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Soviet sources of the economic policy in Poland in 1947–1956*¹

Just as other Central and Eastern European countries subordinated by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics after the war – referred to in official nomenclature as people’s democracies² – Poland was made increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union. This dependence was enforced not only in the political and military spheres but also in the economic domain. Manifesting initially in unfavorable economic relations with the USSR, the subordination transformed over time into the need to adopt the economic strategy imposed on Poland by Moscow.

During the first two post-war years, the communists emphasized that each of the people’s democracies would pursue different paths to a communist system, at the time called a “socialist” one. Even as late as 1946, it would be difficult to find evidence that the Kremlin pushed for an increased pace of transition from a “people’s democracy” to the “socialist” paradigm³. The process accelerated after the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties (Cominform) was established on 27 September 1947 at a conference of representatives of the European communist parties in Szklarska Poręba⁴.

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² Shortly after the war, the term “people’s democratic state” officially denoted a transitional, non-revolutionary form between the capitalist state and the socialist state, in accordance with the programme drawn up back in 1935 at the 7th Congress of the Comintern.

³ A. Skrzypek, *Mechanizmy uzależnienia. Stosunki polsko-radzieckie 1944–1957*, Pułtusk 2002, p. 150.

⁴ See more broadly in M. Golon, *U źródeł „zimnowojennego” podziału świata – powstanie i działalność Biura Informacyjnego Partii Komunistycznych i Robotniczych (Kominformu) w latach 1947–1950*, Toruń 2002.

Besides the transformation of political systems, the so-called people's democratic states embarked on the reception of the Soviet economic model. In subsequent months, those countries would depart from their previous economic systems, which had developed in specific natural conditions and geographical surroundings. They had also been characterized by distinct production structures and developed their own international economic relations. However, following the aforementioned conference, they saw hitherto unknown economic solutions being introduced for strategic reasons. The economic infrastructure of the Soviet bloc countries would be taken advantage of by the USSR, primarily for military purposes. The arms race which accompanied the so-called Cold War left its mark on the economic strategy of the Soviet satellites. Their economic potential was to meet the USSR's military requirements for conventional weapons. Meanwhile, armaments in the Soviet Union itself were subordinated to a costly program of developing nuclear weapons.

The process of economic unification of people's democratic states was stimulated by the creation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) at a conference held in Moscow on 5–8 January 1948, which constituted a response to the Marshall Plan. In the course of successive periods, the objectives set for the Council by the Soviet headquarters varied. In general, its main task was to coordinate economic cooperation, economic plans and trade exchange, as well as expedite industrialization. In practice, the functioning of the Comecon caused increasing dependence of the communist countries on the USSR. The integration of the economic systems of those countries during the Cold War was necessary from Stalin's point of view so as to prompt faster economic development and get the industrial potential of the entire bloc ready to meet the pace of armaments in the event of a conflict with the states of the Western world⁵.

Tighter cooperation was required from the communist countries to adopt a new economic strategy, one which would enable them to undergo a transformation resembling changes which had taken place in the USSR in the 1930s. The implementation of reforms was dutifully and scrupulously handled by the newly established communist parties. There was no room in the bloc of communist states for any autonomy or attempts to create an independent regional federation. The Yugoslav crisis redoubled Moscow's pressure for closer economic integration of the states within the bloc. The Soviet headquarters left them no leeway of autonomy that would have allowed for local economic specificities. After the Second Meeting of the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (in which delegates of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia did not participate) on 19–23 June 1948 near Bucharest, the question of collectivization was already treated as a directive by the communists from the European states subordinate to the USSR⁶.

⁵ A. Skrzypek, *op. cit.*, pp. 175, 232–233, 236, 239.

⁶ Resolution of the Information Bureau on the Situation in the Yugoslav Communist Party – see: “Nowe Drogi” 1948, no. 10, p. 17.

Collectivization of agriculture and the associated class struggle in the countryside (in the course of which the rich peasant class was eliminated) was a prelude to intensive industrialization, which, in line with the Soviet model, was to be based on the expansion of heavy industry. That necessity was not driven solely by ideological reasons (i.e. striving to change the social structure by increasing the number of workers) but, above all, from strategic considerations. As already noted, at a time of increasingly tense international relations – especially after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 – the USSR sought to boost the pace of armaments, while the expansion of the arms industry had to rely on heavy industry and mining⁷. The dependence of Central European countries on the USSR doomed them to directions of economic development which, given their interests, were disadvantageous⁸.

The years following the establishment of the Cominform witnessed an economic transformation during which the Soviet economic model was implanted across the various communist states, there. As the expansion of the industries which produced arms and means of production had to be financed, the societies of those countries were compelled to make enormous sacrifices. Shortages of basic consumer goods in the market, and failure to accomplish the objectives of economic plans in terms of real wages, agricultural production and consumption, significantly lowered the living standards in Central and Eastern European countries and provoked responses from their citizens. In some countries, the people staged protests, demonstrations and strikes in an attempt to express their resentment and disapproval of the authorities, the existing order and the top-down economic solutions. Such developments were also seen in Poland⁹.

Immediately after the war, the platforms of most political milieus in Poland asserted the need for economic reform. The broad consensus was that the war-ravaged economy called for prompt action to bring about fast-paced national development. Holding actual power, the communists at first officially agreed with the conceptions of the Polish Socialist Party (PSP), which presumed a three-sector ownership structure in the economy¹⁰.

⁷ See: Z. Kazimierski, *Polski przemysł zbrojeniowy w latach 1945–1955*, Warsaw 2005, pp. 77–83.

⁸ The economic standing of the Eastern bloc states is discussed in greater detail in *Rozwój gospodarczy europejskich krajów socjalistycznych*, ed. V. Průcha, Warsaw 1981; *The system of centrally planned economies in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe after World War II and the causes of its decay*, Eleventh International Economic History Congress Milan 1994; International Pre-Congress Conference, Univ. of Economic, Prague, March 24–26 1994, ed. V. Průcha, Prague 1994.

⁹ By way of example, one could cite the brutally suppressed uprisings in Berlin (1953), Poznań (1956) and Budapest (1956) – see e.g.: A. Bust-Bartels, *Powstanie berlińskie 17 czerwca 1953. Likwidacja ruchu samorządowego i etatyzacja przemysłu*, Warsaw 1981; Ł. Kamiński, A. Małkiewicz, K. Ruchniewicz, *Opór społeczny w Europie Środkowej w latach 1948–1953 na przykładzie Polski, NRD i Czechosłowacji. Wstępny raport z badań*, Wrocław 2004; *Ku wolności. Powstanie poznańskie 1956*, ed. M. Jędraszewski, Poznań 2006; M. Horvath, *1956 – rozstrzelana rewolucja. Walka zbrojna Węgrów z interwencją sowiecką*, Kraków 2006.

¹⁰ The activists of the PSP advanced such concepts even in the first post-war months – see: Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archives of Modern Records] (hereinafter as AAN), Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej (hereinafter as CKW PSP), 235/XV/23, Protokół posiedzenia Rady Gospodarczej przy CKW PSP, 12 XII 1945, items 65–69.

Most likely, this was due to the fact that over the first two years after the war Stalin himself did not insist on Polish communists adhering strictly to the Soviet models. The reasons for such a position on Stalin's part are difficult to ascertain today. Perhaps he had not yet conclusively formulated his views on the role of Poland in USSR policy and the exact nature of relations between the two states (was Poland to continue as a separate state, albeit dependent on the USSR, or become another Soviet republic?). On the other hand, the international situation may not yet have had a decisive influence on Stalin at that time. Such elements of the so-called Cold War as Harry Truman's doctrine of containment and the Marshall Plan became factors only in the first half of 1947. Moreover, Stalin's approach may have been dictated by the adopted political tactics. It is not unlikely that in the first months after the war, he did not wish to cause Poles, who had been traditionally averse to communism, to be equally antagonistic towards the new government. Perhaps he believed that the path of evolution rather than revolution was more expedient.

