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**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF BOGDAN HAMERA
AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS WORKS
IN THE SOCIALIST REALISM PERIOD (1911–1974)**

Słowa kluczowe: Bogdan Hamera, socrealizm, historia literatury, powieść produkcyjna, cenzura

Keywords: Bogdan Hamera, socialist realism, history of literature, production novel, censorship

ABSTRACT

The article is dedicated to the writer Bogdan Hamera (1911–1974) and his three works from the socialist realism period. The first, “Na przykład Plewa”, was a model example of a new type of literature that was promoted by the communists. Due to this success, he remained a significant figure in Polish literature in the first half of the 1950s. The article presents the significant moments in Hamera’s life. The most important elements of the books were presented, as well as their reception by the communist censorship. Attempts were made to answer the question of the author experiences’ influence on the shape of the works, their content and the importance of his role in the literature of socialist realism.

At the end of World War II, after eliminating the opposition and unification of the workers' parties in 1948, the communists took power over Poland. They began the process of rebuilding the country that affected nearly every aspect of life. During the Congress of the Polish Writers' Union¹ (ZLP) in Szczecin in January 1949, the principles of socialist realism in literature were announced, establishing the only proper direction in culture until the mid-1950s². It included literature, fine arts, theater, architecture, music, and film. The culture was to be used by the communist party to shape a "new" model of the society. The regime was able to control artists since the state was their sole patron.

The primary assumption of socialist realism was to bring culture closer to peasants and the working class. Creating a new intelligentsia based on those social groups, the communist authorities aimed at introducing themes related to the world of work into art³. The resolution of Congress in Szczecin demanded: "[...] conscious participation of writers in building socialism in Poland. New motives for life, the creative enthusiasm of the worker and the peasant require writers to rethink their means of writing thoroughly⁴".

In 1950, ZLP received a new statute according to which the organization became the only ideological center for writers. They were divided into "artistic sections", having regular meetings to discuss their works. Those consultations aimed to discipline the authors ideologically and turn them into members of the "collective". Writers' ideas were discussed in a large group, resulting in acceptance or rejection of concepts. The "Nowa Kultura" weekly (1950–1963), which promoted socialist realism ideas, became the official journal of the ZLP⁵.

This article aims to present the life and work of Bogdan Hamera, an important representative of the above genre in Polish literature. His name often

¹ The Trade Union of Polish Writers was established on August 12, 1944. It was renamed during the congress in Szczecin: M. Fik, *Kultura polska po Jątcie. Kronika lat 1944–1981*, London 1989, pp. 16, 112.

² During the 6th ZLP Congress in 1954, numerous mistakes and "distortions" committed by socialist realist writers were discussed. A fundamental revision of the attitude to this literary trend took place during the 7th Congress in 1956: W. Tomasiak, *Polska powieść tendencyjna 1949–1955. Problemy perswazji literackiej*, Wrocław 1988, p. 13.

³ Z. Jarosiński, *Literatura lat 1945–1975*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 42–43.

⁴ Cit. per: M. Fik, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

⁵ Z. Jarosiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45.

appears in monographs on socialist realism in literature in the context of his book *Na przykład Plewa*, an ideologically important work. This fact, however, is not reflected in the common knowledge on life and other works of the writer. The first part of the text presents a biographical sketch of an artist focusing on a set of events that formed his work. The second unit of the article discusses three of Hamera's books published during the socialist realism period. The third part of this paper presents a reception of his work captured in reports by censorship officials and literary critics. The text's last component attempts to explain why Hamera became a socialist realist writer and indicates his position in writers' local environment. In this final unit author also points at assessing an impact that the writer had on the process of Polish literature rebuilding in the first half of the 1950s.

Life

Bogdan Hamera was born on March 23, 1911, in Szewna near Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski (center of heavy industry in southeastern Poland) in a workers' family. His father worked in the Ostrowiec Plant, where in 1937, he had a fatal accident. Since then, Hamera's mother had received a pension. The future writer had four siblings: sisters Natalia and Irena, and brothers Mieczysław and Jan⁶. He attended the state humanistic gymnasium in Ostrowiec for six years⁷.

⁶ Not only Bogdan sympathized with communism. Natalia, Mieczysław and Jan were members of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR, then PZPR). Mieczysław was murdered after the war in May 1945. Jan became an officer of the Security Office (UB, then the Ministry of Public Security). Irena was the wife of the commander of the Citizens' Militia (MO – Milicja Obywatelska, police in communist Poland) station: Archiwum Akt Nowych [AAN], Centralne Archiwum Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej [CA KC PZPR], Centralna Kartoteka [CK] 1136, Questionnaire for the party, 24 XII 1949, p. 3.

⁷ According to the information contained in the writer's biography, the potential of 11-year-old Bogdan, then attending the fifth department, was noticed in the primary school. The parents were persuaded by a friend to send the boy to gymnasium. Thanks to the good results of the entrance examination, he was accepted. However, due to the leftist views he demonstrated as a teenager, he fell into conflict with some teachers. For this reason, he was dismissed from school before completing his 6th year of education: AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Curriculum vitae, 24 VI 1945, p. 10. I found a similar version in the memoirs of Hamera's daughter, Alicja, written by her niece Grażyna Dzięciołowska:

Hamera started working at the age of 18, regularly changing places of employment. He worked as an office apprentice in Kasa Chorych (health insurance institution), a writer at a sugar beet seed breeding station, a weight controller in a sugar beet association, and a writer in a sugar plant. During the Great Depression, Hamera remained unemployed for almost a year (October 1931–August 1932). His most extended employment period was in Ostrowiec Plant, where he worked as a welder for over three years. He spent the final months before World War II working again as a welder in Dąbrowa-Bór near Kraśnik⁸.

Hamera “inherited” his interest in political activity from his father, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) activist⁹. The writer contacted communists for the first time in the early 1930s after his poetic debut was published in one of the leftist journals¹⁰. Between 1934 and 1938, Hamera (pseudonym “Artist”) was a member of the Polish Communist Party (KPP). At the same time, between 1936 and 1938, he belonged to the Society of Workers University – initially as a member, later as a vice-president of the organization board. He was a member of the Trade Union of Metalworkers in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, on behalf of which Hamera negotiated collective agreements or wage increases with plant owners. He was also involved in other social activities. Between 1936 and 1938, Hamera was the secretary of the board of the Workers House Construction Association in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. After the dissolution of the KPP, he did not belong to any party until August 1945. Only then did he join the Polish Workers’ Party (PPR)¹¹.

Wspomnienia Alicji, córki Bogdana Hamery (Memoirs of Alicja, daughter of Bogdan Hamera), ed. G. Dzięciołowska. I could read the text of the memoirs thanks to Alicja’s nephew, Piotr Hamera.

⁸ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Questionnaire for the party, 24 XII 1949, p. 4; AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Resume, 24 VI 1945, p. 11.

⁹ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Questionnaire for the party, 24 XII 1949, p. 3.

¹⁰ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Resume, 24 VI 1945, p. 10; L. M. Bartelski (ed.), *Polscy pisarze współcześni. Informator 1944–1968*, Warszawa 1970, p. 81; L. Holtzer, D. Tomczyk, M. Kościńska (eds.), *Współcześni pisarze Kielecczyzny*, Radom 1973, p. 20. In the interwar period, Hamera wrote several shorter literary works and one novel. They had never been published: AAN, Akta osobowe, 14291, Bogdan Hamera, p. 1; T. Goździkiewicz, *Bogdan Hamera (1911–1974)*, “Tygodnik Kulturalny” 3 II 1974, p. 3.

¹¹ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Questionnaire for the party, 24 XII 1949, pp. 1, 2, 4.

In November 1939, Hamera left Poland occupied by German troops and crossed the border with the Soviet Union. In December, he started working on a power plant's construction site Kurachów (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic). In February 1940, Hamera was arrested by the NKVD at the railway station in Kiev, suspected of espionage¹². Being released three months later, he went to Lviv. Within a month, he was captured again and departed to the Omsk region in Siberia, where Hamera initially worked as a lumberjack and later on as a clerk¹³.

Bogdan Hamera served twice in the Polish army. He spent two years (September 1932–September 1934) in the 4th Sapper Battalion in Przemyśl. At that time, he graduated from the NCO school and became a writer for the company. Another mobilization took place in November 1943 in the Soviet Union. Hamera was incorporated into the 2nd Infantry Division, and from January 1944 into the 3rd Infantry Division, in which he was a writer and senior writer of the company. Hamera took part in the battles of Warka in August and Saska Kępa in September 1944. From October 1944 to January 1945, he studied at the Officer's School of the First Army of Polish Army (1st AWP) in Mińsk Mazowiecki. Later, he became the company deputy commander responsible for political education. From July 1945, Hamera was active in the Political and Educational Department of the 1st AWP, from September – in the Political and Military Management of the 4th Military District Command. On July 22, 1945, he obtained the military rank of major. He was repeatedly decorated: in 1945 with the Silver Medal for Merit in the Field of Glory (Srebrny Medal "Zasłużony na Polu Chwały"), Silver Cross of Merit (Srebrny Krzyż Zasługi), in 1947 – Cross of Valor (Krzyż Walecznych), and later Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta (Krzyż Komandorski Orderu Odrodze-

¹² According to the memoirs of Hamera's daughter, Alicja, he learned from his friends that the Soviet army equips communists with weapons and directs them to fight against Germany. When it turned out that this was not true, he tried to return to the country. Then he was arrested. According to another version known in the family, Hamera was afraid of being arrested by the Germans because of his connection with communism, so he decided to flee: *Wspomnienia Alicji...*

¹³ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Questionnaire for the party, 24 XII 1949, pp. 2–3; AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Questionnaire, 4 XI 1948, p. 6; AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Resume, 24 VI 1945, p. 11.

nia Polski)¹⁴. The future writer was also active in the Union of Participants in the Armed Struggle for Independence and Democracy (Związek Uczestników Walki Zbrojnej o Niepodległość i Demokrację)¹⁵.

