

# Michał Bruliński

---

## Chopin on Barricades: About the 100th Anniversary of Chopin's Birth (1949) and Socialist Realism Doctrine in Poland

---

Kwartalnik Młodych Muzykologów UJ nr No. 36 (1), 77-114

---

2018

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

# Michał Bruliński

---

UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

## Chopin on Barricades: About the 100th Anniversary of Chopin's Birth (1949) and Socialist Realism Doctrine in Poland<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

---

The main aim of this paper is to examine the discourse on Frédéric Chopin that took place in Poland in 1949, when the 100th anniversary of his birth coincided with the culmination of the socialist realist propaganda in the field of Polish culture. The discourse, initiated and moderated under effective surveillance of the Polish People's Republic's government, was filled with communist ideology. The authorities aimed at creating a sense of communion in the Polish nation, therefore they undertook numerous actions in the area of cultivating memory of Chopin and reception of his works. The composer was used as a banner under which the culture of socialist realism was to be consolidated. Chopin was presented by the narrators in the socialist realist context in various dimensions. "Deep humanism", "truth", "optimism", "sincerity" and "democratic

---

<sup>1</sup> The text is the extensive development of the following article: M. Bruliński, *Chopin „socrealistyczny”? Rok 1949 w polskim dyskursie muzycznym*, [in:] *W kręgu kultury PRL. Muzyka—rodzaje i style*, K. Bittner, D. Skotarczak (eds.), Poznań 2017, pp. 52–68.

features” of Chopin’s music were the crucial notions used by them. Chopin was depicted, among others, as a revolutionist and a prophet of triumph of communism. The oeuvre of Chopin was said to bring together “fraternal countries and nations”, Polish People’s Republic and Soviet Union, while being simultaneously a crucial element of class conflict. The authorities had a tendency to overemphasize folk roots of his compositions, thus among musical genres composed by Chopin the importance of Mazurka was exaggerated. Other genres without such strong folk connotations, as sonatas, ballades and scherzos, were marginalized in the discourse.

## Keywords

---

socialist realism, socrealism, Fryderyk Chopin, Polish People’s Republic, 1949

Podnoszenie ludowych natchnień do potęgi,  
przenikającej i ogarniającej Ludzkość całą, podnoszenie  
ludowego do Ludzkości nie przez stosowanie zewnętrzne  
i koncesje formalne, ale przez wewnętrzny rozwój  
dojrzałości, oto jest, co wysłuchać daje się z muzyki  
Fryderyka jako zaśpiew na sztukę narodową.<sup>2</sup>  
(Cyprian Kamil Norwid)

Despite the fact that Norwid’s *intention auctoris* and *intention operis* are surely far from the pre-requisites of socialist realism, the given quotation—frequently used on the occasion of hundredth anniversary of Fryderyk Chopin’s death—can introduce the reader into the climate of musical discourse of 1949. What is surprising is the fact that among numerous papers devoted to the various aspects of Fryderyk Chopin’s output, there has been no attempt to examine carefully the socialist realist tale about Chopin at the time when the hundredth anniversary of the Polish composer’s death joined the apogee of ideological offensive in the field of culture in Poland. The aim of the following essay is to fill in this gap.

---

<sup>2</sup> C.K. Norwid, *Promethidion*, [in:] *idem, Pisma wybrane*, Vol. 2, *Poematy*, Warszawa 1968, p. 239.

The narration concerning Chopin in 1949 has been found in numerous anniversary publications (prepared for day rooms, for children and adults, for professional musicians and amateurs) and in the press (among others, “Trybuna Ludu”, “Życie Warszawy”, “Ruch Muzyczny” or “Życie Śpiewacze”). I have also searched for archival sources, mainly of Archive of New Acts (Archiwum Akt Nowych, further: AAN), film sources (*Młodość Chopina* by Aleksander Ford and fragments of Polish Film Chronicle), eventually brochures, concert programmes and other documents of social life. In the interdisciplinary sketch, I have tried to present the possibly consistent picture of all narrative topoi, which can be found in the discourse moderated by the government. I deliberately skipped the issues of “Polish” nationality of Chopin music in the analysis because they have been investigated several times.<sup>3</sup> I also have not prepared analyses of the works composed for the anniversary (Chopin’s works in transcription for choirs and orchestras, songs inspired by Chopin’s music) because they need their own detailed musicological studies. Nevertheless, I hope that the abovementioned elements will be truly examined in the near future.

Michał Głowiński pays attention to the fact that

in the field of the totalitarian form, the fact does not matter if it is not covered by the intrusively suggested meanings, if it is not the argument for the first assumed thesis.<sup>4</sup> Very frequently, the participation in the musical practice becomes only the pretext for different social demonstration in the particular historical moments.<sup>5</sup>

Such a “special moment” was, without doubt, Chopin’s Year 1949. For authorities of Polish People’s Republic the world of sounds was

<sup>3</sup> Especially willingly the issue of the “Polish” aspect of Chopin’s music was analysed by Zofia Lissa and Bohdan Pociąg. *Vide*: Z. Lissa, *Problem stylu narodowego w muzyce Chopina*, Warszawa 1955; B. Pociąg, *Polskość Chopina*, Warszawa 2011.

<sup>4</sup> M. Głowiński, *Rytuał i demagogia*, Warszawa 1992, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Orig. “w obrębie totalitarnej formy fakt się nie liczy, jeśli nie jest opleciony nachalnie podsuwanymi znaczeniami, jeśli nie jest argumentem za jakąś z góry przyjętą tezę. Bardzo często uczestnictwo w praktyce muzycznej staje się w szczególnych momentach historycznych jedynie pretekstem dla różnego rodzaju demonstracji obyczajowych”. G. Banaszak, *Współczesne formy kultury muzycznej*, Warszawa 1991, p. 62. Such phenomena were described in the valuable monograph written by I. Massaka. *Vide*: *eadem*, *Muzyka jako instrument wpływu politycznego*, Łódź 2009.

not important itself. What was implied in the semantic context was significant indeed. Therefore, the way of describing music and creating the memory of people connected with music was crucial.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of the government was to shape new, socialist culture. Their task was challenging: they not only had to stimulate creating new compositions of a wanted shape, but also to place the existing cultural heritage in the socialist realist schemes. The elements of culture, which cannot be placed in such schemes, were usually stigmatized and eliminated from its main trend. By building socialist realism, the government also had to create social consciousness of art. The work and person of Fryderyk Chopin became a part of this complicated puzzle. The narration concerning Chopin was shaped according to the generally accepted line of the cultural policy of the country.

Fryderyk Chopin is recognized as a symbol of Polish culture, but it is not compatible with either the acquaintance with his work or the vivid interest in his music. Chopin has been most frequently perceived through stereotypes and patriotic symbols, while his music remains unknown to many Polish citizens.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the study of the reception of Chopin's work is largely the study of collective social memory.

Collective social memory is one of the basic components of the group identity, as it legitimizes the value systems recognized by the member of a group.<sup>8</sup> As Andrzej Szpociński notices, "in the social memory, turning to the past is used for easily identified, practical purposes". First of all, "it is used to legitimise specific orders and provides the building material, necessary to construct the collective identity".<sup>9</sup> In addition, social memory, through which group interests and values are expressed, "is to a large extent the deteriorate, falsified and mystified knowledge". Therefore, "it is sometimes assumed that there is only one history, and the memories of the past are as many as groups referring

---

<sup>6</sup> Compare: J. Kmita, *Kultura jako rzeczywistość myślowa*, [in:] *Teoria kultury a badania nad zjawiskami artystycznymi*, T. Kostyrko (ed.), Warszawa 1983, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Compare: B. Pabjan, *Recepcja postaci i twórczości Chopina we współczesnym społeczeństwie polskim*, [in:] *Chopin w kulturze polskiej*, M. Gołąb (ed.), Wrocław 2009, p. 110.

<sup>8</sup> A. Szpociński, *Przeszłość jako przedmiot przekazu*, Warszawa 2006, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Orig. "w pamięci społecznej zwracanie się ku przeszłości służy łatwo dającym się wytropić praktycznym celom [...] używane jest do legitymizacji określonych porządków oraz dostarcza budulca niezbędnego przy konstruowaniu tożsamości zbiorowej". *Ibid.*, p. 19.

to it and taking it for their own use”.<sup>10</sup> Social memory does not always have to be a historical fraud. Often, the narrative language is poetised, and thus full of symbols and metaphors. Abuses usually consist of selection and skilful display of relevant facts.

### Short sketch of history

For the first two years after the end of the war, Polish people had to struggle with numerous problems of material and existential nature.<sup>11</sup> As it was impossible to satisfy everyday life's needs, art often remained in the background; however, the culture in Polish People's Republic was from the very beginning very important for both the ruling and the ruled ones.<sup>12</sup> For the government, who especially during the Stalinist period cared for the consolidation and integration of society, culture became a field of struggle for the formation of a new man.

In the first years of the existence of Polish People's Republic, the power initiated new cultural institutions, and from 1948 began to synchronise their activities and total subordination of ideology.<sup>13</sup> Then, inspired by the guidelines from Moscow, the Polish governors came to the conclusion that the “far-advanced eclecticism, resulting from the lack of a clear concept in realizing the principles of socialist realism in art” should be cut down.<sup>14</sup> The Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, pointing out the tasks for 1949, included there

---

<sup>10</sup> Orig. “jest w znacznej mierze wiedzą ułomną, sfalszowaną, mistyfikowaną”. Dlatego też „przyjmuje się niekiedy, że historia jest jedna, pamięci przeszłości zaś tyle, ile grup odwołujących się do niej i zawłaszczających ją na swój użytek”. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> Vide: M. Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Kraków 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Vide: A. Idzikowska-Czubaj, *Rock w PRL-u. O paradoksach współistnienia*, Poznań 2011, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> The detailed information concerning the structures of musical institutions in Poland at the discussed time can be found in: AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII/75, *Wydział Kultury—Sektor Kulturalno-Oświatowy. Pracownicze Związki Artystyczne*, card 1.

<sup>14</sup> W. Sokorski, *Sztuka w walce o socjalizm*, Warszawa 1950, p. 156.

the promotion of socialism among the broad masses, educating them in the spirit of patriotism and international solidarity of the proletariat, and making the masses resistant to bourgeois cosmopolitanism, the influence of the ideology and propaganda of the enemy.<sup>15</sup>

On the contrary, the basic element of the artists' mission was to create fundamentals for the culture and art of socialism. The aim of the new art was to

take over the great achievements of the progressive artists of the past, refer to materialistic, humanistic and democratic traditions, fight for the creation of new forms for the new content of social life, develop content and forms reflecting the needs and aspirations of the millions of working people, forms, which are close and understandable for them.<sup>16</sup>

The apogee of the ideological offensive in the field of music was reached during the Congress of Polish Composers in Łągów, which took place on 5–8th August 1949. After the Congress, the final stage of socialist realism in the musical culture of Polish People's Republic began. The extremely important magazines—“Ruch Muzyczny”<sup>17</sup> and independent “Kwartalnik Muzyczny” were closed. Instead, “Muzyka” was created in 1950, where the traces of the intellectual polyphony disappeared.