As a result, the activists of the Polish Workers' Party (PWP) initially declared officially that individual ownership in agriculture would be permitted, denying the accusations that they aimed for forced collectivization¹¹. The concept of land reform, which the communists announced in 1944, did not promote increased commodity output of the fragmented peasant farms and contradicted the concept of agrarianism propounded by the People's Party in exile and later by the domestic Polish People's Party¹². On the other hand, they took a negative view of private ownership in industry¹³. At first, the PWP and the PSP formally concurred that the making of a new political system should allow for the specific circumstances, which would be referred to as the "Polish road to socialism"¹⁴. However, this did not mean full economic independence. Stalin did not forgo the design

¹¹ Let us add that already in the first months after coming to power, a number of Polish communists did not hide that the agrarian reform and the continued existence of individual farms was only a temporary departure from the collectivization of the countryside – see: AAN, Komitet Centralny Polskiej Partii Robotniczej (hereinafter as KC PWP), 295/XII-152, Protokół z narady poświęconej omówieniu statutu Związku Samopomocy Chłopskiej, 16 XII 1944, items 2–9. However, from the standpoint of the political interests of the PWP, it was pointless at the time to advertise plans for village cooperatives – see: M. Nadolski, *Kwestia chłopska w polityce stronnictw robotniczych i ludowych w Polsce w latach 1941–1947*, Warsaw 1990, p. 56. Cf. W. Gomułka, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 2, Warsaw 1994, p. 477.

¹² Decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation of 6 September 1944 on the Implementation of Land Reform, Journal of Laws of 1944, no. 4, item 17; R. Gross, *Założenia polityki rolnej w Polsce w programach głównych partii i stronnictw politycznych (1939–1945/1946)*, "Echa Przeszłości" 2020, vol. XXI/1, pp. 298–304.

¹³ Changes of ownership in industry were introduced under the Act of 3 January 1946, which in fact sanctioned its nationalization; essentially, any enterprises which employed more than 50 workers per shift would go into the hands of the state, subject to compensation. There were two exceptions to this rule: 1. Businesses belonging to the citizens of the German Reich as well as traitors and collaborators were to be taken over by the state without compensation and irrespective of the number of workers; 2. Industrial enterprises in the 17 key sectors of the economy listed in the Act were to be seized upon compensation, the number of the workers employed per shift notwithstanding – see: Act of 3 January 1946 on the Acquisition of the Essential Branches of the National Economy into State Ownership, Journal of Laws 1946, no. 3, item 17.

¹⁴ See more broadly in J. Jagiełło, *O polską drogę do socjalizmu. Dyskusje w PWP i PSP w latach 1944–1948*, Warsaw–Kraków 1984.

to make Poland economically dependent on the USSR; here, one of the most important elements of economic subordination was the striving to monopolize Poland's foreign trade. To accomplish that goal, a system of non-equivalent terms of trade was imposed on Poland by virtue of economic agreements. In 1945, the Soviet authorities forced Poland to sign an extremely unfavorable coal agreement, under which it would supply coal to the USSR at a special, tenfold lower price than the contemporary world price. In reality, it amounted to little more than the mining cost (USD 1 per ton)¹⁵. A number of other agreements further compounded Poland's economic dependence on the USSR, which, in return for loans for the reconstruction and development of industry, obliged Poland to supply various goods¹⁶. A similar mechanism was used in the agreements concerning the supply of grain to Poland. The first was signed as early as 8 February 1946¹⁷. Interestingly, agreements of this kind were signed with Stalin's approval, even when the USSR itself was facing a grain deficit in the internal market¹⁸.

In Poland as such, the directions of Poland's economic development in the first three years after the end of hostilities were decided by two milieus: one centered around Hilary Minc at the Ministry for Industry and Trade (MIT), which endorsed the economic concepts of the PWP. The other was composed of economic activists from the Central Planning Office (CPO)¹⁹, who clearly subscribed to the ideas espoused by the PSP²⁰.

¹⁵ Agreement of 16 August 1945 on the Damage Caused by the German Occupation, [in:] *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich* (hereinafter as *Dokumenty i materiały*), vol. 8: *January 1944 – December 1945*, compiled by E. Basiński et al., in collaboration with H. Adalińska et al., Warsaw 1974, doc. 315, pp. 582–583. Moreover, the agreement deprived Poland of access to American loans for the reconstruction of its industrial infrastructure, including the coal mines which supplied the Soviet industry, as this was disadvantageous from Washington's point of view.

¹⁶ Such as the loan of 50 million rubles and USD 6.5 million (total USD 16.4 million) granted to Poland on 9 April 1945 – see: Agreement of 9 April 1945 on Interest-Free Loan, [in:] *Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. 8, doc. 239, p. 433–434.

¹⁷ Agreement of 8 February 1946, [in:] *Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. 9: *January 1946 – December 1949*, compiled by E. Basiński et al., in collaboration with W. Diechtiarienko et al., Warsaw 1974, doc. 11, pp. 16–17.

¹⁸ A. Skrzypek, op. cit., pp. 147–148.

¹⁹ The CPO was formally established on 10 November 1945 (see: Decree of 10 November 1945 on the Establishment of the Central Planning Office at the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers, Journal of Laws 1945, no. 52, item 298), although it actually had begun to function somewhat earlier (the CPO emerged from the initial concept to create the Chief Office for Economic Planning – see: AAN, CUP, 192/921, Projekt zarządzenia Prezesa Rady Ministrów o statucie organizacyjnym Głównego Urzędu Planowania Ekonomicznego, item 1–3). The principal task of the CPO was to elaborate multi-year economic plans approved by the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers (ECCM) and promulgated as acts of parliament. The only multi-year economic plan prepared by the CPO which was put into effect was the Three-Year Economic Reconstruction Plan for 1947–1949. Its main objective in the initial stage of implementation was to raise the living standard of the population as quickly as possible by means of agricultural development and increased production of industrial consumer goods. The final stage saw a “shift from the priority of producing consumer goods to manufacturing goods” – see: Act of 2 July 1947 on the Economic Reconstruction Plan, Journal of Laws 1947, no. 53, item 285, art. 21–22. The Three-Year Plan is discussed more extensively in J. Kaliński, *Plan odbudowy gospodarczej 1947–1949*, Warsaw 1977.

²⁰ Although it follows from pertinent lists that the leadership of the office was predominantly non-partisan and that the PSP members outnumbered their PWP colleagues only marginally, the CPO soon began to be associated with PSP influence – see: C. Bobrowski, *Wspomnienia ze stulecia*, Lublin 1985, p. 160.

Heading the planning agency was economist Czesław Bobrowski²¹, an extremely important figure. Under his leadership, the CPO became a body which, next to planning, was involved in coordinating the economic policies of the various ministries, although it was not an institution with superior authority. That coordination was carried out “by means of inter-ministerial discussion and cooperation” but no decisions were imposed on the bodies responsible for particular economic affairs²².

PWP’s “victory” in the parliamentary elections of January 1947²³, as well as suggestions from the Kremlin to concentrate the management of economic processes in the hands of the state²⁴, prompted the party’s activists to advance economic concepts modelled on the Soviet transformations. The first indications that the economic course was about to change were seen at the Plenum of the PWP Central Committee on 13–14 April 1947. Hilary Minc, in charge of economic transformation on behalf of the PWP, gave a speech in which he arraigned the private sector in trade. The chief intention of Minc’s speech was to bring about such a restructuring of domestic trade that it would be completely subordinated to the state administration²⁵. In its wake, the Parliament adopted three June laws²⁶ whose enforcement over the next few months set in motion the process of liquidating privately owned shops and wholesale outlets. That undertaking was sup-

²¹ Czesław Bobrowski (1904–1996) was a lawyer, economist, and diplomat. Before the war, he worked in the economic department of the Ministry for Industry and Trade, and in 1935–1939 held the position of Director of the Economic Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Reform. Founder and editor-in-chief of the *Gospodarka Narodowa*. Bobrowski was an advocate of economic statism. During the war, he cooperated with the Polish Government in Exile, among other things. Author of an expert opinion on the domestic economic policy after the war, in which he argued for the introduction of economic planning.

