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Struggle of Masurians with Polish Identity After the Second World War. Socialist Realist Literature Describing the nationality verification and surveying campaign

Zmagania Mazurów z polską tożsamością po II wojnie światowej. Literatura socrealistyczna wobec akcji weryfikacji narodowościowej i ankietyzacji

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After the Polish state took over areas of Warmia and Mazury in 1945, all possible attempts were made to prove that Poland had an indisputable right to this land. Reference was made to “historical memory” about Piast roots and centuries-old longing of the inhabitants of those regions for the lost homeland. Warmians and Masurians, according to official propaganda, were Poles – it was claimed that it would be enough to carry out “proper” re-Polonization of those people, who had been cut off from the source.

The verification campaign carried out after the war, related to national policy of central and local authorities, was of fundamental importance. The idea was to create a uniform society, and consequently, displace Germans still living in these areas.¹ In 1945, Jakub Prawin was appointed the social District Polish Nationality Committee at the Office of the Representative, who was to issue certificates to inhabitants of East Prussia proving that they belonged to the Polish nation. Since

¹ Source materials (regulations, acts, circulars, proclamations), concerning, among others, the mode for establishing Polish nationality for persons living in the area of the Regained Territories and appointment of the Verification Committee, can be found in a collective work *Wysiedlać czy repolonizować? Dylematy polskiej polityki wobec Warmiaków i Mazurów po 1945 roku [To Displace or to Re-Polonize? Dilemmas of Polish Policy towards Warmians and Masurians]* (2001). See also e.g. Belzyt (1996), Jankowiak (2005), Mironowicz (2000), Miształ (1990), Nitsche (1999; 2000), Olejnik (2003), Romanow (1999), Sakson (1990; 2011: 219–238), Strauchold (2001).

many autochthons did not apply for registration, the so-called great verification started in 1949, involving the participation of police and security offices. Through administrative pressure, terror and threats of arrest, the resistance of those hesitant ones was broken. When by the end of 1950 organized displacement was completed, the authorities considered that the problem of German population in the area of East Prussia was properly solved. It was thought that the remaining population either felt its relations with Polishness or it could be “re-Polonized”. In 1952, a surveying and passporting campaign was carried out, preceded by the decision of the Sejm issued in January of the previous year to grant Polish citizenship to all Germans living in the territory of Poland (Achremczyk 2011: 1081–1088; Jasiński 2012: 33–77).

The paper presents the vision of history, created by the propaganda of the socialist realism. The literature concerning Warmia and Masuria, just like in the other areas of the so-called Regained Territories, was in 1949–1956 created under the influence of the socialist realism doctrine and implemented the prescribed theses, which had to be provided by writers from various regions of Poland. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate how these writers presented the national verification and surveying campaign in the area of former East Prussia. This is an interesting issue, since no historical-literary studies fully devoted to this topic have yet been published.² The author proves the thesis that social realism artists presented the campaign in such a way as to show “discovering” the Polish identity by Masurians. They also demonstrated the difficult situation of autochthons, often intimidated by their neighbours and hostile organizations, allegedly financed by former Nazi and US governments, which – according to socialist propaganda – was to “justify” their hesitation and reluctance to put their signature on relevant documents. With this aim in view, the author analysed four stories which were to demonstrate how much the authorities were concerned about confirming Polish citizenship by the Masurians. In this way, the new society of the region was assured that no Germans had been present in these areas for long.

In 1954, a collection titled *Ziemia serdecznie znajoma* [*Land Cordially Familiar*] was published. As observed by Joanna Chłosta-Zielonka, it was an exceptional event, as it was the first publication of an extensive collection of poems, stories and historical sketches related to the region (Chłosta-Zielonka 2010: 43). The authors were both autochthon writers and visitors.³ The value of the anthol-

² The regional literature of Warmia and Mazury in socialist realism times has been the topic of research studies (mainly papers and chapters in monographs), but the action of verification and surveying has not been so far described in an exhaustive manner. The most valuable positions devoted to this period in the history of literature include, among others, Brakoniecki (1999), Chłosta (1995), Chłosta-Zielonka (2010), Ogrodziński (1960), Martuszeński (1966), Szydłowska (2002/2003: 120–121; 2013). Also, other areas of the Regained Territories have attracted the researchers, including Gieba (2018), Kalinowski (2017: 72–103), Piekara (2012).

³ The campaign of meetings with authors, initiated by Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza “Czytelnik” (publishing house), resulted in organising in Warmia and Masuria over 100 “literary and artistic

ogy was confirmed in the introduction by Władysław Gębik, claiming that this is “the book in which our people will find themselves as a part of great community, whose name is the People’s Republic of Poland” (Gębik 1954: 7). Properly selected literary texts were chosen in such a way that the potential reader could not have the slightest doubt that Warmia and Masuria have always been Polish. The four stories published here are (in the opinion of the author) representative for the doctrine prevailing at the time, and each of them features motifs of verification or surveying campaign carried out in the Masurian countryside. Since the literary achievements of the period under discussion are not extensive, it is worth looking more closely and analytically at those works written by authors who did not originate from this area.⁴ Writers, without the knowledge of local reality or the real past of this land, came here with the intention to describe in a biased way the problems faced by the local people. Therefore, the reality presented is somehow schematic and simplified – as the aim was not to depict the truth, but to achieve objectives imposed by the party.

