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The War on the Wall. Polish and Soviet War Posters Analysis

Abstract Every war is not only the fight of the armies but also a war of the ideologies. One of the forms of the ideological war is propaganda posters. Over forty posters presented and analyzed in this article come from the Polish-Soviet war in 1919-1921. The research work is based on grounded theory procedures adopted for visual data analyses. Particularly useful was a method of coding families worked out by Barney Glaser and modified to the visual data analysis by Krzysztof Konecki. The author reconstructed several basic motifs, formal solutions, and communication strategies (i.e., continuity and continuation versus avant-garde and revolution, image of the enemy and "one's own" imagination, strategic conversion) used by artists-ideologists from both sides of the conflict.

Keywords War Posters; Poster Analysis; Polish-Soviet War; Grounded Theory; Visual Sociology

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A war poster from the beginning of 20th century was one of the most persuasive and common forms of communication between the center of authority and maximum number of recipients, while other mass media of communication comprised only press and rather uncommon radio and cinema. It transferred meaning in a shortened form, which was to be easily understood by a wide circle of population. It was a symbol of dominating ideology and a tool that activated masses. The authors of these pictures were often well-known artists, and

stylistics of these works of art corresponded with the dominating aesthetic principles. A poster was a vanguard of "image communication" that dominates nowadays. It may be presumed that also today, in a situation of a rapidly growing crisis, especially of an expected or already existing armed conflict, a propagating poster (e.g., in a form of a high-format billboard) would pose a significant weapon of political agitation, which is confirmed in subsequent political campaigns and social actions.

This analysis refers to a limited collection of posters. Namely, it is about Polish and Soviet propagating images created for the purpose of 1919-1920 war campaign. The presence of several basic motives, formal solutions, and communication strategies that can be seen in the pictures prepared by both sides will be pointed out, whereas others will present the specificity of each collection. An attempt to clarify the genesis of these similarities and differences will be taken.

Sources and Method

Posters presented and analyzed in this article come from very rich resources of books and the Internet. Actually, it is hard to point all sources of the pictures presented below. The author explored collections of posters gathered in Polish museums (Polish Army Museum in Warsaw, Museum of Independence in Warsaw, Museum of Independent Traditions in Lodz), reproduced in historical publications, and dozens of Polish and Russian websites devoted completely or to a great extent to the art of a poster, as well as those that published reproductions interesting for him from time to time only.

Initially, the main criterion to choose particular materials that were subjected to exegesis was the frequency of their presence, not only within websites that they were copied from but also in books, magazines, and historic albums. The author did not use here precise calculations (among others because the sources were so numerous), only the fact of placing a poster multiple times in publishers of all natures was taken into consideration. Attention was also paid to posters whose contents and meanings were to some extent different from the ones that are promoted nowadays. This strategy seems to be adequate because some contents may be perceived controversial these days or recalled reluctantly. It does not mean that despite their lack or marginalization in contemporary publishers they did not influence the way of perceiving conflicts. It was also about obtaining data that would comprise different perspectives and motives of the posters' authors and propagators. Only the first stage of collecting the data was, to a great extent, subordinate to quantitative criterion. Then, choice of the posters and analyses conducted within the research took place according to procedures developed for the purpose of the grounded theory. It should be stressed that the methodology of grounded theory is very useful because of the possibility to get control over the unordered and often inadvertently collected data (here: the images stored on hundreds of websites, dozens of books, and many museums, and grouped in various configurations). Following this kind of data would be very difficult without clear and precise rules. Therefore, very important was the procedure of *theoretical sampling* (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978; 1998; Strauss 1987; Charmaz 2006), supported by and mixed with a *constant comparative method* (Glaser and Strauss

1967; Glaser 1978; cf. Miles and Huberman 2000:179). The researcher looked then for such data that could be implemented and that extended the identified analytical fields, as well as for such ones that were new and often posed a contradiction to the provisionally formulated arguments. Eventually, thanks to the process of *dimensionalizing* the observed reality, a mosaic appeared, which comprised typical and non-typical motives of presentation together with their properties, conditions of occurrence, and all connotations. It needs to be emphasized that during theoretical sampling, and simultaneously in the process of dimensionalizing the observed reality (here: gathering collections of posters), the researcher reformulated permanently their provisional arguments in order

to eventually generate (in this case) a matter-of-fact theory of representing an enemy and a positive hero.

The first stage of analysis was mainly about *open coding* (Glaser 1978; 1992; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990), that is, “transferring data” to a conceptual level, which gives a chance to “detach” from a strictly matter-of-fact field of analysis (here: conceptually and theoretically calling the items and “visible” situations on particular posters). For example, part of a poster presenting a fighter in folk clothing, holding a scythe placed vertically, was coded in the following way:

- a. a symbolic character → (references to national independence tradition)
- b. a character drawn with a thick line → (aim: emphasizing attributes)
- c. a representative of peasant class → (clothing, weapon: scythe, peasant physiognomy)
- d. determination in action → (determined look, tense muscles, “forward deflection,” strong grip of the weapon)
- e. character from the foreground

Therefore, it was about naming the identified pictures or their parts in different ways in order to obtain significant characteristics, which created a basis for developing relatively capacious categories (and their properties), and to notice relations among them.

Procedures developed directly for the purpose of visual data analysis turned out to be a very useful

tool in the process of “describing” and “naming” the analyzed pictures and their elements. Namely, it is about so-called *locating memo*, *big picture memo*, and *specification memo* (Clarke 2005:224-228). *Locating memo* is used for recognizing a social world (worlds) within which a given picture used to function (or still functions). For this purpose, a researcher needs to answer questions like: why have they become interested in this particular materi-

al, what is the genesis of a given picture, for what purpose and with what intentions was it created, et cetera. *Big picture memo* serves for answering the question: what can *generally* be said about a given artifact? This task will be easier to be carried out when the researcher at first describes their initial feelings they had while looking at the picture, then they describe the work as a whole (narratively), and at the last stage they divide the picture into sections or analytical parts in order to spot and review details or items put in further grounds. *Specification memo* comprises the most detailed analysis of a picture, poster, or a drawing as possible, according to a wide scope of criteria, for example, presence (or absence) of particular objects, frames and boundaries of a picture, particular grounds and their contents, the lighting used, colors, techniques, format, composition of the image and its location within the context of other works, criterion of uniqueness or ordinariness, symbolic references, and many others perceived by the researcher to be important. The procedures mentioned above were used at all stages of the research. There was a useful tool of matter-of-fact analysis, as well as the theoretical one. Not long after starting open coding, a procedure similar to *selective coding* was taken up (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; 1998), which included generation, and later, *saturation* of significant categories with properties and characteristics that allow the embracing of them. This stage of the research used so-called coding families (Glaser 1978) adapted for the need of visual analyses by Krzysztof Konecki (2008). Shortly speaking, these are unifications allowing the ordering of the codes and relations between them into relatively coherent, analytically useful wholes.