²² AAN, CUP, 192/982, Sprawozdanie z konferencji prasowej prezesa CUP C. Bobrowskiego w sprawie roli i zadań CUP oraz aktualnej sytuacji gospodarczej, 13 II 1946, items 2–4.

²³ Formally, the victory was won by the so-called Democratic Bloc: an electoral coalition comprising the PWP, PSP, People’s Party, and the Alliance of Democrats. According to falsified results, 80.1% of the votes were cast for the Bloc and 10.3% went to the opposition, i.e. the Polish People’s Party. The pre-election agreement stipulated the following distribution of future seats obtained by the Bloc: PWP and PSP – 31% each, People’s Party – 27%, Alliance of Democrats – 11%. Given that the activists of the so-called Lublin faction of the People’s Party and a number of “crypto-communists” from the PSP were thoroughly loyal to the PWP, the election “results” may be deemed a success of the PWP. For more on the 1947 elections to the Sejm see: *Kampania wyborcza i wybory do Sejmu Ustawodawczego 19 stycznia 1947*, selected, prefaced and compiled J. Wrona, Warsaw 1999; *Koniec jałtańskich złudzeń. Sfałszowane wybory – 19 I 1947*, ed. M. Wenklara, Kraków 2007; C. Osękowski, *Wybory do sejmu z 19 stycznia 1947 roku w Polsce*, Poznań 2000.

²⁴ A. Skrzypek, op. cit., pp. 81–82.

²⁵ As regards the economic concepts, the communists decided to “push them through the Sejm despite the PSP” – see: Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee of 3 May 1947, [in:] *Protokoły posiedzeń Biura Politycznego KC PWP 1947–1948. Dokumenty do dziejów PRL*, issue 15, selected and compiled by A. Kocharński, Warsaw 2002, p. 58.

²⁶ Act of 2 June 1947 on Combating High Prices and Excessive Profits in Commercial Trade, Journal of Laws 1947, no. 43, item 218; Act of 2 June 1947 on Citizen Fiscal Commissions and Social Veters, Journal of Laws 1947, no. 43, item 219; Act of 2 June 1947 on Authorizations for Operating Commercial Businesses and Performing Trade Activities as a Profession, Journal of Laws 1947, no. 43, item 220.

ported by the Special Commission for Combating Economic Fraud and Malfeasance, established in 1945, which intensified its activities²⁷.

The new policy towards the private sector in trade also initiated a political squabble between the communists and the socialists. The leaders of the PWP presumed that the PSP activists would seek greater independence after the elections. Advancing a program which opposed the hitherto three-sector arrangement in the economy and had previously brought the two parties together deepened the rifts in the already internally divided PSP, weakened the party and caused its so-called right wing to be eliminated²⁸. The communists decidedly aimed to have trade taken over by the state sector, which they were opposed to by the socialists, who explicitly affirmed the cooperative movement²⁹.

That “battle for trade” proved a prelude to a far more profound transformation of Poland’s economic model, which ultimately was to resemble the system functioning in the USSR. As early as the autumn of 1947, PWP activists began to denounce the objectives stated in the three-year plan drawn up by the CPO. The main allegations included inadequate reckoning of industrial investment in the allocation of funds and methodological errors, e.g. the failure to follow the USSR’s planning experience. On December 20, 1947, during a meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee, Minc presented his own investment plan for 1948. The plan was officially signed by the MIT and approved by the PWP’s top leadership, allocating significantly more funds towards investment³⁰.

The final decision to attack the CPO was taken at the next meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee two weeks later. The draft investment plan for 1948 prepared by the CPO was deemed “inept and devoid of Marxist foundation”. Subsequently, a decision was taken to prepare a memorandum on the flawed planning methods employed by the CPO, to be conveyed to the leaders of the PSP. Furthermore, it was

²⁷ The activities of the Commission are discussed more broadly in: D. Jarosz, T. Wolsza, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym 1945–1954. Wybór dokumentów*, Warsaw 1995; P. Fiedorczyk, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym 1945–1954. Studium historycznoprawne*, Białystok 2002. On the local dimension of the Commission’s activities see: R. Tomkiewicz, *Olsztyńska Delegatura Komisji Specjalnej do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym 1945–1954*, Olsztyn 1995; W. Tomczyk, *Delegatura Komisji Specjalnej do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym w Rzeszowie 1946–1954*, Rzeszów 2007; L. Szuba, *Komisja Specjalna do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym i jej delegatura bydgoska (1945–1954)*, Toruń 2009.

²⁸ T. Kowalik, *Spory o ustrój społeczno-gospodarczy Polski 1944–1948* (underground publication), Warsaw 1980, p. 59.

²⁹ AAN, CKW PPS, 235/XV/96, Uchwała narady spółdzielczej PPS, 17 II 1946, items 1–4; AAN, CKW PPS, 235/XV/96, Spółdzielczość a trzyletni plan gospodarczy, 6 III 1946, items 95–107; Wystąpienie Stanisława Szwalbe podczas posiedzenia Sejmu Ustawodawczego w dniu 31 V 1947, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z posiedzenia Sejmu Ustawodawczego w dniu 31 V 1947 r.*, [in:] *Sprawozdania stenograficzne z posiedzeń Sejmu Ustawodawczego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Sesja zwyczajna wiosenna 1947*, Warsaw 1947.

³⁰ Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee of 20 December 1947, [in:] *Protokoły posiedzeń...*, p. 150.

resolved that Minc – aided by “his apparatus”³¹ – would draw up a counter-plan in line with the previously approved premises. The question of the planning methods adopted by the CPO would be addressed at a later joint meeting of the core officials of the PWP and the PSP³².

The memorandum was indeed formulated and conveyed to the Central Executive Committee of the PSP on 7 January 1948. The CPO’s draft investment plan for 1948 was censured primarily for erroneous, “non-Marxist” – as it was worded – method of calculating national income, which included all services (e.g. trade, transport, the work of the free professions), as well as for developing three separate sector-specific plans, which – according to MIT officials – would diminish the role of workers in national revenue. In addition, the authors were reproached for overlooking “the most important issues”, i.e. labor competition, quality of industrial products, increasing output per hectare in agriculture, austerity measures, and “raising the cultural level of the countryside”. However, those objections – whose importance was, in fact, only secondary – served the PWP activists to formulate a generalized assertion, namely: “planning in the Central Planning Office has gone down a blind alley”³³.

A week later (15 January 1948), a Polish delegation composed of Józef Cyrankiewicz, Władysław Gomułka and Hilary Minc paid a visit to Moscow, during which Stalin persuaded his guests of the need to up the pace of industrialization in Poland, build a larger steelworks than planned, possibly to achieve increased arms output; also, when constructing a passenger car factory, the Poles were not to enter into a deal with the Italian Fiat but manufacture Soviet vehicles. As Andrzej Skrzypek notes, one of the factors which may have influenced Stalin’s decision to have Poland industrialized so quickly as part of the prospective multi-year plan was that substantial resources in the existing production sectors of the Soviet economy were redirected to the new USSR arms program involving nuclear weapons. The resulting gap was to be offset by the Polish industry producing for the USSR³⁴. After the meeting with Stalin, the communists were certain that the concept of Soviet accelerated industrialization conflicted with the PSP’s economic program. Hence, they were convinced that the latter party had to be stripped of its influence on economic policy, “purged” of its so-called “right-wing” activists and absorbed, only to impose their own economic program on the united party.

Following the Moscow visit, the so-called CPO debate (also known as the CPO process) was held. It took place on 18–19 February 1948 at the headquarters of the Council

³¹ Meaning the officials at the MIT.

³² Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee of 3 January 1948, [in:] *Protokoły posiedzeń...*, p. 155.

³³ AAN, KC PPR, 295/XI/194, Memorandum w sprawie błędnych metod opracowania planu gospodarczego na 1948 r. przez CPO, 7 I 1948, items 45–46.

³⁴ A. Skrzypek, op. cit., p. 198.

of Ministers. Attended by the leading economic activists of the PWP and the PSP, it was a top-level meeting, being chaired by the Secretary General of the Central Executive Committee of the PSP, Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz, whereas the PWP was represented by, e.g. the Secretary General of the Central Committee Władysław Gomułka and Political Bureau member Jakub Berman³⁵.

