

**P R Z E G L Ą D Z A C H O D N I O P O M O R S K I
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A R T Y K U Ł Y

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**COLLECTIVE OR INDIVIDUAL BIOGRAPHY? A COMMUNIST
IN “REGAINED LANDS” JUST AFTER THE WW2**

Key words: Western and Northern Lands in Poland, Polish Government Plenipotentiaries, communists, biography, 1945, human resources policy

Słowa kluczowe: Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne w Polsce, Pełnomocnicy Rządu RP, komuniści, biografistyka, 1945 rok, polityka kadrowa

It would be appropriate to begin by explaining the research perspective outlined in the title. The key to the analysed problem, i.e. the biographies of people taking over and being in power after the end of the Second World War on the Western and Northern Territories, were ideological choices made by them. They determined their fate, and it is through their prism that we can look at the history of regions which, as a result of the post-war transformation of Europe, found themselves within the borders of Poland. It should be noted, however, that the subject under consideration is only a research “sample” as it is limited to a relatively small collection. It is made up of biographies of people who, in March 1945, were appointed government plenipotentiaries of new administrative districts.¹ Of this group, special attention will be paid to one of them – Leonard Borkowicz (until 1944 Berkowicz). It is his personalised history that will allow us to analyse the

¹ Archive of New Files (hereinafter: AAN), Ministry of Public Administration, Excerpt from the minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers of 14 March 1945, ref. 2441, 14.

question contained in the title of the article and it will also be the main point of reference.

The choice of Borkowicz as a representative of the analysed group is dictated by several considerations. The most important is the knowledge of his life, which took me almost a decade to study.² Writing it, I opted for a method of contextual biography in which “the character is much stronger [...] innate, incorporated as it were, into social entities and into historical processes.”³ With such an assumption, it is necessary to describe an epoch which becomes the background and context of a story, and thus acquires the characteristics of a historical biography.⁴ However, it is important to maintain proportions. It would be an abuse to say that the history of Borkowicz can be treated as the “excuse” to describe the history of Poland in the 20th century. But already during the reconstruction of 1945 in Western Pomerania, Borkowicz can be considered a “globalising core”, because it was around him that important issues concerning the history of this region were concentrated.

Borkowicz’s pre-war and wartime biography is of great importance for his choice – his experiences of that time place him in the generation of Polish communists of Jewish origin, born around 1910, who joined the movement in the 1920s and 1930s, presented by Jaff Schatz. Most of them survived the war in the East, and when they returned to the country at the side of the Red Army, they not only rebuilt their lives in Poland, but above all rebuilt them for the millions of people living there.⁵ Often doing so with fervour worthy of “apostles of the new faith.”⁶ Their new position in the structures of power created was therefore determined not so much by personal qualities, education or the course of their

² Katarzyna Rembacka, *Komunista na peryferiach władzy. Historia Leonarda Borkowicza (1912–1989)* (Szczecin–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2020).

³ Tadeusz Łepkowski, „Kilka uwag o historycznej biografistyce”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 3 (1964): 713.

⁴ As Leonid Zaskilniak claims, (“Difficulties of biographical research or how to see a forest behind trees?”, in: *Biografistyka we współczesnych badaniach historycznych. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. Jolanta Kolbuszewska, Rafał Stobiecki (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2017, 29) “a biography can only be called historical if it fits/is inscribed in the historical context and all its intersecting aspects”.

⁵ Jaff Schatz, *The Generation. The Rise and Fall of Jewish Communists of Poland* (Lund: University of Lund Press, 1989), 11.

⁶ Janina Broniewska („Jeden z apostołów”, in: *Ludzie Pierwszej Armii*, Warszawa: GZPW 1946, 25–28) called “apostles” the first group of political-educational officers who were sent in 1943 to the camp in Sielec nad Oko, where the 1st Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division was being formed. Among them was also Leonard Borkowicz.

professional career, but first and foremost by their imprisonment in the communist, party circle.

Such capital was certainly at Borkowicz's disposal – from the age of fifteen he was associated with communism. A member of the illegal Communist Party of Poland, a listener and frequenter of the pre-war prison "universities": the Bastion in Cracow, the Brigidek in Lviv and Drohobycze, the Centralniak in Warsaw and finally Bereza Kartuska, a professional party activist or "funk", carrying out tasks in Altenburg, Berlin, Lviv and Cracow⁷. During the war, in Lviv, a communist agitator, director of a soviet soap factory, and after 1941, a forced worker of the tunic battalion. Later, a Red Army soldier and a Polish political officer in the 1st Tadeusz Kosciuszko Infantry Division, established by Józef Stalin. Borkowicz was so available and loyal that he became a representative of the Polish National Liberation Committee for the Białystok Region and a deputy commander in chief of the Civic Militia. This carousel of posts ended in 1945, when he was entrusted with the mission to develop Western Pomerania.

Was it similar to other attorneys? Did the representatives of the communist Provisional Government in Opole Silesia, Lower Silesia or Warmia and Mazury have similar resumes? How many common, collective features can be found in them? Was their stay in the so-called Recovered Territories a promotion or did it herald degradation? Was it just a stop on the way to other, more important dignities, or maybe "the happiest period in life"?⁸ And finally (which does not mean that the catalogue of questions has been exhausted), to what extent "their" history became the history of the lands they administered and how – or maybe if – they were remembered there.

