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### *350 years of Polish press (an outlook on its past and present)*

#### **KEY WORDS**

Polish press, underground press, émigré press, clandestine press, underground publishing, preventive censorship, repression censorship, central control, authority monopoly

#### **ABSTRACT**

Periodical press has been published in Poland since 1661. Its history has been largely determined by the Partition period between 1795–1918, Nazi occupation between 1939–1945 and totalitarianism between 1945–1989. Hence, in its history a large role was played by émigré press, underground press and clandestine press. The modern press market has been shaped by the transformation of media after the fall of the communist system in 1989 and the entrance of foreign capital onto the Polish market.

It was 350 years ago when, for the first time, published in Poland were the first issues of “Merkuriusz Polski”, placing Poland alongside other European press publishing countries. In another part of Europe, in Antwerp it was since 1605 that a Flemish printer Abraham Verhoeven, based on a privilege granted by archduke Albrecht and acting on behalf of Spain’s monarch, was printing the “Nieuwe Tijdinghe”<sup>1</sup>.

“Merkuriusz” was a political initiative, inspired by, among others, king Jan Kazimierz, his wife Ludwika Maria and Royal Crown Marshal Łukasz Opaliński. The goal was to propagate among the gentry the idea of state reform, so much in need especially after the Swedish invasion and a destabilized political system. The paper was created by the state secretary and printer of news sheets Hieronim Pinocci and Jan Aleksander Gorczyn, Cracovian printer, lawyer and bookseller. The paper, published in Cracow, targeted strict elites. It included information predominantly from abroad and domestic news mainly on court matters. All that was designed in order to convince readers of the necessity for state reform,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. Lankau, *Prasa staropolska na tle rozwoju prasy w Europie 1513–1729*, Kraków 1960, p. 85.

glorifying, at the same time, Jan Kazimierz's rule and policy (including his victories over Sweden, Russia and Cossacks)<sup>2</sup>. A confrontation between the king's court in favour of reform and the opposing magnates was to take place during the Sejm debate on May 2, 1661 in Warsaw. Because of this, the paper, since its 27<sup>th</sup> issue, was printed in the capital city. When reform advocates lost the debate, it also meant the end of "Merkuriusz". Its last, 41<sup>st</sup> issue was dated July 22, 1661 and entitled "Merkuriusz Ordynaryjny to jest Nowiny z Różnych Krajów" (News from around the world)<sup>3</sup>. Its twelve other issues were printed 'extraordinarily'.

"Merkuriusz" in its content included information on what was of interest to its authors. For example, there were Pinocci's articles on free trade (he was also a tradesman and factory owner) criticizing hindrances to its development. He particularly condemned the coining of damn coin contrary to state interests (he was also the author of the *Vilis Moneta, Reipublicae pestis* brochure)<sup>4</sup>.

If we compare dates Antwerp – 1605 and Cracow/Warsaw – 1661 a question arises regarding the time span of press development in Poland and other Western European countries. According to historians, Cracow was the 14<sup>th</sup> European city to publish periodical press<sup>5</sup>. It should be noted, though, that first periodical newspapers on the territory of Poland did come out earlier in Gdańsk. In 1619, Andrzej Hünefeld began printing "Wochentliche Zeitung aus mehrerlei Orten", and in 1630 Jerzy Rethe – "Bericht durch Pommern". There were also some other minor papers. They cannot count, however, as Polish press since they were written in German, as that was the language used there at the time.

Another date which should be mentioned in reference to the beginnings of Polish press is 1656 and the publishing of "Nowiny Polskie", supposedly published by Jakub Weiss during Jan Kazimierz and his court's stay in Gdansk at the time of the Swedish invasion. This, however, is not confirmed, even though it is mentioned by both Polish and German historians<sup>6</sup>.

The shaping of the Polish press system took place at a most difficult time in Poland's history. What is characteristic in the history of the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic is that the most imperative press initiatives were connected with attempts to make social, economic and political

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 101–161.

<sup>3</sup> *Prasa polska w latach 1661–1864*, by J. Łojek and oth, ed. J. Łojek, Warszawa 1976, p. 13–16; Cf.: J. Myśliński, *Kalendarium polskiej prasy, radia i telewizji*, Kielce 2001.

<sup>4</sup> J. Lankau, *Prasa staropolska...*, p. 101–161.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 87–88.

<sup>6</sup> For instance M.G. Löschin, *Geschichte Danzigs*, Danzig 1828; P. Askenazy, *Gdańsk a Polska*, Warszawa 1919, [after:] J. Lankau, *Prasa staropolska...*, p. 94–98.

improvements. For example, created then was Adam Czartoryski's "Monitor"(1765–1785), modeled after the British "Spectator", a breeding ground for intellectuals and the reform camp before the 4 Year Sejm and the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution or the radical "Gazeta Narodowa i Obca" (1791–1792) established during the last years of independent Poland.

Another characteristic trait of beginnings of Polish press was the fact that despite various interference into content and attempts to limit its distribution, there was no formal preventive censorship (in contrast to, for instance, France and England). Finally, it was established by the authorities of the Targowica Confederation which only gives it another negative dimension.

### **Partition Period**

The year 1795 marks the end of press in an sovereign state. What began then was an extremely complicated period in the history of Poland, dominated by nationalist policies of Partitioners Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Press development as means of communication was confronted with socio-political and economic conditions in the different annexed territories.

The specificity of Polish history during and after the Partitions (and also in various periods after regaining independence) resulted in historians dividing Polish press history into different periods: émigré press (after 1831), clandestine press (between 1861 to regaining independence) and underground press (1939–1945), and secret/second circuit press (1976–1989). There is also the term 'reptile press' meaning press published by occupants during the Partitions and World War I and II (both German and Russian).