Representatives of the authorities wanted the highest possible number of Warmians and Masurians to declare their affiliation with the Polish nation. It was to confirm the “truth” promulgated by socialist realist propaganda claiming that, supposedly, they had always felt Poles and were now finally being allowed to officially gain documents. However, it was not that simple, as it had been initially assumed. The native population did not voluntarily, or on a large scale, undergo verification, in view of which the plan of accelerated “re-Polonization” was not successful.⁵ Many of them described themselves as Masurians (not Germans or Poles). Some of them felt the link with the German nation, while others were disappointed with the new state that seemed hostile to them. “Repatriates” from East, and, above all, settlers from the central Poland, upon arriving here often treated local population – against official propaganda – as Germans. Consequently, feeling no threat of penalty, they took revenge for the years of war. There were abuses, assaults and violence, pillaging, harassment, and evictions from farms. Even those who admitted their Polish identity were not spared. The hostile approach of newcomers did not help to quickly strengthen the ties with the local people living here for many generations. Cultural differences further deepened mutual aversion and misunderstandings. From the Masurian perspective, the Polish state appeared

events”, e.g. with the writers originating from outside of the region (Szydłowska 2013: 179–182). According to Szydłowska, the campaign initially did not bring satisfactory effects, and its success could be observed no sooner than in 1953–1955 – the effect of which was, among others, *Ziemia serdecznie znajoma* (Szydłowska 2002/2003: 120–121). The interest in the topic of the Regained Territories was spurred by the so-called field trips, to which writers were encouraged. “Field action” (“literary studies”, “field studies”) was the topic taken up by, e.g. Zbigniew Jarosiński (1999: 28–29) and Mariusz Zawodniak (*Słownik realizmu socjalistycznego* 2004: 357–359).

⁴ As rightly observed by Joanna Szydłowska, issues related to the recent process of verification and surveying in this area was “enveloped in a curtain of silence” (Szydłowska 2002/2003: 127).

⁵ By 1947, 35,000 Masurians had not undergone verification (Achremczyk 2011: 1084–1086).

unfriendly and unable to ensure security and proper care. In this situation, it is not surprising that autochthons were not willing to participate in verification or surveying campaigns organized by authorities. In view of this, the task posed to writers was difficult, as they were to (among others) prove that the problem did not result from the internal “inherent” aversion of Masurians to Poland, but was based on external grounds, related to inappropriate understanding of the situation of the protagonists and a wrong “reading” of the history of this land. Optimism, making an inherent part of the socialist doctrine objectives, forced the authors to introduce a happy ending – when all conflicts were solved and the character consciously joined the new community. It was not enough to sign a document; it was first of all about showing the world view transformation occurring in peasants.

The method of the analytical approach to the prose requires from the author of this paper to refer to the content and the world presented by the authors, to depict how biased propaganda slogans were implemented in the socialist realist literature. It is necessary first of all in case of texts that are not known to a wider group of recipients. The works referred to are treated as a document of the epoch and have, first of all, the value of historical evidence and not a literary work. The authors of stories included in *Ziemia serdecznie znajoma* subordinated their works to the non-artistic reality and, consequently, it was not aesthetical values that were of primary importance, but the possibilities to manipulate the world. Following their ideology, they created the world which did not reflect the actual state, but was its proper interpretation. Using the newspeak, which brought the literary language close to propaganda, they blurred the boundary between the world created and non-literary reality (Głowiński 1991). They involved themselves in implementation of propaganda slogans and created figures of involved characters proclaiming the values promoted by communist authorities and created the figure of a narrator “properly” commenting on the events (therefore, it is difficult in this case to draw a clear and unambiguous boundary between the narrator and the author).

A too fast and ill-considered post-war verification campaign was criticised by Tomasz Domaniewski. It turned out that sometimes German citizenship was sometimes too hastily assigned to Masurians. It was to be proven by the story of Franz (Franciszek) Rubich. The protagonist of the story *Świt nad jeziorem* [*Daybreak at the Lake*] left Poland and stayed in Germany, because Poles „zaliczyli go do Niemców, a on się temu nie sprzeciwił” [“classified him as a German, and he did not object to it”] (Domaniewski 1954: 141–142), and submissively yielded to the pressure. According to the author, it was not a well-thought -out decision, but taken under the influence of emotions evoked by war experiences. The writer created a portrait of a positive character – a Masurian, who was not interested in politics, and simply wanted to live in his village at the lake. However, the happy husband and father was not able to evade the conscription to army, where he was forced to go. He followed orders, although he “Nieufnie traktował krzykliwe hasła, którymi hitlerowcy szpikowali żołnierzy, nie wierzył obietnicom, które hojnie

propagowali wszem i wobec” [“treated with mistrust the loud slogans with which Nazis bombarded the soldiers, he did not believe in the promises that they generously propagated far and wide”], and later „bez zdziwienia patrzył, jak te obietnice i rozdmuchany mit o führerze, o panowaniu nad światem – rozwiewa się niby mgła” [“without surprise, saw how those promises and blown up myth about the führer, about ruling the world – got shattered”] (Domaniewski 1954: 133). Domaniewski, just like other social realist writers, tried to mention in the most discrete manner the war past that was typical for many inhabitants of former East Prussia. He did not provide any information concerning the troops joined by the protagonist, his rank, and especially did not inform the reader about awards possibly given to him for his loyal service in the German army.⁶ Aware of the fact that the memory of soldiers in enemy uniforms was related to the aversion of Poles, he did not want to fuel the still-alive hatred that could be turned against Masurians.

Franz had a feeling of the absurdity of war which destroyed the world and took away his most precious treasures from him – his little son Gerhard, and beloved Hilda. His views fit in pacifist slogans preferred by the socialist doctrine, claiming that thanks to Stalin and the Red Army, the dangerous Nazi curse was driven from the area of Warmia and Masuria, and peace was introduced, guaranteeing to people such as Franz a return from their wartime wandering. Unfortunately, when he arrived to his family home in Kruglanka⁷, he found nothing but charred ruins and the wreckage of his boat. Desperate, he became totally indifferent to what was happening around him.

Żył jak zaczadziały, jak nieprzytomny. Milczący i samotny snuł się po okolicznych lasach. Z wyjątkiem łachmanów munduru, w którym przyszedł, nie zostało mu nic, trzymali go więc sąsiedzi na łaskawym chlebie. Jemu było wszystko jedno, co się dzieje, co się z nim stanie. Nie czekał już na nic, nie wierzył w nic i nie marzył o niczym.

