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The Propaganda of Collectivisation - Polish Peasant Migration to the Ukraine, 1948-1949

In September 1947 the representatives of nine European communist parties gathered in Poland and attempted to re-launch Comintern. The new times, of course, required new forms, and that is why the new composition was given the slightly bureaucratic name *Biuro Informacyjne* (Information Bureau). The first „information-document” declared that the world was divided into two opposed camps, imperialistic and democratic. In this case, democrats considered themselves the bearers of Marxist-Leninist ideology. The recent allies in the war with fascism returned to their former positions as imperialists. The attitude of the communists towards the socialist parties, which were still considered as supporters of the world aggressor, remained unchanged.

In the face of unshakeable soviet military victories, a signal to begin the final „peaceful” liquidation of non-communist parties was given. Initially it applied to the countries under post-war soviet influence in which those parties remained despite a number of simulated referendums and parliamentary elections.

Along with the socialists, the representatives of peasant parties found themselves in deep water. The very existence of separate political formations, mouthpieces of peasants’ interests and points of views, brought, according to the Kremlin, a provocative element in the doctrinal class unity of peasants and workmen. After the liquidation of peasant parties in Hungary (Partia Drobnych Włościan – May 1947) and in Bulgaria (Związek Chlopski – August 1947) – a devastating blow was delivered to Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL).

According to Moscow’s plans, the communists should fully assume power in their hands, and then should consult with the only centre for „integration and consolidation” of powers. Naturally, Moscow was to be the ideological centre, though formally it had to be placed in one of the „brotherly countries”. Still in 1945 Yugoslavian leader J. Broz Tito offered

his services. However, Stalin bore his own personal relation to the countries that were then under his influence. There were many unpleasant memories connected with Poland from the beginnings of his career as leader. As a result it was Poland that caused the most problems as far as political order in post-war Europe was concerned, during the talks with the allies (Moscow, Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam), as well as during their realisation. Stalin decided to place Cominform – the Trojan horse of Moscow – in Warsaw, which is said to have been agreed to during Gomułka's visit to Moscow in the spring of 1947. Gomułka, having his own bitter experiences with Comintern, was suspicious of the idea of a centralised structure beyond the party, especially considering that it was to be located in Warsaw. Half a year before the conference during which Cominform was founded, Gomułka managed to relocate the honourable mission to Belgrade.

The second session of Informbiuro, that took place on the 20th June 1948 in Bucharest, is known more for its decision about the Yugoslavian communist party. We, however, are going to concentrate on another resolution passed by the office under the leadership of M. Susłow. The decision was called „the socialist village reform” and concerned the collectivisation of villages in all the countries of the block.¹

Among the general suggestions in the resolution, it was emphasised that „in order to successfully carry out liquidation of kulaks (well-to-do peasants) and liquidation of the capitalist element in the villages, it is necessary that the party carries out introductory and permanent preparatory work leading to limiting the capitalist element in the villages, strengthening alliance of the working class and the peasants under the control of the working class, and development of socialist industry able to organise production of machines for collective management of agriculture.”²

The day before the meeting (02/02/1948) Central Committee of the USSR passed a decree „on displacing to distant regions those who mischievously avoid working on farms as well as those who lead antisocial parasitic life style.” We will explain later what the designations used in the title of the decree mean. We have quoted the information in order to

¹ W. Góra, *Niektóre zagadnienia reform agrarnych w europejskich krajach demokracji ludowej* (Some Problems of Agrarian Reforms in European Democratic People's Republics) in *Materiały i studia z najnowszej historii Polski* (Materials and Research in Contemporary Polish History), Warsaw 1963, nr 1, pp.51-63

² D. Umans'kyj, *Perebudova sils 'koho gospodarstva w krainach narodnoji demokracji* in „Vilne žyttia”, 8 bereznia 1949 r., p.4

reconstruct the synchronised background of the internal events that took place in USSR and foreign political actions of the builders of the socialist village.

During the conference in Bucharest, the representatives of the Polish communists - Berman i Zawadzki, disregarding certain limitations received from Gomułka, supported the resolution to collectivise villages as well.

During the next assembly of KC PPR (Central Committee of Polish Workers' Party) (31st September – 3rd October), Gomułka was reminded of the lack of consensus concerning peasantry between the Polish communist leader and the resolution of Informbiuro, which according to Stalin expressed the collective thought of the whole socialist people's democratic camp, and was removed from the position of the General Secretary of the party.

It was a natural turn on the way to fight „the hostile ideological influence, nationalism and opportunism among Polish communists” and a new stage of social life in Poland. According to Stalin's conception, whatever the forward move, it required overcoming obstacles. The main obstacles to the development of socialism were its ideological and therefore class enemies. They could be overcome only in a fight. The wave of repression reached Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Anybody could be included on the list of „the enemies of the nation” – from the Prime Minister to the owner of the most distant farm.

During the plenum, „apart from his negative attitude towards Cominform, Gomułka was accused of cooperation with the right-wing Polish groups of socialists and social workers among the peasantry.” His successor, Bierut emphasised that comrade Wiesław avoided the class war in villages as well.³ After having solved the problem of Gomułka, in his speech Hilary Minc spoke about the fight as the beginning of social progress in Poland. He elaborated on class war in villages and the ways of development of agricultural economy. Co-operative movement was to be the main direction. The number of agricultural machines and the level of financial cost stimulated the speed of the process. As far as the latter is concerned, Minc assured his audience that in 1949 the government would finance 1% of farms (33,400), on condition that they joined the co-operative movement.

Under the ideological slogans in the propaganda directed to the Polish villages destroyed by the war, communists hid their quite weighty economic arguments. Peasants, with typical rural mentalities were ready to

A Garlicki, *Stalinism*, Warsaw 1993

accept the compromise. The influence of Mikołajczyk's PSL idea on them remained the only obstacle. Therefore, the next move of the new Polish administration was understandable - the final humiliation of Mikołajczyk as a social activist and as a personality, liquidation of his political figure and thus the party associated with his name. The mechanism of „detecting hostile activity” was made easier thanks to Mikołajczyk's escape from the country. The fact that western diplomats and special forces helped him only further justified the arguments of Polish communists.⁴

In the middle of December 1948 a unifying assembly of PPR and PPS took place in Poland. „The establishment of a homogeneous party of a working class meant not only the end of over a half-century division in Polish workers' movement, but also the victory of it in the Marxist-Leninist direction” – commented a soviet history book for a long time.⁵

The process of creating a one-party system in the countries under the soviet influence proceeded chronologically in a reverse order to the destruction of the peasant parties in these countries. The parties were founded in succession: in Romania (February), Bulgaria (May), Hungary and Czechoslovakia (June 1948). Poland was the last one. However, even after having created PZPR, there existed two peasant parties in the country. With the help of safety organs, SL enlarged its influence while PSL was dying out.

The fiery proclamations, pompous slogans, and even brutal repressions did not convince peasants about the superiority of the collective forms of running a farm. A miracle was needed for the peasants to see a splendid future in the absolute chaos. And the reality was grim and harsh.

Agricultural economy in Poland was almost completely destroyed after the war. The new government announced carrying out agricultural reform. Before the 1st of January 1949, the government gave 9,707 buildings of the total area of 3,485,600 hectares for its realisation. Almost 40% of that was given to poznanskie and pomorskie provinces, which were partly or completely unpopulated⁶. After that soviet strategists of ideology decided to convince individual Polish peasants giving them an illustrative example.

In the whole Soviet Union, only Ukraine could assume that role, even though it suffered fake hunger actions and conscious destruction of peasantry as a class. Especially that after the war the rumours that

⁴ A. Paczkowski, *Stanisław Mikołajczyk*, Warsaw 1994.