The role of the press between 1795–1918 was specific. Because the state and the majority of its structures ceased to function, the development of the press was stunted and it cannot be compared to other parts of Europe and the world. It does not mean, however, that it disappeared altogether. What did change significantly was its role in communication and socio-political life. It became a substitute for the inexistent state and played a major role in preserving national identity in the sphere of culture and national consciousness but also as an element of society's self organization and activity, especially in Russian and Prussian territories.

In the Russian annexed territory, established was, on May 22, 1819, a system of preventive censorship (another directive passed on July 17th and then on May 17, 1822) as a result of a May 13, 1819 article in "Gazeta Codzienna Narodowa i Obca", *O nadużyciach policji w państwie konstytucyjnym (On abuses of authority)* protesting against the closing of

one of Warsaw's theatres, after its audience booed off stage provocative actress Jenny Philis, a favorite of the authorities<sup>7</sup>. This way, up until 1916 censorship dominated freedom of speech in the Russian territory, which marked the end of relative lack of restrictions in this sphere.

Freedom of the press limitations were at their height after the fall of the January uprising. Present from then on were omnipresent, detailed and restrictive controls of publishers, printers and texts written. Prohibited were all subjects related to the history of Poland, especially those which mentioned its glory days such as the Jagiellonian period, Stephen Báthory's rule (defeat of Moscow), national uprisings, battles won (i.e. Vienna), May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution and many others. There was a complete ban on descriptions of present day reality, particularly the situation of Polish people after the liquidation of the Polish Kingdom. There was interference into not only content but also into vocabulary and phrases used, for instance, the word "hunger" would be changed to "shortage", "killed" into "deceased", etc., resulting in what is called "wooden language"<sup>8</sup>.

This communication blockade resulted in the creation of a specific strategy of fighting censorship so as to reach the readers with desired content. Writers had to play with language, make use of symbols and allusions in order to communicate their meaning and to get passed the censors. Repressions on people were described using phrases such as "oppressed mother", "via dolorosa", "tomb", "grave", while hope for a better tomorrow was expressed by words such as "rebirth", "delightful spring", "better day", "overcoming the flood", etc. It is when the so called "Aesopian language" developed, so popular later on in Communist Poland times as well.

This strategy was common in epic writing as well, of which a good example is Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy*. How his work was perceived by the public became evident when *With Fire and Sword* was printed in Warsaw's "Słowo". Since May 2, 1883 in front of its editorial office thousands of people gathered waiting impatiently to find out what would happen in the next installment<sup>9</sup>.

Censorship fight strategy took on various forms and it was carried out by both writers and publishers. Following a minor thaw in censorship restrictions after 1905 (press was now

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Prasa polska w latach 1661–1864*, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> See: B. Mazan, *Interpretacja przepisów cenzuralnych oraz piśmiennictwa polskiego i obcego przez Warszawski Komitet Cenzury w okresie pozytywizmu. Syndrom „kawa z mlekiem”*, [in:] *Piśmiennictwo – systemy kontroli – obiegi alternatywne*, ed. J. Kostecki, A. Brodzkiej, Warszawa 1992, vol. 1, p. 298–312.

<sup>9</sup> See: J. Krzyżanowski, *Henryka Sienkiewicza żywot i sprawy*, Warszawa 1966.

under supervision of jurisdiction, which resulted in the creation of 45 new papers, and the following year, in 1906 – 137), instated was martial law and censorship regime (between 1906–1907 there were 400 press related court cases, 60 suspended publishers and 300 confiscated publications). Publishers would make use of a legal loophole regarding a ban on publishing after three censorship interventions. One such example was a strategy used by Warsaw’s “Kurier Poranny”, established in 1877 by Feliks Fryzy. When the paper could no longer be published, it simply changed its name and was registered again. Between 1906–1909 it had the following names “Gazeta Domowa”, “Sport”, “Nasze Życie”, “Z Dnia na Dzień”, “Poranek”, “Złoty Róg” and “Przegląd Poranny” before returning, in October 1909, to its original name<sup>10</sup>.

After 1864, despite censorship restrictions, the development of press was not hindered. While in 1864 printed were 20 publications, in 1885 it was 80 and in 1904 – 140<sup>11</sup>. In order to exist on the market they had to completely omit political, historical and state issues. Instead, they compensated for it with a high level of information on international issues as well as cultural and literary reviews. There were initiatives to create American style mass popular press, of which an example was the above mentioned “Kurier Poranny” whose initiator wished to apply his experiences gained at the W. Hearst and J. Pulitzer publishers.

In Prussian annexed territory, Wiktor Kulerski, publisher of “Gazeta Grudziądzka” (1894–1938) applied a slightly different strategy. Fortunately, the functioning of the press, including minority press, in entire Prussia was regulated by a liberal “Prussian press act from 1874, with restrictions on freedom of the press and repressive censorship (controls of new publishers, licenses for printing, chief editor responsibility for text content instead of author, criminal responsibility in court). Kulerski was carrying out his three main editorial goals—fight for national and economic rights for Pomerania, fight for Polish language (printed were 0.5 mln copies of *Elementary Polish*) and glorification of the role of peasant as “salt of the earth”, and gaining thousands of supporters. He often provoked Prussian authorities with the content of his articles and when he ended up in prison his editorial office staff would bid how many new readers they needed to gain in order to compensate for “suffering of the editor” fighting with Prussian authorities for Pomeranians. So as to popularize the paper, which was also directed to readers in Kongresówka and Galicia, economic migrants in Westphalia and Rhine (a branch was set up in Herne), France, US, Canada and even South America, applied

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<sup>10</sup> *Prasa polska w latach 1864–1918*. by Z. Kmiecik and oth., ed. J. Łojek, Warszawa 1976, p. 58–113.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12–57.

were modern marketing methods and introduced was life insurance for the paper's subscribers. All that resulted in the paper greatly increasing its circulation from 500 in 1894 to 128 000 in 1914 which made it third largest in all of Prussia<sup>12</sup>.

