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EMBEDDED REVISIONS?

PAST RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE AT THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (PISM) (1947–1965)

After 1948, the question of the former territories of eastern Poland, now western Ukraine, western Belarus and Vilnius, disappeared from public discourse in the Polish People's Republic (PRL). It was replaced by a dominant focus on the western Polish borderlands, the so-called regained territories and on friendship with the Soviet Union. In contrast, this change to the eastern border was the subject of an intense debate in the Polish community in exile, with the journal *Kultura* playing a prominent role in promoting the acceptance of the new borders, in opposition to the Polish government-in-exile and the circle of intellectuals supportive of it.

At the same time, criticism of historic German expansion into Eastern Europe, used by the Nazis as motivation for their brutal conquest of the region, rapidly became the basis of a dialogue between different Eastern bloc historians. It was a convenient topic unifying the countries of the region who could all participate in contesting the German claim on their culture and territories.¹

¹ See the conference proceedings of the Soviet Academy of Science: '*Drang nach Osten*' i istoricheskoe razvitie stran Tsentral'noi, Vostochnoi i Iugo-Vostochnoi Evropy: Stat'i i materialy Mezhdunarodnogo simpoziuma po probleme '*Drang nach Osten*' i istoricheskoe razvitie stran Tsentral'noi, Vostochnoi i Iugo-Vostochnoi Evropy, 20–23 apreliia 1966 g. (Moscow: Nauka, 1967). This was also thematized in an East German exhibition shown in Poland: Rudi Goguel, *Wystawa 'Nauka w służbie "Drang nach Osten"'* (Berlin, 1960). Western German scholars prepared some response to that intense Eastern scientific activity: Wolfgang Wippermann, *Der "deutsche Drang nach Osten": Ideologie und Wirklichkeit eines politischen Schlagwortes* (Darmstadt: WBG, 1981); Hans-Heinrich Nolte, *Drang nach Osten: Sowjetische Geschichtsschreibung der deutschen Ostexpansion* (Köln: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1976).

The question of the shift on the Polish eastern border was hence caught between the omnipresence of the German question and the proscribed discussion of the relationship between Poland and the Soviet Union. It did not fit in the narrative of the denunciation of Nazi ideology or the celebration of the newly gained territories, dominating the public political discourse. Nonetheless, there seems to have been a social need to create a collective narrative on this issue, that would go beyond the private memories. We propose to have to look at semi-public spheres, in the interstices of the official political discourse, and restricted discussion between experts, to ask what form the discussion about the acceptance of the new borders, especially on the eastern side of the country, could have taken in the Polish People's Republic.

To discuss this topic, we will consider an institution which was active in the PRL in the field of historiography and had an explicit mission to shape and promote a new official discourse, especially on the history of foreign relations: the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM). We wish to focus on three levels of activity, starting at an institutional level, in order to understand comprehensively the constraints on the discourse on Eastern Europe in Poland between 1948–65. Next, looking at a conference organised in 1959, we shall see how the historiographical debate on Polish–German relations from 1933–8 created cover for some discussion on Polish relations with Eastern Europe. Finally, we will focus on one intermittent associated of the PISM, Stanisław Zabiełło, who published in 1958 one of the first books dealing with this subject in post-war Poland. We will see how he formulated his approach to the border issue within the framework of official propaganda.

Establishing a New Norm on the History of Polish Foreign Relations After 1948

The Polish Institute of International Affairs was created in 1947 in Warsaw and was from the start an ambivalent institution. It was created on the model of the Royal Institute of International Affairs of London, known as Chatham House, with its eponymous rule. The British institute was created in 1920 in the aftermath of WWI to foster transatlantic discussions beyond the realm of diplomacy. According to the 'Chatham House rule', participants of a meeting cannot quote its discussions. Thanks to this rule, participants felt freer to speak their minds and meetings could serve as informal exchanges without official state involvement. This

model inspired several other institutions across Europe, for instance, the German Association of Foreign Affairs (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik*, DGAP). The goal of such institutions is to create a grey area for contacts mainly between diplomats and politicians but also with civil society and the academic world, among others. This kind of grey area surrounding diplomacy could not function in the Polish People's Republic, especially under Stalinization, and the PISM served rather as an amplifier of the official discourse of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych*, MSZ). It operated officially under the umbrella of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and functioned as a kind of centre of expertise, insofar as it was predominantly a conformist institution dedicated to international issues. Its mission was therefore more one of diversifying the channels of communication of the MSZ, allowing for the additional legitimizing contextualization of a given official position, inside as well as outside Poland, as was explained in 1963 to a guest of the PISM from a sibling organisation in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Stefan Doernberg, then Director of the German Institute for Contemporary History (*Deutsches Institut für Zeitgeschichte*, DIZ).²

