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/// Festivals of Songs in the Polish People's Republic

Abstract

As Communist rule established itself in Poland, its agents learned relatively quickly to appreciate the propagandic value of culture, including music. The authorities realized that popular music, and the pop song in particular, is an important medium of influence on society. The pop song became an integral tool in socialist propaganda, which manifested in how its repertory and content, as well as performers, were selected. Indeed/as a result, the list of criteria a pop star candidate had to fulfil was rather long.

In the Socialist nation, the pop song had an important role to play. It was intended to shape the society's imagination on life, work, and leisure. In this framework, not every song could become a hit, and not every performer could become a star. As a consequence of this cultural policy, the Polish musical stage saw the rise of a certain twofold division. Beside those performers in official circulation, a lot of new bands flourished and became very popular, especially among the youth.

This dual world of Polish pop culture hosted several dozen music festivals: from the Sopot International Song Festival and National Festival of Polish Song in Opole, to the Academic Youth Art Festival (FAMA) in Świnoujście and Jarocin Rock Festival, to a number of rock music revues all across the nation. Among these, there were two festivals with a very special propagandic task to fulfil: the Soviet Song Festival in Zielona Góra, and the Festival of the Soldiers' Song in Kołobrzeg.

In this article, I discuss the propagandic function of festivals and the role they played in the formation of Socialist society. Throughout its socio-political transformations, Communist Poland altered the way it employed pop music. But whoever headed the Polish United Workers' Party, the pop song remained an important tool for shaping the new mentality; as a result, festivals of songs were continuously used for formation of the new Socialist consciousness. I portray I therefore demonstrate here the meaning of pop music festivals in the context of the Polish Communist Era pop song, including music reviews.

The subject of my research is the relationship between the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) and four festivals of songs: the Sopot International Song Festival, the National Festival of Polish Song in Opole, the Soviet Song Festival in Zielona Góra, and the Festival of the Soldiers' Song in Kołobrzeg. These festivals started in the 1960s and were a very important tenet of cultural policy until the end of the Polish People's Republic. Indeed, during the 1970s they became part of the propaganda of success, while in the 1980s the Polish United Workers' Party used them to improve its image.

What were the main roles of these music festivals? How did they change from the 1960s to 1989? What was the level of censorship? Could anyone perform in Sopot or Opole? Finally, did the festivals of songs shape the musical tastes of Polish people? For the youth, the most important event was the Festival of Rock Musicians in Jarocin. What role did this specific festival play in Socialist cultural policy? This research is based on documents of the Department of Culture of the Polish United Workers' Party, documents of the Communist Security Service, newspapers, and audiovisual sources.

= = = The Sopot International Song Festival

The International Song Festival in Sopot was organized for the first time in 1961. Its initiator was Władysław Szpilman: composer, author of several hundred songs, and head of the popular music department of Polish Radio. For the first three years, the festival took place in the hall of the Gdańsk Shipyard, after which it relocated to the Forest Opera.

Sopot was intended to have a promotional function: it was to popularize Polish songs in Europe. In Sopot, alongside Polish singers there were also musical stars from the Eastern Bloc countries. In 1963, the third edition was won by Tamara Miansarowa from the USSR, who sang the song "May there always be sunshine" ("*Pust' vsegda budet solnce*"). Among the Polish winners of the festival were Maryla Rodowicz with "Margaret" ("*Małgośka*") in 1973, Urszula Sipińska with "For this red flower" ("*Po ten kwiat czerwony*") in 1968, Andrzej Dąbrowski with "One step to falling in love" ("*Do zakochania jeden krok*") in 1972, and the band Vox with their "Banana song" ("*Bananowy song*") in 1982. In 1977, the festival introduced the Intervision competition as part of the competition with the West. "They have the Eurovision, and we have the Intervision, or the People's Democracy Games. Strong representations - Vondračkova from Czechoslovakia, Rodowicz from Poland, in the following years Niemen, Pugaczowa, and once our winner, the second time a Russian, another time a Czech and la, la, la, la - the fun continues,"

recalls the singer Maryla Rodowicz in her autobiography.¹ In the Intervision competition, in addition to a Grand Prix competition, a Polish Song Contest was organized in which foreign performers presented their interpretations of Polish hits; the prize was the Amber Nightingale. Contest participants had to choose from a list of Polish songs. When preparing this set every year, the organizers did not take into account the style of the performers. The performers sang songs they didn't like, which affected the level of the entire concert. Thus, the promotion of Polish songs was not very good.

The Sopot Forest Opera featured stars from the Eastern Bloc, with occasional guest appearances by artists from the West. One of the reasons for the lack of interest from Western performers in the competition was the low honorarium. During the time of the Polish People's Republic, the following artists performed in Sopot: Boney M., Demis Roussos, Ałła Pugaczowa, Helena Vondračkova, Karel Gott, Farida, Henri Seroka, Gloria Gaynor, Drupi, Charles Aznavour, and Dream Express.

According to the assumptions of the Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Sopot would play a promotional role for Polish pop music in the international arena. "Promotion is the slogan of the International Song Festival," claimed the director of the Department of Stage Art, from the Ministry of Culture and Art.² Yet already in the seventies this had become an empty slogan. The press frequently wrote about the lack of world stars and big hits.³ Little-known artists, called by publicists the „third set”, came to Sopot, which is why the event was perceived as amateurish in the West. Interest from foreign journalists and impresarios decreased. Ideas to transform the festival into a record fair came to nothing.

In the years 1982 and 1983, the festival did not take place due to martial law. The International Song Festival in Sopot, revived in 1984, was another example of so-called normalization. An event with an international character was needed by the party to enhance its image. A statement by the director of the Department of Theatre and Stage at the Ministry of Culture and Art leaves no doubt about the role of the Sopot festival: in his opinion, such an event "especially in Gdańsk was highly desirable, the participation of foreign artists would be another example of breaking the barriers and restrictions in cultural contacts used by some Western countries."⁴

1 = = Maryla Rodowicz, *Niech żyje bal* (Dom Wydawniczy Szczepan Szymański, 1992), 44.

2 = = AAN, The Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, sygn. LVI-1747, Information on the organization and course of MFP Sopot'87 from September 1987, prepared by Janusz Markowski, Director DSE, undated, 9.

3 = = JM, "Wychowanie muzyczne. Pofestiwalowa refleksja", *Jazz* no. 10 (1971): 14.

4 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1782, XXI MFP Sopot 84. Official note regarding the organization and course of the festival prepared by Janusz Trzciński, director of the Department of Theatre and Stage, undated, 1.

In 1984, Charles Aznavour performed in Sopot, which the Ministry of Culture considered a great PR success of the festival; this was despite the fact that during his concert, which lasted well past midnight, a large part of the audience left the Forest Opera to catch the last electric train to the Tri-City.⁵ The hit of this iteration of the festival was “Frontiera,” performed by the Polish-Italian duo Halina Benedyk and Marco Antonelli.

