaphors but rather a continuation of the pre-war series, *The City*, as the key motif here is again a giant or monster, this time made of ruins. Among the best known pieces are the ink sketch *The Return* (1946), once in the collection of Maria Dąbrowska, and the watercolour *El Maleh Rachamim* (1956), devoted to the Holocaust. The artist took the latter title from Julian Tuwim's *We, the Polish Jews*; these are the first words of a Jewish funeral prayer.

Screaming Stones gained wider recognition only in 1959, following their publication in a fine press book with an introduction by Maria Dąbrowska, who wrote, 'these are ruins-as-nightmares, dreamt by those who saw the crimes rather than, as it should be, by those who committed them. . . . Alas, it is usually innocent people who have nightmares.'

Quotations from: Anna Maria Linke, *Notatki o Bronisławie Wojciechu Linkem spisane 1962–63*, typescript, collection of the National Museum in Warsaw; Maria Dąbrowska, introduction to *B.W. Linke, Kamienie krzyczą*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczno-Graficzne RSW Prasa, 1959.

Anna Manicka

Electra at the Polish Army Theatre in Łódź

A staging of Jean Giraudoux's *Electra*, directed by Edmund Wierciński and designed by Teresa Roszkowska, inaugurated the experimental Poetry Stage of the Polish Army Theatre in Łódź.

Work on the show began in secret during the occupation. The first reading of a Polish translation of *Electra*, rendered by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, took place during the historical meeting of the Clandestine Theatre Board at Teresa Roszkowska's home at the end of 1941.

The show, which premiered on 16 February 1946, caused a furore not only as an outstanding artistic event but also because the story immediately brought to mind the tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising. 'At the critical moment, Electra refuses to help her father's co-murderer. Argos dies, but morality and truth triumph. There is a catharsis. Beggars and cripples crowd out to build life anew', Edmund Wierciński remembered. 'So please imagine how that resounded in Łódź in 1946, for all the embellishments of antiquity and French eloquence. Faced with a dilemma — integral justice versus saving the city at the cost of a compromise with a murderer — the audience could not help but think about the tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising and the Home Army'. In the message it conveyed, the show pointed to the moral significance of a sacrificing a city where 'everything is lost, everything is ruined, and yet you breathe freely'. 'When the woman Narses, dressed in a Frygian cap, spoke of a dawning day, that made a great impression. A shocking one, for everyone was broken inside, and we craved for hope' (Teresa Roszkowska).

Condemned from ideological positions, criticised by the press for its alleged extreme aestheticism, moral ambiguity, and, above all, 'certain contents', the *Electra* was cancelled in an atmosphere of scandal less than three months after its premiere.

Quotations from: Joanna Stacewicz-Podlipska**,** *Ja byłam wolny ptak . . . O życiu i sztuce Teresy Roszkowskiej*, Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki PAN, 2012, p. 304.

Joanna Kordjak

Boy with a Statue

'I dreamt of a deserted city where I alone was alive. I walked through cities that a second struck with death'.

The motif of a lone survivor of a catastrophe, a living man among the dead, recurs frequently in Andrzej Wróblewski's paintings and drawings. The protagonist, whom the artist identifies with in a letter to his wife, has been stigmatised by the experience of death and 'hears the voices of the dead', as in a poem by Louis Aragon that was to serve as a motto of one of Wróblewski's exhibitions in the 1950s.

Published and exhibited for the first time, two large-format drawings by Wróblewski show, in different variants, the same motif: a boy standing next to a headless ancient statue. The artist explores here the theme, crucial for his practice, of the communion of the living with the dead. He portrayed death in his paintings in various ways, most often through 'chromatic metamorphosis': the body of a dead or dying person acquires a bluish, or sometimes grey or ashen, hue. Usually it also changes its shape into an increasingly inhuman one, falling apart or (like here) petrifying (which brings to mind his late 1950s studies of 'stone people').

As in many of Wróblewski's paintings, here too death is contrasted with life and vitality, personified by the boy. Familiar from the *Executions* series, where he appears as a witness, the boy returns as a sole figure in paintings from around 1956.

The motif of a crippled ancient sculpture also recurred throughout Wróblewski's work. In works from the 1940s, subjected to cubist deformation and simplification, it became a point of departure for abstract studies of the human figure and a search for a new formula of figuration. Those inscribed themselves in a broader context of post-war art, which in various ways explored the theme of ruins, including the ruins of the human body. The large-format gouache, *Armless Couple* (ca 1955), showing a man and a woman as two ruined stone statues, provides an interesting analogy for both works.

More or less literal references to antiquity were an important theme of 1940s painting, literature, and theatre, serving to ennoble the experience of war. Comparisons between wartime destruction and ancient ruins, informed by a sense of analogy between the post-war crisis of European culture and the decline of the ancient Greek civilisation, were also frequent.

A headless woman statue is another image of a dismembered human body in Wróblewski's œuvre. After Lynda Nead, it can be interpreted as a metaphor of a time of revolutionary iconoclasm and reversed order (the ruined monument would thus symbolise the overthrown ancien régime). *Homo decapitus* is a special variant of this image. Representations of a head detached from the body or a body without a head are recurring motifs from the *Executions* series onwards. Both compositions can be perceived as referencing the post-war crisis of painting and a crisis of confidence in the image of man shaped by anthropocentric European art since antiquity.

An ancient statue of a headless woman irresistibly brings to mind also the woman's figure in the 1949 painting, *Son with Dead Mother*, where the artist used his characteristic way of framing, cutting her head off with the upper edge of the picture.

The image of a headless mother can therefore be interpreted perhaps not only in the broader context of the post-war crisis of figurative art, but also as a self-reflection on the part of the artist as he seeks to dissociate himself from his family tradition, spiritual roots, and the influence of his artist mother. 'Greatness', he noted, 'comes at the price of destroying one's home, the influence of one's mother, the domestic education. One needs to be the Prodigal Son'.

Quotations from: Andrzej Wróblewski, letter to wife, ca 1953, in Jan Michalski, *Wróblewski nieznany*, Kraków: Galeria Zderzak, 1993, p. 216.

Joanna Kordjak

Waldemar Baraniewski

Ruins, Blood, and (Non)Memory

> Muranów. For today's Varsovians a space that matters little in the topography of the city. A neighbourhood like any other. Knowledge of the Ghetto's tragic past has concentrated around monuments, a museum, enclaves of memory. That is all that has been left of a unique project of a spatial monument meant to commemorate the destruction of the Jewish quarter with new residential architecture.[1]

Urban space is an area of constant entropy, erasure of traces, covering up. In this particular place — of great intensity and conflicting intentions. For the Germans, to completely destroy the Ghetto was a great cultural, reformist, hygienic, and modernisation project. The 'Jew-infested' district, with its 'ugly stamp of slovenliness and neglect',[2] was to be replaced by a new German development. 'The former Ghetto area', Kazimierz Moczarski wrote, quoting his fellow inmates, 'was to become a residential and leisure neighbourhood. Villas, gardens, red roof tiles, green window shutters, roses, swimming pools, tree-lined avenues, parks and gardens. Plus three larger buildings: a local party house, a Heim der SS, and a police station'.[3] The man responsible for the demolition of the Ghetto and for clearing the site to prepare for new development was Hans Kammler, a high-ranking officer of the SS and one of the most efficient organisers of the Holocaust. The Germans were planning to set up an on-site camp for prisoners performing demolition works, which continued through mid-1944. As Kammler reported on 19 April that year, 'Removing the debris won't be feasible . . . It will be levelled on site, covered with ashes and faeces, and grassed.'[4]

In 1945, the former Ghetto area represented a major challenge and temptation for architects. Everything could be built anew, from scratch, according to a single rule. The modernist dream fulfilled. As sociologist Stanisław Ossowski noted in April 1945,

> What is most important is that, unlike the losses incurred in 1939, the Ghetto was a contiguous area and its destruction was complete, followed by the demolition of the houses and the removal of debris. Thus a space for a new district

1 In writing this essay, I used information provided to me by Bohdan Lachert in the 1980s as well as the typescript of the study, *Historia powstania Muranowa południowego w Warszawie w latach 1948–1952*, dated July 1976, which he had kindly made available to me, and which the subsequent quotations are from. I made the typescript available to Piotr Matywiecki, who quotes extensively from it in *Kamień graniczny*, Warsaw: Latona, 1994, pp. 492–494; cf. also Beata Chomątowska, *Stacja Muranów*, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2012, pp. 95–99.

2 'Ruins, rubble, and Jewish mementos are disappearing at a fast pace', the collaborationist *Nowy Kurier Warszawski* reported on 13 May 1942.

3 Kazimierz Moczarski, *Rozmowy z katem*, Warsaw: PWN, 1992, p. 236.

4 Quoted in Bogusław Kopka, *Konzentrationslager Warschau. Historia i następstwa*, Warsaw: IPN, 2007, p. 40.

had been created in the middle of the city. And since reconstruction was not an option — no other expression of the Ghetto tradition was envisaged in Warsaw than a monument to the Ghetto heroes — then one had complete freedom to plan a new district on the ruins of the former streets.[5]

The first design of Muranów was penned in 1946 by Wacław Kłyszewski, Jerzy Mokrzyński, and Eugeniusz Wierzbicki. The architects proposed dense development of three- and eleven-story buildings surrounding a 'centre of collective life'. The following factors were taken into account: 'The concept of the district as a whole, its connection with the city centre and the Old Town, and relatively high population density — 200 inhabitants per hectare.' The design was published in the first issue of a new periodical, *Architektura*, becoming a kind of manifesto of a modernist vision of new Warsaw.[6] It was also a realisation of the principal preoccupation of pre-war avant-garde architects — the design of urban housing estates. The description contains not a single mention of the Ghetto or the history of the site. Modernism knows no past, all that matters is the future. The authors do not even mention the ruins. 'The area where the development is planned covers some 175 hectares; it is roughly flat, sloping down slightly to the north-east; it presents no technical difficulties.' This abstract vision is shocking. It can only be explained as an attempt to repress the traumatic memory of events from five years prior.

This recent history and its horrific spatial presence will be adopted as a point of departure for his own architectural concept by Bohdan Lachert, one of the most active members of the pre-war avant-garde and the eventual author of the new Muranów. 'Walking around Warsaw', Lachert remembered, 'numerous architects visited Muranów, climbed up heaps of rubble 3 or 4 metres high, and watched a large expanse of the city — once the most overpopulated part of Warsaw — which was now a desert of debris with lone surviving churches here and there. . . . The realism of horror inumbrated every nascent architectural vision and every technological idea that might master the area and bring it back to life.'[7]

The planned development would be located between Okopowa Street, Stawki Street, the Trasa W–Z thoroughfare, and an extension of Marszałkowska Street, Nowotki Street (today's Andersa Street). It would consist of four housing complexes grouped around community centres, schools, shops, and local health centres. Four-story deck-access blocks of flats were designed alongside the streets, facing away from them. In this space were situated, in concentric complexes, three-story apartment blocks. The northern side of Trasa W–Z was to be lined with eleven-story high-rises, gaining an elegant, big-city feel. Among those would appear maisonette blocks, standing back from the street and facing towards the thoroughfare.

5 Stanisław Ossowski, 'Odbudowa stolicy w świetle zagadnień społecznych', in *Pamięć warszawskiej odbudowy 1945–1949*, ed. Jan Górski, Warsaw: PIW, 1972, p. 45.

6 Cf. 'Muranów — dzielnica mieszkaniowa', *Architektura*, no. 1, 1947, pp. 8–11.

7 Lachert, *Historia powstania . . .*

It was estimated that the planned construction site contained some 1.125 million cubic metres of rubble. Debris rose to 3–4 metre height and covered an area of some 45 hectares.[8] 'The first bulldozers', Lachert recounted, 'cleared the wreckage from the streets, tracing access roads to the middle of the desert. Moving through the screes of rubble, they crushed it, and the weathered bricks turned into dust under the weight of the machinery, allowing men to follow. The streets were cleared by shoving the debris to the sides, which meant that the heaps of rubble on the site of the former and planned development rose even higher.' That situation suggested a spatial solution that had earlier been proposed for downtown areas by Maciej Nowicki, that is, building new houses on the 'pedestals' of rubble. And precisely that element became in Lachert's interpretation a point of departure for the concept of a housing estate that would also serve as a memorial. 'As a creative team', the architect remembered, 'the studio postulated a spatial layout of Muranów such that would commemorate even fragmentarily the history of the last years of the war, filled, as they were, with horrible events and the heroism of the Ghetto fighters'. The key assumption was to build on the debris 'plateau'. Muranów was to be a monument stretched in space, made of the ruins and on their foundation. 'An estate . . . built of red rubble, as if of Warsaw's blood.'[9] It was not only to be a housing project, but also to comprise a 'clearly legible architectural setup meaningful as historical documentation'.[10] With its situation, spatial layout, shape of buildings, and even its very building material, Muranów referred to the past, commemorating the 'history of the nation's great victories, paid for by a sea of the people's blood, shed in the name of social progress and national liberation'.[11]

The original concept seems to have been predicated on the idea of a housing estate that would also serve as an architectural memorial devoted to the tragic fate of the Warsaw Ghetto. But as the above quotes show clearly, that concept was quickly diluted: bricks-and-mortar ruins turned into the 'ruins of the old social system',[12] and living history into class history. The specific was being replaced by the general and abstract. The theory of Socialist Realism, while informed by issues that architects had been tackling since the 1930s, was also filtering through to their meaning. It repressed the old essence, making sure to retain recognisable, virtually unchanged forms.

Changes that all previously designed architecture was subject to after 1949 applied to Muranów as well. The high-rises alongside Trasa W–Z were scrapped, so the

8 J. Zawisza, W. Drzewiecki, 'Zagadnienie wykorzystania gruzu na terenie Muranowa w Warszawie', *Inżynieria i Budownictwo*, no. 5, 1948, pp. 209–214. The estate's total building volume was originally planned at 1 million cubic metres; the budget was 5 million zlotys. Some 40 percent of the building material was to be produced on site from rubble.

9 Lachert quoting a shock worker from Muranów, Szczepan Partyka. Cf. Aniela Daszewska, 'A na Muranowie . . .', *Wieś*, no. 37, 1950, p. 6, and Lachert, *Historia powstania . . .*

10 Bohdan Lachert, 'Muranów — dzielnica mieszkaniowa', *Architektura*, no. 5, 1949, p. 130.

11 Ibid., and Lachert, *Historia powstania . . .* The architect compared the new development to ancient Troy: 'just as Troy in its geological layers reveals alternating periods of destruction and reconstruction, so Muranów, built on the ruins, was to testify to the energy that generations had contributed to its development'.

12 Lachert, 'Muranów — dzielnica mieszkaniowa'.

smaller 'second row' buildings found themselves in an unnaturally open position. But most problems stemmed from the assumption of the symbolic role of the material that Muranów was built with ('of red rubble, as if of Warsaw's blood'). Critics condemned their military barrack-like appearance, the estate's gloomy feel, the sadness of the grey houses. 'Given the development's large scale, the rosy hue of the hollow bricks, combined with the light-grey colour of the concrete window frames and corners, produced an effect of tedious monotony.'[13] The buildings were too distinct, irritating in their materiality, to be acceptable under the now-official doctrine. In spring 1951, they started to be plastered; the first to receive new, bright façades were the blocks at Aleja Świerczewskiego (today Aleja Solidarności). The correction obliterated the original meaning of Lachert's concept. 'The fact of plastering houses originally designed to be left in rough condition is yet another expression of the methods of socialist construction. Under the old system, incurring extra costs for the sole reason of improving the working man's living conditions would have been unthinkable,'[14] stated a contemporary commentator, as if to deliberately divert attention from the actual rationale behind the decision to cover the Muranów blocks with plaster, to adorn them with frontages and pinnacles. The presence of history was too strong, too evident, and had to be camouflaged.

13 'Tynkowanie Muranowa', *Stolica*, no. 9, 1951, p. 3; Bohdan Lachert, 'Muranów', *Miasto*, no. 10, 1952, pp. 29–32; M. S., 'Muranów w 90 procentach zamieszkały', *Stolica*, no. 7, 1953, p. 4: 'The architect has managed here to solve a problem caused by the particular circumstances. Wouldn't it have been better to simply remove the rubble and level the site? That's obviously the conclusion that the builders of Muranów have made after completing the first stage of development as rubble is now being removed, liquidating the heaps of debris, "craters", and gaps left by ruined buildings of the former neighbourhood.'

14 'Tynkowanie Muranowa'.

Dorota Jarecka

The Sun and Other Graves. On Leon Marek Suzin's Warsaw Monument to Jews Fighting in the Second World War

The sun and its glow acquire great significance in 1940s art. Władysław Strzemiński paints *Afterimages*, and Andrzej Wróblewski works on *The Sun and Other Stars*. Both show a paradox: in order to paint the sun, one should not look at it, but rather present it as an afterimage or turn back and trace circles like a child drawing with a stick in the sand. You lose your senses from gazing straight into the sun, like the protagonist of Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, who 'killed because of the sun'. The sun plays an ambiguous role in Wiktor Woroszylski's early poem, 'Pierwszy dzień stworzenia' [The first day of creation]. A new order is being installed in Poland, but the 'let there be light' of those early days has negative connotations too, for there is another light, faster and more efficient, as it were: 'But before they set out with flagpoles / To measure and divide justice / The red-faced ones had gone afield / To search for gold teeth in the black ashes'.[1] And so the same sun that has flared up in the sky with, to repeat after Andrzej Wróblewski, the 'emotional content of a revolution' drills also the minds of the 'diggers'. Separating light from darkness in their own way, they are looking for Jewish gold in the ashes. The Polish sun of the 1940s is both in the sky and in the ground.

Two Monuments, Two Dates

There is a monument in Warsaw that combines heaven and earth, the lower world and the upper one, mourning and hope. It is the memorial to Jews fighting in the Second World War, designed by Leon Marek Suzin and unveiled at the junction of Gęsia Street and Zamenhofa Street on 19 April 1946, the third anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising. It initially stood in a triangular plaza in front of the Volhynia Cavalry Barracks. Burn out but not ruined, the building had survived the war. Its demolition in the 1960s erased an original urban planning scheme. Nathan Rapoport and Suzin's 1948 Monument to the Ghetto Heroes fit in it nicely, being situated on the axis of the barracks' frontage.

We would know little about the 1946 monument were it not for Henryk Kroszczor's publication, *Kartki z historii Żydów w Warszawie* [Pages from the History of Warsaw Jews], where we read that on 28 February 1946 the Central Committee of Polish Jews [Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, CKŻP] commissioned Eleonora Sekrecka to design a commemorative plaque for the site; Sekrecka entrusted the job to Leon Marek Suzin.[2] Work must have proceeded swiftly as by early April 1946 the wording of the

1 Wiktor Woroszylski, 'Pierwszy dzień stworzenia', in *Śmierci nie ma! Poezje 1945–1948*, Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1949.

2 Henryk Kroszczor, *Kartki z historii Żydów w Warszawie XIX i XX w. Sylwetki, szkice*, Warsaw: ŻIH, 1979, 329; minutes of the 28 February 1946 meeting of the Central Committee of Polish Jews [Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, CKŻP], Jewish Historical Institute [Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH] Archive, Warsaw, sign. 303/I/11.

inscription had already been agreed.[3] The Suzin family archive includes sheets with Hebrew transcription and the architect's stamp.[4]

The memorial's location is explained by Kroszczor: it is a place 'hallowed by the heroic death of fighters who met Hitlerite tanks with fire and fell here'. The round tablet with the inscription, embedded centrally in the upper one of two round slabs of stone, slightly inclined in the direction of the former Ghetto gate at the Krasiński Garden, appears as a kind of symbolic shield. The choice of the reddish Tumlin sandstone symbolises, according to Kroszczor, the 'colour of spilled blood'. From the lower slab three steps cut in the upper one lead to the top. The arrangement is functional, the steps indicating the direction in which homage is to be paid and the place for laying wreaths. The composition suggests the orchestration of official ceremonies. As photographs from 1946–1947 show, the monument was used as a dais and a stage. Delegations laid wreaths, soldiers lined up to pay tribute, and the lower platform was used for making speeches.[5] One could say that whereas Rapoport designed a monumental altar, Suzin's monument is an 'open form' that works when and only when it is used.[6] It is abstract, devoid of elements to be 'admired', but can serve as a binding agent of a democratic space of participation. Oskar Hansen hadn't formulated his theory yet, but it was already present in the Warsaw urban space. For this reason, Suzin's monument is somewhat forgotten — it becomes visible only as a scene of activities: it is of low height, barely rising above ground, by definition horizontal. And yet there is a latent verticality to it. Its form may bring to mind the base of a column or a sewer manhole. Bound up with the symbolism of going underground is the monument's most astounding meaning. In documents from 1946–1947 it is sometimes referred to as a 'symbolic grave' or 'common grave'.[7]

Sepulcrum

The place where it was located functions from as early as 1945 as the 'grave at Gęsia Street'.[8] During the commemorations of the second anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising, flowers are laid here. The decision to build a monument clearly follows a specific clue, the memory of a place. Once the memorial is founded, a transition occurs from 'grave' to 'symbolic grave'. In an invitation to the commemoration of the third anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising, published by the Central Committee of Polish Jews, the monument is referred as the 'Symbolic Grave of Ghetto Fighters'.[9] It is also mentioned as a place where the 'cornerstone of the future monument of the Ghetto has been laid'. It turns out, therefore, that the two memorials are semantically connected, that from the very beginning they reference each other. But let us ask: why a grave?

3 Minutes of the 9 April 1946 meeting of the CKŻP, ŻIH Archive, Warsaw, sign. 303/I/11

4 I hereby thank Alicja Pawlicka for making these materials available to me.

5 Documentation is most ample for the year 1947. ŻIH Archive, Warsaw, sign. B-322 and B-149.

6 I hereby thank Agnieszka Szewczyk for suggesting this comparison.

7 Cf. minutes of the 26 February 1946 meeting of the CKŻP, ŻIH Archive, Warsaw, sign. 303/I/11.

8 Minutes of the 21 May 1945 meeting of the CKŻP, ŻIH Archive, Warsaw, sign. 303/I/7-11.

9 ŻIH Archive, Warsaw, sign. 303/XIII/114.

First we need to explain the monument's location in the context of the Ghetto's topography. Photographs from 1945 show how the place stands out: it is a grassy little square with no ruins. It was an important spot for the history of the Ghetto. In August 1942, following the liquidation of the 'Small Ghetto', the Judenrat offices were moved to the cavalry barracks at 19 Zamenhofa Street. People being taken for deportation to the Umschlagplatz were led through here. The early fighting of the Ghetto Uprising took place here; Yitzhak 'Antek' Zuckerman noted that at some point the Jewish Combat Organisation (JCO) had its headquarters across the street from the barracks.[10]

Shortly after the liberation of Warsaw, in April 1945, during the celebrations of the second anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising, flowers were laid here.[11] On 21 May that year, the CKŻP decided to 'fence off the site at the corner of Gęsia Street and Zamenhofa Street and erect a plaque there'.[12] While there is no mention in the CKŻP archives that exhumations had taken place there, this cannot be ruled out. On 21 May 1945, 'at the motion of [Zuckerman] a resolution was passed to bury 10 JCO fighters fallen in the Ghetto at the Committee's expense'.[13] On 11 January 1946, the Bund organised the burial of six fighters exhumed near Warsaw.[14] During the occupation, the barracks served as a prison. A witness saw a 'heap of bones and ashes' in its courtyard during the Warsaw Uprising.[15]

Alphabet of Memory

Formally and artistically, Suzin's monument follows the idiom of 1940s modernism, as do the Regained Territories Exhibition pavilions, Wróblewski's 'cosmic' compositions, or the starry-sky floor mosaic in a house designed by the husband-and-wife team of Barbara and Stanisław Brukalski in Żoliborz, Warsaw. This is the work of designing the world in spite of everything, informed not by naive merriment, but by a sense that there is no other way than to start anew. It is also order, as opposed to anomia. The separation — again — of light from darkness, a new beginning. But also memory inscribed in basic geometric forms, which is significant in the context of Suzin's work. The Warsaw University of Technology Museum's collection includes a portfolio of illustrations for his 1938 PhD dissertation (which was lost during the war), dedicated to the 'memory of colleagues who had the honour to die in the battlefield'. Suzin (1901–1976) fought in the Polish-Soviet war in 1920. In the work he used the circle and its perspective transformations. He realised the model of the commemoration of the dead through the journey of the circle in a visual form in the 1946 monument.

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10 Yitzhak ('Antek') Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

11 Photographs from 19 April 1945, ŻIH Archive, Warsaw, sign. ŻIH.DD.002, ŻIH.7252, ŻIH.Pomnik.72, ŻIH.Pomnik.72C, ŻIH.Pomnik.7251, ŻIH.Pomnik.69, ŻIH.Pomnik.7254.

12 Minutes of the 21 May 1945 meeting of the CKŻP, ŻIH Archive, Warsaw, sign. 303/I/8.

13 Minutes of the 21 May 1945 meeting of the CKŻP, ŻIH Archive, Warsaw, sign. 303/I/7-11.

14 Minutes of the 11 January 1946 meeting of the CKŻP, ŻIH Archive, Warsaw, sign. 303/I/7-11; *Biuletyn Żydowskiej Agencji Prasowej*, no. 38/8, 11 January 1946.

15 Michael Zybelberg, *A Warsaw Diary, 1939–1942*, London: Valentine, Mitchell, 1969, quoted in Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2013, p. 76.

Let us not forget the contents. After all, monuments are 'carriers of memory'. The slightly inclined top plaque bears the following inscription in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish: '19 April 1946. To those who fell in an unprecedented heroic struggle for the dignity and freedom of the Jewish people, for a free Poland, for the liberation of man — Polish Jews.' The lower slab shows a small scroll with the letter Bet and a palm leaf. Bet is the first letter of first word of the Torah, *bereshit*, which means: 'In the beginning'. In the Jewish tradition the palm tree is a symbol of victory and survival; it denotes Messianic hope.[16] The inscription thus combines a secular message with a religious one, and draws a connection between the struggle for a free Poland and the liberation of Jews.

This is in stark contrast to the inscription on the second monument, unveiled two years later, on 19 April 1948, which says, 'The Jewish people to their fighters and martyrs'. Between the two memorials there stretch two parallel histories. Firstly, the changes in art from post-war classicising modernism to Socialist Realism, which Marci Shore, speaking in the context of Rapoport's work, called Zionist Socialist Realism.[17] And secondly, the vicissitudes of the Polish Jewish community in the early post-war years, from hopes for peaceful coexistence with the Poles to the year 1948, when its rights began to be curtailed and Jewish emigration from Poland had reached its peak.[18] The date when the decision to commence work on the second monument was made is significant: the end of July 1946,[19] a few weeks after the Kielce pogrom. The first monument, besides commemorating the Holocaust, symbolises hope for a new life in Poland. The context of the second one is a Jewish exodus from Poland.

16 I hereby thank Piotr Paziński for this symbolic interpretation.

17 Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: Warsaw's Fin-De-Siècle Generation's Rendevous with Marxism, 1918–1953*, doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 2001, p. 482.

18 Over 200,000 Jews left Poland in 1944–1947. Cf. Maciej Pisarski, 'Emigracja Żydów z Polski w latach 1945–1951', in August Grabski, Maciej Pisarski, Albert Stankowski, *Studia z dziejów i kultury Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku*, ed. Jerzy Tomaszewski, Warsaw: ŻIH, 1997, p. 13.

19 Kroszczor writes that the decision was made on 26 July 1946; Kroszczor, p. 330.

Katarzyna Uchowicz

Experimenting. Sculpture Studio at the Warsaw Reconstruction Bureau's Department of Architecture and Engineering

> The space where Warsaw had burnt yesterday you are to fill with life. We are interested in the greatest possible ingenuity, the highest flight of the imagination. . . . Proceed boldly, your fancy and creative vision won't be curtailed.
>
> Jan Karol Wende, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Culture and Art, 1945[1]

The institution of a sculpture studio at the Department of Architecture and Engineering (headed by Bohdan Lachert) of the Warsaw Reconstruction Bureau (Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy, BOS) coincided with the commencement of work on the Polish-Soviet Brotherhood in Arms Monument in Warsaw (colloquially known as the 'four sleepers') in August 1945.[2] All of the studio's staff sculptors, except its head, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, lived in the Saska Kępa district of Warsaw, which determined the choice of the first project: the modernisation of a stretch of Katowicka Street, envisaged as a model thoroughfare (1946).[3] Lachert acted as a patron towards the sculptors, and the studio's temporary headquarters were near his avant-garde home at 9 Katowicka Street.[4]

The New Katowicka Street

The modernisation of Katowicka Street encompassed an urban-planning and landscaping concept, in which sculptural decoration played an important role. The diverse range of designed forms comprised standalone sculptures, relief sculptures, and openwork structures of architectural detail. Those included a white-cement bas-relief, *The Harvest*, a refined-concrete fountain with a bear cub figure and a decorative rubble-concrete lattice (both by Jarnuszkiewicz), a granite *Badger* by Józef Trenarowski, a concrete *Boy with a Yacht* by Stefan Momot, and a decorative bear-cub support crowning one of the gates by Stanisław Sikora.[5]

The design of the 'showcase' stretch of Katowicka Street drew on pre-war exhibition concepts, such as the arrangement of 'planned residential streets' (Bohdan Lachert

1 'Działajcie śmiało, wasza fantazja i twórczy lot nie będą podcięte . . .', *Biuletyn Informacyjny BOS*, no. 19.

2 'Pracownia rzeźbiarska BOS', *Biuletyn Informacyjny BOS*, no. 70.

3 'Saska Kępa', *Biuletyn Informacyjny BOS*, no. 60

4 'Biura dla remontu Saskiej Kępy i Mokotowa', *Biuletyn Informacyjny BOS*, no. 67; 'Odbudowa Saskiej Kępy', *Biuletyn Informacyjny BOS*, no. 92.

5 Bohdan Lachert, 'Ulice Saskiej Kępy', *Architektura*, no. 4, 1948 ,p. 4.

and Józef Szanajca, 1928][6] and was the only one to be realised in such a form.[7] The composition of greenery and a wide range of sculptural forms echoed the conceptions of modernist gardens realised by Franciszek Krzywda-Polkowski and Alina Scholtz. According to the modernist idea of the interpenetration of exterior and interior space, the modernisation included also the interior of Lachert's home, where Jarnuszkiewicz created a small bas-relief of a seated man and decorative bunches of laurel.

The space of the street opened symbolically with *The Harvest*, a composition alluding to Alfred August Janniot's bas-reliefs from the façade of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (1937). Preceded by a green, it was the subject of aesthetic contemplation in the vein of an open-air gallery.[8] Its artistic value was determined by an individual visual language, informed by graphic arts and large-format paper sculpture, that also characterised other works by Jarnuszkiewicz, e.g. the *Children* relief (1949) and the personification of the River Odra from the Four Dome Pavilion at the Regained Territories Exhibition in Wrocław (1948).[9]

Of distinct visual character, dubbed the '1948 style',[10] was also the openwork 'plaited' lattice covering the stairwell at 7 Katowicka Street,[11] a continuation of which were the decorative forms designed for the Polska Kasa Oszczędności (PKO) building at 124 Marszałkowska Street (1946–1948).

The New Marszałkowska Street

Lachert and Jarnuszkiewicz's architectural and sculptural concept was drafted in response to a competition announced by the Union of Polish Architects.[12] The PKO building, modelled on an unrealised design of a residential building for the Polski Bank Rolny (Lachert and Szanajca, 1939[13]), was considered as a model for the street's post-war development.[14] Jarnuszkiewicz designed several variants of decorative gratings and a personification of Abundance.[15] The façade was envisaged as an openwork structure of textured rubble concrete, its visual expression enhancing the sculptural effect of the architecture.

Prefabricated rubble-concrete detail was an extremely economic solution as well as one that continued the trend of Frank Lloyd Wright's organic architecture. It also appeared in the designs of Maciej Nowicki (of the BOS Architectural Discussion Studio)

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6 Lachert & Szanajca, *Rozplanowanie terenu działu budowlanego i ceramicznego na Powszechnej Wystawie Krajowej w roku 1929 w Poznaniu* (2nd version), Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, sign. MAt IIIb-743/2.

7 Lachert, 'Ulice . . .', pp. 7–9.

8 Jerzy Baurski, 'Problem ulicy Katowickiej', *Architektura*, no. 6/7, 1948, p. 39.

9 Helena Blumówna, 'Architektura i plastyka na WZO', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 39, 1948, pp. 6–7.

10 B.a., 'Bronimy czterech kopuł', *Przekrój*, no. 180, 1948, p. 6.

11 Baurski, p. 39.

12 Bohdan Lachert, 'Dom P.K.O w Warszawie przy ul. Marszałkowskiej 124', *Architektura*, no. 2, 1948, pp. 1–5.

13 'Konkurs na dom mieszkalny Państwowego Banku Rolnego w Warszawie', *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 2, 1939, pp. 19–31.

14 B.a., 'Budowa gmachów biurowych PKO', *Stolica*, no. 49/50, 1947, p. 20.

15 Lachert, 'Dom . . .', p. 5.

who promoted Wright's ideas in the periodical *Skarpa Warszawska*[16] as 'new functionalism', one of the key postulates of which was a 'sense of material'.

An Unknown Muranów

An unrealised visual design for the Muranów housing estate, known from Bohdan Lachert's typescript, 'Udział rzeźbiarzy w budownictwie na Muranowie' [The participation of sculptors in the construction at Muranów], included figural sculpture, relief sculpture, and architectural detail. A performative description ('hypotyposis') had an equal meaning to design drawing, in accordance with the definition of the term as a 'pattern', 'sketch' [from the Greek *hypotypóein*, 'to sketch'].

Excerpt from Lachert's typescript:

Sculpture themes

1. A monumental entrance staircase to the Muranów estate at Plac Bankowy, opposite the Arsenal. Sculptures by the stairs representing 'Guard, vigilance, readiness of the working class'.
2. An entrance arcade to the estate. A sculpture above the arch as Muranów's foundation tablet.
3. Surrounded by children's devices, in a larger inner space, against the background of greenery, a sculpture representing care for the child.
4. An architectural scheme for the surroundings of the historical Działyński Palace designated as a library, featuring a sculpture on the theme of the 'significance of knowledge and science'.
5. A low-key space, encompassing historical buildings and new houses with a free-standing community hall (historical building), in a central place designated for a sculpture on the theme of 'social bond'.
6. A lateral entrance to Muranów from Trasa W–Z through a large arcade spans an unfolding inner space with two accents of sculptures representing the 'consumption-wise usefulness of production' (ampleness, abundance, productivity).
7. Near the intersection of Trasa W–Z with the N–S thoroughfare, which both divides and connects the two parts of Muranów, there unfolds a compositional axis of development, marked by the pathos of new, different architecture. On a square elevated above the surrounding traffic routes, shaped clearly by terraces, stairs, and buildings, a large, centrally positioned sculpture representing 'work leadership and competition'.

. . .

9. In front of the Courts of Justice building, Trasa W–Z forms an extension — a square. The space in front of a large cafe opposite the Courts is filled with colourful open-air furniture. The two shorter sides are enclosed by a high-rise and by a sculpture symbolising the 'democratic bloc's indomitable striving for peace'.

16 Maciej Nowicki, 'W poszukiwaniu nowego funkcjonalizmu', *Skarpa Warszawska*, no. 3, 1945, pp. 1–2.

10. Three sports themes in close connection with the layout of athletic fields.
11. Three themes from the animal world as accents by kindergarten and nursery buildings.
. . .

ATTENTION! The sculptors' job is to find the right expression for an artificial stone — concrete — which in its process of production shares common characteristics with, firstly, bronze cast sculpture (the spatiality of shape), and secondly, with architecture (being constructed with horizontally divided elements, joined by cement mortar).[17]

Simultaneously, Lachert designed a collective working method for a team comprising a sculptor, a plasterer, and a bricklayer, which continued the cutting-edge construction organisation system implemented at Muranów.

Collective Sculpture

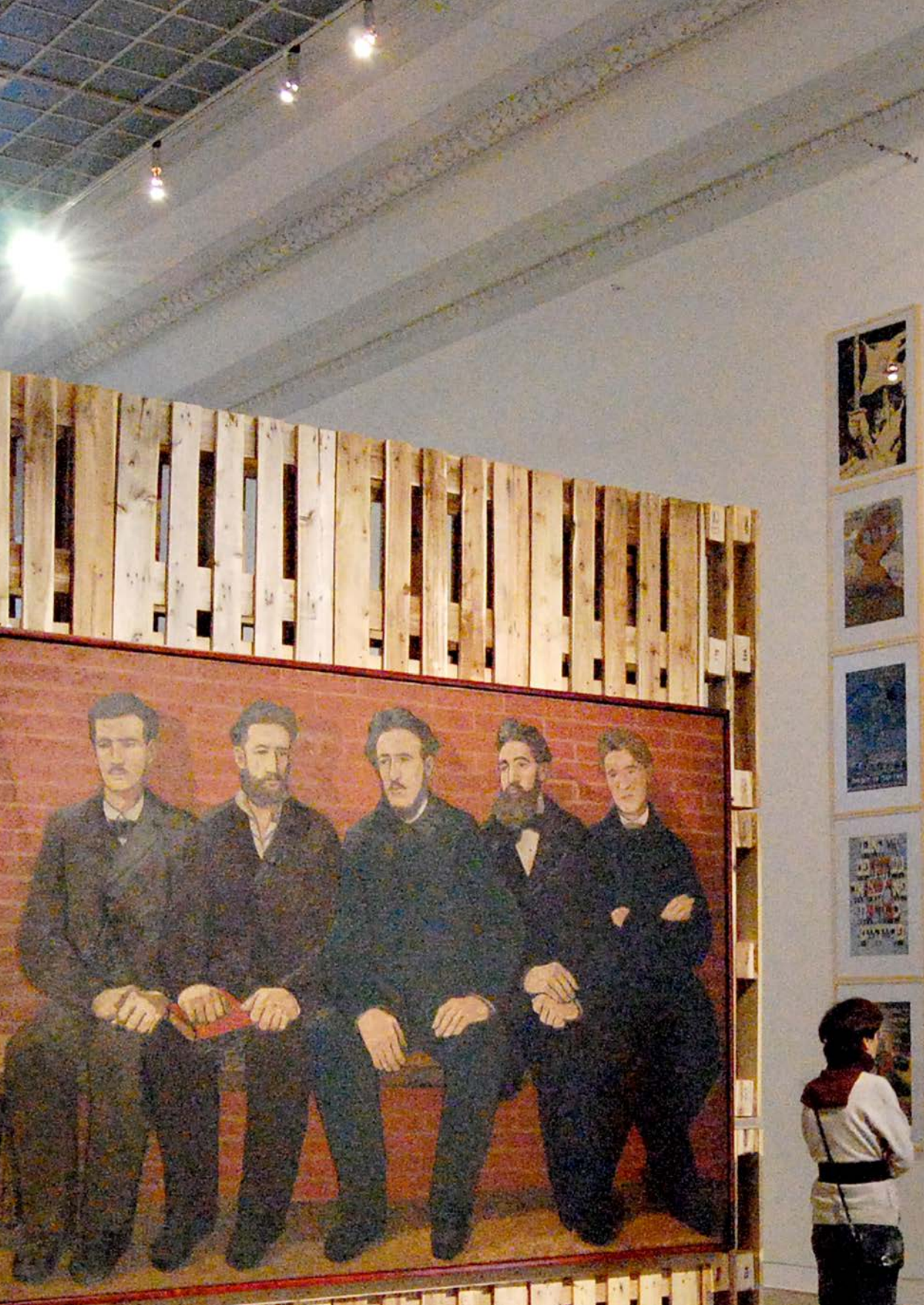
Sculptures were divided into categories depending on their scale and volume, and the process of realisation into two stages: conception and execution. And so the sculptor was responsible for conception, a plaster model, and finish, the plasterer for creating a 1:1 scale plaster model, a blind plaster form, and concrete cast, while the bricklayer took part in the process of casting and assembly. Such 'sculpture trios' were to work at a temporary studio at 11 Wierzbowa Street and a permanent one at the Blue Palace.[18]

Exposing the visual potential of rubble concrete, prefabricated sculptural decoration contributed decisively to the originality of the marriage of architecture and sculpture in the early post-war years. Operating an interplay of textures, colours, and forms, it emphasised the haptic qualities of architecture, effecting on the sense of touch.