A similar role in maintaining national consciousness was also played by other Pomeranian papers at the time such as "Pielgrzym" (1869–1939), "Gazeta Toruńska" (1867–1921) and "Gazeta Gdańska" (1891–1939), plying the role of citizen responsibilities training. It was an analogous situation in other areas of Prussian annexed territory. Among the most influential press present in Wielkopolska there were: "Dziennik Poznański" (1859–1939), "Kurier Poznański" (1870–1939), "Orędownik" (1871–1939), in Silesia there was "Katolik" (1868–1931) and in Warmia and Mazury – "Gazeta Olsztyńska" (1886–1939).

In Austrian territory, conditions for the functioning of the press were much more advantageous than in Russian and Prussian spheres. In Lvov and in Cracow, both daily press and magazines were quite developed. There were, for example, prestigious, conservative "Czas" (Cracow, 1848–1939), "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny" (Cracow, 1900–1939), "Kurier Lwowski" (1883–1935) and "Słowo Polskie" (Lvov, 1895–1946). In Cracow, in 1912, established was also the first on Polish territory Cracow Journalist Syndicate.

Late 19th and early 20th century was a time when the journalist profession developed. Aside from exceptional writers who also happened to edit or write for the press (Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Bolesław Prus, Henryk Sienkiewicz), there were now also professional journalists. In the Russian sphere there was Feliks Fryze, Erazm Piltz, Józef Kenig, Aleksander Świętochowski, Stanisław Kozicki, Konrad Olchowicz, in Austrian: Jan Lam, Ludwik Gumplowicz, Witold Noskowski, and in Prussian: Bernard Chrzanowski, Marian Seyda, Wiktor Kulerski, Ignacy Danielewski, Hieronim Derdowski, Seweryn Pieniężny, Karol Miarka, Adam Napieralski, Wojciech Korfanty and others.

### **Outside Polish borders – émigré press**

Specific to Polish press development, determined by its complicated situation during the Partition period, was press published by émigré circles. Initially, it was predominantly activity

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<sup>12</sup> T. Cieślak, „Gazeta Grudziądzka” (1894–1918): fenomen wydawniczy, „Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Wielkopolski i Pomorza” vol. 3 (1957), z. 2; T. Perkowska, *Zakłady Graficzne Wiktora Kulerskiego w Grudziądzu i ich działalność wydawnicza (1894–1939)*, „Roczniki Biblioteczne” Vol. 9 (1965); W. Pepliński, *Prasa i więź społeczna. Rola Wiktora Kulerskiego i jego „Gazety Grudziądzkiej” w kształtowaniu postaw narodowych w okresie zaboru pruskiego*, „Pieniądze i Więź” 2000, No. 1; T. Krzemiński, „Gazeta Grudziądzka” – obrończyni ludu czy narzędzie ambitnego wydawcy, [in:] *Media – biznes – kultura*, ed. J. Kreft, J. Majewski, Gdańsk 2009.

of the Great Emigration wave after the fall of the November uprising. There were, for instance, initiatives by outstanding personas such as the Parisian “La Tribune des Peuples” edited in 1849 by Adam Mickiewicz or press by various political factions like “Nowa Polska” (Paris 1833–1845), “Kronika Emigracji Polskiej” (Paris 1834–1839), “Demokrata Polski” (Poitiers 1837–1849, then Paris and London up to 1863). All in all, there were over 100 publications, which allowed for the circulation of opinions and attitudes of different émigré circles. At the onset, the focus was on political quarrels over reasons for the fall of the November uprising. With time, however, press focused more on the proliferation of new ideas regarding views on future political and social relations in an independent state. Indispensable was the role of such press for the integration of scattered émigré circles in Western Europe, even though the circulation of these papers was minute, in some cases no greater than 200 copies per issue.<sup>13</sup>

A similar role was played by émigré press after the January uprising, printed in Western Europe and the US, despite the fact that there were much fewer publications, no more than 30 in total. Influential among these were: “Głos Wolny” (London 1863–1870), “Der Weisse Adler” (Zurich 1864–1865), “Ojczyzna” (Lipsk 1864–1865), “Correspondence du Nord Est” (by Hotel Lambert 1868–1870), “Echo z Polski” (New York 1863–1865) and others. This press influenced, in a way, the home country. Many outstanding journalists (also working for Galicia press) cooperated with it such as, among others, Ludwik Gumpłowicz, Ludwik Masłowski, Władysław Sabowski, Agaton Giller and others<sup>14</sup>.

In late 19th and early 20th century, the new trend was press targeting economic emigration circles, both in Western Europe and the Americas, with most developed Polish community press in France and the US. In France, in early 20th century political emigration circles were expiring and with them their press activity. Between 1918–1939, printed were 140 different publications in Polish language of which most notable were “Narodowiec”, “Wiarus Polski” and “Głos Wychodźcy”<sup>15</sup>.

Similar in character was Polish press in the US, except that it was directed to a much larger audience than in France. For instance, published in Chicago, the city with the largest number of Polish emigrants, was ZNP’s weekly “Zgoda” with a circulation of 250 000. There

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<sup>13</sup> *Prasa polska w latach 1661–1864*, p. 272–328.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 215–268.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. A. Paczkowski, *Prasa i społeczność polska we Francji w latach 1920–1939*, Wrocław–Warszawa 1979.

were dailies such as “Nowy Świat”<sup>16</sup> and “Kurier Polski”<sup>17</sup>. Their combined circulation amounted to nearly 1mln copies.

The height of émigré political press is considered to be World War II and directly after. It was largely due to the fact that at that time functioned abroad many Polish political institutions such as the Polish government in exile and the Polish military. Émigré press was first established in France and then, and predominantly in Great Britain. Aside from that, there was military and civic press in the Near East, Africa, the Balkans, Italy and other places in Western Europe. After the establishment of Polish government in France, it was its initiative, in November 1939, to print “Głos Polski”. Another initiative was the weekly “Polska Walcząca”, predominantly for the military.