In the second half of the 1980s, Sopot hosted the following artists: Shirley Bassey, Bonnie Tyler, Sabrina, and Kim Wilde. The party had ambitions for Sopot to become a festival of great international importance. The Sopot '89 Organizing Committee even called this event the MIDEM of Northern Europe,⁶ “a bridge between Western and Eastern show business.”⁷ This opinion was, however, exaggerated. Significance of the Festival in Sopot were much lower than that of the MIDEM fair.

Still, even after 1989 the Sopot festival remained on the map of cultural events. In 1990, world stars performed at the Forest Opera, such as Whitney Houston, Marillion, Annie Lennox, and the Kelly Family.

== The National Festival of Polish Song in Opole

The National Festival of Polish Song in Opole was established in 1963 as a means of promoting Polish creativity and defending it against the flood of Western compositions. Therefore, only Polish compositions written by Polish composers and authors were allowed. The first festival constituted a triumph for satirical songs performed by the Student Satirical Theatre from Warsaw and Piwnica pod Baranami (The Cellar Under the Rams) from Krakow, as well as big-beat and jazz songs; at the same time, it was also a defeat for sentimental songs and mass songs. As a result, Polish pop music began to change. The Opole Festival also changed, allowing, among others, youth bands, which prompted both great enthusiasm among the youth and a wave of criticism among journalists.

The festival was created thanks to the initiative of Karol Musioł, chairman of the City National Council, and of two journalists from Program III of Polish Radio: Jerzy Grygolunas and Mateusz Świącicki. Musioł was also the initiator of the idea of building the Millennium Amphitheatre in Opole, where the festival takes place. During its first iteration, the publicist and music critic Jerzy Waldorff called Opole the “capital of Polish song,” and it stayed that way. The festival has its own theme composed by Bogusław Klimczuk, which opens each festival concert.

5 == AAN, sygn. LVI-1782, XXI MFP Sopot 84, 4.

6 == MIDEM is a phonographic fair in Cannes, an event that has been taking place since 1967. It is attended by creators, producers, publishers, managers, and technicians from all over the world.

7 == AAN, sygn. LVI-1749, The project of the organization of MFP Sopot'89 prepared by Jerzy Gruza and Wojciech Korzeniewski, August 29, 1988, 2.

The two most important events of the Opole festival are the premiere concert and the debut concert. The first presents new songs, while the second presents debuting artists. Many stars of Polish song began their careers in the Opole amphitheater. Since 1983, the main prize in the debut concert is Karolinka—the Anna Jantar Award, named in honor of the singer Anna Jantar, who died tragically in 1981. The festival launched a number of hits: “Carousel with Madonnas” (“*Karuzela z madonnami*”), “This World is Strange” (“*Dziwny jest ten świat*”), “On Foot to Summer” (“*Piechotę do lata*”), “You Will Return Here” (“*Powrócisz tu*”), “So Much Sun in the Whole City” (“*Tyle słońca w całym mieście*”), “Please Write” (“*Napisz proszę*”), and “Long Live the Ball” (“*Niech żyje bal*”).

The concert that many Poles were waiting for, and that worried the authorities, was the cabaret show called “kabareton.” Control over the song lyrics and scripts of cabaret programs was carried out in two stages. First, all of the lyrics were presented for approval in Warsaw at the Main Office of Control of the Press, Publications and Performances. After this, the artists’ performances in Opole were supervised by local censors, who were present both at rehearsals and during the festival concerts.

The August 1980 strikes and the creation of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” influenced culture, including song. Political cabaret, sketches, monologues, and songs portraying the realities of the time were very popular. The Opole ‘81 Festival was held under the banner of “Solidarity”: in the lyrics, stage design, and announcers’ words, there were many references to the situation in the country. Maciej Pietrzyk, Jan Pietrzak, Leszek Wójtowicz, Krystyna Prońko, Jacek Kaczmarski, Przemysław Gintrowski, the band Trzeci Oddech Kaczuchy all sang about everyday problems. A novelty was the award funded by “Solidarity”: Maciej Pietrzyk received one for the “Song for my Daughter” (“*Piosenka dla córki*”). Krystyna Prońko received the journalists’ award for “Psalm of Those Standing in Line” (“*Psalm stojących w kolejce*”), while Jan Pietrzak received the audience award for “Let Poland be Poland” (“*Żeby Polska była Polską*”).

After a hiatus caused by martial law, the Opole Festival returned in 1983. Authorities, journalists, and also fans of the song all had many expectations for it. “For Centrala, the very fact that this year’s festival will take place have a positive value, as a testimony that life in Poland continues and develops,” noted publicist Daniel Passent⁸. Almost all of the top Polish artists appeared in Opole, but in the opinion of journalists and critics, this did not affect the quality of the songs presented. Rock triumphed, with performances by Republika, Perfect, Irek Dudek, Śmierć Kliniczna, Brak, Rezerwat, Lombard, Lady Pank, Bajm and the hard rock band Poziom 600. During the rock concert entitled “Music Will Enter Your Hearts,” fragments of the films *Koncert* by Michał Tarkowski and *Jarocin’82* by

8 = = Daniel Passent, “Elektryfikacja plus epilepsja”, *Polityka* no. 28 (1983): 16.

Paweł Karpiński were shown on a large screen. The first is a recording of the Rockowisko 1981 festival in Łódź, and the second is a recording of the festival in Jarocin—Poland’s largest rock festival.

The press has repeatedly emphasized that Opole sets the trends in Polish song. A similar position was held by the Department of Culture of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party, but it went a step further, declaring that the Opole festival was to stimulate the development of song “that fulfills educational and entertainment functions well.”⁹ Looking at the songs presented, the entertainment functions dominated in Opole. Perhaps this explains why the festival in Opole remains the most important song festival in Poland. Since 2016, the history of this festival can be learned at the Museum of Polish Song in Opole.

= = = The Soviet Song Festival in Zielona Góra

The Festival of Soviet Song in Zielona Góra was first organized in 1965 by the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society, the Ministry of Culture and Art, the Radio and Television Committee, the Ministry of Education and Upbringing, and the Union of Polish Socialist Youth. It was the most mass amateur event, being preceded by eliminations in school clubs, village and district cultural centers, etc. Indeed, the festival was the largest competition for young talents in the country. Many later stars of the Polish stage appeared here: Majka Jeżowska, Małgorzata Ostrowska, Urszula, Michał Bajor, and Izabela Trojanowska. The main prizes were Golden, Silver and Bronze Samovars and a tour to the USSR. The Friendship Concert, alongside Polish pop stars, also featured two artists from the USSR, Alla Pugaczowa and Zanna Biczewska. During the festival, there were also other cultural events dedicated to Polish-Soviet friendship: the Colors of Friendship festival (for children’s song and dance ensembles), Soviet Literature Days, a Polish-Soviet painting plein-air workshop, and music record and book fairs. These activities emphasized the role of the festival as propaganda. No hits were launched in Zielona Góra. Young performers sang Soviet songs from a songbook prepared by the organizer. The choice was quite limited, and many songs were repeated. Ultimately, for many viewers and journalists, the festival was simply boring.