Hamera turned out to be a proper person responsible for political education in the military¹⁶. Superiors considered him as a hard-working, conscientious, disciplined, intelligent, and demanding person. They evaluated his attitude toward duties during and outside the service as exemplary¹⁷. He was described as an “honest and educated democrat with a highly crystallized view¹⁸” in terms of ideology. At the same time, military superiors emphasized that the writer could better serve Poland in civil work. His literary talent was noticed as well¹⁹. Hamera had a similar opinion. Despite his devotion to the communist ideology, he could not find himself at work for a party. He believed that his true vocation was a literary work. He assumed that the novel, prepared for the “Książka i Wiedza” publishing house, would prove his usefulness to the party as a writer²⁰. The book was *Na przykład Plewa*, published in 1950.

In recognition of Hamera’s contribution to Polish literature development, on February 13, 1954, the writer was appointed the first Polish ambassador

¹⁴ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Questionnaire for the party, 24 XII 1949, p. 1; AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Questionnaire, 4 XI 1948, p. 5; “Tygodnik Kulturalny” 27 I 1974, p. 1.

¹⁵ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Charakterystyka służbowa Hamery z 1948, p. 21.

¹⁶ The purpose of the political and educational apparatus in the army was to strengthen the connection between it and the communist party. It was important due to the fact that the army was to be the guarantor of communist power. The activity toward soldiers should be described as indoctrination: W. Jarno, *Praca polityczno-wychowawcza i nastroje w wojskach lądowych w pierwszych latach po zakończeniu II wojny światowej*, “Przegląd Nauk Historycznych” 2011, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 137–138.

¹⁷ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Hamera’s military service evaluation, 23 VI 1945, p. 20.

¹⁸ “Szczerzy i wyrobiony demokrata o mocno skryształizowanym poglądzie”: AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Hamera’s military service evaluation, 1948, p. 21.

¹⁹ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Hamera’s military service evaluation, 23 VI 1945, p. 20; AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Hamera’s military service evaluation, 1948, p. 21. Eventually, Hamera resigned from military service in 1953. T. Goździkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁰ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Hamera to Central Party Committee, 28 XII 1949, pp. 16–19.

to Hungarian People's Republic²¹. According to the opinion expressed in party documents, he had the appropriate skills and competences to hold a managerial position in the foreign service of the Polish People's Republic (PRL)²². However, this assessment was quickly verified. Hamera was dismissed from the post already on June 30, 1955²³. He did not have any necessary experience and did not speak foreign languages, apart from Russian (and limited knowledge of German). Numerous remarks from his superiors in the army pointing at Hamera's ability to work with people turned out to be false; in the embassy, he was utterly unsuccessful in this field, causing or allowing conflicts between his subordinates. The writer confessed to one of the Hungarian interlocutors that he was not interested in diplomatic work. Before the formal dismissal, he left Hungary at the end of 1954²⁴.

In the following years, Hamera worked primarily as a publicist and reporter. For many years he was a member of the editorial team of "Tygodnik Kulturalny", in which he initially headed the socio-political and then the literary-critical department²⁵. He also participated in various ways in public life. Hamera received the Millennium Badge (Odznaka Tysiąclecia) for social activity as part of the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State, awarded by the National Unity Front (Front Jedności Narodowej)²⁶. The writer was also a member of the ZLP²⁷.

Bogdan Hamera died on January 18, 1974. He was buried in the military part of Warsaw's Powązki Cemetery²⁸.

²¹ Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych [AMSZ], Protokół Dyplomatyczny [PD], 16/44/771, Bartol to Polish Press Agency, 13 II 1954, pp. 2–3.

²² AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Approval of the nomination for PRL Ambassador in Hungarian People's Republic (WRL), 18 I 1954, p. 23.

²³ AMSZ, PD, 16/44/771, Mazur to Hamera, 30 VI 1955, p. 12.

²⁴ A. Sylburska, *Działalność polskiej placówki dyplomatycznej na Węgrzech (1946–1956)*, Łódź 2000, pp. 198–200.

²⁵ *Polscy pisarze współcześni*, p. 81; T. Goździkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁶ The badge is in the family collection of Piotr Hamera.

²⁷ AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, ZLP questionnaire, p. 29.

²⁸ "Życie Warszawy" 22 I 1974, p. 11. According to the personal party questionnaire, Bogdan, his wife Maria and their parents did not own any property. The wife became a member of the PPR in 1945. The couple had two children: Alicja (born 1933) and Walde-
mar (born 1937). Hamera's mother-in-law lived with them in the same house, whom he – like his wife, too – supported. After the war, the family first settled in Wrocław and

Bogdan Hamera's Socialist Realist Works

Bogdan Hamera was the author of nine books²⁹, three of which were published during the socialist realism period. In 1950 writer published his most important work, *Na przykład Plewa*, a model production novel³⁰. It met all the

then in the Anin district near Warsaw: AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Questionnaire for the party, 24 XII 1949, pp. 1, 3; AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, Questionnaire, 4 XI 1948, p. 6; AAN, CA KC PZPR, CK 1136, ZLP questionnaire, p. 29.

²⁹ *Na przykład Plewa* (1950), *Doznania ludzkie* (1951), *Śladami czołgów* (1952–1954), *Na styku* (1953, story from the collection *Doznania ludzkie*), *Chodzenie ze strzelbą* (1959), *Czas wyrzeczeń* (1964), *Dobra woda* (1972), *Szczypta Apokalipsy* (1974), *Karmieni burzą* (1975). Hamera presented his vision of the novel as a social product in “Nowa Kultura”. It is a result of the interaction between the writer, publisher, literary critic and reader. The author should be sensitive to the comments of the other three participants in the creation process in order to be able to write book for a mass group of readers. The example for writers should be the Soviet Union, “whose literature reaches unprecedented heights and is a model for the whole world” (“którego literatura dosięga niespotykanych wyżyn i jest wzorem dla całego świata”). B. Hamera, *Powieść – produkt społeczny*, “Nowa Kultura” 10 IX 1950, p. 9.

³⁰ The production novels were schematic stories in which the main role was played by the collective hero, i.e. the workers. There is also the “positive hero”, the embodiment of civic virtues desired in the new political and social reality. As a person coming from the lower social group, he was to become someone intimate to the readers, and thus more effectively encourage them to follow his behaviour. Events and intrigues took place in the production plants whose crew was filled with optimism and faith in a better future, which they were building together. Z. Jarosiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–50. One of the false assumptions of the ideologues of socialist realism was the conviction that the problems undertaken by writers, due to their subject matter, were attractive to readers of the lower social classes. They did not take into account that workers’ and peasants’ literary expectations could have been completely different – or that fact was ignored, because they believed in the power of propaganda, which was supposed to shape the taste of the readers so that they would adopt objectively unattractive literary forms. Within a few years, however, it turned out that this assumption has no real basis: W. Wielopolski, *Atrakcyjność pożądania – od powieści socrealistycznej do młodej prozy epoki przełomu*, “Teksty: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja” 1979, no. 5(47), pp. 140–141. Other examples of production novels: *Fundamenty* by Jerzy Pytlakowski (1948, construction site of Pafawag), *Numer 16 produkuje* by Jan Wilczek (1949, reconstruction of a candy factory), *Kampania znaczy walka* by Mirosław Kowalewski (1950, work in a sugar factory), *Przy budowie* by Tadeusz Konwicki (1950, construction site of a railway to Nowa Huta), *Węgiel* by Aleksander Ścibor-Rylski (1950, work of miners), *Lewanty* by Andrzej

requirements for this new literary genre. On July 29, 1950, the Presidium of the Government decided to award Hamera with the 3rd degree State Artistic Award³¹ for the novel. It became the basis for the screenplay of *Pierwsze dni* movie directed by Jan Rybkowski³² in 1952. In 1951 writer edited a collection of short stories entitled *Doznania ludzkie*. It consisted of seven texts, the first of which concerned the interwar period, the following five – World War II period, while the final was placed in the post-war period. Between 1952 and 1954, Hamera published two volumes of the war novel *Śladami czołgów*. In the opinion of literary critics, this type of literature was the most difficult, and it was not often practiced. According to them, Hamera's book was the most successful attempt to use the Polish soldier's war experience theme³³. In his books, the author presents many crucial topics from the ideology and propaganda point of view. The article will discuss five categories of issues: criticism toward the Sanation (Sanacja, Polish political movement in 1926–1939), disapproval of the Polish government in exile and capitalism; ideological changes in Polish society under the influence of communism; the role of parties, political officers in the army and communist security services; the image of the Soviet Union and Polish-Soviet relations; the problem of attitude toward Germans.