⁵ *Istorija juznyh i zapadnyh slavjan*, Moskva, „Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo Gosudartvennogo Universiteta” (further MGU), 1969.

⁶ I. Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość produkcyjna w Wielkopolsce w latach 1949-1974 (Agricultura lproduction co-operative management in Wielkopolska in the years 1949-1974)*, Warsaw-Poznań 1997, p.15

kolkhozes were to be liquidated spread among the peasants in Russia. During the war, the kolkhoz system turned into half-slave labour, for which the peasants did not receive any payment. Then, however, it was justified by the necessity of conscious limitations in order to defeat the invader – the supreme goal to free the country. Even the enforcement of the government's decision to call the peasants to account for not having produced the statutory minimum without any considerable reasons and on the basis of the sentence forcing those peasants to work in their own kolkhozes with the farm keeping the 25% of the pay was justified.

At that time the situation in the soviet Russia reminded, paradoxically, of the social life in the tsar's Russia after the war of 1812. The kolkhoz members perceived Stalin – victor as „a good tsar”, who would free them from the kolkhozes for strenuous, free of charge work during the war.

After the war, when the economical chaos was joined by drought and the agricultural crisis deepened, the administration of the country took steps that ruined peasants' hopes for a change in their lives. The government's resolution from the 31st of May, 1947 extended the practice of prosecution of peasants for not producing the day-work minimum.

In total, in USSR in 1946, 75,8% kolkhozes produced less than 1 kg of corn, and 7,7 % did not settle accounts by corn⁷. In the same year, 18,4% of kolkhoz members able to work did not produce their daily minimums – for the soviet administration of justice they were potential „penal criminals”.

Peasants and administrators of a lower rank saw hope to overcome the crisis in a withdrawal from the collective farm management. Russian scholar Zubkova gives the data of the specification of inquiry inspectors of KC WKP(b), that conducted inspections of the economic farming conditions in various regions of the country. They prove that the rumours to liquidate kolkhozes began in peasants' circles and were spread in both invaded and non-invaded areas. Apart from already mentioned phenomenon of the Russians' belief in „a good tsar”, a new contemporary element was added. The country folk that spent their war years by the loud speakers listening to the news from the front got used to the information about „the other front”. The names of the leaders of the allied countries of Churchill and Truman appeared on post-war kolkhoz members' tongues in an interesting interpretation. Diplomatic discrepancies were that kolkhozes were the only obstacle on the way to peace in the world. „During the conference in San Francisco," the peasants whispered, "Molotov was offered the renunciation of the Bolsheviks and kolkhozes. Molotov

⁷ J.Zubkova, *Mir mnenij sovetского celoveka 1945-1948 gg. Po materialam CK VKP(b) in Otecestvennaja istorija*, 1998, No 3, p.29

renounced kolkhozes but he did not want to give up Bolsheviks, and therefore America declared war on Russia.” That is how, from the point of view of their kolkhoz life, the peasants from the Pskovski area interpreted the events taking place in the world.

The party officials could not see that the reasons of the crisis came from economic area and the ways of management, and stubbornly continued marching the way clearly marked by Stalin. His idea in the class war this time was used as an explanation of the rise of anti-kolkhoz moods. The only thing to do was to find the source of these moods, announce it „the enemy of the nation”, and the further mechanism was worked out. According to authorities, it was the soldiers at the front returning to villages who were the potential carriers of this influence, as it was the case in the anti-Napoleon marches moving across Europe in earlier times. It is stated in one report regarding the influence of soldiers at the front on the moods of their fellow citizens that „many comrades have been to Romania, Hungary, Austria, and Baltic countries. There they saw a detached farmstead system and individual farms, but not all of them are politically bright enough to recognise it and rightly evaluate our reality and the capitalist reality.”⁸

What was the Ukrainian reality like? Owing to its natural potential, to spite the social persecution on the part of the Bolsheviks, Ukrainian land remained the nourisher of this huge country. And it all happened after the terrible calamity of the war, which overlapped with the Bolshevik experiment.

After the war, Ukrainian agriculture was seized and ruined. Apart from the well-known experiment by the occupants of the exportation of humus, from the beginning of the occupation until the end of June, 1943 the following were exported from Ukraine (given in tons): grain 3,600,000, pulse 100,000, butter 50,000, potatoes 50,000, honey and jam 25,000, sugar 155,000, cotton 5,000, wool 7,000, medicinal plants 1,500, hemp and flax 55,000.⁹ During the war 28, 000 villages, and 30,000¹⁰ kolchozes and sovkhozes were destroyed. In the early post-war years natural calamities such as severe freezes and droughts added to the problem. In

⁸*Ibid.* p. 31. My own impressions and similar memories could be added, those regarding stories I heard from my grandfather, who was a soldier at the front in Hungary and Austria.

⁹M. Zagorulko, A. Judenkov, *Krach plana Oldenburg (o sryve ekonomiceskich planov fasistskoj Germanii na vremennno okkupirovannoj territorii SSSR)*, Moskva 1980, p. 354

¹⁰O. Veselova, P. Pacenko, „Šce odna trahicna storinka istorji Ukrajiny” in *Ukrajins'kyj istorvcnyj žurnal*, 1995, no 6, pp 112-123

1946 almost 350,000 hectares of the winter corn crop was lost.¹¹ That year the average harvest was 6.8 quintals per hectare.

Famine then arrived in the republic. Between the winter of 1946-47 and the spring of 1947 almost one million people died.¹² In this situation, one may suspect (though this point requires additional detailed argument) that to some extent the republic was using most of what was, by force, taken away from the people living in the western parts of Ukraine which were not corrupted by the collectivisation system. Except for such government-organised exploitation, the inhabitants of the provinces affected by the famine began to move to western regions in search of food for their families. People there were not only from Ukraine, but also from Russia.¹³ It is likely that the formation of kolchozes was not coerced in those years in Western Ukraine.

There were various sources, and various ways, of obtaining products. In addition to the compulsory tax, property was confiscated from inhabitants who were accused of cooperation with members of a Ukrainian organisation fighting for national independence and Fascism during World War II. The grander the plan for purchasing products in individual administrative districts, the more people cooperating with the organisation there were revealed by the local unit of NKWD. They were sent to Siberia after their property had been confiscated. By means of various rationales food was also taken from Poles who were leaving Ukraine on the basis of the Polish-Ukrainian agreement related to the transportation of people. Ukrainian emigrants were refused due grain, which was left as compensation for leaving Poland.¹⁴

Moscow decided to show the charms of kolchoz life to farmers from the „brotherly countries,” which appeared to be a difficult task for the authorities of the USRR. The Ukrainian land still remembered the czar’s „potiomkowskie viiages.” The Bolsheviks later managed to fool H. G. Wells, R. Rolland, and R. M. Rilke. Were they now to fear Polish farmers?

¹¹Slightly different figures were shown in *Istorji selanstva (The History of Peasantry)*. That winter over 1 million hectares, which constituted 13% of the whole crop, were lost on kolchozes, together with over 400,000 hectares of the winter crop. *Istirija selanstva Ukrajins'koji RSR*, Kyjiv 1967, vol. 2, p. 346.

¹²O. Veselova, P. Pacenko, *Sce odna trahicna storika*, pp. 112-123.

¹³H. Hutrovyj, „Holodna zyma 1947-ho: Slovo podiaky wolynianam” in *Volyn 29 lutoho* 1996.

¹⁴S. Tkacov, *Pols'ko-ukrajins'kyj transfer naseleennia. Vyseleennia polakiv z Ternopila*, Ternopil, 1997.

