

**Exotic Others or Fellow Travellers?  
Representations of India in Polish Travel Writing During Communist Era**

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

by

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### DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This thesis titled "*Exotic Others or Fellow Travellers? Representations of India in Polish Travel Writing during Communist Era*", submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.



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## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
Hypothesis and Research Questions	
Overview of Primary Material	
Theoretical Approach	
Existing Research in the Area	
Outline of Chapters	
CHAPTER 1. EUROPEAN ORIENTALISM AND INDIA	17
1. A Critique of Western (and Eastern) Orientalism	18
Critics of Orientalism before Said	
Said's Inspirations	
The Discourse of Orientalism, According to Said	
Debates over <i>Orientalism</i>	
Orientalism and Its Transfer to Central and Eastern Europe	
2. Said, Marxism and Soviet Union	29
A Marxist Orientalism?	
Soviet Orientalism	
Post-War Western Intellectuals, Marxism and "the Orient"	
3. Polish Orientalism(s)	40
Orientalising Central and Eastern Europe	
Poland: Orientalised? Orientalising? Or Self-Orientalising?	
Polish Orientalist Perceptions of the Middle- and Far-Eastern Other	
Orientalism in Communist Period	
4. Orientalising India	54
5. Polish Knowledge of India	58
Early Explorers	
Orientalists, Experts and Romantics	
Before the Second World War – Progressives and Conservatives	
An Interwar Reporter in India	
Poles "Adopted" by India	
Communist Poland and Socialist-Oriented India	
CHAPTER 2. TRAVEL WRITING AND REPORTAGE	78
PART I. TRAVEL WRITING	81
1. Nonfiction	81
2. Travel Writing – Definitions	82
3. Polish (European?) Travel Writing	86

First Polish Travel Accounts  
 Partitions and Nineteenth-Century Romanticism  
 Twentieth Century Travel  
 The New/Old Tropes in Socialist Travel Writing  
 Postcommunist Travel

PART II. REPORTAGE	100
1. Beginnings of Reportage in Western and Eastern Europe	100
2. Reportage: Definitions	104
3. Polish School of Reportage	108
Between Fact and Fiction: Literary Reportage as Polish Speciality	
The Reporter and the Reporter's Persona	
Authenticity and Readers' Trust	
The Literary as a Political Tool	
4. Polish Reportage: Beginnings	120
5. Reportage in Communism	124
After the War: The Communist Concentration of Power (1945-1956)	
The Press After the War: An Instrument of Power Monopolisation	
Coaxing Writers into the System	
Stalinist Closing of the Ranks	
The Press in the First Decade after the War	
The Press in Mid-1950s: First Signs of Dissent	
Change of Power in the Communist Party and Post-1956 Thaw	
International Opening in the Period of the Thaw	
Backlash and Stabilisation: The Gomułka Years (1956 – 1970)	
The Press in the Gomułka Years	
The Anti-Semitic Campaign of 1968	
The 1970s: Growing Tensions Between the People and the Party	
The Press in the Gierek Decade	
1980: The Solidarity Carnival	
The Press in Times of Solidarity	
The Party Strikes Back: The Introduction of the Martial Law (1981)	
The Press under the Martial Law	
Solidarity's Victory and End of Communism (1989)	
Towards Freedom of Press	

1. Travel and Representation of Otherness (Kapuściński – Malinowski – Conrad)	162
2. Travel Reporters at Work	166
3. To India on an Official Trip: Koehler, Żukrowski and Putrament Witold Koehler: India in the Eyes of a Conference Delegate Wojciech Żukrowski: Magic and Everyday Life of a Diplomat Jerzy Putrament: Two Trips to India of a Communist Official	
4. Reporters on a Mission Jerzy Ros: A Socialist Idealist Wiesław Górnicki: A Vanquisher of the “Wretched Exotic” Janusz Gołębiowski: A Correspondent and His “Assessment Criteria” Wojciech Giełżyński: An Educator of the Readers Jerzy Chociłowski: A Reporter Overwhelmed by India	181
5. The Search of Otherness	195
6. Representing India	197

#### CHAPTER 4. TRADITION 199

1. Tradition and Modernity in India, “Country of Contrasts” Visual Contrasts Contrasts in the Social Sphere Contrasts in the Minds Reporters’ Reaction to Contrasts Socialist Idea of Progress vs. Imperial Binary Oppositions	199
2. Hindu Religion, Spirituality and Worship India as Land of Origins Exoticising Hinduism Mythical and Mystical India Hinduism as Understood by Polish Reporters Reporters – Proponents of Atheism	207
3. Hindu Customs Case Study 1. “Sacred Cows” The “Holy Cow” Stereotype The Cow as a Part of Indian History The Cow as a Mother The Cow as a Part of Landscape The Cow as a Problem The Cow as a Political Issue Cow Protection as Ahimsa  Case Study 2. Sadhus European Fascination with Indian Mystics	217

Shocking Looks of Sadhus  
Sadhus' Role in Society  
Sadhus: Fake or Real?  
The Political Role of Sadhus

Case Study 3. Sites of Worship and Pilgrimage  
The Ganga  
Kitsch and Ugliness  
Critique of Pilgrimage Places

4. Caste and Class in India 251  
Caste as Seen by Polish Reporters  
Caste/Class  
Reporters' Personal Strategies Towards Caste Divisions  
Strategy 1: Compassion  
Strategy 2: Interventionism  
Strategy 3: Acceptance  
Strategy 4: Instrumentalization

CHAPTER 5. MODERNITY 269

1. Western, Non-Western or Global Modernity? 269
2. The Modernity of a Former Colony 273  
Traces of Colonialism in Indian Cities  
Remnants of Colonialism in Society: Maintaining Feudal India  
Economic Effects of Colonialism  
Cultural Consequences of Colonialism: Racism  
Inverse Racism  
Anti-Imperialism / Anti-Americanism
3. A Socialist Modernity 292  
Science (Fiction) and Travel (Nonfiction)  
A Socialist India?  
Indian Politics  
Gandhi and the Idea of Non-Violence  
Nehru's Semi Socialism  
Orientalising the Socialists?  
Fellow Travellers: Indian Communist Movement  
The "Kerala Experiment"  
Reporters' Meetings with Indian Communists  
Indian Economy: Central Planning vs. Private Capital  
Socialist Industrialisation in India: The Steel and the Rooster  
Indian Socialism or the "Third Way"?

Summary of Chapters

Central European Socialist Orientalism, or Anti-Orientalism

The Polish Travel Writer: Homo Sovieticus or Homo Europaeus?



## INTRODUCTION

In the words of literary critic Maria Janion at the basis of humanities is a story, a narrative (9). It is a way of orientating oneself in the world by opening up to the energy of the Other: the Other that one talks to or to the Other that one listens to (10). A story has a power of changing how one sees the world and how one perceives the Other. That is why, novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns about the danger of a single story<sup>1</sup>. A single story places the entire multitude of experience, whether of a person, or of a social group, of a culture, or that of a region within the confines of one, defining characteristic. Citing personal experience, Adichie, who is from Nigeria, explains that after coming to US, at first, her American college roommate perceived her only through the story of Africa's poverty and underdevelopment. "It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power", Adichie further explains, adding that

[t]here is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. (Adichie, *The Danger of a Single Story*)

With Adichie's thought as context, it follows that the world is full of "single stories", or metanarratives, about nations, groups and individuals that are formed by those who have power to define, power to determine characteristics and diffuse images globally. A single story, or narrative, about Poland comprises of its communist past, peripheral location in Eastern Europe, cold climate, and, not in the least, the enthusiasm for vodka. Similarly, a single story, or narrative, about India is founded on its place in the so-called Third World, its struggles with dire poverty, its half-naked mystics, its people with colourful clothes, worshipping "holy cows". These stereotypical images are a partly result of the long periods of history when the "power to define" was taken away from Poland and India and lay in the hands of their foreign rulers. In *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-Francois Lyotard, explains that such grand narratives, which were used to organise the way of thinking and acting in the modern world, are becoming obsolete in the postmodern era (xxiv). The dissolution of great structures, like Western European colonial empires as well as the Soviet Union, has enabled this reflection.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story", recorded in July 2009.

The postmodern era calls for a more localised and nuanced discourses, or small narratives, Lyotard suggests. Today, the academic reflection on inequality, whether of economic nature, measurable in numbers, or a cultural nature, measured through prestige (or the lack of it) and ability (or inability) to represent itself, has taken multiple forms<sup>2</sup>. It is in the context that postcolonial and post-Soviet studies strive to rethink recent experiences of subjugation, through issues of representation, discourse-production and cultural bias. They focus on relations between a former empire and its peripheries, between the colonisers and the colonised, and offer a more nuanced, “non-single story” of the experience of the colonial and Soviet domination.

Although necessary and thought-provoking, a certain asymmetry can still be observed in much of postcolonial and post-Soviet research. These studies focus on either the relations between the First World and the Third World or between the First World and the Second World (the Soviet Bloc). Little attention is devoted to the relations between the Second and the Third World – the countries of the Soviet Bloc and the newly independent post-colonial states. This dissertation is an attempt at filling this gap by exploring the story of Polish perceptions of India as told by Polish reporters. It offers a new angle to the narrative of the relations between a country of the Eastern Bloc, which while recovering from devastation of Second World War stills suffers from trauma of foreign domination, and a former British colony, which is struggling to define its policy and model of development amidst a sharply polarising Cold War. It takes a step back to look at a sensitive period – from the late 1950s to the late 1970s – in the history of both Poland and India.

The Polish-Indian encounter breaks into multiple stories on India of the 1950s, 60s and 70s as seen by eight Polish reporters. Each reporter has his own style and subjective take on India. Their accounts – nonfictional, first-person, travel narratives – belong to the genre of reportage, a “blurred”<sup>3</sup> and heterogeneous prose, which gained popularity in Poland at the

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka, material goods, power, and prestige are three types of goods which are limited, and as a result, generate inequalities – respectively economic, political and cultural ones (Sztompka 333). There are multiple theories about economic equalities, most notably Immanuel Wallerstein’s of “world-system” composed of states in the centre, competing with each other, as well as semi-peripheries and peripheries from which the centre draws resources and cheap labour. As a response to various apologists of capitalism, and theorists of modernisation, there is a number of scholars, such as André Gunder Frank, Samir Amin or Giovanni Arrighi, that propose the idea of dependency theory that explains economic inequalities in a larger perspective, taking into account long-term processes such as imperialism and colonialism. In terms of cultural prestige and power, probably the most vocal critics of global inequalities can be found among scholars more or less associated with postcolonial studies: Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakravorty, Samir Amin, and many others, who pointed out the need to expose and challenge Eurocentrism and various Western colonial – and neo-colonial – discourses.

<sup>3</sup> The term “blurred” is used after Clifford Geertz article, “Blurred Genres: the Refigurations of Social Thought”.

beginning of twentieth century and over the years, became a sort of a national specialty. The Polish reportage, with its most famous representatives – Melchior Wańkowicz, Ryszard Kapuściński, Hanna Krall, Wojciech Jagielski, Małgorzata Szejnert and Wojciech Szablowski (to cite just a few reporters of different generations) – is becoming an increasingly recognisable phenomenon around the world<sup>4</sup>. Travel reportage was particularly popular in communist times as it constituted a sort of a “window to the wider world” for the Polish people, as most of them could not travel themselves. Nevertheless, this “window” did not always provide an impartial and bias-free view of the world. Polish reporters visiting India tell a story that, on the one hand, reflects India of its time, but, on the other hand, it is coloured by the experience of socialism in Poland. Although the reporters claim to offer a new, non-colonial perception of India, their accounts are often far from ideological neutrality and detached objectivity. Indeed, these accounts speak of ideas of socialist solidarity and development, while still continuing to draw on the Orientalist discourse on India. The goal of this dissertation is to analyse this blend that can be called “socialist Orientalism” as observed within the story of a very particular period and a very particular relationship between two countries, which are themselves somewhat peripheral in relation to the main axis of the Cold War.

### **Hypothesis and Research Questions**

The main hypothesis of this dissertation is that even though reporters from socialist Poland wanted to present India in a new way, devoid of the colonial perspective that, till recently, was the common standard for the Europeans, their descriptions of India can be labelled as Orientalist, albeit with a socialist touch. In an unlikely combination, they perpetrate Orientalist clichés on India, but also promote socialist modernity, once again trying to impose a foreign model on India. In order to verify this hypothesis, several research questions are posed. First, what was the general perception of India in Europe, its place in the discourse of Orientalism, and were Poles part of this discourse? What were Polish relations with India through the ages? Second, what kind of texts presented India to Poles? This dissertation focuses on a particular genre, namely travel writing, and – more specifically – its subgenre, particularly popular in Poland: travel reportage. Thus, the third question: What is the specificity of Polish reportage, its traditions, and its development in the communist period? Further, the analysis of primary material leads to a separate series of research questions. One set of questions pertain

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<sup>4</sup> A short introduction to Polish reportage “A Foreigner’s Guide to Polish Reportage”, together with a list of recent reportage texts translated into English, is available at the website of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Culture.pl.

to reporters and their approach: what are their assumptions, their credibility, their location in the text? Another pertains to the manner in which the selected narratives describe India: what customs, beliefs and other cultural phenomena do they talk about? How do they describe Indian past and present? What is their assessment of Indian modernity?

The underlying problem that the dissertation will attempt at solving is to define the difficult position of the socialist reporter, having conflicting loyalties and different points of reference: Poland, Soviet Union and – culturally and symbolically – Western Europe. The assumption of this research project is that there exists a different type of Orientalism, a Polish, (or even Eastern European) one, a socialist one, and that it shapes not only the image of the Other, but also of the Self.

### **Overview of Primary Material**

As mentioned earlier, the selection of travel accounts on India studied in this dissertation is limited to works of Polish reportage from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The reason for selecting reportage is that it is a particularly Polish genre of writing, which was and continues to be popular. It is also a genre where the writer not only offers a personal account of journey, but also a commentary of a more general nature: on politics, history, social issues or economics. In this way, the writer tends to betray his ideological location (whether by personal choice or because of institutional affiliation) as well as the general discourse on India prevalent in the home country. Majority of the writers of these texts are reporters working for Polish newspapers or the Polish News Agency (Jerzy Ros – *Indyjskie wędrówki* [*Indian Wanderings*] (1957), Wiesław Górnicki – *Podróż po garść ryżu* [*A Journey for a Handful of Rice*] (1964), Janusz Gołębiowski – *Nadane z Delhi* [*Posted from Delhi*] (1966), Wojciech Giełżyński – *Kraj świętych krów i biednych ludzi* [*The Country of Holy Cows and Poor People*] (1975) and Jerzy Chociłowski – *Indyjska szarada* [*Indian Charade*] (1977)). Two of the reporters are better known for fictional writing, primarily novels, but only their nonfictional travel accounts have been selected - Wojciech Żukrowski's *Wędrówki z moim guru* [*Travels with my Guru*] (1960) and Jerzy Putrament's *Cztery strony świata* [*Four Corners of the World*] (1963) and *Na drogach Indii* [*On the Roads of India*] (1967). Finally, included here is one reportage, whose author is neither a journalist, nor a writer, but a professor of forestry – Witold Koehler. Nevertheless, his account, *Indie przez dziurkę od klucza* [*India through a Keyhole*] (1957), is very much travel reportage, written in the first person, in a vivid and original style. Indeed, writing constituted an important part of his career – he published many books popularising environment protection and screenplays for nature documentaries. The decision

to consider a text that is not written by a reporter as reportage follows the seminal *100/XX: Anthology of Polish Reportage of Twentieth Century*, which also classifies certain texts as reportage whose authors are not journalists<sup>5</sup>. The nine texts selected for this dissertation amount to about one third of all Polish travel accounts on India published in the period of communist rule. With such a large pool of material – over thirty travel accounts in the span of almost forty years – many texts had to be excluded.

Therefore, the timeframe adopted for the research was to select reportage from almost three decades: mid-1950s, 60s and 70s. It was introduced in order to focus on writings that were representative of socialist discourse. Such a delimitation results mostly from the political context. There are no accounts from early years of communist rule, before 1956, as these were the years of Stalinist terror, when foreign travel was nearly impossible. On the other hand, the accounts from 1980s are not part of this dissertation given the radical changes in Polish political landscape from 1980 onwards. These changes began with the advent of the Solidarity movement, which incorporated a large cross-section of society, including many reporters and journalists, and led a general strike in protest against the communist power in 1980. Eventually the authorities retaliated by imposing martial law on 13 December 1981, which lasted for almost two years. Although foreign travel was again possible after the martial law and a few accounts were published in mid-1980s, the authors of these accounts were not inclined to express their political views. The martial law significantly comprised the promise of communism in the public opinion, and indeed, in 1989 the communist system crumbled. While there is a certain consistency in the accounts from India in the three decades, from the mid-1950s to the 1970s, the accounts from the 1980s are certainly very different.

Another limitation in the selection of research material is in the gender of reporters – all of them are men. It is not due to a preference in showing a male gaze on India, but it results from the simple fact that almost all travel accounts from India in that period were written by men. There are two interesting accounts by women, Janina Rubach-Kuczewska and Halina Ogrodzińska, both of whom came to India due to their husbands' posting to Delhi. They focus more on everyday life in India than on describing the country as a whole, and their accounts are better placed as memoirs, than reportage. Another account from India written by a woman is Lucyna Winnicka's *Podróż dookoła świętej krowy* [*Travel around the Holy Cow*] (1987), which was not included in the selection not only because it was published post 1980, but also

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<sup>5</sup> According to Mariusz Szczygieł, some authors of reportage were not even aware that their writing is a reportage. A good example is Stefan Bryła's reportage from United States, "Ameryka" (Szczygieł, *100/XX*: 1: 189-194).

because of the author's emphasis on personal experiences with Indian spirituality, alternative medicine, and Ayurveda. Although an interesting memoir, this text did not yield much insight into the focus of this dissertation – the socialist perspective of India. Finally, there is a travelogue written by a couple travelling through India, Andrzej Rytzel and Janina Woźnicka, *25 tysięcy kilometrów przez Indie* [*25 Thousand Kilometers Through India*] (1986), but it was excluded from the selection for two reasons: because it is written in the 1980s, and it is more a travelogue than a travel reportage.

There are a number of travel accounts that, although they would fit in the timeframe adopted for the research, were excluded from the selection. One example is Waław Kontek's *Notatki z podróży do Indii* [*Notes from Travel to India*] (1956). Although Kontek attended the same forestry congress as Witold Koehler, whose account is analysed in this dissertation, his text is different than the one by his colleague. His account is not as personal as Koehler's, resembling more a synthesis of secondary information on India, gathered from encyclopaedias, history books and periodicals, complemented by some memories from the journey. Another example is Włodzimierz Janiurek's *Dzień dobry, Nusantaro* [*Good day, Nusantaro*] (1962). Janiurek accompanied the President of the State Council, Aleksander Zawadzki, to Indonesia and India. A large part of the account includes reprints of speeches made by the President Zawadzki and by Indian and Indonesian authorities, as well as photographic materials from the delegation, and there is little personal commentary on India. Since the objective of this study is the analysis of travel reportage and personal observations of travellers, this account had less relevance. A similar concern led to the exclusion of *Stare Indie w nowym świecie* [*Old India in the New World*] (1964) by Klemens Kęplicz and *Zrozumieć Indie* [*Understanding India*] (1977) by Ryszard Piekarowicz. These texts offered little insight of the into the reporter's views, resting mostly factual descriptions. On the other hand, Tadeusz Margul's *Indie na co dzień: z notatnika religioznawcy* [*India on Every Day: from a memoir of a religion scholar*] (1970) and Antoni Korzycki's *Zapiski Indyjskie* [*Indian Notes*] (1968) are, respectively, a personal memoir and a collection of essays, thus lacking the broad view that can be found in the selected reportages.

Finally, another factor in the selection of the primary material was the type of publication. Certainly, various shorter accounts of reporters travelling to India can be found in the press of that period, but in this dissertation, only the long forms of travel reportage – book publications – were analysed. It must be added that in spite of best efforts to identify all travel accounts of India written in the period in communist Poland, using the Polish National Library,

which is the repository of all books published in the country, and various Internet resources, there is always a possibility that some accounts were omitted.

### **Theoretical Approach**

Broadly, this dissertation is located in the discipline of Cultural Studies and it is close to the works of New Historicism – a movement in literary studies that crosses “the boundaries separating history, anthropology, art, politics, literature, and economics” (Veeser ix). This trend, also called the “poetics of culture” by Stephen Greenblatt (1), “has struck down the doctrine of noninterference that forbade humanists to intrude on questions of politics, power, indeed on all matters that deeply affect people’s practical lives” (Veeser ix), and it does not hesitate to challenge the well-established notions and beliefs. Given this understanding, culture and power are inextricably linked with one another, and the task of a scholar is to find these, often concealed connections – in order to do that, historical considerations take an important place in literary analysis. A text is studied in a larger context, so that the political, social and economical conditions of how the text was created can be traced. This approach defers to various sources of inspiration: among them is the new historical trend, originating from the Annales School in Paris, which focussed on cultural history, history of ideas and representations. New Historicism was also inspired to some extent by Marxism, but even more so by ideas of Michel Foucault and his understanding of power which, unlike in Marxism, does not result only from class, but is a much more complex phenomenon functioning primarily through discourse. Edward W. Said’s analysis of Orientalism as a discourse intensifying and evolving in the course of centuries is a good example that shows how a set of cultural perceptions, expressed in various forms, can become a tool of exercising real power over the lands corresponding to that mythical Orient. Said’s analysis, together with works of other scholars who studied the effects of colonialism and imperialism, became part of the larger field of postcolonial critique. Their aim is to assess the dominant discourses as well as to make the formerly marginalised voiced heard. Furthermore, postcolonial critique (as well as critique of Orientalism) proved to be a “travelling theory”<sup>6</sup> and it made its way to Central and Eastern Europe, where literary scholars adapted it to the study of Russian/Soviet imperialism<sup>7</sup>.

It is ironic, if not contradictory, that scholars develop criticisms of Soviet socialism using the postcolonial critique which, in turn, is based on Marxist thought. It appears that Soviet

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<sup>6</sup> Term used after Edward Said’s essay “Traveling Theory”.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Tlostanova and Mignolo, Korek, Gosk, Ryabchuk, Skórczewski, Ștefănescu.

Union can be a perfect object of enquiry for postcolonial theory, being viewed as a totalitarian empire and a world superpower. Even more so is the fate of the Soviet-dominated states: Poland, for instance, with its history of dominations, partitions, and occupations, but also with strong tendencies to dominate others, is – just like Ireland (which prominently features in postcolonial studies) – a perfect example of the workings of an imperial power (Cavanagh 85). In Ryszard Nycz's words: “[t]he history of Polish society as well as Polish literature and culture could constitute not only a complex and rich, but almost a paradigmatic case in the postcolonial research in the categories of domination and subordination” (5). Scholars of Slavic studies abroad share this interest in applying theories pertaining to Orientalist and colonial discourse to Poland; in various ways, both to analyse the relation of Poland and the West of Europe (as in Leonard Neuger's article “Central Europe as a Problem”, discussing the concept of Mitteleuropa and its discourse of colonial expansionism, or Izabela Surynt's work on German Orientalising discourses on Polish territories), as well as to see how Polish discourse Orientalises its minorities or neighbours (in the works of Dirk Uffelmann, Alfred Gall, and Maxim Waldstein).

Furthermore, one of the assumptions of New Historicism is, according to Harold Aram Veesser, that “literary and non-literary ‘texts’ circulate inseparably” (xi). As such, for instance a dress might become a text of culture, and a canonical and orthodox categorisation of genres is no longer enforced. This aspect of New Historicism is also important in this study as the texts analysed here belong to the genre of nonfiction, or in other words, reportage. Reportage by its definition is situated in between journalism and literature, as it describes nonfictional events often using forms traditionally associated with fiction<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, while first formulations of the concept of genre are attributed to Aristotle, mixing of genres also has a long history, as scholars claim based, for instance, on Renaissance texts. It has been advocated by modernist scholars such as Jonathan Culler, in his article “Towards a Theory of Non-Genre Literature”, and even more so by postmodernist critics, such as Jacques Derrida in the “Law of Genre”.

### **Existing Research in the Area**

After the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, Polish literature of the communist period started to be analysed from fresh perspective that was no longer governed by the limitations of censorship and propaganda. When debates on decolonisation and effects of colonialism took place in Western European academia, Poland was under the communist

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<sup>8</sup> For more discussion on that (in the Polish language), see Glensk, *Po Kapuścińskim...*



regime and the intellectual exchange with Western Europe was limited. Nevertheless, certain works of critics of colonialism were translated into Polish: for instance, Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (translated by Hanna Tygielska and published in 1985) or Edward Said's *Orientalism* (translated by Witold Kalinowski in 1991). Several works of postcolonial fiction also made their way to communist Poland, as described in Dorota Gołuch's *Postcolonial Literature in Polish Translation (1970-2010): Difference, Similarity and Solidarity* (2013). Nevertheless, postcolonial theory "travelled" or "transferred" to Poland only around 2000s. Of note were Ewa Thompson's *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (published in Poland in 2000) and Clare Cavanagh's article "Postcolonial Poland" (2004). Subsequently, this topic was also explored by scholars of other disciplines, including history, sociology and cultural studies, resulting in a number of books, journal publications and essays<sup>9</sup>. Thompson argues that the way Western European empires created a whole body of writings for justification of colonialism, in the same way the Russian Empire – and later Soviet Union – explained its expansion and subjugation of various peoples through the words of its illustrious writers. Literary critic Ryszard Nycz considers Thompson's book as a "founding" study on the topic (6) and a beginning of a new perspective in postcolonial studies: going beyond the "First World" vs. "Third World" relation, and introducing the "Second World" into the equation. Dorota Kołodziejczyk, in her article on a "Postcolonial Transfer to Central-Eastern Europe", wonders why Poland has been left out of postcolonial studies, given that its freedom struggle against foreign oppression clearly had decolonial characteristics (22). While the explanation for this process is usually found in the Marxist origin of postcolonial studies, Kołodziejczyk claims that the ideological aspect is only one of the reasons why the experience of postcommunist nations has not been taken into account. Another factor, Kołodziejczyk contends, is the complexity of Central European history and cultural context as well as the Eurocentrism in postcolonial studies, mostly analysing Western discourses of imperialism (29). Furthermore, postcolonial studies are linked with Anglophone academia, whether in the metropolises or in the former colonies, and in consequence, other cultural areas are not taken into account, even when translations of original texts into English are available (29). The scholar even calls postcolonial studies, because of their Euro- (or Anglo-) centrism,

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<sup>9</sup> See: Special issue on postcolonialism of the *Er(r)go* journal, in 2004, with the title "Postkolonializm i okolice [Postcolonialism and its Surroundings]"; special issue on postcolonial theory of the *Recykling Idei [The Recycling of Ideas]* journal (sociology), featuring translations of texts by Gayatri Spivak, Neil Lazarus, Immanuel Wallerstein and Homi Bhabha; special issue of *Literatura na Świecie [Literature in the World]* journal (literature), featuring translations of texts by Chinua Achebe, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Homi Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty; special issue on postcolonial theory in the *Nowa Krytyka [The New Critique]* journal (philosophy), featuring texts by Terry Eagleton, Etienne Balibar and several Polish critical philosophers.

“surprisingly provincial” (32). Thus, Kołodziejczyk sees much potential in analysing Central European forms of freedom struggle: various forms of artistic expression despite censorship, emancipatory movements, notions of modernity, hybrid forms of political identification (mimicry, various forms of dependence from the hegemonic power etc.), paradoxes brought about by the communist system (inequalities in a theoretically class-less society), strategies of resistance in language and literature (30-31).

On the other hand, the works of a French historian, Daniel Beauvois, revealed another aspect of colonialism in the Polish context. By studying the relations between various ethnicities inhabiting the Polish/Russian territories in 18-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the scholar pointed to the colonial aspect of the Polish domination over other nationalities in the region<sup>10</sup>. Thus, already at the beginnings of debates on the place of Poland in postcolonial studies, there was an awareness of a double role of the country – as the colonized and as the colonizer. This issue is also discussed in an article of an eminent scholar of Polish 20<sup>th</sup> century literature, Aleksander Fiut, in “Polonizacja? Kolonizacja? [Polonisation? Colonisation?]”. A more specific article on the Polish colonial discourse pertaining to the Eastern borderlands of pre-Second World War Poland was published by Bogusław Bakula, “Kolonialne i postkolonialne aspekty polskiego dyskursu kresoznawczego [Colonial and Postcolonial Aspects of Polish Eastern Borderlands Discourse]”, in the journal *Teksty Drugie*. He called for an analysis of Polish literature depicting the so-called Kresy (Eastern borderlands), where colonial, dominating and imperialistic attitudes of the Poles towards Ukrainians, Russians, Belorussians, and other peoples inhabiting these territories are displayed.

Nevertheless, Polish scholars found that the term “postcolonial studies” as not fully reflecting the Polish experience, leading to coining of the term “post-dependence studies”. Subsequently, a Post-Dependence Studies Centre was created to coordinate research on this topic<sup>11</sup>. A study by Hanna Gosk (coordinator of the Centre), *Historie kolonizowanego / kolonizatora [Stories of the Colonised/Coloniser]* (2010), is a seminal work of literary reflection on the topic of Polish dependence and post-dependence. An extensive presentation of this approach can be found in the volume edited by Ryszard Nycz (2011), *Kultura po przejściach, osoby z przeszłością: Polski dyskurs postzależnościowy: konteksty i perspektywy*

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<sup>10</sup> See: Beauvois, *Les confins...*

<sup>11</sup> The Centre, grouping researchers from several major Polish universities, organises annual conferences around the theme of post-dependence, hosting academics from Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They published several volumes of texts on the topic, see Nycz (ed.) *Kultura...*; Gosk (ed.), *Narracje...*; Gosk and Kraskowska (eds.) *(Po) zaborach...*; Gosk and Kołodziejczyk (eds.), *Historie...*; and Graczyk et al. *Białe...*

badawcze [*A Culture with a Past, People with a Past: Polish Post-Dependence Discourse*]. Polish post-dependence discourse in academia often focuses on the period of communist rule and Polish identity in the post-socialist period, for example, the volume edited by Hanna Gosk and Ewa Kraskowska (*(Po) zaborach, (p) o wojnie, (p) o PRL. Polski dyskurs postzależnościowy dawniej i dziś [After/About Partitions, After/About the War, After/About the Communism: Polish Post-Dependence Discourse Now and in the Past]*). Another important collection in this discussion is a 2014 special issue of literary journal *Teksty Drugie* in English on “Postcolonial or Postdependence Studies?” featuring articles by most eminent Polish scholars in the area: Ryszard Nycz, Maria Janion, Aleksander Fiut, Grażyna Borkowska, Ewa Thompson, Dariusz Skórczewski, Dorota Kołodziejczyk, Hanna Gosk, and others. In a larger, Central European context, the recent noteworthy publications are Cristina Sandru’s *Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of Post-1945 East-Central European Culture* (2012), as well as *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures* (2015) edited by Dobrota Pucherová and Robert Gáfrik.

Apart from these publications in postcolonial/post-dependence studies, a number of scholars engaged with Edward Said’s work on Orientalism. Probably the most famous of them is Maria Janion, a renowned literary critic, who published in 2006 a book of essays, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna [Uncanny Slavicdom]*, in which she analyses how the repressed memory of Slavic – pagan – roots, pushed away by Christianity, returns in a phantasmatic form and often fuels fears and even nationalist tendencies. Indeed, a number of works appeared that position Poles as Oriental Others to Western Europeans<sup>12</sup>, but also on how Poles Orientalised their Eastern neighbours, such as previously mentioned ethnic groups living in its Eastern borderlands<sup>13</sup>. Several scholars have written about Polish Orientalism in art and literature, including Izabela Kalinowska (*Between East and West. Polish and Russian Nineteenth-Century Travel to the Orient*, 2004), Michał Buchowski (*The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother*, 2006) and Dariusz Skórczewski (*Teoria – Literatura – Dyskurs [Theory – literature – discourse]*, 2013). These studies firmly establish that Poles were (and maybe still are) at the both ends of Orientalist discourse, both as its subjects and co-creators, but also as its objects. Aside from “acquiring” a typically Orientalist take on the countries of the so-called Third World from Western Europe, Poland initiated development of its own colonialist discourse during the interwar period, fuelled by the creation

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<sup>12</sup> See in particular Wolff and Surynt.

<sup>13</sup> See in particular texts by Fiut, *Spotkania...* and Gosk, *Opowieści...*

of the Maritime and Colonial League in 1930. A monograph on the League and its colonial ambition was written by Marek A. Kowalski, offers little critical insight, focusing on facts, organizational structure and history of the League. A better analysis of the phenomenon of Polish “colonialism without colonies” can be found in Andrzej Szczerski’s article, “Kolonializm i nowoczesność: Liga Morska i Kolonialna w II RP [Colonialism and Modernity. The Maritime and Colonial League in the Polish Second Republic]”.

The Polish place in Europe during communism and its position on the international arena are one of the main issues that the thesis attempts to deal with. However, little has been written in recent times on this issue, apart from a short text by Max Cegielski on Poles in Asia during times of communism. There are a number of texts that pertain more specifically to the perceptions of India in Poland including Jan Tuczyński’s study on Indian motifs in Polish literature (from 1981), as well as Krzysztof Podemski’s *Socjologia podróży [Sociology of Travel]* that includes a large overview of Polish travel to India across ages. Apart from these more specific works on Polish perception of India there are a number of works devoted more generally to the European perceptions of India: Wilhelm Halbfass’ seminal study *India and Europe: an Essay in Understanding* (1988) and a more popular recent book by Sam Miller, *A Strange Kind of Paradise: India Through Foreign Eyes* (2015).

Travel writing offers a much better perspective on how Poles would relate to India at the time. It shows, on the one hand, what the reporters already knew from what they had read before, for instance British colonial literature and the official socialist sources mentioned above, but on the other hand, their spontaneous reflection on the Indian reality. Theoretical discussions on travel writing can be found, for instance, in books edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (*Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, 2002), Tabish Khair (*Other Routes. 1500 Years of African and Asian Travel Writing*, 2006) or by John Zilcosky (*Writing Travel: the Poetics and Politics of the Modern Journey*, 2008). Casey Blanton’s *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (2002) and Carl Thompson’s *Travel Writing* (2011) also are useful sources. Many have pointed out how travel writing is particularly of interest to postcolonial scholars, as it presents individual perceptions of other cultures, often stained by stereotypes, formed by the collective imagination. Travel accounts, especially in 19<sup>th</sup> century, presented a rather typical repertoire of colonial prejudice and paternalist attitudes towards the visited country. This has been demonstrated by Mary Louise Pratt (*Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 1993) and David Spurr (*The rhetoric of empire: colonial discourse in journalism, travel writing, and imperial administration*, 1993).

To place Polish travel writing in a wider context, it is useful to present a brief overview of Central and Eastern European travel writing in the time of socialism. A section on travel writing from this period is included in Wendy Bracewell's *Orientations: An anthology of East European Travel Writing, ca. 1550-2000* (2009), and Alex Drace-Francis' *Under Eastern eyes: A comparative introduction to East European travel writing on Europe* (2008). More insight on socialist travel can be found in Anne E. Gorsuch's *All This Is Your World. Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (2011) and the volume that she edited with Diane Koenker, *Turizm: the Russian and East European tourist under capitalism and socialism* (2006).

In the Polish context, the discussions in the public sphere about the relations of reporters and travel writers with the communist authorities appeared with a new strength after the publication of a book on Ryszard Kapuściński by Artur Domosławski (2009). However, the attempts at understanding the complex condition of intellectuals in communist system date back to the first years after the fall of the communist regime (for instance, Marta Fik's studies on Polish culture in years 1944-1981, Maria Hirszowicz's book on intellectuals at the service of the communist regime, Anna Bikont and Joanna Szczęsna's elaborate historical reportage on writers' involvement with communist ideology, and Marci Shore's study in the English language, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* ). An important perspective on this relationship between the writer and the communist power is also present in the diaries of several renowned writers and journalists, including Aleksander Wat, Leopold Tyrmand, Maria Dąbrowska, Stefan Kisielewski, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz and Sławomir Mrożek, and biographies of intellectuals active at the time, such as Czesław Miłosz (by Andrzej Franaszek), Jerzy Giedroyc (by Magdalena Grochowska), Adam Michnik (by Cyril Boyeure) or Irena Krzywicka (by Agata Tuszyńska). Reportage as a genre attracts much attention in Poland, of both academics studies and publishing houses. Some editors even started issuing series entirely dedicated to reportage (e. g. "Dowody na istnienie" / "Proofs for existence" and "Czarne"/ "Black" publishing house). Works on Polish reportage have been published by media studies specialists (e. g. Andrzej Magdoń, Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński), literary studies specialists (e. g. Urszula Glensk, Artur Rejter, Diana Kuprel), as well as reporters themselves (e. g. Marek Miller, Agnieszka Wójcińska, Mariusz Szczygieł).

Travel writing is a genre popular in Poland, but there are different terms to denote this type of writing. By and large, it is labelled as *literatura podróżnicza*, a direct translation of the English term. But there are other terms, used in different contexts. For instance, in the translation into Polish of the book by Mary Louise Pratt (mentioned above), the translator, Ewa Nowicka, uses the term *pisarstwo podróżnicze* or *podróżopisarstwo*. Although the term

“podróżopisarstwo” sounds slightly awkward, it has a history of being used in literary critique. For example, Stanisław Burkot employed it in his 1988 study on Polish travel writing in Romanticism (*Polskie podróżopisarstwo romantyczne* [*Polish Travel Writing of the Romanticism*]). Often, the term *reportaż podróżniczy* (travel reportage) is used to refer to the subgenre of travel writing (and, subgenre of reportage), which differs from the general understanding of *literatura podróżnicza* because of its scope and style. As for travel reportage, apart from a three-volume collection of articles, *Wokół reportażu podróżniczego* [*Around travel reportage*] (2004), there is a rather limited amount of works specifically on this genre. There is, however, a large body of studies on reportage in general, as it was mentioned in the paragraph above.

While much research has focused on the relations between the West and its colonies, this study focuses on relations between a country of the Soviet Bloc, supposedly anti-colonial, with a recently decolonized country - India. In fact, research on Polish-Indian cultural relations in the period of communism is limited. In recent years, the Polish Embassy in New Delhi has helped revive the memory of Poles in India, such as Stefan Norblin, a Polish artist, whose frescos can still be found in the palaces of Rajasthan. An insightful study on the topic of Polish refugee children rescued by an Indian maharaja during Second World War was published by Anuradha Bhattacharjee: *The Second Homeland: Polish Refugees in India* (2013). Nevertheless, Polish-Indian contacts in the first few decades after the war are often seen mostly through economic contacts, and the reportage from that period is largely forgotten. Secondly, Eastern European travel reportage from that period is not awarded much scholarly attention. Polish travel reportage, in particular, has not been looked into in any comprehensive academic study, neither in Anglophone nor Polish-speaking world. The public opinion has discarded travelogues from the communist period as tainted with propaganda, and academia focuses more extensively on contemporary travel reportage. Indeed, Mariusz Szczygieł together with other reporters recently created an excellent anthology of twentieth century reportage, now of a size of three thick volumes, nevertheless the texts featured there are predominantly domestic reportages, on Poland, and none of the reportages selected for this research has been included. However, other texts by reporters analysed here feature in the anthology, for instance Jerzy Ros’ “Stalowe źródła siły [Steel Sources of Strength]” (669-680), Wiesław Górnicki’s “Zaćmienie [Eclipse]” (843-862), and a reportage from 1989 events in China by Wojciech Giełżyński, “Mord na placu Tiananmen [Murder on the Tiananmen Square]” (549-582). The editor of the anthology, supported by a board of advisors, including well-known reporters and academics studying reportage, maintains that given the extremely large amount of texts to

select from, their choice remains subjective and the fact that certain writers do not feature in the anthology is not indicative on their importance to the history of the genre (Szczygieł, *100/XX... vol. I* 11-22). Furthermore, one of the goals of the anthology was to demonstrate how reportage illustrated the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century of Poland and selected events from world history, and as a result, travel reportage is rather underrepresented in the collection.

Finally, although Orientalism has been studied in various forms, aspects, in connection to different cultures and geographical areas, there is relatively little research on Orientalism in socialist countries of Central Europe – barring the volume *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures* (2015), which contains an article on “Representations of India in Slovak Travel Writing During the Communist Regime (1948-1989)” by Robert Gáfrik, as well as an article on Polish “Socialist Orientalism” by the author of this dissertation. Indeed, themes such as Orientalist discourse, Otherness, cultural clichés etc. are discussed in the context of the Central and Eastern European region, its history, its minorities, as well as in its relations with the West, but rarely do they touch upon the socialist perceptions of non-European Others.

### **Outline of Chapters**

The first chapter focuses on European, and in particular, Polish perceptions of India. This discussion begins with Edward Said’s *Orientalism* as a theory that changed the way Western discourse on Middle East and India is assessed in academia. Particular attention is paid to the way India features in Orientalist discourse, and what were Polish perceptions of India over time. Also, Said’s view on Russia and Marxism is taken into consideration, since postcolonial studies for a long time avoided placing the Russian Empire, and later, Soviet Union, under their scrutiny, although Said did acknowledge Russia’s imperial character.

The second chapter’s goal is to present travel writing and reportage as genres, discuss their development and their characteristics. Polish traditions of travel, and travel writing in particular, are discussed in detail. Also, the roots and development of reportage as a genre in Poland and abroad is highlighted, and followed by a more thorough description of reportage – and journalists and writers in general – during communist regime in Poland. This provides a historical context to the works of reporters analysed in the following chapters.

The third chapter is an introduction to the analysed texts and it includes biographical information on the authors. In particular, the reporters’ approach to their topic and their declared method is considered. Furthermore, the chapter focuses on representation in reportage, as well as on the issue of authenticity and credibility of the reporter.

Chapters four and five present close readings of the texts in two main thematic groups. These two groups pertain to two contrasting concepts: of tradition and of modernity. Such a binary division is inspired by the texts themselves: most reporters underline that the contrast between tradition and modernity is the defining trait of India, although they recognise it is also a well-known cliché. Thus, chapter four explores elements that are most typically associated with India's tradition: India's main religion – Hinduism – and the notion of caste. Chapter five, on the other hand, pertains to how reporters perceive modern India: its decolonisation, its politics, its economy and its plans of development. This analysis leads to determining whether Polish reporters are prone to fall in the trap of Orientalist stereotypes (which, as they claim, they want to avoid), and whether the ideology of the socialist state that has sent them to India influences their perception of the Subcontinent.



## CHAPTER 1 EUROPEAN ORIENTALISM AND INDIA

Half-way through the twentieth century, a number of catastrophic events shook the lives of people around the world: Second World War, the Holocaust, the end of colonial empires, the Cold War divide... New states were created, often amidst chaos and violence, new national identities were constructed, and new allegiances were formed. Intellectuals and academics, too, were faced with challenges: how to rethink the past events, how to deal with trauma, how to deconstruct the certainties of the previous time and question the once unwavering beliefs? Various trends appeared in the post-war decades. Post-structuralism provided the tools to radically change the understanding of basic categories, such as culture, power or history. The ideas of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, among others, destabilized and revolutionized the way anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and, of course, literary scholars, think and research. At the same time, the French school of history, *Annales*, as well as British historians, proposed a different, social approach to their discipline. Anthropology also changed significantly: for instance, Clifford Geertz started a new, more interpretative trend, focusing on the study of symbols and meaning. Cultural studies developed, encompassing various theories, from political, literary, feminist, or environmentalist ones to translation, media, or globalisation studies. Interdisciplinary approaches combined these different theories and encouraged new perspectives on seemingly well-researched topics.

The dissolution of colonial empires and the new Cold War world order led to a reflection on power, world hierarchies, and effects of colonialism and other forms of domination. Many scholars focused on describing the colonial and post-colonial phenomena<sup>14</sup>. Seeing the conquest of overseas territories only in terms of economic gain and imperial expansion was not enough – a crucial question was what cultural forms and power structures allowed the Western empires to justify the subjugation of non-European peoples. Perhaps one of the most influential explanations for the type of discourse, and a system of knowledge that was behind the colonial conquest, was offered by a Palestinian scholar, Edward W. Said. This chapter will begin by explaining the context in which Said's discussion on Orientalism began and in particular, the thinkers that inspired Said. Secondly, his assumptions and his analysis of Orientalist discourse will be outlined, together with an overview of critical receptions of his work. A subsection will be devoted to his views on Marxism and Soviet Russia, since it is relevant to the research on Polish Orientalism of the twentieth century (which was influenced by both Western European

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<sup>14</sup> Among the earliest were: Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Aimé Césaire, Jean-Paul Sartre (*Colonialism and Neocolonialism*), and Edward W. Said (*Orientalism*).

Oriental tradition, as well as by the Soviet school of Orientalism). Later, the focus will shift to Said's impact on further research, in particular on scholars specializing in Central and Eastern Europe, and on Polish Orientalist traditions. In the last part of this chapter, the attention will turn to India: how it was perceived by Westerners, and in particular – by Poles. The assumption of this chapter is that Polish representations of India are part of the European discourse of Orientalism, which was critically studied by Said and later, also by Polish scholars.

### **1. A critique of Western (and Eastern) Orientalism**

Edward W. Said was probably the most famous literary critic who described the mechanisms behind the Western construction of the idea of the Orient, looking at various discourse-producing actors: academia, colonial institutions, artists and policy makers. However, several scholars preceded him in pointing out how the discipline called Orientalism unfairly represented a considerable part of the world's population and bulked together several different cultures all having Islam as a common denominator. While Said's critique of Orientalism became emblematic for the analysis of colonial, Eurocentric, or Western-centric discourse, it is worth noting that it was part of a wider wave of criticism of Orientalist scholarship in particular, and the West's approach to the Islamic world in general. Said had various sources of inspiration, many continuators, but also many critics<sup>15</sup>.

#### **Critics of Orientalism before Said**

In 1963, an Egyptian scholar, Anouar Abdel-Malek, wrote an essay "Orientalism in Crisis", in which he drew attention to the changes in Middle East, Africa and Asia resulting from the post-war decolonisation and freedom struggle, and called for a new way of describing the region, different from traditional Orientalist approach. His article juxtaposes the studies on the so-called Orient undertaken in the West with those in the Soviet Union, which makes it particularly relevant to this dissertation. Abdel-Malek ponders on the approach, the methods and their implementation by scholars on the two sides of the Cold War divide. Analysing traditional Western European Orientalism, he concludes that Marxist thought and its adoption by Soviet Russia offers new possibilities to counterbalance the Eurocentric approach among European Orientalists (120). Preceding Said's study on Orientalism, Abdel-Malek links Western academia with the imperialism of the colonial powers and notices an inherent lack of

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<sup>15</sup> Among the staunchest critics of Said were Bernard Lewis, Robert Irwin, Ibn Warraq, and Zachary Lockman.

objectivism that results from this connection. The Orient is seen as an object of study, “stamped with an otherness” that becomes constitutive of it (Abdel-Malek 107).

This "object" of study will be, as is customary, passive, non-participating, endowed with a “historical” subjectivity, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself: the only Orient or Oriental or “subject” which could be admitted, at the extreme limit, is the alienated being, philosophically, that is, other than itself in relationship to itself, posed, understood, defined-and acted-by others." (Abdel-Malek, 107-108)

In consequence, this process of essentialising the otherness, says Abdel-Malek, borders on racism, which is closely linked with the hegemony that the West maintains in the world (108). Even the methods of study that Orientalism employs strengthen this type of biased scholarship; these are: focusing on the classic period, ignoring the contemporary development of the societies labelled as Oriental, disregarding research that is performed in the countries of the so-called Orient etc. (110). While this was characteristic of the pre-World War II scholarship, the new world order demanded a change in this approach. Abdel-Malek argues that this change has not yet percolated into the Western academia – in his text, he is hopeful that the socialist states will be at the head of a new thinking about the Orient, and a more just “neo-orientalism” will emerge (112). As research on the Russian, and subsequently, Soviet school of Orientalism shows, this did not happen, since USSR had its own political agenda that influenced research on the “Orient”<sup>16</sup>.

Another critique of Orientalism was presented in 1964 by A. L. Tibawi who focused particularly on how European scholars presented religion, claiming that Western academics were mostly hostile to Islam, given their own Christian and Jewish beliefs, and failed to understand Muslims and their faith (58). Their prejudices led to a particular way of analysing Islam: always comparing it with Christianity (or Judaism); as a result, even in contemporary era, Orientalists are not able to grasp their object of study, as they still keep their own religion as the main point of reference (Tibawi 58). His approach reminds of discussions among anthropologists who also realised that the study of other cultures is usually tainted by the fact that the researcher always looks through the lens of his or her own culture – thus, for instance Franz Boas advocated an approach known as cultural relativism, according to which each culture would be studied from the point of view of that culture. Donald Little, in his outline of the “Three Arab Critiques of Orientalism”, finds Tibawi’s approach problematic: if no Western academic is able to understand Islam, then what is the alternative? Should the Arabic world be

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<sup>16</sup> See works by David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye on Russian Orientalism and Michael Kemper’s on Soviet Orientalism.

studied only by Arabs? Is all research in European or American academia flawed? (Little 132). Edward Said develops this approach further, explaining the problem that lies not in religious prejudice (or at least, not only), but primarily in the political and cultural system where that research is located. Said claims that all Western academics, in their studies on the Orient, were in a more or less direct way, allies of the empires that they were part of (*Orientalism* 104).

Donald Little summarises the main accusations towards Orientalists: “. . . one, that Orientalism as practiced in the West is a tool of imperialism; two, that Orientalists are hostile to Islam and Arab nationalism; three, that Orientalists, being ethnocentric, treat Orientals as passive, unchanging objects” (134). That would lead to the conclusion, says Little, that Orientalism is “worthless” (134). While he is, by and large, in agreement with the Arab critics whose works he reviews, he proposes a less radical approach. In order to question whether all scholarship about the “Orient” is biased and imperialistic, Little mentions academics who reflect on their role of observers and on their relation to the reality they describe, and gives examples of research that is more factual rather than interpretative (137-138). Little underlines that the fact that academic work is often sponsored by governments (through public funding) is not yet a proof that the scientific outcome is not legitimate or is politically biased (135). It is hard to disagree with that statement, given that practically all research is sponsored either by public funds or private ones – of corporations and large businesses, which can also have their own agenda; nevertheless, the level of academic independence is linked with to what extent various governments respect freedom of thought and democratic rule of law. In focusing on Orientalism as a science, Little does not fully address Said’s perspective, which goes beyond simply tracing the links between academia and political power. The Palestinian scholar demonstrated how persistent and deeply ingrained the Orientalist images are, not only in scholarship, but also in Westerners’ minds.

### **Said’s Inspirations**

Said draws his inspiration not only from a critique of Orientalism as an academic discipline, devoted to the study of Middle East, its languages, histories and religions, but also from the works of philosophers who observed a more pervasive influence of power discourses. For instance, one of the works that led Said to some of his reflections on Orientalism was *Mimesis* by Erich Auerbach, who was in turn inspired by Giambattista Vico as well as German philosophical thought. Vico, in opposition to the Cartesian concept of ideas as pure, ahistorical and context-free, argued that humans are historical creatures, who participate in the “world of nations” (see: Said’s introduction to Auerbach’s *Mimesis* xii). As a result, in such historicist

approach, representations are a product of their times and their makers, so in order to understand them, one must try to recreate the mind-set and the reality of the author of the analysed text (xiii). As a result,

. . . the relationship between the reader-critic and the text is transformed from a one-way interrogation of the historical text by an altogether alien mind at a much later time, into a sympathetic dialogue of two spirits across ages and cultures who are able to communicate with each other as friendly, respectful spirits trying to understand each other. (Said's introduction to Auerbach's *Mimesis* xiii)

Therefore, the process of interpreting literature appears as a very subjective one, taking the self as the subject matter; moreover, many diverse interpretations are possible (*idem* xxxii). Nevertheless, Said realises that Auerbach's method of understanding was characteristic of a time when great philological erudition and proficiency of many languages were common – such training is no longer customary (*Orientalism* xix). What can be drawn from Auerbach, however, is a profoundly humanist spirit, according to which the mind of the interpreter makes place for a foreign Other, allows to adopt a different perspective (xix). Said notices how such move becomes increasingly difficult in a world where the “clash of civilisations” is heralded almost daily, and nationalist sentiments are still on the rise (xx).

Indeed, what lies behind Said's ideas is often political thought rather than literary criticism, which was his original discipline. Among the works that he referred to are the writings of Antonio Gramsci, from whom Said borrowed the concept of hegemony and of the ruling class. Gramsci perceived the society superstructure as composed of civil society – operating on the basis of voluntary affiliations – and of the political society of the State – or, in other words, the ruling class (124). This hegemonic class is supported by intellectuals who become the “officers” of that class and inculcate certain ideas to the society at large through the means of both the apparatus of State coercion, and the consensus manufactured thanks to the ruling class' position and prestige (Gramsci 124). Said considered Gramsci's idea of hegemony as “an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West” (*Orientalism* 7), and as a factor that reinforced and supported Orientalism, understood as European superiority over “Oriental backwardness” (*Orientalism* 7). Indeed, this hegemonic Western view of its Oriental Other, supported by a network of state institutions, policy-makers, intellectuals and artists, proved to be a particularly persistent one. In Said's words:

Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for

reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character. (Said, *Orientalism* 7-8)

The concept of the hegemony of Western knowledge also draws from the ideas of Michel Foucault, who famously analysed the connection between knowledge and power. Each society has a certain “regime of truth”, or a “political economy” of truth; it is produced by centres of power whose institutions impose discourses in which certain notions are deemed true and others not (Foucault 131). This discourse, or regime of truth, says Foucault, was a condition for the formation and development of capitalism, but socialist states, too, have their regimes of truth (132). Said adopts this Foucauldian idea of discourse, because “without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, socio- logically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (*Orientalism* 3). As such, the discourse of Orientalism became an inevitable point of reference for anyone “writing, thinking or acting on the Orient” (3).

### **The Discourse of Orientalism, According to Said**

To better explain his concept of what is Orientalism, Said highlights three predominant meanings, overlapping to some extent. The first is an academic Orientalism that was prevalent in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, later in 20<sup>th</sup> century transforming into Middle Eastern or area studies (Said, *Orientalism* 2). The second is a general idea of the Orient as ontologically and epistemologically opposite to the Occident (Said, *Orientalism* 2). Finally, the third way of understanding Orientalism, is to see it as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” (Said, *Orientalism* 3) While the first two approaches are closer to what Abdel-Malek and Tibawi had in mind, the third approach is the one most inspired by Michel Foucault and his notion of discourse and power/knowledge, discussed earlier in this chapter. However, as James Clifford notices, Said does not closely follow Foucault’s idea of the discourse, as he focuses extensively on the figures of famous Orientalists, and as a result, his study is closer to a traditional intellectual history (Clifford 268).

Orientalism as a discourse is understood by Said in a variety of ways and its manifestations can be visible in a large array of disciplines:

To speak of Orientalism therefore is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise, a project whose dimensions take in such disparate realms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the Levant, the Biblical texts and the Biblical lands,

the spice trade, colonial armies and a long tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental "experts" and "hands," an Oriental professorate, a complex array of "Oriental" ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use—the list can be extended more or less indefinitely. (4)

Such an understanding of Orientalism makes it rather difficult to define the Orient in a precise manner: neither an enumeration of countries or territories, nor a delimitation of disciplines would do it justice. What Said does, instead, is to focus on a large number of texts that are separate cases illustrating his general point on Orient's image in Western perception. Thus, the Orient functions in the European discourse as the object of scrutiny, judgement, disciplination, and as a material of study and illustration (*Orientalism* 40); it is perceived as static and unchanging, and as such, various figures of the colonial world can speak about it authoritatively, either as administrators, rulers, experts, scientists, but also as writers. This asymmetrical relation of superiority is supported by two aspects of the Orientalist discourse, one pertaining to "learning, discovery and practice", and the other to the Orient as "a collection of dreams, images and vocabularies" (73). Therefore, artists play an important role in strengthening this system of signs and meanings that constitutes the Orient in the European imagination.

Said argues that the Orient is perceived by Europeans as the opposite of the rational, logical, European self (39), as a professional and personal project (158), as an exotic dream, a possibility for self-exploration (170), a romantic adventure (185), an object of desire (188) and a male power-fantasy (207). Orientalism is a cumulative kind of knowledge, a system of representations that are present in many disciplines, from academia to imperial governance. In fact, says Said, "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric" (*Orientalism* 203). This essentialised view of the Orient, the set of ideas on what the Orient represents – sensuality, brutality, despotism, backwardness, irrationality, chaos – is so strongly embedded in European minds that its repertoire is used almost subconsciously. Said calls it latent Orientalism, in contrast to the manifest Orientalism that consist in various views on the Orient's history, society, politics, language, literature etc. It is only the second kind that is subject to change, the latent Orientalism is practically static (206).

Furthermore, Said discusses how the discourse of Orientalism changed after the end of the colonial era and the post-war domination of United States in the global arena. That American Orientalism shares certain characteristics with the previous Orientalism, but also, in

the changing political circumstances, new images appear (for instance, Arabs are seen as dangerous, degenerate and violent, and often as greedy or dishonest, which to Said seems to be the proof of how anti-Semitic stereotypes are transferred from Jews to Arabs (286)). Like in the previous era, the knowledge of the Orient is used in a political rivalry - Said quotes a government report where it is advised to create schools of Oriental languages, because the Soviet Russia is intensively training Arab speakers (292). For the same reason, America began to develop a cultural relations policy, in order to be able to exert more influence in the Middle East and counterbalance the Soviet Union (209). This is yet another way in which, according to Said, the countries of the Orient become satellites subjugated to the interests of the the key international players, with little power of culture, knowledge and scholarship production (322). With few exceptions, the discourse of Orientalism as therefore practically all-encompassing and it adapts to new historical and political contexts.

### **Debates over *Orientalism***

It is not surprising that Said's works sparked a heated debate, among Orientalists, historians, and scholars of cultural studies or anthropology alike. He was accused of offering a too generalised picture, that does not take into account the subtle regional and cultural distinctions, of being too political, or too "prosecutorial" (Kerr 544). Other academics reproached him for isolating Orientalism from its historical context and a liberal dropping of names, anecdotes and places, rather than focussing on specifics (Kopf 496). Michael Richardson, in his article "Enough Said", questioned Said's methodology and was particularly displeased with the scholar's approach to the issue of representation, and, as a result, to the relationship with the Other.

The discussion that sparked the strongest emotions was the one with Bernard Lewis – renowned Orientalist, commentator and political adviser. Lewis is critical of the fact that Said and his followers have denied legitimacy to practically all Orientalist scholarship, seeing it as biased and aimed at sustaining the West's supremacy over the East. Lewis agrees that the term "Orientalist" is not adequate any more, and the majority of his fellow academics, specializing in the Middle-East, have rejected it<sup>17</sup>. "Orientalism" as a name of a field of study was abolished in 1973 by academics attending the International Congress of Orientalists that was renamed to "International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa". What surprises Lewis, is that "Orientalism" as a concept re-emerged after the publication of Said's book, and became

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<sup>17</sup> With the exception of Soviet scholars who staunchly opposed the rejection of the term (Lewis 4-5)



used as a “term[s] of polemical abuse” (5). He criticizes Said for many omissions, historical imprecision, misinterpretations of various Orientalists’ work and of their intentions, but most of all – for dismissing *en gros* the whole Orientalist scholarship and all its achievements, whether in the field of linguistics or history.

More recently, in 2007, a similar argument was expressed by Ibn Warraq in his book, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*, who claims that there were numerous examples of genuinely interested and well-intentioned scholars who sought to go beyond clichés and common stereotypes. Ibn Warraq says that to all Said’s evidence one can provide an array of counter-examples, showing Western intellectuals as in fact quite open-minded towards Otherness (Loc 541). Similar critique can be found in the work of Robert Irwin, who gives an overview of the Orientalist academic tradition, countering Said on many points. In his book, conspicuously titled *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and its Discontents*, Irwin likens Said’s study to a “labyrinth of false turns, *trompe-l’oeil* perspectives and cul-de-sacs” (4) and goes as far as to call *Orientalism* “a work of malignant charlatanry in which it is hard to distinguish honest mistakes from wilful misrepresentations” (4). What Irwin tries to show is that Orientalism is not a monolith – it was an extremely heterogeneous tradition, which, even though it did create certain images that remained for long in the European imagery, was less harmful than what Said implies.

Irwin presents different traditions of Orientalism, not limiting himself – as does Said – merely to the British and French. This is a recurrent accusation, made by Ibn Warraq, Irwin, and Lewis. The latter is particularly dissatisfied with the fact that Said did not take into account the German school of Orientalism, vital in shaping the general academic discussion on the Levant, according to Lewis. Nevertheless, if Orientalism is to be considered in the context of the colonial enterprise, what was German Orientalists’ influence on politics of the European empires? Baber Johansen in his overview of German Islamic studies suggests that politics has not been an important factor in the shaping of the discipline (74-90). Ursula Wokoeck, reiterates this statement, underlining that German Orientalist scholars were relatively free from political pressures, although they did not take advantage of that freedom, and understood Oriental studies in a rather narrow way (Loc 409). While Germany was not a large colonial power, what should not be disregarded is how Orientalist studies affected the collective mentality, and, what Wokoeck finds puzzling, to what extent they could be considered as part of a hegemonic cultural identity project (Loc 526). It is a particularly relevant issue for this dissertation, as Polish Orientalist studies evolved also in a non-colonial context, though they contributed to a perception of Otherness that brings to the fore the European superiority. Apart

from considerations on the absence of German Orientalism in Said's book, Irwin points out the absence of discussion on Russian (and later Soviet) Orientalism. Given its imperialist pattern, Irwin is of the opinion that Russian/Soviet context should not be overlooked when studying academic Orientalism as a whole.

Nevertheless, many academics found Said's work as innovative and inspiring. The anthropologist James Clifford offered one of the most interesting comments to Said's work, in a chapter of his book, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. In his work, Clifford underlines the huge change that happened in the world from 1950s onwards: the representatives of the cultures that were for centuries studied and observed by the Westerners started writing back. Said, although residing in the US, was part of this global phenomenon offering a new, critical view on the Western gaze. Clifford appreciates his "pioneering attempt" at using Foucault's ideas in the context of cultural analysis, but he does not fully agree with his method: instead of focusing on the discourse and structures of power/knowledge, Said, rather conventionally, tracks individual authors and their works, "relaps[ing] into traditional intellectual history" (30). Nevertheless, according to Clifford, the main value of Said's work lies in the fact that he questions basic categories, such as culture. Gyan Prakash also appreciates Said for that, and goes even farther: in his 1995 article, "Orientalism Now" he talks about the "iconoclastic effect of Orientalism" (200) and the subversive power of Said's book:

. . . what accounts for the extraordinary impact of Orientalism is its repeated dissolution of boundaries drawn by colonial and neocolonial Western hegemony. The book ignited an intellectual and ideological conflagration by its insistent undoing of oppositions between the Orient and the Occident, Western knowledge and Western power, scholarly objectivity and worldly motives, discursive regimes and authorial intentions, discipline and desire, representation and reality, and so on. (200-201)

This destabilizing, unsettling effect of *Orientalism* is already in itself a weapon against the authority and certainty of the Orientalist discourse. Still igniting strong emotions, Said's text is an ever-present critique of the pitfalls of Western knowledge, and it strives thanks to its subversive force of violating all borders, also those of different disciplines. Gyan Prakash quotes various reactions to *Orientalism*, and remarks that the book created a movement to "write back", to interrogate the remnants of Western imperialism, to confront the traditional scholarship. Clearly, Said's book is only part of a larger trend in which the postcolonial criticism "converges with the poststructuralist interrogation of universal subjects and origins" (Prakash 205). Many academics were inspired by his book and took his ideas further – in order

to analyse more specific geographical or cultural contexts (e.g. work on French, German or Russian Orientalism), look at colonial relations from a gender perspective (like Reina Lewis or Meyda Yeğenoğlu), or concentrate on different fields and forms of artistic expression (like Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar in their *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*).

While a critique of Orientalism as an academic discipline and as a discourse was urgently needed in the post-colonial era, critics like A. L. Tibawi and Edward Said claim that a radical change in perceiving the Middle East or Asia is not easy to achieve<sup>18</sup>. In fact, in their later works, they demonstrate that Orientalist prejudice can take new forms and expressions (for instance, in Said's *Culture and Imperialism* from 1993 and *Covering Islam* from 1981). Indeed, this dissertation addresses one form of Orientalism, namely an Orientalism coming from a socialist country, having – however – long Orientalist traditions of its own, as well as influenced by “Orientalisms” from the West and the East.

### **Orientalism and its Transfer to Central and Eastern Europe<sup>19</sup>**

Perhaps the source of Said's success lies in the fact that he did not speak from a position of a critic of Orientalist studies as a discipline. His analysis went much deeper than the ones of his predecessors mentioned above, and it was strongly grounded in postmodern philosophy. As a result, Said did not simply condemn the tradition of European Orientalism. He demonstrated that the idea of the Orient is essential to the European understanding of Otherness, and as such, crucial in European identity formation. Orientalism is thus a discursive formation that became prevalent over time in Western, and – as it will be demonstrated – also Eastern Europe. Said emphasizes that it is not merely a romantic myth, or a stereotypical image of Orient that he takes interest in, but more importantly, his attention focuses on Orientalism as a dynamic discourse with its own internal structure and logic, and its grounding in the political context (*Orientalism* 12). Orientalism is more than a benign form of interest in other cultures, more than a product of human curiosity or adventurousness, and it does not end with the exoticisation of the visited lands. Said defines the Orient not only as Europe's close neighbour, but also as:

. . . the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image,

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<sup>18</sup> See Tibawi's article from 1979, “A Second Critique of English-Speaking Orientalists and Their Approach to Islam and the Arabs”.

<sup>19</sup> The term “transfer” is used deliberately, in connection to Dorota Kołodziejczyk's widely commented article, “Postkolonialny transfer na Europę Środkowo-Wschodnią [Postcolonial Transfer to Central-Eastern Europe]” (2010).

idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. (*Orientalism* 1-2)

The last phrase of this quotation clearly demonstrates Said's attempt to link Orientalism to colonialism. All through his book, he argues that there is a difference between knowledge whose purpose is to understand the Other and peacefully coexist, and the knowledge that leads to domination (*Orientalism* 11-12). Orientalism belonged to that second category, even though for decades it was presented as a neutral, objective discipline; Said says:

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest *mission civilisatrice*." (*Orientalism* xvi)

He focuses on three empires: the British, the French, and – the youngest of them – the American. In other words, he talks of Orientalism as “the Anglo-French-American experience of the Arabs and Islam” (*Orientalism* 17). In his view, these were the powers dominating in the process of creating and maintaining the discourse on the Orient, which was vital to their cultural and imperial project. Also, he points out the continuity between first English/French colonisation, and then American post-war imperialism (*Orientalism* 17). While the sphere of enquiry delineated by Said is already broad, he does not exclude other geographical and thematic spheres (e.g. India (17), or German Orientalism (19)) from the scope of possible study. Moreover, Said encourages other scholars to take his research further and consider it as a starting point for the analysis of various areas, cultures, epochs, or political formations (*Orientalism* 24). And this is indeed what happened: many academics drew from Said's thought to take under consideration various examples of Orientalism, both on a micro or macro scale.

Eastern Europe also came under scrutiny of scholars. Said himself mentions Russia as one of the empires that could be studied as part of a critique of Orientalism, although he chooses to focus on the “Orientalist mainstream”, which he identifies as Britain and France:

Unlike the Americans, the French and the British — less so the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss — have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience. (*Orientalism* 1-2)

Russia's Orientalism, past and present, is nowadays often discussed in various publications, mostly in reference to Russia's minorities, its history of colonizing Siberia or the Caucasus, as well as dominating its neighbours, both in tsarist and Soviet era<sup>20</sup>. Poland, as it is to be expected, is not listed by Said, since in the time of modern imperialisms it was more a victim of imperialism, rather than a colonising power. Poles were partitioned by three states that can all fall into the category of empires, given their strong centres and expansionist ambitions: Prussia, Russia and Austria, later renamed Austro-Hungary. Each of these empires has had its own version of Orientalism, as many scholars demonstrated<sup>21</sup>. However, it seems that Poland developed its own tradition of Orientalism, blending together various strands of both Western and Eastern European Orientalisms, as this dissertation will attempt to demonstrate. Poland presents in fact an interesting case of being at the same time on both sides of the colonial – or dependency – equation<sup>22</sup>. After gaining independence in 1918, the new Polish state also became a strong power with its own discourse on the Orient, especially aiming at its Eastern borderlands, and even some colonial ambitions outside of the European continent<sup>23</sup>. Finally, after Second World War it once again lost full independence, becoming one of the satellite states of the Soviet Bloc, and adopting a particular take on the region known as the Orient, according to the model originating in Moscow. Later in this chapter, Polish Orientalism will be discussed more in detail.

## 2. Said, Marxism and Soviet Union

One of the main axes of critique of Said was his “ideological” approach. He was accused of being biased as a Palestinian living in the West, but more importantly, as a representative of the New Left school of thought, with Marxist sympathies. Leaving Said's biography and origin aside, as it is not relevant to this study, Said's approach to Marxism is worth considering, as it is much more complex than what his critics would like to believe.

Marxism was certainly an idea that was close to the hearts of many anti-imperialist scholars, including Said. Nevertheless, in *Orientalism*, he speaks critically of Marx, evoking his views on India. The scholar recognizes real, honest human interest in Marx, as well as his good intentions (as the final goal is for Marx the end of feudal, despotic systems), but Said says

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<sup>20</sup> See for instance works by Brower and Lazzerini (eds.); Kalinowska; Khodarkovsky; and Schimmelpenninck van der Oye.

<sup>21</sup> On German Orientalism see Hodkinson et al.; Kontje; Marchand; and on Habsburg Orientalism: Feichtinger, Prutsch and Csáky. See footnote above for Russian Orientalism.

<sup>22</sup> This is well described by Hanna Gosk in her 2010 book *Opowieści...*

<sup>23</sup> See Aleksander Fiut, “Polonizacja?...”.

that eventually Marx is not far from a typical Orientalist (*Orientalism* 154). It is true that Marx sees the British colonisation as necessary, considering it a step to a much needed revolution. In his articles on India, Marx describes the Asian society as static and unchanged for years, allowing for greedy and powerful governments to take advantage from the people (Marx and Engels 132). The difference between the Asian and European feudal rule was that the former one was more absolutist, allowing for more central concentration of wealth, while in the latter, there was a ruling class that divided the riches between themselves, and later became the bourgeoisie. The Asian model was thus despotic and the “Asiatic mode of production”, as Marx defined it, differed from the European model. That is why, he argued, only after colonialism introduces the capitalist system in India, a revolution will be possible (*Orientalism* 153). However, in Zachary Lockman’s words, “unlike many of his contemporaries, Marx did not believe that Asians were racially inferior to Europeans or inherently incapable of achieving modern civilisation” (86). Marx’s views on India notwithstanding, Marxism as a theory had profoundly influenced many Western intellectuals of the post-Second World War era. Many of them were unaware about the aberrations that Marxist thought has led to in Eastern Europe and USSR, or preferred to believe in a utopian vision of communism as a response to global inequalities. Also, it is not surprising that an understandable critique of colonialism and European imperialism would often go hand-in-hand with leftist sympathies. That is why, prominent intellectuals, like Jean-Paul Sartre, would rightly condemn French colonial policies in Algeria, but at the same time failed to denounce Stalinist atrocities or the terror imposed, for instance, by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. In a similar way, Abdel-Malek, who was one of the first to criticize the Eurocentrism of Orientalists, quite idealistically believed that the Soviet Orientalists will propose a new approach to the studies of the Middle-East.

### **A Marxist Orientalism?**

In his article, Abdel-Malek outlines both the “neo-Orientalism” of the West, which he assesses rather critically, and the socialist approach, that he finds more appropriate, as it takes into account “the political resurgence of the Orient” and makes use of Marxist methodology (120). The general conceptions of the socialist “neo-Orientalism” are: a fundamental critique of Eurocentrism, as well as a change in perceiving the “Orientals” – no longer as objects of study, but as “subjects”, as creators of their own history, culture and science. The Soviet Orientalists declared their support to the newly independent nations of Africa and Asia, and encouraged them to adopt the Marxist-Leninist approach, following the Soviet model. As much as one can agree on the need for “disorientalizing the studies relative to Asia” (124), and a new

approach to countries and cultures of the so-called Orient, it seems that the author is rather uncritical in his appraisal of the Soviet orientalists. Soviet Union was at the time also an empire that aimed at establishing its hegemony in various regions of the world, competing with USA over the influence on the Non-Aligned states. While one can agree with Abdel-Malek that research should focus on the present, not only on the ancient past of the Oriental cultures, it is difficult to believe that Orientalist studies in the Soviet Union “will contribute to put forth creative solutions of the problems of Soviet foreign policy in the future vis-a-vis the countries of the Orient”, as it was put by a Soviet scholar quoted by the author of the article (126). Thus, it seems that once again, in the Soviet case, science was to serve the interests of the state, and Orientalists had a political, not only academic mission to fulfil. This kind of approach is very similar to what Edward Said described in his analysis of Western Orientalism as a science that is not free and objective, and remains intertwined with the political interests of the European (and American) states. Said, although referring to Abdel-Malek’s article in his book, does not comment on the part of the paper devoted to Soviet Orientalists, nor does he offer any kind of positive solution for the study of Orient in a non-Eurocentric, non-typically-Orientalist way.

A critique of Abdel-Malek’s faith in Marxist scholars can be found in Donald Little’s overview of “Three Arab Critiques of Orientalism” (1979). Avoiding a strictly political discussion, Little is nevertheless sceptical of the new Soviet Orientalism, as described by Abdel-Malek, since it does not seem to yield such ground-breaking results as the scholar was expecting. “Certainly the Soviet experiment in assisting Abdel-Malek’s own compatriots does not seem to have been an unqualified success, though it may well be that the new scholarship was not really involved in what was essentially technical and military assistance” (129). Little does not dismiss the possibility of Soviet Orientalism still bearing some fruit, especially in how it might change the perception of people in Russia’s Muslim republics, and their assimilation into the larger Soviet society. The Canadian scholar, writing his article in 1979, had no way of knowing what would be the end result of Soviet policies towards Muslims and the bloody conflicts that they entailed: the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, the brutal oppression of the Muslim regions of Chechnya and Ingushetia, and the rise of Islamophobia and racism in post-communist Russia. More importantly, Abdel-Malek does not mention that while he was hoping for Soviet Union to be the new force to empower the former “Orientals”, the communist superpower has treated its own Muslims extremely harshly: it is enough to mention the fate of Crimean Tatars, half of whom were killed or deported during the Stalinist period, as well as other instances of ethnic cleansing in the Caucasus (Lazzerini). Clearly, the slogans of internationalism or Third-Worldism, equality and solidarity, professed by Soviet academics

and the political and economic support to the newly independent Muslim states in the Middle East or Asia, did not apply to Soviet Union's own Muslim citizens. Thus, Abdel-Malek's proposed model of development for Orientalism, spearheaded by the new socialist approaches, is rather naïve and detached from reality.

### **Soviet Orientalism**

In fact, not only the Soviet Orientalists did not propose any viable alternative to Western Orientalism, they were the ones to argue for keeping the name "Orientalism" (Lewis 4-5) and – being subjected to censorship and Soviet propaganda requirements – had little freedom to create a truly innovative academic school of thought on "the Orient". Soviet Orientalism underwent different phases, but it was always constricted by the communist party.

Indeed, already the tsarist Russia had its own, thriving school of Orientalism. At the time of the "Oriental Renaissance" which reached its peak in Western Europe in the nineteenth century, when increased interest in the Orient went hand in hand with ever more powerful colonialism, Russia was eager to participate in this trend. According to David Chioni Moore, "the Russians were mimicking the French and the British, to whom, again, they had long felt culturally inferior. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, colonial expansion was the price of admission into Europe's club, and this was Russia's ticket" (120). Russian colonialism and expansion in the region is now a widely discussed phenomenon<sup>24</sup>, nevertheless it is important to see its academic grounding. In her study on Russian academic Orientalism, Vera Tolz, describes the founding fathers of the St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Studies, their influence on the public opinion and the authorities, and their fate after the Bolshevik Revolution, pointing out the continuity between the tsarist and Soviet orientalist scholarship (Loc 85). Certainly, during and after the Bolshevik Revolution some scholars were persecuted or even killed in the Gulag, but some became the patrons of the new Soviet Orientology. Even though initially, there were attempts at reading Islam in connection with Marxism and finding common elements (like the idea of social justice or giving alms), the communist state by and large rejected Islam as a "feudal" religion that needed to be eradicated (Conermann and Kemper Loc. 347-373). Bolshevik revolutionaries wanted to establish a new, Marxist Orientology. As Michael Kemper observes in his article "Red Orientalism: Mikhail Pavlovich and Marxist Oriental Studies in Early Soviet Russia", soon after the 1917 revolution there began a movement towards a Marxist redefinition of Orientalist study, in opposition to the "bourgeois", "outdated" and "reactionary"

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<sup>24</sup> See: Etkind; Mostashari; Thompson, *Imperial...*; Khodarkovsky; Meyer; Brower & Lazzarini; Kelertas; Tolz.



Orientalists from the St. Petersburg school, the most important centre of Orientalist study at the time (437)<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, the leader of this movement, Mikhail Pavlovich, in 1921 set up a Marxist organisation, the Soviet Scientific Association of Oriental Studies, and later, became the head of the Moscow Institute for Oriental Studies (1923). He was also behind the emergence of a journal called *Novyi Vostok [The New Orient]*, which was labelled as “the World’s only Marxist journal devoted to the Orient” (Kemper *Red...* 437).

When Soviet communists realised, a few years after the 1917 Revolution, that other countries did not follow suit, Trotskii proposed that the Bolsheviks turn towards the Orient – it might be easier to bring down Western capitalism through revolutions in its colonies. Hence, the Comintern decided to organise a Congress of the Peoples of the East, in order to support the revolutionary movements in the Oriental nations; the Congress took place in Baku in 1920. Contrarily to the ideas of Marx, the Bolsheviks came to the conclusion that the East does not need to first go through a period of capitalism, and that since there was no proletariat (as there was less industrialisation), the revolution should be carried out by peasants (Kemper, *Red...* 447). Their call for action, was however tainted by the well-known Eurocentric Orientalist perspective, explains Kemper, giving examples on how clichés such as old-age wisdom of the East, or “Oriental backwardness” (448). Once again, the Orientals were not allowed to speak for themselves and the Congress became “a measure to turn the Orient into an instrument of Soviet Russia, which reveals its functionalist, ‘Orientalist’ character”, says Kemper (*Red...* 449). The Soviet speakers pointed out the “ignorance” and “superstition” of the Orientals, which have to be overcome in order to fight a “holy war” against British and French imperialism – a call that Kemper labels as “Red Jihad” (450). The most problematic aspect of the Soviet approach was their claim to leadership of the Orient, based on Marxist developmental thought; “lumped together, the Orient from Morocco to China was treated as an amorphous mass that would obtain contours only through the Soviet model” (Kemper 452). It is clear that the primary concern for Soviets calling for the liberation of the Orient was USSR’s interest, and as a result, Orient becomes objectified and subjugated to a very Eurocentric, Western project. Indeed, when the objectives of Soviet diplomacy changed (among other reasons, following a trade agreement with Great Britain), the Bolsheviks were no longer interested in the undertaking of the Oriental Revolution. Furthermore, after Pavlovich’s death

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<sup>25</sup> For a more comprehensive study of the pre-revolutionary Russian Oriental studies, see Vera Tolz’s *Russia’s Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (2011).

in 1927, and after the Stalinist purges which led to the elimination of many academics<sup>26</sup>, among them Orientalists, *Novyi Vostok* and the All-Soviet Scientific Association of Oriental Studies closed down. Also, a new generation of more radical students came about, and they strongly criticised the older Marxist scholars (Kemper 472). A new Soviet Association of Marxist Orientalists was established, and although it was supposed to study the revolutionary movements in the East, it focused more on the fight with “internal enemies” within the Soviet Union and the elimination of “economic and cultural backwardness” (through forced collectivisation and violent reforms) in the nations of the USSR (474). Moreover, from 1930s onwards, Muslims were persecuted in the Soviet Union, and research on Islam—and more generally, on the Orient—became difficult as well (Conermann and Kemper Loc. 347-373). Many Soviet Orientalists took part in this anti-religious propaganda, for instance distributing pamphlets and sending scholars to Muslim-dominated regions of USSR with lectures on atheism. While some Orientalists tried to preserve some independence, others in one way or the other collaborated with the Party, for instance by joining the “League of the Militant Godless”, a state-sponsored atheist organization which, as Vladimir Bobrovnikov explained, could be helpful in their academic career. The political pressure on academics was great: according to Michael Kemper, by 1940 many scholars of Islam and the Orient were imprisoned, exiled, or executed (Loc 401). However, unlike in the West, the Soviet academic environment incorporated many “Orientals”—locals from the predominantly Muslim regions—who knew the language and culture of their ancestors and sometimes had even studied in madrasas before they were closed down by the Soviet state. Like other members of academia, numerous Orientalists maintained political connections with the Communist Party and the field of Orientalism was considerably limited by the ideology and the political goals of the USSR. Conermann emphasises that “the task of Oriental studies in the USSR was to provide information on Islam and Muslim societies abroad, with regard to foreign policy, and at home, in the Muslim areas of the USSR, where scholarship was crucial for the formation of national histories and identities” (Loc 158). He demonstrates that while it should be recognized that some Soviet Orientalists preceded Said—as well as European and American academic Orientalism—in their critique of Western European imperialism, their work was far from objective or apolitical. It was strongly embedded in the system of communist scholarship, and closely linked with a discourse of political propaganda that governed external relations and the

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<sup>26</sup> Also, as a result of the purges in 1930s, the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, established in 1921 under the guidance of Pavlovich, among others, closed down. Its mission was to educate the future communist elites of the East.

image of other regions of the world. Thus, the “Red Orientalism”, in the words of Kemper, was “heavily indebted to European imagination about the East” (476), and represented yet another form of Orientalism, only with a “civilising mission” based in slogans on Marxist premises.

In later years of the Cold War era, Orientalism became an arena of rivalry between East and West, a struggle for the power of interpreting and dominating the Orient. Oriental studies were a prestigious discipline, as they offered coveted position, possibilities of travel, and political contacts – even though the delegations going on international conferences were accompanied by KGB officers (Kemper & Conermann, Loc 487). However, freedom of research was severely limited, as direction were still coming from Moscow, and even the Orientalist departments in the Union republics were subjected to this centralised, politically correct programme. The fact that Orientalist institutes were set up only in some republics, neighbouring with Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, also meant that their primary focus was to monitor the political developments in these countries, rather than do independent research (Kemper & Conermann, Loc 487). Although in 1960s, the political stance of Soviet Orientology was toned down, political pressure was still exerted on many academics, for instance, those of Jewish origin (Loc 533). Finally, in 1970s and 1980s, studying Islam became once again relevant for Soviet scholars, given the political developments worldwide – Iran Revolution, Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, rise of various political islamist movements in the East – but also due to Islamic revival in the Soviet republics, perceived by Moscow as an internal threat. Nevertheless, these developments confirmed the defeat of Marxist Orientalism, and in particular its belief that religion – and in particular Islam – can be relegated to the past. The fact that many revolutionary movements, followed Islam, but also incorporated socialist elements, was also a challenge for Soviets. The breakup of the Soviet Union also meant a rethinking and a reformulation of Orientalist studies, although it did not mean that the party elites educated in the Orientalist institutes of USSR will be marginalised. Quite the opposite: the best case in point is the life story of Evgenii Primakov, in 1977-1985, influential director of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow (and KGB agent), who became a Foreign Affairs Minister in years 1996-1998, and even served – briefly – as a Prime Minister (1998-1999).

### **Post-war Western Intellectuals and Marxism**

It is to some extent understandable that many Western intellectuals laid their hopes on the relatively new, communist ideology, as it offered a perspective of a more just society on a global scale, even though they began to condemn what was happening in the Soviet Union. However, the fact that the world became even more polarized because of the Cold War, made

many intellectuals wary of the US government's anti-communist obsession in times of McCarthy, and the American involvement in the war in Vietnam. The New Left movement, beginning in that period, had very different objectives than the early post-war communists. It did not adopt strictly Marxist views or attempt to sympathize with Soviet Union: quite the opposite, at its core was the anti-war and civil rights, gay and feminist movement. Similar processes occurred in Britain and France, where most left-wing intellectuals distanced themselves from Soviet Union and opted for a New Leftist agenda.

Consequently, modernisation theory was replaced by dependency theories, and essentialist visions of culture were replaced by more complex ways of understanding categories such as race, religion, gender or ethnicity. Lockman describes the feeling of these times in the following way:

There was a growing sense that Orientalism as a discipline, in addition to being intellectually isolated, unself-critical and lacking any methodological tools other than an antiquated philology, did not possess the kind of real intellectual foundation that underpinned the humanities and social science disciplines. It was essentially a vestige of an early modern or even medieval way of dividing up the world, and by taking "the Orient" or "Islam" (understood as a distinct and unitary civilization) as its object of study Orientalism actually made it more difficult to attain a proper understanding of the histories, societies, cultures and politics of predominantly Muslim peoples and lands. (194)

Hence, the climate was right for the formulation of a leftist – but not necessarily Marxist – critique of Orientalist studies. Apart from Abdel-Malek, Maxime Rodinson, and Edward Said, among the critics of essentialist approaches to non-European Others were, for instance, Talal Asad, and Bryan S. Turner. In a volume he edited in 1973, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Asad criticises functionalist anthropological writings on Africa, tracing the origins of colonial science to the ideas of Enlightenment, and to the assumption that the West is superior to other cultures. In a similar vein, Brian Turner pointed out how key Western theorists, Max Weber and Karl Marx, were convinced of the idea of "Oriental despotism" and perceived the Middle-Eastern societies as backward. He proposed a radical severance from Orientalism, or even a "fundamental attack on the theoretical and epistemological roots of Orientalist scholarship" (Turner 85). Nevertheless, it appeared that Marxism itself is not a sufficient basis for critique and a new type of analysis is needed. For instance, post-structuralists had a close, albeit tumultuous relationship with Marxism – or rather, were inspired to their ideas through a critical engagement with Marxism (Choat). Many critical theorists, too, had a strong Marxist background, for example the postcolonial critic Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak. While Said must have been sympathetic to Marxism, which was at the origin of leftist views, his work was not as ideological as his critics purported it to be. Instead of a plainly political critique of Orientalism, similar to one that can be found in the works of his predecessors, Said employed different tools to dismantle this European construct. As it was mentioned earlier, he was inspired by a variety of scholars: Raymond Schwab, whose *Renaissance Orientale* (1950) focuses on both academic and literary Orientalism, Antonio Gramsci and his works on hegemony, as well as Michel Foucault and his definition of discourse. This hardly makes Said a pronounced Marxist scholar, blinded by his ideological bias, as Bernard Lewis, for instance, depicts him. In fact, Said deplors that many of those radical intellectuals believing in the ideas of modernisation and progress, espousing Marxist views, make a similar mistake as Marx himself and adopt a homogenised view of the Third World (*Orientalism* 325). In fact, in his afterword to *Orientalism*, written in 1995, Said responded to the claims of his Marxist critics, who expected his closer alignment on their side, and argued that the “recourse to Marxism or “the West” as a coherent total system seems . . . to have been a case of using one orthodoxy to shoot down another” (339). Clearly, the scholar did not want to be pigeonholed: he was not an enthusiast of radical Marxism, and never praised communism or Soviet Union in his books. When Bernard Lewis accused Said of purposely ignoring Russian and Soviet Orientalists (13), Said replied:

. . . Lewis’s detailed criticisms have a distinctly nasty political tone about them. When he says that I don’t attack the Soviet Orientalists for their attacks on Mohammed, he signals the audience that I may after all be a Soviet apologist. This bit of red-baiting cannot conceal the obvious, that if the Soviet Russian Orientalists attacked Islam they also attacked Christianity, Judaism, as well as all other religions for being opiates of the people. (Said, “Orientalism: an Exchange”)

It is true that USSR imposed atheism on its citizens and persecuted every religion, although this explanation seems too easy. Said knows about Russian/Soviet imperialism, and the school of Russian Orientalist studies (he mentions it on p. 1, 17, 100, 211, 225, 292, and 348 of *Orientalism*). This is not only evident from his *Orientalism*, even though he purposefully focuses on Britain and France, omitting other empires, but also from his other writings and research. Even his first work, on Joseph Conrad, must have given him an insight into the imperialist strategies of Russia: Conrad fled his native Poland, escaping the tyranny of three empires – Russia, Prussia and Austria, which divided his country in three parts, making it disappear from the map of Europe. Perhaps Joseph Conrad was particularly interested in describing colonial Congo because of his own experiences as a colonial subject? In fact, the

writer's parents were persecuted by Tsarist authorities and, when he was only four years old, were sent in exile to the Siberian town of Vologda. Said points out the irony of Conrad's fate – he was an expatriate, fleeing from imperial domination, but also an employee of the imperial navy of Great Britain. In his later work, *Culture and Imperialism*, Said explains that

. . . there are several empires that I do not discuss: the Austro-Hungarian, the Russian, the Ottoman, and the Spanish and Portuguese. These omissions, however, are not at all meant to suggest that Russia's domination of Central Asia and Eastern Europe, Istanbul's rule over the Arab world, Portugal's over what are today's Angola and Mozambique, and Spain's domination in both the Pacific and Latin America have been either benign (and hence approved of) or any less imperialist. (xxii)

He underlines that Russia was in fact an imperial power (*Culture...* 6, 10), although he differentiates between the Russian form of colonial expansionism, which was performed “by adjacence”, and the British and French one, which aimed at acquiring territories overseas (*Culture...* 10). David Chioni Moore, who advocates for the merging of the postcolonial and the post-Soviet perspectives, wonders why Said attaches such an importance to maritime conquest:

What is puzzling about this explanation is not only how it seemingly "excuses" brutality by adjacence but also how it grants odd primacy to water. For when one considers the easy Marseille-Algiers sail or the generally pleasant London-Cairo voyage, one is puzzled that the infinitely rougher path from Moscow to Tashkent—which until the opening of the colonial Central Asian railroads in the nineteenth century took months to travel and traversed one thousand miles of freezing-boiling steppe and desert—is granted an "adjacence." Indeed, a lack of adjacent ice-free ocean was exactly Russia's problem, and much of its expansion-toward the Baltics, the Crimea, the Persian Gulf, and finally the Pacific—was a frank attempt to get some. (119)

Chioni Moore explains the reluctance to perceive Russian and Western European expansionism by the same measure by pointing to another factor: among Westerners, Russia is perceived as different, neither European nor Asian, or even as more primitive, and as such, incomparable to European imperialism. Chioni Moore points out that Russia, in fact, was very ambitious to join the club of the colonising empires and eager to mimic the British and the French, to whom it felt culturally inferior (120). He quotes a significant expression by Lord Curzon, who says that “Russia's conquest of Central Asia is a conquest of Orientals by Orientals” (Chioni Moore, 120).

Edward Said realizes that the label “East” or “Orient” was sometimes used in regards to Russia, putting it in an ambiguous position of being at the same time the oppressor of

Muslims within its borders and in the neighbourhood, but also a country perceived in the West as part of the barbaric and exotic “East”. This duality is a particularly interesting, making Russia/Soviet Union an excellent case study of phenomena described by Said: discourse, power, imperialism, cultural superiority/inferiority. Several scholars engaged in this topic, following Said’s cue: for instance, Ewa Thompson, who analysed Russian literature following Said’s example in her *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (2000), Izabela Kalinowska, author of a study *Between East and West. Russian & Polish Nineteenth-century Travel to the Orient* (2004), or David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye in his *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (2010). Clearly, an analysis of Russian colonialism from a Saidian perspective is not a matter of ideology or whether one holds Marxist views or not. Edward Said was aware of how complex such analysis would have to be, and of the fact that he would have to write a very different book, had he envisaged an overview of colonial or imperialist practices of other empires that the ones he chose to focus on. Also, since he wrote *Orientalism* still in times of the Cold War, such a study of Russia/Soviet Union, would be difficult from a practical – or methodological – view, since most archival sources would simply be kept away from the public by the communist official, and freedom of scholarly research, especially in humanities, was very limited in USSR.

Nevertheless, Said’s lack of clear adoption of Marxist principles disappointed the more orthodox leftist critics. One of the most interesting reactions to Said’s oeuvre came from the Pakistani scholar, Aijaz Ahmad. In the chapter on Said from his collection of essays *In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literatures* (2000), Ahmad criticises at length *Orientalism*’s assumptions, arguments and the choice of literary works used to demonstrate how that discourse works. Ahmad, although appreciative of Said’s books on Palestine, sees *Orientalism* as a “deeply flawed book” (161), a text that is personal and emotional, responding to the author’s need to come to terms with his position of an Arab academic in American academia. Ahmad is critical of Said’s choice of literature: such a sweeping overview of the European canon is problematic, first, because it establishes a continuity between Ancient Greece and contemporary times, second, because it reflects Said’s grand attempt at presenting the whole of European literary, social and literary tradition. As a result, even though Said claims to base his reflections on the ideas of Michel Foucault, he is not consistent, as the French philosopher did not believe in such continuities, and always emphasized that discourse is a product of modernity, so Said should perhaps limit his analysis to a shorter time frame, starting at the earliest in sixteenth century. What is more, the Saidian canon seems to reflect the very ideas of High Humanism that the post-structuralist, postmodernist thought is critical of. Another important point is that

*Orientalism* to some extent essentialises the Orient and the West, making them appear as static structures, while Said could have presented the Western textualities in a wider context: the way they were received, modified or challenged by their readers in colonized countries. In that way, Said, according to Aijaz Ahmad, silences the “Orientals” once again. In many instances, Ahmad expresses a personal disillusionment with the fact that Said discredits Marx – including him in his list of Orientalists – and does not identify with Marxism very strongly. In fact, in his ideological fervour, Ahmad blames Said for referring to thoughts of both the leftist Gramsci and the conservative Julien Benda. But should a scholar only read and accept ideas of only those thinkers who share his or her standpoint? It seems like an unfair expectation from Ahmad’s part. In fact, Said manages to rise beyond political divisions and present an argument that does not leave doubts about the relations of power between East and West; these were so pervasive that even those, like Marx, who might have had good intentions, were not free from the bias of Orientalism.

### **3. Polish Orientalism(s)**

Orientalism in the Polish context can be understood in various ways: as a branch of academia, a cultural trend, and also as Orientalising and stereotyped images on the “Eastern” Other (following Said’s understanding of Orientalism that blends institutionalised knowledge, cultural representations, and popular images). Poles have been at both the receiving end of Orientalism – being Orientalised by Westerners, and also Orientalising themselves – but also produced a variety of Orientalist discourses on their Others, whether close ones (minorities, Eastern neighbours etc.), or farther ones, in the Middle East and India. That is why, the use of the noun in plural form, “Orientalisms”, is more appropriate, according to Dirk Uffelmann in his article “‘Ich würde meine Nation als lebendiges Lied erschaffen’. Romantik-Lektüre unter Vorzeichen des Postkolonialismus [‘I would create my nation as a living song’. A Romantic Reading in a Postcolonial Perspective]”<sup>27</sup>. This paragraph briefly mentions various aspects that constitute the Polish Orientalist discourses.

#### **Orientalising Central and Eastern Europe**

The Iron Curtain – a metaphorical, but also very real divide between Western and Eastern Europe – descended in the aftermath of the Second World War, as a result of talks

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<sup>27</sup> This is discussed in Uffelmann’s article, “‘Ich würde...”. See also: Uffelmann, “Litwo!...”.



between Churchill and Stalin. The communist leader demanded to be given a territory on which Soviet Union can exert its power in return for Soviets helping the Allies win over Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, as Larry Wolff demonstrates in his 1994 book, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, the perception of Eastern Europe as a separate and culturally different entity, dates back to the Enlightenment (4). In that period, Western Europe invented Eastern Europe as its complementary other half, backward and barbaric, as much as the West considered itself as modern and civilised, says Wolff (4). This perception “flourished as an idea of extraordinary potency since the eighteenth century, neatly dovetailing in our own times with the rhetoric and realities of the Cold War, but also certain to outlive the collapse of Communism, surviving in the public culture and its mental maps” (Wolff 4). The process of mental mapping and associating certain characteristics with a given region of Europe was performed primarily through travellers – Wolff gives as an example the travel journals of the French count de Ségur, who considered entering Poland as tantamount to “leaving Europe” and “moving back ten centuries” (6)<sup>28</sup>. Furthermore, the Frenchman referred to Eastern Europe as “Europe’s Orient”, a term that continued to be used until early twentieth century (in exact terms: *l’Europe orientale* or *l’Orient Européen*) (Wolff 6-7). Moreover, geographers placed the countries of Eastern Europe somewhere in between Europe and Asia, and the supposed separation between the two continents would remain fluid. As a result,

Such uncertainty encouraged the construction of Eastern Europe as a paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, Europe but not Europe. Eastern Europe defined Western Europe by contrast, as the Orient defined the Occident, but was also made to mediate between Europe and the Orient. One might describe the invention of Eastern Europe as in intellectual project of demi-Orientalization. (Wolff 7)

Wolff underlines the similarities in the construction of the Orient as the Other that can be subjugated and “civilised”, and of Eastern Europe, that can be dominated by the intellectual power and knowledge of the West, but also through real conquest (8). This was, indeed, the case: most countries of Central and Eastern Europe were for at least parts of their history under the domination of large neighbouring empires: Germany/Prussia, Habsburg’s Austria, Tsarist Russia, or the Ottoman Empire. Many Eastern European nations would also be subjected to domination by other Eastern European states: for instance, Ukrainians in the Polish Second Republic (of the interwar period) or Romanians and Slovaks in (Austro-)Hungary.

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<sup>28</sup> A similar motif of travelling to a foreign land compared to travel in time returns also in the accounts of Polish travellers to India, as it will be discussed later in this dissertation.

At the time of Cold War isolation, the intellectuals opposing the communist rule began to reflect on their position in Europe and wonder whether their nations, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian – situated in a region which they called Central Europe – share certain distinct characteristics. In an influential essay, “The Stolen West or The Tragedy of Central Europe” (1983) Milan Kundera underlined how the nations of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were geographically in the middle of Europe, culturally in the West, and politically, after 1945, in the East (1). Indeed, “Central Europe longed to be a condensed version of Europe itself in all its cultural variety, a small arch-European Europe, a reduced model of Europe, made up of nations conceived according to one rule: the greatest variety within the smallest space” (Kundera 33). While these Central European nations always identified with the West, after the Second World War they were “kidnapped” and forcibly placed in the orbit of the East – the Soviet Union (Kundera 33)<sup>29</sup>. Indeed, nothing could be as foreign to Central Europe, says Kundera, as Russia (or USSR), with its uniformity, standardisation, centralisation, and the idea of moulding its citizens into a universal “Homo Sovieticus”. If Central Europeans believed in the ideal of maximum variety in the smallest space, Russians/Soviets would follow an opposite model: minimum variety in the largest space (Kundera 33). But the tragedy of Central Europe is nothing else than the tragedy of the West, as the subjugated nations are the repositories of truly European values, which the Western countries have already lost, Kundera suggests (38). The notion of Central Europe as “kidnapped West” quickly gained popularity among Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian intellectuals, for instance Adam Michnik, Vaclav Havel and Gyorgy Konrad. The accession of the former Soviet satellite states, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary to the European Union in 2004 was perceived by many as a symbolic return to the West<sup>30</sup>. Nevertheless, the fall of the Soviet Union, the lifting of the Iron Curtain and the breaking of the Berlin Wall did not automatically bring equality and conflict-free coexistence between East and West of Europe. As Cristina Sandru remarks, “[a]fter an initial period of joyous triumphalism at the prospect of a finally united, happily globalised planet, a variety of hardly anticipated tensions emerged, as statal units collapsed under vicious ethnic conflict and economic deprivation set in”, comparing this situation to the one in decolonised countries of the “Third World” (2). The media would once again replay the old images and stereotypes and various forms of “meta-racism” (Sandru 2). A number of works addressed

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<sup>29</sup> Kundera says: “. . . we can no longer consider what took place in Prague or Warsaw in its essence as a drama of Eastern Europe, of the Soviet bloc, of communism; it is a drama of the West – a West that, kidnapped, displaced, and brainwashed, nevertheless insists on defending its identity.” (33)

<sup>30</sup> See: Trzeciak, 39; Wivel and Mouritzen, 137.

these new forms of Orientalising the former socialist states, among them Milica Bakić-Hayden's article "Nesting Orientalisms" (1995) (in which she posits that each region has a tendency to portray cultures to its East and South as inferior or more primitive), Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), in which Said's analysis of Orientalist discourse is applied to Western perceptions of the Balkans, and Vesna Goldsworthy's *Inventing Ruritania* (1998) on a similar topic, exploring the formation of the imagined "Wild East" in Western writing and films (of which Bram Stoker's vision of Transylvania and Anthony Hope's invented country of Ruritania are prime examples). Similarly, films like Wes Anderson's "Grand Budapest Hotel" (2014)<sup>31</sup> and Sacha Baron Cohen's "Borat" (2006)<sup>32</sup> play on the Western stereotypes of the East, demonstrating how clichés on various Eastern European nations come together in a vision of a somewhat barbaric, loud, illogical and nonsensical cultures of the global periphery.

### **Poland: Orientalised? Orientalising? Or Self-Orientalising?**

After communism ended in 1989, Polish elites by and large adopted the assumptions of the anti-communist intellectuals, who believed that Poland is part of the Western culture and now that it is not bound by the Soviet rule, it can freely drift towards the West. Nevertheless, there are also proponents of an opposite view: Ewa Thompson, in her article "Said and the Polish Case", expresses the opinion that Polish society, with its Western aspirations, shares the same characteristics as other postcolonial societies. Among them are: poverty, pessimism, "necessary fictions" (tendency to mythologise the distant past, serving as a post-traumatic therapy), and culturalism (reducing the problem of postcolonialism to the area of culture). Thompson observes that in the case of Poland, once again foreign trends are what defines Polish culture, they are internalised by Poles themselves, for whom the old hegemon was replaced by a new one: the West<sup>33</sup>. In her article, she does not hesitate to call Polish history colonial and equate it with the fate of countries of the "Third World"; she does not, however, discuss whether and how was Poland Orientalised by the West or colonised by its neighbours. It seems, however, that neither of these views (Poland as the West, Poland as the East's colony, aspiring to be the West) does justice to the Polish condition. Maria Janion presents a much

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<sup>31</sup> Jake Scobey-Thal sees "The Grand Budapest Hotel" as anti-imperialist – see his article, "The Anderson Doctrine" on Foreign Policy.com, March 14, 2014. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/14/the-anderson-doctrine/> (last access on 1.02.2016).

<sup>32</sup> A number of critical analyses on Sacha Baron Cohen's movie can be found in vol.67 no. 1 of the Slavic Review.

<sup>33</sup> See: Thompson, "Said..." .

more nuanced perspective on Polish symbolic location, which is “to the west from the East and to the east from the West” (13). The divide between East and West has its origins in the division between Christianity and Byzantium, and between Latin and Slavic cultures; countries of Central Europe – Poland among them – were caught in-between these diverse cultural movements, which caused much tension and identity negotiation. In her book, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna [Uncanny Slavicdom]*, Janion points out how, for instance, the adoption of Christianity and a total rejection of old Slavic traditions lead to a feeling of being in a way violated by the West. The repressed Slavicdom returns, as Janion diligently demonstrates, in a variety of texts of the Romantic period: either as a secret rite of communication with the dead (like in Mickiewicz’s *Dziady*), as visions of utopian past, “pastoral and cruel at the same time” (19), like in Słowacki’s *Król-Duch*), as “a tale of imposed Christianity, feudalism and annihilation of the Slavic freedom, as a vision of a sublime figure (in Kraszyński – a Slavic female vampire), or through images of ruins, disasters and destruction (e.g. in Kraszyński’s novels) (Janion 20). Therefore, throughout the years, Polish culture was constantly torn between opposing forces – of Westernisation, and of a quest for a unique, Polish (Slavic) identity. A concept that gained prominence among Polish nobility was sarmatism – an idea that Poles came from the ancient tribe of Sarmatians, and thus had a distinct identity which was closer to the East than to the West (in a sarmatian fashion, Polish noblemen would dress similarly to the Tatar or Ottoman warriors, used sabres rather than swords, decorated their houses with Persian rugs and decorations). As Maria Janion underlines, Orientalism was at that time (sixteenth-seventeenth centuries) very much part of the experience of Polish nobility, which they used to differentiate themselves from Western Europe, to – in a way – Orientalise themselves (*Uncanny Slavicdom* 170). In the era of the Enlightenment, sarmatism was perceived as an expression of ignorance and backwardness, but its influence can still be perceived in the never-ending discussions between those who advocate a pro-Western, enlightened Poland, and those searching for the Polish authentic, the essence of the Polish culture, that is neither Eastern nor Western. Leszek Koczanowicz, referring to Ewa Thompson’s enthusiastic adoption of sarmatism as an original expression of true Polish identity, warns of the fact that such a formulation of Polish culture and identity narrows it down to a set of values synonymous to the slogans of the right-wing political entities (172). “The concept of sarmatism imparts a certain grandeur on these entities and introduces a conviction that we are dealing not with a consciously constructed narrative of culture, but the universal destiny of a nation”, says Koczanowicz, underlining that it leads to asserting the political hegemony of such a right-wing discourse (172).

