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## Attitudes of the polish intelligentsia to stalinism (1944-1956) : an historian's reflections

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**(Toruń)**

### **Attitudes of the Polish Intelligentsia to Stalinism (1944-1956): An Historian's Reflections**

"Qu'ils aient été séduits, achetés ou contraints, les intellectuels restés en Pologne, dans leur ensemble, servirent le régime à ses débuts..."

(Henri Rollet, *La Pologne au XX e siècle*, 1984)

"Personally, there was something great for me in how quickly the creative intelligentsia overcame the humiliation into which they were thrown by the Stalinist terror. It became a dominant force in the processes that led to the Polish October."

(Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, 1994)

Let us begin with some necessary, quasi-methodological introductory remarks. The subject that is being dealt with would deserve a large-scale quantitative case-study into the historical mentality of the social stratum which was at this time the Polish intelligentsia. They are mentioned directly or indirectly in hundreds of publications, memoirs and documents of the period.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that as Poland was under a totalitarian government from 1944, the bulk of the literature coming from both the authorities and the intelligentsia at the time, devoted to *pro foro externo*, are beleaguered by a general lack of credibility: the genuine motives of many Polish intellectuals of that time are often very different to those they

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<sup>1</sup> Publications like this study, usually written in form of essays or even pamphlets of the elite of the period, often abound in critical terminology, which can be destructive for conclusions. Let us mention only the texts by J. Trznadl, P. W. Szymański, J. Prokop. In contrast, purely sociological works were devoted mainly to the subject of social promotion, i.e. the rise of the 'new intelligentsia'. There is a lack of analytical works that would portray common old intelligentsia's attitudes towards the system both in 1945 and during its later evolution.

give now, although we often lack satisfactory sources or criteria to estimate the credibility of this type of assertion. Often such statements are based mainly on the estimator's subjective attitude. Thus, one should realise that at least at this stage of the research, our statements are of a descriptive and globalizing nature, though we usually lack sufficient bases for quantitative determination which we could define as precise. The author of this article lived through the period of classical Stalinism (1948-1956) as an adult, which undoubtedly is a factor that can both facilitate the perception of the atmosphere in the period and lead to greater subjectivity in our assessment. In any case, as an historian and not as a publisher looking for the arguments for current policy in the past, I am far from perceiving the period only in terms of contrastive colours of black and white. The task of the historian is to portray people, their activities and the motivations for those activities; in the respect of values, however, understanding and portraying does not mean forgiving...

A second introductory remark, also necessary in my opinion, is that the attitudes of the Polish intelligentsia towards Stalinism varied from firm resistance to fanatical support of the system. Nevertheless, one should not forget about some general frames of historical events and life situations which determine the field of manoeuvre and the freedom of decision on the part of the individual. If we take the year 1945 as a starting-point, this field of manoeuvre appeared, in my opinion, as follows (taking into account inevitable simplifications):

- I. World War Two and the two aggressors' diverse criminal activity led to the Polish intelligentsia suffer severe losses in numbers. It should be added that, on account of the situation in the country after Yalta, and in spite of the end of the war, a significant percentage of the Polish intelligentsia representatives stayed in the West and did not come back to the country.
- II. After the gruesome failure of the Warsaw Uprising<sup>2</sup> following Yalta, and after the country had been taken over by the new government on behalf of the Kremlin, the general situation in Poland could appear to anyone as 'realistically' unambiguous.<sup>3</sup> Even if certain groups

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<sup>2</sup> P. Wojciechowski: "Too little has been said about the psychological effect of exhaustion by war.(...) After the Warsaw Uprising nobody wanted military spurts..." in: *Spór o PRL (The Dispute over PRL)*, Cracow 1996, pp 53-54

<sup>3</sup> A great role was also played by geopolitical argument: in the light of the loss of the eastern territories, it is only thanks to the Soviet Union that we were given the western territories. Even Cardinal Wyszyński sometimes followed the policy of Retrieved Lands, which was connected with the acceptance of numerous necessities.

counted on the mythical West, at least from Mikołajczyk's defeat in 1946-1947 onwards, such minimally realistic hopes were non-existent.

III. Following the cessation of military activities on the territories that were later to constitute the so-called PRL (Polish People's Republic), for many, including the intelligentsia, the main problem was to return to quasi-ordinary, peaceful activities: professional intellectuals, doctors, engineers, even lawyers, actors, and writers could officially return to their own jobs. Positions and careers were readily available to them, primarily because of the depletion of the workforce during the war. What we call socially upward promotion became available to everyone: a pre-war common clerk became a bank manager, a primary school teacher became the headmaster of a secondary school, a pre-war lawyer, if he supported the new authorities, could become a judge in a district court or the head of a prosecutor's office in a big city, etc. Before the war, a young novice left-wing journalist could have a bewildering career in communist radio, and a second-rate poet could climb the communist Parnassus, where there were many prizes for pro-government satirists. Thus, there appeared the problem of attitude to the new government, but also that of creating some minimal, personal family existence. Only seemingly, as it was to turn out some time later, did the new government welcome almost everyone. The symbol of new authorities' policy was not Jakub Berman, about whom no one had known anything for a long time, nor was it even Bolesław Bierut, a vague figure, albeit apparently more accessible and cheerful to everybody, but a communist journalist, Jerzy Borejsza, who, for a short but a significant period of time was entrusted with a type of 'government of souls', or the actual adjustment of the Polish intelligentsia to service in the new system.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> J. Prokop, *Writers in the Service of Violence (Pisarze w służbie przemocy)*, Cracow, 1995, p. 46 wrote that "...Borejsza stood out as a hunter of lost and repenting souls." Jerzy Borejsza's amazingly successful activity is the subject of B. Fijałkowska's book *Borejsza and Rożański: A Contribution to the History of Stalinism in Poland (Borejsza i Rożański. Przyczynek do dziejów stalinizmu w Polsce)*, Olsztyn 1995, the author of which, in my opinion, does not explore the great subject successfully, especially the confrontations of the two figures. She writes in conclusion, p.125: "Jerzy Borejsza's entire post-war activity is concentrated on one superordinate task: to gain the intelligentsia's support for the new power." Fijałkowska is prone to assume that Jerzy Borejsza did not realise that the officially stated ideas of the time represent merely a phase in the process of assuming power by communists.