More importantly, the USSR had already hosted Polish delegations of labour representatives in 1929.¹⁵

It was native farmers that constituted a greater threat to the kolchoz order. For this reason it was necessary to prepare well for the operation, which was false and dishonest in assertion. Thus, appropriate sites needed to be decided upon, and, with the use of appropriate terminology, morally resistant people needed to be found.

Preparations for hosting the delegation of Polish farmers were made under the leadership of CK KP(b)U. The aim of this visit was openly formulated in the introduction to the plan for the meeting. The practical aims were „to show the superiority of socialism over capitalism using specific examples from the kolchoz building trade in the USSR and the supremacy of collective farming over individual farming, and to convince Polish farmers that the kolchoz way is the only way to develop agriculture in socialist countries.”¹⁶

Firstly, a convincing reason for such visits needed to be found. Poles were invited to participate in a republican conference for people working on farms, which was to be held on 14 February 1949. During the meeting the council planned to read out an appeal to the farmers of the Polish Republic, which was intended to encourage them to follow the pattern of village collectivisation. Polish communist authorities acted appropriately in explaining the meaning of the invitation, and the appeal was quoted in the press. In *Chłopska Droga* a „brotherly letter” from Ukrainian kolchoz members was quoted almost in full.¹⁷

The USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also included on the list of hosts of the delegation. The plan was to meet in Brest before travelling to Kiev, but to stop en route at Zabłocie, Kowel, Poworsk, and Sarny¹⁸ in order to provide occasions for the „expression of brotherly friendship.” The USSR Ambassador to Poland, Wiktor Lebediew, advised his Ukrainian colleagues to send a first-class railway carriage and a buffet car to meet the Polish representatives in Brest. The carriage was sent immediately, but the buffet car, which could seat up to 28 people, had to be sought with the help of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁹ During

¹⁵H. Makarova, *Poezdka delegacji trudiascichsia Polsi w SSSR (1929 g.) in Sovetsko-polskije otnosenija 1918-1945. Sbornik statej*, Moskva 1997, pp. 111-128.

¹⁶*Archiv MZS Ukrainy*, series I, vol. 1, report 230, p.46.

¹⁷*Chłopska Droga*, 27 Feb. 1949.

¹⁸*Centralnyj Derżawnyj Archiv Holovnwch Orhaniv Upravlinnia (CDAHOU)*, series I, vol. 30, report 1719, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹*Archiv MZS Ukrainy*, series I, vol. 1, report 226, p.1.

a meeting of the CK KP(b)U it was decided that the image of a current figure, a portrait of N. Krushchev, was to be added to the portraits of Stalin, Molotov, and Bierut to decorate the stations. To make sure that the best representatives of Polish farmers were more amenable while disembarking at each station, it was planned „to present each delegate with a bottle of lemon vodka and two packs of cigarettes.”²⁰

Ukrainian soviet civil servants from the People's Committee for Foreign Affairs were given an opportunity to continue their „diplomatic” activities, which began with the Poles' visit. The People's Commissioner of USSR Foreign Affairs, D. Manuilski, gave the employees who would participate in the meeting a special order. There was a point in it regarding the right ideological protection: „each delegate is to receive two or three books by Dubkowiecki (a kolchoz leader, a Hero of Socialistic Labour) in Polish, and if there aren't any copies in Polish, then the works of Stalin in Ukrainian, as well as *Problemy Leninizmu* and others should be provided. Also, investigate the possibility of obtaining books written by classic authorities on Marxism and Leninism in Polish in The International Book Bookshop in Moscow and Lvov.”²¹ The whole list of propagandist literature was to be confirmed by the CK KP(b) U. The last point of the instructions was a condition which characterises the attitude towards the staff in the Ministry and paints a general picture of it. The Minister ordered „all operating personnel should not be under foot and not create an unpleasant impression.”²²

It is necessary at this point to pause and consider the status of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the overall Soviet political system of those times. It was only a nominal institution, activated only for a brief period in Polish-Soviet relations, particularly during the intensive campaign of repatriation and re-evacuation of Ukrainians to the USSR after World War II. At that time it was awkward for Moscow authorities to launch certain international initiatives of an exceptionally delicate matter.

The institution was masked by the false independence of certain republics of the USSR. It constituted a kind of trap for the gullible with democratic bate. On 2 February 1944 the Presidium of the USSR Superlative Council issued a decree, on the basis of which a Union-Republican Commissariat of the USSR Foreign Affairs was founded. Its first diplomatic undertaking was a Polish-Soviet (Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian) population exchange.

²⁰CDAHOU, series I, vol. 30, report 1719, p. 11.

²¹Archiv MZS Ukrajiny, series I, vol. 1, report 226, pp.8-9.

²²Ibid.

Since D. Manuilski was the chief of Ukrainian diplomacy, credibility was approaching zero. Returning to the visit of Polish farmers, it should be noted that the seemingly banal, ideologically simple action of building a reference library for Polish delegates was also confirmed by the chief Ukrainian diplomat not only with CK in Kiev, but also with the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On 13 February 1949 the superintendent of the Ukrainian ministry sent a message to Moscow requesting instructions for customs officers in Brest so that they could allow „Polish delegates to take the books, the list of which will be sent to the border.”²³

The puppet ministry's meticulousness and the trend to secure itself against responsibilities for its decisions were understandable, considering the character of the current Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was D. Manuilski who, in 1922, strove for the abolition of the independent Russian republics. Among other undertakings, he suggested the creation of a general administration to deal with trade and foreign politics. This suggestion was contradictory to the views of Ch. Rakowski, who claimed that the Soviet federation had an opportunity to „revolutionarily penetrate” Galicia, Bukowina, Ruś Zakarpacka, and Besarabia with the intervention of the independent soviet Ukraine. He wrote that „without a serious reason we deprive ourselves of this weapon, and conversely, we give Polish and Romanian bourgeoisie a new weapon with which to fight us and strengthen their national politics” by abolishing ministries which are the attributes of independent politics.²⁴

The paradox of Soviet reality was that Ch. Rakowski's conception regarding that „weapon” and its use in international politics was to be put forward by his opponent D. Manuilski, after Rakowski was executed.

Everything was prepared to host the Polish delegation. The group consisted of thirteen workers from the administration of mutual aid for farmers, three farmers, two superior representatives of PZPR, one representative of PSL, two representatives of the Polish Youth Union, and three journalists.²⁵ A. Brzoza, an instructor of the KC.PZPR Department of Agriculture, led the delegation. The press was represented by the KC.PZPR *Chłopska Droga* journalists Stefan Pawlata and Maria Sztakielska,²⁶ J. Mucha of the Radom voivodeship, J. Kania of the

²³Archiv MZS Ukrajiny, series I, vol. 1, report 228, p.84.

²⁴„Zamecanija tov. Rakovskogo po proektu rezolucii o wzaimootnosienijach RSFSR s nezavisimymi respublikami.” *Izvestija CK KPSS*, 1989, no. 9, pp. 209-212.

²⁵Archiv MZS Ukrajiny, series I, vol. 1, report 226, p.7

²⁶*Vilne Zytia*, 10 lutoho 1949r.

Wałbrzych voivodeship, and R. Uściłowska were listed as social correspondents.²⁷ *CDAHOU*, series I, vol. 30, report 1719, pp. 15-17.

