

## **The History of the Millennium of Poland from the Perspective of Radio Free Europe's Broadcasts, 1960-1966**

### **Historia Tysiąclecia Polski z perspektywy audycji Radia Wolna Europa, 1960-1966**

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#### **Abstract**

A significant element of activity of Radio Free Europe (RFE) were broadcasts of educational character, reminding, especially young generation behind the “iron curtain”, of Polish political history and the development of Polish culture. During the celebration of “Polish Millennium” (1960-1966), the editorial board of RFE played an important role in popularizing a thousand-year-old history of the nation, Christianity and Polish country. Many of the lectures addressed to the society of communist Poland were of up-to-date significance. In that way, the RFE editors opened the “gate to the West”, closed by the communist authorities. Many events from Poland’s 1000-year history were interpreted in an anti-communist spirit, exposing the significant role of the Catholic Church.

#### **Key words**

Millennium, millennium broadcast, history, journalism

#### **Streszczenie**

Ważny element działalności Radia Wolna Europa (RWE) stanowiły audycje o charakterze edukacyjnym, przypominające w szczególności młodemu pokoleniu za “żelazną kurtyną” historię polityczną Polski i rozwój jej kultury. W okresie obchodów “Polskiego Tysiąclecia” (1960-1966) Redakcja RWE odegrała znaczącą rolę w popularyzacji 1000-letnich dziejów narodu, chrześcijaństwa i państwa polskiego. Wiele prelekcji kierowanych do społeczeństwa komunistycznej Polski, miało aktualną wymowę. Tym samym redakcja RWE otwierała niejako zamkniętą przez władze komunistyczne “furtkę na Zachód”. W duchu antykomunistycznym interpretowano wiele wydarzeń z 1000-letniej przeszłości Polski, eksponując w nich znamienne rolę Kościoła.

#### **Słowa kluczowe**

Milenium, milenijny przekaz, historia, publicystyka

## Introduction

The post-war Polish state emerged in the final stages of World War II (1939-1945), on the initiative of the so-called Polish left and under strong pressure from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (hereafter USSR), who dominated it for long until 1989. Together with other states it constituted a group of countries of “people’s democracy”, separated from the West by the commonly named “Iron Curtain”. After the formation of the Polish United Workers’ Party in 1948, communists in Poland were given full political power and the opportunity to implement the “party’s leading role” in the process of building of socialism, providing it ideological guidelines and exercising supervision over its proper implementation. The communist party waged since then an open war against the Catholic Church, relationships from the state part that became more severe already in 1947.<sup>1</sup>

The Church was the leading opponent of the communists in Poland. This was caused by geopolitical reasons – the Church was considered the main force protecting the bonds of the Polish nation with the West and Latin culture.<sup>2</sup> But it was too, or maybe above all, because of the worldview. The Catholic Church was in fact the strongest opponent of the communist party in Poland in the struggle for the “hearts and minds”. This fight, as mentioned, did not begin in 1966, but it was then when the Church’s celebrations of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland (1966) and the competing celebrations of the Millennium of the Polish State (1960-1966) reached their peak.

The Polish section of Radio Free Europe took sides in the celebrations, delivering a message that was far from the expectations of the communist authorities ruling Poland at the time. The millennium message to the Polish nation was broadcast by the Polish section of Radio Free Europe. It was represented by many journalists who believed in the exceptional spiritual role of the Church for the faithful behind the “Iron Curtain”. Among them it was an exiled historian, Oskar Halecki (1889-1973), whose views and activities were a thorn in the side of the communist authorities.<sup>3</sup> This historian had been planning the organization of the millennium celebrations together with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, since the early 1950s.<sup>4</sup> Additionally there were: Aleksandra Stypułkowska (pseud. Jadwiga Mieczkowska), the leading publicist of the radio station, who was jokingly called “Mother of the Church” by the Editorial Staff,<sup>5</sup> Wiktor Trościanko, who alongside Stypułkowska was a respected political commentator,<sup>6</sup> and Czesław Chowaniec, curator of the Polish Library in Paris.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see: Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce 1945-1970* (Krakow: PIT, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Antoni Dudek, “Wybrane czynniki historyczne wpływające na politykę władz PRL”, in *Polityka czy propaganda. PRL wobec historii*, ed. Paweł Skibiński, Tomasz Wiścicki, Michał Wysocki (Warszaw: Muzeum Historii Polski, 2009), 27 (13-36).

<sup>3</sup> Throughout the period of the People’s Republic of Poland, Halecki was one of the most severely criticized Polish historians working in exile, especially during the anti-church millennium campaign. Robert Stobiecki, *Historycy polscy wobec wyzwań XX wieku* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje, 2014), 162.

<sup>4</sup> Janusz Cisek, *Oskar Halecki. Historyk. Szermierz Wolności* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej - Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2009), 27.