The first to speak was Hilary Minc³⁶, who reiterated the allegations levelled against the CPO in the memorandum of 7 January 1948. Listing its principal errors, Minc mentioned the “false” method of calculating national revenue as well as the incorrect ratios determined between the revenue, consumption and production. He argued that the CPO’s plan prioritized consumption rather than production, which was inconsistent with the planning methodology developed in the USSR. Moreover, he found that the CPO staff had failed to adequately allow for the possibility of mobilizing the masses in the pursuit of various indices in the plan, which was also contrary to the Soviet planning model, in which a tremendous role was attributed to the voluntarist attitudes of the communist society³⁷.

As designated by J. Cyrankiewicz, the supplementary address was delivered by Tadeusz Dietrich, who was already being influenced by the PWP. Dietrich’s speech was recalled years later by Jan Drewnowski, Director of the Long-Term Planning Department at the CPO. According to his account, Dietrich’s presentation was substantively poor and failed to refute the allegations made by the PWP; what is more, the author agreed with them on some points³⁸.

Subsequent speakers alternated according to their party affiliation (a member of the PSP followed a PWP member). The PWP activists all took a stand in a very sharp, aggressive and virulent manner³⁹. Apart from Minc’s, one of the major speeches was delivered by the Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade, PWP member Eugeniusz Szyr. Discussing the essence of the dispute between the two economic centers (MIT and CPO), he

³⁵ T. Kowalik, op. cit., p. 81.

³⁶ Excerpts from the paper and final speech by H. Minc delivered on 18 and 19 February 1948 – see: H. Minc, *O właściwe metody planowania w Polsce*, “Nowe Drogi” 1948, no. 8, pp. 17–38. A transcript of the so-called “CPO debate” has not been preserved in the national archives (it is not to be found in the respective CPO, PWP Central Committee, and the PSP Central Executive Committee collections at the Archives of Modern Records). The content of some speeches has survived only in private collections (held e.g. by prof. Tadeusz Kowalik), of which a proportion has been published – see: *Wizje gospodarki socjalistycznej w Polsce 1945–1949. Początki planowania. Materiały źródłowe*, compiled by H. Jędruszczak, Warsaw 1983, pp. 587–620.

³⁷ H. Minc, op. cit., pp. 24–31. On the mobilization of the masses as an element in Soviet economic plans see: C. Bobrowski, *U źródeł planowania socjalistycznego. Analiza doświadczeń radzieckich*, Warsaw 1967, pp. 116–117. In the following months, the communists stressed the necessity of a planned increase in productivity by promoting mass labour competition (socialist emulation) movement – see: AAN, KC PPR, 295/XI/8, Stenogram posiedzenia Wydziału Ekonomicznego KC PPR, 31 III 1948, items 3–4.

³⁸ J. Drewnowski, *Proces Centralnego Urzędu Planowania w 1948 roku*, “Zeszyty Historyczne” 1974, no. 28, p. 44.

³⁹ The fact is recalled by Henryk Różański, who attended the meeting – see: H. Różański, *Śladem wspomnień i dokumentów (1943–1948)*, Warsaw 1988, p. 524.

asserted that it boiled down to distinct perceptions of the role of investment policy. Specifically, CPO planners were decidedly in favor of limiting investment. Moreover, Szyr explained one of the main reasons behind the attack on the CPO. He found that the mode in which the CPO operated to date had only worked well during the initial reconstruction period. The obligations arising under the economic agreements signed with, e.g. the USSR, required a thorough transformation of the economic apparatus centered around a single planning agency⁴⁰. Thus, he admitted that the Polish planning center was burdened with the responsibility of securing the production of those goods which, according to the agreements, were to be exchanged with the USSR. There is no doubt that the allegations raised by Szyr originated from Moscow. Reducing investment at the expense of consumption was not in line with the new guidelines for economic development in Poland that the Kremlin headquarters had formulated since the meeting in Szklarska Poręba and reaffirmed during the January visit of the Polish delegation to Moscow⁴¹.

At the end of the second day of debate, Bobrowski took the floor, speaking in a constructive fashion as he sought to justify rather than attack. He complained that the statistical methods had not yet been sufficiently developed, which hampered the work of the CPO, and that the statistical data entry forms did not meet the requirements⁴². Both the content and the tenor of what the criticized CPO president said surprised his colleagues. They had expected far more firmness and factual arguments to counter the allegations made by the PWP activists⁴³.

As a direct aftermath of the so-called CPO debate, the agency saw some personnel changes among its top officers. Just a few days later, Bobrowski resigned to be succeeded by a socialist yielding to PWP influence, Tadeusz Dietrich⁴⁴. Two of Bobrowski's associates managed to retain their positions as CPO vice-presidents: Kazimierz Sokołowski of the PSP and the non-partisan Jacek Rudziński. However, Stefan Jędrychowski and Leon

⁴⁰ *Przemówienie wiceministra przemysłu i handlu Eugeniusza Szyra*, 19 February 1948, [in:] *Wizje gospodarki...*, pp. 590, 598–600.

⁴¹ A. Skrzypek, op. cit., p. 202.

⁴² *Przemówienie prezesa CUP Czesława Bobrowskiego*, 19 February 1948, [in:] *Wizje gospodarki...*, pp. 608–609.

⁴³ J. Drewnowski, op. cit., p. 47

⁴⁴ In his memoirs, Bobrowski describes the circumstances of his own resignation. He wanted to submit it already a month before the discussion of 18–19 February 1948, but J. Cyrankiewicz did not allow it. Following the discussion, Bobrowski was contacted by the chairman of the PSP Central Executive Committee, Michał Rusinek, who urged him to step down. On that occasion, however, it was Bobrowski who did not wish to do so: "Finally", Bobrowski recalls, "I was bribed by Rusinek: «If you resign, you will get whatever embassy you want, except for the four or five most important ones». [...] In practice, the choice was not that wide. Sweden happened to be available" – see: C. Bobrowski, *Wspomnienia ze stulecia...*, pp. 198–199. The decision to dismiss Bobrowski and appoint T. Dietrich in his place was made at the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP on 25 II 1948. Simultaneously, it was put forward that Bobrowski be appointed an envoy in Stockholm – see: Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee of 25 II 1948, [in:] *Protokoły posiedzeń...*, p. 178.

Kasman – two new vice-presidents from the PWP – began to play an increasingly important role at the CPO⁴⁵.

Following that leadership reshuffle, the MIT communists gathered around H. Minc and forced through their own draft National Economic Plan (NEP) for 1948⁴⁶ and then for 1949. Investment outlays on the industry controlled by the MIT increased from 66.5 billion zloty in 1948 to 131.2 billion zloty in 1949⁴⁷. They were also able to proceed quite hastily with a concept for a new, multi-year economic plan in line with the USSR model while rejecting the methods used so far by the CPO and discarding the draft of the twelve-year plan developed by that agency⁴⁸. As early as March 1948, the MIT Planning Department supplied the CPO with the preliminary theses of a six-year industrial development plan for 1950–1955, predicting a rather bold growth rate in industrial production (95% over a six-year period). The adoption of the six-year perspective was designed to align the planning cycle in Poland with the Soviet five-year system. The amount of industrial investment was to reach 970 billion zloty⁴⁹. With considerable enthusiasm, the main premises of the new six-year plan were presented by the Minister for Industry and Trade to the Unification Congress on 18 December 1948⁵⁰, and later to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland as it debated the enactment of the pertinent bill⁵¹.

From the standpoint of H. Minc and his communist economic associates at the MIT, the changes at the CPO were indispensable if the Soviet economic model was to be introduced in Poland. A fairly autonomous center of planning thought, such as the CPO, was not acceptable to H. Minc, who, guided by the Soviet solutions, strove for greater centralization of the economic management system. The dismissal of Bobrowski and the

⁴⁵ The decision to have Stefan Jędrzychowski assume the function of the first and Leon Kasman second vice-president of the CPO was taken at the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee on 17 III 1948 – see: Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee, 17 III 1948, [in:] *Protokoły posiedzeń...*, p. 194.