Kolchozes and MTSs [machinery and tractor stations- note by E. W.] from six eastern and southern districts were chosen as representative ones. Wasilev kolchoz of the Dymerski region, Kiev district, was the site of an exhibition-visit (25 February). The remaining days were devoted to cultural programs exhibited in the capital. The guests saw the Golden Gate, the monuments of B. Chmielnicki and the Ukrainian prince Vladimir, „after seeing Vladimierska Gorka and Askoldova Mogila, the delegates visited a partisan museum about which some of them had heard in their country. The guests were particularly interested in the exhibition which presented the work of Soviet partisans in Ukraine under the command of S. Kovpak, whose fame resounded throughout Poland during the war, urging Polish patriots to fight the Nazis.”²⁸ The Poles were offered a visit to the Lenin Museum, I. Franka theatre, a folk museum, a picture gallery, a viewing of the film *Pavlov* (in fact substituted for by the film *Miczurin*, which was likely the result of the presence of the academician T. Lysenko at the council meeting) and various other documentaries including *Kukurydza*. Of course, the sights the Poles were exposed to were capable of leaving them with various impressions, but few were in any way related to agriculture.

Before returning to their country, the guests were presented with gifts and photo albums as memorabilia of their time in Ukraine at a ceremony given by the Minister of Agriculture.²⁹ This delegation was only a prelude to the operation, they were assigned the role of witnesses at a Ukrainian kolchoz meeting. They left for Warsaw at 12:50 on 2 March 1945. That

²⁷ *Chłopska Droga*, 27 Feb. 1949.

* Odesky, Zaporosky, Dniepropetrovsky, Poltavsky, Charkovsky, Kijevsky (southern regions which now belong to Czerkasky district). the following kolchozes were the main sites from the capital district: „Osiągnięcie Października” of Talnovsky region (leader, Dubkoviecky), „Proletariusz” of Czerkasky region (leader, Kuzniec), „Vasilev” of Dymersky region. In other districts the following kolchozes were chosen: „K. Libknecht” of Odesky region, „Budionny” of Bereзовsky region (leader, Posmitnyj), „Ordżonikidze” of Lozovsky region in Charkovsky district (leader, Mohylczenko), „Stalin” of Poltavsky region, „Molotov” of Kremenczucky region (leader, Kowal), „Czkalov” of Dniepropetrovsky (leader, Szczerbyna) in Novomoskevsky region, „Bolszewickie Lany” of Vasyłkovsky region (leader, Czerednyk), „Pamięć Lenina” and „8 Marca” of Mychajlovsky administrative district in Zaporosky district.

²⁸ *Radians'ka Volyn*, 19 lutoho 1949.

²⁹ *CDAHOU*, series I, vol. 30, report 1719, p. 23.

kolchoz meeting. They left for Warsaw at 12:50 on 2 March 1945. That day N. Krushchev sent the Polish president, B. Bierut, a telegram regarding the delegates' stay in Kiev and their safe return to Poland.³⁰

The stay was soon evaluated by the organisers. In spite of their wishes, certain negative moments could not be ignored. Some „unpleasant” facts are mentioned in a note by Bogdaszkin, who accompanied the delegation. Although the CK KP(b)U, knowing the real conditions, had emphasised the necessity of appointing special engineers to transport the delegation, „there was one hasty braked stop” between Kiev and Hrebinka. It appeared that the engineer's cap had blown off his head and he had stopped the train to retrieve it. The stop was so sudden that water bottles slid off tables and dishes were broken. Some arguments were heard through windows. The engineer was arrested at Hrebinka station.³¹ Sad were the times when a man was sent to prison for the sake of a cap. Just as there is no stopping for an engineer's cap on a speeding train, there is no stopping for anyone with petty bourgeois sentiments on the road of communism.

From 26 February, Wołyń station greeted its new guests according to a newly formed plan. This is how the group of Polish farmers began their stay. They had supposedly accepted an invitation offered by a council of master workmen, and had departed Warsaw on 25 February. Among the members of the delegation, there were 117 farmers, 83 PZPR members, 9 PSL members, and 24 SL members.³² They were supposed to tour farmsteads of the following districts: Poltavsky, Dnieproprietrovsky, Sumsky, Vinnicky, Charkovsky, Odesky, Stalinsky [presently Doniesky-note by E.W.], and Kievsky.

The delegation was divided into groups, which went to different kolchozes and factories. Each group was accompanied by a representative of CK, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and MDB [Ministry of National Security- note by E.W.]. The events of those years can be reconstructed only on the basis of information from documents stored in the archives of these institutions.

The leaders sent brief reports to Kiev as soon as they could access a phone or telegraph, and full written reports were prepared later. The content of the reports can be divided into three parts: a description of the responses of Poles while touring the farms; a detailing of the dinner menus, including citation of the subjects of toasts; a outline of the discussions between Poles and Ukrainian representatives after the consumption of alcohol intended to prompt conversation.

³⁰*Ibid.* pp. 101 - 102.

³¹CDAHOU, series I, vol. 30, report 1719, p. 128.

³²*Vilne Zytia*, 1 bereznia 1949.

How was it in reality? The group that had arrived to tour Ukraine sovkhos in Charkov region on 3 March visited the barn there and observed the process of electric milking. The hosts exhibited record cows, presented scientific methods of breeding cattle, etc. The dinner was served at 6:00 PM. At the table „warm relations between the Poles and the Ukrainians blossomed, and the fact that the Polish delegation belonged to the party was not noticed.”³³ In his report a CK representative provides a list of the dishes, which were a very important element considering the general state of product supply in Ukraine in March of that year. „There was plenty on the table. The dinner was tasty, and served in a hospitable manner; there were more than ten individual dishes as well as appetisers (fish, fried goose, young mutton, prepared meat, cold borsch, kielbasa, dumplings, cream, tomatoes, cabbage, cucumbers), there was enough vodka, as well as port wine, beer, and fruit juices.”³⁴ Later there was music and dancing, and friendly conversations- which were recorded in detail, and not devoid of subjective ideological „sauce.”

There existed an unwritten rule among Soviet party civil servants, which had actually been taken from the eastern Slavonic folk saying, „what a sober person has in mind a drunk one has on his tongue.” This is why drinking was persistently suggested, that persons could become acquainted and establish friendly relations. Drinking was thus justified since it was part of the profession of those working with the masses. The masses responded with reciprocation, and an analogical saying became fixed in Ukraine, „don't fight, don't wander- dip your tongue in vodka- I'll tell the whole truth.” It is difficult to say how much truth is in it, but the Polish guests themselves were also willing to lead after-dinner conversations. „The meeting had already lasted three-and-a-half hours. A member of the Polish delegation representing PSL, Makowiecki, being under the influence of vodka, was telling a doctor that in the past they had worked under the leadership of Mikołajczyk, but now they are fully in pursuit of socialism, but they do not know how to obtain it. The leadership is weak and something is still to happen in the organisation. A member of the Polish delegation, Władysław Folta (deputy chief of PSL in Rzeszów) approached Kalinowski (chief PZPR secretary in Rzeszów) in the evening and said, ‘I have read about utopian socialism in Fourier. And here we have got true socialism,’ and he reached out his hand. Kalinowski shook Folta's hand, and pointed out that one cannot reach true socialism by reading Fourier- one needs to approach it from Marxism-Leninism.”³⁵ Was

³³CDAHOU, series I, vol. 30, report 1720, p. 95.

³⁴*Ibid.* p.97.

³⁵*Ibid.* p.98.

this touching lesson on political awareness, after having visited the barn and taken in a dose of sovkhos hospitality, realised? Was Folta enlightened by the science he observed? This is a difficult question. However, if we consider the information from Charkov sovkhos one thing is clear- the representatives of the half-hostile PSL were present under the strict supervision of the representatives of CK Kiev, that is to say the organisers of this operation. PSL was a party that was supposed to be made via PZPR, or abolished. This trip was, to some extent, organised to create a positive impression about collectivisation among PSL members.

