

## PROJECTION AND DENIAL: The Party's Attitudes Towards Mickiewicz in the Stalinist Era, 1948-1955

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Every new political régime seeks to create fresh symbolic practices or to re-deploy traditional symbols in an attempt to justify its legitimacy. The establishment of Communist rule in postwar Poland represented merely a variation on this theme, albeit one more highly orchestrated than is usual in non-totalitarian systems. While Bolshevik activity in this respect usually proved vigorous,<sup>1</sup> the postwar régime in Poland, according to Jan Kubik, took a slightly more subtle approach in that it 'relied mostly on the tactic of remodeling the national symbolic domain. Those national symbols and values that did not obviously contradict the new Communist creed were retained.'<sup>2</sup>

Polish literature was to play a major role in the process of naturalizing Communist rule.<sup>3</sup> The reappraisal of Mickiewicz formed a central plank in the Marxists' reevaluation of the Polish literary tradition as a whole.<sup>4</sup> Under the general

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<sup>1</sup> See *Symbols of Power. The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, eds. C. Arvidsson and L. E. Blomqvist, Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International 1987.

<sup>2</sup> J. Kubik, *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power*, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press 1994, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> M. Głowiński, *Polska literatura współczesna i paradygmaty symboliczne (1945-1995)*, „Konteksty” 1995, No. 3-4, pp. 134-40.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing this article, Mariusz Zawodnia's *The Great National Poet in Post-War Poland (Some Remarks relating to the Mickiewicz Anniversaries)*, delivered at the April 1998 SSEES conference, 'Another Transition', was the only paper known to the author to address specifically this issue.

banner of de-commercializing and socializing culture so as to make it accessible to a far wider audience,<sup>5</sup> they strove to appropriate and promote what they regarded as 'progressive' (*postępowe*) in that tradition and to negate and stifle what they viewed as 'reactionary' (*wsteczne*). Ambiguity characterized these categories, and Mickiewicz's *oeuvre* contained works that fell into each. Since he could, under no circumstances, be presented as 'reactionary', and indeed became subject to an official cult, Party cultural policy demonstrated careful selection in its foregrounding of certain works and marginalization of others.

The first brief period of Soviet rule in Lvov (September 1939-June 1941) served as a laboratory for the development of later strategy, specifically the heavily qualified appeal to Polish patriotism that informed it. The August-November 1940 celebrations marking the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mickiewicz's death,<sup>6</sup> which coincided with the Germans' methodical destruction of Polish culture (including statues of Mickiewicz) in the General Gouvernement, enabled the Soviet authorities to posture as defenders of Polish culture in an attempt to encourage Poles to see a common cause with the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> In the immediate postwar period, rebuilding the Mickiewicz monuments was, in effect, a display of national pride sponsored by the Communists.<sup>8</sup> Only gradually would specifically class-based interpretations enter official discourse and a more correct Marxist interpretation emerge to accompany the patriotic slant initially favoured by the régime.

The rebuilding of monuments to the Bard and mass publication of his works were therefore heavily loaded symbolic acts designed to underline the au-

<sup>5</sup> On the real consequences of decommercializing culture, see S. Kondek, *Władza i wydawcy*, Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Such as the exploitation of Mickiewicz's political journalism for slogans and mass promotion of certain poems, e.g. *Oda do młodości* and *Do Przyjaciół Moskali* – the latter used to promote Polish-Soviet friendship.

<sup>7</sup> Mieczysław Ingot is surely right to say that their ultimate aim was to 'destroy national identity and create an internationalist class model of Soviet patriotism; that is, *russification* [my italics].' M. Ingot, *The Socio-political Role of the Polish Literary Tradition in the Cultural Life of Lwów: The Example of Adam Mickiewicz's Work*, in: *The Soviet Takeover of the Eastern Polish Provinces, 1939-1941*, ed. K. Sword, London: MacMillan 1991, p. 132. See also: *idem*, *Polska kultura literacka Lwowa lat 1939-1941*, Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej 1995, pp. 124-57.

<sup>8</sup> Work on monuments in Warsaw, Cracow and Poznań was either begun or completed during the Stalinist period. Public donations were sought in each case.

thorities' commitment to the promotion of the national tradition. Even from the outset, culture, treated instrumentally, was to assist the consolidation of control, to serve as the carrot to the cudgel represented by the organs of repression.

It is in this perspective of continuation, adaptation and, indeed, reconstruction of the national tradition, that the present paper views the Party's attitudes to Mickiewicz in the Stalinist era. First, the public dimension of this issue in terms of the material products and exhibitions produced to mark the principal anniversary celebrations of 1948-50 and 1955-56 will be considered; second, the development of the reception of Mickiewicz's works in the light of official declarations; and, finally, the production process of the 'National Edition' of Mickiewicz's works, which appeared over the years 1948-55.

The celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the poet's birth, which began at the end of 1948 signified a key stage in the process of 'naturalizing' Communist rule. At the most basic level, the anniversary was commemorated by the issuing of special postage stamps and cards in necessarily massive print runs. Phenomenal importance and effort were devoted to exhibitions during the initial anniversary, which ran from late 1948 through to early 1950, when it culminated in Bierut's unveiling of the restored Mickiewicz monument in Warsaw on 26 January that year.

Apart from the central exhibition at the National Museum in Warsaw opened in June 1949, which later toured the other major cities, beginning with Cracow (October 1949),<sup>9</sup> a series of mobile exhibitions visited provincial towns and villages. 'Czytelnik' drew on its early postwar literacy campaigns as it prepared so-called *Teams of the 'Living Word'* to promote Mickiewicz's work through words and music.<sup>10</sup> The most prized and heavily sponsored 'initiatives', however, were those which demonstrated that Mickiewicz's works had truly reached the masses – fulfilling Mickiewicz's hope that his books 'might wander in under the eaves' ('żeby zbłądzili pod strzechy') of the common folk, which became a rallying-call of official propaganda. Key amongst these was the *Great Popular Spectacle on the*

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<sup>9</sup> In keeping with the Party's policy of democratizing culture, the authorities encouraged visitors by providing cheap return rail fares. This and the following details derive from a report on the Anniversary Commission's activity. AAN, MKiSz, Biuro Obchodów Artystycznych (henceforth: BOA), 14, pp. 38-47.

<sup>10</sup> See A. Bikont, *Jak Borejsza budował imperium Czytelnika*, „Magazyn Gazety, Gazeta Wyborcza”, 4 November 1994, p. 7.



*Vistula* (also termed *The Evening of the Four Bards*) held in summer 1949, when numerous amateur ensembles staged an event to commemorate the 'Big Four' of Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Chopin and Pushkin, singing excerpts from the poets' work set to music by contemporary composers.<sup>11</sup> The organizational ploy of running Mickiewicz celebrations through into 1950 enabled the régime to combine events to mark the 100th anniversary of Słowacki and Chopin's death with the 150th anniversary of Pushkin's birth, whose friendship with Mickiewicz was exploited in propaganda to reinforce friendly relations between Poland and the USSR.

Such public events, where the possibility existed of genuine interaction between the poet's works and the contemporary audience, attracted the authorities' closest attention. In contrast to their practice in relation to publications, censors freely cut Mickiewicz's texts when intended for performance to forestall any politically undesirable public reactions. The staging of Mickiewicz's dramatic masterpiece, *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*), proved notoriously problematic in this respect.<sup>12</sup> Although *Do przyjaciół Moskali* had been a central pillar in the Communists' policy of promoting Polish-Soviet friendship since 1940, *Part III's* patriotic force, and anti-Russian-imperialist drive, led to its prohibition on stage until November 1955, when, ironically, it formed the centrepiece of the opening ceremonies.<sup>13</sup> A conference of Party writers and critics, convened to discuss the 150th anniversary celebrations on 13 October 1948, presented the régime's dilemma in stark terms:

'Not staging *Dziady* would provoke comments and would be used as a trump card by reactionary propaganda. We have to mature to the point when we can absorb *Dziady*. Its emotional load is anti-Russian and that will come across. Accenting the rationalization [*sic!*] present in the drama, Bestuzhev's role, the Russian revolutionaries side-by-side with the Poles in the Salon in Vilnius [...] how little threat is contained in

<sup>11</sup> The script for this event illustrates the kitsch that commentators have attributed to Socialist Realist works: bare-chested boatmen and maids opened proceedings, which, in part, took place on the river. MKiSz, BOA, pp. 118-32.

<sup>12</sup> See M. F i k , *Teatr pierwszej połowy lat pięćdziesiątych. Między sztuką a propagandą*, "Mówią Wieki", 1990 No. 8, pp. 5-11.

<sup>13</sup> The infamous congress held at Belvedere Palace in October 1948 apparently ended inconclusively, but Leon Schiller's planned production for the Teatr Polski in Warsaw was first postponed and then shelved indefinitely. Jerzy Timoszewicz's monograph, *Dziady w inscenizacji Leona Schillera. Partytura i jej wykonanie*, Warsaw: PIW 1970, gives a necessarily much veiled account of this meeting (pp. 65-73).

the prison scenes, when the prisoners gather and play cards — none of this disguises the work's essential effect; and on stage this will come across with twice the force.