---

<sup>15</sup> Orig. “popularyzowanie socjalizmu wśród szerokich mas, wychowanie ich w duchu patriotyzmu i internacjonalistycznej solidarności proletariatu oraz uodparnianie mas ludowych wobec burżuazyjnego kosmopolityzmu, wpływu mieszczańskiej ideologii i propagandy wroga”. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII/17, *Wydział Kultury, Sektor Kulturalno-Oświatowy. Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych*, card 50.

<sup>16</sup> Orig. “przejąć wielki dorobek postępowych twórców przeszłości, nawiązywać do tradycji materialistycznych, humanistycznych i demokratycznych, walczyć o stworzenie nowych form dla nowej treści życia społecznego, rozwijać treść i formy odzwierciedlające potrzeby i dążenia milionowych mas ludzi pracy, formy bliskie i zrozumiałe dla nich”. AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII/75, *Wydział Kultury, Pracownicze Związki Artystyczne 1948–50*, card 36.

<sup>17</sup> At that time edited by Stefan Kisielewski.

Numerous studies have been devoted to socialist art in the Eastern bloc.<sup>18</sup> The development of socialist realism was said to have been the fruit of the class struggle. The important element was the national character of the created works, constantly contrasted with “imperialist, American cosmopolitanism”. Folklore was inextricably linked to the national character of the work, called “the most perfect quintessence of national ideas in music”.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, every work of socialist realist art should bring the latest achievements of high culture to the masses in an accessible and intelligible form.

The art of the Stalinist period was characterized by pathos, monumentalism and sublimity. This pathos was supposed to be a combination of such qualities in the work of art (and in its reception) as: beauty, fear, pleasure, bewilderment, delight, horror.<sup>20</sup> The creation of socialist realist art could not be isolated from the realities of social life. Its task was to “remake and excite a man”, while rejecting “all passivity, pessimism and apathy”.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, formalism and abstraction have become hostile concepts. It should also be kept in mind that in the understanding of the Polish People’s Republic’s government, socialist realism was to be not so much an aesthetic concept as “the only scientific cognitive method”.<sup>22</sup>

If we try to apply the above postulates to music, the issue becomes significantly complicated. It is difficult to distinguish genres, forms or features specific to musical socialist realism. Although vocal and vocal-instrumental music was promoted, as—according to the ideolo-

<sup>18</sup> Vide e.g. *Polski socrealizm. Antologia publicystyki społeczno-kulturalnej z lat 1948–1957*, L. Lachowiecki, T. Markiewicz, M. Paczkowski (eds.), Warszawa 1988; W. Włodarczyk, *Socrealizm. Sztuka polska w latach 1950–1954*, Kraków 1991; K. Śliwińska, *Socrealizm w PRL i NRD*, Poznań 2006; S. Kukurowski, *Nie tylko socrealizm. O tzw. literaturze propagandowej, tendencyjnej i zaangażowanej*, Wrocław 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Orig. “najdoskonalsza kwintesencja wyobrażeń narodowych w muzyce”. Z. Lissa, *O stylu narodowym*, [in:] *O społecznych problemach muzyki. Antologia tekstów autorów polskich*, M. Demska-Trębacz (ed.), Warszawa 1994, p. 133.

<sup>20</sup> Vide: *Socrealizm? Dyskusja redakcyjna: Michał Bristiger, Andrzej Mencwel, Stefan Morawski, Wojciech Tomasiak, Władysław Malinowski*, “De Musica” 2002, No. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Orig. “przerobienie i porwanie człowieka [...] wszelkiej bierności, pesymizmu i apatii”. *Z przemówienia Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Bolesława Bieruta na otwarciu radiostacji we Wrocławiu w dniu 16 listopada 1947 roku*, “Przegląd Artystyczny. Pismo Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków” 1950, No. 2, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Orig. “jedyną naukową metodą poznawczą”. W. Sokorski, *op. cit.*, p. 190.



gists—the text was crucial for the art of music, but for obvious reasons the notion of socialist realism in music could not be defined by the used instrumentation. The same applies to the general slogans present in the rich literature of the subject, such as: “love for melody”, “simplicity”, “humanism”, “revolutionary character” or “folk inspirations”. As a result, in the face of the impossibility to fully and unmistakably use the socialist realism’s assumptions in musical practice, the external narrative of the musical work gained immense significance.

The socialist storm in the world of culture coincided with the hundredth anniversary of Fryderyk Chopin’s death in 1949.<sup>23</sup> On the occasion of the anniversary, the Honorary Committee of the Chopin Year was established<sup>24</sup> under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Members of the Government and representatives of art and science invited by the Prime Minister comprised the Committee. It also included the *udarniki* from Żelazowa Wola and the surrounding area.<sup>25</sup> The Executive Committee of the Chopin Year was also created, with the Minister of Culture and Art, Stefan Dybowski as the chairman, and composed of representatives of authorities, artistic and scientific institutions as well as associations and musical trade unions.<sup>26</sup> The committee’s numerous tasks included:

caring for the collective edition of Fryderyk Chopin’s works, publishing monographs and scientific works related to the life and work of Fryderyk Chopin, releasing publications addressed to the widest societies of working people in towns and villages and to young people, organizing artistic events at home and abroad, conventions, exhibitions and congresses, piano and chamber competitions, organizing an international competition for a film novella about Chopin for the

---

<sup>23</sup> The detailed plan of the events of the festivity can be found in: *Rok Chopinowski w 1949 w Polsce*, Komitet Wykonawczy Roku Chopinowskiego 1949 (eds.), Warszawa 1949; M. Fik, *Kultura polska po Jalcie. Kronika lat 1944–1981*, pp. 112–130.

<sup>24</sup> *Vide: Rok Chopinowski w 1949 w Polsce, op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> *Vide: W komitecie Roku Szopenowskiego zasiadają przodownicy pracy*, “*Życie Warszawy*” 1949, No. 50, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> In the Committee there were, among others, Piotr Perkowski (earlier chairman of the Polish Composers’ Union), Zofia Lissa (musicologist), Witold Rudziński (composer), Zbigniew Drzewiecki, Stanisław Szpinalski and Henryk Sztompka (pianists). However, there were also “guardians of ideology”. Compare: AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 747, *Rok Chopinowski. Uchwały, zarządzenia, regulaminy*, card 82.

realisation of a full-length film, a competition for the project of the Chopin monument in Warsaw's Łazienki and a competition for the symbol and poster of the Chopin Year.<sup>27</sup>

The Executive Committee was also indirectly responsible for the other events planned for the Chopin Year.<sup>28</sup> Summing up, all cultural activities

undertaken in the country from May 1948 to 31st December 1949 by the state, a local government or national authorities, institutions or organizations in order to commemorate Fryderyk Chopin's memory should be coordinated with the activity of the National Executive Committee of the Chopin Year and obtain its approval.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, the Fryderyk Chopin Institute was responsible for renovating a manor house in Żelazowa Wola, publishing Chopin's works, enlarging its own collections, co-organizing the 4th Fryderyk Chopin International Piano Competition, the creation of a library with the best recordings of the composer's works, the publication of monographic works relating to Chopin and the design of jubilee postage stamps.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Orig. "opieka nad wydaniem zbiorowym dzieł Fryderyka Chopina, wydawanie prac monograficznych i naukowych związanych z życiem i twórczością Fryderyka Chopina, publikowanie wydawnictw skierowanych do najszerszych warstw ludu pracującego miast i wsi oraz do młodzieży, organizowanie imprez artystycznych w kraju i za granicą, zjazdów, wystaw oraz kongresów, konkursów pianistycznych i kameralnych, zorganizowanie międzynarodowego konkursu na nowelę filmową o Chopinie dla realizacji pełnometrażowego filmu, konkursu na projekt pomnika Chopina w warszawskich Łazienkach oraz konkursu na symbol i plakat Roku Chopinowskiego". Resolution of the Council of Ministers from 20.03.1949 about the "Chopin Year", as cited in: *Rok Chopinowski 1949 w Polsce, op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> *Rok Chopinowski 1949 w Polsce, op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Orig. "podejmowana w kraju w czasie od maja 1948 do 31.XII.1949 przez władze, instytucje lub organizacje państwowe, samorządowe czy społeczne w celu uczczenia pamięci Fryderyka Chopina powinna być skoordynowana z działalnością ogólnopolskiego Komitetu Wykonawczego Roku Chopinowskiego i uzyskać jego aprobatę".

<sup>30</sup> The details of the Project of the Institute of Fryderyk Chopin for 1949 can be found in: M. Idzikowski, *Rok Chopinowski w programie Instytutu Fryderyka Chopina*, Warszawa 1949.

The governors controlled the texts that had appeared in print in an extremely precise and methodical way. Only in the Ministry of Culture several faculties from various departments were in charge of this task. The level of control is evidenced by, among others, a huge number of newspaper cuttings in archives; almost all of them have been carefully commented.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, in each issue of the “Bulletin of the Chopin Year” edited by the Executive Committee of the Chopin Year, based on which all official media information related to the celebrations were created, interesting press article analyses, often somehow humorous, can be found.<sup>32</sup>

### Chopin and “humanistic” music

According to the doctrine of socialist realism, art should “tear a man out of tragic solitude”, be true, honest, optimistic, understandable and “deeply human”.<sup>33</sup> Speaking to a man in a simple, understandable way—with clear references and positive emotions—it was supposed to fill him with joy and hope. For this reason, the form was supposed to be completely subordinated to this “deeply human content”.

All these elements of socialist realist were found by the narrators in Chopin’s works. The Russians were at the forefront in presenting the “humanistic” aspect of his work. Konstantin Igumnov wrote about Chopin as “the most realistic among all Romantics, a sincere and true opponent of music that lacks substance, is speculative and abstract”.<sup>34</sup> Dmitry Kabalevsky also spoke in a similar spirit.<sup>35</sup> About “the humanistic, honest truth of feelings, dreams of the future, simplicity and strength, folk fire and whispered by pure feeling, born of life melody in Chopin’s music” Dmitry Shostakovich wrote as well.<sup>36</sup> Of course, passages dealing with the truth in Chopin’s music cannot be disqualified

<sup>31</sup> AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 762, *Departament Twórczości Artystycznej, Wydział Twórczości Muzycznej. Wycinki prasowe*; AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 747, *Departament Twórczości Artystycznej, Wydział Twórczości Muzycznej. Rok Chopinowski*, card 101.

<sup>32</sup> AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 762, *Departament Twórczości Artystycznej, Wydział Twórczości Muzycznej. Wycinki prasowe*, card 38.

<sup>33</sup> W. Sokorski, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> K. Igumnov, *O Chopinie*, “Sovetskaya Muzyka” 1949, No. 10.

<sup>35</sup> D. Kabalevsky for: *Żywa współczesna sztuka*, “Literaturnaya Gazeta” 15.10.1949.

<sup>36</sup> D. Shostakovich for: *ibid.*, p. 309.

from the spot as aesthetic distortions or historical abuses. However, the ideological context in which they were placed was decisive. It is difficult to avoid associations with politics in a situation when Chopin's articles are adjacent in the newspaper with texts proclaiming "praise of dissemination of music in the Soviet Union" or "successes in the field of ideological struggle for truth in art".