Braun (1952, construction of ships in the Gdańsk Shipyard). S. Burkot, *Proza powojenna 1945–1980*, Warszawa 1984, p. 46.

³¹ The decision to award the prize is in the family collection of Piotr Hamera.

³² There is a short report from the premiere of the film in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski on the website of the Repozytorium Cyfrowe Filmoteki Narodowej. The event was accompanied by a meeting of workers with the filmmakers, including Bogdan Hamera, Jan Rybkowski, actors Hanka Bielicka and Jan Ciecierski: <http://www.repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=pl/node/7284> (1.06.2020). The screenplay of the film was also prepared by Hamera, for whom it was the first contact with the film world: J. Giżycki, *Pisarz tworzy dla filmu*, "Film" 16 III 1952, pp. 4–5. The filming of the book was an important event in the life of the local community. The vast majority of photos were taken in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. Many residents could appear on the screen as extras, some workers played specific roles: "Walczymy o Stal" 13 X 1952.

³³ Z. Woźnicka, *Nowe utwory o tematyce wojskowej*, "Nowa Kultura" 1953, no. 12, p. 7; M. Ostasz, *Oblicze powojennej krytyki literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży 1945–1956*, Kraków 1999, p. 69.

Criticism of the Sanation, Polish Government in Exile and Capitalism

In the short story *Szyzyfiada* (from the collection *Doznania ludzkie*), the author criticized both the political and economic situation in interwar Poland. A young unemployed man, Olek, decides to accept a proposal from Siemiatowski³⁴, president of the organization “Sobriety” (“Trzeźwość”), who offered him a position of a librarian in “Polish School Societ” (“Polska Macierz Szkolna”) in one of the towns in the eastern part of the country. This organization’s main task was to “spread Polishness” and fight against Soviet influence among Ukrainians³⁵. Considering it as an excellent opportunity to improve his life condition, Olek accepted an offer. However, during the journey, he met a man, a communist, who once also did a similar job and explained to Olek that his actual goal would be to combat Ukrainian national consciousness and falsify censuses by lowering the number of Ukrainians in the statistics. He compares this action to the Russification and Germanization activities inflicted against Poles during the partitions, stressing that such measures are exclusively in favor of nationalists and capitalists³⁶. The description of the city which Olek

³⁴ The figure of the president is characteristic – he is a man with a “large belly”. In socialist realist literature, capitalists, representatives of the bourgeoisie, and other “exploiters” were often described as obese and ruddy, suggesting that they lived well at the expense of the lower social classes. B. Hamera, *Doznania ludzkie*, Warszawa 1951, p. 10.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 12–13.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 18–23. “Jaką korzyść miał chłop nad Wołgą czy robotnik w Moskwie z tego, że carski stupajka gnębił polskiego chłopca nad Wisłą i warszawskiego robotnika? Że carski nauczyciel zmuszał polskie dzieci w szkole do mówienia po rosyjsku? Taką, że im carski knut był mocniejszy, tym mocniej smagał jego, chłopca nad Wołgą, i robotnika w Moskwie. Ten ucisk szedł na zdrowie tym, którzy wyzyskiwali naszego zniewolonego robotnika i chłopca, i swojego zbałamuconego stupajkę, i nauczyciela. Pójdziemy teraz do tego zagadnienia inaczej i zapytajmy: Jaką korzyść ma nasz sandomierski chłop i łódzki robotnik z tego, że nasz policjant wywija gumową pałką nad głowami Ukraińców... że będzie pan przymuszał ukraińskie dzieci do polskiej mowy? Jaką korzyść pan będzie miał z tego?” („What did the peasant on the Volga or the worker in Moscow benefit from the fact that the tsarist stupai oppressed the Polish peasant on the Vistula and the Warsaw worker? That the tsarist teacher forced Polish children at school to speak Russian? Such that the stronger the tsarist knout was, the harder it beat them, the peasant on the Volga and the worker in Moscow. This oppression was in favor of those who exploited our enslaved laborer and peasant, and their deceitful stupai, and their teacher. We will now

arrived to allows us to conclude that the Ukrainian areas were backward and neglected, while the Polish police and officials harassed the inhabitants³⁷.

Not only the policy toward Ukrainians has been criticized by the author of the story. Describing the principles of the “Sobriety” society members, Hamera mentioned the fight against alcoholism and Jews³⁸, thus emphasizing the anti-Semitism characteristic of the national movement in the interwar period. The author also criticized capitalism: the unequal distribution of goods, including land for cultivation, and the exploitation of workers by factory owners³⁹. A similar problem also appeared in the novel *Na przykład Plewa*. The main character of the story, Błażej Plewa, worked as a factory janitor. Before the war, he was a specialist, but he was demoted due to an accident in which

approach this issue differently and ask: What is the benefit of our Sandomierz peasant and Łódź worker from the fact that our policeman swings a rubber button over the heads of the Ukrainians... that you will force Ukrainian children to speak Polish? What will you benefit from this?”). Ibidem, pp. 22–23.

³⁷ Ibidem, pp. 32–39.

³⁸ “Nie był on [Olek – A.S.] zbyt zorientowany politycznie, jednak i jego orientacji starczyło, aby odkryć, że towarzystwo walki z alkoholizmem – »Trzeźwość« – ma dwa hasła. Jedno oficjalne i nieprzestrzegane – bądź trzeźwym, i drugie nieoficjalne, ale mocno przestrzegane – bij Żyda” (“He was not [Olek – A.S.] too politically oriented, but his orientation was enough to discover that the society against alcoholism – «Sobriety» – has two slogans. One official and unobserved – be sober and the other unofficial but strongly observed – beat a Jew”). Ibidem, p. 9.

³⁹ This criticism was expressed by Olek’s travel companion – “Miejsca na ziemi jest dość [...]. I jeśli się zdaje, że jest za ciasno, to tylko dlatego, że niektórzy za bardzo się rozparli. [...] We wsi, gdzie byłem ostatnio nauczycielem, sto dziewięćdziesiąt sześć dusz władało stu dwudziestoma hektarami ziemi, a dziedzic, którego rodziną składała się z sześciu osób, miał pięćset czterdzieści hektarów. W miasteczku, gdzie obecnie mieszkam, jest fabryczka, w której pracuje ponad czterdziestu robotników. Razem z rodzinami – sto pięćdziesiąt dusz. Ich miesięczny zarobek wynosi około czterech tysięcy złotych. Właściciel natomiast zgarnia co miesiąc sześć tysięcy...” (“There is enough space on earth [...]. And if it seems too tight, it is only because some have taken too much space. [...] In the village where I was a teacher, one hundred and ninety-six souls owned one hundred and twenty hectares of land, and the heir, whose family consisted of six people, owned five hundred and forty hectares of land. There is a factory in the town where I live now, with over forty workers. Together with their families – one hundred and fifty souls. Their monthly earnings are about four thousand zlotys. The owner, on the other hand, gets six thousand every month...”). Ibidem, p. 25.

he lost his finger⁴⁰. The heartless factory owners offered rent as an alternative, yet it was too low to make a living⁴¹.

Hamera also criticized some events during World War II. A doctor in the story *Czysta chirurgia* was “terrified by the cold indifference of the Western allies, astonished by the flight of the government and the swaggering and stupid leaders who were not to give up a uniform button”⁴². A similarly negative assessment appears in the book *Śladami czołgów*. Soldiers of the Polish Army fighting alongside the Red Army in 1944 accused the Sanation of acting against *raison d’État* and criticized the Allies for insufficient progress in the

⁴⁰ The name itself refers to the hero’s situation. “Plewa” means “chaff, waste”, something rejected and unnecessary. W. Tomasiak, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁴¹ B. Hamera, *Na przykład Plewa*, Warszawa 1951, pp. 5–6. It is worth quoting a fragment in which the narrator judges social relations and the elites of the interwar period – “[...] za czasów nieszczęsnej sanacji, jak zresztą i przedtem, każdy majsterek, buchalterek uważał się za drugą osobę po ministrze, za śmietankę, za figurę, którą bardzo wiele łączy z dyrektorem, ale nic nie łączy z robotnikiem. Głupiutki pisarczyk, ledwie umiejący dodawać na liczydłach, patrzył z góry na wartościowego robotnika, bo przecież on jest urzędnikiem, on siedzi za biurkiem, on ma miesiąc urlopu, on się nie brudzi przy maszynie i ma czyste rączki. [...] Pusty, naiwniutki, rachityczny snobizm w najgorszym wydaniu mścił się na tych ludziach latami i pokoleniami. I nie wyleczyła ich z tej przewlekłej choroby klęska narodowa we wrześniu, nie nauczyła ich niczego okupacja. Nie dotarł do ich mózgow świat nowych czasów po wyzwoleniu. Woleli dalej trwać w swoich iluzjach, karmić się szeptaniem, byle tylko czuć się z dala od «ciemnych mas» i na wzór epigonów wczorajszości zżymać się, sarkać na komunistów, na bałagan, na chamstwo...” (“[...] during the unfortunate Sanation, as before, every foreman, accountant considered himself the second person after the minister, as cream, as a figure, who has a lot in common with the director, but nothing in common with the worker. The silly scribe, barely able to add on the abacus, was looking down at a valuable worker, because he is a clerk, he sits at his desk, he has a month of holiday, he does not get dirty at the machine and has clean hands. [...] Empty, naive, rickety snobbery took revenge on these people for years and generations. The national defeat in September did not cure them from this chronic disease, and the occupation did not teach them anything. The dawn of a new era after liberation did not reach their brains. They preferred to continue their illusions, to live on whispering, just to feel distance from the «dark masses» and, like yesterday’s epigones, to snort at the communists, at the mess, at the rudeness...”). Ibidem, p. 56.