In 1968, the Soviet Song Festival made its debut on the television the small screen. Compared to the festivals in Opole and Sopot, it attracted little interest from the Culture Department of the Central Committee, and its assessment usually came down to praise of both its organizational and ideological attributes. On the one hand, this limited scrutiny could have resulted from the amateur nature of the festival, as it was the finale of a multi-stage vocal competition for young talents. The

9 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1783, Assessment of the National Festival of Polish Song “Opole 1984”, July 19, 1984, 2.

festival in Zielona Góra did not have the same influence on Polish pop music as the festivals in Opole and Sopot, or even in Jarocin. On the other hand, in the case of the Soviet Song Festival and the Soldier Song Festival, the party was not the main organizer, so perhaps this explains the restraint of the Polish United Workers' Party in its assessments of these festivals.

Since the beginning of the eighties, young people's interest in the eliminations for this festival has been decreasing. Popular vocalists refused to participate in concerts. The public's aversion to the Soviet Song Festival, identified with communist propaganda, has increased. According to information from the Security Service, „Solidarity” in Zielona Góra intended to prevent the festival from taking place in 1981 and demanded the disclosure of the costs of this festival. The festival was not cancelled during the martial law, but the level of security was increased.¹⁰ Several hundred officers maintained order in the city, and 200 in the amphitheater. The journalists were previously vetted by the Security Service. The Security Service did not interfere in the substantive course of the festival.

In 1989, the final Soviet Song Festival took place. With the fall of Communist power, the event glorifying Polish-Soviet friendship was of no interest to anyone. Many artists who had debuted in Zielona Góra removed this fact from their biographies. This and other festivals, like the Soldier Song Festival in Kołobrzeg (see below), were called “cursed festivals.”¹¹ In 2008, the Russian Song Festival was organized, but after several editions it was suspended. Changing the name from Soviet to Russian did not help popularize the festival. It was still identified with the propaganda of the Polish People's Republic.

= = The Soldiers' Song Festival in Kołobrzeg

The Soldiers' Song Festival in Kołobrzeg has been organized under this name since 1968. A year earlier, the Festival of Soldier Music and Song took place in Połczyn-Zdrój, the following year the event was organized simultaneously in Połczyn-Zdrój and Kołobrzeg, and from 1969 until 1989 it was held without interruption only in Kołobrzeg. The festival included competitions for the best soldiers' song and the best marching song (awarded with Gold and Silver Rings), a competition for the best amateur singers, and units representing each district and type of armed forces. In addition to concerts, the festival offered viewers shows, and from 1982 on, shows for children.

In the 1960s, youth bands played in Kołobrzeg: Skaldowie, Niebiesko-Czarni, Czerwono-Czarni, Breakout, and No To Co. In the 1970s, popular singers began

¹⁰ = = Krzysztof Brzechczyn, “Wokół 'piosenki'. Festiwal Piosenki Radzieckiej w latach 1982–1984 w Zielonej Górze w perspektywie bezpieczeństwa,” in *W służbie władzy czy społeczeństwa. Wybrane problemy rozwoju kultury i nauki na Środkowym Nadodrzu w latach 1945–1989* (Pro Libris, 2012), 111–121.

¹¹ = = Bartosz Żurawiecki, *Festiwal wyklęte* (Krytyka Polityczna, 2019).

to perform there—Maryla Rodowicz, Anna Jantar, Katarzyna Sobczyk, Halina Frąckowiak, Zdzisława Sośnicka, Teresa Tutinas, Irena Jarocka, Krzysztof Krawczyk, Jacek Lech, and Bogusław Mec—as well as the bands 2+1, Happy End, and Trubadurzy. During this period, the festival’s programming was expanded by introducing a concert of military bands from the Eastern Bloc. In the 1980s, most famous singers boycotted the festival. As a result, a group of artists who could be called the pillars of this festival performed in the amphitheater. They were Pisarek, Nina Urbano, Irena Woźniacka, Iwona Niedzielska, Elżbieta Jagiełło, Adam Zwierz, Krzysztof Cwynar, Bogdan Czyżewski, Adam Wojdak, Roman Gerczak, Ryszard Arning, and Rudolf Poledniok, as well as the actors Andrzej Szajewski, Wiktor Zatwarski, Józef Nowak, and Wojciech Siemion.

In 1971, it was decided that two decision-making centres for the festival should be established: an organizational section in Kołobrzeg and a programme-artistic section in Warsaw. The first was headed by the chairman of the Presidium of the Municipal National Council in Kołobrzeg; the second was composed of the artistic director of the festival and representatives of the party, the ministry and the Radio and Television Committee, and Colonel Władysław Czuba from the Main Political Board of the Polish Army¹². The transfer to Warsaw of the centre deciding on the programme and performers was an example of centralizing cultural policy. The festival occupied a key place in the work plans for each year. In terms of repertoire, it was expected to celebrate anniversaries such as the end of the World War II or anniversaries of the Polish People’s Republic¹³. An example of propaganda was references to the current political situation. In 1983, it was recommended to emphasize support for the party’s and government’s policies, as well as “criticism of illnesses, anomalies and social evil.” Organizers were to “[e]nrich the festival with content resulting from the forty-ninth anniversary of the establishment of the Polish People’s Army.”¹⁴

The festival presented over a thousand new soldiers’ songs over its thirty years of existence. Every year, dozens of songs were submitted to the soldier song competition. Composers were invited to participate according to the distribution list. The competition was organized in two categories: military marching song and stage song with a military theme.¹⁵ Each participant in the competition could

12 == AP, sygn. 983, KW PZPR, Materials concerning FPŻ in Kołobrzeg and Połczyn-Zdrój 1967-1975. Report of the Organizational Office of FPŻ Kołobrzeg 1972, undated, 1.

13 == On the rules of the soldier song competition, see Karolina Bittner, *Piosenka w służbie propagandy. Festiwal Piosenki Żołnierskiej w Kołobrzegu 1968–1989* (IPN, 2016), 118–121.

14 == AMON, sygn. 344/92/721, Stage bands, orchestras, monuments, medals 2 January 1982—31 December 1982. Information on the course of central artistic events held in 1982, November 13, 1982, 334.