Chopin's "humanism" was to refer primarily to the emotions allegedly present in the composer's works. In a speech inaugurating the celebrations of the Chopin Year of 1949, President Bolesław Bierut stated that "the brilliant compositional mastery of Fryderyk Chopin is based on the true power of feelings present in his musical works".<sup>37</sup> Even in professional music press, which was susceptible to influence of ideology to a much smaller extent than daily press, there are passages in the spirit of socialist realism, treating Chopin's music as "forms of general human culture, which bring work and joy to millions of people, teaches how to love beauty and awakens the richness of talents of the masses of people".<sup>38</sup>

### **Chopin, friends and enemies: Russians and Germans**

An important aspect of the socialist realist narrative of the Chopin Year was the display the fraternity—of all the representatives of the proletariat as well as of the Polish and Russian nations. This element of the narrative was supported by the fact that in October 1949, thus at the moment of culmination of the anniversary celebrations, there was the Polish-Soviet Friendship Month. It is worth adding that participation in deepening the friendship between "brother nations" belonged to one of the anniversary duties of the Fryderyk Chopin Institute.<sup>39</sup> The

---

<sup>37</sup> Orig. "genialne mistrzostwo kompozytorskie Fryderyka Chopina opiera się na przedziwnej sile uczuć zawartej w jego utworach muzycznych". *Przemówienie Prezydenta RP Bolesława Bieruta z okazji inauguracji Roku Chopinowskiego*, "Życie Warszawy" 1949, No. 52, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Orig. "tworzywie ogólnoludzkiej kultury, które przynosi milionom ludzi pracy radość i wytchnienie, uczy kochać piękno i rozbudza drzemiące w masach ludowych bogactwo talentów". J. Grosicki, *Odkrywamy Chopina Ludowi Polskiemu. Przemówienie v-ce ministra Kultury i Sztuki na uroczystym koncercie z okazji 139-jej rocznicy urodzin Fryderyka Chopina*, "Ruch Muzyczny" 1949, No. 5–6, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 740, *Instytut Fryderyka Chopina*, without pages.

narrators of 1949 confirmed the recipients of the story about Chopin in the belief that his work “should become the property of millions of simple people in Poland, the link of the noble brotherhood of peoples”.<sup>40</sup> It was also noticed that in the USSR “the great jubilee celebrations held in honor of Chopin turned into a manifestation of brotherhood and Polish-Soviet friendship”.<sup>41</sup> In “*Życie Warszawy*” we can read: “today Chopin’s name and his work is a symbol of friendship between the Soviet people and the Polish nation, a friendship that will be eternal”.<sup>42</sup>

Soviet’s love for Chopin was underlined by Russian composers. Alexander Goldenweiser stated that “in Russia Chopin’s music has long been loved and played more than any other foreign composer’s works”.<sup>43</sup> Also, abovementioned Kabalevsky referred to Chopin as “a trusted friend of Russian hearts”.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Shostakovich noticed that “Fryderyk Chopin is one of the most favorite and most popular composers in our nation”.<sup>45</sup> Yuri Shaporin indicated that “the masses penetrated by the sincere folk and exalted humanism” of mazurkas, nocturnes and polonaises of a Polish composer are the reason for the unprecedented popularity of Chopin’s music in the USSR.<sup>46</sup>

The native narrators were eager to speak in a similar tone. Zofia Lissa stated that in the Russian society Chopin’s traditions are “extremely old and deeply rooted”, while “Soviet culture gave Chopin’s cult a more complete dimension”, enriching the “Chopin hermeneutic circle”.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz spoke about the deep joy that he is filled with by “the fact of the great successes of the

---

<sup>40</sup> Orig. “powinna stać się własnością milionów prostych ludzi w Polsce, łącznikiem najszlachetniejszego braterstwa ludów”. *Przemówienie Prezydenta RP Bolesława Bieruta...*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Orig. “wielkie odbywające się obchody jubileuszowe ku czci Chopina przekształciły się w manifestację braterstwa i przyjaźni polsko-radzieckiej”. *Twórczość Chopina—szczyt polskiego ducha wolnościowego*, “*Życie Warszawy*” 1949, No. 287, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Orig. “dziś imię Chopina i jego twórczość jest symbolem przyjaźni łączącej naród radziecki z narodem polskim, przyjaźni, która będzie wieczna”. “*Życie Warszawy*” 1949, No. 289, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> A. Goldenweiser, *Geniusz polskiego narodu*, “*Sovetskaya Kultura*” 15.10.1949.

<sup>44</sup> D. Kabalevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

<sup>45</sup> D. Shostakovich, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

<sup>46</sup> Y. Shaporin, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Orig. “niezwykle stare i głęboko zakorzenione [...] radziecka kultura nadała kultowi Chopina pełniejszy wymiar [...] chopinowskie koło hermeneutyczne”. Z. Lissa, *Chopin w ZSRR*, “*Trybuna Ludu*” 1949, No. 50, p. 4.

artists of the country of victorious socialism and the victorious socialist culture—the artists of the Soviet Union at the Chopin Competition”,<sup>48</sup> Undoubtedly, Chopin was significant for the Russians for at least several reasons, with only a few of them related to socialist realism. However, in the narrative of the Polish People’s Republic’s government, all manifestations of this closeness of the Polish composer became “threads connecting the cultures of fraternal nations”,<sup>49</sup> thus they were used in the service of ideology.

The foundations of the historicist narrative, which concerned the relationship of Chopin himself with the tsarist authorities, were quite unstable. Authors often got lost trying to preserve the ideological correctness.<sup>50</sup> However, doubts did not occur in the case of a story about the historical brotherhood between the Polish and Russian people. The replacement of the adjectives “Russian” and “Soviet” by the authors of many jubilee texts, which probably confuse lots of readers, could have been a deliberate procedure. It allowed for the comfortable manipulation of the historical truth and the use of “Russianness” or “Sovietness” in the ideologically desired way. It is worth adding that in the minds of Polish people, the idea of brotherhood of nations was present and alive, however putting this idea into the ideological and political context deprives the narrative of objectivity.

In the black and white world of socialist realism, a clearly defined enemy must have been included. In the narrative of the Polish authorities, it was Nazi Germany. It should be remembered that in 1949 the dispute over the western border of Poland was still alive, which is why the “German issue” was very valid. The convincing combination of the condemnation of the Nazis, still vivid in the Chopin Year, with the person of the eminent Polish Romantic composer required an appropriate historical foundation. Therefore, the “German theme” in the socialist realist story of Chopin was built on the foundation of the alleged reluctance of the Polish composer to “foreign and distant”

---

<sup>48</sup> Orig. “fakt wspaniałych sukcesów na Konkursie [Chopinowskim] artystów kraju zwycięskiego socjalizmu i zwycięskiej socjalistycznej kultury—artystów Związku Radzieckiego”. A fragment of Józef Cyrankiewicz’s speech in: *Twórczość Chopina wyrosła z ludu i jest siłą w walce o wolność ludów*, “Życie Warszawy” 1949, No. 287, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Orig. “nićmi łączącymi kultury bratnich narodów”. *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Vide*: Z. Lissa, *Fryderyk Szopen*, Moskwa 1944, p. 19.

work of the Viennese classics,<sup>51</sup> what finds no confirmation in the sources from the epoch.

A good example of the combination of anti-German narration with the narrative about Chopin embedded in the artist's biography is Aleksander Ford's *Młodość Chopina*—the first Polish film about this composer. It is a monumental state production prepared as part of the celebration of the Chopin Year 1949. The aforementioned competition for the screenplay of the film novella about Chopin was announced by the State Enterprise "Film Polski" in May 1948. The film was finally made in 1951, and it was released in May 1952.<sup>52</sup> In *Młodość Chopina* the main character begins to feel worse immediately after his departure to Vienna—depicted as an enemy by all revolutionary tendencies, the seat of extreme reactionaries. It is worth noting that the very fact of Chopin's unhappiness in Germany is confirmed, although on the foundation of the historical truth Alexander Ford created an ideological picture, far from the historical reconstruction. On the second day of Christmas 1830 the composer, feeling a deep need to participate in the November Uprising, wrote to his friend Jan Matuszyński: "All dinners, evenings, concerts, dances that I have up to my ears bore me: I am so sad, dull, gloomy".<sup>53</sup> We also know from Chopin's letters that he was furious with the comments he had heard in the Viennese canteen: "Dear God made a mistake when creating Poles".<sup>54</sup>

While searching for the fragments about the Germans in the socialist realist discourse on Chopin, mainly references to Hitler's Germany can be found. Chopin's music was constantly juxtaposed with the "brutal fist of Hitlerism, the fascist storm and the iron German foot that passed through Żelazowa Wola".<sup>55</sup> The thread of Hitler's occupation served in

<sup>51</sup> J. Broszkiewicz, *Opowieść o Chopinie*, Łódź 1949, p. 34.

<sup>52</sup> T. Lubelski, *Chopin w trzech biograficznych filmach fabularnych polskich reżyserów*, [in:] *Chopin w kulturze polskiej*, op. cit., p. 256.

<sup>53</sup> Orig. "Wszystkie obiady, wieczory, koncerty, tańce, których mam po uszy, nudzą mię: tak mi tu smętno, głucho, ponuro". *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*, B. Sydow (ed.), Vol. 1, Warszawa 1955, p. 165.

<sup>54</sup> Orig. "Der liebe Gott hat einen Fehler gemacht, dass er die Polen geschaffen hat". *Vide: ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Orig. "brutalnej pięści hitleryzmu, faszystowskiej nawałnicy oraz żelaznej niemieckiej stopie, która przeszła przez Żelazową Wolę". Z. Lissa, *Chopin. Materiały do użytku świetlic*, Warszawa 1949, p. 29. *Vide*: a fragment of Józef Cyrankiewicz's speech in the article: *Rok Chopinowski. Ku czci największego geniusza muzyki polskiej*, "Kurier Polski" 1948, No. 274, p. 1 and the text *Żelazowa Wola czeka na gości*, "Polska Zbrojna" 1948, No. 474, p. 6.

the socialist realist discourse as the foundation of the story of Chopin's national character. A good example of this is one of the speeches of Józef Cyrankiewicz, in which the prime minister pointed out that "the anniversaries of the greatest geniuses of Polish art [...] are so crucial and so organically connected with destroying the fascism".<sup>56</sup>

Of course, one cannot question the guilt of Nazi Germany for the destruction of many priceless monuments of Polish culture. It is worth noting, however, that such a significant accumulation in the Chopin discourse of extremely pejorative and emotionally charged epithets regarding issues in no way directly related to the work of the Polish composer certainly aimed at a little more than just a reminder to the reader of the tragic events from just a few years ago.