⁴² “[...] przeraziła [doktora – ed. A.S.] chłodna obojętność zachodnich sojuszników, zdumiała ucieczka rządu i buńczucznych głupich wodzów, którzy mieli nie oddać nawet guzika od munduru”. B. Hamera, *Doznania ludzkie*, p. 148.

Western front⁴³. While the Red Army was already in Warsaw, they were far away, suggesting that the Soviet Union had to play the leading role in the combat against Germany⁴⁴. Members of the Home Army were presented mostly as bandits and unscrupulous, careless people who fought primarily against the communists, avoiding confrontation with the Germans. Some parts of the book describe the uprisers as “fascists” or “Targowica” (a Polish synonym of treason)⁴⁵. The author suggested that the behaviour of the command of the Warsaw Uprising was the reason why the Soviet and Polish troops that reached Prague (eastern part of Warsaw) did not help the fighters. The Polish Army units’ withdrawal was decided by the “betrayal” of the insurgents who had evacuated⁴⁶. The novel’s heroes expressed their opinions about General Władysław Anders’s army in a similarly negative way⁴⁷.

The Polish government in exile, a post-war opposition (mainly formed by Polish People’s Party – PSL lead by Stanisław Mikołajczyk), and partisans were also criticized. The negative hero of *Na przykład Plewa*, the saboteur Jezuicki, confessed his allegiance to the government in exile after being unmasked⁴⁸. The novel ends with two scenes discrediting the partisans. In one of them, the troop of “Szary” was supposed to disrupt the transport of flour for hungry

⁴³ Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1954, p. 72.

⁴⁴ Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1954, pp. 109–110.

⁴⁵ Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 1, pp. 178–179; idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 2, pp. 22, 49, 106, 109–116, 186–187. To emphasize that the insurgents were unable to assess realistically the situation, one of their representatives, critical toward communists, was called “Astrologer”. Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 2, pp. 154–156.

⁴⁶ Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 2, pp. 72, 86–89, 205, 210.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, pp. 25–29.

⁴⁸ Jezuicki left a message to Błażej Plewa – “Wielmożny panie stróžu! Bolszewików i bolszewickich pachotków będziemy bić nie tylko po motorach, ale i po łbach. Zapleniło się polskie ziarno, ale my wszelkie plewy wyczyścimy. Spotkamy się jeszcze, plewo! Precz z uzurpatorami! Niech żyje Rząd Polski w Londynie” (“Honorable watchman! We will beat the Bolsheviks and Bolshevik servants not only on the engines but also on the heads. There is much chuff in Polish grain, but we will clean it all. We’ll meet again, chaff! Down with usurpers! Long live the Polish Government in London”). Ibidem, pp. 145 et seq. It is not a coincidence that the author of the novel chose the name “Jezuicki” for him, thus referring to the black legend of the Jesuit order. W. Tomasiak, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

workers. In the second, three partisans kidnapped the party activist Nieglicki and probably murdered him when he refused to join them⁴⁹.

The author's aim was to present negative features of the political, economic and social situation in pre-war Poland. Attitude towards the Ukrainian minority, as well as anti-Semitism, were unacceptable from the "proletarian internationalism" point of view (idea of equality and solidarity of all nations, represented by workers and peasants). The behaviour of the Polish authorities was compared to the rule of the Russian tsar in 19th century, hated not only by communists but also by Poles of different political views. The presentation of social injustice and the exploitation of the poor aimed at gaining the recognition of readers for the new economic system introduced by the communists. The accusation of treason inflicted against of the government in exile intended to legitimize the new government. The criticism of the Warsaw insurgents and the anti-communist partisans was to justify the repressions against those groups after 1945, including the brutality of the security apparatus.

Ideological Transformations of Polish Society under the Influence of Communism

The post-war literary critics recognized the novel *Na przykład Plewa* as the most successful attempt at presenting the changes in the consciousness of Polish workers after 1945⁵⁰. Błażej Plewa, due to his behaviour during the war and shortly after its end (he never left his post and showed the place where the engines were hidden, though he could sell them and get rich quickly) appointed foreman by the new management of the plant. The equality of all factory workers is often mentioned in the book⁵¹. The question of social advancement

⁴⁹ B. Hamera, *Na przykład Plewa*, pp. 222–228, 231–238.

⁵⁰ W. Leopold, *Na dobrej drodze*, "Nowa Kultura" 16 VII 1950, p. 3.

⁵¹ One of the workers quotes the words of Lenin that "w ustroju socjalistycznym każda kucharka powinna umieć rządzić państwem" ("in a socialist system every cook should be able to rule the state"). It should have been possible that in the factory „pierwszy lepszy robotnik mógł zastąpić majstra na każde zawołanie. Wtedy dopiero produkcja będzie na właściwym poziomie" ("a first served worker could replace the foreman whenever he was called. Only then will the production be at the right level"). B. Hamera, *Na przykład Plewa*, p. 145.

was also presented in the story *Drogi różnie się krzyżują*. Its main character, Młody, fought as the communist partisans during the war. Seeing a chance to change his fate in the post-war system, he started working in the communist Security Office (UB – Urząd Bezpieczeństwa) to develop many of his undiscovered skills⁵².

One of the critical problems in the novel *Na przykład Plewa* is harsh life and work conditions after the war. The author describes scenes of dissatisfaction with a poor standard of living, but there was always a person who could explain the need for further work. They reminded us that the war had just ended, and the pace of “recovery” depended on the workers themselves. Plewa stated once: “It seems to me that we should ask for a job, we should demand that they rebuild the factory as soon as possible because it is our good. The sooner we rebuild, the better our lives became”⁵³. Cooperation was essential to achieve it. Workers had to build a “collective” – they should support each other, control each other, and prevent others from “desertions”. Compared to a military troop, the staff of the plant needed the discipline to achieve its goals⁵⁴. On the other hand, strenuous work changed workers’ lives and made

⁵² Idem, *Doznania ludzkie*, Warszawa 1951, p. 190.

⁵³ „Mnie się zdaje, że my sami powinniśmy się upominać o robotę, sami powinniśmy się domagać, żeby jak najprędzej odbudowali fabrykę, bo to przecież nasze dobro. Prędzej odbudujemy, to prędzej nam się życie poprawi”. Idem, *Na przykład Plewa*, p. 110.

⁵⁴ In one of the scenes, the management decided to extend the working day. Some workers did not submit to it, causing a sharp reaction of their colleague, Bonawentura Wonch – “Nie cieszymy się tym, że zdezerterowało tylko kilkunastu, a myśmy zostali. Jeżeli z pola bitwy dezertuje choć najmniejsza część oddziału, to diabła wart cały taki oddział i z takim oddziałem bitwy się nie wygrywa. Że tamci zdezerterowali, to nie tylko oni są winni, ale my, przede wszystkim my! [...] to dowodzi, że nie jesteśmy oddziałem ludzi, tylko jakąś zbieraniną przypadkową, chodzącą różnymi drogami, i że ktokolwiek może zrobić z nami, co zechce” (“Let’s not be glad that only a dozen deserted, but we stayed. If at least the smallest part of the troop desert from the battlefield, the whole troop is worth nothing and you won’t win the battle with such a troop. If the others deserted, it is not only they who are to blame, but we, above all us! [...] this proves that we are not a troop of people, but a random jumble, walking different ways, and that whoever can do with us whatever they want”). Ibidem, pp. 114–115.

them joyful, peaceful, and significant⁵⁵. Moreover, workers had a strong emotional relationship with the factory⁵⁶.

The change of habits, worldview, and stereotypes, including the approach to religion, is proven by a fragment of a conversation between Plewa and his colleague. In reply to the words of the latter, who, thanking him, said “God bless you”, the main character stated: “Phe ... I wish you the more certain: – the factory blesses you...”⁵⁷. The problem of the Catholic Church and religion also appears in other Hamera’s works⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ Plewa “codziennie do późnej nocy siedział nad gazetą lub książką i po prostu namacalnie czuł, jak mu się świat przed oczyma rozjaśnia, jak życie i praca nabierają istotnej, nowej, prawdziwej wartości. Jego czynności i postęпки stawały się coraz bardziej celowe, przemyślane i konsekwentne. Znikł gdzieś wolny czas, z którym ongiś nie wiadomo było co robić. Skończyły się czcze, bezpłodne, abstrakcyjne rozmyślenia o znikomościach świata tego, bo teraz było o czym myśleć konkretnie” (“was sitting with a newspaper or a book until late at night and he just substantially felt the world brightening in front of his eyes, life and work are developing a new, real value. His activities and actions became more and more deliberate, considered and consistent. The free time which he did not know what to do with, was gone. The empty, futile, abstract thoughts about the insignificance of this world were over, because now there was something to think about specifically”). Ibidem, p. 200.