15 == AMON, sygn. 344/92/721, 240.

submit any number of pieces, but they had to be premiere recordings (i.e., previously unpublished or performed). Composers and lyricists could also create authorial partnerships with a person who did not receive an invitation from the Polish Army Board. The conditions for accepting a piece of work into the competition was that it be submitted anonymously and signed with “an emblem of your choice.”¹⁶ The songs selected by the jury were then assigned to singers and bands.¹⁷

These soldiers’ songs entertained on the one hand, and educated on the other. However, the festival launched few hits: “When the Song Went to the Army” (“*Gdy piosenka szła do wojska*”), “Polish Military Cap” (“*Rogatywka*”), “Don’t Be Sorry, Girl’s Heart” (“*Nie żałujcie serca dziewczyny*”), “It’s Good for Him” (“*Takiemu to dobrze*”), “Podhale Rifleman” (“*Strzelec podhalański*”), “Tell Me, Homeland” (“*Opowiedz mi ojczyzno*”), “Red Sun” (“*Czerwone słońeczko*”), “We Are the Army” (“*Mysimy są wojsko*”), and “When Poland Gives Us the Order” (“*Gdy Polska da nam rozkaz*”). The lattermost became a symbol of the festival. Namely, in 1981, it was performed in the amphitheater by Adam Zwierz, but with the text changed without the consent and knowledge of the author. In the original, the author of the text, Lech Konopiński, wrote, „We will join the army, / To look our enemies in the face boldly.” The festival viewers, however, heard, „We will join the army, / To defend socialism together.”

In view of the socio-political situation in the country, this was a very clear voice of support for the authorities of the Polish People’s Republic. Moreover, in 1981, the entire festival constituted an expression of support for the Polish People’s Army and the Polish United Workers’ Party. The lyrics of the songs repeatedly declared gratitude to the soldiers, emphasizing that the army was needed and could be trusted.

In July 1990, the Polish People’s Republic was no more. There was also no need for a soldier’s song related to the anniversaries of the past period: the building of the People’s Republic of Poland, the triumphs of the Polish People’s Army, or friendship with the Soviet Union. In the information of the Press Office of the Ministry of National Defense from 1990, it was written: “due to the emerging critical voices regarding the saturation of the then editions of the festival with ideological and propaganda content, the management of the ministry decided to withdraw from organizing the festival.”¹⁸ The Kołobrzeg authorities organized several more iterations, but without success. The last time the soldier song festival took place was in 1997.

16 == AMON, sygn. 237/91/151, GZP WP ZKiO, Outgoing correspondence, 2 January 1969, 31 December 1969; 237/91/151, Regulations for a song on a military theme, 1969, 11.

17 == AMON, sygn. 237/91/155, GZP WP ZKiO correspondence received on 24 October 1969—31 December 1969; Regulations of the National Soldier Song Festival Kołobrzeg 1970—draft, 124.

18 == “Festiwal zdjęty z afisza”, *Kulisy Kołobrzegskie* no. 5 (1998): 8.

= = = The Festival of Rock Musicians in Jarocin

In the 1970s, the Greater Poland Youth Rhythms (*Wielkopolskie Rytmy Młodych*) took place in Jarocin, which in 1980 was transformed into the National Review of Young Generation Music. This is how the history of the largest rock festival in Poland began. In 1983, the name was changed to the Festival of Rock Musicians. Jarocin became the rock capital of Poland. Every year, thousands of rock fans came from all over the country to see their idols: TSA, Republika, Brygada Kryzys, and Armia. A small stage was reserved for debutants; in this way, the bands Dezerter, Moskwa, and T.Love started their careers in Jarocin. Representatives of many subcultures—punk, metal, and reggae—met in Jarocin as well. For them, the festival was an oasis of freedom. In reality, however, the rock festival was just like any other: controlled by censorship and spied on by the security apparatus.

A characteristic element of the Jarocin festival was a forest of tape recorders above the heads of the audience, on which fans recorded the performances of their idols. Often, this was the only way to obtain recordings of these artists. “Recording albums with bands presented in Jarocin would be too great an honor for them. [...] This music is mostly just crap—lyrically and musically,” stated the program director of Polish Recordings,¹⁹ who summed up the issue of not recording tapes from Jarocin concerts with a simple “rock music lovers will record them themselves.”²⁰ In turn, the director of the Wifon record label claimed that the cassettes with music from Jarocin would not be distributed in sufficient numbers to guarantee a profit.²¹ Considering the number of young people listening to rock, this statement is surprising. Many rock bands published their cassettes at home and sold them at concerts, including the Jarocin festival. From their accounts, we know that the interest in cassettes was enormous. The T.Love group released two cassettes in this way: *Our Bubelon* (*Nasz Bubelon*) in 1984 and *The Boors Are Coming* (*Chamy idą*) in 1985, of which they sold about five thousand in three years.

The party’s attitude towards the Jarocin festival was ambiguous. Their acceptance of such a large gathering of young people is explained by researchers with the safety valve theory. In this way, the authorities sought to prevent young people from contacting the political opposition. The security apparatus spied on the participants and performers of the festival to see if they were promoting anti-communist content, including distributing leaflets. According to the Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party, the Rock Musicians’ Festival in Jarocin was very controversial and criminogenic, as it was the site for thefts, robberies, and drug addiction; moreover, in 1985, attempts at political

19 == M. Kwiatkowski, “Rock spod korca”, *Odrodzenie* no. 34 (1986): 11.

20 == M. Kwiatkowski, “Rock spod korca”, *Odrodzenie* no. 34 (1986): 11.

21 == M. Kwiatkowski, “Rock spod korca”, *Odrodzenie* no. 34 (1986): 11.

provocations and active influence of the church were recorded in Jarocin.²² At Jarocin '85, leaflets boycotting military service were thrown out twice. The remedy for the above-mentioned phenomena was supposed to be greater involvement of the provincial authorities in Kalisz and of both the Union of Socialist Polish Youth and the Polish Scouting Association.

The Jarocin festival has permanently entered the history of Polish rock music. For several summer days, it constituted a veritable city: a state, where one could manifest one's rebellion against the system. And only the presence of officers of the Citizens' Militia and the Security Service reminded attendees that behind the fence surrounding the Jarocin stadium, there was a different reality, from which it would be possible to escape again only in a year.

In the second half of the 1980s, divisions among the festival audience grew stronger year by year, especially among the conflicting subcultures of punks and skinheads. Fights erupted between them, and the press wrote more about the riots than the music. As a result, after 1989 the reluctance of the Jarocin residents towards the festival grew.

The festival in Jarocin was last held in 1994. That edition went down in history not because of its music, but because of the fighting and riots. "They beat in Jarocin," the press reported: „Five policemen were injured out of 400 taking part in the action, five ambulances were sent there [...] the police used tear gas, shops and cars parked on the Holy Spirit Street were damaged.”²³ The festival was revived only in 2005.

= = = The role of song festivals

The boom in song festivals in Poland in the 1960s was connected to a demographic boom of young people eager for entertainment. Festivals were supposed to regulate, stimulate, direct, and influence the market in a more or less intrusive way. However, the obsession with festivals led to a decrease in their rank and significance. They ceased to be a celebration of song and became an ordinary concert.

The locations where the flagship song festivals were held are not accidental. The choice of the Western and Northern Territories, which were the main element of propaganda in the 1940s, may indicate a desire to emphasize the economic, social, and cultural cohesion of these areas with the rest of Poland.²⁴ That is why organizing the Polish Song Festival in the "Piast" Opole or the International Song Festival in Sopot, a city with pre-war multicultural traditions, was a conscious

22 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1781, Assessment and conclusions resulting from the course of the 1985 song festivals, September 24, 1985, 1.