### Chopin—folk's friend

In one of the stories for children about Chopin, Jerzy Broszkiewicz wrote that "Mikołaj Chopin had a very far way in his life: from a peasant, miserable cottage to the outbuildings of the Krasiński's palace".<sup>57</sup> The composer's father becomes—not only in Broszkiewicz's text—an extremely valid symbol of the social advancement of the working class. In turn, Zofia Lissa presented an idyllic picture that fits perfectly into the quasi-hagiographic convention. In her story about Fryderyk Chopin, he was "born by a Polish village", to the accompaniment of folk music, near peasant huts, "in the heart of folk culture, which he later promoted so much".<sup>58</sup> Not accidentally in the first two, extremely short paragraphs of the booklet *Fryderyk Szopen*, the word "village" in various forms appears as many as six times.<sup>59</sup> Lissa tried to convince readers that the national nature of Chopin's music originates from "a deep penetration

---

<sup>56</sup> Orig. "rocznice największych geniuszów sztuki polskiej [...] tak istotnie i tak organicznie związane są z rozgromieniem faszyzmu". AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 742, *Przemówienie Premiera Cyrankiewicza na wręczeniu nagród IV Międzynarodowego Konkursu Pianistycznego im. Fryderyka Chopina w Warszawie*, card 64.

<sup>57</sup> Orig. "Pan Mikołaj Chopin odbył w swym życiu istotnie bardzo daleką drogę: z chłopskiej, nędznej chaty do oficyn pałacu Krasińskich". J. Broszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Orig. "wydała na świat polska wieś [...] w sercu kultury ludowej, którą miał później tak wspaniale rozsławić". Z. Lissa, *Chopin. Materiały...*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> *Eadem*, *Fryderyk Szopen*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.



of his compositional style by folk music”.<sup>60</sup> In similar contexts Chopin was placed by the eminent Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz:

One should believe to various legends that say that from the earliest childhood Chopin was looking for a contact with the poor Polish people, that he [...] listened to the sad songs of the peasant yet serfdom—that later, this peasant’s sadness in his mazurkas and songs would be sung.<sup>61</sup>

I would like to make a remark here that while the Polish composer undoubtedly drew inspiration from folk art, creating Chopin as the “closest friend of the folk people” from a historical point of view is a significant abuse. This is clearly evident even in the composer’s letters.<sup>62</sup> Chopin as a pianist did not like halls crowded with folk people; he definitely preferred to play the piano in small, aristocratic salons, among the people closest to him. The art of Chopin had a clear mark of “elitism”, so putting the Polish composer by the authorities on the front of the struggle for dissemination of music among the people was as skilful as far from the historical truth.

In the socialist realist narrative concerning Chopin, the Polish village played a special role. It was supposed to be a source of inspiration and a power that would allow the “full of emotion” composer and pianist to overcome all creative crises.<sup>63</sup> He allegedly claimed that “rescue can only be sought [...] in the closeness to the folk”.<sup>64</sup> The anniversary’s narrators had to find an analogous “cathartic factor” which, after leaving the homeland, would enable Chopin to purify his mind, improve his health and draw inspiration. Such factors were the stays in Nohant, which—according to Broszkiewicz—were supposed to remind the

---

<sup>60</sup> Orig. “głębokiego przeniknięcia jego stylu kompozytorskiego muzyką ludową”. *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Orig. “Należy wierzyć różnorodnym legendom, które opowiadają, że Chopin od najwcześniejszego dzieciństwa szukał kontaktu z ubogim ludem polskim, że [...] słuchał smutnych śpiewów pańszczyźnianego jeszcze chłopca—aby potem ten smutek doli chłopskiej w swoich mazurkach i piosenkach wyśpiewać”. J. Iwaszkiewicz, *Chopin*, Warszawa 1949, p. 12.

<sup>62</sup> *Vide e.g.* The letter from Fryderyk Chopin to Tytus Woyciechowski, 25.12.1831, [in:] *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina...*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>63</sup> J. Broszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>64</sup> Orig. “ratunku można szukać tylko [...] w bliskości ludu”. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

composer of Mazowsze, thanks to which his “most beautiful, important works” were created there.<sup>65</sup>

Through Chopin’s life and work the ennoblement of folk culture was made by the authorities, which occupied the most important place in the art of socialist realism. These “melodies of the distant homeland, the wailing of the dying freaks, the perky stomping of masters in mazur and oberek” gave to Chopin’s music “the purest expression of the nation’s feelings”.<sup>66</sup> It was from “the music of the folk people that he drew inspiration for his creative work, in it he saw the purest source of his compositional fantasy”.<sup>67</sup> The quoted passage—although it is placed in an ideological context—to some extent is consistent with the actual state, which is confirmed several times in Chopin’s correspondence, where his *espaces imaginaires* are mentioned.

The Chopin’s mazurka was also used in the service of ideology. This genre was considered the most “democratic” of Chopin’s works.<sup>68</sup> In all projects of auditions for day rooms proposed by Zofia Lissa in the brochure *Chopin. Materiały do użytku świetlic* for about nine songs presented during one concert there were always at least three mazurkas.<sup>69</sup> This is understandable due to the fact that the mazurka is characterised by a simple form, clear folk inspirations and usually a high degree of harmonic-textural clarity, which makes it a relatively easy-to-listen genre. In Chopin mazurka’s apologia, however, the socialist realist narrators went much further: from the publication of Jerzy Broszkiewicz, quoted above, we learn that Chopin did not compose any opera, because he “rejected its pathetic and pompous form” precisely in favor of a simple folk mazurka.<sup>70</sup> According to

<sup>65</sup> Orig. “Najpiękniejsze, najważniejsze dzieła”. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>66</sup> Orig. “melodie dalekiej ojczyzny, zawodzenia pastuszych fujarek, dziarskie przytupywanie taneczników w mazurach i oberkach [...] najczystszy wyraz uczuć narodu”. J. Iwaszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>67</sup> Orig. “muzyki ludu czerpać miał natchnienie dla swej pracy twórczej, w niej widział źródło najczystsze swej fantazji kompozytorskiej”. Z. Lissa, *Fryderyk Szopen, op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> B. Asafyev, *Chopin w wykonaniu rosyjskich wirtuozów*, “Sovetskaya Muzyka” 1947, No. 3, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Z. Lissa, *Chopin. Materiały...*, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>70</sup> Orig. “odrzuć jej patetyczną i napuszoną formę”. J. Broszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 144. It is the truth that Chopin did not write the opera; however, it was the fruit of his consistent artistic attitude, conditioned rather by his aesthetic preferences than the composer’s hostility towards this genre.

Broszkiewicz, the Polish composer, when talking about various musical genres, said about the mazurka: “this is my national art. Not an aria for a king in a cardboard crown, only a song of living people, my nation!”<sup>71</sup> The author of *Opowieść o Chopinie* remarked that “the beginning of the triumphal procession of Chopin’s works through Europe started”<sup>72</sup> from the mazurkas, which were published in 1832.<sup>73</sup> In a somewhat more subtle way Iwaszkiewicz wrote about mazurkas, describing them as “an inexhaustible treasury of real masterpieces”, in which the Polish composer “concluded all the wealth of his soul”.<sup>74</sup> It should be emphasized that Iwaszkiewicz’s biography of Chopin is one of the best works of this type until day. Iwaszkiewicz, however, was also entangled in a complicated flirt with ideology, and although he did not allow historical manipulations or twists, one can find in his work—especially in the 1949 edition—ideologically coloured fragments.

The issue of “folkism” was treated comprehensively by Aleksander Ford in the already mentioned *Młodość Chopina*. The film begins with a scene that depicts peasants warming themselves by the campfire. The editing effects used by Ford build further layers of ideologised meanings: a smooth transition from the bonfire by which the peasants are heated, to the salon in which Chopin performs, may suggest that in his play the song of the disadvantaged people is reflected. Similarly to Jerzy Broszkiewicz’s, in the screenplay of *Młodość Chopina*, the issue of Mikołaj Chopin and his “magnificent promotion from the folk to professorship” was raised.<sup>75</sup> A few shots from the film can be considered a mastery of socialist realist cinematography. In one take, Chopin shows the way to lost peasants going to Marymont then a village nearby Warsaw, in search of a job in a cloth factory. Chopin’s figure in the frame dominates over poor peasants, a young virtuoso shows them a path like a monument. It is a very clear signal for the recipient: it is Chopin who sets the direction for the development of folk culture. In the next scene, a young genius defends the peasant against the whip

<sup>71</sup> Orig. “to jest moja narodowa sztuka. Nie aria dla króla w tekturowej koronie, tylko pieśń żywego ludu, mojego narodu!”. *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Orig. “datuje się początek tryumfalnego pochodu Chopinowskich dzieł przez Europę”. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>73</sup> Broszkiewicz could have meant Op. 6, 7 or 17.

<sup>74</sup> Orig. “niewyczerpaną skarbnicę prawdziwych arcydzieł [...] zawarł całe bogactwo swej duszy”. J. Iwaszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>75</sup> Orig. “wspaniałego awansu z ludu do profesury”. J. Broszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

of one of Count Branicki's servants. However, he reminds the creator of the mazurkas that he is the son of a tutor, so as a non-aristocrat, he cannot question the count's orders. At this moment, Chopin voluntarily stands in the same row as the beaten peasant. In the Ford's image, therefore, the Polish composer and pianist is not only the protector of the oppressed people, but even their representative. A similar idea was presented by Józef Broszkiewicz, quoted on many occasions, who in the matter of "Chopin's brotherhood with the people" went as far as possible from the authors of the texts analysed by me.<sup>76</sup>

In the next scene of *Młodość Chopina* the main character comes to the village in a small noble stagecoach. During the rainy night, the stagecoach loses the wheel, and Chopin, listening to the coachman's advice, hides at a nearby peasant hut.<sup>77</sup> In the morning, in full sun, the peasants drive the composer in a carriage, joyfully singing folk songs. After the night spent by Chopin among the peasants, in the Ford's movie there is an utter change in the way in which the space is shown. Metaphorically speaking, this scene suggests that not only did Chopin raise folk culture to the tops of art, but also folk culture helped him rise from a rainy night in a narrow, aristocratic stagecoach to an open, sunny sky admired from a huge peasant carriage, where everybody fits.

In the Ford's movie—as in many other anniversary "stories"—Chopin feels best among the folk. He puts a party to rural music and trips to the forest above the sophisticated entertainment of the salons, and spending time within with the "commune songs" and its authors helps him in overcoming all crises. What is particularly eloquent is the scene in the tavern, where Stefan Witwicki asks the newly-acquainted young virtuoso to compose a melody for a few songs. Just a moment later the entire inn together sings *Hulanka*, and Chopin's music smoothly turns into a folk oberek. The opposite of this idyllic scenery is a grim, bourgeois city café, portrayed as the space of a multifaceted conflict. In this context, it seems quite natural that the main character of *Młodość Chopina*—apart from a few exceptions (a fragment of *Sonata in B minor*, *Etude in C minor* Op. 10 and *Etude in A minor* Op. 25)—plays the piano performing primarily mazurkas.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>77</sup> This episode somehow refers to the real events from the composer's life. Compare: The letter of Fryderyk Chopin to the family, 1.08.1829, *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 88.

