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**The Sovietisation of Poland's Baltic 'Recovered Territories', 1945-1956**

Paul Martin McNamara

Ph.D. Dissertation

2013

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Paul Martin McNamara

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Department of History, National University of Ireland, Galway

September 2013

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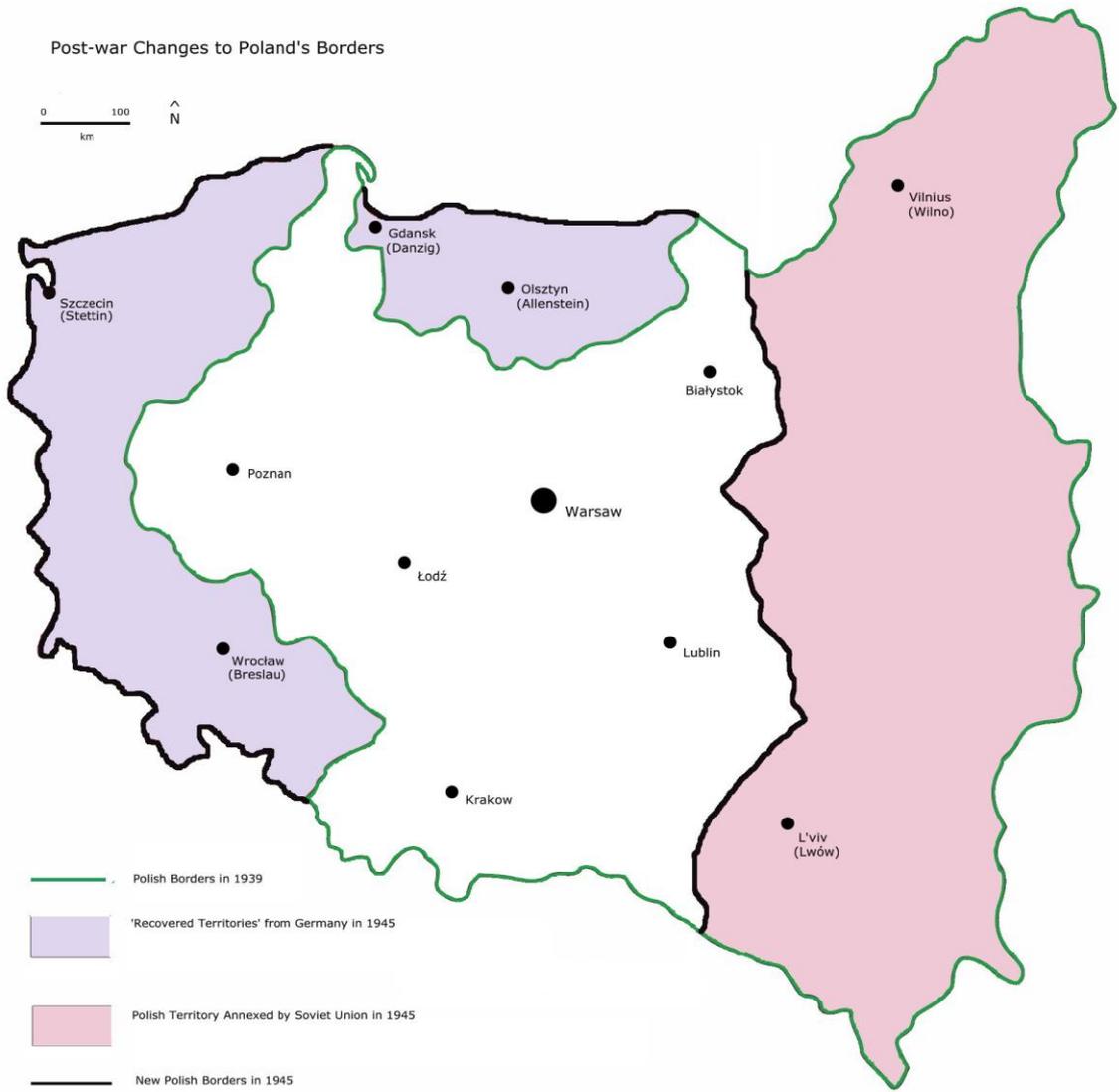
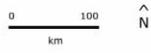
<b>AAN</b>	Archiwum Akt Nowych (Polish State Archives in Warsaw)
<b>APG</b>	Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku (Polish State Archives in Gdansk)
<b>APS</b>	Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie (Polish State Archives in Szczecin)
<b>APO</b>	Archiwum Państwowe w Olsztynie (Polish State Archives in Olsztyn)
<b>GKK</b>	Główna Komisja Księży (Central Priests' Commission)
<b>IZP</b>	Instytut Zachodni, Poznań (Western Institute, Poznan)
<b>IPN</b>	Instytut Pamięci Narodowe (Instytut of National Remembrance)
<b>KW PPR</b>	Komitet Wojewódzki PPR (PPR Provincial Committee)
<b>KW PZPR</b>	Komitet Wojewódzki PZPR (PZPR Provincial Committee)
<b>MAP</b>	Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej (Ministry of Public Administration)
<b>MBP</b>	Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego (Ministry of Public Security)
<b>MIP</b>	Ministerstwo Informacji i Propagandy (Ministry of Information and Propaganda)
<b>MRN</b>	Miejska Rada Narodowa (Municipal National Council)

<b>MZO</b>	Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych (Ministry of the Recovered Territories)
<b>OKK</b>	Okręgowa Komisja Księży (District Priests' Commission)
<b>UIPG</b>	Urząd Informacji i Propagandy w Gdańsku (Office of Information and Propaganda in Gdansk)
<b>UIPS</b>	Urząd Informacji i Propagandy w Szczecinie (Office of Information and Propaganda in Szczecin)
<b>UIPO</b>	Urząd Informacji i Propagandy w Olsztynie (Office of Information and Propaganda in Olsztyn)
<b>UWS</b>	Urząd Wojewódzki w Szczecinie (Provincial Administration in Szczecin)
<b>WUBP</b>	Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego (Provincial Office of Public Security)

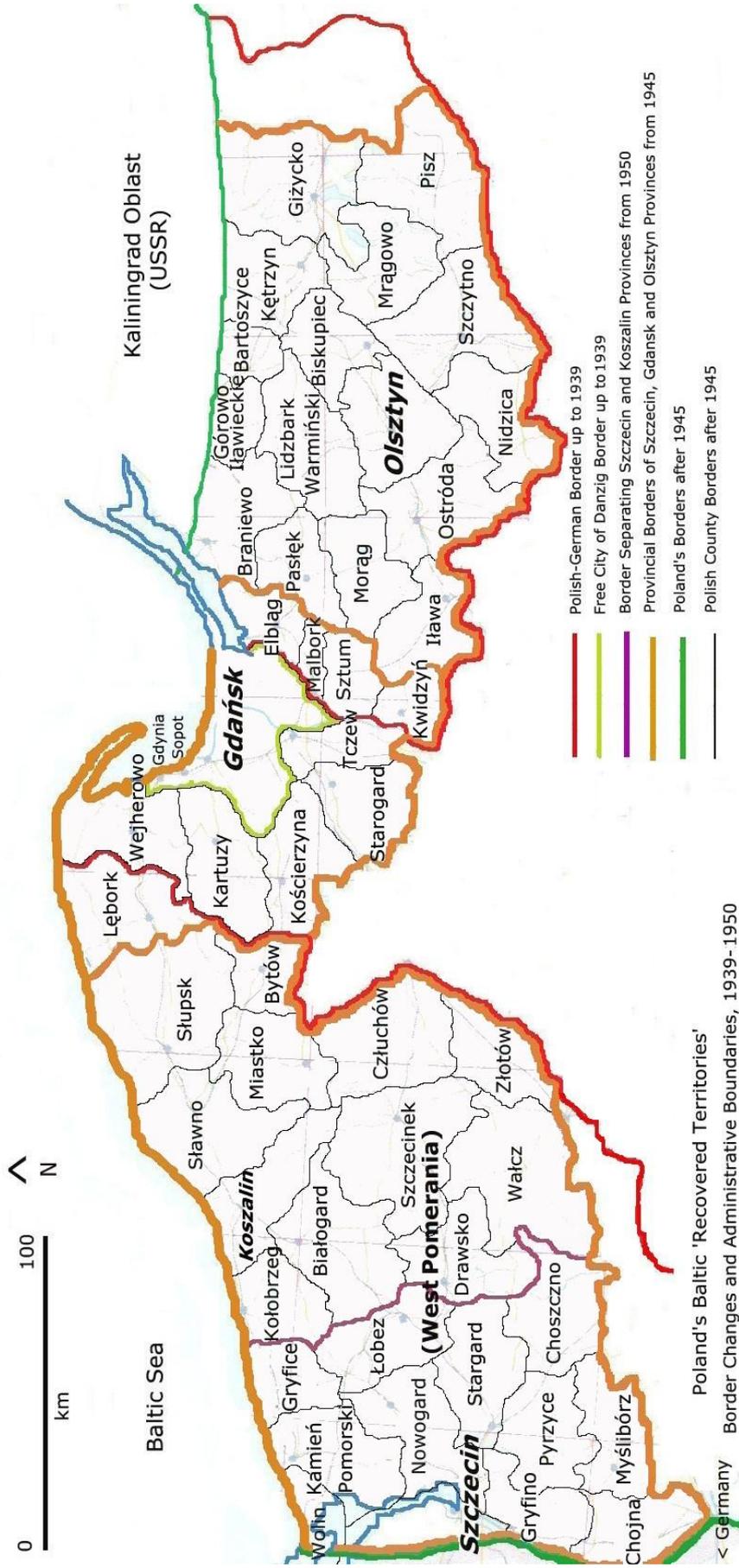
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### Post-war Changes to Poland's Borders



-  Polish Borders in 1939
-  'Recovered Territories' from Germany in 1945
-  Polish Territory Annexed by Soviet Union in 1945
-  New Polish Borders in 1945



## Introduction

Poland's ex-German provinces along the Baltic Sea have proved a particularly challenging region for academic study. Incorporated into Poland's so-called 'Recovered Territories' in 1945 and settled with a largely imported Polish population, the Baltic provinces' historical links with Slavic Pomeranian princes and medieval Polish kings were heavily promoted by Poland's post-war communist regime in order to confirm the 'Polishness' of the region.<sup>1</sup> From the outset, however, visitors noticed that the majority of the region's Polish inhabitants not only had no pre-war roots, but often seemed reluctant to establish their own and showed a lack of interest, even hostility towards examining the region's past.<sup>2</sup> The 1970s and 1980s saw Poland's Baltic coastline, particularly its ports of Szczecin and Gdansk, become inseparably associated with the Solidarity trade union movement, a movement which was a key player in the fall of the Polish communist regime.<sup>3</sup> Even then, the region provided a strong support base for the communist authorities, especially as one travels west towards the German border.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, today it continues to provide residual support for Poland's post-communist parties.<sup>5</sup>

The explanation for these seeming contradictions can be found in the region's highly complex and convoluted history immediately following the Second World War when the southern coastline of the Baltic Sea underwent a period of enormous political, demographic, economic and social change. Exceptional not only by their suddenness, intensity and unparalleled scale, these changes were driven by Sovietisation, a process by which the Soviet Union sought to impose its control over the political, economic, social and cultural systems of those countries found within its sphere of influence at the end of the Second World War. Indeed, as Norman Naimark outlines, Sovietisation was based on using Marxist-Leninist ideology to demand

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<sup>1</sup> Often referred to as the Oder-Neisse lands in English-language works, the term 'Recovered Territories' was officially used until 1949 when it was replaced with 'Northern and Western Territories' to signify that the transition phase to fully integrate these lands into Poland proper had passed.

<sup>2</sup> William Woods, *Poland: Phoenix in the East, A Survey of Modern Times* (London: Penguin, 1972), 81-82; Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 292.

<sup>3</sup> For English-language accounts of the history of Solidarity, see Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (London: Penguin, 1999); Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); ———, *1989: Democratic Revolutions at the Cold War's End* (Boston-New York: Bedford-St. Martin's, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Bethell, *Gomułka, His Poland and His Communism* (London: Longmans, 1969), 137.

<sup>5</sup> Maps showing how current support for these parties is distributed geographically can be seen here: <http://www.skupienski.pl/2011/11/03/wybory-2011-i-ekonomia-co-nas-czeka-w-najblizszej-kadencji/>. Accessed 12 October 2012.

conformity and subservience through imitation. To this end, the Soviets installed advisers to monitor all aspects of life in satellite countries and report on how closely they were following the Marxist-Leninist model and countering western influence. Thus, Soviet intervention in the power structures and in the economic, social and cultural policies of each country all aided the Sovietisation of eastern Europe. Communists increased their power through gradually marginalising coalition partners and opposition parties while increasing the role of state in industry and land reform, initially stopping short of full nationalisation or collectivisation. However, it remains unclear how soon Stalin intended to sovietise the eastern bloc through methods of persecution, administrative pressure and subversion. It has also been a subject of debate whether the Soviet Union was, at this time, displaying a 'revolutionary-imperial paradigm' which echoed traditional Russian desires to control eastern Europe.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, as the work of literary scholar Ewa M. Thompson has shown, 'empire' and 'colonialism' have become important conceptual frameworks in post-colonial studies analysing the colonial policies of Imperial Russia and the USSR.<sup>7</sup> However, the colonial practices of the Soviet Union were imposed through Sovietisation, a concept which is less clearly defined and traditionally viewed by western Cold Warriors as totalitarian empire-building.<sup>8</sup> As Balázs Apor and others have outlined recently, it was also used by the Soviet satellite countries as a method of state and nation building, an aspect of particular importance in the borderland region being considered here.<sup>9</sup>

This study focuses on Poland's three northern provinces which occupy the entire length of Poland's post-war coastline namely, West Pomerania (centred administratively on Szczecin and Koszalin), Gdansk Pomerania (centred on Gdansk) and Warmia-Masuria/Olsztyn (centred on Olsztyn).<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, they

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<sup>6</sup> Norman Naimark, "The Sovietization of Eastern Europe, 1944-1953," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 184-197.

<sup>7</sup> Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Communist Ideology and Power: From Unity to Diversity," *The Journal of Politics* 19, no. 4 (1957), 549-590; Hannah Arendt, "Totalitarian Imperialism: Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution," *The Journal of Politics* 20, no. 1 (1958), 5-43.

<sup>9</sup> Péter Apor Balázs Apor, E. A. Rees ed. *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period* (Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, 2008); Norman Naimark, "The Sovietization of Eastern Europe, 1944-1953," 175-197.

<sup>10</sup> The current Polish names for these provinces are as follows; West Pomerania – *województwo zachodniopomorskie*, Gdansk Pomerania – *województwo pomorskie* and Warmia-Masuria – *województwo wamińsko-mazurskie*. Together they occupy a total area of 65,375 km<sup>2</sup>. GUS, "Powierzchnia i ludność w przekroju terytorialnym w 2012 r.," (Warsaw: Główny Urząd Statystyczny,

will be considered as one coastal region as, while much scholarly attention has been focused on the much-better known region of Lower Silesia, no work has yet appeared treating the three contiguous Baltic provinces as a unit worthy of examination in itself.<sup>11</sup> There are several structural features which made the Baltic region not only particularly interesting but different from other Recovered Territories. Firstly, together these provinces formed the much-extended coastal region of the post-war Polish state and thus gave Poland the access to the sea which it had long craved as a strategic and economic necessity.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, its economy was much less industrialized than Lower Silesia, as the Baltic region had few natural resources, and was mainly based on agriculture, maritime trade and small businesses. Thirdly, while most of coastal region comprised new territory coming within Poland's post-war borders, the main areas of settlement were divided by a sliver of land near Gdansk formerly known as 'the Polish corridor' which had been part of inter-war Poland.<sup>13</sup> Fourthly, because the region was mainly agricultural, sparsely populated and insecure, it proved a less attractive option to Polish settlers, many of whom used it mainly as a stopover before moving on, either to central Poland or the industrial basin of Lower Silesia. Moreover, while the desolation and underpopulation of the Baltic provinces proved to be a major hindrance in attracting a permanent labour force, the physical and social isolation which settlers experienced there also made it easier for the communist regime to impose ideologically-driven policies such as collectivisation and nationalisation. At the same time, this isolation made the settlers more dependent on the authorities and the communist party which, along with the Red Army, took on the role as protector of their homes from perceived German irredentism.

Poland's Baltic Recovered Territories have traditionally been embedded in historical studies regarding Polish-German relations during the Cold War or sociological research on post-war Polish settlement, but not in general terms of Sovietisation. Thus, this study helps to explain some of the above-mentioned contradictions by

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2012); Henryk Galus, *Spółeczeństwo Pomorza*, vol. 1 (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Henryk Galus, 2004), 73-132.

<sup>11</sup> Examples include Tomasz Szarota, *Osadnictwo miejskie na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945-1948* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1969); Sebastian Siebel-Achenbach, *Lower Silesia from Nazi Germany to Communist Poland, 1942-49* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions*, trans. Tom Lampert et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Andrew Demshuk, "Reinscribing Schlesien as Śląsk: Memory and Mythology in a Postwar German-Polish Borderland," *History & Memory* 24, no. 1 (2012), 39-86.

<sup>12</sup> For the economic significance of Poland's Baltic ports during the early postwar years see Grzegorz Baziur, *Armia Czerwona na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1945-1947* (Warszawa: IPN, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Galus, *Spółeczeństwo Pomorza*, 73-132.

examining in detail the processes by which this region, under the guidance of the Soviet Union, became Polish, both officially and more importantly, culturally and politically. It also complements existing work on post-war Poland in order to examine how Sovietisation hindered rather than aided the settlement of its Baltic provinces by imposing counter-productive policies which threatened to undermine the whole settlement process and, consequently, Poland's claim to these lands. This thesis argues that the peculiar conditions of the Baltic region resulted in a unique form of Sovietisation during the early post-war years, one based on force and Marxist-Leninist ideology but which was flexible enough to be compatible with specific national and regional goals. At the same time, the climate of fear engendered by the Second World War fed feelings of impermanence and uncertainty among the general settler population, fears that were more exaggerated than other parts of Poland. Moreover, because its ports, long coastline and western border offered the potential for contact with 'imperialist spies', as well as escape, levels of paranoia within local Party organisations sometimes reached hysterical levels. Thus, while this is a geographically specific study of one region, it has the potential to shed light on other instances of colonisation.

In the Recovered Territories in general, Sovietisation involved a process of layered or, to borrow Tanja Petrović's term, 'nesting colonialisms'.<sup>14</sup> Firstly, at the broadest level, there was a Soviet political and military colonisation which sought to push communism and Soviet power as far west as possible while attempting to disguise it as Polish national self-determination. Within this, there was a simultaneous Polish programme in which the Polish communist regime sought, under a Soviet umbrella, to 'repolonise' ex-German lands through settling these regions with Poles and carrying out 'degermanisation'. Further within this new and fragmented society, the Polish authorities tried to subsume the various regional identities of the settlers, and especially local communities with mixed Polish-German heritage, into one common Polish national identity conducive to 'democratisation' and Sovietisation.<sup>15</sup> Thus, as the Polish 'pioneers' were agents of settlement, rebuilding and 'de-

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<sup>14</sup> Tanja Petrović, "Nesting Colonialisms: Austria, Slovenia, and Discourses on the Western Balkans in the Context of the EU Enlargement," in *Do Good Fences Make Friendly Neighbors? Inclusion and Exclusion in and on the Borders of Europe*, ed. Lev Kreft Jill Benderly (Ljubljana: The Peace Institute, Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies, 2010). Petrović based this concept on Milica Bakić-Hayden's 'Nesting Orientalisms', see: Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995), 917-931.

<sup>15</sup> Maria Tomczak, "Obraz osadników w prasie i publicystyce polskiej," in *Ziemia Odzyskana 1945-2005: Ziemia Zachodnie i Północne, 60 lat w granicach państwa polskiego*, ed. Andrzej Sakson (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2006), 50-54.

germanising' campaigns, as well as the new political system, one can talk of 'repolonisation' in the Recovered Territories as a subset of Sovietisation.

In certain ways post-war Soviet expansion does not fit into the standard colonial model as while the relationship between the USSR and its satellites was conventionally 'imperial', the subjugated periphery was actually wealthier than the imperial centre.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, this thesis will show that while colonisation in other parts of the world was associated with the building of railway networks and industrial facilities as a sign of 'progress' and modernisation, in the Baltic Recovered Territories Sovietisation initially brought about decline, degeneration and de-modernisation through the asset-stripping of factories and infrastructure to be exported as war booty to the 'mother country.' Despite this economic relationship being the reverse of the norm, it is still possible to fit it in to Juergen Osterhammel's broad definition of colonialism as 'a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders'.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, it may be applied both to the Red Army securing the Recovered Territories for the Soviet empire and Polish nation-builders imposing ethnic verification programmes on indigenous Cashubian and Masurian communities. Moreover, in a further echo of 'nesting colonialisms', as Polish settlement gained momentum, Poles evolved from being a dominant minority to a dominant majority over their indigenous neighbours while themselves remaining a subservient to a superior minority namely, the Red Army and Soviet 'advisers'.

Through using Polish-language sources such as lower-level Communist Party files, newspapers and settler memoirs, a significant proportion of which has never been published before, I describe 'the communist experience' of both settlers and Party officials from below, that is, not just for those who suffered under communism but for those who imposed its policies and benefitted from the new political system. It is important to point out here that settlers and 'the Party' were not mutually exclusive groups as, although most settlers in the Baltic provinces were not communists or 'self-sovietised', virtually all Party members were settlers with the same everyday concerns. Moreover, building on work on Poland's post-war society by Padraic Kenney and Michael Fleming I will further challenge the 'totalitarian model' by showing how, even in a highly fragmented society, the survival strategies of those attempting to resist or to opt out of the regime's ideologically-driven policies created enough cumulative force to undermine the Sovietisation of the region, as well as flagship communist

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<sup>16</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Vintage Books, 2005), 167.

<sup>17</sup> Juergen Osterhammel, *Colonialism* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995), 58.

programmes such as collectivisation.<sup>18</sup> Local Party officials were often forced, or sometimes preferred to reach accommodations with groups and individuals, such as the Roman Catholic Church, who, although political or ideological rivals, shared the regime's goals of clearing Poland's Baltic coast of Germans and replacing them with Polish settlers. They were frequently divided whether indigenous communities should be categorised as 'Polish' for pragmatic reasons or expelled as 'Germans' for ideological reasons. Ironically, just a few years earlier under German rule, these same communities had witnessed Nazi officials also attempting to balance ideological and pragmatic considerations when deciding who to count as 'German' or persecute as 'Polish'.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, the communities indigenous to Poland's Baltic provinces have long been the subject of ethnographic studies, many of which bore a political subtext aimed at 'proving' a particular national ethnic origin over regional identity.<sup>20</sup> There were three main indigenous or autochthonous groups living along the Baltic coast following the Second World War, comprising several hundred thousand people.<sup>21</sup> Firstly, the Kashubians were based west of Gdansk, mainly in the inter-war 'Polish corridor' and to a lesser extent in West Pomerania. They spoke a dialect of Polish with many German borrowings and were mostly Catholic.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, the Masurians, based in Olsztyn province, spoke a dialect of German and were almost all Protestant.<sup>23</sup> The southern part of Olsztyn province was home to the Warmians who, although speakers of a

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<sup>18</sup> Padraic Kenney, "Working-Class Community and Resistance in Pre-Stalinist Poland: The Poznański Textile Strike, Łódź, September 1947" *Social History* 18, no. 1, 31-51; ———, "Remaking the Polish Working Class: Early Stalinist Models of Labor and Leisure," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 1, 1-25; ———, "The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2, 399-425; ———, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997); Michael Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland 1944-1950* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Gerhard Wolf, *Ideologie und Herrschaftsrationalität. Nationalsozialistische Germanisierungspolitik in Polen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Friedrich Lorentz, Adam Fischer, Tadeusz Lehr-Spławiński. *The Cassubian Civilization*. London: Faber and Faber, 1935.

<sup>21</sup> Henryk Galus, *Spółeczeństwo Pomorza*, Vol. 1, Gdańsk: Wyd. Henryk Galus, 2004, 17-18.

<sup>22</sup> Friedrich Lorentz, *The Cassubian Civilization*, xii.

<sup>23</sup> For an English-language account of the Masurians see Richard Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans? Language and National Identity among the Masurians since 1871*, Köln Weimar, Böhlau Verlag: 2001.

German dialect, were mostly Catholic.<sup>24</sup> This confusing picture was made more complicated by the fact that most indigenous had been categorised as *Volksliste* Germans, before and during the war.<sup>25</sup> This made it difficult for the Polish government to convince both Polish settlers and officials of their Polishness and loyalty, especially since the presence of indigenous Poles was essential in order to prove Poland's historic claim to the Recovered Territories.

As communist ideology was international and took no note of local considerations, tension between the centre and the periphery over local political and ideological accommodations was a feature of Sovietisation all over Eastern Europe with Party officials initially reluctant to apply the international 'Soviet' model without adaptation.<sup>26</sup> Poland, which was the largest and most important country behind the Iron Curtain, had had previous experience of this through the Russian participation in the partition of Poland during the late eighteenth century and the past co-operation of many elite Poles with imperial Russia. Moreover, later Polish antipathy to Russia was evidenced by the relatively cool response of Poles to 'Pan-slavism' and the unpopularity of communism, seen as a dangerous Russian import in interwar Poland. If this was not enough, the Soviet invasion and annexation of eastern Poland in during the Second World War confirmed the view in many Polish minds that Stalin was determined to dominate what remained of their country. While it is true that other countries such as Czechoslovakia and Hungary underwent similar experiences, such as expulsions followed by Sovietisation, local patterns shaped the relationship significantly. In Poland tensions between the centre and periphery became clear in 1948, with the sidelining of the 'National Communist' wing of the Polish communist party and its return to favour in 1956. In power terms, therefore, Poland became 'the key to the domination of the region and ... the key to the bloc's disintegration.'<sup>27</sup>

There were two simultaneous processes at work in which Sovietisation was a key feature, albeit one which was not evenly imposed across the immediate post-war period or the coastal provinces. The first of these was a settlement process which

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<sup>24</sup> Łukasz Rogowski, "Przemiany tożsamości wsi na Warmii w latach 1920-2005." in Andrzej Sakson, ed. *Ślązacy, Kaszubi, Mazurzy i Warmiacy - między polskością a niemieckością*. Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2008, 305-320.

<sup>25</sup> Andrzej Sakson, Introduction in Andrzej Sakson, ed. *Ślązacy, Kaszubi, Mazurzy i Warmiacy - między polskością a niemieckością*. Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2008, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Professor Andreas Wirsching (Institute for Contemporary History, Munich), Keynote Speech entitled 'Comparing Local Communisms' at Conference on 'Local Communisms', University of Glamorgan, 30 June 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 4.

sought to create a new borderland society ideally to be comprised of patriotic Polish 'pioneer' settlers, or better still *Homo Sovieticus* – the New Soviet Man. The second process was one in which the Polish communist movement sought to gain and maintain political power in these regions by sharing out the ex-German spoils while, as Marcin Zaremba describes, employing nationalist rhetoric and promoting fear of German revanchism, policies which undermined communists' claim to be internationalist.<sup>28</sup> Of course, the Red Army was a key factor, not only in installing Polish communists in power and keeping them there, but in convincing settlers in the Recovered Territories that the German threat to their property was so great, that the only effective deterrent was the visible presence of Soviet forces on Polish soil.

However, it was Soviet annexation of eastern Polish territory gained during the combined Nazi-Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939 which had directly led to Poland being 'compensated' at the Potsdam Conference in August 1945 with German territory in the west.<sup>29</sup> From the outset, authors have attempted to discern Stalin's true motives for expanding into central and eastern Europe, as well as the rationale behind shunting Poland further west.<sup>30</sup> For example, Isaac Deutscher viewed the incorporation of the Recovered Territories in Poland not only as aimed at compensating the Poles for their lost eastern marches, but 'to expose them to such danger of German revenge in the future as to make them absolutely dependent on Russia's protection.'<sup>31</sup> However, Debra J. Allen maintains that US officials, and even senior Polish communists, feared that the Soviet Union would use the possibility of returning these lands to the Germans as a bargaining chip to achieve a united Germany which would be friendly toward Moscow.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in order to gain the maximum amount of booty before possibly having to hand it back to the Germans, the Soviets

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<sup>28</sup> Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed account of the Potsdam Agreement see Debra J. Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> For interesting recent discussion on this issue see Vladimir O. Pechatov, "The Soviet Union and the world, 1944-1953," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 1, Origins*, ed. Odd Arne Westad Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92-103; Hans-Peter Schwarz, "The division of Germany, 1945-1949," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 1, Origins*, ed. Odd Arne Westad Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 145-146.

<sup>31</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin – A Political Biography* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 502.

<sup>32</sup> Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War*, 68-77.

proceeded to asset-strip the Baltic region in a frenzied manner, treating it as occupied German territory, even after officially transferring it into 'Polish administration'.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, in order to justify the forced migration of millions of people due to radical border changes they imposed in central and eastern Europe, the Allies found a legal and historical precedent in the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 which had given *de-facto* legitimacy to the forced population exchange of 1.5 million people between Greece and Turkey following the First World War.<sup>34</sup> In fact, considering the fact that mass expulsions sanctioned by international treaties are a very rare phenomenon, Poland's Recovered Territories are unique in that they were part of two such simultaneous operations at the same time in which Soviet forces played an important role. Thus, in 1945-1946 as the Germans were fleeing the Red Army or being forcibly transferred west under the Potsdam Agreement, a significant number of the Polish settlers taking over their homes in the Recovered Territories were themselves expellees who had being 'repatriated' to Poland under international treaties with the Soviet republics which had absorbed Polish territory in the east. Moreover, in 1947 the Baltic provinces became the destination for many of the 140,000 Ukrainians forcibly expelled from Poland's borderlands with the Ukraine, thus further increasing the numbers of those who had had already experienced Sovietisation directly and who would resist doing so again.<sup>35</sup> Thus, although underpopulated and geographically peripheral, these lands were central to the *raison d'être* of the post-war Polish state while forced migration and ordinary push-pull settlement placed groups of Poles with strong regional and cultural differences into a transnational social and demographic mosaic.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Baziur, *Armia Czerwona na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1945–1947*, 20-55.

<sup>34</sup> Philipp Ther, "A Century of Forced Migrations: The Origins and Consequences of 'Ethnic Cleansing'," in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, ed. Ana Siljak Philipp Ther (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2001), 50.

<sup>35</sup> Arkadiusz Słabig, "Inwigilacja ludności ukraińskiej na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1947-1989 na podstawie dokumentów organów bezpieczeństwa," in *Aparat bezpieczeństwa Polski Ludowej wobec mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych oraz cudzoziemców*, ed. Jarosław Syrnok (Warszaw: IPN, 2009), 184-185.

<sup>36</sup> Maciej Hejger, "Przekształcenia narodowościowe na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych," in *Ziemie Odzyskane 1945-2005: Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne, 60 lat w granicach państwa polskiego*, ed. Andrzej Sakson (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2006), 343-359; Hubert Orłowski and Andrzej Sakson, ed. *Utracona Ojczyzna: Przymusowe wysiedlenie, deportacje i przesiedlenie jako wspólne doświadczenia* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1996); Roman Drodz, "Społeczność ukraińska na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych Polski," in *Ziemie Odzyskane 1945-2005: Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne, 60 lat w granicach państwa polskiego*, ed. Andrzej Sakson (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2006), 383-404.

The uprooting of entire populations has featured strongly in the enormous amount of research conducted in recent decades on the Second World War and its aftermath in eastern Europe.<sup>37</sup> One of the most controversial issues concerning post-war Poland, and the Recovered Territories in particular, is the flight, expulsion or transfer of several million German civilians. From the 1950s onwards German and Polish writers were mainly engaged in writing parallel histories of German and Polish forced migration and settlement concerning the Recovered Territories, aimed at defending and justifying their respective national positions. Thus, they described events in the same region and at the same time but which often had no overlap whatsoever. Although much of the information gathered and presented during the Cold War by both sides is still valuable, it became part of a propaganda war which some would argue is still ongoing.<sup>38</sup> During the 1980s these topics were revisited in Poland although certain German writers continued to produce polemical works focusing heavily on Polish motivations of revenge.<sup>39</sup>

Many Polish works on the post-war period were initially compromised by the fact that the regime was initially far more concerned with presenting the West with the *fait accompli* of Recovered Territories completely settled by Poles, rather than producing historical or social analyses of the processes which led to their creation. After the 1956 'thaw' the first serious Polish works on the post-war settlement these

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<sup>37</sup> Jan T. Gross, "War as Revolution," in *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*, ed. Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 17-40; Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler And Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> Important works promoting the German position during this period include: Wilhelm Turnwald Theodor Schieder, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans* (Munich: C. Wolf and Sohn, 1953); Zoltan Michael Szaz, *Germany's eastern frontiers : the problem of the Oder-Neisse line* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1960); Wenzel Jaksch, *Europe's Road to Potsdam* (New York: Praeger, 1963); Alfred Bohmann, *Menschen und Grenzen* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1969). Similar Polish works include: Józef Kokot, *Logika Poczdamu* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo "Śląsk", 1957). This was later published in English as ———, *The Logic of the Oder-Neisse Frontier* (Poznań-Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Zachodnie, 1959); B. Wiewióra, *Granica polsko-niemiecka w świetle prawa międzynarodowego* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1957); Gerard Labuda, *Polska granica zachodnia: Tysiąc lat dziejów politycznych* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1971); K. Skubiszewski, *Zachodnia granica Polski* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1969); Tadeusz Białecki, *Przesiedlenie ludności niemieckiej z Pomorza Zachodniego po II wojnie światowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1969); Marian Orzechowski, *Odra-Nysa Łużycka-Bałtyk w polskiej myśli politycznej okresu drugiej wojny światowej* (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich-Wydawnictwo, 1969).

<sup>39</sup> Tadeusz Walichnowski Piotr Lippoczy, *Przesiedlenie ludności niemieckiej z Polski po II wojnie światowej w świetle dokumentów* (Warsaw: PWN, 1982); Alfred de Zayas, *Nemesis at Potsdam: The Expulsion of the Germans from the East* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

regions were produced by a team of sociologists working mainly in the Western Institute (Instytut Zachodni) in Poznan, an institute specifically set up to justify Polish claims to 'the northern and western lands.' Throughout the 1960s this team produced many groundbreaking works, most of which were based on material collected from interviews and essay competitions.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in 1967 Krystyna Kersten and Tomasz Szarota also brought out an important work based on first-hand accounts of Polish rural dwellers, including those living in the Recovered Territories.<sup>41</sup> Despite the fact that such works had to promote, or at least not contradict, the official line, there is much of value in them, particularly those which analyze the initial settlement period. The 1980s saw regional analyses of the Olsztyn and Masurian districts being produced by Tadeusz Baryła and Andrzej Sakson while Jan Czerniakiewicz was allowed to publish an important work on the 'repatriation' of Poles from the USSR, a previously taboo topic.<sup>42</sup>

Due to the fact that in 1990 a reunited Germany had formally relinquished all claim to the Recovered Territories, the passing of time and the gradual assimilation of displaced Germans into both East and West German societies, more meaningful and measured discussion regarding the post-war territorial and population exchanges could take place. In the last two decades the number of Polish works dealing with generally contentious issues, such as Polish-German relations, has increased greatly. In 1996 Hubert Orłowski and Andrzej Sakson at the Western Institute in Poznan produced one of the first works attempting to examine forced migration as a common Polish-German experience, while the following year, Klaus Bachmann and Jerzy Kranz brought out a book analyzing official Polish statements and press articles concerning the post-war expulsion of Germans from Poland and asking whether Poland had anything for

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<sup>40</sup> Wojciech Wrzesiński, "Proces zasiedlenia województwa olsztyńskiego w latach 1945-1949," in *Problemy rozwoju gospodarczego i demograficznego Ziemi Zachodnich w latach 1945-1949*, ed. Janusz Ziołkowski Bohdan Gruchman (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1960); Kazimierz Żygulski, *Repatrianci na Ziemiach Zachodnich: Studium socjologiczne* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1962); Andrzej Kwilecki Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1963); Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Społeczny aspekt migracji na Ziemiach Zachodnich* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1964); Krystyna Kersten, "Początki stabilizacji życia społecznego w środowisku wiejskim na Pomorzu zachodnim," *Polska Ludowa* 4 (1965), 3-42.

<sup>41</sup> Tomasz Szarota Krystyna Kersten, ed. *Wieś Polska, 1938-1948: Materiały konkursowe*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: PWN, 1967).

<sup>42</sup> Tadeusz Baryła, "Działalność Polskiego Związku Zachodniego w Okręgu Mazurskim," *Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie* 165(1984), 265-276; Jan Czerniakiewicz, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSSR, 1944-1948* (Warsaw: PWN, 1987); Andrzej Sakson, "Przemiany więzy społecznej na Warmii i Mazurach," *Przegląd Zachodni* 41, no. 3 (1985).

which to apologize.<sup>43</sup> The end of the decade saw Bernadetta Nitschke publish two important works on the forced migration of the Germans in quick succession, the second of which questioned whether these events should be called transfers or expulsions.<sup>44</sup> The publication of four volumes of documents on the Germans in Poland concerning the period 1945-1950, the last of which specifically concerns Pomerania was also a significant development.<sup>45</sup>

These difficult issues were also the focus of works published in English such as those by Philipp Ther and Norman Naimark.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, one of the most important and wide-ranging is *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, a collection of studies of forced migration and settlement in post-war Germany, Poland, Ukraine and Czechoslovakia.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the complexities resulting from the throwing of diverse and sometimes mutually-hostile ethnic and national groups together, as happened in the region concerned in this study, invariably results in 'entangled histories' and the introduction of 'hybridity' into historical identity.<sup>48</sup> Marcin Zaremba's recent work *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa Reakcja Na Kryzys*, shows how competing identities and an atmosphere of chaos and impermanence in the Recovered Territories contributed to a general sense of crisis in Poland during the immediate post-war period.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the complexities of settlement of these lands filtered into the mainstream Polish media and general public interest with the release of *Róża* in 2011. This award-winning feature film portrayed not only the violence, rape and looting which inhabitants of Olsztyn Province

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<sup>43</sup> Andrzej Sakson Hubert Orłowski, ed. *Utracona Ojczyzna: Przymusowe wysiedlenie, deportacje i przesiedlenie jako wspólne doświadczenia* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1996); Klaus Bachmann and Jerzy Kranz, *Przeprosić za wypędzenie? Wypowiedzi oficjalne oraz debata prasowa o wysiedleniu Niemców po II wojnie światowej* (Kraków: Znak, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> Bernadetta Nitschke, *Wysiedlenie ludności niemieckiej z Polski w latach 1945-49* (Zielona Góra: Wydawn. Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej im. Tadeusza Kotarbińskiego, 1999); ———, *Wysiedlenie czy wypędzenie? Ludność niemiecka w Polsce w latach 1945-1949* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> Hans Lemberg Włodzimierz Borodziej, Daniel Boćkowski, ed. *Niemcy w Polsce 1945-1950. Wybór dokumentów*, 4 vols. (Warsaw: Neriton, 2000-2001).

<sup>46</sup> Philipp Ther, "The Integration of Expellees in Germany and Poland after World War II: A Historical Reassessment," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 4, 779-805; Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, ed. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2001).

<sup>48</sup> Robert C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Warszawa: Znak, 2012).

experienced at the at the war's end, but the complex interaction between Polish settlers and Masurian locals and the confusion over national, regional and hybrid identities in a context of increasing communist control and Sovietisation.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, the traditional end dates of the Second World War did not bring automatic relief or stability for many facing yet further upheaval in their lives. Moreover, the resulting mess which the Yalta and Potsdam Accords of 1945 left on the ground in Poland has been largely subsumed into general political histories of the Cold War period, rarely giving a voice to the experience of those who witnessed the extraordinary demographic, political, economic and social changes which resulted.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the employment of 'bottom-up' history in this study, through the examination of local Party files, newspapers and settler memoirs, gives one an insight into central historiographical debates of the period, such as the extent to which so-called 'ordinary people' in post-war Poland experienced, on the one hand, Sovietisation and communist control and, on the other, social advancement and material benefits.

Moreover, sources such as memoirs display the fears of those who settled the Baltic Recovered Territories. However, despite Jan Gross's depiction of a fear of Jews as omnipresent in post-war Poland, the sources of settler fear in the Baltic region were numerous, varied and rarely concerned Jews.<sup>52</sup> Although the consolidation of communist rule later saw, what Marcin Zaremba terms, 'centralized' fear take hold through political persecution and arrests, during the initial post-war period Poles all over the country were gripped by 'de-centralized' fear such as hunger, disease, violence, homelessness, unemployment, banditry and uncertainty.<sup>53</sup> Apart from the widespread fear of Sovietisation through nationalising private businesses and collectivising farms, the settlers displayed fears peculiar to the Recovered Territories. These mainly comprised fear of the Germans and their possible retaking of their new homes and properties due to international border changes and fear of the murder, rape and looting accompanying the presence of Soviet forces. Indeed, in line with Gross's description of the hostile reaction returning Jews often experienced from Poles who had taken over their homes, Polish settlers displayed similar levels of hostility

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<sup>50</sup> Wojciech Smarzowski, "Róża," (Poland: Monolith Films, 2011).

<sup>51</sup> Odd Arne Westad Melvyn P. Leffler, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 1, Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006), 159.

<sup>53</sup> Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, 16-26.

towards the previous German or indigenous owners of their new homes in the Recovered Territories.<sup>54</sup>

More curious is the fear and distrust the Polish settlers had of each other. Far from being united, there was a high level of tension due to the ethnic and regional background of the settlers – those from central Poland considered Poles who had been repatriated from the east as backward Russians or Ukrainians. The easterners considered themselves more entitled to the bounty of the Recovered Territories for having suffered both under Nazi and Soviet rule. Thus, rather than being united by victimhood there were sometimes unseemly competing victimhoods within this new Polish society, as well as strong suspicion of the region's indigenous communities of mixed Polish-German background, such as Kashubians and Masurians, who were subjected to 'repolonisation' by the newcomers.<sup>55</sup> As in the Soviet Union, such strong existing distrust in the Recovered Territories was greatly worsened by Sovietisation which not only prevented the new bonds being established within this new society, but was fostered and exploited by the communist secret police to divide and conquer perceived centres of resistance.<sup>56</sup>

Although the general historiography of Poland depicts the 1944-46 period as a more liberal time before the abrupt imposition of Stalinism through terror and sham elections in 1947-1948, many writers still tend towards a view of post-war Poland as a communist dictatorship. Ann Applebaum, for one, has recently claimed that the early phases were not as liberal as traditionally portrayed and that the Soviets had clearly intended to achieve domination of the region, albeit over a longer timescale.<sup>57</sup> Although Polish historians such as Krystyna Kersten and Andrzej Paczkowski have promoted this viewpoint in the past, sometimes publishing their work as émigrés and under pseudonyms, writers more closely associated with the Party such as Antoni Czubiński and Andrzej Walicki have sought to minimise charges of totalitarianism against communist Poland.<sup>58</sup> However, Dariusz Jarosz, one of a younger generation of

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<sup>54</sup> Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* 46-52.

<sup>55</sup> Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland 1944-1950*, 16.

<sup>56</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, "Trust and Distrust in the USSR: An Overview," *Slavonic & East European Review* 91, no. 1 (2013), 1-25.

<sup>57</sup> Ann Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944-1956* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), xxix-xxxvi.

<sup>58</sup> Andrzej Friszke, "Spór o PRL w III Rzeczypospolitej (1989–2001)," *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1, no. 1 (2002): 18-21; Andrzej Walicki, "Totalitarianism and Detotalitarization: The Case of Poland," *The Review of Politics* 58, no. 3 (1996): 541; Krystyna Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943-1948* (Paris: Libella, 1986); ———, *Historia polityczna Polski 1944-1956* (Gdańsk: PeTiT, 1989); ———, *Między wyzwoleniem a zniewoleniem: Polska 1944-1956* (Warsaw: Aneks, 1993); Jakub Andrzejewski (Andrzej

Polish historians, sees the 'totalitarian model' as appropriate for describing the aims of the Party leadership but not for how communist policies were implemented on the ground.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Pdraic Kenney's *Rebuilding Poland* employs social history to show that traditional concepts of totalitarianism are inadequate when describing the early post-war years in Poland as industrial workers had strong negotiating power with the communists. At the same time, he outlines it was the absence of long-established communities in the fragmented societies of the Recovered Territories which greatly reduced the settlers' bargaining power with the communists and made it easier for the regime to impose its policies without much more than individual acts of opposition or resistance.<sup>60</sup> In the same way, T. David Curp's study of the Wielkopolska region shows that as most Poles were rural dwellers and did not belong to established working class communities, they were quickly faced with conflict, not co-operation, from the communists officials who 'behaved as self-conscious social engineers representing a foreign Soviet sensibility'.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, this thesis will show that the little bargaining power which settlers in the Baltic Recovered Territories' urban centres possessed was even further reduced when dealing with those who settled the countryside. Indeed, it took several years, even decades, before competing martyrdoms of the various settler groups were set aside, allowing rural communities to display some level of communal resistance. The exception to this were areas where close-knit indigenous communities significantly outnumbered Polish settlers, allowing to them to put up a wall of resistance or indifference to all outsiders. Thus, it is not surprising that West Pomerania, the Baltic province with the lowest number of indigenous inhabitants, had the highest levels of collectivisation in the region, if not the entire country.

Writers have also attempted to identify the various forms of resistance or opposition to Sovietisation in Stalinist Poland, for example, the repression of farmers and 'speculators' in works by Antoni Kura and Ludwik Stanisław Szuba.<sup>62</sup> Dariusz Jarosz

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Paczkowski), *Gomułka i inni: dokumenty z archiwum KC 1948-1982* (Warsaw: Krąg, 1986); Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2003); ———, *Trzy Twarze Józefa Światły* (Warszawa: Prószyńska i S-ka, 2009); Antoni Czubiński, *Dzieje najnowsze Polski. Polska Ludowa (1944-1989)* (Poznań: Wielkopolska Agencja Wydawnicza, 1992).

<sup>59</sup> Friszke, "Spór o PRL w III Rzeczypospolitej (1989–2001)", 22.

<sup>60</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 2-4, 149-161.

<sup>61</sup> T. David Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945–1960* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 9.

<sup>62</sup> Antoni Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948–1956* (Warsaw: IPN, 2006); Ludwik Stanisław Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)* (Torun: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2009).

has outlined how, even in the period of High Stalinism, it was open to local apparatchiks faced with community resistance to find ways not only to water down but, even sabotage unpopular orders and instructions from county, provincial or central Party offices.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, another Polish historian influenced by James C. Scott's concepts of 'everyday forms of resistance', Łukasz Kamiński, has produced perhaps the standard work on popular resistance in communist Poland which aims to show that resistance to the imposition of communism was widespread if low-level and unorganised.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, the opportunities for social and professional advancement were enough for a significant proportion of Poles to set aside any qualms regarding the communists' monopolization of political power. Indeed, Kenney describes a process of two revolutions in post-war Poland, the first of which was an economic and social transformation through nationalisation policies and the promotion of workers as the most important social class during the period 1945-1947. Secondly, in 1948-1950 the communist party's taking total control of the state and society provided a social escalator for members of Poland's lowest social classes to gain positions of power and influence in the Party and government administration.<sup>65</sup>

A number of local studies concerning the Baltic provinces have also appeared since 1990, often produced by historians and sociologists based at regional institutes or colleges of higher education. Although Stanisław Łach and Czesław Osękowski have produced works on the Recovered Territories in general, concerning on the Red Army's military control and post-war society respectively, many other studies have concerned quite specific themes and are limited to certain provinces or parts of them.<sup>66</sup> Examples include several works on post-war West Pomerania, Grzegorz Strauchold's analysis of indigenous groups in Olsztyn Province, as well as Maciej Hejger's work on nationality policy in Gdansk Province in the period 1945-1947.<sup>67</sup> Mirosław Golon has written a

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<sup>63</sup> Dariusz Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci* (Warsaw: DiG, 1998).

<sup>64</sup> Łukasz Kamiński, *Polacy wobec nowej rzeczywistości 1944-1948. Formy pozainstytucjonalnego, żywiołowego oporu społecznego* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2000); James C. Scott, "Everyday forms of resistance," in *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, ed. Forest D. Colburn (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1989), 3-33.

<sup>65</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> Czesław Osękowski, *Spółczesność Polski zachodniej i północnej w latach 1945 - 1956* (Zielona Góra WSP, 1994); Stanisław Łach, *Ziemia Odzyskana pod wojskową administracją radziecką po II Wojnie Światowej*, (Słupsk WSP, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> Zenon Romanow, *Ludność niemiecka na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych w latach 1945-1947* (Słupsk: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, 1992); Stanisław Łach, *Przekształcenia ustrojowo-gospodarcze w rolnictwie ziem zachodnich i północnych w 1945-1949* (Słupsk: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, 1993); Grzegorz Strauchold, *Polska ludność rodzima ziem zachodnich i północnych. Opinie nie tylko publiczne z*

number of books on the Kujawy district of Gdansk Pomerania, dealing with the initial post-war period and the communist police, youth groups and Ukrainian settlers respectively.<sup>68</sup> Grzegorz Baziur's work on the presence of the Red Army in the Gdansk Province is a detailed and thorough analysis of the impact of Soviet asset-stripping and instability on the already shattered economy and society of the region and complements Naimark's work on the Soviet presence in East Germany.<sup>69</sup> Another recent book by Marcin Płotek, comprehensively examines the first year of Polish settlement in Olsztyn Province, and its 'difficult beginnings', mainly due to Soviet looting and violence.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, a particularly useful local study on relations between the communist regime and the Roman Catholic Church in West Pomerania is that by Krzysztof Kowalczyk, which outlines how necessity and expedience made these rivals temporary allies in the 'repolonisation' of the Recovered Territories while maintaining their own agendas.<sup>71</sup> In addition, in his own regional study Curp shows how although the Roman Catholic Church provided focus of resistance against the regime, its position had also been strengthened by the national solidarity resulting from the 'ethnic cleansing' of the Germans.<sup>72</sup>

Other local studies have rightly sought to challenge the conventional wisdom on in-between regional identities.<sup>73</sup> In addition, under the direction of sociologist

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*lat 1944-1948* (Olsztyn: Ośrodek Badań naukowych im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego, 1995); Maciej Hejger, *Polityka narodowościowa władz polskich w województwie gdańskim w latach 1945 – 1947* (Słupsk 1998).

<sup>68</sup> M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych na Pomorzu Nadwiślańskim w latach 1945-1947* (Toruń: Wyd. Uniwersytetu im. M. Kopernika, 2001); ———, *Młodzieżowe organizacje konspiracyjne w wybranych ośrodkach Pomorza Nadwiślańskiego w okresie stalinowskim* (Toruń: Wyd. Uniwersytetu im. M. Kopernika, 2005); ———, *Deportacje ludności ukraińskiej z terenów Pomorza Nadwiślańskiego do obozów pracy ZSSR w 1945 r. na tle operacji NKVD na zaplecza 2 frontu białoruskiego* (Rzeszów: WSP, 1998).

<sup>69</sup> Baziur, *Armia Czerwona na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1945–1947*.

<sup>70</sup> Marcin Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946* (Dąbrówno: Oficyna Retman, 2011).

<sup>71</sup> Krzysztof Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945–1960*, 4-7.

<sup>73</sup> Bernard Linek, "'De-Germanization" and "Re-Polonization" in Upper Silesia, 1945-1950," in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, ed. Ana Siljak Philipp Ther (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2001), 121-130.

Andrzej Sakson, an expert on the ethnic complexity of Olsztyn Province,<sup>74</sup> historians and sociologists at the Western Institute have examined in detail the stories of groups, such as the Kashubians, Silesians and Masurians, which were deliberately suppressed by the communist regime as undermining the myth of ethnic homogeneity in the Recovered Territories.<sup>75</sup> Ukrainians who were expelled to these lands from south-eastern Poland in 1947 have also been the subject of a number of academic studies.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, studies on the anti-communist underground after the war show that it was generally much weaker and transient in the Baltic provinces than in the regions which had long-established populations and local support networks.<sup>77</sup>

This study is based on official, semi-official and 'unofficial' primary source materials, much of which are being cited in a work of scholarship for the first time. Official sources from the communist period are generally problematic. Many reports from the central authorities are not only poorly written, but obfuscate what actually occurred through ever more formulaic language intended to prove a pre-ordained Party line. Moreover, as historians seeking to gain a general overview of Stalinist Poland have mainly concentrated on using the files of the central government and the Party, lower-level Party and administrative files contained in regional state archives such as Gdansk, Szczecin and Olsztyn have been comparatively neglected. In addition, in minutes of provincial and county committee meetings, the level of distortion is much less and, consequently, their use to the historian is much greater.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, both the language and information contained in the reports of county secretaries to each other not only ring true, but give a fascinating bottom-up view of local compromise and resistance to the Sovietisation of the Baltic Recovered Territories. Additionally, in order to gain a view into a single county Party organisation during the initial post-war years, I examined the files for Lębork County in Gdansk Pomerania. I chose this county as it had several interesting features which provided an insight into the general complexities of the Baltic Recovered Territories. These include its location adjoining

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<sup>74</sup> Andrzej Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1998).

<sup>75</sup> — — —, ed. *Ślązacy, Kaszubi, Mazurzy i Warmiacy - między polskością a niemieckością* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2008).

<sup>76</sup> Drodz, "Społeczność ukraińska na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych Polski."; Słabig, "Inwigilacja ludności ukraińskiej na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1947-1989 na podstawie dokumentów organów bezpieczeństwa."

<sup>77</sup> Rafał Wnuk, ed. *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego 1944-1956* (Warszawa, Lublin: IPN, 2007). Piotr Niwiński, *Działania komunistycznego aparatu represji wobec środowisk kombatantów wileńskiej AK 1945-1980* (Warsaw: Rytm, 2009).

<sup>78</sup> Osękowski, *Społeczeństwo Polski zachodniej i północnej w latach 1945 - 1956*, 19.

the inter-war 'Polish corridor', the possession of a section of Baltic coastline and important fishing ports occupied by Soviet troops and the presence of a large Cashubian community, as well as Polish 'repatriates' and Ukrainians.

Furthermore, I found the provincial files of the Ministry of Information and Propaganda provided surprisingly frank and unvarnished accounts of both events and the public mood in each province during the early settlement period up to 1947. I also examined files from the Ministry of the Recovered Territories (MZO) held at the Polish state archives in Warsaw and was given full access to communist secret police (MBP/UB) documents held in various archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) concerning both armed and unarmed anti-communist underground groups which operated along the Baltic coast between 1945 and 1956. Although there were methodological challenges in dealing with these files in particular, such documents provide a direct insight into mentality of the Party officials, as well as the into the methods used find, observe and deal with perceived or real enemies. Moreover, the IPN has published collections of relevant Polish documents which I also consulted.<sup>79</sup> As well as government documents, I consulted several regional newspapers from the 1945-1956 period which I treated as semi-official sources which present the various types of propaganda regarding international and domestic events to which settlers were exposed. In addition, the post-war press has recently been reassessed as a useful source which contains valuable information on everyday life in Stalinist Poland.<sup>80</sup>

The fascinating subject of private life within the Soviet bloc is attracting growing interest.<sup>81</sup> One of the most important sources used in this study, therefore, is a collection of essays known as the Settlers' Memoirs held at the Western Institute in Poznan. Comprising 205 essays written by Poles who had settled the Recovered Territories, they were collected by Polish sociologists through the holding of an essay competition in 1957. Although, Curp used a small number of them in his regional study on the Wielkopolska, I identified 60 of these essays concerning the provinces examined in this dissertation for detailed examination. Despite concerns regarding the subjectivity, self-justification and exaggeration present in all memoirs, they are fascinating first-hand accounts of those who were at the coal-face of 'repolonisation' and Sovietisation. Written at a time when it was believed that controversial issues could be discussed frankly and openly, they contained less self-censorship and

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<sup>79</sup> Łukasz Kamiński, ed. *Biuletyny dzienne Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego 1949-1950* (Warsaw: IPN, 2004).

