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## **ACTIVITY OF THE POLISH PEOPLE’S PARTY IN FRANCE – SHORT MONOGRAPH**

### **Abstract**

The article presents an outline of history of the Polish People’s Party in France, active in years 1947-1999, which was a part of the Polish People’s Party in Exile. The Party belonged to the so-called Polish independence emigration. The PSL in France developed dynamically from the late 1940s until the early 1960s. In the following years, its activity diminished gradually and a great number of local party clubs were liquidated. The main reasons behind such decrease in activity of the PSL included, first of all, ageing of its members, lack of inflow of young people into the party and lack of financial resources. Only the most persistent and idealistic activists remained until regaining of independence and overthrowing of communism in Poland. Upon rebirth of the independent PSL in Poland, these activists considered themselves to be the foreign part of the domestic PSL.

**Keywords:** The Polish People’s Party in France, Polish political emigration, Polish community in France, cold war

### **Introduction**

The aim of the article is to present an outline of history of the Polish People’s Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – PSL) in France in years 1947-1990. The party was a part of the Polish People’s Party in Exile, led by Stanisław Mikołajczyk. The source materials, which served as a basis for the study, consisted of archive materials (documents, correspondence, circulars, internal documents, records of minutes from meetings of local clubs) of the PSL, gathered in collections of: Museum of the History of the Polish People’s Movement (Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego – MHPRL) in Warsaw, Department of the Polish People’s Movement (Zakład Historii Ruchu Ludowego – ZHRL) in Warsaw. Use was also made of the press published abroad by the PSL

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structures in France and in Great Britain. Another source, which turned out very useful, were records of the Polish Security Service, which invigilated and sabotaged the activity of the PSL in exile<sup>1</sup>.

### **Characteristics of the Polish political emigration after 1945**

The Polish political emigration was not homogeneous. By year 1950, three political centres of the Polish pro-independence organization had emerged. The first one was the President and the government of the Republic of Poland located in London. The second consisted of political parties: the National Party (Stronnictwo Narodowe, SN), the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS), Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" (Polski Ruch Wolnościowy – "Niepodległość i Demokracja", PRW-NiD). In year 1949, these established a Political Council in London. Both groups believed the Polish authorities in exile should be established on the basis of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of year 1935 in order to maintain legal continuity of the state of Poland. The main difference between the two was that the President of the Republic of Poland - since 1947, August Zaleski - and his supporters believed that according to the Constitution, the President did not need to consult his plans and decisions with anyone, while the party-focused group believed in the necessity to follow the so-called Paris agreement, concluded in 1939 between General Władysław Sikorski and President Władysław Raczkiewicz. The agreement stated that the President would not make any political decisions otherwise than in consultation with the government and the political parties. The division between these groups lasted until death of President A. Zaleski in 1970, after which they managed to reach a reconciliation<sup>2</sup>.

The third centre was established by Stanisław Mikołajczyk. In emigration, Mikołajczyk was not favoured by the President's group or the party-based group - as a result, he made attempts to cooperate with the USSR and he recognised the Yalta agreements. A formal difficulty was posed by the fact that Mikołajczyk and his group failed to recognise the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of year 1935, and thus the author-

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<sup>1</sup> Stanisław Mikołajczyk w dokumentach aparatu bezpieczeństwa, vol. 2, *Działalność w latach 1947-1958*, oprac. W. Bagieński [et al.], Warszawa-Lódź 2010; Stanisław Mikołajczyk..., vol. 3, *Działalność w latach 1959-1966*, oprac. W. Bagieński [et al.], Warszawa-Lódź 2010.

<sup>2</sup> J. Piotrowski, *Polskie władze naczelne na wychodźstwie w latach 1945-1990*, [in:] *Rządy bez ziemi. Struktury władzy na uchodźstwie*, ed. R.P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, Warszawa 2014, pp. 611-615.

ities elected in exile. In 1948, he established the Alliance of Democratic Parties, which in year 1950 was transformed into the Polish National Democratic Committee (Polski Narodowy Komitet Demokratyczny – PNKD). Apart from the PSL, it was joined by the Labour Party (Stronnictwo Pracy – SP) and a part of the PPS, as well as some members of the Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne – SD). In year 1970, the new chairman of the PSL, Franciszek Wilk, decided to engage in cooperation with the President's group and the group representing political parties, which had established the Provisional Council of National Unity. There was a split in the PSL. Some members supported Wilk, others seceded<sup>3</sup>.

### The beginnings of the PSL in France

After the Second World War, the Polish community in France consisted of about 400 to 500 thousand people<sup>4</sup>. Most of those were the so-called old emigrants of peasant origin. They found work in mines located in the northern departments of France, such as Pas-de-Calais, Nord and others. The PSL authorities in Poland did their best to attract the masses of Polish peasants, who stayed abroad. For this purpose, they designated the delegates of the High Executive Committee (Naczelny Komitet Wykonawczy, NKW) of the PSL, who were supposed to organise and gather these people under the PSL banner. In France, the delegate was Aleksander Ładoś – a diplomat in pre-war Poland and a minister in the government of General Władysław Sikorski<sup>5</sup>. He established close relationships with the PSL members staying in France, including Tadeusz Nowak Cieplak, Marian Pompa, Władysław Krawczyk<sup>6</sup>.

On 17<sup>th</sup> May 1946, the PSL members in France started to publish their own newspaper under the title „Gazeta Ludowa” (“People's Gazette”), as the “Organ of the Polish People in France”<sup>7</sup>. The editor of “Gazeta Ludowa” was Ryszard Uszpolewicz, and the publisher was Jan

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 615.

<sup>4</sup> R. Dzwonkowski, W. Śladkowski, *Polonia francuska*, [in:] *Polonia w Europie*, ed. B. Szydłowska-Cegłowa, Poznań 1992, p. 380.

<sup>5</sup> A. Kołodziejczyk, *Aleksander Ładoś (1891-1963) – działacz niepodległościowy, dyplomata, ludowiec*, „Roczniki Dziejów Ruchu Ludowego”, 2000, no 31, p. 263.

<sup>6</sup> Stanisław Mikołajczyk Papers (SMP), file no., 800/22/0/-/85: Polish Peasant Party, 1947-1951, Letter of W.M. Pompa to Stanisław Mikołajczyk, 30 Mar. 1948, Paris, <http://szukajwarchiwach.pl/800/22/0/-/85/skan/full/Y4rnnRpCeQMEE3Q4npSXw>.

<sup>7</sup> Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego (here in after the MHPRL), 4448, A brochure announcing the planned publication of “Gazeta Ludowa”, 1945, Paris.

Małeczyński. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognised „Gazeta Ludowa” as the official organ of Mikołajczyk’s movement in France<sup>8</sup>.

The PSL established in France was to operate as a part of the PSL in Poland, and the task of the party was to attract the Poles to the ideals and values of the Polish People’s movement. This was supposed to strengthen the image and significance of the PSL in the country and show that Mikołajczyk and his PSL are supported by the Poles living abroad.

Organisation of structures of the PSL in France started in the first half of 1946 with the establishment of single groups in various regions of France and attracting individual persons. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1946, there was an organisational meeting of the PSL in Paris, chaired by Aleksander Ładoś. The meeting was attended by: Zygmunt Frątczyk of Las Brugues (Lot et Garonne), Józef Hołowaty of Lille (Nord), Jan Małeczyński – the publisher of „Gazeta Ludowa” – of Paris, Tadeusz Nowak of Paris and Władysław Marian Pompa of Troyes (Aube). Absent were Władysław Krawczyk of Marles-les-Mines (Pas-de-Calais) and Marceł Stachulec of Gevrey-Chambertin. Those, who were present, established the Organisational Committee and brought to life the permanent Secretariat of the PSL in Paris, located at the editorial office of „Gazeta Ludowa” at 4 rue Leverrier, Paris (VI). Organisational matters were to be dealt with all of the Committee members according to their territory. The task of the Committee members was to animate organisational activity of the PSL in the field, which was to be manifested first of all by establishment of local clubs and then districts of the PSL<sup>9</sup>.

