

RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

EAST EUROPE

This material was prepared for the use of the editors and policy staff of Radio Free Europe.

POLAND/20

13 June 1972

REGIONAL CULTURAL PERIODICALS IN POLAND

Summary: This paper, based in part on a recent Polish study of regional periodicals, examines the cultural journals published in various areas of the country.

* * *

After the "March events" of 1968, in which the second most important role, after that of the students', was played by men of letters, the PUWP leadership came to the conclusion that in order to force a showdown with the disobedient literary circles of Warsaw (as demonstrated by the turbulent oppositionist meeting of the Warsaw Chapter of the Polish Writers' Union which took place on 29 February 1968), it was necessary to "outflank" Poland's first-class writers by winning over the union members living in the provinces. At the February 1969 Polish Writers' Union congress in Bydgoszcz, the authorities spread the idea that "those in Warsaw dabble in politics," while "the sound elements in the provinces work for the good of socialist culture." At that time, Wincenty Krasko and Lucjan Motyka, the then head of the CC Cultural Department and Minister of Culture and the Arts, respectively, expressed the view that more attention should be devoted to the union's voivodship chapters.

More than one half of all union members live in the country's capital; of the some 1,100 people who hold membership cards, more than 600 reside in Warsaw. The Ministry of Culture and the Arts has long worried about this "concentration." Anxious to win over

the writers who live in the provinces, especially those among them who suffer from a feeling of inferiority vis-à-vis their colleagues in the capital, the authorities decided to expand the provincial sociocultural periodicals by offering them greater allotments of paper, boosting their budgets, enlarging their editorial staffs, and encouraging them to introduce more attractive typography. This sort of decentralization also offered an additional guarantee that the party's cultural policy would be more efficiently put into force.

For example, the literary periodicals published in Opole or Koszalin are strictly checked by the voivodship censors. Because of the specific conditions found in the provinces, the possibilities of appeal against a censor's verdict are generally smaller than in Warsaw. Moreover, in some regions local party voivodship secretaries keep the cultural periodicals under their own "thumbs." The editors of such periodicals face great difficulties unless they stay on good terms with the local party officials. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the January 1972 issue of the monthly Opole, for instance, encouraged the "personality cult" of local Voivodship Committee Secretary Jozef Kardys by devoting an unusual amount of space to him, citing his speeches, etc.

The Cracow Press Analysis Center recently surveyed the subjects of articles in 15 regional periodicals, the journalistic and literary forms and the language they employ, and their general level, as well as the amount of attention they devoted to regional problems. (1) The analysis included the following periodicals:

Barwy -- monthly, Warsaw Voivodship

Kontrasty -- monthly, Bialystok Voivodship

Profile -- monthly, Rzeszow Voivodship

Warmia i Mazury -- monthly, Olsztyn Voivodship

-
- (1) Wladyslaw Maslowski: "The Format and Circulation of the Regional Voivodship Periodicals," Zeszyty Prasoznawcze No.1/51, 1972, Cracow.

Pobrzeze -- monthly, Koszalin Voivodship.
Nurt -- monthly, Poznan Voivodship.
Odra -- monthly, Wroclaw Voivodship.
Litery -- monthly, Gdansk Voivodship.
Przemiany -- monthly, Kielce Voivodship.
Poglady -- fortnightly, Katowice Voivodship.
Nadodrze -- fortnightly, Zielona Gora Voivodship.
Kamena -- fortnightly, Lublin Voivodship.
Pomorze -- fortnightly, Bydgoszcz Voivodship.
Odglosy -- weekly, Lodz Voivodship.
Opole -- monthly, Opole Voivodship.

The Cracow weekly Zycie Literackie (edited by Wladyslaw Maciejek) was not included in the study because its circulation is national, while that of the majority of provincial periodicals -- with the exception of Odra, Kamena, and Nurt -- is mainly confined to their geographical regions. The general level of the three above-mentioned periodicals, whose editors and contributors have university backgrounds, is considerably above that of other regional cultural periodicals. After the "December 1970 events," the Gdansk Litery has notably improved its general level; in the first quarter of 1971 (in line with a more liberal approach toward the treatment of local problems), this monthly published several interesting articles on the subject of the socioeconomic situation of that region.

The Lublin fortnightly Kamena has sought to return to the prewar traditions of that periodical. Marek Jaworski, the present editor-in-chief of this lively periodical, is the son of its prewar editor, Kazimierz Andrzej Jaworski.