23 = = "Bili w Jarocinie", *Głos Wielkopolski* no. 181 (1994): 1.

24 = = About musical life in the Western and Northern Lands, see Bogdan M. Jankowski and Michał Misiorny, *Muzyka i życie muzyczne na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych 1945–1965* (Wyd. Poznańskie 1968): 199–227.

decision. Similarly, in the case of Zielona Góra with Soviet songs and Kołobrzeg with soldiers' songs, one can find many references to the history of these cities.

The form of institutionalization of popular music were song festivals. Their program, repertoire, and selection of performers were subject to control by the government, or more precisely, the Communist party. It was the party that set the directions of cultural policy, and the Ministry of Culture and Art and cultural institutions implemented this policy.

Song festivals best illustrate the institutionalization and centralization of the entertainment industry in the Polish People's Republic. Unlike phonography, they operated within a framework strictly defined by the authorities. A report on the preparations for the festivals was sent to the highest party authorities, i.e., the first secretary of the Central Committee²⁵. The representatives of the organizing office had to gain the approval of several institutions for trips to other song festivals in Europe: the Polish Artistic Agency "Pagart," the Office of Cultural Cooperation with Foreign Countries at the Ministry of Culture and Art, and the Department of Culture of the Central Committee of the Party. However, the final decision was made by the party. In January 1964, "Pagart" planned, in connection with the preparations for the next festival in Sopot, to send Ludwik Klekow, secretary of the International Song Festival, to the festival in San Remo so that he could familiarize himself with the experiences of another festival. The Culture Department of the Central Committee did not agree to this, arguing that "our experiences are sufficient."²⁶

Song festivals were not only planned in detail but also assessed by the Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, both in terms of organization and repertoire. There could be no question of randomness. They reflected the socio-political situation of the country, often serving to divert public attention from the actions of the authorities. In 1971, a plan was even made to use the festival in Sopot to improve Poland's image in the world after December 1970.²⁷ The festival office received several applications from foreign companies and television stations interested in recording the Sopot '71 festival. Two were selected: Austrian television, which wanted to send a thirty-person crew with equipment for magnetic recording in color and to make the recorded film available to televisions in Germany and Switzerland, and the English company Telebiuro, which planned to film selected fragments of the festival, then edit them with photos of Gdańsk,

25 == AAN, sygn. 237/XVIII-194, Information about the 3rd MFP, August 9, 1963, 42-45.

26 == AAN, sygn. 237/XVIII/214, Letter from the Head of Department II of the Office of Cultural Cooperation with Foreign Countries of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage to the Department of Culture of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, November 14, 1963, handwritten note, 186.

27 == AAN, sygn. LVI-612, Note on the possibility of popularizing the 1971 Sopot Festival in the world, May 4, 1971, 1.

and also provide the star: jazz singer Nancy Wilson.²⁸ The Radio and Television Committee decided that the English proposal was against the interests of Polish television, and the Austrians were asked to only provide the equipment that the Polish crew would operate. In terms of improving the image of the government after December 1970, the participation of stage stars in the Soldier Song Festival in Kołobrzeg in 1971—the first after Edward Gierek took power—should be considered. The performers were Maryla Rodowicz with the song “Drafting into the Army” (“*Powołanie*”), Halina Frąckowiak with the ABC group “The Army Has Been Singing Since Morning” (*Wojsko od rana śpiewa*), the bands 2+1 with “I Won’t Be So Stupid Again” (“*Już nie będę taki głupi*”) and Trubadurzy with “No Dad, No Mom” (“*Nie ma taty, nie ma mamy*”). Never again did so many such popular performers appear at this festival.

In 1981, the festival in Opole was held under the banner of “Solidarity,” and artists identified with this movement appeared on stage: Jacek Kaczmarski, Przemysław Gintrowski, Maciej Pietrzyk, Jan Pietrzak, and Leszek Wójtowicz. In turn, during martial law, only the Soldier Song Festival in Kołobrzeg, the Soviet Song Festival in Zielona Góra, and rock festivals were held: the Young Generation Musicians Festival in Jarocin and the National Meetings with Blues “Rawa Blues” in Katowice. The former were intended to create the illusion of public support for the Polish People’s Army, the authorities of the Polish People’s Republic and the USSR; the latter were a manifestation of the instrumental treatment of popular music by the communist authorities. This is particularly visible in the example of “Rawa Blues.” In 1982, the concerts were moved from clubs to large halls in Katowice, Sosnowiec, Jastrzębie Zdrój, and Dąbrowa Górnicza, accompanied by film screenings and lectures. It was nothing like those of previous years, and the performers did not like these changes.²⁹

Song festivals were included in the programs of celebrations of subsequent anniversaries of the Polish People’s Republic, and their organizers were expected to feature works affirming the achievements of the People’s Republic of Poland and the Polish United Workers’ Party. The leading ones in this respect were the Festival of Soldiers’ Songs in Kołobrzeg, the Festival of Soviet Song in Zielona Góra, and the Festival of Engaged Song in Katowice. Events such as the fortieth anniversary of the Polish People’s Republic or the flight of Mirosław Hermaszewski had to appear in the repertoire of the above-mentioned festivals. However, similar tasks were set for the festival in Opole. In 1966, the Millennium Concert was organized in Opole, with the participation of the period instrument ensemble *Fistulatores et Tubicinatores Varsavienses*. In 1969, the KPP in Opole began the concert *On the*

28 == AAN, sygn. LVI-612.

29 == This is as recollected by Józef Skrzek of the band SBB, cited in Marcin Babko, *Irek Dudek Ziuta blues* (In Rock, 2008): 92.

Right a Bridge, on the Left a Bridge, referring to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Polish People's Republic; in addition to the title song, it also featured "Beloved Country" and "For This Red Flower." In 1984, according to the Department of Culture of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in Opole, there was no affirmation of the achievements of the forty years of the Polish People's Republic.³⁰ The Festival of Soviet Song in Zielona Góra was cited as an example of a proper celebration of this anniversary. The festival featured performances by Sława Przybylska, Renata Danel, Bogdana Zagórska, Iwona Niedzielska, Bajm, Gang Marcela, Banda i Wanda, and Filia Włodara. The festival organizers were particularly proud of the participation of Bajm, Banda i Wanda, and Gang Marcela, as this had "significant political and artistic significance in the environment of artists and stage activists, and constituted a kind of breach."³¹ This was important because since the beginning of the eighties, young people's interest in the eliminations for this festival had been decreasing. In addition, the participation of stars guaranteed ticket sales. In the evaluation of the festival, it was suggested that in the future, additional incentives be introduced in the form of prizes for committed songs, related to specific anniversaries and events.³² "Further efforts are needed to control the repertoire," we read in the conclusions.³³ In practice, this meant increased broadcasting of Soviet songs in the media, especially in programs for children and young people, the publication of new collections of these songs, more numerous recordings, and the publication of songs in the weeklies "Land of Councils" ("Kraj Rad") and "Friendship." For 1985, it was recommended that the programs of the festivals of songs commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the "victory over fascism" and the fortieth anniversary of the "return of the Western Lands" be included."³⁴

= = = Festivals under supervision

Song festivals were a major logistical event for the authorities. They attracted thousands of people eager for music and a chance to meet their favorite artist. Moreover, during periods of socio-political crises, they created an opportunity to contest the system, both for performers and the audience. Hence, it was necessary to properly secure both the amphitheater and the material intended for broadcast on television.