If, from one point of view, the intelligentsia's social moods in the Poland of 1945 can be compared to those after the fall of the January Uprising, some crucial differences can be seen. Firstly, the Red Army and the new system stepped in instead of the Nazi aggressor's terror. One could expect nothing worse to come, and many, especially those who were not familiar with Russia and communism, could indulge in illusions. Secondly the new authorities' flexible propaganda strategy, chanting national slogans, the whole vividness of Polishness (the Polish army, patriotic but only anti-German demonstrations, Polish schools, theatres) plus the whole range of socially radical slogans (agricultural reform, nationalisation of industry, free education)<sup>5</sup> – all these taken together held a significant force of attraction, though it was unevenly spread over the Polish territories. The new government was welcomed better on the territories where, before the war, the anti-German mood had been predominant due to the influence of national democracy, but also due to the lack of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Poland under the PKWN (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego) had been politically enslaved since the very beginning, yet from the point of view of form and (partially) content, it did not look like a new occupation: in the first years, the Catholic church was not fought officially, Polish schools, libraries, museums, and, more significantly, theatres were opened and Polish magazines were published, some of which said many things that would win favour with the populace, especially those who, during the Second Polish Republic, had lacked power and money. Sometimes it was only years later that they realised that the communist system was an ideological, social and economic deception, and that it was based on

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<sup>5</sup> Personally, it has been my view for a long time that the communist utopia had a chance of striking roots in a given country without the use of Soviet tanks only when it was really based on peasant revolution in all the places where the problem of agrarian reform had not been solved. No industrialised country stepped on the path of communism willingly...

<sup>6</sup> All those who knew what Russia, communism and Stalinism entailed were resistant to the communist propaganda. In spite of appearances, there were few such people west of the Vistula, notwithstanding the efforts made by the Polish Underground State in 1943-1945. Others found it sufficient to see Berling's uniforms, to take part in masses by new authorities' solemn representatives, and in particular to listen to the speeches that directed all the hatred that had been developing for years against Germans. Additionally, there was a conviction, known to National Army heroes, that the West had betrayed us and there was no other choice but to accept the reality.

violence and omnipotent lies.<sup>7</sup> We shall return to these issues in the latter course of the argument.

I have mentioned that, in recent years, much has been written about this subject that we do not find interesting today. However, virtually all the more specific analyses concern not so much the Polish intelligentsia as a social group, but rather the attitudes of intellectual elites, mainly of those who left a trace of their involvement in the affairs of the PRL in writing, i.e. most of the journalists, writers of the period and fewer numbers of academics in the humanities.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to seek an answer to the question of whether the attitudes which were distinctly present in the environment of elites have their counterparts in the attitudes among common intellectuals. It should be stated in advance that at the present stage of research and with the sources available, it is only probing hypotheses and debatable theses that can be formulated. Hence, it should be realised that the attitudes of the old intelligentsia will be diversified from the beginning.

Let us notice two more elements that are usually omitted in analysis of these matters. One is the fact that for manual workers and certain others (e.g. railwayman) the return to a normal post-war professional job was not a political problem. For the intellectual, on the other hand, whose work is somehow connected with the basic structures of the state (judge, prosecutor, administration), it was a problem of political decision. We should add that two factors, though of different motivation, affected this decision: the first was that after years away from a job, the yearning to return to it was sometimes enormous for many reasons beyond the immediately practical. The second was that the apparatus of still active Polish Underground State partially supported joining the new regime structures of this type, under the assumption that in this way the activities and ideas of the new authorities would be restricted and slowed down. As a result, volens or nolens, in 1945 the greater part of the Polish intelligentsia returned to their professional jobs and assumed posts that

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<sup>7</sup> At this point the role of the so-called radical agrarian intelligentsia was exceptionally harmful. Their at times righteous trauma over the Second Polish Republic overshadowed the main problem of country's threatened independence, and they were soon to become well-paid bards of the new period. Among the older authors, typical examples include Jan Wiktor, Julian Przyboś, and among the younger ones, Tadeusz Nowak. However, their name is associated with that of the legion.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. especially W. P. Szymański, *The Charms of Court (A Matter of Enslavement) (Uroki dworu (rzecz o zniewalaniu))*, Cracow, 1994 and J. Prokop, *Sovietisation and its Masks: PRL in the Years of Stalinism. (Sowietyzacja i jej maski. PRL w latach stalinowskich)*, Cracow 1997

required the acceptance of the new government. Initially, this power welcomed almost everyone: the purification process was to start in the period beginning in 1948. And here is an important factor: many intellectuals from non-communist groups, though not without certain left-wing tendencies, occupied significant posts for some time and started to identify with the new regime by removing possible objections and hesitations on an internal and emotional level in one way or another, sometimes reaching for Kettman elixir.

Today we know well about the crimes of so-called real socialism committed not only under Stalin but under the whole communist system. However, it is a fact which cannot be denied or treated as a *post factum* legend by an historian that the communist utopia had a great intellectual force, one appealing to intellectuals rather than the common man, who estimated things in a more mundane, and thus more realistic, way.<sup>9</sup> What I am thinking of here is the both symptomatic and psychologically strange fact that there were many who thought that the realisation of Communism on the Polish territories would be free from those distortions that they had been able to determine between 1935-1938 or from 1939 on. These included old, pre-war Polish communists, fanatics of the Cause, and also the many who had some experience of the Soviet reality, as well as those among the Polish intelligentsia of a vague, left-wing origin familiar with the reality of Stalinism from the war on the Soviet territories. It was in these groups that talk about "Polish specificity", about some possible "three roads", or about avoiding the pathetic (though never mentioned) reality of the Soviet system permitted an optimistic view of the beginnings of Stalinism in Poland.<sup>10</sup> In these groups, many of whose members had previously been

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<sup>9</sup> Total critics of 'communist enslavement' cannot deny, however, that the main difference between Nazism and communism was that Nazism was in fact the ideology created exclusively for Germans and did not promise anything to others, and finally was not a utopia, as in the case of communist ideology, which uttered many slogans with humanistic overtones, making use of 'the scientific outlook' argument. Therefore, J. Holzer, in *The Dispute over PRL (Spór o PRL)*, p. 36, writes: "It is not true that only intellectuals fell into the trap of indoctrination, but it is true that they did so particularly easily, and by virtue of their profession, multiplied the effect of indoctrination. The history of communism understood in this way will thus also be the fragment of Polish intellectuals' history, their ways in wilderness."