The results of the study, published by Wladyslaw Maslowski, included Kamena in the group of "traditional cultural literary periodicals." Maslowski concluded that Pobrzeze, which devotes

most of its issues to discussing social problems, publishes "a lot of sound information about the needs of its region." The Poznan monthly Nurt, which has ambitions to reach readers outside its particular region, specializes in scientific subjects and "appeals to a narrow intellectual elite." It would be worth while to add that Nurt carries a rich and discerning review of literary events in the West, with special attention to contemporary German and Scandinavian literature. The popularity of the German studies in Nurt originates from the fact that a number of its contributors work in the Western Institute in Poznan. Particularly worthy of attention are the essays written by Aleksander Rogalski, a leading Polish specialist on Thomas Mann.

So far as "thaw" goes (a criterion which was omitted from Maslowski's study), the Wroclaw monthly Odra is in the lead. Some of the bold articles published by this monthly have on more than one occasion been criticized by Zolnierz Wolnosci (daily of the Ministry of Defense) and by the Pax newspapers. For example, the ironic essay by Jerzy Jastrzebski (2) about the publications sponsored by the Ministry of Defense, which propagated the "struggle against the ideological subversion from the West," aroused a wave of indignation on the pages of the Pax WTK (March and April issues) and of Za Wolnosc i Lud (newspaper sponsored by ZBoWiD). Jastrzebski dared to criticize the potboiler novels produced by UB Colonel Jerzy Kudas-Bronislowski, the press spokesman for the Ministry of the Interior.

Another article, entitled "History Is a Drag," written by Wojciech Gielzynski and published in Odra, (3) also aroused shrill protests among the "hawks" at the Ministry of the Interior, the people's Militia, Pax, and ZBoWiD. Gielzynski had ventured the opinion that: "... We have too extensive a military repertoire, too many monuments, and too much cheap patriotism -- a surfeit in this sphere gives us a hang-over." In reply to this article, Walka Mlodych (newspaper of the Socialist Youth Union) and Za Wolnosc i Lud accused Gielzynski of "attacking the

(2) Odra, March 1972.

(3) Ibid.

Month of National Remembrance." Odra often publishes courageous articles which have been rejected by other periodicals (some of the authors are: Tymoteusz Karpowicz, Tadeusz Rozewicz, and Ludwik Flaszen). This is in part possible because Odra's editor-in-chief, Klemens Krzyzagorski, is on very good terms with Ludwik Drozd, first party secretary of Wrocław Voivodship,

On the other hand, there is no sign of a "thaw" in such periodicals as Barwy, Profile, and Przemiany. These periodicals occupy themselves with regional matters and with "civic education," or merely repeat views published in the Warsaw press.

Pomorze, published in Bydgoszcz, is an attractive fortnightly which is interesting because it runs various readers' polls, discusses a wide range of youth subjects (jazz, pop music, motion pictures), and often draws attention to various local problems (such as shoddy building construction, excessive bureaucracy, etc.). Pomorze often skillfully raises touchy political problems in the form of light feuilletons.

Barwy, Warsaw Voivodship's cultural fortnightly, whose editorial offices are located in the capital itself, is a periodical of rather low quality, and in fact, is rather superfluous, because it is circulated in the same region where the entire press of the country's capital is quite readily available. Barwy was established after March 1968, in order to provide a sinecure for Henryk Gaworski, an activist of the Partisan faction who distinguished himself during the "pacification" of the Warsaw chapter of the Polish Writers' Union. Advocating a "hard-line" policy, Gaworski publishes long-winded articles in which he storms against "decadent liberals" and calls for the restitution of "specialist realism." Janina Pregier, Barwy's regular book reviewer, campaigns against the "nihilistic" writings of Tadeusz Konwicki, who allegedly "fails to perceive the mainstream of our life" and prefers "his nightmares, rather than a just appraisal of our reality." (4)

In his study about the regional periodicals, Maslowski suggests that such periodicals as Nurt, Odra, and Litery, which

(4) Barwy No.5, 1972.

appeal only to certain intellectual groups, should lower their standards to the level of the ordinary reader, while Pomorze, Odglosy, and Barwy should reflect on the dangers of lowering their standards too much in an attempt to pander to popular tastes.

As regards appeals to certain tastes, it is interesting to note that for the last two years nearly all provincial periodicals have taken to publishing various "art" photos of naked girls in their issues. This has led a columnist in Odglosy to wisecrack: "The less meat there is in our shops, the more flesh there appears on the pages of our newspapers."

Tadeusz Nowakowski