The situation of the PISM was very unstable in the 1950s, because of material difficulties in a city still largely devastated after WWII. More notable was the wide range of profiles among the employees of the PISM. Some, like Kazimierz Sidor, had spent the war in Poland and even fought in the resistance, or were veterans of the Red Army, like Kazimierz Rozen-Zawadzki. Later, the PISM welcomed Polish survivors of Soviet camps, such as Józef Berger, who had been secretary of the Polish Communist Party from 1929 to 1931³ and who found a position at the PISM after his liberation in 1956.⁴ The PISM was thus directly affected by the political tensions which marked Polish society in 1956 and a few years later in 1968 it was affected by the wave of anti-semitism that struck Poland.⁵

² Bericht über einen Besuch des PISM in Warschau, Direktor. Aktennotizen und Berichte Dienstreise. 1962–1969. Stefan Doernberg, 27 December 1963, DC 201 / 50, Deutsches Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Bundesarchiv, Berlin (hereinafter: DIZ, BArch).

³ Stéphane Courtois et al., *Le livre noir du communisme: Crimes, terreur et répression* (Paris: Laffont, 1997), 304.

⁴ Mieczysław Tomala, *Z dni chmurnych i górnych w Polskim Instytucie Spraw Międzynarodowych* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2002), 64.

⁵ These crucial events are however silenced in the archives, as the records have been transferred first in 1971 and then in 1981, that is to say, following pivotal moments in Polish political life. See: Sekretariat Dyrektora. Spisy zdawczo-odbiorcze PISM. 1958–1993,

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the PISM was characterized by a significant turnover of staff, with many employees using the PISM as a stepping-stone or rather a waiting-room before moving on either to academia or to the diplomatic service.⁶ This may shed light on the reasons for the strong conformist culture of the institution, even if its personnel came from very diverse backgrounds. The PISM's ambivalence is best embodied by its directors, who themselves were often 'double-hatted', having both a political function and an academic profile.⁷ Both Juliusz Katz-Suchy, director from 1951–7, and Julian Hochfeld, director from 1957–60, taught at the University of Warsaw. They contributed to the transformation of the status of the PISM, making it less dependent on the MSZ, and giving it a more academic feel. The mission of the PISM was then reframed with a change in the statutes governing it in 1959 and with the creation of a formal scientific council,⁸ but at its core it remained the same: the knowledge produced by the Institute was required to serve the interests of Polish foreign policy.⁹ Then in the 1960s, gradually, the PISM became a point of contact not only for sibling organisations in the Eastern Bloc but also further afield, notably in preparation for the *Ostverträge* in 1970 and even more so during the period of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in the 1970s and the 1980s. But before becoming a centre of expertise in issues of international security, the PISM made its focus the history of Poland's international relations.

Indeed, from the first years of activity of the PISM, the Department for the History of International Relations was by far the most dominant in terms of employees and subsequently in terms of publications. This department was dissolved in 1966, its employees moving on to several different sections of the Polish Academy of Sciences (mainly to the Institute of History and the Institute of Socialist Countries). Between 1948 and 1966, this department conducted several activities: it established chronologies of historical events, reviewed historical newspapers, and collected

118, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw (hereinafter PISM, AAN).

⁶ Tomala, *Z dni chmurnych* (see note 4), 10.

⁷ Grzegorz Sołtysiak, 'Historia Polskiego Instytutu Spraw Międzynarodowych w latach 1947–1993: pierwsze przybliżenie', *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* 42, 2 (2008): 104.

⁸ Protokół z zebrania ogólnego pracowników PISM – dnia 30 grudnia 1958, Sekretariat Dyrektora. Protokoły z zebrań pracowników PISM w latach 1958, 1962–1963, 1972, 1986, 1988, 30.12.1958, 104, PISM, AAN.

