

# Serczyk, Jerzy

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## Reminiscences of polish universities in the stalinist era

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Jerzy Serczyk  
(Toruń)

### Reminiscences of Polish Universities in the Stalinist Era

My text is not an academic review. When I accepted the responsibility of speaking at a session on Stalinism I made it clear that, as someone who remembers the times referred to in the title, I am not able to treat them with the objectivity that may be expected of the historian. That is why I want to warn my honourable listeners that they shall have to cope with an historical source of a low level of reliability. According to what the history methodology handbooks say, memoirs written after long time constitute a source of the lowest level of reliability, and only newspaper articles can be worse than that.

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I am unable to say anything important about the first period of authorities' activities which described itself as 'Democratic', and from the end of the 40s and the beginning of the 50s as 'People's' – that is the 'Lublin' period (July 1944 to January 1945), because I was in Krakow then, which had been occupied by Germans. My knowledge about the starting of the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) and about the founding of the Marie Curie-Skłodowska University (UMCS) is solely second-hand. It was obvious though that UMCS had been built to play the role of an ideological counterbalance for the religious university. To some extent, its testimony may be found in the figure of its rector, the biologist Prof. Henryk Raabe - a member of PPS and ally of Osóbka-Morawski, member of parliament from 1947 to 1952, and from 1945 to 1946 ambassador of the Temporary Government in Moscow. Later on, however, he turned out to be not 'flexible' enough, and in 1949 he was made to retire when he was 68 (he died in 1951).

No sooner was Krakow, and the rest of the land west of the Curzon line, freed from German rule by the Russian army, than I was able to observe the movements of the new government, whose existence and actions had been made known to us through the German press, through *Goniec Krakowski* which had been edited by Germans for Poles, and

through the work of conspiracy publishing houses. Knowledge and culture did not, however, take up much space in those publications.

Life in Krakow – the first university city within the new state borders to be freed from German rule and not destroyed – was returning to normality relatively quickly. The last rector of the Jagiellonian University (UJ) elected in 1938, Prof. Tadeusz Lehr-Spławinski, was there and soon took up his position. The main building of UJ, Collegium Novum, opened its gates, which had been closed since 6<sup>th</sup> November 1939. The enrolment of students began, advertised in newspapers and on the university information boards. Many students were accepted without the matura exam on the same basis as before the war. There were no entrance exams or competitions. In spite of the war and the continuing military recruitment of the hastily established PKU, a student ID gave the right to postpone service. Lectures started relatively quickly as, despite the extensive occupation of public places by the Red Army in Krakow, they had not touched the main university buildings. Krakow's *Dziennik Polski* started to appear in February after a group of pre-war journalists from IKC episodically issued a few copies of *Dziennik Krakowski* which had been closed by Jerzy Putrament, who had come to Krakow. But the day after the Russians had entered, the Lublin papers *Rzeczpospolita* and *Głos Ludu* were being brought in and distributed on the central market square. The printing of the literary weekly *Odrodzenie* was moved to Krakow relatively quickly as well. In the first months of 1945 there were no cases in newspapers – the only available medium then – against the 'reaction' at the university. UJ had not given any reasons for it. Rector Lehr-Spławinski immediately joined in the so-called 'reconstruction work' (the name of the era) – his signature appeared at meetings and assemblies next to those of notables whose production was considerable. It was a reflection of contemporary relations between the university community and authorities, when the two sides not trusting each other were ready to co-operate.

Propaganda assaults in the press and the gradually developing radio service (owning radio sets was allowed no sooner than the end of May 1945) were directed against speculators, former factory owners, landowners, and the 'reactionary underground', as well as against the London government called the 'clique of Mikołajczyk, Sosnkowski, and Bor-Komorowski.' As the spring 1945 approached, Mikołajczyk's name disappeared from those smears. When *Tygodnik Powszechny* started to appear in the beginning of March 1945, press attacks focused on him as an easily recognisable 'womb of reactionism'.

On the other hand, the visit to Moscow of Stanisław Kutrzeba – the chairman of PAU and UJ professor – which was pre-discussed with archbishop Sapieha, for talks that preceded the establishing of Government

of People's Union (which took place during the trial of the 16), was of considerable importance for academic circles.

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In addition, the involvement of Professor Adam Krzyżanowski in Democratic Party did not go unnoticed (he was elected member of KRN, and then of parliament in 1947). There were many such cases. So, generally speaking, up to June 1945, when the Temporary Government of the People's Union was formed with Osóbka-Morawski as its premier and Mikołajczyk and Gomułka as vice-premiers, and before it got the approval of the west, there was a kind of armistice between the authorities and the academic circles. Later on, the former started to feel more confident and gradually lost respect even for the academics.

Nevertheless, cautious surveys of the immunity of academic circles were run fairly soon. The trial signals were the press assaults on Professor Feliks Młynarski (before the war in the Central Business School (SGH), and after the war up to 1948 at UJ) as a result of his taking up the post of chairman of Bank Emisyjny in Poland, which had been established by German authorities in German-occupied Poland, although it was known that the professor had received the approval of authorities in the Polish underground. The assaults were carried out on the comfortable pretext of 'collaboration with the Germans'.