<sup>5</sup> Jan (Nowak) Jeziorański, *Polska z oddali. Wojna w eterze – wspomnienia*, vol. 2, 1956-1976 (Warsaw: Krag, 1989), 201.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>7</sup> Joanna Okarma, “Towarzystwo Historyczno-Literackie i Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu: Doświadczenie wymiany międzybibliotecznej w roku 2008/2009”, *Studia Polonijne*, [vol.] 40 (2019): 310 (347-350).

The literature on Radio Free Europe is rich.<sup>8</sup> However, it lacks a viewpoint on the historical message which shaped the historical awareness of Polish people behind the Iron Curtain. This article meets this demand, however in the “micro” scale, through the prism of the short piece of history of the Polish People’s Republic, which revolves around the seven-year period of the celebrations of “Polish Millennium” (1960-1966/67).

On May 3, 1952, the Polish section of the Committee of “Free Europe” began operating in Munich,<sup>9</sup> an inauguration day and anniversary of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution – a public holiday abolished in 1950 by the communists – which achieved an anti-communist dimension.<sup>10</sup> The radio section was headed by Jan Nowak (Zdzisław Jeziorański), who stood in the office of the director of RFE until 1975. It was on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1994 when the Polish Section broadcast from Munich for the last time; two years later it could do it from Warsaw.<sup>11</sup> But in any case, RFE quickly attracted a huge audience across the Soviet satellites.<sup>12</sup>

The communist authorities did not last in reacting hysterically to the creation and operation of the station.<sup>13</sup> It was considered an anti-communist initiative, an integral part of the “psychological warfare mechanism set up and directed by the American government”.<sup>14</sup> These concerns were fully justified. Andrzej Friszke, a Polish historian and researcher of the recent history of Poland, acknowledged its huge role as one of the most important factors in the Polish transformation in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.<sup>15</sup> Radio Free Europe, along with its sibling organization, Radio Swoboda (Radio Liberty), was one of the most “articulate” official voices of American anti-communism and the

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<sup>8</sup> I. A. Piotr Machcewicz, “*Monachijska menażeria*”. *Walka z Radiem Wolna Europa 1950-1989* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej - Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN) 2007; Arch Puddington, *Rozgłoszenie wolności. Tryumf Radia Wolna Europa i Radia Swoboda w zimnej wojnie*, the transferred A. Borzym (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2009); Andrzej Friszke, *Dyskusja panelowa, Miejsce Radia Wolna Europa w historii i pamięci Polaków*, in *50 lat Rozgłoszenia Polskiej Radia Wolna Europa. Materiały z sesji jubileuszowej*. ed. Daria Nałęcz (Warszawa: NDAP - Wydział Wydawnictw, 2003), 16-20; A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Wolna Europa i Radio Swoboda. Lata CIA i późniejsze*, the transferred A. Borzym (Wrocław: Kolegium Europy Wschodniej im. Jana Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Establishing an American-sponsored anti-communist radio station in Munich was an important way of linking the new Federal Republic of Germany to the Atlantic Alliance. Arch Puddington, *Rozgłoszenie wolności*, 105; Grzegorz Adamczewski, *Radio Wolna Europa w okresach politycznych przełomów* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2011), 36; Jerzy Morawski, *Głosy z Monachium* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Interpress Polskiej Agencji Informacyjnej, 1993), 36; Allan A. Michie, *Voices through the Iron Curtain. The Radio free Europe story* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1963), 289.

<sup>10</sup> Paweł Machcewicz, “*Monachijska menażeria*”, 42; Grzegorz Adamczewski, *Radio Wolna Europa*, 36; Krzysztof Kosiński, *O nową mentalność. Życie codzienne w szkołach 1945-1956* (Warszawa: Trio, 2000), 254.

<sup>11</sup> PAP, *60 lat temu powstała Rozgłoszenia Polska*, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/39/156/Artykul/596447,60-lat-temu-powstala-Rozglosnia-Polska-RWE> [Access 01.05.2022].

<sup>12</sup> Allan A. Michie, *Voices through*, 289.

<sup>13</sup> Grzegorz Adamczewski, *Radio Wolna Europa*, 40.

<sup>14</sup> Janusz Kolczyński, *Wolna Europa* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1970), 18. On October 24, 1951, the USSR Council of Ministers adopted a secret resolution to create obstacles to “anti-Polish radio propaganda” on Polish territory. Grzegorz Adamczewski, *Radio Wolna Europa*, 41. Jamming was the preferred method of silencing Munich’s radio stations, and communist regimes also used, though occasionally, more brutal techniques. Arch Puddington, *Rozgłoszenie wolności*, 275.