⁹ Perspektywy roku 1959 w świetle doświadczeń roku 1958, 1959, 132, PISM, AAN.

archives, mainly from the MSZ in Warsaw. Its core activity was focused on WWI, the negotiations of the Treaty of Versailles, and international relations during the interwar period and until 1945.¹⁰

The German question was not set as a priority subject for the PISM because German Studies were done by institutions like the Institute of the West (*Instytut Zachodni*), based in Poznań. The question nevertheless became increasingly central, at the expense of other fields such as the analysis of Soviet policy. This deficiency was subject to repeated criticism during the PISM's early years, mainly on the part of the political institutions on which the PISM depended. For instance, there was criticism at a conference of historians organized at the PISM in 1950¹¹ and dedicated to the different orientations of the history of international relations as a basis for reflection on Polish foreign policy, or later, during a discussion on the 'scientific' priorities for the PISM for 1951.¹² During that meeting, one representative of the MSZ regretted in the remarks on the scientific work plan for 1951 that the majority of resources are devoted to the German question, and that questions about the Soviet Union and the countries of 'people's democracy' are completely ignored. He consequently advised the PISM to complete the work plan by focusing on current issues and, in relation to the USSR, on its role in defending peace in the light of the protocols of international meetings, on the economic development of the USSR since WWII, and finally on the economic cooperation of the USSR with the countries of people's democracy.

These priorities were a direct reproduction of the official discourse of the Polish state at the time. It seems there was no room for research on that topic, as shown in a comment by professor Stanisław Edward Nahlik at another similar meeting between the MSZ and the PISM leadership on 13 December 1951.¹³ As reported, Stanisław Nahlik did not see the need for original analyses and simply advised the translation of the relevant Soviet analyses. These repeated calls for more institutional activity dedicated to the USSR did however not shift the weight of the PISM away from research on the Germanies. The conformism of that institution

¹⁰ For the list of projects in the index of the department's archive see <https://szukajwarchiwach.pl/2/1738/0/32#tabJednostki> (last visited 15 February 2017).

¹¹ Protokół z konferencji historyków odbytej w PISM w dniu 20 lutego 1950, 1950, 31, PISM, AAN.

¹² Uwagi departamentu I o planie pracy PISM, 10 June 1950, 126, PISM, AAN.

¹³ Protokół z konferencji kierowniczego aktywu MSZ z dyrekcją PISM odbytej u MSZ dnia 13 grudnia 1951, 4.01.1952, 254, PISM, AAN.

consisted not simply in producing documentations and analyses on the themes of the official state discourse but reflects the needs identified by its employees and the attractivity of given topics.

The difficulties in the 1950s in establishing a Polish–Soviet dialogue on historiography was not specific to the PISM and it is notable that the PISM did not have a particular role in them. This dialogue rested rather in the hands of the Parties and the Academies of Sciences of both states. The first contacts between Polish and Soviet historians at the institutional level took place in the context of the Committee on Labour History.¹⁴ This cooperation consisted mainly of an exchange of historical documentation. After 1954, it was the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IH PAN) which sought to establish institutional cooperation with the USSR.

In May 1959, a delegation of Polish historians from the IH PAN travelled to Moscow to discuss the joint publication of documentation on Polish–Soviet relations and proposed on this occasion the creation of a bilateral commission. Their Soviet counterparts accepted and proposed involving representatives of the Ukrainian and Belarusian Academies of Sciences. However, the difficulties of finding suitable Soviet historians specializing in Polish issues slowed down the establishment of the commission. As a result, the first meeting took place only in 1963 although the creation of the commission had been agreed in October 1959.

The 1960s witnessed a sensible acceleration of the study of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, in Poland with the creation of dedicated institutions within the Polish Academy of Sciences. First, in January 1961, a department for the History of Polish–Soviet Relations (*Pracownia Historii Stosunków Polsko–Radzieckich*) was established, becoming in 1965 the unit for the History of Polish–Soviet Relations (*Zakład Historii Stosunków Polsko–Radzieckich*). This formed the basis for the creation of the Institute of Socialist Countries of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1972 (*Instytut Krajów Socjalistycznych*, IKS PAN). In parallel, within the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a unit for the study of the History of the USSR and the Countries of Central Europe (*Zakład Historii ZRRS i Europy Środkowej*) was created. These institutions participated in the scientific supervision of the PISM, notably of the work of Włodzimierz T. Kowalski on the ‘Curzon Line’ in the interwar

¹⁴ Jan Szumski, ‘U źródeł powstania Komisji Historyków Polski i ZSRR’, *Klio Polska* 6 (2012): 55–74.

period¹⁵ and after the dissolution of the history department at the PISM, several of its employees joined the IKS PAN.