⁵⁶ The best evidence are descriptions. “Motor zagrał. Jego wspaniała melodia, która szybko przeszła w miarowy szum, rozbrzmiała po hali jak zwycięski hymn, jak Międzynarodówka” („The motor played. His wonderful melody, which quickly turned into a steady noise, resounded throughout the hall like a winning anthem, like The Internationale”). Ibidem, pp. 153–154. “Atmosfera gorącej pracy, atmosfera tętniącego oddziały fabrycznego jest urzekająca dla tego, kto się z nią żył. Jak marzycielskiego poetę urzeka i zapładnia natchnieniem uroczy zakątek przyrody, jakaś obłana słońcem i ukołysana szemranie strumyka polanka w gaju – tak kochającego swoją pracę robotnika urzeka i porywa widok jego miejsca pracy, jego maszyny, jego warsztatu. Niedziela kochał swoją pracę. [...] Gdy przechodził między piecami, doznał wrażenia, jak gdyby z obydwu stron dwie ciepłe ręce objęły go za szyję i musnęły po policzkach pieśczołliwie” (“The atmosphere of hot work, the atmosphere of a bustling factory department is lovely for those who grow accustomed to it. Like a dreamy poet, who is captivated and inspired by a charming corner of nature, a glade in grove drenched in the sun and lulled with murmuring brook – this is how a worker loving his work captivates and magnetizes the sight of his workplace, his machine, his workshop. Niedziela loved his job. [...] When he passed between the ovens, he felt as if on both sides two warm hands were embracing his neck and stroking his cheeks”). Ibidem, pp. 187–188.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 54.

⁵⁸ The negative attitude toward religion is also visible in the scenes describing the enemies of communists who committed crimes, wearing badges with the image of the

The characters of the novel were also intellectuals who had to find themselves in the post-war country. One of them is the engineer Karwacki⁵⁹, who did not believe in the possibility of saving the factory destroyed by the war and hardly pretend to adapt to the new realities⁶⁰. The engineer Wachowicz, who was considered an “honest” man very useful in the factory, hence at the same time a person whose actions were paralyzed with fear of the communists⁶¹.

Mother of God on their clothes or decorating the places of execution with Christian symbols. Ibidem, pp. 169–170, 231. In the short story *Na styku* the negative characters turned out to be a church organist and a rich landowner. Idem, *Doznania ludzkie*, pp. 59, 89 et seq. Another example is the scene contained in the novel “Śladami czołgów” – “[Czajkowskiego – A.S.] opanowała niechęć do świata, jaką chyba czuje nauczyciel do dziecka, które po roku nauki nie umie powtórzyć a-b-c... Bóg ma wszystko załatwić... Jednym pomagać w mordowaniu dlatego, że na sprzączkach swoich pasów napisali «Gott mit uns», drugich strzec przed mordercami dlatego, że wołają «Panie, wysłuchaj nas»” “[Czajkowski – A.S.] had an aversion to the world, which the teacher probably feels toward a child who, after a year of study, cannot repeat a-b-c... God has to arrange everything... help some of them murder because they wrote on the buckles of their belts «Gott mit uns», keep others from murderers because they cry «Lord, hear us»”. Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 2, pp. 69–70.

⁵⁹ The character’s name suggests how his behaviour should be interpreted. The word “karw” means “ox”, someone old, heavy. It is a nickname for lazy and sluggish people. W. Tomasiak, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁶⁰ B. Hamera, *Na przykład Plewa*, pp. 40–46.

⁶¹ “Człowiek uczciwy, zdolny, pracowity, z głową na karku. Za Niemców zachowywał się bez zarzutów, niczym się nie splamił. Postawiono go teraz na stanowisku dyrektora technicznego. I niby wziął się do roboty, ale co z tego... Ręce mu się trzęsą. Dotąd chodzi oszołomiony, zdumiony, że komuniści go nie pożarli, nie połknęli. I ciągle jest przekonany, że go to nie minie, że komuniści tylko czekają, aż trochę utyje, bo będzie apetyczniejszy. [...] A my chcielibyśmy, żeby on krzyczał, biegał po fabryce, żeby stawał wszystkich na nogi, żeby się pienił, jeśli coś nie idzie tak, jak powinno iść, żeby zrozumiał, że robotnik to budowniczy przyszłości świata...” (“An honest, talented, hard-working man, with a good head on his shoulder. He behaved unobjectionable under German occupation; he didn’t get embroiled with anything. He has now been nominated a technical director. And he supposedly works, but so what... His hands are shaking. So far, he goes stunned, amazed that the communists did not eat him or swallow him. And he is still convinced that it will not avoid him, that the communists are just waiting for him to get a little fatter, because he will be tastier. [...] And we would like him to scream, run around the factory, get everyone on their feet, make him go mad if something does not work as it should, that he would understand that the worker is the builder of the future of the world...”). Ibidem, pp. 63–64.

While in the case of Karwacki, it was impossible for him to become a valuable member of the new socialist society, Wachowicz had a chance – it all depended on a change in his attitude to communism.

The problem of transforming the pre-war upper-class representatives under the influence of contact with communists was described in the novel *Śladami czołgów*. Initially, the main character, intelligent Dynkowicz, kept his distance from his colleagues in the troop, who mainly represented the working and peasant classes. He was also not convinced of the rightness of fighting alongside the communists⁶². However, shared experiences and numerous conversations made his views evolve. He began to believe that the new ideology could change the world, and above all, prevent humanity from another war⁶³.

Highlighting the possibility of social advancement writer intended to convince Poles to the communist system. Emphasizing this motive was important due to the great social resistance towards the communism, also within the working class, the one that was supposed to be a new vanguard⁶⁴. The state economy was ruined and the living conditions were difficult. A prospect of upcoming improvement in their life situation was to motivate Poles to work

⁶² “Walczyć o Polskę, to walczyć, ale pod czyją komendą? Czajkowsy, Piotrkowsy skakali z radości dowiedziawszy się, że już idą na front. Dla nich to było – nareszcie! Albo udają, bo tak trzeba, albo są głupi. Zresztą... co tam oni... Czajkowski był murarzem i będzie, Piotrkowski – zwyczajny chłopek. Takim bolszewicy mogą się podobać. Ale on, syn inżyniera, maturzysty...” (“To fight for Poland is to fight, but under whose command? The Czajkowskis and Piotrkowskis jumped up excited when they learned they were already going to the front. For them it was – finally! Either they pretend to be so, or they are stupid. Anyway... what are they... Czajkowski was and will be a bricklayer, Piotrkowski – an ordinary peasant. Such Bolsheviks may like them. But he, the son of an engineer, high school graduate...”). Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 1, p. 4.

⁶³ After the arrival of Dynkowicz’s troop to the insurgent Warsaw, the soldiers could observe the damage in the city as a result of the fights. During one of the conversations with the residents, “choć Dynkowicz słowem nie wziął udziału w tej niesamowitej scenie, jednak przeżył ją najgłębiej. [...] Może przemalowanie reszty świata, jakie Czajkowski miał na myśli, rzeczywiście ustrzegłoby nas przed takimi pożogami...” (“although Dynkowicz did not take part in this amazing scene, he experienced it most deeply. [...] Perhaps the repainting of the rest of the world, which Czajkowski had in mind, would really protect us from such conflagrations...”). Ibidem, p. 54.

⁶⁴ More about workers resistance in the first post-war years: P. Kenney, *Budowanie Polski Ludowej. Robotnicy a komuniści 1945–1950*, Warszawa 2015; K. Lesiakowski, *Strajki robotnicze w Łodzi 1945–1976*, Łódź 2008.

hard, despite objective difficulties. The society's effort was supposed to rebuild the country, but also to change their mentality. On one hand author wanted to emphasize the leading role of workers and peasants in new society. On the other he indicated either degradation or a need of adaptation of the intelligentsia to new conditions. Those processes were accompanied by a change of worldview, i.a. rejection of religiosity.

The Role of the Party, Political Officers in the Army and Communist Security Services

Although the book *Na przykład Plewa* was considered a model production novel, most reviews (discussed in the next part of the article) emphasized that it did not adequately present the party's role in the changes taking place in post-war Poland. While it is possible to discuss how this problem should be shown in the novel, it could not be disregarded by the author. It was the communists who decided to promote Plewa, recognizing its potential and thus contributing to his internal transformation. Party comrade Nieglicki was killed by the partisans because he did not want to join them. Indeed, readers could get the impression that communists did not appear as often in the novel as they should because of their importance in Poland at that time.

In *Śladami czołgów*, a vital role is played by officers responsible for political education. They are positive characters who are necessary to lead soldiers to victory and control their proper functioning⁶⁵. In some scenes, it was shown how important role they played in making tactical decisions – military commanders often succumbed to them⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ Boguta was a political officer. In one of the conversations with his superior, his role was defined as follows – “Teraz na linii powiększają się zadania każdego żołnierza i każdego oficera. Naprzeciw nas wróg, którego trzeba zwyciężyć, pobić. Co my dotychczas mówili, tłumaczyli, uczyli, tu trzeba wprowadzić w praktykę, w dejst... w działanie. Tu już nie na pogadankach wychowuje się żołnierza, tylko w okopie, w boju! Tu potrzebny nie tylko wielki wysiłek, ale i umiejętność” (“Now, on the line, the tasks of each soldier and officer are increasing. Opposite us there is an enemy who must be conquered and beaten. What we have said, explained, taught so far must be put into practice, into... into action. Here a soldier is no longer brought up during talks, but in a trench, in battle! Not only a great effort, but also skill is needed here”). Ibidem, p. 120.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, pp. 150–151, 185.