<sup>10</sup> J. Prokop in *Writers (Pisarze)*, p. 58 writes that communists in their propaganda and utopias often took up "a willingness to reform an underdeveloped country." I would add that if the second Polish Republic had carried out agrarian reform, the number of potential supporters of the new system in the villages would have fallen to zero.

far from communist, the organisational and psychological activity of Jerzy Borejsza found fertile ground, and it was this which led to his being venerated as a kind of 'pope' for intellectual communities who believed he could build a new system in Poland.<sup>11</sup> Let us add that in difficult situations, people prefer deluding themselves with optimistic projections to facing the gloomy reality. As for Borejsza himself, who within the next stage of the "sovietising" of Poland was eliminated from the political scene, one could offer two interpretations. Perhaps he was naively convinced that there was a possibility of creating a communist reality with a humane, rather than a Stalinist, face (and in this case he must, at a certain point, have suffered severe disappointment). Alternatively, and in my opinion more realistically, he consciously realised the introductory strategic variant of communist dictatorship,<sup>12</sup> but forgot that at a certain stage of cultural policy, his own, very expressive identification, in keeping with the logic governing Stalin's regime, had to consistently lead to his liquidation at that moment when it overshadowed the politics of which he was a symbol between 1944 and 1947. By virtue of a well-known rule in Stalin's state, once the Negro did what he was supposed to do, he could go away...<sup>13</sup>

If we wish to determine the Polish intelligentsia's attitudes from 1944 to 1954 in a global way, we could distinguish schematically several main attitudes, taking into account that in the course of those sinister years, particular individuals or even communities changed their attitudes fairly easily. This is understandable, considering the dynamic character of history of the period, as is the fact that the boundaries between some of the

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<sup>11</sup> From today's perspective we can say that for many years *Przekrój* played a role that had been fixed in advance for the authorities: it was supposed to attract an intellectual by means of news and glimpses of a cerebral feast, and in a both controlled and relaxed manner: between Kamyczek and Waldorff, it was supposed to read Gałczyński's satires telling about Tuwim's 'terrible citizens', to show General Anders's caricatures and those of President Zalewski, and at the same time, to grasp the opportunity to provide numerous political commentaries and reports. The question of whether or not the editors realised the role they played is of secondary importance in this case. For the sake of manipulation, it was even better that not each of them knew what *Przekrój* was created for...; cf. P. W. Szymański, op. cit., p. 90.; A. Klominek, *Life in 'Przekrój'* (*Życie w Przekroju*), Warsaw 1995 does not abstain from apology.

<sup>12</sup> From experience it is known that, as a general rule, communists were better tacticians than strategists: generally speaking, their strategies were political nonsense that did not stand any chance in the long run, yet in contrast, their tactics, especially in Western Europe, scored a glorious triumph.

<sup>13</sup> Generally, I refer the reader to B. Fijałkowska's work already quoted here, though the wonder of Jerzy Borejsza deserves more profound analysis.

attitudes (especially among the motives that governed their activities) very often were not clear-cut, and due to the lack of particular sources and their analyses, it is quite difficult to assign many members of intelligentsia groups in quantitative terms to one of the mentioned groups.<sup>14</sup> Here is an attempt at a division of the patterns of attitude.

1. The attitude of determined rejection of the system imposed on Poland, with consistent will to resist (though forms of this resistance could have been varied, and even modest in terms of events, depending on the situation). The attitude of resistance was above all unique to a considerable number of those who had previously taken an active part in the framework of the Polish Underground State between 1939 and 1945, many of whom carried on different forms of legal or illegal resistance against the communist state from 1944-1947.<sup>15</sup> From the end of 1947, all forms of armed or illegal resistance as a mass phenomenon perished, and thousands of Polish intellectuals lost their lives or ended up in the Soviet camps. Active, illegal resistance was actually broken until the end of 1948. Similarly, the only legal oppositional framework - Mikołajczyk's PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe - the Polish Peasant Party) – was relegated to the function of the communist power satellite in 1948. In this situation, any resistance to and rejection of the imposed system had to assume new, less spectacular and expressive forms. It was the church and its structures that started to come to the fore: until the fifties they had preserved certain minimum of unrestricted activity, as well as certain minimum independence (also in financial terms) from the communist

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth bearing in mind that Jerzy Holzer in a discussion from 1994 (*The Dispute over PRL*) identified four basic attitudes in the society of the period: a. opponents of the system; b. supporters of organic work, inevitably leading to a certain compromise with the system; c. fanatics of the new system; d. conformists and careerists. The boundaries among those groups are obviously blurred, and in any case it has not been decided where to put the intellectuals from Czesław Miłosz's book, who were neither typical supporters of organic work nor common careerists, though in practice quite often those differences could not be grasped.

<sup>15</sup> The hopelessness of the Polish Underground State people must have aroused their self-preservation instinct. In the descriptions of decisions made by various conspiracy circles from 1945 on, there is considerable information about people withdrawing from the organisation with management's unanimous consent: one is led to understand that for many the end of endurance was reached. Seemingly (as it was to turn out in 1950-1951), there existed a realm of possibilities to return to normal: to undertake studies, to settle down on the Retrieved Lands, where from the beginning they did not ask where one came from. Comprehensive surveys, as a phenomenon of dangerous consequences, did not appear from the very beginning.



government. An expression of this non-demonstrative but undoubtedly genuine form of resistance was the Krakow-based *Tygodnik Powszechny*, taken over by so-called progressive Catholics from PAX in 1953, after Stalin's death, at the peak the Stalinist period in Poland. The last act of the development of totalitarian tendencies was a spectacular campaign against the Catholic church, which ended with Cardinal Wyszyński's imprisonment.

What were the reasons for and manifestations of opposition to the regime in the years after 1949? By the force of events, in the period of the most intense Stalinist terror, the omnipresence of the secret police, and the all-embracing censorship that imposed the manner of thought, expression, and interpretation, the only form of resistance was the consistent avoidance of participation in official demonstrations supporting the regime, refusal to participate in the institutional structures (membership of the Party, communist youth organisations, or the TPPR (*Towarzystwo Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej* - the Society for Polish-Soviet Friendship), etc), and to countenance the public statements imposed and supported by the government. Thus, the main form of opposition in those groups was the inactivity of the writer, who would refuse to publish or, similar to other intellectuals and artists, who would escape into topics and affairs that were far from praising reality – non-ideological youth literature, for example, or historical novels. Yet let us not forget that if such an attitude did not lead to direct personal persecution, it always sentenced a given individual to a difficult life, a life often deprived of possibilities of earning a living, publishing, or carrying out any intellectual activity whatsoever. A refusal to join the governing party, its satellites and other organisations praising the social reality required, at least in the period from 1949 to 1954, those who held certain social positions or who aimed to get jobs that were under the Party's control, to take a considerable risk: in other words, what we could describe as conspicuous forms of internal emigration might have caused not only various forms of discrimination, including not only job losses, but also numerous other problems to members of families who were unfavourably perceived by the government. Hence, after 1949 the majority of the Polish intelligentsia, even if they did not praise the new system in public, were during the era of the great Stalinist terror, prone to obey the rules of mimicry within certain boundaries: in fact, any open criticism was a *sui generis* social suicide. Even an anti-state joke could cost a joker several years' imprisonment, and the only option left to less determined opponents of communism was abstention from the booming forms of the apotheosis of the regime. Thus, avoidance of political rallies, evasion of participation in May Day demonstrations (which was quite dangerous, even in common industrial plants) and in commemoration



ceremonies, all of which now seem to have been the childish forms of resistance, were then often undertaken at considerable cost.