The following families of coding were used for the purpose of this analysis (in a limited way that is possible to be used in case of posters):

- *family of interactions/actions* (e.g., gestures, behaviors, and posture of a body towards a potential viewer and other objects or characters present in the picture),
- *family of relations* (e.g., mutual relations of characters present in the picture; cooperation, opposition, fight, brotherhood, also relations between the characters and artifacts seen in the poster),
- *family of symbols* (gives a chance for interpreting a given picture in relation to meanings and values that go beyond a framework of a particular performance, allowing placing the poster within a broader cultural context),
- *family of emotions* (e.g., mental states of actors present in the picture, read from behaviors, gestures, and mimics—pride, shame, joy, fear),
- *family of kind* (i.e., certain conventional, culturally conditioned types of actions, read from the actors’ behaviors and from the whole situational context visible in the poster, and sometimes beyond the poster, e.g., male and female roles, defending a homeland, propagating a concept of revolution),
- *family of “social units”* (treated here as some exemplifications of social groups’ categories, e.g., working class, group of revolutionists).

Within the context of the posters' analysis an original family of coding was proposed, which can be determined as: **family of borrowings and references**. Because of the fact that propagating posters are highly commercialized performances, authors of these works make the most of the achievements of their predecessors, and they are (usually) very sensitive to equally conventional needs expressed by political decision makers—sponsors of their creativity. Therefore, it is interesting to draw attention to those inspirations. Though, it is needed to try to notice typical gestures and behaviors, typical symbols and icons, typical jargon and slogans (cf. Konecki 2008:105).

Eventually, the matter-of-fact analysis served to discover different relations among categories, that is, putting forward hypotheses, which is a stage that is called *theoretical coding (memos)* (Glaser 1978; 1998; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; 1998). Shortly speaking, theoretical memos are “the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding” (Glaser 1998:83). Therefore, writing theoretical notes (*memoing*) allows the researcher to understand relations between particular elements of a generated theory (notions, codes, categories together with their properties and relations between them), which means that they are able to achieve a higher level of conceptualization at every stage of analysis. In the above-mentioned case, the notes have become a basis for analytical findings, and they were incorporated into unified text of a report, and in a synthetic form, expressed explicitly in the summary.

Historical Context of the Analysis

Posters that are analyzed in this text were created in relation to the war between Poland, which was reviving after 123 years of seizure, and Soviet Russia that was created as a result of the revolution in 1917. This conflict was of vital significance for both these countries. For Poland, this war was a chance to keep yet unstable independence, to determine its Eastern boundary, and to push (especially in a case of an effective alliance with an emerging state of Ukraine) a threat of Bolshevik revolution. For Soviets, on the contrary: the war created a possibility for exporting the communist ideology to Poland, and then to the Western countries (especially to the revolted Germany). The war started spontaneously and with no declaration at a time when after signing the truce on 11.11.1918, the German army started to retreat from Eastern Europe. The first battle took place in February 1919. Almost until 1920, the Polish Army achieved successes on the military and territorial fields. A significant part of the area of today's Ukraine, Belarus, and Latvia, and even Kiev for a short time, were occupied then. In May 1920, the Soviets took the initiative, and started to counterattack, and in the middle of August, they reached the outskirts of Warsaw. Occupying the capital city of Poland would be equal to losing the country's independence, and opening a route for fighting Western Europe. However, thanks to heroic defenses, breaking Soviet codes, and courageous envelopment, Poland won the battle. The Soviet army suffered great losses and was made to retreat. Since that time till the end of the war, the initiative was maintained by Poles. A significant part of previously lost terrains was regained, and So-

viets were made to negotiate peace. On 18.03.1921, a peace treaty was signed in Riga (see: Davies 2006; Zamoyski 2009).

Almost 1.5 million soldiers took part in a Polish-Soviet conflict. More than 100 thousand members of the Red Army and about 60 thousand of Polish soldiers died during the campaign. As a result of military actions, slaughtering, diseases and famine, ordinary people suffered great losses.

It is necessary to point out one of the most important political results of the war: on the Soviet side—failure of the plan for revolutionizing the whole of Europe and isolation of Soviet Russia, and on the Polish side—maintaining independence, but also failure of the idea of a Federation of Borderlands. The war meant economic crisis and strengthening of the mutual hostility in case of both countries.

Poster War: Pictures' Analysis

Continuity and Continuation versus Avant-garde and Revolution

Lasting versus change, tradition versus modernity is a universal motive and dilemma of art at the same time. It is also a clash of ideology and different visions of reality, strongly represented by the authors of propagating messages.

Exemplum

Soviet Case

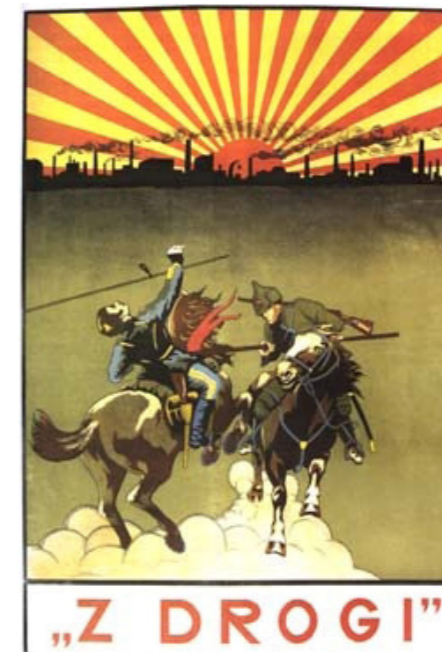
The Revolution “by itself” is not “full,” unless it is accompanied by a project of **export** beyond the boundaries of Soviet Russia. The announced change is an avant-garde project for Europe (including Poland), if not for the whole world.