17 Bohdan Lachert, 'Udział rzeźbiarzy w budownictwie na Muranowie', typescript, 12 May 1949, pp. 1–2, Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, sign. 13 091/2.

18 Ibid., pp. 3–4.


WFDiF




BĄDŹ JAK ZAWISZA
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BERLIN 1945

American Architects on Tour

In the summer of 1947, a delegation of American architects and urban planners, among them Henry N. Cobb (then a student of architecture at Harvard), visited Warsaw and several other Polish cities. The visit was part of a larger tour around war-ravaged Europe that had been conceived by architect Herman H. Field, then professor at University of Cleveland. The itinerary included Great Britain (where the New Town Bill, a wide-ranging agenda aimed at the reorganisation of urban spaces, had just been enacted), France (Paris), Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Norway, and Poland. In Poland, as in Great Britain and Czechoslovakia, the programme included a tour of selected cities (Warsaw, Kraków, Katowice, Wrocław, and Szczecin) as well as meetings with architects and urban planners, authors of reconstruction and rebuilding plans. In summer 1947, the Americans were briefed on the work of the Central Office of Spatial Planning, which had just announced a long-term national plan. Earlier, in October 1946, Poland had presented the first version of plans for rebuilding war-affected cities at the International Congress for Housing and Town Planning in Hastings. Polish papers on the method of drawing up such plans and connecting them with economic planning (including on regional and national scale), developed back in the 1930s, were published in English on the occasion.

In Warsaw, the US delegation, shown around by architects Helena and Szymon Syrkus who played the role of hosts, was particularly interested in long-term reconstruction and development plans presented by the Warsaw Reconstruction Bureau (Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy, BOS). Cobb used the opportunity to shoot a series of colour photographs documenting wartime ruins. Those weren't just documentary snapshots, but images of specific locations connected with freshly enacted development plans, recent competitions, or historical events (such as the opening of an exhibition at the former Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp). Cobb wasn't photographing random places, but those the development plans of which he was familiar with, e.g. through a BOS exhibition. The pictures should be viewed through the prism of the planned rebuilding of the country from still evident destruction, without romantic sentiment for the 'beauty of ruins'. At the same time, Cobb's colour photographs comprise a unique collection documenting post-war ruination.

The first exhibition of Cobb's photographs took place at the History Meeting House and at the Skwer im. ks. Jana Twardowskiego at the junction of Karowa Street and Krakowskie Przedmieście Street in Warsaw at the turn of 2012 and 2013.

Maria Sołtys

Grzegorz Rytel

Glass Houses in Koło, Warsaw

> Pre-war Warsaw — over 1.2 million inhabitants. Some 40 percent of those, i.e., 450,000, dwelled in crowded single-room flats where the average density was four persons per room. . . . In order to combat the overcrowding of working-class homes, a group of activists founded in 1934 the Workers Housing Society (Towarzystwo Osiedli Robotniczych, TOR), with the aim of funding and building homes for low-income blue- and white-collar workers. Based on state loans, the TOR was a necessary safety valve in the light of the era's socio-political conditions.[1]

The first colony of low-cost homes for the most needy was built at the TOR's initiative in Koło, Warsaw, in the second half of the 1930s. A total of 19 buildings with 972 flats and a community hall were constructed.

The perspective of Okopowa Street, which forms the axis of the scheme, is constituted by the rhythmic setup of buildings standing perpendicularly to the street on its both sides, giving a sense of 'barracks-style' unification and spatial monotony. Guided by the idea that homes should receive sunlight from the east and west, buildings were situated in this manner to provide possibly similar conditions to all dwellers. Such 'linear' or 'comb' arrangements, as they were called, which were considered as being 'more progressive than radiation or chessboard setups with narrow backyards',[2] resulted in an excessive uniformisation of housing complexes. Besides Koło, that was the case with such residential communities as the TOR estate in Grochów or the Warsaw Housing Cooperative (Warszawska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa, WSM) project in Rakowiec (both in Warsaw), the Osiedle Montwiłła-Mireckiego in Łódź, the Dammerstock in Karlsruhe, the Britz, Onkel Toms Hütte, or Siemensstadt in Berlin, or the Kiefhoek in Rotterdam.[3] The main issue in Warsaw was the deficit small homes with proper hygiene and spatial standards that would be affordable for low-income tenants. Postulates of proper sun exposure of residential spaces, of providing sites for schools, kindergartens, playgrounds, and leisure areas could be realised on a compromise basis only, as permitted by the plots allocated by the Ministry of Public Works.

> The experiences of the WSM and the TOR, coupled with the studies conducted during the war by the underground Architecture and Urbanism Studio (Pracownia Architektoniczno-Urbanistyczna, PAU) and its team of scholars and

1 This and the subsequent block quotations are from a paper by Helena and Szymon Syrkus, published by the Warsaw Reconstruction Bureau (Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy, BOS) and the Warsaw Housing Cooperative (Warszawska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa, WSM) in November 1946; Helena Syrkus, *Ku idei osiedla społecznego*, Warsaw: PWN, 1976, pp. 391–402.

2 Ibid., p. 256.

3 Paradoxically, the WSM colonies in Żoliborz are free from this flaw due to the difficult shape of the land plots at Wilsona Square and between Krasińskiego Street and Słowackiego Street.

> cooperative activists, defined and cemented the notion of a community estate so strongly that it entered the Warsaw master plan as its organic basic unit. . . . Residential districts do not constitute the sum total of the individual houses, but consist of those estates as basic, and thus indivisible, units.

The pitfalls of the semi-random allotment of locations as well as the excessive rationalisation of planning solutions were realised already in the late 1930s. During the war, studies and research-and-development works were conducted, aimed at designing new, comprehensive planning and urbanistic solutions, housing-construction programmes, and community-estate functioning principles. Solutions developed in the course of interdisciplinary research and studies were meant to be implemented after the war. In 1941, Warsaw's Community Building Enterprise (Społeczne Przedsiębiorstwo Budowlane, SPB) set up the Architecture and Urbanism Studio, headed by Szymon Syrkus, with time transformed into a multidisciplinary team of experts. Independently, though in communication with the PAU, urbanistic studies were conducted by a team led by Barbara Brukalska, resulting in the publication in 1948 of her book, *Zasady społeczne projektowania osiedli mieszkaniowych* [The communal principles of designing housing estates].[4] Besides pursuing theoretical studies of housing-estate and residential-district schemes, or designs of the Rakowiec neighbourhood, the PAU worked on a comprehensive master plan for a 'western residential district'. As part of this project, work was begun in 1943 on a sketch of a detailed plan for a housing estate in Koło, taking into consideration the existing architecture of the TOR housing project on both sides of Obozowa Street. Drawing on the PAU's own schemes of a community estate for up to 10,000 residents, it was assumed that the pre-war TOR complex of buildings, designed for some 3,000 inhabitants, would form the first colony of the planned estate. Already at this early stage, the linear setup of the TOR estate, stretching along the north-south axis, was planned to be offset by stretches of long deck-access buildings situated along the east-west axis. In the course of studies aimed at shaping the estate's architecture in a freer manner than before, a sketch was produced of a slightly curved building dubbed 'Helena's smile'. After the war, a building in this form was realised at the centre of the Koło estate and as part of the Praga I complex.

> Following seven years' of research work, the concept of a community estate is ripe to be realised. Urbanists are ready to introduce in 1948 a new model of development.

In 1947, Helena and Szymon Syrkus, transferred in the same year from the BOS to the WSM, were officially appointed as designers of the Koło estate. The WSM was at the

4 The book, gathering experiences from the realisation of the WSM colonies in Żoliborz and from occupation-era studies, was in 1949 chastised by Socialist-Realist ideologues; the entire print run was removed from bookstores and destroyed.

time reconstructing and renovating damaged buildings, building new colonies in Żoliborz, and drafting designs of new estates in Mokotów, Ochota, and Koło. Concurrently, Michał Przerwa-Tetmajer, a member of the PAU team working during the occupation on a plan for the western district and on design sketches for Koło, wrote — on the basis of general design guidelines and conclusions therefrom — and successfully defended a master's thesis at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology.[5] Based on the wartime sketches and designs, and thanks to Tetmajer's collating of study materials in his thesis, it was now possible to draft an urbanistic design of the estate, executive designs of the first buildings, and a building-material production plan quickly enough for actual construction works to commence before end-1947.

> For the first time in Warsaw and in Poland, a site for housing will be allocated by the supreme authority of the capital and the institution in charge of public land — the City of Warsaw Management Board — rather than acquired in a random and partial manner over twenty years, as has been the case so far in Żoliborz and Rakowiec. For the first time a housing project will be situated in a proper way on a street network adapted not to private plots but to consolidates development sites. It will not be necessary — as during the development of Żoliborz and Rakowiec — to fight battles for the rational situation of the individual colonies and for modifying an outdated street structure.

The post-war development was taking place in new realities: Warsaw had been ruined in over 80 percent, the first three-year plan was in force, and all private grounds in the city had been nationalised by a decree of 26 October 1945. When one looks at the post-war WSM estate, whether from the perspective of an urban planner or a layman, its spatial layout is obviously different from that of the pre-war TOR housing project. A sense of spaciousness achieved in ample urbanistic interiors is enhanced by numerous ground-floor clearances that facilitate pedestrian traffic and offer at times unexpected perspective views of the different open spaces and buildings. At the heart of each new colony, the so called quarter, is a large green with a centrally situated kindergarten of lightweight, pavilion-style form.

> The next three-year period may become to an even greater degree a period of housing construction. During that time, taking advantage of increased availability of building materials and skilled labour, we will be able to build on a massive scale through industrialisation as well as, also through industrialisation, to strive to raise standards, to improve the quality of housing. However, in order to prepare such an improvement of housing standards for the coming years, we need to gather experiences in the course of the present three-year period.

5 At Professor Tadeusz Tołwiński's consent, the thesis was supervised by Helena and Szymon Syrkus.

The estate's first buildings were designed as monolithic reinforced-concrete frame structures. This was very much consistent with the tenets of modernism and Szymon Syrkus's own views. In his manifestos, *Preliminarz Architektury* [The preliminary of architecture] and *Tempo architektury* [The pace of architecture], published at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s in the periodical *Praesens*, Syrkus presented himself as an avowed supporter of the industrialisation of housing construction and of the closest possible cooperation between the designer and the building-materials industry. He stood for those views in his design practice, employing cutting-edge technological and technical solutions.

Given the low height of the buildings (three floors), the idea of resorting to monolithic frame construction raised doubts among the WSM activists and SPB technical staff; other technical and technological outcomes proposed by the designers proved controversial too. All wall and ceiling elements were to be prefabricated on site with rubble concrete, including ceiling beams and hollow bricks as well as elements of load-bearing walls, exterior walls, and dividing walls. Aggregate was supplied by ball mills, grinding rubble, a material which was there no shortage of in Warsaw in the early post-war years. Rubble was however used solely for logistics and economic reasons rather than for its symbolic significance, unlike in the Muranów housing project being designed at the time by Bohdan Lachert. There, residential buildings of unplastered rubble-concrete blocks were to be a symbol of life regenerating on the ruins, like 'Phoenix rising from the ashes',[6] as Lachert wrote. The characteristic façade pattern on all buildings, a relatively minute grid of 50 by 50 centimetres, resulted from the adopted module of elevation blocks, which were in turn coordinated with a modular one-metre constructional grid adopted for all buildings. In the three-layer, modular block, the exterior layer was made as the final, outward-facing one.

What is noteworthy in Helena and Szymon Syrkus's design is a modernist approach to decoration as well as carefully thought-out architectural and sculptural details. Besides the aforementioned curved building, freely drawn elements, contrasting with the orthogonal grid, are evident also in the extreme sections of the multi-staircase buildings and in the shape of the entrance zones. The entrances draw attention with the dynamic shape of their roofs and openwork side walls (due to their form known as the 'slices of cheese'). The exterior stairs and entrance platforms, with their lookthrough side shields, barriers, and benches, have been designed with lots of finesse. The prefabricated elements of the low walls, made of washed concrete with the texture of small pebbles, prefigure the appearance of the lobby walls.

> This experience will cost us more than building a same-size estate with bricks and timber. Every technological invention is expensive at first, becoming cheaper only later. But without incurring the laboratory cost, without building an experimental estate in the first, preparatory three-year period, we won't achieve the cost efficiencies we are after.

6 Bohdan Lachert, 'Muranów — dzielnica mieszkaniowa', *Architektura*, no. 5, 1949.

Oversized entrance halls and flats (though their hygienic and utilitarian values were praised), the space 'lost' to the numerous ground-floor clearances, and the narrow width of the passageways in the deck-access blocks caused the solutions adopted in the design of the Koło estate to be criticised. The high cost of the reinforced-concrete frame construction, issues related to the implementation of the prefabricated technology, and numerous technical complications resulting from its application were also noted. An analysis conducted by the WSM showed that the cost per square metre at Koło (when reinforced-concrete construction had already been discontinued) was 24 percent higher than in a Mokotów estate designed by Zasław Malicki and Stefan Tworkowski. Citing lower costs in the second stage of the project, Szymon Syrkus argued that the cost of building in the rubble-concrete prefabricated system could be eventually lowered to that of traditional construction technology.

Criticism however grew stronger and acquired an ideological overtone with the introduction of the Socialist-Realist doctrine in 1949. The estate's layout was criticised as being too extensive, with the buildings arranged in an overly 'schematic and uniform manner'. The fact that the buildings missed courtyards and were pushed back from the streets was perceived as a flaw, which reflected the period's preference for peripheral development. That scheme was adopted by the Syrkus team for the estate's last quarter. Architecture was designed as 'national in form', for its 'socialist content' was ensured by the very function of working-class homes. To address the criticism, it was decided to make development denser. Some of the green areas were allocated for new buildings, informed by a different ideology and stylistically different from the original ones, despite attempts to harmonise at least their external appearance. That stage of the project was realised by the Workers' Estates Enterprise (Zakład Osiedli Robotniczych, ZOR), founded in 1948 and reporting to the Ministry of Reconstruction. The Koło project was taken over from the WSM in spring 1949. On-site production of prefabricated elements was dumped in return for traditional bricklaying technology. One of the buildings, typical for the estate's original architecture, received a neoclassical cope, and its modernist arcade poles were dressed in a costume of Tuscan-order columns; it now stands as an interesting example of the transition period. Similar formal 'corrections' were introduced at the Praga I estate, designed by the Syrkus team and built by the ZOR.

> From this revolution there stems the notion of the 'democratisation of space' — the basis of new urbanism, untrammelled by individual ownership of land. . . . Rather than a decoration to cover an inner void, the estate's spatial layout will be a living form, reflecting a specific social reality.

The estate's layout was listed in 1992, but its architecture should also be protected, so that renovation and modernisation works do not result in the loss of unique architectural values. Today the Koło estate remains one of the most interesting examples of the fulfilled vision of modernist architects seeking to solve the housing problem, and bears witness to their clashes with reality.

Furniture for Small Apartments

> To let: an inset wardrobe with free access from the corridor for a childless couple with own furniture.
>
> joke in *Przekrój*, 1945

Wartime devastation caused a severe housing deficit in Poland. Large numbers of homes were needed as fast as possible, which generally meant they would be small. Pre-war furnishings didn't fit the new interiors, and industrial production remained based on outdated models from the 1920s and 1930s. The market craved for functional, inexpensive, and visually pleasing designs that would, crucially, be adapted to small floor areas.

In order to popularise fine designs, exhibits were organised of model furnished apartments. Such 'showroom' displays were presented, for example, by the Warsaw Housing Cooperative [Warszawska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa, WSM]: in post-war Warsaw's first new building in Żoliborz in 1947, and in Mokotów and Koło in 1949. The former included 1½-room and 2½-room flats furnished by the Ład Cooperative, the Polish Housing Reform Society, Wanda Krąkowska's Atelier of Artistic and Folk Products, and the state Timber Industry Central.

Also in 1947, as part of the 2nd Exhibition of Artistic Industry at the National Museum in Warsaw, architect Czesław Wielhorski showed a 5 m^2 room furnished with no less than a sofa, an armchair, a wardrobe with a folding desktop, a chair, and a small table.

> . . . it is understandable and unfortunately necessary that in a small home furniture has to be multi-functional. Fans of yachting and trekking will easily understand this. . . . Of course, an apartment is not a yacht, but if a certain culture of cohabitation is observed, also a small space — clean, well lit, rationally fitted and furnished — can accommodate several dwellers until general conditions allow for congestion to be reduced.

In both exhibitions in 1947 Ład showed their most recent creations: smoked-pine pieces that became Poland's sole realisation of the idea of popular furniture. They were sold separately, but fit each other, making for unpretentious, cosy, and familiar interiors.

Quotations from: *Przekrój*, no. 16, 1945, p. 15; Marian Szymanowski, 'Po wystawie mieszkań i mebli w W.S.M. [sprawozdanie i omówienie]', *Życie Osiedli Warszawskiej Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowej*, no. 2, 1947, pp. 55–57.

Anna Frąckiewicz

Anna Frąckiewicz

How to Make Something Out of Nothing

> . . . our arts-and-crafts industry, though working with such meagre materials as flax, hemp, chip (yes!), sticks, and various kinds of rubbish, is worthy, in terms of artistic quality, of standing in the front row of European, even global, production. So much can be achieved by talent, creativity, and good will.
>
> Irena Krzywicka, 'W walce o piękno' [Fighting for beauty][1]

War brought the ruination cities, devastation of industry, and impoverishment of the population. This necessitated extreme frugality. Since labour was cheap and industry hardly functioning, production had to be based on manual work and low-cost materials, locally sourced and easily available as transport costs could be prohibitive.

This meant using softwood, such as pine and spruce, rather than hardwood, wicker, homespun wool, linen and hemp yarn. Olgierd Szlekys argued that snaggy wood could be decorative too, and that 'finely finished pine or spruce are truly attractive'.[2]

Plaiting became a popular furniture technology due to its low cost; durable chair seats and backs could be made with cord, wicker, or strips of cloth or leather. Paper cord proved a highly useful material; it was plaited (as well as crocheted and knitted) to produce bags, belts, even shoe tops. Women's tunics were sewn with parachute silk, skirts with blankets, and the Spółdzielnia Arkady cooperative produced elegant furniture upholstered with tarpaulin. In the fashion industry in particular necessity was a mother of invention:

> It was an imaginative and inspired fashion, full of unexpected combinations . . . A slightly quilted duvet pulled out from the ruins, thrown over an evening blouse borrowed from a cousin in Kraków, a skirt made from a blanket, and hand-made shoes laced with a paper string — here comes the charming Warsaw lady of 1945.[3]

Jewellery was made with 'poor' materials such as wood plugs and twigs, cucumber seeds, plum and cherry stones, beans and maize kernel, strips of felt and leather and so on.

Production waste and by-products — wood slats or chips, leather, fur, and felt scraps etc. — were used on a wide scale: slats for making chair seats and backs, chips for lamp shades, floor mats, and carpets, textile and fur scraps for toys, brooches, carpets, and bedspreads, and small pieces of wood for boxes, containers, cigarette holders, or bowls.

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1 Irena Krzywicka, 'W walce o piękno', *Robotnik* , no. 3 (1447), 1948.

2 Olgierd Szlekys, 'Przestańmy być niewolnikami mebli', *Życie Osiedli Warszawskiej Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowej*, no. 7, 1949, pp. 162–163.

3 Grażyna Woysznis-Terlikowska, 'O warszawskiej modzie', *Stolica*, no. 1, 1946, p. 12.

Waste sorting and recycling produced savings too. 'Waste is a valuable material', proclaimed *Życie Osiedli Warszawskiej Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowej* [Life of WSM colonies] reporting that special containers converted from artillery shells would be installed for collecting cans, bottles, broken glass, waste paper, and rags.[4] *Moda i Życie Praktyczne* [Fashion and practical life] wrote about 'treasures in the dustbin',[5] advising readers to make carpets with rags and use bunched cloth scraps for dishwashing; UNRRA[6] cans were perfect for storing all kinds of household products. Many other publications stressed the benefits of waste segregation and suggested how redundant items could be remade, reused, and upcycled.

Due to the unavailability of certain classes of products, do-it-yourself was a very popular method. The exhibition *Mini Home*[7] featured industrial and artisan furniture, but also ready-to-assemble pieces: 'A bunch of properly cut and planed boards and battens can, with a little sense of craftsmanship and the help of instruction drawings, be fit together into simple but functional and, once finished, attractive furniture'.[8]

Women's magazines carried more or less precise tips on how to make wooden-soled summer shoes or furniture from boxes.[9] In comparison with those propositions, turning an old hat into a belt or producing a cork necklace was plain sailing. But even such skills were useful, for they could become a source of income. Single mothers, unemployed or without a profession, had to earn their living somehow, for example by making decorative garment buttons at home, such as those created by Ewa Zielińska (later a designer at the Institute of Industrial Design): 'Similar to fine little toys or . . . sweets, they were made of pieces of sole leather'. Zielińska told the readers of *Moda i Życie Praktyczne* that she bought scraps from shoemakers (for 300–500 zlotys a kilo) and produced about 20 buttons a day, which she sold for some 120 zlotys apiece.[10]

Much of this penny-wise production was aesthetically pleasing. Virtually all reviews of the 2nd Exhibition of Artistic Industry[11] at the National Museum in Warsaw stressed that the beauty of objects didn't depend on the cost of the material: 'Visually appealing

4 'Rządzimy się sami. Odpadki to pełnowartościowy surowiec', *Życie Osiedli Warszawskiej Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowej*, no. 4/3 (8), 1949, p. 83.

5 'Skarby w śmietniku. Jak zużytkować odpadki w gospodarstwie domowym', *Moda i Życie Praktyczne*, no. 4 (52), 1948.

6 The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, founded in Washington in 1943, was an international relief agency; from September 1945 to September 1946 the UNRRA provided Poland with aid (food, clothing, medicine, trucks, machines, raw materials.

7 Żoliborz, WSM Colony XI, 16 February–2 March 1946.

8 Marian Szymanowski, 'Po wystawie mieszkań i mebli w W.S.M. (sprawozdanie i omówienie)', *Życie Osiedli Warszawskiej Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowej*, no. 2, 1947, p. 56.

9 N. D., 'Robimy same pantofle', *Kobieta Dzisiejsza*, no. 4, 1946, p. 14; Aniela Daszewska, 'Meble zastępcze', *Kobieta Współczesna*, no. 13, 1947, p. 9; wooden-box furniture was made to Wanda Piechal's designs at the State Gymnasium of Household Management in Warsaw.

10 'Dorabiamy w domu. Guziki ze skrawków skóry. Rozmowa z p. Zielińską', *Moda i Życie Praktyczne*, no. 8 (56), 1948, p. 11.

11 The exhibition was on show from 15 December 1947 to 18 January 1948 and featured prototypes from the BNEP collection.

items made of inexpensive materials demonstrate that clearly'.[12] Who or what, therefore, was responsible for aesthetic appeal? First of all, it was the artist who designed a well thought-out and harmonious form, and a maker able to turn his idea into reality.

The work of Wanda Telakowska was focused on introducing beauty to daily life. The institutions she headed — the Ministry of Culture and Art's Department of Production and the Production Aesthetics Supervision Bureau (Biuro Nadzoru Estetyki Produkcji, BNEP) — sought to make sure that even ordinary objects were well designed. To that end, they collected prototypes — usually craft products — as models for future production. This deficit of design for industry in the early post-war years is partly explained by Telakowska's words:

> In the hierarchy of needs, in the order of rebuilding the various branches of industry, the first to be revived will be the heavy industry, the automotive industry, and the construction industry. Time for the garments and accessories sector will come only much later. And yet the impoverished, plundered masses will need to clothe themselves somehow. . . . Contrary to what is popularly believed, industrialism not only does not kill handicraft production, but actually increases its value, provided that handicraft returns to the tradition of artistic work. Big industry, based on serial production, is great at satisfying serial needs. All variants in factory production are costly; in properly construed manual labour they make the worker's effort attractive and add little to the product's price. All sectors of production whose value consists in originality, in identifying and responding to individual, sophisticated needs, make more economic sense when based on handicraft and small industry.[13]

The prototypes from the collection of the Department of Production and the BNEP demonstrate that many artists were indeed able to create beautiful objects with common, inexpensive materials. They share a rustic feel, but also a certain archaic quality, an intended primitivism that is not always informed by folk art.

Unprocessed, raw wood was a popular material; Józef Różyski, for example, used it to make lamp bases or original necklaces with carefully selected and artfully prepared twigs, beads, and pegs. The artist employed simple but impressive designs, juxtaposing dark, smoked wood with bright chiselled motifs, combining various geometric patterns , or rhythmically repeating basic motifs. He took advantage of the expressive values of bark, its colours and textures, knots, gnarls, and snags. Some of the necklaces are regular and orderly, resembling folk embroidery or carving, or even imitating the construction of traditional log houses. Others are rough, corniculate, predatory.

An archaicising style can also be noticed in the metal jewellery of the period, as in the works of Jadwiga and Jerzy Zaremski, Ludmiła and Ryszard Rohn, Stefan Płużański, or Mamert Celmiński. Materials included low-grade silver, white metal, copper, brass,

12 A. W., 'Artyści plastycy współpracują z przemysłem. Na marginesie wystawy w Muzeum Narodowym', *Robotnik*, no. 349, 1947, p. 5.

13 Wanda Telakowska, 'O udział plastyki w życiu gospodarczym kraju', *Odrodzenie*, no. 44, 1945, p. 2.

semi-precious stones, ceramics and glass; the pieces were more or less in the vein of folk art, sometimes a bit irregular, with blurry ornament lines.

In plaiting, Władysław Wołkowski achieved an impressive level of mastery. He produced all kinds of braids: cross, spiral, diagonal, box, pinstripe, queue, as well as combining different materials (e.g. cord with wicker, leather, or bast). He also made baskets, platters, and trays with spiral, helix and figure-eight motifs.

Similarly impressive, though ascetic, are the mats and rugs by Krystyna Tołłoczko-Różyska, made of slats and sticks connected with cord or thick linen thread, with varied, rhythmic patterns of horizontal and vertical lines.

Smoked-pine furniture (made by Olgierd Szlekys, Władysław Winczy, or Czesław Knothe) came with a honey colour and a clear drawing of dark grains, smooth bending lines, with a characteristic dip in the middle, and oblique angular legs. The pine was smoked to the point of partial charring, then brushed, polished, and varnished. Such a finish helped to hide the imperfections of the lower-quality material while producing an interesting grain pattern, a light shine, and a deep and lasting colour.

The BNEP collection includes numerous examples of trinkets, accessories, decorations. These are toys, lace doilies, jewellery, handbags, wallets, souvenirs — seemingly unnecessary items that reflect a widespread desire to return to normal life. The popularity of fashion magazines is another case in point. The first issue of *Moda i Życie Praktyczne*, published for borrowed money in 360,000 copies in November 1945, was completely sold out.[14] Reports from 1940s Warsaw vividly document the phenomenon of the regeneration of life in the ruins. A 1945 issue of *Przekrój* featured the photo of a family at dinner in a room that misses the front wall. But the table is covered with a cloth and decorated with a bunch of flowers.[15] A year later, the weekly *Stolica* wrote,

> Plaster whitened in the caves. Shiny shop windows sprang up one after another, displaying colourful textiles, green-and-yellow and rosy perfume bottles, bread and cakes. A stylish lantern was hung in front of the Cafe Danuta. . . . Nearly 600 shops have already opened along Marszałkowska Street.[16]

But handicraft products couldn't meet popular demand. Artist-made daily items were beautiful and functional, but too few and thus costly. Only industrial production could be truly available to all. In the following decades, as industrial design became more firmly established, the handicraft-oriented design model of the 1940s became obsolete. Today we can appreciate these objects, their beauty and uniqueness.

14 Zofia Sokół, '„Kobieta i Życie" (1945–2002)', in *Studia bibliologiczne Akademii Świętokrzyskiej*, vol. 9, Kielce: Wydawnictwo Akademii Świętokrzyskiej, 2005, p. 66.

15 *Przekrój*, no. 34, 1945, p. 10.

16 (Krzysztof), 'Marszałkowska', *Stolica*, no. 8, 1946, p. 2.

The Beauty of Everyday Things

In the 1940s, the state made efforts to improve the aesthetic quality of everyday items. Those projects were initiated and run by Wanda Telakowska (1905–1985), who from March 1945 headed the Ministry of Culture and Art's Department of Production (1945–1947), later renamed as the Production Aesthetics Supervision Bureau (Biuro Nadzoru Estetyki Produkcji, BNEP, 1947–1950).

The principal role of those institutions was to facilitate cooperation between fine artists and industry (both manufacturing and handicraft), in the belief, as Telakowska put it, that without artists 'it is difficult . . . to improve the aesthetic taste of the thousands of customers who have humbly accustomed themselves to kitschy imagery, ugly wallpaper patterns, unsightly textiles . . . It is not only people who make things: things also shape our inclinations and habits. Fine artists need to join production teams with workers and technicians to create new beautiful furnishings, new garments, new glassware, china and faience, new toys . . .'

Telakowska's call was answered by artists from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and the Ład Cooperative, architects, art- and vocational-school students, painters, graphic artists, and sculptors, including those who hadn't done design work before. The government bought designs and prototypes from them, building a collection in the hope of slating them one day for production. Training courses for designers and makers were also organised, e.g. internships for artists at Lower Silesian glassworks (1946) or for ceramics painters/decorators at the Włocławek Faience Factory (from 1946); experimental studios were founded, where furniture, toys, clothing, metal items, and jewellery were made.

The effects of those programmes were presented in numerous exhibitions; particularly impactful were those at the National Museum in Warsaw in 1946 and at the turn of 1947/1948.

In 1950 the BNEP morphed into the Institute of Industrial Design, and Telakowska became its art director.

Quotations from: Wanda Telakowska, 'Przemysł i piękno', *Odrodzenie*, no. 47, 1949, p. 8.

Anna Frąckiewicz

Faculty of Spatial Arts

In the academic year 1946/1947, the State Graduate School of Visual Arts in Łódź formed the Faculty of Spatial Arts. The aim of the dean, Stefan Wegner, and the heads of the Unit of Spatial Arts, Władysław Strzemiński and Roman Modzelewski, was to connect art with product design.

The Faculty modified its curriculum in the following years, in an effort to respond more precisely to market demand for specialists. The Unit of Spatial Arts taught the visual aspects of architecture and wall decoration design. Students were acquainted with the design of small-scale architecture (kiosks, pavilions) and its integration with the surroundings, and exhibition design. Other units taught applied graphic arts as well as courses in stage design and occasional decoration. In 1949, the Unit of Spatial Arts was renamed as the Unit of Architectural Arts as it focused on strictly architectural design in order to specialise students more closely in the most pragmatic of the arts.

At the same time, the school continued to teach canvas painting and sculpture. Painting retreats were organised, and a lot of emphasis was placed on 'studies from nature'. Such a didactic approach can be viewed as a fulfilment of the postulates of the pre-war avant-garde collective a.r., one of the members of which was Władysław Strzemiński, the Łódź school's co-founder and a co-author of its curriculum. According to Strzemiński, painting and sculpture were a 'laboratory of form', a source of creative ideas that designers could tap into to create attractive mass-market products. They should draw on traditional art forms so that the high quality of their designs helped to change the surrounding reality, improving its aesthetics.

In 1949, following the introduction of the doctrine of Socialist Realism, the school began to be criticised for its artistic results and conflicts among staff. In 1950, Strzemiński was fired, and at the end of the same year Wegner shared his fate. The Faculty had been cleared of the 'accretions of cosmopolitan formalism'.

Bibliography: Janina Ładnowska, 'Kronika Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Sztuk Plastycznych im. Władysława Strzemińskiego w Łodzi 1945–1995', in *Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Sztuk Plastycznych im. Władysława Strzemińskiego w Łodzi 1945–1995*, Łódź: PWSSP, 1995.

Marcin Lewicki

Dorota Jarecka

To Those Who Fought for Realism

'Enhanced realism' (Kantor, Porębski),[1] 'direct realism' (Wróblewski),[2] 'working realism' (Starzyński),[3] 'realism of the visual process' (Strzemiński)[4] and so on. 1940s art theory and criticism are preoccupied with realism to the point of obsession and ceaselessly seek to define it.

Who infected it with this obsession? Imagination suggests teasingly that it must have been the surrealists. As Hal Foster noticed, the term's root, *le réel*, sends us back to Freud.[5] In his interpretation of surrealism — through Lacan's psychoanalysis — Foster argues that surrealism invokes that which is 'Real' and the correlate of which is trauma.

The notion of realism has a particular tradition, connected with the avant-garde and opposition to academism — I mean here Gustave Courbet's *Realist Manifesto*. Among the early 20th-century avant-garde artists, it was referenced by Piet Mondrian and, in revolutionary Russia, by Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner.[6]

But there comes a moment when realism, as one of many possible options, begins to be construed as the only one. This happens in a context geographically distant from France but close to the surrealists in terms of Marxist pedigree, i.e., in communist Russia. György Lukács with his conception of realism (not as primitive as the Soviet one) arrives some time later. Today he is considered as a principal champion of realism, but first he formulates the idea of 'partisan' art, introducing realism to his reflections on literature only in the late 1930s. When Lukács publishes *Es geht um den Realismus*[7] in 1938, realism is already the mandatory formula in the Soviet Union. Soviet Socialist Realism draws on the conservative current in Russian Marxism, rejecting the avant-garde tradition. Condemning the New Left, Proletkult, and Alexander Bogdanov, and praising Georgi Plekhanov was ritualistic behaviour for Socialist-Realist critics. Put shortly, the idea that socialist art should be based solely on realism is relatively late. Formulated in the 1930s, it gains a monopolistic position

1 Tadeusz Kantor, Mieczysław Porębski, 'Grupa młodych plastyków po raz drugi. Pro domo sua', *Twórczość*, no. 9, 1946, p. 87.

2 Andrzej Wróblewski's untitled text in *I Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej. Pięćdziesiąt lat później*, ed. Józef Chrobak and Marek Świca, Kraków: Starmach Gallery, 1998, p. 305, and Andrzej Wróblewski, 'Wystawa sztuki nowoczesnej', in ibidem, p. 308; the texts are from the years 1948–1949.

3 Juliusz Starzyński's speech at a conference of visual artists in Nieborów, February 1948, in *Nowocześni i socrealizm*, vol. 2, ed. Józef Chrobak and Marek Świca, Kraków: Starmach Gallery, 2000, p. 27.

4 Cf. Władysław Strzemiński, 'Widzenie impresjonistów', *Odrodzenie*, no. 25, 1947, p. 4.

5 Cf. Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993.

6 Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner, 'The Realistic Manifesto', in *Art in Theory, 1900–2000*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, Malden: Blackwell, 2003, p. 299.

7 György Lukács, 'Es geht um den Realismus', *Das Wort*, no. 6, 1938, pp. 113–138.

in the Soviet Union after 1945.[8] Which does not change the fact that the essays of Sergei Varshavsky or Nina Dmitrieva offer little clue as to what the painters should actually paint. They are collections of empty formulas, written in fear of deviating from an orthodoxy which no one knows anyway; it is only the Party that possesses its secret. Marxist aesthetics in Russia — or that school of it which Andrzej Turowski calls ideological, as opposed to productivist — enters a stage of ossification; it is actually already dead.[9]

And it is at this point that Polish critics, writing in periodicals such *Kuźnica*, *Twórczość*, or *Odrodzenie*, bring up the theme of realism. From the very beginning, then, realism is anachronistic.

The Discourse of Realism in the 1940s

Still, the debate is fascinating. In Poland, criticism still enjoys relative freedom of speech. In the literary discourse, the spark comes from Kazimierz Wyka's essay, 'Tragiczność, drwina, realizm' [Tragicalness, mockery, realism], published in October 1945 in *Twórczość*.[10] In the discussion of painting, the first declarations of realism are formulated by Mieczysław Porębski in his polemics with Henryk Gotlib in *Kuźnica* in 1946. Tadeusz Dobrowolski will play the role of the brakeman with his lengthy essay, 'O hermetyzmie i społecznej izolacji dzisiejszego malarstwa' [On the hermeticism and social isolation of today's painting], which appeared in June 1946 in *Odrodzenie*.[11] The text will cause a storm. It cannot be ruled out that in some aspects Strzemiński's *Theory of Vision* was a polemic with Dobrowolski.[12] As early as 1934 Strzemiński posits 'abstract realism'[13] in response to the offensive of Socialist Realism; a major exhibition of Soviet painting was held in Warsaw in 1933. Similarly a naive epistemological realism, referred to deceptively as humanism, suggested by Dobrowolski in 1946, forms a context for the 'realism of physiological vision'. Strzemiński says: this realism is a purely idealistic concept; if painting is to be based on truly materialistic premises, it has to be a realism of ocular physiology. At the same time, Dobrowolski's text closes and halts an important debate. From now on, his polemicists' energies will be focused on proving that he shouldn't write about art at all.

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8 Cf. Olga Postnikowa, 'Unsere Herzen gehören der Partei. Künstler unter der Doktrin des Sozialistichen Realismus', in *Kunst und Diktatur. Architektur, Bildhauerei und Malerei in Osterreich, Deutschland, Italien und Sowjetunion 1922–1956*, ed. Jan Tabor, Wien: Künstlerhaus, 1994, pp. 760–783.

9 Cf. Andrzej Turowski, 'Le monde à bâtir . . . la philosophie de la construction', in idem, *Existe-t-il un art de l'Europe de l'Est?*, Paris: Éditions de la Villette, 1985, pp. 89–103, and idem, *Political or Social? (Art History's Issues with Marxism)*, lecture, part of *Marxism and Art* series, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 16 October 2013.

10 Kazimierz Wyka, 'Tragiczność, drwina, realizm', *Twórczość*, no. 3, 1945, pp. 101–119.

11 Tadeusz Dobrowolski, 'O hermetyzmie i społecznej izolacji dzisiejszego malarstwa', *Odrodzenie*, no. 23, 1946, pp. 1–3.