As indicated earlier, the article is of a causal nature so not all issues will be clarified. However, just formulating them, or drawing attention to them, may lead to new research tracks. Perhaps it will also allow us to face the problem of cohesion and uniformity of all the regions of the "Regained Lands", which has already been pointed out by the creators of the Network of Western and Northern Lands

⁷ Katarzyna Rembacka, „Wykluczony, skarcony, zmarginalizowany? Załamanie kariery politycznej Leonarda Borkowicza w 1950 roku – studium przypadku”, in: *Elity komunistyczne w Polsce*, ed. Mirosław Szumiło, Marcin Żukowski (Warszawa–Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Wydawnictwo IPN, 2015), 506.

⁸ Alicja Maciejowska, „Odchodzę z życia”, in: Alina Głowacka, Alicja Maciejowska, *Pisane mikrofonem* (Szczecin–Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo KaDruk, 2004), 33.

who are creating a research project entitled *Western and Northern Lands – region or regions?*⁹

On 14 March 1945, i.e. during the successful operation of the Wisłańsko-Odrzańska Operation by the Red Army, the usurping Provisional Government decided to “divide the Western territories – newly liberated, into four administrative districts and appoint a plenipotentiary for each one.”¹⁰ District I included Opole Silesia and was to be managed by Aleksander Zawadzki, District II was Lower Silesia, and its plenipotentiary was Stanisław Piaskowski, previously the vice-voivode of Kielce. District III was designated on the territory of Western Pomerania, which was to be administered by Aleksander Kaczocho-Józefski, and finally East Prussia (District IV) supervised by Jerzy Sztachelski.

It soon turned out that these appointments were temporary because two attorneys, after a few weeks, ceased to perform this function. On 30 March, Sztachelski, who had been entrusted with the Ministry of Provisions and Trade, was replaced by Jakub Prawin (he operated in Warmia and Mazury).¹¹ On 11 April, Kaczocho-Józefski took over as deputy minister of public administration.¹² On the proposal of the Minister of Public Administration, Edward Ochab, the government decided to “appoint citizen L. Borkowicz to the West Pomerania District regardless of his work as Plenipotentiary to the 1st Belarussian Front.”¹³ In this way, a temporary team was formed to manage the new borders of the land whose “return to the mother country” was a propaganda slogan used by the communists

⁹ *Akademia Ziem Zachodnich i Północnych*, accessed 10.04.2020, <http://szip.pl/akademia-ziem-zachodnich-i-polnocnych-nabor>.

¹⁰ AAN, MAP, Extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers of 14 March 1945, ref. 2441, 14.

¹¹ “It is worth explaining that in March 1945 the term ‘East Prussia’ or ‘Prussia’ was still in use. From the end of the month, in accordance with the resolution on the administrative division of the Regained Territories, the name of the Mazurian District was introduced, and a little later the Warmia-Masuria District”. Anna Magierska, *Przywrócić Polsce. Przemysł na Ziemiach Odzyskanych 1945–1946* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1986), 32.

¹² Anna Magierska, *Ziemie zachodnie i północne w 1945 roku. Kształtowanie się podstaw polityki integracyjnej państwa polskiego* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, 1978), 75.

¹³ “Resolution of the Council of Ministers of 11 April 1945”, in: *Pierwszy wojewoda szczeciński. Dokumenty i komentarze (1945–1949)*, ed. Zdzisław Chmielewski, Kazimierz Kozłowski (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Glob, 1986), 18.

to legitimise their power.¹⁴ It would therefore seem that the filling of key positions in this area should be based on a well-thought-out personnel policy. But was it so?

Let's stop at the nominations of March 14th and look at the party roots of the nominees. Out of the four people indicated at that time, two were members of communist organizations in the pre-war period – these were Dr. Jerzy Sztachelski and General Aleksander Zawadzki. The latter could boast in his biography not only because of his membership in the Communist Party of Poland, of which he was a party officer, or two years of military training in Moscow, but also due to repeated stays in prisons during that time.¹⁵ Against this backdrop, Sztachelski's political card appeared much more modestly, and he also had an important feature on it. It was a membership of the nationalist, pre-war Polish Youth (*Młodzież Wszepolska*).¹⁶ His views evolved dynamically and he quickly joined the ranks of the communist youth in Vilnius, which brought him to the court. He was also affected by other repercussions.¹⁷ Stanisław Piaskowski, in turn, joined the Polish Socialist Party in the 1920s, from which he was to be removed in December 1936 for his "crypto-communist" views.¹⁸ However, despite his radical left-wing sympathies, it is difficult to consider him a typical communist activist. The furthest from this trend was Aleksander Kaczocha-Józefski (actually Aleksander Józef Kaczocha), who belonged to the pre-war People's Party (SL) which was a peasants' movement.

¹⁴ For more see: Mariusz Mazur, „Argumentacja legitymizująca przynależność Ziemi Zachodnich i Północnych do Polski w pierwszych latach po II wojnie światowej”, *Studia Zachodnie* 10 (2008): 81–101; Radosław Domke, *Ziemia Zachodnie i Północne Polski w propagandzie lat 1945–1948* (Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, 2010).

¹⁵ AAN, Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (hereinafter: KC PZPR), Faculty of Human Resources, Aleksander Zawadzki, Survey for Party Activity, December 8, 1948, sign 237/XXIII–340, 4–7. Zawadzki also graduated from the military school in Leningrad, which Bolesław Bierut graduated from. Elżbieta Kowalczyk, „Szkoła Wojskowa w Leningradzie dla działaczy Komunistycznej Partii Polski. Zarys genezy i funkcjonowania (1925–1932)”, *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1 (2016): 309–326.

¹⁶ While studying in Vilnius at the Stefan Batory University, Jerzy Sztachelski found himself in the group of “a host of unusual individuals,” to which Jerzy Putrament also included Czesław Miłosz, Stefan Jędrzychowski and Henryk Dembiński. It was under the influence of the latter that both Putrament and Sztachelski were eventually bound up with the left-wing current. Emil Pasierski, *Miłosz and Putrament. Żywoty równoległe* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2011), 25–36.