⁴⁶ AAN, KC PPR, 295/XI/8, Stenogram posiedzenia Wydziału Ekonomicznego KC PPR, 31 III 1948, items 9–36.

⁴⁷ Act of 9 March 1948 on the National Economic Plan for 1948, Journal of Laws of 1948, no. 19, item 134; Act of 31 March 1949 on the National Economic Plan for 1949, Journal of Laws of 1949, no. 26, item 189.

⁴⁸ AAN, CUP, 192/2967, Wytyczne planu długoterminowego, 23 IX 1947, items 30–31.

⁴⁹ AAN, CUP, 192/2976, Tezy do sześcioletniego planu rozwoju przemysłu w latach 1950–1955, undated, items 1–59. Already in May 1948, the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee obliged H. Minc to present a paper on the six-year plan at one of the meetings of that body in August. However, due to the tension in the PWP provoked by Gomułka's speech at the June plenum, Minc did not acquaint the members of the Bureau with the guidelines of the six-year plan until 11 November 1948 – see: Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee, 25 V 1948, [in:] *Protokoły posiedzeń...*, p. 216; Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee, 11 XI 1948, [in:] *Protokoły posiedzeń...*, pp. 320–321.

⁵⁰ Naczelne Archiwum Cyfrowe [National Digital Archives] (hereinafter as NAC), 33-T-148, Unification Congress of the Polish Workers' Party and PSP. Speech by H. Minc, Minister for Industry and Trade of 18 December 1948, recording from the Central Broadcasting Station of the Polish Radio in Warsaw.

⁵¹ NAC, 33-T-50, Report on the deliberations of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 21 July 1952, enactment of the law on the six-year plan. Speakers: A. Polewka – MP, Minister H. Minc – Chairman of the SEPC and W. Barcikowski – Deputy Marshal of the Sejm.

reshuffle involving head officers of the CPO was a start to the takeover of the day-to-day administration of the economy by Minc's people and the MIT apparatus. Those efforts culminated in the adoption of the Act of 10 II 1949, which finally abolished the CPO and established the State Commission for Economic Planning (SCEP) instead⁵². It was headed by the chairman of the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers (by virtue of which the activities of the ECCM obtained statutory sanction)⁵³. Both functions were held by H. Minc. The tasks of the SCEP included controlling the entirety of state planning, as well as coordinating economic activities of "all departments of state administration" (enterprise organization, price setting, wage policy, delivery of the financial plan). Moreover, the SCEP obtained prerogatives to supervise the implementation of economic plans and work on "issues of the national economy"⁵⁴. As a result, a monstrous entity emerged – reminiscent of the Soviet Gosplan⁵⁵ – which acted not only as a central planning body but also as a "super-ministry" coordinating the current economic policy of the state.

The aforementioned act also fragmented the former Ministry for Industry and Trade into six minor ministries: Mining and Energy, Heavy Industry, Light Industry, Agricultural and Food Industry, Internal Trade and Foreign Trade⁵⁶. This measure eliminated the MIT, which had been a powerful center with a major impact on the country's economy, while the smaller ministries were easily subordinated to the SCEP. In administrative terms, Poland's economy was thus prepared for the reception of the Soviet model.

The successive drafts of the six-year plan showed a definite tendency towards a steady increase in industrial investment rates. In the premises for the so-called second prospect of the six-year plan developed by the MIT in July 1948, the rate in question was raised to 1,300 billion zloty⁵⁷. In the aforementioned Act of 21 July 1950, the projected outlays on industry rose to 2,535 billion zloty⁵⁸.

Involving tremendous expenditure, those extremely ambitious goals were also contingent on the USSR credit assistance, the amount of which was set at USD 450 million

⁵² Act of 10 February 1949 on the Change in Organization of the Chief Authorities of the National Economy, Journal of Laws 1949, no. 7, item 43.

⁵³ Ibidem, art. 1–3 and 6, section 1.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, art. 5.

⁵⁵ Gosplan (abbreviated from Государственная Плановая Комиссия – СССР) was the State Planning Committee, of the USSR. Established in 1921, the institution was initially responsible for economic forecasting. It drafted the so-called *Control Numbers*: documents containing predicted rates of economic development in individual economic branches and sectors. In the late 1920s, when the USSR embarked on its first long-term economic plan and after the 1929 reform of the Soviet economic administration, it became the central planning body with an elaborate internal structure equipped with appropriate instruments for directive planning.

⁵⁶ Act of 10 II 1949 on the Change in Organization of the Chief Authorities of the National Economy, Journal of Laws 1949, no. 7, item 43, art. 15 and 16.

⁵⁷ AAN, CPO, 192/2977, Notatka wicedyrektora Departamentu Przemysłu CPO Stanisława Jezierskiego w sprawie opracowań II rzutu planu sześciolletniego dla przemysłu państwowego, 24 VII 1948, items 34–38.

⁵⁸ Act of 21 February 1950 on the Six-Year Plan for Economic Development and Building the Foundations of Socialism for 1950–1955, Journal of Laws 1950, no. 37, item 344, chapter II, section 6.

already in 1948. That amount was to be largely converted into ready-made facilities, complete conglomerates and industrial plants brought to Poland from the USSR. On 29 June 1950, another loan agreement was signed, according to which Poland was to receive a loan of USD 100 million for the purchase of plant and equipment in the USSR, provided that Poland pay half the value of the equipment supplied on an ongoing basis⁵⁹. The actual reasons why the USSR, whose economy had enormous needs, opted for such large-scale financial support to Poland are difficult to determine today. The factor which seems the most important was that the USSR aimed for a very close integration of the Polish economy (and that of other Eastern European countries) with its own to create one strongly interconnected system⁶⁰.

The confidential part of the six-year plan included a two-year scheme to reorganize the Polish Army (1951–1952), whose implementation was supervised by Marshal Konstanty Rokossowski. In addition to personnel changes, which involved, e.g. the deployment of several hundred Soviet officers to Poland, the military was to be supplied with more arms. However, the premises of the aforementioned act concerning the pace of industrialization in the six-year period 1950–1955 proved insufficient in the following months. The Korean War of 1950–1953 could have turned into another world war, for which the USSR and the bloc of communist states had to prepare. The fact that ambitious economic goals needed time and resources was ignored by Stalin. Moscow's decision to speed up industrialization and especially arms production in the communist countries had an inevitable impact on their economic policies. Thus, arms production was given priority in the investment agenda. The changes introduced in the autumn of 1950 were intended to subordinate the economic planning and administration framework to military objectives. On 18 November 1950, Piotr Jaroszewicz, Deputy Minister of National Defence and Chief Quartermaster of the Polish Army, became vice-chairman of the SCEP in charge of coordinating economic activities to promote development of arms production⁶¹. It follows from Jaroszewicz's account that Stalin wanted the armament of the communist countries to match the combat equipment of the US troops fighting in Korea within three years. Drawn into the arms race by the USSR, the Polish economy had to undergo a shift from civilian to military production. The entire work of revising the plan was supervised by Vasily P. Nikitin, deputy chairman of the Gosplan, who was sent to Poland by Stalin as an advisor⁶².

⁵⁹ The USSR undertook to equip more than 30 industrial plants: mines, steelworks, metallurgical and chemical facilities, AAN, Państwowa Komisja Planowania Gospodarczego (hereinafter as PKPG), 274/2988, Protokół, 27 X 1950, item 45.

⁶⁰ Even so, A. Skrzypek notes that the autarkic premises adopted in the six-year plan were cited as a counterargument to that proposition – see: A. Skrzypek, op. cit., p. 271.

⁶¹ P. Jaroszewicz, B. Roliński, *Przerrywam milczenie... 1939–1989*, Warsaw 1991, pp. 117–121.

⁶² A. Skrzypek, op. cit. p. 275.

