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The collaboration with the German and Soviet occupants as judged by the Poles – then, yesterday and today*

I shall start with several necessary initial remarks and explanations. The word 'then' in the title of my paper refers to the period of World War II, 'yesterday'—to the period between 1945 and 1989, and 'today'—to the situation in Poland after regaining full independence and the abolition of censorship. The very term 'collaboration' (in Polish, 'kolaboracja') also requires explanation. According to linguistic studies on the Polish language in the period of the War and the German occupation¹, and according to my own knowledge of the underground press, the terms 'collaboration' ('kolaboracja') and 'collaborators' ('kolaboranci') were extremely rarely used by the Poles between 1939 and 1945². Many years after the War, Stefan Korboński, who was responsible for fighting collaboration as the head of the Directorate of Civil Resistance, wrote the following: 'Collaboration was understood as any cooperation with the invader which was detrimental to our country or to our compatriots. Accusations of collaboration were formulated very carefully and they took into account the necessities and conditions of life under occupation'³. It is also worth to quote the opinion of Bohdan Korzeniewski, a member of the Secret Council of Theatre which in 1940 forbade actors to play in official, German-approved theatres of the General Government. When the interviewer Małgorzata Szejnert asked him: 'During the War, your generation witnessed a surprising phenomenon—collaboration of actors with the Germans', Korzeniewski replied (in 1988): 'I do not like this word. It is not an appropriate term. Collaborators was a name applied to politicians who were offered collaboration by the authorities of the thousand-years-old Reich. Poland and Polish politicians were not offered such cooperation. Therefore, we do not speak about collaborators but about people who voluntarily followed German orders. Orders that were directed against the values protected by the Polish Underground State. Instead of 'collaboration' I would rather call it 'disobedience'⁴. In an article published in 1992 Tadeusz Chrzanowski, a journalist, wrote: 'My compatriots often emphasise that Poland was the only country with no collaborators amongst its highest officials [such as Petain, Degrelle, Tiso—T.S.], that it never had a puppet government... But, for the Christ sake, my dear countrymen—these

¹ Cf.: S. Kania, *Polska gwara konspiracyjno-partyzancka czasu okupacji hitlerowskiej*, Zielona Góra 1975; F. Płuta, *Język polski w okresie drugiej wojny światowej. Studium słowotwórczo-semantyczne*, Opole 1975; *Język polski czasu drugiej wojny światowej*, T. Bajerowa, ed., Warszawa 1996.

² A note in *Biuletyn Informacyjny* of 4 X 194, on disrespectful conduct of officers and their wives (names were listed) had the title *Kanalie* (Scoundrels).

³ S. Korboński, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne. Przewodnik po Podziemiu z lat 1939-1945*, Paryż 1975, p. 145.

⁴ M. Szejnert, *Stawa i infamia. Rozmowa z Bohdanem Korzeniewskim*, 2nd ed., Warszawa 1988, p. 15 (1st edition was published in the same year in London in Aneks publishing house).



were the Germans who did not want to have such government and who did not seek any candidates for collaboration, for if they did, they would have found them⁵.

And this is how the problem of collaboration appears in the 'country without Quisling'⁶. In a study *Postawa społeczeństwa polskiego pod okupacją niemiecką* written in Spring 1944, left-wing Halina Krahelska expressed the same opinion as Chrzanowski did several decades later in the above-mentioned interview. She wrote: 'It is the Germans whom we owe that opportunism and cooperation with the occupant were not a common phenomenon in the country, as they were reluctant to do anything to win the Polish society over, or at least not in the period when their victories came one by one'⁷. At any rate, there is no doubt that Poland did not have its own Quisling and that collaboration with the enemy was never a common phenomenon. A worker from Warsaw Kazimierz Szymczak noted on August 29, VIII 1942 in his diary: 'I am proud that I belong to this nation, in which there are no mass traitors but only mass graves and individual traitors who collaborate with the enemy'⁸. I shall return to the issue of political cooperation with the Germans later on but I would only like to point to a little known source which proves that Stalin vehemently opposed the idea to create a small Polish buffer state. After meeting him in Kremlin on October 25, 1939 German ambassador Schulenburg sent a telegram to Berlin: 'Stalin stated the following: When solving the Polish issue once and for all, we must avoid everything that could cause any friction between Germany and Soviet Union. In this situation it seems absurd to leave any piece of an independent Poland'⁹.

On October 17, 1939 the Red Army invaded Poland on the order of Stalin, 'the best ally of Hitler'¹⁰. According to the German-Soviet agreement signed on September 28, 1939, a large part of the Polish state found itself under the Soviet occupation—this was the fourth partition of Poland. The term 'Soviet occupation' could not be used until 1989, and everything that had happened under the Soviet rule was a taboo in socialist Poland, and therefore could not be a subject of academic studies¹¹. Poland was not the only country occupied by more than one army; France was occupied by the Italian forces, apart from the German ones, and Greece not only by the Germans, but also by the Italians and Bulgarians. The Poles had as many as four occupants because part of the country was occupied for several months by the Lithuanians, and a small area by the Slovaks. The present study will compare the Soviet and German occupation¹². Most

⁵ T. Chrzanowski, 'Kolaborant czyli służa złych panów' (*Dialog*, 1992, no. 8, pp. 116-117).

⁶ Cf.: T. Szarota, *Il coilahorazionismo in un paese senza Quisling. Il casa di Varsavia: fonti et prospetiive di ricerca (Una certa Europa il coilahorazionismo 1939 - 1945, Annali della Fondazione Luigi Micheletti, Brescia 1992, pp. 395-414).*

⁷ Archiwum Akt Nowych, Division VI, cat. no. 383/11-4, c. 11.

⁸ K. Szymczak, 'Dni zgrozy i walki o wolność' (*Pamiętniki robotników z czasów okupacji*, Warszawa 1948, p. 79).

⁹ *Akten zur deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, series D 1937- 1945. vol. VIII: *Die Kriegsjahre*, vol. I.4: *September 1939 bis 13. März 1940*, Baden-Baden—Frankfurt am Main 1961, p. 101.