The first local club of the PSL in France was established by Marian Pompa on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1946 in Troyes<sup>10</sup>. On 18<sup>th</sup> August 1946, Józef Hołowaty chaired the informative meeting of the PSL on behalf of the PSL Organisational Committee in France in Achiet Le Grand. The meeting was disrupted by a group of about 20 people, who interrupted the speakers, shouting. When the gendarmerie was called, it turned out some of the strangers had ID cards of the Polish Red Cross, and a few persons - of the consulate of the Republic of Poland<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, the club passed what was probably the first resolution of the PSL structures in France. Its authors demanded freedom and democracy in Poland and a five-point electoral law; they paid a tribute to Mikołajczyk, demanded consuls to be sent to France from Po-

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<sup>8</sup> Centre des Archives Diplomatiques, Europe/Pologne, 199QOSUP/3, note from „Bulletin de Renseignements: Politique”, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1946.

<sup>9</sup> MHPRL, 14699-1, Protokół zebrania organizacyjnego PSL we Francji, Paryż, 23 I 1946.

<sup>10</sup> *Z naszej gromady*, „Gazeta Ludowa”, 1946, no 13, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Napad na zebranie PSL w Achiet le Grand*, „Narodowiec”, 1946, no 198, p. 4.

land, who would represent the PSL and not - like it was at the time - only the Polish Workers' Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza - PPR)<sup>12</sup>.

In the mid-1946, organisational development of the PSL in France became more dynamical. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1946, there was another meeting of the PSL Organisational Committee. Discussing their work, the Committee members assessed that the "ideology of the PSL is finding more and more supporters among the numerous Polish farmers and workers in France"<sup>13</sup>. By March 1947, 33 local clubs and three district-level organisations were established<sup>14</sup>. The districts were an intermediate structure between the local clubs and the central authorities in Poland. The decision was then made to conduct a congress of the PSL in France to elect the proper authorities and devise a plan for activity in the future.

The first Congress of the PSL in France was held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1947 in Paris. The Congress was attended by the Minister Aleksander Ładoś, four members of the PSL Organisational Committee, 29 local club delegates, employees of "Gazeta Ludowa" and "a great number of supporters and members of the Polish community". In the organisational report, the secretary of the PSL Organisational Committee in France, Marian Pompa, spoke about the difficulties encountered in the course of organisation of the PSL structures. He indicated that the most difficult barriers included the communist propaganda and "intimidation of the Polish citizens by communist hit squads and various ultra-patriots, calling themselves pro-government, withdrawal of citizenship, benefits and care, and even taking back to Poland and imprisonment"<sup>15</sup>.

The Congress elected the PSL authorities in France: the Executive Board, the Audit Committee and the Court of Honour. The Executive Board consisted of the Chairman - Władysław Krawczyk, the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Chairman - Marcei Stachulec, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy Chairman - Zygmunt Frątczyk, the Secretary - Marian Pompa, the Treasurer - Jan Parafiniak and members - Stanisław Ozorowski, Jan Kulpiński. The Audit Committee members were Jan Małęczyński as the Chairman, Leon Adamczyk and Bazyli Górlaczyk. The Court of Honour consisted of the Chairman

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<sup>12</sup> *Z naszej gromady*, „Gazeta Ludowa”, 1946, no 15, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> MHPRL, AN-8874, a note entitled: Postępy ruchu ludowego. Posiedzenie Komitetu Organ. PSL we Francji.

<sup>14</sup> *Z naszej gromady. Utworzenie Okręgu I-go PSL*, „Gazeta Ludowa”, 1954, no 19, p. 6; *Już 20 Kół i dwa Okręgi PSL*, „Gazeta Ludowa”, 1946, no 28, p. 4; *Utworzenie III Okręgu PSL*, „Gazeta Ludowa”, 1947, no 5, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> MHPRL, 13377, Książka protokołów Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego we Francji, Protokół z pierwszego Kongresu Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego we Francji, pp. 2-4.

Władysław Kądziołka and the following members: Wosiek, Franciszek Kowalik, Edmund Smoliński and Józef Forzyś<sup>16</sup>.

The main issues discussed were the question of the eastern border of Poland - demands were made for Vilnius and Lviv to be returned to Poland, as well as for investigation of the murder of Polish officers in the Katyn forest. In the resolution, the Congress condemned the communist terror, gave a tribute to the murdered compatriots in Poland, demanded releasing of the lawlessly arrested members and activists of the PSL, granting to Poland of the so-called Recovered Territories<sup>17</sup> and establishing of the western border of the state along the line of Oder and Lusatian Neisse rivers<sup>18</sup>.

Conducting of the first Congress of the PSL in France, election of the central authorities, consisting of the Executive Board, the Audit Committee and the Court of Honour can be interpreted as the constitution of the PSL in France. It must be admitted, though, that the process was not fully completed. There were no statutes of the PSL in France, which was due to the fact that the peasant activists in France considered their own organisation to be a part of the PSL in Poland, and they operated on the basis of the programme and statutes passed during the PSL Congress in Warsaw in January of 1946.

The following Congresses of the PSL in France were also held in Paris: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 20-21<sup>st</sup> November 1948, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 24-25<sup>th</sup> February 1952, 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> March 1955, 5<sup>th</sup> – 19-20<sup>th</sup> October 1957, 6<sup>th</sup> – 1959, 7<sup>th</sup> – 17-18<sup>th</sup> June 1961, 8<sup>th</sup> – 12-13<sup>th</sup> October 1963, 9<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> November 1965, 10<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> April 1968, 11<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May 1972. The subsequent Chairmen of the Executive Board of the PSL in France were: Władysław Krawczyk 1947-1948, Jan Kulpiński 1948 - 1960, Mieczysław Wiesztort from 1961<sup>19</sup>.

### Development of the organisation

It is estimated that more than 80 local clubs, grouped in twelve districts, were established in France. However, we do not know the estab-

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> This term referred to all lands between the western border of Poland of year 1939 and the line of Oder and Lusatian Neisse rivers and part of East Prussia.

<sup>18</sup> *Na pierwszym Kongresie PSL we Francji*, „Jutro Polski”, 1947, no 10, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Kongres PSL we Francji i jego uchwały*, „Narodowiec”, 1948, no 280, pp. 1, 3; *Kongres PSL we Francji*, „Jutro Polski”, 1952, no 5, pp. 1, 2, 6; *Czwarty Kongres PSL we Francji*, „Jutro Polski”, 1955, no 7, p. 1; *Przebieg Kongresu*, „Jutro Polski”, 1957, no 17, p. 2; MHPRL, AN-9179, Okólnik PSL we Francji, Paryż, 8 X 1959; *VII Kongres PSL we Francji*, „Jutro Polski”, 1961, no 14, p. 2; *VIII Walny Zjazd PSL we Francji*, „Jutro Polski”, 1963, no 18/19, p. 5; *IX Kongres PSL we Francji*, „Jutro Polski”, 1965, no 19, p. 1; MHPRL, 13317, Okólnik PSL we Francji, Paryż, X 1972, p. 1.

lishment dates or names of all local clubs, as well as the dates of their liquidation. Table 1 presents the list of the PSL local clubs established in subsequent years.

