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Images of the Western and Northern Territories in the Polish Film Chronicle in 1944-1948

Introduction

The media system that developed in post-war Poland, created by state decision-makers, served to promote ideological and political ideas with the intention of shaping the desired social attitudes among citizens. State institutions, such as the Ministry of Information and Propaganda, the Press Office, and the Film Commission of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), being responsible for the shape of a new model of state cinematography, were part of the newly emerging political system and, at the same time, components of its legitimisation (Sokół 1997: 145–147).

From 1944, one of the important propaganda tools used by the state authorities to legitimise their actions was the Polish Film Chronicle (*Polska Kronika Filmowa*, PKF) – a newsreel shown in Polish cinemas between 1944 and 1994. The PKF editorial board was established on 15 November 1944 as part of the Polish Army Film Studio located in Lublin. Its inauguration took place on 1 December 1944, and its first editors-in-chief were Jerzy Bossak and Ludwik Perski. Each episode was about 10 minutes long and covered from eight to ten topics, although there were also special editions which were longer. The new newsreel was released every week, and then twice a week between 1957 and 1980. It was shown in Polish cinemas before every single film show. The state authorities required the PKF editors to perform a propaganda role. Other important functions were to inform and entertain. In 1949, the PKF's audience was estimated to be five million viewers a week. The newsreel had a widely recognisable opening page and logo. Another of its hallmarks was the theme tune, composed by Władysław Szpilman.

The state monopoly on principles of ideology and propaganda resulted in the unification of the means and techniques of communication, as well as the

ideological content of the material shown. The PKF promoted a catalogue of communist values to which the recipients of political messages had to adhere. The newsreel became a place where social authority figures were created, desired images of political enemies and allies presented, stereotypes defined, and new political myths invented.

The purpose of this paper is to present the Polish Film Chronicle's propaganda film images of life in the Western and Northern Territories of post-war Poland. Issues relating to the PKF as an important channel for conveying propaganda messages have already been well researched. Such matters have been discussed in research studies carried out by political scientists, sociologists, historians and media experts (Cieśliński 2005, 2006, 2015, 2016; Jędrzejcki 2015, 2017, 2020). However, the research results published so far seem not to include findings concerning the images of the Western and Northern Territories presented in the PKF. The timeframe adopted here to discuss propaganda images of the Western and Northern Territories conveyed by the PKF was based on the following dates: 1944 as the initial date associated with the appearance of the first issue of the newly created newsreel in mobile cinemas; and 1948 as the final date marking the end of propaganda activities linked to the development and population of the Western and Northern Territories. An important event that was part of the political strategies adopted by the communists was the Recovered Territories Exhibition (*Wystawa Ziemi Odzyskanych*, WZO) held between 21 July and 31 October 1948 in the Four Dome Pavilion in Wrocław. The event was the culmination of a propaganda campaign conducted by the state authorities, which the party decision-makers decreed should end with the organisation of an exhibition.

The hypothesis adopted in this research was that in post-war Poland the PKF became an important component of the communication and propaganda activities undertaken by the state. Alongside the press and the radio, it was an important tool of political influence in the relationships between the state authorities and the public. The purpose of the study was to find answers to the following research questions: (1) What was the propaganda line adopted by the editors-in-chief of the PKF when creating images of the Western and Northern Territories? (2) How was the rebuilding of the urban centres in the Western and Northern Territories portrayed? (3) How was the settlement of the Western and Northern Territories shown? (4) What were the characteristics of an exemplary settler in the new lands as shown in the PKF? (5) How was the WZO portrayed in propaganda? These questions have significantly influenced the shape that this paper takes. Following the logic of the argument, the paper has a structure based on particular issues within the timeframe discussed above.

The sources on which it is based come from the Central Archives of Modern Records and the National Film Archive in Warsaw. Additionally, a number of monographs, group studies, press articles, and papers in scientific journals, dealing mainly with the Western and Northern Territories, were consulted.

Methodology

The nature of political science and administration as a scholarly discipline had an impact on the selection and use of tools in the study. The subject matter of the analysis was political messages containing information or promoting desirable social attitudes and providing opportunities to (1) influence individual people's lives, (2) introduce systemic solutions in the political and economic spheres, (3) perform duties or delegate responsibilities and uphold human and civil rights. The idiographic approach adopted has made it possible to reproduce a detailed picture of post-war political realities in Poland as shown in propaganda. Although the images of political communication included in the idiographic model of the cognition of social and political reality contained fragmented knowledge, it was of a functional nature, enabling the results of observation to be linked to the evaluation of political phenomena and processes occurring in Poland's Western and Northern Territories (Sokół, Żmigrodzki 2016: 481).

Before the research began, a list of thematic codes was made. The selection of appropriate keywords was partly based on pre-existing sets of categories used in political science and discussed in the subject literature. This list consists mainly of such codes as deportation, settlement, political mythology, and the development of the Western and Northern Territories. This procedure was essential for the initial analysis of the collected data and the subsequent interpretation of the documentation. It also proved beneficial for the final editing of the text, especially when checking the logical coherence and clarity of the content and when answering the research questions posed and verifying the formulated research hypotheses.

While preparing the article for publication, a method of systemic analysis proved useful. On this basis, the PKF was viewed as a political institution that was part of the state's propaganda system. The technique used in the text is termed media content analysis. This analysis referred to the propaganda content of political messages formulated by the PKF editorial team. Special attention was paid to the frequency of the key words appearing in the messages, which were components of a specific metalanguage used by the creators of the PKF's political communication. These key words usually referred to the

all-embracing ideology promoted by the state. They could also be seen as powerful propaganda slogans formulated by party decision-makers and referring to political, social and cultural life. The technique was used to identify specific idiolects in the PKF's political messages used to give a propaganda-filled description of social reality. The classification criterion for the analysis was the verbal messages used in the PKF. The media analysis of PKF content was conducted by examining verbal utterances in the newsreel (Pisarek 2007, 2008; Lisowska-Magdziarz 2016).