¹⁰ It is worth to note that this was the title of a book by Aleksander Bregman, first published in 1958, later translated into several languages.

¹¹ It is no accident that the revolutionary work of Jan Tomasz Gross, an emigrant from Poland, was published in the United States [*Revolution from Abroad. The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia*, Princeton, New Jersey 1988].

¹² It is worth to note that between 1949 and 1989 (after the creation of German Democratic Republic) censors crossed out the terms *German occupation* and *German crimes*, and instructed to replace them with



certainly, one can speak of some similarities between the two. The expulsions (in German, *Vertreibungen*) of Poles by the Germans from the so-called *eingegliederten Ostgebieten*¹³, and the abduction of Poles to forced labour camps in Germany found their counterparts in four actions during which the Soviets deported Poles to remote territories of the USSR (mainly to Siberia) between 1940 and 1941. Polish citizens died both in Nazi concentration camps and in the Stalinist *Gulag Archipelago*, where crimes of genocide were committed. The Nazi fight against the 'racial enemy' can be compared to the communist fight against the 'class enemy', during which gas chamber may have not been used but mass executions were common indeed. It is enough to give the example of several thousand Polish officers who were shot in Katyń, Miednoje and Charkow¹⁴. Quality of life under both occupations was similar—both were characterised by famine and quick pauperization of the population¹⁵.

One of the differences between the situation under the Soviet occupation and that under the German occupation—obviously, apart from the extermination of Jews perpetrated by Germans—was the attitude of the two invaders towards Polish national culture and national tradition, as well as the way in which they treated representatives of Polish intelligentsia—the creators of Polish culture. As a symbol of the German rule in Poland, on October 6, 1939 the Nazis arrested professors of the University of Cracow and sent them to the concentration camp in Sachsenhausen, and closed down all secondary schools and universities. They also executed political activists, academics, and artists, removed monuments of eminent Poles, introduced the Nazi index—the lists *deutsch- feindlichen, schadlichen und unerwünschten Schrifttums*, closed down museum, university libraries, concert halls, as well as serious drama theatres¹⁶. In Soviet-occupied Lwów, there were open Polish schools and the university, now called Iwan Franko University, there operated theatres playing Polish classics, concerts were played. In March 1940 in a Warsaw underground newspaper *Polska żyje!* ('Poland is alive!'), in a

such expressions as 'Nazi occupation' and 'Nazi crimes'. Created in 1945, Chief Commission for the Study of German Crimes in Poland changed its name to Chief Commission for the Study of Nazi Crimes in Poland in 1949. Today, it is Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation of the Institute of National Remembrance. For comparisons of the two occupations see: T. Szarota, *Poland under German Occupation, 1939–1941: A Comparative Survey (From Peace to War. Germany. Soviet Russia and the World 1939–1941)*, B. Wegner, ed., Providence—Oxford 1997, pp. 47–61).

¹³ Part of the occupied Polish territory (Silesia, Pomerania, Greater Poland as well as part of Central Poland with Łódź) was incorporated to Germany (much like Alsace and Lorraine). Many Polish families were expelled to the General Government.

¹⁴ Józef Mackiewicz wrote one of the first, if not the first, publications on Katyń. In April 1943 he visited the scene of the crime: *Katyń — ungesuhtes Verbrechen*, Zurich 1949, 2nd edition, Frankfurt am Main 1983. More places of executions were discovered only in the 1980s.

¹⁵ Cf.: T. Szarota, *Warschau unter dem Hakenkreuz. Leben und Alltag im besetzten Warschau*, Paderborn 1985; S. Lewandowska, *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej*, Warszawa 1997. More recently, see G. Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944. Życie codzienne*, Warszawa 2000.

¹⁶ The Germans allowed revue theatres to be operated in the General Government. Instructions issued to local authorities emphasized that shows should not have been artistic in character; pornography was recommended. According to the above-mentioned B. Korzeniewski: 'I think it was at the end of 1941 when the Germans brought to Warsaw journalists from their conquered countries—France, the Netherlands, and perhaps Denmark or Norway. More than ten people. They showed them the theatres as a proof that Poland was leading a normal life, but it was just a wild nation. A nation without culture, that had no dramatic theatres, had no true literature, and only had what the journalists could see. Its culture was to be imitative, superficial, vile', Szejnert, *op. cit.*, p. 16.



note entitled 'Co się dzieje we Lwowie' (What is going on in Lwów) a journalist wrote: 'The attitude of the Soviets towards Polish culture is ostentatiously positive, and in this respect the Bolshevik savages are better than the Nazis ... The Bolsheviks respect the so-called intelligent professions because they themselves are in extremely short supply of this element'¹⁷. This latter remark was certainly true as far as scientist, academics, teachers, doctors and artists were concerned, while the attitude towards judges and lawyers, higher state officials, military officers, policemen, forestry officials, priests and monks was extremely hostile—these groups of population were persecuted and repressed.

Following the defeat of France, that is since summer 1940, Soviet authorities clearly started to make attempts to win Poles over, and Poles, in my opinion, began to be perceived as potential future allies for the forthcoming war with Nazi Germany¹⁸. It was that very purpose that large-scale celebrations of the 85th anniversary of the death of poet Adam Mickiewicz were organized in November 1940, and widely publicized by Soviet propaganda¹⁹. Of course, news about the events also spread in the General Government. In his report of March 20, 1941, a German commandant of Warsaw, colonel von Unruh, wrote the following on the events: 'The direct threat of a war with Russia is being talked about even more frequently than before. However, if earlier no one wished for the victory of the Russians, now the feelings have changed, and the Soviet rule is preferred to the constant persecutions of the Germans, especially that the Russians—as we have heard—treat Poles quite well recently. For instance, the Soviet government held a remembrance week for Polish national poet Mickiewicz—he is a kind of Schiller for the Polish nation—whose monument in Cracow has been destroyed'²⁰.