Another interesting rhetorical procedure used by socialist realist narrators was to justify Chopin's genius with the alleged demand for his work among the masses of folk people. The works of the Polish composer in the Soviet Union were to spread "in millions of copies", which should not be a surprise, "after all, masses constitute a group of the most receptive and sensitive recipients of art who, by their infallible instinct, sense the value of the work".<sup>78</sup> "Chopin's genius" was presented in the narration moderated by the popular authority as an eloquent testimony of the fact that "creativity really grows out of the folk, and thanks to that it becomes an general human good".<sup>79</sup>

The multi-layered narrative based on the work and life of Fryderyk Chopin was also adapted to the needs of the youngest recipients. In the staged stories for children titled *Little Chopin*, written by Janina Skowrońska,<sup>80</sup> the folk character of the composer's music becomes the main aspect of the story, overwhelming all other elements of narrative.<sup>81</sup> Young Fryderyk from the Skowrońska's text says the following words to the farmworker Wojtek: "When I hear your songs, it is good for me then".<sup>82</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that Chopin's intensive listening to the songs of a simple folk people and his enthusiasm for them could be read not only in stories for children.<sup>83</sup>

Certainly, the mere interest in Chopin's mazurkas and folk inspirations in his work during the anniversary celebrations do not imply links with socialist realism. However, the fact that the mazurka was presented as a genre of the greatest importance in Chopin's work, that it was given a disproportionate amount of attention comparing to other genres, and that a mystical aura was created around the folk

---

<sup>78</sup> Orig. "to przecież masy ludowe stanowią grupę najbardziej chłonnych i wrażliwych odbiorców sztuki, którzy swym nieomylnym instynktem wyczuwają wartość dzieła". *Żywe wydanie dzieł Fryderyka Chopina. Program czternastu koncertów obejmujących całą twórczość Fryderyka Chopina*, Komitet Wykonawczy Roku Chopinowskiego 1949 (eds.), Warszawa 1949, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Orig. "twórczość naprawdę wielka wyrasta z tego, co ludowe, i dzięki temu staje się dobrem ogólnoludzkim". *Przemówienie Prezydenta RP Bolesława Bieruta...*, *op. cit.*, p. 1. In the original the whole fragment is bolded.

<sup>80</sup> J. Skowrońska, *Mały Chopin. Inscenizowane opowieści z cyklu „Teatr dzieci z podwórka”*, Warszawa 1949.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>82</sup> Orig. "jak słyszę wasze pieśni, to mi wtedy dobrze". *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>83</sup> Vide e.g. J. Jasiński, *Ludowość w muzyce Fryderyka Chopina*, "Trybuna Ludu" 1949, No. 50, p. 4.

aspect of Fryderyk Chopin's creativity, leaves no doubt that the ideological motivation was unambiguous. It is also worth noting that the extraordinary effort put in 1949 in promoting the folk aspect of Chopin's music weakened with successive jubilees and the gradual collapse of the doctrine of socialist realism.

### **Socialist realist class conflict**

The doctrine of socialist realism was characterized by an extremely dialectic character. The socialist realist art was perceived as a struggle between the new and the old, the proletariat with the bourgeoisie, progress with obscurantism<sup>84</sup>—a struggle that “lasts everywhere, during every episode of life”.<sup>85</sup> According to Włodzimierz Sokorski, “folk art [...] was shaped as the antithesis of the noblemen's court culture, thus reaching the roots of his serfdom of the widest masses of peasants”.<sup>86</sup> The proletariat also opposed the bourgeoisie:

the worker's mentality, classically and politically opposed to the middle class's mentality in moral, aesthetic and cultural assessments, differs from the bourgeois mentality mainly in a healthy, creative attitude towards the issues of struggle for a new regime, and a new attitude towards one's own life.<sup>87</sup>

From this perspective, it is extremely easy to compose all activities into the field of culture in the context of Marxist dialectics. As far as the Chopin narrative is concerned, it even influenced orthography—the polonisation of the composer's name was probably due to the fear that

<sup>84</sup> Compare: W. Sokorski, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>85</sup> Orig. “trwa wszędzie, na każdym odcinku życia”. J. Zambrowicz, *Imię Chopina, muzyka-rewolucjonisty i jego twórczość jest symbolem przyjaźni narodów radzieckiego i polskiego*, “Życie Warszawy” 1949, No. 288, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Orig. “sztuka ludowa [...] ukształtowała się jako antyteza szlacheckiej, dworskiej kultury, sięgając tym samym korzeniami swymi okresu pańszczyźnianej pracy najszerszych mas chłopskich”. *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Orig. “psychika robotnika, klasowo i politycznie przeciwstawna psychice mieszczaństwa w ocenach moralnych, estetycznych i kulturalnych, różni się od mentalności mieszczańskiej przede wszystkim zdrową, twórczą postawą wobec zagadnień walki o nowy ustroj, o nowy stosunek do własnego życia”. W. Sokorski, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

a simple farmer or a worker who, met Chopin's work for the first time on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the composer's death, could feel an inconsistency between the intensely exposed "Polishness" of the creator of the mazurkas and his non-Polish surname, which makes associations with Western "cosmopolitanism".<sup>88</sup>

In the anniversary speeches, President Bierut excluded "the nobility and the bourgeois elite" from the national community, simultaneously entering all the celebrations of the Chopin Year 1949 into the context of class struggle. He emphasized that for the first time in history "the great achievements of Polish national culture" became "a property of the working masses".<sup>89</sup> Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz spoke in a similar tone:

a great revolution was inevitable, it was necessary to overthrow the political and cultural monopoly of classes to make the great creators of national culture become the property of the whole nation, not the handful of possessing classes.<sup>90</sup>

The analysis carried out so far shows that by moderating the Chopin discourse, the Polish People's Republic's authorities tried to root its particular elements in history, especially in the artist's biography. In the context of the class struggle, the paragraphs from the booklet of Zofia Lissa titled *Fryderyk Szopen* are worth mentioning, in which the author suspected Polish aristocratic circles in exile about forgetting Chopin in the moment of his death.<sup>91</sup> In a similar vein, she wrote about the composer's stay in Vienna, where Chopin was supposed to feel bad "in the atmosphere of well-fed and satisfied townies".<sup>92</sup> On the contrary, the

---

<sup>88</sup> The Polish version of the surname "Szopen" was used also before the war—although the reasons were different. It can be assumed that the after-war wave of writing the name of the composer in the Polish manner was started by Zofia Lissa through the brochure *Fryderyk Szopen*, published in Moscow in 1944.

<sup>89</sup> Orig. "wspaniały dorobek polskiej kultury narodowej [...] własnością mas pracujących". *Rok Chopinowski w 1949 w Polsce*, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Orig. "trzeba było wielkiego przewrotu rewolucyjnego, trzeba było obalenia monopolu politycznego i kulturalnego klas posiadających, by wielcy twórcy kultury narodowej stali się własnością całego narodu, a nie garstki klas posiadających". AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 742, *Przemówienie Premiera Cyrankiewicza...*, op. cit., card 64.

<sup>91</sup> Z. Lissa, *Fryderyk Szopen*, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>92</sup> Orig. "w atmosferze sytych i zadowolonych mieszczuchów". *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Russian musicologist, music theorist and composer Boris Asafyev even quoted the alleged paragraph from the composer's letter: "bourgeois classes need something amazing, mechanical, which I am not capable of".<sup>93</sup> The issue of class struggle also became one of the main themes of the socialist realist narrative of the Chopin Competition. In one of the press reports we read:

A lot has changed in concert halls since pre-war times: instead of rich snobs and wealthy burgesses, which prevailed among the pre-war habitués of concert halls [...], we see people of work. There are many workers and clerks among them, and in the crowd the pupils' and student's caps can be often seen.<sup>94</sup>

Class struggle is also one of the narrative keys in Aleksander Ford's film. Numerous scenes of *Młodość Chopina* were supposed to confirm the viewer that Polish nobility depended above all on enslavement of the peasant. In the Ford's movie Chopin often talks about politics and is interested in it. What is worth recalling is the scene of the meeting with friends, when the composer announces that he prefers "a simple song from Zuzka", his maid, over the richly instrumented music of Ignacy Feliks Dobrzyński. Along with his friends, he demonstratively sings this "song" in a café full of artists (probably in Honoratka on Miodowa Street in Warsaw). This induces the outrage of snobbish aristocracy, what in turn provokes a lively discussion. When one of the archconservative professors says that Mickiewicz, like Chopin, "writes for the cooks", Professor Lelewel answers: "Or maybe for a nation that comes from the folk?" Needless to say, this and many other statements impose quite intrusive associations with the Marxist discourse and the doctrine of real socialism in culture.

---

<sup>93</sup> B. Asafyev, *Mazurki Chopina*, "Sovetskaya Muzyka" 1947, No. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Orig. "W salach koncertowych wiele zmieniło się od czasów przedwojennych: zamiast bogatych snobów i zamożnego mieszczaństwa, które przeważało wśród przedwojennych bywalców sal koncertowych [...], widzimy ludzi pracy. Jest wśród nich wielu robotników i urzędników, w ciżbie ludzkiej często migają czapki uczniowskie i studenckie". *Migawki z Romy. Konkurs Chopinowski trwa*, "Polska Zbrojna" 1949, No. 283, p. 5.



## Chopin—revolutionist

In one of the speeches Bolesław Bierut stated that “an artist should be an educator, combining socialism with revolutionary Romanticism”.<sup>95</sup> “The pathos of the great age, the pathos of work and struggle, the heroism of the Soviet people, a bright look into the future, and thus revolutionary Romanticism”<sup>96</sup> constituted, in accordance with the doctrine of socialist realism, an indispensable element of all works of art. “Revolutionary Romanticism” was supposed to “raise people’s spirits, to encourage them to new great and heroic acts, to help them build happiness”.<sup>97</sup> On the one hand, setting Chopin in the context of a revolutionary Romantic art was not unusual. On the other hand, presenting him as a revolutionist and a prophet of socialism was a brave and difficult task.

Jerzy Broszkiewicz in *Opowieść o Chopinie* filled a full of pathos narrative with politics, battles and revolutions, giving his work a didactic value.<sup>98</sup> Using the battle metaphors and exposing the relevant historical background, the author placed the figure of the composer in the centre of a whirlwind of revolutionary events.

It would seem that from a composer with such a delicate physiognomy and fragile health as Chopin it is difficult to make a fighter-revolutionist. Due to this, the tricks used by Ford in *Młodość Chopina* turn out to be even more interesting. In one of the scenes the young genius is carried by the crowd while the *Revolutionary Étude* sounds in the background. The interlarding Chopin’s music with the revolutionary song—Marseillaise—is an equally clear symbol. In another scene, the last three notes of *Prelude in D minor* Op. 28 become directly the gunfire of the November Uprising. In this way, a revolution is born from Chopin’s music.