**Table 1. Establishment of the PSL local clubs in France in subsequent years**

Year	Cities/ towns, in which the PSL clubs were established in France	The number of local clubs established
1946	Achiet le Grand, Troyes, Marles-les-Mines, Argenteuil, Sens, Pouzay, Tonneins, St. Gilles, La Machine, Marais Saint Etienne, Macou Conde, Villeneuve, Gautherets, La Saule, La Fosse, Agen, Bouteilles, Bruay-en-Artois, Lille, Fauvernay, Onnaing, Tours, Meaux,	23
1947	Barlin, Ciry-le-Noble, Lyon, Laventie, Paris, Sainte Margueritte, Ligueil, Chauvigny, Ardentes, Arras	10
1948	Amiens, Denain	2
1949	Billy-Montigny, Escaudin, Moyoeuvre-Grande, La-Ricamarie, Roubaix, Rouvroy, Saint Denis, Sallaumines, Thionville, Baudras-Essarts, Wingles, Blanc-Mesnil, Poncay sur Vienne, La Croix Bianche, Conde-Hacon, St. Gille, Vendin le Vieil	17
1950	Le Grand Prosigny, Captieux, Charmes, Le Magny, Les Ancizes, Mouzon, Sedan, Soissons, Blanc-Mesnil	9
1951	Les Mureaux, Sartrouville	2
1952	Le Creusot, Longwy-Longuyon, Aulnay s/Bois, Lagny-le-Sec, Hayange, Triel	6
1953	Montjoie, Drancy	2
1954	Toulouse	1
1955	L'Isle-Jourdain Gers, Villefranche-Lauragais, Firminy, Avilly St. Leonard, Mazingarbe, Fraisses	6
1956	Dyon	1
1957	Villefranche	1
1961	Dammarié-les-Lys	1
	Total	81

Source: own work on the basis of archived materials gathered and information published in newspapers: "Gazeta Ludowa", "Narodowiec" and "Jutro Polski".

It was possible to identify 81 local clubs. The table indicates that the most - 22 - were established in the first year of activity of the PSL in France. Later on, many clubs were established in year 1947 - 10, 1949 - 17, 1950 - 9. In the subsequent years, the number of clubs established was much smaller, there was a few or just one per year. As new clubs emerged, districts were established (as illustrated by table 2).

**Table 2 Establishment of the PSL districts in France**

District no.	District name	Date of establishment	Clubs belonging to the district
I	Pas-de-Calais	25 <sup>th</sup> Aug. 1946	Marles-les-Mines, Achiét-le-Grand, Bruay-en-Artois
II	Nord (later Lille)	12 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 1947	Departments: Nord, Aisne and Ardennes
III	Paris	18 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 1949	Paris, Saint Denis, Blanc Mesnil,
IV	Troyes	26-27 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 1946	Troyes, Saint Giles, Sens
V	Montceau-les-Mines	6 <sup>th</sup> July 1947	Gautherets, La Saule, St. Etienne, St. Marguerite, Le Creusot
VI	Tours	6 <sup>th</sup> June 1948	Tours, Chauvigny, Pouzay, Le Grand Presygnny
VII	Agen	No data available	Agen
VIII	Valencienes Nord	No data available	Denain, Escoudin, Macou-Conde, Onnaing
IX	No data available	No data available	No data available
X	No data available	30 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1952	Thionville, Longwy-Longuyon, Moyeuve Grande, Hayange, Estrange
XI	Toulouse	No data available	No data available
XII	St. Etienne	Dec. 1955	St. Etienne, Lyon, Ricamarie and Firminy, Dyon

Source: own work on the basis of: *Z naszej gromady. Utworzenie Okręgu I-go PSL*, "Gazeta Ludowa", 1946, no 19, p. 6; *Utworzenie III Okręgu PSL*, "Gazeta Ludowa", 1946, no 26, p. 5; *Utworzenie III Okręgu PSL*, "Gazeta Ludowa" 1947, no 5, p. 8; MHPRL, 8418, Book of minutes of meetings of the Executive Board of the 5<sup>th</sup> District of the PSL in France Montceau-les-Mines, Minutes of the meeting of the 5<sup>th</sup> District of the PSL Montceau-les-Mines in France of 6.07.1947; *Powstanie 6-go Okr. Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego w Tours*, "Narodowiec", 1948, no 144, p. 4; *Z życia PSL we Francji*, "Jutro Polski", 1952, no 22/23, p. 7; *Z kroniki PSL we Francji*, „Jutro Polski”, 1956, no 2, p. 3.

Internal composition of the district boards changed as new local clubs emerged, and as the clubs shifted between districts. This, however, is not the most important aspect of the history of the PSL in France.

Development of the organisation in France can be referred to as impressive. Such was the opinion of Kajetan Morawski, a member of the so-called bloc of the President of the Republic of Poland in Exile, one of the opponents of Stanisław Mikołajczyk. Morawski was impressed by the ability of the peasant activists to organise big events, such as congresses and meetings, attended by several hundred to more than a thou-



sand people. He believed no other Polish political party in France was able to achieve this much. According to Morawski, the reason behind these successes was the fact that the PSL in France had at its disposal the funds for organisational works, its own daily newspaper, and Stanisław Mikołajczyk was very popular among emigrants of peasant origin - particularly those, who came to France from Westphalia<sup>20</sup>. Let us keep in mind that Stanisław Mikołajczyk was born in Westphalia, his father was a miner at one of the mines in Hern, which was where young Mikołajczyk spent the first years of his life. Therefore, he was considered by the old emigration to be "one of them". Moreover, he was one of the most recognised Polish politicians during the war and post-war times.

Organisational successes in years 1947-1952 were possible mainly thanks to dedication of the PSL activists. Those acting in the field complained about shortages of training and educational materials, which would allow them to develop their work. In response, the "Biuletyn Informacyjny Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego we Francji" ("Informational Bulletin of the Polish People's Party in France") started to publish such materials in form of an organisational guide, and to organise political and organisational training courses in the field. The organisational guide described in detail the administrative tasks to be dealt with by each local club, the rules of organisation of club meetings, maintaining books of minutes or accounting books<sup>21</sup>. The training courses were dedicated to key information on history of Poland, situation of emigrants, conflicts between them and the current situation in the People's Republic of Poland. These activities contributed most to the success of the organisation.

Slowing down of development of the PSL clubs in France coincided in time with loss of the party's own periodical - "Biuletyn Informacyjny". "Biuletyn" was published in years 1949-1952, and apart from the organisational guide, mentioned above, it contained political articles; however, the greatest part of the content consisted of news from the field. In this periodical, the peasant activists could proudly present their achievements. This mobilised them to put even greater effort in social work. In fact, activity of political parties in exile consisted of social and charity work. Most of the PSL members were blue collar workers in

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<sup>20</sup> Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu (after: the BPP), Collection of Kajetan Dzierżykraj Morawski (after: KKDM), temp. file no. 6, Reports of Kajetan Morawski (after: RKM), Note of Kajetan Morawski, Paris, 27 II 1952; Ibidem, Report of Kajetan Morawski, Paris, 21 III 1955.

<sup>21</sup> A. Indraszczyk, *Biuletyn Informacyjny Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego we Francji w latach 1949-1952*, „Rocznik Historyczny Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego” (after: RHMHPRL), 2006, no 22, pp. 138-139.

mines, industrial plants and farming. Few of them represented the so-called intelligentsia<sup>22</sup>.

Only a few persons worked at the secretariat of the PSL, and they did not always receive a remuneration. The PSL members had regular jobs; after work, they dedicated their free time to activity in the party, as well as other organisations of the Polish community in France.

### **Organisational, social and political activity**

The main objective of activity of the PSL in France was to struggle for freeing the homeland from the communist rule. The second objective was to gather as many supporters as possible, to prevent them from being taken over by other political blocs, established by emigrant Poles. The PSL in France, like any other emigrant organisations, aimed at maintaining patriotic attitudes, ties with Poland and Polish identity among the Polish community.