Doctoring the play, including insertions, prefaces, and historical commentaries has dire artistic consequences, which may be transformed into political ones.<sup>14</sup>

The imposition of the Soviet model in all spheres from 1949 ruled out a public performance. By the time of the 1955 festivities, the political climate had relaxed allowing Jerzy Pański in a report of the Executive's activity for the 1955 celebrations to describe the absence of *Dziady* (and the major Romantic dramatic repertoire) from the Polish stage as a 'huge impoverishment of Polish theatre'.<sup>15</sup> The impact of the cultural 'Thaw' made itself felt in other ways: in contrast to 1948-50, the participation of non-fellow-travelling writers, including leading Polish émigrés, could also be considered.<sup>16</sup>

The 'General Principles' governing the 100th anniversary of Mickiewicz's death still exhibited a Stalinist spirit.<sup>17</sup> Article 4 reasserted the need to 'abolish false legends and views developed by bourgeois historiography [and] to activate research based on Marxist science to demonstrate the outstanding role of Mickiewicz as an ideologue and activist of his era',<sup>18</sup> yet the document's general tenor took Mickiewicz's work and example beyond its immediate political utility to the régime, and thus stood in marked contrast to the first article of the 1953 draft:

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<sup>14</sup> AAN, PZPR KC Wydział Kultury, 237/XVIII-94, *Akcje masowe, imprezy 1948-1953*, p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> MKiSz, Departament Imprez Artystycznych i Obchodów (DIAO), 52, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> In 1955, the Polish Writers' Union Executive proposed inviting a number of eminent writers, including Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, Kazimierz Wierzyński, and Melchior Wańkowicz. Independently, Kazimierz Wyka, then Head of IBL, proposed inviting to a conference on Mickiewicz such academics as Wiktor Weintraub, Maria Danielewiczowa and Jerzy Pietrkiewicz. The most liberal (and tactical) appeal came from Janina Dziarnowska in a letter dated 5 January 1956: 'we regard the very fact of our inviting the cream of émigré writers as a step that is politically to our advantage, regardless of the invitees' reaction. Secondly, if we do invite people, we have to invite from a broad spectrum, even those who are definitely hostile towards us, provided they are outstanding writers.' AAN, PZPR KC Wydział Kultury, 237/XVIII-137, 1954-1956, pp. 94, 116, 118.

<sup>17</sup> The Organizational Committee was set up in March 1953. An early draft of planned events and general principles may be found in 237/XVIII-94, pp. 162-64. Ministry of Culture materials from 1954-55 give a fuller version: MKiSz, DIAO, Zespół Realizacji, 52, pp. 28-36.

<sup>18</sup> MKiSz, DIAO, 52, p. 28.

'The Mickiewicz year, which falls immediately after the 10th anniversary of People's Poland, should consolidate in Polish society and amongst artists the sense of an unbreakable bond between the artistic and ideological achievement of Mickiewicz and his era with the culture of [our] developing socialist nation.'<sup>19</sup>

Generally, the Stalinist approach meant Mickiewicz had prefigured the tasks demanded of writers by the régime's literary programme. After 1949, official discourse had attempted to make Mickiewicz's work fit the 'Procrustean bed' of Socialist Realism.<sup>20</sup> As the doctrine itself developed in the early 1950s, or, rather, became increasingly unsustainable and less dogmatic, so did the possible interpretations of the Bard's work.

The adoption of Socialist Realism at the Szczecin congress of the Writers' Union in January 1949 established definitively the fundamental criterion of whether a writer and his or her work should be viewed as progressive or reactionary in character. The consequences of falling into the latter category were momentous, leading to marginalization at best and, at worst, to complete elimination from social circulation. While class and political criteria inevitably played the major role in determining the degree of availability, the nature of the work itself – particularly its linguistic accessibility for the mass reader – also came into prominence. These criteria applied equally to the literary tradition and, in some measure, dictated the creation of a fresh canon. The relative marginalization of Norwid during the Stalinist era may be ascribed to the 'difficulty' of his language, though the serviceability of his socialist sympathies clearly appealed to Party critics, while Krasiński's temporary exclusion stemmed partly from his socially unacceptable background. Mickiewicz's life and writings presented considerable problems for the Party. His involvement with Towiański, lapse into literary silence from the mid-1840s onwards, and, perhaps, above all, the anti-Russian-imperialist character of certain works, necessitated for the Party extensive and intensive labours in order to present Mickiewicz's image in a progressive light

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<sup>19</sup> 237/XVIII-94, p. 162. The 1954 document speaks of Mickiewicz's 'great contribution to the development of national consciousness and the ideology of progress and his creative contribution to Polish literature', MKiSz, DIAO, 52, *ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> In certain accounts, Mickiewicz's life provided a model for Polish Socialist Realists: the decisive artistic and ideological stimulus was provided by his trip to Russia, where he encountered a more mature Romanticism in the guise of Pushkin and his colleagues.



– foregrounding the revolutionary aspects of his activity and creative work whilst distancing their mystical and politically conservative dimensions.