Press activity was also taken up by private individuals. For example, there was the weekly “Słowo” published in Paris since 1939 by Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz, similar to his daily printed since 1922 in Vilnius, or Mieczysław Grydzewski’s “Wiadomości Polskie”, following after pre-war “Wiadomości Literackie”<sup>18</sup>.

After France’s capitulation, London became the publishing centre of Polish war emigration. On July 12, 1940 established there was “Dziennik Polski” (unofficial Polish government organ). That same year, in Glasgow created was “Dziennik Żołnierza”, the official paper of the I Polish Corps in Great Britain. The dailies merged on January 1, 1944 and came out from then on as “Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza”. Up to 1945, it was an organ of the Polish government in exile, then, and until 1989, it was the number one socio-political daily of post war political émigrés. It shaped opinions and attitudes of people in exile as well as being the main source of information on any government activity and various émigré circles. Additionally, it was a symbol of post Yalta emigration continuing the existence of sovereign Poland.

In Great Britain present was also press by other political factions (i.e. socialist “Robotnik Polski”, peasant “Zielony Sztandar”, national democratic “Myśl Polska” and others) as well as several hundred other publications of various social, cultural, political or military profiles<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> U. Król, *Środowisko dziennikarskie nowojorskiego „Nowego Dziennika”*, “Studia Medioznawcze” 2008, No. 3, p. 132–139.

<sup>17</sup> A. Paczkowski, *Prasa polska w latach 1918–1939*, Warszawa 1980, p. 387–397.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. P. Lewandowska, *Prasa polskiej emigracji wojennej 1939–1945*, Warszawa 1993.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. J. Chwastyk-Kowalczyk, *Londyński „Dziennik Polski” 1940–1943*, Kielce 2005, *Londyński „Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza” 1949–1989. Gazeta codzienna jako środek przekazu komunikatów kulturowych*, Kielce 2008.



In the post-war period, among the most notable post Yalta periodicals was “Kultura” published since 1947 by Instytut Literacki, first in Rome and later – in Paris. There were two factors which influenced its content and significance. It was the personality and opinions of its founder and editor Jerzy Giedroyc, and the fact that it was predominantly oriented at Poland’s domestic issues, including Borderland First and Second RP. Because “Kultura” was illegally channeled into the country (aside from normal size print, printed was also its miniature version), it greatly influenced the opinions and attitudes of opposition circles there.

Post-war emigration waves resulted in the establishment of various political periodicals. With the first wave, after the March 1968 events, created was “Aneks” by Aleksander Smolar between 1973–1989, first in Sweden and then in London<sup>20</sup>. With the second wave, after December 13, 1981, established in Paris was “Kontakt” edited by Mirosław Chojecki.

Also, in early 21st century in Western Europe, especially in Great Britain, being established are new Polish papers, in connection with the latest economic emigration wave. One example of such is, London’s “Cooltura”, launched in 2004.

### **Clandestine press**

The term “clandestine press” is mainly associated with the January uprising and the period directly preceding it. It was an absolute phenomenon since up until World War II, nowhere in the world was clandestine press as developed as here. Initially, it was created as a form of resistance against the Russian oppressor, resulting from the lack of possibility to express opinions and attitudes in regular press because of strict censorship restrictions.

There were publishing initiatives by groups tied to various underground circles and organizations of national/independent character. The first publications started coming out several years before the outbreak of the uprising. They greatly shaped attitudes and views of the independence movement elites. On August 1, 1861, created was “Strażnica” edited by the so called Siberiaks, including Agaton Giller. The paper was published until May 22, 1863. It was printed with more intensity during the uprising. In total, between 19 to 28 issues per month. Another publication, “Ruch”, started coming out early (July 5, 1862 – July 14, 1863). With the outbreak of the uprising, it became National Government’s organ (printing official decrees and proclamations). At that time, launched were also “Wiadomości z Pola Bitwy” (February 10, 1863 – April 9, 1864) and “Niepodległość” (July 14, 1863 – March 17, 1864).

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. M. Tyrchan, „Aneks” – *pismo emigracji pomarcowej*, “Studia Medioznawcze” 2009, No. 2, p. 109–120.

Additionally, published were also “Dziennik Narodowy”, “Sternik”, “Prawda”, „Wiadomości Polityczne” and others. Particularly interesting was “Wiadomości z Pola Bitwy” which included information from battlefields and other clashes between the partisans and Russian military. Despite intense penetration and surveillance of Ochrana agents and snoopers, between 1861–1864, in total published were 304 issues of different papers.

Uprising press played an integrative role, testifying that fighting continued to take place. It was a kind of antidote to information which legal press had to print by order of Russian authorities between 1861–1864<sup>21</sup>.

Clandestine press was published by both political activists such as Agaton Giller and legal press journalists such as Józef Wagner (“Gazeta Warszawska”), Julian Bartoszewicz (“Dziennik Warszawski”) and others. As mentioned earlier, it was the first of this kind of press in the world, developed to the extent that it was<sup>22</sup>.

During the Partition period and later on, clandestine press continued to exist but it was more of social character. Worth mentioning here is the Polish Socialist Party’s (PPS) “Robotnik”, edited since 1894 by Józef Piłsudski (comrade “Wiktor”)<sup>23</sup>.

### **In sovereign Poland**

1918 marks the beginning of a new press system in a sovereign state. It was not, however, the same free press system as in Western Europe or the US. What was introduced was a system of controlled press with characteristic repressive censorship (lack of institutional censorship, controls after printing, legal responsibility, chief editor responsibility). The March 1921 Constitution guaranteed relative freedom of the press until 1935.

