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Kielce

**KIELCE IN THE YEARS 1945-2010.
AN OVERVIEW OF THE POLITICAL
AND SOCIAL PORTRAIT OF THE CITY**

Introduction

History is not one of the disciplines of science where the final result is decided by experiment. For a historian, a written source is the most important matter. Our knowledge on a given historical epoch stems from most of all the level of progress in the basic research done. And it is here that we touch on the sensitive issue of contemporary history. For a variety of reasons, many sources have been inaccessible to historians. Such was also in the case of the most important events of contemporary history of Poland, as well as the history of our region and our city. Only in the democratic state for a number of years now have we been able to research, examine and critique the documents produced by central organs of the authorities as well as their local counterparts. This category includes also those of the vital importance gathered in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance and comprised mainly of the documents of central and local institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs from the time of the Polish People's Republic.

The time has elapsed; however, it is too soon for the comprehensive and exhaustive works to be completed, keeping in mind that the latter happens very rarely if at all. A historian can practically never state that he/she has done everything on the issue and the problem has been examined to the fullest. It holds true even more so as all historians, conditioned by the environment in which they developed, that a given system of values and the era which formed their attitudes, present also their own views. It only follows that without a written source, no historian is able to objectivize a certain issue in the attempt to give the Reader a reliable and honest account of it.

The above-mentioned problems and methodological issues apply also to this work which at times barely touches on some events dated to post-WWII history of Kielce without going deeper into the core of the matter. Regrettably, this is a direct result of the state of research on contemporary history of Kielce.

In spite of the exhaustive archival research and equally thorough review of the press and literature on the subject, the work is not complete as the current state of research does not allow for it. Nevertheless, the author has decided to present these findings which make up only an outline of the history of Kielce in the years 1945-

2010, attempting to introduce many controversial and difficult moments in the city's past. Secondly, an overview of the portrait of the life of Kielce inhabitants over a period of these few decades years of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century does by no means exhaust the subject and hopefully should provide an invitation for other historians to continue the research in order to eventually work out a comprehensive and complete monograph that would satisfy a possible largest number of readers.

This work has been previously published in Polish in its shorter version as part of a big monograph on the history of Kielce¹. Due to space shortage, extensive parts have not found their place there. Therefore, the author has decided to publish the work in its entirety in the English language in order to make the post-war past of Kielce available to those interested in modern history. It can be accessed via the Internet on the webpage of Humanities and Social Studies so that readers all over the world will be able to learn about the city and the fate of its residents, as well as the history of the entire province after 1945.

From liberation to enslavement

The offensive of the Soviet Army, although started a few days later than the approved plans, was launched on January 12, 1945. The first assault was undertaken by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, and a day later the action against the so-called East-Prussian formation was joined by the forces of the 3rd Belorussian Front. On January 14, the 2nd and 1st Armies of the Belorussian Front began the charge, joined a day later by the troops of the Ukrainian Front. These events marked the beginning of the January Offensive. In four days the Soviet Army attacked German forces on the front spreading nearly 1200 km, and particularly on the line of the campaign of the 1st Belorussian Front and the 1st Ukrainian Front the German forces registered a complete defeat.

Kielce, throughout that campaign, found itself outside of the main strategic direction of the offensive by the Red Army forces. The forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front, enjoying a nearly five-fold advantage, encountered a particularly strong resistance from the German troops. On January 13, after overtaking Pińczów and breaking through the enemy line of defense on the River Nida, the Soviet troops initiated a flanking maneuver on the northern line from Chmielnik and thus the battle of Kielce began. The main battle of the troops lasting a full 24 hours took place in the area of Piotrkowice, Dębska Wola and Morawica. Some 1000 tanks and armor-piercing cannons participated in the battle on both sides. In the morning of January 14, 1945, the German forces defending access to Kielce were finally defeated and the vanguard of the Red Army reached the city. A war correspondent reported the events in this way:

„On the outskirts of Kielce, which our advance guard reached as early as the day before yesterday, there raged a battle of particularly strong intensity. Kielce is an important industrial center of the Radom-Kielce region. It is a concentration of factories producing explosives and armaments, cellulose and timber processing. It is also here

¹ *Kielce przez stulecia*, ed. M. Maciągowskiego, Kielce 2014.

that the railway tracks from Częstochowa, Radom, Jędrzejów and six road routes meet. The terrain conditions in the area of Kielce allowed the Germans arrange very powerful defensive positions [...]. The Soviet forces, heading towards Kielce, had to force their way through hills and forests, and overcome various obstacles. The Soviet troops, well-trained in night skirmishes, kept moving forward combing the forests and clearing a path for themselves through barbed wire, and destroying enemy units in various locations”².

In the evening of January 15th, after storming the Daleszyckie and Dymińskie Hills, from the east Kielce was entered by the forces of the 3rd Army Guard under the command of General Vasilij Nikolayevitch Gordov (1896-1951), and from the south by the 13th Army led by General Colonel Nikolai Puchov. The German garrison comprised of some 5000 soldiers and led by General Kurt Josef Walter Nehring (1892-1983), former commander of the 4th Armored Army, was forced out of the city. The battle was fierce and the eye-witnesses of those events claimed that the following day the road leading to the cathedral hill was strewn with many burnt combat and motor vehicles, both German and Russian, surrounded by fallen troops, mostly Germans who tried to defend the city against the Russian assault. The casualties included 129 Kielce civilians, 248 Red Army soldiers and 6000 Germans. On the battlefield, the Germans lost 224 tanks and self-propelled armor-piercing cannons as well as 1500 vehicles and motorcycles.

After five years of German occupation, Kielce slowly began to return to the normal and free life, or so were the hopes and expectations of the inhabitants. The atmosphere was well-rendered by Zbigniew Berdysz in „Gazeta Kielecka”:

„From over the shop-window displays, there disappeared German inscriptions and the streets bear no longer any signs of the bloody occupier tyrannizing the city. There are no more street signs in German; freedom reigns supreme and there is no longer a fear that from around the corner of a building there might spring the infamous and so dreaded a consumptive face and a disproportionately long figure of the best known Kielce catcher from the so-called Arbeitsamt. No longer there is a threat that he might summon a person by wagging his finger. Out into the streets there came all who once hid in secret places and waited day by day for freedom to arrive. Freedom is felt everywhere. The city breathed a true sigh of relief. So long awaited freedom has finally come. The executioners of our brothers, rapists of our wives and daughters are gone now, and while fleeing they had left behind a string of dead bodies and a huge river of blood [...] We are living now in a resurrected Kielce, the capital of a province. Over the roofs of the buildings, a red-and-white flag is flying and there is a genuine hope in our hearts and souls. For the first time in five years, we can hear the cathedral bells tolling”³.

Finally, Kielce inhabitants were able to go for a walk without fear of being arrested or rounded up in the street and forcefully transported to Germany as slave laborers

² „Gazeta Kielecka” (later referred to as GK), 1945, no. 2.

³ Ibidem.

or to a concentration camp. The children will soon be able to go to a Polish school and the parents read a Polish daily in Kielce instead of the hated collaborationist rag „Kurier Kielecki” („Kielce Courier”). But it was only for some of the inhabitants of the city awakening to life again that the new authorities provided a chance of returning to normal life. Many associated the new establishment with lagers only and so it was no surprise that behind the façade of the returning to the ordinary times there hid also common fear. Starting in 1944, in so-called Lublin Poland, the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland, continuing the policies of the Polish Committee of National Liberation, backed up by the Red Army and NKVD, kept introducing law based on the Soviet system. Yet, for nearly a year, on the territory of Poland treated as the rear of the front, martial law ruled, which allowed the Soviets to do virtually as they pleased. In Kielce, the consecutive war commandants of the city, Majors Kupriy and Vershinyn, were the main people responsible, among others, for taking over post-German property, restarting production in factories, transportation and communication to service the needs of the Soviet Army, as well as for repressions against people that posed a threat to the „security of the state” and their deportation to the depths of the mainland Soviet Union.

Nearly simultaneously with expelling Germans from the city, on January 15, 1945, there came from Sandomierz activists of the Polish Workers’ Party (PPR) with the First Secretary of the PPR Province Committee Jan Kula, and on the following day government representatives whose goal was to set up administrative authorities and the security apparatus in the city. Immediately, there was an organizing meeting of the PPR called and in the presence of some 100 communists the city authorities were established, with Bolesław Zgódką as the secretary.

Under the imposed provisions, the units of NKVD and the functionaries of the Ministry of Public Security (MBP) arrested in Kielce and its vicinity scores of the Home Army (AK) and National Armed Forces (NSZ) soldiers. They were kept, among others, in the Kielce prison. Mass repressions were to coerce all the opponents of the new system being forcefully introduced in the liberated territory to submissiveness. The Home Army intelligence in its report characterized the situation in the following way:

„Kielce – representatives of the Lublin Committee assume the civic and administrative authority [...]. AK and NSZ are persecuted as reactionaries. Arrests and denunciations follow”⁴.

A spectacular provocation took place in the second half of January 1945 when the officers of NKVD under the pretense of a meeting arrested in Kielce a several dozen strong group of judiciary staff from Kielce, Radom, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, and Jędrzejów. The majority of them were deported to the USSR.

Alongside NKVD, and more precisely the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Regiment, part of the 64 Division, the much hated and hostile formation to the Polish non-communist

⁴ Quoted after R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Po wyzwoleniu. Kielce w latach 1945-1950*, „Mówią Wieki”, 2007, no. 12, p. 80.

underground, the afore-mentioned actions in Kielce were led by the Provincial Office of Public Security (WUBP), established right after the city was taken by the Soviet troops on January 20, 1945. The Office was headed by Major Władysław Sobczyński, with Colonel Shpilevoy who was his advisor on behalf of NKVD. A particularly grim figure of that time was Edmund Kwasek who at the end of January became a part of WUBP in Kielce as a 22-year-old former partisan of the People's Army (AL). He started as an officer of the local investigative department and in the early 1946 was made its chief. For three years in this position, he demonstrated extreme cruelty towards the inmates kept in small and louse-infested cells of Kielce investigative WUBP prison on F. Focha Street (today I.J. Paderewskiego Street). The prisoners were interrogated for several hours a day and „special” investigative procedures were applied in which the department chief excelled. After leaving Kielce, Kwasek was assigned to the infamous prison at Warsaw's Mokotów, and the inmates there thought him to be one of the worst ever torturers. Years after, his methods were described by one of the prisoners in the following way:

„In the evening hours, I was summoned to Światło [*Józef, Vice Director of Department X of MBP – annotation by W. Saletra*], who in Kwasek's presence said that should I not plead guilty to collaboration with Germans, they will arrest my wife and use the same methods towards her and beat her until she disclose details of my collaboration. My child will be abducted and no traces left. In view of this threat, I started giving them made-up facts [...]. During one of the subsequent interrogations, Kwasek kept kicking me while I was lying on the floor when one of his vicious kicks in the chest area injured my heart muscle so severely that I felt excruciating pain for three years afterwards. Moreover, Kwasek and his wards used other forms of torture like non-stop knee bends, kneeling with arms in the air, and holding a top rail of a chair with outstretched arms while in a squatting position for hours at a time. Then, there was also pouring with cold water in a solitary [...]. During interrogations, as well as at the time between them, I was constantly beaten by Kwasek and the wards with a cable, a stick, or a whip made of leather, which was called „constitution”. At one of the interrogation sessions, while tormenting me, with his fists he knocked out 10 teeth in the upper jaw and six in the lower”.

Kwasek not only tortured the prisoners but also, as a juror of court Martials, handed down death sentences. On July 11, 1945, he participated in a court murder, when the District Military Court in Łódź at the session in Kielce sentenced to death the freedom underground fighter Konrad Zygmunt Suwalski. The zealotry with which he fulfilled his duties decided about entrusting him with the investigation of the Kielce pogrom.

The ruthless crack down on post-AK underground by the security apparatus and NKVD as well as the reports on unlawful activities of the Red Army troops on their way back in the summer of 1945 brought about a spontaneous and later organized armed resistance. Some inhabitants of Kielce received information on actions carried out by guerilla units or groups led by Henryk „Andrzej” Pawelec, Kazimierz

„Czesiek” Fąfara, „Maks” and „Krótki”. Local Citizens’ Militia stations would be disarmed, transportation disorganized and particular attention paid to paralyzing the functioning of the communist administration. The NSZ unit led by Eugeniusz „Grom” Bator registered particular success in such actions.

The spectacular strike on the prison in Kielce dated to the night of August 5, 1945 is perhaps one of the most courageous and significant actions in the post-war history of the city. The planning and execution of that military strike, which echoed widely all over the country, was the work of the post-AK groups linked with the Armed Forces Delegation for Poland (DSZ), i.e. the units led by Captain Antoni „Szary” Heda, comprised of 120–150 troops, and Lieutenant Stefan „Harnaś”, „Sokół” Bembiński, numbering 70-80 soldiers from Radom region. First the fighters secured the most important points in the city, then blocked the security forces and then stormed the prison and liberated 354 inmates, mostly former AK troops. With only marginal losses, they withdrew from the city. Among the liberated AK soldiers there were, among others, the „Silent Unseen” Ludwik, „Jeleń” Wiechuła and Stanisław „Czarny”, „Bohun” Kosicki, the latter being a prototype of Maciek Chelmicki from the novel *Ashes and Diamonds* by Jerzy Andrzejewski.