On the other hand, such facts as the return of Mikołajczyk from exile, Witos's approval for symbolic joining of the KRN, the arrival of Karol Popiel, the establishment of PSL and Stronnictwo Pracy, and even attempts at the legalisation of Stronnictwo Narodowe, were not a problem for academic professors who proclaimed their independent views in public.

The Polish academic elites that existed on land gradually stolen by the Red Army in 1945, did not approve of either the annexation of land east of the Curzon line by the Soviet Union, or the establishment of communism in this area. In spite of all this, academics and students were of the opinion that it was their duty to work in such conditions to whatever extent was necessary for the good of society which for six years had been deprived of decent education and culture. Efforts towards these aims were not perceived as blameworthy but rather in harmony with an old tradition dating back to post-partition times. Even those least convinced who believed the new regime to be simply Russian occupation, noticed in the situation that developed after 1944 and 1945 some analogies with the situation from 1939 and it was their only source of guidance in their action. It was then that teaching in gymnasiums and high schools started in the area of German-occupied Poland; the decision to reactivate UJ was made as were (successful!) efforts to conduct final examinations for doctors and chemists at Warsaw University (UW). In the meantime, under

the rule of Russians, Lvov professors, under the leadership of the former premier Kazimierz Ba.tel, lectured at the Soviet Ukraine University. In Vilnius, the activity of the USB had been supported up till December 1939, and then lectures were given at the Lithuanian University. Finally, in Warsaw under German rule and in Lvov after 1941, new university level studies began to be organised in medical and technical areas under a 'legal' form of training courses.

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I got to know academic circles more closely at the Nicholas Copernicus University in Toruń (UMK) in the autumn of 1946. New Polish universities such as UMK, UMCS, Łódź University (UŁ), and Wrocław University (UWr), which were conceived in a 'democratic' Poland were, through their very existence, to serve various purposes such as to care for knowledge and education, and at the same time assert the superiority of academia in the period of 'sanacja' under Piłsudski's supporters. To reach this stage, many hurdles had to be surmounted. The authorities knew well that pre-war professors and assistants were not supporters of the regime and that this was also the case with the majority of students. Students coming to universities during the years 1945 and 1946 often had experience in taking part in military conspiracies or at least in secret education, which was done according to pre-September programmes. Thus they constituted a circle of people immune to communist ideology. Those joining communist youth organisations at that time (AZWM 'Życie') were mostly motivated by opportunism with the hope of making a career in the new regime. Ideological motivation was rather rare, although it was pretended that it was the decisive factor in an attempt to compensate for its absence with an affected zealotry. That zealotry was to cover pre-war sins, such as membership of the 'front guard' or Sodalicji Mariańskiej, or sometimes even sins committed during the occupation.

From among those working in academia it was rather those older academics who signed up to the PPR before 1948. This often enabled them to immediately gain an independent position and the right to take up university posts of department heads, deans, etc. However, the authorities were not quick in assigning them higher posts. This was in keeping with general communist staff politics: first places of state functions were given to loyal non-party people, whereas second positions were for PPR members. Apart from that, in the background there were PPR secretaries and AZWM activists who were not yet formal members of department councils and of the senate. Mutual dependencies between formal and increasingly factual power structures were vulnerable to fluctuations and were influenced by local personal relations and various powers 'behind the throne'. In the period from 1945 to summer 1948 this pattern was practised

relatively covertly at universities and more overtly in offices and institutions. The rule, however, was the same everywhere.

The question of the mechanism which enabled the functioning of this peculiar programmed-from-above double power is worthy of thorough investigation – so far we have been hovering on quite superficial journalistic opinions, which treat the actions of the communist regime *en bloc*, without distinguishing between specific situations.

Calling to life as many as four new universities, as compared to three remaining ones (KUL was treated as a relic, which is to be dealt with later on in the name of ‘fight with fideism and the clergy’) testified to the fact that the communist regime was going to take advantage of the great losses from among academic circles during both wars. From the point of view of the ruling powers, who wanted to extend their power, the insufficient number of professors was an advantage rather than disadvantage. No actions limiting their influence were taken against pre-war professors, even those whose political sympathies had been hostile to communism and Russia. Instead, attempts were made to create situations in which they would be forced to make political declarations, which in turn could be interpreted in a specific way by the communist-governed media. Those interpretations consisted in ascribing to acknowledged scholars attitudes endorsing the regime.

All in all, it was a sly policy, because it was a source of conviction to people that, in spite of everything, they had retained their independence, while in reality they were pawns in the regime game. When they made one step, after some time they were forced to make another one, which they excused saying they were choosing the lesser evil. An example of this manipulating technique, which was used even before the beginning of classical Stalinism, was the inducing of university professors to signing proclamations for taking part in the referendum of 1946 and in elections of 1947.