30 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1783, Assessment of the National Festival of Polish Song "Opole 1984", July 19, 1984, 1.

31 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1736, Assessment of the 23rd competition and the 20th Zielona Góra FPR'84, Warszawa, April 1984, 10.

32 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1736, 21.

33 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1736, 22.

34 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1783, Informational note on the meeting organized by the Culture Department of the Central Committee on December 12, 1984 regarding song festivals in Sopot, Opole, Mrągowo and Jazz Jamboree in Warsaw, December 12, 1984, 2.

The security plans for these song festivals were broadly similar and included a two-pronged approach of preventing political activities and hooligan misbehavior.³⁵ Festivals usually had their own Security Services, which were responsible for ticket control, seating arrangements in the amphitheater, and eliminating fake entry tickets or performers' entry cards. These services cooperated with the Citizens' Militia, whose tasks included ensuring security in the amphitheater and in the festival city, securing road and pedestrian traffic, safeguarding festival participants against theft, catering establishments reserved for festival participants, protecting equipment in the amphitheater and festival decorations located in the city, and eliminating the "local criminal element."³⁶ In addition, officers of the Security Service were engaged to counteract "hostile political activity"; they acted on the basis of directives from the relevant departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.³⁷ The scale of security for individual concerts was determined by who was performing. For example, based on rehearsals for the Opole festival in the 1970s, the following conclusions were drawn: "adults want to get to Irena Santor's recitals or wait for hours around the amphitheater. Therefore, we can assume that peace and order will reign at the performances. On the contrary, a lot of 'youth who don't shout' come to Maryla Rodowicz's rehearsals, who start noise and confusion."³⁸

At the festival in Sopot, special interest was shown to citizens of Western countries. As part of preventive measures both in the preparatory period for the festival and during the event, the Citizens' Militia conducted reconnaissance of the gold and foreign currency traders' environment and their contacts with foreigners, as well as observed foreigners' accommodations "in order to establish their social and commercial contacts."³⁹ In 1973, the Security Service carried out an operational control of the German Federal Republic (fourteen people), Dutch (ten people), French (eight people) and Belgian (eight people) teams. The aim of these activities was to identify foreigners "taking advantage of their stay at the Festival for purposes that are detrimental to the interests of the Polish State or violating the applicable legal order," to reveal Poles who "use the above international event to establish contacts for hostile purposes," and to obtain information on

35 == Brzechczyn, "Wokół 'piosenki'," 112-19; Bittner, *Piosenka w służbie*, 50-52; Lesiakowski, Perzyna, and Toborek, *Jarocin w obiektywie*.

36 == AIPN BU, sygn. 1510/335, Diploma thesis entitled: Preparation of the Citizens' Militia to secure the FPP in Opole, Part-time Master's Degree Studies. Academy of Internal Affairs Institute of Public Order Warsaw 1978, 23.

37 == AIPN BU, sygn. 1510/335, 24.

38 == AIPN BU, sygn. 1510/335, 26-27.

39 == AIPN BU, sygn. 1510/926, J. Nasiadko. Organization of the security of the MFP event in Sopot, master's thesis Part-time Master's Degree Studies. Academy of Internal Affairs Institute of Public Order Warsaw 1980, 85.

attempts to disrupt the festival through political and/or hooligan activities.⁴⁰ Operational activities revealed hostile activity by, among others, a journalist from the Erfen weekly "Bild am Sonntag" and a manager from the Netherlands; the latter asked a soldier on guard in front of a military unit in Gdańsk about a gas station.⁴¹ Negative comments from festival participants about the course of the event and the jury's results were noted; for example, Belgian singer Henri Seroka "in the presence of other foreigners commented on the fact that he was not awarded the prize this year, preferring performers from the socialist camp."⁴² In 1974, the "operational focus" was on the representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and the USA.⁴³ The aim was to identify foreigners who, under the pretext of the festival, showed interest in matters unrelated to the event, as well as Poles trying to establish contacts with foreigners for hostile or personal purposes. The Security Service assessed the behavior of the Polish performers very negatively; according to them, performers used the festival "to seek excitement and entertainment. They drink a lot of alcohol and strive for maximum excess. [...] During the Festival, entire families with children and even dogs live in the „Grand Hotel."⁴⁴

In the 1980s, public aversion to festivals in Zielona Góra and Kołobrzeg, identified with communist propaganda, increased. According to information from the Security Service, "Solidarity" in Zielona Góra intended to prevent the Soviet Song Festival in 1981. Solidarity demanded the disclosure of the costs of this festival, claiming that Poland could not afford such an event.⁴⁵ In February 1986, the Security Service noted the existence of an illegal youth group in Kołobrzeg, led by Jacek Borcz. The group planned to disrupt the course of the 1986 Soldier Song Festival by using tear gas and explosives in the amphitheater, as well as distributing leaflets in the units of the Polish People's Army stationed in Kołobrzeg.⁴⁶ These were supposed to be leaflets signed by the Freedom and Peace Movement,

40 == AIPN Gd, sygn. 0046/350/20, Information on the results of operational control of participants of the XIII MFP in Sopot, September 8, 1973, prepared by Capt. W. Raniewicz, 293-94.

41 == AIPN Gd, sygn. 0046/350/20, 297.

42 == AIPN Gd, sygn. 0046/350/20, 300.

43 == AIPN Gd, sygn. 0046/362 t. 29, Analysis of materials obtained during operational security of the XIV MFP, August 31, 1974, 3.

44 == AIPN Gd, sygn. 0046/362 t. 29, 15.

45 == AIPN BU, sygn. 0365/66 t. 3, Information from Department III of the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding the socio-political situation in the country. Information regarding attempts by the MKZ "S" in Zielona Góra to interfere in the organization of this year's FPR, May 22, 1981, 38.