<sup>80</sup> Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, 23.

<sup>81</sup> Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (London: Penguin, 2008).

guardedness than other collections of memoirs and essays collected before or since.<sup>82</sup> Although Czesław Miłosz's *The Captive Mind* and the work the late Polish sociologist Hanna Świda-Ziemia mainly describe internal conflicts and fears regarding communism among Poland's intellectual elites and educated youth, the settler memoirs often include accounts of Sovietisation and self-Sovietisation from the poor and less-educated namely, 'the great absentees' of history.<sup>83</sup> As several of the most interesting memoirs are written by women, they also go some way in giving some gender balance to the male voices which dominate other primary sources.

As the post-war administrative changes of each of the provinces being studied have mainly concerned the exchange of counties between them, for the sake of clarity and simplicity, I will treat them as they lie in their current administrative borders and use current place-names, unless otherwise stated. Understandable confusion has often resulted regarding Poland's Baltic provinces which have changed several times in name and area since the Second World War.<sup>84</sup> Regarding administrative terminology, each province was subdivided into 'powiaty' (counties) run by a 'starosta' (county manager). Each county was then subdivided into 'gminy' (rural boroughs or urban district councils) and run by a 'wójt' (borough or district council leader). These boroughs were, in turn, made up of several villages, each one with a 'sołtys' (village leader).

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<sup>82</sup>Dr. Beata Halicka, (European University Viadrina, Frankfurt Oder) *Druga wojna światowa i przymusowe migracje na terenie Nadodrza – doświadczenie i pamięć Polaków i Niemców*, Paper delivered at international conference on Forced Migration at the University of Zielona Góra, 16-17 November, 2010. By kind permission of the author.

<sup>83</sup> Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage, 1990); Hanna Świda-Ziemia, *Stalinizm i społeczeństwo polskie* (Warsaw: Instytut Stosowanych Nauk Społecznych UW, 1991); ———, *Człowiek wewnątrznie zniewolony : mechanizmy i konsekwencje minionej formacji - analiza psychologiczna* (Warsaw: Instytut Stosowanych Nauk Społecznych UW, 1998); ———, *Urwany lot. Pokolenie inteligentnej młodzieży powojennej w świetle listów i pamiątek z lat 1945–1948* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003); ———, *Młodzież PRL. Portrety pokoleń w kontekście historii*. (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010).

<sup>84</sup> Under German rule the region between Szczecin (then Stettin) and the county of Lauenburg (now Lębork) comprised the eastern half of the German province of Pommern. In 1945, under Polish rule, this region became first, West Pomerania District and, from 1946, Szczecin province. In 1950 it was subdivided into two provinces; the western half remained Szczecin province while the eastern half became Koszalin province, although together they often continued to be referred to as 'West Pomerania'. However, up to 1945 Danzig/Gdansk was in the German province of Danzig-Westpreussen (German West Pomerania). From 1945, under Polish rule, this was divided into two provinces; the northern half became Gdansk Province and the southern half Pomerania Province (centred on Bydgoszcz). In addition, in 1945 the southern part of the German province of East Prussia was placed under Polish rule and became Warmia-Masuria District, later Olsztyn province, while the northern half, centred on Königsberg, was annexed by the Soviet Union and became the Kaliningrad Oblast.

This dissertation is ordered chronologically in order to examine the effect on the ground of events in sequence and to give a clear structure to what is often a complex and multifaceted period. It is divided into five chapters, the first of which will seek to argue that the chaotic and unstable conditions in 1944 and 1945 severely hindered the Polish administration's goal of creating a completely sovietised society from scratch and forced it to make compromises and accommodations with groups and individuals who were its rivals, even enemies. Chapter Two will look at how in 1946, despite political rivalries, the cooperation of all sections of the region's fledgling Polish society along the Baltic coast was essential to ensure that the vast majority of Germans were expelled from the region in order to make room for the enormous numbers of Polish expellees arriving from east of the Curzon Line. Chapter Three will show how although the regime was incrementally gaining power during the 1946-1948 period by identifying and liquidating its enemies, either through stealth or more forceful means, the Polish inhabitants of the Baltic region were still willing to lend it a certain degree of support due to their fears of German revanchism. Chapter Four examines the period of 1949-1953 in which the regime, driven by 'class struggle' and policy changes in Moscow, sought open conflict with all sections of Polish society but often received effective passive resistance in return. The fifth and final chapter shows how the political earthquakes which hit Poland during the 1954-1956 period had had an immediately visible effect on the ground where Poles living along the Baltic coast resisted the temptation to engage in a popular rebellion but instead supported Poland's self-limiting revolution of 1956.

## Chapter One – 1945

### 1.1 Allied Discussions regarding Poland's Post-war Borders

As the Second World War was coming to an end, Polish administration and settlement of what was to become Poland's 'Recovered Territories' became one of the main topics of Allied discussion as it directly affected the political and strategic nature of post-war Europe. Although 'compensating' Poland with German land for its losses in the east through Soviet annexation was something on which all the 'Big Three' agreed, the extent to which Stalin pushed Poland's border west, shocked and disturbed both US President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. More significantly, it was immediately apparent that despite whatever Stalin said about free elections, Poland's new western frontier, and not the Curzon Line as Churchill had hoped, would become the border between European communist states and the 'free world.' As the Western Allies had no intention of going to war over the issue, their only weapons became persuasion and protests as Poland's new communist-led government, along with its Soviet backers and Polish 'pioneer' settlers, attempted to present them with the *fait accompli* of a large swathe of 'degermanised' and 'repolonised' territory east of the Oder.

However both Britain and the USA accepted that even their own more limited proposed border changes would cause enormous population transfers, today termed 'ethnic cleansing'. They believed that the resulting homogenous nation-states would solve a perceived 'problem' of national minorities, which they considered a potential source of conflict and instability. Moreover, their ally, the Soviet Union, had implemented ethnic cleansing policies in central and eastern Europe just a few short years earlier as an ally of the Germans. Between 1939 and 1941 alone, 330,000 Poles and Jews were deported from eastern Poland by the Soviets in an effort to prepare region for Sovietisation through 'social cleansing'. As the war came to an end, however, five million Germans fled in fear beyond the Oder as Soviet forces took revenge on civilians in East Prussia through rape, robbery and violence. By spring 1945 even eastern European communists had become strong supporters of homogenous nation-states and sought to harness the nationalism in their respective countries to serve their political ends.<sup>85</sup>

The issue of Poland's post-war borders had already become an important issue for the Allies as the tide began to turn against Germany during 1943 and the Soviet Union let it be known that it would be holding on to Poland's eastern territories. At

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<sup>85</sup> Ther, "A Century of Forced Migrations: The Origins and Consequences of 'Ethnic Cleansing'," 50-53.

the Tehran Conference of December 1943, Roosevelt's hands-off approach to the issue was interpreted as tacit consent to the informal decision reached by Churchill and Soviet leader Josef Stalin to set Poland's eastern border on the Curzon Line and allow its western border to run up to the Rivers Oder and Neisse.<sup>86</sup> During most of 1944 the Western Allies led Polish representatives to believe that the Poles would have good chance of keeping their eastern territories if they established friendly relations with the Soviet Union. This was despite Stalin having already broken off diplomatic relations with the Polish government-in-exile in London over accusations related to the Katyń Massacre of 1940, as well as the fact that the issue had already been decided at Tehran. By October 1944, however, Churchill was urging the Poles to accept a plan based on a *quid pro quo* of receiving German territory as compensation for Polish land east of the Curzon Line, announcing in the House of Commons that the Poles 'are free, so far as Russia and Great Britain are concerned, to extend their territory, at the expense of Germany, to the West. Thus, they gain in the West and the North territories more important and more highly developed than they lose in the East.' Accompanying this would be 'the total expulsion of the Germans—from the area to be acquired by Poland in the West and the North' as the method which would be 'the most satisfactory and lasting'. No more, Churchill promised, would there be a 'mixture of populations to cause endless trouble .... A clean sweep will be made.'<sup>87</sup>

At the Yalta Conference in February 1945 US and British officials aimed for Poland's post-war gains to be limited to East Prussia, Upper Silesia and the eastern tip of Pomerania, which would result in a gradual transfer of 2.5 million Germans. Taking advantage of the fact that there were two River Neisses in the border region, Stalin proposed that which was further west would join the Oder as Poland's new frontier, a move which would place all of Silesia under Polish control and necessitate the transfer of several million more Germans than anticipated. Eventually, however, the Allies issued a final communiqué stating that Poland's eastern border would be along the Curzon Line, with a vague rider that 'Poland must receive substantial accessions of territory in the north and west.' They also agreed that the opinion of the new Soviet-sponsored Lublin regime, which claimed to be Poland's new government, would be sought before the western frontier would be decided at a future peace conference.

## **1.2 The First Wave of Polish Settlement and 'Degermanisation' – February-July 1945**

Despite the fact that intense fighting was still ongoing in West Pomerania, Gdansk and East Prussia, the ink was hardly dry on the Yalta Accords when the Lublin regime set about establishing administrative structures for the Polish governance of

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<sup>86</sup> Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War*, 12.

<sup>87</sup> Winston Churchill, Speech to House of Commons, 15 December 1944, Hansard, vol. 406, 1478-1483

what were now termed 'the Recovered Territories.' On 3 February 1945 the office of Government Plenipotentiary for the Masurian district, (later Olsztyn Province) was established but, due to the unclear nature of the region's borders, was initially run from Białystok until a Polish administration was established on the ground. The lack of clarity regarding Poland's new frontiers was also seen in West Pomerania whose skeleton Polish administration had to beat a hasty retreat from Szczecin in spring 1945 and relocate further east along the coast to Koszalin where it was based until February 1946, once the border question had become less vague.<sup>88</sup>

From March 1945 further attempts were made to set up a skeleton Polish administration in a Baltic region much destroyed and depopulated. Although the Central Committee of the Polish Worker's Party (PPR)<sup>89</sup> ordered the sending of 'operational groups' to the Recovered Territories, the Polish presence was so thin on the ground in Gdansk Pomerania that priority was placed on providing personnel in towns along the coast and the region west of Gdansk (Danzig).<sup>90</sup> Moreover, close behind these operational groups came Poland's Soviet-trained security service, the UB. In Olsztyn Province, however, the UB was initially under-manned and poorly-led while its superiors continually complained of the youth, inexperience and 'low moral character' of its officers. This situation was, however, marginally better than that of the police force, the MO, whose lack of discipline actually worsened crime in Olsztyn's northern counties in 1945.<sup>91</sup>

In contrast to those who had travelled from great distances either as officials, expellees or migrants, there were also Poles who became accidental settlers, mainly former forced labourers with either no way home or no-one or nothing to return to. Such people suddenly found themselves in control of entire villages and overseeing local Germans who had not already fled west.<sup>92</sup> Stanisław Bania, for instance, ensured he was armed 'day and night' as the village leader of 267 Germans in Będolino, West Pomerania, most of whom accepted his authority. When faced with those who did not, he wrote, 'I had some medicine for these people by neither rationing them flour for

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<sup>88</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 13-17.

<sup>89</sup> Although, both the PPR and its later incarnation, the PZPR, were communist parties based on the Soviet model, they consciously avoided using the term 'communist' in their names. Given the political monopoly the PPR/PZPR enjoyed during the 1945-1956 period, in this thesis it will also be referred to as 'the Party'.

<sup>90</sup> APG/1173/Catalogue Notes.

<sup>91</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 135-145.

<sup>92</sup> Henryk Zudro, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 563.

bread nor milk.<sup>93</sup> Other former forced labourers experienced a gentler transition from slave to master. Stanisław Dulewicz, for instance, had worked in the orchards and vegetable gardens of Frau Lignitz, 'a Herod-woman' who had provided him with poor living quarters and food in the coastal town of Darłowo. Within a several weeks, however, the tables had turned completely when a near-destitute Frau Lignitz, who had failed to escape west, became dependent on Dulewicz, now a Polish official, for food and work for herself and her family.<sup>94</sup>

By the end of March, that is almost six weeks before the war in Europe ended, when the fledgling Polish Ministry of Public Administration (MAP) drew up a very detailed plan for the 'reslavisation' of the Recovered Territories which, it demanded, should 'as soon as possible regain a completely Polish character. Germans may not live beside Poles.'<sup>95</sup> This plan also included employing the services of the UB to persecute perceived enemies, authorising it 'to use means of force and protection when necessary,' and to organise and run 'isolation camps.'<sup>96</sup> Indeed, Polish officials based in Olsztyn Province duly responded by setting up internment camps for over 100,000 German inhabitants of former East Prussia in nine counties while 60,000 to 80,000 female German labourers were deported to the USSR by Soviet units based in the province.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, In a chilling echo of the Nazi *Volksliste*, Polish officials proposed in late March that the remaining German inhabitants be divided into three categories namely, ethnic Poles with German citizenship, German-speakers with a Polish background willing to become fully Polish, and thirdly, ethnic Germans who spoke only German. Moreover, all German monuments, street names, place names and signs were to be changed before 1 July, 1945.<sup>98</sup>

From the outset the MAP also had ambitious Soviet-style plans for land reform, not only by parcelling out large Prussian Junkers estates into small-holdings but through the creation of collective farms. Moreover, factories were to be nationalised as it was judged that if industry was placed in private hands, conflicts for lucrative personal interests would 'obscure the real and most important goal of our presence in the Recovered Territories: the reslavisation of the whole region in the shortest possible

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<sup>93</sup> Stanisław Bania in *Ibid.*, 448.

<sup>94</sup> Stanisław Dulewicz, in *Ibid.*, 485.

<sup>95</sup> MAP Plan of Decree, 28 March 1945, APS/317/1/ 1.

<sup>96</sup> MAP Plan of Decree, 28 March 1945, APS/317/1/3-25.

<sup>97</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 159-161.

<sup>98</sup> MAP Plan of Decree, 28 March 1945, APS/317/1/27-32.

time.<sup>99</sup> Despite the obvious need for positive measures to attract a large numbers of Polish settlers to the region by harvest time, communist ideology soon got in the way. Thus, the first plan of settlement for Olsztyn Province envisaged that settler farmers would not receive title to their land but would be granted usufructary rights, a move which was clearly intended to make it easier to confiscate land should collectivisation be introduced.<sup>100</sup> Although wartime depopulation made room for Polish settlers, it also left a situation of crisis proportions, especially in Olsztyn Province. For instance, in the county of Ostróda only 30% of the pre-war population was left, falling to 20% in Szczytno, 15% in Pisz and 10% or less in Nidzica and Elbląg.<sup>101</sup>

It was during the first days of occupation of the Recovered Territories that Polish officials in West Pomerania judged that the army had had 'the best conditions for removing the undesirable element' namely, the Germans. During the war, the Polish people themselves had been subject for years to Germanisation and Russification and were, therefore, familiar with the brutal techniques used to engineer ethnic homogeneity. Moreover, as recently as the inter-war period Polish officials had conducted their own campaigns in the eastern marches of Poland in order to 'polonise' Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Belorussians and those of mixed nationality living there. Thus, it was no surprise that some Polish officials believed that the best solution to rid the Recovered Territories of Germans

would be the creation of conditions which would cause the spontaneous emigration of the undesirable element. To achieve this goal a strong-arm policy of applying terror should be employed while at the same time making it easier for those to leave the Recovered Territories.<sup>102</sup>

Soon, however, Polish officials found that assessing the ethnic identity and loyalty of those with mixed Polish-German identities, namely indigenous Cashubian and Masurian communities, was no simple matter, advising that

Reslavisation Commissioners, must be good psychologists in order to effectively look into the spirits and hearts and minds of Category 2 candidates. A hidden German is worse than an openly-hostile German. One does not need

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<sup>99</sup> UWS Report, 28 March 1945, APS/317/1/33-47.

<sup>100</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 19.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-77.

<sup>102</sup> UWS Report, 28 March 1945, APS/317/1/42-47.

to look at the example of Ireland and other similar situations in which language does not necessarily follow nationality.<sup>103</sup>

Although Polish officials did their best to set up a local Polish administration wherever they arrived, it immediately became clear that this was subject to the interests of the Red Army. Leon Kukulski arrived in Pomerania in March 1945 as an aide to the Soviet Command in Nowogródek, West Pomerania where his main duty was to organise the remaining submissive Germans into farm worker brigades for the sowing and harvest in order for future Polish settlers to have food and seed on their arrival.<sup>104</sup> However, the Red Army, whether through agreement or force, ensured that its food, property and transportation needs had priority over Polish officials and settlers. Thus, these two groups found an unexpected common purpose when they soon came into conflict with the large number of Red Army soldiers who were responsible for very high levels of serious crime in the region. Although Polish bandits were also operating, it was mainly undisciplined Soviet units who raped and pillaged the region, often making no distinction between Polish settler or German 'enemies', acts which quickly turned Polish gratitude for liberation into dislike, fear and hatred. These destabilizing factors were seen everywhere the Soviets were based, not just in the Recovered Territories, and often had an organised character as the poorly-supplied Red Army was expected to live off the land. At the same time, Norman Naimark contends that the rape and pillage conducted by Soviet troops as they moved west into the German Reich was soon viewed as counter-productive by Moscow as it not only caused enormous material destruction to property which could have benefitted the USSR, but made the task of recruiting Germans amenable to working with the Soviets much more difficult.<sup>105</sup> However, because the Recovered Territories were treated by the Red Army as conquered German land, it was there where the number of organised and 'wild' robberies was greatest and the feeling of security among Polish settlers was weakest.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, while one young settler, Alicja Cwarnóg, initially saw Red Army soldiers stationed in Olsztyn Province as those who had 'died for our liberation', she added that many had carried out robberies, usually at night, and had sold the stolen goods elsewhere for vodka. Even her family home was attacked and robbed in broad daylight while her mother was there, an act which 'cast a dark shadow on the uniform of the

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 33-42.

<sup>104</sup> Leon Kukulski, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 431-432.

<sup>105</sup> Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949.*, 69-80.

<sup>106</sup> Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, 153-158.

Soviet soldier', perhaps suggesting that rape had taken place.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, the rape of civilian women and girls by Soviet soldiers became the norm as the front moved west through the Baltic region during late 1944 and early 1945 with sexual violence not only taking on a more cruel but a mass character. There are, however, different views as to whether Polish women were sporadic or planned targets of Soviet rapists. Marcin Zaremba, for instance, contends that the Soviets saw the rape of Polish and Ukrainian women as their due for liberating these nations from the Nazis. Not only was age of no concern, but there were incidents where grandmothers, mothers and daughters endured mass rape together, some of whom died from their injuries. Peaking in August 1945, the scale of rape in the Baltic region after the war can be partly seen through the reported figures of those seeking treatment for sexually-transmitted diseases which reached epidemic proportions.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, some estimates put the figure for women infected with VD in Olsztyn Province at 60%, a situation compounded by the fact access to healthcare was extremely poor.<sup>109</sup>

The effect of such levels of rape and violence was not only fear, hatred and long-lasting trauma but the impression being seared into the mind of Polish settlers that that they were witnessing something akin to a barbarian invasion. For instance, Stanisław Dulewicz recalled a terrifying incident in West Pomerania which a group of about sixty Polish former forced labourers returning home in May 1945 were robbed, murdered *en masse* and their bodies hidden in a house along a railway line between Darłowo and Sławno.<sup>110</sup> The security situation was also bad in nearby Drawsko County, with Stanisław Bania describing how Poles protecting local property often ended up with a 'rifle butt in their backs mainly by drunken [Soviet] soldiers' who told them 'We have liberated Poland for you and you won't allow us to take German [property].'<sup>111</sup>

The spring of 1945 saw more 'operational groups' arriving in the Baltic region attempting set up a skeleton Polish civil administration in these still heavily German areas. However, the officials were shocked to find that the main source of menace came, not from Germans, but Soviet troops. For example, a member of one such group, Michał Wyszogrodzki, recalled Soviet troops driving them to Kwidzyń 'jokingly

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<sup>107</sup> Alicja Cwarnóg, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 681-682.

<sup>108</sup> Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, 170-183.

<sup>109</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 196-197.

<sup>110</sup> Stanisław Dulewicz, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 494.

<sup>111</sup> Stanisław Bania, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. 93/7.

threatening us with shooting' when both he and his colleagues ran out of vodka.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, alcohol was at a premium, not only as a drink, but as the Recovered Territories improvised currency as it was several months before the first new Polish banknotes came into circulation there. In the meantime, even government institutions were forced to pay their employees in bottles of vodka. Moreover, due to its value, stores of alcohol quickly became the target of bandits and looters and itself engendered much of the violence and conflict in the region.<sup>113</sup> Consequently, all types of strong alcohol from whatever source immediately became a valuable commodity. In fact, one settler was horrified to discover that the 40 litres of spirit he had bought, and some of which he had drunk, had come from Szczecin's zoological museum where it had been used to preserve freaks of nature stored in jars.<sup>114</sup>

Settlers who were, however, prepared to make themselves useful to the Red Army in their operations could expect to be rewarded with food, alcohol and positions of power. Leon Kukulski, for example, found that his cooperation with local Soviet commanders in rural West Pomerania resulted in his appointment as village leader and access to large amounts of free or cheap moonshine: 'He who had spirits could buy anything with it, such as radios, clothes, leather and a whole range of other valuable things.' His relationship with the Red Army allowed him to bring his wife and two-year-old son to the region in June 1945, ensuring that they were guarded by two Soviet soldiers armed with sub-machine guns during the dangerous journey. The family lived off supplies provided by Soviet commander and had 'a good life' as a result. Although Kukulski praised the local Soviet commander and his staff for their attitude towards Poles he admitted that: 'Sometimes, however, conflicts arose, mainly about livestock and harvest crops.'<sup>115</sup>

As the summer came and more and more settlers began to arrive, it became clear that looting and asset-stripping of ex-German property was being carried out by fellow settlers, as well as Soviet units. Adolf Kamiński arrived in Gdansk in June 1945 shocked and disappointed to find Polish looters combing through a city which lay in 'ruins and smouldering heaps of rubble' with uncleared bodies on the streets.<sup>116</sup> The strong sense of disgust felt by such Polish 'pioneer' settlers towards those Poles who

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<sup>112</sup> Michał Wyszogrodzki, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 666-667.

<sup>113</sup> Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, 117.

<sup>114</sup> Jan Lesikowski, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 318-319.

<sup>115</sup> Leon Kukulski, in *Ibid.*, 436-437.

<sup>116</sup> Adolf Kamiński, IZP, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, Memoir No. 203/7-12

came to loot, rape and plunder was widespread.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, even Polish officials in Węgorzewo in Olsztyn Province were found have engaged in the frenzied looting of ex-German property there.<sup>118</sup>

Polish settlers were often shocked by what greeted them on their arrival in the Baltic Recovered Territories. Franciszek Buchtalarz, who left on the very first official settler transport from Poznan in July 1945, soon and ‘suddenly became aware that we had arrived in a different country, one which was depopulated and abandoned by God and man, a country significantly damaged by war.’ Moreover, when they reached a station where the train was to be taken further on by Soviet soldiers, they were presented

with an unbelievable sight. Huge piles of rubbish, straw, damaged furniture, broken crockery and bottles lay beside tracks with wrecked wagons. The July air was saturated with the stench of decay and the specific smell of human and animal excrement. The lungs were starved of breath and noses had unpleasant work drawing in such polluted air. Against the background of this picture, our train looked like a phenomenon which had appeared from another planet.<sup>119</sup>

Even in places that had seen much less destruction, such as Reszeł in Olsztyn Province, settlers’ first impressions were no less eerie. Rather than the usual practice of engaging in wanton destruction, Soviet units based there employed special ‘trophy columns’, which contained experts in fine art and industry, in order to raid the town’s museums of valuable artefacts and musical instruments and its factories and homes of industrial equipment and furniture. Indeed, the main incident of reckless damage occurred when the UB moved into the town’s imposing castle and begun burning a pile of historic artefacts from its museum in the courtyard.<sup>120</sup> Reszeł’s good fortune was very much the exception with a destruction rate for the entire province estimated at 30%-40%, including 82% its factories. Although Olsztyn and Szczecin provinces suffered most from Soviet asset-stripping, the situation was compounded by the lack of a clear policy regarding the development and rebuilding of the Recovered Territories from central government. This is why many local authorities, who had been left to their own devices, then came up with their own way of doing things or adapted what they thought was the official policy to local needs and conditions.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Helena Będkowska, ‘Dwa Listy’, *Ziemia i Morze*, 20 April 1957, (Issue 23), 4

<sup>118</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 55-57.

<sup>119</sup> Franciszek Buchtalarz, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 374.

<sup>120</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 84-86.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 232-233, 84-85.

However, the colossal levels of destruction, as well as the behaviour of Soviet soldiers in the Baltic region drove Field Marshal Michał Rola-Żymierski, the head of the Polish army, to protest at Soviet units' occupation of property without securing the agreement of the local Polish administration. Even worse, there were incidents where Polish officials 'not only do not receive assistance from the [Soviet] army, but have even faced the opposition of commanders who frequently protect the [German] expellees, not considering that the expulsions are being carried out on the order of the Temporary Government ...'<sup>122</sup> For example, when Adolf Kamiński eventually did find a flat in Gdansk and was given permission by Polish officials to occupy half the rooms, its female German occupants quickly enlisted the aid of Soviet soldiers to chase Kamiński off at gunpoint, even shooting at him as he ran for his life.<sup>123</sup>

While the grand strategy of the Polish regime regarding the settlement of the Recovered Territories was to ensure that they would be quickly populated by a loyal, homogenous and self-sufficient Polish population, the reality of the extremely complex situation on the ground meant that compromises had to be made. Indeed, the Baltic region was neither empty enough for a land rush of Polish settlement nor populated by a homogenous enemy which could be immediately driven to the Oder. As Polish officials quickly found, the practicality of preventing chronic depopulation meant that those 'Germans' who had not already selected themselves for expulsion by the time a skeleton Polish administration had been set up had to be considered as candidates for 'verification' and 'repolonisation.' Moreover, even if they all turned out to be true Germans, the gap between their expulsion and the arrival of Polish expellees from beyond the Curzon Line to take their place was invariably so badly coordinated that it resulted in enormous losses in livestock, machinery and property.

Officials in Olsztyn Province learned such lessons the hard way in the summer of 1945. Jakub Prawin, the Government Plenipotentiary for Olsztyn Province, was particularly anxious that the Germans be cleared out as soon as possible. In May he issued a directive that Germans in the city of Olsztyn wear an armband with the letter 'N' in black, (representing 'Niemiec', the Polish for 'German') and be subject to a curfew. However, several local officials chose not to impose his orders to place Germans in camps or ghettos, possibly due to fear of the consequences of further antagonising a group which greatly outnumbered them. Moreover, his plan to evacuate all Germans from the towns and cities into the countryside ended in fiasco due to lack of Polish administrators to enforce it on the ground, as well as obstruction

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<sup>122</sup> Military Order, 3 June 1945, APS/317/1097/3.

<sup>123</sup> Adolf Kamiński, IZP, Pamiętniki Osadników 1957, Memoir No. 203/16.

from Soviet units anxious to keep their skilled or compliant German workforce.<sup>124</sup> Despite his hatred for 'real' Germans, Prawin took a liberal attitude towards local indigenous groups, and in June 1945 greatly relaxed the terms of reference in order for them to be considered 'Polish'. Thus, rather than having the question of their identity decided by Polish 'verification committees', he allowed the indigenous to declare themselves as Cashubians, Pomeranians, Warmians or Masurians.<sup>125</sup>

Polish officials also had to sift, county by county and village by village, to assess whether those working in local administration were suitable people for implementing government policies of 'degermanisation and 'repolonisation', and later Sovietisation. However, in some cases this had to be put on hold due to staff shortages and the fact that the German population of many counties was still an overwhelming majority. In mid-July 1945 the Polish Government Plenipotentiary for West Pomerania, Leonard Borkowicz, secretly reported severe organisational difficulties regarding staff and resources to the MAP and complained that Polish army commanders had appointed local Germans as borough leaders. Although there were still five Germans to every Pole in the province, Borkowicz noted that the Polish army's mass expulsion of Germans without the permission of the local authorities in June and July had left a severe labour shortage.<sup>126</sup>

When it came to the Red Army, however, Borkowicz noted that Polish settlers displayed little trust due to its criminal activities and the attitude of the local Soviet commanders, some of whom had a policy of 'not recognizing the Polish government, persecuting Polish people and the clear favouring of Germans.' In addition, Soviet commanders showed 'passive resistance' to transferring power to the Polish administration and still held on to large number of farms and factories.<sup>127</sup> Although Borkowicz was happy to report that the PPR comprised the strongest political group in West Pomerania, settlers were, however, concerned that there were very few Roman Catholic priests in the region and were 'asking the civil authorities for suitable intervention.' He was also in no doubt that the 'main factor' holding back the local economy were Soviet divisions occupying 'certain properties and farms' and their protection of the local Germans.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Płotek, *Trudne pocztątki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 164-167.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>126</sup> Borkowicz to MAP, Situation Report, marked 'Secret', 14 July 1945, APS/317/939/3-10.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* 11-16.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 17-37.

Indeed, Franciszek Buchtalarz witnessed how it was impossible for Polish settlers to get to Szczecin by rail as the Soviet trains with 'the spoils of war' heading in the opposite direction were blocking the only track as 'the other was torn up and the steel rails taken away.'<sup>129</sup> Similarly in Olsztyn Province, of the three railway lines running through the county of Sztum, the Soviets had removed two entirely and changed the remaining one from a double to a single track.<sup>130</sup> Adolf Kamiński personally observed German prisoner crews in Gdansk disassembling port cranes and equipment on behalf of the Red Army for export to the USSR.<sup>131</sup> With Warsaw concerned that its officials were not working together to expel local Germans fast enough and secure their property, it is clear that the Red Army was not only obstructing this campaign but competing for ex-German property. Indeed, this was especially serious given the Polish government's aim that the upcoming Potsdam Conference be presented with the *fait accompli* of Baltic coastline emptied of Germans.<sup>132</sup>

### 1.3 The Potsdam Conference and the Recovered Territories

In such circumstances the Potsdam Conference took place that July and August, with the Allies meeting to discuss Poland's western border and the treatment of Germany. Since Yalta, not only had Harry S. Truman replaced Roosevelt following the US President's death, but the Soviet-backed Lublin regime had established itself as Poland's *de facto* government. Moreover, the Polish border issue soon brought differences between the Allies to the fore. Although Poland's Recovered Territories were supposed to be part of Soviet Zone of Occupation in Germany, their administration had been handed over unilaterally by the USSR to the Lublin regime, a move which Hans-Peter Schwarz has claimed, greatly weakened the Soviet Union's overall position regarding its influence in post-war Germany.<sup>133</sup> Stalin not only maintained he had awarded Poland the 'lands in the north and west' which Yalta had promised but that the Red Army had had to delegate administration of these lands to the Poles to prevent Germans regaining control of the region. However, Stalin's subsequent statement that 'no single German remained in the territory to be given to Poland' is telling, as it could be taken to mean that territory under Polish

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<sup>129</sup> Franciszek Buchtalarz, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. 165/11-17.

<sup>130</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 69.

<sup>131</sup> Adolf Kamiński, *IZP, Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, Memoir No. 203/19-25.

<sup>132</sup> UIPG Report, 26 July 1945, APG/1173/5/59-60.

<sup>133</sup> Schwarz, "The division of Germany, 1945-1949," 146-147.

administration with large numbers of Germans may not have ended up as part of Poland at all, but could have been incorporated into Soviet-occupied Germany.<sup>134</sup>

As the conference wore on representatives of the Lublin regime were invited to present their views on why the border should run along the western Neisse. Although Churchill was strongly opposed to this for several reasons, he was soon out of the picture, having suffered a shock electoral defeat during the last days of July, leading to his replacement by Clement Atlee. Despite this, within a matter of days US Secretary of State James Byrnes had come up with a 'Package Deal' to allow the Recovered Territories to become *de facto* Polish territory. The resulting Potsdam Protocol on Poland of 31 July thus accepted Stalin's *fait accompli* of a Polish-German border running along the Oder and western Neisse rivers and that the region's Germans should be transferred to Germany in 'an orderly and humane manner'. Although the US government was to consistently claim that the Polish western border would be an open question until it was decided at a future peace conference, the Potsdam Accord was, in fact, a *de facto* territorial settlement in which the approval of the transfer of Germans made it a permanent decision.<sup>135</sup>

Although Poles, especially those in the Recovered Territories, were overjoyed that these lands had officially come to Poland, they continued with their 'degermanisation' and 'repolonisation' policies at a relentless and increased pace throughout August, lest the Allied powers soon change their minds. When Jan Lesikowski announced to everyone in his restaurant in Szczecin at the end of the Potsdam Conference that 'Szczecin is Polish', he observed that there 'was great joy among the Poles, that day several Germans took their own lives with worry.'<sup>136</sup> However, Franciszek Buchtalarz observed how access to Szczecin port was under the complete control of the local Soviet garrison which used German tradesmen to load up crates of 'clocks, sewing machines, typewriters, fridges etc.' to be brought to the port for shipping directly to the USSR.<sup>137</sup> The Soviets were also causing 'fear' in Gdansk, a city burdened with massive wartime destruction and poverty.<sup>138</sup> Apart from the high diplomacy of Potsdam, the main priority in the provinces of West Pomerania, Gdansk and Olsztyn that summer was bringing in the harvest. Unfortunately, it was soon reported that this was being hindered in Sopot by communist youth groups

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<sup>134</sup> Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War*, 24.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-31.

<sup>136</sup> Jan Lesikowski, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 319.

<sup>137</sup> Franciszek Buchtalarz, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. 165/44.

<sup>138</sup> UIPG Report, 4 August 1945, APG/1173/5/67-69.

persecuting Germans needed for farm labour.<sup>139</sup> In Olsztyn County the harvest was being obstructed by the Soviet Army which had taken over most of the county's farms.<sup>140</sup> However, a Soviet-run commission to investigate Polish complaints regarding Red Army indiscipline in the Recovered Territories found, unsurprisingly, that most complaints were 'baseless or exaggerated.'<sup>141</sup>

As the summer was the best time for travelling more and more Polish settlers began to arrive, having been influenced by government propaganda and word of mouth reports of a 'land of plenty.' One surprising feature is that a significant number of single women undertook to begin a new life in the Recovered Territories. Józefa Izdebska, for instance, who was 33 years old in 1945, made the move from a small family farm in Lublin Province due to a 'giant poster' she had seen in her local town. Although Gdansk Pomerania, her ultimate destination, presented serious dangers for anyone travelling alone, she enjoyed the freedom and excitement it engendered.<sup>142</sup> However, Seweryna Urban, another young woman who travelled there alone to find work and accommodation in 1945, recalled that an unpleasant journey in which she found herself crammed into a railway wagon in the dark: 'The night passed us by with women's complaints and men's crude jokes.' Although the 'very gloomy impression' she found on arrival almost drove her to get the next train home, 'I was too ashamed to return [and] my ambition would not allow it.'<sup>143</sup> Not all single women seem to have travelled to the Baltic provinces to work, however. One 'pioneer' settler recalled meeting a young woman whose plan was 'to relax for a year, live easily and comfortably. And more, that currently, whoever is clever and cunning can easily acquire property, live like a king and let the Germans work in exchange for murdering us ...'<sup>144</sup>

While Polish settlers flocked to the cities and towns of the Baltic Recovered Territories, 'repolonisation' of the countryside proceeded at a slower pace. For example, in the county surrounding Gdansk in early August 1945 there were 34,145 Germans and only 10,056 Poles.<sup>145</sup> Towards the end of the month the Polish population of the

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<sup>139</sup> UIPG Report, 3 August 1945, APG/1173/3/47.

<sup>140</sup> UIPO Report, 3 August 1945, APO/500/12/3.

<sup>141</sup> Borkowicz to MAP, Situation Report, marked 'Secret', 6 August 1945, APS/317/939/47-67.

<sup>142</sup> Józefa Izdebska, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 642-643.

<sup>143</sup> Seweryna Urban, in *Ibid.*, 593-595.

<sup>144</sup> Władysław Stachurski, in *Ibid.*, 529-531.

<sup>145</sup> UIPG Report, 7 August 1945, APG/1173/7/5.

county had fallen by almost two-thirds in two weeks to 3,843 Poles, while 30,383 Germans remained.<sup>146</sup> Although this was mainly blamed on a difficult economic climate, incidents of rape and robbery by Soviet soldiers in the Gdansk region did not help and were not only 'undermining people's trust in Soviet army' but were having a negative effect on the political views of settlers from east and central Poland.<sup>147</sup> Even Polish officials were not immune to such incidents, as evidenced by the robbery of a Polish civil servant of 51,000 zloty under guise of a Soviet 'inspection'.<sup>148</sup>

Despite the Allies' request at Potsdam that the expulsions of Germans be suspended until internationally supervised transfers began, they continued, albeit subject to the needs of the harvest and with Polish government representatives claiming that most of the expellees were leaving voluntarily. At meeting of the Allied Control Council on 17 August 1945, the Soviets claimed that 4.5 million Germans had been removed from East Prussia, Pomerania and Silesia with another 1 million awaiting expulsion. US advisors, however, estimated that there were 2.5 million Germans left in Poland and were concerned that American democratic principles were being compromised by tacitly allowing expulsions of a similar kind and scale to those carried out by the Nazis.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, by late 1945 British officials and press correspondents in Germany had begun to personally witness the terrible conditions in which millions Germans had fled their homes, only to reach a British zone of occupation gripped by food shortages and a lack of accommodation. As Matthew Frank points out, the British soon came into conflict with the Polish and Czechoslovak regimes by insisting that they conduct the transfers in 'an orderly and humane manner' as stipulated in the Potsdam Accords. Due to this intervention, conditions improved markedly as the 'wild phase' of expulsions turned into an organised phase of 'transfers', a process greatly helped by the mild winter of 1945-1946.<sup>150</sup> It is important to point out here, however, that although Frank highlights the humanitarian motivations of British officials and journalists in insisting that conditions be improved, it was also the case that they wanted to limit the numbers German refugees being dumped in the British sector due to cost concerns and a lack of resources to deal with them.

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<sup>146</sup> UIPG Report, 21 August 1945, APG/1173/7/19.

<sup>147</sup> UIPG Report, 7 August 1945, APG/1173/7/6.

<sup>148</sup> UIPG Report, 23 August 1945, APG/1173/11/45.

<sup>149</sup> Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War*, 41.

<sup>150</sup> Matthew Frank, *Expelling the Germans: British Opinion and Post-1945 Population Transfer in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 94-121, 227-273.

#### 1.4 The Position of the Roman Catholic Church and Further Polish-Soviet Difficulties

Not all Poles wanted the local Germans to be expelled, however. PPR members in some towns were prepared to give anti-fascist Germans from the SPD the benefit of the doubt and decided 'to help them and treat them the same as members of the PPS [Polish Socialist Party].'<sup>151</sup> Communists in Olsztyn, however, were preparing to use an upcoming commemoration marking the outbreak of the Second World War to conduct crude communist sloganeering aimed at softening up settlers for Sovietisation. Thus, the pre-war Polish government was to be labelled as the main culprit for 'the September Defeat' while 'the Democratic Camp' led by the communists was the 'victorious organiser of the battle for national liberation and the building of an independent Poland.' Moreover, the Potsdam Accord was to be portrayed as a triumph for the ideas of the Lublin regime, 'the result of the political victory of Polish democracy [and ] ... the complete bankruptcy of Polish reaction.'<sup>152</sup> Similar events were held in Koszalin and were also used to criticize the inter-war government and praise Poland's new-found 'friendship' with the Soviet Union.<sup>153</sup> In Elbląg, however, communists were unable to set up a Propaganda Office, let alone run such an event as their building had been occupied by the Soviet NKVD. Moreover, as in other counties, complaints soon arose that the Soviets were interfering in the expulsion of Germans.<sup>154</sup> Indeed, in Olsztyn Province the MO in Mrągowo reported in August that due to Soviet incitement local Germans had turned 'rebellious' against Polish settlers and officials, a development which was discouraging Polish settlement. The following month in Bartoszyce Soviet commanders barged into the county council office demanding that Polish officials there double food rations for local Germans while cutting them for Polish settlers.<sup>155</sup>

In Gdansk, however, reports came in that even German ex-Nazis and SS members were attempting to rehabilitate themselves as 'Poles' through bribery, with one rumour circulating that 'to turn yourself into a Pole costs 20-30,000 [zloty].'<sup>156</sup> Confusion over who was Polish or German was a serious issue in the village of Mikołajki Pomorskie where 80% of the population was indigenous to the region. Jan Jakubek, a 'pioneer' settler working there as a teacher observed that only the elderly

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<sup>151</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 17 August 1945, APG/2603/3/3.

<sup>152</sup> UIPO Circular, 28 August 1945, APO/500/1/131.

<sup>153</sup> *Wiadomości Koszalińskie*, 2 September 1945, 2.

<sup>154</sup> UIPG Report, 2 August 1945, APG/1173/5/22-23.

<sup>155</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 162-163.

<sup>156</sup> UIPG Report, 3 September 1945, APG/1173/5/98.

could speak Polish while the remaining inhabitants had under 'the pressure of various persecutions ... slowly given in to the influence of Germanisation.' Moreover, friction soon appeared in the village between the indigenous and regional groups of Polish settlers over who was more Polish.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, serious conflicts also appeared on the arrival of the last wave of settlers, mainly demobilised soldiers, to West Pomerania during 1945. As their fellow settlers had taken a 'first-come, first-served' attitude to the bounty of the Recovered Territories, ex-soldiers invariably ended up with the worst farms, completely stripped-out houses, poor equipment, little furniture and the worst land.<sup>158</sup>

Divisions among Poles on the political side also began to appear that autumn when Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the leader of the Polish Peasant's Party (PSL) appeared at a Veterans' Rally in Szczecin. Aware that the PSL possessed a level of popular support which gravely threatened the PPR's claim to political legitimacy, communists in West Pomerania demanded a 'ruthless fight against reaction' and for 'Special courts' to 'eliminate reaction.' Such efforts to counter the popular anti-communist opposition were, however, being undermined by local reports that 'the Russians are stealing grain from Poles.'<sup>159</sup> Despite this, one local newspaper claimed that there was 'a tendency towards the normalisation of relations in West Pomerania, as well as greater security, especially where close cooperation with the Soviet authorities has been established.'<sup>160</sup>

As with the fledgling Polish communist-run regime, in 1945 the Roman Catholic Church was making attempts to build a completely new structure in the Recovered Territories. Although the aims of the Polish Church and the communists converged in the policy of 'repolonisation', Polish priests had their own agenda to 're-catholicise' these formerly Protestant lands. By the turn of 1945/1946 there were only 23 German or indigenous Catholic priests left in West Pomerania to serve an ever-growing Polish settler population. To encourage more Polish settlement, the communist officials allowed those priests who chose to declare themselves Polish to remain.<sup>161</sup> Both indigenous and settler communities also requested help from the local authorities in finding Polish priests. Indeed, such efforts resulted in the celebration the first Polish

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<sup>157</sup> Jan Jakubek, IZP, Pamiętniki Osadników 1957, Memoir No. 66/25-28.

<sup>158</sup> Leon Kukulski, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 437.

<sup>159</sup> Szczecin KW PPR Minutes, 6 September 1945, APS/825/10/16-19.

<sup>160</sup> *Wiadomości Koszalińskie*, 5 September 1945, 4

<sup>161</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 58-61.

masses in Szczecin and Koszalin in summer 1945. It was also frequently the case that Catholic priests arrived with groups Polish settlers who had travelled *en masse* from beyond the Curzon Line.<sup>162</sup>

However, the significance of the Church's role in the Recovered Territories for the Polish regime went far beyond settlement and included crucial geo-political issues. Although Pope Pius XII had reluctantly appointed Polish 'Apostolic Administrators' as quasi-bishops in the Recovered Territories, he was reluctant to approve the setting up of full Polish dioceses until the outcome of a planned future peace deal regarding the new Polish-German border. Thus, as Kowalczyk maintains, the Vatican could have it both ways, as if the region ever returned to Germany it would be relatively easy to reactivate old German dioceses while, in the meantime, the Poles would continue to re-catholicize the Recovered Territories. However, at higher levels in the regime there was major disquiet that Pius XII had shied away from bolstering Poland's claim to these lands by refusing to appoint bishops, an act which implied that the new western border was open to revision. In revenge, Polish leader Bolesław Bierut used the appointment of the Apostolic Administrators as an erroneous pretext for claiming that the inter-war Polish-Vatican concordat had been violated. Over the long term, the 'anti-Polish' position of the Vatican regarding the Recovered Territories would be used to portray the Polish hierarchy as disloyal and was used frequently in the communists' battle for the separation of Church and State. For the moment, however, associating itself with the Church on the ground was a way for the communists to both gain popularity and credibility and to guarantee the Polishness of the Recovered Territories.<sup>163</sup>

The growing tension between Church and State could be seen in Olsztyn Province which, as in West Pomerania, had seen great wartime losses among the clergy. Following the appointment of Rev. Dr. Teodor Bensch as Apostolic Administrator in August 1945, moves were made to attract more priests for the settler population and to encourage those already there to stay on despite the very difficult material and security conditions. The following month Bensch pleaded with Government Plenipotentiary Prawin for material assistance for priests, even requesting that they be paid a salary equivalent to teachers for a temporary period, correctly pointing out that the lack of priests is 'undoubtedly damaging for Polish interests in this region.'<sup>164</sup> In late October, however, Bensch's request was turned down by the

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 62-78.

<sup>164</sup> Bensch to Prawin, 14 September 1945, APO 390/91/28-29.

MAP due to what it considered irregular relations between the Polish state and the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>165</sup>

Leonard Borkowicz, the Government Plenipotentiary of West Pomerania, had an attitude to the Church that was at best ambivalent and at worst hostile. An avowed atheist who did not like increasing the position of the Church, he was forced to admit that the number of priests for the region was insufficient for the purposes of 'repolonisation.' Although Borkowicz and Rev. Dr. Edmund Nowicki, the local Apostolic Administrator, met irregularly and conducted a policy of 'mutual avoidance', most government officials in the Recovered Territories initially maintained positive relations with the Church for pragmatic reasons. Moreover, the arrival of a priest in the Baltic region was huge occasion for everyone, the local government administration included. It was not until late 1945 that the Church begun to be treated by the regime as a centre of 'reaction' as the communists were much too weak to even consider unnecessarily antagonising or alienating any potential support base. In addition, many Party members were still practicing Catholics while local government employees still took part in masses, processions and other public displays of Catholic piety, recognising that for settlers the presence of the Polish Church in the region was a *sine qua non*. For its part, the Church also made compromises by becoming actively involved in campaigns defending Poland's new borders and its access to the sea.<sup>166</sup>

Thus, that September, the main problem for Polish communists in the Baltic Recovered Territories was not the attitude of their 'enemy' the Roman Catholic Church but the behaviour of their 'ally', the Red Army. Not only was 17% of West Pomerania's agricultural land controlled by Soviet units but one official bluntly stated that the settlers' views of them was positive 'where there is few of them and where they annoy people less' and negative where they commit 'rape and abuse' and 'robberies'.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, the 'main source' of danger to the lives and property of Polish settlers there was 'still marauders recruited from the ranks of the Red Army'. Indeed, even the settlers' diet was suffering as most of the livestock and dairy cows were in the hands of the Polish or Soviet armies. In addition, although the local Polish administration had found the Soviets 'quite resistant' to transferring property on assigned dates, it had eventually managed to take control of most of them.<sup>168</sup> There were similar problems in Olsztyn Province where Soviet units had not only harvested 45.5% of the crops but had

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<sup>165</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 209, 18-20.

<sup>166</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 62-81.

<sup>167</sup> Kaniewski to MAP, UWS Report, 8 September 1945, APS/317/939/ 69-87.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* 88-107.

confiscated grain from local settlers who were now threatened with famine and considering returning to central Poland.<sup>169</sup> Further complaints about Soviet soldiers arose in Gdansk Pomerania regarding the looting of apartments by Polish and Soviet soldiers,<sup>170</sup> as well as the Red Army's taking over local factories without permission from the Polish authorities.<sup>171</sup>

Indeed, with a Soviet withdrawal from the Recovered Territories planned in the wake of Polish-Soviet treaty outlining Poland's new borders signed on 16 August, the following few weeks saw an intensification of conflict between Polish settlers and Soviet units all over the three Baltic provinces as the Red Army tried to grab what it could before leaving the region.<sup>172</sup> Indeed, due to such crime, a lack of food, a lack of animal feed and rampant disease, it is estimated that between July and December 1945 about 30,000 people left Olsztyn Province, with 10,000 people fleeing the countryside in August alone.<sup>173</sup> In Malbork and Elbląg in Gdansk Province few people ventured out in the evening unarmed due to a situation of 'permanent combat' with Soviet soldiers who were continually raiding homes and shops. In addition, in West Pomerania Soviet commanders ran the properties and towns they controlled almost as sovereign fiefdoms, with the town of Sławno described by a Polish inspector as under 'a drunken occupation'. Incidents of rape and robbery increased not only in scale but in brazenness, as evidenced by Soviet troops holding up train from Stargard to Szczecin Gumieńce, not only robbing all the passengers but taking the time to rape a number of women in the waiting room. Several Polish railway workers resigned from their jobs due to the violence they faced daily in the Baltic region with one recalling a gun battle he witnessed in September 1945 at Gdynia station in which three Soviet soldiers were killed trying to raid a baggage wagon.<sup>174</sup>

Apart from security issues, local communists kept vigilant watch of rival political parties and organisations with those in Szczecin continuing to accuse the PSL and other parties of conducting the 'perfidious and hostile work of reaction' by 'driving a wedge' between the communist and socialists 'through re-privatization and spreading anti-Semitic slogans.'<sup>175</sup> In Gdansk, however, Poles were said to be upset that Germans

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<sup>169</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 104-105.

<sup>170</sup> Lębork PPR Note, 8 September 1945, APG/2603/3/30.

<sup>171</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 15 September 1945, APG/2603/2/10.

<sup>172</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 63.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 203-204.

<sup>174</sup> Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, 159-166.

<sup>175</sup> Szczecin KW PPR Minutes, 13 September 1945, APS/825/10/ 8.

were still employed in the port where, fortunately, relations with the Soviets were said to be improving 'not counting incidents due to the abuse of alcohol.'<sup>176</sup> Hostile Polish-Soviets relations were so bad in the nearby town of Kartuzy, however, that Polish officials were prepared to justify any incidents of 'reaction' as due to the behaviour of Soviet troops.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, the Red Army was high on the suspect list whenever reports came in of random and brutal robberies of Poles, such as that concerning a village leader who had been bayoneted to death for his bicycle near Ostróda in Olsztyn Province.<sup>178</sup> In addition, as more and more settlers came in from beyond the Curzon Line, where they had had direct experience of Soviet rule between 1939 and 1941, the mood in places such as Gdansk Oliwa became progressively anti-Soviet.<sup>179</sup> One settler, Józefa Izdebska, described autumn 1945 in Elbląg County as a time during which 'we lived through days of terror', having to fight nightly Wild-West-style gun battles with Soviet marauders. She also described how a woman she knew there 'once went to buy some cows and returned with no cows, no money and as a woman lost something more ... At every step surprises lurked, especially for women.'<sup>180</sup>

Security had improved in West Pomerania but still left much to be desired due to the activities of the Red Army, which was once again hindering Polish settlement. For instance, in Białogard 20,000 Poles were having trouble finding accommodation as 10,000 Soviet soldiers were occupying half of the town. As well as this, there were a further 9,000 Germans there who the Soviets would not allow to be moved as they were a cheap source of labour. One example of the imbalance between the resources controlled by Soviet soldiers and Polish settlers was in Choszczno County, where the Red Army harvested 21,000 ha. of crops compared with the Polish settlers' paltry 2,000 ha. Besides outbreaks of typhoid, the settlers were presenting many cases of venereal disease which Borkowicz blamed squarely on 'moral corruption and a lack of discipline in the army.' Living up to its name of the 'Wild West', there were still many incidents in the region of livestock rustling by bands of marauding soldiers, who were untouchable due to a woeful lack of Polish police.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> UIPG Report, 15 September 1945, APG/1173/5/103.

<sup>177</sup> UIPG Report, September 1945, APG/1173/5/209.

<sup>178</sup> UIPO Circular, 17 September 1945, APO/500/2/22.

<sup>179</sup> UIPG Report, 18 September 1945, APG/1173/5/111.

<sup>180</sup> Józefa Izdebska, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. 125/7-11.

<sup>181</sup> Borkowicz to MAP, UWS Report, September 1945, APS/317/939/109-152.

## 1.5 Polish Settlement and 'Degermanisation' Stepped Up

As autumn progressed attempts were made to increase the pace of 'repolonisation' across all three Baltic provinces. In Gdansk, for instance, 'degermanisation' continued with a successful campaign to remove all German signs and advertising notices from the streets of the city in the space of one week.<sup>182</sup> In the nearby town of Kartuzy, however, Polish settlement continued at a slow pace with only a tenth of the total available land settled.<sup>183</sup> The behaviour of Soviet troops probably had something to do with this slow uptake which was said, along with strong local religious belief, to be causing Poles to have a negative attitude towards the USSR.<sup>184</sup>

Despite this, the coastal resort of Sopot proudly proclaimed its 'joy' on 1 October that it had become the first city in the Recovered Territories to completely rid itself of Germans. At the same time, officials were perturbed and embarrassed that the organised departure of these Germans had descended into an orgy of abuse and robbery, not only by gloating Polish onlookers, but by the officials and security forces supervising the transport.<sup>185</sup> Apart from anti-German feelings running high, there were also rumours circulating in the Nowy Port district of Gdansk that Jews were getting better share of money and resources due to their alleged connections with the Polish authorities. It was even said that each Jew in Gdansk had got 30,000 zloty in aid which showed that the new government was 'full of Jews.'<sup>186</sup>

Party members also displayed a certain level of paranoia regarding the return to Poland of Stanisław Mikołajczyk and the PSL which had become a junior coalition partner with the communists in a 'Temporary Government of National Unity'. Although the Party leadership realised the inclusion of the PSL in the coalition was necessary in order to convince the West that Poland was still a multi-party democracy, communists in Szczecin saw the move as 'a Trojan horse' sent by the London-based Polish government-in-exile. Moreover, they believed that by entering government the PSL had 'gained a material base' through which it wanted 'to help reactionary groups'. Despite this, local Party members, afraid of alienating PSL supporters who comprised much of the farming population in the Recovered Territories, realised they had to keep up the appearance of supporting its coalition partner. Therefore, they issued instructions to PPR county organisations that they were 'not allowed to speak so

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<sup>182</sup> UIPG Report, 27 September 1945, APG/1173/5/95.

<sup>183</sup> UIPG Report, 30 September 1945, APG/1173/5/215.

<sup>184</sup> UIPG Report, 1 October 1945, APG/1173/5/219.

<sup>185</sup> UIPG Report, 1 October 1945, APG/1173/7/28-29.