Throughout the 1940s the Communists stressed the patriotic dimension of Mickiewicz's *oeuvre*, in effect taking over the traditional view of the poet as a mouthpiece for an oppressed nation.<sup>21</sup> In Bierut's keynote speeches on a number of high-profile occasions – the opening of the radio station in Wrocław in November 1947, the inaugural ceremony of the Mickiewicz Year in November 1948 and at the unveiling of the statue in Warsaw in January 1950 – the intention to use Mickiewicz's work for more directly political purposes grew ever more prominent. The Wrocław speech marked the Party's growing instrumentalization of culture and pointed towards Socialist Realism in its insistence that literature mirror the aspirations and experiences of the working masses. The justification for such demands was, however, the example of the Romantic poets. By November 1948, the growing domination of the Soviet model could be felt behind the assertion that 'Mickiewicz was able to perceive the great truth that honest, genuine love of one's country is most fully revealed by a profound and revolutionary internationalism.'<sup>22</sup> The most important directive to Party critics came in January 1950, as Bierut focused on and, by his use of particular terms, specifically sanctioned the appropriation of problematic areas of Mickiewicz's creative work.

In his speech Bierut presented a number of ideas that were subsequently taken up by leading Party critics such as Żólkiewski, and became commonplaces of Mickiewicz criticism. The first was the yoking of Mickiewicz's example (poetic Romanticism) to contemporaneous economic requirements (the socialist romanticism of labour).<sup>23</sup> As a logical consequence, People's Poland represented the fulfilment of Mickiewicz's dreams, both of gaining a mass popular audience, but also of seeing social justice achieved for Poles.<sup>24</sup>

A second, and highly problematic issue was that of the poet's mysticism. Bierut explicitly endorsed such strands in Mickiewicz's writings (the *Books of*

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, J. Przybóś, *Czytając Mickiewicza*, Warsaw: Czytelnik 1950, pp. 19-20.

<sup>22</sup> *W 150-lecie urodzin Adama Mickiewicza*, "Życie Warszawy", 6 November 1948, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> 'Rewolucyjny romantyzm Mickiewicza zespala się dziś z romantyzmem czynu ludu polskiego.' *Przemówienie Prezydenta RP tow. Bolesława Bieruta na uroczystości odsłonięcia pomnika Wieszcza w Warszawie*, „Trybuna Ludu”, 29 January 1950, p. 2. All subsequent quotations taken from the same place.

<sup>24</sup> 'But that dream could be fulfilled only today, in our socio-historical conditions, [which are] fundamentally different from those of one and a half centuries ago'. *Ibidem*.

*the Polish Pilgrimage and Nation* and certain parts of *Dziady III*, for instance) as attempts to write in a style comprehensible to a less educated readership: 'his aspirations [to instill a sense of unstinting dedication and sacrifice to the cause] often found an outlet in mystical symbolism, as has happened more than once with the social desires of the oppressed masses.'

The third, and undoubtedly most important message to Party critics lay in the reclamation of Mickiewicz's work from bourgeois criticism, which had allegedly systematically falsified the true nature of his work by striving to conceal its revolutionary and popular basis. Accordingly, 'an important and commendable task for contemporary historians of literature is to extract, unveil and bring out the real democratic and popular socio-ideological basis of the poet's creative work, to realize in full his deepest dream, to make his work accessible to the masses.' Precisely this injunction to critics provided the motto to Żółkiewski's later heavily ideologized study of Mickiewicz's life and works, *Spór o Mickiewicza* (1952).

The Party's general approach to Mickiewicz scholarship was to suppress interpretations that dissented from a Marxist-Leninist analysis, frequently in its most vulgar form. Hence Żółkiewski's study demonstrated a consistently materialist perspective that promoted the primacy of socio-economic influences as a factor explaining the poet's development over an individualistic, or, to use the Marxist pejorative term, 'idealistic' viewpoint. As Żółkiewski said elsewhere during this era, 'Mickiewicz is not a completely individual phenomenon'.<sup>25</sup> Essentially, the Marxist approach to Mickiewicz framed his work as a series of problems, key amongst which was the imperative of rendering the writer relevant to contemporary, often extra-literary concerns. Katarzyna Kasztenna has argued that this approach was characterized by a relentless 'presentism', consisting of, first, 'direct reference to current (omnipotent) authorities, especially Marx, Engels and Lenin'; second, the domination of the 'contemporary perspective (People's Poland) as the final point in the cultural development of civilization in Poland'; and, third, and most importantly, the 'language which indicated [...] a servile attitude towards the ideology and methodology [...] of a specific time.'<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> This was during a session of the editorial committee of the National Edition, 15 May 1950. AAN MKiSz, Departament Twórczości Artystycznej (DTA), 697, p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> K. Kasztenna, *Z dziejów formy niemożliwej*, Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej 1995, pp. 85, 103, 114. This is illustrated most emphatically by Żółkiewski's



The eventual dominance of this approach presupposed a drastic reorientation in literary-critical methodology. In the interim, censors eliminated 'idealistic' criticism, but a more proactive response came with the Congress of Polonists held in Warsaw in May 1950. There, critics launched a new direction in the teaching and study of Polish literature, one in which traditional, author-centred, psychological, and idea-based approaches were denounced as 'idealist', and a largely mechanistic Soviet model introduced in their stead.<sup>27</sup> Żółkiewski, in particular, castigated 'idealism' as represented by such outstanding scholars as Juliusz Kleiner, not merely in public, but also in reports on their works for the Censorship Office (GUKP).<sup>28</sup> Although Kleiner continued to work in the universities and participated in the meetings of the Editorial Committee of the National Edition, he existed in print largely as a negative point of reference.<sup>29</sup> That he existed at all may be seen as one of the anomalies of the Polish situation even at the height of Stalinism.