46 == AIPN Sz, sygn. 00105/496, WUSW in Koszalin Emergency Department crypt. Kaktus, Operational report no. 25/86, February 18, 1986, 5.

which is why all contacts between Borcz and the Freedom and Peace Movement were monitored.⁴⁷ As a result of the actions of the Security Service, no distribution took place.⁴⁸ The following year, according to the Voivodeship Office of Internal Affairs in Gdańsk, activists of the Freedom and Peace Movement intended to come to Kołobrzeg to disrupt the festival. In fact, there was no record of their presence in Kołobrzeg during the event, nor of any actions by members of the Freedom and Peace Movement.⁴⁹ In 1988, members of the Freedom and Peace Movement had a more specific plan: a group of several dozen people were to enter the audience to ridicule the performers and the songs they were performing with their attire and behavior.⁵⁰ On July 4, 1988, four members of the Freedom and Peace Movement from Gdańsk, including Krzysztof Goliński and Klaudiusz Wesolek, came to Kołobrzeg, bringing with them one hundred and thirty copies of a poster, a stencil with unknown content, and paints. The poster they left behind, in A4 format, showed the head of the singer with a grenade in his mouth and the words “Kołobrzeg’88 Soldier’s Song Festival.” During their three-day stay in Kołobrzeg, the members of the Freedom and Peace Movement took several dozen photos of the amphitheater. Their visit was closely supervised, including by two secret collaborators nicknamed “Paszka” and “Amadeo.” The aforementioned posters were seized by the Security Service.⁵¹

The level of surveillance of the rock festival in Jarocin was high, as recalled by many musicians, such as Tomasz Budzyński from the band Armia.⁵² In the operational security plan for the Jarocin ‘86 Rock Musicians’ Festival, the main goal was set to “Identify any harmful acts of a political nature.”⁵³ The operational materials of the security apparatus concerning the course and organization of the Jarocin festival contain a lot of information about the opposition activities of rock performers and fans. The censored materials include, among others, publications

47 = = On the Freedom and Peace Movement, see: Anna Smółka-Gnauck, *Między wolnością a pokojem: zarys historii Ruchu “Wolność i Pokój”* (IPN, 2012); *WiPnięci: uczestnicy ruchu Wolność i Pokój o sobie* (Stowarzyszenie Wolnego Słowa, 2014); and Maciej Wiśniewski, *Ruch “Wolność i Pokój” w Szczecinie w latach 1985–1992* (Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, 2014).

48 = = AIPN Sz, sygn. 00105/496, WUSW in Koszalin Emergency Department crypt. Kaktus, Operational report no. 25/86, Supplementary report no.104/86, July 17, 1986, 12.

49 = = AIPN Sz, sygn. 00105/496, WUSW in Koszalin Emergency Department crypt. Kaktus, Operational report no. 25/86, Supplementary report no.100/87, July 14, 1987, 23.

50 = = AIPN Sz, sygn. 00105/496, WUSW in Koszalin Emergency Department crypt. Kaktus, Operational report no. 25/86, Supplementary report no. 78/88, June 9, 1988, 40.

51 = = AIPN Sz, sygn. 00105/496, WUSW in Koszalin Emergency Department crypt. Kaktus, Operational report no. 25/86, Supplementary report no. 96/88, July 19, 1988, 42.

52 = = Testimony of Tomasz Budzyński in Mikołaj Lizut, *PRL—punk rock later* (Sic!, 2003), 73.

53 = = FMR Jarocin ,86 Operational Security Plan, cited in Lesiakowski, Perzyna, and Tობorek, *Jarocin w obiektywie*, 135.

and the content of bands' performances⁵⁴ and leaflets signed by the Alternative Society Movement.⁵⁵ Leaflet campaigns, selling posters with a satirical depiction of Lenin, and even stamping a seal with a drawing of a dragon devouring a sheep and the inscription "Jaruzelski—the Wawel Dragon," in the light of the services' report, only gave the festival "a certain flavor and color"⁵⁶. An important element of observing the Jarocin festival was to identify youth subcultures and their possible contacts with opposition organizations. The music presented at the Jarocin festival was outside the sphere of interest of the security apparatus.

= = = Festivals and television

In the 1970s, song festival rebroadcasts were one of the most important entertainment programs. The form of supervision over song festivals was rationed television broadcasting. Only some festival concerts were broadcast; the rest were presented at a later date and usually in a reduced version, e.g., the festival in Opole in 1986.⁵⁷ This was a form of censorship, but it was partly due to the limitations of broadcasting time. Most Poles watched festivals on television, so their form was subordinated to the rules of the television program. Therefore, the task of stimulating and promoting good songs was relegated to the background, because the priority was the visual spectacle of the festival concert. In 1972, the Opole festival hosted twelve concerts and recitals, but television showed only four of them. In 1973, Opole was broadcast with a one-day delay and only in fragments. The television broadcast therefore had little in common with Polish popular music. In 1979, the Boney M. band performed at the Sopot festival and sang the song "Rasputin." Television broadcast the concert a day later, cutting the song. In June 1980 in Opole, the Tey cabaret presented the program "Store Backroom" ("*S tyłu sklepu*"). It was not shown on television until October 1980.

Control over the festival's television coverage served to eliminate undesirable behavior by performers and audiences, and it allowed for the creation of a beautiful, joyful, colorful world of song, to the rhythm of which the audience swayed in amphitheaters in Opole, Sopot, Kołobrzeg, and Zielona Góra. This festival illusion was intended to distract attention from social, political, and economic issues.

Retransmissions of festival concerts were also subject to the rigors of the television program in terms of the performer's attire. The order for on-stage attire

54 = = Lesiakowski, Perzyna, and Toborek, *Jarocin w obiektywie*, 135.

55 = = Note on the arrest of a leaflet distributor during the FMR Jarocin '85, cited in Lesiakowski, Perzyna, and Toborek, *Jarocin w obiektywie*, 129.

56 = = Report from the XX FMR Jarocin '89, cited in Lesiakowski, Perzyna, and Toborek, *Jarocin w obiektywie*, 203.

57 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1748, Assessment of the XXIII KFPP Opole '86 dated 21 October 1986, prepared by the KW PZPR in Opole, 2.

of August 10, 1966 specified that such attire consisted of black trousers, a black elastic turtleneck, and gaiters.⁵⁸ The party appealed for the enforcement of these regulations. “Strengthen and consistently enforce the requirements for ensembles and soloists appearing in the TV program in terms of their artistic level and personal appearance (clothing, hair, etc.). Ensembles and soloists who do not meet or comply with these requirements may not appear in the TV program,” stated the Culture Department of the Central Committee.⁵⁹

Particular attention was paid to the long hair of members of big-beat bands. In connection with the festival in Opole in 1968, the slogan “Not the hair, but the voice” was promoted.⁶⁰ Tadeusz Nalepa from the band Breakout had to tie his hair up so that the band could perform at the festival in Opole. On the other hand, it was absurd that having a certificate of employment as a musician in a stage band allowed having long hair. It was treated as an element of the stage image. Thanks to this loophole, some hippies avoided having their hair cut.⁶¹

= = Why do we need song festivals?