The situations we are dealing with here lack any common denominator. Nor can we ascribe cowardice and opportunism to the actors as their only motivation, although the fear factor played a crucial role here.

Jerzy Borejsza (a pre-war communist and KPP member from 1929), who acted on behalf of the authorities, used this technique successfully in academic and artistic circles. It consisted in skilfully addicting writers both to institutions created by the regime and to better living conditions against the backdrop of common poverty as well as offering them the possibility of publication in state publishing houses. Yet the addiction was easier because they stood against the regime by themselves, as individuals who did not have institutions in which they could hide.

The academic circles were in this respect in a better position. They had structures of morality dating from Galician autonomy, which treasured the peculiar ethos of scholasticism, and this was more difficult to destroy than individual resistance. Moreover, in the newly created universities every effort was made to cultivate these traditions, including elements of university self-government ('autonomy'), which were restricted by the authorities, though which had not been done away with from the outset. From among these traditional elements it was the freedom of academic research and education that survived the longest. The regime tried to criticise them and to undermine them but until 1949 it did not undertake any actions which lead to their immediate destruction. Up till then, professors chose the subjects of their research, topics of their seminars and lectures, their names and scope. In this respect, studying at a university between 1945 and 1949 was no different from studying in the years before World War II, if we ignore the housing and factory problems of the first post-war years. Yet even these problems had their good side: they brought academic tutors and their students closer together and created among them atmosphere of friendship unknown in such a form in the pre-war period.

In Toruń, one of the symptoms of this friendship and collective responsibility for the university were expeditions to the 'Regained Lands', the West Pomeranian Region, Warmia, and Mazuria for books for university libraries and for basic equipment for physics, chemistry, and biology labs. Both professors and students took part in these expeditions, slept in the same rooms, the only difference being that in the UNRRA lorries the professor would sit next to the driver while students assistants went in the back. Today, such details are not remembered or simply forgotten, yet in their own way they went to create that unparalleled atmosphere of pioneering work. All was both for the good of the regime, which ascribed to itself the building of a university on 'rough soil', and for the solidarity of different generations working at the university.

This solidarity was not favourable for the intentions of the authorities, so every action was taken to destroy it, actions which may be considered a prologue to Stalinism. Different ways were used to achieve these ends:

1. The introduction of institutional transformations with the aim of expunging the remains of university autonomy. (It should be stressed here that the pre-war Jędrzejewicz reforms, especially the higher education act of 1933, which had violated the autonomy, created for communists a comfortable ground which they conscientiously used);
2. The search in academic circles for those ready to co-operate with the authorities beyond the norms of reactivating, starting, and seeing to the normal functioning of a university.

3. The erosion of the above-mentioned solidarity between students and professors by means of creating so-called 'active students', indoctrinated in the Marxist spirit and mobilised to stand against 'reactionary professors'; communist and communist-dependant organisations had dealt with this since 1945. These organisations had been integrated institutionally before the so-called 'union of workers movement' (in the summer of 1948 the ZMP was established with ZAMP as its academic branch, whose separateness had been abolished in 1950; \*\*\*its member was 'Po prostu' with a black and red headpiece). This way of subordinating universities seemed to be promising, especially in the long run. Every effort was made to shorten this period, e.g. through accepting to university students who were not well informed ideologically and who did not have proper high-school education. This situation was true for the majority of young Poles from regions that were allotted to the Reich (the regions around Poznań, the Pomerania, Northern Mazowsze, Sieradz-Leczyca, and Upper Silesia), as in these areas no secret education had been organised – teachers had been killed right at the beginning of the occupation or had been removed to German-occupied Poland. Young people in these areas were offered training courses preparing them for universities and those whom the authorities thought could serve their own purposes to blindly execute the resolutions of their politics, were sent on these courses. From the point of view of preliminary assumptions, it was a successful undertaking and it could be acknowledged as one of the first successes of the authorities. However, the graduates of these 'accelerated' courses did not stay at university after finishing their studies to take up posts as academics, which seemed unattractive to them. Usually, they found employment in state institutions or became 'cogs' of the party machine. These were usually people with a low IQ, but ambitious. Serving the authorities enabled them to climb the social ladder several rungs at a time.
4. Searching for a new academic generation among the youth born in the 30s and taking their 'matura' exam after 1949, who (with the possible exception of Varsovians) were not experienced in conspiracy, and who came from the intelligentsia. Young people in this category characteristically deployed an *esprit de contradiction* against conservative traditions. Although few in number, they caused an intellectual disturbance in universities until the end of the forties and the beginning of the fifties and were the only group of which it was acceptable to speak of the 'Hegelian bite': these young people believed in Marxism and took seriously the project of



constructing a righteous socialist society, which they approached with a dogmatic non-compromise, characteristic of their age. However, it was out of this group, who saw disparities between the communist programme and its practical introduction, that there grew the youth opposition whose symbol became 'Po prostu' with a black and green headpiece and with representatives such as Leszek Kołakowski, who tried to humanise Marxism-Leninism within the sphere of 'purified' doctrine ('Leninist norms' was their catch phrase from the beginning). One could term them (albeit not without a certain literary exaggeration) janissaries, who initially eagerly believed and eagerly served, and then not ceasing to believe in abstract ideals, with a similar eagerness and conviction rebelled against their leaders (psychologically, the process could simulate the spiritual shaping of religious reformers).