During parliamentary rule, the press, as an instrument of pressure, was an element of “independent political forces’ game”. After the May coup, at a time of growing authoritative rule, its function (mainly that of opposition press) was predominantly based on controlling the authorities and affirming present opinions and attitudes rather than shaping the political scene. Independent press and journalists did not enjoy sympathy of the authorities. Opposition press was repressed legally (confiscations, administrative harassment, high fines) and illegally

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<sup>21</sup>For instance, in 1861, there were 7 underground publications and 37 legal ones, in 1862 – 17 secret and 39 legal ones, in 1863 – 23 underground and 35 legal, in 1864 – 5 secret and 29 legal *Prasa polska w latach 1661–1864*, p. 187–198.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> *Prasa polska w latach 1864–1918*, p. 54.

(boycotts, pro-government hit squad assaults)<sup>24</sup>. All this resulted in the 1930s in a significant decrease of independent press scope and influence, and domination of pro-government press.

What was characteristic to the II Polish Republic was its dual structure. Among opinion forming press, dominant was politically oriented press. All key political parties had their press, on both national and local level. Among the most influential were: conservative – “Czas” (Cracow) and “Słowo” (Vilnus); National Democracy (Narodowa Demokracja) – “Gazeta Warszawska” (since 1935 “Warszawski Dziennik Narodowy”), “Kurier Poznański”, “Słowo Pomorskie”; Polish Peasants’ Party (PSL „Piast”) – “Gazeta Grudziądzka” and “Piast” (Cracow); Polish Peasants’ Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) – “Wyzwolenie”; Christian Democracy (Chrześcijańska Demokracja) – “Dziennik Bydgoski” and “Polonia” (Katowice); National Workers’ Party (Narodowa Partia Robotnicza) – “Obrona Ludu” (Toruń) and “Prawda” (Poznań); Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna) – “Robotnik”. After 1926, the “Belvedere Camp” had its own press, among which there were “Gazeta Polska” and “Polska Zbrojna”.

On the other hand, there was high circulation mass press, similar to that in Western Europe and the US<sup>25</sup>. In the three main press centres, Warsaw, Cracow and Lodz, key were: “Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny” (published by Marian Dąbrowski – Press Palace in Cracow), “Express Poranny” (by Henryk Butkiewicz and Antoni Lewandowski – Prasa Polska S.A.), in Lodz – “Kurier Łódzki” and “Echo” (by Jan Stypułkowski), “Express Ilustrowany” and “Republika” (by Maurycy Poznański). Additionally, there was “Mały Dziennik” published since 1935 by Franciscans from Niepokalanów, an initiative by father Rajmund Kolbe (Maksymilian), with a circulation similar to popular press (120 000–200 000 copies)<sup>26</sup>.

In the interwar period, existent was also minority press, predominantly Jewish, German and Ukrainian. Regional press was developed as well. It was printed not only in voivodeship capitals but also more locally. This press was most developed in the North and West, of which a good example is Pomeranian press<sup>27</sup>.

It was also a time of the establishment and development of the journalist profession. Shaped then was an organized journalist environment (Polish Journalists Union – 1924, RP

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. M. Pietrzak, *Reglamentacja wolności prasy w Polsce (1918–1939)*, Warszawa 1963; W. Pepliński, *Prasa pomorska w latach Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1920–1939. System funkcjonowania i oblicze społeczno-polityczne prasy polskiej*, Gdańsk 1987, p. 325–358.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. W. Władyka, *Krew na pierwszej stronie. Sensacyjne dzienniki Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1982.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. A. Paczkowski, *Prasa polska...*

<sup>27</sup> Cf. W. Pepliński, *Prasa pomorska...*; cf. A. Notkowski, *Polska prasa prowincjonalna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939)*, Warszawa–Łódź 1982.

Journalists Union – 1931; press journalism collective agreement – 1938). Among the elite mentioned should be report masters – Melchior Wańkowicz, Ksawery Pruszyński, Konrad Wrzos; feature article specialists – Zygmunt Nowakowski and Antoni Słonimski; political journalists – Kazimierz Ehrenberg, Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz, Adolf Nowaczyński and many others. Moreover, influential were journalists who were also active in parliament such as Stanisław Stroński, Feliks Perl, Marian Seyda, Stefan Sacha, Zygmunt Zaremba and others<sup>28</sup>.

### **Underground press**

With the outbreak of World War II, press in a sovereign state ceased to exist. In order to cut society off from access to any kind of independent information, Nazi occupants liquidated all pre-war publishers. As a result, shaped was a system of underground press together with the establishment and development of the underground resistance movement. It was a true phenomenon, unprecedented anywhere else in Europe. In fact, in none of the other occupied countries was the underground system as developed as in Poland.

Underground press was considered an element and an instrument of psychological war with the Nazis; a tool to weaken their morale. For instance, there was “Akcja N”, initiated by the Home Army’s (Armia Krajowa – AK) Bureau of Information and Propaganda, publishing imitated German newspapers, edited by Polish linguists. In July 1941, launched was “Der Hammer” (later “Der Durchbruch”) targeting Germans living in the Reich. In September 1941, for Wehrmacht soldiers printed was “Der Soldat”, in 1942 – satiric “Der Klabautermann” and many others. These publishing initiatives were supplemented by numerous leaflets and posters<sup>29</sup>. Most of all, though, underground press was an antidote to Nazi propaganda; it had an informative function as well as propaganda one. It enabled the propagation of different political groups’ programmes and ideas part of the underground movement. It also played different social, cultural and education functions, in place of liquidated public institutions.

The number of different titles printed between 1939 and 1945 shows how developed underground press was. All in all, it was nearly 200 different papers, printed by all underground factions, public and cultural organizations. Most developed, naturally, was political press, representing the entire, very complex and diverse underground political spectrum. Leading were AK publishers (earlier the Union for Armed Struggle – Związek

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. D. Nałęcz, *Zawód dziennikarza w Polsce 1918–1939*, Warszawa–Łódź 1982.