Poster 1.



Long live the Polish Socialist Republic of Boards!

Poster 2.



Make way.

Poster 3.



Comrade Lenin sweeps rubbish from Earth.

“Internationalism of revolution” category is definitely in place in the case of the above-mentioned posters.¹ The closest target is Poland. There is also a project prepared for these circumstances: Polish Republic of Boards. Of course, this idea may be realized only through negation of the present (national) identity; also, through a negation of the old symbolic order (see the left lower part of the first poster).

industrial dimension. A Soviet soldier brings “good news” about a country of milk and honey, and everyone blocking his way is doomed to failure. The last poster, entitled *Towarzysz Lenin oczyszcza Ziemię z nieczystości* (*Comrade Lenin sweeps rubbish from Earth*) informs that an aim of the revolution is the whole world. Therefore, it is needed to completely deal with the representatives of the “old order;”

Włodzimierz Majakowski, Kazimierz Malewicz, Wiktor Deni, El Lissitzky (actually, Łazar Lisicki), Włodzimierz Lebiediew, and many others are the creators who were not only inspired by the Western avant-garde (here: Cubism, Constructivism, Futurism) but they were also creators of innovative solutions in plastic arts in the beginning of 20th century (e.g., Cubo-Futurism, Suprematism). In this context, an interesting example is posed by ROSTA's posters (Russian Telegraphic Agency). Works created under the tutelage of the agency were a *novelty* regarding the form, as to high extent they comprised comics³ (sic!). In a case when a significant number of the revolutionary contents' recipients were completely or nearly completely illiterate, this way of transferring information allowed transferring uncomplicated contents to such an auditory in an interesting form.



Poster 8.
R.S.F.S.R. Proletarians of all countries, join together! / A story about upstarts and a woman that would not like to accept the Republic.

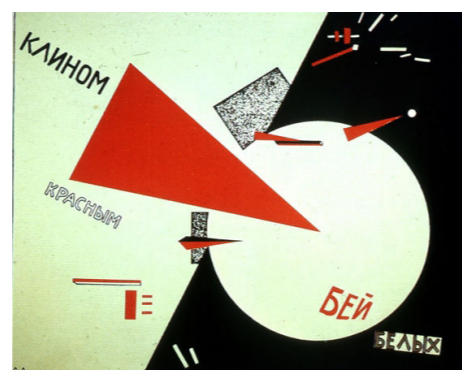
Poster 4.



Poster 5.



Poster 6.



4. To the Polish line.
5. We need to work. A gun is waiting at Your side.
6. Hit the White with red wedge.

Soviet “statue of liberty” (a family of borrowings and references and a family of symbols) informs about birth of a new world (also marked symbolically), and this world has a clear industrial shape. The announced Arcadia will probably require transformation of “colorful” industrial peasants into industrial, unified (militarized and ideologized) workers. It is enough to destroy another wall, another poster does not leave any unclearness. The “Make way” slogan sounds as an ultimatum, leaving no alternative. A daybreak (a family of symbols) has obvious

in the global scale. Rubbish—a class of oppressors (a family of “social units”)²—needs to be absolutely swept.

An avant-garde social projects require an equally **avant-garde form**. Relative freedom, not limited yet by a social realist corselet, was present in new-wave artistic designs.

² The aim of this article is, among others, to show some methodological inspirations to the reader, which is why a description of the first category comprised names of the families of coding used herein. In the further part, in order to maintain clearness and coherence of the text, marking of the families of coding will be skipped.

Poster 7.



We made peace with Poland...

³ A way of presenting the ROSTA's posters was extraordinary as well, namely, they were put in windows, usually of closed shops.

Industrial dimension of the revolution can be found in prophetic visions of techno-paradise, in a highly industrial version (see: Poster 1 and 2). Some chronically repeated items-symbols are worth noticing.

Hammers, factory, uniforms, anvils: these objects do not leave any doubts when it comes to the avant-garde power of the revolution (at least according to the generally known ideology). At the same time, a question whether it still is a class **in itself** or **for itself** is still open (Marks 1949). Artifacts visible in the posters show that revolution conducted by workers' hands has an absolutely modern and industrial dimension, and effectiveness of a worker is as important as the effort put by a member of the Red Army.

Poster 9.



8th convention powers Russia...

Polish Case

Referring to the category of “continuity and continuation versus avant-garde and revolution,” a collection of Polish posters may (despite several exceptions) be determined by two first terms. However, there is a question that arises immediately: what is the type of continuity and continuation? After all, Poland, as a state, when the conflict with Soviet

Poster 10.



Each hit of a hammer is hitting the enemy!

ets broke out, was just at the stage of establishing boundaries after over 120 years of seizures. Therefore, the authors of the propagating messages, first of all, referred to mythologized or even a mystic version of history and a specific “mission,” as well as to those elements of social life that during the time of suppression constituted national identity (cf. Dymarczyk 2008:55-65; Jarecka 2008:187-170).

Poster 11.



Poster 12.



Poster 13.



11. Polonia

12. Your homeland calls you!

13. Under thy protection, We seek refuge.

Allegoric pictures, first of all, put emphasis on religious dimensions of Polish identity. Defence against invasion is possible thanks to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, usually exemplified in the form of Poland—a caregiver and at the same time a prick of conscience of the whole nation. The religious dimension is what differentiates a bulwark of the civilised world and a barbaric East. Hussars, guarding the image of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, prove an inseparable relation of the nation with Divine Providence. They embody and at the same time guarantee the Polish catholic identity (cf. Jarecka 2008:164-167).

Actors of the drama—defenders of the country—are also worth noticing, especially their group portrait.

Poster 14.