[He lived as if he was intoxicated, unconscious. Silent and lonely, he was mooning around neighbouring forests. He had nothing except the rags of the uniform in which he came here, so he lived on neighbours' charity. He did not care about what was happening to him, what his future would be. He did not wait for anything, did not believe in anything and did not dream about anything.] (Domaniewski 1954: 134)

⁶ The service of Masurians, Warmians, Kashubians or Silesians in the Wehrmacht was “a blot on the reputation”, this topic was avoided in public debate or historical studies for many years. Just after the war, it was deliberately denied from the collective consciousness (Kaczmarek 2014: 226). The researcher more extensively studied the problem in his book *Polacy w Wehrmachcie [Poles in the Wehrmacht]* (Kaczmarek 2010). Joanna Szydłowska claimed that journalists and writers were the first ones to tackle the “Wehrmacht hump”, although the matter was very difficult to be “domesticated” (Szydłowska 2013: 417).

⁷ Nowadays, the name of this locality, situated between Giżycko and Węgorzewo, is Krukłanki.

It was just then when he had to declare whether he felt a Pole or a German. It was not a good time for Franz to make such important life decisions, as his mental condition was very poor. The narrator regretted that Polish officials were too fast to make a decision harming the Masurian. It was most probably related to the attitude prevailing in the Polish society in 1945, when Germans became the hated Others, who should be removed as fast as possible from these areas. At that time, the idea of the collective responsibility of Germans and revenge for harm suffered during the war was widely accepted (Strauchold 1996b: 103–108; 1996a: 124–129; Jasiński 1997: 199–208). Therefore, the man

nie protestował, gdy zaliczono go do grupy wyjeżdżającej, nie próbował nawet tłumaczyć, że jest Mazurem, rdzennym Mazurem i że chce zostać w swoim kraju. [...] wszystko to stało się tak szybko, bez możliwości zastanowienia... Zanim zdążył się zreflektować – już wysiadał wraz z innymi na dworcu w Lunenburgu, już był daleko od swoich stron.

[did not protest when he was included in the leaving group, he did not even try to explain that he is a Masurian, a native Masurian, and that he wanted to stay in his country. [...] everything happened so fast, without the chance to reflect ... Before he realized – he was already getting off with others at the railway station in Lüneburg, he was already far from his homeland.] (Domaniewski 1954: 134)

But he was not able to find his place in Germany – either in Cologne, Munich or Hamburg. Thus, he was wandering without purpose, looking for a new home for himself. Domaniewski very clearly emphasizes that the protagonist felt a stranger everywhere, because nothing connected him to the country of forced settlement. He was not able to enjoy the beauty of the landscape, as his heart was filled with sadness: “Podziwiał go, ale podziwiał tak, jak podziwiał człowiek przejezdny, który ocenia wygląd zewnętrzny, ale niczym więcej się nie interesuje, nic więcej nie jest w stanie zrozumieć” [“He admired it, but admired as a visitor, who evaluates the external appearance, but is not interested in anything more, is not able to understand anything more”] (Domaniewski 1954: 130). After several years, he decided to seek to exercise his rights and wanted to return to the place of his birth. According to the author, he was driven there by his homesickness:

Czuł, uparcie czuł, że tam, nad swoim ukochanym jeziorem, u siebie, wśród swoich – dałby rady życiu, dałby rady przeciwnościom. Tam był mocno wrośnięty i w tę ziemię, i między ludzi: tam miał oparcie u swojaków, od nich mógł czerpać otuchę w chwilach zwątpienia, zwierzać się im z trosk i kłopotów, podzielić radościami. Tu zaś, w Niemczech był samotny, z podciętymi korzeniami – niezdolny już do niczego z wyjątkiem wegetacji.

[He felt, stubbornly felt that over there, on his beloved lake, in his place, among his people – he would be able to struggle with life, with the obstacles. It was there

where he was strongly grown into the land and among people: it was there where he could find help among familiar people, in whom he could find encouragement in the moments of doubt, confide in them his concerns and problems, share his joy. But here, in Germany, he was alone without his roots – unable to do anything more but vegetate. (Domaniewski 1954: 137)

Only then did he start to realize his own affiliation and became ready for the declaration, although in the situation of the Masurian – as the writer observed it – it was not easy:

Mówili mi przecież i w szkole, i w wojsku [...], że jestem Niemcem. A ja czasem czuję... Bo ja wiem, tak jakoś dziwnie... [...] Kim więc jestem? [...] Mazurem? Feldfebel, a później nawet oberleutnant mówili stale, że w Niemczech Mazurów nie ma. Więc jakże to wypada. W Niemczech Mazurów nie ma! Może są w Polsce...

[After all, they told me at school and in the army [...] that I am a German. But I sometimes feel... I don't know, somehow strange... [...] So who am I? [...] a Masurian? Feldfebel, and later even Oberleutnant kept saying that there are no Masurians in Germany. So it should not be right. There are no Masurians in Germany! Maybe they are in Poland...] (Domaniewski 1954: 137–138)

Although he was full of concerns about the present life of the Masurians who stayed in their homes, he decided to return. Unsure of his future, “[do] swojej Kruglanki wyrывa się jak do największego szczęścia” [“he breaks free to his Kruglanka, as to the greatest happiness”] (Domaniewski 1954: 141). At the same time, he was wondering whether this is the Poland that his ancestors dreamed about and the regional poets exalted:

Mówią teraz różni, że do Mazurów przyszła wolność, ale któż może wiedzieć, jaka ona jest w rzeczywistości? Czy ta Polska ludowa jest naprawdę ludową, czy ta wolność naprawdę jest wolnością? Czy kraj jest własnością narodu nie tylko w słowach?... Ot, dojdź prawdy, człowieku!...