An example of the 'climate' of the period, based on my own memories of a student of the Law Department at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, where the majority of professors were in silent (though occasionally vocal) opposition against the government. In everyday matters, especially those concerning a student, it was a bunch of youth party activists interspersed with Secret Police informers that decided about everything. Within only the first years of studies, about 10 to 15 people had disappeared from the department and landed in the prisons of the period. Well, my peak achievement, as I would call it, in the opposition of the period (apart from the fact that I did not belong to the Polish Youth Association, as did many students) was comrade Joseph Stalin's funeral. It had been taking place approximately since eleven o'clock Polish time. They had ordered national mourning also in Poland, and they wanted the whole nation to listen to the funeral ceremony transmitted live from Moscow. To this end, Law Department students, together with their professors, were supposed to gather in lecture halls. In the morning I went to the university library as usual, yet just before eleven o'clock it turned out that the transmission of the funeral was being prepared and that the library, together with its readers, was supposed to stand still in mourning, if I may put it in this way. I left the library hastily and went down ul. Krupnicza to the tramp-stop. I forgot that the tramps had stopped and that all the traffic had been brought to a standstill. Policemen were standing at every crossroads. Even the radio-equipped Planty Krakowskie were broadcasting crows of mourning through speakers. As I was going down along Planty Krakowskie, the streets were completely depopulated. I was afraid that some patrol of police officers would stop me, so I made up a story about my grandfather's sudden death, or something like that. Empty plants, an empty ul. Lubicz. Later, after some years, when I was reading Orwell, the mood of those days came back to me...

2. The most widespread attitude (however difficult it may be to show it quantitatively) was, in my opinion, that of a passive lack of enthusiasm, related to the necessity of living in the conditions imposed by the period. People of this attitude quite easily took up the position of full opportunism and that of doing their work, nolens or volens, in the framework of the new system. Above all, one had to live.<sup>16</sup> To an

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<sup>16</sup> In *The Dispute over PRL* J. Szacki stresses that the system of the PRL did not always dominate over people occupied with their 'small matters'. An average intellectual could limit himself to a narrowly perceived professional career and the

intellectual of considerable professional qualifications, however, often even the slightest verbal approval of the new system meant taking up posts of great significance, especially in the field of economics or in professional life. It was engineers who found it easiest to come to such approval, though maybe it was even easier for doctors, who, in every situation, were overtaken by a sort of universal stake of social service, free from the necessity of making morally ambivalent choices. An architect rebuilt Warsaw or Gdańsk, an engineer activated a factory or built bridges, rails, and roads. This specific activity performed, by the force of circumstance, in the framework of the reality of the time, could win the authorities' recognition quite easily, which was followed by a growth in the acceptance of the reality on the part of the individuals concerned. Generally speaking, if these people were from the former creative Polish intelligentsia of wide horizons, their acceptance was limited, but considered necessary.

3. The attitude of active acceptance of the new system grew undoubtedly in the course of time, though for various reasons. Along with the numerous genuine communists, the new system won supporters mainly among the agrarian youth and a section of the workers (mostly from the territories where PPS (the Polish Socialist Party) was weak before war, i.e. those of Śląsk (Silesia), Wielkopolska; in general, it can be stated that the new system found approval on the territories distant from the Soviet Union and those which had not belonged to Russia before the First World War). A considerable part of the intelligentsia, nolens or volens, gradually came to accept the new system. Apart from radical agrarian intelligentsia, one should mention the lay radical intelligentsia from the larger cities. Finally, let us add all those who joined the new system from right-wing positions,<sup>17</sup> and also all those who did not adopt any resolute political attitudes and were guided by opportunistic premises, above all the willingness to

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matters of his own family to remain indifferent to the temptations of approval from the authorities.

<sup>17</sup> The conservative Right supported the new system in the name of alleged Real politics, frustration towards the West, Dmowski's pro-Russian ideas and Wallenrod's pseudo-dreams, which were also adopted by the Catholic movement PAX, independent from the secret police. Therefore, there appeared various slogans of Polish *raison d'être* (with the involvement of Stanisław Stoma), a different nostalgia for Alexander Wielkopolski (K. Pruszyński), tolerant views on Stanisław August Poniatowski, ideological explanation of collaboration in the work of Alexander Bocheński...

take action.<sup>18</sup> Besides, it is worth noticing that given political attitudes or the lack of any political activity had a considerable influence on the opportunities concerning the stance on communist power. While many PSL, ND and ChD activists entered into cooperation easily, among the right-wing activists, those who used to be connected with the former ONR environment (called NSZ during the occupation) were particularly reluctant. However, the environment of the PPS activists was even more resistant, especially those from its right wing, and those of general, independent Piłsudskian leanings. It should be noted that, under the repressive measures of the fifties, it was the activists the legionary and Piłsudskian tradition - those who constituted the hard core of the National Army and WIN - that the communist authority battled against most drastically. Without a doubt, the ethos of those in the National Army, reinforced by persecutions between 1944 and 1947, shaped the oppositional mood in particular. Similarly, in the gymnasium youth circles between 1947 and 1954, numerous underground frameworks stemmed from the National Army tradition, and the oppositional mood in ZHP (the Polish Scouting Association) from 1945 to 1948 was shaped by the legend of the *Szare Szeregi*.