Indeed, the eagerness with which the right-wing accepted certain tenets of the postcolonial discourse, especially in the works of Ewa Thompson, is yet another proof that a one-sided view of Poland as only a victim of colonialism and Orientalist discourse is problematic. It presents the Polish culture in essentialist terms, and Poland's fate as unique, while – says Koczanowicz – it should be perceived like the history of other countries, in a similarly peripheral position towards the West, with its own economic and cultural issues, that are by no means exceptional in a global scale (179). Aleksander Fiut, too, sees in the application of postcolonial theory in the Polish context the “danger of replicating, albeit not vociferously, of the worn out and exhausted image of Poland as martyr, unjustly persecuted and always crushed under the invader's heavy boot” (37). He draws the attention to a different dynamic of domination, the one of Poland's hegemony over its neighbours and minorities:

Until the end of the 19th century the supremacy of the Polish cultural pattern in the territories of today's Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine was regarded, as least by the Poles themselves, as self-evident, and suitable for the purpose of fostering a sense of a civilizing cultural mission. This attitude is amply documented by the Polish-language literature of these regions. In short, the question arises as to the role of this literature in both accurately reflecting and distorting the relationship between the dominant Polish culture and the mostly folkloric culture of nations under Poland's domination. Are the reciprocal cultural connections between Poland and other cultures presented truthfully, or do they simply reflect the Polish point of view? Were the distortions caused by lack of knowledge or by the conqueror's pride? (Fiut 37)

Aleksander Fiut finds that to answer these questions, the terminology introduced by Said, Bhabha, Spivak, and other postcolonial scholars can be useful, as notions of mimicry, mockery, asymmetry, Orientalist imagery can very well be applied in describing the relations between the Polonising centre and its Orientalised borderlands. Scholars such as Bogusław Bakula or Hanna Gosk addressed the discourse on the Polish Borderlands in detail, but also found that the notion of colonialism is not entirely adequate in this context. Aleksander Fiut proposes the term of a “velvet” colonisation” (39) in reference to some territories (for instance, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), Bakula identifies it as “dyskurs kresoznawczy” (Eastern-Borderlands-discourse), which is loaded with particular meaning much more than any other march-land (102)<sup>34</sup>, while Hanna Gosk talks about dependency and post-dependency, which are better

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<sup>34</sup> Bakula enumerates the characteristics of these Eastern Borderlands, so vivid in the Polish collective imagination: they are a frontier, but also a “line of defence of Polishness” (102); they are multinational, but their Polish character is underlined; they are marginalised, but subjected to the centre's cultural mission; they are associated with youth, masculinity and adventure (103); and they give a sense of satisfaction derived from acquisition or appropriation. These elements, says Bakula, can be frequently found in the genre that developed

terms to explain the Polish condition of being at the same time objects and makers of dominating, or Orientalising, discourses. Furthermore, as a number of scholars suggest, although Poland was at various times of history dominated by Russia, it would also Orientalise it, presenting it as inferior, primitive, and uncivilised, and at the same time threatening (Janion, *Niesamowita...*; Gosk, *Opowieści...*; Waldstein).

### **Polish Orientalist Perceptions of the Middle- and Far-Eastern Other**

Apart from these diverse forms that Orientalism adopted in the Polish context, by Poles or about Poles, the more obvious Orientalist discourse is the one constructed to depict the Middle-Eastern, or Far-Eastern Other, in a similar way as the Western Europeans did. The primary difference from Western Orientalism was that Poles had no direct contact and no relation of domination/subjugation of the Orient<sup>35</sup>. Orientalism was first a trend in art and literature – a fascination with the exotic, often along Western European clichés, as well as a discipline in academic study. In Poland, the Orientalist perception of the “East” developed primarily in nineteenth century, although certain Orientalist tropes were present already in Enlightenment. Jan Tuczyński, analysing Indian motifs in Polish literature, mentions Oriental and Indian tales on animals retold in J. S. Jabłonowski’s *Ezop nowy polski [New Polish Aesop]*, Polish 18<sup>th</sup> century tales modelled after the French ones of La Fontaine (in which Indian motives could be found as well) (29). Polish intellectuals of the Enlightenment, Hugo Kołłątaj and Stanisław Staszic also found inspiration in the “wisdom of the East” and included various concepts from the Indian thought in their writings – Staszic pondered on the impermanence and changeability of the world, or on metaphysical understanding of human suffering, while Kołłątaj underlined the connection between Sanskrit and Slavic languages as coming from the same God (Tuczyński 31).

Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt caused a wave of interest in Egypt and the Middle East, fuelling Orientalist images across Western and Eastern Europe. In that period Poland (or rather the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), was since 1795 partitioned by Kingdom of Prussia, the Habsburg Empire and Tsarist Russia. As a response to the domination of the foreign powers, Poles organized resistance, plotted against their rulers, conspired and revolted, and many of them emigrated. Also, they took part actively in cultural activities, whose aim was to preserve

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in early 20th century, “the Borderlands novel”, as well as in nonfictional accounts - memoirs from these territories, in particular written in the communist period, after these territories were lost (104).

<sup>35</sup> Apart from repeated wars with the Ottoman Empire in the period of 15th-17th centuries, through which Poles came in contact with what they perceived as the “Oriental” culture.

the national spirit and maintain the links with Western European countries. This coincided with the heyday of European Orientalism – Izabela Kalinowska, author of a study on Polish and Russian Orientalism points at the connection between these two parallel processes:

Paradoxically, in the nineteenth century scholarly and literary Orientalism enjoyed great popularity in Eastern Europe in part because the Eastern Europeans desired to participate as equals in the intellectual life of Europe. For some Polish and Russian writers, travel to the East provided a way to assert their own Westernness and hence Europeanness. (Kalinowska 3)

Even though Poles faced some restrictions in the freedom to travel, the Grand Tour, or *voyage orientale*, was in fashion among Polish cultural and artistic elites. As in the case of the Westerners, it was often a quest for self-definition, but it responded to an even more complex identity crisis, given that they were themselves in the position of colonised subjects (Kalinowska 12). Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki, both considered as iconic figures of the Polish romanticism, were among those intellectuals who travelled to the Orient, and their journeys were reflected in their literary creations.

Mickiewicz's stay in the Crimea, where he encounters "Oriental" culture, results in a particular form of lyrical travelogue – the "Crimean Sonnets" (1826). There are various Orientalist elements in the sonnets, which are inspired by classic Arabic literature – in particular the genre called *qasidah* – but Mickiewicz differs from his Western European contemporaries in several aspects. For instance, he does so by placing a local Muslim man, the Tatar called Mirza, as one of the main voices in his work, refusing to ascribe to him the stereotypically "Eastern" traits. Some critics see this double presence, of the Traveller and the Tatar as yet another form of presenting the binary opposition between East and West, but others conclude that Mickiewicz was sympathetic to Crimea and its inhabitants because, like his own people, they were dominated by the Russian empire<sup>36</sup>. Kalinowska, too, underlines that "[i]n no way do the *Sonnets* affirm Europe's dominance and its superiority over the cultures of the East. To the contrary, they survey and illustrate the benefits of a creative engagement born from literary travel to the Orient" (16). That is why, Mickiewicz cannot be simply considered as Orientalist, as his writing was in a sense anti-imperialist. Even though the sonnets bring about oriental imagery and language, they also refer in their form to oriental genres of writing (the *qasidah*), and, according to Kalinowska, they are written in the spirit of a true East-West cultural exchange (55). The same applies to other authors of nineteenth century Polish travel writing about the Orient:

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<sup>36</sup> Among those critics were Janina Kamionka, Roman Koropecy, Leon Borowski, Juliusz Kleiner, Waclaw Kubacki, Jerzy Świdziński – see discussion in Kalinowska (38-50).

To survey the Orient in the same manner as the Western Europeans meant to emphasize Poland's allegiance to Europe. Polish writers were therefore prone to replicate the models of cultural encounters present in Western European texts. Yet they did not participate in the West's colonizing enterprise. Rather, on the level of discourse, they faced the risk of becoming voluntary victims of colonization (Kalinowska 66).

Especially in the period after the failed uprising in November 1830, Polish writers felt powerless and stifled. Many of them left Poland at that time (including Adam Mickiewicz), forming a large émigré community in Paris. Juliusz Słowacki, another prominent romantic poet, also left the partitioned Poland and lived in several European countries. In 1836, like many of his contemporaries, he set off on an oriental adventure: a journey to Greece, Egypt, Palestine and Syria. Even though it was a conventional tour, he distanced himself from this travel experience, portraying the oriental travel in "The Journey" (1836-39) and "Beniowski" (1841-1846) in an ironic way. In other texts however, for instance some of his poems and letters, Słowacki uses the Orientalist clichés just as other European writers, focusing on the colours, sensual impressions, encounters with women. These clichés inscribe themselves in the Orientalist discourse, even though the main point of reference for the poet is Poland; he is an émigré that longs for his homeland and his journey is strongly marked by nostalgia and feeling of loss (Kalinowska 80).

The descriptions of oriental travels by Polish Romantic poets would not escape the stereotypes and trends of the European Orientalism, but the motives behind their journeys were different from the Western ones. Mickiewicz considered his travels to be a liberating experience and an opportunity to encounter the otherness that he was curious of, while Słowacki could not shed the melancholic thoughts of how his country is enslaved and subdued. Both these poets were also interested in Indian thought, which they discovered partly through German thinkers – Herder and Schlegel – and partly through the poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson and his idea of transcendentalism drawn from the Vedas (Tuczyński 66-67). Mickiewicz would try to find common elements in Slavic and Indian mythologies, while Słowacki was inspired by motifs from the Upanishads as well as Buddhist thought (Tuczyński 77-78).

The end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century mark a more intense exploration of Indian philosophy, with the artists of the positivist and "Młoda Polska" ("Young Poland") movements reading Max Mueller's studies on India and Schopenhauer's writings inspired by Vedanta and Buddhism, and with the development of Orientalist and Indological studies at all major academic centres. The slogan "Ex Oriente Lux" – light from the Orient – was often



repeated, illustrating this fascination with the “mystical” East (Tuczyński 111). The image of the Orient presented by literature was complemented by visual arts: painting, drawing and graphics. Some of the Polish artists would depict people of the Orient in a very similar way as Western European masters, but a lot of them added a local touch – after all, the pre-partition Poland had many contacts with the Islamic culture, especially due to a considerable Tatar population living on its territories and its proximity to the Ottoman Empire, then very powerful in South-Eastern Europe. That is why, many Polish Orientalist paintings depict Turks, Tatars, Cossacks, Circassians or Kurds, rather than Arabs. Contrary to the Western European painters, often showing Eastern men as traders, craftsmen or nomads, usually portrayed when sitting at a coffee shop, smoking water pipes or praying, the Polish paintings present a much more belligerent version of the Oriental men. Again, this is probably due to the history of conflicts with the Turks and Tatars, which left the memory of a brave, sometimes cruel warriors, rather than effeminate and sensual Orientals. Nevertheless, such a vision is also part of the Orientalist stereotype that evokes the Eastern cruelty or Oriental despotism.

Many painters, such as Stanisław Chlebowski, Jan Ciagliński or January Suchodolski, were students of the famous Orientalist artists, for instance Jean-Léon Gérôme, Benjamin Constant, or Horace Vernet. The Polish Orientalists would have less insight into the reality of Eastern life, since they had less means to travel and often relied only on secondary sources or representations by Western artists<sup>37</sup>. The Orientalist trend in Polish art became though quite popular, with Franciszek Żmurko and Pantaleon Szyndler as most popular painters. An exhibition of that type of painting at the National Museum in Warsaw, presented pictures of harems, bathhouses, coffee parlours and markets, where colours, decorations, clothing and furniture create an atmosphere of mystery and exoticism. There was also a strong interest in Islam and the religious practice of the Arabs – many paintings represent Beduin prayers at the desert, muezzins, famous mosques. Just like their Western European counterparts, Polish Orientalist painters were allowed to show more female nudity and eroticism in the context of a different culture, than what would be acceptable when depicting their own one. The Orient appears in these paintings as a male fantasy, arising the senses and provoking excitement. The colours, shapes and decorations only strengthen this effect. For many artists, an important source of inspiration was ancient history and stories from the Bible, as well as contemporary romantic literature. Thus, Polish cultural life in nineteenth century shared many similarities with the culture of Western Europe. However, although the artistic and literary creation

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<sup>37</sup> See: article on Orientalist painting at the website of the National Museum in Warsaw.

strengthened the Orientalist stereotypes and Eurocentric attitudes, Poles were much more concerned with their own political situation than in the colonial enterprise of the Western empires. Stressing a cultural proximity to Western Europe was rather instrumental in defining their own identity as European, in the times when Poland as a state ceased to exist.

When Poland regained independence in 1918, in the aftermath of the First World War, intellectual life soon began to thrive. New movements developed in poetry, prose, nonfiction, as well as in academic inquiry. The interest in Eastern spirituality in other European countries caused similar trends to come to Poland too. Organisations like the Polish Theosophic Society, or the Metempsychological Society were founded by enthusiasts of spiritualist movement. Writings by Swami Vivekananda, Shankaracharya or Krishnamurty were now available in Polish translations, as well as Rabindranath Tagore's poems (Tuczyński 182). Polish Orientalists could finally act independently, and created in 1922 the Polish Orientalist Society (Polskie Towarzystwo Orientalistyczne), began to issue a journal, the *Orientalist Daily* (Rocznik Orientalistyczny) and organise various conferences and symposia.

Nevertheless, by that time, the popular perception of Asia, Africa and other territories belonging to the Western powers was largely colonial, borrowed from other Europeans. The famous novelist, Henryk Sienkiewicz, in his *Listy z Afryki* [*Letters from Africa*], when comparing the European and the African Other uses binary oppositions typical of the colonial discourse: rationality vs magical thinking, organisation vs anarchy, Christianity vs superstition, and history vs lack of history (Szleszyński 124). According to Szleszyński, another novelist, Bolesław Prus, praised colonialism as an opportunity to find new spaces “for the civilised world” and new resources, bringing “civilisation” to the natives (126).

Indeed, the newly regained Polish statehood called for the redefinition of Poland's position on the international arena. Since what defined the global position of a European state was the ownership of colonies, a part of the Polish elites appealed to the government to start negotiations in order to acquire colonies for Poland. These claims were never taken seriously by the authorities, mostly because Marshal Józef Piłsudski, then leader of the Second Polish Republic, strongly opposed to take part in “colonial brawls”, arguing that Poles should focus on more immediate problems, such as their relations with the neighbours or reinforcing their position in Europe (Kowalski 25). Still, the colonial discourse in Poland remained quite a heated one, to a large extent due to the activities of the Maritime and Colonial League. It was an association created soon after independence, and became an active actor in the Polish public sphere. Its propaganda was widespread: apart from issuing magazines, journals and newsletters for both adults and children, the League had numerous local branches all around Poland, and

collaborated with many public institutions, such as schools, universities as well as the scouting movement. In fact, by the outbreak of Second World War in 1939, the League had about one million members<sup>38</sup>, it has inspired the creation of three thousand local school clubs and started its own militia (Kowalski 38). The League organized Colonial Days, during which its members, youth organizations and other supporters of the movement marched in a parade, carrying banners which claimed colonies for Poland, waving flags, singing and dancing. The League had special uniforms for their militia, which look very similar to the colonial outfits: bright colours, big hats and knee-high boots<sup>39</sup>. The goal of the League was to gather a massive support for the colonial idea and get prepared for a future presence in the overseas territories. That is why, it directed its lobbying to the top level: governmental elites, professionals, academics, and army officers, as well as to different groups of the society. Certainly the League's activities led to arising the society's interest in other countries and cultures, in travel and exploration, but all in all, the League presented colonialism in positive terms, referring to stereotypes and generalisations, and sometimes – even racist ideas. The activists, apart from presenting economic and demographic arguments as a rationale for colonial possessions, argued how Poland could “expand its cultural sphere” on the new territories (Kowalski 62). These colonial aspirations came to an end with the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, and never reappeared. However, many of the authors of the post-war travel accounts, who grew up in the interwar period, must have remembered these discourses.

### **Orientalism in Communist Period**

After the Second World War, when the new communist regime settled in Warsaw, the vibrant atmosphere of Orientalist and Indological studies of the interwar era was gone: many academics perished, others lived through traumatic events, were imprisoned in German or Soviet camps, or lost their close ones. Those who survived were often no longer welcome to continue their research, for instance the outstanding Orientalist, Helena Willman-Grabowska. Now, many of the Orientalist departments were reorganised or closed down and even directions for academic study were coming from Moscow. When full-time studies on the Orient and on India returned to the curricula in Poland, they remained to some extent influenced by Soviet Orientalism; what is more, possibilities of travel or exchange with the Western counterparts, as well as fieldwork in Middle East and Asia were limited. The Cold War divide resulted in

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<sup>38</sup> The total population of the Second Republic of Poland according to the census from 1938 was 34 million.

<sup>39</sup> The photos from the parades can be found at the online collection of the National Digital Archive.

new hierarchies: the model of the world divided into First, Second and Third World became a reality. The Second World, conflicted with the First World, would try to attract the attention of the Third World, but the former colonies were not always easily swayed: after ousting the colonial powers and regaining independence, they were looking for their own model of development.

In Polish literature, socialist realism became the norm in the first decades after the war, and far-away countries were hardly referred to. Nevertheless, travel reportage gradually became a popular genre, because reporters, sent abroad by state-sponsored newspapers, were acting as mediators between a regular reader, for whom travel abroad was almost impossible, and the writer, who had a rare opportunity to witness other cultures and regions directly. A number of reporters, among them Ryszard Kapuściński, Lucjan Wolanowski, Olgierd Budrewicz, Wiesław Górnicki, Wojciech Giełżyński, travelled the world and gained popularity. Also, Alfred Szklarski's series of adventure novels for young adults, talking about a teenage boy, Tomek Wilmowski, who travels around the world with his father and his friends, working as hunters of "exotic" animals for zoos, was extremely popular. As Małgorzata Żółkoś remarks in her analysis of the Szklarski novels, the motive of catching animals on other continents to bring them to Europe is in itself indicative of a colonial conquest, since possessing a collection of exotic animals is a manifestation of power and authority (348-349). Although the novels have a didactic and informative aspect, they are written from a Eurocentric perspective; furthermore, since the action of the novel takes place in times of partitions of Poland, the protagonists manifest their patriotism or nostalgia after the lost homeland in many occasions (Żółkoś 358). The fact that the novels were written in the communist period is reflected only in a subtle way: like in nonfictional texts of that era, in particular reportage, there is an additional stress on rationality (and rejection of religion), and depreciation of tradition, points out Żółkoś (359).

Nevertheless, the advent of communist regime and, consequently, a different way of describing the world, did not mean that Orientalism vanished. On the contrary, many Orientalist tropes were present in post-war texts, often alongside socialist propaganda. While the reporters who visited India were aware that a new language to describe India is required, and wanted to avoid the long-lived clichés, elements of Orientalist, or even colonial discourse can still be found in their texts. First of all, they often present India as part of the Orient, "the Great East" (Putrament, *Cztery...* 93)<sup>40</sup>. As a result, India becomes just one element of a larger,

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<sup>40</sup> Putrament uses the Polish term "wielki Wschód" (93).

imagined area, which used to be called “the Orient”, but the reporters refer to it as the “Third World”. They compare India sometimes to Africa, sometimes to the Middle East, alluding to the regions associated with the imagined Orient, in particular in the metaphorical level. And thus, they mention “Tuaregs on the desert” (Ros 240), people looking like “Ali Baba and his forty thieves” (Ros 236), a “journey on a magical carpet . . . to a land from the tales of One Thousand and One Nights”<sup>41</sup> (Koehler 38-39), or a castle looking exactly like the one from “One Thousand and One Nights” (Putrament, *Cztery*... 114). When Giełżyński becomes confused about the complexities of the caste system, he calls it an “Abracadabra” (61). A common point of reference is Henryk Sienkiewicz’s novel, *W pustyni i w puszczy* [*In Desert and Wilderness*] (1912), which till today shapes the image of colonial Africa in the minds of Poles. Koehler, when describing a Pakistani’s appearance, finds that the man “looks like he has just stepped out from the pages of *In Desert and Wilderness*” (26)<sup>42</sup>. The characteristics that the colonial, Eurocentric discourse would attribute to the “fascinating”, yet “backward” countries of the Orient become in a way transferred to the notion of the “Third World”. This term appears as more neutral and more acceptable in the post-war, and postcolonial, reality – it is, however, loaded with meaning. Just like the notion of “the Orient”, the term “Third World” lumps together a variety of cultures, religions and customs, and attributes them a certain “otherness”, “exoticism”, but also labels them as “backward” and “underdeveloped”. It is very well illustrated in the way the Polish reporters depict India. In their texts, the motif of the “Oriental fairy-tale” often accompanies the one of “Oriental luxury”, which appears also in the passages where the reporters describe the riches of the maharajas, the lavish palaces or forts, the treasures that the Indian aristocrats possess, as well as in the purported love for jewels among Indian upper classes (Ros 116, 279; Putrament, *Cztery*... 114; Górnicki 117, 215; Chociłowski 87-88). Furthermore, many things appear to the reporters as exotic: whether it is landscape, nature, colours, architecture, decorations, or customs. Putrament, for instance, when visiting Haridwar, says: “[w]e walk, we stare, and we peer at the strange, exotic life” (*Cztery*... 146). India appears to the reporters as a place full of oddities, strange customs, bizarre behaviours and abnormalities. The choice of topics in their reportages confirms this bias: although in many accounts, large sections are devoted to Indian industrialisation, politics, and modernisation, issues like cow worship, the existence of sadhus – Hindu renouncers, belief in astrology and “mysteries” of traditional medicine are all very prominent. Discussions on Indian

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<sup>41</sup> “wycieczki odbytej na zaczarowanym dywanie . . . do krainy baśni z tysiąca i jednej nocy” (Koehler 38-39).

<sup>42</sup> “Wygląda tak, jakby przed chwilą wyszedł z kart ‘W pustyni i w puszczy’.” (Koehler 26).

rulers are often marked with the cliché of “Oriental despotism”. Similarly, the reporters cannot escape from Orientalist prejudices in their descriptions of landscape, cities, and people. India for them is a land of chaos and disorganisation, the cities are often described as “a labyrinth”, and people are emotional and rather than rational. Even in their descriptions of India’s modernisation, they do not escape the Orientalist pattern of imposing European knowledge on the Oriental – in this case, Indian – Other. These issues will be explored further in this dissertation, and various case studies will be presented in chapters four and five. Furthermore, while these Orientalist patterns can be observed in texts on different parts of the imagined Orient<sup>43</sup>, the Western way of describing India has its particular characteristics. In the following section, the Orientalist discourse on India is described in more detailed manner.

#### **4. Orientalising India**

From Antiquity, India was of interest to the Europeans, and as a result, there exists a large number of writings, accounts, tales, studies, essays and films about India. There are different accounts on how India was (and is) viewed by Europeans, in philosophical terms (Halbfass 1988), in journalistic terms (Miller 2014), or in terms of popular culture (Mehta 1979). According to Amartya Sen, these various descriptions of India by travellers, visitors and colonial administrators can be divided in three main categories: exoticist, magisterial and curatorial (141). The first category comprises of works by those who were fascinated by India, particularly by Indian spirituality, but also culture, landscapes, and people. Among those who exoticised India, Sen lists the early Greeks – Megasthenes, Strabo or Apollonius of Tyana, the German thinkers of the Romantic period – the Schlegel brothers, Schelling and Herder, as well as more contemporary fascinations with India of poets (Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats or the Polish poet Jan Kasprowicz) through Tagore, or The Beatles’ interest in Hindu spirituality through Maharishi (151-153). The second category is related to the exercise of imperial power, and thus it groups approaches that are marked with a sense of “superiority and guardianhood” (Sen 142). These were mostly writings by British governors and scientists, who wanted to understand India not only out of curiosity or fascination with the exotic, but also in order to rule it better. Among them is the 1817 classic of James Mill, *The History of British India*, as well as the infamous *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) by Thomas Macaulay or Katherine Mayo’s *Mother India* (1927). Finally, the third category – the curatorial one – applies to

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<sup>43</sup> For instance, Ros’ observations from Egypt, on the way to India, in the same travel account, analysed here.

writings that intend to note, classify and exhibit various aspects of India's culture (Sen 142). Sen includes texts by Arab and Chinese scholars, as well as those by Jesuits, like Roberto Nobili, or British scholars, like William Jones (145). Although the primary motivation of these writings might be intellectual curiosity, it is difficult to consider them as disconnected from their historical and political context. Moreover, all three of these categories enhanced an image of India as radically different from Europe – exotic, mystical, and irrational – clouding India's outstanding achievements in the field of the rational: mathematics, logic, medicine, linguistics of epistemology, underlines Sen (155). All these three aspects, exoticism, mastery, and scientific categorisation, are part of a general perception of all countries of the so-called East, or "the Orient".

What shaped the European perception of India was, on the one hand, the Orientalist discourse, enabled in large part and promoted by colonialism, and the ideas of the European Enlightenment. As Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer explain in their introduction to the volume *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, it is the convergence of Oriental and Enlightenment discourse that facilitated the coalescing of important notions of modernity, citizenship and rationality (7). In consequence, colonial attempts at building a sound, scientific knowledge of India, at all sorts of classifications and categorisations, stand in contrast with what the Europeans perceived as irrational or illogical elements in Indian culture, in particular religious beliefs and traditions that could not be enclosed into numbers.

Sara Suleri, in her book on *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992), comments on texts written by colonial politicians (Edmund Burke on Warren Hastings), writers (novels by Kipling and Forster), as well as – in more recent years – Indians living abroad (Naipaul, Rushdie). Thus, India functions in the early European discourse as a space "beyond the scope of cartography" (26), and as such is inviting for both plunder and adventure. Burke, to describe India in late 18<sup>th</sup> century, uses the discourse of difficulty, unknowability, but also aestheticises India, placing it as the "leading moral example of the sublime" (27), which in turn becomes the "uncatalogued horror of the colonial sublime" (30). In other words, the more Europeans try to understand India, the more data is available to them, the more facts and figures turn into hieroglyphs, that have no significance except of showing the coloniser's inability to grasp the object of their exploration, due to inadequate cultural and interpretative tools (31).

Furthermore, in the colonial discourse, the colonisers' youthfulness is contrasted with the alleged slowness and lassitude of ancient Indian culture (33). However, this antiquity does not command respect, because to the British it "represents a malevolent entropy" (33). Burke's speech was actually an attempt to impeach Warren Hastings, former governor of Bengal, for

abuses of power, and constituted, according to Suleri, one of the first examples of colonial guilt (51). Nevertheless, the scholar points out the fallacy in Burke's attack on Hastings, as it came from an "urge to locate colonial responsibility in a single figure" (66). That colonial guilt appears in the analyses of other texts, through which Suleri demonstrates the complexity of the coloniser/colonised relationship that cannot be reduced only to binary oppositions. For instance, while the English exercise their domination over Indians, the position of English women in India remains peripheral: although they are implicated in the structures of colonialism, they also become victims of confinement, even more pronounced than the one of their Indian counterparts (76). As a result, English women resort to the picturesque: through romanticised visions of the colony, they attempt at transforming the dynamic of the cultural encounter into the stillness of a picture (76). The gendered character of colonial relationship is also explored in Suleri's analysis of Forster's *Passage to India* and Kipling's *Kim*. Indeed, other scholars, too, underlined the fact that colonial discourse was a masculinised one, and the conquest of a different territory is often tainted with sexual connotations (see works by Reina Lewis or Meyda Yeğenoğlu in which Said's Orientalism is read through a feminist lens).

Said's understanding of Orientalism was also an inspiration to the works of Ronald Inden, who elaborated on Orientalism in a specifically Indian context. In the article "Orientalist Constructions of India", and in his 1990 book, *Imagining India*, Inden focuses on Western Indological discourse on India. He explores elements of Indian culture central to the strategy of Othering: the notion of castes, the Indian mind, the rural populations of India, or the concept of divine kingship. He remarks that according to the Indological discourse, "the essence of Indian civilization is just the opposite of the West's" (402). The organising principle of this civilisation is a religious one, according to Indology, and its main idea, or Agent, is Caste. Thus, says Inden, the Indological discourse dismissed any forms of Indian political institutions, and declared that Indian thought is "inherently symbolical and mythical rather than rational and logical" (403). What is more, the Orientalist discourse has produced in India the very Orient that was central as a construct to this discourse: Inden gives as an example the non-violence movement by Gandhi, which subscribed very well to the Western vision of Hindu character as averse to war and violence, or even cowardly (408). He emphasises how have the ideas of "Oriental despotism" and "Asiatic mode of production" dominated nearly all discussions on India's political institutions and economy. Many Indologists, as the scholar explains, saw India as governed by principles of Hinduism, but some were particularly attracted to a romantic vision of India as a venue for spirituality and mysticism. Those romantics would perceive India as a "living museum" where one can experience various forms of "ultimate



experiences”, yogic practices and “far-out psychic phenomena” (Inden 436). Even today, these visions of India persist, albeit in a changed form. After the Second World War, United States replaced the European colonial empires as the dominant power. “The oppositions of East and West, Traditional and Modern, Civilized and Primitive have been transformed and have reappeared as the idea of the ‘three worlds’”, says Inden, who stresses the deeply hierarchical character of this division. Referring to Carl Pletsch’s study on the three-worlds idea, Inden explains what each of the three areas represents in popular imagination:

Nations of the First World are the most 'developed' or 'advanced' because they are shaped in accord with scientific knowledge of nature; those of the Second World are, although developed, held back by their distorting Socialist ideology; the Third World, where religion and superstition still run rife, are 'underdeveloped' or 'developing'. (438)

Another popular association when Westerners think of India is the idea of caste. Many academic works on India, for instance the one by A. L. Basham, perceive caste as a more important agent than the kingship, or state. However, in the course of his research, Inden discovered a completely different dynamic: castes were not the cause of the collapse of kingship, they were its effect (440). That is why, the scholar urges Indologists to stop treating caste as a substantialised agent, and give up on the notions of “essence” of a civilisation. Instead, a scholar should assume that “all humans are constrained by the same indeterminate reality” and that “the societies of the world are not more or less 'correct' images of a single reality but are themselves differing realities, constructed again and again in relation to those around them, by human thought and action” (446). It is a particularly poignant observation, as it puts in question the strategy of Othering commonly used by Westerners.

What complicates the one-dimensional vision of colonial masters versus colonised indigenous population is, in Breckenridge and van der Veer’s opinion, the role of Indian elites, mostly Brahmans, as colonial knowledge was in large part formed on the basis of what they chose to present as Indian tradition and beliefs (10). Consequently, other, subaltern voices and traditions were silenced, as Guha and Spivak argue. According to Breckenridge and van der Veer, “the point is that there is neither a monolithic imperial project nor a monolithic subaltern reaction, but rather that there are different historical trajectories of contest and change with lags and disjunctures along the way” (10). Nevertheless, it is difficult to deny that the asymmetry of power between the English and their colonial subjects led to the strengthening of a binary opposition between British self and Indian other. Thus, says Gyan Prakash, “both the self and the other, the rational and materialist British and the emotional and spiritual Indian, appeared as autonomous, ontological, and essential entities” (385). This complicated legacy of

Orientalism, both as a colonial discourse and practice, survive long into the postcolonial era, both in the minds of Westerners and in the minds of Indians themselves (Breckenridge and van der Veer 11). Indeed, “Orientalism without colonialism is a headless theoretical beast”, which is harder to identify and eradicate because “it has become internalized in the practices of the postcolonial state, the theories of the postcolonial intelligentsia, and the political action of postcolonial mobs”, the scholars affirm (11). Orientalism without colonialism is not only a phenomenon of the postcolonial world: it is enough to give the example of German Orientalists, whose knowledge did not serve a colonial conquest of India by Germany, but did contribute to the European Orientalism in various forms. Moreover, intellectuals, scientists, writers, linguists from many European countries would engage in describing and explaining India, its culture, languages (in particular Sanskrit), sometimes even without setting foot on the subcontinent, in this way affirming the asymmetrical relation of Europe with India and contributing to the Orientalist knowledge.

## **5. Polish knowledge of India**

Polish knowledge of India was partly mediated through Western sources, but it also had its own, direct sources, due to the accounts of travellers, writers, and scholars. Polish encounters with India were by and large conditioned by historical circumstances. Given that the age of the first contacts between India and Europe coincides with the time when the position of the Polish Kingdom was becoming weak, most Polish contacts with India took place in 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Poland was partitioned. This fact is significant, because Poles visiting India at that time, in the period of British colonisation, were victims of imperialism themselves. That did not mean that they would be immune to the Orientalist discourse, and be free of colonial prejudices, but it provided them with an additional insight into the workings of an imperial power. Even those visitors who arrived to India in the period between the First and Second World War, when Poland was an independent Second Republic, having the recollection of recent subjugation, were eager to support India’s freedom movement.

### **Early Explorers**

The Polish encounters with India begin at the time of European sailing expeditions of 15<sup>th</sup> century. Probably the first Pole in India was Gaspar da Gama – a Jew from Poznań, who left the city with his parents and moved to the Middle East (some sources mention Jerusalem, some Alexandria), became a merchant and eventually ended up in the service of the royal court

in Goa. Other versions of the story say that on the way to Jerusalem, he was captured and sold as a slave to an Indian ruler<sup>44</sup>. When Vasco da Gama reached India, an elderly, European-looking man approached his ship offering his help, but the Portuguese, fearing that he is a Goan spy, seized him and tortured him. Supposedly, this is when he confessed that he came originally from the Kingdom of Poland<sup>45</sup>. He remained with the Portuguese, converted to Christianity, adopted the name of his patron, Vasco da Gama, and accompanied the sailor on his other journeys. According to Jerzy Ros, “[h]e [Gaspar da Gama] was the first informer of the Portuguese on India and he played an important role in the conquest of that country and in disseminating credible information about it in Europe” (59)<sup>46</sup>.

The second Polish visitor to India, as historical records show, was Erazm Kretkowski, a nobleman educated at the university of Padua, Italy. He was the envoy of the Polish king Sigismund II Augustus<sup>47</sup> to the court of the Suleiman the Magnificent, he also sailed to India in mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, although little is known about this journey<sup>48</sup>. Another Pole who visited India, was, like Gaspar da Gama, a sailor in the Portuguese fleet. His name was Krzysztof Pawłowski, and he is the author of the first Polish written account from India, a letter (in French) that he sent to his friends in Krakow. In the letter, Pawłowski describes the long journey and the arrival to India, including some remarks on the customs of Indian people and their appearance. In 17<sup>th</sup> century, a number of Polish Catholic missionaries visited India, in particular the Jesuits who mostly visited Goa. In 18<sup>th</sup> century, Poles that visited India were mostly soldiers in the service of the colonial armies – Michał Dzierżanowski (serving temporarily in French or English troops in India)<sup>49</sup>, Teodor Anzelm Dzwonkowski (going to India with the Dutch fleet)<sup>50</sup> and Maksymilian Wikliński (an officer of the French colonial troops in India)<sup>51</sup>. According to Krzysztof Podemski, these early travellers had some traits in

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<sup>44</sup> Different versions of the story of Gaspar da Gama can be found in Polish and English sources: see Nawrot; Meixner; Radojewski; Jewish Virtual Library.

<sup>45</sup> According to one of the reporters, whose works are analysed here, the man who was later known as Gaspar da Gama, was a courtier of the king of Bijapur (in Karnataka), and has been in India for thirty years before the arrival of the Portuguese (Ros 58-59).

<sup>46</sup> “Był on pierwszym informatorem Portugalczyków o Indiach i odegrał poważną rolę w podbiciu tego kraju oraz rozpowszechnieniu o nim wiarygodnych informacji w ówczesnej Europie.” (Ros 59)

<sup>47</sup> Sigismund II Augustus reigned over the Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania in years 1548-1572.

<sup>48</sup> The proof that Kretkowski visited India is the epitaph in Latin, still visible on his gravestone in Padua where he was buried, saying that he was seen by various rivers, among them the “rapidus Ganges” – rapid Ganges river. The author of the epitaph was Jan Kochanowski, a famous Polish poet of the Renaissance, himself an alumnus of Padua university.

<sup>49</sup> More information on Dzierżanowski can be found in Konopczyński (Polish Biographical Dictionary Online).

<sup>50</sup> Dzwonkowski’s travels are documented in the memoirs he wrote for his daughter Józefa, republished in 1985.

<sup>51</sup> Wikliński’s travel accounts, originally written in French, were recently published in a bilingual, French and Polish version (see bibliography).

common: they would often travel for years, not necessarily ever returning to their homeland, they visited various states and regions of the world, and they were all in a certain form of service – in a foreign fleet, merchant or military, or in the church (216). In his sociological study, Podemski analysed selected accounts from this period, observing that these early travellers had a rather straightforward perception of India, based on their own observations:

Thus, I call the gaze of these first travellers a commonsensical one, as these travellers, in comparison to travellers of later epochs, perceive India pretty much in the way they see it. And they see very little, because they know very little. They are completely unaware of the civilizational otherness, because they do not know anything about the culture and history of India. They do not have any earlier knowledge at their disposal, because such knowledge was almost inexistent, except of the very general “Columbus’ myth” [about the existence of “East Indies” – India, and “West Indies” – America]. (217)<sup>52</sup>

Podemski adds that not only there was little knowledge on India, but also the differences between Europe and India at the time were not very striking – unlike in 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Westerners considered a travel to India almost as a journey in time (217). These observations confirm the crucial importance of previous knowledge in the perception of a foreign land. Knowledge, in Michel Foucault’s understanding, is a form of power, as it provides a framework into which all new facts will be incorporated and interpreted according to the discourse that this knowledge produces. The Early Modern traveller’s lack of knowledge about India resulted in more straightforward travel accounts, which were probably less biased than the ones of later travellers. Furthermore, it is curious that the Polish military officers express admiration and recognition of the other culture and they often identify more with the Indian population, criticising the colonial armies that they actually serve (Podemski 224). Clearly, Poles who at the time are themselves are subjugated by large empires, are able to understand their Indian counterparts to some degree. This motif of shared suffering returns in various nineteenth-century accounts, and even in reportages from the communist era. Koehler recalls the meeting with an Indian student who knew very well where Poland was.

In his eyes, we see an honest, almost affectionate friendliness.

‘Poland – says the young student – naturally, I know [it]. You were also captive [occupied]...’

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<sup>52</sup> “Spojrzenie pierwszych podróżników nazywam zatem spojrzeniem zdroworozsądkowym, gdyż ci podróżnicy w porównaniu z podróżnikami z późniejszych okresów odbierają Indie znacznie bardziej tak, jak je widzą. A widzą niewiele, bo niewiele wiedzą. Są zupełnie nieświadomi odmienności cywilizacyjnej, bo nie wiedzą nic o kulturze i historii Indii. Nie dysponują żadną wcześniejszą wiedzą, bo wiedza taka nie istniała, jeżeli nie liczyć owego bardzo ogólnego mitu “kolumbijskiego”.”(Podemski 217)

This tiny word 'also' explains everything. It constitutes a more precious and lasting bond from the ties of blood, community, tradition or belief. It appears that Poland is very close..." (Koehler 91-92)<sup>53</sup>

Witold Koehler and his companions are moved by the fact that the young Indian knows of Poland and of its history, and that they can relate to the fact of being occupied or dominated by other countries. Of course, Koehler is cautious not to specify which occupation does he, or the student, have in mind – the recent Nazi one, or the ones from the Partitions' era. Nevertheless, a feeling of solidarity between Poles and Indians, based on a common experience of imperialist domination, is a recurrent trend in the story of Polish-Indian relations.

### **Orientalists, Experts and Romantics**

For Europeans, 19<sup>th</sup> century was the age of the Grand Tour, of Romantic self-discovery and of the institutionalisation of Orientalist and Indologist studies, and, at the same time, the peak of colonial domination over large parts of the world. While Western European states flourished, Poland, from a rich regional power in previous centuries, by mid-18<sup>th</sup> century became a weak, internally conflicted entity and eventually was divided between its neighbours in a series of partitions that culminated in 1795, when the entire Polish territory was engulfed by the other empires. Although the Polish state ceased to exist, the number of Poles visiting India increased. They were people of various professions: scientists, experts, Orientalists, artists and also simply tourists (for instance, the nobleman Benedykt Henryk Tyszkiewicz, amateur photographer<sup>54</sup>). Krzysztof Podemski names a few of those travellers: banker Władysław Małachowski, seeking possibilities of exporting zinc to India, engineer Tadeusz Bartmański, who worked at the construction of rail tracks in East India, as well as scientists – zoologist Stanisław Rembieliński, ornithologist Roman Ujejski, medical doctor Władysław Olechnowicz, ethnographer Adam Sierakowski, art historian Karol Lanckoroński, as well as the Pope's delegate, archbishop Władysław Michał Zalewski, polyglot, historian and botanist, who stayed in India for thirty years (186). These experts and scientists are to some extent tourists, who describe monuments, important sites, have guides who explain the local culture

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<sup>53</sup>“W żrenicach czytamy szczerą, niemal serdeczną życzliwość. ‘Polska – powiada młodziutki student – naturalnie, że wiem. Byliście także w niewoli...’ To małeńkie słówko ‘także’ wyjaśnia wszystko. Stanowi ono więź cenniejszą i trwalszą od braterstwa krwi, wspólnoty, tradycji lub wierzeń. Okazuje się, że Polska leży blisko...” (Koehler 91-92)

<sup>54</sup> Some of his photos can be found at the French Musée Nicéphore Niepce in Chalon-sur-Saône, they were also presented at an exhibition in Lithuania. See: Snitkuvienė.

to them. But – unlike many European scholars of the time, who are only armchair travellers – they undertake the journey to India in order to make first hand observations.

This is also the goal of Romantic travellers, who consider a journey to a far-away place as an opportunity to know more about the world, to educate themselves and gather new experiences. Piotr Kłodkowski remarks on India's appeal to Poles in that period:

What strongly attracted Polish 19<sup>th</sup> century poets, philosophers, the well-educated members of the intelligentsia and the academic community to "the European discovery of India" was a spiritual message of classical Hinduism and Buddhism. With Max Mueller's translations of the most sophisticated Sanskrit works, Schopenhauer's philosophical zeal for the Upanishads, Goethe's admiration for Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, publications by August Schlegel, Alfred de Vigny or Paul Deussen and the Buddhist treatises rendered into English by the Pali Text Society, the metaphysical richness of India became a true source of inspiration for Poles who yearned for freedom of their own country and reflected upon the glorious past and spiritual dimensions of the present. (312)

Indeed, there are various Indian tropes in Polish literature of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many intellectuals would discover Indian spirituality, literature, and yoga, for instance poets Antoni Lange (1862-1929), Jan Kasprówicz (1860-1926), Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer (1865-1940), Leopold Staff (1878-1957), and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885-1939), as well as the composer Witold Lutosławski (1863-1954), who was one of the pioneers of yoga in Poland. According to Piotr Kłodkowski, the composer studied treatises of Vivekananda and Yogi Ramacharaka, and based on them, he created his own, philosophical version of yoga (313).

Nevertheless, none of the major Polish writers visited India themselves, relying on secondary sources and accounts of travellers. A good example of such an account of Romantic travels is that of count Karol Lanckoroński, art historian and archaeologist, who visited India in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of his world tour entitled *Naokoło Ziemi 1888–1889. Wrażenia i poglądy* [*Around the Globe, 1888-1889. Impressions and views*]<sup>55</sup>. Karol Lanckoroński was the first traveller that had a pronounced self-awareness of his journey, remarking on space, time, modes of travelling, as well as on experiencing otherness and liminality of the traveller's experience (Podemski 234-235).

Apart from direct Polish-Indian encounters through travel, and indirect ones through travelogues, literature, and arts, India became known to Poles through academic research, notably through Orientalist and, more specifically, Indologist studies, increasingly popular in

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<sup>55</sup> Karol Lanckoroński, *Naokoło Ziemi 1888–1889. Wrażenia i poglądy*, Kraków 1893, was first published in German in 1890 and then in Polish in 1893. For more information, see the Lanckoroński Foundation website.

19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In fact, already in 1611 a publication appeared, called *Wonderful Verses from the Indian Language* (the original title: *Cudowne wiersze z indyjskiego języka*); it was in fact an adaptation of Bhagavadgita, translated into Latin by an Italian Jesuit priest, Francisco Benci), and then into Polish by a priest, Stanisław Grochowski (Sudyka 89). Actual studies of Indian culture and language began in nineteenth century. In the first few decades, there were three main centres of study where some research on India was conducted: they were Warsaw, Pulawy and Vilnius (Milewska 127). In 1816, Walenty Skorochoł Majewski printed a Sanskrit Grammar, with excerpts from Ramayana – they were later used by the poet Ignacy Kołakowski, who rewrote them in verse; another famous translation of the Ramayana was done by well-known poet Teofil Lenartowicz in 1869 (Sudyka 89). The Jagiellonian University in Krakow was the first to offer a full, university-level course in Sanskrit, and established a separate Sanskrit chair in 1893 (Milewska 127). Also, many young people from the territories of the partitioned Poland studied at the academic centres of the West – Paris, Oxford, Rome – and in the capitals of the empires that they now belonged to: Vienna, Berlin, or St. Petersburg. They were thus well-aware of academic discussions of French and German Orientalists, as well as of the Russian school of Orientalism, which was equally vibrant<sup>56</sup>. This was, for instance, the case of the linguist Jan Hanusz (1858-1887), who first studied Slavic languages in Krakow and Leipzig, then Sanskrit in Berlin and Vienna, and continued his linguistic research in Paris. It was also the case of the author of the first handbook for learning Sanskrit, still used by students today, Andrzej Gawroński (1885-1927). He studied in Lviv and Leipzig, then became a professor at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, specialising in linguistics as well as well as Sanskrit drama and history of Ancient India<sup>57</sup>.

Equally fascinating is the story of Helena Willman-Grabowska (1870-1957), a linguist and an Indologist, the first woman to become a professor at the Jagiellonian University. She studied literature and Sanskrit in Berne and Lausanne, and then moved to Paris, where she taught Sanskrit and Pali at the Sorbonne. When Poland regained independence after the First World War, Willman-Grabowska decided to return to her homeland and became Head of Sanskrit and Indian Philology Centre at the Jagiellonian University. She was a member of Société Asiatique and other associations of Orientalists and travelled around Europe for conferences, talks and lectures. She also made a journey to India in 1930s, visiting Calcutta and Ceylon. During the Second World War, she was arrested by the Nazis together with other

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<sup>56</sup> For more information on Russian Orientalism, see Schimmelpenninck van der Oye.

<sup>57</sup> An interesting article on Gawroński, by Janusz Fedirko, “Fenomenalny multilingwista. Profesor Andrzej Gawroński (1885-1927)” can be found in the Jagiellonian University magazine.

professors of the Jagiellonian University, but then let go – she survived the war and returned to teaching, but the communist authorities soon removed her and deprived her of pension. She was allowed to return to her position of a professor in 1957, but she died that same year<sup>58</sup>.

Indology flourished at the universities of Lvov and Krakow, but thanks to, among other, Stanisław Schayer (1899-1941), in early 20<sup>th</sup> century it developed also in Warsaw. In 1932, this Indologist, linguist, and philosopher founded the Institute of Oriental Studies and became its director. Not only he translated many Sanskrit and Bengali works into Polish, for instance *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa and poems by Tagore, but also he authored the first Polish study on the history of Indian literature, as well as studies on Indian philosophy<sup>59</sup>. Thus, academic study of India was becoming increasingly more widespread, and generated also popular interest in the Subcontinent: in early twentieth century, a number of Poles travelled to India and recorded their impressions in writing.

### **Before the Second World War – Progressives and Conservatives**

A number of Polish visitors came to India in the first few decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among them were first woman travellers, countess Ewa Dzieduszycka (1879-1968), actress Jadwiga Toeplitz-Mrozowska (1880-1966), writer and activist Stanisław Bełza (1849-1929), journalist and lawyer Jan Hupka (1866-1952), as well as writer and reporter Ferdynand Goetel (1890-1960). All these travellers were highly educated members of intelligentsia or nobility, relatively wealthy and able to travel through India using all the comforts available to Europeans at the time. In her account, *India and Himalaya: Impressions from a Journey*<sup>60</sup>, Ewa Dzieduszycka praises the luxury of British trains and hotels, although her curiosity makes her observe various aspects of Indian life. She covers large distances and experiences India's diversity: in Bombay, she is hosted by a wealthy Parsi, then admires the beauty of Jaipur and is amazed by the Taj Mahal, then visits Delhi and Benares, to finally reach the foothills of the Himalayas in Darjeeling. She is interested in the culture and history of India (and is the first traveller to mention Ramayana and Mahabharata), but she also tries to understand the contemporary India (Polskie Radio Dwójka). Krzysztof Podemski observes that Dzieduszycka represents democratic-liberal values of the time, remarking on the patriarchal oppression of

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<sup>58</sup> There are several works on Helena Willman-Grabowska, see for instance: Pobożniak; Czekalska; Czekalska & Kuczkiewicz-Fraś.

<sup>59</sup> See in particular his book *O filozofowaniu Hindusów* [*On Indian philosophy*], edited and republished in 1988. See also: Mejor.

<sup>60</sup> Ewa Dzieduszycka. *Indye i Himalaje: Wrażenia z podróży* [*India and the Himalayas: Impressions from the Journey*] (1912).



women and commenting ironically on the injustice of the caste system; she is also sensitive to poverty and hunger (247-248). Jadwiga Toeplitz-Mrozowska, too, was open to diversity and cultural difference (Badowski). Toeplitz-Mrozowska was a well-educated, independent, somewhat adventurous woman, who travelled extensively, and she visited India a few times in the interwar period<sup>61</sup>. She travels on her own, ventures to places less visited by tourists, like Kashmir, she goes hunting, and she boldly admits to her erotic fascinations. She is anticolonial in her views and supports the Indian independence movement. Eventually, her encounter with India becomes transformative: she questions her own European identity and feels that she should engage in spiritual quest in India (Podemski 255). Indeed, she finally abandons acting to do research on Central Asia (that she often travelled to as well) and Tibetan Lamaism. She published several accounts from her various journeys in Italian (she resided in Italy after marrying Józef Toeplitz, director of Banca Commerciale Italiana), but her memoir in Polish, containing the account of her visits to India, appeared only in 1963<sup>62</sup>. Toeplitz-Mrozowska was not only a tourist, relating the sites visited during her journey, but she also talked about Indian society, politics and economy.

While the two female travellers mentioned above were both progressive, democratically-minded women, their male counterparts often represented a more conservative outlook. Stanisław Bełza was clearly an Anglophile, praising colonialism and seeing only positive effects of the British presence in India. In his book, *Obrazy i obrazki Indjii [Large and Small Images of India]* (1912), he praises the British for their modernisation of India: the lavish architecture of Bombay (showing that the English do their best to impress Indians (8-9), the train network, a “colossal” thing for India (114), as well as systems of irrigation (116). He also emphasises how the English improved the situation of women, health, education and legal system; “the suppressed, plundered and ignorant population – was uplifted, protected and enlightened” (118)<sup>63</sup>. India appears to Bełza as a country full of “curiosities” (*osobliwości*) (17), but also full of colours (57). He constantly underlines the discomforts related mostly to the Indian climate: the heat, the dust, the dirt, the noise, and the crowds (29, 34). Sun is according to Bełza, one of the plagues of India (74). Also, Hindu religious rituals and customs are for him a source of disgust and shock (45), and he deplores the caste system (130) and the child marriage (135). Coming from the part of Poland partitioned by Prussia, he compares the

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<sup>61</sup> More biographical information on Toeplitz-Mrozowska can be found in Michalik (Polish Biographical Dictionary Online).

<sup>62</sup> It was called *Słoneczne życie [Sunny Life]*.

<sup>63</sup> “Ludność deptaną, grabioną, ciemną, - podniesiono, osłonięto i oświecono” (118).

German and the British rule, finding the former oppressive, and the latter reasonable (167-168). Bełza, as a Polish patriot and social activist in the region of Silesia, is also rather polonocentric – he compares what he observes with his native Poland and makes references to romantic poets, such as Adam Mickiewicz. Unlike Dzieduszycka or Toeplitz-Mrozowska, he does not engage much with Indians, except of his guides, and he is not personally affected by Indian spirituality or culture, retaining an outsider's gaze. A similarly conservative outlook can be found, according to Podemski, in the travel account of Jan Hupka. Clearly, although early twentieth-century Polish travellers to India were similar in their background, education and social status, they greatly differed in their views, outlook on the world, and approach to India and its inhabitants.

### **An Interwar Reporter in India**

Another traveller, visiting India in the early 1930s, was Ferdynand Goetel, author of what can be labelled as the first Polish reportage from India. An excerpt of his account is included in the Anthology of Polish reportage of 20<sup>th</sup> century, edited by Mariusz Szczygieł. Szczygieł recalls Goetel's words: "A writer travels for all those that are not going [with him]"<sup>64</sup>, and his surprise at the fact that there are few sources on India in Polish, so his readers have little knowledge of the Subcontinent. In fact, Goetel's journey to India was not his first visit to that part of the world: although he was originally from Galicia (the Austria-occupied part of Poland), the outbreak of the First World War found him in Warsaw. He was deported by the Russians to Tashkent and after the Bolshevik revolution was forcibly incorporated into the Red Army. He escaped from there and in 1921 went back to Poland through Iran, India, and Britain<sup>65</sup>. In the Interwar, Goetel pursued a journalistic career, in *Kurier Poranny* and *Naokoło Świata*, he was also president of Polish PEN Club (1926-1933), and of the Trade Union of Polish Writers (1933-1939). His journey to India took place in 1930-1931 and lasted about three months. His account is written less from a tourist's perspective, and more from a journalist's one: Goetel is interested more in political, social, and cultural issues, than in visiting sights and indulging his own pleasure. Once in India, he meets many representatives of the country's elite, he attends a rally of the Indian National Congress, he is fascinated by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. But he does not idealise India. Like Dzieduszycka, Goetel is a democrat and cannot accept the social stratification of India and the discrimination

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<sup>64</sup> "Pisarz odbywa tę podróż za wszystkich, którzy nie jadą".

<sup>65</sup> See: Krzyzanowski.

of women. He also realises that he will always be an outsider, treated as a foreigner due to the colour of his skin – he feels that particularly strongly at a rally with Gandhi, where Indian participants stare at him with distrust, worried that he might be an English spy<sup>66</sup> (Szczygieł, *100/XX*. 1: 646). Similar to post-war reporters, Goetel looks for Polish traces in India. By that time, there was already a small Polish diaspora, which included those who, escaping Russia after the First World War, stopped in India, but also those who chose India to be their second homeland.

### **Poles “Adopted” by India**

Twentieth century, with its two wars, was a time when the world began to seem smaller, and as a result, India and Poland moved closer to one another. It happened by the way of positive events, such as more opportunities to travel overseas, further development of Indian studies and strengthened attraction to Indian philosophy, spirituality, and arts, but also through the dramatic events of the Second World War, when India came to Polish rescue in various ways. In the first decades of twentieth century, several Poles became permanent residents of India: they were priests and missionaries, but also those, who wanted to explore Indian culture and spirituality. Among them was probably the most exceptional figure in Polish-Indian relations, Wanda Dynowska (1888-1971). From early age, she would learn languages, and she continued her education at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, as well as at the universities of Lausanne and Paris. She became interested in theosophy and after a meeting with Annie Besant in Paris, she was entrusted with the creation of the Polish Theosophic Society. She returned to Poland and engaged in popularisation of theosophy, in translation and publishing texts on spiritual matters, and in meetings with likeminded people across Europe.

In 1935, Dynowska left for India to spend some time at the ashram of Sri Ramana Maharishi. There, she met another Pole, Maurycy Frydman (1901-1977), who also explored Hindu spirituality and became known as Swami Bharatananda. Both Frydman and Dynowska became disciples of Mahatma Gandhi and supported the Indian independence movement. Dynowska, known in India as Umadevi – or Luminous Soul, became close to Gandhi and the Congress, helping organise rallies, made speeches and attended meetings with various organisations. She continued her spiritual quest, learned yoga and meditation. Together with Frydman, in 1944 Dynowska founded a Polish-Indian Library in Bombay, and herself

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<sup>66</sup> Jerzy Ros, another protagonist of this study, finds himself in a similar situation just a couple of decades later, when he is rejected by the participants of a rally of Indian communists.

translated many texts from Sanskrit to Polish, including the Bhagavad Gita. Wanting to popularise Indian philosophy and culture in Poland, she also translated various poems, as well as texts by Krishnamurti, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and by Ramana Maharishi. She also translated Polish texts into Hindi, in an attempt to share Polish culture with Indians<sup>67</sup>.

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, Poland, an ally of Great Britain, and India, British colony, found themselves on the same side of the barricade, with Polish and Indian soldiers fighting alongside against the Nazis. Poles fondly remember Mahatma Gandhi's words of support for Poland (Makles). Furthermore, India gave shelter to Poles evacuated from various camps around the Soviet Union<sup>68</sup>. An Indian maharaja, Jam Saheb Digvijaysinhji, ruler of the Nawanagar princely state (in Gujarat)<sup>69</sup>, offered to host a large group of Polish children that were transported from Soviet Union after losing their parents in the war or in exile to gulags and kolkhozes in Siberia and other locations in USSR<sup>70</sup>. The maharaja built a camp for Polish evacuees in Balachadi, near his summer residence, that hosted about one thousand children of different ages (from 2 to 15). He welcomed them there with exceptional warmth and hospitality. He declared that they are now Nawanagaris and they should call him Bapu – Father; indeed, he eventually adopted some of them to prevent the new socialist authorities of Poland to claim them back<sup>71</sup>. The maharaja and his family often participated in various celebrations with the Polish children and took much interest in Polish culture, the maharaja's daughter still has a folk costume prepared for her by the Balachadi children. Various activities were organised in the camp, including song and dance classes, and scouting. According to Wiesław Stypuła, one of the children of Balachadi, now elderly man, it was one of the few

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<sup>67</sup> For more information about Dynowska, see documentary “The Enlightened Soul – The Life and Work of Wanda Dynowska Umadevi”, dir. by Tonmoy Das. India/Poland 2015.

<sup>68</sup> Soviet Union signed a non-aggression agreement with Nazi Germany, called the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact which divided the territories in between the two powers, among them Poland, into a German and Soviet spheres of influence. Just two weeks after Poland was attacked by Germany from the West, on 1st September 1939, on 17th September Soviet Union attacked Poland from the East. After the Polish army was forced to capitulate, Germany and Soviet Union demarcated a border, and the Eastern territories of Poland became parts of Soviet Union. Deportation of Poles from these territories began soon after, from February 1940 onwards. The exact number of deportees is probably impossible to evaluate, but various historians estimate it at 1,2-1,8 million of people (See: Virtual Museum Kresy-Syberia).

<sup>69</sup> Supposedly, the maharaja's first contact with Poland was at a reception in Switzerland, where he met the renowned pianist and later Polish prime minister, Ignacy Paderewski (Bhattacharjee 29).

<sup>70</sup> When Germany attacked the USSR in July 1941, and Soviet Union joined the war against Germany, it became possible for Poles to negotiate an agreement with the Soviets (14.08.1941) and create a Polish Army on Soviet soil. The Soviets released the Polish General Władysław Anders from a Moscow jail and allowed him to collect Polish officers from across the USSR to form an army. At the same time, Polish authorities on exile pushed the Soviets to release civilians from gulags and kolkhozes, and volunteers began collecting Polish children and grouping them in several centres, to be resettled.

<sup>71</sup> See: Anuradha Bhattacharjee's documentary, “Little Poland in India” (2013), as well as her book, *Second Homeland: Polish Refugees in India* (2012).

places in the world where the Polish flag was raised every morning and the Polish anthem was sung. The children remained in Balachadi till 1946, when the camp closed down. Some returned to Poland and reunited with relatives, some spread out around the world – a few remained in India, married Indian citizens and made their lives in their “second homeland” (Bhattacharjee 276-277).

Apart from Balachadi, a Polish refugee camp was set up in Valivade, near Kolhapur (in Maharashtra) hosting in total up to 5,000 Poles in the course of five years of its operation (1943-1947). According to Piotr Kłodkowski, thanks to the cooperation of the Red Cross, British Army, the Polish II Corps Command, the Consulate General of Poland in Bombay, as well as the local Indian authorities, the first group of refugees, mostly children and women, arrived there in 1943 (315).

In the beginning there was naturally a shortage of teachers, textbooks or the needed equipment but in spite of that all the young people in settlements were required to attend school. Very efficiently the whole educational and cultural infrastructure was completed. In Valivade, for example, there were 3 Polish kindergartens, 4 elementary schools, a secondary school, a lyceum and a teachers' training center. The children and their guardians could also attend Sunday mass, play soccer or organize Christmas carol evenings. Daily activities did not leave much space for reviving traumatic memories. (Kłodkowski 315-316)

The Poles who were hosted by the maharaja as children retain a particularly fond memory of their time in India, where they were received with such generosity. To commemorate their benefactor, a school in Warsaw took Maharaja Jam Saheb as its honorary patron, and a square in Warsaw was named “The Good Maharaja Square”. Among those who sought refuge in India in the war years was also Stefan Norblin (1892-1952), a renowned Polish artist and, in the interwar period, painter of portraits for much of the European royalty. Norblin and his wife fled Poland at the beginning of the war, crossed through the Middle East, and arrived to India. Although initially they planned to reach America, they eventually remained in India, where Norblin received commissions from various maharajas, notably of Marvi and Jodhpur (Kłodkowski 317). His Art Deco paintings are “an inspiring combination of Polish artistic creativity with Indian cultural heritage” (Kłodkowski 317). Indeed, Norblin’s murals blend European motifs, and a somewhat erotic imagery, with scenes from Indian mythology and depictions of Hindu gods and goddesses. They can be found primarily at the Umaid Bhavan

Palace in Jodhpur, but Norblin also decorated private residences and various institutions in Bombay<sup>72</sup>.

When the war ended, radical changes came about in both India and Poland. India became independent in 1947, while Poland became subjugated to the Soviet Union and the hard years of Stalinist rule came about. Many Poles who were exiled in India did not want to return to their homeland, knowing that the new communist regime was – to say the least – not favourable to those who came back from abroad. Many Polish resistance fighters were prosecuted and sentenced to death (Kersten 264). That is why, a number of Poles who were refugees in India, decided to stay in their adoptive country. They feature in some of the reportages, although the authors distance themselves from them and underline that they represent a different ideological option.

Jerzy Ros mentions his encounter with a fellow Pole, a certain Andrzej N. – his last name remaining a secret – who “was one of those Polish fighters in the West there were convinced that in their home country it is prison and exile that awaits them. He got scared and he did not return”<sup>73</sup>. He stayed in India and married an English-Goan woman. Nevertheless, he missed his homeland, as Ros observed. The reporter quotes the man asking him about how are things in Warsaw, whether everything has been “turned upside down”<sup>74</sup>, and how the city looks like after the destruction of the war (111). Ros is disturbed by the fact that Andrzej N. uses the personal pronoun “we”, to talk about how “we are reconstructing Warsaw”<sup>75</sup>. The communist government was indeed calling all Poles to return to their country, presenting those who decided to stay abroad as unpatriotic – however, many of those who did return, faced persecutions. Ros repeats the exact words with which the Pole living in Goa addressed the reporter: “[y]ou are surely a communist, otherwise they would not let you out, but doesn’t matter, you are Polish. Tell me how are things in Warsaw”<sup>76</sup> (Ros 111). In this way, the reporter underlines his own loyalty to the communist government, but also he tries to show a connection between Poles that extends beyond ideological differences.

A similar motif can be found in Wojciech Żukrowski’s reportage, in which he tells the story of another Pole living in India, a certain Zygmunt Rogulski. “He did not return to the

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<sup>72</sup> See Małgorzata Skiba’s documentary, “Chitraanjali. Stefan Norblin w Indiach”. [Chitraanjali. Stefan Norblin in India], from 2011.

<sup>73</sup> “. . . był jednym z tych polskich żołnierzy na Zachodzie, których przekonano, że w kraju czeka ich więzienie i zsyłka. Zląkł się i nie wrócił” (Ros 109).

<sup>74</sup> “Pewnie tam wszystko do góry nogami poprzewracane, co?” (Ros 111).

<sup>75</sup> “jak my ją odbudowujemy” (Ros 110).

<sup>76</sup> “Ty pewnie komunista jesteś, inaczej by nie puścili, ale nic, Polak jesteś. Opowiadaj jak tam w Warszawie . . .” (Ros 111).

home country. He believed partly the anti-Soviet propaganda, but actually he was ashamed that he did not come to any money. How to return empty-handed...<sup>77</sup> (Żukrowski 74). By emphasising the fact that the Pole had no money, Żukrowski stresses the personal factor in the decision of remaining in India, diverting the attention from the political context of Rogulski's choice. The reporter became friends with Rogulski, despite having divergent opinions, and they often met over a glass of whisky. Rogulski told Żukrowski about his business plans and his hopes to earn money and visit his mother in Poland. "To be with he only for a week – he dreamed – and then, they can even deport me to Siberia"<sup>78</sup> (Żukrowski 74). Like Ros, Żukrowski quotes his interlocutor, but makes sure to present himself as a communist. He quotes a conversation with Rogulski, in which he proposes to save some whisky for later, and his friend replies, jokingly: "[o]h, [you] communist, [you're] all about the long-term planning"<sup>79</sup> (Żukrowski 76). Thus, the reporters mark the presence of Poles in India, but place it in an ideologically appropriate political context: their refusal to return to communist Poland is shown as a personally motivated one, out of shame for being poor, or because of what the reporters perceived as manipulations of the "anti-Soviet propaganda" – or Western media – that informed about persecutions of former anti-Nazi resistance fighters in the new, socialist regime. Clearly, the reporters fail to mention the case of Polish children welcomed in India by Jam Saheb, as well as the existence of the Valivade camp, as they would have to acknowledge the oppression and violence that Poles suffered in Soviet Union.

### **Communist Poland and Socialist-Oriented India**

Although the first Polish consulate was opened in Bombay in 1933, the official beginning of diplomatic relations between Poland and India dates to 1954. In fact, Poland wanted to establish relations with India already at the creation of the independent Indian state, in 1947, but Stalin was reluctant. He perceived post-colonial governments as "tools of Western imperialism" (Mastny 52), and did not want the Soviet Union's satellite state of Poland to become close to India. Nevertheless, after Stalin's death in 1953, the attitude in Moscow changed. Stalin's successors were favourable to India and ready to intensify mutual exchange between India and the countries of the Soviet bloc (Mastny 52-53). Indeed, the second half of 1950s brought about more contacts between Poland and India. Already in 1955, Jawaharlal

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<sup>77</sup>"Do kraju nie powrócił. Trochę wierzył propagandzie antysowieckiej, a właściwie było mu wstyd, że się niczego nie dorobił. Jakże tu wracać z pustymi rękami..." (Żukrowski 74).

<sup>78</sup>"Być z nią choć tydzień – marzył – a potem niech mnie na Sybir wywiozą" (Żukrowski 74).

<sup>79</sup>"- Ach komunista, nie ma jak dalekowzroczne planowanie . . ." (Żukrowski 76).

Nehru came on a state visit to Soviet Union and Poland, then Soviet leaders, Khrushchev and Bulganin came to India, rallying thousands of supporters (Engerman 228). Two years later, also the Polish Prime Minister, Józef Cyrankiewicz, visited India. In 1957, the Indian Embassy was established in Warsaw, and in the same year, an Agreement on Cultural Cooperation and subsequent Cultural Exchange Programmes was signed. Economic relations were also gradually expanding. Nevertheless, as David Engerman observes, the relation between India and Soviet Union (and – by extension – between India and the countries of the Soviet Bloc), was not an equal one:

Even with India's dramatic exit from the British Empire and Nehru's repeated declarations of nonalignment, Soviet officials placed it firmly in the capitalist world economy and the imperialist bloc. As Soviet contacts with the decolonizing world expanded in the years following Stalin's death, the pedagogical mode remained: Soviet leaders planned to teach India the ways of revolution and of modern economics, serving as an "elder brother" to this South Asian nation much as it had generously acted as elder brother for the Soviet republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus. (Engerman 227)

In this equation, Poland occupied a particular position – although it was formally an independent country, it belonged to the Soviet Bloc and was also in an inferior position to the "elder brother". Nevertheless, in relation to India, it seemed to adopt a similarly pedagogical attitude as the USSR did. From 1954, Soviet Union began to send experts to India in order to advise the newly formed state, and – in fact – to compete with America over influence in South Asia. Engerman quotes an Indian economist recalling that in 1950s, India became a mecca of planners and economists from over the world<sup>80</sup> (230). Certainly, Soviet Bloc experts would encourage the idea of central planning and praised India's Second Five-Year Plan as they deemed it similar to Soviet plans (Engerman 231). However, even in this praise, a feeling of superiority could be discerned. According to Engerman, one of the eminent Soviet Indologists, R. A. Ulianovskii, said: "[t]he fact that India is borrowing from the planning experience of the socialist countries in its effort to escape from backwardness and to suppress its economic dependence on foreign capital by the country's industrialization is a fact of enormous progressive significance" (231). Although Soviet experts would wish for India to emulate the same model that was introduced in USSR, Indians were well-aware that this is not beneficial for them, as India requires its own model instead of a ready-made solution (Engerman 231). Soviet Union attempted at strengthening its influence not only by sending experts, but also by

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<sup>80</sup> Among them were also Polish economists Michał Kalecki and Oskar Lange (Engerman 230).



inviting students and researchers to study at the Soviet universities and by providing them with scholarships. As Griffiths and Cardona conclude, this was yet another form of soft power: “educational aid could contribute to such goals by producing graduates fluent in Russian, with knowledge of and a sympathetic disposition toward the Soviet political economy, its political structures, systems, and economic plans, and toward the Soviet approach to questions of national economic development” (231). The Polish socialist government also organised courses and scholarships for students from developing countries, including India. Several large investments in industry were undertaken with the Soviet aid, for instance the Bhilai steel mill, where Polish engineers were involved, as well as coal mines where miners from Poland could be found.

This Polish presence was of particular interest to reporters visiting India. Jerzy Putrament visits the coal mines in Gidi and Sudandih, in the state of Bihar, where he meets a group of Polish miners sent there to instruct their Indian colleagues on mining techniques. His visit coincides with the celebration of “Barburka”, a festivity in the honour of Saint Barbara, the patron of miners. Most Polish miners originally came from the region of Silesia, in Western Poland, and Putrament could experience some of the “Silesian folklore” and Polish-style partying that included singing, dancing, and vodka, “the chief deity of the Slavs”<sup>81</sup> (JP2 60). The reporter recalls that the Indian guests were slightly disoriented by what was happening, “just like us looking at the strangest Hindu customs in Benares”<sup>82</sup> (60). Putrament is satisfied to see Polish miners in India and compares this fact with his recollection of Polish miners in the mines of France. There, they were just cheap labour, employed for jobs that the locals found too hard.

Here – they are specialists, best paid, most qualified. It is not difficult to [see] the contradiction: once we were exporting force, numbers, resources, today we export reason, quality, ready-made production, ready-made industrial sets. You can shout, you can fuss, you can gossip, you can complain, but same changes will not be reversed by your clatter. It is a different country, Poland of the 60s than Poland of the 30s, and even if you stood on your head, it is closer to the world’s top than thirty years ago.<sup>83</sup> (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 58-59)

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<sup>81</sup> “naczelne bóstwo Słowian” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 60).

<sup>82</sup> “Hindusi siedzieli z boku, patrząc na widowisko z nie mniejszą zachłannością i zadziwieniem, niż my oglądający najdziwniejsze zwyczaje hinduskie w Benaresie . . .” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 60).

<sup>83</sup> “Tu – to są specjaliści, najlepiej płatni, najbardziej wykwalifikowani. Nietrudno o przeciwstawienie: ongi wywoziliśmy siłę, ilość, surowce, dziś wywozimy rozum, jakość, gotową produkcję, gotowe całe obiekty przemysłowe. Krzyczcie i wydziwiajcie, plotkujcie, narzekajcie, pewnych przemian wasz najgorszy jazgot nie odmieni. To inny kraj, Polska lat 60 tych niż Polska lat 30tych, i choćbyście na głowie stanęli, bliżej jej teraz do światowej czołówki niż trzydzieści lat temu” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 58-59).

Putrament is understandably proud of the Polish specialists in India, but he also uses this fact to provide arguments to the critics of the socialist system and to legitimise it. Nevertheless, he also realises that Poles in India face many difficulties because of the different climate, different culture, and nostalgia over their homeland and relatives.

Another “Polish” spot in India that Putrament visits is the electric plant in Barauni, also constructed with the assistance of Polish engineers. He relates his conversations with them, in which they complain about various difficulties (“heat, monsoons, mosquitoes, and scorpions” (73)) and among others, about the issues with the Indian workers, who - in their opinion, are lazy and disobedient. “- They just don’t do anything. They go there and back, and one cannot catch them and put them to work. And even if you do, you can’t watch over them. . . No, sir, the English knew what they are doing when they kept them at tight leash! Otherwise, they don’t do anything...”<sup>84</sup> (73-74). Putrament finds this opinion extreme, and underlines that it was uttered only by one individual; nevertheless, he suspects that more Poles share this view (74). Clearly, he is disturbed by the admiration for colonial rule in India, but his own feeling of superiority over Indians and sympathy towards fellow Poles can be discerned. Putrament is also of the opinion that it is good for Poles to work abroad in respected positions as they bring their foreign income back to the country and also they learn to appreciate the Polish reality (84). It is thus easy to notice that exporting specialised workers to the “Third World” often has a propagandist angle. Indeed, Putrament recommends to writers to cover this aspect of Polish presence abroad, rather than invent fictional plots (79).

Several agreements were signed between Poland and India in 1960s and 1970s: on economic cooperation (1960, 1962, 1965), on sail (1960) and air transport (1977) and on economic, industrial and technical cooperation (1977) (Wójcik). Another reporter, Janusz Gołębiowski, also focuses on Polish-Indian economic cooperation and, while in India, is on the lookout of products “made in Poland”. Apart from mines, steel plants, electric plants, Poland also began to export to India tractors and motorcycles. Nevertheless, the reporter notices that the lack of knowledge of local conditions caused many vehicles to fail – tires were not strong enough for Indian roads, engines would get heated up in the hot climate (Gołębiowski 160). The reporter is interested, too, in the intensified cultural exchange between Poland and India. He mentions the *Poland* and *Polish Perspectives* magazines, available at the press club in Delhi, and occasional exhibitions of graphic art, books or artistic photography,

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<sup>84</sup> “Po prostu nic nie robią. Chodzą tam i z powrotem, nie można ich złapać i postawić do roboty. A jak już postawisz, nie upilnujesz. . . . Nie, panie, Anglicy wiedzieli, co robią, że trzymali ich krótko! Inaczej nic nie robią...” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 73-74).

but he realises that these events have limited outreach and Indian knowledge of Poland remains rather limited (156-157). That is why, he believes in economic progress and trade relations. This was also the dominating aspect in Polish-Indian relations of that period, although culture and education were also areas for mutual encounters.

Indological studies were well-established in main Polish academic centres, and when travel became more and more accessible, both reporters and travel writers would go to India and describe the situation there for the Polish public. Like in the West, the hippies' movement also became to form in Poland, and there were more and more Poles interested in spiritual explorations away from the Catholic paradigms. In 1970s and 1980s, more individual travellers, not sponsored by a newspaper or another public institution, could go to India, although they were few in comparison with Europeans from the West. Various artists became interested in Indian culture and spirituality, for instance the outstanding theatre director, Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999), who based many of his concepts on Indian thought. One of the first plays that he directed was Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* (1960). Probably his best-known concept is the idea of "poor theatre", in which the scenography is limited to enhance focus on the actor, as well as innovative projects that break the division between the actors on the scene, and the public, and to involve the spectators in the performance. He travelled extensively, observing rituals and drama techniques of different cultures – also the Indian ones – and basing theatre plays on those inspirations; this was the stage called "Theatre of Sources".

Indian thought exceeded the field of artistic creation and had an impact on politics: many intellectuals in the opposition movement were familiar with the Gandhian ideas of non-violence and decided to fight with the oppressive communist authorities according to those principles. Indeed, as Piotr Kłodkowski asserts, "Mahatma Gandhi became a symbolic figure for many Poles, an archetype of a non-violent freedom fighter, frequently invoked by the organized Opposition, Academia members, journalists or workers" (320). Indeed, civil resistance is now studied from a larger perspective, which highlights the links and inspirations among leaders of peaceful revolutions across the globe, from Gandhi, to the anti-communist "velvet" revolutions in Central Europe, as well as the more recent "Rose Revolution" in Georgia and "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine (Roberts & Garton Ash).

After the fall of communism, Poland and India shared a similar path of transformation from a centrally planned, or partially planned, economy, to a market economy, and both opened to the investments and capital from the West in the early 1990s. As a result, the last two decades brought even more contacts between the two countries, and awareness of each other's culture increased. India is now famous among Poles as a tourist destination, as a growing economy, as

the place of origin of yoga (now extremely popular among urban Poles), and as the homeland of Bollywood cinema, while Poland starts to be perceived as an important country of the EU, attractive to investors, students, and film-makers (several Indian productions were shot in Polish locations, for instance “Fanaa” (2006), “Kick” (2014) or “Bangistan” (2015)). There are many travel accounts and reportages on India, as well as TV shows, blogs, and films. Indian literature is translated and read, and contacts between individuals from both countries are numerous, both in the virtual and real space<sup>85</sup>. Nevertheless, it seems that the amount of Polish travel reportages on India today is proportionally smaller to the countless opportunities for writers and journalists to travel. The reporters of the communist era found India fascinating probably partly because of their own country’s isolation, which made it difficult for Indian culture to reach Poland.

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To conclude, the history of Polish contacts with India, both through travel, but also through intellectual encounter, is long and rich in unconventional biographies. The intertextuality of knowledge about India is reflected in passing references to these “classics”: Polish reporters of the communist era, although selective in who they talk about and do not, are aware of their predecessors visiting India. Certainly, Ewa Dzieduszycka, an aristocrat, would not be mentioned, while figures from distance history, like Gaspar da Gama or Krzysztof Pawłowski, were referred to, as they were not considered as problematic. As it was mentioned earlier, the story of children refugees in India was completely silenced, as well as the story of Umadevi – Wanda Dynowska; she is only mentioned in the reportage of Jerzy Chociłowski, written in 1977, and less ideological in its nature. Apart from the Polish heritage of contacts with India, the socialist reporters are well-aware of the fact that much of knowledge of India came to Poland through the British. As a result, even those visitors to India who come from a completely non-colonial background, and are staunch critics of British imperialism, refer to the images produced by the colonial Orientalist discourse mechanism. The themes that appear in their reportages from India, are, too, rather repetitive, demonstrating that they are also part of a discourse that fosters certain images and ideas more than others. While Said underlines the adventurous aspect of imperialism, where India appears as a land of freedom and possibility for young English, Polish reporters of the communist period, too, enjoy their travels around the Subcontinent and excitedly relate all the adventures on their way. While Westerners of the

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<sup>85</sup> Since this dissertation does not focus on contemporary Polish-Indian relations, this topic is only briefly mentioned. While many travel accounts, reportage, studies on Indian religion and history can be found in Polish bookshops, there is no comprehensive overview of Polish-Indian relations or Polish perceptions of India.

colonial era believed that they are travelling on a civilising mission, the Polish reporters tend to present themselves as emissaries of the new, socialist world, whose mission is to popularise new models of modernization, and present India as an arena of clashes between “the old” and “the new”.

## CHAPTER 2. TRAVEL WRITING AND REPORTAGE

“Travel as a source of inspiration, as creativity and as a theme. Marco Polo, Humboldt, Goethe, Twain, thousands of others. One needs to mature into travelling - travel is more than a movement from one place to another, it is different than tourism . . . Travel means a fruitful reliving of the world, the exploration of its truths and secrets, the search for answers to questions that the world poses. Travel understood in this way is a reflection, [it] is a philosophy.” (Ryszard Kapuściński, *Lapidarium I*, 270-271 – my own translation)<sup>86</sup>

In a way, writing is travelling, since “every story is a travel story – a spatial practice” (Michel de Certeau 115). The writer, by inventing a story, moves to a different space and remains in two places at once: the actual and the imagined. Writing is thus “not keeping still, [it is] going where one isn’t” (Grivel 254). Perhaps that is why so many writers found travelling inspirational and stimulating. Travel and the exposure to otherness, or the unknown, could trigger a deeper reflection on the self and on one’s identity. John Zilcosky explains that there is a connection between travel theory and modern concepts of subjectivity, in which “the self becomes itself only in another place, as in Freud’s description of the ego” (Loc 141). He continues to say that even though for poststructuralists writing is always about writing, writing is also always about travel, as travellers, too, never finally arrive at their destinations (Loc 147).

A vehicle of *différance*, travel stages desire’s continual temporal deferral and spatial difference. From the picaresque to the bildungsroman to the Beat novels, modernity grasps at travel’s mirages, repeatedly setting out for suspended utopias, where the self attempts to find itself through displacement. (Zilcosky Loc. 149-150)

Indeed, the poststructuralist debates on alterity and difference, as well as on discourses that are vehicles of power, influenced Edward Said and postcolonial scholars to look at European texts from a new perspective. Literature, and travel writing in particular, were analysed as products of a colonial era, of an imperial mind-set, often recurring to and reproducing prejudices and stereotypes. The travelling Self - and the Other encountered by the traveller - were given much attention. Mary Louise Pratt, in her study of European travel writing, established a useful notion of the “contact zone” – a space where different cultures, previously geographically and historically separated, meet, clash, and grapple with each other. The relations between them

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<sup>86</sup>“Podróż jako źródło inspiracji, jako temat i jako twórczość. Marco Polo, Humboldt, Goethe, Twain, tysiące innych. Trzeba dojrzeć do podróżowania – podróż to coś więcej niż przemieszczanie się z miejsca na miejsce, niż turystyka (właściwie rozwój turystyki, jak umasowienie każdej wartości, zbanalizował, zwulgaryzował sacrum podróży). Podróż to owocne przeżywanie świata, zgłębianie jego tajemnic i prawd, szukanie odpowiedzi na pytania, które on stawia. Tak pojmowane podróżowanie jest refleksją, jest filozofowaniem.” (Ryszard Kapuściński, *Lapidarium I* 270-271)

are often asymmetrical, and are displayed in various forms of domination and subordination, such as colonialism, slavery or other forms of dependence (4). Another term used by Pratt is “transculturation”, a typical phenomenon of the contact zone, in which cultural elements of the dominant group are absorbed by the subordinate group (4). Even though the metropolis usually perceives itself as the one that determines the culture of the periphery, Pratt observes that the periphery also determines the metropolis, starting by the latter’s “obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself” (4).

Effectively, the growth of European empires coincided with the extensive interest in Otherness, among scientists, linguists, writers, explorers, and of course, colonial administrators. It was the time of an increased production of texts about non-European cultures: travel writing flourished. However, as Sachidananda Mohanty points out, exactly in that period of nineteenth-century consolidation of empires, travel writing had a particular awareness of the ideological and the political, and it often became a site for collision and contestation of power (xiv). These sites of power struggle were denounced in the last few decades, and many Western European and American writers were accused of participating in the colonial discourse and strengthening such an unequal distribution of world power. Even those who seemingly represented a left-wing, anti-imperialist point of view were not spared. For instance, in an article written for *The Hindu*, Ilija Trojanow looks at texts by Günter Grass and Pier Paolo Pasolini, progressive representatives of the Left, to conclude that in their accounts from India, they “mirror the imperial hegemony of the First World while simultaneously denouncing it”. Trojanow identifies three strategies used in accounts from the so-called Third World, namely prejudice, authority and domination. In the end, he ironically observes: “[t]hus the progressive and the imperial gaze go hand in hand. The greatest critics of imperial politics have themselves written imperial travelogues” (*The Hindu*, 2.12.2001). This is yet another proof that the roots of Eurocentric, Orientalist or paternalist attitudes go deeper than the nineteenth-century colonial imagery. Such perceptions of Otherness transcend a simple cause-and-effect relation between imperial politics and colonial discourse. Even in a postcolonial world, after much has been said about the evils of imperialism, the feeling of superiority and claim to possess all knowledge is still in the minds of many Westerners. In order to show a relation more complex than just the metropolis-periphery, or the East-West divide, the travel reportages analysed here will touch upon a similar issue that Trojanow raised. Can the representatives of the Second World, the progressive socialists, demonstrate similar approaches as the ones displayed by Grass and Pasolini? And how does the relationship with another empire, the Soviet one, affect travel writing on India?

This chapter focuses on two subdivisions of a very broad genre: nonfictional prose, defined as “any literary work that is based mainly on fact, even though it may contain fictional elements” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*). These two strands of nonfiction are travel accounts and reportage, which is also known as literary journalism. In the Polish context, they often blend into one: travel reportage, and this is the term adopted here to designate journalistic accounts of travel to India analysed in this dissertation. To outline this particular genre of travel reportage, two (not very different) traditions are addressed: the one of travel writing, as well as the one of reportage.

The first part of this chapter presents an overview of the long and sometimes curvaceous path of European travel writing, filled with challenges. Many of challenges persist till today. While this genre is arguably “the most socially important of all literary genres” (Youngs, 2013, 1), travel writers always struggled with labels tagging their texts as “middle-brow” (C. Thompson 1) or “paraliterary” (Forsdick et al, Loc. 100). The discussion on whether travel writing is, or is not, literature, accompanies the genre from its beginnings. Another matter for the debate concerning travel writing is linked to the fact that readers believe travel accounts to be true and they identify the narrator with the author. It is an illusion, since the persona of the real life author and of the narrator are separate. Nevertheless, while many authors actually did travel to the place they describe, there are many examples of travel texts that are largely fictionalised, or downright fabricated (the most famous case are the travels of the invented persona of John Mandeville). Another problematic issue is the political aspect of travel writing – or, actually, of travel itself. As it was mentioned earlier, various scholars, among them Mary Louise Pratt and David Spurr, pointed out how travel writing in colonial times served as one of the tools of imperial domination. Not only colonial empires, but also Soviet Union could also transmit a propagandist message via the travel accounts from various parts of the world. Nevertheless, as the Polish case shows, travel reportage could also be subversive and help with contesting such a domination. Kapuściński’s accounts from Ethiopia or Iran were read as a study of dictatorial and oppressive power, and interpreted by Poles in relation to the abuses of power by communists. Today, travel writing is still questioned for presenting a nostalgic view of the world, objectifying other cultures, and supporting global tourism industry and exploitation of people from poorer backgrounds (for instance, the controversial “slums tourism”). Because of its many facets, and its close links with culture and contemporary history, travel writing is a genre that nowadays receives more and more attention from the



academia<sup>87</sup>. Also in Poland, travel writing begins to be more intensively explored by scholars of various disciplines. Earlier, it was mostly analysed as a subgenre of literature, that is why most attention would focus on travel accounts or memoirs by renowned writers (Burkot 12-15). In recent years, especially given the emergence of numerous works of travel reportage from many parts of the world, the genre is studied also by gender studies, cultural studies as well as academics interested in postcolonial theory. Indeed, Polish traditions of travel contain very diverse texts, from early accounts of nobles travelling to the Holy Land, to travelogues of hippy backpackers today. These texts were always intertwined with various events of Polish history, for instance travels of 19<sup>th</sup> century Partitions émigrés or travel reportage in socialism, which is why they can offer interesting insights for various disciplines. The goal of this section is to present the genre of travel writing with a special attention to the Polish context, as well as the function of travel in the Polish identity-building.

The second part of this chapter concentrates on reportage, another type of nonfictional account, which often encompasses travel writing too. It will be discussed as a journalistic genre typical of twentieth century, which was labelled with various names and designations depending on the cultural context. Given that the genre is particularly developed and popular in Poland, the first section will explore the beginnings of modern Polish reportage, and the beginnings of theoretical discussions on whether it is a genre that can be defined as literature. The second section of this chapter will present an overview of the historical context in which reporters of the communist period created their text, the political conditions that surrounded them, and the pressures exerted on them by the authorities. This will allow to deepen the context of the particular situation of reporters (and writers in general) in socialism, and how that condition was reflected in their works. The discussion on Polish reportage in the communist period is particularly important due to the fact that today's exceptional popularity of nonfiction (in comparison to other countries) started in that time. Reportage, planned to be a tool of socialist propaganda, gradually became a tool in the struggle with the communist oppression, and since then, it has been an integral part of social and political critique.

## **PART I – TRAVEL WRITING**

### **1. Nonfiction**

Nonfiction is as old as fiction - for what are the works of Herodotus or Thucydides if not nonfictional accounts? Also memoirs, diaries, and travel accounts can be categorised under the

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<sup>87</sup> See, among others, works by: Youngs, Thompson, Huggan, Hulme, Korte, Zilkosky, Pratt, Adams.

label of nonfiction, though they might contain elements of fiction as well. As Henri M. Peyre explains in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, nonfiction became increasingly popular in the last two centuries:

From the 19th century, writers in Romance and Slavic languages especially, and to a far lesser extent, British and American writers, developed the attitude that a literature is most truly modern when it acquires a marked degree of self-awareness and obstinately reflects on its purpose and technique. Such writers were not content with imaginative creation alone: they also explained their work and defined their method in prefaces, reflections, essays, selfportraits, and critical articles. (“nonfiction” by H. M. Peyre in *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*)

According to Peyre, nonfictional works of such authors as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Thomas Mann, or André Gide – their letters, diaries or travel accounts – are as acclaimed as their poetry or novels. Twentieth century was marked with a proliferation of forms that place themselves between fiction and nonfiction, such as literary journalism and literary travel writing, intimate diary, and essay. What characterises nonfictional writing as a whole is the marked presence of the author and his/her use of a subjective tone. While nonfiction, just like fiction, makes use of the basic modes of writing - the descriptive, the narrative, the expository, and the argumentative - these are present in nonfictional texts in different proportions than in fiction. For instance, narrative might be limited, and descriptions may prevail (to a different degree depending on the text). Like *Britannica*, the Polish PWN Online *Encyclopaedia* stresses how varied are the subgenres that belong to the category of nonfiction literature, or *literatura faktu*. Among them are chronicles, diaries, travel accounts, biographies, reportages and interviews, political or polemic articles, as well as essays. Czesław Niedzielski, the author of this *encyclopaedia* entry, emphasizes how fact and fiction intertwine with one another, despite the latter’s aspiration to authenticity. Fiction writing freely borrows from these documentary genres (for instance, in fictionalised biographies, novels including fictional diary entries or fictional travel accounts). Fact literature too uses narrative techniques or fictionalises events imitating the belles-lettres. While it is fascinating how fact and fantasy can coexist, rather than defining these two extremely broad categories of fiction and nonfiction, it is better to focus on a particular group of texts. That is why, this study is centred on reportage and travel writing, listed in *encyclopaedic* definitions among many genres of nonfiction. The following two sections elaborate on these two genres in more detail.

## **2. Travel Writing – Definitions**

The term “travel writing” is in itself problematic, in English often used interchangeably with “travel literature”. It is so in other languages too: in French, the genre is called *récits de voyage* (travel accounts) or *littérature de voyage* (travel literature), in German *Reisebericht* (travel report or travel account) or *Reisebeschreibung* (travel description), and in Italian *reportage di viaggio* (travel reportage). In Polish, it is either called *literatura podróżnicza* (travel literature), or *reportaż podróżniczy* (travel reportage), but the translator of Mary Louise Pratt’s book into Polish, Ewa Nowakowska, uses a more direct translation of the term “travel writing”: *pisarstwo podróżnicze* or *podróżopisarstwo*. The latter term is also used by Stanisław Burkot in his study on Romantic voyages. Barbara Korte, author of *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*, treats terms “travel account”, “travelogue”, and “travel writing” as synonyms, though she also underlines that “in a narrower understanding, “travelogue” is sometimes reserved for accounts that are composed retrospectively . . . – in contrast to accounts in the form of journals, diaries or letters which are normally written (or at least drafted) while a journey is still in progress.” (Notes, p. 181)

Apart from discussions on lexis, also the characterisation of what travel writing consists in poses many problems. According to Carl Thompson’s definition, travel writing stems from the encounter between self and other that is brought about by movement through space, so it is at some level a record or product of this encounter, of the negotiation between similarity and difference (10). This description emphasises the necessity of spatial movement, and the element of otherness, of experiencing difference. Similarly, Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs stress the importance of travel writing as a narrated account (usually in first person) of an actual travel that really happened. The main condition for a text to be considered as “travel writing” is that the author must have travelled to the place(s) he/she describes, otherwise these works would be classified into a different category, the one of imaginary voyage (Youngs 4). Nevertheless, as underlined by John Zilcosky, there are various texts which deal with travel, in which the author does not set off on any real journey at all. These are either fictional accounts, for instance *Mandeville’s Travels*, a text widely popular in mid-fourteenth century and for a long time considered to be a true travel account, or books by authors who based their knowledge on other traveller’s accounts, never participating in a journey themselves. Notably, this was the case of early anthropologists, like James Frazer, who wrote his *Golden Bough* hardly moving away from his desk in England. Immanuel Kant, in his *Anthropologie* even declared that there is no need to travel as real anthropology is to learn about one’s own home. “If we only pay attention to our homes, Kant suggests, we (enlightened cosmopolitans) are ‘always already travelled.’” – says Zilcosky, and adds: “note, too, that Kant, who never left

Prussia, probably quenched his private, unscientific longings for foreignness through the travel books he devoured” (Loc 95-98). And what can one make of novels where the actual journey is only a base for a story of fictional characters, as in Laurence Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*? Can these texts be considered as travel writing, which primarily is a non-fiction genre? Unlike Hulme and Youngs, who divide texts into two groups, “travel writing” and “travel-related texts”, Zilkosky adopts a rather more inclusive approach, arguing that it is exactly the fact that travel literature escapes such categories what makes its central characteristics. Mary Louise Pratt is also sceptical of any attempts to define travel writing as a genre, since she sees it as too heterogeneous to be circumscribed (11).

Travel, as an escape from daily routine and familiar surroundings, always provided inspiration. John Zilkosky points at the connection of travel with storytelling, and reminds of an old German proverb: “when we go travelling, we have stories to tell” (quoted from Walter Benjamin, Loc 325-326<sup>88</sup>). Nevertheless, story *telling* and story *writing* are two different things, because, according to Benjamin, telling requires orality and community, and writing – silence and isolation (Zilkosky, loc 70). A travel account is usually written after the completion of the voyage, which is what makes it different from a journal or a diary. Writing is not only a way of documenting the journey itself, but it also makes it possible for the traveller to convey his/her feelings and observations to the readers. It allows for a deeper reflection on the individual experience of travel.

Such universal need to describe one’s journey found countless ways of individual expression. In the words of Percy Adams, “[t]he literature of travel is gigantic; it has a thousand forms and faces” (281). There is a variety of forms, styles, types of authors, and goals that this type of writing serves. For some, a travelogue serves a personal goal: to assert their status and authority, to display their knowledge and acquired cultural capital. In other cases, it constitutes a rite of passage, a chance for self-discovery and confrontation with their preconceptions. As suggested by Carl Thompson, the first type of traveller was prevalent in the Enlightenment period, when authors were trying to provide information to larger society and avoided focusing on themselves, while the second type was more characteristic of the Romantic notion of introspective analysis of self, of the emotions evoked by the surrounding landscape, and of the possible transformation of oneself through the experience of travel (54). While travel writers were usually to some extent representative of the epoch that they lived in, their writing styles

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<sup>88</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Der Erzähler”, 386. Quoted by: John Zilkosky in *Writing Travel: The Poetics and Politics of the Modern Journey*.

remain “notoriously hybrid, ranging from the sober and scientific to the poetic and rhetorical” (Zilcosky, loc. 160-161). This multiplicity and hybridity is well captured by Jonathan Raban’s humorous comment:

As a literary form, travel writing is a notoriously raffish open house where very different genres are likely to end up in the same bed. It accommodates the private diary, the essay, the short story, the prose poem, the rough note and polished table talk with indiscriminate hospitality. (253)

Practically every scholar dealing with travel writing emphasises how eclectic this genre is. It presents a “bewildering diversity of forms, modes and itineraries” (Thompson 1-2), it is “notoriously refractory to definition” (Holland and Huggan, x-xi), and, it freely borrows from the memoir, journalism, letters, guidebooks, confessional narrative, and fiction (Kowalesky, 7). The diversity of texts equals the diversity among their creators. Travel accounts have been published by a variety of authors: writers, journalists, celebrities, pilgrims, conquistadors and individual explorers or backpackers (Thompson 1-2).

Primary texts analysed in this thesis are as heterogeneous as travel writing as a whole. They, too, are written by various types of people – journalists, writers, conference delegates, and government employees – sometimes performing more than one of these roles at once. In this research, only one country, or travel destination – India – is taken into account. However, the authors’ itineraries vary, since most of them visit different sites during their journey. The given political and historical moment, current events in Poland and in India, exert some influence on their writing too. There are several aspects in which they are similar to Western travel accounts, but in many points they differ. While most twentieth-century travellers are individuals who are responsible for their own agency, the socialist travel writers are sometimes limited in their movements. Among the authors analysed here, two were visiting India on an official journey, which was organised and planned for them, and they were probably accompanied by guides at least on parts of their journey (e.g. Putrament and Koehler). The reporters coming to India as correspondents of newspapers and magazines were more independent and had more agency in deciding what to visit and which events to cover, but they must have also received certain recommendations from their superiors in Warsaw. Finally, unlike their Western counterparts, a self-exploration, or soul-searching, was not recommended, as it would contradict with the socialist, pragmatic spirit, and could be perceived as “bourgeois”. The style and language of each of the account varies from others, some adopting a more personal, emotional approach (Górnicki), some following a more ideological agenda (Ros), some frequently resorting to somewhat fictionalised accounts of others (Żukrowski),

some aiming at a rather neutral stance (Chociłowski) and some maintaining an attitude of distance, at times tinged with irony or sarcasm (Putrament).

In consequence, the selected texts are so diverse that they could be studied by historians, by social scientists, by media studies specialists, as well as by literary critics. It is only one more proof that travel writing is situated at the crossroads of many other genres, and it appears as an ideal material for interdisciplinary study. Not only can the texts be analysed from the point of view of genre, literariness, style, modes of descriptions, but they can also be considered as documents of an epoch, as products of a particular political context and of a specific condition of writers and journalists. Travel writing in its essence is a negotiation between at least two cultures – the one of the traveller, and the one of the travellee<sup>89</sup>. Indeed, as concludes Forsdick, “analysing a textual form that is inherently transcultural permits critical dialogues that are themselves often powerfully comparative and cross-cultural” (Kindle Loc. 100-101). It is exactly the genre’s diversity and hybridity that renders possible a reflection on the experience of travelling, which is in itself an act of crossing boundaries, challenging beliefs and encountering Otherness.

### **3. Polish (European?) Travel Writing**

Poland, because of its location and history, has always been an arena of encounters between cultures, trends and beliefs. It changed borders, had rulers of various origins, fought wars with various countries, but was also a home to a number of ethnicities. This experience was common to Poland’s Central European neighbours, that is why studying travel writing from this region offers interesting insights. Wendy Bracewell, editor of a three-volume study on how Eastern travellers perceive the West, states:

In eastern Europe, the travel account has been one of the main instruments by which elites, but also others, have imagined their place in Europe and the world. Their narratives have not just recorded their experiences abroad. Their accounts have divided their world into ‘us’ and ‘them’, and have infused meaning into a whole vocabulary of belonging and exclusion . . . (xiv)

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<sup>89</sup> The term “travellee” was first used by Mary Louise Pratt to indicate a member of culture visited by the traveller. Pratt uses it first in her Introduction (on p. 7) then in Chapter 6 of her book, and explains it in the endnote on p. 242: “This clumsy term is coined on analogy with the term “addressee.” As the latter means the person addressed by a speaker, “travellee” means persons traveled to (or on) by a traveler, receptors of travel.”

In the Polish context, too, the story of Polish travel writing is in many aspects a story of an ambiguous and complicated relationship with Western Europe, but also the story of encounters with other parts of the world.

### **First Polish Travel Accounts**

Poles travelled extensively since the Middle Ages. Already in mid-twelfth century, one of the Polish princes, Bolesław I the Tall, participated in the Second Crusade as knight of the German king Conrad III, visiting Constantinople and Palestine. Around the same time, the Duke of Sandomierz, Henry, organised his own crusade to Jerusalem to defend the city against the Saracens, in a fashion typical to other European rulers of that era. This expedition was described by the first Polish chronicler and historian, Jan Długosz. Though Długosz did not travel abroad himself, he recounted many stories of pilgrimages and crusades of the Polish knights, who often visited other countries on the way: Italy, Greece, Turkey and Egypt. Participating in crusades was for Polish aristocracy a way to assert their adherence to the Catholic faction, to situate themselves on the European side of the divide between the Christian “us” and the Muslim “them”.

The first Polish travel account was written by Benedict the Pole after his visit to the Mongol Empire in 1245-1247. Benedict, a Franciscan monk, was part of a mission sent by Pope Innocent IV to the Mongol capital. The expedition was led by Giovanni (Joannes) da Pian del Carpine, an Italian diplomat and a member of the Franciscan order, and Benedict was his interpreter. After his return, Benedict dictated a story of the Tatars, and later wrote a comprehensive travel account, describing in much detail the journey, the stay at the lavish court of the Great Khan Güyük, the meetings with delegations from Delhi, Bagdad, China and Korea, as well as the customs of tribes inhabiting the territories of Central Asia. His account was called *De Itinere Fratrum Minorum ad Tartaros [On the travel of Franciscan friars to the Tatars]*, and it was first translated from Latin and published only in 1839. Nevertheless, in his time, Benedict’s work became widely discussed among Europeans, together with the account of his fellow traveller, Giovanni. Theirs were the first European travel accounts from Asia, preceding even Marco Polo’s account, and – presumably – first Polish-Indian encounter.

Another trend that began in the Middle Ages, was educational tourism. It is enough to look at the student emblems on the walls of Archiginnasio, the historical seat of Università di Bologna, to discover many Polish names. Among the students of this university, the first one in Europe, was Mikołaj Kopernik from Toruń, remembered as Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543). Many Poles studied also in Padua, Florence, Paris, Oxford and Cambridge. In

Renaissance, it became increasingly popular among Polish nobles to send their sons to study abroad. Amid young Poles on a Grand Tour was Tomasz Zamoyski, son of the Chancellor to the Polish King, and the Jabłonowski brothers, heirs of the commander-in-chief of King Sobieski's army. Since there were also foreign students coming to the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, the circuit of students and knowledge around Europe was not only one-sided. Travelling was considered a part of noblemen's education, and Latin was a *lingua franca* that enabled this multinational community of university scholars to flourish.

Aside from educational peregrinations, Wendy Bracewell mentions different types of accounts from eastern Europe, prevalent in the Early Modern period. These are the following: embassy diary, the pilgrimage narrative, and the captivity account (13). The first type, diplomatic travel, is well exemplified in the account of Erazm Otwinowski (1529-1614), poet and a supporter of Reformation, one of the first Calvinists among Polish nobility. As part of the Krakow voivode court, he took part in a few delegations, namely to Sweden, Denmark and Turkey, and described his visit to Istanbul in 1557 in *Wypisanie drogi tureckiej* [*Description of the Turkish Journey*]. Out of pilgrimage accounts, the best known account was the one written by prince Mikołaj Krzysztof "the Orphan" Radziwiłł (1549-1616). In his *Podróż do Ziemi Świętej, Syrii i Egiptu 1582-1584* [*Journey to the Holy Land, Syria and Egypt 1582-1584*], he retold the many adventures during his travels not only to the Middle East, but also to Greece, Italy and Cyprus. In sixteenth century, many diverse travel texts appeared<sup>90</sup>, representing various genres, or rather *subgenres*: pilgrimage diaries, travel letters, memoirs, war expedition diaries and autobiographies.

Wendy Bracewell observes that in Early Modern Era, even though the differences of faith – Catholic, Muslim, Protestant – were often emphasised by travellers, travel accounts would become more and more identified with the idea of a secular Europe. In sixteenth century, there emerged *ars apodemica* – a humanist idea of texts that would instructed travellers on how to travel and provided them information:

Apodemic handbooks . . . played a part in this process of "Europeanization". Such works taught educated travellers to see and to understand Europe as a single multi-polar space, made up of cities, provinces and states, each with their own diverse characteristics "in all their variety" . . . (Bracewell 13-14)

Indeed, at that time Europe was more fragmented, but the dividing line between East and West was not yet drawn – this changed in eighteenth century, when terms such as advancement and

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<sup>90</sup> A more extensive collection on travel writing in sixteenth century can be found in the *Anthology of Polish Sixteenth-Century Memoirs*, edited by Roman Pollak.



backwardness, light and darkness, started to be used (Bracewell 14). According to Jan Sowa, the discrepancy between the east and the west of Europe began to be visible in 16th century, and it was caused by two processes. One was the transition to capitalist economy in the West, while the East remained feudal, and two – power in the West was held by strong, absolutist monarchies, while in the East the central rule was weak, which eventually lead to disintegration of the state (Sowa 35). These economic differences influenced cultural perceptions too: Wolff notices that in the Enlightenment an important shift occurred, according to which the intellectual and economic centre of Europe shifted from the South to the West (5). As a result of this change, the line of division between civilisation and barbarism, since Antiquity dividing the South and the North of Europe, was now replaced by a line separating East and West. Consequently, Central and Eastern European travel writers started to regard the West as a model, an example to follow.

The growing habit of referring to these things [modern inventions in the West] as “Europe” as well as “civilisation” or “enlightenment” leads to the discovery of degrees of “Europeanness” – with problematic implications for the self-image of travellers from the less developed economies and societies of the continent. (Bracewell 71)

Such realisations changed the way travellers recounted their journeys: new genres and types of texts appeared, for instance more scientifically oriented ones. Also, a popular trend of that time were first-person travelogues, which became vehicles for exploring individual experience of travel (Bracewell 71).

In Poland, the Enlightenment brought about a discussion about the traditional and the modern. At the time, the dominating trend among Polish nobility was the so-called Sarmatian culture, presenting a myth of ancient Sarmatian tribes who gave birth to the Polish nation (this trend is also mentioned in chapter 1). A good example of a Sarmatian non-fictional text from this epoch is the memoir of Jan Chryzostom Pasek (1636-1701), a nobleman who narrated his adventures during wars with the Swedes, Hungarians and Russians, and his participation in the military expedition to Denmark in mid-seventeenth century. Pasek’s *Memoirs*, published only in 1839, were a lively depiction of the life and adventures of Sarmatian nobles, who believed in their uniqueness and cultural superiority (Burkot 20). Contemporary to Sarmatians were the reformers, enthusiasts of modernisation, often cosmopolitan intellectuals. Among them was a particularly well-travelled man of his era, Jan Nepomucen Potocki (1761-1815). He visited countries both in and out of Europe, and composed a number of travel accounts: among others, from Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, China, Caucasus and Russia. His best known oeuvre, however, is a fantastic novel called *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa*, a frame tale inspired by Arabic

literature, in particular *The Thousand and One Nights*. According to Jonathan Elukin, Potocki's novel is characteristic of the eighteenth-century scholarship, as it is an "odd combination of profound erudition and fantasy" (153).

Efforts of bringing reform and modernisation along the Western European models were undertaken by many intellectuals such as Stanisław Staszic (1755-1826), Hugo Kołłątaj (1750-1812), Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (1758-1841), and even the last Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski (1732-1798). All of them undertook voyages of the educative kind, with the purpose of observing other countries, their societies and institutions, to later implement these foreign models at home. After his visits to France and England, Poniatowski even funded bursaries for travel to Western Europe, "as one means of reforming a backward Poland" (Bracewell 119). Nevertheless, these attempts did not bring much results, as a deeper crisis awaited Polish society. After a series of Partitions, Poland was erased from the map of Europe and its territories were incorporated into Austria, Prussia and Russia.