To be sure, the Party's long-term strategy aimed at producing the new researchers via the Literary Research Institute (IBL) in the Polish Academy of Sciences – an institution created in November 1948 along Soviet lines to produce textbooks for schools and elaborate the leadership's pronouncements on literary matters.<sup>30</sup> Its practice nevertheless amounted to a *de facto*, albeit limited, acceptance of apolitical contributions to literary studies.<sup>31</sup> Stalin's 1950 article

drawing of parallels between Mickiewicz's poem on his departure from Odessa and Engels' sense of alienation in London, *Spór o Mickiewicza*, Warsaw: Czytelnik 1952, p. 86.

<sup>27</sup> A collection of speeches from the Congress was published as *O sytuacji w historii literatury polskiej*, Warsaw: PIW 1951.

<sup>28</sup> In 1948, Żółkiewski, then Head of the Cultural Department of the PWP, described Kleiner's *Zarys dziejów literatury polskiej, Tom II*, a reprint of the pre-war edition, as 'utterly unfit for publication ... a manifesto of reactionariness, religiosity, and routine, not a textbook.' AAN, GUKP, I/163, p. 10. The other reviews (pp. 2-9 of that file), while negative, deemed certain elements to be salvageable. It was not republished until after 1956.

<sup>29</sup> In response to this paper, Dr. Stanisław Eile described his own difficulties in buying even the books that Kleiner was allowed to publish up to 1948: their cost and limited print run provided further disincentives.

<sup>30</sup> See J. Sławiński, *IBL od przedwczoraj do jutra. Rozmawiam z 'Kulturą Niezależną'*, in: *idem, Teksty i teksty*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo PEN 1990, pp. 215-240; J. Prokop, *Polonista jako utrwalacz władzy ludowej*, in: *idem, Sowietyzacja i jej maski*, Cracow: Wydawnictwo VIRIDIS 1997, pp. 44-82.

<sup>31</sup> This policy caused censors some consternation, as an explanation by Helena Landsberg, Head of the Non-Periodicals Section of the GUKP, in December 1952

on linguistics, in which he removed language from the ideological domain and thereby legitimized the achievement and efforts of non-Marxist experts, provided the supreme approval for this approach.<sup>32</sup> In reality, though, during the Stalinist period, IBL failed to provide the textbooks that were to replace the prewar manuals for schools: no authoritative monograph on Mickiewicz, written from the new Marxist perspective, materialized, while most of the primers were provisional.<sup>33</sup>

It is fair to say, then, that the hermetic system envisaged by the Communist authorities, wherein only officially approved interpretations circulated, failed to appear. An essentially defensive strategy of eliminating undesired works prevailed, but this was not complemented by the production of popular Marxist literary-critical works dealing with the Romantic period, let alone Mickiewicz, in overwhelming quantities. In contrast to ideological pipe dreams, the reality was limited and chronically overstretched resources.

The major publishing project of the first postwar decade, the production of the *National Edition* (*Wydanie Narodowe*) of Mickiewicz's works, bore this out. From the promulgation of the 5 May 1945 decree by the provisional government, the Polish National Council (KRN), announcing its decision to 'take over the incomplete initiative of the 1921 [properly: 18 December 1920] Legislative Sejm to publish a collected edition of Mickiewicz's works', over ten years were

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indicates: 'we have to allow them to speak a little, for some of them may still be of service to People's Poland because of their abilities and experience [...] On the one hand, we don't allow books that are inadmissible in our conditions, but we also make compromises. [...] and certain depoliticized things are passed and will continue to be passed.' AAN, GUKP, I/421, t. VI, p. 240. Stefan Żółkiewski, as Head of IBL, had adopted a similar policy before 1950 towards old Polonists. AAN, PZPR KC Wydział Kultury, 237/XVIII-68, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> See S. Kondęk, *Stracone złudzenia. Kłopoty dysponentów obiegu książki z rzeczywistością czytelniczą w latach 1952-1955*, in: *Instytucje – publiczność – sytuacje lektury*, t. 6, ed. J. Kosteci, Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa 1997, pp. 234-35.