<sup>15</sup> Andrzej Friszke, *Dyskusja panelowa*, 19.

most effective tools of the “Cold War”<sup>16</sup> used by the US government.<sup>17</sup> The radio could also seek support for its anti-communist idea from the Church in Poland.<sup>18</sup> In turn, according to the Primate of Poland, Stefan Wyszyński, RFE had a restrictive influence on the policy of the authorities aimed at the Polish Church.<sup>19</sup>

### **The role of Radio Free Europe in the celebrations of the Millennium of the Polish State and the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland**

Since 1957, the Church in Poland had been celebrating the “Great Novena” before the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland (1966). The initiative, whose scale was unprecedented, was organized centrally (managed by the General Secretariat of the Polish Episcopate, headed by Cardinal Wyszyński).<sup>20</sup> For nine years, starting from May 5, 1957, ceremonies involving Jasna Góra Vows of the People had been held in each parish.<sup>21</sup> The nation’s retreat in 1966 was the final event of the celebrations.<sup>22</sup> In response to the “Great Novena” initiated in 1957 by the Catholic Church before the “Millennium of the Baptism of Poland”, at the beginning of 1958 the state authorities announced competitive celebrations of the Millennium of the Polish State (1960-1966).

The objective of the millennium celebrations was twofold: honoring the millennium of Polish statehood, and recalling selected episodes from national history. The celebrations included the following events: Anniversary of Poland’s accession to history; 550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald; 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Jagiellonian University; Anniversaries related to the national-liberation struggle of the Polish nation, and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polish People’s Republic. Celebrations of the last anniversary, which constituted the part of the Millennium of the Polish State celebrations, were planned for the years 1964-1965, and the year 1966 was to be the final stage of the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State.<sup>23</sup>

In 1966, the authorities decided to fight openly against the Church (extensive scientific literature covers this topic).<sup>24</sup> This were manifested through provocations, the use of force against the faithful, making it difficult for them to participate in the celebrations and punishing them for illegal distribution and trade of religious postcards.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> It was widely known that the “cold war” was in fact a war of ideas. The United States, acting through the CIA, financed numerous projects to counteract the fascination with the communism of intellectuals in Europe and developing countries. Arch Puddington, *Rozgłoszenie wolności*, 32-33.

<sup>17</sup> A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Wolna Europa*, 91; Arch Puddington, *Rozgłoszenie wolności*, 17, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Grzegorz Adamczewski, *Radio Wolna Europa*, 242-243.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>20</sup> Bartłomiej Noszczak, *Milenium czy Tysiąclecie* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006), 22. For a detailed report on the ceremony see: National Digital Archive (further NDA), sig. 757, 90-92; sig. 758, 66; sig. 760, 73.

<sup>21</sup> Elżbieta Wojcieszek, “Najtrudniejszy przeciwnik. O arcybiskupie Antonim Baraniaku (1904-1977)”, in *Poznańskie dziedzictwo, Kronika Miasta Poznania*, 1(2016): 194 (188-198).

<sup>22</sup> I. A. Peter Raina, “*Te Deum*” *Narodu Polskiego. Obchody Tysiąclecia Chrztu Polski w świetle dokumentów kościelnych* (Olsztyn: Warmińskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1991), 51-530.

<sup>23</sup> “Polskie Tysiąclecie – Uchwała Komitetu Przygotowawczego Obchodów Tysiąclecia Państwa Polskiego akceptowana na posiedzeniu Rady Państwa w dn. 12 lutego 1960 r”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, [vol.] 67, 1(1960): 7 (3-9).

<sup>24</sup> I. A. Antoni Dudek, Ryszard Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce (1945-1989)* (Kraków: Znak, 2003); Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce 1945-1970* (Kraków: PIT, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Archive Institute of National Remembrance (further IPN), Kielce, sig. IPN 0416/1055, 125, 228; Antoni Dudek, “Przebieg obchodów milenijnych w Polsce w latach 1966-1967”, in *Zapomniany rok 1966. W XXX*

RFE was actively involved in defending the church's millennium celebrations,<sup>26</sup> and all repressions and restrictions against the head of the Catholic Church in Poland – the Polish primate, Cardinal Wyszyński – were made public and criticized.<sup>27</sup>

Yet both the state authorities and the Polish Episcopate specified different objectives for the celebrations they announced. While authorities aimed at promoting Poland as a socialist country, the Church focused upon the promotion of its catholic faith. State authorities (at the central and provincial levels) made every effort to properly promote the politically correct “vision of history”. The leading topic was the shaping of Polish statehood presented as not related to the act of baptism. On the other hand, the Church treated the year 966 as symbolic in terms of the outset of Christian culture and recognized it as the key theme of the Millennium. The editorial office of RFE played a significant role in popularizing the 1000-year history of the nation, Christianity and the Polish state.<sup>28</sup> After all, in 1965 about one in three of Polish people listened to Western radio stations (mainly RFE). RFE programs were in this sense an important part of the “fight against the ubiquitous secularization of history”. They served an educational role by reminding, in particular the younger generation, the 1000-year history of Poland and the creation of its culture.<sup>29</sup>