---

<sup>95</sup> Orig. “artysta powinien być wychowawcą, jednocząc w sobie socjalizm z rewolucyjnym romantyzmem”. As cited in: B. Wolny, *O realizmie socjalistycznym*, “Po Prostu” 1949, No. 22, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> Orig. “Patos wielkiej epoki, patos pracy i walki, heroizm ludu radzieckiego, jasne spojrzenie w przyszłość, a więc właśnie rewolucyjny romantyzm”. *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Orig. “Rewolucyjny romantyzm [...] podnosić ludzi na duchu, porywać ich wciąż do nowych wielkich i bohaterskich czynów, pomagać im budować szczęście”. *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> J. Broszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

In the art of socialist realism, “the artist, who is free from superstitions” first of all had to “realize that the basic source of his creativity is the hard work of a worker and a peasant”.<sup>99</sup> It was the artist’s duty to “empathise with the pulse of the work of the masses, their longing and needs; treat their emotions and experience as the source of inspiration for his own effort, which main and primary goal should be to raise and enrich the standard of living of these masses”.<sup>100</sup> By setting Chopin in the frames of socialist realist poetics, the “engaged” creators had to make him an example of a revolutionary educator of the nation and the prophet. These procedures often required bending the historical truth, and more bluntly: historical falsifications. The example of this is the article written by Jerzy Jasiński, who presented Chopin in “Trybuna Ludu” as a “prophet announcing the advent of the victorious era of revolutionary socialism”.<sup>101</sup> The Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz also spoke in a similar vein: “Chopin’s oeuvre [...] was an expression of the gathering forces of protest, a promise of victory in the future. Today, this announcement of old libertarian manifestos is being realized”.<sup>102</sup> Quite clumsy slogans related to Chopin’s “revolutionary” character appeared also in the headlines of newspaper articles. It is worthy to quote the one published in “Życie Warszawy”: *The name of Chopin—revolutionist-musician—and his work is a symbol of friendship between the Soviet and Polish nations.*<sup>103</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Orig. “wolny od przesądów twórca [...] zdać sobie sprawę, że podstawowym źródłem jego twórczości jest ciężka praca robotnika i chłopa”. Z *Przemówienia Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Bolesława Bieruta...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>100</sup> Orig. “wczuć się w tętno pracy mas ludowych, w ich tęsknotę i potrzeby, z ich wzruszeń i przeżyć czerpać natchnienie twórcze do własnego wysiłku, którego głównym i podstawowym celem winno być podniesienie i uszlachetnienie poziomu życia tych mas”. *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Orig. “proroka zapowiadającego nadejście zwycięskiej epoki rewolucyjnego socjalizmu”. J. Jasiński, „Nie mówił: naród—ale—był nim cały”, “Trybuna Ludu” 1949, No. 285, p. 6.

<sup>102</sup> Orig. “Twórczość Chopina [...] była wyrazem gromadzących się sił protestu, zapowiedzią zwycięstwa w przyszłości. Dziś realizuje się ta zapowiedź dawnych wolnościowych manifestów”. AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 742, *Przemówienie Premiera Cyrankiewicza...*, *op. cit.*, card 64.

<sup>103</sup> Orig. *Imię Chopina, muzyka-rewolucjonisty i jego twórczość jest symbolem przyjaźni narodów radzieckiego i polskiego*. J. Zambrowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

## Chopin under a thatched roof, in a day room and with factory in the background

The most prominent slogan of socialist realism was “popularisation”.<sup>104</sup> The doctrine indicated that culture should reach the broad masses of society, every simple man; art should break free from the shackles of intellectual bourgeois confinement and enter the arena of the worker’s real life. An extremely important place in the landscape of socialist culture was a day room. It constituted the basic centre of socialist masses formation. The cultural, social and intellectual life of the workers was to concentrate around it, where they could meet the “humanistic” art. In one of the notes of the Culture Department of the Polish United Workers’ Party (Polish: Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) Central Committee of the early 1950s, the number of day rooms was estimated at nine thousand.<sup>105</sup> In all workers’ clubs and day rooms, “speeches and lectures devoted to Chopin’s life and works” were delivered.<sup>106</sup> A valuable compendium for the day rooms published on the occasion of the jubilee was the already mentioned booklet of Zofia Lissa titled *Chopin. Materiały do użytku świetlic*. This publication was

to serve the cult of Chopin on three different paths. The first one is to familiarize readers in the simplest and most popular way with Chopin’s figure, his life and work. The second is to simplify the organization of Chopin programmes in day rooms and schools. The third one gives directions to organise Chopin exhibitions with the help of two series of postcards (published by the Fryderyk Chopin Institute) with explanations.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> More about popularisation the culture in the context of the Chopin Year: AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 740, *Instytut Fryderyka Chopina*, card 82. The detailed plan of work and the programme of the promoting activity: *ibid.*, cards 10–11.

<sup>105</sup> AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII/17, card 3.

<sup>106</sup> Orig. “referaty i prelekcje poświęcone życiu i twórczości Chopina”. *Twórczość Chopina—sztrandarem polskiego ducha wolnościowego*, “Życie Warszawy” 1949, No. 286, p. 1.

<sup>107</sup> Orig. “służyć kultowi Chopina na trzech różnych drogach. Pierwsza z nich to zapoznanie czytelników w sposób najprostszy i najbardziej popularny z postacią Chopina, jego życiem i twórczością. Druga ma na celu ułatwienie urządzania świetlicowych czy szkolnych audycji chopinowskich. Trzecia zaś podaje wskazówki do urządzania wystaw chopinowskich przy pomocy dwóch serii pocztówek (wydanych przez Instytut Fryderyka Chopina) z objaśnieniami”. Z. Lissa, *Chopin. Materiały...*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

Although not free of ideological content, the Lissa's book was a very valuable work and, as it might be expected, extremely useful.

In the jubilee year of 1949, Chopin's works had obviously a special position in the campaign to popularise culture among the masses. "One of the main goals [of the Ministry of Culture and Art and the Executive Committee of the Chopin Year] was to familiarise the broad masses of Polish society with the life and work of Fryderyk Chopin".<sup>108</sup> In the villages, Chopin's concerts were played—"on trucks with pianos" artists went "to the farthest places, where the music of Chopin has not yet arrived".<sup>109</sup> An important element of the "popularisation" was also the action "Chopin broadcasts in all schools of Poland" ("Audycje chopinowskie we wszystkich szkołach RP") organized by the Ministry of Culture and Art.<sup>110</sup> On the occasion of the jubilee many great demands were made, for example: "There will be no more unhappy village musicians—every talented child has the right to develop his talent [...]. Each artist can count on the protection of the society".<sup>111</sup> Certain of these—to some extent valid and still up-to-date—slogans echo in the mentality of Polish artistic circles to this day.

On the occasion of the Chopin Year numerous trips to Szafarnia and Żelazowa Wola were organized, also for participants of the Competition: "Guests of the Competition, jurors and participants were brought to the place by special coaches. In Szafarnia the annual «Chopin Village» was organized on this occasion".<sup>112</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Orig. "Jednym z podstawowych celów [działalności Ministerstwa Kultury i Sztuki oraz Komitetu Wykonawczego Roku Chopinowskiego] było zapoznanie szerokich mas społeczeństwa polskiego z życiem i twórczością Fryderyka Chopina". *Vide: Rok Chopinowski w 1949 w Polsce...*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>109</sup> Orig. "na ciężarówkach z pianinami [...] w najdalsze zakątki, tam, gdzie dotychczas nie dotarła muzyka Szopena". *W komitecie Roku Szopenowskiego...*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>110</sup> AAN, MKiS, sygn. 747, *Rok Chopinowski 1949. Uchwały, zarządzenia, regulaminy*, card 40.

<sup>111</sup> Orig. "Nie będzie więcej nieszczęśliwych Janków muzykantów—każde utalentowane dziecko ma prawo do rozwijania swojego talentu [...]. Każdy artysta może liczyć na opiekę ze strony społeczeństwa". *Międzynarodowy Konkurs Chopinowski. Po drugim etapie*, "Życie Warszawy" 1949, No. 277, p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Orig. "Gości Konkursu, jurorów i uczestników zawieziono na miejsce specjalnymi autokarami. W Szafarni zorganizowano przy tej okazji doroczną imprezę «Chopinowska wieś»". Compare: W. Sierdakowski, *Reportaż z wycieczki do Szafarni*, "Rzeczpospolita" 1949, No. 268, p. 4.

Heavy industry was an important element of the socialist economy. The sources show that the jubilee of the hundredth anniversary of the Chopin's death was an excellent opportunity for the authorities to promote the successes of reconstruction and achievements in the field of industry. To demonstrate progress and economic successes served the Polish People's Republic government, among others trips organized by the Executive Committee of the Chopin Year. The Committee's office prepared—among many other attractions—a trip for the jury of the Chopin Competition and candidates; its aim was to “acquaint participants with the beauty of historic Polish architecture and the development of industry, mainly in the Recovered Territories”.<sup>113</sup> Next to Kraków on the map of the trip were, among others, Katowice, Jelenia Góra and Lower Silesia, thus mostly industrial landscape was demonstrated. In the dominant trends of the narrative it was emphasized that the Chopin anniversary is celebrated at the time when “the work of a worker and a peasant changes ruins into sunny houses and factories, which vibrate with the creative rhythm—and fallow land in fertile fields”.<sup>114</sup>

#### 4th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

The key event of the Chopin Year was the IV International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition, which was also used by socialist realist narrators for the purposes of ideology. The first of the themes of the socialist realist tale about the Competition was displaying social egalitarianism on various levels. After all, “the Chopin Competition has become an event of the day, celebrated by all people of the work”.<sup>115</sup> On the pages of one of the issues of “*Życie Warszawy*” a similar statement can be found: “Every observer could easily see the huge, growing

---

<sup>113</sup> Orig. “zaznajomienie uczestników z pięknem historycznej architektury polskiej oraz z rozbudową przemysłu, głównie na Ziemiach Odzyskanych”. AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 742, *Departament Twórczości Artystycznej, Wydział Twórczości Muzycznej*, card 41. Bolding from the author.

<sup>114</sup> Orig. “praca robotnika i chłopca zmienia ruiny w słoneczne domy i tętniące twórczym rytmem fabryki—ugory zaś w żyzne pola”. *Żywe wydanie dzieł Fryderyka Chopina...*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>115</sup> Orig. “Konkurs Chopinowski stał się wydarzeniem dnia, żywo obchodzającym ogół ludzi pracy”. *Migawki z Romy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

with every day interest in the competition among Polish society [...]. When it comes to raising interest for Chopin's music, the competition did a lot".<sup>116</sup> However, I will return to the preparation stage for a second. Its final event in the case of the Polish team was a several-week stay in Łagów Lubuski in the summer of 1949 at the "«practice camp» where, under the guidance of teachers, undergoing a weekly «examinations» before the Commission, the details of the programme were discussed".<sup>117</sup> This training camp coincided with the famous Polish Composers' Congress (5th–8th August 1949), during which the assumptions of socialist realism in music were specified and attempts were made to determine the course of their adaptation process in Poland. Thus, the path of pianism and ideology converged in Łagów Lubuski.