A few remarks should be devoted to the matter of the periodic division, as the fluctuating situations of those years caused changes in the attitudes of not only individuals but also entire environments. On this issue, I would stress the following elements of the chronology and their results:

1. The years 1944 to 1947 were, on the one hand, years of tough resistance to the communist authorities, but, on the other hand, it was the first phase of success in winning over the elites and the whole intelligentsia. This phase is sometimes defined as a period of civil war in the country. However, it has been stressed recently that it was mainly a war between Soviet powers, with the NKWD at the forefront, and the national resistance. I think that even if we do not stick to the term 'civil war' itself, some attention needs to be paid to the fact that, unlike in the period from the autumn of 1944 to the autumn of 1945, some months later it is the national forces that would join the battle against the Underground, forces such as UB, MO, KBW, and LWP, the last of which, surprising though it may be, was quite often commanded by pre-war generals and colonels (e.g. Gustaw Paszkiewicz, Prus-Więckowski, Mossor, Olbrycht, and those from the National Army, such as Franciszek Herman). The years 1946 to 1947

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<sup>18</sup> N.B. After 1948 communists placed greatest trust in those who, during the Nazi occupation, were totally indifferent, and not involved even in GL-AL. Their personal files were clean and did not evoke any suspicions.

draw one's attention with their overt contrasts: the war was over, yet the heroic struggle led by 'peasants from the forest' carried on, the illegal underground withered away and Mikołajczyk's legal opposition was put down by massive terror as early as autumn 1946. Yet, at the same time, the 'repatriation' process of millions had been in progress, the Western lands were being populated, and the rebuilding and restoration of Warsaw was undertaken. At least apparently, cultural and scientific life went on not only normally but with a certain intensity that made up for the period of the Nazi occupation: schools and universities of all kinds were overcrowded, young people left for camps of different associations, theatres, concert halls, and even lecture halls were overcrowded, and literary novelties were being snatched up (with censorship being initially mainly interested in current political affairs). Every day people were dying in cities, forests and prisons of UB, while publicised trials of the WIN management were taking place, and the members of the PSL were being treacherously murdered. Many still used forged identification, and those capable of it concealed anti-German activities during the occupation. However, a great part of the basic elements of the reality did not appear in the contemporary media and not everyone was aware of the complexity of the situation. Although almost everyone knew about the concentration camps in Russia, as they did about Katyn', in the course of time there appeared some who accepted the official version. It was the generation born in the early 1930's who would occupy the circles of ZWM (later, ZMP) and, lacking the same awareness of the Nazi occupation, were susceptible to propaganda.

2. 1948 was a critical year. Many promises of the previous phase were rejected in the great process of organising social life entirely according to obtrusively popularised Soviet patterns.<sup>19</sup> December 1948 saw the unifying congress of licensed PPS and PRL and with it the rise of PZPR. At the same time, it was the year when anticipation of a Third World War or any political intervention turned out to be illusory: for many (including in particular the circles of former Underground members who would find limited asylum in the pseudo-Catholic

<sup>19</sup> There is still a debate on the nature of the post-war regime. Not to express my opinion on this subject in general terms, I would like to point out that there was no doubt about its goal from the very beginning and that by 1949 only its initial stage had been completed.

frameworks of PAX)<sup>20</sup> it was the last moment of choice, the last opportunity to make a decision on whether to conform and formally accept the reality of the new system with or without hesitations.<sup>21</sup> It was a significant fact that there emerged a deeper and deeper conviction that there was no alternative to PRL.<sup>22</sup> Indeed it is worth pointing out that many of those who accepted the new system were then imprisoned in the phase of "ordering personal files", though they had neither the strength nor the desire to put up any resistance. It was PRL that questioned them by putting into prison many managers, engineers, experts in a variety of fields, and all those who supervised the restoration of the country in the initial years, and were now replaced by new staff through social promotion.

3. In formal terms, the years from 1949 to 1953 were the apogee of the acceptance of the system in terms of society's official response. Faced with such a massive terror, the mimicry principle was commonly in force. To quote Piotr Wojciechowski, "The mythology of the official propaganda was rejected, yet it gradually penetrated people's brains; few believed in Stalin's linguistic genius and yet it was easy to swallow egalitarianism, the cult of science and that of heavy industry, as well as the conviction of discrepancy between religion and science."<sup>23</sup>
4. The years from 1954 to 1955 were the last days of classical Stalinism and the modest beginnings of the thaw: some time after Stalin's death, hitherto suppressed doubts and anxieties began to emerge. Firstly, though not announced officially, releases of political prisoners took place. In May 1954 an indication of the thaw may be seen with the opening of the STS theatre; from November 1954 the "Bim-Bom" theatre, which later was to become famous, started its activities. The

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<sup>20</sup> B. Fijałkowska, *Borejsza and Różański: A Contribution to the History of Stalinism in Poland (Borejsza i Różański. Przyczynek do historii Stalinizmu w Polsce)*, Olsztyn 1995, pp 130-133 points out that it was also Borejsza who directly supervised the birth of the PAX experiment

<sup>21</sup> It should be borne in mind that at this time many from the former PPS found their way to life in the new reality (though many of them were later subject to persecution), cf., for example, J. Rzepecki, K. Moczarski, J. Rutkowski, A. Kamiński, M. Żuławski, K. Sosnowski.

<sup>22</sup> It should be examined to what extent the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, with utter indifference on the part of the West, exerted an influence on the collapse of hopes for any changes in the Eastern Europe.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *The Dispute over PRL*, Krakow 1996, p.61



transformations in the USSR which exerted their influence on the attitudes of certain circles in PZPR are of fundamental significance. The Polish edition of *Thaw* by Erenburg was published as early as in April 1955. Probably the most important preparation of the period of moral protest against the years of terror and captivity would be the revelations of Colonel Świtała, a former UB dignitary, who defected to the West (broadcast on Radio Free Europe on 28 September 1954). Throughout 1955 there appeared to be no end to the drawn out factional fights within the party. The publishing of Adam Ważyk's poem, "A Poem for Adults" in August 1955 was of fundamental importance to intellectual circles. The poem, written formally from the point of communist approval (yet without cleaning any of the particularly dirty ideological stains) was received as an expression of complete disappointment with the promises of the new system, and what should be remembered in particular is that this was the disappointment of 'a new man', located in a symbolic town, which was supposed to be a socialistic Nowa Huta... Today, a reader of this poem would not fully appreciate its contemporary meaning, and might well fail to realise the significance of the fact that its author had previously belonged to the group of famous eulogists of the system only to find himself in a circle of determined revisionists condemning the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November, 1956. ("Qui tacet clamant").

Let us pass on to some thorough remarks on the Polish intellectual elite, which in research has hitherto been analysed from the point of view of men of letters. For obvious reasons, this group of people are of special interest in 'accounts of Stalinism', for the simple reason that they have left both numerous documents of the period and many retrospective statements, or even texts which were then written *pro foro interno* (Maria Dąbrowska's annals serving as a perfect example). Finally, there came into being rich interpretative literature, starting with Czesław Miłosz's famous utterances and ending with numerous texts by such authors as Jacek Trznadel, Jan Prokop, Andrzej Walicki, Adam Michnik, Wiesław P. Szymański, Konstanty Jeleński, G. Herling-Grudziński, and many others. The whole affair still waits for an author who to undertake a summary of this debate in a way that is less unilateral than the accounts of an author like Andrzej Walicki which tend to be characterised by a certain pamphleteering tone rather than that of an historian's reflections. Walicki tends to speak sharply while judging our national intellectual elites of the period, including those authors (such as Adam Ważyk, not to mention Czesław Miłosz himself) who, at an early stage, broke from captivity to play a great role in the struggle against the communist regime. There



remain many abominable works from '50s, but one should remember about the environment of their evolution.