<sup>33</sup> Officially approved works written before 1950 included the biographies by Mieczysław Jastrun (*Mickiewicz*) and Henryk Szyper (*Adam Mickiewicz. Poeta i człowiek czynu*), both published by Czytelnik (Warsaw) in 1947; and Waclaw Kubacki's *Pierwiosnki polskiego romantyzmu* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo M. Kot 1949); as well as the assemblage of articles published in 1950 as *Materiały*. Kazimierz Wyka's *Historia literatury polskiej dla klasy X. Cz. I: Romantyzm*, Warsaw: PZWS 1952, was the only handbook on Romanticism produced during the period, while Żółkiewski's monograph on Mickiewicz seemed destined not to be a popular work.

to elapse before the project reached completion.<sup>34</sup> Despite being singled out as a supremely prestigious undertaking under President Bierut's direct patronage, the edition's path towards publication proved extremely obstacle-strewn: the constant shortage of personnel,<sup>35</sup> lack of paper, inadequate funds and the increasingly stringent ideological requirements made upon the edition's commentaries meant that it was 1948 before production began in earnest. Eventually, the edition appeared in four installments over the years 1948-1955, the last volumes appearing in time for the 100th anniversary celebrations, whereupon in 1955, the whole edition was reprinted as the so-called *Jubilee Edition*.

The *National Edition* did not represent a totally new version of the interwar edition, but largely incorporated work that had been completed just before the outbreak of war.<sup>36</sup> Due to the fact that the *National* was conceived as a work intended for a broad audience living in radically different political conditions, revamped or completely new commentaries had to be written.<sup>37</sup> Over time, this resulted in the composition of lengthy essays, designed to influence the proper reception of the works, as well as detailed commentaries, which were deemed particularly necessary in the case of Mickiewicz's political and mystical writings.<sup>38</sup> The original plan to preface each volume with introductory essays was dropped, presumably due to their ideological unacceptability.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Odpis: Uchwała powzięta na 7 posiedzeniu Krajowej Rady Narodowej w dniu 5 maja 1945 r. w sprawie narodowego wydania dzieł Adama Mickiewicza, AAN, MKiSz, Departament Literatury i Książki, Wydział Literacko-Organizacyjny (DLK, WLO), 449, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> The basic committee from roughly 1949 consisted of Leon Płoszewski, Chairman of the Editorial Committee, who had worked on the interwar edition, Żółkiewski, Jan Wolpe from *Czytelnik*, Jastrun and Kleiner.

<sup>36</sup> Details about the interwar edition are given in: K. Górski, *Wydania zbiorowe dzieł Mickiewicza w Polsce Ludowej*, „Rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego im. Mickiewicza”, 1974, IX, pp. 13-24.

<sup>37</sup> As Miller commented at the committee session of 5 July 1945: ‘the revision of prefaces and introductions is also necessary, such as those by Pigoń, since, due to certain authors’ disposition, they may be received critically in the present reality.’ AAN, MKiSz, DLK, WLO, 449, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> The original intention to write critical prefaces to the literary works contained in vols. I-IV was eventually reduced to an introductory essay by Przyboś, which prefaces vol. I.

<sup>39</sup> A Ministry of Culture quarterly report, dated 17 July 1948, noted that ‘the introductions to the individual volumes were evaluated critically and in the main rejected as inappropriate [...] the first series [will appear] with commentaries but without introductions’. AAN, MKiSz, DTA, Wydział Ogólny, 469, p. 31.



The committee appeared especially keen, however, to avoid accusations of suppressing politically controversial, or, indeed, any works in Mickiewicz's *oeuvre*.<sup>40</sup> In this respect, its establishment within the Ministry of Culture appears to have given it a superior position *vis-à-vis* the GUKP in the official hierarchy. At the outset, the privilege of censoring the volumes belonged to the Ministry alone, although for the sake of observing formalities, the Censorship Office also received copies.<sup>41</sup> Even when censors began to play a greater role, not all of their objections were acknowledged as valid.<sup>42</sup> The committee, in effect, served as primary censor and, where necessary, it canvassed the appropriate scholarly and political authorities for their opinions on controversial matters. Its own debates (although this perception may be skewed by the surviving materials) concerned the definition of Mickiewicz's 'progressive' or 'reactionary' status. Żótkiewski, who as Head of IBL was ultimately one of the few entrusted with the task of providing definitive Marxist accounts of the history of Polish literature, emerges as a deciding voice in the debates over the volumes containing Mickiewicz's political writings and lectures.

The archival materials detail mainly the technical side of producing the edition, yet protocols of the debates throughout 1950-52 address a number of substantive issues, which are essentially ones of terminological exactitude.

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<sup>40</sup> The issue of censorship exercised the committee from the outset. In 1946, it drafted a resolution opposing censorship of the critical apparatus by any institution other than the Ministry of Culture (AAN, MKiSz, DLK, WLO, 449, p. 59). Generally, in the years up to 1949 (judging by the admittedly sparse materials available), the committee wished to defend itself against any accusations of censorship. The inclusion of the lyric 'Mazur', whose attribution Kleiner had challenged, caused some debate; the eventual formulation in the published commentary indicates their scruples: *Dzieła. Wydanie Narodowe*. t. I, Warsaw: Czytelnik 1949, p. 503.