¹⁷ Sztachelski was suspended from student rights for his communist activities. AAN, KC PZPR, HR department, Jerzy Sztachelski, Biography, n.d.a., sign. 237/XXIII-837, 6–7.

¹⁸ Sebastian Ligarski, „Stanisław Piaskowski – pierwszy wojewoda dolnośląski”, *Dolny Śląsk* 11 (2005): 142. I would like to thank Mr. Stefan Bednarek for his help in obtaining the material.

The fate of the nominees during the war was also different, which was influenced by their stay at the time. Piaskowski and Kaczocha-Józefski remained on the territory of the German-occupied country and both were engaged in underground activities. The socialist was active first in the Polish Association for Armed Struggle, which was subordinate to the pre-war Polish authorities, then in the Home Army, while the folklore was engaged in secret teaching. On the other hand, the communists found themselves on the territory of the Soviet Union and it was there, after the initial period of stagnation, that their political careers accelerated. Both were directed to the 1st Tadeusz Kosciuszko Infantry Division, where the promotion of “Aleksander Zawadzki from Corporal to Major and then very quickly to General” echoed in the soldiers.¹⁹ Equally surprising could be the fact that he was entrusted with the leadership of the Central Office of Polish Communists, which most probably should be combined with some form of agency cooperation with the Soviets.²⁰ Sztachelski’s position was also strengthened – in the Kosciuszko Division, as commander of the sanitary battalion, he was promoted to captain, and in the spring of 1944, together with the ubiquitous Zawadzki, he found himself on the Main Board of the Polish Patriots’ Association.²¹

But not only individual careers of Polish communists were strengthened. At least since the defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad it was known that “liberation will come from the East, that it will be liberated by the Soviet Union and its army. This awareness led to the creation of new political programmes and the “re-definition of previous assessments and attitudes.”²² Perhaps it was precisely these factors that led Aleksander Kaczocha-Józefski to power the satellite in the face of the Polish Workers’ Party, which was strengthening its position and created by

¹⁹ Bolesław Dańko, *Bez układów* (Warszawa: s.n., 1993), 69.

²⁰ Janusz Mokrosz, *Aleksander Zawadzki – działacz komunistyczny i wojewoda śląski (1945–1948)* (Katowice–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2017), 72–78.

²¹ “On April 13th, 1944, a plenum of the ZPP Main Board was convened in Moscow, at which the nine-month activity of the Union was criticized and significant personnel changes were made. At the request of Stefan Jędrychowski, the plenum elected subordinate Andrzej Witos as deputy chairman of the ZPP, Jerzy Sztachelski as a member of the presidium and secretary general of the ZPP and Aleksander Zawadzki as a member of the presidium. Then, at the request of A. Witos, the Plenum added 6 people to the General Board, including Aleksander Zawadzki, Jerzy Sztachelski, Kan Grubecki, Jakub Berman and Stanisław Radkiewicz. Czesław Grzelak, Henryk Stańczyk, Stefan Zwoliński, *Armia Berlinga i Żymierskiego. Wojsko Polskie na froncie wschodnim 1943–1945* (Warszawa: Neriton: Akademia Świętokrzyska im. Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach, Filia w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim, 2002), 46.

²² Jacek Chrobaczyński, *Konteksty przełomu 1944–1945. Społeczeństwo wobec wojennych rozstrzygnięć. Postawy – zachowania – nastroje* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Universitas, 2005), 24.

it, the People's Party "Will of the People".²³ In this way, he found himself in the orbit of the communists' influence, licensing the party system and monopolizing power. It is not known whether he was guided by ideological motives,²⁴ a sober assessment of the situation or extreme opportunism. However, the support given to the peasants allowed him to occupy high positions in the SL leadership, "initially called "red" and then "false"²⁵ and to "represent" their voters in the Sejm (National Assembly).²⁶ And what about Piaskowski? Almost immediately after the liberation of central Poland from German occupation, he started to hold a function in the new apparatus of power, without giving up his membership in the Polish Socialist Party, or more precisely its "Lublin" part.²⁷ In a sense, he thus followed a path analogous to Kaczocha-Józefski.

However, the CVs of the "March" attorneys differed in other, for obvious reasons, areas that were independent of them, which were determined by the metric or origin. They also did not always have an influence on their education, which was related to the financial status of their families. The eldest was Aleksander Zawadzki, who was born in 1899 in Będzin, in a Polish workers' family and completed only a few classes of a common school. Apart from professional party work, he was also involved in mining. Aleksander Kaczocha-Józefski came from the Małopolska village of Słupiec. He was born in 1906, most probably to a Polish peasant family. He graduated from the gymnasium in Tarnów and began legal studies at the Jagiellonian University, which he was unable to complete due to his difficult financial situation. He worked as a school manager. Stanisław Piaskowski, born in 1901 near Garwolin, also chose a similar profile of education as

²³ "Created by the communists in the rural circles, the 'Will of the People' group joined the National Council at the end of March 1944, where it was officially presented as a representative of the peasants movement". Janusz Wrona, *System partyjny w Polsce 1944–1950. Miejsce – funkcje – relacje partii politycznych w warunkach budowy i utrwalania systemu totalitarnego* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1997), 68.

²⁴ Aleksander Kaczocha most probably was also a member of PPR since January 1943. *Aleksander Kaczocha*, Biuletyn Informacji Publicznej IPN.pl, accessed 2.04.2020, <https://katalog.bip.ipn.gov.pl/informacje/601149>.

