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The Politics of History and Culture in Stalinist Poland: Museology and the Construction of a 'Usable Past', 1945-1956

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of History

Durham University

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The Politics of History and Culture in Stalinist Poland: Museology and the Construction of a 'Usable Past', 1945-1956

Maksymilian Loth-Hill

Abstract

This thesis explores the politics of history and culture in Stalinist Poland by analysing the role of museums and the meaning of the 'usable pasts' articulated within them. It focuses on museology in post-war Poland's new western regions – the formerly German territories initially referred to in contemporary propaganda as the *Ziemie Odzyskane* ('Reclaimed Lands') – but also adopts a central perspective by considering praxis in the nation's leading museal institution, the National Museum in Warsaw. The study is structured across three sections, each of which deals with museology in the context of specific conceptual construction projects underway in post-war Poland. Part I looks at the connection between museums and nation-building, firstly in the central context of the National Museum in Warsaw, and then from the regional perspective of the Silesian Museum in Wrocław. Part II delves into the realm of Stalinist ideology, looking at the way museological narratives were shaped by the contemporary drive to 'build socialism' and promote ideas of Polish-Soviet friendship. Finally, Part III shifts the focus to the smaller regional museums of the 'Reclaimed Lands', the former German *Heimatmuseen*, exploring the local dynamics of the process of cultural transformation and Polonisation. Overall, the thesis reveals the way in which museums presented 'usable pasts' which historicised the transformation of post-war Poland. Beyond this, however, it points to wider conclusions about the nature of Polish Stalinism. By drawing out the contextual threads of a broader museological discourse that transcended the boundaries of Stalinism, it emphasises ideas of continuity as well as change, problematising the idea that the entire period can be framed in terms of imposition and rupture.

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Introduction: Themes and Contexts

'Who controls the past…controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'.[1] Despite being recycled to the point of exhaustion, this famous quote from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* nonetheless provides the most succinct expression of the totalitarian idea – or, more precisely, ideal – which lies at the heart of this study. Indeed, the quote is particularly apposite, given that it was at the Tehran Conference of 1943 – the proceedings of which, according to Orwell, inspired him to write his novel – that the 'Big Three' first discussed situating a post-war Polish state between the 'Curzon line' and the Oder River.[2] By the time Poland regained its independence, the changes inflicted upon it were more than just territorial. Poland now lay within what Churchill termed the 'Soviet sphere', and, through a mixture of canny political manipulation and outright intimidation, over the following years a Soviet-style state socialist system was constructed in the reborn Polish state.[3] This process was by no means simple or straightforward, and, among the many resources deployed in this struggle, history itself was used by Poland's rulers in their attempt to secure legitimation, and to transmit their ideology to their subjects. Of course, in Orwell's novel, the ruling Party was all-powerful; Poland's new authorities, however, were under no illusions as to the limits of their might. While they might dearly wish to control the future, the immediate struggle in the Stalinist years was to control the present, and the past had a key role to play in this endeavour.

The purpose of this study is to examine Stalinist attempts to create a 'usable past' in Poland by exploring the role of museums and the nature of museological interpretations of history and culture. It asks how museums contributed to the twin conceptual construction projects underway in Stalinist Poland – the process of nation-building, and the ideological drive towards 'building socialism' – as well as considering the broader implications of what

[1] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London, 1987), p. 40.
[2] Ibid., p. xii; A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 1.
[3] In Polish society the terms 'People's Poland' (*Polska Ludowa*) and 'PRL' (short for *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, or 'Polish People's Republic', the state's official name from 1947-89) are used as a shorthand to refer to the communist period as a whole. Both terms will be used interchangeably to this effect throughout this study.

museology can tell us about the nature of Stalinism and its cultural politics. As key embodiments of what Pierre Nora has famously termed *lieux de memoire*, museums are one of the foundational pillars – alongside libraries, archives, and monuments – used in the construction and transmission of a given society's 'cultural memory'.[4] This concept was pioneered by Jan Assmann, who highlighted the way in which it connects a shifting conceptual and representational landscape of cultural heritage to the 'concretion of identity' through a process of (re)construction.[5] As Assman notes, 'no memory can preserve the past'.[6] Instead, cultural memory is formed and cultivated in response to the specific conditions of the present, and its complexion varies according to circumstances that frame its operation.[7] Cultural heritage – the 'building blocks' of cultural memory – can be defined, understood and deployed in myriad ways, offering a multiplicity of potential 'usable pasts'. Thus, explains Assman, 'which past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a society'.[8]

Here, we are concerned with the meaning of 'usable pasts' articulated within the specific context of Polish Stalinism, broadly defined as the period 1945-1956.[9] Though its temporal span is relatively short, the Stalinist era is of fundamental importance to understanding post-war Polish society. Not only does it mark the formative years of the Polish state that emerged after the Second World War, but also – most notably after 1948/49 – the period during which ideology shaped the parameters of everyday life with an intensity that would never be seen again. As such, it occupies a complicated and controversial position within

[4] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire'*, *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989), pp. 7-24; Aleida Assmann, 'Transformations between History and Memory', *Social Research*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Spring, 2008), p. 56.
[5] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, No. 65 (1995), pp. 125-133.
[6] Ibid., p. 130.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., p. 133.
[9] Polish Stalinism is bookended by frayed temporal borders, and, depending on the reasoning, the starting point could be placed as early as 1944 (when the Soviet-backed Polish Committee of National Liberation was founded), or as late as 1948/49, when 'building socialism' began in earnest. Likewise, the beginning of the retreat from Stalinism can be seen prior to 1956, though this year marked the major turning point. I have adopted a broad span covering 1945-1956 (roughly the end of the war to the Polish October) in order to widen the analytical framework.

Polish history, with many keen to dismiss it as an aberration, the toxic intrusion of an alien presence into the Polish body-politic that can only be seen as a 'divergence' from the nation's 'proper' historical path.[10] Indeed, until the 1990s the dominant trends in scholarship largely reflected the 'totalitarian' paradigm of the Cold War years, which emphasised the almost limitless power of the regime to bend society to its will through the might of its coercive apparatus.[11]

Since the fall of communism, however, a growing body of 'revisionist' scholarship – which this study both draws upon and contributes to – has used the archival material made available after the system's collapse to move beyond these earlier interpretations. Important interventions from Padraic Kenney, John Connelly and Katherine Lebow have complicated the older 'totalitarian' model by drawing attention to the limitations of the regime's coercive power and adding nuance to our understanding of state-society relations.[12] In his pioneering study of worker experiences in Łódź and Wrocław between 1945 and 1950, for example, Kenney argued convincingly that that the period in question was shaped by dynamics of negotiation as well as imposition, and that it would be a mistake to dismiss Polish workers as 'helpless victims of an omnipotent state'.[13] While 'totalitarian' analyses tended to minimise (or even deny) the scope for societal agency, Kenney used examples of worker activism to show his subjects as 'resourceful shapers of their own destiny, able to turn a system to their own advantage and lessen its cruellest aspects'.[14]

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[10] Michał Kozłowski, 'Red nationalism? A brief overview of the origins of Polish Stalinism', *Studia Litteraria et Historica*, No. 8 (2019); Anna Zawadzka, 'Stalinism the Polish Way', *Studia Litteraria et Historica*, No. 8 (2019).
[11] The essential contours of this approach had already been outlined even as the Stalinist system was still being established in Poland. See, for example, former Deputy Prime Minster Stanisław Mikołajczyk's description of a system imposed through mastery of the 'technology of terror' on a population which had 'loathed the concept of communism since it first showed its head'. Stanisław Mikołajczyk, *The Rape of Poland: Pattern of Soviet Aggression* (Westport, 1948), pp. viii-ix. For the classic 'totalitarian' work, see Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*, revised edition (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).
[12] Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists 1945-1950* (Ithaca; London, 1997); John Connelly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956* (Chapel Hill; London, 2000); Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-56* (Ithaca; London, 2013).
[13] Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland*, pp. 335-336, 344.
[14] Ibid., p. 336.

Similar patterns of agency and accommodation have been exposed by John Connelly's work on Stalinist-era higher education. Though Poland's communists may have had bold visions for the future of the nation's universities, the party largely failed to effectively penetrate into the academic establishment, and a relatively weak position vis-à-vis an overwhelmingly non-communist professoriate prompted the authorities to pursue what Connelly calls a 'long-range strategy of compromise'.[15] Though members of the academic establishment were forced to make political concessions in order to continue in their posts, they were nonetheless able to secure a considerable degree of autonomy in return. The 'constant bargaining and compromising' that defined university life during high Stalinism meant that the turbulent ideological winds buffeting Polish academia did remarkably little long-term damage, and much of the world of higher education remained outside of the party's grasp.[16] Ultimately, maintains Connelly, attempts to impose ideological uniformity and to instil a 'Marxist-Leninist consciousness' in students achieved little success, in large part due to the obstructive presence of a well-established and cohesive professoriate.[17]

The significance of this latter group – which, as Connelly argues, was able to frustrate the ambitions of the party-state due to the strength of a collective identity rooted in the culture of the Polish academic milieu – points towards another important factor illuminated by revisionist scholarship: the issue of continuity.[18] Instead of viewing the Stalinism as a totalitarian 'black hole', more recent analyses have argued that to be properly understood, the period needs to be integrated into the broader framework of Polish history.[19] Katherine Lebow's work on Nowa Huta, for example, has shown that the utopian vision of a 'socialist city' was prefigured by ambitious urban planning projects of the inter-war years. While Nowa Huta might seem characteristically Stalinist, its realisation drew on the successful

[15] In January 1951, for example, a mere sixteen members of the several-hundred strong faculty at Cracow's Jagiellonian University were party members. See Connelly, *Captive University*, pp. 6, 182.
[16] Ibid., pp. 125, 179.
[17] Ibid., p. 282.
[18] 'The university', writes Connelly, 'continued as a community of tradition and value, bound together by a thick web of personal intimacies and professional friendships that extended several generations into the past'. See ibid., p. 144.
[19] Malgorzata Fidelis and Irina Gigova, 'Communism and its legacy', in Irina Livezeanu and Arpad von Klimo, eds., *The Routledge History of East Central Europe since 1700* (London, 2017), p. 367; Zawadzka, 'Stalinism the Polish Way'; Kozłowski, 'Red Nationalism?'.

legacy of the state-planned new town of Gdynia, built between 1920 and 1939.[20] Another major inter-war state initiative – the development of a wide swathe of territory in south-east Poland to create the so-called Central Industrial Region as part of the government's 1936 Four-Year Plan – can also be seen as a kind of spiritual forerunner.[21] As Lebow notes, the integrated vision of economic and urban planning created a space for cooperation, allowing architects and planners who might not otherwise see eye-to-eye with the state to work with it in pursuit of the shared goal of 'industrialisation with amelioration' both before and after the war.[22]

Moreover, Lebow observes how common interests – notably in the pursuit of a programme of 'cultural enlightenment' – could bridge gaps between the regime and the Polish intelligentsia.[23] Though 'cultural enlightenment' under Stalinism was connected to ideological indoctrination, Lebow highlights the way in which the party's agenda was also influenced by deeper-rooted East-Central European intellectual traditions which emphasised the enlightening and improving effects of exposing the 'masses' to the fruits of a (broadly defined) 'culture'.[24] Thinking about culture thus allows us to move beyond simpler 'totalitarian' ideas to focus on more nuanced interactions shaped by a multiplicity of factors. Patryk Babiracki's important work on Soviet-Polish cultural exchanges is particularly instructive here. Focusing on Soviet attempts to project 'soft power' via culture, Babiracki argues that the term 'Sovietisation' offers a limited and reductive conceptualisation of the changes underway in the cultural sphere, obscuring the 'tangled fault lines' of 'multivectored postwar transformations'.[25] Ultimately, the more complicated dynamics uncovered by Babiracki illuminate space for a variety of actors to exert agency. On the one hand, the process was initially marked by a degree of reciprocity and genuine commitment on both sides; on the other, it also offered mid-level cultural figures in Poland (including

[20] Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, pp. 19-20.
[21] Ibid., pp. 20-21.
[22] Ibid., p. 21.
[23] Ibid., p. 10.
[24] Ibid., p. 128.
[25] Patryk Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland: Culture and the Making of Stalin's New Empire, 1943-1957* (Chapel Hill, 2015), p. 239.

some of the museologists we will encounter in subsequent chapters) opportunities to subvert it.[26]

This study is strongly influenced by some of the key insights revealed by the scholarship discussed above – namely, the idea that taking stock of Polish Stalinism means thinking in terms of negotiation and continuity as well as imposition and rupture – and seeks to add to newer interpretations by showing how similar dynamics were present elsewhere. It focuses on a particular section of the cultural sphere – museology – in order to explore the impact of the broad trends that defined and shaped Stalinist-era praxis, specifically in the context of two interrelated conceptual construction projects: post-war nation building, and the contemporary drive towards restructuring society through 'building socialism'.

Of course, there was much that was undoubtedly 'new' about interpretation in Polish museums during the Stalinist period, particularly after 1948, when the reconstituted communist party – *Polska Partia Robotnicza*, (Polish Workers' Party; PPR) – merged with the *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* (Polish Socialist Party; PPS) to form the *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* (Polish United Workers' Party; PZPR). The years 1948/49 ushered in what we might term the epoch of 'high Stalinism', when the ideological crescendo swelled to a dogmatic climax. It was a period in large part defined by the ambitious but short-lived attempt to build a new society according to the principles of Soviet-style state socialism, an experiment which came to an end with the Polish October of 1956 and subsequent transition to Władysław Gomułka's 'national communism'. Museology – like all areas of cultural life during high Stalinism – was implicated in the process of 'building socialism', resulting in the production of new exhibitionary narratives which sought to apply a legitimating gloss to the new geo-political reality. As well as emphasising ideas of Polish-Soviet friendship, Polish museums also contributed to an attempt to historicise the post-war social transformation by invoking the idea of a deep-rooted progressive tradition stretching far back into the national past.

[26] Ibid., pp. 154-55, 240.

At the same time, however, the story of Polish museology under Stalinism is one of continuity as well as change. As we shall see, the museological contribution to post-war nation-building was also strongly connected to pre-war discourse, complicating the idea that Stalinism should be viewed primarily in terms of cleavage and exteriority. At the National Museum in Warsaw – post-war Poland's leading museum – fundamental issues of form and function were intimately bound up with the civilisational aspirations of inter-war elites. Though superficially rearranged, their enduring presence testifies to a cultural constellation that was negotiated, not simply imposed. In the same way that Connelly's professors and Kenney's workers used the means available to them to assert agency and shape their own futures, Polish museologists were able to carve out a space to operate within the confines of the regime.[27] Stalinism, as the revisionists have shown, was not based on raw power alone, and in Polish museums of the period we can observe dynamics of accommodation and compromise reflected in exhibitions that appeared both strikingly 'new' and yet remarkably familiar.

By bringing the revisionist lens to bear on an area which has received remarkably little scholarly attention thus far – museology – this study thus broadens our understanding of Stalinist-era cultural politics, drawing out the different contextual threads which framed the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage. Put simply, museums offer a 'way in' to thinking about Stalinist-era approaches to culture that goes beyond the monolithic, illuminating the interplay of the variety of different factors shaping contemporary discourse. Precisely how this will be done is outlined in the thesis architecture presented at the end of this introduction. However, before we delve into the world of Stalinist museology, it is necessary to spend a little time outlining some of the background to the project. To understand how the museums of Stalinist-era Poland functioned, and what they sought to

[27] Indeed, the comparison between professors and museologists is particularly apt, as one of the key reasons Connelly gives for the state's policy of co-operation with the former group – namely, that scale of post-war rebuilding precluded the sacrifice of necessary expertise – could easily be applied to the latter. Perhaps the most obvious example is provided by the figure of Stanisław Lorentz, who we will encounter throughout this study. Though not affiliated to the party, Lorentz – who served as director of the National Museum in Warsaw from the mid-1930s to the early 1980s – dominated Stalinist-era museology, providing a vital connection between the pre-war and post-war worlds. See p. 38, n. 171 for more on Lorentz's biography.

do, we need to provide a foundation on which to build this study and introduce some of the literature involved. This will involve a discussion of four key contextual strands. This is a thesis about culture in Stalinist Poland, but it is specifically about museums, and thus draws on some of the wider theoretical literature on museology. We will begin, therefore, by **i)** asking broader questions about what museums mean and the nature of their social and political role. This will be followed by a consideration of more specific factors, namely **ii)** the history of Polish museums before 1945, **iii)** the role of the museum under state socialism, and **iv)** the nature of the politics of history in Stalinist Poland.

I: Museums – Function and Meaning

Before we can ask ourselves what museums mean, we need to consider a seemingly simple question of definition: what do we mean by museums? The institution is so firmly embedded into our cultural consciousness that it exudes an illusory naturality; as a Foucauldian 'heterotopia' – 'a place of all times that is itself outside of time' – it seems to embody a transcendent timelessness, yet the museum as we understand it today is very much a product of Western European modernity.[28] True, the museal idea has a complex and convoluted ancestry – scholars such as Jeffrey Abt and Paula Findlen have traced its origins back to Antiquity – but it is only with the emergence of the 'modern public museum' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century that the museum came to achieve its archetypal form.[29] Initially an institution devoted to the display and contemplation of works of art – the Louvre, opened to the public in 1793, became the 'prototypical public art museum' which other nations sought to emulate – the 'modern public museum' diversified as the nineteenth century wore on to encompass different fields, such as natural history or

[28] Michel Foucault, trans. Jay Miskowiec, 'Texts/Contexts: Of Other Spaces', in Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds., *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 377.
[29] Paula Findlen, 'The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy', in Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds., *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 159-191; Jeffrey Abt, 'The Origins of the Public Museum', in Sharon Macdonald, ed., *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 115-134.

ethnography.[30] At the same time, the professionalisation of museum work and the development of museology resulted in an increasing reification of the 'modern public museum' as the definitive institutional model, and it has come to dominate critical and theoretical literature on the subject.[31]

If this concept provided the blueprint for modern museums – and certainly, the thinking behind it can be seen in the institutions of Stalinist Poland with which this study is concerned – then it is worth taking a moment to consider its chief characteristics. Broadly speaking, the 'modern public museum' was defined by a series of general organising tendencies. Firstly, as the name suggests, it was intended to be a 'public' institution, both in terms of its administration and its accessibility.[32] In this way it differed from its early modern ancestors, such as the Renaissance *studiolo* or the seventeenth-century cabinet of curiosities, which were generally private and remained the preserve of a small group of elite males. Secondly, the 'modern public museum' was no mere repository of interesting objects; it actively sought to use its collection to engage in research and facilitate the advancement of knowledge.[33] Thirdly – a related point – it was also defined by the systematic principles of classification which governed the organisation of its displays and collections.[34] This is not to say that the museum's forerunners lacked purpose or meaning, but rather that their successor structured its collection in a distinctly modern way. The emergence of an evolutionary historicism over the course of the nineteenth century fostered the development of a teleological narrative of progress, which was reflected in the seriated displays of the 'modern public museum'.[35] Whether it was in the grouping of artworks into historical schools, or the use of archaeological finds to illustrate a process of evolution, modern museums sought to use their resources to build definitive progressive chronologies, and to imprint them onto the minds of the multitudes who visited them.

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[30] Carol Duncan, 'From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London', in Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds., *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 250.
[31] Abt, 'Origins', p. 132.
[32] Charles Saumarez Smith, 'Museums, Artefacts and Meanings', in Peter Vergo, ed., *The New Museology* (London, 1997), p. 8.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (Abingdon, 1995), pp. 33-47.

The museum, then, is a place where history is 'selected, constructed and transmitted'.[36] Narratives take primacy over objects; as the late-nineteenth-century Smithsonian secretary C. Brown Goode put it, an effective display should essentially be 'a collection of instructive labels illustrated by well-selected specimens'.[37] In this way, artefacts could be utilised 'for the increase of knowledge and for the culture and enlightenment of the people', and this conception of the museum's function predominated well into the twentieth century and beyond.[38] This purpose was generally seen as both benign and beneficial, and the museum itself as a rather impersonal and seemingly impartial institution dealing in that most valuable, neutral and intangible of goods: knowledge. Indeed, this perception is so entrenched that even today it is often taken for granted as the museum's primary role, while the categories of classification it continues to represent are so conventionalised as to appear perfectly 'natural'.[39] Yet this view, deeply ingrained though it might be, is a fiction. Knowledge cannot be divested of its accumulated semantic freight, and, as Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach observed in a seminal 1980 essay, the museum's primary function is ideological.[40] The emergence of a new critical approach in the late 1980s – the so-called 'new museology' – explored this theme further.[41] By historicising the museum as an institution, the new approach strongly rejected claims of museal 'neutrality' and sought to ask questions about institutional purpose rather than practice, which had been the primary focus of earlier museological literature.[42]

From the perspective of this study, the most important element of the 'new' approach is the emphasis it places on the connection between museums and the exercise of cultural and

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[36] Graham Black, 'Museums, Memory and History', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2011), p. 415.
[37] Cited in Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, p. 42.
[38] Goode, cited in ibid., p. 24.
[39] Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums', in Peter Vergo, ed., *The New Museology* (London, 1997), pp. 22-24.
[40] Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', *Art History*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1980), p. 449.
[41] See, for example, Peter Vergo, ed., *The New Museology* (London, 1997); Robert Lumley, ed., *The Museum Time Machine: Putting Cultures on Display* (London; New York, 1988); Eilean Hooper-Greenhill *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London, 1992).
[42] Randolph Starn, 'A Historian's Brief Guide to New Museum Studies', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (2005), pp. 70-72.

political power. Its proponents drew heavily on the work of Michel Foucault, viewing the museum itself as a performance of the particular 'power/knowledge hybrid' that was one of the defining features of Foucault's 'modern episteme'.[43] Alongside the mainstays of the Foucauldian 'disciplinary complex' – the hospital, the prison and the asylum – the museum increasingly became represented by cultural theorists as a means of social control.[44] Its power lay in its ability to create homogenising and unifying 'cultural master narratives', which served to universalise certain ideas and exclude others.[45] As Carol Duncan puts it, 'to control a museum means precisely to control a community and some of its highest, most authoritative truths'.[46] Primarily – to use Benedict Anderson's oft-cited formulation – that community is the 'imagined' one we call the nation, and the constituent communities contained within it. Indeed, the primacy of national museums within the museological landscape (and as we shall see, Poland is no exception here) testifies to the fundamental connection between the museal idea and the nation. 'National museums', Fiona Maclean argues, 'are implicit in the construction of national identities'; they are places where ideas which make up the nation's 'spiritual heritage' are deployed in the service of particular political values.[47]

The focus on the museum's cultural power and political utility which the 'new museology' has foregrounded is indeed salutary, though it is important to remember that not all the critical and theoretical literature connected with museology's Foucauldian turn is equally helpful or relevant. In part, this is due to the skewed and almost polemic tone of certain contributions. At its best, the new direction in museum studies provoked penetrating studies which have greatly enriched the field[48], but some of the work which emerged in the wake of 1989's *The New Museology* displays a marked tendency towards what Ivan Gaskell has

[43] Ibid., pp. 72-73; Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, 'General Introduction: What are Museums For?' in Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds, *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 5-6; Foucault, 'Texts/Contexts', pp. 371-379.
[44] Preziosi and Farago, 'General Introduction', p. 5; Starn, 'New Museum Studies', p. 72.
[45] Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos, 'Museums and Memory: The Enchanted Modernity', *Journal for Cultural Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2003), p. 31.
[46] Carol Duncan, 'Art museums and the ritual of citizenship', in Susan M. Pearce, ed., *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London, 2003), p. 286.
[47] Fiona McLean, 'Museums and National Identity', *Museum and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2003), p. 1; Duncan 'Art museums', p. 279.
[48] See, for example, Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*.

termed 'museophobia'.[49] This is most clearly seen in the work of Douglas Crimp, whose rather narrow reading of Foucault reduces the museum to an intrinsically repressive component of the disciplinary complex, the baleful influence of which is to be roundly condemned.[50] The determination of Crimp and others to expose the museum as 'a strategy of power linked to hegemonic capitalism' results in an approach that remains fixated on an idealised and generalised conception of the 'modern public museum' which verges on caricature, and tends to privilege Western European and anglophone contexts.[51] In part this is understandable, given the modern museum's origins, but it obscures the fact that, as some more recent work has highlighted, 'the emergence of the national museum in different national settings cannot be read as nations doing the same thing'.[52]

A more nuanced application of Foucauldian thought to museology can be found in the work of Tony Bennett, whose analysis of what he terms the 'exhibitionary complex'[53] emphasises the significance of the museum's position as part of the wider framework of civic governance.[54] According to Bennett, the museum 'deploys its machinery of representation within an apparatus whose orientation is primarily governmental', through which it can both 'impress the visitor with a message of power' as well as offer an induction into 'new forms of programming the self'.[55] Through the production and dissemination of knowledge connected to shifting Foucauldian 'regimes of truth', the museum helps create and perpetuate power effects rooted in the circularity of knowledge/power relations; for Bennett, museums are

[49] Ivan Gaskell, 'Book Reviews: On the Museum's Ruins by Douglas Crimp; The Cultures of Collecting by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal; Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles by Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (1995), pp. 673-675.
[50] Crimp's perspective is clearly reflected in the title of his influential work 'On the Museum's Ruins'. See Douglas Crimp, 'On the Museum's Ruins' (Cambridge, Mass., 1993).
[51] Daniel J. Sherman, 'Quatremère/Benjamin/Marx: Art Museums, Aura and Commodity Fetishism', in Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (London, 1994), p. 123; Starn, 'New Museum Studies', pp. 78. Gaskell, 'Book Reviews', pp. 673-675.
[52] Simon Knell, 'National museums and the national imagination', in Simon J. Knell, Peter Aronsson, Arne Bugge Amundsen, Amy Jane Barnes, Stuart Burch, Jennifer Carter, Viviane Gosselin, Sarah A. Hughes and Alan Kirwan, eds., *National Museums: New Studies from around the World* (Abingdon, 2011), p. 6.
[53] As Lara Kriegel notes, the term has become a useful shorthand for the wider physical and conceptual landscape of museology. Lara Kriegel, 'After the Exhibitionary Complex: Museum Histories and the Future of the Victorian Past', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2006), pp. 683-684.
[54] Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, pp. 59-88.
[55] Ibid., p. 46.

modernity's 'citadels of truth'.[56] In a broad sense, this core mechanic of the 'exhibitionary complex' provides a useful way of thinking about the Stalinist-era museology with which this study is concerned. Given the organising goals which shaped the system, knowledge/power discourses under Stalinism were concerned not merely with sustaining certain social dynamics, but rather with realising a dramatic process of transfiguration which aimed at the creation something new. Thus for a communist government with a radical political programme as well as a severe legitimacy deficit, intervention in the museological sphere offered a space in which to advance (and historicise) a transformative agenda as well as burnish claims of 'authenticity' by invoking ideas about the national past. In short, Stalinism had its own 'regimes of truth', and – as we shall see over the course of this study – museums were deeply implicated in their production.

Yet while the notion of museological 'regimes of truth' provides this study with one of its underlying motifs, the Foucauldian-inspired theoretical literature can only take us so far. For one thing, it remains largely Western-orientated, and, though last decade has seen the publication of works which adopt a more global perspective, the sheer breadth and variety of the studies which are beginning to emerge reminds us of the need to understand specific contexts rather than deal in generalities.[57] We may have established that museums are public institutions which contribute to the exercise and maintenance of power via the specific cultural and historical narratives they seek to embed, but to understand how they do that – in other words, how those narratives are constructed and transmitted – we need to excavate the different contextual strands which frame their operation. Stalinist Poland is clearly a very different place to the Western and anglophone nation states which, in their various modern configurations, have dominated museological studies. To properly understand its museal institutions, then, it is necessary to explore three key areas which help illuminate the context in which they functioned: the earlier history of Polish museums,

[56] Tony Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge: Selected Essays* (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 1-2; 78-96.
[57] See the many case studies contained in Simon J. Knell, Peter Aronsson, Arne Bugge Amundsen, Amy Jane Barnes, Stuart Burch, Jennifer Carter, Viviane Gosselin, Sarah A. Hughes and Alan Kirwan, eds, *National Museums: New Studies from around the World* (Abingdon, 2011); Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, eds, *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010* (Linköping, 2011)

the role of the museum under state socialism, and the politics of history in the PRL, and it is to these matters which we now turn.

II: Polish Museology – Background

Firstly, let us consider the development of museums in Poland prior to 1945. As the theoretical literature has already convincingly demonstrated, museums played a vital role in the construction of modern nation states, most notably in the way they provided a space in which to develop and display nascent ideas of national consciousness and historical memory.[58] Yet while the nineteenth century has come to be seen as something of a museological 'golden age' due to the emergence and refinement of the 'modern public museum' discussed above, Poland lagged some way behind the rest of Europe when it came to the process of establishing such institutions.[59] This was a result of the third and final partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian and Habsburg Empires in 1795, which removed the Polish state from the geopolitical map of Europe for the next 123 years. Henceforth, the various territories which had comprised it were administered by one or other of the occupying powers, who – broadly speaking – were unlikely to be enthusiastic about projects dedicated to preserving the historical memory of an often-troublesome subject people. Moreover, the fragmentation of a once-unified political entity meant that Poland lacked the kind of centralised public structures which had helped bring public museums into being elsewhere in Europe.[60] The first Polish museums were thus more the result of 'bottom-up' initiatives launched by enthusiastic individuals and communal interest groups rather than 'top-down' governmental projects.[61]

[58] See, for example, ibid., Knell et al., *National Museums*; Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*; Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London, 2005); Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds, *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (London, 1994).
[59] Kazimierz Mazan, 'National Museums in Poland', in Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, eds., *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010* (Linköping, 2011), p. 671.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

This is not to say, though, that the development of museums followed the same pattern in each of the three partitions, or that the partitioning powers treated such initiatives in the same way. Excluding Princess Isabella Czartoryska's 'pantheon of Polish history' at Puławy in Russian Poland, which flourished until the November Insurrection of 1830/1, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that museums began to be established on Polish soil.[62] As Lech Trzeciakowski has shown, the various scientific and intellectual societies which arose during the era of partition played a key role in keeping the flame of 'Polishness' alive.[63] It was one such group – the *Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk Poznańskie*, or Poznań Society of Friends of Science, founded in 1857 – that was responsible for the earliest museal initiative in Prussian Poland, in the form of a small museum that was established not long after the society itself.[64] Its first exhibition opened in 1871, and sought to 'present the historical evolution of Polish painting from the times of Stanisław August to today's flowering of our art', but the emergence that year of a unified German state served to retard Polish museal endeavours under German rule.[65] The Prussian authorities increasingly came to view the promotion of German art and culture as a way of 'neutralising' ethnic tensions, resulting in the creation of an exclusively German institution in Poznań in 1904, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum.[66] Polish museums in Prussian territory remained underdeveloped, and their peripherality meant they lacked any real national significance.[67]

A similar trend could be seen in the Russian partition. Following the failed uprising of 1863, the Russian authorities pursued a policy of Russification and de-Polonisation; the resultant

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[62] Czartoryska's museum was very much dedicated to the idea of preserving an idealised 'Polishness' in the era of partition, and the collection itself had a longer life than the institution that was built to house it. See Zdzisław Zygulski, 'Princess Isabel and the Czartoryski Museum', *The Connoisseur*, No. 731 (1973), pp. 15-24; for a Polish 'national museum' which existed outside of Poland itself – the museum of the exiled nobleman Władysław Plater in the Swiss town of Rapperswil – see Dariusz Małyszek, 'Rapperswilskie inicjatywy niepodległościowe', *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*, Vol. 64 (2009), pp. 85-111.

[63] Lech Trzeciakowski, 'The Role of Learned Societies in the Development of Polish Culture during the Period of the Partitions', *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1988), pp. 291-303.

[64] Elisabeth Anna Krüger, 'Serving the Homeland: The Archaeological Society for the Province of Posen', *Archaeologia Baltica*, Vol. 21-22 (2015), p. 143.

[65] Mazan, 'National Museums', p. 685.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Karoline Kaluza, 'Reimagining the nation in museums: Poland's old and new national museums', in Simon J. Knell, Peter Aronsson, Arne Bugge Amundsen, Amy Jane Barnes, Stuart Burch, Jennifer Carter, Viviane Gosselin, Sarah A. Hughes and Alan Kirwan, eds, *National Museums: New Studies from around the World* (Abingdon, 2011), p. 153.

atmosphere was hardly conducive to displays of Polish culture, and severely impeded the development of the first genuine modern museum in Russian Poland.[68] Founded in Warsaw in 1862, the Museum of Fine Arts – later to become the National Museum in Warsaw, and the leading institution in Poland – began life as a study aid for art students of the Warsaw Main School (later Warsaw University), with which the museum was associated.[69] Even though the impetus behind its establishment came from Polish municipal officials and art-lovers, the museum lacked any semblance of a national character.[70] Indeed, among its initial collection Polish art was conspicuous only by its absence, and though it later began to acquire Polish works, the museum could hardly be called a success.[71] For much of the subsequent half-century it lacked a proper home, existing only as a collection – as Kazimierz Mazan points out, the Russian authorities worried that a permanent salon could become potential breeding ground for anti-Russian sentiment – and even when it moved into larger premises rented by the municipal authorities at the turn of the twentieth century it remained chronically under-used.[72] 'There exists in our town an institution of which the public seems to be totally oblivious', the newspaper *Przegląd Tygodniowy* complained in 1903; 'despite the fact that admission remains free of charge, the museum remains unjustifiably empty, and the number of visitors rarely exceeds ten daily'.[73]

The situation in the Habsburg partition, however, was rather different. Though its administration was initially marked by many of the repressive features that characterised Russian and Prussian rule, the Austrian Empire's transformation into Austria-Hungary in 1867 fostered a more liberal and permissive culture in its imperial possessions.[74] At the same time that the other partitioning powers were beginning to turn the screw through

[68] Brian Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom* (Chichester, 2014), pp. 26-27.
[69] Mazan, 'National Museums', pp. 673, 681.
[70] Ibid., p. 673; Anna Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie 1862-2002. Vol. 1: 1862-1962* (Warsaw, 2002), p. 10.
[71] Mazan, 'Museums in Poland', p. 681.
[72] Ibid., pp. 673, 681.
[73] Cited in Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, p. 19.
[74] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland. Vol. II: 1795 to the Present* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 104-15; Tomasz Kamusella, 'Germanization, Polonization and Russification in the Partitioned Lands of Poland-Lithuania: Myths and Reality', p. 28, 38 – available at https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/4055/Krzysztof_Germanization.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [accessed 18 February 2020]; Kaluza, 'National Museums', p. 153.

respective policies of Russification and Germanisation, the Habsburg administration began a process of Polonisation in its Galician territories which became, in Tomasz Kamusella's words, an 'ersatz Polish nation-state'.[75] Compared with the rest of the partitioned territories, the atmosphere in Habsburg Poland was uniquely conducive to the development of museal initiatives, and in Cracow – which had been self-governing since 1866 – a number of different museums emerged in the following years.[76] In 1871 the city's mayor argued for the creation of a 'true national museum' in which the memories of a great and heroic Polish past could be immortalised for future generations.[77] Eight years later this vision became reality when Cracow's National Museum was inaugurated amidst a fanfare of pomp and publicity.[78] As Markian Prokopovych has shown, the museum's foundation resonated through Galicia to the rest of partitioned Poland and beyond, and it came to be seen as a kind of 'depository of national traditions'.[79] The museum was thus in a sense the first modern 'national museum' on Polish soil, though as Prokopovych points out, we should be careful when it comes to defining this dimension.[80] While it sought to represent national history, it did so from a distinctly Cracovian and Galician perspective, and the diversity of factors that shaped the museum's growth resulted in a lack of conceptual clarity.[81]

The development of modern museums in territories formerly under Polish rule was thus a patchy and uneven process, the contours of which varied according to the conditions present in each partition, and it is not until the early twentieth century that we can begin to think about a more unified Polish museal culture in a broader national context. The first move in this direction came in 1914, through the founding of an organisation devoted to the promotion of museological cooperation across three partitions, and with the emergence of an independent Polish state in the aftermath of the First World War these trends were greatly accelerated and amplified.[82] While museological development could hardly be said to

[75] Ibid., p. 38.
[76] Markian Prokopovych, 'The City and the Museum: Cracow's Collections and Their Publics in the Long Nineteenth Century', *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. 49 (2018), pp. 166-186.
[77] Ibid., p. 180; Mazan, 'National Museums', p. 684.
[78] Prokopovych, 'Cracow's Collections', p. 181.
[79] Ibid., p. 183.
[80] Ibid., pp. 183-185.
[81] Ibid., pp. 183-186.
[82] Agnieszka Murawska, 'Związek Muzeów w Polsce w latach 1914-1939', *Muzealnictwo*, Vol. 56 (2015), p. 116.

have progressed in a uniform manner under the new political order, the emphasis on the primacy of the national idea was undeniable. This tendency was most clearly reflected in the transformation of the capital's Museum of Fine Arts into the National Museum in Warsaw, which was to become a 'symbol and calling card of the Polish nation's culture'.[83] Though it may have begun life as a didactic institution filled exclusively with examples of foreign art, its first exhibition under its new name in 1919 almost completely reversed this policy in favour of a display dominated by Polish artefacts and artworks.[84] Over the subsequent decades its exhibitions were predominantly patriotic in character; typical subjects were great Polish kings, such as Jan Sobieski or Stefan Batory, military triumphs – the 1683 Battle of Vienna, for example – or heroic failures like the anti-Russian uprisings of 1830/1 and 1863.[85]

The emphasis on national culture and the creation of a leading central institution served a clear ideological purpose. While the paradigmatic institutions of Western Europe may have helped to buttress established systems of power, social order and accumulation of wealth, in the newly reconstituted Poland national museums helped underpin the nation's very existence as a geopolitical entity. Broadly speaking, the first 'modern public museums' were created in states that were already 'old', yet the Polish state which was created in 1918 was very obviously 'new'. Its borders were shaped by a mixture of political negotiation and violence over a relatively short space of time; the Second Polish Republic was thus in a sense very much an 'artificial' creation.[86] The potent historicism of its museums, however, rendered the 'new Polish nation…immediately old', and lent it a powerful, unchallengeable legitimacy.[87] Speaking at the inauguration of the National Museum in Warsaw's new modern building in 1938, the city's President spoke of 'a continuum of the development of Polish culture over the ten centuries of its existence' to which the museum should 'testify'.[88]

[83] Mazan, 'National Museums', p. 674.
[84] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, pp. 22-23.
[85] Mazan, 'National Museums', pp. 681-682.
[86] Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, pp. 84-88.
[87] Knell, 'National museums', p. 11.
[88] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, pp. 36-37.

Moreover, in a similar manner to the way museums in western Europe served to legitimise colonial projects, the National Museum helped embed Polish cultural hegemony in a multi-ethnic state. As the ministry dedicated to its exercise argued, 'our' – i.e. Polish – culture could 'integrate Poles from all sides', thus providing a means to 'cement and unite the State' and to 'prevail upon others to give us our due respect'.[89] The key institutions and narratives had to be strictly Polish; in Poznań, for example, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum was Polonised and re-opened in 1921 as the Museum of Wielkopolska.[90] Though it is important to stress that the development of museums over the course of the Second Republic's existence was far from straightforward – there was no overall program of nationalisation, and thus different museums followed different paths – it was during this period that the idea of the 'National Museum' as a specific kind of institution acquired a particular significance.[91] As Kazimierz Mazan puts it, it served to 'reintegrate the collective memory of the three disparate partitions of the old Commonwealth, and reinterpret the history of Polish nationhood during the partitions in the light of recent unification', mythologising it as an era of a 'nation without a state'.[92] By the time war broke out in 1939, the National Museum in Warsaw was firmly established as Poland's leading institution.[93] Though its building and collections were severely damaged during the Second World War, the museum survived and retained its leading role in post-war Poland, providing a pattern to be followed – albeit in a somewhat modified manner – in the reborn Polish state.

III: The Museum under State Socialism

Of course, post-war Poland was a very different state to the one which had been partitioned out of existence by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. The latter invader had now been recast in the role of liberator, and, in the wake of the allied conferences at Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam, Poland's borders were redrawn and a Soviet-style political system was

[89] Cited in Mazan, 'National Museums', p. 682.
[90] Ibid., p. 685.
[91] Ibid., p. 674.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, p. 39; Dorota Folga-Januszewska, 'Muzeologia, Muzeografia, Muzealnictwo', *Muzealnictwo*, Vol. 47 (2006), p. 11.

imposed.[94] In almost all the realms of social and political life – and as in the other central and eastern European states that came to constitute the Soviet bloc – the USSR was to serve as a model. Culture was no exception, and soon after the communist consolidation of power a programme of 'cultural revolution' was announced to accompany the related processes taking place in the social and economic spheres.[95] Its goal was a reordering of cultural life 'to accord with the ideals of progress and popular democracy' and broaden the accessibility of 'past attainments and contemporary achievements of culture'.[96] The inspiration for this was clear; the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society stressed the need for a 'much greater familiarity' with Soviet cultural forms, whilst the Soviet ambassador urged 'a significant expansion of [Soviet] cultural work in Poland', which he saw as a 'top priority'.[97] A new influence – that of Soviet museology – thus came to bear upon Poland's museums.

As a variety of studies have shown, the primary function of Soviet museums was to serve the ideological needs of the Soviet Regime.[98] On one level, this purpose is not necessarily dissimilar to the role of museums in the Western world – as we have seen, all museums are, in a sense, ideological – but the nature of Soviet politics produced institutions which were, in practice, very different from both their Western counterparts and Tsarist forerunners. While in the aftermath of the revolution there were numerous voices among the avant-garde who sought to reject the museal idea in its entirety, dismissing it as a relic of a bourgeois society obsessed with the past, the museum rapidly came to be seen as a powerful vehicle for the transmission of Marxist-Leninist ideology.[99] The number of institutions grew rapidly – from around 114 in 1917 to 738 by 1934 – and new types of museum began to be established covering areas as diverse as hygiene, agriculture and the history of the revolution itself.[100]

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[94] Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, pp. 195-208.
[95] Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, p. 36.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Alma S. Wittlin, *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future* (Cambridge Mass, 1970), pp. 144-147, 169-173; Adam Jolles, 'Stalin's Talking Museums', *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2005), pp. 431-455; Karin Konksi, 'Sovietisation and the Estonian National Museum during 1940s-1950s', *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, Vol. 1, No. 1-2 (2007), pp. 29-38; Alexander Huzhalouski, 'Soviet Museums and Political Censorship: The Belarusian Experience', *Museum History Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2015), pp. 209-222; Boris Groys, trans. Thomas Seifrid, 'The Struggle against the Museum; or, The Display of Art in Totalitarian Space', in Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (London, 1994), pp. 144-162.
[99] Ibid., pp. 144-52.
[100] Wittlin, *Museums*, pp. 145-146.

Key themes such as class struggle, cultural revolution and anti-imperialism were to be ingrained through exhibitions which sought to 'demonstrate the advantages of socialist society…in a simple and understandable manner'.[101] In this endeavour, history was a powerful weapon; the past could be invoked in opposition to the present in order to emphasise the triumphs of the socialist system.[102]

The expansion of Soviet influence into Eastern Europe after the Second World War meant that the museological tendencies developed over the preceding decades in the USSR were now to be exported to a wider audience. In general, this process has remained largely unexplored. As Joel Palhegyi has noted, there is a distinct lack of literature on communist museology outside the USSR, due, perhaps to a reluctance in many post-socialist societies to accept the communist period as part of their national heritage.[103] More recently, however, the work of scholars such as Simina Bădică and Gabriela Petkova-Campbell has begun to fill in some of these historiographical blank spots.[104] Working in a Bulgarian context, Petkova-Campbell outlines the basis of the 'socialist museology' which was 'imposed' on the nation after 1944.[105] As in the Soviet Union, museums were nationalised and subordinated to the control of the ruling communist party, serving to glorify its achievements and promote Marxist-Leninist principles.[106] Bădică shows a similar process at work in Romania, noting the manner in which museology 'flourished' – at least with regard to sheer number of museums being created or reorganised – in the wake of the establishment of a Soviet-style state socialist system.[107] In particular, she foregrounds links with Soviet museal practice by

[101] Huzhalouski, 'Soviet Museums', p. 212; Konksi, 'Sovietisation', p. 30.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Joel Palhegyi, 'National museums, national myths: constructing socialist Yugoslavism for Croatia and Croats', *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (2017), p. 1061.
[104] Simina Bădică, *Curating Communism: A Comparative History of Museological Practices in Post-War (1948-1958) and Post-Communist Romania*, Doctoral Dissertation, Central European University (Budapest, 2013); Gabriela Petkova-Campbell, 'Communism and Museums in Bulgaria', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (2009), pp. 399-412.
[105] Ibid., pp. 402-404.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Simina Bădică, 'The Revolutionary Museum: Curating the Museum of Communist Party History in Romania (1948-1958)', *Historical Yearbook*, Vol. X (2013), p. 95.

discussing the role of 'imported' museum types and the circulation of translated manuals of Soviet museology in state socialist Romania.[108]

Nonetheless, as well as highlighting the influence of Soviet museology, these studies also remind us that Romanian and Bulgarian museums were not mere carbon copies of their Soviet counterparts. Petkova-Campbell discusses, for example, the way in which the museums of communist Bulgaria cultivated hatred towards the nation's Turkish population.[109] Negative portrayals of the Ottoman period in Bulgarian museums went beyond the discourse of anti-imperial struggle, and fed into the anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim narratives that accompanied the forced assimilation campaigns of the 1980s.[110] In Romania too, museal practice was shaped by a particular national accent. Bădică argues that, while Soviet museological practice continued to frame the operation of Romanian institutions until the collapse of communism in 1989, explicitly Slavic and Soviet influences were silently 'deleted out of history' following the end of Romanian Stalinism.[111] Later in the period, Gabriela Nicolescu has drawn attention to the output of the 'Decorativa' factory, which, from the mid-1960s onwards, designed and created the vast majority of display materials for cultural institutions nationwide.[112] In museums 'Decorativa' created everything from display labels to maps and mannequins, but, according to Nicolescu, its distinctly Romanian flavour gave it an important role in 'empowering the national agenda in the context of the de-Russification of Romania'.[113] While Soviet museology clearly exerted a considerable influence across the socialist bloc, such details serve as a salutary reminder of the inadequacy of a 'one size fits all' approach.

IV: The Politics of History in People's Poland

[108] Bădică, 'Curating Communism', pp. 144-213.
[109] Petkova-Campbell, 'Communism', p. 405.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Bădică, 'Curating Communism', p. 301.
[112] Gabriela Nicolescu, 'Decorativa: The Monopoly of Visual Production in Socialist Romania – The Centralized Organization of Museum Displays in the 1960s and 1970s', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2016), pp. 71-87.
[113] Ibid., p. 77.

Like their counterparts throughout the socialist bloc, then, the museums of People's Poland were deeply politicised institutions, both in an organisational sense, and in terms of the 'knowledge' and 'truths' they sought to impart. Indeed, history itself was a political resource, and, as a significant body of scholarship has shown, in the PRL the Polish past was reinterpreted – in official discourse, at least – to serve the needs of the communist regime.[114] On one level, this process was simply part of a broader project taking place across the bloc; in Poland, as in the other state socialist countries, history – along with other academic disciplines – provided a means to reflect and illuminate the central tenets of Marxist-Leninist ideology.[115] Though there had been a certain degree of pluralism in the early post-war years, under high Stalinism academic historiography was subjected to crude manipulation to bring it into line with contemporary Soviet thinking.[116] By the early 1950s this was proceeding apace, and, at the First Congress of Polish Science in 1951, a leading communist historian denounced 'history which is not based on Marxist ideology' as 'scientifically barren' and not worthy of being called 'a science in the full meaning of the word'.[117] In the schoolroom, the same processes could be observed. Of all the educational textbooks used in Polish schools, it was those devoted to the study of history – and in particular, those produced in the Stalinist era – that were 'the most heavily loaded with propaganda'.[118] The past was viewed through the lens of class struggle, with historical processes and events framed in terms of the constant battle between oppressive elites and 'progressive' forerunners of the revolutionary movement.[119]

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[114] See, for example, Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, *Historiografia i historycy w PRL. Szkice* (Warsaw, 2019); Rafał Stobiecki, *Historiografia PRL. Ani dobra, ani mądra, ani piękna… ale skomplikowana* (Warsaw, 2007); Rafał Stobiecki, 'Wokół głównych narracji o przeszłości Polski po 1945 roku', in Robert Kostro, Kazimierz Wóycicki and Michał Wysocki, eds., *Historia Polski od-nowa: Nowe narracje historii i muzealne reprezentacje przeszłości* (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 284-305; Marcin Kula, 'Poland: The Imposed and Rejected Vision of History', *Polish Foreign Affairs Digest*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (2003), pp. 109-135; Paweł Wieczorkiewicz and Justyna Błażejowska, *Przez Polskę Ludową na Przełaj i na Przekór* (Poznań, 2011), pp. 447-77.

[115] Though as John Connelly has shown, attempts to 'Sovietize' higher education across the bloc were neither as uniform or successful as many have assumed; see Connelly, *Captive University*.

[116] Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, 'The Rise and Decline of Official Marxist Historiography in Poland, 1945-1983', *Slavic Re*view, Vol. 44, No. 4 (1985), p. 663.

[117] Rafał Stobiecki, 'Between Continuity and Discontinuity: A Few Comments on the Post-War Development of Polish Historical Research', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (2001), pp. 219-220.

[118] Joanna Wojdon, *Textbooks as Propaganda: Poland under Communist Rule, 1944-1989* (New York; Abingdon, 2018), pp. 108-110.

[119] Ibid., pp. 110-114.

It would be a mistake to exaggerate the success of these endeavours; broadly speaking the Stalinists failed in their attempts to restructure Polish culture, and Brian Porter-Szűcs has described any apparent achievements in this area as 'ephemeral'.[120] With regard to the recent past, the history taught in schools was undermined by the memory of lived experience, while as Maciej Górny's work has shown, the impact of Marxist-Leninist thought on academic historiography was also much more superficial than has been assumed.[121] Nonetheless, for the post-war regime, history was much more than just a vehicle for Marxist-Leninist ideology; it also provided a means to secure legitimation. Even before their accession to power, the Polish communists had been under no illusions as to their unpopularity.[122] Communism had only ever been a marginal force in Polish politics, and its association with Russia played into long-standing prejudices and phobias in Polish society which were only exacerbated by the more recent memory of the War of 1920 and the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland in 1939-41.[123] Communism was seen as an alien ideology which, on its own terms, was unlikely to ever gain serious traction in Poland; the fact that the new order had been imposed by the military might of the Red Army merely compounded the issue.[124] History, though, could provide a potential solution to this dilemma, and, by evoking an unequivocally nationalist and patriotic vision of the Polish past, the communists sought – with a considerable degree of success – to surround themselves with an aura of legitimacy.[125]

Marcin Zaremba has provided the clearest account of how this was realised in his key text *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism*.[126] From the very beginning, the communists 'bent

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[120] Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, p. 222.
[121] Maciej Górny, trans. Antoni Górny, *The Nation Should Come First: Marxism and Historiography in East Central Europe* (Frankfurt am Main, 2013)
[122] Marcin Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism: Nationalist Legitimation of the Communist Regime in Poland* (Berlin, 2019), p. 110, n. 279, p. 111. (First published in Poland in 2001 under the title *Komunizm, Legitymizacja, Nacjonalizm: Nacjonalistyczna Legitymizacja Władzy Komunistycznej w Polsce*).
[123] Ibid., pp. 110-111; Davies, *God's Playground*, Vol. II, pp. 404-405.
[124] Zaremba, *Communism*, pp. 110-111.
[125] Ibid., pp. 111-115.
[126] Ibid; Similar themes are present in Mikołaj Stanisław Kunicki, *Between the Brown and the Red: Nationalism, Catholicism and Communism in 20th-Century Poland – The Politics of Bolesław Piasecki* (Athens OH, 2012). Another related intervention comes from Michael Fleming, who highlights the relationship between nationality

over backwards to establish their national bona fides'.[127] Even the names of their political formations – firstly the *Polska Partia Robotnicza* (PPR, or Polish Workers Party) and then, from 1948 onwards, the *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotninicza* (PZPR, or Polish United Workers Party) – avoided explicit reference to communism, presenting the party in national terms.[128] Throughout his work, Zaremba shows in considerable detail how the communists cast themselves as 'the inheritors of the nation's past'.[129] In part, this process involved the co-option of key historical figures to the communist cause. The great poet and writer Adam Mickiewicz, for example, was declared 'a living symbol of…Polish progressive thought' and the 'revolutionary current of worker thinking', making him 'a prophet of progressive national-liberation struggles'.[130] Another posthumous recruit was Frederic Chopin, whose heart was transported to Warsaw in October 1945 and reinterred amidst much pomp and ceremony.[131] 'Already upon the ruins of Warsaw', declared Prime Minister Edward Osóbka-Morawski, 'the red rose of Chopin's heart has bloomed', a testament to the new authorities' strenuous efforts to 'fulfil Mickiewicz's desire that art wander into the great masses'.[132] 1948 marked the 150th anniversary of the Mickiewicz's birth, while the following year saw the 100th anniversary of the deaths of Chopin and Juliusz Słowacki; both milestones provided the pretext for celebrations which allowed Poland's rulers to publicly demonstrate their connection to these titans of national culture.[133]

National traditions of heroic resistance provided another means to seek acceptance. In their claim to be 'by blood from the blood and bone of Pułaski, Kościuszko, Traugutt, Henryk and Jarosław Dąbrowski, Ludwik Waryński and other famous warriors for the freedom of the Polish nation', the communists tried to bind themselves to it through an 'inheritance of blood'.[134] 1946 was declared 'the Kościuszko year', and Poland's new rulers 'the

policy and the formation of a 'social anger regime' that helped secure communist hegemony. See Michael Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland, 1944-50* (Abingdon, 2010).

[127] Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, p. 203.

[128] Zaremba, *Communism*, p. 113.

[129] Ibid., p. 115.

[130] 1948 speech by Włodzimierz Sokorski, cited in ibid., p. 155.

[131] Ibid., p. 156.

[132] Cited in ibid.

[133] Ibid., p. 155.

[134] From 'Do robotników, chłopów i inteligencji, Do wszystkich patriotów polskich!', cited in ibid., p. 114.

implementers of [his] political testament'.[135] At a speech that year, Marshal Rola-Żymierski – himself a Polish veteran of the War of 1920 – proclaimed 'the Polish people's democracy' as 'not only a spiritual heir [to Kościuszko] but the continuator of the social and political thought of the great leader in peasant garb'.[136] Of course, not all the heroes of the past were equally worthy of praise; Marshal Piłsudski was denigrated as a 'fascist', and the War of 1920 could only be referred to in negative terms, if at all.[137] Other heroes, however, could be raised up instead. The obituary of the prominent communist general Karol Świerczewski, for example, spoke of his life as a 'milestone' on a path of historical continuity that led back, via Republican Spain and the Paris Commune, to Mickiewicz's Legion and Kościuszko.[138] Świerczewski's actual achievements were rather dubious; his efficacy as a wartime commander was marred by alcoholism, though he was particularly energetic in the process of expelling what he termed 'Germanic vermin' from the annexed territories after the war.[139] By being assassinated by Ukrainian nationalists in 1947, however, he provided the communists with an opportunity to create their very own martyr, to be elevated into the national pantheon alongside the heroes of old.[140]

The legitimating power of history takes on an even stronger meaning when it is considered in the light of one of the most significant post-war changes: the redrawing of the Polish border to incorporate a wide swathe of formerly German territory. The seizure of German land had widespread support in Polish society, and the repopulation of the regions then referred to as the *Ziemie Odzyskane*, or 'Reclaimed Lands' was accompanied by an intensive programme of cultural Polonisation.[141] By invoking the memory of the medieval Piast

[135] Ibid., p. 152.
[136] Cited in ibid.
[137] Stobiecki, 'Wokół głównych narracji', p. 288.
[138] Zaremba, *Communism*, p. 163.
[139] Halik Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (London, 2012), pp. 541, 622.
[140] Ibid., p. 622; Zaremba, *Communism*, pp. 195-6, 201.
[141] Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, p. 203; Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles: Communism, Nationalism and Ethnic Cleansing after the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 266-305; Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory: A German-Polish Conflict over Land and Culture, 1919-1989* (New York; Oxford, 2015), pp. 183-231; Gregor Thum, trans. Tom Lampert and Allison Brown, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions* (Princeton, 2011), pp. 190-377; Marta Grzechnik, ''Recovering' Territories: The Use of History in the Integration of the New Polish Western Borderland after World War II', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (June 2017), pp. 668-692; G. Strauchold, *Myśl Zachodnia i jej Realizacja w Polsce Ludowej w Latach 1945-1957* (Toruń, 2003), pp. 79-250; Beata Halicka, trans. Paul McNamara, *The Polish*

dynasty – which, in the tenth century, had controlled a territory roughly equivalent to that of the reconstituted post-war state – the Polish authorities were able to burnish their legitimacy by claiming that they were simply 're-Polonising the ancient lands of our Piast heritage'.[142] Of course, this 'myth-making' was ahistorical, and imposed a modern conception of the nation state onto a medieval past, but its political utility was undeniable.[143] Building upon a pre-war tradition of *myśl zachodnia*, or 'Western Thought', the new territories were presented in official discourse as 'ancient Slavic lands' in which Germans were foreign interlopers.[144] 'The German ethnic character of the Recovered Territories is the result of many centuries of imperial German policy', argued one prominent advocate of 'Western Thought' in 1946.[145] The territories had formerly been Polish, but 'German possessiveness…led to the destruction of their Slavic and Polish character'.[146] The communists could thus claim to be 'righting' a historical 'wrong', by reversing the effects of centuries of Germanic aggression.