The official opening of the Competition under the patronage of President Bolesław Bierut took place on 18th September. The VIP box was full of members of the Council of State with the Speaker of the Sejm, Władysław Kowalski and Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz. The opening of the Competition was made by Włodzimierz Sokorski, the Deputy Minister of Culture and Art. From the beginning, the pianists from Poland and the Soviet Union were favourites. The Polish government could not fail to use this fact for propaganda purposes. The press was filled with messages, which emphasized that "the Polish national character of Chopin's music is inevitably the closest to Polish pianists and pianists of the fraternal Soviet Union, where Chopin's very vivid and deep cult has always existed".<sup>118</sup> Only the citizens of Poland and the Soviet Union were among the laureates. The winners were Bella Davidovich and Halina Czerny-Stefańska *ex aequo*. There is no reason to undermine the verdict of the jury, but this fact remains extremely

<sup>116</sup> Orig. "Každy obserwator mógł z łatwością dostrzec ogromne, narastające z każdym dniem zainteresowanie konkursem wśród społeczeństwa polskiego [...]. Jeżeli chodzi o wzbudzenie zainteresowania dla muzyki Chopina, konkurs zrobił bardzo wiele". *IV Konkurs Chopinowski zakończony. Zdumiewająca dojrzałość młodzieży. Świetne wyniki Polaków*, "Życie Warszawy" 1949, No. 287, p. 1.

<sup>117</sup> Orig. "«obozie kondycyjnym», gdzie pod kierunkiem pedagogów, poddając się cotygodniowym «przesłuchaniom» przed znaną nam Komisją, dopracowywano szczegóły programu". A quotation from the unpublished memories of Prof. Regina Smendzianka, recorded by Barbara Niewiarowska in September 1999.

<sup>118</sup> Orig. "narodowy polski charakter muzyki Chopina jest siłą rzeczy najbliższy pianistom polskim oraz pianistom bratniego Związku Radzieckiego, gdzie istniał zawsze bardzo żywy i głęboki kult Chopina". P. Beylin, *Konkurs Chopinowski trwa*, "Po Prostu" 1949, No. 28, p. 4.

meaningful from the perspective of propaganda activities of the Polish authorities. In a speech finishing the Competition Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz said: “The results please us all the more because the achievements of our young artists are largely the result of the care of the Polish People’s Republic for the development of culture in all its manifestations”.<sup>119</sup> Also, there are passages whose authors convince the audience that “in the common democratic system, for sure [the laureates of the Chopin Competition] will find the best conditions, the best care and help”.<sup>120</sup> The other model aspects of narrative, such as folkism, were not forgotten as well.<sup>121</sup>

### Chopin Exhibition in the National Museum

The Chopin Exhibition organized in the National Museum was an extremely important element of the commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the Chopin’s death. The exhibition was opened on 19th October 1949 by the Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz. At the vernissage, Minister Sokorski and the director of the National Museum Stanisław Lorentz had speeches.<sup>122</sup> Chopin exhibits were presented, in accordance with the scenario of Stefan Jarociński, in five categories: Chopin as a man and creator, folk and patriotic sources of Chopin’s music, Chopin’s cult in historical Poland, a hundred years of Chopin’s music and idea, and Chopin’s music as a symbol of peaceful work of nations. The entire exhibition was divided into three sections: *Chopin’s Epoch*, *The Last Century*, and *Chopin’s Music reaches masses*.<sup>123</sup> From the perspective of this essay the third section is the most interesting, where the viewer was able to become acquainted with “the action

<sup>119</sup> Orig. “Wyniki cieszą nas tym bardziej, że osiągnięcia naszych młodych artystów są w dużym stopniu wynikiem opieki Państwa Ludowego nad rozwojem kultury we wszystkich jego przejawach”. AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 742, *Departament Twórczości Artystycznej, Wydział Twórczości Muzycznej*, card 64.

<sup>120</sup> Orig. “w ludowym ustroju demokratycznym na pewno [laureaci Konkursu Chopinowskiego] znajdą jak najlepsze warunki, najtroskliwszą opiekę i pomoc”. *IV Konkurs Chopinowski zakończony...*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> W. Żuławski, *Konkurs Chopinowski, wspaniała impreza kulturalna*, “Ekspres Wieczorny” 1949, No. 261.

<sup>122</sup> AAN, MKiS, cat. No. 742, *Departament Twórczości Artystycznej, Wydział Twórczości Muzycznej. Konkurs Chopinowski, biuletyn informacyjny Konkursu*, card 31.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*



of popularisation of Chopin's music, which, being inspired by the folk people, has now become the property of the broad masses of the Polish nation".<sup>124</sup> Apart from "moving memoirs", like the composer's letters and manuscripts, the exhibition featured "photographs of workers and peasants, to whom Chopin's art has just arrived today".<sup>125</sup> The author of the cited article points out that "they put a lot of effort into making sure that New Poland could carefully educate young pianists, the participants of today's Competition".<sup>126</sup> By making a barely superficial analysis of the segments of the exhibition, it can be noticed how important element for the Polish authorities in the narrative of Chopin's life and art was the content subject to the ideology.

The theme of the exhibition was intensively used in the socialist realist narrative of the Chopin Year. In the articles describing and reviewing this cultural event, one can find topical statements: "The Chopin Year in Poland is a beautiful symbol of the emerging culture of socialism".<sup>127</sup> In the narrative of the Polish Film Chronicle the revolutionary theme was accentuated particularly clearly in the context of the exhibition. The short, two-minute material uses an overwhelming load of revolutionary symbolism, referring to such famous works as the image of Eugène Delacroix *Liberty Leading the People* or *Revolutionary Étude in C minor* Op. 10. The previously mentioned topoi: the Chopin-revolutionist and the friend of the folk people, the class struggle and the peaceful cooperation of the nations were also recalled.

## Chopin in socialist realist poetry

The study of poetry is an interesting topic in the journey following the footsteps of the socialist realist narrative concerning Chopin. In this essay, although there is no room for a detailed analysis of individual

---

<sup>124</sup> Orig. "akcją umasowienia muzyki Chopina, która wyszedłszy od ludu, dzisiaj stała się własnością szerokich mas narodu polskiego". *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Orig. "fotografie robotników i chłopów, do których dziś dopiero dotarła twórczość Szopena".

<sup>126</sup> Orig. "włożyli oni wiele trudu w to, by Nowa Polska mogła starannie wykształcić młodych pianistów, uczestników dzisiejszego Konkursu". P. Beylin, *Międzynarodowy Konkurs Szopenowski*, "Po Prostu" 1949, No. 25, p. 7.

<sup>127</sup> Orig. "Rok Szopenowski w Polsce—to piękny symbol budzącej się kultury socjalizmu". *Ibid.*



poems, I have allowed myself to mark all the phrases which, in my opinion, evoke obvious associations with socialist realist poetry, leaving it to the aesthetic evaluation of the reader.

In a poem *Chopin* written by Witold Wirpsza, during a pre-election meeting of the National Front, “a revolution takes place in the dayroom”.<sup>128</sup> A woman plays the old, dusty, dilapidated piano in the corner. The sound recalls the lyrical cimbalom for the narrator—and therefore a folk instrument. It can be read as a subtle reference to Chopin’s oeuvre, already discussed in the earlier fragments. Elsewhere, the narrator presents an industrial metaphor to the reader: the sound of the instrument “collapsed on listeners like a downpour of steel”.<sup>129</sup> Steel symbolises reconstruction, modernity, reliability; the use of this type of metaphor may provoke an association with the poetics of socialist realism. In successive stanzas there is further accumulation of the industrial and military metaphors: the symbol of the October Revolution appears—the Aurora cruiser, as well as the barrels, chimneys, cranes, concrete, dams, stoves. According to the narrator, the vision of the army triumphantly storming and the steel from the metallurgical furnaces flowing under the red banner emerges from the music of the Polish composer. In the end, “the last chord died with a bang” and “revolutionary silence reigned over the day room”.<sup>130</sup> The narrator suggests that Chopin’s music filled people gathered there with positive emotions—as the art of socialist realism should do. A similar type of metaphors was used by Ludwik Goliński in the poem *Wierzba nad Chopinem*, where the narrator mentions, among others, “a willow broken with a tank”.<sup>131</sup> Włodzimierz Słobodnik in the poem *Ku czci Chopina* uses the “topos of the folk people”, writing about the “stale song of villagers” which “Chopin raised from the earth”.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> Orig. “w świetlicy dochodzi do rewolucji”. W. Wirpsza, *Chopin*, [in:] *Wiersze o Chopinie. Antologia i bibliografia*, E. Słuszkiewicz (ed.), Kraków 1964.

<sup>129</sup> Orig. “runął na słuchaczy jak ulewa stali”. *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Orig. “padł z hukiem ostatni akord [...] rewolucyjna cisza zapada w świetlicy”. *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Orig. “wierzbie złamanej czołgiem”. L. Goliński, *Wierzba nad Chopinem*, [in:] *Wiersze o Chopinie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>132</sup> Orig. “czerstwej pieśni wieśniaczek [...] podniósł z ziemi Chopin”. W. Słobodnik, *Ku czci Chopina*, [in:] *Fryderyk Chopin natchnieniem poetów. W setną rocznicę śmierci*, K. Kobylańska (ed.), Warszawa 1949, p. 141.

An interesting musical metaphor appears in Helena Platt's poem entitled *Chopin*. The narrator, speaking to the composer, tells about "all hands" that "will grab the hammers and start forging the prelude, and in the highest tone there will once again be a lonely monument".<sup>133</sup>

In the socialist realist poetry almost all of the previously analysed topics appeared, especially "revolutionary", military and industrial ones. The music of the genius composer was often a background for the events of extermination. In the poetry of socialist realism Chopin's output became a harbinger of future revolutionary changes.

## Conclusion

The Polish People's Republic authorities had an immense influence on conducting and moderating the narrative of the Chopin Year in all official sources. They introduced or encouraged to set the work and person of Fryderyk Chopin into a social realist context with the help of several patterns, modified in various ways.

The narrative exposes the "profound humanism of Chopin's music" in accordance with the doctrine of socialist realism, and its folk prototypes, which have presented as the only sources. Among the Chopin genres, the mazurka was perceived as crucial; other forms that did not carry folk connotations (e.g. ballads, scherzos, sonatas) were marginalised in the discourse. The Polish composer, depicted in socialist realist narratives as a revolutionist and prophet of the victory of socialism, was to unite the "fraternal nations" of Polish and Russian people. He did not, however, sympathise with Germans or German culture, from which the atrocities of Hitlerism were born. The authorities wished to "popularise" Chopin among simple people: under thatched roofs and in day rooms through the great action of "popularisation". The aspect of popularisation was often combined with the issue of class struggle, which also clearly manifests itself in the context of the socialist realist narrative of the Chopin Year.

The Chopin Year coincided with the apogee of the socialist realist offensive in the field of culture, which turned into a great ideological

---

<sup>133</sup> Orig. "wszystkich rękach [...] pochwycą za młoty i zaczną kuć preludium, zaś na najwyższym tonie znów stanie kiedyś samotny pomnik". H. Platta, *Chopin*, [in:] *Fryderyk Chopin natchnieniem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

propaganda campaign. The activities of the Polish authorities took place primarily in the field of reception and shaping the memory of the Polish composer. They were, however, distant from the music *per se*, although e.g. the Chopin Competition was used so strongly in the service of ideology.