### **Partitions and Nineteenth-Century Romanticism**

Following these events, a large number of noble families, intellectuals and artists emigrated, primarily to France. Many others were sent in exile to Siberia and other remote parts of the Tsarist Empire. Stanisław Burkot mentions such "travel out of necessity" as one of the four types of nineteenth-century travel. Others include Oriental travel, home (local) travel, and scientific/artistic travel (31-38). Nineteenth century thus abounded in travel motives present in many types of texts, both fictional and non-fictional. Also, travel writing in that period is already considerably intertextual, as authors are well-aware of travel accounts from previous epochs, which serve them as inspiration, or even as guidebooks (Burkot 8). Another trait that characterises romantic travel writing is that the title of the work suggests that it is a travel, voyage or journey, as well as geographic – and sometimes temporal – indicators. Such is the case with Stanisław Dunin-Borkowski's *Podróż do Włoch w latach 1815 i 1816* [*Journey to Italy in years 1815 and 1816*] from 1820 or Kazimierz Kontrym's *Podróż urzędnika Banku Polskiego w r. 1829 po Polesiu* [*Travel of an Employee of Bank of Poland in year 1829 around Polesie*] (1829). In travel memoirs, so popular in this epoch, typically important issues are mixed with mundane ones and the world is seen in a non-hierarchical manner (Burkot 18). What is more, the present is intertwined with the past, historical facts are interspersed with subjective observations of the narrator.

A novelty in nineteenth century was also the development of tourism – or travel for leisure. Though travelling was becoming more and more accessible, it was still mostly the

prerogative of elites (Bracewell 182). For Poles, especially after the failure of the November Rising in 1831, home tourism became an even more attractive opportunity, and it was considered as a cultural “institution”, a way of sustaining national consciousness (Burkot 23). This idea is illustrated in the words of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-1887), writer and one of the initiators of romantic travels around the Polish territories:

While elsewhere to discover new and unknown lands one needs to sail . . . through the ice or go towards the sources of the Nile, where so many already perished; while elsewhere travellers are forced to repeat in constantly new ways things there are very long known, seen, described and worn out, while the shores of the Rhine, and the mountains of Scotland, and the poor huts of Irish peasants (much worse than ours) are painted, explained, and poeticised until exhaustion; while naturalists need to look for new animals deep under the ground (mammoth), and new plants in depths of the sea (algae) – here, in our Slavic countries, everything remains still in a virgin state, it can still be described, explored and discovered for the world. Stern or Pallas, Humboldt or miss Trollope, Basil-Hall and prince Pückler-Muskau, each of them could benefit from undertaking their own kind of trip here, they could find here still untouched material for every kind of a journey. (my own translation, quoted after Burkot 23-24)<sup>91</sup>

Kraszewski was involved in many patriotic activities, he travelled to the East and to the West, and apart from numerous works of fiction, he composed a few works about his journeys, for instance *Memoirs from Volhynia, Polesya and Lithuania [Wspomnienia z Wołynia, Polesia i Litwy]* (1840), *Images from Life and Travels [Obrazy z życia i podróży]* (1841), *Memoires from Odessa [Wspomnienia z Odessy]* (1845-46). The idea of a mission, of Poles’ superior spirituality, and a Romantic belief in nature was typical to Polish Romantics.

The three key poets of Polish Romanticism: Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), Juliusz Słowacki (1809-1849) and Zygmunt Krasiński (1812-1859), all frequently used travel tropes both in their poetry, fiction and non-fictional texts. In Zygmunt Krasiński’s travel account on *London and Messina* (1839), the comparison of the West, heartless and materialistic, and the youthful, energetic East, brings about a conclusion that Poles have a unique ability to synthesise Nature and Civilization (Bracewell 126). As observed by Bracewell, such patterns in Polish

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<sup>91</sup> “Gdy gdzie indziej potrzeba dla odkrycia nowych i nieznanych krain płynąć . . . przez lody lub iść do źródeł Nilu, gdzie już tylko zginęło; kiedy indziej podróżni zmuszeni są bardzo dawno wiadome, widziane spisane, oklepane rzeczy powtarzać coraz na inszy sposób, kiedy już aż do znużenia wymalowane są, objaśnione, upoetyzowane i brzegi Renu, i góry Szkocji, i biedne chaty wieśniaków Irlandii (daleko gorsze od naszych); kiedy nowych zwierząt naturaliści muszą szukać w głębi ziemi (mamuty), nowych roślin na dnie morza (algi) – u nas, w krajach słowiańskich, wszystko jest jeszcze w stanie dziewiczym, do opisu, do wynalezienia i odkrycia przed światem. Stern czy Pallas, Humboldt czy miss Trollope, Basil-Hall i książę Pückler-Muskau, każdy by tu swój rodzaj podróży mógł z korzyścią przedsięwziąć, do każdej z nich znajdują się jeszcze nietknięte materiały”(Kraszewski, qt by Burkot 23-24).

Romanticism hint at the existence of an uneasy mixture of superiority and inferiority among Polish writers (126). Indeed, the profound crisis caused by the dissolution of the state, the threat of losing national identity, resulted in creating a vision of rebirth, of moral victory, of a spiritual – and as a result, political – triumph. One of the functions of Romantic travel was thus to create an alternative to the grim reality of partitioned Poland, to escape into other realms, of fantasy, or simply of difference. In many cases, it was an actual escape, as in the case of Waclaw Seweryn Rzewuski (1784-1831) who travelled extensively through Egypt, Turkey and Arabia, receiving from one of the tribes the title of “Emir”. Even when he came back to his native lands, it is said that he lived in an “Oriental” way (Bojarska). Interestingly, the figure of Rzewuski became so well-known that it inspired Juliusz Słowacki, who wrote a poem “A reflection on Waclaw Rzewuski” [“Duma o Waclawie Rzewuskim”] (1832).

Even though this intensification of travel was often indirectly triggered by repressions and the necessity to leave the country or disappear for a period of time, it was also, according to Burkot, an opportunity to overcome the isolationism of the Sarmatian era (38). Travel gave the possibilities of encountering other cultures, of confronting own traditions with different customs, and of exploring the self (38). It also led to overthrowing old patterns in literature and introducing new trends, new forms, and new themes. “Travel [writing], by the changing space, the varying impressions, and the dynamism that constitute it, transformed the style of feeling and portraying: it modernised the metaphoric, it enriched both the vocabulary and the sphere of poetic associations”, says Burkot (39)<sup>92</sup>.

### **Twentieth Century Travel**

At the beginning of twentieth century, travel became much more available for Poles, especially after their country regained independence in 1918. The advent of the Second Republic of Poland meant that diplomatic relations were established with many countries of the world, and the tourism industry started to grow: the first Polish tourist office, Orbis, was created in 1920. This intensified mobility would make authors ask themselves whether it is still worth writing about travel, in a time when their readers are able to explore the world themselves. Twentieth-century writers often felt the need to offer justifications as to why they choose to describe their journey. A travel account is worthwhile, if it is written from an unusual destination, or from one particularly relevant for the writer’s contemporaries; another

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<sup>92</sup> “Podróż przez konstytuującą ją zmienność przestrzeni, zmienność wrażeń, dynamikę, zrewolucjonizowała lirykę romantyczną, zmieniła styl przeżywania i obrazowania: unowocześniła i przeobraziła metaforykę, wzbogaciła słownictwo i sferę poetyckich skojarzeń” (Burkot 39).

justification for writing was the use of an unexpected means of transport (Bracewell 256). Far-away lands were still awaking readers' interest, which is why explorers such as Ferdynand Ossendowski (1886-1945) gained great popularity. His many travel accounts – from India, China, Japan, Russia, Central Asia, or North Africa – were widely read and translated to other languages. He was compared to the travel adventure writer Karl May, as well as to Rudyard Kipling (Reszczyński). Two journeys that fit in the category of unusual means of transport are those of Kazimierz Nowak, who crossed Africa on a bicycle, as well as the one of Halina Korolec-Bujakowska, who – together with her husband – went from Poland to China on a motorbike and described her journey in *Mój chłopiec, motor i ja [My Boy, the Motorbike, and Me]* published posthumously in 2011.

Other outstanding travel accounts from before the First World War, are Teodor Tomasz Jez's "Opowiadanie z podróży po koloniach polskich w Ameryce Północnej [Story from a trip around Polish settlements in North America]" (1902), as well as Waclaw Sieroszewski's account from a journey through Siberia, Manchuria and Japan (1903)<sup>93</sup>, both of which are included in the anthology of Polish 20<sup>th</sup> century reportage. Nevertheless, reportage as a genre that describes both travel, as well as political and social events, was still in its infancy at that time. It was after the First World War that reportage flourished as a genre – this will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Of course, certain destinations, although already extensively written about, like Italy or Greece, would still attract visitors (and writers) just out of "the sheer weight of cultural prestige" (Bracewell 256). Italy was usually the most coveted destination, as a repository of Roman heritage, classic beauty and ideal form. Polish twentieth-century writers were frequent guests on the Apennine Peninsula: among them were Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (1894-1980), Zbigniew Herbert (1924-1998), Witold Gombrowicz (1904-1969) and Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004). While filled with admiration for the Italian culture and landscapes, they would distance themselves from nineteenth-century travel accounts. According to Joanna Ugniewska, Iwaszkiewicz criticised the epic work of Józef Kremer, *Podróż do Włoch [Journey to Italy]* (1859-64), finding it too didactic and excessively filled with information and details – indeed, the book was so large that it had to be published in five volumes. Unlike his predecessor, Iwaszkiewicz avoided a display of erudition and did not prove a fascination solely for the classic form. Instead, he underlined his lack of knowledge and his attempt to encounter Italy

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<sup>93</sup> The Polish titles are, respectively, "Opowiadanie z wędrówki po koloniach polskich w Ameryce Północnej" ("kolonie polskie" here are understood presumably as settlements), and "Przez Syberię i Mandżurię do Japonii. Kartka z podróży [Through Siberia and Manchuria to Japan. Postcard from a Journey]".

through direct experience (22). He also questioned the traditions of the travel writing genre, finding meticulous descriptions of the landscapes and works of art “irritating”<sup>94</sup> (23). Iwaszkiewicz thus preferred to write about his travels in an autobiographical mode, focussing on his personal experience, rather than describing his journey in the style of a classicist’s travelogue. In this undertaking, he was closer to travel reportage, which also attempts at presenting the subjective experience of the narrator without losing the documentary function of the text.

While for some, among them Zbigniew Herbert, a journey to Italy resembled a pilgrimage, for other writers such an admiration seemed excessive. Witold Gombrowicz, conscious of this idealized image of Italy, avoided the clichés and openly mocked the Polish adoration of Italy. In the sketches from his 1938 journey, he ironically contrasted the commonplace exclamations about the beauty of the landscape, with the mundane reality of travel (Ugniewska 28). Like Gombrowicz, who derided Polish inferiority complexes in the face of the Eternal City, Kazimierz Brandys (1916-2000), finding himself in Italy in 1950s, also subverted clichés through humour. In the words of Joanna Ugniewska, he transformed weakness to ironic distancing, and cultural poverty into a sort of advantage (31). Brandys called Poles “Europeans by correspondence” and felt nostalgic about the beauty of the dilapidated houses in his homeland (Ugniewska 31). His parody of Polish tourists was however intertwined with deep reflections on culture, consumerism and with a critique of Western societies.

Such was the tone of travel accounts written in the first decades after the advent of communism in Poland. Nevertheless, travel impressions of writers who remained in the country despite of communist rule, were different from the ones written by authors that emigrated to the West. Among the émigrés were Czesław Miłosz, Witold Gombrowicz, and many other illustrious intellectuals, but also regular Poles, who – upon obtaining a foreign passport – were not subjected to as many limitations of travel as their countrymen in Poland.

Although Poles had long traditions of travelling and were eager to go abroad, in the first years of communism, it was practically impossible. Paweł Sowiński, author of a study on vacations in communist Poland, lists the requirements for obtaining a permission to go abroad in the first decade after the war. One had to report to the Passport Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw, fill a request form and attach up to twelve different documents: from a certificate from the tax office, through marriage and employment certificates, to proofs of having family

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<sup>94</sup> Ugniewska refers to Iwaszkiewicz’s comments on Kremer in his *Travels to Italy* from 1977 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2008).

abroad certified by Polish consulate in that country (Sowiński 51). Nevertheless, fulfilling these bureaucratic requests was only one condition – proving one’s loyalty to the Party was even more important. Given the destruction and poverty of the country after the war, and extreme measures undertaken by the Stalinist regime, tourism was almost inexistent in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

In the years of Władysław Gomułka, First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party between 1956-1970, tourism abroad increased from 172,000 travellers going out of the country to 871,000 at the end of his rule (Sowiński 148)<sup>95</sup>. The grand majority of these journeys had socialist countries as destination, because going to the capitalist democracies was too expensive and rarely permitted by the authorities, which feared that Poles would defect to the West (Sowiński 150)<sup>96</sup>. Individual travellers were subjected to numerous controls and interrogations, had to provide countless certificates, and were obliged to return their passports to the local police station upon returning from their journey. As Sowiński remarks, the obligation to apply for the passport and the necessity of bringing various documents, created many occasions for the authorities to interrogate the petitioner, assess his or her loyalty and probe into their possible connections abroad (161). Nevertheless, giving the citizens a theoretical possibility of going abroad, even if such journeys were in practice rather difficult to organise, was an important move of the Polish authorities, as it created a semblance of freedom and normality. The modern idea of leisure, free time, and holiday was becoming increasingly important all across Europe and socialist states realised that their citizens will demand to participate in it too. Clearly, the state wanted to maintain its monopoly also in this area. As maintains Diane Koenker, author of a study on Soviet idea of vacation, the idea of travel as a holiday was a result of a negotiation between the regime and the people who wanted to have a notion of a “good life” (Loc 85). However, vacationers were not supposed to simply rest and relax, there was “a distinctive blend of purpose and pleasure in Soviet vacation policy and practice” (Loc 85). Permissions for a holiday abroad were also a tool for the state to reward those who were loyal to the system, and punish those who were not.

In the period between 1971 and 1980, travelling abroad became even more accessible, although the trips within the Soviet Bloc still constituted more than 90% of all foreign travel

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<sup>95</sup> Sowiński analysed records available at the archives of the Institute for National Memory [Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – IPN], IPN 0397/262, t. 1, *Turystyka 1971* [*Tourism 1971*], “Statystyka Polska – Materiały Statystyczne GUS Polish Statistics – Statistical Material of the Central Office of Statistics]” no 124. p. 25.

<sup>96</sup> Indeed, state-organised group travel (often on a “collective” passport, allowing the individual to cross the border only as part of an organised group), was often an occasion to stay abroad for good. Based on the data, Sowiński assesses that there were many such occasions, as group leaders often reported that several persons were missing from the group on their return journey.

(Sowiński 236). In this period, individual travel became more prevalent than organized travel. Apart from being an occasion for sightseeing or having a holiday at the beaches of Greece, Yugoslavia, or Italy, travel created an opportunity to buy products unavailable in Poland. While this *turystyka handlowa*, or “commercial tourism”, was officially condemned for tarnishing Poland’s reputation, Sowiński argues that unofficially, the authorities would turn a blind eye to this practice (243). This, too, was a way to make the citizens believe that they can have access to products that appeared to them as symbols of modernity<sup>97</sup>.

Paradoxically, few possibilities of travel for regular citizens were matched by a great interest in travel writing, reportage from abroad, photographic depictions of far-away places that one could never see with their own eyes. Reporters, or travel writers, adopted a role of emissaries, or cultural mediators, who brought the world to those, who could not experience it first hand. Probably everyone who grew up in communism remembers the adventure books by Arkady Fiedler (1894-1985), who travelled around the world. Equally popular in that time were travel books by explorers of the polar region, Alina (1907-1993) and Czesław Centkiewicz (1904-1996). Many people were fascinated by the exploits of Polish mountain climbers, who reached the highest peaks of the world, including Mount Everest, K2, Nanga Parbat, Gasherbrum, or Lhotse. Many of them wrote travel accounts and memoirs, for instance Wanda Rutkiewicz (1943-1992), first European woman on Everest, or Wojciech Wróż (1942-1986), who wrote a gripping account from an expedition on Kanchenjunga. While there were many literary travellers in that period, like Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Andrzej Banach (1910-1990), or Edward Stachura (1937-1979), it was travel reportage that reached even wider audiences. Among most popular travelling reporters were: Ryszard Kapuściński (1932-1937), Olgierd Budrewicz (1923-2011), Lucjan Wolanowski (1920-2006), Kazimierz Dziewanowski (1930-1998), Monika Warneńska (1922-2010), as well as some of the authors studied in this dissertation: Wiesław Górnicki, Wojciech Żukrowski, and Wojciech Giełżyński. The hunger for stories on other cultures and lands was also expressed by the popularity of travel-related magazines: *Świat* [*The World*], a weekly published from 1951 to 1969; *Dookoła Świata* [*Around the World*], a youth travel magazine (issued in years 1954-1976, in sale again from 2011); *Poznaj Świat* [*Discover the World*], travel and geography magazine published since 1948; as well as *Kontynenty* [*The Continents*], a monthly travel magazine published in years 1964-1989, reactivated as a travel reportage magazine in 2012.

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<sup>97</sup> These products ranged from foods unavailable in Poland, like chewing gum or chocolate bars, through clothes, jewellery to home appliances or IKEA furniture. Aficionados would bring music records or thematic magazines and books.



### **The New/Old Tropes in Socialist Travel Writing**

The accounts of reporters analysed in this dissertation, although a product of their era, bear a certain resemblance to the accounts of earlier travellers. Jerzy Ros' reportage starts with several chapters which describe his journey to India on a Polish ship, the details of the journey, the anecdotes on other passengers and events on board. Incidentally, at that point of his narrative, he mentions the first travellers that reached India by ship: Marco Polo, Vasco da Gama, as well as the Poles: Gaspar da Gama and Erazm Kretkowski. He seems to – more or less consciously – draw a parallel between their travel of exploration, and his own. Similarly, Witold Koehler emphasises the fact that he travels to India by air, and similarly to Ros, recounts various parts and aspects of his journey. In both reportages, this long introduction to India by means of retelling the air or sea travel, adds to the sense of excitement and anticipation. In this way, Ros' and Koehler's accounts resemble the early voyages to far-away, yet unexplored lands.

Another trait that links the historical and the socialist-era accounts is the fact that travel remains a prerogative of the elites. In Renaissance it depended on status and wealth of a family, while in communism, it was conditioned by the political context. Seemingly, communism was supposed to bring more equality and democratisation; it has, however, created new hierarchies, and the possibility of travel, more than anything else, was dependent on one's place in that network of power and privilege. Since there was no free, private-owned media, all the reporters were employees of state-controlled newspapers and magazines, and as such higher in the hierarchy than an ordinary Pole, who would probably have much more difficulty to obtain necessary permissions to go abroad. Some of the authors of texts analysed here are even higher in the system of communist institutions: Jerzy Putrament, for instance, was for years at the head of the Polish Writers' Association, while Żukrowski was an employee of the Polish Embassy in India. Therefore, although they like to present themselves as ordinary Poles, trying to convey their impressions from India to readers at home, they are members of a privileged class in a theoretically class-less society.

One of the goals of travel in the socialist view was that it always had to have a purpose. Travel just for leisure would be too "bourgeois", and thus the reporters usually were entrusted – or felt entrusted – with a mission. That mission was to provide more knowledge about a fellow socialist country (as it will be demonstrated in the last chapter, they had no doubt that India should fully adopt socialism), to portray cultural differences to their readers, to appraise certain phenomena in a positive or a negative fashion, and to teach the public about how people

live in other corners of the world. This ideologically-marked, educational aspect was also meant to transform Polish journalists into worldly, culturally-aware men, who act abroad as “ambassadors” of their own country and the system that it adopted. And so, when visiting an Indian household, Ros talks about the progress and development in his own country, along communist ideals (141), and Górnicki constantly campaigns for the abolishment of caste in discussions with Indian interlocutors (147). Giełżyński, on the other hand, does not seem to seek knowledge for himself or to impart knowledge to Indians. Instead, he has a more didactic approach towards his readers: he addresses them frequently, in a prescriptive tone. For instance, when describing certain Indian customs, he urges the reading public: “[b]ut let us avoid such generalisations, let us not say: what a backwards, what an unenlightened country!”(13)<sup>98</sup>.

Furthermore, in a rather romantic vein, the authors of travel accounts to India keep referring to Poland, its landscape, its people and its customs. Several of them, notably Putrament and Gołębiowski, travel to see the steel mills or mines established by Poles, and praise the products that socialist Poland exports to India. They feel nostalgic when they meet a fellow Pole, even despite political differences. They react emotionally to Polish music (Koehler) or other elements of Polish culture encountered in India. Furthermore, their memories of the Second World War are still vivid, and they are able to compare the fate of, for example, Partition refugees. Although they affirm their loyalty to the Soviet Bloc, by referring to Russian travellers to India in the past or Soviet Union’s investments in their times, they also feel European. They occasionally demonstrate their civilizational superiority, using expressions describing someone’s name as sounding “too long for our European ears”<sup>99</sup> (Górnicki 118), or saying that Indians are “deaf to our, European, rational advice”<sup>100</sup>. Nevertheless, they can hardly hide their satisfaction at being able to experience the comfort of a large house, full of servants, or the opportunity of attending elegant receptions at par with other Western visitors. In that sense, Bracewells remark about Eastern European travellers’ approach, characterised by a mixture of superiority and inferiority, seems particularly apt.

### **Postcommunist Travel**

After 1989, however, the citizens of Poland had the same possibilities of travel as their Western European counterparts, but many did not have the means. Nevertheless, the number

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<sup>98</sup> “Ale wystrzegajmy się podobnych uogólnień, nie mówmy zaraz: jaki to zacofany, jaki nieoświecony kraj!” (Giełżyński 13).

<sup>99</sup> “brzmia nieco przydługo jak na nasze europejskie uszy . . . ”(Górnicki 118).

<sup>100</sup> “Hindusi są zupełnie głusi na nasze, europejskie, racjonalne porady . . . ” (Giełżyński 16).

of travelogues or travel reportages published every year is impressive. There are travel books by TV celebrities, like Martyna Wojciechowska, Jarosław Kret or Wojciech Cejrowski, travelogues by young backpackers, like Max Cegielski in 1990s and now Tomek Michniewicz and Marzena Filipczak (author of a book for single woman travellers), and travel reportages from various parts of the world, by authors like Jacek Hugo-Bader, Witold Szablowski, Paulina Wilk, and many others. However, after the economic transformation, travel, like many other products in capitalism, became commercialised. Poles massively go on all-inclusive stays in hotels of Egypt or Tunisia, which are unlikely to inspire any kind of travel writing. Individual travel remains highly popular too, and thanks to the new media, it is often recounted on blogs, which can also be considered as short forms of travel writing. In recent years, just like in other European countries, in Poland too the issue of sustainability, ethics, and value of travel is often raised by academics and journalists<sup>101</sup>. Nevertheless, travel still provides inspiration, and Wikipedia information does not replace nonfictional travel accounts, eagerly read by those interested in a particular culture or region of the world, as well as, in a more pragmatic manner, by those planning a journey or returning from one.

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<sup>101</sup> See, for instance, discussions and articles published on the website: <http://post-turysta.pl/> (last access 10.03.2016).

## PART 2 - REPORTAGE

Apart from literary travels, twentieth century abounded in non-fiction writing which focussed on social issues. Modernity, marked by industrialisation, technological development, growth of cities and ever more complex urban communities, led to new social tensions and divisions. These phenomena aroused the interest of both academics and journalists. In academia, the Chicago school of sociology was pioneering an urban-based, qualitative analysis of the society, which required fieldwork and direct involvement with the studied subjects. Similar were the concerns of early reporters. Ryszard Kapuściński notices a connection between this movement in sociology and the development of reportage in *Lapidarium IV*:

[Robert] Park [founder of the Chicago school] introduced to sociology the practice of fieldwork, of participant observation, of [using] interviews, news clippings etc. It was close to the practice of reportage; many texts by the Chicago school are related to reportage, they are an account of collecting data on the spot, on the ground. (170)<sup>102</sup>

Incidentally, a study on Robert Park and the Chicago School of Sociology, by Rolf Lindner, is entitled: *Die Entdeckung der Stadtkultur. Soziologie aus der Erfahrung der Reportage [The Reportage of Urban Culture]*. Indeed, authors of reportage often display the same social awareness as academics specializing in fields such as anthropology, social sciences or cultural studies, sometimes even sharing methods or subjects of interest. While earlier reportage was closer to travel writing, in twentieth century it ceased to be a merely apodemic (travel) genre, and it became socially and politically engaged (Glensk, 12). This heightened social sensitivity was not only a domain of Americans, although they perceive the popularity of nonfictional accounts as a phenomenon characteristic of their country, calling United States a “fact-minded nation” (Cheney 1). At the turn of nineteenth and twentieth century, an increased interest in the real, the social, and the factual seemed to be *en vogue* in all Western countries, if not around the world.

### 1. Beginnings of Reportage in Western and Eastern Europe

Actually, various European intellectual movements expressed preference of fact over fiction, starting from the first decades of twentieth century. In Weimar Germany, an artistic current appeared called the *Neue Sachlichkeit* – the New Objectivity – which appealed for a

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<sup>102</sup> “Park wprowadził do socjologii praktykę badań terenowych, obserwacji uczestniczącej, rozmów, wiadomości zaczerpniętej z prasy itd. Było to bliskie praktyce reportażu, wiele tekstów szkoły chicagowskiej jest pokrewnych reportażowi, są one relacją ze zbierania danych na miejscu, w terenie” (Kapuściński, *Lapidarium IV*: 170).

more direct, practical engagement of art with real world. The Russian revolutionaries also championed a realistic, fact-based approach, considering novels to be a typical pastime of the bourgeois class. Slightly later, after World War II, Italian film-makers of the Neorealismo trend started to depict social issues, such as poverty, injustice or oppression. Also, the French Nouvelle Vague was characterised by a documentary style and a turn towards realism.

Simultaneously to these trends in art, changes in journalism also took place. While daily newspapers became widespread in nineteenth century, twentieth century brought about a popularisation of magazines of various types, which would feature longer and more in-depth stories, rather than just actual news. Such a format enabled the development of reportage in different forms – the American “feature” (a longer story exploring a particular issue), the French “journalisme engagé” or “reportage subjectif”, or the German “Sozialreportage”. Rudolf Wagner explains that the movement towards reportage began in Germany, following the successes of the “Racing Reporter”, Egon Erwin Kisch, and spread to Soviet Union, where it hailed as the “first truly proletarian genre available” (347). It is true that at first, it was primarily the leftists who championed the new genre. Wagner explains it in the following way:

The rapid changes, the (transitory) visibility of “truth”, the need to provide avenues for reports directly from the workshops, the need to provide stepping stones for an aspiring contingent of writers of working-class origin towards the higher genres, and the insight that the revolution had failed in Europe in 1918 and that the battle was now on for the Communists to conquer the minds of the people to gain hegemony in the superstructure, as Gramsci said, all contributed to the rise of reportage literature. (346)

Prominent thinkers of twentieth century, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and George Lukács, debated on this “new” genre and on its links with fiction. Sartre was an advocate of a writing that has a strong grip on reality. He is even quoted in the entry on reportage in the French dictionary, *Le Petit Robert*, for saying that reportage is a genre that is part of literature (Richards 304). “The ability to grasp meanings instantly and intuitively, and a talent for regrouping them in order to offer the reader immediately comprehensible synthetic wholes, are the qualities most crucial to a reporter”, said Sartre (267). Indeed, the journal “Les Temps Modernes” that he founded together with other French intellectuals just after the Second World War, was a vehicle for engaged literature, and gave much space for reportage as well as, generally, nonfiction writing. Another thinker who wrote about the “new” genre of reportage was George Lukács, yet his views were far from Sartre’s. In his essay “Reportage Oder Gestaltung” [“Reportage or Portrayal”], Lukács explains that reportage, though it is “a

perfectly legitimate indispensable form of journalism” focuses on what is on the surface of things, unconsciously reproducing the fetishist illusions about the outward appearance of reality (Wagner 353). Because it lacks *Gestaltung*, understood as a conscious creative activity or representation, reportage cannot be considered literature, says Lukács (Wagner 353-354). Nevertheless, Lukács believed in realism, which he perceived as a literary genre that conveys the experience of the masses. Perhaps literary reportage as it is known today, with its social engagement and creative methods, would be assessed differently by Lukács?

Documentary genres, in particular reportage, began to develop rapidly both in the West and in the East. In the newly created Soviet Union, artist and intellectuals close to the Left Front of the Arts (and its journal, LEF), championed modern trends such as productivism and factography. According to them, reportage, and more generally, fact-based literature, should serve the socialist cause by depicting working class, large-scale production and represent reality. Subsequently, in 1950s, this idea spread around other countries of the Soviet bloc, and reportage, as well as another Russian documentary genre, called “očerok”, became popular forms of writing (Kuprel 378). Many texts had a primarily propagandist value, and their goal was only to further the communist party message, clumsily copying the same schemes, but some would display literary value as well. It was particularly so in the articles and essays published by the weekly magazine “Ogoniok”, which saw it as their mission to constantly seek new topics, new forms of expression, as explains Jędrzej Morawiecki in his article on reportage in *Ogoniok*<sup>103</sup>.

Simultaneously, in the West, nonfiction soon started to rival fiction. In his *Lapidarium III*, Kapuściński observes how strongly social and political reportage is rooted in the American tradition, giving example of the works by such eminent writers as Mark Twain, Jack London, Herman Melville, Richard Wright, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck and Norman Mailer. John Carey, the editor of the *Faber Book of Reportage*, also mentions these names and includes their texts in his anthology: Twain’s “Americans Abroad” (1867), London’s “San Francisco Earthquake” (1906), or Hemingway’s “German Inflation” (1922). British tradition of reportage includes great literary figures too: Charles Dickens, D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, and Evelyn Waugh (Kapuściński, *Lapidarium III* 107). According to Kapuściński, the American and British reportage is strongly embedded in a liberal tradition, according to which press is a public institution that expresses the interests and opinions of all citizens, and as such must be

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<sup>103</sup> Available in the electronic magazine, Dziennikarze Wędrowni [“Travelling Journalists”], at <http://www.dziennikarze-wedrowni.org/archiwum/archiwum.htm> (last access 10.03.2016)

independent, objective and – as a result – impersonal (113). Thus, in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the reporter is someone who cannot reveal his views and opinions in the text and whose task is to provide as much “pure” information as possible, explains Kapuściński (113). Nevertheless, apart from the Anglo-Saxon tradition, reportage is popular in other cultural contexts, in particular the Continental European one (Poland, Italy, France, Germany, Russia), as well as in the Latin American one (with such celebrated authors as Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, or Mario Vargas Llosa). Kapuściński praises the reportages of many European writers, namely: Claude Roy, Heinrich Böll, Elias Canetti, Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, Ilia Erenburg, Joseph Kessel, Arthur Koestler, Jean Beaudrillard, André Gluksman, Allain Finkelraut, Jacques Derrida, Umberto Eco, and Günter Grass (Kapuściński 106-107). While it is a rather heterogeneous and subjective listing, it reflects the popularity of the genre, used by journalists, philosophers, literary critics and novelists alike.

In Poland, an increased coverage of social issues can be observed already at the turn of nineteenth and twentieth century. It is significant that the first text in the anthology of Polish twentieth-century reportage, edited by Mariusz Szczygieł, is the account of Janusz Korczak, a doctor and pedagogue who died in the Holocaust together with the children from his orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto. In his reportage from 1901, Korczak, with surprising thoughtfulness, describes his visits to the “slums” of Warsaw – the poorest quarters of the city. These visits, aimed at the exploration of the “dark side of the society”, were rather popular among the elites of that time, and Korczak soon realised how inappropriate such voyeurism was: he decided to help the poor instead (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1*: 24-25). Many other writers and journalist in their texts unveiled poverty, discrimination, and deprivation among the most vulnerable members of the society. Urszula Glensk in her study called *Historia słabych: Reportaż i życie w Dwudziestoleciu (1918-1939)* [*The History of the Weak: Reportage and Life in the Interwar (1918-1939)*], gives an insightful image of the themes explored by reporters of that time. After more than a century of occupation by foreign powers, Poland was poor and largely underdeveloped, in comparison with other European nations. The society was divided among class, ethnic and religious lines. By depicting the lives of people who were at the bottom of the social hierarchy, reporters gave a voice to the poor that would otherwise have no means to make their situation known to a wider public (Glensk, *Historia...* 12-13). The sense of urgency and importance that accompanied these reporters (many of whom were women), certainly played a part in shaping the genre. Already then, reportage often included stories of individuals, it presented its protagonists with empathy and understanding, and it didn't shy away from bold

techniques of participatory or investigative journalism (Wanda Melcer, for instance, in order to describe the conditions of the poor, stayed at a homeless shelter).

After the Second World War, realism, or rather social realism, was the binding doctrine, and journalists were supposed to play an important role in introducing and legitimising the new, socialist system. Nonfiction, and in particular reportage, was opposed to “bourgeois” prose, and could serve as a tool of propaganda. A good example of such ideologically motivated texts is the 1950 reportage by Michał Krajewski and Bogdan Ostromięcki, “Ludzie na rusztowaniach [People on Scaffoldings]”<sup>104</sup>. Nevertheless, reportage gradually became a way to unveil the absurdities of the socialist system. Even though the censorship would not allow an open critique of the authorities or of the system, reporters managed to achieve that goal by focussing on details, presenting stories of individuals, visiting small towns and villages. Małgorzata Szejnert, a well-known reporter who started her career under communism, used to say: “since one could not write about the whole, one wrote about the detail”(Loc 27)<sup>105</sup>. Her reportages, as well as those of many of her colleagues, were in fact rather subversive and indirectly contributed to strengthening the opposition to the system. Reportage was also a popular genre in the alternative and underground press, and journalists played an important role in overthrowing the system. They subsequently set out to describe the effects of transformation and illustrate the new, capitalist reality. Moreover, when travel abroad was hardly possible for wider groups of people, reportage from other countries flourished. Today, in Poland, reportage as a genre is popular as ever. Most publishing houses issue book series or collections devoted exclusively to reportage, there are various institutions popularising and teaching this genre (such as the Institute of Reportage or the Reportage Laboratory, both in Warsaw), and scholars publish academic research on the genre and on its representatives (Glensk, Wolny-Zmorzyński, Goban-Klas, Szczygieł and others). The Polish tradition of reportage is discussed in detail in a further section of this chapter, but this topic is preceded by an overview of definitions and delimitations of reportage.

## 2. Reportage: Definitions

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<sup>104</sup> Allegedly, the figure of Mateusz Birkut, protagonist of the famous Andrzej Wajda’s movie *Człowiek z marmuru* (*Man of Marble*) is based on the co-author of this reportage, Michał Krajewski, bricklayer and socialist work leader (Szczygieł 625-626).

<sup>105</sup> “Skoro nie można było pisać o ogóle, pisano o szczególe” (Loc 27). Szejnert’s sentence is quoted by Mariusz Szczygieł in his introduction to a collection of Małgorzata Szejnert’s reportages, *My, właściciele Teksasu: Reportaże z PRL-u* [*We, Owners of Texas: Reportages from PRL*].



The Oxford Dictionary of English defines reportage either as a mass noun that means “the reporting of news, for the press or the broadcasting media”, or as “factual presentation in a book or other text, especially when this adopts a journalistic style”. Other dictionaries (e.g. Merriam Webster, Collins, Cambridge) offer similar definitions, while Encyclopaedia Britannica lists reportage as one type of nonfiction. In fact, in the English-language tradition, what is known as reportage in French and other European languages, is usually labelled as either “New Journalism” or “creative/ literary nonfiction”. While there is no entry on reportage in Wikipedia in English, there is one on New Journalism, in which it is defined as a style that uses literary techniques and a subjective perspective. In this dissertation, however, the term “reportage” will be used, as it refers to the Eastern European context and it is a direct translation of the Polish word “reportaż”. Even though it might be questionable from the point of view of English lexis, the usage of this term will ensure a greater precision and it is more appropriate given the cultural context. The term is by and large used in academic works in English on Polish reportage (for instance in Kuprel 2004). There are several examples: Faber & Faber publishing house issued an anthology of best texts of this genre, *The Faber Book of Reportage*, edited by John Carey, so did Granta magazine, collecting the best reporters’ texts in a volume *The Granta Book of Reportage* (ed. by Ian Jack). Similarly, “The New York Review of Books” recently issued a selection of their best reportage in a book *The New York Review Abroad: Fifty Years of International Reportage*, featuring such authors as Timothy Garton Ash, Nadine Gordimer, Susan Sontag, V.S. Naipaul, or Ryszard Kapuściński. There are also various academic works on reportage from around the world, notably Charles A. Laughlin’s and Rudolf Wagner’s books on Chinese reportage, and George Feifer’s analysis of Russian reportage. Various contemporary works of nonfiction are categorised as reportage, for instance Linda Grant’s *People on the Street: A Writer’s View of Israel*, Alexandra Fuller’s *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier*, Anna Politkovskaya’s *A Dirty War: A Russian Reporter in Chechnya*, Jean Hatzfeld’s *The Antelope’s Strategy*, or Liao Yiwu’s *The Corpse Walker: Real-Life Stories, China from the Bottom-Up* – all of which received awards for best works of reportage<sup>106</sup>. Nevertheless, the line between reportage, nonfiction, essay and travel writing is often blurry. A good case in point is the critical reception of William Dalrymple’s *Nine Lives*. This nonfictional account about spirituality in India is in some reviews called “reportage”, in

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<sup>106</sup> Namely, the Lettre Ulysses Award for Art of Reportage (France) and Ryszard Kapuściński Award for Literary Reportage.

others “travel writing”, or even “collection of stories”<sup>107</sup>. What is it, then, that distinguished reportage from other genres?

Several indications on how to classify a nonfiction work as reportage are given by John Carey in his introduction to *The Faber Book of Reportage*. First, the author insists, a reportage must be an eye-witness account, because this guarantees the authenticity of the text (xxxix). Perhaps only historical reportages could be exempt from this condition. Another requirement for Carey is that a reportage is dated exactly, so that it can be placed in a larger context (xxxix). “The reporter is a private eye working in a public area, and the subject of his report must not be inward or fanciful, but pinned verifiably to the clockface of world time” (xxxix), explains Carey. He does not identify particular subjects that reportage explore, asserting that it is the form of writing rather than the content that matters: any subject can be important, even if it seems trivial at first (xxxix). Moreover, Carey rejects the criterion of immediacy, since it does not really matter if the reportage was written on the spot, just after the event, or much later, after the writer took time to reflect on what he/she witnessed.

In a Polish anthology of reportage, the editor, Mariusz Szczygieł, adopts a similar approach to identify texts belonging to this genre. He bases it on a definition formulated by Egon Erwin Kisch, one of the precursors of the genre, who claimed that reportage is a dry account [of events] elevated to the level of art (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1*: 18). Given that the term “reportage” originates from the Latin verb *reporto* - to report, to bring back - it is important to see the intentionality in texts of this genre: they are written with the intention to reach the recipient. That is why, Szczygieł and the programme board that assisted him in creating the anthology of Polish twentieth-century reportage, decided to include only texts written in the press or in books, leaving aside journals or memoirs, even if in form they were close to reportage. Nevertheless, their ultimate criterion was based on the definition of reportage by Jacek Maziarski in his *Anatomia Reportażu [Anatomy of Reportage]*: “It appears that in debatable cases a general rule to adopt is to consider as reportage only these works in which the relating function is a dominant one - in consequence, those with the domination of action (narrative), description and representation that leads the reader to visualise [events].” (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1*: 19)<sup>108</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> Exerpts from press reviews of *Nine Lives* can be found on Dalrymple’s website: [http://www.williamdalrymple.uk.com/books/nine\\_lives](http://www.williamdalrymple.uk.com/books/nine_lives) (23.04.2015).

<sup>108</sup> “Wydaje się, że w przypadkach wątpliwych generalną zasadą powinno być przyjmowanie za reportaż tylko tych utworów, w których dominuje funkcja sprawozdania, a więc w konsekwencji – dominuje element akcji, opisu, unaoczniającego przedstawienia.” (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1*: 19).

According to Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński, a theoretician of reportage, the genre can be defined as a truthful and realistic representation of facts using artistic forms of expression (178). Thus, it is usually characterised as: imaginative, actual, touching upon an important problem, skilfully depicting reality with literary language, and using a communicative style that takes into account the relation between transmitter and recipient (178). Wolny-Zmorzyński underlines that the poetics of a written reportage originate from the novella, and the two share such traits as short form, single plot of action, simplicity and clarity of the narrative, the dramatic character of the story, a reduced number of protagonists, a cause-effect motivation, a frequent contrasting of events, and a striking ending (178). This seems, however, a definition that applies more to the shorter form of a newspaper reportage rather than a travel reportage book, as the ones analysed here. Other attributes of a reportage are: a good documentation of actual events, and a current topic that the reporter relates from his/her own experience, “from the inside” (181). The theoretician – Wolny-Zmorzyński – quotes the practitioner of reportage, Melchior Wańkiewicz, who used to say that a reporter is an artist that composes his piece from three major strands. The first are documents, the second – facts observed by the reporter, supplemented by what he read in the documents, and the third is the “ingredient”, or in other words, the subjective experience of the reporter, transposed to the language of reportage (181).

Maria Wojtak in her *Analiza gatunków prasowych* [*Analysis of Press Genres*] emphasizes the connection of reportage with real life, which is visible even in titles of newspaper sections devoted to reportage or the titles of reportages themselves: “Closer to life”, “Real life”, “Taken from life” etc. (123). This is also a strategy of authors and publishers of reportage to highlight the authenticity of their texts. Wojtak even mentions the existence of a “factographic pact”, a tacit understanding between the reporter, the publisher and the readers that guarantees authenticity and objectivity of presenting events (123), even if the narrative strategies used in the text originate from fiction. Indeed, these strategies can vary and many authors see reportage as a sort of collage, an assembly of genres, modes of representations and various stylistic patterns. Also in terms of subjects, the reportage looks often like a collage, as it focuses on minute details to present a different take on the whole. By showing a situation or an event from a different perspective, or unveiling its complexity, reportage avoids simplifications and cheap judgements (Wojtak 125). This seems to be the biggest strength of today’s reportage. Given the speed that news travels nowadays, the reportage’s role has changed: it is no longer a primarily informative one. It cannot compete with news and offer a simple relation of events, which the public could already see on the television, follow on the internet, and hear about on the radio (Szczygieł & Tochman 295).

News still provides us with a topic, but today, what matters in reportage is what is absent in the news. . . Reportage should reach where the camera and the microphone of a news journalist will not reach, under the surface of the event. It should be deepened by personal emotion and reflection of the author. In the reportage, the world smells, tastes, it is cold or hot, bright or dark. It evokes calm, disgust or fear. (Szczygieł & Tochman 295)<sup>109</sup>

Reportage, therefore, serves to explain an event, a process or a phenomenon, and to give a multi-dimensional and in-depth picture of it. To sum up the characteristics of reportage listed by various Polish specialists in the field, several traits of the genre can be identified. First of all, authenticity, but also a creative depiction of real-life events, often from a perspective of an individual. Secondly, objectivity, as the author is expected to show a problem or a phenomenon from different perspectives, but also subjectivity: the author has a voice and a character of his/her own, and can choose between various styles and techniques. Finally, reportage displays more emotions than news, and a reporter should be empathetic and try to relate to the readers the experience of his/her protagonists, as well as to sense the feeling of a place, a time, and of the general atmosphere. The primary texts selected for this dissertation all bear the characteristics listed above. They are first-person accounts, presumably authentic, written on the basis of an actual journey. Apart from subjective opinions and perceptions of India, their aim is in large part informative. Nevertheless, the language is vivid, creative, with frequent use of metaphors or comparisons.

### **3. Polish School of Reportage**

Although nonfiction and reportage are genres well-known in Western Europe, Polish reportage was strongly marked by the shift towards facts that occurred as a result of the Russian Revolution. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Polish reporters more often than not espoused leftist views, and the first manifesto of the genre appeared actually in a communist periodical of the interwar period. After the Second World War, reportage in socialist Poland developed in the same way as it did in other countries of the Soviet Bloc, becoming incorporated in the propaganda system. In these times, reportage was defined in the following way:

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<sup>109</sup> “News wciąż daje nam temat, lecz dziś w reportażu ważniejsze jest to, czego w newsie już nie ma. . . Reportaż powinien sięgać tam, gdzie nie sięga kamera i mikrofon depeszowca, pod powierzchnię wydarzenia. Powinien być pogłębiony osobistą emocją i refleksją autora. W reportażu świat pachnie, smakuje, jest mroźny lub gorący, jasny albo mroczny. Budzi spokój, wstręt albo strach” (Szczygieł & Tochman 295).

. . . a journalistic genre, the subject of which is a concrete social situation (a “slice of life”), limited in time and place. There are two basic forms of reportage: informational and analytic. Analytic reportage considers the totality of socially meaningful facts from the perspective of class-party interests and draws conclusions having important practical significance. Reportage is characterized by a stable unity of content and form, ensuring its journalistic effectiveness. It is one of the most common genres in the Soviet general political press; urgent production and economic questions are its main theme. (Free Dictionary online, after *The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (1970-1979))

Certainly, this definition lost its accuracy with the end of the Soviet Union, but the main focus of reportage is still to illustrate a particular social situation, in other words, a “slice of life”. A current definition from a Polish dictionary states that the term “reportage” means:

. . . a genre of prose in between journalism and artistic literature, typical of twentieth century, aiming at a truthful, problematized account of authentic events and phenomena; a recording of facts known to the author from first-hand observation or documentary sources, it usually combines information and an attempt at interpretation of the presented phenomena, rarely giving a straightforward judgement; developed as a separate genre in the press at the end of nineteenth century; the evolution of technology led to the emergence of other forms of reportage: film reportage, audio reportage, photo reportage; as per subject, it is divided into following types: social, real life, travel, political, war, court, or sports reportage; literary reportage often comes close to forms of fictional narrative – novel or short story.<sup>110</sup> (PWN Encyclopaedia Online, my own translation)

Clearly, reportage is perceived in Poland as a sovereign genre that has diverse types and forms and explores various topics. Also, it is significant that the Polish definition notes a particular kind of reportage – literary reportage – and points out at its similarities with fiction.

While the tradition of writing called literary journalism, or reportage, can be found in many countries, Polish school of reportage is a rather exceptional phenomenon. Diana Kuprel, discussing the emergence of “fact literature” in Central and Eastern Europe underlines that: “[t]his intersection of journalism, belles-lettres, and politics was particularly manifest in Poland, which developed a strong tradition of reportage: the press preserved the language,

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<sup>110</sup> “reportaż [fr.], charakterystyczny dla XX w. gatunek prozy z pogranicza dziennikarstwa i literatury artystycznej, mający na celu wiarygodną, sproblematyzowaną relację o autentycznych zdarzeniach i zjawiskach; zapis faktów znanych autorowi z własnych obserwacji lub ze źródłowych dokumentów, zwykle łączy informację z próbą interpretacji przedstawionych zjawisk, rzadziej z ich jednoznaczną oceną; ukształtowany w prasie jako odrębny gatunek pod koniec XIX w.; rozwój techniki spowodował powstanie innych form reportażu: reportażu filmowego, reportażu dźwiękowego, fotoreportażu; ze względu na temat rozróżnia się odmiany: reportaż społeczny, obyczajowy, podróźniczy, polityczny, wojenny, sądowy, sportowy; reportaż literacki zbliża się niekiedy do form narracji fikcjonalnej — powieściowej lub nowelistycznej.” (PWN Encyclopaedia Online).

provided a source of employment for the intelligentsia and the gentry, and fostered opposition to the regime during its partitioning.” (374-377). Kuprel tries to offer an explanation why has it become such a prominent genre in Poland, and not necessarily so in other countries. First, she points out strong traditions in historical, realist and documentary prose, as well as travel writing that preceded the birth of reportage *per se*. Secondly, she attributes the popularity of the genre to the particular political and historical context, the trauma of the two World Wars and the ensuing profound social and economic changes that created a need for a new language (378). That new form of expression was close to a documentary approach, but also left space for individual perceptions and feelings. Kuprel identifies six aspects that make Polish literary reportage unique. The first one is a fairly strong amount of creative subjectivity (in the words of Marek Miller), or “the author’s unique “I” that tries to grasp, understand, order, and then explain that which is to be related” (Kuprel 381). The second aspect is a particular approach to truth, which is not absolute – a true picture can be obtained also when a certain amount of fiction is used. Wańkiewicz, for instance, instead of trying to achieve “documentary truth” preferred a “synthetic” one, but one that grasps the essence of a problem (Kuprel 382). The third aspect is participation, which appears in various degrees of presence. Kuprel claims that according to reporters, “participation is essential to fulfil the hermeneutic function of reporters for it allows them to identify with the otherness they relate” (383). As the fourth aspect, Kuprel lists the explicit implication of the audience, which is called to assume an active, critical role in respect to the story told to the reporter (383). The fifth feature of reportage is its hybrid style, a composition of diverse styles and techniques (Kuprel 384). Finally, the sixth – and, in Kuprel’s words, the most salient – aspect of Polish reportage is its allusiveness.

Given the long tradition of freedom restrictions, censorship and other forms of oppression, both Polish writers and readers developed various ways in which a message could be passed across between the lines. One way was to tell the story of an individual in order to portray a larger issue, another to talk about a problem in a different country, but hinting at the similarities with Poland. Kuprel describes how foreign correspondents specialized in such strategies:

Reporters would use exotic subject matters to write about the home situation; conversely, the home audience would “read” the reportage about some distant land as an allusion to its own situation. In the 1970s and early 80s, Wojciech Giełżyński wrote a number of books about the ideological systems in Cambodia and Vietnam, which his Polish audience automatically read as a critique of the Gomułka era. On the other end of the world, Wiesław Górnicki penned under the ironic title *Zanim zaczną rządzić maszyny* [*Before the Machines Begin to Rule*] a

positive analysis of American capitalism and the development of the humanities; for attentive Polish readers, the book contained an exposé of how the Communist system failed to function. (Kuprel 385)

Certainly, to understand such convoluted allusions, readers needed a certain amount of interpretative skills. Similarly, reporters had to recur to techniques which usually belong to fiction, such as metaphor or allegory (Kuprel 385). Fact and fiction would thus be intertwined in reportage in surprising ways, making this genre a truly unique one, and hardly comparable to nonfiction in other countries.

### **Between Fact and Fiction: Literary Reportage as Polish Speciality**

Reportage is a genre situated on the border of literature and journalism, and it will probably remain an in-between type of writing, or, as Urszula Glensk calls it, a negotiated genre (*Historia...* 13). Even reporters themselves are not sure to which genre their writing belongs to: they are not authors of fiction, neither are they simply covering news. They write about real events, but their way of presenting them is very much a product of a long and demanding creative process. Thus, can an author of reportage be considered as a writer, and assessed with the same criteria as a writer of fiction? Melchior Wańkiewicz elevated reportage to the role of the “father of literature”, claiming that it is as old as human speech, and that it originates from the Latin verb *reporto* - to relate, to retell an event, appealing to the imagination of people who did not witness it (339). He presented a very wide of conception of what reportage is, and traces its Polish origins to medieval chroniclers - although he classifies it as “indirect reportage” as oftentimes their texts were based on accounts of events, and not on events directly witnessed by the writer. Other works that preceded modern reportage are, according to Wańkiewicz, texts by those usually not associated with the journalistic profession, for instance by novelists like Daniel Defoe and Charles Dickens, or by Napoleon, whose lively and evocative bulletins could be considered as early forms of war reporting (342-343).

Indeed, in many cases these two roles overlap, given that especially in history, writers would often also be journalists, publish in a newspaper or magazine, or simply include accounts of true events in their works of fiction. Already half-a-century ago, Wańkiewicz remarked that the incredible modernisation, intensification of transport, development of modern communication, and other breakthrough changes that twentieth century brought about, made the world much smaller, and world issues became also local ones. This made the reporter to be a vital element of the public sphere (Wańkiewicz 347). Wańkiewicz also mentioned travel reporters, like Richard Burton, who made it possible for the larger European public to learn

about places such as India, Africa, or Middle East. Many of these early travellers were affiliated with the newly created press empires, for instance H. M. Stanley's search for Livingstone was financed by the New York's "Herald" owner, James Gordon Bennett. Another pioneer of reportage was the first woman that achieved fame in this profession, Nelly Bly<sup>111</sup>. Wańkowicz retold her legendary journey, in which she challenged the story of Jules Vernes, *Around the World in 80 Days*, and managed to cover the same distance in 72 days. "Real reportage beat fiction by seven days, seventeen hours, and fifty minutes"<sup>112</sup> - concludes the Polish writer (Wańkowicz 357).

In her sketches on reportage, *Po Kapuścińskim [After Kapuściński]*, Glensk underlines that even today, the reporter's connection between a newsroom and a publishing house remains strong. Reportages are often printed first in the press, and later published as a book – this was the case with Ryszard Kapuściński, Małgorzata Szejnert or Krzysztof Kąkolewski, and, more recently, with Wojciech Tochman, Mariusz Szczygieł, Krystyna Kurczab-Redlich, Jacek Hugo-Bader, or Anna Bikont. Often, reporters publish a collection of their texts, sometimes with additional edits or personal commentary. Hanna Krall, a genius of conciseness, while preparing new editions of her texts cut out all the words that seemed unnecessary. In an article on Krall, Paweł Goźlinski explains that the real challenge for a reporter is to tell the same story, about a particular event, phenomenon or person, in a different way. How to make it alive in the mind of readers? Krall's answer is to constantly reshape the form, so that the message is even clearer and more powerful. She looks for a core, an essence of the story – almost similar to the brevity that characterises a poem.<sup>113</sup>

In that sense, the literariness of reportage lies in how creatively a form is chosen by the author to best convey a particular real-life story. The reporter chisels the text to reject all unnecessary or meaningless information and, as a result, makes the story more compelling. Goźlinski maintains that behind Krall's attempt to distil the story to its essence is a longing for a bigger Whole, a search for the universal hidden behind the complexities and the variety of facts of life. Nevertheless, many reporters underline that the best way to depict a bigger issue is to start from details. Małgorzata Szejnert even calls herself a "maniac of details" (interview, Wójcińska 21), and believes that focussing on small things, particular objects, individual

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<sup>111</sup> Her actual name was Elizabeth Cochrane.

<sup>112</sup> "Realny reportaż pobił fikcję literacką o siedem dni, siedemnaście godzin i 50 minut" (Wańkowicz 357).

<sup>113</sup> "Jak opowiedzieć każdą historię, by nie była to wciąż ta sama historia? . . . Odpowiedź brzmi: nożyczki. . . Reporter służy rzeczywistości, jest posłuszny faktom. A literatura? Forma? To medium, ale także przeszkoda do pokonania. Dlatego Krall nieustannie poprawia swoje książki. Każde wydanie jest nieco inne. Z każdego kolejnego ubywa słów." (Goźlinski).



emotions, is what gives authenticity to the story. A detail is often a starting point for a reportage, and serves as a key to illustrating a larger problem. For instance, Angelika Kuźniak, in her 2008 reportage “Ja tam ze śmiercią oswojona [I’ve come to terms with death]”, asks her interviewees to show her the clothes they would like to be dressed in after death and the objects they would like to be put in their coffin. By analysing these clothes and objects, Kuźniak engages in a reflection on aging, solitude, life, death and other imponderables. Another excellent example of detail in reportage can be found in Jacek Hugo-Bader’s travel reportage from Russia, *Biała gorączka [White Fever]*: while stopping at a roadside bar, the reporter follows the nature’s call and goes behind the building. By looking at the traces of urine on the snow left by the previous guests of the bar, he ponders on the different types of travellers stopping at that pub in the middle-of-nowhere. Many reporters stress the fact that a large part of their work consists in collecting material, conducting interviews, getting information, but this stage is followed by an equally important stage: selection. Differently than news journalists, who often try to provide maximum information in the shortest possible form, reportage requires a careful planning and mapping of the material. A good reportage – or a mark of literary skills – is not necessarily about what story it tells, but how is the story told. Like fiction, reportage has to involve the readers, engage their emotions, make them empathise with the protagonists.

While it is impossible for an individual to fully verify the truthfulness of a reporter’s account, much depends on the reporter himself/herself and their approach to facts. What is left for the reader, is a “willed credulity” – a wish to believe (Carey 60). Thus, a reportage is an “act of faith” (60), and as such it differs from literature. A similar belief is expressed by Jerzy Żurek, in an interview with Marek Miller, who concludes that the reader will never be able to assess the truthfulness of each element of the reportage, and thus has to trust the reporter (Miller 178). According to Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński, a reporter is obliged to an almost scientific study of an environment that later s/he describes in an artistic way (179). What is it that reporters do to make their text be considered as art? Urszula Glensk in *After Kapuściński...* lists a number of narrative techniques that reporters employ in their writing, similarly to those employed in fiction, among others: the use of hyperboles, metaphors, impressive comparisons and amplifications, repetitions, changeable rhythm of sentences (243)<sup>114</sup>. Zbigniew Żabicki lists several elements that qualify a journalistic text as artistic prose: one is the adoption of a

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<sup>114</sup> “Hiperbolizacja, metaforyzacja, efektowne porównania i amplifikacje, wykoncypowane powtórzenia, przymiotnikowe formy wielokrotne, granie kontrapunktami, zmienna długość frazy – te zabiegi weszły już do zasobu figur stylistycznych, po które sięgają reportażyści” (Glensk 243).

particular narrative convention, two is the dramatization of events, three is a vivid portrayal of protagonists, and four, focusing the attention on the reporter himself/herself, on his/her work, contacts with people, collecting information, as well as his/her attempts at synthesis (Wolny-Zmorzyński 181-182). Thus, much depends on the writer himself/herself, and often reportage is a mirror that speaks much about the integrity of its author.

### **The Reporter and The Reporter's Persona**

Although many reporters claim that humility is crucial in their profession, the ego of a reporter is just another proof that he/she is an artist, creating, or rather re-creating a reality out of words. "We, reporters" – says Janusz Roszko – "belong, after all, to this category of people who, just like artists of all other disciplines, would like to get a name for themselves . . . [o]ne should openly say that this is one of those professions that rely on the ambition to achieve popularity, fame, a certain reputation" (Miller 50)<sup>115</sup>. Roszko underlines that this can only be done by very hard work and personal investment, which often does not pay well and brings results very slowly (Miller 51). It is understandable that a long and meticulous search for sources, information, as well as energy and time devoted to planning and writing reportage, makes the reporter long for a certain recognition in return. Nevertheless, in some cases the reporter's ego might cloud their judgment, as well as overpower the story and its protagonists.

Indeed, many reportages clearly emphasise the figure of the reporter, whose literary persona sometimes becomes the protagonist of the story presented in a reportage. It is particularly visible in travel reportage, and – more generally – in travel writing, that often present the journey as experienced in reality by the reporter-narrator. This is due to the obvious attempt at retelling one's individual travel, but it also is a technique that renders a different culture more approachable and understandable to the readers, as it is mediated through the reporter/traveller usually belonging to the same culture, acting as an interpreter of otherness. Nevertheless, a reporter that excessively focuses on displaying his/her own travelling persona risks to be considered as egocentric and lacking objectivity. Such allegations were recently expressed in two, rather different, instances. One discussion took place after the issue of Jacek Hugo-Bader's reportage from Broad Peak, in which he showed the sorrow of relatives of dead climbers. The reporter, allowed by the family members to join their expedition, was later

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<sup>115</sup> "My, reporterzy, naleźymy mimo wszystko do tej kategorii ludzi, którzy, tak jak artyści wszystkich innych dyscyplin, pragnęli zdobyć nazwisko, i tego nie ma co ukrywać. Trzeba powiedzieć otwarcie, że jest to jeden z zawodów, który opiera się na chęci zdobycia popularności, sławy, jakiegoś rozgłosu" (Miller 50).

accused of exploiting their grief only to promote his own exploits, as well as of plagiarism from another book on the same events<sup>116</sup>.

Another discussion, this time not about the persona of the reporter as created in the text, but about a reporter's integrity and responsibility was provoked by a biographical reportage on Ryszard Kapuściński, published by Artur Domosławski. The younger journalist gained the trust of Kapuściński's wife to access the reporter's private study and library, and later wrote a book that not only contained much criticism of the reporter's work, but also revealed details from Kapuściński's private life. The family of the reporter blocked the publishing of the book (which appeared eventually in a different publishing house), and sued Domosławski for defaming them to achieve personal popularity as biographer of the famous reporter<sup>117</sup>. Similarly, controversies arise on the issue of how reporters use elements of fiction in their otherwise nonfictional accounts, by changing certain features of their characters, or by condensing traits of several individuals into one figure. This was debated in particular after Domosławski talked to several people from countries visited by Kapuściński and accused the reporter of fictionalising his texts, describing characters that do not exist and events that have not taken place.

### **Authenticity and Readers' Trust**

The discussion of what is and what is not allowed in a reportage seems to continue for years, and the border between fact and fiction remains fuzzy. Certainly, authors of fiction have a greater freedom in the techniques they employ, whether or not they are inspired by real life, while reporters – since they are primarily considered as journalists – are expected to write “the truth”, even though “truth” can have many faces. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of the reporter to give an accurate, even if generalised, dramatized, or emphasised, image of a phenomenon. The reader, while interested in facts, is also aware that a true objectivity is virtually impossible to achieve, and realises that a reportage is an interpretation of (presumably) true events, it is a version of reality as understood and related to the public by the reporter. The reporter is only a medium transmitting the message, but his/her capacity of accurately describing and understanding events is also limited. Marek Miller is convinced that the “self” of the reporter always remains in the centre.

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<sup>116</sup> See the discussion on this matter in the Polish media: Gašior; Popławski; Dobroch.

<sup>117</sup> See discussions on Domosławski's book in press articles and interviews with the author: Stasiuk; Passent; Maziarski & Kaczorowski; Glensk, *Siedem*....

It is the reporter that constitutes the linking element that brings facts together. It is around him, like around a mother in a beehive, that revolves the life of events, which becomes later the object of social interest. It is true that he is the one that ventures out to look for events, rather than events coming to him, but it does not change the fact that stepping into the action, he becomes its protagonist. (Miller 28)<sup>118</sup>

Reporters are aware of this tension between fact and fiction, and many of them find various ways to maintain at least a certain degree of objectivity and to stay true to their readers. One of the methods is to support their account with data. A good example is a somewhat forgotten reportage by Melchior Wańkowicz called “Sztafeta” [“Relay”] from 1938, in which he recounts how the interwar Poland developed its industry: The Central Industrial Area (so-called COP). While some reporters, like Krzysztof Kąkolewski, perceived this text as a prelude to post-war social realist writing, Ryszard Kapuściński praised it as a great reportage, repeating after Wańkowicz that a reporter should not be afraid of numbers (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1*: 392).

Apart from using numbers, another way to add credibility is when the reporter actively participates in the events that he/she describes. This was a method made famous in particular by the legendary German reporter, Günter Walraff. Impersonating an immigrant, or “Gastarbeiter”, or a factory worker, allowed Walraff to unveil various social mechanisms and portray the issues faced by those who are often underrepresented. Such participatory reportage can also yield controversial results: would events unfold in the same way if the reporter would not influence them by his/her participation? Is it fair to create artificial events only to test an assumption of a reportage? Once again, the creative, but often controversial reporter Jacek Hugo-Bader was at the centre of such debate. In one of his participatory reportages, he dressed into a homeless person to describe the reactions of passers-by and to see how much money he can raise in a given time. Hugo-Bader repeated this experiment, doing it once in 1990s, at the beginning of Polish transformation, and two decades later, when Poland was hailed a “green island” among the pan-European economic crisis<sup>119</sup>.

Another strategy to improve the authenticity of a reportage is by showing the details, the little traits of humanity in people or situations otherwise removed from the reader’s experience. Hanna Krall recalls how she called a grandson of her protagonist living in America

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<sup>118</sup> “To on, reporter, jest elementem łączącym, spajającym fakty. To wokół niego, jak wokół matki w ulu, toczy się życie zdarzeń, które staje się potem obiektem społecznego zainteresowania. To prawda, że udaje się on na poszukiwanie zdarzeń, a nie przychodzą one do niego, ale nie zmienia to postaci rzeczy, że wkraczając w akcję staje się jej bohaterem” (Miller 28).

<sup>119</sup> Jacek Hugo-Bader reportages appeared in 1993 as “Charlie w Warszawie” [“Charlie in Warsaw”] and in 2009 as “Walka Klas Trwa!” [“The Class War Persists!”]. Both were published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

only to ask him about the colour of his grandmother's favourite armchair – she needed to know the colour in order to better picture the person that she was writing about. Krall explains this obsessive attachment to reality: “I am addicted to facts just like I am addicted to a milky Nescafe for breakfast. If I don't know this one thing, I cannot write further” (Antczak 48)<sup>120</sup>. Similarly, this loyalty to real events makes reporters very conscious of every breach in the attachment to facts. Wojciech Jagielski, when writing his reportage from Uganda, wanted to encapsulate stories of various children-guerrilla soldiers, and as a result, created fictional characters to whom he ascribed the cumulated experiences of many young fighters. However, Jagielski warns the readers of this literary trick, and even shies away from calling his text a reportage, preferring the term “documentary prose” (Wójcińska 79). Often, especially when a reportage touches a taboo issue, or when it can bring unwanted attention to its protagonists, reporters change the names of their interviewees or leave only their initials. However, they are then expected to notify the reader of doing so. Sometimes, reporters choose to conceal the customary information about “who, when and how?” to hide the identity of their protagonist. This was the case in Wojciech Tochman's reportage “Wściekły pies” [“Mad Dog”] (2007) about a homosexual Catholic priest. Urszula Glensk points out that this reportage – in the form of a sermon – falls more under the category of a novella rather than the one of nonfiction, because it is so general, that the verification of facts is virtually impossible (Glensk, *Po Kapuścińskim...* 172). Nevertheless, knowing Tochman's other texts and his reliability as a reporter, she understands why such few facts are revealed – so that the priest's anonymity remains intact – and she trusts the author (172).

What results from these examples is that the relation of reportage to truth – and to fiction – is always a negotiated one. What could be difficult to accept in one text, is acceptable in another. While Hugo-Bader's experiment on the empathy and compassion towards the homeless can be justified given how important questions it raises, Jerzy Urban's reportage on clients of matrimonial offices is much more ethically dubious. Urban, working at the time as a journalist for the *Po prostu* magazine, opened a fictional match-making office in Krakow under a false name of Sylwester Kwiatkowski. He described the meetings with a range of women, mercilessly deriding their hopes and emotions, or even calling them “idiots” (Szczygieł, *100/XX...* 1: 707). And it is not only the question of text, but also the question of the author: for instance, if a student of journalism presents a reportage similar to Tochman's story, with

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<sup>120</sup> “Jestem uzależniona od faktów, tak jak od neski z mlekiem na śniadanie. Jak czegoś nie wiem, nie mogę dalej pisać” (Hanna Krall interviewed by Jacek Antczak, 48).

no particulars, and no verifiable sources, it is less credible than the same text from a journalist who has already built a relation of trust with his readers. It is easier to forgive Kapuściński or Wańkowicz for fictionalising their accounts to achieve a greater goal (for instance, unveil the mechanisms of dictatorial power, like Kapuściński in the “Emperor”).

### **The Literary as a Political Tool**

The boundary between fact and fiction runs differently depending on the cultural context. Krzysztof Mrozwicz, in his afterword to Glensk’s book *Po Kapuścińskim: szkice o reportażu* [*After Kapuściński: Sketches on Reportage*], notes that the reporter’s relationship with facts is different in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, and in the Latin American/Southern European one. The former has a stricter approach and grants less liberty to the author, while the latter is more imaginative and allows a greater degree of fictionalisation. According to Mrozwicz, Kapuściński belonged to the Latin, or Southern tradition, just like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Arturo Perez-Reverte, and Tiziano Terzani (Glensk, *Po Kapuścińskim...* 254).

However, other Polish reporters did not necessarily adopt a similar approach - Wojciech Giełżyński or Wiesław Górnicki for instance used to declare that they remain faithful to details. Their accounts are more matter-of-factly, as opposed to Kapuściński’s personal reflections on the nature of power, on poverty, on marginalisation, or on injustice. Already in early Polish reportage, such approach could be observed. Teodor Tomasz Jeż starts his 1902 account from travel around North America in the following way: “I will now begin a story – a simple, matter-of-factly story, the biggest advantage of which will be the pure truth. Not even for once, not even for one line, I will not stray towards literary fantasy (Szczygieł, *100/XX...* 1: 44)<sup>121</sup>. One of the reporters analysed in this dissertation, Wiesław Górnicki, opposed the categorising of reportage as a literary genre, because “[o]nly a purely journalistic reportage, devoid of literary inclinations, unhealthy aspirations, strictly holding on to reality, can fulfil a constructive, immediate function in the press” (qt after Magdoń 72)<sup>122</sup>. His point could have been influenced by the communist line that recommended reporters to avoid embellishments and

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<sup>121</sup> “Przedsiębiorę opowiadanie – proste, bezpretensjonalne opowiadanie, w którym zaletę główną stanowić będzie prawda czysta. Ani na chwilę, ani na linię fantazji literackiej cugłów nie popuszczę.” (Teodor Tomasz Jeż, “Opowiadanie...” 43).

<sup>122</sup> “Po wtóre, bardzo gorąco przeciwstawiłem się sztucznemu włączaniu reportażu dziennikarskiego do dyscyplin literackich (...). Konstruktywną, doraźną funkcję w prasie może spełniać tylko czysto dziennikarski reportaż, pozbawiony literackich ciągotek, niezdrowych aspiracji, trzymający się bezwzględnie realnej rzeczywistości.” Wiesław Górnicki in “Międzynarodowe spotkania reporterów” [“International reporters’ meetings”], *Prasa Polska* nr 8, 1958, p. 22, quoted by Andrzej Magdoń (72).

fictionalisations in reportage, nevertheless, it is a valid opinion shared by many other reporters. For some of them, literariness of reportage was not even so much a question of method, or borrowing techniques from fiction, but rather the choice of topics, protagonists, and narratives. Jerzy Lovell, a classic of Polish reportage, said that “[t]he literariness of reportage does not lie, as some say, in a beautiful style, rich vocabulary, or the inclusion of fictional elements. The literary reportage is made by its theme [subject], and not by its form.” (qt after Magdoń 135)<sup>123</sup>. Another well-known reporter, Krzysztof Kąkolewski, used to say that life creates stories that no fiction can compare to, and language in a reportage should be “transparent”, not too distract the reader from the story (Magdoń 135).

However, as Polish journalists became more and more bold in opposing the communist regime, they found that the literary can become useful tool in passing across certain, rather subversive ideas. Authors of the entry on reportage in the *Bible of Journalism*, underline that the success of literary reportage in communist Poland was actually due to censorship and ideological restrictions:

In communism, the printed word was used to hide the truth. If a talented reporter wanted to share his observations [with readers] in the official [as opposed to underground] press, he looked for ingenious ways of doing so. Having to outwit the authorities lead to a great literary game. One could not write about the system itself, so reporters described the fate of an individual. One could not write about the whole, so one would write about the details. One could not write about what is reflected in the mirror, so one would write about what is reflected in a sliver of a mirror. “We were saying about reportage that it is an art that allows to see the sea in a water drop” - wrote Adam Michnik. The reader knew that the seemingly banal, everyday images conceal a diagnosis of the system. (Szczygieł and Tochman 294)<sup>124</sup>.

This great literary game that outstanding reporters excelled at, was thus a play with readers, who learned very fast to read between the lines and to interpret signs that were hidden in the reporter’s message.

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<sup>123</sup> “Literackość reportażu nie polega, jak niektórzy sądzą, na pięknym stylu, kwiecistym słownictwie, włączaniu doń fikcji. Reportaż literacki konstruowany jest przez temat, a nie formę.” (Jerzy Lovell in an interview with A. W. Pawluczuk, “Jak być reporterem” [“How to be a reporter”], *Kontrasty* nr 10, 1976, p. 32. Quoted after Andrzej Magdoń, 135).

<sup>124</sup> “W komunizmie słowo drukowane służyło ukrywaniu prawdy. Jeśli utalentowany reporter chciał w oficjalnej prasie podzielić się swymi obserwacjami, szukał na to wymyślnych sposobów. Przechytrzenie władzy zapoczątkowało wielką literacką grę. Nie wolno było pisać o samym systemie, więc reporterzy opisywali losy indywidualnego człowieka. Nie wolno było pisać o ogóle, więc pisano o szczególe. Nie wolno było pisać o tym, co widać w lustrze, więc opisywano, co widać w odłamku lustra. “Mówiliśmy o reportażu, że jest sztuką, która pozwala zobaczyć w kropli wody – morze” – napisał Adam Michnik. Czytelnik wiedział, że w banalnych z pozoru obyczajowych obrazkach kryje się istotna diagnoza systemu” (Szczygieł & Tochman 294).

#### 4. Polish Reportage: Beginnings

According to Diana Kuprel, the specificity of Polish reportage relies in a large part on the particular historical and political context in which the genre developed (378). The following two sections present Polish reportage's evolution on the backdrop of historical events. Even though reportage is a *par excellence* twentieth-century genre, the documentary style of writing, the development of a reporting function in texts, both by fiction writers and journalists, started to appear already in nineteenth century. According to Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński, the first press reportage in Polish was Józef Ignacy Kraszewski's, "Pracownia Suchodolskiego" ["Suchodolski's Workshop"], published in *St. Petersburg's Weekly* in 1838, and as first literary reportage, the writer Władysław Reymont's *Pielgrzymka do Jasnej Góry* [*Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra*] (1895). In terms of travel reportage, Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Listy z podróży do Ameryki* [*Letters from a Journey to America*] (1880) can be considered as an early example of the genre, although Sienkiewicz wrote it in form of letters published in the press, and did not consider himself to be a reporter (Horodecka 15). Early reportage is, however, closely related with other genres, such as letters, memoirs, and other non-fictional accounts. As observed by Sztachelska,

It [reportage] emerged from a huge bloc of documentary prose, as a particular, subjective form of relating (direct relation) of events, people and facts, having a clearly reporting function. In its best realisations, it displayed characteristics that in twentieth century begin to distinguish it as a genre: actuality, authenticity, action, and the reporter's personal attitude towards the subject. (153)<sup>125</sup>

The second half of nineteenth century witnessed an intensive development of journalism in Poland, and as a result, the position of reporters improved. They often were full-time employees of newspapers, they became much more professionalised, and began to specialise in various fields. Sztachelska lists a few discerning traits of reportage in that period. Firstly, most texts were based on the motive of travel of some sort, which makes reportage closely related to mobility, to discovery of unknown territories, to recording subjective impression and observations, and gathering information about people and places (160). Secondly, the texts feature a particular set of roles, in which the narrator (author) is usually side-by-side of the reporter, whose exploits are retold in the reportage and constitute its "depicted world" ["świat

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<sup>125</sup> "[o reportażu] Wyodrębnił się z ogromnego bloku prozy dokumentarnej jako szczególna, przedmiotowa forma powiadomienia (relacja bezpośrednia) o wydarzeniach, ludziach i faktach, o wyrazistej funkcji sprawozdawczej i w najlepszych swoich realizacjach przejawiał te cechy, które w wieku XX będą podstawą jego rozpoznawalności jako gatunku: aktualność, autentyczność, akcyjność oraz osobisty stosunek reportera do przedmiotu" (Sztachelska 153).



przedstawiony”] (160-161). Thirdly, the texts use a rhetoric of truthfulness, or in other words, cite facts, numbers, quotations etc. in an attempt at authentication (161).

As it was mentioned earlier, reportage as a genre developed in Poland from a different stylistic forms, predominantly documentary prose, travel writing, and other types of nonfictional accounts. The travel accounts of Ferdynand Ossendowski and another traveller of that era, Mieczysław Lepecki, were well-known and widely read. Nevertheless, in twentieth century a new social sensitivity began to develop among the reading public. Ever since Poland regained independence in 1918, writers also regained the freedom to cover a wide range of issues, and speak their mind even on ideologically charged topics. Henryk Sienkiewicz, Antoni Słonimski, Gustaw Morcinek, Józef Mackiewicz began to depict the suffering of the weakest. Similarly, the fictional and nonfictional texts by prominent women writers - Maria Dąbrowska, Zofia Nałkowska, Maria Kuncewiczówna - were good examples of how problems resulting from social inequality, injustice, and economic deprivation became questions discussed more largely at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, writing was no longer a domain of only fiction writers. Journalists were increasingly becoming reporters - writing longer and more analytical texts, based on direct observation and interviews. Among those journalists-reporters Urszula Glensk lists, among others, Ksawery Pruszyński, Konrad Wrzos, Melchior Wańkowicz, Jan Dąbrowski, Stefania Zahorska, Paweł Hulka-Laskowski, Franciszek Gil, Aleksander Janta-Pończyński, Kazimiera Musiałówna, and Józef Mackiewicz (*Historia...24*). They took up various issues, such as poverty, discrimination, women rights, often breaking taboos and countering prejudices. They portrayed the fates of people whose voice would otherwise remain unheard: the destitute, the homeless, the uneducated. Thus, at the beginning of twentieth century, reportage was not only a “mirror” of life, but it also served as a tool for initiating social change. This interventionist aspect remains one of the functions of reportage today, as various issues covered and popularised by reporters become, as a result, topics of public debate, often challenging social norms. For instance, in contemporary Poland, reportages about gay community or child abuse by priests caused an important response from the society<sup>126</sup>.

Gradually, reportage started to be perceived as a genre among the Polish public. It was an uncomfortable trend for some, like for medical doctor Władysław Sterling, who was dissatisfied with journalists poking around in the field of medicine, and criticised such modern

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<sup>126</sup> Such texts oftentimes attained a cult status, as in the case of Barbara Pietkiewicz’s “Gorzki fiolet” [“Bitter purple” (1981), first reportage on homosexuals in Poland (*Szczygieł, 100/XX... 1: 17*)

whims as this “swarm of reportage” (Glensk, *Historia...* 21). Nevertheless, readers of that time were increasingly eager to read about real events, to know about facts and to follow the news. According to Urszula Glensk, the interwar was the period when reportage became an independent genre, no longer exclusively linked with accounts of travel – it started to be perceived as “applied literature”, as texts that were supposed to fulfil a particular role in the society: an informative, educational, emancipatory or investigative one (*Historia...* 23). It was the concern with the current problems, for instance economic difficulties, as well as an unstable international situation, that shaped the questions the reportage addressed. Thus, many reporters wrote about social exclusion, poverty, violence, discrimination of women, as well as important events abroad, particularly in Russia (at the beginning of its experiment with communism), and Spain, divided by war.

The first Polish intellectuals fascinated by the power of reportage were interwar leftists, sympathising with communism. As described by Glensk in *Historia słabych*, many Polish writers followed the trends observed among the new Soviet avant-garde artists, especially the milieu of the New LEF, and promoted an engaged – or even propagandist – kind of reportage. This was done particularly by journalists of *Miesięcznik Literacki* [Literary Monthly] who – for instance – organised competitions for best reportage written by amateurs, and published theoretical texts on this new type of reportage. Aleksander Wat wrote the first programme article in 1929, in which he informed the readers about the goals of “New LEF” literature, and called for replacing fiction with fact: reportage, document, biography, essay and so on. The authors of “Literary Monthly” named this new trend “faktowizm” or “faktomontaż” (it could be translated into English as “factism” and “fact-editing”). The reporter was to serve the ideology, become a voice of the leftist propaganda<sup>127</sup>.

The outspoken champions of reportage as an ideological tool for social change attracted the attention of literary critics. As a result, the first discussion on what reportage is, and on what are its goals, began already in early 1930s. Ignacy Fik wrote that despite its claims to authenticity and truthfulness, reportage like no other literary genre can be used to present the untrue (Glensk, *Historia...* 41). He further explained that it can be done by omitting the truth and manipulating reality, and ironically observed that it does not even require literary talent (41). Other critics, namely Waław Kubacki, Roman Kołoniecki, and Konstanty Troczyński, shared Fik’s views, accusing authors of not being independent from certain political and social

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<sup>127</sup> Wat and his colleagues were persecuted by the Polish authorities for their communist views, and later by communist authorities. Wat, after spending a long time in Soviet prisons, deeply regretted his early involvement with communism, and became a strong supporter of democracy.

influences. They also perceived reportage as subordinate to imaginative art, and as devoid of aesthetic value (42). Nevertheless, most newspapers and magazines of that period, both left-wing and right-wing oriented, started publishing reportages as the genre was becoming increasingly popular with the readers. The authors – writers, journalists – also tried to make the case for the genre. Maria Kuncewiczowa divided the reportage into two types, journalist and literary, confirming the higher aspirations of the latter. Irena Krzywicka and Wanda Melcer, two progressive, left-leaning nonfiction writers, derided the critics and accused them of elitism and snobbery (Glensk, *Historia...* 64-66). Other well-known literati, such as Melchior Wańkiewicz and Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, also defended the genre:

According to writers, reportage as a convention was based on artistic creations, transforming the image of reality into a literary oeuvre. They objected to the marginalisation of this type of works and to placing them in the “antechamber of literature”, as Wańkiewicz called this hierarchisation of genres . . . (Glensk, *Historia...* 67-68)<sup>128</sup>

Glensk, however, points out that this early marginal position, the status of a “bastard child of literature”, was also full of potential: borderlands or peripheries are usually more interesting than the centre (*Po Kapuścińskim...* 236).

From the beginning of twentieth century, the terms “reporter” and “reportage” started to appear in dictionaries of Polish language. The 1912 dictionary by J. Karłowicz, A. Kryński and W. Niedźwiedzki only had an entry defining the reporter as a “provider of current news to magazines or radio” (Magdoń 11)<sup>129</sup>. Already in 1965, the term is explained as a “journalist gathering and processing actual news for magazines or radio”<sup>130</sup>, but there is a second term used, “*reportażysta*” (which could be translated as “reportagist”), defined as an “author of reportages” (Magdoń 11-12). The transition taking place in the course of only a few decades demonstrates how reportage developed as a genre that exceeds everyday journalistic writing. Short forms in newspapers are meant primarily to inform, while reportage goes deeper, it aims at understanding the nature of events, the motivations of their protagonists, or the complexities of a system. Nevertheless, the Second World War brought an abrupt halt to this flourishing activity of reporters. Still, while newspaper offices closed down or moved to the underground, and reporters themselves were in danger, the best accounts of the war events that survived till now are often those written by reporters who found themselves on the battlefields, in Nazi or

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<sup>128</sup> “Zdaniem pisarzy, konwencja reportażu zakładała artystyczne kreacje, przekształcające obraz rzeczywistości w dzieło literackie. Sprzeciwiali się oni marginalizowaniu tego rodzaju twórczości i umiejscawiania jej “w przedśionku literatury”, jak oceniał hierarchizację gatunkową Wańkiewicz. . . “(Glensk, *Historia...* 67-68).

<sup>129</sup> “dostarczyciel wiadomości bieżących do czasopism”.

<sup>130</sup> “dziennikarz zbierający i opracowujący aktualne wiadomości dla czasopisma lub radia”.

Soviet camps, or in the ghetto<sup>131</sup>. When the war ended and the communist system was imposed in Poland, significant changes occurred in the structure and objectives of the Polish media. Reportage was to play an important role in the Polish public discourse.

## **5. Reportage in Communism**

The shape of the media landscape in communist Poland was tightly connected to the political events in the country. After the first period of eliminating ideological opponents and concentration of power in the hands of the Polish United Workers Party, periods of relative stability were intertwined with moments of deep crisis. Reporters, and the press in general, were particularly sensitive to any movements of the political pendulum. Since all independent media were shut down, the public ones, tightly controlled by the Party and the censorship, could only be as free as the system allowed it. Journalists were the first to be called for help if the leaders wanted to strengthen their position, but also the first to be let go in times of difficulty. Nevertheless, they cannot be considered merely as a professional group. Much depended on each journalist, reporter or writer as an individual. On his or her integrity, honesty, independence, personal ambition, as well as many other factors shaping their decisions. The following sections demonstrate the situation of intellectuals, and the press in particular, in different periods of the communist rule. These sections attempt at showing both a story of the press as a whole, as well as individual stories of particular journalists or writers.

- **After the War: The Communist Concentration of Power**

Those intellectuals who survived the war in Poland, started to organise the cultural life on the ruins of the destroyed cities. Many of them were struggling with traumas of occupation, Nazi and Soviet camps, and death of their loved ones. The culture of the pre-war Poland could not be recreated: there was a different political system, numerous artists and intellectuals died in the war or were exterminated in Nazi and Soviet camps. The Jewish community was decimated, many of its representatives perished or escaped abroad. Generally, Polish artistic and intellectual elites, of any origin, were in large part scattered around the world and uncertain whether they should return to Soviet-dominated Poland.

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<sup>131</sup> One of the most moving reportages in Szczygieł's anthology is one by Perec Opoczyński (1892-1943), a journalist before the war, and later a postman in the Warsaw ghetto, who placed his writing in milk cans and buried them underground. They were discovered only in 1950, after their author's death. See "Reportaże z warszawskiego getta [Reportages from Warsaw Ghetto]" (Szczygieł, *100/XX...* 1: 511-528).

Those pre-war leftists who found themselves in Poland, even those who suffered from the Soviets, often embraced the new system. But they were not the only ones – many intellectuals decided to work within the socialist framework and to be compliant with the authorities. If they wanted to continue writing or creating, there was no choice left: leaving the country was difficult, and the refusal to take part in communist cultural life could have dire consequences. Indeed, the communist authorities from 1945 onwards tried – and succeeded – to monopolise cultural life. They did not encounter much difficulties, as most of the Polish cultural institutions and media were already shut down by the Nazis. During the occupation, there were several underground newspapers, radios and bulletins issued by the largest resistance organisation, the Home Army – Armia Krajowa (AK). The AK and its sympathisers actively fought with Germans, as partisans, but also created a complex system of underground institutions: clandestine media, secret schooling from primary to university education, scouting organisations, cultural institutions, various help centres. Their aim was to keep these institutions going until the occupation ends, the Germans are defeated, and the state can be recreated. However, when the Red Army entered Poland, many political activists came along and started to prepare a takeover of power (which already took place on the territories occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939). After the agreement of the Second World War victors at Yalta and the formal division of Europe into the Western and the Soviet sphere, Moscow intensified its efforts to quickly eliminate all non-communist organisations in Poland. Thus, the Home Army (AK) was disbanded, many of its leaders arrested, and some even executed by the new authorities. All opposition to the new system had to be eliminated. The authorities would not tolerate any activity that could threaten their monopoly of power.

### **The Press after the War: An Instrument of Power Monopolisation**

The media were an important element of this concentration of power. Socialist Poland was to follow the Soviet model. Lenin saw the press as a key factor in ideological revolution and as an extension of the Communist Party. According to Tomasz Goban-Klas, after 1922 Soviet Russia introduced a unique media system, in which Party press became state press and no other voices could be heard (45). Such control was extended not only on press, but on all writing – literature was also perceived as an important weapon in the ideological war. Thus, press and literature were controlled in two ways – negatively, through censorship institution, and positively, through recommendations and guidelines what kind of content should be found in publications (46-47). A similar model was to be introduced on the territories that fell under Soviet control as a result of the war. In her book, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-56*, Anne Applebaum explains the mechanism of the monopolisation of mass media on

the example of the radio. She points out that by the time the Soviets arrived, most of the broadcasting equipment was confiscated by the Germans, so apart from a brief time of Warsaw Uprising, when the Home Army started its own radio transmissions, there practically were no radio broadcasts available in Poland:

Radio returned to Poland for good under Soviet auspices, and with the assistance of Soviet soldiers. Radio Pszczółka - 'Radio Honeybee' - began transmitting on Soviet equipment from a train wagon near Lublin on 11 August 1944, and advanced into the city with the Red Army. . . . In liberated Lublin, Rzeszów and Białystok, the radio station employees also established *radiowęzły* - outdoor loudspeaker systems - so that people could gather in town squares and public places to listen to the broadcasts several times daily. . . . All of the first radio news broadcasts were written by propaganda officials of the Lublin provisional government, and then passed to the radio to be read out. (Applebaum 193-194)

In an information void and war chaos, it was relatively easy to win the minds of people with propaganda, as no alternative news, except through informal channels, was presented. The first Polish President after the communist takeover, Bolesław Bierut (1892-1956), extremely suspicious of any external influence, issued an order that the possession of a radio without a licence would be punished with a death sentence (Appelbaum 196).

Although at first, freedom of press was theoretically declared, the authorities' attitude towards newspapers, periodicals and publishing was uneven (Applebaum 196). At first, since all officially registered political parties were allowed to run a newspaper, some voices of dissent could still be heard (e.g. in *Życie Warszawy* or *Gazeta Ludowa*). However, already in 1945, the printing industry became public, so those newspapers who were not fully supportive of the government had trouble to get issued. Book publishing soon also became monopolised by one institution, Czytelnik, run by Jerzy Borejsza. By 1947 – when the communist rule was officially introduced in Poland – most pre-war journalists were killed, blacklisted, forced to emigrate or pushed aside (Curry 35). What remained, however, were the historically conditioned traditions of the press as “an independent voice against unwelcomed ruler and a forum for intellectual discussion” (Curry 35). Such traditions were formed during the time of Partitions, and during the interwar era. Even though in the first decades of the communist rule journalists had to assist in strengthening that rule, they soon became a separate, highly professionalised group that spoke its own voice, and eventually played an important part in overthrowing the communist regime.

### **Coaxing Writers into the System**

According to Marci Shore, author of *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968*, even though the post-war “rebirth” of cultural life in Poland was “vigorous and animated”, it unfolded with an “increasingly bloody Stalinist security apparatus, the *Bezpieka*” in the background (Loc 3393). In spite of that, artists and intellectuals were eager to return to their creative activity. Most people longed for normality, for the reconstruction of an everyday reality, no matter how different from their pre-war existence. Many artists and intellectuals survived because they fled abroad. In the first years of the new regime, these émigré Poles were encouraged to come back, as the communist state wanted to demonstrate its benevolence to create a cultural life in the new system. By attracting famous figures, such as the poet Julian Tuwim or the reporter Melchior Wańkiewicz, the authorities were trying to contradict what they perceived as negative propaganda in the West. Some writers were tempted to go back to Poland, even if it was governed by a repressive regime, because that allowed them to return to their profession. Abroad, they often had to assume odd jobs much below their dignity (Wańkiewicz, for instance, was helping his daughter run a chicken farm in America).

The story of such Aleksander Wat, mentioned above as the author of the first “reportage manifesto”, can serve as a good illustration to the complex situation in which intellectuals found themselves. He was back to Warsaw, that he found unrecognisable. Many of his relatives died in the Holocaust or in the war, while Wat was first imprisoned in the Soviet Union, then exiled to Kazakhstan. When Jerzy Borejsza, the almighty director of *Czytelnik*, came to greet Wat and offer him a position on the literary market, Wat was distrustful - after all, Borejsza denounced him to the NKVD during the war (Shore Loc 3598). Also, now that his fascination with communism was over, he decided not to get involved with the official institutions and made contacts with “non-communist, Catholic<sup>132</sup> literary circles” (Shore Loc 3598). Later, Wat became head of the State Publishing Institute, publishing his texts again, until the harsh reality of the Stalinist period forced him to stop writing. Thanks to some of his former colleagues from *Miesięcznik Literacki*, Wat was spared harsh persecutions, although he had enemies among high-placed socialist literati – one of the protagonists of this dissertation, Jerzy Putrament, was one of them. In 1959, Wat left Poland and emigrated to the West, where the writer befriended Czesław Miłosz. Their conversations transformed into a series of biographical interviews with Wat, which were published with the title *My Century* (1977 - published in Poland only in 1990).

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<sup>132</sup> In fact, Aleksander Wat, though having Jewish origin and a revolutionary youth, after his experiences in Soviet Union sought refuge in the Catholic religion. Him and his wife Ola got baptised in Warsaw in 1953.

It is a poignant testimony of a life in the century of extreme historical and political crisis: Wat was considered to be an enemy by the Polish nationalists (for being a leftist), by German Nazis (for being a Jew), for the Soviet NKVD (for being a Polish intellectual), and for the post-war Polish Stalinists (for being an opponent of communism).

Many intellectuals found themselves in a similar situation as Wat. They wanted to continue their work as writers, poets, reporters, or artists – but the price to pay was the subjugation to the new system. Communist apparatchiks knew well how to manipulate the insecure and vulnerable literati: as soon as the Red Army liberated Lublin (a city in the East of Poland), the new, Moscow-appointed authorities insisted on creating a cultural life in the city and attract artists and writers from all formerly Polish territories. “Hoping that they will finally be able to publish an article or a poem, to speak on the radio, to organise a concert, to stage a play, writers, journalists, actors, directors were arriving to Lublin even if they did not share the enthusiasm about the new, Soviet order” (Bikont & Szczęśna 23)<sup>133</sup>. Jerzy Borejsza, one of the key organisers of socialist cultural life, would gather artists dispersed around small towns and villages, and propose them jobs, accommodation, publications, public readings etc. Borejsza used to say that there should be a cultural and educational revolution in Poland, but a “mild” one. Some believed him and appreciated his efforts to publish Polish classics and to found public libraries in smaller towns and villages – but this was only one side of the coin. Although Lublin cultural life began to thrive, its population was simultaneously ever more terrorised by the NKVD and communist police, arresting, torturing and deporting thousands of Poles (Bikont & Szczęśna 23). As a result, many intellectuals were arrested, and many others were too frightened to disobey the orders of their superiors.

After the rest of Poland was “liberated” by the Red Army and the Soviets took reigns of the power in all of the country, the Lublin model was replicated in other cities. In Krakow, the authorities allocated a building on 22 Krupnicza street, where various literati were lodged, among them Jerzy Andrzejewski, Kazimierz Brandys, Stanisław Dygat and Jan Kott (Bikont & Szczęśna 31). Similar houses for intellectuals existed in Warsaw, Łódź and Poznań. The idea of placing writers in the so-called “komunalka”, a collective house, was already practiced in Soviet Union and served two goals: one, having intellectuals in one place allowed a better control of their lives, and two – in the post-war shortage of accommodation, an offer of a decent flat in a good location was a luxury that many intellectuals could hardly decline. Some realised

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<sup>133</sup> “Kierowani nadzieją, że można będzie wreszcie opublikować artykuł czy wiersz, wystąpić w radio, zorganizować koncert, wystawić sztukę, ścigali do Lublina pisarze, dziennikarze, aktorzy, reżyserzy, niekoniernie entuzjaści wprowadzanych przez Sowietów porządków” (Bikont & Szczęśna 23).



that it was a dubious ethical compromise, just as dubious was their existence as writers in general. Jerzy Andrzejewski says in a letter from 6 September 1948 to his friend, Czesław Miłosz, then cultural attaché in Paris:

“Do you really think that because I am still in the country, I do not take a proper distance to myself and to what is happening here? . . . For some time now, I live with almost only doubts and oftentimes it is hard for me, so hard, like never before in my life” (letter, qt after Bikont & Szczęsna 38)<sup>134</sup>.

In spite of moral doubts, many intellectuals chose to participate in the cultural life of the new system. In some cases, they did it out of opportunism, in others – out of fear. But just as many were those who were simply happy that the war is over and that they can start rebuilding their country – even if that meant an allegiance to the red flag. Their life in early communist Poland was rather detached from the experience of average Poles. This is how this period is remembered by Kazimierz Brandys, then living in the industrial city of Łódź:

We lived with ideas and we lived well. We used to meet every night at the “Pickwick” club. The distance to Moscow seemed immense. The closeness of Warsaw did not cause worry. The eye of the Party observed us attentively, but from a distance. Certainly, they also made sure to separate the Łódź cultural circles from life in the rest of the country through particular privileges: first passports to the West, allocation of flats in villas previously owned by German industrialists, and less severe censorship. Socialism in art was not yet postulated. For people with money, everything was available in shops, from Bielsk worsted to smoked salmon. In the country, AK members were imprisoned, Łódź workers could only eat potatoes and dumplings. [And] artists led a life of whites in a colonial city. (Kazimierz Brandys, qt after Bikont & Szczęsna 50)<sup>135</sup>

Creating enclaves for artists was thus part of the Party’s strategy to pull intellectuals on their side and, by these means, create a wider support to the communist rule. Nevertheless, this strategy worked only for some time, because the illusion of good life could not be maintained for very long. First of all, the material conditions were not as good for literati, as Brandys

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<sup>134</sup> “Czyż Ty naprawdę myślisz, że dlatego, że jestem ciągle w kraju – nie mam właściwego dystansu I do tego, co się tu dzieje, i do siebie samego? (...) Od pewnego czasu żyję prawie samymi wątpliwościami i chwilami jest mi ciężko, jak chyba nigdy ciężko mi w życiu nie było” (6 September 1948, quoted after Bikont & Szczęsna 38).

<sup>135</sup> “Żyło się ideami I żyło się nieźle. Co wieczór spotykaliśmy się w klubie “Pickwick”. Odległość od Moskwy wydawała się ogromna. Bliskość Warszawy nie budziła niepokoju. Oko partii obserwowało nas uważnie, ale z dystansu. Zapewne dbano też o to, aby łódzkie środowisko kulturalne oddzielić od życia kraju szczególnym uprzywilejowaniem: pierwsze paszporty na Zachód, przydziały mieszkań w willach po fabrykantach niemieckich i miękka śruba cenzury. Nie postulowano jeszcze socjalizmu w sztuce. Dla ludzi z pieniędzmi było w sklepach wszystko, od bielskiego kamgarnu do wędzonego łososia. W kraju więziono akowców, łódzcy robotnicy jedli ziemniaki i kluski. Artyści wiedli życie białych w kolonialnym mieście.” (quoted after Bikont & Szczęsna 50)

perceived it. Secondly, while in 1946 writers still thought that they will be able to continue their work relatively freely, the following years proved them wrong. Soon, socialist realism became the one and only doctrine and writers could not remain apolitical.

### **Stalinist Closing of the Ranks**

The first disappointment came in 1948 with the World Peace Congress in Wrocław. Many Polish writers were convinced that they will remain at par with their Western European colleagues and show them how Polish culture is rebuilt after the war. However, the Polish delegation was completely overpowered by the Soviet one, which dominated the Congress and expressed opinions that were unacceptable to a significant number of delegates from the West. Several of them, for instance Julian Huxley (then at the head of UNESCO), Oxford professor A. J. P. Taylor, or painter Fernand Léger, demonstratively left Wrocław. The French journalist François Bondy remembers it in the following way:

“It was difficult to pretend that the Congress’ atmosphere was friendly. The tone that the Russians imposed was a disaster for Poles. To them, the Congress appeared as a chance to maintain their relations with the Western world. And the Russians attending the Congress spoke in a way to exacerbate all the disparities between intellectuals from the two sides of the Curtain” (François Bondy in a conversation with Bikont & Szczęsna 107)<sup>136</sup>.

This is how the illusions of Polish intellectuals came to an end. They could no longer expect that Poland will be a “window to the West” for the Soviet bloc, and a country where both Western culture and Soviet political system could coexist.

Indeed, in the following years, culture would drift away and the communist system was tightening its grip, imposing more and more restrictions on artists and intellectuals. A new generation of young communists was coming of age and dominating the literary scene. Among them was Wiktor Woroszyński and Tadeusz Borowski. The communist ardour of these activists, labelled as “the pimple-faced” [*pryszczaci*] due to their age, was much stronger than the one of the older generation who started their careers in the interwar period. The turn towards an even sharper ideological edge could be observed at 1949 assembly of the Writers’ Association (Związek Literatów Polskich - ZLP). The Party had clear expectations from literature: it has to represent the goals of the people in a socialist realist spirit, and it must support the new system. Any other kind of literary creation was perceived worthless or outright noxious. Aleksander Wat remembers how, on the last day of the assembly, the Russian

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<sup>136</sup> “Trudno było udawać, że kongres przebiega w serdecznej atmosferze. Dla Polaków ton nadany przez Rosjan to była klęska. Dla nich kongres jawił się jako szansa na podtrzymanie więzi ze światem zachodnim. A Rosjanie obecni na kongresie swymi wystąpieniami potęgowali wszystkie rozbieżności między wypowiedziami intelektualistów z obu stron żelaznej kurtyny.” (François Bondy in conversation with Bikont & Szczęsna, 107).

delegation walked in, its leader first promised support and financial gain to cooperating writers, and then threatened: “And who will not join us, will be annihilated and his name will forever be crossed out from books and from memory” (Bikont & Szczęsna 125)<sup>137</sup>.

The next assembly of writers, in June 1950, only strengthened the monopoly of socialist realism in literature. On a photo featuring its participants, Jerzy Andrzejewski and Jerzy Putrament, one can see a poster in the background. Painted on it were words of the supreme leader, Joseph Stalin: “Writers – engineers of human souls”<sup>138</sup>. During the assembly, most well-known writers were criticised, barring the authors of the new “production” genre (in Polish: *produkcyjniak*), and the participants were given a lecture on socialist realism. It was delivered by a Marxist critic, Melania Kierczyńska, who said that socialist realism creates typical characters, in typical conditions, or in other words, characters living in a reality strongly recreated from its concrete model. She listed other traits, such as optimism, humanism, sharp actuality, depiction of the “new man” – maker of socialism, and loyalty to the Party (Bikont & Szczęsna 134). This meant that there was no longer any space for creativity and originality of expression, and literature could only exist if it was subjugated to the goals of the communist party. Maria Dąbrowska, in her (then) secret journal, called the assembly “a sort of official funeral of literature and writers” (Bikont & Szczęsna 136)<sup>139</sup>.

What followed, was an almost complete dictatorship of the Party in the field of literature. Works, as well as particular words, expressions, characters or even authors’ personal lives were discussed in detail, bordering on absurdity. Authors would be criticized for the smallest deviations from the Party line – or even for mentioning such bourgeois food articles as oysters. After Stalin’s death in 1953, the literati were pressurised to publish poems and elegies bemoaning the “Great Leader” – what resulted were pieces full of pathos and exaggerated grief. Paweł Hertz recalls: “[s]urely there were palls on Nowy Świat, but everything looked normal. If people grieved, they did it only where they were expected to, not on the street” (Bikont & Szczęsna 214)<sup>140</sup>. In private conversations, one could hear expressions

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<sup>137</sup> “A kto nie pójdzie z nami, będzie unicestwiony, a imię jego zostanie wykreślone z książek i pamięci na zawsze” (These words of a Soviet delegate, Professor Anisimov, were remembered by Aleksander Wat and quoted in his book *Świat na haku i pod kluczem: eseje* [ *The world on a hook and locked with a key: essays*], Ann Arbor: Polonia, 1985. Page 22; Also quoted by Bikont & Szczęsna, 125).

<sup>138</sup> Photo available at the National Digital Archive.

<sup>139</sup> “był czymś w rodzaju uroczystego pogrzebu literatury i pisarzy na rzecz pismaków-pomagierów rządu w akcji ‘umacniania ustroju’” From Maria Dąbrowska’s journal, entry from 27 June 1950, qt after Bikont & Szczęsna 136.

<sup>140</sup> “Na Nowym Świecie z pewnością były kiry, ale wszystko wyglądało zwyczajnie. Ludzie, jeśli łkali, to tam, gdzie musieli, nie na ulicy.” (As remembered by Paweł Hertz and mentioned in his conversation with Barbara Łopieńska, qt after Bikont & Szczęsna 214).

of relief and satisfaction: the ruthless dictator is no more; some even secretly celebrated (214). Thus, there was a stark contrast between the disproportionate demonstrations of sadness in official newspapers and magazines, as well as at public events, while privately, many Poles saw Stalin's death as a ray of hope for the system to become less harsh.

### **The Press in the First Decade after the War**

The first reportages after the war were still relatively creative, as the socialist realist "production" genre did not yet pervade in journalism. The hot topic in 1945 were the newly acquired lands in the West of the country – compensation for a much larger territory of pre-war Poland, annexed by Soviet Union. These lands, formerly German, were called the "Regained Territories", as in Middle Ages they belonged to Polish kings of the Piast dynasty – a continuity that the communist authorities were happy to underline. Edmund Osmańczyk's 1945 reportage "Na pobojuwisku [On the battlefield]" from Opole region and Wanda Melcer's "Wyprawa na odzyskane ziemie [Expedition to the Regained Territories]", from 1945 were probably the first reportages published after the war (Szczygieł, *100/XX...* 1: 591). While Osmańczyk, himself a representative of Polish minority in Silesia, was understandably happy about his region to become part of the Polish state, Melcer's reasons are rather of an ideological nature. Her account is a propagandist one, yet written with insight and empathy. These two accounts still maintain a certain originality, which very soon becomes unwelcome. Freedom of expression for writers and journalists alike gradually decreased and only very typical pieces, written according to the party-imposed model would be accepted.

The newly created daily, *Rzeczpospolita*, announced a new style in journalism already in 1944:

Our press differs, and will differ from the pre-war one: it will not describe sensational court cases, publish popular romance nor easy articles, appealing to lowest of instincts. We belong to a new generation that sees the seeding campaign, the potato lifting, the projects of machines for agriculture, a crèche or a new school as much more important than the Gorgonowa case [a famous 1930s court case of a governess killing her pupil] or the murder of Henry the Eighth's wives. (*Rzeczpospolita*, 19 December 1944, p. 1 - qt after Goban-Klas 85)<sup>141</sup>

It is rather puzzling why the author of this press manifesto contrasts the coverage of socialist progress with the rather remote story from the Tudor monarchy – if anything, it only indicates

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<sup>141</sup> "Nasza prasa różni się i będzie się różnić od przedwojennej: nie będzie opisywać sensacyjnych procesów sądowych, drukować popularnych romansów ani łatwych artykułów, zaspokajających najniższe instynkty. Należymy do nowego pokolenia, które uważa kampanię siewną, wykopki ziemniaków, projekty maszyn dla rolnictwa, żłobek czy nową szkołę za znacznie ważniejsze niż proces Gorgonowej lub zamordowanie żon Henryka VIII" (Goban-Klas 85).

his classic, “bourgeois” education. Nevertheless, the mission of socialist journalism was laid out as not only a mission of providing information to readers, but also an ideological struggle to build a new order. From 1949 onwards, newspapers stopped informing and started to comment, educate, and pass on messages from the authorities (Magdoń 12). An entire system was created to ensure that the press is tightly controlled. Already at the end of 1944, the Lublin interim government created a Ministerstwo Informacji i Propagandy [Ministry of Information and Propaganda], but the control of news and publications would also be under scrutiny of the ruthless Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego [Ministry of Public Security]. In 1945, a separate agency was created, Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk [Central Office for the Control of Press, Publications and Performances], but censorship was officially introduced by a parliamentary decree on 5th July 1946. The censorship bureau would restrict any information that is not in line with the communist party, and news content started to be mostly obtained via the Polish Press Agency - such centralised system was easier to control by the communist authorities (Goban-Klas 91). Censorship was not always needed: journalists themselves were scared to write anything out of line, since any small mistake could have grave consequences.