Special words of praise need to be said about the commander and the mastermind behind the plan of rescuing the prisoners, Captain Antoni „Szary” Heda. At the time of German occupation, he was a commander of units of the Union of Armed Struggle (ZWZ) and the Home Army in Kielce Province. Afterwards, as an indomitable soldier and patriot, Captain Antoni „Szary” Heda remained in the conspiracy of the Home Army Resistance Movement and later within the structures of DSZ. After the strike in Kielce, he had to cease the underground struggle and under the changed name of Antoni Wiśniewski moved to the Polish sea coast. He was fully aware that he was wanted by the Office of Public Security (UB) as earlier his family had been arrested and his two brothers murdered. Finally in 1948, the functionaries of the security apparatus caught him in Gdynia. He was sentenced to death four times but eventually, through the intervention of the former officers of the People’s Army with whom he cooperated in 1944, the sentence was changed to life in prison. He was freed only after the October political thaw of 1956. For the rest of his life, he remained faithful to the ideals of freedom and independence. In 1981, he was elected President of the Independent Veterans’ Union affiliated with Independent Self-governing Trade union „Solidarity”. In appreciation of his services to the country, he was elevated by the President of Poland Lech Kaczyński to the rank of Brigadier General during the National 3rd May celebration in 2006. It was truly a crowning of his entire life as a soldier fighting for independence and his ideals, for which he had paid dearly with tremendous suffering. He died on February 14, 2008. At the funeral ceremony at the Field Cathedral of the Polish Army, the Field Bishop Reverend General Tadeusz Płoski said the following beautiful and much telling words when bidding goodbye to „Szary”:

„In the pantheon of fame there is a place for all who in the name of Poland shed blood and gave their lives. Your name has entered that list of national heroes, imprin-

ted in gold letters. Today, your nearest and dearest are bidding you goodbye but they are saying „see you” because a soldier never dies. A soldier gives his life and departs for the eternal service. You were such a soldier all your life”⁵.

In view of the growing repressions and equally increasing number of government agencies and spy networks (the Provincial Office of Public Security in Kielce fighting the underground independence movement in the years immediately following WWII had on its payroll 66 agents and 230 informers), as well as provocations and traps instigated and set by the security apparatus and NKVD, the existing structures of freedom fighters became deeply secretive. In spite of such extremely dangerous situation, in Kielce alone there existed at that time a post-AK sabotage group led by Lieutenant Eugeniusz „Szparag” Dahling-Dalewski. The actions of the national and post-AK guerilla units were to be coordinated. On behalf of the Command of the 5th District of NSZ, until July 1945, i.e. its liquidation, the task was entrusted to Witold „Witold” Szpatowicz. The Kielce–Starachowice Inspectorate of the DSZ, the post-AK national structure established in May 1945, led by Stefan „Kos”, „Bogumił” Gądzio, included Kielce District and the sub-districts of Chęciny, Morawica, Niewachłów, Bodzentyn, Samsonów, and Wąchock. Clandestine newspapers „Prawda Polska” („Polish Truth”) and „Sprawy Polskie” („Polish Matters”) were printed and distributed. When in August 1945 DSZ was dissolved, in its place the organization Freedom and Independence (WiN) was called to life with the task of continuing resistance, but above all of conducting political and propaganda activities. This way of combat did not quite suit the post-AK majority and faced with the growing influence of the communists, a great many disappointed and discouraged activists decided to stand aside. The gradual evolution of attitudes became apparent. Therefore, the District Command of WiN (code name „Ł-5”), called to life in Kielce in the fall of 1945, headed by Józef Stępkowski, was a cadre organization. The District Command of 10 people only did not manage to carry out the planned actions prompted by the upcoming elections. The organization was bitterly defeated by the UB in February and March of 1946 and its members arrested. The only military strike of some consequence at the time was the rescuing of Second Lieutenant Henryk „Alocha” Rozkrót from the headquarters of the Military Information in Kielce. The action was carried out by the conspirators and guerillas under the command of Stanisław „Szczerbol”, „Snopek” Piwnicki. The Information building was taken over in a flash without a single shot fired, the several people strong garrison disarmed, and once the commander of the local group from Radom was freed, the fighters withdrew from the city.

In Kielce, the communists and their allies, practically holding all the power, made an effort to subject all their activities to hold on to the reins and render impossible the development and consolidation of the potential of all political organizations connected with the Polish underground liberation movement and the London Government in Exile. By controlling the press and the radio, they kept concocting their own image of progressive and democratic activists for the sake of so-called „people’s” strata.

⁵ Quoted after S. Piątkowski, M. Sołtysiak, *Antoni „Szary” Heda. Biografia*, Kielce 2011, p. 90.

That is why their efforts concentrated mostly on rebuilding local authority structures and the activities of allied political parties and organizations supporting the new system. On January 27, 1945, the first meeting of members of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the Workers' University Society (TUR) was held at the party headquarters at 32 Sienkiewicza Street. Stanisław Piaskowski, plenipotentiary of the Provisional Government for Kielce, took part in it. The meeting was moderated by Bolesław Śliwiński who was then elected president of this organization. Historical accuracy calls for the annotation that the following people were candidates to the Provincial Council: Bolesław Galiński, Antoni Mochocki, and Kazimierz Kucharczyk. The first PPS Municipal Committee after WWII consisted of 15 people, among them Alfred Drabarek, S. Urbanowicz, Alfred Gerke, Kazanecki, Zygmunt Gross, Józef Szunke, Bolesław Galiński, Kapicki, Słomczyński, Wojdan, Zajęcki, Kaleta, and Maria Szmajdlówna. Over a month later, on March 4, the first Provincial Convention of PPS took place in Kielce.

In order to document the then-existing parties, it is necessary to mention the event inaugurating the activities of the Alliance of Democrats in Kielce. On April 8 – as reported by the press in Kielce – in the movie theatre Bałtyk at noon, the first meeting of the party took place. The first city board was constituted, composed of: Chairman, Kielce lawyer Adam Winiarski; Vice Chairmen: Jerzy Słowik, Leon Strzębalski, Jan Wrzeszcz; Secretary Mikołaj Jachowicz; Treasurer Franciszek Sputo and members of the board Stanisław Bałuciński, Stefan Cichowski, Władysław Helleński, Stanisław Ratajski, Stefan Sobański, and Stanisław Zieliński.

When the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN) was established on June 28, 1945, parties of the ruling government quickly strengthened their influence, which was also clearly noticeable in the political life of Kielce. The most significant changes in the people's movement took place once Stanisław Mikołajczyk arrived in Warsaw and accepted the position of Deputy Prime Minister as well as the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reforms at the TRJN. The procommunist People's Party (SL) began losing the footing and its members started moving over to the clandestine People's Party „Roch” in great numbers. In July 1945, in order to clarify the situation and avoid confusion, S. Mikołajczyk and his organization took on the official name of Polish People's Party (PSL).

In Kielce Province, as early as August 1945, county conventions of PSL were organized and the ranks rapidly grew. The then-Chairman of the Provincial Council, Józef Ozga-Michalski, an activist of SL, was a sworn enemy of the PSL and with the assistance of UB functionaries blocked the PSL convention in Kielce. The delegates, gathered in the hall of the DPWiWF (Pol. abbr.), the House of Military Preparedness and Physical Education (such was the official name of the building until 1947), were forced to leave the premises. The meeting reconvened at another place and the convention elected Franciszek Kumor for the Chairman of PSL in Kielce. The final act of forming PSL authorities in the region was a provincial convention of the party in Kielce on October 28, 1945. At the session, a great and unequivocal support was voiced for the policies of the PSL Chief Executive Committee along with the demand of appropriate representation „of peasantry in the percentages reflecting

their influence” in the society and accordingly in national authorities, economic institutions, local and civic organizations. Creation of administrative courts and declaration of general amnesty for the underground liberation movement fighters were advocated. In addition, an opinion was voiced that PSL must gain greater representation in the National Councils. Finally, a Provincial Board of PSL in Kielce was elected. Czesław Poniecki became its Chairman, Stanisław Jagiełło and Stanisław Nowak the Vice Chairmen, Antoni Gurwicz and Marian Orzeszek the Secretaries, and Stanisław Janicki the Treasurer. In the years 1947-1949 Stanisław Jagiełło was the Chairman of the Provincial Board of PSL in Kielce. On the turn of 1945, PSL was the strongest and most effectively functioning political party, and in opposition to communists and their allied parties. The PSL structure in the province listed 50 thousand members. PSL exerted its biggest influence in Kielce city itself and the county of Kielce, being particularly popular among petit bourgeoisie, professional people, teachers and the church hierarchy.

At the beginning of January 1946, changes were made to the bill on the National Councils to enlarge them. The Liaison Committee of Political Parties in Kielce and the Presidium of the Province Council amended the composition of the council and the number of councilors was raised to 116. As a result of these changes, PSL was represented on the council by Józef Dąbkowski, Marian Orzeszek, Władysław Zwiewski, Czesław Poniecki, Stanisław Jagiełło, Stanisław Janicki, and Antoni Gurnicz.

The political struggle of that time grew particularly intense after announcing the decision of the State National Council about holding the people’s referendum in June 1946. PSL became the subject of vicious attacks and political harassment as the only party regarded by the people to be able to oppose the communists and save Poland’s sovereignty. PSL’s influence and political popularity were a serious threat to the communists and that is why the security apparatus undertook decisive steps to deal with the legal opposition.

The Province Office of Public Security issued a directive which obliged political parties to notify nearest public security office of any meetings and public conferences, which was to curb the political mobility of PSL. There were also attempts to limit the statutory activities of PSL by banning all meetings, trainings and rallies. Another example of suppression by the communists was banning of the provincial convention of PSL in Kielce in September 1946. Moreover, during the session of the Province National Council, on September 27 and 28 that year, a sharp political attack was noted. Speaking on behalf of the „Blok” party, the activist of PPR Marian Słoń, former mayor of Kielce, viciously attacked PSL activists and called for a revision of their „hostile attitude” towards the democratic camp. The information offered by PSL Councilor Stanisław Jagiełło, retorting the accusations of the PPR councilor, was rejected. Eventually, the majority of the „Blok” members adopted the resolution condemning PSL and introducing a substantial curbing of their activities.

The elections to the Legislative Sejm (Parliament) of January 19, 1947 became the final step in crushing PSL. Following the orders of Joseph Stalin, PPR together with its satellites were preparing for the final showdown against the Mikołajczyk Par-

ty. To this end, the National Council passed the decree on summary judicial proceedings of November 16, 1945 on transgressions regarding, among others, murder, robbery and „offences threatening public order” as well as the decree on „offences particularly dangerous in the period of building the state”. The latter, introduced by the decree dated to June 13, 1946, was also called a „small penal code” and provided severe punishment for acts of terror, sabotage, participation in „bands” or for „spreading propaganda against Poland’s alliance with friends” and even for „offences threatening the industrial development in the nationalized sector” and “the interests of the labor world”. PSL was practically banned from the pages of the press by censorship. The elections statute became one more tool in fighting PSL as it gave the exclusive right to establish an electoral commission to the province authorities, strongly controlled by PPR, instead of the counties where PSL enjoyed particular popularity. In addition, district commissions were not allowed to announce the results, but the count had to be sent to the Central Commission which in consequence led to much abuse during the January elections. Two weeks after the elections, the results were made public. The majority of Poles were convinced they were falsified, and the following little verse circulated all over Poland, including Kielce:

„What a mysterious swap!
You vote Mikołajczyk,
But Gomułka comes on top”.

Military authorities of the city, led by the city commandant Vershinyn, together with the communists took very special care of the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society established on February 4, 1945. Its president was Prof. Marceł Łobodziński and board members lawyer Roman Cichowski, Józef Kobyłecki, and Adam Winiarski. The 27th anniversary of the Red Army was celebrated with great pomp. A. Winiarski, one of the main activists of the Society, gave a political-historical speech. The following day, i.e. February 24, in accordance with the propaganda guidelines, the paper was published in „Gazeta Kielecka”. Emphasizing Polish-Soviet friendship and military comradeship in particular was a part of the political campaign run on the territories liberated by the Red Army. The Soviet troops were no longer an aggressor, as in September 1939, but „liberators”, and so their behavior was totally different. Admittedly, enemies of the „people’s authority” were liquidated but the repressions did not affect the whole nation and there was no talk of total extermination as proposed in the years 1939-1941. This time, for the communists it was sufficient to realize the plan of subjecting Poland, and one of the ways was to erase from the collective memory the massacres of Poles in Katyn Forest, Lvov, Mednoye and other numerous places east of the Polish border.

The examples of new political life in Kielce cited here were characteristic of the policy by the communists and Soviet war authorities. A major portion of the society fully realized that the authorities tried to control every aspect of life supporting those activities and organizations which span over possibly the widest range of social activities and made their political influence stronger. It was clearly visible in Kielce press,

„Gazeta Kielecka” and later „Dziennik Kielecki”, which propagated the PPR, the Association of Youth Fight (ZWM), PPS, the Alliance of Democrats (SD), and SL. The new authority especially commanded complete loyalty. This situation made the citizens all over the country accept a cowardly or even cynical attitude. Resistance and protest disappeared and were replaced by acceptance of the new reality, motivated by ideology, pragmatism and conformism, and in some cases by simple indifference and apathy.

It would be very difficult to question the motivation of that time dominated above all by pragmatism, as justified many years later, in 2000, in an interview for „Gazeta Wyborcza” by Andrzej Wajda:

„It was not the Polish People’s Republic that created those opportunities, but we did it. We simply couldn’t leave this country in ruins. It was our life and we had no other. We realized that we had no chance for changes and that the West would not create any other situation for us, and nobody wanted to hear about the Third World War [...]. Today, it’s easy to ask whether the People’s Republic was really my Polish state. But what other was there? True, we had a government in exile in London but it couldn’t take place of the government in Poland”⁶.