In the People’s Republic of Poland, song festivals were assigned a role that was inadequate to their artistic value. The number of articles about Opole or Sopot had no bearing on the level of the songs presented, and the numerous critical voices about songs, often winners of festival competitions, fell on deaf ears. The publicist Krzysztof T. Toeplitz rightly noted that “in normal societies, song festivals are appropriate topics for people from the entertainment industry, boarders and domestic help, and I have never heard in Italy, France or America, anyone seriously discussing, for example, the festival in San Remo.”⁶² In the Polish People’s Republic, on the other hand, one could read about song festivals in almost every periodical. They were also an important element of the cultural policy of the Polish United Workers’ Party, which was eagerly pursued during the so-called Polish months.

The abundance of song festivals did not go hand in hand with their quality. Song festivals were often treated solely as an element of summer entertainment. Summer song festivals were therefore a part of not only the entertainment industry, but also the tourism industry—and sometimes with a predominance of the latter. In terms of song promotion, the festivals left much to be desired. Opole was a “

58 = = Dariusz Michalski, *Trzysta tysięcy gitar nam gra, czyli historia polskiej muzyki rozrywkowej (lata 1958–1973)* (Iskry, 2014), 186.

59 = = AAN, sygn. 237/XVIII-308, Note on the Polish Radio Music Program and the Polish Song Festival in Opole, July 15, 1970, 159.

60 = = Tracz, *Hippiesi*, 179.

61 = = Tracz, *Hippiesi*, 185.

62 = = J. Neuberg, “Festiwal, czyli gra pozorów,” *Opole*, no. 10, (1977): 30.

factory of illusions for the audience,” Kołobrzeg was less popular than expected, and Sopot was subordinated to television broadcasting. Festivals were avoided by big stars of the stage, partly because they were afraid of comparisons and because it was difficult to break through among the many festival events. In turn, the lack of the biggest celebrities resulted in smaller audiences. Moreover, with the development of mass media, the role of festivals in promoting young talents decreased. An expensive, several-day song marathon lost out to a television revue, recital, or show-type spectacle. Festivals stopped promoting music; they became a vanity fair, a social gathering, a tangle of interests, a fashion show.

Song festivals, especially those for amateurs such as the Festival of Soviet Song in Zielona Góra, did not fulfill the role of promoting young talents. They failed to promote the songs. “Over time, they became an end in themselves instead of a means of stimulating the development of Polish song; they were only a review of the state of possessions,” noted the 1982 report on the state of the stage.⁶³

= = = Conclusions

The influence of the Polish United Workers’ Party on popular music was definitely weaker than that of the communist parties in the USSR and other countries of the bloc. But the actions of the Polish People’s Republic authorities were not as restrictive as those of the Soviet Union. This can be seen in many areas of the entertainment industry. Opening the phonographic market to Polish companies, as well as tolerating illegal production of audio postcards and audio cassettes, was a defeat for the state monopoly in this area: a defeat that the party admitted to by accepting the broadcasting of songs released by private phonographic companies on the radio.

Artists performed in official concerts, and in the circulation organized by state institutions, they were subject to censorship—but this was not enough. The authorities managed to institutionalize entertainment, but they did not take control over the repertoire. On the one hand, the nationalization of publishing houses, editorial offices, galleries, etc., gave the Polish United Workers’ Party control over culture, but supervision alone was not enough to create the taste of Poles. Songs that did not necessarily follow the party’s guidelines gained popularity. Two songs from 1981 are an example of this: “When Poland Will Give Us an Order” (“*Gdy Polska da nam rozkaz*”) from the Soldiers’ Song Festival in Kołobrzeg and “Let Poland Be Poland” (“*Żeby Polska była Polską*”) from the Polish Song Festival in Opole. Poles, contrary to the party’s expectations, chose the latter song. They sang it during strikes, and after martial law was introduced on December 13, 1981, this song became one of the most important protest songs.

In addition, the multitude of cultural institutions and the dispersion of the decision-making process introduced chaos into the system, effectively reducing its

63 = = AAN, sygn. LVI-1783, Report on the state of the stage, May 1982, 7.

effectiveness. In terms of staging, there was also a dispersion of responsibility; no one felt responsible for entertainment, and statements such as “I didn’t see the program, so I don’t know what they showed there” were not isolated.⁶⁴ In the history of song festivals, we can find frequent absences of responsible parties: for the lack of hits, e.g., the festival in Kołobrzeg, or for the appearance of an anti-state song at the festival in Opole, approved by the provincial censorship office without the knowledge of the central office.

After the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party in 1955, Jerzy Putrament, a writer and publicist, stated that “we can prevent the publication of bad works, but we cannot order the creation of good works.”⁶⁵ Administrative control of creativity—i.e., imposing the content of novels, films or songs—was impossible. Despite this, the authorities made attempts to control creativity, such as through competitions for a song on a specific topic, but the effects of these did not occupy a significant place in popular culture. Among the plebiscites for musical hits from the Polish People’s Republic, we will not find songs written on the occasion of, for example, the fortieth anniversary of the Polish People’s Republic, nor will we find soldiers’ songs.

Controlling culture largely came down to administration. Various events, reviews, and competitions were organized, creating the appearance of the effectiveness of the Polish United Workers’ Party’s influence in the area of mass culture. Imposing themes resulted in dualism; alongside mass, Soviet, soldier, and engaged songs, there were ordinary pop songs. This raises questions about the possibilities of controlling culture, which Włodzimierz Sokorski, the Minister of Culture and Art in the 1950s, himself questioned. The degree of politicization of pop music was much weaker than, for example, literature. This was the result of the weak influence of the government apparatus on the musical environment and the lack of involvement of authors and composers in implementing the cultural guidelines of the party, which the Department of Culture of the Central Committee considered its failure: first in the mid-fifties, and again in the last decade of the Polish People’s Republic. Attempts made in the second half of the eighties to establish a new body for entertainment arts, composed of party members representing organizations and institutions involved in entertainment activities instead of the previous non-party artists, were a de facto admission by the Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party of a mistaken policy towards entertainment music.

64 = = AAN, sygn. 237/XVIII/192, Comment on the Nine Best Program, November 15, 1962.

65 = = Włodzimierz Kaczocho, *Polityka kulturalna PPR–PZPR. Zarys problematyki polityki kulturalnej w okresie 1942–1977* (Centralny Ośrodek Metodyki Upowszechniania Kultury, 1981), 99.

The four main song festivals discussed here were one of the most important events in the entertainment calendar. Festivals in Opole and Sopot in the '60s and '70s attracted popular performers and crowds of the audience. People were waiting not only for new hits, but also for the creations of singers. It was at the festival in Opole that Halina Frąckowiak appeared in a mini skirt, and in Sopot Maryla Rodowicz launched the famous banana skirt (*bananówka*). The year 1989 reaffirmed the importance of song festivals. The organizers had to adapt to a new political and economic reality. On the one hand, new sources of financing had to be sought, while on the other, a change in their formula was necessary. Only the festivals in Opole and Sopot succeeded. Kołobrzeg and Zielona Góra, burdened with propaganda functions, did not survive the confrontation with the free market. Their example shows that the military and Soviet songs promoted at the request of the authorities simply did not appeal to the taste of Poles. In this area, as elsewhere, the party suffered a defeat.

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