In particular, the anti-German sentiment which lay at the heart of 'Western Thought' provided a potent source of legitimation for the new regime. After the experience of Nazi and Soviet occupation, nationalist tendencies had hardened in Polish society which, due to the effects of genocide, border changes and forced transfers of population, was now almost entirely ethnically homogenous.[147] As the communist leadership realised, the war had left Polish society 'engulfed by hatred of Germany', a situation which provided 'ample opportunities for the unification of society into one general national front'.[148] Not only did the communists seek to 'monopolise anti-German sentiments', they actively sought to

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Wild West: Forced Migration and Cultural Appropriation in the Polish-German Borderlands, 1945-1948 (Abingdon, 2020), pp. 240-52; José M. Faraldo, 'Emotional communities and the reconstruction of emotional bonds to alien territories; the nationalization of the Polish 'Recovered Territories' after 1945', in Andreas Stynen, Maarten Van Ginderachter and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, eds., *Emotions and Everyday Nationalism in Modern European History* (Abingdon, 2020), pp. 185-200.

[142] Andrzej Paczkowski, trans. Jane Cave, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (University Park, 2005), p. 161; Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, p. 201.

[143] Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, p. 201.

[144] Grzechnik, ''Recovering' Territories', pp. 669-674.

[145] Cited in ibid., p. 678.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Service, *Germans to Poles*, p. 56.

[148] Cited in Zaremba, *Communism*, p. 144.

inflame them further in order to justify their policies and bind the nation to its new leadership, which promised to resolve the 'German problem' once and for all.[149]

To emphasise the achievements of the new regime, a simplistic black-and-white conception of history was invoked, in which the age-old conflict between the Teuton and the Slav took centre stage.[150] 'The present is the summary of the past, which is kept in it like tree rings', wrote another exponent of 'Western Thought' in 1946.[151] A direct line thus connected the 'cruelty of the German counts' and the 'Teutonic Knights' pride and violence' with the 'nihilism of the Nazis'.[152] The defeat of the Third Reich, however, could be presented as the final chapter in this struggle.[153] May 1945 was a 'better version of Grunwald', and through Slavic brotherhood-in-arms, a foe that had threatened the Polish nation for a millennium had finally been vanquished.[154] Moreover, Poland's 'Slavic brothers' in the USSR supposedly stood as the 'only guarantor and protector of the Oder-Neisse line', thus linking anti-German feeling with a fatalistic 'pro-Sovietism' in which the Polish-Soviet alliance was a necessary prerequisite for the Polish state's continued existence.[155]

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History and culture, then, were clearly useful resources for Poland's Stalinist rulers. Though the picture presented in this introductory overview is, by necessity, painted with a broad brush, already we can see how different representations of the past had the potential to serve as vehicles for the transmission of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and, perhaps more

[149] Ibid., p. 147.
[150] Grzechnik, ''Recovering' Territories', pp. 680-681.
[151] Cited in ibid., p. 681.
[152] Cited in ibid.
[153] Ibid., p. 682.
[154] Joanna Wawrzyniak, trans. Simon Lewis, *Veterans, Victims, and Memory: The Politics of the Second World War in Communist Poland* (Frankfurt am Main, 2015), p. 25; The defeat of the Teutonic Knights at Grunwald/Tannenberg in 1410 by Polish-Lithuanian forces was widely celebrated throughout the communist period, and was (incorrectly) emphasised as an example of pan-Slavic 'brotherhood-in-arms', see Grzechnik, ''Recovering' Territories', p. 682.
[155] Zaremba, *Communism*, p. 148.

significantly, how they could serve to buttress the rather shaky legitimacy of the new political system. While this phenomenon has attracted considerable scholarly attention, however, rather less ink has been spilt on exploring the museological contribution to this process. Since 1989, publications concerned with the life of communist-era museums in Poland have largely fallen into two groups. Firstly, there are the general histories published by various institutions, usually to commemorate a noteworthy temporal milestone in a museum's life.[156] Though these studies are often illuminating, their utility is limited by their generally descriptive and largely uncritical nature[157]. Then, there are the various studies – usually published as journal articles – which focus on local themes, part of a rapidly expanding body of work concentrating on local issues.[158] Drawing on knowledge honed by researchers dealing with the specificities of the local past, such works have certainly expanded our horizons, though they tend to focus predominantly on specific places or regions and thus rarely synthesise multiple perspectives.[159]

On a broader scale, analytical works remain rather thin on the ground; beyond Kazimierz Mazan and Karoline Kaluza's brief overviews of the history of national museums in Poland – both of which only deal with the communist period as one part of a broader chronology –

[156] See, for example, Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, for the National Museum in Warsaw, produced to coincide with its 150th anniversary; Mariusz Hermansdorfer, Robert Heś and Małgorzata Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu 1947-2007* (Wrocław, 2008), produced for the National Museum in Wrocław's 50th anniversary, and Szymon Piotr Kubiak and Dariusz Kacprzak, eds, *100 Lat Muzeum w Szczecinie* (Szczecin, 2013); for a regional example, see Romuald Witczak, ed., *100 Lat Muzeum Karkonoskiego w Jeleniej Górze* (Jelenia Góra, 2014)

[157] The deeper multi-layered analysis in Kubiak and Kacprzak, *100 Lat Muzeum w Szczecinie*, is something of an exception.

[158] See, for example, Lidia Fołtarz, 'Muzea województwa krakowskiego w latach 1945-1948', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 34 (1992), pp. 3-15; Danuta Krawczyk, '85 lat Muzeum Narodowego w Kielcach', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 36 (1994), pp. 16-22; Anna Ciosk, '70 lat wystawiennictwa w zielonogórskim muzeum', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 36 (1994), pp. 65-76; Ignacy Skrzypek, 'Z historii muzealnictwa środkowopomorskiego', *Koszalińskie Zeszyty Muzealne*, Vol. 21 (1997) pp. 5-162; Andrzej Toczewski, 'Muzea lubuskie w perspektywie historycznej', *Rocznik Lubuski*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2005), pp. 21-26; Joanna Jakutowicz, 'Muzeum jako nośnik pamięci na Warmii i Mazurach w latach 1945–1970', *Meritum*, Vol. 2 (2010), pp. 197-207; Jerzy Buziałkowski, '80 lat Muzeum na Zamku w Darłowie (1930-2010)', in Włodzimierz Rączkowski and Jan Sroka, eds., *Historia i Kultura Ziemi Sławieńskiej Tom XI: Ośrodki Miejskie* (Darłowo, 2013), pp. 313-356; Paweł Migdalski, 'Fragmenty dziejów muzeum drawskiego po 1945 roku. Przyczynek do losów muzealnictwa i dziedzictwa pomorskiego po II wojnie światowej', in Eryk Krasucki, ed., *Drawsko Pomorskie i Okolice Poprzez Wieki - Studia i Szkice*, 2nd Edition (Drawsko Pomorskie, 2017), pp. 267-284; Izabela Kmak-Błaszczuk, 'Pomiędzy polityką a kulturą. Działalność Muzeum Piastów Śląskich w Brzegu w latach 1945-1957', *Brzeski Rocznik Zamkowy*, No. 1 (2020), pp. 77-97.

[159] Special reference, however, must be made to the excellent work of Ignacy Skrzypek, whose detailed studies of Pomeranian museology have proved invaluable to this project.

we have to go back to the PRL itself to find a comprehensive study of communist-era museology.[160] Franciszek Midura's study provides some useful insights – notably in his periodisation of museological developments in the PRL – but it is too short to engage in any penetrating analysis, and ends up asking more questions than it answers.[161] Midura stresses the importance of museums in shaping identity and transmitting ideology, but also bemoans the lack of in-depth studies examining the societal impact of museological practice.[162] He claims that prior studies of museology have largely been dominated by a statistical approach, thus providing little in the way of criticism or analysis.[163] The continued existence of this scholarly caesura is all the more surprising given the current explosion of museological studies situated in a post-1989 context. Of course, the 'memory war' which has afflicted contemporary Poland – in which museums provide one of the main fields of battle – has resulted in a heightened awareness of museological matters, both in academia and in wider society as a whole.

Yet while 1989 may have led to a 'paradigm shift' in the work of Poland's museums, the transition to democracy was marked by continuity as well as rupture. The vast majority of museums in Poland today existed, in one form or another, in the PRL, and the museological practice of that era undoubtedly continued to exert its influence after 1989. Moreover, it is clear that pre-war Polish museology played an important role in shaping the post-war museological landscape. The Stalinist period with which we are concerned was marked by different trends and concerns, but it retains a formative significance with regard to later developments. In the 1980s, Midura was able to claim that the 'basic essence of the museum has not changed since the 1940s', pointing to the importance of the era under consideration in this study.[164] In the subsequent chapters, an attempt will be made to explore this 'basic essence' and to go beyond it, in order to uncover the meaning of Stalinist-

[160] Mazan, 'National Museums'; Kaluza, 'Poland's Old and New Museums'
[161] Franciszek Midura, 'Rozwój muzealnictwa w okresie czterdziestolecia PRL', *Muzealnictwo*, Vol. 30 (1986), pp. 3-8.
[162] Ibid., p. 4.
[163] Ibid., pp. 3-4.
[164] Ibid., p. 4.

era museological representations of the past, and to delve further into the processes by which they were constructed and transmitted.

In large part, the focus of the thesis is on museums in the so-called the formerly German territory initially known as the *Ziemie Odzyskane* ('Reclaimed Lands'), and in particular the large art-historical institutions located in Wrocław, Gdańsk and Szczecin which are today part of the nationwide network of National Museums. It also drills down to the local level, taking into account the smaller regional museums in Pomerania and Lower Silesia – the former German *Heimatmuseen* – which operated in the orbit of their larger counterparts. In this regard, it reflects on the geographical specificities of post-war museology by contributing to a broader understanding of the post-war transformation of the 'Reclaimed Lands'. Though numerous studies have drawn attention to the importance of history and cultural heritage in making territorial claims in the Polish-German borderlands (most notably in contested Upper Silesia), museums have remained relatively peripheral to the discussion.[165] Yet as sites where 'place is formed into embodied historiography and material for identity construction', they had an undeniably important role to play.[166] Indeed, the context of the post-war 'Reclaimed Lands' – where the dislocation felt by many Polish immigrants fuelled what Gregor Thum has termed an 'impermanence syndrome' – serves to amplify their significance. [167] In a fragile transitionary period, museums helped diffuse ideas of 'Polishness' and integrate region into nation by culturally reconfiguring 'post-German' space.

The museums under consideration here offer two different perspectives on this process. In the central museums of the 'Reclaimed Lands' – which bore the attributes of 'universal survey' institutions like the National Museum in Warsaw, even if they were very much the

[165] See, for example, Service, *Germans to Poles*; Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*; Thum, *Uprooted*; Grzechnik, ''Recovering' Territories; Strauchold, *Myśl Zachodnia*; Halicka, *The Polish Wild West*; Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a Polish-German Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge, 2018). Karch and Polak-Springer make passing references to museums in inter-war Upper Silesia and Thum emphasises the importance of museums and cultural heritage in post-war Wrocław, but only in relatively general terms.
[166] Christopher Whitehead, Susannah Eckersley, Katherine Lloyd and Rhiannon Mason, 'Place, identity and migration and European museums', in Christopher Whitehead, Susannah Eckersley, Katherine Lloyd and Rhiannon Mason, eds., *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe: Peoples, Places and Identities* (Abingdon, 2016), p. 15.
[167] Thum, *Uprooted*, pp. 171-189.

junior relations of their Varsovian counterpart – we can see a 'top-down' attempt to use cultural heritage to foster a sense of belonging in the new territories. Here, centrally imposed interpretations hinged on particular historical and cultural narratives strongly associated with the pre-war political right, reflecting the authorities' pragmatic endorsement of nationalist scholarship that could be used to reinforce the nation's new frontiers. Though they inherited collections from defunct German institutions, these museums were – so to speak – 'new', and could be laid out from scratch according to the demands of contemporary policy.

In the provincial towns of Pomerania and Silesia, however, there were other institutions – the former German *Heimatmuseen* – where the reach of the state was initially more limited. They presented a different challenge. Products of the '*Heimat* mania' that resulted in the creation of 371 new museums in Germany between 1890 and 1918, these smaller institutions were largely the result of 'bottom-up' initiatives by the provincial bourgeoisie.[168] They were diverse and eclectic, catering to a popular audience and eschewing the scientific seriation of the 'universal survey' museum, but at heart they were – as Alon Confino puts it – a 'mode of communication to reconcile localness and nationhood'.[169] In their often chaotic displays, they situated the specificities of the local past within the broader context of the German nation, creating a 'visual lexicon' of 'common denominators with which to understand every local history'.[170] This was a history of the everyday, not of grand historical events, but one which – however much mythmaking was involved – was connected to an established community with a shared past and present.[171] Though those communities changed after 1945, the specific 'localness' of surviving *Heimatmuseen* in the 'Reclaimed Lands' nonetheless continued to be a factor in the production of a sense of belonging, albeit one that situated the local past within a different national history.

[168] Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill; London, 1997), pp. 134-153.
[169] Ibid., p. 136.
[170] Ibid., p. 144.
[171] Ibid., pp. 137, 145.

Alongside the perspective of the Western Territories, however, this thesis devotes considerable attention to museological praxis in post-war Poland's leading institution, the National Museum in Warsaw – Poland's archetypal 'universal survey' museum – and the nature of the relationship between centre and periphery. While there are obviously considerable differences between the old *Heimatmuseen* and the larger museums situated in key urban centres, all of these institutions have been selected on account of their ability to produce broadly imagined epoch-spanning cultural surveys set across a wide sweep of historical time. The thesis does not therefore consider Poland's numerous specialist museums, which orient their interpretation around a specific factor such as an event, personage, industry, or technology. Instead, we are concerned with institutions that – to greater and lesser extents – articulated claims to represent multi-layered pasts that reflected the historical and cultural development of local and national 'imagined communities'.

It should be stated at this point that this thesis is the result of research which, unfortunately, was carried out against the backdrop of the global pandemic, which severely restricted travel opportunities and access to archives, forcing me to recalibrate some of my initial plans. The result is a slightly skewed geographical spread to the source material. Originally, I had planned to expand the picture of central museology by incorporating material from Cracow, but in the event it had ended up based entirely on the National Museum in Warsaw. In fairness, the Varsovian institution occupied a dominant position in post-war museology (as did its singularly determined director Stanisław Lorentz[172], who we will encounter throughout the course of the study), so the focus can be partially justified, but it is

[172] Born into a Lutheran family of Swedish descent in 1899, Lorentz was to become the towering figure in twentieth-century Polish museology. After defending his doctoral thesis in 1924 – which focused on the work of the eighteenth-century Warsaw-based architect Efraim Szreger – he was appointed to the position of conservator of monuments in the Vilnius and Nowogródek Voivodeships in 1928. From 1936 he served as director of the National Museum in Warsaw, a position he continued to fill until 1982. Though he left his post that year, it was not through choice – Lorentz's sympathy for the Solidarity movement resulted in a targeted smear campaign that sought to undermine his achievements – but, following the collapse of communism, he became honorary director of the museum in 1990, and died the following year at the age of 91. Beside his position in the museum, Lorentz became well-known due to the key role he played in safeguarding cultural heritage during the Nazi occupation, and later for his vital contribution to the reconstruction of Warsaw's Royal Castle, which had been destroyed during the war. Though he worked in the highest echelons of the cultural sphere, Lorentz never joined the PZPR, but belonged instead to the satellite Democratic Party (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*), and was a member of the Sejm between 1965 and 1969. See Lech Krzyżanowski, 'Profesor Stanisław Lorentz (1899-1991)', *Ochrona Zabytków* Vol. 44, No. 3 (1991), pp. 213-214, and Anna Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie 1862-2002. Vol. 2: 1963-1982* (Warsaw, 2002), pp. 57-58.

nonetheless important to acknowledge certain inherent limitations shaped by factors beyond my control. The same issue applies to the case studies from local museums in the Western Territories, which are drawn exclusively from Pomerania and Lower Silesia, but – due to the vicissitudes of pandemic-related disruption – ended up privileging the former region.

Still, the study incorporates a rich body of source material gathered in Warsaw, Wrocław, Gdańsk, Szczecin, Słupsk, Koszalin, and Jelenia Góra, the vast majority of which was produced by the various museums in question. Much of the material – particularly that dating from the immediate post-war period – is archived in a haphazard and rather chaotic matter, an issue which presented its own problems. In a few cases, specific files (at times even full boxes) lack archival signatures beyond the overall collection numbers, but I have tried to supply as much information on each document as possible. Where it is present, I have supplied page references relating the subsequent pencilled-in pagination applied to many archival files, though this has not always been possible. On top of the material produced by museums, I have also incorporated a significant volume of other primary sources, including exhibition programmes and guides, newspapers and press material, contemporary popular and scholarly journals[173], and newsreel footage. Taken together, they have helped me build a picture of what the museums in question looked like, and the kind of historical and cultural narratives they presented. Admittedly, this picture is – to a certain extent – somewhat one-sided, with the missing link being the voice of the visitor. Unfortunately, it proved difficult in the circumstances to locate visitor books from the 1940s and 1950s, and the few examples I did uncover contained entries that were generally formulaic and offered little in the way of deeper insight. With this in mind, the thesis should largely be understood as an exploration of the way that museums and those who worked with or in them understood their own work, but – as we shall see – this approach opens up a variety of areas of analysis which allow us to delve deeply into the world of museological praxis.

[173] Particularly significant here is the journal *Muzealnictwo* (Museology), which began publication in 1952 and remains a leading publication in the field to this day. As such, it is used in this study as both a primary and secondary source.

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The thesis is structured around three key sections, each of which deals with specific (but ultimately interrelated) conceptual construction projects. Part I (chapters one and two) focuses on nation-building, firstly from the central perspective of the National Museum in Warsaw. Chapter one thus explores the revival of the nation's leading institution after the Second World War and the nature and meaning of its representations of national history and culture, as well as teasing out the threads connecting post-war and pre-war museological practice. Of all the institutions under consideration in this study, it is the National Museum in Warsaw which most closely embodies some of the key characteristics of what Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach have termed the 'universal survey museum', and the chapter's argument draws on this concept in order to highlight the way in which the museum's 'regimes of truth' transcended the boundaries of Stalinism. In chapter two, our focus shifts to the 'Reclaimed Lands' and the creation of the Silesian Museum in Wrocław.[174] By considering the way it constructed an epoch-spanning exhibitionary 'master narrative' for the Silesian past, it foregrounds the way that the museum helped connected region to nation and overcome the disturbing sense of dislocation and impermanence that accompanied the incorporation of the new Western Territories into the reconstituted Polish state post-1945.

Part II (chapters three and four) moves into the realm of ideology, which, following Hayden White, I understand as 'a set of prescriptions for taking a position in the present world of social praxis and acting upon it (either to change the world or to maintain it in its current state)'.[175] In the context of Stalinist Poland, the end goal was emphatically the former. 'Building socialism' was a defining part of Stalinist-era official discourse, denoting a wide-

[174] An earlier version of a substantial part of this chapter has previously been published under a different title. See Maksymilian Loth-Hill, ''Ancient Polish Lands': Narratives of *Polskość* in the Silesian Museum in Wrocław, 1948-1956', in Magdalena Gibiec, Robert Klementowksi, Wojciech Kucharski and Marek Szajda, eds., *Konflikt – stabilizacja – asymilacja? Konsekwencje migracji w życiu mieszkańców Dolnego Śląska po 1945 roku. Ujęcie komparatystyczne* (Wrocław, 2022), pp. 404-437.

[175] Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973), p. 22.

ranging project carried out in synchrony with post-war nation-building that aimed at reconfiguring society in line with the central tenets of Soviet-style state socialism. Chapter three reflects on the way this ideological process reframed museological narratives through the application of historical materialist principles and an insistence on the presentation of a 'progressive' genealogy, which situated contemporary developments within the canon of the national past. Chapter four then goes on to think about the museological articulation of narratives of Polish-Soviet friendship and the attempt to promote wider social engagement through the work of the new socio-educational teams, primarily from the perspective of the new museums of the 'Reclaimed Lands'.

Finally, Part III – entitled 'Building Communities', and comprising chapters five and six – stays within the context of the Western Territories in order to drill down to the local level, focusing on the way museums functioned in small-to-medium sized towns in the new region during the turbulent first post-war decade. These were the former German *Heimatmuseen*, which now had to be made Polish, and, in chapter five we examine the fate of local cultural heritage in light of the wide-spread 'revindication' programme underway in the 'Reclaimed Lands' in the later 1940s. As well as illuminating the nature of the relationship between national centre and regional periphery, the chapter also draws attention to the role of individual agency in reviving local museology. Here, we see how cultural life in the provinces unfolded according to its own dynamics, and the way in which the very process of transformation has, in turn, become a part of an evolving memory of the local past. Finally, chapter six explores the process of cultural 'de-Germanisation' and 're-Polonisation' at a local level, drawing out the degree of both continuity and change and thinking about the broader implications of the way that local heritage was reframed to suit the new reality.

Part I

Building the Nation

1

Out of the Ruins: The National Museum in Warsaw and the Reconstruction of Polish Museology

On a warm day in early May 1945, a group of specially invited guests assemble at the National Museum in Warsaw. To the west, in the heart of the Nazi Reich, fierce fighting is still underway, and the scars of war are clearly visible on the modernist façade of the museum building, which sits in the centre of the capital's ravaged cityscape. Already, however, onlookers can observe evidence of reconstruction. Despite the parlous state of the city's plumbing, those in attendance are amazed to see a stream of water cascading from the fountain in the flower-lined courtyard in front of the museum, a sign of the transformation underway.[176] Stepping across the threshold into the cool air of the museum's entrance hall, they are presented with something even more remarkable: a brand new exhibition – the first since 1939 – laid out in halls which, only a few months earlier, had been occupied by German troops. In the preceding weeks, simple black-and-white posters bearing three crosses and a short inscription – '*Warszawa Oskarża* (Warsaw Accuses) – May-June – Exhibition in the National Museum' – had appeared across the ruined city, and now, on May 3, the momentous occasion of the exhibition's grand opening has arrived.[177] Flanked by the museum's director, Stanisław Lorentz, President of the National Council Bolesław Bierut cuts the ceremonial ribbon and, as the guests file though, the National Museum symbolically becomes a functioning public institution once again.

[176] The museum's director, Stanisław Lorentz, later recalled how this was made possible through efforts of the engineer Franciszek Juszczak, the head of the museum's technical staff. Though the water network was not functioning properly, Juszczak hid himself round the corner and physically pumped water through to feed the fountain; Lorentz remembered how 'all the official guests, the government and the members of the diplomatic corps looked on with amazement at the fountain gushing up streams of water, not comprehending how it could be happening'. Cited in Aleksandra Przeździecka-Kujałowicz, ''Warszawa Oskarża' – pierwsza powojenna wystawa Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie', *Spotkania z Zabytkami*, Vol. 43, No. 11-12 (2018), p. 27.
[177] As Aleksandra Przeździecka-Kujałowicz explains, the three crosses symbolised Golgotha, and thus the idea of death and resurrection. See ibid., p. 26.

Of course, the museum they are entering seems scarcely recognisable as the thriving institution many remember from the years of the Second Republic. The war broke out barely a year after its move into new purpose-built premises on Warsaw's prestigious Aleje Jerozolimskie, and the subsequent years of conflict and occupation were to exact a devastating toll on the city and its museum. Damaged by air-raids and artillery fire during the fight for the capital in 1939, the museum was subjected to a systematic process of looting after the Polish defeat, which reached a shocking climax following the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944.[178] Captured by German troops early on in the insurgency, it became the base for sizable garrison which stole or destroyed much of what remained in the museum's collections.[179] On top of the staggering material losses, there was also a terrible human cost. Numerous museum employees lost their lives, either as a result of their attempts to protect the city's cultural heritage, as a consequence of their involvement in anti-German conspiracy, or – like many of their fellow Varsovians – as part of the widespread violence that was part and parcel of daily life under occupation.[180]

Given the scale of wartime destruction, the staging of a new exhibition less than four months after the city's liberation was a semi-miraculous achievement. In large part it was a

[178] For a detailed account of the museum under occupation, see Stanisław Lorentz, 'Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie w latach 1939-1954', *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Vol. 2 (1957), pp. 15-58. The initial looting of the museum was planned before the outbreak of the war and led by art historians like Dagobert Frey and Joseph Mühlmann, but with the outbreak of the Uprising it became more indiscriminate and characterised by a high degree of wanton vandalism and violence. For example, Lorentz recalled that after the Uprising's end in early October 1944 an SS officer appeared tasked with removing any valuable paintings that remained, noting that 'the pace and manner of the review is sufficiently illustrated by the fact that, with a carbide lamp, he and his soldiers reviewed and disqualified about 1,000 paintings within three quarters of an hour'. Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[179] Lorentz was locked inside the museum with the German garrison for the duration of the Uprising, and in an interview he gave to the newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* in August 1945, he provides an emotive illustration of the museum's fate during this period. The museum fell to German troops in the first days of the Uprising, and Lorentz remembered how the robbery of the museum collections began as soon as they entered the building, as 'soldiers broke down doors to museum halls with rifles and pickaxes, smashed chests and broke the glass in cabinets and display cases' to get at the items within. Renaissance jugs were used as coffee pots and antique tapestries as bedding, while paintings were used to cover over windows. Lorentz describes how the 'favourite game of officers and soldiers in their free time from murder was dressing up in antique uniforms and costumes and parading with antique weapons', which would be thrown out of the window once the 'game' had finished. See Z. S., 'Tragiczne dni Muzeum Narodowego - rozmowa z dyr. Stanisławem Lorencem', *Rzeczpospolita* (5 August, 1945), p. 8.

[180] Lorentz played a key role in safeguarding cultural heritage during the period of Nazi occupation. For more on his wartime activities, see T. P. Rutkowski, 'Przyczynek do działalności Stanisława Lorenza w latach 1939-1945', *Kwartalnik Hstorii Nauki i Techniki,* Vol. 39, No. 3-4 (1994), pp. 57-64.

tribute to tenacity of the museum employees involved, particularly the indefatigable Lorentz, who was the driving force behind the project. The director later remembered how, in those first weeks and months, the museum took on multiple roles, serving as 'a gathering point for workers in the fields of culture, science and art, an information centre, a primitive lodging house and almost a folk inn', with people living and working in the same building.[181] Their commitment brought 'Warsaw Accuses' into being with remarkable speed, but the quick turnaround was also made possible by the of the specific nature of the exhibition, which was unlike any the museum had previously attempted. 'Warsaw Accuses' was a product of the contemporary situation; solemn and emotionally charged, it took the very act of destruction as its central theme. According to the guidebook, it was intended to illustrate 'the shocking damage inflicted by the Germans in the field of Polish culture', and, using the brutalised artefacts left behind by the retreating occupiers, it presented a unique overview of the preceding years that was poignant and disturbing in equal parts.[182]

Even today, the appearance of the exhibition – which is preserved in numerous surviving photographs and newsreel footage filmed for *Polska Kronika Filmowa* (Polish Film Chronicle) – seems stark and shocking. The narration to the latter claimed that the exhibition struck a tone 'without pathos', using the straightforward presentation of artefacts and documents to explore the 'enormity and meaning of the tragedy experienced in the field of Polish culture' with relatively minimal interpretation.[183] Instead, the damaged objects spoke for themselves, their ravaged state seemingly inverting the conventional picture of what a museum was supposed to be and allowing visitors to – as the guidebook put it – 'see the truth about the Germanic fury'.[184] Faded sepia images of the exhibition show museum halls lined with piles of empty picture frames, broken furniture, dismembered statues and suits of armour, and paintings violently slashed or pierced by bayonet thrusts. Powerful enough on

[181] Warsaw was liberated on 17 January, and within two days the first eight employees had arrived; by the beginning of February this number had grown to around 40. Lorentz, 'Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie w latach 1939-1954', pp. 58-59.
[182] *Warszawa Oskarża: Przewodnik po Wystawie urządzonej przez Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy wespół z Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie* (Warsaw, 1945), p. 3.
[183] PKF 20/45 (31/07/1945), available at http://repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=pl/node/4519 [accessed 17 January, 2023]
[184] *Warszawa Oskarża*, p. 5.

their own, they took on additional meaning in the broader context of the ruined capital, and a press release stressed that the destroyed city itself constituted 'the most dramatic exhibit' of all.[185] In this sense, 'Warsaw Accuses' was 'only a synthesis and reflection' of what lay outside the walls of the exhibition building, with the museum – which, in the guidebook's words, had been 'forced to see almost the entire martyrdom of the old culture of the capital' – a 'main participant' in the broader drama of the city's recent past.[186]

Nonetheless, despite the sense of chaos and upheaval conveyed by the shattered artefacts on display, the exhibition had a clear order, and was organised into distinct stages. It began almost immediately after visitors crossed the threshold of the museum, where, alongside representations of the city's mermaid crest, they saw photographs and paintings showing the old Warsaw that was destroyed between 1939 and 1945.[187] Passing into the main hall, Polish flags flanked a plaque inscribed with the names of cultural workers who lost their lives during the conflict, before the main part of the exhibition began with a section entitled 'Destruction'.[188] Divided into two sub-sections – one dealing with the damage sustained by libraries and archives, the other the fate of artworks – this part of the exhibition focused on the methods, scale and scope of the German assault on Polish culture.[189] Visitors were provided with precise statistics, while various documents and symbolic objects helped drive the message home. One glass case, for example, contained a book stained with faeces along with an inscription proclaiming it as a 'work bearing the seal of German culture', while elsewhere German packing cases filled with rolled up paintings and antique furniture illustrated the process of looting that had so recently been underway.[190]

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[185] Cited in Zofia Petrow, 'Wystawa. 'Warszawa oskarża': Notatka prasowa i głosy prasy', *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Vol. 20 (1976), p. 652.
[186] Ibid., p. 652; *Warszawa Oskarża*, p. 3.
[187] Dariusz Kaczmarzyk, 'Pamiętnik wystawy 'Warszawa oskarża' 3 maja 1945 – 28 stycznia 1946 w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie', *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Vol. 20 (1976), p. 603. Kaczmarzyk's article – which is based on his own writing from the time of the exhibition itself – contains detailed information about the content of the exhibition, and thus constitutes the best source for reconstructing its layout.
[188] Ibid., pp. 602-604.
[189] Ibid., pp. 604-613.
[190] Ibid., pp. 606-607.

[Figure 1.1 – Part of the 'Warsaw Accuses' exhibition. The painting on the far wall shows 'Germanic methods of war', and presents several historical scenes, from the sack of Rome in 410 through to the Second World War][191]

Over the course of subsequent sections – such as the 'Egyptian Hall', with the grotesquely mutilated remains of Egyptian mummies pulled apart by treasure-hunting soldiers, and the 'Castle Hall', which detailed the fate of Warsaw's famous Royal Castle – visitors were presented with what the guidebook termed the 'basic lines of the life and death' of Warsaw's cultural heritage.[192] Yet as it went on to explain, the exhibition did not aim to become 'yet another display of national suffering, a panopticon of horrors' that kept open wounds which the 'city, as a living organism', had spent the last few months trying to heal.[193] Instead, it sought to 'objectify our experiences, to show the meaning of the catastrophe in the chaos of ruins, and reveal the enemy's intentions', an endeavour which could be distilled

[191] AMNW 1070a.
[192] Ibid., pp. 613-620, 631-636; *Warszawa Oskarża*, p. 23.
[193] Ibid., p. 23.

into two practical conclusions.[194] One concerned the absolute culpability of the entire German nation, and the need not only for punishment – which, it was argued, provided 'only emotional satisfaction' – but also for reparations.[195] Poland's damaged and depleted museum collections had to be replenished out of the holdings of German institutions, which had forfeited their 'moral right' to act as guardians of the 'treasures of universal culture'.[196]

[Figure 1.2 – 'What survived for forty centuries the German hand destroyed' – inscription on the wall of the Egyptian Hall in 'Warsaw Accuses'][197]

[194] Ibid., p. 23.
[195] Ibid., p. 24.
[196] Ibid.
[197] AMNW 1070a.

The other conclusion concerned the importance of reconstruction, and specifically the need to rebuild 'the living symbols without which the nation-state nation cannot exist', which could 'bring back to artistic life whole epochs that [the Germans] wanted to erase from our culture'.[198] Though the destructive experience of the recent past provided the exhibition's organising theme, it was only one side of the coin, and the obverse – the idea of cultural revival, and a positive vision of the future – provided a hopeful counterpoint that prevented 'Warsaw Accuses' becoming overwhelmed by relentless negativity. In the 'Destruction' section, for example, a three-and-a-half meter tall sculpture of a broken tree trunk with new branches emerging symbolically expressed how – as the guidebook put it – 'a new generation [would] grow…museums and libraries [would] be filled again', and the 'walls of Old Warsaw [would] be reborn from the rubble'.[199] Indeed, one of the exhibition's final sections was dedicated to the work of the *Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy* (Office for the Reconstruction of the Capital, or BOS).[200] Here, a niche on the wall contained the famous statue of King Zygmunt III, which had stood atop a column in the city's Castle Square from the mid-seventeenth century until 1944, along with an inscription declaring that new walls would be erected 'on Zygmunt's cornerstone'.[201] Visitors could also get an idea of what this process of reconstruction would look like, with several display boards outlining the BOS's plans for the capital's future.

'Warsaw Accuses' turned out to be a remarkable success. The initial two month run had to be extended due to popular demand, and, when it finally closed at the end of January 1946 – by which point the city's total population numbered around 473,000 people – it had attracted over 435,000 visitors (one of whom was Dwight D. Eisenhower, who saw the

[198] *Warszawa Oskarża*, p. 24.
[199] Ibid., p. 5. Created by the sculptor Franciszek Masiak, the tree-trunk had charred timbers and crosses placed in front of it which were draped in a shroud, evoking the idea of martyrdom and the image of the destroyed ruins of the city. Kaczmarzyk, 'Pamiętnik wystawy', p. 604.
[200] Ibid., pp. 636-639.
[201] Ibid., p. 636. The first column was replaced in 1887, and today both the original and the replacement that stood between 1887 and 1944 can be seen beside the Royal Castle. Now on his third column, the statue of Zygmunt remains one of Warsaw's iconic images. The BOS section also contained part of another famous Varsovian statue, the head of Adam Mickiewicz from the monument on Krakowskie Przedmieście. Dismantled by the Germans in 1944, the head was later found in Hamburg and the statue restored.

exhibition during his brief trip to Warsaw in September 1945).[202] It also generated a considerable amount of press coverage, with articles appearing in numerous domestic publications as well as *Pravda* in the Soviet Union.[203] *Polska Zbrojna* hailed 'Warsaw Accuses' as a 'great credit' to its organisers, emphasising its 'extremely high level' along with its 'transparency and the atmosphere of factual seriousness'.[204] Not only was the exhibition of 'great didactic importance', but, given the contemporary situation, it was the 'only necessary and proper' one for the times.[205] Similar views were expressed in the pages of the Łódź weekly *Młodzi Idą*, where the literary historian Janina Kulczycka-Saloni wrote that she left the exhibition 'deeply shocked', having seen 'the facts speak for themselves…without pathos or exaggeration'.[206] The momentum generated by the exhibition's popularity resonated beyond the Polish capital, and – albeit in a considerably modified form – 'Warsaw Accuses' was later staged in various different cities, including London, New York, Washington D.C. and Paris.[207]

[202] Ibid., p. 599; When the exhibition opened in May 1945, the city's population was around 366,000. See Stanislaw Dziewulski and Stanislaw Jankowski, 'The Reconstruction of Warsaw', *The Town Planning Review*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1957), p. 213. During Eisenhower's visit, he was shown round the exhibition by Lorentz, who later recalled a short conversation they had while smoking outside the museum. Eisenhower expressed surprise at the fact that – in a city where basic amenities were lacking – people were working to rebuild a museum and organise an exhibition, to which Lorentz laconically replied: 'such is our history'. See Stanisław Lorentz, 'Notatka o wizycie generała Eisenhowera', *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Vol. 20 (1976), p. 598.
[203] List of press articles relating to the exhibition 'Warsaw Accuses', AMNW 1070c, p. 23.
[204] Article from 25 May 1945 reproduced in AMNwW 1070c, p. 26.
[205] Ibid., p. 26. In late September, a smaller exhibition entitled *Ruiny Warszawy: Rysunki, Akwarele, Gwasze* (Ruins of Warsaw: Drawings, Watercolours, Gouches) opened alongside the main one. Its stated aim was 'to complement 'Warsaw Accuses' show and look at the reality that surrounds us through the eyes of an artist', thus overcoming the perceived limitations of the photographic medium, which, 'despite its documentary accuracy', was thought by the exhibition's organisers to be incapable of capturing 'the essence of the drama' and providing emotional satisfaction. See 'Wystawa Ruiny Warszawy: rysunki, akwarele, gwasze - katalog wystawy: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie (przedruk)' *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Vol. 20 (1976), p. 659.
[206] Article from 25 May 1945 reproduced in AMNW 1170c, p. 27.
[207] The exhibitions shown abroad relied more heavily on photographs, given the impracticality of transporting the museum's ruined collections. See Przeździecka-Kujałowicz, ''Warszawa Oskarża', pp. 29-30.

[Figure 1.3 – Dwight D. Eisenhower visiting 'Warsaw Accuses' in September 1945][208]

Various explanations could be provided for the original exhibition's success – not least the fact that admission was free, or that it presented a cultural spectacle of the sort that had not been seen for six years – but, in its subject matter and composition, it clearly struck a chord with the contemporary zeitgeist. On one level, the stark image of destruction presented in the museum's halls resonated with the personal experiences of the city's population, creating what the guidebook's text called 'a community of martyrdom', which brought together 'living Polish people and dead objects, material exponents of Polish culture'.[209] On another level, however, the emphasis on ideas of rebirth and regeneration chimed with the general mood on the streets, where the process of clearing the rubble and building anew was marked by hopeful enthusiasm and (at least initially) a high degree of spontaneity.[210]

[208] AMNW 1070a.

[209] *Warszawa Oskarża*, p. 5.

[210] As David Crowley has noted, the history of Warsaw's reconstruction up to 1956 can be seen as 'a barometer of the changing political climate'. Initially spontaneity soon gave way to 'stage-managed spectacles' as the project became politicised by the communist authorities, though the general attitude of enthusiasm remained relatively constant. See David Crowley, *Warsaw* (London, 2003), pp. 29-31.

People wanted to see Warsaw resurrected from the ruins, though as David Crowley has observed, the actual process of reconstruction was shaped by a tension between different conceptual visions.[211] Should the pre-war city be restored to its former glory, or did the sheer scale of destruction offer a unique opportunity to create a new modernist metropolis in its place? In the event the end result was a kind of compromise, with elements of the old and the new combining to create a cityscape that was both deeply nostalgic and distinctly modern, but, in 1945, the precise shape of the city's future was far from clear.

It was not only in the ruined capital that the experience of daily life was tinged with a strong degree of uncertainty. Across the nation as a whole, people struggled to find their footing in a Poland that was very different to the state that had been partitioned out of existence in 1939. The profound demographic and territorial changes which reshaped the face of the post-war nation took place against the backdrop of a shifting political climate, as Poland's Soviet-backed rulers sought to secure and consolidate their hold on power. When 'Warsaw Accuses' opened in May 1945 a limited degree of political pluralism did indeed exist, and there were high hopes that Poland's future might be decided via the 'free and unfettered' elections promised at the Yalta conference.[212] By the time the museum celebrated its official full reopening the following July, however, the restrictive limits of the new reality were becoming increasingly clear.[213] In June, the heavily falsified *Trzy Razy Tak* (Three Times Yes) referendum paved the way for the transition to outright communist rule, and any further pretence at maintaining democratic norms evaporated in the wake of the rigged parliamentary elections of January 1947.[214] Moreover, the recourse to crude electoral

[211] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[212] Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, pp. 140, 154-159.
[213] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 43. 'Warsaw Accuses' had been a temporary exhibition, organised in great haste, but it was not until the following year that the first permanent galleries opened. The occasion was marked by a ceremony, once again attended by Bierut, which was held on 22 July 1946, a date which reflects the changing political situation. The opening of the 'Warsaw Accuses' exhibition had taken place on the symbolically significant date of 3 May, which marked the anniversary of the declaration of the 1791 Polish Constitution. In the inter-war period this had been a public holiday, but after 1945, the communists sought to supplant it with other holidays. One of these was 22 July, which marked the official anniversary of the creation of the Soviet-backed Polish Committee of National Liberation in 1944.
[214] For more detail on the 'Three Times Yes' referendum, see Andrzej Paczkowski, *Referendum z 30 czerwca 1946: Przebieg i wyniki - Dokumenty do dziejów PRL, Zeszyt 4* (Warsaw, 1993) and; Andrzej Zaćmiński, 'Próba legitymizacji władz komunistycznych w Polsce poprzez referendum z 30 czerwca 1946 roku' in Tomasz Nowakowski, ed., *Oblicza Władzy: Relacje między Władzą a Społeczeństwem z Perspektywy Historycznej, Politologicznej i Prawnej* (Bydgoszcz, 2014).

manipulation merely confirmed what most already knew: the communists lacked any significant base of genuine popular support. PPR leader Władysław Gomułka was well aware of the fact, and, at meeting of the Central Committee held the very same month that 'Warsaw Accuses' opened, he expressed his concerns about the widespread proliferation of anti-Soviet sentiment, which threatened to isolate the party from mainstream society.[215]

Gomułka – whose own patriotism and commitment to pursuing a 'Polish road to socialism' came to the fore in the dramatic events of 1956 – stressed the need for emphasising national credentials, telling his comrades on the Central Committee that 'the masses should regard us as a Polish party'.[216] If the PPR's leadership was to be criticised, argued Gomułka, then 'let them attack us as Polish communists, not as foreign agents'.[217] Thus from the very beginning of the post-war state, Poland's rulers sought to mobilise nationalist sentiment in pursuit of legitimacy, and the idea of the 'nation' became one of the key guiding principles around which public discourse was structured. As Marcin Zaremba has perceptively observed, the concept of 'nation' is not grounded in concrete reality but exists as a 'lived-value'; its meaning is symbolic and thus malleable, allowing it to be co-opted or adapted in pursuit of different goals.[218] According to Zaremba, it can 'easily become an ingredient of political magic', in the sense that it promotes a 'pre-reflexive take on reality without distance [which] allows for the construction of myths that legitimate the system'.[219] Out of the ashes of the old a new Poland had to be built, but, as Gomułka understood, Soviet-style state socialism would, at least on its own, provide a flimsy foundation. Instead, it would have to be reinforced by the abstract and emotive idea of the 'nation', which in turn spoke to the broader concerns of Polish society and – by helping imbue the new reality with a sense of coherence and meaning – provided a stronger platform for construction.

[215] Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism*, p. 125.
[216] Cited in ibid.
[217] Cited in ibid.
[218] Ibid., p. 132.
[219] Ibid.

A wide-reaching nation-building project was thus underway in post-war Poland, in which – as in all such endeavours – national history was a central component.[220] Raphael Utz states that 'no nation can exist without a national political culture based on a usable past', and Poland's communists demonstrated their commitment to this principle early on as they sought to leave their own stamp on the broad sweep of Polish history.[221] In this process, museums – and national museums in particular – had a key role to play. As Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius have noted, national museums turn 'empirical evidence into consolidating perceptions of membership, ultimately related to nationhood and citizenship', placing them at the very heart of the nation-building enterprise.[222] The Polish leadership clearly understood this, and only a few days after 'Warsaw Accuses' opened, the capital's principal museum formally came under the supervision of the state. Previously, it had been connected to the civic administration, but, under the provisions of its new statute, its management now answered directly to the Ministry of Culture and Art.[223] The National Museum's signal importance was also highlighted by the fact that it was now designated 'the central museum institution of the Polish State', with its area of operation broadly defined as the entire national territory.[224] Its seniority was also emphasised by the fact that its director was appointed as head of the *Naczelna Dyrekcja Muzeów i Ochrony Zabytków* (Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments), making Lorentz the most senior figure in the world of Polish museology.

The National Museum in Warsaw thus assumed a leading role in post-war Polish museology, and thinking about its activity during the formative years of the post-war state provides a valuable insight into the way culture helped underpin nation-building. As we shall see,

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[220] Raphael Utz, 'Nations, nation-building, and cultural intervention: A social science perspective', *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2005), p. 627. For more detail on the relationship between particular conceptions of history and the idea of the nation, see Anthony D. Smith, 'The rites of nations: elites, masses and the re-enactment of the 'national past', in Rachel Tsang and Eric Taylor Woods, eds., *The Cultural Politics of Nations and Nation-Building: Ritual and Performance in the Forging of Nations* (Abingdon, 2014), pp. 21-37.

[221] Utz, 'Nations, nation-building, and cultural intervention', p. 632.

[222] Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, 'Introduction: making museums and nations', in Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, eds, *National Museums Nation-Building in Europe, 1750-2010: Mobilization and Legitimacy, Continuity and Change* (Abingdon, 2015), p. 2.

[223] Statute of the National Museum in Warsaw, 1946, AMNW 752a, pp. 4, 8.

[224] Ibid., p. 5.

despite the radically different post-war context, museological praxis in the National Museum was in many ways rooted in an older ethos which firmly connected it to the pre-war past. When viewed from the present, the casual observer is immediately struck by what is *different* about the period 1945-1956, particularly after the onset of high Stalinism in 1948/49. The overwhelming image is of an era saturated with ideology; a time of mass rallies and propaganda posters, of socialist realist art and architecture, and of a new, Stalinist modernity being constructed under the ominous gaze of Poland's 'friends' in the east. Of course, this vision does indeed reflect an important part of the Stalinist experience, and in part two of this thesis we will focus on what was 'new' about post-war museology by considering the way it was shaped by the wider conceptual construction project known as 'building socialism'. Equally striking however, is what was – so to speak – 'old', and the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to exploring how the National Museum in Warsaw represented a kind of continuity which – though superficially shaped by their ebb and flow – extended beyond the shifting currents of contemporary state politics.

To understand how, it is necessary to backtrack slightly and consider the nature of the pre-war National Museum. Though its roots could be traced back to 1862 and the period of partition, it was not until 1916 that it gained its 'National' title, a move which prefigured the creation of an independent Polish polity two years later and which – as Péter Apor notes – effectively constituted an act of state-building in itself.[225] Its subsequent development was driven by the nation-building impulses of inter-war Polish elites, who understood that a national museum offered an opportunity to harness culture in the service of identity formation.[226] A museum collection that had been formerly dominated by non-Polish European artworks acquired a more pronounced national accent, while numerous displays staged during the 1920s and 1930s attempted to reach back to a glorious past in order to paint a picture of continuity and national unity.[227] Topics included patriotic moments in

[225] Péter Apor, 'Museums of Civilization, Museums of State, Museums of Identity: National Museums in Europe, 1918–2000', in Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, eds, *National Museums Nation-Building in Europe, 1750-2010: Mobilization and Legitimacy, Continuity and Change* (Abingdon, 2015), p. 36.
[226] Ibid., p. 40. Of course, the newly independent Poland already possessed a national museum, located in Cracow. However, the transformation of the Warsaw Museum of the Fine Arts into the National Museum in Warsaw was more closely related to the nation-building programme directed from the Polish capital after 1918.
[227] Ibid.

Polish history, such as the period of the Duchy of Warsaw (the first temporary exhibition at the new National Museum, held in 1921), the November Uprising (1931), the 1683 Battle of Vienna (1932), and the January Uprising (1933).[228] Alongside these thematic expositions, other displays focused on individual (and exclusively male) figures, whose position in the heroic pantheon of Polish history and culture imbued them with deeper meaning. Examples include exhibitions dedicated to Juliusz Słowacki (1927), Frédéric Chopin (1932), Józef Piłsudski (1937) and Jan Matejko (1938).[229]

As well as providing a forum for the celebration of national culture, the museological stage also offered an opportunity to define more precisely what this actually meant, and where Polish culture was situated within the broader European context. Poland's relationship with the culture of Western European had long preoccupied an intelligentsia which – to use Jerzy Jedlicki's phrase – had seen itself as a 'poor and neglected suburb of Europe', the underprivileged fringe of a wider European cultural constellation.[230] After 1918, this perceived cultural gap had to be overcome. 'Having attained once more to the dignity of independent existence', the Polish philologist Roman Dyboski wrote in 1934, '[Poland] is intensely eager to justify her deliverance by living up to the full dignity of a cultured and civilised modern nation'.[231] Membership of this rarefied group of 'civilised modern nations' – at least in the eyes of Polish intellectual elites – was contingent upon the construction of a vision of Polish modernity that emphasised the nation's cultural links with Western Europe, thus 'proving' the legitimacy of its newfound statehood.[232]

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[228] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 70, 72, 77-78. By virtue of his French connections, Chopin also helped reinforce the connection between Polish and Western European culture – the significance of which is discussed in the following paragraphs – but his Polishness (and specifically his ties to Warsaw itself), were strongly emphasised. As the exhibition guide explained, the main body of exhibits concerned the great composer's 'fatherland, and in particular Warsaw', whose walls bore witness to the 'creation of Fryderyk Chopin, genius'. See Léopold Binental, *Katalog I wystawy dokumentów i pamiątek Chopinowskich zorganizowanej przez Warszawskie Towarzystwo Muzyczne i Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie* (Warsaw, 1932), p. 4.

[229] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 72, 76, 85, 90-91.

[230] Jerzy Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe: Nineteenth-Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization* (Budapest, 1999), p. xiii.

[231] Roman Dyboski, 'Cultural Problems of the New Poland', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 12, No. 35 (1934), p. 322. Dyboksi also stresses the role of Western influences in the development of Polish culture. Ibid., pp. 304-305.

[232] Nonetheless, despite the widespread belief that they belonged to a cultural constellation with distinctly Western roots, Polish intellectuals had a more complicated – and not necessarily uncritical – understanding of

In the realm of culture, museums – and national museums in particular – were deeply implicated in this project. Over the course 1920s and 1930s, Warsaw's National Museum increasingly took on the characteristics of what Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach famously describe as the 'universal survey museum', a term used to denote paradigmatic art-historical institutions modelled after the Louvre, 'the first and…fullest statement of the ideal of civilisation'.[233] Such museums – 'the indispensable ornaments of any great city' – present epoch-spanning cultural surveys structured around distinctly Western (and modern) systems of classification, through which artworks could be understood as 'tangible symbols of [the] powers and attributes' of the state.[234] The presence of a universal survey museum in its capital was thus seen as a marker of Poland's right to place at the table of European culture; as Ewa Manikowska points out, for Bronisław Gembarzewski – the National Museum's director between 1916 and 1936 – cultural heritage represented a broader reflection of civilisation, through which Poland's 'affinity with Western Europe' could be definitively displayed.[235]

This was particularly true after the museum moved into the new building on Aleje Jerozolimskie at the end of the 1930s. Designed by the architect Tadeusz Tołwiński, the new structure helped both define and amplify the National Museum's institutional meaning. Duncan and Wallach have observed that power of the universal survey museum is partly based upon articulation of a specific 'architectural rhetoric', which draws on classical

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the meaning of Western modernity. Jerzy Jedlicki notes how nineteenth century inhabitants of the Polish 'suburb of Europe looked on the Metropolis with contradictory feelings of envy, admiration and distrust—and sometimes with sincere or feigned contempt for the West's corrupt values and false glitter'. See Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe*, p. xiii. In the inter-war context, Kathryn Ciancia's work on Poland's eastern borderlands notes how Polish elites who invoked Western cultural norms in the course of their 'civilising mission' were still drawn to what they understood as Volhynia's 'premodern traditions', where they might find a cure for the perceived 'ills of Western modernity'. See Kathryn Ciancia, *On Civilization's Edge: A Polish Borderland in the Interwar World* (New York, 2020), p. 17.

[233] Duncan and Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', p. 452.

[234] Ibid., pp. 452, 456-457.

[235] Ewa Manikowska, *Photography and Cultural Heritage in the Age of Nationalisms Europe's Eastern Borderlands (1867–1945)* (Abingdon, 2020), p. 120. Manikowska refers to the specific context surrounding the development of the *Archiwum Ikonografczne Historii Kultury Polskiej* (Iconographic Archive History of Polish Culture), a project directed by Gembarzewski between 1914-1918 which aimed at the production of 'an organized, academic collection of reproductions reflecting the vision of Polish cultural heritage', but the point has broader significance.

influences in order to 'embody and make visible the idea of the state'.[236] 'By employing such forms as the Greco-Roman temple front', they write, 'the museum, along with other public buildings, asserts its descent from the ideological, historical and political reality of imperial Rome'.[237] Though the National Museum's modernist building expressed its classical references in slightly less strong terms than the iconic European museum structures of the previous century, the influence of antiquity was nonetheless undeniably present.[238] Envisaged by its founders as a 'Parthenon of arts', the new building relied on a form of simplified Classicism in which, as Błażej Ciarkowski explains, 'the decisive factor was the axial nature of the composition, the monumental character of the entrance hall preceded by a portico supported by pillars, and the regular rhythm of simple lesenes, which created the articulation of the façade and rendered reference to a Classical colonnade legible'.[239]

Furthermore, once liberated from the spatial limitations imposed by the cramped nature of its former premises on Ulica Podwale – a one-time police precinct that served as its home from 1916 – the National Museum was able to expand its activity, helping to reinforce its credentials as a 'universal' institution. Anna Masłowska describes the museum of the 1930s as a 'window onto the world', offering Polish society the opportunity to enjoy increasingly global cultural experiences mediated through the discursive language of Western European modernity.[240] Poland's connection to this cultural constellation was emphasised by the presence of exhibitions such as the 1937 display of French paintings entitled 'From Manet to the Present Day' – which featured 89 paintings loaned from Parisian museums and private collections – as well as a growing preoccupation with Antiquity.[241] In 1937, the museum

[236] Duncan and Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', pp. 449-450.
[237] Ibid., p. 450.
[238] Examples of such structures include the *Alte Nationalgalerie*, *Altes Museum* and *Pergamon Museu*m in Berlin, the British Museum and the National Gallery in London, and the *Museo del Prado* in Madrid, to cite but a few.
[239] Błażej Ciarkowski, 'An Evidence of Creative Spirit: Architecture of Museum Edifices in an Independent Republic of Poland', *Muzealnictwo*, Vol. 59 (2018), pp. 24, 27. As Ciarkowski explains, the design of the new building was decided through an architectural competition, the terms of which specifically referred to the suitability of classicist forms. Some of the entries presented unequivocally classical ideas, but it was Tołwiński's fusion of classicism and modernity which prevailed, reflecting the contemporary search for new architectural forms which could both 'express the national spirit' and 'accentuate the modern character of the Republic'. See ibid., pp. 25-26.
[240] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 39.
[241] Ibid., pp. 82-83.

presented an exhibition of finds unearthed by a joint Franco-Polish expedition working in the Egyptian city of Edfu, and the following year saw the establishment of a separate department dedicated to ancient art.[242] Given the central role accorded to Egyptology and the study of Antiquity in the great museums of Western Europe, this further served to underline contemporary perceptions of Poland's proximity to Western culture. Referring to the new department's creation, the National Museum's yearbook for 1938 described Warsaw as 'the capital of a country whose civilization, like the civilizations of other European countries, is the heir to the ancient cultures of the Mediterranean basin'.[243] In this regard, museum exhibitions were said to provide the best means for 'accentuating and realising this relationship in ourselves…by bringing us closer to the monuments of ancient civilisation'.[244]

[Figure 1.4 – The National Museum building on *Aleje Jerozolimskie*, 1938][245]

[242] Ibid., pp. 86-87. For information on the background to Polish Egyptology of this period, see Wojciech Ejsmond and Marzena Ożarek-Szilke, 'The Collection of Egyptian Mummies of the University of Warsaw and their Role in the 'Prehistory' of Polish Egyptology', *Études et Travaux*, Vol. 35 (2022), pp. 9-16, and Patrycja Klimowicz and Arkadiusz Klimowicz, 'Polish archaeology in Egypt and Sudan: an historical overview', in Sjoerd J. van der Linde, Monique H. van den Dries, Nathan Schlanger & Corijanne G. Slappendel, eds., *European Archaeology Abroad: Global Settings, Comparative Perspectives* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 107-112.
[243] 'Kronika', *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Vol. 1 (1938), p. 190.
[244] Ibid.
[245] NAC 3/1/0/11/385.