<sup>41</sup> At a session on 1 October 1946, Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki, Head of the Department for the Promotion of Literature within the Ministry of Culture, explained that Director Czachowski read the essays on the Ministry's behalf, thus acting as formal censor. AAN, MKiSz, DLK, WLO, 449, p. 76.

<sup>42</sup> In the absence of the original texts on which the censors worked, I am reliant solely upon the internal evidence of their reports. An objection that was apparently ignored related to the definition in volume VI of Mickiewicz's views on the peasant question as 'conservative' (AAN, GUKP, I/375 [31/27], p. 8). The phrase 'and in this respect, he drew close to the stance of the conservative émigrés' remains intact in the published version (*Wydanie Narodowe*, Warsaw: Czytelnik 1950, p. 218).

Questions such as the applicability of the epithet 'socialist' to Mickiewicz, the precise degree of 'progressiveness' exhibited in his writings and whether he should be seen as 'tragic' – a term Bierut used in his 1950 address – held sway over other considerations.<sup>43</sup> This reflected the Party's need to promote the idea that the poet's renunciation of poetry did not signify a decline and that his later journalism written for "Tribune des Peuples", in which he expressed strong socialist sentiments, was of comparable value to his poetry. The point at issue was ultimately the régime's political legitimacy, and the very choice of the name "Trybuna Ludu" for its daily mouthpiece indicates the importance that the Party ascribed to Mickiewicz as a cultural icon.

Nonetheless, disquiet emerges from these 'backstage' debates about the wholesale appropriation of the poet that Bierut explicitly endorsed. Żótkiewski expressed the committee's dilemma concisely, when at one point he declared its task to be 'not to make Mickiewicz more reactionary than he actually was'.<sup>44</sup> The 'presentism' inherent in the Party's approach to the poet also generated problems, specifically over the issue of Mickiewicz's socialism. Despite his stance being defined as non-Marxist, the use of Marxist terminology in categorizing his class sympathies obscured matters.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, questions of objectivity arose concerning the actual historical – as opposed to the propaganda or symbolic – significance accorded to the Polish Legion he founded.<sup>46</sup>

Terminological difficulties (which ultimately had an ideological subtext) also arose from the problematic status of Romanticism in the Stalinist era, which found peculiar expression in Mickiewicz's works. In Stalinist accounts, his poetry tended to be pulled between two extremes: 'more-than-Classicist' and 'not-yet-Realist'. Romanticism appeared, rather, to be a category which the majority

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<sup>43</sup> The use of the word 'tragic' in relation to Mickiewicz's life was criticized by Żótkiewski at the May 1951 session. AAN, MKiSz, DTA, 697, p. 49.

<sup>44</sup> Session of 8 September 1951. Żótkiewski's immediate concern was to explain Mickiewicz's favourable response to Napoleon III during the Spring of Nations. AAN, MKiSz, DTA, 698, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> During the session of 19 May 1951, Mauersberger raised the question of the permissible degree of ideologization, particularly in relation to the confusion that might be created in the reader's mind by indiscriminate use of Marxist terminology. AAN, MKiSz, DTA, 697, p. 47.

<sup>46</sup> A point made by Kleiner, only to be denounced by Żótkiewski: 'revolutionary facts are always important, even the minor ones, because they can be the start of great events.' *Ibidem*, p. 48.

of Marxist critics observed in the absence: attempts to endow Romanticism with distinctive features, such as Wyka's *O realizmie romantycznym*,<sup>47</sup> which endeavoured to unite Romanticism and Realism in a more organic and theoretically reputable manner (though significantly on the basis of Russian examples), proved the exception. Marxist theoreticians' wariness of Polish Romanticism undoubtedly derived from its principal subject-matter – Russian autocracy's oppression of the Poles, a theme which retained its validity into the present – as well as its focus on mystical and messianic dimensions, which 'bourgeois' critics had foregrounded.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the concept of the 'wieszcz', despite its sanction by Bierut, demonstrated certain problems for the 'codifiers' ('ustawiacze'), to employ Janusz Sławiński's term, in the system. At the Polonists' Congress in May 1950, Wyka questioned its validity, but, apparently, in vain, for it remained in use in Marxist accounts.

The briefest summary of the Party's attitude to Mickiewicz in the Stalinist era would be to describe it as opportunistic.<sup>49</sup> Bearing Żółkiewski's assertion of Mickiewicz's 'typicality' in mind, the choice of Mickiewicz as a vehicle for Party propaganda stemmed from his purely accidental status as the greatest Romantic poet, a status which the Marxists simply took over as a *given* from earlier, non-Marxist critics. Consequently, their approach tended to de-individualize Mickiewicz and his works, treating them as 'issues' that exemplified the stages of a pre-determined course of development towards the 'national liberation struggle'.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> „Pamiętnik Literacki” 1952, vols. 3-4, pp. 779-813.