### **Radio Free Europe's Millennium Message, integrated into the 1000-year history of the Polish state and nation**

The Millennium Message of RFE, inscribed in the 1000-year history of the Polish state and nation, has been appropriately presented. The émigré historian Oskar Halecki<sup>30</sup> was strongly convinced, as stated, of the exceptional spiritual role of the Church for the faithful behind the “Iron Curtain”. Therefore, he considered “emphasizing Polish democratic traditions” as the most important in the Millennium Message addressed to Polish people. They were a counterweight to the currently prevailing system in Poland. The series of lectures on this subject addressed to the society of communist Poland undoubtedly conveyed the precise meaning. The series opened up with a talk entitled *On the role of the development of democracy in the history of Poland* (23 December 1961).<sup>31</sup> O. Halecki searched for its origins at the beginning of Polish history, and he did not have doubts, however, that in the long 1000-year history there were times of “progress” and “going back” or “at least hindering” its development. He emphasized, however, that

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*rocznicę obchodów Milenium Chrztu Polski*, ed. Tadeusz Bach (Gdańsk: Instytut Konserwatywny im. E. Burke'a, 1996), 38 (31-45); K. Czackowska, *Kardynał Wyszyński* (Warszawa: Znak, 2009), 351; Antoni Dudek, Ryszard Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół*, 234, 241.

<sup>26</sup> NDA Polish Broadcasting, sig. 845, 8. The listeners were informed in detail about the individual points of the millennium jubilee, NDA Polish Broadcasting, sig. 846, 848; sig. 851, 56, 83, 88-90.

<sup>27</sup> NDA, Polish Broadcasting, sig. 851, 56; sig. 760, 50-51.

<sup>28</sup> Jan (Nowak) Jeziorański, *Do Czytelnika*, “Na Antenie”, *Mówi rozgłośnia Polska Radia Wolna Europa*, [vol .1] (1963): 1, (1-1).

<sup>29</sup> Paweł Machcewicz, “Monachijska Menażeria”, 152.

<sup>30</sup> RFE dedicated one of its broadcasts on January 12, 1966, to the figure of Professor Halecki (T. Olsztyński). His silhouette was described with great reverence. NDA, Polish Broadcasting, sig. 757, 64-67. On the day of the Vatican millennium celebrations in the Auditorium Palazzo Pio, prof. Oskar Halecki gave a lecture entitled “The First Millennium of Catholic Poland”, NDA, Polish Broadcasting, sig. 757, 61.

<sup>31</sup> Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw (further CA). Radio and Television Committee. Polish Radio Listening Service (further Listening Service), sig. 440, vol. 1, 1.

Polish democracy “has never been isolated, it has never developed in isolation from the world, in indifference to the fate of neighboring nations”.<sup>32</sup>

In the next talk (of January 5, 1962), entitled *The historical development of Polish democracy*, while reflecting on the “Piaśt sources of Polish democratic traditions”, he recalled the assemblies,<sup>33</sup> and called Casimir the Great “the precursor of democratic development”.<sup>34</sup> The charters created by the last king in the Piaśt dynasty showed “an extraordinary humanitarian spirit”, so that – as he emphasized – “it will probably not be an exaggeration to call it the beginnings of democracy”.<sup>35</sup> Referring to the Polish democracy as a model (a talk of January 15, 1962), he also emphasized that “Polish democracy had a beneficial influence on neighboring countries”.<sup>36</sup>

In further considerations (of February 2, 1962), he took up the subject of Polish parliamentary history. Using the evolutionary theory of its development, he pointed to its half-thousand-year tradition in Poland.<sup>37</sup> He saw the genesis of the Polish Sejm “several dozen years before the traditional textbook date of 1493”, in the Charter of Nieszawa by Kazimierz Jagiellończyk of 1454. Although, as he emphasized, it did not mention the general Sejm, he pointed the audience’s attention to “the obvious consequences”.<sup>38</sup>

Moving on to the post-partition period (lecture on March 16, 1962), the speaker demonstrated that the fight for independence was a decisive factor in the “democratization” of Polish society.<sup>39</sup> He saw the most important step in this direction in the last independence uprising in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – the January Uprising.<sup>40</sup> Using historical perspective, Halecki showed democracy as the most rational political system. It was a counterbalance – which largely made the tradition of Polish democracy the subject of Halecki’s interest –, he said, to the authoritarian system existing in Poland.

The RFE millennium broadcast highlighted several “focal points” in the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State. RFE significantly exposed the January Uprising – the third point of the ceremony. Honoring it duly was particularly requested by the historical community in Poland,<sup>41</sup> since it did not have to suffer the censorship’s constraints in exile. RFE’s message on the events from one hundred years ago, in social

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<sup>32</sup> CA, Listening Service, 4-6.

<sup>33</sup> CA, Listening Service, 27. There are two different stances in science – institutional and evolutionary – on the genesis of parliaments and regional assemblies. The continuity of assemblies, from the rallies of the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the sejmiks (regional councils) and Sejm (lower chamber of parliament) of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, was shown by Franciszek Piekosiński, linking it with the development of the land privileges of the noblemen. Juliusz Bardach, *Początki sejmu*, in *Historia sejmu polskiego*, vol. 1. *Od schyłku szlacheckiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. Jerzy Michalski (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwa Naukowe, 1984), 11 (5-62).