Hey! Every Pole gets a bayonet!

Poster 15.



Every home will be our castle.

It is worth noticing that the authors of these works emphasize an all-nation character of the war. Different social classes join together to drive Soviets back. A group of defenders comprises soldiers of common folks together with workers/craftsmen and peasants. Slogans put in the posters are quotations from the well-known songs created in order to support the national spirit under a threat to the state and during seizures.

An individual actor is also exhibited, who is often a person of the Head of State. Piłsudski is shown as a defendant of working classes, peasants, and workers. First of all, he is a man of Providence, who is hoped by the pious population to save them from wild and godless aggressors (see: Poster 17).

Poster 16.



Józef Piłsudski. Prefect of State and the First Leader
—the First Marshal of Poland.

Poster 17.



Józef Piłsudski

20th century (e.g., Poster 11 and 12). Inspirations with realistic historical painting (Poster 16) and the art of Young Poland (Poster 17) are also visible.⁴

Continuity and continuation in the content and formal layers are the features characteristic of the Polish “line” of war poster. Independence that had just been regained, a need to unite the society into one organism, and a still unstable state would rather make the authors emphasize permanence and invariability of features, values, attitudes, and aspirations of the nation.

Image of the Enemy

A war poster, as a propagating work directed to the masses, needs to speak in a maximally simplified language. A “stranger” (also “one of us”) plays clear roles, takes actions typical for them, and carries particular stigmata that allow recognizing them.

Exemplum

Soviet Case

Images of Soviet social utopia require asking a question: who is the enemy of the Red Army? Who is the enemy of “the new?” Analysis of the posters shows several categories of enemies that need to be defeated. While these categories are not separate, they mix with each other, or simply some comprise others. The Red Army attack is attempted to be stopped by:

- general, world enemies of revolution—capitalists, imperialists (Poster 18 and 19),

⁴ Among the well-known authors of Polish posters we need to list among others: Kamil Mickiewicz, Władysław Skoczylas, Kamil Babiński.

From the formal perspective, despite quite a few exceptions, Polish posters are significantly different from the Soviet ones. For sure, they could not have been perceived as avant-garde works. On the contrary, in many cases, it is easy to find clear references to even Grottger Romanticism, Impressionism, and Symbolism of the

- internal enemies, that is, specifically shown counter-revolutionists and bourgeoisie classes (Poster 20 and 21),
- Poles and enemies (usually called by name) of the Soviet state that have an alliance with them (Posters 22-25).

Poster 18.



League of Nations. Capitalists from all countries join together!

Poster 19.



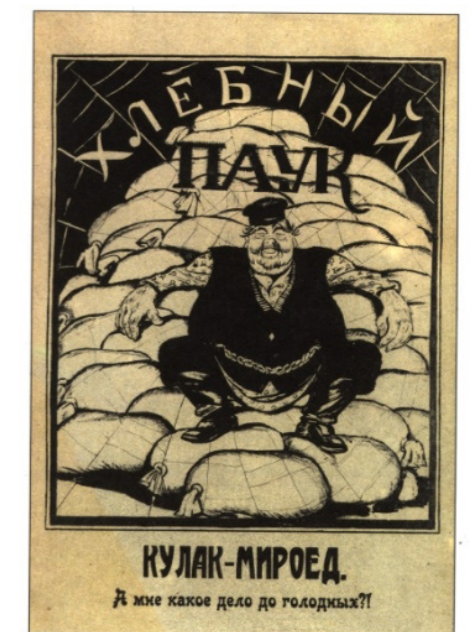
Death of the world imperialism.

Poster 20.



Manifesto. All power for landowners and capitalists.

Poster 21.



Bread spider. Kulak—devourer of peace.

The last category of the mentioned ones, regarding the article's title, is an issue of special interest for the author of this analysis.

Poster 22.⁵



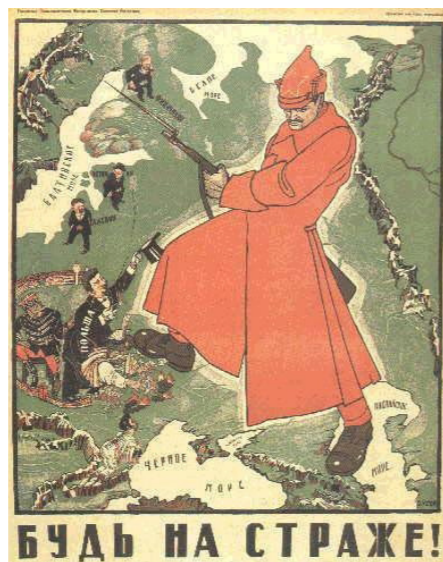
A king and a thug.

⁵ Reproduction comes from the book by Aleksandra Julia Leinwand, entitled *Czerwonym młotem w orla białego. Propaganda sowiecka w wojnie z Polską 1919–1920 (Red Hammer Hits White Eagle. Soviet Propaganda During War with Poland 1919-1920)*. Description of the poster is an interesting and original example of the family of borrowing and references functioning: “Wiktor Deni’s composition (order of the characters with a king in the foreground) recalls a painting of Jan Matejko, *Stefan Batory pod Pskowem* (1872). The Polish painter was well-known and appreciated in Russia. The above-mentioned painting was valued by Russians. A Russian artist, who learned and started working before World War I, had to encounter at least a reproduction of his work. Deni in his poster does not correspond directly to *Batory pod Pskowem*, but location of the characters and lightness of the composition seem to prove the fact the graphic artist noticed a relation between the king of Poland and Russia through the works of Matejko. The character of Sawinkow bowing and scraping in front of Pilsudski makes us think about old Russians depicted by the Polish painter 50 years ago” (Leinwand 2008:180, reproduction, iconographic attachment).

Poster 23.



Russian landowner goes after a Polish lord.



Poster 24.
Guard!



Poster 25.
The last hour!

The above posters show Poles as active members of the world bourgeois-recreational coalition of the Soviet state's enemies. What is more, “Polish men” are quite often presented as initiators and leaders of the counter-revolutionary conspiracy.