The new system started to form its own media, recruiting and training young journalists and pushing aside the pre-war members of the profession, in spite of the protests voiced by the Union of Polish Journalists (recreated after the war). The Union became powerless, and journalists’ complaints about freedom restrictions in their work were not heard. By 1948, when the Polish system became transformed into a fully Stalinist one, and the full power was taken over by the consolidated Polish United Workers Party, the condition of journalists’ work has become worse than ever. The media policy at the time, according to Curry, had two goals: “to win support from a hostile population for communist rule in Poland and to sovietise the population” (39). Also, a journalist acted as an intermediary between the society and the Party, collecting testimonies from the “worker-peasant” correspondents, intervening with bureaucrats, as well as transmitting the propaganda message to the society. The media, as declared in a popular magazine *Sztandar Młodych* [Youth’s Flag], was supposed to act as “propagandists, who day after day convey the Marxist-Leninist theories, agitators who day after day speak about the international political situation and about the Party’s and people’s government policies, and organizers, who day after day mobilize our forces for their active part

in Socialist construction” (Curry 39)<sup>142</sup>. These three roles that the press had to play were first laid out in Lenin’s doctrine of Party press, drafted well before the Bolshevik revolution. That is why, even reportage had to contribute to the ideological offensive of socialism.

Like in literature, in reportage too, a new genre appeared, also called a “production” one (*produkcyjniak*). According to Mariusz Szczygieł, its theme would be centred around a factory or a construction site, it would be simple, schematic, with one-dimensional characters. Its goal was to educate, strengthen the faith in the system, and evoke emotions (*100/XX... 1: 624*). A good example of such “production” kind of reportage was “Ludzie rusztowań [People on Scaffoldings]” (1950), written by Michał Krajewski, prized bricklayer, and Bogdan Ostromecki, writer and poet, at the time employed by the Ministry of Reconstruction. The central theme of the reportage is a construction site and the activity of engineers, builders and supervisors. It follows them at work, on the day when they try to achieve record speed in laying bricks, and describes their families, the prospects that the workers will have in socialist Poland, and the future of the working-class housing districts that they are building. They also mention the first female bricklayer team, describing these girl workers as happy, youthful, and hardworking. Similar reportages were written in the early 1950s, by newspaper reporters, like Jerzy Ros, and even by well-known writers, not necessarily supporters of communism, like Maria Dąbrowska. In Dąbrowska’s case, what was supposed to be a *produkcyjniak*, turned out to be an *anty-produkcyjniak*. The novelist visited a factory of steam trains – but what she observed there could not appear in the press, as it stood in sharp contrast with the official propaganda. The workers’ conditions were appalling and the pre-war class differences were still striking. The employees of the factory told the reporter how reluctant they were to attend the party meetings, considering the Second Republic much better than the new system (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1: 645*). Dąbrowska’s reportage was only published for the first time 1973, when criticism of the Stalinist period was already allowed.

Surprisingly, even in the harsh period of Stalinism, the communist party was not fully successful in creating such a disciplined and ideologically involved media. Young recruits to the journalism programmes soon realised that what they were taught at the university was rather removed from reality. Many would become sceptical of the government observing the conditions of workers or peasants’ reactions to plans of collectivisation (Curry 41). Already as early as 1953, journalist and editor Henryk Korotyński delivered a speech, in which he voiced

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<sup>142</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry quotes from an article that appeared in *Sztandar Młodych* on 5 May 1953, translated into English as “The Fettered Fourth Estate” in *News from Behind the Iron Curtain*, I, no. 7, June 1953, p. 35.

many complaints and problems that him and his colleagues were facing: lack of discussion among journalists, lack of trust from readers, lack of possibilities to satisfy readers' expectations, colouring of reality rather than solving actual problems etc. (Curry 45). Even though Korotyński was bound to also express support to the Stalinist system, his speech was revolutionary and provoked much discussion – it began to dawn on the Party members that journalists cannot be considered as a mere propagandist tube for the system. In the following years, the ferment among journalists increased. It coincided with a Thaw period in the Soviet Bloc after Stalin's death in 1953, which allowed for a certain liberalisation of the press.

### **The Press in Mid-1950s: First Signs of Dissent**

Indeed, even before the historically significant year 1956, in Polish intellectual life a gradual “breaking of the ice” began already in 1955. Many of the staunch supporters of the communist doctrine began to publicly express doubts about the system: among them philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, and writers Antoni Słonimski, Maria Dąbrowska, Julian Przyboś and Jan Kott. Socialist realism was criticised by well-known literary critics, for instance Jan Błoński. The publication of Ilia Ehrenburg's novel, *Thaw*, caused a wave of debates. Several works previously blocked by the censorship were now published. Nevertheless, two events of 1955 particularly shook the public: The International Youth and Students' Festival, and the publication of the “Poem for Adults” by Adam Ważyk. Even though the Festival was planned as a propaganda device, to demonstrate comradeship between people from various continents, united in their love of communism, it became an impulse for change. The Polish participants of the Festival came from all parts of the country: in Warsaw, they met thousands of people from around the world, happily celebrating together, freely discussing global issues, telling first-hand stories about their countries of origin. For many, it was an eye-opening experience. “It turned out that it was possible to be “progressive”, and at the same time enjoy life, wear colourful clothes, listen to jazz, have fun and fall in love” – remembered Jacek Kuroń (qt by Applebaum 474-475), realising how the presence of foreigners livened the grey, poor, and gloomy reality of Poland. The sight of happy, smiling people from the Western countries also contradicted the propaganda's image of the unhappy, conflict-ridden, unhealthy liberal world.

Around the same time, poet Adam Ważyk, member of the party and until then – loyal communist, wrote a poem that shocked the Polish society. The flagship of socialist progress, the newly built industrial city of Nowa Huta (in the suburbs of Krakow), was presented in the poem as a failed experiment, as a place where one can witness the human condition at its worst. The poem begins by a nostalgic reference to pre-war Warsaw, and continues to illustrate the

degeneration of Nowa Huta, the lack of resources for those in charge of the building of “New Homeland”, the human misery contrasted with idealized visions of progress. Even though the party blocked the reprint of the poem and banned Ważyk from writing, the damage was already done. Poles, in their workplaces, in queues for food, in factories and universities, all discussed Ważyk’s poem. The poet’s personal disappointment with the system that he so strongly believed in gave his piece an additional emotional charge: “I was destroying the mythology that I previously believed in myself” –Adam Ważyk used to say (Bikont & Szczęsna 251)<sup>143</sup>.

The authorities were in panic and started a vigorous counter-campaign. Among other actions, they decided to send reporters to describe the “real” situation in Nowa Huta. Among them was young Ryszard Kapuściński, beginning his career at the *Sztandar Młodych* magazine. He set off to Nowa Huta in order to illustrate the real conditions in the town. To the dismay of his superiors, Kapuściński confirmed Ważyk’s observations: he described in gruesome details the extremely bad conditions of workers. Young men and women brought from small towns and villages were provided with terrible hostel housing, or hardly any accommodation at all, and the new city did not give them anything except from work – no churches, entertainment, or cultural institutions. Even married couples had to live separately, as no accommodation was provided for families. As a result, alcoholism, prostitution, and sexually-transmitted diseases would wreak havoc in the town. Even though his reportage, “This, too, is the truth about Nowa Huta”, managed to go through censorship and get published, it was obviously not well received by the authorities. According to Małgorzata Niemczyńska, the consequences were widespread: the editor-in-chief of *Sztandar Młodych* and the censor in charge were let go, while a special commission wrote a report for the Central Committee of the Communist Party that demoted the entire management of Huta’s steelworks. Kapuściński was eventually prized for pointing out “irregularities”, but sent abroad so that he does not create any more trouble.

Kapuściński’s story was a sign that a new generation of journalists was about to enter the scene. They were reporters of a new type: bolder, more adventurous, less intimidated by the system. Many of them believed in socialism and the values that it was promoting: world peace, equality, economic development. However, they also felt entitled to criticise that same system. A group of such young, critical journalists took over a rather dull student magazine, *Po Prostu*, and started to write about various “uncomfortable” topics: corruption and incompetence of bureaucrats, poor management of public resources, excessive privileges of top party members, as well as the decline of ethical standards in everyday life (Goban-Klas

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<sup>143</sup> “. . . rozbiłam mitologię, w którą sam przedtem wierzyłem.” (Ważyk qt by Bikont & Szczęsna 251).



138). In Mariusz Szczygieł's opinion, just like *Wiadomości Literackie* was a breakthrough for Polish reportage in the interwar era, *Po Prostu* was such a breakthrough for reportage in the socialist period: "[t]here was a widespread belief that in *Po Prostu* one can publish something that would not go through anywhere else" (694)<sup>144</sup>. For his anthology of reportage, Szczygieł chose a reportage by one of the magazine's most popular authors, Włodzimierz Godek. It is a straightforward, direct account of a graduate's life in Nowy Sącz, a small town in Southern Poland. The reportage is written as if it was a monologue of the protagonist, talking to the reporter about his frustration about the lack of opportunities and almost non-existent cultural life in the provincial town, the conflicts between local apparatchiks, the absurdity of issues discussed at Party meetings<sup>145</sup> (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1*: 702). Thus, Godek's 1955 reportage, "Sądecki tor przeszkód" ("The Obstacle Course of Nowy Sącz") was rather radical in how it unveiled the pathologies of the system, especially given that other press painted the socialist reality only in bright colours. Nevertheless, as it turned out in just a couple of years, this freedom at *Po Prostu* was rather short-lived.

- **Change of Power in the Communist Party and Post-1956 Thaw**

While in literature and media tensions could be felt already in 1955, real change could only take place after the death of Bierut, one of the "little Stalins of Central Europe"<sup>146</sup> (Appelbaum 45). His passing away coincided with Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" in 1956, in which Stalin's rule was denounced as ruthless and cruel. Polish public, who found out about it as soon as the speech was leaked to Western sources, was shocked by the Khrushchev's revelations about executions, torture and other excesses of Stalinist regime. What followed that legendary speech, was turmoil in Poland and Hungary. Societies of Eastern European countries were wrecked by terror, NKVD brutality, poverty and lack of freedom and wanted change. In June 1956, about 100 000 workers in the Polish city of Poznań went on strike, demanding "Bread and Freedom". The communist authorities deployed the army that ruthlessly curbed the protests, killing tens of people and leaving hundreds wounded (Appelbaum 484). In Hungary, events took an even sharper form – in October 1956, large groups of protesters went out on the streets of Budapest. It soon became a full-blown revolution, as Hungary's political

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<sup>144</sup> "Panowało przekonanie, że w *Po Prostu* da się wydrukować artykuł, który nie przeszedłby nigdzie indziej." (Mariusz Szczygieł, in his introduction to Włodzimierz Godek's reportage in *100/XX... 1*: 694).

<sup>145</sup> For instance, the Party secretary could not bear that a journalist of a local daily would wear shorts to work – she considered it to be a "particularly serious problem" and accused the man of being a "bikiniarz" – a sort of a decadent hipster.

<sup>146</sup> The other two were Hungary's leader Mátyás Rákosi and GDR's Walter Ulbricht.

leader, Imre Nagy, took side of the protesters, declared the country's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and announced neutrality, calling for the West's support. The Soviet Union, dismayed by the scale of the protest, sent out the Red Army to pacify Hungarians. In following months, hundreds were killed and thousands sent to prison, many others were forced to emigrate (Appelbaum 488). Even though Stalin was dead, the communist party of the Soviet Union maintained a tight grip over societies of the Bloc. However, that grip was different depending on the country.

In Poland, 1956 brought about a change of power, and following the VIII Plenum of the Party in October of that year Władysław Gomułka (1905-1982) was nominated as a new leader. Gomułka was loyal to Moscow, but he believed that Poland can have its own "road to socialism", and does not need direct supervision from Soviet Union. As a result, says historian Norman Davies, "the Polish People's Republic ceased to be a puppet state, and became a client state" (9). The new leader granted several concessions – less persecution of the Church, abandonment of the farm collectivisation idea, more artistic and intellectual freedom. When it comes to the situation of Polish journalists and writers, October of 1956 presented an opportunity to publish previously banned works, start new magazines and journals, and broach topics that were formerly taboo. The critique of the system was particularly strong among those communist revisionists whose illusions were shattered, who realised that they took part in a totalitarian destruction, rather than in a socialist utopia. Many intellectuals gave up their party membership, for instance Jerzy Andrzejewski, Stanisław Dygat, Paweł Herz and Mieczysław Jastrun. The Marxist philosopher, Leszek Kołakowski, wrote a text entitled "What is Socialism?", a parody of the system. In the first words of his article, Kołakowski says:

We will tell you what socialism is. But first, we will tell you what it is not. Thus, socialism is not:

- A society, in which a person that did not commit a crime, waits at home for the arrival of the police;
- A society, in which it is a crime to be a brother, a sister, a wife, or a son of a criminal;
- A society in which one man is unhappy, because he says what he thinks, and another is unhappy because he does not say what he thinks;
- A society in which a man lives better, because he does not think at all;
- A society in which one man is unhappy because he is a Jew, and another feels better, because he is not one; . . .
- A state in which one lives better because he praises the leaders of the country;
- A state in which someone is sentenced without trial; . . .
- A state that one cannot leave; . . .

This was part one. And now – listen carefully! – we will tell you, what socialism is. Thus: Socialism is a system, which... eh! What is the point of talking! Socialism is a really good thing.

(Kołakowski - my own translation)<sup>147</sup>

This short piece soon became the revisionists' manifesto (Bikont & Szczęsna 278). Among them were many of the previous radical communists, like Woroszyński or Borowski. Journalists and reporters also felt a breath of fresh air: although they were still controlled by the Party, they were allowed to say much more than before. Even if this freedom of press was curbed already in 1957, the October opening brought changes in people's minds that could not be reverted:

Young people developed a passion for avant-garde painting, cabaret, theatre and existentialist philosophy, discs, art, and, occasionally, Coca-Cola. . . . Contacts with the West were partly renewed, the [state-sponsored] stations that silenced BBC, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe were temporarily off. University libraries obtained foreign books and magazines, including the Paris-based *Kultura* [influential Polish émigré magazine]. Cinemas showed Hollywood movies, theatres performed new Parisian plays. . . . For all of 1957, cultural life in Poland was freer than ever before, since the communist takeover. (Goban-Klas 153)<sup>148</sup>

This taste for freedom and for international opening was there to stay. It was one of the reasons for the popularity of news and writing from other parts of the world.

### **International Opening in the Period of the Thaw**

In the period of Thaw, following Stalin's death, first travel reportages began to appear: earlier, it was almost impossible to go abroad. The strict limitations of the Stalinist period

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<sup>147</sup> "Otóż: socjalizm nie jest

- \* państwem, którego żołnierze pierwsi wstępują na ziemię innego kraju;
- \* państwem, gdzie ilość urzędników rośnie szybciej niż liczba robotników;
- \* państwem, gdzie tchórzom żyje się lepiej niż odważnym;
- \* państwem, w którym część obywateli otrzymuje płace czterdzieści razy wyższe niż inna część;
- \* państwem, które chce, żeby jego ministerstwo spraw zagranicznych kształtowało bieżący światopogląd dla całej ludzkości;
- \* państwem, które źle odróżnia ujarzmianie od wyzwiania;
- \* państwem, gdzie rasiści cieszą się wolnością;
- \* państwem, które mówi, że świat jest bardzo skomplikowany, ale naprawdę myśli, że świat jest nadzwyczaj prosty;
- \* państwem, które jest przekonane, że nikt nigdy na świecie nie może wymyślić nic lepszego;
- \* państwem, gdzie wielu ignorantów uchodzi za uczonych;
- \* państwem, gdzie jest dużo ludzi szlachetnych i dzielnych, ale trzeba wiedzieć o tym skądinąd niż ze znajomości polityki jego rządów; (...)" (Kołakowski).

<sup>148</sup> "Młodzi ludzie zachwycali się awangardowym malarstwem, kabaretami, teatrem i filozofią egzystencjalną, płytami, sztuką i, okazjonalnie, coca colą. . . . Częściowo zostały przywrócone kontakty z Zachodem, stacje zagłuszające BBC, Głos Ameryki, a nawet RWE czasowo zamilkły. Biblioteki uniwersyteckie otrzymywały zachodnie książki i czasopisma, w tym paryską *Kulturę*. W kinach wyświetlano hollywoodzkie filmy; w teatrach wystawiano nowe sztuki paryskie. . . . Przez cały 1957 r. życie kulturalne w Polsce cieszyło się większą swobodą niż kiedykolwiek przedtem od czasu przejęcia władzy przez komunistów" (Goban-Klas 153).

would not only allow for travel, but also for the translation of travelogues by foreign authors. Things changed in 1956: in July 1956, the National Publishing House “Iskry” [“Sparkles”] started its travel series called “Naokoło Świata” [“Around the World”]. Its white cover became recognisable for decades to come, as throughout the forty years of its existence, it became the most popular travel reportage series in Poland. It was run by two experienced editors and reporters: Krystyna Goldbergowa and Zbigniew Stolarek. The series featured both original travel reportage, as well as translations of travel accounts by various international authors. Renowned reporters and travellers were published in Iskry: Olgierd Budrewicz, Waław Korabiewicz, Melchior Wańkiewicz, Roald Amundsen, Thor Heyerdahl, Ernest Hemingway, Maurice Herzog, and many more. One of them was Jerzy Ros, author of socialist reportages and collaborator of *Życie Warszawy*. It is difficult to determine in what circumstances he was sent to India, but it was clearly a journey sponsored by the authorities, probably in the spirit of rapprochement between Soviet Union and India. Ros published his reportage in 1957, in the “Naokoło Świata” series of Iskry, with a title *Indyjskie wędrówki* [*Indian Wanderings*]. Two other travel accounts from India were published around that time: Waław Kontek’s *Notatki z podróży do Indii* [*Notes from a Journey to India*] (1956) and Witold Koehler’s *Indie przez dziurkę od klucza* [*India through a Keyhole*] (1957). Their authors were participants of a forestry congress in Dehradun and later they documented their impressions in writing. Unlike their Western counterparts, these travellers were not on an individual adventure: they were part of an official delegation. Even in the period of Thaw, had they not been officially sent to India, it would be virtually impossible for them to leave the country on such a faraway journey, outside of the Soviet Bloc.

Nevertheless, the enthusiasm of Polish intellectuals and their various cultural initiatives would not find completion - Polish October openness was not there to last. In the following years, the regime backtracked from its liberal course, closed down the more free-thinking and critical magazines, like *Po Prostu*<sup>149</sup>, and increased the censorship of new publications.

- **Backlash and Stabilisation: The Gomulka Years (1956 – 1970)**

Gomułka, perceived as a moderate in comparison to his more radical comrades, began his rule among high hopes in the society that he will allow the relaxation of the “Polish October” to last. Nevertheless, already in 1957 and 1958, he was heard expressing his

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<sup>149</sup> When Gomulka ordered to close *Po Prostu* down on 2 October 1957. The reaction to his decision was strong, as the weekly was considered a symbol of (relatively) independent journalism. Students took to the streets, asking for “freedom of press”, and literary circles publicly voiced their protests – to no avail.

disapproval, finding these new liberties far-fetched. Journalists were at the centre of this criticism: from now on, said Gomułka, they have to choose whether they are with the Party, or against it – complete loyalty had to be assured (Goban-Klas 163-164). In Gomułka's opinion, journalists should “serve society and respect Party politics”, but instead they became “little involved with the life of the country and too enamoured with Western consumerism” (Curry 64). That is why, the Party decided to make changes in order to restrict journalists even more. Many editors-in-chief of major newspapers were removed, and a new governmental body that controlled the press was instituted in 1958. It was called the Commission for Publication and Distribution of Press, and its members soon called for a “reorganization” of the press market, closing down over 200 titles.

At the turn of 1950s and 60s, the Party was set to strengthen its grip on the society and start an ideological campaign to woo young people. An important part of this campaign was to promote secularism and detract the youth's attention from the Catholic Church's activities – it was to be done through the popularization of science and technology. “A pro-scientific orientation had an openly anti-religious goal: the struggle, with the help of science, with “religious obscurantism, ignorance and spreading of nationalist views”” (Goban-Klas 166-167)<sup>150</sup>. This was one of the reasons why travel and geography became even more popular in that period. On the one hand, stimulating young people's interest in far-away, non-Western countries, was meant to offer an attractive alternative to fantasies about the rich and beautiful West. On the other hand, it was a tool in combatting religion and tradition, by exposing young minds to other topics than the ones presented in Church. Indeed, travel books of that period (for instance those by Ros, Górnicki and Giełżyński), have a clearly anti-religious tone, whether they talk about Hinduism, Islam or Christianity.

Nevertheless, the Party met an important obstacle in its ideological campaign: intellectuals (writers, journalists) who already tasted a certain freedom in October 1956, did not want to let go of their right to freedom of expression. In March 1964, they drafted a letter to the Prime Minister, protesting against limitations of printing paper and calling for their civil rights guaranteed in the constitution to be respected. It was signed by 34 eminent literary figures, of different backgrounds and affiliations: from Catholic, right-wing writer (and reporter) Cat-Mackiewicz, to Adam Ważyk – atheist, and till recently, militant communist. The news of the “Letter of the 34” reached Radio Free Europe, based in the West, and caused an

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<sup>150</sup> “Orientacja pronaukowa miała cel otwarcie antyreligijny: walkę, za pomocą nauki, z ‘obskurantyzmem religijnym, ciemnotą i szerzeniem poglądów nacjonalistycznych” (Goban-Klas 167).

international commotion. Arthur Koestler, Hanna Arendt, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Arthur Miller, Susan Sontag, Alberto Moravia, and many other intellectuals supported their Polish counterparts' claim to be granted freedom of expression. As a result, the Party accused the signatories of taking part in an "anti-Polish" campaign and defaming their homeland abroad. A counter-letter was also drafted and many writers, professors and other members of cultural elites were pressurised to sign it – among them was Wojciech Żukrowski. Nevertheless, what is now remembered as the "Letter of the 34" was one of the first steps towards a formation of a democratic opposition (Bikont & Szczęsna 334).

### **The Press in the Gomulka Years**

As for reportage, a group of liberally-minded journalists, working for *Po Prostu*, *Polityka*, *Kultura* and other newspapers, began to criticise the communist state in various ways. They employed a plethora of strategies to show the weaknesses of the system. Marian Brandys switched from socially-engaged reportages to historical ones - they could also be read as metaphoric of the actual situation. Zbigniew Kwiatkowski, reporter of *Gazeta Krakowska* and *Życie Literackie*, focussed on small towns and the provincial life, unveiling the absurdities of the communist economy and a variety of local problems. Janusz Rolicki, working for *Polityka* and *Kultura*, became famous for his "impersonation reportages": he tried being a construction worker, employee of a collective farm, a fisherman, and a homeless person. In this way, he discovered various schemes, corruption cases, and instances of theft and other petty crimes. This showed that the celebrated working class was not exactly as brave and honest as the propaganda would have it, and that the paradoxes of the system pushed people to challenge the law. Another reporter of *Polityka*, Stefan Kozicki, tried to demonstrate how the system controls people and how little individual initiative is allowed - he, too, based his observations on the Polish province. His reportage on a local beauty pageant is an opportunity to present the scandals surrounding the entertainment scene in a small town. Aleksander Rowiński (*Prawo i Życie*, *Kultura*), on the other hand, reports from a court case that followed a famous catastrophe - a fire at a transport ship. He relates how the responsibility for the accident is shifted around, nobody wants to speak up, and the clerks are scared of taking decisions. All these strategies were used by the journalists of late 1950s and 1960s to illustrate various problems in the personal, social, economic and political spheres, without expressing outright criticism of the Communist Party.

The years of Gomulka rule were a time of relative stability, interrupted by various events, in which the power of the Party was challenged. Writers, journalists and other members of intelligentsia, having experienced a short moment of more freedom in October '56, were

hungry for more and continued to push the boundaries imposed by the state. Reporters, even though most remained at the payroll of the Party press system, managed to present the reality of 1960s in a way that would cause the readers to ask uncomfortable questions: what is the purpose of different state policies? Why are there discrepancies between propaganda and real life? Why do the politicians' promises remain unfulfilled? What are the everyday struggles of a common man, that the communist system was supposedly trying to help?

At the same time, the less oppressive post-Stalinist years gave many reporters the opportunity to apply for a passport and be sent abroad by their newspaper or magazine. Kapuściński travelled to Africa, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as Latin America. Lucjan Wolanowski went to USA, Australia and South-East Asia. Wiesław Górnicki was an envoy to the UN in New York, he also visited India, Egypt, Afghanistan and Cambodia. Wojciech Giełzyski, too, reported from various countries, among them India and Indonesia. Wojciech Żukrowski, on the other hand, spend most of the late 50s and 60s abroad, working for Polish embassies in Delhi and Laos. Janusz Gołębiowski became a Polish Press Agency correspondent in Delhi. Jerzy Putrament, given his privileged position of vice-president of the Polish Writers' Association (1959-1980), and his intensive cooperation with the top Party officials, was able to travel even more than his colleagues. In 1960s he visited India twice, publishing two travel journals from there, he also went to several countries of Europe, North Africa, Mongolia and China. Polish readers, at that time still having limited possibilities to travel, were particularly eager to read these reporters' accounts from far-away countries. Nevertheless, those who travelled in that period, usually had to pay a high price for such freedom.

- **The Anti-Semitic Campaign of 1968**

The communist authorities were challenged once again in the time of international crisis following the Six Days War in the Middle East. The West took the side of Israel, while the Soviet Bloc supported the Arab countries. This became a convenient setting for the nationalist fraction in the Polish communist party. The fraction's leader, Mieczysław Moczar, was eager to eliminate his rivals based on their origin. Many party members, as well as many intellectuals and artists, were of Jewish origin. Some were left-wing already before the war, some joined later, seeing in the new system a hope for a more equal society and a safer future. That is why, an anti-Semitic campaign was a perfect way to gather support among more nationalist Poles, and to neutralise the more progressive elements in the party. Adam Mickiewicz's play, "Dziady

[The Forefathers]”, directed by Kazimierz Dejmek, and staged by the National Theatre in Warsaw, became a pretext to start the campaign. Moczar and his supporters called for the performance to be cancelled, calling the play anti-Russian, and its enthusiasts - pro-Zionists. Students of the Warsaw University protested against this decision, which led to a wave of unrest, later remembered as the “March events”.

The demonstrators gathered on 8 March 1968 to protest against censorship and restrictions of cultural freedom. They were attacked by the police, the leaders were arrested and later relegated from university. The press covered the events in a particularly biased manner, and the Moczar fraction underlined the “foreign” origin of the student leaders, such as Adam Michnik, calling them “Zionist agents” and “enemies of the Polish nation” (Goban-Klas 184). Students of other universities across the country went out on the streets in solidarity with their Warsaw counterparts. The Party responded by organising a large-scale campaign against intellectuals in general: professors, students, writers and dissidents. Given the anti-Semitic character of the campaign, all those with Jewish-sounding names felt threatened. Kazimierz Brandys was scared to leave his house on his own, knowing that both his Jewish and non-Jewish colleagues were beaten up on the street. Another writer, Julian Strykowski, had to change his phone number twice, since he was often woken up at night by hateful, anti-Semitic callers (Bikont & Szczęśna 371). As a result, Polish intelligentsia of Jewish-origin was facing repressions, many lost their positions, and numerous were forced to emigrate. This was also a critical moment for the press - instead of taking the side of the intelligentsia, like in 1956, a large part of the media joined the virulent anti-Semite campaign launched by Moczar and his supporters. These journalists were labelled “*prasa marcowa*” - the “March press” - and were given instructions directly from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Warsaw section of the Party (Goban-Klas 187). Their tone was so violent, and they had such strong backing, that even Gomułka succumbed to this anti-Semitic rhetoric (in spite of the fact that his own wife was Jewish).

A number of journalists, writers and intellectuals disappeared from the Polish scene, as they were forced to emigrate. Their voice could be heard either through Western publications smuggled over the border to Poland, or only more than two decades later, when Poland regained independence. Possibly, this was also the fate of Jerzy Ros, one of the authors featured in this dissertation. Little is known of his biography - he published several reportages in 1950s, as well as children books, but then his name disappears from records. However, an internet search reveals two cues that suggest his Jewish origins: an article in which he tells the story of his



imprisonment in the Auschwitz concentration camp<sup>151</sup>, and two, the fact that in 1972 in Tel Aviv he published a historical study on Jews involved in armed struggle with Nazi forces on the Polish territories during the war. Given that his descendants live in United States<sup>152</sup>, Ros might have followed a route similar to many March '68 émigrés: first left to Israel, and from there to America – nevertheless, this can only be subject to speculation.

Another victim of the March events was *Świat* weekly, which featured texts of various well-known reporters, such as Kazimierz Dziewanowski, Marian Brandys, Krzysztof Kąkolewski, Andrzej Mularczyk, Adolf Rudnicki, Lucjan Wolanowski and Jerzy Waldorff. It was also home to two protagonists of this dissertation, Wiesław Górnicki and Wojciech Żukrowski. It was published since 1951, by the RSW Prasa, but due to the political purge began by the Moczar fraction, it was closed down in 1969. Indeed, the events of March 1968 led to a crisis in the media: an aggressive nationalist and anti-Semitic group of journalists tried to marginalise their differently-minded colleagues. Goban-Klas recalls: “For the entire year of 1968, the media was dominated by the faction of “partisans”, who held semi-fascist (or rather communo-fascist) views” (188)<sup>153</sup>. As a result, over 800 employees of the state media company, RSW Prasa, were dismissed or forced to change jobs, and many editors-in-chief were replaced with Party loyalists. Repressions also touched students: over 1600 were relegated from universities (Goban-Klas 189). At the same time, a deepening economic crisis provoked new tensions in the society. In December 1970, miners went out to protest against an increase in food prices, and their demonstration was brutally curbed by the police and the army. The officers opened fire, killing more than 40 persons, and over a thousand were wounded. This massacre led to a public outcry and Gomułka had to resign - the reigns of the Party passed to Edward Gierek (1913-2001).

### • **The 1970s: Growing Tensions Between the People and the Party**

The Polish Communist Party was constantly challenged by the society and was forced to make compromises. It had to give up on many Soviet-inspired projects, such as collectivisation or ousting of religions. Catholic Church became more powerful than ever, given that after the Holocaust and the expulsions of Germans and Ukrainians, Polish society

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<sup>151</sup> His article can be found online in *Przegląd Polski* - a Polish magazine issued in Sao Paolo, Brazil. Ros' text appears there in 1964 with the title “Cygańska noc” [“Gypsy Night”], and it could be a reprint from a Poland-based newspaper.

<sup>152</sup> Information obtained from the publisher of Ros' children's books, Jolanta Karwowska. Email from 17.07.2015.

<sup>153</sup> “Przez cały rok 1968 w dziennikarstwie dominowała frakcja ‘partyzantów’, która reprezentowała poglądy semi-faszystowskie (czy raczej: komuno-faszystowskie)” (Goban-Klas 188).

was composed mainly of Catholics<sup>154</sup>. Moreover, the Church was the only institution that offered an alternative to the official, communist institutions. Thus, it is not surprising that those who were critical of the government would ally with the clergy. According to Goban-Klas, it was the particular coexistence of Gierek and the Catholic Church that defined the decade of 1970-1980, preparing a fertile ground for the birth of Solidarność movement in 1980 (194).

Like most leaders of the communist era, Edward Gierek came to power after a violent crisis (the massacre of demonstrators in 1970). He was at first perceived as a liberal, and the society expected him to grant more freedom to various groups. Indeed, Gierek promised reforms and unveiled his grand economic strategy, which was to bring prosperity to all. This initial “honeymoon” phase lasted for a very short time. Soon, it turned out that the foreign loans (from the same Western capitalists so deplored by the Soviets) did not bring expected results (Davies, *Heart...* 13). This “phoney prosperity” the ever increasing debt<sup>155</sup>, the frozen prices of food, the wages and subsidies that the state could not afford, were all signs of an approaching economic disaster. When Gierek suddenly tried to increase food prices, the workers of Ursus factory in Warsaw and Radom arms industry began to protest. Even though eventually the government called off the price increase, the protesters faced harsh consequences, many were beaten up or made redundant. As a response to these events, the intellectuals decided to form an organisation helping the persecuted workers: Komitet Obrony Robotników [Workers’ Defence Committee]. It was the first open, legal civil society organisation that was vocal in criticising the government. Furthermore, apart from offering legal and financial support to the workers, it held discussions, started underground publishing, and even organised a Flying University. It was the seed from which grew the largest opposition organisation in the Soviet Bloc - the Solidarity movement.

Another event that caused great trouble to the Communist Party was the election of a Pole, Karol Wojtyła, to the position of the Pope. The ensuing visit of John Paul II to his homeland, in 1979, has further shaken the legitimacy of the communist rule. Millions of Poles participating in the meetings and open-air masses felt united and powerful, able to face up to the oppressive regime.

A critical moment took place in 1975, when members of the Communist Party meeting at the 7th Assembly, decided to include mentions of “unbreakable bonds between Poland and

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<sup>154</sup> According to Norman Davies, after the war Catholics constituted about 96% of the population (*Heart of Europe* 10).

<sup>155</sup> The Polish foreign debt exceeded twenty billion dollars - which was at the time the entire foreign debt of the whole of USSR (Davies, *Heart...* 14).

the Soviet Union” and a “leading role of the Communist Party” in the new constitution (Goban-Klas 208). Critics of the system signed a letter addressed to the Speaker of the Lower Chamber of the Polish Parliament. An initiative of Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń, and Jan Józef Lipski, the so-called “Letter of the 55” (in reference to the previous “Letter of the 34”), was signed by writers, professors, lawyers, scientists and priests. Given how all attempts at expressing critique of the government were met with severe repressions, the decision to sign a public appeal was not an easy one to take. As Bikont and Szczęsna point out,

The entire second half of 1970s was marked by such emotional seesaw for the intellectuals, and dilemmas of the type: to let oneself be carried away by emotions and a wish to challenge the authorities, or to continue doing one’s own thing? to risk losing the right to get a passport or to face ostracism in one’s milieu? to save the national substance or to get involved in political squabbles? to give testimony to the truth or to be a coward? (Bikont & Szczęsna 405)<sup>156</sup>

Nevertheless, more and more people found the courage to publicly denounce the anomalies and abuses of the communist state. Numerous writers, among them Jerzy Andrzejewski and Wiktor Woroszyński joined KOR together with younger intellectuals. They also began to publish an independent literary magazine, called *Zapis* [Record], the first underground publication. More and more authors started to write for the so-called “second circle” - the underground, or samizdat, publishings<sup>157</sup>. These publications were not only addressed to the intelligentsia - many social groups had their own independent magazines, such as *Robotnik* [The Worker], *Bratniak* (a student magazine), or *Gospodarz* (addressed to farmers). Madeleine Albright remarks that one of the most remarkable initiatives from that time was the uncensored Nowa publishing house, that by 1980 issued over 50 book titles (18). Furthermore, Tomasz Strzyżewski, an employee of the censorship office, defected to the West and smuggled the handbook of GUKPPiW, the Main Office for the Control of Press, Publications and Performances out of the country. Soon after his arrival to Sweden, Strzyżewski published it as *The Black Book of Censorship in PRL* (1977)<sup>158</sup>. Even though everyone was aware of the existence of censorship, Poles were shocked by how detailed and precise were the instructions

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<sup>156</sup> “Cała druga połowa lat siedemdziesiątych upłynęła wielu intelektualistom na takiej emocjonalnej huśtawce i rozstrząsaniu takich mniej więcej dylematów: dać się ponieść emocjom i chęci przykopywania władzy czy robić swoje? Ryzykować utratą paszportu czy ostracyzmem środowiska? Ratować narodową substancję czy wdawać się w polityczne awantury? Dać świadectwo prawdzie czy stehórzyć?” (Bikont & Szczęsna 405).

<sup>157</sup> The first underground publication in communist Poland was published on 29 September 1976, and it was the “KOR Statement” (according to Goban-Klas 210).

<sup>158</sup> It was edited and translated into English by Jane Leftwich Curry, and published as *Black Book of Polish Censorship*, New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

for censors<sup>159</sup>. There was a growing sense of divide between the sympathisers of the communist Party and the sympathisers of the opposition.

### **The Press in the Gierek Decade**

The 1970s were a particularly intensive time for journalists on both sides of the divide. Those who chose to stay close to the political leaders could quickly reap the benefits of their loyalty. Contrarily to Gomułka, who was rather distrustful of journalists, Gierek attached much importance to his public image. According to Goban-Klas,

His information policy would grant the journalistic profession a high status. Those journalists who supported him, became part of the political elite. Their conditions of work improved, incomes increased, and they were able to go abroad more often. Simply speaking, Gierek would have a “stick and carrot” policy, while Gomułka made use only of the stick. (200)<sup>160</sup>

Indeed, according to a young editor interviewed by Madeleine Albright, journalists in that time could be divided into two types of people (14).

The first group comprised journalists who had come up through the party ranks and were really white collar workers who wanted to make a name for themselves and liked to see their name in print. The second were intellectuals who wanted to have their work appear in print and tried to figure out how to write their thoughts in such a way as to fit within the censorship system.<sup>161</sup> (Albright 14)

The press became even more centralised. *Trybuna Ludu* remained the most important Party newspaper, and the local dailies often quoted it or reprinted its news items. The already large Party publishing house for magazines and journals, RSW Prasa, became even larger and more powerful, as it was transformed in RSW Prasa-Książka-Ruch. It was joined by the Party book publisher, Książka i Wiedza<sup>162</sup>, as well as Ruch, the state company solely responsible for press distribution (Goban-Klas 204).

Gierek also realised the potential of television that became more and more popular and accessible to regular citizens. The 1971 Assembly of the Polish Communist Party issued a resolution that defined the tasks of the mass media in building support around the socialist ideas, in strengthening the relationship of the nation with the Party, and in providing

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<sup>159</sup> For further information about Strzyżewski case, see documentary by Grzegorz Braun, “Wielka ucieczka cenzora” [“The Great Escape of the Censor”] (1999).

<sup>160</sup> “Jego polityka informacyjna przyznawała zawodowi dziennikarskiemu wysoki status. Ci dziennikarze, którzy go popierali, stali się częścią elity politycznej. Warunki pracy dziennikarzy poprawiły się, zarobki wzrosły, częściej też wyjeżdżali zagranicę. Krótko mówiąc, Gierek prowadził politykę ‘kija i marchewki’, podczas gdy Gomułka robił użytek wyłącznie z kija” (Goban-Klas 200).

<sup>161</sup> Albright identifies her sources by numbers - this journalist is coded as “Source no. 2” - in order to guarantee their anonymity. Her book was published in 1983, at the time of the communist backlash.

<sup>162</sup> For instance, Książka i Wiedza was the publisher of Janusz Gołębiowski’s book, *Nadane z Delhi*, analysed in this dissertation.

endorsement for the political and propaganda line of the Party (Goban-Klas 201). However, rather than promoting an ideology, the mass media were, in Gierek times, a crucial tool of political marketing (201). Indeed, much of the media was rather supportive of Gierek's great plan of modernisation, even those who were not particularly supportive of the Communist Party as such. The situation changed when Gierek strategy turned out to be a catastrophic one for the Polish economy, and journalists became more critical of the government and refused to participate in the "propaganda of success". The authorities restricted the media once again, imposing even more stringent censorship control.

Nowadays, the 1970s are now remembered as the Golden Age of reportage, when the greatest names gained their fame. It was the age of Ryszard Kapuściński, Małgorzata Szejnert, Hanna Krall, Teresa Torańska, Barbara N. Łopieńska, Wojciech Giełżyński and Krzysztof Kąkolewski. They were skilled at making compromises with the system, trying to outwit the censors and to pass across veiled messages for their readers. Nevertheless, in spite of the intensive development of reportage as a genre, reporters faced many hardships in their dealings with the authorities. Małgorzata Szejnert recalls how she agreed to write a reportage on the condition of Polish aristocracy in communism. It was an idea of her boss, Jerzy Urban, chief of the domestic affairs section of *Polityka*. The enterprise was risky, as it was very likely that the censorship office will not let it pass. Małgorzata Szejnert, an ambitious young journalist, decided to go for it: her "Mitra pod kapeluszem" ["A Mitre under the Hat"] was published in 1973. Even though the censorship allowed it to be published, the authorities were deeply displeased, especially given that the Soviet delegate visiting the May Parade in Warsaw reprimanded the propaganda secretary for it (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 140). Szejnert recalls the consequences of her article:

When the text was adjudicated, the press division [of the Party] organised a hate campaign against me. They called several journalists and instructed them to write polemical texts. And that is when more brutal texts appeared. [...] International journalists became interested in why the reportage evokes such emotions, and many foreign newspapers reprinted it. This fact shocked the Party comrades, and the authorities put my name and my article on record [a ban on publishing]. From that time, I was surrounded by a deep silence. (Szejnert quoted by Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 140)<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> "Kiedy tekst został odsądzony, wydział prasy zorganizował na mnie nagonkę. Wezwali kilku dziennikarzy i zlecili im polemikę. I zaczęły się kolejne brutalne teksty. [...] Dziennikarze zagraniczni zainteresowali się, czemu reportaż wywołuje takie namiętności, przedrukowało go mnóstwo zachodnich gazet. To poruszyło towarzyszy, władze partyjne zrobiły zapis na moje nazwisko i tekst. Nastąpiła głucha cisza. Ale byłam już taka sławna, że kiedy poszłam na pocztę i podałam nazwisko, to panią odwróciła się do koleżanek i krzyknęła: 'Dziewczyny, to ta co arystokrację napisała!'" (Szejnert qt by Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 140).

Hanna Krall, who later became famous for her reportages on Holocaust, faced similar problems as Małgorzata Szejnert. The reporter claimed that her aim was to write about the good and the evil in people, but also about mundane things, like about “people who enjoy their life because they managed to save eighty złoty or to get pig legs from the shop” (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 302)<sup>164</sup>. Just like many of her colleagues, Krall wanted to show the absurdities of everyday life in communist Poland. While her individual reportages were still tolerated by the censors, when she wanted to publish them as a collection in a book called *Szczęście Marianny Głaz [The Happiness of Marianna Glaz]* (1976), all the copies of the book were destroyed (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 302).

Even those journalists who did not face such problems as Szejnert or Krall were often criticised for “excessive pessimism” in showing Poland in the 70s, or for adopting the “wrong” point of view (presumably - not socialist enough) (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 169). Many of those reporters, having started their careers as employees of daily newspapers, in 60s and 70s moved to newly created weeklies, *Kultura* (1963-1981) and *Literatura* (1972-1981). The former one had the same name as the émigré *Kultura* run by Jerzy Giedroyc in Paris and was meant to be an alternative to the unwanted foreign influence. The latter one, *Literatura*, with Jerzy Putrament as its editor-in-chief, featured both fiction and reportage. Many works of reportage were also published in the monthly *Kontrasty* (1965-1990) and in the student weekly magazine, *ITD - Ilustrowany Magazyn Studencki* (1961-1990). *Polityka*, created as a propaganda tool after October '56, and at first run by Party loyalists (such as Jerzy Putrament), under the editorship of Mieczysław Rakowski gained significant independence and became famous for its articles and reportages. Travel reportage could be found primarily in *Dookoła świata* (1954-1976) and *Kontynenty* (1964-1989)<sup>165</sup>. While many reporters attempted to visit places which were the scene of important political changes, such as the revolution in Iran (covered by Giełżyński) or wars in Africa and South America (described by Kapuściński), India remained one of the favourite directions for travellers. A few reportages about the Subcontinent were published in the 1970s: Wojciech Giełżyński's *Kraj świętych krów i biednych ludzi [The Country of Holy Cows and Poor People]* (1977) and Jerzy Chociłowski's *Indyjska szarada [Indian Charade]* (1977). Several travel accounts and memoirs from India were also published in this period (Dworczyk, Margul, Rubach-Kuczevska). The eruption of travel literature in 1970s was, however, soon to be over. The advent of the Solidarity movement, followed by the

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<sup>164</sup> “o ludziach, którzy są zachwyceni życiem, bo udało im się odłożyć osiemdziesiąt złotych na książeczkę albo zdobyć nogi wieprzowe” (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 302).

<sup>165</sup> Its last editor-in-chief was one of the reporters featured in this study, Jerzy Chociłowski.

martial law, turned the attention of the public towards domestic affairs. Also, many reporters were banned from official press and started publishing in the underground media.

- **1980 – The Solidarity Carnival**

The economic crisis progressed and the authorities decided, once again, to raise food prices. Workers reacted with protests, just like in 1970 and 1976, however this time, strikes erupted in many places in Poland. Thanks to underground press and foreign media, now more available to Poles, the news spread fast and the protests soon turned into a nation-wide general strike. The central point of it was Gdańsk shipyard, where workers were joined by members of KOR and other intellectuals. The strike leader, Lech Wałęsa, sat down to negotiate with the Management and Party representatives - they agreed to raise wages if workers return to work. Wałęsa was ready to accept the deal, but a group of women opposition activists intervened: if the shipyard stops the strike, smaller enterprises will be crushed and political prisoners never released. They argued that the shipyard needs to keep striking in solidarity with other workers. Wałęsa agreed and this event marked the beginning of the Solidarity Movement. The protesters formed an Interfactory Strike Committee [Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy] which drafted a list of twenty-one demands for the Party: the most important requests were the reinstatement of workers previously sacked by the management, a raise in wages, the right to form independent, self-governing trade unions, and the right to free speech. They also demanded for political prisoners to be released, and a monument to the victims of 1970 massacre to be erected (Kemp-Welch 238). The strikers were exceptionally well-organised, they had their own experts in law, sociology, and history, and they benefitted from a large network of popular support. Their families and inhabitants of Gdańsk would bring them supplies, and they were helped by the Church. In the end of August 1980, after intensive negotiations with the authorities, Wałęsa announced their victory - their demands were agreed upon. As a result, every province sent delegates to the newly formed Independent Self-Governing Trades Union [Niezależne Samorządne Związki Zawodowe - NSZZ] - Solidarność. The fifteen months that followed are often remembered as the “Solidarity Carnival” - a time of enthusiasm and hope, when free press was circulated and plans for the future were made. In this time, the number of Solidarity members rose to 10 million - more than a quarter of the Polish society. As Norman Davies observes, “Solidarity represented almost every single family in the land, and thereby expressed the will of the overwhelming majority of the nation” (16). Another crucial point, according to Davies, was that the movement was obstinate in keeping

their fight peaceful, which eventually granted Solidarity a moral victory over the communist Party (17). What is more, a revolt of workers (supported by other sections of the society) undermined the legitimacy of the communist state, as it showed that the very class whose interests the Party was supposed to represent, turned against it.

### **The Press in Times of Solidarity**

The period of Solidarity (August 1980-December 1981) was a particularly important time for the media. Many Polish and foreign journalists came to cover the strike and the negotiations. Even before a deal was struck with the authorities, a group of them issued a declaration about how unfair was the coverage of events in the official media. The letter was signed by 36 journalists, among them Ryszard Kapuściński, who recalls this in *Prasa Polska*:

For many journalists that signature was a huge decision. They wondered if there would be repressions. I remember one colleague who signed and the next day came to me and said, “Mr. Ryszard, what do you think? I signed but what will happen?” He was terribly upset. We all had the feeling that the decision was the right one, but risky. Today, it all seems a little grotesque, but then... on August 25th. In the end, we were protesting against the whole propaganda line in connection with the Baltic Coast... with what was going on there. (quoted after Albright 41)

Among these journalists was also Wojciech Giełżyński, one of the reporters whose text is analysed in this dissertation. He remembers that workers were not necessarily enthusiastic about the presence of the press amongst them, as they associated journalists with the despised communist authorities (Miller et al. 162). The letter helped to break the ice between the strikers and the journalists, many of whom were deeply impressed by the energy and the truly democratic spirit of the protest. In the words of Kapuściński, “what was happening there, and our conversations, were a tremendous personal experience. We realised that these events will be decisive for us, they will influence our individual fate as reporters, and what and how we will write.” (Miller et al. 233)<sup>166</sup>.

Indeed, in the first few months of the “Solidarność Carnival”, both at the meetings of the Polish Association of Journalists, as well as those of the Association of Polish Writers, big debates about freedom of expression took place. The writers demanded for the record of writers banned from publication to be abolished, and challenged the institution of censorship; similar discussions and claims were made during the meeting of the Journalist Association (Goban-Klas 228-229). The operations of the censorship were transformed from 1st October 1981, when its legal base changed from decree to law, which meant that one could take a censor to

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<sup>166</sup> “To, co się działo, i nasze rozmowy, były wielkim, osobistym przeżyciem. Zdawaliśmy sobie sprawę, że rozstrzygają się sprawy, które wpłyną na nasze osobiste losy reporterskie, na to, co i jak będziemy pisać.”



court. According to the new law, it was no longer necessary to censor every printed material (before that, even personal business cards had to be approved by the office), there were exemptions for all publications printed in less than one hundred copies, Church publications on religion, and all publications for “internal use”. Goban-Klas points out that this last clause permitted Solidarity - as an officially recognised trade union - to issue all its bulletins without interference of the censors (231). Also, the Solidarity received slots for their own programmes on TV and radio, and they published their own newspaper, *Tygodnik Solidarność*. It was independent from the state media concern RSW Prasa, and it was circulated in 500 thousand copies (Albright 94). More freedom of expression allowed even major national and regional dailies, controlled by the Party, to publish independent articles. One of them was *Gazeta Krakowska*, run by Maciej Szumowski, who – thanks to his good contacts with the Party and the censors – managed to publish rather subversive stories and commentaries. Jerzy Sadecki, then young reporter of “*Krakowska*”, remembers how his story from events in Bydgoszcz, where “unknown civilians” attacked Solidarity activists, made the first page of the newspaper. His relation, confronted with news from the Polish Press Agency and the statement from the authorities, unveiled government’s lies and manipulations. Given that it was the only newspaper featuring this story, readers queued for it and its copies were circulated around for days on end (Sadecki).

Madeleine Albright summarises the journalists’ activity in this period as twofold: “1) to get behind the facade of lies that had been constructed by the authorities and to deal with Poland, its present problems and past history, in a truthful way; and 2) to present Solidarity activities in a positive light” (53). Indeed, the fifteen months of relative freedom allowed Poles an unprecedented access to information, not only political, but also on various topics that were taboo in the communist state: alcoholism, public health, damage of environment, corruption, and many other issues that would spoil the image of successful socialist Poland. Also, it was a time when fervent intellectual discussions took place, on history, social issues or philosophical questions. Alas, the Party was not willing to give up its power and decided to curb this free spirit, introducing martial law on 13 December 1981.

- **The Party Strikes Back: The Introduction of the Martial Law (1981)**

Upon waking up on that winter day, Poles discovered tanks on the street. Offices, schools and other institutions were closed, and their phones went quiet. The TV kept showing the speech of General Jaruzelski, explaining that “the country finds itself on the brink of an

abyss” and blaming Solidarity for this chaos in the country. “Strikes, warning strikes, protest actions have become the norm. Even school-children are dragged in . . . Acts of terrorism, threats and mob justice, together with direct coercion abound”, he continued (quote translated by Kemp-Welch 327). This was the reason why he decided to impose the “state of war” and form a Military Council of National Salvation (WRON). All strikes and demonstrations were brutally “pacified” by the ZOMO forces, a few people died and thousands of Solidarity activists were interned. Their offices, desks, printing presses, typewriters and other equipment were smashed (Kemp-Welch 328). The hopes of millions of Poles waiting for a gradual democratisation were crushed, too. Life in the country came to a stand-still: one could not leave their region without a permit, many institutions remained closed, many households searched by the police, and fear was instilled in the minds of regular citizens. What presented the most important concern, was the threat that the Soviet Army will come to the help of their Polish comrades and the country will experience the same fate as Czechoslovakia in 1968. Years later, Jaruzelski justified his decision of introducing the martial law precisely by that fact: he claimed that he wanted to avoid an external intervention. Nevertheless, historians argue that there is evidence that, on the contrary, he supposedly asked for Soviet support in case the Polish army loses control over the population (Kemp-Welch 325-326).

### **The Press under the Martial Law**

The martial law was accompanied by an almost complete “communication blackout” (Goban-Klas 246). Phones and telexes (back then a popular tool among journalists to send information) were cut off; all performances, exhibitions, conferences and other public events were called off, and a curfew was introduced. All newspapers were shut down, except of two dailies: *Trybuna Ludu* (issued by the Party) and *Żołnierz Wolności* (issued by the military), and sixteen regional newspapers, replacing various local press. These newspapers did not feature texts by individual journalists - all their texts were signed by the “editing team”, which meant that in most cases, their source was the Propaganda Department. One of the main topics in the press then were the arrests of the “extremists” from Solidarity and resignations of various government employees accused of supporting the opposition (Goban-Klas 246-247). Not only the press would only represent the voice of the Party, also television - all presenters were obliged to wear military uniforms.

The only independent and uncontrolled medium of communication were private conversations - but only those that were not held over the phone. During phone calls, one could hear an

announcement [by the operator] “this call is controlled”. In brief, a strict communication block was extended on all citizens. (Goban-Klas 247)<sup>167</sup>

Such stick block lasted for a month, then slowly the authorities relaxed their grip, but some media restriction lasted till the end of the martial law, which took place on 22 July 1983. With thousands of Solidarity activists, artists, academics, and other supporters of the opposition still in jail, and with no independent media, many Poles would boycott television or press and tune in to Radio Free Europe, BBC or Voice of America instead. Still during the martial law, the network of underground press and publishing began to form, in spite of fierce penalties introduced by the authorities. Even the Catholic Church was engaged in supporting this underground cultural life, allowing for opposition members to gather in their premises for discussions or film screenings.

Journalists were divided into those who openly supported General Jaruzelski, those who reluctantly collaborated with the Party press to keep their work places, and those who were in the opposition, and either stopped writing altogether or published only in the underground press. At one end of the political spectrum was Wiesław Górnicki and Jerzy Urban. Górnicki, previously a reporter of *Przekrój* weekly, joined the army on the night of the martial law introduction, and became a close collaborator of Jaruzelski, writing his speeches and advising the Governmental Press Committee. Urban, an editor in “Polityka”, became the government spokesman and press secretary of the General. At the other end of the spectrum were reporters who backed the Solidarity movement and joined the protesters in the shipyard: Ryszard Kapuściński, Wojciech Giełżyński, Kazimierz Dziewanowski, Marek Miller, Krystyna Jagiełło and many others. Their stories are published in a collective reportage, called *Kto tu wpuścił dziennikarzy?* [*Who Let the Journalists in Here?*], first published by the underground Publishing House “Nowa” (1982). There were different secret publications published during the martial law, featuring texts by those reporters who refused to write for the Party press. For instance, a group of reporters formed a magazine called *Karta* [Card]<sup>168</sup>. One of its articles, “W stanie [In the state [of war]]”, is a reporters’ documentation of the events and peoples’ experiences during the martial law. Its authors, Zbigniew Gluza, Katarzyna Madoń, Grzegorz Sołtysiak, and Alicja Wancerz, note spontaneous conversations, quick messages, individual memories, letters, poems, excerpts of underground brochures, and their friends’ journals

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<sup>167</sup> “Jedynym niezależnym i niekontrolowanym środkiem komunikowania została prywatna rozmowa, lecz nie przez telefon. Podczas połączeń telefonicznych słychać było komunikat: “rozmowa kontrolowana”. Krótko mówiąc, wszystkich obywateli objęto ścisłą blokadą komunikacyjną” (Goban-Klas 247).

<sup>168</sup> It still exists as a historical quarterly, and it is published by the Karta Centre, which till now works on the documentation of Central European 20th century history.

(Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 410). This collage is a lively, documentary story of martial law victims. However, as its author, Zbigniew Gluza, admits, it is a one-sided narrative:

We made a mistake of not including any statements by those who were reconciled with the “occupation”, or by the authorities. It seemed to us that on the other side, there is only deadness, that does not deserve our attention. . . In this way, we were closed to the experience of the majority of the society, from which depended what will happen in the country.” (Gluza, quoted by Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 410)<sup>169</sup>.

Nevertheless, this reportage is according to Mariusz Szczygieł one of the most important non-fiction stories on the martial law, as experienced by the Polish society (*100/XX... 2*: 411).

The fates of many other reporters can be places in between these two opposite ends of the spectrum. Małgorzata Szejnert became unemployed when the authorities closed down “Literatura” in 1981, and apart from writing small texts to underground magazines, she juggled between various jobs - one of them was making compositions of dried flowers - and eventually emigrated to USA for a few years (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 141). Hanna Krall left “Polityka” and became employed by a small hobby magazine for fishermen, which at that time constituted a “repository for non-verified journalists” (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 303)<sup>170</sup>. She had her own column there, “Smutek ryb [The Sadness of Fish]”, and she always managed to link the topic of fish to historical or social issues. However, as the magazine editor recalls, her texts would infuriate the local Party representatives and eventually she was forced to leave (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 303).

When the political turmoil somewhat calmed down in the mid-1980s, the Interpress agency (which belonged to the Party concern RSW) started a new magazine devoted to reportage, the *Reporter* monthly. According to Mariusz Szczygieł, it featured mostly new authors, as older, experienced reporters either stopped writing altogether, or published only in the underground press (*100/XX... 2*: 501). Wojciech Pielecki, the editor-in-chief of the new magazine, managed however to promote young talents. When the Gdańsk shipyard went on strike again in 1988, the *Reporter* became famous for featuring an interview with Lech Wałęsa (516). The Solidarity leader was “the best known “private person” in Poland” (516), and that interview was the first one in official press since martial law. Pielecki send two of his young reporters, Piotr Gabryel and Karol Jackowski, to find Wałęsa. Upon reading the interview,

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<sup>169</sup> “Popelniliśmy zresztą błąd, nie uwzględniając wypowiedzi osób pogodzonych z “okupacją” czy ludzi władzy. Wydawało się, że po tamtej stronie jest wyłącznie martwota, która nie zasługuje na uwagę. . . W ten sposób zamykaliśmy się na doświadczenie większości społeczeństwa, która wtedy przesądzała, co się dzieje w kraju.” (Zbigniew Gluza quoted by Mariusz Szczygieł, *Antologia... T. 2* 410)

<sup>170</sup> “były przechowalnią niezwyfikowanych dziennikarzy” (303).

Pielecki was so impressed with the leader's vision that he strongly negotiated with the government members to let this text be published in his magazine (518). At that time, Wałęsa called for a round-table debate, where both the opposition and the authorities would come together. This was the beginning of the Polish "velvet revolution".

- **Solidarity's Victory and End of Communism (1989)**

In the entire Soviet Bloc, the wind of change<sup>171</sup> started blowing in the second half of 1980s. Politically, it was due to the increasing pressure exerted by the society on communist governments in Central Europe, as well as to changes in Soviet Union itself. The ascension of a more liberal leader, Mikhael Gorbachov, meant reforms: indeed, in 1986, Gorbachov launched a policy of *glasnost* – openness, and *perestroika* – economic reform. These changes, especially in the field of culture and media, were already under way in Poland, despite the authorities' attempts to quench such freedom of expression. The murder of a charismatic priest, Jerzy Popiełuszko, by the secret services in 1984 exacerbated the popular anger against the government. General Jaruzelski realised that reforms will be necessary: a loosening of the censorship was announced in 1987. Also, Poles were becoming even more exposed to other – Western – ways of life. Technological progress allowed many of them to have video recorders and satellite television, thanks to which thousands of Poles could watch international programmes and in this way circumvent the limitations imposed by the government (Goban-Klas 262).

In 1988, a wave of strikes took place, and the communist authorities realised that some sort of social agreement will be necessary. That is why, on 6 February 1989 the Round Table discussions began. The participants on both sides were selected from, on the one hand, most experienced opposition members, and, on the other hand, most progressive members of the Party. The chairman from the Solidarity side was Lech Wałęsa, awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 for his political activity, and the other chairman, from the Communist Party side, was general Czesław Kiszczak, then Minister of Internal Affairs. They reached an agreement that included the legalisation of independent trade unions, the introduction of the office of President of the Republic, the creation of the Senate (upper house of the parliament), and, most importantly, partially free parliamentary elections (in which 35% of seats of the lower house and all seats in the Senate were to be freely elected) and fully free elections in four years' time.

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<sup>171</sup> The term is used in reference to the Scorpions' song, "Wind of Change", written by Klaus Meine and released in 1990 on the album "Crazy World".

On 4 June 1989, an overwhelming majority of Poles voted for the opposition, and Solidarity candidates won 160 out of 161 seats available to them (35% of Sejm), and 92 out of 100 seats of the Senate<sup>172</sup> (Kemp-Welch 404). It was a landslide victory, as Solidarity took all the seats that were available. This meant a definitive change of power: Poland became the first country of the Soviet Bloc where members of the democratic opposition gained real influence on the shape of their country.

### **Towards Freedom of Press**

Freedom of expression was one of the key areas discussed during the Round Table. The opposition demanded access to radio, television and printing paper, the legalisation of the underground publications, the reinstatement of journalists dismissed in the martial law, the liberalisation of the censorship law and several other claims. Some of these demands were granted right away, allowing for instance for independent press to be published. Some, like the dismantling of the censorship, took many months after the elections to be completed<sup>173</sup>. Nevertheless, Round Table was a breakthrough for the Polish independent media, and it meant a heightened activity for the opposition that had very little time to promote their candidates for the parliamentary election in June of that year. A new voice in the press was needed. These were the circumstances of the creation of *Gazeta Wyborcza* [The Electoral Gazette], which is till now one of the biggest dailies in the country. It is run by the legendary Adam Michnik, leader of the student protests of 1968 and a key member of Solidarity, and it is home to most illustrious Polish reporters of both the socialist and the democratic era.

Its reportage section was run first by Hanna Krall, then by Małgorzata Szejnert, and today by Paweł Goźliński. Many reporters mentioned in this study contributed or worked for “Wyborcza” over the years: Anna Bikont, Artur Domosławski, Jacek Hugo-Bader, Wojciech Jagielski, Lidia Ostałowska, Joanna Szczęśna, Mariusz Szczygieł, Witold Szablowski, Wojciech Tochman and many others. Reportage was a way to document the transformation of the Polish political system and economy and to present it from unexpected points of view. As a genre, it is now more extensively studied and promoted as a Polish phenomenon, closely intertwined with the recent history of the country and the power play between the society and the communist state.

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<sup>172</sup> In the second round, on 18 June, Solidarity won the remaining 161st seat and seven more seats in the Senate.

<sup>173</sup> For instance, the first budget of free Poland, in 1990, still included a large sum to be assigned for censorship, though in reality this institution did not exist any more.

Clearly, it is impossible to present the entire story of Polish reportage in communism in a comprehensive manner in a dissertation. Much more could be written about individual figures, particular organisations, and media outlets. Similarly, there were different currents within the communist party and diverse policy decisions. One of the goals of this overview was to point at the complexity of relations between the press, the state and the society. Nowadays, in the Polish public discourse, there are tendencies to tell the story of communism in a rather black-and-white, simplified manner. The communist period is presented as yet another “single story”: a binary divide between the evil communists and brave oppositionists. This duality could perhaps be observed in the last phase of communism in Poland, when the society became to large degree polarised, but it was not so in previous decades. The interplay between the press and the government, between various state institutions, and between fractions among media representatives themselves, transcends such simplistic models of struggle between “us” and “them”. The space of negotiation was enlarging or shrinking in accordance to political situation. The periods of stricter control, followed by more freedom, and then leading to a backlash and tightening of control again formed cycles which repeated throughout the history of communist Poland.

Intellectuals – writers, journalists, thinkers, reporters – were at the centre of these cycles. Some, in their writing, would strengthen the ideological message of the Party, some would try to undermine it. Thanks to the efforts of the latter ones towards pushing the boundaries of free expression, the space of dialogue was always in negotiation. Many journalists performed several few roles at the same time: they were employed in newspapers or magazines, sometimes wrote longer pieces – reportages, essays, fiction – and sometimes were involved in political activities as well. This is also due to the reality of communist system: each citizen had to have a permanent employment. One could not work as a “freelance” journalist or “independent” writer. Authors were strongly encouraged – if not forced – to be part of Writers’ Association or other state-controlled organisations. Many intellectuals were also obliged to join the Party, especially if they wanted to be published, travel abroad, participate in international associations etc. Some did not need coercing at all, since they identified with the communist ideology. This issue presents another problem in current discussions on the nature of the communist state. While right-wing nationalists would like to identify and label all those who “collaborated” with the system, the context of that historical period makes it virtually impossible. So much depends on the historical context and to individual reasons for making ideological choices. How to assess those who were initially enthusiasts of communism, in the worst, Stalinist years, but later became ardent opponents of

the system? Which period in their lives should be deemed as more important? How to judge those who were presented with an impossible choice: if you do not inform on your colleagues, your child will be refused treatment at the hospital? Or even those who made choices in less dramatic circumstances: a permission for academics to do research abroad in turn for a Party loyalty declaration? And what to make of those who were part of the system itself: were they all corrupt Party loyalists, or did they have doubts of their own? Finally, is the ideologically motivated art and writing created in this period worthless, because it served a political goal, or can it still be appreciated for other reasons? It seems obvious that precisely because these questions cannot be answered in a straightforward manner, the story of communist Poland must be seen in its full complexity.



### CHAPTER 3. THE COMMUNIST REPORTER'S GAZE

Travel writers and travel reporters face similar dilemmas as anthropologists: how to approach the Other, how to understand a different culture, and – finally – how to describe their experience. Their works are not bound by academic expectations and methodological requirements, but they have a certain responsibility towards their readers. Travel reporters, in particular, are bound by the expectations of their profession: journalism. In Polish culture, the most prevalent type of travel writing is travel reportage, given the large popularity of reportage as a genre. In the previous chapter, the two strands of nonfictional writing were discussed, travel writing and reportage. Travel reportage can be situated in between: like in travel writing, the narrative is usually in first person, and it involves a journey, most often abroad (although there are examples of domestic travel reportages). Furthermore, like in travelogues, the narrator offers his or her subjective interpretation of the observed phenomena, accounts of his/her interactions with people, and insights into the foreign culture.

However, a travel reportage usually goes beyond the travel account, providing also information about social or political issues. It is thus usually more engaged and socially conscious than travelogues, and closer in style to journalistic accounts. As opposed to informative journalism, travel reportage not only describes reality, but also reacts to it (Rejter 29). Scholars who analyse travel reportage underline two elements: the subject – the reporter/narrator/traveller; and the object – the observed reality (Rejter 36). In the earlier travel accounts, the subject and his or her unilateral account<sup>174</sup> were more prominent, while in 20<sup>th</sup>-century reportage, the subject's role is diminished and more attention is given to the object of travel: the journey itself, the reality of the foreign place, the narratives of people encountered during the travels (Rejter 50). If the figure of the author is concealed, and the voice of the narrator is reduced, the readers are more likely to have an illusion of fiction, says Rejter (52). The analysis of primary material, in this chapter and two following ones, is also divided in this manner: while this chapter focuses on the subject – the traveller himself, the other two pertain to the object – the travel itself, the descriptions of India and the events during the journey.

This chapter is a reflection on who were the authors of the analysed texts and how did they present themselves and their mission in their reportages. Where they setting of on a

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<sup>174</sup> Rejter also mentions bilateral accounts: when the traveller addresses a particular person or group of people. This is most visible in the case of epistolary travel accounts, but it remains in contemporary travel reportage in forms of the narrator directly addressing the readers, in particular in the foreword or afterword section, or in a “note from the author” section.

journey with the same spirit as regular travellers? What was the motivation that brought them to India? What goals did they set for themselves? The answers to these questions are as diverse as are the authors analysed here. By and large, they can be divided into two categories: journalists, whose aim is to describe India to Polish readers, as well as official delegates, who are sent to India with a particular mission, for instance as participants of a congress or as public sector employees. However, this broad division into reporters and delegates is only a functional one. Actually, all forms of travel writing – and travel reportage – were to some extent an official project (Gorsuch 20). Hence, independently of their profession and the particular purpose of their travel, all the authors featured in this dissertation are on an official mission. Their journey had to be endorsed by the authorities, as it was otherwise impossible to obtain the passport, visas, and foreign currency. That is why, state officials, delegates to conferences, and reporters alike were all bound by the same restrictions and their accounts were (self-) censored. Nevertheless, like other travellers describing Otherness – writers or anthropologists – the Polish reporters had to make a conscious decision about the modes of representation of the Indian Other.

### **1. Travel and Representations of Otherness (Kapuściński – Malinowski – Conrad)**

This idea of negotiation or even translation between cultures was close to the heart of Ryszard Kapuściński (1932-2007), one of the best known travel reporters in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, labelled as “The Emperor of Reportage”<sup>175</sup>. He used to call himself an “interpreter of cultures”, defining his role as someone who enables a dialogue between the self and the other, under the condition that it is a dialogue between partners, between equals. He started his journalistic career in 1955 and soon after he became famous because of his interventionist reportage on Nowa Huta (see: Chapter 2). Although Kapuściński believed in socialism and was a member of the communist party, his criticism of the flagship project of the communist government caused mixed reactions. Kapuściński received a prize for it, but soon after he was sent abroad. His first foreign journey was to India, and – as he himself admitted – it did not go well. His English was not good enough at that time, he did not understand India, and he was overwhelmed by its vastness and complexity. He considered India his failure: “its enormity and diversity, its poverty and riches, its mystery and incomprehensibility had crushed, stunned, and finally defeated me” (*Travels with Herodotus*, 19). He was taken aback by this experience and eventually did not publish any longer account of his journey, even though he made

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<sup>175</sup> See: “Ryszard Kapuściński – cesarz reportażu”, [Polskieradio.pl](http://Polskieradio.pl). 23.01.2016. Web.

references to India in his later books. Upon returning to Poland, he resumed his work as a journalist, first in *Sztandar Młodych*, then in *Polityka*. He is best known for his reportages from Africa, Middle East and South America, where he went as a correspondent from the Polish Press Agency. His reportages from Ethiopia (*Cesarz [The Emperor]*, 1978), and Iran (*Szachinszach [The Shah-of-the-Shahs]*, 1982) became bestsellers, not only because of his excellent way of reporting events, but also because they were read by Poles as a more universal allegory of corrupt power. Although in his early years, Kapuściński believed in socialism, after observing the abuses of the communist power and the misery experienced by most of the Polish society, he started to support the anti-communist opposition. He was one of the journalists covering the general strike in Gdańsk and speaking out for the cause of the Solidarity movement. After transition to democracy, Kapuściński kept working as a reporter, but he was also vocal about the global inequalities and various world issues. He died in 2007, but his spirit is still present among younger reporters who keep republishing his works and referring to him as their role-model. Nevertheless, his legend was somewhat tarnished by the controversy caused by a biographical reportage on Kapuściński by Artur Domoślawski (2010) and allegations of collaboration with the communist secret services.

Independently on Kapuściński's biography, the points that he made about representing non-European Others and the role and duties of travel reporters are still valid. Eurocentrism is still a phenomenon widely discussed among scholars (Amin, Kanth, Chakrabarty). Indeed, equality is difficult to achieve in a world still marked by the colonial past and post-colonial present. Indeed, many critics accuse travel writing as a whole of being "a refuge for complacent, even nostalgically retrograde, middle-class values" (Holland and Huggan viii), or even worse, of reproducing the Western domination on other parts of the world (Lisle 3). It is hard to disagree with Lisle on the fact that "travel writers continue to secure their privileged position by categorising, critiquing and passing judgement on less-civilised areas of the world" (3). So, is travel writing bound to be yet another vehicle for colonial, Orientalist discourse? Do Western reporters have the right to represent the non-Western Others? Or can it be educational, or even emancipatory? Kapuściński believed in the latter: he used to say that his main mission is to overcome Eurocentrism, and to show other ways of life to his readers (*The Self-Portrait...* 13).

In academia, the disciplines involving the study of culture – anthropology, ethnography, area studies, sociology – are still dealing with the colonial baggage of their predecessors. The last few decades brought about numerous discussions on representation, postcoloniality, otherness etc. This critical turn began before the end of colonialism, already at the beginning

of twentieth century. Bronisław Malinowski, Polish anthropologist living in Britain, challenged the idea of hierarchies between cultures and called for more objectivism and lack of bias in anthropological research. His method became known as “participant observation” and it would require the anthropologist to study a given culture from close up, preferably participating in the observed community’s every day life, rituals, ceremonies and important events. Such point of view would challenge especially the colonial anthropology, that evolved alongside the expansion of European empires, presenting the non-Western Others as uncivilised and primitive. While the role of anthropologists in the colonial system was rather marginal, the reverse – European colonialism’s influence on anthropological work – was considerable (Asad 315). Colonial empires, through the power of their military and administration, but also, through the power of their discourse, enclosed the “rest-of-the-world” in a position of subjects that should follow European lead. In such a framework, anthropology understood as a study of “traditional” cultures and their development to “modernity” was no longer innocent. As Asad remarks, a lot of anthropological assumptions, for instance about cultural continuity, authenticity or autonomy, must be questioned (316). Nowadays, anthropology does not only focus on what to study, but on how to do it, what language to use when talking about other cultures. And not only anthropology: in this chapter, it is discussed how reporters represent another culture – namely, India’s culture. Indeed, reportage often was (and is) linked to anthropology since its main aims are to represent a different reality, culture, mind-set and values (Rod 212).

Bronisław Malinowski was mentioned here not only because he was an important anthropologist – many more scholars contributed to new approaches in the discipline and formed a critique of the Western feeling of superiority over the “uncivilised” parts of the world. In fact, Ryszard Kapuściński felt a connection with Malinowski, and perhaps saw himself as a continuator of sorts: he, too, was a Pole travelling to faraway places and writing about other cultures. However, there is another connection between these two figures, namely the controversies surrounding their work. After their respective deaths, in 1942 (Malinowski) and in 2007 (Kapuściński), doubts appeared over their integrity and their approach to other cultures. The publication of Malinowski’s personal notes, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (1967) caused a great discussion among scholars and the general public. The persona of Malinowski presented in the diaries is a far-cry from a compassionate, engaged researcher; his egocentrism, obsessiveness, and superiority complexes make him a rather dubious example for anthropologists. His remarks about the population of the Triobriand islands revealed a racist and sexist side of Malinowski, and left his admirers in dismay. Nevertheless, today the

scholar's diary is considered as an important documentation of self-analysis and reflection on the personal aspect of the anthropologist's work (Clifford, Geertz), or even seen as a "safety valve" (Stocking 102-103), helping Malinowski to deal with feelings that could not be expressed openly. Indeed, Malinowski in all honesty shows his flaws of character, which perhaps make him seem more human, struggling with his own preconceptions and weaknesses.

Similarly, Kapuściński's legacy, as presented by Artur Domosławski in his *Kapuściński non-fiction* [English title: *Ryszard Kapuściński: a Life* (2012)], raised many controversies. In spite of his idealistic declarations about the work of a journalist, like the example cited above, Kapuściński did not always remain faithful to the ethics of journalism. Domosławski proved that not only did he overlook certain facts, but also parts of his reportages are simply invented. Also, as it appeared from the analysis of the secret security service (Służba Bezpieczeństwa) files, Kapuściński occasionally met with secret agents and provided them with reports. These two issues provoked a discussion, both in Poland and abroad. Some defended Kapuściński, like the American writer Lawrence Weschler, who told Domosławski that the Polish reporter's texts transcended the dichotomy of fiction and non-fiction, being simply Literature (308). Some, for instance John Ryle, were outright critical, calling Kapuściński's style "tropical baroque" and "gonzo orientalism", or simply accusing him of lying (Shafer). Many maintained a more balanced approach, like Timothy Garton Ash or Neal Ascherson, pointing out the difference between Kapuściński's short journalistic pieces for the press agency, newspapers and magazines, and his books, which can be considered as literary reportage.

Ryszard Kapuściński kept two notebooks when he was on the road. One was for his job as an agency reporter, haring about the world, meeting deadlines and battling to file stories whose transmission was paid for out of the pittance of worthless communist currency he received from Warsaw. The other was for his calling as a writer, making reflective, creative, often lyrical sense out of what he was experiencing. To mix the two notebooks up is to miss the point of him. (Ascherson)

The border between fact and fiction remains at the core of academic discussions on literary reportage and travel writing. When considering three famous Poles whose work fluctuated between literature, journalism and anthropology, Joseph Conrad, Bronisław Malinowski and Ryszard Kapuściński, one can see an interesting continuation. Malinowski, an avid reader of literature, admired Conrad's texts, exclaiming once that he would like to become the Conrad of anthropology (Clifford, *The Predicament...* 96). Kapuściński, too, read Conrad, quoted his

words<sup>176</sup> and his descriptions of Africa. Even the characters of his reportages were often likened to those of Conrad<sup>177</sup>. Incidentally, Malinowski was the last great fascination in Kapuściński's life; the reporter wanted to write about the Polish anthropologist, he even started gathering materials and making notes, but died before completing this project. Hence, the lineage of Conrad-Malinowski-Kapuściński remains in the background of all discussions oscillating around travel and representation of otherness. Kapuściński, although not directly analysed in this dissertation, is a point of reference: his work, acclaimed internationally, is probably the best-known sample of Polish reportage from the communist era.

## 2. Travel Reporters at Work

In his book, *A Reporter's Self Portrait* (2003), Kapuściński reflects on the role of a travel reporter and on how similar it is to the work of an anthropologist or an ethnographer. Both are fuelled by the same motivation: the curiosity about the world (3). It is very different from a holiday or a tourist's journey.

The reporter's journey requires hard work and a huge theoretical preparation. One needs to acquire knowledge about the terrain where one is going. Such a journey knows no relaxing time. It is undertaken in full concentration, full focus. We need to realise that the place where we have reached is perhaps given to us only once in a lifetime. We will never return to it, and we only have one hour to get to know it. During that hour we must see, remember and hear everything, record the ambiance, the feeling, and the situation. The reporter has to be prepared for a great logistic, physical and intellectual effort. The reporter's journey is exhausting and strenuous. (...) When someone, upon finding out that a reporter was in Congo, says: oh, I was also there and I was visiting, then these are two separate things. It is a completely different way of experiencing and perceiving the world. That is why, travelling as a reporter requires a certain emotional surplus, a passion. Aside of passion, there is no other reason to do it. (Kapuściński, *A Reporter's...* 13-14)<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> For instance, in *The Emperor*, 107.

<sup>177</sup> See: Nowacka and Ziętek, 182, 252.

<sup>178</sup> "Podróż reporterska wymaga ciężkiej pracy i wielkiego przygotowania teoretycznego. Zdobywania wiedzy o terenie, na który się jedzie. Podróż ta nie zna relaksu. Odbywa się w pełnej koncentracji, skupieniu. Musimy mieć świadomość, że miejsce do którego dotarliśmy, być może jest nam dane tylko raz w życiu. Nigdy tu nie wrócimy, a mamy godzinę, żeby je poznać. Przez godzinę musimy wszystko zobaczyć, zapamiętać, usłyszeć, utrwalić nastrój, sytuację, atmosferę. Reporterska podróż po świecie, jeśli wyjechać poza krąg Europy i USA, jest podróżą ciężką, nieraz morderczą, bo świat jest źle komunikacyjnie zorganizowany. Reportera czeka ogromny wysiłek logistyczny, fizyczny i intelektualny. Podróż reporterska wyczerpuje i wycieńcza. . . . Dlatego reporterskie podróżowanie wymaga pewnej nadwyżki emocjonalnej, wymaga pasji. Oprócz pasji nie ma innego powodu, żeby to robić" (Kapuściński, *Autoportret reportera*, 13-14).

Travel reportage is, ideally, both a passion, and a profession – a particularly demanding one. A reporter's journey requires planning, preparing, and learning about the destination. When going there, the reporter gives up the usual tourist comfort in order to document, with full focus, the encounter with a different culture. In that, a travel writer is indeed similar to an anthropologist, as he or she strives to document a reality, and give an objective representation of it (to the best of his or her capacity). At the same time, travel narratives are subjective accounts, usually written in first person, what situates them closer to other non-fiction genres like memoir or diary. The issue of authenticity and subjectivity is thus a crucial one in the discussion on travel reportage, just as it is in anthropology. Another similarity between these two disciplines is the question how to describe other cultures in a way that is fair to their members, but also understandable for the readers belonging to the reporter's culture. Thus, the first issue is the interaction with the Other, and the second is the representation of the Other. In this chapter, the analysis of the primary texts will be followed by the discussion on these two problems.

Moreover, a travel reporter faces practical issues resulting from his or her particular location in a historical, geographical and political context. From Kapuściński's words quoted above, it is clear that going abroad was not an easy undertaking for journalists from the Eastern Bloc. A reporter's journey – or, as a matter of fact, any journey abroad – was limited in various ways. One limitation was the current political situation: internal unrest in the country would mean restrictions in the possibilities of foreign travel. The other was the person's background, his (or – rarely – her) position and political stance (for instance, membership, or lack of thereof, in the communist party). Sometimes, one could not obtain a passport due to family connections, and sometimes it depended on the willingness to sign a loyalty declaration or strike a deal with the secret services.

Apart from limitations in the possibility of travel, there were many limitations of the freedom of expression. Unlike in the open societies of the West, characterised by a multitude of communication channels and free exchange of information, in closed societies of the Soviet Bloc the media systems were structured in a much more vertical way. It was a tightly controlled hierarchical system, in which the most important messages would go from top to bottom, and the bottom – journalists, the public – could only express support of the top authorities, and occasionally send limited feedback (Goban-Klas 28). However, the Polish case differed slightly from the situation of journalists in other countries. Ever since the end of the Stalinist era, the Polish journalists began to distance themselves from the party, becoming eventually mediators between the party and the people (Curry). But, independently on their views, they

could not be openly critical of the party. Every publication had to be approved by the Central Office for the Control of Newspapers, Publications and Events, created in 1945. The decree that enumerated all types of forbidden content was general enough to facilitate a very wide interpretation by censors. The institutions of censorship designed an elaborate system of control, but also journalists themselves engaged in self-censorship, to avoid later complications. The Polish Press Agency (PAP) had a monopoly for information from outside. Effectively, much of the foreign news was simply copied from the Soviet agency TASS. As a result, most travel reportages on India from late 1950s and 1960s were written by employees or collaborators of PAP and other state media. Some were professional reporters (as was Ros, Górnicki, Gołębiowski and Gielżyński), some – delegates to an official conference (e.g. Koehler, attending a congress on forestry in Dehradun), or government officials (for instance Żukrowski – attaché at the embassy, and Putrament, vice-president of Polish Writers' Association).

As the travel reportage is a particularly heterogeneous genre, the texts vary in style, narrative, and aim: one would expect that journalists focus more on facts, officials at the political outcomes of their visit – but it is not usually so. Putrament and Żukrowski are not only officials, they also aspire to being recognised as writers, and indeed their language is far from a dry report of a clerk. All of them visit India for the first time (except of Putrament, who documented in writing both his visits), and their excitement is easily noticeable. Almost all of the analysed authors share their perplexity on how convey their experiences to the readers. Surely, one issue was to be ideologically correct, but also to give justice to the vastness of India. It is significant that many reporters include a self-reflexive passage on how to write about India. Even though the authors belong to a generation that grew up and was educated still in a colonial world, and their readings often included the literature of the British Raj, they understood that writing about the independent India requires a new approach. Perhaps such were also the guidelines that they received from their superiors. The Soviet academia criticised the Western Orientalism even before such realisations became widespread in America or Western Europe (Kemper & Conermann 2), though their reason for doing so was probably motivated politically and ideologically, by a general anti-imperialist stance rather than by a genuine intention to deconstruct clichés about the Orient. Whatever the reason, a new way of describing the formerly colonial world was necessary, and the Polish reporters in India understood that very well.

Therefore, the reporters of the first decades after the Second World War were looking for a new way of approaching otherness. They were well aware of the Orientalist set of ideas



about India and the colonial power behind these perceptions. Although Poland never had colonies overseas, it was not excluded from the Western European discourses. Colonial-era novels and studies by Western European Orientalists were widely read. The adventure novels by Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson or Karl May were also well-liked. Furthermore, Poles had their own plans to establish colonies in Africa. In 1882-1884 an expedition to Africa was led by Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński and made popular through the accounts published in the weekly *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (Gołuch 44). Thus, the image of the non-European exotic was widespread among Poles and pervaded also to works of Polish literature. Henryk Sienkiewicz's *In Desert and Wilderness*, mentioned in Chapter 1, is a case in point. Nevertheless, as explains Małgorzata Czermińska in her article "An Exotic Journey and a Turn into the Inside. Non-fictional Narratives Between 'Orientalism' and Intimism", the early twentieth century travel writers already showed a different view on colonial relations. Sieroszewski, Ossendowski, Janta-Połczyński and Ferdynand Goetel, through their travel accounts, or travel reportage, showed to the readers a more complex relation than simply the European hegemon and the colonised peoples. The best example is Goetel's reportage from India, in which he sympathises with the Indian independence movement and praises Mahatma Gandhi. Moreover, thanks to these authors, and in particular, Kapuściński's reportages, much before postcolonial debates began among academics, Poles, in their collective consciousness, already had a certain notion of postcolonial thinking (15).

The authors of travel reportages written in the 1950s and 1960s, who grew up in the interwar period, must have been shaped by both the colonial discourse on India, as well as the anti-colonial ideas that started to spread at that time. Many refer to the image of India that was shaped in their mind before their first journey to the Subcontinent. Although that image is rather hazy, composed of snippets of information and loose associations, it is typical of Orientalist depictions of India. What does this image consist of? "[P]alm crests, slender minarets, turbans and elephants, and most of all, an indelible impression of otherness and a breath-taking exotic"<sup>179</sup>, recalls Waclaw Koehler (5). Jerzy Ros asks where is the world of the "maharajas, elephants, fakirs"<sup>180</sup>(186), and the precious stones, while Wojciech Żukrowski talks about "clairvoyants, fakirs, [and] sages that vanquish death" (26)<sup>181</sup>. All these authors were aware of a popular image of India as an exotic fairy tale, a land of mystics, but also as a

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<sup>179</sup> "pióropusze palm, smukłość minaretów, turbany i słonie, a przede wszystkim owo niezatarte wrażenie odmienności i zapierającej dech w piersiach egzotyki" (Koehler 5).

<sup>180</sup> "Gdzież jest ten świat bajki o maharadzach, słoniach, fakirach . . ." (Ros 186).

<sup>181</sup> "Gdzież są ci jasnowidze, fakirzy, mędrcy, którzy pokonują śmierć?" (Żukrowski 26).

poor and underdeveloped country. This was India of the European imagination, popularised by art, literature, newspapers, travel accounts and even academia. The Polish reporters probably read the same novels, seen the same films – for instance, the “Indian Grave”, mentioned by Koehler – as their Western counterparts. Practically all of the authors analysed here referred to Kipling at some point of time. Even when they tried to dispense with the preconceptions and banal images of the exotic, they were more or less conscious that they are to some extent enclosed in a discourse where such Orientalist tropes abound. Nevertheless, the reporters wanted to break free from these stereotypes and each had a different strategy of “fighting with the Indian exotic” (Górnicki 166)<sup>182</sup>. It is worth briefly analysing what they claim in their writing as their way to talk about India. Obviously, their declarations may not have proven true, however the intention and the method employed to represent Indian reality is telling.

### **3. To India on an Official Trip: Koehler, Żukrowski and Putrament**

When taking into account the subject of the travel reportage – or, its author – the reportages from India can be divided into two groups. One group consists of authors who were not reporters by training, and they were not employed as journalists in a newspaper, magazine or news agency. Putrament writes poetry, fiction and nonfiction, Żukrowski, too, specialises in poetry and prose, while Koehler, given his field of natural science, is an author of mostly nonfictional accounts about nature. Thus, all three are, in one way or another, writers. Also, their accounts from India can be considered as works of reportage, given their lively language and their interest in social, political and economic issues. The other group of text are those written by professional reporters, and can undoubtedly be considered as reportage. They will be described in the following section.

Probably the first Polish travel reportage on India after the Second World War is a text by a delegate to the Fourth World Forestry Congress in Dehradun, which takes place in 1954. Witold Koehler (1909-1988), was a rather improbable travel writer, as he was an expert in his field, employed in a research institute, rather than a writer or a reporter. He did not share the same concerns as journalists, whose mission usually is to write about facts, maintain a certain objectivity and satisfy the expectations of their editors. Nevertheless, his account can be called a reportage, as it is a rather subjective relation from a journey, even if that journey was an official delegation, with all limitations that result from that fact.

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<sup>182</sup> “front walki z nieszczęsną ‘egzotyką’” (Górnicki 166).

Another text coming from a government-employed official, is the collection of reportages, or stories, by Wojciech Żukrowski (1916-2000), then posted to the Polish Embassy in New Delhi in the rank of a Secretary. Although it resembles the reportage genre, his book, *Podróże z moim guru* [*Travels with my Guru*], is not a non-fictional work *per se*, especially since the author considered himself to be a writer, not a reporter. The situation of Żukrowski can be compared to the one of Jerzy Putrament (1910-1986), also a writer, but above all, communist apparatchik and politician. Both men were sent on diplomatic missions in the early years of their careers, continued writing throughout their lives, and held important positions in state institutions. While Żukrowski's political engagement would fluctuate throughout his life, Putrament remained a rather hard core supporter of the communist system. He travelled to India twice, once because of a session of the World Peace Council, and once on another official occasion.

The four accounts – one by Koehler, one by Żukrowski and two by Putrament – differ: the first one is a text from a short trip to India by an expert in a particular discipline, to attend a forestry congress. As it was mentioned earlier, his account is similar to those of reporters, but Koehler shows a certain naiveté of a first-time tourist to a far-away country. On the contrary, Żukrowski and Putrament are well-travelled members of the intellectual elite of their time, whose language and style are somewhat more sophisticated. What is more, their exposure to India is prolonged: Żukrowski travels around India, having Delhi as a base for a few years, and Putrament visits the country twice, driving around many cities and regions. Nevertheless, the two writers' take on India is not radically different from the forestry specialist: similar themes keep reappearing, such as spirituality, castes, colonial past, and hopes for progress. Often, the remarks are rather superficial – perhaps only Żukrowski attempts sometimes at a deeper understanding of these phenomena. The following section describes each of the authors, first in biographical terms, and then discusses their declared attitude towards India.

### **Witold Koehler: India in the Eyes of a Conference Delegate**

Witold Koehler, although on a short official delegation, managed to make various observations about India, its culture, customs and traditions. He became a well-known professor of forestry and entomologist, with a mission to popularise the idea of protection of nature and animals. He worked at his alma mater, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, as well as at the Ministry of Forestry and the Institute of Forest Research. Apart from his travel account, he published numerous academic texts, but also books for general public. He also

wrote scenarios for documentaries on the environment<sup>183</sup>. His writing style was clear and easy to understand, and his books always contained a number of anecdotes and personal reflections. In his travel account from India, Koehler chose to overlook encyclopaedic or academic information, in order to convey his own impressions of the journey. His book was published in 1957, with a title *Indie przez dziurkę od klucza* [*India through a Keyhole*]. It is full of Koehler's description of the journey, as well as subjective opinions on India and its culture. There are various humorous scenes and real dialogues, giving Koehler's book a light tone. The account is composed of thirty-three chapters, out of which first eight cover the story of the journey to the Subcontinent and a stop in Karachi on the way. This disproportion, resulting from the fact that Koehler gave much space in his account to the journey itself, is yet another proof of how rare far-away travel was in that period. It was possibly his first journey by airplane, so he provides numerous details about the flight: the speed of the aircraft, the hostesses, the co-passengers, and even the meals on board (Koehler 12). It seems as if the air journey constitutes a symbolic line separating "here" and "there", and crossing that line is to some extent a rite of passage (in Van Gennepe's understanding of the term).

Koehler confesses that his first exposure to India was the film "Indian Grave"<sup>184</sup> which he saw as a boy through the keyhole of a local cinema: it left him with an impression of an exotic country, full of elephants, minarets and people in turbans (5). The congress of forestry was thus a chance for a second encounter of India, but just like the first one, it was "short and feverish, giving an incomplete image, but fascinating, full of extraordinary impressions" (6)<sup>185</sup>. Similar to other authors, Koehler starts with some reflections on before and after: what was the initial image of India, and how it was confronted with reality. He is taken aback by the complexity of India and finds it impossible to describe it in simple words, after only a short journey:

From the chaos of observations and sensations experienced in such conditions it is difficult to create a homogenous and truthful picture. One could reach for different sources, look up statistics, and form for oneself a truth about India. I tried this path... But soon after reading the first pages, the immediate impressions, the images carved in one's memory, the experiences still fresh in one's mind, in brief, all that one could absorb with own senses, starts to fade, recede and blur – overpowered by the importance of exact numbers, irrefutable facts, and eminent opinions of specialists. An image is created, a truthful one, perhaps, but devoid of colours,

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<sup>183</sup> The information on Witold Koehler is based on a biographical note in the regional section of *Gazeta Wyborcza* daily, from 16.07.2007.

<sup>184</sup> The author probably refers to the 1921 German movie "Das Indische Grabmal", directed by Joe May.

<sup>185</sup> "krótki i gorączkowy, nie dający pełni obrazu, lecz urzekający niezwykłością przeżywanych wrażeń"

sounds and aromas. Thus, let us allow these gates to remain closed, I am content with my own, personal, fleeting glance through... a keyhole. (6)<sup>186</sup>

The author uses a repetition, referring at the beginning to the keyhole when describing his first, indirect encounter of India, and then at the end, to demonstrate his still very limited knowledge of the place, despite of the journey there. Like many other travellers before him, he is in awe of India's vastness and diversity, realising that writing about all historical, geographical or social issues would be an endless – and, as a result, a futile – task.

Thus, Koehler turns to a more subjective formula, closer to a travel memoir, putting himself at the centre of the story and filtering India through his own eyes. He is aware that it might not guarantee objectivity, or a deep analysis, but it also saves him from repeating widely spread clichés:

Before our feet touched the Indian land for the first time, we promised ourselves to look at this peculiar world with our own eyes, that we will erase from our memory the (rather meagre) baggage of scholarly information on India. Above all, we swore to guard ourselves again banal formulas of the sort: "India is a country of contrasts". But after all, such is the substance of this land. Contrast is inherent to nature, people, their history and beliefs. We encounter contrast on every step of the way, in every image, event, and experience. (18)<sup>187</sup>

Through most of his account, Koehler speaks in first person, only once or twice mentioning the fact that he was accompanied by two other colleagues. It is therefore puzzling that in the passage above, he suddenly switches to the plural: saying "we" and "our". The collective resolution to "look . . . with our own eyes" and "erase the baggage of scholarly information" points to the possibility that such point of view was not inherent to the writer. It is possible that the use of the first person of plural was just a rhetorical mode to underline how "everyone" in their group agreed on this approach. But perhaps it was a suggestion from someone else. It was rather common for those who were sent abroad to have an "interview" with the authorities,

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(Koehler 6).

<sup>186</sup> „Z chaosu spostrzeżeń i doznań zdobytych w takich warunkach niełatwo jest stworzyć sobie jednolity i prawdziwy obraz. Można by wprawdzie sięgnąć do źródłowych dzieł, zajrzeć do statystyk i wypracować sobie prawdę o Indiach. Spróbowałem tej drogi... Już jednak po przeczytaniu pierwszych kart wrażenia bezpośrednie, obrazy tkwiące w pamięci, przeżycia świeże w bliskim wspomnieniu, słowem to, co chłonęło się własnymi zmysłami, poczyna blednąć, oddalać się i zacierać – przysłonięte ważnością ścisłych cyfr, niezbitych faktów, dostojnych sądów specjalistów. Powstaje obraz, być może prawdziwy, lecz pozbawiony barwy, dźwięku i woni. Niechaj więc pozostaną zamknięte wrota, wystarcza mi to moje, własne, krótkie spojrzenie przez... dziurkę od klucza” (Koehler 6).

<sup>187</sup> „Zanim nasze stopy dotknęły po raz pierwszy ziemi indyjskiej, przyrzekliśmy sobie, że będziemy patrzeć na ten osobliwy świat własnymi oczyma, że wyrzucimy z pamięci ubożuchny zresztą bagaż książkowych wiadomości o Indiach. Nade wszystko zaś, że będziemy się strzec banalnych komunałów w rodzaju twierdzenia „Indie to kraj kontrastów”. A jednak taka właśnie jest treść tej ziemi. Kontrast tkwi tu w przyrodzie, w człowieku, w jego historii i wierzeniach. Kontrast napotykaemy na każdym kroku, w każdym obrazie, przeżyciu, doznaniu” (Koehler 18).

prior to the journey, during which they were either recruited to the secret services, asked to write a report on a person, organisation or a particular issue, or at least lectured on how to behave abroad.

Nevertheless, relying on the self and one's own ability to observe can also lead to a trap. Koehler realises that Europeans are prone to Oriental fascinations and they are easily overtaken by a romantic melancholia. Even seeing a rather common landscape through a train window, "an occasional visitor from Europe constantly surrenders, inadvertently, to a particular atmosphere of a romantic oddness. Everything that surrounds him, seems to him unreal, like a fascinating, exotic film" (147)<sup>188</sup>. But this dream-like state cannot last for long: "once in a while, the malicious fate gives him [the European traveller] a brutal kick"(147)<sup>189</sup>, interrupting this reverie. This romantic vision of the Orient dates back to eighteenth century and the fascination with the exotic, depicted in literature and art. Such images were accumulating in the European's imagination, making the faraway lands seem a distant, yet appealing dream, having no direct grounding in reality. In the first words of his book, Said says: "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (*Orientalism*, 1), adding that this Orient is now practically over, this fantasy image is located in the past, creating a feeling of nostalgia. Ali Behdad too demonstrates how travellers long for this romantic East, the image of a "pure" Orient, so deeply ingrained in European culture (*Belated...*, 50). Koehler shares this feeling, surrendering to the romantic aura, but he keeps in mind that it is not real, it is a fantasy disconnected from reality. One "brutal kick" can bring him back from these nostalgic musings.

### **Wojciech Żukrowski: Magic and Everyday Life of a Diplomat**

While several travel reportages from South Asia were already available to Polish readers, perhaps the most popular depiction of India in Polish literature of the communist period came from Wojciech Żukrowski's *Kamienne tablice* [*Stone Tables*], published in 1966. It was a novel that featured the adventures of a cultural attaché of the Hungarian embassy in New Delhi. Incidentally, in 1956-1959, Żukrowski was employed in a similar position at the Polish embassy in the Indian capital. Hence, his novel is based at least in parts on his personal

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<sup>188</sup> "Obraz to w gruncie rzeczy bardzo zwyczajny i niewiele w nim jest egzotycznych akcentów. Mimo to przygodny przybysz z Europy bezwiednie ulega tu ciągle swoistemu nastrojowi romantycznej niezwykłości. Wszystko, co go otacza, wydaje mu się nierealne, jak fascynujący, egzotyczny film" (Koehler 147).

<sup>189</sup> "Tymczasem złośliwy los wymierza mu od czasu do czasu brutalnego kuksańca" (Koehler 147).

story. In this dissertation, a different text by Żukrowski is taken under scrutiny: *Wędrówki z moim Guru* [*Travels with my Guru*], published first in 1960. This collection of stories can be considered as a non-fiction text, as the narrator speaks in the first person, referring to his actual experiences as part of the diplomatic service, but it is possible that some parts of it are fictionalised. The narrator recalls meetings with various people, offers his comments on Indian culture and provides explanations for different traditions and customs. Although it can be broadly categorised as travel reportage, it is not only an account of journeys around India. Many chapters do not recount his own adventures, but unusual stories heard from people that he meets during his stay in Delhi. These stories and characters seem to inspire Żukrowski to the extent that they reappear, slightly modified, in his later novel, *Kamienna tablice*. Given that Żukrowski considered himself as a writer rather than as a journalist, it is difficult to enclose his texts only in one category: of reportage, fiction, or nonfiction. Nevertheless, the comments and observations that he provided in *Travels...* are worth analysing, as they represent a particular way of seeing, understanding and representing India.

Even though Żukrowski was a government employee, a member of the diplomatic service of the communist Poland, his biography shows that he was not always enthusiastic about the new, socialist system. While he was often praised by the authorities and given awards, there were periods when his works were frowned upon. For instance, between 1953 and 1956, a few of his books were indexed as too Catholic and bourgeois.

Born in Krakow in 1916, he started studying Polish philology before the outbreak of the Second World War. During the war, he continued his education in secret, and was a member of the underground cultural and political resistance. He was also an officer of the Polish Home Army (AK). He continued his career in the army after the war for a few years, while starting his career as writer. In the early 1950s, Żukrowski went to Vietnam not as a soldier, but as a war correspondent. He also visited China, Laos, and India, the latter on an official posting of a cultural adviser. From early 1960s, he lived in Poland, continuing his career as a writer and as a member of various cultural organisations. He was a prolific writer, who published almost fifty books: novels, short stories, travel reportages, tales for children, as well as an unfinished autobiography. Four of his works were filmed, and he wrote several scripts for well-known cinematographic productions, such as *Pan Wołodyjowski* (1968) and *Potop* (1974). Loyal to the communist state, he publicly condemned in 1964 the “Letter of the 34” (a protest against censorship signed by 34 leading Polish intellectuals), and in 1981, he supported General Jaruzelski and his decision to introduce Marshal Law to curb the Solidarity Movement.

Allegedly, disappointed readers would return his books to the author, as a sign of protest.<sup>190</sup> In the years 1972-1989 he served as a member of the Polish Parliament. He died in Warsaw in 2000.

Like Koehler, Wojciech Żukrowski also had a range of expectations about India based on stories he heard as a child. After coming into contact with Indian reality, he expressed a feeling of disenchantment. Seeing a sweeper on the street, he admitted:

He [the sweeper] was spoiling the image of India that I have dreamt of as a child. Where are these clairvoyants, fakirs, sages that vanquish death? Where do these sorcerers who control all elements hide? Here, like everywhere in the world, the same battle was being fought, a struggle for a chapatti, for a handful of rice. Those [guests] uninvited to the table, without their regal gowns, were stretching out their hands, they wanted to live. (26)<sup>191</sup>

The author's self-mockery is visible here: he laughs at his own naiveté and ironically blames the poor man for shattering his illusions. Żukrowski is aware that behind every story from another corner of the world, embellished and exoticised, there lies a reality that is often grim. That is why, he is reluctant to accept the role of such a reporter who minutely documents every event and social phenomenon or analyses statistics and reports. He considers himself more as a writer than as a journalist.

At the end of his book, he recalls a conversation with a Bengali professor, who tries to persuade him to write only about India's progress, arguing that "we [Indians] don't care about the truth . . . , we know it. You don't have to put a mirror in front of us, we know what we will see in it. We just want to hear some compliments" (319)<sup>192</sup>. The professor tells Żukrowski to write about industries, steel mills, about a new dam, about the new capital of Punjab, Chandigarh, designed by Le Corbusier. "Write about all these things, in which we resemble you [Europeans]" (320)<sup>193</sup>, says the Indian academic. Żukrowski is reluctant to do so, as he finds such description simply boring: facts about progress in different fields can be found in government publications, and readers do not want stories about the "technical unification of the world" (320). The writer's goal was different:

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<sup>190</sup> Sources of biographical information about Żukrowski are: Lesław Bartelski, *Polscy pisarze współcześni: 1939-1991. Leksykon [Polish Contemporary Writers: 1939-1991. A Lexicon.]*, as well as Internet sources: Żukrowski's website, [zukrowski.inf.pl](http://zukrowski.inf.pl).

<sup>191</sup> "Psuł mi obraz Indii, który sobie wymarzyłem w dzieciństwie. Gdzie są ci jasnovidze, fakirzy, mędrcy, którzy pokonują śmierć? Gdzie ukrywają się czarownicy, którym posłuszne są żywioły? Tutaj, jak na całym świecie, toczyła się ta sama uparta walka o placek ciapatów, o garstkę ryżu. Nie proszeni do stołu, bez szaty godowej wyciągali ręce, chcieli żyć" (Żukrowski 26).

<sup>192</sup> "Bo nam wcale nie zależy na prawdzie – mówił namiętnie profesor G., Indus z Bengalii – my ją znamy. Nie musi nam pan podsuwać zwierciadła, wiemy, co się w nim przejrzy. My pragniemy usłyszeć tylko trochę komplementów" (Żukrowski 319).

<sup>193</sup> "Niech pan pokazuje to wszystko, w czym jesteśmy do was podobni..." (Żukrowski 319).



Writing this book, under the excuse of interesting, almost sensational stories that quench our thirst for the strange and the mysterious, I wanted to show a large chunk of everyday life. A life that unfolds slowly, broadly, in which there is place for you, a professor of a university, an excellent linguist, but also for a fakir with a trident on top of his spear. (321)<sup>194</sup>

This justification is only partly credible – perhaps the author himself is fascinated by these peculiar stories about astrology, reincarnation, local legends, and unusual events. He longs for the adventure and the exotic, similarly to nineteenth-century travellers who sought the “unhomely” and the thrill of the Orient, as was described by Ali Behdad. The everyday life of India is for Żukrowski particularly interesting, because observing people performing their daily chores gives the idea of repetitiveness, of time not running forward, but turning in circles. Such a vision conserves traditions and customs, and does not succumb to modernity and change. Żukrowski thrives on stories where the real meets the surreal, the facts are distorted by popular emotions and beliefs. Whether he describes a boy kidnapped by tigers and found in the jungle by his family years later (a similarity with Mowgli comes to mind), or the ghost of a dead child troubling a tailor’s shop, he tries to keep the readers in suspense, keeping possible rational explanation to himself until the end of the story. Nevertheless, the line dividing a truthful report and a tale is blurred – the reader can suspect Żukrowski of a certain *licentia poetica*: to embellish and to fantasise. It is not difficult for the author to make his stories seem credible, because, according to the popular belief, in the Orient everything is possible.

### **Jerzy Putrament: Two Trips to India of a Communist Official**

Like Wojciech Żukrowski, Jerzy Putrament is a particularly interesting figure to analyse as a travel writer. Indeed, he performed many functions: he was a communist party activist, a writer and a public figure. He held a high rank in the communist hierarchy, serving as a diplomat, as a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and as a deputy to the Parliament. For many years, he was the president of the Polish Writers’ Association, which was an influential position at the time. He worked as an editor of two literary magazines, *Miesięcznik Literacki* and *Literatura*. Putrament published four volumes of poems, and around fifty books in prose, among them a few reportage texts from his travels to America, Italy, China and India. Born in 1910 in Minsk, he studied in Vilnius with Czesław Miłosz. The fates of the

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<sup>194</sup> “Próbowałem, pisząc tę książkę, pod pozorem ciekawych, prawie sensacyjnych historyjek, zaspokajając nasz głód spraw dziwnych, tajemniczych, pokazać szmat powszedniego życia, leniwie się toczącego, rozległego, gdzie jest miejsce i na pana, profesora uniwersytetu, znakomitego lingwistę, i na fakira z trójzębnym ostrzem włóczni” (Żukrowski 321).

two writers intertwined several times: before the outbreak of the war, although having different political views, they were both members of the literary group “Żagary”. In 1945, Putrament, who already started his communist career, agreed to recommend Miłosz for a foreign post. He did not know at the time that he was unintentionally helping the future Noble-Prize-winner to leave the country for good. After a few years of Miłosz’s work at the Polish embassy in Washington DC, the authorities begin to doubt his political loyalty and move him to Paris, where Putrament until recently served as ambassador. Miłosz thus knew very well the two faces of Putrament, the pre-war and the post-war ones, and after defecting to the West, depicted him in his study of intellectuals under communism, called *Zniewolony umysł* [*The Captive Mind*] (1953).