12 Luiza Nader, *Strzemiński and Marxism*, lecture, part of *Marxism and Art* series, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 8 June 2014.

13 Władysław Strzemiński, 'Integralizm malarstwa abstrakcyjnego', *Forma*, no. 2, 1934, pp. 8–10.

The discussion of realism is interesting also because it is potential and keeps going astray. Realism is a mask in it, every time demanding a different decoding. It is thus a contextual notion, not an essential one. Let me venture a hypothesis: those debates were not about realism. The actual matters of contention were three: power, modern art, and the experience of the war and Holocaust.

Power

The discussion of realism is in fact about bargaining for power. Between the lines, Dobrowolski's essay raises the issue of cultural policy in Poland. Will it follow the liberal model or the authoritarian one? In his text, in which there is not a single mention of Marxism, Dobrowolski refers to its most conservative aesthetic option, that is, realism based on the 'close and eager study of nature'. He also resorts to the opposition, widely employed by the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s, between the masses and the elites. The former 'crave for comprehensible art', while 'difficult' or 'decadent' genres, such as cubism, fauvism, or surrealism are but whims of the latter.[14] Dobrowolski, director of the Silesian Museum in Katowice before the war, is appointed head of the National Museum in Kraków in 1950. He also wins in the short term, driving his fiercest adversaries, such as Julian Przyboś or Władysław Strzemiński, off the pages of *Odrodzenie*. But in his views he is too honest, and power cannot be naive. In 1949, Stefan Żółkiewski and Juliusz Starzyński enter the stage, comprising a formation that has perfected a strategy of dissimulation. It is them who will 'organise' Socialist Realism at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, including negotiating it with those in power.

Modern Art

The discussion of realism is also a battle over modern art. At stake is freedom of speech. Why did Kantor and Porębski attack Dobrowolski so viciously in their manifesto, 'Pro domo sua?' Was it because his conception of art carried great significance? Not at all, they didn't even mention his name. It was because they had noticed in his text an anti-modern discourse that brought to mind the rhetorics of Nazi propaganda. They asked directly, 'Is it necessary to mention concentration galleries of "degenerate art" in Nazi Germany?'[15] Hiding under the guise of a good uncle advising 'realism' were regressive, anti-modern cultural concepts. Why was the postulate of 'enhanced realism' made? No doubt about it: to win the notion of realism for modernity. In 1946, Porębski's definition of modern art included also cubism, expressionism, Paul Klee, the collectives a.r. and Praesens, constructivism, and even the 'ravings of surrealism'.[16] He wasn't the only one. In 'Tragiczność, drwina, realizm', Wyka described realism as an 'objective surprise', borrowing André Breton's well-known formula.[17] Realism in Poland in 1945–1946 is also surreal.

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14 Dobrowolski.

15 Kantor, Porębski, p. 85.

16 Cf. Porębski, 'O nową ideologię w malarstwie', *Kuźnica*, no. 4, 1946, p. 10, and idem, 'O sztuce malarskiej', *Kuźnica*, no. 22, 1946, pp. 4–6.

17 Wyka, p. 119.

War and the Holocaust

The discussion of realism is a dispute about the truth of the most horrible times of the war and Holocaust. Two opposite things are at stake. On the one hand, real experience, honest testimony, loyalty to those who have died. On the other, individual integrity, quiet mind, ability to forget and start all over. Wyka's 'realism' is an art that must confront the devastation wrought by the recent catastrophe.[18] Interestingly, while no one questions literature's duties towards history, autonomous painting, excluded from the historical experience, has its advocate in Henryk Gotlib, writing in the Marxist *Kuźnica*, who champions 'revolutionary classicism'.[19] It was Gotlib's texts that provoked Porębski's angry reaction — the young Marxist sought to connect the painting's meaning with reality rather than with the play of formal values. Occupation-era experience isn't directly mentioned here, but it is hardly insignificant that the conception crystallised during the war, when a group of young visual artists had rebelled against postimpressionism. Porębski defines the time frame precisely: it was in the years 1941–1943.[20] That should make us think: it is the time of the Holocaust. For that reason, I believe, Dobrowolski's essay stifled a potentially important debate. It redirected it: instead of searching for a new formula of realism, critics started tracking down its alleged enemies. Adam Ważyk will soon announce that Dobrowolski is right because formalism is 'wrong'; in an exhibition of French art at the National Museum in Warsaw the 'bubble of surrealism burst and the expressionist guts spilled out'.[21] There is no better manifestation of the repression of wartime horrors than this text. The deeper meaning of the discussion of art in the context of the war experience — the dispute, essentially, between Gotlib and Porębski — is lost.

Realism as a Symptom

If we look at the artistic production of the era, there is somehow little realism in it. We should ask *what* realism, of course. If we mean the realism expounded by Strzemiński in *Theory of Vision*, informed by biology on the one hand, and by the social dynamics on the other, then his own art is an example of it. But 'enhanced realism', as a metaphor rather than theory, is impossible to detect. At the same time, we feel that 1940s art struggles with eyewitness experience, and that this truth of what has been seen leaves a mark on it. Outstanding examples of works that are characterised by such eyewitness literalness include Strzemiński wartime drawings, e.g. *Deportations* (1940), *War to Homes* (1941), or *Cheap as Mud* (1944),[22] or Stefan Wegner's drawings from the *Auschwitz* series (1945), which also document a non-cultural human 'bios'. These works can be called 'testimonial', but it needs to be stressed, after literary scholar

18 Ibid.

19 Cf. Henryk Gotlib, 'Dwie kultury', *Kuźnica*, no. 18, 1945, pp. 12–14, and idem, 'Zwiastuny rewolucyjnego klasycyzmu', *Kuźnica*, no. 3, 1946.

20 Porębski, 'O nową . . .'.

21 Adam Ważyk, 'Niedyskrecje malarskie', *Kuźnica*, no. 27, 1946, p. 11.

22 Dated after: *Powidoki życia. Władysław Strzemiński i prawa dla sztuki*, ed. Jarosław Lubiak, Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2012.

Krzysztof Zaleski, that the boundaries of such a genre are 'blurry'.[23] We can also find examples of works that are testimonial without being 'realistic', such as Henryk Beck's drawings made in an underground bunker after the fall of the Warsaw Uprising. They would be closer to the notion of the allegory, or even 'medallion', as Michał Głowiński called Ludwik Hering's wartime short stories.[24] There is doubtless a desire in Polish art, when the war still rages on, to give an artistic portrait of reality. 'Work amid experiences' takes place, as Wyka put it.[25] But the category of realism, with the exception perhaps of the realism of physiological vision, is useless here, and what is more, the realism of the 1940s appears to be simply bogus. Realism is not a stylistic, generic, philosophical, or aesthetic category, but a proof of being lost, of searching for something nameless, something that resides in the unconscious. Realism is a symptom.

That is why it seems more correct to place the art of the second half of the 1940s in a different paradigm. Piotr Piotrowski suggests the category of a 'surrealist interregnum'.[26] While the Exhibition of Modern Art in Kraków in 1948 can hardly be called strictly 'surrealist', there is no doubt that already at this time, during a highly ideologised, at times to the point of Soviet-style orthodoxy, discussion of realism, the surrealism of Marian Bogusz or Alfred Lenica was politically rebellious.

The context of the battles and arguments over realism sheds light on Andrzej Wróblewski's paintings, both those featured in this show and later ones. Let us consider the message of his *Painting on the Theme of the Disasters of War (Headless Fish)*. I would define it as anti-realist. The very title sounds like a mocking joke. The attitude is contrarious: this is not a painting *like* Goya's, but *on the theme of* Goya. On this theme, the theme of an art that defends humanity and seeks to tell a truth about war and send a moral message, Wróblewski has to this say this: he saw headless fish in the market. They fish are being filleted, so someone with a knife is standing behind the painter's back. Wróblewski reflects here on the industrial character of the Holocaust, its economic dimension of 'processing'. This, I would venture to say, is also how Wróblewski's *Executions* should be interpreted — as a mockery of the European tradition of representing the 'disasters of war'. A mockery of the era's postulate of 'humanist' painting.[27] Dehumanised objects, shown without empathy. Supporting this reading is the title: *Surrealist Execution*. Why? Because not realist. And yet, through the *réel*, the real is present there courtesy of surrealism.

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23 Krzysztof Zaleski, 'Fakt i sens całości. Z problemów okupacyjnej literatury faktu', in *Literatura wobec wojny i okupacji*, ed. Michał Głowiński and Janusz Sławiński, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1976, p. 123.

24 Cf. Michał Głowiński, 'Niezwykła książka', *Teksty Drugie*, no. 3, 2012; also Katarzyna Bojarska, 'Der affektive gesselschaftliche Realismus im Schaffen Ludwik Herings', *Historie. Jahrbuch des Zentrums für Historiche Forschung der Polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 2014/2015.

25 Wyka, p. 119.

26 Piotr Piotrowski, 'Surrealistyczne interregnum', in *Mistrzowi Mieczysławowi Porębskiemu uczniowie*, ed. Tomasz Gryglewicz, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2001, pp. 297–326.

27 Cf. the discussion inspired by the publication of Andrzej Banach's essay, 'Sztuka nieludzka', spring 1948; its summary in *Polskie życie artystyczne 1944–1960*, vol. 2: *Rok 1948*, ed. Anna Wierzbicka, Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki PAN, Liber pro Arte, 2012, pp. 112–118.

Realism and the End

The discussions of realism come to an end at the turn of 1948 and 1949. In early 1949, Włodzimierz Zakrzewski circulates a memo among the members of the Party's Central Committee urging measures to whip artists into line. 'The Party's strategy on how to build a new art of Socialist Realism in Poland has yet to be worked out', he writes, attacking, effectively, the compromise achieved in February 1949 at the conference in Nieborów.[28] Interestingly in the context of this defeat of realism, which had been politically compromised, Polish art history sought to discern a utopian and revolutionary moment in it. In 1984, another revision of realism, this time along romantic and perhaps secretly Marxist lines, was carried out by eminent art historian Elżbieta Grabska.[29] In a struggle for the coherence and meaningfulness of individual and collective choices, Grabska performs a historical shift: Wróblewski was a romantic, the only one, as Charles Baudelaire once, who knew what realism was. A chosen one who knew that the artist's role is to 'tread barefoot on painful ground'. Realism is the biggest loser here, but this precisely means that it is also a chance of redemption.

28 Włodzimierz Zakrzewski, *O partyjność w plastyce*, typescript, Archive of the Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw.

29 Elżbieta Grabska, '*Puisque réalisme il y a*, czyli o tym, co w sztuce powojennego dziesięciolecia nie mogło się dokonać', in *Sztuka polska po 1945 roku. Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, Warszawa, listopad 1984*, ed. Teresa Hrankowska, Warsaw: PWN, 1987, pp. 375–384.

Luiza Nader

Neurorealism. Władysław Strzemiński's Afterimages

Władysław Strzemiński made his 'afterimage' or 'solaristic' paintings in the years 1948–1949. They have been discussed in terms, for example, of the physiology of vision,[1] phenomenology,[2] or psychoanalysis.[3] In my interpretation of one of Strzemiński's solaristic paintings I would like to add to those analyses an affective and neurological aspect,[4] and propose the category of neurorealism.

Afterimage of the Sun (1948–1949) is an oil-on-canvas painting in the shape of an upright rectangle (73 × 61 cm). It is marked by strong chromatic and textural contrasts, with thick layers of pigment applied vigorously in different directions, producing a 'twinkling' effect. It is the intense colours and texture rather than form that define the spatial relations in the representation.

The composition has been divided into three uneven geometric parts. The narrowest of those, along the left edge, is an elongated black triangle, pointing downward. The widest one, in the centre, is a trapeze, tapering upwards, striking in its strong contrasts of intense colours: blue, yellow ochre, red, green; expressive texture gradations are most pronounced here. The third part, along the right edge of the painting, is also a trapeze, this time narrower at the bottom. It has been covered with white pigment that serves not so much as a background, but as a boundary space between, on the one hand, amoeboid forms of various colours that seem to be shaping themselves 'before' the white filter and, on the other, a whitish pink patch spilling out 'behind' it.

The upper part of the middle part is filled with a rich texture of blue pigment. Longitudinal brushstrokes are directed downward and to the left, emanating from an intensely yellow patch in the upper right corner. The density of the painting material and the movement of the brush endow the form with volume and weight. The blue content surrounding the solar form borrows colour from it. Below the blue area there settles horizontally an orange-red patch, its texture reminiscent of hot lava. The direction of the impastations changes: they are applied more horizontally, weighing towards the right side of the painting. It is an image from inside the body — a spectacle, masterfully

1 Andrzej Turowski, 'Fizjologia oka', in *Władysław Strzemiński 1893–1952. Materiały z sesji*, Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 1994, pp. 21–29.

2 Leszek Brogowski, *Powidoki i po . . .* , Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2001.

3 Paweł Mościcki, 'Zdążyć poniewczasie. Strzemińskiego potyczki z historią', in *Powidoki życia. Władysław Strzemiński i prawa dla sztuki*, ed. Jarosław Lubiak and Paulina Kurc-Maj, Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2012, pp. 301–322.

4 The first to notice neurobiological and neuroaesthetic themes in Strzemiński's works from the 1930s and 1940s and in *Theory of Vision* was Łukasz Kędziora; cf. Łukasz Kędziora, *Neuroestetyka jako nowa metoda analizy obrazów*, 2012, master's thesis, supervisor: Piotr Piotrowski, Institute of Art History, Faculty of History, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, pp. 59–69.

described by Leszek Brogowski, of afterimages.[5] Received by the heated atmosphere, sunlight filters through the bloody eyelids. The organic forms of almost celadon green, various hues of blue, pink, and black, and, above all, a large, uniformly red patch on the left are all afterimages dancing under the eyelids. They have been applied in an utterly flat manner on the above-described textured surfaces. These are not just the colours of afterimages, but also colours that make the viewer see them. Gazing at the painting long enough, we will notice that the patch of red on the left represents an afterimage of dingy yellow. Red in turn finds its consequent contrast in the washed-out rouge in the part of the picture covered by the white filter. With the right visual focus, the uniform and two-dimensional patches of afterimage colours seem to be arranging themselves into irregular rows running across the two wider parts of the representation, as if they were in a space 'between' the viewer and the picture. Brogowski notices that at some point in analysing Strzemiński's afterimages we are no longer sure what we are looking at: a painting or its afterimage on the retina of our eyes.[6] The divide between viewer and representation disappears.

Afterimage of the Sun operates on three levels: referential, self-referential, and relational/affective. Interpreted literally, it may depict the experience of both light and its temperature — heat pouring in through the window. The narrow black triangle on the left is the margin of vision. Perhaps it connotes the frame of the window — the source of the spilling light — or the nose, a relative limit of vision for someone who (like Strzemiński) would have full vision in one eye only, the right one in this case. The painting's texture indicates its own self-referential qualities — the rich painterly substance. But it also relates to the work's relational and affective levels. The pulse of the artist's body has been recorded in the representation through the rhythm of the impastations, their different directions and textural variations. But afterimages are also a record of a particular physical action that every attentive observer is familiar with: a momentary opening of one's eyes to dazzling sunlight, then shifting focus elsewhere, observing the afterimage phenomena, closing one's eyes (the red under the eyelids), opening them again, casting glances, accommodating vision.

The chromatic and at the same time haptic qualities of the painterly substance reinforce each other's effect: the painting is striking visually, but it also influences our tactile sense. According to Gilles Deleuze, phenomena such as chords or colours are affects: they exist in themselves, 'self-supporting', but also in relation to human hearing or vision.[7] Paraphrasing Deleuze, we could say that colours in afterimage paintings, resounding in the viewer's eye, become embodied vision, a common rhythm of the gazes projected by the image itself and those the viewer casts on it. The reception of solaristic paintings is different from the contemplation of their unist counterparts. It relies primarily on the affective sensation — an event of intensity rooted in bodily

5 Brogowski, among others pp. 43–46.

6 Ibid., p. 46.

7 Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, 'Co to jest filozofia?', Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2000, p. 180; English edition: *What Is Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

experience. For Deleuze, affect is a mover of thoughts as well as a moment of indeterminacy, when the boundary between *self* and *thing* suddenly blurs.[8] In solaristic paintings, the afterimage event makes the viewer feel like passing through colours, contrasts, textures with their gaze as well as their body and mind. The line separating subject from object fades away. Colour, and intensity with it, are recorded on the retina of the eye, but first of all in perception and memory, touching on the 'point x' of human subjectivity where affect is born.

But where exactly is that? 'Affect' as a term first appeared in the humanities in the mid-1990s, having migrated from the natural-sciences discourse. Contemporary neurobiologists such as Joseph LeDoux believe, as Maria Jarymowicz writes, that the 'principal structures responsible for inducing affect (the attribute of every emotion) are the amygdalae, which are located in the area of subcortical structures, unable to generate consciousness'.[9] Affect is therefore linked not so much to the subconscious as to the unconscious mind. Affective intensities suggest that human subjectivity should also be considered in a neurological perspective. *Theory of Vision* leaves no doubt that Strzemiński's view of the relationship between sight, mind, and body was very advanced for his time. Łukasz Kędziora calls him actually an 'intentional neurobiologist'.[10] Though *Theory of Vision* is not free of errors, Strzemiński has impressive knowledge of how the brain works, which in many places accords with the state of neurological research in 1940s Poland, and many of his intuitions correspond with later discoveries. Shortly after the war, Łódź saw the reactivation of the Marceli Nencki Research Institute, which worked in the field of neurology, among others. One of its researchers was Jerzy Konorski, an outstanding Polish scholar (at one time a collaborator of the famous Ivan Pavlov), who in 1928 published (with Stefan Miller) an early paper on the mechanisms of operant (instrumental) conditioning. An illustration from his paper — besides a diagram from a publication by the Russian psychologist Boris M. Teplov — was reproduced in *Theory of Vision*. Two paths seem to have brought Strzemiński to neurological themes: materialism and the empirical experience of his many years' painting and teaching practice. An interest in the reactions of his own body, the work of his eyes, his disability, may have been a contributing factor too.

The principal category of *Theory of Vision* — visual consciousness, which determines the development of art as well as the ability to perceive, understand, and draw knowledge from reality — is defined by Strzemiński as a dynamic process of work occurring between the mind (thought) and the organ of sight (the eye).[11] Strzemiński construes vision, and the human body as well, not only in physiological or biological terms, but also neurological ones. It is 'not the abstract reception of visual sensations by an abstract human being, but the functioning of neural impulses, that is, short-term electric currents running along neuron chains, carrying those sensations from the eye to particular centres

8 Ibid., pp. 191–192.

9 Maria Jarymowicz, in *Nieuświadomiony afekt. Najnowsze odkrycia*, ed. Rafał K. Ohme, Gdańsk: GWP, 2007, p. 21.

10 Kędziora, pp. 68–69.

11 Władysław Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1958, p. 13.

of the cerebral cortex'.[12] In Strzemiński's art, this neurological notion of the human body merges the organism, the organ of sight, and the mind into a network of interconnected centres of vision. Contemporary neurobiology holds a similar view of the process of seeing. As Wojciech P. Rdzanek puts it, 'we first create an image of our surroundings, and then correct it on the basis of visual stimuli', and all this happens quite involuntarily, on an unconscious level. Flat and incomplete, the 'retina image is . . . interpolated by a vision centre' located in the brain.[13] Semir Zeki, a representative of a recent discipline known as neuroaesthetics, points out that the brain is equipped with hereditary concepts, such as colour, whose role is to organise and regulate the signals received by the brain.[14] According to Zeki, hereditary concepts cannot be ignored; they are relatively autonomous and do not change in time. Strzemiński's reflections, of course, aren't as advanced or detailed. Still, he notes that the 'image of the visible world . . . arises through the integrating process of thought',[15] that the 'work of thought, cooperating with the immediate action of seeing, determines the wealth and diversity of our observations'.[16] The point is not to return to a Cartesian vision of reason, but to appreciate the mind's role in the process of perception; it is an image of man in which the body, the organ of sight, and the activity of the brain — i.e., the mind — are interconnected, Moebius strip-style.

Solaristic paintings seem to be based on similar premises. Besides afterimages, colour — a hereditary notion — seems to be one of their principal aspects. It is not an objective phenomenon, but a 'subjective sensation, caused when light strikes vision receptors on the retina, that is, rods and cones'.[17] Colour refers us to a crucial issue of afterimage paintings as well as of *Theory of Vision* — the complex relationship between the organ of sight and the activity of the brain. Strzemiński asks not only how the eye sees, but also how the brain sees. How do history, memory, and attention affect what we see? What kind of images does our mind generate before our always too-little-knowing eyes? What kind of knowledge is produced by glare and insufficient vision? What are the blind spots of our vision of the world?

Strzemiński wasn't interested in the subconscious mind in the Freudian sense, but in the mind's unconscious work on the neurological level. In solaristic paintings, like earlier in his wartime drawings and in the post-war drawing series, *To My Friends the Jews*, he annulled the opposition between abstraction and figuration on behalf of realism, or rather, as I would like to suggest, neurorealism. Neurorealism is a mode of representation mediating between dialectical materialism and a neurological notion of the human body. Strzemiński was motivated by a desire to settle the image realistically: not on a perspective grid, though, and not even on the retina of the eye, but in neuron networks, neural impulses — those areas of the cerebral cortex that are responsible for the perception and comprehension of the world as well as its affective reception.

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12 Ibid., p. 205.

13 Wojciech P. Rdzanek, 'Rola świadomości w procesie widzenia', *Forum Akademickie*, no. 5, 2005.

14 Semir Zeki, *Blaski i cienie pracy mózgu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011, p. 39; original edition: *Splendors and Miseries of the Brain*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

15 Strzemiński, p. 154.

16 Ibid., p. 16.

17 http://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/barwa;3874753.html (accessed 5 May 2015).

Piotr Słodkowski

The Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists (1947) vis-a-vis the Exhibition of Modern Art (1948/1949). Revisioning Modernity

The Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists in Warsaw (Wystawa Prac Plastyków Nowoczesnych, WPPN), the first nationwide presentation of its kind in post-war Poland, has still not garnered the appreciation it deserves. The reasons for this include the traditional art-historical narrative of the 1940s and the specificity of the relationship between art and politics in the following decade, amid the changed conditions of the post-Stalin 'Thaw'. Due to these factors, the Warsaw show has been considered as less important than the 1st Exhibition of Modern Art (Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej, WSN) held at Kraków's Art Palace a year later.

The classic studies from the 1970s and 1980s perpetuated a quasi-biological, cliché notion of 1944–1949 art that followed a logic of bloom, maturity, and (Socialist-Realist) decline.[1] Authors such as Janusz Bogucki and Alicja Kępińska, noting the collapse of the pre-war avant-garde centres and general dispersion of the art community, proceed to justify the mission of young artists, mainly those from Kraków, but also from Warsaw; in doing so, they frame the activities preceding the WSN in a linear narrative to connect the individual events — the 1945 and 1946 presentations of the Group of Young Artists (Grupa Młodych Plastyków, GMP) and the WPPN — into a critical junction. Such an interpretation had earlier been presented by Aleksander Wojciechowski, who accentuated a gradual consolidation of the art community from a hurried debut (1945), through the formulation of the idea of the Group (1946), to a mature presentation of their work (1948), and by Bożena Kowalska, who introduced a dichotomy between 'imitative' and 'fresh' avant-garde, reserving the latter term for modern art from no earlier than the turn of 1948 and 1949.

Even before those narratives had been established, during the unstable period of the 'Thaw' when cultural liberalisation was intensely negotiated, it was the Kraków exhibition that became a symbol of a desirable tradition of modernity and an important argument in the discussion of the limits of artistic freedom. It is sometimes forgotten that the original brochure/catalogue and Maciej Makarewicz's poster for the 1948 show called it simply an Exhibition of Modern Art, whereas the numeral '1st' was added only later to emphasise a connection between it and the 2nd Exhibition (1957), considered the apex of the 'Thaw', as well as the 3rd one (1959). Founding the myth of the Kraków show are, notably, Mieczysław Porębski's

1 I reconstructed the narrative in my master's thesis, 'The Visuality of the 1st Exhibition of Modern Art', written under the supervision of Prof. Waldemar Baraniewski and Prof. Piotr Piotrowski, Institute of Art History, Warsaw University, Academia Artes Liberales, 2010, pp. 5–25; typescript in the Institute of Art History library.

introduction[2] to the catalogue of the 2nd WSN and Andrzej Jakimowicz's 'Kronika polskiej awangardy' [Chronicle of the Polish Avant-Garde],[3] spanning the period from the Formists to the 2nd WSN, published during the 'Thaw' in *Przegląd Artystyczny* (no. 1, 1958). In both documents, the Kraków exhibition is framed as an ahistorical and inclusive idea that claims a large area of Polish artistic modernity, from the *Exhibition of Paintings* (a.k.a. the 'exhibition of the nine', 1955) to Ryszard Stanisławski's *Metaphors* (1962).

In the political realities of the second half of the 1950s, it made strategic sense to absolutise the significance of the Exhibition of Modern Art, but to reinforce its myth in the later art-historical discourse did not. Firstly, because of the ahistoricalness of such a view, which notices the show's affirmation of surrealism (including on the level of exhibition concept), Tadeusz Kantor's first assemblage (Mieczysław Porębski), the autonomous art work (Anna Markowska), or its embodiment of youthful rebellion (Włodzimierz Nowaczyk), but loses it from sight as an event deeply entangled in the topical issues of the years 1945–1949, notably the vying for favourable State patronage. For this reason, as I argued elsewhere,[4] it should be compared not to surrealist exhibitions, but rather to didactic museum shows. Secondly, because the inclusivity of the WSN as a 'Thaw'- and post-'Thaw'-era myth diverts our attention away from other important post-war shows, notably the Warsaw WPPN. If we perform the critical gesture of deconstructing such a distorted notion of the Kraków Exhibition of Modern Art, we should, consequently, appreciate other phenomena more fully. In this vein, I want to ask what vision of modernity was presented by the Warsaw Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists and, for all its analogies to the Kraków show, to focus on subtle differences between them.

The Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists opened on 30 November 1947 in 'two small rooms of the former Art Propaganda Institute (today the Polish Army House) at 13 Królewska Street',[5] becoming the first post-war presentation of modern art as well as inaugurating the exhibition programme of the Club of Young Artists and Scientists (Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców, KMAiN). The show was the most important result of long efforts to consolidate the progressive visual-arts community more closely. Bearing witness to those efforts is Marek Włodarski's letter to Jonasz Stern, dated 31 July 1946, barely two months after Tadeusz Dobrowolski's hotly debated text, 'O hermetyzmie i społecznej izolacji dzisiejszego malarstwa' [On the

2 Mieczysław Porębski, introduction, in *II Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej*, Warsaw: CBWA Zachęta, 1957), n.pag.

3 Andrzej Jakimowicz, 'Kronika polskiej awangardy', *Przegląd Artystyczny*, no. 1, 1958, pp. 2–35.

4 Piotr Słodkowski, 'Partykularne znaczenia nowoczesności. Wizualność I Wystawy Sztuki Nowoczesnej (1948) w *świetle Exposition internationale du surréalisme* (1947)', *Artium Quaestiones*, vol. XXII, 2011, pp. 237–269.

5 Cf. *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1944–1960*, vol. 1: *Lata 1944–1947*, ed. Anna Wierzbicka and Anna Straszewska, Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki PAN, Liber pro Arte, 2012, pp. 520–521. Cf. Leokadia Bielska-Tworkowska, 'Na marginesie wystawy w dawnym I.P.S.', *Przegląd Artystyczny*", no. 2, 1948, p. 9. The exhibition was also shown at the Union of Polish Visual Artists and Designers (Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków, ZPAP) Gallery in Katowice, 21 February–15 March 1948; cf. *Polskie życie artystyczne* . . . , vol. 2: *Rok 1948*, pp. 44–45.

hermeticism and social isolation of today's painting].[6] In the letter, Włodarski suggests founding a nationwide group of modernist painters.[7] It is in this context that the exhibition is mentioned in the Club's activities report for 1947–1949: 'The activities of the visual-arts section contributed to consolidating the group of progressive artists (modernists) who, having previously shown their work at the Club, made a particularly strong appearance in the Exhibition of Modern Art in Kraków . . .'[8]

The Warsaw presentation featured 27 artists,[9] compared with the 37 participants of the Kraków show.[10] Whereas the latter was dominated by the Kraków scene (represented by 22 artists), in the WPPN the proportions were more balanced: nine artists from Kraków, seven from Warsaw, six from Łódź, and several from Poznań and Szczecin. It is particularly important to stress the role of the Łódź art community, whose significance in the 1940s art-historical discourse, culminating in the WSN, remains underappreciated. The Warsaw exhibition gave also more space to artists active before the war.[11] While many artists appeared in both exhibitions, there is no doubt that the major absentees in Kraków, both present in Warsaw, were Władysław Strzemiński (accompanied, in fact, by several of his students, including Lech Kunka, Bolesław Utkin, or Stefan Wegner) and the Paris-based Jerzy Kujawski, an important intermediary in centre-periphery artistic relations, Tadeusz Kantor's guide during the latter's state-sponsored residency in France in 1947, and participant of the *Exposition internationale du surréalisme* (1947).

While the exhibition had no catalogue, being promoted instead by *Nurt* issue no. 2,[12] numerous reviews, including an extensive one by Helena Blumówna, make it

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6 Tadeusz Dobrowolski, 'O hermetyzmie i społecznej izolacji dzisiejszego malarstwa', *Odrodzenie*, no. 23, 1946, pp. 1–3.

7 Marek Włodarski's letter to Jonasz Stern, 3 July 1946. *W kręgu lat 40.*, part IV, ed. Józef Chrobak, Kraków: Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne Grupa Krakowska, 1992, pp. 75–78.

8 *Sprawozdanie z działalności Klubu Młodych Artystów i Naukowców w Warszawie od dn. 14.12.47 do dn. 28.02.49*, 4, Collection no. 325 (Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców), Central Archives of Modern Records, Warsaw.

9 Featured artists as listed in *Polskie życie artystyczne . . .* , vol. 1, p. 521: Marian Bogusz, Tadeusz Brzozowski, Ali Bunsch, Maria Jarema, Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Kujawski, Lech Kunka, Alfred Lenica, Maria Ewa Łunkiewicz, Jadwiga Maziarska, Kazimierz Mikulski, Łukasz Niewisiewicz, Jerzy Nowosielski, Hanna Orzechowska, Jerzy Skarżyński, Henryk Stażewski, Jonasz Stern, Władysław Strzemiński, Bogusław Szwacz, Marian Tomaszewski, M. Tylko, Teresa Tyszkiewicz, Bolesław Utkin, Stefan Wegner, Romuald Kamil Witkowski, Ignacy Witz, Anatol Wróblewski. Plus Marek Włodarski with a solo exhibition.

10 Cf. *I Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej. Pięćdziesiąt lat później*, ed. Józef Chrobak and Marek Świca, Kraków: Starmach Gallery, 1998.

11 Besides Jarema, Tyszkiewicz, Stażewski, Stern, and Włodarski, who participated also in the WSN, those were notably Maria Ewa Łunkiewicz, Władysław Strzemiński, and Romuald Kamil Witkowski.

12 *Nurt* issue no. 2, 1947, had a cover by Marian Bogusz and carried reproductions of drawings by Picasso and Toyen, and in-text illustrations by Bogusz, Alfred Lenica, and Jan Lenica. Most importantly, however, it featured reproductions of six works shown in the exhibition, including Włodarski's 1929 *Composition*. Moreover, the section 'Aspects of the Visual Arts' included Mieczysław Porębski's essay, 'Impressionism, Cubism, and New Painting' (pp. 69–72), where the author, discussing modern art with a focus on cubism, defended its achievements in the context of the political revaluations of his era. This seems to be the only theoretical text that can be linked directly to the exhibition.

possible to identify at least some of the featured works.[13] A collection of reproductions of selected drawings and paintings have been preserved in the KMAiN photographic archive.[14]

It can be assumed that the year that separated the Warsaw exhibition from the Kraków one, marking different stages in the artistic discourse and the discussion of state patronage for the arts, had informed somewhat different visions of modernity and its presentation. The Exhibition of Modern Art assumed the persuasive form of a firm argument on behalf of a single artistic faction, both on the discursive level (being wrapped in a dense web of commentary) and on the visual one, through its linear viewing order and enfilade-style architecture. Due to this persuasive dimension, the WSN, though planned as a one-off event, was to be, according to Kantor, a travelling exhibition.[15] Even since the National Museum in Warsaw had sent *The History of Civilisation in Poland* exhibition of Jan Matejko's works on tour around the country in 1947, road shows were regarded as an effectual means of arts promotion. The WPPN, in turn, instead of following a single-argument logic, chose, courtesy of the still relatively open character of the artistic debate, to present a more dynamic, fluid, and diverse image of modernity. On the back cover of *Nurt*, the show was advertised by the slogan, 'A permanent exhibition of modern art', and indeed it was meant as a permanent gallery (or nucleus thereof), albeit one accompanied by periodical solo exhibitions of selected modern artists. The first of those, which opened simultaneously with the main show, presented Włodarski's works on paper from 1929–1932; the second one, launched on 14 December, was a survey of Adam Marczyński's drawings from 1945–1947.[16] Besides five works by artists from the main show, *Nurt* reproduced also an ink drawing by Włodarski, suggesting that both exhibits were considered to constitute an organic

13 Those are Tadeusz Brzozowski, *Paul of Tarsus*, *Drinking Contestant*; Ali Bunsch, *Sink*; Maria Jarema, *Dancers*, *Ponies*; Tadeusz Kantor, drawings; Maria Ewa Łunkiewicz, *Horses*, *Shepherds* (paintings); Jerzy Nowosielski, *Wings of the Archangel*, *Sword of the Archangel*, *First Snow*; Hanna Orzechowska, *Still Life*; Jerzy Skarżyński, *Nude*; Władysław Strzemiński, *Mountains and Clouds* (drawing, 1947, according to Blum his only work in the exhibition); Bogusław Szwacz, *Sailor* (painting); M. Tylko, a post-cubist *Still Life* and *House on a Canal*; Teresa Tyszkiewicz, *Red Sofa* (painting); Bolesław Utkin, portrait drawing and a landscape from Nowa Ruda; Romuald Kamil Witkowski, *Flowers with a Still Life* (painting); Ignacy Witz, *Feeding*; Marek Włodarski, *Heads* (ink drawing, 1929); Anatol Wróblewski, *Composition* (oil); the following titles are mentioned without naming the authors: *Construction of Captive Birds*, *Anxiety and Surgical Instruments of the Jungle*, *Dusk in the Eyes — Immersed Letter*; it is possible that some of these are works by Jerzy Skarżyński who, according to Porębski, showed 'compositions of long, surreal titles'. *Przegląd Artystyczny* carries reproductions of works by Brzozowski (*Paul of Tarsus*), Szwacz, Włodarski, Witkowski, and Wróblewski. Cf. Helena Blum, 'Wystawa młodych plastyków', *Twórczość*, no. 2, 1948, pp. 17–121; Mieczysław Porębski, 'Sprawy plastyki w Krakowie', *Twórczość*, no. 10, 1948; Stefan Rassalski, 'Roczny bilans imprez sztuk plastycznych w Warszawie', *Kurier Codzienny*, no. 350, 1947; Leokadia Bielska-Tworkowska, 'Na marginesie . . .', p. 9.

14 Cf. Collection no. 325 (Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców), folder no. 5, KMAiN Photo Archive 1947–1949, envelope: Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej, Central Archives of Modern Records, Warsaw.

15 Cf. Mieczysław Porębski, *Deska. Chciałbym, aby kiedyś profesor Mieczysław Porębski napisał mały esej o tym biednym przedmiocie*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Murator, 1997, p. 51.

16 Cf. *Polskie* życie . . . , vol. 1, pp. 542–543.

whole. Thus a new way of thinking about (the presentation of) modernity was opening up, with a rigid discursive interpretation being replaced by lively discussions (the absence of a catalogue), while art itself, with the permanent gallery serving as a platform or starting point, was to remain 'in motion', shown kaleidoscopically, through various contemporary attitudes and, importantly, various genealogies of modernity.

This in turn leads to surrealism, then identified with modernity. The WSN is usually considered its supreme emanation — the presentation of a wide array of metaphoric painting. But if we break up the bundles of tradition and dynamics of reception, it is possible to reveal an incommensurability between the Kraków and Warsaw exhibitions. It can be said without oversimplifying that in the former, metaphoric painting was informed by the 1947 Paris trip of Kantor who had popularised the style among modern artists born around 1920. The Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists, in turn, though inclusive of that influence, was by no means limited to it. From the perspective of the Warsaw scene, there was actually no reason to see 1947 as a turning point in the reception of surrealism, if Marian Bogusz and Zbigniew Dłubak had had the opportunity already in 1945 to get to know the trend's Czech version (and later went on to organise the *Exhibition of Young Czechoslovak Artists*). Besides Kantor's reading of surrealism, two other ones were represented, equally if not more important. Kujawski's must have been a valuable contribution, for unlike Kantor he was able to experience the 'surrealist Paris' less as a guest and more as an insider. Włodarski's œuvre, to whom the first solo exhibition was devoted and who showed surrealist drawings in it, marking the modern tradition of pre-war Lviv, gained a central position. Włodarski took part in the WSN too, but showing recent works and serving rather as a pillar of modern art in the general sense. Moreover, highlighting metaphoric painting mainly in its Kraków version rather than the Warsaw one, the Kraków show had in fact excluded other surrealist traditions, and Kantor even said that in interwar Poland 'there was no surrealism, because there was catholicism'.[17] The Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists and the Club of Young Artists and Scientists, on the contrary, offered a rich constellation of surrealisms seen synchronically (Kantor, Kujawski, the Czechoslovaks) and diachronically, with an added focus on the work of the Artes collective. In other words, acknowledging the significance of the Warsaw exhibition means revising Polish surrealisms and the Polish notion of modernity in the 1940s, as well as establishing an important link between pre- and post-war Polish art.

17 *Tadeusz Kantor. Malarstwo i rzeźba*, ed. Zofia Gołubiew, Kraków: Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, 1991, p. 82; also Piotr Piotrowski, *Awangarda w cieniu Jałty. Sztuka w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1945–1989*, Poznań: Rebis, 2005, p. 51.

Agata Pietrasik

Antagonism in the Field of Art
The Work of the Club of Young Artists and Scientists (1947–1949)

The Club of Young Artists and Scientists (Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców, KMAiN) was doubtless one of the most important and most active places on the map of post-war Polish art. It began operations officially in May 1947, but its nucleus, at least that of its visual-arts section, was the wartime friendship of Marian Bogusz and Zbigniew Dłubak, when both were imprisoned at the Mauthausen concentration camp.[1] Bogusz was employed in the camp office as a drafting technician to make architectural drawings, among other things. Taking advantage of access to drawing materials, he also secretly made art. Bogusz, the Czech painter Zbyněk Sekal, and eventually also Dłubak organised micro-scale portable exhibitions, pinning works to blankets which were then spread on the bunk beds in other barracks. 'We would sit on the top bunk in the corner of the barrack, spread out single-page drawings, and a discussion would begin. Each one of us in turns had a Sunday show that was announced by posters',[2] Bogusz reminisced. Already at this period the artists were focused on exploring the language of modern art. Bogusz's and Dłubak's works from Mauthausen neither document nor directly refer to the camp's bleak and brutal reality, but, on the contrary, constitute a breach in it. Bogusz and the Spanish artist Manuel Muñoz sketched designs of an international artist residency centre that they envisaged would be built after the war on the camp site. The centre's modern architecture, radically different from Mauthausen's heavy, fortress-like construction, reflects Bogusz's belief in the emancipatory potential of modern art.