[There are people who say that freedom has come to Masurians, but how can you know what is it like in reality? Is this people's Poland, really people's, is this freedom real freedom? Is the country owned by the nation not only in words?... Oh, man, how to get to the truth?...] (Domaniewski 1954: 140)

His German friend, Kurt Stippe, helped him to dispel his doubts. A stonemason from Hamburg, describing himself in the following way “nie jestem taki jak szajka tego obłąkanego kapraliny Hitlera” [“I am not such a scumbag as this lunatic little corporal, Hitler”] (Domaniewski 1954: 138), saw a good man in Rubich and was not interested whether he was a German or a Pole. At the same, he ridiculed “the rubbish about races” and the feeling of superiority of some nations

above others. He was a positive character, typical for the socialist realist literature, who was to prove that not all Germans deserved condemnation, and many of them kindly observed the situation in the communist bloc countries. It was him who kindly suggested:

Jesteś samotny, Franz, nic cię nie wiąże i niczym w gruncie rzeczy nie ryzykujesz. Może by to nazwali „działalnością na szkodę państwa niemieckiego” – zaśmiała się z gorzką ironią – ale ja ci powiadam po prostu: zbieraj manatki i jedź do swojej Kruglanka! [...] Nie wiem, co trzeba zrobić, i nie wiem, co ty tam teraz zastaniesz. Polska jest teraz czerwona, ale... ja naprawdę nie wiem, czy mam cokolwiek przeciwko czerwonym. Nie wierzę temu, co piszą w naszych gazetach, bo adenauerowskie gadanie to takie same bzdury jak goebbelsowskie...

[You are alone, Franz, you are not bound by anything, and actually, you are not risking anything. Perhaps they would call it “an activity to the detriment of the German state” – she smiled with bitter irony – but I will tell you briefly: get your stuff together and go to your Kruglanka! [...] I don’t know what should be done, and I don’t know what you will find there. Poland is now red, but... I really don’t know if I have anything against the reds. I don’t believe what they write in our newspapers, because the Adenauer gibberish is the same rubbish as that by Goebels...] (Domaniewski 1954: 139)

Rubich finally found his happiness in the Masurian fishing village. He could settle here thanks to the favour of the manager of the Polish institution in Hamburg, aware of the fact that still many Masurians demonstrate the willingness to return, experiencing the misery of being separated from their nation. Domaniewski outlined an unlikely, although not impossible situation, to make aware to people displaced from Warmia and Mazury far from the Polish homeland that those of them who would understand their mistake and show their “true love” to Poland will be welcome here with open arms. They must be as sure and committed as Rubich, who after years of wandering found his place on Earth:

Czyżby istotnie ta obcość, którą odczuwał w Niemczech, tęsknota za swoimi stronami, rozrzewnienie, z którym wspominał tamtą mowę – miało oznaczać, że jest Polakiem?... Kto wie... Niemcy mazurskiego języka nie rozumieli, a Polacy... Spotkał ich przecież wielu podczas wojny i po wojnie: rozmawiali ze sobą zupełnie swobodnie. [...] Polska... Tak, mówił o niej dziadek, mówił ojciec, pisali o niej mazurscy poeci: Michał Kajka i stary Langowski, mówili inni... Oni Polskę pamiętali, znali, żyli nią i zawsze wierzyli, że przyjdzie do nich, a wraz z nią odrodzenie Mazurów, ich mowy, ich starych obyczajów.

[Was this strangeness he felt in Germany, longing for his land, the emotions with which he remembered that language – was it supposed to mean that he is a Pole?... Who knows?... Germans did not know the Masurian speech. And Poles... He met

many of them during and after the war and talked to them with no difficulties. [...] Poland... Yes, the grandfather and the father talked about it, Masurian poets wrote about it: Michał Kajka and old Langowski and others... They remembered Poland, knew it, lived and breathed it, and always believed that it would come to them, together with the revival of Masurians, their speech, their old customs.] (Domaniewski 1954: 140)

The reason for his many years of suffering in a foreign country were, first of all, Poles who did not show proper understanding and empathy during the verification campaign. Domaniewski, showing the case of old Franz, wanted to make the compatriots aware that they might have harmed many inhabitants of the so-called Regained Territories. Perhaps others would eventually realize that they feel Polish – it would be enough to give them more time, and support them wisely. But this would require political training and “proper” knowledge of the history of the region. Thus, the text fit into the socialist realist propaganda campaign, which disseminated the idea of Polish roots of the Masurian people. The “roots” whose existence was unrealized by many people after the war – both the newcomers and the autochthon population. Therefore, it was enough to properly “educate” them to avoid mistakes.

The story by Stanisław Kowalewski, *Kiedy mija noc* [*When the Night Goes by*] describes problems related to the surveying campaign, carried out in 1952. Although after 1949, when the Security Office considered the verification campaign to be successfully completed, and it might seem that the so-called autochthon problem ceased to be important, resistance and the aversion to new authorities was still manifested in Warmia and Masuria, with particular disapproval for collectivisation and quotas for compulsory deliveries (Jarosz 1998: 187–194). By the end of post-war displacements and the so-called great verification, the terms such as “German population” or “Germans” were no longer used in official documentation, but were replaced with the term “non-verified population” (Madajczyk 2011: 11–12) and it was towards this population that the repressions were applied. On 2 May 1952, the surveying campaign started as a consequence of the Act on Polish Citizenship of 8 January 1951, which contained unclear provisions concerning the terms of nationality and citizenship (Sakson 1990; 1998).

The protagonist of Kowalewski’s story, Teresa Bożek, the president of the Communal National Council, was sent to the state-owned farm (PGR) Serwiany in Masuria. Upon arrival, she explained to a new manager, Okoń, a former police officer, who had been transferred here from Łódź:

No, to pewno nie rozumiecie się jeszcze na tutejszych sprawach. [...] No, więc nasz powiat jest autochtoniczny. Tu zamieszkuje więcej niż dziewięćdziesiąt procent ludności miejscowego pochodzenia. [...] Mamy kłopoty z tymi ankietami.

Wiecie, tu różni są ludzie. Jak teraz przyszło co do czego, że każdy ma powie-dzieć, kto on – no, to są trudności [...]. Boją się agitować, boją się podpisywać ankiety. Wszystkiego się boją [...]. A u nas to są właśnie tacy, co potrafią straszyć. Specjaliści... [...] U nas tu wszystko jakby trochę inaczej. Bo tu Mazury.