Capital of a province. The years of delusion and rebuilding

The post-war years in Kielce were marked by healing the wounds wrought by the Nazi occupation. The administrative division of the state retained from 1939 allowed for the city to keep the status of the province capital. The province was changed to some degree as a result of territorial shift of the Polish state westwards and the western border established on the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse rivers. Kraków Province incorporated Miechów County (February 1945) and Olkusz County (July 1945). That same year, the counties of Będzin, Zawiercie, Sosnowiec Municipal District, and in the year 1950 two counties of Częstochowa were detached from the province and all added to the Silesian-Dąbrowa Province. At the same time, to Kielce Province Końskie and Opoczno counties were returned. Finally, 13 counties composed Kielce Province and its overall area listed 17,804 km².

Kielce was the main center of provincial, county and municipal administration. In the years 1945–1950, as a province capital, it became the seat of Province National Council, County Offices, County National Council, City Government and administrative offices of the province, county and municipal administration such as Province Department, County Department, and City Council.

The structure and administrative organization in those years looked the following: voivods and starosts were the representatives of government general administration, while in cities and districts the equivalent functions were performed by city and town mayors and borough leaders. Apart from government bodies of general administration,

⁶ Quoted after M. Śliwa, *Ostatnie dni wojny, pierwsze dni pokoju*, [in:] *Wielka historia Polski po 1945*, Kraków 2003, p. 23.

or so-called complex administration, there functioned numerous separate offices of departmental government administration (non-complex), e.g. boards of education and education inspectorates. At the same time, in post-war Polish administration there also functioned a system of organs of local self-government on the level of districts, counties and provinces. The organization and functioning of the national councils and their executive bodies was based on the provisions of the Bill of September 11, 1944 „on the organization and scope of activities of the national councils”. The National Councils, i.e. institutions of programing public activities and social control, were then legislative bodies of local governments on all levels of the administrative division. In turn, district and municipal governments were executive bodies on the level of districts, towns and cities, while county and province departments on the level of counties and provinces. Such a legal structure lasted until March 20, 1950, when the newly passed bill on local bodies of uniform state authority dissolved the dualistic idea of local administration. In that way, on the strength of the new bill, any remnants of local governments were eliminated for a period of over 40 years to come.

Immediately following the liberation, from the area of Sandomierz came to Kielce practically already organized Province National Council and Province Kielce Office. The historical Bishops' Palace became their seat. Only in 1967, the foundation stone was placed at IX Wieków Kielc Street to start the construction of a new seat for the Voivode. The first building was made ready in 1971.

An important role in setting up administration and overtaking the authority by communists was played by an operation group of the Provisional Government led by Deputy Minister, Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Ochab. As early as January 18, 1945 he arrived in Kielce and began working in a building at 59 Sienkiewicza Street. Stanisław Piaskowski became the deputy of the plenipotentiary. The group led by Ochab was to organize provincial administrative structures as well as the county one on the territory of the entire province as quickly as possible. The political situation in the city was conducive, as duly reported by the operation group in a letter to the Central Committee of the PPR dated to January 21, 1945:

„The public sentiment is good. Some say it is better than initially in Lublin. The city has not been destroyed much in general but nearly all the glass windows are gone. Shops stay closed, partially because of the windows but mainly due to uncertainty about the money. Bread in the city is hard to find. The Lublin currency is welcome [...]. The lack of authority is clearly felt in spite of posted directives of the acting voivode and mayor”.

Wilhelm Gancarczyk, chairman of the clandestine Presidium of Provincial National Council, became on January 18, 1945 the first leader with the title of acting voivode, and Zygmunt Moskwa was soon made his deputy. In addition, right after the liberation, from Sandomierz came to Kielce the activist of the pro-communist People's Party, Chairman of the Presidium of the Voivodship (Province) National Council (WRN), Józef Ozga-Michalski and the Deputy Voivode Bronisław Belczewski. The former engaged in organizing the WRN, while the latter's task was to hire the personnel for the Province

Office and the City Government. On behalf of the Deputy Voivode, chief Zakrzewski dealt with those matters, and he staffed the offices mainly with pre-war officials which met with decisive criticism by the government plenipotentiary E. Ochab. Organizing the administration of Kielce County was initially entrusted to a government plenipotentiary Kazimierz Orczykowski and once he left, starting on March 1, 1945 Stanisław Tłuczkiwicz (PPR) became the head of the district (Starost). The post of Voivode was also quickly changed. W. Gancarczyk, called to the post in Lublin, was replaced by Deputy Voivode B. Belczewski, and starting in mid-February 1945 the government administration in the Province of Kielce was led by Stanisław Piaskowski (PPS). But already in March 7, 1945 the Presidium of the Council of Ministers appointed the 33-year-old Eugeniusz Artur Iwańczyk, code name „Wiślicz” Voivode of the province. He was a former commandant and partisan in the People’s Army.

The new province administration faced tremendous challenges as evidenced by an interview of Kielce Voivode Bronisław Belczewski for „Gazeta Kielecka”:

„We are go-getters and will overcome the accumulated problems, which in Kielce require a superhuman effort. The most important obstacle is the destruction of the city and the lack of locations for most offices. There is also the somewhat acute shortage of public transport compounded in the last few days by snow storms and snowbanks”⁷.

It should be added that in the battle for the city 57 buildings were burnt down and 10% of the whole housing was damaged. In the first days after driving the Germans out, the city suffered all sorts of shortages, of bread above all. There were basically no supplies at all. The 200 tons of wheat and rye flour handed over to the city by the Soviet troops and the secured post-German food storages somehow managed to meet the most pressing needs of inhabitants in those difficult winter days. Until January 26, 1945 the city had no electricity or water. Therefore, the power plant had to be rebuilt as soon as possible and fuel provisions found. Nearly 50 thousand people in Kielce required assistance. The statistics show that in 1945 Kielce had 53,662 inhabitants and a year later the population diminished to 49,960.

The provisional municipal authorities were formed fairly quickly. It was decided that the power should be held by the formerly clandestine City Council with its chairman Alfred Drabarek, member of PPS. The post of city mayor was entrusted to the communist Marian Słoń. The state of temporariness did not last too long and as early as February 7, 1945 at the meeting with a government plenipotentiary a list of candidates was proposed to the City National Council (MRN) for the first time since the end of war. It was to be composed of two former clandestine members, i.e. A. Drabarek and M. Słoń, 18 representatives of trade unions, 13 of PPR; 10 of PPS, 2 of ZWM, 2 of TUR and 1 of SL – altogether 48 people. The inaugural session took place in the hall of DPWiWF (today the Józef Piłsudski Community Center) on February 11, 1945. A ceremonious oath was received by the Chairman Alfred Drabarek. At the next session of February 15 new municipal authorities were elected.

⁷ GK, 1945, no. 3.

The Presidium was composed of Chairman Alfred Drabarek (PPS), Deputy Chairman Adolf Cieřlik (PPR) and Members Leopold Porębaniec (PPR), Franciszek Ziółkowski (trade unions) and Jan Śniowski (SL). Then the executive branch was elected and it consisted of Mayor Marian Słoń (PPR), Deputy Mayors Jan Łukawski (PPR) and Edward Abramowicz, and City Councilors Józef Szunke, Bogusław Patrzalek, Stanisław Dawidowicz and Jan Śledź. At that time, the City Government was divided into the following departments: Housing, Supplies, Maintenance, Population Records, Military, and Administration. In that difficult time of rebuilding the city, the post of mayor was held consecutively by Tadeusz Zarecki, Jan Łukawski, and Stanisław Zwolski. The organization chart of November 28, 1949 introduced a number of new departments in the Bureau of City Government. In comparison to the previous one, the number grew considerably and there were 10: Planning and Control, General Organization, Finances, Administration, Health, Social Services, Education, Art and Culture, Maintenance, Property and City Enterprises, and Housing. Then there were separate offices of the City Government: the Independent Military Office, Independent Socio-Political Office, Independent Office of Spatial Planning, Municipal Measurement Office, and the Civil Registry Office.

The introduction of rationing in the whole country due to shortages was to satisfy the immediate needs and prevent famine. In spite of various actions of the municipal administration, e.g. creation of a special commission at the session of February 15, 1945, whose members were to go to the countryside and secure the levy imposed to improve the supplies in the city, in June 1945, Kielce still had not sufficient provisions to meet the demand of the issued food stamps. At that time, people did not receive the bread rations for April and the shortfall reached over one thousand tons. There were also serious shortages of fats, potatoes, and other foods.

Alongside with provisions, housing was another pressing issue. In view of serious destruction wrought by war and the increasing number of inhabitants due to influx of people from the East, the city authorities had to deal with the problem as soon as possible. From January 24 to February 8, 1945, the Housing Department allotted some 550 separate apartments, 125 tenanted rooms, 53 retail outlets, and 30 office spaces. In addition, on the motion by the Mayor M. Słoń, MRN granted the City Government special powers to control and supervise housing reserves being in private hands as well as office spaces in order to establish the degree of their use and ensure their proper utilization, and assess the possibility of accommodating more people.

For a few post-war years, the city had no public transportation. The basic transport means were a bicycle and horse cart as there were only very few motor vehicles and motorcycles in the city. Only in 1951, by the decision of the President of the City National Council, the Department and later the Municipal Transportation Company was established within the frame of the Municipal Public Utilities in Kielce. Four public bus lines were established servicing the routes of Kielce–Dąbrowa; Kielce–Bukówka; Kielce–Dyminy, and Kielce–Białogon. The lines were serviced by 5 buses with 16-people-strong crew, and the fleet was rented from the State Motor Transport Enterprise. Only in the year 1954, public transport in Kielce received 6 Chuosson bu-

ses with some mileage already on from the municipal public transport in Warsaw. On January 1, 1956, the Ministry of Public Utility Services called to life a separate enterprise: the Municipal Transport Company in Kielce.

The location in Kielce of all the afore-mentioned organizations and offices of various levels made the construction industry satisfy only the needs of the administration. Obviously, it must have had a negative impact on housing. Only in the year 1949, the Management of a Working Class Housing Estate started construction work on the outskirts of the city, and in the early 1950s completed a few apartment buildings located at Szydłówek, Czarnów and on the beginning section of Zagórska Street. A decision was also made to start so-called infill housing construction which resulted in creation of the Sienkiewicz Housing Estate. As the city developed, its population grew and in the late 1950s the number of inhabitants reached 88,000. At that time, Kielce Housing Cooperative, established in 1957, seriously took on construction development. Among others, a big housing estate was „25-lecia PRL” was built, located between the streets of S. Konarskiego, Zagórska, Wawrzyńska, F. Chopin, M. Karłowicz, and K. Szymanowski. In the 1970s several more housing estates were made available: „Bocianek”, „Sady”, and „Uroczysko”. Construction of new housing estates and economic development of the city after the period of stagnation dated to the 1960s led to a rapid growth of population. Towards the end of Władysław Gomułka’s regime, Kielce surpassed the number of 100 thousand residents, and at the end of the Polish People’s Republic reached over 200 thousand. During that time, first owing to creation of the second in Kielce Workers’ Housing Cooperative called „Armatury” new apartment buildings were constructed in the vicinity of the streets Jagiellońska, Grunwaldzka, and Chęcińska. In the 1980s, big housing estates of „Świętokrzyskie”, „Barwinek”, „Słoneczne Wzgórze” and „Na Stoku” were built. Rapid development of the city and four-times-fold growth of population required big investment into public utilities. The sewage and waterworks facilities were expanded and a sewage treatment plant built in Sitkówka. A rapid increase in electricity consumption forced the city’s inclusion into the national electricity network system. In 1955, construction of Kielce natural gas pipeline was started. In the 1960s and ‘70s, roads were much improved. Street traffic lights were installed at many crossroads. Still, the lack of hotel rooms remained an Achilles’ heel and a barrier hindering the development of tourism in Kielce. Until 1975, the city had only two hotels.

The Pogrom – July, 1946

The tragic experiences of the war and occupation, and then the joy of regained peace did not calm down the Polish-Jewish antagonisms. Still, in the minds of many Poles, in spite of the Holocaust, there remained stereotypes about a particularly harmful role of Jews in the social and political life. In addition, in the new political system, somewhere in the national psyche a stereotype of a communist Jew has gained a special importance. These attitudes were exacerbated by the simple fears of losing the appropriated Jewish property as 50–60 thousand Jews who survived the German occupation in Poland were joined by additional 300 thousand returning to the country from

the Soviet Union after years of war wandering. As early as July and August 1945, the liberated country witnessed the attempts or actual pogroms of the Jewish population, among others in Rzeszów, Kraków, Tarnów, and Rabka. The wave of such incidents rolled over other parts of Poland also in the following year. According to the estimates, in the first few years after the war, over one thousand Jews were murdered. It was a tragedy in itself compounded by the fact that the murdered Jews were survivors of the war who had managed to escape the Nazi henchmen.

And it was in Kielce that those who survived the Ghettoes and extermination camps chose to stop at.

„They were those who came out of hiding during the occupation, and those who came as repatriates from the East and followed the army. They made a stop in Kielce considering what to do next with once they survived. They were looking for their families, taking care of the immediate matters while considering what to do next: stay here or leave for some other parts of the world”⁸.

Anti-Semitic excesses made the Jewish population realize to a fuller degree that it was a hostile place. Although for several generations it once was a „haven” for Orthodox Jews, now it has become just a temporary stop on their way to Western Europe or the Palestine. Jews started emigrating from Poland right after the fighting seized but legally they were able to do it only since April 1946 when the authorities allowed the functioning of the Jewish Agency Emigration Bureau on the territory of Poland.

The biggest and most tragic events took place in Kielce on July 4, 1946. And although over 60 years have passed since the tragedy, we still are not fully cognizant of the reasons for those brutal murders of the Jewish population. A full and comprehensive diagnosis would allow debunking many false myths, the more so as the communist authorities used the pogrom in their political indoctrination to blame the underground independence movement for the events in Kielce. They appalled the public opinion in Poland and outside of it, and furthermore contributed to perpetuating the stereotype of an anti-Semitic Pole in the world.