<sup>186</sup> UIPG Report, 2 October 1945, APG/1173/5/101.

broadly that the PSL is our enemy and it is not allowed to openly attack them.' Instead, they were instructed to support the SL Party, a communist version of the PSL. Although they frankly admitted that 'the peasant fears collectivisation and we are not in favour of it ...', Party activists warned that anti-communist groups had 'come out from the underground. Sabotage has not yet ended.'<sup>187</sup>

However, such fears were largely unfounded as, apart from some now defunct organisations which had been active in the former Polish corridor during the war, the main Polish underground organisation, *Armia Krajowa* (the Polish Home Army) was not native to the Baltic provinces and found it very difficult to operate areas with no long-established population of Poles which could support their activities and hide their members. It was not until late 1945 that armed anti-communist groups began to make their presence felt as they moved west into Olsztyn and Gdansk from neighbouring provinces. Initially, armed underground activity in Olsztyn was centred on the south-east of the province and mainly involved small nationalist groups which operated there between 1945 and 1947.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, in late October 1945 the UB in Pisz reported that one such group which was 'prowling the county' had killed three UB officers in an ambush, seizing four light machine guns.<sup>189</sup> Although settlers were led to believe that some local Germans were part of a 'resistance' organisation known as 'Wehrwolf', there was neither widespread nor organised violence by groups of Germans noted in Olsztyn Province. Moreover, the UB's investigations in the existence of a German underground in July 1945 eventually ended with the arrest of members of an 'illegal youth organisation' in Pasłęk which comprised a few former Hitler Youth members aged between 8 and 13 years.<sup>190</sup> There were also fears that 'illegal German organisations' in West Pomerania were attempting to organise resistance to Polish settlement and were spreading propaganda leaflets 'with contents of a provocative nature.'<sup>191</sup>

In some areas, however, behaviour of the UB gave as much cause for concern as that of Soviet marauders. For instance, in Lębork, Gdansk Pomerania, Party officials were dismayed to report that the local UB, which was heavily involved in the local black economy, posed the main danger to the town.<sup>192</sup> So bad was the UB at its job

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<sup>187</sup> Szczecin KW PPR Minutes, 6 October 1945, APS/825/10/25-26.

<sup>188</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 154-156.

<sup>189</sup> WUBP Olsztyn Report, 18-28 October 1945, IPN Series BU 00231, File 155, Vol. 3/134.

<sup>190</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 170-171.

<sup>191</sup> *Wiadomości Koszalińskie*, 24 October 1945, 1.

<sup>192</sup> Lębork PPR Report, 11 October 1945, APG/2603/7/4-5.

there, that the local Party called for the Red Army, of all organisations, to improve public safety, stop looters and destroy 'Wehrwolf' which it claimed was active in the area.<sup>193</sup> The UB in Starogard, however, claimed more success when it arrested 26 farmers and foresters said to be part of an organisation called 'The White Eagles' and who had allegedly sworn an oath, described by the UB in typically Soviet-style terms, to 'act against the Democratic Government' and 'wipe out all units of democracy'.<sup>194</sup>

In Szczecin, a city of over 60,000 Germans and growing population of 27,000 Poles,<sup>195</sup> the UB were already central to the plan for expelling Germans and were given the task of checking if among those slated for departure there were people 'who, in the interests of the Polish state, it is important to keep and will allow only those to leave for whom there are no such concerns.'<sup>196</sup> Despite the completion of the harvest, however, as winter approached food in the Baltic Recovered Territories was becoming more and more scarce to the point where the Gdansk Propaganda Office was willing to accept that a protest in the Nowy Port district over food shortages was not an 'antigovernment act.'<sup>197</sup> In Olsztyn Province so-called 'voluntary departures' of Germans, mainly of the 'burdensome element' namely the old, the very young and the sick, began on 22 October. By the end of the month just over 2,000 Germans had left Olsztyn County alone, with about 1,000 left on nearby Soviet farms. Due to imprecise or non-existent data the number of Germans who left the province by the end of 1945 is estimated at somewhere between 25,000 and 98,000.<sup>198</sup>

The end of October also saw preparations being made for the first commemorations of the Russian revolution<sup>199</sup> and were predictably dull, Soviet-style affairs featuring stock slogans.<sup>200</sup> Although these efforts were aimed at attracting new members to the Party, many locals, and especially indigenous groups such as Masurians, stayed well away as they feared that if they allied themselves to the current ruling party they would be hunted down as subversives if there was a future

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<sup>193</sup> Lębork PPR Report, 24 October 1945, APG/2603/6/20.

<sup>194</sup> WUBP Gdansk Report, 28 October 1945 to 8 November 1945, IPN Series BU 00231, File 155, Vol. 32/30.

<sup>195</sup> *Wiadomości Koszalińskie*, 24 October 1945, 2.

<sup>196</sup> UWS Report, marked 'Confidential', 12 October 1945, APS/317/1097/ 5.

<sup>197</sup> UIPG Report, 19 October 1945, APG/1173/5/105.

<sup>198</sup> Płotek, *Trudne początki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 172-174.

<sup>199</sup> UIPO Circular, 9 October 1945, APO/500/1/108.

<sup>200</sup> MIP Circular, 30 October 1945, APG/1173/4/3.

change of regime or borders.<sup>201</sup> In Cashubian areas such as Bytów, farmers' organisations brought better results in attracting indigenous Poles to communist-run groups, leading local Party officials to conclude that the mood of the people was 'Generally satisfactory. Reaction [is] not openly appearing.'<sup>202</sup> In urban areas, such as Gdansk Oliwa, it also proved difficult recruit new members to any political party with local officials finding it 'difficult to judge whether [this is due to] bad faith or normal laziness.'<sup>203</sup>

## 1.6 From 'Wild Expulsions' to Organised Transports

By November 1945 the Allied Control Council had a drawn up a plan for the orderly transfer of 3.5 million Germans from Poland to start on 1 December 1945 and end in July 1946. Of these, 2 million were to go to the Soviet zone and 1.5 million to the British zone.<sup>204</sup> However, unknown to the Western Allies, Szczecin had already made plans in early November to pre-empt the 1 December starting date and become the point through which the vast majority of Germans were to be expelled from northern Poland. Therefore, as early as October, Gen. Sierov , one of the main Red Army commanders in Poland, pronounced that organised transfers of Germans could be sent to the Soviet German Zone of Occupation the following month. With that, the Mayor of Szczecin, Piotr Zaremba, travelled to Greifswald to meet Col. Sidorov, the Soviet commander of Mecklenburg Province, and agreement was reached that the first transport would take place in mid-November and contain 1,500 to 1,800 Germans. They would be transported in a Polish military convoy to the Soviet zone and the empty train was to immediately return to Poland. Correctly suspecting that the Poles would quickly attempt to dump those Germans unfit for work into the care of the Soviets and thus avoid having to feed them for the winter, Sidorov insisted that the expellees be comprised of both sexes and all age groups and that food be provided for those who needed it.<sup>205</sup> Therefore, on his return to Szczecin Zaremba immediately issued a public notice informing Germans that free and safe transport would be provided for them from Szczecin Niebuszewo station to Greifswald between the dates of 15 and 20 November 1945. These notices also informed prospective expellees that they would be allowed to carry 50 kg of belongings and should take enough food

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<sup>201</sup> UIPG Report, 29 October 1945, APG/1173/7/127.

<sup>202</sup> UIPG Report, 31 October 1945, APG/1173/5/6-7.

<sup>203</sup> UIPG Report, 31 October 1945, APG/1173/5/116.

<sup>204</sup> Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War*, 40-41.

<sup>205</sup> UWS Memo, 2 November 1945, APS/317/1096/3.

supplies for four days.<sup>206</sup> Within only a couple of days, however, reports had come in that copies of the public notice had been torn down, probably by irate Germans, and that the culprits were being sought by the Polish security services.<sup>207</sup>

As all this was going on, Borkowicz reported on the general situation in West Pomerania that November to the MAP. Although he was happy to inform his superiors that there were more and more Polish settlers and fewer Germans, there were still large number of Soviet soldiers in the region. While there had also been an improvement in attitudes to the Red Army due to fewer 'excesses', the UB had caught certain *Volksdeutsch* Poles 'hiding their past and even making use of false documents'. Although crime was still increasing, Borkowicz pointed out that murders were now rare and were usually carried out by drunken soldiers.<sup>208</sup> He also reported that the Soviet authorities in Szczecin were deliberately blocking Polish efforts to have flats confiscated from Germans working for the Soviets in the port which, incidentally, was still closed to the Polish authorities. Moreover, Soviet commanders often engaged in a tedious round of stonewalling before transferring property or livestock to Poles, or just refused to do so point blank. In addition, Soviet units, when not engaged in illegal harvesting, were driving Polish settlers out of the region by destroying their crops by conducting tank and cavalry manoeuvres on their land. Moreover, farms which the Red Army did eventually hand over to the local Polish administration were left with poor levels and quality of livestock and stripped of anything which could be defined as equipment, even windows and doors.<sup>209</sup> Such Soviet rapacity for war booty was reflected across the region. In Lębork, for instance, newly-arrived settlers complained that all the livestock had been requisitioned from their farms by the time they arrived. Consequently, they were left with nothing to eat but potatoes and water for their first winter in the Baltic Recovered Territories.<sup>210</sup>

Back in Szczecin, the first transport of German expellees was set to leave on 20 November with 455 families. Obviously aware of what could happen *en route*, Zaremba asked the Soviets beforehand to 'ensure that the transport encounters no obstacle on its way to Greifswald' and that the train be returned to Szczecin 'as soon as possible' following the disembarkation of the Germans.<sup>211</sup> Borkowicz, former Red Army

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<sup>206</sup> UWS Public Notice, 9 November 1945, APS/317/1096/1.

<sup>207</sup> UWS Report, marked 'Confidential', 11 November 1945, APS/317/1097/11.

<sup>208</sup> Borkowicz to MAP, UWS Report, 10 November 1945, APS/317/939/153-169.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. 170-198.

<sup>210</sup> Lębork PPR Report, 14 November 1945, APG/2603/6/25.

<sup>211</sup> UWS Memo, 18 November 1945, APS/317/1096/7.

colonel, was particularly enthusiastic about these transfers and wrote to local government officials, as well as the UB and the MO, to say that the expulsions of Germans had to be stepped up now that the harvest was over. He was particularly concerned that 'suitable conditions for the voluntary leaving of Germans across the Oder are created' and that a campaign to be launched 'so that the largest number of Germans leave'. He also advised that the date of the expulsions 'must be kept top secret in order to prevent the destruction of equipment and buildings by the Germans themselves who are to be expelled.'<sup>212</sup>

When, on 20 November, the day of the first transport arrived in Szczecin, Waclaw Brokowski, a Polish official assigned to the transport, noted that only 500 expellees had turned up by 7.30 that morning. Moreover, when Polish customs officers began conducting strict baggage inspections and confiscations, over half of the German passengers withdrew from the transport in protest, leaving only 674 Germans for transportation.<sup>213</sup> Although the this first transport reached its German destination delayed but unhindered, on the return journey Soviet officials in Pasewalk attempted to confiscate the Polish train. Realizing that this disturbing experience did not bode well for the future, Brokowski frankly informed his superiors that there was 'an unfriendly attitude and a lack of cooperation from the Soviet authorities in the campaign to resettle Germans from Poland to Germany.'<sup>214</sup>

Despite all the problems of which engulfed the region, branches of the Polish Workers' Party in Pomerania reported an increase in membership during the last quarter of 1945, probably due to their *ad hoc* policy of temporarily laying aside ideology and making compromises with those it needed to aid in 'degermanisation' and 'repolonisation.' To take Lębork County as an example, in early October the PPR there had had only 24 sub-branches comprising 139 members.<sup>215</sup> By the end of November, however, the number of sub-branches had increased to 32 and members to 234. Even at this early stage when the PPR and PSL were ostensibly government coalition partners, cooperation between these parties was non-existent in Lębork. The PSL, although reported to be organisationally very weak, was believed to have taken control of the county council administration.<sup>216</sup> Moreover, the PPR, like every group and institution in the Recovered Territories at the time, seemed to have attracted its

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<sup>212</sup> UWS Report, marked 'Top Secret', 21 November 1945, APS/317/1097/17.

<sup>213</sup> UWS Report, 28 November 1945, APS/317/1096/11-12.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. 12-13.

<sup>215</sup> Lębork PPR Report, 5 October 1945, APG/2603/8/7.

<sup>216</sup> Lębork PPR Report, 30 November 1945, APG/2603/8/11-12.

fair share of opportunists. Therefore, when one Party member was accused of straying from Marxist ideology by running a private shop, he countered that it was part of his own effort to 'repolonise' the region.<sup>217</sup>

The end of 1945 in the Olsztyn Province saw relations between the Masurian population and the new Polish settlers improving, although the general mood of people towards the government was reported to be highly dependent on the security situation, law and order and rising crime. While it was slowly changing into a more normal society where political parties had a real presence, the material situation of the settlers was still dreadful, leading Polish officials to believe that many of them would leave for central Poland as winter approached. Apart from the abysmal standard of living there, settlers were still suffering from rising crime due to poor discipline in both in the Polish and Soviet Armies, a badly-trained police force and a lack of inspections of the civil administration.<sup>218</sup> Unfortunately, as the very difficult economic situation was compounded by a severe lack of seed grain and potatoes, farmers had little to look forward in the coming year. As if this was not bad enough, the major ongoing problems with sanitation, a lack of medical care and the accompanying spread of diseases such as typhoid and VD, had not abated. To add insult to injury, Olsztyn Province was particularly badly affected by very poor communications and transport.<sup>219</sup> Similar problems remained in Gdansk Province, as the end of the year drew to a close. Some towns, such as Bytów, were stable and organised enough to have forced all its German inhabitants into one part of the town to make the expulsions more efficient.<sup>220</sup> Other towns, such as Kwidzyń, were still plagued with robberies of Polish settlers by Soviet soldiers who stole horses, bicycles, cows, money and even laundry.<sup>221</sup>

Summing up the end of the year for his superiors in the MAP, Thomas Bronisław, one of Borkowicz's deputies in West Pomerania, was convinced that most Polish settlers were ready to put up with the hardships 'when it is demanded by Polish reasons of state and on which depends the future of the country and the Polish people settling in the region.' Moreover, settlers were still distrustful of the Red Army due to robberies and the drunken 'pranks' of Soviet officers and soldiers, with Bronisław observing that the number of these incidents was continually increasing due to the

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<sup>217</sup> Lębork PPR Judgment, 29 November 1945, APG/2603/6/34.

<sup>218</sup> UIPO Report, 30 November 1945, APO/500/12/7.

<sup>219</sup> UIPO Report, 30 December 1945, APO/500/12/42.

<sup>220</sup> UIPG Report, Late November/Early December 1945, APG/1173/5/10-12.

<sup>221</sup> UIPG Report, November 1945 to January 1946, APG/1173/9/24.

large groups of demobilised Soviet soldiers hanging around nearby collection points waiting to be sent home. Officially, he noted, there had been eight murders of Poles in November by Soviet soldiers, although he was certain that there had been more. Although Polish settlers were in possession of 27,000 farms in West Pomerania, Germans and Soviet units still controlled the same number. In addition, many Polish settlers from the east had arrived with little or nothing, and 'the aid that they receive is so little that it often just stops them dying of hunger.'<sup>222</sup>

Although the expulsions of Germans were planned to transfer hundreds of thousands of people within a matter of months, concern was growing in the Polish administration that a large number of Germans designated as skilled workers had been, as yet, spared expulsion. This led one official to investigate the matter and conclude that among the many Germans employed in Szczecin's offices, very few could actually be considered indispensable experts.<sup>223</sup> In late December, however, the mistreatment of German expellees became a serious issue once again. One official felt obliged to request that an army post be quickly set up in Szczecin Gumieńce transfer assembly point as the 1,500 to 2,000 Germans who were passing through every day were being robbed by 'elements presenting themselves in military uniforms and who are heavily armed.'<sup>224</sup> As the New Year approached, however, a less caring official in Koszalin suggesting expelling all the Germans across the Oder on one particular day as he believed that those in West Pomerania 'especially in the countryside are starting to organise and revitalize themselves in a spirit of freedom.'<sup>225</sup>

In conclusion, the official Polish documentation covering the initial Polish settlement of the Baltic Recovered Territories paints a picture of a region severely affected by uncertainty and instability. Moreover, the irony is that the 'repolonisation' and Sovietisation of these regions was placed in serious jeopardy mainly by the actions of the Red Army. Moreover, the high levels of crime, looting and corruption in Gdansk, Olsztyn and Szczecin provinces, mainly due which Red Army units engaged in supported the stereotype of the Polish 'Wild West' throughout Poland, thereby further discouraging potential settlers. Indeed, for those who did arrive in the Recovered Territories through forced migration or a sense of patriotic 'pioneer' duty, the appalling living, working and security conditions which the Polish settlers had to face during that first year undoubtedly tested their resolve to the limit.

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<sup>222</sup> Bronisław to MAP, UWS Report, 7 December 1945, APS/317/939/199-227.

<sup>223</sup> UWS Memo, marked 'Confidential', 24 December 1945, APS/317/1099/17.

<sup>224</sup> UWS Report, marked 'Confidential', 28 December 1945, APS/317/1097/37.

<sup>225</sup> UWS Memo, marked 'Secret', 31 December 1945, APS/317/1096/25.

Thus, the regime's ideological and political goal of creating a completely Sovietised society from the bottom-up was gravely obstructed by the chaotic and unstable conditions encountered by Polish communist officials who followed the Red Army into the Baltic Recovered Territories in 1944 and 1945. As the cooperation of all Poles was vital in presenting the outside world with a *fait accompli* of lands which were 'degermanised' and 'repolonised, Party officials were forced to make compromises and accommodations, or at the very least avoid conflict, with groups and individuals who, in normal circumstances, would not be allowed any role in a Sovietised society. The specific nature of the Baltic Recovered Territories, however, meant that Polish officials often came into conflict with their ostensible allies while being forced to make compromises with those hostile to communism. Therefore, not only were there the obvious hostilities between Poles and Germans during 'degermanisation' but between Polish officials and Red Army units who not only attempted to protect and monopolize German skilled workers but keep out Polish settlers. There is a certain black irony here, of course, with the Poles implementing a 'population transfer' policy after the war that, to outsiders at least, seemed similar in practice to the brutal Nazi 'ethnic cleansing' which had been used against the Polish people during the war. Moreover, there was the further irony of the Soviets protecting their erstwhile enemy, the Germans, and obstructing the aims of their ostensible allies, the Poles. Apart from this, internal divisions quickly became apparent among this new Polish society regarding groups which did not fit into the conventional wisdom regarding concepts of 'Polishness'. Although such divisions should have made it easier to Sovietise, it proved difficult for Party activists to penetrate closely-knit groups of settlers and indigenous communities suspicious of outsiders. Moreover, the indiscipline of members of the security services not only created popular resentment towards the communists, but also caused conflicts to arise with Polish officials and Party members.

As we have seen, the expulsion of the Germans brought benefits, as well as challenges for the regime regarding its 'repolonisation' and Sovietisation campaigns. During this first 'wild' phase in 1944-1945, the communists sought to legitimize Poland's claim to the Recovered Territories by convincing the Western Allies that Germans had already left, although many of them were still on the move at the time. Despite several protests from the Western Allies to cease 'wild' transfers of Germans, by the end of 1945 the Polish authorities in West Pomerania had managed to expel almost 300,000 people across the border, thereby making room for Polish settlers and securing Poland's western border.<sup>226</sup> However, in Olsztyn Province 'degermanisation'

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<sup>226</sup> Stanisław Jankowiak, "'Cleansing' Poland of Germans: The Province of Pomerania, 1945-1949," in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, ed. Philip Ther and Ana Siljak (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2001), 87-103.

resulting from the flight of many indigenous Warmians and Masurians to Germany caused serious problems.<sup>227</sup> By May 1945 Olsztyn Province was massively depopulated with only 125,000 inhabitants, mainly due to colossal levels of war damage, causing potential settlers to move quickly on to greener pastures further west. Moreover, as Claudia Kraft points out, the behaviour of the Red Army towards Poles regarding forced labour and rape was a 'decisive factor' in the settlers' desire to flee the region while the conditions of hunger, disease and instability which the Polish settlers had to endure in Olsztyn Province were even more appalling than other regions. In fact, it proved so difficult to attract permanent Polish settlers to this already underpopulated and unstable region that at the stroke of a pen in late 1945 tens of thousands of Germans and Masurians still living there were reclassified as 'Poles' in order keep them from leaving.<sup>228</sup>

To conclude, the regime's *ad hoc* policy of compromise which resulted in securing the acquiescence, if not the support, of rival organisations and individuals greatly helped in achieving a significant degree of 'degermanisation' and 'repolonisation' during 1945. Moreover, as we have seen, some local communist officials were prepared not only to overlook open expressions of opposition but even protect German 'anti-fascists' in an attempt to deal with the alarmingly high-levels of under-population in these provinces just after the war. Indeed, the realisation that such compromises were necessary, even if only on the grounds of expediency, permeated upwards through the provincial governors and back to their superiors in Warsaw. Moreover, as 1946 was to be the year in which the largest number of Germans were expelled, the policy of compromise could not be abandoned. However, the conflicts, particularly those with the Red Army which threatened to undermine Polish settlement of the Baltic Recovered Territories, as well as Sovietisation, would also continue.

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<sup>227</sup> UIPO Report, 31 December 1945, APO/500/12/31.

<sup>228</sup> Claudia Kraft, "Who is a Pole, and Who is a German? The Province of Olsztyn in 1945," in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, ed. Philip Ther and Ana Siljak, *Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series* (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield Inc., 2001), 107-18.

## Chapter Two – 1946

### 2.1 Main Issues of Time Period

The events of 1946 were crucial in the Sovietisation of the Baltic Recovered Territories and Poland in general, with the communist-led regime incrementally gaining power by identifying and liquidating its enemies, either through stealth or more forceful means. Despite these practices, Polish inhabitants of the Baltic region were still willing to lend it a certain degree of support due to their fears of German revanchism and were often prepared to turn a blind eye both to communist attempts to grab and consolidate power. Notwithstanding Soviet marauding, they also tolerated the presence of the Red Army which they hoped would guarantee Poland's claim to the region and their homes from the Germans.<sup>229</sup>

As part of its campaign to persuade the outside world that the Recovered Territories were a permanent part of the Polish state, a special Ministry for the Recovered Territories (MZO), headed by Władysław Gomułka, the Secretary-General of the PPR and Deputy Prime Minister, was created in November 1945. This move ensured that the communists had direct control of the Recovered Territories while sidelining the role of the Ministry of Public Administration (MAP) and the Ministry for Agriculture, both of which were headed by leaders of the Polish Peasant's Party (PSL), the PPR's rapidly-growing rival and coalition partner whose central platform was land reform.<sup>230</sup> Communist leaders thus hoped that their control of the Recovered Territories, Poland's main repository of free land, would allow them to take the credit for 'degermanisation' and land reform and siphon popularity from the PSL. Moreover, communist control of the MZO meant that the Sovietisation of these ex-German lands could take place without too much interference from other government departments, especially those headed by PSL leaders.

Despite such political rivalries, there was almost unanimous support among Poles for the general goal of 'degermanisation' which peaked in 1946 as the vast majority of Germans were expelled from the Baltic region on internationally-supervised organised transports.<sup>231</sup> However, we will see that there were often problems on the ground in weaning the Polish settlers off benefitting from cheap or

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<sup>229</sup> Marcin Stefaniak, *Działalność aparatu represji na zachodnim pograniczu Polski w latach 1945–1950* (Szczecin: IPN, 2008), 33-34.

<sup>230</sup> Bethell, *Gomułka, His Poland and His Communism*, 109.

<sup>231</sup> Piotr Eberhardt, *Migracje polityczne na ziemiach polskich (1939-1950)* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2010), 179.

free German labour. In addition, the policy of 'repolonisation' proved more problematic due to the major challenges involved in finding suitable homes and farms for the two million Poles 'repatriated' from lands beyond the Curzon Line, many of whom were to settle in the Baltic Recovered Territories. Indeed, we will see that the speed and momentum behind the expulsions of Germans was not only dependent on the Polish regime completing this operation by an internationally agreed deadline of 30 June (later extended to 23 December), but by the urgent need to make room for the enormous numbers of eastern repatriates.<sup>232</sup> Although the PPR again hoped to court popularity among this new settler group by providing lands, accommodation and jobs, the easterners' personal experience of Soviet rule made them wary of communists and resistant to Sovietisation.

Moreover, 1946 also saw the PPR planning ahead to its next operation namely, to rid the coalition government of its PSL partners and identify regions where opposition support was still strong.<sup>233</sup> As we will see, shocked at the levels of PSL support during a referendum in June, the PPR took the decision to falsify the results. It then spent the rest of the year harassing and systematically weakening their political enemies who were finally destroyed in rigged elections which took place in January 1947.

## **2.2 Organised 'Transports' of Germans Continue**

The year 1946 began with senior MZO officials issuing orders as to how the expulsion of the Germans was to be carried out. As we saw Chapter One, the first transports of expellees had encountered serious organisational, logistical and humanitarian problems. Despite this, the MZO hoped up to 6,000 Germans per day (4,000 of these from Szczecin) would be transported from Poland to the British zone. Polish settlers were also told to occupy German properties before their owners were expelled in order to protect them from destruction or looting, although Polish authorities also issued warnings that those who abused German expellees were to be 'severely and harshly punished'.<sup>234</sup> Such abuse is evidenced by a poster which appeared in the border town of Świnoujście in mid-January, condemning 'the shocking spread of venereal disease in this district among the German population' and ordering a compulsory medical examination of all German women there.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Płotek, *Trudne pocztki: Okręg Mazurski w latach 1945-1946*, 206-07.

<sup>233</sup> Paczkowski, *The Spring Will be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*, 181.

<sup>234</sup> MZO Order marked 'Very Urgent', no date but probably January 1946, APS 317/1099/1.

<sup>235</sup> Poster/Public Notice, 14 January 1946, APS 317/1099/205.

Although calls for the humane treatment of German expellees echoed down through the Polish administrative ranks, it was difficult for officials to ensure this was the case on the ground. For instance, Leonard Zarębski, the administrative head of Kołobrzeg County in West Pomerania, was outraged that the local Polish rural militia had already been caught stealing jewellery, watches, handbags and even slippers from expellees.<sup>236</sup> The security situation was much worse at Szczecin Gumieńce, the main transfer assembly point in West Pomerania for transporting German expellees to the British and Soviet zones. Although transports under the name of Operation 'Swallow' were to officially begin on 23 February 1946, between late November 1945 and mid-January 1946, approximately 100,000 Germans had already passed through the facility before the Polish administration finally agreed to halt these 'wild' expulsions due to British and Soviet protests that they were neither orderly nor humane.<sup>237</sup>

The Polish authorities were also disturbed the fact that various Soviet delegations had come from Berlin making a wide range of demands, including that all sick expellees to be first sent to Polish hospitals before transporting them to the Soviet zone and that the Poles build baths, hotels, feeding centres at Gumieńce. Indeed, there was the fear that Soviets may soon demand that a quarantine be set up lasting several weeks, a move which would jeopardize the entire expulsion operation by creating enormous backlogs of destitute refugees before the 30 June deadline. Polish officials were also worried by the presence of foreign journalists and diplomats in Szczecin 'who are not always positively disposed towards our country' witnessing such chaotic conditions on the Polish side of the border.<sup>238</sup> In late January, Leonard Borkowicz, the Governor of Szczecin Province, even suggested that the Gumieńce camp be shut and the main assembly point moved west of the German-Polish border to Pasewalk, arguing that it would place responsibility for unloading and feeding expellees on the Germans themselves and remove opportunities for anti-Polish propaganda. He also requested that Soviet Marshal Zhukov order his commanders in Germany to stop hindering the expulsions from Poland to the Soviet zone. In fact, Polish relations with these Red Army officers was so poor that Borkowicz's own delegate had been recently turned away at the border.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Report from Kołobrzeg County by Leonard Zarębski, 15 January 1946, APS 317/1098/1.

<sup>237</sup> MRN Szczecin report marked 'Confidential', no date but probably January 1946, APS 317/1097/29. For a detailed account of Operation 'Swallow' see Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland 1944-1950*, 39-47.

<sup>238</sup> UWS memo by Stefan Kosior marked 'Secret and Urgent', 23 January 1946, APS 317/1098/4-11.

<sup>239</sup> Borkowicz to MZO, 29 January 1946, APS 317/1098/15.

While Soviet commanders on the German side of the border did not want to let unproductive Germans in, many Poles did not want to let able-bodied German workers out. Borkowicz, however, was uncompromising in his demand that skilled Germans be included in the expulsions, even if employed by the Red Army.<sup>240</sup> Indeed, he put in a request to his superiors in late January that the Soviets be asked to issue clear orders regarding the transports to avoid difficulties: 'The lack of such orders leave the fortunes of the whole campaign under a question mark – because, as practical experience in this region has indicated up to now – the Soviet army, which employs most of the working German people, categorically opposes being deprived of its workforce.'<sup>241</sup>

### **2.3 Local issues and the Appearance of the Armed Underground**

Apart from the expulsion programme, early 1946 saw Polish officials making preparations for official commemorations of the Red Army's 'liberation' of various parts of the Baltic Recovered Territories, which would occur in various towns from January to late spring.<sup>242</sup> Local Party activists, however, were mainly concerned with the settlement of Poles, as well as increasing the PPR's influence. In the county of Lębork, Gdansk Pomerania to take one example, although Polish settlement was going well, nearly 30,000 Germans remained to be expelled.<sup>243</sup> Moreover, while local communists were pleased at the Party's growth from 282 to 349 members in January 1946 alone, some expressed the fear that they were attracting a significant number of opportunists to their ranks.<sup>244</sup> This fear was even stronger regarding the PPS, the communists' socialist 'sister party', in which political and 'class enemies' were suspected to have found a hiding place.<sup>245</sup> The increase in the PPR's membership early that January was part of a vigorous recruitment drive all over the country which had seen numbers swell to 235,000 at its first national party congress the previous month. Over the next two to three years, the feverish desire to increase numbers led to many opportunists and those with dubious political pasts being accepted into the PPR's ranks. Undoubtedly, such people were attracted by the benefits which came with

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<sup>240</sup> MRN Szczecin plan by Leonard Borkowicz marked 'Secret', no date but probably late January/early February 1946, APS 317/1097/47.

<sup>241</sup> UWS memo by Leonard Borkowicz, 22 January 1946, APS 317/1098/13.

<sup>242</sup> UWO Circular, 14 January 1946, APO 500/1/21.

<sup>243</sup> PPR Lębork report, 14 January 1946, APG 2603/11/37.

<sup>244</sup> APG 2603/8/17-19, PPR Lębork report, 31 January 1946, APG 2603/8/17-19.

<sup>245</sup> PPR Lębork report, 4 January 1946, APG 2603/8/14-16.

holding a party card, such as access to jobs, food, clothing and housing, especially in the Recovered Territories, where such things were in particularly scarce supply.<sup>246</sup>

Economic issues and an appalling lack of public security continued to be very serious problems all over the Baltic region. The main threat, as usual, came from the presence of Soviet units asset-stripping properties, favouring German skilled workers over Polish settlers and even destabilising Polish rule. Indeed, one report from a Polish official in West Pomerania reported a rumour being spread by a Soviet officer that Szczecin was to be a 'Free City' with a Soviet population of 30%. More seriously, armed Soviet intervention to prevent their expulsion had resulted in many Germans believing that the new Polish administration would soon be pushed out of the region.<sup>247</sup> Certain Soviets units had claimed to be protecting Germans from 'Polish Terrorism', before robbing and raping them as they left for the Reich. Faced with such a situation, an official in Koszalin noted, 'a section of the people does not see a friend and ally in the Red Army. Voices [asking] why the Red Army is still in Poland and why [it] is exploiting it as a conquered country are [heard] more and more often'.<sup>248</sup> Furthermore, apart from damage caused by Soviet asset-stripping 'Ships on the rivers or along the coast are in the hands of the Red Army and are off-limits to the Polish authorities'.<sup>249</sup>

In Gdansk Pomerania, Party activists began to make strident attacks on the PSL, accusing it of being supported by 'reactionary-fascist' anti-communist underground groups.<sup>250</sup> Whether with such links were true or not, communists there increased attacks as the threat from the PSL became more real.<sup>251</sup> The Baltic provinces were largely free of underground armed groups until the arrival of the Polish Home Army's 5<sup>th</sup> Vilnius Brigade, comprised of battle-hardened soldiers moving westwards from their former homes beyond the Curzon Line. It was led by the elusive Zygmunt Szendzielarz, more commonly known by his *nom-de-guerre* 'Łupaszko', a name which soon became attached to entire brigade. From December 1945 to April 1946 Łupaszko's highly-mobile units covered a wide geographical range along the Baltic coast where they stole cars and robbed banks, co-operatives and railway stations. Anxious to show that such activity was not mere banditry but 'requisitioning' by the

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<sup>246</sup> M.K. Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History* (Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 192.

<sup>247</sup> UWS report marked 'Secret', 7 January 1946, APS 317/942/23-27.

<sup>248</sup> UWS report by Thomas Bronisław, 7 January 1946, APS 317/939/233-235.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 240-261

<sup>250</sup> UIPG Memo, 18 February 1946, APG 1173/4/21.

<sup>251</sup> UIPG Memo, 22 February 1946, APG 1173/4/24-28.

Polish Army, 'Łupaszko' always had a signed requisition order left at the scene which itself had a propaganda value.<sup>252</sup> The group's activities soon broadened out to gathering weapons and intelligence, recruitment, as well as conducting assassinations of PPR activists, such as those which took place in Białogard and Koszalin in March 1946.<sup>253</sup>

With communists now fearing that the PSL had acquired a dangerous armed wing, counties all over the region were soon asked to assess the strength of its support, a difficult task as the PSL was still organising itself. Officials in Tczew reported, however, that although the PSL was not very strong there, locals were uninterested in commemorating the anniversary of Lenin's death.<sup>254</sup> Moreover, its Propaganda Office complained that the local priest was monopolizing the best meeting hall in town and therefore preventing it from running its anti-PSL campaign.<sup>255</sup> Sometimes such Soviet-style propaganda campaigns and attempts to discredit rivals were clumsy and unconvincing, especially when it was clear provocation. In West Pomerania, for example, the UB were ostensibly asked to investigate an incident in which someone had hung a banner with the legend 'Down with democracy: Long live the *Sanacja* and Reaction'.<sup>256</sup>

#### 2.4 The Expulsions and International Developments

In February 1946 officials in Szczecin were anxious to come up with arguments to justify the expulsions of Germans, especially the 12,000 under Soviet protection who comprised a fifth of the local German population.<sup>257</sup> Moreover, an official in nearby Nowogard County complained that 'despite strenuous efforts' the Soviets had not provided him with information on how many Germans they employed.<sup>258</sup> Some officials felt that they were in a race against time to 'degermanise' the Recovered Territories with one even entitling his own detailed plan: 'The expulsion of the German

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<sup>252</sup> WUBP Szczecin report, 23 May 1946, IPN Sz 009/43/t.2/133.

<sup>253</sup> Tomasz Łabuszewski Kazimierz Krajewski, Piotr Niwiński, *Brygady „Łupaszki”, 5 i 6 Wileńska Brygada AK w fotografii, 1943-1952* (Warsaw: IPN and Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytym, 2010), 191-192.

<sup>254</sup> Tczew UIP Report, 4 February 1946, APG 1173/6/186.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>256</sup> UWS report, 9 February 1946, APS 317/1051/2. *Sanacja* was the name given to the military regime established in Poland through a coup d'état in 1926 and which stayed in power up to the Second World War.

<sup>257</sup> UWS report marked 'Secret and Urgent', 9 February 1946, APS 317/1099/143-145.

<sup>258</sup> UWS memo marked 'Secret', 9 February 1946, APS 317/1099/169.

population from the city of Słupsk, as a necessary condition for the survival of the Polish government in this region through the creation of a *fait accompli*, which will influence decisions at a future peace conference.<sup>259</sup> In late February an ambitious technical plan for expulsions up to the deadline at the end of June was drawn up, estimating the number to be forcibly migrated at 276,000, of whom 75,000 were to be expelled by 31 March. The amount of food necessary to feed the expellees was outlined in detail, as well as provisions for transport and medical care.<sup>260</sup> Restrictions were also placed on the amount of foreign currency to be allowed per expellee.<sup>261</sup> Further orders were issued warning Germans not to destroy their remaining property and ordering them to report to an office where an inventory of their belongings would be carried out.<sup>262</sup>

As the 'organised population transfers' were taking place in full view of the international media, Poland's image abroad suffered, a situation not improved by the visible presence of the Red Army behind the scenes. By the spring of 1946 it was becoming more generally accepted that the world was quickly splitting into two opposing camps. Such views were crystallized by Winston Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech delivered in Fulton, Missouri on 5 March in which he stated: 'From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent [where] ... the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe ... are all subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high, and some cases, increasing, measure of control from Moscow.'<sup>263</sup> In Poland part of this increasing control was evidenced by the fact that there had not been 'free and unfettered elections' as promised at Yalta and Potsdam. Churchill's speech was, therefore, an unwelcome reminder of the regime's international obligations. Although there was a flurry of speeches from PPR activists stridently condemning the former British Prime Minister's audacity for stating what most knew to be obvious, they had to accept that some kind of electoral exercise would soon have to be held, if only to placate international opinion.

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<sup>259</sup> UWS Plan marked 'Confidential', no date but probably February 1946, APS 317/1099/181-188.

<sup>260</sup> UWS Technical Plan, 19 February 1946, APS 317/1097/69-86.

<sup>261</sup> UWS Circular marked 'Confidential', 20 February 1946, APS 317/1097/89.

<sup>262</sup> UWS Public Order, 26 February 1946, APS 317/1097/99.

<sup>263</sup> A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10.

Within days of the 'Iron Curtain' speech, plans were made for Gdansk Women's League to be pressed into fighting the underground and to aid future elections.<sup>264</sup> In Łęborg, Party activists discussed electoral cooperation between the PPR and 'brother organisations', while the local head of the UB was co-opted onto the PPR's county committee.<sup>265</sup> In Olsztyn, local organisations were also instructed to hold demonstrations, lectures or meetings in response to Churchill's speech and discuss plans for an upcoming referendum on national unity and 'the battle with terrorist sabotage groups'.<sup>266</sup> At a meeting in the rural borough of Miłomłyn, activists declared that only a communist-run 'Democratic Bloc' would be able to protect the Recovered Territories and world peace in the face of Churchill's so-called 'Anglo-Saxon imperialist' statements.<sup>267</sup> Contacts with such imperialists through Poland's Baltic ports was of great concern to the UB which considered them points through which 'underground organisations are constantly being delivered anti-government propaganda, foreign currency, as well as weapons and ammunition from abroad.' Moreover, it believed that 'reactionaries' in the navy were looking for the speedy de-mining of Polish ports as it would allow them 'quick regaining of contact with English submarines, while there are rumours that, even at the moment when the sea is mined, there are several water routes [by which] English submarines sail, supporting the reaction.'<sup>268</sup>

In West Pomerania, the beginning of March saw the massive expulsion programme continually run into problems. Polish officials complained that the expellees faced separate inspections by several Polish armed organisations, as well as the Red Army, 'depending on who gets their hands on them first when they leave the wagons.'<sup>269</sup> When it came to political issues, officials in the county of Nowogard reported that the success of communist propaganda there was said to be very weak. This was due to 'malcontents' latching on to several issues to spread disquiet among the settlers, including the perceived temporary Polish nature of region, the lack of livestock and basic supplies, the settlers being denied legal title to property, as well as 'hostile propaganda' from a 'reactionary element' from central Poland. Despite this, the mood of most people was assessed as positive towards the regime.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> UIPG Circular, 9 March 1946, APG 1173/4/11.

<sup>265</sup> Łęborg County PPR Minutes, 29 March 1946, APG 2603/1/8.

<sup>266</sup> UIPO Circular, 7 March 1946, APO 500/1/311.

<sup>267</sup> UIPO Resolution, 10 March 1946, APO 500/18/94.

<sup>268</sup> MBP report, 25 March 1946, IPN BU 00231/155/t. 32/53.

<sup>269</sup> UWS report, 1 March 1946, APS 317/3426/13.

<sup>270</sup> UIPS report, 3 March 1946, APS 317/1051/24-26.

Early March also saw the MZO again warn local activists and officials to use common sense to make sure that indigenous groups who had yet to receive their certificates of verification were not expelled along with 'real' Germans.<sup>271</sup> However, in West Pomerania the main issue continued to be expelling Germans under Soviet protection to make room for the impending arrival of 50,000 eastern Polish settlers. A tense meeting took place in early March between the Mayor of Szczecin, Piotr Zaremba and the local Soviet delegate, Lt. Col. Frejd, over the Red Army's complete monopolization of the port and its German labour force. When Frejd claimed that the Germans employed there were mostly 'essential experts', Zaremba pointed out that a huge number of them were actually domestic servants and demanded 'the elimination of this parasitical element.' After much discussion, agreement was finally reached that these Germans would be more strictly monitored by the local Polish administration.<sup>272</sup> Reviewing both the period of 'voluntary emigration' up to February 1946 and that of 'forced expulsions' since then, one official calculated that of the more than 1,300,000 Germans in Szczecin Province in 1945, only 250,000 were left. With over one million, therefore, having gone, he was satisfied to report that 'The forced expulsion campaign has, up to now, followed a peaceful course and has taken place in an atmosphere of order ...'<sup>273</sup>

Although Churchill's Iron Curtain speech was denounced at public meetings across the region, there was confusion in the PPR and PPS as to the PSL's true strength in the Baltic provinces.<sup>274</sup> In terms of numbers, the PSL was certainly a threat, despite communist attempts to play down their significance. For example, the membership of 'Democratic' (i.e. communist-controlled) parties in Stargard County were said to number 800 people all together, while the PSL alone comprised about one thousand. PPR activists, however, saw potential recruits in the near-destitute Polish 'repatriates from Siberia' whose spirits and political attitudes, they naively believed, could be improved if their food and clothing needs were supplied by local officials who controlled access to goods donated by the international relief organisation, UNRRA.<sup>275</sup> However, others quickly discerned that eastern settlers desired to return to their homes beyond the Curzon Line, 'as quickly as possible.' More worryingly, they contributed to the strength the PSL in Stargard while communist youth organisations remained 'very weak'. In fact, the local non-communist scout troop, ZWHP (Wici), was

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<sup>271</sup> MZO Circular marked 'Confidential', 3 March 1946, APS 317/1097/109-110.

<sup>272</sup> UWS report marked 'Confidential', 4 March 1946, APS 317/1097/121.

<sup>273</sup> UWS memo by Bronisław Starczewski marked 'Secret', 12 March 1946, APS 317/1099/251-255.

<sup>274</sup> UIPS report, 6 March 1946, APS 317/1051/3.

<sup>275</sup> UIPS report marked 'Secret', 6 March 1946, APS 317/1051/4.

suspected of containing 'a subversive element working to damage the Polish State' with ten of its 116 members under investigation by the UB for working with 'sabotage gangs'.<sup>276</sup>

## 2.5 The Increasing Momentum of the Expulsions and the PSL Threat

Despite the efforts of some PPR activists to make out that the PSL had little support in the Recovered Territories, local propaganda offices took the PSL threat seriously.<sup>277</sup> The terrible economic and security situation, of course, made communist propaganda very difficult to sell to Polish settlers as official reports make clear.<sup>278</sup> Fear of Soviet marauders continued to be widespread all over the Baltic region. When in March 1946 news came to Pisz in Olsztyn Province that a Red Army unit was to be stationed there, the county manager reported that local inhabitants 'have been enveloped by panic. The settlers are abandoning their homes and intend to move back to central Poland with all their property.'<sup>279</sup> The PPR was, of course, very concerned that these problematic issues could be exploited by the PSL. One official in West Pomerania reported that 'Everywhere the reactionary element uses every shortcoming which exists for their own ends, ... hijacking the community's trust towards the government which results in a passive state of the community.'<sup>280</sup> Attacks displaying insecurity over Poland's new borders directly reached Mayor Zaremba in Szczecin who found a handwritten leaflet from the NSZ nationalist underground in his office toilet, declaring:

Poles under Russian occupation, enough of this communist fraud, Szczecin will be German, Russia alone does not decide for the world, Poles! It is a waste to keep your money in Szczecin, the troublemakers will take it from you through various fines and taxes, Mayor Zaremba and the Government Plenipotentiary [Borkowicz] along with their puppets, will not go unpunished ... they are the chosen ones of communism for which they will not avoid punishment ... The UB are bandits of the school of communism, the MO are professional thieves ... Woe betide them. [Signed] NSZ saviours.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> UIPS report marked 'Secret', 8 March 1946, APS 317/1051/8-10.

<sup>277</sup> UIPS programme, 19 March to 2 April 1946, APS 317/1051/17.

<sup>278</sup> UIPS report, 18 March 1946, APS 317/1051/27-30.

<sup>279</sup> Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, 188.

<sup>280</sup> UIPS report, 18 March 1946, APS 317/1051/32.

<sup>281</sup> WUBP Szczecin 'Special Report' to MBP, 25 March 1946, IPN BU 00231/155/t. 40/ 102.

As April approached political activity in the Recovered Territories began to increase as further international pressure was applied on the Polish regime regarding the 'free and unfettered elections' which it had undertaken to conduct 'as soon as possible' under the terms of the Potsdam Agreement.<sup>282</sup> Although Germany had capitulated almost a year earlier, the PPR was shocked to see Hungarian communists recently losing free elections. Thus, it needed to extend this unseemly delay even further in order to prevent its own humiliating defeat at the polls by the Poles. In an effort to buy time, the PPR came up with a strategy of conducting a referendum, which it announced on 5 April, concerning the reforms being introduced by the provisional government. The referendum would serve two key purposes. Firstly, it would be a 'dry-run' for an as-yet untested PPR electoral machine, particularly in how to ensure electoral results could be falsified, while keeping the appearance of a democratic process. Secondly, it would force supporters of the PSL and other opposition parties to reveal themselves, both in terms of numerical strength and geographical location.<sup>283</sup> This would allow the PPR to concentrate its resources on specific target areas of opposition, rather than spreading itself too thinly, when parliamentary elections were eventually to be held. The referendum asked the voters three vague populist policy questions to which the vast majority of Poles would have answered 'yes' in any case, namely: 1) Are you in favour of abolishing the Senate?; 2) Are you in favour of the economic reforms instituted by the new government, the nationalisation of industry and land reform?; 3) Do you want the western frontier with Germany as fixed on the Baltic, the Oder and the Neisse to be made permanent?

Despite the fact that each of the questions were also central planks of PSL's programme, it was clear that 'Three Times "Yes"' would have been interpreted and promoted by the PPR as overwhelming public support for its own political aims. Thus, the PSL needed to find a way to make its presence felt, both to the PPR leadership and their masters in Moscow. To do this, and in spite of its traditional policy of opposing the existence of the Senate, PSL leader Stanisław Mikołajczyk asked supporters to vote 'No' to the first question and 'Yes' to the remaining two. Fearing that the referendum would now turn out to be a public humiliation, the PPR immediately began mobilizing its forces within the Party, security services and local administration while attempting to identify and assess the strength of its opponents.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History*, 9.

<sup>283</sup> Paczkowski, *The Spring Will be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*, 179.

<sup>284</sup> Bartłomiej Kamiński Antoni Z. Kamiński, "'Road to "People's Poland": Stalin's Conquest Revisited,'" in *Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2009), 223.

One of the most significant attempts at a combined administrative, military and political campaign soon occurred in the Baltic Recovered Territories. In Szczecin on 13-14 April, a major propaganda event entitled '*Trzymamy Straż nad Odrą*' ('We'll Keep a Guard on the Oder') took place which included a rally, military parades, as well as cultural and sporting events and was attended by over 50,000 visitors from all over the country.<sup>285</sup> Taking place just five weeks after Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, it was primarily designed to communicate to the outside world, the Soviet Union included, that Poland would fight to keep its newly-acquired lands to the last man, a fact that should be considered by the 'Big Three' at any future peace conference.<sup>286</sup> It also hoped to show Poles that rumours of the 'Wild West' were untrue and that West Pomerania had much to offer Poles should they decide to settle there. However, there was no escaping the fact that the rally had a strong political and propaganda basis which the regime hoped to use to its full advantage, especially with the 'Three Times "Yes"' referendum now on the horizon.

However, rather than unity the Szczecin rally inadvertently showed the political tensions which divided the Polish people. With the cream of the regime's leadership in attendance including Polish President Bolesław Bierut, Foreign Minister Edward Osóbka-Morawski and Marshal Michał Rola-Żymierski, the head of the Polish Army, the communists once again hoped to gain cheap popularity through portraying themselves as defenders of the Recovered Territories. This plan was upset, however, with the arrival of PSL leader, Stanisław Mikołajczyk who received a rapturous reception from large sections of the crowd, particularly from the Polish Scouts. Indeed, the loud chanting of his name by thousands of scouts, described by an eyewitness 'a glaring manifestation of the political mood of those in Szczecin and the guests present', so disgusted Bierut that he stormed off the podium, followed by a 'red-faced and raging' Borkowicz. In revenge, the Polish Scouts were banned from taking part in the parade the following day, although groups praising the Home Army were allowed to march.<sup>287</sup> While the rally did succeed in its aim of promoting Szczecin Province as a stable and attractive place for settlement, the crowd's enthusiastic reception of Mikołajczyk showed the regime, and everyone else there, the uncomfortable and embarrassing truth that the communists did not have mass support, either in West Pomerania or in Poland generally.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> UWS report, 29 May 1946, APS 317/333/37.

<sup>286</sup> UWS Press Release, 29 March 1946, APS 317/238/3.

<sup>287</sup> Memoir of Irena Szydłowska, *Pamiętniki Osadników*, IZP, Memoir No. P 210/9.

<sup>288</sup> For a detailed account of the April 1946 Szczecin rally see Radosław Ptaszyński, *Trzymamy straż nad Odrą. Propaganda-fakty-dokumenty* (Szczecin: IPN, 2007).

With several hundred settlers arriving in Szczecin daily following the rally, officials became concerned that many of the new arrivals were actually vagrants in search of an easy life, or fugitives from the law. As Marcin Zaremba points out, vagrants provided a convenient scapegoat for the chaos and crime resulting from the presence of Soviet marauders who could not be accused openly. On the positive side, the three Baltic provinces comprised the most dynamic employment market in post-war Poland and their rapid absorption of the country's landless and jobless brought national unemployment levels down to just 100,000 by the end of 1946. Indeed, those who were still unemployed in the Baltic region were often bitter towards remaining Germans, especially those under Soviet protection, who they felt were taking their jobs.<sup>289</sup>

In April 1946 the Propaganda Office in Gdansk was initially focused on preparations for the a Soviet-style 1 May workers' holiday, as well as preparing leaflets for the upcoming June referendum.<sup>290</sup> In nearby Łębork, party activists were keen to find ways to have political opponents removed from important posts before the referendum. One target was the mayor of the nearby port of Łeba who was taken to task over the fact that all German-language signs had not been taken down from public view and that some Germans were still running shops there. This, of course, ignored the fact that part of Łeba had been settled by Red Army units who had taken complete control of the port and were protecting local Germans, particularly fisherman.<sup>291</sup> In Olsztyn, the referendum campaign featured Party activists vehemently rejecting accusations that the current PPR-led 'democratic' government was Bolshevik, anti-Polish and anti-clerical. Moreover, they labelled the 'fascist' underground as the only enemies of the 'new Poland, with its new borders.'<sup>292</sup> Although there were reports of violence, such as the murder of a PPR member by 'unknown assailants' near Ostróda that month, it is unclear whether such incidents were motivated by politics, banditry, or both.<sup>293</sup>

In contrast to the provinces of Gdansk Pomerania and Olsztyn, Szczecin Province was still mainly concerned with expelling Germans, rather than the upcoming referendum. This was, of course, because while the other two provinces had merely to send their German populations west, it was Szczecin which had to deal with

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<sup>289</sup> Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, 230-245.

<sup>290</sup> UIPG Circular, 9-10 April 1946, APG 1173/4/16.

<sup>291</sup> Łębork PPR Minutes, 15 April 1946, APG 2603/6/63.

<sup>292</sup> UIPO Report/Paper, No date but probably April 1946, APO 500/1/52-53.

<sup>293</sup> UWO report, 4 April 1946, APO 500/2/25.

coordinating the transports and organise transfer points with food, fuel and medical care for the thousands who arrived daily. Moreover, Governor Borkowicz, despite his success at launching the recent rally in Szczecin, also had to deal with British complaints regarding the poor treatment of German expellees. One official demanded the culprits be punished as 'If there is a repeat of similar situations, we may encounter great difficulties from the British in our campaign to repatriate the Germans.'<sup>294</sup> However, Irena Szydłowska, a former German concentration camp inmate who was now a senior official in West Pomerania, was incensed at British observers being 'concerned that not a hair fall from the heads of the departing Germans'.<sup>295</sup> Indeed, Polish officials were more concerned by the amount of food the German expellees were bringing out of Poland, with the head of customs in Szczecin issuing limits on the four-day food and currency ration.<sup>296</sup> Such concerns were present at the highest levels with Gomułka himself complaining that the departing Germans were indeed taking out too much food and suggesting his own limits.<sup>297</sup>

In May, referendum preparations intensified all over the Baltic region. In Gdansk, communist officials, anxious that information be kept within their ranks, issued strict instructions for civil servants regarding the guarding of 'state secrets'.<sup>298</sup> Smaller towns such as Lębork also drew up plans for mobilising voters and the PPR political machine for the referendum.<sup>299</sup> In parallel with the political campaign, a major issue for the local administration was the spring sowing. This also had propaganda value as it would be the first season in which the Polish settlers themselves would be sowing their own crops on their new farms, thereby creating a stronger link with the Recovered Territories.<sup>300</sup> Officials in Olsztyn drew up a programme for 'Recovered Territories Week', which took place from 2-9 May, and included public demonstrations and the creation of a 'social fund' for settlers in these new lands.<sup>301</sup> Details of preparations for the 'Three Times "Yes"' referendum were drawn up in parallel.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> UWS memo, 9 April 1946, APS 317/3426/47.

<sup>295</sup> Memoir of Irena Szydłowska, *Pamiętniki Osadników*, IZP, Memoir No. P 210/7-8.

<sup>296</sup> UWS instructions, 20 April 1946, APS 317/3426/81.

<sup>297</sup> MZO instructions marked 'Secret', 27 April 1946, APS 317/1099/283.

<sup>298</sup> UIPG instructions, May 1946 APG 1173/1/9-21.

<sup>299</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 22 May 1946, APG 2603/2/44-45.

<sup>300</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 2 May 1946, APG 2603/8/2.

<sup>301</sup> UIPO programme, 2 May 1946, APO 500/1/177.

<sup>302</sup> UIPO instructions, 18 May 1946, APO 500/1/301-308.

While the political mood in Western Pomerania was generally assessed as positive, as in Olsztyn, the lack of basic supplies was causing bad feeling, particularly among eastern settlers who were complaining 'that they had left a lot behind and had received almost nothing.' Officials dealing with these easterners, however, in turn accused them of being 'unwilling do any work, wanting, in a word, to do nothing and live well.'<sup>303</sup> Moreover, with the end of June not only signifying the referendum, but the deadline for completing the expulsions, the Mayor of Szczecin held serious doubts whether this could be achieved. He was especially worried whether the Germans under Soviet protection were going to be still in Szczecin even after the deadline had passed, or that they would be granted Soviet citizenship deliberately to protect them from expulsion.<sup>304</sup>

## **2.6 The Armed Underground Attempts to Destabilize the 'Three Times "Yes"' Referendum**

In the wake of the announcement of the referendum the 'Łupaszko' brigade changed its strategy from 'fundraising' through armed robbery to open conflict with the regime. From April, it was organised into four uniformed 'flying column'-type squadrons and assembled for training in the forest of Bory Tucholskie which lay south of Gdansk near the borders of Olsztyn and Bydgoszcz provinces. With support from ex-Home Army officers based in the 'Tri-City' of Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot, from their hidden forest base the 'Łupaszko' squadrons were able to launch surprise attacks on railway lines and other communications within a range of hundreds of kilometres, even deep into West Pomerania.<sup>305</sup> 'Łupaszko' units were largely self-sufficient in the field and requisitioned supplies and money from state-run institutions rather than settlers to avoid turning these new arrivals into spies for the regime. This, and their highly-mobile tactics allowed small squadrons to carry out many attacks throughout May 1946, killing up to 19 UB/MO officers and agents while losing only one soldier. Indeed, during a twelve-hour period on 19 May one squadron managed to attack six MO stations, two UB offices and several co-operatives in the counties of Stargard and Kościerzyna.<sup>306</sup> The resulting propaganda coup for the underground forced Party organs in Gdansk to label the 'Łupaszko' units as those who 'murder their brothers who are acting to

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<sup>303</sup> UIPS report marked 'Confidential', 13 May 1946, APS 317/1051/55.