<sup>34</sup> CA, Listening Service, sig. 440, vol. 1, 28.

<sup>35</sup> CA, Listening Service, sig. 440, vol. 1. In his *History of Poland*, O. Halecki also emphasized the “great care for justice for all social classes” contained in the statutes of Casimir the Great, CA, Listening Service, sig. 440, vol. 1, 62.

<sup>36</sup> CA, Listening Service, sig. 440, vol.1, 23.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 110. This important event in national history was presented in a similar vein in Polish historiography of the 1960s.

<sup>41</sup> More on the commemoration of this anniversary in Poland, in Anita Młynarczyk-Tomczyk, *W kręgu polityki, nauki i popularyzacji. Obchody “Polskiego Tysiąclecia” (1957-1966/67)* (Kielce: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach, 2019), 74-75, 178-192, 251-259, 390-403, 462-468.

and cultural issues, was consistent with the one presented at that time by national historiography.<sup>42</sup> There were special talks on the Uprising.

One of such lectures, entitled *About the January Uprising. A card from the historical calendar*, was given on January 22, 1963. The struggle of 1963-64 was here considered the “loudest chord” in the history of struggles and fights for the liberation of Poles throughout the hundred years of post-partition history. It was to argue that it was an “unforgettable anniversary”, the priority of which being not only to regain the state’s independence but also to solve an important social problem – the enfranchisement of peasants. This event was presented as “a manifestation of the rebellion of Poles on behalf of and for the sake of all oppressed nations ‘for our and your freedom’”. Such goals allowed the author of the program to place the January Uprising in the row of “the most important and radical social movements and armed struggles in the history of not only Poland but also Europe”.<sup>43</sup>

There were also occasional speeches dedicated to the January Uprising. On January 28, 1963, the station broadcasts a fragment of the speech entitled *Hundred Years, Anniversary of the January Uprising*, by Chowaniec. The speaker referred to and expressed his support for the message of the national historiography,<sup>44</sup> that the outbreak of the uprising was not the result of a “spark accidentally thrown on the pile of long-accumulated revolutionary fuel”. He shared the opinions of the majority of contemporary researchers and popularizers of its history, that the outbreak of the uprising could be linked to two people – Jarosław Dąbrowski and Zygmunt Padlewski.<sup>45</sup> The former, one of the leaders of the underground party “Reds” in 1862, who supported the Uprising from the outset, and the latter, a member of the National Central Committee and, after the outbreak of the uprising, the head of the uprising in the Płock governorate. The aforementioned C. Chowaniec did not deny that the January Uprising prepared “in improvised conditions” did not turn out to be tactically successful. Instead of military or political successes, following the historians in the country,<sup>46</sup> Chowaniec pointed to something even more important – “high morale for the Polish idea of independence”.<sup>47</sup>

Occasional broadcasts devoted to the January Uprising presented reports on the exhibitions, including in Rapperswil, dedicated to the event. Aleksandra Stypułkowska (pseud. Jadwiga Mieczkowska) talked about it, on November 25, 1962.<sup>48</sup> The exhibition was considered impressive. The report showed that the uprising was brought closer through pictures, books and “priceless” prints.<sup>49</sup> Friendly Polish-Swiss relations at the time of the uprising were highlighted the most.<sup>50</sup> It was achieved using the symbolic figure of Godfrid Keller, the well-known Swiss writer who collected weapons and

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<sup>42</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, “Setny styczeń. Dyskusja o powstaniu 1863-1864”, *Współczesność* (Warszawa), 16-31 (January 1963): 1.

<sup>43</sup> CA, Listening Service, sig. 440, t. 4, 179.

<sup>44</sup> Anita Młynarczyk-Tomczyk, *W kręgu polityki, nauki i popularyzacji*, 186-187, 334-336.

<sup>45</sup> CA, Listening Service, vol. 5, 165; A. Młynarczyk-Tomczyk, *W kręgu polityki, nauki i popularyzacji*, 255-259.

<sup>46</sup> I.A., “Sens powstania. Rozmowa z prof. dr Stefanem Kieniewiczem”, *Stolica* (Warszawa) (27 January 1963), 5.

<sup>47</sup> CA, Listening Service, sig. 440, vol. 4, 168.

<sup>48</sup> CA, Listening Service, sig. 440, vol. 4, 168-172. Her friends in the Editorial Board jokingly called her “the Mother of the Church”. Jan (Nowak) Jeziorański, *Polska z oddali*, 201.