Visual propaganda relating to the Western and Northern Territories

In the post-war political reality, the main task of the Polish Army Film Studio "Czołówka," based in Lublin from 1944, was to define the spheres in which the newly established state authorities, supported by film-makers, could succeed in presenting an ideologised image of the world. In the early years of the newsreel, the editorial team was made up of film-makers who had graduated from the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography in Moscow. They successfully transposed to Poland a newsreel model developed by such renowned Soviet film-makers as Dziga Vertov.¹ Jerzy Toeplitz, a theoretician and expert on film issues, noted: "The Soviet Chronicle was always [...] not only a reporter, but it sought to encourage the active involvement of the viewer as well" (Toeplitz 1964: 52).

What should be noted is the tendency for the political messages conveyed by the Polish Film Chronicle to be formulated in such a way as to make viewers feel socially involved in its content. This kind of social involvement was supposed to be encouraged by commentator's casual speech, access to information about the actions taken by the new state authorities, and the spread of knowledge about the functioning of the military, so that the message conveyed by the new state authorities would have the desired effect, namely a broad social involvement. The Ministry of Information and Propaganda issued a number

¹ Dziga Vertov – born David Abelevich Kaufman (his name was later russified to Denis Arkadievich Kaufman) in 1896, died 1954. He was a Soviet scriptwriter, film director, and creator of the idea of newsreels. He was one of the most outstanding documentary film makers in cinema history. As early as the 1920s, Vertov proposed many innovative solutions to film-making in both his theoretical works and films. Vertov's theoretical concepts were related to the search for new film-making techniques and a new way of presenting and interpreting film themes. Vertov advocated that reality in a documentary film should be presented in a natural way. He considered it important to free the message in the documentary from excessive intentionality and to show everyday life as it really was (Taptykov 2018).

of circulars containing control instructions on how ministry representatives should interpret public response to the newsreel footage shown in the PKF. In Circular no. 24, dated 9 August 1944, minister Stefan Matuszewski wrote of the need “to study attitudes towards the films shown, to monitor the behaviour of the audience and their response to the film [...]. In the event of a negative response from viewers [...] critical or ironic comments, the Ministry should be notified at once” (AAN..., ref. no. 856, microfiche 26881). The purpose of the activities undertaken by the ministry was to organise political action on a large scale and make the ministry representatives in the field socially active.

How to weave the propaganda messages into the images of the Western and Northern Territories became an issue discussed in film circles. A good example of such a debate was the First Convention of Newsreel Employees held in Lodz in 1946. There, the creator and first editor-in-chief of the PKF, Jerzy Bossak, described the means developed to convey evocatively in the PKF the propaganda images of the life of people in Poland's Western and Northern Territories:

If the Recovered Territories are shown on screen with clear political implications and it is said that these lands must be populated by our peasants, workers and intelligentsia, and that the future of our country depends on the development of these areas – this is not a lie, but creative propaganda and an indication of what the most vital interests of the state are. [...] Nor is it a false move, but a conscious extraction of the truth from the lie, from the glaringly obvious pretence. Nor can showing our exemplary public utilities, nurseries, kindergartens, medical clinics, etc. be considered a distortion of reality. For exemplary centres are not meant to advertisements, but signposts. That's what they are supposed to be and that's what we have to strive for. (Bossak 1946: n.p.)

In order to convey the atmosphere of the political transformations taking place in Poland, the editors of the PKF tried to make the commentators emphasise key words with unambiguously positive ideological connotations. Commentaries were full of language calques such as ‘brotherly help’, ‘building the foundations of socialism’, ‘the indissolubility of the alliances of the fraternal states of people's democracy’, ‘Polish–Soviet friendship’, ‘Polish–Soviet alliance’, ‘the struggle for peace’, or ‘the struggle for social liberation’. According to Pisarek, such phrases were claimed to be a set of universal key words (Pisarek 2002: 10–11), but they could be also useful exclusively in Polish national culture. Michał Głowiński, on the other hand, regarded them as belonging to a group of words characteristic of three varieties of newspeak. He distinguished these types as persuasive-propagandistic, bureaucratic, and kitschy-ludic (Głowiński 1991: 28–30). The aforementioned universality resulted from the planned internationalisation of the propaganda message.

Minister of the Recovered Territories

The Minister of the Recovered Territories and Deputy Prime Minister, Władysław Gomułka, was usually shown in the PKF while visiting towns and villages in the Western and Northern Territories. While in this post, Gomułka was portrayed as an advocate of settlement of the issue of Poland's western border. Following US Secretary of State James Byrnes' speech given in Stuttgart on 6 September 1946, in which he condemned Stalinisation in Central Europe, the PKF editorial team showed coverage of a protest rally criticising the Secretary of State's speech. For many years this speech was a contentious issue in international relations between Poland and the West. Byrnes' questioning of the Polish borders on the Oder and Neisse and making their acceptance contingent on the holding of democratic elections aroused understandable opposition from the communists. In response, they organised a series of demonstrations in Polish cities. The video footage to be shown in the PKF was only three minutes long, of which two minutes were devoted to an excerpt from a speech by Gomułka, which was heard off-screen. Gomułka insisted that the communists would not discuss the shape of Poland's western border with the Western powers, and put forward arguments that Lower Silesia would form the westernmost area of the Slavic region (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 31/46, n.p.). To better illustrate the words of the Minister of Recovered Territories, during his speech, the PKF's editorial team reproduced a map with the Polish post-war borders and the area of Lower Silesia highlighted. The argument made by Gomułka that the Western and Northern Territories should be incorporated into Poland for good as the areas delineating the western border of the Slavic region was not well grounded. A more rational argument for leaving Lower Silesia as part of Poland was one made by Józef Cyrankiewicz in justifying the actual post-war geographical order.

As Minister of the Recovered Territories, Gomułka would visit western areas of Poland and participate in the demonstrations and festivities organised there. In 1946, both Bolesław Bierut and the minister were filmed during a traditional harvest festival in Opole. The newsreel showed them seated in the grandstand. The PKF commentator Andrzej Łapicki alluded to the speech made by the US Secretary of State: "This land belongs to Poland and will remain Polish forever. The Western Territories up to the Oder and Neisse are considered a condition for peace and the economic survival of Poland" (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 32/46, n.p.). As the minister for the region, Deputy Prime Minister Gomułka also participated in the celebrations of the Recovered Territories Week organised in 1947. The speech which was recorded then was given by Gomułka at the end of the ceremony. In the initial newsreel clips, the politician was filmed

from behind, and then viewers were shown his face in profile. The decision was made not to broadcast an excerpt of his speech off-screen. A commentator summarised the main ideas of the speech, placing special emphasis on Gomułka's strong response to all those who wanted to question Poland's right to the western borderlands. In his view, the industriousness of the settlers in the new lands was an element in determining the status of the new territories incorporated into Poland (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 18/47, n.p.).