The PISM was one of the creators and dissemination channels of the official discourse of the Polish state at the time, both in commenting on current international affairs and in shaping official historiographical discourse. The institution was subject to the general political context prevailing in Poland and reflected in its activities the growing weight in the public discourse of the German issue and the reluctance to deal with the Soviet Union, because of the potential pitfalls the topic entailed. The PISM retained the function of defining and propagating official discourse on the history of international relations in Poland. This was a particularly difficult task because of the intricate situation in post-war Poland of having lost territory to the Soviet Union and gained territory from pre-war Germany. The issues of both border changes were interdependent but while the western border change occupied the front pages in Poland, the eastern one was remarkable by its absence.

Now that we sketched out the institutional frame, we will see next how the discussion on German history provided a frame and even a blueprint for addressing the issue of the Polish past in Eastern Europe at the PISM.

Embedded Revisions: A Cautious Opening of the Polish Eastern Question (1959)

On 27–28 April 1959, the PISM hosted a conference dedicated to Polish–German relations between 1933–9.¹⁶ A focus on this particular conference gives us an insight into the range of official historiographical voices in post-1956 Poland and shows some early signs of a research trend in the Polish Eastern European historiography of the 1960s. Moreover, this conference seems to have had a relatively wide distribution¹⁷ and was

¹⁵ Linia Curzona, Stosunki Polski z zagranicą, 1960, 785, PISM, AAN.

¹⁶ For the transcript of the conference, see Józef Marian Chudek, ed., *Sesja naukowa poświęcona stosunkom polsko-niemieckim w latach 1933–1939, 27–28 kwietnia 1959 r.: referaty i dyskusja* (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych – Zakład Historyczny, 1959) and a recension of the conference: Jan Kremer, ‘Sesja naukowa poświęcona stosunkom polsko-niemieckim w latach 1933–1939’, *Wiadomości Historyczne* 2, 4 (1959): 258–9.

¹⁷ Although in manuscript form, it seems to have been distributed to the university libraries of Cracow, Poznań, Toruń, Warsaw and Wrocław, according to the NUKAT catalogue (National Universal Central Catalogue).

covered by the journal for teachers of history.¹⁸ The conference was transcribed and the transcription distributed with a restriction notice on the cover, containing both the five presentations and notes of the discussion following each panel, with the names of the fourteen commentators.

One noticeable contribution was made by Kazimierz Piwarski, then Director of the Institute of the West (Poznań), providing a state-of-the-art report on the issue of Polish–German relations between 1933–9.¹⁹ In doing so, he highlighted the dominant historiographical trends at the time in Poland, or rather the main targets of official historiography. He focused his presentation on the publications which seem to have interested him the most: the ones from the Polish emigration in the West, mostly from London²⁰ and Paris.²¹ As for Soviet publications, he merely mentioned them in passing, which hints at the relative unattractiveness of Soviet historiography on this matter. The publications from the Polish emigration were criticized for their support for the legacy of the Second Polish Republic, with a strong focus on the German–Polish Non-Aggression Pact of 1934.

This resonates with Rafał Stobiecki's study of the historiography of Russia in Poland.²² Stobiecki states that during the 1960s, the ongoing fight between Polish historians from Poland and their fellow-countrymen in emigration was mainly about acceptance of the post-1945 situation. Polish historians in emigration rejected the current status quo in terms of borders and the political system, whereas the official historians defended and legitimized them. Piwarski used the Teschen crisis of autumn 1938, when Poland occupied a portion of the Czech territory, to discredit the émigré discourse, a classic element of communist criticism towards the pre-war Polish government.

The second major target was the West German historians of Eastern Europe. Referring to two recent books published in West Germany by

¹⁸ Kremer, 'Sesja naukowa' (see note 16).

¹⁹ Kazimierz Piwarski, 'Stan badań w zakresie stosunków polsko-niemieckich w latach 1933–1939', in *Sesja naukowa* (see note 16), 26–39.

²⁰ Among others, the London counterpart of the PISM, Polski Instytut Badania Spraw Międzynarodowych, and its quarterly *Sprawy międzynarodowe*.

²¹ Or rather Maison-Laffite where the Institute of Literature (*Instytut Literacki*) was based, and its journal *Kultura*.

²² Rafał Stobiecki, 'Rosja i Rosjanie w polskiej myśli historycznej XIX i XX wieku', in *Katalog wzajemnych uprzedzeń Polaków i Rosjan*, ed. Andrzej de Lazari (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2006), 159–202.

the prominent historians Richard Breyer and Hans Roos,²³ he concluded that there was an ongoing mobilization in West Germany in order to attack the post-1945 alliance between Poland and the Soviet Union by highlighting the common ‘negative relationships’ of Poland and Germany with the Soviet Union during the interwar period.