<sup>304</sup> MRN Szczecin memo, 29 May 1946, APS 317/1097/139.

<sup>305</sup> WUBP Szczecin report, 30 May 1946, IPN Sz 009/43/t.2/117.

<sup>306</sup> Kazimierz Krajewski, *Brygady „Łupaszki”, 5 i 6 Wileńska Brygada AK w fotografii, 1943-1952*, 193-194.

defend the workers and peasants.<sup>307</sup> However, due to overwhelming odds and the fact that newly-arrived settlers with no previous links to the region could not provide a suitable support base, 'Łupaszko' was soon forced on to the defensive and forced to retreat from Gdansk Pomerania to Olsztyn Province.

While Olsztyn region offered the potential for expansion and freer rein to launch attacks, 'Łupaszko' was still limited to small squadrons which needed to be self-sufficient when operating in unfamiliar territory. Although in early June three of his squadrons were still strong enough to launch attacks on five MO stations in the Olsztyn/Bydgoszcz border area, the loss of several men within days, including his most effective squadron commander, was a major setback. Moreover, contrary to his expectations, the UB in Olsztyn was better prepared to deal with the underground than in Gdansk Pomerania and soon had a force of 1,000 soldiers searching for him and his men. Despite this, 'Łupaszko' managed to carry out two attacks aimed at destabilizing the communist's referendum campaign with the liquidation of a Polish Army propaganda unit in Czarny Piec on 23 June and the destruction of a polling station in Stawiguda on the eve of the referendum a week later.<sup>308</sup>

Unfortunately, however, the 'Łupaszko' campaign against the June referendum turned out to be an exercise in futility. Polling, which took place on 30 June 1946, has long been accepted by historians to have been 'conducted in an atmosphere of moral pressure and even physical terror.'<sup>309</sup> All over Poland PSL supporters were removed from jobs while thousands of preventative arrests were made on the grounds of collaboration with the 'reactionary underground.'<sup>310</sup> In the Baltic Recovered Territories, however, such incidents were less frequent compared to central and southern Poland due to much weaker political and administrative structures, as well as the fluid social and demographic nature of the region. Officials in all counties were required to send in detailed and frequent reports throughout June on the political situation regarding the strength of the PSL and underground groups, such as 'Łupaszko', and the mood of the people concerning the referendum.<sup>311</sup>

An example of how the campaign was run in the Recovered Territories is provided by the county of Lębork. With about 500 members, Lębork PPR, had

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<sup>307</sup> Newspaper article probably from *Dziennik Bałtycki*, no date but probably late May 1946, IPN Sz 009/43/t. 5/230-233.

<sup>308</sup> Kazimierz Krajewski, *Brygady „Łupaszki”, 5 i 6 Wileńska Brygada AK w fotografii, 1943-1952*, 195.

<sup>309</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 195.

<sup>310</sup> Antoni Z. Kamiński, "Road to "People's Poland": Stalin's Conquest Revisited'," 223.

<sup>311</sup> Tczew UIP report, 6 June 1946, APG 1173/6/198.

increased its membership by 10% since the referendum campaign began in spring while its youth wing, the ZWM, had rapidly increased from 30 to 263 members.<sup>312</sup> Local communists also had a detailed plan of action for campaigning around the county during the last few weeks before the referendum.<sup>313</sup> Moreover, Lębork's UB and MO officers also compiled reports, later forwarded to local PPR officials, including information regarding the fears that settlers had of collectivisation and the regime's intentions.<sup>314</sup> Party activists were also aware that the local Cashubian population was highly susceptible to rumours and took swift action to counteract them. When, just four days before polling day, a '100% reactionary' Cashubian teacher in Gniewino spread a wave of panic among settlers by claiming that Germans were coming back to retrieve their land, the army was sent in to calm things down.<sup>315</sup> In order to reassure the Cashubian population regarding the referendum in another village, Party activists took the highly unusual step of delivering the main speech in German.<sup>316</sup>

As polling day approached MAP instructions were issued for all civil servants and private citizens to make their vehicles available to the local security services and the electoral commission during the ballot.<sup>317</sup> Lębork PPR duly responded by mobilising its access to resources such as cars and petrol to rally voters for the referendum.<sup>318</sup> Despite fears concerning the forces of 'reaction' the referendum passed off quietly in the county.<sup>319</sup> However, confusion and consternation arose at one polling station where a woman was seen putting a blank voting ballot into the box. This resulted in conflict among the members of the commission whether she had the right to do so or not.<sup>320</sup> The reporting of such incidents was later put to good use by PPR activists, however, as by the elections of January 1947, the law had been changed to count all blank ballot papers as votes for the 'Democratic Bloc.' As the ballots were being counted and it was clear that things had not gone the PPR's way, the local electoral

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<sup>312</sup> Lębork PPR report, 1 June 1946, APG 2603/8/31-33.

<sup>313</sup> Lębork PPR report, 12 June 1946, APG 2603/12/21-22.

<sup>314</sup> Lębork PPR report, 17 June 1946, APG 2603/12/32.

<sup>315</sup> Lębork PPR report, 18 June 1946, APG 2603/12/33.

<sup>316</sup> Lębork PPR report, 27 June 1946, APG 2603/12/42.

<sup>317</sup> MAP Circular, 24 June 1946, APG 1173/1/26-27.

<sup>318</sup> Lębork PPR report, 1 July 1946, APG 2603/12/47.

<sup>319</sup> Lębork PPR report, 30 June 1946, APG 2603/8/40.

<sup>320</sup> Lębork PPR/PPS inter-party committee report, 30 June 1946, APG 2603/5/1.

commission refused to announce the results as it was still 'working' on them.<sup>321</sup> Very quickly, however, the Cashubians were being accused of having shown 'fascist attitudes' by voting 'No' in the referendum and, although no results had been issued yet, PPR activists nervously reported that local 'reactionaries' seemed happy.<sup>322</sup>

In West Pomerania, similar attempts were made to portray all opposition as 'fascists' or 'reactionaries' during the referendum campaign. The borough leader of the village of Mikołajki, for instance, was accused of being a pro-PSL German collaborator, and having contact with underground 'forest gangs'.<sup>323</sup> Some officials were concerned that the level of as-yet unrepaired wartime destruction might have an effect on the vote. Indeed, with an abysmal reconstruction rate of 0.015%, the regime's promotion of itself as the rebuilder of the Recovered Territories was being seriously undermined.<sup>324</sup> Moreover, as the referendum was being conducted it became clear to many who had a behind-the-scenes view of events that a Soviet-style power grab was taking place. Stanisław Bania, a village leader in Drawsko County, who served on the local electoral commission, provided the clearest evidence of the fraudulent nature of the 1946 referendum describing how: 'The representative of the UB who was assigned to [the commission], used a rubber to erase all the words "No" on the [voting] cards and wrote "Yes". The commission members were not allowed to say anything and had to sit there quietly.'<sup>325</sup>

Having seen that the referendum results were such a comprehensive rejection of the PPR's position, the communist leadership's decision to falsify the outcome was made easier when international attention shifted to the occurrence of a serious anti-Jewish pogrom in the southern Polish city of Kielce on 4 July in which over 40 people were brutally killed by a frenzied Polish mob. Thus, when the official results were finally announced on 11 July, few took notice, least of all abroad. In any case, it was clear to most Poles that communist claims that a significant majority of voters had voted 'Three Times "Yes"' were completely bogus. In fact, nationally only 27% had done so while at least 33% had voted 'Three Times "No"'.<sup>326</sup> The level of fraud was clearly visible in the official results for Szczecin Province where support for the three referendum questions came in at 84.7%, 75.6%, 90.2% respectively, while the true

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<sup>321</sup> Lębork PPR Situation Report, 30 June 1946, APG 2603/12/46.

<sup>322</sup> Lębork PPR report, June 1946, APG 2603/8/36.

<sup>323</sup> UIPS report, 26 June 1946, APS 317/1051/62.

<sup>324</sup> UWS report, 16 June 1946, APS 317/333/21.

<sup>325</sup> Memoirs of Stanisław Bania, Pamiętniki Osadników, IZP, Memoir No. P 93/11.

<sup>326</sup> Paczkowski, *The Spring Will be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*, 182-183.

figures were 38.1%, 56.5% and 71%.<sup>327</sup> Moreover, a similar level of weak support for the communists was reflected in Gdansk Pomerania.<sup>328</sup> Therefore, having failed to win genuine popularity and a democratic mandate, either nationally or regionally, the PPR would use all legal and illegal means at its disposal ensure the destruction of the PSL by the time the next electoral test came round. Indeed, as Kenney points out, the significance of the 1946 referendum campaign rested on the fact that 'the communists failed at their first attempt to enforce some political unity on workers.' Afterwards, it would become more and more difficult to ignore or avoid communist policies.<sup>329</sup>

Apart from the referendum that summer, efforts were made to sovietise the Roman Catholic Church. Governor Borkowicz, in particular, was a keen supporter of the 'Polish National Catholic Church' (PNKK), an communist-controlled organisation staffed with 'Patriot-Priests' through which the Party attempted to attract disoriented newly-arrived settlers towards 'progressive Catholicism.' Many settlers, however, spotted the ruse with some placing a note on the door of a Szczecin PNKK chapel calling it an 'heretical church'.<sup>330</sup> Unfortunately, the PNKK's weak situation was not helped by serious problems within its own ranks regarding the moral rectitude of its priests. Indeed, Borkowicz secretly reported that Fr. Brosz, a PNKK priest based in Szczecin, had been arrested while in Lublin on unspecified charges.<sup>331</sup> Moreover, in mid-June another PNKK priest, Fr. Kędzierski, was accused of sexual abuse by a young male parishioner.<sup>332</sup> Undoubtedly, such incidents contributed to Mayor Zaremba's call for the church's withdrawal from Szczecin in mid-1946.<sup>333</sup> In Olsztyn Province, despite growing anti-clerical voices within the regime, it was recognized that the growth of the Roman Catholic Church still had to be aided by local government in order to attract settlers. In late July officials in Lidzbark Warmiński were even instructed to attend a ceremony and a church blessing to commemorate the second anniversary of the Warsaw Rising, itself a highly controversial event in recent Soviet-Polish relations and one which was soon to be officially labelled taboo.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 107.

<sup>328</sup> Baziur, *Armia Czerwona na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1945-1947*, 68.

<sup>329</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 44.

<sup>330</sup> UWS report marked 'Secret', 29 May 1946, APS 317/14789/1.

<sup>331</sup> UWS report marked 'Secret', 18 June 1946, APS 356/14789/3.

<sup>332</sup> Signed Police Statements by Leopold Szuta, 18 and 19 June 1946, APS 356/14783/402-403.

<sup>333</sup> Zaremba to UWS, 25 June 1946, APS 356/14789/4.

<sup>334</sup> UIPO Circular, 31 July 1946, APO 500/1/410.

Despite West Pomerania planning to attract more Poles by promising each settler family farms of 12 ha. compared with average holdings in the rest of Poland at below 5 ha., by July it was reported that only 46% of available farms had been settled. Although both Polish peasants and the Red Army were still using about 78,000 German labourers, the recent expulsion of Germans farmers was reported to have significantly affected sowing and 'farming culture'. In a further compromise to awkward realities, local officials advised that that 'we must take account of the reaction of the specific mentality of the rich peasant.' It was also recognized that the first wave of settlers did not need as much aid as other new arrivals, as it was this group's looting from neighbouring Germans farms which had impoverished later settlers.<sup>335</sup>

As August came local officials attempted to assess the remaining strength of the PSL and other sources of 'reaction' in their own counties following the referendum.<sup>336</sup> In Lębork County for example, trends towards growing PPR control and efforts to keep opponents on the run were clearly apparent. Although the local PPR party had grown to 566 members, the political mood of the county was worsening due to 'reactionary' propaganda being spread about an approaching Third World War.<sup>337</sup> Attempts were also made to link opponents to communism to the Kielce pogrom of the previous month, by labelling it 'murder carried out by bandits and incendiary fascists.'<sup>338</sup> Apart from the threat posed by the PSL, Lębork PPR was also concerned that some in its sister party, the PPS, were actually potential opponents. Having already gained control of the county administration, the UB, the MO and several district councils, mid -1946 saw Lębork PPR attempting to monopolize all local bodies possessing power and authority and neutralize its enemies.<sup>339</sup> Communists within the local police force made calls for colleagues to 'pay particular attention to all reactionary movements and liquidate them.'<sup>340</sup> However, with eight murders having occurred there during a recent three-week period, local Poles were said to be 'very angry and saying that this is not Poland but the Soviet Union, as the murders were carried out by those in Red Army uniforms.'<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> UWS report, no date but probably July 1946, APS 317/79/2-17.

<sup>336</sup> Tczew UIP report, 1 August 1946, APG 1173/6/200-201.

<sup>337</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 1 August 1946, APG 2603/8/41-42.

<sup>338</sup> Lębork MO PPR Minutes, 3 August 1946, APG 2603/16/27.

<sup>339</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 8 August 1946, APG 2603/3/4.

<sup>340</sup> Lębork MO PPR Minutes, 29 August 1946, APG 2603/16/32.

<sup>341</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 28 August 1946, APG 2603/2/51.

In Olsztyn, there were also efforts to capitalize on the PPR's referendum 'victory', mainly through propaganda campaigns.<sup>342</sup> Settlement was going according to plan with a total population in the province of 377,985, a figure which, however, included 61,753 Warmians and Masurians and 97,550 Germans. Officials were pleased to report that the little 'reaction' and 'regression' that could be seen in the province was a result of 'moral corruption picked up by weak characters during war'. Moreover, the Special Commission against Economic Abuse and Speculation, a much-feared extra-judicial body, was using 'total ruthlessness' against speculators while the UB and MO were said to be in complete control of the province.<sup>343</sup>

Indeed, such increasing UB control in Olsztyn and Gdansk Pomerania brought success in liquidating 'Łupaszko' units. It was also greatly aided by Regina Żylińska-Mordas, a 'Łupaszko' liaison officer who agreed to become a UB agent on her arrest.<sup>344</sup> The information which she provided not only revealed the organisation's safe-houses but led to the arrest, torture and execution of several of her former comrades, including medical orderly Danuta Sziedzikówna, better known by her *nom-de-guerre* 'Inka'.<sup>345</sup> Convicted on spurious charges of ordering the shooting of injured enemy combatants to whom she actually had given medical aid, 'Inka' was executed by firing squad in Gdansk prison on 28 August 1946, a week short of her eighteenth birthday.<sup>346</sup> The damage resulting from the betrayal of Żylińska-Mordas, as well as casualties sustained during skirmishes that summer, forced 'Łupaszko' to attempt a return east to Białystok Province, thereby ceasing operations along the Baltic coast by the end of the year.<sup>347</sup>

## 2.7 Jewish Affairs and Polish Settlement in Summer 1946

In contrast to Olsztyn and Gdansk Pomerania where there were relatively few Jews, in West Pomerania the Kielce Pogrom was reported to have caused a 'fundamental change' regarding plans to employ Jews in the province. Indeed, Polish officials complained that Jews were reluctant to take up jobs in West Pomerania, despite

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<sup>342</sup> MIP Circular, 11 August 1946, APO 500/1/147.

<sup>343</sup> UIPO report, 26 August 1946, APO 500/2/51-52.

<sup>344</sup> MBP minutes of interrogation of Regina Żylińska-Mordas, 25 April 1946, IPN Sz 009/43/t.2/81-85.

<sup>345</sup> MBP minutes of interrogation of Regina Żylińska-Mordas, no date but probably 1947/1948, IPN Sz 009/43/t.2/244-259.

<sup>346</sup> Notice of execution of Danuta Sziedzikówna marked 'Top Secret', 28 August 1946, IPN Gd 323/1/156-157.

<sup>347</sup> Kazimierz Krajewski, *Brygady „Łupaszki”, 5 i 6 Wileńska Brygada AK w fotografii, 1943-1952*, 195.

claims that they would be safer there, and were being encouraged to emigrate by Zionists parties.<sup>348</sup> Whether there was an actual threat to the Jewish population of Szczecin following the Kielce Pogrom is difficult to ascertain. However, as West Pomerania's Jewish settlement programme was mainly based on relocating them to under-populated rural areas to create a new class of Jewish farmers, it is possible that local officials were attempting to exaggerate the threat in the city of Szczecin with a view to convincing the Jews that they could find sanctuary in the countryside. This would allow upwardly-mobile Poles to take over urban 'Jewish' jobs in the professions and trade.

A first-hand account of Jewish settlement in West Pomerania is provided by Irena Szydłowska who was one of the Polish officials involved in receiving a large transport of Jews to the region from the USSR in spring 1946. In a city of 50,000 Poles the sudden influx of 30,000 impoverished and emaciated Jews led Mayor Zaremba to consider settling them in separate ghetto-like districts of Szczecin, a move which Szydłowska opposed as against the spirit of 'internationalism'.<sup>349</sup> Moreover, she was outraged that some of the poorest Jews were employed as street cleaners, while 'German civilian workers employed by the Russians were properly dressed, wearing arrogant expressions and speaking German loudly as they travelled to work by car.' She admitted, however, that 'an anti Semitic mood' had begun to break out among the Polish population, with several assaults on Jews occurring in or around the city and that Jewish friends of hers 'had to barricade their front door with tables and wardrobes for the night.' Szydłowska believed that at the time the local administration, herself included, had failed to understand that most of these Jews were intending to use Poland only as a staging post before moving on to western Europe or Palestine and had no real intention of settling in the region. Moreover, with plans to 'resettle' them into the dangerous and impoverished rural areas of West Pomerania, the Kielce pogrom, as well as signs of increasing communist control, convinced any undecided Jews that the opportunity to move west had to be grasped before the border was completely closed.<sup>350</sup>

Jewish affairs were treated seriously by local communists in Szczecin who were upset that the local newspaper, *Kurier Szczeciński*, had not mentioned the Kielce pogrom until ordered to do so. Indeed, the Party's reaction give an insight into the methods used to sovietise independent media. Although Mieczysław Halski, the editor,

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<sup>348</sup> Szczecin KW PPR Minutes, 1 August 1946, APS 825/10/73.

<sup>349</sup> Lower Silesia was home to biggest group of Jews in post-war Poland numbering 47,000 in early 1947, with 20,000 in Wrocław alone. Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 156.

<sup>350</sup> Memoir of Irena Szydłowska, *Pamiętniki Osadników*, IZP, Memoir No. P 210/21-28.

first defiantly replied that that his newspaper was not a PPR party organ, he soon faced an onslaught from Party activists who charged the paper with harbouring 'a nest of ... vermin', comprised of ex-members of pre-war nationalist anti-Semitic parties. A cowed Halski was then warned that he would have 'a much easier time at work if he cooperates with the Party which would allow him at the same time to avoid making many mistakes'. He was then told that it was his duty 'to come to the Party to help it remove hostile people ...' Despite his subsequent efforts to fall into line, however, the PPR's provincial committee unanimously decided that Halski should quickly be replaced as editor with someone politically reliable.<sup>351</sup>

Although in August 1946 the MBP warned that Olsztyn Province was 'mainly under the threat' underground nationalist organisations<sup>352</sup>, poor security in West Pomerania continued to be largely due to Soviet troops who, Party activists admitted, had robbed, raped and even murdered Polish settlers.<sup>353</sup> Thus, with their tools, machinery, crops, homes and animals often confiscated by the Red Army, some Polish settlers were so frightened that they wanted to leave the region as soon as possible. To make matters worse, the PSL was accused by Party activists of spreading rumours about the imminent expulsion of Poles from the region, looming collectivisation and that Poland was due to be absorbed into the USSR as its seventeenth republic.<sup>354</sup>

Following the referendum in June, expectations rose that long-awaited parliamentary elections would take place soon. Nationally, the main political parties grew dramatically during the second half of 1946 with the PPR increasing its membership from 350,000 to 550,000, and the PPS from 200,000 to 400,000. The PSL, however, comprised over 800,000 members in mid-1946.<sup>355</sup> Clearly, the PPR and PPS were going to have to work hard to destroy the PSL before elections took place. Despite conceding that 'we do not yet have political stability in Poland ...', Governor Borkowicz was satisfied that such elections would not only remove western interference in Poland but send a clear message to Poles that there would be no changes regarding 'the democratic regime'. He also warned colleagues that some members of the PPS were hoping to remove the PPR from power by forming a coalition with the PSL. To prevent this he advised, the PPS had to be intensely lobbied by PPR representatives over the coming weeks and months and 'a common language'

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<sup>351</sup> Szczecin KW PPR Minutes, 8 August 1946, APS 825/10/75-78.

<sup>352</sup> MBP to WUBP Olsztyn, 12 August 1946, IPN BU 00231/155/t.3/149.

<sup>353</sup> UIPS report, 13 August 1946, APS 317/1051/66.

<sup>354</sup> UIPS report, no date but probably August 1946, APS 317/1051/67-73.

<sup>355</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 46-51.

used to convince them to toe the line of the 'Democratic Bloc' and to play down their differences in public. Moreover, he outlined that the PPR's plan 'to break the back of PSL' was to be based on a 'political liquidation as much as a police liquidation'. Party activists would also be instructed to tell voters that liquidation of the PSL would finally force the 'Anglo-Saxons' to recognize the new Polish-German border.<sup>356</sup>

## 2.8 The Fallout from Secretary Byrnes' Speech

In early September, as the prospect of elections loomed ever nearer, the PPR was gifted a propaganda coup against the PSL by none other than US Secretary of State, James Byrnes. In a speech in Stuttgart on 6 September 1946, he pointed out that despite the *de facto* situation in which the Recovered Territories were being administered by Poland, the *de jure* status of these territories, as well as their geographical extent, was to be finally decided at a 'Big Three' peace conference which had yet to take place.<sup>357</sup> Thus, while Poland would certainly gain German territory, the implication was that the current border along the Oder-Neisse line had no legal basis and could be revised in Germany's favour.

While the speech caused a wave of outrage among Poles of all political persuasions, near panic resulted in the Recovered Territories where Poles from beyond the Curzon Line felt the seemingly temporary nature of their settlement more keenly than ever. Even the Roman Catholic Church in West Pomerania condemned Byrnes' speech.<sup>358</sup> Amid all the hysteria and wrath, however, the PPR was delighted to have the opportunity to portray the PSL as the lackeys of US and British 'imperialism', allies of the Germans and being prepared to sell the Recovered Territories to Poland's enemies.<sup>359</sup> Moreover, the PPR could now also convincingly claim that the presence of the Red Army and a close alliance with the USSR was vital to protect Poland's territorial integrity.

Although Byrnes probably did not realize just how much his speech played into the hands of the PPR at a crucial juncture in its battle against the PSL, he achieved his aim in forcing Moscow publicly support Poland's new border as permanent and legal, therefore disappointing those Germans who were holding out for Soviet support for border revisions. Although they would never admit it, this also gave Polish communists reassurance that the USSR could no longer countenance using the Recovered

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<sup>356</sup> Szczecin KW PPR Minutes, 26 August 1946, APS 825/10/79-81.

<sup>357</sup> Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War*, 54.

<sup>358</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 107.

<sup>359</sup> Paczkowski, *The Spring Will be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*, 184.

Territories as a bargaining chip to secure a united Germany friendly to Moscow. Thus, whereas the Soviets sought and received support in Poland for guaranteeing the Oder-Neisse Line, the Americans aimed to do the same in Germany by leaving it open to question.<sup>360</sup> The speech also revised the US stance regarding German reparations by declaring that Washington would not prevent Germany's economic recovery, thereby upsetting arrangement with the Soviets to strip Germany of everything but the bare necessities.<sup>361</sup>

Reaction on the ground in the Baltic region to Byrnes' speech was widespread, with county after county passing resolutions against German 'designs on the western border' of Poland while appealing for US support of the Polish position.<sup>362</sup> Despite public PPR/PPS appeals ostensibly looking to cooperate with the PSL, local Party organisations ceaselessly portrayed Mikołajczyk as a danger to the western border and suggested that 'foreign reaction' would lead Poland into a Greek-style civil war.<sup>363</sup> As 'reaction' and the PSL were still relatively weak in Olsztyn Province, settlement issues took precedence over politics with each county being instructed to survey its population, particularly the numbers of Polish settlers, both from central Poland and the east, as well as local Masurians.<sup>364</sup> However, it was noticed that reports of Soviet terror near the eastern repatriates' former home region of Vilnius, which now lay in the USSR, was having a negative effect on their attitude towards the regime in Olsztyn Province.<sup>365</sup>

Indeed, in contrast to the summer period which had been relatively free of 'reaction' when compared to Gdansk Pomerania and West Pomerania, as the autumn came propaganda officials in Olsztyn began to notice signs that this was changing for the worse, with a rise in armed attacks and counter-propaganda. More worryingly this seemed to coincide with the movement of eastern Polish settlers into the province, thus settlers whose personal experience of Soviet rule had made them stridently anti-communist. However, this rise in instability also coincided with the arrival in Olsztyn Province of the longest lasting 'Łupaszko' squadron commanded by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Henryk

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<sup>360</sup> Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War*, 50-51.

<sup>361</sup> Charles S. Maier, "The world economy and the Cold War in the middle of the twentieth century," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 1, Origins*, ed. Odd Arne Westad Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 56.

<sup>362</sup> Tczew UIP resolution, 15 September 1946, APG 1173/6/271.

<sup>363</sup> Łębork PPR/PPS inter-party committee minutes, 17 September 1946, APG 2603/6/74-75.

<sup>364</sup> UIPO Circular, 9 September 1946, APO 500/1/284.

<sup>365</sup> UIPO report, 8 September 1946, APO 500/2/261.

Wielicki who bore the *nom-de-guerre* 'Lufy'. Indeed, in September 1946 his unit managed to destroy MO stations in Samborowo and Miłomłyn, as well ambushing an UB unit. The following month the 'Lufy' squadron attacked two more MO stations and ambushed an MO unit tailing them near Szczytno, killing five officers.<sup>366</sup>

No doubt because a number of settlers in Olsztyn Province linked communism with Jews, local officials began referring to anti-Semitism as 'a weapon of reaction'.<sup>367</sup> Moreover, they described 'reaction and regression' as prevalent among those settlers who were illiterate, easily influenced by whispering campaigns and showing a 'complete unawareness of political and social developments.' More seriously, an active 'Terrorist-Robber group' was said to be 'sowing fear' near the towns of Ostróda, Nidzica and Morąg, while a 'Cleansing-liquidation action' was in progress in response to the killing of an MO sergeant.<sup>368</sup> In Szczecin Province rumours and whispering campaigns were also having a serious effect. In Stargard County, for instance, settlers believed that the Recovered Territories would be soon taken from the Polish state, causing many to leave the area. In fact, 200 people were said to have recently left one village *en masse*.<sup>369</sup>

## 2.9 Elections on the Horizon and the Decline of the Armed Underground

The end of September also saw concrete measures being taken to ensure communist victory in parliamentary elections set for January with the introduction of an electoral law which introduced political qualifications for voting that required no prior judicial verdict. Although those disenfranchised included those accused of having been wartime collaborators, it also covered a deliberately vague category of 'persons collaborating with underground Fascist organisations or bands striving to overturn the democratic structure of the state.'<sup>370</sup> However, having failed to co-opt the PSL into its 'Democratic Bloc', the PPR endeavoured to destroy Mikołajczyk's group by stealth, intimidation, fraud and terror. Indeed, over a hundred PSL activists would be murdered in the run up to the elections and countless voters pressured or terrorized into voting for the 'Democratic Bloc'.<sup>371</sup> On the other hand, the PPR had to fend off 'reactionary rumours' that it was attempting to establish a one-party Sovietised state which

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<sup>366</sup> Kazimierz Krajewski, *Brygady „Łupaszki”, 5 i 6 Wileńska Brygada AK w fotografii, 1943-1952*, 196.

<sup>367</sup> UIPO programme, 19 September 1946, APO 500/1/154.

<sup>368</sup> UIPO report, no date but probably autumn 1946, APO 500/2/13.

<sup>369</sup> UIPO report marked 'Top Secret', 3 September 1946, APS 317/942/57.

<sup>370</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 203.

<sup>371</sup> Antoni Z. Kamiński, "'Road to "People's Poland": Stalin's Conquest Revisited'," 224.

would start collectivising the Polish countryside, especially in the Recovered Territories. To calm such fears, Gomułka played down the PPR's links with the Soviet Union and communist ideology by emphasizing his policy 'the Polish road to socialism', and even attempting to appeal to popular religious feeling, as Mikołajczyk maintained, by printing PPR literature featuring an image of the Virgin Mary.<sup>372</sup>

On the ground in the Recovered Territories, the regime's propaganda office got into full swing in October 1946 using every public event to promote the PPR and condemn the PSL. Thus, at a meeting to honour to the MO in Starogard, Gdansk Pomerania, 'malcontents' were criticized for holding back the rebuilding of Poland.<sup>373</sup> The province was blitzed with a series of public meetings that month, not all of which went as planned. For example, PPR officials in Lębork were highly embarrassed when the main speaker failed to appear.<sup>374</sup> In the rural town of Żukowo, only twenty people turned up at the main event as it was potato picking season.<sup>375</sup> Some officials tried to explain away reserve or barely concealed hostility in positive terms. For instance, one report on a public meeting in the Cashubian town of Kartuzy interpreted the 'deathly silence' of the audience as reflecting 'great interest.'<sup>376</sup> Things were more tense at an event in Skarszewy where the PSL's rumours of impending plans for collectivisation had to be strongly denied.<sup>377</sup> At another public meeting in Tolkmicko, PPR activists were forced once again to deny rumours of Soviet-style kolkhozes being set up in Poland as 'false.'<sup>378</sup> In Olsztyn Province, PPR activists accused the local Polish-Soviet Friendship Society of 'promoting chaos and laziness' while all political, social and youth organisations were requested to work together to 'more effectively fight the whispering campaign of the fascist reactionary underground.' Above all, with the PSL in its sights, local PPR activists promised to provide 'immediate aid in fighting the hostile political mood of the people ... as well as use aid in liquidating [enemy] headquarters, causing a worsening of the political situation [there].' To achieve this, coordination between the UB and the 'Democratic Bloc' was to be stepped up.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 203.

<sup>373</sup> UIPG report, 7 October 1946, APG 1173/2/35.

<sup>374</sup> UIPG report, no date but probably mid-October 1946, APG 1173/2/39-49.

<sup>375</sup> UIPG report, 15 October 1946, APG 1173/2/52.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>378</sup> UIPG report, 21 October 1946, APG 1173/2/61-62.

<sup>379</sup> UIPO Circular, 22 October 1946, APO 500/1/6-8.

In Olsztyn communist propaganda was increased as armed underground attacks became a frequent occurrence from autumn 1946 on. Although local officials reported that the province was calm, there were several incidents with armed underground units which gave cause for concern and which they, rightly or wrongly, linked with the PSL.<sup>380</sup> For example, when, in mid-October, the UB traced anti-communist propaganda leaflets to an underground safe-house, two UB officers and one 'bandit' were killed in ensuing gunfight.<sup>381</sup> A few days later, two more UB officers were killed and one wounded in 'a liquidation action of members of a forest gang' near Giżycko.<sup>382</sup> As a result, one official called for 'the coordination of planning methods and an efficient battle' against the PSL, the underground 'forest gangs' and enemy propaganda.<sup>383</sup> In West Pomerania, officials reported more success in recruiting locals to the ranks of the PPR. In Gryfino, for example, the PPR was the strongest party while the PSL was not officially organised there. Moreover, not only had security much improved but 'Members of the UB and MO are taking an active part in the social and political life of the county.'<sup>384</sup> As example of this occurred in October when the local UB commander in Trzebiatów turned up at funeral of a fireman murdered by Soviet soldiers to warn protesting locals that they were to blame the incident on 'forest gangs.'<sup>385</sup> In Gdansk Pomerania the situation on the ground was more positive. For instance, in Lębork County PPR membership had risen to 982 members.<sup>386</sup> Within the PPR's own branches Soviet-style ideological training took place in which 'self-criticism' was promoted as essential for an ideologically healthy party.<sup>387</sup> However, the formulaic forms of discussion and behaviour which Sovietisation introduced to the organisations it enveloped invariably caused stultifying boredom. For example, PPR members in the local MO, tired of the dullness of their sub-branch meetings, complained to their party boss that their colleagues in the PPS had more 'fun' and nights out than they did.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> UWO report from coded telegram, 13 October 1946, APO 500/2/56.

<sup>381</sup> UWO report, 11 October 1946, APO 500/2/163.

<sup>382</sup> UWO telephone message, 16 October 1946, APO 500/2/57.

<sup>383</sup> UWO report, 22 October 1946, APO 500/2/119.

<sup>384</sup> UWS report, 10 October 1946, APS 317/1051/100.

<sup>385</sup> Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944 – 1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, 193.

<sup>386</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 3 November 1946, APG 2603/8/64-65.

<sup>387</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 15 November 1946, APG 2603/15/102.

<sup>388</sup> Lębork MO PPR Minutes, 14 November 1946, APG 2603/16/38.

In Olsztyn Province, detailed analyses of the population structure and political loyalty of the inhabitants of the province continued to be made, while sources of 'reaction' were also examined.<sup>389</sup> Officials claimed that about 250 underground soldiers were said to be active near the town of Pisz and another group near Szczytno.<sup>390</sup> These figures, however, must have been greatly exaggerated, given that the UB had initially estimated that the 'Łupaszko' brigade comprised 360 soldiers when, in fact, it never had more than 50-60 men in the field at any one time.<sup>391</sup> However, this might be explained by the fear it engendered in communist officials being greatly disproportionate to its numbers. In the Baltic provinces alone, from December 1945 to late November 1946, 'Łupaszko' squadrons conducted about 170 operations in which they destroyed 27 MO stations and two Soviet communication stations. They also killed a total 53 members of various Polish uniformed units, along with six Soviet soldiers, while losing a total of three men.<sup>392</sup> Indeed, even after its operations had long ceased the communist authorities never relented in hunting down 'Łupaszko', finally arresting him June 1948<sup>393</sup> before executing him in February 1951.<sup>394</sup>

In West Pomerania, while there were no armed groups comparable to the 'Łupaszko' brigade as such, opposition to increasing Sovietisation was present. Therefore, when the picture of a local county manager and PPR supporter was torn off the wall and thrown out onto the street during the night, it was immediately concluded that 'guilt should be assigned to reactionary individuals from the PSL'.<sup>395</sup> With the elections just over six weeks away, the PPR increased the pressure on local branches to maintain the anti-PSL momentum, the leadership of both the PPR and PPS having been summoned to Moscow on 28 November where they signed a 'unity of action' pact. This resulted in the Lębork PPR issuing instructions to note how everyone voted in order 'to create the most accurate picture of the amount of votes cast'. Moreover, all party members were to ensure five or six others votes for the PPR which

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<sup>389</sup> UWO report, 9 November 1946, APO 500/2/70-72.

<sup>390</sup> UWO report, 9 November 1946, APO 500/2/64.

<sup>391</sup> WUBP Szczecin report marked 'Top Secret', no date but probably spring/summer 1946, IPN Sz 009/43/t.2/84.

<sup>392</sup> Kazimierz Krajewski, *Brygady „Łupaszki”, 5 i 6 Wileńska Brygada AK w fotografii, 1943-1952*, 196-197.

<sup>393</sup> MBP minutes of interrogation of Zygmunt Szendzielarz, 1 July 1948, IPN BU 0259/436/t.1/337-341.

<sup>394</sup> Sentence issued by WSR Warsaw, 2 November 1950, IPN BU 0259/436/t.2/104 and MBP form, 25 July 1969, IPN BU 0259/436/t.3/230-31. On 22 August 2013 the IPN announced that it had identified the remains of 'Łupaszko' who had been buried in an unmarked grave following his execution.

<sup>395</sup> UIPS report marked 'Top Secret', 12 November 1946, APS 317/1051/111.

was to be made known to the electoral commission present when voting.<sup>396</sup> Leaving nothing to chance, on 7 December Łęborg branches of the PPR and PPS met with the heads of the UB and MO to discuss the necessity of the elimination 'of destructive and unnecessary elements in the democratic life of our country.' Moreover, they complained that the 'reactionary propaganda' which was being spread through 'gossip' had even led to the murder of 'honest democrats'.<sup>397</sup>

In Olsztyn, an electoral commission was set up in early December with local officials observing that 'The element of reaction as represented by the PSL and forest gangs did not reveal themselves ...' and that no underground propaganda was circulating.<sup>398</sup> Most PSL members in the province were said to be moving to its communist-run counterpart, the SL, with a few even trying to join the PPR or the PPS.<sup>399</sup> Apart from this, a radio transmitter was discovered by which PSL members were thought to be sending messages directly to the London government.<sup>400</sup> Towards the end of the month, three underground members were arrested in the province, while locals were said to be 'passive' towards the election campaign.<sup>401</sup> Moreover, 'reactionary' activities against the elections in the province were described as 'unplanned and disorganised' with the armed underground reduced to very small groups.<sup>402</sup> By the end of the month, officials reported that their lists of voters for the elections were ready and '90% checked'. However, Christmas did not pass peacefully in the town of Lidzbark Warmiński, where a group of twenty underground soldiers robbed the local cooperative, killed one UB officer and disarmed two MO stations.<sup>403</sup>

In conclusion, 1946 ended on a note of political uncertainty with violence and intimidation in the air. It was the year in which the PPR developed and executed clever strategies to identify and eliminate its enemies while managing to maintain the support of the settlers. Indeed, it was the main development of 1946, the organised and systematic expulsion of the Baltic region's remaining Germans and the settlement of Poles in their place, which allowed the regime to portray itself as representing the

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<sup>396</sup> Łęborg PPR instructions, December 1946, APG 2603/13/77.

<sup>397</sup> Łęborg MO PPR Minutes, 7 December 1946, APG 2603/16/42.

<sup>398</sup> UIPO report, 1 December 1946, APO 500/2/76.

<sup>399</sup> UIPO report, 9 December 1946, APO 500/2/78.

<sup>400</sup> UIPO report, 12 December 1946, APO 500/2/80.

<sup>401</sup> UIPO report, 28 December 1946, APO 500/2/90.

<sup>402</sup> UIPO report, 28 December 1946, APO 500/2/94.

<sup>403</sup> UIPO report, 31 December 1946, APO 500/2/89.

interests of the Polish nation. Moreover, a worsening international situation resulting in the outbreak of the Cold War undoubtedly contributed to the high levels of anxiety among Polish settlers in the Recovered Territories. In particular, speeches by former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and US Secretary of State, James Byrnes, were harnessed by the PPR to whip up almost hysterical levels of fear among Polish settlers that not only were the 'Anglo-Saxons' aiming to help the Germans take their newly-gained property from them but that the PSL was traitorously working with the Western Powers to undermine Poland's claim to the Recovered Territories.

Although the methods behind liquidating the PSL were Soviet-inspired, the policies which the communists espoused were far more nationalist than internationalist. Thus, while the PSL had similar aims for land reform and nationalisation, it was trumped by the communists, in propaganda terms at least, when it came who could better protect Poland's national interests, particularly its claim to the Recovered Territories. While the communists could claim that the Red Army was the true protector of these lands, the PSL's position that it should maintain friendly relations with the West was being undermined by the lukewarm or ambivalent statements emanating from Washington, London and the Vatican towards the very legal status of the Recovered Territories.<sup>404</sup>

Despite shrill and sometimes hysterical propaganda regarding German revanchism and a potential fifth column working to destroy the new Polish state, there was a surprising degree of cooperation, even docility, from Germans slated for forced labour, economic exploitation and ultimately, expulsion. Thus, the documents largely portray a picture the German threat as an external one, even in situations where one Polish official was in charge of an entire village comprising hundreds of Germans. Indeed, the local German population quickly realized that the most effective strategy for preventing a Polish takeover of the region, and their own expulsion, was to seek protection from the Soviet Army in exchange for their skilled labour. The resulting Soviet monopolization of this German labour force and attempts to prevent its expulsion angered and confused Polish communist officials as to the true motives of the USSR in the Recovered Territories, as well as making it very difficult to soften up settlers for Sovietisation.

However, PPR leaders were careful not impose Sovietisation either too openly or too soon. Indeed, what allowed it to maintain and gain further control in the Recovered Territories in 1946 was not Soviet-style 'class war' but its claiming credit for popular ethno-nationalist policies of driving out the Germans and helping Polish settlers share in the resulting bounty. It gave one to understand that as long as

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<sup>404</sup> Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War*, 50-55.

'moderate' and nationally-minded communists, such as Władysław Gomułka, were in control Polish settlers could be assured that they would be allowed run small businesses for a reasonable profit or to become self-sufficient homesteaders without being driven into collective farms. In addition, the Church would be permitted to cater for their spiritual needs and indigenous groups would be showed more toleration regarding their mixed Polish-German identity. Therefore, if the price for this stability was to allow these 'National Communists' to gain a monopoly on political power, then many were prepared to go along with it.

However, as we have seen, when it came to securing votes at the ballot box the PPR was forced to cheat not only to keep power, but to convince itself and others that it was popular despite what the real results said. Moreover, as the PPR had simultaneously conducted a covert programme of infiltrating and gaining control of the key organs of government, such as the civil service, the army, the police and security services, the upcoming elections were to be merely the recognition of the *fait accompli* of a communist takeover. Even though the PSL's electoral support in the Baltic Recovered Territories turned out to be much stronger than anyone supposed, the fact that the communists were even in a position to falsify electoral results convinced a significant number of settlers that further political resistance was futile.

## Chapter Three, 1947-1948

### 3.1 Main Issues of time period:

The period of 1947-1948 saw international tensions rise as the USA moved towards the containment of Soviet expansion rather than elimination of the Soviet Union itself. Following the issuing of the Truman Doctrine in March 1947 portraying the Greek civil war as an ideological battle between communism and western democracy, before the end of the year Moscow had directed the leaders of the communist satellite countries to view the world as divided into 'two camps.'<sup>405</sup> In Poland the period witnessed the souring of relations between the communist authorities and the settlers of the Baltic Recovered Territories, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, as Sovietisation policies intensified. Soon prospective homesteaders were gripped by rumours of impending collectivisation while the Church found that its 'working relationship' with the Party as an ally in 'repolonisation' was to become even more fraught.<sup>406</sup> As T. David Curp points out, the communists were torn by the fact that the Church was a transnational and universalising institution which was also nationally revolutionary. Moreover, despite anti-Vatican propaganda claiming that it was aiming to help the Germans regain the Recovered Territories, many Poles continued to support the Church as a way of showing their opposition to Stalinism.<sup>407</sup> Michael Fleming maintains that not only did the Polish Church benefit from a period without close Vatican supervision but actually played a key role in identifying which inhabitants of the Recovered Territories were Polish.<sup>408</sup>

Indeed, as the documents for the Baltic Recovered Territories show, Catholic priests, especially in Olsztyn Province, frequently came into conflict with those 'of the German faith' over church property and thereby, by accident or design, identified potential Masurian enemies. Despite this, local officials' pragmatic compromises to prevent depopulation often led to conflict with newly-arrived Polish settlers and their priests who refused to accept their 'German' and Protestant indigenous neighbours as fellow Poles. Following April 1947, the situation was further complicated by an influx of

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<sup>405</sup> David C. Engerman, "Ideology and the origins of the Cold War, 1917-1962," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 1, Origins*, ed. Odd Arne Westad Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 36-38.

<sup>406</sup> Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948–1956*, 40-44.

<sup>407</sup> Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945–1960*, 7.

<sup>408</sup> Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland 1944-1950*, 21.

unpopular Polish Ukrainian settlers who were forcibly relocated to the Recovered Territories under 'Operation Vistula', were they were seen as a dangerous Ukrainian fifth column.<sup>409</sup>

As we will see, following the January 1947 elections, in which the PPR and its sister parties, the PPS and the SL, engineered victory in a 'Democratic Bloc', the PSL and other non-communist parties were irrevocably weakened or infiltrated to the point where the communists had almost total control of all government departments. At the international level, the intensification of the Cold War led Stalin to found the Cominform, an organisation aimed at co-ordinating the policies of all Central and East European Soviet satellite countries along the Soviet model and so eliminate all independent 'national roads to socialism'. For the Recovered Territories this was to mean preparations for collectivisation, the introduction of 'socialist competition' and the elimination of 'speculators', 'hoarders' and all private business through a 'Battle over Trade'.<sup>410</sup>

By 1948, tensions between the regime and the Roman Catholic Church over the Vatican's stance on the Recovered Territories encouraged the communists to openly attempt to drive a wedge between the hierarchy and the settler faithful.<sup>411</sup> The trend of 'coordinating' and 'unifying' all organisations and groups along Soviet lines, through infiltration, entryism and co-option also became more obvious. We will also see how, at a local level, pressure was relentlessly applied on the PPR's main socialist coalition partner, the bigger and more popular PPS, to agree to its absorption through 'unification' into the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). Moreover, the purging from the PPR of Władysław Gomułka, the Minister of the Recovered Territories and main advocate of a 'Polish road to socialism', was to cause great disquiet not only within the Party, but among settlers in the Baltic region. As the end of 1948 introduced a period of 'High Stalinism' which escalated incidents of conflict and in the Baltic region, settlers attempted to find refuge from Sovietisation in belonging to tight-knit regional groups.

Indeed, despite the demographic mosaic of the Polish Baltic coast, such groups tried hard to maintain or transplant their identities and traditions, even their entire communities, to their new homeland. Thus, the formation of regional cliques and communities in the Baltic Recovered Territories allows one to examine how 'social

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<sup>409</sup> Drodz, "Społeczność ukraińska na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych Polski," 383-404.

<sup>410</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 31-36. Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 189.

<sup>411</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 139-142.

traditions and established communities actually interacted with communist power.'<sup>412</sup> Moreover, there were important social differences between the various groups living in the Baltic Recovered Territories between 1945 and 1948, in particular as to how these groups viewed themselves. For instance, the concept of 'victimhood' was common to all groups, the only question being who had suffered the most, which itself became a kind of moral currency as to who had the most right to the bounty of the Recovered Territories. Indeed, the victimhood of the eastern Polish settlers, themselves expellees from the east, trumped the victimhood of the local Germans and the indigenous population, despite their suffering and expulsion at the hands of the Red Army and Polish officials. Moreover, Poles from central Poland saw themselves as 'pioneer conquerors' whose victimhood during the war not only gave them the right to the material wealth of the Baltic region, but to rapid social advancement above all others. As Andrzej Sakson points out they also saw themselves as top of the ethnic pecking order of 'Polishness', a kind of Polish *Herrenvolk* when compared to 'Sovietised' Poles from the east and 'Germanised' Cashubians, Masurians and Warmians, an attitude which caused much antagonism during the early years of Polish settlement.<sup>413</sup> Settlers from Poznan and Wielkopolska, in particular, attempted to create the romantic idea of the 'Western Pole' in the national Polish media as an heroic and selfless frontiersman fighting all that was foreign and hostile to Poland in the Recovered Territories, an idea which of course reflected their own self-image as those who had long battled with 'Germanisation' to maintain the Polish character of their home region.<sup>414</sup>

The concept of 'compensation victimhood' was prevalent among those Polish settlers who had been expelled from Polish territory annexed by the Soviet Union. As with the German expellees from Poland, these Poles spent their first few years following their expulsion yearning to return to their homeland and hoping that the pre-war borders would be reconstituted, either through an international agreement, or a Third World War, if necessary. Moreover, their central position in Poland's traumatic and violent past gave eastern Poles a peculiar martyrological view of themselves as patriotic lambs to be slaughtered on the altar of Polish national interests. Thus, their expulsion from the east in the interests of aiding the new Poland gain the Recovered Territories in the west, gave them a superior right to compensation for what they had lost, not only as victims but as patriots. As these Poles had, during the inter-war period, constituted a Polish elite which had dominated, even 'repolonised' local groups of Ukrainians, Belorussians and Lithuanians in the east, they

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<sup>412</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 11.

<sup>413</sup> Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997*, 172-173.

<sup>414</sup> Tomczak, "Obraz osadników w prasie i publicystyce polskiej," 49-52.

also felt entitled to transfer their social positions to their new homes in the Recovered Territories.<sup>415</sup>

Competition between Poles from the east and those from central Poland over who was more Polish, of course, deflected attention from the fact that they really saw each other as competitors over property, material wealth and jobs. This rivalry was accentuated by the use of stereotypes with the central Poles often characterizing easterners as lazy, drunken and backward country bumpkins with sing-song Russian accents.<sup>416</sup> Although eastern settlers in the Baltic region had to long endure such pejorative stereotypes, what they found especially hard to accept was the official government line that the collective memory of Poland's lands east of the Curzon Line had to be erased. Moreover, their own experience of forced migration led some of them to sympathize and identify with the Germans being expelled from the Baltic region. Undoubtedly this, and the fact that the easterners invariably viewed the Soviet Union as Poland's main enemy, made them even less popular with other Polish settlers who feared and hated Germans and Germany the most. On the other hand, their accents and style of dress led other settlers to believe that they were Russians masquerading as Poles whose loyalty to the new Polish state was in doubt.<sup>417</sup> Moreover, their knowledge and experience of life under the Soviet rule, as well as their close ties with anti-communist underground, led both the UB and the local administration to place these eastern settlers under special surveillance and sometimes directed their settlement in order to break up old ties.<sup>418</sup>

However, when it came to the Ukrainians who had been transported to the Recovered Territories under Operation Vistula, Polish settlers of all backgrounds were united in their view that the newcomers were a dangerous and hostile fifth column. Moreover, realizing that they had been abandoned in a foreign society which viewed them as 'the enemy within' and hoping that they would soon be allowed to return home, the Operation Vistula settlers shut themselves off from their Polish neighbours through self-isolation and the creation of closed circles of friends and relatives.<sup>419</sup> However, having being dumped on farms which had suffered the most war-damage

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<sup>415</sup> Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997*, 173-75.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-179.

<sup>418</sup> Marek Latoszek, "Przemiany społeczne na Pomorzu ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Trójmiasta," in *Ziemie Odzyskane 1945-2005: Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne, 60 lat w granicach państwa polskiego*, ed. Andrzej Sakson (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2006), 243.

<sup>419</sup> Hejger, "Przekształcenia narodowościowe na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych," 349.

and looting, and without the means to renovate them or make the land productive, many Ukrainians viewed the Recovered Territories as a 'cursed land.' The feelings of resentment this produced led some to engage in forms of passive resistance, not only through self-isolation, but by refusing to speak Polish, not sending their children to Polish schools and by spreading 'whispered propaganda' that Poland's borders would soon be redrawn.<sup>420</sup>

The UB and MO viewed the Ukrainian community with great suspicion, believing that some of their number were attempting to set up UPA and OUN armed nationalist structures in the Oder-Neisse lands.<sup>421</sup> When a number of UPA groups was uncovered in Olsztyn Province, it widened the gulf between the Polish settlers and the Ukrainians, and confirmed the 'fifth column' theory in many minds. This was particularly true in cases of Poles who had resettled in the Baltic Recovered Territories to escape Ukrainian violence in south-east Poland in 1946 only to find that tens of thousands of their former enemies were to become their neighbours once again in 1947. Moreover, in a region in which trust was a rare commodity, as Sovietisation intensified during 1948, the only thing which united all of these disparate groups was distrust of the communists.<sup>422</sup>

### **3.2 Electoral Fraud and the Decline of the Political Opposition – January-April 1947**

As polling day approached on 19 January 1947, the general election campaign reached fever pitch. Determined to win by fair means or foul, the PPR ensured that just one week before the vote all PSL candidates were struck from the ballot in ten out of 52 electoral districts and arrested 135 opposition candidates in the remaining districts. Moreover, as Kenney states it was an election in which 'the PPR bloc succeeded for the first time in forcing political participation on much of Polish society.'<sup>423</sup> Believing that they exerted stronger influence and greater social control over the settler population, the communist authorities gave disproportionate electoral weight to the districts in the Recovered Territories where efforts continued to be made to force influential PSL, and even PPS figures out of office.<sup>424</sup> For instance, in Sławno in West Pomerania local communists believed the county manager to be a secret PSL supporter, despite being a

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<sup>420</sup> Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997*, 179-185.

<sup>421</sup> Drodz, "Społeczność ukraińska na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych Polski," 394.

<sup>422</sup> Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997*, 185-188.

<sup>423</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 55-56.

<sup>424</sup> Paczkowski, *The Spring Will be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*, 185; R.J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century - And After* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 220.

PPR member. Having heard he had 250,000 zloty in his bank account, Party activists speculated whether it came from 'the funders of [Polish émigré General] Anders?'<sup>425</sup> Moreover, Stanisław Dulewicz the energetic and popular PPS Mayor of Darłowo, suddenly resigned at the beginning of January, ostensibly on grounds of overwork and ill-health, but more likely due to PPR pressure.<sup>426</sup> As if the myriad of parties and pseudo-parties was not confusing enough, in Gdansk Pomerania a 'Cashubian List' was announced, as yet another ruse to entice indigenous voters away from the PSL.<sup>427</sup>

The elections took place at the height of a very severe winter in which heavy snow made travelling difficult, especially for opposition supporters, since the PPR had monopolized almost all forms of motorised transport. Moreover, a vigorous propaganda campaign had been launched by the PPR two weeks before the election to encourage open voting over secret voting in order to intensify the atmosphere of fear at polling stations.<sup>428</sup> A clear example of this occurred in the port of Łeba where a group of communist activists masquerading as a spontaneously-formed group of patriotic voters stormed into the local polling station and threw screens surrounding the voting booths out into the street. To intimidate those present into publicly declaring their vote, they began shouting: 'We are openly voting for the Democratic Bloc' and 'Down with elections hidden behind screens.' Such blatant electoral abuse produced the desired results with PPR activists reporting that by 11am 78% of voters had cast their ballots 'with no incident of a vote being cast other than openly'. Unsurprisingly, when the ballot box was opened the Democratic Bloc had received 1,730 out of 1,745 votes cast.<sup>429</sup> The PPR's county branch soon had the pleasure of reporting not only that its membership had risen to 1,208 members, but that the PSL was said to have been totally weakened due to the 'democratisation' of local government and state companies, with 600 of its members having recently left to join the PPS.<sup>430</sup> It had also called for an 'uncompromising battle' against those in the PPS

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<sup>425</sup> UWS report marked 'Secret', 9 January 1947, APS 317/942/107.

<sup>426</sup> Stanisław Dulewicz, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 521-522.

<sup>427</sup> Henryk Galus, "Struktura ruchu regionalnego na Pomorzu," in *Ślązacy, Kaszubi, Mazurzy i Warmiacy – między polkością a niemieckością*, ed. Andrzej Sakson (Poznan: Instytut Zachodni, 2008), 259.

<sup>428</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 204.

<sup>429</sup> Łębork PPR report, 19 January 1947, APG 2603/13/26-27.