Images of urban centres in the PKF's political communication

In 1946, the main social theme in the PKF's communications relating to the situation in the Western and Northern Territories was the displacement of the German population from those lands.

In the early post-war years the public were antagonised by references to the recent actions of the German occupiers in Poland. Portraying Germans as eternal enemies of the state was part of the general model of policy towards national minorities pursued by the new authorities.² As noted by Trembicka: "For Poland, the objectively essential task was to suppress any form of irredentism, so bearing this in mind the communist authorities accepted the provisions of the Potsdam conference on the expulsion of the German population from the Recovered Territories" (Trembicka 2014: 174). One of the fundamental goals set by the representatives of the state authorities was to create a new model of the state based on the most homogeneous nationality structure. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the new state policy with regard to national minorities brought about various forms of repression.

The first topic commented on in PKF no. 10/46 was a report on German people leaving Wrocław. The footage was three minutes and five seconds long. The narrative used in documentaries was very aggressive, as evidenced by the use of the imperative mood. The following calls could be heard: "The Germans are leaving Poland! Let them take their belongings and go to their homeland

² As has been noted by Olejnik: "Germany appeared to be an enemy on all levels: national (as an anti-Polish agent, currently exterminating the nation), ideological (as an embodiment of the most reactionary anti-democratic and anti-humanitarian ideas) and economic (as an exploiter of the country's living and dead resources). The assessment of Germany was not only associated with Nazism. It was stressed that the moral degradation of the German people had already begun before the war or even before Hitler came to power. The communists saw Nazism as yet another manifestation of the German imperialism and expansionism that was for centuries directed eastwards" (Olejnik 2003: 73).

where they belong” (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 3/46). This quote clearly reveals an antagonistic attitude. The displacement of Germans from the Western Territories resembled what Poles had experienced when they had to leave the Eastern Borderlands. The huge bundles carried away by the German people were meant to symbolise the property that had been looted by them as they left Wrocław.

A communication technique used in the footage discussed above was the showing of archival shots of Polish people being deported to death camps. The viewers' attention was drawn to the humane treatment of the Germans by the Polish authorities. A politically unambiguous commentary was complemented by clips showing trains well-stocked with food and hygiene products, on which the Germans were to leave Poland. The images of political communication featured the use of a particular kind of contrast in the selection of clips to illustrate the scenes described above. A dominant feature of the footage was the bipolarity of the message. The shots taken in the death camps focused on showing the living conditions in those camps in winter. These vivid images featured poorly dressed people and the sadness and depression visible on their faces. In both cases the leitmotif was the mythical theme of the road, matching the political situation being discussed. The bipolarity of the message also manifested itself in the portrayal of Germans. Those shown were usually young people (attractive girls) with features of the Aryan type. The propagandistic manner of reporting indicates that for the PKF's film-makers, the most important aspect of the political message was the implementation of the guidelines relating to the resettlement action. In most cases, the PKF editorial team chose to present the resettlement scenes as idyllic images. The message of the newsreel was dominated by a fabricated image of generous Poles who let the Germans leave Poland in humane conditions (Dziurok, Madajczyk, Rosenbaum 2016: 38–381).

It should be mentioned that on 25 June 1945, Edward Ochab, the then chief representative for the Recovered Territories, set out guidelines regarding the displacement of the Germans from the Western and Northern Territories. The document was addressed to the governors administering the Silesian, Gdańsk and Pomeranian provinces. In the document, Ochab mentioned that the administration's efforts urging the Germans to leave were supposed to lead to 'voluntary departures'. The local administration subordinate to the agencies of the Ministry of Recovered Territories was eager to issue documents facilitating mass departures for the Germans. A common desire to leave the Western and Northern Territories resulted from the Germans' awareness that the already approved territorial changes had become irreversible and displacement inevitable (Mordawski 2015: 137–138).

Communication illustrating the displacement of Germans from the Western and Northern Territories was part of an ongoing propaganda campaign intended to highlight the organisational efficiency of the Polish administration on the one hand, and its resoluteness and consistency in implementing Joseph Stalin's decisions on the other. PKF no. 23/46 showed the deportation of Germans to the British occupation zone. Viewers could see well-stocked sanitary carriages in which German newborn babies were taken care of before being deported with the adults. As in the previous footage, the German population was shown well prepared for transport, all of the people wearing new, neat clothes (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 26/46, n.p.). The commentator Andrzej Łapicki read:

The Germans are leaving the Western Territories, making room for the Polish settlers from the destroyed central areas and from the East. Despite the lies spread by German propaganda and its Western European friends, we are resettling them in accordance with international obligations, they are being given food and sanitary assistance for their onward journey. We are not driven by revenge, although this feeling would be more than justified given the wrongs we have suffered not only at the hands of the Gestapo, but also the German civilian population. (ibid.)

The displacement of Germans from the Western and Northern Territories as presented in the PKF was consistent with the principles of the displacement policy adopted by the Ministry of Recovered Territories. The head of the ministry, Władysław Gomułka, responsible for the displacement of Germans, appointed government representatives in individual counties. Important issues which were stressed in the document published at the same time included matters concerning the humane treatment of the Germans leaving Poland. Displacement could only take place in daylight and in the presence of the authorised officials representing the administrative authorities. Gomułka warned that any lack of discipline on the part of Poles towards Germans leaving Poland should be punished most severely (Mordawski 2015: 207–208).