Piawski provides us with a textbook example of the ideological framing of historical debate in the context of the Cold War. His practice of using official history as a legitimization of the current regime is set within transnational historiographical debate notably dominated by Western sources. Even though he does not quote Soviet historiography significantly, this discourse blending Poland with Germany, both as variations of ‘imperialism’ turning to fascism, echoes the Soviet approach at the time.

Another contributor was Jarosław Jurkiewicz, then Director of the Department for the History of International Relations at the PISM, who was preparing a book on the Oriental Pact of 1934.²⁴ This planned treaty, often described as the ‘Locarno of the East’, resulted from a French diplomatic proposal to agree a multilateral non-aggression pact in Eastern Europe securing the mutual recognition of post-WWI borders. Jurkiewicz makes a classic presentation of French ambitions linked to the Pact and German efforts to torpedo it, but without using Stalin-era vocabulary like ‘imperialism’.

The main target of Jurkiewicz’s text is neither Western countries nor Nazi Germany but, as in the case of the previous example, the pre-war Polish Republic. This becomes evident when he addresses the issue of national minorities in the Second Polish Republic, linking the admission of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations in 1934 with the League’s growing pressure on Poland to respect national minorities, especially in the east of the country. This echoes Soviet discourse on its role as defender of the repressed minorities of the Second Polish Republic, especially in the eastern part of the Second Polish Republic.

According to Jurkiewicz, the Polish rejection of the Pact is founded on three “fictions”: a fantasy of marginalizing the Soviet Union away from European affairs, of a possible normalization of relations with Nazi Ger-

²³ Richard Breyer, *Das Deutsche Reich und Polen 1932–1937: Außenpolitik und Volksgruppenfragen* (Würzburg: Holzner, 1955); Hans Roos, *Polen und Europa: Studien zur polnischen Außenpolitik 1931–1939* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1957).

²⁴ Jarosław Jurkiewicz, ‘Polska wobec planów Paktu Wschodniego 1934–1935’, in *Sesja naukowa* (see note 16), 65–117.

many, and a recurrent dream of Poland becoming a regional power.²⁵ Of course, all this resonates with the contemporary situation in Poland in 1959 and the promotion of collective border security under the Soviet umbrella. Jurkiewicz argues implicitly for the acceptance of the premise of the new borders and the new regime.

This connexion between ‘borders and regime’ was picked up by several commentators reacting to Jurkiewicz’s presentation. One such was Stanisław Zabięłło, a former diplomat and aristocrat working as a freelance historian at the PISM. Zabięłło addresses what in his eyes is the core problem: the anti-Soviet attitude of the Polish government. He proceeds to expand on his own analysis of that period, reminding his audience of the politics of the alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union under the Rapallo Treaty (1926) which had set out to unite the two anti-Versailles states. In Zabięłło’s eyes this was the core challenge for the Polish diplomacy, as Germany led a revisionist policy on the western border of Poland but at the same time:

“on the other side of that same Poland ... existed the real fact of momentarily hidden, held under lock-and-key but nonetheless continuously existing tendencies to complete the history of national unification for Belarus and Ukraine.”²⁶

Zabięłło emphasizes that the Polish government had a window of opportunity to build an equilibrium between the two bigger neighbours but its latent anti-Soviet attitude and the sense that the Soviet system would eventually collapse paved the way to “materializing eastern expansion plans under the flag of the so-called Jagiellonian idea”.²⁷ This is a rare mention of this part of Polish political heritage from pre-war political debate: Prometheism. The historian Andrzej Garlicki defines Prometheism as a

“conception of actions in favour of separating from Russia those territories inhabited by non-Russian peoples and in support of the creation of new states in those regions. These states in return, since they will feel threatened by Russia, will become natural allies for Poland, thereby increasing Poland’s weight in the region.”²⁸

²⁵ Ibid., 111–12.

²⁶ Quoted in Chudek, *Sesja naukowa* (see note 16), 155.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Andrzej Garlicki, *Siedem mitów Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2013), 62.

This Polish political tradition was in the Polish People's Republic equally an easy target and quite a tricky topic to deal with. The topic gained in attraction in the 1960s, with several studies made,²⁹ but in 1959 it still remained marginal, especially in the context of this kind of official historiography.