After the camp's liberation, Bogusz and Dłubak went to Warsaw through Brno and Prague, where they got in touch with local artists.[3] Upon their return to the ruined Polish capital, they got involved in activities on behalf of the Club of Young Artists and Scientists, which, following lengthy deliberations, was assigned a space at the former Art Propaganda Institute, now the Polish Army House.[4] Besides visual artists, writers had a strong representation in the Club, with Tadeusz Borowski, Stanisław Marczak-Oborski,

1 Bogusz was sent to Mauthausen in 1941 from Fort VII in Poznań; Dłubak was transferred there from Auschwitz in 1944. Cf. Janina Jaworska, *„Nie wszystek umrę . . .". Twórczość plastyczna Polaków w hitlerowskich więzieniach i obozach koncentracyjnych 1935–1945*, Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975, pp. 65, 69.

2 Cf. ibid., p. 66; Bożena Kowalska, *Marian Bogusz, artysta i animator*, Pleszew: Muzeum Regionalne w Pleszewie, Pleszewskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne, 2007, pp. 13–20

3 Cf. 'Relacja Zbigniewa Dłubaka z obozu w Mauthausen w opracowaniu Adama Mazura i Piotra Filipkowskiego', *Obieg*, no. 1, 2006, pp. 60–61.

4 Cf. Barbara Wojciechowska, 'Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców', in *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1945–1960*, ed. Aleksander Wojciechowski, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1992, p. 90; *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1944–1960*, vol. 1: *Lata 1944–1947*, ed. Barbara Wojciechowska, Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki PAN, Liber pro Arte, 2012, pp. 401–402.

or Jerzy Lau playing a highly influential role. The science section was organised by mathematician Rafał Molski; there was also a vigorous theatre section. The Club's opening event saw appearances by poets, writers, and a cabaret which parodied the Greek chorus from *The Oresteia*, which was on show in Warsaw at the time, and then poems by well-known authors, such as Władysław Broniewski, which were sung to the melody of low-brow pop hits.[5] That performance met with a mixed reception, with some spectators actually outraged.[6]

The Club's mission was to create a space for a free exchange of views between the different disciplines of art and science, as well as laymen. The Club organised open discussions and lectures, always announced by street posters; Władysław Strzemiński, for example, on the occasion of an exhibition of his wartime drawings, delivered a lecture called *Thematic Painting*.[7] The exhaustion of the artistic language after the war was a widely discussed topic. Describing the issues confronted by the contemporary artist, Rafał Molski stressed that art was no longer up to date with reality: 'We cannot help but notice a profound rift between the life regenerating around us and the artistic production'.[8] The Club's aim was therefore to breathe a new life into the stale artistic discourse. Discussions were a primary means of achieving this: 'the clash of ideas, the diverse viewpoints, the comparison and juxtaposition of various philosophies and methods . . . the Club's existence will boost and enliven the circulation of ideas; it will contribute to the revival of a new, truly contemporary Polish culture'.[9]

That is why the Club didn't represent one particular artistic faction, but gathered the representatives of many, thus acknowledging dispute and disagreement as something of its modus operandi. Ideological differences weren't considered as temporary difficulties to be overcome, but as a driving force of intellectual exchange.

The sharpest strife was that between the supporters of modern art and the postulated Socialist-Realist art. Opening a Club discussion meeting in late 1947, Tadeusz Borowski quoted from Henryk Stażewski, among others, to demonstrate the 'philosophical bankruptcy of abstract art'.[10] His very sharp comments on Władysław Strzemiński, verging on the insulting, called into doubt not only the aesthetic but also the ethical position of the doyen of the Polish avant-garde and his artistic heirs:

> Those here who have seen Władysław Strzemiński's wartime drawings will likely remember the sense of embarrassment and humiliation they provoked. Perhaps for this particular artist the war was really a matter of the relation between a flowing and closed line and the sheet of paper, but for a complete human

5 Cf. Stanisław Marczak-Oborski, 'Gospoda młodych talentów', *Pokolenie*, no. 9, 1948, p. 8.

6 [eg], 'Jeszcze o klubie: „Akademia ku czci"', *Przegląd Akademicki*, no. 5/6, 1947, p. 12.

7 'Wystawa Strzemińskiego', *Gazeta Ludowa*, no. 44, 1947; about the Club discussions, cf. Bożena Kowalska, pp. 21–42.

8 Rafał Molski, 'Warszawski Klub Młodych', *Przegląd Akademicki*, no. 5/6, 1947, pp. 10–12.

9 Ibid., p. 11.

10 Tadeusz Borowski, 'Prawda i etyka dzieła sztuki', in idem, *Utwory zebrane: w pięciu tomach*, vol. 3: *Krytyka literacka i artystyczna*, Warsaw: PIW, 1954, p. 110.

being, one who has not been castrated of humanity on behalf of art, these drawings appear as absurd as Simeon Stylites standing one-legged on his platform for forty years.[11]

Another ignition spark was the nationwide Exhibition of Modern Visual Artists, opened in November 1947, which presented a very extensive and varied line-up of modern artists.[12] Borowski wrote about it angrily: 'it seems to me that what is hanging on the walls of the Club of Young Artists in Warsaw is art "just in case", art playing a waiting game . . . whose aesthetic system includes the square, triangle, and circle, but has no place for a man killed for his country.'[13]

The few on-record statements by Bogusz, who preferred to do rather than to talk, suggest that he viewed Borowski's comments as doctrinarian and limiting the field of debate.[14] There was, he believed, no reason to accuse the young of escapism. One example of modern artists' 'commitment and engagement with reality' was the Regained Territories Exhibition in Wrocław.[15] Poet Stanisław Marczak-Oborski took a similar stance in a text published in *Przegląd Akademicki*, vividly picturing the uneasy position of the proponents of modern art, constantly attacked and harassed by the 'poorly educated and often uncalled-for young lad who bullies others as the super-militant and loud ultra-activist'.[16]

In embodying the Club's guiding principles, the visual arts section presented not only modern art. In 1948, as part of wider trend of promoting non-professional art, there was an exhibition of amateur painters from the coal-mining community, including Teofil Ociepka.[17] Also that year, Jadwiga Simon-Pietkiewiczowa showed a series of paintings about the life of Silesian miners, a theme she had taken up not in response to the discussions of realism but as an ex-camp prisoner trying to move past her traumas. Liberated from Ravensbrück, she was hospitalised in Sweden, where, as she wrote, she was suffering from a sense of inner numbness, 'for after four years in a concentration camp it is hard to return to life and socialise with people'.[18] Reading about Vincent van Gogh's depictions of miners, she concluded that 'studying the life and work of miners and talking about in the language of the visual arts would reconcile me with life, would make it meaningful again'.[19]

Yet another line of activity pursued by the Club's visual arts section were presentations of contemporary art from abroad. Bogusz's and Dłubak's contacts with Czech

11 Ibid., p. 111.

12 Cf. *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1944–1960*, vol. 1, *Lata 1944–1947*, pp. 520–524.

13 Tadeusz Borowski, 'Koło trójkąt i rozstrzelany człowiek', *Przegląd Akademicki*, no. 9, 1947, p. 17.

14 Marian Bogusz, 'Wstęp', in *Rysunki Jana Lenicy*, exh. cat., Warsaw: Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców w Warszawie, 1948.

15 Ibid.

16 Stanisław Marczak-Oborski, 'O bolączkach, klubie i papudze', *Przegląd Akademicki*, no. 1/2, 1948, p. 33.

17 'Górnicy — malarzami', *Dziennik Literacki*, 1948, no. 51, pp. 1, 8.

18 *Śląsk w obrazach Symon-Petkiewiczowej* [sic!], exh. cat., Warsaw: Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców w Warszawie, 1948.

19 Ibid.,

artists, dating back to Mauthausen, resulted in several exhibitions. A favourable political climate and the signing in 1947 of a Polish-Czechoslovak cultural-exchange agreement were conducive to such projects.[20] Polish artists were actually advised to follow the example of their Czechoslovak colleagues who, as Stefan Rassalski wrote, 'went through a period of formal explorations, have now arrived at a specific modern form, and are trying — with complete success — to express contemporary life with it'.[21]

An analogical proposition was made in a text for the catalogue of the *Exhibition of Young Czechoslovak Graphic Arts* at the Club in 1948, which featured some of the country's leading art collectives, such as Grupa 42 or the surrealist group RA.[22] Writing in the introduction, František Doležal stressed the uncompromising attitude and collective nature of Czechoslovak art, the aim of which was to produce the 'highest progressive artistic form of socialist visuality'.[23] Visiting Poland on the occasion of the show, artists Jindřich Chalupecký, František Hudeček, and Evžem Nevan called on not only Warsaw but also Kraków, where their visit created quite a stir and, as Mieczysław Porębski wrote, sparked discussions about modern art's relation to life and about genre art.[24] In November 1948, the Club presented a solo exhibition of the Czechoslovak artist Jaroslav Paur, titled *Warsaw 1946*.[25] The catalogue cover by Bogusz stands out as one of the finest examples of his graphic designs for the Club. The works of Paur, who had visited Warsaw earlier that year, documented the city's wartime devastation.[26]

The last exhibition organised by the Club of Young Artists and Scientists in 1949 was Wojciech Fangor's solo show, his debut. Remembering it years later, the painter stressed an ongoing exclusion of modern art at the time, which had in fact annulled all antagonisms: 'No one noticed the exhibition: neither artists nor critics. It was a modernist anachronism in the nascent ideology of Socialist-Realist art'.[27]

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20 Cf. Dziennik Ustaw, 48.47.346, Agreement signed in Prague on 4 July 1947 on Cultural Cooperation between the Republic of Poland and the Czechoslovak Republic, http://www.prawo.pl/dz-u-akt/-/dokument/Dz.U.1948.47.346/16780132/9480 (accessed 3 July 2015). In the same year, *Przegląd Artystyczny* published critical texts discussing trends in Czechoslovak art, e.g. Jiří Kotálik, 'Rozwój malarstwa czeskiego', *Przegląd Artystyczny*, no. 6/7, 1947, pp. 1–4; Jindřich Chalupecký, 'Nowy realizm', ibid., p. 5; idem, 'Nowe tendencje w młodym malarstwie czeskim', *Przegląd Artystyczny*, no. 6/7, 1948, pp. 9–10.

21 Stefan Rassalski, 'Grafika czechosłowacka', *Nowiny Literackie*, no. 30, 1947, p. 7.

22 Franciszek Dolezal [František Doležal], 'Przedmowa,' in *Czechosłowacka młoda grafika*, exh. cat., Warsaw: Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców w Warszawie, 1948, p. 5. More on those collectives in Piotr Piotrowski, *Awangarda w cieniu Jałty. Sztuka w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1945–1989*, Poznań: Rebis, 2005, pp. 37–65.

23 Dolezal, p. 6.

24 Mieczysław Porębski, 'Plastycy czescy w Polsce', *Twórczość*, no. 7/8, 1948, pp. 122–124.

25 *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1944–1960*, vol. 1, *Lata 1944–1947*, pp. 219–220.

26 Zdeněk Hlaváček, 'Introduction', trans. Marian Bogusz, *Warszawa 1946. Wystawa obrazów Jarosława Paura*, exh. cat., Warsaw: Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców w Warszawie, 1948.

27 *Z Wojciechem Fangorem rozmawia Stefan Szydłowski*, http://www.atlassztuki.pl/pdf/fangor2.pdf (accessed 3 July 2015).

Nurt

Nurt [Stream, or current] was a periodical of the Club of Young Artists and Scientists, edited by Tadeusz Borowski. In 1947, two issues were published (both with covers by Marian Bogusz) whereupon the periodical was suspended. The issue no. 2 featured, among others, an essay by Mieczysław Porębski, 'Impresjonizm, kubizm i nowe malarstwo' [Impressionism, cubism, and new painting], as well as reproductions of works by artists associated with the Club, including Marek Włodarski, Tadeusz Kantor, Marian Bogusz, Władysław Strzemiński, Jerzy Kujawski, and Henryk Stażewski.

> Of domestic material, the first issue includes poems (Gajcy, Różewicz, Wirpsza, Ziembicki), an act of Bratny's play, Marczak's 'programming' essay, and your piece on Kisielewski, plus Bratny's comments on new literature and some 'scientific' ballast. Lots of translations, an excerpt from a novel by Sartre, a short story by Steinbeck, an essay by Bush, a poem by Aragon; a few interviews, some drawings, and a colour cover. . . . *Nurt*, if it flows, will for many have bitter and acrid waters; I guess it's worth trying. By the way, I reckon it's time to think of a kind of critical synthesis; to discuss, for example, Polish camp literature, or the neoclassicist poetry of Jastrun and *Kuźnica*, or Catholic literature, or the mess in so called Marxist criticism (principles? criteria?). Or the issue of realism (socialist? Catholic? realism and censorship? can realism be reactionary?). Or a hundred other matters which you know better than I.
>
> Tadeusz Borowski's letter
> to Wilhelm Mach, 8 August 1947

> Comrade Pióro of *Po Prostu* was here and told me that *Nurt* had been ultimately suppressed. Before it actually gushed out. He said it was because of the contents: Sartre, Koestler, Steinbeck. Indeed, not so much young literature on the offensive, but old Trotskyites. Just kidding. It's another matter, though, that you need to get serious. The situation demands this. Don't behave like children. Your fencing yourselves off in a ghetto of the 'young' is absurd. You — young? Hertz is 28 and is grown up. Bratny is 27 and is 'young'. Brandys, an old writer, 30 years old, and you a 'laddie' — what, 25? That's rubbish. We are one generation. We need to stick together. Our artistic and social ideals are the same. Drop those ideas of exclusive 'young' magazines and work normally with *Kuźnica*. Otherwise those boors of *Po Prostu* will eat you alive. . . . He who would pen a weekly critical column on poetry for *Kuźnica* — and the position is open to anyone who writes regularly — would govern public taste in Poland.
>
> Stefan Żółkiewski's letter
> to Tadeusz Borowski, 22 September 1947

Quotations from: *Niedyskrecje pocztowe. Korespondencja Tadeusza Borowskiego*, Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2001, pp. 198–199, 204–205.

Agnieszka Szewczyk

Two Paintings by Marek Włodarski

The gouaches *Glorification of the Trasa W–Z* and *Building the Radio Station* are typical examples of Marek Włodarski's work from the turn of the 1940s and 1950s. At the same time, like a large part of his oeuvre of the period, they allow us to rethink the way socialist realist art has traditionally been perceived.

The first of the two works references the opening the of Trasa W–Z [East-West Route] thoroughfare in Warsaw, which took place on 22 July 1949, marking the fifth anniversary of the founding of People's Poland. The composition includes a view of the Trasa and Warsaw's Old Town, with the spire of the St. Anne's Church recognisable in the background. Since the Trasa W–Z was a major post-war transportation infrastructure project, the gouache fully responds to the needs of the Socialist-Realist theme and inscribes itself in the propaganda of building — literally and metaphorically — a Socialist-Realist society. The theme of building and construction, exploited heavily in Socialist-Realist painting, appears frequently in Włodarski's works on paper from the period, such as *Construction Site*, *At the Building Site*, or *Building the Radio Station* (all 1949).

However, neither *Glorification of the Trasa W–Z* nor *Building the Radio Station* meet the standards of good Socialist-Realist painting. Instead of realism, both opt for oversimplified figuration, very synthetic lines, austere colours, and lack of depth. In the former, the presence of angels floating on clouds and blowing trumpets means that the programmed Socialist-Realist optimism and triumphalism turn into self-parody; and in the latter, many parts of the composition are dangerously close to free, slightly geometricised abstraction.

The well thought-out ambiguity of both gouaches means that the work of Włodarski — an artist who a year later took part in the 1st National Exhibition of the Visual Arts — hardly fits a simple, binary interpretation of Socialist Realism, where on the one side are the doctrine's faithful practitioners, such as Helena and Janusz Krajewski, and on the other those who remained silent and intransigent, such as Maria Jarema or Tadeusz Kantor. Włodarski's art is situated somewhere in the middle, encouraging us to fine-tune our gaze to the subtle nuances of the era's artistic production.

Piotr Słodkowski

Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. First Exhibition

The first camp to be turned into a museum was Majdanek. But it was Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi German extermination camp in occupied Europe, that emerged, soon after its liberation in 1945, as the main symbol of wartime martyrdom, and for both Poles and Jews.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum was created in the first place by its former prisoners who arranged the first exhibitions and guided visitors around the site, which was open to the public as early as 1945. The official opening took place on 14 June 1947, on the seventh anniversary of the first transport of Polish political prisoners. It was an international event, presided over by Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz, a former Auschwitz prisoner, who in his opening address stressed the Museum's role as a 'warning and eternal document' of German bestiality, but also of a heroic struggle (against imperialism).

On the opening day, only several blocks of the main camp were presented to the public: block no. 4, with the exhibition *Annihilation of the Millions* (featuring, among other things, the 'symbolic remnants of people gassed to death' and plaster crematorium models by sculptor Mieczysław Stobierski); blocks no. 5 and 6 with an exhibition of the victims' personal belongings; blocks no. 8 and 9, presenting living conditions in the camp; the interior of block no. 11 (the death block); and block no. 7 with an exhibition of painters — former prisoners.

Press reviews were numerous and generally favourable, with critics praising in particular the exhibition in the blocks no. 5 and 6, designed by an ex-prisoner, artist Tadeusz Myszkowski. The 'discretion and realism shown in arranging these uncanny museum rooms' was seen as distinguishing the Auschwitz exhibition from that in the museum of Majdanek, which featured wax-figure scenes of torture and execution. 'The authors of the Museum had acted on the correct principle that the multitude of the exhibits, the heaps of underwear or spoons, the endless agglomeration and repetition of everyday items, snatched from the hands, torn off the body by death, will fascinate and shock the viewer. We all felt that shock'.

A separate room in the block no. 4 was devoted to the extermination of the Jews. Designed by the Łódź-based Jewish artist cooperative, Sztuka [Art], the exhibition, though received favourably by the Jewish public opinion, was to be but a 'nucleus of a future museum of Jewish martyrdom'.

One place that mattered in particular to the survivors of the Holocaust was Birkenau as the actual extermination site. None of the numerous proposed projects of commemorating the site was realised, and the remnants of the Birkenau camp slowly fell into neglect and oblivion, causing outrage, especially among the Jews. Plans for expanding the scale and scope of the exhibition at the former Auschwitz I camp didn't go through either, thwarted by adjustments in official policy (resulting in budget cuts) and a new public mood concerning the recent past, manifesting itself as a critique of the 'cult of martyrdom'. The controversy was reflected in the press debate in the late 1940s, with some authors criticising the Auschwitz Museum and even suggesting it should be closed down.

Quotations from: Jacek Lachendro, *Zburzyć i zaorać . . . ? Idea założenia Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau w świetle prasy polskiej w latach 1945–1948,* Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2007.

Joanna Kordjak

Krzysztof Pijarski

Cut-View of the Week. 'Documents' Between Propaganda and Working-Through

On 15 April 1945, when the fate of the post-war world still hangs in the balance and the new reality only looms vaguely on the horizon,[1] the first issue of *Przekrój*, a 'news weekly' of cult status today, is published. As Stefan Bratkowski put it, the magazine, edited from its inception until 1969 by Marian Eile, injected the 'rather gloomy Poland with contemporary world culture, including the bad guy Picasso, as well as with gentle humour',[2] becoming a 'salon', as it was called, for the country's new elites. Perhaps that is why Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński called its phenomenon the 'civilisation of *Przekrój*'. From the issue no. 2 throughout the first year of its existence (in nine issues in total), that probably most influential illustrated weekly in People's Poland publishes column called 'Documents', usually consisting of photographs accompanied by brief commentary, depicting the atrocities of the recent war. And so the issue no. 2 from 22 April carries, next to the 'Przekrój tygodnia' [Weekly digest] news section, a feature entitled 'Komisja do badania zbrodni niemiecko-hitlerowskich już pracuje' [The commission for investigating German-Nazi crimes has commenced work], without the 'Documents' header yet. It is a rather matter-of-factly piece of reporting, with an image of the Commission's presidium and a set of photos from the Auschwitz camp, shown yet in a restrained manner: the barbed-wire fences, the gallows with the so called death wall, and the iconic main entrance gate. No bodies or violence. The only indication of the radical evil of what Pierre Bonhomme and Clément Chéroux call the 'concentration camp universe'[3] is synecdochic, effected through an image of bags full of human hair, with a caption explaining that seven tonnes of it were found at the camp, and 'since the hair of a man weighs an average of 50 grams, this is a hoard from 140,000 corpses'.[4]

From the moment the section bears the 'Documents' header, it starts featuring images of violence and mutilated, objectified corpses. In the issue no. 4, besides a report from Goebbels's visit to Poland in 1934, we see photographs condemning the 'bestiality of the Nazi torturers', particularly their custom of documenting their own hideous deeds. The issue no. 6 contains a feature on 'two Gdynias', exposing the pre-war

1 Cf. Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Kraków: Znak, 2012; also Magdalena Grzebałkowska, *1945. Wojna i pokój*, Warsaw: Agora, 2015.

2 Stefan Bratkowski, 'Sensacja — odkryto „cywilizację Przekroju"', *Studio Opinii*, 23 March 2012, http://studioopinii.pl/stefan-bratkowski-sensacja-odkryto-cywilizacje-przekroju/ (accessed 2 July 2015). Cf. also: Justyna Jaworska, *Cywilizacja „Przekroju"*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2008.

3 Pierre Bonhomme and Clément Chéroux, introduction to: *Mémoire des camps. Photographies des camps de concentration et d'extermination nazis (1933–1999)*, ed. Clément Chéroux, Paris: Marval, 2001, p. 9.

4 *Przekrój*, no. 2, 22 April 1945.

propaganda of a 'miracle born out of a fishing village', as well as the 'documents', discovered at the Institute of Hygiene in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz, of a German laboratory producing soap from human bodies. The 27 October 1945 issue juxtaposes an article ridiculing the naivety of a BBC broadcast devoted to Polish affairs, in which fantasies about the heroism of daily life under the occupation prevail over reality, with two photographs showing the execution of Benito Mussolini.

How should the column be construed? What was the purpose of its publication? Why did Eile decide — like so many editors-in-chief in both the East and West at the time — to break the taboo of showing acts torture and killing, of publishing images of mutilated, deformed corpses? As it turns out, April 1945 marks precisely the beginning of a flood of such images in the Western press. According to Clément Chéroux, who calls the phenomenon the 'pedagogy of horror', it is not the graphic nature of these representations but rather the desire to show them that makes this a crucial moment.[5]

One of the motivations of the decision may have been to work through a traumatic experience. We are talking, of course, about the topos of war narratives in general, particularly those concerning the (non)experience of the Holocaust, which is bound up with a sense of derealisation, an alienation from reality. Not only becoming the subject of 'inhuman' or 'unimaginable' violence, but also viewing images of it leads to the event itself becoming unreal, hard to believe. Citing Roland Barthes, who said that 'in Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*',[6] Chéroux suggests that it was precisely those photographs that constituted the ultimate proof of the existence of the 'concentration camp universe'.[7] In the Polish context, his proposition would have to be slightly modified: the images would serve as a *confirmation* that what originally seemed so unreal, or which we don't want to remember, did really happen. This in turn would corroborate *Przekrój*'s mission of educating its readers, encouraging critical distance, and opening their eyes to the world around them.

But such an interpretation raises several fundamental doubts. The first one concerns photography itself as material evidence. Chéroux mentions that photographs from liberated camps which were published in the Western press were often met with incredulity or even outright rejection by those who thought them manipulated, propagandistic imagery.[8] Moreover, military photographers documenting the camps for the purpose of future trials were obliged to accompany each submitted photo with a sworn testimony that it contained nothing but a 'precise and truthful reproduction' of what they had seen with their own eyes.[9] The self-evidence of photography as a document, and the title of the column where photographs were supposed to speak for themselves, are thus questionable from the beginning.

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5 Clément Chéroux, '"L'épiphanie négative". Production, diffusion et réception des photographies de la libération des camps', in *Mémoire des camps . . .* , pp. 117, 135.

6 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, p. 76.

7 Chéroux, p. 127.

8 Ibid., 125.

9 Ibid., 113.

The second doubt, arising from the first one, is of greater calibre and concerns that which Judith Butler called the frame that blinds us to what we see.[10] Interpreting the interpretation entailed by that visual frame, making it visible is, according to the American theorist, a critical mission of visual arts studies. Let us now look again at the 'documents' published in *Przekrój*. For example at the 20 August issue where a note about the upcoming re-edition of Sienkiewicz's *The Knights of the Cross* is paired with a chronology of the final days prior to the liberation of Dachau, illustrated by reproductions of precisely posed photographs taken by Germans of the members of the 'crematorium commando'. In this context, the final paragraph of the note on Sienkiewicz is highly telling: 'And in these post-war times Sienkiewicz has become especially close to us. First of all in *The Knights of the Cross* where he emphatically condemns the cruelty of the Teutonic methods and points to the forces which the self-preserving instinct of the Nation had to rise against. Teutonism and Hitlerism are synonyms of precisely those forces'.[11]

Or the issue no. 14 from 15 July, perhaps the most graphic of them all, devoted to the anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald, where a feature about Warmia and Masuria as native Polish territories is accompanied by the photographs taken by a Sonderkommando member at Auschwitz, those sole existing images from inside the hell of the Shoah, the 'images in spite of all'.[12] Next to this seemingly ultimate proof of the dehumanisation of the Germans, a caption reads, 'There is no such thing as "East Prussia". These ancient Polish lands, stretching between Masovia and the Baltic coast, are called: Masuria and Warmia.'[13] And one more example: the issue no. 31 from November 1945, devoted to the funeral of Wincenty Witos, in which the 'Documents' column finds its final incarnation. Wanda Kragen's story on the 'German problem' in Silesia is accompanied by a highly rhetorical juxtaposition of an image of 'poor and emaciated' German soldiers in Berlin following their return from Poland with a photo showing German soldiers again, this time 'burying Poles and Soviet POWs alive in Dęblin in 1942'. In this context, the August issue no. 18, where an entire centrefold is devoted to the 'graves' of the Łambinowice POW camp, acquires a somewhat ominous overtone. True, Łambinowice was a German Stalag during the war, but in 1945–1946 it served as a Polish concentration camp for Germans. Over 1500 people lost their lives there due to harsh conditions and violence, many of whom did not feel German at all. Many years had to pass before the episode could be publicly discussed.

It is precisely in these juxtapositions that the political, essentially propagandistic frame of these 'documents' is revealed. It seems that their main purpose was not solely to remember, confirm, or work through, but above all to legitimate the new order and to establish new divisions: not only between friends and enemies, but also between humans and non-humans. These divisions were linked to the need to polonise

10 Judith Butler, '*Photography, War, Outrage*', PMLA, vol. 120, no. 3, 2005, p. 826.

11 *Przekrój*, no. 20, 26 August 1945.

12 Cf. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, trans. Shane B. Lillis, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.

13 *Przekrój*, no. 14, 15 July 1945.

large territories and to carry out huge population transfers — of Germans beyond Poland's new western border and of Poles from behind the country's new eastern frontier, ultimately confirmed in August 1945. Setting those migrations in motion required a gesture of law-establishing violence, required delegitimising and expropriating the hitherto inhabitants of the 'Regained Territories', presenting them as inhuman, and convincing the new settlers that the land belonged to them. The frame that Butler writes about focuses the gaze on a selected fragment of reality, on the detail — so that we do not see what is beyond it. And beyond it was not only the Łambinowice camp, but also the doings of the Red Army, widespread looting of the newly acquired territories, or fratricidal fighting for control of the country.[14]

14 It is worth considering that throughout the 'Dokumenty' column's existence, the word 'Jew' is mentioned only once in it (!), precisely in the context of the Sonderkommando photos; always there is talk of 'Poles', a practice that can actually be interpreted in two different ways.

Piotr Rypson

Mieczysław Berman. Author of a Communist Idiolect

Few interwar graphic designers influenced the discipline as critically in the 1930s as Mieczysław Berman. He was one of the most recognisable commercial designers in Poland — working for private publishers before the war and later for the communist propaganda machine — and the best known author of photomontages. Few artists have also been as controversial. Berman was a propaganda designer and a communist, and his work bears the stigma of the historical upheavals Poland at the time.

Anti-Establishment Artist

Berman was born in 1903 and belonged to a generation that entered adulthood in independent Poland. He was an autodidact, with middle-school education and two years of drawing courses at the Warsaw Municipal School of Decorative Arts and Painting. It needs to be stressed that he was not related to the communist and later People's Poland dignitary, Jakub Berman, as various publications in recent years have erroneously claimed.[1]

Berman himself said he was inspired to take up photomontage and commercial graphic design by his meeting with Zygfryd Kamiński in 1927.[2] Still, many facts stated by the artist, particularly those concerning the dating of his early montages, should be taken with a pinch of salt — not all fragments of his biography were convenient for him at one time or another, and we know that he reconstructed many of his photomontages years later, including their dates. In his art, Berman was no doubt informed by the work of the 'father' of Polish photomontage, Mieczysław Szczuka, and Teresa Żarnowerówna, both radical constructivists of productivist orientation, closely associated with the Communist Party of Poland (Komunistyczna Partia Polski, KPP). But his greatest influences came from John Heartfield and his political and anti-Nazi photomontages, the theories of László Moholy-Nagy, two leading Soviet designers, Gustav Klutsis and Alexander Rodchenko, and Władysław Daszewski's layouts for the *Miesięcznik Literacki* (1929–1931).[3]

1 For example Krzysztof Stanisławski in 'Mieczysław Berman. Brat Jakuba albo rentgenograf epoki', in *Polscy artyści żydowskiego pochodzenia w powojennej Polsce*, exh. cat., Warsaw: Galeria Opera, 2014, pp. 12–15. Stanisławski founds his entire argument on the two being brothers, quoting numerous web comments about the artist. Jakub Berman had a brother named Mieczysław, but the latter perished at Treblinka.

2 Cf. Mieczysław Berman, *Fotomontaże 1924–1934*, exh. cat., Warsaw: Galeria Współczesna, 1970, p. 18. We know very little about Kamiński's work; he was probably the author of the photomontage covers for a 1929 edition of Upton Sinclair's *Boston* by the communist publisher Książka, and died a year later. Many interesting reflections on the beginnings of Berman's design work, with analyses of his photomontage covers, can be found in Jan Strauss's *Cięcie. Fotomontaż na okładkach w międzywojennej Polsce*, Warsaw: 40 000 Malarzy, 2014, pp. 80–116.

3 The latter inspired in fact by Rodchenko's design of the magazine *Lef*.

For left-wing artists, photomontages were a means of deconstructing the 'old world', cutting and fragmenting existing images to rearrange them into new meanings. Through accumulation and amassment, they were able to intensify the message, make it more expressive. They could also be reconfigured into a caricature or a monumental, affirmative construction. Berman will resort to all these modes throughout almost all his life.

Already his early projects bear his trademarks: strong geometric divisions of the montages, three-colour schemes (white, red, black), authors' names or titles set in a grotesque font against a contrasting background. It is likely that he already knew Moholy-Nagy's manifesto, *Typofoto*,[4] which, in a way, he remained faithful to throughout his entire career as a designer.

In 1932–1933, as the Great Depression brought about a radicalisation of the masses, Berman saw demand for his services skyrocket. Soviet themes were gaining popularity, especially in the context of growing fascist tendencies in Europe. Due to the lack of copyright agreements, Polish houses were able to publish Soviet novels without having to pay royalties, while winking knowingly at the politically dissatisfied reader.

Meanwhile, the illegal Communist Party of Poland had found itself under Moscow's nearly complete domination. Berman was not a Party member, merely a 'fellow traveller', but one trusted enough to be the man of choice for various publishing activities. Working regularly for Rój, he also received commissions from the left-wing publisher M. Fruchtman, from Alfa, Bibljon, Jakub Przeworski, and from ephemeral houses such as Metropolis or Płomienie. In 1932, when Trotsky had already been expelled from the Soviet Union, the Polish-Yiddish house Bibljon published the first volume of his *History of the Russian Revolution* with a cover by Berman. That job, for a publisher of anti-Stalinist orientation (as the titles would suggest), will cause the artist trouble in the 1950s.

In 1932–1933, Berman more and more often combined photomontage with simple drawing — a map contour, a dynamic rhythm of lines, signs, or silhouettes. To go beyond his now well-recognisable style, he began to compose purely typographic covers as well as covers drawn entirely in freehand. He also decided to add another trademark: handwriting, rendered with a soft, round brush, informed by the lettering style of political leaflets, propaganda posters, or trade union gazettes. With its directness and immediacy, the style transformed the contents into an appeal addressed directly at the reader. During a period of intensifying struggle between, on the one hand, the communists (and the left) and, on the other, the far right and the Nazis, such a communication mode was used with increasing frequency in the publications of German communists and fascists, in the propaganda graphics of republican Spain. Berman's lettering impacted heavily on graphic design in Poland before and — even more so — after the war.[5]

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4 Cf. László Moholy-Nagy, 'Typofoto', in *Zmiana pola widzenia. Druk nowoczesny i awangarda*, exh. cat., Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 2014, pp. 144–147.

5 Examples include the headpiece of the popular weekly *Antena* (1938–1939), the periodical *Jantar*, or *Horyzonty Techniki* and *Poznaj Świat* from the 1960s.

1934 was an important year for Berman, who, at the communist party's behest, organised the Warsaw Group of Visual Artists (Warszawska Grupa Plastyków, WGP) left-wing artist collective, better known as the Czapka Frygijska [Phrygian Cap]. From a 'fellow traveller' he had risen to the rank of an actual activist. Members of the Group and Berman himself illustrated leftist periodicals, such as *Dwutygodnik Ilustrowany*, *Głosy i Odgłosy*, *Oblicze Dnia*, and later *Szpilki*, designed posters, bulletins, sceneries for working-class theatres.[6] Two WGP exhibitions allowed Berman to present his photomontages as standalone works. In summer 1934, as he later stated,[7] Berman and his brother, a member of the Communist Union of Polish Youth, were arrested for several weeks over their activism.

Berman Co.

In 1933, Berman drops his 'b' monogram from his works and replaces it by his last name, set in capital letters, an obvious 'logo'. He enters the second half of the decade as an established, recognised professional. In 1935, his poster, *The Bullet*, wins wide acclaim and a prize; among his works that year are photomontage folders and a brochure for Social Security and a government bond, or a poster for Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego.

Berman's professionalism is confirmed by his admission to the elite Koło Artystów i Grafików Reklamowych organisation of advertising graphic designers (1935). He wins further high-profile contracts — most likely for covers and layout of the Łącznik *Pocztowy* monthly (1935–1936), published in 300,000 copies by the Ministry of Post and Telegraphs.[8] From 1937 until the war, Berman freelances regularly for Ludwik Spiess i Syn S.A., Poland's largest pharmaceutical company, designing the *Medycyna i Przyroda* monthly, but also producing a series of outstanding photography-and-photomontage newspaper display ads for the firm.

The Warsaw Group of Visual Artists' activities peaked with exhibitions in Warsaw and Kraków in 1936 (the latter show was criticised by members of Grupa Krakowska and the left-wing writers associated with the group). Then it lost momentum, due also to the decomposition of the KPP following the arrest of its Central Committee members in Moscow in 1937 and the party's subsequent dissolution.

The artist focused on working for Wydawnictwo Rój, a publishing house he would continue to do commercial work for until the start of the war. He did photomontages for their political reportage and travel books, and lettering designs, sometimes combined with photography, for the covers and jackets of socially committed prose and publications. Using cutting-edge technology and operating on a stable market, Rój was able to commission such cover-to-cover designs. Berman designed an edition of

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6 Cf. Mieczysław Berman, 'Czapka Frygijska', in *Księga wspomnień 1919–1939*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1960, pp. 52–90.

7 Cf. the artist's self-critique, pp. 143–149.

8 Kalina Galwas, '„Łącznik Pocztowy" (1932–1936)', *Kwartalnik Historii Prasy Polskiej*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1982, pp. 35–44. Judging by its style, Berman may have also influenced the graphic design of *Młody Zwiadowca*, a mass-market youth periodical.

Melchior Wańkowicz's 'nation-building' documentary prose volumes, *C.O.P. Ognisko siły* [The fire of power] (1938) and *Sztafeta* [Relay] (1939), both among his best-known book designs today, and *Katalog wydawniczy Roju* [Rój publishing catalogue] (1938).[9]

Working for the System

After the outbreak of war, Berman fled east, first to Białystok, then to Lviv. There he joined the Union of Visual Artists, and started working for *Czerwony Sztandar* [Red flag], where he met many ex-comrades from Warsaw. But membership in the *orgkomitet* of the Union and being on the payroll of a propaganda newspaper fully controlled by the Soviet authorities did not protect Berman from deportation to north-western Russia. Through Moscow and Kyrgyzstan, he reached the Polish Army's 1st Kościuszko Division being formed in Kuybyshev.

Having found himself under the command of the organisers of the Union of Polish Patriots (Związek Patriotów Polskich, ZPP) and high-ranking communists forming a nucleus of the future Polish government (e.g. Włodzimierz Sokorski, Hilary Minc, or Marian Naszkowski), he was dispatched to Moscow, where he worked until 1946. For the ZPP, he designed covers of paperback editions of Polish prose classics as well as agitprop literature (such as Żanna Kormanowa's *Grunwald. 15 lipca 1410* [Grunwald. 15 July 1410]). Wartime conditions required simple solutions: two-colour, freehand lettering-and-graphics designs, repeating compositions from several years earlier. Berman spent also more and more time overseeing the graphic design of the Moscow-based Polish-language biweekly, *Nowe Widnokręgi* [New horizons] (1943–1946).

Thus a new stage began in his career — that of the chief visual propagandist of the communist regime, which was being introduced in Poland by a relatively small group of activists with the powerful support of the Red Army, the NKVD, and the rapidly expanding domestic military and political security services. It has never been properly studied; most authors gloss it over as a 'period of errors and distortions' on the part of the legendary graphic designer.[10] And yet it was a logical next step for him, once a communist dissident, now working — at last! — for a left-wing Polish government.

The artist returned to Poland in 1946. He joined the Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza PPR) and was appointed head of the Artistic Propaganda Agency at the Ministry of Information and Propaganda.[11] His most important commission was the design of several propaganda brochures and posters (with Juliusz Krajewski, a fellow Czapka Frygijska member) for the parliamentary election campaign, which was extremely heated. In the three pocket-format brochures, he used simple photomon-

9 Years later Berman will be forced to explain himself over those productions, especially *The Bullet* and the Wańkowicz books.

10 Krystyna Bartnik attempts a more in-depth analysis in *Mieczysław Berman*, exh. cat., Wrocław: Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu, 1990. Gaining a better understanding of the personal connections or the role of the Soviet apparatus would require access to the Russian archives.