The communicated messages fit the general model of ethnic policy modelled on Stalinist ideas. As pointed out by Eugeniusz Mironowicz:

In 1945, the national rhetoric became an essential part of communist propaganda in Poland. A nationally homogeneous post-war Poland was supposed to stand in contrast to a multinational and torn by internal conflicts Second Republic of Poland. In this context, talking about national minorities in terms of current politics contradicted the doctrine of the national state [...]. The displacement of the German population [...] was quite widely approved of. (Mironowicz 2000: 32–33)

In 1946, the communication agenda of the Polish Film Chronicle included mentions of the cohabitation of new settlers and the native population of the Western and Northern Territories. The PKF cameramen filmed a 'spontaneous' rally in one of the villages on the Oder river. The footage was meant to stress the local people's attachment to their native language and intangible cultural artefacts. By way of illustration, they showed village women in folk costumes typical of the Oder region taking part in a demonstration (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 36/46). The cohabitation of people of different origins did not look the same in all parts of the Western Territories. In Upper Silesia, where there was a mix of Polish Silesians and Germans as well as people resettled from the Eastern Borderlands, everyone saw their future as equally uncertain, yet they lived together quite peacefully. The situation was quite similar in the areas adjacent to Wrocław where a very small German minority remained. On the other hand, in Western Pomerania, near Szczecin and especially on the coast, where resettlers arrived from central and north-eastern Poland, the cultural differences between them and the natives were so great that the dominant emotion of the early years was mutual distrust. The state authorities did their best to ensure normal living conditions in the areas acquired after the war. This was extremely difficult to achieve in the Western and Northern Territories. Beata Halicka is right to claim in one of her publications that the settlers from the Eastern Borderlands were characterised by a duality of attitudes towards the German population living along the Oder. The suffering experienced by Poles living in the Eastern Borderlands at the hand of the Soviets was far greater than that inflicted by the German occupiers. They were also expelled from their lands in the Borderlands. Therefore, they were more sympathetic towards the Germans who were forced to leave their homes. Those displaced to the Western and Northern Territories from the areas that had been incorporated into the Third Reich (the former General Government) took a completely different attitude. This was caused by the active involvement of the population of the General Government in actions against the Nazis, while others spent the period of occupation either as prisoners in death camps or as forced labourers. Such experiences resulted in a clearly negative attitude towards the German population. After the Second World War, Poles held to the belief and hope that Germany must atone for the acts committed by Nazi criminals. This belief made the new settlers in the Western and Northern Territories support the idea of the collective guilt of the German people (Halicka 2015: 206).

By controlling the propaganda images the state reaped concrete benefits, such as the remodelling of the mentality of society, which began to exhibit characteristics of a close-knit community living under coercion in conditions

of political terror. There was a progressive vassalisation of the individual, deprived of human and civil rights, left without protection against the oppression of the state machine and its functionaries (Marczewska-Rytko, Olszewski 2011: 408; Popper 1993: 17ff.).

As has already been mentioned, one of the important aspects shaping the myth of the Western and Northern Territories was the consistent rebuilding and resettling of the new areas incorporated into Poland. In the early post-war years, it was workers who played a significant role in the development of the newly incorporated areas, which was related to the territorial changes in Poland after 1945. In the newsreel, the workers were portrayed as those who had brought the cities back to life. The image of the workers that was created depicted them as the new administrators of the urban centres in the Recovered Territories. Janusz Jasiński pointed out that:

After 1945, the term *Ziemie Odzyskane* (Recovered Territories) referred to those territories that had belonged to the Third Reich before 1939 and to the Free City of Danzig, and which were allocated to Poland as a result of the decisions made in Potsdam. Until 1989, no one considered this term disrespectful or let alone contemptuous. It was just used as a new, yet accurate name in a specific historical period. (Jasiński 2006: 15)

According to Osękowski:

The incorporation of the eastern German territories into Poland meant that the Polish state had to face a new social and economic reality. The area which used to be part of Germany and an integral part of her economy for several hundred years was now part of Poland. The areas that had been taken over by Poland were now part of a state with different political and economic systems. In the post-war years, there were significant differences between the Recovered Territories and other parts of the country, concerning both economic matters and various social problems. This determined the specific nature of the areas incorporated into Poland and the new German–Polish borderland. Over the years, these differences blurred and a unified state organism began taking shape. (Osękowski 2006: 20–21)

Groups of workers in these areas were meant to play an important role by helping Polish people get used to the new territorial shape of the country. Workers rebuilding Wrocław as the new, unofficial capital of the new Western Territories were to reinforce in the public perception the belief that the loss of the Eastern Borderlands³ should quickly be forgotten and the notion of the Re-

³ As Eleonora Kirwiel, an expert on history and political and social life in the Eastern Borderlands, pointed out: “The area of the North-Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Po-

covered Territories should work its way into the collective consciousness. This view of history was determined by both internal and external factors, namely the approval of the new shape of the frontier by Western states and the eradication of West German territorial revisionism (2006: 27–28).

A political memorandum referring to the shape of the new territory of Poland comprising areas in the basins of the Oder and the Vistula served as a means to legitimise the measures taken by the TRJN (the Provisional Government of National Unity). The history of Poland began to be associated with the motherland located on the Oder and Neisse rivers, which had been lost as a result of German rule. Attention was drawn to Poland's full rights to the Recovered Territories and to politics based on the idea of a Poland going back to the times of the Piast dynasty (*Postulaty Polski* 1970: 10). Commentaries and films shown in the PKF concerning the role of the "working class" in rebuilding Wrocław and restoring normal life in the Recovered Territories can be grouped as follows: 1) rebuilding of the historical part of Wrocław, 2) development of industry in Wrocław, and 3) the role of the 'working class' in the development of the Western Territories as shown at the Recovered Territories Exhibition.

PKF no. 12, shown in Polish cinemas as early as 1945, included footage showing Wrocław following its liberation by the Soviet army on 6 May 1945. There were shots taken just after the liberation of the city. That this was the case could be deduced from the fact that the towers of St. Mary Magdalene Church, which were blown up by the Soviet army soon after the liberation, were still completely intact. To reinforce the propaganda message, the footage included many panoramic shots showing a general, bird's eye perspective. Their purpose was to show the extent of the city's destruction. To legitimise Poland's new territorial gains and to point to the historical Polishness of Wrocław, the messages abounded with expressions referring to the history of Poland from the period of the Silesian Piast dynasty and the then undisputed Polishness of Wrocław: "Wrocław, the ancient capital of the Silesian Piast dynasty, the Polish Wrocław, the bosom of the fatherland, we will sweep away the traces of German rule, we will rebuild the Polish Wrocław" (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 12/45, n.p.).