The figure of Gamma – the “Slave of History” – can quite easily be associated with Putrament, although it is an allegory of a particular type of intellectual involvement with communism. Miłosz specifically avoids using real names and chooses nicknames instead, so that his description of minds captivated by the New Faith gains a more universal meaning. He pictures young Gamma as a somewhat brutish, opinionated character, with a loud voice and nationalist sympathies (98). He also abhors Putrament’s anti-Semitism. In Miłosz’s recollection, Putrament – rather mediocre as a poet – had great personal ambitions, and communism was a way to make them come true. Czesław Miłosz explains Putrament’s attitude by the fact that he originated from a mixed, Polish-Russian family from a provincial town, and after coming to study in Vilnius, he was desperate to “catch up” (99), to feel equal to his colleagues. Even later in life, according to Miłosz, Putrament tried to play a game with his Western European acquaintances, pretending to be worldly and liberal. In fact, he was one of the most loyal members of the communist system, even though the communist authorities exiled his family to the camps in the polar regions of the USSR (107).

He often displayed a patronising and superior attitude, which also manifested during his travels.

The pleasures he [Gamma] got out of traveling were not, it seems, overly refined. He had little appreciation for architecture and art; he had no great curiosity about patterns of life in different civilizations. Had it been otherwise, he would have been a better writer, Travel for him was a pleasant way of killing time and of satisfying the youthful ambitions of a former provincial. (Miłosz 171)

In his two accounts from India, Putrament is conscious of the fact that the readers will know his name and his position, and he mentions that he visits the country as part of an official visit (but it is usually unclear what kind of visit was it, who was organising it etc.). Its programme is set beforehand: meetings with officials, representatives of the Indian communist

parties or cultural institutions, and Poles working in India are predictably an essential part of it. Putrament presents himself as someone for whom travel knows no limits and is a rather mundane experience. He is far from enthusiastic exclamations, present in other accounts on India. His approach is sober, ironic, and even cynical at times.

His first account, *Cztery strony świata* [*Four corners of the world*] (1963), features four journeys, to Morocco, Scandinavia (Norway and Finland), Algeria, and India. Putrament was participating in the session of the World Peace Council and took this opportunity to travel around the Subcontinent. The second, *Na drogach Indii* [*On the Roads of India*] (1967), is exclusively about another, more extensive visit to India, during which he visits Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Mumbai, and Kerala.

Jerzy Putrament travelled to various countries, but he lacked the relative independence of a reporter: the journey was always planned, filled with meetings and official visits. Nevertheless, as a representative of cultural institutions, he also visited monuments and sites popular among regular tourists. In his reportage *Cztery strony świata*, he admits that his understanding of a foreign culture is only cursory:

None of these journeys was “travel for the sake of travelling”, hence the fragmentary descriptions and the lack of depth. But one can “deepen” when he/she is not moving. Since I was in movement, I wanted to note the unique impressions, especially the visual ones. I would like the reader to experience at least to a small degree what I have seen, heard, and admired in these four, very different corners of the world. (*Cztery... 5*)<sup>195</sup>

Indeed, his book offers a fleeting glance through places very different from one another: North Africa, Scandinavia, India, and Mongolia. As secretary general, and later vice-president of the Polish Writers' Union (closely linked with the communist party), he was one of the creators of the new social realist cultural life. Nevertheless, his travel accounts are not particularly political – in fact, his frequent use of French idioms and proverbs would probably be considered as too “bourgeois” if found in another writer's text.

But, even though Putrament is somewhat aware of the clichés about “exotic” cultures, he sometimes adopts a rather Orientalist perspective. He admits:

All of us have a certain vision of the exotic, in general of the “Easternness”, of “the South”. I was wandering around the bazaars of Marrakesh, I was in Alexandria, Istanbul, I was roaming

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<sup>195</sup> “Żadna z tych podróży nie była ‘podróżą dla podróży’, stąd fragmentaryczność opisu i brak tak zwanego pogłębienia. Ale ‘pogłębiać’ można nie ruszając się z miejsca. Ponieważ się ruszałem, chciałem notować niepowtarzalne wrażenia, wzrokowe przede wszystkim. Chciałbym, aby czytelnik choćby w jakiejś części przeżył to, co widziałem, czego słuchałem, czym się zachwyciałem w tych czterech stronach świata.” (Putrament, *Cztery... 5*).

around Shanghai and Canton, and everywhere I could find some confirmation of my image of the Orient. But only here [in Old Delhi] I know that I am in the middle of it, at its heart. (*Four... 92*)<sup>196</sup>.

This quote demonstrates how vast the term “Orient” is. To this Polish traveller, the Orient ranges from North Africa to China, encompassing all the lands to the South and to the East of Europe (excluding perhaps Equatorial and South Africa). It does not only refer to the Orient delineated by Said, who focussed on North Africa and Middle East, or – in other words – on Orientalism as “the Anglo-French-American experience of the Arabs and Islam” (*Orientalism*, 1978: 17). Putrament includes also China – a country that did not experience European colonisation. Though he visited the Muslim countries of North Africa, central to Said’s analysis of Orientalist discourse, it is Old Delhi that constitutes the “heart” of the Orient for the Polish writer. He describes the chaos, the movement, the variety of people and means of transportation in a truly Orientalist manner. However, in the next section, he becomes self-conscious. He asks a rhetorical question, so frequently raised by every travel writer:

How to represent this unusual, amazing and terrifying diversity of this world? I do not like my first reportage: between Nowogrodzka [in Warsaw] and New Delhi one cannot feel any barrier, any leap. But then everything, just everything here is different, incomparable. (*Cztery... 97*)<sup>197</sup>

The tone of his first book is more positive and optimistic, with a feeling of genuine interest in Indian culture. However, in the book written after his second visit, *Na drogach Indii*, Putrament is overall less enthusiastic. At times, he cannot hide his excitement at the thought of an exotic adventure, for instance during his visit to Jaipur including an elephant ride to the Amber fort. But he soon rectifies himself and describes his excitement as “juvenile”. In a similarly self-aware manner, he admits: “Whether you want it or not, I still see India through *Jungle Book*” (*Na drogach... 53*). Nevertheless, the accumulation of adjectives such as “horrible”, “dreadful”, or “ugly” gives the impression of a generally negative reception of the visited culture. Putrament is often ironic, whether talking about the Indian idea of tolerance or about the local film industry: “Our cinematography should not be losing sleep . . . The Indians will not threaten it any time soon” (24)<sup>198</sup>. There is an increased sense of superiority in his account.

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<sup>196</sup> “Każdy z nas ma jakąś wizję egzotyki, w ogóle ‘wschodniości’, czy ‘południa’. Krążyłem po rynkach Marrakeszu, byłem w Aleksandrii, w Stambule, szwendałem się po Szanghaju, po Kantonie, wszędzie coś z moich wyobrażeń o Oriencie znajdowało potwierdzenie. Ale dopiero tutaj wiem, że znalazłem się w jego środku, jego sercu.” (Putrament, *Cztery... 91-92*).

<sup>197</sup> “Jakże oddać tę niezwykłą, zachwycającą i przerażającą odmiennosc tego świata? Nie podoba mi się pierwszy reportaż: między Nowogrodzką a Nowym Delhi nie wyczujesz tam żadnego proggu, żadnego przeskoku. A przecież wszystko jest tutaj inne, nieporównywalne.” (Putrament, *Cztery... 6-7*).

<sup>198</sup> “Wyszliśmy. Nasza kinematografia może spać spokojnie. Hindusi nieprędko nam zagrażą.” (Putrament, *Na*

One explanation for this change of attitude is due to the change of India's political course. During Putrament's first visit, in early 1960s, there was still hope among communists that India will become more socialist, eventually joining the Soviet side of the Cold War divide. However, after Nehru's death in 1964, India changed and – as Putrament observes, turned towards the right (*Na drogach...* 186-187). Obviously, the writer, being part of the political establishment of communist Poland, laments over the fact and in the concluding chapter of his book demonstrates how deplorable the consequences of such shift are, and how they might worsen in future (*Na drogach...* 194-195). Finally, Putrament claims that since the good memories always outshine the bad ones, he had to actively remind himself of the bad ones too:

From this series of images, I tried to faithfully reconstruct all that was shocking, wild, and inhumane, and to recreate it from my own memories, unearth it from beneath the beautiful pictures. I should never forget the great misery of half a billion people, and pass on at least a part of my anxiety to the reader. (*Na drogach...* 203)<sup>199</sup>

Hence, Putrament writes his book with a mission. The most apparent goal of that mission is to represent India, give a full picture of its beauty, and its misery. But perhaps an equally important goal is to convey a political message to the Polish readers. By criticising Indian politicians for stepping away from socialism and presenting the apparently negative consequences of this decision, he warns the Polish readers against doing the same. He seems to suggest that there is no other way than to be socialist – capitalism will only lead to poverty and general downfall.

### 3. Reporters on a Mission

“Mission” is indeed a key word in the discussions on travel reportage from 1950s, 60s and 70s. In the period of Thaw after Stalin's death in 1953, when Khrushchev denounced the former leader and began de-Stalinization, Soviet Bloc's relations with other countries improved. Khrushchev himself visited China, Yugoslavia and even United States (1959). In his speech on the great role of Soviet literature from 8 March 1963, Khrushchev encouraged writers and journalists to travel to foreign countries since “it is necessary for Soviet writers to see with their own eyes how other people live” (Balina 261). However, that mobility had to be very well controlled, so that the confrontation with the outside world does not lead the travellers

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*drogach...* 24).

<sup>199</sup> “Wszystko, co w tej serii obrazków było przejmujące, dzikie, nieludzkie, starałem się wiernie odtworzyć z własnych wspomnień, odkopać spod sterty pięknych obrazów, abym nigdy nie zapomniał wielkiej krzywdy pół miliarda ludzi i aby choć cząstkę własnego niepokoju zasiać w duszy czytelnika.” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 203).

to question the world inside the Soviet Bloc. The events in USSR influenced the situation in Poland too. It became easier to go abroad and newspapers editors were more eager to send their journalists on foreign journeys. Among reporters that visited India in these three decades were: Ryszard Kapuściński, Jerzy Ros, Wiesław Górnicki, Janusz Gołębiowski, Wojciech Giełżyński and Jerzy Chociłowski. As it was mentioned earlier, Kapuściński never published a book on his journey to India, he only reminisces about it, nearly half-a-century later, in *Travels with Herodotus* (2004). His colleagues, however, decided to describe their journeys, and these reportages are a particularly interesting document of how India was perceived at the time by a visitor from socialist Poland.

### **Jerzy Ros: A Socialist Idealist**

Jerzy Ros (1919-1997) travelled to India in early 1950s and published the account of his journey, *Indyjskie wędrówki* [*Indian Wanderings*] in 1957. Apart from his travel reportage, Ros wrote several books, some reportages of socialist transformation in Poland in 1950s, but also a fictionalized Viking mythology, and a few books for children, featuring tales from around the world. Ros is also the author of a historical study of Second World War, published in 1972 in Tel Aviv. Not much is known about Ros' fate in later decades – it is possible that he emigrated, as his descendants live now in the United States. It is possible that he was of Jewish origin, and the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968 might have pushed him to leave the country. It is, however, only a speculation, formed on the basis of isolated information<sup>200</sup>.

A well-known writer of the time, Marek Hłasko, mentions Ros in 1955, in one of his editorials for *Po Prostu* magazine, referring to him as an associate reporter of the *Życie Warszawy* daily. Hłasko praises Ros, calling him a “true journalist”, as opposed to the “idiotic writers of the interwar”, and admires his ability to put together facts in a telling way (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1*: 672). Indeed, Ros complied with the aesthetics of socialism, describing workers of a steel mill near Częstochowa (*Stalowe źródła siły* [*Steel sources of power*], 1952), and revisiting the places described by a pre-war journalist, Konrad Wrzos, to demonstrate how much has changed for the better with the new system (*Konfrontacje* [*Confrontations*], 1954). In the piece selected for the anthology of Polish reportage, Ros finds pre-war workers who

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<sup>200</sup> As it was mentioned before, an émigré magazine published an account from the Holocaust by Jerzy Ros, and a study on Jewish fight with the Nazis on Polish territories by the same author came out in Tel Aviv. Furthermore, a genealogy webpage, Geni.com, lists a Jerzy Ros, born and dead in the same dates as the author studied in this dissertation and mentions a full name: Jerzy Rosenberg. Many Jews changed their names after the war in order not too stand out in the Polish society, Ros could be one of them (see Teresa Torańska's interviews with Jews who emigrated after '68, *Jesteśmy. Rozstania '68* [*We Are. Separations of '68*]).

wrote letters to the directors of a steel mill, begging for a job. He compares the conditions that they have now to the previous ones in order to demonstrate the superiority of the socialist system. Mariusz Szczygieł concludes that “[i]t is hard to say whether it was socialist realism that employed Jerzy Ros to its service, or did he employ himself”(671)<sup>201</sup>. In spite of this perhaps excessive ideological commitment, Szczygieł finds that there was something refreshing even in the way Ros wrote about steel industry. Similarly, in his travel reportage from India, Ros does not avoid clearly ideological comments, but in spite of that, his account is lively and insightful. First, he focuses on the progress of his journey, describing the cruise on a large ship, “Batory”, as well as the sites that he visits upon his arrival to India.

The journey starts in Gdynia, then the ship collects more passengers from other European cities, and later it passes near the shores of Egypt and goes along the Arabian Peninsula to finally arrive to Mumbai. It is clear that the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea is already something of a culture shock for the reporter. It is his first meeting with the Orient, so far only imagined. Jerzy Ros depicts the bazaars and the sites of Egypt, accentuating the strangeness and the exoticism of the scenery, the “unusual” clothing and jewellery, the “strange” physiognomy of the people, the “Eastern” culture of trading. At the same time, the tone of his account is more political than the one of his predecessors: Ros often criticises Western colonialism and imperialism, praises the communist movement, as well as the achievements of socialism in Poland. Arriving in India, Ros travels around the country, visiting the main cities, like Mumbai and Kolkata, monuments and tourist destinations. He offers some background explanations on Indian history, society and politics, but he does not overload his readers with unnecessarily detailed information.

In his text, Ros appears as a rather idealistic (and ideological) reporter, who treats his travel to India as a professional mission. He stresses the importance of preparation before a journey: “A traveller, setting off to a journey, needs to accumulate and learn the facts that will help him better understand and study the people and the life of the country that he intends to visit. Every hour spent on learning these facts *before* the journey will pay of hundredfold *during* the journey” (5)<sup>202</sup>. Indeed, in the first few chapters of his book, Ros, while describing his long journey to India by sea, mentions various basic facts about India to prepare the reader just as he prepares himself. Approaching India, he traces a history of Polish travel to the subcontinent,

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<sup>201</sup> “Trudno powiedzieć, czy to socjalizm zaprzął Rosa do służby, czy to on zaprzął się sam.” (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1*: 671).

<sup>202</sup> “Podróżnik, nim rusza na wyprawę, zgromadzić musi i poznać te fakty, które pozwolą mu zrozumieć lepiej i lepiej poznać ludzi i życie kraju będącego celem wędrówki. I każda godzina poświęcona poznaniu tych faktów przed podróżą opłaci się stokrotnie w czasie trwania podróży.” (Ros 5).

starting from Caspar, or Gaspar, da Gama, a Polish Jew who was a member of the court of Bijapur at the time of the arrival of Vasco da Gama. Ros tells this story with a certain pride, underlining that both Caspar and the Russian tradesman, Nikitin, came to India earlier than the Portuguese colonisers. Given the Cold War context, this fact was an element of competition between Western and Eastern Europe, a somewhat triumphant “we-got-here-first” type of statement. Indeed, “one of the enduring appeals of travel . . .”, says Diane Koenker, “is the drive to escape from collective norms and patterns, to discover new territories, new experiences, to be the first to encounter a mountain peak, a waterfall, a hidden lake, or an unknown ethnic group” (659). Ros’ emphasis on the fact that Eastern Europeans, first a Russian and then a Pole, were the ones to “discover” India, seems to reflect a quasi-colonial ambition to conquer new territories, although neither Nikitin nor Gaspar da Gama were actually colonisers. Nevertheless, the race for primacy in every discipline between the Eastern Bloc and the West, and a certain national pride of the Polish reporter, would make Ros stress these facts.

At the same time, by naming Poles travelling to India over a span of a few centuries, Ros presents himself as a continuator of such glorious traditions. This adds prominence and magnitude to his own journey. As a matter of fact, the reporter sees his mission as the one of an educator and cultural guide, explaining the “reality” of India to his readers:

India should be accepted with all its living inventory and all its baggage of philosophy, particular customs, beliefs and superstitions. The elbow [traditional measure] with which we are used to measure the European, as well as our own, Polish affairs, is oftentimes useless here, so I decided to leave it behind, on the ship. The problems of the Great Peninsula [Subcontinent] require their own keys. (77)<sup>203</sup>

Ros understands that times have changed and India has to be seen by a different lens, devoid of Eurocentric prejudices. It is in fact a critique of the essentialist approach of the previous era, since Ros calls for understanding India in the framework of its own context, for assessing it with its own measures. Ros’ call for cultural relativism sounds surprisingly contemporary, making him seem as someone who was ahead of his times.

During his journey, Ros talks to people of various backgrounds: young intellectuals, communist party activists, rickshaw pullers, and even gurus. He visits monuments, modern streets of large cities, but also the poorest districts, for instance the slums of Kolkata. There, he stops his description of the city to reflect:

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<sup>203</sup> “Indie przyjmować trzeba z całym dobrodziejstwem inwentarza żywego i z całym bagażem filozofii, specyficznych obyczajów, wierzeń i zabobonów. Łokieć, którym przywykliśmy mierzyć europejskie i nasze, polskie sprawy, często jest tutaj bezużyteczny, toteż zdecydowałem się zostawić go na statku. Problemy Wielkiego Półwyspu wymagają własnych kluczy.” (Ros 77).



How different is this image from the colourful, juicy landscape, from the Bengali exotic from Kipling's tales, which I used to read at one gulp! Where is that world of tales about maharajas, elephants, fakirs, and the little Kim, who learned perceptiveness on precious stones: rubies and diamonds, topazes and jades, sapphires and opals? (186)<sup>204</sup>

By contrasting the imagined riches with a very real poverty, Ros emphasises how inaccurate is the popular representation of India, and to what extent it clouds the understanding of the current condition of Indian society – especially of its poorest groups. It could be a discovery for the Polish readers, still rather uninformed about India. It may even be a disappointment: in Ros' description, the fairy tale turns to a nightmare, the shine of the gemstones is overshadowed by the grim reality of misery and deprivation.

### **Wiesław Górnicki: Vanquisher of the “Wretched Exotic”**

Wiesław Górnicki (1931-1996) was one of the leading reporters of his times. India and Egypt are two countries described in his reportage *Podróż po garść ryżu* [*Journey for a Handful of Rice*] (1964). The well-known reporter started his journalistic career in 1949. He worked for various magazines, and ended up specialising in global affairs – he was a war correspondent in the Middle East and Indonesia, and in early 1960s left for New York, where he became a correspondent of the Polish Press Agency. Politically, he would follow the mainstream political line, however his colleagues remember instances of his insubordination. His appointment in New York was terminated because he protested against the Polish government cutting ties with Israel after the Six Days War in 1967, which resulted in a brutal anti-Semitic campaign. In his protest note that he sent to Warsaw, he said: “I simply wish to keep my hands clean in this insane affair and not to contribute even with one word to acts that fill me with terror and disgust” (qt. after Kwaśniewski). The authorities, fearing his defection, brought him back to Warsaw, where he continued his work as a journalist, in the Polish Press Agency, *Życie Warszawy* and later *Przekrój*. He continued his specialisation in international news until his career took an unexpected turn. At the beginning of 1980s, he became involved in domestic politics. He was offered position of adviser to General Wojciech Jaruzelski who introduced martial law in 1981. Górnicki seemed flattered by this position, especially since Jaruzelski incorporated him in the military in the rank of a major. Fellow journalists remember him

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<sup>204</sup> “Jakże różni się ten obraz od barwnego, soczystego pejzażu, od bengalskiej egzotyki opowieści Kiplinga, które ongiś czytałem jednym tchem! Gdzież jest ten świat bajki o maharadzach, słoniach, fakirach i małym Kimie, który uczył się spostrzegawczości na szlachetnych kamieniach: rubinach i diamentach, topazach i jaspisach, szafirach i opalach?” (Ros 186).

sporting a uniform at every occasion (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 1*: 847). His role was to write speeches for the General and act as his spokesperson. After the change of system in 1989, Górnicki stopped appearing publicly, only occasionally writing articles under a pseudonym. Before he died in 1996, he published a memoir, *Teraz już można* [*Now it is allowed*] (1994), in which he looked back at his career. Apart from numerous press publications, he authored more than twenty books: mostly reportages, essays, novels and two memoirs. Apart from his role in times of Jaruzelski, he is remembered as an outstanding reporter. For instance, Mariusz Szczygieł, the director of the Institute of Reportage and journalist himself, remembers that Górnicki's texts inspired him to choose this profession<sup>205</sup>.

Akin to reporters mentioned above, Górnicki realises that a new language is needed to describe India. Instead of the old Oriental tale, there should be emphasis on progress and development under the socialist banner. The fascination with the exotic has to end, says Górnicki, almost in a Saidian spirit:

I was coming to this country with the conviction that I will encounter here a widespread struggle with this wretched "exotic"; that I will be carried away by the momentum of the great change, the familiar clamour of debates, the fast course of fiascos and successes, a clear contour of the future in the shadows of the past, the tangle of emerging conflicts. Were we not discussing, full of impatient curiosity, the "Indian path to socialism" in the version presented by the Indian Congress Party? (...) I wanted to write about power plants and bridges, to praise spinning-mills and schools, and to relentlessly avoid all that reminds the readers in my country of the banal picture of India. I wanted to scream: there exist people, who defy the Indian "exotic"! Let's end with the maharajas and yogis! (165-166)<sup>206</sup>

While this fervour in adopting a fresh, non-Orientalist approach is understandable, one detail attracts the reader's attention: Górnicki suddenly changes tenses, from present, used in earlier passages, to past. He says: "I wanted to write about...", "I wanted to scream..." – but did he really achieve this goal? After these declarations, the passage suddenly ends, and a completely different topic begins. Did his attempt to do away with the exotic fail? The author leaves this

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<sup>205</sup> Source: Mariusz Szczygieł's personal webpage.

<sup>206</sup> "Jechałem do tego kraju z przeświadczeniem, że zastanę w nim szeroki front walki z nieszczęsną 'egzotyką'; że porwie mnie patos wielkich przemian, ów dobrze mi znajomy zgiełk sporów, spieszny nurt błędów i sukcesów, wyraźny kontur przyszłości w cieniu rzeczy mijających, gmatwanina rodzących się, nowych konfliktów. Czyż nie rozprawialiśmy, pełni niecierpliwiej ciekawości, o 'indyjskiej drodze do socjalizmu' w takim właśnie wydaniu, jakie prezentuje Partia Kongresowa? Chciałam pisać o elektrowniach i mostach, sławić przedsiębiorstwa i szkoły, milczeć zawzięcie o wszystkim, co się czytelnikowi w mim kraju kojarzy z banalnym obrazem Indii. Chciałem wołać: są, którzy się targnęli na indyjską 'egzotykę'! Koniec z maharadzami i jogami!" (Górnicki 165-166)

issue hanging, and the reader needs to evaluate by himself/herself, whether Górnicki succeeded in “defying the Indian exotic”.

In his first chapter about India, Górnicki describes with awe the riches of the nizam of Hyderabad, “reminding of the grand Eastern tales”(115), “making the wildest dream of a European jeweller seem an unimaginative dullness compared to the treasures, stored in nizam’s cellars”(115-116)<sup>207</sup>. Finally, he appeals to the readers: “You have to admit: all 1001 nights’ tales would pale in the face of these stories [about nizam’s fortune]”(117)<sup>208</sup>. These metaphors and comparisons remind of a typically Orientalist language, though overall, Górnicki criticises the accumulation of wealth among the Indian aristocrats. In the later part of the chapter, Górnicki adopts a more ideologically correct tone, deploring the feudalism of the colonial era, the exploitation of peasants, and the changes after India’s independence that stripped the princes of large parts of their wealth. His choice of topics in his reportages from India is significant: the five chapters are devoted to 1) the nizam and the fate of Indian princes, 2) cast divisions, 3) the city development in Calcutta, Madras and Trivandrum, 4) hakims – doctors of traditional medicine, and 5) the pilgrimages to the holy city of Hardwar. It seems like a collection of rather typical issues, based on Oriental tropes – Oriental riches, castes, urban poverty, traditional medicine, religious rituals... Nevertheless, each of these chapters also leads to a reflection of a different kind. On agricultural reform, social divisions, politics, and secularism.

In his endeavour to be a travel writer of a new kind, Górnicki does not limit his visits to tourist sites, but also tries to describe modern India: the cities, the industry, the people. This is a choice made by many of the travel writers: they contrast “old” India with the “new” one. However, this approach creates a binary division between what is traditional (Eastern), and modern (Western), or uncivilised and civilised. Although Górnicki, and many of his contemporary writers, do not associate themselves with the West understood as North America and Western Europe, they have a sense of belonging to the modern, Soviet world. This socialist modernity should be exported to the Third World, Górnicki seems to suggest, so that “superstition” and “old beliefs” are eradicated. The project of “defying the exotic” becomes thus problematic: instead of giving a voice to Indians so that they can represent themselves, the socialist narrative imposes yet another model of modernity, coming from elsewhere.

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<sup>207</sup> “zatrącająca o pyszne bajki wschodnie” (Górnicki 115); “najdzikszysen europejskiego jubilera może być tylko pozbawioną fantazji szarzyzną w porównaniu ze skarbami, zalegającymi piwnice nizama.” (Górnicki 116).

<sup>208</sup> “Przyznajcie: wszystkie baśnie z 1001 nocy błędą wobec tych opowieści.” (Górnicki 117).

### **Janusz Gołębiowski: A Correspondent and His “Assessment Criteria”**

While Górnicki is considered to be a classic of the post-war Polish reportage, Janusz Gołębiowski (1924–2013), also a Polish Press Agency correspondent, seems to be forgotten. According to his obituary<sup>209</sup>, as a young man, he fought in the Warsaw Uprising. After the Uprising, he was taken as a prisoner of war by the Germans. When the war ended, he graduated from the Warsaw School of Economics, and became a journalist. He was posted to India, United States, and Japan.

In his book *Nadane z Delhi [Posted from Delhi]* (1966), Gołębiowski attempts at showing the whole spectrum of social and political issues. He is, however, aware that a dry description of the modern Indian industry without talking about the culture and history of the country might not only tire the readers, but also give an incomplete image. He wants to write about “everything” (6):

I came back to Delhi [after a trip out of the city] with a confusion in my head and a resolution to write about everything that happens in India: about the extreme poverty and brave attempts of getting out of it, about the work of the Indian “doctor Judymy” [a Polish symbol of sacrifice in the name of charity] and about the selfishness of some local politicians, about the economic backwardness of the country, and about the newly created islands of modern industry. This first encounter with Indian reality convinced me that in many magazines and books about this country, various aspects of this reality are exaggerated – in a positive or negative way. Drawing one’s attention only on the construction of steel mills in India creates an equally distorted view of the country, as concentrating solely on the descriptions of the masterpieces of Indian art or the mysterious practices of yogis. (6)<sup>210</sup>

Announcing in the introduction his intention to cover a broad spectrum of issues, Gołębiowski takes up an uneasy task. He realises that, and elaborates on his approach: the first chapter of the book is entitled “The assessment criteria”. It explains to the readers what is – in the author’s opinion – the image of India in Poland and in the world, how it is affected by Cold War politics, and to what extent it is true. He points out that even though India is considered by the USA as

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<sup>209</sup> See: Gołębiowski’s obituary in *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

<sup>210</sup> “Wróciłem do Delhi z zamętem w głowie i postanowieniem pisania o wszystkim, co się dzieje w Indiach: o skrajnej nędzy i śmiałych próbach wydobywania się z niej, o pracy indyjskich ‘doktorów Judymów’ i sobkostwie niektórych miejscowych polityków, o gospodarczym zacofaniu kraju i o powstających oazach nowoczesnego przemysłu. To pierwsze zetknięcie z indyjską rzeczywistością przekonało mnie bowiem, że w wielu prasowych i książkowych relacjach z tego kraju przejawiają się poszczególne aspekty tej rzeczywistości – negatywne lub pozytywne. Skupianie uwagi wyłącznie na budowie w Indiach hut stwarza tak samo błędny obraz kraju, jak koncentrowanie się na opisach arcydzieł indyjskiej sztuki czy tajemniczych praktyk jogów.” (Gołębiowski 6)

“a tool of Moscow” (10), the country still preserves strong ties with Britain, and it adopts a rather neutral political stand (11). The radically leftist programmes of political parties, especially inspired by Nehru and other sympathisers of socialism, should not be taken too literally, says Gołębiowski (11). “(...) [These socialist programmes] have tarnished the old, Kiplingian image of India, but in its place they created an equally extreme image” (11)<sup>211</sup>.

Gołębiowski, as a journalist seeking objectivity, seeks to present a more balanced representation of India. He says: “Still about a dozen of years ago, the most popular source of these images [of India] were the exotic books of the “Jungle Book” kind, filled with colonial overtones, or British movies about the mission of the white man on the colonised territories.”(11)<sup>212</sup>. Later on, continues the journalist, due to certain “dogmatic political concepts”, the independence struggle was questioned, and only in the 1950s India was “discovered anew” as an important anti-colonial and anti-imperialist force (12). However, Gołębiowski deplores the excessive zeal in attributing radical socialist ideas to Indian politicians and warns against taking their speeches and fiery declarations out of context, while failing to inform on various negative issues taking place in India at the same time (12). As a result, another “false image” of India was created: one of a “large, revolutionary country that after breaking the bonds of the colonial domination, entered its own, fascinating way towards socialism” (12)<sup>213</sup>. However, India’s reality is quite far from these opinions, says Gołębiowski, discussing various policies of the Indian government that prove its neutral position versus the capitalist/socialist divide. He also stresses the sheer size and diversity of India, which preclude any generalising statements about the country in its whole. This is the first of five criteria of assessment that Gołębiowski lists as key issues to keep in mind when writing about India. The following four are: India is a country of a large-scale poverty, but with stark contrasts in the access to material goods; so far it has not had any astounding economic successes, but it is going forward; its development is uneven in a temporal, spatial and sector-oriented sense; India is a neutral country, not aligned with any of the blocs, but its politics remain changeable and lack consistency (19-20). The author presents these assumptions in a matter-of-factly way, without dwelling on cultural aspects, but effectively, his approach challenges clichés, prejudices, as well as propagandist formulas. In his view, society is not homogeneous, political

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<sup>211</sup> “Brane zbyt dosłownie programy te zatarły dawny, kiplingowski obraz Indii, ale na jego miejsce stworzyły wizerunek równie krańcowy.” (Gołębiowski 11).

<sup>212</sup> “Jeszcze kilkanaście lat temu najpopularniejszym źródłem tych wyobrażeń były egzotyczne, nie pozbawione kolonialnego podtekstu książki w rodzaju *Księgi Dżungli* Kiplinga lub angielskie filmy o posłannictwie białego człowieka na terenach skolonizowanych.” (Gołębiowski 11).

<sup>213</sup> “Był to wizerunek wielkiego rewolucyjnego kraju, który po zrzuceniu pęt kolonialnego panowania wkroczył na własną, fascynującą drogę do socjalizmu.” (Gołębiowski 12).

affiliations are not static, and development is not linear. As a result, though perhaps he does not remain fully in line with the ideological goals of presenting India as an unquestionable socialist ally, he manages to form a new viewpoint. This viewpoint is far from an unquestionable belief in progress, whether understood as the evolutionist concept of stages of civilisation or as the Marxist idea of development. Gołębiowski's goal is to stay balanced, but as the analysis of his text in the following chapter will demonstrate, it is not always easy to maintain this declared neutralism.

### **Wojciech Giełżyński: Educator of the Readers**

Wojciech Giełżyński (1930-2015) was born into a journalistic family: his father was editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Ludowa* daily. Already as a 16-year-old, Giełżyński published his texts in his father's newspaper, and after graduating in economics, he became a full-time reporter of the sports section of *Dookoła Świata* magazines. He was a sportsman himself, and even won a championship of Poland in rowing. He continued his journalistic career, publishing in various magazines and specialising in foreign affairs. As he confessed, between 1957 and 1964 he was a secret collaborator of the SB – security service, since it was a condition for his journeys abroad. Later, Giełżyński joined the opposition. During the martial law, he started writing for the underground press, and after the end of communism in 1989, he worked for the independent *Tygodnik Solidarność*. After retiring from active reporting, he taught journalism to students. Throughout his career he visited 85 countries, and wrote around 60 books on a wide range of topics. He is one of the best known Polish reporters, but – as Mariusz Szczygieł points out – radically different from Kapuściński: while the latter would always be close to literature, Giełżyński focused on facts (Szczygieł, *100/XX... 2*: 551). Kapuściński looked for a synthesis, or even for a metaphor, while Giełżyński wanted to document the events and their context as well as he could.

In Wojciech Giełżyński's *Kraj świętych krów i biednych ludzi* [*Land of Holy Cow and Poor People*] (1977), the narrator does not ruminate over how he should describe India – instead, he turns to the readers. He lectures them on how another culture should be perceived, using plural pronouns in the imperative mode, such as *wystrzegajmy się* – “we should avoid”, or *nie mówmy* – “we should not say”. Similarly, he prescribes the readers to learn to understand others, using the impersonal modal verb “trzeba” (“one ought to”). Surely, this plural form includes himself too, but it extends the responsibility of using a particular language – or avoiding certain statements – to a collective. His individual voice is thus only a part of a larger

discourse. Giełżyński adopts the role of a teacher, who imparts his experiences and instructs his potential followers how to behave when visiting India. For instance, after describing Indian customs as strange, Giełżyński declares, almost with guilt, that “(...) we should avoid such generalisations, we should not say at once: what a backward, unenlightened country!” (13)<sup>214</sup>.

This kind of statements, admonishing the readers or, more generally, the public opinion, appear frequently in Giełżyński's book. Nevertheless, in his own descriptions of India he frequently uses generalisations and stereotypes. As many of his predecessors, he describes cow worship, the belief in astrology, and various customs that seem unusual to him. He is, however, conscious that there is a different way of reading India. That is why, he also expresses support and praise to the communist rule in Bengal, or emphasises India's progress. Once again, the old is contrasted with the new, the spiritual with the material and the irrational with the rational, though this is precisely what Giełżyński claims should be avoided. “Fakirs, holy cows, astrologers. What a strange country, full of paradoxes and contrasts! This last phrase is rather unwise, but it is often used about India.” (17-18)<sup>215</sup>.

Finally, Giełżyński concludes that every culture has its own particularities, which are difficult to understand for people in other cultures. He believes that this cultural autonomy should be respected – even if it contradicts one's own values:

. . . [I]nstead of joking about customs, ways of life, beliefs of other nations, one should learn about them. Only then it turns out how rich is the treasury of other nations' cultures. And only then, when one knows the source of the existing differences, it is possible to understand why certain people in the world live this way, and others another way – and each of them considers their way of life as the most appropriate. However, to us, people from Europe, especially from socialist countries, from Poland, it is difficult to accept many customs observed there. Above all, it is difficult to close our eyes to social relations, so very different from our own.” (20)<sup>216</sup>

Giełżyński calls for a better understanding of cultures and more respect towards otherness, but he recognises that there are limits to such tolerance. These limits result from the socialist

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<sup>214</sup> “Ale wystrzegajmy się podobnych uogólnień, nie mówmy zaraz: jaki to zacofany, jaki nieoświecony kraj!” (Giełżyński 13).

<sup>215</sup> “Fakirzy, święte krowy, astrologowie. Jakiż dziwny kraj, pełen paradoksów i kontrastów! Niemądre jest to ostatnie zdanie, chociaż często tak właśnie się mówi o Indiach. Dla Hindusów wiele naszych zwyczajów jest tak samo ‘dziwaczkich’, ‘śmiesznych’ i ‘niepojętych’.” (Giełżyński 17-18).

<sup>216</sup> “Każda kultura ma swoje osobliwości, niezrozumiałe dla ludzi wychowanych w odmiennych kulturach. Dlatego, zamiast żartować ze zwyczajów, ze sposobu bycia, z wierzeń innych narodów, trzeba je poznawać, trzeba się ich uczyć. Wtedy dopiero okazuje się, jak bogata jest skarbnica kultur tych narodów. I wtedy dopiero, gdy zna się źródła istniejących odmienności, rozumie się, dlaczego jedni ludzie na świecie żyją tak, inni inaczej – i każdy uważa swój sposób życia za najwłaściwszy. A jednak nam, ludziom z Europy, zwłaszcza z krajów socjalistycznych, z Polski, trudno przystać na wiele zwyczajów, które się tam spotyka. Trudno przede wszystkim przymknąć oczy na stosunki społeczne, tak bardzo sprzeczne z naszymi ideałami.” (Giełżyński 20).

ideology which – in the author’s opinion – makes travellers from Poland more sensitive to social issues in India than other Europeans. It is a rather naïve statement, attributing social empathy only to citizens of the Eastern Bloc. Surely, the Soviet Union assisted India in various areas, offering scholarships and technical support, but also much aid was coming from Europeans and Americans. Nevertheless, Giełżyński used this opportunity to present the communist countries as superior to the West.

### **Jerzy Chociłowski: A Reporter Overwhelmed by India**

Although he graduated from the department of law at the Warsaw University, Jerzy Chociłowski (1933-) worked mostly as a journalist and as a translator. He was a reporter for various newspapers, in particular *Polityka* and *Rzeczpospolita*, and he served as editor-in-chief of the *Kontynenty* magazine, specialising in travel reportage. In his nonfictional writing, he focussed mostly on Asia, in particular he authored reportages from Thailand, Vietnam and India. In later years, Chociłowski also published a few other works: a book presenting the unusual personalities of the Polish Second Republic, short stories and limericks. His reportage from India, *Indyjska szarada* [*The Indian Charade*] was published in 1977, and as Henryk Sobieski<sup>217</sup> suggests in the introduction to the book, it is composed of close-up images of a huge country that is India (5). Indeed, at the very beginning of his account Chociłowski mentions the difficulty of describing India:

Coming to India is like being thrown into deep waters, but not knowing how to swim. Some would immediately sink to the bottom, others somehow manage to stay on the surface, choking and gagging, constantly getting undercut, submerged by the wave, pulled into whirlpools. And even those who will, after a period of time, master somehow the art of swimming – will notice, that the shore that they want to reach is a grey, blurry line on the horizon. There is probably no other place in the world that would be defined as often as India, and at the same time, that would so easily slip out the frames of those definitions. Nevertheless, such definitions do not cease to be produced, because they are provoked by the intriguing matter of this country, shiny and brisk, and then dark and immobile, simultaneously unchangeable and diverse. (Chociłowski 10-11)<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Henryk Sobieski was a diplomat in the communist period, he worked for years at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and served as ambassador in Venezuela and Angola.

<sup>218</sup> “Przyjechać do Indii, to trochę tak, jakby być ciśniętym na głęboką wodę, a nie umieć pływać. Jedni idą od razu na dno, drudzy utrzymują się jakoś na powierzchni, ale krztusząc się i zachłystując, podtapiani nieustannie, zalewani falą, wciągani w wiry. I nawet ci, którzy po pewnym czasie opanują jako tako sztukę pływania – dostrzegą, że brzeg do którego zmierzają jest szarą, zamazaną nitką na horyzoncie. Nie ma chyba miejsca na świecie, które byłoby tak często jak Indie definiowane i które by zarazem z taką łatwością wyslizgiwało się z



The reader is faced with an impossible challenge: whatever he or she will come to understand about India, it will be a fleeting and impermanent knowledge. In this way, the reader shares the powerlessness and perplexity of the author. Chociłowski continues: “[t]alking about India, one can prove everything and deny everything, always maintaining the semblance of reason. It is a land without truth, but also a land of uncountable truths, which, like nowhere else, are subjected to the pressure of relativity theory” (11)<sup>219</sup>. He realises that what makes the assessment of India difficult are the clichés that foreigners bring along and that “at the first sight, seem to maliciously find confirmation”<sup>220</sup>. The reporter says that these clichés vary across countries, but have certain common points, for instance poverty and “Oriental splendour”, “holy cows”, women wearing saris, snake-charmers, elephants, fakirs, baths in the Ganges and burning the dead on stakes (12). “The Taj Mahal in Agra – the “eighth wonder of the world” and crowds of beggars...”<sup>221</sup>, enumerates Chociłowski. As a result, “an average tourist returns home with a baggage of such clichés, registered on the films of memory and on the rolls of videos. Some time is needed for the plaster of stereotypes to fall off, unveiling the fragments of the great Indian fresco”<sup>222</sup> (12). He admits that he, too, was visiting Delhi in a rush, like a tourist, and only later, he could experience more varied images of India, when travelling through different regions of the country. Nevertheless, he remains aware that it is difficult for a foreigner to fully understand India, as one of his Indian interlocutors told him (14).

Chociłowski tells the story of Wanda Dynowska Umadevi, a Polish woman who lived in India for years. Every time someone asked her about her adopted country, she used to respond: “it depends where” or “it depends when”, because “all that can be true in one place of India can be false in another” (14)<sup>223</sup>. Chociłowski mentions various attempts (mostly unsuccessful) of other journalists to describe India and the difficulties they faced. Finally, he concludes:

But despite of all these – objective and subjective obstacles that we encounter when trying to decipher the Indian Sphinx - there are things that strike our eyes more than others. And we will

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ram tych definicji. Definicje te jednakże nie przestają być produkowane, prowokuje je bowiem intrygująca materia tego kraju, błyszcząca i ruchliwa, to znów ciemna i nieruchoma, jednocześnie niezmienna i różnorodna.” (Chociłowski 10-11).

<sup>219</sup> “Mówiąc o Indiach można wszystko udowodnić i wszystkiemu zaprzeczyć, zachowując zawsze pozory racji. Jest to ziemia bez prawdy, a także ziemia niezliczonych prawd, które jak nigdzie indziej poddawane są ciśnieniu teorii względności.” (Chociłowski 11).

<sup>220</sup> “które na pierwszy rzut oka zdają się złośliwie sprawdzać” (Chociłowski 12).

<sup>221</sup> “Tadž Mahal w Agrze – ‘ósmym cudem świata’ i gromady zebraków...” (Chociłowski 12).

<sup>222</sup> “I przeciętny turysta wraca do domu z bagażem takich właśnie kalkomanii, zarejestrowanych na kliszach pamięci i na błonach filmów. Trzeba trochę czasu, żeby zaczął się osypywać tynk stereotypów, odsłaniając fragmenty wielkiego indyjskiego fresku.” (Chociłowski 12)

<sup>223</sup> “to, co w jednym miejscu Indii jest prawdą w innym może być kłamstwem” (Chociłowski 14).

perhaps not be mistaken if we say that there are two most striking facts: the might of Hinduism, or more specifically, of the caste system, and poverty. Let us add right away, that there is something like a feedback between these two phenomena. (16)<sup>224</sup>

Towards the end of his introduction, Chociłowski quotes E. M. Forster's *Passage to India*, saying that India is not a promise, but a bait (31). Strangely, the reporter seems unaware of the colonial context of Forster's take on India (31). The reporter warns the readers that what they will find in the book are just subjective impressions, which only slightly touch upon India (31). According to Chociłowski, India is "too complicated of a place on earth for one to talk and write about it without appropriate humility"<sup>225</sup>. Furthermore, "if here and there I happen to draw a picture that does not seem idyllic, it is not because I have been looking into a distorting mirror for too long, but in a friendly attempt to demonstrate how deeply is India immersed in its difficult complexity" (31)<sup>226</sup>. Therefore, declaratively, the reporter's take on India is a very uncertain one, he keeps excusing himself to the readers about the superficiality of his account in the face of India's complexity. However, in his reportages, he is not afraid of making bold, often generalising statements. What differentiates them from his predecessors is that he is less ideologically-driven and rarely professes openly political statements.

The historical overview in the previous chapter provides background both to the primary texts analysed in this dissertation, and to the biographies of their authors. While some are better known, others are forgotten. Although their writing might bear several similarities, their life trajectories are widely different. Putrament joined the communist party early in his life and was one of those who contributed to imposing this system in the country. He was personally involved in shaping the cultural life in socialism and remained a Party member till the end of his life. Ros, who seemingly embraced the new system after the war and identified with socialist ideology, was probably betrayed by that very system only because of his Jewish origins and forced to emigrate. Perhaps the most interesting is the political stance of Wiesław Górnicki, who was staunch communist, but during the anti-Semitic campaign of March 1968, he opposed the hate speech. At the same time, while many of his colleagues joined the ranks

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<sup>224</sup> "Ale pomimo wszystkich – obiektywnych i subiektywnych przeszkód, na jakie napotykamy chcąc rozszyfrować indyjskiego sfinksa – są przecież rzeczy, rzucające się w oczy bardziej od innych. I nie popełnimy chyba błędu, jeśli powiemy, że najbardziej uderzające wśród tych faktów są dwa: potęga hinduizmu, a właściwie systemu kastowego, oraz nędza. Dodajmy od razu, że istnieje coś w rodzaju sprzężenia zwrotnego między tymi dwoma zjawiskami." (Chociłowski 16)

<sup>225</sup> "miejsca na ziemi nazbyt skomplikowanego, by można było o nim mówić i pisać bez należytej pokory" (Ch

<sup>226</sup> "Jeżeli zaś tu i tam przydarzyło mi się naszkicować obrazek, który nie tchnie sielanką, to nie dlatego, że się zapatrzyłem w krzywe lustro, ale z życzliwej chęci unaocznienia jak głęboko pogrążone są Indie w swej trudnej złożoności." (Chociłowski 31)

of the opposition, he became more radical and accepted the position of Wojciech Jaruzelski's spokesman. Giełżyński, on the contrary, although having a history of collaborating with the secret services, later became close to Solidarity movement and was one of the journalists present at the Gdańsk shipyard. These are just the best-known examples: not having enough information about the authors, it is impossible to assess their political views in their entirety. Nevertheless, the historical and political context is important in the reading of their works. Their reportages cannot be read literally, without the necessary assumption of the censor's interference and of political pressures of the time. That is why, this dissertation focuses more on the texts rather than on the biographies of the authors. Obviously, Wiesław Górnicki as a reporter's persona present in the text as narrator and protagonist is not the same as the real Górnicki, whose actual motivations and political views can only be subject of speculation. Even though reportage as a genre is part of the larger branch of nonfiction, it does not mean that it can be read merely as a collection of facts or news. The subjective views of the narrator are not expressed in a vacuum, they are also a product of their times, as well as their political and historical context.

## 5. The Search of Otherness

Almost all writers analysed in this chapter underline how much of an achievement it is to even embark on a journey. And a very special journey – not to the Polish Baltic sea coast or to the Soviet Crimea, but one to such a distant and “exotic” place as India. Diane Koenker, in her article on Soviet travel, distinguishes between domestic *turizm*, and travel abroad, which “offered a different kind of appeal and required a different kind of mapping: not one that incorporated new sights and experiences into a national whole, but a map that opposed here and there, us and others” (661). The idea of encountering, exploring and describing Otherness is one of the main motivations of the reporters from socialist Poland. This is very well exemplified by Kapuściński and his fascination with the Other:

I consider myself to be an explorer of Otherness: other cultures, other ways of thinking, other types of behaviour. I want to come into contact with strangeness in order to understand. It is a question of how one can describe reality adequately, but anew. Sometimes this kind of writing is called nonfiction writing. I would call it creative nonfiction writing. Personal presence is crucial. Sometimes I'm asked who the hero of my books is. “I am,” I respond, “because these books describe a person who travels, looks around, reads, reflects, and writes about all of this.” Kapuściński, *Lapidaria* (210).

Thus, apart from the usual goals of a traveller, identified by James Clifford as “search of difference, wisdom, power, adventure, [and] an altered perspective” (91), travel leads to a better self-understanding. Knowing the Other, being confronted to a different culture, is an important lesson on one’s boundaries and personality in general. However, this encounter does not take place in the void, it is also defined by the historical, political or social context. The reporters from communist Poland are not simply individuals on a journey, meeting other individuals. Their experience is influenced by ideologies, which are “systems of representation” (in Althusser’s understanding of the term), that mediate between the individual and his or her relationship to society.

As it has been demonstrated, in many cases the proper ideological stance of the communist reporters coexists with a desire for adventure and excitement. Even while describing the “Oriental riches” or the abject customs of India, the reporters, perhaps not fully consciously, find a certain pleasure. It reminds of the phenomenon that Ali Behdad described in his article on Nerval’s *Voyage en Orient*. The French writer, in Behdad’s words, experienced a desire of the Orient, which is “the return of a repressed fascination with the Other, through whose differentiating function European subjectivity has often defined itself since the Crusades” (1990: 39). Despite being representatives of the Eastern Bloc, Polish reporters share this fascination, and display a typically Western European desire to know the Oriental Other and to define themselves in opposition to the Other.

However, this desire does not always lead to a real encounter and dialogue, it does not enable the reporter to hear the voice of the Other. Most travel accounts analysed in this dissertation feature Indian interlocutors rather sparingly. Instead, they are filled with the narrator’s impressions, opinions and interpretations. Going on a journey to India and writing about Indian culture does not in itself make the reporter understand and appreciate it. This problem is illustrated well by bell hooks:

I am waiting for them to stop talking about the ‘Other’, to stop describing how important it is to be able to speak about difference. It is not just important what we speak about, but how and why we speak. . . Often this speech about the ‘Other’ annihilates, erases: no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the centre of my talk. (hooks, 1990: 151–2)

Whatever strategy the authors use to represent India, such representations have one deep flaw: they become *their* narrative of India, their perception. They do not leave much space for the object to speak for itself – they replace it with their own ideas. The reporters know better what India is and what it should be, what kind of modernity it should aspire to, and what traditions it should reject.

## **6. Representing India**

The issue of representation is preceded by an even more crucial question: what is it that the observer – traveller – sees? Is his gaze reliable, does it fully grasp the object that they want to represent? The primary challenge that the reporters visiting India face, is how to describe what they perceive as reality. They contrast the idea of India as imagined by the wider public, with what they have seen with their “own eyes” (Koehler 18). They consider themselves as journalists who observe reality and represent it in an objective way. In this way of thinking, they follow in the footsteps of nineteenth-century realist writers, whose ambition was to depict “reality” as truthfully as possible. This endeavour was characteristic of Western modernity; in fact, it was one of its dominant discourses. Tzvetan Todorov remarks that realism was also a discourse, even though it was disguised as transparent, almost inexistent, so that the readers could feel like they have witness a real “slice of life” (“tranche de vie”) (Barthes et al., 9). This discourse was based on the assumption originating from a Cartesian belief in senses, through which one can experience truth. But what if the senses fail and one’s image is influenced by preconceptions?

Ronald Inden points out to a similar phenomenon occurring among scholars: they assume that they describe facts, while these “facts” were already reinterpreted through an “episteme”, or in other words, a particular way of knowing (Inden 401). What is more, according to Inden, such belief in “true knowledge” creates a hierarchical relationship between the knower and the known (402). It is a typically colonial mode in which the speaking (or writing) subject represents the colonised, denying them their voice, or the possibility of self-representation. If the speaker assumes that there exists a unitary essence of human nature, and that essence is realised primarily in the West, then the essence of the Other – India – must be at the opposite end. So, if the West is rational, the East is irrational. If the Western societies see the concepts of Reason, State or Market as Agents leading towards the achievement of an essential goal, India’s organising principle, or Agent, must be Caste – in the understanding of Indologists (402-403). As a result, Indology dismisses political institutions, and sees the Indian thought as symbolic and mythical (as opposed to rational and logic European thought).

Inden underlines the belief of Western scholars in the existence of an external, objective reality. If one assumes that human knowledge can represent, copy or mirror that reality, then Western science claims to be the best way to achieve this goal, since it is, in Inden's words, empiricist (or rationalist) in its epistemology and realist in its ontology (412). In contrast to it, Vedic thought is understood by Indologists as mystical and idealist, hence its relation to reality must be limited. That's why, Inden sees the link between knowledge and reality as crucial in the discussion on Indology, or – more generally – on Orientalism (412). The question of representing reality is also key in analysing travel writing, or literary reportage.

Travel reporters, by presenting a “first-hand experience”, create an illusion of reality, an air of authority over their readers. Their claim to present a “true story” stands in opposition to the fact that no travel account is objective and it does not depict “reality” in its fullness. Already the moment of writing it, after completing the journey, makes travel reportage a reiteration. It is at least “one step removed from the reality that it describes” (Beller and Leerssen 446). A travelogue is an autonomous text that has a poetic function and a potential to produce powerful images. These images are not facts; they are representations of a reality perceived by the traveller.

The reporters on their journey to India chose reportage as the best form to convey their experiences. From an ideological point of view, non-fiction was also more welcome by the authorities than the “rotten bourgeois novel” (Kuprel 378). While striving to convey a truthful depiction of India, their perception was influenced by both Orientalist, as well as socialist discourses. They were trapped between the need to reject the “wretched exotic” and the encouragement for a transition to “modernity”. However, by imposing their own vision of modernity, they perpetuated a colonial pattern of subjugation. Marek Moroń, sociologist, calls this phenomenon a “Comintern Eurocentrism” (Cegielski 87). The socialist countries were concerned with supporting the Third World not only out of their belief in equality or comradeship. Their mission was also to expand their sphere of ideological influence upon countries that they considered as inferior and underdeveloped, explains Moroń (Cegielski 87). That is why, even if India is no longer presented in travel accounts according to the colonial stereotypes, even if the “exotic” is abandoned, it is still perceived as a second-rate country that needs to be shown the path towards development. It is clearly visible from Putrament's texts that the abandonment of the socialist course cannot be positively received by representatives of the Soviet Bloc. The only acceptable scenario would be for India to blindly follow the Soviet example.

## CHAPTER 4. TRADITION.

“With the power of contrasts, typical of India, the old mixes with the new... There are two things particularly complicated for a European visiting India. It is the issue of religion and the issue of castes. To a large extent, they are linked with one another.”  
(Koehler 105)<sup>227</sup>

### 1. Tradition and Modernity in India, “Country of Contrasts”

While the previous chapter focussed on **who** the reporters were and **how** did they approach India, this chapter will explore **what** the reporters chose to write about. The attention is thus shifting from the subject to the object of the reportage. India – a country, a subcontinent, a federation of states, a mix of languages, cultures, lifestyles, religions and landscapes – offers a travel writer an almost infinite number of potential topics. Nevertheless, it is striking that practically all the authors focus on the same set of topics. Among them are the usual suspects: the caste system, the “cult” of the cow, the “holy men” (*sadhus*) and various Hindu customs and rituals. Furthermore, the reporters often mention astrology and other popular beliefs that they consider as “superstition”. These issues are usually presented together with notes on history, geography, and climate of India. Such index of topics would indeed sound like a table of contents of a book on India from the colonial era, if it was not for considerably large sections on Indian modernisation, in particular industry and government economic plans. Apparently, the socialist travellers had the ambition to convey to their readers the past and the present (and even the future) of India. There was a clearly ideological goal in this approach: presenting the past in negative terms would make the future look positive. Consequently, such a juxtaposition would contribute to a rather optimistic vision of world development along the Soviet model. Thus, Polish reporters often presented the two realities – of tradition and modernity – in a mutually exclusive way. Old customs clash with ambitious plans for the future, traditional social constructs prevent progress, and religious beliefs cloud rational thinking. Most reporters choose to present India in this way, although they realise it is a rather clichéd vision. What is more, talking about contrasts serves a practical purpose: it helps conveying the travellers’ surprise at what they find in India and titillating the readers with exiting contradictions.

One of the first Polish travellers to visit independent India, Witold Koehler, announces from the very beginning that he wants to avoid the banal statements, repeated by many of his

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<sup>227</sup> “Z właściwą Indiom siłą kontrastów stare miesza się tu z nowym... Dwie sprawy są dla Europejczyka, odwiedzającego Indie, szczególnie zawikłane. To kwestia religii i kwestia kast. W znacznym zresztą stopniu wiążą się one ze sobą.” (Koehler 105).

predecessors: “India is a country of contrasts” (18)<sup>228</sup>. Nevertheless, he admits that it is a difficult goal, as contrast is inherent to India and it strikes the visitor at every step of the way (18). His words are echoed by Jerzy Ros, who also travelled around the Subcontinent in late 1950s. Ros outlines the huge diversity of cultures, religions, languages, human types, and landscapes that are all part of India. He calls it, too, “a country of social, climatic, and natural contrasts – a truth that has now become a clichéd slogan”(8)<sup>229</sup>. Wojciech Giełżyński, coming to India almost two decades later, repeats the slogan: “What a strange country, full of paradoxes and contrasts!”<sup>230</sup>. But, he adds immediately, this is not a wise thing to say, because for Indians many of our customs and habits appear as funny or strange (17). Even today, it is a phrase time and again used to describe India by travellers, bloggers, journalists, travel agents and marketers alike. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that reporters visiting India in the first decades of its independence point out these differences. Indeed, they are not alone in their observations. Mexican poet and writer, Octavio Paz, assigned for a diplomatic post in India, travelled there for the first time in 1952, around the same time as some of the Polish reporters. Paz recalls:

The first thing that surprised me about India, as it has surprised many others, was the diversity created by extreme contrast: modernity and antiquity, luxury and poverty, sensuality and asceticism, carelessness and efficiency, gentleness and violence; a multiplicity of castes and languages, gods and rites, customs and ideas, rivers and deserts, plains and mountains, cities and villages, rural and industrial life, centuries apart in time and neighbours in space. (Paz 27)

Paz realises that he is not the first one to notice India’s diversity and its contradictions, however the image of these stark contrast is what remained a powerful memory from his stay in India. What constitutes, in his mind, the biggest paradox, and the most defining trait of India, is the coexistence of Hinduism and Islam. These two religions, one “strictest and most extreme form of monotheism” (Paz 37), and the other, “the richest and most varied polytheism” (Paz 37) are not only a source of contrast, but also a deep wound, a source of lasting tensions. The Polish reporters are aware of these tensions, although in their reportages one can find surprisingly little mention of the traumatic events of the last few decades, the 1947 Partition of India into Muslim-dominated Pakistan and Hindu-dominated India, or Hindustan. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the reporters prefer not to emphasise on religious differences, accusing the British of strengthening the divide between communities.

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<sup>228</sup> “Indie to kraj kontrastów” (Koehler 18).

<sup>229</sup> “Indie są krajem kontrastów społecznych – ta prawda stała się już utartym sloganem – a także klimatycznych i krajobrazowych . . .” (Ros 8).

<sup>230</sup> “Jakież dziwny kraj, pełen paradoksów i kontrastów!” (Giełżyński 17).



## Visual Contrasts

However, the reporters do see contrasts in various spheres of Indian life. The most obvious sphere is the economic one: extreme poverty alongside extreme wealth. Janusz Gołębiowski, upon his appointment at the Polish Press Agency (PAP) Office in Delhi, visits Kolkata, Mumbai and Bangalore, covering an official visit to India of the Polish trade minister. When he returns to Delhi, he says: “It was a mega dose. In Kolkata, I saw with my own eyes shocking contrasts between poverty and wealth, which I knew until now only from descriptions in books and in the press” (Gołębiowski 5)<sup>231</sup>. The coexistence of these economic extremes is what causes particular surprise among all reporters featured in this dissertation.

Another startling aspect of Indian reality is, for the reporters, an aesthetic one. They are surprised by the “the mixing of the old and the new” (Koehler 105)<sup>232</sup>, of the clean and the dirty, of the beautiful and the ugly. Jerzy Putrament notices the contrast between the fancy residences in New Delhi, and the untended streets (91). The elegant centre of the English-designed new part of Delhi, the circular Connaught Place, is – according to the writer – cluttered with ugly stands and stalls. In the countryside, Putrament observes mud huts in the neighbourhood of outstanding temples of Khajurao, and exclaims: “This contrast between grandiose past and the present! It strikes even more than in the [Greek] Corinth, because there, too, is a village, but a clean one!” (Putrament, *Four...* 126)<sup>233</sup>. Another reporter, Wojciech Giełżyński, is startled by the difference between new express trains connecting main cities, and old buses, which make a traveller doubt whether India is a modern country (5).

There are also a few positive surprises. Jerzy Chociłowski is impressed with the precision, punctuality and maintenance of perfect order during a state parade in Delhi, contrasting with the usual chaos, lack of organisation and “carefree bustle” (33)<sup>234</sup>. Here, the contrast serves to underline the positive aspects and to prove that chaos is not an inherent characteristics of India. Indeed, when Witold Koehler reaches New Delhi, he is astonished by its orderliness. He says: “the capital of the great Land of Contrasts lacks exactly these contrasts”(49)<sup>235</sup>. He finds New Delhi similar to large European cities, and even more orderly and well-planned, full of greenery and luxurious villas. Talking about taxis, he notices that in Delhi, they are all of the same type, while in Warsaw one can see ramshackle vehicles side-by-

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<sup>231</sup> “Dawka była uderzeniowa. W Kalkucie zobaczyłem na własne oczy, znane mi dotychczas tylko z opisów w książkach i prasie, szokujące kontrasty nędzy bogactwa.” (Gołębiowski 5).

<sup>232</sup> “Z właściwą Indiom siłą kontrastów stare miesza się tu z nowym...” (Koehler 105).

<sup>233</sup> “Ten kontrast między świetną przeszłością a teraźniejszością! To silniej bije nawet niż w Koryncie, bo i tam wieś, ale czysta!” (Putrament, *Cztery...* 126).

<sup>234</sup> “beztroski rozgardiasz” (Chociłowski 33).

<sup>235</sup> “W stolicy wielkiego Kraju Kontrastów brak jest właśnie – kontrastów.” (Koehler 49).

side with modern “Pobedas” and “Warszawas”. “In this respect”, says Koehler, “our contrasts beat the Land of Contrasts”(50)<sup>236</sup>. Clearly, the lack of chaos and the lack of contrasts are appraised in a positive manner, because they are associated with European culture. New Delhi appears to Koehler as beautiful because it is similar to European cities, while Chociłowski is reassured by the precision of the parade, organised in a similar way as other military parades across the world. Koehler, perhaps conscious of the fact that perceiving “Europeanness” can be frowned upon in communist Poland, compares Delhi taxis with the Warsaw ones to show that contrasts are also a typical of his own country.

### **Contrasts in the Social Sphere**

The reporters attempt at showing that Indian contrasts are not only visual, they go much deeper and create divisions at many levels: social, economic and political. Wojciech Górnicki takes the example of the brand new city of Chandigarh, the state capital of Punjab. It was built from scratch, since the old capital, Lahore, now belongs to Pakistan. Designed by a team of international architects, among them Le Corbusier, Chandigarh gained fame for its innovative design. According to Górnicki, “. . . it could have been a truly ideal place for the birth of an actual modern community, free from caste superstitions. Instead, the opposite occurred: the city hardens the barriers between castes” (145)<sup>237</sup>. The reporter explains that despite egalitarian ideas and a logical division of the town into sectors, each of these sectors soon acquired a given reputation and a particular place in the symbolic hierarchy of the city. Even the practical idea of building one school for each sector led to the lack of interaction between children of different social backgrounds. Why did this happen, wonders Górnicki, and gives an explanation:

European architects believed the words of Indian politicians, who – themselves full of illusions and wishful thoughts – maintained that the cast system is passing away. Both groups, as a result, involuntarily contributed to the preservation of the cast system. The clash between modernity at its best with a congealed backwardness, pervading into social customs, led to almost paradoxical effects. (Górnicki 146)<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> “Na tym odcinku bijemy kontrastem na głowę Kraj Kontrastów...” (Koehler 50).

<sup>237</sup> “Czandigarh, przez swą programową nowoczesność, mógł być wymarzoną wprost miejscem dla narodzin jakiejś istotnie nowoczesnej wspólnoty, wolnej od kastowych przesądów. Stało się odwrotnie: miasto petryfikuje przegrody międzykastowe.” (Górnicki 145).

<sup>238</sup> “Europejscy architekci zawierzyli na słowo indyjskim politykom, którzy – sami pełni złudzeń i pobożnych życzeń – utrzymywali, że system kastowy obumiera. Jedni i drudzy w rezultacie przyczynili się mimowiednie do utrwalenia układów kastowych. Zderzenie najlepiej pojętej nowoczesności z zaskorupiałym, wżartym w obyczaj społeczny wstecznictwem doprowadziło do skutków wręcz paradoksalnych.” (Górnicki 146).

Clearly, modern urban planning did not take into account the resilience of caste divisions, which not only did not disappear with India's independence, but that persist in changed forms and conditions even till this day.

Apart from caste differences, the reporters describe class divisions, created – according to the travellers – by the capitalist economy. Putrament presents a rather grim picture of the capitalist development of two major Indian cities, Kolkata and Mumbai:

Calcutta is a city of traditional, 19<sup>th</sup>-century English capitalism. Bombay is a gateway to the new, American-style capitalism. What does it mean in practice? The intensification of contrasts. During our trip to Pune, we saw modern blocs of flat surrounded by slums. Both American capitalism, as well as the monopolistic state capitalism *à la Tata* increase and exacerbate the immeasurable contradictions of the Indian society. (Putrament, *On the Road...* 153)<sup>239</sup>

The consequence of such economic policies, according to Putrament, is that large masses of people face unemployment and poverty, while only selected ones can be workers (153). The country thus remains in the category of “developing states”, even though in some disciplines, it rivals Western countries. Gołębiowski recalls his astonishment when he hears of atomic reactors, supersonic jets and modern diesel locomotives. “In the course of only few years, this country turned from importer to producer and exporter of train equipment, diesel engines and range of other machines. And in spite of that, it is a backward and poor country” (171)<sup>240</sup>, says the reporter. He adds that poverty, deepened over several centuries, cannot be easily eliminated. “It springs to one's eyes in the hardly-enduring villages and slums in big cities. It crawls over the ultramodern arteries, glowing with neon lamps, it creeps around luxurious hotels”(171)<sup>241</sup>. In his depiction, poverty is personified as a sneaky adversary that constantly hampers the development. It is also striking that some reporters add a temporal dimension to poverty. It is a phenomenon of the past, a relic of the colonial nineteenth century. Żukrowski, for instance, visits a hydroelectric power plant, and then sees a nearby settlement. “Just behind the twentieth century, on a stony hillside – a hut, if one can even call this windowless block this way . .

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<sup>239</sup> “Kalkuta jest miastem tradycyjnego, XIX-wiecznego kapitalizmu angielskiego, Bombaj bramą wypadową nowej, amerykańskiej odmiany kapitalizmu. Co to w praktyce oznacza? Zaostrzenie kontrastów. Widzieliśmy na wyjeździe w Punie nowoczesne bloki mieszkalne otoczone ruderami. Kapitalizm amerykański, czy monopolistyczny kapitalizm krajowy a la Tata powiększają i zaostrzają niepomierne sprzeczności społeczeństwa indyjskiego.” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 153).

<sup>240</sup> “Kraj ten przekształcił się w ciągu kilku lat z importera w producenta i eksportera sprzętu kolejowego, wysokoprężnych silników i szeregu innych maszyn. A przecież jest mimo to zacofany i biedny.” (Gołębiowski 171).

<sup>241</sup> “Bije w oczy w wegetujących wioskach i wielkomijskich slumsach. Wpełza na ultranowoczesne, lśniące neonami arterie, podchodzi pod luksusowe hotele.” (Gołębiowski 171).

.”(137)<sup>242</sup>. A plant thus represents the modernity of the new century, and the hut belongs to the old age. The two stand side-by-side, becoming – in the reporter’s eyes – a symbol of Indian contrasts.

### **Contrasts in the Minds**

Politics reflects these contrasts. Polish reporters visiting India are by and large appreciative of the country’s leaders, who faced a particularly difficult task of building a modern, democratic state, given that the country was so full of contrasts. It was an attempt to “reconcile water with fire”, “socialism with feudalism”, “enlightened intentions with the inertia of a stratified party”, “damned traditions with the postulated modernity”, as Górnicki puts it (129)<sup>243</sup>. That attempt was successful only in parts: India managed to build and maintain a democracy, but, as Gołębiowski explains, introducing Western political forms onto a system of “archaic social relations”(121) and “deeply rooted traditions”(121) did not go as smoothly as expected<sup>244</sup>. It created yet another level of contrasts: between the Western form and the local content, which sometimes proved to be contradictory. Even the philosophy and political thought of the politicians at the head of the Indian Republic was based on rather diverse elements. Gołębiowski remarks that Nehru himself admitted that his system of thought was a “mix of old Indian traditions and Western concepts” (187)<sup>245</sup>. Often, reporters find it puzzling that their Indian acquaintances, usually educated abroad, Westernised and generally perceived as proponents of modernization and secularism, time and again revert to old “superstitions”, like consulting astrologers, abstaining from certain foods, and “believing in most incredible stories and miracles” (Gołębiowski 92)<sup>246</sup>.

### **Reporters’ Reactions to Contrasts**

Even though it sounds like a cliché, the reporters realise that contrasts indeed seem to be inherent to Indian reality: cultural, economic, political and mental one. Their reactions to such a diversity are varied. Exposed to so many paradoxes, they admit that they experience a range of emotions: from helplessness to fascination. Witold Koehler states, with a certain

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<sup>242</sup> “Ale tuż za wiekiem dwudziestym, na kamienistym upłazie – chałupa, jeśli tak można nazwać bryłę bez okien. . .” (Żukrowski 137).

<sup>243</sup> “Próba pogodzenia ognia z wodą, socjalizmu z feudalizmem, świątłych zamierzeń z beziłą rozwarstwowanej partii, przeklętych tradycji z postulowaną nowoczesnością . . .” (Górnicki 129).

<sup>244</sup> “archaiczne stosunki społeczne” i “zakorzenione głęboko tradycje” (Gołębiowski 121).

<sup>245</sup> “. . . jego sposób myślenia – będący, jak sam przyznawał, mieszaniną starych indyjskich tradycji i koncepcji zachodnich . . .” (Gołębiowski 186-187).

<sup>246</sup> “wierzyć w najbardziej nieprawdopodobne historie i cuda” (Gołębiowski 92).

resignation, that an “European, bewildered by the unintelligible maze of superstitions, beliefs, fossilised customs – is soon taken over by doubt and becomes certain that no progress is possible in these conditions.” (106)<sup>247</sup>. Chociłowski adopts a more stoic – or relativist – approach, concluding that “[w]hen talking about India, one can prove everything, and disprove everything, preserving the semblance of reason. It is a land with no truth, as well as a land of uncountable truths” (11)<sup>248</sup>. Górnicki, on the contrary, would like to rebel against such extremes:

. . . when one sees with his own eyes the span of these [opposite] poles, the black bottom of poverty and the gold-and-pearl colour of luxury, contrasts inconceivable in Europe nowadays – one would want to, despite everything, call for justice; for this basic, ordinary justice . . . which presupposes that people are, and should be, equal. (136)<sup>249</sup>

Thus, for many reporters, India’s contrasts are a cause and an effect of other grave problems and should be eradicated. Unlike his colleagues, Żukrowski is fascinated with the contrasts and paradoxes of India. He finds that these contradictions are what makes India unique:

It is perhaps the only place on the globe when one can observe all ages of humanity, [existing] at the same time, side-by-side, from an iron broad-axe, fire stricken by rubbing two pieces of wood, or a nomad’s spear, to the . . . Tata Institute with active nuclear reactors and a group of world-famous scientists. Both the one with a spear in his hand, and the one holding a test-tube in an isolated vice, call themselves Indian. They can coexist one next to the other without conflict, this is what makes the incredible, everyday miracle of India. (322)<sup>250</sup>

India’s diversity, its everyday contrasts, are thus seen by Żukrowski as a strength rather than a weakness. It is, in a way, a proof that democracy works, if it allows for communities so far apart in their everyday experience of the world to live peacefully within the same state. Tradition and modernity, in Żukrowski’s mind, are not mutually exclusive. India’s success is not dependent on how advanced it is on the scale of backwardness and progress, its success

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<sup>247</sup> “Europejczyk, oszołomiony niezrozumiałą dłań gmatwaniną zabobonów, wierzeń, skostniałych obyczajów – szybko popada w zwątpienie i nabiera przekonania, że jakkolwiek postęp jest w tych warunkach w ogóle niemożliwy.” (Koehler 106-107).

<sup>248</sup> “Mówiąc o Indiach można wszystko udowodnić i wszystkiemu zaprzeczyć, zachowując zawsze pozory racji. Jest to ziemia bez prawdy, a także ziemia niezliczonych prawd . . .” (Chociłowski 11).

<sup>249</sup> “. . . kiedy się na własne oczy widzi rozpiętość biegunów, czarne dno nędzy i złotoperłowy kolor przepychu, kontrasty dziś już w Europie niepojęte – chciałoby się, mimo wszystko, wołać o sprawiedliwość; o tę najprostszą, najzwyczajszą sprawiedliwość, która . . . zakłada, że ludzie są równi i powinni być równi.” (Górnicki 136).

<sup>250</sup> “To chyba jedyne miejsce na kuli ziemskiej, gdzie można obserwować sąsiadujące ze sobą w tym samym czasie wszystkie epoki ludzkości, od kamiennego toporka, ognia krzesanego przez pocieranie dwóch kawałków drzewa, włócznie nomada, po . . . Tata Institute z czynnymi reaktorami atomowymi i garścią uczonych o światowej sławie. I ten z włócznią w rękę, i ten z probówką w izolowanym imadle jednako nazywa się Indusem. Mogą koło siebie współżyć bez gwałtu, to jest dla mnie niepojęty, powszedni cud Indii.” (Żukrowski 322).

relies on the negotiation between the old the new, and on an effective inclusion of this large diversity into one state structure.

### **Socialist Idea of Progress vs. Imperial Binary Oppositions**

Nevertheless, most of the reportages analysed here, adopt a rhetoric of progress rather typical of the socialist viewpoint. “The old” should be assessed critically, and “the new” welcomed enthusiastically. This narrative is also present in all states of the Eastern Bloc, where the tenets of previous “bourgeois” cultures are condemned: religion, social structures, free market, private property and enterprise, free thought. That is why, reporters from socialist Poland tend to organise their account from India along the same lines: critique of old customs and praise of progress, especially if that progress is based on the socialist model. The division into tradition and modernity is thus a useful tool in this ideological agenda. Certainly, their intention is to compare colonial and independent India and present the country’s progress under the new rule.

However, this grand scheme has its fallacies: by underlining these contrasts and differences, the reporters tend to follow the well-known binary logic of imperialism. Indeed, in media and political discourses, juxtaposing contrasting images or ideas is a frequent tool employed to attract audiences and readers, and to present reality in a simplified, black-and-white manner. The poor versus the rich, the good versus the bad, the beautiful versus the ugly – such contrapositions are numerous in contemporary public and media discourses. Ferdinand de Saussure called them binary oppositions, and saw them as key structures of human thinking and a fundamental part of all cultural constructs of reality. According to scholars of postcolonial studies, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, “[t]he problem with such binary systems is that they suppress ambiguous or interstitial spaces between the opposed categories” (23) and overlapping regions become impossible or taboo. The binary oppositions reflect a hierarchy, or domination, which suppresses anything that is in-between. The concept of binary oppositions is also functional in the analysis of colonial relations, because empires to a large extent relied on such binary logic. The distinctions between colonizers/colonized, white/black, civilized/primitive, advanced/backward, teacher/student are typical of the colonial discourse. They serve an ideological purpose of constructing a stronger collective community (us versus them), and they justify the *mission civilisatrice* of the Western empires in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, the spaces between these oppositions can prove to be most interesting, because these are areas, in which “ambivalence, hybridity and complexity continually disrupt the certainties of imperial logic” (Ashcroft et al. 26).

To summarise, in almost all reportages analysed here, at the centre of the narrative are themes of tradition and modernity, the old and the new, the history and the future, the backwardness and the progress. In the reporters' view, in the area that belongs to the past are: religion, caste system, poverty, and underdevelopment. What belongs to the future is industrialisation, adoption of the socialist model of development, disappearance (or reduction) of class differences, and secularism. These divisions, however, are rarely clear-cut. The following section will analyse how reporters present these issues and whether these representations contain inconsistencies or grey areas.

## **2. Hindu Religion, Spirituality and Worship**

One of the main themes appearing in Polish reporters' accounts is religion, or more specifically, its manifestations. The reporters do not explore Indian philosophy and beliefs in depth, and instead address customs and traditions related to Hinduism. In previous descriptions of India, religion is a common trope.

### **India as Land of Origins**

Indian philosophical thought and spirituality were always at the centre of interest among Europeans of different ages. Already the Ancient Greeks, trying to define the origin of their own philosophy, looked towards the East. They wondered if the thought of Hellas has roots in the "Orient", and more specifically – in India, another civilisation the existence of which the Greeks were aware of (Halbfass 4). Although no definitive proof of such influence was found, it is remarkable that Greeks were considering this possibility and were ready to accept these "alien" sources of their own culture (5). They did not know much about India, and until the era of Alexander the Great, their idea of this "far-away kingdom" was mediated through the accounts of Persians. Two Greeks in Persian service, Scylax of Caryanda and Ctesias of Knidos, were authors of first European descriptions of India. According to Wilhelm Halbfass, "[t]heir stories of bizarre creatures and "fabulous races" played their part in the European image of India up to the Middle Ages and beyond" (11). The real opportunity to learn about India and its religion came however at the time of Alexander the Great's Indian campaign in 327-325 BC, as the Greek leader was accompanied by several philosophers. The ruler himself had meetings and discussions with Indian "naked sages", or *sadhus* (Halbfass 12). Another Greek famously travelled to India as an ambassador of a Seleucid ruler to the Mauryan capital, Pataliputra (today – Patna). His name was Megasthenes, and his account, *Indika*, served

as reference to many Greek and Roman authors, among them Strabo and Pliny. He describes Indian beliefs and gods using Greek names and concepts (Halbfass 14). The idea of India as the land of origins of thought and religion would thus become more and more prominent among the Greeks, and it kept resurfacing at different times of history.

### **Exoticising Hinduism**

While in Middle Ages Europe was separated from India by the Muslim world, the connection was recovered in 16th century, after Vasco da Gama's expedition in 1498 establishing the sea route to India. Before that, India appeared in the accounts of Muslim travellers, such as Al-Beruni and Ibn-Battuta, and European ones – Venetian traders Marco Polo and Niccolò Conti, and Catholic monks from France and Italy. India was featured, too, in the fictional account of *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. According to Sam Miller, it is one of the first popular attempts to describe Indian beliefs and it presents “a shadowy, often misleading and exoticised idea of what we now call Hinduism” (114). Indeed, the idea of Hindu customs mentioned in *Travels...* is not very different from themes that occur in contemporary travel writing on India. There are “half-man and half-ox” gods, cremation of the dead, ritual suicide, worship of fire, sun, trees and snakes, idols on chariots, and so on (Miller 114). As a consequence of Vasco da Gama's journey, more and more Europeans began to travel to India, with – as the Portuguese sailor's envoy supposedly put it – “Christians and spices” in mind (Miller 132). Indeed, many missionaries were sent to India with the task of converting Indians, perceived as heathens, to Christianity. Interestingly, this effort triggered research on Hinduism and learning of Sanskrit, considered as tools of evangelisation<sup>251</sup> (Halbfass 49-50). Unfortunately, few missionaries were interested in deeper studies of Hinduism, and – according to Halbfass – dogmatism and intolerance were prevalent (53). A negative opinion on Hindus as devil worshippers would also circulate among the European public, due to travellers' descriptions of scary Hindu gods<sup>252</sup>. Many other accounts made India appear as a land of strange customs, mysterious rituals, frightening gods and exotic holy men.

### **Mythical and Mystical India**

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<sup>251</sup> Some Hindu religious texts, such as Vedanta and the Upanishads, deemed as a highpoint of Indian religious thought, were seen by Europeans a transitional stage in the evolution towards accepting the Christian faith (Halbfass 51).

<sup>252</sup> One of them was the journey of the Italian aristocrat and traveller, Ludovico di Varthema, whose description of the idol of “devil in Calicut”, and the numerous visual images resulting from it would remain for a long time in Europeans' imagination (see: Spinks 2014).



Europe kept its interest in Indian religion and philosophy throughout Enlightenment. Philosophers, themselves often critical of the Catholic church, would embrace the idea of an ancient faith which can be found in India. Voltaire, for instance, believed that India is the cradle of civilisation and the home of religion in its oldest and purest form (Halbfass 57). This idea appears again in various occultist and spiritualist movements that emerged in Europe in the following centuries, particularly in Romanticism, the prime time of “Indomania”. The Romanticist critique of utilitarianism, industrialisation and rationalism was a fertile ground for exaggerated visions of the Orient, as a mythical land unspoilt by modern civilization. According to Halbfass, “the very idea of India assumed mythical proportions; the turn towards India became the quest for the true depths of our own being, a search for the original, infant state of the human race, for the lost paradise of all religions and philosophies” (72). This outburst of fascination with India was reflected in the development of Indology as an academic discipline. It would also manifest itself in other disciplines and non-academic intellectual endeavours, such as the spiritual pursuits of the theosophists.

Not only would Western Indology claim their right to explain and represent Indian thought to the European public, but also it searched for an “essence” of the religion. For many Europeans, especially the Romanticists, this “essence” that defined Indian religions was mysticism, a particular spirituality. King observes that today, two main images about Indian religion circulate in the West: one of the “mystic East”, and the other one, of “militant fanaticism” (146-147). Both relate to the European idea of Oriental “irrationality”, but one has a more positive connotation than the other. The mystical is linked with the notion of spirituality, philosophical reflection, meditation. The image of “militant fanatics” appeals more to European fears and is related to a well-known cliché that presents Orientals as “wild”, “passionate”, “excitable” and “unpredictable”.

The Polish reporters visiting India represent various approaches to Indian religion, but the Western fascination with Indian spirituality, so frequent in that time, is almost absent. Perhaps Żukrowski is the reporter that expresses the most positive, sometimes even enthusiastic take on Hinduism. His narrative opens with a description of an Indian man, a Brahmin, that the writer considers as his “guru”. Indeed, throughout his account, Żukrowski often mentions the insight and explanations provided by the guru-friend. However, the author often realises that his friend, a modern, Westernised man, educated in Oxford, despite all his European appearances, is still “one of them” (175). Żukrowski recalls how the guru “takes off his suit, wraps himself with a dhoti, crouches on the floor, eats with his hands, plunges into

meditation – with a relief, he comes back to his ways” (175)<sup>253</sup>. There is a trace of irony in this description, but overall, the writer feels close to Indians and their way of life. According to Piotr Kuncewicz, the author of an introduction to Żukrowski’s memoir, the writer was always fascinated with spiritual mysteries and paranormal events (9). This explains why, in his non-fiction stories from India, Żukrowski confesses that his aim is to collect stories that pertain to curious or inexplicable events, so that he can get to know and understand the Indian mentality (6-9). Every chapter of his book deals with magic, superstition, peculiarity, and mystery. These inclinations, and a certain desire of immersion in the Hindu culture, make his guru convinced that the Polish writer’s destiny is somehow particularly linked to India. “You are more of an Asian, than you would like to admit”, declares the guru, “. . . why were you born in Europe, if you feel so drawn to India? After all, you feel good among us. Did you ever think that you could have lived here before?” (174)<sup>254</sup>. The writer protests, saying that he believes in only one life, but he seems rather pleased with the idea of a particular bond that ties him to India.

While Polish writers in times of socialism were clearly less inclined to mysticism of the New Age type, it was still acceptable to express a certain interest in Indian spirituality. Żukrowski was not the only one to write about this topic. A former film star, Lucyna Winnicka, also became interested in Eastern religions and philosophy. In 1970s, she started her own practice, called Academy of Life, where one could learn about meditation, self-awareness, traditional medicine etc. In 1987, she published an account from her spiritual travels around India, *Travels around a Holy Cow*. However, the trend of travel to India in search of spiritual enlightenment, described, for instance, in Gita Mehta’s *Karma Cola* (1979), would have limited impact on Poles. It was due to the fact that there were many restrictions of travel for leisure, and the costs of intercontinental plane tickets were too high for an average Pole. The hippies’ movement which developed in Poland in late 1960s would heighten the interest in meditation and other elements of Hindu spirituality, but it was a phenomenon rather limited in scale, and it faced repressions from the communist authorities. Hinduism was studied in academia by Orientalists and Indologists, but – again – it was a small circle of specialists. By and large, Poles knew very little about Hinduism. No wonder that reporters coming to India had a rather meagre idea of this religion and only learned about it there.

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<sup>253</sup> “Zrzuca smoking, owija się dhoti, siada w kucki na ziemi, je palcami, uprawia medytacje – z ulgą wraca do siebie.” (Żukrowski 175).

<sup>254</sup> “Ty też jesteś bardziej Azjata, niż chcesz się do tego przyznać... dlaczego urodziłeś się w Europie, skoro cię tak ciągnie do nas? Przecież się dobrze czujesz między nami. Czyś nie myślał, że już zdarzyło ci się tu żyć?” (Żukrowski 174).

## Hinduism as Understood by Polish Reporters

Witold Koehler suggests that Hinduism is too complex to understand. He comments on India's religions briefly, as it is not his main point of interest. His first observations pertain to food restrictions in Hinduism and other external manifestations of religious belief. Given that the questions of religion and caste are, to his mind, "particularly complicated" (Koehler 105) for a European visitor, he chooses not to delve into them.

It is a question that, during a short stay in India, can prove to be interesting – or not. The effect is anyways the same. In one way or the other, the mysteries are concealed by thousands of veils; one would have to keep taking them off just like one tears off the pages of a calendar, whereas the calendar of Hindustan's history comprises at least a few thousands of years. (Koehler 105-106)<sup>255</sup>

Koehler thus prefers to leave the exploration of Hinduism to experts, outlining quickly the main ideas of the religion to the readers. He explains that "Brahmanism"- as he calls Hinduism – has three main gods, Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva, the latter of whom is accompanied by his "blood-thirsty wife, Kali" (105). There are millions of other gods, but according to the reporter, only the priests can make sense of this complex family. Common people "care little about divine mysteries" (105), choosing to worship one god or a few gods. This view confirms the point about Hinduism being represented and described to Westerners by Brahmins (see: King, Thapar), hence its popular designation in Europe as "Brahmanism". Koehler also presents a rather Orientalist picture of Hinduism as a religion with a large array of rather scary gods who expect bloody sacrificial offerings. This in itself is an image that in the popular understanding would be associated with the "uncivilised" or the "primitive". Moreover, Koehler clarifies that "[t]he fantastic labyrinth of religions proliferated over the ages in propitious circumstances among peoples with a vivid and excitable Eastern imagination" (105)<sup>256</sup>. Therefore, Indian tradition of polytheism is – in the reporter's view – an outcome of an excessive imagination, which supposedly is an inborn trait of the Orientals. It is linked with a particular "excitability", a propensity to be moved by passions and emotions. Colonial Orientalists attributed this "excitement" to the climate zone and the stimulating effects of heat, but, as highlighted by Edward Said, it was only imagined this way in order to present the European self as cool, detached, disciplined and in control of passions – and imagination (Orientalism 162). Koehler

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<sup>255</sup> "Jest to kwestia [religie Indii], która w ciągu krótkiego pobytu w Indiach może zainteresować lub – nie. Skutek zresztą jest zupełnie ten sam. Tak czy inaczej zagadki kryją się za tysiącem zasłon; trzeba by je zdzierać jak kartki z kalendarza, kalendarz zaś historii Hindustanu obejmuje co najmniej kilka tysięcy lat." (Koehler 105-106).

<sup>256</sup> "Fantastyczny labirynt religii przez wieki rozrastał się w sprzyjających warunkach wśród ludów o bujnej i pobudliwej, wschodniej wyobraźni." (Koehler 105)

closes his remarks on Hinduism by presenting the Indian religious landscape as characterised by contradictions:

The religions of India may be fascinating with their immeasurable wealth or they may discourage at the threshold of discovering them. They do not lack in any of the human passions, starting from an almost hysterical compassion to horrible cruelty, from asceticism to laxity and from the beauty of the purest poetic thought to the prose of most primitive, animal instincts. (105)<sup>257</sup>

Once again, India is shown as a country of paradoxes, which leave the visitor puzzled and confused.

The stereotype of a “militant fanatic” is part of the modern Orientalist imagery. Jerzy Chociłowski, coming to India in mid 1970s, remarks exactly on this aspect of Hinduism. Indian religiosity, in his description, comprises of contradicting emotions and behaviours (goodness and cruelty, asceticism and laxity, lyricism and primitive instincts), but it can also be fanatic and overwhelming. Chociłowski finds Hindu extremists dangerous, because of the sheer size and impact of the religion that they claim to represent. “Hinduism is like a huge river that runs its course calmly through the Indian Motherland, but it can always overflow and drown whatever is around” (17)<sup>258</sup>, says the reporter. He gives the example of the fanatic Jana Sangh movement that – in the reporter’s words – wished for Muslims to be engulfed in the sea of Hinduism (17). Chociłowski remains in awe of Hinduism considering it to be a particularly mighty religion. Its power results not only from the large number of followers, he clarifies, but also from the immovability of its dogmas, particularly the one that assumes people are not born equal (18). However, in comparison with other reporters, Chociłowski stands out as a more detached narrator. He often adopts the position of an outside observer who tries to withhold judgement and offer historical, sociological and cultural explanations to Indian customs and beliefs. He focuses on manifestations of religiosity in everyday life and worship, instead of informing his readers about Hinduism as such.

### **Reporters – Proponents of Atheism**

Most reporters, however, cannot be placed neither in the camp of romantic admirers of Indian mysticism, nor in the camp of Europeans scared of Hindu fanaticism. Their position is

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<sup>257</sup> “Religie Indii mogą fascynować niezmiernym bogactwem lub mogą nim zniechęcać u progu ich poznania. Nie brak w nich żadnej z namiętności ludzkich, począwszy od aż historycznego miłosierdzia do potwornego okrucieństwa, od ascezy do rozwiązłości i od piękna najczystszej poezji myśli do prozy najbardziej pierwotnych, zwierzęcych instynktów.” (Koehler 105)

<sup>258</sup> “Hinduizm jest jak ogromna rzeka, która toczy spokojne swe wody przez Macierz Indyjską, ale może zawsze wezbrać i zatopić wszystko co jest naokoło.” (Chociłowski 17).

different – they are critical of any religion, as it is expected from a reporter from a communist state. As Lenin famously said, religion is the opium of the people, and “[a]theism is a natural and inseparable part of Marxism, of the theory and practice of scientific socialism” (6). The best weapon against religion was, according to Lenin, a “scientific world-outlook” (“Socialism and Religion”). Indeed, the reporters often recur to rationalist or scientific explanations of Indian culture, recommending to end the “cow worship” or to free the society of the influence of priests. Many of them do not explain the main assumptions of Hindu beliefs, focusing on their cultural manifestations instead.

Jerzy Ros focuses on documenting his journey and meeting people rather than elaborating on the main tenets of Hindu religion. In fact, it is clear that his approach to all religions is sceptical, he considers faith as a relic of the past, unnecessarily dividing humans and causing conflicts. In his account, the religiosity of his interviewees is presented in a somewhat ironic way. It is easily discernible when Ros describes the motivations of a young Hindu owner of a ship taking passengers from Bombay for a pilgrimage to Goa, where the remains of Saint Francis Xavier were put up for public display. “Trusting that Hindu gods will not blame him for organising a Christian pilgrimage and will understand that business is business, he [the young entrepreneur] believes at the same time that the Catholic saint will bless his undertaking and will help him raise his little fortune” (93)<sup>259</sup>, explains Ros. The reporter finds it rather humorous that the belief in gods of one religion does not exclude the belief in the power of a saint of another religion, especially when money matters are concerned.

Indeed, for Christians, whose faith is quite rigidly confined to a particular dogma, and transgressions from it are not welcome, this openness of Hindu religion comes as a surprise. Even today, the boundaries between Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, are sometimes fuzzy in the popular understanding and it is not uncommon to find families where these religions are mixed within one household. The Hindu Marriage Act from 1955, in force till today, applies to Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhist, and does not consider marriages between the members of these communities as interfaith relationships<sup>260</sup>. The pilgrims in Goa, described by Jerzy Ros, are also representatives of various faiths. “Protestants and believers in Hinduism, Muslims and Parsi, all compete in praising the healing powers of the saint” (92)<sup>261</sup>, notes Ros. Why?

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<sup>259</sup> “Ufny, że hinduscy bogowie nie wezmą mu za złe organizowania chrześcijańskiej pielgrzymki i zrozumieją, że *business is business*, wierzy równocześnie, że katolicki święty pobłogosławi tym poczynaniom i pomoże zaokrąglić fortunę.” (Ros 93).

<sup>260</sup> If, however, a follower of these religions would like to marry a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or a Jew, the Special Marriage Act from 1954, which provides for mixed couples, would apply.

<sup>261</sup> “Protestanci i wyznawcy hinduizmu, muzułmanie i Parsowie na wyścigi sławią uzdrawiające moce świętego.” (Ros 92)

What brought them to this Catholic church? “Curiosity, often an innate mysticism, partly desperation, partly a belief that the intercession of a white man can get more in cases when own gods did not grant favours...”(100-101)<sup>262</sup> – explains the reporter. This quotation is symptomatic of Ros’ approach to religion. He often calls religion “superstition”, perceiving it as a human weakness of some sort, which originates from the feeling curiosity, fear and desperation. While this view can still be considered as a sympathetic one, attributing to Indians a particular need for spirituality, the notion of “an innate mysticism” is a typically Orientalist, patronising statement, reminding of an old Western cliché. At the same time, Ros often condemns the colonial influence which instilled a belief among Indians that white Westerners are superior to them – a belief manifested in the pilgrims’ conviction that a white saint’s prayers will be more effective than theirs.

In other moments of Jerzy Ros’ account, strong religious beliefs are judged by the reporter as “conservative” (308), “reactionary”(176) or even “fanatic”(176)<sup>263</sup>. The reporter seems to suggest that religion is an element of the past, and that it is part of the feudal, colonial, and caste-based systems of oppression. It is noticeable when, while describing the birth of Buddhism in India, Ros presents Buddha almost as a socialist messiah who wanted to bring justice to the poor people exploited by the upper caste (157). However, after Buddha’s death, the mighty priests eradicated Buddhism from India, and “the word of the reformer, which was to destroy the unjust [social] order . . . was placed as a pillar supporting the ceiling of an old temple”(158)<sup>264</sup>. “Not the first time, not the last”, concludes Ros, referring to all reformists movements crushed by the power of a clergy (158)<sup>265</sup>. As a self-proclaimed communist, Ros is obviously critical of the Catholic church. Nevertheless, he defies the Western belief that religion is completely banned in a communist state. When travelling to India on a Polish ship, “Batory”, he sneers at foreign passengers’ surprise that there is a chapel and a mass takes place there every day. Ros is convinced that the accusations of lack of religious freedom in communist Poland are the outcome of the Western propaganda. Thus, it appears that Ros, while believing in the right to one’s religious convictions, hopes that modernisation and progress will lead to secularisation, and religion – “the opium of the people” – will become obsolete.

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<sup>262</sup> “Ciekawość, częściowo wrodzony mistycyzm, trochę wiara, że wstawiennictwo białego świętego wskórać może więcej w sprawach, w których nie udało się uzyskać przychylności własnych bogów . . .” (Ros 100-101).

<sup>263</sup> “konserwatywne” (Ros 308); “reakcyjne” (Ros 176); “fanatyczne” (Ros 176).

<sup>264</sup> “. . . słowo reformatora, które miało zburzyć krzywdzący ład, oplecione girlandami legendy wstawiono jako jeden z filarów podtrzymujących strop starej świątyni” (Ros 258).

<sup>265</sup> “Nie po raz pierwszy i nie po raz ostatni...” (Ros 258).

Wojciech Giełżyński shares a similar view: he is often ironic and critical of Hinduism, which he considers as a tradition that will slowly fade away. “India’s religiosity is striking at every step”, observes the reporter, and adds: “one does not need to go to Benares to see the fanaticism of faith”(Giełżyński 55)<sup>266</sup>. He points out the inconsistencies in Hindu beliefs: respect for animals, but exploitation of people (54), huge expenditure on religious festivals, while there lacks money for allowances for the poorest (56). He also finds esteem of the of the “half-naked old men” incomprehensible (55)<sup>267</sup>. Giełżyński adopts a position of a rational moderniser, who does not understand why seemingly logical and cost-effective solutions are not adopted. While admonishing the readers to always keep Indian cultural specifics in mind, he himself adopts a patronising attitude towards Indians. He believes that reforms, if applied properly, are bound to bring positive results, and India will become modern and secular. This process, he thinks, is already under way:

Still, slowly, imperceptibly, step by step, - beliefs wane, religious ardour dies away. The cinema is more attractive than the rituals at the temples. The work at the factories demands at least an elementary discipline, it does not allow to participate in every religious ritual and ceremony. Through schools, and especially through universities, flow the currents of modernity, still modest, but already discernible. (56-57)<sup>268</sup>

However, a few decades after Giełżyński wrote these words, it appears that Indians remained as religious as they were before. The Indian national census conducted in 2011 reveals that in spite of radical changes in demographics, Hinduism is still the major religion in India, with Hindus constituting almost 80% of population (compared to 84% in 1951), and the number of respondents claiming to have no religion does not even amount to 1% of the population (in 1951, it was 0,4%). Other religions also retained their share over these six decades<sup>269</sup>. Clearly, Indian society has not become secular, as some of the reporters expected. Given that riots between religious communities are still not uncommon, it seems that large parts of the Indian population still feel very strongly about their beliefs.

Nevertheless, except of these communal tensions, strong religiosity did not lead to any great catastrophe, as Wiesław Górnicki feared. In his reportage, he asks in a dramatic tone:

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<sup>266</sup> “Religijność Indii rzuca się w oczy na każdym kroku. Niekoniecznie trzeba jeździć do Benares, by zobaczyć fanatyzm wiary.” (Giełżyński 55).

<sup>267</sup> Giełżyński calls them in Polish: “półnaczy starcy” (55).

<sup>268</sup> “A jednak powoli, niepostrzeżenie, krok za krokiem, - wierzenia słabną, religijny zapal przygasa. Kino jest atrakcyjniejsze niż obrzędy w świątyniach. Praca w fabrykach wymaga choćby elementarnej dyscypliny, nie pozwala na uczestniczenie we wszystkich obrzędach i ceremoniach religijnych. Przez szkoły, a zwłaszcza uniwersytety, idą prądy współczesności – jeszcze nieśmiałe, lecz już dostrzegalne.” (Giełżyński 56-57).

<sup>269</sup> The percentage data are based on statistics available at the Indian Census site: <http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/C-01.html> (last access 12.10.2015).

Will the people, put to a narcotic sleep with satiagraha and centuries of inaction, ever assault the gold and the land of the nawabs, break the yoke of caste, and start exerting their rights? Will the sages deliberating on ahimsa ever be able to notice the rags, the hunger, the illnesses, and draw practical conclusions from them? If they will not, they will bring over India a storm, that has never been seen on this continent; will four thousand years of philosophy matter then? (197)<sup>270</sup>

Thus, according to Giełżyński, no religion can alleviate the suffering of the most unprivileged in the Indian society, other means will have to be employed. Hinduism is, in his eyes, partly responsible for India's problems: it inculcates a feeling of powerlessness and passivity among its believers. Incidentally, these traits are also typical in the depiction of Orientals.

Wiesław Górnicki, himself a staunch atheist, remarks on the evils of religion at many moments of his account. Coming from a predominantly Catholic Poland, he is particularly vociferous when writing about Christian religion in India. Inspired by the visit to the local Catholic church, he shapes his reportage from Trivandrum on the basis on the everyday prayer, "Our Father". Thus, every paragraph starts with a phrase from the *Pater Noster* (in Latin) and serves as an introduction to a critique of Catholicism. For instance, Górnicki says: "*Pater noster qui es in coelis...* Our father? But whose father, the father of the plantators?" (198)<sup>271</sup>. He claims that Vatican owns more than 30% of the spices plantations, and the rest belongs to European and Indian landowners (referred to as "*kulaks*"). Since these forces are allied in the process of exploitation of poor peasants, Górnicki declares: "Here, a sign of equality has been put between Catholicism, plantation owners and European missionaries" (198)<sup>272</sup>. The reporter moves on to explain the political situation in Kerala, ending with the final line of the prayer:

*...sed libera nos a malo...* From the evil. From the missionaries, carrying the Bible in one hand, and in the other – a costs-benefits analysis. From the church of the plantators. From the alliance of black *sotnia* of the four different religions. From all the situations that enable the Catholic Church to have a political activity. *Amen.* (Górnicki 204)<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> "Czy lud, uśpiony narkozą satiagrahy i stuleciami bierności, targnie się kiedyś na złoto i ziemię nawabów, zerwie kajdany kast, zacznie dochodzić swoich praw? Czy rozstrząsający ahimsę mędrcy potrafią dostrzec łąchmany, głód, choroby i wyciągną z tego praktyczne wnioski? Jeżeli tego nie uczynią, sprowadzą na Indie burzę, jakiej na tym kontynencie jeszcze nie widziano; czy wtedy będą się liczyć cztery tysiąclecia filozofii?" (Górnicki 197).

<sup>271</sup> "*Pater noster qui es in coelis...* Ojczy nasz? To znaczy czyj, plantatorów?" (Górnicki 198).

<sup>272</sup> "Pomiędzy katolicyzmem, posiadaczami plantacji i europejskimi misjonarzami postawiono tu znak równości" (Górnicki 198).

<sup>273</sup> "*...sed libera nos a malo...* Ode złego. Od misjonarzy, niosących w jednej ręce ewangelię, a w drugiej – rachunek strat i zysków. Od kościoła plantatorów. Od przymierza czarnej sotni z czterech różnych religii. Od wszelkich sytuacji które umożliwią kościołowi katolickiemu działalność polityczną. *Amen*" (Górnicki 204).



Górnicki's aim is to demonstrate how false are the words of the prayer when confronted with the actual condition of the local population. The particular attention that he awards to the bad deeds of Catholic church is not coincidental. While the situation of Christians in India might be an interesting topic for a reporter, it usually is not the most prominent issue for a visitor to the Subcontinent. Thus, it seems that Górnicki is particularly intent on ridiculing the Catholic Church because by doing that, he targets his Polish readers and fulfils an ideological goal. Indeed, ideology might play a role in this negative attitude towards religions of India among many reporters of the socialist period. Just like the communist state oppresses or marginalises Churches of various religions, an ideologically consistent view of a communist visitor to India would also require criticism, or at least distance from religion.

### 3. Hindu Customs

Polish reporters visiting India would more or less consciously renounce from providing a more in-depth overview of Hinduism to their readers, but they focus on many aspects of Indian culture and everyday life that are inevitably linked to religion. In the following section, they are considered one by one, as separate case-studies. The first one pertains to the idea of cow worship, the second – to the figure of holy men, or *sadhus*, and third – to religious sites and pilgrimages.

#### Case Study 1. “Sacred Cows”

##### The “Holy Cow” Stereotype

Practically all reporters address the issue of the “Holy Cow” as it is probably the strongest and the longest-lasting stereotype of India. Chociłowski comments on it in the following way:

In the eyes of an outside observer, Indians' love for cows is charged with such a load of fanaticism and irrational obsession, that it often serves as an illustration of the saying that there no such depth of superstition that India wouldn't plunge into with pleasure, up till its nose. It is true that nothing distinguishes India from the rest of the world more than cow worship and it is often the only thing that people know about India; all the more, it is a pity that it is hastily placed among the oddities of Hinduism. (54)<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> “W oczach postronnego obserwatora miłość Indusów do krów mieści na ogół taki ładunek fanatyzmu i irracjonalnej obsesji, że chętnie ilustruje się nim powiedzeni, iż nie ma takiej głębiny przesądu, w której Indie nie zanurzyłyby się z przyjemnością aż po dziurki w nosie. To prawda, że nic tak nie odróżnia Indii od reszty świata, jak właśnie kult krowy i często jest to w ogóle jedyna rzecz, jaką ludzie wiedzą o Indiach, tym większa zatem szkoda, że wrzucana pochopnie pomiędzy dziwactwa hinduizmu” (Chociłowski 54-55).

In this quote, the well-known stereotypes of Orientals return: fanaticism, irrationality and superstition. Chociłowski explains the idea of cow worship, trying to show the complex status of cows in Indian society, but he realises that for outsiders, the very fact of respecting the cow is a proof of India's "irrational obsession".

Indeed, the special status of cows has been noticed by many foreigners visiting India. A seventeenth-century French merchant, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, apparently determined to impress his readers, described how disgusted he was by the use of cow urine to cure the sick, or by the (unconfirmed) custom of widows eating the "droppings" of cows (Miller 187-188). More contemporary accounts focus on how unusual it is to see cows roaming around on the street, entering temples and other buildings, and stealing food from markets (from Katherine Mayo, through Antonio Tabucchi, to Sarah Macdonald). Polish reporters, too, describe how cows are treated in India, trying to offer explanations of cows' religious and cultural importance. In a truly socialist spirit of secular rationalism, they demonstrate how many problems are caused by cow worship in India, and voice recommendations how the "cow issue" should be solved. Jerzy Ros illustrates his account with a very telling photograph of a car that stops in the middle of the street, because a cow stands in its way. The subtitle says: "Technology and Superstition", and it is symbolic of the author's understanding of India as a place where modernity and tradition exist side-by-side. The fact that cows are roaming free around India's towns and villages is for all authors a sign of a tradition that impedes the advent of modernity. The presence of cows on the streets speaks not only of the lack of development, but of the "backward" mentality of Indians (Ros 178).

The reporters have diverse attitudes towards the concept of cow worship, but all of them agree that it is a particularly Indian problem and as such deserves explanation. That is why, in almost all reportages analysed in this dissertation, the veneration of cows is presented as a multi-faceted phenomenon.

### **The Cow as a Part of Indian History**

Ros justifies the special status of the cow by historical conditions. In his vision of India's past, for the Ancient Aryans a cow was a precious animal as a source of milk, butter, leather, fertilizer for heating, and workforce (177). However, the economic rationale disappeared, says Ros, and what remains is "an orthodox religious dogma" (177)<sup>275</sup>. Chociłowski, on the other hand, explains cow worship by the fact that the cattle that the Aryans

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<sup>275</sup> "ortodoksyjny dogmat religijny" (Ros 177).

brought with them [from Central Asia] was delicate and not adapted to India's climate. That is why, the Aryans stopped killing cows and eating their meat, and started to protect cows from extinction (55). "By protecting the cattle, Aryans protected themselves, and all the ideology of sanctity was simply concocted by priests who sanction an economic and political need in a religious way", adds the reporter (55)<sup>276</sup>. He remarks that even the Muslim invaders respected Hindu reverence of cows (54). Nevertheless, from the time of Muslim conquests, Hindu perception of cows began to change:

Muslim invasion of India, and then the British occupation, filled the cult of the cow with a new – nationalist – meaning. It expressed as much love for these useful animals, as hate towards the conquerors. It was a turning point in the story of this worship, that at first had a rational and logical intention, and – although it kept its economic rationale. . . – it became dangerously degenerated and acquired an unpleasant whiff of fanaticism."(56)<sup>277</sup>

As a result of this "pious adoration" (Ros 177), the cows have reproduced so fast that now [in 1957] India's cows account to almost one fourth of all world cattle (Ros 178). Giełżyński, visiting India in 1974, claims that around two hundred million stray cows roam around the country, and "they are in . . . big cities, even in the centre, in medium and small towns, in villages, on fields and on roads – everywhere!"(15)<sup>278</sup>.