Now I shall finally proceed to the main subject of my analysis.

1. The perception of collaboration during German occupation.

Of course, many factors influenced the conduct of Poles and their behaviour during the occupation, as well as how they judged the conduct and behaviour of their

¹⁷ *Polska żyje!*, 1940, no. 39–40.

¹⁸ I would go as far as to state that after the defeat of France, the decision of March 5, 1940 on the liquidation of Polish prisoners of war would have not been taken. It seems very likely that reports on German preparations to the future *Barbarossa* plan got to Moscow quite early. These reports include, in my view, both dispatches of the intelligence services and reports of the Soviet ambassador in Berlin (these were coded messages, and they have not been disclosed yet).

¹⁹ It would be important to establish when exactly the decision on the organisation of the commemoration events was taken in Moscow. A Warsaw underground newspaper *Biuletyn Informacyjny* of September 20, 1940 informed that a week earlier a communist activist Jerzy Borejsza announced news about the events on the *Lwów Radio*. On the course of commemoration events see: J. Rogowski, *Kult A. Mickiewicza we Lwowie w latach 1939–1941 (Pamiętnik Literacki)*, 1948, pp. 522–532), and M. Ingot, *Polska kultura literacka Lwowa lat 1939–1941*, Wrocław 1995, pp. 124–157.

²⁰ Institut für Zeitgeschichte, München, Microfilm MA 679(2) BI. 1111. Several other German reports on the issue were published by K. Pytlarczyk. In a note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of December 18, 1940 we read the following: *Die — unmittelbar nach der Beseitigung des Mickiewicz-Denkmal in Krakau — einsetzenden Mickiewicz-Veranstaltungen in Lemberg haben u.a. angeblich zur Folge gehabt, dass sogar eine bereits auf den Namen des Sowjetmarschalls und ehemaligen Kriegskommissars Woroschilow umgetaufte Strasse den Namen Mickiewicz-Strasse zurückerhielt*. Cf.: *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-radzieckich. Studia i materiały*, vol. V, 1969, p. 210. It is also worth to add that German also removed the monument of Mickiewicz in Poznań. In Warsaw in May 1940 they demolished the Chopin's monument.



fellow citizens²¹. In my opinion, the most important of them included: the attitude towards Poland's statehood which had been regained after 123 years of partitions, and now was again lost after merely 20 years; the nature of the occupation system introduced by the enemy; and the propaganda of the Polish Underground State, a phenomenon that appeared in no other occupied country²². The underground authorities, connected with the Polish government-in-exile, first based in France, and then in London, often referred to as the 'authoritative institution in the Country', used their own media²³ to influence public opinion, formulated the code of the patriotic and civil ethics and stigmatized those who did not follow that code. Additionally, the underground judicial system made it possible to punish traitors and people whose conduct qualified them for being excluded from the national community by sentencing them to infamy, and sometimes even to death²⁴.

It would be difficult to give an unequivocal answer to the question whether the Polish government-in-exile and its Poland-operating underground treated the German and Soviet occupant in the same way between 1939 and 1941. Directive on the attitude of the society towards the two occupying forces, adopted on November 15, 1939 in Paris, ordered a 'political and societal boycott' of the invaders²⁵. Things appear more complicated when one analyses the patriotic decalogue, published in underground press in Spring 1940. At first, a text entitled 'Boycott of the invader' was published April 18, 1940 by *Pobudka* from Warsaw. It speaks exclusively about the German occupant. On May 1, 1940 that same decalogue was published in the underground paper *Polska żyje!*, and 10 days later, in *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, published in Warsaw, but by the Union of Armed Struggle (the predecessor of the Home Army), and therefore it impacted all Poland. Only this publication mentioned the both occupants, namely in the sentence: 'A German or a Bolshevik—is no guest and no tourist'²⁶. Occupants are mentioned in a plural form in 'Nakazy chwili' published in Warsaw on August 25, 1940. The article states: 'Any sort of compromise, any sort of political combinations that take any form of cooperation with the occupants as a departure point, and especially agreeing to organise a fictional Polish state under the protectorate of Germany, or a federal republic of Poland under the auspices of the Soviet Union would be derogatory to the honour of the

²¹ I would like to stress that before World War II, Poland was a multinational country, with such nations as Jews, Germans, and Ukrainians living side by side with Polish citizens. In the territories under Soviet occupation, all instances of collaboration by Jews and Ukrainians were eagerly emphasized, while under German occupation people who acknowledged their German origin in the General Government (Volksdeutschen) were often condemned.

²² Cf.: S. Salmonowicz, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne*, Warszawa 1994; also footnote 4.

²³ Underground press constituted the most important medium, but the Office for Propaganda also published leaflets and used the so-called 'butterflies' (from French 'papillons'), placed on notice boards.

²⁴ Polish underground military and civil judicial systems have been thoroughly studied. Only some of the sentences were announced in underground press. In one case (on March 5, 1943) public opinion was informed about a death sentence via posters distributed all over Warsaw. Individual degrees of punishment included: the least severe one—a warning sent by mail; the next one—infamy. Other forms of punishment included flogging and head shaving, where the latter was used for women who had relations with German men.

²⁵ *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, vol. I, Londyn 1970, pp. 5–8.

²⁶ This decalogue was frequently reprinted after the War but censors always removed the phrase 'or a Bolshevik'. The complete text was first published by A. K. Kunert, *Rzeczpospolita Walcząca. Styczeń–grudzień 1940. Kalendarium*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 184–185.