11 He was sent there by the experienced communist propagandist Roman Werfel, under whose editorship he had worked in the Soviet Union. Berman's colleagues at *Czerwony Sztandar* and *Nowe Widnokręgi* at the time included Tadeusz Trepkowski, Jerzy Zaruba, Włodzimierz Zakrzewski, or Henryk Tomaszewski. The artist worked also for the communist Youth Fighting Union (Związek Walki Młodych).

tages and text-and-graphics compositions in the vein of 1930s Soviet socialist modernism. Another, particularly vile brochure, *Kariera barona Andersona* [The Career of baron Anderson], a slander against General Władysław Anders, which he probably wrote himself, was illustrated by photomontages showing three 'treacherous' incarnations of the Supreme Commander of the Polish Armed Forces in the West.

After the elections, which were rigged by the communists, Berman started working for publishing houses established by the new regime, at a pace as intense as before the war. His main customer was the military publisher Wydawnictwo Prasa Wojskowa, for which he did over 40 book covers (agitprop, literary reportage, Soviet war prose).[12] He also worked for other publishers and political organisations, his ideological credentials impeccable. In all his projects he utilised principles developed in the previous decade. As the communists struggled for power and then sought to consolidate it, Bergman was regularly entrusted with politically crucial projects that required adherence to ideological orthodoxy. He designed the layout of the magazine *Wolne Narody* [Free nations] (published 1948–1949 by the Moscow-controlled Slavic Committee), publications of the veteran association ZBOWiD,[13] and most likely the headpiece of the Party's chief ideological organ, the *Nowe Drogi* [New ways] monthly (1947).[14] He also did complete designs for major propaganda books, such as *Trasa W–Z* (1949).

During that period, Berman relied heavily on the style of 1930s Soviet propaganda graphics, without giving up his favourite montages of photographs, text, and simple graphics, and always putting his trademark signature on the covers. His stylistic evolution can be compared to that of Alexander Rodchenko: from functionalistic compositions, contrasty and geometric, to monumental socialist modernism.

Berman continued his work in the field of (mainly agitprop) photomontage. He showed his wartime and post-war productions during the Polish Week in Prague in autumn 1947, and in April the following year in Warsaw. The introduction to the Warsaw catalogue was penned by Tadeusz Borowski, famed by his concentration camp short stories and a member of a new wave of aggressively pro-regime young writers known as the 'pimply ones'. He wrote the introduction in the spirit of an impending confrontation between the postulates of Socialist Realism and 'artistic formalism', accentuating the subordination of Berman's montages — with their inevitable deformation of reality — to the 'demands of ruthless political realism'.[15] The text began with a quote from John Heartfield: 'We must put all our strength into our work and shape revolutionary ideas with all our might'. Within a year, the doctrine of Socialist Realism will have been officially decreed at writers' and visual artists' congresses.

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12 The author signed them, as before the war, with his last name placed vertically at the edge of the cover. On this cf. Piotr Rypson, 'Inżynierowie oczu. Prasa pop wojskowa', *Piktogram*, no. 14, 2010, pp. 14–27.

13 Founded in 1949, the ZBOWiD (Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy) wielded considerable political influence in Poland.

14 At a time when *Nowe Drogi* was run by Franciszek Fiedler, a leading KPP activist, the man in charge of its publishing activities.

15 Tadeusz Borowski, in *Fotomontaże Mieczysława Bermana*, exh. cat., Warsaw: Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców, 1948. In the text, Borowski attacks Henryk Stażewski's formalism.

During the Stalinist period, Berman published also a dozen or so film and political posters. However, in early 1951, he suddenly fell from favour for unclear reasons. The 'case of Comrade Berman' was discussed twice by the Party unit of the visual artists' union (ZPAP).[16] The artist had to offer a self-critique. Due probably to this turbulence in his career, Berman's name is missing from the meticulously edited and finely printed volume, *KPP. Wspomnienia z pola walki* [KPP. Memories from the battlefield] (1951), the first publication 'rehabilitating' the pre-war Communist Party of Poland, for which he did his characteristic photography-and-text compositions. But fortune turns again, and Berman receives new commissions, e.g. for the design of the mammoth *Paris Commune 1871* by the Ministry of Defence. The period of working as a government propagandist ends with the collapse of Stalinist dictatorship in 1955 and the subsequent (relative) cultural liberalisation.

Berman's style strongly influenced many slightly younger artists, a phenomenon that continued into the 1960s. The designer himself returned to photomontage, nurturing an image based on his early achievements, genetically connected with the avant-garde, which at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s was coming into spotlight again. From this period date several full designs that are canonical for Polish book art, such as *Monte Cassino* (1957) or a 1959 edition of Wańkowicz's *Na tropach Smętka* (1936). The artist was returning to the period of his youth, co-forging the legend of the pre-war communist party, which after 1956 was no longer taboo. He revived his old style, consolidating his position as one of the pioneers of photomontage in Poland and Europe; he created excellent new works as well as reconstructing old ones.[17] His former self as a communist propagandist embedded with the centre of power was replaced by a revamped image of a revolutionary avant-garde artist.

Warsaw-Beijing, January–March 2015

16 Perhaps he was hit by a splinter from a power struggle within the Party; a much more mundane and nasty version would be that of in-fighting over prestige and privileges within the graphic arts community. The full text of the self-critique is featured in this volume, pp. 143–149.

17 Following the anti-Semitic purge in the Party in 1968, Berman towards the end of his life created series of highly emotional photomontages on Jewish themes.

Eryk Krasucki

Czytelnik Publishing Cooperative. A Cultural Phenomenon, 1944–1948

Antoni Słonimski's *Alfabet wspomnień* [Alphabet of memories] contains the following fragment: 'Before light was separated from darkness, before there was the Writers Union and tramways, Borejsza's spirit already swept over the face of the waters.'[1] If we add the name Czytelnik to the aforementioned last name, the poet's comment on the condition of Polish culture after the end of the war becomes clearer.

The beginnings of the Czytelnik Publishing Cooperative date back to September 1944, when a group of officials at the Department of Press and Information of the Polish Committee of National Liberation's [Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, PKWN] Ministry of Information and Propaganda conceived of establishing a publishing house whose mission would be to carry out 'publishing, educational, and propaganda activities, based on democratic and progressive principles, for raising the general level of social knowledge in Poland and enabling the broadest masses of Polish citizens to read daily newspapers, periodicals, and all kinds of publications in the fields of politics, social sciences, economics, literature and art, and popular science'.[2] We know from elsewhere that Borejsza was thinking of setting up a publishing group already during the war, while in Soviet Union.

In the early post-war years, Czytelnik was an institution unlike any other, unique in terms of both the scope of its activities and their significance for Polish culture. This was due to Borejsza's talent and imagination, but also the hard work of his employees. Czytelnik has often been seen as a strictly communist project, launched solely for propagandistic purposes, and the view has been applied to the cooperative's staff as well. In fact, among those working for Borejsza were communists, pre-war socialists and nationalists, as well as many anarchists, whom he had close links with in his youth.

Czytelnik may therefore appear as a place for everyone who, as Helena Radlińska put it, wasn't a 'slave of present-day politics', but wished to work for a higher good. Such an attitude echoes the Polish cooperative tradition, which is confirmed by ideological texts published in the Czytelnik periodicals. As Zofia Dembińska wrote in 1945,

> Who published books in Poland before? The capitalist. It was a form of investing capital, as good as producing bubble gum or gramophone records. That's why it was often done by people lacking any social idea. Profit was the only consideration, hence the domination of translations, whatever their literary value [ready material, ready advertising, low risk], hence the proliferation of 'furniture books', i.e., multi-volume worthless publications in colourful gilded covers,

1 Antoni Słonimski, *Alfabet wspomnień*, Warsaw: PIW, 1989, p. 21.

2 *Zasady działalności Spółdzielni Wydawniczej „Czytelnik"*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1946, p. 8.

> meant as bookcase decoration only, hence, worse still, pornography, crime stories, and cheap pseudo-science.[3]

Disappointment with the publishing policies observed in pre-war Poland is expressed straight out here. The cultural project realised through Czytelnik stemmed therefore from an almost complete negation of the past. Dembińska, Borejsza's right hand and widow of the famous pre-war leftwing activist, Henryk Dembiński, used openly Marxist (not Leninist!) language and exaggerated many things, but her comments reflect a deeply felt sense that Polish culture needed to be pulled out of the stagnation it had fallen into as a result of the pre-war governments' ill-conceived cultural policies. The source of change would be a radically different approach to the recipient, earlier just an 'object of exploitation, but also disregard', whose lowest instincts were tapped without offering him the slightest chance for genuine hunger for knowledge. What was needed instead, Dembińska suggested, was a partnership between the reader and the publisher.

Already in its statute Czytelnik was envisaged as a 'mass organisation, with millions of shareholders, millions of co-owners', while one of the brochures presenting the work of the Czytelnik Clubs read, 'The Polish book — wise, beautiful, and good — has, like the daily bread, be shared by everyone: the young and old, the affluent and the less so, the learned and those working with hammer and plough. Only then will Poland be truly democratic and only then will we consolidate our democratic achievements forever.'[4] With its millions of stakeholders, Czytelnik was thus becoming a guarantor of perpetual democracy (and the 'fourth party' in Poland, as pundits called it). Such an optic was something new and unprecedented in the Polish cooperative sector. It stemmed, as it seems, from a perception of the post-war situation, where, amid omnipresent devastation and a sense of defeat, there had been established an institution that contradicted both with its existence and grand scale of operations.

An anonymous article published in the periodical *Książka i Kultura* in December 1946 listed Czytelnik's achievements:

> In 1944 (December), Czytelnik had one daily newspaper of a monthly circulation of 1,700,000 copies; in November 1946, it had 12 daily newspapers which sold in a total of 22,000,000 copies monthly. The number of periodicals grew from 3 in December 1944 to 15 in November 1946. Books — and we know the usually high editorial quality of Czytelnik's book publications — showed a similar pace of growth: from zero titles at end-1944, through 60 titles at end-1945, to 103 titles on offer in early November 1946. The same picture emerges when we look at Czytelnik's printing base: whereas in December 1944 they had one printing plant, by end-1945 the number had risen to 9, with overall spending on them reaching 47 million zlotys by October 1946.[5]

3 Zofia Dembińska, 'Założenia ideowe „Czytelnika"', *Książka i Kultura*, no. 1, 1945.

4 'Co słychać w Kołach Członków „Czytelnika"', *Książka i Kultura*, no. 4/6, 1946.

5 '„Czytelnik" na szerokiej drodze', *Książka i Kultura*, no. 12, 1946.

These are but some of the figures cited in the article; other statistics look equally impressive. For example, Czytelnik had ten branches in major cities around the country, as well as dealerships abroad. In order to obtain some degree of independence from news reported by government press agencies, the cooperative established its own, Press and Information Agency (Agencja Prasowo-Informacyjna). The group's scale of operations is also evident in its very structure, which comprised a dozen or so divisions, with those responsible for press publishing, book publishing, and educational activities playing the most important role. Each of those divisions had succeeded in creating an original and easily recognisable 'product'. That is why we speak to this day of the 'Czytelnik press' — different from the official media, less stereotypical, and probably more credible — while Czytelnik's editions of Czesław Miłosz's *Ocalenie* [Rescue], Zofia Nałkowska's *Medaliony* [Medallions], or Tadeusz Breza's *Mury Jerycha* [The walls of Jericho] went down in the history of Polish literature. The role played by Czytelnik in providing financial security to Polish writers in the early post-war years can hardly be overestimated. Some called Borejsza an 'arch-corruptor' for this reason, although it seems that most of the literati honestly believed in the 'mild revolution' project.

An important aspect of the cooperative's activities was the founding of what was probably Poland's first book clubs, the Czytelnik Clubs (Koła Czytelnika), which sold and lent inexpensive books and magazines, organised 'collective and individual reading', coordinated lecturing and counselling on reading and self-education, worked to 'awaken cultural needs in the local community', and organised various kinds of cultural events. It was, therefore, a well thought-out and wide-ranging educational programme that required great commitment from its implementers who had to employ a large number of educators and persuade artists, many of whom were die-hard urbanites, to leave big city for a while. As Irena Krzywicka wrote,

> You travelled by car or by train, often covering the last stretch of the way on a horse wagon, which was wearisome, but offered unique experiences and emotions. The provinces craved for culture, however strange this may sound. The room was usually full. The books, which were vended by a Czytelnik agent, would sell out in an instant. After such an evening I usually signed them. I'd never encountered such intellectual hunger before.[6]

The uniqueness of the model employed by the cooperative as well as a sense of the significance of its achievements was constantly stressed. Borejsza himself wrote about it in the essay, 'On the Goals and Development of Czytelnik':

> That there has been no precedent of a similar organisation elsewhere — so what? One needs to have the courage to create precedents, to discover new terrain. That Czytelnik doesn't fit stereotypical formulas — so what? Let those

6 Quoted in Eryk Krasucki, 'Spadek Borejszy', *Przegląd*, no. 50, 2004.

who favour them reconsider their hackneyed notions and understand once and for all the elementary truth.[7]

Going far beyond the cliché, he wrote also that Czytelnik was the 'noblest madness of a great number of committed cultural activists . . . there is a method to our madness, a system; a new, fresh, invigorating conception'.[8] That this wasn't just vain bragging is confirmed by Krzywicka, who wrote about a 'miracle' that had been wrought in Poland thanks to Czytelnik and its chief.

Maintaining the position that Czytelnik had originally enjoyed on the publishing market wasn't possible. As soon as the communists had seized full power in the country in 1947, the idea of a 'mild revolution' was discarded on behalf of what was called the 'second offensive'. Borejsza tried to defend his conception, but stood little chance of success in confrontation with the Party dictate. Czytelnik was accused of being a 'failed experiment' that had 'deviated from the political line' due to lack of ideological control. The cooperative's real achievements, innovative concepts and methods, and grand scale of operations ceased to matter, or, worse still, were actually held against it. A resolution passed in 1947 by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR) ordered Czytelnik to promote the 'achievements of the popular democracy and the superiority of the planned economy over capitalist anarchy', to purge its cadres of 'alien, hostile, and demoralised elements', and to 'enhance political control over its book publications'.[9]

Borejsza was helpless in the face of these instructions, though for several months he still hoped that through his cleverness and connections he would be able to protect the organisation he had created. But Stalinism followed its own logic, in which there was no place for individual 'madness' of any kind. In October 1948, Borejsza was booted from his position. Czytelnik was broken up and partitioned over the next few years, reducing it to the role of a mere publishing house. What remained of it was memory, and a vague one at that. In the 1970s, Kazimierz Koźniewski would write, 'Today few remember the great Borejsza, and the readers of Putrament's *Małowierni* hardly know whom one of the main protagonists is modelled on. Only culture and art professionals have preserved a memory and legend of the man as one of the most outstanding organisers and activists, unparalleled probably in our post-war culture'.[10] These words still seem to apply today.

7 Jerzy Borejsza, 'O celach i drogach rozwoju „Czytelnika"', *Dziennik Polski*, no. 176, 1948.

8 Ibid.

9 Central Archive of Modern Records, KC PPR, sign. 295/VII-5, vol. 2, Resolution of the Secretariat of the KC no. 52 concerning Czytelnik, October 1947, pp. 131–132.

10 Kazimierz Koźniewski, 'Rogatywki Jerzego Borejszy', in *Zostanie mit*, Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1988, p. 224.

The Woman after the War

Let us examine the image of the post-war woman as conveyed by the periodical *Kobieta* [Woman], published from autumn 1947 to end-1949 by the Women's League, with Janina Broniewska as editor-in-chief.

The magazine's reader was keenly interested in the new political reality, as the cover of the first issue already suggests, being devoted to the struggle for world peace and the life of women in the Soviet Union. She also viewed an advertisement for Gizella Świtalska's soaps and Tatra Snow cream, read about beauty without makeup and the history of cosmetics, exercised with the '10 Minutes of Gymnastics' column, learned the 'art of washing clothes', cooked dinners according to a weekly menu, with 'apples with whipped foam' for dessert, decorated her home 'in keeping with the spirit of the time', and finally adorned her blouse with 'old-gold embroidery'.

Centrefold drawings and Zuzanna's columns advised her how to customise an 'UNRRA jacket', a men's shirt, or an old fur coat, as well as against the charming but impractical fads of Paris fashion. The woman, as the cover of *Kobieta* suggests, should be chic, even when she joins the rubble-clearing brigades. And she should have cultural aspirations, as suggested by the columns in the culture section: 'Theatre', 'Film', 'Books', and the 'Language Corner'. *Kobieta* featured, for example, Władysław Broniewski's poem 'Kabała' [Fortune telling], prose pieces by Irena Krzywicka, Pola Gojawiczyńska, or Magdalena Samozwaniec, or reviews of Xawery Dunikowski's exhibition.

The magazine's reader was also able to admire its painting-like covers, which owed its French lightness and charm to *Kobieta*'s art director, Tadeusz Gronowski. As far as possible, *Kobieta* continued the tradition of pre-war magazines. But after 1949 the lady of yore was forgotten and a new woman began to matter.

Monika Micewicz

Warsaw Cinemas

Six free-standing cinemas were built in Warsaw in 1948–1950. Most opened only after 1950s. The now non-existent Praha cinema at 24/26 Jagiellońska Street, Warsaw's second largest movie theatre, was built in 1948–1950 according to a design by Jan Bogusławski and Józef Łowiński. Stanisław Sikora created its relief-sculpture decorations, and interiors were designed by Bogusławski. With its screening room covered by a flattened dome, the building combined modernist tendencies with elements typical for Socialist Realism in a manner characteristic for the period. The entrance was from Karola Wójcika Street, where the box office and a glazed snack bar were also located.

The no-longer-existent Moskwa cinema operated from 1950 till 1996 at 19/21 Puławska Street. The building was erected in 1949–1950 to a 1947 design by Kazimierz Marczewski and Stefan Putowski. It boasted modern and finely designed interiors, and was post-war Warsaw's largest movie theatre. Originally to be called Wieczór [Evening], the name was ultimately changed to Moskwa [Moscow]. It was demolished in 1996, and an office building was erected on the site a year later.

Four free-standing cinemas were built in 1949–1950 to designs by Mieczysław Piprek: Stolica, W–Z, 1 Maj, and Ochota. All are examples of modernist functional architecture, with small concessions to Socialist Realism, in a style highly typical for the architect. The former Stolica cinema (now the National Film Archive's Iluzjon Cinema) was located in a building at 50a Narbutta Street. It represents a characteristic example of a single-floor pavilion-style free-standing movie theatre, with a cuboid main bulk and a decorative, undulating roof, and further variety added by a rotunda-style box office in the front. The main finishing material, adding the building a feel of elegance, were various kinds of sandstone.

The now non-existent W–Z cinema at 1 Leszno Street (demolished in 2010) was part of a larger scheme at the western end of the Trasa W–Z, which also included the Bar Wenecja diner and the PDT Wola department store. W–Z cinema was also a single-story pavilion with an undulating roof and a round box-office outbuilding at the front. The cinemas 1 Maj (4 Podskarbińska Street, function now changed) and Ochota (69 Grójecka Street, today occupied by the Och-Theatre) both had similar architecture.

Magdalena Komornicka

Wojciech Świdziński

The Reception of Western Cinema in Post-war Poland

As the front moved eastwards and the German armies were retreating, cinemas in Poland reopened their doors. Hungry for entertainment, the public stormed the screenings of pre-war movies that had been saved from wartime devastation and confiscations, flocking to see such classics as *The Rage of Paris* (1938) with Danielle Darrieux or *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939) starring Johnny Weissmuller. Following his return to Kraków, the teenage Roman Polański couldn't get enough of watching the Technicolor *Robin Hood* (1938) with Errol Flynn.

The popular government wasn't yet able to exploit the cinema fever gripping the war-ravaged country. A key administrative decision was the founding in 1945 of Przedsiębiorstwo Państwowe Film Polski, a central state agency for the film industry. Appointed as its top managers were former activists of Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Filmu Artystycznego START, a left-wing association of art film fans, who in the mid-1930s called for socially engaged cinema and criticised domestic cinematography.[1] Such a personal decision as characteristic for the early post-war period, when the cadres weren't yet subject to strict ideological control, and a broad notion of 'leftism' meant that various intellectual and artistic positions were tolerated. The main mission of Film Polski was to start the production of movies –— which was taking a lot of time due to the sluggish pace of the construction of a studio and political pressures — and to develop a cinema network. The latter goal was swiftly achieved, albeit not without the expropriation of private movie-theatre operators. The number of cinemas grew from 100 in March 1945 to 375 in December, some of those equipped with 'trophy' German equipment. By 1949, the number of permanent cinemas had grown to 762, roughly on a par with pre-war levels. Even if Film Polski had its headquarters in Warsaw, the centre of cinematographic life was Łódź, which had been spared major wartime destruction. From the roughly 70 movie theatres operating in Warsaw before the war, only four had reopened by 1946.

Film Polski was also tasked with providing new repertoire. Soviet film was relatively most easily available. Red Army units stationing in Poland since 1944 ran their own movie theatres, but screened nothing except wartime propaganda productions. From 1945, Polish audiences were treated to more valuable Soviet repertoire, including movies from the 1930s, not yet entirely suppressed by Socialist-Realist ideology. It can be assumed that they were watched with keen interest. Throughout the interwar period, the censors had cleared only about some 80 Soviet titles for screening, arresting, for example, all of Sergei Eisenstein's masterpieces. Now his *Ivan the Terrible* (1944) and *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) went into wide release. But the greatest Soviet hit

1 Those were Aleksander Ford as director, Jerzy Bossak as programming director, and Jerzy Toeplitz as head of foreign department.

of the era was Grigori Alexandrov's vigorous music comedy, *Jolly Fellows* (1934), which played in Polish theatres also before the war.

Film Polski's first 'Western' distribution contract was with British cinematography. The dozen or so titles released as early as the turn of 1945 and 1946 may have seem like an 'ersatz product' to compensate for the unavailability of recent Hollywood movies. In reality, however, they bore witness to the development trends that dominated in British film after 1939. Most dealt with various aspects of the war, and war movies were exactly what the Polish audiences wanted to watch, as a survey taken by *Film* magazine suggested. The first new British film, screened from January 1946 at the Atlantic and Polonia theatres in Warsaw, was *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing* (1942), telling, in a near-documentary style, the story of a RAF bomber crew shot down over the Netherlands. A similar theme was explored by one of the most successful British war films, *In Which We Serve* (1942), directed by Noël Coward, who also wrote the screenplay, composed the music, and starred as the captain of a destroyer ship sunk by the Germans. Critic Jerzy Giżycki enthused about the artist's versatility:

> Noël Coward's directing is absolutely first-class. Particularly noteworthy is the subtly directed scene of the captain's parting with the surviving crew members. He shakes the hands of his men, who are also his comrades-at-arms and friends, each time saying the same casual farewell formula. It is only slight changes in his intonation and gaze that indicate how strong his emotional bond with these people is.[2]

In Which We Serve inspired a number of navy-themed drama films, including the 1958 Polish *The Eagle*. But not every British movie met with a favourable reception. Writing about the 1941 spy story, *'Pimpernel' Smith*, a critic for *Życie Warszawy* bristled at its naive portrayal of the Germans: 'No, gentlemen, fighting the Nazis wasn't as easy, nor the SS as dumb, as, with disarmingly good will, you are trying to present it'.[3] A true revelation for cinema buffs was Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out* (1947), screened at the Syrena in Warsaw in April 1948. Moving away from war themes, it depicted, in a realistic-poetic convention, the last night in the life of a member of the Northern Irish separatist underground. Fugitive Johnny McQueen's wandering around a cold Ulster city may have brought to mind the plight of Poland's 'cursed soldiers'.

Soon after the first British films, new French productions also hit the screens, always appreciated by the more discriminating Polish audiences. After the outbreak of war and France's surrender, the country's film industry retained its creative potential, but, controlled by the Germans, isolated, and forced into 'inner emigration', lost its verve and remained apathetic also in the first post-war years. But its most valuable achievements soon found its way to the Polish market, and *Film* critics praised titles such as Marcel Carné's *Children of Paradise* (1945), Christian-Jaque's *Angel*

2 Jerzy Giżycki, 'Nasz okręt', *Film*, no. 3, 1946, p. 4.

3 B. W., 'Nieuchwytny Smith', *Życie Warszawy*, no. 50, 1946, p. 5.

and Sinner (1945), or Jean Delannoy's *La Symphonie Pastorale* (1946). Opened on 18 May 1947 at the National Museum in Warsaw, the exhibition *50 Years of French Film* was accompanied by screenings of early and classic productions, e.g. of films by the Lumière Brothers, Georges Méliès, or the burlesques of Max Linder. Also presented were the avant-garde works of Fernand Léger and René Clair, as well as Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), a film that couldn't find its way into wide release in pre-war Poland. Among the sound productions on show were Jean Renoir's *A Day in the Country* (1946) and Marcel Carné's *Port of Shadows* (1938).

From 1947, productions of other national cinematographies, principally those from the Eastern Bloc countries, became widely available. From the West, there were isolated examples of Swiss (*The Last Chance*, 1945) or even Mexican cinema (*Pepita Jimenez*, 1946). Audiences welcomed the return of Swedish films to Polish theatres. Alf Sjöberg was hailed as a successor of Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller, and his works attracted a lot of attention, especially since they dealt with themes that were otherwise missing from Polish cinema screens. His religious film, *The Heavenly Play* (1942), confounded a *Film* critic, who wrote: 'The realistic treatment given to abstract concepts — the way God, the Saints, the Prophets, and Satan are reduced to a human, ordinary form — perplexes anyone trying to judge this very peculiar film. . . . It is located in some fourth dimension, alien to our way of thinking'.[4] The picture that proved most controversial, however, as reflected in the hundreds of letters sent to the editor of *Film*, was *Torment* (1944), marking Ingmar Bergman's debut as screenwriter.

Several Italian films were cleared — if with certain misgivings — for screening in 1948–1949, allowing the public to taste the most innovative trend in post-war cinematography, i.e., neorealism. Most impressive of them all was doubtless *Rome, Open City*, Roberto Rossellini's portrayal of the Nazi occupation of the Italian capital. A *Film* critic reviewing it in 1949 employed a protective manoeuvre, highlighting the film's alleged parallels with Soviet cinema and stressing that its protagonists are a 'communist' and a 'priest of progressive leanings'. As a result, he was able to enthuse about Rossellini's austere realism and sense of detail. He was delighted with Anna Magnani's performance, of whom he wrote, 'an ugly actress, albeit one endowed with an immense dramatic talent. With her not very long role in this film, Magnani is starkly distinguished from the Hollywood stars, a genuine member of the struggling proletariat'.[5] Thanks perhaps to such interpretations, *Rome, Open City* continued to play through the end of 1949 as the last major Western movie, surrounded by titles such as *The Battle of Stalingrad*, *Lenin*, or *Soviet Ukraine*. Bearing witness to the impression it had left was Andrzej Wajda's *A Generation* (1954), which partly broke from the formulas of Socialist Realism, treading instead the neorealist path blazed by Rossellini.

What viewers who remembered pre-war cinema were waiting most intently for, however, were new Hollywood movies. Film Polski's negotiations with US distributors dragged on, the latter demanding payment for the non-contractual screening of titles

4 Tadeusz Kowalski, 'Droga do nieba', *Film*, no. 25, 1947, p. 6.

5 Wacław Świeradowski, 'Rzym, miasto otwarte', *Film*, no. 7, 1949, p. 13.

in 1944–1945. In mid-1947, an agreement was reached, giving the Polish distributor the right to select titles according to, officially, their artistic merit. Some 65 movies were contracted, almost all of which were screened in the course of the following year. In 1949, as Stalinisation intensified, the contract was cancelled, and a filmmakers congress in Wisła ushered in the era of Socialist Realism. In 1950, Polish cinemas showed just ten films made outside the Soviet sphere of influence.

But from end-1947 to end-1948 a true festival of American cinema took place. Besides titles of lighter calibre, some of the most outstanding productions of the wartime and post-war periods went into release, e.g. Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), Bill Wilder's *The Lost Weekend* (1945), or Max Fleischer's full-length animation, *Gulliver's Travels* (1939). *Madame Curie* (1943), starring Greer Garson as the Polish born scientist, was a nice surprise. But many American films were lambasted by the critics, often for clearly ideological reasons. Lewis Milestone's *Of Mice and Men* (1939), based on John Steinbeck's novella, was called by *Po Prostu* an 'example of cynical opacity'.[6] It is worth stressing that *Film*, which is as Film Polski's press organ sought usually to justify its repertoire choices, sometimes published unfavourable reviews too, always however stressing formal rather than ideological values. That was the case with *Casablanca* (1942), which didn't enjoy cult status yet and was judged as any other war movie. Praising the actors' performances — Ingrid Bergman's in particular — critics found fault with the film's improbable story, poorly designed sets, and oversimplifications. The story of refugees from German-occupied Europe meeting at Rick's Café Américain must have been particularly fascinating, though, for *Casablanca* remained on the bill of Warsaw's Palladium cinema for nearly a month from its premiere on 14 June 1948, which was a markedly longer time than most movies at the time. In the war-ravaged country, in the mass graveyard that was Warsaw, on the eve of another, Stalinist, night, Bergman's makeup and costumes and Humphrey Bogart's tropical tuxedo must have held special allure of extravagant luxury and romantic-erotic adventure.

One can hardly imagine today the emotions that accompanied moviegoers of the era, as people queued for hours to see particularly popular movies. Bearing witness to a fascination with the other world presented on the silver screen is Zygmunt Kałużyński's reminiscence of watching Charles Vidor's *Gilda* (1946):

> For the cine buffs of my generation, one of the greatest, most moving, most — yes! — indecent scenes in cinema was Rita Hayworth taking off her long black glove in *Gilda*. She first takes its edge between two fingers, lifting it slightly, pulling the fabric off slowly . . . no! no! I won't go on describing this, for as soon as I begin, my vision blurs and I start to shiver. No later indecencies in film, all that rolling naked in beds, on carpets, in swimming pools, will ever make the same colossal impression on me.[7]

6 K. G., 'Myszy i ludzie', *Po Prostu*, no. 9, 1948, p. 7.

7 Zygmunt Kałużyński, *Kolacja z celuloidu*, Warszawa: Polski Dom Wydawniczy, 1994, p. 48.

Maciej Szymanowicz

Discovering the Territories Mieczysław Orłowicz's Photographic Tours around the Regained Lands

The geopolitical changes brought about by the Second World War had significant consequences for the photographic community.[1] Vilnius (Wilno) and Lviv (Lwów) — the centres of Polish fine-art photography — were now part of the Soviet Union. At the same time, newly acquired territories in the north and west waited for depiction. The relative lack of public knowledge about the Regained Lands' natural and cultural resources as well as their ongoing development made it necessary to organise institutionally-sponsored photographic-documentation actions in those areas. Commissioned mainly by the Ministry of Transport, the Polish Tourism Society, and the Poznań-based Western Institute, they were undertaken by photography associations operating in the Regained Lands.

In the second half of the 1940s, such tours were organised by the Ministry of Transport's Tourism Department, and coordinated by Mieczysław Orłowicz, a well-known regionalist, PTS activist, and public servant, who before the war, from 1926, managed a central photographic archive of views of Poland, located first with the Ministry of Public Works' Department of Tourism and, from 1932, with the Ministry of Transport.[2] Aware of the need to portray the newly acquired lands, Orłowicz stressed,

> To know them is necessary not only for the reasons of regional studies, but also for political, cultural, and economic ones. . . . it is our duty to make up for what has been lost and explore these lands, connected historically and ethnographically with Poland, yet almost completely unknown.[3]

In 1947–1949, he organised ten photographic tours that took place between May and September each year. The resulting documentation became part of a new Ministry of Transport archive.[4] Orłowicz's strategy, while responding to current needs, emulated the concept of the photographic tours that he led around the territory of the Polish Republic in 1929–1939. Those activities were a consequence of a long-term programme for the Department of Tourism, which he had drafted as early as 1919 and which attached a lot of importance to the creation of photographic collections.

1 This essay is based on a chapter of a book the author is writing on Polish photography in the first decade after the Second World War.

2 On Orłowicz's activities, cf. Mieczysław Orłowicz, *Moje wspomnienia turystyczne*, Wrocław, Warsaw and Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1970.

3 Mieczysław Orłowicz, 'Zwiedzajmy Ziemie Odzyskane!', *Ziemia*, no. 1/2, 1946, pp. 5–6.

4 Schedule of tours around the Regained Territories, cf. Mieczysław Orłowicz, 'Bułhak nie żyje [garść wspomnień]', *Świat Fotografii*, no. 15, 1950, p. 13.

The aims and scope of the post-war tours are elucidated by one of the preserved reports:

> These tours are organised to acquaint the tourism specialists at district offices and railway directorates with the tourist attractions of the Regained Territories, and at the same time to photograph those attractions. For this reason, invited to participate in them are not only the aforementioned tourism specialists but also representatives of the Orbis travel agency, outstanding landscape photographers, and authors of tourist guides . . . or tourism promotion brochures published by the Ministry of Transport. Space allowing, also taken on board are executives and tourism committee members of the Polish Tourism Society and the Polish Tatra Society as well as other activists in the region.[5]

Among the several photographers working on the project, the most influential were Jan Bułhak, Tadeusz Dohnalik (a Department of Tourism official), and Bonifacy Gajdzik (amateur photographer and tourism specialist at the Provincial Office in Katowice). Henryk Hermanowicz, Stanisław Mucha, and Jerzy Mańkowski were photographers who participated in selected tours.[6] Reports from the individual expeditions make us aware of Orłowicz's scope of interest, as he reconciled tourist/regional explorations with the needs of state historical policy. One of the aspects of the tours — which in particular informed the resulting imagery — was the searching for Polish-related motifs in the material heritage left by the Germans. Through the precisely planned trips as well as separate acquisitions, the Ministry of Transport's Department of Tourism created an archive of photographs (used for various kinds of publications) with views of Poland, with a particular focus on the Regained Territories in the north and west. Their main provider was the outstanding photographer, theoretician, and undisputed leader of the Polish photographic community, Jan Bułhak, who in the second half of the 1940s produced a collection of some 8,000 images of Poland.[7]

These documentation activities were theoretically underpinned by the programme, dating back to the pre-war years, of 'homeland photography', now adapted to a new socio-economic reality. It was recodified at the 4th Polish Tourist Congress in Kraków in May 1946, where its chief proponent, Bułhak, presented the paper, 'Photography for the Purposes of Regional Studies and Tourist Propaganda'. While the programme was reformulated to take into account the (particularly geopolitical) changes that had occurred, its key paradigm of the need for comprehensively portraying the country's material and social resources remained the same. The Polish cultural markers that were to be considered in photographic documentation were redefined, shifting the focus from the romantic/upper-class tradition, as before the war, to worker/peasant motifs,

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5 Mieczysław Orłowicz, *Sprawozdanie z objazdu krajoznawczo-fotograficznego autami wybrzeża morskiego*, Polish Academy of Sciences archive [hereafter: PAN], sign. III-92, 432, p. 35.

6 Folder *Sprawozdania z wyjazdów służbowych M.O. objazdów krajoznawczych, podróży służbowych, programy, sprawozdania, notatki, zestawienia wydatków 1946–1958,* PAN, sign. III-92, p. 446.

7 Lech Grabowski, *Jan Bułhak*, Warszawa: Arkady, 1961, p. 9.

in keeping with the dominant post-war discourse.[8] Bułhak so explicated the agenda's goals: 'Homeland photography aims to achieve various cultural and material benefits, serving . . . science and literature, information and propaganda, and generally satisfying the needs of civilised life. Its most important goal, however, is to study the inner essence of the nation by probing its material and mental centres'.[9] Those centres, as the work of Bułhak and other homeland photographers suggests, were identified mainly with landscape, cultural heritage, industrial plants, and all kinds of projects initiated by the new regime. These tenets informed the dominant themes of the photographic tours around the Regained Territories: the land itself, its historical substance, and the life of the Polish pioneers.

Bułhak was responsible for creating iconic images of the new territories' landscape which were frequently used in the mass media of the period. In taking those pictures, he employed the same visual strategies that he had developed in eastern Poland before the war. The open compositions showed vast fields or natural landscapes through which the artist sought to define an archetypal 'national' space. They were accompanied by images of farmers at work, highlighting their close bond with the 'regained' land, e.g. the recurring motif of haymakers. Paradoxically, however, despite the complete rejection of the Jagiellonian conception of the Polish State, the same visual strategies were used to legitimate Polish rule in the north and east that were employed before the war to portray the eastern 'borderland' provinces, the symbol of a geopolitical concept now negated. The annexation of the myth of the 'wild East' to describe the space of the Regained Territories not only overlapped with the common notion of the typically Polish, or Slavic, landscape, but also symbolised fallow land, a place to colonise and develop.

The second frequent theme was cultural heritage — here the photographers usually documented medieval architecture, focusing, in a manner characteristic for the official discourse of the era, on the 'Piast legacy'. By highlighting certain objects and ignoring others, history was rationed to convey a particular ideology. Documenting the relics of the past, the photographers activated, in a way, their symbolic potential, turning them into containers, or carriers, of the memory of the Polish origins of the Regained Lands.[10] A characteristic element of the images was a particular manner of interpreting the topography of historical sites and cities — widespread and originated by Bułhak — based on showing architecture in a close connection with nature, as evidenced not only by numerous panoramas, but also by pictures of individual buildings, usually portrayed against the background of lush vegetation. These popular compositional choices, based on the 'naturalisation' of urban spaces, were meant to convey a familiar (typically Polish) vision of architecture.

The third of the great themes of homeland photography were the Polish settlers in the new provinces. The ideological substrate here was provided by a widespread image

8 This aspect was stressed in later documents, which specifically listed the expected themes.

9 Jan Bułhak, *Fotografia ojczysta*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1951, p. 57.

10 I am referring here to the category of the container of historical memory, proposed by Marcin Kula; cf. idem, *Nośniki pamięci historycznej*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2002.

of the inhabitants of the new territories, formed in the first post-war years. Those starting a new life there were presented as undergoing a kind of metamorphosis:

> The result of this transformation was supposedly a new type of Pole — the 'Occidental' Pole, free from the national vices. . . . this emerging type represented the positivistic principle, as opposed to the romantic one, which was considered destructive. The only gauge of his character was hard work, diligence, and persistent effort to know more.[11]

The image of the indomitable settler was popularised by large collections of photographs on the theme of work, showing, for example, the manifold efforts to revive industry and farming in the Regained Territories. It is worth stressing that it was precisely on the basis of homeland photography, among other things, as it sought to document the sweeping changes taking place in the country's western and northern provinces, that the pre-war canon of imaging the typical Pole was transformed, the country gentleman of yore being replaced by a conscious participant in the production process. In this regard, homeland photography proved the vanguard of Socialist Realism.