The degree of our knowledge, and above all the hypotheses and interpretative theories circulating in scholarly communities, to this day are not properly documented. The investigations, repeated a few times, never uncovered the whole truth about the real instigators of those events. Summary proceedings and a show trial, together with the quickly executed death sentences and a simultaneous obscuring of responsibility of the communist authorities and a security apparatus in Kielce for a much inept handling of the case during those shocking incidents muddied the picture even more. No wonder then that it gave rise to many false assessments which without a solid scholarly verification painted a false picture of the events, functioning in Poland for nearly half a century.

It all started with a rumor which spread in the city that Jews kidnapped the 8-year-old Henryk Błaszczak for ritual purposes, i.e. to murder him and use his blood in

⁸ J. Daniel, *Z pogromowych kronik*, „Słowo Ludu”, 27th June, 1996.

the production of matzo. Before noon on July 4, in front of the building number 7/9 at Planty, inhabited by Jews (it was a seat of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland), there quickly gathered people to free the boy. Although the child was found unharmed after some time, the gathered crowd together with the militia had forced their way to the building to check the cellars where the boy was allegedly kept. It proved that the house had no cellars at all as it was built on somewhat marshy land. At some point, shots were heard which excited the mob even more and triggered murdering. Some of the people present in the building were shot to death and several thrown out of the windows. At around 12:30 p.m., from the Kielce „Ludwików” Steelworks there left workers who shouting anti-Jewish slogans approached the location of the incidents, murdering every Jew they met on the way. Only between 2 and 3 p.m., attendees of the Training Course for Citizens’ Militia and the military dispersed the mob, securing the location of those horrific events, giving aid to the wounded and carrying out dead bodies. The outcome of the pogrom was tragic: 39 Jews were murdered and 40 other injured. Two days later, on July 6, the survivors and the wounded were transported to Łódź by a special train, and on July 8, the funeral of the victims took place at a Kielce district of Pakosz. In the fighting, also two Poles participating in the pogrom were killed.

Regrettably, the incident at Planty was not the only anti-Jewish incident and the tragedy of Kielce Jews continued at other places in the city. The fate of a Jewish woman Regina Fisz and her son, inhabitants of a building at Leonarda Street, may serve as an example of heinous bestiality. At 3:30 p.m. the Militiaman Stefan Mazur and his colleagues took them out of the apartment, drove to Cedzyna nearby Kielce, and shot them to death. Similar fate was met by Jews murdered at the railway station in Kielce and on the train going to Częstochowa.

After those tragic events, the communist authorities ordered mass arrests and five days after the incidents, a trial took place before the Supreme Military Court at a session in Kielce. Nine of the pogrom participants were sentenced to death and the verdict was carried out summarily by a firing squad in a nearby forest. Today, when our knowledge is somewhat more extensive, the collected evidence points to the fact that there were people among the sentenced whose guilt had not been proven beyond doubt. A few others were punished with long-term imprisonment. Separate court trial was held for the People’s Militia and employees of the Security Office.

“Saturday, high noon, the sirens are wailing”. So began Jadwiga Karolczak her report on the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Pogrom. “All those who came to Planty Street to honor the memory of forty two Jews murdered in the pogrom of July 4, 50 years ago, stand very still”. The representative of highest Polish authorities took part in the memorial celebrations: Prime Minister of the Polish Republic Włodzimirz Cimoszewicz, Aleksander Małachowski – Deputy Speaker of the Sejm (Parliament); Danuta Waniek – Head of the Chancellery of the President of Poland; Leszek Kubicki – Minister of Justice, and members of Jewish organizations from various European countries, the United States, and Israel. The remembrance was organized by municipal authorities led by City Mayor Bogusław Ciesielski and President of the City Council Wojciech Saletra.

As stated by J. Karolczak, „For inhabitants of Kielce it was a very difficult celebration. Because it did happen here. Because we cannot possibly weasel out of the responsibility for the disgrace. In the middle of a nice day, a heinous murder was committed and we inherit it together with the history of the city. And it is so regardless of the fact who did the killing: a worker of the Ludwików Steelworks, a hysterical woman, a militiaman or a soldier. So-called „decent” inhabitants of Kielce watched the murder of innocent people. They stood, observed and did nothing to save the Jews. A thoughtless rumor about the Jews kidnapping Polish children circulated in the city and found its conclusion in the evil circle of crime in the „Jewish House””⁹.

The crime is part of the post-war city history of the previous century but should still serve as a warning and a lesson for contemporary generations of Poles as a chilling example what hatred can lead to and what heavy toll the results are.

The patriotic Bishop

In the publications that appeared right after the events of July 4, 1946, as well as later, the curia and Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek were accused that the Church did nothing to stop the mob's aggression at Planty. The allegations springing from communist propaganda had no validity whatsoever as Bishop C. Kaczmarek was simply absent during the tragic events, being away on a two-month-course of treatment. Priests representing the cathedral parish twice attempted to reach and pacify the mob but they were not allowed to enter the location and were categorically assured there was no need for their intervention as things had already quieted down.

Immediately after his return to Kielce, Bishop Kaczmarek established a special commission to bring to light all true reasons for the event in Kielce on July 4, 1946. The commission was led by the historian from Lublin Catholic University Rev. Mieczysław Żywczyński and Rev. Władysław Mąkowski, a professor from Płock. The report was prepared relatively soon and it pointed out the true instigators and „directors” of the pogrom. As the contents could not be made public in Poland, Kielce bishop secretly delivered it to his friend, US Ambassador in Poland, Arthur Bliss-Lane. To this day it remains in the archives of the State Department in Washington, D.C.

The role of the Church and the clergy to prevent the crime cannot possibly be unnoticed. Neither can be Bishop Kaczmarek disregarded in his attempts to unraveling the reasons and instigators of these events so tragic in their consequences. It appears that everything humanly possible was done in the situation of that time driven by rapidly changing political scene.

The Catholic Church itself, which came out the war and occupation much consolidated, enjoyed relative independence and much respect from the Poles, so it had to present its position on the existing political situation and make its voice heard in the discussion on the choice of an economic and social model of the state, as well as its political system. At the celebrations honoring the Feast of Christ the King in Gniezno in November 1945, Cardinal August Hlond said the following in his homily:

⁹ J. Karolczak, *Dzień oczyszczenia. Kielce 4 lipca 1996 r. Planty 7/9*, „Słowo Ludu”, 8th July, 1996.

„We want Poland to be a most enlightened country and the most cultured one, and we do have our hand in it. Out of our Catholic sense, we want to work on introducing such a social system in which there would be no privileges or injustice, proletariat or unemployed, or the hungry and the homeless, and so that in the Polish national society, organized on the basis of the imperative of justice and love for the neighbor, where every citizen could through his hard work enjoy the possibility of securing for himself and the family a standard of living worthy of a human being”¹⁰.

At the time, the communist authorities declared they would respect Christian tradition and not question the position of the Catholic Church in Poland sanctioned by history. A double game was played in which the authorities tried to gain the support of the clergy for a quick legitimization of the new system as well as to use the clergy to advance their own standing in the society somewhat distrustful of the ideas that came from the East. The intent of such a course of action was bluntly expressed by Colonel Kazimierz Orczykowski who headed the WRN Department of Information and Propaganda:

„We have used and emphasized strongly the emotional national aspect, and we have employed nationalism. For propaganda purposes, we have tried to exploit our natural opponents: reactionary intelligentsia, the clergy and even the bishop himself. The overall results are satisfactory”¹¹.

The undisputed high standing of the lay and monastic clergy in social life mitigated the actions of the political authorities which allowed promulgating religious messages. Bolesław Bierut himself, after being elected to the office of President of Poland, ended his oath taken in February 1947 in front of the Legislative Sejm (Parliament) by saying, „So help me God”. In Kielce, the Voivode E. Iwańczyk-Wiślicz and other representatives of the provincial and municipal authorities participated openly in religious celebrations and services. All such actions undertaken mainly for appearances' sake did not however mask the true intentions of the communists who several months after the elections to the Legislative Sejm began the open fight with the Catholic Church. It was an element present in the program of all countries in the Soviet bloc of accelerated process of brainwashing the society in order to secure „the captive minds”, to use the term coined by the poet Czesław Miłosz, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature. Alongside with the propaganda offensive, one of the most important components of the communist policy was the goal of depriving Catholicism of any influence on public life, which never materialized.

The authorities together with the security apparatus repressed the congregations, clergy and bishops. Priests, monks, leaders of Catholic associations, and journalists of the few remaining church papers were arrested. Religious classes were removed from schools, religious orders banned from educational institutions and hospitals,

¹⁰ Quoted after M. Śliwa, *Spory o przyszłość*, [in:] *Wielka historia Polski po 1945*, p. 42.

¹¹ Quoted after B. Stanaszek, *Diecezja sandomierska w powojennej rzeczywistości politycznej 1945-1967*, vol. I, Sandomierz 2006, p. 375.

and church-affiliated charitable organizations liquidated. Among others, under the false accusation of a spying activity, Wiesław Chrzanowski, founder of the Christian Social Association, was arrested. In September 1948, the regime banned the publication of „Tygodnik Warszawski” („Warsaw Weekly”). In Kielce, the state authorities took over the charitable institutions of „Caritas” from Kielce Diocese, together with St. Joseph and St. Anthony orphanages, another one in Niewachłów, two children’s homes, four boarding houses for boys and three for girls. In addition, many other parish and monastic institutions were nationalized, among them elderly people nursing homes managed by nuns as well as day-care centers, including the one located at 2 H. Sienkiewicza Street. In 1949, the Private St. Stanisław Kostka Gymnasium for Men was seized and renamed III Public Secondary School for Men.

These difficult moments for the Catholic Church of the fall 1948 coincided with the passing of Cardinal August Hlond. The pope appointed to the post of Primate of Poland the bishop from Lublin, Rev. Dr. Stefan Wyszyński. For the Catholic community of Kielce the biggest blow came when the UB arrested Bishop Kaczmarek on January 20, 1951. The priest, awaiting an actual trial, spent two years and eight months in prison. During interrogations, he was subjected to all sorts of brutal methods to extract information:

„Blinding Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek with a light bulb pointed directly into his eyes, they kept interrogating him for 30–40 non-stop and only secret police agents took shifts. Exhausted by sleep deprivation and lack of food, without a chance to go to the bathroom, Bishop Kaczmarek was no longer able to control his physiology. He was then ridiculed: „The Excellency does not know how to behave properly” and punished by solitary confinement”¹².

The trial began on September 14, 1953 and the prosecution prepared a completely fabricated indictment informing the people that the bishop admitted to: supporting fascist organizations and thus contributed to the weakening of the spirit of defense of the Polish society in the face of looming Nazi invasion; cooperating with the German occupying forces, exhorting the congregation to submissiveness and cooperation with the occupier, following the guidelines of pro-Nazi and anti-Polish policy of the Vatican; attempting to abolish the workers’ and peasants’ authority and the people’s democratic system of Poland; sabotaging rebuilding of the country and the centrally planned economy; organizing and supervising the intelligence gathering on the territory of Poland to serve the interests of American imperialism and the Vatican; spreading war propaganda in public appearances, advocating a new war, and accepting moneys in hard currency from foreign espionage and sabotage agencies, and then profiteering from exchanging it on the black market.

In this carefully staged trial, which was to serve as an example, the verdict was 12 years of imprisonment. The society was informed (in truth, fed lies by the communist propaganda machine) about the proceedings and the final verdict with the hope

¹² M. Michalczyk, *Męczennik czasów komunizmu*, „Nasz Dziennik”, 14th September, 2002.

that it would discourage the people from Christianity and the Catholic bishop. In those dramatic years, any of the higher church hierarchy or the Episcopate may have been put in the dock. „Bishop Kaczmarek was selected because he decisively opposed any sort of deals or agreements with the communist authority”¹³.

Difficult beginnings and successes. Social and cultural life

Paradoxically, in the first years of solidifying the communist authority when the sting of terror was directed against the underground independence movement and the democratic party of Mikołajczyk, in Kielce, as well as all over Poland, culture and social life registered a seemingly uncontrolled development. Very quickly, associations, education, academia and theater were rebuilt. Sports associations were resurrected to life, new schools, and stage and movie theaters open. Fans again followed sports games in various disciplines and on different levels. It was possible due to incredible civic entrepreneurship of inhabitants of Kielce who after nearly six years of occupation wanted the life in the city to come back to normal. But the new people in charge did not wish to allow for anything to happen without their control. As early as January 26, 1945, i.e. almost immediately after the liberation of Kielce from the hands of German occupiers, the first meeting of representatives of cultural life took place on the „invitation” of the Head of the Province Office of Information and Propaganda, Zbigniew Kulczycki. The meeting called to life the first creative arts unions in the city: the Association of Writers and Journalists, the Society of Authors and Composers, and the Association of Painters and Designers.

Daily press was an observer and a commentator of the post-war events, and in the minds of its controllers, it was to popularize the changes occurring in the city and the province. It was also to instigate and mobilize the society to co-create and solidify those changes. It should be added that the matters of daily press and periodicals, press, information and telegraphic agencies, radio broadcasting, circulation and distribution, as well as supervision and control were within the scope of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) entrusted with the Department of Information and Propaganda. Once the Provisional Government was established, until the year 1947, the press policy was managed by two administrative centers in Warsaw; the first one was the Ministry of Information and Propaganda, and the second one the Central Bureau for the Control of the Press at the Ministry of Public Security. In July 1946, the latter one turned into the Main Office for the Control of the Press, Publications and Public Spectacles with its branches in all provinces and counties.