Their reaction was controlled and evaluated by the CK KP(b)U leaders. During the second delegation's stay it was decided that „Wacław Ludwikowicz Niedek, who was officially the leader of Warsaw PSL council, was the real leader of the PSL group.” However, he could just as easily have been a member of the PSL Chief Executive Committee as one of its workers. On the way from Kiev to Charkov a PSL member, Jan Bunowicz, the leader of PSL in Bydgoszcz, incautiously mentioned that Niedek belonged to NKW PSL. He said, „The three of us are voivodeship representatives, and Niedek is from NKW PSL.” Niedek's behaviour confirmed as much. In the sovkhos he tried to reduce PSL members' curiosity. „On 1 March, while en route by train, when we voiced our arguments against PSL's evidence, which was to prove that if kolchozes are organised in Poland there may be parasites, as well as unemployment there, Niedek did not take part in the conversation, but hid behind his colleague who was sitting next to us and was signalling to the PSL members to suggest ending the conversation.”

A member of the NKW PSL representing women's affairs, Michalina Petrykowska (who had drunk somewhat more than necessary) gave a speech at an evening meeting in a sovkhos. She said she was there to represent Polish Women, and toasted to the friendship between the two countries. Niedek talked to her, and later, after his return to the hotel, also talked to Jan Bunowicz.³⁶ An informer added that he had used certain means to weaken Niedek's influence on the Polish delegation. One of those means could have been the contact made with the delegates who could only poorly control themselves when drinking alcohol. Encouraged by the alcohol and provoked into having a conversation, they became a source of information. While they were in Charkov voivodeship, during a conversation with M. Petrykowska (mentioned above) it appeared that Niedek was in fact working as the chief deputy of the CKW PSL organisational department.³⁷

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.* p.104.

The practice of „prompting conversations” at dinners was becoming more and more common. During a party in the village of Huty in Bohoduchovsky region, Józef Pawlus, who was previously considered a „tentative” person, expressed his admiration for a certain farmstead. While toasting he said, „there are some serious problems in Poland, they form the succession to Mikołajczyk’s party (PSL). There are still some secret followers of Mikołajczyk, but those ‘losers’ are being fought. If those ‘losers’ do not stop getting in the way of the work of building socialism, Mikołajczyk’s ‘losers’ will be swept away, and if necessary put against the wall. The kolchoz members and, partly, the Polish delegation, applauded Pawlus’s speech. With a degree of reserve, the speech was also accepted by some PSL members.”³⁸ According to an informer’s account, this speech „caused the relations between the Polish delegates to become hostile.” Niedek and Petrykowska felt „as if they were in dock.”³⁹

It might be supposed that Waclaw Niedek sensed the exceptional interest directed at him, and felt some pressure as a result, since while giving a speech in Zaporozh, he made reference to the speeches of the PZPR members Kalinowski and Tomaszewski. He mentioned the necessity of marching towards socialism, the task of uniting PSL with SL, the role of comrade Stalin, and the idea of creating a single party in Poland. However, his presentation was considered a concealment by one CK KP(b)U observer. Apart from presenting various arguments to support his view, he characterised Niedek as an amoral person. While touring Stalin kolchoz in Bohoduchovsky region, Charkov district, he „tried to get three kolchoz women drunk, and while he was at a bird farm, he said in Polish to one ‘show me, show me, you indecent woman’” (meaning, a woman from the street).⁴⁰ According to one leader, such behaviour was understandable, since Niedek „was once the leader of a reactionary Country Youth Union, and was expelled about the time he was organising a united Polish Youth Union.”⁴¹ Therefore, only Polish reactionaries could have acted execratorily, which did not happen in the case of KP(b)U members. While choosing members to the Polish delegation, the comrades did not wish to include him because of his reactionary views. However, he had support in Warsaw. He also had followers among the delegates in Ukraine. The secretary of *Chłopi i Państwo*, a PSL member, Józef Kowal, who, according to a CK KP(b)U observer, was a CKW PSL member, asked Niedek, „why did you step out like a young single lady.”

³⁸*Ibid.* p.108.

³⁹*Ibid.* p.109.

⁴⁰*Ibid.* p.113.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

But what the informer was most concerned about was the fact that PSL members' negative views on collectivisation were also shared by some PSPR members. There were, naturally, some misunderstandings.

As an example, Mieczysław Domagała (the secretary of PSPR district committee of Szczecin voivoideship) believed that collectivisation could be introduced in Poland only when there were enough tractors and when some people from the country who were then useless took jobs in industry.⁴² The well-known method of slandering those who express doubts was used against M. Domagała, who they could only accuse in the end of attending to his own business. According to Józef Kus's account, a member of the delegation, the secretary of the district committee was given 30 hectares of land, some good buildings which formerly belonged to the Germans, and a few cows and horses, that is why he felt he did not need collectivisation. The row intensified, and political argumentation was resorted to. M. Domagała called his critics „idiots” and political illiterates, believing all he had done was simply refer to some points made by H. Minc at a plenum devoted to the development of agriculture in Poland. Other delegates had referred to this speech a number of times. A PSL member, Makowski, stressed the idea that the success of collectivisation depended on three factors: tractors, the development of industry, and social and political work. He considered the plan to collectivise 1% of farms now and 100% by the year 1955 (over a six-year period) unrealistic. He claimed that the country's attempt to eliminate PSL from politics was the main argument against the collectivisation plan. Communists recognised the importance of social and political work in this process as uniting all political powers under one party. He also claimed that „if farmers' parties are eliminated, the issue of development will fade and the reactionaries will use this fact for their own purposes.”⁴³ Makowski tried to convince a CK.KP(b)U member that the existence of separate farmers parties: PSL and SL was a necessity.

While Polish communists planned to move the labour force from the country to cities in an organised manner, this process was spontaneous and uncontrolled in the USSR. The lack of prospects for kolchoz work, which would provide a chance to support a family, was a very real reason for leaving villages. The number of people who moved to cities peaked in the famine year of 1946-47. It was calculated later that the number of kolchoz members that were able to work on farms (within pre-war borders of the USSR) dropped by 3.3 million people between 1949 and 1953.⁴⁴

⁴²*Ibid.* p.116.

⁴³*Ibid.* p.131.

⁴⁴J. Zubkova, *Mir mnenij sovetskogo celoveka*, p. 32.

MTSs were centres for the introduction of collectivisation. They were to supervise harvests, crop transportation, and the land itself. It was not farmers who worked at them, but people who felt little connection with the land. Although there were over 174,000 tractor drivers studying at mechanics schools, and taking courses organised by MTSs at the beginning of 1949, not all of them returned to the country in the spring.⁴⁵ They tried to use the courses to avoid working at kolchozes. This is why in 1948 the KP(b)U Kiev city committee assigned city groups to villages in order to „give them consistent practical help in production, revival, and development. Special attention was placed on helping machinery and tractor stations.”⁴⁶ In this way, qualified industry workers and specialists were sent to work permanently at MTSs, kolchozes and sovkhoses, even though they were needed in cities. This is the way Soviet leaders rotated the labour force- as villagers were leaving the country, specialists were being sent there.