What, therefore, is the ultimate ideological significance of the resulting collections? Created in the course of the photographic tours, the documentation of the newly acquired provinces was meant to convey a notion of Polish culture as being superior to the German one, while selected material heritage of the latter was appropriated if useful for state-policy purposes. The period of German rule was presented in the official discourse as a time of the ruthless and inconsiderate exploitation of lands acquired 'by ruse', whose poor condition justified a new civilising mission. This in fact typically colonial narrative ideology impacted on the photographs being taken in a frenzied hurry in the first post-war years.[12] Recounting in 1950 his collaboration with Bułhak, Mieczysław Orłowicz remembered that he dreamt of cutting loose from the rigour and hectic pace of the Department of Tourism commissions. There was no time for studying the motif more thoroughly; pictures had to be taken quickly and regardless of the weather and light conditions.[13] But work comfort did not matter: Bułhak and Orłowicz were players in a game for high stakes. As noted by the eminent researcher of the spatial discourse, Karl Schlögel, in his seminal *In Space We Read Time*, those who want to rule territories must know them;[14] moreover, only a measured territorial

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11 Maria Tomczak, 'Obraz osadników w prasie i publicystyce polskiej', in *Ziemie Odzyskane/Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne 1945–2005. 60 lat w granicach państwa polskiego*, ed. Andrzej Sakson, Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2006, p. 49.

12 I am referring here to the key narrative-strategy markers of the colonial discourse as discussed by Hanna Gosk in *Opowieści „skolonizowanego/kolonizatora". W kręgu studiów postzależnościowych nad literaturą polska XX i XXI wieku*, Kraków: Universitas, 2010, p. 52.

13 Orłowicz, 'Bułhak nie żyje . . .', p. 14.

14 Karl Schlögel, *W przestrzeni czas czytamy. O historii cywilizacji i geopolityce*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2009, p. 188; English edition: *In Space We Read Time: On the History of Civilization and Geopolitics*, New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2016.

space can be subdued, and once subdued, it becomes a dominion.[15] Considering the documentational practices organised by Orłowicz from this perspective, we can fully appreciate how deeply the homeland-photography discourse had become engaged in realising the goals of state policy.

15 Schlögel, *W przestrzeni . . .*, p. 164.

The Poznań Photographic Community in the Years 1945–1949

The centre that dominated Polish photographic life in the second half of the 1940s was Poznań. Its strength was the active attitude of the local Photography Enthusiasts Association (Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Fotografii, SMF), founded on 28 June 1945. Headed by Włodzimierz Nowakowski, it soon became highly successful due to the administrative support of the Division of Photography, a structure of the Poznań Provincial Office's Department of Culture and Art, established in May 1945. The Association's first local initiative was *Into the Ruins of Poznań*, a series of photographic outings. The resulting documentation became the basis of the first post-war Exhibition of Artistic Photography, which launched on 16 December 1945 at the Wielkopolskie Museum in Poznań. Growing rapidly, the SMF set up two sections: the narrow-film section the elite technical-aesthetic (later artistic) section, headed by Stefan Paradowski, informed by the pre-war photo-club tradition. Among its leading members were Jerzy Strumiński, Fortunata Obrąpalska, Zygmunt Obrąpalski, Zenon Maksymowicz, Stefan Leszczyński, Franciszek Maćkowiak, or Marian Stamm. In early 1946 the SMF felt established well enough to initiate a nationwide programme, the most important manifestation of which was the publication in August 1946 of the first issue of *Świat Fotografii*, marking the start of the post-war history of the Polish photographic press. Under the editorship of Marian Schulz (head of the aforementioned Division of Photography at the Provincial Office), the magazine from the very beginning published materials from all over the country, and its consistent editorial policy had a significant influence on the development of photographic theory in post-war Poland. It was *Świat Fotografii* that published Jan Bułhak's crucial explications of his homeland photography programme, the early theoretical texts of Zbigniew Dłubak, or the first manifestos of Socialist Realism. The nationwide ambitions of the Association's members led to the organisation of a series of artistic exhibitions, hearkening back in their conception to the pre-war photographic salons. The first of those, which showed artists from the region of Wielkopolska and elsewhere, was the 2nd Exhibition of Artistic Photography at the Wielkopolskie Museum in 1946, the highlight of which was a large selection of Jan Bułhak's photographs of the ruins of Warsaw. However, the centralisation of artistic life decreed by the Ministry of Culture and Art from the late 1940s meant that Poznań's primacy was ultimately unsustainable.

Maciej Szymanowicz

The Western Institute

The shift of borders after the Second World War meant that the 'western idea', popular in interwar Poland, supported by Roman Dmowski's National Democracy party, acquired new political significance.

Although the communists were sworn enemies of the national-democratic camp, in the first post-war years they worked closely with its representatives, and the 'western idea', promoted by the nationalists, became a powerful argument in the new regime's claim to legitimacy. Official propaganda exploited the slogan, coined by the Minister for the Regained Territories, Władysław Gomułka, of their 'return to Motherland', as well as the key thesis of the 'western idea': the notion of the newly acquired provinces as having been 'regained', and of the country's new borders as a return to Piast-era Poland.

The leading centre of interdisciplinary western studies after the Second World War was the Western Institute in Poznań, founded in 1945 and run until 1955 by Zygmunt Wojciechowski. Its research areas included history, archaeology, historical linguistics, art history, ethnology, and geography. The idea was to legitimise Poland's existence in its new borders, but also to make the culturally alien territories more familiar to the millions of people migrating here from eastern and central Poland.

One of the Institute's seminal publications in the field of western research was the monumental series of popular-science books, *The Lands of Old Poland*, published from 1948 till 1957. Vast photographic material was created for its purpose by outstanding photographers such as Jan Bułhak, Henryk Hermanowicz, Eugeniusz Kitzmann, or Bronisław Kupiec in the course of research field trips undertaken from 1946. Their photographs combined the postulates of Bułhak's pre-war 'homeland photography' programme with the language of visual propaganda.

The following themes predominated: historical architecture, conveying the notion of the newly acquired western provinces as having always been essentially Polish (stressing their mediaeval/Piast-era history), wartime devastation (e.g. ruined industrial plants), and the beauty of the natural landscape (stressing the territories' historically Polish character and the familiarity of their landscape).

As was stressed in the introduction: 'The purpose of this publication . . . is to spiritually integrate the Polish people with the Regained Lands through a sense that we have returned to our old country'.

Quotation from: Zdzisław Kaczmarczyk, 'Ziemie Staropolskie', *Przegląd Zachodni*, no. 3/4, 1955.

Joanna Kordjak


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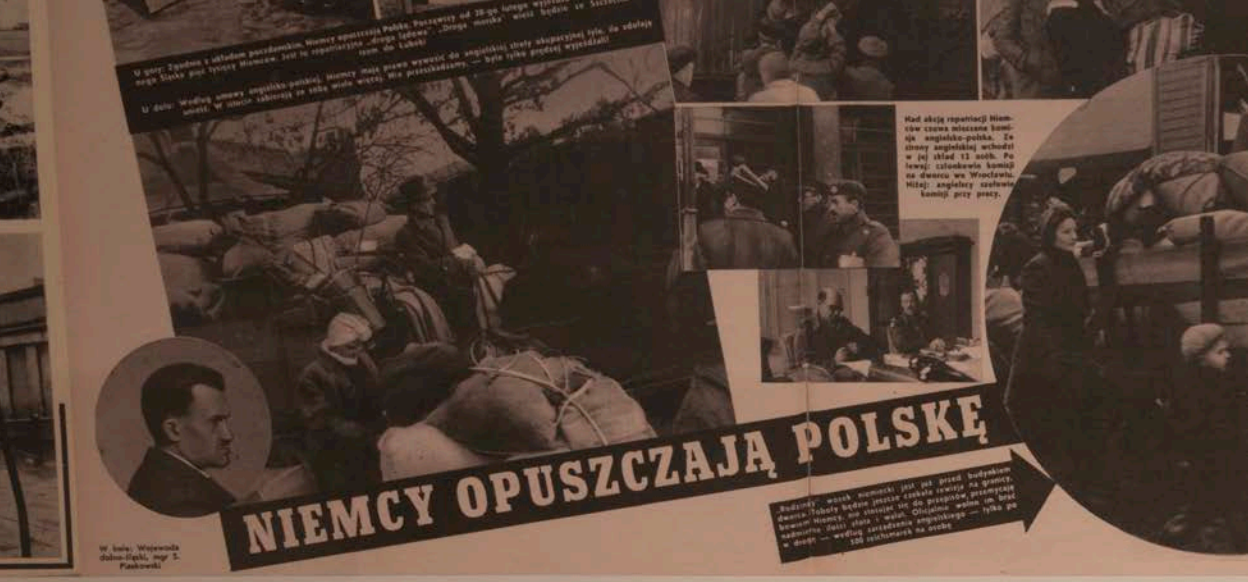
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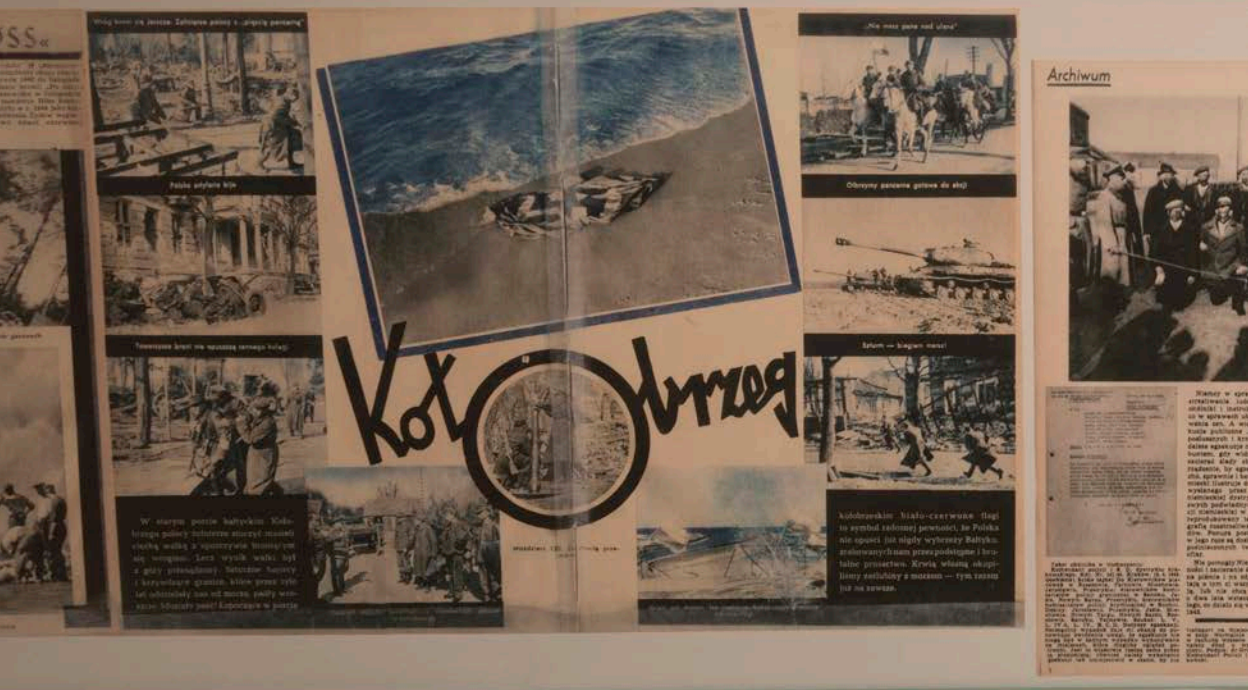
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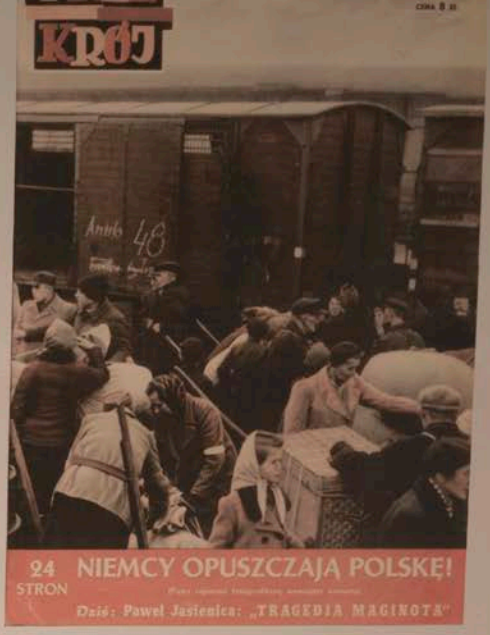
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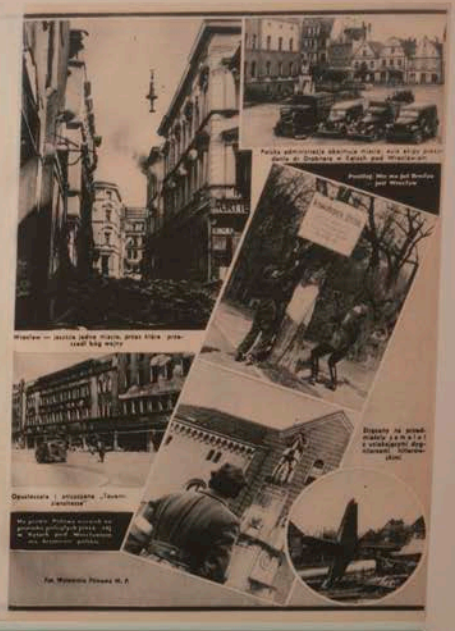

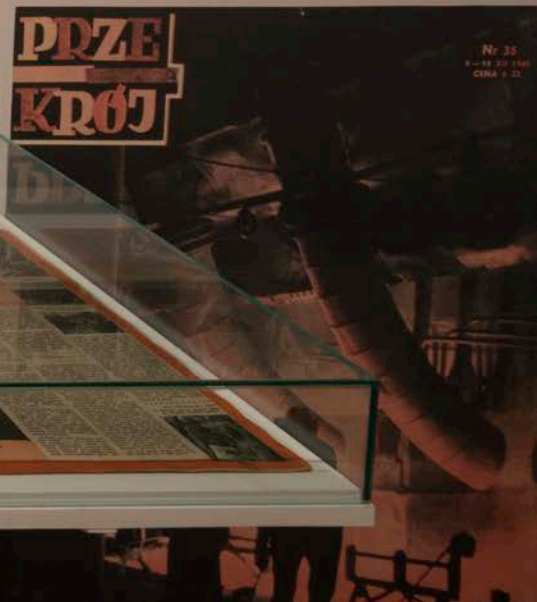
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Regained Territories Exhibition

Held in Wrocław in 1948, the exhibition presented the achievements of a three-year period of reconstruction and development in the so called Regained Territories in many fields of economic and social life. It was People's Poland's first propaganda endeavour on this scale, one that remained unparalleled for years in terms of both grandeur and the quality of its exhibition-design choices. It consisted of three parts: one located at the Four Domes Pavilion and the Centennial Hall (with themed sections such as 'Ruination', 'Unity of Silesia', 'Coal', 'The Odra and Transport', or 'Man'), another one, with pavilions by government ministries, agencies, cooperatives, and trade bodies, focused on farming and industry, at the site now occupied by the Wrocław zoo, and an open-air section at the now non-existent Plac Młodzieżowy, devoted to the reconstruction of Wrocław.

The exhibition was launched by the President of Poland, Bolesław Bierut, in the presence of Józef Cyrankiewicz and Hilary Minc, among other dignitaries. Growing strife within the Politburo meant that the Minister for the Regained Territories, Władysław Gomułka, was missing from the ceremonies. The exhibition was on view from 21 July to 31 October 1948.

The show's art director was Jerzy Hryniewiecki, and its visuals were created by artists such as Jan Cybis, Xawery Dunikowski, Eryk Lipiński, Henryk Tomaszewski, Stanisław Zamecznik, Wojciech Zamecznik, Henryk Stażewski, Jan Bogusławski, Czesław Wielhorski, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Marek Leykam, or Stanisław Hempel.

The economic/industrial section presented products manufactured in the new provinces, the achievements of the engineering, steel, and, especially, mining industries.

Visitors were also confronted with materials concerning the natural conditions and history of the Territories, whose aim was to justify the decision to award them to Poland and shed light on centuries of struggle against German expansionism. Those presentations displayed a particularly high level of intellectual and emotional propagandistic manipulation, and established for the coming years a repertoire of dominant agitprop motifs (Piast-era heritage, 'ancient Slavic oaks', the victory over the Teutonic Knights at Grunwald). The pavilion devoted to the River Odra featured a relief sculpture proclaiming 'The Odra Swooshes in Polish", and a film was screened demonstrating that within German borders the river could not function as a viable waterway and Silesia was 'suffocating' economically. Display charts at the Coal Pavilion illustrated the Germans' 'overexploitation' of the coal mines. In historical terms, the exhibition sought to portray the new provinces as a recent base of German imperialism; it was only under Polish administration that boundless energy could be released for creative and peaceful work: a factory that used to manufacture periscopes for the U-boots now made microscopes for scientists, a former production plant of Zyklon B had switched to artificial fertilisers, the Poles had regained the Baltic ports, which the Germans 'did not need', and so on.

Agnieszka Szewczyk

Jewish Pavilion

After 1945, Lower Silesia became an important centre of Jewish life. Almost half of the survivors had flocked here, starting schools, committees, political parties, and cooperatives. One of the pavilions of the Regained Territories Exhibition was to be devoted to the history of Jewish settlement in the region and the Jews' role in the reconstruction of the new provinces. An exhibition committee, appointed by the Central Committee of Polish Jews, began work in April 1948. The winning pavilion design, distinguished by its classic form, had been submitted by sculptor Haim Hanft, member of the pre-war collective Phrygian Cap. The pavilion was located in the main part of the show. The employment of Jews in industry was an important theme of the display, hence the two relief sculptures flanking the entrance represented scenes from the life of miners. Facing the entrance was a sculpture of a Jewish miner, which after dark was to be illuminated with phosphorus. Jakub Egit, president of the Jewish Committee for Lower Silesia, said that the pavilion 'has to demonstrate to the Polish public and the foreign delegations a new type of Jew, who through his efficient and productive work has earned respect and recognition'. A couple of days before the launch of the Exhibition, a delegation of Polish dignitaries decided to scrap the Jewish presentation and hand the pavilion instead to the Polish Western Union (Polski Związek Zachodni). According to Egit, that was because the 'Council of Ministers hadn't been told about a separate Jewish pavilion, and believes that it is wrong for Jews, citizens of Poland, to separate themselves, effectively creating a ghetto. Jews, the government believes, should present their achievements within the general exhibition'.

The decision was likely dictated by significant changes in the political situation: the establishment of the Israeli state in May 1948 and the Soviet Union's policy towards it, and, domestically, the upcoming unification congress and a policy of centralisation, which meant a new approach to the issue of the Jewish minority.

Quotation from: Bożena Szaynok, 'Krótka historia pawilonu żydowskiego', *Odra*, no. 4, 1996. p. 20.

Agnieszka Szewczyk

Jan Cybis at the Regained Territories Exhibition

Jan Cybis's triptych, *Harbour, Family, Harvest*, occupied a special place at the Regained Territories Exhibition (Wystawa Ziem Odzyskanych, WZO), displayed in three large rectangular white frames/showcases in the main plaza, right by the Spire. Further down the yard leading to the Centennial Hall were presented the works of Bogdan Urbanowicz, Henryk Stażewski, and Jerzy Wolff, and a sculpture by Xawery Dunikowski, praised as the show's most impressive piece.

The Wrocław exhibition coincided with the climax of Cybis's struggle for the institutional recognition of colourism at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. Cybis considered painting the most important component of the classic triad which also included sculpture and architecture; graphic design, influential before the war, was a discipline he disregarded. At the Warsaw academy, Cybis had an ally in the invalid Felicjan Szczęsny Kowarski (who died during the exhibition), author of the widely praised *Proletarians*, also featured in the WZO. So positioned, painting did not fit the conception of 'allegorisation' (equal combination of disciplines) promoted by the show's art director, Jerzy Hryniewiecki, as well as losing against the presented spatial graphic design, but the painter's participation in the WZO certainly boosted his prestige.

The scale and place of presentation of paintings was determined by Hryniewiecki. And both scale and theme were something that Cybis had until then cared little for. His students took them for a token of opportunism and ostentatiously chose the ateliers of Kowarski's former disciples: Kazimierz Tomorowicz and Jan Sokołowski.

The paintings *Harbour* and *Harvest* are a repetition, on a large scale, of Cybis's pre-war principles of composition, but what is striking is the central part of the triptych: *Family*. These parts follow different rules, and the characters, lacking proper painterly 'weight', add to the difference. Both panels convey also different symbolic and political meanings. The upper part of the painting sacralises work and reconstruction, anticipating the compositional logic of Aleksander Kobzdej's *Pass the Brick*; the lower one portends the calm fulfilment of his *Women Bricklayers*. The straight line, which the colourists said did not appear in nature, has been used here to represent the bricks. A rare choice for Cybis, it was necessitated by the scale of the painting. With large formats, his characteristic, virtually 'biological' connection of signature gesture and space-building *tache* is no longer possible. Dense brushstrokes endow these paintings with a personal-document quality, but only if the format is small. Raised by researchers, the question why the colourists used small formats finds its explanation here. Going larger results in pure decorativeness, as in Cybis's mural paintings on a tenement in Lublin in 1954. In *Family*, we encounter an application — unique for his work — of the modernist rhetoric of the plane, dominant for example in the large-format paintings of Piotr Potworowski. Cybis trades the painterly gesture for abstract rules of composition here, and painting for oratorship.

Wojciech Włodarczyk

Xawery Dunikowski's Monument at Góra Świętej Anny

'The history and course of the Polish patriotic struggle since earliest times, the struggle against Germanism — this is what I am passionate about in working on this monument. . . . It has to be epic. Runes carved in granite, on the Mountain, legible for the future generations for many centuries to come'. A competition for the design of the Silesian Uprisings Memorial was announced in November 1945 by Związek Weteranów Powstań Śląskich, a veteran organisation. The location was special. Góra Świętej Anny (Saint Anne Mountain), traditionally known as Chełm, is probably a remnant of an extinct volcano; once a site of Slavic pagan rituals, in the 17th century the Franciscan friars built a pilgrimage monastery here. Some of the fiercest fighting of the Third Silesian Uprising took place here in 1921, and in 1933–1937 the Germans built a monumental architectural complex: a mausoleum with a Hall of the Dead (Totenhalle), with a central statue of a dying warrior, and below an amphitheatre used for Nazi German events and celebrations (the complex was partly demolished after the war).

Dunikowski (and team) produced two competition designs. In the first stage, he undersigned the conception of carving 17-metre-tall figures of Slavic archers in the cliff, and of placing a menhir surrounded by saint figures on top of the hill. In the second stage, he presented a much changed design that was slated for realisation: a monumental, 15-metre-tall construction, called a 'dolmen' in reference to the tradition of the site, consisting of four connected pylons. In the clearing between them stood four figures: of a miner, a steel worker, a farmer, and a Silesian woman with a child. In the centre was a semi-altar with a flame, with a carved Silesian Uprisings Cross and a Grunwald Cross. Above, where the pylons conjoined, were eight Silesian heads. The outer walls were covered by scenes (drawing carved in granite and filled with lead) illustrating the struggle for Polish schooling under German rule, worker protests, German oppression, the uprising battles, or the liberation of Silesia by Polish and Soviet troops. By 1948, the basic structure of the memorial was ready; completion took another seven years, and it opened officially on 19 July 1955.

Quotation from: Maria Flukowska, 'Runy ryte w granicie (Rozmowa z prof. Xawerym Dunikowskim)', *Nowiny Literackie*, no. 17, 1947, p. 6.

Agnieszka Szewczyk

Epilogue

Self-criticism was one of the communist party's ritual instruments of power, especially during the Stalinist period. The tradition of offering a (verbal or written) statement of self-criticism, initiated in the Soviet Union, had its model in post-war Poland in Władysław Gomułka's speech at the Central Committee of the Polish Workers Party's (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR) last plenary session before its unification with the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS) and the establishment of the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR). The PPR leader, Bolesław Bierut, attacked Gomułka on many accounts, including 'rightist-nationalist deviation', and Gomułka was forced to offer self-criticism. His statement was accepted by the Central Committee, but Gomułka was nonetheless gradually dismissed from his various functions, and eventually arrested. The attack against him signalled an upcoming political change — a shift towards the centralisation of the PZPR and its complete subordination to Soviet power.

Gomułka's self-denunciatory speech was followed by a wave of acts of self-criticism, climaxing in 1950. Offering a statement of self-criticism did not guarantee that one's 'sins' would be forgiven, but was a necessary act available to those Party members who had 'deviated'. Such an act had to include the necessary elements: confession of guilt, self-condemnation, desire to repent. It might be offered not only by actual Party members (Wróblewski was a member neither of the PZPR nor earlier of the PPR), but also by the new regime's 'fellow travellers'. Such statements assumed various forms: they were published in periodicals, delivered verbally at Party or union meetings, or offered in letters (Jerzy Borejsza self-criticised himself several times, e.g., in a letter to Jakub Berman).

In the field of art, the need for dissident artists to humble themselves and condemn their wrongful deeds was indicated by Włodzimierz Zakrzewski's 1949 text, *For Party Values in Art*, whose author warned: 'We will not let comrades such as Włodarski, Nita, Lenica, Jaremianka, or Sztern to just continue as if nothing has happened. We will demand self-criticism from them.'

Below we present the texts of five self-critical statements offered by influential personages of the early post-war era, protagonists of this book and exhibition. All were deeply engaged in building the 'new reality'. Constituting the epilogue of this book, these texts are a moving and telling sign of the time that had arrived.

Agnieszka Szewczyk

Mieczysław Berman was a graphic artist and designer, closely associated with the Union of Polish Patriots, for which he designed a book series and the newspaper *Nowe Widnokręgi*, among other things; responsible for the visual style of communist propaganda in the early post-war years.

Jerzy Borejsza was a pre-war communist activist, member of the Communist Party of Poland and later the Polish Workers Party, co-founder of the Union of Polish Patriots, after the war a deputy of the State National Council, a key cultural policymaker, founder of the Czytelnik publishing group, initiator of the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace.

Tadeusz Borowski was a writer, commentator, prisoner of Auschwitz and Dachau, author of veristic camp stories, a member of the 'acne generation' of young radical supporters of the new regime; a PZPR member.

Bohdan Lachert was a modernist architect, member of the Praesens collective, author of the post-war designs of the Muranów housing estate (1948–1956) or the Soviet Military Cemetery in Warsaw (1949–1950); a PPR and later PZPR member.

Andrzej Wróblewski was a painter who debuted after the war, a participant in the 1st Exhibition of Modern Art in Kraków (1948), founder and chief ideologue of Grupa Samokształceniowa, a self-education group opposed to the Kraków academy's teaching system. He set forth a programme of direct realism, 'legible, thematic art aimed at the public at large'.

THE FOLLOWING ARE MINUTES OF A 8 JANUARY 1951 MEETING OF THE POLISH UNITED WORKERS PARTY CELL AT THE UNION OF POLISH ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS (ZWIĄZEK POLSKICH ARTYSTÓW PLASTYKÓW, ZPAP)

[Central Archives of Modern Records]

Present: 36 comrades, including 1 guest, Comrade Piotrowski.

Excused absence: Comrades Strynkiewicz, Wąsowicz, Erna Rozensztejn;

Unexcused absence: Comrades Bernaciński, Daszewski, Kiliszek, Kotowski, Nehringowa, Pawlikowska, Roszkowska, Zdunek.

Minutes taken by: Comrade Narbuttowa and Comrade Błażejowski.

Agenda:

1. Read minutes of previous meeting
2. Comrade Berman's self-critique
3. Free discussion.

The Party collective secretary, Comrade Krajewska, urges comrades to relate to the self-critique with full alertness, for its purpose is to help Comrade Berman overcome his errors and to draw constructive conclusions for the whole cell.

ITEM 1

The minutes from the previous meeting weren't complete. The following corrections have been introduced to Part 1:

Comrade Bielska didn't accuse Comrade Zakrzewski of ascribing the anonymous letter to comrades from the Party cell.

Comrade Lipiński criticised Comrade Berman for political, not artistic, shortcomings.

Comrade Rafałowski exhibited not in Stalingrad but in Kuybyshev, and the word 'equivalent' was used in the context of reminiscences about the 1st Division.

Comrade Zakrzewski spoke of Comrade Sokorski as a member of the Central Committee, but not the Central Committee of the Party.

Comrade Lenica states that Comrade Berman's works for the satire book have been withheld by Party controllers.

Comrade Witz asked why Comrade Berman had written four short biographical notes about the awarded colleagues and a longer one about himself.

Comrade Gozdawa will prepare the Part 2 of the minutes for the next meeting.

Part 1 has been endorsed with revisions.

ITEM 2

Comrade Berman: I was born in 1903. My father was a clerk in private employment. 1912/1913 I attended the Mikołaj Rej School, interrupted by war. During the war, I attended Kopczyński's gymnasium, took my secondary-school graduation exam in 1920. Due to lack of funds, I couldn't study at a regular arts college. I attended drawing courses 1921–1923. For the next two years I worked as a clerk for Ettinger's law firm. 1924–1926 without a regular job. Freelanced as designer of advertising materials and product labels. 1927–1930 employed as a clerk at the Żywiec paper mill, later the paper syndicate. 1930 the theatre critic Tonecki brings me on board the new magazine *1930*. Funded by Winawer, the publisher of Biblioteka Groszowa, contributors include Brzeski, Kamieniecki, Tonecki, and Słobodnik.

With the second issue there was a tendency to politicise the magazine. Tonecki and Słobodnik left. Brzeski and Kamieniecki were for politicisation. I stayed, and the magazine shortly morphed into *Przekrój 1930*, edited by Pański. I had no specific political views. I witnessed and experienced social injustice, understood the existence of class struggle. 1926 saw how unemployed people were treated at the job centre and similar things, and that probably made me decide to support the right cause.

The publisher Winawer got interested in me and commissioned me to design a cover for Romain Rolland's *Gandhi*. I made contact with the Fruchtman and Rój publishing houses. Design work for publishers attracted me. *Przekrój 1930* went down following a number of arrests. Comrade Brzeski offered me work: layouts, photomontages. I worked for *Kuźnia* and *Światło*, published in Łódź and Bydgoszcz. Met Emil Schürer. The periodicals were short-lived, many people got arrested, and not necessarily the most active ones. I managed to avoid persecution thanks probably to my own discretion (I won't call this conspiring), Brzeski was usually my only contact. In 1932, on Brzeski's recommendation, a man known as Tolek got me in touch with *Ze Świata*, which was to be an illustrated magazine in the vein of *Wiadomości Literackie*. During this period I met a number of visual artists: the Krajewski couple, Gede, Rafałowski. I was directed to Daszewski to arrange materials for a caricature on Słonimski. Political matters weren't discussed with me, and I didn't start such discussions either. I was a loner, preoccupied with what I did, I supported the right cause, and that satisfied me. I never used lack of time as an excuse, and people never complained about me. Following the collapse of *Ze Świata*, I worked for *Dwutygodnik Ilustrowany*, 1933 or 1934.

Commercial work during this time: I designed a poster, *Sugar Strengthens*, but no feeling of embarrassment. It was my first major job for industry. I did numerous book cover designs: *Knickerbrocker*, *Red Trade Looming*, *Red Trade Tempting* — liberal tendencies, I thought it helped. I didn't read many of the books I did covers for anyway. I designed one cover that I am ashamed of, Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. None of my editorial colleagues had warned me about this . It wasn't the only book of the kind. I did covers for Solone, Pilnyuk, Tretyako. I'd put a lot of artistic ambition into the Trotsky piece. In 1934, I did a caricature on the renegades of socialism for *Dwutygodnik Ilustrowany*: an image of a playing card with the figures of Trotsky and Kautsky. In 1932 or 1933 I designed a poster for a government bond. For the first time I wondered if that was alright in the context of the work I did for political organisations. Asked Brzeski for opinion. Brzeski replied after some that he had passed the question on, and that was it. He continued to give me work.

In 1935 I was summoned for a hearing before a public prosecutor for political matters. He asked about *Głosy i Odgłosy*, which I never worked for. Now I was on file. In 1934 the union organisation at Igła asked me to design decorations, probably at the recommendation of Schürer and Brzeski. There I met Wika Rajchmanowa, who was close to the Red Lantern. Finding the decorations interesting, she introduces me to the Workers Studio at the corner of Marszałkowska and Sienkiewicza Streets, which brought together young people from blue- and white-collar families. I designed scenery for a play by Kirshon, a renegade as it later turned out, but the censors arrested the show anyway. I was approached by Mieczysław Bibrowski at the Workers Studio who wanted me to organise a group of leftwing visual artists. I replied that I didn't know too many, and that Rafałowski and Daszewski were much better acquainted with their milieu. But Bibrowski insisted. In May 1934, I met with Krajewski, Bobowski, Miller, Gede, Tynowicki, Herman, forming the nucleus of a group. Dawid Hopensztand visited us. We talked about art. Two years later, under Hopensztand's custody, a small exhibition of works was organised. Bobowski as an inhabitant of Żoliborz negotiated with the Czapka Frygijska which undersigned the exhibit at the Gospoda WSM in Żoliborz. The show met with some interest, and a survey was organised. Wallis in his review called it an 'exhibition of leftwing artists'. Bobowski and Szerer were arrested. Before 1 August, I was arrested too, along with his brother, a member of the communist youth organisation KZM. I was released after several weeks. The idea was conceived of staging an exhibition of antifascist artists, but it never came to fruition. During this time, Comrades Rafałowski and Daszewski convened a founding meeting of the visual arts section of the Human Rights Defence League. Comrade Daszewski chaired, Comrade Rafałowski made a speech. The League was soon disbanded. In 1935 the Party stopped publishing semi-legal periodicals. The popular-front newspapers, *Oblicze Dnia* and *Dziennik Popularny*, were launched. Many drawings were confiscated, few got actually published. 1937 *Czarno na Białym* was started, but I never worked for them. In the same year, on Krajewski's initiative, a larger exhibition was organised at the Robotnik space and the WSM Rakowiec. I didn't participate because I work slowly and I had nothing new to show. I had exhibitions back in 1936 in Żoliborz and in Kraków (the latter with Parecki and Linke). The exhibition in Kraków was kept under lock and key at all times, supposedly due to lack of visitors. Leftwing Kraków formalists expressed interest in the show and then criticised it harshly. Kruczkowski and Polewka contributed to the discussion. I kept in touch with Gede and Bobowski. The Krajewski couple in 1938 were out of town.

Commercial work: in 1933 I designed a poster for gun and pistol bullets for Pocisk company. The poster won awards at home and abroad, where it was exhibited by the association of commercial graphic designers KAGR. I won a gold medal for it. I took part in two KAGR exhibitions, in 1935 and 1936. Wajwód approached me to participate in a KAGR show in Berlin, but this time I refused. KAGR was a professional association, and tendencies to transform it into an *arbeitsamt*-style employment agency, like in Germany (an idea floated by Prof. Bartłomiejczyk), were cut short by Gronowski. In 1938 I worked for the pharmaceuticals industry, met Lipiński. At the end of the year, I designed Wańkowicz's book on the Central Industrial District. *Sztafeta* [Relay], it was meant as a school textbook. Towards the end of the project, the book began morphing into a periodical, and the author introduced the theme of Zaolzie. When I protested, they said I'd signed a contract.

When war broke out, I evacuated to Białystok on 14 October. There I couldn't earn a living due to the absence of publishing business. I went to Lviv and reported immediately to the Artists Union. There I met Rafałowski and Daszewski, and got to know Stern, Włodarski, Radnicki, Rzepiński, and Witz. I worked for *Czerwony Sztandar* with Schürer, Brzeski, Grosz, and Ważyk. The Kraków formalists

held away at the Artists Union. In 1940, I joined the *orgkomitet* with graphic artists Iwanycz, Pałas, Glazner, and Tyrowicz. When passportisation had begun, my right to stay in Lviv was rescinded. Kolski and Izdański intervened for me. I was warned not to sleep at home, but I didn't listen. I felt it would be embarrassing to use a tactic that reminded me of hiding from preventive arrests back in Warsaw. I was deported to the Vologda oblast, where I stayed compulsorily for 18 months. I received material assistance from artists and editorial colleagues in Lviv. Pasternak's invitation to come to Moscow reached me when Moscow was evacuating. I worked instead at a local railway newspaper, and was emotionally moved by the trust I'd been shown there. But after making a larger number of drawings in advance, I went to Penza to register with the Polish army. Learning in Kuybyshev that only former servicemen were being recruited, I went to a kolkhoz in the Kyrgiz Republic. Worked there building canals etc. In 1942 I went through typhus. During that time, I made written contact through Pasternak and Grosz with *Nowe Widnokręgi*. Received financial assistance. On 8 May, Wanda Wasilewska spoke through the radio about the formation of the 1st Kościuszko Division, and I understood that a democratic movement had arisen. On 17 May, I was summoned by the local military office and told I was going to the Polish division. When I'd reached the division in Kuybyshev, Pasternak sent me to Major Sokorski and Major Minc. Under the direction of the 1st Regiment DCO, Naszkowski, I organised an arts workshop at the dayroom. Rafałowski arrived and was appointed the division's chronicler. Two months later, Sokorski dispatched me to Moscow, to the Union of Polish Patriots. I worked as the art director of *Nowe Widnokręgi* from November 1943 to March 1946. During that time, I also did many other designs, logos etc. Excellent working conditions allowed me to study art and make art. I produced two portfolios of drawings and photomontages, many of which were eventually published by *Nowe Widnokręgi*. In 1945, former Party members and activists were urged to register, But I didn't feel entitled.

On 21 March 1946, I arrived in Warsaw. Comrade Werfel sent me to the Ministry of Information and Propaganda, where I took over the AP, although I didn't feel suited for this kind of visual propaganda work. In end-May 1946, I applied for Party membership. I'd been pondering for over a month before deciding to apply, for I believed I had to be ready and I wasn't sure if I was. The recommending members were Billig and Anzelm's then wife, I don't remember her name. I was acquainted for the first time with regular Party life in our conditions. I attended the Visual Artists Section meetings occasionally at best. In 1947, the Ministry of Information was dissolved, and I was entrusted with illustrating a weekly magazine published by the Youth Struggle Union (Związek Walki Młodych, ZWM). But I couldn't work with young people. As the assets of the former AP were being transferred to the ZWM cooperative, I got involved in an employment-related dispute, the case was referred to the Party, and I received an official reprimand, a fact I disclosed when being co-opted to the cell executive. In early 1948, Comrade Wągrowski commissioned me to edit the periodical *Wolne Narody*. I did that for two years. Contributors included Comrades Brus, Wroński, and others. In 1948 I took active part in the emerging movement of Socialist Realism in the visual arts.