At the same time, the abundance of propagating works “unmask” a neighbor of the proletariat's homeland as a usually submissive tool in the hands of protectors, mainly of bourgeoisie and Entente.

Poster 26.



26. A pig trained in Paris.

Poster 27.



27. Language of the League of Nations.

Poster 28.



28. Her Ladyship Poland. The last dog of Entente.

A distinctive feature of a Pole is their national clothing, more precisely speaking—gentry clothing. A typical Polish plutocrat-landowner wears a four-cornered hat, a confederate cap, and traditional clothing. He has a moustache; he is fat with a bloated face. His physical state, that is, “bodily abundance,” is probably a result of a lack of modesty in the matter of a diet. He can afford living a lavish life because he is a bloodsucker who exploits peasant classes with deliberation. He is an iconic representative of the leading class, fed with harm of the working population. At the same time, this is a grotesque figure—not a dreadful opponent, but rather a caricature of *ancien régime* (cf. Jarecka 2008:220-223).

Poster 29.



Peasant! A Polish landowner wants to make a slave out of you.

Poster 30. (cf. Poster 21)⁶



Ukraine bread.

A typical strategy in case of many conflicts, especially when it comes to representing them, comprises depicting an enemy as a representative of more mediocre species of fauna. Posters 26 and 28 represent a Polish opponent as a pig and a dog. The purpose of this **animalization** (cf. “animalistic perspective” [Konecki 2005]) is to **dehumanize** the enemy, which is not human as a result of this procedure, but rather a sum of negative connotations connected with the traditional understanding of animal attributes and “personalities.” A dog and a pig are impure animals, often located at the bottom of the hierarchy of the living, especially in Eastern traditions.

Polish Case

“Wild barbarians”—these are the words that describe the way in which Polish authors of propagating posters depict the opponents of their homeland.

⁶ Posters 21 and 30 are an interesting example of the family of borrowing and references functioning. In this case, the level is drawn between “misdeeds” of internal enemy (kulak) and those of external enemy (Pole).

The Soviet aggressor is a creature of bloodthirsty instincts. A stranger from an “uncivilized world”: a murderer, brute, rapist, and destroyer (cf. Jarecka 2008:200-213). His patrons are also “hellish” **beasts**, bringing death and destruction.

While in the cases of Soviets depicting the enemy we experience animalization of the opponent, domestic authors go “a step further.” Animalization is replaced here with another category—**demonization** of the aggressor (Jarecka 2008:213-220). Demon is “something

Poster 34.



Bolshevik creature.

Poster 35.



His program.

Poster 36. (see also Poster 40)



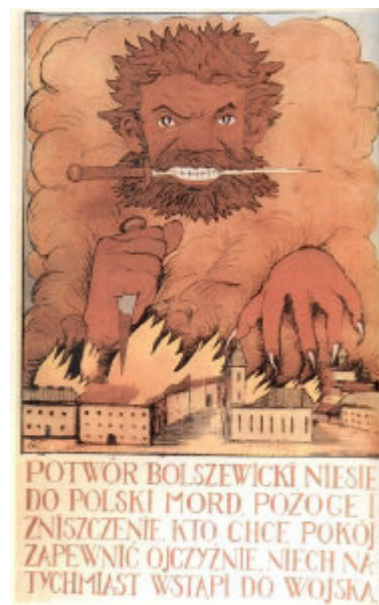
Bolshevik freedom.

Poster 31.



He who believes in God.

Poster 32.



Bolshevik creature brings murder, conflagration, and destruction to Poland.

Poster 33. (cf. Poster 17)



The enemy is coming—see what he holds.

⁷ “If anyone saw this wave of Bolsheviks approaching us, they would have to be surprised with their appearance, as some were barefoot, others in slippers, others in some kind of rubber shoes, with hats on their heads, even female ones, winter caps or headscarves, or they went with bare heads, only their hair floated. They looked like some **demons**. Their guns hanged on ropes, or they did not have any ropes at all, but they had a lot of ammo in their pockets and they shot well.” From the memories of platoon sergeant Franciszek Krzystyniak (Knyt 2005:19).

⁸ Poster 35 focuses, like a lens, iconic imaginations of the enemy and (almost archetypical) fears that these imaginations are accompanied by. The beast of the revolution is therefore a creature “not from this world”—an exemplification of evil, a devil or its work. Co-passengers of this revolutionary vehicle comprise wild Asians (“Bashkirs and chinks in a red cheka”), a political commissioner (“Commissionaire at a disciplinarian shall get his whip going”), ideologist-agitator (Trotsky?), revolutionary (“dyed”) German (sic!) officers and soldiers. The last case probably describes Ober-Ost—a German army that remained in the East—which is described by Norman Davies as: “some commentators tell that Hoffman [commander of the Ober-Ost army] played a double game; he was said to impel Bolsheviks for expansion towards the West, and Poles towards the East—hoping that he would earn on their conflict” (2006:40).

more” than even the most cunning, subservient, or stupid animal. This is a creature not of this world. That is why any human reactions are naturally strange to them. The only *raison d'être* of the demon is destruction and throwing the world into chaos. Only those that would entrust their faith to the Providence (see announcements on Posters 13 [*Under thy protection, We seek refuge*] and 31 [*He who believes in God*]) can effectively counter the power of evil. It is worth noticing that this motive, in its allegoric form, is strongly exhibited in Polish posters (see: Posters 11-13). The division line is clear—Christian frontiers of Western civilization, turned towards God, counter rhetorically atheist hordes of the “wild West,” which serve Satan.

The outlined axis of the conflict between Christian frontiers of the West and non-Christian, or rather anti-Christian “strangers,”

is emphasized by pointing one of the actors of this drama who actively creates the “Antichrist coalition.”

Poster 37.



Jewish hands again? Never ever!