²⁵ Janusz Wrona, „Elity kryptokomunistyczne w partiach satelickich”, in: *Elity komunistyczne w Polsce*, ed. Mirosław Szumiło, Marcin Żukowski (Warszawa–Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Wydawnictwo IPN, 2015), 155–156.

²⁶ Tadeusz Mołdawa, *Ludzie władzy 1944–1991. Władze państwowe i polityczne Polski według stanu na dzień 28 II 1991* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1991), 267–269.

²⁷ The communists managed to attract a small group of the most left-wing socialists for cooperation. Acting against the majority, this group, headed by Edward Osóbka-Morawski, became part of the National Council. Wrona, *System*, 72–77.

he did, taking up legal studies at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov and finishing them, after various perturbations, at the University of Warsaw. Piaskowski's father, Antoni, was a district governor in Radom, and it was there that Stanisław was head of the department in the Municipal Council. Jerzy Sztachelski, who was born in 1911 in Puławy, to a Polish intellectual family and graduated in medicine in Vilnius, was in the best position.

So what, apart from the ideological choices, predestined the above four to be entrusted with the extremely difficult task of "preparing the land for the Polish settlement?"²⁸ Piaskowski and Sztachelski were certainly supported by their experience in managing the field administration. He gained his first practice in the Kielce Province, where he served as deputy government plenipotentiary just after the liberation of the area from the German occupation (Edward Ochab was then his superior). From summer 1944, Dr. Jerzy Sztachelski, on the other hand, managed Podlasie, acting as the Białystok voivode. Entrusting him with the management of the region's neighbouring East Prussia was a logical consequence of his earlier actions. Sztachelski, (without waiting for any signal from the central authorities), on his own began to develop the lands occupied by the Red Army and "prepare their administration. His zeal can be explained by the geographical proximity of these areas and the plan to connect eight districts of former East Prussia to the province he managed."²⁹

Directing Kaczochy-Józefski to Western Pomerania was certainly connected with the party key used in the division of positions in local administration. According to Mirosława Szumiło's findings, "in 1945, under various inter-party agreements, 14 provinces and districts were divided into parties represented in the National Council and the Provisional Government of National Unity", in which the People's Party had a significant share.³⁰ It actively supported the concept of settlement of new lands and their development.³¹ It also had a lot to say on this

²⁸ Magierska, *Ziemie zachodnie*, 84.

²⁹ Tomasz Tadeusz Majer, „Pełnomocnik Rządu RP na Okręg Mazurski – budowa aparatu państwowego”, *Studia Prawnoustrojowe* 18 (2012): 104.

³⁰ Mirosław Szumiło, „Wojewodowie i okręgowi pełnomocnicy rządu w pierwszych latach Polski Ludowej (1944–1950)”, in: *Dzieje biurokracji na ziemiach polskich*, vol. II, ed. Artur Górak, Dariusz Magier (Lublin-Siedlce: Wydawnictwo Radzyńskie Stowarzyszenie Inicjatyw Lokalnych, 2009), 297–298.

³¹ "The General Council of the Party at its meeting in March 1945 called on all subordinate units to organize settlement groups among peasants and direct them to the land in consultation with the authorities west and north." Małgorzata Ryś, „Stronictwo Ludowe na Pomorzu Zachodnim wiosną i latem 1945 roku”, *Śląskie Studia Historyczne* 5 (1997): 180.

subject because two successive heads of the public administration ministry came from their ranks.³² Thus, Kaczocho-Józefski was followed by both the strength of the group itself and its position within it, public political activity (a member of the KRN) and some experience in management.

However, the most interesting seems to be the candidacy of Aleksander Zawadzki, a man who could certainly be regarded as one of the most important political figures at the time. As his biographer Janusz Mokrosz points out, the fact that the deputy commander-in-chief of the Polish Army for political and educational affairs was sent to "the disposal of the Provisional Government" resulted from the desire to separate him "from the highest circles of power".³³ Both Władysław Gomułka, as well as people gathered around him, had aversion towards Zawadzki. At the same time, however, the central authorities gave him practically unlimited freedom of decision making, which resulted both from his position and the key importance of Silesia for the post-war reconstruction of Poland.³⁴ Not without significance was the fact that before the war Zawadzki worked as a miner and lived in this region, which could be used as propaganda.

However, as previously written, the March nominations proved to be short-lived. Sztachelski was replaced after a dozen or so days by Jakub Prawin, and Kaczocho-Józefski, after almost a month, by Leonard Borkowicz. It is in the CVs of the new attorneys that most common elements can be found. But are there enough of them to give them a collective biography?

Both Prawin (born 1901) and Borkowicz (born 1912) were Polish communists of Jewish origin. Both of them had a long party experience, the status of "funk", both were imprisoned in Bereza Kartuska for their political activities.³⁵ They were very different in terms of the level of their education – Prawin, who studied in Vienna with the title of Doctor of Laws, while Borkowicz, who was expelled for his communist activities from subsequent schools, did not manage to finish middle school. Prawin also enjoyed greater trust of his Moscow comrades

³² First, the Ministry of Public Administration was headed by Stanisław Kotek-Agroszewski and Józef Maślanka from the People's Party, respectively (until April 1945). Mołdawa, *Ludzie władzy*, 180.

³³ Mokrosz, *Aleksander Zawadzki*, 93–94.

³⁴ Adam Dziuba, „A New System, New Parties, and a New Elite. Beginnings of the Post-war life in the Voivodeship of Silesia”, *CzasyPismo* Special Issue (2019), 68.