In the early post-war years, there seemed to be a need to rewrite the history of Wrocław in such a way as to add a Polish touch, so that the foreign, post-German city would appear more familiar to the settlers. The newsreel

land in the inter-war period consisted of the then Vilnius and Novgorod Voivodeships. These lands bordered the Białystok Voivodeship to the west, the Polesie Voivodeship to the south, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the east, and Lithuania and Latvia to the north" (Kirwiel 2011: 11).

producers contributed significantly to the creation of the myth of Polish Wrocław by building the Polish tradition of the city, and skilfully combining events from Polish history with the present of Wrocław. They were acting here as engineers of social collective memory, and the workers' activities shown in the PKF offered a kind of antidote to the sense of homelessness and loss of roots common among borderlanders. The image of Wrocław's past created for the needs of the PKF showed features of a city to which borderlanders could come back as Poles, to discover the nation's history and traditions and Polishness (Thum 2005: 257–258). Propaganda actions were justified on the basis of assumptions specific to the Polish Western school of thought which was popular in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century. After the war, propaganda activities were based on assumptions originating from this school of thought, and identified with groups closely associated with National Democracy and its supporters (Maj 2010). The idea of incorporating the Western and Northern Territories into Poland was based mainly on the theoretical works of scholars in Poznań. Post-war propaganda activities targeting the Western and Northern Territories intensified after 1944, when the Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland were completely lost. The new state authorities justified the incorporation of the Western and Northern Territories into Poland using an argument based on the national and class character of the proposed changes, including the development of numerous workers' centres in the new areas (Domke 2010: 47–48).

Just as in the case of the Polish capital, after the liberation of Wrocław, PKF viewers could see reconstruction works and clearing of rubble going on in various parts of the city. PKF no. 41/46 mentioned the reconstruction and raising of the suspension bridge over the Oder, which was called the Grunwald Bridge to emphasise the Polishness of the city and allude to the victory of Władysław Jagiełło over the forces of the Teutonic Order at the Battle of Grunwald on 15 July 1410. The film depicted the role of two social groups – the intelligentsia (engineers) and the working class – in the rebuilding of Wrocław (AFN..., KR, no. 41/36, n.p.). In addition to the rebuilding of the city's historic sites, one could see the reopening of factories that had been destroyed by the Germans. There were also shots showing the reconstruction of the rail coach factory and workers performing their tasks. The clips kept changing like kaleidoscopic images. To highlight the contribution of Polish workers to the construction of coal wagons, each of them was decorated with the national emblem of Poland. The reports showed the development of the factory and the willingness of the workers in the Recovered Territories, who were at the forefront of all others, to develop the national economy. Propagandistic purposes were served by the

use of vocabulary usually associated with actions on the war front: “victorious battle on the front of the economic recovery, the first success of the Three-Year Plan” (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 5/46, n.p.).

A newsreel film showing the development of the machine tool factory in Wrocław was made in much the same vein. The footage opens with photographs of the factory destroyed in 1946 followed by images of people at work in the newly rebuilt production halls. Then a profile of Eugeniusz Kołdra, a super-efficient worker, was presented. A newsreel commentator praised the worker’s professional qualifications: “Foreman Eugeniusz Kołdra has been working in the profession for thirty years. Today, he holds a managerial position and does an excellent job. New Poland needs professionals and knows how to appreciate their work and merits” (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 44/46, n.p.). For the authors of PKF’s political messages, the development of heavy and metallurgical industry was tied to the running of factories and other companies in the Western and Northern Territories. The PKF editorial team joined in a campaign to melt down scrap metal from war machines which were still lying on battlegrounds. The state authorities believed that such a way of acquiring metal would increase the efficiency of the metallurgical industry. A commentator read that the scale of heavy industry in Poland was contingent on the good development of the Western and Northern Territories: “Obviously, the basic condition for such development is the proper development of the Western Territories, where there are huge metallurgical factories” (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 40/46, n.p.).

A component that played an important role in the growth of industry in the Recovered Territories was inland shipping. The development of this area of the economy was closely tied to the proximity of the Oder, which was an important waterway for transporting goods. To provide a better understanding of the situation, newsreel viewers were shown technical innovations such as river locks used by workers to improve water transport. To make the argument about the development of the Recovered Territories more believable, newsreel commentaries included statistics proving the power of inland shipping: “Its reconstruction was completed in a record time of three months, during which six tugboats, seven barges, three dredgers, and three motorboats were also renovated. The shipyard employs only Poles” (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 43/46, n.p.).

Examples selected from the newsreels reporting on the situation in the Western and Northern Territories and the significant contribution made by workers prove that the early years after the end of the Second World War were difficult for the new authorities in terms of building a positive image of society. In Wrocław, the streets had to be cleaned up and social life had to be organised to a basic degree. It was necessary that people should approve of the new state

authorities, which was the first step in consolidating the position of the communist government in the new lands. In the government's political communication, Wrocław was to be shown as the most important urban centre of the Western and Northern Territories. With the active participation of citizens, it was to become the living image of victory in the war against Germany. Finally, it was to serve as an example of a proper model of urban development in these areas and become a symbol of the achievements of the communist authorities (Malicka 2012: 135). It should be noted that many Wrocław residents, especially those who had come from the Eastern Borderlands after the Second World War, emphasised the uniqueness of the thousand-year-old city on the Oder river. This sentimental attitude towards the city and priceless monuments that had survived the ravages of the war meant that Wrocław, not without reason, began to be called Little Lwów (Lviv), when the Lwów *Polonica* arrived there together with the repatriates (Kunicki, Ławecki 2015: 78).