<sup>48</sup> The whole reappropriation of Mickiewicz was premised upon disabling connections between Tsarist and Soviet Russia: 'We should erase [...] the bourgeois intellectuals' idea of equivalence between Imperial Russia and the USSR, and show that Mickiewicz fought against a Russia of feudal oppression, and that the USSR emerged out of a struggle and triumph over autocracy.' AAN, PZPR KC Wydział Kultury, 237/XVIII-94, p. 74.

<sup>49</sup> Dating from the *ad hoc* reclamation of *Pan Tadeusz* required by Paweł Hoffman of Marxist critics in Lvov in the wake of the Soviet 'donation' of an original manuscript to the Poles. See M. Inglot, *Polska kultura literacka...*, op. cit., pp. 143-48; idem, *The Socio-political Role...*, op. cit., pp. 139-41.

<sup>50</sup> This is not to deny that analyses of individual works or poetics appeared during the period, but that they were secondary to this main trend. See, for example, W. Kubacki's *Arcydramat Mickiewicza*, Cracow: Wydawnictwo M. Kot 1951; or A. Ważyk's *Mickiewicz i wersyfikacja narodowa*, Warsaw: Czytelnik 1951.



Nonetheless, the Party's cardinal ideological debates about Mickiewicz's legacy took place in that first decade after the war, when the Communist system was itself established. The *Wydanie Narodowe* published then both constituted the foundation stone of future editions and was intended to endorse the régime – most crucially, by promoting the idea that People's Poland, in contrast to the Second Republic, had the will to disseminate on a massive scale the works of the greatest national poet. Yet it is clear that the Party never succeeded in enforcing its own interpretation of Mickiewicz to the exclusion of all others, primarily because its account of the poet's significance proved drastically limiting and unconvincing. It exaggeratedly projected secondary elements of the poet's work (his journalism) whilst obviously denying the real impact and intention of certain of its main strands.

Mickiewicz may have been a symbol that the populace was spontaneously ready to accept, though precisely what he symbolized remained to be fought over by the Party and society.<sup>51</sup> As late as the mid-1980s, Party ideologues were forced to acknowledge the vitality of the Romantic paradigm,<sup>52</sup> but the real coda to the Stalinist project of appropriating Mickiewicz's work had come earlier, in the 1968 protests against the closure of Kazimierz Dejmek's production of *Dziady* at the National in Warsaw. It was those events that decisively revealed the Party's failure to remodel 'the national symbolic domain'.

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<sup>51</sup> Quite literally: the Mickiewicz statue in Poznań served as a rallying point for student protests. Z. Grot, *Dzieje pomnika Mickiewicza w Poznaniu 1856-1939*, 2nd ed., Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk 1998, p. 99.

<sup>52</sup> See J. Ładka, *Literatura i polityka*, „Nowe Drogi” 1985 No. 7, p. 159.

### Projektowanie i odrzucenie: Partia wobec Mickiewicza w epoce stalinizmu, 1948-1955

Artykuł, oparty na materiałach archiwalnych Głównego Urzędu Kontroli Prasy, Ministerstwa Kultury i Wydziału Kultury KC PZPR, analizuje podejmowane przez władze komunistyczne próby „wykreowania” Mickiewicza w celu wykorzystania tej postaci w Polsce Ludowej w pierwszej dekadzie po II wojnie światowej. Owo „wykreowanie” reprezentowało rozwój technik pierwotnie wypracowanych w trakcie radzieckiej okupacji Lwowa (wrzesień 1939 – czerwiec 1941). Obejmowało wyolbrzymienie znaczenia pewnych aspektów życia i twórczości poety – jego późnej publicystyki i wysiłków na rzecz stworzenia armii – oraz pomniejszenie innych, np. mistycyzmu i antyrosyjskiego punktu widzenia w niektórych pismach, co było ideologicznie nie do przyjęcia w nowych warunkach politycznych. Po krótkim przedstawieniu problemów związanych z wystawieniem na scenie prac Mickiewicza i analizie przemian podejścia do nich krytyki marksistowskiej, artykuł skupia się na przygotowywanym w latach 1945-1955 *Wydaniu Narodowym* jego dzieł. Okazało się ono trwałym osiągnięciem polityki Partii w odniesieniu do Mickiewicza, dając podstawy późniejszym edycjom dzieł poety. Nadmiernie uproszczone przez Partię podejście do Mickiewicza, szczególnie widoczne w epoce stalinowskiej, ostatecznie zakończyło się porażką, co udowodnił protest studentów przeciw zdjęciu ze sceny *Dziadów* w 1968 roku.