Jew—an infidel—is a figure that perfectly fits the rhetoric of civilization war. He is identified (a red star inscribed in the Star of David, drawing of a star on a red banner, shadow of a Soviet soldier) with a strange aggressor, and even with a demonic creature (Poster 37). He is definitely reprehensible as he is a kind of a “fifth column” in the conflict.⁹

⁹ “And here we reached the square of Kremlin, right after a wooden cross there is a delegation of Revolutionary Committee, its deputy and several hundreds of local inhabitants. Of course, all of them, almost with no exception, were raven-haired with aquiline noses. President of the Committee holds some kind of a tray with some bread on it. Giving me this gift...he welcomed our army as a winning army of Trotsky, which gives freedom to the working masses of the whole world. Paying this tribute, he gives the bread, about which he said that revolutionary army will have enough of it within the area of white Poland...We needed to thank the comrade president and the comrades immediately.” From the memories of lieutenant Stanisław Lis-Błoński (Knyt 2005:126).

Poster 38. (see also Poster 33)



Help! Everything for the front! Everyone to the front!

Image of “One’s Own”

A war poster, similarly to a coin, consists of an obverse and a reverse. Countenance is ascribed to an enemy, but also to a brother in arms. Who is this “one’s own,” what are his attributes? A lot has been already said and shown in this article about it. However, it is worth systematizing and completing the dispersed observations.

Exemplum

In both Polish and Soviet cases, the main, positive characters of the drama are the representatives of the **lower classes**: workers, peasants, soldiers, and, to a smaller extent, their leaders (e.g., Poster 16 and 17). Actors of the drama carry easily recognizable

stigmata—symbols of the class affiliation. Posters 14 and 15 (*Hey! Every Pole gets a bayonet!* and *Every house shall be our castle*) depict the representatives of

working classes (workers, peasants), and, first of all (especially in the Polish case), ordinary soldiers acting hand in hand.

Poster 39.



Take arms. Let's save the homeland!

In the Soviet posters, actors of the drama represent similar environments, with a difference that peasants as positive heroes are shown relatively seldom. Characters in the foreground comprise workers (Posters 5, 9, 10). This is a significant difference. The industrial-revolutionary project versus traditional-national myth, this is the main axis of the conflict and actors depicted in the pictures that reflects this different perspective. The first of the generated categories, “continuity versus continuation and avant-garde versus revolution,” clearly emphasizes the dominating attitudes of the actors. Soviet eulogists of a “new tomorrow” usually comprise **deprived of any doubts, courageous, vigorous, and certain** revolutionists (Posters 2, 4, 10, 24). Agitators, soldiers, and workers have a clear task and a historic mission to fulfill, so any doubts are alien to

them. A group of Poles comprises, first of all, **determined and at the same time extremely exhausted** defenders of the country (Posters 11, 38, 39, 40). **Effort and suffering** are a part of a soldier’s faith, they are also a sign of defiance accompanying the defenders trying to save the country from the flow from the East, and as a consequence, from another loss of independence. Because there is no sacrifice that would be too big in the face of obvious threat to the nation’s being.

However, regardless of the distribution of stress, it virtually is a general war, a total 20th century war, activating masses and expecting engagement from them. It is not important that the mass hero (in the sense of quantity of the presented characters) is depicted less often than a single actor.

Poster 40.



Take arms! Enroll in the Voluntary Army!

Poster 41.



Here, this is what your ideas end with.

Poster 42.



Take arms! Our homeland calls you!

Well, art of a poster has its right and encourages rather a synthesis than a fictional debauchery. Synthetic representation (through showing a “particular” actor with their recognizable stigmata, and at the same time through those stigmata deeply placed within a given culture and discourse) takes such notions from the mass of meanings and references, which are easily recognizable by an “ordinary” recipient. This is a peculiar *punctum* of a “broad” landscape of a war (cf. Barthes 1995).

By the way, it is worth noticing that in order to fulfill a demand for taking part in a fight universally, each of the parties presented the consequences of not having this engagement.

Poster 43.¹⁰



What are you waiting for?

¹⁰ Poster 43 is the only poster available to the author in the Polish collection of posters, which is formally responsible for a comic style, broadly used by the Soviet Party.



Poster 8. (repeated)

R.S.F.S.R. Proletarians of all countries, join together! / A story about upstarts and a woman that would not like to accept the Republic.

In both cases, the peasants are characterized by passive attitudes, and probably the thing that the war agitators had the most problems with, referred to activation of this class. At the same time, it is clearly seen that the peasant sacrifice, despite participating directly in a fight, is to comprise contribution including fruit of their labor. Indirectly, creators of the posters point to one more enemy which was equally rough for both sides—hunger.

Strategic Conversion

The term **strategic conversion** means here a conscious borrowing of symbols, language, and meanings that

belong and refer to the enemy’s world (values, standards, ideology, and argumentation). It means a (temporary) suspension of some axiological assumptions (e.g., program atheism) in order to win favor with the masses, which, for instance, out of the devotion to tradition or an outlook on life, could be hostile or skeptical towards concepts promoted by the authorities. The mentioned social engineering technique is never a main course of fighting for a “line of souls” because it brings the embers of a riot against the promoted doctrine. It holds strategic and assisting functions in emergency situations, when every person (and a gun) can decide about a success or a failure.

Poster 44.¹¹



Oppressors torture Ukraine. Death to the oppressors!

¹¹ The reproduction comes from the book by Aleksandra Julia Leinwand (2008, an iconographic attachment).

Poster 45.¹²



Polish vandalism.

¹² Source of reproduction: Leinwand (2008).

Poster 46.



Together brothers!

In the tie of emergency, agitators of the Soviet Russia did not hesitate to come back to the rejected and reviled “God-homeland” rhetoric. The crucified (by an executioner—a Polish lord and Petlura, his Praetorian guard) Ukraine and a blown up Orthodox Church¹³ (sic!) for sure belong to a discourse different from that of Soviet-revolutionary character. Similarly, using a language (and specific clothing) of the inhabitants of Eastern frontiers by a Polish propagator, leaves no doubts when it comes to the intentions that the picture was created with.

Summary

In conclusion of the deliberations on representations of a Polish-Soviet conflict in posters, it is worth conducting some kind of a synthesis of the contents and meanings that are comprised within them. Integration of categories is a process that orders the dispersed theses, is a useful and necessary procedure,

¹³ Poster 45 is a specific eclectic masterpiece. Next to an Orthodox church—comprised within an old symbolic-normative order—a fallen down pole of electric traction is presented in the foreground—a symbol of progress and achievements of the new authorities.

not only with regard to the used method of analysis (here: the grounded theory). Therefore, holding to a frame of division regarding the “Soviet case” versus “Polish case” criterion, we can come to the conclusions listed below.