One up-and-coming researcher on the topic was Józef Lewandowski, then preparing his PhD on the Polish socialist conception of federalism, which was published in 1962.³⁰ In April 1959, he had just published two articles in the journal of the Political Military Academy on the topic of Prometheism, which he mentions in his comments during the PISM conference without giving their titles or any indication of their content. In his comment, Lewandowski deplores the fact that the Polish government tried to use its alliance with Nazi Germany to pursue its own agenda:

"It is not by chance that the most heated and extreme proponents of the Polish-German alliance are to be found among the supporters of the doctrine of Prometheism, or, frankly speaking, of eastern expansion: Adolf Bocheński, Włodzimierz Bączkowski, Stanisław Mackiewicz-Cat."³¹

The choice of names of course is not fortuitous either, since these were major figures of the Polish emigration. Lewandowski's criticism of Polish fantasies of regional influence in Eastern Europe became the leitmotif of his later book, *Imperialism of Weakness*, published in 1967.

In summary, these four interventions all communicated the legitimization of the current situation, more explicitly in relation to Germany and the western border and more covertly in relation to the post-war eastern Polish border. Within that validation of the contemporary situation, we can still discern four distinct dimensions in that chorus of criticism directed against the pre-war Polish government and its heirs. Piwarski stands for the legitimization of the current situation without really even mentioning the role of the Soviet Union, while Jurkiewicz underlines the

²⁹ Józef Lewandowski, *Imperializm słabości: kształtowanie się koncepcji polityki wschodniej państw 1921–1926* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1967); Sergiusz Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1971); Ryszard Torzecki, *Kwestia ukraińska w polityce III Rzeszy: 1933–1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1972).

³⁰ Józef Lewandowski, *Federalizm: Litwa i Białoruś w polityce obozu belwederskiego: XI 1918–IV 1920* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962).

³¹ Quoted in Chudek, *Sesja naukowa* (see note 16), 209. The latter had returned to Poland in 1956.

role of the Soviet Union in collective European security as a basis for Polish national security. In their comments, Zabięłło refers to the Ukrainians and the Belarusians as the driving force behind changing the borders, whereas Lewandowski assimilates Polish Prometheism with ‘imperialistic expansionism’. What all these attacks obliterate are the on-going debates in the Polish emigration, intensely so within *Kultura*, led by Jerzy Giedroyc, who was then striving for a change of approach towards Eastern Europe, which had started in the 1950s.

The conference expressed an implicit conformism on the part of historians in Poland to Soviet discourse on international history. By reviewing historiography on the subject, the participants set the norms for it and designated forbidden references, namely Western scholars and the publicists of the Polish emigration. The commentators on the other hand opened up the well-defined frame of the German question to sketch out a connection with the particular Polish past in Eastern Europe. This public and relatively well-publicized event captures the results of individual reflections and research and gives us an indication of the appropriation of new official norms. We now suggest lifting the curtain and taking a closer look at the path of Stanisław Zabięłło, starting on his career as a diplomat in the Second Polish Republic before joining the choir of official voices of the People’s Republic of Poland.

The Tribulations of Stanisław Zabięłło on the Discussion of the Eastern Border of Poland (1950–64)

Stanisław Zabięłło returned to Poland in August 1947 after having spent the war in occupied France and survived the deportations to Buchenwald (January 1943) and Bergen-Belsen (April 1945).³² He was arrested for his activities as a representative of the Polish state in France, helping Polish citizens to flee France.³³ He had undertaken this mission as a diplomat of the Second Polish Republic, for which he had also spent five years in the Soviet Union (1929–34) before working as a specialist on Eastern Europe in Warsaw until 1939. He was born in the region of Minsk into an old aristocratic family.

³² Stanisław Zabięłło, ‘Byłem w Dorze. Wspomnienia z obozu koncentracyjnego w 25 rocznicę wyzwolenia Buchenwaldu’, *Życie i Myśl* 20, 3 (1970): 75–85.

³³ Stanisław Zabięłło, *Na posterunku we Francji* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1967).

Despite this very inadequate profile, upon his return Stanisław Zabięłło soon started to do some independent work for the PISM in the context of the aforementioned shortage of experts on international relations. Even though he seemed primarily to have been recruited for his expertise on France, he soon started to work on the events of the war which had led to the contemporary Polish situation, both from a territorial and a political angle. He started to prepare the publication of documentation on Polish diplomacy during the Second Republic, in the form of an inventory, with a commentary, of sources available in Poland at the time.³⁴ His proposal was accompanied by a note on methodology.³⁵

Stanisław Zabięłło, familiar with the Soviet-style Marxist rhetoric he had witnessed in his pre-war professional functions, now needed to adopt it himself. On this occasion, he comprehensively demonstrated his ideological anchoring in the new Poland, emphasizing the need to develop an interpretation “according to the reasons of State of the People’s Poland” of these “tendentious” sources “defending the politics and the interests of propertied elites”. In his proposal, he listed a series of themes on the history of pre-1939 Polish foreign relations, organized chronologically and structured around major events in Polish foreign relations.