As far as the literary environment is concerned, in every sense it should be said that already in the years from 1945 to 1946, within the confines of the Borejsza's activity and that of his co-workers, the majority of Polish writers of the middle-aged and older generations participated, to some extent, in the official reality of the period: they published, performed in public, and took a pro-government stance on political matters. In actual fact, this is representative of all the pre-war environments, though for different, at times contradictory, motives. The motives will be discussed in a moment. However, let us make it clear that some forms of the approval of the state of affairs were ready to be undertaken not only by right-wing writers, especially the generation of a nationalistic tradition, but also by the younger generation which would dominate the circles of the future PAX, as well as right-wing, Catholic poets (Roman Bratny, L. Bartelski, W. Żukrowski), and (perhaps most of all) those writers who, in the pre-war period, represented what we call the radical intelligentsia, though not were not so much left-wing but rather lay, and critically estimating particularly the rule of *sanacja*.<sup>24</sup> Here came to the fore those who stood out as supporters of the new authority including radical folk writers, notably Jan Wiktor; also such avant-garde poets as Julian Przyboś could be mentioned. Maria Dąbrowska and Leon Schiller supported them, albeit hesitantly. Besides, the left-wing referred to them as well, as occasionally did pre-war communists, who, against their own experience, were in favour once again: Władysław Broniewski, Julian Strykowski, or Andrzej Stawar. Finally, there were many writers who lived a fairly independent, individual life, yet who, though mistrustful of communism, did not develop positive feelings for 'Poland of the Purged' or 'London Poland'.<sup>25</sup> Here one could mention Antoni Słonimski, Julian Tuwim,<sup>26</sup> and Czesław Miłosz. Apart

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<sup>24</sup> The point is that in 1945 those clerics and National Democrats subject to exile in London did not have any ideas, apart from the hope for the Third World War. The community in exile was parochial and represented the worst features of pre-war Poland. A significant alternative of a dialogue with the State was created some years later by the environment of *Kultura* in Paris and that of Free Europe in Munich.

<sup>25</sup> Many such as these, notably Maria Dąbrowska, generally espoused the belief that "there was no other way to modernisation," and this gained limited acceptance, cf. J. Kuroń, J. Żalowski, *PRL for Beginners (PRL dla początkujących)*, Wrocław 1995, p. 42.

<sup>26</sup> In 1948 Tuwim was not embarrassed to obsequiously shout slogans and to raise his hand 'in workers' greeting', cf. J. Prokop *Sovietisation (Sowietyzacja)*, p. 87, who quotes Maria Dąbrowska's disgust with this scene from her annals...

from them, there are those who were guided by opportunism or the feeling of superior necessity, including Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, K. I. Gałczyński,<sup>27</sup> Ksawery Pruszyński, and Zofia Nałkowska. It is worth noticing that at this point a few writers (like Jerzy Braun, Tadeusz Kudliński) were still taking part in an active resistance against the communist power. Next, there came years of seemingly unambiguous elections: the political elimination of W. Gomułka, the rise of PZPR, the declaration of the social realist doctrine, a massive process of intimidation from 1949 directed not so much against active enemies of the regime (because since 1949 they had almost ceased to exist, apart from desperate youth conspiracies) but rather against all those who were found to be uncertain and thus deserved to be eliminated. In this period, the choice became more and more obvious: support the regime and its official, ridiculous but at the same time gloomy, aesthetic doctrine, or be marginalised, write for children or for the mythical 'drawer', or look for ways of surviving in total silence as an artist and citizen. It should be stated here that from 1950 to 1954, only few writers decided to assume passive forms of resistance, and nobody gave up social life willingly. Yet there were differences in attitudes, some of them being distinct: Jan Prokop, a severe critic, wrote: "...they tried various forms of survival, some rubbing shoulders with the authorities, but only as this allowed a preservation of dignity."<sup>28</sup> In a sense he is right to say that a certain minority openly and enthusiastically accepted, or did not notice, the crimes of the regime. However, it is impossible to forget the list of authors who worshipped the works or the posthumous memory of Józef Stalin, though it was not a legal obligation of every man of letters, nor was it *sine qua non* of his activity... On this long list, next to numerous scribblers, there are almost all the significant names of the contemporary literature, and especially of poetry: Tuwim and Broniewski, Iwaszkiewicz,

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<sup>27</sup> K.I. Gałczyński was an outstanding poet of this period, but also the author of propaganda texts, which at times were so ridiculous that they appeared like mockeries of heads of state, cf. K. A. Jeleński's nice sketch about him, "Blouse from Blue Pearls" ("Bluza z błękitnych pereł") (1954), reprinted in the collection of K. A. Jeleński's essays, *Coincidences (Zbiegi okoliczności)*, Paris 1982, pp.293-298. On page 295 he writes of his "anxiety and the feeling of hopelessness. But never riot, never protest. Gałczyński was too weak and too sentimental for that. The intelligentsia was, in the eyes of the authorities, a necessary but also suspected social stratum, which should be overpowered. Gałczyński felt this and even said that historical determinism was right, though it was conspicuous where feelings led him..."

<sup>28</sup> J.Prokop, *Sovietisation*, p.96

Dąbrowska,<sup>29</sup> Miedzyrzecki, Woroszyński, Szymborska, Ważyk, T. Nowak, Ficowski. Works in the mood of social realism were written by everybody: among the known names of authors, one should mention, apart from Neverly, Filipowicz, Andrzejewski, Paweł Hertz, also Dąbrowska, Brandys, Konwicki, Andrzej Braun, Jacek Bocheński...

Only few tried not to get involved into the new reality: Stanisław Rębek, Jan Parandowski, L. Staff, S. Kisielewski, Gołubiew, Tyrmand, J. J. Szczepański, Herbert, and Iłakowiczówna. Let us state briefly and without melancholy that during this period, aside from the trend of war literature (of which certainly that of an anti-German sentiment was officially allowed) the majority of Polish literature from 1949 to 1955 is courtly panegyricism and a recycling of creative activity called social realism. It cannot be forgotten that sometimes this recycling constitutes a quantitatively significant part of the literary output of many twentieth-century Polish writers.