³⁵ AAN, KC PZPR, HR Department, Prawin Jakub, ref. 237/XXIII-407; AAN, KC PZPR, Personal files of Leonard Borkowicz, ref. 306.

than he had in the party discipline and conspiracy principles, Borkovich.³⁶ This became apparent during the Soviet occupation of Lviv, when in early 1941, Prawin was admitted to the VKP(b) with an internship in KPP.³⁷ Borkowicz “was proposed to join the JPC(b)” only two years later.³⁸ During the war, apart from Lviv, both soldiers were joined by service in the Red Army, in which they were “polishers”, officer promotions obtained there, and then command posts in the Kościuszko Division. They also found themselves in a team of leading party activists included in the CBKP work system. “The members of the team fulfilled the role of the Office’s shop stewards, being a direct link between the Office and the communists in the units.”³⁹ The year 1944 was marked by great dynamism in their lives and increasingly new functions and tasks – at that time they both gained experience in administrative work at the local (Borkowicz) and central (Prawin) levels. Both of them still wore uniforms and obtained higher and higher military ranks.

Their fates were once again united on 26 February 1945, when the decision of the Provisional Government to establish the composition of plenipotentiaries to act on the Soviet fronts was made. Eugeniusz Szyr was assigned to the 1st Ukrainian Front, while Leonard Borkowicz, Julian Kole (quickly named Antoni Alster) and Jakub Prawin were assigned to the three Belarusian fronts.⁴⁰ In this case, it is difficult to speak of any inter-party agreements, and the selected group had an obvious common denominator, certainly taken into account for these nominations. All of them (Alster, Borkowicz, Kole, Prawin, Szyr) were connected by the Kapepsk past, all of them came to Poland from the East, all of them were engaged in political work in the army, holding command posts. They did not

³⁶ Patrycja Bukalska, *Krwawa Luna* (Warszawa: Wielka Litera, 2016), 65–81.

³⁷ AAN, KC PZPR, HR Department, Jakub Prawin, Biography, 3 VII 1950 r., sign. 237/XXIII–407, 6b.

³⁸ Russian State Archive of Social and Political History in Moscow, f. 494, op. 252, d. 5, The Files of Leonard Borkowicz, 24.

³⁹ According to Fryderyk Zbiniewicz (*Polish Army in the USSR. Studia na problematykę pracy politycznej*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MON, 1963, 177) „The team included: M. Mietkowski, R. Zambrowski, E. Ochab, S. Jędrychowski, W. Grosz, J. Prawin, J. Gawroński, J. Urbanowicz, I. Korniluk, St. Kondratowicz, Wł. Maskalan, E. Pszczółkowski, M. Naszkowski, St. Zawadzki, A. Alster, L. Krzemień, L. Borkowicz, K. Świetlik, E. Szyr, H. Toruńczyk, Z. Okręt, K. Witaszewski, L. Rubinstein, J. Burgin, M. Szleyen, J. Kratko, W. Konopka, W. Stresser, St. Sobczak and several others.

⁴⁰ AAN, MAP, Extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers of 26 February 1945, ref. 2441, 5.

graduate from military academies, but while serving in the political and educational corps, they obtained officer status. "Everybody knew Russian, everybody knew each other. They also knew – and this was perhaps the most important thing – the comrades from their brother's army, with whom they were supposed to settle disputes."⁴¹

In the course of their tasks, both Borkowicz and Prawin operated in the areas that were to be covered by the Polish administration, during the personnel reshuffles carried out by the Provisional Government. Their relatively best preparation for the management of Western Pomerania and East Prussia was evidenced by their orientation on the state of infrastructure and economy in the regions. They obtained it, among other things, during field reconnaissance, and they included their observations and observations in reports sent to central authorities.⁴² Borkowicz showed not only perceptiveness but also concern for the future fate of Western Pomerania by including in the report his concerns about the state of the Soviet military commanders and the lack of any action on the part of Poland to secure these lands.⁴³ And since he submitted the report at the time when Kaczocha-Józefski interrupted his Western Pomeranian mission by deciding to return to the capital and take over the portfolio of the deputy minister of public administration, he became probably the best, and probably the only one, candidate for the district.

Therefore, it seems legitimate to state that the nominations of Borkowicz and Prawin were more influenced by their place of residence, their specific availability and experience resulting from the implementation of the tasks at that time than by the well thought-out strategy of the central authorities. They were simply at

⁴¹ Rembacka, *Komunista na peryferiach*, 206.

⁴² The rightful reconnaissance of East Prussia took place on 14–22 March 1945 – "1945 March 23, Warsaw. Plenipotentiary of the Polish Government at the 3rd Belarusian Front Colonel dr Jakub Prawin to the Prime Minister Edward Osóbka-Morawski. Report from talks with the front command and the situation of the eastern and central part of East Prussia", in: Tadeusz Baryła, *Okręg Mazurski w raportach Jakuba Prawina. Wybór dokumentów. 1945 rok* (Olsztyn: Ośrodek Badań Naukowych im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego, 1996, 53–55). Borkowicz, on the other hand, made a tour of Western Pomerania in the first week of April 1945, reaching Kołobrzeg, Gorzów, Świebodzin and Stargard, among others. The Pomeranian Princess House, Special Collections, The legacy of Leonard Borkowicz, sign. 3001, *Pierwsze miesiące dwuwładzy i władzy*, k. 6.