If one was to follow the reporters' train of thought, it would seem that cows were first protected because they were useful and valuable, then they acquired a religious protection, and as a result of these two processes, they became too numerous in times contemporary to the reporters. However, according to historical research, it was not necessarily so. D. N. Jha explains that in the Aryan era, cows were treated just like any other cattle: "the Vedas mention about 250 animals out of which at least 50 were deemed fit for sacrifice, by implication for divine as well as human consumption" (139). Later Brahmanical texts, says Jha, confirm that beef was widely eaten and cows were also killed for sacrifice and other rituals, in particular in the funerary ones (140). The ascent of Buddhism and Jainism contributed to a change in this pattern, and Hindus gradually started to adopt the idea of *ahimsa* – non-violence – towards animals. Only in the middle of the first millennium A.D., beef eating became discouraged

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<sup>276</sup> "Chroniąc bydło, Ariowie chronili więc siebie, cała zaś ideologia świętości została po prostu dorobiona przez kapłanów, którzy potrzebie gospodarczej i politycznej dali sankcję religijną" (Chociłowski 55).

<sup>277</sup> "Inwazja muzułmańska na Indie, a następnie okupacja brytyjska wypełniły kult krowy zupełnie nową – nacjonalistyczną – treścią. Było w nim wówczas tyleż miłości do pożytecznych zwierząt, co nienawiści do najeźdźców. To był bodaj punkt zwrotny w dziejach kultu, którego pierwotna intencja była racjonalna i logiczna, a który – choć zachował swe ekonomiczne uzasadnienie . . . – niebezpiecznie się przecież wykoślawił, nabrał niemiłego zapaszku fanatyzmu" (Chociłowski 56).

<sup>278</sup> "są w . . . wielkich miastach, nawet w centrum, w miastach średnich i małych miasteczkach, we wsiach, na polach i drogach – wszędzie!" (Giełżyński 15).

among upper casts. According to Wendy Doniger, refraining from eating beef became a matter of status, and that prohibition was strengthened by a number of sanctions (150). Even some Mughal rulers, although Muslim, abstained from eating beef. Emperor Jehangir proclaimed that no animal should be killed and no meat should be eaten on certain days (Doniger 543). In times of the British rule, the special status of cows became a problematic issue, when Indian soldiers discovered that bullets for their guns were covered with cow and pig fat. The cartridges were to be open with their mouth, which meant that they would have to ingest the fat – an idea abhorrent to both Hindu and Muslim military men. It was one of the reasons that sparked a full-fledged rebellion, which took place in 1857. Gradually, more and more Hindus would perceive cow protection and vegetarianism as key elements of their identity. One of them was Dayanand Sarasvati, who founded in 1875 a reformist movement called Arya Samaj. Protecting cows was central to the Samaj supporters: they established societies to lobby against slaughter and they decried any act of cow killing. In fact, according to Doniger, “cow slaughter was specifically used [by Arya Samaj] to justify violence against Pariahs and Muslims” (623) and it is even today a frequent cause of communal riots<sup>279</sup>. The idea of non-violence that includes vegetarianism was reinforced by the time India regained independence thanks to Mahatma Gandhi, who emphasised the importance of a cow as a Mother, and in particular, the Mother of the Nation. A cow remains a particularly important animal for Hindus, who are still in large numbers vegetarian. Nevertheless, accepting nationalists’ claim that meat-eating came to India with the Muslim invaders (mentioned by Doniger, 657) would be a rewriting of history.

### **The Cow as a Mother**

Chociłowski titles one of his chapters “The Cow is our Mother”, which, he says, is a slogan often repeated by Hindus (53). Indeed, even today, the cow is sometimes referred to as Gaumata, the cow-mother. It is one of the most symbolic animals in Hinduism, associated with the caste of Brahmins (Doniger 40). A cow is also linked with the female gender and its stereotypically-defined traits: gentleness, maternal care, purity, and docility. The fact of giving milk is associated with a motherly act of feeding and selfless giving. The cow can feed people without having to die – that is why, it became an iconic image of nonviolence. What is more, the image of a cow that nourishes, a cow full of bounty, is, as Doniger observes, a “Hindu parallel to the Roman cornucopia” (112). However, Westerners do not fully understand the status of cows in India and use their own categories of “holiness” or “saintliness” to describe

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<sup>279</sup> Recently (in September 2015), a Muslim man was killed by a mob in an Uttar Pradesh village over allegations that he has eaten beef. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/03/inside-bishari-indian-village-where-mob-killed-man-for-eating-beef>

how Hindus treat the animal. Moreover, many European languages use the idiom “sacred cow” in a rather disparaging way. According to Oxford Dictionary, it is “an idea, custom, or institution held to be above criticism”, while Merriam Webster indicates that it is used to describe “one that is often unreasonably immune from criticism or opposition”. In the Polish language, too, this idiom is used in the same way. However, calling someone “a stupid cow” is intended as a minor expletive, mostly towards women. In this manner, the language itself offers two, rather conflicting images of a cow – one, denoting a special privilege, and the other associating cows with lack of intelligence and a certain slowness. Thus, it is not surprising that Polish reporters are so interested in cows’ status – and their alleged “cult” in India. Koehler asks an Indian colleague, professor in zoology, about the status of cows, and hears the following answer:

. . . setting apart all the religious prescriptions and age-old traditions, the cow is for us a symbol of maternity, calm, gentleness, profit. Our bards have been admiring her beauty for centuries. Do not be surprised – . . . in our fauna, there are many beautiful, colourful, shapely beings. It is not only about the common harmony of shapes and colours; look into her big, pure, calm eyes... (Koehler 68)<sup>280</sup>

It seems as if Koehler chose to quote his interlocutor in order to present the Hindu viewpoint in a more authentic manner. Other reporters heard of similar metaphors. Giełżyński underlines that every cow is holy for Hindus, because “it is a symbol of maternity, prosperity, happiness, and the embodiment of the highest ideal: life” (15)<sup>281</sup>. Thus killing a cow would be considered as a matricide (Giełżyński 15). He recalls the words of Mahatma Gandhi, who said that if the worship of cows dies, the whole culture will die.

Chociłowski adds that Gandhi tenderly called the cow a “poem of the heart” (53)<sup>282</sup>. Giełżyński points out to his readers that Gandhi was not a fanatic and realised that it is important to modernise the society while keeping some traditions alive (16). In this explanation, the reporter unveils his own view: a “fanatical”, or extreme idea that cows should be worshipped can only be explained in rational terms by political strategy. He suggests that since Gandhi was a respected figure, his respect for cows would only be understandable if it was part of a political bargain: keep the “holiness” of cows, but give up on child marriage and

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<sup>280</sup> “. . . pominąwszy przepisy religijne i wiekowe tradycje, krowa jest dla nas symbolem macierzyństwa, spokoju, łagodności, pożytku. Nasi pieśniarze p d stuleci opiewają jej piękno. – Nie dziwcie się – . . . w naszej faunie jest wiele pięknych, barwnych, kształtnych istot. Nie chodzi o pospolitą harmonię kształtów i barw; popatrzcie w jej wielkie, czyste, spokojne oczy...” (Koehler 68).

<sup>281</sup> “. . . jest symbolem macierzyństwa, pomyślności, szczęścia, uosobieniem najwyższego ideału: życia” (Giełżyński 15).

<sup>282</sup> “poemat serca” (Chociłowski 53).

discrimination of the lower casts. Most reporters share a similar view. Although they try to explain what cows mean to Hindus, the cow “worship” remains for them, at best, one of India’s “oddities”, and at worst, a symptom of “fanaticism”.

### **The Cow as a Part of Landscape**

Most reporters perceive the presence of cows as an unusual part of the urban landscape. They notice how they roam around the streets, lie down in parks, sometimes stop the traffic (Kohler 67, Ros 175, 177, 271, Żukrowski 17, Putrament 1 92, Górnicki 155). Perhaps the only author with a positive attitude towards cows is Witold Koehler. As a forester and environmentalist, he is appreciative of Indian cows: “We have to admit that they look neat and pleasant. Their light hair of a milky coffee colour gets a brown velvety shade on their hump and their muzzle. The long ears dangle downwards, the clear eyes look at the world gently and peacefully”(67)<sup>283</sup>. The same colour that Koehler likens to milky coffee, Putrament calls the colour of mud (*Cztery...* 92). Górnicki is even more negative in his description of cows, that he sees as “skinny, dull, covered with an eternal dirt; their udders, sallow like a leprosy-infested skin, hang empty and dry” (155)<sup>284</sup>. Cows are not only off-putting by how they look, but also by how they behave. Górnicki recalls a cow walking through a bazaar, jostling through the crowd, butting its head towards the children, or stealing fruit or bread (226). Koehler describes a similar situation: a cow stops at a stall with fruits, and – to the travellers surprise, “the seller that just a moment earlier was ardently haggling with customers, would now stare, motionless, at the “saint” that turned her attention to his modest possessions” (67)<sup>285</sup>. Nevertheless, upon arrival to the town of Dehradun, Koehler was surprised to see that the reaction of sellers was different. “The dark-skinned vendor would concentrate for a moment on following the cow, and then he took a large stick and with no qualms started to beat the animal on its sides. The holy cow took it just like a normal cow – it ran away” (68)<sup>286</sup>. The reporter notices that all the other people were indifferent, nobody stopped “the blasphemous hand”, nobody defended the “affronted holiness” (68), and the foreigner visitors seemed to be the only ones perturbed by the scene. To convey this contrast between “holiness” and mundane matters of the sellers, he

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<sup>283</sup> “Trzeba przyznać, że wyglądają schludnie i sympatycznie. Jasna sierść o barwie mlecznej kawy jest na garbie i pysku brunatnawo aksamitnie przyciemniona. Długie uszy zwisają ku dołowi, wyraziste oczy spoglądają na świat z łagodnym spokojem” (Koehler 67).

<sup>284</sup> “Krowy są chude, tępe, porośle odwiecznym brudem; ich wymiona, ziemiste jak plama trądu, zwisają puste i wysuszone” (Górnicki 155).

<sup>285</sup> “Sprzedawca, który przed chwilą targował się namiętnie, patrzy teraz bez drgnienia, jak ‘święta’ zaszczyca uwagą jego skromny dobytek” (Koehler 67).

<sup>286</sup> “Ciemnolicy sprzedawca przez chwilę śledził ją w skupieniu, po czym chwycił okazały kij i bez ceremonii jął nim bębnić po bokach zwierzęcia. Święta przyjęła to tak jak zwyczajna krowa – po prostu dała drapaką” (Koehler 68).

personifies the cow and presents it – or her (almost, Her Holiness) – as a queen that strides across the market, surveying her possessions. That is why, the reporter is surprised when the sellers unceremoniously chase the animal away.

Indeed, the “sanctity” of a cow is a concept that remains vastly misunderstood by foreigners. Applying Christian notions of “sanctity”, they think a cow is perceived almost as a deity, as a personified figure of worship. Instead, a cow is “holy” only in the sense that it is protected, which means that it is not killed and its meat is generally not eaten. The fact that one can see cows roaming freely on the streets is linked with a general acceptance of animal presence in all spaces, urban and rural.

### **The Cow as a Problem**

The Polish reporters consider the special status of the cow primarily as a problem for India. Górnicki argues that the number of cows in India is excessively big, given that they do not give much profit:

. . . [they] do not give any milk or meat, they gulp down a lot of fodder, they destroy the meagre plant life in the north and the plantations in the south, they block the movement at city crossroads, they attack passers-by . . . their only rationale is that they serve in field labour . . . and they provide fuel from their dried dung. It is too little [profit] for a number of two hundred million animals. (155)<sup>287</sup>

Górnicki thus perceives cows as useless. Not only do they fail to contribute to the economy, but, as Ros asserts, they become a “burning economic problem” (178)<sup>288</sup>. Giełżyński tells the readers about the fact that there are regions in India where most innovative farming solutions are used and their crops beat all records. But even there, the cows enter the fields and nobody dares to chase them away (15). Thus, the reporter considers cows as a hindrance to modern farming and in general, India’s development, and calls them a “plague” of India (15). Chociłowski concurs, and underlines that even Indians agree on that matter. He presents the problem “as seen through their eyes” (57):

Through towns and villages of India rove millions of hungry, sick, terribly haggard cows that nobody feeds, and that survive on stealing and ruining fields, shops and stalls. The sight of a slow ordeal of a cow dying of hunger and emaciation is commonplace. Of course, nobody will consider the possibility of ending the animal’s suffering. Similarly – if, for instance, a cow dies

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<sup>287</sup> “Reszta nie daje mleka ani mięsa, zżera paszę, niszczy skąpą szatę roślinną na północy i zasiewy na południu, tamuje ruch na miejskich skrzyżowaniach, napastuje przechodniów. . . . Jedyłą racją ich bytu jest to, że służą jako siła pociągowa . . . i dostarczają opału w postaci wysuszonego łajna. Nieco za mało, jak na ponad dwieście milionów sztuk” (Górnicki 155).

<sup>288</sup>Ros refers it to as “palący problem gospodarczy” (178).

on the street hit by a bus or a tram – one can be sure that the crowd would not let a veterinary to give it a merciful injection. It would be against the “karma” . . . (57)<sup>289</sup>

Chociłowski presents these words as an Indian rationalist’s view, which serves him to justify his point. He also demonstrates a certain moral superiority: in “rational” terms, it would be expected to end the cow’s agony and help the animal die, but the “irrational” belief in karma prevents people from such action, he suggests. But cows dying on the street is not the only problem – the sick cows endanger those who are bred. The herds of stray cows that live near rivers in Uttar Pradesh or Punjab make it impossible to farm these areas (59). That is why, exclaims Chociłowski, backing his point by the opinion of “economists”, keeping huge herds of cattle that is sick, inefficient and barren is an “economic madness” (59). Saying that cows increase the poverty of India is a euphemism, concludes Chociłowski, “cows devour India!” (59)<sup>290</sup>.

Marvin Harris, in a well-known article on “Cultural Ecology of India’s Sacred Cattle”, presents a different stance. Unlike those who claim that in India spirit triumphs over the flesh, and assert that the Hindu would rather starve than eat cow meat, Harris views the relationship between humans and cattle as symbiotic rather than competitive (52). Cows are useful to humans particularly because they give milk, they produce bullocks that can be used in the field, and their dung is a particularly efficient fuel for domestic use (54). What is more, other religions or castes can use the meat of the dead cow for eating and skin for leather, says Harris (54). As for breeding cattle, the situation become more complicated, as the farmers usually have to choose which animals are more valuable, and should be given more fodder, and which are not – the cow usually belongs to the second category, as it does not work in the field. Its value depends on whether it can give birth to a calf, or at least provide milk. If it does not, it constitutes an additional burden on the farmer, who relies mostly on the bullocks. That is why, even though cows are not killed, they are sometimes left to die out of neglect (57). Nevertheless, the vast majority of cows do have an owner and are useful to humans, while stray cattle constitutes a small percentage of the total. Thus, Harris presents a vision that contradicts the popular belief that cows are a resource that is mismanaged due to a religious belief. On the

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<sup>289</sup> “Spróbujmy spojrzeć na problem ich oczami. Oto po miastach i wsiach Indii włączą się miliony głodnych, chorych, przerażająco wynędzniałych krów przez nikogo nie karmionych, a utrzymujących się z kradzieży i ograbiania pól, kramów i straganów. Powszechnym obrazkiem jest powolna męka krowy zdychającej z głodu i wycieńczenia. Oczywiście nikt nie pomyśli o tym, że można by skrócić cierpienia zwierzęcia. Tak samo – jeśli np. Na jezdni zdycha krowa potrącona przez autobus lub tramwaj – można mieć pewność, że tłum nie pozwoli wezwanemu weterynarzowi na zrobienie zastrzyku miłosierdzia. Byłoby to wbrew ‘karmie’ . . .” (Chociłowski 57).

<sup>290</sup> “Krowy pożerają Indie!” (Chociłowski 59).



contrary, humans and cows form an eco-system, in which a cow is a useful animal. It needs very little care and at the same time, it provides cheap nourishment – milk – and ecological fuel.

### **The Cow as a Political Issue**

By and large, the reporters come to a conclusion that cows are not only an economic, but also a political issue in India. Upon seeing a cow blocking the tram tracks, Ros remarks that chasing the animal away might be dangerous. Why? Even a small act of violence against the cow, like pushing or kicking, can have dire consequences if done in presence of a Hindu orthodox – especially if the conductor is Muslim (Ros 177). Surely, violence against all animals is a condemnable act in general, but cows constitute a particularly sensitive case. Given the many instances of Hindu-Muslim conflicts, even one incident can become a spark to ignite a full-fledged riot. Therefore, any political initiative concerning Indian cows causes heated political debate. Giełżyński tells the readers how planned introduction of “progressive, just, reasonable” (16)<sup>291</sup> reforms allowing some cattle slaughter, caused millions of Hindus to unite against the government and the “progressive” parties (16). As a result, “the most reactionary parties were strengthened”, and “good intentions yielded bad results” (Giełżyński 16)<sup>292</sup>.

Failure to introduce the reforms was the least harmful effect. The radicalising right-wing parties started lobbying for a complete ban on cow slaughter in India and organised rallies to support their cause; both Putrament and Kohler mention these events in their accounts (Kohler 68, Putrament *Na drogach...* 45). One of the most violent protests against cow-slaughter took place in 1966, when a huge crowd led by a Jana Sangh MP and numerous *sadhus* surrounded the Parliament. The police used tear gas and rubber bullets to push away the angry mob, but the unrest continued: the protesters destroyed cars and buses, and even set fire to the house of the Congress president. Historian Ramachandra Guha quotes a newspaper that called this march of holy men and their supporters, an “orgy of vandalism and hooliganism” (Loc 8638). In Putrament’s words, “in defence of cow’s blood, a lot of human blood was spilled: mutilated policemen, participants of this pogrom killed by the military” (*Na drogach...* 45-46)<sup>293</sup>. The issue of cow protection in India remains a political one. The current ruling party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in the “Cultural Heritage” section of its 2014 manifesto mentions cow protection and promotion (41), and Prime Minister Narendra Modi was often critical on

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<sup>291</sup> “prawa postępowe, słuszne, rozsądne” (Giełżyński 16).

<sup>292</sup> “[owe poczynania] ogromnie wzmocniły najbardziej wsteczne ugrupowania polityczne. Dobre intencje dały więc fatalne rezultaty” (Giełżyński 17).

<sup>293</sup> “Broniąc krwi krowiej przelano wiele ludzkiej: rozszarpani policjanci, zabici przez wojsko uczestnicy pogromu” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 45-46).

growing beef exports. The issue of cow protection, that in itself seems a rather fair claim, becomes however strongly politicised and, as such, is put forward by the extreme right-wing Hindutva movement.

Apart from the right-wing lobby for ban on cow-slaughter, there is another way that cows are present in Indian politics. Wojciech Giełżyński notes that one reason behind the Indian National Congress party's multiple victories is the fact that the symbol they used at the time was a cow with a calf. According to the reporter, many illiterate people who do not follow politics and do not know party programmes cast their vote where there is an image of a cow (Giełżyński 116). Given that he considers the Congress as a leftist party, he concludes: "in this way, a conservative religion gives support to progressive politics" (117)<sup>294</sup>. Indeed, the choice of electoral symbols is still particularly important for political parties, who compete for the right to use certain images. These images are predefined by the Electoral Commission, hence the choice is limited. In times of Nehru, Congress used the symbol of two bulls with a yoke, to underline its closeness to the peasants, then, in the course of conflicts and secessions caused by Indira Gandhi, it changed its symbol to a cow with a calf, and later, to the open hand (which is its symbol till now). Nowadays, it is Congress' opponent, the nationalist BJP party, that uses the issue of cow protection for their political goals.

### **Cow Protection as Ahimsa**

Since cows cause such trouble to people, agriculture, economy or even politics, why are they still protected in India, ask the reporters? What should be the solution? Reporters mention various ideas that Indian authorities put forward: from feeding contraceptives to cows to placing them in special pastures, where they can die in peace (Górnicki 155, 156; Putrament 2 192). Chociłowski even visited a cattle hostel, financed by devout Hindu businessmen who wanted to ensure that cows are given best condition possible (58). Still, the reporters assert, the easiest way to solve the cow issue would be to kill the cows and convince Indian villagers to eat beef (Chociłowski 60, Giełżyński 16). They realise, however, how difficult it would be to run such an "Operation Slaughterhouse", as Chociłowski jokingly phrases it (60)<sup>295</sup>. A contemporary reader might find the authors' lightness of tone shocking, especially because animal rights have now become a much more prominent issue worldwide as compared with 1960s or 70s. Even in the meat-loving West, more and more people switch to vegetarianism, although their numbers fade in comparison to India, where meat consumption is the lowest in

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<sup>294</sup> "W ten sposób zachowawcza religia wspiera postępową politykę" (Giełżyński 116-117).

<sup>295</sup> "Operacja Szlachtuz" (Chociłowski 60).

the world<sup>296</sup>. It seems, however, that Chociłowski is only saying this to provoke the readers. For after proposing this operation of mass cow slaughter, Chociłowski explains that in fact, such a solution would not be beneficial to India. He echoes Marvin Harris' argument that cows are needed, because they provide some nourishment to people, they can occasionally be milked, their dung can be used for fuel etc. Killing them would mean death to the people who rely on them. "Those who say and write that cow worship in India is a senseless relic of the past . . . do not understand this" (63)<sup>297</sup>, underlines Chociłowski. Giełżyński, always sceptical and ironic, also ends up distancing himself from this solution:

Hindus are completely deaf to our European, rational advice, to finally put an end to those cow parasites, kill most of them, and only keep the ones that are healthy and eligible for breeding. Some of them respond in the following way: then why you, Europeans, do not plough over your cemeteries, why don't you tear down your churches? You could grow wheat on cemeteries and the brick from churches would be of use in building houses? Every culture has its sanctities that it does want or cannot subjugate to practical reasons. (16)<sup>298</sup>

Undeniably, the respect for cows is a practical embodiment of the key assumption of Hinduism: Ahimsa, or non-violence. It is the idea of doing no harm to other, especially to those weaker than humans. Vegetarianism is one of its expressions: its aim is to break the chain of alimentary violence by proving that it is not necessary to kill in order to eat (Doniger 10). The idea of *ahimsa*, as a more general principle of not harming other beings, is still present in Hindu attitude to all animals. Witold Koehler, as someone who appreciates nature, is positively impressed by this fact: "A Hindu does not kill. It means that in his environment he does not take the position of a predator. It means that he does not evoke fear and he does not create a void around himself. Quite the opposite, his proximity gives a sense of security to the weak." (38-39)<sup>299</sup>. Putrament, on the other hand, is sceptical. Upon seeing many stray goats, cows and dogs, says:

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<sup>296</sup> According to Daily Charts by The Economist, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/91840616/Meat-Consumption-Per-Person>.

<sup>297</sup> "I tego przede wszystkim wydają się nie rozumieć ci, którzy mówią i piszą, że kult krów w Indiach jest obłądnym przeżytkiem, który czym prędzej należy wyrzucić na śmietnik." (Chociłowski 63)

<sup>298</sup> "Hindusi są zupełnie głusi na nasze, europejskie, racjonalne porady, ażeby z tymi krowimi pasożytami zrobić wreszcie porządek, większość wybić, a zachować tylko sztuki zdrowe i zdatne do hodowli. Niektórzy odpowiadają tak: a dlaczego wy, Europejczycy, nie zaorzecie waszych cmentarzy, nie zburzycie kościołów? Na cmentarzach mogłoby przecież rosnąć żyto, a cegła z kościołów przydałaby się w mieszkaniowym budownictwie! Każda religia, każda kultura ma swoje świętości, których nie chce albo nie może podporządkować racjom praktycznym" (Giełżyński 16).

<sup>299</sup> "Hindus nie zabija. Znaczy to, że w otaczającym go środowisku nie zajmuje on pozycji drapieżcy. Znaczy to, że nie sieje grozy i nie stwarza pustki wokół siebie. Przeciwnie, sąsiedztwo jego daje słabszym poczucie bezpieczeństwa" (Koehler 38-39).

Indians, whose sympathy to animals, in spite of all the excess and fanaticism . . . also demands our sympathy, are different in their approach from our [dog-loving] ladies. Dogs are treated with contempt . . . Dogs in India are true pariahs and they are well-aware of it. They are cowardly and they don't even bark at anyone, because why would they do that? (57)<sup>300</sup>

Once again, the reporter notices a paradox: cows are loved, but dogs are disliked. In a European point of view, a dog is associated with friendliness, loyalty and intelligence. The reporter is clearly finding it difficult to understand that Indians may not feel as much sympathy towards dogs as they do towards cows. Another paradox that the reporters point out, is that there are hostels for cows, hospitals for birds, monkeys and cows are protected – but not all people enjoy such privilege. After visiting the cow hostel, Chociłowski is shocked: “all this in a country where people die every day, where there was not enough rice or medicine for them” (57)<sup>301</sup>.

Thus, even though the reporters try to explain the importance of cows to the Hindu believers, they still think in Western, anthropocentric terms, in which humans are at the top of the hierarchy of living beings. In such view, rights of animals are secondary to the rights of humans – a belief that in contemporary bioethical studies would be called speciesism. It is defined by Peter Singer as “a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interest of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species (6). According to Singer, a campaign for animal liberation does not mean that animals should be given the same rights as humans, politically. But, in the same way as small children of humans, animals have the right to food, comfort, warmth and good treatment from others (5). Incidentally, Singer uses the example of cows, explaining that they do not desire freedom, if they are confined at a green pasture - they will be happier there than strolling the streets of New York. Here is where the academic discourse of animal rights touches the issue of attitude to cows in India. The Hindu source of respect for animal rights is placed in the belief in reincarnation – a soul travels through different bodies, human and animal alike – rather than in the issue of rights. That is why killing an animal, in particular a cow or a monkey, is wrong from the point of view of karma. Cows should be protected, as they are giving animals on which rely many Indian households.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that cows are necessarily awarded a good treatment in India. While some Westerners imagine cow worship as an expression of an ideal human

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<sup>300</sup> “Hindusi, których sympatia do zwierząt mimo przesady i fanatyzmu, o czym później, zasługuje i na naszą sympatię, różnią się w tych zamięowaniach od naszych panius. Psy są otaczane pogardą. . . Psy w Indiach są prawdziwymi pariasami i mają pełną tego świadomość. Są tchórzliwe i nawet nie szczekają na nikogo, bo niby za co i po co?” (Putrament, *Na drogach*... 57).

<sup>301</sup> “w tym kraju, gdzie codziennie umierają ludzie, dla których nie starczyło ryżu albo lekarstw” (Chociłowski 57).

relationship towards an animal<sup>302</sup>, the condition of cows in India is often far from perfect. Certainly, unlike the West, India does not consume beef in industrial quantities, nevertheless, it is one of the top world exporters of beef (Raghavan)<sup>303</sup>. Cows are caught, kept and slaughtered often in horrible conditions. Moreover, according to animal rights groups, even those cows that roam freely become a victim of human consumptionism: since they are hungry and search through rubbish looking for food waste, they end up eating plastic which eventually blocks their digestive system and leads to a slow and painful death. In the words of the Karuna Society for Animals and Nature which collects funds for cow surgeries to extract the plastic from their bodies, “it is an acute form of cruelty”. They add that nowadays, “the noble cow has become a scavenger” (Karuna).

The stereotype on “cow worship” in India is thus a rather problematic one. On the one hand, it is true that cows enjoy a special status and protection in India. However, it does not mean that is so from times immemorial, nor that it would always be manifested in the same way. While eating beef is still taboo for many Hindus, the cows’ fate in contemporary India is often far from ideal. The reporters, commenting on this issue several decades ago, would perceive cow protection as a tradition belonging to the past. Today, it is very much part of the present, but together with the very modernisation for which the reporters so strongly advocate, the cow’s condition has often become worse than in the first decades of the Independence.

### **Case Study 2. Sadhus**

Cows are not the only element of Indian surroundings, say the reporters, another “typical” picture is the one of naked sadhus, or “holy men”, wandering around the country. Chociłowski defines sadhus as “ascetics-pilgrims, apostles of Indian mysticism, teachers and healers of the souls of the people, owners of mysterious truth about life, which – like a shiny ball of mercury – escapes the hands of mere mortals” (64)<sup>304</sup>. A sadhu is not only a “philosopher, that sinks into *Samadhi* (meditation), but he can also be a doctor, fortune-teller,

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<sup>302</sup> See Christie Ritter’s book for young adults, *Animal Rights*: “Sacred Cows: Cows have a special place in Indian society. . . According to Hinduism, cows are the most sacred of animals. They are a symbol of the divine. Cows are used in religious ceremonies and it is believed that they provide special blessings for people. . .” (17)

<sup>303</sup> While the beef industry states that the exported beef comes only from buffaloes – which are not considered as sacred – the media report that it is not always true: illegal slaughterhouses and black market of beef is a growing phenomenon (Desai Gopal; Harris).

<sup>304</sup> “. . . asceci-pątnicy, apostołowie indyjskiego mistycyzmu, nauczyciele i lekarze dusz ludu, właściciele tajemniczej prawdy o życiu, która jak błyszcząca kulka rtęci wymyka się z niezręcznych dłoni zwykłych śmiertelników” (Chociłowski 64).

magician, and a consultant in all matters of human soul and body” (69)<sup>305</sup>. It is a rather romanticised vision of sadhus, perceived as Oriental mystics, “owners of truth about life”, people doted with supernatural capacities. Such a view is inscribed in the Western discourse of Oriental mysticism, so common in reference to India.

### **European Fascination with Indian Mystics**

The reporters see India as a place where spirituality occupies a particularly prominent place. “There are plenty of saints here”, says Putrament, and sketches the picture of saints belonging to different religions; “[t]he simplest saints have long hair, long beards, dirty white coats, classic, Aryan features.” (*Cztery...* 93)<sup>306</sup>. As if underlining the universality of “saints” of various religions, he continues his description of Indian “holy men”: “The other, Buddhist ones, have yellow-orangey robes, shaved heads, some clanging things. The Jain saints seem to be the most logical. Their contempt of the worldly possessions was taken to the extreme: they are naked.” (*Cztery...* 93)<sup>307</sup>.

There is no consistency in terms used in the analysed reportages. They are called: “saints”, “sadhus”, “fakirs”, “ascetics”, “pilgrims”, “yogis”, “gurus”, “sanyasins” and “dervishes”. Indeed, there exists much confusion as to terms used to name the “Holy Men of India”: Western texts often use them interchangeably. However, the term “sadhu”, originating in Sanskrit and used in India, means “a holy man, sage, or ascetic” (OED). The term “fakir”, on the other hand, has a Muslim origin, and means “A Muslim (or, loosely, Hindu) religious ascetic who lives solely on alms” (OED). Similarly, a “dervish” is also term from the Muslim culture, which is used mostly in reference to Sufis. The term “guru” denotes a “Hindu spiritual teacher”, while “yogi” is understood as someone “proficient in yoga” (OED). The word “sannyasi” is explained as “a Hindu religious mendicant” (OED). In India, probably the most common term used to describe such a person would be the term “sadhu”, meant in a rather all-encompassing way; a sadhu can also be a sannyasi, a guru and a yogi, depending on the particular activity that he performs. In academic language, the term commonly used is “renouncers”, as opposed to those who live a family life in their homes – the “householders” (Hausner).

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<sup>305</sup> “Sadhu jest bowiem nie tylko filozofem, pogrążającym się w samadhi (medytacji), może być także lekarzem, wróżbitą, czarodziejem, konsultantem we wszystkich sprawach duszy i ciała ludzkiego.” (Chociłowski 69)

<sup>306</sup> “Zresztą świętych tu pełno. Święci najprostszy mają długie włosy, długie brody, brudne białe chałaty, klasyczne, aryjskie rysy. . .” (Putrament, *Cztery...* 93).

<sup>307</sup> “Inni, buddyjscy, mają żółtopomarańczowe szaty, włosy zgolone, jakieś brzękadełka. Najbardziej logiczni wydają się święci dżainowscy. Ich pogarda dla dóbr doczesnych doprowadzona została do końca: są goli” (Putrament, *Cztery...* 93).

Ros describes sadhus as wandering ascetics or hermits, who have renounced the world (245). He explains that among their pursuits are pilgrimages to holy places or temples and the disciplining of their body and mind through special exercises and meditation (245). He warns Europeans against the use of the word “fakir”, which is of Arabic, not Indian origin (245-246). Interestingly, Ros lists six ascetic commandments, and six prohibitions for sadhus, however he does not include the source of this list. It includes no sleeping in a bed, no wearing white clothes, no talking to or thinking of women, no sleeping during the day, no riding of an animal or means of transport, and not allowing for the mind to be agitated (246). Given this rather impressive list, no wonder that his fellow reporter, Chociłowski, is reminded of the Greek philosopher, cynic and ascetic, Diogenes, who supposedly wore rags and slept in a jar (64). Actually, Ancient Greeks were fascinated with Indian sadhus to the point of having Alexander the Great to hold a meeting with the “gymnosophists, or the “naked sages”” upon his arrival to India (Halbfass 12). This Western fascination with sadhus, perceived as the embodiment of Hindu spirituality, was a recurring trend. Many Europeans searched for their guru in India, went to live in ashrams and followed their spiritual teachers. Gita Mehta talks about this fascination critically, describing how this spiritual tourism is another way of Orientalising, and marketing, the “mystic East” (xi). She wrote her book in 1979, but the recent popularity of Elisabeth Gilbert’s *Eat, Pray, Love* travelogue in which the visit at an ashram and interactions with a guru become a life-changing event for the protagonist, is another case in point. Nevertheless, with the exception of Żukrowski who has a certain interest in the spiritual and the supernatural, Polish reporters place themselves at the opposite pole of Western fascination with Hindu spirituality. They observe sadhus as if they were ethnographers describing an artefact of a different culture, they focus on the social and political role of the “holy men”, but they do not show any personal admiration or veneration of the sadhus.

Who really are sadhus and what characterises them? According to Sondra Hausner, author of a study on ascetics in Hindu Himalayas, “people become renouncers for many reasons, including an inability or an unwillingness to fit into normative society, on one hand, and a profound desire to understand the meaning of existence, on the other” (21). Becoming a sadhu means leaving behind one’s family, house and all material possessions. It also means rejecting one’s caste – sadhu community does not have caste divisions. However, Hausner’s study reveals that it is not always the case – some sects do introduce a caste requirement, and some sadhus and sadhvis (female sadhus) maintain a connection of some sort with the larger society, by keeping contact with their families (39-40). The inclusiveness of the sadhu community and the freedom that such a lifestyle offers are probably even more attractive if the

alternative is a rather rigid, hierarchical Hindu society with gender-oppressive norms and strong social pressure.

### **Shocking Looks of Sadhus**

What strikes the reporters most are the looks of sadhus: fascinating, repulsive, or scary. Koehler mentions a “beggar or maybe dervish with long, entangled hair that flows on his bare back and falling onto his eyes, which are so piercing as to cause an unwitting shiver” (28)<sup>308</sup>. Ros describes them as “hirsute, dishevelled ascetics”, whose “wild and unkempt look – fiery eyes, bodies covered with ash, foreheads marked with symbolic signs, skinny and naked limbs” make a great impression (200)<sup>309</sup>. Chociłowski talks about them in the following way:

Half-naked, or [naked] as God created them, with faces smeared with ash and paint, dishevelled like Macbeth’s witches, with hair woven in dreadlocks or with smoothly shaved cranes, with a stick or Shiva’s trident in their hand, barefoot, unwashed, grey with dust and dirt – they look sternly and boldly, sure of their power and of the fear they cause. (64)<sup>310</sup>

Giełżyński focuses less on the look (although he notices the nakedness and the “strange designs that have a symbolic meaning only for the initiated Hindus”(11)<sup>311</sup>), and more on their activities. The “saints”, in his description, crouch instead of sitting, stand motionlessly, sometimes only on one leg, adopt yogic poses... (7, 11). Yoga, nowadays extremely popular in the West, including Poland, was almost completely unknown to the reporters of the communist era. The concept of adopting “strange” poses, stretching, loud breathing, bending, “odd” sequences of movements – appears to them as truly eccentric.

The reporters have very little awareness about sadhus as a cultural phenomenon and they judge their appearance as dirty, unkempt, and repulsive, not realising what do the particular elements of the renunciators mean. As Sondra Hausner explains, the preference for orange robes has several explanations: one, is that orange is the colour of the fire and of the sun, hence a source of energy; two – it is a colour that stands out, so even if the sadhu has, for instance, taken a vow of silence, people can recognise him/her from afar and bring him/her food or alms (45-46). Naked sadhus, on the other hand, choose not to wear anything in order

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<sup>308</sup> “żebrak lub może derwisz o długich, skołtunionych włosach, spływających na nagie plecy i opadających na oczy, których przesywające spojrzenie wywołuje mimowolny dreszcz” (Koehler 28).

<sup>309</sup> “[Nad basenem . . . siedzą] kudłaci, rozczochrani asceci – sadhu. Ich wygląd dziki i niechlujny – oczy gorejące, ciała posypane popiołem, czoła znaczone symbolicznymi znakami, członki wychudłe i nagie – sprawia niesamowite wrażenie” (Ros 200).

<sup>310</sup> “Półnaczy lub jak ich Bóg stworzył, o twarzach wysmarowanych popiołem i farbami, poczochrani jak makbetowskie wiedźmy, z włosami splecionymi w strąki warkoczyków lub o gładko wygolonych czaszkach, z kosturem lub trójzębem Śiwy w ręku, bosi, niemcy, szarzy od kurzu i brudu – patrzą surowo i zuchwale, pewni swej siły i lęku, jaki wzbudzają” (Chociłowski 64).

<sup>311</sup> “. . . pomalowany w różne dziwne wzorki – mające symboliczne znaczenie dla wtajemniczonych Hindusów” (Giełżyński 11).



to set themselves apart from the householders, to defy social norms, and to stress the “natural state” of human body (Hausner 46). Then, they usually cover their bodies with ash from funeral pyres. “By wearing ash, *sādhus* remind all who see them of the impermanence and substitutability of all material forms”, says Hausner, but she adds that ash also has a practical use: as a mosquito repellent and as medicine (46). What strikes the viewer (and the reporters) most, is the tousled hair of the *sadhus*. Here, too, the explanation goes beyond a simple wish to let the hair grow freely. Upon their initiation to *sadhu* life, the disciple’s head is shaved (both in case of men and women), so the length of hair tells for how long one is a *sadhu* and how strong his/her religious power has become (Hausner 46). For practical purposes, the hair is usually weaved into dreadlocks – *jata*. According to Hausner:

Most renouncers keep their *jata* tied into a manageable turban, as if to keep the true power of the hair under wraps. The unruly nature of renouncers’ dreadlocked hair symbolizes their explicit rejection of normative life and also serves as a public sign of the power of renunciation. (46)

Long, dreadlocked hair is thus perceived as cause for respect in the Hindu society, as opposed to the reporters’ somewhat disdainful pose. The designs with which *sadhus* adorn their bodies, that Giełżyński qualifies as intelligible only to the “initiated” Hindus” (11), are in fact simply a way of identification and a public manifestation of devotion to a particular god. The most common *tilak* (mark on the forehead) is the one made of three lines, symbolizing the trident of god Shiva (Hausner 46). For the same reason, *sadhus* often carry a trident or tongs, that also serve to scare animals away; other few belongings that they travel with include a blanket (for sleeping), a water jug (for drinking and washing), a small bag, and often photographs of their gurus (Hausner 47). This minimalistic approach is similar to ascetics of other religions, but unruly hair and naked or painted body are more specific to Indian *sadhus*.

It is the hair and the body adornments that attracts most attention of foreign visitors looking for the “Indian exotic”, because they are not only biological phenomena, they are part of the body as a social construct. Edmund Leach notices the particular symbolic of hair: he points out that in psychoanalysis, head hair is associated with genitals. Ethnographic evidence, Leach argues, supports this thesis, as two extreme forms of hair treatment – shaving and letting grow – are symbolic of, correspondingly, castration and renouncement of sexuality (as in case of ascetics with long beards and hair) (149). Discussing the context of Indian *sannyasin*, Leach refers to the Upanishads to prove that sex behaviour and hair behaviour go parallel with one another (156). Leach separates symbols into public and private (considering hair as a public one), but according Gananath Obeyesekere, author of *Medusa’s Hair*, these two realms are

linked together, as emotions and customs often intertwine (13). Also, Obeyesekere finds that shaved hair and matted hair are not expressions of two extreme acts, as Leach proposes, but the former is more common to Buddhist culture, and the latter to the Hindu one (38). As for the cultural message that long, matted hair convey, Obeyesekere notices a strong emotional reaction to the ascetics' hair: fear, disgust, revulsion, and an association of hair with actual flesh growing out of one's head (36). Hence, the sight of a sadhu with matted, tousled hair is a source of anxiety, linked both with the idea of purity (hair as impure) and repressed sexuality. The reporters are indeed troubled by the appearance of sadhus, although they hardly come in contact with them. Usually, they just observe the sadhus from afar. They try to understand their function in the society, but – with the exception of Chociłowski – do not attempt to talk to the “holy men” directly.

### **Sadhus' Role in Society**

Ros' *Indian Wanderings* feature a black-and-white photograph of a sadhu dressed in a long, dark, robe and a mask. The caption says:

In places of public gatherings, appear various weirdoes and cranks, apostles and pilgrims, strangely painted and tattooed, with uncut hair and nails, extending their beggar bowls. Thousands of mountebanks prey on the good-naturedness and naiveté of simple, ignorant people. (224)<sup>312</sup>

Clearly, Ros primarily considers sadhus as crooks who exploit people. Other reporters, too, attribute the special status of sadhus in Indian society mostly to the common people's ignorance and fear. Chociłowski explains that sadhus are most popular – and most feared – in villages, among least educated people:

The country is understandably the territory where a sadhu feels particularly well. He comes there with his face red with vermillion, with a skull in one hand and a claw in another, bejewelled with talismans and rosaries made of lotus seeds or human teeth. Singing his “mantras”, he casts and breaks spells, he exorcises ghosts and daemons from “possessed” women, he heals those who were bitten by snakes and scorpions. (Chociłowski 69)<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> “W miejscu większych zgromadzeń pojawiają się różni cudacy i nawiedzeni, apostołowie i pątnicy malowani i tatuowani dziwacznie, z niestrzyżonymi włosami i nieobcinanymi paznokciami, wyciągając przed siebie miseczki żebracze. Tysiące wydrwigroszów żeruje na dobroduszości i naiwności prostego, ciemnego ludu” (Ros 224).

<sup>313</sup> “Wieś jest zresztą ze zrozumiałych względów terenem, gdzie sadhu czuje się szczególnie dobrze. Zjawia się tam z obliczem czerwonym od cynobru, z czaszką w jednej i szczypcami w drugiej ręce, obwieszony talizmanami i różańcami z nasion lotosu albo ludzkich zębów. Wyśpiewując ‘mantry’ rzuca i odczynia uroki, wypędza z ‘opętanych’ kobiet duchy i demony, leczy ukąszonych przez węże, skorpiony” (Chociłowski 69).

Koehler agrees with this view and finds this “mad fanaticism” (133) comparable only to the one in the “dark ages of medieval Europe” (133)<sup>314</sup>. As such, it is rooted in ignorance and “infinite poverty” (133)<sup>315</sup>. Nonetheless, as Giełżyński’s account suggests, the elites are also susceptible to the spell of the sadhu. The reporter tells the story of a “holy man”, mister Rao, whose was so popular as to be received by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Rao announced that he will publicly demonstrate how he walks on the surface of water; the event attracted huge attention of Bombay media, a few hundred spectators gathered around the pool. The “saint” made a few breathing and concentration exercises, took a step forward... and sunk in the pool (11). The reporter was surprised that the public so easily accepted the “saint’s” explanation (that the night before he dreamt of Lord Shiva and this took away his power of concentration), and calmly went home (12). “This is what is most astonishing: faith in supernatural phenomena, contradicting the laws of physics, is so deeply rooted in India”<sup>316</sup>, concludes Giełżyński. Clearly, the reporters adopt the position of rationalist commentators of India’s cultural reality, presenting the status of sadhus as yet another confirmation of blind belief and irrationality. It is yet another demonstration of their cultural superiority: they perceive themselves as “enlightened” Europeans, with a secular worldview, in contrast to Indians believing in the magic powers of sadhus.

Nevertheless, Chociłowski breaks this pattern, pointing out that many in India are critical of this tolerance towards the “holy men”, these “leeches sucking on the neck of the Indian simpleton” (72)<sup>317</sup>. There are also those, says the reporter, who find that sadhus are not always “cynical parasites”, but their services can be useful (73)<sup>318</sup>. For instance, Gołębiowski recalls how in the Sudandih mine, a sadhu acts as an intermediary between the local peasants and the management, because he is considered to be a trustworthy figure (167). Other reporters mention with appreciation Vinoba Bhawe, an old “mystic”, who journeys around India, teaching peasants and fighting with dacoit crime (Górnicki 182).

However, the reporters are not fully able to understand the social function of the renouncers, who do more than only begging: they perform rituals and prayers, bless people and places. Some of them run dharamshalas – rest houses – for pilgrims, teach meditation and yoga, specialise in natural medicine and provide other religious and non-religious services. These

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<sup>314</sup> “Prawda, że obłądny fanatyzm utrzymuje się tu po dziś dzień w rozmiarze i napięciu godnym może mrocznego średniowiecza Europy” (Koehler 133).

<sup>315</sup> “Ma to swe źródło w ciemnocie ludu i jego bezgranicznej nędzy” (Koehler 133).

<sup>316</sup> “I to właśnie jest najbardziej zdumiewające: wiara w zjawiska nadprzyrodzone, niezgodne z prawami fizyki, jest w Indiach zakorzeniona niezwykle głęboko” (Giełżyński 13).

<sup>317</sup> “pijawek przysysanych do karku indyjskiego prostaczka” (Chociłowski 72).

<sup>318</sup> He uses the term “cyniczne pasożytnictwo” (73).

activities often require an advanced knowledge and experience, and years of training. Thus, in rural societies, where the state does not provide a health or education infrastructure, the sadhus offer their medical, psychological, and spiritual knowledge and advice, gaining respect of the population. Hausner underlines that by distancing themselves from the quotidian and materialistic concerns and placing themselves outside the norms of the society, sadhus occupy a position of both marginality and power (184). Referring to Victor Turner's concept of liminality, Hausner sees renouncers as figures that are not only mobile in space, but who also move in between structures. They are "are liminal figures in relation to the normative caste and family structures of Hindu society and, as such, they claim transcendence over that which they leave behind" (184). Hence, like any liminal figure, sadhus cause unrest and a sense of anxiety among the visitors from abroad, including the reporters of the socialist era.

### **Sadhus: Fake or Real?**

One of the most frequently asked question by travellers is whether a sadhu is a real sage or a fake one? The reporters do not fully dismiss the possibility of the existence of "real" sadhus, but – as it was mentioned earlier – they underline that many of those who claim to be sannyasins, are fake sadhus, "charlatans" ("*szarlatani*") exploiting naïve people (Gołębiowski 87). They present them as two-faced figures, marked with a duality. Jerzy Ros, describing a sadhu that he met, finds that he had a face of a "half-fanatic, half-philosopher" and it was at the same time "attracting and off-putting" (323)<sup>319</sup>. Gołębiowski comments on this double-face of Indian sadhus in the following way:

One can meet them everywhere . . . Half-naked – and in long, rust-coloured tunics. With shaved heads – and with hair falling on their shoulders. With spiritual faces of ascetics – and with a cunning look of crooks. [Those] reciting fluently verses in Sanskrit – [and those] mumbling "secret" spells. There are as many true priests, devoted to their religion, as ordinary charlatans, preying on people's ignorance. They have one thing in common: they undoubtedly exert an influence on the masses of Hindu society. (87)<sup>320</sup>

Chociłowski recalls how he met a sadhu during a walk in Delhi and asked a local student to help him in making a conversation with the "holy man". Sadhu responded to the reporter's questions in rather metaphorical terms. Hence, the student concluded that it must have been a

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<sup>319</sup> "jego twarz półfanatyka, półfilozofa odpycha i pociąga" (Ros 323).

<sup>320</sup> "Spotkać ich można wszędzie . . . Półnagich – i w długich, rdzawego koloru tunikach. Z ogolonymi głowami – i z włosami spadającymi na ramiona. Z uduchowionymi twarzami ascetów – i ze szczwanym spojrzeniem oszustów. Recytujących biegle sanskryckie wersety – i bełkocących 'tajemnicze' zaklęcia. Jest wśród nich przynajmniej tyłu prawdziwych, oddanych swej religii kapłanów co i zwykłych szarlatanów żerujących na ludzkiej ciemności. Jedno jest im wspólne: mają niewątpliwy wpływ na masy hinduskiego społeczeństwa" (Gołębiowski 87).

real sadhu. Chociłowski quotes his words: “– There are few such people in India today. There are swarms of fake sadhus roaming the streets, who are beggars and frauds. But people believe them and are afraid of them. Everyone is fearful of a spell cast by a sadhu”(66-67)<sup>321</sup>. The reporter gives several examples of tricks used by fake sadhus to steal money or precious jewellery. Koehler remarks that maybe only a longer stay in India would allow for a better proficiency in “distinguishing the “holy sages” from common tricksters”, although he is not certain of that; to his mind, it seems as if the boundary between the two is rather elusive, and it “vanishes even in the very conscience of the yogis and fakirs themselves” (133)<sup>322</sup>. According to Hausner, many Hindus, too, are unsure how to recognise a true sadhu:

I witnessed a number of heated arguments between householder Hindus about what constituted a “real” renouncer and what kinds of sādhus could be counted as legitimate. Almost everybody—even highly suspicious householders—eventually agreed that a committed devotee might be able to find a real renouncer, who would be a realized or spiritually advanced person who spent his or her days in meditative contemplation, and whose steadfast efforts produced religious power. (21)

Thus, her interlocutors believe that some sadhus can be genuine spiritual guides, but they are convinced that they constitute a small percentage of all renouncers (20). The scholar admits that since sadhu lifestyle is so separate from the regular householder’s existence, many people would join the community to shelter themselves from the outside world – for spiritual, social, or family reasons (for instance, if they did not want to marry or if they were widowed), but also sometimes because of a mental illness, criminal record or other reason to flee from someone or something (44). Clearly, many self-proclaimed “sadhus” might pose a threat to both Indians and visitors – stories of sexual abuse, fraud or drugs consumption appear from time to time in the Indian media (Mehta, Hausner).

### **The Political Role of Sadhus**

Given the influence that sadhus supposedly exert on the minds of the people, politicians are eager to have the “holy men” on their side. Gołębiowski describes the plan of a minister to use sadhus in social campaigns and in support of economic development – for that goal, a sadhu association, Bharat Sadhu Samaj (88). The reporter participates in the annual sadhu meeting and relates the main issues discussed. He sees a potential political force that was at the time in

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<sup>321</sup> “- To był prawdziwy sadhu – rzekł student kiedyśmy weszli w aleję prowadzącą do wyjścia. – Niewielu jest dziś takich w Indiach. Po ulicach kręcą się chmary fałszywych sadhu, którzy są żebrakami i oszustami. Ale ludzie im wierzą i boją się ich. Każdy lęka się przekleństwa rzuconego przez sadhu” (Chociłowski 66-67).

<sup>322</sup> “Być może, że po dłuższym pobycie w tym kraju nabiera się sprawności w odróżnianiu ‘mężów świątobliwych’ od zwykłych sztukmistrzów, wydaje się jednak, że granica ta jest zgoła nieuchwytna, że ztraca się ona także w świadomości samych jogów i fakirów” (Koehler 133).

the process of consolidating, but – in his words – “could become future organisers of a Christian Democratic equivalent in India” (Gołębiowski 89)<sup>323</sup>. Indeed, an organisation called Bharat Sadhu Samaj (India Association of Sadhus) was formed in 1956 and exists till this day. Another, perhaps less formalised, but more all-encompassing organisation is Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad, which brings together both Hindu and Sikh renouncers, grouped in fourteen akharas, or orders. Sadhu organisations are not immune to political influence, and it is not surprising that various political parties try to assure themselves the renouncers’ support. In particular, Hindu extreme nationalists from the VHP and RSS movements would woo the sadhus with their slogans on strengthening Hindu identity, enforcing cow protection and protecting “Hindu Dharma”<sup>324</sup>. They are often successful: sadhus were indeed involved in various protests and political events. Chociłowski is aware of that and informs his readers in the following way:

Here, confraternities of sadhus do not shun intervention in political affairs and they put on the armour of defenders of Hindu faith, starting campaigns for the untouchability of cows and oftentimes they acting as instigators of bloody riots, burning government buildings, destroying buses, and once even organising a regular siege of the parliament. They belong to those that throw a spanner in the works of progress. (72-73)<sup>325</sup>

Thus, in the reporter’s perspective, sadhus might not only harm “naïve” individuals, but are also preventing the development of India. While in this viewpoint there is hardly a place for sadhus in future India, it seems that there are at least as many sadhus in India as there were before, and some do not abstain from political involvement. According to Christophe Jaffrelot, in 1990s, various sadhus such as Uma Bharti presented themselves as candidates in the elections and became members of parliament. Some took to more extreme measures and became involved in terrorist activities<sup>326</sup>. Modern gurus have associated themselves with a range of Hindu nationalist political causes, for instance participating in the 1992 Babri Masjid riots (started by the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu extreme nationalists

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<sup>323</sup> “[siła, która] w przyszłości może wyłonić kadrę organizatorską swoistego rodzaju chadecji w Indiach” (Gołębiowski 89).

<sup>324</sup> This was, for instance, Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), which belongs to the umbrella organisation of Hindu nationalists led by RSS – the National Patriotic Organisation.

<sup>325</sup> “Oto konfraternie sadhu nie stronią również od interwencji w sprawy polityczne i okrywają się puklerzem obrońców wiary hinduistycznej, prowadzą kampanie w obronie nietykalności krów i niejednokrotnie byli inspiratorami krwawych zamieszek, podpalali budynki rządowe, niszczyli autobusy, a raz nawet zorganizowali regularne oblężenie parlamentu. Należą więc do tych, którzy wkładają kije w szprychy kół postępu. Indie mają inne, większe kłopoty, a poza tym są przecież krajem, w którym może trudniej niż gdziekolwiek indziej odwrócić się od przeszłości” (Chociłowski 72-73).

<sup>326</sup> Jaffrelot mentions three renouncers, Pragma Singh Thakur and Swami Amritananda Dev Tirtha, both accused of participation in the 2006 Malegaon bombings, and Swami Assemanand, accused of organizing the 2007 bomb blast on the train to Pakistan (Samjhauta express bombing).

claiming that this was the place of birth of god Ram). According to Jaffrelot, nowadays “saffron-clad leaders have embarked on a more ‘secular’ warpath, but one thing remains unchanged: the support they receive from the RSS”. Indeed, popular sadhus like Baba Ramdev – who publicly supports the current prime minister, Narendra Modi – play an important role in day-to-day Indian politics.

### **Case study 3. Sites of Worship and Pilgrimage**

A large part of the reporters’ narrative on India consists in descriptions of temples, holy places, or sites of pilgrimage. The reporters visited many famous monuments or places of worship that are considered as key spots on the tourist map of India. Among them were, of course, Taj Mahal and other Muslim monuments in Agra and Delhi, but also old Hindu temples in Kolkata, Gwalior or in South India. Some reporters venture to Khajuraho, lured by the fame of the erotic sculptures on the temples’ walls. Moreover, visits to pilgrimage sites at the shores of the Ganges were also a must: most reporters visited Varanasi (Benares) and some also saw Hardwar and Patna. During the visits to these sites of worship, just like in other instances of contact with religion, reporters maintain an ironic, or even critical tone.

#### **The Ganga**

The Ganges is considered as one of the most important landmarks in India and recognise its significance in the spiritual life of the country. Jawaharlal Nehru once wrote:

The Ganges, above all, is the river of India which has held India's heart captive and drawn uncounted millions to her banks since the dawn of history. The story of the Ganges, from her source to the sea, from old times to new, is the story of India's civilisation and culture...

(Daftuar)

Indeed, the Ganges, third longest river of India, is the most revered of all rivers. It crosses a large part of the Indian subcontinent, flowing from the Himalayas, through Rishikesh, Hardwar, Allahabad, Patna, and reaching the Bay of Bengal, spreading out in a large delta, partly located in India, and partly in Bangladesh. It is 2,510 kilometres long and it provides water to the inhabitants of the Indo-Gangetic Plain – considered as the cradle of many illustrious civilisations, from the empire of Mauryan king Ashoka to the one of the Mughals (Lodrick). Since bathing in the Ganga is considered by the Hindus as purifying, and because many choose to cremate the bodies of the dead at its shores (so that the ashes are taken by the river), many towns on its shores became sites of pilgrimages. It is the case of Varanasi, Hardwar or Allahabad, where the bathing festival, the Mela, is regularly held. Referring to the significance of the Ganges, Koehler notes that despite “progressive trends”, the “pietism for

the river will certainly last the longest and it will victoriously outlive the decline of the gods” (126)<sup>327</sup>. For Europeans, too, the Ganges is the epitome of India, the embodiment of the “farthest end of the world”, as well as the “river of paradise”, explains Steven Darian in *The Ganges in Myth and History* (161). The Indian river features already in classical accounts, and Alexander the Great considers reaching the Ganges as the goal of his expedition (Darian 164). In Middle Ages, the fame of rich and bountiful cities at the banks of Ganga reach Europe, and it becomes legendary as the “river of Eden” (Darian 181). Many, including the author of *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, believed that the Ganges carries precious stones and gold. Christopher Columbus was so convinced that his route to India was right that upon landing in America, he assumed that the natives are talking about Ganga (Darian 183). When more Europeans started arriving to India, many sites along the Ganges were visited by travellers, especially Benares/Varanasi. Francois Bernier called the city at the shore of Ganga the “Athens of India”, and Edwin Arnold, the “Oxford and Canterbury of India in one”. Kipling, on the other hand, would refer to it as a city “of two Thousand Temples and twice two thousand stench” (Miller 304). Mark Twain, too, visits Varanasi and although stunned by the temples and cities, he is appalled by the filth of the river, where people bathe and human remains are thrown (Miller 305). Indeed, the “holiness” of the Ganges in Hindu understanding often contrasts with a rather unforgiving take on the river by the tourists.

The Polish reporters are conflicted as well. They realise the importance of the river and try to explain it to their readers, but at the same time, they are repulsed by the “dirt”, “lack of hygiene” and the surrounding “kitsch”. They also criticise the greed of priests and the “blind faith” of the people. Koehler summarises these feelings in the following way:

Here – at the holy Ganges – meet: the calculated might of the priests, the mad fanaticism of the pilgrims, the cynicism of the secular magnates, the unearthly yearnings of the soulful dreamers and finally, the pathetic, helpless trust of the paupers. (126)<sup>328</sup>

Nevertheless, Koehler does not give up the hope for some kind of spiritual experience. Disappointed by the “stony emptiness and endless void that we have seen in the eyes of the deities sitting on the altars of the Birla temples” (128), he is expecting that the holy river will “unveil its secrets” and that he will be able to understand “this maze of beliefs, cults, dreadful

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<sup>327</sup> “Niemniej religijny pietyzm dla rzeki przetrwa zapewne najdłużej i zwycięsko przeżyje zmierzch bogów” (Koehler 126).

<sup>328</sup> “Tu zatem – nad świętym Gangesem – spotykają się ze sobą: wyrachowana potęga kapłanów, obłąkańczy fanatyzm pątników, cynizm świeckich możnowładców, nadziemskie tęsknoty uduchowionych marzycieli i wreszcie żalonna, bezradna ufnosć nędzarzy” (Koehler 126).



practices and pitifully naive superstitions”(128)<sup>329</sup>. Even for the socialist non-believers, the Ganges is a symbolic core of the Hindu faith, a river so famous that seeing it should be a meaningful event. But he is disappointed once again. Although he admires the old city of Hardwar and the marble stairs leading to the river, he feels that the place is too much of a tourist attraction, where there is little place for reflection. It is remarkable, however, that he notices how Westerners spoil the atmosphere: “there is something brutal in the loud gusts of laughter, in the intrusive nosiness of tourists, in their confidence, demonstrating the superiority of the Western arch-culture”(128)<sup>330</sup>. Looking at the local people, Koehler feels that there is contempt in their eyes (128). This moment when the gaze shifts from the Polish tourist to the local person – who usually is the object of his observation – is significant. The roles are reversed: it is not the Westerner that surveys his surrounding, it is the local that looks disapprovingly at the tourist. The arrival of a foreign tourist group in Hardwar is presented as an intrusion, an interference, even though Koehler himself is part of that group. Nevertheless, he realises that loud tourists present a disturbance in a place of such spiritual character.

Górnicki, upon his arrival to Hardwar, is much less spiritually inclined than Koehler. Throughout his account, he maintains an ironic distance to what he observes at the pilgrimage site. He approaches the Ganges, the “holy river for Hindus” (223), and informs that its water has purifying qualities, “naturally, [only] in a philosophical sense” (223)<sup>331</sup>. He describes the waters of Ganga in harsh terms:

A greasy-green liquid maunders lazily among granite stones, floating near the shore there are lumps of buffalo dung, tangerine peels, faded banana leaves, phlegm-like mixture of mud and plankton. In the greasy-green water, shoals of greasy-brown fish mill around. . . The are, however, no feverish fishermen, and the emaciated beggars on the banks do not even dare to cast their desirous glances towards the river. For fish are sacred. A premeditated killing would

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<sup>329</sup> “Oto jednak zbliżamy się do świętej rzeki. Za chwilę znajdziemy się w ostrym blasku światła Wschodu, spojrzymy w źrenice boga. Co w nich dojrzymy? Czy ten sam martwy odbłask dręczącego zabójczym żarem słońca, tę samą kamienną pustkę i bezdenną nicość, którą widzieliśmy już w oczach bóstw zasiadających na ołtarzach świątyni Birły? Czy może uchyli się wreszcie rąbek tajemnicy i dotrze do nas iskra zrozumienia dręczącej zagadki tej gęstwy wiar, kultów, przejmujących grozą praktyk i żałośnie naiwnych zabobonów? Próżne nadzieje!” (Koehler 128).

<sup>330</sup> “Jest coś brutalnego w głośnych rechotach śmiechu, w natrętnym wścibstwie turystów, w ich pewności siebie, demonstrującej wyższość zachodniej arcykultury. Po raz pierwszy wydaje mi się, że oczy nieruchomo stojącego, brunatnego człowieka patrzą nie przez nas, lecz na nas. W oczach tych jest wyraz – pogardy...” (Koehler 128).

<sup>331</sup> “Oto Ganga, moi państwo, święta rzeka hinduistów”; “Ma własności oczyszczające – w sensie filozoficznym naturalnie” (Górnicki 223).

be an offence, or even a blasphemous sacrilege, which nobody in this town would have the courage of doing. Holy river, holy fish, what else is holy in here? Actually everything. (223)<sup>332</sup> After drawing this unappealing picture of the Ganges, Górnicki explains that Hardwar is as important to the Hindus as Varanasi, because the waters of Ganga there contain as many “liquefied blessings”<sup>333</sup> as in the historical town of Benares (223). He describes pilgrims bathing in a nearby temple pond. Once again, its waters do not seem to be “purifying”, let alone “pure”: “a greenish gunk washes around their necks, lumps of mud and dunk flow close to their faces” (224)<sup>334</sup>. Górnicki concludes, sarcastically: “[A]fter such a bath – the benevolence of gods [is] guaranteed” (224)<sup>335</sup>.

Putrament observes the site of ritual cremation of the dead at the banks of Yamuna, tributary of the Ganges, and is shocked by the fact that next to the burning funeral pyres people bathe in the waters of the river. He finds the river very dirty and muddy, and is horrified to see a man not only drinking the water, but also taking a pinch of the mud to clean his teeth (*Cztery...* 94). Giełżyński experiences a similar scene in Benares. He watches pilgrims sitting, bathing, washing clothes and swimming in the waters of the Ganga, and explains to the readers:

It is even good to rinse one’s teeth and, of course, to drink this muddy water that contains sewage from over a dozen big cities and thousands of village, as wells as the ashes of the dead, that have been burnt on pyres at the shores. Nobody is concerned with the hygiene. But, after all, there was never an epidemic here. The waters of the Ganges, probably because of the intensive sun operation (surely not because of the protection of Hindu gods!), are really free from bacteria, in spite of permanent pollution. (49)<sup>336</sup>

Clearly, Giełżyński’s feelings are similar to those of other reporters: he is disgusted and repelled by the waters of the “holy” river, and he makes ironic remarks about Hindu beliefs. At the same time, he tries to explain the phenomenon of the Ganges in rational terms: it is

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<sup>332</sup> “Tłustozielona ciecz snuje się leniwie pośród granitowych cembrowin, przy brzegu płyną wartko grudki bawolego łajna, łupiny mandarynek, zwiędłe listowie bananów, podobna do flegmy zawiesina planktonu i błota. W tłustozielonej wodzie kłębią się stada tłustobrunatnych ryb. . . Nie widać jednak rozgorączkowanych wędkarzy, a wychudli żebracy na wybrzeżu wystrzegają się nawet pożądlivych spojrzeń w kierunku rzeki. Ryby są bowiem święte. Umysłne zabójstwo byłoby niecnotą, ba, bluźnierczym świętokradztwem, na które nikt się w tym mieście nie poważy! Święta rzeka, święte ryby, co jeszcze jest tutaj święte? Właściwie wszystko” (Górnicki 223).

<sup>333</sup> “rozpuszczone błogosławieństwa” (Górnicki 223).

<sup>334</sup> “Zielonkawa maź obmywa ich szyje, grudki szlamu i łajna przepływają tuż koło twarzy” (Górnicki 224).

<sup>335</sup> “Po takiej kąpieli – przychylność bogów gwarantowana” (Górnicki 224).

<sup>336</sup> “Dobre jest nawet płukanie zębów i, oczywiście, picie tej mętnej wody, niosącej ścieki z kilkunastu wielkich miast i tysięcy wsi, oraz popioły zmarłych, spalonych na stosach, które płoną tuż przy brzegu. Nikomu nie przychodzi zresztą do głowy kłopotać się o higienę. Zresztą, nigdy nie było tu epidemii. Wody Gangesu, zapewne dzięki intensywnej operacji słonecznej (bo przecież nie dzięki protekcji hinduskich bogów!) są rzeczywiście wolne od bakterii, pomimo stałego ich zanieczyszczenia” (Giełżyński 49).

reassuring for him as a European visitor that the river's "purifying" effect can be explained scientifically.

Indeed, research shows that the Ganges, whose waters come from Himalaya glaciers, has a particular ability to purify itself due to very high levels of oxygen in water <sup>337</sup>. Nevertheless, with global warming causing the glaciers to melt, and with high levels of contamination by billions of litres of untreated sewage and toxic waste, the Ganges has become one of the top most polluted rivers in the world (Zerkel, Daftuar). The situation is not better for Yamuna, flowing through the capital, which is so polluted as to become empty of all aquatic life (Daftuar). Successive governments have tried to tackle this problem, from the rather unsuccessful Ganga Action Plan started already in 1986, to the latest campaign announcements of Narendra Modi, who pledged in Varanasi to cleanse the Ganges (Black).

While these contemporary concerns are understandable, there is something disconcerting about the reporters' disgust with the Ganges. It resembles the way nineteenth-century missionaries and travellers described "primitive religions" as unhygienic and unclean. Categories of cleanliness and dirt reflect, according to Mary Douglas, the ideas of order and chaos, and crossing the line between these states represents an important transgression that the traveller is fearful of. What is characteristic of the Western culture, is that dirt avoidance is a matter of hygiene or aesthetics, and not of religious belief (Douglas 36). Also, the Western thinking of dirt is "dominated by the knowledge of pathogenic organisms" (36), but it only dates back to nineteenth-century discovery of bacterial transmission of disease, underlines Douglas. However, leaving the medical aspect aside, dirt is relative: Douglas gives the example of food that is considered clean when on a plate, but unclean on clothes or furniture, or shoes that are not considered unclean when on the floor, but placing them on a chair or on a table would make them seem dirty. Thus, "dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements" (36). In a similar way, ash in a fireplace would not be considered as unclean by the Polish reporters, but smeared on a sadhu's skin it would be categorised as dirt. Similarly, ashes of the dead seen by Hindus as purified by fire, appear to foreigners as unclean when they are thrown to the river. Only because certain elements do not fit the system of order that a European is used to, they are discarded as dirty or unhygienic.

### **Kitsch and Ugliness**

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<sup>337</sup> See: NPR podcast by Julian Crandall Hollick.

In most reportages by the analysed authors, there are numerous judgemental statements on India. While it is understandable that the reporter can express his opinion, these statements often bear a rather excessive negative charge. These critical assessments of Indian surroundings pertain mostly to two areas: hygienic one – related to cleanliness/dirt – and aesthetic one – related to beautiful/ugly. Sometimes, these two realms are joint together, for instance when Putrament is not allowed to enter a temple and comments: “the temple was a functioning one, packed and dirty, and apart from that, unattractive” (*Na drogach...* 103)<sup>338</sup>. Putrament, in particular, frequently uses the adjective “ugly”: “the temple [in Mandu] is small and ugly, full of contemporary, thus hideous devotional paintings” (*Na drogach...* 140)<sup>339</sup>. Indeed, the author claims that the real beauty lies in the ancient temples and in Muslim monuments, like the Taj Mahal. He brutally discards all more recent architecture of India:

One can rarely encounter something uglier than a “current” Hindu temple. While the ancient ones survived in all their splendour, shell-like, decorated with a multitude of sculptures, constructed in some delirium-like harmony, saved by the patina of ages from the primitive polychromies, the modern ones, not able to find their own shapes that would fit contemporary materials, ineptly imitate the old forms and make up for it with the “riches”: white marble of the walls, floors and statues, garish, candy-like paintings . . . , garlands of somewhat faded flowers, handfuls of petals thrown at the feet of particularly worshipped statues. (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 19)<sup>340</sup>

Putrament is not alone in his contempt for Indian contemporary architecture. Giełżyński, too, tells the readers that in order to see “the true, old architecture of India”<sup>341</sup>, one has to go to the South, because the North was destroyed by Muslim invaders (93). “Those that were built later, when Muslims were gone, are devoid of originality, ugly, sometimes even grotesque” (93)<sup>342</sup>, says the reporter. He is similarly unimpressed by the city of Patna, which has “no breadth nor architectural beauty, it looks as if it was a conglomerate of a hundred small and ugly towns”

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<sup>338</sup> “Świątynia była czynna, zapchana i zapaskudzona, poza tym byle jaka” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 103).

<sup>339</sup> “Świątynia jest mała i brzydka, pełna współczesnych, więc okropnych malunków dewocyjnych” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 140).

<sup>340</sup> “Rzadko można spotkać coś brzydszego niż ‘bieżąca’ świątynia hinduistyczna. O ile dawne przetrwały, okazały, jak muszle, ozdobione na zewnątrz tłumami posągów, zbudowane w jakiejś delirycznej harmonii, uratowane patyną wieków od prostactwa polichromii, to współczesne, nie umiejące odnaleźć własnych, dopasowanych do dzisiejszego tworzywa kształtów, podrabiają nieudolnie dawne formy i nadrabiają ‘bogactwem’: białym marmurem ścian, posadzek i posągów, jaskrawymi, cukierkowymi obrazkami . . . , girlandami przywiedłych kwiatów, garściami tychże płatków kwiatnych, sypanymi do stóp szczególnie czczonych posągów” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 19).

<sup>341</sup> “prawdziwa, stara architektura Indii” (Giełżyński 93).

<sup>342</sup> “Te, które zbudowano później, kiedy odparto muzułmanów, są pozbawione cech oryginalności, brzydkie, często wręcz pokraczne.” (Giełżyński 93).

(Giełżyński 57)<sup>343</sup>. Koehler, too, is rather nonplussed after visiting the Birla temple, and asks the Polish ambassador about his opinion – the reply is short: “Birla temple? . . . it is horrendous architectural kitsch” (Koehler 58-59)<sup>344</sup>.

Clearly, reporters apply to Indian monuments their own, Western ideas of beauty – and those, as Umberto Eco demonstrated, are relative and changeable over time (*On Beauty*, 8-12). If, as underlines Eco, Beauty is associated with Good, what is beautiful is considered as right, and what is ugly is considered as wrong. That is why, strong evaluating statements of reporters, who authoritatively divide what they see as beautiful or ugly, or right and wrong, have such a resonance and effect on the reader. What is more, the reporters are guided by the ideal of “high art”, which, in their understanding, characterises masterpieces that are antique and original. On the opposite end of the scale, in their view, is kitsch: colourful, cheap reproductions of the the old monuments. The concept of kitsch is a curious one: Walter Benjamin defines it as something that offers instantaneous emotional gratification without intellectual effort, without the requirement of distance, without sublimation” (Menninghaus 41). Also, it presents no difficulties in interpretation and it is a simple invitation to wallow in sentiment (Menninghaus 41). What is more, kitsch is seen as a form of popular art that transcends social norms and defies taboos with its lack of classic beauty, proportion, choice of colours of style. Reporters are disappointed by “kitschy” temples, because they do not match **their** expectations of beauty. But, once again, they look at this issue from a Eurocentric point of view: they do not realise that the temples are not built to merely please the tourists’ eyes, but they serve as places of worship for the local believers.

Not only temples provoke such unhesitant reactions. Górnicki arrives to Hardwar and walks around the town, observing the stalls full of cheap souvenirs, that he quickly qualifies as “zakopiańszczyzna” (222) – meaning the souvenirs sold at the market of Zakopane, a popular resort in Polish Tatra mountains. Although souvenirs produced by the Polish highlanders are hardly items of high quality, Górnicki says that compared to the Indian souvenirs, they are examples of tasteful artwork (222). The reporter notices the following items: “glass beads *made in Czechoslovakia*”, fruits, peanuts, copper plates, “keys to some unknown doors”<sup>345</sup>, toilet paper, and pictures of Mahatma Gandhi, “at least not printed at [the banks] of Veltava [Czech

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<sup>343</sup> “Nie odznacza się także rozmachem ani pięknem architektonicznym, wygląda raczej tak, jakby była zlepkiem stu małych i brzydkich miasteczek” (Giełżyński 57).

<sup>344</sup> “ – Świątynia Birły? – mówi krótko. – To okropny kicz architektoniczny” (58-59).

<sup>345</sup> “Bisiory szklanych paciorków *made in Czechoslovakia*. . . klucze nikt nie wie do czego . . .” (Górnicki 222-223).

river]” (222)<sup>346</sup>. These products are for Górnicki the synonym of kitsch, cheapness, and poor quality. By referring to beads “made in Czechoslovakia” and pictures of Gandhi that could be printed also in the Czech capital, he underlines their lack of authenticity. The reporter notices stands with devotional products. “Among the holy pictures, there are mostly two main conventions: either the wild, Hindu-Buddhist monsters, or the “sweet realism”, similar to our church fair pictures of girls on sofas, floating on ponds full of swans and wild lilies.” (*Na drogach...* 44)<sup>347</sup>. Upon entering a shop, the salesman shows “Konarak-themed pictures, tawdry and purely commercial” (44)<sup>348</sup>. Fully disgusted with the religious commercialism, Górnicki forms a very negative opinion of the pilgrimage town of Hardwar. He qualifies Hardwar as a “gigantic open-air show, a monstrous church fair” (224)<sup>349</sup> and concludes his description by saying that everything there “reeks of plaster, whole-sale and cheapness” (225)<sup>350</sup>. It reminds him of similar phenomena in his own country. He does not appreciate church fairs as religious gatherings in general, but also, in a rather elitist manner, he shows contempt for everything that is not elegant, stylish and artistic. In fact, the Polish term “odpust” (meaning “church fair”) is often used as a synonym to kitsch.

### **Critique of Pilgrimage Places**

Apart from the aesthetic displeasure of reporters at the sight of various Indian temples, cities and products, their accounts are also critical of people encountered at the “holy places” and their attitudes. According to Putrament, the movement of people at the temple resembles a conveyor belt – the faithful come in, see the “holy man”, and come out:

What constitutes the most valuable aspect of a strictly religious act is the reflection, meditation, an attempt to look into one’s self and a confrontation with something beyond the self, some non-human element of the scale. What kind of reflection can be possible in this stream, when all the attention is focussed on looking on the right, on the statue of Shiva, and [looking] down, on one’s legs, to avoid bumping into the person ahead? The religious act disappears, and what remains is only the act of satisfying one’s own curiosity, like at an art exhibition, not to mention worse comparisons. (*Na drogach. . . 20*)<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> “Wyjątkowo nie drukowany nad Weltawą” (Górnicki 223).

<sup>347</sup> “Są tu głównie obrazki święte, w dwóch konwencjach: albo dzikiej, indobuddyjskiej maszkary, albo ‘słodkiego realizmu’, podobnego do naszych kiermaszowych obrazków z dziewczynami na kanapach, pływających po stawach pełnych łabędzi i dzikich lili” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 44).

<sup>348</sup> “handlarz pokazuje współczesne wariacje tematyki konarackiej, tandetne i wyłącznie komercyjne” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 44).

<sup>349</sup> “gigantyczny ‘show’ w plenerze, odpust-monstre” (Górnicki 224).

<sup>350</sup> “Wszystko to nadto trąci gipsem, hurtem i taniością” (Górnicki 225).

<sup>351</sup> “W akcie ściśle religijnym to, co jest najcenniejsze – to zaduma, medytacja, próba zajrzenia wewnątrz siebie i konfrontacji z czymś poza sobą, jakąś jednostką miary pozaludzkiej. Jakaż tu może być zaduma w tym potoku, gdy cała uwaga podzielona jest między gapienie się na prawo, na posąg Sziwy i pod nogi, żeby się nie potknąć o

Putrament is unimpressed about the emptiness and soullessness of the ritual, he criticises the popular attitudes, seeing them as superficial and thoughtless. Górnicki expresses a similar feeling of disappointment, but in even more negative terms:

All this horrible church-fair in the worst of tastes, the holy rivers and the holy ponds, parades of lice-ridden dervishes, the uproar, the stench and the hysteria of mass pilgrimages – they are solely an embarrassing show, in which ignorance and cynical business play the leading roles. The mass rallies in Benares of Hardwar actually have as much in common with the subtle ruminations of Eastern thinkers, as the Bernardine monks of Kalwaria with Mounier or Maritain. Where were your exotic, naïve travellers of the past century? . . . The only impressive aspects here are the beards of the astrologers and the ugliness of temples that is so absolute, that it is almost fascinating. But it is a poor proof for the “universal need of the absolute”. One should rather discuss on the need of enlightenment and hygiene. (228)<sup>352</sup>

Clearly, Górnicki is averse to all the Hindu places of worship and the idea of pilgrimage as such. He associates the “holy sites” with filth, lack of hygiene, ugliness, “bad taste”, irrationality and hysteria. Overall, he finds “rational” concepts, such as “enlightenment and hygiene” more important. It is a paradox that the two reporters who are otherwise champions of atheism, criticise the religious sites for their lack of spirituality. Although, as it seems, they are not believers themselves, they still look for the sublime and the metaphysical.

More importantly, criticising religion in India provides the reporters with an opportunity to present all religions in a negative light. Górnicki contrasts what he perceives as shallow spirituality with real spirituality, giving as example Hardwar and Kalwaria (Polish religious site) on the one hand, and Eastern thinkers, Mounier and Maritain on the other hand. The latter two were Catholic philosophers, but – incidentally – leftist ones, hence more acceptable for a socialist reporter. Górnicki clearly pursues here a domestic agenda, showing the superiority of leftist French Catholics over the Benedictine monks of Kalwaria (opposed to the communist regime). He is particularly inclined to comparing Indian pilgrimage sites with the Polish ones. He even calls Hardwar a “Częstochowa at the shores of the Ganges”. The Polish town of Częstochowa is the destination of Catholic pilgrimages due to a monastery

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poprzednika? Akt religijny znika, zostaje akt zaspokojenia ciekawości, jak na wystawie sztuki, żeby nie szukać gorszych porównań” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 20).

<sup>352</sup> “. . . cały ten koszmarny odpust w najgorszym stylu, święte rzeki i święte sadzawki, rewie zawszonych derwiszów, wrzask, smród i histeria masowych pielgrzymek – są wyłącznie żenującym widowiskiem, w którym ciemnota i cyniczny byznes grają główne role. Masówki w Benaresie czy Hardwarze mają akurat tyle samo wspólnych cech z subtelnymi dywagacjami wschodnich myślicieli, co kalwaryjscy bernardyni z Mounierem czy Maritainem. Gdzieżeście tutaj zauważyli egzotykę, naiwni podróżnicy z zeszłego wieku? . . . Jedyne, co tu jest naprawdę imponujące, to brody astrologów i brzydota świątyń tak bezwzględna, że aż urzekająca. Ale kiepski to dowód na ‘ogólnoludzką potrzebę absolutu’. Należałoby raczej rozprawiać o potrzebie oświaty i higieny” (Górnicki 228).

where a “holy picture” of Saint Mary can be found. Górnicki sees many similarities between the two localities. When wondering across Hardwar, he concludes that “[A]ll of this is very exotic, but the atmosphere of this place persistently reminds of something...” (223)<sup>353</sup>. He further explains his point:

It is difficult to deny that a certain country between Bug and Oder rivers is a rather unfortunate place for such critical reflections on the pilgrimages near the Ganges. One should honestly admit that the Częstochowa and Kalwaria events cause the same kind of distaste and feeling of strangeness among the visitors from Western Europe, as the ones that a Pole feels in Hardwar. If some hysteria-meters and smell-measures could be used, who knows whether this comparison would be favourable to the Hardwar on the shores of Vistula river. (228)<sup>354</sup>

Hence, Polish pilgrimage sites are for Górnicki not very much different from the Indian ones. The same kind of attitudes that appear to the reporter as “fanatical” and “hysterical” can be found in India and in Poland. In his reportage, he is also critical of the role of Catholic Church in Kerala. In this passage, once again, the critique of Hindu religious sites is for Górnicki a way of criticising the Polish church. It is not surprising given the historical and political context of Górnicki’s times. In communist Poland the Church was one of the key opponents of the regime. While some individual priests would collaborate with the communist authorities, many would support the opposition, allow for unofficial meetings of intellectuals at their premises and present alternative versions of history than the one taught at school. Undermining the position that the Catholic Church had at the time in Polish society was an important goal for the propaganda, and thus the reporters’ criticism of religion would be encouraged.

In spite of that, it is hard to disagree with the reporters’ critical, or at least ironic take on the “church fairs” and commercialisation of pilgrimages (cf Reader, 2013; Katic et al., 2014, Eade et al., 2014). In the years after the fall of communism, Poland experienced an outbreak of religious activity, resulting in numerous new churches and pilgrimage sites being built. Curiously, the style of many of them was a “continuation of socialist realism . . . tangled up with a traditional, folk religiosity” (Niedźwiedź 94). This eruption of Catholic architecture reflects the hegemonic position of Catholic Church in Poland and its ambitions to influence the social and political life of the country. The socialist reporters would probably be surprised that

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<sup>353</sup> “Bardzo to wszystko egzotyczne, tyle że atmosfera tego miasta coś natarczywie przypomina” (Górnicki 223).

<sup>354</sup> “Trudno zaprzeczyć, że pewien kraj między Bugiem i Odrą jest miejsce dość niefortunnym dla snucia tak krytycznych refleksji na temat pielgrzymek nad Gangesem. Z ręką na sercu przyznać wypada, że imprezy częstochowskie lub kalwaryjskie przyprowadzają przybyszów z zachodniej Europy akurat o ten sam niesmak i poczucie obcości, jakich Polak doznaje w Hardwarze. Gdyby uruchomić zapachometry i histeriomierze – kto wie, czy porównanie wypadłoby korzystnie dla nadwiślańskich Hardwarów. Ale w prawdziwym Hardwarze, powtarzam, nie ma żadnej huty. I to jest ta decydująca różnica” (Górnicki 228).



their attempts at presenting the Church (and generally, religion) in an unfavourable way brought a completely opposite result. The communist critique of the Church in fact only strengthened this religious institution (Niedźwiedź 87, Meyer Resende xvi). Similar to Częstochowa or Licheń, Hindu pilgrimage sites can also become strongly politicised. It suffices to say that in the last parliamentary elections, it was from Varanasi that the two rivals, Narendra Modi and Arvind Kejriwal decided to run for the seat of Prime Minister. The political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot finds that it is a larger phenomenon called “*Yatra* politics”, or the exploitation of the holy sites by politicians, particularly Hindu nationalists. Thus, the processes that the reporters observed or participated in – commercialisation of pilgrimage sites, alliance of religion and nationalism – have only increased with time in both Poland and India. The secularist agenda of Nehruvian governments and Polish socialists instead of bringing to the society secularism and a certain distance towards religious institutions and practices, only strengthened the conservatives in both countries. In today’s Poland, priests indulge in tirades against atheists and support extreme right-wing politicians, while in India atheists and rationalists are persecuted by radical Hindu groups<sup>355</sup>. While pilgrimage places can serve as a community-building sites of spiritual reflection, it seems that oftentimes they become an important political tool. The reporters’ critique of these sites is thus on the one hand based on rationalist ideas, but on the other hand, their repulsion at the aesthetic or hygienic aspects of Indian “holy sites” is an emotional reaction. Even though on the rational level, they make Hardwar and Częstochowa equal, on the emotional level, they feel superior to the Indian culture and religiosity.

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Although Polish travellers are critical of the “European” religions too, Hindu places of worship are particularly abject for them because of the “dirt”, “naked sadhus” and other “unpleasant” views. This appears to be a common strategy of many European writers. According to David Spurr who analyses colonial discourses in journalism, travel writing and imperial administration, it can be called a strategy of debasement. While Polish reporters cannot be considered “colonial” per se, the language they use in describing India often follows into colonial tropes of Othering, debasing, aestheticizing, classifying, or appropriating. As explained by Spurr, the meeting with the Other is a source of sociocultural stress and the anxiety produced by the unknown causes the traveller to distance him- or herself from the Other, or even to debase the Other (76-77). The anxiety of being confronted with a different

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<sup>355</sup> In recent years, there were even murders of atheist activists because of their views (Rahman).

culture makes the observer more inclined to affirm his or her own cultural order and place the Other at the negative end of a system of values (77). In colonial discourse it was common to present “the natives” as living in “misery and abjection” (Spurr 77), only to be saved by Western civilising mission. The Polish reporters’ texts do not go as far as to present Indians in such harsh view, nevertheless, the element of disgust at the filth of the most venerated river, or the criticism of the cow status does remind of colonial strategies of debasing the Other and glorifying the Self.

Moreover, it is striking that by and large, the elements of Hindu tradition that the reporters chose to describe belong to the realm of nature. Whether it is the cow and the general protection of animals, the naked bodies of sadhus, the yogic poses that imitate the poses of animals, the funeral pyres at the riverside, the waters of the Ganges revered by the pilgrims – all of these “holy” elements of Hinduism pertain to nature. In this, the discourse presented by the reporters is similar to colonial discourse, in which the binary opposition of nature versus culture serves to underline the “civilised” character of the coloniser and the “primitive” character of the native, who appears to a certain degree as a “savage” that did not leave the state of nature and needs to be colonised to lift him on a more advanced level of development. What is more, it is explicitly mentioned by reporters that cows and sadhus are “parts of the landscape” (Chociłowski 64) in India. This way of phrasing demonstrates how the foreign gaze objectifies animals and people, presenting them as if they were props on a scene, or elements of background. These “exotic” aspects of Indian reality are also described as motionless, timeless, and representative of the “backward” mentality of Indians – or, in Said’s terms – of the Orientals. Chociłowski says outright that sadhus “supposedly were always there in India and today one can also meet them in this country, that seems to fit their presence more than any other [country of the world]” (64)<sup>356</sup>. India is thus presented as a land of curious traditions, an old civilisation and an old religion that has lasted, unchanged, for centuries. However, as demonstrated by the case studies, the Indian take on animal protection or the status of renunciants has not been the same in the past and has been time and again revised and reinterpreted. Furthermore, the vocabulary that is used by reporters often bears a negative charge and reminds of typically Orientalist descriptions from colonial times. The adjectives such as “strange”, “odd”, “repulsive”, “filthy” abound. While declaring that they want to speak

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<sup>356</sup> “Podobno byli w Indiach zawsze i dziś można ich spotkać wszędzie w tym kraju, który jak żaden inny wydaje się pasować do ich obecności” (Chociłowski 64).

about India in a different way than their predecessors, reporters use terms such as “exotic”, “mysterious” or “irrational”.

Nevertheless, the reporters’ narratives differ in several respects from typically Western, Orientalist narratives. First of all, at least in some degree, they try to incorporate also an Indian point of view. In many instances they underline that their opinions are based on what they heard from their Indian colleagues. For instance, Koehler mentions a conversation with an Indian zoologist, and Chociłowski refers to the problem of cows “as seen through Indian eyes” (57). Secondly, reporters make an attempt at showing religious phenomena, or – as they perceive it – elements of tradition, in a larger context. They discuss the social and political implications of these manifestations of religious faith, they give examples and statistics. Nevertheless, their general take remains ideological: expressions of religion are an element of the past and with “modern” education, they should slowly fade away. Thirdly, the reporters liken Hindu practices to the ones of Catholics, and in that way, universalise religion. They are equally critical of Hindu pilgrimages as of the Christian ones, and they deplore the emptiness of ritual, exploitation of believers by cunning priests, ignorance leading to superstition and so on.

Perhaps it is safe to say that on an intellectual level, they do try to defy the Orientalist narrative on India, but on an emotional level, they succumb to the same feelings as those of their colonial predecessors. Like travellers of the previous era, they are shocked by difference and they react to it in the usual way: experiencing disgust, fear, displeasure, irritation and contempt.

#### **4. Caste and Class in India**

Western discourse on India featured two most prominent aspects of the subcontinent’s culture: its dominant religion, but also the caste-based social order. Caste has been one of the key aspects in foreign accounts from India, from Al-Beruni’s accounts to contemporary travelogues. Even the very word “caste” comes from a European language – Portuguese, in which *casta* means race. The origin of caste system is unclear: some scholars argue that the Indian society was equal prior to the arrival of Aryans to the Indian subcontinent, but some claim that caste has its origins in earlier tribal systems that evolved into “marriage-circles”, or more complex socioeconomic structures (Liddle and Joshi, Klass). The word “caste” actually denotes two concepts that are known in Hindi as *jati* – “the endogamous group that one is born into” and *varna* – “the place that group occupies in the system of social stratification mandated

by Hindu scripture” (Guha Loc 256). The earliest known references to the caste system in Hindu texts can be found in the Rig Veda, where at the beginning of the world there is the cosmic being, Purusha, and the different varnas (castes) emanate from different parts of its body – Brahmins from the mouth, Kshatriyas from the arms, Vaishyas from the thighs and Shudra from the feet. The ancient code of laws by Manu, the Manusmriti, describes duties assigned to each varna: to Brahmins - teaching and learning, to Kshatriyas – protecting people and giving away wealth, to Vaishyas – trade and commerce, as well as agriculture and tending of cattle. All three upper classes also had a duty of performing sacrificial rites, and the Shudras – lower class – were to serve them (Geetha 7-8).

Furthermore, there are various categories of peoples that would either be considered as belonging to lower class, or to be outside of the caste system altogether. Traditionally, people lowest in hierarchy were called “the untouchables”, and this is the term that most reporters use, alternatively with the Gandhian term “Harijans”. Nowadays the most common word for this group is “Dalits”, a term coined by famous reformer and leader of the Dalit movement, B. R. Ambedkar. In contemporary India, different terms have been coined to designate groups that are discriminated and should have the right to reservations, or quotas, in public institutions. Thus, low-caste groups are called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs and STs), and other socially and economically unprivileged groups are labelled as Other Backward Classes (OBCs). All upper castes are grouped under the term “Forward Classes” for whom no reservations apply. Nevertheless, despite of these seemingly clear-cut categories, there have always been many more cultural divisions than the four major categories commonly perceived as the core of Hindu hierarchy; each region has had a separate system of castes and sub-castes.

Western scholars, according to Ronald Inden, believed that caste and religion were two interrelated factors central to the understanding of Indian culture and society (402). These two aspects are prevalent in many foreign descriptions of India. As a result, in the Western discourse, human agency in India is displaced “not onto a reified State or Market but onto a substantialized Caste” (403). Inden uses a capital “C” to indicate that “Caste” becomes a principle, an ideal, and an agent. As a result, researchers would attach less importance to political institutions, because Caste would be considered to be the main factor of development or the lack thereof, and was blamed for its “repeated failure to prevent . . . conquest by outsiders” (403). Clearly, such a perception of India leads to yet another imagined binary opposition, in which the West appears as individualistic – modern – and the East as communalist – traditional. Louis Dumont believed that caste hierarchy is a practice particular to India and even coined the term “Homo Hierarchicus”, referring to caste as the most

prominent aspect of Hindu mind. As a result, it is a key social trait that differentiates between East and West: the traditional, hierarchical East, and the individualist, equal West. Thus, if caste is such an all-encompassing phenomenon, remarks Inden, then Indians are not autonomous agents, they are not makers of their own history – Caste is (428). Nicolas Dirks concurs, explaining that “caste has been seen as omnipresent in Indian history and as one of the major reasons why India has no history, or at least no sense of history” (3). Moreover, caste is considered as defining the core of Indian tradition, and it is seen today as the major threat to Indian modernity (3).

According to Surinder Jodhka, there are two typical views on caste among Westerners. One is that caste hierarchy is an ancient institution in Indian society, and that it divides the society into four casts (2). In such a simplified version, caste would be a set structure, without any regional variations, changing only when colonisation and modernisation decreased its impact on the society. It would have been eradicated completely by now, if it was not for politicians who use it for their electoral gains, foreign observers seem to suggest (Jodhka 2-3). The opposite view on caste, says Jodhka, presents it as a phenomenon surviving till today, as if “nothing has changed in the underlying ideological structure of the Hindu mind” (3) and processes of modernisation, development and secularisation were merely superficial (3). However, both of these views are flawed and oversimplified, observes Jodhka. There are three reasons why such opinions do not find confirmation in reality: one, caste is not only an ideology or a religious practice, its materiality and the lived experience of caste should be considered (4). Two, the ground realities of caste are different across regions of India, and three, caste was a contested institution long before the advent of Western modernity (4-5).

Indeed, the Polish reporters are in this respect not different from other Westerners. The two views presented by Jodhka as typical to the foreign perception of caste of India can be found in the reportages from the socialist period. Some reporters believe that caste is a relic of the past and will disappear with mass education and secularism. Others notice the pervading character of the caste hierarchy and the difficulty in opposing it. A closer look at how the reporters describe the idea of caste will help to analyse their positions.

### **Caste as Seen by Polish Reporters**

Most reporters, similarly to other European visitors, see caste as a uniquely Indian social phenomenon. Even Górnicki, who compares social divisions in Chandigarh to urban hierarchies in other cities of the world, finds that there is something specific to the Indian caste divisions. They are deeper than simply economic differences of class. He observes that the

newly-built city of Chandigarh, which was meant to be an ideal city of the future, is torn by caste divides and its organisation into small districts makes this hierarchical system even stronger. Górnicki calls it “the modernised Middle Ages” (145)<sup>357</sup> and observes that if there is any parallel to this phenomenon in European history, it can only be found in Medieval times:

Here, all the analogies to the European social relations end, [and] if one would insist on finding them, then perhaps only in early Middle Ages. Only in that time such cruel, hermetic, impenetrable social relations existed, so deeply ingrained in minds. But even this comparison does not make that much sense. All the European divisions into [feudal] states, the iron-strong exclusivity of nobility or town guilds, do not even remotely equate to the spirit of caste system. This [Indian] society is like a honeycomb, composed still today of closed cells, structures foreign to one another, governed by separate laws, living side by side for thousands of years. (Górnicki 145)<sup>358</sup>

Thus, even if one wanted to find a comparable example in Europe, it would be difficult, given the particularity and the longevity of India’s caste system. Górnicki is very vocal about caste that he sees as a key issue in India. The reporter explains that being born into a given caste determines the whole life of an individual: his profession, social status, marriage, clothing, circle of friends and type of school that his children attend, and, in Chandigarh, says Górnicki, also his address (149). While there are historical reasons for such a stratification of Indian society, argues the reporter, it is difficult to understand why this “anachronistic” social order is still alive in twentieth century. “After all, the social and economic reasons that once provided sense to the existence of caste are now in regression”, concludes Górnicki, and adds that “[a] slow, but unquestionable industrialisation, progress of ethnic integration, great migratory movements after independence – they should all precipitate the decomposition of caste system” (151)<sup>359</sup>.

The reporter cites examples of social progress in other countries, former colonies – Egypt, “Black Africa” (151) – and states his disappointment at the lack of such progress in India. He reckons that the only explanation for this fact is the strong conservatism prevalent in

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<sup>357</sup> “zmodernizowane średniowiecze. . .” (Górnicki 145).

<sup>358</sup> “Urywają się tutaj wszelkie analogie do stosunków europejskich, gdyby ich jednak szukać na uparte, to chyba tylko we wczesnym średniowieczu. Tylko wówczas istniały układy socjalne równie okrutne, hermetyczne, nieprzenikalne, równie zakorzenione w umysłach. . . [jednak] cały europejski podział stanowy, żelazna ekskluzywność szlachty czy cechów mieszczańskich nie odpowiada nawet w przybliżeniu istocie systemu kastowego. To społeczeństwo, jak plaster pszczeli, składa się ciągle jeszcze z zamkniętych komórek, ze struktur wzajemnie sobie obcych, rządzących się odrębnymi prawami, żyjących obok siebie od tysiącleci” (Górnicki 145).

<sup>359</sup> “W gruncie rzeczy ustają przecież powoli ekonomiczne i socjalne przyczyny, warunkujące dawniej sens istnienia kast. . . Powolna, lecz niewątpliwa industrializacja, postępy integracji etnicznej, wielkie ruchy migracyjne po odzyskaniu niepodległości – powinny przyspieszać rozkład systemu kastowego” (Górnicki 151).

all social groups, “except of the relatively small group of unrelenting leftists” (152)<sup>360</sup>. Thus, the struggle against caste will take decades, says Górnicki and wonders whether doing away with caste is at all possible, given India’s political system (152). In his words, “. . . the modern form – legal, architectural, and any other – does not solve the problem. It does not change the contents” (153)<sup>361</sup>. And, continues the reporter, the current content is unacceptable (153). The urban planning of Chandigarh thus serves as a metaphor of failed projects of modernity, the architects of which underestimated the strength of culture. Caste identity can manifest itself in the most innovative of settings, concludes Górnicki.

Chociłowski, too, notices the extreme resilience and pervasiveness of the caste system and links this inequality to the idea of karma:

Hinduism is powerful not only because of the numbers [of its followers]. Its power lies in the immovability of its dogmas, and especially the one that assumes that people are born unequal. If someone suffers from paucity – he must deserve it because of his dishonourable deeds in his previous incarnation. If someone prospers – then clearly he must have earned it. This is what karma says and trying to change this state of affairs is pointless. (18)<sup>362</sup>

Chociłowski is clearly resigned about the longevity of caste, because in his opinion, the beliefs that justify such hierarchy will not change. He describes how caste structure negatively impacts administrative work, agriculture and social relations, and notices that “caste is so deeply immersed in the Indian society that even among Muslims, Christians and Sikhs caste pockets can be found” (20)<sup>363</sup>. The reporter admits that the laws against discrimination of lower classes have yielded results and more and more people from underprivileged groups gain education and employment, but in his overall assessment, caste is still a dominating force in the society. Not even in two or three generations, caste divisions will be eradicated, says the reporter (21). He likens the phenomenon of caste to a knot that can come undone only with patience and time:

It is an enormous tie in the entangled knot of this continent. One cannot, unfortunately, cut it with the sword of a law, an order, [or] a penal sanction. One has to keep patiently and

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<sup>360</sup> “z wyjątkiem niewielkiej stosunkowo grupy konsekwentnych lewicowców.” (Górnicki 152).

<sup>361</sup> “. . . nowoczesna forma – prawna, architektoniczna czy jakakolwiek inna – nie likwiduje problemu. Nie zmienia treści” (Górnicki 153).

<sup>362</sup> “Hinduizm potężny jest nie tylko liczebnie. Jego moc to niewzruszalność dogmatów, a zwłaszcza tego, który powiada, że ludzie rodzą się nierówni sobie. Jeśli ktoś cierpi niedostatek – to snadź zasłużył na to niegodnymi postępkami w poprzednim wcieleniu. Jeśli komuś się powodzi – to widać również na to zasłużył. Tak mówi *karma* i bezcelowe są starania zmiany tego stanu rzeczy” (Chociłowski 18).

<sup>363</sup> “Kastowość jest tak głęboko wsączona w społeczeństwo indyjskie, że nawet wśród muzułmanów, chrześcijan i sikhów istnieją szufladki kastowe” (Chociłowski 20).

laboriously disentangling it, although time is pressing. For it is easier to built an atomic power plant than to change the mind of a man. (21)<sup>364</sup>

Caste is thus perceived almost as an in-built pattern of the Indian mind, an unchangeable characteristic of Hindu's worldview, the essence of India's culture. As such, it is hardly subject to change and its eradication is almost impossible.

While other reporters comment on caste in a general way, Gołębiowski illustrates the problem on the example of a Rajasthani village. Its lower caste inhabitants were forbidden from drawing water from the public well. Police had to be called in order to protect people going to the well from the attacks by "local aristocracy" (56). Through this example, Gołębiowski concludes that although the constitution and administrative regulations forbid caste discrimination, the bias does not fade away. "Age-old traditions do not give in to stamped papers" (57)<sup>365</sup>, concludes the reporter. He explains the workings of caste in contemporary Indian society: separate wells, kitchens, toilets and other forms of segregation. Caste divisions are, he argues, more prevalent in the countryside, while in large cities these hierarchies are less visible and anti-discriminatory legislation can be applied more efficiently (57). Gołębiowski idealises modernity as an equalising force, repeating that "the reality of contemporary life – its growing mobility, mass communication etc. – makes it impossible to observe old imperatives and traditions" (60)<sup>366</sup>. The provincial life, on the other hand, is characterised by the continuation of "reflexes developed over centuries" and strengthened by "material barriers" (57)<sup>367</sup>. Because villages are closely-knit communities, argues Gołębiowski, one knows his place in the group and is aware of what constitutes a taboo (60). The reporter gives examples of how strong these taboos are, and clarifies that at their core is the concept of purity and defilement:

A Brahmin is defiled if the shadow of an "Untouchable" is cast upon him. Impure would be those who kill a cow or take the skin off a dead animal . . . All excrements, except those of a cow, are defiling. For members of one cast, it is impure to eat meat, drink alcohol and smoke tobacco, while in another, there are no interdictions in these matters. Washing oneself in the

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<sup>364</sup> "Ale zmiany te w istocie są tak wolne, że żaden z Indusów, którzy przyjdą w tym roku na świat, a może nawet żadne z jego dzieci – nie doczeka zniknięcia kastowości. Sekret jej witalności tkwi nie tylko w potędze kanonów religijnych, sile tradycji i obyczaju. Kryje się za nią konserwatyzm struktur społecznych i gospodarczych. I egoistyczna chęć utrzymania tych struktur przez jednych kosztem ubóstwa drugich. To ogromny supeł na splątany węzle kontynentu. Nie można go niestety przeciąć mieczem ustawy, rozkazem, sankcją karną. Trzeba go cierpliwie, z mozołem rozwikływać, choć czas pili. Bo łatwiej jest zbudować elektrownię atomową niż zmienić umysł człowieka" (Chociłowski 21).

<sup>365</sup> "Odwieczne tradycje nie ustępują wobec ostemplowanych papierków" (Gołębiowski 57).

<sup>366</sup> ". . . realia współczesnego życia – z jego rosnącą mobilnością, środkami zbiorowego transportu, itp. – uniemożliwiają ściśle przestrzeganie starych nakazów i tradycji" (Gołębiowski 60).

<sup>367</sup> "wyrobione w ciągu wieków odruchy"; "bariery materialne" (Gołębiowski 57).



water from the Ganges “purifies”, while accepting a glass of cleanest water from an “Untouchable” is an act of defilement. (59-60)<sup>368</sup>

The irony in Gołębiowski’s words is evident, and it is stressed by using quotation marks both to denote the members of lower caste as “Untouchables” as well as to the verb “purify”. The first one is a word used by the upper-caste, that the reporter distances himself from, preferring the term “Harijans”, meaning “the children of God”. As for the verb “purify”, the reporter underlines the lack of rationality in the assumption that water from a dirty river would be considered cleaner than pure drinking water received from an “impure” person. In this way, Gołębiowski demonstrates to readers the lack of sense and logic in the idea of caste and his personal condemnation of it. He admits that caste system gave Indian society “a great rigidity and resistance to external influence” which “allowed it to survive various invasions over the centuries and to keep its distinctiveness” (62)<sup>369</sup>. But now, it is only a “brakeman of progress” (62)<sup>370</sup>. It makes people believe that their position in life is determined before they are born and they can only reach a higher status in the next life, explains Gołębiowski (61). Such a philosophy of life does not allow for social advance and is a reason for “minimalism” in the lives and ambitions of a large part of Indian population, judges the reporter (61). That is why, he finds that political change should start with a “general attack on the old superstitions”<sup>371</sup>, and a large-scale programme of social and economic reforms – anti-discrimination laws and the so-called reservations are not sufficient (64). Gołębiowski is not blind to problems that arise, such as the replication of caste allegiances on high levels of politics, leading to nepotism and corruption. Nevertheless, he seems convinced about the fact that progress, understood as urbanisation, industrialisation and secularisation, will bring more equality.

### **Caste / Class**

Like Gołębiowski, Ros is optimistic about modernity leading to the end of caste divisions. He realises, however, that it will take time and effort:

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<sup>368</sup> “Bramin jest skalany, jeśli padnie na niego cień “niedotykalnego”. Skalany będzie ten, kto zabije krowę lub zdejmie skórę ze zdechłego zwierzęcia. . . Kalają wszystkie ekskrementy oprócz krowich. Dla członków jednej kasty kalające jest jedzenie mięsa, picie alkoholu i palenie tytoniu, dla innej nie ma w tym względnie żadnego zakazu. Obmycie się brudną wodą z Gangesu ‘oczyszcza’, natomiast przyjęcie szklanki najczystszej wody od ‘niedotykalnego’ jest czynem kalającym” (Gołębiowski 59-60).