[So, surely you are not familiar with our matters yet. [...] So, our district is au-tochthonic. We have more than ninety percent of the local population living here. [...] We have problems with those surveys. You know, there are different people here. And now, when the time has come for everyone to say who they are – then, well, there are problems [...]. They are afraid of campaigning, they are afraid of signing surveys. They are afraid of everything [...] And on our side, there are just those who like terrifying. Specialists... [...] Here everything is somehow slightly different. Because this is Masuria.] (Kowalewski 1954: 193–195)

Sent here “in line with the surveying for identity cards”, she informed, disap-pointed, that – despite her numerous visits to this area – in the state-owned farm almost nobody so far had put a required signature and most inhabitants still had no registration cards. And although people in Serwiany had Polish surnames and spoke Polish, nobody was able to break their resistance. Kowalewski wanted to explain to uninformed readers the reason for such an attitude. To make the situation of choice even more dramatic, he weaved into the past of one of female characters living here a motif related to an important event from the past of the region. Maria Kozłowska (née Podbielska) was a widow of a plebiscite activist. Being afraid of her neighbours, and first of all her own Germanized children, Johann and Margerita, she evaded putting a signature several times – she pretended she felt pain in her heart, she had spasms or lied that she did not know the Polish language. Bożek “tried to talk to the conscience” of the cow-tender to “make a breach” in the local population. She believed that when “hesitating” Kozłowska finally breaks down, than others would also get convinced. Also Okoń, who wanted to “chase away the Gloom” (i.e. the creature harming people) “from this land”, decided to join the agitation campaign. The experienced former police officer wanted to “fight for the human beings”:

Okoń widział wielu ludzi w trudnych, najtrudniejszych nieraz chwilach życia. [...] Ale były też sytuacje, gdzie pomocna, życzliwa rada lub w porę postawione pytanie mogły zdecydować o uratowaniu ludzkiego życia.

To trudne zabiegi, trzeba w nich czasem zdobyć się na delikatność i czułość, z jaką chirurg dotyka unerwionej tkanki. I trzeba także umieć jednym trafnym cięciem otworzyć ją, by dotrzeć głębiej, aż do zamaskowanego źródła choroby. Okoń wie, że musi teraz działać, sięgnąć do argumentów najważniejszych, osta-tecznych.

[Okoń saw many people in difficult, sometimes the hardest moments of life. [...] But there were also situations, where helpful, friendly advice or the question asked at the right moment could help save a human life

These are difficult procedures, sometimes you have to apply tenderness and sensitivity, with which the surgeon touches the innervated tissue. And it is necessary to know how to open it, with one precise cut, to reach deeper, to the disguised source of the disease.

Okoń knows that he must act now and reach for the most important, ultimate arguments.] (Kowalewski 1954: 198–199)

The manager – a skilful communist “philosopher and moralist”, perfectly well qualified for teaching people, after receiving proper training on the courses preparing him to work in the police forces (Citizens’ Militiya) – referred to the category of the truth which is worth verification with one’s own life and which should be taught to children, and to the conscience that does not allow to live a lie. Bziarski, an activist, remembered at this occasion the heroism of the cow-attendant’s husband, who was “battered with wheels” by Germans after the plebiscite. According to him, such activists, proving their love to Poland with their life should be widely promoted and presented as examples at school. Those arguments convinced the old woman and made her sign a document confirming the fact that she was a Pole. The situation described by Kowalewski was to prove that events related to 1920 were still alive in Masurians’ memory and affected their further choices. The writer “properly” prepared for writing used the plebiscite episode, one of scarce historical facts referred to at that time, which was to prove – according to official propaganda – the struggle of inhabitants of this land for Poland. Since it was difficult to find other important events from the history of the region that would confirm the love of its inhabitants to the lost homeland, this motif was frequently highlighted in the socialist realism times. It was presented most often in a simplified manner, as even the most eager socialist realist writer was not able to say much on the topic, discreetly avoiding the crushing defeat of Masurian and Warmian fighters for Polishness (Szydłowska 2002/2003: 127–128). Also, Kowalewski wrote just a few sentences on this topic, yet they very significant in the context of the entire work, as they affected the fate of the characters.

Kozłowska was right to be afraid of the hostile response of her children to her choice. Johann and Margerita decided to invalidate the document, claiming that their old mother was intimidated by officers. They referred to the activity of their father during the plebiscite as to an “old story”, not worth remembering. However, manager Okoń stood up for Kozłowska, confirming that she put her signature of her own free will, without any pressure from any side. The author of the story, a socialist realist writer, wanted to convince the public opinion in this way that no pressure was applied from the side of the police or other representatives of the government during the surveying campaign.

Kowalewski also introduced the figure of the class enemy, typical for the socialist realism literature, who also perfectly well fitted the image of the world in

which constant struggle was taking place. Masuria was not an exception here. Okoń had to stand up to unscrupulous and insidious “spoilers” and “saboteurs”, reluctant to accept changes.⁸ Kurpiewski, a Pole managing the state-owned farm in Wilkowo, warned him:

Eh, sąsiedzie, sąsiedzie... Po co się płątać w sprawę tych nieszczęsnych ankiet. [...] Na samym zaraz wstępie zrobiliście fatalny błąd. Jakich tu naokoło siebie mamy ludzi? Sami Mazurzy i Niemcy. [...] Zresztą to mała różnica. Oni tu mają swoje własne życie, swoje tradycje, swoje sprawy. I sami sobie z nimi radzą. Rozumiecie mnie? Nie ma, nie może być z naszej strony gorszego błędu, jak mieszać się w te ich spory, ich sprawy. [...] Jesteśmy pracownikami Państwowych Gospodarstw Rolnych, tak? Jakie jest nasze najważniejsze zadanie? Aby powierzone nam gospodarki prowadzić jak najlepiej. Żeby wykonywały plan, żeby przekraczały plan. [...] jeśli pan chce wiedzieć, mieszanie się kierownika w tak drażliwe sprawy, jak kwestie narodowościowe, ankiety – z góry przekreśla powodzenie pańskiej pracy na gospodarce. [...] Tu mowy nie ma o hitlerowcach. Najwyżej jakieś tam kwestie narodowościowe i koniec. A my musimy wybierać, co ważniejsze! Dobra gospodarka czy sprawy narodowościowe i agitacja.