Images of the settlers in the Western and Northern Territories

In the media coverage, there appeared to be two main threads concerning the peasantry in the Western and Northern Territories: (1) resettlement from the Eastern Borderlands to the Western and Northern Territories, and (2) harvest-time with the army's participation. What image of the Western and Northern Territories was presented in the media was determined by state agencies such as the Ministry of Information and Propaganda. The ministry took steps to carry out a propaganda campaign in the mass media of the time. In the surviving ministerial documents concerning this campaign we find much information about the attempts of the state authorities to influence the media that were subordinate to them. For instance, these documents show that there were calls to find new topics to discuss in the media. These included, but were not limited to: "(1) Providing assistance and care for repatriates, (2) Matters relevant to the Recovered Territories" (AAN, ref. no. 27/VIII/MIIP, microfiche 58, p. 73). The ministry recommended actions involving collaboration between representatives of the PKF and the State Repatriation Offices and the promotion of the actions of the Support Committees for repatriates from the USSR (*ibid.*).

The measures taken by the ministry were closely related to the political situation at the time and the uncertain status of the Western and Northern Territories. The state authorities planned a quick and complete replacement of the German population and the incorporation of the native population of the Western Territories – the autochthons – into the Polish population. On

starting the resettlement process, the post-war Polish authorities did not wait for international decisions regarding the status of the new lands. They chose to adopt a *fait accompli* policy. The presence of settlers coming from the Eastern Borderlands in the once German lands was supposed to testify to the Polishness of these lands and their incorporation into the territorial composition of post-war Poland (2019: 66).

PKF no. 18/45 included an account of the resettlement process. A camera team filmed the deserted villages near Olsztyn. Władysław Hańcza, a commentator, read:

The Western Territories await the Polish settler. Wheat fields, fish farms, farmsteads, agricultural machinery. A free, yet still unoccupied country is waiting for a proprietor. More and more Poles who used to live across the Bug earn a living in the regained territories. These lands, torn away from the enemy, will be revived by a large stream of Polishness. (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 18/66)

The newsreel footage was made so as to create an image of a land abounding in good fertile soils and farmsteads, ready for immediate habitation and use, in the minds of peasants who were to be the future farmers in the newly acquired territories. The commentator listed the qualities that the Western and Northern Territories possessed. Because of their attachment to the land, peasants who were to populate the areas regained from the Germans were expected to impart an element of Polishness to them. Propaganda footage produced by the PKF team was dominated by the emptiness permeating the villages (deserted houses, barns, abandoned cartloads of potatoes). In the final shots, however, we can see the mass influx of newcomers from across the Bug, many of whom considered the Western and Northern Territories a new “promised land”. A mass exodus, an atmosphere associated with reaching the promised land, which were the main topics of the PKF productions, resembled mythical and biblical stories based on the archetypal motif of journey, whose participants experienced various plagues and misfortunes and had to endure hardship and suffering (Odysseus’ return home to Ithaca, the Israelites’ journey to the Promised Land). The history of the Western and Northern Territories also fitted into the theme of wandering and the mythical pattern of cyclical repetitions: degradation, world destruction, and a new order of rebirth (Tumolska 2007: 60ff.). It should be noted that the changes and social migrations in the aftermath of the Second World War forced people coming from across the Bug to renounce completely the social ties that they had built over the years. Although the new residents of the Western and Northern Territories might set off on a journey with neighbours whom they knew very well or settle down in neighbouring farms, the divided and scattered social groups

were forced to change their ingrained understanding of such concepts as Poland and Polishness and reconstruct them on completely different and new foundations (Bock-Matuszyk, Kucharski 2017: 19).

Newsreel films featuring settlement in the Western and Northern Territories were dominated by a carefully constructed image of a typical settler, reinforced by evocative shots such as staged scenes showing everyday village life, men fencing off a new farm, families feeding livestock in clean, spacious and well-kept yards, an old woman churning butter, or fishermen repairing their nets after a (no doubt successful) catch. An image of everyday life returning to normal was expected to ensure stability and security (AFN..., KR, no. 20/47, n.p.). In the propaganda-driven footage, the people of Warmia and Mazury were portrayed as resourceful and hard-working farmers. The scheme adopted was part of the overall positive image of Warmia and Mazury, depicted as a region inhabited by people who were attached to the land and tradition, hardworking, honest, appreciative of peace and work, and above all guardians of the new, but not yet fully settled, borders of the Republic of Poland (Marczak 2012: 40).

The reality of those times was significantly different from the images shown in the propaganda films. The Poland of 1945 was said to be a country of the migration of peoples. Around 1.5 million people changed their place of residence. Trains full of repatriates left for the Western and Northern Territories. In the early days, the property that had been left by more than two million Germans abandoning towns and villages was taken over by around 800,000 Poles. The takeover of the properties that used to belong to Germans was far from perfect; it happened that flats and houses were taken without any official consent, which over time was sanctioned by the authorities. There was no shortage of looters, who took away the goods left behind by the Germans with impunity. In the 1940s, a quarter of Poles changed their place of residence.

Another piece of footage showed how resettlement was proceeding in Lower Silesia. The main scenes showed efficiently coordinated activities, or carts with the resettlers' possessions going one after another. Notable was a scene involving an official of the State Repatriation Office handing over the keys to former German farms to the settlers. There were many scenes depicting the settling of new homes, unpacking of the carts, caring for animals, and preparation of former German agricultural machines for use in harvesting. Władysław Hańcza read:

Settlers are taken from assembly points to settlement sites of their own choice where local branches of the State Repatriation Office, or alternatively public administration offices, hand them over the keys to previously secured houses and workshops. Farms that had until recently been abandoned began to hum with activity again. New settlers easily get used to new types of agricultural machinery. (ibid.)

The images and film commentary were meant to testify to the administrative efficiency of the Polish authorities. The recorded images showed symbols of Polishness, of attachment to the land: fields of grain, or a wooden cross. A shot of the Oder and a Polish border pole crowned with the image of an eagle served as evidence of the Polishness of the western areas. The footage was taken with the intention of showing that the promises made to the nation by the state had been fulfilled: the Recovered Territories were to be safe, developing, friendly to settlers, and equipped with modern agricultural machinery (Drygalski, Kwaśniewski 1992: 260–261).