Some keywords and short comments gave some indication about the interpretation he would offer of these events. For instance, on the subject of the Treaty of Riga, he aimed to show that Polish claims were in fact determined by the Western powers.³⁶ On the Lithuanian question, Polish aristocratic expansionism was justified by “pseudo-historical slogans” and served the logic of an anti-Bolshevik “cordon sanitaire”. Generally speaking, Zabięłło presented Poland as a tool of French imperialism. Tensions with Czechoslovakia over the Teschen question are also an important element in understanding the anti-Soviet stance of the Polish government after 1918. Another phase in Polish foreign policy identified by Zabięłło is that of the years 1933–8, labelled “within the orbit of German imperialism”.³⁷ The shadow of Germany looms over all aspects of Polish diplo-

³⁴ Historia polskiej polityki zagranicznej i dyplomacji w latach 1918–1939 oraz chronologiczny spis wydawnictw związanych z polską polityką zagraniczną z lat 1917–1932. Opracowanie Stanisława Zabięłły (1949–1963), *Stosunki Polski z zagranicą w latach 1817–1939*, no date, 774, PISM, AAN.

³⁵ Notatka, *Stosunki Polski z zagranicą w latach 1817–1939*. Stanisław Zabięłło, 12.12.1950, 774, PISM, AAN.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

macy, including relations between Poland and Japan and Polish promethean anti-Soviet attempts at cooperation with that distant country.

His proposal was reviewed, in the manner typical of the period, both politically and academically.³⁸ His reviewers criticized him for not respecting his own chronological limits, not sufficiently integrating economic conditions into his analysis, and treating the question of Lithuania separately from the question of the rest of the Baltic. Alongside these remarks, on a more political level, some corrections of vocabulary were suggested: “German imperialism” instead of “German bourgeoisie” and the question of “Spisz and Orawa” instead of Teschen. As for the Ukrainian question, Zabięłło was advised to treat it by focusing on the attempts by Western powers to mobilize Ukrainian nationalism against Poland and the USSR. Stanisław Zabięłło revised his strategy and moved away from archival and press sources to the memoirs of the wars then gradually being published in France, Great Britain, the USA, and West Germany.³⁹ He started to translate some of them fully⁴⁰ and some in part. This collection of fragments of memoirs of WWII are the material on which he based his book on the Polish question during the war, published in 1958 by the PISM,⁴¹ the first of a longer series.

In this first book, quotations from Western politicians as well as from the Polish government-in-exile are organized chronologically and presented with very few comments. The use of memoirs allowed Zabięłło to integrate the political interpretations given by actors in the war, otherwise discredited for being ‘imperialist’ but nevertheless quoted directly in this book. This is a strategy appreciated in the context of censorship, when it offers this possibility of direct quotation.⁴² By the nature of the sources, the book has a lively tone, with politicians mixing their retrospective

³⁸ Zbigniew Romek, *Cenzura a nauka historyczna w Polsce 1944–1970* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2010), 175.

³⁹ Materiały do zbioru ‘Sprawa polska w okresie II wojny światowej w świetle pamiętników’. Opracował Stanisław Zabięłło. 1949–1963, Stosunki Polski z zagranicą. Sprawa polska w latach 1939–1945, no date, 816, PISM, AAN.

⁴⁰ Leon Noël, *Agresja niemiecka na Polskę* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1966); André François-Poncet, *Byłem ambasadorem w Berlinie: Wrzesień 1931 – październik 1938* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1968); Jules Laroche, *Polska lat 1926–1935: Wspomnienia ambasadora francuskiego* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1966); Anthony Eden, *Pamiętniki 1923–1938* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1970).

⁴¹ Stanisław Zabięłło, ed., *Sprawa polska podczas II wojny światowej w świetle pamiętników* (Warsaw: R.S.W. Prasa, 1958).

⁴² Romek, *Cenzura* (see note 38), 172.

interpretation into the facts of the story. It is a patchwork text, providing no global or explicit interpretation.