In the following months, the pace of armaments picked up. The Kremlin-led Coordinating Committee for the Military Affairs of the Communist States, established in early 1951, requested that Poland build 53 arms factories by 1955 and establish 92 manufacturing departments geared towards arms production at the existing plants. The undertaking was to be carried out in Poland in a covert manner, i.e. within the framework of the Central Board of the Construction Machinery Industry. The secret plan for the development of military production significantly affected the overall results of the six-year plan, leading to diminished production of consumer goods and means of production for civilian purposes⁶³.

Such an approach to investments was in line with the so-called “method of leading links”, which had been practiced in the USSR in the 1930s. With a chronic shortage of funds, it served to categorically prioritize certain tasks of the plan (in this case, armaments) over others. That mode of determining priority investments and economic sectors, which would receive a broad flow of internally accumulated funds, actually led to an economic imbalance. Certain economic needs were fully met, while others were ignored⁶⁴.

Still, in late 1952 and early 1953, the Soviet design to create a unified economic organism, consisting of the economies of the communist countries coupled with the USSR economy, was collapsing. The gigantic investments in industrialization to boost the expansion of the arms industry consumed a vast proportion of the countries’ budgets, promptly causing deficits in the supply of consumer goods to the population. The difficult supply situation in Poland was not improved by the policy pursued by the authorities towards small industries and crafts. The drive to do away with small private industrial plants and individual craft enterprises and gearing state-owned small and medium industries, as well as cooperatives, towards production for investment purposes exacerbated the existing disparities in production⁶⁵. The concurrent collectivization of the countryside compounded the adverse effect on the supply of foodstuffs. To counter the poor situation on the market, attempts were made to introduce food rationing (1951–1952)⁶⁶ and commercial prices (from 3 October 1953)⁶⁷.

⁶³ See more broadly in Z. Kazimierski, op. cit., pp. 226–243.

⁶⁴ C. Bobrowski, *U źródeł planowania...*, pp. 107–111.

⁶⁵ Compared with the preceding year, the value of the 1951 output of the state-owned small and medium industry grew twofold while workers’ co-operatives increased efficiency by 120%. However, in both cases, priority was given to products belonging to group A, i.e. means of production – see: AAN, PKPG, 274/5673, *Analiza wykonania planu 6-letniego (1949–1955) przez drobną wytwórczość*, item unnumbered; AAN, PKPG, 274/5673, *Ocena wykonania planu 6-letniego przez spółdzielczość pracy*, item unnumbered.

⁶⁶ A. Zawistowski, *Trzy próby walki z nierównowagą w handlu detalicznym – trzy okresy reglamentacji artykułów pierwszej potrzeby w Polsce Ludowej*, “Kwartalnik Kolegium Ekonomiczno-Społecznego. Studia i Prace” 2011, no. 3, pp. 113–115.

⁶⁷ Bierut travelled to the Kremlin in early November 1952 to seek Stalin’s consent to the introduction of commercial prices in Poland. Stalin then accused Jewish-born members of the PUDP leadership of pursuing

Following Stalin's death and the end of the Korean War, the countries of Eastern Europe – and the USSR – saw efforts to reduce armaments and even out the resulting disproportion in economic development. In Poland, the previous economic strategy was reviewed on 29–30 October 1953 during the 9th Plenum of the Central Committee PUWP; consequently, a decision was taken to reallocate some of the funds to promote agricultural development and increase the production of consumer goods⁶⁸. These goals were formulated in more precise terms during the 2nd Congress of the PUWP (10–17 March 1954); a suggestion to change the economic policy was advanced by N. Khrushchev, who attended the event as a guest⁶⁹. It was decided during the Congress to intensify industrial production oriented towards the technological development of agriculture, as well as increase the quantity, range and quality of the consumer goods output. Simultaneously, one emphasized the need to maintain a high development rate in heavy industry, align the scope of production to the requirements of the economy, raise the quality and reduce the cost of production⁷⁰. The declared changes did not entail any reorganization in major positions, meaning that they would be carried out by the former political outfit, which posed quite a threat to the success of the prospective transformation⁷¹.

After 1953, the Soviet headquarters also briefly outlined other objectives of the aforementioned Comecon. At the fourth session of that body (26–27 March 1954), it was agreed that the previous economic policy of the Eastern Bloc countries based on socialist industrialization and autarky required modification. It was asserted that greater emphasis be placed on the production of consumer goods in order to elevate the living standard of people in communist countries⁷². The economies of the latter were to be linked through a system of cooperation, while specialization of production was stated as the goal of development. However, as early as 1955, the Comecon once again became a vehicle through which Gosplan directly intended to administer the economies of the Eastern Bloc countries, including Poland⁷³.

As previously noted, loans were a crucial device used by the Kremlin to tie the Polish economy with the USSR, as they compelled Poland to export a specific range of goods

a policy that was contrary to the interests of workers, which may have been related to the anti-Semitic purge in the USSR that he was preparing – see: J. Chyliński, *Jaki był Bolesław Bierut. Wspomnienia syna*, Warsaw 1999, p. 193; A. Skrzypek, op. cit., p. 306.

⁶⁸ IX Plenum Komitetu Centralnego PZPR, Warsaw 1953, pp. 71–95; M. Jastrząb, *Manewr gospodarczy? Korekta polityki ekonomicznej na IX Plenum Komitetu Centralnego PZPR w 1953 r.*, “Przegląd Historyczny” 2003, no. 94/1, pp. 43–58.

⁶⁹ A. Skrzypek, op. cit., p. 328.

⁷⁰ II Zjazd PZPR. *Sprawozdanie Komitetu Centralnego PZPR*, Warsaw 1954, pp. 49–61.

⁷¹ J. Kaliński, *Polityka gospodarcza Polski w latach 1948–1956*, Warsaw 1987, p. 89.

⁷² Communiqué of the Polish Press Agency on the Comecon Session, 28 III 1954, [in:] *Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. 10: *January 1950 – December 1955*, compiled by W. Balcerak et. al., in collaboration with W. Diechtiarienko et. al., Warsaw 1982, p. 324–325.

⁷³ A. Skrzypek, op. cit., pp. 370–371.

to the former. Trade with the Soviet Union in the early years of the six-year plan grew steadily, reaching its peak in 1954. Goods exported to the USSR accounted for 37.9% of total Polish exports, while imports from the USSR accounted for 37.2% of total Polish imports. Such a large share of the USSR in Polish trade was associated with an attempt to monopolize it. Meanwhile, Poland's debt to its eastern neighbor was growing. In 1954 alone, Poland was expected to export goods worth USD 35 million to the USSR as repayment of its loans. Towards the end of 1955, Poland's overall debt on long- and medium-term loans exceeded 2.1 billion foreign-exchange zloty⁷⁴, of which 1.9 billion were the liabilities to the USSR, whereby funds obtained for armaments accounted for just over half of that amount⁷⁵.

In the process of adopting Soviet economic solutions, the collectivization of agriculture proved a particularly difficult endeavor. Even at the meeting of communist party activists in Szklarska Poręba in September 1947, Władysław Gomułka claimed that the PWP had relinquished the idea of collectivization "for quite a long period". However, his position was not shared by the entire PWP leadership, and that rift among the highest political echelons was known to the Kremlin. A memo drafted on 4 April 1948 by Leonid Baranov, Nikolai Pukhlov and Vladimir Ovcharov entitled "On the anti-Marxist ideological statements of the PWP leadership" alleged, e.g. that Polish party heads (with Gomułka and Minc explicitly named) lacked a clear and precise policy concerning collectivization of agriculture⁷⁶.

Moscow's pressure had its effect. As early as 1 July 1948, during a meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee, H. Minc presented the guidelines on the economic and social system, which included the task of establishing production cooperatives, i.e. the Polish variety of collective farms. The guidelines were elaborated in a paper which Minc delivered at the plenum of the PWP Central Committee on 3 September 1948, describing the prospective transformation in the countryside and agriculture and stating the tenets of the agricultural policy that – as it turned out – remained in force in Poland until 1956. Drawing on the Soviet solutions, Minc made a class breakdown of the peasantry into three groups: the poor, the middle stratum and the rural capitalists⁷⁷. Furthermore, he also characterized the three forms of production cooperatives to be introduced in Poland⁷⁸.