For small farmers from central Poland, a move to the Western and Northern Territories provided an opportunity for significant social advancement. From small farms and thatched cottages, they moved to well-maintained brick houses and took over farms of several dozen hectares. The price that they had to pay was the lack of security and stability. Years after the war ended, people living in the Western Territories still believed that the land taken over from the Germans would one day have to be returned. In practice, this also meant that the peasants did not care much about the buildings and machines they had taken over. A decision to move west carried a serious risk. Shortly after liberation, the Recovered Territories were swarming with looters plundering former German towns. To ensure a minimum level of security, the lands along the frontier were settled by former soldiers. In addition, the Youth Organisation of the Workers' University Association sent its activists to protect the border areas. The PKF reported:

A symbolic mounting of the guard by activists of the Workers' University Association has taken place at a border station. Soldiers of the border protection force are reporting after having done their guard duty. As is well known, along the entire length of our western borders, border protection troops do guard duty to effectively protect the frontier and prevent the German element from penetrating the Recovered Territories. (AFN..., KR, no. 2/46, n.p.)

The state authorities knew all too well how difficult it was to promote a positive image of the Recovered Territories in the media. Therefore, the Ministry of Information and Propaganda prepared detailed guidelines encouraging settlement in the western regions of the country, and the official documents stated that "The keeping and developing of the Recovered Territories is a matter of paramount importance to the state. The settlement process comes to the forefront of the current problems. To ensure our programme is completed it is necessary that as many Poles as possible should settle in the Western Territories" (AAN, ref. no. 27/VIII/MIIP, microfiche 58, p. 76).

PKF's reports relating to the Western and Northern Territories also contained information about harvesting in those areas. In a film from 1945, it was reported that the first harvest in free Poland had begun. The footage showed peasants working in fertile and productive rye fields (AFN, KR, no. 21/45). A PKF commentator compared the first harvest and peasants' work to a secondary school graduation exam (*matura*): "The first harvest in reborn Poland is like a maturity exam for a nation that has taken power into its own hands and is building its homeland following the principles of democracy and social justice" (ibid.). Just as the graduation exam is a crucial stage in a young person's life, the harvest was considered a crucial stage in the functioning of the new state reborn after the Second World War. Peasants were compared to school graduates, on whose dedication the state's food and farming policy depended. The message communicated to the public also contained key words characteristic of the new political system and state, referring to the idea of universal people's democracy. Characteristic lexemes used to describe the reported social situation included: "reborn Poland, democracy, social justice, the great work of rebuilding the country" (ibid.).

Knowing that the Western Territories were largely uninhabited, the state authorities sent military units to help local peasants with the harvest. PKF no. 22/45 showed footage featuring soldiers doing harvesting work. The images captured by the PKF cameramen, using both long shots and close-ups, showed soldiers working in the field, reaping rye and operating modern agricultural machines. The commentator Władysław Hańcza read: "The Polish soldier is replacing his machine gun with a scythe and taking a driver's seat in an agricultural machine. A specially formed economic-agricultural division is harvesting crops in the most sparsely populated West Pomeranian counties" (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 22/45). The footage showing the harvest was dominated by long shots. Naturally, this propaganda film style was intended to show the vastness of arable lands. An interesting symbolic shot focused on hay sheaves and rifles placed next to them. Silesian mines loomed in the distance. The makers of a film titled *Military Ploughing and Sowing* contained in PKF no. 17/47 adopted a similar style. It showed soldiers turning fields into arable land for future settlers. "[...] In the military estates that will later be parcelled out between settlers, the time of ploughing and sowing has just begun. The settlers who are expected here in April and May will find the land cultivated and ready to welcome new farmers" (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 7/47). Additionally, emphasis was placed on measures to improve agricultural mechanisation in the Western and Northern Territories. PKF no. 12/46 features newly delivered tractors donated by UNRRA. In the commentary, the announcer described the task of

the tractor drivers operating the new machines in the Western and Northern Territories as “regaining the west” (AFN..., KR, no. 12/46, n.p.).

The footage shown exhibited elements of Christian Metz’s theory of media syntagmatics. Metz viewed film as a set of consecutive segments. The shot was the basic unit, and a sequence comprised more complex units whose components were usually a set of shots forming a coherent narrative unit (Ollivier 2010: 81). In reports communicating images of agriculture in the Recovered Territories, we can find different narrative styles describing the model of agrarian culture in those regions. The state authorities supported the existence of large-scale farms. They paid attention to the proper economic development of the new lands. This can be confirmed by numerous shots of mechanised farms. Due to their dedication to the development of the Recovered Territories, the people living there were perceived, alongside the workers, as a social vanguard enabling the state’s economic growth.

In its reports on military settlement, the newsreel showed images of life in villages inhabited solely by former military personnel. Life in the village of Platerowo, so named after the patroness of the Emilia Plater Independent Women’s Battalion of the First Polish Army, was reported in the form of *miczałki* (short stories about trivial events). The footage showed women farmers working in the fields, and the uniforms in which they performed the work signified their affiliation to the army. The way in which the shots were taken suggests that these were staged shots intended to show how life was returning to normal in the Recovered Territories. The jocular character of the footage was complemented by images of women pushing a hand plough and an irreverent comment from the narrator: “This village will forever remain a symbol of the most beautiful virtues of a Polish woman” (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 36/46, n.p.).

Newsreel footage clearly revealed the party decision-makers’ desire to create a certain profile of a new settler in the Recovered Territories – that of a former soldier. This decision was driven by the political priorities of the government of the time (Sękowski 1993: 59–61). The soldiers who had been sent to settle in the Recovered Territories had specific political tasks to perform: they were to guard the borders and be ready to repel any attack from Germany. Special instructors were assigned to new settlers to help them adapt and settle in the new lands. Independently of the Citizens’ Militia posts that had already been set up there, special civil guard units were established in local communities. The guards were often recruited from repatriated soldiers (*ibid.*). The state authorities wanted the Recovered Territories to be settled as quickly as possible. Therefore, General Karol Świerczewski issued an order to each army

unit requiring them to take measures to settle from a dozen to several tens of families (*ibid.*).