<sup>430</sup> Łębork PPR report, 25 January 1947, APG 2603/8/70-71.

who were against 'cooperation' with the PPR<sup>431</sup>, and had assessed the political mood during the elections as 'good' or 'very good'.<sup>432</sup>

In Olsztyn Province the regime was confident of victory despite the occurrence of several incidents of open opposition. Although the province was still severely underpopulated, the number of inhabitants had increased significantly from 326,153 in January 1946 to 449,690 one year later.<sup>433</sup> In political affairs, however, the local PPR assessed itself as the strongest party in the province with 10,000 members, compared to 8,000 in the PPS, 2,000 in the SL and a mere 450 in the PSL.<sup>434</sup> Indeed, one official in the propaganda office, described the PSL almost non-existent in Olsztyn and reported that the scouting organisation ZMW 'Wici' which had once been 'under PSL's influence is being democratised.' Moreover, not only were the local Roman Catholic clergy said to be 'completely passive' towards the elections, but there had been no boycott or 'sign of reaction'.<sup>435</sup> More worryingly, the 'bestial murder' had recently occurred of two Democratic Bloc campaigners near Nidzicko one of whom was a 20-year-old female activist in the ZWM communist youth.<sup>436</sup> In a further sign of the accommodation of the local clergy to the new political circumstances, the murder victims were given Catholic funerals which had followed a Democratic Bloc demonstration condemning the brutality of their deaths.<sup>437</sup>

Despite the large number of supporters on paper, communist activists found high levels of indifference all over Olsztyn Province regarding the elections, particularly among Polish settlers from beyond the Curzon Line. In Braniewo County, for example, eastern repatriates were 'apathetic and passive' towards politics and 'look at all parties and organisations with distrust and avoid joining parties ... Being in a party is considered as something very bad.'<sup>438</sup> Incidents of violence involving those who were supposed to be protecting the settlers and representing the authority of the regime did not help matters. For instance, in a restaurant in Giżycko where there were victory celebrations for the Democratic Bloc, a UB officer shot an MO officer in the face while

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<sup>431</sup> Łębork PPR report, 17 January 1947, APG 2603/8/ 106.

<sup>432</sup> Łębork PPR report, 18 January 1947, APG 2603/13/24-25.

<sup>433</sup> UWO report, January 1947, APO 500/2/503.

<sup>434</sup> UWO report, 3 January 1947, APO 500/2/86.

<sup>435</sup> UWO report, 8 January 1947, APO 500/2/97.

<sup>436</sup> UWO report, 9 January 1947, APO 500/2/100.

<sup>437</sup> UWO report, 12 January 1947, APO 500/2/104.

<sup>438</sup> UWO report, 25 January 1947, APO 500/2/284.

the restaurant itself was destroyed by a grenade.<sup>439</sup> In the end though, negative settler attitudes mattered little as the results were to be falsified in any case. As Stanisław Bania, a borough leader in West Pomerania, bluntly put it: 'On the district commission there were those already chosen mainly from the PPR and the election result was as they wanted.'<sup>440</sup> Moreover, Franciszek Buchtalarz, a schoolteacher living near Szczecin, recalled that despite the fact that local settlers were politically 'passive' and did not take part in the election campaign, factory guards, the MO and the UB began visiting workers' flats at night, especially those suspected of supporting the PSL, and carried out armed inspections which were designed to frighten other settlers into voting 'the right way'. Although he was on a local electoral commission as non-Party member, only three of the commission members were actually allowed to stay on for the counting of the votes, while he was sent home with the rest.<sup>441</sup>

Moreover, while the official results would not be announced for over a month, local officials were communicating suspiciously precise, and possibly fore-ordained voting figures to each other within days. Thus, before the end of January it was reported that 94.7% of Olsztyn Province had ostensibly voted for the Democratic Bloc,<sup>442</sup> a rate which rose to 99.2% the county of Kętrzyn.<sup>443</sup> Moreover, in Pasłęk County 97% of the population of 12,000 Poles and 6,000 Germans was said to have turned out to vote, of whom 99.7% had voted for the Democratic Bloc. No doubt the role of the UB and the local citizens' militia (ORMO) in 'guaranteeing the security of citizens' had helped to engineer such an outstanding result.<sup>444</sup> It is also curious that despite local anger over very poor living standards, the lack of money to cater for basic needs on their asset-stripped farms and the fact that there was no development of industry worth speaking of, officials quickly reported that local inhabitants had expressed 'joy' at the communists' election victory.<sup>445</sup> However, Franciszek Buchtalarz recorded that most settlers near Szczecin had received the victory of the Democratic

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<sup>439</sup> UWO report, 28 January 1947, APO 500/2/198.

<sup>440</sup> Memoir of Stanisław Bania, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 93/11.

<sup>441</sup> Memoir of Franciszek Buchtalarz, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 165/148-153.

<sup>442</sup> UWO report, January 1947, APO 500/2/209.

<sup>443</sup> UWO report, 24 January 1947, APO 500/2/302.

<sup>444</sup> UWO report, 31 January 1947, APO 500/2/191.

<sup>445</sup> UWO report, 30 January 1947, APO 500/2/197.

Bloc with 'great relief' as it meant political stability in the Recovered Territories and an end to its temporary nature as a 'no-man's land'.<sup>446</sup>

The official elections results of the elections were eventually published on 22 February and placed the PSL's vote at a mere 10% and that the Democratic Bloc at 80.1%.<sup>447</sup> Indeed, this result was so far-fetched that even senior figures in the regime did not pretend it was anything more than a cynical exercise to achieve total political hegemony. As Władysław Wolski, the Deputy Minister of Public Administration, later stated: 'Was anyone so naïve as to expect that a revolution carried into this land on bayonets' points would yield before a ballot box ... ?'<sup>448</sup> The vast majority of Poles reacted to this result with a mixture of anger, cynicism and their characteristic dark humour, a popular saying being: 'What a magic ballot box!!! You vote Mikołajczyk and Gomułka comes out!'<sup>449</sup>

There was, however, nothing amusing about the unseemly pace at which the Democratic Bloc raced to consolidate its victory. On 19 February, three days before the election results were even published, an interim 'Small Constitution', replacing Poland's 1935 Constitution, was rushed through parliament. This removed the provisional nature of the post-war government, thereby absolving the PPR of any international obligation to work with the PSL. Bolesław Bierut, still maintaining the fiction that he was non-party, was appointed President while Józef Cyrankiewicz, the head of the PPS, became Prime Minister. The Small Constitution also established a Council of State comprising seven members who could rule by decree when the *Sejm* was not in session while the PPR gained control of five key ministries, including the Ministry of the Recovered Territories, Industry and Trade, Education, Foreign Affairs and the MBP. While the PPS was awarded six ministries, each one had a deputy minister from the PPR to keep an eye on their PPS superiors. In addition, on 22 February, Hilary Minc, the Minister of Industry and Trade, launched a 'Battle over Trade' by obliging all private merchants and shopkeepers to submit to a 'surrender and re-grant' style programme of having to apply for trading 'concessions' from the state.<sup>450</sup> According to Kenney, the 'Battle over Trade' marked a transition in the communist regime's struggle with real and imaginary opponents.' Thus, emphasis

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<sup>446</sup> Memoir of Franciszek Buchtalarz, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 165/Section II/1.

<sup>447</sup> Antoni Z. Kamiński, "'Road to "People's Poland": Stalin's Conquest Revisited'," 225.

<sup>448</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 204-205.

<sup>449</sup> Antoni Z. Kamiński, "'Road to "People's Poland": Stalin's Conquest Revisited'," 197.

<sup>450</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 27.

changed from external enemies such as the Germans and foreign 'imperialists' to internal enemies occupying vague categories such as 'reactionaries', 'capitalists' and 'saboteurs.'<sup>451</sup>

As these changes were occurring, mass arrests of PSL members were taking place around the country while local branches were smashed up. Many PSL members now sought refuge in joining other parties, with Lębork PPS said to contain many ex-PSL figures.<sup>452</sup> Moreover, the PPR's taking over of positions formerly occupied by popular PSL figures caused a certain amount of public anger in Lębork County as a visible and jarring example of how the elections had been part of a PPR power-grab. Indeed, there must have been a high level of danger present for 34 PPR members there to be issued with firearms as it was feared that 'their taking up of posts could affect their safety.'<sup>453</sup> It is also clear that the local PPR was simultaneously attempting to quietly sideline the PPS, its new partner in government, and take over most important positions in the county.<sup>454</sup>

In Olsztyn Province, the post-election landscape was generally calm with incidents of opposition much subdued. In one county, for instance, although a Catholic priest was reported not to be speaking out 'directly against democracy', his sermons were 'coloured with regression.'<sup>455</sup> A more important issue, however, was that there was a steady stream of Masurians returning from expulsion and attempting to get their homes and farms back from Polish settlers. In Ostróda County alone, this concerned about 15 to 20 families per week.<sup>456</sup> Similar fears were also prevalent in Gdansk Pomerania. Jan Jakubek, a teacher in Sztum County, recalled how one German expellee sent a letter to his former neighbour in Mikołajki Pomorskie instructing him to keep an eye on his home and orchard and vowing to hang the new Polish occupant and his entire family from the biggest fruit tree in the garden on his return.<sup>457</sup>

Stanisław Bania, a borough leader in West Pomerania, began to notice increasing Sovietisation as spring approached. Indeed in his own borough district of Wierzchowo he recalled there were 'secret agents working for the UB' and witnessed

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<sup>451</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 197.

<sup>452</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 2 February 1947, APG 2603/3/12.

<sup>453</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 25 February 1947, APG 2603/3/16.

<sup>454</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 7 February 1947, APG 2603/5/2-5.

<sup>455</sup> UWO report, 12 February 1947, APO 500/2/205.

<sup>456</sup> UWO report, 19 February 1947, APO 500/2/504.

<sup>457</sup> Memoir of Jan Jakubek, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 66/51.

‘fierce class conflict’ with people being divided into ‘Kulak’ and ‘Biedak’ [poor peasant]. Although high losses of grain that spring had made government targets impossible to achieve, this did not stop the UB coming to the borough to ‘lock up a few rich peasants’ having checked attics and barns for hoarding. With local farmers sufficiently frightened into turning over whatever grain they had, it was no surprise that the government plan for Drawsko County ended up being 90% accomplished.<sup>458</sup>

In Lębork County, PPR activists reported that the success of the referendum and the elections had led to the ‘most intensive period of democratisation’, as well as a large increase in party membership and the number of sub-branches in the county. However, not only was ‘reaction’ still present in the local administration<sup>459</sup>, but the elections had shown that ‘there are difficulties with people from beyond the [River] Bug [who] are impossible to convince’.<sup>460</sup> Although there was pressure being applied from above for PPR activists to ‘cooperate’ more closely with the PPS, local communists continued to see their coalition partner as a haven for ex-PSL members. Apart from believing the civil service to be full of ‘irresponsible people in improper positions’, local PPR figures insisted that new cooperatives could only be set up once ‘damaging ... PSL elements’ were removed.<sup>461</sup> Another perceived sanctuary for ex-PSL members in Lębork was the ZMW ‘Wici’ scouting organisation for which the PPR planned actions ‘as soon as possible to aid its democratization’.<sup>462</sup> In West Pomerania ZMW ‘Wici’ scout troops were also seen as prime targets for infiltration and takeover, which inevitably led to conflict between old members and communist infiltrators. In spring 1947 Henryk Zudro, a young communist activist, attending a ZMW ‘Wici’ provincial conference in Szczecin, personally witnessed how: ‘In the hall where the conference was taking place, once again a passionate row broke out between the representatives of the two factions of the organisation.’<sup>463</sup>

Local Party organisations were, however, clearly worried about the competence of those it was attracting to its own ranks, especially since they were to be earmarked for taking over responsible posts in local government and institutions from the PSL and PPS. Drunkenness was a cause for embarrassment, not only among new recruits, but

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<sup>458</sup> Memoir of Stanisław Bania, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 93/11.

<sup>459</sup> Lębork PPR report, March 1947, APG 2603/1/22-27.

<sup>460</sup> Lębork PPR minutes, 3 March 1947, APG 2603/7/46.

<sup>461</sup> Lębork PPR minutes, 23 March 1947, APG 2603/1/15.

<sup>462</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 3 March 1947, APG 2603/3/19-20.

<sup>463</sup> Henryk Zudro, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 570.

among long-time members.<sup>464</sup> The need for suitable and qualified people for key positions was so great that even those outside the PPR could be recruited if they agreed to be rehabilitated through a government amnesty which had been recently announced for underground members still in hiding.<sup>465</sup> Perhaps this eventually allowed ex-PSL members to return to administrative posts having been on a political merry-go-round of moving from the PSL to the PPS and ultimately to the PPR, following rehabilitation. In addition, calls for the redistribution of German property to 'Polish workers' in local Party branches continued to attract recruits hoping to materially benefit from implementing its policies on the ground.<sup>466</sup> Thus, if attracting competent candidates depended on sharing out the spoils in exchange for a job well done, the political backgrounds of those selected could be ignored for the time being. However, as in Gdansk Pomerania, there were worrying signs for the PPR in West Pomerania that ex-PSL members had infiltrated other Democratic Bloc parties. In particular, it was believed that the SL had provided a haven for many former members of the PSL 'who have not been assimilated.' Because of this influx of new politically-dubious blood and the rising strength of the SL in West Pomerania, communists feared it could become a competitor party.<sup>467</sup>

In Olsztyn Province, officials were wary of the fact that almost 300 politically-dubious individuals had been given amnesty that March and further 100 released from prison.<sup>468</sup> On the other hand, the Roman Catholic clergy had stopped agitating from the pulpit against the Democratic Bloc and no enemy propaganda had recently appeared. Eastern repatriates were, however, spreading rumours that there would soon be hunger in the province due to a lack of seed deliveries. However, officials were pleased to report that when these deliveries of seed did arrive, the settlers quickly accepted that this had been 'just gossip and false propaganda.'<sup>469</sup> A further propaganda coup was provided by ceremonies handing over the title deeds of 176 farms to settlers: 'The awarding to peasants of their own land has knocked a weapon from the hand of reaction spreading whispered propaganda about the creation of kolkhozes.'<sup>470</sup> In Braniewo County, however, eastern settlers were continuing to

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<sup>464</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 14 March 1947, APG 2603/3/23.

<sup>465</sup> Lębork PPR minutes, 18 March 1947, APG 2603/3/53a.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>467</sup> Szczecin KW PPR Minutes, 3 March 1947, APS 825/11/10.

<sup>468</sup> UWO report, 10 March 1947, APO 500/2/218.

<sup>469</sup> UWO report, 24 March 1947, APO 500/2/296-298.

<sup>470</sup> UWO report, 27 March 1947, APO 500/2/219-220.

spread more rumours that Poland's borders would change. Moreover, such settlers viewed officials who sent confiscated German goods to other regions, rather than distributing them to poor Poles, as no better than thieves, with one report admitting that 'It is no surprise that this attitude arouses much wariness among the community towards all government offices ...'<sup>471</sup> In West Pomerania, the arrival of Polish settlers from the Soviet Union also posed serious problems for local officials, with complaints that many of them had come to the region 'in a catastrophic material state'.<sup>472</sup>

### **3.3 Increasing Communist Economic and Political Control –April-December 1947**

Spring 1947 saw major developments regarding Poland's Ukrainian population which had serious implications for the Recovered Territories. Between 1944 and 1946 over 450,000 Ukrainians had already been expelled from south-eastern Poland where near civil-war conditions existed between the Polish authorities and armed Ukrainian nationalists (UPA/OUN). When the Ukrainian SSR abruptly announced it would not accept any more 'repatriates' in August 1946, the following April Poland launched Operation Vistula (*Akcja Wisła*), a brutal military operation which had the combined goals of liquidating the UPA and forcibly resettling Poland's Ukrainians in the Recovered Territories. These Ukrainian 'settlers' were not allowed to live within 100km of a land border, within 50km of the coast or within 30km of a provincial city and were not permitted to comprise more than 10% of the population of any particular place.<sup>473</sup> However, in Olsztyn Province where the majority of Ukrainians were 'resettled' *en masse*, most of these requirements were impossible for local officials to put in practice which, of course, led to tensions with central government and the security services. It is generally accepted that over 140,000 Ukrainians were expelled during Operation Vistula, of whom about 55,000 were mainly sent to the northern counties of Olsztyn Province and the remaining 85,000 to Szczecin, Wrocław, Gdansk and Poznan provinces. Indeed, the 1950 census recorded that 56,625 Ukrainians had settled in Olsztyn Province, 31,169 near Koszalin in West Pomerania, 15,058 in the counties near Szczecin and 5,280 in Gdansk Pomerania.<sup>474</sup> In the latter, Ukrainians were distributed across the counties of Lębork, Sztum, Kwidzyń, Malbork, Elbąg, as well as Gdansk itself.<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> UWO report, March 1947, APO 500/2/303.

<sup>472</sup> UWS report, 8 March 1947, APS 317/942/149.

<sup>473</sup> Drodz, "Społeczność ukraińska na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych Polski," 384.

<sup>474</sup> Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997*, 133-134.

<sup>475</sup> Galus, "Struktura ruchu regionalnego na Pomorzu," 251.

April 1947 also saw the PPR support calls to step up the Battle over Trade and 'take energetic steps with the aim of ensuring deliveries to the broad masses of workers, as well as to break the hostile activities of speculators and usurers.'<sup>476</sup> On 20 April Władysław Gomułka visited Szczecin to take part in a large rally celebrating Recovered Territories Week. One of the young communists attending was Henryk Zudro who heard him speak of 'the policy of the Party and the government regarding the problems of the Recovered Territories, about the necessity of conscientious work, about ... the obligations of the countryside towards the country.'<sup>477</sup> Moreover, on 1 May 1947, in an effort to counteract the influence of ex-PSL members in the PPS, Gomułka called for the merger of the PPR and the PPS into one 'workers' party'. From then on, all PPS members opposing 'unification' or 'cooperation' would be labelled as 'reactionaries', whether they had links with the PSL or not. Moreover, in Olsztyn May Day speeches went further by calling the PSL 'bloodsuckers' and the underground 'fascists.'<sup>478</sup> Later that month, Łębork PPS and PPR had agreed to create a 'united front' which would then fight 'anti-united front' elements in their respective parties.<sup>479</sup>

In late May new price-control laws were introduced, as well as broader powers for the Special Commission despite objections from PSL and some PPS members that speculation was actually the result of both government-imposed price controls and severe shortages of staple goods.<sup>480</sup> In June PPR activists in West Pomerania launched a 'Fight against Speculation' campaign by outlining how branches of the Special Commission would be based in all counties in the province.<sup>481</sup> To avoid selling their produce at low prices, farmers naturally began trading from their farm yards, going door-to-door, as well as doing deals with shopkeepers to have their goods sold under the counter. However, in a situation of low-wages, food rationing and shortages of other staple goods, the regime successfully managed to direct the social anger of the average Pole over high black market prices at 'parasites' and 'elements hostile to the working masses.'<sup>482</sup> Summer 1947 also saw the launch of the 'Three Year Plan' which,

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<sup>476</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 28-29.

<sup>477</sup> Henryk Zudro, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 570.

<sup>478</sup> UWO speech, no date but probably 1 May 1947, APO 500/2/43-44.

<sup>479</sup> Łębork PPR/PPS inter-party resolution, 30 June 1947, APG 2603/5/21.

<sup>480</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 30.

<sup>481</sup> Szczecin KW PPR Minutes, 6 June 1947, APS 825/11/33.

<sup>482</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 31-32.

although successful at increasing production in the industrial sector, caused severe difficulties in agriculture and, with their profits eaten up by state price controls and high land taxes, many left farming altogether, resulting in even lower productivity. As well as the Special Commission, local trade union officials played a key role in carrying out 'price inspections' clearly aimed at driving private shops out of business, which were also being punished with exorbitant tax bills.<sup>483</sup>

On 5 June 1947 the USA announced a massive US economic aid package for Europe, popularly known as the Marshall Plan, in order to prevent the Soviet Union getting control of Western European industries and skills.<sup>484</sup> Ordered by Stalin to have nothing to do with it, the Soviet satellites were to hand over economic and military control to Moscow through the foundation of the Cominform the following September. Within Poland, however, moves were made at a national level in mid-1947 to engineer the hegemony of the PPR over the PPS. Having recognized that heavy PPR infiltration meant that 'unification' was now inevitable, the PPS leadership decided that further resistance was futile and that a quick and painless merger would be the best course of action for all. However, with a significant section of the PPS rank and file putting up strong opposition to what amounted to a hostile takeover, a decision was later taken to purge those against the PPR/PPS merger as 'rightist deviationists' between then and the final merger in December 1948. Moscow was particularly anxious that the purges of both parties were complete before 'unification' in order to prevent Gomułka and his 'National Communists' gaining the opportunity to create new rival group with ex-PPS supporters.<sup>485</sup> At the local and national level, the PPR continued to increase in numerical strength, probably due to post-election fears of those with careers or property to protect that it was better to be inside the Party than outside it. Indeed, by June 1947 the PPR increased its membership to 850,00 and the PPS to 660,000.<sup>486</sup>

By late summer in Lębork County, for example, although the political mood was considered to be satisfactory, most trouble continued to come from eastern repatriates who were blamed for the rising crime rate. However, some of these 'crimes' were politically motivated as evidenced by an incident in which four

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>484</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, "The emergence of an American grand strategy, 1945-1952," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 1, Origins*, ed. Odd Arne Westad Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 77.

<sup>485</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 215-20; Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century - And After*, 218-221.

<sup>486</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 56-57.

easterners held up a medical clinic and demanded information on UB/MO officers, as well as local government officials.<sup>487</sup> However, in line with central Party policy local Party leaders soon held a meeting with the PPS at which they made calls for 'uncompromising battle with all those who oppose cooperation with the PPR.'<sup>488</sup> Within weeks both parties had come up with a strategy to force PPR/PPS candidates into key posts in the local administration. The PPR's weakness in rural parts of the county was also of concern, leading some to propose a peculiar strategy of recruiting wealthier farmers to the cause of 'socializing the Polish countryside'.<sup>489</sup> On the positive side, 'hostile reactionary propaganda' was said to be falling on deaf ears.<sup>490</sup>

In Olsztyn Province in August 1947 the ethnic composition of its population continued to be of major concern. Indeed, out of an approximate total of 450,000, the total number of indigenous was assessed by local officials at 119,436 (26.5%). Although local officials initially believed that Warmians and Masurians would be begging for Polish citizenship, almost a third of them were avoiding the 'verification' programme at all costs. Apart from being unhappy with the very concept of having their regional or national identity completely redefined for them as 'Polish', many Masurians were afraid that if they declared themselves to be Poles at a time when the border question had not been settled, they could be judged later to have betrayed Germany and suffer severe consequences.<sup>491</sup> Apparently, doubts about the status of Poland's new borders were being spread, not by German revanchists, but by Olsztyn Province's former governor, Jakub Prawin, who in 1947 was the head of the Polish Military Mission in Berlin. According to Debra Allen, Prawin told US officials in February that while Poland's eastern border was settled he was much less emphatic about the Oder-Neisse line, even hinting at a revision in Germany's favour. However, considering that Prawin, who had employed a liberal policy towards 'verifying' the Masurians, must have been aware that this directly contradicted the Polish government's line regarding the Polishness of the Recovered Territories, Allen suspects it may have been just a negotiation ploy.<sup>492</sup>

In Olsztyn Province itself, it was much easier for Masurians to resist verification in counties where they formed overwhelming majorities and could create a comfort

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<sup>487</sup> Lębork PPR report, 30 July 1947, APG 2603/8/102-103.

<sup>488</sup> Lębork PPR/PPS inter-party committee report, 17 August 1947, APG 2603/5/24.

<sup>489</sup> Lębork PPR report, 12 September 1947, APG 2603/3/42-43.

<sup>490</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, September 1947, APG 2603/8/109.

<sup>491</sup> Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997*, 88.

<sup>492</sup> Allen, *The Oder-Neisse Line: The United States, Poland and Germany in the Cold War*, 68.

zone by isolating themselves from or bargaining with the local Polish administration. Indeed, Kenney's description of how Polish workers' shared traditions, identity, culture and beliefs during the initial post-war years provided the social capital which made them 'more powerful than the communists expected' while giving them 'the tools to influence and survive the system in which they lived ...' could also be applied to these indigenous communities.<sup>493</sup> Conversely, in counties where indigenous groups were heavily outnumbered by Polish settlers, they were far more willing to participate in verification.<sup>494</sup> Here Polish officials used the verification programme to deliberately antagonise local Masurians as part of a more general campaign to hound them out of their valuable homes and farms. In contrast to indigenous groups in Silesia who were encouraged to join local government and political parties, Masurians and Cashubians were very poorly represented in the Polish administrative and political structures of the Baltic provinces. In late 1946, for example, a mere 0.15% of Masurians and Warmians held positions in local government while 0.11% were members of the PPR and 0.02% members of the PSL.<sup>495</sup>

Autumn 1947 saw some success in having the Red Army withdraw from farms, factories and ports along the Baltic coast. Following months of Polish-Soviet negotiations on 19 September the port of Szczecin was finally transferred to the Polish authorities, a development which was vital both for the redevelopment the province and the entire country as the port was to be one of the main outlets for exporting Polish coal from Silesia.<sup>496</sup> Perhaps the communists' success in securing most of the Baltic ports, and the jobs which came with them, from Soviet control is one reason why there was less resistance among the inhabitants of the region's major urban centres when compared to the countryside. Even if such resistance was present in the shipyards and ports, the UB had a difficult time recruiting a sufficient number of reliable agents within Polish industry to counter-act it. As Kenney maintains: 'To speak of an all powerful security apparatus at this point would be misleading at best.'<sup>497</sup>

Although the Baltic ports were being 'de-Sovietised' in the literal sense, the communists continued to tighten their grip on political life all over Poland. Moreover, it was the port of Gdynia which provided an escape route west for Stanisław

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<sup>493</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 6.

<sup>494</sup> Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997*, 81-83.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-91.

<sup>496</sup> Ryszard Techman, "Przejmowanie portu szczecińskiego przez polskie władze w latach 1945-1947," *Zeszyty Odrzańskie*, no. 18-19 (2000), 117-45.

<sup>497</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 40.

Mikołajczyk, who fled Poland, with British help, on 21 October. With the PPR now rid of its main political opponent, the pressure increased on local PPR organisations to push top-down ideologically-driven policies harder, as well as to centralise power, not only within the community, but within the Party itself. For example, Lębork PPR complained that its recent 'battle with speculators', which closed down fourteen shops, had actually backfired by causing settlers to return to central Poland, as well as leaving fewer business for the local council to raise income through taxation.<sup>498</sup> Some of the less-committed members found the move towards ideological dogmatism and active campaigning difficult to deal with. For instance, one MO officer was disciplined for not turning up to PPR meetings and for being too embarrassed to hold a Party standard at a local rally.<sup>499</sup> Moreover, by the end of November the trend towards the centralization of power became obvious with the creation of a Party 'Secretariat' within the county executive committee. Comprising only four members, it justified its establishment on the grounds that 'sometimes the need arises for sudden decisions regarding important matters, and there are difficulties in calling the whole executive together.'<sup>500</sup>

In other parts of Gdansk Pomerania, the PPR's battle to infiltrate and cleanse the PPS of any ideologically unsound elements before unification, particularly those in positions of authority, was also gaining momentum. In the village of Mikołajki Pomorskie in Sztum County, Jan Jakubek, a schoolteacher and member of the PPS soon became a target following an incident in November 1947 when he reprimanded two members of the PPR's youth wing, the ZMP, who had turned up unexpectedly at his school to spread PPR propaganda. Subsequently, he recalled pro-unification activists threatening those who had been purged from their respective parties that their careers would be finished.<sup>501</sup>

As Christmas 1947 approached, efforts continued to be made in Gdansk Pomerania to have those whom the regime considered ideologically doubtful removed from the local administration and positions of authority. For instance, local executive committees of the both the PPR and PPS devised a 'reorganisation' plans to rid the county and city administration of those not members of the Democratic Bloc.<sup>502</sup> Religious affairs were also of concern to the regime in West Pomerania, especially as

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<sup>498</sup> Lębork PPR report, October 1947, APG 2603/8/114-115.

<sup>499</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 12 November 1947, APG 2603/3/52.

<sup>500</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 26 November 1947, APG 2603/3/54.

<sup>501</sup> Memoir of Jan Jakubek, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 66/29-34.

<sup>502</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 4 December 1947, APG 2603/3/57.

the 'Polish National Catholic Church' (PNKK) had turned out to have failed abysmally in its mission to attract settlers away from the Roman Catholic church. For instance, the congregation attending one PNKK church in Szczecin on Sundays comprised only two adults and two children, while a much larger group of 40 to 60 people attended the Roman Catholic mass which the priest was forced to celebrate in the cemetery chapel.<sup>503</sup>

By the end of 1947, a period known as 'the First Revolution' had come to an end. Political power had been monopolized by the PPR through the April 1946 referendum and the January 1947 elections, while the 'bourgeois' property-owning class and its liberal representatives had been removed from Polish public life. At the same time, it is important to recognize that this period was marked by developments, such as the nationalisation of industry, the introduction of wide-ranging land reforms and Polish settlement of the Recovered Territories that had significant popular support. In this sense, therefore, these policies can be seen as both democratic and socialist, despite the fact that they were used by the PPR to gain political hegemony and maintain power. Moreover, as Dziewanowski has pointed out, certain 'gestures of appeasement' were initially employed towards the Roman Catholic Church, peasants and small businessmen until the PSL, their political voice, had been neutralised.<sup>504</sup> However, as part of the Battle over Trade, in late 1947 the cooperative movement and rural shops were absorbed into the communist-controlled 'Samopomoc Chłopska' organisation, while over half of private businesses had been forced to close their doors by time the deadline for trading concessions had passed on 15 November.<sup>505</sup>

Although it would take another year for Poland to become a fully 'socialist' state, four basic freedoms still existed in Poland namely, freedom of worship, freedom of movement and labour, freedom of making criticism in private, if not in public, as well as freedom to listen to the radio, even foreign broadcasts.<sup>506</sup> However, not only were these few remaining freedoms to face grave danger during 1948, but it was also clear that the days of the PPS were numbered. Moreover, the depth and extent of control, especially in the countryside, which the Special Commission had gained

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<sup>503</sup> Szczecin PWRN note, no date but probably late 1947, APS 356/14789/unpaginated.

<sup>504</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 206-207.

<sup>505</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 35-36.

<sup>506</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 206-207.

through the 'Battle over Trade', was to raise confidence with the Party that the collectivisation of Poland was an attainable goal.<sup>507</sup>

### **3.4 Division Points to 'Unification' – January-August 1948**

After the flight of Mikołajczyk and several other leading PSL figures to the West at the end of 1947, the PPR stopped all pretence that it was just one member of a coalition and began to openly dominate other political parties, especially the PPS. However, the year 1948 was dominated by two major developments which are clearly evident in documents concerning the PPR and the local Polish administration in the Recovered Territories. The first was the boiling over of tensions in September between the 'National Communist' and 'Muscovite' wings of the PPR over the implications of adhering to the 'coordinating' policies of the Cominform, when Gomułka and his supporters were removed in a purge. The second was foundation of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in December, the culmination of a process which had begun the previous year in which the PPR aimed to swallow up the PPS through 'unification'.

A key factor in creating Soviet doubts about Gomułka was not only his constant emphasizing of a 'Polish Road to Socialism' and scepticism towards collectivisation, but his ambivalent attitude towards the Soviet Union's intentions regarding the Recovered Territories. Indeed, speaking at the inauguration conference of the Cominform regarding the PPR's effort to eradicate anti-Soviet feelings in post-war Poland, Gomułka seemed to voice the doubts and fears of many Poles that the Soviet Union may be prepared to use the Recovered Territories to strike a future deal with Germany at Poland's expense.<sup>508</sup> Other international issues were to seal Gomułka's fate as the dispute between the USSR and Tito's Yugoslavia became a split, resulting in all those who supported 'National Communism' over 'co-ordination' from Moscow being earmarked for expulsion from the party. Moreover, convinced that the Marshall Plan was a US vehicle for assembling a anti-Soviet coalition, the Soviets orchestrated a coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. The USSR was also especially angered by the unification of western German zones into a West German state whose economy was to be revitalised under the Marshall Plan. By June 1948 increasing tensions over the future of Germany resulted in the Soviets placing a blockade around West Berlin which was to last until May the following year.<sup>509</sup> Thus, one of the early flashpoints of the Cold War was less than 80 miles from Szczecin and a mere 30 miles from a Polish-German border which was unrecognised outside the Soviet bloc.

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<sup>507</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 36.

<sup>508</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 209.

<sup>509</sup> Pechnatov, "The Soviet Union and the world, 1944-1953," 105-106.

Although cooperation between the PPR and PPS had never been very smooth, now the PPR turned to purging itself of undesirables and 'bourgeois elements', and forced the PPS to do the same. Moreover, the messy business of forcing political enemies from their positions was made more complicated by internal competition within the Democratic Bloc for the powerful and lucrative positions made vacant.<sup>510</sup> At the local level, these processes were especially visible in Lębork County where in January the PPR turned on ex-PSL member Zygmunt Sobczyk, the head of a local cooperative who had subsequently joined the PPR. Seeking an opportunity to replace with him with someone more ideologically sound, the pretext for action came when Sobczyk dismissed one of his workers, who was also a member of the PPR, for stealing a sheepskin coat from the cooperative. Despite the fact that it was an open and shut case of theft from his employer, the Party attempted to portray it as a case of a poor oppressed worker being victimized by a member of the bourgeois managerial class.<sup>511</sup> Moreover, following a long PPR/PPS campaign, the Mayor of Łeba was eventually pushed out of his position while the head of Lębork city council was also forced to resign.<sup>512</sup> In the unseemly carve-up of these newly-vacated posts infighting between the PPR and PPS over 'jobs for the boys' occurred within days.<sup>513</sup> Moreover, intrigue and jealousy spread within the local PPR executive itself and by the end of January several members in party positions had been replaced.<sup>514</sup>

Officials in Szczecin Province, however, were much more concerned that the lack of professionals in agriculture was leading to key positions being filled by politically-loyal bureaucrats and 'citizens of good will' whose incompetence was causing huge damage to the local economy. Not only were huge amounts of land left unploughed due to a lack of tractors and horses, but livestock numbers continued to be dreadfully low.<sup>515</sup> Moreover, wartime damage, a lack of investment in rebuilding, a lack of farming supplies and a shattered infrastructure was having a serious effect on agricultural production and causing huge economic imbalances. Although they referred to the Polish settlement campaign as 'internal colonisation', senior officials advised that it actually had many of the characteristics of 'external colonisation' regarding the

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<sup>510</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 37.

<sup>511</sup> Lębork PPR reports, 10 January 1948, APG 2603/14/19-23.

<sup>512</sup> Lębork PPR/PPS inter-party committee minutes, 21 January 1948, APG 2603/6/98.

<sup>513</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 25 January 1948, APG 2603/4/102.

<sup>514</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 30 January 1948, APG 2603/3/70.

<sup>515</sup> UWS report on agriculture, 1948, APS 317/5110/1-5.

amount of investment needed.<sup>516</sup> In an ominous sign of plans for collectivisation, they outlined that 'The government aims to carry out and complete agricultural reform in the Recovered Territories in 1950 at the latest.' Moreover, in January 1948, it was estimated that there were still 27,000 German inhabitants 'mainly employed on properties under the management of the Red Army.'<sup>517</sup> Indeed, the number of such properties was still very large and sometimes included entire villages. In Słupsk County, for example, there were 85 Soviet-run properties, including farms of up to over 700 ha. while in Koszalin there were 29 properties of up to 900 ha.<sup>518</sup> Indeed, local schoolteacher Franciszek Buchtalarz, later complained that it was through such continued asset-stripping of West Pomerania by the Soviets, as well as the Polish government and looters, which had created the impression among Polish settlers that the Recovered Territories would eventually be handed back to the Germans.<sup>519</sup> In March 1948, however, Party officials in Lębork County maintained that the international political mood was turning against the 'Anglo-Saxon' policy of favouring the Germans regarding the Oder-Neisse border.<sup>520</sup> Moreover, most local settlers were said to be ignoring 'reactionary propaganda' regarding rumours of an upcoming Third World War.<sup>521</sup>

'Repolonisation' of the indigenous communities along the Baltic coast continued throughout 1948. In the county of Sztum in Gdansk Pomerania, schoolteacher Jan Jakubek described how for the first three years after war he had helped run winter repolonisation courses for Cashubians on the Polish language, history and culture. He recalled that after a few short years it brought 'great satisfaction when more and more often one heard Polish being spoken, although the style and pronunciation was still very broken.'<sup>522</sup> However, Franciszek Iwanowski, a librarian based in Barczewo in Olsztyn Province described how, despite hopes that patriotic concerns would be utmost, the only Warmian and Masurian girls who initially applied for repolonisation courses there were 'mainly in an extremely difficult material situation.'<sup>523</sup> Moreover, it soon became clear that if verification programmes were

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<sup>516</sup> Ibid., 15-17.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>518</sup> UWS maps, January 1948, APS 317/5335/1-8.

<sup>519</sup> Memoir of Franciszek Buchtalarz, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 165/Section II/20.

<sup>520</sup> Lębork PPR report, 5 March 1948, APG 2603/8/130.

<sup>521</sup> Lębork PPR report, March 1948, APG 2603/8/134-136.

<sup>522</sup> Jan Jakubek, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 638.

<sup>523</sup> Franciszek Iwanowski, in Ibid., 705-706.

continually broadened to include more and more indigenous inhabitants, as some officials in West Pomerania wanted, then the local administration would not be able to cope. Moreover, the main problems regarding implementing settlement and repolonisation programmes continued to be the presence of a weak local Polish administration, the negative attitude of Polish settlers towards indigenous groups and the 'chaos' resulting from large numbers of criminals using the Baltic region to hide from the law.<sup>524</sup>

In Olsztyn Province, tension within the indigenous community grew that spring as Warmians and Masurians became rivals over positions of influence in local government and institutions. Paradoxically, the purging by communists of cooperative Masurians 'of the German faith' made room for the Warmians who were Catholic and, in the eyes of xenophobic PPR activists, more Polish. Moreover, the very negative experience which both Warmians and Masurians had had just after the war and in which their first contact with Polish people was often through being robbed, raped or assaulted, had then been followed by aggressive attempts by the Polish state to 'repolonise' them and by the Roman Catholic Church to 're-Catholicize' them.<sup>525</sup> Thus, facing poverty, instability and uncertainty under post-war Polish rule, many indigenous turned to the strategy of self-isolation as a form of escape and passive resistance, as well as biding their time until they could emigrate to the Reich as 'Germans.' There were also tensions among the various Protestant denominations to which the Masurians belonged over to what extent they should accommodate themselves to the wishes of the regime, as well as conflict over church property confiscated by the local Polish administration or the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>526</sup>

Property confiscations also affected ex-PSL members who had found a hiding place in the PPR. For example, Józefa Izdebska joined the PPR in Elbląg County despite her strong dislike for the Party and the persecution she had suffered for campaigning for the PSL during the 1946 referendum. Indeed, in March 1948 she was issued with an order to vacate the well-run and profitable farm which she had spent three years building up from nothing and which was awarded to someone either more politically loyal or to a Party official's greedy relative.<sup>527</sup> Spring also saw pressure within and between the PPR and PPS continuing to increase and every pretext used to

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<sup>524</sup> UWS report, 18 March 1948, APS 317/1182/71.

<sup>525</sup> Łukasz Rogowski, "Przemiany tożsamości wsi na Warmii w latach 1920-2005," in *Ślązacy, Kaszubi, Mazurzy i Warmiacy – między polkością a niemieckością*, ed. Andrzej Sakson (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2008), 312.

<sup>526</sup> Sakson, *Stosunki narodowościowe na Warmii i Mazurach 1945-1997*, 162-169.

<sup>527</sup> Memoir of Józefa Izdebska, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZ Poznań, Memoir No. P 125/13-25.

remove perceived enemies from positions of influence. In Lębork County when a Party member had referred PPR colleagues as ‘bastards’ and declared that ‘the Jews do not have the main voice here yet’,<sup>528</sup> instructions were soon drawn up to further tighten party discipline and carry out expulsions, if necessary.<sup>529</sup> At a subsequent joint PPR/PPS meeting, activists called for a united front to deal with such ‘hostile elements’, especially in order to clear out both parties of ‘the damaging right-wing ballast of pseudo-socialists’ and ‘bourgeois liberal weeds.’<sup>530</sup> In addition, a local communist youth education organisation, OM TUR, declared that it was willing to work with the non-communist scouting association, the ZHP, ‘if changes are made to its leadership.’<sup>531</sup> Although the UB, the local administration and the PPR were reported to be all working well together, Polish settlers were said to be nervous about being uprooted again due recent statements by Pope Pius XII seeming to undermine Poland’s claim to the Recovered Territories.<sup>532</sup>

The summer of 1948 saw a ‘Recovered Territories Exhibition’ take place in Wrocław, aimed at showcasing Poland’s new northern and western lands, while playing down local patriotism in favour of a narrative stressing Polish unity in these regions.<sup>533</sup> Sovietisation intensified nationwide with 300 ‘Price Noting’ and ‘Price Setting’ committees sent around the country to carry out inspections of restaurants, hairdressers, tailors, shoemakers and other ‘privateers.’ These inspectors were supported by local ‘social committees’ who were directed to carry out their own inspections and observations.<sup>534</sup> Another Soviet-style project, the promotion of the Polish National Catholic Church (PNKK) in West Pomerania was also assessed for its effectiveness at promoting the aims of the regime. Although most of its priests were assessed positively, some were accused of alcohol abuse or using their positions for material benefit.<sup>535</sup> However, the veracity of these reports is put in serious doubt when one considers that Fr. Stanisław Kędzierski, who we saw facing charges of sexually

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<sup>528</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 2 April 1948, APG 2603/3/76.

<sup>529</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 12 April 1948, APG 2603/3/77.

<sup>530</sup> Lębork PPR/PPS inter-party committee minutes, 18 April 1948, APG 2603/5/13-77.

<sup>531</sup> Lębork PPR report, May 1948, APG 2603/8/138.

<sup>532</sup> Lębork PPR report, June 1948, APG 2603/8/142.

<sup>533</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 164.

<sup>534</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 38.

<sup>535</sup> Szczecin PWRN reports 1 June, 7 July and 22 October 1948, APS 356/14783/395-399.

abusing parishioners in 1946, also received a positive assessment.<sup>536</sup> Thus, one can see that past and current misdeeds were deliberately ignored or hushed-up with a view to keeping the organisation alive in West Pomerania, despite the poor quality of its personnel.

### **3.5 The Impact of the Fall of Gomułka in the Baltic Provinces – August-December 1948**

By August 1948 the tensions between the PPR's so-called 'Muscovite' wing and Gomułka's 'National Communists' had obviously filtered down to through all levels of Polish society. Gomułka and his supporters, as we have seen, had been given tacit permission to govern partly through their promise to share out land in the Recovered Territories and the manipulation of negative popular attitudes towards ethnic minorities, mainly Germans. This policy was as Fleming puts it, 'a crucial nexus through which population groups were both coerced and able to consent to the unfolding new social order.'<sup>537</sup> In Gdansk Pomerania, Polish settlers were reported to be upset and nervous, not only about rumours of impending collectivisation but due to 'reactionary propaganda' which claimed that Gomułka had already been arrested in Moscow.<sup>538</sup> In Lębork County the PPR continued to ratchet up tension by claiming that the PPR was actually weak when compared to the PPS, which it now declared to be its main rival.<sup>539</sup> This led to detailed assessments of the respective strength of the PPR and PPS around the county being produced within days and resulted in the what the settlers most feared – calls within the local PPR for collective farms to be set up.<sup>540</sup> Such fears and uncertainties, engendered not only by collectivisation but the previous year's anti-speculation Battle over Trade, eventually pushed some settlers to vote with their feet, with local authorities already reporting in 1948 that the population of the Recovered Territories had fallen, particularly in the countryside.<sup>541</sup>

By the end of August Lębork communists had begun to engage in Soviet-style 'self-criticism' and had openly begun to talk about collectivisation, a fitting local

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<sup>536</sup> Szczecin PWRN report, 20 July 1948, APS 356/14783/401.

<sup>537</sup> Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland 1944-1950*, 1.

<sup>538</sup> Lębork PPR report, 4 August 1948, APG 2603/8/148.

<sup>539</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 20 August 1948, APG 2603/7/106-108.

<sup>540</sup> Lębork PPR minutes, 20 August 1948, APG 2603/2/82-87.

<sup>541</sup> Adam Makowski, "Ziemie Zachodnie i Północe w polityce gospodarczej Polski," in *Ziemie Odzyskane 1945-2005: Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne, 60 lat w granicach państwa polskiego*, ed. Andrzej Sakson (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2006), 65.

prelude for the tumultuous events which were to follow within days.<sup>542</sup> Between 31 August and 3 September at a PPR Central Committee meeting in Warsaw, Władysław Gomułka was denounced by his colleagues for his past compromise with other parties, his 'nationalist deviationist' policy of the 'Polish Road to Socialism', as well as for his alleged attempts to sabotage collectivisation in Poland. He was quickly replaced as PPR Secretary-General by Bolesław Bierut who had been officially non-party up to then. For the moment, however, Gomułka was spared incarceration and left alone in a political limbo until 'unification' of the PPR and PPS at the end of that year, and subsequently placed under house arrest.

Immediately following the shockwave resulting from the fall of Gomułka and his 'National Communists', PPR activists on the ground reported that rumours about impending collectivisation were spreading through the settler communities like wildfire. Despite the fact that harvest time inevitably brought farmers together and that they would have certainly discussed impending collectivisation, the PPR laid the blame for spreading these rumours on 'rich peasants and other hostile elements.'<sup>543</sup> The turmoil within the PPR quickly spread to the PPS when, in mid-September, the Central Committee of the PPS launched its own mass purge. With all potential internal opposition quashed, the way was now clear for introducing economic and social policies in line those of the Soviet Union, despite the fact that Poland was still in a very weak state of economic recovery. The Three Year Plan of 1947-1949 had already been based on over-investment in industrialization and capital goods while neglecting consumer goods. This imbalance had not only resulted in general standard of living lower than in 1937, but Soviet-style shock-tactics such as 'socialist labour discipline' and 'socialist competition' were brought into the workplace in order to force under-fed and under-paid workers to raise production.<sup>544</sup> Given the regime's strong emphasis on industry and the Polish worker's role in maximising production, it is strange that more effort was not put in to recovering the 208 industrial plants in Poland still in the hands of the Red Army, most of which were in the Recovered Territories. Although the development of shipbuilding and marine industries along Poland's Baltic coast, especially in Szczecin and Gdansk, was seen as a crucial area for the economy, investment was concentrated in just a few industrial centres rather than spreading it around the region. This not only allowed a large amount of factories in smaller towns

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<sup>542</sup> Lębork PPR minutes, 28 August 1948, APG 2603/2/88-93.

<sup>543</sup> Lębork PPR report, 8 September 1948, APG 2603/8/152.

<sup>544</sup> Dzięwanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 200-201.

and cities to wither and die, but encouraged more and more people to leave an already depopulated and still war-damaged countryside.<sup>545</sup>

By October the sudden changes in the PPR's policies caused fear and confusion among the Party faithful, especially in the Recovered Territories. Having spent several years reassuring Polish settlers that land reform would never mean the introduction of collectivisation and unsure themselves what this would mean in practice, rural PPR members used Party meetings to inquire who was to be classified as 'a rich peasant' and what the difference was between a collective farm and a kolkhoz.<sup>546</sup> Feelings of apprehension were heightened when inspectors from Gdansk PPR turned up to see the PPR secretary in Rozłazino having heard that he was actually 'a kulak employing six workers on his farm.'<sup>547</sup> Understandably, Lębork PPR was soon gripped by feverish discussions on finding reasons for purging particular individuals.<sup>548</sup> The Roman Catholic Church also came under the spotlight. However, a UB agent who was sent to listen to sermons during a mission held in Lębork by four visiting priests in November reported that no political matters had been brought up. Indeed, Catholic organisations had also held back from saying anything against the regime during their meetings. Nevertheless, the Church had retained many supporters within the local administration, with both the county manager and a local judge having their own pews in church.<sup>549</sup> A subsequent report, moreover, described how the faithful had been requested to take an oath taken to defend the Church from atheists, while two local priests in Wicko and Białogard were identified as having a negative attitude toward the PPR.<sup>550</sup>

In other parts of Gdansk Pomerania, connections with the Roman Catholic Church and resistance to unification within the PPS were used as the basis to remove enemies from positions of authority. Jan Jakubek, the 'pioneer' schoolteacher in Mikołajki Pomorskie who had come into conflict with the local PPR a year earlier, again became a target both because of his anti-PPR stance and because of his links with the Catholic charity, Caritas, which the regime had been attempting to infiltrate and take over. A PPS member, in late 1948 Jakubek was unexpectedly visited at 10pm one evening by three members of the provincial PPS organisation demanding to see local

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<sup>545</sup> Makowski, "Ziemie Zachodnie i Północ w polityce gospodarczej Polski," 64-66.

<sup>546</sup> Lębork PPR report, 2 October 1948, APG 2603/11/65.

<sup>547</sup> Lębork PPR report, 4 October 1948, APG 2603/11/69.

<sup>548</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 7 October 1948, APG 2603/2/94.

<sup>549</sup> Lębork PPR report, 7 November 1948, APG 2603/11/57.

<sup>550</sup> Lębork PPR report, 21 November 1948, APG 2603/11/78.

party lists and who interrogated him for an hour and a half in order to decide who should be expelled. The next day Jakubek was summoned to the PPS office in Sztum where he was informed that he had been expelled from the party. Confused, angry and 'morally broken' he maintained that he had 'worked in the belief that I was doing good, but that I had not yet properly got into the spirit of the times. I don't think it was my fault as I was cut off from the world for six years [when] I was in a [German] slave labour camp.'<sup>551</sup> Other 'pioneer settlers' found themselves being pushed aside to make way for ideologically-driven bands of *Homo Sovieticus* who quickly set about undoing all their hard work of the previous three years. Franciszek Buchtalarz, for instance, bitterly complained about the decline of the factory school he had helped set up and run, once the communist-run youth organisation, the ZMP, had taken it over in 1948. From then on 'a painful defeat for education' resulted focused not on learning, knowledge and qualifications but on 'ping-pong, alcohol and hooliganism.' However, Buchtalarz was not an opponent of other changes by the regime, supporting, for example, the liquidation of 'private enterprise' as he believed the regime's line that some traders and speculators were taking advantage of settlers and making their lives much more difficult.<sup>552</sup>

Despite the climate of fear being engendered around Gdansk Pomerania, more rural parts of the province were found to ideologically complacent. Party activists visiting the village of Kostkowo were shocked to find that not even a single member of the local PPR sub-branch could sing the 'Internationale'. To make matters worse, one member openly admitted that he first attended church before going to Party meetings.<sup>553</sup> Evidently, it was forcefully impressed on the Kostkowo branch that immediate changes would have to be made, especially regarding ideology and toeing a centrally-controlled Party line. Thus, when a subsequent inspection was made barely three weeks later, Party activists were delighted to report that not only a meeting to celebrate PPR/PPS unification been 'impressive' due to the quality of the papers and speeches delivered, but that Party members had learnt to sing the 'Internationale' and other communist songs.<sup>554</sup> In the meantime, however, Lębork PPR continued to draw up lists every few days of those who had been denied party membership, usually on

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<sup>551</sup> Jan Jakubek, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 637.

<sup>552</sup> Memoir of Franciszek Buchtalarz, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, 1957, Memoir No. P 165/Section II/28.

<sup>553</sup> Lębork PPR report, 24 November 1948, APG 2603/11/190.

<sup>554</sup> Lębork PPR report, 15 December 1948, APG 2603/11/207.

vague charges of 'drunkenness' and 'suspicious wartime activities.'<sup>555</sup> Many others, however, were expelled for being 'class enemies' or 'ideologically hostile.'<sup>556</sup>

With PPS resistance having been relentlessly worn down through purges and PPR pressure throughout 1947 and 1948, the long-awaited 'unification congress' took place in Warsaw on 15-21 December 1948. In preparation for the merger, the purging of 'opportunists' resulted in the PPS expelling 13% of its members whereas the PPR expelled just 3%.<sup>557</sup> As if to clear up any doubts as to direction in which developments were moving, the guests of honour were the wife of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the pre-cursor to the KGB, and Wanda Wasilewska, one of Stalin's closest Polish collaborators. Indeed, the congress hall soon echoed with loud and sustained cheers to celebrate Stalin's 69<sup>th</sup> birthday. Although the newly-founded Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) appointed former PPS leader Józef Cyrankiewicz as Secretary-General, Bolesław Bierut became Party Chairman while the PPR took over the most important posts.<sup>558</sup> Bierut lost no time in forecasting an intensification of 'class struggle' and increase in nationalisation. The Three Year Plan, which was due to be finished by 1949, was to be replaced by a 'Six Year Plan' lasting from 1950 to 1955. This would be aimed at massively developing coal production and industry, as well as providing 65,000 tractors for collectivisation.<sup>559</sup>

The PZPR, seeing itself as a party designed to permanently hold power, proceeded to set up Soviet-style hierarchical organisational structures which would facilitate its wishes and decisions being transmitted to its minions quickly and efficiently. At the lowest level were 'primary cells' which were supervised by district committees and in turn, by provincial committees. The supreme organ was the Central Committee whose members were to be elected by the party congress, but they could also be appointed or dismissed internally, a facility which allowed Soviet Marshal Rokossovsky to be co-opted on to the Central Committee in November 1949. In order to ensure that it had almost total ideological control, the PZPR established rules that 'resolutions of the lower bodies may not be contrary to the resolutions of the upper bodies' and that 'internal democracy may not be used for purposes contrary to the interest of the party and the working class.'<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>555</sup> Lębork PPR Minutes, 27 November 1948, APG 2603/3/95.

<sup>556</sup> Lębork PPR list, 30 November 1948, APG 2603/8/167-168.

<sup>557</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 222.

<sup>558</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 218-219.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, 220-221.

Following the merger of the PPR and the PPS into the PZPR, the SL merged with the remnants of the PSL to form the ZSL, another communist 'transmission belt' aimed at controlling the peasant masses. Similarly, a rump Democratic Party (DP) was left to function as 'transmission belt' for any tradesmen, shopkeepers and professions who had managed to escape being shut down by the Special Commission. The disruption of trade resulted in food shortages, especially meat and fat in Gdansk and Szczecin, resulting in long queues outside shops. Worst of all was the situation in Olsztyn where orders were quietly issued for meat and fat sales to be cut by 50%. Although the regime aimed to eliminate private enterprise from all of Poland, it was forced to make its own 'concessions' in order to keep settlers in the Recovered Territories, where taxes on business were 40% lower than the rest of the country.<sup>561</sup>

At the local level, the unification congress resulted in calls for the party faithful to practice Soviet-style 'self-criticism' and to continue to purge their ranks of 'kulak' and 'foreign elements'.<sup>562</sup> In the village of Łęczycze, Gdansk Pomerania, speeches were given regarding the US threat from the atom bomb, as well as how to classify capitalists and rich peasants. During the subsequent discussion, however, complaints from the floor about high taxes for individual farmers were brushed off by communist activists as 'baseless'.<sup>563</sup> Communist activists in Łęborg County warned that 'kulaks' had infiltrated all organisations in order to take advantage of the difficult economic situation, and that the forces of 'reaction', especially the Roman Catholic Church, were attempting to obstruct collectivisation.<sup>564</sup> Although 'up to now one could not have accused [the clergy] of hostile activities', they warned that the Church was trying to win over the hearts and minds of both young and old, with priests in Białogród and Wicko continuing to preach against the Party.<sup>565</sup> Indeed, feelings of anti-clericalism may have led to the first meeting of Łęborg's PZPR branch being scheduled for Christmas Eve. Thus, the acolytes of the PZPR demonstrated their fidelity to their new party by devoting the religious holiday to a discussion about the upcoming Six-Year Plan.<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>561</sup> Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945-1954)*, 39-42.

<sup>562</sup> Łęborg PPR report, 14 December 1948, APG 2603/1/58

<sup>563</sup> Łęborg PPR report, December 1948, APG 2603/1/228.

<sup>564</sup> Łęborg PPR report, early December 1948, APG 2603/1/45-52.

<sup>565</sup> Łęborg PPR report, 19 December 1948, APG 2603/1/54-56.

<sup>566</sup> Łęborg PZPR Minutes, 24 December 1948, APG 2603/2/95.