In the second half of 1949, there was the matter of artistic publications. I joined the editorial team of *Przegląd Artystyczny*. I consider my work there unsatisfactory. I didn't appreciate the magazine's serious profile, and was unable to put myself second and the common cause first. This caused friction between me and Comrade Krajewska, which I deeply regret. I didn't how to work as a member of a collective. This threatened to affect the magazine's functioning, put his performance of professional and Party duties at risk, and made collective work difficult; I failed as a member of the collective. I didn't understand the principles of ZPAP life. I have poor knowledge of the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, I need to do better in this regard. But the collective didn't leave me alone. The executive and the editorial team reprimanded me harshly, which had an educational effect. The comrades helped me a lot. I had learned how to better control my emotions, but I had still not developed proper vigilance for editorial material. The question of the awards I've already explained. I was motivated by a sense of personal grievance, my behaviour being unworthy of a Party member. I believe one should stick very much to the Party postulates, albeit in a tactful and political manner. When the case of Bogusz was discussed, I lost my temper at some point and said to Comrade Dłubak that, 'we'll deal with' — it was rude, unworthy of a Party member. I'm not a young man, I work hard to be an activist, and I must remember what obligations this entails. I didn't understand my colleagues and comrades from the visual arts community.

My most serious error was avoiding self-criticism. Self-criticism is very helpful in a Party member's education. I ignored this. One should speak frankly about one's past mistakes. The circumstances were favourable. No detailed CV was re-

quired of me when I was applying for membership. The organisation of the Ministry of Information was crude. When I was being transferred to the Visual Arts Section, no CV was required either. When in spring last year comrades were registering for self-criticism, I acted cowardly, failed to step forward. I was urged to offer a self-critique. And very well. I'd violated Party discipline by procrastinating, and I should definitely be dismissed from the executive. This was my greatest fault, and I now ask the cell members to judge me.

DISCUSSION

• Comrade Szancer asks if the executive knew about Comrade Berman's biography when accepting him for the executive?

• Comrade Krajewska: He was elected in an open ballot, wasn't required to present a CV, some comrades knew him from before the war.

• Comrade Słomczyński: I worked for a long time at the Central Committee, heard many self-critiques, usually they are no more than 20 minutes long. Comrade Berman offers so many details, but barely scratches the surface. He is unenthusiastic about every kind of work. So what kind of work is he enthusiastic about? He doesn't remember the name of one of his recommending members — that's a basic duty for a Party member.

• Comrade Berman: Perhaps I wasn't able to explain properly. Without enthusiasm I wouldn't be able to work. There was no financial motivation; I never took money from leftwing organisations. The recommending comrade was Comrade Billig's later wife, I don't remember her name, this is indeed a negligence on my part.

• Comrade Szancer: Speaking of enthusiasm, Comrade Berman probably meant an inner conviction for a particular category of works, consistent with an artist's inner moral code. A positive attitude to work in general is another matter. What matters for an artist is how his views have been shaped. It's not enough to say one freelanced. He doesn't discern between working for *Sztafeta* and ideological work. There was a realisation somewhere: I don't work for money, I work for People's Poland. Leading Party members made bad choices. Today this is remembered with a smile. I urge Comrade Berman to speak frankly about this to his advantage, I'm sure he his moments of enthusiasm.

• Comrade Berman: I freelanced in the advertising industry, work I didn't like. I could have left, but for that I wasn't class-conscious enough. I was just a member of the intelligentsia, earning my living, but I also had beautiful moments when I was able to help idealistic people. There were those who were called the 'living-room communists', I wasn't one of those, I never flaunted my leftism. I did work for idealistic people with enthusiasm. Working in the Soviet Union was a most wonderful experience. It felt so natural. At the kolkhoz, I didn't work well. Stalingrad, the idea of People's Poland — those were exciting moments, and I worked with enthusiasm. But this isn't something that I openly display. I came back to Poland and started working immediately. My dream has always been satire. In the past, I couldn't devote myself to that, I wasn't as heroic as Wasilewski to live for 40 zlotys a month. And today I often have to do other things. Perhaps my skills are better used in this way. Everything is good that serves People's Poland.

• Comrade Krajewski: Comrade Słomczyński is wrong. A detailed self-critique is well intended. As for enthusiasm: one wouldn't have been able to work for illegal periodicals without enthusiasm. Comrade Berman has rightly characterised the petit-bourgeois class, which might declare support for the communist cause without changing its lifestyle. The period spent in the Soviet Union was a breakthrough in Berman's education. He became aware of his encumbrances. Applying for Party membership upon returning to Poland was a logical step. Far more serious are the later errors, which suggest that old habits die hard. This is our fault as well — we don't admonish one another frankly enough in the struggle for Socialist Realism. Once upon a time Comrade Berman rebuked me when I'd succumbed to the fallacy of formalism. But he didn't appreciate the role of self-criticism. It is the cell's fault too. We have failed to create an atmosphere of helpful criticism. We should therefore draw conclusions of a more general nature from Berman's self-critique.

• Comrade Siemaszkowa: It is as if Comrade Berman was always acting under constraint. He finished the Wańkowicz job because he 'had to'. If these are his private affairs, this isn't our business, but now that he's a Party member, we must be concerned. The comrades mentioned by Berman knew of his errors, why didn't they demand his CV when electing him to the executive? They knew what he'd received an international award for, and still they vouched for him. Berman has been our faultless political manager. The editorial team members are covering up his cheap past.

• Comrade Mangelowa: I met Comrade Berman in Moscow through Comrades Pański and Modzelewski who recommended him as a close acquaintance. I was of the best opinion of his conduct which indicated no encumbrances. His presence on the

executive didn't surprise me. He always spoke very favourably of Soviet art. I think he was too modest in recounting his achievements.

• Comrade Lipiński: Comrad Berman was in close touch with Comrades Krajewski, Bobowski, Gede, Parecki, and others. Did they urge him to join the Party without trying to make him mend his ways? That would be an argument against them.

• Comrade Berman: No one sought to recruit me. I didn't understand the significance of the movement, lacked the necessary consciousness, and wasn't eager to join at all. Fellow artists didn't ask me about it, such things were usually left unsaid. Party members like Brzeski or Bibrowski may have asked. Apparently those were sought out who offered prospects of becoming functionaries.

• Comrade Gozdawa: Those joining the executive have been required to present a CV only since the 3rd Plenum. Offering a self-critique is a great experience. Comrade Berman isn't as eloquent as others, isn't such a great orator as Comrade Szancer. But his self-critique was honest and practical.

• Comrade Szancer: I like what Comrade Krajewski said. There is a lot of bad feeling in the cell, and constructive criticism and mutual confidence are lacking. Trifle matters have often been discussed while important ones have been passed over. Conclusions from Comrade Berman's self-critique should be drawn by the members of the executive, for they know him better.

• Comrade Zakrzewski: Berman asked for the Party to judge his self-critique. We should therefore judge his life and our role in it, for we are more than friends, we are his Party comrades, fellow members of the Party cell. The decision to offer a self-critique wasn't an easy one for Berman, and was actually made only in recent weeks. Today he doesn't deny his errors, which were twofold: firstly, he did covers for Trotsky and others, and this is something we must be concerned about; and secondly, he avoided self-criticism. No one, let alone an activist, should withhold important facts from the Party. He himself called it cowardice. Let me cite an example from my own life. Before the war, in prison, I admitted under torture to being a member of the communist youth organisation. I withheld the fact when joining the PPR. Only when I'd learned that the man who'd informed on me was still operative somewhere did I fight down the harmful thought and report everything to the Party authorities. You mustn't withhold the dark sides of your life from the Party. Comrade Siemaszkowa sees no light at all in Berman's life. She speaks of a 'cheap life'. Is working for illegal periodicals a cheap thing? Actively opposing formalism? I worked with Berman in the field of propaganda and was sharply rebuked by him for formalism. Berman was one of the initiators of the struggle for Socialist Realism. His vigilance often saved the day. It would be blindness not to see this. Why does Comrade Słomczyński believe that Berman is not showing enough enthusiasm? Now, as regards *Przegląd Artystyczny*. The distribution of the awards was a serious error. The executive wasn't vigilant enough. He knew about it and didn't blow the whistle. Comrade Krajewski is right that Berman doesn't discern between private interests and Party matters. Contrary to what Comrade Szancer said, we discussed many important current issues. But we had failed in our duty to work individually on those comrades who needed it. Comrade Berman was sharply reprimanded for his editorial work. But we made more mistakes. Comrade Bielska as the secretary of the Basic Party Unit, made the very serious error of offering a self-critique at the executive meeting and withdrawing it at the cell meeting. But she reproached the executive for having become elitist, for not paying attention to the collective, that we didn't list to her pleas for help, and she was right on that score. Berman's editorial work is a proof of the executive's lack of alertness. Conclusions stemming from the self-critique we have just heard should be formulated by the whole cell, not just the executive.

• Comrade Siemaszkowa: I apologise to Comrade Berman for using the term 'cheap past'. It was a slip of tongue.

• Comrade Witz: The self-critique was incomplete. I was waiting for explanations till the end. I'm referring to the last issue of *Przegląd Artystyczny*. On the third page Comrade Berman put a portrait of Comrade Bierut by Comrade Krajewska. It was a very bad portrait, of which he immediately informed Comrade Łyżwański. In Borowski's article again the same issues that came up in the case of the state awards. The reasons for this go deeper. The executive has been working for too long. It has disconnected from the Party masses. Comrades are appointed for responsible posts without being thoroughly checked. When important matters are at hand, the executive should meet twice a month. The editorial team should accept the inspection of a wider Party collective, it will help avoid further errors and unnecessary costs. The atmosphere is stifling, it's time to open some windows. Self-critiques were reported last spring, they need to be resumed.

• Comrade Szwacz: Comrade Zakrzewski concluded that Comrade Siemaszkowa and Comrade Szancer are wrong. A self-critique has been performed, but

in the course of discussion many previously unknown facts emerge.

• Comrade Pomorska: Everything should be frankly disclosed to the cell. Wasn't Comrade Witz motivated by prejudice when questioning the quality of the photo of Comrade Bierut? Wasn't it a personal attack?

• Comrade Witz: No.

• Comrade Szancer: I agree with Comrade Zakrzewski that there were many important matters at hand. But I don't understand how Berman fought for Socialist Realism when it is German expressionism that informs him. In fact, when is there formalism in photomontage? These are hieroglyphs, ultimate formalism. The articles in *Przegląd* don't raise the issue convincingly enough. Things aren't looking well for Socialist Realism in our context.

• Comrade Lipiński: Are there more pros than cons in Comrade Berman's self-critique? Comrade Zakrzewski tried to blur the lines here, doing him a disservice.

• Comrade Krajewska: It is the first time such a harsh self-critique has been submitted in our cell. Comrade Berman has judged himself most sternly, says he is guilty of acting to the detriment of the Party, and demands being removed from the executive. He feels it was unfair for Comrade Słomczyński, speaking first, to say that his self-critique had been verbose but cursory. A detailed curriculum vitae certainly offers a fuller picture and we can't hold it against him. You can't do it in 20 minutes. Can we call opportunistic someone who on his own accord helped the progressive movement? He could have been indifferent. Comrade Lipiński is worried by the attitude of those comrades who, knowing Berman, didn't alarm him and didn't try to recruit him. Me, my husband, Gede, and Bobowski were members of the Życie organisation, which operated in the academic world. I read Trotsky's book without paying any attention to its cover or author; in fact, I don't remember having a clear view on Trotsky back in 1932. The fact of combining commercial occupations with ideological work was normal for the progressive intelligentsia, necessitated by the realities of life — which doesn't mean that every kind of involvement in the apparatus of class oppression was acceptable. Comrade Berman was in close touch with Gede and Bobowski; me and my husband were away from Warsaw for about two years (1936–1938). We should pay particular attention to the practical 'course' in Socialist Realism that Comrade Berman underwent in the Soviet Union and from this point of view judge, as sternly as possible, his activities in recent years, for he appears here as a conscious Party member. That's why I consider the punishment that Comrade Berman has suggested for himself as a measure of his understanding of Party discipline, and I support the motion to remove him from the executive. There have been numerous faults in the executive's style of work, as a result of which the cell is in a bad condition today. The executive understood the importance of the matters facing it during the period of the intense struggle against formalism, but it failed to see the people beyond those matters; limiting itself to short-term mobilisation, it neglected the goal of improving and educating the cell as a whole. Comrade Witz says that the executive has been working for too long — that's right, it's been unable to cope with its mounting workload, and it needs to be added that it has received no support from the higher Party structures in adjusting its work style. A reorganisation of the Basic Party Unit is necessary, and it will now soon happen. Comrade Witz isn't right to raise the matter of the last issue of *Przegląd*, he shouldn't have done it, but that's another story. Since we are talking about it, let me explain: it wasn't the editorial team's intention to specially expose my work as Comrade Witz is suggesting; rather, the team was waiting for a portrait from the exhibition, and then decided that a fragment of my painting was better than any of those portraits, which doesn't mean that it was perfect. Borowski was criticised for highlighting Comrade Berman's work in his article — that was unjustified given his encumbrances, the editorial team didn't pay attention to that, for the author had discussed many facts from the history of Polish satire that I wasn't aware of, just as I wasn't aware of Comrade Berman's work in this field. Comrade Szancer imputes formalism to Comrade Berman, we'll be talking about it, and it will help us in our struggle for Socialist Realist art. Returning to Comrade Berman's self-critique, my proposition is to endorse the motion he himself has proposed.

• Comrade Krajewski: None of us was a Party member before the war so we couldn't have been trying to recruit Comrade Berman. Our duty is to judge Comrade Berman's good and bad sides. A number of comrades didn't show such tendencies. Remarks such as that the executive is covering up for Comrade Berman or that we need to open the windows do not reflect a striving to judge, in a true Party spirit, the record of the cell and its individual members. I don't agree that the editorial team was motivated by personal reasons when choosing Comrade Krajewska's portrait for publication. You can suspect me of such personal motivations with regard to Comrade Krajewska, but I still mean what I just said.

• Comrade Rafałowski: Comrade Berman's self-critique was narrative in form. He should have rather focused on specific issues and explained his position on them from today's perspective. Someone mentioned a sense of intimidation in what he said, but failed to mention the faults of the executive which worked with him on a regular basis.
• Comrade Witz: I move for the upcoming issues of *Przegląd* to be edited by an expanded team.
• Comrade Siemaszkowa: Why did the editorial team tell Comrade Berman to publish a note about the award for the poster without discussing the work in detail?

• Comrade Zakrzewski: It was my suggestion, because the award was for the quality of the work rather than its theme.

The executive will draw up a conclusion concerning Comrade Berman's self-critique; the key theses of the conclusion will be put to a vote at today's meeting.
1. The cell finds the self-critique satisfactory.
2. The cell acknowledges Comrade Berman's faults.
3. The cell resolves to remove him from the cell's executive.

Item 1 — unanimously; item 2 — unanimously; item 3 — one vote against, two abstaining.

At this the meeting was concluded.

Warsaw, 10 January 1951
signed:
Secretary of the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) Cell at the Union of Polish Artists and Designers (ZPAP)
[H. Krajewska]
5 February 1951

RESOLUTION OF THE ZPAP PZPR CELL
concerning the self-critique offered by Comrade Mieczysław Berman at the cell meeting on 8 January 1951, in the presence of 36 comrades, including 17 members of the Basic Party Unit (Podstawowa Organizacja Partyjna, POP) of the ZPAP Warsaw District and one guest, Comrade Piotrowski, with 3 members absent and excused (including 2 POP members) and 8 absent and unexcused (including one POP member).

1. The ZPAP Party cell declares that Comrade Berman's self-critique was marked by a sense of responsibility towards the Party, and resolves to judge his work as a Party member on its basis.
2. The cell acknowledges serious faults on Comrade Berman's part: a) he had cowardly avoided voluntarily judging his pre-war commercial work (e.g. the cover for Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, the poster for Pocisk, and Wańkowicz's *Sztafeta*); b) while a member of the cell and its executive since October 1948 and one of the initiators of our struggle for Socialist Realist art, Comrade Berman had failed, as a member of the *Przegląd Artystyczny* editorial team, to overcome his petit-bourgeois habits and personal ambitions (the mention of the state awards in the issue no. 7/8/9, the second part of Borowski's feature on satire, lack of sense of collective responsibility for the magazine); c) as a member of the cell executive, Comrade Berman had failed to find the right attitude towards his fellow cell members (addressing Comrade Dłubak with the words 'we'll deal with'), thus fostering a harmful atmosphere of mistrust between the activists and the other cell members; he had demonstrated with his work style that he is below the level required of a cell activist and a member of is executive.
3. The cell resolves to remove Comrade Berman from the executive and commends him to work intensely on grasping the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism as well as on restraining in daily Party work his negative character traits for his own education and for the benefit of the Party.
4. At the same time, the cell finds that the blame for Comrade Berman's belated self-critique lies in large part with the cell executive, for it became overly focused on the group of the activists, failing to sufficiently educate and improve the rest of the cell members, as well as neglecting criticism and self-criticism as important factors in Party education.
5. The cell finds that one of the basic reasons of the unsatisfactory style of the cell's work is a defective organisational structure, and urges the cell executive to speed up the reorganisation of the cell according to the statute of our Party and its policy line on the domestic visual arts.

5 February 1951
for the Cell Executive
H. Krajewska
Passed unanimously

STENOGRAPHIC RECORD, PLENARY MEETING, CENTRAL COMMITTEE, POLISH UNITED WORKERS PARTY (POLSKA ZJEDNOCZONA PARTIA ROBOTNICZA, PZPR), 31 AUGUST–3 SEPTEMBER 1948
SELF-CRITIQUE OF JERZY BOREJSZA, 2 SEPTEMBER
[Central Archives of Modern Records]

COMRADE BOREJSZA:
The first thing is the cultural trend. All our discussions about it, the critiques and self-critiques we offered in this regard, were often shallow and random; we criticised others and ourselves for this or that book, for this or that erroneous press article.

The cultural trend, I believe, is a function of the Party's strategy and tactic in the field of class struggle, and of the Party's economic and political problem. I believe that the July Party Plenum and the draft Politburo resolution allow us, as culture professionals, to more closely examine our errors in this respect and reflect more thoroughly on the prospects of opposing petit-bourgeois culture, which unfortunately has played a hegemonic role in many aspects of our work, with a socialist type of culture. Comrades, it is not my intention to put the blame for my own errors on people formally responsible for the whole of cultural policy. I won't speak of the faults committed in the other fields, in the field of education, or radio, or theatre, or any other, including the Party press and publications. I offered a self-critique twice following the June Plenum, seeking a way out of our often erroneous zigzagging in cultural policy. Comrades, I don't consider offering a self-critique and openly speaking of one's own errors instead of blaming others as something humiliating or derogating the ambitions of a Party member. When we start criticising, we need to start with ourselves. Last year we as culture professionals in Poland were still stuck in a blind corner, and we were seeking a way out of it. I believe, let me repeat, that it was only the June Plenum that offered such an exit, but still in the stretch of the cultural front that I was responsible for the following errors had been committed.

Firstly, we approached mechanically rather than dialectically the matter of the three sectors in Poland, and our propaganda had been positioned in such a way as if the petit-bourgeois sector was permanent, as if we needed to fawn on and kowtow to it. Hence in the press and publications that I managed there was often this tendency to butter up the petit-bourgeois sector.

Second error: we prolonged the period of liberalism and the neutralisation of the petit bourgeoisie without putting forward a bold and courageous element of socialist culture. We were liberal towards snobbish intellectuals and liberal in accepting allegedly and pseudo-Marxist enunciations in our press. Since Comrade Żółkiewski didn't offer a self-critique yesterday for his May Day article in *Kuźnica*, which was completely non-Marxist, I hereby offer a self-critique for Comrade Żółkiewski's article in the May Day issue of *Kuźnica*, and I state that it was me who had cleared the piece for publication.

Third thing: we were too timid in popularising the Soviet Union. We didn't promote it boldly enough. Once, when I'd 'plucked up the courage', as it were, to publish Comrade Zhdanov's essay in *Odrodzenie*, there were those who said it was against the Central Committee line. Yes comrades, there were such situations. I believe we underestimate the potential for promoting the Soviet Union among the masses: if 75,000 copies of Nyekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* sold out in a couple of days, this means there is a lot to be done in this respect, and we've been timid.

Fourthly, we failed to evaluate the Party's role and hegemony in the general line of work that I did.

Fifthly, in the sector where I worked we tolerated ideological indistinctness with regard to literature and art, and we accepted for publication articles that had nothing to do with Marxist literary criticism and were predicated on false, neopositivistic, formalistic premises. Our critical evaluation of literary works was often guided by personal considerations rather than ideological markers. That was the case with Comrade Kruczkowski's play, a harmful play, where because of our personal relations with Comrade Kruczkowski we didn't allow it to be frankly criticised.

And the last thing, where I feel personally guilty. Awarding too much importance to organisational forms and issues while neglecting the ideological and Party-related aspects of what one does.

Comrades, this self-critique wouldn't be honest if I didn't mention the recent Congress of Intellectuals. Although I wasn't personally responsible for the line-up of the delegation, I nonetheless wish to state that it was a mistake that it included only 12 Party members, and that we were too late to add Comrade Fiedler, the chief editor of *Nowe Drogi*, to the list. That, I believe, was a mistake. But this, comrades, was just an episode and it's not the point here. The point is that our delegation included 12 Party members, but still some University presidents, people who'd been vouched for by the Party, walked out of the room when the resolution was voted on.

Comrades, I am far from belittling what has been done. By no means do I want, in the fervour of this self-critique, to disparage the things that have been achieved in all sectors of our cultural work. What I want to say is that clarity on the peasant issue, clarity on the prospect of moving from popular democracy to socialism, will allow us organisationally and ideologically to effect a change on the cultural front.

After this self-critique I'd like to mention three more issues.

Firstly, Comrade Bartek-Baryła's address yesterday. I'd like to say that it strangely reminded me of Professor Julian Huxley's speech at the Congress of Intellectuals. It was equally opaque and equally wrong because first of all Comrade Bartek tried to agree with the item no. 5 of the Politburo resolution in such a way as if the said item no. 5 concerned the entirety of the PPR's activities and the entirety of its record. I believe that throwing the baby out with the bathwater like this is an incorrect and harmful thing to do.

Secondly, comrades, I consider Comrade Bartek's address yesterday as incorrect because those comrades who are co-responsible for the [rise of the] rightist group often make things easier for themselves on this tribune by lashing out at Comrade Wiesław, as if they weren't co-responsible for his deviation. This is making things easier for oneself, comrades. I believe that those comrades who since the June Plenum have been criticising Comrade Wiesław, spreading rumours and stirring resentment against him, that these comrades should start with themselves rather than with Comrade Wiesław. I wish to mention in particular that I myself said a reckless thing in my conversation with Comrade Kozłowska a day after the Plenum, and my words were related to Comrade Wiesław not to calm him down, but to aggravate him, in a distorted, false form.

Comrades, after the June Plenum I picked up a book and started reading Lenin's discussions with the Mensheviks. And I noticed an interesting thing: I saw that when Lenin comes forward with a clear, simple, political message, his opponents the Mensheviks begin to reply him like: But in a conversation with so and so you said this or that — and in a conversation with so and so you offended so and so — and in a conversation with . . . As if that was the heart of the matter. What is characteristic for the rightist group is that they try to reduce ideological, fundamental issues to rumours, intrigues, and an atmosphere of sycophancy.

There was a lot of kowtowing to the Plenum and the Politburo's resolution on Comrade Wiesław. Now I feel the distasteful voices of some comrades from the rightist group, their superficial fawning to the Politburo resolution.

Another matter I'd like to bring up is the address that Comrade Kowalski gave yesterday. I am returning to this address, comrades, because we mustn't allow the struggle against the nationalist and rightist deviation to push the Party into the positions of sham nationalism, of the negation of national interests, the true and sole bearer of which is our Party. Comrade Kowalski offered a self-critique yesterday concerning the Odra-Nysa line. I believe that a self-critique pertaining to whether or not we trust the Soviet Union and Slovakia on the Odra-Nysa issue can only be superficial because it fails to see this border for what it is: a result of the development of Marxist reflection, Marxist practice, and the historical revolutionary perspective. It is anti-Marxist because it stems from a lack of understanding of Marx and Engels's position after 70 years on the role of the east and historical processes, and from a lack of understanding that the Odra-Nysa border is a result of the fact that the revolution's centre of gravity has shifted to those countries that we represent, among others. It is anti-Soviet, for it undermines confidence in the Soviet policy and leadership, presenting very serious agreements as a tactical game, as a weathervane. It is, comrades, anti-Party, because these borders have been given to the Polish people by our Party, which didn't resettle the millions of people there so that someone could declare from the Central Committee tribune today that it's just a petty game, dependent on how things develop in Germany.

And the third thing I'd like to discuss.

On the morrow after the June Plenum, not at anyone's instigation but on my own accord, I went to Comrade Wiesław and told him. What this conversation meant for me in a situation where the Politburo and the whole Party had so elevated Comrade Wiesław's authority, please judge for yourselves. I told Comrade Wiesław that with his speech at the June Plenum — we were talking on 6 June — he had created conditions for a factional split within the Party. I told him that the Anglo-Saxon resident in Warsaw would leap at the opportunity to incite and provoke either way. On 4 June, *Dziennik Polski* and *Dziennik Żołnierza* had published an article entitled 'Amaranthine Communists', which said, among other things, that 'we won't allow', that there are communists who don't want to cheat their own people, who don't want to be seen as being two-tongued — and it was clear that the bet was on national communists. This means that the comrades from the

June group knew after the June Plenum who was betting on them and what for. And they shouldn't be saying from this tribune today that they didn't know what the reaction would be.

Now, comrades. Early this morning I was seeing off a group of French delegates and communists to the airport and I heard that this night a drunk French diplomat was telling everyone at Bristol Hotel that a Central Committee plenum was under way, that they wouldn't recognise Poland in three months' time, that Comrade Wiesław was the Polish Tito. Since the June Plenum to this day the foreign residents have been playing the same game, placing their bets on the rightist group in the foolish and naive hope for a repeat of the Yugoslav example.

Comrades, what was missing from the addresses of our comrades from the rightist group was the admission that they knew and didn't understand it. The speech of Comrade Bieńkowski missed one thing — which I discussed with Comrade Wiesław half a year ago — that in his introduction to Comrade Wiesław's biography published by Spółdzielnia Książka, a Party publishing house, he makes no mention of the fact that Comrade Wiesław was a member of the Polish Communist Party (Komunistyczna Partia Polski, KPP). Instead, he suggests that Comrade Wiesław moved from the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS) to the Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR), and that's what we talked about half a year ago, and that was an error, a serious error, resulting from Comrade Bieńkowski's attitude to the KPP.

It is finally not an accident, comrades, that what had hurt and insulted the comrades from the rightist group more than anything else was the question of collectivisation and the farming question. Comrades! One needs to possess an elementary knowledge of Marxist philosophy. One needs to know Comrade Stalin's works on nationalism to be aware that the Politburo's resolution diagnosed the situation so: when the head hurts, the hand hurts, and the leg hurts, it's not so that the head, hand, and leg that need separate treatment, but one needs to get down to the abscess that is causing the pain. And in the development of nationalist and rightist tendencies in communist parties that abscess, comrades, was the farming question. Pick up the history of the Bolshevik Party and read the whole history of the Bukharin opposition, comrades. What was the situation in our Party? When we started working on Comrade Wiesław's book, *Droga i polityczne oblicze Nowej Polski* [The political path of New Poland], we found that it missed — and I had said so much — it missed one chapter, precisely on the farming question. From all the speeches by Comrade Wiesław, from his whole and great output, one crucial issue was missing: a clear position on the farming question. And from this lack of clarity may have arisen precisely the rightist and nationalist deviation. And what was the strength of the Information Bureau? That it shifted the focus in the struggle against nationalism and the rightist deviation to the farming question. And what was the aggravation of the rightist group? That it had hurt them the most, in the sorest spot, for it was the very heart of the matter, comrades!

I am nearing conclusion, comrades. I wish to say one more thing. I remember Comrade Wiesław in Moscow when the Government of National Unity was being formed. I remember asking Comrade Wiesław whether Mikołajczyk was sincere or not. And with a keen sense of class struggle, with great clarity, Comrade Wiesław replied: no, that's not the point, Mikołajczyk's role is independent of him. It's a process of the class function that is Mikołajczyk. And whether he is sincere or not is not something for you to worry about. Mikołajczyk has to go this way, and he will go it. I remember the clarity, the proletarian class instinct that marked Comrade Wiesław's diagnosis on Mikołajczyk, the leader of the Polish reaction. Today when we discuss what happened during the three months, Comrade Wiesław replies that his Marxist education was lacking. I ask, therefore, where is the sharp class instinct that Comrade Wiesław demonstrated with respect to Mikołajczyk, the class sense and instinct of where the enemy works and how. I don't want to say that Comrade Wiesław and other comrades find it easier to blame others and attack others rather than admitting their own guilt. That's all.

Tadeusz Borowski, 'Rozmowy. Wolna Trybuna' [Conversations. Free Tribune]
Odrodzenie, no. 5/6, 1950

To the comrades:
Jerzy Andrzejewski
and Wiktor Woroszylski

I like talking to the young comrade Artur G. from Munich who is an activist at the university on Berlin. Nazi doctors wanted to poison him when after liberation he'd been taken from Mauthausen to a hospital in Linz. There, tuberculosis patients were treated with quinine. Artur G. escaped from the hospital, begged in Linz, returned to Munich on foot. He was just an antifascist, but when one day the Americans used force to disperse a demonstration of Dachau ex-prisoners, he understood it was time to become a communist. Since then on he has worked where the Party sends him. One Saturday we went to a village near Berlin to meet a group of peasant youth activists on a training course. We were going through the Western sectors, singing songs about Free German Youth. Speaking over a chorus of young voices, Artur G. told me he was worried. 'You know, my wife is giving birth to our baby at the hospital. I'd afraid of complications. It just happened that I couldn't stay. This trip, damn it.' But I knew that Artur G. had come forward voluntarily for the Sunday outing.

I once talked to the integral poet, S., who is also an antifascist. But that's it. There's a smell of Berlin around him. If you look at the man, you know at once that you only need to ride a few stops of the subway to find yourself in a different, capitalist world. He asked me, 'You are talking so much about the reconstruction of Warsaw. What's the truth there? Tell me, but honestly: is it true that you've been so quick with it because you use German POWs as slave labour?' I just snorted, so he added liberally, 'You don't need to answer if you don't want to. I understand that, it's like in other countries.' When I explained to him that socialism never resorts to imperialist methods, he interrupted me with a provocateur's offended grimace: 'You don't need to sell me propaganda. I was a prisoner of the camps. I've always been an antifascist.'

I know this reactionary form of antifascism! Under the guise of ideological struggle against German fascism, literature and art close their eyes tightly to the crimes of contemporary imperialism, using the excuses of neutrality and humanism, seeking perspective and distance. For how not to wait for the 'object to ripen, the fig to sweeten, the tobacco to settle?' How to feed literature to the predations of journalism? How to cope with the lack of time and disengagement from practical life? Even if we — always the antifascists — mean well?

How often I hear such and similar querimonies! How similar they are to the conversations we conducted at the cafes and bars, eating and drinking (as Andrzejewski hinted) teachers' monthly wages away! Here, in the Soviet sector of Berlin, eating a student's monthly bursary away at a cash-only restaurant, they also talk a lot about the difficulties and disappointments of the writing profession.

Well, in Poland people fall for bitter confessions about the slow ripening of literature, but here their class meaning is obvious: it's a desire, a wild desire, to escape from the battle for the German people that socialism and imperialism are fighting. This scrimshanking finds a safe, humanistic domain: a struggle against fascism, with a silent accord with its heirs. Aha! One is reminded of the Polish problems: when you have nothing else to defend Polish prose with, you pull established painters out of the hat like rabbits, saying that after all they oppose and condemn fascism.

German fascism, at odds with the interests of American and British imperialism, has become a scapegoat, dying over and over again in imperialist literature and art for its own sins and those of others. But the imperialists want to profit from everything, including from the collapse of fascism. With the lack of a creative ideological attitude, antifascism has become a convenient cover for crypto-imperialists, cosmopolitans, and outright neo-fascists, a convenient mask of anticommunism. The favourite trick of imperialist art and journalism is to equate fascism with communism and then precipitating the 'communism' component, so that anyone who without precisely defining his position declares himself to be an antifascist, automatically implies he is an opponent of communism as well. George Orwell, author of the utopian romance, *1984*, in which he paints (while pretending to be speaking about communism) a grim vision of capitalism's transformation into fascism, the traitor Koestler, Steinbeck, the author of hypocritical 'socially conscious' novels — they are also 'antifascists'. They have a keen sense of smell and detect each other immediately. When Dobraczyński once published a lengthy piece on Plievier in *Dziś i Jutro*, I wondered why. A Catholic writing about *Stalingrad*? Praising a communist? How wrong I was in my naivety. Theodor Plievier, who occupied an important post in the government of Thuringia, defected to the West, issuing a statement that he

wouldn't engage in anti-Soviet activities. But his butt was too small to sit on two chairs at once and, slowly but surely, he was swept, like dishwater in s gutter, into the embrace of US-financed Trotskyites. Plievier wanted to be a neutral antifascist, for he had come to doubt the ideals of socialism, considering them mere propaganda, then he stated that the planned production and distribution of goods wasn't enough and that man needed the Kingdom of Heaven as well, to finally admit that he would feel most at home in a cosmopolitan Europe open to the expansion of American products.

And so attacking German fascism became for bourgeois writers an escape from a political decision and even more than that: it became a cover for imperialist ideology!

How much I was praised for 'exposing' fascism! I would swallow the bait, unaware that it was a naked hook. My antifascism stemmed from a desire to moralise, from an offended bourgeois protest, similar to the complaints of a shopkeeper whose daughter has been sleeping around. I was blind to the class aspect of fascism; it was later explained to me by my Party comrades. And *Pożegnanie z Marią* [A farewell to Maria], which was to be a parting with the class-specific, hypocritical, reformist bourgeois 'humanism', became in fact its victorious manifestation, a class work of the bourgeoisie. This was evidenced by the response it had received from bourgeois critics, as well as by my eager rightist friends' suggestions that I was a 'lost sheep' Catholic. This example shows how much we need to revaluate works that during the years of nationalist deviation we called 'antifascist', 'exposing fascism', or 'moralising' in the belief that this would be enough forever. We need to saw in half the much-trodden platform on which Żółkiewski embraced Zawieyski. If you don't want to find yourself in the company of Plievier and Camus, of Silone and Orwell, you must ask yourself: 'Were you an antifascist? That's very well, young writer — you fulfilled your duty then. But today — what do you really believe in, new master of prose?'

II

And the Polish - arch-Polish — way of observing the practices of imperialism and doing nothing? That's anti-Sanationism. There are still some writers who think that if only they dislike the pre-war junta (the Sanation), criticise its leaders, expose their lack of morals, abominate the way they fled the country — then their position is progressive and realist. These writers like to sell themselves dearly, piece by piece: first a finger, then a hand, the heart at the end. They think, 'Hasn't it been a sufficient concession on my part that I publish in the communist *Odrodzenie*? True, I'm an opponent of the Sanationist junta, for it had brought the country to ruin. But don't demand too much from me: I can't disengage from my social class. I like to write for the same readers who enjoyed literature during the Sanation years. Only they can fully appreciate my free indirect speech, my ellipses, the sociological comments I put in my characters' mouths.' And bingo: that's Tadeusz Breza's 'anti-Sanationist' novel series.

Reading *Mury Jerycha* [The walls of Jericho] less than four years ago, I was full of doubts about its realism. The Sanation's dealings with Polish fascism, seen at restaurants and maiden rooms, sauced with Kaden-style jargon, this compromising of a social class through puking in toilets and erotic sufferings — it all looked like a cabaret that attracted and repulsed the author as if he were a curious student. Since serious critics praised it, so did I, but half-heartedly. I shouldn't have. I wasn't aware of the book's class-related, bourgeois, 'objective' ideological message. Then, a few days ago, I finished reading *Niebo i ziemia* [Heaven and earth] and was overcome, like recently my friend in Szczecin, by a sense of pity and dismay, and then I laughed a long hollow laugh. There has probably never been in Polish literature an account of a (failed) seduction as detailed as the one contained in the second chapter of *Amory Tobitki* [Tobitka's amours]. All the phases of erotic badinage between an ambitious aristocrat and an unruly half-virgin have been described with great expertise. These are the problems that the Sanation inflicted on Poland. And indeed, we remember them quite well . . .

I don't just mean Breza's novel. We reject graphomania, and everyone agrees that it needs to be opposed. We are opposing it. But an 'artistic' work, as the cliché has it, agreeing with second-rate aesthetic expectations and smelling of quality, always meets with favourable reviews in literary magazines. And the writers so praised aren't worried at all by the persistent silence of the mass-circulation Party periodicals, loathe to promote such literature among the working masses.

Sure, we like to stand united against less successful things, to deride ambitious pioneering projects, laugh at those who take up new themes and fail. Correct in its postulates, public criticism turns coward when specific issues, styles, or individuals are discussed. Cowardly in public, criticism becomes all the more daring in private. Just compare the judgements pronounced by writers at cafe tables with those that they present to their readers!

The Soviet discussion on the ways of theatre critics should have opened our eyes to the danger of literary cliques as a special kind of cosmopolitanism. Particularly dangerous are the silent cliques of 'good' writers against 'bad' writers. Here Marxist writers have been duped by the old bourgeois fib that divisions in literature are 'formal'. As a result, they lose touch with their popular base, fixing their gaze on the lips of their class enemy, smearing their countenance as if with a lipstick.

III

Finally, the term 'the intellectual's repentance' was coined. Many good and bad books are considered as monographic studies of this spiritual condition. The bourgeois writer carried the burden of the pre-war, wartime, and post-war intellectual problems, self-excusing his passivity, redundant, like a man who's missed his train. Terrified that the intellectual elite wasn't exclusively in charge of the nation's life, that, having emerged in a capitalist society, it served that society, the writer 'broke off' with it, turning his head towards the workers party, but his heart and hands remained 'there', with intellectual preoccupations. With neither the fortitude nor the social experience of an ordinary Party member, worker or peasant, the writer didn't look for subjects in the new milieu, didn't change his life style nor his writing style, and didn't even read new things out of mere curiosity. Like before, he got laid at Bandurskiego Street in Łódź and came for sex to Warsaw, or chatted with female mandolinists in Łódź; he had disowned a place just left, still warm, and pressed with questions, tried to explain yesterday's misdeeds while sinning today, and analysed and accused himself. Whom was he accusing? The intellectual elite that had reared him. Whom was he exposing? Himself. Was he critically reflecting on his present self? No, he was being soft on himself, and careful, talking about past crimes only. For all the fantasising, he'd retained a pinch of realism — it was his self-preservation instinct. In *Bez dogmatu* [No dogma], Płoszowski kept a diary and liked to criticise himself on a daily basis like a masochist; the contemporary intellectual in bourgeois novels writes down events from a year ago. Ultimately, *Bez dogmatu* was about a guy who let a girl who loved him marry another [an inexcusable thing for Sienkiewicz], here the author is concerned with the future of an entire social group, his ambition being to show its misdeeds, its ties with capitalism, to win it for the cause of the working class. But the bourgeois system can only be criticised through a Marxist's mouth. All other criticism is a camouflaged defence, a reformist, camouflaged, dirty tear, a sentimental 'let's love each other'. Isn't Brandys's penitence in *Drewniany koń* [The wooden horse] that he didn't join the resistance, Sandauer's that he survived the ghetto, mine that I survived the camps, Adolf Rudnicki's that they didn't burn him in the oven, a defence of today's half-hearted position? *Drewniany koń* has been forgotten for a good reason and the author's monographers will be the only ones to ever return to it. But Rudnicki's short stories? In Lviv in 1939 he wrote *Koń* [The horse], in Łódź in 1948 — *Scedzone wino życia* [The clarified wine of life]. Between the pieces stretches the war and the whole quagmire of living à la Płoszowski. It has been held against Adolf Rudnicki that he saw the war as an artist, that his art was prone to inexplicable whims, that it has failed to produce a complete, truthful picture of the epoch of the ovens. Truthful, that is, informed by the experience of a particular social group — the Jewish proletariat. The experiences of Rudnicki's characters are in fact the problems of an intellectual elite that has lost its sense of existence. I exclude here, of course, *Józefów*, *Czysty nurt* [A clear stream], or *Ucieczka z Jasnej Polany* [The escape from Yasnaya Polyana]. Rudnicki is justified by his occupation-era loneliness, but what justifies him today? I just don't want to see him complaining six years from now that had passed up the period of the construction of socialism! No, Adolf, let neither of us has reason to complain . . .