⁷⁴ One foreign-exchange zloty was equivalent to ¼ US dollar, or 0.2221 gram of gold.

⁷⁵ J. Kaliński, *Nierównowaga zewnętrzna gospodarki Polski Ludowej*. "Kwartalnik Kolegium Ekonomiczno-Społecznego. Studia i Prace" 2011, no. 3, p. 45; A. Skrzypek, op. cit., pp. 336, 373.

⁷⁶ *Polska – ZSRR. Struktury podległości. Dokumenty WKP(b) 1944–1949*, compiled by G.A. Bordiugow et. al., Warsaw 1995, pp. 204–217.

⁷⁷ H. Minc, *Bieżące zadania Partii w zakresie polityki gospodarczej i społecznej na wsi*, "Nowe Drogi" 1948, no. 11, pp. 156–183.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*. The introduction of a model consistent with the Soviet kolkhoz, announced by Minc in 1948, followed a slightly modified paradigm. In 1949, the statutes of three types of Polish production cooperatives

On 11 November 1948, Minc discussed the premises of the six-year plan at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee and obtained the approval of the party's top leadership to set a collectivization benchmark of 35% for peasant farms; the subsequent five-year plan for 1956–1960 envisaged the completion of the “building of socialism” in Poland⁷⁹. However, the official version of the six-year plan – as enacted by the parliament – did not include precise information on the planned rate of collectivization but only vaguely provided that “the State shall create conditions for a major proportion of the farms to be taken over by socialist production cooperatives”⁸⁰.

As the Kremlin saw it, Polish authorities proceeded somewhat tardily in the matter of collectivization, of which Stalin was advised by Viktor Lebedev, USSR ambassador in Warsaw, in a letter dated 26 February 1950. The ambassador noted that cooperativization of the countryside was carried out primarily in the so-called Regained Territories⁸¹. This issue was most likely raised by Stalin during Bierut's visit to Moscow in March 1950, as soon thereafter – at the 4th Plenum of the Central Committee PUWP (8–10 May 1950) – a commitment was made to establish two thousand production cooperatives by the end of 1950⁸².

The outcomes of the six-year plan were unsatisfactory. With respect to the initial benchmarks set by the Act of 21 July 1950⁸³, the only goal in which it succeeded was increased industrial production (158% planned, 172% achieved), while the remaining essential objectives were not accomplished. The national revenue was envisioned to increase by 112% in the six-year period, but growth reached only 73%. Agricultural production increased by 13% instead of 50%, whereas real wages rose by a mere 4–13%, as

were drafted: type I – land cultivation associations, copies of the Soviet Associations for Joint Cultivation of Land (Товарищество по совместной обработке земли – ТОЗ); type II – production cooperatives, where in addition to labour input the area of contributed land was taken into account in the distribution of income; type III – cooperative groups, in which the sole criterion for the distribution of profits was labour input. The statute of the fourth type of cooperatives – called IB – was developed as a combination of types I and II in 1950. With the terms and conditions of membership as in type I, the profits were shared following the arrangement of type II cooperatives (i.e. also inclusive of the labour input). See more broadly in J. Tepicht, *O statutach spółdzielni produkcyjnych*, Warsaw 1950; A. Kita, W. Jurek, A. Niedźwiecki, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna w świetle ustawodawstwa i doświadczeń*, Warsaw 1956.

⁷⁹ Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the PWP Central Committee, 11 XI 1948, [in:] *Protokoły posiedzeń...*, pp. 320–321.

⁸⁰ Act of 31 July 1950 on the Six-Year Plan for Economic Development and Building the Foundations of Socialism for 1950–1955, Journal of Laws 1950, no. 37, item 344, chapter II, section 47.

⁸¹ Letter from the USSR Ambassador in Warsaw Viktor Lebedev to Joseph Stalin, 26 II 1956, [in:] *Polska w dokumentach z archiwów rosyjskich 1949–1953, Dokumenty do dziejów PRL*, issue 12, selected and compiled by A. Kochański et al., Warsaw 2000, doc. 13, p. 73.

⁸² A. Skrzypek, op. cit., pp. 260–261; R. Gross, *Przemiany gospodarcze wsi na Warmii i Mazurach w latach 1945–1956*, Olsztyn 2019, p. 267.

⁸³ Those baseline benchmarks were later raised in view of the tense international situation. In the plan for 1951, production growth rates were thus increased from 120% to 123.4% (performance in 1950 = 100%) – see: J. Kaliński, *Polityka gospodarcza...*, p. 74.

opposed to the targeted 40%. Per capita consumption was expected to grow by 50–60%, and the actual rate was 30–44%.⁸⁴

Despite the growing disparities and tensions, the Soviet economic model was deliberately perpetuated in Poland until 1956 (with minor adjustments in 1954). After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, increasingly strong signals from the USSR suggested the need to increase living standards and reduce armaments and investment. A fairly open critique of the previous economic strategy, which rested on the intense development of heavy industry and armaments, was heard at the 2nd Congress of Polish Economists (7–10 June 1956). Eugeniusz Szyr, a close associate of H. Minc, was dismissed from the post as president of the SCEP a month later, whereas the former was compelled to step down after another three months, completely lost his influence on the current economic policy and was removed from the Political Bureau of the Central Committee PUWP. The need for alterations in the current economic model was also recognized at the top of the government. During the 7th Plenum of the Central Committee PUWP, which began on 18 July 1956, J. Cyrankiewicz explicitly stated that the living standard of the citizens had not risen sufficiently due to excessive investment in armament and industry. An additional difficulty, he claimed, was that the level of food production in Poland was too low⁸⁵. In view of the Soviet disarmament decisions⁸⁶, the Polish government decided in August 1956 to reduce the Polish army by 50,000 soldiers. A proportion of the previous production capacity of the Polish arms industry could thus be freed to produce consumer goods. The Soviet declaration on disarmament resulted from the change in Soviet war doctrine, according to which the main strike force would rely on strategic missile troops. This entailed a significant shift in Poland's role in Soviet war plans, which, in turn, was reflected in economic affairs⁸⁷. Moscow was to provide Poland with assistance in further expansion of industry and completion of the investments launched as part of the six-year plan⁸⁸, as well as grant a loan of 100 million rubles in commodities (copper, rubber, fats) and gold⁸⁹.

Following the 8th Plenum of the PUWP Central Committee, the Soviet government adopted a declaration of 30 October 1956, in which it determined further economic relations between the USSR and the Eastern Bloc countries. Among other things, the document affirmed respect for national sovereignty and equality in economic relations⁹⁰.

⁸⁴ A. Jeziński, B. Petz, *Historia gospodarcza Polski Ludowej 1944–1985*, Warsaw 1988, p. 169.

⁸⁵ J. Cyrankiewicz, *O założeniach planu pięcioletniego*, "Nowe Drogi" 1956, no. 7–8, pp. 169–170.

⁸⁶ *Deklaracja rządu ZSRR w sprawie rozbrojenia*, "Trybuna Ludu", 15 May 1956, no. 135.

⁸⁷ A. Skrzypek, op. cit., note 35, p. 394.

⁸⁸ This would apply to two agreements of 11 July 1956: on providing Poland with technological assistance in the construction of industrial plants and on providing technological assistance in the expansion of Nowa Huta – see: *Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. 11: *January 1956 – December 1960*, selected and compiled by W. Balcerak et al., in collaboration with W. Diechtiarienko et al., Warsaw 1987, doc. 28 and 29, pp. 53–57.

⁸⁹ Information of *Trybuna Ludu* on the Soviet economic assistance to Poland in accordance with the Polish-Soviet protocol signed in Moscow, 18 VIII 1956, [in:] *Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. 11, doc. 45, p. 78.

⁹⁰ Declaration of the Government of the USSR on the Foundations of Development and Further Consolidation of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist States, 30 X 1956, *Stosunki*

Consequently, a number of the most sensitive issues in mutual economic relations were raised during the November visit of the Polish delegation headed by Gomułka to Moscow. The Polish side cited the losses incurred due to unfavorable prices for coal supplied to the USSR, excessively low rates for rail transport across Polish territory and reduced gains from German war reparations, which, the Poles argued, had been consistently understated by Moscow. On the other hand, Poland was indebted to the USSR on account of previous loans and credits. Ultimately, both sides agreed to the “zero option”: in return for the losses incurred by Poland due to underpriced coal supplied to the USSR between 1946 and 1953, its debt to the USSR as of 1 November 1956 was written off⁹¹.