In conclusion, during the initial post-war years, the 'degermanisation' and 'repolonisation' of the Recovered Territories depended on, as Curp points out, a 'grass-roots partnership' between the communists, the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish settlers in which they set aside open conflict for the moment in order to achieve the common ethno-nationalist goal of a region cleared of Germans and resettled with Poles.<sup>567</sup> Indeed, as Fleming argues, the communists employed and then took advantage of social anger against minorities, mainly Germans. Less successfully, they attempted to both unify society and convince the people of their 'Polishness' by associating themselves with nationalist symbols and rhetoric. Moreover, while the presence of Soviet troops was a major factor in the communists gaining power and sovietising Poland, it is also true that their maintenance of this power was not only based on coercion but also acquiescence.<sup>568</sup>

However, what most of these tacit supporters failed to realize was that the predatory nature of communism thrived on finding yet another set of enemies when a previous set had just been destroyed. Thus, when, following the 1946 referendum, the 1947 elections and amnesty, the lists of real or imagined enemies dried up, the communist movement began turn and eat itself. Indeed, the purging of Gomułka's 'National Communist' wing from the Party in 1948 and subsequent Sovietisation policies had very serious consequences for the Recovered Territories, consequences which are still being felt today. For instance, collectivisation caused many productive farmers to 'up stakes' and flee to central Poland which, together with renewed persecution of indigenous groups, set in motion a process of chronic depopulation, particularly in Olsztyn and Szczecin provinces.

Indeed, by late 1948 the Baltic region ceased to be a land of opportunity where formerly landless but industrious peasants could farm much larger holdings or small business people had a wide open door to improve their lot. Instead, entrepreneurial success or good management of land would often be ruthlessly punished in pursuit of uncompromising ideological goals, while sloth and greed would be rewarded if political loyalty to the regime could be assured. At the same time, we have seen that certain groups of peasants, particularly indigenous communities and eastern settlers, either developed effective strategies, or just employed traditional peasant intransigence, to obstruct Sovietisation. Moreover, when faced with groups of sullen and stubborn settlers threatening to abandon the region, local communist activist and officials often

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<sup>567</sup> Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945–1960*, 55.

<sup>568</sup> Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland 1944-1950*, 3-5.

chose to avoid confrontation or present their superiors with excuses why such policies could not be implemented.<sup>569</sup>

Indeed, between 1945 and 1948 what Curp terms the 'post-war nationally revolutionary consensus' brought broad sections of Polish society together behind a policy of 'nationally revolutionary ethnic cleansing' which also facilitated the political consolidation of the communist party-state. By harnessing anti-German sentiment for Polish nationalist aims, the communists hoped to promote themselves as patriots and portray their enemies as reactionary 'fascists' as treacherous agents of western imperialism and German revanchism.<sup>570</sup> However, even those within the communist camp whose had spent the previous three years energetically employing the regime's popular policies of settlement and land reform on the ground in Szczecin, Gdansk and Olsztyn provinces soon realized that the writing was on the wall for them also. It is this period that the relationship between the policies of compromise and conflict becomes seriously unbalanced by Sovietisation and one which ends with conflict becoming an essential instrument in conducting the 'class war' which was to come. Thus, while open political opposition was still possible up to early 1947, as 1948 approached and 'unification' and 'co-ordination' became the order of the day, the hiding places, both for those wished to raise their head above the parapet and for those who did not, became fewer and fewer. However, in placing ideology above pragmatism in order to drive through counter-productive policies aimed at destroying the 'National Communists', the independent farmer and the Church, the Party burned its bridges with many of those who had given it the benefit of the doubt up until then. Moreover, such Sovietisation policies were to ultimately sow the seeds of the Stalinists' own destruction by isolating the Party from 'the masses' while increasing nationalist and anti-regime sentiment to breaking point over the years which followed.<sup>571</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948–1956*, 50-56.

<sup>570</sup> Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945–1960*, 78-90.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-80.

## Chapter Four, 1949-1953

### 4.1 Main issues of time period

The 1949-53 period is one in which Cold War tensions intensified Sovietisation throughout Poland and the eastern bloc. In response to the Marshall Plan, Moscow first sought to integrate its satellites along Soviet model by removing their links with Western trade through the setting up of Comecon in January 1949.<sup>572</sup> Although the Berlin Blockade continued until May 1949, the period began positively for the Polish communist regime with the foundation of the neighbouring German Democratic Republic (GDR) which soon signed a treaty with Poland recognising the Oder-Neisse the new Polish-German border. However, because the treaty was not recognised by West Germany or the USA, it did little to reduce the fear of German revanchism and Western imperialism in the Baltic provinces. Feelings of instability grew following the death of Stalin and a subsequent anti-communist uprising in East Berlin. Although the proximity of the Baltic Recovered Territories to the GDR meant that they were especially affected by these events, they also witnessed their own marked social and political changes during this time. Firstly, the completion of expulsion programmes of the local German population shifted the focus of settlers and local officials from 'degermanisation' onto building up Polish claims to the coastal region. Secondly, problems with insecurity and crime subsided somewhat as the Soviets handed over the region's ports, factories and landed estates to the Polish government and Red Army units left, either for the USSR or for larger bases in elsewhere Poland where military discipline was tighter.<sup>573</sup>

Despite a improving situation which was more conducive than ever to promoting settlement and stability, following the fall of Gomułka and his 'National Communists' in late 1948, hard-line communists introduced a new course of action which threatened to derail Poland's settlement of the Recovered Territories. This was based on two policies which would previously have been both unthinkable and impracticable namely, collectivisation of the Polish countryside and a plan to remove the Roman Catholic Church from all areas of public life. Thus, it is these two issues which dominate the period, both in official government and Party documents, settler memoirs, as well as contemporary newspapers.

As general histories of post-war Church-State relations describe, although covert methods had been used to obstruct the Church's power by both central and

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<sup>572</sup> Maier, "The world economy and the Cold War in the middle of the twentieth century," 59.

<sup>573</sup> Baziur, *Armia Czerwona na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1945–1947*, 227-239.

local government for several years, it was from 1948 that communists began openly to label the clergy as 'the enemy.'<sup>574</sup> While these anti-clerical policies, along with collectivisation, were part of a coordinated Moscow-directed programme of ideologically-driven change all over the Soviet Bloc, in Poland the regime's battle with the Roman Catholic Church was strongly linked with the precarious international status of the Recovered Territories. As we have seen in previous chapters, the Vatican's hesitancy in setting up fully-fledged Polish dioceses seemed to undermine Poland's claim to these lands. However, Poland's Roman Catholic Primate Archbishop (later Cardinal) Stefan Wyszyński, immediately understood that the conflict brewing with the regime could only be won by playing a long game and thus, tried to avoid open conflict, unless provoked beyond reason. Church leaders in the Baltic provinces mainly employed a similar strategy, avoiding political subjects while counter-acting the regime's attempts to split priests into 'patriots' and 'reactionaries.'<sup>575</sup>

The issue of collectivisation was not only extremely controversial among the Polish people in general, but within the regime itself. Indeed, before unification into the PZPR, the PPR and PPS had issued a joint paper stating that collectivisation was unsuitable for Poland and it was Gomułka's lack of enthusiasm in the programme which led to his downfall. Moreover, the Party continued to purge any remaining 'National Communists' and ex-PPS members.<sup>576</sup> Indeed, at the first meeting of the PZPR's Provincial Committee in Olsztyn Province, one delegate reported that 'The purging operation has been completed but should be a permanent phenomenon [and] should take place on a constant basis.'<sup>577</sup>

Three types of farm were included in the collectivisation programme launched in March 1949. In the first type, the land remained in private ownership but was merged for certain periods, such as ploughing and harvesting, during which time livestock and equipment to be shared in common. In the second type, all the land was joined into one large farm and all peasant property rights were liquidated. All livestock and equipment were held in common ownership and farm income put into common fund. The third type was most similar to the Soviet kolkhoz where all land and property

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<sup>574</sup> Such works include Jan Żaryn, *Dzieje Kościoła Katolickiego w Polsce (1944-1989)* (Warszawa: Neriton and PAN, 2003) and Bartłomiej Noszczak, *Polityka państwa wobec Kościoła rzymskokatolickiego w Polsce w okresie internowania prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego 1953–1956* (Warszawa: IPN, 2008).

<sup>575</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 260.

<sup>576</sup> Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948–1956*, 47.

<sup>577</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 23 December 1948, APO 1141/87/2.

was held in common but income divided according to peasants' work input. A fourth type was introduced in 1950 on which only tillage produce was collectivised.<sup>578</sup>

Although Hilary Minc, now Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for Economy Affairs and author of the Six-Year-Plan, initially planned on collective farms occupying 1% of the agricultural sector, he believed this would grow significantly once Polish peasants became convinced of their merits. Indeed, his colleagues in the Party's Central Committee (KC PZPR) hoped this would soon reach 35%.<sup>579</sup> To encourage their development, collective farms were slated for preferential treatment regarding infrastructure such as buildings, electrification and transport, as well as supplies.<sup>580</sup> At the same time, private farms were slated for liquidation through very high taxation and 'administrative pressure'.<sup>581</sup> Despite the peasants' lack of enthusiasm for the new programme, the PZPR leaders called for the number of collective farms to increase from 348 in January 1950 to 1,000 within a year.<sup>582</sup>

In line with the standard works on Polish collectivisation by Dariusz Jarosz and Adolf Dobieszewski, as well as those on collectivisation in Stalinist Russia by Sheila Fitzpatrick and Lynne Viola, we will see that Polish settlers in the Baltic provinces displayed a complex set of responses to the rural policies of the Polish communist regime.<sup>583</sup> On the one hand, peasants avoided open conflict in favour of what James C. Scott has termed 'everyday forms of resistance'. This included passive protest through disobedience, shirking, stealing supplies and produce, if working on collective farms, or, if private farmers, attempting to avoid compulsory deliveries of produce. Indeed, we will see how the most effective strategies for undermining collectivisation was not

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<sup>578</sup> Adolf Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja wsi polskiej, 1948-1956* (Warszawa: Fundacja im. Kazimierza Kelles-Krauza, 1993), 33-34. For the sake of simplicity, in this thesis the term 'collective farm' will cover all the above-mentioned types. Moreover, the terminology used in original documents rarely makes clear which type is being referred to.

<sup>579</sup> Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci*, 54-55.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>581</sup> Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja wsi polskiej, 1948-1956*, 30.

<sup>582</sup> Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948-1956*, 60-61.

<sup>583</sup> Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja wsi polskiej, 1948-1956*; Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci*; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

political opposition but 'the aggregated acts of millions of agriculturalists'.<sup>584</sup> Moreover, as in Soviet Union of the 1930s, Poland's Baltic provinces of the 1950s were strongly affected by land flight, rumours against the government, religious fervour and apocalyptic visions of impending famine and war.<sup>585</sup>

Another major issue for the Party throughout the 1949-1953 period was the Sovietisation of all youth groups, especially the Polish Scouting Association (ZHP) into one communist-controlled organisation, the ZMP. Such an organisation would serve as yet another 'transmission belt' for indoctrinating Polish youth, separating them from 'reactionary' parents, priests and teachers, as well as a providing cheap reserve workforce for harvesting and rebuilding work.<sup>586</sup> However, a ZMP representative in Olsztyn Province conceded that his members, by refusing to participate in religion lessons and taking down crosses from classrooms, were actually alienating rural youth. Other activists suggested sport as a way to draw youth away from the clergy and that operations be carried out 'to cut them off from their parents and connect the masses to the Party.'<sup>587</sup> In Szczecin Province aggressive anti-clerical behaviour by ZMP activists also proved to be counter-productive in recruiting non-Party youth. Indeed, when, at a local secondary school, morning prayers were replaced by the ZMP song, it caused pupils to engage in a mass walkout. After a few days of protest, only one pupil was left singing in the classroom, while the rest went to join a rival prayer session.<sup>588</sup>

#### **4.2 Attempts to Sovietise Youth and Peasants Prove Difficult – January-December 1949**

Indeed, Jerzy Kozak, a 15-year-old boy living in Słupsk, West Pomerania in 1949, provides one with a fascinating account of the Sovietisation of his scout troop and school. He first noticed something was awry when the scout oath was changed, the cross removed from uniforms and 'new, progressive and modern' scouting songs introduced. With time, the new ideology 'found more and more receptive ground, more and more young minds allowed themselves to be twisted.'<sup>589</sup> Moreover, to

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<sup>584</sup> Scott, "Everyday forms of resistance," 18.

<sup>585</sup> Lynne Viola, "Bab'i Bunty and Peasant Women's Protest during Collectivization," *Russian Review* 45, no. 1 (1986), 28.

<sup>586</sup> For a broad examination of communist youth organisations see Sławomir Stępień Paweł Ceranka, „Jesteście nasza wielką szansą”: *Młodzież na rozstajach komunizmu 1944 -1989* (Warszawa: IPN, 2009).

<sup>587</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 2 February 1949, APO 1141/87/16-18.

<sup>588</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 2 February, 1949 APS 858/43/1-10.

<sup>589</sup> Memoir of Jerzy Kozak, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 149/27-29.

increase nominal attendance at notoriously boring ZMP meetings, the teachers at his school scheduled them right after lessons before anyone had a chance to go home. Prospective members of the school's ZMP branch then had face a public barrage of questions from their peers regarding 'organisational vigilance' concerning 'hostile elements'.<sup>590</sup> Above all, he recalled how an 'atmosphere of mutual distrust' among the youth had been created to the point where even 'friends did not trust friends anymore.' Indeed, anyone not on the 'right road' was labelled 'an enemy of socialism'.<sup>591</sup>

In Gdansk Pomerania Province, Jerzy Kozak's negative experience was reflected in the failure of the ZMP to completely sovietise the local scouts, many of whom had joined Marian Sodality groups instead. As with delegates in Szczecin and Olsztyn there was support for broadening the membership of the ZMP, even suggesting that the children of 'kulaks' could be accepted. Moreover, the ZMP's unnecessary antagonising of settlers sometimes forced the local administration to take action to fend off an anti-PZPR backlash. For instance, when a ZMP member in Łeba provocatively took down the cross from hall which was already being used as a chapel, an outraged priest dealt with matter in his sermon the following week in a manner 'touching the faithful until tears were shed in the church.' Fearing criticism from locals, the Party then ensured that the ZMP member concerned was placed in custody 'in order to send this matter in a different direction.'<sup>592</sup>

There were also tensions in Gdansk Pomerania within the PZPR, with the average rate of absence at Party meetings (35%) showing a curious correlation with the percentage of ex-PPS members (37.5%) in the Party. Moreover, there were also clear divisions between ex-PPR and ex-PPS in the way they voted on PZPR motions.<sup>593</sup> Efforts were also made to identify opportunists within the Party. Adolf Kamiński, for instance, complained that some of his colleagues had only joined up to get bigger UNRRA packages, hid the fact that they went to church from neighbours and were actually ashamed of their membership of the Party.<sup>594</sup> PZPR activists also reiterated criticism of the allegedly dubious position of Polish bishops and the Vatican regarding Poland's post-war borders and accused priests of having direct connections to the underground. Furthermore, a representative of the Women's League maintained that

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<sup>590</sup> Ibid., 31-34.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 34-36.

<sup>592</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 3 February 1949, APG 2384/53/1-10.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 11-15

<sup>594</sup> Memoir of Adolf Kamiński, Pamiętniki Osadników 1957, IZP, Memoir No. P 203/7-28.

that there was more freedom for the Church in Poland than in western countries while charging some priests with wartime collaboration.<sup>595</sup> This was no doubt in response to Central Committee orders on 14 March 1949 to highlight divisions in the Church, especially between the clergy and the hierarchy.<sup>596</sup>

Collectivisation, however, continued to be the main concern in West Pomerania where attitudes to the Red Army and the regime, were all assessed as 'good'.<sup>597</sup> Although the Provincial Committee now had to find ways to put collectivisation into practice, one Party activist warned 'We cannot go to a small village and say give us back the land because we want to set up a collective farm.'<sup>598</sup> In Gdansk Pomerania, while some Party officials claimed that between a quarter and two-thirds of local villages were ready to join collective farms, others warned of the 'distrust' of farmers felt towards them. Stanisław Zrałek, the Provincial Governor, blamed peasant resistance to collectivisation on the lingering influence Poland's inter-war regime and warned that the entire state apparatus, including the MO and village and borough leaders 'are squaring up to breaking the resistance of the reaction.' However, another delegate struck a more cautionary note by warning that '... we cannot fall out with that section of the peasantry which has not yet gained clarity in this matter' and advised persuading non-communists to see the merits of collective farming.<sup>599</sup> Thus, while communists on the ground began to notice practical problems with imposing collectivisation, Party leaders refused to give up or consider any alternatives. Moreover, they not only displayed complete ignorance of the mentality of farmers and real economic conditions, but a lack of understanding of the unstable nature of the Recovered Territories in which most of the collective farms were based.<sup>600</sup> Reports of 'kulak resistance', however, inevitably raised levels of Party 'vigilance' during the spring and early summer of 1949 and led to large numbers of arrests around the country.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> UWS Report, 24 March 1949, APS 317/942/307-312.

<sup>596</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 145.

<sup>597</sup> UWS Report, no date but probably early 1949, APS 317/942/323-425.

<sup>598</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 17-18 March 1949, APS 858/43/37-42.

<sup>599</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 17 March 1949, APG 2384/53/16-25.

<sup>600</sup> Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948-1956*, 61-71.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-134.

As the Party's nationwide anti-clerical campaign was having some success, the Church responded with pastoral letter in late April, rejecting accusations that its clergy were 'enemies of the people' and appealing that Catholics refrain from taking part in the campaign. In an effort to limit the letter's impact among the faithful, the UB quickly succeeded in convincing 20% of West Pomerania's priests to either to read just sections of it or not read it out at all. Moreover, Party officials estimated that 53% of the local population had taken part in official 1 May events and reported that 'all West Pomeranian churches were almost empty'.<sup>602</sup> In Olsztyn Province an estimated turnout of 20,000 people on May Day was also interpreted that the Party had mass support.<sup>603</sup>

Early summer 1949 also saw international developments, particularly the foundation of NATO, influence the situation in the Recovered Territories. Local Party leaders criticized enemies of the resulting Soviet-directed 'Fight for Peace' campaign as lackeys of US imperialists and the Vatican. Less zealous members, however, called for more focused propaganda campaigns aimed at undecided non-communists. Although 34 collective farms had been founded in Szczecin Province, rising international tensions had seen a corresponding rise in settler and indigenous anxiety regarding Poland's borders. For example, in Miastko County, a local indigenous farmer had refused to pay his farm tax claiming that 'the Germans will come here soon.' Party officials often claimed to be 'helpless' in the face of such passive resistance to collectivisation with one complaining that only 18 out of 180 farmers in one local village wanted to join. Even minor success gave little cause for celebration. In Nowy Jarosław, for example, the mood on the local collective farm was said to be 'apathetic, although up to now it was simply hostile.'<sup>604</sup>

Party officials also feared that 'imperialists' in Gdansk encouraging large numbers of sailors to use their ships as a means of escape.<sup>605</sup> Moreover, there were still worrying signs of clerical influence with the deputy county manager in Kartuszy having planned a 1 May programme beginning with religious services. On the other hand, as in West Pomerania, the Party had noticed 'incidents of the clergy relenting. There are those who will come close to us and others with whom we will continue to fight.'<sup>606</sup> Indeed, in response to Pius XII's recent decree threatening excommunication

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<sup>602</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 146-148.

<sup>603</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9 May 1949, APO 1141/87/35-46.

<sup>604</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9 May 1949, APS 858/43/48-59.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-47.

<sup>606</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9 May 1949, APG 2384/53/26-35.

for Catholics who supported, promoted or belonged to any communist party, the Polish regime launched an immediate anti-clerical campaign. Within days, however, the country had come under a wave of religious sentiment resulting from the 'Miracle of Lublin'. This concerned an image of the Madonna in Lublin which had appeared to cry on 3 July. In the context of the regime's anti-clerical and collectivisation campaign, it seemed to many that 'the Queen of Poland' had begun shedding tears for her country. News of the event spread like wildfire around Poland, despite media censorship, and huge crowds arrived to witness the event for themselves. It was unsurprising, therefore, that the regime's own attempts to use the 'Miracle of Lublin' in its anti-hierarchy propaganda campaign met with a poor response, including the Baltic provinces.<sup>607</sup> Indeed, according to Kenney, the miracle itself 'became a folk symbol of opposition to the state's attacks on beliefs, traditions, the nation, and the individual.'<sup>608</sup> In Olsztyn Province, however, Party officials were happy to report fewer Party members were 'under influence of the clergy' than feared as only five members had turned in their Party cards fearing excommunication. County secretaries also reported success in convincing settlers of the 'hostile attitude' of Vatican towards Poland.<sup>609</sup>

At the same time the regime increased efforts to create the impression, particularly in the press, that the Church was split into 'patriots' and 'reactionaries'. Autumn 1949 saw the foundation of 'the Patriot Priest Movement' on the suggestion of Stalin to Bierut. Formally part of the war veterans organisation, ZBoWiD, the Patriot-Priests initially comprised ex-prisoners, military chaplains, social radicals, and priests already in conflict with the Polish hierarchy.<sup>610</sup> This development signified the winding down of the earlier strategy of using a rival 'Polish National Catholic Church' (PNKK) to direct disorientated and unwitting settlers arriving in the Baltic Recovered Territories into a church which was happy to serve the needs of the state. From now on the regime would be focused on splitting the real Catholic Church rather than supporting a splinter organisation which had failed abysmally in trying to usurp it. Sensing the weakness of the PNKK's position, Roman Catholic priests in Szczecin attempted to retrieve church buildings and furniture which had previously confiscated from them to serve the PNKK.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>607</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 149-51.

<sup>608</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 331.

<sup>609</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 13 July 1949, APO 1141/87/48-56.

<sup>610</sup> Żaryn, *Dzieje Kościoła Katolickiego w Polsce (1944-1989)*, 130-131.

<sup>611</sup> Załuchowski to PWRN Szczecin, September 1949, APS 356/14737/18.

However, the regime had its own campaign to seize land and property from the Roman Catholic Church through increasing its tax burden, questioning its title to ex-German churches, restricting or banning the public collections of money and the liquidation or takeover of Catholic organisations. When the ground rent on church buildings was massively increased, one Catholic institution in Słupsk was retrospectively charged 3 million zloty for the 1947-49 period. Such acts caused senior clerics to fear that the regime was now aiming to 'liquidate the Church in the Recovered Territories.'<sup>612</sup> In fact, local officials conducted 'interviews' with priests in order to categorize them into groups. Although half of those who turned up for interview in West Pomerania assessed as 'positive', the fact that most of the rest were assessed as 'undecided' indicated that the Roman Catholic Church, by avoiding direct opposition from the pulpit, was posing much more refined and subtle forms of resistance than the regime had expected or was used to.<sup>613</sup>

In autumn 1949 there were calls across the Baltic provinces for more action against 'hostile elements'. In Olsztyn Province Party activists demanded liquidation of enemy propaganda and the 'counter-acting [of] the efforts of class enemies.'<sup>614</sup> Party officials expressed fears that collective farms and, especially Szczecin port, had been infiltrated by saboteurs and spies. One delegate demanded to know whether the high levels of absenteeism and drunkenness in factories was being investigated to see 'whether this is not being deliberately organised by hostile elements.'<sup>615</sup> However, much of the 'sabotage' referred to above had resulted from dismissing qualified but ideologically-suspect professionals and replacing them with loyal 'self-educated' apparatchiks. Indeed, Soviet-style 'self-education' was a social escalator in Olsztyn Province where 621 self-educated workers or peasants held posts in the Party and local government at city, county and provincial level. Despite the serious 'gaps' in knowledge which subsequently appeared during their work, the Party refused to recognize the damage that this policy was doing.<sup>616</sup> Party officials in Gdansk Pomerania also heard how the purging of qualified expert staff there was being obstructed by 'the myth of professionalism and indispensability'. One port worker ominously claimed that breakdowns on ships 'which up to now were thought to be due to normal circumstances ... is hidden class struggle against us'. Another delegate agreed that 'Our

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<sup>612</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 173-179.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-155.

<sup>614</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Plenary Session Resolution, 10 September 1949, APO 1141/87/57.

<sup>615</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 22 September 1949, APS 858/43/60-75.

<sup>616</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Plenary Session Resolution, 10 October 1949, APO 1141/87/61.

province is particularly a trouble-spot as a point of contact with western imperialism.<sup>617</sup>

By the end of 1949, especially following the Party's Plenum in November, the language of the PZPR became more alien and the rhetoric more Soviet-style. Thus, workers were no longer perceived as allies but as potential saboteurs and needing strict Party discipline.<sup>618</sup> Moreover, all sorts of 'enemies' had simultaneously become the motor and target of UB operations on the coast and in the countryside and who faced a campaign of repression including heavy fines, as well as arrest and imprisonment. Indeed, settler memoirs show us how such fines not only forced people off the land but resulted in further persecution and harassment. The drive to arrest peasants went in tandem with the regime's increasing frustration not only with the pace of collectivisation but the poor productivity figures from farms already founded. Indeed, in Gdansk Province only thirteen collective farms had carried out winter sowing by November 1949. Despite this failure, Party officials claimed that collectivisation 'did not cause panic among the peasantry' and planned to set up at least fifty farms in the near future. Any incidents of peasant resistance were put down to 'foreign and hostile elements.'<sup>619</sup> Similarly, in Olsztyn Province poor ploughing and sowing, mechanical breakdowns and the outbreak of fires on collective farms were labelled the 'clear results of sabotage'. Although Provincial Governor, Mieczysław Moczar, advised Party activists to put their energy into stopping mistakes taking place rather than finding culprits in the local administration, others demanded greater vigilance regarding sabotage on collective farms and at farm machinery stations.<sup>620</sup> The Party was assessed as 'weak' in the countryside, with collectivisation again being 'obstructed to a great degree by foreign and destructive elements.'<sup>621</sup> Indeed, in 1949 the PZPR purged 15,000 peasants believed to be class enemies from its ranks nationwide.<sup>622</sup>

#### **4.3 Problems with the Clergy and Collectivisation – January-December 1950**

In autumn 1949 the MAP issued Soviet-style instructions that 'associations which do not serve the interests of the working masses – should be liquidated' while those with

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<sup>617</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 23-24 November 1949 APG 2384/53/63-87.

<sup>618</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 235.

<sup>619</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 23-24 November 1949, APG 2384/53/117-137.

<sup>620</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 25 November 1949, APO 1141/87/71-82.

<sup>621</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Plenary Session Resolution, 25 November 1949, APO 1141/87/89-97.

<sup>622</sup> Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja wsi polskiej, 1948-1956*, 48.

similar remits should be 'joined together.'<sup>623</sup> Thus, January 1950 saw the regime seize control of Poland's main Catholic charity, Caritas, an act which was accompanied by a large propaganda campaign which justified the move by criticizing 'abuses' in an organisation being run by 'reactionary' priests. When the Polish bishops issued an encyclical on the matter in mid-February, the UB and PZPR activists carried out 'prophylactic talks' with local priests which resulted in only 43% of priests in West Pomerania reading it out.<sup>624</sup> To give the charity an outwardly Catholic veneer during its Sovietisation process, Patriot-Priests were co-opted onto Caritas boards. They were also key promoters of 'the Stockholm Appeal', ostensibly an international peace petition but actually a Soviet-directed campaign against NATO and the US military presence in Europe and Korea. Naturally, when both the Vatican and the USA refused to sign 'the appeal', it gave the regime yet another basis on which to criticise the Pope and their own bishops for ignoring the peaceful desires of their Polish flock in order to curry favour with the Americans.<sup>625</sup>

In Gdansk Pomerania the alleged influence of 'enemy agents' began to occupy more and more minds with one Party official claiming such agents were deliberately getting local sailors drunk in order to blackmail them and sow 'provocative rumours'.<sup>626</sup> The influence of 'the enemy' was allegedly evident in the countryside. Although by February 1950, 114 collective farms had been set up in Gdansk Province, the largest number were located in the counties of Lębork (23), Elbląg (20) and Gdansk 19 and the lowest number in Tczew (5), Kościerzyna (2) and Kartuzy (0). Therefore, the poorest results were in the 'old counties and villages' which had either been in or near 'the Polish corridor' between the wars and had large and long-established Cashubian or Polish populations. Even at this stage Party officials admitted that some peasants who had joined collective farms had been 'subjected to pressure, being frightened with tax demands, expulsion, persecution etc.'<sup>627</sup>

Although the Party attempted to win over peasants to collectivisation by organising excursions to collective farms in both the USSR and in the Recovered Territories, most were reported to be sceptical and critical of what they had seen.<sup>628</sup>

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<sup>623</sup> UWS circular marked 'Confidential', 22 August 1949, APS 317/827/73-77.

<sup>624</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 184-86.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-34.

<sup>626</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 8 February 1950, APG 2384/54/1-27.

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-59.

<sup>628</sup> Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci*, 57.

There were still, moreover, 'all kinds of attempts to create confusion among the peasants, particularly inspired by the reactionary section of the clergy ...' <sup>629</sup> One of the most contentious issues for farmers during the collectivisation campaign was the regime's imposition of compulsory delivery quotas, forcing farmers to sell a set proportion of their produce to the state at a price lower than the market rate. Having accrued enormous levels of debt through fines and taxes, persecuted peasants could have all these sins forgiven if they joined the local collective farm. <sup>630</sup> Piotr Leśniak, a settler near Słupsk, personally witnessed how these taxes financially crippled many fellow settlers and led to the mass abandonment of farms in the region, as well as a reduction in farm sizes to 5-6 ha. <sup>631</sup> Indeed, such policies made peasants not only angry but susceptible to rumours. For example, in several villages in Stargard County, there was reported peasant 'organised resistance' with the clergy and the 'kulaks' telling peasants that, during an inevitable Third World War, invading Americans would consider anyone working on a collective farm a communist. However, the situations in the counties of Bytów, Miastko, Człuchów, Kamień and Świnoujście were even worse where activists had not yet managed to set up 'even one' collective farm. <sup>632</sup> Although in January 1950 the number of collective farms for the three Baltic provinces amounted to a meagre 76 (11 in Gdansk Pomerania, 34 in Olsztyn and 31 in Szczecin), this was to increase substantially throughout the year as part of a collectivisation drive which saw almost two thousand farms founded nationwide. <sup>633</sup>

In April 1950, following the Sovietisation of Caritas and on the back of an intensifying anti-clerical campaign, the Polish hierarchy attempted to reach a *modus vivendi* with the regime by signing an agreement in return for guarantees regarding the teaching of religion in schools and the running of Catholic charities. Without consulting the Pope, the Polish bishops also stated their support for the Recovered Territories and promised to intervene with the Vatican to have Polish Roman Catholic dioceses established there. Much more controversially, however, they not only expressed support for the collectivisation programme but promised 'to also fight the criminal acts of underground gangs' and to punish priests who supported it. <sup>634</sup> UB officers in

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<sup>629</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 11 February 1950, APS 858/44/3-10.

<sup>630</sup> Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948-1956*, 207-212.

<sup>631</sup> Memoir of Piotr Leśniak, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 98/12.

<sup>632</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 11 February 1950, APS 858/44/13-20.

<sup>633</sup> Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci*, 107-109.

<sup>634</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 156-157.

Szczecin now observed that a section of priests who used to hold negative attitudes towards the regime 'now positively speak about and support the policies of the Polish government in their sermons.'<sup>635</sup> Despite the new agreement, the regime ratcheted up its anti-clerical campaign. Mass rallies soon took place around the country passing anti-Vatican resolutions, although most people in countryside concentrated on calling for the security of Poland's new borders rather than directly attacking the Church.<sup>636</sup> As Krzysztof Kowalczyk describes, the Church came up with more subtle ways of confrontation by encouraging Catholic parents to use Soviet-style 'entryist' tactics in taking up places on the Parents' Committees of the province's atheist-run schools.<sup>637</sup>

Administrative changes at the end of June saw the creation of Koszalin Province which was to occupy the eastern half of what had been Szczecin Province. However, such changes would have no influence on the fact that collectivisation was going badly across West Pomerania due to the poor quality and insufficient numbers of staff involved, while drunkenness was still observed to be a serious problem.<sup>638</sup> Maritime affairs were of more concern in Gdansk as, despite new crews being subjected to 'political work', the fleet was 'more exposed to foreign influence' especially regarding officers and those in higher administrative posts.<sup>639</sup> At the same time, Party officials reported that 38 new farms had been founded recently, again mostly in Lębork, Elbląg and Gdansk counties and still none in Kartusy. However, compulsory grain deliveries were not going as well as the year before with some again claiming that that 'kulaks' and enemies were deliberately getting workers drunk.<sup>640</sup> Although in Szczecin Province Party officials were happy to report that the October target for compulsory grain deliveries had reached 125%, the figure was only 80% in Chojna County due to 'strengthened kulak resistance which is not always possible to unmask in time.'<sup>641</sup>

#### **4.4 The Unexpected Impact of the 'Gryfice Incident – January-December 1951**

In the first few weeks on January 1951, Party officials in Gdansk Pomerania were coming under increased pressure from above to raise the number of collective farms, despite severe difficulties on the ground. In Starogard, for example, the county

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid., 158-159.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid., 139-141.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid., 164-168.

<sup>638</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 16 May 1950, APS 858/44/27-36.

<sup>639</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 27 July 1950, APG 2384/54/122-145.

<sup>640</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 22 October 1950, APG 2384/54/171-200.

<sup>641</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 26 October 1950, APS 858/44/73-86.

committee had set up just five out of ten planned collective farms, and even then had only managed this through threats and harassment. In Gdansk County some peasants were refusing to join collective farms by saying that they were planning to leave the region anyway. Party officials blamed this situation mainly on the UB and MO which had 'caused certain perversions, certain divergence from the principle of freedom of decision.'<sup>642</sup> Moreover, they considered the peasants' abandoning of farms as a phenomenon which had 'a economic-political character', even sabotage.<sup>643</sup> In West Pomerania, the growth of collective farms was more successful than other regions, with 256 collective farms founded by January 1951.<sup>644</sup> Indeed, the tempo was especially fast in Pырzyce County where 19 farms had been set up in November and December 1950 alone despite the fact that 'serious resistance among the peasants was encountered.' Moreover, attempts by settlers at trying replicate a family farm under the guise of a collective farm, in which they only employed their family members and friends, were 'immediately liquidated.' Women were also found to be resisting collectivisation, refusing to work outside normal hours or discouraging their husbands from signing up.<sup>645</sup> Such resistance evidently worked to a degree, with the Party secretary in Gryfino County being expelled from the Party for trying to set up a farm 'with the aid of terror and frightening peasants'. Party officials sadly concluded that such incidents 'do not completely depict the facts of violations of basic principles of freedom of decision which took place in every county and caused the collective farms to perform poorly.'<sup>646</sup>

However, it is important to remember that despite the widespread abuses engendered by the Sovietisation of the countryside, collectivisation did mean a better life for a number of Polish peasants. For example, W.J. Kopka, a settler who had been farming near Lębork saw joining a collective farm not only as a way to improve his own material situation but provide his children with a fast track to social advancement. Having been forced to abandon his private farm due to high taxes and compulsory deliveries in 1949, the following year he moved with his family to a collective farm in Białogarda. Moreover, for Kopka, who had never seen a tractor ploughing before, collective farming provided him with an opportunity to see modern farming methods first hand. Despite his idealism, he had to admit that the farm was poorly managed, with most families concentrating on their private allotments and neglecting collective

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<sup>642</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 11 January 1951, APG 2384/55/1-51,

<sup>643</sup> Ibid., 67-70.

<sup>644</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Plenary Session Resolution, 11 January 1951, APG 2384/55/74-75.

<sup>645</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 11 January 1951, APS 858/45/18-35.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid., 36-46.

farm work. In any case, the material situation of Kopka's family 'significantly improved' on the collective farm, especially regarding the access to food and educational privileges and career prospects which his children received as a result.<sup>647</sup>

International and domestic affairs continued to strong reverberations in Poland's Baltic region. The signing of a treaty with the GDR in July 1950, confirming Poland's western border as the Oder-Neisse line, had allowed the regime to claim that the Vatican had no reason not to establish Polish dioceses in the Recovered Territories. Following a number of demonstrations and rallies organised by the Party to call the Church to carry this out, in January 1951, the regime unilaterally removed the Apostolic Administrators in the Recovered Territories and replaced them with hand-picked 'Vicars Capitular'. In the massive propaganda campaign which followed, thousands of mass meetings took place, with 1,500 in West Pomerania alone, each passing resolutions against 'the reactionary section of the clergy'.<sup>648</sup> Soon PZPR bigwig, Stefan Jędrychowski, claimed that the Polish hierarchy had 'capitulated' due to popular patriotic concern over the Church's stance towards the Recovered Territories.<sup>649</sup> Indeed, in an effort at compromise, and at avoiding a schism, Archbishop Wyszyński recommended that the faithful obey the new regime-sponsored 'Vicars Capitular' for the time being and, in April 1951, finally convinced Pius XII to nominate five titular bishops.<sup>650</sup> However, the Patriot-Priest organisation continued to be at the forefront of the National Front's propaganda campaigns.<sup>651</sup>

The Polish political stage had also witnessed the formation of a 'National Front', which was ostensibly an alliance of all major Polish political and social groupings to support early completion of the Six-Year Plan, Poland's 'partnership' with the USSR, and maintain the 'Fight for Peace' against the designs of Western imperialists on Poland's borders. It was aimed at presenting the Polish citizen both with the illusion of democratic choice, as well the idea that whoever did not support the Front's aims was a 'reactionary' or a 'class enemy'. This was clear in Olsztyn Province in March 1951 where a delegate from Morąg County warned how individual farmers were continuing to abandon the land and hide grain.<sup>652</sup> Along with warnings to be vigilant towards

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<sup>647</sup> Memoir of W.J. Kopka, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 129/7-13.

<sup>648</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 188-192.

<sup>649</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 5 March 1951, APG 2384/55/87-119.

<sup>650</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 193.

<sup>651</sup> Minutes of OKK Szczecin meeting, 24 April 1951, APS 356/3863/1-2.

<sup>652</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 4 March 1951, APO 1141/87/168-174.

sabotage, activists were instructed to hold meetings 'to recruit hesitant small and medium farmers, to unmask and break the resistance of the kulak and speculator elements.'<sup>653</sup>

Enemy sabotage was also high on the agenda in West Pomerania as the collective farm sector continued to have problems with productivity and waste on farms, as well as with 'kulaks' refusing to hand over grain or pay taxes. By this stage, however, several Party officials had begun to notice how National Front and Party activists had not yet learned adapt their message to the province's 'specific conditions.' They pointed out that it was a region without long-established traditions and that activists had to realize that a significant proportion of the Polish population there were repatriates whose strong sentiments for their former homes in the east were open to abuse by enemy propaganda. Moreover, the province's location beside the GDR necessitated more work to raise political 'awareness' among settlers, given their susceptibility to rumours. Indeed, one delegate claimed women in shop queues were heard saying that they would not object to Poland being absorbed into the USSR in order to avoid a Third World War. Another warned that settlers had to realize that 'even the smallest sign of weakness' regarding the economy and settlement 'will be especially used by [imperialists] as an argument against us, that every such fact damages our country and weakens it ... Thus the kulak, spreading false imperialist propaganda [about] war and not sowing the land, is an enemy of our country.'<sup>654</sup>

Although spring 1951 saw mass arrests take place in order to increase the tempo of collectivisation, the Party became so concerned about a popular anti-PZPR backlash resulting from the acts of over-zealous activists that it sought scapegoats to shoulder the blame. Indeed, the best example of this is a series of events which took place at this time in Szczecin Province and known as 'the Gryfice Incident' in which a brigade of communist activists in Gryfice County used violence, threats and 'revisions' of resistant farmers' homes to set up 15 new collective farms in February/March 1951. Despite this success, news of official complaints from two of the affected farmers soon reached provincial party and administrative officials. Rather than hush the matter up the PZPR, anxious to portray itself as the protector of the settlers, decided to use it to deflect social anger regarding 'excesses' during collectivisation away from the Party leadership. By April 'the Gryfice incident' had become a national story as the Party's Central Committee and State Prosecutor launched a commission to investigate what had happened. With most of the brigade and its ringleaders soon imprisoned, ostensibly for 'breaking the Party line', it is clear that in this case the Party, the UB and

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<sup>653</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Plenary Session Resolution, 4 March 1951, APO 1141/87/185-203.

<sup>654</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 4 March 1951, APS 858/45/48-66.

the courts worked together to play down the incident's political aspects in an attempt to show that the PZPR was in control of events.<sup>655</sup>

In late May the PZPR's Provincial Committee in Szczecin met to deal with the fallout from Gryfice. Having heard a resolution from the Central Committee's Political Office not only criticizing the incident itself but also provincial and county Party organisations, those in attendance duly took their cue to engage in 'self-criticism'. For example, a delegate from Stargard, one of the region's most collectivised counties, admitted that that he 'broke the Party line' by wanting to collectivise as many villages as quickly as possible. Eliaz Koton, the province's notorious head of the UB accepted that members of the UB and MO may not only have failed to react to such incidents but had actually taken part in them, thereby causing 'an atmosphere of uncertainty'.<sup>656</sup> A settler's view of 'the Gryfice incident' is provided by Franciszek Buchtalarz who described the complete lack of understanding of the farmer-settler mentality by 'worker-propagandists' from the cities who had come to implement collectivisation in West Pomerania. As eastern repatriates had already had an opportunity to see Soviet kolkhozes in reality, the Gryfice incident caused shockwaves and panic among these settlers in particular.<sup>657</sup> Moreover, Irena Szydłowska, a local inspector, described how her earlier attempts to report the abuses of one of the main figures behind the Gryfice incident to local Party officials were continually obstructed. Eventually, she resigned over the issue after sending a file on the matter to the Party Inspection Committee in Warsaw. When, several months later, news of the Gryfice incident became public, Szydłowska wondered her actions had anything to do with getting justice for the Gryfice settlers.<sup>658</sup>

Curiously, it was in Olsztyn, the Baltic province furthest from the actual events, where the reverberations from the Gryfice incident caused some of the greatest unease among the Party faithful with local officials reporting that the incident had 'shaken our Party to the core.' Moreover, a delegate from Morąg, pointed out how the 'bestial incidents' of some activists had caused immense damage by maintaining the mood of impermanence among the settlers.<sup>659</sup> On occasion this led to group resistance. For example, a delegate from Węgorzowo reported how when a drunken

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<sup>655</sup> Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948–1956*, 226-236.

<sup>656</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 27 May 1951, APS 858/45/88-112.

<sup>657</sup> Franciszek Buchtalarz, in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 41-50.

<sup>658</sup> Memoir of Irena Szydłowska, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 210/36.

<sup>659</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 2 June 1951, APO 1141/87/205-235.

MO officer locked up collective farm workers, their younger colleagues had turned up at the police station *en masse* looking for their release and shouting: 'Your time will come, you PZPR sons of bitches.' Even the deputy head of the local ZMP criticized his own members for using violence and intimidation rather than persuasion, saying '..after all there is nothing easier than writing on the fence to an average farmer "Give Back the Grain Kulak" instead of convincing him why and where the grain will go.'<sup>660</sup>

The Gryfice incident also resulted in a wave of self-criticism within the Party in Gdansk Pomerania. As in West Pomerania, many Party officials complained that local activists had paid little regard to 'the specific conditions of this area ...' and that 'normal farmers' were being victimized by vexatious tax demands. There were also calls to transfer more title deeds to farmers to give their legal situation more permanence and prevent them abandoning their farms. Moreover, the widespread confiscation of grain had proved counter-productive as resentful peasants had slowed down work and production in revenge. For example, a delegate from Kartuzy, maintained that the reason collectivisation was going so badly was there due to popular anger resulting from the arrest of twenty local peasants the previous September for refusing to join a planned collective farm. Moreover, the head of the provincial propaganda office informed Party colleagues that the Gryfice incident had 'undermined the authority of the People's government in the eyes of the peasants.'<sup>661</sup>

Despite the negative popular mood resulting from the Gryfice incident, collectivisation, and the repression which often accompanied it, continued in the Baltic provinces. However, from now when 'excesses' occurred the Party would be more careful about publicizing them, lest they result in yet another anti-communist backlash. Indeed, it was only a matter of months before the another serious Gryfice-style incident took place in Koszalin Province, but one which was handled very differently. It concerned the county of Drawsko which had been slated for total collectivisation. By July 1951 there had already been so many complaints of abuse from peasants in the county that the Party had already set up another commission of investigation which soon confirmed the role of the UB, the MO, the army and county committee in persecuting local settlers. However, clearly reeling from how publicizing the Gryfice incident had not quietened things down but had encouraged other victims of collectivisation to come forward all over the country, the Party ensured that the investigators merely recommended that the perpetrators be quietly dismissed and moved on. Thus, despite the fact that the events in Drawsko were of the same magnitude as in Gryfice, the whole matter was kept quiet and within the Party to avoid

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<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 235-245.

<sup>661</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 3 June 1951, APG 2384/56/3-65.

creating settler unrest with the perpetrators being punished far from the public eye.<sup>662</sup> At the same time, a government decree from 25 July 1951 called for strong punishment for those showing resistance, especially those refusing to provide compulsory deliveries.<sup>663</sup> Notwithstanding such attempts to quell peasant dissent, both the Gryfice and Drawsko incidents resulted in an almost complete stalling of collectivisation during the second half of 1951 when fewer than 50 farms were founded nationwide.<sup>664</sup>

Some settlers in Drawsko County, however, not only cooperated with the collectivisation programme but became part of its apparatus. Henryk Zudro, a young settler who had been a Party activist first worked at the sugar beet inspectorate in Drawsko in 1950 before taking up a post at the state inspectorate in Koszalin, saying: 'I wanted to play a part in the clearing of theft, negligence and laziness which was vigorously spreading. During my work I learned the rules in order to be able to properly inspect someone ...'<sup>665</sup> However, Stanisław Bania, a settler in nearby Będolino, and possibly one of Zudro's victims, described how he was subjected to a sustained campaign of harassment and intimidation for opposing collectivisation. Apart from being dismissed from his job as an agricultural inspector, he was arrested for allegedly hoarding ex-German property. Aware he was being used as an example to frighten other farmers in Drawsko into signing up for collectivisation, Bania was also approached during his interrogation to become a UB agent. Having refused this approach, he was officially labelled a 'kulak' and was interrogated by the UB on two further occasions and harassed through 'administrative pressure' in the form of spurious fines, inspections and confiscations. Eventually, ground down by such constant harassment, he joined a collective farm in Wierzchowo district to be finally left in peace.<sup>666</sup> Attempts made by the UB to recruit agents from farmers under interrogation had become standard practice and was effective in pressuring such people to become agents and informers, as well as join collective farms, even the Party.<sup>667</sup> In fact, in Bania's own province of Koszalin, the UB had 600 informers on its books in 1952-1953<sup>668</sup> while his fascinating memoir articulately describes the climate

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<sup>662</sup> Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948-1956*, 220-25.

<sup>663</sup> Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci*, 220.

<sup>664</sup> Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja wsi polskiej, 1948-1956*, 53.

<sup>665</sup> Henryk Zudro in Zygmunt Dulczewski, *Pamiętniki Osadników Ziemi Odzyskanych*, 572-573.

<sup>666</sup> Memoir of Stanisław Bania, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 93/12-16.

<sup>667</sup> Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja wsi polskiej, 1948-1956*, 89-92.

<sup>668</sup> Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci*, 234.

of fear at this time in a countryside 'surrounded by agents and spies who were [the Party's] eyes and ears ... and nobody knew who was one of them.' Moreover, he recalled how '... nobody believed anyone else, each was afraid of the other when voicing any kind of opinion, even at home in the evenings people were afraid to say anything aloud when they were uncertain if anyone was not listening at the window.'<sup>669</sup>

The atmosphere of distrust only intensified as time went on. By late September, Party officials in Szczecin Province were expressing fears that some young men who had come to the coast for training as fishermen were planning to use this opportunity to attempt escape abroad. Elias Koton, the head of the local UB, warned that Szczecin's location as the coastal province furthest west increased the possibility of foreign contact and was concerned about the presence of large numbers of settlers involuntarily 'repatriated' from the east. Some delegates accused the whole Provincial Committee of making Gryfice-style errors based on applying administrative pressure while failing to use persuasion. On hearing this, First Secretary Pryma claimed that the 'confusion' in Party after the Gryfice incident had rendered some of its members helpless in the face of opposition:

We are often unable to use our authority when an enemy or a hooligan comes along, shouts out against the Party or the government and if it suits him even hitting a policemen who [then] did nothing to him as he was afraid because he did not understand the resolution regarding Gryfice.<sup>670</sup>

In Olsztyn Province reverberations from the Gryfice incident continued to have a disproportionate effect when compared to regions closer to events. A delegate from Moraġ, also claimed that the recent Central Committee resolution condemning the Gryficko incident had led to confusion. Indeed, local peasants had stopped fearing local Party secretaries, were openly debating articles from newspapers and criticizing both the Party organisations and the local administration. Curiously, however, these peasants placed the blame for collectivisation's excesses almost entirely on local Party organisations, not the PZPR leadership. A delegate from Kętrzyn, however, complained that the peasants were not handing grain over to the collection points as they believed rumours it was bound for the Soviet Union. Another delegate claimed that if the Central Committee's resolution condemning the Gryfice incident was applied to those present 'only 20% ... would be without fault. We have all been seriously excessive.'<sup>671</sup>

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<sup>669</sup> Memoir of Stanisław Bania, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 93/11-12.

<sup>670</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 29 September 1951, APS 858/45/292-330.

<sup>671</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 30 September 1951, APO 1141/87/250-290.

There was less contrition in Gdansk Pomerania, however, with one official bluntly declaring '... it is necessary to harshly lay out that we beat enemies and villains before Gryfice and we will be [still] beating them after Gryfice.'<sup>672</sup> In West Pomerania where Party officials heard one delegate describe the frequent 'moaning and complaining' he had to face on collective farms from workers who were often unwilling to work.<sup>673</sup> Moreover, only 71.3% of the compulsory grain deliveries for 1951 had been collected by mid-November.<sup>674</sup>

The atmosphere in West Pomerania at this time is clearly described by Leopold Przewoźniczek, a settler living in Sławno, a town which although badly destroyed during the war had seen very little rebuilding since 1945. Indeed, most Polish settlers from east were not very interested in rebuilding as 'Some say that the granting of this land to Poland has not been sufficiently guaranteed[and] that it may happen that [they] will still move from here ...' Despite efforts to convince these people that Poles had once lived there, Przewoźniczek recalled that not many seemed to believe it. In fact, he complained that the Polish settlers already established there had done little to alleviate this feeling of impermanence by neglecting important public buildings in dire need of renovation.<sup>675</sup>

#### **4.5 The Failure of Collectivisation Becomes Apparent – January- December 1952**

As 1951 came to a close the National Front, of which the Patriot-Priests were a key part, stepped up its 'Fight for Peace' campaign. However, as the minutes of Patriot-Priest meetings in Gdansk show, the main international focus had shifted away from American 'imperialism' in Korea and more onto German 'revisionism' regarding the Recovered Territories.<sup>676</sup> However, many such priests publicly identified themselves with the 'Fight for Peace' campaign, even appearing in the local press.<sup>677</sup> Although the local deputy prosecutor maintained that the fight against 'kulak-speculator unrest' was continuing in the province, in the post-Gryfice atmosphere he advised that that farm produce collectors at least attempt to explain to peasants that they had to sell their

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<sup>672</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 2 October 1951, APG 2384/56/92-106.

<sup>673</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 17 November 1951, APS 858/45/340-354.

<sup>674</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Report to Plenary Session, 17 November 1951, APS 858/45/371-398.

<sup>675</sup> Memoir of Leopold Przewoźniczek, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 3/25-29.

<sup>676</sup> Minutes of OKK Gdansk Meeting, 22 November 1951 AAN/425/75/Prot. 19/51.

<sup>677</sup> *Dziennik Bałtycki*, 23 November 1951.

produce to the state so that its workers could provide them with manufactured goods in return.<sup>678</sup>

Party officials in West Pomerania were also concerned with the failure of propaganda campaigns to 'persuade' the Polish peasant to sign up, now that more coercive methods had to be put aside following the Gryfice incident.<sup>679</sup> However, the provincial prosecutor there maintained levels of 'kulak' theft and other crimes showed how: 'In our province [there] is the greatest pressure from the enemy ...'.<sup>680</sup> Indeed, other Party officials pointed out that while there had been hundreds of incidents covert resistance of 'speculation' and hiding grain and potatoes, there was also open resistance in the form of farmers attempting to force the authorities to raise the set prices of agricultural produce.<sup>681</sup> Moreover, although the numbers of collective farms in the province had increased from 155 to 397 in just over a year, from May 1951 Party officials had 'noted clear stagnation in the area of expanding [the number of] collective farms'. Indeed, they had to admit that 'the roots of this phenomenon originate in the incidents in Gryfice.'<sup>682</sup>

The atmosphere was even more tense in Olsztyn Province with a Party official from Pisz claiming that there were still former underground strongholds which were no-go areas for Party activists campaigning for a new constitution modelled on that of the USSR. As in other regions, the sharp decrease in the number of collective farms being organised in the province was blamed on confusion resulting from the Central Committee's resolution on the Gryfice incident which, one Party official claimed had 'weakened enthusiasm.' A tractor driver at a collective farm near Kętrzyn reported how his efforts to monitor the work of other farm members had caused those who 'were already rebellious ... [to] lay on the grass.' Such reports caused one delegate to demand: 'And you secretaries must not forget that you must look for enemies who are attempting to lower production – you must seek them out, unmask and punish them.'<sup>683</sup> Governor Moczar then accused the average settler of ingratitude, as despite having benefitted from 203 million zloty in provincial loans since 1946, he 'has an attitude of distrust towards us' due to enemy propaganda and 'believes that apart from what we say, either at his place or at meetings, we have something else in our

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<sup>678</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 3 February 1952, APG 2384/57/25-61.

<sup>679</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 13 January 1952, APS 858/46/59-60.

<sup>680</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 2 February 1952, APS 858/46/76-90.

<sup>681</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 2 February 1952, APS 858/46/125-140.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-147.

<sup>683</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 2-3 February 1952, APO 1141/88/1-35.

bosoms.<sup>684</sup> However, other Party colleagues maintained that it was poor living conditions rather than collectivisation, that was causing an 'escape from the farms' as youth sought a better life in the factories. Indeed, in 1951 alone about 1,700 peasants had abandoned farms in Olsztyn Province, a phenomenon which greatly worsened labour shortages in the collective farm sector. As in the other coastal provinces, the low number of collective farms being created there, Party activists admitted, was directly due to the Gryfice incident.<sup>685</sup>

Party officials in Olsztyn also made Soviet-style efforts 'to correct the social composition' of membership, a practice based on replacing 'intellectuals' with 'workers.'<sup>686</sup> Even though overall membership had increased, the proportion of peasants had declined while that of intellectuals had actually risen. Thus, the trend was the opposite of what the Party was demanding. In addition, party officials were warned to be wary of ex-Nazis and 'kulaks' among the Warmian and Masurian communities as those who had refused to take Polish passports showed that 'there are American stool pigeons working among them.'<sup>687</sup> As in Olsztyn, the social composition of the PZPR was of concern in Gdansk Pomerania with one delegate accusing Cashubians of shying away from his attempts to recruit them for a communist-controlled 'Cashubian Party'. Moreover, serious difficulties had been encountered in trying to recruit new members in Gdansk port showing that 'there is a large number of enemies who are exerting influence on the healthy section of the crew.'<sup>688</sup> A similar situation existed in West Pomerania with a Party activist from the port town of Żegluga admitting that no new members had been recruited there during the previous two years as: 'Our sailors are very much exposed to the influence of capitalist elements by being on long voyages and in capitalist ports.'<sup>689</sup>

With three-quarters of farmers in Szczecin Province still outside the collective farm system and the harvest fast approaching, Party officials reluctantly admitted that private farmers had 'an important role' in the economy.<sup>690</sup> In Olsztyn Province,

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<sup>684</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 2 February 1952, APO 1141/88/40-70.

<sup>685</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, No date but probably 2 or 3 February 1952, APO 1141/88/77-82.

<sup>686</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 23 April 1952, APO 1141/88/93.