And Dygat from *Jezioro Bodeńskie* [Lake Constance] and *Pożegnania* [Farewells], books that have been criticised so many times? Płoszowski was realistic enough to judge himself honestly; Dygat's intellectual is incredibly smug. And so we silently sweep today's doubts and vacillations under the carpet of yesterday's accounts.

IV

Once in Weimar Polish writers were talking to boys from the local Party unit. Our colleague was collecting materials for a novel about a German small town, so he was interested in everything: were the kids in the Hitlerjugend (yes, they were), were the camps discussed at home (no, they weren't), and Buchenwald? Not either. Finally: 'Have you read Thomas Mann's new novel, *Doctor Faustus*?' The boys in blue ties, who greet each other with the word 'Friendship', shook their heads. No, they haven't. 'So what do you read?' the Polish writer asked, growing impatient. 'Sholokhov, Ehrenburg, Kuba', they replied. Kuba [Kurt Barthel] is a young German poet whose *Story about Man* and *Cantata on Stalin* educate the German youth.

Whenever I come to Warsaw, my friends demand *Doctor Faustus* from me. Seeing it apparently as an alpha and omega of literary knowledge, the true, sole epic work of our epoch, the most profound study of fascism. But I never bring Mann, I am one of those who read him with a mixture of admiration and impatience. Can *Doctor Faustus*, this apex of the bourgeois novel tradition, serve for us as a model of ideology and style, an example of transmission to the nation? Just as Byron and Schiller were an inspiration for Mickiewicz? A separate study would be required to demonstrate the pitfalls and dangers of 'Mannism', and something else is actually the main point here: the boundary between a complex of the West and an aversion to Soviet art, between admiration for Mann and contempt for Ehrenburg. Admiring Mann, they disparaged Ehrenburg's *The Storm*; extolling the 'construction of the human fate' in Mann, they ignored the monograph of an epoch when socialism is fighting a victorious struggle against the successive incarnations of imperialism. We'll be learning from the book for years to come.

In poetry, the anti-Soviet complex was focused in attacks against Mayakovsky and admiration for Pasternak. In prose, the critics appreciated Sholokhov — how could it have been otherwise — and rejected everything else. In fact, in Sholokhov they admired not the clear, class-specific contours of a revolutionary breakthrough, but the spirited and vivid characters. They framed him as a kind of mega-scale Wojciech Żukrowski, in order to lambaste all the more sharply the 'journalism' of Ehrenburg and Fadeyev. This can be witnessed on all fronts of ideological struggle: a selected achievement of socialism is taken for granted so that other ones can be attacked with even greater zeal. From Sholokhov they also took the peculiar rhythm of his prose; they consoled themselves that the last volume of *And Quiet Flows the Don* had been published in 1940. So we have time for everything — that was the lesson learned from the experiences of Soviet literature. Yet we are extremely pressed for time — and Soviet literature reminds us of the fact with every book, every line of text. Searching for the national tradition, highlighting folk motifs, alert to the present day, looking into tomorrow, seeking a connection with the masses, interested in artistic simplicity — Soviet literature is a goldmine of aesthetic knowledge for us. We are impressed that the novels of Soviet writers are published in the hundreds of thousands and millions of copies. Ours, we are sad to find out, lay idle at the publishers' warehouses in just a few thousand. Such socially useless books are referred to by publishers as 'bricks'. There are therefore many bricklayers in our literature! A poet, whom I had congratulated on his beautiful poems, complained to me in a letter that they were published in three thousand copies only and so practically no one would read them. You are wrong, Comrade Woroszylski — there will be a time when a worker after work, a speaker on a tribune, a young lad from the Polish Youth Union [Związek Młodzieży Polskiej, ZMP], will be repeating your poems, keeping them like one keeps a valuable thing. But, honestly said, does the average production of our 'workshops' deserve higher print runs? I've done a fair share of transplanting Polish prose to the German market and I was very tough in the choice of material; if I were a publisher, a teacher, a librarian, I'd probably be even tougher. All the considerations of a writer's immaturity, ideological involvement, and errors cease to matter; what is left is the book itself, bare like the truth. And the book often speaks against the author.

Soviet criticism teaches us a new attitude to the discussion among the Marxists. The discussion on war literature, in which a number of writers were accused of nationalist bias, the discussion on Sofronov's plays, on Fadeyev's *Young Guard*, on Azhayev's *Far from Moscow*, all show that literary disputes revolve around ideology, and the formal reflection is but a secondary phenomenon. In this struggle for the ideology of our prose, Soviet literature will be a key ally.

If we blur ideological differences among us, if we choose an 'aesthetic' community while retaining ideological 'differences', then we'll find ourselves in an ideological community with a class enemy and we'll have to forget about aesthetic values; this can look tragicomical. Like that book by Bernanos, translated by Wat and published by the Catholic PAX, with a foreword by, believe it or not, Bolesław Piasecki.

Give the devil one finger, he'll reach for the rest of you. Even if you didn't want. Even if you resisted.

V

Our mentors, old pre-war writers, constantly rebuked us for ignorance; presenting themselves as sages, they spoke of European and national traditions, admonishing, instructing, and warning us. My dear God! Traditions! I remember an evening at a ducal palace set in beautiful park. It was winter, the trees stood bare in the freezing air, the statues lining the paths had been boarded up for protection, a thin layer of frozen snow covered the tennis court. Convened in the first-floor chapel [the largest room, once used on Sunday mornings as a nave

and in the evenings as the living room], where family portraits lined the walls and the gilded spines of old volumes jutted out inside glazed bookcases, young writers — poets, authors of prose, essayists — were listening raptly to a lecture on the literary tradition. They didn't know yet that they were attending a seminar that fate, the trickster, likes to stage sometimes. Here was a renowned writer, a tower of strength of our literature, introducing us to the arcana of his writing profession, giving us the best he had to offer, citing examples to show how reality is turned into literary material, which is then reworked according to the laws of composition and the author's intention. For example, two unhappy lovers meet after many years to remember their old days in the Ukraine, then the woman drowns herself in a Venice canal. In reality, she wasn't from the Ukraine but from Warsaw, and wasn't his lover but a chauffeur. And the palace that they remembered was much more exquisite then in the story. It had to be diminished and uglified to make the plot more probable.

Oh, the misery of such writing technique! In a literary, sociological foreshortening, there lay before us the whole way of the degeneration of bourgeois realism — from Richardson, Defoe, and Balzac, through Flaubert, to Nałkowska and Iwaszkiewicz.

Oh, the naivety of the young adepts of literature! We thought those 'initiations' perfectly legitimate. We didn't know at the time that Gorky used to hold similar seminars. But he didn't tell his listeners about reworking homosexual experiences into 'compositions'.

VI

I've received dedicated books from my friends: Bogdan Czeszko and Jacek Bocheński. I've also been reading Zalewski's *Traktory zdobędą wiosnę* [The Tractors Will Win the Spring]. I've browsed through reviews of *Początek edukacji* [The Beginning of Education] and *Fiołki* [Violas]. What *Odrodzenie* liked, *Kuźnica* decried. Żukrowski praised Czeszko in *Odrodzenie* for his vigour and energy. 'Life, there is life in this book!' he exclaimed in delight. He was less happy about condoms under the blue-blooded maiden's window. I think Czeszko shouldn't delude himself as to how much the 'biological' praises are worth. Their ideological meaning is very clear indeed.

Czeszko cherishes his capital of wartime memories, but he'd rather not overvalue them. After several years of Party work you can't be still at the beginning of your education. The beginning of a writer's education — faithful description, falling back artificially to remembered past moods, using compromised naturalistic tricks — and where is the historical experience of one's social class and one's party?

I'm not a zealous adherent of only certain formal categories. Divisions in art often don't overlap with stanzas, though the boundaries of stanza and ideology sometimes conjoin, but are ideological differences, with the writer's sympathies and antipathies, the interests and ambitions of his social class, hiding behind them.

Does a communist behave like Czeszko's protagonist? Is this lumpenproletarian supposed to be a revolutionary? Brecht in *The Threepenny Opera* showed the beggars as a revolutionary force, able to thwart — if only for a short time — the wicked ways of the bourgeoisie. The rich bask in the sun, and the poor in the shadows are seen by no one, Brecht said. It was at a time when the German communist party was facing the mounting threat of fascism. Falsely portraying an important revolutionary force, Brecht was in fact impairing the masses' confidence in the Party. 'No one will see the poor in the shadows anyway, and those in the sun will eventually bury the hatchet', the well-meaning nihilist told them.

How distant the prospect of Czeszko portraying a conscious protagonist! And distant perhaps his own path to literature worthy of the Party's name.

There are writers who learn, and there are the ignorant ones. Andrzejewski, Breza, Zawieyski started from nearly identical ideological and artistic positions. But how much Andrzejewski has learned since *Drogi nieuniknione* [Unavoidable roads]! He has become a living part of the Polish prose tradition. Czeszko, Zalewski, Bocheński also start from more or less the same positions. But Czeszko's path ends halfway. The progress that Zalewski has made between *Mortal Heroes* and the excellent novel, *Traktory zdobędą wiosnę*, is something that any Polish writer can envy.

And Bocheński? Well, Bocheński is a kind of Borowski. It's of little consolation that in caricature!

VII

One needs a significant oeuvre, one needs to enjoy the nation's attention like Andrzejewski, to be able to write about oneself legitimately and seriously; if I'm trying, it's with a sense that neither the value of my work nor its popular appeal entitle me to do it. I've been — so far — a 'closed writer', the print run of my three books didn't exceed twenty thousand copies, a good few thousand of that being 'bricks'. Of course, I'd be proud — show me a writer who wouldn't be — if I won mass appeal, but I'd also

be terrified: I see what I've written so far as socially useless. My literature is neither true knowledge about the world nor intelligent entertainment.

But a Marxist writer suffocates in such a cramped space, wishing nothing but to pry open the door, to reach the masses, wishing to learn from them and become imbued with their experience; he wishes to partake actively in the class struggle of his nation and his social class. Aware of the meagreness of his achievements, he asks in terror: what have I done with the national tradition that I'm heir to, what values have I derived from the works of Rej and Mickiewicz, Orzeszkowa and Prus, Żeromski and Broniewski? One needs, I kept telling myself, to study and study, one needs to pursue practical activities; to participate in the life of the masses. I was studying — and succumbing to the literature of the 'West'. How hard I tried for some time to write 'like Hemingway'! And I was even praised for it. As a result, I'm better acquainted with English and American literature than with the work of our Soviet comrades. This is not a private matter. Its echoes can be found in both *Pożegnanie z Marią* and *Kamienny świat* [Stone world].

A lot has been written about my 'camp complex'. I don't think the term exhausts the subject. It wasn't a complex, but an ideological weakness. The young critics at *Odrodzenie* see this more clearly than the professionals. It was just 'antifascism' without a positive agenda. When you show man's degradation in fascism, you also need to show his heroism; you mustn't shirk class struggle under the pretext of 'cruel moral indignation'. Didn't I know that an underground movement was active at the Auschwitz camp, that besides ruthless survival struggle I was taught great solidarity among the supporters of socialism? I once told a poet friend how Austrian comrades brought us typhus medicine to the camp hospital; I told him about a French boy, a Jew from Paris, who, when someone told him that the French [communist] party was kaput, was ready to rip them apart. All evening I told such stories to my poet friend. He listened in silence, and then asked: 'Why didn't you write about it?' Why didn't I? I had been unable to analyse the camp in class terms; experiencing things, I was in fact unaware what I was experiencing. So I played with narrow empiricism, behaviourism, however it's called. My ambition was to show the 'truth', and I ended up in an objective alliance with fascist ideology. The result? Lack of faith in man, moral dilemmas, and a year wasted in Munich. I browsed there through heaps of American weekly and monthly magazines that devote a great deal of space to advertising. But I was looking for literature and finding it: the short story. I fell for the form, succumbed to it, tailored the theme to it, becoming, in part, a snob. In *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem* [The battle of Grunwald], I sought to portray a DP camp under the administration of American imperialists and the degeneration of the capitalist intelligentsia, disconnected from its class society and frightened by the spectre of socialism. How great was the theme's potential, what wealth of material I still remember! But snobbery had stifled the idea, the writer's potential smothered by formal bias.

Andrzejewski's horse was a noble battle stallion. So when Andrzejewski fell from it, the bang could be heard all over the country. My horse was small; Chinese peasants use it, as I hear, and it's shown in circuses and zoos. Such a small horse is called a pony. My pony was *Kamienny świat*. It was meant as a literary satire on bourgeois writers. But the author lacked an ideological conception. He wasn't a Marxist; camp empiricism was the alpha and omega of his experience. And so an ideological lampoon turned into a series of pessimistic short stories that begin with the camp and end with a kind of return to Auschwitz. The stories were accompanied by dedications, but dedications aren't something you achieve literary breakthroughs with. The pretty pony wasn't a battle horse.

So I took off my spurs and began learning to walk. I started writing newspaper columns. I know that this is an occupation that our literary critics despise, and my colleagues looked with friendly disdain at the fact that I wrote for a daily paper. But penning content for several youth magazines and then for *Rzeczpospolita* gave me a lot of fun, and the several dozen articles and feuilletons that I'd written were a good school, also in ideological terms. I wished to speak directly to the reader, using all the means that stand at the writer's disposal, without prejudice: a concise feuilleton, a journalistic short story, a sense of humour, an apt quotation. I don't consider wasted the evenings and nights I spent composing captions for photographs.

In 1946, I told young writers that a writer had to keep an eye on democracy. It was a combat thesis of a class enemy, so what if an unconscious one! Three years later I published *Opowiadania z książek i gazet* [Stories from books and newspapers], a book that was timid and clumsy, but politically and artistically clear-cut. I don't care if they'll say that I'm wasting my talent in journalism, I don't feel like a vestal virgin of prose! It seems to me that I would have the strength today to contribute in all ways to the struggle against imperialism: through lampoon and

satire, reporting and interview, feuilleton and essay. I don't wish to give up any blow that I could strike.

What has taught me more than anything else? Practical Party work. Perhaps one day someone will describe in detail how our Party consciousness was shaped. The heavy resistance we offered (we, young writers, the hope of literature), the way the rightist deviation affected us, the difficulties, imaginary and real, amid which we bent like not fully heated iron. The price we paid for the teachings of incompetent teachers.

And I think I know what the most important thing is: to avoid living your life in vain.

VIII

I remember, it was late evening, the Unification Congress of workers parties had opened in Warsaw. We were gathering experience, listening from a high balcony to speeches, to reports about the various productivity records achieved to celebrate the Congress. As young writers, we had contributed our share to the joint effort through declarations, songs, poems, stories.

Around midnight, when I got back home from the Polytechnic, a certain renowned writer paid me a visit. He had sat at the Congress two floors below me; he was all excited and his eyes shone when he remembered the Congress hall. I had recently published a short story, *Zabawa z wódką* [A vodka party]. My first, childish and clumsy, step towards Party literature.

We went out. The streets were deserted, the city asleep. We walked briskly, collars turned against the wind. He told me, 'You're riding a popular wave, allowing yourself to be carried by it; you're turning shallow, putting too much trust in the present day.' I think, he said (he had already read my story but didn't comment on it; I knew he didn't like it), that you should abstain from writing prose until the enthusiastic period has passed away. Literature is not potatoes to be planted in spring and dug up in autumn; and you don't even let your potatoes grow! You have talent, he told me, and you shouldn't allow yourself to be provoked!

'And you?' I asked. 'You aren't riding the popular wave?'

'Me, what?' he replied, and it was as if his soul had waved its hand resignedly. 'Well, I . . . I'll keep writing.'

He wouldn't say what it was that he'd be writing. When visiting Warsaw, he was always eager to know what was up in politics and in newspapers, as if he never went outside. It seemed that he truly had no idea what was going on in the world, but no! He knew how to scrutinise suitcases and women, and he knew about objects.

We parted at the Polytechnic. In the light of the reflector lamps, the walls shone a chalky glow, and the red banners appeared purple, almost black. 'I fear for you', he said, shaking my hand.

'Don't', I replied casually. 'I'll manage. Literature isn't as difficult as you think.'

What I should have said was: 'My dear man, we aren't alone and life isn't our whim. We're fighting a hard struggle for the liberation of mankind. It's changing before our very eyes, and with it our nation. After all, alongside the thousands of our comrades and friends, we are the nation's teachers, the masters of its culture. Let's not hold our washed hands behind our back; let's resort to simple, ordinary, everyday literary work. We don't have an unlimited store of social and historical experience at our disposal. Every day we learn class struggle, the front line of which runs also through our soul. But when, apologising for yesterday's misdeeds, we wish to err today, let's remember that a new generation is growing up in the world of those who wish to love and understand their land. It's the generation of conscious socialists. It is being moulded and educated in the sweat of its own labour, in the difficult experiences of the construction of socialism, in the ruthless struggle against decadent imperialism. The members of this generation will reject our mistakes and our bourgeois rebellions, and won't be conned by bar confessions and drunken tears. These people want to be responsible for their world, and they know that one cannot shirk politics. And to avoid being wrong in politics, one needs to look forward, not backwards, one needs to be a revolutionary, not a reformer, one needs to take class struggle through to the end. The same, my dear friend, is true for literature!'

***[FOR POLISH SOCIALIST ARCHITECTURE. MATERIALS OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PARTY ARCHITECTS, HELD 20–21 JUNE 1949, IN WARSAW* (WARSAW, 1950)]**

Bohdan Lachert
architect, M.Eng.

Comrade Goldzamt's paper offered guidelines on the theory of architecture and urbanism. Comrade Minorski's paper was a critique of the practices of Polish architects.

In line of the necessity of a strong connection between theory and practice, both papers show a great disproportion between the projected path of architecture's theoretical development and architects' unpreparedness for immediately applying this theory in practice.

The great and impressive growth dynamic of People's Poland, a result of the takeover of power by the working class, led consciously by the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) in keeping with the central tenets of socialism, pushes to the forefront of society — as its most progressive part — the working-class masses.

As regards the State's capital expenditure, including in the construction sector, we've seen uneven growth of productive forces.

1. legions of construction workers, conscious of their task, determine a constantly growing pace of the country's reconstruction and rebuilding;
2. an insufficient development of the work tools needed for the preparation of building materials and the mechanisation of the construction process, for example in Warsaw — insufficient in size and poor in quality supplies of rubble-concrete prefabricates for the Workers' Estates Enterprise (Zakład Osiedli Robotniczych, ZOR) construction in Muranów;
3. highly qualified professional teams — notably architect teams — lacking such production habits as the new, emerging socio-political formation requires.

In the further course of my presentation I will discuss the matter of the architects. The Soviet experience and the struggle taking place, under public pressure, in the Soviet architectural community offer guidance as to the future growth of Polish architecture and urbanism.

Comrade Goldzamt stressed the significance of architecture as an art that reflects the material reality and expresses a particular social ideology.

The socialist state clearly postulates architecture as art.

The period of end-stage capitalism, when our generation of architects received its professional education, did not make such a postulate. Architects cooperated in producing a commodity that was virtually every private building — to be sold or to provide a return on the capital invested.

In such conditions, architectural form was an element of no value and caused most architects to view their profession in terms of the production of designs for the capitalist market.

The less intellectual work and time the architect devoted to producing the design, the lesser were his costs and the greater his profit.

Capitalist habits and the freelancing character of most architectural work before the war are reasons why in the new circumstances architects are unable to take up the tasks set by the state.

A public commission for an architect in the system of a popular democracy, a system heading towards socialism, is one that demands submitting a design of artistic value.

The architect is expected to produce a work of art. This necessitates a selection of the human resources. Technical qualifications are no longer enough: it's artistic skills that matter. Only some architects and architecture students possess such skills — and only those qualify for creative design work.

In free-market conditions, such a selection is impossible, but in a planned economy we are able to regulate the matter.

The establishment of state architectural studios — large professional teams — introduces a rational division of work and ensures that resources are put to best use.

As a result, we not only make productivity gains, but also create the right conditions for the production of mature designs, as they are subject to critical review and analysis in the course of their making.

State studios are an area where new talents will be revealing themselves through quality competition.

The new working methods guarantee, therefore, a significant improvement in the artistic quality of architectural designs, avert the risk of littering our cities with trashy architecture designed by freelancing private practices run by architects who lack artistic skills.

Artistic skills are a necessary condition of architecture making, but not the only one. I won't be repeating here the characteristics of architecture that were discussed in Comrade Goldzamt's presentation — the characteristics of Socialist Realism as the right expression of the architecture of People's Poland. But I wish to stress the great

importance of the proper education of future architects.

If the young generation is properly educated, i.e., if along with technical knowledge it studies the science of Marxism-Leninism, and in particular the theory and practice of Socialist Realism in architecture, we will have new cadres, ready to face up to the great challenge of our times.

Let me add that the current teaching staff at the Warsaw University of Technology's Faculty of Architecture do not guarantee proper education, and only strenuous efforts undertaken by the Academic Union of Polish Youth (Związek Akademicki Młodzieży Polskiej, ZAMP) in a struggle for a new expression of architecture, a new ideological expression, can help transform academic knowledge into task-conscious means of action.

The tasks planned for the coming years will be carried out by architects whose production habits are incompatible, in whole or part, with the artistic requirements of the broad masses, conscious of their role in shaping socialist culture.

It is impossible for architects to make a complete and immediate transition without proper training.

Dialectically construed development cannot completely detach from the past and start off from some kind of *tabula rasa*.

Let me quote the English architect, Campbell: 'The habits of capitalist morality and capitalist social relationships can only be removed by the patient work of the generations. The influence of capitalist architecture will long continue to be felt. This architecture's positive role in shaping the direction of the further development of socialist architecture will not disappear either. Quite the contrary, just as the socialist state adopts the technology and organisation of capitalist industry in order to adapt them to its new goals, so it will doubtless develop the physical and technological basis of contemporary architecture, but at the same time it will certainly reformulate it'.

I do not share the Englishman's view that the influence of capitalist architecture will long continue to be felt.

The dynamic of our growth, based on the Soviet experience, will, with the active support of architects, shorten the time span of capitalist architecture's influence to a minimum.

Although the consciousness of our path and goals is clear and comprehensible, there exist in the processes of architectural work many subconsciousnesses that can be gradually harnessed to produce an architectural image of our times.

Architects cannot devote themselves exclusively to theoretical studies, postponing practical work until they have mastered new, national heritage-informed canons of architecture.

There exists a specific hierarchy of needs: design today and start building tomorrow — such are the demands of the Six Year Plan.

The architecture of the first years of the Six Year Plan will reflect the transitional nature of the period.

The content of architecture, as a functional interpretation of being, will be socialist, but its form will remain immature, searching for a unique national expression.

Our job is to accelerate the process — to screen every new project for errors and an erroneous approach to architectural form — in order to avoid repeating such errors in the future. To highlight positive examples and stimulate a broad debate on our achievements in the field of architecture.

To educate architects, both Party members and not, to train the young cadres of architecture in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, to explain on specific examples, particularly Soviet ones, how Socialist Realism arises and develops.

In conclusion, I wish to add that I fully appreciate and accept the significance of criticism and self-criticism in the growth path of every architect. Comrade Minorski's critique of my work focused on two projects, designed in 1945 and still not completed. I will take advantage of this opportunity to redress the negative impression that an ordinary person gets when looking at the bare shell of a building and not realising how it will look like when completed.

Comrade Minorski was perhaps too pessimistic about my development path, saying that my formal explorations were taking place 'in a vacuum', and the path led 'nowhere'.

Realised designs are an architect's language, one in which his views, his temperament, his active attitude to life are expressed.

Today's conference mobilises us all, and evinces a great perspective of the development of Polish architecture.

Those comrades who knew how to protest against eclecticism and secession in the capitalist system, who 20 years ago sought a new expression for architecture, have retained, I guess, the indispensable sensibility that assesses the great, impressive possibilities of today.

We shall integrate the ambitious goal of our work — creating the frameworks of life for the broad working masses — with the entirety of the manifestations of a free socialist society.

ANDRZEJ WRÓBLEWSKI, 'PRACA SAMOKSZTAŁCENIOWA ZWIĄZKU AKADEMICKIEGO MŁODZIEŻY POLSKIEJ I KÓŁ ARTYSTYCZNYCH NA UCZELNIACH PLASTYCZNYCH' [THE SELF-EDUCATION WORK OF THE ACADEMIC UNION OF POLISH YOUTH AND ACTIVIST GROUPS AT ART SCHOOLS]

Przegląd Artystyczny, no. 5/6, 1950, pp. 34–37

BEFORE THE POZNAŃ FESTIVAL

The academic year 1948/1949 was probably the most difficult period for art schools. The rise of formalistic tendencies in teaching over the past four years had caused a blatant disparity between the schools and the surrounding life of People's Poland. The organisational structure of art schools and the mentality of the teachers responsible for the curriculum made even highly evolutionary changes very difficult. The disgregation of youth organisations at art schools in the shape of the ZAKA cut young people off from the positive influence of other schools that had entered the path of democratisation and progressive education. However, among both students and professors there was a growing protest against ignoring the outside reality, against the professional ineptitude of the formalists, against cosmopolitan salons and the rearing of 'geniuses'. Due to its lack of grounding in Marxist theory, and due to the abovementioned reactionary characteristics of the art-school system, this protest sometimes assumed aggressive forms. The Exhibition of Modern Art in Kraków in December 1948 was an evident example of a rise in formalistic tendencies in our artistic life.

In the criticism of the erroneous ways in our visual arts there concreted the formulations of the Party artists. Their enunciations gave the right direction to the struggle against formalism and its ideological premises.

Students, increasingly critical of their schools, learned from increasingly abundant Marxist literature, from Minister Sokorski's writings, from the scanty translations of Sobolev and Fried. President Bierut's Wrocław speech played a breakthrough role in the ideological elucidation of cultural-policy issues.

In March 1949, a nationwide conference of art-school activists took place in Warsaw, formulating the goal of ideological self-education, of fighting for Socialist Realism and progressive art schools.

In the period in question, the work of activists at art schools focused on two issues: firstly, on individual artistic work, where they realised, each in their own way, the postulates of Socialist Realism, and secondly, on a struggle for the reform of art schools, or at least a possibility thereof, to educate truly professional visual artists. This kind of work was pursued at almost all graduate art schools in the country, though each had its own political context, so the ideological struggle looked different at different schools. The position of the Łódź activists, for example, was more or less in line with the formalistic views of the teaching staff, whereas in Sopot the struggle got very intense, resulting in violations of professorial authority and school discipline. The situation in Wrocław and Kraków was similar. At the Warsaw academy, the professors represented less united a front, and the progressive student community was ideologically more diverse too. That the general situation at all schools had been the same, however, was proven by the idea of organising a nationwide exhibition of political art, which in fact fell through temporarily due to the forthcoming opening of the Poznań festival.

What were the forms of the activists' work and their results? I will try to discuss this on the Kraków example, where the work took its fullest course. ZAMP [Academic Union of Polish Youth] activists at the Kraków academy led a systematic discussion concerning its curriculum and organisational structure. A result of that discussion were several press articles (in *Wieś* or *Po Prostu*) as well as enunciations at the Poznań festival. The key points they raised concerned organising the studies in a manner consistent with public needs, preparing the students for professional work, introducing more realistic correction procedures, scrapping autonomous professor studios binding for all years of study, the advisability and two-tiered structure of the curriculum, the selection of students, the designation of assistants by youth organisations, the representation of students on the school's Senate etc. Voicing those postulates at general student meetings didn't produce any clear-cut results at the time; still, the ZAMP activists were well prepared to understand and endorse the Ministry's curriculum reform.

The main field of the activists' work were personal artistic endeavours, self-education. Year after year of nudes and still lifes, boring, 'pretty', and superficial — this wasn't studying but a gradual castration of the student's creativity. We felt co-responsible for the fact that people didn't talk about art and weren't interested in exhibitions. The students at large were passive. We set up a narrow, ten-person team and got down to work. Our goal was a collectively prepared anti-war exhibition. With support from the district-branch ZAMP,

the self-education team prepared and showed their paintings as a standalone presentation at the Poznań festival.

What was the team's artistic ideology? It was one-sided, in its radicalism bearing an affinity with the ideologies of bourgeois avant-garde movements. The most crucial point for us was to get rid of all formalistic conventions of representation, such as colourism, cubism, abstractionism, surrealism. Based on the premise that in the first, preparatory phase of the construction of socialist culture art has to be comprehensible, thematic, and aimed at the general public, we postulated an artistic form possibly untransformed, objective, photographic, as consistent as possible with the common sense and imagination of the ordinary viewer. We believed that only when a wide enough social basis has been created for the new art, when truly great masses have been reached, should it become possible to proceed to building new forms of Socialist-Realist art. Then art would be developing in constant contact with the viewer, going hand in hand with the general aesthetic development of the working class.

Aware that such an agenda was good only for the preparatory, 'levelling' phase of the new art, we didn't immediately think of its socialist theme and content. That was supposed to be the next phase of work. For the preliminary one we had adopted the theme of war, as something that was still fresh in the memory of the masses and at the same time mobilised us to fight for peace and socialism.

Once the exhibition's general theme had been decided, a new problem arose. To fight formalism meant not only to fight its form and lack of theme, but also its individualistic work method and its incomprehension of the social function of painting. We ventured to produce a themed exhibition, ideologically and artistically uniform, and based on teamwork.

As for teamwork, the results were relatively good. Were it not for technical difficulties (the lack of funds and time), the team could have fully switched to collective work. This meant that every successive stage of preparations for the exhibition was discussed by the whole team. Various compositional ideas were suggested by the team members to each other. The conclusions were binding for everyone. Today it can be ascertained that the half year of collective work has given the team members a firm theoretical foundation, ideological experience, and rhetorical skills.

Returning to the exhibition itself, here is its outline. It was to give a full interpretation of the war, as well as to connect the fascist aggression with today's imperialistic aggressions, and the occupation-era racial discrimination — with the American fascists' discrimination of Negroes today. It would do so through themes such as the destruction of the society, nation, and individual by war; the ruination of the national economy; the independence struggles in Greece, Indonesia, Spain; the persecution of the Negroes.

But ensuring the exhibition's ideological cohesion and comprehensive character through the proper choice of themes was not enough; the point was for the show to impact clearly and suggestively on the viewer precisely in the ideological-emotional sense. To that end, we envisaged it as being highly uniform, limited to strictly figural paintings, with the scenery, whether natural or man-made, reduced to a few key motifs. According to our general premises, we aimed to treat the motif in a more objective fashion with more or less the same degree of expressivity and protuberance, with the same distance (step-back) from which the painting is visually most effective.

The team's self-critique is as follows: our worst error — theoretical and practical — was placing too much emphasis on artistic form at the expense of ideological content. As has already been mentioned, our revolt shared some aspects with the bourgeois avant-garde movements. In our turn against formalism we failed to reject all alien formal conventions: we succumbed now to primitivism, now to naturalism or impressionism. While avoiding all stylisation, we neglected nonetheless the matter of the development of technical skill, depriving ourselves voluntarily of a painter's major weapon in his struggle to express a given theme (ideological content) in the most suggestive manner possible. Another misstep was a wrong interpretation of the war. The show, intended as a comprehensive themed presentation with a clear ideological message, was dominated by pessimism, the horror of the atrocities of war.

The Art School Festival in Poznań in October 1949 revealed a general formalism of education. Confronted with the huge exhibition, we realised that self-education in small student groups wasn't an answer. On the other hand, the errors of the Kraków team owed in large part to its being narrow and one-sided. Also as far as the curriculum and organisational structure of art schools are concerned, the festival clearly demonstrated the futility of individual, guerrilla-style efforts at a time when a general reform is needed. The festival helped to reconcile the students' grassroots initiative with the work and plans of the Ministry.

AFTER THE POZNAŃ FESTIVAL

This year, the situation in the visual arts has become absolutely clear. This has been due to the stance of the Party, which at the 3rd Plenum paid particular attention to cultural policy issues and carried out an exhaustive assessment of the situation also in the field of the visual arts. The Union of Polish Artists and Designers (Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków, ZPAP) congress in Katowice was an introduction — the 1st Exhibition of Visual Arts in Warsaw became a conclusion: he who isn't a reactionary will fight against formalism as a decadent form of imperialist art, and for an art that is truly realistic, contemporary, and educational. A whole series of ill-construed issues — the question of artistic quality, the false 'machine cult', the risk of naturalism, the timeless values of art — was exposed by the artist conference accompanying the show. Artists felt there like one great collective, where everyone, whatever their professional experience, strives towards the same goal. Since then work in the field of the visual arts has gotten easier. The new *Przegląd Artystyczny* has been launched. Subsidies for artists and students have been sharply increased. Changes are taking place in exhibition life and union life. The State Institute of Art has been established, its goal to develop a Marxist criticism and knowledge of art. Its first achievements were immediately shared with students (the training course for art-school activists in Jadwisin). A new law has been drafted that will close the most urgent gaps in artistic education.

The course in Jadwisin was an opportunity for making a final decision on a student exhibition and the self-education work that would precede it. Let me cite from a resolution adopted there:

1. What is self-education work? It complements the school studies. School work gives one the basic visual knowledge, and self-education work aims to utilise this knowledge in an individual professional practice. Self-education work is thus neither disconnected from one's studies nor a repeat of the curriculum. It encompasses that part of studies where students can seize the initiative, unburdening their professors as well as speeding up the ideological transformation of the school.

2. How does self-education work proceed? It consists in making themed compositions, whose ideological content and technical rendition are then collectively discussed. Thus the students' political and artistic consciousness is developed, and they are educated in the spirit of socialist cooperation in professional work. The basic unit of self-education work is the art-school studio. It is there that the ideological struggle takes place. But it isn't presumed that the professor and his students are ideologically divided; quite the contrary, the idea is for the professor to foster the collective. Self-education work is a field where the ZAMP can influence non-affiliated students.

3. As for organisational aspects, self-education work is performed at the Activist Group on the ZAMP's initiative. Depending on the ideological maturity of the students, there are three possible forms of organisation, corresponding with three stages in the development of self-education work.

The first form is a closed ZAMP collective of up to 10 members (that was the case in Kraków, and is now the case in Wrocław). Its role is not so much to raise the [ideological] level of the students at large as to set up a community that will initiate ideological struggle at the school. Once a sufficiently strong ZAMP core group has been created, self-education work can proceed to the second stage.

This stage consists in including all students in studio collectives set up and run by the ZAMP. The purpose of the action is to raise the [ideological] level of the school, highlight ideological struggle, and extend it to the entire community.

With an ideologically mature and numerous community, a ZAMP artistic team is formed within the activist group as a higher form of self-education work to focus and direct its ideological line and prepare future assistants.

As can be seen, the current guidelines no longer ignore the issue of the artist's individuality. At the same time, a tendency has emerged to connect self-education with school work.

Following such guidelines has its good and bad sides.

A general ideological discussion was carried out at the different schools; the students got interested in the various aspects of Socialist Realism and learned to use press debates for the purpose of their own artistic development. Moreover, the idea of a nationwide exhibition and the need to prepare works for it activated the students. It turned out that everyone had their favourite themes, events from life that they had remembered due to their emotional impact and social meaning. For many, the first experiences with figural composition were an awakening of artistic passion, making them realise the reach and significance of creative artistic work. However, attempts to paint an actual composition — once a preliminary sketch has been collectively discussed — revealed serious issues, gaps in professional education. At this point, we need not so much to discuss the shortcomings of

self-education as understand its limitations. Mass-scale out-of-school work on themed compositions, based on feedback from fellow students, can be but a complement of the school curriculum. It won't by any means substitute for methodical nature study and figural composition, which only a proper curriculum can teach. But before a new curriculum is introduced, self-education plays an important educational role and orients the student's development in the right direction, especially that growing ideological changes among professors make it possible to involve them in the work and take advantage of their artistic knowledge and expertise. And one more thing: individual work on a composition, if it collectively reviewed on a regular basis, represents a first-class educational measure. And we mustn't forget that, despite welcome ideological changes at art schools, the poisonous traditions of individualism, subjectivism, and artistic pretentiousness still hold strong.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

One aspect of the October exhibition being currently prepared at art schools (for the Peace Month) has been intensely discussed: should one submit only compositions (or only out-of-school works) or in-school nature studies as well? The question is absolutely legitimate and stems from the dynamic of the current period at art schools. On the one hand, we are still working under the old curriculum, and while being unable to prepare fully for composition, with our attempts we can at least manifest and contribute to the struggle for peace: through intense work we can show things of proper quality! On the other hand, we are on the eve of a curriculum reform that will allow us to prepare systematically for composition, and we know very well that what we could show today would be primitive and inept compared with the future outcomes; that today a good study is actually worth more than a poor composition. The answer to the above question should reflect the actual status quo at art schools, i.e., take into account both the needs of the current phase as well as those that are mentioned today with the next academic year in mind.

Comparing the needs of self-education today and after the new curriculum has been introduced, we become aware of the changes that will be required in the functioning of youth organisations. With a correct curriculum in place, their role in the field of ideological-artistic work will be no longer to complement the curriculum but to follow it. Just as we are setting about to limit the organisations' administrative and economic functions, so we will need to circumscribe their function of establishing autonomous centres of out-of-school education; up till now we have often practiced a 'school within school' since the art school didn't fulfil our needs; now the task will be to fully utilise its potential.

But what does it mean to follow the curriculum, to utilise a school's potential? Firstly, it means to struggle for discipline and thoroughness in study, and secondly — to be aware of the deviations possible during the first phase of the curriculum's introduction. To struggle for discipline means for students to assimilate the socialist attitude to work. Thoroughness in study means utilising the possibilities afforded by the curriculum, e.g. towards learning Marxist theory and towards learning the method of Socialist Realism, which is the practical application of Marxist principles in the visual arts. Vigilance in realising the curriculum shouldn't challenge professorial authority nor violate school discipline; a great outlet for such vigilance are working meetings, where every shortcoming can be presented to the school administration and discussed. The students' work, until now dispersed in a range of unconnected activities — school study, self-education, organisational work, activism — will focus on broadly construed school work and, closely coordinated with it, youth-organisation work, aimed at educating an artist who is are of his tasks and knows his society.

JUST AFTER THE WAR

exhibition
3.10.2015–10.01.2016

ZACHĘTA

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