<sup>29</sup> J. Jarowiecki, J. Myśliński, A. Notkowski, *Prasa polska w latach 1939–1945*, ed. J. Łojek, Warszawa 1980, p. 65–70.

Walki Zbrojnej, ZWZ) with over 250 publications, with “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, with a circulation up to 50 000 copies. In February 1940, ZWZ established Underground Military Publishing, the largest secret publisher in all of occupied Europe, made up of 12 specialized printing workshops with the capability to print up to 150 000 copies.

All political factions had their own publications: Polish Socialist Party – Freedom, Equality, Independence (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Wolność, Równość, Niepodległość, PPS–WRN) – “Informator” (later “WRN”), “Robotnik”; Peasants’ Party “Roch” (Stronictwo Ludowe “Roch”) – “Przegląd”; National Party (Stronictwo Narodowe) – “Szaniec” (later “Walka”); Labour Party (Stronictwo Pracy) – “Głos Warszawy”; The Polish Workers’ Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR) – “Gwardia”, “Barykada Wolności”. Additionally, there was the government paper, printed between 1941–1945, “Rzeczpospolita Polska”<sup>30</sup>.

Nazi occupants, wanting to influence Polish people, also had their own press, the so called “reptile” press which was printed in Polish on the territory of Generalne Gubernatorstwo (GG – Generalgouvernement für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete) i.e. “Nowy Kurier Warszawski”. All in all, between 1939 and 1945 printed were 50 such publications including eight dailies (with a circulation of 400 000–500 000), six weeklies, two monthlies and other specialist press<sup>31</sup>.

A similar strategy was applied by the Soviet occupant in the East with, for instance, Lvov’s “Czerwony Sztandar” established as early as September 27, 1939 or “Prawda Wileńska”.

### **In Communist Poland**

After World War II came another extremely complicated period in the history of Polish press. Firstly, the Central Committee of Polish United Workers’ Party (KC PZPR) resolution from April 25, 1947 established publishing RSW “Prasa”. “The time between 1947 and 1948 was when RSW took control over press agencies, publishers and PPS press until when this process was finished on the market remained only one large publisher Spółdzielnia Wydawniczo-Oświatowa »Czytelnik«”.<sup>32</sup> The next goal of the Communist Party was to take control over “RSW” press section which was accomplished by 1951. In comparison, before the take over “RSW” market share was estimated at about 53% while after taking over “Czytelnik”, it

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. P. Lewandowska, *Polska prasa konspiracyjna. Prasa informacyjno-polityczna 1939–1945*, Warszawa 1982.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. W. Wójcik, *Prasa godzinowa Generalnego Gubernatorstwa (1939–1945)*, Kraków 1988.

<sup>32</sup> J. Drygalski, J. Kwaśniewski, *(Nie)realny socjalizm*, Warszawa 1988, p. 227.

increased to nearly 80% [...] and it remained this way for the next 20 years (1972 – 83.8%)”<sup>33</sup>.

In 1973, created was the press concern RSW “Prasa–Książka–Ruch” which took over the entire press distribution system, becoming the largest in Poland and one of the largest press publisher and distributor in Europe”<sup>34</sup>.

Characteristic to the period between 1945–1989 was a blockade of information channel structures. The activity of the Main Office for the Press, Publications and Public Performances Control (Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk – GUKPPiW) was a return to the past, similar to practices during Russian censorship used after the fall of the January uprising. Omnipresent was strict preventive censorship, the KC PZPR party had a central system of press steering and RSW had a monopoly to print. All that extensively limited communication or in some cases – it even made it impossible<sup>35</sup>.

It all had an influence on journalist availability with regard to media owners. There were only short moments of relative ideological independence, such as during or after political or economic crisis situations. For instance, after the October 1956 thaw established was the weekly “Po Prostu” (student and intelligentsia magazine) edited by Stefan Bratkowski, Jan Olszewski, Ryszard Turcki and Jerzy Strzałkowski. It postulated the need for liberalization and system reform but in the end it was quickly closed down by the authority of Władysław Gomułka, First Secretary of KC PZPR.

Polish elites numerously appealed to the authorities to liberalize freedom of speech restrictions (i.e. “Letter 34” from 1964 signed by leading writers and scholars). The only result were further repressions against the letter’s authors and its signatories.

Somewhat more effective were postulates put forward during breakthrough strikes in Gdańsk. Demands to liberalize censorship were included in the famous 21 Demands from August 20, 1980 by the shipyard striking committee. The third demand read, “Obey the guaranteed by the Constitution right to freedom of speech, print and publication, do not persecute independent publishers and make mass media available to people of all faiths [...]”<sup>36</sup>. In this case, resulting was an amendment to the Main Office for the Press,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 229.

<sup>34</sup> W. Sonczyk, *Kolportaż prasy w Polsce do roku 1989*, “Studia Medioznawcze” 2010, No. 2, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem; Cf.: W. Pepliński, *Cenzura jako instrument propagandy PRL*, [in:] *Propaganda PRL. Wybrane problemy*, pod red. P. Semkowa, Gdańsk 2004.

<sup>36</sup> *Protokół porozumienia zawartego przez Komisję Rządową i Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy w dniu 31 sierpnia 1980 r. w Stoczni Gdańskiej, Gdańsk – sierpień 1980. Rozmowy Komisji Rządowej z Międzyzakładowym Komitetem Strajkowym w Stoczni Gdańskiej (23–31 sierpnia 1980 r.)*, Warszawa 1981; W. Pepliński, *Wolność*

Publications and Public Performances Control decree from July 1981 which now introduced the possibility to appeal the Main Office decisions in court and which allowed censorship interference to be marked in the text by the publisher. It did not, however, lessen restrictions on freedom of speech. The onset of martial law worsened the situation even further, made controls stricter and brought more severe repressions against journalists.