„Gazeta Kielecka” was the first daily paper circulated in Kielce. Jan Aleksander Zarembo, a teacher from Kielce, and the journalist Zbigniew Strzembalski on January 23, 1945 received a permission from Z. Kulczycki to publish the paper. The first issue of the daily was released on February 3, 1945, in the circulation of 3 thousand, and the last issue was published on February 26, 1945. Two journalists from Warsaw, Maurycy Berlecki and Waław Jeziorowski who after the Warsaw Rising found themse-

¹³ Ibidem.

lives in Kielce, participated in the editorial work. The paper was printed in the printing house of Katarzyna Stachurska and Jan Wiech. The daily was replaced then by „Dziennik Kielecki” the first issue of which issued on March 4, 1945. Ten days later, the daily was taken over by the Province Office of Information and Propaganda (WUIiP), and after a period of two months of publishing in Kielce, on May 10 it started being printed in Radom at the II State Printing House. By the decision of the WUIiP, the Kielce paper was merged with „Głos Ziemi Radomskiej” („The Voice of Radom Region”) and this marked the birth of the first paper distributed throughout the province called „Dziennik Powszechny” („The Universal Daily”) dedicated in its content to daily news and current affairs. The date of September 28, 1949 marked the birth of „Słowo Ludu” („People’s Voice”), which was the 11th Party daily in the country. „Słowo Ludu” has been with the residents of Kielce for over 50 years, obviously undergoing several transformations in the meantime. In the 1970s, „Echo Dnia” („Daily News”) was established, first as an evening paper. Today, „Echo Dnia” is the only existing daily in Kielce.

The history of Kielce Polish Radio broadcasting station is very interesting. At the time, there already functioned the stations in Warsaw, Katowice, Lublin, and Krakow. Soon afterwards, the broadcasting radio stations in Poznan, Gdansk, Lodz, Szczecin, and Wroclaw began operating. From the very outset, the authorities appreciated the radio as a propaganda and culture-spreading means of influencing the society. For that reason, there followed such quick action to make use of it in spite of several obstacles, like low level of electrification and the simple lack of radio sets which both were very difficult to overcome then. Therefore radio cable transmission system was being developed in the countryside.

The campaign of setting up a radio network in the entire province was entrusted to the Province Center of Broadcasting System. Captain Stanisław Makowiecki and engineer Tadeusz Galiński were made responsible for the technical side of the operation in Kielce. In early April of 1945, out of 13 counties in Kielce Province, 8 had radio reception: Kielce, Jędrzejów, Radom, Busko, Pińczów, Włoszczowa, Opatów, Starachowice, and Olkusz. Kielce broadcasting system was launched on February 6, 1945, and three public speakers were installed at central streets of the city, followed later on by additional 20 such devices. Thanks to the personal commitment of the head of provincial administration then, Voivode Stanisław Piaskowski, at the beginning of April there came the necessary equipment from Katowice to facilitate the further development of radio network in the region.

Only in 1952 did Kielce join some other province capitals with the Polish Radio local branches. Kielce Branch was located at the historical palace on Świerczewskiego Street (today’s John Paul II’s Street). For many years, it was a place where history of that institution was made, together with the history of the city and the whole region. Only in the early 1957, owing to the transmitter of 1 kilowatt power, transmitting on the frequency of 1484 kilohertz, several kilometers outside of the city one was able to hear the announcement: „This is Kielce broadcasting on the wave of 2002 meters”. A significant progress was made in 1964 when in the vicinity of the Province Cultural Center a radio mast was placed, and two years later, once the new TV center was

opened at Święty Krzyż, broadcasting on short waves 70.49 megahertz was started. The programs were extended from half-an-hour-long shows to 85 minutes of programming. All of that was achieved thanks to the efforts of the pioneers of Kielce Radio like Maria Olkuśnik who for over a quarter of a century was professionally connected with Kielce National Radio Broadcasting Station. It is also indispensable to mention at least some people responsible for the content of broadcasting: Wiesław Barański, Jerzy Butwiłło, Stanisław Fornal, Czesław Kussal, Ryszard Podlewski, and Waldemar Korejba. Thanks to their inventiveness, people in the region could listen to literary shows, satirical programs or the ever popular radio spoofs.

In the first years of rebuilding the city cultural life was being resurrected in the atmosphere of tremendous social enthusiasm. The beginning of regular activity by Kielce stage theater was definitely one the cornerstones. In February 1945, the comedy by Aleksander Fredro *Damy i huzary (Ladies and Hussars)*, directed by Paweł Owerłło inaugurated the Kielce Province Stage Theater, later called the Stefan Żeromski Theater. The cast of that first staged play included: Ewa Porajska, Alina Mycielska, Janina Zielińska, Maria Szewczyńska, Władysław Heleński, and Zygmunt Drwęski. The last show of that play took place on April 12, 1945. *Wesele Fonsia (Fonsio's Wedding)* by Ryszard Ruskowski, directed by Mieczysław Winkler was the following premiere at the theater. Stefan Leński acted magnificently in it as the title character. The theater enjoyed probably its golden age in 1960s and 1970s under the management of Tadeusz and Irena Byrskis. Equally ceremonious was the opening of the first cinema in Kielce called „Bałtyk”, located at 5 S. Staszica Street (formerly called „Palace”).

The city social life soon was enriched by another of its dimensions, i.e. sports activities. On April 11, 1945, a meeting of Kielce sports activists was held at WFiPW. The goal was the fastest possible calling to life district sports associations and organizing sports structures in Kielce and the entire region. Grzegorz Korduba became the head of the newly established Kielce District Football Association. Waclaw Wilczyński led the District Field and Track Association, Józef Młynarski the District Association of Team Sports, and Eugeniusz Niechciał the District Boxing Association. A little later, at a second session of the District Association of Sports Associations, Kielce District Cycling Association and Kielce District Swimming Association were established, led by Władysław Woźniak and Tomasz Kamiński, respectively.

The District Football Association, with its headquarters at WFiPW, was the first one to get to work. The Association immediately appealed to people in the whole region to report on the newly established sports sections with the precise data on the athletes representing them. It was soon announced that the football season would be inaugurated ceremoniously on May 1, 1945 by a match between teams representing Kielce and Częstochowa. Two thousand fans watched the event where the final score was 3:2 in favor of Częstochowa. A reporter of „Dziennik Kielecki”, commentating on the match, among others, wrote the following: „We must objectively state that Kielce team did not perform well in comparison to Częstochowa one. Clearly, one could see the lack of practice and fitness, as well as sports gear (boots)”. At the time, four different football

teams inaugurated their activities; the Workers' Sports Club „Grom,” the Association of Youth Fight, Railway Workers' Trade Union, and State Employees' Trade Union.

The above short outline describing social and cultural life of Kielce needs also a section on such important cultural dimensions as education and learning.

A representative of the Ministry of Education, Chłapowski, was entrusted with rebuilding education in Kielce. He reported as early as mid-February 1945 that the work in that field was progressing relatively smoothly in spite of the destruction wrought by war. Until that moment, all school inspectorates were already functioning in the counties and as many as 85 percent of secondary schools. Vocational schools, training technicians and craftsmen, however, lagged behind. Before the war, the province had as many as 130 of such schools. There were efforts to fill the shortages in teaching personnel by organizing lower and upper level teaching courses which started in Kielce as early as March 21, 1945. The learning on both levels lasted for four months. Candidates who completed 4 years of primary school were admitted to the lower level, and those with completed high school or 8 years of primary school of the „old system.” Equally quickly, on March 17, Kielce pedagogical school was started, which trained teachers in a two-year-long course of studies.

In Kielce, as well as in other bigger towns of the province, all secondary schools reopened. The first school year after the war was very short and atypical because it lasted from February 15 to July 30, 1945. The conditions of learning environment were extremely difficult. To some degree, it concerned the dilapidated school buildings but above all there was no school equipment available, mainly writing boards and teaching aids. As described by the author of a small work dedicated to the Jan Śniadecki II Secondary School in Kielce: „The building was wrecked and nearly devoid of all equipment. Students were obliged to collect and bring to school everything of any scholarly or didactic value. A collection of Polish books was publicly announced, to enrich the school library”¹⁴. There was acute shortage of textbooks and scholarly books. The problem was to be alleviated by reopening as quickly as possible of the Public Library in Kielce on 46 H. Sienkiewicza Street. But as reported by the Public Library Society, out of the pre-war collection of some 20,000 books, after the occupation was over only 4000 remained. Hence, the most urging matter was to replenish the collection. An appeal was made by Stanisława Massalska, director of the library, in „Dziennik Kielecki” to „all those who might be in possession of public library books to kindly return them”¹⁵.

The functioning and situation of Kielce education were determined not only by economic conditions caused by a five-year-long occupation, but above all by the political situation. It must be said, however, that as communists were solidifying their influence, the authorities did not try to impose a new direction of upbringing the youth too drastically. The authorities desperately needed spectacular successes and a quick rebuilding of education system could provide them with such an im-

¹⁴ Quoted after *II Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Jana Śniadeckiego w Kielcach – historia i współczesność*, collective work ed. by S. Majewski, Kielce 2003, p. 24.

¹⁵ „Dziennik Kielecki”, 1945, issue no. 38.

portant achievement, which was unattainable without the assistance of teachers, students, and their parents.

The situation changed dramatically after the year 1947 when political and educational authorities escalated ideological indoctrination. More and more often, new curricula and programs included strong Marxists and Leninist content. Fear entered the domain of education, just like other areas of social life. Apart from programming changes, the years to follow brought also organizational modifications, liquidation of private and Catholic schools, as well as repressions against those teachers and pedagogues who could boast of a great body of successful work dating to pre-war times. Such repressions were carried out against, for example, the meritorious Director of the Blessed Kinga Gymnasium and Lyceum, Maria Opielińska. At the time of occupation, she organized clandestine classes in Polish, but after the war she was accused of reactionary views and forced to leave the city. Equally repressed was the school run by the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, which for a long time resisted the charges but was finally closed down in 1960. Because of several provocations, in 1949, the Diocese Curia decided to shut down the „bishops' school” as the private St. Stanisław Kostka Gymnasium was commonly called. Only the political thawing of October 1956 brought a change, albeit short, of the educational policies. In the first post-war decade of Kielce educational system operations, the biggest problem was possibly the lack of sufficiently spacious classrooms. This was clearly related to the economic stagnation experienced by the city until the early 1960s. Only the investments brought by the late 1960s and 1970s allowed for a substantial improvement in this area.

In the same vein, one could discuss the cultural life of the city which began to grow dynamically only in mid-1960s. It was at that time that the District Association of Polish Artists and Designers, Literary Club, Art Gallery became active, and in 1965, the Museum of Stefan Żeromski's School Years was opened. At the beginning of 1971, an amphitheater was built on the grounds of a former quarry called Kadzielnia, and to this day it serves as a venue for concerts, festivals, and artistic events. This beautiful outdoor concert venue has been recently renovated and fitted with a roof. At the same time, i.e. 1971, the National Museum of Kielce (until 1968 bearing the name of Muzeum Świętokrzyskie), whose first seat was a tenement on Plac Partyzantów (Partisans' Square), today called Rynek (the Square), relocated to its new site at the Palace of the Krakow Bishops in Kielce.

In 1966, the Higher Engineering School was established in Kielce, and three years later a Teachers' College, which marked the beginning of a dynamically growing higher education center. In the 1970s, the Kielce-Radom Higher Engineering School soon became the Kielce University of Technology, and the Teachers' College first became the Higher Teachers' Training School, later the Jan Kochanowski Świętokrzyska Academy, and in 2008 was changed into the Jan Kochanowski University of Humanities and Sciences. In 2011, after fulfilling all the necessary requirements, the school became a full-fledged classical university. At the time of passing a bill by the parliament on establishing a university in Kielce, Prof. Regina Renz was its president. In establishing a classical university, a great deal was done by the MP Przemysław

Gosiewski. In 2010, he was a member of the presidential delegation whose members were killed in the Smolensk plane crash. The academia expressed its gratitude by installing a memorial plaque to his name.

It should be reiterated that the plans of calling to life a university in Kielce have a long post-war tradition. A group of enthusiasts, who at the time of occupation were actively engaged in running underground education where philosophy, Polish language and literature, history, German, chemistry, pharmacology, medicine, and law could be studied, aimed to open a higher school of the university level in Kielce. The same justification was then used and several years later still remained valid: establishing a university in the capital of Kielce Province would have an important social, cultural and economic significance.

„Establishing courses of studies of the university level in Kielce, went the argumentation, would stand in accord with modern regional trends of decentralizing cultural and educational work of the nation so that the widest range of people can avail of them. [...] In addition, continued access to higher studies would be a logical consequence of the historical development of Kielce region. After all, Kielce and the environs have had a rich cultural and scientific past. The region has produced a great many distinguished men of letters, scholars and scientists”¹⁶.

Equally interesting was the idea proposed by the Inspector of the Department of Arts and Culture, Jerzy Krzeczowski, to establish an Academy of Political Science, offering three-year cycle studies, at the University of Kielce. The idea materialized only in 1997 when at the then Higher Teachers' Training School, the Institute of Political Science was established at the Department of Management and Administration.

On March 28, 1945, a meeting was held at WFiPW bringing together professors, members of social and political organizations supporting the idea, and the Voivode of Kielce, E. Iwańczyk-Wiślicz. As a result of the meeting, a memorandum was sent to the Ministry of Culture and Education with a request to establish a university in Kielce. It seems rather clear, however, that the idea did not meet with the approval of the central authorities, apparently for political reasons, since Kielce had to wait for the university for over 60 years, until the year 2008.