5. Gradual, but from a certain point (1950-1952) radical backing off from active academic lecturers of those professors who, after a few years of observation, were said to be incapable of ideological 'conversion' and acceptance of the structural changes introduced into higher education. What was important was that these transformations were carried out with a view to depriving universities of their special position amongst higher schools and bringing them down to the position of every other 'wuz' (Wysszije uczebnyje zawiedeniya), and giving them as the only *differentia specifica* a limited right to carry out research in the realm of the so-called basic academic disciplines. Yet because the only people who could carry out such research were those ideologically suspicious professors, there appeared the need to create extramural structures in which these forms of activities could be practised. It was almost an exact imitation of Russian examples from the 20s, although new and more civilised names were invented. Thus the name 'Red Professorship' was not mentioned although in 1951 the IKKN was set up. The creation of such institutions as the Institute of Literary Research (established as a result of the efforts of Stefan Żółkiewski as early as 1948) was a constituent part of this politics, the result of which was 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Academic Congress which took place from 29 June to 2 July 1951, and the creation of PAN on the basis of an act of parliament in October of the same year. PAN's institutes, workshops, and laboratories enabled the exploitation of some part of the intellectual potential of the scientists who had been withdrawn from contact with students in their university teaching. Within PAN some were able to create academic workshops of a high level, which also served as 'storage' for academics of the younger generation

(usually born in the 20s), for whom the authorities saw no place in universities, yet whose skills could not be completely neglected.

6. Removing from university and restricting the possibilities of further development of the youngest generation of academics, who studied after the war according to the pre-war studies and under the supervision of pre-war professors system (i.e. those who obtained their Master degrees between 1949 and 1951). It was from this group that professors started to choose their assistants, bearing in mind obvious criteria: competence and a love of academia. The first post-war generation of assistants usually did not meet the new personnel requirements of the authorities: they were not enthusiastic towards 'progressive transformation' (it was not until 1949 that 'construction of socialism' became a topic of conversations, when Marxism-Leninism was announced as a 'academic outlook on life' – these expressions were both used to mean the same thing), and they were indifferent or close to indifferent. What completely disqualified from future university carrier was to admit Catholicism ('religiousness', 'clericalism', and \*\*\*'fideistic outlook on life'). What is more, it was important which professor was to be the supervisor of a given assistant. If a professor was for some reason 'reactionary' he should not have any assistants at all (as even a 'progressive' assistant could be contaminated by the detrimental miasma of his master). Those professors who, according to the authorities, could be hoped to be 'progress-teachable', were given the chance of having assistants, but these assistants should be members of the ZMP or (from 1949) the PZPR. On the other hand, the professors who, towards the end of the 40s, could be said to be 'subjects of democratic Poland' (which gradually became to be known as 'people's Poland' or 'the country of the people's democracy') constituted a very small group, which usually was involved, on a central level, in the preparation of basic structural and organisational transformations of both universities and other third level institutions, and also of the whole network of academic institutions throughout the country.

The actions of removal of politically unwanted assistants reached its peak in 1949-50.

The newly prepared structures were to be filled solely with 'available' people. What counted was not so much the individual's inner motivation of being 'available' (which was difficult to check) but the dressing of its outer symptoms. Membership of ZMP or PZPR (or both at once) was paramount, and in reality the only sign of this kind. It should be remembered that in the first post-war years membership of regime

organisations was silently condemned among those at universities who wanted to do something. It was not overt, but it existed and caused frustration among those who were dependant on both academia and the authorities. In any case, a young up-and-coming academic who, in order to stay at university, decided to 'sign up the party' (the expression is taken from the contemporary colloquial speech) – had to bear in mind that even if his colleagues did not turn away from him totally (which could be dangerous for them!), their mutual relations would cool.

It should be added here that in universities outside Warsaw young people who had been expelled from posts as teaching assistants in the years 1949 to 1950 could not dream about getting jobs in PAN structures (which were not yet developed). They could consider themselves lucky if they got a job in a library, archive, museum, or similar cultural institution. Many who hid themselves in such institutions during the worst years, returned to universities after the 'Polish October', with richer experience. Most of them managed to make up for the wasted years (wasted on their CVs for the second time) and achieve the title of professor with substantial academic achievement.

A separate issue concerning the overt process of Stalinisation (Russification) of Polish universities, which was well underway in the early 50s, was an elementary reconstruction of their structures, the aim of which was to subject them to the efficient and constant control of the authorities and to give this control an institutional character. The 1947 decree on higher education did not solve any of these matters issued as it was in a period when the authorities had not fully revealed their intentions about other areas of life and when they angrily rejected any accusations of introducing Russian models to Poland. The term 'people's democracy', which gradually began to appear in government speeches, then meant not (as it was soon to turn out) 'an introductory phase of socialist society', but a separate and (by default) durable political system, different from that of Russia.