This artificiality must have been noticed by Polish delegates. While visiting Ružyń MTS in Żytomiersk district (III delegation), a PZPR member, Józef Lachowski „was silent for six days and here he spoke up. He said that all those machines are German and that the USSR can introduce so many of them only because it is robbing the Germans, and that all the exhibits and presentations are manipulated and everything is in much worse condition than is shown.”⁴⁷

Lachowski had reasons to be skeptical since the work of MTSs was also criticised during CK KP(b)U meetings, though not in this manner.⁴⁸ A resolution was submitted entitled „Mistakes in the Work of MTSs Made in the First Days of Spring Sewing” during the stay of a Polish delegation in Ukraine on 26 March 1949. The manipulation of data by MTSs was also stressed. For example when „a director of Kalin MTS in Winnicky district, comrade Martyniuk, concealed the truth about the number of deals made with kolchozes, and in his report of 29 March he stated that he had made deals with 21 of the 26 kolchozes. The truth is, no deals were made.”⁴⁹ The lying comrade Martyniuk had worthy mentors, the CK KP(b)U being one of them, who often perturbed Polish farmers by

⁴⁵*Vilne Zytia*, 12 lutoho 1949r.

⁴⁶*Istiria Kijeva* (ed. J. Kondufor), Kijev 1985, vol.3. *Kijev sicialisticeskij*, no. 1, pp. 386-387.

⁴⁷*CDAHOU*, series I, vol. 30, report 1721, p. 99-100.

⁴⁸Postanova Rady Ministriv URSS i CK KP(b)U vid 5 sicnia 1949 r. „Pro chyby v roboti masynno - traktornych stancij URSS i zachody polipsennia jich roboty v 1949 r.,” *Radians'ka Volyn*, 11 sicia 1949 r.

⁴⁹*Vilne Zytia*, 29 bereznia 1949 r.

showing them MTSs. The fact that it was a typical situation is shown by the resolution lodged the next day (25 April 1949) regarding „the complaint of Lenin kolchoz of Czornobajevsky region, Poltavsky district treating the violation of deals with kolchozes by MTS.”⁵⁰

To distract later Polish delegates from the schedule of often colourless observation, they were invited to grand dinners. During one of these on the 23rd of February in Orichovo MTS, Zaporsky district, the delegate Zdyjb raised his glass to toast that giant of thought- Lenin, while another delegate, Sztakielska raised hers to toast Lenin’s friend- comrade Stalin. The delegate Pavlata toasted to the hope that Stalingrad tractors would be driven not only in Ukraine, but also in Poland and the whole of Europe. And the delegate Rotaj added- in America and the whole world.”⁵¹ After viewing the victorious march of Soviet tractors, participants proceeded to discussing the ongoing issues to be openly debated at the table. There was some dissatisfaction expressed concerning the fact that a Jew, not a Pole, was the head of the delegation. It was a very current topic, since at that time local newspapers were urging people to „find the cosmopolitans in Ukraine and crush them.”⁵² Prof. F. Hołowenczenko’s request „to finally reveal critic-cosmopolitans” was placed next to Ukrainian kolchoz members’ appeal to Polish farmers.⁵³ Thus, there was no lack of conversational topics at the table. The issue of an Anti-Fascism and Jew Committee was also heatedly discussed.⁵⁴

The MTS director told the Poles about serving in the S. Budienny’s First Cavalry Army and knowing something of Poland, which probably offended the guest’s political sentiments. They questioned him about why there were no tractor drivers and foremen among the Ukrainian participants at the dinner. The director could have expected such a question. He pretended that he did not have a room large enough to accommodate them as well. It was of course not possible to reveal that there was barely enough food for everyone, and that those people could not be shown the affluence they had been made to believe existed.

The visit to this MTS was described by Stefan Pawlata in the 17th issue of *Chłopska Droga* in 1949.

⁵⁰ *Vilne Zytia*, 27 kvitnia 1949 r.

⁵¹ CDAHOU, series I, vol. 30, report 1719, p. 69.

⁵² *Vilne Zytia*, 23 lutoho 1949 r.

⁵³ *Vilne Zytia*, 20 lutoho 1949 r.

⁵⁴ Among the repressed: 10 were sentenced to life imprisonment, 20 to twenty-five years, 3 to twenty years, 11 to fifteen years, 2 to eight years, 1 to seven years, 2 to five years, 1 to two years of deportation. In the course of the investigation 5 people died. Information taken from *Izvestia CK KPSS* 1989, no. 12, p. 40.

An easily recognised fact of Bolshevik hypocrisy emerged in the village of Stadijovka in Vinnisky voivodeship, where a group of Poles arrived. When they were taken to a kolchoz kindergarten and shown children dressed in new clothes and their clean sheets, one of the delegates suggested that it was somewhat strange that the children's hands were dirty and that their feet looked cracked due to the layers of dirt on them.⁵⁵

The harsh reality, from which Polish delegates were to be separated by the walls of buffet cars and festive moods, remained in their minds, destroying the illusionary facades built by the communists.

In line with Soviet tradition, the faults were not sought in the USSR itself but among Polish delegates. Apparently, they were not „the right Poles that visited the brotherly republic,” which was what the Polish deputy consul in Kiev was told. The diplomat passed on the message to Moscow Ambassador Marian Naszkowski, who prepared a report for the president, prime minister, vice prime minister H. Minc, and for KC PZPR Department of Agriculture.

The Soviet's main complaint was that there were too many „accidental” people among the delegates. „Most of the delegates had been chosen at general meetings of farmers social organisations, and they had been given mandates from almost 330 villages. Among the delegates there were also managers of various grades. It should also be added that according to the previous plan there were supposed to be 500 delegates but over 100 people could not be considered because they had problems obtaining visas. This is why people who had neither been chosen nor checked by party and social organisations were put on the list (15% of the total number). Those people not only did not represent Polish progressive farmers, but they also appeared hostile towards the USSR and Poland.”⁵⁶ The consul supported those claims using examples given to him by Soviet comrades. „Some young woman, a Ukrainian from Rokitnian region, Kiev district, voluntarily went to work in Germany during the German occupation. She met a Pole there and married him. After the war they settled in Poland. The woman wanted to get off the delegation train and stay in her home village in Ukraine.” In the group led by Róžański, which went to Żytomiersk voivodeship „there were also some unhealthy elements: a German, Hilda Kramer, the daughter and wife of Sztreng, the owner of a twenty hectare piece of land, Stachulska - a former shop owner - as well as PZPR members Rogaczewski and Lachowsky. In the group led by Piotrowski, Maria Wójcik, Wilczyński, and Rach were absolutely uninterested in kolchoz issues and the tasks facing a Soviet village. In Ciężela's group

⁵⁵*Ibid.* p. 227.

⁵⁶*Archives of New Acts (AAN)*. KCPZPR, Wydział Rolny, 237/XII-35, p. 107.

there were PZPR members Safaryn, Sokół, Szerenbaum, Birkholz, and the SL member Piątniakowska. In every group of 12 people there were about 10% whose attitudes were hostile, and who had negative views on village problems and Soviet reality. After their return, 40 delegates will be lying, slandering, and leading hostile agitation against the USSR. Of the remaining delegates, 5%, about 20 people total, will be indifferent and will not contribute to the spread of the truth about the Soviet village and the organisation of cooperative societies.” However, the consul also noticed a positive side which the Ukrainian hosts mentioned, namely that „unlike previous delegations, there were real farmers from all Polish voivodeships in the third delegation who knew the problems of agriculture.”⁵⁷

Those remarks were formulated on the basis of notes taken from the CK KP(b)U.

It should be remembered that according to the plan, 100% of Polish farms were to be collectivised by the end of 1955. This is why, regardless of the number of delegates, the organisers of trips to Ukraine were aimed at convincing as many Polish farmers as possible to acknowledge the superiority of a cooperative economy. All the sources of mass information in both countries were used to achieve this goal: newspapers, news films, and radio. Visits to Ukrainian writers, especially O. Kornijczuk and his wife W. Wasilewska, were also compulsory points of such visits.