Such was the nature of the National Museum in Warsaw on the eve of the Second World War, and, despite the traumatic experiences endured between 1939 and 1945, it emerged from the conflict battered and bruised but still clearly recognisable as the same institution. True, the actual content of its collections had, in many cases, changed quite dramatically. Teams led by Stanisław Lorentz himself embarked on a 'revindication' campaign which aimed at recovering looted artworks and replenishing the museum's depleted holdings, but this was challenging work, and many artefacts could not be located.[246] Nonetheless, due to the influx of cultural heritage taken from the formerly German territories that now constituted the western regions of the resurrected Polish state – the so-called 'Reclaimed Lands' – the National Museum's collections actually expanded after the war in comparison to their extent in 1939. In her thoughtful analysis of 'revindication' work carried out in the period 1945-1950, Lidia Karecka notes that the National Museum's holdings grew by some 50,000 objects, while wartime losses numbered around 10,000 exhibits.[247] These new artefacts included a significant proportion of medieval artworks, which had been somewhat underrepresented in the pre-war museum.[248] Some of the new acquisitions went on display as early as April 1946 in temporary exhibition of gothic art, and a permanent gallery of medieval art was opened at the end of 1947; to this day its extensive medieval holdings remain one of the National Museum's star attractions.[249]

This reconfiguration of the collections did not, however, fundamentally change the museum's identity as a 'universal survey' institution. Indeed, if anything, it reinforced its claim to such a status, as medieval art simply constituted another period to be folded into its grand art historical narrative alongside those which had been better represented in the pre-war museum. Despite changes in some of the actual exhibits themselves, the overall line of its epoch-spanning survey still remained broadly the same, beginning in antiquity and

[246] This is discussed further in chapter five. For more information on the 'revindication' process – including the problematic nature of the term itself – see Lidia M. Karecka, 'Akcja rewindykacyjna w latach 1945-1950: spór o terminologię czy o istotę rzeczy', *Ochrona Zabytków*, Vol. 55, No. 3/4 (2002), pp. 404-409.
[247] Ibid., p. 405, n. 20. As Karecka explains, these figures do not include numismatic collections, which are harder to calculate precisely. Some of the newly acquired exhibits were transferred to museums in Łódź, Toruń, Poznań, Wrocpaaw and Gdańsk, but remained the property of the National Museum in Warsaw.
[248] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 46, 106. Much of the medieval material was of Pomeranian and Silesian origin.
[249] Ibid., p. 46.

tracing a path through subsequent eras of art-historical classification to the present day.[250] Of course, reassembling the survey (albeit in a somewhat different form) was a challenging process, which, due to the amount of work involved, had to be carried out in stages. The unveiling of the first permanent galleries of the post-war period – the Gallery of Polish Painting, and a limited section of the Gallery of Foreign Painting on 22 July 1946 – was, however, an important turning point. According to *Gazeta Ludowa*, the ceremony marked the moment at which the National Museum 'ended a difficult period of preparatory work and returned to normal life as the pride of Polish culture'.[251] There was much work still ahead, but the emotional significance of the first permanent displays should not be underestimated. The coverage of the opening in *Gazeta Ludowa* noted that – even though as little as twenty percent of the pre-war content of the Gallery of Polish painting had been recovered – what survived had 'become for us something incomparably more valuable than before', a haunting memento of a 'loved one now lost'.[252]

Though only certain parts of the museum were accessible to visitors at this point, the re-opened galleries created a powerful sense of continuity by bringing to mind the memory of the city's pre-war cultural life. In May 1946, on the occasion of the opening of an exhibition of recovered artworks, *Gazeta Ludowa* claimed that one 'did not have to be an art expert' in order to feel a 'genuine thrill' when visiting the ground floor rooms of the National Museum.[253] 'It is enough', the paper's correspondent explained, 'to be a Varsovian, attached to his city', whose vanished form was brought to life by the gathered artworks.[254] Indeed, their meaning had been amplified, both by the experience of war and by the fact that the

[250] While the pre-war Gallery of Ancient Art had primarily concentrated on Egyptology, classical antiquity assumed the dominant position in the post-war museum. The Roman and Greek collections were significantly expanded with material secured in the new Western Territories, while the main part of the Egyptian collection was made up of the surviving finds from the pre-war Franco-Polish excavations in Edfu. Ibid., p. 47; Lorentz, 'Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie w latach 1939-1954', p. 90. In time, they would be supplemented by artefacts unearthed by later Polish expeditions to Egypt and Sudan, but these would not take place until the late 1950s. See Klimowicz and Klimowicz, 'Polish Archaeology in Egypt and Sudan', pp. 112-120.
[251] H. P., 'W przymierzu między dawnymi a nowymi laty. Dwie wystawy w Muzeum Narodowym', *Gazeta Ludowa* (23 July, 1946), p. 6.
[252] Ibid.
[253] H. P., 'Polskie dobra kulturalne wracają z hitlerowskich kryjówek', *Gazeta Ludowa* (23 May, 1946), p. 2.
[254] Ibid.

museum now incorporated surviving elements of other important Varsovian collections. As the article went on to explain, the effect on viewer was particularly poignant:

After years of separation, [in the National Museum] we finally meet old friends from the days of our childhood — from Zachęta, from Łazienki Park, from the Castle. For a while one can forget, when looking at Chełmoński's 'Storks', Siemiradzki's 'Nero', Gierymski's 'Arbour' or Matejko's series 'History of Civilization in Poland', that 'my mother's city' no longer exists behind the walls of this building, and that all that remains of the city of our childhood is that which the Latin proverb considered more valuable than life: Art.[255]

In this sense, the resurrected National Museum served as a kind of cultural anchor, tying the radically reconfigured Poland that emerged after 1945 to the pre-war state through the medium of a national artistic canon. Despite the major political and social changes, culture still provided a potent rallying point for the transmission of a sense of national identity. Moreover, the very notions of 'Polish culture' and 'Polish identity' had been imbued with an extra potency, partly due to the very raw and recent memory of Nazi attempts to eradicate them, but also as a result of the post-war nation's demographic transformation and the communist government's subsequent embrace of nationalist rhetoric as a tool for legitimation. Just as it had prior to September 1939, the post-war museum thus continued to act as a powerful space for cultural nation-building, and, over the course of the following years, the museum's exhibitions can be seen as assertions of the continued power and vitality of an idea of Polishness conceptualised in terms of a shared cultural inheritance. As the reference to several classic works in the *Gazeta Ludowa* article suggests, paintings constituted one of the most effective resources for articulating such sentiments, particularly if they concentrated on historical themes. The prime examples here are the works of Jan Matejko, which came to assume the most prestigious position within the Gallery of Polish Painting.[256]

[255] Ibid.

[256] In a 1953 article in the journal *Muzealnictwo*, Wanda Załuska described Matejko's works as the 'pride of our galleries', on account of their 'powerful emotional charge' and 'social and educational meaning'. See Wanda Załuska, 'Malarstwo współczesne w galeriach muzealnych', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 3 (1953), p. 8. By the mid-1950s the National Museum in Warsaw had two large rooms devoted exclusively to Matejko's paintings.

[Figure 1.5 – Young visitors in the Jan Matejko Hall, 1953][257]

Matejko concentrated on heroic depictions of the Polish past that were epic both in scale and composition. Paintings such as *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem* (Battle of Grunwald) – which, following its extensive restoration in the period 1945-1949, took up an entire wall of the gallery – and *Hołd Pruski* (The Prussian Homage, part of the collections of the National Museum in Cracow) played a major role in shaping cultural perceptions of Polish history. Writing in the 1970s, the Polish historian Henryk Wereszycki claimed that Matejko 'imposed on Polish society his own vision of the past to such effect that to the present time the average Pole visualises the national heroes as represented by this great painter in his compositions'.[258] Moreover, the anti-Prussian content of the two famous paintings mentioned above – which, respectively, depicted the Polish-Lithuanian victory over the Teutonic Knights at Grunwald/Tannenberg in 1410, and the last grand master of the Teutonic Order swearing allegiance to the Polish king in 1525 – meant that Matejko could readily be

[257] AMNW 1188b.
[258] Aleksander Gieysztor, Stefan Kieniewicz, Emanuel Rostworowski, Janusz Tazbir and Henryk Wereszycki, *History of Poland*, Second Edition (Warsaw, 1979), p. 472.

identified with an anti-German brand of Polish nationalism. According to Danuta Batorska, Matejko was something of a 'symbol of Poland's independence' in late nineteenth-century Poland, a view which was apparently shared by the Nazis.[259] Matejko's works were marked for destruction following the invasion German invasion in 1939 and were successfully hidden from the Nazis at great risk, despite Joseph Goebbels' offer of a ten million mark reward for the recovery of *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem* and *Hołd Pruski*.[260]

Alongside the various Polish artworks exhibited in the permanent galleries, which gradually expanded as time went on, this tendency is also well illustrated by the topics of some of the temporary exhibitions staged in the first post-war decade. For example, it is notable that, after 'Warsaw Accuses', the first display to focus on something other than the wartime destruction – and the third to be staged after the museum resumed its exhibitionary activity – was dedicated to none other than the person of Frédéric Chopin (or Fryderyk Chopin, as he was known in Poland).[261] It was in truth a relatively modest display, but its small scale belies its broader significance. Not only did its theme call to mind pre-war museology by echoing the earlier Chopin exhibition held at the National Museum in 1932, but its opening in October 1945 coincided with the reburial of the composer's heart in Warsaw. The occasion was commemorated with much patriotic fervour, reflecting the desire of Poland's new rulers to mobilise Chopin's memory as vehicle for nationalist legitimation.[262] At a ceremony held in Chopin's former home at Żelazowa Wola, Bolesław Bierut paid tribute to the 'most brilliant creator and master of Polish music', whose 'eminently national' works were hailed as an undeniable 'expression of our Polish feelings'.[263] Using language that was almost mystical, Bierut invoked the nation in spiritual terms, highlighting Chopin's legacy as a source of inspiration which could underpin the future 'power and greatness of our homeland'.[264]

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[259] Danuta Batorska, 'The Political Censorship of Jan Matejko', *Art Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (1992), p. 60.
[260] Ibid., pp. 61-2.
[261] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 100. The use of 'Fryderyk' instead of 'Frédéric' served to underline the composer's Polish identity. As Marcin Zaremba notes, the first programmatic document issued by the newly formed PPR in 1942 also Polonised the surname – referring to him as 'Szopen' – though this did not become usual practice. Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism*, p. 113.
[262] Ibid., p. 156.
[263] 'Gem', 'Serce Chopina wróciło w mury Warszawy', *Życie Warszawy* (18 October, 1945), p. 2.
[264] Ibid.; Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism*, p. 156.

The 1945 display also foreshadowed a larger exhibition staged in 1949, the 100th anniversary of Chopin's death. A tradition of using anniversaries connected with notable individuals to engage in nation-building was already well established – indeed, the post-war National Museum had already staged a display of this type in 1946, which commemorated the 125th anniversary of Cyprian Norwid's birth – and the 1949 Chopin exhibition took place in the context of the nation-wide celebrations organised to mark the jubilee year.[265] As Michał Bruliński's article on the 1949 *Rok Chopinowski* (Chopin Year) explains, these included a variety of initiatives, including the commissioning of a feature film (Aleksander Ford's *Młodość Chopina*) and the co-option of the International Chopin Piano Competition, which was to be held for the first time since 1937.[266] Opened in October by Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz, the National Museum's exhibition was another important part of the year's festivities, and its displays outlined an uncompromisingly nationalist vision of the composer and his oeuvre.[267] The printed programme which accompanied the exhibition presented its narrative under the title 'Chopin – Creator and Patriot', arguing that the composer's entire life provided eloquent testimony to his undeniable Polishness, despite foreign attempts to dilute his national essence.[268] He was hailed as the originator of a national 'musical style', which fused 'elements of folk music' with the 'artistic expressions of his epoch' to create a distinctly Polish 'organic whole'.[269] Moreover, through his music, he was apparently able to effectively communicate the meaning of Polish identity to an international audience. Chopin's art, it was claimed, 'suddenly revealed to other nations the essence of Polishness – a separate and unique value among the cultural heritage of all humanity'.[270]

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[265] In the latter years of the period of partition, for example, numerous anniversaries were celebrated relating to figures such as Adam Mickiewicz, Joachim Lelewel, Frédéric Chopin, Juliusz Słowacki, and Józef Poniatowski. See Błażej Popławski 'Obchody rocznic historycznych: Rok Kopernika i Rok Odrodzenia (1953)', *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (2010), p. 388, n. 6.

[266] Michał Bruliński, 'Chopin on Barricades: About the 100th Anniversary of Chopin's Birth (1949) and Socialist Realism Doctrine in Poland', *Kwartalnik Młodych Muzykologów UJ*, Vol. 36, No. 1(2018), pp. 77-114.

[267] Ibid., p. 106.

[268] Programme of the Chopin Exhibition at the National Museum in Warsaw, contained in AMNW 1136, p. 6. For example, the programme decried 'biographers who used his father's French origins to undermine Chopin's Polishness', as well as Nazi attempts to appropriate Chopin for the German nation during the Second World War. Ibid., p. 9.

[269] Ibid., p. 6.

[270] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Despite the image of continuity presented by the subject matter, however, it is important to note that the 1949 exhibition adopted a take on Chopin's life and work that was very different to kind of interpretation employed before the war. In preparing the exhibition, its organisers rejected what they called the 'anti-historical' method of presenting a straightforward chronological display of Chopin-related memorabilia.[271] Such an approach, they argued, imposed upon the viewer the specific interests of the collector, which '[revolved] around inanimate objects' and thus failed to embrace the broader meaning of the composer within his historical context.[272] In place of this 'common' structure, they proposed a thematic exploration centred around five key areas they deemed most important: 'Chopin as a man and an artist'; 'the folk and patriotic sources of Chopin's work'; 'the hundred-year history of Chopin's idea'; 'the cult of Chopin in today's Poland', and finally 'Chopin as a symbol of the peaceful work of nations'.[273] These issues, the exhibition programme explained, were not selected on the basis of an 'arbitrary idea of the project's organisers'.[274] Instead, they presented themselves, a choice inescapably shaped 'by the times in which we live', when 'the threat of a new war arouses in us enthusiasm and strength to work and fight for a new man', strengthening 'our sense of national identity and pride that we are in the camp of the defenders of peace and progress'.[275]

The exhibition's overt political thrust was thus clear from the very outset. Chopin's life and work were framed in ideological terms, with strong emphasis placed on the way in which the 'powerful, revolutionary current' of his music was shaped by the social conditions of his era.[276] This was a Chopin who belonged to the masses, whose compositions – inflected with the rhythms and harmonies of the 'simple music of the Polish people' – reflected an 'organic connection' with Polish Folk culture that stretched back to his childhood.[277] Indeed, this link

[271] Ibid., p. 3.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid., p. 4.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid., pp. 3-4.
[277] The programme paints a romantic picture of summer hours spent listening to the music emanating from rural cottages and inns. Ibid., p. 10.

was a unifying theme which underpinned the exhibition's narrative, of which only the first part actually dealt with the period of the composer's life. Chopin's posthumous legacy was the focus of the two following sections, considered firstly in the context of the period 1849-1939, and then in post-war Poland, where it was said to have acquired 'proletarian features', becoming a 'symbol of the cause of People's Poland'.[278] It was only in the present era, the exhibition programme argued, that this legacy had been truly fulfilled. Following the 'great transformation in Polish social relations' Chopin now came 'alive for the widest masses of the Polish people', with art that was 'conceived from the spirit of the people' finally returning to its rightful owners.[279]

[Figure 1.6 – Visitors at the opening of the 1949 Chopin exhibition][280]

[278] Ibid., p. 5.
[279] Ibid., pp. 4, 14.
[280] NAC 3/39/0/-/3608;

Chopin was not the only important cultural figure to be posthumously recruited to the socialist cause. 1949 also saw the opening of an exhibition at the National Museum dedicated to Adam Mickiewicz, which had been created in conjunction with the celebrations surrounding the 150th anniversary of the national bard's birth the previous year.[281] Again, it was a deeply politicised affair, hailing Mickiewicz's 'progressive-revolutionary' spirit and casting him as a passionate critic of 'capitalism and its methods'.[282] The text of the accompanying programme closed with a quote of Bierut's, which claimed that Mickiewicz 'is and will always be close to the masses of the people because he knows how to combine fervent patriotism with concern for the liberation of man'.[283] According to Bierut, the poet's perception allowed him to see 'the great truth that sincere and true love for the fatherland fully reveals itself in deep revolutionary internationalism'.[284] Another member of the esteemed group of the 'Three Bards' – Juliusz Słowacki – was given a similar treatment in 1950. Like the Mickiewicz and Chopin exhibitions, Słowacki was placed against the 'background of the era' and the trajectory of the development of contemporary strands of revolutionary thought.[285] Though the planning documents show that the exhibition's organisers understood that some parts of Słowacki's legacy could prove a little awkward, as far as possible these issues were glossed over in order to bind him as closely as possible to the official culture of the new People's Poland.[286]

Exhibitions like the ones discussed above need to be understood within the broader political context of the time. The creation of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) from the amalgamation of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) at the 'Unification Congress' of December 1948 marked the onset of high Stalinism, which was characterised by an increasingly repressive and restrictive ideological climate.[287] A

[281] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 143.
[282] Mickiewicz Exhibition, 20 June – 11 September 1949, AMNW 1134/II.
[283] Julian Krzyżanowski, *Ogólnopolski Komitet Obchodu 150-lecia Urodzin Adama Mickiewicza, 1798-1948: Przewodnik po Wystawie Jubileuszowej* (Warsaw, 1949), p. 47.
[284] Ibid., p. 47.
[285] Słowacki Exhibition, 3 July – 18 September 1949, AMNW 1146, p. 1.
[286] For example, the organisers acknowledged what they termed Słowacki's 'spirituality' – which certainly had overtones of mysticism – but suggested that it be explained as a reflection of his 'social radicalism and anarchistic inclinations'. Ibid., p. 2.
[287] Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, pp. 39-44.

'refreshing breeze from the east' (as Anna Masłowska ironically puts it) began to waft through the museum's halls, reshaping the parameters of museological activity and subordinating it more forcefully to the dictates of state policy, which aimed at the construction of a Soviet-style system on Polish soil.[288] Its effects – which included the application of Marxist-Leninist principles in the creation of exhibitionary narratives, along with the promotion of Socialist Realist art and a model of 'Polish-Soviet friendship' – are dealt with in detail in part two of this thesis, which concentrates on the museological contribution to 'building socialism'. However, in the context of the current chapter, it is important to draw attention to the way that established cultural icons like Chopin or Mickiewicz were being appropriated by Poland's communist rulers as part of the post-war nation-building process. By attempting to bind themselves to these figures, they sought to utilise their legacies to legitimate the political changes underway, which – instead of being seen as an external imposition – could be presented as being deeply rooted in a progressive cultural tradition.[289]

Nonetheless, despite the gusts of this 'breeze from the east', we should not neglect the museum's continued connections with Western European culture. As we have seen, the very nature of the pre-war museum underlined the prevalent belief among contemporary Polish elites that national culture existed within a broadly Western milieu, and these ideas continued to exert considerable power in the post-war context. Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius has drawn attention to the problematic nature of certain (Western) tropes traditionally associated with the study of culture behind the 'Iron Curtain', one of which relates to the metaphorical frontier's apparently impermeable nature.[290] Yet as Murawska-

[288] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 50.

[289] Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism*, pp. 155-156. Mariusz Zawodniak draws attention to an interesting facet of this process, namely the way in which such figures were described as being 'alive' (the programme accompanying the Chopin exhibition, for example, referred to the Chopin being 'alive for the wide masses of the Polish people'). As Zawodniak explains, not only did this continued vitality separate them from 'dead' and 'decaying' elements of the past that did not fit into the communist worldview, but it also referred to the way in which, under Stalinism, certain individuals – such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Dzerzhinsky – were to be seen as actually immortal. See Mariusz Zawodniak, ''Żywy Mickiewicz'. Socrealistyczny obraz wieszcza. (kilka wstępnych uwag)', in E. Balcerzan and W. Bolecki, eds., *Osoba w Literaturze i Komunikacji Literackiej* (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 180-181.

[290] One of the other major issues Murawska-Muthesius identifies is the 'perceived dreary homogenisation of Iron Curtain countries', and the tendency to see art in an 'Eastern European' context as 'a tangible whole, a

Muthesius points out, this was not the case, and cultural exchanges took place across the East-Division throughout the Cold War era.[291] Such activity is clearly visible in the National Museum in Warsaw, which, soon after its reopening in 1945, 'became a battleground between the hegemonic aspirations of France, Italy, England and the USSR', who sought to 'project their cultures onto the ruined landscape of Central and Eastern Europe'.[292] Alongside manifestations of Soviet/Russian culture, there were also displays like the exhibitions of contemporary Italian, French and English art that the museum hosted in 1946, while the following year it staged displays devoted to English graphic art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and French film of the last fifty years, the latter of which hailed France as the 'true cradle of cinema'.[293] 1948 saw presentations of contemporary Belgian graphic art, French literature, and – most famously of all – an exhibition of works donated by Pablo Picasso, which was supplemented by several important paintings loaned by the French government.[294]

Another important factor that tied Polish museology to the wider world beyond the Soviet bloc was Poland's accession to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) with the creation of a Polish ICOM National Committee in the second half of 1947.[295] Closely connected with the creation of UNESCO, ICOM was established in Paris in 1946 to promote the principle of international cooperation in the museological field. Though the Soviet Union initially showed little interest in either UNESCO or ICOM (it eventually joined both organisations after Stalin's death, in 1954 and 1957 respectively) Polish museologists proved much keener to participate in the kind of cultural exchanges that ICOM membership

unified organism, approachable in its entirety'. See Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, 'Paris from Behind the Iron Curtain', in Sarah Wilson, ed., *Paris: Capital of the Arts, 1900-1968* (London, 2002), pp. 250-251.

[291] Ibid., p. 250.

[292] Ibid., p. 253.

[293] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 105, 107, 111, 115, 119, 124; Jerzy Toeplitz, 'Słowo wstępne', *50 Lat Filmu Francuskiego: Wystawa w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie* (Warsaw, 1947), p. 6.

[294] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 134. Picasso visited Poland to attend the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace, held in Wrocław in August 1948. For more information the significance of his stay in Poland, see Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, 'Modernism between Peace and Freedom: Picasso and Others at the Congress of Intellectuals in Wrocław', in David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, eds., *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970* (London, 2008), pp. 33-41, and Piotr Bernatowic 'Picasso w Polsce "Zaraz po Wojnie"', *Artium Quaestiones*, No. 11 (2000), pp. 155-220.

[295] Dorota Folga-Januszewska, 'Establishment of ICOM National Committee Poland and the role it played in 1947–1958', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 60 (2019), p. 13.

offered.[296] Headed by Stanisław Lorentz, the Polish ICOM committee was represented at the 1947 'preparatory' General Conference in Mexico and the 1948 General Conference in Paris, where the delegation was led by Lorentz himself.[297] As Dorota Folga-Januszewska has observed, these events provided a space in which to share knowledge and expertise, allowing Polish museologists to benefit from the latest methodological and organisational approaches in the field, and also functioned as a forum for the development of valuable international partnerships.[298] For example, Lorentz forged a relationship with George Salles – the director of French Museums and chair of the 1948 ICOM conference – that led to Picasso's visit to the National Museum in Warsaw later that year.[299] Moreover, as Michał Wenderski's work on Polish-Dutch cultural relationships in the period 1947-1950 shows, Polish exhibitions could also travel west; cultural exchange was not a one-way street.[300]

Of course, during the high Stalinist period the continued maintenance of East-West cultural connections was complicated by the increasingly restrictive political situation in Poland. This was already evident in 1948, when Lorentz's application to travel to Paris for the forthcoming ICOM conference was initially rejected, and over the following six years the newly founded Polish National Committee participated in ICOM's activity only in a very limited way.[301] Polish delegations were absent from the General Conferences held in London in 1950 and Genoa, Milan and Bergamo in 1953, but – as a result of the shifting political landscape – they were able to attend the next one, which took place in Geneva in July 1956.[302] By this point, both Stalin and Bierut were dead, and the dramatic aftershocks that came in the wake of Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February were being felt across the Soviet Union's East European empire. The museologist Janusz Durko, one of the Polish

[296] Julie Deschepper, 'Between Future and Eternity: A Soviet Conception of Heritage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (2019), p. 501. For early Soviet involvement with UNESCO, see Poul Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945-1976', *Journal of World History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2011), pp. 123-128.
[297] Folga-Januszewska, 'Establishment of ICOM National Committee Poland', p. 13.
[298] Ibid., pp. 13-17.
[299] Lorentz was particularly inspired by the way Salles had worked closely with Picasso in France. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
[300] Michał Wenderski, 'Art versus politics: Polish-Dutch international cultural relationships at the outset of the Cold War (1947–50), *Cold War History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2022), pp. 103-112.
[301] Folga-Januszewska, 'Establishment of ICOM National Committee Poland', pp. 14, 17.
[302] Ibid., p. 17.

representatives in attendance at 1956 ICOM General Conference, remembered how the delegation's departure for Switzerland took place against a backdrop of national tension following the brutal crushing of protests in Poznań at the end of June.[303] Until the very last minute, it was not even clear whether they would be able to travel at all. As Durko later recalled, only as they were preparing to depart did the delegation finally receive their passports, when an official from the Ministry of Culture and Art burst onto the railway station platform brandishing the documents mere minutes before their train was due to leave.[304]

The thaw of 1956 created a more favourable atmosphere in which to pursue cultural exchanges across the East-West divide. In the opinion of the artist, critic and contemporary museum *habitué* Ignancy Witz, the changing political climate allowed exhibition-goers to 'take a deeper breath', and, even before the events of the famous 'Polish October', its impact on museology could be seen in the displays of the National Museum in Warsaw.[305] Over the course of 1956 the museum staged three major exhibitions of Western European art, all of which sprung from international initiatives which involved stakeholders on both sides of the 'Iron Curtain'. The first – entitled 'Rembrandt and His Circle' – was a project conceived in connection with UNESCO's 'Rembrandt Year' (1956 marked the 350th anniversary of the Dutch master's birth), and included loans from numerous international institutions, including Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum.[306] It was closely followed by 'The Venetian Portrait from Titian to Tiepolo' (April-May), and 'French Painting from David to Cézanne' (June-July), both of which reflected the significance of growing Italo-Polish and Franco-Polish cultural exchanges.[307] The former consisted exclusively of paintings from Italian collections, and was created after the success of a 1955 Polish exhibition of works by Benardo Bellotto and

[303] Janusz Durko, 'Lata pięćdziesiąte', *Almanach Muzealny*, Vol. 1 (1997), p. 352.
[304] Ibid., pp. 351-352.
[305] Cited in Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 57.
[306] Ibid., pp. 171-172. An account of the exhibition was published in the famous British art journal The Burlington Magazine, which – though acknowledging that the Polish exhibition did 'not rank among the most conspicuous' of the major projects undertaken in honour of the Rembrandt jubilee year – nonetheless paid tribute to the successful efforts of 'our colleagues in Poland'. See H. Gerson, 'Rembrandt in Poland', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 98, No. 641 (1956), pp. 280-283.
[307] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 174-177.

Aleksander Gierymski in Venice.[308] Even more impressive was the summer display of French painting, which was prepared by the Louvre's chief painting curator Germain Bazin and featured ninety-one works loaned by twenty-two French museums, including Eugène Delacroix's iconic *Liberty Leading the People*.[309]

As Patricia García-Montón González has recently observed, these exhibitions served to underline the idea of the fundamental 'Europeanness' of Polish culture and reflected the aspirations of the nation's museologists to play in what she terms the field's 'first division'.[310] Moreover, the transnational nature of the exhibitionary discourse provided a space in which to articulate ideas about identity and culture which transcended Europe's ideological divide.[311] For example, the momentum generated by the three aforementioned exhibitions culminated with International Museum Week that autumn, which was being celebrated in Poland for the first time in 1956. Led by the Polish ICOM committee, it was intended to promote closer cultural ties 'between countries with different systems' and 'highlight the role of museums [in facilitating] rapprochement between nations', with a variety of events planned for museums across the nation.[312] In conjunction with the festivities, Stanisław Lorentz organised a conference at the palace in Nieborów which brought together eminent museologists from Western Europe and the Soviet bloc, including the heads of both the UNESCO Museums and Monuments Division and ICOM.[313] One of those in attendance was Janusz Durko, who later recalled how the 'guests from the West…initially looked at us with

[308] Patricia García-Montón González, '1956. Old Masters and the Ephemeral Borders', in Agnieszka Chmielewska, Irena Kossowska and Marcin Lachowski, eds., *State Construction and Art in East Central Europe, 1918-2018*, Kindle Edition (New York, 2022), p. 366.
[309] Ibid., pp. 366-367; Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 176.
[310] García-Montón González, '1956', pp. 363-364.
[311] Ibid., pp. 371-372.
[312] Guidelines for the celebration of the 1956 Museum Week in Poland, AMNWr III/61, pp. 3-5. Planned activities included lectures, concerts, and competitions for school-children, and the Polish postal service issued a limited run of museum-themed stamps. An intensive promotional campaign was launched to raise the profile of the event, and Lorentz also prepared a special publication on Polish museums intended for distribution abroad.
[313] Durko, 'Lata pięćdziesiąte', p. 353. As well as Jan van der Haagen (head of UNESCO Museum and Monuments Division), and Georges Henri Rivière (director of ICOM), Durko also mentions Germain Bazin, Michel Florisoone and Charles (Karol) Sterling from the Louvre, French art historian André Chastel, Vladimír Denkstein from the National Museum in Prague, Vladimír Novotný from the National Gallery in Prague, and Gábor Pogány from the Museum of Fine Art in Budapest. There was also a Soviet delegation, whose presence was connected with the return to Poland of museum exhibits which had ended up in the USSR after the war.

distrust'.[314] However, the relaxed atmosphere of the conference soon overcame any initial apprehension on the part of the visitors, and new and lasting friendships were forged among the participants, regardless of the nationality of the individuals concerned. It was, thought Durko, an 'exceptionally beautiful' occasion which would linger long in the memories of all concerned.[315]

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The two dates which bookend this study – 1945 and 1956 – both represent important turning points in the history of the National Museum in Warsaw, and, by extension, Polish museology more generally. 1945 marks the moment of its symbolic resurrection from the ruins of the devastated capital, while 1956 can be seen as the point where the restrictive chains of Stalinist ideology were finally cast off, allowing the museum to engage in transnational exhibitionary discourse which extended beyond the confines of the Soviet bloc. For these reasons, both dates are undoubtedly significant, and yet a close examination of the National Museum's activity during the period they enclose also encourages us to think in terms of continuity as well as change. As we have seen, its development during the inter-war period was closely connected to the nation-building ambitions of Polish elites. Not only did the National Museum provide a space in which to realise the identity-forming potential of national cultural heritage, but – by virtue of the fact that it was consciously modelled on the 'universal survey museum' – it embodied a belief that Polish culture was an intrinsic component of a broader European cultural constellation.

Obviously, the museum's return to life in the second half of the 1940s took place under very different circumstances, and the complexion of the collections had been significantly changed as a result of wartime losses and post-war revindication initiatives. Yet despite all of

[314] Ibid.
[315] Rivière – 'tall, slim, subtle in expression, a deeply cultured individual, direct in manner' – left a particularly strong impression on Durko, who recalled how, following a tour Lorentz gave for the delegates around the palace in Nieborów, the Frenchman sat down at a piano and gave an impromptu concert to those present. Ibid.

this, it was still clearly recognisable as the same institution, which is part of what made the 1945 'Warsaw Accuses' exhibition such a powerful experience. The first post-war display – which invoked a binary opposition between ideas of (Polish/European) 'civilisation' and (German) 'barbarity' – testified to a commitment to reconstruct what had once been, and the museum continued to play an important role in nation-building after 1945. Indeed, even taking into account the differences in the museum's holdings, it is undeniable that the raw materials used in this process remained broadly the same. Just as it had done in the inter-war period, the National Museum presented a vision of Polish culture that rested on widely understood images – such as the works of Jan Matejko – or canonical figures such as Adam Mickiewicz and Frédéric/Fryderyk Chopin.

True, the ideological inflection that coloured Stalinist-era museological narratives represented a clear break from pre-war practice, a theme which we will consider in more detail later on. At the same time, however, it is important to remember that – underneath the hastily applied coat of red paint – the colours of pre-war museology were still visible. After all, even at that very height of Stalinism, the museum continued to function as a 'universal survey' institution. Contemporary politics might reshape the way images and narratives were presented, but the museum's core essence remained the same. Thus in 1954 Kazimierz Michałowski could mention Marx and the 'struggle' to spread culture among the 'broad masses of society' in his introduction to the guide to the museum's Gallery of Ancient Art, while simultaneously referring to a 'thread of tradition' in Polish collecting that stretched back centuries and a 'common scientific character' which connected the museum's collection of antiquities to those of larger institutions around the world.[316] In both its pre-war and post-war incarnations, the National Museum's displays embodied an accumulation of what Foucault termed 'evolutive time', a seriated and linear temporal framework in which 'moments are integrated, one upon another' towards a fixed end point.[317] The conceptual terminus might look different in the different contexts, but the line

[316] Kazimierz Michałowski, *Sztuka Starożytna* (Warsaw, 1955), pp. 5-7.

[317] Michel Foucault, trans. Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 2019), pp. 68-69. Foucault links 'evolutive time' with disciplinary power, and considers it in contexts like pedagogical practice or military training, where the path to knowledge is measured out in stages. However, as Tony Bennett points out, it can also usefully be applied to the 'exhibitionary complex'. See Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, pp. 46, 214.

of travel along a historicised route of ‘progress’ was a familiar one (even if its meanings had been partially reinscribed). Antiquity provided the chronological starting point for this broad cultural panorama, which – like those of the museum’s grander counterparts on the other side of the Iron Curtain – was ultimately organised according to the premises of a system of art-historical classification firmly rooted in Western European modernity.

2

‘Proto-Slavs’, Piasts and *Polskość*: The Silesian Museum in Wrocław and Nation-Building in the ‘Reclaimed Lands’

Two hundred miles to the west of Warsaw – at the very moment that Bolesław Bierut was cutting the ribbon to officially open the National Museum’s ‘Warsaw Accuses’ exhibition – the siege of Breslau was in its terminal stages. Designated a *Festung* (fortress) city by Hitler, which was to be held at all costs, the Lower Silesian regional capital had been encircled by Red Army troops in February 1945. A gruelling three-month battle ensued, with the fanatical *Gauleiter* Karl Hanke – whom the *Führer* had placed in charge of the defence – refusing to yield, even as Soviet artillery and warplanes pulverised Breslau’s historic centre into rubble. Only after Hanke fled the city under the cover of darkness in the defenders’ only remaining aircraft did the German forces finally surrender on 6 May, four days after the fall of Berlin and two days before the signing of the German Instrument of Surrender by Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel.[318] Breslau had paid a heavy price for Hanke’s intransigence; having survived most of the war remarkably intact, it was reduced to a landscape of burning ruins in the conflict’s final months, while further damage was inflicted in the chaos following the capitulation. Moreover, for the embattled remnants of the city’s German population, the end of hostilities heralded the beginning of a process of transformation, which would uproot them from their homes and permanently change the face of the city they once knew.

Three years later, in the summer of 1948, Breslau – which was now a Polish city named Wrocław – found itself under siege once again. This time, however, it was tourists, not Soviet troops, who were arriving en masse, and the mood in the city was much more positive than it had been in 1945. Though the evidence of wartime devastation was inescapable, a special effort had been made to clear up the rubble and debris, while in the Szczytnicki Park (formerly Scheitniger Park) a curious steel spire had been erected, the tip of which towered more than a hundred meters above the city. The cause of all this activity was the grandiose

[318] Thum, *Uprooted*, p. xxix.

Wystawa Ziem Odzyskanych (Exhibition of the Reclaimed Lands), a major propaganda event designed to showcase the reconstruction of Poland's new western provinces under the auspices of its communist rulers.[319] Following its post-war territorial shift westward, the Polish state had acquired vast swathes of formerly German land to the east of the Oder-Neisse line, which, in the propagandistic parlance of the time, were referred to as the *Ziemie Odzyskane* (Reclaimed Lands).[320] The exhibition – a combination of 'propaganda and carnival' which ran from July until October and was seen by approximately 1.5 million people – was an opportunity for the government to show both the Polish population and the wider world that all was well in Poland's new territories.[321]

Outwardly, at least, it seemed to project a vibrant picture of rapid development and technological progress, as reflected in the iconic structure of the modernist ribbed-steel spire. But under the surface, all was not quite as straightforward or cheerful as it seemed. As studies have shown, the process of incorporating the 'Reclaimed Lands' into the Polish state was chaotic and, for many, deeply traumatic.[322] It involved huge movements of people, with the German population expelled and replaced by Polish settlers from central Poland and the eastern borderlands annexed by the Soviet Union. This process was particularly pronounced in Lower Silesia. In Upper Silesia, the persistence of what historians have termed 'national indifference' complicated matters, but in Lower Silesia the predominance of German language and culture resulted in the near-total expulsion of the local population.[323] Yet

[319] For a detailed discussion of the exhibition see J. Tyszkiewicz, *Sto Wielkich Dni Wrocławia: Wystawa Ziem Odzyskanych we Wrocławiu a Propaganda Polityczna Ziem Zachodnich i Północnych w Latach 1945-1948* (Wrocław, 1997).

[320] As Jakub Tyszkiewicz has observed, the exhibition also marked the climax and conclusion of the initial phase of communist propaganda relating to the 'Reclaimed Lands', with integration declared supposedly 'complete'. The term 'Reclaimed Lands' was replaced in official terminology by the less emotive 'western and northern lands', and the Ministry of the Reclaimed Lands – responsible for the development and integration of the new territories – was dissolved in 1949. See ibid., p. 149, and Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 212. Nonetheless, the term 'Reclaimed Lands' continued in popular and semi-official usage for many years to come, and, because of its conceptual significance, will be used over the course of this chapter to refer to the new regions in general.

[321] Ibid., p. 207.

[322] Service, *Germans to Poles*, pp. 266-305; Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a Polish-German Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 258-94; Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, pp. 183-231; Faraldo, 'Emotional communities', pp. 190-92; Thum, *Uprooted*; Halicka, *The Polish Wild West*; Andrew Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945-1970* (Cambridge, 2012).

[323] Tomasz Kamusella provides a compelling analysis of the way that multilingual Upper Silesian populations negotiated their own a-national or non-national identities in spite of the attempts of German, Polish and Czech governments to co-opt them as part of their respective national communities. See Tomasz Kamusella, 'Upper

making these new territories Polish was not as simple as removing Germans and replacing them with Poles. As Gregor Thum has observed, the success of the whole endeavour hinged upon the degree to which the Polish population could come to see the 'Reclaimed Lands' as genuinely Polish.[324] German place-names might have been changed to Polish ones, but to its new inhabitants the region seemed alien and distinctly 'un-Polish'. It was difficult to think of it as 'home', and many settlers struggled to put down roots on this strange terrain; Thum calls this unsettling phenomenon 'the impermanence syndrome'.[325]

How to overcome this problem? Poland's new rulers understood that in order to graft formerly German regions onto the Polish state, it was necessary to show that they were not mere compensation for territorial losses to the east. They thus turned to history – drawing on scholarship which had been generally associated with the pre-war political right – to try and show that the new territories were, in fact, 'ancient Polish lands'. This process involved the construction of a particular narrative of the area's past, which was not only disseminated in schoolrooms and academic publications, but through large-scale public engagement. Historical displays, for example, formed an important part of the 1948 Exhibition of the Reclaimed Lands – according to a promotional flyer, it was, in part, a 'historical document' which showed the centuries-old Polish presence in the western lands – but the exhibition's temporary nature meant it only offered a fleeting opportunity to present a 'usable past'.[326] In the longer term, it would be museums which would publicly make the historical case for the region's 'Polishness', or *polskość*, and in this chapter we will explore how this aim was realised by exploring the cultural and historical narratives presented in post-war Silesia's pre-eminent museal institution, the Silesian Museum in Wrocław, from the late 1940s until the mid-1950s.[327]

Silesia in Modern Central Europe: On the Significance of the Non-National/A-National in the Age of Nations', in James Bjork, Tomasz Kamusella, Tim Wilson and Anna Novikov, eds., *Creating Nationality in Central Europe, 1880-1950: Modernity, Violence and (Be)longing in Upper Silesia* (Abingdon, 2016), pp. 8-52; Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, pp. 14-15.

[324] Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 190.

[325] Ibid., pp. 171-189.

[326] 'Promotional Leaflet for the *Wystawa Ziem Odzyskanych*', author's collection.

[327] The museum was originally called the *Muzeum Państwowe we Wrocławiu* (State Museum in Wrocław), but was renamed the *Muzeum Śląskie we Wrocławiu* (Silesian Museum in Wrocław) at the start of 1950. To avoid confusion, the museum will be referred to throughout the article by the second appellation. In 1970, it was

As in the case of the National Museum in Warsaw discussed in the previous chapter, the Silesian Museum made a significant contribution to the post-war nation-building process. Museums, notes Simon Knell, provide 'the scenography and stage for the performance of myths of nationhood', and in Wrocław – as in Warsaw – new 'productions' were being presented (even if they were often new variations on established themes).[328] Yet while the 'raw materials' used in the museological nation-building were very similar, shifting the analytical lens from the national centre to the regional periphery illuminates key differences in the parallel processes underway in Warsaw and Wrocław. In the National Museum in Warsaw, nation-building meant reviving and adapting a well-established museological tradition in order to harness its identity-forming potential and both define and negotiate what that identity meant in the context of the new reality. In Wrocław, however, there was no pre-war Polish heritage to draw upon, meaning that post-war museological praxis would have to be based upon the reshaping of a German legacy in the light of ideas imported from the territory of the pre-war Second Republic. Moreover, while no one could seriously contend that Warsaw was not a Polish city, the same could not be said for Wrocław, where the uneasy memory of its former identity as Breslau undermined its future path within the framework of the Polish state. It was this pressing concern that shaped the Silesian Museum's activity during the crucial first post-war decade and underpinned the construction of a new museological narrative that stretched from the dawn of prehistory to the modern era. In this chapter, we will explore precisely how that was done.

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On July 11, 1948, amidst much pomp and ceremony, the Silesian Museum in Wrocław opened its doors. Housed within a former local government building, which had been erected in the late nineteenth century in a neo-Renaissance style, the museum was an

elevated to the status of *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu* (National Museum in Wrocław), the name it retains to this day.

[328] Knell, 'National museums', p. 4.

imposing structure located close to the city's historic centre. Only a year beforehand, it had resembled little more than a bomb-damaged husk (though even so, it was in considerably better condition than many other parts of the city). Its opening – which took place ten days before the start of the 'Exhibition of the Reclaimed Lands' – represented the culmination of work which had begun only days after the city's capitulation to the Red Army in May 1945. That month saw the arrival of the first Polish administrators in the war-ravaged city, and the creation of the local Department of Museums and the Protection of Monuments.[329] One of the department's key tasks was to identify and secure what remained of Breslau's museal collections and cultural heritage.[330] Given the scale of wartime devastation and the extent of opportunistic post-war looting, this was no simple matter. Before the war, Breslau's museums had housed some 150,000 artefacts; by the end of 1945 only a little over 3,000 had been recovered.[331]

The situation appeared a little more positive the following year, however, as the work continued, and a gradual order was imposed on the city. In July, the arrival in Wrocław of a special train containing 39 boxes of artefacts from the Ukrainian S.S.R. – most of which came from the collections of pre-war Polish Lwów, which was now Soviet Lviv – significantly boosted the city's cultural holdings, and later that year discussions took place regarding the creation of a multi-departmental museum.[332] In August, the Department of Museums and the Protection of Monuments was wound up, and its responsibilities were taken over by the Ministry of Culture and Art, which, in March 1947, issued instructions for the organisation of the future Silesian Museum.[333] Its director – who remained in post until his death in 1952 – was to be Jerzy Güttler, the former director of the National Gallery in Lwów. According to the ministry's instructions, the new museum was to serve as 'the main museal institution in

[329] Józef Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie w Latach 1945-1956', *Roczniki Sztuki Śląskiej*, Vol. 1 (1959), pp. 177-178.
[330] Hermansdorfer, Heś and Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu*, p. 7.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Ibid., p. 8; Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 184. One of the most significant treasures recovered from Lwów was the famous *Panorama Racławicka*, a huge cycloramic painting depicting a battle from the uprising of Tadeusz Kościuszko. However, due to the fact it showed an anti-Russian revolt, it was deemed ideologically problematic, and was not put on full display until 1985. For a detailed account of the post-war Polish-Ukrainian struggle over Lwów's cultural heritage, see Maciej Matwijów, *Walka o Lwowskie Dobra Kultury w Latach 1945-1948* (Wrocław, 1996).
[333] Hermansdorfer, Heś and Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu*, pp. 8, 10.

Silesia', its primary task being the 'collection, storage, research and dissemination of…material manifestations of Polish and foreign culture in Poland', with a particular emphasis on 'the role of Polish culture in Silesia'.[334] The Silesian Museum thus sought to explicitly foreground the connection between region and nation, and, as we shall see, its displays were intended to act as a kind of cultural 'glue' with which to bind the two together.

To properly understand the purpose and function of the Silesian Museum in the early years of the Polish People's Republic, however, it is first necessary to briefly outline the theoretical arguments which underpinned the integration of the 'Reclaimed Lands' into the Polish state. As Marta Grzechnik has observed, the name given to Poland's new western territories in post-war Polish propaganda was, in a sense, 'a narrative in itself'.[335] For these lands to have been 'reclaimed', they had to have been 'lost' in the first place, which was the crux of the legitimating narrative propagated by the communist state. Grzechnik identifies three inter-related strands of the argument, the most important being the idea that these new territories were, in fact, 'ancient Slavic lands', and had been home to an autochthonous Polish population.[336] The other two components of the argument – namely that the German presence in these lands was the result of invasion and an insidious process of cultural Germanisation, and that the post-war border change was thus a historically justified 'liberation' – could only be understood in relation to this primary narrative.[337]

The case for Silesia's *polskość* and the legitimacy of the Polish-German border was, in large part, formulated on the basis of a particular conception of medieval history which centred around the semi-mythical idea of 'Piast Poland'. It presented the Piasts – a medieval dynasty which, a millennium previously, had controlled a territory which roughly coincided with Poland's post-war frontiers – as the founders of the Polish state. Their dominions were, it was argued, the true 'Polish homelands'.[338] According to one prominent advocate of the

[334] Instructions on the Matter of the Organisation of the State Museum in Wrocław, 28.03.1947, reproduced in Hermansdorfer, Heś and Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu*, pp. 12-13.
[335] Grzechnik, ''Recovering' Territories', p. 688.
[336] Ibid., pp. 674-675.
[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid., p. 675.

Piast idea, it was during the late tenth-century reign of Mieszko I that Poland 'first began to strive for state sovereignty'.[339] This ambition was to be realised in opposition to the nascent polity's western neighbour, as, for Poland, sovereignty was 'an embodiment of the conviction that it was impossible permanently to think of co-operation and good neighbourliness with Germany'.[340] The lands around the Oder and Wisła river basins were to be seen as a coherent geographical and political unit, bound together by 'internal bonds of the highest order'; German expansion to the east was thus an 'intrusion…into the living Piast organism', the first chapter in a bloody story of Polish-German enmity that was to span centuries.[341]

Of course, this picture of a united ethno-nationalist Piast Polish state was by no means an accurate reflection of medieval reality. Contemporary loyalties were structured around dynastic rather than ethnic lines, and the constantly fluctuating territories of the Piast polity can hardly be regarded as a state in the modern sense of the word.[342] In itself, this is hardly surprising; the 'Piast idea' was much more closely connected to the modern context in which it evolved than to the distant medieval past it sought to invoke. It origins can be traced back to the later nineteenth century and the tradition of *myśl zachodnia* (Western Thought), which focused attention on Poland's northern and western frontiers and the thorny issue of Polish-German relations.[343] During the later years of the period of partition, this kind of thinking provided a means with which to challenge policies of Germanisation and respond to the anti-Slavic discourse of German *Ostforschung* (Eastern Research), which supplied scholarly justification for German eastward expansion on the basis of the perceived superiority of German culture and ethnicity.[344] *Myśl zachodnia* emerged in response to this kind of German scholarship, using history to articulate a different vision of central-European

[339] Zygmunt Wojciechowski, 'Poland and Germany – Ten Centuries of Struggle' in Zygmunt Wojciechowski, ed., trans. B. W. A Massey, *Poland's Place in Europe* (Poznań, 1947), p. 96.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid.
[342] Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 224; Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland. Volume 1: The Origins to 1795* (Oxford, 2005), p. 56.
[343] Grzechnik, ''Recovering' Territories', p. 669.
[344] Karin Friedrich, ''Pomorze' or 'Preussen'? Polish Perspectives on Early Modern Prussian History', *German History*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2004), p. 354; Kazimierz Wóycicki, 'The war of the geographers: A political scientist's remarks', *Geographia Polonica*, Vol. 89, No. 2 (2016), pp. 245-246.

political geography and argue for the creation of a westward-facing independent Polish state.[345]

In the inter-war period *myśl zachodnia* developed further, with the Polish state established after the First World War providing a more supportive environment in which to pursue such scholarly endeavours. During these years, the ideology became increasingly strongly associated with the right-wing National Democratic party of Roman Dmowski. The party's stronghold was in Poznań, in the former Prussian partition, and the city's university became a key centre of Western Studies; it was there that the historian Zygmunt Wojciechowski – a friend of Dmowski's and an important advocate of *myśl zachodnia* – plied his trade.[346] For the National Democrats, Germany was the Polish nation's principal foe, and the memory of the Piasts provided powerful means with which to advance a western-focused political agenda.[347] The 'Piast' politics of the National Democrats were also presented as being in stark opposition to the 'Jagiellonian ideas' of Józef Piłsudski, the first leader of the new Polish state and Dmowski's main political rival.[348] Piłsudski and his followers saw Russia as Poland's main enemy, and 'Jagiellonian' thinking - which invoked the memory of the later Jagiellonian dynasty – was connected to the idea of a more easterly-orientated Polish state.[349]

The political situation after the Second World War meant the death of the 'Jagiellonian' idea; for Poland's new rulers, an anti-Russian ideology which promoted eastward expansion was, understandably, unpalatable. The 'Piast' idea, however, was revived more strongly than ever before. By providing historical justification for Poland's new frontiers, and by emphasising an anti-German orientation rather than an anti-Russian one, it possessed great political utility.[350] Despite the postulates of Marxist internationalism, Poland's communists promoted a strongly ethno-nationalist ideology which had formerly been associated with the pre-war

[345] Ibid., pp. 245-246.
[346] Friedrich, ''Pomorze' or 'Preussen'', pp. 354-355; Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 192.
[347] Ibid., pp. 192, 223.
[348] Ibid., p. 223.
[349] Ibid., pp. 193, 223.
[350] Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism*, p. 151.

right. Prominent advocates of 'Western Thought', including Wojciechowski, now put themselves as the service of the state; though they were hardly enthusiastic supporters of the post-war regime, there was enough common ground to support a degree of pragmatic co-operation. In the post-war years, the Piasts became a ubiquitous part of Polish propaganda, particularly in the new western territories. The dynasty's historical connections to Silesia were used to emphasise the region's *polskość*, and their memory was constantly invoked, with newspapers, cinemas, restaurants, hotels and industrial complexes all renamed in their honour.[351] The idea of 'Piast Poland' meant that the new borders were no mere by-product of Great Power *realpolitik*, but a return to the nation's 'natural' state. As one prominent communist functionary put it in a speech in 1952, post-war Poland was home to 'the first fortunate generation since Piast times to be given the opportunity to govern the entire national territory and to decide Polish affairs within the bosom of the entire nation'.[352]

The medieval period was thus integral to the argument for Silesia's *polskość*; the discussion, however, was not confined to the Middle Ages but stretched back into the deeper past. The study of prehistory, which had developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, provided another means with which to advance territorial claims.[353] Since its emergence as a field of study, European prehistory had been closely connected with nationalist politics.[354] By excavating the ancient past, archaeologists sought to trace the 'genesis' of modern nations, prove the cultural 'superiority' or 'inferiority' of particular ethnic groups and justify policies of territorial occupation and expansion.[355] The presence of prehistoric 'Slavic' or 'Germanic' populations on Silesian soil served to legitimate – according to the ethno-nationalist thinking of the time – the rule of their modern Polish or German descendants. Of course, prior to the German defeat in 1918, the absence of a Polish state meant that the idea of Polish rule over Silesia could only exist as a future ambition. Moreover, the more advanced state of German prehistorical studies meant that German scholars led the way in articulating claims about

[351] Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 222.
[352] Cited in ibid., p. 198.
[353] Sarunas Milisauskas, 'Historical Observations on European Archaeology', in Sarunas Milisauskas, ed., *European Prehistory* (New York, 2011), pp. 7,10; Margarita Díaz-Andreu, 'Guest Editor's Introduction: Nationalism and Archaeology', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 7, No.4 (2001), pp. 433-434.
[354] Ibid., pp. 435-438.
[355] Milisauskas, 'Historical Observations', p. 10.

Silesia's prehistory.[356] Indeed, it was a German prehistorian, Gustaf Kossinna, who developed the methodology which underpinned these endeavours. Kossinna – an ardent nationalist who described prehistory as a 'pre-eminently national discipline' – pioneered an approach he termed *Siedlungsarchäologie* (settlement archaeology), which argued for a direct connection between excavated material culture and specific ethnic groups.[357]

This method could be used to articulate bold territorial claims, depending on how one interpreted the archaeological record. For Kossinna and his followers, prehistoric finds provided conclusive proof of the 'fact' that the lands between the Oder and the Wisła were 'age-old Germanic homesoil', but such assertions did not pass unchallenged.[358] A lively Polish-German discussion had been underway since the later nineteenth century, in which Polish scholars sought to use archaeology to refute Kossinna's assertions.[359] In the aftermath of the First World War, the tone of the debate became considerably more heated.[360] On the one hand, the German defeat and resulting loss of territory to the newly established Polish state gave German prehistoric studies – which provided a means to challenge and undermine new political geographies – greater contemporary significance.[361] On the other, the creation of a Polish state and the subsequent development of Polish scientific institutions invigorated the work of Polish prehistorians.[362] Led by the eminent archaeologist Józef Kostrzewski (who had earlier studied under Kossinna), Polish academics inverted and modified Kossinna's reasoning to argue that, far from being an ancient Germanic land, the territories between the Oder and the Wisła had in fact been home to an autochthonous Slavic population.[363] They saw in the archaeological record evidence for cultural continuity

[356] Díaz-Andreu, 'Guest Editor's Introduction', p. 435; Ingo Wiwjorra, 'German archaeology and its relation to nationalism and racism', in Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion, eds, *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe* (London, 1996), pp. 169-175.
[357] Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London, 1997), p. 2; Milisauskas, 'Historical Observations', pp. 9-10.
[358] Ulrike Sommer, 'Archaeology and nationalism', in Gabriel Moshenska, ed, *Key Concepts in Public Archaeology* (London, 2017), p. 180.
[359] Włodzimierz Rączkowski, 'Drang nach Westen?: Polish archaeology and national identity', in Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion, eds, *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe* (London, 1996), pp. 198-200.
[360] Ibid., p. 203.
[361] Wiwjorra, 'German Archaeology', pp. 175-176.
[362] Rączkowski, 'Drang nach Westen?', p. 203.
[363] Ibid.

from the Bronze Age (when, it was argued, the region was inhabited by the 'proto-Slavic' Lusitanian people) to the early medieval period.[364]

Throughout the inter-war years the Polish-German debate on prehistory continued to intensify, taking on an ever-more overt political hue as scholars on both sides engaged in stormy polemical exchanges.[365] These were not confined to the rarefied world of academia, but also played out in the popular sphere, and Kostrzewski and his German rivals published articles in newspapers and magazines in order to bring their messages to a wider audience.[366] On both sides of the German-Polish border, the propagandistic utility of prehistory served to raise its profile. In Germany, the rise of the Nazis fuelled the pseudo-scientific exploitation of prehistory in order to 'prove' the superiority of the Germanic race, whilst in Poland the discovery of the remarkably well preserved Iron Age site at Biskupin – which was effectively promoted by Kostrzewski and others as a counterargument to German claims about the primitive nature of Slavic prehistory – captured the popular imagination.[367] Unfortunately, the outbreak of war in 1939 brought this promising excavation – and, indeed, all work in the field of Polish prehistory – to an abrupt halt.