<sup>49</sup> CA, Listening Service, vol. 4, 170.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

organized a nationwide fundraiser for the insurgents. Finally, the author of the report quoted: “The homeland of Wilhelm Tell and Winkelried could not remain indifferent to the heroic effort of Poland. You are the ones who are right. Polish people must have access to political equality and religious freedom”, and referring to the present and current events in Poland, she pointed out: “The homeland of Wilhelm Tell and Winkelried thinks the same today, 100 years later”.<sup>51</sup> The message was unambiguous and appropriately directed. It emphasized the solidarity of the countries behind the Iron Curtain with Poland.

Edward Kosowicz and Edward Witanowski talked about another exhibition on the January Uprising (January 20, 1963, RFE London section), in the broadcast entitled *On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the January Uprising*. According to the report, this exhibition also presented lots of books, prints and original documents. It was arranged by the employees of the New York Public Library (several documents were borrowed from the Józef Piłsudski Institute of America). From the point of view of a Pole visiting this exhibition, America’s attitude to the events of 1863-64 was considered the “most interesting”.<sup>52</sup> The purpose of the exhibition was to be clear to visitors, and its creators emphasized the fact that during the first stage of the January Uprising, official American policy did not support it (the reason was the Civil War). However, as it was emphasized while idealizing history, American society clearly stood in for the need to help the insurgents.<sup>53</sup> The way the January Uprising was depicted by RFE clearly aimed at creating a positive attitude of European and American society towards the events of 1863-64.

The greatest discrepancies between the national and RFE broadcast concerned the present day. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the People’s Republic of Poland is the fifth point in the jubilee of the millennium of the Polish State.<sup>54</sup> In Poland, People’s Poland was presented as “the most remarkable achievement” of the 1000-year history of the Polish nation and state. The inevitability of its creation was to be proved by 1) the formation of “only democratic representation of the nation” during the war – the people’s power; 2) the successes in the socio-economic and cultural field; and 3) the takeover and development of the western territories, within the boundaries similar to the early medieval Polish state. The Polish People’s Republic was to symbolize a state guarded by alliances with the USSR and other people’s democracies, strengthened from the inside by the ideology of socialism which guaranteed the well-off of all citizens.<sup>55</sup>

Wiktor Trościanko, the RFE journalist, gave the talk on the formation of communist government structures in Poland in the program “Reverse side of the medal”.<sup>56</sup> He delivered it on the occasion of the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polish Workers’ Party (henceforth referred to as PPR which is a Polish abbreviation for the name) (January 6, 1962). Its author pointed out directly that “no one would dare to boast about such jubilees, and such beginnings as the PPR if it were not for the reign of violence, if it were not for the active the presence of the actual creator of the PPR from

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-172.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-176.

<sup>54</sup> For more on the commemoration of this anniversary in Poland, see: Anita Młynarczyk-Tomczyk, *W kręgu polityki, nauki i popularyzacji*, 77-78; 192-210; 260-279; 468-480.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Stobiecki, “Najnowsze dzieje Polski w syntezach historycznych okresu PRL”, *Przegląd Zachodni*, [vol.] 176, 4 (1994): 120-121 (111-122).

<sup>56</sup> The editor of the radio station J. N. Jeziorański appreciated Wiktor Trościanko for “exceptional polemic talent”. Jan (Nowak) Jeziorański, *Polska z oddali*, 200.



twenty years ago – Soviet Russia”.<sup>57</sup> To show “the greatest favor to the distinguished jubilarians”, he recalled “the actual role of this party”.<sup>58</sup>

He mentioned that “when the fiercest struggle took place on our lands, requiring the highest military virtues, common sense and solidarity from the whole nation”, the communists “were creating their own apparatus of power”. The author emphasized the fact that the communists cooperated enthusiastically with the “Soviet occupier of the then half of our country”,<sup>59</sup> and also strongly criticized “the attitude of the communists towards the Nazi occupant”,<sup>60</sup> as striving for two “Soviet” diversionary goals. Military sabotage which was help in the fight against Hitler’s forces, and political – preparation for the future reign of communism and “Poland’s subordination to the Soviets”.<sup>61</sup> The broadcast revealed an anti-Soviet trend, far from the idealized message about the formation of the people’s power, present in the national broadcast.

The year 1966 – the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland and the celebration of the last year of the Millennium of the Polish State – were for both sides (the Church and state authorities) an opportunity to present their own views on the role of these events in history. These activities aimed to make Polish society accept one of the two arguments, ecclesiastic or secular. Moreover, to make people stand for one of the two opposing visions of post-war Poland – socialist and Catholic.<sup>62</sup> RFE broadcasts presented the thousand-year history of the nation in a retrospective way, emphasizing – according to church historiography – the importance of “The Baptism of Poland”. In the country, while the authorities tried to diminish the importance of the year 966, which was in line with the official historiography,<sup>63</sup> Kazimierz Wierzbiański in one of the broadcasts, given on January 9, 1966 entitled *About the Polish Millennium*,<sup>64</sup> emphasized that the year 966 is a “revelation”, the most important fact in the 1000-year history of the Polish nation and state. He pointed to the success of the policy, thanks to which baptism was not received “from the Germans”.<sup>65</sup>

The anti-German message also emerged from national historiography, both church and state.<sup>66</sup> The political history of Poland in the years 963-966 was mostly the history of Polish-German relations. Thus, history divided the good and bad sides of research on this period. An example of this state of affairs was the millennium message from the 1960s. As noted by the eminent medievalist Gerard Labuda (1916-2010), who warned against the negative influence of ideology on the state of science, extensive research within the framework of the millennium program became one of the forms of defense against the myth about the overwhelming influence of the “Norman element” in the early Polish history. It was promoted by German historiography, especially in the interwar period.