One symbol of change on the press market was the weekly “Tygodnik Solidarność”, published since August 3, 1981 with a circulation of 500 000 copies, edited by Tadeusz Mazowiecki. All in all, the initiative was very short lived (only 37 issues) as it was closed down, together with all other Solidarity weeklies, when Communist authorities announced martial law on December 13, 1981.

Undoubtedly, outstanding in the history of Polish press was the Catholic “Tygodnik Powszechny” (since 1945), edited for years by Jerzy Turowicz. In it published their texts renowned representatives of clergy (i.e. Karol Wojtyła) and intellectual elites (i.e. Stefan Kisielewski, Paweł Jasienica, Józefa Hannelowa) as throughout the years it was able to remain relatively independent.

More significant changes on the press market took place in 1989 and after, with the fall of the Communist system.

### **Second circuit press**

As a result of little change taking place, despite widespread protests against freedom of the press restrictions, censorship and RSW monopoly, established was new, independent press, the so-called second circuit press (outside censorship control). Again, it was a true phenomenon, similar to the phenomenon of underground press between 1939–1945, as it was much more developed than in any other socialist state.

The establishment and growth of this press broke the state’s information monopoly. This was a predominant goal of “Biuletyn Informacyjny KOR”, initiated by KOR (Workers Protection Committee) and printed since September 23, 1976 (many researchers consider this date to be the starting point of second circuit press, despite the existence of earlier individual publications). In the late 1970s, second circuit press was springing up in different parts of the country. Particularly creative was 1977 when publications such as “Puls”, “Zapis”, “Głos”, “Opinia”, “Bratniak”, “Spotkania” and “Robotnik” started coming out. In 1979, launched was

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*słowa jako wartość. Refleksje historyczno-prasoznawcze, [in:] Wobec świata wartości. Księga pamiątkowa w 45-lecie pracy profesora Bohdana Dziemidoka, ed. H. Szabała, W. Pepliński, Gdańsk 2001, p. 215.*

“Robotnik Wybrzeża”, an organ of the Free Trade Union established by Andrzej Gwiazda, Krzysztof Wyszkowski, Anna Walentynowicz, Bogdan Borusewicz and Lech Wałęsa<sup>37</sup>.

The development of this press was parallel to the shaping of the opposition movement. A breakthrough moment were the August 1980 strikes, the establishment of “Solidarity” and a period of relative liberalization between August 1980 and December 1981.

Martial law restrictions, including liquidations of publications, journalist repressions and stricter controls, all stimulated growth of second circuit press. The years between 1982 and 1989 were considered the most dynamic period of its development. All in all, printed then were several thousand publications, as registered by the National Library<sup>38</sup>. The largest number of publications were, naturally, associated with “Solidarity”. In December 1981, in Warsaw published were “Wiadomości”, “Informację Solidarności”, “Tygodnik Wojenny”, in Poznan – “Solidarność”, and in Wrocław – “Z Dnia na Dzień”<sup>39</sup>.

Dominant at the time was the weekly of national scope “Tygodnik Mazowsze”, established in 1982 and edited by Helena Łuczywo, with a circulation of 80 000 copies. Such a high circulation was possible thanks to its regional versions printed locally. The weekly was a binding force of underground “Solidarity”<sup>40</sup>. Imperative then was also the activity of local union organs such as “Solidarność. Pismo Regionu Gdańskiego” in Gdansk, edited by Maciej Łopiński, Mariusz Wilk and Andrzej Liberadzki, journalists of the liquidated during martial law “Czas”.

Second circuit press was crucial to the shaping of the opposition movement and new political factions. For instance, there was Gdansk’s “Przegląd Polityczny” launched in 1983, which played an imperative role in the establishment of Gdansk’s liberal circle. Similarly, there was Cracow’s “13-tka”, Warsaw’s “Niepodległość” and others<sup>41</sup>.

Underground press was a breeding ground for press established after the 1989 transformation. One example is the relation between “Tygodnik Mazowsze” and “Gazeta Wyborcza”. According to Maciej Łopiński, co-author of *Konspira* and second circuit press

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<sup>37</sup> B. Chrzanowski, „Robotnik Wybrzeża” (1979–1980), [in:] *Media – biznes...*, p. 19–33.

<sup>38</sup> *Bibliografia niezależnych wydawnictw ciągłych z lat 1976–1990*, ed. P. Skwirowska, Warszawa 2001; *Bibliografia niezależnych wydawnictw ciągłych z lat 1976–1990. Indeksy*, by P. Skwirowska, J. Podurciel, Warszawa 2001; see also: K. Knoch, *Znaczenie prasy drugiego obiegu w rozwoju ugrupowań politycznych*, [in:] *Media – biznes...*, p. 76–83; J. Kamińska, *Bibliografia publikacji podziemnych w Polsce 13 XII 1981 – VI 1986*, Paris 1988.

<sup>39</sup> T. Mielczarek, *Między monopolem a pluralizmem. Zarys dziejów środków masowego komunikowania masowego w Polsce w latach 1989–1997*, Kielce 1998, p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> K. Knoch, *Znaczenie prasy...*, p. 76–83. Cf.: *Solidarność podziemna 1981–1989*, ed. A. Friszke, Warszawa 2006.

<sup>41</sup> K. Knoch, *Znaczenie prasy...*, p. 76–83.



publisher in Gdansk, this press built, independently of the authorities, new social ties and social consciousness as well as civic attitudes<sup>42</sup>.

### **1989 press transformation and modern day press**

Today's press system is an product of the social and political changes which took place after 1989. What happened as a result was a major transformation of the existing publishing market, both in an organizational and legal sense.