<sup>687</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 23 April 1952, APO 1141/88/122-146.

<sup>688</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 24 April 1952, APG 2384/57/144-165.

<sup>689</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 27 April 1952, APS 858/46/156-171.

<sup>690</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 28 June 1952, APS 858/46/245-253.

however, an official from Nowe Miasto complained that there was a large number of local 'kulaks' who displayed 'dogged resistance' against collectivisation. For example, when a meeting was organised in the village of Omule to hear the glowing report of a local woman who had been to the USSR to see a kolkhoz, the 'kulaks' allegedly prevented the event taking place by getting her husband drunk before convincing him to beat her severely with a pitchfork. Moreover, as local collective farms still had very low production, some activists had begun using 'collective punishment' to raise it. The amount of tax revenue coming in from farming was also a fraction of amount predicted, such as in Nidzica County where this amounted to only 30%.<sup>691</sup> Peasant resistance to the compulsory deliveries was quite strong in certain areas, with Party officials estimating that about 40% of farmers in Olsztyn Province did not provide milk supplies, especially in the counties of Szczytno and Iława. Moreover, the number of collective farms being founded in Olsztyn had virtually stalled. Indeed, with 127 farms having been set up in 1950, this had collapsed to a mere four in 1951 and fourteen in 1952. Faced with such peasant intransigence, President Bierut's statements against the 'kulaks' became ever more shrill. The kulak class, he said, needed to be 'isolated' as it was 'the last redoubt of capitalism in our country, an enemy of the people's government ... [and] an enemy of all the working people ... We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the kulaks still today are a serious economic power in the countryside.' Poland, he warned, continued to be the target of foreign capitalist enemies with designs on its hard-won Recovered Territories.<sup>692</sup>

Although 'kulaks' were an important issue in Gdansk Pomerania, Party officials were pleased to hear that Kóscierzyna County had finally managed set up one collective farm, despite constant 'difficulties and obstacles'. In a county with very large numbers of Cashubians, alcoholism among Party activists was a major concern for their public image, especially in light of the enemy's alleged success in getting PZPR officials drunk.<sup>693</sup> Indeed, other activists also called for collective farms to be purged of 'thieves, pests, saboteurs and robbers of state property, as well as removing malicious layabouts, drunks and disturbers of socialist work discipline as a foreign and hostile element ...'<sup>694</sup> By late summer 1952, Party activists in Gdansk were anxious that the electoral lists for upcoming parliamentary elections had to be accurate and correct; 'There may not be too many nor too few voters.' Moreover, the elections were to be fought using the broad base of the National Front as the enemy would 'make the

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<sup>691</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 29 June 1952, APO 1141/88/154-175.

<sup>692</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 29 June 1952 APO 1141/88/179-201.

<sup>693</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 30 June 1952, APG 2384/58/1-36.

<sup>694</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 30 June 1952, APG 2384/58/84-92.

greatest effort to obstruct our plans and above all create divisions in the countryside, stir it up regarding the compulsory deliveries, the raising of ground taxes etc.’<sup>695</sup> One settler in Gdansk Pomerania, Czesław Karmel, described firsthand how punitive taxation and confiscation of land for collective farms had driven many private farmers to ruin or left them with holdings of between 5 and 9 ha. Moreover, he described the pervading atmosphere along Poland’s coastal during this period as one when: ‘two words incautiously stated against the binding dogmatic rules of a political-economic nature could have one put in prison for a couple or [for] several years, when ... informing was made widespread by the UB apparatus by various ways ...’<sup>696</sup>

Although communists in West Pomerania were concerned with shirking and drunkenness on collective farms, they also planned to continue harassing private farmers in ‘the battle for carrying out the duties of the countryside regarding the government.’<sup>697</sup> The election campaign was not only aided by the Patriot Priests but the Polish hierarchy which, in an effort to avoid further trouble with the regime, issued a statement reminding the faithful of their obligation to vote. However, when, in October 1952, a parish priest in Gryfice County was arrested for spreading ‘anti-government sentiments’ and opposing the Patriot Priests, local settlers, perhaps emboldened by their previous resistance to collectivisation, organised a public protest. Several protesters were arrested with one of them, a nun, receiving a four-year prison sentence for her trouble.<sup>698</sup> Moreover, while the targets for compulsory deliveries in Szczecin Province were being exceeded in the counties of Nowogard, Stargard, Szczecin and Gryfice, this was offset by the failure to hit targets in the highly-collectivised counties of Pyrzyce, Łobez, Kamień and Choszczno.<sup>699</sup>

In Olsztyn Province, however, Sovietisation was running into difficulties with a number of Party members expelled for abuses, alcoholism, even having a ‘hostile attitude’ to collectivisation. Local ZMP brigades also came in for serious criticism regarding their attitude to work and susceptibility to the enemy, above all clerical, influences. Indeed, another warned that the clergy ‘has changed its tactics. They don’t shout loudly at atheists and communists anymore but employ broad praying for these

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<sup>695</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 15 August 1952 APG 2384/58/142-146.

<sup>696</sup> Memoir of Czesław Karmel, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 212/37-43.

<sup>697</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 30-31 August 1952, APS 858/46/268-302.

<sup>698</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 199-202.

<sup>699</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 30-31 August 1952, APS 858/46/325-340.

atheists whom they reputedly “want to turn.”<sup>700</sup> Moreover, activists were ordered to prevent the exposure the indigenous community to the ‘revisionist, anti-nation and anti-Polish mood’ of the enemy who was ‘attempting to put stumbling blocks in our way and sabotage our production.’ Another major issue of concern for Party officials were ‘blank spots’, meaning that 30% of villages and 40% of the collective farms in the province had no Party organisations at all, especially Węgorzewo, Braniewo and Pastęk.<sup>701</sup>

In areas where the Party did have a presence, however, farmers were often subjected to relentless harassment. Stanisław Ossowski, a settler living near Olsztynek was one those who bore the brunt of the Party’s anti-farmer policies during the early 1950s in Olsztyn Province. Having initially received a 15 ha. farm and being exempted from paying tax for three years, this was reduced to 5 ha. of poor land as soon as collectivisation was introduced. Moreover, the moment his three-year tax-free period expired the village leader, in league with a local government official, confiscated most of his livestock in lieu of an enormous tax bill. Having put up some resistance to such ‘administrative pressure’ the campaign of persecution to which he was subjected not only caused his wife to suffer a heart attack but completely turned his son off taking over the farm. Moreover, he was eventually forced to work on other farms to make ends meet and continued to be the subject of vexatious threats from tax officials.<sup>702</sup> Unfortunately, the figures show that Ossowski’s case was not unusual with 159,518 seizures of property in lieu of unpaid ground tax carried out nationally between 1 January and 15 September 1952, a figure that nearly doubled to 344,976 for the period 1 January to 20 June 1953.<sup>703</sup>

Polish Primate Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński made two visits to West Pomerania in 1952, both of which were observed very closely by the UB. In fact, Wyszyński was visiting Szczecin in late November when news came that he had been appointed a cardinal by Pope Pius XII. This was aimed at bolstering his position during a campaign strong clerical repression in which three bishops, including the Bishop of Katowice, Stanisław Adamski had been removed from their positions by the regime and replaced by Patriot-Priests. Moreover, senior members of the Krakow curia were arrested on trumped-up charges of spying and illegal trading in foreign currency.<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>700</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 27-28 August 1952, APO 1141/89/1-30.

<sup>701</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 27 August 1952, APO 1141/89/59-75.

<sup>702</sup> Memoir of Stanisław Ossowski, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 158/1-5.

<sup>703</sup> Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci*, 255-256.

<sup>704</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 203-204.

Despite such apparent success in cowing one of the regime's key opponents, the head of the UB in Olsztyn Province warned Party activists of the need be alert to 'Vatican agents'. He advised that, apart from 'reactionary' priests, these may including other church employees, such as organists and sacristans.<sup>705</sup>

There was also strong 'kulak' passive resistance in a number of counties, especially regarding the compulsory deliveries. In Bartoszyce, for example, all 121 farmers attending a meeting had refused to accept written notifications, a pattern which was followed in several other counties. As a result, Olsztyn Province's compulsory delivery plan had only been 43% achieved.<sup>706</sup> Collective farms were not only producing low yields but rotting from the inside, with a number of such farms the counties of Mrągowo, Bartoszyce, Kętrzyn and Pisz in such a poor state that they were threatened with closure due to 'lazybones and layabouts [and] a slackening of socialist discipline ...'<sup>707</sup> Sovietisation reached into other areas of life, even the field of beekeeping. Filip Raczycki, a beekeeping instructor in Olsztyn Agricultural College, was dismissed as a suspected former member of the underground and replaced by the inexperienced but ideologically-sound cousin of the head of the local county administration. As a result, production at the college apiary soon collapsed from 40 to 16 hives.<sup>708</sup>

#### **4.6 The Impact of Stalin's Death and the Berlin Uprising – January-December 1953**

Despite the calamitous state of collective farming across the Baltic provinces, the year 1952 ended with Party officials in Gdansk Pomerania praising the 'serious achievements' regarding the development of collective farms in Kościerzyna and Kartuzy, the two least collectivised counties in the province.<sup>709</sup> In February, tensions with the Polish bishops were raised even higher when the regime issued a unilateral decree ordering all Church appointments to have the prior approval of the government and all priests to take an oath of loyalty to the state. Of the 301 priests in West Pomerania, 282 took the oath (93.7%) while 19 refused, 17 of whom were classified as having a 'markedly hostile attitude.'<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 4 December 1952, APO 1141/89/127-148.

<sup>706</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 4 December 1952, APO 1141/89/165-176.

<sup>707</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 4 December 1952, APO 1141/89/231-270.

<sup>708</sup> Memoir of Filip Raczycki, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 171/1-7.

<sup>709</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 6-7 December 1952, APG 2384/59/1-34.

<sup>710</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 223-224.

February also saw President Bierut claiming that although Western imperialism was in 'great crisis', Poles still needed to be constantly vigilant regarding foreign enemies who were continually changing their tactics. Of particular concern to Bierut was Poland's long Baltic coastline, especially the high levels of 'vigilance' required to catch enemies coming through its ports. As a port 'links us with friends but also links us with enemies', he warned Party activists in Gdansk that the harbours of Poland were witnessing 'ceaseless sabotage' by 'imperialists' and 'enemies'.<sup>711</sup> Of course, of vital importance in this regard was the Polish navy. The communists had initially been forced to compromise regarding the politics of its naval officers, such was the shortage of trained sailors. However, to deal with potential enemies among them, a counter-intelligence unit based in the port of Gdynia and run by Soviet NKVD took a severe toll on the Polish navy during the early 1950s, particularly its officer class.<sup>712</sup>

News of the death of Stalin on 5 March 1953 suddenly threw both the Party and the UB into a period of uncertainty, which saw a subsequent increase in peasant demonstrations against collectivisation and compulsory deliveries appearing. While the regime initially seemed to hesitate in the face of such opposition, it turned out to be a mere tactical pause.<sup>713</sup> The events of spring 1953 had a curious effect in West Pomerania, with Party officials in Gryfino claiming that, despite a large number of recent expulsions of 'hostile elements' from the Party, the number of new members had actually increased during the weeks after Stalin's death. Others, however, complained that Party had not been able to 'use and consolidate' the grief of the masses following the death of the Soviet leader.<sup>714</sup> Indeed, local Party organisations were criticized for their 'insufficient' links with the masses, shown by fact that since December 1952 the Party membership in Szczecin Province had decreased by almost 1,000 members. Moreover, apart from the failure to achieve agricultural produce targets by a significant margin, other factors pointed to the internal decay of the collective farms. Indeed, at once such farm in Nowogard County, the farm manager was reported to have 'organised the mass listening of a foreign broadcast ... and by which he disseminated enemy propaganda and warned [them] against joining the

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<sup>711</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech/Paper by Bolesław Bierut to Plenary Session, 27 February 1953, APG 2384/60/21-37.

<sup>712</sup> Dariusz Nawrot, "Zarząd Informacji Wojskowej nr 8 w Gdyni – organizator represji w Marynarce Wojennej," in *System Represji Stalinowskich w Polsce 1944-1956. Represje w Marynarce Wojennej*, ed. Igor Hałagida (Gdańsk: 2003), 75-89.

<sup>713</sup> Kura, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości wobec kolektywizacji wsi polskiej 1948–1956*, 114-118.

<sup>714</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 7 May 1953, APS 858/47/10-12.

Party.<sup>715</sup> Party officials also expressed concern regarding an increase in numbers of schoolchildren taking part in Lenten retreats, particularly those attending atheist-run schools.<sup>716</sup> Moreover, in mid-June the Vicar Capitular with responsibility for West Pomerania wrote to President Bierut advising that the regime's removal of Catholic priests from their posts 'cannot be carried out base on the whims and interests of individuals without concrete and real charges and evidence' but should follow 'Polish reasons of state, the good of the Polish people and [be]in the spirit of stabilizing and deepening the Polishness of the Western Territories'.<sup>717</sup>

Indeed, in late June 1953 Bierut and Soviet Marshal Rokossowski, attending a PZPR Provincial Committee meeting in Gdansk, witnessed the atmosphere of nervousness along Poland's Baltic coast following the crushing of an anti-communist uprising in East Berlin just a few days earlier. The esteemed guests not only heard how the Baltic ports were exposed to 'enemy propaganda, incidents of hooliganism, smuggling and even desertion' but how the Berlin Uprising had resulted in attempts 'to sow confusion and uncertainty' among Cashubians and Polish settlers on the Baltic coast through 'neo-Nazi revisionism'.<sup>718</sup> In Olsztyn Province, however, the reverberations of the Berlin Uprising initially had little impact although this was soon to change. Party officials were more concerned with ties between 'kulaks' and the clergy with Provincial First Secretary Klecha angrily asking:

Why is our Party not being built up in the countryside?? ... our work with [the peasants] is limited to when we want something ... [and] there among them is the kulak, speculator who takes advantage of and incites the peasants to revolt. ... We have many people with baggage, the clergy goes in there, we tolerate it [and] they are laughing at us and we should be ashamed of ourselves at such helplessness ... Where a priest acts against the government, there must be a uniform attitude [and] there must be no gentleness ... We are not fighting the religious administration, we are, however, fighting a foreign imperialist spy network in cassocks.<sup>719</sup>

The regime also encountered resistance from Polish settlers over church property. For instance, in July 1953 forty women in the village of Wełtyn, Gryfino

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<sup>715</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 7 May 1953, APS 858/47/36-64.

<sup>716</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 260.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>718</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 27 June 1953, APG 2384/60/39-54.

<sup>719</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 29 June 1953, APO 1141/90/1-26.

County, openly protested at the attempted transfer of a Protestant presbytery, which they had renovated, to the local administration.<sup>720</sup> Indeed, such incidents, in which groups of women led protests either against government acts against religion or collectivisation, are reminiscent of the *Bab' i Bunty* which occurred in Soviet Russia during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>721</sup> Despite such problems, by July 1953 the number of collective farms in Szczecin Province had increased to 650 while those in Koszalin, Gdansk and Szczecin provinces had reached 462, 353 and 459 respectively, altogether comprising almost 25% of the national total.<sup>722</sup>

In August 1953 Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz visited Party colleagues in Gdansk to steady nerves given recent developments in the Soviet Union such as the 'unmasking' of KGB chief, Lavrenty Beria, as well as effects of the Berlin Uprising. He appealed for activists to guard Poland western borders against 'Nazis, and Adenauer with the American imperialists', perhaps as a way concentrating their minds on what was happening in the west rather than in the east.<sup>723</sup> As the summer rolled on, the effect of the Berlin Uprising on the Baltic provinces became clearer. Curiously, however, as with the Gryfice incident, the impact of the Berlin Uprising in West Pomerania was lower than in the coastal provinces further east. Indeed, Party officials in Świnoujście, a port on the Polish-German border, were criticized for not responding adequately to 'the Berlin provocation.'<sup>724</sup> Although the Berlin Uprising had had little impact in Olsztyn Province initially, by mid-August Party officials were linking recent outbreaks of settler, and especially indigenous resistance, to this event. Provincial First Secretary Klecha claimed that West German revisionists were using radio, letters and leaflets in a propaganda campaign which he admitted was 'revitalising revisionist elements in our province.'<sup>725</sup> Indeed, in the heavily-indigenous borough of Rzeck almost all of the inhabitants were fined for not supplying documents in order to receive Polish identity cards. Growing peasant anger over collective farms even caused one delegate to suggest that '... we cannot wait for general collectivisation.'<sup>726</sup> In fact,

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<sup>720</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 274.

<sup>721</sup> Viola, "Bab'i Bunty and Peasant Women's Protest during Collectivization," 23-42.

<sup>722</sup> Jarosz, *Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w latach 1948-1956 a chłopci*, 108-109.

<sup>723</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech by Józef Cyrankiewicz to Plenary Session, 8 August 1953, APG 2384/60/100-103.

<sup>724</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9 August 1953, APS 858/47/128-148.

<sup>725</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 12 August 1953, APO 1141/90/94-128.

<sup>726</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 12 August 1953, APO 1141/90/65-90.

incidents of open opposition were seen during this period in several locations around the province, including farmers allowing crops to rot in the fields and even group requests from farmers for remittances from compulsory deliveries.<sup>727</sup>

However, on 22 September 1953 the Roman Catholic hierarchy was thrown into panic when the Bishop of Kielce, Czesław Kaczmarek, was sentenced to 12 years in prison for 'spying' for the Vatican and the CIA. Three days later Cardinal Wyszyński was taken into custody and interned in Stoczek Warmiński, a monastery near Lidzbark Warmiński in Olsztyn Province, the most isolated and least populated of the Recovered Territories which had the added advantage of a population which did not have a sufficiently unified identity to provide any kind of support base for escape. Curiously, at a subsequent Provincial Committee meeting in Olsztyn lasting several hours, Party officials made no mention at all either of the Roman Catholic Church or their distinguished prisoner, Wyszyński.<sup>728</sup>

In fact, religious affairs were also curiously absent from the agenda in Gdansk Pomerania where Party officials complained of 'kulak' resistance against collective farms and demanded more repressive measures to deal with it. Another delegate from Kartuzy County reported there were 700 'kulaks' there getting their information from listening to the BBC and the Voice of America, as well as 'from letters received from our enemies in West Germany, with whom every fourth farmer corresponds in our county.'<sup>729</sup> The concentration of Party officials on economic rather than religious affairs was also a feature of the Provincial Committee meeting in Szczecin. Even the Party's own statistics still showed that pre-war yields in Szczecin Province under the Germans had been much higher.<sup>730</sup> The Patriot-Priests, however, sensing that their time was at hand, crowed with delight at the news of Wyszyński's internment.<sup>731</sup> Moreover, those in West Pomerania tried to promote themselves as the defenders of the Recovered Territories.<sup>732</sup> According to Kowalczyk, although in October 1953 almost 20% of West Pomerania's priests belonged to the movement, only about half this

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<sup>727</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 12 August 1953, APO 1141/90/142.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid., 182-244.

<sup>729</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9 November 1953, APG 2384/60/168-206.

<sup>730</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9 November 1953, APS 858/47/216-226.

<sup>731</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 226-227.

<sup>732</sup> Minutes of KDiŚDK Szczecin Meeting, 4 November 1953, APS 356/3863/1-2.

figure were active members.<sup>733</sup> Indeed, when a Patriot-Priest rally was to be held in Szczecin on 5 November, officials complained that a number of local members had been making excuses to avoid attending it.<sup>734</sup>

In conclusion, the period of 1949-1953 was one in which the regime, driven by Sovietisation and policy changes in Moscow, sought open conflict with all sections of Polish society but often received effective passive resistance in return. Although the two main targets for destruction were 'kulaks' of the countryside and the 'reactionary priests' of the Roman Catholic church, the field of conflict quickly broadened out to include every organisation not controlled by the PZPR. While collectivisation was the responsibility of three main agents namely, the UB, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Justice, we have seen how closely PZPR officials were involved in its implementation. Indeed, it was they who had to deal on the ground with the fact that while Minc's Six-Year-Plan raised farm produce targets, it simultaneously cut investment in agriculture as Moscow demanded that its Soviet satellites industrialized to provide weapons during the Cold War. When the inevitable fall in production occurred, these same officials decided to starve private farmers of resources gained through vexatious taxation and compulsory deliveries which were then funnelled to the collective farms.

Indeed, throughout this period the Party failed to realize that two completely different systems being in competition only made things worse, and despite noticing practical problems imposing collectivisation, refused to consider any alternatives. We have also seen how the relatively small number of collective farms caused never-ending anxiety in the Party's provincial committees which then blamed local party organisations for not doing enough. In fact, when the number of collective farms began to contract, more farmers were forced to join, signifying that Stalin, aided by Bierut and his fellow hardliners, was now driving collectivisation in Poland.

At the same time, however, the Party itself and its sister organisations became some of the greatest sources of concern regarding infiltration by 'enemies' and 'kulaks'. Moreover, when flagship collective farms and factories began to fail almost immediately due to poor-planning, waste and incompetence resulting from forcing the 'self-educated' to take over the jobs of experts, the blame for this was not laid at the door of the Party but at the 'kulak' and the 'saboteur'. Indeed, the rise in the number of collective farms during the 1949-1953 is directly connected to efforts of the

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<sup>733</sup> Kowalczyk, *W walce o rząd dusz: Polityka władz państwowych wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945-1956*, 251.

<sup>734</sup> RdsW Szczecin Report, marked 'Confidential', 5 November 1953, APS 356/3863/12-14.

government to achieve an ideologically-driven collectivisation plan which was divorced from its economic and social implications.<sup>735</sup>

We have also seen how when Party activists began to use persecution and terror tactics to expand the collective sector as in Gryfice, passive resistance had built up a sufficient static charge to shock the PZPR into changing tactics. Thus, from 1951 a second phase of collectivisation opened, one based on using punitive taxation and 'administrative pressure' rather than violent harassment to force farmers into joining the collective farms. Indeed, peasant resistance seemed to be emboldened after the Gryfice incident all across the Baltic region, particularly regarding the compulsory delivery quotas. Moreover, due to their implications for international stability, the repercussions of Stalin's death and the Berlin Uprising were more keenly felt in Poland's Baltic provinces than elsewhere.

The Roman Catholic church proved to be a great well of passive resistance to Sovietisation, despite the activities of the Patriot-Priests. In fact, we have seen how it was often ordinary parishioners and priests who seemed to be more willing than the hierarchy to take a stand against the authorities, whether this was through marching in processions, taking control of Parents' Committees in schools or protesting at the confiscation of church buildings and the removal of religious instruction from schools. Despite the regime's 'salami tactics' against the Church, it failed to build a 'new man' and a 'new society' in the Recovered Territories whose people still clung to religious practice.

Finally, despite the regime's decision to appoint its own candidates to Church positions in the Recovered Territories, a policy of passive resistance prevented the Patriot-Priests from taking key posts. Therefore, despite the interment of Wyszyński, attempts to further push Sovietisation, collectivisation and the hunt for 'kulaks' and 'enemies', the latent or passive resistance of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Recovered Territories meant that the Party was in a much weaker position than it seemed. Indeed, such weaknesses would become clear during the final phase of Stalinist rule in Poland as the Party's control of all areas of social, political and economic life began to unravel.

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<sup>735</sup> Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja wsi polskiej, 1948-1956*, 54.

## Chapter Five, 1954-1956

### 5.1 The Communists' Illusory Hold on Power

The beginning of 1954 saw Poland's communist regime intensify its hard-line policies in contrast to other Soviet satellite countries which relaxed 'class struggle' following the death of Stalin.<sup>736</sup> Although under Nikita Khrushchev's tenure as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), a 'new course' had resulted in liberal reforms being introduced across the eastern bloc, some of the region's 'Little Stalins', Bierut included, initially preferred to maintain the Stalinist system rather than reform it.<sup>737</sup> Indeed, through the incarceration of Cardinal Wyszyński, eight Polish bishops and up to 900 hundred priests, the Roman Catholic Church seemed to be cowed and ready to cooperate with the regime.<sup>738</sup> Despite resistance among some settlers resulting from the Gryfice and Drawsko incidents, collectivisation of the Polish countryside was intensified as individual farmers came under further 'administrative pressure' through punitive taxation and compulsory deliveries. However, by the end of that year signs had appeared that the Party hard-liners' grip on power possessed a brittleness which would cause it to disintegrate over the next three years, leading to a popular uprising in Poznan, as well as the return of Władysław Gomułka and his 'National Communists'.

There were, of course, several factors which contributed to this slow disintegration, including popular resentment of the Party's privileged apparatchik class, a deep internal crisis of faith among the Party's intellectual and youth wings and the economic breakdown resulting from collectivisation. Moreover, the discrediting of the UB following the fall of KGB chief, Lavrenty Beria, and the revelations of UB defector, Józef Światło, led, on the one hand, to a relaxation in communist authoritarianism in Poland and, on the other, the emboldening of groups and individuals to openly challenge Sovietisation. As we will see, such popular frustration and anger caused great concern among the Party faithful in the Baltic Recovered Territories, some of whom recognised the seriousness of the situation and advised making amends with the masses before it was too late. Although the lack of a long-

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<sup>736</sup> Jan Nowak-Jeziorański in Zbigniew Błażyński, *Mówi Józef Światło: Za kulisami bezpieki i partii* (Łomianki: LTW, 2012), III.

<sup>737</sup> Csaba Békés, "East Central Europe, 1953-1956," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 1, Origins*, ed. Odd Arne Westad Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 338-339.

<sup>738</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 251. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History*, 48.

established society along the Baltic coast meant that no Poznan-style uprising erupted there, both the settler and indigenous communities, sensing weakness in the communist cause, became more disobedient and less afraid of the consequences.

## **5.2 Party Activists Feel Increasing Pressure of Resistance – January-December 1954**

In January 1954 small numbers of anti-communist leaflets and posters appeared in Sztum, Gdynia, as well as in Starogard County while UB informers claimed that former underground members along the coast were spreading rumours gleaned from foreign radio and sabotaging factories in which they worked.<sup>739</sup> In Szczecin Province, however, such Stalinist paranoia was beginning to wear thin, even among some Party officials who became more and more sceptical that ‘enemies’ could be responsible both for the decline of collective farms and deliberately getting farm managers and Party members drunk. Indeed, they seemed finally prepared to admit that Party organisations were also partly to blame due to the damage caused by ideologically sound but unqualified people being shoe-horned into key posts.<sup>740</sup> One delegate pointed out that as the population density of collective farms was almost half that of the rural average, the Party should now be concerned about ‘the development and profitability of farms of small and medium farmers [and] protect them from kulak exploitation.’<sup>741</sup>

In Olsztyn Province some Party officials also began to face the cold reality of just how unfavourable local conditions were to the growth of communism. For a start, the primarily rural nature of the Warmia/Masuria region meant that its small working class was not only concentrated in small industrial centres, but that many of its members were actually former peasants who had recently moved to urban areas, fleeing collectivisation. Indeed, local collective farms were facing ever-decreasing manpower, not helped by the ever-increasing breakdowns of machinery during the spring sowing campaign.<sup>742</sup> One delegate reported that there had been a huge increase in the number of farms refusing to join the collective farm sowing campaign (up from 14 to 70), warning that those that are ‘politically ailing will get worse and [this] may spread to other collective farms.’<sup>743</sup>

Moreover, farmers were becoming more vocal about their anger at the lack of legal title to their land, unfair taxes and compulsory deliveries. In Nowe Miasto ‘talks’

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<sup>739</sup> WUBP Gdansk Dept. III reports, 1952-1953, 7 January 1954, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.3/312-320.

<sup>740</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9 February 1954, APS 858/48/93-113.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid., 114-144.

<sup>742</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 12 February 1954, APO 1141/91/3-9.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid., 21-31.

held with 974 local farmers resulted in only 512 agreeing to provide the deliveries completely and 69 in part.<sup>744</sup> First Secretary Klecha claimed that 10,000 farmers in the province had 'weaselled out' of the compulsory deliveries, maintaining that it had been

thanks, in fact, to the kolkhozes that the Soviet Union gained the strength which crushed Hitler. Can the peasants really think that these 200,000 members of the collective farms are idiots, that the Party has made fools of them? One person may be mistaken but not the masses.<sup>745</sup>

Notwithstanding, the masses' obduracy meant that while 12 collective farms had been founded in the province so far that year while 47 had collapsed, meaning that the total number had actually decreased.<sup>746</sup> However, in Koszalin Province over 400 rural homes had been renovated by early spring with a view to attracting settlers from central Poland, who would also receive loans and tax reliefs, to join the collective farms there.<sup>747</sup>

In mid-February 1954, Party officials in Gdansk hosted Stanisław Radkiewicz, the head of the MBP and one of the most feared people in the country, who began by severely criticizing their failure to achieve spring sowing targets and demanded more action be taken to root out enemies from their alleged hiding places in local administration. In addition, he bluntly informed the Gdansk delegates that he wanted the kulak's farm 'to produce, not to prosper ...'. In a telling response to appeals for more aid for the countryside, he warned activists to be aware that such aid was not to be given due to philanthropic, but economic reasons 'to strengthen [and] help farmers in order for them to hand over more grain, and not for them to take it and pat themselves on their bellies and say: "Aha, they have started giving, we deserve it, next year they should give us even more ..."'.<sup>748</sup>

Having heard this, delegates frantically attempted to shift the blame for their own failures onto others or find credible excuses as to why their organisation, borough or county was failing to meet its targets. For instance, some delegates highlighted the often effective resistance of the local Cashubian population to collectivisation with one

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid., 10-20.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid., 32-41.

<sup>746</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, KW Executive Report, 12 February 1954, APO 1141/91/97-107.

<sup>747</sup> *Głos Koszaliński*, 2 March 1954, 1.

<sup>748</sup> Speech by Stanisław Radkiewicz to KW PZPR Gdansk Plenary Session, 14 February 1954, APG 2384/61/45-54.

maintaining that it was the Cashubians' fear both of war and Polish reprisals against those who had joined the *volksliste* which was stopping them from joining collective farms.<sup>749</sup> Others made outlandish claims regarding the 'activation' of local Jehovah's Witnesses, seen by the regime as a CIA-controlled organisation, if only for the reason that it had its headquarters in Brooklyn.<sup>750</sup> However, the local Party leadership added that the Jehovah's Witnesses were not the only religious 'reactionaries' in the province as 'We feel severe pressure from the [Roman Catholic] clergy, not only on the lower Party cells but also on important Party and government activists.'<sup>751</sup>

At the national level, March 1954 saw the convening of the Second Party Congress, which was attended by Nikita Khrushchev.<sup>752</sup> Typically, less than a third of the delegates in attendance were classified as 'workers' and 'peasants', with the remainder largely made up of bureaucrats, intellectuals and Party functionaries.<sup>753</sup> The woeful situation in Polish agriculture was the main focus of the congress with Bierut complaining that the collective farms only occupied 9% of Poland's cultivated land and admitting not only that their yields per hectare were lower than individual farms, but that Poland had actually been forced to import 'a considerable and increasing amount of grain.'<sup>754</sup> Despite this, he was determined that collectivisation be driven forward over the next two years as it was lagging behind the expansion of industry to the point where it threatened to derail the Six Year Plan. The congress also introduced major administrative changes in order to achieve greater Party control of the countryside for the drive towards collectivisation, consolidating small village boroughs into larger units.<sup>755</sup> As Dziewanowski points out, with 'kulaks' holding 14% of the country's cultivated land and producing 28% of its food, the Party somehow planned to increase agricultural production by clearing the countryside of its most efficient farmers.<sup>756</sup>

Party officials in Olsztyn Province soon admitted that there was still a huge amount of waste, theft, hooliganism and drinking on local collective farms, especially amongst the young. Even First Secretary Klecha was prepared to roll back a little on his

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<sup>749</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 14 February 1954, APG 2384/61/1-8.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-29.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-41.

<sup>752</sup> *Głos Koszaliński*, 11 March 1954, 1.

<sup>753</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 254.

<sup>754</sup> Speech by Bolesław Bierut to Second Congress of PZPR, *Głos Koszaliński*, 12 March 1954, 3.

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>756</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 236-240.

communist principles by rewarding good workers with bonuses, declaring that: 'One must also understand that socialism cannot be built on enthusiasm alone. For there to be good quality work carried out there must also be material interest.'<sup>757</sup> As in Olsztyn and Koszalin provinces, major problems with the spring sowing in Szczecin were mainly blamed on farm machinery centres (POM) and their slovenly tractor drivers.<sup>758</sup> Other delegates, moreover, continued to concentrate on the supposed efforts of 'the enemy' to wreck the collective farms rather than look for causes within the Party's policies or their execution. One complained, for example, that on the collective farm he managed, 'the dogged resistance of the enemy' was often visible, while Party organisations were trying to dispel 'theories promoted by the enemy.'<sup>759</sup>

Rebellious youth and problems in the maritime sector were of concern in Gdansk. Indeed, it now became clear that the Party was fighting a losing battle for the hearts and minds of most Polish young people. Despite recently allowing the publication of Ilya Ehrenburg's *The Thaw*, a novel which signalled the loosening of Soviet 'socialist realism', this only spurred on critics of the regime within intellectual and youth circles. In response, some Party activists took a defensive tone, with one labelling local workers' hostels as gateways for youth to join 'hooligan groups, the gatherers of weapons and ... explosive materials, illegal enemy organisations etc.'<sup>760</sup> However, even the head of the ZMP in Gdansk admitted that its meetings were boring and non-educational and its local leadership was poor. Moreover, the parents of many Cashubian youths 'maintain contact with close family and friends in West Germany, [and] under whose influence they exert pressure on youth not to belong to [communist] organisations, not to take part in social life, not to speak Polish ...'<sup>761</sup> Another delegate pointed out that over 40% of local youth were not in the ZMP, and warned that such people on the Baltic coast 'paying attention to direct contact with capitalist countries, is especially exposed to the pressure of enemy ideology ...'<sup>762</sup>

The summer of 1954 saw Party officials in Olsztyn Province divided over how best to deal with the rapid decline of the province's agricultural sector. On the one hand, a delegate from Barczewo recommended that parcels of fallow land be passed to 'a permanent owner' to prevent it being abandoned. A more hard-line delegate

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<sup>757</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 25 April 1954, APO 1141/91/109-141.

<sup>758</sup> *Głos Koszaliński*, 9 April 1954, 1.

<sup>759</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 27 April 1954, APS 858/48/145-170.

<sup>760</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 15 May 1954, APG 2384/61/105-117.

<sup>761</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-130.

<sup>762</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-177.

from Nowe Miasto, however, happily reported how the threat of heavy fines had improved results in a borough which had had the lowest delivery rates locally.<sup>763</sup> Although Koszalin Province celebrated the foundation of its 500<sup>th</sup> collective farm in mid-June, local activists were keen to stress that there was they were attempting to work with individual farmers, not against them, to achieve a common goal of higher production.<sup>764</sup> Party officials in Gdansk Pomerania, however, blamed 'the enemy' for dreadful situation on the collective farms. There were also more open acts of defiance in Cashubian areas with one village leader in Kartuzy County reported to have told local peasants that signing up to collective farms was the same as signing the *volksliste*.<sup>765</sup> Moreover, 'hostile propaganda' was blamed for the fact that only four new collective farms had been founded in the counties of Wejherowo, Kartuzy and Kościerzyna between January and July 1954. Compulsory deliveries of milk in Kartuzy were half that of Kwidzyna even though Kartuzy had twice as many cows. As many as 33 out of 134 villages in Wejherowo County still had no Party presence while a mere 10-11% of candidates for Party membership in the province were classified as peasants, thus showing the 'Worker-Peasant Alliance' to be a sham. One delegate criticized Party members in local government offices who 'do not see that political work must accompany the breaking of the enemy's resistance by administrative means.'<sup>766</sup>

In Szczecin Province Party officials also begin to admit errors in their own work in mid-1954. One delegate from Myślibórz admitted that the lack of legal title to land there was a 'serious problem' for retaining farmers who were also being unjustly punished with claims for back-tax, a practice that was frightening farmers away from taking on fallow land.<sup>767</sup> Koszalin Province experienced severe problems in securing compulsory deliveries of grain, a problem blamed on a lack of 'political work' with local farmers. Indeed, in the third week of August the monthly grain target had not even been 42.5% achieved in Zlotów, the best performing county and a miserable 6.9% in the worst, namely Kołobrzeg.<sup>768</sup> In September, activists in Szczecin heard that while the proportion of teachers in the Party had risen from 17% to 22% in the province, Catholic priests were attempting to 'undermine the reputation and authority' of atheist-run schools and 'organise intense extra-curricular religiosity ...' However, they blamed the

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<sup>763</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 14 July 1954, APO 1141/91/119-202.

<sup>764</sup> *Głos Koszaliński*, 17 June 1954, 1.

<sup>765</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 16 July 1954, APG 2384/61/194-205.

<sup>766</sup> Speech by Jan Trusz to KW PZPR Gdansk Plenary Session, 16 July 1954, APG 2384/61/219-244.

<sup>767</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 16 July 1954, APS 858/48/176-186.

<sup>768</sup> *Głos Koszaliński*, 20 August 1954, 1.

541 incidents of 'hooliganism' in Szczecin so far that year, not on clerical influence, but on poor control of local youth by the ZMP.<sup>769</sup>

Despite all the problems on the ground with collectivisation and anti-clerical policies causing occasional incidents of resistance or opposition, these did not present the regime with a serious threat to its hold on power. This all changed when on 28 September 1954 the United States announced that Józef Światło had voluntarily defected to the West, having mysteriously disappeared during a visit to Berlin in early December 1953. Światło had served as the deputy head of the UB in Olsztyn Province from December 1945 to October 1946, later becoming deputy head of the MBP's Department X which gave him complete access to information to the secrets, past misdemeanours, as well as any incriminating material concerning almost all Party members, including its highest ranks.<sup>770</sup> In fact, his position was so powerful that he took part in the arrest of Cardinal Wyszyński in September 1953 and knew the location of his place of internment in Olsztyn Province, a matter so secret that not even the most senior local Party figures seemed to be aware of it.<sup>771</sup>

Światło's astonishing revelations about the regime were broadcast into Poland by Radio Free Europe in over 140 instalments during the next fourteen months.<sup>772</sup> News of Światło's broadcasts spread like wildfire and soon had Poles both appalled and enthralled at their radios as details were given on the political skulduggery used to eliminate perceived enemies both within and without the communist movement.<sup>773</sup> Moreover, these revelations, which were also surreptitiously sent into Poland in booklet form by balloon from February 1955, confirmed what many Poles already knew or suspected about the extent of Soviet interference in their country. Indeed, Neal Ascherson suggests that they also planted a seed in many Polish minds that should the Stalinist wing of the Party fall, Gomułka and his fellow 'National Communists' could be brought back in order to restore an alternative and more palatable form of communism.<sup>774</sup>

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<sup>769</sup> Resolution of KW PZPR Szczecin, 11 September 1954, APS 858/48/76-80.

<sup>770</sup> Piotr Kardela, ed. *Twarze olsztyńskiej bezpieki. Obsada stanowisk kierowniczych Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa i Służby Bezpieczeństwa w Olsztynie. Informator personalny* (Olsztyn: IPN, 2007), 25.

<sup>771</sup> Paczkowski, *Trzy Twarze Józefa Światły*, 145, 206.

<sup>772</sup> Błażyński, *Mówi Józef Światło: Za kulisami bezpieki i partii*, 19.

<sup>773</sup> Jan Nowak-Jeziorański in *Ibid.*, I.

<sup>774</sup> Neal Ascherson, *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1982), 67.

The impact of the Światło broadcasts was immediately visible on the ground. In early October many Party officials in Gdansk campaigning in upcoming local government elections reported disturbing signs of voter hostility, with several recalling people saying they would not vote due to the influence of foreign propaganda leaflets. Indeed, the Provincial Head of the UB claimed that the enemy was trying 'to sow unrest' through rumours and various forms of propaganda, as well as 'openly hostile acts at pre-election meetings.' For example, one 'kulak' not only told a meeting in Wejherowo County that he would not be voting 'as the candidates have been decided from above', but even proposed his own candidates instead.<sup>775</sup>

In Szczecin Province, there were also serious worries that the elections would show the Party's popularity in official propaganda to be an illusion. One Party official reported that 'the enemy' had increased efforts to obstruct the compulsory deliveries while at some public meetings there were numerous 'provocative questions such as why have BBC broadcasts been jammed ...'<sup>776</sup> In neighbouring Koszalin, while the Party-controlled press did not mention the Światło broadcasts directly, it warned activists to confront those in public places spreading 'enemy rumours' heard on foreign radio.<sup>777</sup> Party officials in Olsztyn Province also made oblique references to Światło, with a delegate from Pasłęk attempting to counter an accusation included in the broadcasts that Party members were routinely siphoning off food for themselves before passing what was left to the proletariat. Indeed, there were worrying signs that the broadcasts were inciting people to speak out openly against the regime. In Nowe Miasto, a Party activist, concerned about the local elections, reported that enemy activities 'are beginning to damage us.' He even went so far as to suggest that the National Front place question boxes at certain locations for the public to use as 'our community has doubts.'<sup>778</sup>

Party officials in Olsztyn were just as concerned as their counterparts in the other Baltic provinces regarding the widespread popular belief that the elections would be a foregone conclusion, echoing yet another accusation made by Światło in his broadcasts. They also blamed 'the enemy' for uncertainty among the local indigenous population with claims that young Masurian men in Mrągowo 'often sing Nazi songs on the streets.'<sup>779</sup> Equally perturbing was the fact that there were still

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<sup>775</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 30 October 1954, APG 2384/61/248-269.

<sup>776</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 31 October 1954, APS 858/48/274-298.

<sup>777</sup> *Głos Koszaliński*, 4 November 1954, 3.

<sup>778</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 5 November 1954, APO 1141/91/262-277.

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-286.

incidents of Polish settlers objecting to Masurians working in local government, showing that they had never really shaken off their reputation as a German ‘fifth column’. Indeed, apart from the appearance of graffiti with ‘Hej [sic] Hitler’ and swastikas, rumours were circulating in Mrągowo that ‘war was to break out in August but has been postponed until January.’<sup>780</sup> First Secretary Klecha was particularly worried that ‘enemy propaganda’ would cause low voter turnout, thus undermining the Party’s claims of mass support, advising activists that ‘We must direct but not commandeer ...’ to ensure that the masses voted the way the Party wanted. However, he warned that the enemy ‘who speaks at a meeting is only a hundredth part of that which silently disturbs ... he who speaks up in this manner at a meeting is a nervous, stupid enemy. The enemy does not like [to be in] the spotlight.’<sup>781</sup>

By early December, the impact of the Światło revelations drove the Party leadership to abolish the MBP and dismiss Stanisław Radkiewicz, ‘the Polish Beria’, as its head. Although, the same month Władysław Gomułka was quietly released from his internment, this information was withheld from the public until a much later date.<sup>782</sup> Party officials in Szczecin, however, continued to be concerned how to rescue the disastrous situation brought about by collectivisation. In fact, a visiting member of the Party’s Central Committee told delegates in Szczecin that their province was following, or perhaps directing a nationwide trend in which the number of collective farms being founded was rapidly decreasing. While Provincial Secretary Wachowicz accepted that the mistakes and negligence of Party activists were partly responsible, he warned that fellow communists were ‘marked by many incidents of liberalism’ and that it was ‘forbidden to tolerate the enemies of collectivisation.’<sup>783</sup>

### 5.3 The Party Engages in ‘Self-Criticism’ – January-December 1955

At the Third Plenum of the Central Committee held in late January 1955, Bierut had no choice but to finally concede both that the Party had lost touch with the masses and had serious errors to answer for, including allowing the UB to arrest and imprison people unjustly.<sup>784</sup> With the inevitable subsequent purge of the UB leadership and the Party in turmoil and confusion, in Koszalin Party activists once again called on their colleagues to ‘energetically oppose’ foreign propaganda undermining the

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<sup>780</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 5 November 1954, APO 1141/91/338-348.

<sup>781</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 5 November 1954, APO 1141/91/307.

<sup>782</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 255-256.

<sup>783</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 10 December 1954, APS 858/48/334-371.

<sup>784</sup> Speech by Bolesław Bierut to Third Plenum of PZPR, *Głos Koszaliński*, 27 January 1955, 4.

communists' standing with local settlers.<sup>785</sup> In Gdansk Pomerania the UB soon reported that although there had been a significant decrease in the amount of 'revisionist' leaflets and correspondence, there was an increase in rumours regarding the possibility of an upcoming war. There was also a report that someone claiming to be from the Red Cross in Gdansk had been going around the Cashubian community telling them that he had been asked by the German Red Cross to make a list of those who wished to move to Germany.<sup>786</sup>

In Olsztyn Province 'self-criticism' was high on the agenda at the Party meetings following Bierut's recent admission of Party errors and public anger resulting from the Światło revelations. This was, of course, a survival strategy with those at the higher levels trying to portray problems as resulting from indiscipline or incompetence in the lower ranks. Those on borough or county committees, however, laid the blame on the top-down solutions imposed by their superiors at the provincial or central committee level, with one county committee secretary bluntly declaring that 'the fish stinks from the head.'<sup>787</sup> In addition, as 32.6% of the Party membership in Olsztyn Province possessed a primary school education or less, officials were justifiably worried that such people would be unable to deal with the host of politically awkward and embarrassing issues which could be brought up by the electorate due to the Światło revelations.<sup>788</sup> First Secretary Klecha conceded that enemy propaganda was having an effect, admitting that the wives of members of the Party and UB were guilty of abusing their positions, for example, to jump shop queues or turn up late for work.<sup>789</sup>

With the Party in Gdansk Pomerania also in turmoil due to the Światło broadcasts, activists grabbed the opportunity to complain of a long list of inefficiencies concerning Party members, including incompetence, theft and drunkenness on collective farms, county committees and in the local administration. The marine sector was also reported to be in a poor state with the UB's policy of removing good sailors for perceived political crimes having a bad effect on the rest of their crews.<sup>790</sup> Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz told a Party meeting in Gdansk that although he blamed UB errors on its lack of trust in the masses, it was the activities of 'the enemy' on the Baltic

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<sup>785</sup> *Głos Koszaliński*, 31 January 1955, 1, 4.

<sup>786</sup> WUd/sBP Gdansk Dept. III report marked 'Top Secret', 6 February 1955, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/5-12.

<sup>787</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 8-9 February 1955, AP0 1141/92/10-24.

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-44.

<sup>789</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-90.

<sup>790</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9-10 February 1955, APG 2384/62/1-7.

coast which was responsible for frightening people into escaping abroad. He also warned delegates that while they were right to criticize certain government ministers, they must be able 'to discern the voice of the enemy from the voice of concern or pain regarding our affairs ...'<sup>791</sup>

Under pressure to justify the actions of his comrades in the Gdansk region over the previous decade, Żmijewski, the head of the provincial UB, accepted that the UB's actions had forced Polish settlers to abandon the coastal region but asked fellow delegates to take into account its specific nature in which foreign enemies 'have a particularly strong interest.' He claimed that thousands of sailors from capitalist countries 'drift into our ports, move about without any restrictions [and] have contact with the people. May one suppose – it would be naïve to think that American, West German and other intelligence centres do not use these sailors for this dirty work to a serious degree.'<sup>792</sup> Party activists in Szczecin were unable to convince sailors that smuggling could lead them to be drawn into 'collusion with foreign agents', and had little control of how they spent their free time, especially in the ports of capitalist countries.<sup>793</sup> As with his counterpart in Gdansk, Elias Koton, the head of the UB in Szczecin blamed any UB excesses on the peculiarities of the Szczecin region, claiming: 'we did not always realize that the specific nature of our province differs from other provinces, the proximity of the border with the area of the port city, all of which has a huge influence on the life in our province as a whole, [and] also has an influence on our work.'<sup>794</sup>

Indeed, the Baltic region's specific nature could be seen that spring in UB reports in Gdansk Pomerania. In Elbląg not only were many indigenous 'revisionist' groups were said to be meeting for political discussions but there was a 'German Families Club' there seeking West German aid in order to emigrate due to 'difficult material conditions or also for hostile reasons.'<sup>795</sup> Party officials were increasingly worried about the resurgent influence of the Roman Catholic clergy. One delegate, Waclaw Wojcieszak reported almost all of those attending the atheist-run school in Kartuzy were taking part in clandestine religion lessons which he claimed were 'a nest of moral corruption', disingenuously linking them to youth drinking and hooliganism

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<sup>791</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 9-10 February 1955, APG 2384/62/70-83.

<sup>792</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9-10 February 1955, APG 2384/62/26-40.

<sup>793</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 9-10 February 1955, APS 858/49/3-14.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid., 14-18.

<sup>795</sup> WUd/sBP Gdansk Dept. III report, marked 'Top Secret', Early March 1955, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/19-25.

when the ZMP was a far more likely culprit. He also complained about Catholic activists campaigning to have crosses placed back into schools and hospitals and harassing those who did not attend church. In fact, religiosity had evidently spread not only to the rank and file Party membership but to those entrusted with the task of teaching and learning Marxist ideology: 'One cannot tolerate the fact that our seminar students, [and] lecturers who are supposed to teach our Party members, go to church in secret.'<sup>796</sup> In March First Secretary Kunat condemned the effect of 'perfidious [and] slanderous' leaflets, almost certainly those based on the Światło broadcasts, arriving in region by balloon 'which are aimed at triggering unrest, uncertainty and distrust towards the Party and the Government.' He also noted several incidents 'where the enemy has managed to morally corrupt certain weak individuals and push them on to a road of anti-socialist activities.'<sup>797</sup>

In April Party officials in Olsztyn hosted Stanisław Radkiewicz who, although still on the Party's Central Committee, had been demoted as Minister for Public Security the previous December to Minister for State Farms. He heard delegates report that collective farms in Olsztyn Province were unable to achieve their delivery targets due to poor crop yields and the flight of farm workers. Moreover, this situation was made worse by the cheating, theft, and drinking of those still employed on them. Radkiewicz, however, showed little sympathy for their problems, labelling state-run agriculture in Olsztyn Province as 'one of the weakest and most lagging behind sectors in our country.' He warned those attending that he did not want number of collective farm closures to be higher than the previous year, which was an admission in itself that closures were inevitable. Although he requested more Masurians be put in leadership posts on collective farms, he warned delegates about the presence of a pro-German 'enemy' among the indigenous community. Party members, he added, also needed to be vigilant against hooligans and criminals as 'At the current stage in the conditions of Olsztyn Province one can smell depraved elements but democracy is not for hooligans and society's weasels.'<sup>798</sup>

Although the regime had quietly released Władysław Gomułka in December 1954, it was not officially announced until April 1956. However, news of the event had reached the Baltic coast by May 1955 with the UB in Gdansk reporting that ex-PPS members were claiming that Gomułka's release was due to 'the lack of evidence of his guilt'. Anti-PZPR sentiment was evidently growing with two 'revisionist' women overheard saying that if a Third World War broke out 'members of the Party will have

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<sup>796</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 26 March 1955, APG 2384/62/151-153.

<sup>797</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 26 March 1955, APG 2384/62/184-190.

<sup>798</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 24 April 1955, APO 1141/92/101-126.

to flee this area as if they do not they will meet a deserved punishment.’ Local students were said to have made hostile statements against the Party and the USSR while even a ZMP member dared to state that the Katyń Massacre had been carried out by the Soviets.<sup>799</sup> In Szczecin Party officials heard reports that local sailors were also become less cowed. Indeed, during one propaganda meeting on the international situation a Party organiser complained to a Party secretary that ‘one of the workers told him that he was talking rubbish.’ On hearing that a complaint had been made against him, ‘this worker called the organiser an informer and punched him in the face in front of the entire crew.’<sup>800</sup>

Party activists in Szczecin also warned that ‘the enemy’ was trying not only to whip up Polish settlers against the Soviet Union but also fostering distrust towards the GDR. They pointed out that ‘Our region, the western-most province is particularly exposed to rotten imperialist propaganda ...’ comprising ‘radio broadcasts, leaflets in various languages flying into our region and mindless lies, rumours sucked from the dirty finger of gossip spread on the grapevine, “Sibylline prophecies” and “divine letters” circulating here and there, this is what we have to fight against on a daily basis.’<sup>801</sup> Similarly, ‘revisionist’ propaganda challenging the Polishness of the Recovered Territories was serious problem in Gdansk with the discovery of 24,000 German-language leaflets attached to balloons, aimed at Cashubian communities in Sztum, Pruszcz, Puck and Gdansk. It was also reported that a seven-strong group, mainly women, was travelling around the province discussing political affairs with Cashubians, suggesting that the Germans would soon return and discouraging others from taking Polish citizenship.<sup>802</sup> The UB believed that such ‘revisionist talk’ and Cashubian correspondence with West Germany was aimed at ‘maintaining the German spirit’ among indigenous communities. Indeed, some had apparently received letters from West Germany saying that ‘soon a flag of different colours will flutter over Gdansk and [it] will be a Free City.’<sup>803</sup>

The summer of 1955 saw not only increasing Sovietisation through the foundation of the Warsaw Pact, but witnessed its dilution as even leading communist writers and intellectuals used their talents to bitterly criticize how the Party’s past policies had engendered frustration, boredom, hooliganism, alcoholism and sexual

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<sup>799</sup> WUBP Gdansk Dept. III report, marked ‘Top Secret’, 6 May 1955, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/47-53.

<sup>800</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 28 May 1955, APS 858/49/228-236.

<sup>801</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 28 May 1955, APS 858/49/280-312.

<sup>802</sup> WUBP Gdansk Dept. III report, marked ‘Top Secret’, 5 June 1955, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/55-62.

<sup>803</sup> WUBP Gdansk Dept. III report, marked ‘Top Secret’, early July 1955, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/67-72.

depravity, especially among Polish youth. The most noteworthy example of this was the hugely-popular 'A Poem for Adults' which also lampooned the Party's obsession with 'enemies', deviations from Stalinist dogma, and 'newspeak', while calling for it to renew its socialist mission.<sup>804</sup> The irony here was that its author, Adam Ważyk, had previously been a zealous Party watchdog crushing any Polish writers showing 'decadent' Western tendencies. Such criticism would not have been well received among the Olsztyn PZPR leadership. First Secretary Klecha, for instance, rejected attempts by county secretaries and activists to shift blame for the Party's mistakes upward to the Provincial Committee as unjustified and unfair, blaming this on 'theories voiced by the kulak and foreign radio [which] want to deform our political line ...'<sup>805</sup> Party officials reported 'quite frequent incidents' of farmers fleeing the countryside for the towns or leaving the province altogether, leaving more than 500 collective farms severely undermanned and under-populated.<sup>806</sup> In fact, the setting up of collective farms was said to be so difficult in Olsztyn Province as 'every third or fourth son of a peasant was in forest gangs, also their fathers do not look on the building of collective [farms] very positively ...'<sup>807</sup>

Land flight to the cities and 'particularly harmful propaganda' attacking the Soviet Union and Polish communists were also present in Gdansk Pomerania. Some settlers in the province had attempted to flee their farms in the belief that the Germans would return to reclaim them, while in Gdansk Suchonino residents organised a meeting and a petition signed by 200 people calling for the abolition of the local atheist-run school.<sup>808</sup> Apart from such cases of open opposition, the UB in Gdansk was also prepared investigate those which prove no threat whatsoever, even an organisation calling itself 'the Army' but which was actually a group of nine children aged between 8 and 14 years playing at soldiers with 'a sub-machine gun not fit for use and rifles made of wood.'<sup>809</sup>

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<sup>804</sup> 'A Poem for Adults' by Adam Ważyk in Paul E. Zinner, ed. *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February-November, 1956* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1956), 40-48.

<sup>805</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 3-4 October 1955, AP0 1141/92/180-201.

<sup>806</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, No date, but probably September 1955, AP0 1141/92/221-282.

<sup>807</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 3-4 October 1955, AP0 1141/92/170.

<sup>808</sup> WUd/sBP Gdansk Dept. III /KW MO report, marked 'Top Secret', October 1955, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/86-98.