The years of occupation had a devastating effect on the discipline – around one quarter of Polish archaeologists were killed during the war and occupation – but, following the Nazi defeat, the difficult task of rebuilding could begin.[368] Though the political situation was different, with regards to Silesia Polish prehistorical studies continued along the path laid out before the war, in the sense that the overriding goal was to demonstrate the *polskość* of the region's deep past and the high level of ancient Slavic culture.[369] If anything, in the post-war

[364] Ibid., p. 204.
[365] Ibid., pp. 205-206.
[366] Ibid., p. 205.
[367] Ibid., pp. 207-208; Bettina Arnold, 'The Past as Propaganda', *Archaeology*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (1992), pp. 30-37; J. Kostrzewski, 'Biskupin', *The Scientific American*, Vol. 160, No. 3 (1939), pp. 154-156.
[368] Sarunas Milisauskas, 'Historical Observations on Archaeology in the Polish People's Republic, 1945–1989', in Ludomir R. Lozny, ed., *Archaeology of the Communist Era: A Political History of Archaeology of the 20th Century* (Cham, 2017), pp. 124-125.
[369] Ibid., p.126; Anne Kluger, 'Between pottery and politics? 'Slavic archaeology' in communist Poland and East Germany and its interrelations with politics and ideology. A biographical-comparative approach', *Studia Historiae Scientiarum*, Vol. 19 (2020), pp. 297-8; Rączkowski, 'Drang nach Westen?', pp. 209-211.

environment, this endeavour was of even greater import. Previously, prehistory had been used to make territorial claims; now, with the German-Polish border moved to the west, it needed to legitimate territorial changes that were already a *fait accompli*. The immediate post-war years saw numerous archaeological digs in the 'Reclaimed Lands'.[370] Rudolf Jamka – head of archaeology at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow – highlighted the importance of these projects in comments he made about digs planned in Opole (formerly German Oppeln) in 1947. 'The political significance of these excavations', Jamka emphasised, lay in 'irrefutably proving the uniquely old Polish settlement of the reclaimed Silesian territories', and thus 'stressing even more strongly [Polish] rights to these lands'.[371]

Museums provided ideal spaces in which to publicly present this kind of evidence, and the significance attached to prehistory in the 'Reclaimed Lands' is demonstrated by the fact that a Prehistory Museum was established in Wrocław soon after the end of the war.[372] Though the museum itself proved short-lived, it was not due to any lack of interest in prehistoric matters. Following the decision to create a State Museum in Wrocław, the Prehistory Museum was incorporated into the new institution on 1 January 1948 as the Department of Prehistory, one of three departments operational by the time the Silesian Museum opened to the public in July 1948.[373] Its collections reflected the fruits of over a century of collecting – accession dates went as far back as 1842 – and were made up in large part of artefacts accumulated and exhibited in pre-war Breslau.[374] While a sizable part of Breslau's pre-war museal inventories had been lost during the Soviet assault on the city in 1945, a considerable number of artefacts survived.[375] These objects – which, through the efforts of Jamka (who became the department's first director) and his colleagues, were salvaged after the city's surrender – formed the core of the department's collections.[376] The artefacts were

[370] Ibid., p. 210.
[371] Cited in Milisauskas, 'Historical Observations on Archaeology in the Polish People's Republic', p. 126.
[372] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 193.
[373] Ibid., p. 186.
[374] Ibid., p. 193; Report on the work of the Archaeological Department in 1951, AMNWr III/63, p. 1.
[375] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 193.
[376] Ibid., p. 193.

supplemented by objects uncovered during post-war archaeological digs on Silesian soil, in which the department played an active role.[377]

The main point of contact between the general public and the museum's Department of Prehistory (which, from 1950 onwards, was known as the Department of Archaeology) was its permanent exhibition 'The Prehistory of Silesia'. According to promotional material released around the time of the museum's opening, the exhibition's purpose was to show that Silesia was 'Polish soil' by documenting '[the fact] that Silesian land had been inhabited by Slavs since time immemorial'.[378] The initial exhibition – which documented Silesia's *polskość* by presenting over a thousand archaeological artefacts, alongside a plethora of accompanying maps, photographs and models – was ready in time for the museum's opening in July 1948.[379] Although it was reorganised in 1951 and subsequently revised on at least two occasions, the exhibition (which, apart from a short break between August 1954 and May 1955, ran until 1959) retained its general character, layout and narrative throughout its lifespan.[380] Spread out over fourteen rooms across the museum's first floor, it followed a broad chronological framework, tracing the story of Silesian prehistory from the Stone Age through to the early medieval period.[381]

Adopting such a vast temporal scope (the earliest part considered the evolution of *Homo sapiens*) allowed the exhibition to challenge earlier German arguments about the region's prehistory.[382] Following in the footsteps of Kossinna, scholars such as Bolko Freiherr von Richthofen had argued that Slavs had 'trickled' into Silesia in the middle of the first millennium; according to the German archaeologist Carl Schuchhardt they had 'crept into Eastern Germany with a completely foreign culture'.[383] The museum's prehistory exhibition, however, presented a very different picture. 'Silesia', the exhibition's 1954 guidebook

[377] Ibid., p. 196.
[378] Promotional material for Polish Radio, AMNWr II/1, p. 10.
[379] Report on the activity of the State Museum in Wrocław, 1 April 1948-31 September 1948, AMNWr II/6, pp. 9-12; Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 186.
[380] Ibid., p. 194; Hermansdorfer, Heś and Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu*, p. 17.
[381] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 194.
[382] Report on the activity of the State Museum in Wrocław, 1 April 1948-31 September 1948, AMNWr II/6, p. 9.
[383] Cited in Wiwjorra, 'German Archaeology', p. 176.

declared, was a 'prehistoric Slavic land', and the exhibition's narrative stressed the continuous presence of an autochthonous Slavic population on Silesian soil.[384] The idea of the Lusitanian people as 'proto-Slavs' – which had been developed in the inter-war Poland by scholars like Kostrzewski – was an important part of this argument.[385] On the basis of evidence provided by burial culture, the exhibition informed visitors of a 'proto-Slavic' presence in Silesia stretching back to the Bronze Age.[386] Indeed, it further suggested that, even at this distant point in the past, these 'proto-Slavs' were by no means new to the region.[387] Though changing methods of inhumation around the period 1300-1100 B.C.E. were cited as proof of a 'proto-Slavic' Lusitanian population, certain artefacts, such as ceramic goods, tools and weapons, were said to reflect stylistic – and, by extension, ethnic – continuity with earlier periods.[388]

By emphasising the 'proto-Slavic' population of prehistoric Silesia, the exhibition also sought to highlight connections between the 'Reclaimed Lands' and the territories to the east which had been part of the pre-war Polish state. According to the exhibition guidebook – which spoke of the historical ties which bound 'the land between the Oder and the Wisła in one whole' – the artefacts on display 'proclaimed [Silesia's] cultural unity with the rest of [the] Polish lands'.[389] Throughout the exhibition, Silesian prehistory was framed within a Polish context. For example, Silesia was presented as one of the first 'parts of Poland [to be] populated', while at the end of the Bronze Age Silesia's population increased 'as in the rest of Poland'.[390] Later on, Scythian artefacts and Roman imports appeared in Silesia and 'the other parts of Poland'.[391] The idea of 'Poland' was used to help interpret and contextualise a distant (and, of course, pre-national) past, with Silesia a constituent part of a coherent Polish

[384] Wanda Sarnowska, *Śląsk Starożytny i Wczesnośredniowieczny – Przewodnik po Wystawie Archeologicznej Muzeum Śląskiego we Wrocławiu* (Wrocław, 1954), p. 3.
[385] Though Kostrzewski was not the first to articulate this concept; see Maciej Kaczmarek and Danuta Minta-Tworzowska, 'The Józef Kostrzewski Poznań School of Archaeology. Several reflections on the illuminations and shadows of prehistory studies in respect to the Bronze and Early Iron Ages', in Maciej Kaczmarek, ed., *Folia Praehistorica Posnaniensia Tom XVII* (Poznań, 2012), pp. 35-37.
[386] Report on the activity of the State Museum in Wrocław, 1 April 1948-31 September 1948, AMNWr II/6, p. 10; Sarnowska, *Śląsk Starożytny*, pp. 36-38.
[387] Ibid., p. 36.
[388] Ibid.
[389] Ibid., p. 3.
[390] Ibid., pp. 11, 40.
[391] Ibid., pp. 52, 58.

whole. According to the guidebook, as early as the Bronze Age 'Poland' – of which Silesia was 'the south-westernmost area' – was developing closer relations with 'other countries'.[392] At times, the contemporary Polish nation-state was actually even directly invoked. Celtic influences, for instance, reached 'the terrain of present-day Poland' around the fourth century B.C.E., while trade routes carried flint axes 'across the whole' of the 'present-day' nation.[393]

Material connections between Silesia and the rest of Poland were further underlined by the exhibition's use of the famous archaeological site at Biskupin to illustrate the layout of a typical Lusitanian settlement. The display featured a replica model of the settlement, which had been discovered 1933 and was excavated extensively in the years before and after the Second World War.[394] Located in north-eastern Wielkopolska, Biskupin could not, of course, be called 'Silesian', and indeed, the exhibition guidebook acknowledged as much. However, it maintained that its inclusion in the display was entirely appropriate given that 'the same proto-Slavic people' who inhabited the settlement also lived in Silesia.[395] Yet Biskupin was no ordinary archaeological site. Even before the Second World War it had acquired considerable propagandistic significance, playing an important role in shaping national consciousness during the later years of the Second Polish Republic.[396] After the war, this process continued – and, in the light of further excavations, accelerated – making Biskupin 'the only archaeological site to have permanently entered Polish culture of the twentieth century'.[397] Biskupin captured the Polish popular imagination, principally due to the prevailing belief that the settlement was 'proto-Slavic' in nature.[398] The incorporation of Biskupin into a narrative about Silesian prehistory thus helped to Polonise the region's ancient past.

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[392] Ibid., p. 41.
[393] Ibid., pp. 26, 54.
[394] Ibid., p. 42.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Rączkowski, 'Drang nach Westen?', pp. 207-208; Kamil Adamczak, Anna Grossman and Wojciech Piotrowski, 'The 75th Anniversary of the Biskupin Excavations and the Conference 'Biskupin in the Past, Today and Tomorrow', Biskupin, 18–19 June 2009', *Archaeologia Polona*, Vol. 50 (2012 – not published until 2019), p. 208.
[397] Ibid., p. 210; Rączkowski, 'Drang nach Westen?', p. 208.
[398] Wojciech Piotrowski, 'The importance of the Biskupin wet site for twentieth century Polish archaeology', in Kathryn Bernick, ed., *Hidden Dimensions: The Cultural Significance of Wetland Archaeology* (Vancouver, 1998), p. 99.

Though the main exhibition constituted the most obvious and important way in which the museum sought to bring Silesian prehistory to the general public, it was further supplemented by shorter-term temporary and travelling exhibitions. With regards to prehistoric topics, the latter were of somewhat greater significance than the former. Between 1949 and 1956 the museum presented over eighty temporary exhibitions; only two – 'Prehistoric Art' (1951) and 'The Most Recent Excavations in Silesia (1955) – could be said to focus specifically on prehistory and archaeology.[399] The 1955 exhibition – which had originally been planned for the previous year, to coincide with the tenth anniversary of People's Poland – was the more noteworthy of the two.[400] According to preliminary plans, the exhibition would have 'major political significance because of the revisionist tendency of fascist German science'.[401] It was intended to emphasise Silesia's *polskość* 'in light of archaeological studies' and highlight links between excavations in Silesia and those elsewhere in Poland, thus echoing main exhibition's core narrative.[402] Moreover, by placing a spotlight on post-war archaeology, the exhibition provided an opportunity to showcase scientific achievement in People's Poland, showing genuinely 'new' artefacts with no prior connection to pre-war German museology.[403]

More significant, however, at least with regards to prehistory and archaeology, were the museum's travelling exhibitions. Pioneered by the National Museum in Warsaw, which organised its first travelling exhibition in 1947, this kind of peripatetic display became an important weapon in the post-war museological arsenal.[404] As part of the 'great offensive' which aimed at 'building the socialist culture of People's Poland', they visited smaller towns and settlements for a few days at a time in order to 'bring [exhibitions] to a mass

[399] 15th Anniversary of the Silesian Museum, 1948-1962, AMNWr III/47, pp. 17-20.
[400] Program of Exhibitions and Publications in Connection with the PRL's 10th Anniversary Celebrations, AMNWr III/60, pp. 2-3.
[401] Ibid., p. 2.
[402] Ibid., p. 3.
[403] Adam Chudzicki, 'Wystawa pt. Najnowsze Wykopaliska na Śląsku', *Wiadomości Archeologiczne*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1956), pp. 121-122.
[404] Stanisław Lorentz, *Muzea i Zbiory w Polsce, 1945-1955* (Warsaw, 1956), p. 97.

audience'.[405] The Silesian Museum was quick to create its own travelling exhibitions; its first – entitled 'Silesia in the Prehistory of Poland' – was organised in 1949, the second year of the museum's existence. Designed to fit inside a specially adapted museum vehicle, and made up of a variety of maps, models and images accompanied by over a hundred explanatory panels, the exhibition spent forty-five days touring the northern part of Lower Silesia over the course of 1949.[406] Nearly 22,000 locals took this 'opportunity to gain knowledge of the prehistory of their land', the majority of whom, according to an internal report, were children or youths, who formed an important part of the museum's target audience.[407]

Similar exhibitions continued to run annually throughout the 1950s, and the significance attached to prehistory and archaeology is reflected in the fact that all four travelling exhibitions organised by the museum between 1949 and 1956 concentrated on these topics. The title of the first of these – the aforementioned 'Silesia in the Prehistory of Poland' – clearly echoes the permanent exhibition's attempts to demonstrate Silesia's *polskość* and to connect the region with the rest of the nation. These themes were further emphasised by various lectures delivered by museum staff on topics such as 'Proto-Slavic Culture in Silesia' or 'The Landscape of Poland in the Ice Age', the latter once again projecting the idea of the nation back into the distant past.[408] However, after the first exhibition – which was overhauled in 1951, and became part of a permanent display in Bolesławiec the following year – the emphasis shifted towards the practice of archaeology as a discipline.[409] The next three travelling exhibitions – entitled 'How to Protect Archaeological Monuments' (1952-4), 'Ten Years of Excavations in Silesia' (1955) and 'Excavations in Silesia' (1956-8) – all showed contemporary developments in post-war Silesian archaeology.[410] Alongside related talks with titles like 'We Protect Archaeological Monuments' (broadcast on Polish Radio in July 1951),

[405] Zdzisław Rajewski, 'Organizacja Wystaw Objazdowych Systemem Sztafetowym', *Muzealnictwo*, Vol. 1-2 (1952), p. 37.
[406] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', pp. 194-195.
[407] Ibid., p. 195; The State Museum in Wrocław in 1949, AMNWr II/6, p. 30.
[408] Report on the Activity of the State Museum in Wrocław for the Period from January 1 to March 31, 1949, AMNWr II/6, p. 26.
[409] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 195.
[410] 15th Anniversary of the Silesian Museum, 1948-1962, AMNWr III/47, p. 16.

they helped to promote the achievements and expertise of the museum's staff.[411] With the state's backing they served as both guides and guardians, simultaneously illuminating and protecting the ancient past.

As well as providing a showcase for scientific accomplishment, a broader emphasis on archaeology helped to cultivate a grander, epoch-spanning historical narrative which transcended the prehistoric past. As we have seen in the earlier discussion on Western Thought', it was the medieval period – and, above all, the idea of 'Piast Poland' – which provided the core argument for Silesia's *polskość*. Ancient 'proto-Slavs' were all well and good, but considered in prehistoric isolation they would remain somewhat distant and less relatable. Situating them within a *durée plus longue* which reached up to the Middle Ages, however, helped to reinforce the notion of Silesia's *polskość*. Doing so made it possible to draw a direct line from Lusitanian 'proto-Slavs' to the polity of the early Piasts, lending extra weight to the argument for the continuous presence of an autochthonous Slavic population. In this sense, we can see how the Silesian Museum helped embody what Tony Bennett has called 'pasts beyond memories', a term used to denote awareness of a deeper sense historical time that was facilitated by the emergence of archaeology and prehistory in the middle of the nineteenth century.[412] These distant pasts were – so to speak – 'nationalised', and incorporated as foundational layers in an accumulatory framework that tied them to a broader story, which in turn served to justify and sustain present reality.

Indeed, this line of reasoning is clearly reflected in the temporal parameters of the Department of Archaeology's permanent exhibition. Though it was called 'The Prehistory of Silesia', the exhibition's chronology reached into the early Middle Ages; its final four rooms covered the period from the ninth to the eleventh century C.E.[413] At the conclusion of the exhibition, visitors were presented with a map of Poland in the later tenth century.[414] It was based on the contemporary description of the lands ruled over by Mieszko I – the Piast

[411] Report on the Activity of the Department of Archaeology in 1951, AMNWr III/63, p. 4.
[412] Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge*, pp. 135-157.
[413] Sarnowska, *Śląsk Starożytny*, pp. 66-79.
[414] Ibid., p. 79.

founder of the Duchy of Poland – contained within the famous document known as *Dagome iudex*.[415] Cartographical depictions of Mieszko's territories bore more than a passing resemblance to the frontiers of the post-war Polish state. Here, one could see the outline of something that was recognisably Poland; a fitting conclusion to the epic historical journey which the exhibition took its visitors on. As the guidebook put it, 'archaeological studies show, as we can trace [through] the artefacts in the Silesian Museum, an uninterrupted continuity in socio-economic, cultural and ethnic development in Silesia from the Bronze Age to the early medieval period, when, as well as archaeological artefacts, written sources testify to the Polishness of the Silesian tribes'.[416] According to the exhibition's narrative, the Polish state was formed through the unification of smaller tribal groupings; Silesia was thus 'one of the oldest constituent parts of the Polish state'.[417]

This nascent Polish state was, of course, the Poland of the Piasts, which was well represented elsewhere in the museum too. Though the narrative of 'The Prehistory of Poland' concluded in the eleventh century, other displays took visitors further into medieval Silesia. Initially this responsibility fell to the Department of Medieval Art, the second of three departments operational by the time the museum opened in July 1948. Its first permanent exhibition, 'Medieval Art', which ran until 1964, was ready in time for the museum's opening.[418] Made up of surviving artefacts from the museal collections of pre-war Breslau, alongside other objects salvaged from ruined churches and deposits from the Archdiocesan Museum, it comprised seventy-four works of art dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries.[419] Two-thirds of these were sculptures, the remainder a mixture of paintings and triptychs.[420] Like the archaeological exhibition, it was laid out along chronological lines, though being an art exhibition the emphasis was placed on the objects themselves rather

[415] Ibid.; Though it is regarded as one of the most important written sources relating to the early Polish polity, the original document does not survive. Our knowledge of it is based on a (rather confused) summary written in the late eleventh century; see Krystyna Łukasiewicz, ''Dagome Iudex' and the First Conflict over Succession in Poland', *The Polish Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 410-411.
[416] Sarnowska, *Śląsk Starożytny*, p. 79.
[417] Ibid., pp. 78-79.
[418] Hermansdorfer, Heś and Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu*, p. 18.
[419] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 197.
[420] Ibid.

than on the construction of a historical narrative.[421] Nonetheless, it still transmitted the idea of Silesia's *polskość*, primarily through its two star exhibits: the tombs of the Silesian Piast dukes Henry II (d. 1241) and Henry IV (d. 1290). The tombs, which dated from the fourteenth century, took pride of place within the exhibition, and, because the former occupants of both tombs had also served as Dukes of Cracow, they further served to symbolically bind Silesia to the rest of Poland.[422] According to a 1953 article in the Warsaw magazine *Świat* entitled 'The Silesian Museum – Museum of Polishness', both dukes thought on a national scale and held hopes of 'uniting all the [Polish] lands under one crown'.[423]

As well as the main exhibition of medieval art, there were numerous smaller (and mostly temporary) displays which dealt with the issue of Silesia's *polskość* in a medieval context. Exhibitions such as 'Medieval Wrocław' (1952-late 1950s), 'Wrocław – Residence of the Piasts' (1952), 'The Polishness of Silesia in Documents' (1953) and 'Monuments and Documents Speak of the Polishness of Silesia' (1954) all articulated the narrative in a more explicit manner, with the latter exhibition accompanied by a cycle of lectures on the same topic.[424] Furthermore, the first three of the exhibitions mentioned above were not located within the museum itself but within the restored Old Town Hall, which had opened in 1948 and became a satellite branch of the main museum at the start of 1951.[425] Though many parts of the building were post-medieval (and even the medieval parts were largely post-Piast), the impressive structure was an iconic part of the skyline of pre-war Breslau and, in its restored form, post-war Wrocław. It was, in a manner of speaking, the largest and most spectacular medieval artefact in the museum's collections, and would have had an imposing effect on its visitors. As the 1951 guidebook put it, Wrocław was a city that, 'like Gdańsk, was once ours, and today is once again ours'; on leaving its 'ancient walls', visitors would feel their consciousness stirred by a greater awareness of 'who raised that splendid building, and whom it served'.[426]

[421] Ibid.
[422] Promotional material for Polish Radio, AMNW II/1, p. 10.
[423] 'The Silesian Museum – Museum of Polishness', *Świat*, May 1953, AAN 366 5/14.
[424] Hermansdorfer, Heś and Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu*, pp. 40, 51, 55.
[425] Ibid., p. 32.
[426] Józef Piątek and Wojciech Gluziński, *Stary Ratusz we Wrocławiu – Przewodnik*, Second Edition (Wrocław, 1951), p. 29.

Yet as useful and informative as these exhibitions were, they remained somewhat limited in scope; what was still lacking was a continuous and coherent narrative that did for the years post-1000 C.E. what 'The Prehistory of Silesia' did for the period before.[427] Moreover, the post-medieval period remained largely untouched, an issue which was not confined to museology. The first post-war history of Wrocław – whose author professed his hope that his work would help repair 'the broken thread of tradition' that connected 'Polish society and Silesian Wrocław – broke off in 1526, the beginning of the period of Habsburg rule.[428] Likewise the 1953 publication *Szkice z Dziejów Śląska* (Sketches from the History of Silesia) was criticised by a contemporary Polish reviewer for its neglect of post-medieval topics.[429] The problem lay in the fact that, for the period after the end of Piast rule in Silesia, it became harder and harder to articulate a convincing argument for Silesia's continued *polskość*; Karol Maleczyński ended his 1948 history of Wrocław in 1526 by simply stating that the city thus entered 'a 420-year period of German rule'.[430]

In 1954, however, a new exhibition entitled 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' opened at the Silesian Museum in Wrocław. Created by the museum's Department of History (established in 1950) the new display sought to fill these historiographical gaps by presenting for the first time an overarching museal narrative which spanned the period from the tenth to the twentieth centuries.[431] Its title and temporal scope echoed the contemporary output of the *Instytut Zachodni* (Western Institute) – such as Zygmunt Wojciechowski's *Poland and Germany – Ten Centuries of Struggle* – and the theme of Silesia's embattled *polskość*, besieged by the encroachment of German colonisation, ran throughout the exhibition.[432] It was also redolent of the historical component of the 1948 'Exhibition of the Reclaimed Lands', which had

[427] Vasco Kretschmann, 'The triple reinvention of Wrocław in its twentieth century exhibitions', in Dorian Singh and Marta Dziurosz, eds, *Post-1945 Poland: Modernities, Transformations and Evolving Identities* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 115-116.
[428] Ibid., p. 116; Karol Maleczyński, *Dzieje Wrocławia: Do roku 1526* (Katowice; Wrocław, 1948), p. 8.
[429] Kazimierz Piwarski, 'Szkice z Dziejów Śląska' (review), *Sobótka: Organ Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Miłośników Historii*, Vol. 10, No. 1-2 (1955), pp. 262-264.
[430] Maleczyński, *Dzieje Wrocławia*, p. 284.
[431] Kretschmann, 'The triple reinvention of Wrocław', p. 116.
[432] Wojciechowski, 'Poland and Germany – Ten Centuries of Struggle', pp. 85-316. The *Instytut Zachodni* was an important centre for the propagation of 'Western Thought'.

strongly emphasised the idea of a millennium of Polish-German conflict.[433] Initially, it was intended that the display would be divided into five separate sections: 'Feudal Silesia within the Polish State' (up to 1348); 'Silesia under Foreign Feudal Rule' (up to 1764); 'The Rise of Capitalist Exploitation' (up to 1850); 'In the Chains of Capitalism' (up to 1945) and 'Liberation and the Building of the Framework of Socialism' (first post-war decade).[434] This last section, however, was not included in the completed exhibition, appearing instead as a temporary exhibition in 1955-1956 as part of the celebrations for the tenth anniversary of the liberation of the western lands.[435]

At the time of its opening, 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' was by far the most lucid and comprehensive museal expression of Silesia's *polskość*. According to one of its architects, the exhibition was intended to 'foreground the following issues: the eternal Polishness of the Silesian land, the enormous contribution of the Polish element to its economic and cultural development and the struggle of the Silesian people for national and social liberation'.[436] Moreover, it was deemed particularly necessary due to the fact that Poland's 'undeniable rights' to Silesia were being 'undermined by enemy propaganda'.[437] Problems in integrating and governing the new Western Territories were, in large part, related to the difficulty new settlers had in putting down roots on territory which was, to all intents and purposes, 'alien'.[438] This is what Gregor Thum has described as 'the impermanence syndrome' (see p. 80) and indeed, it provided a rich source of material for West German propaganda.[439] The exhibition thus sought to help mitigate the symptoms of this alarming 'syndrome' and refute the claims of anti-communist propaganda.

Lavishly illustrated and furnished with over 740 exhibits – including coins, seals, weapons and models depicting agricultural and industrial practices – the exhibition occupied ten

[433] Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse, *Microcosm: Portrait of a Central European City* (London, 2002), p. 447.
[434] History of Silesia – Exhibition Outline, AAN 366 5/26, p. 1.
[435] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 202.
[436]'Information on the Exhibition 'Ten Centuries of Silesia', AMNWr III/66, p. 1.
[437] Ibid.
[438] Thum, *Uprooted*, pp. 171-189.
[439] Ibid., p. 189.

rooms in the museum's main building.[440] By beginning its narrative in the tenth century, it neatly dovetailed with 'The Prehistory of Silesia' exhibition; the newer exhibition began with the same map of late tenth-century Poland with which the older one concluded, once again invoking the famous *Dagome iudex* document (see p. 96 n. 414).[441] The ideological thrust of 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' was, however, much more overtly expressed when compared with 'The Prehistory of Silesia'. Near the map of tenth-century Polish territory, for example, visitors could read a quote from the East German journal *Einheit* which argued for the historical legitimacy of the post-war Polish-German frontier. The accompanying inscription proclaimed that 'a contemporary progressive German historian states that Poland's western territories are ancient Polish lands'.[442] The exhibition's job was to prove this; to connect 'dry facts and historical documents' with the 'realities' of the past in order to help visitors 'more easily understand present day Silesia'.[443]

For the initial section of the exhibition, which dealt with the Piast period and thus picked up at the point where 'The Prehistory of Silesia' finished, constructing a narrative of Silesia's *polskość* was a relatively straightforward matter. The pervasive presence of the Piasts within post-war Propaganda – they were, in Gregor Thum's words, 'the state myth of the People's Republic of Poland' – meant that they penetrated the popular consciousness and acquired a degree of nationalist 'authenticity'.[444] The exhibition built on this foundation, making effective use of written sources in order to strengthen the idea of the region's *polskość*. The ethnicity of Silesia's early-thirteenth century inhabitants was, for example, evinced from medieval documents. 'Old documents preserve for us the names of Polish peasants', one of the display panels read, while another advertised the fact that 'the oldest sentence written in Polish comes from Silesia'.[445] The latter referred to the 'Book of Henryków', written in a Cistercian abbey in Lower Silesia, and the inscription was accompanied by a photo-

[440] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 202.
[441] History of Silesia – Exhibition Outline, AAN 366 5/26, p. 2.
[442] Ibid., p. 2.
[443] Information on the Exhibition 'Ten Centuries of Silesia', AMNWr III/66, p. 2.
[444] Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 223; Grzechnik, ''Recovering' Territories'' pp. 688-689.
[445] History of Silesia – Exhibition Outline, AAN 366 5/26, p. 3.

reproduction of the original thirteenth-century text containing the relevant sentence.[446] Economic ties between Silesia and the rest of Poland were also highlighted. Coins minted by the Silesian Piasts 'played the role of a nationwide Polish currency', serving as 'further proof of the Polishness of Silesia', whilst maps displayed trade routes which connected Silesia with Poland 'until the middle of the fourteenth century'.[447]

It was at this point, however, that the presentation of a continuous narrative of Silesia's *polskość* became a little more challenging. Piast rule came to an end in the fourteenth century – according to the exhibition the region had 'fallen from Poland' – but it still had to be presented as 'Polish'.[448] Henceforth, then, the task would be to sustain a narrative of *polskość* over the subsequent centuries of Bohemian, Habsburg and Prussian rule, in order to set the stage for Silesia's 'return to the motherland' after the Second World War. Following the contours of post-war Polish historiography, the emphasis thus moved away from dynastic history and fell more strongly on the cultural and economic connections, which, it was argued, continued to tie Silesia to the rest of Poland.[449] Numerous documents in Polish were produced to attest to the national identity of early modern Silesian citizens – and, in particular, peasants, who were said to have 'retained their *polskość* through the centuries' – while Silesian trade 'testified to the lively economic connections with the rest of the Polish lands'.[450] Art and architecture in the region also bore apparent hallmarks of Polish culture, and, despite the repressive actions of Silesia's foreign rulers, the region's deep-rooted *polskość* endured.[451] Advancing onward through the centuries, the narrative encompassed the turbulent events of 1848 and the Silesian Uprisings of 1919-21, concluding with Silesia's 'liberation' in 1945.[452]

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[446] Ibid.; The *Instytut Zachodni* published a Polish translation of the 'Book of Henryków', alongside a version of the original Latin text, in 1949, see Roman Grodecki, trans., *Księga Henrykowska: Biblioteka Tekstów Historycznych T. II* (Poznan; Wroclaw, 1949)
[447] History of Silesia – Exhibition Outline, AAN 366 5/26, pp. 7, 11.
[448] Ibid., p. 12.
[449] Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 227.
[450] History of Silesia – Exhibition Outline, AAN 366 5/26, pp. 14, 22, 29-30, 43, 45-46.
[451] Ibid., pp. 30-31.
[452] Information on the Exhibition 'Ten Centuries of Silesia', AMNWr III/66, pp. 6-8.

Of course, this narrative was deeply problematic, making bold (and ahistorical) claims about ethnicity and identity on the basis of a relatively meagre selection of sources. Moreover, as Vasco Kretschmann has noted, the exhibition blurred the lines between Upper and Lower Silesia, articulating instead a broader pan-Silesian narrative.[453] This was no accident; compared with Lower Silesia, Upper Silesia had more obvious linguistic and cultural connections to the rest of Poland, and was less affected by post-1945 transfers of population.[454] Incorporating Upper Silesian sources into the narrative made it much easier to talk about *polskość*, particularly in the later part of the display. The Silesian Uprisings, for example, took place in Upper Silesia, but their stirring history (which, at the time, was well within living memory) fitted neatly into the centuries-old story of Polish-German antagonism. The same went for the Second World War, the outbreak of which in 1939 was described as 'the final link in the chain of misery and suffering of the Silesian people'.[455] This clearly ignored the fact that, in 1939, Lower Silesia and a sizable portion of Upper Silesia lay within the frontiers of Nazi Germany; during the first weeks of the war, German aircraft had taken off from Lower Silesian airfields on their way to bomb Warsaw. It was only in the last months of the war, with the advance of the Red Army, that wartime devastation affected Silesia as a whole.

Nonetheless, these inconvenient details were not of interest to the exhibition's creators; what was important was the museal narrative of a 'usable past' which provided a clear and easily understandable historical justification for post-war Poland's western border. Kazimierz Popiołek – vice-director of the Silesian Institute and one of the scholars behind 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' – wrote that, with the 'downfall of Germany…Poland returned to the land upon which a thousand years ago her history had started'.[456] The end of the Second World War provided the culminating chapter of the story, when thanks to the help of the Red Army, an age old historical 'wrong' could be 'righted'. With the opening of the exhibition in 1954, the Silesian Museum could present its visitors with an uninterrupted narrative of Silesia's *polskość* from prehistoric times until the end of the Second World War. By

[453] Kretschmann, 'The triple reinvention of Wrocław', p. 117.
[454] Ibid.
[455] Information on the Exhibition 'Ten Years of Silesia', AMNWr III/66, p. 8.
[456] Kazimierz Popiołek, 'The History of Silesia', in *Lower Silesia and the City of Wrocław* (Wrocław, 1948), p. 16.

'emphasising Polish heritage and devalorising German traces in all centuries' the museum tapped into the zeitgeist of post-war Polish society, playing a valuable political and ideological role and providing the most accessible public representation of Silesia's 'new' history.[457]

Presenting a Polonocentric interpretation of the region's past was, then, the most obvious and important way in which the Silesian Museum sought to bind region to nation; it was not, however, the only means by which to achieve this objective. Though primarily concerned with Silesian matters, the museum's remit encompassed broader 'manifestations of Polish culture', which meant that Polish heritage from beyond Silesia also had a role to play.[458] Importing extra-Silesian cultural artefacts and ideas into the region gave the museum a closer resemblance to similar institutions already established on the territory of the Second Polish Republic, such as the National Museums in Warsaw and Cracow, or the Museum of Wielkopolska in Poznań. While (for the time being, at least) the Silesian Museum remained somewhat in the shadow of its more illustrious forebears, the importation of Polish culture into Silesia helped to reinforce the authenticity of the museum as a genuinely 'Polish' institution.

With regards to permanent exhibitions, it was the Gallery of Polish Painting – the third of the three departments in operation at the time of the museum's opening – which was most strongly connected with Polish culture beyond Silesia. Its collection was chronologically organised to illustrate the development of Polish painting 'from the times of Stanisław August (Poland's last king) to the present'.[459] Many of the paintings had formerly been exhibited in pre-war Lwów, and were part of the 1946 'gift' of cultural artefacts from Poland's former eastern borderlands donated by the government of the Ukrainian S.S.R.[460] These works formed the core of the gallery, but they were supplemented by loans from the

[457] Kretschmann, 'The triple reinvention of Wrocław', p. 115.
[458] Instructions on the Matter of the Organisation of the State Museum in Wrocław, 28.03.1947, reproduced in Hermansdorfer, Heś and Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu*, pp. 12-13.
[459] Promotional material for Polish Radio, AMNWr II/1, p. 10. Interestingly, this is almost exactly the same way that the very first Polish art exhibition on Prussian soil (Poznań, 1871) was described.
[460] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', pp. 184, 198-199.

National Museum in Warsaw and the collections of the Ministry of Culture and Art.[461] In a Silesian context, the gallery's chronology made little sense, as it broadly represented the period of Prussian rule. When considered in a national context, however, it was, give or take a few decades, roughly equivalent to the period of partition, during which art became an important means of preserving (or, perhaps, more properly, creating) a sense of national identity in the absence of a Polish state. Moreover, the great museums of the Polish Second Republic were, in a general sense, artistic institutions, and their art collections had been a key part of inter-war museological attempts to project an idea of a unified Polish nation-without-a-state back into the era of partition.[462]

Certainly, the gallery's collection was by no means as impressive as other ones in Poland. In his 1959 history of the museum, Józef Gębczak described it as 'neither rich nor homogenous', noting that its coverage of Polish art lacked clarity and breadth and thus could not compare to the collections of larger Polish museums.[463] Nonetheless, it did contain some valuable items, particularly when viewed from a propagandistic perspective. Most notable were works by the well-known artists Artur Grottger and Jan Matejko. Grottger's *Wojna* (War), a cycle of eleven drawings completed between 1866 and 1867, was among the most important artworks to arrive from Lwów. Deeply inspired by patriotic themes – *Wojna* was, in part, a reaction to the failed anti-Russian uprising if 1863 – Grottger's works were strongly 'embedded in the Polish national consciousness'.[464] According to one Polish critic, his art targeted the 'neuralgic centres of the Polish imagination, appealing to patriotic feelings and releasing the cult of heroism'.[465] It was clearly one of the centrepieces of the gallery. In an article on the opening of the museum, the regional newspaper *Dziennik Zachodni* claimed that 'Wrocław is building homes, factories and churches, organising square and parks...and waiting for *Wojna* – Grottger's famous cycle of illustrations'.[466]

[461] Ibid.
[462] Mazan, 'National Museums', p. 674.
[463] Gębczak, 'Muzeum Śląskie', p. 199.
[464] Jadwiga I. Daniec, 'Artur Grottger's Comet', *The Polish Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2/3 (1986), pp. 165-9.
[465] Cited in ibid., p. 168.
[466] 'Museum in Wrocław in the Service of Culture and Science', article in *Dziennik Zachodni*, May 1948, in AMNWr II/1.

As well as the Grottger drawings, the presence of works by Jan Matejko further boosted the gallery's patriotic credentials. While the paintings acquired by the Silesian Museum were not of the same importance as Matejko's most famous works, their very presence bestowed an extra layer of legitimacy on the institution. Matejko was a mainstay of all the major Polish museums with art collections; the fact that his works could now been seen in Wrocław thus connected the Silesian Museum with its more established counterparts to the east and burnished the authenticity of the new institution's *polskość*. This was further reinforced by the fact that one of the paintings had a connection to Wrocław itself. *Piotr Włost sprowadza Cystersów do Polski* (Piotr Włost brings the Cistercians to Poland) depicted Piotr Włost, an eleventh century Silesian nobleman and castellan of Wrocław whose wife had apparently contributed towards the construction of one of the city's famous medieval churches.[467] Though the connection was, perhaps, rather tenuous, the fact that the *Dziennik Zachodni* mentioned it in its article on the museum's opening reflected a desire to link Poland's pre-eminent historical painter with the story of the 'Reclaimed Lands'.

The importation of Polish culture was not merely limited to painting. As Marcin Zaremba has observed, towering figures of Polish literature and music – most notably Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Frederic Chopin – were posthumously recruited to the communist cause.[468] The communists wanted to connect themselves with these cultural titans in order to demonstrate their own *polskość*, and indeed, all three of the aforementioned figures could be encountered in some of the temporary exhibitions presented in the museum in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Displays devoted to Mickiewicz (1949-1950), Słowacki (1950) and Chopin (1954) brought nineteenth-century Polish romanticism into the heart of a city which was, at the time the individuals concerned were active, distinctly Prussian.[469] None of these figures had any real connection to Silesia (though the Słowacki exhibition did mention that he had stayed in 'our city') but that was, in a way, beside the point.[470] As well-known

[467] Museum in Wrocław in the Service of Culture and Science, AMNWr II/1.
[468] Marcin Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism*, pp. 155-156.
[469] Hermansdorfer, Heś and Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu*, pp. 25, 30, 56.
[470] Ibid., p. 30.

representatives of Polish high culture, their importance was symbolic. Though they were certainly not as significant as any of the permanent displays discussed earlier, alongside other temporary exhibitions organised along national lines such displays still helped to graft Lower Silesia onto the body of the Polish nation.

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Between 1948 and 1956, over a million people visited the Silesian Museum in Wrocław. In doing so, they encountered a historical narrative which stressed in the strongest possible terms the *polskość* of the city and the region. The story – which began in the depths of prehistory and reached up to the present day – was coherent, continuous and easy to follow. The idea of the Polish nation was the common thread which ran throughout. From the ancient 'proto-Slavic' population of Silesia to the Piast dukes and the Silesian insurgents of 1919-1921, the region's 'true' inhabitants were all presented as members of this broader national community. In this sense, the museum embodied the circularity of Foucault's conception of knowledge/power, with its institutional authority underpinning the operation of historical/archaeological 'regimes of truth' that spoke to post-war geopolitical reality. Though many of its exhibits came from the museums of pre-war Breslau, the Silesian Museum comprehensively rewrote the history of Lower Silesia, expunging traces of 'Germanness' and replacing them with an emphatic articulation of age-old *polskość*. The region's German heritage was to be seen as the unwelcome by-product of German colonial aggression and hubris, but its extent was minimised. Deep down Silesia always was, and always would be, Polish.

Needless to say, this was by no means an accurate reflection of the region's past. From a modern perspective, the Silesian Museum's teleological and often ahistorical version of local history has aged rather badly. Few scholars today would argue that national identities can be attributed to prehistoric people, while medieval loyalties are now understood to be structured around dynastic rather than ethnic ties. Moreover, the museum's displays clearly

served the interests of the communist regime. By publicly showing Silesia's *polskość*, it helped to 'sell' the geopolitical consequences of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences to the Polish public and reinforce the shaky foundations of the post-war state.

It would, however, be wrong to see the Silesian Museum as a mere mouthpiece for official propaganda. Such an approach is overly simplistic and obscures the museum's broader significance. Even as a stopped clock shows the correct time twice a day, so too were there moments in Stalinist Poland where the attitude of the authorities overlapped (to a certain extent) with the desires of society. The communists may have been unpopular, but the new western border was generally seen in a positive light. During the heavily falsified 1946 *Trzy Razy Tak* (Three Times Yes) referendum, 66.9 per cent of voters indeed opted to maintain the new frontier (though this was a much smaller figure than the 91.4 percent claimed in the official results).[471] Moreover, for Polish settlers making their homes in Lower Silesia, the museum provided a kind of cultural anchor. By documenting a long and storied Polish past mapped out across layers of Foucauldian 'evolutive time', it allowed the region's new inhabitants to see themselves as rightful custodians of 'ancient Polish lands' rather than squatters on alien soil.

As Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius have observed, museums are 'constituent components of negotiated cultural constitutions'.[472] They should not be considered as 'straightforward representations of historical or national 'facts'', but as 'manifestations of cultural and political desires'.[473] The Silesian Museum's displays provided historical 'justification' for the new geopolitical reality, but they also helped fulfil the fundamental need of Polish settlers to belong, to feel a genuine connection to what might otherwise seem 'alien' terrain. As Gregor Thum puts it, talking about the 'Reclaimed Lands' (the term

[471] Of the questions asked, only that of the western frontier received a genuinely affirmative response, though the margin was inflated by around 24 percent in the official results. The other questions – which concerned the abolition of the Senate, and nationalisation and land reform – received majority 'no' votes. The true result was a disaster for the communists, who falsified the outcome to show an implausible majority voting 'three times yes'. See Paczkowski, *Referendum z 30 czerwca 1946*; Zaćmiński, 'Próba legitymizacji władz komunistycznych', and Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, p. 204.
[472] Aronsson and Elgenius, 'Introduction', p. 3.
[473] Ibid., p. 2.

continued in popular usage well after its retirement from official discourse) was 'healing, a kind of therapy against the syndrome of impermanence'.[474]

This narrative gained further authenticity from the fact that it was not, so to speak, 'new'. By building on the legacy of *myśl zachodnia*, the museum bridged the gap not only between region and nation, but between the pre-war past and the post-war present. In form – particularly in the Gallery of Polish Painting – it bore more than a passing resemblance to the large museums of pre-war Poland, and it made sense that it was eventually elevated to the rank of National Museum, alongside its illustrious forebears in Warsaw and Cracow. Socialist rhetoric did, of course, have a prominent place within the museum's displays. Of those discussed here, it was the 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' exhibition – opened in 1954, at the height of Stalinism – which most strongly reflected these tendencies. Yet despite its Marxist focus on the 'Polish folk masses of Silesia', it was still very clearly concerned with connecting region to nation, and it dovetailed with existing displays to form a continuous story. We might certainly critique the historiographical basis for the museum's core narrative, but it would be naïve to dismiss it as a communist creation; it was based on ideas which resonated across the political spectrum and long predated communist attempts to politicise the past.

[474] Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 215

Part II

Building Socialism

3

The Onward March of Progress: Marxism in the Museum

Poland in the later 1940s was alive with activity. Across the nation, the sounds of construction rang out as its citizens sought to rebuild their war-ravaged nation from the ground up. A western observer in 1947 spoke of a 'general impression' of 'immense vitality', with 'the women builders plastering the law courts, the brick-laden peasant carts now wheeled with heavy rubber tyres, [and] the police-girls directing the traffic' all bearing witness 'to the Polish determination to rebuild'.[475] The most dramatic accomplishments were in Warsaw, where, under the slogan '*cały naród buduje swoją stolicę*' (the whole nation is building its capital) – still visible today on the façade of a building on the corner of Warsaw's famous Nowy Świat street – an almost superhuman construction effort was in progress. The already impressive results of this titanic endeavour had become a central part of communist propaganda, which trumpeted the capital's phoenix-like resurrection as an achievement of the new socialist system. Yet Warsaw was not returning in the same form. Though the picturesque Old Town and major thoroughfares Krakowskie Przedmieście and Nowy Świat had been reconstructed to look as they did before 1939, in other parts of the city the presence of a new architectural style – socialist realism – reflected the dramatic political changes now taking place. Alongside the physical construction, a parallel process – 'building socialism' – was underway in the ideological realm. For Poland's new rulers, the latter was as important as the former; they sought to radically reconfigure Polish society, and the phrase rapidly became an inescapable feature of the new propagandistic landscape.

What did 'building socialism' mean? In practice, it meant different things in different contexts, but ultimately it referred to a nationwide piece of social engineering aimed at constructing the foundations of a new way of life. It was a defining part of public discourse in the Stalinist era, penetrating into almost every corner of social and cultural life, and of

[475] D. W., 'The Polish Three-Year Plan: an attack on poverty and over-population', *The World Today*. Vol. 3, No. 3 (1947), p. 108.

course, museums were no exception. Over the course of the next two chapters, we will look at the project of 'building socialism' from a museological perspective, exploring how museums sought to promote state ideology and the numerous ways in which it shaped their activity. While the first part of this thesis drew attention to certain continuities between pre-war and post-war museology, here we are dealing with something which (at least in its outward aspect) initially appears to be startlingly 'new'. With the hardening of Stalinist orthodoxy from 1948 onwards, museums – like all public institutions – found themselves limited by the increasingly narrow and prescriptive parameters of state ideology. As Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach remind us, 'the museum's primary function is ideological', in that it is designed to 'impress upon those who use or pass through it society's most revered beliefs and values'.[476] By 'building socialism', the Stalinist state sought to reconfigure these core ideas in line with the central tenets of Marxism-Leninism, meaning that the cultural and historical 'regimes of truth' presented in Polish museums had to be adapted to suit the new political reality.

This chapter begins by exploring the background to this process, outlining the key ideas which shaped the treatment of history and art in Polish museums in the late 1940s and first half of the 1950s. It then investigates what this looked like in practice by analysing several Stalinist-era exhibitions, most notably the National Museum in Warsaw's 1953 display *Odrodzenie w Polsce* (The Renaissance in Poland), which, in terms of scale and scope, represented an undertaking unprecedented in the history of Polish museology. Finally, it moves away from the national centre to return to the Silesian Museum in Wrocław's 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' exhibition, in order to highlight the way in which a Marxist agenda could be adapted to fit the particular circumstances of the 'Reclaimed Lands'. As we shall see, museological praxis under high Stalinism was shaped by the need to reframe the past through the lens of Marxist-Leninist historical materialism, and, even more significantly, situate Polish society's post-war transformation within a broader 'progressive' genealogy rooted in national history. For all that the museology of the era represented a sharp departure from the pre-war period (or, indeed, the first post-war years), the ostensibly 'new'

[476] Duncan and Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', p. 449.

narratives remained heavily reliant on nationalist tropes, and a cast of heroes largely drawn from the established national canon. Despite the emphasis on class struggle, the story was ultimately defined in national terms, reflecting the intimate relationship between post-war nation-building and the conceptual construction project that aimed at 'building socialism'.

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From the later 1940s onwards, Stalinist ideology began to play an ever-more powerful role in shaping Polish society and public discourse. Though the early post-war years had been marked by a certain degree of political pluralism and freedom of expression – Carl Tighe refers to a 'honeymoon' period in intellectual life – the cultural horizon soon began to narrow.[477] Initially, the communists were preoccupied with snuffing out resistance (both political, and, in the context of the anti-communist insurgency, armed) and dealing with the vast logistical and organisational challenges of post-war reconstruction. By 1948, however, Poland's new rulers had their hands rather more firmly on the levers of power and could now focus on realising their goal of fundamentally 'reconstructing' society. Already, the need for a 'cultural revolution' was being stressed by prominent communist politicians and activists. In 1947 Włodzimierz Sokorski – then Vice-Minister for Culture and Art – complained of the 'the profound dissonance between the economic and social revolutions now taking place in Poland and the absence of any cultural revolution', and similar thoughts were echoed by President Bolesław Bierut, who was to become party General Secretary the following year.[478] During the 1947 conference of the Union of Polish Writers in Wrocław, Bierut claimed that the cultural sphere lagged behind 'the rapid mighty current of life today'.[479] What was needed was a 'cultural revolution' in order to build the 'culture of a people's democracy'.[480]

[477] Carl Tighe, 'Forward to battle for the Six-Year Plan! Polish writers 1945–56', *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2015), p. 190.
[478] Cited in Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, p. 36.
[479] Cited in Tighe, 'Forward to battle', pp. 192-193.
[480] Cited in ibid., p. 193.

This revolution came to encompass all aspects of cultural life. In art and architecture, the ubiquity of socialist realism – 'socialist in content, national in form' – was a hallmark of the Stalinist era.[481] As Michał Haake has noted, this 'national form' was something of a smokescreen, designed the mask the fact that the introduction of socialist realism was merely the import of the doctrine which had defined Soviet artistic life since the early 1930s.[482] One can see this clearly in Warsaw's imposing *Pałac Kultury i Nauki* (Palace of Culture and Science), a Stalinist skyscraper which still dominates the city's skyline to this day. A 'gift' from the Soviet Union, the building was completed in 1955 and, though its Soviet architect Lev Rudnev apparently incorporated aspects of Polish 'national style', the building closely resembles the iconic socialist realist architecture of the Moscow State University (another of Rudnev's works, for which he won the Stalin Prize in 1949).[483] Polish socialist realist art also replicated Soviet tropes in a Polish context. As the name suggests, the emphasis was on realism, which was held up as an alternative to the dangerous influence of 'bourgeois' modernism and the 'degenerate' avant-garde.[484] According to Vice-Minister Sokorski, the goal of socialist realism was the pursuit of 'objective truth'.[485] 'The deeply real truthfulness of our way of living… requires deeply realistic modes of representation', Sokorski claimed.[486] 'Deformation' constituted an 'ideological deceit'; 'art in the socialist era' could therefore 'only be shaped by the methods of socialist realism'.[487]

The end of the period of so-called 'gentle revolution' and the intensification of the Stalinist cultural offensive also had powerful implications for the interpretation and presentation of history. In the first issue of the party's monthly journal *Nowe Drogi* (New Roads), published

[481] Michał Haake, 'Pictures and history: art exhibitions as a tool for the validation of communist authority in Poland', in Michał Haake and Piotr Juszkiewicz, eds., *Image, History and Memory: Central and Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective* (Abingdon, 2022), p. 190.
[482] Ibid.
[483] In order to make the Palace 'national in form', Rudnev and his team visited cities like Cracow and Toruń in order to seek inspiration from the architecture of the Polish Renaissance, but this was done more for publicity than anything else. David Crowley describes it as 'pseudo-Polish', and cites the words of the famous poet Władysław Broniewski – a one-time panegyrist of the regime – who declared that the Palace resembled 'the nightmare dream of a drunken cake-maker'. See Crowley, *Warsaw*, pp. 40-42.
[484] Haake, 'Pictures and history', p. 190.
[485] Cited in David Crowley, 'Stalinism and Modernist Craft in Poland', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1998), pp. 72.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Ibid.

in 1947, Jakub Berman declared the need to 'make up the great delay in the area of scientific research'.[488] It was high time, the prominent party ideologue maintained, for the 'germ of Marxist thought to increase the pulse of research both in the field of humanities and mathematics and natural sciences'.[489] By the following year, the exhortations of communist activists were beginning to have some effects. At the *VII Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich* (VII General Congress of Polish Historians) held in Wrocław in September 1948, a group of like-minded scholars formed the *Marksistowskie Zrzeszenie Historyków* (Marxist Association of Historians).[490] According to its statute, its aimed to 'spread and deepen Marxist scientific method and partisanship in historical science…eliminate ideological backwardness in the historical field in Poland…accelerate work on the creation of a Marxist history of Poland…spread Marxist historical knowledge in society' and 'participate in the education of Marxist cadres in the field of history'.[491]

In the event, the 1948 conference was not quite the breakthrough that the communists had hoped for. Marxist historians remained in the minority, and the new association they had formed remained largely dormant until 1950.[492] Yet even if developments in the field of history did not quite keep pace with those in the broader political sphere (1948 saw the unification of the PPR and the PPS to form the PZPR, marking the beginning of the high Stalinist phase), in time the changing climate began to affect the historical discipline more profoundly. Rafał Stobiecki identifies the years 1949-1951 as the moment when Stalinist politics started to influence the field significantly, both in methodological and organisational matters but also in the interpretation of Polish history more generally.[493] The editorial boards of the nation's two main historical journals – *Kwartalnik Historyczny* (Historical Quarterly) and *Przegląd Historyczny* (Historical Review) – were reshuffled, with party-

[488] Cited in Piotr Hübner, 'Przebudowa nauk historycznych w Polsce (1947-1953)', *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (1987), p. 451. After Bierut, Berman was probably the most powerful politician in Poland during the Stalinist period.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Rafał Stobiecki, 'Historia i historycy wobec nowej rzeczywistości: z dziejów polskiej nauki historycznej w latach 1945—1951', *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis: Folia Historica*, No. 43 (1991), p. 173.
[491] Cited in ibid.
[492] Ibid., pp. 174, 179.
[493] Ibid., p. 166.

affiliated historians taking key positions.[494] The ideological content of articles became more pronounced, and, as the new decade dawned, the relatively small group of committed Marxist historians began to press their agenda more vocally.

This was clearly reflected in the proceedings of the *I Kongres Nauki Polskiej* (First Congress of Polish Sciences), held in Warsaw in 1951. In preparation for this momentous event, a special subsection of history and prehistory was established (which was dominated by scholars closely associated with the new regime), and its work formed the basis for a lengthy speech at the congress by the communist historian Żanna Kormanowa.[495] Though (unsurprisingly) Kormanowa was full of praise for the achievements of People's Poland, she sharply criticised Polish historians who had failed to effectively engage with Marxism and bemoaned the fact that, as a profession, historians 'failed to keep the pace of the miner, the steelworker, the founder, the weaver' when it came to realising the goals of the six-year plan.[496] Historians had a vital role to play in the construction of the new socialist nation, Kormanowa maintained, by highlighting 'the heroic contribution of the masses of the people to all the achievements of Polish past' and rescuing 'from oblivion the progressive traditions of our history', which would be presented 'in all their brilliance' and interpreted 'in a new and revealing way from the position of the victorious socialist revolution…the working class and the popular masses'.[497]

The realisation of this lofty goal hinged upon that core element of the historian's profession: methodology. In the Stalinist context, this broadly meant the application of historical materialism. According to Kormanowa – who described Marxist methodology as a scholarly 'weapon' – any historical work not grounded in the tenets of historical materialism was 'scientifically barren'.[498] Like socialist realist art, historical materialist scholarship claimed to

[494] Ibid.
[495] Ibid., p. 176.
[496] Górny, *The Nation Should Come First*, pp. 51-52; Żanna Kormanowa, 'Referat podsekcji historii sekcji nauk społecznych i humanistycznych I Kongresu Nauki Polskiej', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, Vol. 58, No. 3-4 (1951), p. 297.
[497] Ibid., p. 255.
[498] Ibid., p. 273.

strive for 'objective truth'. As Kazimierz Piwarski explained in an agenda-setting 1949 article entitled *Kryzys historiografii burżuazyjnej a materializm historyczny* (The crisis of bourgeois historiography and historical materialism), its methodological basis enabled a 'genuine…scientific cognition of the real material world' and its 'actual processes' which lay 'as close to the objective truth as possible'.[499] In practice, the officially sanctioned historical materialism of the Stalinist era was actually formulated in relatively simplistic terms and generally interpreted as a basic directive to view the past through the prism of economic development and class struggle, but its dictates played an important role in shaping historical studies in the period 1948-1956.[500] Indeed, even though the majority of Polish historians did not subscribe to the Marxist project, the study of material culture became an important part of the Polish historiographical landscape, resulting in the establishment of the *Instytut Historii Kultury Materialnej* (Institute of the History of Material Culture) at the Polish Academy of the Sciences in 1953.[501]

The ascendancy of socialist realism and historical materialism had profound implications for Poland's museums, as it was within their walls that the wider population came into contact with officially sanctioned art and history. 'An art exhibition must teach its audience that it is not only the heir to a rich national heritage, but also a co-creator of a new, socialist culture' argued one contemporary critic.[502] Socialist realist art undoubtedly had key role to play in this endeavour, and numerous exhibitions across the nation sought to fulfil the exhortation that 'artistic creation' should 'reflect the economic, political and social processes taking place in the territory of the Republic of Poland'.[503] The exhibition *Człowiek i Praca* (Man and Work), organised by the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin in 1949, provides a typical example. Comprised of a selection of works by local artists, the exhibition presented depictions of the city's workers – including employees from the shipyards, docks, gasworks,

[499] Kazimierz Piwarski, 'Kryzys historiografii burżuazyjnej a materializm historyczny', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, Vol. 57, No. 1-4 (1949), p. 4.
[500] Jerzy Topolski, 'Polish Historians and Marxism after World War II', *Studies in Soviet Thought*, Vol. 43, No. 2: Polish Philosophy at the Crossroads (1992), p. 172.
[501] Ibid., p. 177.
[502] Wanda Załuska, 'Wytyczne do programu prac muzealnictwa na rok 1953', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 1-2 (1952), p. 10.
[503] Załuska, 'Malarstwo współczesne', pp. 5-6.

and fishing industry – and was hailed as a 'visible sign of the modernization of artistic creativity'.[504] According to the exhibition catalogue, these artworks would serve as 'a solid foundation on which the true creativity of People's Poland will continue to develop'.[505] Much grander was the *I Ogólnopolska Wystawa Plastyki* (First All-Polish Exhibition of Art), held at the National Museum in Warsaw in 1950.[506] Bringing together over 600 works of socialist realism, it was hailed as a marker of the decisive break with the 'cosmopolitan formalism' and the beginning of the new direction in Polish art.[507]

Socialist realism, however, was only part of the story. Of course, it constituted an important aspect of the general aesthetic of life in the Stalinist era – and, as Marek Hendrykowski has shown, was rather less monolithic than conventional wisdom suggests – but from a museological perspective the situation was rather different.[508] Socialist realism was a relatively new phenomenon, and, though its (somewhat vaguely defined) dictates lent a particular flavour to architecture, design, literature, cinema, and numerous other cultural forms during the Stalinist era, when it came to fine art the number of pieces that actually 'made the grade' was somewhat smaller than might be imagined. Despite the huge number of works assembled for the 'First All-Polish Exhibition of Art' in 1950, many were clearly deemed substandard, and the exhibition did not escape contemporary criticism.[509] In a 1953 article in the journal *Muzealnictwo* (Museology), Wanda Załuska reminded her colleagues to 'be honestly aware of the fact that, especially in the light of recent discussions, the choice of works that can represent the good results of the struggle for socialist realism in art is very modest'.[510] According to Załuska, this amounted to little more than 'several dozen paintings

[504] *Wystawa prac członków Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków w Szczecinie p.t. Człowiek i Praca 29-V - 19-VI 1949 – Katalog Wystawy* (Szczecin, 1949).
[505] Ibid.
[506] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 150.
[507] Czesław Komarnicki, 'Pierwsza ogólnopolska wystawa plastyki', *Przekrój* (16 April, 1950), pp. 10-11.
[508] Marek Hendrykowski, *Socrealizm po polsku: Studia i szkice* (Poznań, 2015).
[509] Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, 'Curator's memory: the case of the missing 'man of marble', or the rise and fall of socialist realism in Poland', in Wessel Reinink and Jeroen Stumpel, eds., *Memory and Oblivion Vol. 1: Proceedings of the XXIXth International Congress of the History of Art* (Dordrecht, 1999), p. 906. Czesław Komarnicki's review in *Przekrój* noted that 'not all exhibitors have found the right method of artistic expression', while in *Odrodzenie* Janusz Bogucki suggested that many of the pieces on display reflected a 'timid and outdated' nineteenth century realist formula, and stressed the need for 'creators, not imitators'. See Komarnicki, 'Pierwsza Ogólnopolska Wystawa Plastyki', pp. 10-11, and Janusz Bogucki, 'Pospolite ruszenie', *Odrodzenie* (26 March, 1950), p. 3.
[510] Załuska, 'Malarstwo współczesne', pp. 7-8.

and a dozen sculptures'.[511] The majority of permanent museum collections, therefore, would be made up of artwork that was not, strictly speaking, part of the officially approved artistic form.