Nation, and from the point of view of politics and Polish independence—pointless and harmful'. At the same time, being aware of the potential conflict between Germany and Soviet Russia, and of the possibility to organize Legions on both sides (anti-German and anti-Bolshevik ones), the author stated that 'the attitude towards such initiatives must be decisively negative (they should be condemned)'. Countering the 'Germanisation and Russification influences' was recommended²⁷. Unfortunately, presently there is not enough research on the history of Soviet occupation and of the Polish anti-Soviet resistance to conduct an analysis of public feelings and attitudes in that territory, as well as the ethical, patriotic code in place. We do not know to what extent ethical norms, developed under German occupation, made their way to and were approved of in the Soviet-occupied territories. It is possible that things that did not cause outrage and things that were considered reprehensible in Soviet-occupied Lwów were more like in German-occupied Paris than in German-occupied Warsaw²⁸. Targeted at the Lwów intelligentsia, the *Nowe Widnokreghi* journal was of similarly high standard as the Paris *Comaedia*, while it cannot be compared to such papers as the pornographic *Fala* or an entertainment magazine *7 dni*, which were published by the Germans and targeted at the Polish *Untermeriscentum*²⁹.

However, let us return to the issue of political collaboration in occupied Poland. The Germans fiercely rejected the initiative of one of few Polish Germanophiles, Władysław Studnicki, who sent a memorandum to Nazi authorities demanding that the rule of terror be stopped, and offering cooperation in return³⁰. No demands were most likely made by Polish fascists, who several times tried to establish a Polish counterpart of NSDAP. Presently we know very little about the activity of this small group³¹.

We still do not have a complete knowledge about the attempts of the Soviets to establish some collaborative Polish government already in July 1940. Possibly, Soviet archives contain documents that will allow us to determine if such offer was indeed made to Kazimierz Bartel, who was prime minister of Poland for several times in the interwar period³². A note in the diary of Ludwik Landau of May 31, 1943 suggests that

²⁷ *Armia Krajowa u dokumentach*, vol. I, pp. 271–273.

²⁸ In other words: Jean-Paul Sartre staged two of his plays in Paris, published a book in an official printing house (at Gallimard's) and published an article in a German-censored journal—had he done this in Warsaw he would have been considered a collaborator, but if he had done it in Lwów, he most probably would not have been called so. Similarly, in Paris he was not criticized at that time. Today, criticism does appear; see: G. Joseph, *Une si douce occupation. Simone de Beauvoir et Jean-Paul Sartre 1940- 1944*, Paris 1991.

²⁹ Aurelia Wyleżyńska, a writer living in Warsaw, in her diary on February 22, 1942 noted the impressions she had when reading this monthly, as somebody gave her three issues, smuggled from Lwów: 'Virtually all in this magazine is interesting for a writer ... The articles are written almost as if Bolshevism was not there, only sometimes you find some tribute to Stalin; Archiwum Akt Nowych, Division VI, cat. no. 231/I-1, B1. 57– 58; cf.: K. Woźniakowski, '7 Dni (1940–1944). Quasi-kulturalny gadzinowy tygodnik warszawski' (*Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, 1994, no. 1–2, p. 146).

³⁰ The memorials were published in a book *Irrwege in Polen. Ein Kampf um die polnisch-deutsche Annäherung*, Göttingen 1951. In Poland, several decades later they were published in Polish by the author's son, Konrad Studnicki-Gizbert, 'Tragiczne manowce'. *Próby przeciwdziałania katastrofom narodowym 1939–1945*, Gdańsk 1995.

³¹ All data on this issue that I managed to gather are contained in *U progu Holocaustu. Antyżydowskie zajścia i pogromy w okupowanej Europie*. The book is awaiting publication.

³² This was suggested by Cz. Madajczyk and R. Torzecki in their article 'Świat kultury i nauki Lwowa (1936–1941)' (*Dzieje Najnowsze*, 1982, no. 1–4, pp. 60–61).



after his visit to Katyń, Leon Kozłowski (another interwar prime minister) was, 'according to a widespread opinion', the 'candidate for the Polish Quisling'³³. However, the best known case is that of the newspaper *Przełom*, a fake underground magazine published by the Germans since spring 1944, edited by Feliks Burdecki and Jan Emil Skiwski³⁴. Without a shadow of a doubt we may speak here about a programme of political cooperation with the enemy, and Jan Emil Skiwski resembles to a certain extent a French collaborator Robert Brasillach³⁵.

On the other hand, in occupied Poland, there were no collaborative military units. Hitler did not agree to create units comprised of Polish voluntary soldiers, giving the example of the Pilsudski's Legions from World War I³⁶. As far as individual professional groups were concerned, the resistance movement mostly criticized actors who played in revue theatres in the territory of the General Government and in anti-Polish films produced by the Germans³⁷. No measures were taken, however, against actors performing in theatres operating under Soviet occupation, the main argument being that 'the standard of Polish theatres in the East is high, and has nothing to do with the poor Polish revue theatres under the Nazi occupation'³⁸. The resistance movement were very pleased with the conduct of writers³⁹. Only a few authors, of no established reputation, chose to publish their books in official German-approved print houses⁴⁰. Journalist cooperating with German-operated press (the so-called *prasa gadzinowa*) formed a much longer list, although it did not include any great names of Polish journalism⁴¹.

³³ L. Landau, *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji*, Z. Landau and J. Tomaszewski, eds., vol. II, Warszawa 1962, p. 458.

³⁴ Historian Lucjan Dobroszycki wrote about this newspaper: *Tatsächlich jedoch war Przełom das Organ einer polnischen Gruppe, die ideell mit der Nazibewegung verbunden war. Formal gesehen war er also die in der Geschichte des GG erste und gleichzeitig einzige »Reptilien-Zeitung« in der eigentlichen Bedeutung dieses Wortes, Die illegale polnische Presse im Generalgouvernement 1939-1945*, München 1977, pp. 184-185.

³⁵ Both were talented journalists, and both were ideologically motivated as fierce anti-communists. Brasillach was sentenced to death by a French court and executed, while Skiwski, as an organizer of the Bolshevik League, was received by Hans Frank in September 1944 and admitted to the circle in Germany in February 1945. After fleeing from Poland, he died of heart attack in Caracas in 1956. I shall return to the 'case of Skiwski' later on.