In terms of struggle for freeing Poland from communists and dependence from the USSR, the PSL in France could do very little. In fact, its activity was limited to propagating these objectives in the Polish and French periodicals, on the French radio (only sporadically), and to organisation of political manifestations. These actions were undertaken mainly by the PSL leaders: Stanisław Mikołajczyk and Stanisław Kot. They met with the French Parliament members, representatives of the state administrations, and presented their demands. The peasant activists were thankful to General De Gaulle for his recognition of the Polish borders on Oder and Lusatian Neisse rivers, which they underlined very often in their speeches and publications. In fact, however, the “big politics” was left to the management of the PSL and the International Peasants’ Union, to which the PSL belonged. Together with other representatives of emigrant parties from states behind the Iron Curtain, they appeared in influential circles to remind the decision-makers of the fate of nations of Central Europe and demand their help<sup>23</sup>. The local clubs and districts of the PSL in France limited themselves to passing political resolutions and announcing them in the press: “Narodowiec” and “Jutro Polski”. The PSL in France rarely organised political manifestations. In fact, these only accompanied

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<sup>22</sup> *Sprawozdanie z działalności Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego we Francji w okresie od dnia 1 stycznia 1952 r. do dnia 30 kwietnia 1953 r.* – oprac. A. Indraszczyk, „Roczniki Dziejów Ruchu Ludowego”, p. 2004, no 33, p. 463.

<sup>23</sup> A. Indraszczyk, *L’«Internationale verte» et ses visionnaires d’une Europe unie*, in: *Les exiles polonais en France et la reorganisation pacifique de l’Europe (1940-1989)*, [w:] red. A. Mares, W. Prazuch, I. Kawka, Peter Lang Edition 2017, pp. 47-49, 51-57.

the congresses and big district meetings. They were limited to marching around the city or town, in which the congress (Paris) or the district meeting was held. A more serious manifestation was planned in association with the planned visit of Nikita Khrushchev in France in 1960.

It was decided that these actions should be coordinated by the Executive Board. It was also agreed that the action should be clearly anti-communist, but without offending Khrushchev personally, as he was the guest of France<sup>24</sup>. Professor Stanisław Kot prepared a memorandum to the French government, in which he explained the need for such anti-Soviet demonstrations in the period of Khrushchev's stay in France. Kot pointed to the fact that Khrushchev could be blamed for deportation of about 1.5 million Poles from territories occupied by the USSR, as well as disappearance of 21 thousand Polish officers in Katyn and in the vicinity of Kharkiv. Moreover, Kot referred to the fact that the British authorities had allowed for and supported organisation of similar demonstrations during Khrushchev's visit to Great Britain. Professor Kot also did his best to make sure Stanisław Mikołajczyk would be a guest during the congress of the French. The professor engaged in talks with cardinal Feltin as well, to persuade him to hold masses in churches of Paris for those murdered in Katyn on the day of Khrushchev's arrival<sup>25</sup>. The secretary of the Executive Board, Leon Urbaniak, informed the PSL members that the authorities of the PSL in France made inquiries at prefectural police stations and ministries to find out whether anti-communist actions could be held during Khrushchev's visit. Initially, these were received with sympathy and interest on the part of the French authorities; nevertheless, finally, they prohibited any action against Khrushchev, the USSR etc.<sup>26</sup>

The PSL decided not to do anything that could exert negative impact on de Gaulle's situation. It was explained as follows: "Khrushchev is coming to France on the invitation of the French authorities, which are the host in this country and have shown us their hospitality. Therefore, the Executive Board recommends to all Members of the PSL in France to withdraw from any manifestations to avoid complicating the situation

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<sup>24</sup> Zapis rozmowy wicedyrektora Departamentu III MSW płk. Stanisława Filipiaka i naczelnika Wydziału II Departamentu MSW kpt. Adama Malika z agentem ps. „Rolland” w dniu 18 listopada 1959 r. na temat jego rozmów z Karolem Popielem i Franciszkiem Wilkiem, Warszawa, 18 XI 1959, [in:] *Stanisław Mikołajczyk w...*, vol. 3..., pp. 195-196.

<sup>25</sup> Fragment notatki wytworzonej w Departamencie I MSW dotyczącej działań Stanisława Kota i Stanisława Mikołajczyka związanych z planowaną wizytą Nikity Chruszczowa we Francji, Warszawa, II 1960, [in:] *Stanisław Mikołajczyk w...*, vol. 3..., pp. 269-270.

<sup>26</sup> MHPRL, AN-9350/1, List Leona Urbaniaka do ludowców z Le Creusot, Paryż, 13 III 1960.

of the French authorities. We thus underline that if we recommend our Members and Supporters to withdraw from any public manifestations against Khrushchev, it is not because we are afraid of him or want to capitulate to him, but only to avoid causing any difficulties for the Hosts of this country and to prevent any negative consequences for our Party, as well as its individual Members". At the same time, the Executive Board of the PSL informed that the authorities of the PSL, together with other parties of the PNKD, would submit an appropriate note with demands of the Polish nation to the President of France<sup>27</sup>. Political notes could be submitted, yet, undoubtedly, they lost their distinctiveness and force without the mass support, which could be shown by the mass media.

It is also possible that the real reason for withdrawal of the PSL from action during the visit of the Khrushchev was the fact that the French authorities started to pacify the immigrants from Central Europe. A broad action was conducted, in which emigrants from countries of Central Europe, residing in France, were detained and sent to Corsica, as well as R e and Belle- le-en-Mer islands in Brittany; they also cancelled the permits to enter France, issued before 1<sup>st</sup> March 1960. In total, more than 800 activists, leaders of political parties and emigrant organisations, as well as more active members, were interned<sup>28</sup>.

In the PSL in France, those deported included the Vice Chairman of the Executive Board, Adam Bitoński (he ended up in Switzerland, as he got a permit to go there), and boards of local clubs in southern France: the PSL club in St. Etienne (chairman Antoni Grzegolc, secretary Orzeł and treasurer Szatan), the PSL club in La Ricamarie (chairman Grątkiewicz), the PSL club in Firminy (chairman Stanisław Bartnik, who was also a secretary of the District Board of the PSL in St. Etienne)<sup>29</sup>. Some other activists of the PSL had to report several times a day at the police station, including Leon Urbaniak - Secretary of the Executive Board of the PSL<sup>30</sup>, and Janusz Borowczak. According to Borowczak, the authorities did not aim at the Chairman of the PSL, Jan Kulpiński, or anyone in the northern regions of France - the mining areas<sup>31</sup>. It can be concluded

<sup>27</sup> ZHRL, Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe na Uchodźstwie (after: PSLU), 116, Działalność ZG PSL we Francji, Okólnik, Paryż, 2 III 1960, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Chruszczow boi się uchodźców*, „Jutro Polski”, 1960, no 3, p. 1; Dobosz, *Z dziejów „odprężenia”*. *Korespondencja z Paryża*, „Gazeta Polska”, 1997, no 1, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> *Oblędny strach cara Nikity*, „Jutro Polski”, 1960, no 4, p. 1; MHPRL, 13516, List Antoniego Grzegolca do Leona Urbaniaka, Saint Etienne, Francja, 11 IV 1960.

<sup>30</sup> MHPRL, AN-9350/1, List Leona Urbaniaka do ludowców z Le Creusot, Paryż, 13 III 1960.

<sup>31</sup> Zapis rozmowy agenta ps. „Waldemar” naczelnikiem Wydziału II Departamentu III MSW kpt. Adamem Malikiem w dniu 6 kwietnia 1960 r. na temat rozmów agenta

from Borowczak's words that the authorities could be afraid of resistance put up by miners. According to Leon Urbaniak, the internment order included professor S. Kot, who was staying in England at the time<sup>32</sup>. The French action resulted in public outrage among the emigration from countries behind the Iron Curtain, as well as many residents of France.