By force of circumstance, the question that arises is whether among the writers who actively supported the new regime in those years, the majority were ideological communists, or common careerists and opportunists, or individuals directed by different forms of dialectical consent or partial acceptance, despite differences, of the need for cooperation with the new regime, that is to say, those attitudes that Czesław Miłosz called 'ketman' forms, i.e. official approval but with secret reservations, fears and aspirations.<sup>30</sup> This conception stirred up numerous and rough polemics both just after the publication of Miłosz's masterpiece *The Captive Mind* and in the recent years. From an historical perspective Miłosz himself, as if moderated his statements, writes about his interpretation of Polish writers' intellectual and dialectical captivity that "... what I wrote in reference to certain number of people in Poland is true. Yet such people in Poland were few in number, and I think there are many of them in different countries."<sup>31</sup> Miłosz's evaluations revolved around the discussion of intellectual attitudes, and somehow put on the margin such essential elements of the

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<sup>29</sup> Did Maria Dąbrowska have to write a paean worshipping Stalin after his death? She could have pretended to have fallen ill, or get out of it in any other way... She was the one that did not risk anything.

<sup>30</sup> Miłosz distinguished different 'ketman' forms 1. In the name of national interest; 2. "The ketman of revolutionary purity" that was accepted by a communist with sympathy hidden for his aesthetic theory; 4. "The ketman of professional job", which was interpreted in *The Captive Mind Years After* (*Zniewolony umysł po latach*), Warsaw 1993, p. 338 by A. Walicki in the following way: "Verbal declarations to New Faith with its simultaneous protection of honest professionalism."

<sup>31</sup> Quoted by A. Walicki, op. cit., p. 321

Stalinist period as terror and fear of terror. To some extent they ennobled the realistic attitudes of the elites, which often stemmed from more down-to-earth motives than the 'Hegelian bite'.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, for instance, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński decidedly rejected the plausibility of Miłosz's hypotheses. For a change, in recent years in his numerous statements, Walicki tends to accept Miłosz's argument. Personally, I would maintain a view closer to that of Herling-Grudziński than that of Walicki, and I would say that it is in extreme situations that it is typical of mankind to assume methods of 'self-deception' and rationalisation of morally and intellectually doubtful decisions. However, in circles of the elite there may have been those who, in order not to feel primitively enslaved, cheerfully accepted Engels's formula that freedom is a necessity one is aware of. Thus such 'ketman' forms came into existence – the combination of the highest official degree of conformism with subtle reservations that did not necessitate defying the subordination to the new authority and ensured a certain psychological comfort. We should also notice that the choice of careful reservation towards the attitude of communist power was possible and it did not need to be an act of heroism, though also by no means was it an act of formal acceptance of reality. Let us analyse these matters more closely.

What motives governed access to the new reality? Are Miłosz's intellectually sophisticated considerations on the reasons for "the captive mind" more convincing than evaluations exhibiting opportunism, and poets' desire to serve in 'new court' (as was mentioned by Trznadel, Prokop, Wierzbicki, and Herling-Grudziński)?<sup>33</sup>

Miłosz directly observed only individuals of the Warsaw intellectual environment in 1950. It cannot be denied that both the conscious (as in Miłosz's 'Tiger') and the unconscious (as in the case of those assuming a

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<sup>32</sup> The apparent contemporary resistance was described by M. Głowiński in *Ritual and Demagogy: Thirteen Sketches about Degraded Art (Rytuał i demagogia. Trzynaście szkiców o sztuce zdegradowanej)*, Warsaw 1992, p.97: "The answer to dragon's cry is man's cunning - man who gives in to them only apparently, because he fights for higher rights and values. It is a doctrine of the lesser evil, which, however, often ends with writing a hymn worshipping the Party, as in this way I will receive creative scholarship, which, God forbid, would otherwise be granted to someone without talent..."

<sup>33</sup> G. Herling-Grudziński in *Dialogue on Iwaszkiewicz (Dwugłos o Iwaszkiewicz)*, 1980, reprinted in the quoted work by K. A. Jeleński, p.148 he wrote: "Did the price in relation to what was saved not appear to be too high?, Did the model of 'Petainowski' behaviour not do more harm than good? To what extent was an alleged player able to control his game - did the game not happen to dominate and mask the player?"

less self-analytical 'ketman' attitude) did exist. To the fore, despite the awareness of 'mistakes and drawbacks', there was the conviction that there existed an historical necessity, the necessity of getting used to the regime in the vague hope of being able to influence the forthcoming course of events. 'Tiger' thought that his activities would civilise the barbarians around him, that is to say, the communists. This mission was doomed to fail from the outset. Attitudes of this type collapsed or those who espoused them slid into the masked opportunism, to use the newspeak, either during the period of Stalinism or not later than in 1956. That is why, very few people that were well-versed in the climate of domestic Stalinism would share Miłosz's enchantment with not only 'Tiger' but also with the attitude full of intellectual hesitations, which did not lead to any goal. However, it is worth noticing that the position of an intellectual brought up in the tradition of abstract thinking, capable of idealism in social life put him in the position of one more susceptible to those elements of reality described by the ideology and official propaganda connected with it: together with the ability for self-deception and with a certain naivety in the perception of social and economic reality. An intellectual, and especially female intellectual, gave in to utopian arguments (which by definition cannot be verified empirically) more easily and was less able to confront them with the reality of the period, or to re-marginalise them by uttering abstract slogans. It is impossible to treat seriously those noble motives evoked after many years. It should be noted that an honest confession of social opportunism or even one of common fear of disgrace, which is careerism without any ideological illusions, seemed to many, Miłosz included, to be something coarse and inelegant. In this context, one should recall Arthur Sandauer's ironic reference to the 'heroic opportunism' of those fellow travellers who thought, for instance, that by joining the party they victimised themselves to rescue the country... Having said all that, I have no intention of denying that there is considerable truth in Miłosz's analysis of variable motives for the capitulation of such numerous intellectual elites representatives in the light of "New Faith". Miłosz stressed both the element of hypnosis caused by historical determinism and, on the other hand, different forms of self-deception. Omitting certain zealous groups of the contemporary literary youth, I would stress that the element of self-deception was applied in order to arrive at a positive conclusion concerning the system and to praise this system without having to give up the minimum of respect for oneself,<sup>34</sup> which was promised by the new

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<sup>34</sup> Note, at this point, the question of alcoholism in the lives of outstanding writers of the period - Władysław Broniewski and K. I. Gałczyński. Was the self-



system to the recruits chosen for its affirmation. It was perfectly described by Czesław Miłosz:

You shall live free from suffering  
we shall give you soundness of mind and glory  
may your poem, instead of waging war,  
give educating joy to people

As for the attitudes in the middle of the Stalinist night around the year 1951, let us add to the debate a remark that has been underestimated: "when in Rome, do as the Romans do", this, in a certain respect, applies to those who officially approved of the system and derived the means of living from it; this possible break with everything while PRL prisons were being filled required courage: where the beginnings of 'collaboration' created some illusions, hopes and careerism were determined by 'great fear'.<sup>35</sup> It was in the Polish Writers' Association that there was a joke around the year 1951 saying that in order to promote a candidate to become a member of this association, "one had to publish one book or give away two colleagues..."