<sup>369</sup> “System kastowy, nadając hinduskiemu społeczeństwu ogromną sztywność i odporność na wpływy zewnętrzne, pozwolił mu przetrwać rozliczne inwazje w ciągu stuleci i zachować swoją odrębność” (Gołębiowski 62).

<sup>370</sup> Gołębiowski calls it “hamulec postępu” (62) – a term employed frequently in the Polish propaganda to point at those factors that opposed the socialist government.

<sup>371</sup> “generalny atak na stare przesady” (Gołębiowski 64).

. . . one needs to know that old and deep-seated habits, the ignorance and fanaticism will not give way and surrender without a fight. The main allies of the forces of progress are plans of industrialisation of the country, and plans of construction of a new industrial base which will influence the relics of the old system. (339)<sup>372</sup>

For Ros, it is a struggle between the forces of “ignorance and fanaticism”, and the “forces of progress”. Incidentally, this is the narrative often employed in socialist viewpoints on Poland and other countries of the Soviet Bloc, for instance in Ros’ earlier reportage, the “Steel sources of power”. In that account, he contrasts the semi-feudal relations at factories of the interwar period with the development and progress brought by socialism (cf. Szczygieł, *100/XX... Vol. 1*). At various points, Ros’ conversations with his Indian guides (usually, fellow journalists from left-leaning newspapers), although pertaining to India, are strangely reminding of the Soviet reality. At some point of his narrative, the Polish reporter talks about a celebration of Baram-Puga, “goddess of the jungle”, for which the local raja offered young goats as a sacrifice, to the satisfaction of his subjects. Ros relates the words of his guide:

See . . . [in our country] ignorance is the best ally of the kulaks. Why would a peasant look at the kulak’s land, it’s better if he looks at the sky, where the gods reside. You are poor? It is the punishment for your sins in previous lives – this is what gods want! You are rich? It is the reward for my virtues – this is what gods want! Then pray. Give offerings. Worship the priests and do not rebel! That is why it is profitable for the wealthy raja to offer goats. Let the peasants believe that their fate and the crops depend on the appeasement of Baram-Puga, not on reforms and human will. (235)<sup>373</sup>

The use of the word “kulak” (in Polish: “obszarnik”), is typical to the socialist new speech. It is used to denote the rich peasants and landowners, a class that was persecuted by communists for their alleged exploitation of the poor. Indeed, pre-revolutionary Russia was by and large a society based on a feudal model, but the forced collectivisation of the Stalinist era led to many innocent peasants accused of being “kulaks” to be arrested, sent to gulags, or killed (Pipes)<sup>374</sup>. Thus, the reporters that shared socialist views would compare the situation in Indian villages

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<sup>372</sup> “. . . trzeba wiedzieć, że stare i głęboko zakorzenione nawyki, ciemnota i fanatyzm nie ustąpią z placu i nie poddadzą się bez walki. Potężnym sojusznikiem sił postępu jest plan uprzemysłowienia kraju, plan budowy nowej bazy przemysłowej, która najskuteczniej oddziaływuje na przeżytki starego systemu” (Ros 339).

<sup>373</sup> “Widzisz – dodaje poważnie – ciemnota jest u nas najlepszym sprzymierzeńcem obszarników. Po cóż chłop ma spoglądać na obszarniczą ziemię, lepiej niech patrzy na niebo, w którym siedzą bogowie. Jesteś biedny? To kara za twoje grzechy w poprzednich żywotach – bogowie tak chcą! Ja jestem bogaty? To nagroda za moje cnoty – bogowie tak chcą! Módl się tedy. Składaj ofiary. Czcij kapłanów i nie buntuj się! Dlatego bogatemu radzę opłacać się te ofiarne kozłeta. Niech chłop wierzy, że jego los i urodzaj zależy od prześlągania Baram-Puga, a nie od reform i ludzkiej woli” (Ros 234-235).

<sup>374</sup> Pipes notes that according to official records, in years 1930-31 almost two milion peasants suffered this fate, and about 30% of them died (60).

to the one in Poland (where collectivisation did not happen, just like in India). Not only did they compare rich peasants or landowners to “obszarnicy” or “kulaks”, but also they saw analogies between the alliance between religion and upper class in both countries.

Furthermore, the link between the working class of Poland and the one of India is underlined in Ros’ description of the fishermen settlement in Madras. The reporter talks to a young boy, Kanijapan, son of a fisherman. Ros asks him who would he like to become in the future: to study, to be a doctor, or an engineer? “The boy looks at me as if I were asking him if he wants to become the emperor of India. His dreams go in a different direction: he would like the price of fish to go up and to find clients for [his] mussels and seahorses . . .” (316)<sup>375</sup>. The reporter explains to the readers why the boy’s dreams are so pragmatic and limited only to the foreseeable future:

The caste system tells him: if your father was a fisherman, you must be one too. You cannot break away from this law, you cannot cross the threshold of the small village and escape to the districts of rich people, where kids go to school, and youngsters study. [Such] advance is against the spirit of the caste, a man should die the same way that he was born. Remember, boy, to be banished from the caste is worse than death. (316)<sup>376</sup>

Thus, the caste system determines the boy’s future and does not allow him to change his destiny. The reporter tries to explain to him that times have changed and more and more people demand their rights. The boy is sceptical – the reporter knows why: “[t]ruths brought here by whites were until now almost always the truths of the colonisers . . . They were truths good for them, not for the fishermen from the Madras beach” (317)<sup>377</sup>. However, at the end of their conversation, the reporter hears the following request from young Kanijapan: “– When you go back home, to your country, write about us, so that your fishermen know how we live and work...” (317)<sup>378</sup>. The reporter is surprised that the boy does not want the large Polish public to hear about his community’s life, but only the Polish fishermen. Ros emphasises this fact, as if he wanted to underline the class solidarity between workers of a particular profession.

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<sup>375</sup> “Chłopak patrzy na mnie, jakbym pytał, czy chce zostać cesarzem Indii. Jego marzenia idą w innym kierunku: pragnie aby ryba zdrożała i aby znaleźć dość klientów na muszle i koniki morskie. . .” (Ros 316).

<sup>376</sup> “System kastowy nakazuje mi: skoro twój ojciec był rybakiem, i ty nim być musisz. Nie możesz wyłamać się z tego prawa, nie wolno ci przeskoczyć progów małej osady i wyrwać się do dzielnic bogatych ludzi, tam gdzie dzieci się uczą, a młodzież studiuje. Awans jest przeciwny duchowi kasty, człowiek powinien umrzeć tym, kim się urodził. Pamiętaj, chłopcze: usunięcie z kasty to gorzej niż śmierć.” (Ros 316).

<sup>377</sup> “Prawdy przynoszone tu przez białych były dotychczas prawie zawsze prawdami kolonizatorów . . . Były to prawdy dobre dla tamtych, ale nie dla rybaków z madraskiej plaży. . .” (Ros 317).

<sup>378</sup> “– Jak wrócisz do siebie, do domu, napisz o nas, aby wasi rybacy wiedzieli, jak żyjemy i jak pracujemy” (Ros 317).

Indeed, he thinks that all over the world, things are changing and a revolution against inequality is needed. He describes the worker struggles in Madras in a following way:

People stopped agreeing with the doctrine of passivity and started to actively oppose those, who preach: you must die the same person, as the one you were born, you must be satisfied what fate brings [you] – this is what the gods want. People [now] take their fate into their own hands: in the old system of caste inertia – [it is] revolutionary! (316)<sup>379</sup>

Ros is hopeful: people begin to rebel against an oppressive system. Indeed, a revolution against the system of caste is for Ros a parallel to the revolution against class, and as such it fits the Marxist outlook. Caste system is for the reporter yet another form of oppression of the poor by the rich and privileged.

Another example confirms this: while visiting a Tamil village of Sembattu, he describes the situation of leather workers, belonging the cast of “Untouchables”. He talks about their abject situation, oppression by upper castes, lack of possibilities to recur to the law (as law was made by the more privileged) etc. Ros explains that the Brahmins made the “Untouchables” believe that they are born into a low caste because of past sins and that they have no means of changing their situation. “In such perfidious manner, using religious dogmas, the privileged classes ensured for themselves slave labour of millions of people” (334)<sup>380</sup>, he concludes. Since the poor were determined to stay at the lowest rank of society, “the priests and the propertied classes have denied the proletariat the right to “veto” and any rebellious instincts” (334)<sup>381</sup>. The terms used by Ros are of a clearly Marxist origin, and in this way, the reporter inscribes Indian caste system into the logic of class struggle.

Indeed, caste and class often intertwine, although most scholars underline that they are not equivalent to one another (Patil, Mencher, Bandyopadhyay). Caste system, unlike class structure, does not allow for social mobility. Also, given the economic changes of Indian society, various castes achieve different economic status: one can find rich Dalits (as lower classes are today referred to) and poor Brahmins. Nevertheless, it does not mean that material wealth will free them from discrimination. Even if there exist Dalit *crorepatis*, or millionaires,

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<sup>379</sup> “Ludzie przestali już godzić się z doktryną bierności i przeciwstawiają się czynnie tym, którzy uczą: musisz umrzeć tym, kim się urodziłeś, musisz zadowalać się tym, co przynosi los – bogowie tak chcą. Ludzie biorą swój los w swoje ręce: to w starym systemie kastowej bierności – rewolucja!” (Ros 316).

<sup>380</sup> “W ten perfidny sposób posługując się religijnym dogmatem klasy uprzywilejowanej w starożytnych Indiach zapewniły sobie niewolniczą pracę milionów ludzi . . .” (Ros 334).

<sup>381</sup> “W ten sposób kapłani i klasy posiadające odcięły proletariat od prawa ‘veta’ i od każdego odruchu buntu” (Ros 334).

the reality of the vast majority of lower caste members is still grim<sup>382</sup>. On the other hand, the Gujarati Patel caste, historically considered as upper caste, recently demanded to be included in the group of so-called OBCs, Other Backward Castes, which would allow them to benefit from affirmative action that involves reserving quotas for lower castes in education and institutions of the public sector. The functioning of caste system and affirmative policies of successive Indian governments keep stirring fiery debates in Indian society. As scholars observe, caste system often serves upper classes to consolidate and maintain their power, legitimising it by tradition. Nicolas Dirks states in his *Castes of Mind*, that caste was always political. While many external observers perceive caste as the defining feature of Indian society from time immemorial, Dirks argues that it is in fact a modern phenomenon and, more specifically, the product of the historical encounter between India and the West (5). Certainly, caste was not a British invention, says Dirks, but the colonisers contributed to making it a central symbol of Indian society (5):

I am suggesting that it was under the British that “caste” became a single term capable of expressing, organizing, and above all “systematizing” India’s diverse forms of social identity, community, and organization. This was achieved through an identifiable (if contested) ideological canon as the result of a concrete encounter with colonial modernity during two hundred years of British domination. In short, colonialism made caste what it is today. (5)

Indeed, also in Wendy Doniger’s opinion, enhancing the caste hierarchies was convenient for the British: “[t]he Hindu caste system – more precisely the class system within which the caste system was imperfectly assimilated, awkwardly interleaved – enabled the British to fit into Hinduism as one more Other, another Other” (557). It was also convenient to exacerbate the difference between castes for their own gain (558). The makers of independent India were aiming to at least diminish its impact, if not fully eradicate. The new Indian Constitution provided for lower castes seats in public offices, opened Hindu temples to people of all castes, and called for abolition of untouchability (Guha Loc 2675). Already at that time, the idea of reservations sparked a debate, with left-wing politicians asking for quotas per class rather than per caste (Guha Loc 2696). Also, as Surinder Jodhka points out, the social changes that the Constitution introduced did not happen as fast or as efficiently as expected – they applied mostly to low-caste inhabitants of cities, while those in rural areas could not benefit from the new provisions (147). Again, it turns out that each of these divisions: between castes, classes,

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<sup>382</sup> According to Sudha Ramachandran’s article in Asia Times, the Dalit Chamber of Commerce and Industry estimated that about 30 Dalit businessmen fall into the category of *crorepati* (as their wealth exceeds 10 million rupees).

the urban and the rural populations, the educated and the uneducated, the privileged and the unprivileged, the men and the women, all affect a person's status in the society. These complexities cannot be reduced only to the concept of caste, perceived as the sole cause of inequality in India.

### **Reporters' Personal Strategies Towards Caste Divisions**

As semi-official envoys from the Eastern Bloc, Polish reporters are expected to condemn class and caste inequality. They employ various strategies to this goal, and they are usually intent on proving that they personally oppose caste hierarchies.

#### **Strategy 1: Compassion**

Ros manifests his beliefs in equality in talking to people of various backgrounds, especially to the poor and destitute. Thanks to the fact that he arranges for a guide or translator in every city he visits, he is able to talk to various people and the language is not a barrier. In Mumbai, his guide takes him to the "working class district" of the city, Matunga. He talks to the local brush-makers and points how they are part of a multi-levelled system of exploitation. He is aware of the fact that colonialism had a role to play in creating and maintaining this hierarchy:

For decades, the opinion about this people was shaped in a way to demonstrate that dirt and anti-hygienic conditions are inherent to them, to the extent that they do not realise their situation [as a negative one], that they are protected by their mentality of "people from the East", by the belief in destiny – *kismet* – mother of abnegation and father of apathy, which allows them to feel happy in conditions that causes horror in us; these same people take me by the hand and show their cubbyholes, where light and air never reach, where mould flourishes on the walls with abundant, tropical fungus: - Look – they say – this is how we live! Look – they say – this is our life! (80-81)<sup>383</sup>

Ros is appalled by the conditions of life of Bombay's poor. Although he certainly realises that his publishers and the censorship authorities expect a narrative from India that includes a critique of colonialism and capitalism, and a tale on how socialist progress can change the condition of the people, his empathy and compassion towards his interlocutors seems authentic. Whether he talks to the brush-maker, rickshaw-puller, or the fisherman's son, he is truly

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<sup>383</sup> "Ludzie, o których dziesiątkami lat wyrabiano opinię, że brud i antyhygieniczne warunki są im przyrodzone tak dalece, że nie odczuwają własnego położenia, że chroni ich 'mentalność ludzi Wschodu', wiara w przeznaczenie – *kismet* – matka abnegacji i ojciec apatii, pozwalające im czuć się szczęśliwymi w warunkach budzących u nas grozę, ci sami ludzie biorą mnie za rękę, pokazują swoje kliteczki, do których nie dociera powietrze i światło, gdzie pleśń kwitnie na ścianach bujnym tropikalnym grzybem: - Patrz – mówią – oto jak mieszkamy! Patrz – mówią – oto jak żyjemy!" (Ros 80-81).

interested how they live, what they think, what are their worries and hopes for the future. He faces ethical dilemmas when seeing the poor in Kolkata that pull rickshaws only with the force of their muscles:

In Calcutta, a thoughtful and sensitive person is faced with an unsolvable dilemma, the squaring the circle problem of a rickshaw wheel. If he gives in to the solicitations and gets on the cart, then he cannot stop feeling like he contributed to the disgrace of human dignity: it is a human being that runs in front of him as if in a harness, dragging him like a horse. Sitting on the mattress pillows covered with wax-cloth, he sees the back of the rickshaw-puller covered with a rag, the neck shining with sweat and bent under the yoke of his effort, the brown, fast-moving feet of a runner, he hears the whizz of the [man's] breathing. But if he remains deaf to the begging of the poor – he will have a deep conviction that he stole [from them], deprived them from their meagre earning, and if everyone had similar scruples, the poor rickshaw-puller would have died of hunger on the street... (179-180)<sup>384</sup>

Ros' focuses on the physicality of the puller: his sweat, his breathing, and his tensed body. In this way, the reader's attention is drawn to the man's effort and suffering. Also, this passage illustrates the moral guilt of a rickshaw passenger. A reporter from a socialist country is probably in an even more problematic position – will his readers (and supervisors) approve of him taking a human-pulled rickshaw? Can one criticise colonial exploitation, while being treated by India's poor as a "saab", or sahib? How to avoid being hypocritical and stay true to one's beliefs? It is clear that Ros struggles with these questions, apparently helpless in front of much larger social stratification than in his native Poland, based not only on economic status, but also on lifestyle dictated by caste. To his surprise, it is not only the upper castes that maintain such hierarchic social order – the poor also distance themselves from other groups. When visiting poor districts, he notices that people are diffident of the journalist and troubled by his interest in their life. He is saddened by the fact that the leather workers avoid him and are reluctant to speak with him, but comes to the conclusion that caste oppression made lower castes believe that they are, in fact, "untouchable". He explains it with a metaphor: "a bird born

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<sup>384</sup> "W Kalkucie człowiek czujący i myślący staje przed nierozwiązywalnym dylematem, przed kwadraturą koła rykszy. Jeśli ustąpi przed nagabywaniami i wsiądzie do wózka, wówczas nie może pozbyć się uczucia, że przyczynił się do poniżenia godności ludzkiej: przecież to człowiek biegnie przed nim w zaprzęgu i ciągnie go jak koń. Siedząc na materacowych poduszkach obitych ceratą widzi plecy rykszarza osłonięte szmatą, jego kark lśniący od potu i pochylony w jarzmie wysiłku, jego brunatne, migające stopy bieguna, słyszy świszczący oddech. Jeśli zaś pozostanie głuchy na prośby biedaków – wówczas będzie miał przeświadczenie, że okradł i pozbawił któregoś z nich groszowego zarobku i że gdyby wszyscy mieli podobne skrupuły, biedny rykszarz padłby z głodu na drodze..." (Ros 179-180).

in a cage, when the door is open, it is at first afraid of a free flight” (336)<sup>385</sup>. Thus, work towards social change should be done in all groups, concludes the reporter (336).

### **Strategy 2: Interventionism**

The motive of moral doubt and demonstrations of personal engagement in the issue of inequality is recurrent in the accounts of other reporters too. Janusz Gołębiowski recalls when he asked his house cleaner to show him his native village. The boy was enthusiastic. When they arrived to the village, neighbours were gathered to greet the foreigner and the first thing that the boy did was to offer the guest a glass of water. “By offering me the water, he wanted to demonstrate to everyone that I treat him as equal” (61)<sup>386</sup>, explains Gołębiowski, adding that the boy was from a low cast of sweepers, but his ambition was to become a waiter or a cook in the city. He was pleased that through his presence, he could help to improve the boy’s status in the village.

Górnicki, similarly to Ros, is radically critical of caste, to the extent that he does not hesitate to debate on it with his Indian acquaintances, risking rather hostile reactions. Given the reporter’s emotional way of describing his disputes, it is worth quoting the full passage in the narrator’s own words:

Not once, not ten times, but hundred times I happened to get into heated disputes with Hindus that do not see anything improper about the caste system. Even worse, some are inclined to see in it a sort of reflection of a natural social order, a dignified national tradition, a valuable trait and a particularity of their society. In such discussions, it is easy to loose one’s temper and to earn a reputation of an impolite guests. None, absolutely none of the arguments presented by caste system supporters has any validity; the intellectual poverty of caste believers is embarrassing, and among my adversaries there was even a university professor, a doctor of economics, and a worldly journalist. I do not claim that all Hindus would defend this shameful institution with equal fanaticism; nevertheless, the fact that I met in India so many combative people, mistaking national pride with national nonsense, causes bitterness and many sad reflections. It seems that the extent of this specific regression is much larger than we think. I admit, I was belligerent and tactless, I attacked frontally and I rejected evasive responses. From almost any encountered person I demanded a clear statement: for or against. For I am of the opinion that one should eradicate, destroy and ridicule such national traditions that consist of anti-humanist contents. (147-148)<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> “Ptak zrodzony w klatce, jeśli mu otworzyć drzwiczki, w pierwszej chwili lęka się wolnego lotu” (Ros 336).

<sup>386</sup> “. . . chciał, ażeby – przyjmując wodę – zademonstrował przy świadkach, iż traktuję go jako równego sobie” (Gołębiowski 61).

<sup>387</sup> “Nie raz i nie dziesięć, ale sto razy zdarzyło mi się podejmować zaciekle dysputy z Hindusami, którzy w systemie kastowym nie upatrują niczego zdrożnego. Gorzej, niektórzy skłonni są widzieć w nim jakieś



Górnicki continues in this tone and explains that in a similar way, he admires Sicilian customs, but rejects the idea of vendetta as anti-humanist as well, and that he feels entitled to criticise aspects of any culture that he disagrees with, at the same time not becoming an enemy of that culture. Which is what Indians could not understand, says the reporter, and thought that when criticising caste, he is criticising India as a whole (148). Finally, he underlines that he is not a “traveller of the by-gone century” (148)<sup>388</sup> and that he does not tell some exotic tales, but that his goal is to observe the contemporary life and politics, in which caste is still very much present. He finishes his tirade on caste defenders in the following way:

Phew! How good it feels to finally convey this bitter anger on paper. In my reporter’s travels, I have investigated many antipathetic phenomena and it is time to learn to refrain from excessively direct reactions. Well, [what to do] when a discussion with a supporter or at least an indifferent witness of casteism resembles a discussion with an anti-Semite, monarchist, or French ultra: a glass wall. (149)<sup>389</sup>

Górnicki expresses his frustration at not being able to convince his interlocutors to his point of view. His critique of caste system may be just, but his intransigence and insistence on taking a clear position seems excessively invasive. Ideology aside, as a foreigner, a tourist, it is not the reporters place to convince Indians to change their customs – doing so is another form of imposing his Western viewpoint on another culture.

### **Strategy 3: Acceptance**

Nevertheless, such vociferous stand against caste is not shared by all reporters. Wojciech Giełżyński accepts that as a white tourist, his position is a rather privileged one, and he is satisfied with this state of affairs. He explains that “every European, in order to live normally in India, must have several servants. One is not enough. A cook makes food, but he

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odzwierciedlenie naturalnego porządku społecznego, godną tradycję narodową, cenną właściwość i odrębność swego społeczeństwa. Łatwo w takich dyskusjach stracić panowanie nad sobą i zasłużyć na miano niegrzecznego gościa. Żaden, ale to żaden argument zwolenników systemu kastowego nie zawiera nawet cienia słuszności; ubóstwo intelektualne wyznawców kastowości jest żenujące, a wśród moich adwersarzy znalazł się również profesor uniwersytetu, docent – doktor ekonomii – i bywały w świecie dziennikarz. Nie twierdzą, że wszyscy Hindusi z jednakowym fanatyzmem skłonni są bronić tej haniebnej instytucji; fakt jednak, że spotkałem w Indiach aż tylu zaperzonych ludzi, mylących dumę narodową z brednią narodową, przyprawia o rozgoryczenie i mnóstwo smutnych refleksji. Zdaje się, że obszary tego specyficznego wstecznicstwa są znacznie większe, niż sądzimy. Byłem, przyznaję, napastliwy i nietaktowny, atakowałem frontalnie i odrzucałem wykrętne odpowiedzi. Domagałem się od każdego niemal napotkanego człowieka wyraźnego stanowiska: za lub przeciw. Jestem bowiem zdania, że należy tępić, niszczyć i wyszydzać takie tradycje narodowe, które zawierają w sobie treści antyhumanistyczne” (Górnicki 148).

<sup>388</sup> “. . . nie jestem podróżnikiem z zeszłego stulecia. . .” (Górnicki 148)

<sup>389</sup> “Uff! Dobrze, że tę zapiekłą złość można wreszcie przerzucić na papier. Śledziłem już w reporterskich włączkach różne antypatyczne zjawiska i czas byłby odwyknąć od nadmiernie bezpośrednich reakcji. Cóż, kiedy dyskusja ze zwolennikiem czy przynajmniej indyferentnym świadkiem kastowości przypomina dyskusję z antysemitą, monarchistą, lub francuskim ultrasem: szklana ściana” (Górnicki 149).

will never agree to wash dirty dishes – that is the job of a “sweeper” of a lower caste” (23)<sup>390</sup>. He warns the readers of the consequences of not respecting this order. He recounts the story of a certain Pole, new to India, who immediately “fraternised himself” (23)<sup>391</sup> with his cook. What happened then?

. . . [The cook] confessed that he has very progressive, socialist, or even almost communist views. They talked about this and that, exchanged similar opinions on political topics. The following day, the cook did not make dinner, and sat comfortably in the living room: after all, if both of them are progressive and both believe in the principle of equality of all people, why would one serve another? (24)<sup>392</sup>

This story sounds less like a real event and more as a cautionary tale told to those who would be inclined to transgress the boundaries of the social order. Giełżyński ridicules the idealism and naiveté of the fellow Polish citizen. Conveniently, it puts himself in a position of an experienced, slightly cynical traveller that knows better how to avoid being fooled. To his mind, caste system is an unintelligible “abracadabra” (61)<sup>393</sup>, a mix of beliefs, traditions, uses, diets and other forms of behaviour that seems to him irrational. Although he is critical of caste divisions, he sees it as a hierarchy which, like many other elements of Indian tradition, should fade away on its own, because of the advent of modernity. He notices certain signs of change already, because of the influence of schooling, “radio propaganda” (62), and especially because of urbanisation. Giełżyński is convinced, however, that it will take years, “maybe entire generations” (62)<sup>394</sup>. Although India introduced a “progressive constitution”, it will not “transform human mentality” nor “end superstitions” (62)<sup>395</sup>. Hence, Giełżyński as a traveller accepts the workings of caste, although he believes it is a custom that should slowly die out.

#### **Strategy 4: Instrumentalization**

Although rejecting the idea of caste, Gołębiowski at times does not hesitate to use the principle of caste divisions to his advantage: “[s]ometimes I would be offered a dish that

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<sup>390</sup> “Každy Europejczyk musi mieć w Indiach, żeby móc normalnie żyć, parę osób służby. Jedna nie wystarczy. Kucharz gotuje, ale za żadne skarby nie zgodzi się umyć brudnych naczyń, od tego jest ‘sweeper’ z niższej kasty” (Giełżyński 23).

<sup>391</sup> “spoufalił się” (Giełżyński 24).

<sup>392</sup> “. . . ten wyznał mu, że jest bardzo postępowych, socjalistycznych, a nawet prawie komunistycznych przekonani. Pogadali o tym i owym, wymienili zgodne opinie na tematy polityczne. Na drugi dzień kucharz nie ugotował obiadu i rozsiadł się w salonie: przecież, skoro obaj są postępowi i obaj wyznają zasadę równości wszystkich ludzi, dlaczego jeden ma obsługiwać drugiemu?” (Giełżyński 24).

<sup>393</sup> “abracadabra” (Giełżyński 61).

<sup>394</sup> “Wiele jeszcze lat potrzeba, może całych pokoleń, by w Indiach wygasła pamięć o systemie kastowym i jego regułach” (Giełżyński 62).

<sup>395</sup> “Postępowa konstytucja nie zdołała przeobrazić ludzkiej mentalności, znieść przesądów. Nie znaczy to jednak, że nic się w Indiach pod tym względem nie zmienia. Wpływ szkoły, propagandy radiowej, a zwłaszcza życie w wielkich miastach, gdzie można ukryć swoje kastowe pochodzenie, powoli przeobraża stare nawyki i osłabia rygory systemu kastowego” (Giełżyński 62).

already by its look would cause nausea. Then, it was enough to say that “my caste” does not allow me to eat this food and such refusal would be accepted with full understanding” (61)<sup>396</sup>. This use of “caste” as a tourists’ ruse is on the one hand a way to subvert the oppressive character of this tradition, and turn it into a mere excuse, but on the other hand, it could be perceived as an arrogant behaviour of a foreigner. Even though Gołębiowski claims that his explanation was met with “full understanding”, one can assume that most Indians know that caste divisions do not exist in Europe and they are aware that the foreigner uses this concept without understanding it. Also, Gołębiowski’s take on caste sometimes lacks consistency – if he completely rejects the concept, then he should not make excuses based on that very concept of caste.

In fact, Gołębiowski is the only reporter who describes how he felt isolated, if not discriminated, because of the fact that he was not an upper-caste Indian. Once, he spent a few days in the house of a public administration employee, a Brahmin. The reporter was not surprised that the family was vegetarian, but something else puzzled him:

I could not understand, at first, why they served me meals separately. When I asked, they would usually say that they have already eaten. I finally figured out that in spite of apparent modernity in their lifestyle, my hosts did not do away with their aversion to eating meals with a man of an “unknown caste”. (60)<sup>397</sup>

Therefore, Gołębiowski not only criticises caste, but positions himself at the receiving end of caste discrimination, together with those who are excluded from something because of caste. Surely, his position in India as a foreign journalist was still a privileged one, but in telling this story, he could express his solidarity with those who experience various exclusions based on their supposed “lack of caste” on an everyday basis.

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As demonstrated in the examples above, the view that caste is a key element of Indian culture is shared by most Polish reporters from the communist period. Indian society appears to them as inherently hierarchical. Arjun Appadurai identifies three ways in which Westerners think about hierarchy (41). Firstly, they have the urge to essentialize caste, a strategy described also earlier in this chapter. Secondly, there is a tendency to exoticise Indians by stressing the

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<sup>396</sup> “Czasem na przykład częstowano mnie potrawą, która samym swym wyglądem wywoływała mdłości. Wystarczyło wtedy powiedzieć, że ‘moja kasta’ zabrania mi jedzenia danej potrawy, i odmowa traktowana była z pełną wyrozumiałością” (Gołębiowski 61).

<sup>397</sup> “Nie mogłem się . . . początkowo zorientować, dlaczego posiłki podawano mi zawsze osobno. Na pytania dostawałem z reguły odpowiedź, że gospodarze już jedli. Domyśliłem się w końcu, że mimo pozorów nowoczesności w sposobie życia moi gospodarze nie wyzbyli się awersji do spożywania posiłków wspólnie z człowiekiem ‘obcym kastowo’” (Gołębiowski 60).

difference between “self” and “other” – their culture is hierarchical, and ours is equal (41). And thirdly, Western views of caste seem to be totalising, as they present this form of social order as pervasive to all domains of life. Appadurai demonstrates the popularity, or – in other words – the hegemony of an idea in anthropological research, which eventually assumes a totalising status and applies to any study of a given region. Thus, hierarchy becomes the defining characteristics of India, just like honour-shame is attributed as typical in the Mediterranean or ancestor-worship in China (46). These particularly resilient images that link places and cultural themes, says Appadurai, “all capture internal realities in terms that serve the discursive needs of general theory in the metropolis” (46).

Polish reporters describing hierarchy in India do realise that their predecessors from the colonial era would operate with clichés and denigrate India in their descriptions, and they attempt at offering a different, fresh perspective. In order to relate Indian issues to their readers, they often draw parallels between India and Poland, for instance by presenting caste hierarchy as similar to class hierarchy. Nevertheless, in most accounts there is a deep-rooted sense of difference that divides usual social divisions of an urban landscape in Europe, and the divisions resulting from the all-encompassing caste system. By and large, the reporters fall into the cliché in which caste hierarchy is a practically unchangeable phenomenon, although they do express hope that modernity will reduce the social division. They differ, however, in their reactions to caste. Ros, in an almost postcolonial spirit, decides to give voice to the most unprivileged, interviewing rickshaw-pullers and leather workers. Górnicki’s provocative questions about caste, on the other hand, are meant to be interventionist, but instead, they are antagonising. As a result, the reporter appears as a European, believing in equality, and his interlocutors as natives, trapped in the dialectics of caste. Giełżyński, although critical of caste as a concept, accepts the everyday existence of social divisions and finds interventionist approaches naïve and foolish.

Even if the reporters follow at times Western bias on caste, they do try to present it in a more complex and empirical manner. They write about historical roots, colonial influence, social and political meaning of caste, the everyday experience of caste – all this presents the issue of hierarchy in a more multi-dimensional way. Nevertheless, the reporters seem to be unable to transcend the opposition between tradition and modernity. For them, caste system belongs to the realm of tradition, even if its effects can also be observed in the realm of modernity.

## CHAPTER 5. MODERNITY

While manifestations of religiosity and social hierarchies in India are signs of tradition that the reporters hope will soon become echoes from the past, what lies ahead is a supposedly bright future brought by modernity. Although they reserve a large space for descriptions of Indian traditions, rituals, beliefs and customs, Polish reporters do not fail to notice the signs of “progress”. It is brought about by urbanisation, industrialisation, secularism and technology. By and large, they believe that modernity is a positive force, and tradition – a negative one.

As Arjun Appadurai observes in his *Modernity at Large*, such a vision of modernity is typical of the Western thinking. When analysing different societies around the world, researchers would like to point to one single moment which can be considered as a break between past and present, says Appadurai. “Reincarnated as the break between tradition and modernity and typologized as the difference between ostensibly traditional and modern societies, this view has been shown repeatedly to distort the meanings of change and the politics of pastness” (Appadurai 3). Introducing such a clear break between past and present seems virtually impossible, as modernity can mean many different things and be experienced unevenly and in diverse ways. India is a good example of how different processes of modernity run in parallel. Especially in the times corresponding to the framework of this dissertation (the first three decades after Independence), various types and visions of modernity and tradition competed and coexisted in India. The remains of a colonial modernity project, together with various modernisation projects devised with the help of advisors from Europe and America, and a socialist vision of modernity – all these ideas for development of India intertwined. More importantly, Indians also began voicing their own, indigenous and localised projects of modernity which would be neither Western nor Soviet one.

### 1. Western, Non-Western, or Global Modernity?

In the West, the concept of modernity as a period or a condition has been discussed by academics of various disciplines. Chris Barker defines it in the SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies as “a post-traditional historical period marked by industrialism, capitalism, the nation-state and increasingly sophisticated forms of social surveillance” (125). These phenomena can be perceived as institutions of modernity, and they are “inherently dynamic and expansionist” (125). In the last few decades, there have been continuing discussions on what modernity constitutes, what are its workings, how does it affect societies, does it last, has it ended, and so

on<sup>398</sup>. Arif Dirlik finds that in the thought on modernity, and modernisation, two approaches can be identified. According to one of them, modernity is an intrinsic characteristics of a society, which entails that societies can be judged on the extent to which they are modern (pre-modern, modern, modernising etc.) (35). The other approach is structural, and, in Dirlik's opinion, it is associated with the concept of world-system analysis. In times of capitalist modernity, all societies that are part of the world-system are affected by capitalism, positively or negatively (35). In consequence, the "backwardness" or the underdevelopment, is also a product of that same capitalist modernity, because the capitalist world-system is all-encompassing. In a globalised world, virtually no society can remain unaffected by capitalism, even if it adopts a different model of development (36). This point of view is significant because it reverses the responsibility for the lack of development: it does not result from the fact that a society is traditional, but from the fact that it is marginalised or exploited by the forces of global capitalism. Therefore, the commonly professed belief that tradition is an obstacle on the path to modernity, may not be true.

The socialist modernity project appeared as an attractive alternative to the capitalist one, but, as history demonstrated, it did not succeed. Capitalist modernity, however, proved problematic too, given the growing radical nationalisms, the lack of democratic control over global business, the increasing surveillance and decreasing privacy of the citizens, the destruction of natural environment by industry, technology and people and excessive consumptionism. The crisis of these two models of modernity lead to a widespread doubt about modernity as a whole and to the assumption that at present, one can only speak of a post-modern age.

The erosion of these two forces, colonialism and socialism, can perhaps lead to a new concept of a "global modernity" (Dirlik, "Global..." 276). While decolonization owed much to socialism as ideology, as long as socialism persisted as a viable alternative to capitalism, the effects of decolonisation were dissolved into the teleologies of Eurocentrically conceived modernity, says Dirlik (276). "Questioning of Eurocentric teleology in either the capitalist or the socialist guise has revealed modernity in its full historicity, and 'geohistorical' diversity, which is a condition of what I describe here as global modernity, says Dirlik ("Global Modernity?" 276). Thus, a global modernity would require challenging the previous Eurocentric modernities, and placing them in a historical and geographic context, in order to

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<sup>398</sup> See: Giddens, Habermas, Bauman, Lyotard, Taylor, Heller, Foucault, Delanty.

invent alternatives that are diverse and vary from one region of the world to another, but ultimately form a global modernity.

Nevertheless, if modernity is dissociated from its Western context and considered, as proposes Michel Foucault, as an attitude rather than as an epoch, there is more space for a discussion on alternative modernities. Indeed, various ideas on non-European modernity emerged, in different regions of the world. There were, for instance, discussions on Indian modernity<sup>399</sup> or studies on modernity in South and Latin America<sup>400</sup>. Debraj Bhattacharya argues that there are various ways of understanding the link between modernity and colonialism in India. The first one is likened to the “image of a certain flower called modernity that came to full bloom only in the ‘advanced’, ‘developed’, ‘industrialised’ ‘West’ or ‘Europe’ whereas the colonized ‘third world’ was witness to a partial, if not distorted, blossom” (2). In such a view, modernity is a *par excellence* Western phenomenon, and non-Western cultures can only produce inferior versions of it. Clearly, such vision is Euro-centric and it idealises the West as a place where problems such as poverty, corruption, ethnic violence, discrimination of women, etc. do not exist, observes Bhattacharya. Another view on the link between modernity and colonialism is presented by Partha Chatterjee, who writes that “because of the way in which the history of our [Indian] modernity has been intertwined with the history of colonialism, we have never quite been able to believe that there exists a universal domain of free discourse, unfettered by differences of race or nationality” (275). As a result, Indians would always be consumers, not producers, of universal modernity. The solution proposed by Chatterjee is for India to produce its own version of modernity. Bhattacharya points out that these different assumptions are based on the division of modernity into two separate circles, the Western, and the colonial (or now, postcolonial) (7). He proposes to break free from this dualism:

If we divide modernity into two different blocks, ‘theirs’ and ‘ours’, then the ‘developing’, formerly colonial societies would have to give up their claims on modern knowledge; perhaps some day even have to pay a fee for using Newton’s Laws of Motion that are the intellectual property of the ‘West’. . . There can, on the other hand, be a different strategy, one which I prefer: ensuring that modernity remains universal and global and not the property of ‘them’ alone. (Bhattacharya 8)

Satya Mohanty shares a similar view, and underlines that both the colonialist versions of modernity, as conceptualised by thinkers such as James Mill, as well as leftist versions of modernity, with Marx as their prime representative, had one thing in common: what the

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<sup>399</sup> See: Chatterjee, Chakrabarty, Appadurai, Bhattacharya, Sivaramakrishnan and Agarwal.

<sup>400</sup> See: Mignolo, Morana et al., Larrain, Volek.

colonially-imposed modernity replaced or destroyed belongs to the past (2). “In contrast to this view,” continues Mohanty, “the recent literature on “alternative modernities” and the “provincializing” of Europe raises the strong possibility that more fine-grained historical, cultural, and philosophical analyses will show how distinctly modern values such as individuality and radical egalitarianism were articulated in contexts other than the capitalist West” (2). Indeed, questioning the fact that colonialism brought values of modernity to India is central to the rethinking of the pre-colonial past, and in discussions on post-colonial condition of India. As a result, there are various attempts at thinking of alternatives to the colonial modernity and at rereading and reinterpreting Indian traditions. Mohanty mentions “alternative modernities” and “indigenous modernity” as more appropriate labels for Indian modernity, going beyond the colonial, or postcolonial, heritage. This approach, however, bears the same danger of further dividing the Western and the “post-colonial” modernities as separate phenomena, rather than bringing them together in a vision of a universal modernity, as proposed by Bhattacharya.

In the analysis of reportage from the three decades, the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, one needs to go slightly back in time, to the era when socialism was a valid concept of modernity, and colonisation of India was over since recently. Polish reporters are very openly critical of colonialism, although they seem to unquestioningly accept some of its manifestations, still visible in India. For instance, they praise the architecture of colonial Delhi, the efficiency of Indian railways, built by the British, and many of them gladly stay in comfortable hotels built in times of the Raj, mostly accommodating foreigners. In the first section of this chapter, their descriptions of colonial India, and of what remained of colonialism in independent India, are analysed. However, Polish reporters were not only critics of colonialism. They were proponents of a new model, and since they were sent to India by their newspapers or magazines, or participants of official visits, they can be considered as representatives of a socialist modernity. Even their choice of itineraries suggests that their goal is to depict the political, social and economic change, as well as industrialisation of India - issues at the heart of the socialist modernisation project. In the second part of this chapter, it is discussed how the reporters perceive Indian politics, the main Indian leaders, the Indian communist movement, as well as the sphere of economy and technology. The fact that most of them attach a lot of importance to explaining these issues to their readers in itself confirms that the Soviet Union and its satellite states were actively promoting this project of socialist modernity.



## 2. The Modernity of a Former Colony

A probably most obvious trait of socialist travel reportage would be its critique of Western colonialism. Clearly, it was motivated by both the condemnation of colonialism as a phenomenon, but also by the negative campaign towards the West in Soviet propaganda. However, a number of researchers remark that Soviet Union also led their colonialist policies in its neighbourhood (Thompson, 2000; Chioni Moore, 2001)<sup>401</sup>. In spite of its own, rather imperialistic ambitions to dominate, or at least influence, large parts of the world, the USSR was very vocal about the wrongdoings of the British, French or Portuguese colonisers in various parts of the world and supported anti-colonial movements. The sole fact that Polish reporters were allowed, or even encouraged to go to India, proves that describing a former British colony was deemed politically useful in the propagandist formation of socialist worldview. The reporters are extremely vociferous when talking about India's colonial past and they are eager to vilify the British. They are intent on tracing various manifestations of colonialism and its consequences: in politics, society, economy and culture.

The reporters describe the history of colonial conquest of India, but also describe the status of the last colonial territories, for instance Goa. According to Ros, starting from the first Europeans that reached India, all the successive Westerners that arrive to the Subcontinent can be considered as looters and exploiters. Since their arrival, "violence, like shadow, was ever-present in the march of Europeans, that ravage the country and plunder mercilessly. The traditions of Portuguese sailors are continued by the French, Dutch and English, who follow their suit "(59)<sup>402</sup>. Ros is also critical of the missionary aspect of European presence in India, underlining that religious proselytism and colonial exploitation go hand-in-hand. Asked why did they come to India, the Portuguese used to say: for pepper and for souls. Ros claims that when the "lambs" did not want to get under the "protective wings" of the new faith, the Jesuits would surround a few villages, spread a few drops of water, and declare them converted (99). When the Goans failed to abide by the rules of the new religion, there was always the "gentle persuasion of the Holy Inquisition, imported from the metropolis" (99)<sup>403</sup>, ironically observes the reporter.

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<sup>401</sup> The issues of Soviet colonialism and Orientalism were also discussed in-depth at the International Conference "Orientalism, Colonial Thinking and the Former Soviet Periphery", taking place at the Vilnius University on 27-29 August 2015.

<sup>402</sup> "Od tej chwili gwałt jak cień nieodstępnie towarzyszący pochodowi Europejczyków, którzy pustoszą kraj i grabią Nielitościwie. Tradycje portugalskich żeglarzy kontynuują podążający za nimi w ślad Francuzi, Holendrzy i Anglicy" (Ros 59).

<sup>403</sup> "pozostawała jeszcze łagodna perswazja Świętej Inkwizycji, którą importowano z metropolii" (Ros 99).

Soon, it becomes clear why Ros takes Goa as an example of colonial conquest. Not only because it was the region where Vasco da Gama first landed, but also because it is a territory that in his time is still not part of independent India. Ros underlines that Goans are still not free and many of them choose to emigrate: “In their homeland, beautiful and once bountiful, Portuguese governments maintain ignorance and primitivism, opposing a natural, year-by-year stronger drive to join India” (108)<sup>404</sup>, Ros explains authoritatively. It is clear for him that the colonial era is over and the Portuguese should forego their overseas colony, and Goa, as part of the Indian continent, should join the Indian state – he does not even delve on the possibility of Goans having their own, independent country.

Indeed, a reporter visiting India just a few years after Ros, Janusz Gołębiowski, could directly witness the decolonisation of the last Western-dominated territory of India. It was not an easy process, because the Portuguese were determined to keep Goa to themselves, explains Gołębiowski:

They held tight to this strip of Indian land, even when British India ceased to exist. They forged a theory that Goa is not a colony, but a part of Portugal . . . they referred to papal edicts from centuries ago, they erected in Goa statues for their kings, and they hoped that independent India will tolerate their presence. (100)<sup>405</sup>

It was difficult to push the Portuguese away, because of several factors – the Goan intelligentsia economic and religious ties to the Portuguese, and the villagers’ “lack of political conscience” and “backwardness” (102), as well as because of the “occupant’s terror” (102). In the end, the Indian government decided to take action and annexed Goa by force, proving, according to Gołębiowski, that decolonisation cannot be achieved peacefully (110).

Ros and Gołębiowski, in their reflection on the status of Goa, tend to include various phenomena into the category of brutal colonial oppression. They show continuity between the first conquerors, British colonialists, and the contemporary rule of Portuguese in Goa. In this attempt, they disregard the actual historical and political context, only to underline the evils of colonialism in the face of a current event: the ongoing discussions on Goa joining independent India. This eventually happened in 1961, when Goa became part of the Indian Union.

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<sup>404</sup> “W ich ojczyźnie, pięknej i ongiś zasobnej, portugalskie rządy utrzymują ciemnotę i prymityw, przeciwstawiając się naturalnemu, z każdym rokiem silniejszemu dążeniu do zjednoczenia się z Indiami” (Ros 108).

<sup>405</sup> “Trwali kurczowo przy tym skrawku ziemi indyjskiej nawet wtedy, gdy przestała istnieć British India. Ukuli teorię, że Goa nie jest kolonią, lecz częścią Portugalii . . . powoływali się na papieskie bulle sprzed stuleci, wznosili w Goa pomniki swych królów, i mieli nadzieję, iż niepodległe Indie będą ich obecność tolerować” (Gołębiowski 100).

## Traces of Colonialism in Indian Cities

Although the reporters are looking for signs of modernity, they also describe the colonial past and its persistent influence on contemporary India. It is also a topic that Indians themselves keep discussing: as Arjun Appadurai observes, “[i]n every major public debate in contemporary India, one underlying strand is always the question of what to do with the shreds and patches of colonial heritage” (89). Some of these shreds and patches are institutional, some ideological, some aesthetic. In Polish travel reportages, the analysis of these colonial “shreds and patches” is limited to a rather superficial picture. It is based on what the reporters can themselves observe and read about in books and newspapers. For them, even a glance at Indian cities brings about the image of the British Raj. The white bungalows, the stone churches, the colonial residences... Interestingly, while they are critical of colonialism, they find colonial architecture aesthetically appealing, perhaps because it resembles the European buildings and evokes a feeling of familiarity among the otherwise vastly different surroundings.

Koehler, for instance, observes that New Delhi is a young, nice city, whose history goes back only a few decades, and calls it an “English foundling, bearing an indelible beauty of its origin” (49)<sup>406</sup>. Putrament – although a communist official – is even more enthusiastic about the Indian capital:

A colonial city, designed mostly for “whites”, planned in advance, very green: both lawns and alleys. . . A city in constant development. Extremely beautiful, ultramodern houses, multi-storeyed and multi-coloured. American Embassy, an original rectangle. A somewhat classicist edifice of the Soviet Embassy. Hotel Ashoka, slightly touched with “Hinduism”, wonderful, comfortable, slightly nouveau-riche . . . (*Cztery...* 89)<sup>407</sup>

Although Putrament puts the term “whites” in quotation marks, he is not particularly troubled with the fact that New Delhi was built by and for the colonisers – the same “Western imperialists” of whom he is so critical. His love for aesthetic gratification and his strong rejection of anything below a certain concept of beauty is noticeable at many points of his account. He seems to aspire to a certain notion of “high culture”, referring frequently to classical art, the monuments of Athens, Rome or Paris, and considering himself as part of an intellectual elite, that looks down upon the “nouveau riches”. Furthermore, having in socialist

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<sup>406</sup> “. . . New Delhi jest właściwie angielskim podrzutkiem, noszącym niezatarte piękno swego pochodzenia” (Koehler 49).

<sup>407</sup> “Miasto kolonialne, obliczone głównie na ‘białych’, zaplanowane zawczasu, bardzo zielone: i trawniki, i aleje. . . Miasto w ciągłej rozbudowie. Przepiękne, ultranowoczesne domy, wielopiętrowe i wielokolorowe. Oryginalne pudło ambasady amerykańskiej. Nieco klasycystyczny gmach ambasady radzieckiej. Trochę tknięty ‘hinduizmem’ hotel Aszoka, wygodny, trochę nowobogacki. . .” (Putrament, *Cztery...* 89).

Poland a privileged position of the president of Polish Writers' Association, he probably was not worried about his account being censored. He could easily appreciate the design of the American Embassy and compare it with the Soviet one, as well as express his admiration for Western European heritage and culture. Nevertheless, his anti-colonialism is noticeable in the criticism of British statues. Putrament, arriving on Delhi's main alley, Rajpath, which he calls "the local Champs-Elysees" (*Cztery...* 90), is struck with the ugliness of the monument of George V, placed in the vicinity of India Gate. "What kind of a devil of bad taste has led the English to locate this monstrosity here?" (*Cztery...* 90)<sup>408</sup>, asks the writer, and describes the lack of proportions of the sculpture, ridiculing the appearance of the British monarch. Indeed, King George V statue was removed from this prominent position in 1960s and joined many other statues of important figures from the British Raj era at the Coronation Park, situated rather far from the centre of the city, in North Delhi. Putrament is similarly disapproving of other colonial monuments that he sees in Kolkata:

The English have arranged this terrain in their own way: they have placed plenty of statues of the subsequent viceroys, and at the other end of the field [Maidan], they have built the horrible "Victoria Memorial", an edifice in the pseudo-Indian style, honouring the queen, or rather the empress of India, who once visited Calcutta. They still carefully preserve the slippers she wore here, and other such relics. We were offered to see this wonder from close up. Somehow, we did not feel like it. (*Na drogach...* 16)<sup>409</sup>

The colonial monuments are thus a metaphor for the British presence in India, and by demonstrating his disinterest and displeasure with them, Putrament shows his criticism of colonialism. He is similarly disapproving of the statue of Subhash Chandra Bose, calling him an "Indian Quisling"<sup>410</sup> (*Na drogach...* 16), because he formed an anti-British legion with the help of the Japanese. He comments on the fact that these two statues, Bose's and Victoria's, are situated close to one another: it is the embodiment of Indian tolerance, says Putrament, with evident sneer (*Na drogach...* 17).

Jerzy Ros dedicates one of his chapters to descriptions of Mumbai, giving it the title "The Queen's Necklace" (74). Although he is impressed with the beauty of the town and

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<sup>408</sup> "Jaki diabeł złego gustu podkusił Anglików, żeby to monstrum tu ulokować?" (Putrament, *Cztery...* 90).

<sup>409</sup> "Anglicy urządzili ten teren po swojemu: nastawiali pomników wszystkim kolejnym wicekrólom, a w drugim końcu pola zbudowali koszmarny 'Wiktoria Memorial', budynek w stylu pseudoindyjskim ku czci królowej, a raczej cesarzowej Indii, która niegdyś odwiedziła Kalkutę. Przechowuje się tam pieczołowicie pantofle, w których tu była, i tym podobne zabytki. Proponowano i nam pokazać to cudo z bliska. Jakoś się nie chciało" (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 16).

<sup>410</sup> Vidkun Quisling was a Norwegian leader who collaborated with the Nazis and was at the head of the pro-German Norwegian government during World War II.

enchanted by the lights of the seaside boulevard, he quickly adds that this is only a façade, as real Mumbai is a city of workers, traders, low-level bureaucrats, and a city of the poor. And of course, as a reporter, he wants to see what is behind the beautiful front, probably not only out of ideological duty, but also because out of his journalistic curiosity. He tries to talk to interlocutors of different backgrounds. He notes down their names and other information, and by mentioning them in the text, he avoids objectifying them in a manner that the colonial accounts did. He describes their life in a detailed way, which contrasts with the elegant colonial setting that he observes. He closes his description of the city in the following way:

Above the highway, a pearly arch of lights that gave the boulevard a poetic name of “The Queen’s Necklace”. The quivering lights, reflected in the black, polished mirror of the ocean, beam on the beautiful façades of Bombay. They look like pearly teardrops, threaded on a long string – like true jewels of the crown. (Ros 84)<sup>411</sup>

In this poetic description, Ros praises the unquestionable beauty of the city, but he does not forget the pain inflicted by the colonisers. Mumbai paid a high price for its splendour, with tears and suffering of its poorest inhabitants.

For the reporters, another manner of explaining the sins of colonialism to their readers is to compare the colonial exploitation of labour to the exploitations of workers in early capitalism. In order to do that, they juxtapose images of modern-day Kolkata with those of nineteenth-century London. For instance, Putrament describes Kolkata and focuses on a bridge joining two sides of the city: “A huge bridge on Hooghly, the local mighty, dirty river, a tributary of the Ganges. A Victorian bridge, tall, with a thick network of bindings, clogged with cars, rickshaws, cyclists. A horrendous mix of the ugliness of nineteenth-century London with Bengali poverty.” (*Na drogach...* 27)<sup>412</sup>. London’s ugliness and Bengali poverty come together in an explosive mixture, which causes the tragedy of Kolkata’s most underprivileged inhabitants. Chociłowski, visiting Kolkata ten years after Putrament, surprisingly has an almost identical observation: “Calcutta was built by the English, that is why, a European walking around the city centre or the factory/port district at the banks of the Hooghly river – might feel

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<sup>411</sup> “Nad autostradą zapala się perlista parabola światel, które sprawiły, że bulwar otrzymał poetyczną nazwę “Naszynnik królowej”. Odbite w czarnym polerowanym zwierciadle oceanu światła drżą o promieniając piękne fasady Bombaju. Wyglądają jak perliste łyżki nanizane na długą nić – jak prawdziwe klejnoty korony” (Ros 84).

<sup>412</sup> “Ogromny most na Hugli, na tutejszej potężnej, brudnej rzece, odnodze Gangesu. Most wiktoriański, wysoki, o gęstej sieci wiązań, zapchany samochodami, rykszami, rowerzystami. Koszmarne połączenie brzydoty dziewiętnastowiecznego Londynu z bengalską nędzą” (Putrament 27).

a bit like in London, Hamburg, Amsterdam, or even Łódź<sup>413</sup> of the previous century” (119)<sup>414</sup>. Thus, in the reporters’ accounts, Kolkata is placed side-by-side the main centres of European industrial revolution, it is one of the elements of the capitalist system that they see as exploitative and unfair. Nothing beautiful can ever come out of this system, it is ugly, inhumane and ruthless.

Such viewpoint can also be observed in Górnicki’s description of the banking district of Kolkata:

Morrison and Sons, Ltd., Eastern Trade Co., Calcutta Banking Corp., India and Far East Trade, Oriental Transport, Ltd. Banners – ghosts, houses – nightmares. Houses – delusions of a dishevelled bourgeois: dirty Atlases picking their dirty beards with their dirty fingers, keeping Greek pillars on one arm, and Gothic arches on another. . . All of Victorian London’s endless hideousness, imported, half-a-century ago, carefully and flawlessly. (158)<sup>415</sup>

It is an imaginative, yet very harsh critique of Kolkata’s British heritage. Górnicki emphasises the colonial character of the district which he associates with ruthless exploitation of India by the British, and presents it like a nightmarish landscape, inhabited by greedy, dirty and repulsive spirits, embodied in the form of sculpted figures of Atlases on the buildings’ façades. This landscape is at a standstill:

Since a hundred or two hundred years, the dark fingers of Indian clerks write into the white books the same words, names and addresses. Only the numbers are ever increasing. This is the only thing that changes. The dirty Atlases over the gates and the goddesses from allegories, faded from the sun’s heat, point their lifeless stare at the crowd . . . (159)<sup>416</sup>

Górnicki clearly labels those who are the oppressors, and those who are the oppressed, introducing a visual difference between “dark fingers” and “white books”. He mentions the “increasing numbers”, representing the growing income of the colonisers – a fortune made at the expense of the colonised. In his opinion, colonial domination led to a standstill and froze India in time, not allowing for its development or progress. The reference to lifeless sculptures

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<sup>413</sup> Łódź is a city in central Poland, famous for its nineteenth-century development of textile industry.

<sup>414</sup> “Kalkutę budowali Anglicy i dlatego Europejczyk, który będzie chodził po Śródmieściu czy dzielnicy portowo-fabrycznej nad rzeką Hugli – poczuć się może trochę jak w Londynie, Hamburgu, Amsterdamie, albo nawet ubiegłowiecznej Łodzi” (Chociłowski 119).

<sup>415</sup> “Morrison and Sons, Ltd., Eastern Trade Co., Calcutta Banking Corp., India and Far East Trade, Oriental Transport, Ltd. Szyldy-upiory, domy-koszmary. Domy – przywidzenia niechlujnego burżuazja: brudne Atlasy dłubią brudnymi palcami w brudnych brodach, na jednym ramieniu trzymają greckie pilastry, na drugim gotyckie łuki. . . Cała bezdena brzydota wiktoriańskiego Londynu importowana przed półwieczem troskliwie i bezbłędnie” (Górnicki 158).

<sup>416</sup> “Od stu chyba czy dwustu lat ciemne palce hinduskich urzędników wpisują do białych ksiąg te same słowa, nazwy i adresy. Tylko cyfry są coraz większe. To jedyne, co się zmienia. Brudne Atlasy nad bramami i zwietrzałe od żaru słonecznego boginie na alegoriach patrzą martwo w tłum. . . (Górnicki 159).

is a metaphor of the colonisers' nature, heartless and cold like a stone. The statues stare at the Indian crowd in an almost defying way, affirming the British strength.

Even though Górnicki comes to India when colonialism is already over, he feels as if the colonial era never ended. He stands among the Indian crowd, and suddenly notices a Chrysler rolling through the streets of Kolkata. "Hallucination?", he asks himself, and describes the passenger sitting in the back of a car as a "pink, robust gentlemen with side-whiskers" (159)<sup>417</sup>. The reporter makes an instant connection: "although he does not wear a cylinder and a tobacco-brown overcoat, his neck is adorned with a discreet tie instead of a necktie, but these traits... the blond sideburns... a smirk on his lips... Which century is it, really?" (159)<sup>418</sup>. Thus, for Górnicki, every wealthy Brit in an expensive car is a living memory of the colonial era; in different clothes, but with the same attitude. He suggests that the business ties between Britain and India were not fully severed at the end of political dependence, and the British till now keep taking advantage of India, for instance through the banking sector. Certainly, from a socialist's point of view, banks should be nationalised and left at the hands of "bourgeois capitalists", as it happened in Soviet Union. It is not the only instance in which Górnicki criticises independent India for being not socialist enough; he expresses similar concerns about the lack of collectivisation of farms, about the failure to nationalise the wealth of the maharajas and nizams, and about the strong position of religion in society. It is a suggestion that if no radical changes are introduced, the effects of colonialism will persist.

### **Remnants of Colonialism in Society: Maintaining Feudal India**

Górnicki finds another group to be blamed for the evils of colonialisms – the rich Muslim princes of India, the nizams:

During all the uprisings against the English that broke out in India over two centuries, the nizams always took the side of the white oppressors. Already after a hundred years, they have grown into the Indian soil, soaked in the Indian culture, for they have forged bonds of blood with the once conquered nation. Nevertheless, they valued more the pact with the new invader, the security of their wealth, the limited sovereignty. Never, not even once, in no circumstances have they made at least a gesture of solidarity with their kinsmen. They were vile, cruel, corrupt to the last hair of their devout beards. (124-125)<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> "Halucynacja? Na tylnej kanapce rozpiera się różowy, dorodny dżentelmen z bakenbardami . . ." (Górnicki 159).

<sup>418</sup> "Nie nosi cylindra i tabaczkowego surduta, jego szyję zdobi dyskretny krawat zamiast płomiennego halsztuka, ale te rysy... blond bokobrody... grymas wokół ust... Któryż to wiek, doprawdy?" (Górnicki 159)

<sup>419</sup> "Podczas wszystkich powstań, jakie przez dwa prawie stulecia wybuchały w Indiach przeciw Anglikom, nizamowie zawsze stawali po stronie białych opresorów. Już po stu latach wrosli w indyjską glebę, przesiąkli

Górnicki, writing in his usual, vivid and emotional style, explains the fact that the British could easily dominate India if they had such powerful allies. Muslim princes, themselves once invaders, are shown as greedy and selfish magnates who value the preservation of their wealth and power more than the well-being of their people. In this way, Górnicki achieves two goals: he criticises both Western colonialists and the Indian princes, representatives of the bourgeois aristocracy that the communists were so strongly opposing. The reporter describes the rule of the nizams as the “quintessence of chronic, unending atrocity” (126), and notes that each ounce of their gold is marked with “a drop of human blood and a sea of human sweat” (126). Their greed could only be matched by their brutality:

Nobody knows and nobody will never know how many of nizam’s subjects died of hunger, under lashes, in dungeons; where are the hands that were cut off, the tongues that were torn out and eyes that were gouged out. No one can describe the immensity of poverty, on which grew the fortune of the nizams, because there are no such words. (126)<sup>420</sup>

There is no doubt that reading these descriptions of torture, these hyperbolisation of nizam’s cruelty, one finds no words that would express his outrage. Górnicki, however, finds a comparison that would speak to his readers, depicting nizam and his soldiers as the worst of war criminals. The reporter uses terms and imagery drawing from the still fresh memory of Second World War, comparing nizam’s fighters to the members of the Nazi SS. In his narrative, he suddenly addresses his readers directly, and asks: “do you know the term “razakar”? In Telugu it means a servant, a mercenary, but it would be more accurate to translate it as a thug, SS-man, paid murderer” (127)<sup>421</sup>. Furthermore, describing this regiment of nizam’s “razakars”, Górnicki likens them to “Leibstandarte”, Hitler’s personal bodyguard formation<sup>422</sup>. Finally, the last parallel to the horrors of World War II appears in Górnicki’s story on peasant revolts in Telangana in the first years of Independence. “The wildest British pacifications pale in comparison. Maybe only the liquidation of Warsaw ghetto or the events of Zamojszczyzna region [in south-eastern Poland] can be compared with what happened then in Telangana and

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indyjską kulturą, zadzierzgnęli bodaj więzy krwi z podbitym niegdyś narodem, a jednak swój pakt z nowym najeżdźcą, bezpieczeństwo majątności, ograniczoną suwerenność – postawili ponad wszystko. Nigdy, ani razu, w żadnych okolicznościach nie okazali choćby odruchu solidarności z pobratymcami. Byli podli, okrutni, sprzedajni do ostatniego włosa pobożnej brody”(Górnicki 124-125).

<sup>420</sup> “Rządy nizamów były kwintesencją chronicznej, nieustannej zbrodni, zasadzały się na zbrodni z samej swej istoty. Na każdej uncji złota nizamów ciąży, bez żadnej retorycznej przesady, kropla ludzkiej krwi i morze ludzkiego potu. . . Nikt nie wie i nie będzie już wiedział, ilu poddanych nizama zginęło z głodu, pod batami, w ciemnicach; gdzie się podziały ich odrąbane ręce, wyrwane języki, wyłupione oczy. Nikt nie opisz bezmiaru nędzy, na której rosła fortuna nizamów, bo brak na to jakichkolwiek słów” (Górnicki 126).

<sup>421</sup> “Czy znacie słowo ‘razakar’? W języku telugu znaczy ono tyle, co służący lub najemnik, lecz trafniej byłoby tłumaczyć je jako zbir, esesman, profesjonalny morderca”(Górnicki 127).

<sup>422</sup> Their full name was “Leibstandarte SS *Adolf Hitler*”.



in the entire kingdom of Haiderabad” (127)<sup>423</sup>, says Górnicki. Indeed, the Nazi liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto involved the deportation and murder of around 300,000 Jews<sup>424</sup> and the events of the so-called “Aktion Zamość”, Nazi plan to colonise Eastern Polish territories in 1942-43, led to massive expulsions, child kidnappings, and deportations of the local population. In the words of the historian Norman Davies, “[t]he evictions were attended by unspeakable burnings, beatings and butchery” (61)<sup>425</sup>. It seems, however, that Górnicki emphasises the brutally suppressed revolt in Telangana, comparing it to the most despicable events of World War II, because it was a communist revolt.

Chociłowski, too, points at the complicity of colonisers and the Indian princes, describing not only nizams, but also various maharajas and their extravagant ways. The one of Jaipur, who would not travel without taking a supply of Ganges water, the one who loved cricket more than anything, the one who spent most of his time hunting tigers or the one who had 22 Rolls-Royces (Chociłowski 85-86). The reporter sums all these tales of bounty in the following way:

The stories about the extravagances, the riches and the vanity of the Indian princes sound like fables of Baron Munchhausen, but they are unfortunately true. Unfortunately, because all this fairy-tale luxury was an orchid blooming on a swamp. The costs of the sceptres, litters, golden palanquins on elephants’ backs, of parades, feasts and aristocratic rallies, of whims and follies – were covered by the subject of nizams, nabobs, maharajas, gaekwads, maharans and maharanis. The Indian princely states were classic, feudal tyrannies, some of them had well-preserved relics of the slavery system. (87-88)<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> “Bledną wobec niej nawet najdziksze pacyfikacje brytyjskie z dziewiętnastego wieku. Chyba tylko likwidację getta warszawskiego lub wydarzenia na Zamojszczyźnie można porównać z tym, co się wówczas działo w Telanganie i w całym królestwie Haiderabadu” (Górnicki 127).

<sup>424</sup> For more information, see entry “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising” at Holocaust Encyclopaedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, at USHMM.com.

<sup>425</sup> There is no doubt these brutal pacifications and exterminations by the Nazis were immense crimes, but Górnicki seems to forget about Soviet-inspired expulsions and pacifications, notably the ‘Akcja Wisła’ taking place in 1947-50 also in Southeastern Poland, not far from Zamość, the goal of which was to resettle minority groups (Ukrainians, Lemko, Boyko) from their native regions in the East to the newly acquired, formerly German lands in the West. Surely, the scale of brutality was different, but the idea of deportation of large ethnic group and settlement of another is the same.

<sup>426</sup> “Opowieści o ekstrawagancjach, o bogactwach i próżności książąt indyjskich brzmią jak ambaje barona Munchhausena, ale są niestety prawdziwe. Niestety, albowiem cały ten bajeczny przepych był orchideą kwitnącą na bagnie. Rachunki za sceptry, lektyki, złote palankiny na grzbietach słoni, za defilady, uczyty i arystokratyczne konwentyle, za kaprysy i fanaberie – płacili poddani nizamów, nababów, maharadzów, gaekwadów, maharanów i maharanich. Księstwa indyjskie to były klasyczne feudalne tyranie, niektóre z niezłe zachowanymi relikwiami ustroju niewolniczego”(Chociłowski 87-88).

The reporter admits that there were exceptions from this rule, but he quotes Marx that supposedly said these states “fed on the suffering” and were feudal on the bottom and imperial on the top (Chociłowski 91).

The reporters find it difficult to understand why, in post-colonial, left-leaning India the wealthy princes were not stripped of their privileges. The fact that they maintained a certain economic status even after independence is shocking for the reporters. They would expect the central government to take a more radical stand towards what they perceive as remnants of the feudal system.

### **Economic Effects of Colonialism**

One of the darkest sides of this imperial domination was economic exploitation of India, affirm the reporters. Ros explains in a detailed way how the English started sailing to India, negotiated a privileged trade agreement and created the East India Company, “which made looting and perfidious exploitation the tools of its activity” (189)<sup>427</sup>. Ros does not spare the East India Company in his description, saying the the first pages of its history are “written with tears and blood, atrocity and rape, pillage and hunger” (189). He calls the Company a criminal organisation that was eventually condemned even by the English parliament. Nevertheless, he sees a clear continuity between the activities of the East India Company and the ones of the British Crown:

What the East India Company did by means of pillage, it was later enclosed in a legal framework by the British administration. The life juices of India flew with a wide, unrelenting stream. The British destroyed almost completely the old, famous Indian handicraft and arts; entire strata of population, working from generations in textile or metal business, could not stand to the competition and invasion of English products. The great industrial revolution linked with the discovery of the steam engine happened in England, by and large, at the cost of India, for Indian rupees. But at home, the British would build a new system on the ruins of the old one, while in India, having ruined the old [system], they left behind only a desert land. (195)<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> “. . . która z rabunku i perfidnego wyzysku uczyniła narzędzie swojej działalności”(Ros 189).

<sup>428</sup> “To, co Towarzystwo Indii Wschodnich robiło metodami rozboju, administracja brytyjska ujęła w zorganizowane normy prawne. Soki żywotne Indii popłynęły szerokim, nieprzerwanym strumieniem. Brytyjczycy zniszczyli nieomal doszczętnie stare, sławne rzemiosło indyjskie i rękodzieło; całe warstwy ludności, trudniące się od pokoleń tkactwem lub metalurgią, nie mogły wytrzymać konkurencji i zalewu angielskich fabrykatów. Wielka rewolucja przemysłowa związana z wynalezieniem maszyny parowej dokonała się w Anglii w znacznej mierze indyjskim kosztem, za indyjskie rupie. Ale Brytyjczycy u siebie, na gruzach starego ustroju budowali nowe, w Indiach natomiast zburzywszy stare zostawili pustynię”(Ros 195).

Clearly, Ros discounts any possibility that the colonial project could bring any positive effects to India: colonial modernity is only for the metropolis, not for the colonies. In this point of view, the British brought only destruction. Górnicki concurs:

It is true: they left behind roads and hotels, steam locomotives shiny with copper, the telegraph keys, polished with use. But it was counted that they pumped out of here hundred and twenty billion pounds, according to today's prices. The greenish banknote, call sterling, is worth 20 shillings, but out of those 20, as many as six were stolen in India. Exactly, stolen – this is the most accurate word, better than “transfer of profits”, “inexpensiveness of labour force” and “cost-free takeover of natural resources”. Nowhere else is the elementary political knowledge about the world as useful as in India. Nowhere else the truths of the thinker from Trier received such a rich illustration.” (170)<sup>429</sup>

Although he notices certain British contributions in India, like trains and hotels, Górnicki is of the opinion that Britain became rich at India's expense, hiding this exploitation cynically under bureaucratic terms. He also refers to Marx, “thinker from Trier”, whose ideas find a clear application in Indian context.

At the end of his musings on British presence in India, Górnicki exclaims: “Oh, Victorian England, red-haired, puritan, with your stiff bustle, England Rulling the Waves, England of cruel admirals and deceitful diplomats – you did not neglect anything that would allow not to hate you till the end” (170-171)<sup>430</sup>. This personification of England makes the country appear under the guise of a mean, uptight and dominating Victorian lady, impossible to like. This vivid image is almost an encouragement for the readers to partake in the collective despising of England, in finding all her worst traits and unveiling all her ruses.

### **Cultural Consequences of Colonialism – Racism**

The effects of colonialism are not only present in the economic sphere, but also in people's minds. Reporters notice that in some places, racist policies are still in place, even though the white colonisers are gone. Ros observes that in a Goan church, where people crowd

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<sup>429</sup> “To prawda: zostawili po sobie drogi i hotele, połyskujące mosiądzem parowozy, wyślizgane od użycia klucze telegrafu. Ale wypompowali stąd, jak obliczono, sto dwadzieścia miliardów funtów wedle dzisiejszych cen. Ten zielonkawy banknot, zwany funtem szterlingiem, odpowiada wartością 20 szylingom, ale z tych 20 sz. aż sześć zostało ukradzione w Indiach. Właśnie ukradzione – to najodpowiedniejsze słowo, lepsze niż ‘transfer zysków’, ‘taniaść siły roboczej’ i ‘bezpłatne zagarnięcie surowców’. Nigdzie chyba elementarz wiedzy politycznej o świecie nie jest tak przydatny jak w Indiach. Nigdzie prawdy myśliciela z Trewiru nie otrzymały tak bogatej oprawy ilustracyjnej” (Górnicki 170).

<sup>430</sup> “Ach, wiktoriańska Anglio, tiurniurowa, ruda, purytańska, Anglio Panująca nad Morzami, Anglio okrutnych admirałów i przewrotnych dyplomatów – nie zaniedbałaś tutaj niczego, aby cię znienawidzić do końca” (Górnicki 170-171).

to see relics of a saint, the order of entry is highly hierarchical: white tourists go first (101). He is even more outraged during his visit to a European club in Mumbai, “Bridge Candy”<sup>431</sup>, and his Indian guide and fellow journalist is not allowed to accompany him, because “people of colour” are not let in (83). Other reporters, too, are shocked by such evidently racist, but sometimes also classist behaviours. Giełżyński, for instance, spots a notice in his hotel’s lift informing that the use of it is forbidden to “servants and dogs” (8-9). The reporter is even more disgusted by the discriminatory policies, when he visits a Mumbai bathing resort:

There is an inscription on the gate: ‘For whites only’. The pool serves mostly to the English, the former colonialists, many of whom remained here on lucrative postings. ‘The coloured’ are not allowed in. Although India is independent, proud of this independence, their own citizens, in their own country, cannot bathe in this exclusive pool, even if they purchase the pricey ticket, because this resort is managed according to racist rules. Only recently, after strong protests in the press and street demonstrations, Indians were allowed to enter the resort once a week and even swim in the pool. ‘The whites’ do not come on those days, they prefer to stay home, rather than be around ‘worse’ company. (21-22)<sup>432</sup>

This is what Giełżyński perceives as a true tragedy: even in an independent state, Indians are made to feel inferior because of their skin colour. This example is also useful from an ideological point of view. Giełżyński seems to say that such a situation is only possible because of the fact that the club is a private business and it can introduce its own rules. If such swimming pools were public – like the socialist model would have it – the government would have a say in what kind of rules or exclusions should be established.

Górnicki is more optimistic in his assessment of race relations in India. He notices that things in India are beginning to change. He describes a reception at the Great Eastern Hotel, full of women “beautiful like the Oriental tales” (162), wearing colourful saris adorned with gold and expensive jewels, as well as men in perfectly cut frocks. All this crowd attends a party hosted by the rich industrialist, “king of steel, who survived wars, dismantling, and

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<sup>431</sup> The actual name of the club was Breach Candy, as was the name of the whole neighbourhood where the club was. Incidentally, this neighbourhood also features in Salman Rushdie’s famous *Midnight Children*, as it was also where the author was born and raised.

<sup>432</sup> “Oto znów całkiem inna, ale równie zawstydzająca sprawa: nad brzegiem morza, w Bombaju, piękne, luksusowe kąpielisko ocienione palmami. Na bramie napis: ‘For whites only’. Basen służy głównie Anglikom, dawnym kolonialistom, których tu jeszcze sporo pozostało na intrantnych posiadach. ‘Kolorowi’ wstępu nie mają. Indie są wprawdzie niepodległe, dumne z tej niepodległości, lecz ich obywatele we własnym kraju nie mogą zażyć kąpeli w tym ekskluzywnym basenie, nawet za słońną opłatą, bo to kąpielisko zarządzane jest według zasad rasistowskich. Dopiero ostatnimi czasy, po burzliwych protestach w prasie i ulicznych demonstracjach zezwolono Indusom raz w tygodniu wchodzić na teren kąpieliska i nawet pływać w basenie. ‘Biali’ w te dni nie przychodzą, wolą siedzieć w domu, nie chcą się stykać z ‘gorszym’ towarzystwem” (Giełżyński 21-22).

unfavourable economic trends”, Alfred Krupp (162)<sup>433</sup>. The reporter notices, with sarcasm, that the German is “no longer ashamed of shaking ‘coloured’ hands” (162)<sup>434</sup>. Górnicki explains the reaction of Indians:

And the coloured hands consider it an honour that a man as famous and wealthy invites them to a luxurious reception, something that the English never did, perhaps with the exception of the princes. And that Mr Krupp shares the concerns of Indian businessmen about the development and progress of this ‘unfortunate country’. (162)<sup>435</sup>

The reporter suggests that the German industrialist is having a lavish party because he is trying to buy the favours of Indian elites. In fact, at the time, Krupp was probably preparing to invest in a huge steel plan in Rourkela<sup>436</sup>, in the state of Odisha. It was set up in collaboration with several German firms, but it was a state industry and operates till this day. Clearly, when profit was concerned, Krupp did not mind doing business with those that just a decade or two before would be considered as inferior races by the fascists. Górnicki’s malicious remarks about Krupp serve two purposes: one, to denigrate a West German, and two, to show the hypocrisy of powerful capitalists.

### **Inverse Racism**

Another interesting aspect of discussions on race relations in India is how white travellers – writers, reporters, and journalists – are treated by the locals. This is an element that frequently returns in the reporters’ narratives. For many of them, it is the first time when they find themselves among mostly non-white population, and they seem disturbed by the fact that suddenly, their skin colour matters, they cannot blend in or pass unnoticed. Koehler devotes an entire chapter to this issue. He recalls how, together with his co-travellers, they were amazed by the polite smile with which everyone greeted them. He admits that all these niceties make the visitor feel happy and welcome, until the day he discovers that it is an artificial smile, because when one looks into people’s eyes, they show indifference. When one comes out of the touristic area, to poorer neighbourhoods, people tend to ignore the visitor, not even look at him (Koehler 46-47). The reporter was at first puzzled by this, but then he understood the reasons behind such behaviour:

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<sup>433</sup> “Król stali, co przetrwał wojny, demontaże i niepomysłne koniunktury, nie wstydzi się już ścisnąć ‘kolorowych’ dłoni. . .” (Górnicki 162).

<sup>434</sup> Indeed, Alfred Krupp was known to support Hitler and his company was put on trial and indicted after the war for using slave labour of Jews and non-Jewish POWs.

<sup>435</sup> “A kolorowe dłonie poczytują sobie za zaszczyt, że człowiek równie sławny i zamożny zaprasza ich na wystawne przyjęcie, czego Anglicy nigdy nie czynili, chyba w stosunku do książąt. I że pan Krupp dzieli troski indyjskich biznesmenów o rozwój i postęp ‘tego nieszczęśliwego kraju’” (Górnicki 162).

<sup>436</sup> Rourkela even owes its name to the German metallurgy firms, as the first part of the name comes from the Ruhr district in Germany where the investors had their centres.

Contrary to appearances, the politeness of modern Delhi's centre is not at odds with the indifference of the city's suburbs. It is a phenomenon resulting from other reasons. After all, a European is a guest here since recently. Before, he was a conqueror, oppressor, one of the many plagues of this country. A sahib would demand submission, he taught people to manifest it with a smile. This smirk stuck to the lips of those that had to deal with him. But under the mask of a smile, there is cold. The same cold that looks out of the indifferent eyes of a peasant, a stall keeper, or a pauper. (48)<sup>437</sup>

Koehler realises that as a European visitor, he will always be associated with the former colonisers and it will be difficult to escape this equation.

Ros, a reporter with a strong socialist outlook, who wants to get to know Indians, understand social and cultural phenomena, is particularly troubled by this fact. He realises that wherever he goes, his presence will alter the way people work, the way they refer to his guide, the way they look at him. When visiting the brush-makers at the poor Bombay neighbourhood, he notices how one of them looks at him, "the white sahib" (80), with "flattery and expectation" (80) in his eyes. Similarly, child beggars on the streets follow him, calling the reporter "raja sab", or "maharaja sab" (82). Whenever Ros wants to talk to someone, they do not react, either not wanting to get in trouble, or expecting that he will demand something of them. In Goa, the reporter curiously observes how a local woman prepares coconut milk, wants to ask her questions about village life. But the peasant woman only breaks the coconut and gives the juice to him. "The peasant returned to her work, sure that she has guessed his wish. What else could bring a white man to her hut, if not thirst?" (105)<sup>438</sup>.

The association with the British colonisers even lands the reporter in trouble. Ros went to a large communist rally held at Kolkata's Maidan. He merged with the crowd, but his presence did not remain unnoticed. People started hissing, pushing, labelling him as an Englishman:

[D]espite the seriousness of the situation, it would be hard not to notice the paradox of this incident: any time now, a Polish journalist will be beaten up for allegedly being a war instigator.

In my thoughts, I curse my light canvas hat, the camera, the freshly ironed shorts and those

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<sup>437</sup> "Zagadka nie jest trudna do rozwiązania. Ponadto, wbrew pozorom, uprzejmość śródmieścia nowoczesnego Delhi nie stanowi kontrastu z obojętnością jego przedmieści. Jest to zjawisko wynikające z podobnych pobudek. Wszak Europejczyk od bardzo niedawna jest tu tylko gościem. Do niedawna był zaborcą, ciemżycielem, jedną z licznych plag tego kraju. Sahib żądał uległości, nauczył manifestowania jej uśmiechem. Tym, którzy musieli się z nim stykać, grymas ten przywarł do warg. Poza maską uśmiechu jest chłód. Ten sam, który wзира z obojętnych oczu wieśniaka, kramarza, biedaka" (Koehler 48).

<sup>438</sup> "Wieśniaczka znów zabrała się do pracy przekonana, że odgadła moje życzenie. Cóż innego mogło przyznać do chłopskiej chaty białego, jeśli nie pragnienie?" (Ros 105).

almost two hundred years of British occupation which taught Indians to see a representative of the despised imperialist world in every white person. (248)<sup>439</sup>

Finally, Ros manages to pull out the passport from his pocket and the atmosphere suddenly changes. When he proves to be a Pole, he is surrounded by people patting him on the back and cheering “long live the USSR and Poland!” (249). This instant enthusiasm seems slightly exaggerated in the reporters’ account, as this change of attitudes happens almost as if by the touch of a magic rod. It is possible that people attending a communist rally would be more positively disposed towards some from the Soviet Bloc rather than to a Brit, but the way Ros presents it – as if he went from being lynched to being revered – appears as somewhat amplified.

Generally, the reporter has a tendency to emotional outbursts of solidarity with Indians. He describes his participation in another political rally in the following way: “wrapped in a Bengali shawl, I listen to the words about peace and my heart beats in the same rhythm with the heart of this people, that feels and thinks like me” (217)<sup>440</sup>. Similarly, he feels in sync with Indians when he joins a religious celebration in Madura, and says: “I notice that even myself, a drop of Europe in this large, Indian river, move obediently to the rhythm of tam-tams” (322)<sup>441</sup>. While it is possible that the reporter was genuinely moved by speeches or events that he attended, it is difficult not to wonder how much of his desire of blending in, or showing solidarity with Indians, is motivated by his political views. Perhaps in this way, Ros wants to avoid being called a hypocrite, who professes socialist views and still enjoys the status of a privileged white tourist?

Putrament faces a similar problem: while he admits that being a white visitor is sometimes helpful, he openly expresses his ethical concerns. In hotels, there are so many employees, says Putrament, that whenever you want to do something, call the elevator or open the door, someone is there to help. “You know that he is counting on a tip, you don’t have money for the tip, you are ashamed that you don’t have any, and ashamed that you let them serve you, as if you were an old, impotent man” (*Na drogach...* 15)<sup>442</sup>. Similarly, the writer

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<sup>439</sup> “mimo powagi położenia trudno nie dostrzec paradoksalności incydentu: oto lada chwila dziennikarz polski dostanie po łbie jako domniemany podżegacz wojenny. Klnę w duchu mój jasny, płócienny kapelusz, aparat fotograficzny, świeżo odprasowane szorty i tych bez mała dwieście lat okupacji brytyjskiej, która nauczyła Hindusów widzieć w każdym białym przedstawiciela znieawidzonego świata imperialistycznego” (Ros 248).

<sup>440</sup> “Owinięty w bengalski szal słucham słów o pokoju i serce moje bije zgodnym rytmem z sercem tego ludu, który czuje i myśli jak ja” (Ros 217).

<sup>441</sup> “Spostrzegam, że i ja, kropla Europy w tej szerokiej indyjskiej rzece, poruszam się posłuszny rytmowi tam-tamów” (Ros 322).

<sup>442</sup> “Wiesz, że liczy na grosz napiwku, grosza tego nie masz, wstyd, że nie masz, wstyd, że dajesz się obsługiwać, jak byś był starcem-impotentem” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 15).

feels awkward having waiters around while eating, he sees them looking at his food, almost salivating over the guest's meal. Perhaps it's only an illusion, wonders Putrament, but he is aware of the huge risk of famine in Bengal (*Na drogach...* 15).

Nevertheless, special treatment is sometimes welcome. When he travels by car with three other Poles, they are stopped by the police. The officer asks for documents, and it turns out that their passports stayed back at the embassy. The reporter is relieved when the officer lets them go, seeing "three white sahibs" inside the car (*Cztery...* 114). This example proves that although the reporters oppose the concept of race privilege, they sometimes benefit from the same inequality that they condemn.

### **Anti-Imperialism / Anti-Americanism**

What is striking in the reporters' take on colonialism, is that they incorporate it into the Cold War narrative of rivalry between East and West. They often use the term "imperialism", so that they are able to make a parallel between the British rule in India and America's global presence. It was typical of the Soviet propaganda to accuse America of imperialism and of following in the footsteps of colonialism.

For Ros, British imperialism is similar to American imperialism. After arriving to India, the reporter exclaims: "[t]hose American hopes that in India lost the ground under their feet, still find their shore in Goa. The hopes to get support in the bases set up against the Soviet Union and the independence struggle of peoples of Asia" (91)<sup>443</sup>. Thus, he accuses Americans of trying to pull India on their side and turn them against the USSR, and of being against "the independence struggle of people of Asia" (91). In such view, just as Soviet Union is presented as an advocate of independence struggle in Asia and Africa, America is accused of opposing and hindering decolonisation. This idea returns once more in Ros' narrative. He attends a communist rally where an activist confirms the link between colonial Britain and USA: "We understood: the Americans and the English are one and the same imperialism, one and the same enemy of peace and our enemy!" (216)<sup>444</sup>. Ros is the only one of the reporters that points out to this continuity so strongly, others are mostly critical of both America and Western Europe, but do not directly link USA to imperialism. The bluntness of Ros' statements can be attributed

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<sup>443</sup> "W Goa znajdują również przystań te amerykańskie nadzieje, które w Indiach straciły już grunt pod nogami. Nadzieje na uzyskanie oparcia w systemie baz organizowanych przeciwko Związkowi Radzieckiemu i walce wyzwoleniczej ludów Azji" (Ros 94).

<sup>444</sup> "I zrozumieliśmy: Amerykanie i Anglicy to jeden i ten sam imperializm, to jedne i ten sam wróg pokoju i nasz wróg!" (Ros 216).



to the fact that he was one of the earliest Polish reporters to visit India, just a few years after the Stalinist era, and in that time, the Cold War polarisation was still particularly strong. While all authors analysed here are to some extent trapped in this world order, their degree of criticism of the West varies.

Żukrowski remembers a meeting with Nehru, who was seen playing with tiger cubs. The writer was observing the scene, alongside other journalists.

“An American journalist bent towards my ear:

- He toys with them like he does with socialism....

But what grows, gains force rapidly. The little tigers in two months will be given to the Zoo, put behind bars, but it is not as easy to stop playing with the other thing. I looked at his [the American's] bold, shaved face. He was not joking, I understood his anxiety. They were losing influence.” (318)<sup>445</sup>

Indeed, the concept of a rivalry between America and Soviet Union can easily be noticed in this exchange. Furthermore, Żukrowski, as an employee of the Polish embassy, is an official representative, so he often underlines his political alignment, referring to the fact that people consider him as “red”, or asking a friend who invites him to a German party, whether it is organised by “our Germans”, or the other, Western Germans.

Putrament, on the other hand, is clearly familiar with Western culture and appreciative of it, but he expresses criticism of USA as a country. The most bizarre reflection on America in his reportage is inspired by his visit to Khajuraho and a discussion with a friend about tantric traditions in India. The writer is convinced that societies that are too satiated – have access to food, drink and sex – will become weaker, as their men will become lazy and lose motivation to fight. As an example, he talks about the Roman Empire and its decline. In his view, USA will come to a similar end.

The strange religion of contemporary America, a religion of an easy and fast fulfilment of all desires, all wishes, has an economic justification: it speeds up the circulation of goods on its enormous internal market. It also has its pseudo-scientific base, formed by Freudism diluted into the size of a worldview. It would be interesting to see how the ruling classes of America will react, once they realise that all this social-cultural system is a prelude to a national suicide?

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<sup>445</sup> “Amerykański dziennikarz nachylił mi się do ucha:

-On igra z nimi jak z socjalizmem... Ale to rośnie, gwałtownie nabiera siły. Tygrysięta za dwa miesiące odda do ZOO, umieści za kratą, ale z tym drugim nie da się tak łatwo skończyć zabawy. Przyjrzałem się jego śmiałej, wygolonej twarzy. Nie żartował, rozumiałem jego niepokój. Tracili wpływ” (Żukrowski 318).

I am afraid that trying to save themselves, they adopt some form of fascism... “(*Na drogach...* 40)<sup>446</sup>

Putrament died in 1986, not knowing that it was not America that collapsed, but the Soviet Union. While America's consumerism has been criticised by many, but still its political and economic model proved more stable than the Soviet one. The reporters, however, insist on presenting Americans and Western Europeans as inheritors of the colonial past, as representatives of a culture that is slowly degenerating and falling apart, although it still has the advantage of wealth and political influence. In Żukrowski's description elderly Western tourists are symbolic of America's decline:

Visiting monuments was of little interest to them, they simply had money and enough energy to travel, so they would go around the world. Maybe they wanted to boast at a tea-party, among their friends: ‘India? Of course, I know it, they prepare lamb terribly...’ ‘Agra? I’ve been there. They forced me to enter their temples barefoot, like a savage.’ Nowadays, there is no such corner of the world, that would not have old, lonely American and English women. (272)<sup>447</sup>

Żukrowski emphasises the superficiality of the Western women who dispose of enough funds and time to travel the world. But their aim is not to learn about other cultures or explore different countries – in his opinion, they travel only to kill their boredom, to find excitement, to have something to boast about among their friends. Their attitudes are vain and superior, and they look down upon those “savages”. This seems to be a metaphor of United States' attitude towards the rest of the world: arrogant, vain, and superior.

Observing other visitors from abroad, the reporters attribute to individuals traits which are considered as representative of their cultures. Putrament describes an international gathering in the following way:

There are a few skinny and red-headed ladies and gentlemen, a couple of bearded, carefully unkempt Scandinavians, some GDR-ians, and most of all, Americans. Their women also cling and shine [like Indian women], but less, in this meeting of the richest West with the East, the dominance in external display of wealth is indisputably on the side of the natives, particularly

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<sup>446</sup> “Dziwaczna religia dzisiejszej Ameryki, religia łatwego i szybkiego zaspokajania wszystkich pragnień, wszystkich zachcianek ma swoje uzasadnienie ekonomiczne: przyspiesza obrót towarowy ogromnego rynku wewnętrznego. Ma też swoją pseudonaukową bazę w postaci rozwodnionego do rozmiarów światopoglądu freudyizmu. Byłoby interesujące zobaczyć, jak zareagują rządzące klasy Ameryki, gdy nareszcie zrozumieją, że cały ten układ społeczno-obyczajowy jest wstępem do narodowego samobójstwa? Obawiam się, że za jedyny ratunek uznają jakąś formę faszystwu...” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 40).

<sup>447</sup> “Zwiedzanie zabytków niewiele je interesowało, po prostu miały pieniądze i dosyć energii, żeby podróżować, więc nosiło je po świecie. Może chciały na tea-party, w gronie przyjaciółek, pochwalić się: ‘Indie? Znam oczywiście, źle przyrządzają baraninę...’ ‘Agra? Byłam. Zmusili mnie, żebym jak dzikus do ich świątyni wchodziła boso.’ Nie ma w tej chwili takiego zakątka na świecie, gdzieby nie przyniosło starych, samotnych Amerykanek i Angielek” (Żukrowski 272).

the female ones. Maybe only a few old Americans with their lace hats and hanging chins try to defend the dominating position of the “white” race. (*Na drogach...* 159)<sup>448</sup>

Hence, in Putrament’s interpretation, the visiting Americans are not only arrogant in displaying their wealth, but they also “try to defend the dominating position of the “white race”, show themselves as better than anyone else. However, like Żukrowski, Putrament too mentions American elderly women, who try to their best to keep the semblance of high status, but in fact, their days might be coming to an end.

Górnicki describes his interaction with a different type of American visitors to India. But, he is equally critical of these tourists, ridiculing their naiveté, or even stupidity:

A couple of American tourists: Fantastic! Have you seen the snake charmer? How can they live in such poverty? And how many prostitutes! It’s so hot, hotter than on Manhattan in the summer! Are you also going to Madurai? Why is this Coca-Cola so warm? What do you think about Nehru? Fantastic! No, we are tourists. (171)<sup>449</sup>

Górnicki tries to present American tourist as those who think in stereotypes, who see India as the land of “snake charmers”, and of extreme poverty and destitution. They also compare everything to what they know from home – heat, cold Coca-Cola... By painting such picture of American tourists, the reporter places himself outside of the travel industry, he is more than a tourist. He is a reporter on a mission and as such he has more authority to talk about India. Clearly, as representatives of communist Poland, all reporters analysed here underline that they are not merely tourists, and not only that – they are visitors from the Soviet Bloc, they have no connection to colonialism, like the Westerners.

Nevertheless, political differences can be breached. Putrament remembers having a dinner with American guests in a hotel on one of his trips, an employee of a US gas company in Trivandrum and a young woman from Peace Corps, “a civil, apolitical and free aid for ‘developing countries’ conceived by Kennedy”<sup>450</sup>, explains the writer. He admits that they had a nice conversation at dinner, and they “carefully avoided all sensitive issues” (178-179)<sup>451</sup>.

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<sup>448</sup>“Jest trochę chudych i rudych panów i pań, para brodatych, starannie uniechlujnionych Skandynawów, jakichś enerefowców, przede wszystkim Amerykanów. Ich kobiety też pobrzękują i łyskają, ale mniej, w tym spotkaniu najzamożniejszego Zachodu ze Wschodem przewaga zewnętrznej zamożności bezkonkurencyjnie pozostaje przy tubylcach, a zwłaszcza przy ‘tubylkach’. Może tylko parę starych Amerykanek w kapeluszach z koronki i z obwisłymi podgardlami próbuje bronić dominującej pozycji ‘białej’ rasy” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 159).

<sup>449</sup>“Para amerykańskich turystów: Fantastyczne! Czy pan widział zaklinacza węży? Jak oni mogą żyć w takiej nędzy? Ile tu prostytutek! Ależ upał, gorszy niż latem w Manhattanie! Czy pan też jedzie do Maduraju? Dlaczego ta coca-cola jest taka ciepła? Co pan myśli o Nehru? Fantastyczne! Nie, my jesteśmy turystami” (Górnicki 171).

<sup>450</sup>“To Kennedy wymyślił taką cywilną, apolityczną i bezpłatną pomoc krajom ‘rozwijającym się’. (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 178-179).

<sup>451</sup>“Zjadamy kolację w miłej pogawędce, starannie unikając wszelkich drażliwych spraw” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 178-179).

Koehler, while attending the forestry congress, noticed that when it comes to issues concerning nature, protection of forests etc., there can be dialogue even between those nations who are politically at odds with one another. “A Pakistani with sharp, thoughtful features listens with approval to a Hindu professor with a soft, mild profile, and a stout American claps during a Soviet professor’s speech...” (87)<sup>452</sup>.

Not only can there be dialogue between enemies, one can even put the mask of the “enemy power” when the situation demands it. Ros, although critical of American imperialism, does not hesitate to impersonate an American to get to Goa. The Polish journalist takes the ship from Bombay, but upon his arrival to the shores of Goa, still under Portuguese rule, he realises that Poland does not have diplomatic relation with Portugal and the customs officer refuses him entry. The reporter does not give up. He goes back to his cabin, he ties a colourful tie, puts on his light-coloured canvas hat, pushing it to the back of his head, “according to the best examples of American journalists shown on Hollywood films” (96), and buys chewing gum. He goes back to the customs officers, approaches them in his American-style attire, with a camera hanging on his neck, chewing loudly, and presents his passport open on the visa page. “The officer looks at my tie, with one glance assesses my tie and the movement of my jaws chewing gum – and not even examining my passport, mechanically stamps the visa. He has no doubt. Neither have I: he is clearly a consumer of American movies” (96-97)<sup>453</sup>.

### **3. A Socialist Modernity**

While the historical context of the advent of modernity in Western Europe is generally well known, the same process in Russia, and later Soviet Union, is less discussed. Indeed, Russia’s trajectory was different from the Western one, as the change occurred later, in a shorter span of time, and more violently. From a vastly agrarian society, with autocratic power and serfdom abolished by the tsar only in 1861, Russia transformed into a socialist state with centralised economy and officially (but often not efficiently) introduced equality. Already the tsars attempted at modernizing Russia, backed by educated elites discussing what kind of modernity would be best for Russia (the two camps were Westernizers and Slavophiles).

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<sup>452</sup> “Pakistańczyk o ostrych, skupionych rysach słuca z błyskiem aprobaty w oczach hinduskiego profesora o miękkiem, łagodnym profilu, zaś tęgi Amerykanin bije oklaski w czasie przemowy radzieckiego profesora...” (Koehler 87).

<sup>453</sup> “Urzędnik spogląda na mój krawat, jednym rzutem oka ocenia kapelusz na ciemieniu, ruch szczęk żujących gumę – i nie patrząc już w paszport mechanicznie przykładają stempel wizowy. Nie ma żadnych wątpliwości. Ja również: trafiłem na konsumenta filmów amerykańskich” (Ros 96-97).

Nevertheless, as David Christian explains, the clash between modern economic methods and traditional social and political structures eroded the power of the traditional tsarist state (5). In consequence, the power passed on to the Bolsheviks, who promised a different kind of modernity, which would not be based on the capitalist inequality. Yet, the country still needed to mobilise resources for defence, administration and welfare, which is why the communists sought various ways of direct and indirect mobilisation, which initially seemed to succeed (5). However, it soon turned out that this experiment was not as successful as expected, because the increased reliance on methods of direct mobilization revived the harsh inequalities of the pre-industrial world, says Christian (5). While the Second World War, labelled by Russians as “The Great Patriotic War”, brought a sense of pride and hope that the Soviet Union is becoming an important power, a modern state and a society that will compete with other global players, it soon turned out that the Soviet economy was less effective than the economies of capitalist societies, which had higher levels of innovation and productivity. Moreover, it was the society who paid the high price for the Soviet industrialization, as economy was managed by “one of the most powerful, coercive, and centralised state systems of the twentieth century”, and it created new forms of inequality (Christian 320).

However, the socialist propaganda of success was fruitful in the extent that many governments around the world admired Russian development and progress, and were not always aware of the failures of the system, carefully concealed by the Soviet authorities from outside view. Propaganda, agitation and other forms of “ideological work” were always key to the communist party, who wanted to convince citizens of other nations to the idea of revolution in the competitive world of the Cold War era (Barghoorn 6-7). Behind it was not only, as Westerners sometimes believe, a cynical manipulation of the authorities, but also the “political messianism” of Soviet writers who tended to use the term “propaganda” in a positive sense, equivalent to education (Barghoorn 10). In the early post-war years, the objectives of international propaganda would be focussed on the revolutionary training of working class in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, but in mid-1950s, its objectives became milder and more universal in their formulation: “proletarian internationalism”, “friendship of peoples”, anti-colonialism, and world peace (14). Also, gradually, more and more anti-American ideas came to the fore (28). These would often be disguised under the idea of “anti-imperialism”. In socialist reportages from former colonies, like the ones from India, this critique of America would be presented in parallel to the critique of Western European history of colonial domination. Soviet Union would present itself to countries of the so-called Third World as a supporter of national liberation movements, and advertise its model of economic and social

development as the only truly progressive one (Barghoorn 41). In the propaganda discourse aimed at the neutral, Non-Aligned Countries, Soviet Union would thus appear as a peace-loving, anti-imperialist proponent of modernity, presenting the West as reactionary and dominating. What is more, Soviet Union presented its model of modernisation as a universal one, and promised that it will transform a “backward country into an industrial country within the life-time of one generation and not in the course of centuries”, as it offered “the road to freedom and happiness for the peoples” (Barghoorn 166). The appeal of Soviet-style modernization was strengthened by the successes of science and technology, the space missions, the nuclear weapons, and the large industrial zones. Popular culture, including television, magazines and travel accounts, reinforced this appeal of Soviet modernity.

### **Science (Fiction) and Travel (Nonfiction)**

Development of science and technology was an important part of the Soviet propaganda message, together with a new opening towards the world. Already at the turn of twentieth century, “science and technology truly began to dominate Russian discussions about the phenomenological, epistemological, institutional and cultural parameters of modernity”, says Anindita Banerjee (8), mentioning the voices of such intellectuals as Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Nikolai Berdyaev, and of course Lenin. Indeed, as time went by, a consciousness that science and technology had become the primary driving forces of modern life became widespread in Soviet Union, underlines Banerjee (2). This was in part due to the explosion of popular print culture in Russia: it promoted learning about science, geography, discoveries, medicine etc. Among the well-known publications was the magazine *Vokrug Sveta* [*Around the World*]. It was actually founded still in tsarist times, and by early twentieth century it became a popular magazine, featuring travel and adventure accounts by such authors as Jules Verne and Rudyard Kipling. After the revolution, *Vokrug Sveta*, together with another magazine, *Na sushe i na more* [*By Land and by Sea*] became a small window to the world for Soviet citizens, as it told them about foreign countries that they could not visit themselves.

In fact, until 1955, Soviet citizens were not allowed to go abroad, and even their domestic mobility was limited. After Stalin’s death, the ideological rigidity subsided, and in spring 1955 the Central Committee announced that Soviet citizens are finally allowed to cross Soviet borders, at first – only to socialist countries (Gorsuch 10). In her book *All This Is Your World*, Anne Gorsuch describes the cover of the *Pravda* newspaper from August 1955 showing a group of smiling Leningrad tourists with suitcases, heading for a trip abroad – to Poland (1). Trips between socialist countries were a way to bring them together and encourage friendly

relations, but also to reinforce the geographic divisions of the Cold War. Soviet travel opportunities increased in the Khrushchev era, also due to the fact that the First Secretary himself was an avid traveller - he once sent a message to a UN conference on trade and tourism, saying that tourism is “a vehicle of fruitful contacts between people” and it “provides people with an opportunity to see with their own eyes and appreciate the way of living of other peoples as their economic, cultural and social achievements”<sup>454</sup> (Gorsuch 14).

Travel to other countries was also ideological – it was a political statement. Not only it served to expand international connections, but also it strengthened the “international authority” of the USSR (Gorsuch 14). Developing tourism and making it available to Soviet citizens, albeit it was only possible for the limited few, created the illusion that the USSR can compete with other countries in technological progress (for instance, fast means of transport), and in consumerist lifestyle (showing Soviet tourists on the French Riviera could do the trick). Unlike their Western counterparts, Soviet tourists were less free to move around while on their trip, and they received many instructions how to behave abroad prior to the trip. Travelling was supposed to strengthen their love for the homeland and make them appreciate their Soviet lifestyle – nevertheless, the Soviet state was distrustful of its citizens, deeming only those who are loyal and appropriately “politically prepared” as worthy of being allowed to go abroad (Gorsuch 17). Indeed, the authorities were often dissatisfied with travel accounts even by those writers who were considered to be loyal communists, blaming them for dealing with the “bourgeois” and the “reactionaries”<sup>455</sup> (17). Furthermore, travellers were closely monitored and groups were usually accompanied by a KGB agent, especially when travelling to capitalist countries (24). As time went by, the number of tourists from the Soviet Bloc was steadily growing, but going abroad was still limited to the chosen few.

Nevertheless, it was yet another way for the citizens of the communist countries to be part of a “modern” lifestyle<sup>456</sup>. Travelling, and writing nonfictional accounts from the journey was closely connected with the idea of Soviet Union as a global leader in technology and

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<sup>454</sup> Anne Gorsuch found this quote in the records of the Open Society Archive in Budapest, at the section of Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, 300-80-1 Box 1048 (Khrushchev message to tourism conference, 1963).

<sup>455</sup> Gorsuch quotes a speech of Khrushchev in which he condemns writer Victor Nekrasov, Ilia Ehrenberg and Evgenii Evtushenko for their travel accounts from abroad.

<sup>456</sup> The title of Gorsuch’s book is a good case in point. It is a quote from a 1961 novel, *A Ticket to the Stars* by Vassili Aksenov. The protagonist tells his younger brother: “Dance and then leap into your saddles. . . Dive into the depths of the sea, climb mountains, fear nothing, all this is your world” (18). This statement conveys the idea that Soviet travellers can embrace the whole world, can feel part of the global modernity at par with citizens of other countries. It is thus a particularly relevant title to Gorsuch’s study, which deals with Soviet domestic and international tourism.

science, and a participant of the Space Race. Just as the “global opening” of the Soviet Union is reflected in travel writing, the fascination with technology resulted in a huge popularity of the science-fiction genre in USSR. Anita Banerjee explains that “science fiction became the self-identified narrative of a new, imagined community that Zamyatin called “we modern people” (9). One could venture a statement that travel, and travel writing, played a similar role: it gave the impression to the citizens of the Soviet Bloc that they are exposed to the world just like their Western counterparts, that they are also “modern people”. Science fiction dealt with the “consciousness of being, or wanting to be, modern” (Banerjee 6), and it was the same aspiration that was shared by readers of travel reportages. However, the everyday life of the “modern people” hardly matched the propagandist image of happy life. Outsiders did not have much chance to learn about the hardships of daily life of Soviet bloc citizens, about political persecutions and limitation of free speech and artistic expression. Like reportage, science fiction became a genre in which writers could express their criticism of the system. Banerjee claims that it became a “powerful mode of dissidence” (4-5), because through the use metaphors or dystopic images it could unveil the workings of the communist system. What is more, travel and technology were seemingly apolitical fields, through which both propagandist and counter-propagandist discourses could be disseminated. On the one hand, through describing how traditional and religious other cultures of the world are, the inhabitants of the Soviet bloc could feel positive that their model is based on modern values of secularism, rationalism, and idea of technological progress. On the other hand, however, by seeing different worlds, different lifestyles, different beliefs, they could realise how isolated and constricted they are by the authoritarian communist state.

Socialist travel reportages from India were thus aimed at showing that the Soviet-inspired model can be attractive to other countries, that socialism did not lose its global appeal, and that there is a large community of like-minded activists, or fellow travellers, even in far-away countries. The attractiveness of the Soviet model is displayed in the reportages primarily by means of showing the socialist inclinations of India’s leading politicians, in particular Jawaharlal Nehru’s sympathy towards the USSR. The existence of a large communist movement in India, with its particularities, but also with universal demands, would give the citizens of the Eastern Bloc a feeling of transnational unity. That is why, the Polish reporters meet with members of the Indian communist parties, attend rallies and visit workers in trade unions. Furthermore, given the socialist fascination with technology and industrialisation, the reporters describe the newest projects of mines and power plants, pointing out that some of them are built thanks to Soviet funds and know-how from the Eastern Bloc. This would help



to institute a sense of pride among the readers, since they could feel that their co-nationals bring innovation to other corners of the world. In consequence, the citizens of the Soviet Union and its satellite state can also think of themselves as part of that imagined community that Zamyatin labelled as “we modern people”.