Khrushchev's visit to France acted as a spur to further activity of the PSL local clubs, which, nevertheless, showed great circumspection after the internment action. Numerous resolutions were passed during the annual and special meetings, demanding overthrowing of communism, recognition of borders along Oder and Lusatian Neisse rivers and respect for those fighting for truth and freedom<sup>33</sup>.

It should also be mentioned that the internment action during Khrushchev's visit in France was successful in intimidating some of the peasant activists. When a visit of the Prime Minister of the Polish government, Józef Cyrankiewicz, was planned for September of 1965, during the meeting of the 5<sup>th</sup> District of Montceau-les-Mines in August of 1965, when the potential protest activities were discussed, Józef Ryśny, the secretary of the 5<sup>th</sup> District, maintained that opponents of the Soviet Union were interned during Khrushchev's visit upon his wish. "We cannot risk this", he said. "The authorities could get cross with us and prohibit any activity and close the PSL completely, as it has happened with other political organisations"<sup>34</sup>.

The key activity of the PSL in France was focused on the second and third objective. The cycle of work of the PSL clubs in France was marked by general meetings, held every year, as well as folk festivals, national and religious holidays, anniversaries of the people's movement (mainly birth and death dates of the key leaders), national anniversaries. General meetings were usually held at the beginning or at the end of the year and they were associated with election of the club's new authorities. Other organisational meetings were held as necessary. They were organised before various events and undertakings planned by the clubs. A perfect plan of annual activity of a PSL club would be as follows:

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z Franciszkiem Wilkiem, Januszem Borowczakiem i Stanisławem Kotem, Warszawa, 6 IV 1960, [in:] *Stanisław Mikotajczyk w...*, vol. 3..., pp. 333-334.

<sup>32</sup> MHPRL, AN-9350/1, List Leona Urbaniaka do ludowców z Le Creusot, Paryż, 13 III 1960.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. *Kronika PSL we Francji*, "Jutro Polski", 1960, no 8, p. 3; *Z kroniki PSL we Francji*, "Jutro Polski", 1960, no 11, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> MHPRL, 8419, Księga protokołów V Okręgu PSL we Francji Montceau-les-Mines, p. 66.

- January - general meeting of the club and election of the new authorities, as well as devising the plan for activity of the club in the following year;
- 21<sup>st</sup> January - birthday of Wincenty Witos - the leader of Polish peasants, considered legendary, a statesman, three times Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Poland, including the Government of National Defence in year 1920;
- 19<sup>th</sup> February - birthday of Maciej Rataj - one of the leaders of the people's movement, vice chairman of the People's Party, the Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland;
- March or April - Easter - important not only for religious reasons, but also for preservation of national traditions and customs, blessing of the Easter baskets, a shared Easter breakfast, enjoying time spent together;
- 4<sup>th</sup> April - anniversary of Tadeusz Kościuszko's victory in the battle of Raclawice, which was crucial from the perspective of peasant struggle for their rights in the state, proving in battle that they could also defend their homeland, and thus should have the same rights as the nobles;
- holidays of 1st and 3<sup>rd</sup> May - important due to national reasons, particularly the Constitution Day - 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, considered by the peasant activists to be the starting point of the struggle for a modern, democratic Poland and for awarding of citizen rights to peasants and townsmen in Poland;
- the Green Week - a folk holiday - the most important holiday for the peasant movement;
- 21<sup>st</sup> June - anniversary of death of Maciej Rataj, murdered in Palmiry;
- 4<sup>th</sup> July - anniversary of death of General Władysław Sikorski - important for the PSL due to cooperation between the peasant movement and General Władysław Sikorski, first of all, co-establishment of governments during the Second World War and cooperation of Stanisław Mikołajczyk with the Commander-in-Chief, as well as the fact that many of the PSL members in France were soldiers, to whom Sikorski was the legendary Prime Minister and commander;
- 15<sup>th</sup> August - Peasant Movement Holiday - remembrance of involvement of peasant activists and farmers in the Polish-Bolshevik war, mainly in the Battle of Warsaw of 1920, which combined the religious holiday of the Assumption of Mary and the nationwide celebration of the anniversary of the so-called "Miracle of the Vistula";

- 31<sup>st</sup> October - anniversary of death of Wincenty Witos;
- 1<sup>st</sup> November - All Saints Day - an important religious holiday, significant from the perspective of preservation of a national tradition;
- 11<sup>th</sup> November - Independence Day - significant due to political reasons, for preservation of the national tradition, as well as depicting of the role of peasant activists and farmers in the struggle for independence;
- 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> December - Christmas - important for the same reasons as other religious holidays, but also the merriest holiday in the Polish tradition;
- 31<sup>st</sup> December - New Year's Eve party;
- without a date - participation in organisational works of the district, organisational and political training courses, organisation of political and social actions (e.g. charity collections for expatriates returning to Poland from the USSR), participation in the life of the Polish community.

On 13<sup>th</sup> December 1966, another sad anniversary was added to this calendar - it was the day of death of Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the Chairman of the PSL. The calendar also included trips, celebrations associated with activity of the club - such as anniversaries of its establishment, name days or birthdays of the most prominent members, occasional parties and banquets. Apart from the listed peasant and national leaders, other important Polish personalities were given tribute as well, such as Ignacy Jan Paderewski<sup>35</sup>.

All of the holidays and events, listed above, could be organised and celebrated by the PSL members in France independently, only among themselves. Such was the case of their statutory and organisational activity: general conventions, club meetings, participation in district meetings, as well as organisational and political training courses. On the other hand, folk holidays were celebrated openly, involving the friendly agrarian parties from the International Peasant Union, Polish parties of the PNKD or the Polish community. A similar approach was taken towards religious and national holidays. Sometimes they were celebrated only by the club members, but usually in cooperation with other Polish organisations. These holidays and anniversaries were supposed to unite the Poles and remind them that successes were achieved together and not on terms of constant political rivalry. Therefore, celebration dates were often moved to allow for their joint organisation at a time, which would be convenient for the entire Polish community.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ku czci ś.p. Ignacego Paderewskiego*, BIPSL, 1951, no. 6-7-8, p. 21; *10-ta rocznica śmierci ś.p. I.J. Paderewskiego*, BIPSL, 1951, no. 5, p. 15.

For instance, in 1950, the 3<sup>rd</sup> May Constitution Day in St. Denis was celebrated on 21<sup>st</sup> May under the banner of unity - it was a joint celebration of the local Polish group<sup>36</sup>. On the other hand, the PSL club in Denain organised the celebration on 14<sup>th</sup> May, also in cooperation with other Polish organisations except for the President's legalists and communists<sup>37</sup>. In 1953, the PSL club in Onnaing celebrated both the Independence Day and the anniversary of the November Uprising on 6<sup>th</sup> December, with many guests representing Polish organisations in France<sup>38</sup>. These changes were typical not only for the PSL, but for the entire Polish community and - in the broader sense - the entire emigration<sup>39</sup>.

In about forty years of PSL activity in France, intensity of work of individual clubs varied. Only a few got close to completing the entire "calendar" of activity, quoted above. Those, which did, were only able to do it in the period of the most intensive activity of the PSL in France, from the late 1940s until the second half of the 1950s. In the subsequent years, intensity of work of the local clubs gradually decreased.

Only one report on activity of the PSL in France has been preserved, in which activities of the local clubs are listed in detail. The report encompasses the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1952 until 30<sup>th</sup> April 1953 and it was prepared on the basis of questionnaires, returned by 33 out of 82 existing clubs. Even this fact proves that activity in the field varied. All of the 33 clubs organised the statutory required general meetings, elections of authorities and organisational meetings in the reporting period. However, only 7 organised public meetings, attended by non-members. All of the clubs organised the national holiday, the folk holiday and Christmas. Nevertheless, only 15 organised commemorations, celebrations or trips<sup>40</sup>. This much can be said about the 49% of clubs, which returned the questionnaires. How about the remaining 49 clubs? Were they entirely inactive, or did they just fail to send their reports? Still, the result of those very active 15 clubs in France was very good in the light of activity of political organisations of the Polish community abroad.