³⁶ This is evidenced by a note of Heinrich Himmler written on August 10, 1943 after a conversation with Hitler concerning the possibility to use the chief of the Home Army, general Stefan Rowecki, who had been arrested in Warsaw on June 30, 1943. A facsimile of this document can be found in my book *Stefan Rowecki „Grot”*, 2nd edition, Warszawa 1985.

³⁷ Despite the orders of the Secret Council of Theatres some 200 actors worked for official theatres. However, the punishments of reprimand or infamy were applied not for performing on the scene but for maintaining contacts with German occupants. On the other hand, such punishment was applied for a role in the film *Heimkehr*.

³⁸ Szejnert, *op. cit.*, p. 56 (this is an opinion of Jan Kreczmar, who was well familiar with the situation both in Lwów and in Warszawa).

³⁹ See an article with the telling title 'Honor milczenia' (The Honour of Keeping Silence), published in *Biuletyn Informacyjny* on April 3, 1941.

⁴⁰ Cf.: T.Szarota, 'Jawne wydawnictwa i prasa w okupowanej Warszawie' (*Studia Warszawskie*, vol. X: *Warszawa lat wojny i okupacji*, vol. 2, 1975). An interesting attempt to analyse these pieces can be found in K. Woźniakowski, *W kręgu jawnego piśmiennictwa literackiego Generalnego Gubernatorstwa (1939-1945)*, Kraków 1997.

⁴¹ Names of such collaborating journalist were published several times in underground press. It is quite telling that texts published Soviet-occupied Lwów in *Czerwony Sztandar* were typically signed with full



There is no doubt that patriotic public opinion was also very critical, or often even contemptuous, towards journalist writing for the analogical *Reptilienpresse*, published in the Soviet-occupied territories. The main difference was perhaps that while in the General Government every act of cooperation with the official press was considered reprehensible, in the East, what counted was the content of a given article, poem or story. The category of collaborators should also encompass scientists cooperating with the Institut für deutsche Ostarbeit⁴² in Cracow, or people working in employment agencies. Work for the police, called 'dark-blue' because of the colour of uniforms, were widely condemned⁴³. Members of a folk group from southern Poland, who helped to create the allegedly independent *Goralenvolk*, were quite commonly considered as traitors⁴⁴. Jewish cooperation with the Germans is a separate topic for discussion. Working for the *Ordnungsdienst*, organised in the Warsaw Ghetto, was unequivocally condemned, but participating in the Works of *Judenraten* was looked upon quite differently; consequently, no one would ever dare to call Adam Czerniaków, who headed the Jewish Council, a collaborator, and the more so a traitor⁴⁵.

2. Settling accounts with collaboration yesterday, i.e. in communist Poland.

On August 21, 1944, the Polish Committee of National Liberation was proclaimed in Moscow—a quasi-government formed by communists and destined to assume power in Poland. On August 31 1944, the Lublin Committee issued the famous decree 'on degree of punishment for Fascist and Nazi criminals guilty of murders and harassment on the civilian population and prisoners of war, and for the traitors of the Polish Nation'⁴⁶. It was based on this decree that not only collaborators, but also political opponents and simply Polish patriots were put to trials and convicted⁴⁷. Initially, the intention was indeed to punish all who collaborated with the Germans during the occupation (of course, the decree did not mention collaboration with the Soviet

names of their authors, while many journalists of *Nowy Kurier Warszawski* preferred to use pseudonyms and cryptonyms.

⁴² Cf. article: 'Zaprzaczący w piśmie podziemnym', *Strzelec* of 14 XII 1942.

⁴³ Cf.: A. Hempel, *Pogrobowcy kłęski. R zecz o policji „granatowej” w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, Warszawa 1990. Chief of this Police force, Aleksander Reszczyński, died in an assassination attempt organised by communists, who most probably were not aware of his connections with the Home Army.

⁴⁴ Cf.: Korbonski, *op. cit.*, p. 147; promoted as the leader of the *Goralenvolk*, Wacław Krzeptowski was sentenced to death by the underground and was killed by mountain dwellers themselves on January 20, 1945.

⁴⁵ He was one of the most tragic figures of occupied Poland. Czerniaków committed suicide on August 23, 1942. He left a shocking document: *Adama Czerniakowa dziennik getta warszawskiego 6 IX 1939–23 VII 1942*, M. Fuks, ed., Warszawa 1983.

⁴⁶ *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, 1944, no. 4. item 16.

⁴⁷ Documents from the Civil Office of President Bolesław Bierut, stored in the Central Archives of Modern Records, contain a Note on Crimes from the August Decree (*Notatka w sprawie przestępstw z dekretu sierpniowego*), written in the end of 1950. It occurs that between 1944 and 1949 16,622 cases related to the decree were submitted to courts. The note categorized the defendants into the following groups: '1. war criminals extradited from Germany, 2. policemen from the Dark-Blue Police, 3. members of Fascist organizations (National Armed Forces, Home Army) collaborating with Gestapo, 4. informers, Gestapo, military policemen etc., 5. criminals committing crimes in concentration camps, 6. peasants who took part in manhunts for Jews or partisans, or who voluntarily apprehended and turned in to the German authorities people who were persecuted and hunted for by the occupant for national or political reasons. The latter group is the largest' (I would like to thank dr Dariusz Jarosz for sharing these documents with me).



occupant). Such intentions of the newly established communist authorities seem to be confirmed by its decisions taken in Praga (district of Warsaw on the left bank of the Vistula River, liberated on September 14, 1944) during the first meeting of the newly-established National Council of the Capital City of Warsaw, on November 30, 1944, a resolution was passed ordering house committees to prepare lists of residents with an attached 'list of traitors of the Nation'⁴⁸.