<sup>57</sup> CA, Listening Service, t. 4, 30.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>62</sup> Adam Rajewski, *Stefan Wyszyński wobec idei Przedmurza w myśli historycznej Oskara Haleckiego* (Warszaw: Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu), 2015, 169. For more on the commemoration of this anniversary in Poland, see: Anita Młynarczyk-Tomczyk, *W kręgu polityki, nauki i popularyzacji*, 86-106, 107-153, 211-234, 280-300, 494-534.

<sup>63</sup> For more details, see: Anita Młynarczyk-Tomczyk, *W kręgu polityki, nauki i popularyzacji*, 211-228.

<sup>64</sup> For many years he worked in the RFE news program and was replaced by Michał Tyszkiewicz. Jan (Nowak) Jeziorański, *Polska z oddali*, 214.

<sup>65</sup> CA, Listening Service, sig. 440, t. 14, 279.

<sup>66</sup> For more details, see: A. Młynarczyk-Tomczyk, *W kręgu polityki, nauki, popularyzacji*, 211-234.

After the Second World War, the German-Polish polemics did not disappear. The primary problem around which they oscillated was the question of post-war frontiers. Statements by West German politicians, including chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who treated the Western Territories as “areas under the temporary administration of Poland” could be read as a real threat.<sup>67</sup> It is worth noting that when it comes to commenting on the durability of Poland’s post-war western border,<sup>68</sup> RFE was hampered by US policy, and especially by its location in Germany.<sup>69</sup> The program policy regarding the border on the Odra and Nysa was the direct cause of the threat of a strike by the Polish editorial office in October 1960. Therefore, it was clear why the Polish authorities, headed by Gomułka, were attacked by the Polish radio station for not distancing themselves from Chancellor Adenauer’s statements on the temporary character of the border along the Oder-Neisse line. The crisis was defused, but the major restrictions on addressing the issue of the border along the Oder-Neisse line remained.<sup>70</sup>

Coming back to the previously mentioned Millennium Talk. It was in the RFE broadcasts that K. Wierzbiański called the year 966 the beginning of everything that is Polish.<sup>71</sup> Mieszko’s genius lied in the ability to “sense the coming changes of the world and life, not reject them but join the unstoppable flow of events”.<sup>72</sup> An occasional talk was also given on January 13, 1966, on the occasion of the main millennium celebration in Rome.<sup>73</sup> The Polish writer and columnist Tadeusz Nowakowski (pseudonym Olsztyński)<sup>74</sup> linked the year 1966, not only with the thousandth anniversary of the adoption of Christianity by Mieszko I but also with the thousandth anniversary of “Poland joining the great family of Christian nations”.<sup>75</sup> He also introduced the listeners to the venues of the main millennium celebrations in Poland while talking about the Gniezno cathedral “as a testimony and symbol of unwavering survival”.<sup>76</sup>

Other “sacred places in Poland”, Gniezno of that time and “glamour and splendor” of Gniezno from 1000 years ago, were also introduced (Jerzy Kaniewicz, pseud. Tadeusz Mielezko). The thousand-year relationship of the “old towns” of Gniezno and Poznań with the Eternal City was not overlooked either. The statement that “this relationship was not broken by the historical storms that passed over them. Today’s rulers of Poland will not tear it apart” revealed the actual message.<sup>77</sup> Occasional historical radio plays, such as *Conversion of Mścibor the Warrior*, were also very popular.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Zbigniew Kobyliński, *Archeologia wczesnego średniowiecza w Polsce 1939-1989: sukcesy i porażki*, in: *Pół wieku z dziejów archeologii polskiej 1939-1989*, ed. Jacek Lech (Warszaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007), 367 (357-410).

<sup>68</sup> A. Ross Johnson, *Radio*, 253.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 254. Restrictions on addressing the issue of Poland’s western border in the RFE programs were loosened only in 1966 when West Germany gradually began to accept the loss of the “eastern territories”. Arch Puddington, *Rozgłoszenie wolności*, 110.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>71</sup> CA, Listening Service, sig. 440, t. 14, 279-282.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> The main millennium celebrations outside Poland took place in Rome on January 13, 1966. CA, PUW, ref. No. LI / 246.

<sup>74</sup> Jan (Nowak) Jeziorański, *Polska z oddali*, 214.