Summing up our discussion of the image of peasant farmers in the Recovered Territories, it should be said that state propaganda created consistent images of a mythical social mission. The peasants were not only supposed to form the vanguard and foundation of the new post-war society, but to be the “bastion of Polishness” as well. Everyday farm jobs as portrayed in political messages were elevated to the status of a social mission. Farm work and resettlement actions were compared to fighting, with the concept of “fighting on the reconstruction front” being juxtaposed with armed struggle. The commentaries heard in the PKF were characterised by bombastic rhetoric and the commentators’ distinctive tone of voice. The phraseology used in the propaganda messages exhibited simplicity of style. Slogans were usually simple and politically unambiguous, intended to reinforce viewers’ belief in the Polishness of the Recovered Territories and provide a sense of security and prosperity that would encourage newcomers from across the Bug river to settle in the new Polish territories (Tyszkiewicz 1995: 115).

The Recovered Territories Exhibition

The state-organised Recovered Territories Exhibition was a culmination of the propaganda activities undertaken by politicians to encourage settlement in the Western and Northern Territories (Tyszkiewicz 1997: *passim*). The exhibition concepts were subject to change. In its initial stage, the project was titled “The Recovered Territories Two Years After the War”. The importance of the exhibition was evidenced by the fact that it was an outcome of interdepartmental collaboration. The government, in particular the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Information and Propaganda, and the Ministry of Recovered Territories, was responsible for the content of the propaganda presented to the public. The opening of the exhibition was originally scheduled for 1947, but due to organisational delays it was postponed to 1948. As Berlin was being blockaded by Soviet troops, comments of an anti-imperialist nature appeared; however, the main focus of the exhibition was on the history of the Recovered Territories, the achievements of people’s Poland associated with the development of the new lands, and the close connection of the new areas with the “motherland” (Domke: 2010: 65).

The PKF film reports on the WZO usually featured the industrial exhibition halls. The dominance of this type of footage was intended to confirm the

dynamic development of the new lands, which would not have taken place without the prominent participation of the workers. There were stands dedicated to the main industries, for example, a textile stand manned by seamstresses. Andrzej Łapicki read: "Seamstresses in the Textile Industry Pavilion are very popular. Everybody wants to see how clothing fabric is manufactured" (AFN..., ref. no. KR, no. 39/48, n.p.). The exhibition was impressive not only because of its size, but also because of the ludic nature of some of the displays. PKF no. 35/48 showed a model of a coal gangway whose purpose was to illustrate the operation of a Silesian mine. To make the image look more realistic, the stand was hosted by miners. The propaganda message was that the incorporated lands were inseparably bound to Poland and needed to remain within the borders of a post-war Polish state with its developing industry and natural resources. In sum, the main purpose of the Recovered Territories Exhibition was to reinforce the public belief that the Recovered Territories would remain Polish forever. It was an opportunity to showcase the current state of industrial reconstruction in the territories. It also served as a propaganda tool by showing Poland's growing dependency on the policy pursued by an external sovereign power, the USSR (Domke 2010: 166–167).

Conclusion

The political messages associated with images of the Western and Northern Territories shown in the PKF between 1944 and 1948 can be divided into several thematic subgroups determined by the political situation in those lands at the time. In the years 1944–1945, the main issue presented in the PKF was the displacement of the German population and problems related to the socialisation of the incoming population with the native inhabitants of the Western and Northern Territories. Between 1945 and 1946, the PKF consistently reported on the propaganda campaign involving clearing Wrocław of rubble and restoring the normal functioning of the city institutions. Further, a distinctive feature of the years 1946–1947 was a propaganda campaign to encourage people displaced from east of the Bug to settle in the new lands. The year 1948, chosen as the closing year of the present discussion, coincided with the end of the propaganda campaign focusing on the settlement of new lands. A culmination of the persistent propaganda campaign was the Recovered Territories Exhibition held at the Pavilion of the Four Domes in Wrocław.

Images used by the PKF for political communication created a certain media image of the Western and Northern Territories in Poland and contained

a whole set of meanings, values and principles relevant to media and political communication. The images of the Western and Northern Territories presented by the PKF editorial team were part of a political communication process whose final effect was to legitimise the post-war actions taken by the state authorities. The incorporation of new territories into the “Motherland” was meant to signify the cohesion of the nation and the state. The glorification of historical events related to the Western and Northern Territories and the recollection of them in the PKF, together with the construction of a new symbolic and cultural order, carried a whiff of political intentionality and trivial indoctrination. The constant reference to the myth of Piast Poland with regard to the Western and Northern Territories had a compensatory function after the loss of the Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland. Themes exploited by the PKF to create the desired image of the Western and Northern Territories contained elements of the anti-war, anti-German, patriotic, national and popular propaganda so desired by the state authorities. The content of the PKF was conducive to the Polonisation of the memory of the end of the war and its consequences, and the magnification of the achievements of the glorious tradition of the Polish nation.

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Keywords: Western and Northern Territories, Polish Film Chronicle, Władysław Gomułka, film, propaganda

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to present the images created for political communication by the editorial team of the Polish Film Chronicle (PKF), an important means of transmission of political content. The hypothesis adopted in the research was that in post-war Poland, the PKF became an important component of propaganda activities carried out by the state. Alongside the press and the radio, it was an important tool of political influence in relations between the state authorities and the public. The study uses the techniques of exegesis and media analysis, together with the systemic analysis method. It shows that the PKF's political communication contained a whole set of meanings, values and principles that played an important role in the media and political message concerning Poland's Western and Northern Territories and influenced the creation of their image. The pictures of the Western and Northern Territories presented by the PKF's editors were a component of the political communication process, whose final effect was to legitimise the actions of the post-war state authorities. The incorporation of new territories into the "Motherland" symbolised the cohesion of the nation and the state. The glory of historical events related to the Western and Northern Territories, referred to in the messages communicated by the PKF, and the construction of a new symbolic and cultural order were characterised by political intentionality and trivial indoctrination. The consistent reference to the myth of Piast Poland with regard to the Western and Northern Territories had a compensatory function after the loss of the Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland. The themes of the films shown in the PKF shaped the image of the Western and Northern Territories and contained elements of the anti-war, anti-German, patriotic, national and popular propaganda so desired by the state authorities. The content of the PKF fostered the Polonisation of the memory concerning the end of the war and its consequences, and strove to magnify the achievements of the glorious tradition of the Polish nation in viewers' eyes.