[Eh, neighbour, neighbour... Why get involved into the issue of those unfortunate surveys? [...] You made a grave mistake just at the very beginning. What people do we have around here? Only Masurians and Germans. [...] Besides, the difference is very small. As they have here their own life, their traditions, their matters. And they can handle them alone. Do you understand? There is no, there can be no worse, mistake on our side than to get involved into the disputes, the issues of theirs. [...] We are employers of the State-Owned Farms, aren't we? What is our most important task? To run the farms entrusted to us in the best possible way. So that the farms implement the plan, exceed the plan. [...] if you want to know, involving the manager in such sensitive matters as nationality issues, surveys – already blights the success of your work at the farm. [...] There is no question of Nazis here. At worst, there are some nationality issues and that's it. And we have to choose what is more important! Good economy or nationality issues and agitation.] (Kowalewski 1954: 209–210)

Okoń realized the difficulties awaiting him in his new job. He was made aware first of all by Milewski, who claimed that “many mistakes have been made” in the Masurian region that should be rectified. He staked his hopes on the new manager, saying:

Na łatwe was tu nie daliśmy. [...] Towarzyszu Okoń, wyszliście ze służby w milicji z piękną kartą. Komitet Partyjny na was liczy i nie możemy się zawieść. Wołaliśmy o aktyw, o najlepszych ludzi z Polski. [...] Ot, tak od razu puszczamy was na głę-

⁸ The image of the class enemy in the socialist realist art is discussed, among others, by Wojciech Tomasiak (*Słownik realizmu socjalistycznego* 2004: 396–402).

boką wodę. Macie reperować cudze błędy. Macie wyciągnąć ludzi z tego strachu, z tego zgnębienia. [...] Macie tu ludziom przypomnieć, że są Polakami. I zrobić z nich przodowników. Tak, przodowników. Nauczyć o Polsce, o socjalizmie. No, wtedy i plan będzie wykonany.

[We did not transfer you here to take an easy job. [...] Comrade Okoń, you left your service in the police with a beautiful record. The Party Committee relies on you and we cannot be disappointed. We called for activists, the best people from Poland. [...] And like that, at once, we throw you in at the deep end. You are to repair mistakes made by others. You have to pull out people from this fear, for this depression. [...] You have to remind people here that they are Poles. And make them leaders. Yes, leaders. To teach about Poland, about socialism. And then, the plan will also be achieved.] (Kowalewski 1954: 201–202)

It soon turned out that employees were terrified by other autochthons that did not feel any relation to Poland and cooperated with post-Nazi organizations. The image of the bad German was used for years by representatives of the People's Republic of Poland as one of efficient propaganda methods, reaching for various types of emotions. The aim was to cause fear. According to Marcin Czyżewski:

In the post-war Polish propaganda, it was Germans who became the main deterrent. Their eternal hostility towards Poland, cruelty inflicted during World War II, designs on taking back the Western Territories from Poland. [...] Why was the anti-German phobia so eagerly and consequently aroused? Skilfully played fear against Germans helped communists to keep in power. The nation was continuously made believe that Germans wanted to revise their post-war eastern border and only the people's government, thanks to the support of the Soviet Union, was able to stop them (Czyżewski 2005: 215).

Of course, only the Germans from the West were dangerous, those from the GDR became friends, as propagandists often assured (*Polityka Polski Ludowej* 1953: 16). The image of the "good German" was examined by Zbigniew Jarosiński (1999: 219–223), while Joanna Szydłowska (2013: 470–481) distinguished three modules for presenting the German Others in the post-war literature: compensatory, ideological and anthropological. The literature and the press warned people against Nazism reviving in the western occupation zones, where allegedly, it was planned (with the support of America) to violate the order in Europe. Poland was to feel especially endangered, particularly the Western and North Territories. The author of the socialist realistic story also used this black and white scheme in the simplified image of the Masurian reality. Bad characters in the story are Masurians who are reluctant to work in the state-owned farm, waiting only for the former German authority from Hitler's times to return. It was they who cheated, black-mailed, were ready even to kill their kin who wanted to cooperate with representa-

tives of the new system. Individual farmers – Ragina, Smenda and Polkowski (wearing a green jacket – a converted Wehrmacht uniform, under which he was hiding a machine gun), negatively looking at state-owned farms operating in the vicinity, proved to be the worst of them. As Joanna Szydłowska observed, many Masurians entered the post-war reality with the “Wehrmacht hump”, which only intensified the hostility towards them and intensified anti-German attitudes. According to the researcher “Service in Wehrmacht is a tragic situation, it stigmatizes the whole life of the character, deprives them of perspectives” (Szydłowska 2013: 417–421). It was them who forbade the local people to sign the survey lists. They also tried to intimidate Okoń and force him to testify that Kozłowska put her signature under pressure of the commune representatives and consequently, it should be invalidated. Ragina, burning with hatred and resembling a “predatory bird”, demanded:

My tu jesteŃmy Mazurzy. [...] Jeden naród. Lepiej nas nie ruszać. Kto nie chce polskiej narodowości ani polskiego obywatelstwa, jego prawo. [...] My tu jesteŃmy jedno. Ze sobą wszyscy trzymamy. [...] My tu jeden naród. Mazury. Kto nas krzywdzi, nasz wróg. [...] I pan kierownik ma nie rozmawiać ze swoimi ludźmi o żadnych ankietach. [...] Nie wtrącać się do sprawy Mazurów. Pan tu jest obcy, pan ma tylko gospodarować. My znamy prawa. My czytamy gazety i słuchamy radia. Nas, ot tak, nie można za łeb... brać.

[We are Masurians here. [...] One nation. You’d better not touch us. If somebody does not want Polish nationality or Polish citizenship, it is their right. [...] We are one here. We all stick with each other. [...] We are one nation here. Masurians. Whoever harms us, is our enemy. [...] And you are not to talk with your people about any surveys. [...] Not to interfere with Masurian issues. You are a stranger here, you are only here to manage. We know our rights. We read newspapers and listen to the radio. We cannot be just taken in hand like this.] (Kowalewski 1954: 212–214)

It was only after breaking up a gang of evil characters that the peasants realized what side they should take – Germans, describing them with disregard as “half-breeds”, who would come back as great lords to use the work of Masurian farmhands, or Poles, who want to work together with them in new state-owned farms.