Polish universities from 1950 and 1951 had a structure in which the basic organisational unit was the department; the head of department was a *professor ordinarius*. The 1920 Academic Institutions Act stated that the university system was to be based on self-government, and the WRiOP Ministry was merely a supervisory authority. The decrees of the Polish President and the act of 1933 put some limits on this self-government. Communist authorities introduced further restrictions applying in two ways:

1. Removal of self-government (mentioned above)
2. The lowering of professorial status by removal of institutional control in a department and including professors within the

'collective body'. The professor was to lose his independence, the right to carry out unlimited research and to lecture in accordance with his knowledge and conscience, as well as the right to choose his own students and staff. His role was now limited to that of an academic teacher, subject to supervision and control from above and below. In this way the communists could count on the backing of younger professors and those of third level institutions outside university. Even before the war there were voices in academic circles pointing to the fact that traditional structures were becoming non-functional with the massive inundation of youth to universities – which was generally true – and that there was a need for more modern solutions. Thus they worked on the basis of this assumption using tactics tested in similar situations and practised by communists, who used catch phrases and programmes made up by people of totally different orientations to achieve their own goals through giving them meanings contradictory to the intentions of their authors. Moreover, there was discrediting in the eyes of the non-communist part of society – comfortable for the communists – of both the slogans and programmes as well as their original authors and also for them (communists) a comfortable mess in academic circles. This commotion was an introductory step preceding the enforcement of communist ideology and was a recurring tactic used in Russia and elsewhere since Bolshevik Revolution towards circles which were first to be neutralised and spiritually immobilised and then subordinated and swallowed or destroyed.

Organisational changes also involved disintegrating universities and creating separate departments on the basis of their faculties. Simple human ambition, of which even full professors were not free, was abused. It happens that rectors' ermine robes become an irresistible lure (and somehow this non-proletarian and feudal appendage survived). The first faculties to be removed from Krakow and Warsaw universities were the theology faculties (there were two in Warsaw: one Catholic, the other Evangelical), which could be ideologically explained as a progressive secularisation of universities in the name of the separation of State and Church. Then medical faculties were taken care of, that is separate Medical Academies were created, a move which was not simply administrative. The same thing happened to the Agriculture Faculties of UJ and UP, which were transformed into Higher Agriculture Schools (renamed in the 70s as Agricultural Academies); in 1951 there began a process of creating new

higher vocational schools, which fully resembled Russian models. From the government's point of view, this had at least two advantages:

1. Universities had been degraded in the public opinion, to one of many categories of higher schools.

In speeches it became the custom to call them 'humanistic colleges' although they still included natural science faculties. In terming them 'humanistic' there was a certain detectable shade of contempt for skills that did not have any straightforward practical ('productive') application. Though it was never said explicitly, there was the impression that universities were schools of less importance than they thought themselves to be; it was proof of mercy of the ruling powers that they were allowed to exist at all and thus they should be grateful.

2. As a result of creating a relatively large number of new colleges, academic circles became atomised and there was a conspicuous decrease in universities' intellectual potential. Thus, the fake multiplying of the number of universities presented in propaganda as a success (which to some extent it was) served *de facto* to weaken their social position. It also enabled regional PZPR committees to take control over them. This was formally exercised so that party organisations in larger workplaces (universities included) were subject to the direct control of the KW. This was observable in, for example, appointing the first secretaries of university PZPR committees who were 'brought in a briefcase' from among the KW apparatchiks and 'elected' by university party organisations. One of the symptoms of the fall of Stalinism in the mid-50s was the 'rebellion' of university party organisations by electing secretaries from their own groups. For the KW, used to obedience, these 'rebellions' were such a surprise that they were not able to counteract them.

Great importance was ascribed to creating new organisational structures within faculties (which usually kept their traditional names) and increasing their number, and this brought about similar consequences within a particular university as did the creation of new colleges on a national scale. In Toruń, for example, the faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences was divided into 'BiNoZ' and 'MatFizChem' at the beginning of the 50s (these abbreviations, used officially and colloquially, were one of the small components of Russification, with its tendency for creating syllabic abbreviations instead of traditional Polish acronyms.)

Within the scope of these movements, officially motivated by the necessity of 'rationalisation', and the application of 'collective work', the final disintegration of university departments was accomplished, and without deleting the terminology from their names they were deprived of

organisational sovereignty through the removal of the traditional signs of competence from their professors. In some cases it was reflected in creating 'team departments', where several professors could work at the same time; the head of such a department was the one who was the most trusted by the authorities (or the one who was to be put against his co-workers and therefore he would weaken their solidarity). A higher form was represented by 'teams of departments', inner structures, which did not expand deans power, but limited the competence of department's head within such team. After the 'Polish October' many departments disappeared from university structures, or were transformed into institutes, though often the rules of their organisation survived.