<sup>809</sup> WUd/sBP Gdansk Dept. III /KW MO report, marked 'Top Secret', October 1955, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/99-108.

In October 1955 Stanisław Radkiewicz heard Party officials in Gdansk report that farmers were holding back their produce due to 'kulak' rumours that the upcoming Fifth Party Plenum would lift compulsory deliveries entirely.<sup>810</sup> In contrast to his previous hard-line rhetoric, Radkiewicz had evidently softened his attitudes towards 'kulaks' claiming that

we want an increase in the general harvest in agriculture. We want the wealthier section of the countryside to have better productivity per ha., including kulaks ... this must change the lines of division in the countryside ... It will be necessary to learn to recognize the enemy – we will not always recognize him according to the state of his assets ... [but] according to who will be hindering us in our work in the countryside.<sup>811</sup>

As in Gdansk, Party officials in Szczecin Province found settlers were becoming sufficiently emboldened to openly challenge local Party organisations whose members were often cowed into silence. For instance, a delegate from Gryfino County described how at a meeting in one village regarding compulsory deliveries:

the wives of the collective farm workers made very many accusations, they put up great resistance, they stood up against the compulsory deliveries and despite there being eight members of [the Party] ... there, however none of these comrades took the floor or spoke out against those resisting.<sup>812</sup>

On hearing this, Jerzy Tepicht, a visiting member of the Central Committee, reminded those present that the main tasks of the Party should be 'to strengthen the state of ownership of the Polish nation in these lands' and denied that collective farms *per se* were causing peasants to flee the region. While admitting that it might have made more sense to have applied a different policy in West Pomerania concerning collectivisation, he claimed it would have been 'unthinkable' at the time for the Party to employ two conflicting policies regarding 'the Worker-Peasant Alliance' in the same country.<sup>813</sup>

Indeed, the unpalatable truth was that popular dissatisfaction with the communist regime was growing in the countryside, despite a propaganda blitz in Gdansk Pomerania comprising 3,000 lectures attended by 50,000 people. At one such course, the peasants attending even convinced the lecturer to teach them how to

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<sup>810</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 6 October 1955, APG 2384/63/67-85.

<sup>811</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 6 October 1955, APG 2384/63/102.

<sup>812</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 10-11 October 1955, APS 858/49/400.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, 401-410.

avoid going to prison for not providing compulsory grain deliveries. Moreover, farmers were openly refusing to provide such deliveries, even at a 'resistant' collective farm at Gnojowo which the previous year had supplied only two out of 180 tons of grain to the government.<sup>814</sup> The fact that only 24 collective farms had been founded in Gdansk Province in 1955, compared with 121 in 1953, combined with the fact that Party meetings were now being held 'in an atmosphere very harshly critical of the errors of the Party' was causing internal divisions regarding collectivisation. Indeed, one delegate complained about the 'bourgeois' tendency to 'negate our achievements up to now, looking at everything only through black colours.'<sup>815</sup>

The intensity of criticism throughout the Baltic region only grew as 1955 came to a close. The head of the UB in Szczecin Province, Eliaz Koton, conceded that local people did 'not feel a particular goodwill towards the UB' but declared that this would have to change as the province had very large number of settlers. Curiously, he claimed that most Germans living in Szczecin had relatives among the indigenous in Olsztyn Province and feared that through contact with them 'these indigenous will become German again, or vice versa, the Germans living here will begin to feel like Poles', and suggested that the UB in Szczecin maintained contact with their counterparts in Olsztyn in the matter. Moreover, he claimed that the specific nature of Szczecin Province placed higher demands on the UB than elsewhere 'with the exception of Gdansk Province.' Although Antoni Alster, a visiting member of the Central Committee, severely criticized both Koton and the UB, he was loath to play down the role of 'the enemy'. For example, while he acknowledged that most fires in the province were accidentally started by children, he advised that more attention should be paid as why these occurred 'above all in cooperatives and on collective farms and very few on individual farms.' Alster also complained that the UB's agent network was also very poor, especially near the German border, adding that 'those who live there should help us'.<sup>816</sup> In fact, Szczecin Province was now near the bottom of table concerning compulsory deliveries while only 93 out of 2,000 farmers who had failed to deliver compulsory quotas of grain and potatoes were prosecuted and convicted by the courts.<sup>817</sup>

As the end of the year approached, the UB in Gdansk reported that former underground members were continuing to spread propaganda against the Soviet Union and collectivisation, while pre-war army officers were distributing 'the leaflets

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<sup>814</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 29 November 1955, APG 2384/63/182-187.

<sup>815</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 29 November 1955, APG 2384/63/192-227.

<sup>816</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Executive Session, 28 November 1955, APS 858/14737/118-133.

<sup>817</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Executive Session, 3 December 1955, APS 858/14737/76-96.

of the provocateur Światło.' Although Cashubians in Sztum County were spreading rumours that eastern settlers would have to leave the region once the Recovered Territories were rejoined to Germany, in Nowy Dwór contrary rumours abounded that indigenous farmers were to be expelled and eastern repatriates awarded their farms.<sup>818</sup>

#### 5.4 The Period of Shock Upon Shock – January-October 1956

At the beginning of 1956, Party officials in Olsztyn Province reported that there were 8,112 people living on 543 collective farms in the province, accounting for a mere 9.6% of the peasant population. Moreover, both the distribution and tempo of the founding of these farms had been uneven over the previous six years before virtually stalling by 1956, a collapse blamed mainly on the fallout from the Second Party Congress.<sup>819</sup> Although 700 peasant members of the PZPR had not yet joined the collective farms, Party officials claimed that the higher rate of collectivisation in Olsztyn than the national average showed that the kind of settler there was 'the most daring, the most progressive and the most connected to the [communist] political system and the People's Republic [in terms of] class and politics.'<sup>820</sup>

Seemingly unaware of the precariousness of their positions, the Gdansk Party executive met in early January 1956 to re-elect the same hard-line leadership as before.<sup>821</sup> Perhaps this was in response to local UB reports that 1955, although showing no actual rise in the number illegal organisations based in the province, had been characterized by increased intelligence gathering by ex-underground figures and the growing influence of groups with 'clerical and hooligan overtones' over local youth. In fact, the UB in Gdansk boasted that its work in the liquidation of hostile organisations 'is so good compared to 1954 that such activities are immediately countered, [and] liquidated in a summary fashion, [as] a result of which we have the possibility to prevent the growth of such groups and their development into real underground organisations.'<sup>822</sup> In contrast to their colleagues in Gdansk, Party officials

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<sup>818</sup> WUd/sBP Gdansk Dept. III /KW MO report, marked 'Top Secret', 31 December 1955, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/114-136.

<sup>819</sup> The number of collective farms founded in the province of Olsztyn per year during the period 1949-1956 was as follows: 1949 – 26, 1950 – 87, 1951 – 4, 1952 – 120, 1953 – 220, 1954 – 82, 1955 – 38, 1956 – 4.

<sup>820</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Plenary Session Report, No date, but probably early 1956, AP0 1141/92/203-220.

<sup>821</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 8 January 1956, APG 2384/64/1-4.

<sup>822</sup> WUd/sBP Gdansk Dept. III /KW MO report, marked 'Top Secret', 21 January 1956, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/141-151.

in Szczecin, sensing that the attitude of the people was becoming progressively negatively disposed towards them, called for more to be done to stop the flight of youth from collective farms to the cities, with one admitting: 'Life in the countryside is still too bleak and even [Party] agitators are unable to do anything to put a little bit of life back into it.'<sup>823</sup> Indeed, only two collective farms had been set up recently in the counties of Łobez and Chojna, showing that most farmers had managed to avoid or resist taking the final step.<sup>824</sup>

If Polish communists found the Światło broadcasts challenging to deal with, they were sent reeling by series of events in February-March 1956 which threw the entire communist movement into crisis. The first shock was contained in a *Pravda* article claiming that Stalin's liquidation of the Communist Party of Poland in 1938 had been 'groundless' and 'based on materials which were falsified by subsequently exposed provocateurs.'<sup>825</sup> Secondly, Khrushchev's earth-shattering 'secret' speech at the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on 25 February attacking both Stalin and 'the cult of personality', provoked a crisis of faith among even the most zealous communists. Against the wishes of Soviet leadership the text of the speech was made widely available in Poland for three weeks in April, and even fell into the hands of non-Party members.<sup>826</sup> Moreover, it had almost immediate consequences for the Polish leadership with its own 'little Stalin', Bolesław Bierut, dropping dead in Moscow just over two weeks later on 12 March. Inevitably, the rumour mill in Poland went into overdrive at the news, with workers in Szczecin shipyard claiming that Bierut had been murdered by the Soviets for refusing to sign a decree designating Poland as the 17<sup>th</sup> republic of the USSR.<sup>827</sup> Bierut's place as First Secretary of the Party was filled by Edward Ochab, despite Khrushchev's clumsy attempts, when in Warsaw for the funeral, to force a loyal Stalinist, Zenon Nowak into the post.<sup>828</sup> In any case, Bierut's timely death gave added momentum to the movement for change, both within and

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<sup>823</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 10 February 1956, APS 858/50/2-30.

<sup>824</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 10 February 1956, APS 858/50/33-39.

<sup>825</sup> 'Statement on the Wrongful Liquidation of the Communist Party of Poland in 1938', *Pravda*, 21 February 1956 in Zinner, ed. *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February-November, 1956*, 37.

<sup>826</sup> Paweł Machcewicz, "Social Protest and Political Crisis in 1956," in *Stalinism in Poland 1944-1956: Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and Eastern European Studies, Warsaw, 1995* ed. A. Kemp-Welch (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 102-104.

<sup>827</sup> Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History*, 72.

<sup>828</sup> Ascherson, *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution*, 71; Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History*, 74.

without the Party. As Dziewanowski has pointed out, the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress 'was both more meaningful and more dangerous to the [Polish United Workers' Party] than to any other Communist Party outside the Soviet Union.'<sup>829</sup> This was mostly clearly seen in the ZMP organ, *Po prostu*, a magazine in which communist youth put on paper the soul-searching, confusion and thoughts they had concerning the deep crisis engendered in the movement by the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, with some even calling for the winding-up of the ZMP.<sup>830</sup> Moreover, the main Party organ, *Trybuna Ludu*, admitted that Stalin's 'cult of personality' had caused 'many honest people [to be] imprisoned, sent to penal camps, or shot' while taking the opportunity to condemn Gomułka's deviation of 'a Polish road to socialism.'<sup>831</sup>

Despite these tumultuous events at national and international level, the early months of 1956 were relatively quiet in Gdansk Province. Although no increase in 'hostile activities' were noted, sailors on a West German trawler moored off the coastal village of Mikoszewo were reported to have called out by megaphone to local Cashubians on shore to leave Poland as it would be 'dangerous' to stay. UB informers reported that ex-PSL members were claiming that the credibility of Marxism had been undermined by the Party's U-turn on Stalin and that Bierut's sudden demise had been brought about by Józef Światło's shocking revelations and was 'not a natural death.'<sup>832</sup> By spring, reaction to the 20th Congress was sufficiently strong for Central Committee hard-liner Zenon Nowak to tell Party officials in Gdansk that 'the Stalin issue' was more for the Soviets to deal with themselves than the communist movement in Poland.<sup>833</sup> Despite Nowak's attempts to play down the role of 'the cult of the individual' in Poland, the head of Gdansk Sailors' Union declared that it had been 'very obvious and protruded very much' in the province.<sup>834</sup> Not only were Party officials worried about at the effect of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin on local youth, but they warned against a growing tendency to criticize everything about Soviet system.

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<sup>829</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 236-240.

<sup>830</sup> Dominika Rafalska, "„Pokolenie ZMP”. Urodzeni w latach trzydziestych – ich wizja socjalizmu na łamach tygodnika „Po prostu”, in „*Jesteście naszą wielką szansą*”: Młodzież na rozstajach komunizmu 1944 -1989, ed. Sławomir Stępień Paweł Ceranka (Warszawa: IPN, 2009), 79-96.

<sup>831</sup> Jerzy Morawski, 'The Lessons of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU', *Trybuna Ludu*, 27 March 1956 in Zinner, ed. *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February-November, 1956*, 55-59.

<sup>832</sup> WUd/sBP Gdansk Dept. III /KW MO report, marked 'Top Secret', 4 April 1956, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/152-158.

<sup>833</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 4 April 1956, APG 2384/64/30-53.

<sup>834</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 4 April 1956, APG 2384/64/5-13.

One delegate complained that this was made worse by the silence of the Party leadership and the state-controlled press regarding important events, a silence which only encouraged the Polish people to find out from the BBC. Indeed, he reported that people in Lębork were openly asking awkward questions about the reasons for Gomułka's imprisonment, the suspicious delay in reporting Bierut's illness and death, adding that: 'It must be said that we are always behind and the people are finding out about various matters from various sources, but not from us.'<sup>835</sup>

It was not until a Party conference in Warsaw on 6 April, that First Secretary Ochab, while denouncing 'hysterical criticism' of the former Party line, candidly admitted the Party's numerous past mistakes and announced the release and rehabilitation of Gomułka and twenty-six of his political allies.<sup>836</sup> Within a month an amnesty had been introduced freeing 35,000 individuals, including over 4,500 political prisoners.<sup>837</sup> Moreover, subsequent revelations that many of these people had been persecuted for serving in the underground only deepened public anger against the regime, an anger that was little assuaged by news that the UB members responsible were being purged from the Party and arrested. Moreover, the fallout from Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin had caused huge disquiet among Party activists, some of whom used a meeting at Szczecin Technical University in late March to make a flurry of accusations against the Party and the Soviet Union thinly disguised as awkward questions.<sup>838</sup> However, such difficult issues were largely avoided by the Szczecin Party Plenum which focused on the collapse of the collective farming sector.<sup>839</sup> Although between November 1955 and mid-April 1956 fifteen new collective farms had been set up, Party officials also admitted that a significant number of people were applying to leave existing farms. In addition, a large portion those who stayed on were more a burden than a benefit as 'in many collective farms allotments are over-expanded and have become basic source of income for the collective farm workers.'<sup>840</sup>

Unlike their colleagues in Szczecin, Party officials in Olsztyn Province decided to tackle the denunciation of Stalin head on. Although a delegate from Barczewo

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<sup>835</sup> Ibid., 14-29.

<sup>836</sup> 'The resolutions and recommendations of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress', *Trybuna Ludu*, 7 April 1956, in Zinner, ed. *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February-November, 1956*, 79-84.

<sup>837</sup> Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History*, 83.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>839</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 7 May 1956, APS 858/50/43-65.

<sup>840</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 7 May 1956, APS 858/50/69-79.

reported that the cult of Stalin was ‘especially strong’, some Party members defended his role in the Russian revolution and the Second World War. Indeed, others complained that ‘kulaks’ had been vilifying the Party and the compulsory deliveries, with peasants even reprimanding communist activists regarding the collective farms: ‘Now the peasants are angry with us and if peasants are resentful, can they have good results at work [?] – I believe not.’<sup>841</sup> Moreover, a visiting representative of the Central Committee observed that Party activists had become enveloped by ‘a range of doubts and ambiguities’. He was greatly disturbed at the ‘many anti-Soviet statements’ circulating, as well as ‘attempts to negate all the achievements of our reality. Voices can be heard that if so much was bad, is the political system itself at fault?’<sup>842</sup> However, First Secretary Klecha maintained that the Party’s efforts to deal with ‘perversions and the overturning of the rule of law’ would eventually help the Party deal with ‘anti-Soviet and anti-Party slander.’ At the same time, he warned that the enemy ‘is spreading and circulating its own lies ... on enemy radio, [and] is maligning the Soviet Union and our Party.’<sup>843</sup> Gdansk also had a visit from another Central Committee member, Paweł Wojaś, who told delegates that any Party members showing signs of giving in to ‘clerical pressure’ would have to be removed from their posts.<sup>844</sup> Such ‘clerical pressure’ on sailors was said to be ‘blatant’ in local ports while recent political events had engendered ‘an atmosphere of fear’ on Polish ships which had had constant contact with capitalist countries.<sup>845</sup>

In June, a Polish communist movement already shell-shocked from the Światło revelations and Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin, had to face its biggest physical and ideological threat so far – namely a worker’s revolt in a supposed worker’s paradise. This was centred in the western Polish city of Poznań and was a result of the anger and frustration of industrial workers with the shortages, waste and chaos brought about by the relentless pressure to achieve the targets set by the Six Year Plan, which had just been replaced by a new Five Year Plan. Moreover, rapid industrialisation at the expense of the agricultural, housing and consumer sectors had led to wages depreciating by as much as 36%, which drove living standards down to subsistence level by the mid-1950s.<sup>846</sup> The revolt was sparked by a strike at the Stalin

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<sup>841</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 18 May 1956, AP0 1141/93/2-9.

<sup>842</sup> Ibid., 10-21.

<sup>843</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 18 May 1956, AP0 1141/93/33-39.

<sup>844</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 22 May 1956, APG 2384/64/62-78.

<sup>845</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 22 May 1956, APG 2384/64/79-96.

<sup>846</sup> Ascherson, *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution*, 71.

Locomotive Works over shortages of consumer goods, terrible housing conditions and unfair work practices. With the demands of a workers' delegation to Warsaw having been ignored, a protest march on 28 June snowballed into a mass demonstration, then a full-scale riot, and, once Party headquarters and the local army garrison and arsenal had been sacked, an uprising against the regime. Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz and several other Party bigwigs flew to Poznan in panic and tried to quell the unrest with a mixture of promises and threats, while ensuring that the city was surrounded by troops. When the fighting eventually stopped the following day, almost 60 people lay dead while about 650 were injured.<sup>847</sup> The Party leadership was at a loss to explain what had happened, initially blaming it on 'imperialist agents' and foreign 'provocateurs', recycling accusations which had been levelled at those who had risen against the East German regime in three years earlier in Berlin. Gradually, however, the genuine grievances of the Poznan workers was grudgingly recognized by Party officials. Notwithstanding, the Party had come to face with incontrovertible proof of the weakness of its position, with the confidence of even its most faithful members shaken to its foundations by 'the Poznan incidents.'

In the wake of Poznan those who had been in non-communist parties now had great expectations. For example, the UB in Gdansk reported that ex-PPS figures there believed they were witnessing 'a political "thaw" and a turnaround of 180 degrees in the policies of the socialist camp.'<sup>848</sup> Moreover, Cashubians were also circulating a rumour that a secret UB committee had been set up to prevent them from leaving for West Germany, while UB officers were themselves investigating a separatist Cashubian group in Wejherowo. At the same time, the UB in Gdansk was reporting that, due to Poznan, its agents and informers were now trying to back out of providing further information on surveillance targets.<sup>849</sup> Moreover, in Szczecin, Party officials soon linked the frequent occurrences of food shortages and theft in shops there to the Poznan uprising.<sup>850</sup>

Indeed, the pressure on the Party to find a solution satisfactory to both the Polish people and the Soviet Union was raised by the presence of Soviet Minister of Defence Marshal Zhukov and Soviet Prime Minister Marshal Bulganin at the Seventh Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR, which convened for an unprecedented ten days in mid-July 1956. While Bulganin used his speech to rail against the foreign

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<sup>847</sup> <http://www.czerwiec56.ipn.gov.pl/portal/c56/1399/9284/Historia.html>, accessed 25 October 2012.

<sup>848</sup> WUd/sBP Gdansk Dept. III /KW MO report, marked 'Top Secret', 6 July 1956, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/177-178.

<sup>849</sup> *Ibid.*, 179-197.

<sup>850</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 10 July 1956, APS 858/50/106-145.

‘provocateurs’ he claimed had been responsible for Poznan, both Ochab and Cyrankiewicz ignored this analysis, admitting that the incidents were due to the ‘immense wrongs’ inflicted on the working class by the Party bureaucracy and central and local authorities.<sup>851</sup> In the end, however, it was the view of the Polish leaders which held sway and a resolution was passed promising improved working and living conditions for workers and peasants.<sup>852</sup> Along with former underground soldiers, the Seventh Plenum officially rehabilitated Gomułka. August, however, saw riots and demonstrations spread, with many workers ignoring the Party to elect their own workers’ councils in order to effect a relaxation of ‘socialist work discipline’ and unrealistic norms.<sup>853</sup>

Party officials in Gdansk Province now saw that there was an unstoppable momentum for change following the events in Poznan and the Seventh Plenum. The editor of *Dziennik Bałtycki* ominously informed Party colleagues that ‘a completely different period is opening in our lives’, one which may not be good for the Party. Indeed, a representative from Gdynia shipyard reported how at a Party meeting one member received applause when he pronounced that 40% of the shipyard workers were in solidarity with the Poznan uprising. Indeed, this mood was evidently hostile enough for the UB to feel it necessary to warn ‘certain individuals’, probably informers, that they were in danger from co-workers in the shipyard. Moreover, the editor of *Głos Wybrzeża*, pointed out that Poznan had caused ‘a serious crisis of trust towards our propaganda’ despite the reluctance of some Party officials to even admit its existence. This crisis of trust, was based, he said, on the fact ‘we have always been lying’ and cited incidents where his own newspaper had reported untruths or downright lies in order to scotch rumours which could have caused unrest.<sup>854</sup> Another delegate still maintained that the enemy was using ‘a mood of dissatisfaction’ resulting from Poznan ‘for his own dirty aims.’ This mood had evidently spread north when a few days following the Poznan uprising, workers in the Mechanical Factory in Elbląg downed tools for several hours in protest at conditions there, an event which was blamed on the enemy spreading ‘psychosis, disquiet and fear.’<sup>855</sup>

By September even the Polish parliament had become rebellious and intent on regaining its proper constitutional role. The press also began printing the truth

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<sup>851</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 267-269.

<sup>852</sup> Resolution of Seventh Plenum of PZPR, *Głos Koszaliński*, 31 July 1956, 2-6.

<sup>853</sup> Ascherson, *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution*, 72.

<sup>854</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 8 August 1956, APG 2384/64/134-149.

<sup>855</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 8 August 1956, APG 2384/64/163-174.

regarding the state of Polish agriculture, in particular how yields for important crops, as well as farmers' use of fertilizer, were lower than before the war. POM stations were finally shut down and their machinery sold to peasants, while the first wave of inefficient collective farms were dissolved. Indeed, that month Party officials in West Pomerania were desperately attempting to save a collective farm sector crumbling before their eyes. A delegate from Kamień County accused the press of fostering 'much resentment' through 'improper articles' against the Party, a phenomenon which could be seen by the fact that the Party had recently felt it necessary to significantly reduce compulsory delivery targets in a futile effort to stop the large number of applications to leave collective farms flooding in. More direct techniques were also employed to stop the land flight from the state sector. For instance, when over 200 such applications were made in Stargard County, the county secretary there reported that, within a week, 41 had been withdrawn 'as a result of conversations with these people ...'<sup>856</sup> Comrade Pasło, a visiting member of the Central Committee, then informed delegates that while Koszalin, Szczecin and Gdansk were bearing the brunt of the collapse of the collective farms, there had been 'a mass influx of applications' to leave such farms nationwide. On reflection, he believed that the regime had spread its resources too thinly in trying to collectivise whole country at once, adding that 'we could have concentrated them in all those provinces where we had the conditions for quicker collectivisation, i.e. the Western Lands.'<sup>857</sup>

The UB in Gdansk also reported the revival and activation of some 'hostile elements' which had occurred in the province during recent months had 'clearly appeared following the Poznan incidents ...' Indeed, it heard how one suspect from Nowy Dwór was said to be in solidarity with 'the enemy elements' in Poznan, had not only declared that a similar event should be organised in Gdansk Province but that 'suitable steps' should be taken to prepare and arm people for it. Informers also reported that an ex-PPS figure had been saying that Poznan was a 'result of the harm done to the workers and their poor treatment' and blamed the Party and the main trade union for 'the unnecessary spilling of blood.'<sup>858</sup>

Seeing the writing on the wall, hard-line Party bigwigs in Olsztyn Province now embarked on a desperate attempt to save their positions and stem public anger with their past actions by introducing liberal reforms. First Secretary Klecha, for one, hoped that wage increases of between 10% and 20% in the province, along with plans to raise

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<sup>856</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 26 September 1956, APS 858/50/197-211.

<sup>857</sup> Ibid., 212-220.

<sup>858</sup> WUd/sBP Gdansk Dept. III /KW MO report, marked 'Top Secret', 2 October 1956, IPN Gdansk, 0046/77/t.4/202-211.

living standards and allow more private trade, would placate the masses. Moreover, in an effort to defuse growing resurgent nationalist tensions between Ukrainian and Polish settlers in Olsztyn, he proposed providing Ukrainians with greater economic aid, along with equal political, cultural, and even religious rights.<sup>859</sup> Despite this, it is clear that, as in Szczecin, the local administration and security services in Olsztyn Province were almost paralyzed by indecision due to confused messages from the Party regarding the treatment of enemies and lawbreakers. Indeed, one delegate cited a recent case how when a ‘hooligan’ had punched an MO officer in the face, the officer ‘did not hit him back as it was forbidden, he wanted to take him in [but] the people would not allow it [and] there were Party members there but they did not react to it.’<sup>860</sup>

Early October 1956 saw Party officials in Gdansk Province engage in a flurry of self-criticism, mutual recrimination and attempts to deflect blame onto others. As in Szczecin, Koszalin and Olsztyn they were increasingly frustrated with the Central Committee’s silence and ‘fear of telling the truth’, which created a vacuum allowing various rumours to circulate. Moreover, many delegates who had been involved in implementing collectivisation on the ground were greatly upset that newspapers such as *Po prostu* were so critical of state-run agriculture and claimed that the resulting crisis of political faith was causing rural activists to demobilise. There were also further fears that the Poznan uprising had led to a increase in the number incidents of theft and ‘hooliganism’ in Gdansk, as well as a large number of attacks on MO officers. One delegate described how Party activists, having received no instructions or information from their own superiors regarding current events, were unable deal to with the flood of news and rumours coming through the ports. Indeed, when he himself was asked by sailors to confirm foreign radio reports that Gomułka was to become prime minister, he recalled how ‘I could not answer it for fear of looking a fool ...’<sup>861</sup> The fact that local Party bigwigs were more poorly-informed than the man on the street was a cause of major embarrassment with one complaining that they should be ‘ashamed’ that they had to find out from the BBC what was said at the Central Committee meetings. Moreover, foreign press and radio were completely undermining the facade of Party unity by dividing the PZPR leadership into hard-line Stalinists and reformists. Despite such pleas for more information, hard-liners in Gdansk doggedly maintained that the

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<sup>859</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, 8 October 1956, AP0 1141/93/44-74.

<sup>860</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 8 October 1956, AP0 1141/93/81-90.

<sup>861</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 10-12 October 1956, APG 2384/65/5-37.

Gomułka issue 'is, in a certain sense, a secret and there is no need to announce it to the masses.'<sup>862</sup>

Apart from the ongoing power struggle in the higher echelons of the Party, the situation within Gdansk Province was also of great concern, especially issues concerning youth, settlers and ethnic minorities. Indeed, several Party officials also noted that while most hostile comments among the general public were anti-Soviet in nature, a proportion were anti-intellectual and anti-Semitic. Although one delegate claimed there was no popular anti-intellectual mood, he did concede that the main focus of the nationalist mood 'is against the Soviet Union, [and] fewer comments are heard against Germans and more against the Jews whether in the form of jokes or other gossip.'<sup>863</sup>

### **5.5 The Polish October and its Fallout in the Baltic Recovered Territories – October-December 1956**

Following the Seventh Plenum Edward Ochab sensibly realized that the continuation of Sovietisation in Poland would lead to a nationwide revolt. Once he appreciated that Gomułka was the only man with the credibility among both a majority of the Party and the general public to stem the anti-communist tide, Ochab convened the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee on 19 October to ensure Gomułka's election as First Secretary. However, during the meeting the Central Committee heard that a top-level Soviet delegation, including Khrushchev, Molotov and a dozen Soviet generals, was about to land uninvited in Warsaw. During the explosive meeting which followed, the 'guests' from Moscow informed the Central Committee that they were 'deeply apprehensive' about the impending political changes in Poland and the rise in anti-Soviet feeling, so much so that they threatened military intervention. Indeed, Soviet troops based in Poland had already been mobilized and were moving towards Warsaw, while Soviet divisions in East Germany and the USSR were placed on standby. In the end it was Ochab who defused the situation by convincing them that Gomułka's reinstatement as First Secretary was necessary to create a communist regime which the Polish people would accept as their own and would not result in withdrawal from the Warsaw pact or undermine Polish-Soviet 'friendship'.<sup>864</sup> Gomułka's position was strengthened by the leaking of the news of the Soviet advance on Warsaw to the Party, workers and more-importantly, the Polish Internal Security Corps which blocked access routes to the city and occupied strategic buildings. It was also clear to the

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<sup>862</sup> Ibid., 38-76.

<sup>863</sup> Ibid., 77-104.

<sup>864</sup> Dzięwanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 273-275.

Moscow delegation that if the Polish armed forces were ordered to support Soviet troops, they would refuse to do so. Faced with such a dangerous stand-off situation, Khrushchev backed down the following day and left for Moscow, once he accepted that Poland would remain communist and in the Warsaw Pact.<sup>865</sup>

However, divisions of the Red Army were still stationed along Poland's borders and the Soviet fleet ostentatiously carried out manoeuvres in the Bay of Gdansk. It was in this tense atmosphere that Gomułka addressed the Central Committee, telling its members that each country in the Soviet bloc should have full independence and admitting that in recent years many 'innocent people had been sent to their death' and that others had been subjected to 'bestial tortures'. He also criticized the Party's drive to industrialize at all costs and undertook to improve the situation regarding agriculture and consumer goods. Indeed, the speech was a return to the policies he had implemented before his downfall and based on a gradual transition from capitalism to communism.<sup>866</sup> Although Gomułka's subsequent election to the post of First Secretary was greeted by genuine enthusiasm by the Polish people, it was an enthusiasm which Gomułka skilfully managed to keep under control and use it to strengthen the position of the Party, not undermine it. Indeed, the dangers of being swept along in a pro-nationalist and anti-Soviet wave of fervour became clear within days when, on 23 October, an uprising broke out in Budapest, sparked by a demonstration supporting the recent political changes in Poland. The Polish people were now placed in a agonising dilemma whether to support a potential democratic domino effect which could, however, plunge all of the Soviet bloc into a mass insurrection and spark a world war. Self-restraint was advised not only by Gomułka as the most sensible course of action but also by Cardinal Wyszyński who had been released from captivity on 28 October. With the Hungarian Uprising having been crushed with the arrival of Soviet tanks on 4 November, many Poles realized they would have come to a similar fate had they failed to impose limits on their zeal for change.<sup>867</sup> At the same time, Wojtech Mastny contends that while Khrushchev's first reaction was to use force against Poland in October 1956, he was put off by the timely and strong support of communist China for the Polish 'National Communists'. However, it was also due to Chinese demands for intervention in Hungary that the Soviets reversed their decision to withdraw from Budapest.<sup>868</sup>

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<sup>865</sup> Bethell, *Gomułka, His Poland and His Communism*, 215-216.

<sup>866</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 276-277.

<sup>867</sup> Bethell, *Gomułka, His Poland and His Communism*, 226-228.

<sup>868</sup> Wojtech Mastny, "Soviet foreign policy, 1953-1962," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 1, Origins*, ed. Odd Arne Westad Melvyn P. Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 320.

Despite the wave of anti-Soviet feeling sweeping the country in early November, Gomułka managed to strengthen his position by freeing priests and bishops who had been imprisoned in recent years. Soon Church-State negotiations opened, Catholic organisations allowed to operate with a greater degree of freedom and an official *modus vivendi* agreement reached within two months of Gomułka's return to power, abolishing the regime's control over Church appointments and restoring the teaching of religion in schools.<sup>869</sup> Moreover, in mid-November Gomułka travelled with Cyrankiewicz to Moscow to renegotiate a new deal for Polish-Soviet relations based on achieving more national sovereignty and less Soviet interference, both in the internal affairs of the country and the Party. On his triumphant return, he brought a deal which greatly reduced the Soviet military presence, scrapped exploitative Polish-Soviet trade agreements, freed Poles living or incarcerated in the USSR to return home and allowed Poland more room to establish trading and diplomatic contact with the West.<sup>870</sup>

Within days of Gomułka's return to power Party hardliners in Gdansk met in panic and confusion. While some declared that they were treating the meeting as 'an examination of conscience', others, however, attempted to portray themselves as uneducated simple people who were just doing what the Party demanded. Several delegates continued to complain about the lack of information from PZPR leaders as to what was going on in the Party and refusing to share what they knew, while others seemed genuinely distraught that the great communist experiment had caused so much damage to those it purported to help. Now faced with his own 'serious errors', First Secretary Kunat had no option but to resign and place his fate in the hands of the Party, even if it decided to send him to a factory to 're-educate' himself. Moreover, a representative from Gdynia shipyard claimed that anti-Semitic feeling against the Party leadership and apparatus was being used in order to distract society's attention from other issues.<sup>871</sup> The editor of *Głos Wybrzeża* then accused the members of the Provincial Committee of having attempted to forestall information about the growing pro-Gomułka mood spreading to Gdansk, as well as about Soviet troops movements. As if the old-guard had not realized the significance of Gomułka's return, another delegate compared it to a hurricane which would winnow out the Party's wheat from the chaff, ominously adding that 'There may be excesses, [but] we'll correct these

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<sup>869</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 278-279.

<sup>870</sup> Ascherson, *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution*, 75-76.

<sup>871</sup> KW PZPR Gdansk, Minutes of Plenary Session, 25 October 1956, APG 2384/66/8-76.

excesses. Attempts to hold [it] back with an umbrella would be ridiculous, those who are attempting to do this, you will be swept away by this hurricane.’<sup>872</sup>

Indeed, there is some evidence this political hurricane had driven workers on the Baltic coast already to create structures outside the Party. As Anthony Kemp-Welch describes, ‘the most significant self-organisation’ during October 1956 was based around attempts to make a trade union for Seamen and Deep-Sea Fishermen in Gdynia, numbering 3,000 members, independent of Party control. With the Soviet fleet having trained its guns on the port during the October crisis, the union’s main purpose was to protect its members, who were literally in the line of fire, from dismissal and intimidation. Although they ultimately failed to found a free trade union, they did succeed in having their members politically rehabilitated. Thus, a generation before the ‘Solidarity’ movement formed in Gdansk shipyard, merchant seamen in Gdynia had already come close, during a time of political upheaval, to forming the first free trade union in a communist country.<sup>873</sup>

The inevitable purge of the Szczecin Plenum and Executive occurred during the last week of October with the resignation of seven hardliners. Although they engaged in qualified self-criticism, some went defiantly, angrily rejecting labels such as ‘tyrant’ and attempting to shift blame upwards onto the Central Committee. Indeed, one senior official made a disingenuous attempt take advantage of current anti-Semitic feeling against the Party leadership by boasting of his refusal to help Jews in the Party.<sup>874</sup> At the same time, the head of Polish Radio in Szczecin described how when he came back from Warsaw with news of Gomułka’s triumph and went to the Provincial Committee to ask for a statement, they had neither heard the news nor wanted to believe it until an official statement came from the Central Committee itself.<sup>875</sup> Although First Secretary Sielanciuk resigned his post voluntarily, he added sarcastically that this was because the BBC had already been reporting his resignation for the previous four days.<sup>876</sup>

Some Party officials in Olsztyn Province, however, attempted to adapt to the changing circumstances by admitting serious errors and ‘perversions’ while cravenly expressing their ‘warm support and readiness to help the new Party leadership’ under Gomułka. As in Szczecin, Koszalin and Gdansk, Olsztyn’s Provincial Committee

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<sup>872</sup> Ibid., 76-108.

<sup>873</sup> Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History*, 101-102.

<sup>874</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 25-26 October 1956, APS 858/50/255-299.

<sup>875</sup> Ibid., 299-318.

<sup>876</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Report to Plenary Session, 26 October 1956, APS 858/50/333-339.

admitted to disconnecting itself from the masses and fostering the cult of the individual.<sup>877</sup> It warned, however, that it was proving difficult to replace those purged from the county committees as those proposed believed they would be 'compromised and decline to accept the position or obviously want to avoid election, declaring that they are practicing Catholics.'<sup>878</sup> By mid-November 1956, with the process of purging the old guard of the Olsztyn Plenum and Executive in full swing, there were those who believed things were going too far and too fast. One delegate resented that those who had supported collectivisation in the past were now labelled 'criminals', and accused the Party's critics of engaging in demagoguery. Indeed, another complained that 'As a result of the rarefied atmosphere and attacks on Party activists, some comrades are watching themselves whether some group of hooligans will grab a truncheon and knock them on the head.'<sup>879</sup> The Party had become so unpopular in the province that in some counties its only remnant was the ZMP. Moreover, activists reported that 'no-one wants to be a [Party] secretary. There is also a tendency to hand in Party cards. They explain it in this way that they were beaten up for Gomułka and now they will be beaten up for Stalinism.'<sup>880</sup>

In West Pomerania the level of anxiety was also high, not only with elections on the horizon, but residual anger among the Polish people over the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Indeed, before the year's end the Soviet consulate in Szczecin was ransacked by an angry mob who vandalized the building and destroyed its files.<sup>881</sup> Indeed, one delegate from Stargard County claimed that local Party members had suffered a collective 'nervous breakdown' while another from Nowogard County reported that in the countryside 'the situation among Party members is not a happy one, they are afraid to stand out ...' As the upcoming elections were clearly going to be an opportunity for voters to rid the county committees and local administration of 'Stalinists', reports came in how many local people were shouting 'Down with the Party, Long Live Gomułka.' Moreover, of 738 collective farms in Szczecin Province, 600 were already in a state of liquidation.<sup>882</sup> The upcoming elections were also were a major issue for the new Provincial Committee in Olsztyn, as was the reorganisation of

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<sup>877</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Plenary Session Resolution, 27-28 October 1956, AP0 1141/93/116-174.

<sup>878</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Plenary Session Report, no date but probably late October 1956, AP0 1141/93/186-195.

<sup>879</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 17 November 1956, AP0 1141/93/197-203.

<sup>880</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Minutes of Plenary Session, 17 November 1956, AP0 1141/93/203-208.

<sup>881</sup> Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History*, 113.

<sup>882</sup> KW PZPR Szczecin, Minutes of Plenary Session, 26 November 1956, APS 858/50/340-362.

local Catholic groups which 'have become a new problem for the Party.' More worryingly, an increase in anti-indigenous and anti-Ukrainian sentiment had been noted among Polish settlers, while the number of indigenous members in the Party and in the local administration had dropped significantly. As in Szczecin Province, the 'catastrophic' state of the collective farm sector was blamed on 'an absurd system of management unyielding to change', an exodus of farm workers and a lack of resources.<sup>883</sup>

In conclusion, it is clear that the three political earthquakes which hit Poland during the 1954-1956 period, namely the Światło revelations, the 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress and the Poznan uprising, had an immediately visible effect on the ground in Szczecin, Koszalin, Gdansk and Olsztyn provinces. Firstly, the Światło revelations forced the regime to rein in the operations of the UB as 'state within a state' and allowed those who wished to resist the regime more room to manoeuvre, be they Catholic priests, indigenous 'revisionists', peasants seeking to escape from collective farms or the anti-communist underground. Secondly, the 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress had particularly dangerous repercussions in the Baltic provinces where a significant proportion of the settler population were 'eastern repatriates' and thus, direct victims of Stalin, who were guaranteed to keep anti-Soviet feeling high. Thirdly, the Poznan uprising raised the spectre of strikes and riots, if not armed revolt, spreading throughout the country, a development which would have certainly drawn in Poland's Baltic ports. In addition, each of these events gave many rural settlers the justification they needed either to resist providing compulsory deliveries or to abandon the collective farms. At the same time the new settler society on the Baltic coast was still too fragmented and riven with mutual distrust to provide mass resistance on a scale comparable to long-established communities with a strong moral economy, as in Poznan.

The Party itself suffered three almost fatal blows to its moral authority during the period, a situation only rescued by the return of Gomułka. Some historians, such as Neal Ascherson, maintain that the crisis in Poland in 1956 was more a result of a dissatisfaction with Stalinist policies by forces within the Party than by spontaneous popular revolt. Moreover, he suggests that change was already evident in the Party's Seventh and Eighth Plenums and Gomułka probably have returned to power anyway, even if the Poznan incidents had not occurred.<sup>884</sup> Moreover, as Dziewanowski outlines the Party's insatiable appetite for absorbing all rival organisations inevitably brought large numbers of people into its lower echelons who not only had no connection with communist ideology but actually diluted it by gradually succumbing to environmental

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<sup>883</sup> KW PZPR Olsztyn, Speech/Paper to Plenary Session, November 1956, AP0 1141/93/232-245.

<sup>884</sup> Ascherson, *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution*, 77.

pressure and, despite instructions to impose one-size-fits-all policies, adapting them to local conditions. Over time the lower levels of the Party began to reflect the beliefs of the masses rather than attempting to change them. Thus, after a decade in power, large sections of the Party became permeated with the bourgeois, nationalistic and even religious and anti-Soviet sentiments which most Poles held.<sup>885</sup> Indeed, we have seen how senior Party figures in each of the Baltic provinces were constantly complaining about the ideological quality of their local members, and suspecting that they were closet 'National Communists' or worse. In fact, it was the Party's inadvertent preservation of Gomułka and his fellow 'National Communists' which provided it with a lifeline to stay in power after 1956 as it provided the Polish public with popular alternative leadership which, even if communist, was perceived as courageous enough to defend Poland's interest against the Soviet Union and Polish Stalinists.<sup>886</sup> Indeed, it is also clear that in a Polish revolution unusually based on restraint, the inhabitants of the Baltic provinces also 'self-limited' their zeal. Having realized that Poland had been cast adrift in a sea of Soviet domination, most Poles, including those the Szczecin, Koszalin, Gdansk and Olsztyn, accepted that their country had to at least maintain the appearance of Communism in order to be hold off total Soviet control and retain some degree of national sovereignty and independence.

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<sup>885</sup> Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, 254-255.

<sup>886</sup> *Ibid.*, 280-281.

## Conclusion:

The story of how Poland's Baltic Recovered Territories were sovietised is further reflection of Stalin's statement that 'whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise.'<sup>887</sup> Indeed, the three Baltic provinces linked the Kaliningrad Oblast in the east to the Soviet Zone of Occupation in Germany in the west, thereby bringing the entire southern coastline of the Baltic Sea under Soviet domination. However, as Polish communist leaders soon realised, the long coastline and major ports of West Pomerania and Gdansk provinces, while providing economic security, exposed the region to Western 'imperialists', German revanchists and provided routes of escape. Thus, they considered it highly desirable that Poles settling there be supporters of the regime and vigilant towards internal and external enemies.

However, as we have seen, there was an inherent contradiction in attempting to sovietise a population whose migration to the Recovered Territories depended on pull and push factors which did not sit well with communism. Firstly, many of those who had come voluntarily expected to enrich themselves with ex-German property or, at least, be given the opportunity to prosper through farming, trade or small businesses. Secondly, most of those who had ended up there involuntarily were eastern repatriates who had not only experienced Soviet rule first hand, but whose forced migration westwards could be blamed squarely on the USSR. Thus, the necessity of employing pragmatism and ideological compromise with these groups during the initial post-war years made the complete imposition of Sovietisation a near impossible task.

At the same time, this thesis has clearly shown that, despite their later failure to gain total control, communists based in the Baltic provinces were, from the outset, planning to effect a political takeover through the identification and gradual liquidation of their enemies. Indeed, seeing how early these plans were in operation, both at provincial and county level, provides an insight into the age-old debate whether there was a Cold War because of communist takeovers or whether there were communist takeovers because of the Cold War.<sup>888</sup> At the same time, the documents used in this thesis display the shifting goals of the regime over time, rather than confirming a totalitarian model which suggests a well-defined and consistent goal.<sup>889</sup> Moreover, as Norman Naimark points out, the use of the secret police to

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<sup>887</sup> M. Djilas and M.B. Petrovich, *Conversations with Stalin* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 90.

<sup>888</sup> Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century - And After*, 211.

<sup>889</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 336-337.

destroy opposition before, not after, the communists seized power was actually a reversal of the Soviet Union's own revolution and not an imitation of it.<sup>890</sup>

We have also seen that the tactics of this communist takeover in the Baltic provinces more or less reflect the three-stages which Hugh Seton-Watson first outlined in the 1950s. These were as follows; firstly, a general coalition of anti-fascist and left-wing groups; then a bogus coalition in which the communists eventually liquidated their non-communist partners and finally, the unification of all remaining parties into one communist-dominated party or a national front organisation.<sup>891</sup> Indeed, by looking at the county of Łęborg in closer detail, the methods which Party activists used on the ground in each of these stages to eliminate rivals, be they in the PSL, PPS or in the PPR itself, become particularly clear. Moreover, we can also see, at a local level, issues which affected the development of communist power, both in Poland and across the Soviet bloc. These included popular antipathy towards the methods of 'creeping Sovietisation', as well as communist resentment of having to put up with opposition as instructed by Moscow before it began to prepare plans to forcibly impose Soviet model in 1947.<sup>892</sup>

However, it was the peculiar nature of the Baltic Recovered Territories which magnified popular fears regarding Sovietisation and the ultimate intentions of the Soviet Union into drivers of a continued sense of impermanence and instability. This was not helped, either by the regime's constant warnings for settlers to be vigilant to a perceived German threat to their new properties, or by a lack of government investment for decades after the war, especially in West Pomerania. This all the more strange when, despite their claims to be internationalist by nature, Polish communists not only sought to prove, through what Andrew Demshuk has called 'a palimpsest reinscription' of history, that the expelled German population had no right to return but that they had never had the right to be there in the first place.<sup>893</sup> Moreover, the deterioration and neglect of regions now under Polish rule was used in right-wing German propaganda to build a case for an international treaty to restore German's pre-war borders.<sup>894</sup> Non-German visitors also noticed the uneven development of the Baltic provinces. For instance, William Woods, an American writer who toured Poland

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<sup>890</sup> Naimark, "The Sovietization of Eastern Europe, 1944-1953," 183.

<sup>891</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1956), 169-171.

<sup>892</sup> Pechnatov, "The Soviet Union and the world, 1944-1953," 103.

<sup>893</sup> Demshuk, "Reinscribing Schlesien as Śląsk: Memory and Mythology in a Postwar German-Polish Borderland," 41-42.

<sup>894</sup> Szaz, *Germany's eastern frontiers : the problem of the Oder-Neisse line*, 182-191.

extensively in 1967, was highly impressed with the rebuilding of Gdansk and described Olsztyn Province in positive terms. He was, however, shocked to find Szczecin, the busiest port on the Baltic Sea, lying in one of the poorest areas of the country where '... one's impression is of damage unrepaired, narrow roads pitted with pot-holes, and on every side an almost unutterable desolation.' Moreover, neighbouring villages contained untended gardens, derelict churches and cottages and were mainly populated by backward eastern repatriates living in squalor and often walking barefoot, a situation he blamed 'only their own ignorance ... and the concomitant consumption of vast quantities of vodka. They make one think that perhaps Wat Tyler's England looked like this.'<sup>895</sup>

The reluctance of such settlers to set down roots in the Baltic provinces, however, points to their readiness to move elsewhere. Although in the case of the eastern repatriates returning home was out of the question, they always had the option of abandoning the land and moving to factory jobs in local towns and cities or fleeing the Recovered Territories entirely for central Poland. Thus, both social and physical mobility became 'unexpected weapons' over which the Party had little control.<sup>896</sup> Moreover, as Kenney points out, labour mobility, and the fact that settlers had no strong attachment to either to where they worked or lived, made even those who had joined the Party harder to discipline.<sup>897</sup> As the success of collectivisation, in particular, depended on keeping settlers and their families on the land, only a coercive Soviet-style policy of restricted movement of labour and internal passports could have prevented the high-levels of land flight along the Baltic coast. In addition, the future of collective farming was seriously undermined by the fact that neither the children of those who suffered under collectivisation nor those who benefitted from it saw their future in the sector. For instance, the relentless 'administrative pressure' which Stanisław Ossowski faced on his farm in Olsztyn Province drove his son off the land and left the family farm unviable due to a shortage of labour.<sup>898</sup> Moreover, none of the four children of W.J. Kopka, who joined a collective farm in Gdansk Pomerania voluntarily, planned to stay on the farm. Instead, they used the educational privileges which being a collective farm family gave them as a social escalator to non-agricultural white-collar careers.<sup>899</sup> Indeed, the Kopka family is a good example of Hanna Świda-Ziemia's observation that support for Stalinism in Poland came not from workers or

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<sup>895</sup> Woods, *Poland: Phoenix in the East, A Survey of Modern Times*, 81-85.

<sup>896</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 9.

<sup>897</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>898</sup> Memoir of Stanisław Ossowski, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 158/3-4.

<sup>899</sup> Memoir of W.J. Kopka, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 129/12-13.

peasants *per se* but those who had managed to socially advance out of these groups.<sup>900</sup>

Moreover, the memoirs of settlers used in this thesis, especially those who were supporters of the Party to some degree, shed light on debates concerning 'self-Sovietisation', a concept which suggests that satellite populations adapted to Soviet models without coercion as part of a complex give and take process between Moscow and the countries within its sphere of influence.<sup>901</sup> Certainly, some of the settler memoirs give an insight into the inner conflicts hidden deep within *Homo Sovieticus*. For instance, Aleksander Bernakiewicz, was an eastern repatriate who rejected the portrayal of Stalin's 'fatherliness [and] friendliness' towards the Polish nation, commenting that he had had 'an opportunity to feel this fatherliness and the brightness of these rays of sunshine, [and] ... to see such things which today it is probably better not to recall.' Within a few short years, however, he had become a zealous Party convert, then a municipal First Secretary in January 1951 before finding that his Marxist-Leninist training, 'worked differently in practice ... I suppressed this within myself and later could no longer go on.' Under constant attack from Party colleagues for being a 'materialist' and an 'opportunist', he quickly suffered a nervous breakdown and was expelled from the PZPR in July 1952.<sup>902</sup> Another easterner with torn loyalties was Adolf Kamiński who had been active in the Soviet Communist Youth in the Ukraine where he had taken part 'in the deportation of "enemies of the nation" to Siberia' before joining the PPR following his 'repatriation' to Gdansk. Evidently hoping for a milder kind of communism in Poland, he soon became anxious that 'the system of Yezov and Stalin' would return: 'I have already lived through that once and the thought that I would have to go through it again drives me demented. No! I will not be able to stand it.'<sup>903</sup> Indeed, such accounts are key for fulfilling one of the key aims of this study, namely to show what 'the communist experience' was actually like for the settlers of the Baltic Recovered Territories, their thoughts about communism, the aspects of communism which did or did not appeal to them, as well as their coping and survival mechanisms when in conflict with the regime.

Moreover, local and regional Party files have shown us how the regime exercised its power on the ground and adapted its policies firstly, in order to 'repolonise' and secondly, sovietise the Baltic provinces. Although the communists undoubtedly achieved their first goal, this depended on, as Curp maintains, a 'grass-

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<sup>900</sup> Świda-Ziemba, *Stalinizm i społeczeństwo polskie*, 25.

<sup>901</sup> Naimark, "The Sovietization of Eastern Europe, 1944-1953," 195.

<sup>902</sup> Memoir of Aleksander Bernakiewicz, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 24/76-79.

<sup>903</sup> Memoir of Adolf Kamiński, *Pamiętniki Osadników 1957*, IZP, Memoir No. P 203/27-28.

roots partnership' with the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish settlers in which they united to achieve the common national goal of a region cleared of Germans and resettled with Poles.<sup>904</sup> However, as Fleming points out while the communists were less successful in their attempts to gain legitimacy by associating themselves with nationalist symbols and rhetoric, their maintenance of power was not only based on coercion but also acquiescence.<sup>905</sup> However, by later placing ideology above pragmatism in order to enforce ultimately counter-productive policies against the small businessman, the private farmer, the Church and 'National Communists', the Party reneged on its tacit deal with settlers to provide land, religious freedom and prosperity in exchange for a monopoly on political power. Indeed, further studies may show parallels with contemporary societies where such a trade-off still exists. The most obvious example is the People's Republic of China, where a 'national communist' political monopoly maintains power today through allowing a degree of capitalist economic freedom, as well as tightly controlling its Catholic minority through a 'Patriotic Catholic Church' which rejects the authority of the Vatican.<sup>906</sup>

The Sovietisation of the Baltic Recovered Territories also reveals how Polish 'pioneer' settlers, eastern repatriates and indigenous communities developed strategies to cope, not only with a new life in a transnational social and demographic mosaic, but one which presented dynamic, sometimes dangerous interactions, either with Soviet soldiers or Polish communist officials. As the work of Polish sociologist Andrzej Sakson and his colleagues has shown, the effects of these interactions, although fading, are still present in the Recovered Territories, in terms of distrust of the authorities and fellow Poles, as well as a lingering fear of Germans returning to reclaim property.<sup>907</sup>

Although we saw how events such as the Gryfice incident emboldened peasant resistance to compulsory delivery quotas all across the Baltic region, by the early 1950s the Soviets themselves were beginning to notice signs of resistance to their model in central and eastern Europe. Indeed, there was also mass resistance to compulsory deliveries in Hungary in 1952.<sup>908</sup> Moreover, due to their implications for international

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<sup>904</sup> Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945–1960*, 55.

<sup>905</sup> Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland 1944-1950*, 3-5.

<sup>906</sup> Jacek Żurek, *Ruch "Księży Patriotów"* (Warszawa, Katowice: IPN, 2008), 35.

<sup>907</sup> Hejger, "Przekształcenia narodowościowe na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych", 343-59 ; Sakson, ed. *Utracona Ojczyzna: Przymusowe wysiedlenie, deportacje i przesiedlenie jako wspólne doświadczenia*; Drodz, "Społeczność ukraińska na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych Polski", 383-404.

<sup>908</sup> Békés, "East Central Europe, 1953-1956," 336.

stability, the repercussions of Stalin's death and the Berlin Uprising were especially visible in Poland's Baltic provinces than other parts of the country. Furthermore, the Światło revelations, the fallout from the 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress and the Poznan uprising, also had an enormous impact there. Although, as Kenney contends, conditions for large scale protest were ostensibly better in the Recovered Territories than in central Poland, the settlers' restraint can be explained both by the fragmented nature of the local population, as well as a desire not to endanger the 'repolonisation' of the Baltic coast.<sup>909</sup> Indeed, following the Polish 'October' of 1956 Soviet protection of the Recovered Territories was the main argument Gomułka used in order to justify the continued presence of the Red Army on Polish soil, an argument which both reassured settlers fearing German revanchism, as well as Soviet leaders fearing the intentions of Polish 'National Communists'.<sup>910</sup>

A generation later, however, when the Polishness of these lands was no longer in doubt and by which time 'a moral economy' had evolved, Poles there were as ready to strike as anywhere else in Poland, if not more so.<sup>911</sup> In fact, it was the presence of large numbers of eastern Polish 'repatriates' in the Baltic provinces that is, people who had had direct experience of Soviet rule before their expulsion westwards, which provided one of the seeds of resistance which grew into the Solidarity movement. Indeed, as Timothy Garton Ash observed, by 1970 such people were now a significant section of the striking workforce of Gdansk shipyard and had, for the first time, been fused into 'a cohesive community with a common purpose.'<sup>912</sup>

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<sup>909</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 135-136.

<sup>910</sup> Békés, "East Central Europe, 1953-1956," 347.

<sup>911</sup> Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, 342.

<sup>912</sup> Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 14.

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### **Conference Papers**

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Dr. Beata Halicka, (European University Viadrina, Frankfurt-Oder) *Druga wojna światowa i przymusowe migracje na terenie Nadodrza – doświadczenie i pamięć Polaków i Niemców*, Paper delivered at international conference on Forced Migration at the University of Zielona Góra, 16-17 November, 2010. By kind permission of the author:

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### **Electronic Sources**

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### **Film**

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