June-October 1956; March 1968; December 1970

Today, after a few dozen years have passed since the events called in Polish contemporary historiography the „Polish months”, one can say that it was the time when to a larger degree than before new collective attitudes in whole Poland began to be expressed. Obviously, also the residents of Kielce were deeply interested and affected by what was happening in Poznan, Warsaw or Poland's Baltic coast. Although the events of that time were not nearly as dramatic as in the afore-mentioned locations, also in Kielce, as well as all over the province, various forms of social protest against

¹⁶ GK, 1945, issue no. 12.

the communist rule took place. Today, we can authoritatively state that the effort and sacrifice of those generations were not in vain, although the harm and suffering wrought at that time cannot possibly be fully compensated.

Inhabitants of Kielce, just like the whole society, intimidated by and exhausted with the repressions in the years of so-called „full bloom of Stalinism” (1949-1955) remained rather disinterested in the new system. People had gone beyond the authentic enthusiasm of the rebuilding time. As emphasized by Kielce historian Grzegorz Miernik who examined the attitude of workers in Kielce Province, most of them were politically uninvolved as they were clearly tired of frequent rallies organized by the party activists. On the other hand, however, employees of Kielce factories, just like the rest of the city inhabitants, followed diligently the developments on the political scene. Animated reactions were noted to personnel changes in the top hierarchy in 1956 when Władysław Gomułka, with the aura of a former Stalinist prisoner, assumed the post of the First Secretary of The Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), and Marian Spychalski replaced Konstancy Rokossowski as Minister of National Defense. People expected the political changes to bring them substantial improvement in the living conditions. Workers in Kielce, although never in public for fear of reprisals, negatively assessed the new „socialist” methods of business management, criticized wastage of materials and the dreadful work organization. Equally badly received was the new rule of socialist work competition. Hence, in the hot summer months of 1956 and later on, during the wave of proposed reforms, workers tried to force the political authority to agree to establish workers' self-government in the form of workers' councils. There were also some political demands and clear sympathy was expressed towards the Hungarians who were dying from bullets and bombs in the streets of Budapest fighting for their independence against the Soviet intervention ordered by Nikita Khrushchev and met with great indifference of West European countries. People of Kielce tried to express their solidarity with the Hungarian friends not only in words but also by donating blood and collecting medicines and bandages.

In the third quarter of 1956, three strikes took place in Kielce Province. But as early as the beginning of 1957, all protests, to borrow the words of Andrzej Paczkowski, „they were then skillfully rechanneled within the work places, school and universities”. In the party committees, people sent from Warsaw began taking the leading roles and the departure of many discredited local functionaries of the party and security apparatus in Kielce facilitated calming down social tensions.

The political thawing of October slowly retreated and became part of history. The new administration of Władysław Gomułka's, as well as the local representatives, drew appropriate conclusions for the future. Hence, in order not to allow such social protests in the future, they focused on improving life conditions for the people. This marked the beginning of the period called „small stability”. It was only several years afterwards that the new social protests were to take place in Poland.

Student manifestations in Warsaw in March 1968, brutally pacified by the peoples' militia, gave rise to many social riots all over Poland, including Kielce region. Among others, the riots took place in Radom on March 16-17, and high school stu-

dents played the main role in them. In Kielce, there were no street protests on this scale, perhaps because the city was not then yet a thriving center of academia. The Teachers' College functioning here was treated nearly as a cadre base for the authorities and due to strong ideological indoctrination of its students, no street manifestations took place here, unlike at large centers of Lodz, Krakow, Wroclaw or Lublin. Neither was a decisive support noted from students of the Kielce-Radom Higher Engineering School. As the existing documents show, only four students were arrested in Kielce for distributing leaflets expressing the support for their colleagues in Warsaw. But the wall graffiti and distributed leaflet appeals disclose the social attitudes of Kielce inhabitants. They expressed not only support for the students but through their anti-government and anti-party content articulated the growing discontent of the society towards the ruling methods of the Gomulka regime, and above all to their non-existent recipe to solve the increasing economic problems. Two years later, the December events of 1970 were to wipe out the regime from the political scene.

Regrettably, Kielce was not spared the anti-Semitic cleansing which started in Poland in 1967. From „the party sources”, we learn about some 80 people of Jewish background living in the Kielce Region. The Voivodeship Party Executive Committee meeting of June 12, 1968 stated, among others: „They do not constitute a particular problem here but most of these people have chosen a pro-Israeli stand”¹⁷. The current editor-in-chief of the party paper „Słowo Ludu”, Marian Skarbek, tried to make light of the problem, questioning the sense of the instigating the anti-Semitic campaign through the following words:

„We don't have an insight into the enemy circles, because how could we possibly have it? I have been told two names: Rozenfeld and Edelbaum. But these do not seem to be worthy opponents for the organ of the Voivodeship Party Committee. Should we treat them as such, we'd make them some important persons whom they are really not. We should not make heroes out of pawns”¹⁸.

In spite of the public general feeling, still in Kielce a few cases of removal of people of Jewish background from managerial positions were noted. Such a fate was met by the Deputy Director for Commerce of the company „Eldom” Mieczysław Edelbaum and Director of the District Cultural Center at Czarnów in Kielce Aleksander Rozenfeld. Only one paper, namely „Słowo Ludu”, an organ of KW PZPR, participated in this primitive and incredibly shameful witch-hunt directed against Polish citizens of Jewish background. In its pages, along with reprints from national papers, also „masterpieces” of local columnists were published. One of them was an article by Bolesław Dziatosz dated to June 5, 1968, titled „They Spit the Pity in Your Face...” which made reference to the hot topic of the time about relationships between Poles and Jews during the German occupation. In that way, the press built

¹⁷ E. Wróbel, *Marzec '68 na Kielecczyźnie*, [in:] *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich. Polityka – gospodarka – kultura-społeczeństwo*, eds. J. Wijaczka and G. Miernik, 2005, p. 360.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 360.

an image of a Jew who was a sworn enemy of the Polish Peoples' Republic, which meant that both the press and the party authorities of the province and the city clearly followed the guidelines of their Warsaw masters.

Neither were residents of Kielce indifferent towards the strikes over the pay and working conditions in Gdansk, Elbląg and Szczecin, and then the bloody events of December 17, 1970, when soldiers opened fire on the people of Gdynia who were going to work. Our knowledge on the social attitudes of the people of Kielce comes from the party documents gathered at the National Archives in Kielce. Still, it is only a glimpse and this subject matter requires much deeper and intensified research, particularly in terms of examining the documents of the late Security Service (SB) collected at the Institute of National Remembrance.

It is interesting that on December 15 that year a list of people „anticipated to be detained” was compiled which included names of 242 lay persons and priests regarded as enemies of the system who were to be isolated should the situation so require. The Party and state authorities adapted special preventive measures in order not to allow the escalation of events. Warnings, preventive „didactic” conversations, detentions and arrests were to serve this purpose, as recommended by the chiefs of the citizens' militia (MO) and SB departments. Teachers in high schools were to deliver the message to the students about the ban on public gatherings. In addition, all forms of resistance were to be duly recorded, including within the party circles. Any sort of opposition's informational material was to be immediately and at all cost confiscated, particularly underground leaflets.

The situation began to stabilize once the changes at the top were made and Edward Gierek became the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR. A major part of the people of Kielce received gladly and accepted the vision of overall all-inclusive prosperity and building of the „Second Poland.”

Everyday life

The post-war everyday life of the people of Kielce was dominated by two basic factors: the consequences of war and the occupation, and the takeover of power by the communists and their ideological intrusions in practically all aspects of life. However, survival was of the greatest importance so the liberated city first of all tried to secure the basic means of existence in the form of rations, fuel and lodgings. The elimination of the hardships of everyday life became the priority. Food supply centers were relatively quickly established, electricity restored, and a general organizing of the city started. A great commitment of the local authorities and the residents themselves must be emphasized here. The press informed daily about liquidating the effects of war and normalization of peoples' lives.

Two weeks after the Germans were defeated, trade in Kielce was established. Starting January 20, 1945, at 8 a.m. the post office on Sienkiewicza Street, in the building which has been the postal property since 1830, began servicing customers. However, there was acute lack of phone lines to establish full communication between institutions.

Kielce medical services had tremendously difficult restart and many wounded and ill had to wait for the outpatient or hospital care. The Municipal Hospital suffered great damage at the time of the war offensive, but resumed work immediately after the Red Army entered. Under extremely difficult conditions, experiencing serious shortages of electricity and water, doctors and medical personnel organized assistance for those in need. After a few weeks, the work came back to normal. The hospital had then 400 beds in the surgical, gynecological, obstetric, isolation, TB and VD departments. The functioning of this facility as well as all of medical services in the city was seriously affected by shortages of qualified medical personnel. The problems were compounded by inadequate number of hospitals and outpatient clinics.

The surgical department was regrettably the most „popular” one and the majority of patients brought there were the victims of unexploded bombs and shells. The problem of abandoned weapons and ammunition became one of the most serious ones to deal with by the municipal authorities. Many children, youngsters and adults suffered serious injuries or were killed. In the municipal hospital which serviced people from Kielce Country beds occupying all the corridors were a common picture.

The administrative authorities were fully aware of the appalling public health situation in Kielce. Everything humanly possible was done to open the Municipal Outpatient Clinic located at 2 Plac Wolności. The immediate health assistance was made available first in three departments: general health clinic, municipal anti-trachoma and anti-VD clinics. District nurses launched a wide public awareness campaign in Kielce schools to propagate prevention and early diagnosis of the trachoma (a roughening of the inner surface of the eyelids). There was an appeal made to the public not to hide venereal diseases and unconditionally call at medical centers for help.

Food shortages, more acute or less severe in the post-war history of the city, were the hardships experienced by the people of throughout the whole period of the Peoples' Republic. So were the waiting lines an inseparable companion of the „socialist economy” until the late 1980s. In the city, after a short-lived improvement in goods supply and services based on semi-private business, the so-called 3-year economic plan (1947-1949) brought restrictions imposed on free trade. Private shops, wholesale outlets and restaurants were banned and in their place state and cooperative entities established. Already in 1945, the Fruit and Vegetable Cooperative started operating. A year later, the first milk-bar was opened. In 1947, the first State Department Store with industrial goods opened its doors. In the 1950s, shops of Centrala Foto-Optyczna (electrical, optical, photographic), Centrala Rybna (fish), Fabryka Obuwia „Chełmek” and „Radoskór” (footwear) became available. Some time later, Kielce residents could use the services of the newly opened „Delikatesy” („Delis”) in Plac Partyzantów (today's the Square), which functions to this day. The restaurants called „Jodłowa” on M. Buczka Street (today called I.J. Paderewskiego Street) and „Świętokrzyska” on Sienkiewicza Street did not enjoy favorable reputation. The network of new shops and services was by far insufficient; the supplies did not improve and the waiting lines became even longer so the only alternative was the black market.

In the Stalinist times, shortages of industrial goods, building materials and fuel were a common occurrence. However, the most pressing matter were dismal supplies of food, cleaning agents and clothing. As the problem intensified in the last quarter of 1949 and in January 1950, the temporary solution was to re-introduce vouchers starting in September 1951. Rationing of goods was stopped only in the early 1953. The authorities tried to improve the market balance by raising prices and wages, which became a commonly applied measure in the economy of the Peoples' Republic. For the inhabitants of Kielce, who made their living mostly in industry, such a solution was not welcome as the increase in wages usually did not compensate the upsurge in prices.

Those in Kielce who made better money or were simply more enterprising bought their food supplies at a local produce market at prices higher than in state retail. Meat was usually bought directly from farmers and butchers engaging in so-called illegal slaughter. Although it was illegal and severely punished, „illegal slaughter” and „smuggling” of meat and animal fat from the villages to the city were an inseparable element of the everyday life at the time of Peoples' Republic.

In the first years of the Władysław Gomułka regime, the economic policy subjected to the interests of the countries of the socialist bloc, brought short-lived benefits of more jobs and higher wages. For a moment, the waiting lines disappeared. People of Kielce, just like all citizens of the PRL, had a guaranteed social minimum, access to mass culture and education. One could say that the majority of society was equal in poverty. An ordinary weekday would start with breakfast usually consisting of a roll with margarine, jam, and a glass or cup of milk or chicory coffee. It was followed by a commute to work on a very crowded bus. Greyness dominated the streets. A dream come true was a black and white „Smaragd 902” or „Klejnot” TV set, the „Frانيا” fridge and washing machine produced at Kieleckie Zakłady Wyrobów Metalowych Polmo „SHL” (this factory quickly restarted the production of a motorcycle SHL which were manufactured also before WWII) – obviously all purchased on installments. After work, there was commute back to the much desired M-3 apartment with two rooms and a windowless kitchen. Blocks with such apartments (called skyscrapers) were built, among others, on Armii Czerwonej St. (today Sandomierska St.), M. Nowotki St. (today Biskupa C. Kaczmarka St.) and Źródłowa Street. In the streets, one could see the company cars of the Volga and Warszawa make, or those belonging to a select few more affluent citizens, usually the representatives of the authorities: Syrenka, Moskwicz, Skoda Oktavia, and Wartburg. The bicycle „Huragan” or the small motorbike „Komar” were the ultimate for youngsters. The 1960s marked the period when the first generation of Poles who did not live through the war and did not remember the rebuilding hardships became adults. They were brought up with a cultural inferiority complex about the West, were fascinated with the music of the Beatles, Rolling Stones, and with long hair, and wore trousers of the skinny or bell-bottom types, and miniskirts. In the auditorium (a sports-entertainment complex) built in 1964 on Źytnia St., the „giants” of Polish rock „Niebiesko-Czarni”, „Trubadurzy”, „Czerwone Gitary”, „No to co” or the legendary Hungarian rock group named „Omega” appeared in concerts. The group named „Perfekt” sang their iconic song of the 1980s titled *Nie płacz, Ewka (Don't Cry, Evka)*,

which characterized the generation of then contemporary Poles who above all wanted to be left in peace, through the lyrics: „Telewizor, meble, mały fiat – oto marzeń szczyt” („TV set, some furniture and a small Fiat – that’s the peak of our dreams”). At that time, the waiting lines reappeared stronger than ever. The phenomenon was present all over Poland, so also in Kielce there appeared so-called „social queues” and „waiting lists” which were a way of arranging a purchase of scarce goods. All over city, in front of the stores, „chefs” of so-called „social waiting line committee” could be heard taking the roll, among others at the furniture store on Solna St., at Warszawskie Zakłady Telewizyjne (TV equipment factory outlet) on Mielczarskiego St., similar stores on Sienkiewicza and Nowotki Streets, respectively, and in front of the furniture warehouses on Zagnańska St. Waiting lists were drawn for just about everything, including practically all goods and even meat, because even through meat was rationed, at times the supplies did not cover the amounts issued in vouchers. People spent most of their time in waiting lines which became a peculiar social gathering and the best source of gathering information by the secret police. Usually, people showered abuse on the authorities which could find no solution to this kind of life full of inaptitude and physical and spiritual torment.