The rule of 'team work' found its application both with academic teachers and students. With the latter, it helped plant mutual distrust and suspicion – the latter being borrowed in an almost unchanged form as a 'criticism and self-criticism' to the unified (according to Komsomol) youth organisation ZMP. ZMP was an organisation describing itself as the 'closest assistant of the Party' and bringing up youth on 'with an academic outlook'. The assumption that ZMP (initially AZMP) played a similar role for other student organisations as PZPR was playing for 'allied parties' and non-party organisations, was not said out loud, but it was practised and realised. A totalitarian scheme was applied here in its full form, overtly corresponding with Russian models, but also resembling German national-socialist 'Gleichschaltung'.

Created in the autumn of 1950, the Polish Student Association, which outlived Stalin and Gomułka, was to become some kind of 'student trade union'; but it was not until 1973, when it was transformed into the Polish Socialist Student Association, that it began to operate in a different way. The association was assigned the task of controlling the 'socialist discipline of study', introduced at more or less the same time, which consisted in obligatory attendance of all students on classes included in the schedule. There were a lot of these classes, even up to 10 hours a day. For this purpose, there was created a hierarchy of controllers taking care of each other. At the bottom there was a group of several students, the head of which was an appointed 'foreman', who checked attendance on each hour of class, and marked it on a list and then reported it to 'year foreman' – another student, and 'group supervisor, appointed from among assistants. This one collected group reports and handed them on to the 'year supervisor' – a lecturer or reader, who in turn put down week attendance on big sheets of paper (commonly known as 'canvas') and handed them to the deputy dean for student affairs, who prepared a collective report of the whole faculty for the deputy rector.

From time to time, these reports were made at different levels: group, year, faculty, university, 'production conferences'. 'Absentees', who missed classes and failed exams, were branded and 'labour and academic leaders' were praised. Photos of both groups were hung out on boards, one type of which were 'honourable', the other 'black'. They were also described in manually produced wall notes, called 'lightnings'.

'Production conferences' were political meetings for non-party citizens. PZPR and ZMP members played the major role there, leading discussion and criticising professors and students. The criticism was of dual nature. It was relatively less dangerous for the afflicted students because it did not mean the ultimate discrimination, but only 'handing out for monitoring of the collective'. 'Production conferences' were used, however, for previously arranged (in the party committee and ZMP council) campaigns against 'reactionary' professors. In Toruń we could watch such 'performance' directed against a couple of Botany professors, Wanda and Jan Zabłocki for not being eager enough in promoting the theory of Miczurin and Lysenko and not giving proper resistance to 'bourgeois pseudo-science of Morgan-Mendel.' The Zabłockis were not suspended, however, in their didactic work as it had been feared – maybe because they appeared at this conference and – with peace and dignity – they reasoned with received non-sensical accusations. The authorities accepted it as 'self-criticism', however deficient it seemed to them. An important factor of Russification/Stalinisation was a fundamental change of organisation and content of university syllabus. The principle of free teaching and studying was abolished. A strictly written programme for each course, which included exact number of classes and syllabus to be lectured, replaced it. The number of tests, colloquiums, and exams was multiplied and the dates were fixed in advance. Obligatory subjects for every course were introduced: the basics of Marxism-Leninism and of Marxist political economy, which ended with exams. The names of these subjects were changed later, but the content remained the same. Party activists were introduced into universities to lecture them (these were usually Master degree holders). New departments were created for them and they were given some of the competencies of individual academics. They were not called to management posts at the universities. Their role was to indoctrinate and not to manage.

Indoctrination was run on many levels and tracks. Ideological training was done 'along' the party and youth line in due organisations, whereas non-party academics, administrators, librarians, and technical personnel were trained in the structures of trade unions. The frequency of training sessions was quite extensive, and attendance was checked. Apart from regular meetings there were numerous additional ones because of various

occasions. The first real orgy of such meetings exploded with the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party of Stalin. Not only attendance, but also servile enunciations were expected from the people in charge. Shunning such took a lot of courage, and after some time it brought about negative consequences. It should be remembered that the whole society was experiencing the arising feeling of fear, which mingled with an atmosphere of hopelessness. In the first post-war years it was still believed that there existed a possibility of positive change of relations, even through an outbreak of WWII, but around 1950 these hopes died away. The horror of a communist regime was something different from the fear during German occupation, when the border between the enemy and 'us' had been clear. In Stalinism there it was never certain whether some careless sentence during a usual friend-to-friend conversation would not ignite a chain reaction of spying information and accusations from which there was no way out. The press, the radio, news films were full of pictures presenting 'pest' trials, enemies, and spies; there were capital punishments carried out, as well as life sentences. It all contributed to an atmosphere of constant terror and personal danger especially for persons whose job involved constant must of making public statements and opinions: academic and school teachers.