Apart from the report mentioned, many reports of individual clubs have been preserved, including their books of minutes and activity, which enables an analysis of their activity over the long term. This can be illustrated by the example of selected clubs. Table 3 presents the activity of the PSL Club in Troyes.

<sup>36</sup> *St-Denis*, BIPSL, 1950, no. 6, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> *Denain*, BIPSL, 1950, no. 6, p. 15.

<sup>38</sup> *Z kroniki PSL we Francji*, "Jutro Polski", 1954, no 2, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> This trend was mentioned by Kajetan Morawski, BPP, KKDM, RKM, Report of Kajetan Morawski to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paris, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1954.

<sup>40</sup> *Sprawozdanie z działalności...*, pp. 449, 454-457.



**Table 3. Activity of the PSL Club in Troyes in years 1950-1973**

Activity name	1950	1951	1952	1953	1955	1956	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
General meeting	1	1			1	1		1	1	1	1
Meeting of delegates	5		7		5		6	6	6	2?	6
Extraordinary meeting					1			2			
Meeting of the Executive Board	8		5	2	4		8	5	4		5
Folk holiday			1		1		1	1	1		1
Conferences					1		1				
Banquets, parties, balls	1				1		3	1	1		
Religious celebrations and customs	2		2		6		6	6	5		4
Polish celebrations, commemorations etc.	8		2		3		1	1	5		3
Trips			1					1	2		
Charity collections									6		
Activity name	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
General meeting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Meeting of delegates	2?	3? 6??	6	6	4	4	5	5	5	5	4
Extraordinary meeting			1	1					10	9	
Meeting of the Executive Board		4	5	3	5	9	12	15			10
Folk holiday	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	1
Conferences											
Banquets, parties, balls			2	2	2	2	4	3	1	1	2
Religious celebrations and customs	4		4	4	4	4	4	3	2	2	3
Polish celebrations, commemorations etc.	2		4	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	3
Trips								1			
Charity collections									1	1	1

Source: own work on the basis of: MHPRL, 16376, Report on activity of the PSL Club in Troyes in France, 3 June 1953 r.; *ibidem*, AN-10917, Report of the PSL Club in Troyes, 1954; *ibidem*, AN-8220/2 Report of the Executive Board of the PSL Club in Troyes on the General Meeting for year 1955; *ibidem*, 13381, Book of minutes of the PSL Club in Troyes, 1960-1971; *ibidem*, 13380, Book of minutes of the PSL Club in Troyes, 1972-1974.

The PSL Club in Troyes is an example of a club operating independently. The table shows that it was doing quite well. This was not the case everywhere. Individual clubs sometimes found it difficult to follow the “calendar”; therefore, they often combined their efforts - events were organised by two or more clubs in the same district. An example here can be the 5<sup>th</sup> District of the PSL in France in Montceau-

les-Mines. In this district, most celebrations were held in the 1950s. Various anniversaries and holidays were organised by individual clubs, designated by the Executive Board of the District. Over time, the clubs specialised in various celebrations. For instance, the club in Le Creusot organised the Peasant Holiday every year, not only for the district, but also on the national scale; it also took care of commemoration of the anniversary of death of General Władysław Sikorski. The club in St. Etienne specialised in celebrations on the anniversary of death of Wincenty Witos. The club in Gautherets organised annual trips around France, to Polish cemeteries, monuments and places of cult of saints<sup>41</sup>. Of course, this does not mean these clubs only organised or participated in the events listed.

One of the examples here can be one of the most active PSL clubs in France, the one in Le Creusot. It was organised in 1952, and as early as in 1953, together with the club in Montchanin, it commemorated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of death of General Władysław Sikorski. In 1954, this club, together with other organisations associated in the Committee of Local Associations (Komitet Towarzystw Miejskowych - KTM)<sup>42</sup> co-organised the following events: 3<sup>rd</sup> May on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1954, Green Week at the PSL Club in Lyon – 7<sup>th</sup> June, 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the PCE – 25<sup>th</sup> July, 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club of Reservists and Former Military Men – 11<sup>th</sup> July, participation in blessing of the Monument of the Deceased Compatriots of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division in Normandy – 15<sup>th</sup> August, 32<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mutual Aid Society – 29<sup>th</sup> August, 28<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Rosary Mothers – 24<sup>th</sup> October, the holiday of 11<sup>th</sup> November. The Club was the main organiser of the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of death of General W. Sikorski on 13<sup>th</sup> June, dancing parties on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> June, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> October. The Club also organised five film screenings for children in February, March and April of 1954.<sup>43</sup>

In 1959, the Club held 9 organisational meetings, participated in 2 meetings of the KTM and 2 meetings of the 5<sup>th</sup> District of the PSL, to which it belonged. On 12-13<sup>th</sup> April, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 18<sup>th</sup> June, it organised a screening of Polish films; on 18<sup>th</sup> April, the chairman of the Club participated in the welcome ceremony for the President of France, Charles de Gaulle, at the city mayor's office; on 24<sup>th</sup> May, the Club celebrated

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<sup>41</sup> See A. Indraszczyk, *V Okręg PSL we Francji Montceau-les-mines. Zarys historii okręgu w latach 1947-1974*, RHMHPRL, 2002, no 18, p. 85.

<sup>42</sup> Committee of Local Associations - an association that brought together Polish organisations in the same city or town or a smaller region. The aim of the KTM was to coordinate joint activities.

<sup>43</sup> MHPRL, 15543, Książka działalności Koła PSL w Le Creusot, Rok 1954, pp. 6-7.

the Folk Holiday under the banner of Polish-French friendship; on 5<sup>th</sup> July, a resolution was passed to provide the amount of 20 thousand francs for the KTM for construction of a meeting room; on 13<sup>th</sup> September, the Club passed a political resolution, expressing support for the Confederation of Fighters for Freedom of Poland in the USA, recognition for the French authorities for the reforms conducted and friendship for Poland, making a tribute to those killed in Algeria and expressing thanks to France for recognition of the border of Poland along the Oder and Neisse rivers, calling upon the government of the Federal Republic of Germany to stop its anti-Polish activity and to recognise the western borders of Poland, warning the western superpowers to beware of the hypocritical policy of the Soviet Union, demanding freedom of press in their homeland, freedom of the Church and religion lessons in schools, demanding withdrawal of Soviet army and agents from Poland and countries behind the Iron Curtain, expressing its trust in the authorities of the PSL; the Club ordered two holy Masses - on 24<sup>th</sup> May for the fallen compatriots and on 11<sup>th</sup> November for Wincenty Witos; between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> October, the Executive Board of the Club participated in the Congress of the PSL in France and in the World Congress of the PSL. Moreover, members of the Club actively participated in organisation of the following: a Holy Mass for J. Czekalski in Le Saule, 3<sup>rd</sup> May in Montceau-les-Mines, between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May, the standard bearers participated in the pilgrimage to Paray – 7<sup>th</sup> June, in the 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Mutual Aid Society – 28<sup>th</sup> June, 11<sup>th</sup> November – 15<sup>th</sup> November, Christmas party for children – 10<sup>th</sup> January 1960<sup>44</sup>.

In 1961, the Club conducted several organisational meetings, participated in meetings of the KTM, as well as in celebrations organised by other entities: on 3<sup>rd</sup> May in Montceau-les-Mines, and on 11<sup>th</sup> June - in the pilgrimage to Pary-le Monial. The Club organised no events or celebrations due to various reasons, including lack of proper facilities. The Club sent two parcels of 10 kg each with clothing to Poland as aid to flood victims<sup>45</sup>.