It is very likely that the August Decree was used to crack down on opponents of the communist regime, including soldiers of the legendary Home Army, as a result of suggestions, or even orders from the NKWD. Very quickly the term 'collaborator' began to be employed to compromise activists of the political opposition. On January 18, 1947, a day before the communist-falsified elections, Stefan Korboński noted in his diary: 'Approximately fifty thousand people, including 98 parliamentary candidates, have been removed from the voting lists at the false pretext of collaboration with the Germans. Because Poland was amongst leaders in terms of underground combat with the occupying forces, and a country that have never had its Quisling, this accusation of mass collaboration is an appalling misrepresentation of the reality. This could not have been invented by a Pole. Such meanness could only come from foreigners'⁴⁹. How far this could go may be exemplified by a passage from justification of the sentence for Blanka Kaczorowska, an actual Gestapo agent, in which the following extenuating circumstances were found: 'she was a victim of the criminal activity of the Home Army leaders, who, as we now know, collaborated with the Gestapo, followed the orders of the Gestapo and together with the Gestapo fought against a larger part of the Polish Nation.'⁵⁰

Between 1945 and 1948 several very famous trials against collaborator were held in Poland. It is worth to emphasise that they most often concerned people who had been stigmatized in the underground press or had been sentenced by underground courts⁵¹. At that time, the public was very dissatisfied when acquittals were granted, such as in the case of Stanisław Wasylewski, who had been accused of cooperation with *Gazeta Lwowska*, a newspaper published by the Germans. Prison sentences of several

⁴⁸ Cf. article: 'Oczyścić dom' (*Życie Warszawy*, December 3, 1944).

⁴⁹ S. Korboński, *W imieniu Kremla*, A. K. Kunert, ed., Warszawa 1997, p. 218.

⁵⁰ I would like to thank Andrzej Gass for the copy of the court documents.

⁵¹ Sometimes trials were held and defendants were convicted *in absentia*. Such was the case with the above-mentioned editors of the *Przełom* newspaper. As far as Skiwski was concerned, he was stigmatized by the underground press already in September 1941 for allegedly submitting a book in the official *Wydawnictwo Polskie* printing house and for taking the position of head of literary division in this institution. In the newspaper *Pionier* of September 15, 1941, apparently because these accusations had not been confirmed, a motion to 'suspend the infamy' was mentioned, while *Biuletyn Informacyjny* of September 18 informed that the case was transferred to a 'special court', however the title of the news, *Infamy*, suggested that the three defendants mentioned in the article, including Skiwski, had already been convicted. Under the impression made by the post-war trial, Stefan Kisielewski expressed a very negative attitude towards Skiwski, 'Wspominki i inwektywy', in *Polityka i sztuka*, Warszawa 1949. pp. 252 - 254; see also: E. Kozikowski, 'Burdecki and Skiwski' (*Odra*, 1949, no. 26); Skiwski's memorandum to the German authorities of September 30, 1944 was recalled by Z. Mycielski, 'Sprawa Skiwskiego i towarzyszy' (*Odrodzenie*, 1948, no. 23).



years met with an approval—but today, when the files of these trials are analyzed by a historian, these sentences seem much too severe⁵².

In post-War Poland, independently of normal court proceedings, cases of collaboration were also verified by special magistrate courts and verification committees for individual professional groups. Resulting decisions, regarding for example actors, who were banned from performing in Warsaw, were considered by the public as too lenient. Above-mentioned Stefan Korboński noted on December 22, 1946 in his diary: 'As it happens, this occupation scum gets away with too many things. Malicka stood some stupid trial for appropriating somebody's property, and the charges were dropped. The only punishment she got for her close relations with the Germans is the sentence of the Central Court of the Union of Polish Actors, forbidding her to perform until the 1st of September 1947 ... Dymcza, Perzanowska and others were dealt with in a similar manner'⁵³.

Few historians realize that with a resolution of March 22, 1948 Minister of Justice appointed a plenipotentiary to persecute people suspected of collaboration with the Germans. In a secret circular to prosecutors, the decision was explained as follows: 'The reaction of the public, as revealed by a series of press articles and news, points to the issue of the collaboration with the Germans by representatives of the intelligentsia. Society considers as particularly annoying the leniency of the verification and disciplinary institutions, operating within various organisations and trade unions'⁵⁴. In Stalinist Poland, no one spoke about true collaborators, but based on the August Decree, courts did not hesitate to sentence a hero of the Polish resistance movement, general Emil Fieldorf *Nil*, to death. Virtually until 1989, the issue of collaboration with the Soviet occupant was mentioned only in emigrant publications⁵⁵.

Following the Polish October of 1956, the academic community together with interested artistic communities made two attempts to make a possibly objective assessment of the attitudes and behaviours during the Nazi occupation. In December 1962, a scientific conference was held in the Institute of Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, devoted to Polish theatres and related culture during World War II⁵⁶, and in April 1981 Warsaw Musical Society organized a session entitled 'Musical culture of Warsaw during the Nazi occupation', materials from which have never been published⁵⁷.

⁵² I based my opinion on the analysis of the files from the trial of Helena Wielgomasowa, an untalented writer, who published her 'literary works' in the official press. The files are stores in the State Archives of the Capital City of Warsaw. Helena Wielgomasowa was sentenced to six years in prison.

⁵³ Korboński, *W imieniu Kremla...*, p. 209.

⁵⁴ The document is stored in the Archives of Ministry of Justice; I received a copy thereof from dr. Aleksander Kochański.

⁵⁵ For instance see the text 'Inżynierowie dusz' by M. Borwicz, concerning the situation in Lwów between 1939 and 1941, published in *Zeszyty Historyczne* in Paris (vol. 3, 1963, pp. 121–163), a reprint in volume *Ludzie, książki, spory*, Paryż 1980, pp. 7–51, or an article by B. Czaykowski, 'Lwowska szkoła inżynierii dusz' (*Kultura*, 1988, mo. 4, pp. 12–38).

⁵⁶ Materials from this conference were published in a special edition of the *Pamiętnik Teatralny* magazine (1963, Nos. 1–4), later withdrawn from sales. Today, it has become a real treat for book collectors. Several years later, a very valuable book on this topic was published by S. Marczak-Oborski, *Teatr czasu wojny 1939–1945*, Warszawa 1967.