War, from the perspective of Soviet propagators, is, first of all, a historic mission, going far beyond a “classic” conflict of hostile countries. An avant-garde form of representations cooperates here with an innovative concept of a designed social order. Not only Poland is an enemy (state), but also a class of oppressors (“Polish lord,” landowner, an internal class enemy, capitalist, Entente). Form of a message (e.g., Abstractionism, Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism) cannot be less important than “glowing” future concepts.

Marxists used to incorporate and understand, in their own way (in a *vulgaris* version), the theory of evolution willingly. A “natural” law of replacing less complex forms (simple and “primitive”) with more specialized ones (here: “more perfect”) is expressed in a way of presenting an opponent. Forms of life that are old and not so well adjusted to the new reality are doomed to failure. It is not a coincidence that the enemies are represented in forms of “lower” beings (dogs, pigs, worms), and apologists of the new order are almost perfect creatures (strong fighters with no disabilities). By the way, this way of representation is not contrary to traditional and relatively common images of an enemy (cf. animalization).

However, rarely, out of opportunistic reasons, the past, traditions, the old world of values and symbols

can be used instrumentally, in order to encourage unstable or resistant individuals and social groups (strategic conversion). Polish propagators used symbols, meanings, and forms that were borrowed by history and tradition. It is common to refer to 18th and (more often) 19th century techniques of depicting. “God-homeland” rhetoric, with all consequences, seems to dominate, and it has its explanation. What could the authors of the poster refer to? Only to romantic (formally conventionalized) visions or to the newly-Polish (livened up by the impressionist unrest) transformations of these visions. God, Nation, Homeland (all with capital letters) determined the framework of the world that was worth defending effort. A basic task was here to create a given (imagined) order. An “arrow of time” is undoubtedly turned backwards here.

Independence—predicted by a prophet, which means that it was regained by the will of God—can only be lost as a result of a conspiracy of the devil (not Christian) powers, negating all sanctities of the red atheists and infidels (e.g., Jews). Demonization of the enemy is a completely understandable procedure under such circumstances.

Threat to the state and national existence is real, so mobilization of all live power (masses: simple soldiers and peasants) is a necessary condition for an effective defense. Defiance against the invader is atoned with extreme effort, pain, suffering, and sometimes it means the greatest sacrifice.

Agitation (from time to time) used to be directed towards unstable individuals (mainly peasants) or non-Polish citizens of Poland.

This article presents several capacious categories that emerged while analyzing a relatively rich collection of posters. Could we propose different ones? Of course. Data should be coded in many possible ways, which often results in discovering new categories and their properties. Moreover, the permanent coding and recoding demand was fulfilled by the author. However, eventually, some motives or topics (never mind the names) emerged multiple times. It confirmed the researcher in his belief that, finally, the obtained categories are strongly supported by data. After all, a poster may be perceived and analyzed as an artistic work, historic document, ideological manifesto, an artifact showing unconscious motives of actions, a tool of mass communication and manipulation in many different ways. It is impossible to count all aspects and variants. The conducted analysis is one of many possible, and its significance can come not so much from the originality of the theses, as from the fact of their constant confronting with a systematically enriched and recoded collection of data (posters).

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¹⁴Participants of the research seminar comprised: Małgorzata Akonom, Kamila Becherka, Agnieszka Brożyńska, Monika Ciepielak, Marta Gamoń, Olga Garbarska, Magdalena Gołos, Aleksandra Kurkiewicz, Maciej Małek, Ewa Mróz, Kamil Podawca, Marta Pokorska, Anna Sałacińska, Anna Sekielska, Katarzyna Smalczyk, Iwona Stelmasiak, Marta Twardowska, Bartosz Zadworski, Anna Zamolska, Ewelina Ziótek.

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Appendix: Posters presented in the text.

Poster 1.

Niech żyje Polska Socjalistyczna Republika Rad! (*Long Live the Polish Socialist Republic of Boards!*), author unknown, Russia, year 1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 2.

Z drogi (*Make Way*), author unknown, Russia, <http://www.sovietposters.com> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 3.

Tow. Lenin zmiata z Ziemi śmieci (*Comrade Lenin Sweeps Rubbish From Earth*), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1920, <http://www.plakaty.ru> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 4.

Na polski front! (*To the Polish Line!*), Iwan A. Maljutin, Russia, year 1920, <http://www.plakaty.ru> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 5.

Trzeba pracować. Strzelba czeka przy boku (*We Need to Work. A Gun is Waiting at Your Side*), Włodzimierz W. Lebediew, Russia, year 1920, <http://www.sovietposters.com> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 6.

Czerwonym klinem uderzaj w białych (*Hit the White With Red Wedge*), El (Łazar) Lissitzky, Russia, year 1920, <http://www.sovietposters.com> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 7.

Zawarliśmy pokój z Polską... (*We Made Peace With Poland...*), Włodzimierz Majakowski, Russia, year 1920, <http://www.plakaty.ru> (retrieved August 2011).

Poster 8.

R.S.F.S.R. Proletariusze wszystkich krajów łączcie się! / Opowieść o publicznych i babie, która nie chciała uznać republiki (*R.S.F.S.R. Proletarians of All Countries, Join Together! / A Story About Upstarts and a Woman That Would Not Like to Accept the Republic*), Michaił Czeremnych, Russia, year 1920, <http://www.sovietposters.com> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 9.

VIII zjazd napędza Rosję... (*8th Convention Powers Russia...*), Iwan A. Maljutin, Russia, year 1920, <http://www.plakaty.ru> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 10.

Każde uderzenie młota – uderzeniem we wroga! (*Each Hit of a Hammer is Hitting the Enemy!*), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw, also in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw.

Poster 11.

Polonia, Stanisław Bagieński, Poland, period of the World War I (actually, a picture copied for propagating purposes), copy in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw.