Nonetheless, this situation was by no means a problem; Poland's new rulers did not want to dismiss national artistic heritage, but rather sought to reinterpret it to serve their needs. Indeed, their approach to culture may even be termed a little old-fashioned. As David Crowley has pointed out, the 'party's cultural arbiters…held on to a rather conservative, inflexible definition of culture originating in the last century' which celebrated traditional realist forms and treated avant-gardism with considerable suspicion.[512] Realism was interpreted as a continuous trend in Polish art history, with deep roots that stretched back to the Middle Ages.[513] Presenting an overview of guidelines for the work of museums in 1953, Załuska stressed that the 'task of the artistic departments is to demonstrate realism as a progressive trend in the history of Polish art', with contemporary Polish art serving as 'a complement and extension of the retrospective gallery.[514] 'According to the prominent art historian and museologist Tadeusz Dobrowolski – curator of the 1950 exhibition *Realizm w Tradycji Malarstwa Polskiego od XV do XIX Wieku* (Realism in the Tradition of Polish Painting from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century) at the Society for the Friends of the Fine Arts in Cracow – it was around the mid fifteenth century that 'realist features became distinctly present in Polish art'.[515] Working through the subsequent centuries, the struggle between 'realism [and] mystical religiosity and courtly schematism', could, in Załuska's words, be 'traced both in the paintings of the late Renaissance and…the Enlightenment, as well as in the paintings of bourgeois realism of the nineteenth century'.[516] This latter period was of particular interest, as it furnished politically useful examples of Polish realism in the works of artists such as Jan Matejko and Aleksander Gierymski.[517]

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[511] Ibid., p. 8.
[512] Crowley, 'Stalinism and modernist craft', p. 71.
[513] Haake, 'Pictures and history', p. 191-192.
[514] Załuska, 'Wytyczne do programu', p. 10.
[515] Cited in Haake, 'Pictures and history', p. 191.
[516] Załuska, 'Malarstwo współczesne', p. 6.
[517] Karolina Łabowicz-Dymanus, 'Normative practice and tradition management in Polish art and history of art of the 1950s', in Kristina Jõekalda, Krista Kodres and Michaela Marek, eds., *A Socialist Realist History? Writing Art History in the Post-War Decades* (Cologne, 2019), p. 94.

The significance attached to the realist form as an organising principle can be clearly seen in the major reorganisation of the Gallery of Polish Painting at the National Museum in Cracow, which took place in 1951. Though initial post-war reconstructive work had sought to faithfully replicate the gallery's pre-war appearance, by the start of the 1950s this layout was out of step with the current state of cultural politics.[518] Dobrowolski – who served as the museum's director from 1950 until 1956 – set out to update the gallery according to the 'rules of modern museology' by adopting a 'periodisation of artistic phenomena' based on the unequivocally Marxist concept of 'historical truth'.[519] It was thus divided into twelve sections: 1760-1800, Decline of Court-Feudal Art; 1800-1870, Development of Bourgeois Art - Classicism, Realism, Romanticism; 1860-1880, Maturation of Realism; 1850-1890, Historicism, Monumental Realism; 1875-1900, Mature Realism; 1890-1900, The Impressionist Episode; 1890-1910, Post-Impressionist Realism; 1894-1910, Early Symbolism and Post-Impressionist Realism (continued); Landscape after 1910 and the Stanisławski School; 1900-1910, Symbolism and Art Nouveau and 1920-1945, Post-Impressionist Colourism.[520] The final section was dedicated to socialist realism. Chronological overlaps and inconsistencies were explained by Dobrowolski as an 'understandable consequence of the phenomenon of contradiction' through which 'anachronistic and progressive forms live side by side' when 'the new comes into contact with the old'.[521] Dobrowolski's aim was to highlight 'the problem of Polish realism…as a progressive direction (synchronized with social development)' and 'properly emphasize the importance of the realist current'.[522] The idea of a 'historical cross-section of Polish art' which emphasized the 'struggle for realism and the truth of artistic vision' thus sought to frame socialist realism as the logical development of an earlier progressive realist tradition.[523] Despite the 'regression' of 'formalistic theories and

[518] Tadeusz Dobrowolski, 'Zreorganizowana galeria malarstwa polskiego Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 1-2 (1952), p. 18.
[519] Ibid., p. 19.
[520] Ibid.
[521] Ibid.
[522] Ibid., pp. 19-20.
[523] Załuska, 'Malarstwo współczesne', p. 6.

experiments' of the 'late capitalist' (pre-war) period, Polish art had returned to the 'broad highway of realism, referring to the best traditions of previous eras'.[524]

Around the same time, a similar project was undertaken at the National Museum in Warsaw, and again, the same principles were in action. According to the museum's director Stanisław Lorentz, the collection assembled in the museum after 1945 was 'undoubtedly the richest and most comprehensive depiction [of] the development of Polish painting'.[525] Yet prior to its reorganisation at the start of the 1950s, argued Lorentz, it could not truly be called 'national', due to inconsistences and omissions in its presentation of art from earlier periods, which prevented the viewer from understanding the connection between contemporary art and national 'progressive traditions'.[526] The gallery failed to display a 'clearly visible realistic trend' in older Polish art, and, perhaps even worse, almost completely omitted any contemporary works.[527] The reorganisation sought remedy the situation by introducing new works – including socialist realist art – in order to highlight the 'patriotic progressive' roots of nineteenth century critical realism, which Lorentz described as a 'trend of…extraordinary importance in the development of Polish art' and the 'predecessor…[of] socialist realism'.[528] Admittedly, Lorentz was cautious about the achievements of the reorganisation – realism was presented as 'best possible' given limitations in space and available material – but the gallery's new layout was another clear indicator of the influence of Stalinist cultural politics within the museum.[529] In the party newspaper *Trybuna Ludu* the gallery's 'scientific, Marxist and realistic method of perceiving the history of art and culture' was hailed as an unprecedented achievement.[530]

As well as promoting the officially approved conception of a realist tradition, the periodisation of these major galleries also demonstrated the practical application of

[524] Ibid.
[525] Stanisław Lorentz, 'Narodowa Galeria Sztuki Polskiej', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 3 (1953), p. 22.
[526] Ibid.
[527] Ibid.
[528] Ibid., pp. 28-30.
[529] Ibid.
[530] Cited in Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 54-55.

historical materialist principles. This was especially true in the case of the National Museum in Cracow, where the Gallery of Polish Painting employed unambiguously Marxist art-historical categories such as 'court-feudal' or 'bourgeois art'. To a certain extent, this helped fulfill the exhortations of the editors of *Muzealnictwo*, who called for the energisation of museology through 'the fruits of the reconstruction of scientific concepts in the history of Polish culture and art based on the method of historical materialism' and an alignment of the work of the museum with the 'daily tensions of class struggle for the progressive and popular profile of the national front'.[531] Yet art galleries could only do so much. Though they were able to convey narratives through their organisation and through the works on display, they typically eschewed detailed textual interpretation, limiting their ability to (as *Muzealnictwo* put it) 'teach the average viewer to perceive…the broad background of historical processes accompanying the creation of a work of art'.[532] When it came to the museum's role as a popularisation point for 'knowledge-agitation', it would be historical exhibitions that would prove the more effective transmitters of historical materialist narratives.[533]

An early example of a display of this nature which explicitly foregrounded 'progressive' narratives of Polish history can be found in the exhibition *Ks. Piotr Ściegienny na tle Epoki* (Fr. Piotr Ściegienny Against the Background of the Epoch), which was organised at the *Muzeum Świetokrzyskie* (Museum of the Holy Cross Province) in Kielce 1948. It focused on the life of Piotr Ściegienny (1801-1890), a Catholic priest from the Kielce area who combined his pastoral duties with a career as an energetic social activist. Inspired by the Jacobins and radical democratic thinkers (he was apparently nicknamed 'Robespierre' by some of his less enthusiastic contemporaries), Ściegienny embarked on a campaign of revolutionary agitation of behalf of the peasantry in the 1830s and 1840s which culminated in the creation of the underground *Związek Chłopski* (Peasants' Union).[534] A peasant uprising was planned for 1844, but before it could be launched Ściegienny was betrayed and sentenced to death.

[531] 'Od redakcji', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 1-2 (1952), p. 5.
[532] 'Muzealna akcja oświatowa w roku 1951', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 1-2 (1952), p. 49.
[533] Ibid.
[534] Marcin Konarski, 'Radykalny demokratyzm i wizja rewolucji społecznej księdza Piotra Ściegiennego', *Kościół i Prawo*, Vol. 7(20), No. 1 (2018), pp. 44-55.

Though he narrowly avoided execution – his sentence was dramatically commuted as he stood on the gallows – Ściegienny nonetheless had to endure a lengthy Siberian exile as well as the loss of his priestly dignity, which he did not regain until 1883.[535]

For Poland's new communist rulers, this biography was a valuable one indeed. Ściegienny could be seen as a Polish patriot who had struggled for national independence, but his socialist credentials meant that he could also be co-opted by the communists in order to build a more 'authentic' national lineage for themselves.[536] Thus Ściegienny was hailed as a 'defender of the people' who, in the words of one prominent communist politician and economist, fought for the 'liberation of peasants from feudal oppression through a ruthless revolutionary struggle'.[537] Moreover, as a Catholic who espoused radical democratic ideas and who was frequently critical of the higher clergy and the papacy, Ściegienny provided an alternative paradigm of Polish Catholicism.[538] He was widely believed to be the author of the so-called *Złota Książeczka* (The Golden Book), a forgery in the style of a papal encyclical which predicted an upcoming 'war of justice' to be waged 'by the poor against the rich…by Poles and Russians together against the kings and the lords'.[539] In the post-war context, he was identified as a spiritual predecessor of the so-called 'patriotic priests', pro-regime clerics who disdained capitalism as 'anti-Christian' and sought to portray themselves as the inheritors of a progressive tradition that stretched back to Ściegienny's times and even earlier.[540]

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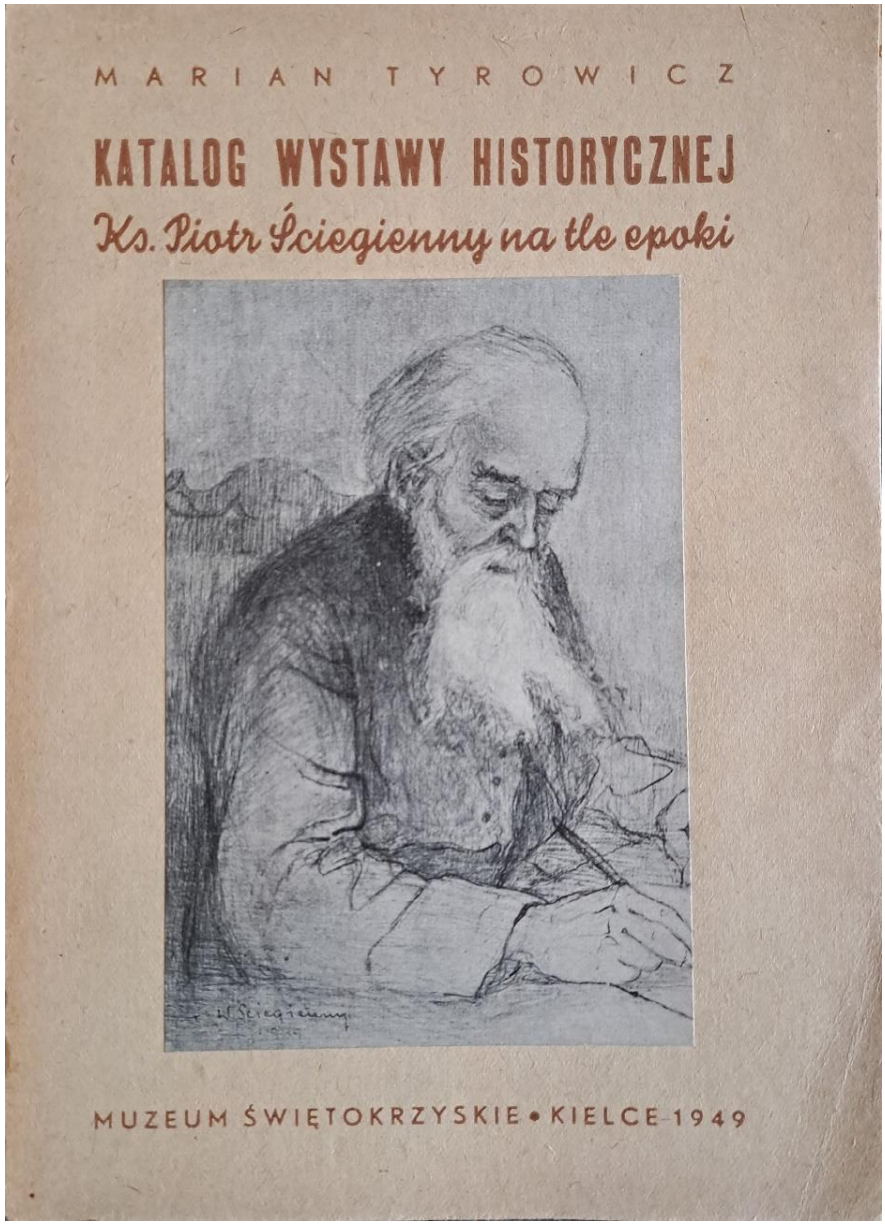
[535] Ibid., p. 47.
[536] Jakub Sadowski, 'Mechanisms of homonym transformations: on Catholic variants of Stalinist discourse in Poland', *Semiotica*, no. 247 (2022), p. 131.
[537] Ibid., p. 137; Zygmunt Modzelewski, 'Komuna Paryska i polski ruch rewolucyjny', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (1954), p. 53. Modzelewski was a member of the Central Committee of the PZPR, a former Minister for Foreign Affairs (1947-51) and the adoptive father of the future opposition activist Karol Modzelewski.
[538] Mieczysław Żywczyński, 'Historiozofia Ściegiennego', *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 42 (1951), pp. 399, 402-403.
[539] Cited in Davies, *God's Playground*, Vol II, pp. 159-160; Piotr Kuligowski, 'Sword of Christ: Christian inspirations of Polish socialism before the January Uprising', *The Journal of Education, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2012), p. 120.
[540] Bartosz Kaliski, 'Środowisko „księży-patriotów" Wielkopolski i Kujaw w latach 1949–1957', *Polska 1944/45-1989: Studia i Materiały*, Vol. 10 (2011), p. 161. The *Komisja Księży-Patriotów* (Commission of Patriotic Priests) was active during the first half of the 1950s, and represented a communist attempt to co-opt Catholic priests for the state. As Małgorzata Lubecka has observed, its ranks included careerists as well as genuinely ideologically committed individuals, but blackmail and coercion was also used to recruit members. Initially seen as a means to counterbalance the power of the Catholic Church, the commission proved relatively unsuccessful and was disbanded in 1955. See Małgorzata Lubecka, 'Komisja księży-patriotów 1949-1955



[Figure 3.1 – 1949 image of Piotr Ściegienny by Włodzimierz Ściegienny on the cover of the exhibition programme][541]

The communist authorities were eager to show that the new People's Poland was connected to national heritage; according to the communist historian Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, 'the People's Republic of Poland looks for its roots in a period removed from our times by a

w polskim Kościele na przykładzie dekanatu ostrołęckiego', *Zeszyty Naukowe Ostrołęckiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, No. 21 (2007), pp. 103-115.

[541] Tyrowicz, *Katalog Wystawy*.

hundred years, dating its emergence to the period of the Springtime of the Peoples'.[542] Nonetheless, as the handbook to the Ściegienny exhibition pointed out, the history of the 'revolutionary movement' in Poland in the nineteenth century was a topic few knew much about.[543] 'Revolutionary movement' in this context meant a struggle for social justice, rather than simply national independence, and the guidebook complained that the overwhelming emphasis on the latter process in most conventional historiography had left 'the issue of social movements…on the side-lines'.[544] The exhibition, however, proposed to redress this imbalance by illuminating the life and times of this 'peasant-priest, thinker, and activist' who devoted himself to 'the struggle for the rights of the people…[against] the oppression of serfdom and [to] raising the countryside from ignorance to the heights of education'.[545] Divided into ten thematic sections, and bringing together 325 objects from diverse collections, the exhibition was one of the first socio-historical displays of its type in Poland, and it was widely publicised, even featuring in a 1949 edition of the national newsreel *Polska Kronika Filmowa* (Polish Film Chronicle).[546]

Yet even though the exhibition was ostensibly devoted to the life of Ściegienny, it also displayed a marked tendency to subsume his biography into what Jakub Sadowski has called 'an almost cosmogonic narrative about the emergence of the structure of the modern world'.[547] Its title placed Ściegienny's life 'against the background of the epoch', which, as the exhibition guide explained, meant 'primarily the events of contemporary peasant movements in Poland, which, irrespective of their territorial-geographical scope, were bound up with the revolutionary movement in Poland, especially in the 1840s'.[548] According to the exhibition's narrative, progressive political actors emerging in the wake of the 1848 Spring of Nations 'reached for the person of Ściegienny as the ensign of their banners'.[549]

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[542] Cited in Górny, *The Nation Should Come First*, p. 161.
[543] Marian Tyrowicz, *Katalog Wystawy Historycznej: Ks. Piotr Ściegienny na tle Epoki* (Kielce, 1949), p. 11.
[544] Ibid.
[545] Ibid., p. 12.
[546] Elżbieta Podpłońska, 'Muzeum kieleckie w latach 1908-1950', *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Kielcach*, Vol. 24 (2009), pp. 53-4; PKF 35/49 (24/08/1949), available at http://repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=pl/node/5483 [accessed 10 June, 2022]
[547] Sadowski, 'Mechanisms of homonym transformations', p. 131.
[548] Tyrowicz, *Katalog Wystawy*, p. 13.
[549] Ibid., p. 12.

Ściegienny thus provided the organising theme for an exhibition which contained broader sections such as 'Democratic Conspiracies in Galicia' – covering issues such as agrarian reform and political prisons – or 'Rural Poland and Peasant Life in the Era of Serfdom', which presented a social and material history of village life in the 1840s.[550] This wider focus on progressive trends allowed the exhibition to bring in other key personalities like the famous democratic thinker and historian Joachim Lelewel, as well as the now ubiquitous figures of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.[551]

The prominent celebration of the centenary of the revolutions of 1848 no doubt influenced the decision to develop the Ściegienny exhibition, and subsequent commemorations provided a further opportunity to extend Marxist museological narratives further back into the past. 1951 was declared 'The Year of the Enlightenment in Poland', and at the National Museum in Warsaw work was well underway on a major new exhibition of the era.[552] Opening in December 1951, *Wiek Oświecenia w Polsce* (The Enlightenment Era in Poland) was the post-war museum's largest exhibition to date, and it was described in the contemporary press as a 'great cultural and scientific event on a nation-wide scale'.[553] Of course, in Marxist historiography the eighteenth century was characterised by 'the formation of a capitalist system within the final stage of feudalism', and the exhibition was said to reflect the latest developments in the field.[554] 'The undeniable power of the document', claimed one newspaper, 'speaks here of historical truth, of the truth of social change and class struggle'.[555] Altogether around 4,000 objects were gathered to present a broad picture of key economic, cultural, and scientific developments.[556] Special attention was given to the theme of 'patriotic and progressive thought', and the display closed with a

[550] Ibid., pp. 19-21.
[551] Ibid., pp. 29, 109-110. Lelewel – which the guidebook described as 'nineteenth-century Poland's greatest historian, noting that he 'brought the matter of peasant enfranchisement to the fore in all his works' – was a popular subject of Stalinist-era historiographical studies. See Joan S. Skurnowicz, 'Lelewel in Polish Historiography in People's Poland', *The Polish Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1991), pp. 269-282.
[552] Norbert Kołomiejczyk, Ryszard Halaba and Władysław Góra, 'Calendarium Polski Ludowej 1944-1963', *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (1964), pp. 296-297.
[553] B. L., 'Wielki hołd polskiemu Oświeceniu', *Głos Wybrzeża* (4 September, 1951), p. 6.
[554] Ibid. See, for example, Witold Kula, 'Początki układu kapitalistycznego w Polsce XVIII wieku', *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 42 (1951), pp. 36-81, and Celina Bobińska, 'Społeczno-ekonomiczne idee polskiego Oświecenia', *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 42 (1951), pp. 82-106.
[555] B. L., 'Wielki hołd polskiemu Oświeceniu'.
[556] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 161.

room dedicated to illustrating 'how our People's Fatherland relates to the progressive and patriotic traditions of the Polish Enlightenment'.[557]

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Two years later, the museum presented an even larger exhibition, this time in connection with 1953's 'Year of Copernicus and the Renaissance'.[558] The year of Stalin's death marked the undoubted apogee of Stalinism in Poland, and the exhibition in question – *Odrodzenie w Polsce* (The Renaissance in Poland) – was organised on a scale that was unprecedented in the entire history of Polish museology.[559] As the crowning achievement of Stalinist-era museology, 'The Renaissance in Poland' is worthy of detailed analysis; in it, we can see the most coherent and comprehensive manifestation of the museological and historiographical trends discussed thus far, which sought to draw on a progressive 'usable past' to both legitimate the present and point the way to the future. Hailed by *Gazeta Robotnicza* (Workers' Gazette) as 'a great work and a great gift for the whole of Poland', the exhibition was a significant part of the nation-wide event celebrating the heritage of the Renaissance in Poland, with Nicholas Copernicus (or Mikołaj Kopernik, as he is known in Poland) serving as the 'patron of the epoch'.[560] The practice of dedicating a year to a particular era and/or historical figure was, by the early 1950s, reasonably well established in People's Poland. Previous subjects had included Adam Mickiewicz (1948), Juliusz Słowacki and Frederic Chopin (1949), and Hugo Kołłątaj (1951), the latter providing the inspiration for that year's exhibition on the Enlightenment era at Warsaw's National Museum.[561]

[557] B. L., Wielki hołd polskiemu Oświeceniu'.
[558] 1953 marked the 480th anniversary of Copernicus's birth and the 410th anniversary of his death. Though the 'Year of Copernicus' and the 'Year of the Renaissance' had slightly different agendas and separate organising committees, they broadly overlapped and can be seen as two parts of one whole. See Popławski, 'Obchody rocznic historycznych', pp. 387-413.
[559] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 166-167.
[560] Cited in ibid., p. 167; Popławski, 'Obchody rocznic historycznych', p. 390.
[561] Ibid., p. 392.

This practice of co-opting national heroes for the communist cause – which we encountered in chapter one of this thesis – had clear propagandistic value.[562] Beyond the obvious attempt to establish nationalist bona fides, it also provided a platform on which to re-interpret the past along Marxist lines, which we can see in the text of the resolution inaugurating the 1953 events. 'The main goal of the celebrations', it stated, was 'to bring out progressive traditions in the history of the Polish nation and…point to the trends and progressive forces of this period', thus emphasising the 'contribution of the Polish Renaissance to the universal treasury of progressive social thought, scientific research, culture, and art'.[563] Following the official launch of the festivities in May, a diverse array of events were organised across the entire nation, though the central hubs of activity were in Warsaw and Cracow. As well as more conventional historical talks and academic conferences, the 'Year of Copernicus and Year of the Renaissance' was also celebrated through theatrical performances, folk dances, cycling races, motor rallies and even a football match.[564] It also generated a considerable volume of tourist traffic, particularly in the 'Reclaimed Lands', as people travelled to visit related attractions or new tourist routes such as Warmia's 'Copernicus Trail'. The whole endeavour was accompanied by an intensive promotional press campaign, and widely publicised on the radio as well in newsreels; it even resulted in the production of a short film about Copernicus.[565]

By far the greatest single expenditure, however, was the National Museum's Renaissance exhibition, which ate up some 1.2 million złoty out of a total budget of just over 5 million for the entire anniversary event.[566] Preparatory work on the exhibition began in 1952, when Cracow's Wawel Castle was initially suggested as a possible venue.[567] However, this plan proved unworkable, in large part due to the reluctance of Cracovian museologists and art historians to assume control of the exhibitionary commission and the resultant failure to establish a supervisory team.[568] In March 1953 the decision was taken to stage the

[562] See also Zaremba, *Communism – Legitimacy – Nationalism*.
[563] Cited in Popławski, 'Obchody rocznic historycznych', pp. 391-392.
[564] Ibid., p. 409.
[565] Ibid., pp. 398-400.
[566] Ibid., p. 391.
[567] AMNW 1162a, p. 6.
[568] Ibid.

exhibition in Warsaw's National Museum instead, with the museum's director Stanisław Lorentz assuming overall control of the planning committee.[569] Under Lorentz's direction and in collaboration with the *Polska Akademia Nauk* (Polish Academy of Sciences), a sizable team of experts – including, among others, Stanisław Arnold, head of the Marxist Association of Historians – soon set to work bringing the exhibition to life.[570] Relocating to Warsaw presented considerable organisational problems, in the sense that many of the artefacts intended for display were located elsewhere (particularly in Cracow, hence the original choice of location).[571] The creation of the exhibition was therefore not a just Varsovian project but a national one; in total seventy-three museums, libraries and archives provided items from their collections.[572] Indeed, with the presence of objects loaned from the Austrian National Library in Vienna and its Czechoslovak counterpart in Prague, it even had an international dimension.[573]

In planning the exhibition, the organisers referred back to the National Museum's 1951 display on the Enlightenment. 'Discussion of the concept of the [Renaissance] Exhibition' a preliminary report suggested, 'should begin with an analysis of the achievements, but also the clear errors, in the organisation…of the Enlightenment Exhibition'.[574] The earlier exhibition was criticised for a lack of clarity in its periodisation, and a failure to emphasise strongly enough 'the history of the masses of the people'.[575] Of course, the role of key individuals – 'frontrunners…titans of thought' – was still envisioned as an integral part of the new exhibition, but they had to be presented in a way that highlighted their position as 'representatives of the masses'.[576] A more thorough application of materialist principles was also recommended. Attention was drawn to the overuse of the idea of rationalism in the exhibition on the Enlightenment, a concept which 'the classics of Marxism…did not use at all' when writing about the era.[577] 'Rationalism', it was claimed, had been utilised by 'certain

[569] Ibid.
[570] Lorentz, 'Muzeum Narodowe', p. 77.
[571] AMNW 1162a, p. 7.
[572] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 166-7.
[573] Ibid.
[574] AMNW 1162a, p. 344.
[575] Ibid.
[576] Ibid.
[577] Ibid., p. 345.

currents of bourgeois historiography' to 'obscure the role of materialism'; in the Renaissance exhibition it had to be kept within its 'proper limits'.[578] Regarding historiography more generally, the exhibition had to counter the effects of 'bourgeois science in its decaying stage in the era of imperialism', which would be contrasted against 'the achievements of Soviet historical science in its various branches'.[579]

Several key themes were identified as being of signal importance in the construction of this museological narrative of the Renaissance, which, in accordance with the ideological current of the time, was framed in Marxist terms. The initial plan sketched out various broad sections which considered the trends of the era from a continental perspective, before zooming in to the national level.[580] A rough chronology was outlined, which divided the exhibition's temporal framework – which covered the period from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries – into smaller segments, while another section was to be devoted to 'great men of the Polish Renaissance'.[581] Though each part covered specific aspects of the period, there were several issues that needed to be sustained across the exhibition in its entirety. Throughout, it was deemed necessary to illustrate the 'development of forces and relations of production, expressed in the unquestionable economic development of Poland'.[582] Thus topics like the growth of industry, mining and trade were brought to the fore, mapped out against the related issue of the formation of class identities and the inevitable conflicts these changes engendered. Particular attention would be paid to the 'exploitation…and oppression of peasants' and the evolution of 'the progressive struggle against the nobility, oligarchy and the Church', in order present the rulers of People's Poland as the heirs to the 'positive' traditions of the Renaissance.[583]

How did these ideas play out in practice? Taking an imaginary walk through the exhibition's forty-one rooms gives provides an insight into how these issues were presented to the

[578] Ibid.
[579] Ibid., p. 349.
[580] Ibid., pp. 345-6.
[581] Ibid., pp. 344-9.
[582] Ibid., p. 346.
[583] Ibid., pp. 346, 349.

viewing public, helping us to understand what a major Stalinist-era museological narrative actually looked like. Like the Enlightenment exhibition before it, the displays were supposed to interpret key issues in an engaging and accessible manner.[584] Numerous artefacts were used to illustrate various aspects of the narrative, but without overwhelming the viewer or overcrowding the available space.[585] Each room dealt with separate (though ultimately interrelated) topics, but the overall ideological thrust of the exhibition was clear from the very beginning. The first twelve rooms – which dealt with the development of productive forces, changes in social relations, the evolution of the state and legal thought – foregrounded some of the main topics which had been emphasised in the planning process. From the very first room – which bore the heading 'The Breakdown of Feudalism in the Renaissance Epoch' – the exhibition's Marxist inflection was clearly expressed. 'Medieval relations', the guidebook explained, 'were characterized by the exploitation of serfs… [by] the great feudal lords', whose 'political and social superiority…found its ideological support in the 'science' of the Church, which proclaimed the inviolability of the social order'.[586] 'In the Age of Renaissance', however, 'the oppressed masses broke with the medieval worldview, rejected the authority of the ecclesiastical authorities, and mobilised against their previous oppressors'.[587]

Social conflict – illustrated in the first room by a reproduction woodcut showing the storming of a castle during the German Peasants' War in 1525 – was further highlighted in subsequent sections.[588] Described as 'an essential feature' of the period, it was linked with what the exhibition termed ongoing 'struggles for sovereignty and the unification of national states'.[589] Examples were provided from across Europe; in France, it was claimed, the beginning of the Renaissance marked the outbreak of the 'national-liberation struggle of the French people…headed by Joan of Arc', while Thomas Müntzer and Jan Hus were said to

[584] Ibid., p. 7.
[585] Ibid.
[586] Stanisław Arnold, Juliusz Bardach, Waldemar Voisé, Tadeusz Nowak, Bogdan Suchodolski, Bogusław Leśnodorski, Hanna Dziechcińska, Zofia Lissa and Stanisław Lorentz, *Odrodzenie w Polsce: Wystawa w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie, 1953-1954* (Warsaw, 1953), pp. 7-8.
[587] Ibid., p. 8.
[588] Ibid., p. 8.
[589] Ibid., p. 9.

have played similar roles in the German and Czech lands.[590] These clashes were presented as the result of a growing sense of class consciousness, pitting the peasantry and the bourgeoisie – 'the patriotic classes' of Renaissance-era society – against the Church and nobility.[591] This latter group were described as displaying 'anti-national' tendencies, striving against the centralisation of the state, severely impeding the progress of what Marx called 'the most powerful political factor in the rapid development of the country'.[592] Their 'selfish policies' were blamed for the failure of attempts to 'unify all Polish lands', which, according to the maps and documents on display in the exhibition, included Silesia in its entirety (thus reinforcing the validity of Poland's new post-1945 borders).[593]

To explain the emergence and consolidation of social classes, the first part of the exhibition devoted considerable attention to the development of rural and urban society, which was presented in economic terms. In this context, life in the countryside was often portrayed (probably not unfairly) as unremittingly miserable. The defining feature in rural areas was the 'ruthless oppression of the peasant masses' which accompanied agricultural expansion and the related spread of serfdom.[594] Nonetheless, peasants were not simply shown as passive victims. Serfdom was introduced in an atmosphere of 'fierce class struggle', in which 'the peasant defended himself with all his might against the growing exploitation'.[595] Examples of resistance – from economic sabotage to fully-fledged armed uprisings, such as that led by 'the peasant Mucha' in Pokucie – were produced to testify to the ongoing conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors.[596] Cities, too, were shown as hotbeds of social unrest. Here, the key theme was the emergence of the bourgeoisie because of changing methods of production.[597] In accordance with Marxist theory, the bourgeoisie of the Renaissance period were accorded a progressive social role, standing 'in the first rank of

[590] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[591] Ibid., p. 9.
[592] Ibid., pp. 10-11, 20.
[593] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[594] Ibid., pp. 10-13, 26-27.
[595] Ibid., p. 13.
[596] Ibid., p. 27.
[597] Ibid., pp. 13-19.

opposition to feudal-papal power' and forming an (admittedly 'short-lived and limited') alliance with urban plebians to counter the depredations of the richer classes.[598]

It might be noted at this point that the initial parts of the exhibition say very little about the intellectual, artistic, and scientific achievements which, in Western society, have been traditionally seen as the hallmarks of the Renaissance period. Of course, these elements formed an integral part of the displays, but in keeping with exhibition's Marxist approach, it was only in the later sections that they received sustained attention. In order to properly understand them from a Marxist perspective, it was necessary first to outline the economic and social context in which they arose; the 'superstructure' could not be appreciated without reference to the 'base'. As the guidebook's introduction explained, it was 'the development of productive forces and progress in the field of the commodity-monetary economy' that provided the 'prerequisites for the creative role of the bourgeoisie', the epoch's great cultural and intellectual innovators.[599] Above all, the Renaissance was to be seen as not just a period of great creativity, but as the crucible of modernity. It was then, the guidebook claimed, that Poland laid 'the foundations of its modern development'.[600] 'The achievements of the Polish Renaissance' spoke to the post-war present, marking 'the path of valuable, militant traditions of the struggle for truth and justice'.[601]

With this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that the first room to concentrate specifically on an individual figure (there were several such rooms over the course of the exhibition) focused not on a scientist or an artist, but rather a humanist thinker and 'progressive ideologue', Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski (1503-72). An acquaintance of both Erasmus and Martin Luther, Frycz Modrzewski – sometimes referred to as 'the founder of Polish democratic thought' – was an ideal candidate for special treatment.[602] In his writings – most

[598] Ibid., pp. 16, 36.
[599] Ibid., p. 5.
[600] Ibid.
[601] Ibid., pp. 5-6.
[602] Dalibor Roháč, ''It is by Unrule that Poland Stands': Institutions and Political Thought in the Polish-Lithuanian Republic', *The Independent Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2008), p. 220; Katarzyna Pisarska, 'More's Utopia in Poland: Translations and Impact—An Overview', *Utopian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2016), p. 348.

notably the 1551 treatise *De republica emendanda* (On the Improvement of the Republic) – he advocated ideas such as the equality of all citizens before the law, and showed himself to be a sharp citric of the nobility and the structure of the Church.[603] The exhibition drew attention to Frycz Modrzewski's 'noble and heated defence of the peasantry', presenting him as a patriot who was deeply concerned with the fate of the nation.[604] Though it primarily focused on his support for the oppressed classes, attention was also drawn to his desire for the Polish Church to secure independence from the Papacy, an issue which had more than a little relevance in the context of the 1950s.[605] It was also noted that the triumph of 'backwardness' in subsequent centuries had obscured the great man's significance; only in People's Poland was 'the deep humanitarian content of [his work] fully appreciated', restoring him 'to his rightful place in the ranks of the most prominent fighters for progress'.[606]

The humanist thought represented by Frycz Modrzewski set the theme for the successive sections of the display, which concentrated more specifically on intellectual, scientific, and cultural developments. Naturally, the Reformation – which, in ideologically correct Stalinist-era historiography, had to be portrayed as a movement that was 'in all its phases…progressive' – loomed large throughout the exhibition.[607] In the works of Frycz Modrzewski and others like him, the 'deep aspirations of humanism were expressed'.[608] The purest realisation of these ambitions was to be found in the activities of the Polish Brethren, non-trinitarian Protestants who, it was claimed, remained a bastion of 'rationalist and critical thought' even when the 'militant momentum of humanistic knowledge' began to weaken in the face of the Counter-Reformation.[609] As Piotr Wilczek has observed, the Polish Brethren were particularly popular amongst communist policy makers, who simplified the complex aspects of the movement's history and theology in order to present them as 'model victims

[603] Ibid.
[604] Arnold et al., *Odrodzenie w Polsce*, pp. 20-23.
[605] Ibid., p. 22; AMNW 1162b, p. 101.
[606] Arnold et al., *Odrodzenie w Polsce*, p. 23.
[607] Łukasz Kurdybacha, cited in Natalia Nowakowska, 'Forgetting Lutheranism: historians and the early Reformation in Poland (1517—1548)', *Church History and Religious Cultur*e, Vol. 92, No. 2/3 (2012), p. 291.
[608] Arnold et al., *Odrodzenie w Polsce*, p. 6.
[609] Ibid., p. 81.

of Catholic bigotry and intolerance'.[610] As well as having their own section in the exhibition, the Brethren made numerous appearances in other parts of the display, usually to illustrate how their progressive philosophy resulted in persecution. The guidebook explained that their 'social radicalism' – which (quoting Engels) was 'a direct expression of the needs of the peasants and plebeians' – earned them the hatred of the clergy and Catholic nobility.[611] It accorded the Brethren a position in the 'left wing of the [Reformation] movement', lauding them as advocates for the 'oppressed masses' and a powerful 'reflection of the militant character of Renaissance rationalism'.[612]

In the realm of art and literature, the energising impulse of humanist thought was foregrounded through a series of displays which dealt with important individuals and trends of the era. Connections were established between Renaissance humanism and linguistic nationalism[613] – important Polish writers of the Reformation period such as Mikołaj Rej, Marcin Bielski and Jan Kochanowski were presented as creators of a progressive national literary tradition – while in the visual arts a strong emphasis was placed on the emergence of realism.[614] In contrast to medieval art, the guidebook explained, Renaissance art 'broke with idealism in favour of realism', and was imbued with humanistic content which foregrounded 'the struggle for freedom of conscience and the liberation of man'.[615] This was illustrated through a selection of (original and reproduction) paintings and sculptures, which highlighted the link between Polish and European art of the period while at the same time stressing the former's position as 'national art, separate within the [Renaissance] framework'.[616] A fifteenth century painting of St. Barbara from Wrocław, for example, was said to show 'Slavic facial features' that testified to 'the artist's tendency to clearly locate his

[610] Piotr Wilczek, 'The 'myth' of the Polish Reformation in modern historiography', in Peter Opitz, ed., *The Myth of the Reformation* (Göttingen, 2013), pp. 64-65.
[611] Arnold et al., *Odrodzenie w Polsce*, p. 25.
[612] Ibid., p. 64.
[613] This link has, of course, been famously discussed by Benedict Anderson. See also Alan Patten, 'The humanist roots of linguistic nationalism', *History of Political Thought*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2006) Summer 2006, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer 2006), pp. 223-262.
[614] Ibid., pp. 43-44, 75-78. It also worth noting the fact that the exhibition also drew attention to folk art and literary traditions; a particular conception of folk culture was enthusiastically promoted by the communist regime. See Anna Markowska, 'Around 1948: The 'Gentle Revolution' and Art History', *Artium Quaestiones*, Vol. 30 (2019), pp. 148-154.
[615] Arnold et al., *Odrodzenie w Polsce*, p. 90.
[616] Ibid.

art in contrast to cosmopolitan trends'.[617] Not only was this very dubious claim significant in light of the changed frontiers of the post-war state (see chapter two), but it was also a non-too-subtle reminder of the bond between past and present. In this light, socialist realist art – created under the slogan 'socialist in content, national in form' – could be seen as the culmination of progressive artistic trends that were firmly rooted in the era of the Renaissance.

What art sought to depict, science endeavoured to understand, and it was the latter topic that formed what might be termed the focal point of the exhibition; 1953 was, after all, the Copernicus year. 'The Copernicus Hall at the current exhibition', the guidebook declared, 'is one of the manifestations of remembrance and gratitude of our nation in the Copernicus Year'.[618] Naturally, the Copernicus who emerged from the exhibition was uncompromisingly Polish. 'One of the world's most brilliant scholars and thinkers', Copernicus (who was referred to in the exhibition by his Polish name, Mikołaj Kopernik) was numbered among the nation's 'greatest sons'.[619] Though passing reference was made to disputes in 'bourgeois science' about his national and cultural identity, it was claimed that such issues had been resolved.[620] 'Democratic Germany' (i.e. the GDR) had halted this 'chauvinism' in its tracks by agreeing on the *polskość* ('Polishness') of 'our astronomer'; what Western scholars might have to say on the matter was of little interest.[621] More thoughtful observers have questioned the importance of the nationality debate – Czesław Miłosz, for example, thought the whole issue 'immaterial' – but at the time it was of considerable significance, not least in light of Nazi attempts to claim 'Nikolaus Kopernikus' for the Reich.[622]

[617] Ibid., p. 92.
[618] Ibid., p. 69.
[619] Ibid.
[620] Ibid.
[621] Ibid.
[622] Cited in Wiktor Weintraub, 'Review of The History of Polish Literature by Czesław Miłosz', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1970), p. 218; For Nazi interpretations of Copernicus, see Volker R. Remmert, 'In the Service of the Reich: Aspects of Copernicus and Galileo in Nazi Germany's Historiographical and Political Discourse', *Science in Context*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2001), pp. 333–359.

[Figure 3.2 – The Copernicus Hall in the Renaissance in Poland Exhibition at the National Museum in Warsaw][623]

Of course, central to the Copernicus display was an elaboration of his (literally) revolutionary discovery of heliocentrism. Alongside a large modern statue of the great astronomer, a stylised depiction of his theory dominated the main room, but pride of place was given to the original manuscript of *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres), which dated from around 1515-1540 and was on loan from the National Library in Prague.[624] In his scientific endeavours, Copernicus was as a potent embodiment of the Marxist quest for truth, simultaneously representing the glories of the past and the progressive principles that shaped the future. By encountering his life and work (which, in keeping with the rest of the exhibition, was presented with due reference to his class origins) visitors could share in Copernicus' belief that 'science can and should reveal a reality

[623] AMNW 1162a
[624] Arnold et al., *Odrodzenie w Polsce*, p. 72.

independent of us', the truth of which would inevitably be illuminated through 'proper scientific judgements'.[625] At the entrance to the Copernicus section, a wall plaque displayed a quote from Bolesław Bierut proclaiming Copernicus as an 'immortal teacher' of the Polish nation.[626] The intended lessons – the significance of 'his struggle for a true picture of the universe and liberation…from the bonds of theology and medieval scholasticism' as an expression of 'the progressive…anti-feudal aspirations of the popular masses' – could be applied not just to the famous astronomer, but to the narrative of the exhibition as a whole.[627]

In its entirety, the Renaissance exhibition provides a valuable example of a museological 'usable past'. By presenting a broad picture of Renaissance culture (albeit one interpreted in rather narrow terms), the exhibition answered the call for a full 'Marxist synthesis of the Polish Renaissance', which had been articulated in a 1952 article in the journal *Pamiętnik Literacki* (Literary Diary).[628] Its author bemoaned the lack of close cooperation between art historians and scholars of literature, which had led to an 'involuntary isolation and mechanical separation' between literary studies and research on the visual arts.[629] These fields – along with others, such as music and architecture, which have remained unexplored here – were brought together in the exhibition to paint a grand picture of the epoch. Yet this impressive portrait of the age said as much, if not more, about the contemporary reality of People's Poland as it did about the past. It was not simply a case of presenting history according to the dictates of the Marxist laws, but also an attempt to frame the radical changes taking place in post-war Polish society as the continuation – indeed, the culmination – of progressive trends that had deep historical roots.

This goal can most clearly be seen in the final section of the exhibition, entitled 'The Living Tradition of the Renaissance'. Again, the words of Bierut adorned the walls, proclaiming the

[625] Ibid., p. 53.
[626] AMNW 1162b, p. 189.
[627] Arnold et al., *Odrodzenie w Polsce*, p. 69.
[628] Kazimierz Budzyk, 'O syntezę polskiego Renesansu', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 43, No. 1-2. (1952), p. 2.
[629] Ibid., p. 51.

creative work of Copernicus, Frycz Modrzewski and others as 'the source of our native glory'.[630] The 'great hall' – the last of the exhibition's forty-one rooms – sought to bring the narrative up to the present day by highlighting the 'living ties' that bound the new Polish state to a period 'distant in time', but close to the present in terms of its 'progressive currents'.[631] 'People's Poland', the guidebook explained in its closing section, 'reverently takes over the legacy of the progressive struggles and emancipatory endeavours of the Renaissance'.[632] The 'popular revolution' transforming contemporary Poland was explained as the ultimate development of positive values embedded in the national past, rather than an alien imposition.[633] Throughout the exhibition, these values had been expounded, contextualised, and vividly illustrated but – great as they were – the achievements of the Renaissance were merely 'the first steps' towards the realisation of 'truth and happiness of man'.[634] It was only in People's Poland, the exhibition's conclusion claimed, that these progressive aspirations could come to full fruition, 'thanks to the ever-growing creative effort of the working people and the driving force of their power - the working class'.[635]

Staged in the capital, the National Museum's Renaissance exhibition clearly illustrates the contours of Stalinist-era museology from a central perspective, and indeed, the general principles which structured its approach were – broadly speaking – applied to displays in other institutions across the nation. Regional specificities, however, also shaped the presentation of historical narratives, and by comparing it with another important exhibition from the national periphery we can get a clearer picture of how a Marxist agenda might be adapted to deal with particular circumstances. *Dziesięć Wieków Śląska* ('Ten Centuries of Silesia') – a major permanent exhibition in Wrocław's Silesian Museum which opened in 1954[636] – provides a useful example of the way Marxist thought was applied to museology in a regional context. Though this exhibition has already been discussed in chapter two, this

[630] Arnold et al., *Odrodzenie w Polsce*, p. 113.
[631] Ibid., pp. 113-114.
[632] Ibid., p. 114.
[633] Ibid., pp. 113-114.
[634] Ibid., p. 114.
[635] Ibid.
[636] The exhibition opened on a particularly significant date – July 22, the National Day of the Rebirth of Poland, which commemorated the signing of the PKWN manifesto by the embryonic communist government – which further accentuates its propagandistic significance.

analysis was framed in terms of the exhibition's role as a transmitter of *polskość* as part of the post-war Polonisation of Lower Silesia. Undoubtedly, it was significant in this regard, but it is also worth devoting some attention to the way in which the exhibition interpreted the Marxist ideology of the high Stalinist period, as its distinctly regional flavour presented certain differences.

Of course, overall the two exhibitions followed a broadly similar Marxist approach. Though 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' was structured around smaller geographical parameters – as well as much wider temporal ones – it was, first and foremost, a narrative of class struggle which focused primarily on changing relationships between the productive forces. In fact, its stated goal – the documentation of the economic and cultural development of Silesia, alongside the struggle of the Silesian proletariat for social liberation – meant that it could actually place a firmer emphasis on material culture than the more intellectually-focused Renaissance exhibition in Warsaw.[637] Initial sections – which dealt with the period of Piast rule from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries – outlined the development of agriculture and industry by presenting an assortment of tools and other objects connected with the ordinary life of the peasantry, which were contrasted with the luxurious possessions of the ruling classes.[638] Like the Renaissance exhibition, the dynamics of feudal oppression and the vicissitudes of serfdom were accorded particular prominence. In the second section of the exhibition, which picked up the narrative in the fourteenth century, visitors were greeted by a large glass plaque adorned with the words of the Polish communist Julian Marchlewski (1866-1925).[639] 'The history of the peasants in Silesia under serfdom', Marchlewski declared, 'is one of the bleakest chapters in the entire history of the Polish peasantry'.[640] Peasant and proletarian resistance was also highlighted – ranging from refusal to fulfil feudal obligations to full-blown uprisings – and numerous documents were produced to attest to the ongoing defiance of the oppressed masses.[641]

[637] AMNWr III/66, p. 2.
[638] AAN 366 5/26, pp. 3-6.
[639] Ibid., p. 13.
[640] Ibid.
[641] Ibid., pp. 16-18, 35-37.

The wider chronology of the exhibition meant that it went far beyond the Renaissance, but once again similar ideas were articulated, this time in the context of the development of capitalism. Sections three and four – entitled respectively 'The Rise of Capitalist Exploitation' (covering the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries), and 'In the Chains of Capitalism' (1850 to 1945) – outlined further the development of productive forces and the deepening oppression which accompanied it.[642] A contemporary review praised the way the exhibition illustrated 'with numbers, words, and images the misery of the Silesian people', who had to endure hardship, famine, and widespread economic exploitation under their capitalist overlords.[643] Again, proletarian resistance occupied a leading role in the narrative. The Silesian Weavers' Revolt of 1844, for example, was presented alongside a quote from Marx declaring that 'ideological and [class]-conscious character' of the weavers' uprising far surpassed that of any previous workers' risings in France or England.[644] A class-based character was also applied to the (Upper) Silesian uprisings of 1919-21, with participants described as 'worker-insurgents' struggling against 'German coal barons'.[645] Silesia's 'liberation' in 1945 provided the culminating chapter in this story, marking the end of the capitalist era and the dawn of a 'new, socialist age' in Silesian history.[646]

Nonetheless, despite the broadly consistent Marxist approach, the Wrocław exhibition's focus on regional issues gave it a rather different complexion to the Varsovian one. 'Silesia has its own specific problems', the exhibition's architects explained, namely 'the problems of the Reclaimed Lands', where Poland's 'undisputed rights' were being 'undermined by enemy propaganda'.[647] This meant that the exhibition had to deal with the important issue – discussed in detail in chapter one – of reinforcing Poland's dubious historical claim to 'post-German' Lower Silesia by presenting a narrative that emphasised the region's historical *polskość*. As we have already seen, this involved the propagation of a nationalist

[642] Ibid., pp. 35-55.
[643] Julian Raba and Józef Leszczyński, 'Dziesięć wieków Śląska: wystawa w Muzeum Śląskim we Wrocławiu', *Sobótka: Organ Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Miłośników Historii*, Vol. 10, No. 1-2 (1955), p. 274.
[644] AAN 366 5/26, p. 44.
[645] Raba and Leszczyński, 'Dziesięć wieków Śląska', p. 276.
[646] AMNWr III/66, p. 8.
[647] Ibid., p. 1.

interpretation of history and culture that was heavily indebted to the right-wing intellectual tradition of *myśl zachodnia* (Western Thought). Such thinking was clearly evident in 'Ten Centuries of Silesia'. According to a contemporary review, the issues of the 'indigenous Polishness of the Silesian lands and the fight against the advancing wave of Germanization' ran like a 'through all the exhibition halls like a red thread', powerfully illustrating the 'organic relationship between Silesia and the rest of the Polish lands'.[648]

Intriguingly, however, this story of *polskość* also had a Marxist element. Essentially, this entailed mapping a narrative of class struggle onto a story of ethnic conflict, with Germans – or other non-Polish elements – occupying the position of feudal, and later capitalist, oppressors of an ethnically Polish peasantry and proletariat. This began in the Piast period, when Silesian feudal lords were said to have promoted 'alien colonisation' in order to increase their wealth.[649] Under Bohemian rule feudal oppression was said to have increased – in particular, this was connected to harsher forms of serfdom – but it was in the capitalist (Prussian) period that this abuse of the Polish masses supposedly reached its apogee.[650] For the 'German capitalists', the exhibition's planners claimed, Silesia became an area of 'plunder and exploitation'; various documents were presented to attest to the iniquity of their 'possessive plans'.[651] Germans were accused of 'suffocating' Silesia; its development was entirely down to the region's connections to Poland, and it was only 'under the leadership of the Polish working class' that capitalism could finally be defeated with Silesia's 'liberation' in 1945.[652]

In the light of the establishment of the GDR in 1949, and the subsequent cultivation of 'friendly' Polish-German relations within the framework of the Soviet bloc, not all Germans were shown in an entirely negative light.[653] Occasionally the exhibition referred to Polish-

[648] Raba and Leszczyński, 'Dziesięć wieków Śląska', p. 275.
[649] AAN 366 5/26, p. 8.
[650] Ibid., p. 13.
[651] AMNWr III/66, p. 7.
[652] Ibid., pp. 2, 7.
[653] As Sheldon Anderson has shown, these ostensibly 'fraternal' relations were often rather fraught. See Sheldon Anderson, *A Cold War in the Soviet Bloc: Polish-East German Relations, 1945-1962* (Boulder, 2001).

German cooperation, though this was always along class lines. Examples from the later Middle Ages and early modern period – when, as the display explained, the 'current of class struggle in the cities [was] gaining momentum' – showed instances where the 'Polish and German plebian masses' were said to have fought 'side-by-side'.[654] Later sections drew attention to joint efforts of Polish and German revolutionaries to create a 'common front against the ruling classes' in the early twentieth century.[655] Likewise, there were occasions when Poles came in for criticism too. Writing in the national paper *Trybuna Ludu*, Kazimierz Popiołek – one of the exhibition's coordinators – explained how a selection of documents presented to illuminate the aggressive tactics used by the 'German propertied classes' against the 'Polish popular masses' also implicated elements of the former group's Polish counterparts.[656] 'These documents', Popiołek claimed, spoke 'of the treacherous attitude of the Polish propertied classes', who, motivated by economic gain, were said to have colluded with the German oppressors, thus 'betraying the interests of the Polish popular masses'.[657]

These examples, however, did not detract from the dominant theme of a Polish-German conflict that revolved around issues of class. Indeed, if anything, they amplified it. Given that the overwhelming mass of the Silesian population was said to be ethnically Polish – the extent of German colonisation was even said to have been exaggerated by 'reactionary scholarship' – it would be Poles who led the way in fighting for social liberation, even if they sometimes stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the German oppressed classes.[658] The latter could only follow their example, and would be bound to agree with the pronouncements of German 'progressive thinkers' – highlighted in the exhibition – that Silesia was culturally Polish .[659] As for those members of the Polish bourgeoisie who had made common cause with their German counterparts, their 'treachery' could again be explained by reference to their narrow class interests, which had caused them to place their own needs above that of the nation. 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' thus presents a fascinating example of the way in which

[654] AAN 366 5/26, p. 26.
[655] Raba and Leszczyński, 'Dziesięć wieków Śląska', p. 276.
[656] 'Dziesięć wieków Śląska', *Trybuna Ludu* (20 September, 1954), in AMNWr III/66, p. 9.
[657] Ibid.
[658] AAN 366 5/26, p. 8.
[659] Ibid., p. 47. Examples included the Evangelical pastor Johann Wilhelm Pohle (1742-1801) and the writer Johann Gottlieb Schummel (1748-1813).

a Marxist agenda could be given a regional inflection. While the Renaissance exhibition in Warsaw had foregrounded the role of the bourgeoisie as the 'progressive class' in Renaissance society, 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' placed a stronger emphasis on the peasantry and proletariat, who kept the flame of *polskość* alive despite the machinations of the 'alien interlopers' who formed the ruling class. Such interpretations were, of course, deeply ahistorical, but they allowed events like the Silesian Weavers' Uprising – which could not really be described as 'Polish' – to be subsumed into a wider narrative of national and social liberation. In 'Ten Centuries of Silesia', ethnic conflict and class struggle were essentially two sides of the same coin.