Thus, activity of the PSL clubs in France varied. The intensity of work depended on many factors. A key role among these was played by the members themselves, their commitment and determination. A lot depended also on financial abilities. Starting from the 1960, another key factor was the physical fitness of the members, as the clubs entered the period of ageing.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, Rok 1959, pp. 21-23.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, Rok 1961, p. 27.

In the 1970s, their activity started to diminish. At the beginning of the decade, some revival was brought by the conflict concerning the direction of action of the PSL between the Chairman, Franciszek Wilk, and other members of the top authorities - the chairman of the Chief Council Stanisław Bańczyk, the deputy chairman of the NKW Józef Rzemieniewski, treasurer of the NKW Anna Chorążyna. The problem concerned the possibility of cooperation between the PSL and the remaining historic parties (PPS, SN, SD, others), as well as the "Castle", which was supported strongly by Wilk and opposed by his adversaries. Until 1975, there was an ongoing debate on who is right, and the field members did their bets to remain neutral. In 1972, during the meeting of the PSL, two groups emerged, but until 1975 - that is, until the World Congress, awaited since 1972, it was hoped that the conflict could be solved, and the disputable issues would be solved by the Congress. It was not possible, though, to convene a single congress. Both fractions of the PSL convened their own congresses.

Later on, as it can be concluded from letters of peasant activists in France, the activity diminished almost completely. The French activists were old, retired, and their economic situation was usually very poor. They were only able to keep publishing the general bulletin of the entire PSL, known as "Wieści". It was edited in Brussels by Anna Chorążyna, while the peasant activists around the world contributed to its publication<sup>46</sup>. Janusz Borowczak wrote to Chorążyna: "if the *Wieści* ceased to be published, it would be the end of us"<sup>47</sup>. He was referring to the entire PSL, including its French part. The co-founder of the PSL in France, Marcei Stachulec, was very sceptical about the organisation. He wrote to Chorążyna that it would be very difficult to mount the commemorative board of Wincenty Witos and Stanisław Mikołajczyk in Montmarcy, as it was not possible to gather the necessary funds. He wrote about the peasant activists in France: "It is a failure, people are no longer interested in social and political life - one old activist has told me, leave this, we won't be able to do anything anyway, so, how am I even supposed to speak to people like this"<sup>48</sup>. Nevertheless, the most idealistic members remained active, although they limited themselves to sporadic meetings during national and religious holidays.

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<sup>46</sup> A. Indraszczyk, „*Wieści*” (1977–1983) — *pismo europejskich struktur Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego na Uchodźstwie — grupy brukselsko-waszyngtońskiej*, „*Rocznik Historii Prasy Polskiej*”, 2016, Vol 19 no 4, pp. 104-126.

<sup>47</sup> MHPRL, 6426, Letter of Janusz Borowczak to Anna Chorążyna, Argenteuil, 14 V 1978.

<sup>48</sup> MHPRL, 6435, Letter of Marcei Stachulec to Anna Chorążyna, Courtivron, 23 VIII 1978.

## **Activity of secret service of People's Republic of Poland against the PSL in France**

Part of the history of the PSL in France was also the activities against it carried out by the security services of the Polish People's Republic. This issue has already been described<sup>49</sup>, so here it will only be mentioned. The main goal of the services was to sabotage the activities of the PSL and disintegrate the party. This was to be achieved by the following methods:

- disinformation aimed at the PSL members through activists from Poland cooperating with the services;
- exacerbating of personal conflicts between the PSL members through dissemination of false information, delivered via mail or orally by peasant activists cooperating with the services;
- exacerbating of conflicts between the PSL and other Polish organisations abroad through false information;
- supporting of various groups of peasant activists, critical towards Mikołajczyk, in their activity against him - for instance, by supporting their press publications (bulletins);
- organising of a competitive organisation, consisting of peasant activists formerly removed from the PSL of Mikołajczyk or displaying negative attitudes towards him;
- hindering of work of the national and district authorities and local clubs of the PSL through activity of agents and collaborators - members of these authorities;
- counteracting reconciliatory actions between peasant activists by suggesting that such actions were not supported by the local clubs or by activists in Poland;
- writing letters abroad by families, groups, persons to persuade the peasant activists to return to Poland;
- selection of family members and close co-workers of emigration activists, who could be sent abroad with artistic groups, sports people, scientists, and who could be used to persuade them to return to the country;
- gathering of compromising materials to be used to discredit the peasant activists in the eyes of the general public in the country and abroad;
- development of the network of agents and investigations involving other peasant activists.

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<sup>49</sup> A. Indraszczyk, *Activity of Security Service of the People's Republic of Poland against the Polish Peasant Party in France in years 1948-1966*, "Studia Polonijne", 2021, vol. 42, pp. 209-236.

These methods have been listed on the basis of analysis of numerous operating plans and reports, published in the source-based publication, mentioned above<sup>50</sup>.

The secret services of the People's Republic of Poland managed to recruit important PSL activists in France: Marian Pompa, Stefan Puchala, but the most important was an agent with the pseudonym "Beatrice", who turned out to be Adam Bitoński, an organizer of many circles of the party, vice-president of the PSL General Board in France. In the second half of the 1950s, he began intensive activities to disintegrate the PSL in France. He primarily tried to compromise PSL in France chairman Jan Kulpiński and secretary Leon Urbaniak. Bitoński's activities led to serious quarrels within the PSL in France, but in 1959, the Populists managed to discover that Bitoński was the author of many slanderous letters and forgeries. They conducted their own investigation and on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1960, the PSL NKW removed Bitoński from the PSL. At the time, the People's Party did not yet know that Bitoński was an agent of the Polish secret police<sup>51</sup>.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the services of the People's Republic of Poland set about organizing a rival party to Stanisław Mikołajczyk in exile<sup>52</sup>. Folkmen in disagreement with Mikołajczyk were used. These included Bolesław Sirko (PSL in England), Waldemar Sobczyk (PSL in Sweden), Jan Kukiela (PSL in Belgium), Antoni Dudek (PSL, member of the Supreme Council), Stefan Puchala (PSL in France). They began to think about forming a new party, but did not have the material means to do so. And here the secret services of the People's Republic of Poland rushed to their rescue, offering financing and taking control of the formation of the new organization. Some of the people's activists mentioned, such as Kukiela and Sobczak, were already agents of the PRL services at the time<sup>53</sup>. The organisation was to be established, among others, by Stefan Puchala - agent known as "Tracz", and it was supposed to receive support from "Nasz Znak", published in Sweden by

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<sup>50</sup> See: operational plans of the secret service against the PSL in exile form years 1955-1958 published in *Stanisław Mikołajczyk w dokumentach...*, vol. 2, 394-97, 453-57, 716 and vol. 3, 5-7, 85, 101-2, and other.

<sup>51</sup> ZHRL, PSLU, 122, Sąd Partyjny PSL we Francji, Zebranie Komisji badawczej dnia 2 X 1960 r. w lokalu PSL, Paryż, 2 X 1960, p. 1; *Ibidem*, 117, Odpis, Pismo ZG PSL we Francji do NKW, Paryż, 4 X 1960, p. 57; MHPRL, 6617, Okólnik PSL we Francji, Paryż, Listopad 1960.

<sup>52</sup> Plan Wydziału V Departamentu I MSW dotyczący zorganizowania stronnictwa „lewicy ludowo-robotniczej” na emigracji, 13 styczeń 1959 r., Warszawa [in:] *Stanisław Mikołajczyk w...*, vol. 3..., pp. 3-7.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

Waldemar Sobczyk, who at the time was already an agent using the pseudonym „Tur”<sup>54</sup>.

After the action of defamation of Mikołajczyk and his supporters, it was Adam Bitoński, who was supposed to finish the operation. He was supposed to organise a conference of activists, which would pass the proper resolutions to declare themselves as the authorities of the PSL<sup>55</sup>.