⁵⁷ Apart from the texts of the reports, what would be really valuable are the very important accounts of the witnesses of those event, who are now deceased. However, I would like to signal the publication of a book by S. Lachowicz, *Muzyka w okupowanym Krakowie 1939–1945*, Kraków 1988.



3. The perception of collaboration today, i.e. in the Third Republic of Poland.

It should not be surprising that in the *martyrological* and heroic image of the occupation which is ingrained in the historical awareness, that is in the social memory of Poles, there is no place for a phenomena that are completely unfit for such image, such as collaboration⁵⁸. Of course, this does not mean that the subject was not of interest for journalists, researchers or finally for those involved, or later members of their families, mainly descendants. Discussions and controversies related to the judgement of the conduct of individual people during the occupation, particularly since 1989, have a marked ideological and political context. Lack of censorship obviously helps here. I shall try to illustrate this with a few examples.

On June 19, 1989 at a meeting of the Polish PEN-Club in Warsaw a statement was read out concerning a writer Ferdynand Goetl, in which the accusation which had been made during the War in relation to his alleged collaboration with the Germans was considered as groundless, and which informed about Goetl's participation in the resistance movement⁵⁹. In June 1991, the most popular Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* published an interview of Adam Michnik with Czesław Miłosz, in which the cases of two persons were discussed: of Teodor Bujnicki and Józef Mackiewicz⁶⁰. The former, a poet, published shameful pieces in *Prawda Wileńska* under the Soviet occupation, for which he was sentenced to death by the Home Army and killed in November 1944. For Michnik, Bujnicki's conduct was a 'chemically pure example of collaborating with the occupant, with the enemy', but he also added: 'But can one kill a writer for even the most contemptuous poems? This is a question to which I myself cannot find an answer.' After the interview had been published, Tadeusz Bujnicki defended the good name of his father in a list published by the weekly *Polityka*⁶¹.

Most clearly, the dispute over Józef Mackiewicz, considered by some critics as one of the most eminent Polish writers of the century, has attracted the widest public attention⁶². In a sense, the efforts of his supporters to ensure a place for him in the history of Polish literature resemble efforts that had been undertaken to revive the work of Celine in French literature. Józef Mackiewicz published articles in *Goniec Codzienny*, a newspaper issued in German-occupied Vilnius; he visited Katyń under German supervision (allegedly with the underground authorities' approval), and was sentenced to death by an underground court; eventually, he was not executed. In Summer 1944 Mackiewicz arrived to Warsaw with an intention to establish a paper that was to

⁵⁸ Cf.: T. Szarota, 'Życie z historią lub „żywa historia". II wojna światowa w świadomości Polaków po 50 latach' (*Polska 1944/45—1989. Studia i Materiały*, vol. II, 1996, pp. 235 – 247).

⁵⁹ However, I would like to point out that the motion to punish F. Goetel with infamy (for convincing his colleagues to register at German authorities) was prepared in September 1941, while he was not stigmatized for taking part in the Polish delegation sent to Katyń by Germans. Only in 1990 F. Goetel's memoirs, *Czasy wojny* could be published.

⁶⁰ *Gazeta Wyborcza (Świąteczna)*, 8–9 VI 1991.

⁶¹ T. Bujnicki, 'Sprawa śmierci mego ojca', a letter to editor (*Polityka*, 1991, no. 34); see my text, 'Problem kolaboracji w Wilnie pod okupacją sowiecką. Sprawa Teodora Bujnickiego' (*Europa nieprowincjonalna*, K. Jasiewicz, ed., Warszawa 1999, pp. 600–616).

⁶² Books of Józef Mackiewicz have been already translated into several languages; in Poland, his works only became popular thanks to underground publications in the 1980s. J. M a l e w s k i (pseudonym of Włodzimierz Bolecki) wrote two books on Mackiewicz: *Ptasznik z Wilna*, Kraków 1991, and *Wyrok na Józefa Mackiewicza*, Londyn 1991.



promote a programme aiming at an agreement with the Germans, who were losing the war at that time⁶³. It is also worth to note that veterans' organizations have fiercely opposed the rehabilitation of Józef Mackiewicz⁶⁴.

I have already mentioned Jan Emil Skiwski twice in this paper. Although it would be difficult to consider Maciej Urbanowski's article *Bohaterowie i zdrajca* (Heroes and a Traitor), published in *Arka*, as an attempt to rehabilitate Skiwski, undoubtedly the author's intention is to look at the issue in a wider context, and at least to preserve the writer's pre-war work from oblivion⁶⁵. Despite arguing with Urbanowski, Marta Fik also agrees that the term 'collaborator' is too simplified an assessment for Skiwski⁶⁶.

History of Lwów during World War II is a subject that increasingly attracts attention of Polish researchers, with a special emphasis on the period of Soviet occupation. Accounts are being published of those who personally experienced the rule of 'the first Bolsheviks'⁶⁷, there are many competent studies⁶⁸, although we still have too few publications of source materials. Although the discussion on collaboration with Soviet authorities started earlier, it was only in independent Poland that a real, serious confrontation of opinions could have taken place. Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, a great writer, theatrical critic and a distinguished translator of French literature, can be considered a central figure in the debate. Barbara Winklowska, the author of his biography and an eminent expert in his work, in order to defend him from the charges of collaboration, gathered and published all available texts on Boy-Żeleński's stay and activity in Lwów between 1939 and 1941⁶⁹. On the other hand, for Jacek Trznadel it was Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński who became almost a symbol of the group of writers collaborating with the Soviet occupant⁷⁰. Recently B. Winklowska has been supported by Józef Hen, however the

⁶³ Here is how Czesław Miłosz remembered a meeting with Mackiewicz: 'We listened to him in disbelief, as you listen to man who is out of his mind. And we laughed at him. We told him that he did not know the local situation, and that nobody would cooperate with such paper, that nobody would shake hands with the collaborators Emil Skiwski and Feliks Rybicki [sic! — T.S.], and if he himself started to issue such paper, he would have been called a traitor' (*Rok myśliwego*, Kraków 1991, p. 218).