Poster 12.

Ojczyzna wzywa was! (*Your Homeland Calls You!*), Bogdan Nowakowski, Poland, year 1918, in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw.

Poster 13.

Pod Twoją obronę uciekamy się (*Under thy Protection, We seek Refuge!*), Karol Maszkowski, Poland, year 1919/1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 14.

Hej! Kto Polak na bagnety! (*Hey! Every Pole Gets a Bayonet!*) Kamil Mackiewicz, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence Traditions in Lodz, also in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw and the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 15.

Nam twierdzą będzie każdy próg (*Every Home Will Be Our Castle*), Kamil Mackiewicz, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum, also in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw.

Poster 16.

Józef Piłsudski. Naczelnik Państwa i Naczelny Wódz – Pierwszy Marszałek Polski (*Józef Piłsudski. Prefect of State and the First Leader*

Dymarczyk, Waldemar. 2014. "The War on the Wall. Polish and Soviet War Posters Analysis." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 10(4):6-31. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php).

—*the First Marshal of Poland*), author unknown, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw.

Poster 17.

Józef Piłsudski, Władysław Skoczylas, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw.

Poster 18.

Liga narodów. Kapitałiści wszystkich krajów łączcie się! (League of Nations. Capitalists From All Countries Join Together!), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1919, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 19.

Śmierć światowemu imperializmowi (Death of the World Imperialism), Dimitri S. Moor (Orłow), Russia, year 1919, <http://www.sovietposters.com> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 20.

Manifest. Cała władza w ręce obszarników i kapitalistów (Manifesto. All Power For Landowners and Capitalists), author unknown, Russia, <http://www.sovietposters.com> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 21.

Chlebowy pająk. Kulak – pożeracz pokoju (Bread Spider. Kulak—Devourer of Peace), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1921, <http://www.sovietposters.com> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 22.

Król i bandyta (A King and a Thug), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1922, in: A. J. Leinwand *Czerwonym młotem w orla białego (The Red Hammer Hits the White Eagle)*, Warsaw, 2008.

Poster 23.

Za polskim panem idzie rosyjski obszarnik (Russian Landowner Goes After a Polish Lord), P. Abramow, Russia, year 1920, http://www.wceo.wp.mil.pl/plik/file/WYSTAWY/Polsko-sowiecka%20wojna%20na%20plakaty_1920.pdf (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 24.

Stój na straży! (Guard!), Dmitri Moor (Orłow), Russia, year 1920, <http://gallerix.ru/storeroom/> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 25.

Ostatnia godzina (The Last Hour), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1920, http://dl.lib.brown.edu/Views_and_

[Reviews/date_lists/1918-25.html](http://www.sovietposters.com/reviews/date_lists/1918-25.html) (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 26.

Świnia tresowana w Paryżu (A Pig Trained in Paris), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1920, <http://www.sovietposters.com> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 27.

Język ligi narodów (Language of the League of Nations), Włodzimierz Majakowski, Russia, year 1920, <http://www.sovietposters.com> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 28.

Jaśnie wielmożna Polska. Ostatni pies Ententy (Her Ladyship Poland. The Last Dog of Entente), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 29.

Chłopi! Polski obszarnik chce cię uczynić niewolnikiem (Peasant! A Polish Landowner Wants to Make a Slave Out of You), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 30.

Ukraiński chleb (Ukraine Bread), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 31.

Kto w Boga wierzy... (He Who Believes in God), author unknown, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw, also in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 32.

Potwór bolszewicki niesie do Polski mord, pożogę i zniszczenie (Bolshevik Creature Brings Murder, Conflagration, and Destruction to Poland), author: A. L., Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw.

Poster 33.

Wróg nadchodzi – patrz co niesie! (The Enemy Is Coming—See What He Holds), Piotr Danya, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw, also in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw.

Poster 34.

Potwór bolszewicki (Bolshevik Creature), author unknown, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw, also in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 35.

Jego program (His Program), author unknown, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw, also in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 36.

Wolność bolszewicka (Bolshevik Freedom), author: „mjk,” Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence, also in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 37.

Znowu łapy Żydowskie? Nie, przynigdy! (Jewish Hands Again? Never ever!), Piotr Danya, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 38.

Na pomoc! Wszystko dla frontu! Wszyscy na front! (Help! Everything For the Front! Everyone To the Front!), Edmund Bartłomiejczyk, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 39.

Do broni. Ratujmy Ojczyznę! (Take Arms! Let's Save the Homeland!), author: „Manon,” Poland, year 1920, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Polish-Soviet_War (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 40.

Do broni! Wstępujcie do armii ochotniczej! (Take Arms! Enroll in the Voluntary Army!), author: J. P., Poland, year 1920, in the

collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw, also in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw.

Poster 41.

Oto czym kończą się pańskie pomysły (Here, This Is What Your Ideas End With), author unknown, Russia, year 1920, <http://hoohila.stanford.edu/poster/> (retrieved August 20, 2011).

Poster 42.

Do broni! Ojczyzna was wzywa! (Take Arms! Our Homeland Calls You!), Zygmunt Kamiński, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence in Warsaw, also in the collection of the Polish Army Museum.

Poster 43.

Na co wy czekacie? (What Are You Waiting For?), Tadeusz Waśkowski, Poland, year 1920, in the collection of the Museum of Independence Traditions in Lodz.

Poster 44.

Oprawcy dręczą Ukrainę. Śmierć oprawcom! (Oppressors Torture Ukraine. Death To the Oppressors!), Wiktor N. Deni (Denisow), Russia, year 1920, in: A. J. Leinwand *Czerwonym młotem w orla białego (The Red Hammer Hits the White Eagle)*, Warsaw, 2008.

Poster 45.

Wandalizm Polski (Polish Vandalism), Piotr Alakrinskij, Russia, year 1920, in: A. J. Leinwand *Czerwonym młotem w orla białego (The Red Hammer Hits the White Eagle)*, Warsaw, 2008.

Poster 46.

Razem bracia! (Together Brothers!), Zdzisław Gedliczka, Poland, year 1920, reproduction in the collection of the author.