Another conference campaigns took place with the publication of Stalin's two newsletters, his last writing works (1950-1952): *On Marxism and linguistics* and *Economic problems of socialism in USSR*. They were spread out immediately as a proof of their author's special genius and as a model example of faultless academic thinking. Academic circles, then, became the object of additional indoctrination efforts. They consisted in exerting pressure on academic teachers, who were recognised as 'progressive', to show 'spontaneous initiative that arise from their ranks' and to make speeches at department, team, institute, and society meetings on the influence of Stalin's work on their own academic work and field of study. It was expected that after such speeches there would arise a debate, and that the people taking part in it would add something in a similar spirit, i.e., they would identify the applicability of 'genius-like thoughts of the great koryfeusz of science'. The course of such meetings was strictly monitored, and open and secret reports (they were revealed in party archives after 1989) were written with conclusions concerning viewpoints and attitudes of particular academics. This campaign was the last from the five-year series of indoctrination actions. The wave of official mourning after his death on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1953 was big, but it lasted relatively short as compared to previous campaigns – to the point when the almighty boss of Police and anything else, Ławrentij Beria, was killed. It became obvious then, that the race for power had begun.



Indoctrination activity in the period of 1949 – 1954/55, executed outside the obligatory programme for students, apart from its prime purpose – flooding the minds of subject people with a certain quantum of quite unambiguous elementary knowledge of Marxism-Leninism – was also done with a view to gathering a substantial amount of time and keeping the workers after hours within the place of work (in this case, university). It was a general tendency: there was not a week without two or three meetings; often, however, there were meetings all week long, except Sundays (there were no free Saturdays). PZPR and ZMP members had even more such meetings, but if they could enjoy them more as they learned about planned personal decisions.

Speaking of ideological training – it was relatively easy to learn, as it consisted of bluntly put statements and was characterised by inner coherence. Mastering them could give the conviction that one possesses now the key to understand the matters of this world, a complete knowledge of nature and society. Half-intelligent minds were shaped in this way, which were characterised by unusual self-confidence and ignorance of all other non-academic viewpoints, or even ‘anti-academic’. It did not work with experienced minds, but this web, from which it was difficult to disentangle, caught philosophically unprepared students and some young assistants.

Another factor of Russification executed in the Stalinist times was a fundamental modification of procedures concerning acquirement of academic degrees. It was connected with the simultaneous introduction of double-step university studies, closing down of many lines of study – where there were too many ‘reactionary’ academics – and assembling many specialisations (especially in the humanities) in chosen universities. Toruń University suffered the most from these movements. The Faculty of Law was almost completely closed down, and on the Faculty of Humanities there was left only the first (lower, three year) level of history studies and Polish studies, the last one being in danger of closing down as well. The higher level for particular lines of study, ending with master’s degree, was given to only those universities, which were recognised as ‘progressively’ more advanced, ready to ‘accept academic viewpoint’ and ‘setting free of the remains of bourgeois pseudo-science’. The number of students who were admitted access to higher level studies was, for obvious reasons, smaller than the number of students accepted to the first year of lower level studies. These studies ended without any degree (graduates were ironically called ‘engineers’), but they gave right to teach in secondary schools. The side effect of this system was a lowering of education level of teachers.

At the same time, there was introduced 'compulsory employment'. It had been effective since 1950, so it embraced also those students who managed to complete their studies and get a degree before the war. 'Compulsory employment' issued by commissions influenced by 'community factor' (PZPR) were a part of division of students' fate also after their graduation: the graduate had to accept the assigned place of work and work there for at least three years. Persons suspected of ideological disloyalty could in this way be sent to a distant land, to small towns, where it was easier to watch them and where they could not do much. The 'orders' also included the candidates for future university teachers; it was an additional 'sieve' which awaited even the most apt graduates.

A closer supervision was made towards those lines of study, which were recognised by the authorities as vulnerable to 'hostile ideological influence', such as for example language departments (philologies), both ancient and modern. These lines were concentrated on chosen universities, which received professors and younger academics moved from disqualified universities. The strongest measures were taken against philosophy, which was gathered in UW, and provincial universities were ascribed logic departments, as the so-called 'service departments', which did not have a right to educate its own graduates (logic was to become a compulsory subject on many lines of study, but only those of elementary level; a number of appropriate Russian hand books were translated into Polish then).

An important, in Stalinist reformers' plans, institution of 'young staff education' [this term appeared then as well] was the institution of post-graduate student, which was a close imitation of Russian system. In the long run, it was to replace assistance. From the point of view of the authorities it was much better from assistance, because it broke the traditional connection between the master and the student and the coexisting multigenerational spiritual bond. Post-graduate student was to be subject to intense indoctrination embracing self-education, checking their work in the train of its creation and exams (the so-called candidate minimum), partly done not in home university but in Warsaw. One of the exams that were centralised and not carried out outside Warsaw was Marxist philosophy exam (the examiners were Professor Tadeusz Kroński and Professor Jan Legowicz).