⁶⁴ Opinions on the issue have been expressed for example by Władysław Bartoszewski, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański and Cezary Chlebowski. In response several famous writers published a statement to defend Mackiewicz (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27 I 1992).

⁶⁵ *Arka*, Kraków 1993, no. 43/1, pp. 132-152; he also wrote a biographical note on J. E. Skiwski in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. XXXVIII, no. 157, 1998, pp. 190 – 193.

⁶⁶ M. Fik, 'Skiwski zdrajca heroiczny?' (*Puls*, Warszawa, July-August 1993, no. 63); a reprint in *Autorytacie wróć? Szkice o postawach polskich intelektualistów po październiku 1956*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 21–30.

⁶⁷ The rule of 'the first Bolsheviks' (or 'the first Soviets') was a term applied to the period between 1939 and 1941, while 'the second Bolsheviks' (Soviets) arrived in 1944. Interesting accounts from the period include, in my opinion, a book by L. Dzięgiel, then a child, now an eminent ethnographer, *Lwów nie każdemu zdrow*, Wrocław 1991; see also: K. Żygulski *Jestem z lwowskiego etapu*, Warszawa 1994.

⁶⁸ For instance, a doctoral thesis of A. Cieślikowa, *Prasa okupowanego Lwowa*, Warszawa 1997. See a great study by G. Hryciuk (footnote 16) and his popular article 'Kolaboracja we Lwowie w latach 1939–1941' (*Magazyn Historyczny Mówią Wieki*, January 1996, no. 1 (440), pp. 37–40). In 1992, Hryciuk published a book on *Gazeta Lwowska*, a paper issued under German occupation.

⁶⁹ B. Winklowska, *Boy we Lwowie 1939–1941. Antologia tekstów o pobycie Tadeusza Żeleńskiego (Boya) we Lwowie*, Warszawa 1992.

⁷⁰ J. Trznadel, *Kolaboranci. Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński i grupa komunistycznych pisarzy we Lwowie 1939–1941*, Komorów 1998.



latter could not polemicize with J. Trznadel because their books were written in the same time⁷¹.

We should also mention the publication of a special issue of the *Pamiętnik Teatralny* quarterly in 1997, which was almost entirely devoted to the history of Polish theatres during World War II, and especially to the participation of actors in the official culture and the efforts to settle accounts with 'collaboration' that had been undertaken in Poland after 1945⁷². We can easily see a tendency to justify actors' conduct on the one hand, and for the first time to fiercely criticize the behaviour of this professional group during Soviet occupation between 1939 and 1941. At the same time, a criticism appeared of the manner in which the post-war verification had been performed, ignoring the conduct of actors under the rules of 'the first Bolsheviks'.

As a conclusion, I would like to point out to the fact that the very term 'collaborator' is nowadays increasingly popular in Poland. It is used not only in relation to the period of World War II. Kazimierz Orłoś, an eminent writer, stated in his article 'Kto jest kolaborantem' ('Who is the collaborator'), a polemic with the interview of Adam Michnik with Czesław Miłosz: 'Although Poland had no ... Quislings, but instead it had—which we should not forget—its Bieruts', and further on he writes: 'No one can have any doubt that Polish communists have collaborated with the Soviet Union in recent decades'⁷³. In 1986, a book by Jacek Trznadel entitled *Hańba domowa. Rozmowy z pisarzami*⁷⁴ was published in Paris, and then several times in Poland, becoming the required reading in the country. For the author and some of his interlocutors post-war literary works supporting the propaganda and ideology of the communist regime were examples of collaboration. Finally, the term 'collaborators' is used in reference to those actors who did not take part in the spontaneous boycott of television performances initiated after the introduction of the Martial Law in Poland.

Additionally, the term is beginning to be used for phenomena of similar, or only seemingly similar, nature, which had taken place in previous centuries. This may be exemplified by a special issue of the *Magazyn Historyczny Mówią Wieki* magazine, devoted entirely to the issue of collaboration. Only great medievalist Halina Manikowska had the courage to admit that it would be extremely difficult to use the term 'collaboration' in reference to Middle Ages⁷⁵. Such doubts were not shared, in my opinion, by the organizers of a conference held in December 1997 in Olsztyn. The title of the event was: 'Between irredentism and collaboration. The conduct of the Polish society in relation to the occupant in the 19th century'.

* This text, abbreviated and without footnotes, was presented (in a German version) at the international conference on the consequences of Nazism, which was held in April 1998 in Rome. In its basic assumption, this is only the first attempt to deal with this subject, and it will be by no means exhaustive. To a certain extent, I refer to the views of Czesław Madajczyk expressed in his article 'Między neutralną współpracą ludności

⁷¹ J. Hen, *Błazen — wielki mąż. Opowieść o Tadeuszu Boyu-Żeleńskim*, Warszawa 1998.

⁷² *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1997, issue 1-4 (181–184), p. 784.

⁷³ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19 VII 1991.

⁷⁴ Recent issue (7th) Warszawa 1997. One should take note of what Zbigniew Herbert said: 'People like me believed that 1945 was no liberation but merely an invasion, a continued, longer, and morally much more difficult occupation. I had experienced the occupation of Lwów.', p. 198.

⁷⁵ H. Manikowska 'Średniowieczna „kolaboracja” all' Italiano' (*Magazyn Historyczny Mówią Wieki*, January 1996, no. 1 <440>, p. 15).



NARODOWY PROGRAM
ROZWOJU HUMANISTYKI

TOMASZ SZAROTA : THE COLLABORATION WITH THE GERMAN AND SOVIET OCCUPANTS AS JUDGED BY THE POLES—
THEN, YESTERDAY, AND TODAY

terytoriów okupowanych a kolaboracją z Niemcami' (Between neutral cooperation of the population of the occupied territories and collaboration with the Germans), in which he also posed a question on the role of collaboration with Soviet authorities in the former territory of the eastern provinces of Poland (*Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniam i Hitlerowskimi*, vol. XXI, Wrocław 1998 (*Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis*, no. 2077, pp. 181–196)).