It should be noted that in this period non-ideologised publications also appeared. However, they belong to a decided minority. These were primarily musicological analyses,<sup>134</sup> available to a small group of people who did not have too much impact on collective social memory. And yet, although not all sources have shown the trace of the doctrine, often the ideological task was fulfilled by the context itself. When opening the 273th issue of “Trybuna Ludu” from 1949 the recipient came across an article in which Chopin was not shown as a revolutionist, bound with the thread of brotherhood with the Russians, against the background of factories and the Polish folk people, next to it he found such texts as: *Each day of our lives we will struggle for socialism and peace, May the friendship of the nations of Poland and the USSR live forever, The place of the Polish intelligence is at the side of the working class or American imperialism—the heir of Nazism.*

In 1949 Poland People’s Republic’s government aimed at building a sense of community among the society. Chopin, like Mickiewicz, Słowacki or Norwid, was used as a banner under which the unification and consolidation of the culture of socialist realism was to take place.

## Bibliography

---

### Sources

#### Press

“Ekspres Wieczorny” 1949; “Codzienny” 1949; “Kwartalnik Muzyczny” 1948–1949; “Muzyka” 1950–1951; “Poland of Today” 1949; “Polska Zbrojna” 1949; “Przekrój” 1949; “Ruch Muzyczny” 1949; “Śpiewak” 1948; “Trybuna Ludu” 1949; “Życie Śpiewacze” 1949; “Życie Warszawy” 1949.

---

<sup>134</sup> Vide: M. Mirska, *Szlakiem Chopina*, Warszawa 1949; V. Paskhalov, *Chopin a polska muzyka ludowa*, Kraków 1951; Z. Jachimecki, *Chopin. Rys życia i twórczości*, Warszawa 1949.

- Capenko M., *Realizm socjalistyczny. Metoda budownictwa radzieckiego*, "Stolica" 1950, No. 20.
- Dolgopolov M., *Shopenovskiy god v Pol'she*, "Sovetskaya Muzyka" 1949, No. 5.
- Hordyński W., *Chopin u sąsiadów—Związek Radziecki—Ludzie radzieccy czczą pamięć wielkiego polskiego kompozytora*, "Odra" 1949, No. 5.
- Idzikowski M., *Kult Fryderyka Chopina*, "Płomień" 1949, No. 4.
- Kabalevsky D., *Chopin u sąsiadów—Związek Radziecki—Przyjaciel*, "Odra" 1949, No. 45.
- Kisielewski S., *Chopin*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 1949, No. 8.
- Kisielewski S., *Czy muzyka jest niehumanistyczna*, "Znak" 1948, No. 8.
- Lissa Z., *Ideologiczne oblicze polskiej twórczości muzycznej*, "Nowe Drogi" 1948, No. 7.
- Łobaczewska S., *Jeden z celów Konkursu Chopinowskiego*, "Dziennik Literacki" 1949, No. 39.
- Mycielski Z., *Twórcy a masy*, "Nowiny Literackie" 1948, No. 4.
- Obchody „Roku Chopinowskiego”*, "Poradnik Muzyczny" 1948, No. 5.
- Rudziński W., *Dlaczego Konkurs Chopinowski wypadł dla nas tak korzystnie*, "Odrodzenie" 1949, No. 3.
- Stulecie śmierci Chopina w ZSRR*, "Przyjaźń" 1949, No. 43.
- Z przemówienia Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Bolesława Bieruta na otwarciu radiostacji we Wrocławiu w dniu 16 listopada 1947 roku*, "Przegląd Artystyczny. Pismo Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków" 1950, No. 1/2.

## Publications

- Broniewski W., *Mazurek Szopena*, [in:] *idem, Bagnet na broń*, Warszawa 1946.
- Broszkiewicz J., *Opowieść o Chopinie*, Warszawa 1950.
- Filip T., *Cypriana Norwida „Fortepian Szopena” ze stanowiska twórczości poety odczytany*, Kraków 1949.
- Idzikowski M., *Rok Chopinowski 1949 w programie Instytutu Fryderyka Chopina*, Warszawa 1947.
- Fryderyk Chopin w oczach Rosjan*, G. Wiśniewski (ed.), Warszawa 2010.
- Iwaskiewicz J., *Chopin*, Warszawa 1949.

- Jachimecki Z., *Chopin. Rys życia i twórczości*, Warszawa 1949.
- Kobylańska K., *Fryderyk Chopin natchnieniem poetów. W setną rocznicę śmierci*, Warszawa 1949.
- Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*, ed. by B. Sydow, Vol. 1–2, Warszawa 1955.
- Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*, Vol. 1, 1816–1831, Z. Helman, Z. Skowron, H. Wróblewska-Straus (eds.), Warszawa 2009.
- Kultura muzyczna Polski Ludowej 1944–1955*, J. Chomiński, Z. Lissa (eds.), Kraków 1957.
- Międzynarodowe Konkursy Pianistyczne im. Fryderyka Chopina*, K. Czekaj (ed.), Warszawa 1954.
- Mirska M., *Szlakiem Chopina*, Warszawa 1949.
- Lissa Z., *Chopin. Materiały do użytku świetlic*, Warszawa 1949.
- Lissa Z., *Fryderyk Szopen. Krótki życiorys*, Moskwa 1944.
- Lissa Z., *Niektóre zagadnienia estetyki muzycznej w świetle artykułów Józefa Stalina o marksizmie w językoznawstwie*, Kraków 1952.
- Lissa Z., *Problemy stylu narodowego muzyki Chopina*, Warszawa 1955.
- Lissa Z., *Uwagi o metodzie marksistowskiej w muzykologii*, Kraków 1950.
- Paskhalov V., *Chopin a polska muzyka ludowa*, Kraków 1951.
- Rok Chopinowski 1949 w Polsce*, Komitet Wykonawczy Roku Chopinowskiego 1949 (eds.), Warszawa 1949.
- Skowrońska J., *Mały Chopin. Inscenizowane opowieści z cyklu „Teatr dzieci z podwórka”*, Warszawa 1949.
- Słobodnik W., *Szopen*, [in:] *idem*, *Wiersze zebrane*, Warszawa 1948.
- Słuszkiewicz E., *Wiersze o Chopinie. Antologia i bibliografia*, Kraków 1964.
- Sokorski W., *Sztuka w walce o socjalizm*, Kraków 1950.
- Stromenger K., *Fryderyk Chopin. W stulecie śmierci*, Warszawa 1949.
- Żywe wydanie dzieł Fryderyka Chopina. Program czternastu koncertów obejmujących całą twórczość Fryderyka Chopina*, Komitet Wykonawczy Roku Chopinowskiego 1949 (eds.), Warszawa 1949.

## Film

- Młodość Chopina*, dir. A. Ford, 1951.
- Polska Kronika Filmowa, 1949.

## Archival sources

### Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN)

- KC PZPR 237/XVIII/16, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII/17, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII/74, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII/75, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII/76, KC PZPR, 237/XVIII/77, *Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej. Wydział Kultury. Sektor Kulturalno-Oświatowy.*
- KC PZPR 237/VIII/52-61, *Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej. Wydział Propagandy i Agitacji. Sektor Wydawnictw i Wystaw oraz Sektor Propagandy i Agitacji Masowej.*
- KC PZPR 1354/XXXIV/1-243, *Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej. Wydział Pracy Ideowo-Wychowawczej.*
- MKiS 366/165-314, *Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki w Warszawie 1945–1976. Departament Muzyki.*
- MKiS 366/1-76, *Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki w Warszawie 1945–1976. Zarządzenia, plany, sprawozdania 1949–1956.*
- MKiS 366/1-26, *Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki w Warszawie 1945–1976. Biuro Obchodów Artystycznych: sprawozdania 1949–1953.*
- MKiS 366/1-271, *Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki w Warszawie 1945–1976. Zarząd Szkół Artystycznych: szkoły muzyczne, plastyczne, teatralne, baletowe, filmowe 1947–1968.*

### Library of Polish Composers's Union in Warsaw

- 12/3 and 12/4, *Protokoły obrad Zjazdów Związku Kompozytorów Polskich 1947–1948.*

## Literature

- Baculewski K., *Współczesność. Część 1: 1939–1974*, series «Historia Muzyki Polskiej», S. Sutkowski (ed.), Vol. 7, Warszawa 1996.
- Banaszak G., *Współczesne formy kultury muzycznej*, Warszawa 1991.
- Chopin w kulturze polskiej*, M. Gołąb (ed.), Wrocław 2009.
- Chopin—w poszukiwaniu wspólnego języka. Materiały z konferencji*, A. Szklener (ed.), Warszawa 2004.
- Ekiert J., *Chopin wiecznie poszukiwany. Historia Międzynarodowego Konkursu Pianistycznego im. Fryderyka Chopina w Warszawie*, Warszawa 2010.

- Fik M., *Kultura polska po Jałcie. Kronika lat 1944–1948*, Warszawa 1991.
- Głowiński M., *Rytuał i demagogia*, Warszawa 1992.
- Golka M., *Pamięć społeczna i jej implanty*, Warszawa 2009.
- Golka M., *Socjologia kultury*, Warszawa 2007.
- Idzikowska-Czubaj A., *Rock w PRL-u. O paradoksach współistnienia*, Poznań 2011.
- Kłosiński K., *Człowiek w sytuacji kontaktu z muzyką*, Warszawa 1995.
- Kukurowski S., *Nie tylko socrealizm. O tzw. literaturze propagandowej, tendencyjnej i zaangażowanej*, Wrocław 2005.
- Mazur M., *O człowieku tendencyjnym. Obraz nowego człowieka w propagandzie komunistycznej w okresie Polski Ludowej i PRL 1944–1956*, Lublin 2009.
- Misiak T., *Muzyka jako wspólnota. Kulturowe wzory odbioru muzyki w europejskiej kulturze muzycznej XX wieku*, Warszawa 1990.
- O społecznych problemach muzyki. Antologia tekstów autorów polskich*, M. Demska-Trębacz (ed.), Warszawa 1994.
- Pocieja B., *Polskość Chopina*, Warszawa 2011.
- Polska współczesna kultura muzyczna 1944–1964*, E. Dziębowska (ed.), Kraków 1967.
- Polski socrealizm. Antologia publicystyki społeczno-kulturalnej z lat 1948–1957*, L. Lachowiecki, T. Markiewicz, M. Paczkowski (eds.), Warszawa 1988.
- Schütz A., *Wspólne tworzenie muzyki. Studium relacji społecznych*, [in:] *idem, O wielości światów. Szkice z socjologii fenomenologicznej*, trans. into Polish by B. Jabłońska, Vol. 4, Kraków 2008.
- Socrealizm? Dyskusja redakcyjna. Michał Bristiger, Andrzej Mencwel, Stefan Morawski, Wojciech Tomasik, Władysław Malinowski*, “De Musica” 3 (2002).
- Szpociński A., *Przeszłość jako przedmiot przekazu*, Warszawa 2006.
- Śliwińska K., *Socrealizm w PRL i NRD*, Poznań 2006.
- Teoria kultury a badania nad zjawiskami artystycznymi*, T. Kostyrko (ed.), Warszawa 1983.
- Tyszka A., *Uczestnictwo w kulturze*, Warszawa 1971.
- Wieczorek S., *Na froncie muzyki. Socrealistyczny dyskurs o muzyce w Polsce w latach 1948–1955*, Wrocław 2009.
- Włodarczyk W., *Socrealizm. Sztuka polska w latach 1950–1954*, Kraków 1991.