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The attempt to reframe museology according to the dictates of historical materialism provides one of the clearest reflections of the influence of state ideology on the field during the Stalinist period. Exhibitions like 'Fr. Piotr Ściegienny Against the Background of the Epoch' in Kielce, 'The Renaissance in Poland' in Warsaw, or 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' in Wrocław presented a vision of history framed in Marxist socio-economic terms, which emphasised the inevitable march of the forces of 'progress' and provided a ready supply of 'heroes' who could be redeployed in the service of the PZPR. They interpreted the past in a way that seemed radically new, heralding the dawning of a new epoch, which – when considered in the context of the vast historical tableaux brought to life in Polish museums of the time – could be understood as something that was deeply rooted in national tradition. In this sense, these narratives provide a prime example of the idea of a 'usable past'. They offered the possibility of interpreting the transformation of post-war Polish society not as an external imposition, in which Soviet ideas were merely imported and articulated in a Polish context, but as something natural, the final chapter in a distinctly national story built up of interlocking sections of Foucauldian 'evolutive time'. The same notion could be applied to the socialist realist turn in the art world, historicised as the latest development in the far-reaching evolution of Polish realism, which stretched back to the Middle Ages and incorporated the many of the nation's best-known artists. Here, then, we are dealing with

the museum as a 'backteller', an institution which – as Tony Bennett puts it – 'materially instantiates…retrospective prophecies' by applying a particular social coding to its visualisation of the past, which, in this case, meant foregrounding a story of socialism's triumph.[660]

At the same time, it is impossible to escape the fact that – however 'new' the interpretative framework – these narratives were, by and large, firmly situated within the established national historical and cultural canon. True, in certain aspects it represented a clear departure from previous tendencies; foregrounding the Polish Brethren, for example, can be seen as an attempt to undermine the persistent idea that Polish identity was defined primarily in religious terms through the trope of the *Polak-Katolik* (Ściegienny's anti-clericalism was also helpful in this regard).[661] Yet the defining element remained nationality, framed in ethnic terms. Poland's Stalinist rulers may have set the museological agenda, but their power was not unlimited, and the attempt to impose an unequivocally Marxist vision of culture had to be refracted through existing ideas about the nation. Though outwardly the cultural sphere appeared to have shifted radically, the impression was, perhaps, somewhat superficial. After all, many of the key displays discussed here were, under their ideological facades, reconfigurations of traditional nationalist narratives. While the communists might have sought to promote their own heroes, the most effective ones – from Copernicus to Ściegienny – were also emphatically Polish; their appeal ultimately came not from any 'progressive' tendencies they may have shown, but from their membership (real or perceived) within the broader national community. Within the seriated temporal framework presented in the museum, they helped advance an agenda framed in terms of 'progress' which embodied the 'evolutive' historicity traditionally associated with Whig histories of classical liberalism. Though Marxist and Whig interpretations utilised different 'objective' and 'empirical' understandings of 'progress', both were grounded in evolutive teleology. The

[660] Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge*, pp. 105-106.

[661] In this sense, it can be seen as a not-unwelcome counterbalance to what Brian Porter-Szűcs has identified as the 'highly exclusionary' Catholic narrative of Polish history, which – far more than national demography – has served as the basis for the continued power of the idea of the *Polak-Katolik* (i.e. the notion that to be a Pole means being a Catholic). See Brian Porter, 'The Catholic Nation: Religion, Identity, and the Narratives of Polish History', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2001), pp. 289-299.

overlap in temporal mechanics thus reveals the significance of a broader inheritance, through which a triumphal nationalist narrative could be reframed in socialist terms.

4

Sovietising Society: Museums for the Masses

In November 1947, in the small village of Poronin – a popular resort in the Tatra mountains a few kilometres away from Zakopane – a new museum opened which was unlike any heretofore seen in Poland. Created on the initiative of the *Towarzystwo Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej* (Polish-Soviet Friendship Society, or TPPR), the museum was intended to commemorate Lenin's two-year sojourn in the area in 1913-1914, part of which he spent in the vicinity of the Podhalian village.[662] By the early 1950s – by which point the museum site in Poronin had been enhanced by the reconstruction of the inn Lenin was thought to have frequented, along with a recreation of his rooms in a house in nearby Biały Dunajec – it was averaging around 10,000 visitors a month.[663] Writing in *Muzealnictwo*, Henryka Cichocka explained how the museum painted 'a picture of Lenin's great revolutionary and creative activity throughout his life'.[664] As well as presenting 'the brilliant revolutionary theoretician and practitioner against the background of his contemporary epoch', it also illustrated the continuation of Lenin's legacy under Stalin, and the achievements of the 'countries of popular democracy, a great camp of peace and progress around the world'.[665] Poronin, Cichocka claimed, should serve as a stimulus for the development of new methods to realise 'the tasks and goals of our historical museology'.[666] Citing several (predictably formulaic) entries in the museum's visitors book – 'learning about Lenin's life and struggle will be a signpost for us in…building socialism in Poland', read one typical example – Cichocka drew attention to what she called the museum's 'didactic and mobilizing role', which was the apparent source of its popularity.[667]

[662] Maciej Mętrak, 'Cokół do wynajęcia – muzeum i pomnik W.I. Lenina w Poroninie w pamięci współczesnych mieszkańców Podhala' in Maria Małanicz-Przybylska, ed., *Co Słychać na Podhalu: Tradycja we Współczesności: Praca Zbiorowa* (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 191-197.
[663] Henryka Cichocka, 'Muzeum Lenina w Poroninie', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 1-2 (1952), p. 17.
[664] Ibid., p. 15.
[665] Ibid.
[666] Ibid.
[667] Ibid., p. 17.

In truth, the museum's much-vaunted appeal was a myth. Its sizable visitor numbers could more readily be explained by the fact that it was often a compulsory destination on officially organised trips and outings, with the quasi-religious character of Marxist-Leninist ideology making it something of a 'holy site', to which pilgrimages had to be made.[668] Given its status as a 'specialist' museum, directly linked to party ideology, the museum does not – strictly speaking – fall into the same category as those under consideration in this study. While the rest of the museums discussed here continue to function successfully in post-communist Poland, the Lenin Museum in Poronin disappeared with the system, closing for good in 1990. Yet its creation points us towards another important element of Stalinist-era museology, namely the attempt to 'Sovietise' Polish society and promote the achievements of the 'homeland of the Great October Socialist Revolution'. As Patryk Babiracki has explained in a detailed and thought-provoking study, culture lay at the very heart of Soviet 'soft-power' initiatives, in which Polish elites were – with greater and lesser degrees of success – co-opted in an attempt to 'popularise the USSR via propaganda, mobilise the masses for shifting political goals, and legitimate Soviet hegemony'.[669] Babiracki's work considers a wide range of cultural exchanges, but has relatively little to say on the topic of museums. Yet they had an undeniably important contribution to make to the process of Sovietisation, which, in a museal context, went far beyond the application of Marxist principles to museological depictions of Polish history and culture discussed thus far. Museums had to play their part in an even more ambitious projects – 'selling' the Soviet Union to the Polish population and bringing culture to the masses – and it is to these issues which we now turn.

Given the widespread antipathy towards the Soviet Union in Polish society, this first task would be something of a 'hard sell'. According to Czesław Miłosz, 'the history of Polish-Russian relations can largely be reduced to the collision of two different concepts of freedom', and, though subjective, this kind of thinking carried a broader resonance; given the Polish experience of Russian imperialism in both its Tsarist and Soviet forms, for many

[668] Mętrak, 'Cokół do wynajęcia', pp. 199-200; Krzysztof Kosiński, '„Religianctwo": napięcie między ideologią a religią w świadomości członków i działaczy PZPR', *Polska 1944/45-1989: Studia i Materiały*, Vol. 12 (2014), p. 111. Maciej Mętrak's exploration of the museum's place within the memory of local inhabitants reveals the fact that it was often treated as a joke; very little about it – both in terms of the exhibits, and its apparent appeal – was actually regarded as authentic.
[669] Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*, pp. 10-11.

the Soviet version of 'freedom' was irrevocably tainted.[670] Nonetheless, the new Polish authorities, with the help of their Soviet allies, soon began an enthusiastic and far-reaching programme aimed at promoting Soviet culture and society; only by following the example of the 'Great Soviet Nation' could the 'foundations of socialism' be laid.[671] By the later 1940s, the pace of these efforts had begun to accelerate. Regular mass rallies accompanied the various commemorative dates of what has been termed the socialist 'liturgical calendar', while an increasing volume of radio broadcasts and panegyric publications attempted to embed a positive image of the Soviet Union in the hearts and minds of the Polish population.[672] In museological terms, the most basic contribution to this process was the staging of propagandistic displays which sought to glorify the Soviet Union and its achievements. 1947 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the October Revolution – which, as Jan C. Behrends has observed, was a transnational event celebrated across the Soviet bloc – and that year a celebratory exhibition was organised at the National Museum in Warsaw.[673] The display – conceived not in Warsaw, but in Moscow – presented the accomplishments of the Soviet system over the last thirty years, bringing visitors face to face with the 'strong, determined and triumphant countenances' of the Soviet Union's most 'outstanding citizens'.[674]

Of course, most outstanding of all Soviet citizens was Stalin himself, and, as in the USSR, a hagiographical treatment of the *Vozhd* became a ubiquitous part of Polish state propaganda in the late 1940s and early 1950s. 1949 may have been the 'Chopin Year', but it was also the Soviet leader's 70th birthday, and unsurprisingly it was the latter who enjoyed the grander official celebrations.[675] In honour of his birthday, numerous displays were staged, both in museums and elsewhere. In Olsztyn, for example, a display dedicated to 'the life, activity and struggle of the Great Leader of the international proletariat' was organised in the

[670] Cited in ibid., pp. 239-240.
[671] Załuska, 'Wytyczne do programu prac muzealnictwa', p. 9.
[672] Krzysztof Kosiński, '„Religianctwo"', p.111; Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*, p. 112; Tighe, 'Forward to the Six-Year Plan!', pp. 9-10.
[673] Jan C. Behrends, 'Nation and Empire: Dilemmas of Legitimacy during Stalinism in Poland (1941-1956)', *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2009), 453.
[674] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 147.
[675] Behrends, 'Nation and Empire', p. 456.

common room of the District Council of Trade Unions (located in the local theatre), and birthday gifts were gathered from inhabitants of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship.[676] Along with other offerings from across the nation, they were transported to Warsaw and exhibited in the National Museum, where, over the course of three days, they were seen by around 150,000 people and even featured in the newsreel *Polska Kronika Filmowa*.[677] In the words of Vice-Premier Hilary Minc, the 811 gifts on display were a reflection of the 'powerful tide of enthusiasm, heartfelt feelings of gratitude, and love caused by the jubilee of Joseph Stalin amongst millions of Poles'. [678] After the exhibition's conclusion, a special train departed for Moscow, carrying 'the gifts of Polish society to Comrade Stalin'.[679]

[Figure 4.1 – Visitors to the 'Exhibition of Gifts Offered by Polish Society to Joseph Stalin Upon his Seventieth Birthday' in the National Museum in Warsaw, 1949][680]

[676] Witold Gieszczyński, 'Obchody 70. rocznicy urodzin Józefa Stalina w grudniu 1949 roku (na przykładzie województwa olsztyńskiego)' *Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie*, No. 3 (2019), pp. 580, 583.
[677] Ibid., p. 580; Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 147; PKF 52/49 (21/12/1949), available at http://repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=pl/node/5068 [accessed 23 May, 2022]
[678] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 147; 'Wystawa darów polskiego świata pracy dla Wodza Postępowej Ludzkości', *Kurier Szczeciński* (14 December, 1949), p. 1.
[679] Gieszczyński, 'Obchody 70. rocznicy urodzin Józefa Stalina', p. 580.
[680] NAC 3/39/0/-/4072-2

One wonders what Stalin would have made of this motely selection of presents – perhaps he never even saw them – but, for the Polish population, these kinds of displays provided a clear reflection of the power dynamics in Stalin's new empire. Yet when it came to 'selling' the new political reality, their efficacy was limited. Images from the exhibition show visitors processing through, no doubt somewhat amused by the curios on display – the city of Gdańsk, for example, donated a large metal model of a medieval galleon – but they were unlikely to leave with a new-found love for Stalin burning in their hearts. Exhibitions of this nature allowed the unadulterated propagandistic discourse of the mass rally to encroach into the space of the museum itself, but in reality they represented one of the most primitive ways that the museum could participate in 'building socialism'. Praising the USSR and its leaders was, of course, expected in Stalinist Poland, but museums could go beyond mere praise. They were, after all, cultural spaces, and – in the context of promoting Polish-Soviet friendship – they could play a more constructive role by actively promoting the virtues of Soviet culture[681]. As an institution, the museum's strength – and its problematic nature – lies in its claim to authority and knowledge. Instead of merely echoing the same slogans heard in propaganda, the museum could actively 'enhance' them by drawing on its status as a perceived repository of specialist knowledge to 'prove' the viability of Soviet culture as a model for People's Poland.

To this end, museums across Poland staged numerous displays which dealt with specific elements of Soviet culture, such the National Museum in Warsaw's 1948 exhibition on Soviet books and literature. Featuring no less a figure than Julian Tuwim[682] on the honorary committee, the exhibition presented around 4,000 works in all the languages of the USSR in order to document the 'cultural development of the peoples of the Soviet Union'.[683] Divided into eleven sections – which ranged from the obligatory 'classics of Marxism-Leninism'

[681] As Patryk Babiracki explains, the Soviets viewed culture as 'the sum total of all artistic output'. Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*, p. 13.
[682] An outstanding poet and member of the avant-garde *Skamander* circle in the inter-war period, Tuwim's return to Poland from the USA in 1946 was a considerable propaganda coup for Poland's communist rulers, though his last years in Poland present a rather sad ending to a remarkable life. See Magnus J. Kryński, 'Politics and Poetry: The Case of Julian Tuwim', *The Polish Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1973), pp. 3-33.
[683] *Wystawa Książki Radzieckiej w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie* (Warsaw, 1948), p. 5.

through to science, law, philosophy, history, children's literature and even 'the aesthetics of the book' – it sought to familiarise a Polish audience with the 'most ideological…progressive [and] revolutionary literature in the world'.[684] Throughout the exhibition, the democratising achievements of Soviet publishing were heavily emphasised. Compared to pre-revolutionary Russia – where culture had been monopolised by 'the capitalists and the ruling classes', who limited the dissemination of literary works to a 'small, privileged part of society' – in the Soviet Union literature was made available to the 'widest possible masses'.[685] As the guidebook explained, across the USSR a 'dense network of bookstores, kiosks, libraries and reading rooms' brought high-quality and affordable works to millions of ordinary Soviet citizens, educating them 'in the spirit of patriotism, friendship' and instilling a heightened awareness of progressive ideas of 'brotherhood, freedom and equality'.[686]

Despite the propagandistic rhetoric, these were not merely empty slogans. In true Soviet style, the exhibition backed up its grandiose claims with a veritable barrage of statistics illustrating the impressive accomplishments of the thirty years since the October Revolution. Publication figures from the Russian Empire for the three decades before 1917 (during which a total of two billion books were published) were contrasted against those for the period 1917-1947 (eleven billion), with the average number of books per person rising from 0.7 in 1913 to 4.11 in 1939.[687] Comparisons were also made with the capitalist world, with the exhibition boasting of the fact that the USSR overtook 'even the most advanced countries' in the total number of works published.[688] As early as 1926 the Soviet Union had overtaken Germany, Britain and France, and the following year output was shown to be three times higher in the USSR than in the USA.[689] In part, this could possibly be accounted for by the mass production of political literature – which made up twenty-nine percent of new books published between 1928 and 1947 – but plenty of space was accorded to classic works of literature.[690] Alongside Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekov and Gogol, the exhibition also

[684] Ibid., pp. 5-6.
[685] Ibid., p. 6.
[686] Ibid., pp. 12, 31.
[687] Ibid., p. 10.
[688] Ibid.
[689] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[690] Ibid., p. 15.

featured works by such luminaries as Dante, Shakespeare, Dickens, Hugo, Zola, Stendhal, Heine, Goethe, Schiller, and Flaubert. Again, statistics were deployed to show how Soviet publishing disseminated these texts on a hereto unforeseen scale. Compared with the last three decades of Imperial Russia, the period since the Revolution saw publications of Shakespeare and Dickens more than double; for Heine, the figure was nearly ten times greater.[691]

As well as celebrating the triumphs of Soviet publishing, the exhibition also highlighted the issue of mass education, without which these works would remain confined to the narrow intellectual circles of pre-revolutionary Russia. It was 'only thanks to the overthrow of tsarism and the introduction of a socialist system', the guidebook explained, that 'millions of people could begin to enjoy the benefits of education, science and culture'.[692] Statistics showed the huge increase in investment in education, which in 1946 was said to be more than 175 times greater than it had been in 1914.[693] Particular attention was drawn to the eradication of illiteracy; estimated at around seventy-three percent in 1914, it had almost disappeared by the last years of the Stalinist period.[694] Like the rapid development of publishing – Poland soon developed a 'gigantic but clumsy' Soviet-style industry of its own – this was a clear example for Polish communists to emulate.[695] Poland had its own literacy problems, albeit on a much smaller scale than the Soviet Union. The census of 1931 revealed an illiteracy rate of nearly twenty percent, but over the course of the communist period it fell to almost zero.[696] Indeed, it was the year after the exhibition of Soviet books and literature that the Polish government passed the 'Illiteracy Elimination Act'; though there is, of course, no direct link between the two, it nonetheless reflects the determination of Poland's new rulers to put the educational and cultural model outlined in the display into practice.[697]

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[691] Ibid., p. 22.
[692] Ibid., p. 6.
[693] Ibid., p. 8.
[694] Ibid., pp. 6, 8.
[695] Carl Tighe, *The Politics of Literature: Poland, 1945-1989* (Cardiff, 1999), p. 73. For an overview of the communist-era publishing industry in Poland, see ibid., pp. 69-76.
[696] Ibid., p. 278.
[697] Magdalena Budnik, 'Combating Adult Illiteracy in the People's Republic of Poland (on the Example of Selected Documents of the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for

[Figure 4.2 – Exhibition of Soviet Books and Literature in the National Museum in Warsaw, 1948][698]

Two years later, a similar (albeit smaller) exhibition opened at the Silesian Museum in Wrocław – a reflection of the way museological currents flowed from the centre to the periphery – while other contemporary displays dealt with different elements of Soviet culture, such as architecture and fine art.[699] The former was the subject of the 1949 exhibition *Architektura Narodów ZSRR* (Architecture of the Nations of the USSR), again held in Warsaw's National Museum. The work of the Soviet All-Union Committee for Foreign Cultural Contacts, it presented Varsovians with some of the ideas shaping the urban regeneration taking place around them.[700] Soviet architecture was on the menu again at the

Combating Illiteracy in 1949–1951)', *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis: Folia Litteraria Polonica*, Vol. 37, No. 7 (2016), p. 45.

[698] NAC 3/3/0/37/806

[699] AMNWr III/47, p. 17.

[700] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, p. 140.

Silesian Museum in autumn 1953, but on the whole, it was fine art was most popular medium through which to present the achievements of Soviet culture.[701] Exhibitions dedicated to various aspects of Soviet fine art were staged across Poland, for example in The National Museum in Warsaw (1946, 1948, 1950), the Silesian Museum in Wrocław (1951), the Pomeranian Museum in Gdańsk (1950), and the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin (1951, 1955).[702]

The promotion of the culture of Poland's larger eastern neighbour was by no means limited to the post-revolutionary period. As Patryk Babiracki points out, Polish perceptions of Russia – particularly among the middle and upper classes – were often riven with contradictions; Russia may have been synonymous with imperialist oppression, but it was also the land of Tolstoy, Pushkin, Turgenev, and Tchaikovsky.[703] Pre-revolutionary high culture could thus also be co-opted into the process, and in Poland's museums one might be as likely to encounter cultural icons from the Tsarist period as their Soviet counterparts. This trend was reflected in exhibitions like the display of Russian painting from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries organised at the Pomeranian Museum in Gdańsk in 1950. A promotional statement prepared for the press and radio explained that the exhibition presented 'reproductions of the most outstanding works of Russian realism from the renowned Tretyakov Gallery'.[704] A selection of well-known artists were displayed, including Venetsianov, Briullov, Kramskoi and Repin. Due deference was paid to 'revolutionary themes', however, with the inclusion of works like Repin's 'They Did Not Expect Him' and 'Arrest of a Propagandist', as well as Surikov's dramatic 'Morning of the Streltsy Execution'. According to the press release, Russian art 'best expresses the interests of a wide audience' due to its 'excellent technical level'; though only in its early days, the exhibition had apparently already proved very popular.[705]

[701] AMNWr III/47, p. 18.
[702] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 112, 132, 152; AMNWr III/47, p. 17; AMNG 1/18, p. 37; APS 493/0/2/74, p. 13.
[703] Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*, p. 10.
[704] AMNG 1/37, p. 7.
[705] Ibid.

Indeed, for official propagandists, reaching back into the pre-revolutionary past could be a particularly fruitful exercise. Despite the anti-Russian hue colouring popular memory of the era of partition, both nations shared an experience of empire in the nineteenth century, providing a useful repertoire of historical figures who operated in both Polish and Russian contexts. These individuals could act as cultural 'bridges'; if presented correctly, they could put a certain gloss on Poland's return to the Russian sphere by suggesting the presence of deeper-rooted Polish-Russian cultural ties. One such figure was the Polish painter and printmaker Aleksander Orłowski, a participant in the 1794 Kościuszko Uprising who later settled in St. Petersburg, where he became a member of the Academy of Fine Arts, producing works for important figures in the Tsarist court. From a propagandistic perspective, his biography was not entirely straightforward – he had, after all, participated in an anti-Russian insurrection, even if it was directed against an imperialist foe – but such details could be smoothed out in order to turn him into a twentieth century cultural ambassador. A 1952 article in *Muzealnictwo* described Orłowski as one of 'those Polish artists of past centuries who, transferred to Tsarist Russia, succumbed to the charm of its vast landscapes and inhabitants, enriching with their talent both the Polish and Soviet heritage of national art'.[706] 'Both nations', it was claimed, could 'rightly consider [him] one of their first realists'.[707] An exhibition of his works organised that year by the National Museum in Cracow in connection with the annual Polish-Soviet Friendship Month was praised for emphasising his 'scathing satire, fighting for social justice'.[708]

Another initiative in this area was the practice of pairing famous partition-era Poles with Russian counterparts, stressing, if possible, their common world-views and mutual respect. A case in point is the combination of Jan Matejko and Ilya Repin, with the two famous realist painters sharing space in several exhibitions of the period. For example, in conjunction with the same Polish-Soviet Friendship Month of 1952 which inspired the Orłowski display in Cracow, a Matejko-Repin exhibition was organised by the *Muzeum Sztuki* (Museum of Art) in

[706] Helena Kęszycka, 'Wystawy w Miesiącu Pogłębienia Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 1-2 (1952), p. 44.
[707] Ibid.
[708] Ibid.

Łódź.[709] Of the numerous displays staged in conjunction with the Polish-Soviet Friendship Month, the Łódź exhibition was commended in *Muzealnictwo* (along with the Orłowski display, and another in Poznań entitled 'Museums of the Capital of the USSR') for showing the 'greatest independence and most interesting approach'.[710] Helena Kęszycka's article explained that the exhibition drew on the Russian's 'veneration' of the Polish artist, showing a selection of reproductions and photographs of paintings, alongside sketches, drawings, and 'accessible explanatory texts'.[711] The museum was also applauded for subsequently transposing this 'particularly didactic temporary exhibition' into 'local community halls, workplaces, and cultural centres'.[712] At the same time, the Museum of Western Pomerania presented its own exhibition devoted to the two painters, entitled 'Matejko and Repin: Representatives of Patriotism and Humanism'.[713] According to the local *Kurier Szczeciński*, the exhibition – staged in honour of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution – sought not only to present 'the rich work of both great masters of Polish and Soviet painting', but also to 'emphasise their mutual ties and influence'.[714] Like its counterpart in Łódź, the Szczcecin exhibition was also recycled, appearing in smaller local museums in Słupsk and Koszalin the following year.[715]

A similar example – this time from the world of literature – was the pairing of Alexander Pushkin with Adam Mickiewicz. In many ways, the association was a perfectly logical one; the two famous poets knew and respected each other, even if the more complicated nuances of their relationship were generally overlooked in contemporary Soviet and Polish scholarship.[716] Moreover, there was an already-established tradition – particularly

[709] Ibid.
[710] Załuska, 'Wytyczne do programu prac muzealnictwa', p. 8.
[711] Kęszycka, 'Wystawy w Miesiącu Pogłębienia Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej', p. 44. It is particularly interesting that it was Repin's respect for Matejko which was commented on; given the dynamics of Polish-Soviet relations, one might expect it to be the other way round. However, Repin's admiration for Matejko was, indeed, genuine, and he fiercely defended the Pole from contemporary critics who denounced his work as stale.
[712] Ibid., pp. 50-51.
[713] APS 493/0/2/74, p. 13.
[714] 'Dzieła Matejki i Repina na wystawie w Muzeum Pomorza Zach.', *Kurier Szczeciński* (14 November, 1952), p. 3.
[715] Analysis of the activity of the Museum in Słupsk, 1945-1955, APSł 386/8, p. 10; Skrzypek, 'Z historii muzealnictwa środkowopomorskiego', pp. 76-77.
[716] For more on the nature of Pushkin and Mickiewicz's relationship, see Megan Dixon, 'Pushkin and Mickiewicz in Moral Profile', *Pushkin Review*, Vol. 4 (2001), pp. 15-36; David M. Bethea, 'The Pushkin-Mickiewicz Connection, Once Again', *Pushkin Review*, Vol. 5 (2002), pp. 105-107.

prominent amongst pro-Russian loyalists in Tsarist Poland – of using their friendship as an emblem of a broader Russo-centric pan-Slavism.[717] This tendency became even more pronounced in the Stalinist era. Writing in 1949 – which marked Pushkin's 150th birthday – the prominent communist literary figure Leon Kruczkowski claimed that 'for us, the Polish nation, which today is striving towards common goals with the peoples of the Soviet Union, Pushkin appears as a particularly close and dear figure'.[718] He was significant 'not only because his genius broke the boundaries of the era', but also because of the way he 'broke international boundaries' through his relationship with Mickiewicz.[719] Their friendship, Kruczkowski declared, was 'one of those…which leaves a heartfelt mark on the fate of the nation and ignites the imagination of future generations. In its 'brilliant splendour', it 'appealed to the forces of tomorrow, to the forces that would grow up and fight for common freedom, common happiness'.[720]

The 'Pushkin Year' of 1949 – which, according to the communist literary critic Stefan Żółkiewski, would be 'an important contribution to the process of revolutionisation and democratisation of our culture' – also saw the opening of two parallel exhibitions dedicated to Mickiewicz and Pushkin at the National Museum in Warsaw.[721] Conceived in connection with the Pushkin jubilee of 1949 and the previous year's celebration of Mickiewicz's 150th birthday, the exhibitions were opened by Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz in the presence of Soviet ambassador Viktor Lebedev, reflecting their clear political and diplomatic significance.[722] The grand opening featured in the Polish Film Chronicle, which showed footage of the Polish and Soviet grandees in attendance and described the 'exhibition devoted to the two great poets' as a 'symbol of the friendship they shared'.[723] 'The aim of the exhibition', explained Marian Toporowski, curator of the Pushkin display, 'was to familiarize Polish society with the life and work of the great Russian poet, and to emphasize

[717] Dixon, 'Pushkin and Mickiewicz', p. 16.
[718] Cited in Marian Toporowski, *Puszkin w Polsce, Zarys Bibliograficzno-Literacki* (Cracow, 1950), p. 265.
[719] Ibid.
[720] Ibid.
[721] Cited in Dixon, 'Pushkin and Mickiewicz', p. 26.
[722] Masłowska, *Kronika Wystaw*, Vol. 1, pp. 143-144.
[723] PKF 28/49 (06/07/1949), available at http://repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=pl/node/5380 [accessed 15 July, 2022]

the ties that connected him with Poles, in particular with Adam Mickiewicz'.[724] Subsequently, the exhibitions – now combined into one overarching narrative entitled 'Mickiewicz-Pushkin' – toured across the country, visiting Cracow, Wrocław and Poznań.[725] During its stay in Lower Silesia – where it was housed in Wrocław's Silesian Museum – the exhibition was visited by the Soviet writer Nikolai Tikhonov, who enjoyed what he saw (though he took exception to a section entitled 'The Cult of Pushkin in Russia', a term he regarded as wholly inappropriate).[726]

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Though the Mickiewicz and Pushkin exhibitions had been organised by the special celebratory committees established for their respective anniversaries, in many cases the impetus for displays promoting the Soviet Union came from propagandistic events like the annual Polish-Soviet Friendship Months, which took place in the run up to the anniversary of the October Revolution.[727] The organisation behind these initiatives was the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society (TPPR), which was established in Lublin in November 1944, mere months after its 'liberation' by the Red Army. As Jan C. Behrends has shown in his study of the society during the Stalinist period, the TPPR played an integral role in the Sovietisation of the nation in the later 1940s and early 1950s.[728] Initially, this was carried out in a relatively limited and pragmatic manner, but with the onset of high Stalinism its reach and activity rapidly intensified.[729] In mid-1947, it was decided to turn the TPPR into a mass organisation, with the goal of promoting the cult of the Soviet Union and its leader – along with a 'new' socialist variation on the old pan-Slavic theme – throughout the entire population.[730] With a

[724] Toporowski, *Puszkin w Polsce*, p. 263.
[725] Ibid.
[726] Hermansdorfer, Heś and Korżel-Kraśna, *Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu*, p. 25; Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*, p. 115.
[727] For an overview of events staged in Polish museums for the Polish-Soviet Friendship Month of 1952, see Kęszycka, 'Wystawy w Miesiącu Pogłębienia Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej'.
[728] Jan C. Behrends, 'Agitation, organization, mobilization. The league for Polish-Soviet Friendship in Stalinist Poland', in Balázs Apor, Péter Apor and E. A. Rees, eds., *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period,* Kindle Edition (Washington D.C., 2008), pp. 180-197.
[729] Ibid., p. 196.
[730] Ibid., pp. 183-192.

rapidly growing membership – by November 1947, it already boasted some 500,000 members, rising to a figure of several million by the end of the Stalinist period – the TPPR's activity penetrated deeply into the reality of everyday life.[731]

In order to realise its aims – namely, the full Sovietisation of public space and the mass dissemination of pro-Soviet propaganda – the TPPR sought to establish *koła* (circles) in workplaces and communities across the nation, and museums were no exception.[732] Almost every museum had its own TPPR *koło*, and a closer analysis of the way such circles functioned illuminates the ways in which pro-Soviet ideology was disseminated at an institutional level. Given the central supervisory role of the higher echelons of the TPPR, these *koła* – regardless of their location – were supposed to function in a similar manner, and a case study of an individual circle provides a snapshot of the dynamics of Sovietisation in a medium-to-large sized museum under high Stalinism.

In the State Archives in Szczecin, surviving records outline the activity of the TPPR circle at the Museum of Western Pomerania at the very peak of the Stalinist era. Dating from the period 1950-1955, the documents appear – on one hand, at least – to present a full and lively programme of events designed to promote key issues on the TPPR's agenda. The most complete records date from 1953-1954, and they show the TPPR's members promoting pro-Soviet themes in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most obvious was the preparation of propagandistic displays, such as the one entitled 'The Polish and Soviet Soldier Liberates Piast Szczecin' – which combined *myśl zachodnia*-influenced nationalism with pan-Slavic, pro-Soviet discourse – staged in the museum in connection with the Polish-Soviet Friendship Month of 1953.[733] Such efforts were not confined to the museum; the TPPR was supposed engage with Polish society in the broadest possible sense, and many more examples reflect the wide range of exhibitions organised across West Pomerania. In 1954, for example, the museum's TPPR was responsible for staging exhibitions in twenty-five different locations,

[731] Ibid., pp. 190-192.
[732] Ibid., pp. 189-193.
[733] 'Report from the Month of the Deepening of Polish-Soviet Friendship in the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin' (1953 – handwritten date), APS 493/0/1/63.

including a *Szkoła Milicyjna* (Police School), the regional *Szkoła Partyjna* (Party School), the *Dom Rybaka* (Fisherman's House) in Świnoujście, trade union premises, railway and bus stations, a vocational secondary school and the *Pałac Młodzieży* (Youth Palace).[734] The exhibitions – which ran for anything from a few days to several months – covered topics such as 'Stalin in Art and on Art', 'Matejko and Repin', 'Polish and Russian Democracy in the Struggle for the Liberation of Man' and – in a nod to intra-bloc unity – 'Käthe Kollwitz, Fighter for the Rights of the German People'.[735]

These exhibitions were also accompanied by an intensive programme of lectures and talks on Soviet/Russian subjects, with a total of forty-two delivered over the course of 1954.[736] Again, the selection of locations was varied, with members of the museum's TPPR visiting *spółdzielnie pracy* (workers co-operatives), army units (including an officers' club and a hospital in a military garrison), a tram depot and a textile factory.[737] Topics ran in a similar vein to those of the aforementioned exhibitions. Some lectures were dedicated those familiar figures who formed the mainstays of discourse on Polish-Soviet Friendship – for example, Pushkin, Orłowski and Repin – while other subjects included 'The Role of Soviet Literature in Shaping Human Consciousness', 'The 106th Anniversary of the Communist Manifesto', and 'Feliks Dzierżyński, the Great Revolutionary'.[738] During that year's Polish-Soviet Friendship Month, the TPPR also sought to cooperate with another mass organisation, the *Związek Młodzieży Polskiej*, (Union of Polish Youth), which was given the texts of eleven lectures prepared by museum staff.[739] Within the museum, too, the TPPR sought to stir up enthusiasm for the Soviet Union and its achievements. *Wieczornice* (evening events) were organised – such as the lecture celebrating the fiftieth birthday of the Soviet writer Nikolai Ostrovsky, delivered by Comrade Rutkowski of the museum's TPPR – along with ideological training sessions for museum employees devoted to topics like Soviet

[734] 'Annual Report for 1954 of Circle no. 200 of the TPPR at the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin', APS 493/0/1/63.
[735] Ibid.
[736] Ibid.
[737] Ibid.
[738] Ibid. Dzierżyński, the founder of the Cheka, was another 'popular' figure in Polish-Soviet friendship narratives due to his Polish origins.
[739] Ibid.

literature or 'Lenin in Art and on Art'.[740] Perhaps more enjoyable were the staff outings to see Soviet films and plays, though these would also be followed by discussion sessions in order to make sure that attendees had properly absorbed their ideological content.[741]

Despite all this, however, not all was as straightforward as it might seem. Beneath this outward veneer of enthusiasm, on closer inspection the functioning of the TPPR circle at the Museum of Western Pomerania also appears to be characterised by a sense of disorganisation and disinterest. The records themselves are arranged in a rather chaotic manner; though ostensibly covering the period 1950-1955, documents appear in a random sequence with numerous caesuras. Of course, this could be the result of inconsistent or careless archiving, but some TPPR reports seem to suggest that a haphazard approach to record-keeping was, in fact, a contemporary problem. At a general meeting of the TPPR held at the museum in May 1953, the group's chairman explained that the present commissary board had not found enough material for a report on the group's activity in 1952, and thus was only able to provide an 'imprecise and sketchy' account of its work.[742] This earned a severe rebuke from the museum's director, Natalia Pacanowska-Haltrecht, who stated that – apart from under recent tenure of Tadeusz Urbaniak as chairman – 'the circle had not demonstrated any activity whatsoever'.[743] 'In fact, it is only now, following this general meeting', the director declared, 'that the circle launches into action', adding that, 'from this moment onwards, all employees of the museum should become members of the circle'.[744]

Moreover, the reports suggest a degree of reluctance among museum staff engage with the activity of the TPPR. Pacanowska-Haltrecht considered it a 'matter worthy of reprimand' that the previous board, now removed from their positions, had not even bothered to attend the meeting.[745] Their report – deemed unsubstantial – was not approved, and the meeting

[740] Ibid.
[741] Ibid; Report from the Month of the Deepening of the Polish-Soviet Friendship in the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin (1953 – handwritten date), APS 493/0/1/63.
[742] 'Minutes from the General Meeting of the TPPR at the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin, May 30, 1953', APwS 65/493/0/1/63.
[743] Ibid.
[744] Ibid.
[745] Ibid.

closed with the election of their replacements, who it was hoped would produce 'more fruitful work'.[746] In this case, the new board all accepted their positions, but there are several examples of employees actively seeking to avoid extra responsibilities. In 1950, not long after the museum's TPPR circle was established, its chairman, Stefan Sieja, attempted to avoid participating as the museum's delegate in a general assembly of local TPPR associations due to his 'heavy workload'.[747] Unfortunately for Sieja, a colleague pointed out that the meeting would most likely take place on a Sunday, which 'should not prevent citizen Sieja, as president of our circle, from taking part'.[748] Sieja's request was rejected, but a lack of enthusiasm for TPPR work from the circle's chairman suggests that similar attitudes were present throughout its ranks. Indeed, at the same meeting, two of three proposed candidates for the position of secretary of the *koło* declined to stand for election – one due to the fact that he was, apparently, 'not a member of the TPPR' – leaving the third candidate elected by default.[749] Though Pacanowska-Haltrecht's stern words at the general meeting in 1953 might have had some galvanising effect, such tendencies continued. At the circle's electoral meeting in July 1954, for example, the proposed candidate for treasurer could not be elected as he had chosen not to attend the meeting, while another candidate selected for service on the audit committee refused to stand.[750]

This lack of enthusiasm is hardly surprising. TPPR activity meant extra work – including weekends and holidays – and, for most of the museum's staff, it can hardly have proved rewarding. As Jan C. Behrends' study of the organisation shows, during the Stalinist period the TPPR's activity became 'ritualised and stagnant'.[751] Though its ranks had swollen to several million, the true meaning of TPPR membership became increasingly difficult to define.[752] If anything, the campaign for Polish-Soviet friendship actually had an opposite effect, and its primitive and unquestionable discourse did not have much to offer most Poles.

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[746] Ibid.
[747] 'Minutes from the General Meeting of the TPPR at the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin, April 12, 1950', 65/493/0/1/61.
[748] Ibid.
[749] Ibid.
[750] 'Minutes from the Electoral Meeting of the TPPR at the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin, July 2, 1954', APS 493/0/1/63.
[751] Behrends, 'Agitation, organization, mobilization', pp. 192-194, 196.
[752] Ibid., p. 192.

The TPPR's agenda was dictated from above, providing little room for initiative, and the activity of the museum's circle had to conform to specific criteria. A 1954 circular letter issued by the Municipal Board of the Szczecin TPPR, for example, explained how plans for the Month of Polish-Soviet Friendship – during which 'the wide masses of the Polish society' would 'manifest their warm feelings of gratitude and friendship towards the USSR' – had to follow specific policy guidelines.[753] These included 'showpiece meetings about implementation of Soviet experience and methods of work' and the celebration of relevant anniversaries.[754] Among those scheduled for 1954 were 'the fourth anniversary of the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR regarding the construction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station on the river Dnieper' (September 14)[755] and 'the anniversary of the XIX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, outlining the Soviet society's path from socialism to communism' (October 14).[756]

Another requirement was for schools and workplaces to write letters through which to 'share their experiences with their friends from the USSR'.[757] As part of 1951's Month of Polish-Soviet Friendship, the members of the TPPR circle at the Museum of Western Pomerania sent their 'cordial friendly greetings' to their counterparts at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow 'on the joyful occasion of the 34th Anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution'.[758] Dutifully praising the achievements of the 'world's first socialist state', the missive explained how 'the friendship, example, and assistance of the Soviet Union' served as 'a guarantee of…the rapid fulfilment of the goals of the Six-Year Plan and the construction of socialism in People's Poland'.[759] With this in mind, the employees at the Museum of Western Pomerania asked their Soviet colleagues to 'kindly share…[their] experience of the great and beautiful path that the Tretyakov Gallery undertook to become

[753] 'Circular from the Municipal Board of the TPPR to Boards of all TPPR Circles in Szczecin, June 28, 1954', APS 493/0/1/63.
[754] Ibid.
[755] Completed in 1956, the dam would be destroyed in June 2023 during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, precipitating a major humanitarian crisis.
[756] Ibid.
[757] Ibid.
[758] 'Letter to the Employees of the Tretyakov Gallery', APS 493/0/1/63.
[759] Ibid.

the most famous museum of progressive paintings'.[760] The letter's tone was both obsequious and formulaic, and it is difficult to believe that its expression of 'sincere appreciation' of the Tretyakov Gallery's work was in any way authentic. Instead, it serves to emphasise the often humiliating and debasing nature of the discourse around Sovietisation, which was perceived in many quarters as 'an insult to national pride'.[761] In this context, a lack of commitment towards the TPPR among museum employees appears wholly understandable.

Paradoxically, however, the records suggest an intensification of TPPR activity in the museum during the later Stalinist period – the very moment when Behrends tells us that the organisation as a whole began to stagnate. Yet rather than being the consequence of any exceptional ideological commitment among its members, this phenomenon can be more readily explained by the influence of a particular individual: Natalia Pacanowska-Haltrecht. A pre-war communist activist who had served in the Polish People's Army as a political and educational officer between 1944 and 1947, Pacanowska-Haltrecht was a committed ideologue and enthusiastic supporter of the post-war regime.[762] From 1951 to 1952 she held the role of curator of critical realist painting at the Museum of Art in Łódź – where the director noted her 'outstanding sense of propaganda' and 'burning hunger for action', as well as a certain impetuosity and lack of foresight – and in April 1952 she was appointed director of the Museum of Western Pomerania.[763] As director, she sought to develop the museum's ideological engagement, reorganising the permanent displays along Marxist dialectical and historical materialist lines and embarking on an energetic popularisation campaign in the local press.[764] Pacanowska-Haltrecht's tenure in her new position, was, nonetheless, short-lived. Her approach alienated some of her colleagues, and, after these internal disputes were leaked to the press, her contract was terminated by mutual consent

[760] Ibid.
[761] Behrends, 'Agitation, organization, mobilization', p. 194.
[762] She also had an impressive acacdemic CV, having studied art history, classical archaeology, and Polish philology at the Jagiellonian University prior to the war, and was fluent in five languages. Involved in underground teaching during the period of Nazi occupation, Pacanowska-Haltrecht was also active in the mainstream resistance movement – the *Armia Krajowa* – where she bore the partisan soubriquet 'Maria'. See Szymon Piotr Kubiak, *Daleko od Moskwy: Gérard Singer i Sztuka Zaangażowana* (Szczecin, 2016), pp. 129-131.
[763] Cited in ibid., pp. 130-131.
[764] Ibid. pp. 74-76, 130-131.

in September 1955.[765] Though she raised the museum's ideological profile in the short term, it came at a price, and her story serves to exemplify one of the major failures of Stalinist-era Sovietisation. Too often, it relied on the initiative and commitment of genuinely motivated individuals who believed in the new system, figures that, ultimately, were both too few in number – and too contentious in their roles – to have any meaningful long-term impact.

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While the work of the TPPR was unlikely to be a particularly popular part of daily life in the museum, the group's activity nonetheless points towards another important element of post-war Polish museology, namely the concerted attempt to promote more extensive forms of social engagement. In People's Poland, the museum was to be for the many, not the few. Its work – which was not confined to the production of displays, or, indeed, to the museum building itself – had to be made accessible to the 'broad masses of society' and disseminated as widely as possible. As early as the summer of 1945, Polish museologists were giving thought to what post-war museology might look like. In an article published in July of that year in the Cracovian socio-cultural newspaper *Odrodzenie* (Rebirth), Tadeusz Dobrowolski argued that, in the post-war context, it was necessary to 'thoroughly rethink the issue of cooperation between museums and society'.[766] Pre-war museology, Dobrowolski maintained, had – particularly in Western democracies – been shaped by liberalist and individualist trends, resulting in the development of 'dispassionate' institutions which were, in essence, 'scientific workshops'.[767] This scientism fuelled a drive 'to investigate as many facts as possible' – with 'the value of the institution…measured by the number of exhibits' –

[765] Ibid., p. 131. Less is known about Pacanowska-Haltrecht's subsequent activities, but after her tenure at the Museum of Western Pomerania ended she was able to claim a military pension on account of her service, and left for Warsaw to be with her daughter. After 1955 she sporadically engaged in professional activity, showing a particular interest in educational films. She died in 1989, in the middle of the historic elections that brought an end to the system.
[766] Tadeusz Dobrowolski, 'Społeczna problematyka muzeów i muzea krakowskie', *Odrodzenie* (12 August, 1945), p. 3.
[767] Ibid.

creating a crowded and chaotic exhibitionary landscape which, for many visitors, was off-putting.[768]

Not all pre-war museology was dismissed as ineffective, however. In mapping out the discipline's new trajectory, Dobrowolski drew attention to the work of American, Soviet and Belgian museologists, who had pursued alternative paradigms which focused on the museum's wider social role. In particular, he cited the work of the Belgian Egyptologist Jean Capart, who established the pioneering *Service Éducatif* at the *Musée du Cinquantenaire* in Brussels in 1922.[769] Capart viewed the museum as a 'wonderful working and cultural tool', and sought to counter what he described as a general tendency to view it as 'a dumb or speechless catalogue, a temple for hermetic sciences' by showing visitors 'how to make the best use of it'.[770] His multi-disciplinary educational service helped realise this goal through an intensive and far-reaching programme of activities, which included guided tours, popular lectures, concerts, staff-led day trips, the screening of educational films, special talks for schoolchildren, and even the development of that quintessential staple of the museum experience – the museum shop.[771]

For Dobrowolski, Capart's work provided a useful example of how new methods could maximise 'the impact of museums on the masses', and the following year he outlined his views further in the quarterly journal *Biuletyn Historji Sztuki i Kultury* (Bulletin of Art History and Culture).[772] This article was much longer than the brief sketch published in *Odrodzenie*, presenting a more thorough overview of the development of Polish museology – which, terms of displays, Dobrowolski deemed to have 'stopped at the level of the end of the last

[768] Ibid.
[769] Ibid; For more on Carpat's work in the field of museological education, see Nicole Gesché-Koning, 'The avant-garde of European museum education in Belgium', available at https://www.academia.edu/30828401/The_avant_garde_of_European_museum_education_in_Belgium [accessed 15/05/2022], pp. 2-6.
[770] Cited in ibid., p. 5.
[771] Ibid., p. 4; Dobrowolski, 'Społeczna problematyka muzeów'.
[772] Ibid; Tadeusz Dobrowolski, 'Zagadnienie muzealnictwa', *Biuletyn Historji Sztuki i Kultury: Kwartalnik Wydawany przez Zakład Architektury Polskiej i Historji Sztuki Politechniki Warszawskiej* Vol. 8., No. 3-4 (1946), pp. 154-175.

century' – as well as a fuller outline of his thoughts on its future direction.[773] Noting pessimistic attitudes towards museums both in certain sections of academia and society more broadly, Dobrowolski urged readers to look beyond 'the concentration of shadows that suppress the social meaning of museology' to the 'lights that radiate from it'.[774] He discussed a variety of ideas, from new methods of organising displays – which 'should strive not only to exhibit objects, but…to visualize issues' – to the formation of a new nation-wide museum network and the nature of the relationship between museology and the state.[775] Underpinning all of this, however, was the issue of social engagement. In Dobrowolski's eyes, the museum could find its 'full social justification' by playing a key role in a kind of semi-spiritual educational awakening, in which 'the deepening of knowledge and aesthetic sensitivity' would become as fundamental a need as eating or sleeping.[776] It was an ambitious goal indeed; as well as contributing to the production of 'real intellectual cadres', the museum would help to create 'a complete man, living life to the fullest in the noblest sense of this trivialised concept'.[777]

Central to this endeavour was the issue of the development of a new kind of educational service. Though in a broad sense this would be organised along similar lines to Carpat's *Service Éducatif*, it had to go further. Indeed, Dobrowolski was somewhat sceptical about the achievements of the *Musée du Cinquantenaire* in this area. When visiting Brussels in 1935, Dobrowolski claimed that – despite the much-vaunted activity of the museum's education service – he 'came across a perfect emptiness', without a visitor in sight; its 'methods of operation', he suggested, were perhaps 'limited to quite narrow social groups' and thus could not capture the interest of 'the masses'.[778] Instead, Dobrowolski advocated the creation of an educational service that 'remained in constant contact with society', a task that required energy, commitment, and dedication.[779] Museums had to help 'transform the

[773] Ibid., p. 171.
[774] Ibid., pp. 157-158.
[775] Ibid., pp. 167-173.
[776] Ibid. p. 162.
[777] Ibid.
[778] Ibid., pp. 155-156.
[779] Ibid., p. 173.

spiritual structure of society', which meant reaching out to a broader public.[780] In a modern museum, the education service had to extend 'beyond the institution', utilising a variety of media – including the press, cinema, and radio – to bring its message to as wide a public as possible.[781] Initially, admitted Dobrowolski, it would the urban intelligentsia who constituted the 'ripe fruits' (i.e. who were easiest to engage), but in time he envisioned a museal service which also cultivated strong ties with the peasantry and the working classes.[782]

However, as Dobrowolski pointed out – and as contemporaries would have been painfully aware – in the immediate post-war period, these groups were too preoccupied with the much more pressing concerns of basic 'biological existence' to give much thought to visiting museums.[783] Ending on a slightly negative note, Dobrowolski acknowledged that many of his readers might accuse him of being a dreamer.[784] In the short term, the basic tasks of conserving and consolidating the nation's war-ravaged cultural holdings – further complicated by the redrawn post-war borders, which left important collections in Soviet territory[785] – were almost overwhelming. Looking further ahead, Dobrowolski declared that 'the future of Polish museums, like any future, lies in darkness'.[786] Yet as his article had stressed, the journey into the dark would be infinitely easier with a map. 'Regardless of the broader or narrower framework of action', argued Dobrowolski, 'a specifically defined program should condition all activities in the field of museology'; without one, museum policy would be reduced to an ineffective mess of 'uncoordinated acts of improvisation'.[787] In 1946, it was still unclear exactly what this plan would look like, but, as Dobrowolski had observed, in one way or another, a new education service would be an integral part of it.

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[780] Ibid.
[781] Ibid.
[782] Ibid.
[783] Ibid.
[784] Ibid.
[785] Dobrowolski urged readers not to forget about Polish collections in Wilno/Vilnius and Lwów/Lviv, noting the increased significance of these collections in light of Poland's wartime cultural losses. With regard to the latter, he argued that pre-war Polish collections 'cannot have much significance for the Ukrainian population', who should instead be allowed to keep objects connected to Ukrainian culture selected by a specially established Polish-Ukrainian commission. Some parts of pre-war Polish collections from Lwów were brought to Wrocław the month after Dobrowolski's article was published. Ibid., p. 174.
[786] Ibid.
[787] Ibid.

Within a few years, a much clearer picture had emerged. In the half-decade following the end of the war, Polish museology had to be rebuilt (literally, in some cases) from the ground up. During this period collections were consolidated, existing museums reorganised, and new ones established; gradually a sense of order began to be restored to the field. At the same time, however, momentous changes were taking place in Polish society. In some ways, Dobrowolski's vision for the future of Polish museology was not far off the mark, but in the event, its development took a rather different path than he might have hoped. The changing tide was already palpable in June 1946, when Dobrowolski published his programmatic article. It was then that the Polish authorities held the infamous *Trzy Razy Tak* (Three Times Yes) referendum, which marked another step in Poland's creeping Stalinisation, but, as we have seen, it was not until the end of the decade that this process rose to a crescendo. Still, under the new regime, many of the ideas on Dobrowolski's agenda were being realised. The state was taking an active role in museological life and, at both a regional and a national level, institutional networks were being established. According to a retrospective article published in the first volume of the trade journal *Muzealnictwo* in 1952, the 'breakthrough year' in Polish museology came in 1950, which saw the nationalisation of museums as well as the creation of a dedicated social education service.[788] The cause Dobrowolski had so passionately championed was now official state policy.

Initially, this service operated in only the largest museums, but, within a few years, it had become a key part of the museological landscape, and, within the pages of *Muzealnictwo*, considerable attention was devoted to its activity. Echoing Dobrowolski's concerns about the hermetic isolation of museums, an article from 1952 contrasted pre-war museums – which were dismissed as mere repositories of 'souvenirs' and 'curiosities' – with the 'living institution[s]' of People's Poland.[789] As a place dedicated to the popularisation of 'knowledge-agitation', the contemporary museum was faced with 'enormous didactic tasks',

[788] Izabela Rybarska, 'Muzea w Polsce w latach 1945-1952', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 1-2 (1952), p. 46; 'Muzealna akcja oświatowa', p. 49.
[789] Ibid.

the fulfilment of which was its 'contribution to the work of building socialism'.[790] The new educational service would be instrumental in realising these goals, and the article identified four key areas in which the new service would operate. Firstly, its employees would guide visitors around the museum, presenting them with 'the general assumptions of a given exhibition' and explaining the significance of the objects on display.[791] Secondly, it had to organise and regulate museum attendance, in cooperation with relevant state authorities and local employers, and develop a programme of social and educational activities.[792] Thirdly, it was responsible for delivering various lectures on museological topics, both in the museum itself and in schools and workplaces; finally, it had to promote the museum through the press and radio, as well as coordinating a broader advertising campaign to increase visitor numbers.[793]

In essence, this remit was very similar to the tentative outline sketched by Dobrowolski several years earlier, yet at the same time, the content of articles on socio-educational matters from the early 1950s also reflected just how much had changed in the intervening period. In an article from 1953, Helena Kęszycka – director of the Social and Educational Office in the General Directorate for Museums and the Protection of Monuments – expanded on some of the themes discussed in the previous year's issue of *Muzealnictwo*.[794] Compared to Dobrowolski's 1946 article, the most obvious difference is a considerable change in tone. In contrast to Dobrowolski's rather elevated and thoughtful prose, Kęszycka's text is saturated with the dogmatic and propagandistic cliches of Stalinist-era official discourse. While Dobrowolski's writing could, in some respects, be said to reflect the influence of Marxist thought (albeit in a rather oblique manner), for Kęszycka it informed the educational service's entire agenda. She spoke of museological activity as a 'phenomenon in the field of superstructure', anchored to the 'base of emerging socialism', and emphasised its 'serious role in the work of social progress [and] in awakening a socialist, conscious attitude to national achievements'.[795] For Polish museologists working in educational areas, this

[790] Ibid.
[791] Ibid.
[792] Ibid.
[793] Ibid.
[794] Helena Kęszycka, 'O muzealnej służbie społeczno-oświatowej', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 3 (1953), pp. 9-14.
[795] Ibid., p. 9.

meant the application of 'the dialectical method of historical materialism and [the] Leninist theory of the reflection of reality in art' in their daily work.[796] Only in this way could 'post-bourgeois ballast' and 'post-capitalist burdens' be overcome, the 'elitism' of 'whole generations' of their predecessors atoned for, and the 'rhythm' of museological life synchronised with that of a nation engaged in 'building socialism'.[797]

In particular, the energies of the museum's educational service would be directed towards a new kind of visitor – 'recruited from among the working people' – who was the 'rightful owner of [the] material and artistic wealth' previously hoarded by members of the propertied classes.[798] 'As the creator of the new socialist culture', Kęszycka argued, this hypothetical visitor saw themselves as 'the heir to the progressive national tradition', and thus expected the new socialist museum to help explain to them how to understand and fully utilise its resources.[799] Therefore, the educational service had to teach the 'average viewer' to see artefacts and artworks against the 'broad background of historical processes' accompanying their creation; the most important of which was class struggle.[800] It was not hard to see where the inspiration for this agenda came from. As in all areas of society, Soviet work in the field of museological education was upheld as a shining example for Poles to emulate. Though Dobrowolski's 1946 article only mentioned the USSR in passing, Helena Kęszycka talked in glowing terms about the 1951 visit to Poland of the 'outstanding Soviet museologist Comrade Malashenko', the head of the educational team at the Tretyakov Gallery.[801] She spoke of the 'deep gratitude' felt towards Malashenko by her Polish counterparts, who would 'long remember the impression made on them by the story of the massive educational campaigns of Soviet museums'.[802] Of course, Kęszycka, maintained, they could only dream of engaging in work of such scale and sophistication, in large part due to the fact that 'Polish theoreticians in the field of museum pedagogy [were] still maturing'.[803]

[796] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[797] Ibid., pp. 9-11.
[798] Ibid., p. 9.
[799] Ibid.
[800] 'Muzealna akcja oświatowa', p. 49.
[801] Kęszycka, 'O muzealnej służbie społeczno-oświatowej', p.11.
[802] Ibid.
[803] Ibid.