The changes taking place (politically and economically) on the press market were as a result of a collapse of the ideological and economic system. Breakthrough events were the liquidation of the press concern RSW "Prasa-Książka-Ruch" (act from March 22,1990) and overrule of the GUKPPiW act (of April 11, 1990). At that time, the dynamically developing press market was shaped by spontaneous acts of various groups and circles wishing to propagate their opinions and attitudes. Created then were several thousand publications. The existing papers, as a result of the activity of the RSW "Prasa-Książka-Ruch" Liquidation Commission, were either sold on the free market or became part of other projects (journalist associations). There was widespread privatization of the press market. This was possible thanks to foreign press concerns entering the Polish market, firstly French (Hersant), the German (Volksgruppe Passau, Axel Springer, Heinrich Bauer), Norwegian (Orkla), and British (Mecom Group). New publications were launched, i.e. in 2001 – licensed "Newsweek Polska", in 2003 – "Fakt" (based on Springer's tabloid "Bild Zeitung"), in April 2006 – "Dziennik. Polska, Europa, Świat" based on "Die Welt" (since 2009 published by Infor Biznes as "Dziennik. Gazeta Prawna"). Consequently, what began was acute competition on the press market.

Without doubt, outstanding among opinion forming dailies on the market is "Gazeta Wyborcza". It was launched on May 8, 1989 as a result of "Round Table agreements", and is edited by journalists of "Tygodnik Mazowsze" (entire team), "Przegląd Wiadomości" and later "Tygodnik Solidarność". Despite being accepted by some and negated by others, it is definitely a leading newspaper among Polish opinion forming dailies. Promoted by history, it played a key role in reflecting events in the course of time. It also represented transformation and social changes taking place in independent Poland. Undeniably, it is the personality of Adam Michnik, its chief editor which greatly influences the profile of the paper.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibidem.

A somewhat different role is played by “Rzeczpospolita”, another opinion forming daily. It was transformed between 1989–1996 by Dariusz Fikus from a Communist party daily into a serious daily with characteristic three main segments: informative, legal and economic. It has gained widespread popularity among the Establishment as well as state and local administration.

Additionally, high popularity is enjoyed by two leading tabloids “Fakt” and “Super Express”, predominantly associated with populist journalist practices.

The described above transformation related not only to national but also regional and local press. Some publications were brought back to life (from the interwar period) while others were brand new initiatives. There were numerous new, individual and small publishers, joint partnerships, publishing associations and organizations. As a result, at that time present on the market were roughly 3000 new publications.

Presently, the situation is much different. This is because of ‘iron’ free market laws. Small publishers were not able to last long on the market due to high publishing costs and acute competition, especially from foreign press concerns. Taking advantage of a difficult situation on the local press market, foreign media corporations bought and took over smaller publishers, gradually monopolizing the regional market<sup>43</sup>.

Dominant on the market are German publishing corporations<sup>44</sup>. As far as dailies, it regards both national and regional press (Axel Springer Polska – 20.4%, Polskapresse – 18.05%, Media Regionalne – 13.6%, Polish Agora SA – 18.05%). The situation is similar on the magazine market where one German publisher, Heinrich Bauer Polska, has control of over 50% of the market.

This is one aspect of the Polish press market which is the subject of criticism by journalists, media experts and politicians. It should be noted though that at the same time it means that press is politically independent, privatized and modernized. Introduced were changes to graphic design and layout as a result of the introduction of modern technologies. The offer is enriched now and able to withstand competition on the free market. On the other hand, evident is marginalization of Polish capital, increasing unification, uniformity and

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<sup>43</sup> A. Szynol, *Piętnaście lat obecności Passauer Neue Presse (Polskapresse) i Orkla Media na polskim regionalnym rynku prasowym*, “Studia Medioznawcze” 2008, No. 2, p. 33–54. Cf.: W. Pepliński, *Gdańskie i pomorskie media po 1989 r.*, Gdańsk 2007; *Media regionalne: sukcesy i porażki*, ed. J. Adamowski, K. Wolny-Zmorzyński, W. Furman, Kielce 2008.

<sup>44</sup> O. Dąbrowska-Cendrowska, *Dwadzieścia lat minęło. Działalność wydawnicza koncernów: Burda Polska, H. Bauer Gruner + Jahr Polska i Axel Springer Polska na polskim rynku prasowym*, “Studia Medioznawcze” 2010, No. 2, p. 90–105.

decreasing individualization as a result of market monopolization and tabloidisation of content, both elements of market commercialization.

Polish press market in a sovereign state has become part of a worldwide media system. It is subject, then, to the same trends as in other parts of the world. Nowadays, it has to face threats such as competition from electronic media, predominantly the Internet. The development of the Internet as an easy source of information, the progress of digital technologies, changes in young people's reading habits and a change in the way we view information as a luxury product – all that threatens the existence of printed press. In this situation, will the expansion of electronic media, mainly the Internet now considered an independent mass medium<sup>45</sup>, lead to the end of printed press? Will the Internet, parasitizing on printed press, destroy traditional press? Are we dealing with the end of the printed press as we know it or is it a beginning of its significant transformation? These are all questions that need to be addressed in a situation where there is widespread decreasing press circulation, particularly regarding regional dailies, when publications are transferred to the Web in their entirety and when media experts, journalists, editors and owners are increasingly faced with the necessity to predict the date of the last printed issue of traditional press<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Is the Internet a new medium? There are those who agree and those who do not. See Z. Bauer, *Dziennikarstwo wobec nowych mediów. Historia, teoria i praktyka*, Kraków 2009, p. 298–303.

<sup>46</sup> In an attempt to describe 350 of Polish press history, the author had a dilemma which publications and names to choose from among thousands. He could deal only with a limited number of issues and events. It so happens that when reading it is easier to point out what has been omitted for obvious reasons. Reality is objective but authors tend to be subjective and so are their texts.