⁴³ "1945 April 16, Wałcz – Letter of the Plenipotentiary of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland to the Command of the First Belarusian Front of the Soviet Army Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Borkowicz to the President of the National Committee of the Republic of Poland – Bolesław Bierut", in: Władysław Góra, „Początki władzy ludowej na ziemiach odzyskanych”, *Z pola walki* 31 (1965), 3: 175–178.

hand. Thus, it may be difficult to defend the thesis about conscious directing only former soldiers to new districts, which would testify to the communists' special interest – in terms of personnel – in the “Regained Lands”.⁴⁴ Neither the casting of Lower Silesia, where for a few years the socialists were in the lead,⁴⁵ nor Western Pomerania, where the staffing of the operational groups was influenced by the folklore Kaczoch-Jozefski,⁴⁶ prove this. PPR at that time was more focused on expanding the party and security apparatus than on staffing monopolizing the field administration, because “temporarily” it did not have such possibilities. That is why it drew a full handful from the reservoir of people who were connected by Polish western thought, and that is why it used pre-war officials giving them an illusory sense of equality.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, at the district level, both Borkowicz⁴⁸

⁴⁴ “In 1945 the Polish Workers' Party had only four governors and plenipotentiaries: in Lublin, Katowice, Szczecin and Olsztyn. As you can see, the communists were mainly interested in the Regained Territories”. Szumiło, *Wojewodowie*, 298.

⁴⁵ “In 1945, the Lower Silesian PPS and PPR units were convinced of the decisive predominance of socialist influence in the area. (...) In the people of Stanisław Piaskowski and Bolesław Drobner two key positions in the administration fell to the PPS”. Elżbieta Kaszuba, „Dzieje Śląska po 1945 roku”, in: Marek Czaplinski, Elżbieta Kaszuba, Gabriela Wąs, Rościsław Żerlik, *Historia Śląska* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002), 478.

⁴⁶ At least in some cases, representatives of individual ministries were delegated to the Kaczochy-Józefski operational group, which was decided by their heads. State Archive in Szczecin, Szczecin Voivodship Office, Letters of the Plenipotentiary of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland to the Director of the Compensation Office, Main Liquidator and Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Warsaw, 30 March 1945, No 3, 11–13.

⁴⁷ For more on this subject see: Grzegorz Strauchold, *Mysł zachodnia i jej realizacja w Polsce Ludowej w latach 1945–1957* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek Publishing House, 2003).

⁴⁸ It is worth quoting here opinions on Borkowicz formulated by two writers, Maria Dąbrowska and Maria Boniecka. Dąbrowska, who visited Szczecin in September 1948, was astonished to learn that “a gentleman of a strong stance, disguised as Maciek Borkowicz Matejko – with black moustaches falling and as black as a beetle [and] altogether nice” was the Szczecin voivode. She also quickly found out that this “Jew – a pre-war communist – supposedly knew how to win the kindness of the people here” (Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki*, vol. 3, selection, introduction and elaboration. Tadeusz Drewnowski, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1988, 164–165). Boniecka, in her book published in exile, wrote that Borkowicz “in the Chrobry's Bulwarks he rules like an absolute monarch, swears like a true soldier, and, what is most important, he blunts various pigeons and combiners without mercy, making little of their mighty Warsaw protectors” (Maria Boniecka, *Ucieczka za druty*, Londyn: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1975, 123). For more about the Western Pomeranian personnel see: Kazimierz Kozłowski, *Pomorze Zachodnie w sześćdziesięcioleciu (1945–2005). Społeczeństwo – władza – gospodarka – kultura* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2007), 337–360.

and Zawadzki⁴⁹ were able to establish cross-party cooperation, appreciating and respecting the professionals around them.

Does the information presented above allow us to create a collective figure of a district and at the same time communist attorney? Yes, and no. The common and overriding feature connecting Borkowicz, Prawin and Zawadzki was their ideological past, it was the past that distinguished and marked them valuable, and it was this factor that, after the war, led them to the honours, despite the lack of formal education, professional qualifications and professional experience. Possible complexes, if they faced this human affliction at all, were to be eliminated by the confession and practice of "religious-like communism".⁵⁰ If not Prawin,⁵¹ then surely Borkowicz and Zawadzki, in arranging propaganda events, making occasional speeches or cutting ribbons, were really efficient.⁵² This was due to their propaganda skills and experiences in 'brainwashing' polished up as an integral part of their "political" service in the army and the rank of their commanders. The military uniform and the high, officer's ranks were another elements connecting them. In 1945 Borkowicz was a lieutenant colonel, Prawin a colonel and

⁴⁹ "Eventually, for most of his stay in Upper Silesia, this communist from Zagłębie will benefit to a large extent from the experience gained mainly by Jerzy Ziętek's pre-war staff [Michał] Grażyński, despite various negative suggestions coming from his closest party background, which was the provincial organization of PPR. (...) The consistency shown by Zawadzki in this matter was probably related to the fact that he simply realised how much he needed qualified pre-war personnel and social and political activists who knew the local specificity to manage the region". Mokrosz, *Aleksander Zawadzki*, 99–100.

⁵⁰ See: Marcin Kula, *Religiopodobny komunizm* (Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, 2003).

⁵¹ In 1945 Prawin was sceptical about the initiative to organize the anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald: "In Olsztyn, due to his function, Government Plenipotentiary Jakub Prawin, who took over the leadership of the Provincial Committee for the Celebration of the Grunwald Feast, was to supervise the organization of the celebrations. It is said that at first he was not delighted with the organization of the celebrations, and the available materials indicate that in summing up the celebrations, he was not satisfied with their organization and course either. He was perfectly aware of the situation, here on the spot, in Olsztyn and in the field. He believed that in the face of a number of needs and enormous difficulties in the Mazury Region, if at all, it would be better to organize small, only local celebrations. Probably he was also fully aware that in such a short period of time, in difficult post-war conditions, the preparation of a prestigious event will require a lot of effort". Ryszard Tomkiewicz, „Pierwsze powojenne obchody rocznicy bitwy grunwaldzkiej (15 lipca 1945)”, *Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie* 3 (2010): 328.