Bohdan Kozięło-Poklewski disagreed with such an image of Masurians among Germans, claiming that in the Nazi period the relationship with inhabitants of East Prussia was closer and that they were treated as equal members of the community and the nation by the German population in general (Kozięło-Poklewski 1993: 127–128). Stanisław Achremczyk claimed that Masurian peasants could feel particular protection of the German government fighting unemployment here and introducing a new agricultural policy – this was the cause of huge support for the NSDAP during the Reichstag elections (Achremczyk 2011: 985–991).

Another character forbidding signing passport surveys was Helmut Żak – a figure from the story by Seweryna Szmaglewska *Cicha wieś na brzegu puszczy* [*A Quiet Village at the Edge of the Forest*]. This inhabitant of Masuria was wearing a dark brown shirt with a swastika during the war, and after the end of war often came from West Germany to prepare sabotage actions. Szmaglewska created an image of a typical enemy, who – although born in this place – was not “ours”, as he represented the hated and still dangerous world of Nazism and capitalism. Trained by American intelligence in Berlin and “the new Wehrmacht”, he smuggled money, organized weapons and acted to the detriment of Poles. He ordered his people to intimidate and instigate the rebellion against Masurians who wanted to sign the surveys. He illegally came from Berlin to Masuria to instruct his accomplices what they should do to turn the inhabitants of this land against Poland:

Robota ruszy. Pieniądze są, dostałem, z tym się nie musicie liczyć. Do czasu będziecie na pozór cicho siedzieć. Tak jak mówiłem. Robić robotę na miejscu. Pamiętaj Erwin o jednym drobiazgu: nie odgruzowywać! Nawet sobie nie zdajesz sprawy, jakie to ważne. Mówiliśmy o tym w Berlinie. Ile rzeczy można w gruzach ukryć. [...] Oprócz tego, póki stoi gruz, łatwo wmówić ludziom, że Polska nie dba o Warmię i Mazury. Budowa? Rozkwit? A dokoła gruzy. [...] W Berlinie, widział, przechodziłem szkolenie. To było w wywiadzie amerykańskim. Tam uczyli, że trzeba wszystko psychologicznie. Te gruzy, to tak, jakby trupy miast. W tych gruzach człowiekowi łatwo popaść w chorobę woli.

[The work will start. We have money, I got it, you do not have to worry about this. Until then, you will appear to stay quiet. As I told you. Do your job on site. Erwin, remember one small thing: do not clear debris! You have no idea how important it is. We talked about that in Berlin. How many things can be hidden in debris. [...] And besides, as long as we have debris, it is easier to make people believe that Poland does not care about Warmia and Masuria. Construction? Heyday? And debris lying around. [...] You see, I received training in Berlin. It was the US intelligence. They taught us that everything should be done psychologically. This debris is like wrecks of towns. In this debris, it is easy for a human being to fall for the sickness of willpower.] (Szmaglewska 1954: 304–305)

Szmaglewska created an image of a bad and cruel German, who had many lives on his conscience. Helmut threatened that the disobedient would be treated ruthlessly and encouraged people to intensify activities during the surveying campaign. After a night-time meeting with the leaders of the local groups and listening to their reports related to the operating of machine centres and state-owned farms, he gave instructions to Masurians. He especially emphasized that they should not allow passport surveys to be signed:

Mówcie ludziom, co chcecie. Jak wam wygodniej. Dajcie rozkaz albo straszcie. W każdym razie teraz jest okazja pokazać bolszewikom, że nigdy nie uznamy ich

władzy ani podziału majątków, że nie chcemy tu żadnych kolektywów. Rozumiecie? Niech wiedzą, że na nas będą musieli sobie zęby złamać.

[Tell the people what you want. As you prefer. Give them orders or intimidate them. Anyway, now we have an opportunity to show to the Bolsheviks that we will never recognize their power or division of property, that we do not want any collectives here. Do you understand? Let them know that they will have to break their teeth on us.] (Szmaglewska 1954: 312)

One of the characters of the story – Bolechowa, as many other autochthons, did not know what to do when she would be asked to sign documents, especially that in the village people threatened her not to do that. A desperate woman, who was looking after her small granddaughter, Gunda, was searching for advice:

Głowa chce pęknąć od owego rozruchu. Mów, co robić? Młode przychodzą z tego Zet Em Pe, mówzio: podpisać, podpisać. A na co im te ankiety potrzebne? Podpisę, to mnie za Odre nie pusco. Poradź. Zawszedy mocna nie będę; muse Gunde ojcom zawieść. Muse za Odre jesiać. [...] Tak tedy trza mi będzie do jeziora iść, utopić się, bom głupsio na starość.

[My head is going to split because of this confusion. Tell me, what to do? The young keep coming from this ZMP, they say: sign, sign. And what do they need these surveys for? If I sign, they won't let me go past the Oder. Give me some advice. I won't always be strong; must take Gunda to her parents. I must go past the Oder. [...] So the only thing I can do is to get drown myself in the lake, as I get dumber getting old.] (Szmaglewska 1954: 333)

Aleksandra, the main character of the story, came from Warsaw to relax in the countryside and was summoned by the police about this case. She was suspected of telling to the local people that no surveys were signed in the capital city and in central Poland. According to the interrogating officer, this may have meant that she intended to discourage the inhabitants of the lakeland from signing documents. In the opinion of Szmaglewska, it was only then that this unfairly accused tourist realized the importance of the surveying campaign in this area, to which also her landlady resisted. The writer thus emphasized how faint was the knowledge of newcomers from other areas of Poland concerning the inhabitants of Masuria and the problems they had to struggle with. Aleksandra wanted then to make the old autochthon realize that she should have no doubts:

Pragnęła wytłumaczyć Bolechowej, że ankieta nie jest żelaznym wilkiem, że to zwyczajna formalność administracyjna, że nikt w województwach centralnych ani się nie myśli dziwić, iż w roku tysiąc dziewięćset pięćdziesiątym drugim, w siedem lat po wojnie, rząd uznał za potrzebne wydać ludności jednolite paszporty.