This happened on November 18-19<sup>th</sup> 1961, at the so-called "unification convention" in Brussels, where the authorities of the new PSL were elected. Zbigniew Zaremba was elected the chairman of the NKW, while Stanisław Wójcik became the head secretary. Adam Bitoński become the chairman of the European Council, and Jan Kukiela - the secretary of the Council. The new group condemned the activity of S. Mikołajczyk, peaceful coexistence of two political blocs, general disarmament. The declaration opted for strict cooperation between Poland and the USSR and emigration from the USSR, arguing it was necessary to counteract and safeguard Poland against German revisionism<sup>56</sup>.

Activity of the new PSL started to diminish quite quickly, which was associated with the fact that Adam Bitoński was arrested in January of 1963 and accused of spying for the PRL intelligence. Inevitably, the same accusations were made against other members of the new PSL, which must have hindered exerting influence on peasant activists in France, as well as in other parts of Europe.

In the subsequent years, interest of the secret services in the independence of emigration weakened. The communist authorities in Poland decided to forget about emigration and wipe it out of the collective memory of the society<sup>57</sup>. The political emigration was too conflicted internally to pose a real threat for the system in Poland. In the 1980s, on the other hand, the authorities and intelligence of PRL focused mainly on the “Solidarity” movement, perceiving it as the real threat<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> On sabotage within the peasant movement using Waldemar Sobczyk, see: K. Tarka, *Jest tylko jedna Polska? Emigranci w służbie PRL*, Łomianki 2014, pp. 315-395.

<sup>55</sup> Plan sporządzony przez Wydział V Departamentu I MSW dotyczący działań przeciwko emigracyjnemu PSL, Warszawa 8 wrzesień 1960, [in:] *Stanisław Mikołajczyk...*, vol. 3..., pp. 448-450.

<sup>56</sup> K. Tarka, *Jest tylko...*, p. 53-354; *Deklaracja zjednoczeniowa członków Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego znajdujących się na emigracji*, „Nasz Znak”, 1961, no. 11/12 (114/115), pp. 7-13.

<sup>57</sup> K. Tarka, *Jest tylko...*, p. 15.

<sup>58</sup> See P. Pleskot, *The Polish Intelligence Service and the Polish Diaspora*, [in:] *East Central Europe in Exile, Vol. 2 Transatlantic Identities*, red. A. Mazurkiewicz, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, pp. 311-325.

## The final stage and discontinuation of activity of the PSL in France

In the early 1970s, the dynamics of activity of the PSL in France was substantially weakened. While as many as even forty clubs existed on paper, in practice, there were only a few people with strong ideological ties to the Polish people's movement. Their activity was limited to celebrating several anniversaries per year, occasional meetings - usually accompanying anniversaries or national (Polish) holidays.

The last stage of activity of peasant activists abroad consisted of writing letters to the PSL authorities in Poland, as well as the Polish authorities. These were written by activists from several countries, who consulted the content between themselves. The initiators and editors of these letters were Janusz Borowczak, Marcelli Stachulec, Ludomir Dakowski (all of them from the PSL in France), and, to a lesser extent, Henryk Okólski (from the PSL in Belgium). The letter signatories included: in France: Stanisław Bartnik, Marian Blicharz, Jan Boroń, Janusz Borowczak, Krzysztof Borowczak, Mieczysław Chyliński, Bożena Dakowska, Ludomir Dakowski, Stefan Grądzik, Michał Kaleta, Jan Kieparada, Wiktor Kurek, Gracjan Markiewicz, Czesław Nawrocki, Adam Ragan, Bolesław Ragan, Janusz Różański, Marcelli Stachulec, Tomasz Szłozek, Józef Tutak, Antoni Tyczyński; in England: Władysław E. Szkoda; in Belgium: Zbigniew Bardo, Henryk Okólski; in the Netherlands: Marian Jamrozik; in Sweden: Janusz Zwoliński<sup>59</sup>.

The authors discussed very significant political, economic and social problems. While the peasant activists abroad supported Poland's aspirations in terms of accession to the European Union and believed it to be consistent with the reason of state, they appealed for common sense, care and patience in the accession negotiations. In terms of farming, they pointed out it was absolutely necessary to maintain the state interventionism, support for farmers, which was the foundation of the Common Agricultural Policy. They warned that uncritical acceptance of remarks and postulates of the European Union would lead to liquidation of most small farms, which would be replaced by a smaller number of stronger ones. They stated this would lead to depopulation of rural areas and their pauperisation.

They also focused very much on the overly tolerant approach towards Józef Piłsudski and his rule. They found it almost impossible to understand that anyone could present such approach towards a regime,

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<sup>59</sup> A. Indraszczyk, *Listy otwarte ludowców z emigracji do Polski z lat 1990-2007*, „Myśl Ludowa”, 2012, no. 4, pp. 133-183.



which was responsible for Poland's defeat in September of 1939. They refused to accept praise of people, who destroyed democracy in pre-war Poland, while development of democracy in Poland after year 1989 was not only one of the canons of the internal policy, but also the fundamental requirement of the European Union, to which Poland aspired.

An issue, which they found particularly controversial, was cooperation of Poland with Germany - "the so-called reconciliation", as they referred to it. They were very much concerned about reliability and honesty of Germans in their support for Poland on the way to the European Union. They warned Germans only showed such attitude, because it was the way to expansion to the Polish territory. First of all, through economic expansion after the opening of the Polish market to the European Union; secondly, through Poland's accession to the EU, a possibility would emerge for legal purchase of land by Germans, thus allowing them to return to their old lands. They feared this most of all. Warning against it, they argued that Germans, who until then had purchased land and real estate in the European Communities/European Union member states, mainly Alsace and Lorraine, but also the French Riviera and Spain, did not assimilate with the local population, but established separate national groups. Thus, they addressed the peasant party members, demanding that, while there was still time in the 1990s, Poland should solve its problems with ownership of land and real estate in the so-called Western Territories, recovered and taken over after year 1945. They also demanded modernisation of the law allowing for buyout of land by foreigners, in order to make it more difficult, and warned that in these transactions, foreigners (that is, Germans) could use fraud by finding Poles, who would purchase these lands in their name.

Simultaneously with the action of writing letters, the peasant activists abroad decided to submit the materials of the PSL in exile to the Museum of the Polish Peasant Movement in Warsaw<sup>60</sup>. The Museum today holds 3387 items (as of 28<sup>th</sup> October 2019) of materials developed by the PSL in France.

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<sup>60</sup> J. Czajkowski, „Spotkanie po latach”. *Sprawozdanie ze zjazdu przedstawicieli emigracji chłopskiej i ludowej*, RHMHPRL, 1995, no 9, p. 149.

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## **Działalność Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego we Francji – krótka monografia**

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule naszkicowano historię Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego (PSL) we Francji działającego w latach 1947-1990, które było częścią Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego na Uchodźstwie, kierowanego przez Stanisława Mikołajczyka. Partia ta należała do tzw. polskiej emigracji niepodległościowej, której celem było działanie na rzecz wyzwolenia Polski spod jarzma komunistycznego. PSL we Francji dynamicznie się rozwijało od końca lat 40. do początku lat 60. XX wieku. W kolejnych latach działalność coraz bardziej zamierała, likwidacji uległa znaczna część kół stronnictwa. Przyczyną zmniejszenia aktywności PSL było przede wszystkim starzenie się jego członków, brak napływu młodych osób do partii, brak środków finansowych na prowadzenie działalności. Do czasu odzyskania samodzielności i odrzucenia komunizmu w Polsce dotrwali tylko najwytrwalsi, ideowi działacze. Działacze ci, po odrodzeniu się niezależnego PSL w Polsce, uznali się za zagraniczną część PSL w kraju.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe we Francji, polska emigracja polityczna, Polonia we Francji, zimna wojna