Communists knew well how to shape a „new man” with a literary word. To achieve this, a suitable group of writers needed to be found. Stalin wanted to transfer the experiences of the forming and functioning of the Soviet Writers’ Union and other structures to the intellectuals of post-war Europe. At the end of August 1948, a meeting of the World Congress of Intellectuals to Defend Peace was held in Poland. People representing art and science who were shocked by the horrors of the war, and the exterminations carried out during it, demonstrated interest in the operation planned by Moscow. The intellectual elite of the New and Old Worlds alike arrived in Wrocław. Press reports shone with the names of Einstein, Picasso, and Eluard. However, the speech by Aleksander Fadiejew contributed to what would become the scandalous character of the congress by calling Sartre „a hyena that types.” Real intellectuals felt offended and left Wrocław immediately. In spite of this, it was somehow a symptomatic signal for the less talented, and all the more for graphomaniacs, who were serving the new authorities. In Poland, after the unification of parties, writers and scientists were also united. Jakub Berman, the curator of KC Security Service became the highest authority

⁵⁷AAN. KCPZPR, Wydział Rolny, 237/XII-35, pp. 108-109.

in the Union. It was a real service done to intelligence in the interests of a Stalinist country.

W. Wasilewska's influence on the course of events in Poland could even be noticed while she was abroad. She was the author of the screen play for a film about Polish delegations in Ukraine. The USSR Ministry of Cinematography made a copy of the documentary *The Stay of the First and Second Delegations of Polish Farmers in Ukraine*, and in September 1949 the Ministry released the film to the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was to send it on to Warsaw. The film was to be copied there in great numbers in order to be distributed across Poland.⁵⁸

The plot of the documentary, accepted by the CK KP(b)U, was quite simple, moving from a meeting in the village of Zabłocie, to an arrival in and departure from Kiev, and a touring of kolchozes and MTSs.⁵⁹ The piece unfolds in the spirit of socialistic realism, without overusing the form, but with the corruption of content characteristic of the method.

The film was sent from Kiev to the Polish consulate, and then on to Warsaw. Polish diplomats confirmed receiving the film at the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the CK KP(b)U, and in 1950 the consul Marian Cieślin informed the CK that the film about the visit of the third delegation to Ukraine, together with W. Wasilewska's commentary, was very popular.⁶⁰

Among the Polish delegates there were always journalists.⁶¹ Three accompanied the first delegation, three SL and one PSL press representatives accompanied the second.⁶² The groups of Ukrainian correspondents, carefully chosen by the CK, were more numerous. In the second delegation, for instance, there were 18 representatives of RATAU [a Ukrainian information agency - note by E.W.].⁶³ The CK Department of Propaganda and Agitation, as a means of improvement, decided it was compulsory for delegates to be accompanied by members of the USSR Writers' Union. This was done so that a volume describing the stay could be published after the delegation left.⁶⁴

In Poland, apart from press articles, fiction and documentary books were also published to describe the delegations. These include: *Widzieliśmy na własne oczy* by R. Wójcik and E. Zeguła, *Z podróży po*

⁵⁸ *Archiv MZS Ukrainy*, series I, vol. 1, report 228, p.197.

⁵⁹ *CDAHOU*, series I, vol. 30, report 1721, p. 165.

⁶⁰ *CDAHOU*, series I, vol. 30, report 1851, p. 1.

⁶¹ *Archiv MZS Ukrainy*, series I, vol. 1, report 226, p.7.

⁶² *CDAHOU*, series I, vol. 30, report 1720, p. 5.

⁶³ *Archiv MZS Ukrainy*, series I, vol. 1, report 228, p.29.

⁶⁴ *Archiv MZS Ukrainy*, series I, vol. 1, report 230, p.55.

kolchozach Radzieckiej Ukrainy by R. Jurys, *Ziemia dobrych nowin* by J. Hena, an unabridged edition of *Jak żyją i jak pracują w kolchozach Radzieckij Ukrainy*, and *Chleb i sól* by M. Jarochowska.

The Soviet historiāist I. Jewsiejew described the latter-most in these terms, „the author not only shows the Soviet reality seen by Polish delegates, but she also analyses the means by which the kolchoz village attained a wealthy and cultural way of life. In M. Jarochowska’s book, a Polish farmer finds answers to many pressing questions, real and convincing answers, answers having educational influence on life in Polish villages. At the same time, a red thread, representing the noble idea of a cementing brotherly friendship between Poland and Russia, winds its way through the text.”⁶⁵ pp. 128-130.

It is difficult to say how many Polish farmers read any of these books, and if so whether or not they found the same moral elements that Soviet scientists recognised in them. We do know however, that newspaper articles were given a measure of attention. Articles were often read. Editors began to receive letters in which readers describe their impressions and also asked concrete questions. A review of Polish Publications was prepared at the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the CK KP(b)U. In one of those reviews A. Wojna, head of the Department of Politics, pointed out that Polish newspapers presented only summarised facts. „Reviews of the visits to Ukrainian kolchozes and factories do not constitute lively accounts of farmers, they are given in the form of reporters’ notes.”⁶⁶ The letters from Polish readers, copies of which were sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kiev by the Polish consulate, were of slightly different, more lyrical, character.

These letters were written by people who knew the real conditions in Soviet kolchozes. Descriptions from 1941 were still accurate in 1948, largely because the prices for farm products remained unchanged in the USSR between 1928 and 1953. The government paid 7.5 roubles for a quintal of grain in 1948, thus if a farmer wanted, for instance, to buy a ZIS - 5 lorry he would need to sell 99 tons of wheat in 1940, or 156 tons in 1952.⁶⁷

It must have been difficult to hide such facts from Polish delegates, and this is why choices of „the right comrades” became an important issue. Delegates were expected to look towards the bright future, rather than over the present surroundings. Consider a glaring example from later trips

⁶⁵I. F. Jevseev, *Sotrudnicestwo Ukrainskoj SSR i PolskojNarodnoj Respubliki*, Kiev 1962.

⁶⁶CDAHOU, series I, vol. 30, report 1721, p. 129-130.

⁶⁷I. Voronov, J. Pylavec, *Holod 1946-47 rr.* Kyjiv 1991, pp. 6-7.

to the USSR. In the early 1950s, after the Ukrainians had gained some experience, the organisers of the delegations began to show the Soviet capital, Moscow, to Polish farmers. The report written by the leader of one of the groups for the KC PZPR reveals that „while visiting Pushkin Museum, where presents given on the occasion of Stalin's 70th birthday can be found, [one of the delegates- note by E. W.] asked where the place for Poland as the 17th republic was, while standing next to a crystal vase symbolising the 16 Soviet republics. The delegate was a man known to have a weakness for alcohol and to be a womaniser. But these traits should not be paid too much attention. He is talented, he showed great interest in kolchozes and sovkhazes, he is familiar with the subject of them, and he has expressed positive opinions at group meetings, so he can be used in propaganda.”⁶⁸

After the delegation returned to Poland the ideological propaganda relay race passed into the hands of the leading offices of Polish communists, who used this kind of eye witness to stupefy farmers.

When the first delegation returned from Ukraine a meeting was held at the head office of the Farmers' Mutual Aid Union in Warsaw on 5 February, where a report on the trip was presented.⁶⁹ Vice Minister Korzycki, Minister of Agriculture Dąb-Kocioł, and WK SL leader Baranowski were present at the meeting.