⁵² The inhabitants of Western Pomerania particularly remember an exceptional event organized in 1946 under the patronage of Borkowicz "We keep the Guard over the Oder". It was then that the scouts, manifesting their support for the Oder border, at the same time loudly expressed their support for Stanisław Mikołajczyk and the opposition to the communists, the Polish People's Party. Radosław Ptaszyński, *Trzymamy Straż nad Odrą: propaganda – fakty – dokumenty* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2007).

Zawadzki a general. In the chaotic and confused period of transition, the military decoration heralded the strength that civilian clothes could not yet provide. With time it changed, bringing different consequences for each of the attorneys.

And here we come to the question signalled at the beginning of the text – what was it like for district attorneys to be entrusted with this task? Promotion, degradation or transition? It seems that only in relation to General Zawadzki can we talk about the action planned by Gomułka’s people, aiming at pushing him out of the strict political elite by directing him away from Warsaw. This does not mean, however, that he considered the years spent in the Silesian Voivodeship to be wasted, all the more so, because the scope of power of the proxies was very wide.⁵³ Nevertheless, high party and governmental positions, and thus moving to the top of power, did not bring Zawadzki until 1948, when his stay in Katowice⁵⁴ ended. In turn, the rather accidental way of directing Borkowicz and Prawin to the “Regained Lands” proves that in their case it is difficult to talk about a personal strategy implemented by the party headquarters, although one could find a greater strategy here. Only those who were closer to the name of “Moskals” (Russians) than the “nationalists” were directed to the new provinces.⁵⁵ However, both Borkowicz and Prawin had already had their chance to appear at the headquarters – the first as Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the MO, and the second

⁵³ Plenipotentiaries, theoretically, were representatives of the second instance of general administration and in territorial administration held a position equivalent to that of voivodes. It should be stressed, however, that unlike voivodes, the Plenipotentiaries – temporarily – also exercised power over a number of offices and non-segregated (special) institutions. In the case of Western Pomerania, in the spring of 1945, Borkowicz was subordinate to, or was under his authority, tax chambers, school district superintendents, the Land Office, the District Automobile Office or the Temporary State Administration. Robert Degen, *Kancelaria wojewódzkich urzędów administracji ogólnej na Ziemiach Odzyskanych w latach 1945–1950* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2005), 28–31.

⁵⁴ Mokrosz, *Aleksander Zawadzki*, 271–291.

⁵⁵ Such a division resulted mainly from the different fates of Polish communists during the war and the dispute over the central primacy of the party apparatus among them. As Władysław Gomułka recalled [*Pamiętniki*, vol. 2, ed. Andrzej Werblan (Warszawa: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BGW, 1994) 450], one of the most important contenders for taking power: “The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party (KC PPR) was constituted at the beginning of August 1944 in the following composition: 1. Władysław Gomułka (Secretary General); 2. Bolesław Bierut; 3. Jakub Berman; 4. Hilary Minc; 5. Aleksander Zawadzki. (...) The Politburo therefore included two members of the former secretariat of the CPC PPR and three members of the former Central Communist Office in Moscow. My original quantitative concept assumed an equal ratio – three out of three meaning a parity.”

as head of ministerial departments.⁵⁶ But the war is not over yet and it is possible that the directing to the front was more appealing to them than working in offices.

However, in 1945, the paths of Borkowicz and Prawin went two different directions because for Prawin, the Doctor of Law, the stay in the Mazury District turned out to be only a stopover.⁵⁷ More important for him, and not only for political but also economic reasons, was certainly the several years spent in Berlin and directing the Polish Military Mission.⁵⁸ Whereas for 33-year-old Lt. Borkowicz, a four-year presence in Western Pomerania, was a period of his professional fulfilment. Never before or after had he had such extensive power, sense of independence and commonly shown him the attraction.⁵⁹ If so, the search for a biographical *iunctim* in this respect will not be successful.

The biographies under analysis will also differ in their memory and material expressions. Starting with⁶⁰ memorial materials published shortly after death, issuing occasional postcards⁶¹ or naming squares and streets,⁶² through documentary films⁶³ or texts popularizing – or analysing – the life and activity of

⁵⁶ AAN, KC PZPR, HR Department, Prawin Jakub, Autobiography, Warsaw, 7 July 1950, ref. 237/XXIII-407, 7.

⁵⁷ In mid-December 1945, as a governmental plenipotentiary, Prawin was replaced by Dr. Zygmunt Robel, who was associated with the Labour Party. Majer, "Government Plenipotentiary", 117.

⁵⁸ AAN, KC PZPR, Department of Human Resources, Prawin Jakub, Autobiography, Warsaw, 7 July 1950, ref. 237/XXIII-407, 7.

⁵⁹ The environment of artists who settled in Szczecin for a short time and received a lot of support from it contributed to building a positive image of Borkowicz. As Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński wrote (*Listy z fiołkiem*). Quote from Robert Cieślak, "Spojrzenia (na) Gałczyńskiego", *Pogranicza* 3 (2003): 17–18 "If the Governor of Szczecin was not an angel, could we feel like in heaven with him? Angelology".

⁶⁰ For example: Henryk Kotlicki et al., *Jakub Prawin (wspomnienia)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, 1959); Henryk Rechowicz, ed., *Wspomnienia o Aleksandrze Zawadzki* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo „Śląsk”, 1971).

⁶¹ Such an occasional postcard was issued in connection with the death of Aleksander Zawadzki and presented the funeral ceremonies organized in Warsaw on 11 August 1964. Mokrosz, *Aleksander Zawadzki*, 290.