However, there were a few days in a year when the party and state authorities tried extremely hard to assure that the inhabitants of Kielce participated in state celebrations in the organized, mass and joyful manner. These were the holidays of May 1, July 22, and the consecutive anniversaries of the Bolshevik Revolution. The state ruled by the PZPR was the one and only organizer of public life, hence the multitude of marches, political manifestations and numerous community actions, which were to emphasize the „bond” between the society and the party line, as termed by the official propaganda of the time. In the celebrations, there participated people rounded up in masses from factories and schools. In organizing such events there was always a possibility that the unfavorable social attitudes might disturb the proceedings, so there were always efforts made to monitor the preparations and the participation, informing the authorities about the state of affairs. The responsibility in this field lay with the fundamental party organizations. After all, it would have been inexcusable to allow a situation where a May 1 parade would be boycotted for political reasons or a minute number of people would march in front of the parade stand occupied by the highest party and administrative authorities. For many years, such a stand was situated on H. Sienkiewicza St. and later on M. Buczka St. (today called I.J. Paderewskiego St.). In efforts to boost the participation, fairs, entertainment and dancing were organized either in the city park or in the square of Obrońców Stalingradu (Defenders of Stalingrad, today Wolności (Freedom) Square)). What made it particularly grotesque is that it was the time when the most wanted and scarce product was made available for purchase on those occasions, namely the priceless toilet paper.

Political life in Kielce at the time of the PRL concentrated around the Polish United Workers’ Party, a dominant organization of the regime, and the „licensed” political powers of the United Peoples’ Party and the Alliance of Democrats. The local political color was dominated by red but a significant place was reserved for the „PAX” Chris-

tian Association with its Province Branch on Równa St., for a great many years headed by Józef Knapik. At the time, all political roads led to the building of the Voivodeship Committee of PZPR, constructed in the 1950s at 5 Żeromskiego St., jokingly named by the people of Kielce a „chapel” or the „White House”.

It was there that the most important decisions regarding the life of the city were taken. The main tenants (First Secretaries of KW PZPR) who occupied the office on the first floor included: Franciszek Wachowicz, Tadeusz Rudolf, Aleksander Zarajczyk, Maciej Lubczyński (in the 1980s) and the last one – Jarosław Motyka. On the ground floor the City Committee (KM) of PZPR was located, where the first secretaries of that party level worked. Some of them are still well-known and active politically: Zdzisław Skowron – the First Secretary of KM PZPR during martial law, and Tadeusz Józwick, the last head of the communist party in the city of Kielce. After the dissolution of PZPR, Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SdRP) found its seat in that building after the convention of January 1990. Jerzy Daniel became its first chairman, and after his resignation new authorities of the Voivodeship Council of SdRP were elected, led by the young scholar from the Institute of History of the Teachers’ College, former secretary of the College Committee of PZPR from late 1980s, Dr. Wojciech Saletra. Aleksander Gołoszczukow became the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the party.

Practically, the only institution independent from the state and enjoying much societal support was the Church. The elevation of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła to the position of St. Peter’s successor solidified this respect even more. For people of Kielce, who in their majority were Roman-Catholics, it was a very special moment restoring the true meaning of the notions so abused by the former propaganda, such as patriotism, independence, and democracy. Several years later, in June 1991, Pope John Paul II in his fourth pilgrimage to Poland visited also Kielce and after the meeting with the diocese hierarchy led by Bishop Stanisław Szymecki, celebrated a mass in the apron area of the airport in Masłów for thousands of people from Kielce Region. How different was that celebration from those experienced at the time of communism when the Church and its people were subjected to various forms of persecution. The capital of Kielce Region, alongside with Roman-Catholic Church, is also a place of activity of Protestant churches and some other religious denominations, including the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, the Evangelical Methodist Church, the Church of Evangelical Christians, the Baptist Union of Poland, Polish Pentecostal Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church.

Freedom. System transformation

„Every human being and every nation must experience a limitation of freedom as pain and injustice. Freedom is due to every man, and limiting it leads to protest, rebellion or even war”.

These words voiced by Polish bishops a month after the declaration of martial law were an expression of protest against the brutal action of the authorities and halting

the nation's march towards freedom. On Sunday December 13, 1981, armored vehicles appeared in the city streets together with strengthened patrols of the army and the peoples' militia. General Wojciech Jaruzelski announced on TV the imposition of martial law and the creation of the Military Council of National Salvation (WRON). That way another attempt at reforming socialism was brutally terminated by the communists who simply did not wish to share the power with authentic representatives of the nation. In the days to follow, people of Kielce received the news about hundreds of activists of Kielce Region „Solidarity” being detained. The local prison at Piaski, by the order of the Minister of Justice dated to December 13, 1981, was made one of the internment institutions. According to the recently published list of detainees, over 360 people were arrested and detained. Today, it is very difficult to assess how many of them actually were from the city of Kielce. Some stayed behind bars just a few days, but there were others who spent several months in the cells. There were also cases when people were detained twice (25 people) or even three times (1 person). Many citizens, after the initial jail time at Piaski, were then transferred to other prisons. Such a fate awaited, among others, Waldemar Bartosz – member of the Presidium of Kielce Regional Board (ZRŚ) of NSZZ „Solidarity”; Eugeniusz Bednarczyk from the Factory of Specialized Vehicles „Polmo-SHL” in Kielce – chairman of the factory commission and member of the Regional Board of NSZZ „Solidarność”; Juliusz Braun – journalist of *Echo Dnia*; Mirosław Domińczyk from Kielce Enterprise of Building Installations – chairman of ZRŚ NSZZ „Solidarność”; Edmund Sarna – a magnificent teacher and coach of many track and field athletes in Kielce, teacher at the Second Economic Lyceum in Kielce; Jerzy Stępień – company lawyer at the R&D Center at the Factory of Bearings and Components in Kielce, member of the Regional Board of NSZZ „Solidarność”, and many others. Once martial law was imposed with-in the operation named „Jodła” („Fir Tree”), academic teachers of the Higher Teachers' Training School, activists of the company branch Committee of NSZZ „Solidarność” were jailed, including Eugeniusz Gromada, dr. Józef Płoskonka, and dr. Stanisław Żak. A review assessing the political attitudes of academic teachers of the school was also one of the consequences of martial law imposition. That course of action was concluded with a motion to the Ministry of Science, Higher Education and Technology to terminate the employment of the eminent researcher on the history of captive Poland in the post-partition time, prof. Eligiusz Kozłowski, as of January 31, 1982. The documents of the former Security Service archived at the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) clearly show that the party authorities together with the security apparatus were especially afraid of the opinion-forming circles and devoted much attention to them in their operations. In January 1982, the list of academic teachers whose political attitude according to the authorities „raised many objections” included: Tadeusz Moszyński, dr. Stanisław Styrz, Janusz Zawadzki, Edward Dąbrowski, dr. Irena Furnal, Krzysztof Skupieński, dr. Lech Stępkowski, Jerzy Osiecki, Tadeusz Kubicki, dr. Barbara Stachurka, Justyna Gałol, Jadwiga Broniś, and dr. Alicja Malik. At the school, there existed a network of informers. Data published by historians and researchers dealing with IPN archives show that in 1987 the authorities had

35 secret agents at the school: 14 academic teachers, 14 students, 5 administrative employees, and 2 employees of the school's printing house. Other work places in Kielce were kept under constant surveillance in a similar manner.

The city party authorities (led by the First Secretary Zdzisław Skowron) and their province equivalent (with the First Secretary Maciej Lubczyński), working with the security apparatus, while fighting „Solidarność” tried to defend „socialism as if independence”. But this march to freedom could not have been stopped. In the years 1982-1988, people of Kielce participated in various forms of resistance against WRON and the policies of the party authorities. The reports compiled by the chiefs of the Province Command of the Peoples' Militia, sent to Department III of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw document the forms of resistance and the scale of such actions in a much detailed way. The inhabitants of Kielce were guilty of breaking the martial law: street manifestations were organized, underground leaflets distributed, strikes organized at work places, collections taken for the repressed people. On the anniversary of martial law imposition, on the 13th of each month candles were lit and placed in the windows. There many spontaneous examples of defiance by citizens of Kielce dated to those very dramatic years, but only a few, for obvious reasons, can find its place in this work. In January 1982, three drivers were arrested at the Municipal Transport Company and charged with being activists of „Solidarność” who never ceased their union work and allegedly continued their „subversive-sabotage activities”; in May it was disclosed that both Kielce schools of higher education distributed the information bulletin published by the Student Protest Committee in Kielce, as well as the „Monitor Świętokrzyski” compiled by the Region's „Solidarity.” In addition, on May 13 that year, much bigger, several-dozen-strong strikes took place in Kielce factories to mention only Fabryka Urządzeń Chemicznych i Armatury Przemysłowej, Fabryka Łożysk Tocznych „Iskra” and Fabryka Samochodów Specjalizowanych „Polmo-SHL”. The communist authorities had not managed to pacify the public sentiments until the late 1980s. It was to happen again and again that the streets of the center of Kielce witnessed manifestations of protest led by Kielce activists of the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN), among them the late Zygmunt Pęksyk, later Kielce Councilman, creator and chief of the Municipal Guard in Kielce, and the then student of the Institute of History at the Higher Teachers' Training School and today the Secretary of the City Janusz Koza.

In those difficult times, only in churches one could feel somewhat free due to the steadfast attitude of Catholic Church, Kielce Bishop Stanisław Szymecki, and the priests. Every single church service on the anniversary of the national holiday was an occasion to manifest peoples' deep attachment to independence and the „Solidarity”. People of Kielce, gathered at the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Cathedral, during a mass would intone the song „Oh Lord, return to us our free Homeland” and to protest by making the Victory sign. There was pastoral work organized specially for different groups, be it blue collar workers, artists, teachers, university or high school students. Church-affiliated organizations and parishes distributed international relief donations to those in need.

The deteriorating economic situation in the country, repeated strikes noted also in Kielce factories, forced the authorities to sit at a table and negotiate. People of Kielce, just like the majority of Poles, placed great hope in the news about preparations for the Round Table talks. Nobody even suspected, however, that this event of such tremendous importance in contemporary history, when viewed in retrospective, would in essence become a triumphant comeback of the „Solidarity” to the political scene and mark the beginning of an end of the rule of PZPR. Although the matter of rebuilding local self-government was entered in the record of differences of the final Round Table Agreement, the electoral success of the „Solidarity” candidates in the elections to the Sejm (lower house of Polish parliament) and the Senate (upper house of Polish parliament) on June 4, 1989 made way to building grassroots democracy. It was made possible through the Bill on Local Governments passed on March 8, 1990. That marked the beginning of the administrative reform started in 1998 which not only transformed the administrative map of the state but above all inaugurated a laborious task of developing civic society. It was now the society that is supposed to develop and engage in building local communities as well as recreating societal fabric.

In the first free and democratic elections after WWII, which took place on May 27, 1990, the new City Council of Kielce was chosen. A decisive victory was registered by Kielce Citizens’ Committee of the „Solidarity” which entered 40 candidates out of 50 available places. The Independence Electoral Bloc, created by KPN and the Polish Peoples’ Party (PSL), won four seats, while Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland, established a few months after the dissolution of PZPR, won two seats. The remaining four seats were won by Kielce neighborhood’s committees. These elections were a breakthrough as they marked the resurrection of local governments all over Poland, in Kielce, and opened a new chapter in the history of the city.

Arkadiusz Płoski, Robert Rzepka, and Jolanta Daniel were in succession the first city mayors of Kielce in the sovereign Poland. The City Council, just like the political scene in the country, reflected political changes. Kielce leftists grouped in the coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance governed the city in the second half of 1990s. Starting in 2002, the pendulum swung to the right and the rightists began to dominate and became the majority in the City Council, led by the Local Government Accord and Wojciech Lubawski. In 2006, i.e. at the time when Law and Justice (PiS) enjoyed its biggest support, Krzysztof Słoń became the City Council Chairman. After the elections of 2010, the city has been run by the wide coalition of the Local Government Accord led by Wojciech Lubawski, which enjoys the majority in the 25-people strong council, together with the Civic Platform (PO) and SLD. Kielce Left enjoys a strong position and can turn the scales. Owing to the agreement-seeking and long-sighted policies of the leader of the SLD city structures, Joanna Grzela, the party supported Tomasz Bogucki of the Local Government Accord in the elections for the chairman of the council. In exchange, SLD gained the position of Deputy Chairperson and the leadership of two commissions.