[She wanted to explain to Bolechowa, that the survey is not an iron wolf, that this is a normal administrative procedure, that nobody in central provinces was

going to be surprised by the fact that in 1952, seven years after the war, the government considered it necessary to issue uniform passports to the population.] (Szmaglewska 1954: 333)

One of the manifestations of fighting against any symptoms of Germanness in these areas was a mass campaign consisting of the Polonization of first names and surnames of the inhabitants of Western and Northern Territories. It was to “serve” the process of re-Polonization of the local population. In November 1945, a decree was published, establishing, among others, a fee for changing the surname and first name, but in 1947 and 1948, two circulars of the Ministry of Regained Territories were issued on charging no fees at all, which was to facilitate and accelerate the action. Additionally, it was also possible to carry out operations *ex-officio*, without the application of the interested party or exerting pressure. The actions were particularly intensified in 1953–1954, when identity cards were issued (Lewandowska 2012: 150–154; Hejger 2006: 345). It was also postulated that the names of the towns and villages should be changed. With this aim in view, the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Regained Territories reactivated in January 1946 the Commission for Establishing Name of Localities, which had existed before the war, as an advisory body. It was composed of Polish representatives of various fields of knowledge and many research centres. The removal of the German language from public places was demanded and the destruction of monuments was allowed (Strauchold 1995: 143).⁹ The policy of “de-Germanization” of the People’s Republic of Poland was aimed at eliminating external symbols of the previous rule. It was recommended that German books, maps and images, as well as towels, pillows and equipment with inscriptions in German should be removed from houses. The Office of the Council of Ministers on 19 June 1945 issued circular No. 33 on removing German inscriptions, in which province governors, starosts and mayors were called to remove any traces of Germanness in their area (*Niemcy w Polsce* 2000: 142).

In *Lowizka*, a story by Marta Michalska, making her debut after the war, the nearby estate Dortenfeld was named Dorotowo. Masurians living here in 1945 were forced to make a declaration of whether they were Poles or Germans (the title character provided that she was a Masurian, as this is what her grandmother ordered her to do).¹⁰ They had to provide their personal data in the commune office – Gottlieb became Bogumił and Lowizka – Ludwika (Michalska 1954:

⁹ G. Strauchold mentioned that this operation was to cover all aspects of life – one of the journalists even called for setting up “neighbourhood committees” encouraging people to remove household items with German inscriptions (Strauchold 1995: 143).

¹⁰ Andrzej Sakson often emphasized that ethnic group of Masurians was the borderland community, and “the entire group of Masurians was characterised first of all by a low awareness of any connection with the entire Polish nation, at the simultaneous feeling of strangeness in relation to the German society” (Sakson 1990: 44). The author quoted “Masurian national commandments” published in “Mazur” in 1938, which were to serve maintaining Masurian identity (ibid: 51–52).

374–375). However, it turned out during the campaign that Gottlieb Mazuch, officially admitting Polish nationality was actually a former SS man, currently preparing sabotage operations and hiding weapons in a cowshed. He was denounced by a young Polish girl, Lowizka Mojzycyk – an honest Masurian, who not only started a relationship with a good Pole – settler Józek Romaniuk, but also decided to fulfil her dreams and became a cow-tender in the Production Cooperative in Niecki in the Olsztyn Province.

A socialist realist writer duly fulfilled the task entrusted to them by communist authorities and used their pens to respond to the most current problems of the new state. Together with politicians and journalists, they tried to create a falsified vision of history and confirm, verbally and declaratively, the affiliation of the so-called Regained Territories to Poland. They contributed to the consolidation of the party and state policy, which allegedly “favoured” the declaration of Warmians and Masurians for Polishness. At the same time, the official propaganda actions were supposed to unify the society in terms of language, ethnicity and nationality. A sociologist, Halina Murawska, writing about the past of those areas claimed: “It was the world created here for ages by the Germans, the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Russians, the Masurians, the Warmians and the Dutch. The end of the great war in 1945 brought about the extermination of this world” (Murawska 2000: 8). After regaining independence, it was also the area reached, among others, by the displaced Polish population from the Borderlands (Vilnius Region, Grodno Region, Volhynia) and Ukrainians. The joint existence of these groups was very difficult, and the representatives of the authorities tried hard to prove that all problems could be overcome and integration was possible, provided that everyone finally realised that they belonged to the Polish state. The common good – the construction of a new socialist reality – was to become important.

The writers were particularly helpful, as they took up the task of “proper” interpretation of the observed world. In their stories, they presented the difficult situation of the autochthon and immigrant inhabitants of these areas and their often slow process of “discovering” Polishness. They showed how much involvement and effort was required to properly carry out the verification and surveying campaign in Masuria. In their black-and-white vision of reality, typical for socialist realism, they clearly outlined the profiles of negative characters (often former Nazis or traitors at the service of a foreign government) and positive heroes (valuable Masurians, who were finally “permitted” to feel Polish and to work in Polish enterprises and friendly newcomers from other regions). At the same time, they attributed a significant role to Poles perceiving Masurians as rightful citizens. The authors demonstrated that the class struggle in these areas was still continued, additionally reinforced by the national struggle. Bringing their narratives to a happy end, they anticipated an upcoming solution to ethnic problems, as well as to those specified by the communist ideology. The imagined and forward-looking optimistic version was not confirmed by the history of Warmian and Masurians in post-war Poland.

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Summary

This article presents the history of Masuria created by the propaganda of socialist realism. Its aim is to show how writers presented the nationality-based verification campaign and opinion polls in the area of former East Prussia. The author attempts to prove that social realist writers described the above-mentioned action as “discovering” Polish identity by the inhabitants of Masuria. In order to do that, four stories included in the anthology *Ziemia serdecznie znajoma*, published in 1954, are analysed to show that strong pressure was exerted on the Masurians to confirm their Polish nationality.