### **A Socialist India?**

In the first years of India’s independence, Nehru’s interest in socialism coincided with Soviet ambitions to bring India to its side in the Cold War conflict. The rather strong relationship that Soviet Union had with India seems, at the first glance, an unlikely one. Peter Duncan, in his 1989 book about Soviet-Indian relations, notices this incongruity: India of his time is an unequal society, divided both by caste and economic differences, and a culture in which atheism is highly unpopular. It is also a multi-party democracy, with free trade unions, free press, and English as one of its official languages – it appears as culturally closer to the West than to USSR (1-2). However, common interests brought the two states together, and in 1971, they signed an Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation. Consequently, Soviet Union supported India in the 1971 war with Pakistan (which resulted in the division of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh) and did not prevent India from improving its relations with China and USA. India was Soviet Union’s largest trading partner in the “Third World”, and on the other hand, India was, in the years 1964-1985, the largest recipient of Soviet aid (Duncan 3). It is not surprising that it was important for the countries of the Soviet Bloc to intensify their relations with India, and the reporters’ visits, their coverage of political events, their contacts with local communist activists and their support to socialist tendencies of Indian politicians would be encouraged.

In the communist period, Polish foreign policy was to a large extent dependent on the one shaped in Moscow. In Chapter 1, Polish-Indian relations were discussed in more detail. However, apart from official relations, the mutual perceptions depended on depictions of India (to Poles) and Poland (to Indians) in novels, nonfiction, and popular culture. Analysing the way in which the Polish reportage depicts Indian political context can give insight into the Polish interpretation of current events in India in the three decades after Independence. As expected, Polish reporters in India are on the lookout for signs which indicate that the country follows a socialist model. India is actually a Non-Aligned state, but Polish reporters tend to present it as pro-Soviet, almost socialist. They focus on the way India adopts the models observed in the Soviet Union, and also on the ways in which it fails to do so. According to Gołębiowski, the image of contemporary India in Poland is based on several issues that the Polish press raises in

relation to India. Among them are: non-violent struggle with foreign domination, the path to socialist economic planning (under somewhat socialist slogans), neutralism (avoiding large military pacts), and a role of a negotiator in times of international crises (9). However, underlines the journalist, these facts do not give a full image of India. Clearly, India is not the one well-known from colonial stories, neither it is a socialist country as the West would like to present it (10). That is why, the role of a reporter is to observe the changes in India, to describe various social groups, trends, and phenomena, in order to complicate these simplified images, Gołębiowski suggests (16-19). His fellow reporters seem to adopt a similar stance, showing both the remnants of the past, as well as the present development (or the lack thereof). To depict how India applies the concepts of planned economy, many reporters visit the pride of Indian industry: large factories, steel mills and mines in Bhilai, Golden Rock, Barauni and Sudamdih. They are particularly interested in those that employ Polish engineers or mining specialists. Furthermore, the reporters explain the trends in Indian politics, paying special attention to the Indian communist parties. Other social issues, such as land reform or demographic planning are also mentioned.

### **Indian Politics**

The reporters, unlike many travel writers, instead of describing in detail their journeys, spend a considerable time describing Indian politics. They do not hide their sympathies: they clearly support the Indian communists, they are also largely appreciative of Nehru and the Indian National Congress, but they are critical of the “reactionary” right wing – the nationalist parties. Their views are slightly varied, because each of them visits India at a different point of time, finding a different political context. Also, each reporter demonstrates a different level of interest and involvement in politics. Finally, they visit India in different roles: of newspaper correspondents, conference delegates, or diplomats. Koehler, for instance, hardly comments on Indian politics, as he comes to India as a participant of the forestry conference, and does not even attempt to explore the complexities of Indian political life. Ros refers to politics much more often, although he describes in greater detail the Indian independence movement and Indian communists, rather than focussing on governmental policies. Putrament, Górnicki and Gołębiowski are the most vocal about Nehru and the power play between different parties, as well as perspectives for the future. Giełżyński and Chociłowski make passing remarks about Indian politics, but their aim is to give a more general view of Indian culture and society.

### **Gandhi and the Idea of Non-Violence**

Two reporters choose to talk extensively about the figure of Mahatma Gandhi and his role in the struggle for independence. Surprisingly, the two reporters are, chronologically, the most far-apart from one another. Ros publishes his reportage in 1957, so one can assume that his journey must have taken place around 1955-56. These are the first few years since India became independent from the British, on 15 August 1947. Chociłowski's account, published in 1977, is the last account in the timeframe chosen for this dissertation. Maybe this is not accidental. Perhaps precisely the fact that at the time of Ros' journey around India, Gandhi's story was still fresh in the collective memory, makes the reporter interested in Mahatma. On the contrary, in case of Chociłowski, perhaps it is thanks to a certain distance from the political events linked with Gandhi's activity and his death that a new reflection on his achievements is possible.

In describing the story of Mahatma Gandhi, Ros is cautious in his judgements: although he appreciates Gandhi's role in undermining the power of the British (for instance through promoting homespun cloth, which made the sale of textiles from Britain difficult), the reporter is doubtful of Gandhi's methods.

. . . the assessment of Gandhi from a European point of view does not stand criticism and does not give results. This man, against the criteria of our logic, would get across to the Indian masses amazingly well and arise their mystical imagination, to which the European way of reasoning would not appeal. . . . Nowhere else, except of India, would this sort of a man make any sense in political existence and action, but also none of the politicians and leaders of Europe . . . could count on such a popularity in India, on such a cult among masses numbering millions of illiterate and superstitious peasants . . . (285)<sup>457</sup>.

Here, Ros falls into the trap of Orientalist clichés, arguing that Indians require a different type of a leader, as they think and act according to a different logic, a non-European, non-rational one. They have a “mystical imagination”, they are mostly illiterate and “superstitious” (a term that is often a derogatory way of describing religiousness), and thus a European is not able to understand them, believes Ros. It is also a way for the reporter to reconcile his admiration for Gandhi, and the communist ideology's condemnation of non-violence as a revolutionary method. By explaining that Indians require a different approach, the reporter does not challenge

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<sup>457</sup> “. . . ocena Gandhiego z europejskich pozycji nie wytrzymuje krytyki i nie daje rezultatów. Ten człowiek, wbrew kryteriom naszej logiki, znakomicie trafił do mas indyjskich i działał na ich mistyczną wyobraźnię, do której z kolei nie potrafiły dotrzeć europejski sposób rozumowania. . . Nigdzie indziej poza Indiami człowiek tego pokroju nie miałby racji politycznego bytu i działania, ale też żaden z polityków i wodzów Europy . . . nie mógłby liczyć w Indiach na taką popularność, na taki kult wśród milionowych mas analfabetycznego i zabobonnego chłopstwa, jak ten człowiek . . .” (Ros 285).

the general logic of communist revolution through struggle, but he merely allows for an exception to the rule, due to a supposedly different mind of Indians.

Chociłowski, coming to India in mid-1970s, offers a different point of view on Mahatma Gandhi. He devotes an entire chapter to the Indian leader of his book, giving it the title: “The Man Who Woke the Sleeping Giant”<sup>458</sup>. Through this metaphor, Chociłowski underlines the crucial role that Gandhi played in the awakening of Indian society and its national spirit, and the resulting independence struggle leading to the demise of the British empire. The reporter mentions the enormous amount of writings on Gandhi and says that he was compared to a number of legendary figures: medieval saints, Buddha, Socrates, Lenin and Jesus Christ, but some labelled him as a naïve apostle, as a utopian, shady philosopher, and even as a reactionary (139). The reporter admits that Gandhi has had many critics who accused him of being too fixated on the idea of non-violence, or being too eccentric and puritanical. Nevertheless, Chociłowski presents Gandhi as a great figure, whose strength, intellect, charm and charisma caused masses to consider him as their leader, their Bapu – Father (142-143). He explains the rationale of *satyagraha*, i.e. independence through non-violence, and says that precisely because of that philosophy, Gandhi was sceptical about Marxism and socialism:

Even the words ‘class struggle’ were, for him, infused with conflict and violence. He would expect the transformation of social relations in India through peaceful ‘conversion’ of *zamindars* (kulaks) and capitalists. He was against a ‘bloody revolution’, not only then, in times of a weak and powerless India, but in general ‘at any time’. The Indian communists were convinced that – Gandhi’s noble intentions notwithstanding – his strategy was *nolens volens* the grist to the mill for the owning classes, the bourgeois, and feudal aristocracy, safely seated under the English umbrella. (146)<sup>459</sup>

Chociłowski explains why Gandhi’s ideas were problematic for leftists and the reasons for communists to criticise him. However, he situates himself outside of this judgement, he does not identify with this view, trying to remain a neutral observer. The reporter mentions various opinions on Gandhi, also those critical ones, but the gist of his chapter is definitely appreciative of the famous advocate of non-violence. It is enough to mention the quote that opens Chociłowski’s chapter on Gandhi: it is a quotation from Einstein who said that future

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<sup>458</sup> The original title of the chapter in Polish is “Człowiek, który obudził śpiącego olbrzyma”.

<sup>459</sup> “Już same słowa ‘walka klasowa’ tchnęły dlań konfliktem i gwałtem. Przekształcenie stosunków społecznych w Indiach upatrywał w pokojowym ‘nawróceniu’ zamindarów (obszarników) i kapitalistów. Był przeciwny ‘krwawej rewolucji’ i to nie tylko wtedy, w ówczesnej sytuacji słabych i bezwładnych Indii, ale w ogóle, ‘w jakimkolwiek czasie’. Komuniści indyjscy uważali, że – niezależnie od szlachetnych intencji Gandhiego – jego strategia była *nolens volens* wodą na młyn klas posiadających Indii, burżuazji i feudalnej arystokracji, siedzącej bezpiecznie pod parasolem angielskim” (Chociłowski 146).

generations will find it difficult to believe that such a person, with flesh and bones, once walked on this earth (138). Clearly, Chociłowski, travelling to India in the 1970s, is not as bound by ideology as Ros and can present Gandhi as seen from various perspectives. Indians, too, by that time gain more perspective on Gandhi, and look at his actions with less emotions as they did in Ros' time, only a few years after Gandhi's assassination.

### **Nehru's Semi-Socialism**

While Mahatma Gandhi remains probably the most famous Indian in Poland of that time, and even today, most reporters focus on the figure of Jawaharlal Nehru, the follower of Gandhi and the first prime minister of independent India. They discuss his ideas on how to organise the independent state, how to plan its economy, and how to align – or non-align – with foreign powers in the world divided by the Cold War rivalry. The reporters consider India as a country that is on its way towards socialism, mostly thanks to Nehru's leadership. He did not want to blindly copy foreign models, but aimed to create an “enlightened socialism” (Putrament, *Cztery...* 153). The specifics of this Indian model of semi-socialism are discussed at length by reporters.

India's affair with socialism begins with decolonisation. Putrament sees Marxism as directly connected to the decolonial thought, which in turn makes the decolonised states more sympathetic to socialism:

India today is a particularly instructive object of study for a Marxist. At the beginnings of the post-war decolonisation process, the freshly created countries set off, by and large, from these [Marxist] starting positions. But from the very first moment, they chose different systemic principles. Almost all of them adopted general socialist declarations, although each of them understood them differently. So did China, and Egypt and India... (*Na drogach...* 187)<sup>460</sup>

Putrament is aware that independence movements across the world would refer to Marxism at some point or another, but also that they would apply socialist principles selectively and in different ways. In Górnicki's opinion, this presents a danger:

It is possible that while nurturing a wholesale sympathy to postcolonial states and believing in their natural development we omitted a moment of great importance in which the national

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<sup>460</sup> “Dzisiejsze Indie są niezwykle pouczającym dla marksisty obiektem badań. W początkach powojennego procesu dekolonizacyjnego świeżo powstające państwa startowały, z grubsza biorąc, z tychże pozycji wyjściowych. Ale od razu na początku wybrały one odmienne założenia ustrojowe. Wszystkie niemal przyjmowały ogólne deklaracje socjalistyczne, każde z nich jednak rozumiało je inaczej. I Chiny, i Egipt, i Indie...”(Putrament, *Na drogach...* 187).

bourgeoisie of these countries ceased to be a spring of progress and started to be its brake.  
(186)<sup>461</sup>

Górnicki believes that India's elites, or "national bourgeoisie", in spite of their allegiance to socialism, act now as a "brake of progress". The reporters repeatedly express their dissatisfaction at the fact that Indian government does not implement more radical socialist reforms. They are convinced that the Polish public opinion has a distorted view of India and has too many illusions about its political leaders. Górnicki underlines that the generation of "idealists" (187) like Nehru is dying out, the capital is accumulating, and that perhaps the future will be different from popular expectations. Hence, it is possible that the Eastern Bloc's hopes of India becoming a socialist ally will not come to a fruition.

There are many ways in which India differs from the communist countries of Eastern Europe. India chose socialism through parliamentary democracy, not through a revolution. Putrament explains it by the enormous diversity of the country. Only the principle of tolerance, he suggests, could initially calm down the burgeoning conflicts, decrease the separatist tendencies and ensure the maintenance of national unity (187). Nevertheless, Putrament finds this principle unsustainable in the long run. During his first visit, the writer notices that even though Nehru enjoys great popularity among the masses, his time is coming to an end, and a turn towards the right can be expected (*Cztery...* 152). Incidentally, Putrament puts the blame for this state of affairs partly on the media, saying that "like in America, the government does not have the propaganda apparatus at its disposal", and the major dailies are in the hands of capitalists or right-wingers (152). It results from his comments that had India adopted the same model of concentration of media by the government and of censorship, like in the Soviet Union, Nehru's position would not be threatened. Also, the principle of tolerance, of peaceful coexistence of diversity and of a political plurality, is in the long run making India weaker, says Putrament.

Thus, the parliamentary democracy that was supposed to be a patron of the Indian incarnation of socialism, during its twenty years it not only failed to give this socialism a shape perceptible for the masses and to rely on these masses, but on the contrary, it allowed for the most violent, right-wing, nationalist fanatics to reach these masses. Under the pretext of defending holy cows

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<sup>461</sup> "Bardzo możliwe, że żywiąc hurtową sympatię do krajów postkolonialnych i wierząc w ich naturalny rozwój przeoczyliśmy moment o wielkiej doniosłości, w którym narodowa burżuazja tych krajów przestała być sprężyną postępu, a stała się jego hamulcem"(Górnicki 186).

they are ready to convince the poor of India that their only salvation is the multiplication of Mister Tatas and letting them take care of the Indian people. (*Na drogach...* 193-194)<sup>462</sup>

Clearly, Putrament deplores the supposedly decreasing appeal of socialism in India, and warns of the “fanatics”, or the right-wing parties’ domination. He is against any promotion of capitalism, personified by Mister Tata – a famous industrialist. All India’s problems, in Putrament’s view, result from this lack of clear adoption of socialist values. A free coexistence of different parties – unlike in the Soviet model in which there is only one, hegemonic party, the communist one – is at the crux of the problem, feels the writer (*Na drogach...* 202).

Another problematic issue in the context of Indian politics is, for the reporters, the idea of non-violence. Górnicki lists three important requirements for a truly socialist India. First, the limitation of political freedom for the owning class, second, a relative financial equality (which can only be reached through “forms of legal coercion” (196)), and third, central planning (196). The reporter suspects that it would be hard to reconcile these principles with what he calls “gandhism”, and in particular the principle of *satyagraha*, but he does not exclude such possibility (196). He finds that some of these Gandhian ideas have a certain value, especially the “deep reflection on the fate of the individual” (196)<sup>463</sup>, the idea of tolerance, the lack of arrogance and the ability to question. However, certain modifications would have to be made:

If these values could be boiled down to the role, that they really deserve, filter them from the gibberish of mystics and from the hocus-pocus of reincarnation, and blend them into rationalist socialism – India could perhaps reach some new synthesis, a political philosophy that is not yet known to us, but it is certainly familiar and useful. It is conceivable that such process will one day take place. India could then become one of the most important, most creative link of international socialism, its Medina and agora. (Górnicki 197)<sup>464</sup>

Górnicki, in his usual, emphatic style proposes a blend of Indian philosophy with socialism, but only if certain ideas are rejected. These ideas – mysticism and the belief of reincarnation –

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<sup>462</sup> “Tak więc demokracja parlamentarna, która miała patronować indyjskiemu wcieleniu socjalizmu, nie tylko przez dwadzieścia lat nie potrafiła temu socjalizmowi nadać kształtów uchwytnych dla mas i oprzeć się o te masy, ale wprost przeciwnie, pozwoliła na to, że do tych mas zaczynają się przerywać najgwałtowniejsi, pravicowi, nacjonalistyczni fanatycy. Pod pretekstem obrony świętych krów gotowi są wmówić nędzaczom Indii, że jedyny dla nich ratunek – to rozmnożenie panów Tata i oddanie im troski o lud indyjski” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 193-194).

<sup>463</sup> “głęboki zamysł nad losem jednostki” (Górnicki 196).

<sup>464</sup> “Gdyby sprowadzić te wartości do roli, jaka im rzeczywiście przypada, odsączyć je z bełkotu mistyków i guseł reinkarnacji, wtopić w racjonalistyczny socjalizm – Indie doszłyby może do jakiejś nowej syntezy, do filozofii politycznej dziś nam jeszcze nieznannej, ale na pewno bliskiej i potrzebnej. Niewykluczone, że kiedyś taki process nastąpi. Indie mogłyby stać się wówczas jednym z najważniejszych, najbardziej twórczych ogniw światowego socjalizmu, jego Medyną i agorą” (Górnicki 197).

are however at the core of Hindu beliefs, and Górnicki's rejection of them (in rather disparaging terms) makes his proposition of a fusion questionable. The reporter himself is not convinced if a coexistence of these two ideas are possible, he is nevertheless certain of one thing: given India's inequality and poverty, "all principles of Marxism remain in power here . . . [t]o the bitter end" (197)<sup>465</sup>.

Gołębiowski, too, notices a contradiction in socialist ideas and the principle of non-violence.

His [Nehru's] interpretation of socio-political processes was not parallel to the Marxist interpretation. Above all, Nehru assumed that class conflicts, the existence of which he fully acknowledged and grasped, could be solved by means of 'cooperation' and a certain kind of 'synthesis'. The source of this approach was probably the Gandhian concepts of avoiding violence. (52)<sup>466</sup>

Gołębiowski notes that Nehru is too idealistic, slowly concedes to the liberals, believes in technological progress, but detaches himself from socialist ideals. Indeed, when Nehru died, the Congress' left proved to be powerless against "the right that took over strategic positions" (55), and could not stop "the process of backward changes in priorities of internal and foreign policies of India" (55)<sup>467</sup>, concludes the reporter.

### **Orientalising the Socialists?**

The reporters' sweeping statements about India's politics, and – in particular – Indian socialism, reveal a slightly superior attitude. In their criticism, they compare Indian socialism to the Soviet (or Polish) model, pointing out the incongruities between the two. The reporters find it difficult to accept that perhaps the exact implementation of Soviet models would not be beneficial to Indian society and the decision to introduce certain ideas selectively is well thought through. Instead, they suggest that since India is not a fully socialist country, it somehow lags behind.

Putrament explains Indian socialism's problems by the specificity of the country. In "overpopulated, rural and backward countries like India"(202)<sup>468</sup>, freedom is impossible to be

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<sup>465</sup> "wszystkie prawa marksizmu pozostają tutaj w mocy. . . . Aż do skutku" (Górnicki 197).

<sup>466</sup> "Jego interpretacja społeczno-politycznych procesów nie pokrywała się jednak z interpretacją marksistowską. Przede wszystkim Nehru zakładał, że klasowe konflikty, których istnienie w pełni uznawał i doceniał, można rozwikłać na drodze 'współpracy' i pewnego rodzaju 'syntezy'. Źródłem tej postawy były zapewne gandhystowskie koncepcje unikania przemocy"(Gołębiowski 52).

<sup>467</sup> "Gdy zabrakło Nehru, lewica Kongresu okazała się niemal bezsilna wobec rozlokowanej na strategicznych pozycjach prawicy i nie mogła powstrzymać pogłębiania się procesu wstecznych przeakcentowań w wewnętrznej i zagranicznej polityce Indii" (Gołębiowski 55).

<sup>468</sup> "Ale w przeludnionych, rolniczych, zacofanych krajach typu Indii taka 'wolność' jest nie tylko zakłamana, jest po prostu niemożliwa do urzeczywistnienia" (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 202).



fully realised, says Putrament, given that people are not free from hunger and cold, and are likely to follow different demagogues and their unrealistic promises (202). He offers a different solution:

In such countries, the most just system would be one that would mean a democracy, or freedom to the people, and a dictatorship, or coercion to the rich. Because there is no separate, abstract justice. The justice to the poor must be an unjust to the rich. The justice 'for all' is primarily a justice for the strong. (*Na drogach...* 202)<sup>469</sup>

Putrament's statement is problematic: he justifies a coercive dictatorship in the name of equality. He would even recommend such a policy to India, explaining that the rich need to be coerced in order to help the poor. As attractive as some would consider it, there is a basic fallacy in this idea: today, it is obvious that the communist rule did not make Soviet society as equal as expected. Most of the population, perhaps except the *nomenklatura*, or the prominent members of the party, was still very poor, and also subjected to coercion, violence and extreme surveillance<sup>470</sup>. A second problem with Putrament's statement is that there is an underlying assumption that countries are not equal to one another. India belongs to those "backward" and largely illiterate countries, in which people will follow blindly any demagogic leaders, and thus it should not be a democracy, according to the writer. Hence, in his pursuit of equality, Putrament himself gives in to an unequal vision of the world, in which the less "enlightened" societies do not deserve democracy and should experiment with some forms of dictatorship in order to achieve a certain social goal, like universal equality.

In various instances, the reporters describe Indian politics using Orientalist clichés. Gołębiowski attends a Congress rally in Rajpur, which is a massive event. He describes the rather kitschy plaster statues of a worker and of a peasant, adorning the large hall where the rally is held, and a huge painting behind the speakers, representing the industrial constructions of "new India" and the figure of Gandhi amongst them. "This is how all Congress Party rallies look like", says the reporter, and adds that "they always have something of a mass gathering or a caucus that takes place with a theatre decoration in the background" (43)<sup>471</sup>. One can sense a certain irony in this description, although the decorations of general assemblies of the Polish communists, not to mention the First of May parades, would probably not look very different.

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<sup>469</sup> "W takich krajach najsprawiedliwszy jest system, który byłby demokracją, czyli wolnością dla ludu, dyktaturą, czyli przymusem dla możnych. Bo nie ma oderwanej, abstrakcyjnej sprawiedliwości. Sprawiedliwość dla nędzarzy musi być niesprawiedliwością dla bogaczy. Sprawiedliwość 'dla wszystkich' jest w pierwszym rzędzie sprawiedliwością dla silnych" (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 202).

<sup>470</sup> For more details, see: Figes, Appelbaum, Sakwa.

<sup>471</sup> "Tak jest na wszystkich zjazdach Partii Kongresowej. Zawsze mają one coś z masówki lub wiecu odbywającego się na tle teatralnej dekoracji" (Gołębiowski 43).

The journalist observes a certain similarity with other such political gatherings: “[i]f it wasn’t for the colourful setting of Oriental decorations, the clothes and the characteristic position of participants sitting on mats, it could seem that it is some international conference, debating on world situation. (45)<sup>472</sup>. It is surprising for the reporter that the meeting resembles an international conference, as if he forgot how large India is and how an all-India assembly of any party is actually comparable to an international conference, just as much as a meeting of leaders from various European states would be. Nevertheless, what makes it different are the “Oriental decorations”, the visible manifestation of Otherness.

Generally, Gołębiowski speaks somewhat condescendingly of the democracies in all Third World countries, perceiving them as somewhat “curious – Indian parliamentary democracy is one of them. He describes how Indian citizens, unaware of how the electoral system really works, would cast, apart from their vote, letters, banknotes, change, or flowers.

Similar cases, and one could find thousands of them, do not happen only in India, but in most countries of the Third World, where archaic social relations and deeply-rooted traditions were supplemented with Western-inspired political forms. The result of this sort of transplantation was twofold: in some countries - above all, India should be mentioned here – under the impact of the local conditions the appropriated form was filled with a different content, in others – e.g. in Pakistan, Indonesia or Burma – over time, even the form was given up, and experiments with own concepts . . . were undertaken. (121)<sup>473</sup>

Hence, by presenting the habits of Indian voters in a humorous fashion, Gołębiowski ridicules the idea of Western democracy, which is not an idea native to the “Third World”, and is only “appropriated” by different states, with varying effects. Although he admits that India was successful at “filling the form with a different content”, he still is hesitant whether a Western model can – or should – be “transplanted” into a different context. Nevertheless, he did not express similar doubts when talking about socialism – an idea similarly “transplanted” to India from abroad, only not from the West, but from the Soviet Union.

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<sup>472</sup> “Gdyby nie barwna oprawa wschodnich dekoracji, stroje i charakterystyczna pozycja zasiadających na matach uczestników, mogłoby się wydawać, że to jakaś międzynarodowa konferencja debatuje nad światową sytuacją” (Gołębiowski 45).

<sup>473</sup> “Podobne wypadki, a można ich przytaczać tysiące, zdarzają się nie tylko w Indiach, lecz w większości krajów trzeciego świata, gdzie na archaiczne stosunki społeczne i zakorzenione głęboko tradycje nałożono zaczerpnięte z Zachodu formy polityczne. Rezultat tego rodzaju transplantacji był dwojaki: w jednych krajach – wymienić tu trzeba przede wszystkim Indie – pod wpływem miejscowych warunków zapożyczona forma wypełniła się inną treścią; w drugich zaś – np. w Pakistanie, Indonezji, czy Birmie – z czasem zarzucono również i formę, przystępując do eksperymentów z własnymi koncepcjami w rodzaju ‘demokracji kierowanej’, ‘demokracji podstawowej’ etc.” (Górnicki 121).

### **Fellow Travellers: Indian Communist Movement**

It is understandable that the reporters from a communist-ruled country are particularly interested in the fate of the communist movement in India. The same democracy that Gołębiowski frowns upon appears to be a convenient system if it leads to the victory of communists. Reporters are pleased to mention the political situation in Kerala, where the Communist Party of India won the elections in 1957. Putrament affirms that Kerala was a proof that communists can come to power through elections (*Na drogach...* 173). Indeed, just a year before, in 1956, at the same 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Soviet Communist Party at which he denounced Stalin, Khrushchev announced that communism can also be achieved through peaceful means, in parliamentary elections. At the prime of the Cold War, it was important for Soviet Union to keep the support of leftist postcolonial states. It is thus clear that successes (and failures) of Indian communist and leftist parties are of much interest to the Polish reporters. Gołębiowski underlines that the communists exert their influence unevenly, being present in some states more than in others, for instance in Kerala or West Bengal. According to the reporter, the communists are not able to prevail in politics nationally, because of the great stratification and polarisation of Indian society, which requires flexibility in political action and leads to ideological disparities between activists (Gołębiowski 116). Putrament reaches a similar conclusion and explains that at first, the communists had to maintain a united, anti-colonial front with the Congress, and later, especially during the growing Sino-Indian tensions, split into many different parties, CPI Left, CPI Right, and even a Bolshevik one (*Na drogach...* 198). He clarifies to the readers that these divisions were not caused by external agents, but they were a result of internal strife between different wings of the party. Given the difficulties of the Indian communists to get to power due to the fragmentation of their movement, the reporters attach a great importance to the instances in which they actually managed to win an election. Kerala is the prime example.

#### **The “Kerala Experiment”**

Górnicki, visiting the southern state in early 1960s, still sees traces of the events accompanying the brief time of a communist government in Kerala following the local election in 1959. “On the church wall, there is a slogan written with red paint: ‘Down, down Reds’ rule!’. This is for export. Underneath, a second one, written with chalk in Hindustani language: ‘Kerala swarda zindabad!’ – long live red Kerala. This is for domestic use.” (Górnicki 197-

198)<sup>474</sup>. The reporter suggests that opposition to the communists in Kerala was an externally organised one, pointing at the fact that protesters slogans were written in English, and that “red” sympathies are authentic ones, since they were expressed in Hindustani. Nevertheless, he does not realise that the use of Hindustani is hardly a proof of authenticity: Kerala’s official language is actually Malayalam.

Górnicki stresses that Indian communists, unlike many of their comrades in other countries, gained power in a perfectly democratic manner:

For the first time, the birth of a communist government was accompanied not by the shots of a cruiser or the barking of Mauzers, but by the rustling of sheets, taken out of the ballot box. The Kerala experiment had all chances to serve theoreticians as a test for new, creative tendencies in Marxism. (188)<sup>475</sup>

Górnicki notes with excitement that the eyes of “all India, Asia, and probably all postcolonial countries” (187) were on Kerala. The reporter goes as far as to declare that the fourteen months of communist rule in that state was the most significant event in Asia since the creation of People’s Republic of China (187). His colleague, Janusz Gołębiowski, calls the day of 5<sup>th</sup> July 1957, when the new government was formed, a “historical date [marking] the beginning of an experiment: a local communist government functioning within a bourgeois state” (30)<sup>476</sup>.

The reporters underline how successful the communist government was at introducing reforms in Kerala. The plan to reorganise the agriculture, limiting the rights of the local “kulaks” and lending support to peasants, was to bring a major change in the state. Nevertheless, says Gołębiowski, “it is not difficult to guess that such policy was met with a staunch resistance of landowners, and not only in Kerala. The entire large landowners strata in India, that had a lot to say in other state governments and in the central government, protested violently against it” (Gołębiowski 30)<sup>477</sup>. However, the true conflict was caused, according to reporters, by a planned reform of education. Putrament tells this story in the following way:

At the first attempt to introduce a rather non-communist, or not even socialist programme – the secularisation of education, they [the communists] clashed with fanaticised crowds, which

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<sup>474</sup> “Na kościelnym murze napis czerwona farbą: ‘Down, down Red’s rule!’. To na eksport. Poniżej drugi, nabazgrany kredą w języku hindustani: ‘Kerala swarda zindabad!’ – niech żyje czerwona Kerala. To na użytek wewnętrzny” (Górnicki 197-198).

<sup>475</sup> “Po raz pierwszy narodzinom rządu komunistycznego towarzyszyły nie salwy krążownika i szczekanie mauzerów, lecz szelest kartek, wydobytych z urny wyborczej. Eksperyment keralski miał wszelkie szanse, aby się przysłużyć teoretykom jako sprawdzian nowych, twórczych tendencji w marksizmie” (Górnicki 188).

<sup>476</sup> “Była to historyczna data zapoczątkowania eksperymentu funkcjonowania lokalnego rządu komunistycznego w ramach państwa burżuazyjnego” (Gołębiowski 30).

<sup>477</sup> “Nietrudno się domyślić, że polityka ta napotkała zacięty opór obszarników, i to nie tylko w Kerali. Ostro zaprotestowała przeciwko niej cała wielkoobszarnicza warstwa w Indiach, która przecież miała wiele do powiedzenia w innych rządach stanowych i rządzie centralnym”(Gołębiowski 30).

served as an excuse for the central government to nominate a commissary power. The repeated elections, announced soon after, gave the communists even more votes<sup>478</sup>, but the great democrats from Delhi did not listen to this voice of the people. The example of Kerala proves that the result of elections alone does not give a guarantee of taking power: the matter is more complicated and the general formula of ‘peaceful transition to socialism’ is not enough. (175)<sup>479</sup>

For the communists’ failure he blames the strong influence of the “fanatical” Catholic church as well as the central government, which – for Putrament – is democratic only in name. Górnicki concurs: “[t]he communists were deprived of the power with all deviousness, by using trivial tricks of the new electoral system, already clichéd in Europe. The Kerala experiment was gagged, because it was too dangerous as an example for other states and countries” (189)<sup>480</sup>. Górnicki explains that the communist government in Kerala posed a threat to the Congress, because it managed to start reforms that the Congress was too slow and inert to undertake (189). That is why, even though the reporter finds that Congress’ and Communist Party’s goals are by and large similar, a strong anti-communist feeling grew among Congress members – and the Kerala government underestimated these forces (188). Górnicki describes this change of heart among Congress members in harsh terms: “[a] melancholic deliberator on ahimsa transforms suddenly into a raging anti-communist, Gandhi’s disciples – into followers of Denikin<sup>481</sup> and Maurras<sup>482</sup>, “satyagraha” into McCarthyism, freedom and tolerance – into a brutal witch-hunt” (190)<sup>483</sup>. By juxtaposing peaceful attitudes to such strong examples of conservatism, the reporter stresses the contrast between the behaviours of Congress members before and after the debates on Kerala. Górnicki emphasises the fact that Jawaharlal Nehru was sympathetic to the Kerala communists, but was gradually overpowered by the right-wing forces in his party (190-191). The reporter also raises the question whether any revolution is at all

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<sup>478</sup> In fact, the communists only got 29 seats out of 126, while Congress got 63. Data according to the *Statistical Report on General Election, 1960 to the Legislative Assembly of Kerala*.

<sup>479</sup> “I przy pierwszej próbie realizacji całkiem niekomunistycznego, ani nawet socjalistycznego programu – laicyzacji szkolnictwa, starli się z rozfanatyzowanymi tłumami, co rząd centralny natychmiast wykorzystał dla mianowana władzy komisarycznej. Rozpisane niebawem powtórne wybory dały komunistom jeszcze więcej głosów, ale wielcy demokraci z Delhi nie posłuchali tego głosu ludu. Przykład Kerali dowodzi, że sam wynik wyborów jeszcze nie daje gwarancji objęcia władzy: rzecz jest bardziej skomplikowana i ogólnikowa formuła ‘pokojowego przejścia do socjalizmu’ nie wystarcza” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 175).

<sup>480</sup> “Komunistów pozbawiono władzy z całym wyrachowaniem, przy użyciu trywialnych, oklepanych już w Europie kruczków nowej ordynacji wyborczej. Zadławiono keralski eksperyment, ponieważ był zbyt niebezpieczny jako przykład dla innych stanów i krajów” (Górnicki 189).

<sup>481</sup> Anton Denikin was a tsarist general in Russian Empire, and after the revolution – leader of the White Movement in Russia that tried to fight the Bolsheviks.

<sup>482</sup> Charles Maurras was a French monarchist and counter-revolutionary, who collaborated with Marshall Petain in the Vichy regime.

<sup>483</sup> “Melancholijny roztrząsacz ahimsy przedzierzga się nagle w rozwścieczonego antykomunistę, uczniowie Gandhiego – w wyznawców Denikina I Maurrasa, ‘sattiagraha’ w maccarthyzm, wolność I tolerancja – w ordynarną nagonkę” (Górnicki 190).

possible (assuming that the only revolution that would be beneficial to India is a communist one). Gołębiowski, on the other hand, considers the Kerala case, as well as India's support to the Dalai Lama in the aftermath of the Tibetan Uprising (in the same year), as signs that India is turning away from its leftist course.

Indeed, contemporary historians comment on the 1959 elections in Kerala as particularly important and observed by other countries of the world (Guha, Jeffrey). Guha argues that the Congress saw communists' victory in the southern state as a threat to India's federalism; New Delhi was also worried about the fact that the new ruling party was an until recently an underground one, it professed allegiance to the idea of armed revolution and its leaders were known to sometimes take orders from Moscow (Loc 6080). It is also true that the new communist government of Kerala, led by E. M. S. Namboodiripad, acted with impressive efficiency and commitment to the people (Guha Loc 6151). Nevertheless, when their opponents grew stronger, the "people's" government replied with "organised brutality" (Guha Loc 6268), beating up and even killing protesters (around 20 people died), and putting around 150 thousand people in jail (Guha Loc 6288). Like the reporters said, Jawaharlal Nehru supported the idea of land and education reforms and was not opposed to communists; however, upon seeing the polarisation between supporters and opponents of communists, the level of hostility and hatred, as well as the suffering of ordinary citizens of Kerala, he decided to end the communist rule in the state (Guha Loc 6307). Polish reporters conveniently omit the story of government-ordered brutality against the protesters. They put the blame for the defeat of EMS Namboodiripad's government solely on the rising "reactionaries" in the Congress. It is also untrue that when Nehru called for a second election in Kerala, communists received even more votes as in the first one – in fact, their support decreased dramatically, while Congress and its allies gained many more seats. Hence, it is clear that in their support to the communists of India, Polish reporters are far from objective, and they use facts and data liberally and selectively.

### **Reporters' Meetings with Indian Communists**

Some reporters go beyond merely commenting on political events, but try to directly engage with Indian communists, workers and activists. They describe working-class districts of big cities, the everyday concerns of people, and talk to party members or attend party meetings. The prime location for that is usually Kolkata, which is famous for its leftist tendencies:

Calcutta is a large centre of workers' movement, industry and transport here gave birth to a strong working class, organised in trade unions and in the Communist Party of India. But at the

same time, Calcutta is a centre for reactionary, orthodox groups, preying on chauvinism and religious fanaticism. (Ros 176)<sup>484</sup>

Indeed, Ros notices slogans that call for cooperation with China, and a struggle for “peace and bread” (176), but also “nationalist” and “backward” ones, against “murdering” of cows (176). Ros visits poor neighbourhoods, meets a rickshaw-puller, a president of a trade union of textile workers, as well as a “proletarian Bengali poet”, with whom the reporter toasts to Polish-Indian friendship, to Stalingrad, and to “heroic Warsaw” (250).

Giełżyński, too, visits the “red” Kolkata, where “all troubles and failures of India reflect” (82). The reporter notes that the poverty and social divisions in Kolkata cause a ferment that might lead to revolutionary changes. He mentions the important role of the university in Kolkata, that he believes to be “the best in all of India”, but also the most politically radical: “They say that it is the cradle of the socialist revolution, that it maintains close links to the worker activists” (83)<sup>485</sup>. Of course, says Giełżyński, there are also many “fanatics” and “reactionaries” in Kolkata, but workers are not as divided by caste there as in other parts of India, which makes the city more progressive.

All this does not mean that in Calcutta the castes are only a cultural anachronism and that everyone is a conscious fighter for new, socialist and fair social relations. This is still very far away. But if one worker out of fifty carries an ID card with a hammer and sickle, and one in ten understands exactly what do ‘exploitation’ and ‘class struggle’ mean – that, in Indian conditions, is a lot. It means that ‘Red Calcutta’ is the most progressive city in all India. (85)<sup>486</sup>

Jerzy Chociłowski, too, visits Kolkata and finds that something is always happening in the city, one can bet on the fact that within half-an-hour one would witness a manifestation, an explosion or a protest (127).

For now, it is calm, so let’s take a tramway, before there is any fire, and let’s go to College Street, the street of book-sellers, which is a terrain where it is easiest to find the elite of Calcutta’s Maoists. The stalls on the sidewalks and the countless box-like tiny bookshops are swamped from top to bottom with literature that would surely cause disgust on the face of any

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<sup>484</sup> “Kalkuta jest wielkim centrum ruchu robotniczego, przemysł i transport zrodziły tu silną klasę robotniczą, zorganizowaną w związkach zawodowych i w Komunistycznej Partii Indii. Ale jednocześnie Kalkuta stanowi ośrodek reakcyjnych, ortodoksyjnych ugrupowań, żerujących na szowinizmie i fanatyzmie religijnym” (Ros 176).

<sup>485</sup> “Mówią o nim, że jest kolebką socjalistycznej rewolucji, że utrzymuje ściśle więzy z działaczami robotniczymi” (Giełżyński 83).

<sup>486</sup> “Wszystko to nie znaczy, iż w Kalkucie już kasty są tylko obyczajowym przeżytkiem i że wszyscy są już świadomymi bojownikami o nowe, sprawiedliwe, socjalistyczne stosunki społeczne. Do tego wciąż bardzo daleko. Ale jeśli jeden robotnik na pięćdziesięciu nosi legitymację z sierpem i młotem, a jedno na dziesięciu dokładnie rozumie, co znaczy ‘wyzysk’ i ‘walka klas’ – to, w indyjskich warunkach, bardzo wiele. To już oznacza, że ‘Czerwona Kalkuta’ jest najbardziej postępowym miastem w całych Indiach” (Giełżyński 85).

CIA officer. There is Engels, Stalin and Marx, Trotskyists and sectarians of different countries and all epochs of the international workers' movement. There is Guevara and Regis Debray, there are, side-by-side, publications of Moscow and Beijing publishing houses. Young people, dressed in white, browse through them – present, failed and former students that we might see tomorrow or the day after burning the writings of Gandhi – “traitor in the service of English imperialism”. (127)<sup>487</sup>

Chociłowski, unlike previous reporters, maintains a certain distance from the Indian leftists. There is a touch of irony in his description, and by mentioning the critical approach of students to Gandhi, he presents them as extreme and radical. Surely, Chociłowski would not go as far as to openly criticise the communist movement as such, but his detachment from the leftists is clearly visible. To counterbalance his point, he quotes the words of his host, an English owner of a pension, Mrs Gade, married to an Indian. When the reporter returns to the pension after a long day of walking around the city, Mrs Gade welcomes him as if he was “saved from a plane crash” (131), and complains about the lack of security in Kolkata, which she compares to “a Wild West, a Chicago” (131). By placing her words at one extreme, and the activities of the Maoists at the other, the reporter situates himself somewhere in the middle, and does not reveal his own views. He admits, however, that Kolkata “has its reasons to be communist” (132), underlining that it is India’s biggest city (at the time), but also a gigantic “pool of poverty” (132). He calls it “the sick man of India”, who faces death every day (132). He wonders if one day, this huge disparity between the rich and the poor will bring some kind of cataclysm, some apocalyptic end (125). Or, will it lead the way to a social revolution in India, according to the Indian saying that what Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow, concludes Chociłowski.

There are many instances in the reporters’ narratives in which they mention a meeting with a local leftist journalist, or a conversation with a communist party member. It is not clear to what extent such meetings were planned: the reporters were certainly encouraged to write about socialism in India, but it is difficult to judge how free they were in choosing their interlocutors. It is also possible that upon their return, they were expected to write a report

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<sup>487</sup> “Chwilowo jest jednak spokojnie, wsiądźmy więc w tramwaj, póki się jeszcze nie pali i pojedźmy na College Street, ulicę bukinistów, która jest terenem, gdzie podobno najłatwiej o spotkanie z kwiatem kalkuckich maoistów. Stragany na chodnikach i niezliczone klitkowate księgarenki zawalone są od góry do dołu literaturą, która z pewnością wywołałyby grymas odrazy na obliczu każdego funkcjonariusza CIA. Jest tam Engels, Stalin i Marks, trockiści i sekciarze ze wszystkich krajów i wszystkich epok międzynarodowego ruchu robotniczego. Jest Guevara i Regis Debray, są leżące obok siebie publikacje moskiewskich i pekińskich domów wydawniczych. Przeglądają je młodzi, na biało ubrani ludzie, obecni, niedoszli i byli studenci, których być może jutro lub pojutrze zobaczymy jak ciskają na stos pisma Gandhiego – ‘zdraycy w służbie angielskiego imperializmu’”(Chociłowski 127).



about the people they met to the Polish secret services<sup>488</sup>. There is a clear difference between the reporters, linked to the time of their visit to India. Earlier visitors are more ideological, while later, like Chociłowski, prefer to avoid political topics.

An obvious destination for all of them was Kolkata, the “flagship of the Indian left” (Chociłowski 125). Moscow, and other political centres of the Eastern Bloc, were certainly interested in the events there, given that Kolkata could serve as an example for other Indian cities. If a communist revolution broke out there, the Soviets could count on India becoming an even closer ally.

### **Indian Economy: Central Planning vs. Private Capital**

While most Western travel writers are interested in history, culture, everyday life, customs, and sometimes politics of a given country, socialist reporters would go beyond this scope, often discussing economics, industrialisation and technological development. Since India adopted a mixed economic model, borrowing ideas of planned economy from the Soviet Union, but also reserving space for the private sector, it was very much of interest to the reporters to discuss these solutions and their efficiency (or the lack thereof). Here, again, the reporters tend to underline the diversity and coexistence of different models within the same state. In Putrament’s words,

India is not only a mosaic of languages, nationalities, races, religious beliefs, historical traditions – but also economic systems. Different states exist at various stages of development, ones close to the tribal system, others very close to contemporary capitalism. (*Cztery...* 153)<sup>489</sup> Indeed, it was puzzling for the reporters to see ultra-modern technology side-by-side elements of traditional village life. Żukrowski, for instance, visits a hydro power plant that provides electricity for all Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. The reporter remembers how proud was the engineer that guided them around the plant and how he encouraged the visitors to take pictures. “All of this was built after attaching Kashmir to India, [as] an investment of India in its own *Kresy*”<sup>490</sup>, explains Żukrowski, hinting at an important political meaning of investing in a region disputed between India and Pakistan. Żukrowski is, however, surprised by the fact that

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<sup>488</sup> As it happened with Kapuściński. The copies of his secret service reports can be found in Domosławski’s biography of the reporter.

<sup>489</sup> “India stanowi nie tylko mozaikę języków, narodowości, ras, wierzeń religijnych, tradycji historycznych – ale i systemów gospodarczych. Poszczególne ich stany żyją na rozmaitych stadiach rozwoju, jedne niedalekie ustroju plemiennego, inne bardzo bliskie współczesnego kapitalizmu” (Putrament, *Cztery...* 153).

<sup>490</sup> “To wszystko zostało zbudowane po przyłączeniu Kaszmiru, inwestycja Indii w swoje *Kresy*” (Żukrowski 137). The use of the word *Kresy* is significant, as it denotes the interwar territories in the east of Poland, which were during Second World War annexed by the Soviet Union, an action that led to massive deportations and forced migration. Poland, in its post-1945 shape, did not regain these territories, receiving formerly German

[j]ust behind the twentieth century, on a stone cliff – a hut, if one can call this way a shapeless block with no windows, with walls made of slate fixed with clay, a roof of muck, with weeds growing on top, and the smoke from the fire coming from inside. A woman in a reddish rag, crouching over the doorstep, picks out lice from her child’s hair. (137)<sup>491</sup>

Actually, poverty neighbouring high technology is an image presented repeatedly by the reporters. Gołębiowski visits a large steel plant in Bhilai, and, still on the same day, he arrives to a village inhabited by a tribal community. “In the morning, I admired the huge blast furnaces, transporters and enormous cranes, while in the evening I watched arrows and the dance of a buffalo, sitting among people from a different epoch” (68)<sup>492</sup>, he remarks. In his mind, the people with traditional lifestyles do not belong to twentieth century, they are almost frozen in time, acting as a reminder of a pre-industrial era. In most accounts, such belief in linear progress can be observed. This makes them even more surprised to see traditional, or “primitive” communities, alongside examples of cutting-edge technology.

Generally, the reporters are convinced about the need for industrialisation and technological progress, not even noticing that it might be happening at the expense of people, community life, customs and traditions. For them, a modern power plant is worth more than the “dance of a buffalo”, practiced perhaps for centuries. The belief in such version of modernity was undermined by such events as the 1984 Bhopal tragedy, during which poisonous gas leaked from a pesticide plant in Madhya Pradesh, causing thousands of deaths in the region. In recent years, too, many private and government investments cause controversy, as they are considered by activists as dangerous to local communities and natural environment<sup>493</sup>. In their blind belief in industrialisation, the socialist reporters are rather sceptical about ideas of self-reliance promoted by Gandhi (for instance the idea of producing one’s own clothes by weaving one’s own cloth - *khadi*). Gołębiowski even concludes that the idea of self-sufficiency only made sense in colonial times, and now it “ goes in favour of those who would like most to see India as a resource base for the industrialised West” (44-45)<sup>494</sup>.

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lands in the West in exchange. A nostalgia about the lost *Kresy* would however last for decades to come, resurfacing especially after the end of communism in 1989.

<sup>491</sup> “Ale tuż za wiekiem dwudziestym, na kamienistym upłazie – chałupa, jeśli tak można nazwać bryłę bez okien, ściany z łupku uszczelnionego gliną, dach z mierzwy, porosłej gęstwą zielska, dym ogniska wali przez drzwi. Kobieta w buraczkowych łachmanach iska dziecko, przycupnąwszy za progiem” (Żukrowski 137).

<sup>492</sup> “Rano podziwiałem wielkie piece, transportery i potężne suwnice, wieczorem zaś oglądałem łuki i taniec bawołu, siedząc wśród ludzi z innej epoki” (Gołębiowski 68).

<sup>493</sup> See, for instance, the nonfictional writings by Arundhati Roy.

<sup>494</sup> “idą na rękę tym, którzy najchętniej widzieliby Indie jako surowcowe zaplecze uprzemysłowionego Zachodu” (Gołębiowski 44-45).

Thus, the best choice for India, is – in the eyes of the reporters coming from communist Poland – a planned economy. Gołębiowski even thinks that it is an obvious and widely shared belief among Indians. He claims that “[a]part from a small group of right-wingers, who in their concepts did not go beyond the nineteenth-century idea of “freedom of economics”, actually nobody in India questions the legitimacy of economic planning and state’s role in the development of economics” (42)<sup>495</sup>. The same is also clear for Górnicki, who ponders on various economic models as well as on philosophical foundations of liberalism and socialism, and concludes his reflection in the following way:

The path of a classic capitalist development is closed for India; there is no doubt about that. The repetition of the entire cycle – from primitive accumulation through crises to a relatively permanent prosperity – is now impossible. Capitalism ultimately lost its driving power for backward countries, it cannot guarantee their advancement neither as an economic system, nor as a financier [creditor]. . . Thus, India has only one path to choose: socialism. What socialism? The one without quotation marks, in any case. I do not think about empty slogans, or a “socialism” of Guy Mollet<sup>496</sup> or Carlo Schmid, but of an actual, functioning system – the only one that in today’s world can ensure a fast progress, a dynamic of development, and a way out of the impasse. (195-196)<sup>497</sup>

Hence, the only economic model that would be beneficial to India, is – in Górnicki’s eyes – the centrally planned one. Any half-measures, or a socialism in quotation marks, will not be enough. Janusz Gołębiowski is even less optimistic about the Indian economic model and Indian socialism as a whole. He notices that it does not bring expected results:

Because the range of the state’s influence on the dominating private-capitalist sector is minimal, the methods of [central] planning borrowed from socialist countries turn to be of little use. The concept of society construction according to the socialist model is undermined, furthermore, by

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<sup>495</sup> “Poza niezbyt liczną częścią prawicy, która w swych koncepcjach nie wyszła dotąd poza dziewiętnastowieczne wyobrażenia o ‘wolności gospodarki’, nikt właściwie nie kwestionuje w Indiach słuszności gospodarczego planowania i roli państwa w rozwoju ekonomiki”(Gołębiowski 42).

<sup>496</sup> Guy Mollet (1905-1975) was a French socialist and prime minister in years 1956-1957, criticised, among others, for trying to regain control over the Suez Canal after its nationalisation by Nasser, and for his hardline policy towards Algeria. Carlo Schmid (1896-1979) was a German academic and Social Democratic Party politician, one of the founders of SPD. He was behind the reform in SPD as a result of which Marxist ideas were abandoned by Social Democrats. Thus, Górnicki considers these two politicians to be socialists only by name, and in reality – supporters of liberal democracy.

<sup>497</sup> “Droga klasycznego rozwoju kapitalistycznego jest dla Indii zamknięta; co do tego nie ma wątpliwości. Powtórzenie całego cyklu - od pierwotnej akumulacji przez kryzysy do względnie trwałej prosperity – jest dziś niemożliwe. Kapitalizm utracił ostatecznie swą moc napędową dla krajów zacofanych, nie potrafi już zagwarantować im awansu ani jako system gospodarczy, ani jako finansista. . . Indie mają więc tylko jedną drogę do wyboru: socjalizm. Jaki socjalizm? Ten bez cudzysłowu, w każdym razie. Myślę nie o czcnych formułkach, czy ‘socjalizmie’ Guy Molleta czy Carlo Schmidy [prawicowi socjaliści], lecz o faktycznym, funkcjonującym systemie – jedynym, jaki w dzisiejszym świecie potrafi zapewnić szybki postęp, dynamikę rozwojową, wyjście z impasu”(Górnicki 195-196).

the lack of a numerous radical reforms and by the insistent use of half-measures, while fundamental decisions are required. All this, as well as a traditional conservatism of the society and relatively weak influence of the organised left, makes the Indian “middle way” time and again stray to the sides. (47)<sup>498</sup>

Furthermore, Gołębiowski quotes after an Indian newspaper (presumably a leftist one), that the problem of Indian central planning lies in the contradiction between socialist aspirations and capitalist habits of Indian society (48). Another problem, in his view, is the rapid – and tolerated by the government – development of private trade and services, which are for the reporter an unwelcome phenomenon (49). Moreover, says Gołębiowski, although the assumptions of the five-year-plans were right, they did not bring about the expected result because of the “specifics of Indian political-economic model, which limits the efficiency of planning” (43)<sup>499</sup> as well as the “meagre capabilities of the ruling Congress Party in implementing the most radical socio-economic programmes” (43). Clearly, the reporters believe (or are expected to demonstrate) that only truly socialist measures, that include a full control of the state on all sectors of economy, can lead to a successful outcome.

The problems in Indian economic model are illustrated on the example of a large, government project of a power plant. Jerzy Putrament, on his visit to the construction site of the plant in Barauni talks to the Polish engineers working there. The construction supervisor explains the problems that are caused by the clash of public and private interests. Big industrialisation projects are sponsored by the state, but executed by private companies. The companies, to increase their income, pay their workers low wages, or even employ children, to keep more money to themselves, says the engineer (*Na drogach...* 75). Public employees who supervise the construction earn far less than the private contractors, and as a result, are more vulnerable to pressures and easily corrupted. For this, both the anonymous engineer and the reporter blame the “two-sector economy” (75). Putrament concludes:

One thing is to tolerate small shopkeepers or craftsmen, but another thing is such an attempt at a symbiosis of large capitalist companies with the public sector. The experience of many countries teaches that in the long run it becomes impossible: private capital has at its disposal

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<sup>498</sup> “Ponieważ zakres oddziaływania państwa na dominujący sektor prywatno-kapitalistyczny jest minimalny, zapożyczone od krajów socjalistycznych metody planowania okazują się mało przydatne. Koncepcję budowy społeczeństwa na wzór socjalistyczny podważa ponadto brak szeregu radykalnych reform i nagminne stosowanie półśrodków tam, gdzie potrzebne są zasadnicze decyzje. Wszystko to oraz tradycyjny konserwatyzm społeczeństwa i stosunkowo słabe wpływy zorganizowanej lewicy sprawia, że indyjska ‘pośrednia droga’ coraz to skręca na manowce”(Gołębiowski 47).

<sup>499</sup> “specyfika gospodarczo-politycznego modelu Indii, ograniczająca skuteczność planowania, oraz skromne możliwości rządzącej Partii Kongresowej w zakresie realizowania radykalniejszych programów społeczno-gospodarczych” (Gołębiowski 43).

many means of exerting pressure on social economy, on the psyche of public sector managers, and even on the public opinion. And the latter one [the public sector], with all its might, is sluggish, and as such, defenceless, like enormous lizards [dinosaurs] from Cretaceous period. (78-79)<sup>500</sup>

He finds that it would have been much more profitable for the government to form and employ state companies (78). This would be a solution based on those common in countries of the Soviet Bloc, but – as the Polish example often proved – such model did not guarantee neither a trouble-free process of construction, nor high-quality outcomes. The poor quality of the socialist blocks of flats remains a subject of jokes till this day<sup>501</sup>. Also, it is a widely acknowledged fact that corruption and nepotism were widespread in public sector companies in the Soviet Bloc (Childs 85). Finally, as it turned out just a few decades later, the socialist central planning led to economic crises and large international debt in all countries of the Eastern Bloc. The economic problems partly contributed to social and political unrest, which resulted in the fall of socialist governments in Central Europe, and soon after, to the collapse of Soviet Union as a whole.

### **Socialist Industrialisation in India: The Steel and the Rooster**

Many hopes rested also on the development of modern industry, in Eastern Europe and in India alike. Giełżyński is convinced, for instance, that it is the only way of improving the fate of the poor (77). Upon his arrival to India, he notices that industrialisation is indeed growing, partly thanks to loans received from socialist countries (81). He stresses the role of the Soviet Union in the creation of the steel mill in Bhilai and the one in Bokaro. In Ranchi, says Giełżyński, a factory of heavy machinery and mining equipment was created, and in Sudamdih and Monidih Polish specialists assisted in digging coal mines (81). In fact, “[s]ome of the Indian factories use tools that provoke jealousy of the Polish engineers”<sup>502</sup>, remarks Giełżyński (14). He also mentions that India has a nuclear power plant – something that seemed

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<sup>500</sup> “Co innego tolerowanie drobnych sklepikarzy czy rzemieślników, co innego taka próba symbiozy wielkich kapitalistycznych spółek z sektorem państwowym. Doświadczenie bardzo wielu krajów uczy, że na dalszą metę staje się to niemożliwe: prywatny kapitał dysponuje bowiem wieloma środkami nacisku i na gospodarkę społeczną, i na psychikę kierowników sektora państwowego, i nawet na opinię publiczną. A ten drugi, przy całej swej potędze, jest nieruchawy i przez to bezbronny, jak ogromne jaszczury z epoki kredowej” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 78-79).

<sup>501</sup> The poor quality of socialist blocks of flats became a running joke, even already in communist times, for instance in the super-popular 1980s series, “Alternatywy 4” [No. 4, Alternative Street], directed by Stanisław Bareja.

<sup>502</sup> “Niektóre z indyjskich fabryk posługują się urządzeniami, wzbudzającymi zazdrość polskich inżynierów” (Giełżyński 14).

to him a proof of ultimate modernity, as Poland did not have any nuclear reactors (and even now, has no nuclear power plants).

Many reporters visit various sites of technological progress to witness that “socialist modernity” first hand. Ros is very clear about the reasons of his visit to Jamshedpur, the centre of the Tata Industries company: “To be honest, I was encouraged for this escapade by Karl Marx . . .” (251)<sup>503</sup>. Putrament also passes through Jamshedpur and comments on Tata industries. He explains that Tata is well-known for his “paternalist” approach to employees, who get accommodation and some form of social welfare (*Na drogach...* 52). In the Indian context, among all the poverty and overpopulation of villages and underdeveloped industry, Tata industries are “sort of islands of relative order and well-being” (52)<sup>504</sup>. Nevertheless, Putrament stresses that precisely because of the general poverty it is profitable for Tata to be generous (52). His choices are important in the context of the “struggle of ideologies, struggle of concepts for the future of this huge country” (52), explains Putrament, and asks: “Socialism? Capitalism? And if the latter one, will it not be the most bountiful, most concentrated capitalism *à la Tata*?” (52)<sup>505</sup>. To the Polish writer’s mind, the mere fact of allowing for such large private company to exist is a threat that the Indian economic model will turn towards capitalism, rather than towards socialism. Putrament is of the opinion that the workers of Tata will not further the communist cause if they are offered flats and welfare. This statement is obviously problematic: should poverty be preserved so that people become desperate and start a revolution? Putrament does not say that, but in the reporters’ descriptions of Kolkata, there is a sense of hope that the dire circumstances that people live in will accelerate a radical change of system.

As one can find out from Ros’ account, the employees of state-owned industries show a considerable understanding for leftist ideas, or at least the reporters wants to believe so. He describes his visit to the Golden Rock Railway Workshop in Tamil Nadu. But apart from the technology, he is interested in the views of the workers and invites some of them to a local tea shop. The workers welcome him warmly and make toasts to Warsaw (344). “Here, they are the inquisitive listeners, wanting to find out as much as possible about the country and the system

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<sup>503</sup> “Prawdę mówiąc, do tej eskapady zachęcił mnie Karol Marks” (Ros 251).

<sup>504</sup> “Na tle straszliwej nędzy przeludnionej wsi indyjskiej, na tle niedorozwiniętego przemysłu państwowego, przedsiębiorstwa Taty są jakby wysepkami względnego porządku i dobrobytu” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 52).

<sup>505</sup> “I choć jedno z drugim jest najściślej związane, choć ‘szeroki gest’ Taty opłaca mu się właśnie na tle i na koszt nędzy ogólnej, gra to określoną rolę w walce idei, walce koncepcji przyszłości tego ogromnego kraju. Socjalizm? Kapitalizm? A jeśli już ten ostatni, to czasem czy nie najbujniejszy, najsilniej skoncentrowany kapitalizm a la Tata?” (Putrament, *Na drogach...* 52).

that is for them the symbol of equality between free individuals” (344)<sup>506</sup>. The new friends even accompany Ros to the train station, from which he starts his journey back to Poland. Ros is moved by their warmth and the emotional goodbyes. This farewell scene conveniently figures at the very end of the reporter’s account and it symbolises the brotherhood of socialist India and socialist Poland, through the unity of the working population.

Throughout his reportage, Ros tries to establish a link between the Indians that he interviews and his readers, bringing them together in the same cause, bound by the same wish for development and similar political ideas. It is also the aim of Górnicki and Gołębiowski, although they are less sure of whether India really can be defined a socialist country. Giełżyński, despite his calls for withholding judgment on other cultures or understanding different points of view, still draws a line between the European “us” and the Indian “them”. After finding out that at some construction sites of factories, sponsored through Soviet credits, children are employed, Giełżyński concludes: “[s]till, for us, people from Europe, especially from socialist countries, from Poland, it is difficult to accept many customs that one encounters there. It is particularly hard to close our eyes to the social relations, so contradictory with our ideals” (20)<sup>507</sup>. Thus, for the reporter, even though India can boast about its industrialisation and technological development, these do not go hand-in-hand with cultural modernity. Although child labour is certainly an important and deplorable issue, the reporter uses it as an excuse to look down upon India’s customs.

The contrast between modern industrialisation and traditional culture is perhaps best illustrated by Jerzy Ros. After his visit in one of the industrial sites, Ros notices people watching a rooster fight. He treats this image as a metaphor of India:

Steel and roosters – this is also India. For many years only the colourful, rooster-like exotic of this enormous country would be seen. Now, some would like to see here only iron. But the life and the truth of this country means that roosters fight at the threshold to large factories, in which steel is melted. (260)<sup>508</sup>

Through this metaphor, Ros suggests to the readers that neither an Orientalist view is a correct one, nor an exaggerated belief in modern technology. What defines India, he seems to say, is

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<sup>506</sup> “Tu oni są dociekliwymi słuchaczami, chcącymi dowiedzieć się jak najwięcej o kraju i ustroju, który jest dla nich symbolem sprawiedliwości panującej między wolnymi ludźmi” (Ros 344).

<sup>507</sup> “A jednak nam, ludziom z Europy, zwłaszcza z krajów socjalistycznych, z Polski, trudno przystać na wiele zwyczajów, które się tam spotyka. Trudno przede wszystkim przyknać oczy na stosunki społeczne, tak bardzo sprzeczne z naszymi ideałami” (Giełżyński 20).

<sup>508</sup> “Stal i koguty – to też Indie. Przez długie lata widziano tylko barwną kogucią egzotykę tego wielkiego kraju. Teraz niejednen chciałby tu widzieć tylko żelazo. Ale życie i prawda tego kraju polega na tym, że koguty walczą na progu wielkich zakładów, w których przetapia się stal.”(Ros 260)

the contrast between the two, the exotic and the industrial. Thus, even though most reporters try to show India's industrialisation in a positive light, they still contrast it with a somewhat Orientalist take on India.

### **Indian Socialism or the “Third Way”?**

There are two types of modernity that reporters refer to: the traces of colonial, British-made modernity, as well as a socialist modernity, along the Soviet model. They assess the first, colonial model of modernity in a definitely negative way, while they idealise the Soviet one, presenting it as a solution to all India's problems. While Ros and Putrament are more radical in their view of socialism, and critical of Nehru's “incomplete” introduction of socialist reforms, Górnicki and Gołębiowski at least attempt at presenting a more balanced view. Despite the reporters' insistence on promoting socialism, at various points of their accounts they underline India's specificity and the need for India to create its own model of development. They believe that a middle path is possible and India can form its own political and economic model of development.

They try to switch perspectives and make it possible for the reader to look from a different point of view, from an Indian one. Górnicki, for instance, says the following:

What gives the European visitor the right to arbitrarily judge this country? Statistics. 1440 calories per day, 360 million of illiterate, a standstill, thus regress. That is true. But where is it stated that for instance 3500 calories per day brings happiness? That the ability to read, some shoes and shirt, a television and a car, a house with air conditioning, a freezer, and finally 2,000 dollars of national income per capita, like in USA, rather than 70, like in India – that all of this guarantees a fullness of humanity? On the contrary, the experiences of the wealthy societies of the West seem to negate these general beliefs. (193)<sup>509</sup>

As an example of these problems in the West Górnicki mentions depressions, anxieties, the chase after money in the West (as if India or the countries of the Soviet-controlled sphere were free from those problems). He also challenges the ideas of contemporary “fashionable philosophers” (136), who do not believe in the idea of progress and, allegedly, think that political activism brings new grievances and new conflicts. He admits that there might be some

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<sup>509</sup> “Co uprawnia przybysza z Europy do arbitralnych sądów o tym kraju? Statystyki. 1440 kc na dobę, 360 milionów analfabetów, zastój, a więc regres. To prawda. Ale gdzie jest powiedziane, że na przykład 3500 kc dziennie przynosi szczęście? Że umiejętność czytania, buty i koszula, telewizor i samochód, dom z klimatyzacją, zamrażalnik, wreszcie 2 tys dolarów dochodu narodowego na głowę, jak w USA, zamiast 70, jak w Indiach – że to wszystko gwarantuje pełnię człowieczeństwa? Raczej odwrotnie, doświadczenia zasobnych społeczeństw Zachodu zdają się przeczyć tym obiegowym sądom” (Górnicki 193).



truth in these statements, but by and large, he disagrees with them. He is of the opinion that such beliefs are professed mostly in Western Europe and America, by those who – presumably – do not know the reality of other countries around the globe. “As for me”, says Górnicki, “I think that if believers in such ideas came to Telangana, they would understand this simple truth, so hard to disseminate: that at the core, only one thing is immoral – the failure to act” (136)<sup>510</sup>. Górnicki is thus critical of Western ideas, presenting them as Eurocentric and detached from global problems. He also underlines the Westerners’ indifference to other peoples’ suffering, which is conveniently contrasted in various points of the book with the remarks on Soviet aid to India. In this way, the readers are presented with a biased image of a rich, but selfish capitalist West and a less rich, but helpful socialist East. Certainly, India was politically closer to the Soviet Union than to United States in times of the Cold War, but American aid was actually more extensive (throughout 1950s and 1960s, half of the foreign aid provided to India came from US)<sup>511</sup>. Even though Górnicki expresses his criticism of Indian politicians, for not undertaking sufficient reforms (for instance, allowing for the existence of princely states and failing to introduce a radical land reform across the country), he is aware that India is a non-aligned state. Although he would recommend a more decisive turn to the left, the reporter respects India’s subjectivity and independence.

It is the case also with Gołębiowski, who is well-aware of the fact that India does not conform to the binary division imposed by the Cold War order. In his first chapter, he presents different views on India prevalent in the Polish society, only to conclude that both are wrong: India is neither an exotic land straight of colonial tales, nor a staunchly communist nation, “tool of Moscow” as the Americans would like to present it (10). He criticises the fact that the Polish – socialist – take on India was excessively optimistic, and too much credence was given to the political statements that had no reflection in reality. Consequently, another false image of India was formed: “[a]n image of a huge, revolutionary country, which, after throwing off the chains of colonial domination, entered its own, fascinating path towards socialism” (12)<sup>512</sup>. This is not a full picture, says Gołębiowski, and many attempts at describing it may result in simplifications and superficial opinions, given India’s scale, its complexity and diversity (16). The reporter encourages the readers to take all these factors in mind and abstain from easy

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<sup>510</sup> “Co do mnie, myślę, że gdyby tak ich wyznawcy przyjechali do Telangany, pojęliby tę prostą, a tak opornie rozprzestrzeniającą się prawdę: że w gruncie rzeczy niemoralne jest tylko jedno – zaniechanie działania” (Górnicki 136).

<sup>511</sup> See: Siddiqui 46.

<sup>512</sup> “Był to wizerunek wielkiego rewolucyjnego kraju, który po zrzuceniu pęt kolonialnego panowania wkroczył na własną, fascynującą drogę do socjalizmu” (Gołębiowski 12).

categorisations. This, in itself, is already a step forward to a new narrative, which allows a more balanced and less ideological view. Logically, if one followed this argumentation, neither Western or socialist modernity would be fully applicable to India, as it would be up to Indians themselves to decide about what kind of modernity they expect.

## CONCLUSIONS

The key assumption of this dissertation was to determine whether Polish accounts on India can serve as a showcase of a particular type of Orientalism which can be called a “Socialist Orientalism”. It is a product of a specific time, political system and cultural context. To investigate this type of discourse travel accounts from socialist Poland describing India were selected for scrutiny. There were multiple reasons for the selection of this particular primary material.

Many scholars agree that travel writing is a genre that in a particularly vivid way showcases various forms of Western (American and European) objectification of other cultures (Pratt; Clifford; Youngs; Lisle; Said). Mary Louise Pratt even talks about “Euroimperialism” and its strategies of creating support to their expansionist enterprises through interpreting and subjugating the “rest of the world” (4-5). Travel accounts were often tools with which the colonial states created a perception of a different culture which placed that culture in an inferior position. This legitimised their intervention to – supposedly – help that culture, or in other words, their *mission civilisatrice*, and, by extension, their political and economic domination over the region. Travellers, if considered as envoys from the metropolis, served, at best, as cultural intermediaries, and at worst, as frontrunners and promoters of a colonial enterprise. As a result, certain patterns, clichés and modes of representing Others became prevalent in European collective perception of “the rest of the world”. Even when the colonial era came to an end, travel writing maintained this dubious tradition of Othering, as, in the words of Debbie Lisle, “travel writers continue to secure their privileged position by categorising, critiquing and passing judgement on less-civilised areas of the world” (3). Nevertheless, if travel writers of the postcolonial age reproduce colonial and Orientalist tropes, they are restructured and repositioned in a contemporary setting, and thus assume new forms and expressions.

In this dissertation, travel accounts highlight yet another form of Orientalism, which partly draws on Western European perceptions, and partly on the political ideology of their time. Although they claim to introduce a fresh, unbiased, and well-intentioned perspective, they often reproduce the Orientalist tropes of their Western European predecessors. The narrators of these travel accounts are not tourists, vacationers or adventurers, who decide to share the impressions of their journey. They are not fiction writers, seeking new insights through the means of travel as a metaphor for transgressing one’s boundaries and facing the unknown. Their travel is an official one, planned, controlled and also limited by the institutions of the state that have sent them to India. As such, they are not free in the way they recount their

journey and in the way they represent India. Interestingly, they have one point in common with the accounts of the colonial era: the fact that, like in nineteenth century, travel opportunities were limited for most people, and as a result, the travel writer becomes an intermediary between the larger public and the wider world. Despite technological progress and new possibilities for international mobility in the post-war era, the authorities' full control over the right to such mobility made it *de facto* as difficult for an ordinary person to travel, as it was, for instance, for an ordinary person in Victorian times.

Because of that fact, the adoption of a particular timeframe – communist period – and a particular local context – Poland – allows to see a different dimension of travel writing. In fact, in this incarnation, travel writing appears as travel reportage. Reportage is a journalistic genre and as such it differs from travel writing in its scope and style. Furthermore, reportage has a tradition of being socially or politically engaged, exposing a variety of issues and forcing the readers to rethink their position on these problems. Travel reportage can thus be considered as a subgenre of travel writing (and a subgenre of reportage), but it is often less personal than travelogues and it explores larger issues than the journey itself<sup>513</sup>. As such, it is a particularly relevant type of writing for an analysis of social and political discourses.

Travel writing from the communist period is a convenient vehicle of such discourses, because it displays a particular relationship, which is often overlooked by postcolonial studies. It is the relationship between the so-called Second World and Third World. While postcolonial studies focus on the interactions between the metropolis and the colony, the interaction between the Soviet-dominated states and the former colonies transcends a simple structure of coloniser's hegemony over the colonised. Travel writing from communist Poland, itself a satellite state of the Soviet Union, about India, a recently decolonised, non-aligned, but left-leaning country, presents a more complicated structure of power. On the one hand, the communist traveller, like any European traveller to India, reproduces the tropes of power and control over the foreign land and objectifies it through his gaze. On the other hand, he claims to present a fresh perspective, based on the ideological principles of equality and internationalism in a socialist spirit. However, he is not free – he is also subjugated to the power machine of the communist state, which decides who should be allowed to have a voice and what kind of message this voice can spread. The interplay between the communist ideology and the old Orientalist tropes is thus characteristic to the travel writing of that period.

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<sup>513</sup> In fact, many examples of travel writing in English would be, in the Polish context, considered to be travel reportages. For instance, this would be the case with travel accounts by William Dalrymple or Colin Thubron.

Poland and India were two countries chosen as examples of such type of writing. Their respective histories and political lines are one reason, but another is the long history of their mutual contacts. Even in times of political turmoil, partitions of the Polish state, shaky independence, there were travellers who visited India and wrote about it. Both countries have an interesting cultural location. Poland, throughout its history, was always thorn between the East and the West, and it was always in a liminal position on the map of Europe. India, too, witnessed exchanges and clashes of various cultures: between numerous cultures coexisting on the Subcontinent, but also the cultures of India's visitors and invaders – the Greek, the Persians, the Moghuls, the British... Hence, both countries make excellent cases for studies on collective identities, colonial/postcolonial structures of power and cultural representations.

There are even analogies in the trajectories of Indian and Polish history. The battle of Plassey (1757), which led to the establishment of East India Company's rule in India almost coincided with the first Polish partition in 1772. Throughout nineteenth century, both India and Poland were under foreign domination. In both places, there were armed rebellions against the colonial oppressors (1857 in India, 1863 in Poland). Finally, Poland gained independence in 1918, around the same time that Gandhi arrived to India and gave a new push to the Indian independence movement. The Polish traumas of the Second World War and the following change of borders, resulting in forced resettlements of millions of people, coincided with India's involvement in the war and the trauma of the Indian Partition. Finally, both countries began their affair with socialism at a similar time, India in a voluntary, while Poland in an imposed manner, to also end it at the break of 1980s and 1990s. While the scale of events in India – a huge country and an old culture – cannot match the Polish one, it is striking how the experiences of the respective countries run in parallel.

Finally, another reason for selecting Polish travel accounts on India, and not on any other country, was that the European discourse on India is rich and diverse, containing images that range from Indian mysticism and to those of poverty and backwardness. These clichés affected the travellers from communist Poland too, even though they tried to avoid stereotypes. However, these clichés were complemented by a very particular worldview, the socialist one. It involved a belief in progress and technology, the abolition of class (and caste) divisions, the secularisation and the fight with the “superstitions”. The Polish reporters travelling to India were, in a way, emissaries of this “socialist modernity”, and as such, they opposed all that was linked with tradition, understood as the embodiment of backwardness and an obstacle to development. However, their rejection of tradition was not very different from a colonial view that India's “backwardness” clashes with the modernity that the British were trying to

implement. Similar strategies of exoticisation, debasement, objectification or naturalisation, found in colonial writing, can be observed in the Polish accounts<sup>514</sup>. Thus, labelling the Polish travel reporters' discourse on India as "Socialist Orientalism" seems appropriate.

### **Summary of Chapters**

The dissertation began with an overview on Orientalism as a discourse of the West – a term referring to Europe and North America – in the understanding of Edward Said. While Said was not the first, nor the only one to question how the Orient is constructed in the Western imagination, his analysis remains one of the most influential texts pertaining to this issue. Although he was criticised by various representatives of academia – most prominently by Orientalists and historians – his attempt at providing a wide range of diverse examples that together form Orientalist discourse was a successful one and his work is now considered as a classic reference for academics. Scholars of postcolonial studies took his work further, providing even more examples of the workings of Orientalist discourse in various disciplines and various geographical contexts. Also Polish academics found the notion of Orientalism useful, both in the way the West perceives Poland, recurring to well-known stereotypes on everything "Eastern", and in the way Polish texts of culture objectify and use cliché images of other cultures, whether located just beyond the Eastern fringes of Poland, or farther to the East, or South-East: in the historical Levant and South Asia. India features prominently among cultures Orientalised by Westerners, who invariably focused on its spirituality, often fascinated with India's alleged "mysticism". Another common cliché on India is that its society is divided in castes, and this social order is perceived as the main characteristics of the country. Indeed, different elements of Indian culture, thought and spirituality became of interest to Europeans and a large body of works, from travel accounts to philosophical works, is a heritage of this fascination.

Poles shared this interest: in fact, the Polish presence in India dates back to the times of Vasco da Gama's arrival – Vasco was greeted by a Polish Jew who lived in India already for many years before the Portuguese set sail to India. Through the centuries, many Polish travellers visited India and their accounts can be read till this day. But India's thought was present in Poland not only through travellers, but through the work of Orientalists – or Indologists – as well as through Western European thinkers who would discuss concepts of Indian philosophy in their works. Polish intellectuals were also affected by this scholarship and

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<sup>514</sup> Some of these strategies are studied by Spurr.

philosophical discussions. As a result, several generations of poets and writers were inspired by Indian thought, among them such famous figures as Adam Mickiewicz or Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy). In early twentieth century, when travel abroad became more widespread, many Poles visited India, some even settled there, like Wanda Dynowska. Furthermore, India offered refuge to Polish children rescued from Soviet Union, and other Poles fleeing the destructive force of the Second World War. When the war ended, Poland became – unwillingly – part of the Soviet Bloc. This dissertation focussed on accounts of reporters that visit India in that period – from late 1950s to the end of 1970s.

The texts analysed in this dissertation belong to the wide category of travel writing on the one hand, and of reportage, on the other. In the second chapter, these two genres are analysed in detail. Both travel writing and reportage are nonfictional genres with long traditions – one rooted in documentary prose, memoirs and travel journals, and the other originating from journalism. While travel writing is a genre widely discussed in Anglophone academia, Polish academic works on the topic are not as numerous. However, travel writing has long traditions in Poland, which have been briefly outlined in the second chapter. Reportage, on the other hand, is a more recent genre, which became popular in twentieth century, both in Poland and abroad. From its beginnings, it was linked with leftist agenda, as it aimed at portraying various sections of society and at presenting the view of those who do not usually have a voice. Indeed, after the Russian revolution, the Bolsheviks preferred realism to fiction and reportage gained a new appreciation in countries with communist regimes. Nevertheless, what the history of reportage in Poland demonstrates, since reportage traditionally took the side of the oppressed, in a communist state, too, it became a vehicle of resistance, expressing, in veiled terms, a critique of the system and of the authorities. The analysis of texts of the 1950s, 60s and 70s demonstrates that travel reporters were less inclined to contest the communist regime than their colleagues writing about domestic issues. While it is difficult to define the real views of the reporters visiting India, it is clear that one of the conditions for them to travel abroad was their loyalty to the communist state. Dissenting views are rare in the analysed reportages, as the reporters either used self-censorship, or they would be removed by the actual censorship bureau. Furthermore, as it is explained in the section of chapter two that describes the situation of journalists and writers, many intellectuals actually believed in communism in the first decades of the new system, despite the terror of the Stalinist years. On the one hand, Ros' reportage, for instance, demonstrates a rather genuine belief in socialism as a tool to bring equality and advancement for the least privileged. Jerzy Putrament, highly placed in the hierarchy of the communist regime, was also, as if by default, a proponent of socialism and as

part of the establishment, identified with the idea of promoting the socialist model in other countries. Other reporters represent different degrees of politicisation, some expressing their views openly (Górnicki), and some avoiding political matters as much as possible (Koehler, Chociłowski). Certainly, the political regime in Poland assumed different forms and practiced different policies throughout this period, there are, however, similar trends in all the accounts analysed here. The close reading of primary texts revealed what are the similarities and differences among the reporters describing India: the results of such analysis can be found in chapters three, four and five.

Chapter three focuses on the reporter – the actual author of the text, as well as the reporter’s figure presented in the text. To introduce the discussion on the reporter and his work, three famous Poles are brought to the front: the most famous Polish author of reportages, Ryszard Kapuściński; equally well-known Bronisław Malinowski, anthropologist; and finally, a celebrated writer, Joseph Conrad. This trio of Poles famous abroad, connected by their interest in Otherness and their experience of living in different cultures, is exemplary of the different roles that a reporter must assume. On the one hand, he (or she) is a journalist, a foreign correspondent, focussed on truthfully representing what they observe to the readers in the home country – like Kapuściński. On the other hand, a reporter is like an anthropologist that has to study and understand a different culture, through first-hand observation and participation – like Malinowski. Finally, a reporter needs to relate his/her observations in writing, in a lively and interesting language, in order to make it an attractive and insightful read for the general public – like a fiction writer, here exemplified by Joseph Conrad. Of course, reporters succeed at these tasks differently, just as their models do (all three, Kapuściński, Malinowski and Conrad, at some points of time were subjects of controversies or critiques).

All reporters whose works are analysed here declare that they want to present India differently than their predecessors. Some of them confess that the India of their imagination is not the same as the India that they experienced in reality. Indeed, given that much of their knowledge was based on sources that Said would qualify as Orientalist, their image of India was full of “Oriental riches”, snake charmers and mysticism. What was then their reaction to what they have seen upon their arrival to India? In his notes, published in several volumes of *Lapidaria*, Ryszard Kapuściński reflects on reportage and travel, and enumerates various reactions to what is perceived a different, “inferior” culture, in an Eurocentric understanding: first, is a didactic attitude, in which the visitor acts like a teacher, treating the Other like a child; second, is an “aristocratic” attitude, which is manifested in underlining one’s own superiority, a cold and contemptuous approach to the Other; third, is the “ironic-mocking” attitude that



means treating the Other as the object of satire, as someone funny and silly; fourth, is the “aggressive domination” attitude (marked by hatred, maliciousness, anger), fifth, is resignation, which ensues an acceptance of the Other in the way they are, but still treating him/her as inferior; sixth – a benevolent approach (slightly paternalistic, but friendly), and seventh – the partner position, which assumes that the Other is someone equal to us (*Lapidarium* III, 114-115)<sup>515</sup>. When observing the attitudes of reporters visiting India, a mix of approaches can be identified. The attitude of “aggressive domination” is practically absent, as the reporters by and large declare their positive approach. Nevertheless, although Polish reporters attempt at presenting themselves as equal to Indians, in reality, their attitudes vary. Their didactic and prescriptive tone is often discernable, as well as their irony and mockery. At times, resignation overwhelms the reporters, since they feel that much will not change in the Indian society and attempts at “modernising” are futile. Finally, their benevolence is often lined with a feeling of paternalist superiority.

The following chapters explore more in depth how the reporters see India. In a rather stereotypical fashion, India is presented as a “land of contrasts”, in which tradition and modernity clash or coexist. Chapter four focuses on the elements that the reporters categorise as traditions, or elements belonging to the past. They are centred around two main concepts – of religion, and of caste. In order to analyse the reporters’ perceptions of these concepts, several case studies are presented. In the section on religion and spirituality, the elements addressed are: the idea of the “holy cow”, to this day probably one of the images most frequently associated with India; the presence of “naked gurus”, or renunciators, whose appearance is considered by foreigners as bizarre or even repulsive; as well as the *loci* of spirituality – holy places, temples, and pilgrimage sites. It results from this section that even though the reporters declare to be objective and neutral observers, they harbour rather strong emotions when exposed to these manifestations of difference. In that, they are not very different from the Orientalists, many of whom tried at least to understand the spiritual rationale behind the religious practices. However, there is another reason for their criticism of all things religious:

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<sup>515</sup> “Możliwe postawy w zetknięciu z inną, „niższą” kulturą:

- postawa belferska (pouczanie, traktowanie innego jako dziecka),
- postawa arystokratyczna (podkreślanie własnej wyższości, chłodny, pogardliwy stosunek do innego),
- postawa ironiczno-kpiarska (traktowanie innego jako obiektu satyry, jako pajaca, jako półgłówka),
- postawa dominacji agresywnej (nacechowana nienawiścią, złośliwością, wściekłością),
- postawa rezygnacji (akceptowanie innego takim, jakim jest, jednak z przekonaniem, że jest niższy),
- postawa życzliwości (trochę paternalistyczna, ale serdeczna),
- postawa partnerska (przyjmowanie innego jako równego sobie.”

Excerpt From: Ryszard Kapuściński. “Lapidarium II.” iBooks. 114-115

a Marxist-based rejection of religion as such. Indeed, their criticism of pilgrimage places, for instance, is to some extent a criticism of Catholic pilgrimages in their home country. This transfer of criticism of Catholicism on the Indian ground is one of the propagandist aspects of travel reportage: it encourages the Polish readers to see religion as a relic of the past, as an expression of ignorance and irrationality.

The other element of Indian tradition that the reporters focus on is the idea of caste. Presented as the main organising principle in Indian society, it is – as can be expected – condemned by reporters, who promote the idea of equality. Nevertheless, their view of caste is somewhat simplistic, treating caste structure as parallel to class structure. The critique of caste discrimination is not only declarative, but also performative: reporters take actions that contradict the logic of caste. They either engage in heated discussions with Indians (Górnicki) or make a point to talk to underprivileged sections of society (Ros, Żukrowski, Gołębiowski), and to represent their worldview and interests. They show compassion and solidarity, and they appeal to the readers' emotions. Often, they are embarrassed and confused by the fact that as foreigners, they are treated similarly to other Westerners – sometimes with reverence, but often with distance and diffidence, as intruders. Their attempts at establishing a connection with people of lower classes is not always successful: for instance, the rickshaw pullers or leather workers that Ros was approaching were confused and intimidated, not knowing why the reporter takes interest in their life. Some reporters, for instance Giełżyński, although deploring caste discrimination, seemed actually rather satisfied with their special status of a foreign guest. Another common reaction to the caste system is resignation: Chociłowski, for instance, is aware that although caste divisions are an unwelcome phenomenon, it is a long-lasting custom and it will not change overnight. Although the reporters demonstrate their solidarity with people of lower caste and class, their attitude remains somewhat paternalist. With a certain superiority, they seem to suggest that caste is linked to ignorance and underdevelopment, expressing a belief along evolutionary lines that these traditional customs will be eradicated once India achieves a higher level of development (which, they presume, their home country already achieved).

Finally, the last chapter reveals how the reporters describe the India of their times, commenting on politics, economy and social issues. Although they underline the fact that by remaining non-aligned, India has chosen the “third way”, they advocate for more socialist measures to be taken, taking countries of the Soviet Bloc as an example. Among the aspects of Indian modernity that the reporters describe are the visible traces of colonialism: they manifest themselves in urban life, social relations, privileges to princes and maharajas, and in racist

attitudes. It is predictable that reporters from communist Poland would be critical of colonialism, but once again, this criticism goes beyond commenting on the past subjugation. In fact, the reporters try to portray America, Soviet Union's rival, as a direct continuator of the British Empire, planning to exert influence over India and eventually subjugate it as well. Here, too, the reporters seem to appeal to their Polish readers and present America – which, despite propaganda's efforts, was deemed to be a “promised land” for many Poles – in a negative light. In contrast, Soviet Union is presented as a benevolent and helpful state, which imparts its know-how with India, perceived as a fellow traveller, and offers financial assistance for the industry development. The reporters' take on Indian politics is also peculiar: the problems that Indian leaders have to tackle – poverty, social and economic inequality, or the dissent from the opposition – can only be explained in two ways: either they result from colonialism, or from insufficient socialism. In many instances, the reporters blame Nehru for hesitating to copy the Soviet solutions: land reform (Górnicki), silencing the opposition (Putrament), control over the media (Putrament), no religious sentiments and efficiency in handling the “cow issue” (Gielżyński) etc. In fact, Putrament believes that India, as a “backward” country, should introduce more drastic measures, even possibly a form of dictatorship. In this way, he demonstrates his superiority and belief that Indian society is in some way inferior, if reform has to be introduced by force. Clearly, he also does not understand the values that made Gandhi and Nehru such popular leaders, specifically – the idea of non-violence. Other reporters are more aware of Indian thought and cultural heritage and they try to describe them to their readers, nevertheless, by and large, they do keep a somewhat Orientalist frame of mind. Their descriptions of India's modernity are often accompanied by references to “Oriental decorations” or “exotic looks”, and they often describe Indians as irrational, immature, or fanatical. The blend of these long-lived clichés and socialist propaganda seem to be a version of Orientalism typical in Poland, and perhaps in other countries of the Soviet Bloc as well – a Socialist Orientalism.

### **Central European Socialist Orientalism, or Anti-Orientalism**

Central Europe, home to a plethora of national and ethnic groups, languages and religions, is itself an excellent case to study Orientalist, colonial, postcolonial (and post-Soviet) discourses. Many of its inhabitants were at both ends of the equation: as those who dominated over smaller groups or minorities, and as those that were the object of their imperial neighbours' expansionist policies. Central Europe was also Orientalised in Western European accounts (Wolff), as its underdeveloped, wild and immature younger cousin. Central

Europeans themselves were often unsure of their place on the European map, at times leaning East, and at times, West. Although Central European states did not possess any colonies themselves (if, at all, they were lucky to have their own state), many individuals, educated at Western European universities, well-read in colonial literature, would be exposed to the colonial worldview. Czechs, Hungarians, Poles, Slovaks – they were also students of Orientalist departments, both in the empires of which they were part, and in other academic centres across Europe. Róbert Gáfrik, in his paper on “Representations of India in Slovak Travel Writing during the Communist Regime”, mentions several famous Central European Indologists and Orientalists: starting from the Hungarian Csoma Korösi Sándor (1784-1842), founder of Tibetan studies, the Czech Sanskrit scholar Moriz Winternitz (1863-1937), and ending with the linguist Anna Rácová (1946-), who was, till recently, practically the only Slovak Indologist (286-287). The traditions of Polish Orientology and Indology were also very strong (as it was discussed earlier, in Chapter 1). Apart from academic study of Sanskrit and India in general, among many literary cultures of Central Europe, there was an interest in Indian thought and spirituality. According to Gáfrik, the key figures of the Slovak national revival movement, Ján Holly (1785-1849) and Ján Kollár (1793-1852) romanticised about India as the “homeland of the Slavs” (287). The romantic perception of India was followed by a realist, or indeed, a socialist realist one.

In his article, Gáfrik analyses a travel account from India by Miloš Ruppeldt, who served as *chargé d'affaires* at the Czechoslovak embassy in Delhi from 1949-1951. There are many similarities between his account, titled *India, krajina davnych mudrosti [India the Land of Ancient Wisdom]* (1956), and the reportages analysed in this dissertation. Ruppeldt frequently criticises the colonial rule, and like his Polish counterparts, “wages the Cold War on the pages of his book” (Gáfrik 290). In his view, while British were the villains of the past, Americans are the villains of the present (290). Ruppeldt, like the Polish visitors to India, is particularly interested in the local communist movement and its attempts to bring India out of its “backwardness” (290). Also, according to Gáfrik, the travel writer’s interpretations of key aspects of Indian tradition – caste, religion, Oriental despotism etc. – is “vulgar Marxist” (290). Another travel account analysed by Gáfrik is Dušan Kerný, who published his book *India nie je dal’eko [India Isn’t Far Away]* in 1974, displays similar tendencies as the Polish travel reportages from the same period. Like Górnicki and Gołębiowski, Kerný focuses on West Bengal and Kerala, where communist have won elections, and praises the prospects that socialist modernity would bring to India (290-291).

Gáfrik mentions two other travel accounts from India, but he classifies them as neo-romantic, given that they were not focussing on political aspects, exalting India's culture instead. He analyses the account by Elena Androvičová, *Od Himaláji po Cejlón* [*From the Himalayas to Ceylon*] from 1978 and *India, černo-biely kontrapunkt* [*India, a Black and White Counterpoint*] from 1984. Her travelogue is different than the ones of her predecessors and offers a less ideological view, except of occasional references to communism, Marx and the Soviet Union. Gáfrik categorises them as “mere decorative flourishes which were necessary for the book to pass the communist censorship” (294). In spite of her initial shock, related to India's poverty and the surrounding dirt, Androvičová eventually finds the country “fabulous”, explores Hindu spirituality, and learns yoga (294). Her account has probably no counterpart among the reportages selected for this dissertation: while Polish travellers occasionally exoticised or aestheticized India, it would be difficult to see them as neo-romantic.

Gáfrik separates the Slovak travel accounts from the communist period into two categories: socialist and neo-romantic ones. He concludes that because of the fact that they presented a belief that socialism will once become prevalent in the Third World, and the Second World is merely helping in this inevitable process, the discourse of these accounts can be considered as a form of latent colonialism (298). Even the neo-romantic travel accounts, are part of this process, as according to Gáfrik, they are filtered through the communist viewpoint (298). While his analysis is an interesting one and offers a perspective into the Slovak travel writing, it does not take into account the possibility of these two strategies intertwining in the same account, like it happens in many Polish reportages. This dissertation asserts that it is precisely the contradiction between the declared belief in socialist viewpoint and the Orientalist, romanticising/patronising perception of India that makes the analysis of such texts worthwhile. The second problematic issue that Gáfrik does not take into account, is the historical context of these travelogues. Predictably, the tone of travel accounts would be different according to the political situation in a given period: the situation in the Eastern Bloc in 1950s and 1980s is hardly comparable.

Another insight into Czechoslovak writing from the communist period, 1950s in particular, is offered by Martin Slobodnik in his article: “Socialist Anti-Orientalism: Perceptions of China in Czechoslovak Travelogues from the 1950s”. A rapprochement between Czechoslovakia and the People's Republic of China resulted in an intensified cultural cooperation. Consequently, a number of Czechoslovak writers and journalists were sent to China on a mission to describe the country and its inhabitants, in order to bring the two nations closer. Slobodnik observes that the travelogues from these state-sponsored trips, written by

pro-regime writers or reporters, were a tool of the communist propaganda (301). He specifies that these trips were carefully organised and monitored by the local authorities, and foreign visitors were not allowed to leave the group, change the schedule, or plan any individual tours. Even though the Czech and Slovak travellers described the local population, especially the so-called progressive classes, in fact they had practically no opportunities for spontaneous interactions with the ordinary Chinese (304-305). Like in some of the Polish reportages from India, the tone of the Czechoslovak accounts is often didactic and its goal is to familiarise the readers at home with the developments in the “New China” (305). The Chinese were presented as fellow travellers, socialist brothers, with whom the Czechs and the Slovaks should feel in solidarity (306). The authors of the accounts contrast China’s past and the oppression of the poor in the previous era of the Kuomintang, with the benefits and successes resulting from the introduction of the communist system in the country (309). Slobodnik’s points on Czechoslovak travel accounts from China and their ideological character could well be applied on Polish accounts from India. However, Slobodnik does not find these accounts Orientalist. He explains that,

In the representation of the Chinese ‘Other’ the authors deliberately suppress the exotic features of Chinese society and traditional culture in order to stress the shared values, common historical destiny of the exploited classes, and the sense of comradeship which transgresses any cultural or ethnic differences as was required by the communist concept of proletarian internationalism. (Slobodnik 311)

Hence, in the travelogues analysed by Slobodnik, the Other is not the Chinese, the Other is the ideological enemy (Kuomintang, the West), as well as the class enemy (landowners, bourgeoisie etc.). The scholar concludes that there are two main dynamics that appear in most travelogues: the one of ideological solidarity with China, and the one of a clear separation between the past (negative) and the present (positive) (311-312). He adds that similar narrative strategies can be observed in other socialist travelogues, for instance the ones from Korea, or Soviet travel accounts from China (312).

Similarities between travel accounts from the communist period can be observed also beyond Central Europe. In her anthology of Eastern European travel writing, Wendy Bracewell includes a passage by a Bosnian, but at the time, Yugoslav writer and journalist, Fadil Hadžić (1922-2011). In his introduction to a collection of journalistic travel sketches, *Put oko svijeta: putopisi* [Travel around the world: travel accounts], Hadžić formulates the principles of the

new, socialist approach to travel writing<sup>516</sup>. In the very opening of his text, Hadžić makes a truly anti-Orientalist statement: “[i]t seems that one particular breed of travel writer is fast vanishing – the man with a beard, carrying a gun, leaning over a map of some dark continent in the pose of a scholar explorer” (292). The travellers of the new, socialist era, are radically different, says Hadžić. A new traveller is not a private individual, he does not “go to hunt butterflies in Central Africa”, and he is not a “chance wayfarer who desires to feed his eyes on exotic landscapes” (292). Instead, he is an “engaged individual” with a clear affiliation with an important newspaper, whose mission is to portray the contemporary world to the readers.

The travel writer has gone with open eyes into these neuralgic hotbeds of the modern world, and his pen has carried with it the zeal of his young, socialist republic, the zeal which has inspired him to grasp not just his own but also other people’s struggle for independence and for a better future for all the world’s people. (Hadžić 293)

Clearly, there is an anti-colonial agenda underlining Hadžić’s words – his text dates from 1962, when decolonisation of many parts of the world, particularly Africa, was still under way. Moscow saw a political and strategic opportunity in declaring support to decolonisation, and reporters from many Soviet-dominated states were sent to describe the events in the “Third World”. Among them were many of the reporters mentioned in this dissertation. The role of reportage and of direct foreign correspondence increased. Hadžić finds that this is the future of travel writing, and contrasts it with the accounts of the previous era: “[n]ot even tiny children can any longer be amazed by operatic photographs of palms and cathedrals, descriptions of starry nights and the azure blue of far seas, and the literary value of such false travel poetry resembles a bad tourist guidebook . . .” (293). The work of the new era reporters is the opposite of these dull, clichéd, “falsely poetic” accounts. It is the work of “engaged citizens” who went out into the “world of experiences” and related them to the readers (293).

To conclude, as the examples above demonstrate, there are numerous common points and links between accounts from different countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but also differences. Clearly, the common, socialist perspective has the same root, and it is closely linked with the foreign opening of the Soviet Union, its propaganda goals, and its strategy to win over the “Third World”. These similarities are also linked with the reality of life in a communist state, obsessively controlling its citizens and maintaining them in isolation. They are the following: firstly, all travel had to be organised, or at least approved by state authorities. Secondly, the travellers were usually writers or reporters/journalists with a clear affiliation with

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<sup>516</sup> Although, as Wendy Bracewell observes, “there is an unmistakably non-aligned and Yugoslav flavor in the denunciation of those ‘for whom the war between the blocs is the only perspective’”. (292)

a public medium or with a writer's association controlled by the regime. Thirdly, the range of subjects that they talk about is limited by ideology. Whether a Polish reporter visits India or a Czechoslovak one visits China, there would be a similar dichotomy between the past and the present, or between tradition and modernity. In this perspective, modernity is associated with the socialist/communist worldview, while tradition is grounded in "superstition" and feudalism. All travel accounts from this period are critical of religion, presented as a hindrance to progress. They are also pragmatic, rationalistic, and utilitarian. Furthermore, many of them have a didactic role, explaining to the readers various aspects of the visited cultures and interpreting their observations in a Marxist (or, in Gáfrik's words, "vulgar Marxist") framework. Finally, they become a tool of propaganda, providing to the citizens of the communist states an illusion of contact with the wider world, and acting as a safety valve that releases the popular frustration with the repressive state.

There are, however, differences in which the cultural Otherness is portrayed in these accounts. Gáfrik does see Orientalist, or even somewhat colonialist tropes in the Slovak travelogues from India, while Slobodnik does not observe any similar ways of Othering in the Czechoslovak relations from China. Hadžić indirectly declares that there is no place for Orientalism in socialist travel reportage, but one would need to closely analyse the Yugoslav travel accounts in order to tell whether, indeed, these Orientalist tropes are no longer used. Moreover, apart from the homogenising dialectic of Marxism and socialist projects of progress, each of the Central and Eastern European countries has had different traditions of describing others, both academic (schools of Orientalism or Indology), literary, and artistic. These traditions are also influenced by the histories and cultures of each of these countries and even in a time of rejection of tradition, they might play a significant role in foreign travel accounts. Thus, the conclusions drawn from these few works of analysis would have to be verified in a more comprehensive, comparative study of travel writing, or travel reportage, by representatives of countries of the "Second World", visiting the countries of the "Third World".

### **The Polish Travel Writer: Homo Sovieticus or Homo Europaeus?**

On the surface, Polish travel reportages from India inform Polish readers about the Subcontinent's past and present, in an attempt at fostering solidarity between socialist nations. Certainly, the texts display the communist dream of an ideological conquest of the Third World, but – perhaps more importantly – are a mirror that reflects the identity of the writers themselves and the society from which they originate. Jan Kieniewicz, historian, writes in his essayistic book, *Drogi do Indii [Paths to India]* (1983) about his ways of understanding India,



learning about India, and interpreting Indian history and culture. He finds that “[r]eportages from India are a wonderful source of knowledge about Poles in general” (172)<sup>517</sup>, much more than they are a source of knowledge about India, in fact. Although he appreciates that thanks to the popular travel reportages India becomes less of a distant culture in the Polish collective conscience, but he would rather have the Poles learning about India from Byrski [well-known Polish Indologist]<sup>518</sup> than from Putrament and Żukrowski (172). Kieniewicz is frustrated with the Polish reporters:

For many years I relished the thought of whaling into our reporters. I was imagining how it would be right and fair to extract from the Indian texts of Piekarowicz, Giełżyński, Chociłowski or Górnicki the entirety of our Polish [inferiority] complex and demonstrate the hollowness of the Eurocentric stereotype. There are still fragments of their texts that I should polemicize with. There are some, increasingly more often, that I would like to write myself. However, long ago, exactly at the time when I first saw and experienced India, I stopped feeling inclined to such settling of accounts. Maybe I gained humility. Or maybe it is my hope that their books are not only a testimony of their own paths and enquiries, but also an important factor guiding the social consciousness in Poland? [A factor in] overcoming indifference? (Kieniewicz 171)<sup>519</sup>

It is exactly the indifference that constitutes the main problem for Kieniewicz. Writing his book in 1983, he already realises the importance of understanding other cultures and building a oneness, a unity, in the more globalised world of the future. Introducing artificial categories and boundaries, thinking in Eurocentric terms, will impede this goal. Kieniewicz appeals to his readers to find their own path to India, which will require them to abandon set patterns and prejudices, and overcome one’s limitations in a quest for a new identity. The historian realises that Poland is at the cusp of a fundamental change, he says that Poles have shed the blinders from their eyes and understand that success was only illusory (175). The era of that deceptive success, presumably based on the socialist model of development, is coming to an end. Kieniewicz suggests that a deeper look at the relations with the wider world, and more

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<sup>517</sup> “Reportaże z Indii są wspaniałym źródłem wiedzy o Polakach w ogóle” (Kieniewicz 172).

<sup>518</sup> Maria Krzysztof Byrski (1937-) is a Polish Indologist, graduate from the Benaras Hindu University and for many years, professor at the Warsaw University. In the 1980s, he joined the opposition and became an important member of the Solidarność movement. After the fall of communism, he became Polish ambassador to India (1993-1996).

<sup>519</sup> “Przez wiele lat pieściłem w sobie myśl o dobraniu się do skóry naszym reporterom. Wyobrażałem sobie jak to będzie słusznie i sprawiedliwie wydobyć z indyjskich tekstów Piekarowicza, Giełżyńskiego, Chociłowskiego czy Górnickiego całość naszego polskiego kompleksu i ukazać nicłość europocentrycznego stereotypu. Są nadal fragmenty ich tekstów, z którymi powinienem polemizować. Są coraz częściej i takie, które sam chciałbym napisać. Toteż już dawno, właśnie gdy po raz pierwszy zobaczyłem i doznałem Indii, odeszła mi ochota do takich rozrachunków. Może przybyło mi pokory. A może to nadzieja, że ich książki nie są tylko świadectwem własnych dróg i poszukiwań, ale istotnym czynnikiem kierującym świadomością społeczną w Polsce? W przełamywaniu obojętności?” (Kieniewicz 171).

specifically India, will help formulate a new collective identity and an alternative for the even more interconnected world (175).

Nevertheless, the authors of the travel reportages analysed in this dissertation seem to be unable to transcend the old patterns of Orientalism and Eurocentrism, as well as the more recent pattern, the one of socialist modernity. At the same time, their own location often remains fluid. They often refer to themselves as Europeans, not without a certain satisfaction and sense of superiority. This can be observed, when Giełżyński says that Indians are deaf to “our European, rational advice” to reduce the population of cows (16). Or, when Górnicki describes an impoverished nizam, saying that “in our, European measures” he is incredibly rich (114). Ros, visiting Mumbai, admires the modern city, full of buses, cyclists, advertisements; he opens the window and exclaims, with awe: “Europe” (76). Here, Europe stands as a high standard of development and urban life, despite of the fact that Western Europe is in Ros’ account placed in the role of the ideological enemy.

Indeed, while criticising the West, the reporters are not opposed to being treated as special guests from Europe. Although they do not demonstrate it in a direct way, the fact that they describe lavish hotels and receptions, full of elegant guests from both India and the West, proves that they draw a certain satisfaction from being included in such an elite club. Ryszard Kapuściński recalls that since the communist state did not provide much funds to reporters, and even to diplomats travelling abroad, it was difficult for Polish correspondents to feel at par with their Western European counterparts. This feeling of being a European of a second category, a substandard one, is a result of both stereotypical images of Eastern Europe in the Western Europeans’ collective consciousness (Wolff), but also of the Cold War isolation. Apart from propagandist reason, precisely this sense of inferiority causes the reporters to become rather Polonocentric in their accounts. Ros recalls the disappointment of a little boy begging for money, upon learning that the reporter is not an English engineer, but merely a “comrade from Poland” (137). During this very telling scene, Ros talks about Poland as a country where “land belongs to farmers, factories to workers and schools are open to everyone free of cost” (137). Although the reporter praises his homeland, the boy is not impressed. Górnicki, Putrament and Gołębiowski are equally determined to show Poland in a positive light, not only to their Indian interlocutors, but primarily to their Polish readers. They are happy to convey the respect with which Polish specialists are treated in India, the successes of Polish products, and the positive opinions about their country. While this serves to legitimise and strengthen the communist authorities in their endeavour to build a new model of modern development, it

might also be significant of an inferiority complex. If Europe rejects us, at least there are places in the world where we are accepted, the reporters seem to suggest.

Furthermore, even those reporters who clearly stated that they consider themselves as communist, do not identify with the Soviet Union. They only briefly mention the Soviet aid, placing in the foreground the Polish presence in India. It is clear that their national identity, the Polish one, is stronger than their sense of belonging to the Eastern Bloc. In their descriptions of India, they constantly refer to their own homeland, praising the beauty of its landscape or underlining the country's suffering during the war. Their location is thus one of Europeans, members of the Eastern Bloc, but above all, Poles. Nevertheless, their Polish identity is often challenged when travelling around India: some of their interlocutors do not know anything about Poland and they confuse it with Holland (Chociłowski 102), some take them for Westerners. The reporters protest against being mistaken for people from the capitalist West, but, as mentioned earlier, they are also somewhat flattered to be recognised as Europeans. Perhaps this conflicted attitude is yet another incarnation of the perennial dispute whether Poland belongs to the East or to the West. As Maria Janion said, Poles are to the East of the West, and to the West of the East, and as a result of this unclear location, they feel foreign to themselves. This creates an anxiety that perhaps leads to more pronounced assertion of the national identity, but it is an identity full of contradictions. The superiority towards other cultures, reflected in Polish relations with its minorities, but also the inferiority resulting from years of subjugation, create a strange discourse on Otherness, in which seemingly opposing ideas intertwine. This dichotomy is also present in the Polish travel writing on India during communism, bringing together two seemingly contradictory images: the Orientalist one of an exotic Other, and the socialist one, of a fellow traveller.

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