Over twenty years have passed since the first democratic elections in Poland. Kielce has managed to remain a political, administrative, economic and cultural center

of the region. The city houses voivodship authorities and is the seat of a municipal and rural county, which allows this city with a population surpassing 200 thousand people to play a significant role. The central government offices as well as local ones, together with the most important companies in the region have their seat here. Several institutions of higher education function in the city, led by Kielce University of Technology and The Jan Kochanowski University. Kielce is also a location for Świętokrzyskie Centrum Onkologii (The Holy Cross Oncological Center), one of the most modern facilities of this kind in Central Europe, specializing in early diagnoses of breast, cervix, and prostate cancer.

Due to its geographic location as well as historical circumstances, Kielce for years has functioned as an important trade and industrial center of national importance. Its central location supported by a good network of roads and railway tracks allow to reach the biggest cities in the country like Warsaw, Krakow, Lodz or Silesia relatively quickly. „Targi Kielce” („Kielce Trade Fairs”) has become the city’s flagship. It is a meeting place for representatives of the biggest companies of various industries, information exchange forum as well as a place for establishing business relations of the leading trade and commerce enterprises of national and international importance. „Targi”, functioning on the Polish market for several years now, made Kielce the second most important center in the exhibition industry in Poland. Nearly 200 thousand guests of the fairs visit the city and region annually which translates into the increase in economic and tourist attractiveness of Kielce land. „Targi Kielce” is the driving force of economic growth for hotels, food services, cultural and entertainment industry, and transport services. It exerts tremendous impact on the development of infrastructure. The number of events organized by the „Targi Kielce” and above all its size, determines the functioning of the regional sector of tourist services. In addition, it intensifies and improves the quality of international relations and shapes the image of Kielce as a reliable and serious economic partner. Trade expos are not the only flywheel for the local or regional economy as the city is known also for its construction industry, building materials, electrical and machine, food and processing industries.

The economic situation of the city translates also into the quality of cultural life determining this aspect to no little degree. All year long, Kielce houses numerous events which gather thousands of people. The city boasts of many institutions which attract people and are evidence of the rich cultural life, which includes museums, stage and movie theaters, and above all the Kielce Culture Center and Kielce Region Philharmonics. The city has several artistic societies which animate the cultural life in the city such as the union of cultural associations „Baza Zbożowa” and the house of artists called Pałacik Zielińskiego. Kielce’s showpiece is the wonderfully situated amphitheater Kadzielnia, which owing to the recent renovation and retractable roof has become a unique feature of the region.

The location of the city is its unquestionable advantage. Kielce is the biggest city in the region and may boast of unique natural values both in the country and all over Europe. Surrounding Kielce land area has seven attractive hiking and five bicycle trails. In the vicinity of the city, there are much interesting and well-known tourist attractions

like the castle in Chęciny, the cave „Raj” („Paradise”) or the oldest oak tree in Poland named „Bartek”. The Świętokrzyskie (Holy Cross) Mountains are not far away, and they offer a chance for active pastime in natural environment. In addition, recently made infrastructural investments make the city and region a much promising tourist location in this part of the country as well as a center for winter sports.

The sports infrastructure of the city has 9 sports venues (with auditoriums), 5 swimming pools (for of them roofed), 8 big training facilities, 5 stadiums (1 for field and track, 1 multifunctional, and 3 soccer ones), 8 football pitches, 14 tennis courts, and 2 downhill ski runs with lifts. The five-kilometer-long bicycle rout leads from the artificial lake at Szydłówek, along the rivulet Silnica, J. Gagarina St. and Legionów Avenue, next to Kadzielnia all the way to Stadion Leśny (Forest Stadium). Currently, an additional bike route is being built towards Witosa St.

On April 1, 2006, one of the most modern football stadiums in the country was opened in Kielce, with the capacity of 15,500 spectators. It is equipped with two-level roofed stands, the main pitch with a heated field measuring 105 by 68 meters, lighted with lamps of 1411 lx, wide range of facilities for fans, professional sound system and the additional training fields.

That very same year, on August 25, a brand new sports venue was finished on Boczna St. It is a facility for team handball, basketball, volleyball, court tennis, field and track, as well as a venue for cultural event. The venue has a capacity of 3 thousand. Good sports infrastructure in Kielce is accompanied by good results of local teams. The city can boast of four different teams in the top leagues: „Korona” (soccer); „Vive-Targi Kielce” and „KSS” (team handball), and „Effector” (volleyball).

The years 2002-2010 – progress or stagnation?

Out of the period of over twenty years of transformation and economic and social development of Kielce, Wojciech Lubawski held the position of the city mayor for half of that time. During that time, the legal position of a mayor and importance local governments grew significantly under the *Act of June 20, 2002, on direct elections of borough leaders and mayors*. This legal act of statutory character introduced a new structure of municipal executive power, which is different than the ones on voivodeship or county levels. It is now one person; comes straight from the direct vote by people and the people may dismiss the mayor through a referendum. Such a regulatory framework strengthened the political position of mayor and legitimized his/her power to govern the city. It was solidified by an entry into the Statutes of the City, chapter 9, stating that mayor is the single executive authority of the City of Kielce. The mayor manages the current affairs of the city, represents the city externally, is the head of the Municipal Office which implements the resolutions of the City Council and performs the tasks as prescribed by law. Hence, the mayor plays one of the most important roles on the lower level of public administration. At the same time, the mayor bears full responsibility for the political consequences resulting from his/her actions, which are subject to public approval.

The local government elections of 2002 became an important turning point in contemporary history of Kielce for a number of reasons. For the first time, mayor of the city was elected through a direct vote. It also marked the beginning of an end of the leftist rule in the city and initiated the slow process of changes in electoral preferences among the inhabitants of Kielce. The changes came not necessarily because of the bad governing of the previous authorities led by Mayor Włodzimierz Stępień, but were rather a result of a general national feeling of fatigue with the rule of the SLD-UP (Labor United) and PSL coalition. All of that was compounded by the political mistakes made by the previous mayor of Kielce. In consequence, after the following four years the political affiliation of the city council changed and today it is dominated by the Wojciech Lubawski's group, Civic Platform and Law and Justice.

People's assessment of the rule of Mayor Wojciech Lubawski throughout all those years is positive. Obviously, the political opposition has a different opinion but the opposition is expected to do exactly that. The positive assessment was evidenced by the fact that people of Kielce once again voted Wojciech Lubawski to Mayor of the city in 2006. This happened in the first round of elections and the candidate won by a landslide. The actions of the Mayor of Kielce in the latest nine years should be judged by the maxim: „It's only those who do nothing that make no mistakes”. And so much has really been done. Some accomplishments have already been mentioned in this text but Wojciech Lubawski as mayor is mostly perceived through his achievements cultural developments in the city. During his term, among others, an international Competition for Designers and Fashion Enthusiasts called „Off Fashion” was organized by the city of Kielce, and the Museum of the History of Kielce established as well as the Gallery of Contemporary Sacred Art in the so-called Dom Praczek (The House of a Washerwoman).

The latest several years in the history of Kielce mark a period of development. Nevertheless, there still exist many shortcomings which trouble the people of Kielce. One can easily say that the problems never subside but that life rather brings along new ones. Possibly the most worrisome is the fact that the population of the city slowly but systematically decreases. The tendency is not to be blamed only on the falling birth rate but, unfortunately, on the decline of the city's attractiveness for the young. This is a constant trend which for the first decade of the 21st century could not be reversed or at least halted. Much has been written and talked about Kielce in that time, and the vision of the city's development has been realized together with the bold ideas posed by Mayor Wojciech Lubawski. People of Kielce are pleased with the level and direction of changes which have occurred in the city within that time. In the survey run in 2008 by „Gazeta Wyborcza”, as much as 54 percent of respondents stated that the mayor manages the city well, Kielce keeps developing under his governance, and its residents enjoy a higher standard of living. The city has grown more beautiful and a great deal of investment has been made, which even the staunchest critics cannot question. Many people living in Kielce take a great pride in their city.

Streszczenie

KIELCE W LATACH 1945-2010. SZKIC DO OBRAZU SPOŁECZNO-POLITYCZNEGO MIAST

Historia nie jest dyscypliną z nauk ścisłych, gdzie o efekcie końcowym decyduje eksperyment. Najważniejszą materią dla historyka jest źródło pisane. Poziom naszej wiedzy o epoce historycznej wynika przede wszystkim z zaawansowania badań podstawowych jakie zostały przeprowadzone. I tu dotykamy delikatnej kwestii dotyczącej historii najnowszej. Wiele źródeł z różnych przyczyn była i jest niedostępna dla historyków. Tak też było w przypadku najważniejszych wydarzeń z najnowszej historii Polski oraz również historii regionu i miasta. Dopiero w demokratycznym państwie, możemy od kilku lat badać i poddać krytyce dokumenty wytworzone przez organy władzy centralnej, jak i terenowej. W tym te najbardziej istotne, a zgromadzone w Instytucie Pamięci Narodowej obejmujące głównie dokumenty centralnych i terenowych instytucji Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych z czasów PRL-u.

Upłynął jednak zbyt krótki okres czasu, aby mogły powstać opracowania kompletne i wyczerpujące. Chociaż te drugie w naukach historycznych występują bardzo rzadko, albo wcale. Albowiem historyk nie może stwierdzić, że w tej sprawie zrobił już wszystko i zbadał problem do końca. Tym bardziej, że każdy historyk uwarunkowany jest środowiskiem, w którym wzrastał, określonym systemem wartości oraz epoką, w której kształtował swoje poglądy, prezentuje również swój punkt widzenia. Ale bez źródła pisanego nie jest jednak w stanie zobjektywizować wydarzenia i starać się przekazać czytelnikom rzetelną o nim wiedzę.

Wyżej zasygnalizowane wątpliwości badawcze oraz sugestie metodologiczne odnoszą się również do prezentowanego niżej opracowania, które w wielu miejscach zaledwie sygnalizuje niektóre wydarzenia z powojennej historii Kielc i traktuje je w sposób przyczynkarski. Jest to efekt stanu badań nad historią Kielc w czasach najnowszych.

Mimo szeroko zakrojonej kwerendy źródłowej oraz przeglądu prasy i literatury przedmiotu nie mogło powstać dzieło kompletne, gdyż na to nie pozwalał przede wszystkim obecny stan badań. Jednak nie zniechęciło to autora do przedstawienia opracowania, które będąc szkicem dziejów Kielc w latach 1945-2010 stara się również dotknąć wiele drażliwych i trudnych chwil w jego historii. Po drugie przedstawienie takiego obrazu życia mieszkańców na przestrzeni czasowej tych kilkudziesięciu lat XX i początkach XXI w., przecież nie musi wyczerpywać tematu, a wręcz przeciwnie powinno stanowić zachętę dla historyków do kontynuowania badań, aby w przyszłości wreszcie powstała monografia kompletna i zadawalająca jak najszerze rzesze czytelników.

Résumé

KIELCE DANS LES ANNEES : 1945-2010. L'ECQUISSE AU TABLEAU SOCIO – POLITIQUE DE LA VILLE

L'histoire n'est pas une discipline des sciences exactes dans lesquelles de l'effet final décide l'expérience. la plus importante matière pour l'historien est la source écrite. Le niveau de notre connaissance de l'époque historique est un résultat avant tout des recherches de base les plus avancées, qu'on a déjà réalisées. Et ici nous touchons à la question délicate, qui concerne l'histoire la plus récente., Pour des raisons différentes de nombreuses sources étaient dans le passé, et sont encore maintenant inaccessibles pour des historiens. C'était comme ça aussi dans le cas des plus importantes événements de l'histoire la plus récente de la Pologne, ainsi que l'histoire de la région et de la ville. C'est à partir de quelques années dans l'Etat démocratique que nous pouvons mener des recherches et soumettre à la critique, les documents élaborés par les institutions du pouvoir central, et du pouvoir local. Aussi ces documents qui sont les plus essentiels, complétés dans l'Institut de Mémoire Nationale, qui comprennent principalement les documents des institutions centrales et territoriales de la Ministère des Affaires Intérieures de l'époque de la République Populaire de Pologne.

Le temps qui est écoulé est encore trop court pour la création des publications complètes et minutieuses. Bien que ces dernières dans des sciences historiques se paraissent très rarement, ou jamais. L'historien ne peut pas affirmer que dans ce sujet il a tout fait et il a examiné le problème jusqu'au bout. Surtout que chaque historien est conditionné par le milieu dans lequel il grandissait, par le système de valeurs et par l'époque dans laquelle il formait ses opinions. Il présente aussi son point de vue. Mais sans source écrite, il n'est pas capable d'estimer objectivement un événement et de tâcher de transmettre aux lecteurs le savoir minutieux et véritable sur cet événement.

Ces doutes de recherche et des suggestions méthodologiques, signalisées ci-dessus concernent aussi l'oeuvre présentée ci-dessous, qui dans beaucoup de fragments signale à peine de certains événements de l'histoire de Kielce de la période d'après la guerre, et les traite d'une façon iniciatrice. C'est l'effet de l'état des recherches sur l'histoire de Kielce dans les temps les plus récents.

Malgré une fouille précise de nombreuses oeuvres de source, ainsi que la revue de la presse et de la littérature de matière, l'oeuvre complète ne pouvait pas encore être élaborée, avant tout l'état actuel des recherches dans ce domaine ne le permettait pas. Mais cet obstacle ne décourageait pas l'auteur de présenter la publication, qui étant l'esquisse des événements de Kielce dans des années 1945-2010 tâche aussi de toucher à beaucoup de moments susceptibles et difficiles dans son histoire. En plus la présentation d'un tel tableau de la vie des habitants dans l'espace temporelle de ces quelques dizaines de XX^e et du début de XXI^e siècle, ne doit pas épuiser le sujet. Contrairement, elle doit constituer l'encouragement aux historiens à la continuation des recherches, pour créer dans l'avenir une monographie complète et satisfaisante de plus grands groupes de lecteurs.

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