The role of the UB in post-war Poland is interesting in Hamera's works. In the novel *Na przykład Plewa*, the main character was interrogated by security officers. During the conversation, Plewa recalled the stories of tortures and brutal treatment of detainees. In his case, nothing like this happened, which made him trustful the security service⁶⁷. Młody, character in the story *Drogi różnie się krzyżują*, as it was already mentioned, was an UB officer. While traveling by train, he met a railwayman. It turned out that during the war, the man lost his arm because the partisans attacked his train. He had no grudge against the people who caused his misfortune – due to an injury, and he could not continue the work that served the German occupier. He concluded that they saved him from further collaboration with the enemy⁶⁸.

Representatives of the communist system (party members, political officers in the army and UB officers) were not respected by Polish society. The scale of repression in the first years after 1945 was high and Poles were aware of brutal behaviour practiced by officers of the security apparatus. The aim of the books' author was to improve the image of people responsible for introducing communism in Poland. Hamera was even more interested in it because of the fact, that he was one of them. Thus, a positive reception of, at least, political officers in the army was in his personal interest.

⁶⁷ Idem, *Na przykład Plewa*, pp. 161–170.

⁶⁸ When asked if the railwayman had a grudge against the partisans, he replied – “Nie, panie [...]. Przecież już panu powiedziałem. Mogę mieć żal do siebie, a przede wszystkim do tych, którym się wojny zachciało, ale do partyzantów? Bo niechże pan zrozumie... Kiedy ja teraz patrzę na to, co się u nas dzieje, jak ten kraj... czy ja wiem, jak to powiedzieć... rozkwita, piętzy się i po takiej niewoli jest taki wolny, to... mnie się zdaje, że i ja też się do tego przyczyniłem. Wiem, że to jest bardzo głupie i ktoś może się z tego śmiać, ale ja sobie myślę tak: – Gdybym ja nie prowadził tego pociągu tamtędy, to by go partyzanci nie wysadzili... że to niby ja współnik. I mam za to takie odznaczenie, o... – podniósł do góry okaleczoną dłoń i zaśmiał się kpiąco” (“No, Sir [...]. I already told you. I can feel grudge against myself, and above all against those who wanted the war, but the partisans? Understand, please... Now, when I look at what is happening in our country, how this country... I do not know how to say it... how it flourishes, piles up and is so free after such captivity... it seems to me that I also contributed to it. I know it's very stupid and someone can laugh at it, but I think so: – If I hadn't been running the train that way, the partisans wouldn't have dropped it off... it's like me an ally. And I have such a decoration for it... – he raised up his mutilated hand and laughed mockingly”). Idem, *Doznania ludzkie*, p. 202.

The Image of the Soviet Union and Polish-Soviet Relations

The question of the Soviet Union, usually represented by Red Army soldiers, often appears in Hamera's works. He dedicated them a lot of space in the collection *Doznania ludzkie* and the novel *Śladami czołgów*. On the other hand, the motif of Soviet advisers present in various Polish institutions after the war could not be found in his books.

The author wanted to create a positive image of the Soviet soldier to show cordial relations between the Red Army and Poles under German occupation. In the short story *Zagadnienie chleba*, Hamera described the story of a young woman who received a bread ration for her hungry family. However, seeing the column of Soviet prisoners of war, she decided to give it to them (she was not alone in this gesture of solidarity). The woman's father found her behaviour understandable and appropriate. He stated that the remnants at their disposal were enough – his optimism was based on news from the front that the German army had to withdraw under pressure from the Red Army⁶⁹.

Spojrzenie na siebie describes two Polish civilians who saved the life of a Soviet tanker after an attack by the German air force. Although the Soviet soldiers lost the battle, their appearance aroused enthusiasm among the local population, bringing hope for a quick liberation⁷⁰. The characters involved in helping the wounded were sure that they contributed to the Germans' victory⁷¹ in this way. On the other hand, the short story *Na styku* presents the cordial and fruitful cooperation between the Soviet and Polish intelligence service, which led to unmasking Polish spies, acting on behalf of the Germans.

⁶⁹ Ibidem, pp. 51–55.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 102.

⁷¹ This conviction was expressed in the words of the doctor who treated the wounded soldier – “Bardzo dziękuję. W imieniu własnym i tych wszystkich, którzy walczą [...]. Pomagając naszym sprzymierzeńcom ze wschodu ratujemy siebie... i... cały świat od zalewu barbarzyństwa” (“Thank you very much. On my own behalf and on behalf of all those who fight [...]. By helping our allies from the East, we save ourselves... and... the whole world from the flood of barbarism”). The story ends with the words – “A od wschodu szedł groźny, upragniony, wyzwolenczy pomruk...” (“And from the East it could be heard a menacing, longed-wished, liberating murmur...”). Ibidem, pp. 116–117.

In the novel *Śladami czołgów*, most Polish soldiers trusted their Soviet comrades because of the everyday wartime experiences and the observation of life in the Soviet Union. Czajkowski, a worker, one of the essential characters in the novel, expressed the conviction that after Poland's liberation, the Red Army would leave its borders⁷². During the Warsaw Uprising, Soviet troops gave hope to the city's inhabitants, who also believed that they brought them freedom⁷³. The Soviet Union is a model for other countries to follow (e.g., in terms of land reform⁷⁴). The social relations there are also admirable – one of

⁷² Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 1, pp. 60–61. After the Germans left Warsaw, the narrator stated that “to jest ziemia wyzwolona. To jest ziemia, którą już zasłonił piersią żołnierz z czerwoną gwiazdą i żołnierz z orzełkiem na jednakowych hełmach” (“this is a liberated land. This is the land that has already been covered with a soldier's breast with a red star and a soldier with an eagle on the identical helmets”). Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 2, p. 222.

⁷³ “Już ludzie zapomnieli o strachu. Już ich opromienił widok polskich mundurów i wyzwolenicza siła Armii Radzieckiej. Już przypisywali Stalinowi jakiś fantastyczny rozkaz o niezwłocznym wyzwoleniu Warszawy, już podniesionymi głosami komponowali jakiś zbiorowy plan strategiczny, który miał zadecydować o błyskawicznym zmiażdżeniu hitleryzmu. A przecież dopiero przed paru godzinami szalało nad nimi piekło, które odsunęło się zaledwie o parę kroków” (“People have already forgotten fear. They were already captivated by the sight of Polish uniforms and the liberating power of the Soviet Army. They were already assigning Stalin some fantastic order for the immediate liberation of Warsaw, and with raised voices composed some collective strategic plan that was to decide on the immediate crushing of Hitlerism. And yet only a few hours ago hell raged over them, which moved away only a few steps”). Ibidem, p. 60.

⁷⁴ Idem, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 1, p. 67. Even “The Internationale” was admired by the soldiers, even the skeptical Dynkowicz could not “resist” it. Boguta commented the song – “Melodia, która rozpiera człowiekowi piersi, pogłębia oddech, każe podnieść czoło, rozprostować ramiona i tak jakoś szeroko, twardo i radośnie spojrzeć na świat. Boguta zniecka podniósł głowę i zanucił [...] Dynkowicza uderzyła czysta głębia jego głosu, urzekająca wymowa melodii, która na tle dudnienia wystrzałów brzmiała szczególnie urzekająco. Przeżył niespodziewane wzruszenie” (“A melody that bursts man's breast, deepens his breathing, makes you stand up, stretch your arms and look at the world widely, hardly and joyfully. Boguta suddenly raised his head and hummed [...] Dynkowicz was struck by the clear depth of his voice, the captivating significance of the melody, which sounded particularly charming against the rumbling of gunshots. He experienced an unexpected emotion”). Ibidem, pp. 157–158.

the characters stated that Soviet people are more valuable and everyone living in this country changed for the better⁷⁵.

One of the most urgent needs of the communist authorities in Poland was to improve the image of the Soviet Union. From the Poles' point of view, this country had nearly always been a threat and enemy. Most of them treated the "liberation" of the country by the Red Army as a new occupation. The above-mentioned examples lead to the conclusion that, according to Hamera, the best way to change the attitude of Poles towards the Soviet Union would be to emphasize the common struggle against Germany during World War II. In this context the Eastern neighbour appears most often. In a view of the atrocities committed by the Soviet soldiers and the reluctance of Poles towards the hated communism they represented, this solution seemed to be the most appropriate.