To conclude considerations on this aspect, which will remain a subject for argument for a long time to come, I would like to point out to two sad truths: first, while analysing available sources, we cannot usually distinguish where an attitude of genuine engagement for ideological reasons or that of a 'pedigree' ketman ends from instances when common life opportunism starts. All the retrospective and supposed Wallenrod-like acts reported from later times, by force of circumstance, arouse mistrust and that is why one should not be astonished at the sharp and ironic judgements they evoked. One could risk a statement that a human with certain experience, who survived 17<sup>th</sup> September 1939 and Katyń, as well as the Warsaw Uprising, to say nothing of the news about the range of terror from the fifties, could hardly follow Tadeusz Kroński's recipe or Bolesław Piasecki's specific hints.

Let us now sum up our considerations. In 1945 the Polish intelligentsia found themselves facing the creation of a totalitarian system. Poland had got out of the Second World War with a feeling of defeat and the loss of hope of maintaining independence. In such a situation, part of the non-communist intelligentsia (especially the more radical circles of the agrarian intelligentsia), not without many illusions, made an effort to find a place

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destruction of its own type not a peculiar way of trying to get out of false acceptance of the false reality?

<sup>35</sup> Especially J. Prokop in his sketches.



for themselves in the new system, part of whom did it for purely opportunistic reasons, not without various *pro foro interno* restrictions. A large part of the intelligentsia especially of right-wing and Catholic origins, also belong here - those who, in the name of *raison d'état* and the necessity of a realistic perception of reality, were ready to cooperate, (national democracy, Christian democracy). Those who did not have illusions and who were still trying to fight the system in the years 1945-1948 died or ended up in labour camps, as did many others. After all, soon, along with the old intelligentsia trying to find their place in the new reality hesitantly, around the year 1948 there appeared a new, vigorous and quite numerous group of young intellectuals from social promotion. These would comprise mainly the agrarian youth that in the years 1947-1954 constituted the fore of communist youth associations and that, after receiving certain certificates, would be part of the professional intelligentsia of different jobs after around 1949. In this group, there would be the greatest percentage of honest supporters of the new system, who basically came under the effective influence of communist propaganda. It may be worth mentioning that it is those university graduates of 1953-1955 who would be recruited for the guard of PZPR from the epoch of Gomułka and Gierek. However, let us not forget that from this group, not only among the careerists but also among more outstanding people, there would stem a strong revisionist movement symbolised by the names of Karol Modzelewski, Jacek Kuroń, the 'Po Prostu' band of 1956 or such writers as Woroszyński, Jacek Bocheński, Witold Zalewski, and Marek Hłasko. Let us conclude that it was easiest to 'get dirty' with a pen, that is why to the attitudes of an average intellectual, who only did his job honestly, accepting officially, *nolens* or *volens*, the new system<sup>36</sup> remained less conspicuous. The average provincial intellectual conformed to the new authority because he did not see any other possibility of doing his job, and he did not have the strength for heroism after six years of Nazi occupation. If an intellectual who did not want to accept the new system in the fifties was in a difficult situation,<sup>37</sup> it is the examples of such professors as Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Konrad Górski, Adam Vetulani, Ludwik Ehrlich, and Henryk Wereszycki, who did not capitulate and risked discrimination, as well as personal problems rather than dismiss their own ideas, that prove such a stance was possible, if sometimes difficult, and at a certain

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<sup>36</sup> P. Wandycz, in *The Dispute over PRL*, p. 13: "Life in every country, and especially in that of totalitarian countries, does not allow an average citizen to distance himself from everything that happens there. Internal emigration cannot be a mass or even a normal phenomenon."

<sup>37</sup> J. Prokop paid some attention to this in *Sovietisation*, p.6

point of Stalinism even dangerous,<sup>38</sup> though at times a famous name provided protection.

The debate on the so-called policy of the lesser evil and on the problem of the degree to which social opportunism was profitable will continue to the very end. For example, while in exile Konstanty Jeleński and even Giedroyc were prone to moderate evaluation,<sup>39</sup> and severe moralising was practised by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński.<sup>40</sup> In fact, in this period, we deal with a whole range of attitudes and their variations. Let us add that a moralist's unhappiness consists in people's tendency to evolve, especially in variable and difficult situations. In other words, in the period from 1944 to 1956 not everyone assumed uniform attitudes. Among many of them there prevailed internal dilemmas which did not find their form of public expression because at the peak of Stalinism such forms were nowhere to be found. Only those who were in prison did not have such dilemmas. One should not forget how many of the most outstanding representatives of the Polish intelligentsia, including many women, went to the prisons of PRL or Russia, and how many of them lost their lives there.

The most depressing balance of that period is that of Polish literary output. However, certain successes were achieved by the effort of intellectuals who were far from negotiating with the regime. There was, nevertheless, no adequate response to the terrorism and crime. Miłosz and others could have chosen freedom and to set themselves free from the complicity in a lie, but neither the whole nation nor its elites could 'choose freedom' abroad. In the country, if it was not possible to protest against the evil - it was only possible to reject the participation in solemn forms of its acceptance. Few managed to do so. However, one cannot attribute the will to fight to the majority of the intelligentsia, apart from the lack of enthusiasm to obligatory homage paid to the period. The events which took place in the years from 1944 to 1948 broke this will to a great extent.

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<sup>38</sup> In spite of all of this, only few writers went to prison in the years 1948-1955.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. A quoted conversation between A. K. Jeleński and G. Herling-Grudziński.

<sup>40</sup> It is difficult not to be surprised with the evaluations by witnesses of the period, who remember strict adherence to the conventions of the communist 'court', receptions with Bolesław Bierut and those who at a certain time used so many words of condemnation for the panegyricism of Rydz-Śmigły's and Mościcki's period. Even the birthday of Moscow proconsul, Bolesław Bierut, was celebrated with panegyrics, and among numerous visitors, there were many famous names: Broniewski and Anatol Stern, Ważyk, Woroszyński, Iwaszkiewicz, Słonimski, Międzyrzecki, Ficowski. These were mainly non-party authors. Did they have to be there or were they afraid of Putrament and Radkiewicz?