Still, despite some weaknesses in certain areas, overall the work of the education service was progressing well. Its employees were growing into their roles as 'intermediaries' between the museum and the rest of society, and their achievements over the course of the last calendar year – 1952 apparently saw a 'good harvest' for the education service – seemed to bode well for the future.[804]

Nonetheless, while the aims of the new organisation were relatively clear, we are still left with the question of what its activity looked like in practice. Kęszycka's article presented some of the successes – as well as some of the problems – that had marked the work of the new educational service thus far, but in a somewhat brief and generalised manner. To build a fuller picture of its activity, it is necessary to turn to the archive, with the records of two particular teams – those from the Pomeranian Museum in Gdańsk, and the Silesian Museum in Wrocław – providing useful case studies. The choice of these teams is not an arbitrary one. They represent two of the most important museums in the new Western Territories, and – with both teams established in 1950 – were among the educational service's pioneers; the work of both teams was praised in *Muzelanictwo*.[805] In particular, it was noted that, despite lax record-keeping in some museums, the museological education departments in Wrocław and Gdańsk were among a small group which compiled 'the most systematic and best-prepared monthly reports'.[806] Their records thus illuminate the day-to-day functioning of significant (and apparently well-run) educational teams, revealing in detail the various ways they sought to engage with society and participate in 'building socialism', as well as the practical problems they encountered along the way.

Within the museum itself, one of the first tasks on the socio-educational agenda was the organisation of guided tours, which sought to ensure that visitors 'correctly' understood the issues presented in any given exhibition, as well the 'class interests' which framed the creation of specific artefacts and artworks. In both museums, the incoming socio-educational employees were introduced to the content of the exhibitions by better-qualified

[804] Ibid., p. 10.
[805] See 'Muzealna akcja oświatowa', pp. 49-52.
[806] Ibid., p. 52.

curatorial staff, but within a short space of time they had taken the initiative, with an impressively large proportion of visitors participating in their new tours. By mid-1952, the Pomeranian Museum in Gdańsk was regularly exceeding expectations in this area; its targets aimed to make sure that forty percent of visitors experienced the museum's collections in this way, but the real figure was often nearer fifty, reaching a high-point of sixty-one percent in July.[807] In part, this was no doubt down to the Stakhanovite efforts of certain instructors. In September of 1950, for example, a single employee of the Silesian Museum's socio-educational department was responsible for guiding 1200 visitors around the displays, nearly double the previous month's figure for the entire team.[808] To ensure that new staff or volunteers could be trained effectively, members of the educational teams were also responsible for producing texts detailing the content of these tours, guaranteeing a degree of consistency in regard to interpretation.

However, while it is clear that guided tours were an important part of the activity of both teams, the records appear to suggest that much of their time was spent on other tasks. Staying inside the museum, the staff of the both groups – the Wrocław service was officially entitled the *Biuro Społeczno-Oświatowe* (Socio-Educational Bureau, or BSO), while their counterparts in Gdańsk were known as the *Zespół Oświatowy* (Education Team, or ZO) – were also involved in the ideological training of staff. Part of this consisted of *samokształcenie* (self-instruction) with employees set various 'improving' texts to read, a duty that also applied to the staff of the educational teams themselves. Typically these were works by Marx, Engels, and Stalin, but occasionally texts by Polish authors like Adam Schaff – the 'high-priest of Polish Stalinism' – were also included.[809] Such endeavours were augmented by the creation small libraries of Marxist literature, such as the one organised by the BSO in Wrocław in connection with the 1950 anniversary of the October Revolution, and lectures and seminars were arranged for museum staff in order to expand their understanding of the collections and 'deepen Marxist knowledge'.[810] In Gdańsk, these

[807] Report on the inter-museal competition for the first quarterly stage, 1952, AMNG 1/21, p. 21.
[808] Report on the activity of the BSO, 1 August – 01 October, 1950, AMNWr III/79, p. 3.
[809] Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, p. 37.
[810] Report on the activity of the BSO, October 1950, AMNWr III/79, p. 8; Report on the activity of the ZO, 1 April – 20 October, 1950, AMNG 1/21, p. 2.

activities included the entire museum. In September 1950, for example, Citizen Sikorska of the ZO was conducting training sessions with the museums janitorial staff on variety of topics relating to political, economic, and social history, while the following month the same group tackled 'the development of human society' and 'the history of Poland and Gdańsk against the backdrop of world history'.[811]

Much more important, however, was the educational service's activity in the field of social outreach, which took its employees far beyond the walls of the institution. Ties were cultivated with local educational authorities, and the BSO and ZO teams tried to promote visits from school groups – by autumn of 1950, the Silesian Museum was aiming to host two to three such excursions daily – but this was not always a straightforward matter.[812] A report on the activity of the ZO in Gdańsk from the last quarter of 1952 noted resistance from school directors; as most of the schools in the area lay some distance from the museum itself, visiting meant the loss of almost a whole day's teaching.[813] Instead, school authorities were much keener on hosting talks from members of the museum's educational team within school premises, but from the latter's perspective such work was problematic, due the fact that most schools lacked the episcopes that were deemed essential for illustrating talks on art history.[814] Nonetheless, contact with schools continued to grow; in 1954, organised school groups accounted for more than half the total number of visitors to Pomeranian Museum for the entire year, while the same year just under 200,000 *młodzieży szkolnej* (school-age youths) visited its counterpart in Wrocław (over fifty-six percent of all visitors for 1954).[815]

As well as schoolchildren, socio-educational teams also sought to engage with the other sections of society deemed most important by the new communist authorities: workers and

[811] Report on educational work at the Pomeranian Museum, September 1950, AMNG 1/21, p. 12; Report on the activity of the ZO, October 1950, AMNG 1/21, p. 15.
[812] Plan for the activity of the BSO, October – December 1950, AMNWr III/79, p. 4.
[813] Report on the activity of the ZO, October – December 1952, AMNG 1/21, pp. 38-39.
[814] Ibid., p. 39.
[815] Report on educational work at the Pomeranian Museum, 1954, AMNG 1/21, p. 134; Communication from the Silesian Museum to the Ministry of Culture and Art, 15 January, 1955, AMNWr III/79, p. 184.

peasants. Gdańsk's shipyards provided one area of activity for the ZO, with lectures on art history topics broadcast through internal public address systems and various articles disseminated in the shipyard workers' weeklies *Głos Stoczniowca* and *Głos Portowca*.[816] In Wrocław, the BSO began cooperation with *Pafawag* (*Państwowa Fabryka Wagonów*, or State Wagon Factory), a producer of locomotives and railway stock and one of the largest employers in the local area. In connection with elections to the *Sejm* in the autumn of 1952, the museum assumed the position of the factory's cultural 'patron' and launched an educational campaign involving the delivery of lectures in *Pafawag's* common room, as well as organising specially guided museum visits for its workers.[817] Writing in *Muzealnictwo*, Helena Kęszycka declared the scheme a 'beautiful success', explaining how the BSO sought to engage the workers on their own territory by starting with an illustrated talk on railway history.[818] As well as factories, the museum's education team also sought to engage with the mining community, which was an integral part of the Silesian industrial landscape. A report from the last quarter of 1953 refers to a special 'action' conducted for miners in Wałbrzych – more than sixty kilometres outside Wrocław – with thirty-seven lectures delivered in the common rooms of five mines and coking plants.[819] To fit in with the miners' schedules, the talks took place late in the evening, some of them finishing as late as 11pm; museological education was certainly not a nine-to-five job![820]

Wrocław's rural hinterlands were targeted too, as part of an initiative entitled '*Akcja Chłopska*' (Peasant Action), launched in the first quarter of 1952.[821] In celebration of Bolesław Bierut's upcoming sixtieth birthday that year, the BSO planned lectures and film presentations on the history of art and material culture for nearby state farms, and a conscientious effort was made to coordinate mass visits by peasants to the museum itself.[822] Forty-eight afternoon lectures aimed at a peasant audience were held in March 1952 alone;

[816] Report on obligations fulfilled in connection with the all-Polish inter-museum competition, January – March 1953, AMNG 1/21, p. 80.
[817] Report on the activity of the BSO, September 1952, AMNWr III/79, p. 106; Report on the activity of the BSO, October 1952, AMNWr III/79, pp. 107-108.
[818] Kęszycka, 'O muzealnej służbie społeczno-oświatowej', p. 13.
[819] Report on the activity of the BSO, October – December 1953, AMNWr III/79, p. 159.
[820] Ibid.
[821] Report on the activity of the BSO, February 1952, AMNWr III/79, p. 83.
[822] Undertaking pledged in connection with the 60th birthday of President Bierut, AMNWr III/79, p. 84.

covering topics such as Silesian archaeology and 'peasant themes' in Polish painting, they attracted an average attendance of 300-400.[823] Similar initiatives also took place in Pomerania. Records from 1953 show the ZO's staff engaged in outreach work in rural communities, which included informal 'cultural-educational events', aimed at bringing some of Gdańsk's urban inhabitants into the countryside in order to meet peasants from Kashubia and Lower Powiśle.[824]

Special day trips were also organised. As part of the museum's 'rural action' in 1953, villagers from the small settlement of Świecino and employees of the local state farm were treated to a trip to the Teutonic Knights' castle at Malbork (perhaps inspired by the fact that a famous Polish-Teutonic battle had been fought in their village in the fifteenth century).[825] Another trip took members of the *Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe* (United People's Party)[826] to Frombork in Warmia-Masuria, in order to visit the town's Copernicus museum.[827] At the same time, the formalisation of an agreement between the Pomeranian Museum and the Peasant Self-Help Union (*Samopomoc Chłopska*) helped increase the number of organised visits by peasant groups to the museum itself.[828] Driving these figures was a prime concern for educational teams, and the importance attached to them is underscored by the fact that both museums kept detailed records of the number of workers and peasants visiting the museum.

In reality, the numbers were often rather lower than the museum authorities might have hoped, but it was not for want of trying. On top of their role as interpreters, activists and educators, the employees of the museum education service also had to serve as propagandists by raising the social profiles of their institutions through engagement with the media. This entailed the production of promotional articles circulated in the local and

[823] Report on the activity of the BSO, March 1952, III/79, pp. 86-87.
[824] Report on educational work at the Pomeranian Museum in 1953, AMNG 1/21, p. 94.
[825] Ibid.
[826] An agrarian socialist party which existed to maintain the façade of democratic pluralism. Ostensibly the successor to the pre-war People's Party, in practice it operated as a satellite of the ruling PZPR.
[827] Ibid.
[828] Report on the activity of the ZO, January to March 1953, AMNG 1/21, p. 57.

national press, as well as radio programmes on a variety of museological topics. By January 1951 the BSO in Wrocław had established contacts with several newspapers – including important local dailies *Gazeta Robotnicza* and *Słowo Polskie* – feeding them a steady stream of texts prepared by its staff.[829] In Gdańsk, press work was regarded as particularly important, on account of the museum's 'out of the way' location 'amongst ruins'.[830] Potential visitors had to be made aware that there actually was a museum to visit, which sometimes could be as simple as printing posters and displaying them in important public locations. In May 1951 alone, the Silesian Museum distributed 3,000 – including 1,000 in railway stations across Lower Silesia – along with another 2,000 promoting the new Lenin Museum in Poronin.[831]

For obvious reasons, railway stations were ideal locations for publicity work, and they could also be used as spaces for temporary promotional exhibitions. At the central station in Gdańsk, for example, the Pomeranian Museum's educational team organised a display in connection with the same elections of September 1952 which inspired the *Pafawag* initiative in Wrocław. Designed to showcase the work of the museum's staff in 'disseminating culture among the wide masses of the people', it was one of a number of projects launched in response to the Central Board of Museums' request that all institutions 'take part in the election action as an expression of gratitude…to the People's State' for its work in caring for the nation's cultural and artistic heritage.[832]

Clearly, the employees of the education service had a lot on their plates, and their work would undoubtedly be arduous even if everything ran smoothly; unfortunately for them, the records seem to suggest that this was rarely the case. Firstly, there was the issue of shortages of both people and material. The often chaotic atmosphere of the first post-war decade presented numerous logistical problems, meaning that basic goods were often in

[829] Report on the activity of the BSO, January 1951, AMNWr III/79, p. 27.
[830] Report on the activity of the ZO, 1 April – 20 October, 1950, AMNG 1/21, p. 4.
[831] Report on the activity of the BSO, May 1951, AMNWr III/79, pp. 38-39.
[832] Report on socio-educational work at the Pomeranian Museum, September 1952, AMNG 1/21, p. 35; Maria Rymszyna, 'Udział muzeów w akcji przedwyborczej', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 3 (1953), pp. 74-75.

short supply. A BSO report from February 1951 showed that leaflets could not be printed due to a lack of paper, while in Gdańsk the scarcity of good quality paper and card needed for posters and postcards hampered the ZO's promotional work.[833] Even more concerning, however, was the lack of qualified personnel, which caused particular problems in the Museum of Western Pomerania. The huge losses sustained during the Second World War had disproportionately affected the intelligentsia – around a third of all citizens with university degrees lost their lives – and finding people to fill the roles in the new education service was often easier said than done.[834] An annual report on the ZO's activity from 1950 drew attention to staffing difficulties, which were partially attributed to the absence of a proper 'humanities hub' in Pomerania. Alongside the director, in 1950 only one permanent member of staff had been recruited, 'historian/pedagogue colleague Sikorska'.[835] Until she could be properly trained as an education instructor, Sikorska could only serve as a guide, though she was supported in this work firstly by a student from the Technological University, and later by a medical student.[836] The latter had to leave after a short time, however, as she was unable to balance her museum commitments with her studies, meaning that for most of the first year of operation the ZO team consisted of only three employees.[837]

The situation did not improve with time, even as the team's responsibilities began to increase. Extra problems were created by the smaller regional museums, which operated in the orbit of their larger counterpart in Gdańsk. Following up on the activity of these 'subordinate' institutions in 1952's 'inter-museum competition', a ZO report noted that the local museum in Lębork had shown complete 'indifference' to the project and failed to participate whatsoever, with its director subsequently tendering his resignation.[838] This meant that a member of the team had to be despatched to Lębork to provide support, leaving the ZO in Gdańsk dangerously short-staffed, and, according to the report, struggling

[833] Report on the activity of the BSO, February 1951, AMNWr III/79, p. 29; Report on the activity of the ZO, 1 April to 20 October, 1950, AMNG 1/21, p. 5; Report on educational work at the Pomeranian Museum, August 1950, AMNG 1/21, p. 11.
[834] Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, p. 158.
[835] Report on the activity of the ZO, 1 April to 20 October, 1950, AMNG 1/21, p. 1.
[836] Ibid.
[837] Ibid.
[838] Report on the inter-museal competition for the first quarterly stage, 1952, AMNG 1/21, p. 19.

to carry out even basic tasks, let alone engage in new forms of educational work.[839] Things looked even worse in 1953. A report from the third quarter of the year explained despairingly that, due to staff illness, holidays, and the secondment of one team member to Frombork, for seven months of the year the team had consisted of only two or three instructors.[840] As a result, new actions could not be undertaken and work was limited to only the most important areas (guiding and developing contacts with the wider community).[841] By the final quarter of the year, a report recommended that the team be enlarged by at least three members; as it stood, the museum could 'barely meet the constantly growing needs' of educational work in the tri-city area.[842] At times, the ZO was even having to decline requests for lectures from interested parties due to lack of time, a state of affairs which meant that the team could not conduct larger scale work across the area and fulfil the demand for displays and talks in regional centres like Kościerzyna, Starogard and Elbląg.[843]

As well as staffing issues, educational work was often complicated further by the unwieldy hierarchies of Stalinist bureaucracy. Though ostensibly all cogs in the same system, communication between different institutions and government bodies was often ineffective, and attempts at cooperation could frequently end up mired in confusion. For example, when an exhibition of prehistoric art arrived from Poznań in October 1950, it came as a complete surprise to the Pomeranian Museum's educational team, which had no prior knowledge of it.[844] As no information or educational material was supplied, the ZO felt unable to guide visitors around it, which was deemed 'harmful' from an educational point of view; without their guidance, there was no guarantee that visitors would interpret the displays 'correctly'.[845] Another attempt at inter-institutional cooperation – this time with the Gdańsk branch of the Orbis state travel agency – also proved to be something of a failure. Orbis promised to organise mass visits of workers from across the nation in celebration of the

[839] Ibid.
[840] Report on fulfilment of obligations in connection with the inter-museum competition, July – September 1953, AMNG 1/21, p. 77.
[841] Ibid.
[842] Report on fulfilment of obligations in connection with the inter-museum competition, October – December 1953, AMNG 1/21, p. 81.
[843] Ibid.
[844] Report on the activity of the ZO, October 1950, AMNG 1/21, p. 15.
[845] Ibid.

'National Day of the Rebirth of Poland' (July 22), and in anticipation the museum mobilised its entire educational team, along with extra volunteers.[846] In the event, it was a 'complete let down'; Orbis muddled the logistics, and the majority of visitors actually arrived the following day.[847] Bureaucratic impediments also stymied the development of press relations, with a ZO report of 1952 bemoaning the fact that 'attempts at regular co-operation have completely failed'.[848] These difficulties, it was claimed, were not the result of 'ill will', but rather lack of space due to the amount of material sent from 'the top'.[849] In private, the report explained, editors urged museum staff to petition their superiors, who 'should attempt to approach those in charge of the whole press and fight for a regular column dedicated to museal matters', but such things were easier said than done.[850]

Beyond all of this, there was also the issue of how the messages communicated by educational teams were received, and again, there is often a gap between theory and practice. Cultivating ties with workplaces was a fantastic idea on paper, but in reality, some employers were less than enthusiastic. The Wrocław BSO's first attempt at such a relationship – in this case with a local textile factory – was 'not met with due understanding', and failed to produce a satisfactory outcome.[851] For directors of industrial concerns, museum outreach could appear as a trivial distraction which could potentially disrupt production. As for the workers and peasants who made up the target audience for the education service's work, it seems clear that – quite understandably – they often had other plans for their free time. A few beers or a trip to the cinema were, on balance, probably more appealing than a lecture on historical materialism or art history. ZO reports – which, overall, appear to be more candid than those produced by the BSO – are revealing in regard to this issue. One dating from early 1954 discusses at length the difficulties encountered by its travelling instructors. In urban areas, they found that delivering lectures in workers' common rooms was often impossible as they were often closed in the evenings, and anyway, many were empty by this time because employees were usually housed in hostels located

[846] Report on socio-educational work at the Pomeranian Museum, July 1950, AMNG 1/21, p. 7.
[847] Ibid.
[848] Report on socio-educational work at the Pomeranian Museum, July 1952, AMNG 1/21, pp. 25-26.
[849] Ibid.
[850] Ibid.
[851] Report on the activity of the BSO, 1 April – 1 August, 1950, AMNWr III/79, p. 1.

anywhere between five and twenty kilometres away from their places of work.[852] Though ZO instructors made the effort to travel to the hostels, they were often met with a very reluctant crowd, who preferred film showings or performances by ARTOS[853] to educational lectures.[854] The report explains how sometimes an audience could only be generated by a summons from the hostel manager, and at times, the instructors themselves had to go room to room in order to find listeners.[855] In this environment, it was estimated that only one in three planned talks actually came to fruition.[856]

In rural areas the situation was better, but not by much. While the report claimed that it was easier to find listeners in rural communities – perhaps due to the fact that there was less to do there – it still calculated that only one in every two expeditions into the countryside resulted in the delivery of a lecture, resulting in a 'huge waste of time'.[857] Even when lectures did go ahead, the audience was not necessarily always a welcoming one. In one rural community an audience greeted the travelling instructor with jeers, whistles and stamping of their feet when it was announced that a lecture on art was to be given.[858] The ZO account of the event blamed the director of the common room in which it was to be delivered; apparently, he had not sufficiently prepared the crowd for the talk, and they were expecting to be entertained with a film.[859] Despite the crowd's 'rude attitude' the speaker pressed on, and 'parts' of the lecture were delivered.[860] The experience cannot have been rewarding for anyone involved. Socio-educational work appears to have often been something of a thankless task, and the disconnect between its lofty goals and the often challenging reality on the ground is, perhaps, a reflection of the contradictory nature of the Stalinist system itself. For an exhausted employee of the education service, trundling

[852] Report on socio-educational work at the Pomeranian Museum, January – March 1954, AMNG 1/21, p. 96.
[853] *Państwowa Organizacja Imprez Artystycznych "Artos"* (The State Organisation for Artistic Events "Artos") – a group which staged popular artistic performances, usually of a musical or theatrical nature.
[854] Ibid.
[855] Ibid.
[856] Ibid.
[857] Ibid.
[858] Report on work in connection with the all-Polish inter-museum competition, July – September 1953, AMNG 1/21, p. 53.
[859] Ibid.
[860] Ibid.

homewards along a poorly maintained rural road in the darkness after another unsuccessful lecture, the bitterness of that paradox must have been all too clear.

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As Stalinist propaganda constantly stressed, 'building socialism' meant following the example of the Soviet Union, and museological discourse during the high Stalinist period was strongly directed towards the promotion of a narrative of Polish-Soviet friendship. Museums were supposed to shine a spotlight on the USSR's achievements and promote its culture on the basis of a kind of reanimated 'socialist' pan-Slavism, with historical figures like Mickiewicz, Matejko and Orłowski positioned as cultural ambassadors, engaging in a kind of bridge-building dialogue with Russian/Soviet culture. Moreover, the Sovietisation of museology also drove attempts to promote wider social engagement, and – as we saw in the case of the TPPR circle at the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin – museum activity was integrated into broader attempts at mobilising mass society in the service of politics. Stalinist museology was by no means confined within the walls of the institution. Museums had to bring culture to the masses, and the desire to culturally engage with workers and peasants brought staff from the museal education service into factories, common rooms, schools, army bases and village communities across the nation. Such endeavours draw attention to the striking scale and broad scope of the Stalinist attempt to reconfigure Polish society and direct it onto a new, Soviet, path to a 'brighter tomorrow'.

Yet at the same time, the story of Polish museums under Stalinism also illustrates the limitations of the system. One of its defining features was, a Brian Porter-Szűcs puts it, a kind of 'freakish optimism', coupled with a belief that, with enough energy and commitment, anything was possible.[861] The post-war reconstruction of Polish society was supposed to proceed at breakneck speed, and the lofty goals of Poland's Stalinists were often almost impossibly ambitious. In the cultural sphere, they aimed at nothing less than the creation of

[861] Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*, p. 216.

a ‘new man’, but in the chaos and upheaval of the first post-war decade this bold project was often tackled in a rather haphazard manner. This is most clearly seen in the activity of museological socio-educational teams discussed in the latter part of this chapter. They served as ‘jacks of all trades’, assuming a heavy burden of responsibilities that ranged from interpreting exhibitions and acting as propagandists through to ideologically training museological cadres and wide-ranging outreach work. Such a workload would no doubt be challenging even for a well-organised and supported team, but in practice, conditions were generally less productive. Understaffed and overwhelmed, these teams – which, as Dominika Cicha reflected a year after the 1956 thaw, were often wholly unprepared for the tasks in front of them – had to spread culture on a shoestring budget, reflecting the broader disconnection between Stalinist ambition and reality.[862]

[862] Dominika Cicha, ‘Z zagadnień muzealnych zespołów oświatowych. Uwagi na marginesie prac oświatowych w Poznaniu’, *Muzealnictwo*, No. 6 (1957), p. 57.

Part III

Building Communities

5

‘Revindication’ and Revival: Local Museology in the ‘Reclaimed Lands’, 1945-1950

In this final section of the thesis, we return to the context of the ‘Reclaimed Lands’ in order to consider some of the key themes explored in the previous chapters from the rather different perspective of the local museum. Thus far our analysis has remained broadly focused on larger museums, but to properly understand the way museology developed in the post-war Western Territories we need to move beyond major urban centres. With the Polish frontier’s westward shift to the Oder-Neisse line, dozens of smaller regional institutions – the pre-war German *Heimatmuseen* – now came under Polish control, and it is to these places that we now turn. What did museology look like at the local level? The humbler regional museum has often been overlooked in theoretical literature on museology which, understandably, privileges large paradigmatic institutions located in metropolitan areas. In one major collection of works by the field’s ‘big names’, which runs to nearly six hundred pages, the term ‘regional museum’ appears only four times, ‘local museum’ a mere three.[863] Yet the Polonisation of the Western Territories took place in smaller as well as larger communities, and adjusting our frame of reference to the former provides a fascinating insight into the dynamics of cultural reconstruction from a local perspective.

How was local museology revived after the war, and which key factors shaped its trajectory? How were German museums made Polish, and how were they implicated in the two ideological construction projects – building the nation, and building socialism – which we have looked at in the preceding sections of the thesis? By focusing on museums in several medium-sized towns – Jelenia Góra in Lower Silesia, and Koszalin, Słupsk and Darłowo in Pomerania – the following two chapters will attempt to sketch out the main lines of their post-war development in order to illuminate the local specificities that framed the process of cultural transformation and integration in the ‘Reclaimed Lands’. This chapter – which

[863] Sharon Macdonald, ed., *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford, 2006).

concentrates primarily on the museums in Jelenia Góra and Darłowo – begins by examining the fate of local cultural heritage in the immediate post-war years, particularly in the light of its movement from regional periphery to national centre through widespread 'revindication' work. Having considered how this reshaped collections, it then discusses the role of individuals in reviving local museums. Through a case study based on the museum in Darłowo, it explores the way such figures negotiated local power dynamics and carved out their own positions as 'pioneers', thus writing themselves into local history and highlighting unlikely continuities across the temporal rupture of 1945.

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Polish administration of the Western Territories was established against a backdrop of chaos, lawlessness, and chronic instability. In popular parlance, the region became known as the *Dziki Zachód* – the 'Wild West' – and the recollections of the first Poles to arrive in Pomerania and Silesia reflect the general turmoil and tumult that characterised the immediate post-war period. In the skeletal ruins of Wrocław, which became a hotbed of criminal activity, one was 'as likely to be shot from behind a corner as to get a knife in the back', remembered Stanisław Kulczyński, the first rector of the city's university.[864] The war-ravaged cityscape proved an ideal haunt for all manner of bandits, but even in the less damaged provincial towns, daily life was fraught with danger. Not far from Wrocław lay Jelenia Góra (formerly German Hirschberg, and home to some 40,000 people), which emerged from the war relatively unscathed. It was, according to one Polish soldier who arrived there in May 1945, a 'city like a pearl', with clean streets where lilacs bloomed.[865] Among the first Polish incomers, however, there were numerous bands of armed and organised looters. They had little intention of contributing to the reconstruction and revival

[864] Cited in Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 184.
[865] Józef Borowiec, 'Udział Wojska Polskiego w organizowaniu władz miasta Jeleniej Góry w okresie powojennym', in Kazimierz Stąpór, ed., *Rola wojska w rozwoju intelektualnym Jeleniej Góry. Materiały z konferencji naukowej 16-17.05.2008 roku* (Jelenia Góra, 2008), p. 52.

of civic life; instead, as the city's Chief Official complained in August 1945, they simply came to 'look around, steal something, and leave'.[866]

Such activity was a routine part of life in the new provinces, which were connected to the rest of the Polish lands in only the most tenuous of ways. In the Pomeranian city of Koszalin (until 1945 German Köslin), a young settler who arrived in July of that year recalled widespread robbery of 'post-German' goods – in particular furniture, art, and valuables – by gangs who thought little of committing murder and targeted Germans and Poles alike.[867] Nor were they the only dangerous miscreants wandering the city's streets. Even more problematic (at least from the perspective of new Polish administrators) was the widespread looting and violence perpetrated by Soviet troops. According to Hugo Service, they played a key role in cultivating a climate of general lawlessness, and their actions – which the Poles were mostly powerless to prevent – filtered down through society.[868] As Marcin Zaremba has noted, the Red Army helped to provide an 'education' in the basics of looting; Polish troops fighting alongside the Soviets followed their example, which radiated out into wider society, releasing a 'tsunami' of plundering.[869] Though a nationwide phenomenon – the *Dziennik Powszechny*, a daily published in the Kielce-Radom region, claimed in July 1945 that the 'huge majority' of the population 'either was looting, is looting, or is about to' – in the Western Territories it reached truly epidemic proportions.[870]

Unsurprisingly, in this orgy of plundering, the local museums of the Western Territories made easy targets. Compared with the level of destruction inflicted on Szczecin, Gdańsk, and Wrocław, some (though by no means all) of the area's smaller towns had escaped the full horrors of war, meaning that pre-war museal collections often survived in a more complete state. In Darłowo – formerly German Rügenwalde, a seaside town with a population of just over 8,000 in 1939 – the remaining artefacts in the former German *Heimatmuseum*, housed

[866] Cited in Service, *Germans to Poles*, p. 89.
[867] Józef Napoleon Leitgeber, 'Tak zaczynaliśmy…', in Zofia Banasiak, Maria Hudymowa, and Janina Stolc, eds., *Pionierzy ziemi koszalińskiej i ich wspomnienia* (Koszalin, 2010), p. 72.
[868] Service, *Germans to Poles*, p. 87.
[869] Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga: Polska 1944-1947 – Ludowa Reakcja na Kryzys* (Cracow, 2012), pp. 309-10.
[870] Cited in ibid., p. 275.

in the old castle of the Pomeranian Dukes, were clearly impressive enough to stir the imaginations of Polish observers. Stanisław Dulewicz – who arrived in Rügenwalde as a forced labourer in 1944 and later served as the town's mayor – visited the castle in the aftermath of the German retreat, leaving a record of his initial impressions in his diary. He described the castle as being 'overloaded' with a rich selection of objects of 'significant museological value', and his observations – which provide a fascinating view of the museum's interior at the juncture between its German and Polish phases of life – are worth quoting at length:

In the massive main knights' hall, with floors lined with shiny parquet, I saw on the walls many paintings of great artistic value by eminent painters, numerous sculptures in wood, bronze and white marble; dozens of glazed showcases arranged in two rows, full of exhibits, numismatic collections, bas-reliefs in silver and even gold; a wealth of archaeological specimens in the form of vases from different periods, jugs, vessels, bronze ornaments, knives and needles from the Stone Age; excavations of Proto-Slavic cemeteries, various types of the most primitive tools of work, many bronze daggers, swords and shields; then iron armour, chain mail, and numerous examples of gunsmithing from the Middle Ages; a diverse variety of amber ornaments, different types of armaments from the Napoleonic Wars, groups of military banners; many regional costumes covering mannequins or hung in several glazed cabinets, models of old and modern ships…of former settlements and houses, beautiful and cleverly made relief maps of the city of Darłowo and the surrounding area. I…admired the work of master locksmiths, very complicated fastenings and decorative chests, [and] a number of rooms in which there were famous Gdańsk wardrobes, sideboards, bureaus, inlaid desks, medieval clocks, interesting Biedermeier furniture, beds of old princes and many other objects, [including] interesting triptychs of medieval sculpture, etc.[871]

Despite the vicissitudes of war, the old *Heimatmuseum* – which had remained open until early 1945 – clearly retained a wide array of significant objects, but the weeks and months following the arrival of the Red Army saw its collections seriously depleted through opportunistic theft. Karl Wilhelm Rosenow, the museum's German director (and in large part, the individual responsible for bringing the museum into being in the first place)

[871] Cited in Buziałkowski, '80 lat Muzeum na Zamku w Darłowie', p. 332.

recorded his memories of the chaotic post-war situation. According to Rosenow, 'Russians and Poles, including locals, wandered around the halls and took what they liked', with the entire interior of the museum left unguarded and freely accessible to anyone who wished to enter.[872] Weapons and war-related memorabilia were among the first items to go, but more practical objects – for example tables, benches, and chairs – soon disappeared too, along with parts of the museum's impressive lepidoptery collection.[873] Butterflies, it seems, were of particular interest to young people, who used them to decorate their hats; a novel and cost-effective way of adding a splash of colour and personality to the grey reality of post-war life.[874]

According to an inspection carried out in July 1945, around fifty-five percent of the museum's collection had already been looted, and the opportunistic dismemberment of its carefully curated collection reflected the broader fate of museums throughout the 'Reclaimed Lands'.[875] Indeed, the situation was often much worse; in Słupsk – formerly German Stolp – as little as ten percent of exhibits from the city's *Heimatmuseum* remained after the war's end.[876] An inspection – which, judging from a hastily pencilled date, took place in late August or early September – revealed that what was left of museum's collection was found 'in a terrible mess, scattered and mixed-up'.[877] Surviving objects – which ranged from swords and helmets to sculptures and books, sheet music and even a few pianos and a harmonium – were found piled in one room, while an assortment of top hats and other headgear occupied another.[878] A mass of empty hangers also testified to the fact that, at some point, there had also been a large selection of costumes.[879] As in Darłowo, the building was unsecured, meaning people could freely enter, 'browsing and stealing' at will.[880]

[872] Reproduced in Mateusz Matejek, 'Karl Rosenow jako 'kierownik muzeum' pod polską władzą, *Darłowskie Zeszyty Muzealne*, Vol. 1 (2017), p. 8.
[873] Ibid.
[874] Ibid.
[875] Report from the Department of Art and Culture in Sławno, regarding an inspection carried out at the museum in Darłowo on 17 July 1945, APSł 560/69, pp. 2-3.
[876] Skrzypek, 'Z historii muzealnictwa środkowopomorskiego', p. 93.
[877] Note on screening carried out at the museum building in Słupsk, APSł 341/63, p. 7.
[878] Ibid.
[879] Ibid.
[880] Ibid.

The inspection recommended that the building be secured as soon as possible, but, in the short term, cultural heritage was hardly the top priority of the new local administrations being established across the Western Territories.[881] Dealing with the chaos of resettlement as well as widespread criminal activity and serious food shortages were, unsurprisingly, much more pressing concerns, but it meant that much of the work of safeguarding what remained fell to a handful of motivated cultural activists. One such figure was Aleksander Stafiński, a Red Cross employee and amateur archaeologist who settled in the West Pomeranian town of Szczecinek – formerly German Neustettin – at the end of 1945.[882] Stafiński corresponded with important figures in the cultural establishment, and, in a letter from March 1946 to the eminent archaeologist Józef Kostrzewski – director of the Museum of Prehistory in Poznań – he outlined the troubling situation he saw during his travels through the region. 'Wandering around Western Pomerania', wrote Stafiński, 'I had the opportunity to see for myself that seventy percent of the collections from local regional museums were stolen by the immigrant population'.[883] He informed Kostrzewski about the 'beautiful ceramics' which 'today… decorate the private apartments of many people in our region', and the even 'worse things which happened when our allies trampled the beautiful pottery from the collections of the museum in Szczecinek and other towns'.[884] Despairingly, he claimed that the task of contemporary archaeologists would be to excavate local rubbish heaps, where less flashy prehistoric artefacts had been cast aside by treasure hunters.[885]

Of course, not everyone searching for artefacts in the new Western Territories was motivated by a desire for personal enrichment. As well as amateur enthusiasts like Stafiński, museologists operating under the auspices of the Polish government's newly established Ministry of Culture and Art arrived in Pomerania and Silesia soon after the cessation of hostilities, tasked with locating and securing historically and culturally significant objects. Primarily, they were concerned with the recovery of the vast quantity of cultural goods

[881] Ibid.
[882] Migdalski, 'Fragmenty Dziejów Muzeum Drawskiego', p. 270, n. 11.
[883] Cited in ibid., pp. 270-271.
[884] Cited in ibid., p. 271.
[885] Ibid.

which had been looted by the Nazis from the territories of the pre-war Polish Second Republic. During the war years, a clandestine network of scholars, curators and other intellectuals operating in occupied Poland had been working together with representatives of the London-based government-in-exile to compile registers of cultural losses, which would help direct post-war recovery initiatives.[886] Following the German defeat, the cultural salvage project could begin in earnest. Many of the looted items had been dispersed across Central Europe – individuals involved in the revindication process were at work in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia – but the regions which were soon to become known as the 'Reclaimed Lands' were to become the focus of particular attention.[887]

Especially important was Lower Silesia, where recovery work was initially led by Stanisław Lorentz, the director of the National Museum in Warsaw. As the tide of war turned decisively against the Germans, some of the most valuable items they had looted were evacuated from the territory of the General Government to the relative safety of eastern Germany. Polish museologists had become aware of this fact in late 1944/early 1945, but only in the most general of terms.[888] An excerpt from Lorentz's diary, dated 11 September 1944, records a conversation with Alfred Schellenberg, a German official dealing with cultural issues in the occupied Polish capital, in which the latter revealed that important parts of the museum's collections were to be moved to the vicinity of the Lower Silesian Giant Mountains.[889] Similar information was shared with Feliks Kopera – the pre-war director of the National Museum in Cracow – by Wilhelm Ernst von Palézieux, who had worked as an advisor on artistic matters for the Governor General, Hans Frank.[890] Entrusted by Frank with the evacuation of valuable collections from Cracow, Palézieux informed Kopera that they were bound for Lower Silesia,

[886] Marek Sroka, '"Nations Will Not Survive Without Their Cultural Heritage" – Karol Estreicher, Polish Cultural Restitution Plans and the Recovery of Polish Cultural Property from the American Zone of Occupation', *The Polish Review*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (2012), pp. 3-10.
[887] For more information on the individuals involved and the locations in which they were operating, see Karecka, 'Akcja rewindykacyjna', p. 406.
[888] J. Robert Kudelski, 'Rewindykacja dóbr kultury na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1949', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, Vol. 123, No. 1 (2016), pp. 74-75.
[889] Cited in ibid, pp. 74-75.
[890] Ibid., pp. 75-76.

along with important artworks from Galicia.[891] Among them were several paintings by Jan Matejko, which were to surface in the vicinity of Jelenia Góra in the summer of 1945.[892]

Armed with a rough idea of where the looted treasures might be located, members of the Polish 'revindication' teams were understandably eager to start searching for them as soon as possible. Following the German retreat, however, the situation on the ground meant that this was hardly a straightforward process. Though the first recovery team – made up of a mixture of museologists, archivists, historians, and librarians – was ready to depart for Silesia as early as February 1945, they were initially unable to cross the pre-1939 border.[893] The area was still under Soviet military administration, and, before the Poles were allowed access, it was combed by the 'trophy brigade' led by Lt. Col. Boris Filippov, director of the Moscow Drama Theatre.[894] Aware that the territory would soon be handed over to the Poles, Soviet trophy brigades worked against the clock to gather artworks and cultural treasures, which were transported to Moscow by the trainload.[895] Only after the handover of power to the new Polish administration was Lorentz's party able to start work in Lower Silesia. By May, the recovery work was underway, and it soon bore fruit; over the course of June and July several railway wagons and around one hundred lorry loads of artworks were despatched from Lower Silesia to Warsaw and Cracow.[896] The aforementioned paintings by Matejko – *Rejtan*, *Batory near Pskov* and *Union of Lublin* – were the star finds, leading to the village in which they were located temporarily being renamed 'Matejkowice' in honour of Poland's most famous artist.[897]

[891] Ibid. As Witold Kieszkowski, another key individual involved in recovery work, also highlighted the importance of the 'great services…rendered by worthy informants, mostly chauffeurs, railwaymen and workers who had the opportunity to find out about the destination of the transports'. Cited in ibid., p. 75.
[892] Ibid., p. 76.
[893] Ibid., pp. 77-78.
[894] Ibid., pp. 78-79.
[895] Ibid. For a detailed discussion of the work of Soviet trophy brigades, see Konstantin Akinsha, 'Stalin's Decrees and Soviet Trophy Brigades: Compensation, Restitution in Kind, or "Trophies" of War?', *International Journal of Cultural Property*, Vol. 17 (2010), pp. 195–216.
[896] Kudelski, 'Rewindykacja dóbr kultury', pp. 80-81.
[897] Ibid., pp. 81-82.

[Figures 5.1 – Stanisław Lorentz supervising recovery work near Jelenia Góra, summer 1945][898]

Despite their substantial achievements, it is important to remember that the teams engaged in revindication work were operating in extremely challenging circumstances. It was a time of great flux, with the relative underdevelopment of new administrative apparatus as well as the difficulties created by the presence of the Soviet military authorities placing severe obstacles in the way of their activity. Moreover, the lack of resources – most notably the scarcity of suitable means of transportation – further hampered their endeavours; it was not until mid-1947 that the team in Lower Silesia acquired their own lorry.[899] Nonetheless, the enthusiasm of its members – combined with a willingness to improvise and a general attitude of spontaneity – helped overcome these operational issues.[900] Lidia M. Karecka likens them to sheriffs in a western film, or real-life 'Raiders of the Lost Ark', using whatever means were at their disposal in pursuit of their goals.[901] Indeed, their successes were reflected in the creation of a substantial network of temporary storehouses across the

[898] Collection of the Muzeum Karkonoskie in Jelenia Góra, courtesy of Robert Rzeszowski.
[899] Kudelski, 'Rewindykacja dóbr kultury', p. 90.
[900] Karecka, 'Akcja rewindykacyjna', p. 406.
[901] Ibid.

Western Territories, in which the rapidly expanding volume of cultural artefacts could be housed.[902] In turn, many of these finds flowed out of the region to larger storehouses in central Poland, the most important of which were in Warsaw, at the National Museum, and in Cracow, at the Wawel Castle.[903]

In the context of revindication, the transfer of cultural goods from a peripheral region – which, had, until very recently, been part of a hostile state – through to the national centre might appear perfectly logical. After all, the main task of the recovery teams was to secure Polish collections that had been looted and dispersed by the Nazi occupier. Nonetheless, the reality is more complicated. In Polish, the term *rewindykacja* – revindication – has been in widespread usage among museologists for some time, usually in the context of this post-war recovery work; indeed, according to Karecka's definition, it simply denotes 'the recovery of lost property or the legal recovery of goods which have been seized'.[904] Yet the fact remains that a great deal of the material that was being 'recovered' was not, in any meaningful sense, 'Polish'. Alongside the artefacts stolen from the territory of the inter-war Polish state, the new storehouses were filled with thousands more that had, prior to the end of the war, been part of German collections. Only in the aftermath of the Nazi defeat did they come into Polish hands; was this really 'revindication'?

Strictly speaking, the answer has to be no. As Karecka observes, given the meaning of the word *rewindykacja*, to use it in the context of 'post-German' property is to commit a 'logical error'; more appropriate are terms like 'substitute restitution' or 'war reparations' which acknowledge (albeit implicitly) the fact that, in 1939, these objects were not in Polish

[902] For more detail on the creation and functioning of these warehouses see the series of articles by Lidia Małgorzata Kamińska: 'Powojenne składnice przemieszczanych dóbr kultury w Polsce. Przyczynek do szerszego opracowania', *Muzealnictwo*, Vol. 57 (2016), pp. 74-80; 'Wawelska i Warszawska – największe powojenne składnice przemieszczanych dóbr kultury w Polsce. Przyczynek do szerszego opracowania', *Muzealnictwo*, Vol. 58 (2017), pp. 249-256; 'Polish central museum repository for Gdańsk Voivodeship – Part 1: Genesis', *Muzealnictwo*, Vol. 59 (2018), pp. 175-184; 'Polish central museum repository for Gdańsk Voivodeship – Part 2: in Sopot and in Oliwa', *Muzealnictwo* Vol. 60 (2019), pp. 256-266.
[903] Kamińska, 'Wawelska i Warszawska'.
[904] Karecka traces the origin of the word back to the Latin word *revindicatio*. Karecka, 'Akcja rewindykacyjna', p. 404.

collections.[905] For those engaged in the process in the years following the war, however, the difference between 'revindication' and 'substitute restitution' was hardly of paramount importance, and, given their experience of the Nazi assault on Polish culture, we can well understand their perspective. Writing nearly a quarter of a century after the war's end, Stanisław Lorentz argued that because 'the work of destroying Polish culture [was] carried out under the highest orders', through the combined efforts of the German army, civil administration, and German scholars and artists, Poles had 'the right to direct the accusation against the entire German nation, and…to issue a bill for it and demand reparation'.[906]

Moreover, historic artefacts were, in Lorentz's view, altogether 'safer' in Polish collections. Addressing 'the scrupulous', who might question 'whether the German nation should be deprived of its eternal property', Lorentz urged his readers to consider 'the history of the development of German museology, which increased only in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in parallel with the growth of German imperialism'.[907] Germany's great museums were, he argued, not simply artistic or scientific institutions, but rather 'the most visible and broadly understood testimony to the cultural power of Germany, its primacy in the world and the superiority of the Germanic race'.[908] Museums constituted a cultural counterpart to the German army and the nation's military might, which had been – as his readers would no doubt remember – 'so terrible for humanity'.[909] In Lorentz's eyes, German actions during the war meant that, as a nation, they had forfeited the right to act as cultural guardians for humanity. Considering 'the extent of the cultural losses suffered by us and our allies, and...how consciously and with what refinement the Germans carried out the destruction of other people's heritage', should, maintained Lorentz, raise the questions of 'whether they are at all worthy of continuing to take care of [non-German] cultural property…or whether they should be left to the care of monuments of universal, non-German culture located on German territory'.[910]

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[905] Ibid., p. 407.
[906] Cited in Adam S. Labuda, 'Niemieckie dziedzictwo historyczno-artystyczno w Polsce. Sądy, stereotypy i opinie po II wojnie światowej', *Artium Quaestiones*, No. 8 (1997), p. 9.
[907] Cited in ibid.
[908] Cited in ibid.
[909] Cited in ibid.
[910] Cited in ibid.

The practical consequence of this kind of thinking, which was understandably prevalent in Poland in the decades following the war – and indeed, has persisted into the post-communist period[911] – was the large-scale transfer of 'post-German' cultural property from the Western Territories to central Poland. As well as non-German artefacts, this also included a considerable number of objects which were quite clearly of German origin. Yet as Adam S. Labuda puts it, 'everything that was German in the 'Lost/Reclaimed Lands' suddenly became Polish', from artworks, historical monuments, and places of remembrance through to the topography and toponomy of streets, and even the very ground on which people walked.[912]

In order to 'erase [the] physical traces' of the region's former inhabitants, artefacts often acquired a new 'nationality', but their Germanic heritage was not always easily obscured.[913] This reality was tacitly acknowledged in a memorandum issued in August 1947 by the Chief Directorate of Museums and Protection of Monuments, which justified the removal of a large number of cultural artefacts from the 'Reclaimed Lands' on the grounds that the 'necessary protective treatments' they required could only be carried out in Warsaw.[914] On the other hand, it made it clear that some of these items – which were described as being 'tendentiously collected…by the Germans to demonstrate…Germanic culture in the areas of Silesia, Pomerania and Masuria – would not be returned for political reasons.[915] Instead, they would be replaced by 'special collections of works of Polish art' transferred from central Poland, which would serve to 'underline the living connection' between Silesian and Pomeranian culture and that of the Polish nation as a whole.[916]

[911] Gregor Thum mentions the outcry that followed the initial refusal of museum directors in Warsaw to return 'revindicated' objects to Wrocław after the collapse of communism. See Thum, *Uprooted*, pp. 404-5.
[912] Labuda, 'Niemieckie dziedzictwo historyczno-artystyczno w Polsce', p. 6.
[913] Ibid.
[914] Memorandum on the issue of museums in the 'Reclaimed Lands', AAN 196/79, p. 112. This same memorandum is referred to by Gregor Thum in *Uprooted*, pp. 201-202.
[915] Memorandum on the issue of museums in the 'Reclaimed Lands', AAN 196/79, p. 113.
[916] Ibid.

Though the Ministry of Culture and Art declared that it would 'not allow the Reclaimed Lands to become impoverished in terms of their possession of cultural artefacts', the collections of the old German *Heimatmuseen* were severely depleted in the immediate post-war period.[917] Initially, this was due to the widespread plundering that accompanied the collapse of German rule in the region, though by mid-1946 the 'looting frenzy' which had gripped the nation was showing some signs of abating.[918] As Polish administrative structures began to take shape and exert their authority over the area's new population, museum buildings were gradually secured and became less viable targets for opportunistic treasure hunters, though many pre-war institutions failed to survive the transition to Polish rule. Of the dozens of museums that made up the vibrant pre-war museological landscape of Western Pomerania, for example, only a handful continued to function after 1945.[919] Officially, the Ministry of Culture and Art argued suggested that the reasoning for this was political, arguing that 'a significant number of small [museums] will not be reactivated' because their 'significance was related only to the propaganda of the Third Reich'.[920] More likely, however, the scale of wartime destruction coupled with a general lack of resources presented almost insurmountable stumbling blocks to the revival of museology on a pre-war scale.

Moreover, what limited resources were available were, when it came to matters relating to cultural heritage, directed more towards 'revindication' work rather than the reconstructing German museums. Though work was underway on creating new flagship museums in the major urban centres of the 'Reclaimed Lands' (such as the Silesian Museum in Wrocław, discussed in chapter two), local museology remained in the shade, its future uncertain. We can see this atmosphere clearly reflected in records relating to the regional museum in Jelenia Góra, which, prior to the Polish takeover, had been an important cultural landmark in German Hirschberg. The initiative behind its creation came from the members of the *Riesengebirgsverein* (Giant Mountains Association) – one of the many *Heimat* associations that emerged in the later nineteenth century – who sought to promote tourism in the area

[917] Ibid.
[918] Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, p. 312.
[919] Migdalski, 'Fragmenty Dziejów Muzeum Drawskiego', pp. 268-269.
[920] Memorandum on the issue of museums in the 'Reclaimed Lands', AAN 196/79, p. 113.

and generate interest in regional heritage.[921] To this end, an impressive collection of historical artefacts and artworks was amassed, which, by 1914, was housed in an impressive purpose-built museum building which remains in use to this day.[922] With the Nazi defeat, however, the quiet world of local museology was – like every aspect of life in German Hirschberg – upended by the arrival of Polish settlers and the new Polish authorities. Rechristened Jelenia Góra (a direct translation of its former German name), the town soon became a focal point for revindication work, in large part due to the important cultural artefacts hidden in its vicinity by the Germans during the latter stages of the war.

[Figure 5.2 – Postcard showing the new building for the museum in Hirschberg, constructed during the period 1909-1914, which is today the home of the *Muzeum Karkonoskie* in Jelenia Góra][923]

[921] For information on the museum's origins, see Robert Rzeszowski, 'Historia Muzeum RGV do 1945 roku', in Romuald Witczak, ed., 100 lat Muzeum Karkonoskiego w Jeleniej Górze (Jelenia Góra, 2014), pp. 9-31.
[922] For information on the collections during this period, see ibid., pp. 41-48.
[923] Collection of the Muzeum Karkonoskie in Jelenia Góra, courtesy of Robert Rzeszowski.

The storehouse for recovered objects established in the town's Paulinum Palace in 1945 was the largest such facility in Lower Silesia, and the building constructed for the historical collections gathered by the *Riesengebirgsverein* functioned in a similar manner, albeit on a smaller scale. Though it was taken over by Polish functionaries in mid-1945, for the next three years it was essentially a museum in name only. It was not until 1948 that an inventory of the museum's collections was carried out, and the curator at the time, Stefan Górka, found them in a chaotic state. Prior to Górka's appointment, the museum had already had three curators in as many years[924], and the general state of disorganization which coloured its functioning in these years is reflected in the archival material, much of which has been filed in several boxes which lack titles or archival signatures and are identifiable only by collection number. In boxes marked *akta luźne* – loose files – a jumbled assortment of documentation dating from the immediate post-war period bears testimony to the haphazard and unsystematic way in which the museum was run by its new custodians.

Górka took over the management of the museum in January 1948, and, compared with his predecessors, took a firmer hand in attempting to restore some order.[925] This was, however, no easy task. Despite the fact that between 1945-1948 the museum was little more than a storehouse, the lack of any inventory meant that there was no detailed information about what it held.[926] Górka soon set out to remedy this, and by April 1948 an inventory had been compiled which revealed that the museum had around 46,000 objects in its collection, a mixture of pre-war exhibits and other objects 'revindicated' from the vicinity of the town.[927] Around half of the collection was made up of natural history exhibits, and there was also a

[924] These were, respectively, Borys Borkowski, born 8 September 1912 in Pochaiv (Kremenets district), graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (1939), who assumed control of the museum in June-July 1945 as part of his role as Head of the Department of Culture and Art of the Municipal Board in Jelenia Góra; Karol Dąbrowski, born 4 November 1907 in Częstochowa, also graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (1939) who served as curator of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra from August 1945 to March 1946; Zygmunt Wereszczyński, born 4 July 1891 in Kaunas, graduate of the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Lviv (1912) with a doctoral degree, curator of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra from April 1946 to January 1948, though as a result of disciplinary action he ceased his duties as curator in October 1947. See Ivo Łaborewicz, 'Działalność Muzeum Miejskiego w Jeleniej Górze w 1948 r.', *Skarbiec Ducha Gór*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2007), p 13, n 3,4,5; Elżbieta Ratajczak and Gabriela Zawiła, 'Muzeum w Jeleniej Górze w latach 1945-2013', in Romuald Witczak, ed., 100 lat Muzeum Karkonoskiego w Jeleniej Górze (Jelenia Góra, 2014), p. 67.
[925] Ibid.
[926] Łaborewicz, 'Działalność Muzeum Miejskiego', p. 13.
[927] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra, February-March 1948, APJG 83/168/4, p. 8.

significant volume of graphic art and engravings – around 4,700 items, dating from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries – alongside a substantial ethnographic collection, smaller quantities of historical furniture (approx. seventy items), and some fifty or so paintings.[928] The museum's star possession, however, was an eighteenth century gobelin tapestry, valued at 10,000,000 złoty.[929] Given that this was a slightly more than the entire value of subsidies provided for all museums in the 'Reclaimed Lands' by the Ministry of Culture and Art during the first eight months of 1947 (9,245,000 złoty) – which itself accounted for 26.5 percent of the overall figure for the whole nation – this was no trifling sum.[930]

While Górka seems to have been dedicated to transforming the museum from a storehouse to a public institution, some of his contemporaries appeared rather less committed to its long-term future. Indeed, according to Górka, his predecessors adopted a proprietorial attitude towards the collections, dipping into the museum stores and 'assigning' items on their own initiative to individuals and organisations without any authorisation or documentation.[931] Clearly, serious discrepancies in the museum's records were providing cause for concern, and, in a 1950 letter to the local public prosecutor, Górka laid the blame squarely on the museum's previous manager, Zygmunt Wereszczyński.[932] He accused Wereszczyński of being responsible for the disappearance of several valuable items from the collections, including a seventeenth century painting of the Battle of Lepanto, a snuffbox valued at 40,000 złoty (equivalent to nearly three months' wages for the museum's manager), and a Soviet Army standard from the local archives.[933] In turn, Wereszczyński argued that it was his successor who was to blame, and, though Górka maintained that these were 'false allegations' aimed at 'attacking [him] personally', by the end of May 1950 –

[928] Ibid.
[929] Ibid.
[930] Memorandum on the issue of museums in the 'Reclaimed Lands', AAN 196/79, p. 113.
[931] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra in 1948, reproduced in Łaborewicz, 'Działalność Muzeum Miejskiego', p. 13.
[932] Letter from Stefan Górka to Public Prosecutor Teofil Kowalczyk, 6 May 1950, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, box no. 4 (loose files with no further archival signature or pagination).
[933] Ibid.

less than a month after he wrote to the public prosecutor – his employment at the museum came to an end.[934]

This episode may appear as a minor local drama (though the investigation did implicate various local worthies, including the town's former police chief, who provided a statement in connection to the missing objects), but, in a broader sense, it is emblematic of the way in which local museum collections in the 'Reclaimed Lands' were seen by many of those who came into contact with them.[935] Despite Górka's hopes of building a 'living institution' in Jelenia Góra, the general tendency to view 'post-German' collections as spoils of war meant that, for others, the museum was simply a source of 'raw materials'. In his annual report for 1948, Górka bemoaned what he termed the 'museological chauvinism or possessiveness' exhibited by visiting museum professionals and cultural functionaries, who sought to enrich their own institutions from the collections in Jelenia Góra.[936] The curator of the Maritime Museum in Szczecin, for example, requested the transfer of objects connected with nautical themes.[937] He suggested that they would find a more 'appropriate setting' on the coast, despite Górka's objection that, because the Lower Silesian town possessed its own branch of the Maritime League, there was no need.[938]

Other institutions issued similar demands, much to Górka's consternation. Over the course of 1949 and 1950, an entire saga played out in relation to the transfer of material from Jelenia Góra to the State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw (then known as the State Museum of Folk Culture and located at the time in the Brühl Palace in the suburb of Młociny). According to a June 1949 communication from the Wrocław Voivodeship

[934] Ibid; Ratajczak and Zawiła, 'Muzeum w Jeleniej Górze', p. 67.
[935] Letter from Stefan Górka to Public Prosecutor Teofil Kowalczyk; Testimony of Władysław Sikora on the issue of Zygmunt Wereszczyński's management of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra, 2 June 1950, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, box no. 4 (loose files with no further archival signature or pagination).
[936] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra in 1948, reproduced in Łaborewicz, 'Działalność Muzeum Miejskiego', p. 14.
[937] Ibid.; Letter from Aleksander Kapaon, curator of the Maritime Museum in Szczecin, to the Municipal Council in Jelenia Góra, 27 October 1948, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, (loose untitled file with no further archival signature or pagination).
[938] Ibid; Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra in 1948, reproduced in Łaborewicz, 'Działalność Muzeum Miejskiego', p. 14. The presence of a branch of the Maritime League in landlocked Jelenia Góra is in itself interesting.