Simultaneously, further efforts were undertaken in the country to readjust the previous economic model. The SCEP was dissolved and replaced with the Planning Commission attached to the Council of Ministers, headed by Stefan Jędrzychowski⁹². However, hopes for a different economic policy were soon dispelled. In line with the concept advanced at the Comecon to make Poland a raw material base for the Eastern Bloc countries, Jędrzychowski again announced fast-track industrialization in 1958. In another attempt at changing Poland’s economic strategy, the participants of the aforementioned 2nd Congress of Polish Economists requested that an advisory body to the government be created and indeed, the Economic Council to the Council of Ministers (1956–1962), with Oskar Lange as chairman and Czesław Bobrowski as acting vice-chairman was established in 1956⁹³. Its tasks included developing improved principles of organization and methods of economic management, preparing expert economic analyses, and initiating and conducting research into individual sectors of the national economy and its entirety. However, the main document drafted by the Economic Council, entitled *Theses on Certain Directions of Change in the Economic Model*, was ignored by the government, whereas the role and significance of the Council gradually diminished until its mandate was terminated in 1962⁹⁴.

polsko-radzieckie w latach 1945–1972. Dokumenty i materiały, eds. E. Basiński, T. Walichnowski, Warsaw 1974, pp. 318–321.

⁹¹ Joint Declaration of the Delegation of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party and the Government of the People’s Republic of Poland and the Delegation of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Government of the USSR on the Aggression of England, France and Israel against Egypt, and on Polish-Soviet Relations, [in:] *Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. 11, doc. 53, p. 91.

⁹² Act of 15 November 1956 on the Establishment of a Planning Commission attached to the Council of Ministers and the Abolition of the State Economic Planning Commission, *Journal of Laws* 1956, no. 54, item 244; Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 15 November 1956 on the Detailed Scope and Procedure of the Planning Commission at the Council of Ministers, *Journal of Laws* 1956, no. 58, item 271.

⁹³ Resolution No. 768 of the Council of Ministers of 1 December 1956 on the Appointment of the Economic Council, *Monitor of Poland* of 1956, no. 101, item 1168.

⁹⁴ M. Ostrowski, *W Radzie Ekonomicznej*, [in:] *Czesław Bobrowski – mistrz ekonomii stosowanej*, ed. M. Kulowa, Warsaw 2004, pp. 43–45; *Czesław Bobrowski i jego dwie Rady*, [in:] *Przez ciekawe czasy*, eds. Z. Sadowski, P. Kozłowski, Warsaw 2011, pp. 151–164.

Poland's post-war economic strategy had primarily Soviet sources. The escalation of the so-called Cold War had left its mark on the economies of the Eastern Bloc countries at the time. Following the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan in 1947, Stalin decided to exercise more stringent control of the communist parties and states by establishing the Cominform, drawing on the Communist International, which had been dissolved before the war. After the Yugoslav crisis, i.e. from mid-1948 onwards, Moscow's instructions regarding further development of the Eastern Bloc countries were clear: as little autonomy as possible and faithful imitation of the Soviet experience as they constructed the new system, inclusive of all economic aspects. The Soviet economic model would then be reproduced in individual countries, while the economies of those countries were expected to become part of a larger organism controlled by Moscow. Their economic development was to rely on the expansion of heavy industry and armaments.

From the Kremlin's perspective, Poland was a fairly important element in the entire economic mechanism, primarily because of its resources of raw material. At the same time, its territory served as a direct hinterland for the Soviet troops stationed in eastern Germany and, therefore, would have played an invaluable role during a potential conflict.

The new economic strategy in Poland was foreshadowed by changes in the economic planning system and administrative apparatus in 1948–1949. The takeover of the CPO by PWP activists, and its subsequent transformation into the powerful SCEP, allowed the milieu surrounding H. Minc to devise a new long-term economic plan in line with the concepts developed in the USSR. The outbreak of the Korean War, which coincided with the launch of the six-year plan, had a major influence on its modification and, ultimately, its results. As dictated by Moscow, the need to develop the arms industry became the priority to which any other objectives, particularly all civilian production, were subordinated.

In the process, small private plants that had managed to survive the 1946 industry nationalization act were liquidated, and private craft businesses met the same fate. The latter were primarily involved in manufacturing daily-use products, which is why their disappearance exacerbated the shortage of consumer goods on the market, not to mention causing the decline of economic life in many small urban centers. In addition, collectivization in the rural areas and insufficient funding for technological development in agriculture by no means improved the food supply.

Contrary to assurances, the standard of living of the population did not rise. Over time, the gigantic economic investments that had been planned on such a grand scale – with concurrent high production costs – began to run short of funds. Even though certain adjustments were announced in 1953 and 1954 to balance the development of various production sectors, it was impossible to reduce the disparities between them by the end

of the plan's implementation. After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, emboldened party activists and circles of economists associated with the party became increasingly more vocal in their criticism of the previous economic policy, putting forward their own ideas, which essentially consisted in increasing outlays on the development of consumer goods production and departure from collectivization of agriculture.

Despite the industrialization of the country, the economic strategy imposed on Poland by Moscow should be assessed negatively. It led to the militarization of the economy, substantial disproportions in economic development and rising social discontent, which were manifested, for example, in the protest known as the Poznań June.

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Soviet sources of the economic policy in Poland in 1947–1956

Summary: The economic policy implemented in Poland between 1947 and 1956 emulated its Soviet equivalent, as it was constrained to do. Along with other countries which had fallen into the Soviet sphere of influence, Poland became part of a larger economic organism controlled by Moscow. As the so-called Cold War and arms race intensified, Poland became engaged in arming the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries. This resulted in intensive industrialization and militarization of the Polish economy. However, that particular direction of economic development brought about a decline in the standard of living in Poland.

Keywords: industrialization, Stalinism, economic policy, armaments, Poland

Sowjetische Quellen der Wirtschaftspolitik in Polen 1947–1956

Zusammenfassung: Die Wirtschaftspolitik, die in Polen zwischen 1947 und 1956 umgesetzt wurde, war das Ergebnis einer erzwungenen Nachahmung der sowjetischen Wirtschaftspolitik. Polen wurde zusammen mit anderen Ländern, die in die sowjetische Einflussosphäre fielen, Teil eines größeren wirtschaftlichen Organismus, der von Moskau kontrolliert wurde. In der Zeit des sich verschärfenden so genannten Kalten Krieges und des Wettrüstens beteiligte sich Polen an der Aufrüstung der Sowjetunion und der Ostblockländer. Diese Aktivitäten führten zu einer gewaltsamen Industrialisierung und Militarisierung der polnischen Wirtschaft. Diese Richtung der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung führte gleichzeitig zu einer Verschlechterung des Lebensstandards der polnischen Bevölkerung.

Schlüsselwörter: Industrialisierung, Stalinismus, Wirtschaftspolitik, Rüstung, Polen

Sowieckie źródła polityki gospodarczej w Polsce w latach 1947–1956

Streszczenie: Polityka gospodarcza realizowana w Polsce w latach 1947–1956 była efektem przymusowego naśladownictwa sowieckiej polityki gospodarczej. Polska, obok innych państw, które

znalazły się w sowieckiej strefie wpływów, stała się częścią większego organizmu gospodarczego sterowanego przez Moskwę. W okresie narastającej tzw. zimnej wojny i wyścigu zbrojeń Polska została włączona w proces uzbrojenia Związku Sowieckiego i państw bloku wschodniego. Działania te doprowadziły do forsownej industrializacji i militaryzacji polskiej gospodarki. Ten kierunek rozwoju gospodarczego skutkowało jednocześnie obniżeniem stopy życiowej mieszkańców Polski.

Słowa kluczowe: industrializacja, stalinizm, polityka gospodarcza, zbrojenia, Polska