The reviews were overall very positive: Henryk Batowski, in the magazine *Przegląd Historyczny*,⁴³ considered it “interesting and useful” and even “exciting”, “fruitful”, and “convincing” in its methodology. In another review, published in the *Wiadomości Historyczne*,⁴⁴ Zabięłło’s book received a significant validation as a good source for secondary school teachers in Poland, because it provided direct access to sources and was parsimonious with comments. In all his books, Stanisław Zabięłło joined in the general attack on the contemporary Polish emigration as we have already seen in relation to the 1959 conference. He was accordingly criticized by the Polish intellectuals in emigration, notably his former colleague at the pre-war Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tytus Komarnicki.⁴⁵ The latter published on this occasion a letter that Stanisław Zabięłło sent him when returning to Poland in 1947.⁴⁶

Notwithstanding this great “scientific and political” success recognized by the management of the PISM in the person of Juliusz Hochfeld,⁴⁷ the books which followed on the issue of the diplomatic discussion on the fate of Poland during the war were published outside the PISM.⁴⁸ Indeed, it seems that this ambiguous mixture of historical documentation and personal memories did not meet the standards of the PISM in terms of official clarity. The PISM even published competing documentation in the same year as Zabięłło’s second publication.⁴⁹ The documentation follows

⁴³ Henryk Batowski, ‘“Sprawa polska podczas II wojny światowej w świetle pamiętników”’. Opracował Stanisław Zabięłło. Warszawa 1958. [recenzja], *Przegląd Historyczny* 50, 2 (1959): 404–7.

⁴⁴ Jerzy Myśliński, ‘Sprawa polska podczas II wojny światowej w świetle pamiętników’, *Wiadomości historyczne* 2, 1 (1959): 63–4.

⁴⁵ Rafał Stobiecki, ‘Rosja i Rosjanie w polskiej myśli historycznej XIX i XX wieku’, in *Katalog wzajemnych uprzedzeń Polaków i Rosjan*, ed. Andrzej de Lazari (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2006), 197.

⁴⁶ Tytus Komarnicki, ‘Rosja zawsze miała rację’, *Polemiki* 2, 4 (1965): 7–32.

⁴⁷ Protokół z zebrania ogólnego pracowników PISM – dnia 30 grudnia 1958, Sekretariat Dyrektora. Protokoły z zebrań pracowników PISM w latach 1958, 1962–1963, 1972, 1986, 1988, 30.12.1958, 104, PISM, AAN.

⁴⁸ Zabięłło, *Sprawa polska* (see note 41); Stanisław Zabięłło, *O rząd i granice: walka dyplomatyczna o sprawę polską w II wojnie światowej* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1964), reedited and augmented in 1965 and again in 1970; idem, *W kregu historii* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1970).

⁴⁹ Tadeusz Cieślak et al., eds., *Sprawa polska w czasie drugiej wojny światowej na arenie międzynarodowej: Zbiór dokumentów* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Naukowy, 1965).

a similar structure to Zabiello's publication but is framed in a classical academic style, introduced with texts written by historians of the PISM and the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Stanisław Zabiello's publications and departure from the PISM exemplify the relative diversity in the official historiography on Polish foreign relations. Zabiello was able to bring a reflection on the changed borders to a wider audience, blaming the government-in-exile for this situation. In using the quotes, he was able to offer a certain appropriation of the situation by other voices while staying within the framework of the legitimation of the new borders. The success evidenced by several re-editions of Zabiello's books indicate some public interest for the type of tone he adopted, even if the core message is ultimately relatively aligned with the official norm as expressed, for instance, at the PISM.

Embedded Revisions: Three Paths Towards a New Discourse on Polish Relations with Eastern Europe

Looking at how the issue of the history of Polish foreign relations with Eastern Europe was dealt with within the PISM, we have identified three approaches. The first one, dominant in the 1950s, consisted in the mere translation and import of Soviet discourse on these foreign relations. It was the product of the delicate situation in which the Polish state found itself after the war, with a strong dependency on the Soviet Union for its existence, both in terms of regime and borders. The second one, which emerged after 1956, consisted in the use of the frame of the German issue to raise questions about Poland's own past relations with Eastern Europe. This approach is also strongly embedded in Soviet convention but relies on original research or, in other words, results from an appropriation of that Soviet convention. The third, embodied by Stanisław Zabiello, used the authorized discourse of criticism of the Polish emigration to create some distance from the pre-war conception of foreign policy on Eastern Europe.

Officially sanctioned discourse moved from silence to a restrained and implicit reflection on the changes to the border. The topic did stay concealed under more prominent elements of public discourse. However, this slight change in approach should be noted and contrasted with sources from less official venues. The PISM appears to be an interesting focus of observation for the creation of the official historical narrative on the eastern border change as it had a strong conformist culture while still

involving a variety of individuals. Context like this can help with our study of how some intellectual traditions might be transmitted within such an institutional environment without leaving many traces in official publications.