The next delegation, which returned in March, formally expressed thanks to the USSR Cabinet President Korotchenko, and to Minister of Agriculture Mackiewicz at a meeting in Warsaw. In return, they sent their „warmest thanks” to the presidium [present at the meeting in Warsaw], including Stefan Ignar, Hilary Szelszowski, Roman Gesing, Zygmunt Krotko, and about which all Ukrainian newspapers were informed.⁷⁰

Soon Ukrainian kolchoz members visited Poland. Their stay was covered in Polish and Russian newspapers. The visit was a stimulus to the Russian poet Markijan Winokurov. The title of a consequent poem, *A Meeting of Bolesław Bierut, President of Poland and Olena Chobta, a Forewoman of Szewczenko Kolchoz* suggests how much poetry it contains. The poem was immediately translated by Oleksy Novycky and published in *Gazeta Ojczyzna*.⁷¹

⁶⁸ AAN. KCPZPR, Wydział Rolny, 237/XII-38, pp. 1.

⁶⁹ *Radians'ka Volyn*, 9 bereznia 1949r.

⁷⁰ *Radians'ka Volyn*, 26 bereznia 1949r.

⁷¹ *Vitczyzna*, 1949, no 7, pp. 7-9.

In 1949 delegations of Polish farmers visited 127 kolchozes, 34 sovkhoses, 27 MTSs, 14 factories (among which were 10 sugar factories), 12 scientific research stations, and 7 agricultural science institutes.⁷²

Considering the sheer amount of information given to Polish farmers during their stay in Ukraine, one gets the impression that these efforts were directed not only at Poles but also at Soviet Kolchoz members. Alluding to this, it was stated that „they come to us to learn, as you can see, even individual Polish farmers follow us, which means that we have taken the right way comrades.”

Ukraine became a school of „the progressive kolchoz movement” not only for Polish farmers. In 1950 a leading staff delegation, together with the Moscow voivodship kolchoz chairman, visited 20 Ukrainian kolchozes.⁷³ It should be remembered, however, that the Informbiuro resolution about collectivising villages concerned all the countries in the Soviet block. Thus on 20 June, 152 Romanians, together with Minister of Agriculture W. Wajda, joined the third delegation of Polish farmers. Their visit was planned to last one-and-a-half months. During this time the Romanian representatives were expected to visit the Trans-Caucasian republics, Kuban, and Ukraine.⁷⁴ On 25 June the Romanian delegation travelled from Moscow to Kiev, where they were welcomed in the „Polish” scenario.⁷⁵ In September Polish farmers sent a delegation to Bulgaria. The delegates „were impressed by the eager enthusiasm with which Bulgarian farmers were building a socialistic country economy. Bulgarian farmers admitted that the cooperative movement is the only way to a better life. It could reduce the losses caused by the four-year drought in Bulgaria.”⁷⁶ In 1950 Polish farmers began to visit Russia as well. Minister of Agriculture Stanisław Tkaczow was the leader of the first delegation.⁷⁷ Their stay was prolonged up to a month (from 25 May to 23 June). Later, delegations were sent to Czechoslovakia and Germany. In the mid-1950s a period of delegation exchange began, which could be called „a period of friendship trains.”

What were the practical consequences of the trips to „kolchoz paradise” for Polish agriculture?

After the new borders were established 1,009,000 square kilometres of western and northern lands were incorporated into Polish territory. Seven

⁷² I. F. Jevseev, *Sotrudnicestvo*, p. 265.

⁷³ *Istoriya selanstva Ukrajsn'koji RSR*, Kyjiv 1967, vol. 2, p. 352.

⁷⁴ *Radians'ka Volyn*, 22 cęrvnia 1949r.

⁷⁵ *Radians'ka Volyn*, 28 bereznia 1949r.

⁷⁶ *Nowiny Rzeszowskie*, 25 Sep 1949.

⁷⁷ *AAN KCPZPR*, Wydział Rolny, 237/XII-36, pp. 49-73.

new voivodeships were formed out of these areas, which constituted 32% of Polish territory total. The voivodeships included: Olsztyńskie, Gdańskie, Koszalińskie, Szczecińskie, Zielono Górskie, Opolskie, and Wrocławskie.⁷⁸ In Poland land division lasted from February 1945 until the end of 1948.

Regardless of the propaganda, the organisation of collective farms was a gradual process. Enormous regional differences, which had historical and economic sources, were a significant impediment. The agricultural reform was intended to affect 5,014,000 hectares across the country, examples being the 600,000 hectares of Poznań voivodeship, and the 6,215,000 hectares of Rzeszów voivodeship. (These particular figures reflect a decision about an initial situation in which the land area in Wielkopolska was inequitably 8,026,000 hectares, compared to Rzeszów voivodeship which encompassed only 534,000 hectares.) Smaller farms in Poznań voivodeship were allotted 5-8 hectares, and medium-sized farms up to 10 hectares. Even though their farms were above average in size, Poznań voivodeship farmers felt they had received too little. Farms smaller than 10 hectares were thought to be those of destitute farmers.⁷⁹

It was difficult, therefore, to persuade farmers to give up the land they had received to the collective farm system. Neither „trips to Ukraine” nor the sending out of workers and party members from cities helped in the persuasion. The plan of forming collective farms was not fully carried out. Collectivisation affected only the villages that once belonged to the Germans, and which were peopled by emigrants from Ukraine and Mazowsze, as well as so-called „mixed” villages, which were populated after the „Wisła” operation. Those were populated by Ukrainians who, it was hoped, would form an insignificant percentage of inhabitants. At the end of 1949 only 33 collective farms had been established, which constituted just 2.7% of the total number of collective farms.⁸⁰ In so-called „old” villages, the inhabitants of which were native to the land, no collective farms had been established.

In Rzeszów voivodeship the problems were of a different nature. It was not accidental that most of the delegates visiting Ukraine were farmers from Eastern Małopolska. In addition to economic reasons, there were political ones. These voivodeships were considered to be the cradle and

⁷⁸E. Basinskij, *Pomoc SSSR v razvitti zapadnych zemel narodnoj Polsi in Sovetsko-polskije otnosenija 1918-1945. Sbornik statej: Nauka, Moskva 1974, p. 273.*

⁷⁹I. Ławiczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość produkcyjna w Wielkopolsce w latach 1949-1974, Warszawa-Poznań 1977, p. 16.*

⁸⁰I. Ławiczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość, p. 34.*

support of PSL. Only in September was a PZPR newspaper established in the area. In a front page article, the first secretary Józef Kalinowski wrote that the paper needed to help tighten the alliance between workers and farmers. „To win and to lead the country to socialism, the party must take its natural ally, the smaller scale farmers (those occupying farms of 10 hectares or less), into the whirl of the battle.”⁸¹

Polish communists used not only agitation to promote collectivisation, but ideas speaking to the intensification of the class struggle voiced by comrade J. Stalin. In September 1949, in his article „To Intensify the Activity of the Entire Party,” Jakub Berman vowed that „the party will lead a fierce fight with all kinds of rightist and nationalist deviations, with the remains of social democracy among the members of the party, and with all traces of the Trotskyite poison.”⁸²

H. Minc’s article „The Polish Nation Builds Socialism,” published in Moscow’s *Pravda*, was a kind of report for Soviet comrades. In addition to providing statistical data concerning the success of collectivisation (on 120 collective farms grain production amounted to 123.9% of pre-war production), the author expresses the idea that the conviction of the necessity of moving from a backwards farm economy to a modern, large-scale farm economy had deepened. The trips to the USSR had certainly played a significant role in the reinforcement of this belief.⁸³

⁸¹ *Nowiny Rzeszowskie*, 15 Sept. 1949.

⁸² *Nowiny Rzeszowskie*, 22 Sept. 1949.

⁸³ *Nowiny Rzeszowskie*, 21 Sept. 1949.