⁶² Most such forms of commemoration concerned Aleksander Zawadzki, who died in 1964. In reference to Jakub Prawin, who died in 1957, there is an anecdotal information about giving his name to the park in Olsztyn. He died in 1989. Leonard Borkowicz was not honored in this way, which should be combined with the transformation of the political system.

⁶³ Edmund Szaniawski *Aleksander Zawadzki* (film) (Polska: Wytwórnia Filmowa Czołówka, 1977); Andrzej Androchowicz *Pełnomocnik Rządu* (film) (Polska: Telewizja Polska Szczecin, 1987).

the proxies.⁶⁴ Most of these memorials did not stand the test of time. Top-down patronage, hagiographic articles and books have been socially and scientifically revised. The researchers also lost their interests in the biographies of party and government activists, which Jerzy Eisler explained, among others, that: “a significant part of people (also a number of historians, including even *those focused on communism in Poland*) are simply of the opinion that it is not worth to deal with them and devote separate books to them, and that the time spent on this type of activity would be better spent on preserving in the common memory the achievements of their political opponents and, at the same time, national heroes.”⁶⁵ This situation is gradually changing and more and more publications are available in the publishing market (published after the political transformation) presenting the profiles of Polish communists, although mainly those from the “first ranks”.⁶⁶ Therefore, it seems justified to shift interest into their depths, to reach an indescribable background and outline a “field” perspective. Full and individual stories of district attorneys (and then voivodes), would allow for a better understanding of the processes taking place in the Western and Northern Territories, where after all, they set the pace. The awareness of who these people were before and how their future proceeded would help to supplement the knowledge of the importance that the communist authorities gave to the new borders of the country and the real place they occupied in their plans. Without a doubt, drawing individual biographies is an arduous work and, as Felix Tych stated years ago, “there will

⁶⁴ Chmielewski, Kozłowski, *Pierwszy wojewoda*; Henryk Rechowicz, *Aleksander Zawadzki. Życie i działalność* (Katowice–Kraków: PWN, 1969).

⁶⁵ Jerzy Eisler, „Dlaczego nie lubimy biografii dotyczących osób z czasów PRL?”, *Polish Biographical Studies* 2 (2014): 43.

⁶⁶ Jerzy Eisler, *Siedmiu wspaniałych. Poczet pierwszych sekretarzy KC PZPR* (Warszawa: Czerwone i Czarne, 2014); Barbara Fijałkowska, *Borejsza i Różański. Przyczynek do dziejów stalinizmu w Polsce* (Olsztyn: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna w Olsztynie, 1995); Piotr Gajdziński, *Gomułka. Dyktatura ciemniaków* (Warszawa: Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo, 2017); Andrzej Garlicki, *Bolesław Bierut* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 2004); Czesław Kozłowski, *Namiestnik Stalina* (Warszawa: „BGW”, 1993); Eryk Krasucki, *Międzynarodowy komunista. Jerzy Borejsza – biografia polityczna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2009); Piotr Lipiński, *Bierut. Kiedy partia była bogiem* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2017); Paweł Machcewicz, *Władysław Gomułka* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1995); Andrzej Paczkowski, *Trzy twarze Józefa Świątły. Przyczynek do historii komunizmu w Polsce* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2009); Anita Prażmowska, *Władysław Gomułka* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo RM, 2016); Andrzej Skalimowski, *Sigalin. Towarzysz odbudowy* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2018); Anna Sobór-Świdorska, *Jakub Berman. Biografia komunisty* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2009); Mirosław Szumiło, *Roman Zambrowski 1909–1977. Studium z dziejów elity komunistycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2014).

never be any recipe for a good biography, because how many people there are, how many situations, how many different means of expression have to be found in order to reflect a person's silhouette, to show in full the choices he faced and the decisions he made."⁶⁷ That is why we should look for books presenting the comprehensive biographies of Leonard Borkowicz, Jakub Prawin, Stanisław Piaskowski and Aleksander Zawadzki – even if it was only a few years that they spent on "Regained Lands" that made them historical figures.

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⁶⁷ *Biografistyka dziejów najnowszych* (wypowiedź F. Tycha), *Dzieje Najnowsze* 3 (1973): 167.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to compare the biographies of the governmental plenipotentiaries who were sent to Poland in 1945 and to search for the elements connecting them. The profiles of people managing the "Regained Lands" just after the war are presented – Leonard Borkowicz, Jakub Prawin, Stanisław Piaskowski and Aleksander Zawadzki. The biographies of those who, although nominated, did not take over their posts – Aleksander Kaczochy-Józefski and Jerzy Sztachelski – have also been presented. Particular emphasis was placed on the political and ideological choices they made. The article also discusses the human resources policy of Polish communists.

BIOGRAFIA KOLEKTYWNA CZY INDYWIDUALNA? KOMUNISTA NA „ZIEMIACH ODZYSKANYCH” TUŻ PO WOJNIE

ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest porównanie życiorysów rządowych pełnomocników kierowanych w 1945 r. na nowo przyłączane do Polski ziemie oraz poszukiwanie łączących ich elementów. Zaprezentowano sylwetki ludzi zarządzających tuż po wojnie „Ziemiemi Odzyskanymi” – Leonarda Borkowicza, Jakuba Prawina, Stanisława Piaskowskiego oraz Aleksandra Zawadzkiego. Przybliżono także biografie tych, którzy choć nominowani, nie przejęli powierzanych im stanowisk – Aleksandra Kaczochy-Józefskiego oraz Jerzego Sztachelskiego. Szczególny nacisk został położony na podejmowane przez nich polityczne i ideologiczne wybory. W artykule podjęto również rozważania na temat polityki kadrowej polskich komunistów.