In return for these restrictions, a post-graduate student received a slightly higher salary than that of an assistant (if he or she had been an assistant before, his previous status was suspended for the period of post graduate studies, planned for three years) and additional stipend for academic books. He was also released from teaching (which was

compulsory even for beginning assistants). Post-graduate studies should end with a candidate dissertation and its defence, and the acquirement on its basis a degree of Science Candidate. In official announcements concerning this topic it was suggested that the degree of Science Candidate was something better than a traditional doctorate. The already started doctorates were to be finished by the end of 1952. This is why the term 'December doctorate' was coined ('Dezemberdoktorat') and it referred to hastily granted 'old' doctorates, where supervisors, and faculty councils often deliberately ignored the shortcomings in meeting all formal requirements, so that only the deadline was met. It was a violation of good academic manners, but the accompanying compulsory circumstances were a satisfactory excuse. In this way Stalinist system indirectly contributed to the loss of balance in university life rules, leading to some kind of ethical relativity, justified by the choice of the lesser of two evils.

Apart from the traditional doctorate also habilitacja was annulled and exchanged for a procedure of granting the degree of 'science doctor', which also was an imitation of Russian models. In order to make this innovation more digestible for Polish academic circles, it was established that all full professors, who held this title in the moment of introducing the new regulation, were to be granted the degree of 'science doctors'. In the future, however, acquiring this title was to be more difficult than the former habilitacja.

Central Qualification Commission (its name was altered, but its responsibilities remained the same), organised in 1934 and imitating the Russian WAK (Wyssaja attestacjonna komisija), was created to control the compatibility of movements in the field of personal politics of particular universities and also, to grant titles and – to some extent – academic degrees. During Stalinism this institution raised the titles – to professors or at least docents – of those people who were recognised by the authorities as the ones who could become useful or who would not overtly act against the Russification of universities and academic institutions. The criteria for this category were not strictly specified and they varied from one region to another, depending on where a given person was active; as it is always the case in totalitarian regimes, personal 'connections' played an important role.

Personal politics practised by CKK was at the same time connected with analogous movements done by department authorities (the ministry that managed university affairs changed its name and personnel over the period in question:

- 1945-1947 Ministry of Education, Czesław Wycech,
- 1947-1950 Ministry of Education, Stanisław Skrzyszewski,

- April-July 1950 Ministry of Higher Education and Science, Witold Jarosiński,
- July 1950 Ministry of Higher Education and Science, Adam Rapacki,
- 1952 Ministry of Higher Education, Adam Rapacki,
- April 1956 Ministry of Higher Education, Stefan Żółkiewski)

The opinion of every head of the Academic Department of KC PZPR was always important and sometimes ultimate. The names of these people were known in academic circles, but they were not revealed in the press and on the radio, as well as the very structure of KC Secretary Office and its departments were a half-mystery. It was not available for general access in various publications, and the knowledge of it constituted a certain degree of initiation, which gave the 'active body' the feeling of superiority over the lower members of the party and ordinary non-party citizens.

It should be pointed out here that, in contrast to other countries of 'people's democracy', during the whole period of Stalinism, there was no plenary assembly of KC PZPR that would solely be dedicated to such questions as education, higher education, or ideological indoctrination. They occupied relatively much space in assemblies of 1950 (May 1950 'Party tasks in fight for new employees on the background of general situation,' July 1950 'Questions of personnel on the light of the six-year plan,') but only as one of the discussed topics. In the next years, both before the death of Stalin and in the period of March 1953 – October 1956, the situation looked similar. One may make a conclusion that for the contemporary leaders of PZPR (Bierut, Berman, Minc, and Zambrowski) higher education did not belong to the most important parts of party and political activity; its department superior, Adam Rapacki, came from PPS and was just a deputy of a member of political office of KC PZPR.

It was different in East Germany, where before the creation of NRD particular lands accepted acts on 'democratisation of education' (in Saxony and Branderburg in 1946) and where there was run Party High School (Parteihochschule 'Karl Marx') in June 1946, and the first university institute of dialectic materialism was created on Jen university in October 1946. In August 1948, the presidium of SED passed a bill 'Political instructions for German democratic education.' In January 1951, the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenary of CK SED debated for three days solely on 'major ideological and organisational principles on the development of education,' the main task being 'to introduce Marxism-Leninism and regular planning and centralisation in the field of academic research and education,' as well as 'socialist transformation of higher education.'

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Stalin's death did not bring many immediate changes. The change in spiritual atmosphere, however, was felt relatively quickly. The overt fight for power between political inheritors of Stalin reverberated also in the countries of 'people's democracy' and brought about one, of other important side effects, a lessening of ideological pressure and weakening of indoctrination activities. In 1954, academic circles saw it quite clearly. It was not the end of Stalinism, but certainly, the end of its development. Certain organisational solutions were abandoned, for example, even before the 'Polish October' the two-level studies were cancelled. Soon, Stalinism was going to experience political regress, the symbol of which became coming to the post of 1<sup>st</sup> Secretary of KC PZPR of Nikita Chruszczow in Russia in September 1953, and in Poland the releasing from prison of Władysław Gomułka in 1954.

These matters, however, do not belong to the subject of our discussion.