Attitude toward Germans

The plot of Hamera's works takes place mostly during or just after World War II, and therefore often refers to the question of the German occupiers. In most cases, his attitude toward them is negative. It was the prevailing social feeling at the time. An interesting theme that appeared in the short story *Ponadludzkie brzemie* is the character of "good German". A German soldier developed a closer relationship with a Polish woman and her son. He hated fascists and lamented that he is perceived as a criminal because of his uniform. He was sure that the German society was divided into supporters of Hitler and his opponents. However, it is worth noting that these considerations are accompanied by the motif of a new political order and the birth of democratic nations,

⁷⁵ "Dlaczego w Związku Radzieckim jest tylu ludzi dobrych, dlaczego ludzie w ogóle są tam inni, nowi? Dlaczego ogromna większość naszych ludzi, Polaków, tak się zmieniła po kilkuletnim pobycie w Związku Radzieckim, zmieniła swój pogląd na świat, swoją psychikę, moralność? Przede wszystkim dlatego, że zetknęli się z nowym podejściem do człowieka" ("Why are there so many good people in the Soviet Union, why are people different, new? Why did the vast majority of our people, Poles, change so much after several years in the Soviet Union, changed their viewpoint, their psyche and morality? First of all, because they encountered a new approach to man"). Ibidem, pp. 151–152.

which should be understood as a sign of communist rule (the reader could suspect that also in Germany)⁷⁶.

Maintaining the hatred of Poles towards the Germans was in the interest of Polish communists. The memory of the German war crimes and the fear of their renewed aggression was the best explanation for the need to maintain close alliance with the Soviet Union. It also justified the presence of the Red Army in the country. At the same time, the development of Cold War forced a distinction to be made between “bad” Germans (Nazis) and “good” ones (communists). It was essential because of the establishment of the German Democratic Republic in 1949, the communist German country which was to be – as the Soviet Union demanded – Polish ally⁷⁷.

Reception of Bogdan Hamera’s Work

We dispose of two types of sources, thanks to which we can evaluate the official reception of Hamera’s works. These are primary and secondary reviews⁷⁸ of the Central Office for the Control of Press, Publications, and Performances (GUKPPiW) and reviews published in literary journals. Both groups of texts reflect the regime’s attitude toward writers. In that case, we are dealing with official censorship. The press was under similar supervision. Critical are the reviews published in “Nowa Kultura”, which presented the official attitude of

⁷⁶ Not speaking Polish, the soldier tried to explain with gestures that “faszyści to dranie, ale nie-faszyści to ludzie, do których należy przyszłość. Wszędzie są faszyci i nie-faszyści, i ci pierwsi wszyscy się skończą, zmiecie ich wiatr historii, nowy powiew przewieje ziemię” (“fascists are bastards, but non-fascists are people to whom the future belongs. There are fascists and non-fascists everywhere, and the former will all end, the wind of history will sweep away, a new breeze will blow the earth”). Elsewhere he stated that “jego naród na pewno znajdzie wspólny język z innymi narodami demokratycznymi” (“his nation will surely find a common language with other democratic nations”). Ibidem, pp. 141, 144.

⁷⁷ L. Mehlhorn, *Przyjaźń nakazana. Rozwój stosunków między NRD a PRL w latach 1949–1990*, [in:] *Przyjaźń nakazana? Stosunki między NRD a PRL w latach 1949–1990*, eds. B. Kerski, A. Kotula, K. Ruchniewicz et al., Wrocław 2009, pp. 37–39.

⁷⁸ Primary reviews allowed the literary work to be published. The purpose of the secondary review was to decide whether the book should be republished. Moreover, it often contained an assessment of censorship officials’ work. K. Budrowska, *Literatura i pisarze wobec cenzury PRL 1948–1958*, Białystok 2009, p. 24.

the forum responsible for promoting the principles of socialist realism in literature.

Reading individual reviews, both official and published in the press, it is difficult to say what the assessment of Hamera's work was unequivocally. One thing is beyond doubt – the novel *Na przykład Plewa* was very positively received, and it made Hamera one of the leading socialist-realist writers. What was most important, it had a “positive political tone”⁷⁹. The novel was recognized as the first successful post-war attempt to portray the ideological changes taking place among workers. It was the initial stage of the formation of a socialist nation, shown not from the perspective of those responsible for the revolution but of those who, thanks to this revolution, could finally come into being in society⁸⁰. The emphasis was on “realistic optimism”, which was not difficult for Hamera to achieve. It resulted from the author's own experience, knowledge of industrial plants' life, and his emotional attitude to this reality⁸¹. Hamera himself emphasized the importance of his life experiences. In one of the interviews, when answering the question of whether he had shown the text of the novel to another writer before its publication, he replied: “If Maxim Gorky had lived, I would have gone to see him on foot. I would not like to go to anyone else. I knew that very few knew the environment described in the book among the writers so well as he did”⁸². One of the book's advantages was that the author did not write only about the industrial plant – the events were presented against a broad political background⁸³. Besides, compared to other production novels of that time, Hamer did not focus much attention on technological issues, which was also assessed positively⁸⁴.

It was emphasized that the author had not been known to literary critics before, which was to prove that the process to adapt literature to the new

⁷⁹ AAN, Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk [GUKPPiW], 2/1102/0/5.1.2/2860, Secondary review of the novel *Na przykład Plewa*, 13 VII 1951, p. 518.

⁸⁰ H. Bereza, *Z perspektywy teraźniejszości*, “Nowa Kultura” 7 X 1951, p. 3.

⁸¹ W. Leopold, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸² “Gdyby żył Maksym Gorki, poszedłbym do niego nawet piechotą. Do nikogo innego iść nie chciałem. Wiedziałem, że wśród piszących bardzo niewielu zna dobrze środowisko opisane w książce”. “Sztandar Młodych” 17 VII 1950.

⁸³ J. Putrament, *Pięć nagrodzonych debiutów*, “Nowa Kultura” 27 VIII 1950, p. 3; R. Matuszewki, *Proza polska 1950*, “Życie Literackie” 18 II 1951, p. 3.

⁸⁴ J. Putrament, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

realities began to bear fruit⁸⁵. However, it was noted that this “increase” occurred while the book was being written. The result was that the first part was much worse in terms of form and not free from compositional and linguistic mistakes⁸⁶.

Some press reviews indicated that the book did not emphasize the role of the communist party in transformation properly⁸⁷. On the other hand, in a review prepared by GUKPPiW, one could read that “The author, based on the example of the former watchman Plewa, who currently becomes a foreman thanks to social advancement, shows how the process of the fight for lifting the factory from the rubble, supported by the party, established and increased a political awareness of workers”⁸⁸. Considering that the review was short (it had three extended sentences), emphasizing the role of the party showed that, in the opinion of the reviewers, this motif was not treated marginally.

The authors of the reviews prepared after the publication of the book *Doznania ludzkie* highlighted that Hamera addresses essential moral issues in a new, so far less frequently used literary form. However, the collection of short stories was evaluated less enthusiastically than the writer’s first work. The criticism concerning the composition, linguistic errors, and the excessive emotionality of the message was constantly repeated. In most cases, the reviewers missed a proper political and moral justification for individual stories’ conflicts. They stressed that the author left the readers too much room for

⁸⁵ W. Leopold, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸⁶ J. Putrament, *op. cit.*, p. 3; R. Matuszewki, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸⁷ W. Leopold, *op. cit.*, p. 3; J. Putrament, *op. cit.*, p. 3; R. Matuszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 3. For the same reason, Hamera was criticized on the ZLP party meeting in 1952. D. Jarosz, *Działalność Podstawowej Organizacji Partyjnej PZPR przy Zarządze Głównym Związku Literatów Polskich w latach 1949–1953: w świetle akt własnych*, “Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne” 1999, no. 5(1), p. 21.

⁸⁸ “Autor na przykładzie byłego stróża Plewy, który dziś zostaje z awansu społecznego majstrem, pokazuje jak w walce z dzwignięciem fabryki z gruzów za sprawą partii rośla i krzepła świadomość polityczna robotników”. AAN, GUKPPiW, 2/1102/0/5.1.2/2860, Secondary review of the novel *Na przykład Plewa*, 13 VII 1951, p. 518. In one of the reviews of the film *Pierwsze dni*, there is a demand that the screenplay should be published. In the author’s opinion, Hamera managed to correct some errors in the novel, e.g. more space was devoted to the party secretary, who could participate in the triumphant scene of opening the factory (as opposed to the book, in which he is killed shortly after he fully appeared). I. Merz, *Temat i człowiek*, “Nowa Kultura” 13 IV 1952, p. 4.

interpretation. According to critics, Hamera was not clear in emphasizing that the positive heroes' motivations resulted from their political and ideological attitudes⁸⁹.

However, there were also other reviews in the press, indicating that in some stories author managed to demonstrate the superiority of "socialist morality" over "bourgeois one" (*Czysta chirurgia*). Critics emphasized the significance of the fact that it was possible to present the German problem for the first time in post-war literature by refusing to agree to identify Germans with fascism. It was also suggested that Hamera should write a book dedicated to the figure of a UB officer because this theme has not been adequately developed in the literature. As the most significant advantage of the stories, critics indicated the attempt to present World War II in a completely innovative way⁹⁰.

Reading the reviews of GUKPPiW, it is challenging to decide unequivocally how the collection *Doznania ludzkie* was perceived by the censors. The author of the original review praised the language of Hamera, which was an exception compared to the previous comments. The stories were considered very good, with only a few exceptions. Based on this review, the book was approved for printing⁹¹. On the other hand, in secondary reviews, we find pretty different

⁸⁹ A. Kijowski, *Opowiadania Bogdana Hamery*, "Życie Literackie" 8 VII 1951, p. 10.