<sup>75</sup> NDA, Polish Broadcasting, sig. 757, 61.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 847, 55-59.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 848, 68.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. 851, 43-62.

In order to unite the faithful “behind the iron curtain”, the history of the painting of Our Lady of Częstochowa and her cult,<sup>79</sup> the Polish hymn – Bogurodzica<sup>80</sup> and the history of the Jasna Góra monastery were presented (Wojciech Trojanowski).<sup>81</sup> Occasional radio plays involving selected episodes from the history of Christianity were very popular.<sup>82</sup> Special talks were also proposed (including the series *Issues of the Millennium*).<sup>83</sup>

In the spirit of ecclesiastical historiosophy, the myth of the “bulwark” about the mission of Poland as “the main defender of Christianity” became the subject of the radio broadcasts.<sup>84</sup> It became the center of the struggle for the supporters waged by the communist state against the Church and Catholicism, becoming a conflict between two opposing visions of the national past.<sup>85</sup> Olsztyński described the approach of the PRL (Polish People’s Republic) authorities to this concept as agitating.<sup>86</sup> In response to the statements of the state historiography, which considered the political concept of the “bulwark” as “doubtful”,<sup>87</sup> Olsztyński, in RFE broadcast, valued Poland’s mission very highly. He pointed out that Western Europe gave Poland such a nickname, because “by defending our own state against the onslaught of foreign forces, we also defended other countries”.<sup>88</sup> Transferring this role of the Church to the present day, he added that “the Church in Poland wants to be the Church of peace, radiate peace to the East and the West”.<sup>89</sup>

The broadcast from Rome also emphasized the role of Poland as the “bulwark of Christianity”. There, as reported by the correspondent Kazimierz Komła, the main millennium celebration on January 13, 1966, was full of “precious symbols” – pennants attached to hussar copies, “reminding Italians that our ancestors on the battlefields won the honorable name of the bulwark of Christianity for Poland”.<sup>90</sup> In his speech, translated into Polish by RFE, Pope, Paul VI also emphasized the “spiritual mission” of Poland.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

In exile, the millennium of Polish history was carefully reviewed. As has already been noted in the literature, this anniversary made it possible to regard the national

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. 851, 19-24; sig. 867, 14.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. 867, 23-31.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. 863, 27-31.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. 851, 43-67; sig. 865, 44-62; sig. 867, 32-50.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. 851, 19-24; sig. 851, 38-42.

<sup>84</sup> Janusz Tazbir, *Polskie Przedmurze Chrześcijańskiej Europy* (Warszawa: Interpress, 1987), 5.

<sup>85</sup> Adam Rajewski, *Stefan Wyszyński wobec idei Przedmurza*, 169.

<sup>86</sup> The communist authorities interpreted them as “re-setting Poland as a bulwark of Christianity and a bastion against the USSR” and “creating Cardinal Wyszyński as the only and true leader of the nation”. CA, Polish United Workers’ Party Central Committee in Warsaw 1905-1947, 1948-1990 (further: PUW), sig. 237/XIX/93, p. 14.

<sup>87</sup> “Przedmurze? Czy rzeczywiście?”, *Wiedza i Życie*, [vol.] 33, 4 (1966): 4 (2-8).

<sup>88</sup> NDA, Polish Broadcasting, sig. 852, 37.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>90</sup> Inauguracja obchodów milenijnych (1000-lecie Chrztu Polski) w Rzymie – sprawozdanie Kazimierza Komły. <https://www.polskieradio.pl/68/788/Tag/90029> [Access 01.04.2021].

<sup>91</sup> Kazanie papieża Pawła VI do narodu polskiego z okazji Millenium Chrztu Polski <https://www.polskieradio.pl/68/788/Tag/90029> [Access 01.04.2021].

community's power in a new light.<sup>92</sup> It also provided a unique opportunity to ask for many questions, the most important of which, in the face of the 1000-year history of the Polish nation and state, being the roots of Poland and its future: "where do we come from and where are we going". The editors of Radio Free Europe linked these questions to the Church's 1000-year existence on Polish soil and its further history in the second millennium, and based its broadcast on these very needs.

They addressed their message to the compatriots "behind the iron curtain" who, in the period of distorting official information in Poland, was needed. RFE opened the "gate to the West" closed by the communist authorities. Many events from the national past were also interpreted in this spirit. The question is whether this message was unilateral or not. It concentrated only upon the best values that Poland drew from the "West". The only contentious issue was the border along the Oder-Neisse line, which Germany (West Germany) did not acknowledge (the radio was based in Munich). Undoubtedly, with the departure of the communist authorities from the transformations of 1956, the message of RFE became more and more anti-communist and anti-Soviet.

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<sup>92</sup> Marek Kornat, *Polska myśl polityczna na uchodźstwie wobec Millenium. Komentarze, rozważania, postulaty*, in *Obchody Millenium na Uchodźctwie, w 50. Rocznicę* ed. Rafał Łatka (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, UKSW, 2016), 93 (47-94).

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