⁹⁰ H. Bereza, *op. cit.*, p. 3. It is worth mentioning here that in 1965, Bogdan Hamera and Franciszek Jakubowski, prepared the material *Służba bezpieczeństwa w literaturze pięknej* (*Security Service in belles-lettres*) for the Department of Human Resources and Training of the Ministry of the Interior. The initiators of this project recognized that fiction was an important tool with which it would be possible to shape public opinion of the security service. The authors were asked to prepare a list of books in which this topic appears, with a description of how it is presented in them. The part prepared by Hamera was entitled *Problematyka działalności Służby Bezpieczeństwa w utworach opublikowanych w latach 1945–1955* (*Problems of the activity of the Security Service in the works published in years 1945–1955*). He described 16 books, including his own works *Na przykład Plewa* and the short story *Drogi różnie się krzyżują*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych w Warszawie [1944] 1954–1990, IPN BU 01334/188, B. Hamera, F. Jakubowski, *Służba Bezpieczeństwa w literaturze pięknej*, DKSziDZ MSW 1965.

⁹¹ AAN, GUKPPiW, 2/1102/0/5.1.2/2859, Primary review of the book *Doznania ludzkie*, 15 XII 1950, pp. 529–530. According to the reviewer, Hamera's book was anti-German. It was not possible to eliminate this impression even in the story *Ponadludzie brzemię*. Moreover, the structure of this text suggests that the murdered husband of the Polish woman was a Home Army soldier, which should not have appeared in a realist

assessments. The first one is very critical. Only the stories in which the main characters are Soviet soldiers were considered valuable. According to critics, the rest of the stories missed “tough, full of character and fully ideological” heroes. The author of this report concluded that the book should not be reprinted⁹². Another review indicated that the level of stories is uneven. However, the author indicated an element of class struggle, which was recognized as an advantage of the book. The reviewer assessed the whole as interesting, stressing that Hamera did not treat any plot superficially⁹³.

Śladami czołgów was considered the worst among Hamera’s books published so far. He was accused of, i.a. the lack of a clear outline of the “ideological conflicts of the historic year of liberation” in favor of an overly realistic description of the everyday life of soldiers. Another shortcoming of the book were errors in composition, too long dialogues, as well as inadequate personality traits of some characters (defined as “emotional shaking” or a lack of “spiritual balance”). In the reviewer’s opinion, the changes taking place in the characters’ souls and minds were not evident to the reader, and had it not been for the narrator’s interference, it would have been unnoticed. The author was also accused of bringing up topics for which there were no solutions or explanations⁹⁴.

According to the reviewers, the book’s advantage was the presentation of the “reborn” Polish Army as “a school of consciousness and characters” and the importance of patriotism as a factor that influenced Dynkowicz’s ideological change. The description of the battle scenes was considered the novel’s most vital point⁹⁵.

socialist literature. The reviewer suggested “politicizing” the story. She assessed the text of *Szyfyda* as naive, and the discussed as simplified.

⁹² AAN, GUKPPiW, 2/1102/0/5.1.2/2859, Secondary review of the book *Doznania ludzkie*, 9 V 1951, pp. 419–422. It is worth quoting the final assessment of the collection: “Całość ma charakter pompacyjnego, drobnomieszczkańskiego głądzenia o rzeczach wzniosłych i rozczulania się nad bohaterstwem nota bene pozostającym pod znakiem zapytania [...]” (“The whole is a pompous, petty-bourgeois wandering about lofty things and feeling sorry for a questionable heroism [...]).

⁹³ AAN, GUKPPiW, 2/1102/0/5.1.2/2859, Secondary review of the book *Doznania ludzkie*, pp. 423–424.

⁹⁴ H. Bereza, *Nowa książka Hamery*, “Życie Literackie” 25 I 1953, p. 6; Z. Woźnicka, *Nowe utwory o tematyce wojskowej*, “Nowa Kultura” 1953, No. 12, p. 7; P. Bystrzycki, *Śladami czołgów czy śladami człowieka*, “Nowa Kultura” 8 VIII 1954, p. 6.

⁹⁵ Z. Woźnicka, *op. cit.*, p. 7; P. Bystrzycki, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Conclusions

Hamera, writing his above-mentioned books, took part in the process of Polish society's indoctrination. He was to shape new attitudes, such as commitment to the workplace, strenuous efforts to rebuild the country, and the fight against capitalism. Such an approach was required because of the war devastation and challenges that the Polish economy faced. Hamera's publications built a positive image of the communists, the Soviet Union, and the Red Army. They improved the image of institutions and representatives of the widely hated regime, e.g., UB or political officers in the army⁹⁶. They were to provoke and develop aversion toward pre-war social and economic relations, the Sanation, Western powers, and (to a minor extent) the Catholic Church. His novels strengthened the hatred of the Nazis on the one hand, but on the other, they made people understand that reconciliation with "good" Germans (communists). Above all, however, those books and stories prove that it is possible to change a person, and thus – society, nation, and the entire world.

Bogdan Hamera, thanks to the novel *Na przykład Plewa*, became an important figure of socialist realism in literature. However, this production novel's publication was his career peak – literary critics have not so enthusiastically received subsequent books. Comparisons with Hamera's first work have always been unfavorable for them. It is worth mentioning one of the reviewers' opinions that one should expect more from a writer like Hamera⁹⁷. His talent and skills were later discredited quite often.

The ideologues of socialist realism, who favored the production novel as the most important literary genre, encouraged writers to visit factories and large workplaces, thanks to which they could learn more about workers' lives⁹⁸. In the case of Hamera, it was not necessary since he knew this reality very well, working for many years in the Ostrowiec Plant. Reading his biography, we can conclude that his enthusiasm expressed in the novel was genuine. Thus, he

⁹⁶ Probably for this reason, during the ZLP session in 1951 someone used the term "Hamera-obscura". M. Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne 1945–1965*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1996, p. 172.

⁹⁷ H. Bereza, *Nowa książka Hamery*, p. 6.

⁹⁸ Z. Jarosiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–47.

was not an example of a writer who joined the communist regime only for economic reasons. He remained faithful to socialist realism's ideological assumptions in 1955 when he criticized Adam Ważyk's *Poemat dla dorosłych*, a work that forecasted changes taking place in Polish literature⁹⁹.

In Hamera's books, we can find many elements that refer directly to his life. In the novel *Śladami czołgów*, the author described the warfare in those places where he fought: the battles at Warka¹⁰⁰ and the fights of the 1st AWP for bridgeheads in left-bank Warsaw during the 1944 uprising¹⁰¹. Boguta, the officer responsible for political education, is one of the novel's main characters, not by coincidence. Hamera himself played the same role during his military service. He cared about the positive reception of this character because this position was not respected by the Polish society.

Books include more "personal" traces of the author's beliefs and experiences. Hamera was skeptical about religion (from the childhood, what was mentioned in a biographical sketch), which careful readers can find in his stories. The positive characters rejected all manifestations of traditional religiosity, and the church and clergy are depicted in a negative way. The last scene in the novel *Na przykład Plewa* probably refers to the tragic event in Hamera's family life. His brother Mieczysław, a PPR member, died in mysterious circumstances shortly after the end of the war. The author dedicated the book to his sibling, ending it with the words: "Wrocław. On the 4th anniversary of the death of the beloved brother, Mieczysław, murdered by the fascists on May 12, 1945"¹⁰². This event might have strengthened his aversion to the anti-communist resistance movement.

Hamera sacrificed his literary talent to communism, being an authentic advocate of changes in the country during the socialist realism period. Fidelity

⁹⁹ A. Bikont, J. Szczęsna, *Lawina i kamienie. Pisarze wobec komunizmu*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 259–261.

¹⁰⁰ B. Hamera, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 1, p. 129.

¹⁰¹ B. Hamera, *Śladami czołgów*, vol. 2, pp. 52 et seq.

¹⁰² "Wrocław. W czwartą rocznicę śmierci ukochanego brata, Mieczysława, zamordowanego przez faszystów 12 maja 1945 roku". Idem, *Na przykład Plewa*, p. 238. According to the recollections of Hamera's daughter Alicja, Mieczysław was then the commander of the militia in Ostrowiec: *Memories of Alicja...* A query in IPN did not confirm this version. It contains materials about Mieczysław Hamera, son of Jan, yet the lecture of the documents allowed stating that it was not Bogdan's brother.

to ideology and meeting the requirements for writers brought him fame and recognition of the authorities, evidenced by the nomination for the first Polish ambassador in Budapest. He owed his position to the popularity of his first novel. Although subsequent literary attempts were not so successful, he remained an important figure in the literary world of the first half of the 1950s. He was one of the new post-war spiritual and cultural society's creators, which is shameful but important to understand this historical period.

SUMMARY

Bogdan Hamera was one of the most important Polish writers of the Socialist realism period. His book *Na przykład Plewa* was acknowledged as a model production novel. His other books from the first half of the 1950s were not praised so much, but Hamera was remaining an important figure in the literary world of that time. He joined the communist movement in his youth, spent many years in large industrial plants, and served in the Polish Army. Those events were reflected in his books. He engaged in building the communist system with conviction and genuine enthusiasm. An article presents the most important elements of his biography, selection of books written in the socialist realism era, its evaluation included in the reviews of censors and literary critics. This text also attempts at determining the role of the writer in the process of transforming Polish culture in the first half of the 1950s.

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