Department of Culture and Art, the museum was to relinquish all items in the field of 'exotic ethnology', which, 'in accordance with the postulates of planned museum policy', were to be handed over to the central ethnographic museum in Warsaw.[939] Yet the move met considerable resistance from Górka, who was backed in this matter by the town's mayor. The latter accepted the move in principle, but expressed concern that the museum in Jelenia Góra might simply become a 'supplier' of cultural and artistic collections to other institutions, thereby failing to fulfil its responsibility to local society, 'which wants our museum to have valuable collections'.[940] Moreover, there were fears that the transfer of goods might dissuade potential donors from parting with artefacts. The mayor referred somewhat vaguely to a 1,300-year-old wooden statue of a 'Goddess of Mercy', which was valued 'in the millions'.[941] It had been a personal bequest from the director of the Municipal Savings Bank, who stipulated that it was specifically for the town's museum; moving it to Warsaw would thus undermine trust in the museum as an institution.[942]

In a letter to the Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments in Warsaw, Górka complained about an employee of the State Museum of Folk Culture who had visited Jelenia Góra four times, taking items unconnected with ethnography purely on account of the fact that 'they were nice'.[943] These losses were merely the latest in a long line, leaving the curator in a state of near despair. Numismatic collections had gone to the National Museum in Warsaw, weaponry to Wrocław, and the stand-out piece – the gobelin tapestry valued at 10,000,000 złoty – was taken to the Belweder Palace in Warsaw, official residence of President Bolesław Bierut.[944] Other items housed in the pre-war museum of the *Riesengebirgsverein* ended up in Poznań and Cracow.[945] 'If the stripping [of the museum] is

[939] Letter from Wrocław Voivodeship Department of Culture and Art to the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra, 13 June 1949, APW XVII/119, p. 11.
[940] Letter from the mayor of Jelenia Góra to the Municipal Presidium of the National Council, October 1949, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, (loose untitled file with no further archival signature or pagination).
[941] Ibid. It seems that the statue in question may have been Chinese in origin.
[942] Ibid.
[943] Letter from Stefan Górka to the Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments in Warsaw, 6 February 1950, concerning a visit that day from Wanda Jostowa of the State Museum of Folk Culture, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, (loose untitled file with no further archival signature or pagination).
[944] Ibid; Letter from Stefan Górka to the Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments in Warsaw, 29 November 1948, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, (loose untitled file with no further archival signature or pagination).
[945] Ratajczak and Zawiła, 'Muzeum w Jeleniej Górze', p. 69.

to continue further', Górka warned, 'it might actually liquidate it altogether'.[946] As the institution's 'only intellectual worker' (*pracownik umysłowy*), he lacked the 'technical capacity' to constantly refill the 'bare spaces on the walls and emptied display cases' that were left behind as a result of the ongoing expropriation.[947]

In 1950, the museum – which had, in a limited fashion[948], been accessible to the public since 1948 – once again closed its doors to visitors.[949] It was to remain shut until 1953, and its fate during the managerial tenure of Stefan Górka and his predecessors is illustrative of the broader trends which shaped the treatment of cultural heritage in the 'Reclaimed Lands' during those years. Though the Ministry of Culture and Art pledged its commitment to the revival of museal life in the region, in practice its energies were directed towards flagship institutions in major cities. Local museums were, to a certain extent, neglected by the central administration, and their main interactions with cultural authorities and museum professionals was usually in the context of 'revindication' – sometimes presented in the context of rational centralisation – which served only to deplete their holdings. In his annual report for 1948, Górka argued that the museum in Jelenia Góra 'deserved support not only from the municipal authorities, which, so far, are our only protectors and guardians', but also from the Ministry of Culture and Art.[950] In 1950, when he wrote to the Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments in Warsaw complaining that he had 'not received any funds or help' from the central authorities, the situation had hardly changed.[951]

Nonetheless, it would be unjust to be too condemnatory of Stanisław Lorentz and those engaged in the process of 'revindication'. As noted earlier, the experience of Nazi occupation

[946] Letter from Stefan Górka to the Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments in Warsaw, 6 February 1950, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, (loose untitled file with no further archival signature or pagination).
[947] Ibid.
[948] At this time, access was often limited to pre-arranged group visits.
[949] Ratajczak and Zawiła, 'Muzeum w Jeleniej Górze', p. 69.
[950] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra in 1948, reproduced in Łaborewicz, 'Działalność Muzeum Miejskiego', p. 14.
[951] Letter from Stefan Górka to the Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments in Warsaw, 6 February 1950, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, (loose untitled file with no further archival signature or pagination).

fundamentally shaped their perspective towards 'post-German' cultural heritage, but, even so, they were also concerned with issues of protection and preservation. With this in mind, the transportation of artefacts from the periphery to the centre, where the necessary restoration facilities were available, makes logical sense. At the same time, it seems clear that preservation provided a useful pretext for appropriation, which – regardless of the moral arguments that accompanied it – had the ultimate effect of denuding the 'Reclaimed Lands' of much rich and storied cultural heritage. The grander institutions that were opened in Wrocław, Gdańsk and Szczecin served, perhaps, to divert attention away from the damaging effects of 'revindication' on local museums in Pomerania and Silesia. Yet despite this inauspicious beginning, local museology would, in time, flower once more, and, as we shall see, the impetus for this revival was not a centralised bureaucracy, but rather the agency and initiative of a small number of dedicated individuals. It is to them we now turn.

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On the outskirts of Słupsk lies a relatively unremarkable housing complex, built in the typical style of the late communist period, which today is known as Osiedle Niepodległości (Independence Estate). Originally called Budowniczych Polski Ludowej (Builders of People's Poland), like many communist-era developments it was renamed after 1989, and many of the surrounding streets now bear names which honour members of a distinctly non-communist pantheon of Polish heroes, such as Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński or the soldiers of Piłsudski's legions. Within this newly reinscribed toponomy, however, there are some places that have retained their former identities. At the end of Ulica Romana Dmowskiego – at one time named after the Stakhanovite miner Wincenty Pstrowski – there is another street, the name of which has remained the same since its creation in 1982. Ulica Marii Zaborowskiej (Maria Zaborowska Street) commemorates a key figure in the post-war revival of cultural life in Słupsk. A Varsovian who, in 1945, found herself 'rather accidentally' in the Pomeranian town, Maria Zaborowska played an instrumental role in the development of the Museum of Central Pomerania, which she managed for many years.[952] In doing so, she wrote herself into

[952] Ludwik Downar-Zapolski, *Inicjatywy i działalność pierwszych Słupszczan* (Słupsk, 1998), pp. 15-16.

the history of her new hometown, and the continued presence of Ulica Marii Zaborowskiej within the post-communist urban landscape is a reminder of the fact that not everything from the period of People's Poland is seen today in a negative light.

Zaborowska is not the only communist-era museologist to be honoured in this way. In 2020, the Municipal Council in Darłowo agreed, with the support of the town's Committee on Education, Culture and Tourism, to name a square after Aleksander Tarnowski, manager of the town's museum between 1946 and 1961.[953] Forty or so miles south-east of Darłowo, in Białogard, a permanent exhibition entitled 'Wojciech Sawilski – Artist and First Curator of the Post-War Museum of Białogard' can be seen alongside a display commemorating another famous resident of the town, former president Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Sawilski even has a website dedicated to him, which surely makes him unique among his museological contemporaries.[954] All of these figures are today remembered for their roles as 'pioneers' – to use the 'wild western' terminology often applied to narratives of post-war resettlement – who helped build a new society in the 'Reclaimed Lands'. Indeed, the term is a fitting one, as it was people like Zaborowska and Tarnowski who laid the foundations for the reconstruction of cultural life, taking the initiative, and – in a time when, from the perspective of the new Western Territories, Warsaw seemed both physically and symbolically distant – setting the agenda in those crucial early years.

The connection between museums and the exercise of cultural and political power – which lies at the heart of so much of the theoretical literature that has emerged since the 1980s in the wake of the 'new museology' – looks rather different from the perspective of the 'Reclaimed Lands' in 1945. Today, the museums in which Zaborowska and Tarnowski worked are thriving parts of the Pomeranian cultural landscape, yet at the war's end this future appeared far from certain. Political power in the Western Territories – which were no longer German, but not exactly Polish – existed in embryonic form, and could only be exercised in a relatively primitive way. Broadly speaking, this was through the exertion of physical force,

[953] See https://www.darlowo.pl/skwer-aleksandra-tarnowskiego/ [accessed 14-12-2022]
[954] The website concentrates on Sawilski's work as an artist, and was created 'on the initiative of people who remember Wojciech Sawilski and his work'. See http://sawilski.pl/ [accessed 15-12-2022]

and, though a rudimentary administrative apparatus began to take shape as the year went on, when it came to cultural organisation it remained woefully undeveloped. Moreover, as we have seen, representatives of the central cultural authority in Warsaw – the Ministry of Culture and Art – were more concerned with the work of 'revindication' than they were with stimulating initiatives at a local level. What limited energy and resources there were for such matters would largely be focused on the development of museums in major cities; in provincial towns this work would be left to more motivated individuals from among the ranks of the immigrant population.

A useful case study that helps illustrate the way in which individual agency helped kick-start local museology can be found in Darłowo, where the surviving collections of the pre-war *Heimatmuseum* had so impressed Mayor Stanisław Dulewicz in 1945 (see p. 188). The experiences of Amelia Łączyńska – whose short tenure as museum curator in Darłowo in 1945-1946 strongly reflects the spontaneity and informality which characterised developments in the cultural sphere during the first post-war years – provide a fascinating insight into life in a provincial town in the immediate post-war period. A woman of many talents – she was a writer of plays, novels, and journalistic articles as well an energetic activist in the educational and cultural spheres – Łączyńska was born in Podolia into a family of intelligentsia in 1893.[955] Written between 1958 and 1967, her memoirs provide a lively overview of a remarkable life, and – in a section entitled *Na innym gruncie – Po drugiej wojnie światowej* (On different ground – after the Second World War) – she discusses her time in Darłowo.[956] Having spent the war years in various cities, including Lviv and Warsaw, she was one of the many wanderers who, through the vicissitudes of fate, found themselves in the newly Polish lands in the west.[957] Arriving in Darłowo in September 1945, she beheld a

[955] Her grandfather was the poet Adam Pajgert, who translated works of Byron and Shakespeare into Polish, and her father Kornel Pajgert – who held a PhD in economics from the University of Munich – served as a member of the Galician parliament. Łączyńska's biography shows that she was clearly a remarkable individual. Having studied painting in Cracow before the First World War, she went on to found her own 'model school' – which operated from her home – and, in preparation, visited numerous establishments across Europe. In 1924, she participated in the International Congress of the New Education in Denmark, from where she sent reports to Polish weeklies. See Regina Kurewicz '"Wspomienia" Amelii Łączyńskiej', *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, Vol. 27 (2005), pp. 207-216.
[956] Jan Sroka, 'Amelia Łączyńska i jej wspomnienia z Darłowa', *Darłowskie Zeszyty Muzealne*, Vol. 1 (2017), pp. 17-18; Kurewicz, 'Wspomienia', p. 207.
[957] Ibid.

town which stood in stark contrast to the war-ravaged cities she had left behind. Darłowo was 'clean, nicely built and undamaged', adorned with 'plenty of greenery and gardens in which villas and cottages stood'.[958] It had a 'wonderful beach', and 'above the humming lock on the Wieprz River…a medieval castle, not very large, but perfectly preserved with a beautiful tower'.[959] Inside the castle was the town museum, which was to be Łączyńska's place of employment for the next year.

While Darłowo was physically intact, the end of German rule meant the collapse of the organisational hierarchies which had enabled the town to function as a coherent community, and, at this early stage, new power structures remained relatively undeveloped. Outside of the Soviet occupiers, authority belonged to those who took it. In those days, wrote Łączyńska, 'power literally lay on the ground, and it was enough to bend down to pick it up and, sitting on the appropriate seat, shake its symbol; recognition and confirmation came immediately'.[960] This was how Mayor Dulewicz – who Łączyńska describes as the 'Alpha and Omega' of all matters connected with the life of the town and the incoming settlers – was able to take charge, and it was through him that she was appointed to her new role.[961] 'Bureaucracy', Łączyńska remembered, was a 'monster' that had 'not yet been born'. Instead, 'improvisation triumphed', with verbal agreements taking the place of a formal administrative processes, and it was in this way that Łączyńska became a museum curator.[962] She simply visited the mayor to ask for some kind of occupation, and, after a short conversation, her offered her the post. Though she herself admitted that she 'did not have the slightest idea about curatorship and work in the museum', she had a good education and was well-travelled, which, given the shortage of suitable candidates, was qualification enough.[963] 'Certainly', remembered Łączyńska, 'out of all the settlers in Darłowo I was the

[958] Amelia Łączyńska, 'Zachód - powojenne lata', reproduced in Jan Sroka, 'Amelia Łączyńska i jej wspomnienia', p. 19.
[959] Ibid.
[960] Ibid., p. 20.
[961] Ibid.
[962] Ibid., p. 22.
[963] Ibid., p. 19.

most adequate for this position, and, confident in my strength and abilities, I accepted the offer'.[964]

Despite the more pressing issues such as food and housing which dominated everyday reality, the fact that both Dulewicz and Łączyńska were concerned with the museum's future shows that they were keenly aware of what one settler called 'the hunger for cultural life'.[965] Indeed, before Łączyńska's arrival Dulewicz had – in co-operation with Soviet officers – taken steps to protect the museum from looters, which may well account for the more complete state of its collections when compared with places like Słupsk, where far fewer pre-war exhibits survived.[966] Beata Halicka has suggested that Dulewicz's actions were simply manifestations of 'the feeling of duty of an educated person who later felt no connection with the artworks saved'.[967] Yet it seems clear that Dulewicz was genuinely committed to building a thriving community in Darłowo – Łączyńska describes him as a popular person who 'cared for everyone like a true father of the city' – and, by appointing a curator, he was going a step further than simply safeguarding the museum's collections.[968] Perhaps Dulewicz understood that cultural heritage would be important in giving the community he served a sense of meaning. Certainly, in appointing Łączyńska, he was not filling the position with a mere placeholder, but rather an energetic and educated individual who was genuinely passionate about cultural matters.

Indeed, the fact that the museum in Darłowo was open to visitors as early as 1946 – the first local institution in Pomerania to be accessible to the general public – is testimony to the efforts of its early curators. A report on the development of museology in the Koszalin Voivodeship prepared in the mid-1960s attributes this to the work of Aleksander Tarnowski, who succeeded Łączyńska in 1946, but it would be unfair to overlook the contribution of Darłowo's first post-war curator.[969] Łączyńska had to work in very difficult conditions, with

[964] Ibid.
[965] Cited in Halicka, *The Polish Wild West*, p. 234.
[966] Ibid., p. 237.
[967] Ibid.
[968] Łączyńska 'Zachód - powojenne lata', p. 22.
[969] Untitled report on the post-war development of museology in the Koszalin Voivodeship, APSł 96/8, p. 85.

hardly any outside support. There was no formal contract or salary, forcing her to make numerous expeditions to the offices of the Voivodeship Department of Culture and Art in Gdańsk in order to personally implore the officials for money.[970] Despite this, Łączyńska was able to enlarge the museum's collections through her own initiative, travelling to palaces and churches in the town's vicinity on the bicycle which was her 'indispensable and irreplaceable companion' in search of lost or hidden artefacts.[971] True, she was less enthusiastic about other parts of the job, such as the 'tedious' task of replacing German inscriptions with Polish ones, but, when it came, her departure from Darłowo was unconnected to museological matters.[972] Instead, it was Łączyńska's association with Stanisław Mikołajczyk's Polish People's Party – the source of unwelcome attention from the local security organs – which prompted her to leave for Gdańsk, though not before appointing Tarnowski as her successor.[973]

Like Łączyńska, Tarnowski also lacked a museological background, and acquired his position purely by chance. Arriving in Pomerania from Warsaw in May 1946, Tarnowski encountered Łączyńska in the offices of the regional administration in Sławno, a short distance from Darłowo.[974] As well as being curator of the museum in Darłowo, Łączyńska also worked as the head of the Sławno district Culture and Art Department – at that time, holding more than one position was not an uncommon situation for those engaged in cultural work in the

[970] As Łączyńska relates, this was a difficult journey to undertake. Trains were infrequent and unreliable - Łączyńska describes having to wait overnight in the rain when the expected train failed to arrive – and could even be dangerous. On one occasion the return train from Gdańsk was occupied by Red Army troops, who refused to let Polish civilians board and opened fire, resulting in one casualty. 'It is not difficult to imagine', remarks Łączyńska, 'that in such conditions I did not want to go to Gdańsk often', and these issues are a vivid reminder of the fact that provincial towns like Darłowo could feel even more isolated than we might imagine based on distance alone. See Łączyńska, 'Zachód - powojenne lata', pp. 27-29.
[971] Ibid., p. 33.
[972] Ibid., p. 23.
[973] At that time Mikołajczyk's party – PSL (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, or Polish People's Party) – was the only genuine political opposition, and, though Mikołajczyk had been included in the government in a reluctant attempt to maintain a veneer of democracy, the campaign of repression waged by the authorities led to his fleeing the country in 1947. Subsequently, what remained of his party was subordinated to the communists, becoming part of the ruling bloc. Łączyńska was involved in establishing a PSL group in Darłowo, and, with fellow activists, the nascent cell went as far as holding a rally in the town; it came to a premature end, however, due to the actions of groups disruptors planted by the communists. Łączyńska was later arrested by local state security, and, though she was not formally charged, the experience was enough to convince her to leave the town. See Łączyńska, 'Zachód - powojenne lata', pp. 35, 38-39.
[974] Ibid., p. 39; Aleksander Tarnowski '12 lat na Zamku w Darłowie', reproduced in *Dorzecze*, No. 10 (2000), p. 24.

provinces – and Tarnowski immediately caught her attention. Already in his sixties, with his 'wonderful moustache *a la polonus*' he reminded Łączyńska of Sienkiewicz's famous lighthouse keeper.[975] Though he was looking for work as a hotel porter, his intelligence and experience – he was fluent in eight languages, and had travelled the world working for Thomas Cook – convinced her that his talents could be better used elsewhere.[976] She thought him 'worldly and sophisticated', and though lacking in higher education, certainly 'worth keeping'.[977] The only position she could offer him was as janitor in the museum (the German woman who had been working in that capacity had been arrested by the UB[978]), and Tarnowski gladly accepted.[979] He did not remain janitor for long; his aptitude mean that he was unofficially promoted to assistant custodian shortly after, and when Łączyńska left Darłowo later in the year he assumed her position as manager.[980] 'Happily', Łączyńska reflected, 'I was able to leave the work I had started in good hands'.[981]

Despite being a total newcomer to museum work, under Tarnowski's stewardship the former *Heimatmuseum* began to thrive once more. His memoirs – entitled *Twelve Years in the Castle at Darłowo* and written in the late 1950s – offer a window onto life in Darłowo during the first post-war decade and show how the museum once more became an important part of local society. Gradually visitors began to return, and at first these were mostly locals, though not all of them were visiting for cultural reasons; apparently, the nooks and corners of the old medieval castle became a popular site for romantic trysts.[982] Soon, however, tourists were coming from further afield, and by 1948 attendance in July and August averaged nearly 6,000 people.[983] At this time the town's population only numbered around

[975] Ibid.; Łączyńska, 'Zachód - powojenne lata', p. 39.
[976] Ibid. Born in Lida in 1884, Tarnowski's life prior to his arrival in Darłowo is rather mysterious. It has been suggested that he came from an aristocratic background and possibly studied in Moscow and Paris (despite Łączyńska's belief that he lacked higher education). See Jan Sroka, 'Aleksander Tarnowski', in Jan Sroka, ed., *Znani i nieznani mieszkańcy powiatu sławieńskiego* (Sławno, 2015), pp. 174-175.
[977] Ibid., pp. 39-40.
[978] *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa* (Security Office), everyday term used to refer to units of the state security organs from the *Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego* (Ministry of State Security).
[979] Ibid., p. 40.
[980] Ibid.
[981] Ibid., p. 39. After a few years in Gdańsk, Łączyńska eventually settled in Poznań, where she devoted herself to literary pursuits and her enthusiasm for tour guiding, achieving the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society's highest qualification. See Kurewicz '"Wspomienia", pp. 213-214.
[982] Tarnowski '12 lat na Zamku', p. 30.
[983] Ibid., p. 36.

5,000, and, combined with the fact that the museum's personnel rarely exceeded a total of three, the volume of visitors made work very difficult. Numerous thefts took place, and the increased attendance left Tarnowski 'overtired, nervous and probably oversensitive', leading to occasional confrontations with visitors he deemed rude or disruptive.[984]

Nonetheless, despite the hard work, Tarnowski continued in his efforts. He was involved in everything from guiding visitors and organising the collections, through to scrubbing the medieval castle's stone steps, which is what Leon Kruczkowski, Deputy Minister of Culture and Art, found him doing during a surprise visit to the museum in 1947.[985] Moreover, he continued to expand the museum's collections, becoming a passionate advocate for the museum and Darłowo, 'this neglected town…[which] I love…as much as Cracow, Warsaw, [or] Vilnius'.[986] At a time when 'revindication' was in full swing, Tarnowski actively sought to protect his museum's holdings, as illustrated by an episode in his memoirs which concerns the visit of a certain 'Mr. Ł' from the central authorities in Warsaw. Impressed by the museum's collections, and in particular a selection of fine baroque furniture, he declared that he would be taking them back to the capital.[987] Tarnowski, however, was appalled by this decision, and sought to keep the furniture, stressing the significance of its local connections. From his perspective, the hard work that had gone into gathering these objects – 'wrested from the hands of looters and speculators' – meant that removing these 'hard-won exhibits' would be nothing more than 'ordinary looting'.[988] Tarnowski's memoirs state that the affair generated some press coverage, earning him a reprimand from the Ministry of Culture and Art.[989]

Indeed, relations with representatives of the political authorities – both on a local and on a national scale – were far from straightforward. With regard to the latter, it seems that in the first post-war years the museum in Darłowo barely registered on the Ministry of Culture and

[984] Ibid., p. 43.
[985] Ibid., pp. 32-33.
[986] Ibid., p. 66.
[987] Ibid., p. 31.
[988] Ibid.
[989] Ibid., pp. 31-32.

Art's radar. Sporadic visits from officials operating under its auspices might bring limited short-term investments, but, as Tarnowski and Łączyńska both stress in their memoirs, in general very little support was offered. More problematic were relations with the local security forces, who viewed the museum with suspicion due to the continued presence of German curator Karl Rosenow, manager of the museum from its inception until the arrival of the Soviets in 1945.[990] Rosenow continued to work in the museum alongside Łączyńska and Tarnowski until he left Darłowo for the British sector of occupied Germany in 1947, and, despite the difficult circumstances, his relationship with his Polish successors was reasonably cordial. Though Łączyńska regarded him personally 'unattractive and rather unsympathetic', she expressed empathy with his situation, writing in her memoirs that 'only one who also lost the fruits of their life's work in one fell swoop can understand the tragedy of this old man'.[991] Tarnowski – who, in his own words, was 'not an enemy of the German nation, but of the Hitlerites' – was also able to co-operate with Rosenow, and the latter's departure in mid-1947 took him somewhat by surprise.[992]

Rosenow was, however, targeted by the local UB, which resulted in his imprisonment in 1946. In his memoir he recalls how they visited the museum 'every day, under any pretext' to carry out searches; 'once…they were looking for weapons or partisans, and another time for underground passages in which the treasures of King Eric could be hidden…in search of secret rooms, they tapped all the walls'.[993] Eventually Rosenow was arrested and accused of

[990] Rosenow's own recollections of his time in Darłowo are reproduced in Matejek, 'Karl Rosenow', which is a Polish translation of text originally published in West Germany. Born in January 1873 in Szczecinek (then Neustettin), Rosenow was an important figure in pre-war Rügenwalde, where he taught in the school and was responsible for the establishment of the town's museum. He was a passionate advocate for regional history, and responsible for numerous publications on the topic. Though he left Darłowo in 1947, he continued his scholarly activity in West Germany, where he maintained contact with former inhabitants of the town and became a member of the *Gesellschaft für Pommersche Geschichte* in 1955. He died in Laubach in 1958. Polish academic interest in him dates back to the late 1950s – a 1959 article in *Przegląd Zachodni* grudgingly admitted that he had 'some merit as a German regionalist' and drew attention the diaries he had left behind in Darłowo – and, since the collapse of communism, he has been the subject of further study. See H. Sachers, 'Ein ganzes Leben im Dienste der Heimatforschung', *Die Grenz-Zeitung* (16/17 January, 1943), p. 5; Zygmunt Dulczewski, 'Materiały do historii Darłowa, 1894-1947 – (Pamiętnik b. dyrektora muzeum w Darłowie K. Rosenowa), *Przegląd Zachodni*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1959), pp. 404-409; Matejek, 'Karl Rosenow', pp. 7-16; Rafał Witkowski, 'Karl Wilhelm Rosenow i jego związki z muzeum w Darłowie', *Historia i Kultura Ziemi Sławieńskiej*, Vol. 13 (2019), pp. 259-268.

[991] Łączyńska 'Zachód - powojenne lata', p. 40.

[992] Tarnowski '12 lat na Zamku', pp. 32, 35.

[993] Matejek, 'Karl Rosenow', p. 9

holding Nazi sympathies, though the real reason behind it appears to be the desire of a certain 'Piotrowski' – an individual who Łączyńska claims was connected to the UB – to get his hands on Rosenow's valuable philatelic collection.[994] The 73-year-old Rosenow was held for six weeks, during which time he was tortured; Łączyńska recalls that, when she heard about his arrest, she 'shook with indignation' and proceeded straight to the UB office to try and clear things up.[995] After the UB searches, several objects (including the stamp collection) had disappeared from the museum, but when Łączyńska complained about it she received a frosty response, and was told that she would 'regret' any attempt to intervene on behalf of the imprisoned Germans.[996]

The threats did not work, and clearly Łączyńska took her grievance higher. A letter from the government plenipotentiary for the Sławno district to his counterpart in Gdańsk dated 21 March 1946 outlines the situation, explaining that, as the key to the museum remained in the hands of the UB, it was not possible for it to function.[997] Evidently, it had some effect; nine days later the head of the UB in Sławno wrote to Łączyńska to inform her that the key was ready for collection, and the museum was able to reopen.[998] However, the fact that the government plenipotentiary in Sławno was in contact with the UB again in May to request the return of the missing objects suggests that it was not plain sailing, and it is not clear if they were ever recovered.[999] Interestingly, this last letter makes specific reference to a 'philatelic collection' comprising several volumes of stamps, which are described as being 'under the museum's protection'.[1000] Both Łączyńska and Rosenow's accounts confirm that the stamps were part of the latter's private property. Evidently, the complaint was likely to

[994] Ibid.; Łączyńska 'Zachód - powojenne lata', p. 25.
[995] Matejek, 'Karl Rosenow', pp. 9-13; Łączyńska 'Zachód - powojenne lata', p. 37. As Rosenow explains, the UB got hold of a book he had published in 1921 in which he discussed hidden passages underneath the castle, which they claimed could be used to hide treasure or German partisans. According to Łączyńska's account, the castle's old German janitor – who she describes as 'mentally ill' – aroused the suspicions of a Polish woman who saw him staring into the basement windows, whereupon she 'made up some dramatic, fabricated story about treasures and weapons allegedly buried in the basement of the museum and reported it to the UB'. Either way, Rosenow's arrest was based on the flimsiest of pretexts.
[996] Ibid., p. 37.
[997] Letter from the government plenipotentiary for the Sławno district to the regional government plenipotentiary in Gdańsk, 21 March 1946, APSł 67/562, p. 21.
[998] Letter from UB commander in Sławno to Amelia Łączyńska, 30 March 1946, APSł 67/562, p. 22.
[999] Letter from the government plenipotentiary for the Sławno district to the UB office in Sławno, 15 May 1946, APSł 67/562, p. 31.
[1000] Ibid.

be taken more seriously if it was made on behalf of a Polish institution rather than a German individual. Of course, Łączyńska could simply have been trying to secure the stamps for the museum, but, either way, Łączyńska's intervention also brought her onto the UB's radar, no doubt contributing to her own arrest later that year.

By mid-1947, Łączyńska and Rosenow were both gone, and only Tarnowski remained. For Łączyńska, the atmosphere in Darłowo had become 'too tight', and she moved on to Gdańsk and later to Poznań, though she returned to Darłowo from time to time to visit Tarnowski.[1001] He had become, in Łączyńska's words, 'a valued citizen of the town of Darłowo', and, having abandoned his dreams of working as a porter in Warsaw's Bristol Hotel, managed to carve out a 'more independent…[and] honourable position' as the guardian of the cultural heritage of a small provincial town in the 'Reclaimed Lands'.[1002] Rosenow's departure was prompted by changing legislation regarding employment of Germans (and possibly also be a growing understanding on his part of the increasing unlikelihood of *Pomorze* reverting to *Pommern* at any point in the near future). 'As far as possible', he later wrote, 'I saved the cultural property of the Pomeranian Germans from destruction…I would like to live long enough to be able to watch my contribution to the cultural and economic development of our *Heimat* bear fruit.'[1003] Rosenow died in 1958 at the age of 85, and, though the museum he brought into being remained an important part of the Pomeranian cultural landscape, its path post-1945 was not the one he would have envisaged or hoped for.

Nonetheless, in today's Darłowo Rosenow is not forgotten, and his photograph hangs on the wall of the institution he once worked in alongside images of his Polish successors. Between them, Rosenow, Łączyńska and Tarnowski ran the museum for over three decades, and the

[1001] Łączyńska describes the climate of creeping Stalinisation in her memoirs, as well as her view on people affiliated with local sources of communist power. 'Politics – on a parochial, domestic, and global [scale] – surrounded us everywhere like an aura, influencing all our actions and plans. Some rejoiced at the socialist coup and quickly joined the party or militia, pushing their power and turning up their noses. In the provinces, these were mostly citizens with a lower sense of ethics, and riffraff and thugs reported directly to the secret police'. Łączyńska 'Zachód - powojenne lata', pp. 36, 41.
[1002] Ibid., pp. 40-41.
[1003] Matejek, 'Karl Rosenow', pp. 15-16.

one-time guardians of Darłowo's cultural heritage have now themselves become part of the town's history, which is significant in itself. As Christopher Whitehead, Rhiannon Mason, Susannah Eckersley, and Katherine Lloyd have pointed out, museums have an important role to play in the assembly of 'place identity', which is defined as 'the construction of identity for or by people(s) through reference to place and/or the construction of identity for places through reference to their morphology, histories, cultures, and inhabitants'.[1004] Of course, Darłowo in 1945 was already imbued with a sense of 'place identity', but it was one which was connected with its former life as Rügenwalde, and thus only resonated with the rapidly dwindling German population, most of whom left the town over the course of the next few years. Rosenow's museum – like all *Heimatmuseen* – was implicated in the production of this 'place identity'. Such institutions were, as Alon Confino puts it, among the 'vehicles of memory' that helped transform 'the localness of history, nature and folklore into a concept of nationhood', and were thus deeply involved in the nation-building process underway in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Germany.[1005]

Under Polish rule, this process would essentially be reversed, in the sense that a concept of nationhood – but one which was Slavic and Polish – would provide the cultural framework that would help to transform this 'localness of history' into a constituent part of the Polish national community. The meaning of 'place identity' in the 'Reclaimed Lands' had to change in order to allow the region's new population to put down meaningful roots, and – as we shall see in the next chapter – this was partly achieved (at least in the short term) by using the idea of Polish nationhood as an organising principle for the reinterpretation of local history. In the longer term, however, the very process of transformation that turned Rügenwalde into Darłowo actually helped shape the new community's sense of itself and of its history. One of the key tropes that accompanies narratives of post-war resettlement is the idea of the 'pioneers', dedicated individuals who grasped their 'historical mission', and, through their own agency, built a new society in the 'wild west'.[1006] As Beata Halicka writes, the ideal pioneer embodied 'an organisational spirit [and] an inclination to work for society',

[1004] Whitehead et. al., 'Place, identity and migration and European museums', pp. 10, 12-13.
[1005] Alon Confino, 'The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Heimat, National Memory and the German Empire, 1871-1918', *History and Memory*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1993), pp. 50, 59-62.
[1006] Halicka, *The Polish Wild West*, p. 207.

and, through their grit and determination, such individuals wrote the opening chapters in a new story which helped define a different kind of 'place identity'.[1007]

[Figure 5.3 – Photograph from Maria Zaborowska's collection showing a group gathered in front of the Museum in Darłowo, probably late 1950s. Aleksander Tarnowski – instantly recognisable by his trademark fez and impressive moustache – stands on the centre left][1008]

[1007] Ibid.

[1008] From the private collection of Wanda Szpilewska and Stanislaw Szpilewski, available at http://bibliotekacyfrowa.eu/dlibra/publication/edition/19603 [accessed 25 March 23]

With the passing of time, the 'pioneers' became subsumed into the mythology of their new hometowns, and many of them have become part of a new urban landscape of memory that has been shaped by the story of post-war resettlement. Perhaps the most famous 'pioneer' in Darłowo was Mayor Stanisław Dulewicz, and, in 2015 – the seventieth anniversary of the beginning of Polish rule – he was commemorated with a bronze statue located outside the town hall. Yet Łączyńska and Tarnowski's work at the museum in Darłowo means that they also have a claim to 'pioneer' status. With limited resources and little help from the central authorities, they brought the museum back to life, and – while Łączyńska did not stay long enough to be commemorated in Darłowo (though there is a street named after her in Poznań, where she later settled) – Tarnowski has become part of the town's urban toponomy, with the square outside the museum now bearing his name. Though Rosenow has yet to be commemorated in such a way, the rediscovery of German heritage following collapse of communism has generated new interest in the old German curator; during the museum's ninetieth anniversary celebrations in 2020, the then-curator proclaimed it his 'dream' to gather together the full legacy of Rosenow's regional research.[1009] Increasingly, there is a tendency to think about the local community in terms of the continuities that bridge the dramatic *Zeitenwende* of 1945, a connection which is symbolically personified by Rosenow. Local museology in the immediate post-war period was shaped by individual agency far more than it was by any kind of centralised bureaucracy, securing the people involved a place in the history of their institutions and the changing communities in which they lived, meaning that their legacies continue to resonate to this day.

[1009] https://24kurier.pl/aktualnosci/lato-z-kurierem/wypoczywajac-w-darlowie-warto-tu-zajrzec/ [accessed 5 February 2023]

6

From *Heimat* to *Mała Ojczyzna*: Local Museums, Politics and Society

The German term *Heimat* has proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone translate. 'It would be a great mistake', argues Celia Applegate, 'to search for a solitary meaning, a single truth beyond all the white noise'.[1010] Words, she reminds us, are 'slippery and malleable things', and the meaning(s) of *Heimat* have shifted and evolved over time through its continued articulation within a wide variety of different dialogues.[1011] Yet despite its fluidity, at its core the term denotes the multiplicity of meanings connected to a certain sense of place identity similar to that we saw defined at the end of the previous chapter. Writing in the context of the German Empire, Alon Confino draws attention to its multi-layered nature by noting how, from the 1880s onwards, the idea of *Heimat* represented 'the ultimate German community – real and imagined, tangible and symbolic, local and national – of people who had a particular relationship to one another, sharing a past and a future'.[1012] *Heimat* was rooted in locality (which, in turn, was understood as constituent part of a national whole), and it drew its strength from a particular kind of collective memory, which as, Confino observes, was composed of three main strands: history, the natural environment, and the world of folk culture.[1013]

To the extent that it was something which existed in people's minds, ideas about the *Heimat* in which they had grown up were carried west by the former German inhabitants of the 'Reclaimed Lands' after their expulsion.[1014] Yet the key elements used to define *Heimat* memory did not (indeed *could* not) simply move wholesale along with the population. The landscape, the flora and fauna, the built environment, and the vast majority of the region's

[1010] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials* (Berkley, 1990), p. 4
[1011] Ibid., pp. 4-6.
[1012] Confino, 'The Nation as a Local Metaphor', p. 50.
[1013] Ibid.
[1014] Andrew Demshuk explains how expellees coped with loss through the production of two contrasting visions of *Heimat*: an 'idealised version of what they had lost' – which he terms '*Heimat* of memory' – and *'Heimat* transformed', which denoted its new reality within the Polish state. See Demshuk, *The Lost German East*, pp. 13-25.

cultural heritage was still there, and the post-war transformation of the Western Territories meant that they had to be interpreted anew, as a different kind of place identity was constructed to suit the needs of Polish settlers. German *Heimat* was to become Polish *mała ojczyzna* ('little homeland')[1015], and as key 'sites of memory' local museums had an important part to play. While the previous chapter sought to explore the fate of local cultural heritage in the immediate post-war period – and, in particular, to draw attention to the way in which the revival of museology in the provincial towns of the Western Territories was shaped by territorial/institutional hierarchies and driven by individual agency – this final chapter delves into the broader political and social role of local museums. It draws on the key themes discussed in the first two sections of the thesis – nation-building and 'building socialism' – in order to examine the way in which these conceptual construction projects played out in small-to-medium sized settlements in the 'Reclaimed Lands'.

Using case studies from Jelenia Góra, Słupsk, Darłowo and Koszalin, it considers the attempt post-1945 to erase or obscure traces of German regional identity and present a Polono-centric vision of the local past in its place. Despite the drive to Polonise the 'Reclaimed Lands', in provincial towns the vestiges of the German past remained visible longer than might be expected, reflecting the inherent challenges facing Polish museologists working to reconfigure *Heimatmuseen* to fit the new national and political reality. Moreover, as we shall see, the incorporation of these institutions into a nation that from 1948/49 onwards was 'building socialism' carried its own implications. According to Confino, in Imperial Germany *Heimat* offered a kind of 'never-never land…impervious to politics' (though as he points out, this did not mean the concept lacked political meaning).[1016] Later, the Nazis brought their ideology to bear on local museums, but it is at the peak of the Stalinist period that the former *Heimatmuseen* were most directly affected by state politics. Thus the final part of the chapter moves on to examine the impact of high Stalinist state ideology on local museology,

[1015] In recent years, this formulation has been the most popular translation of *Heimat*, and it is certainly preferable to the simple *ojczyzna* (homeland), which obscures the sense of locality. Radosław Supranowicz mentions several other terms which are sometimes used in Polish, such as *ojczyzna prywatna* (personal homeland), *prywatna przestrzeń* (personal space), or even simply the original German *Heimat*. See Radosław Supranowicz, 'Tęsknota za utraconym rajem?: kilka uwag na temat fenomenu 'Heimat'', *Studia Ełckie*, Vol. 11 (2009), pp. 21-22.

[1016] Confino, 'The Nation as a Local Metaphor', p. 75.

looking at the dynamics surrounding the imposition of political ideas from the centre into smaller, more isolated institutions in the regional periphery, and the tensions – and opportunities – that followed in their wake.

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The incorporation of the 'Reclaimed Lands' into the post-war Polish state was accompanied by large-scale process of *odniemczanie* (de-Germanisation). As a 1946 article in the Polish Western Union's weekly paper *Polska Zachodnia* put it, 'the struggle for the full development and de-Germanization of the Piast Lands' was one of the key issues that would shape 'the immediate future of reborn Poland'.[1017] This 'struggle' did not simply refer to the mass population transfers which fundamentally shaped the region's demographics, but also to a cultural 'cleansing' project which aimed at the eradication of all traces of *niemieckość* ('Germanness'). 'Despite the disappearance of German society', wrote the Polish sociologist Tadeusz Kłapkowski in 1946, 'its rich material cultural heritage remains in the Reclaimed Lands', and, in Kłapkowski's estimation, its continued presence constituted a kind of 'mental barrier' that left many Polish settlers alienated by their new environment.[1018] Though official propaganda might loudly trumpet the return to 'ancient Slavic territory', the inescapable 'Germanness' of Pomerania and Silesia in the immediate post-war period undermined claims about the 'true' identity of the 'Reclaimed Lands'. Expunging the cultural presence of the region's former rulers was thus a necessary pre-requisite for 're-Polonisation', and the process of what Gregor Thum calls 'cleansing memory' began almost immediately after the arrival of Polish administrators in 1945.[1019]

[1017] Wacław Barcikowski, 'Ziemie Odzyskane - warunkiem suwerennej Polski', *Polska Zachodnia* (May 19, 1946), p. 2. The Polish Western Union (*Polski Związek Zachodni*) was a patriotic organisation closely tied to the ideology of Western Thought. It traced its roots back to the pre-war period, but was reactivated by the communists in 1944 in order to support the integration of the 'Reclaimed Lands'.

[1018] Cited in Andrzej Brencz, 'Rola niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego w procesie transformacji społeczno kulturowych na pograniczu zachodnim: (na przykładzie środkowego Nadodrza)', *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne*, Vol. 6 (2002), pp. 167-168. Kłapkowski was being a little premature, given that in 1946 the expulsion of the German population was far from complete.

[1019] Thum, *Uprooted*, pp. 266-287. Of course, the term should really be 'Polonisation', but the narrative of the 'Reclaimed Lands' meant that the transformation was presented as a restoration of the region's age-old character rather than the imposition of something new.

It was a wide-reaching endeavour. Though press reports presented an optimistic vision of rapid 'de-Germanisation' – a 1946 editorial in the weekly *Odra*, for example, suggested that a 'sense of nativeness' and regional attachment was already rapidly emerging as the 'hand of the Polish worker' wiped away the 'German greasepaint' that obscured the true face of the land – the sheer scale of the project presented major challenges.[1020] At one end of the spectrum, it entailed the reconfiguration of the region's imagined geography through the introduction of a new Polish toponomy, which was supposed to 'bind today's epoch as closely as possible with the original, native epoch of these lands'.[1021] At the other end, it involved the policing of basic everyday objects; Hugo Service notes how civic inspection committees in Upper Silesia worked to root out items like German beermats and ashtrays, or towels and boxes for condiments bearing German inscriptions.[1022] 'De-Germanising' to this extent was, of course, unrealistic. Basic shortages of goods meant that German objects had to be re-used – indeed, it is notable that some of the earlier Polish archival material used in this study is typed on recycled German paper, complete with Nazi symbols – but there was still plenty of enthusiasm for the attack on German culture. According to one uncharacteristically reflective Polish contemporary, attitudes 'to the vestiges of Germanness in the Western Lands [were] frequently off-hand and barbarous', with 'unparalleled destruction of works of art [and] historical and cultural monuments' fuelled by 'pseudo-patriotic zeal' and a 'tawdry duty of vengeance against a fallen enemy'.[1023]

All of this had serious implications for regional museology. The *Heimatmuseen* which sprung up across Germany during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries acted as vectors for the diffusion of a broader idea of nationhood that was rooted in the local past, which made them intensely problematic to the new Polish authorities.[1024] At the XVII Congress of

[1020] 'Perspektywa Odry', *Odra* (March 1, 1946), p. 1.
[1021] Kazmierz Kolańczyk, 'O nazwy polskie na Ziemiach Odzyskanych', *Przegląd Zachodni*, Vol. 2. No. 6 (1946), p. 543. Kolańczyk's article, along with the response from Władysław Rusiński in the subsequent issue of *Przegląd Zachodni* illustrate the many difficulties encountered by those engaged in the renaming process. This is further born out in archival material connected with the process; see, for example, the discussion surrounding new Polish placenames in the Koszalin area, APS 317/0/18.1/4951.
[1022] Service, *Germans to Poles,* p. 271.
[1023] Cited in Halicka, *The Polish Wild West*, pp. 239-240.
[1024] Confino, 'The Nation as a Local Metaphor', pp. 59-62.

the Delegates of the Union of Museums in Poland, which was held in Nieborów in 1946, the issue of museums in the 'Reclaimed Lands' was high on the agenda. Attention was drawn to the many pressing organisational difficulties, such as lack of qualified personnel and funds, as well as the troublesome issue of German cultural heritage, and recommendations were made that exhibits which reflected a 'tendentious German propaganda character' should be removed.[1025] These views were reiterated at the XVIII Congress in Poznań in 1947, where Stanisław Lorentz reminded delegates that 'German patterns should not be repeated'.[1026] In the future, regional museology would be 'constructed differently…according to the line of Polish policy in this area', and not be directed by 'erroneous local patriotisms'.[1027] Those *Heimatmuseen* which had survived the transition to Polish administration would have to be 'de-Germanised' forthwith in order to help in the broader 'cultural re-Polonisation of the Z.O'. ('Reclaimed Lands').[1028]

What did the 'de-Germanisation' of local museums look like? Clearly, given the fact that these institutions had been established by Germans in order to promote a sense of local identity that was closely connected to the national whole, this was no straightforward matter. It could involve erasing visible traces of 'Germanness' from the very buildings themselves – for example, the words *Heimatmuseum* were embedded in relief into the frontage of the museum in Słupsk, meaning they had to be physically destroyed – but the real work would be focused on sorting the collections and surviving interpretation. One of the earliest archival documents relating to the post-war life of the museum in Słupsk is a circular letter issued by the director of the Regional Department of Culture and Art in Gdańsk to the starosts in Kwidzyn, Kartuzy, Słupsk, Lębork and Sławno with orders for the segregation of local museum collections. Both newly established and already existing museums were supposed to focus on presenting a regional past 'which undoubtedly belongs to Polish culture', while everything that possessed a 'German propagandistic character' or

[1025] Stanisława M. Sawicka, 'O program muzealny dla ziem odzyskanych', *Przegląd Zachodni*, Vol. 2. No. 10 (1946), pp. 850-52.
[1026] *Protokół XVIII Zjazdu Delegatów Związku Muzeów w Polsce, odbytego w Poznaniu w dniach 2 i 3 czerwca 1947 r.* (Cracow, 1948), p. 11.
[1027] Ibid.
[1028] Sawicka, 'O program muzealny', p. 855.

which could be deemed as 'anti-Polish' was to be removed from view; such items would, for the time being, remain in storage at the disposal of the Ministry of Art and Culture.

Nonetheless, such work seems to have progressed relatively slowly. Of course, the lack of personnel and resources would certainly appear to have been a factor here, but, as Aleksander Tarnowski's memoirs show, in some cases even the most glaring representations of *niemieckość* remained visible well into 1946:

I started working at the museum on May 24, 1946, and there were still a lot of Nazi and Imperial 'relics'. For example, above the door in the office hung a portrait of Admiral Raeder, [and] on the wall a wreath with the inscription: 'An unserem Hermann Goering/ dankbare Bevölkerung von Hagen' [there were also] reproductions of German army uniforms, a portrait of Frederick the Great and other 'trinkets'! Only the pre-war Polish state emblem testified to some changes. After a few days, in consultation with Mrs. Łączyńska, I removed these 'relics'.[1029]

Tarnowski remembered that Karl Rosenow, the old German curator, reacted bitterly to the changes – 'rightly thinking that, from his point of view, we were ruining the work to which he had devoted his life' – though he claims that his initial alterations consisted of little more than 'changing inscriptions, removing portraits of German emperors from the halls and eliminating from the library the works of…Hitler, Rosenberg, [and] Goebbels'.[1030] Certainly, Tarnowski's changes failed to impress a committee of museologists who visited the museum in August 1946. They reported that the museum was 'improperly organised' and that the collections were unprofessionally presented, with 'faulty inscriptions and explanations'.[1031] Noting that the prehistoric exhibition was organized by 'the German Rosenow' and subsequently Polonised by an employee of Mr. Tarnowski, the Varsovians complained that

[1029] Tarnowski '12 lat na Zamku', p. 25. It is not entirely clear how such a wreath ended up in the museum; 'Hagen' or 'Hägen' could refer to several different places, but none of them are in Pomerania.
[1030] Ibid.
[1031] Cited in Skrzypek, 'Z historii muzealnictwa środkowopomorskiego', p. 50.

'the distribution of the material leaves much to be desired', with some of the interpretation deemed 'simply scandalous'.[1032]

This situation was by no means a sign of any reluctance to 're-Polonise' on Tarnowski's part. Indeed, his memoirs indicate that – unlike Amelia Łączyńska, his immediate predecessor – he truly believed in the historical arguments underpinning Poland's westward shift, and the passage in which he describes his first visit to the castle in Darłowo, where Karl Rosenow showed him round, shows genuine emotion.[1033] 'I walked around the halls of the castle', Tarnowski remembered, 'and thought about the distant past, when the Polish language resounded in these walls and in the town; I am – I think to myself – in a place 'where the earth gathers ashes', in the land soaked with the blood of our unfortunate ancestors'.[1034]

Instead, the problems observed in Darłowo were simply a reflection of the general disorganisation that coloured the development of local museology in the 'Reclaimed Lands' in the second half of the 1940s. These difficulties were highlighted in a 1947 article in *Odra*, which discussed the organisation of museology in Lower Silesia and stressed the need for closer cooperation between local administrative units and the Ministry of Culture and Art.[1035] It was not always clear which bodies were actually responsible for the running of individual museums, and – given the extra costs required – there was often a distinct lack of

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[1032] Ibid.

[1033] Łączyńska immersed herself in the Pomeranian past by reading the German histories available in the museum's collections, and, though finding them 'one-sided', she nonetheless began to form a critical view of official propaganda. 'I learned the names of all the Slavic tribes inhabiting the entire coast, from Brandenburg to mouth of the Elbe', Łączyńska recalled in her memoirs, but, despite this 'wonderful history' she felt that 'all this could not be called Poland'. Still, she supported Polish rule in Pomerania – voting in favour of the new borders in the 'Three Times Yes' referendum of June 1946 – but thought that instead of 'propaganda based on trickery and lies' there were more 'eloquent and correct arguments' to be made. In her view, the 'calculation was real and simple'. 'Germany lost the war and must pay…for the harm and misfortune done', and thus new territories were needed 'for strengthening, for reconstruction and for compensation for losses in the East'. See Łączyńska 'Zachód - powojenne lata', pp. 31, 42.

[1034] Tarnowski '12 lat na Zamku', p. 26. Tarnowski's comment about being in a place 'where the earth gathers ashes' is a reference Józef Kisielewski's famous 1938 book *Ziemia Gromadzi Prochy* (The Earth Gathers Ashes). Though ostensibly a work of reportage based on the author's 1937 visit to Germany, Kisielewski's thinking was very much inspired by the scholarship associated with Western Thought, and the book reflected his view that the eastern German territories were in fact indigenous Slavic lands. See Jakub Telec, 'Piotr Zaremba i generacja 1910', *Autobiografia Literatura Kultura Media*, Vol. 3 (2014), pp. 171-173.

[1035] Tadeusz Zelenay, 'Organizacja muzealnictwa na Dolnym Slqsku', *Odra* (June 8, 1947), p. 5. Interestingly, the title page of this issue bears a slogan from the book by Kisielewski mentioned in the previous footnote.

enthusiasm for taking on these duties. For example, a report from Koszalin dated November 1945 shows that though municipal authorities were responsible for the museum building, that they wanted to cede it to the powiat's Culture and Art Department.[1036] While negotiations in the matter were apparently underway in 1945, another report by the museum's manager in spring 1948 despairingly explained that the matter was still unresolved, meaning that 'we are still under the municipal administration'.[1037] The situation in Darłowo was clearly similar. According to Tarnowski, the district and city authorities did not show interest in the museum and failed to provide the necessary financial assistance, while at the 1947 Congress of the Delegates of the Union of Museums Darłowo was described as being 'practically without an owner'.[1038]

In these conditions, it is hardly surprising that local museological work might be deemed lacking, and the scarcity of trained personnel provided another obstacle to bringing local practice in line with that of the regional and national centres. The aforementioned article in *Odra* complained that – despite their 'good will and sincere intentions' – the fact that many of the people working in local museology lacked appropriate qualifications meant that it was 'developing in the wrong direction'.[1039] Again, these criticisms could easily be applied to the museum in Darłowo, and Tarnowski freely admitted his lack of requisite knowledge when recalling the process of 'de-Germanising' and 're-Polonising' the museum displays:

After translating Rosenów's brochure, I began the work of re-Polonisation. This work was begun by Miss Jadzia[1040], and by winter some departments already had Polish inscriptions, but the worst job was Polonising the Prehistory Department, in which some German labels were lost. We made a lot of mistakes in this work, and our translations cannot be considered accurate and professional, because neither I nor Miss Jadzia are archaeologists, and the lack of a German-Polish dictionary hindered our work. I must tell the truth that sometimes we also made spelling mistakes; Miss Jadzia probably

[1036] Report of the custodian of the museum in Koszalin, November 1945, APK 1153/15, pp. 13-14.
[1037] Report on the activity of the museum in Koszalin, February 20 to March 20, 1948, APK 1153/15, p. 31.
[1038] *Protokół XVIII Zjazdu Delegatów Związku Muzeów w Polsce*, p. 9.
[1039] Zelenay, 'Organizacja muzealnicta', p. 5.
[1040] Jadwiga Łączyńska, daughter of Amelia Łączyńska, who worked alongside her mother and Tarnowski in the Darłowo museum.

inadvertently, and I by my 'cleverness'. And so one time she asked me what is the Polish for 'Wetterfahne'? – "I don't know, I forgot, my lady! I have a problem with 'Meissel' here, I think it will be a chisel. Do you know how to spell it?" – "I don't know, I forgot", replied Miss Jadzia – I mutter to myself under my breath, "Proto-Slavic would be 'dołto'…Czech and South Slavic probably 'dlato', and in Polish it must be dłóto", and so I wrote it in Old Polish with dashed 'o'. "You know", says Miss Jadzia, "I wrote 'chorągiewka wietrzna', I'm not sure if I translated it correctly" – "it'll be fine, let's keep fighting, time is pressing, in a month we need the museum 'in polnisches verwandeln'" [I replied]. After a few days, an elderly teacher visiting the museum fell like a bomb into the office with the words: "In the inscriptions in prehistory there are spelling mistakes – 'wietrzna' written with a 'z'? Good people, it is 'wiatr', 'wiatrak'! And 'dłuto' is spelled with a 'u', as in 'dubać'"! After her departure we were very amused, and burst out laughing.[1041]

From the perspective of contemporary state politics, the well-meaning but often misguided efforts of enthusiastic individuals could have a potentially harmful effect on the development of the new Polish institutions which were to take the place of the old *Heimatmuseen*. In many cases, argued Tadeusz Zelenay in the pages of *Odra*, local museums were becoming 'a mere assemblage of quite randomly accumulated objects' which lacked a 'deeper guiding idea' that would give them meaning.[1042] In the case of Darłowo, which retained far more of its pre-war collections than other local museums, this was, perhaps, less of an issue, but in places where far fewer artefacts survived this was clearly a cause for concern. Even more worrying, however, was the continued presence of *ślady niemczyzny* ('German traces') in now-Polish museums. Though 'de-Germanisation' was proceeding apace in the 'Reclaimed Lands', it was not always going according to plan. A circular issued by the Ministry of the Reclaimed Lands in April 1948 noted that 'the campaign to re-Polonise the Reclaimed Lands has not produced satisfactory results everywhere', and that 'the eradication of all vestiges of Germandom has not been fully and universally implemented'.[1043]

[1041] Tarnowski '12 lat na Zamku', p. 27.
[1042] Zelenay, 'Organizacja muzealnictwa', p. 5.
[1043] Cited in Thum, *Uprooted*, p. 271.

By 1948 the process had been underway for three years, and the government was keen to conclude it, particularly in light of the upcoming Exhibition of the Reclaimed Lands, which was to be held in Wrocław that summer. Indeed, as Jakub Tyszkiewicz has noted, the exhibition also marked the climax and conclusion of the initial phase of communist propaganda relating to the new Western Territories.[1044] Integration was supposedly complete; 'there are no more Reclaimed Lands', claimed the Wrocław newspaper *Słowo Polskie* in 1948, 'only Poland'.[1045] The situation in local museums was also changing at this point, as they began to transition to general opening. Witold Kieszkowski, a senior functionary at the Central Directorate of Museums, referred to a 'normalisation' of working conditions within museums in 1948, and that May ceremonial re-openings of the museums in Słupsk and Jelenia Góra took place.[1046] It was also the year in which the large new state museums in Gdańsk and Wrocław opened their doors to the general public, and it would seem that the new Polish museology in the 'Reclaimed Lands' was beginning to take off. Nonetheless, as events which unfolded in the Koszalin museum in early 1949 show, 'de-Germanisation' was far from complete.

On the morning of 21 February 1949, a surprise inspection committee made up of representatives of the municipal council and the powiat committee of the PZPR arrived at the museum in Koszalin. During the course of a nine hour examination of the museum and its collections they found much that concerned them, noting down their complaints in detail in their report. From the very moment of entering the museum, they claimed, it was made clear to museum visitors that 'they are entering a German museum'.[1047] A German shoemakers sign bearing the name 'Schumacher' hung over the main entrance, and, throughout the exhibition rooms, evidence of the region's Germanic past was liberally scattered throughout the displays.[1048] One room presented the interior of an 'old German

[1044] Tyszkiewicz, *Sto Wielkich Dni Wrocławia*, p. 149.
[1045] Cited in ibid., p. 53.
[1046] Survey on the work programme and financial needs of museums, November 13, 1948, APK 17/0/2/87, p. 3; Łaborewicz, 'Działalność Muzeum Miejskiego', p. 13; Skrzypek, 'Z historii muzealnictwa środkowopomorskiego', p. 94.
[1047] Copy of the protocol from the inspection carried out in the Municipal Museum in Koszalin on February 21, 1949, APwK 17/0/2/87, p. 6.
[1048] Ibid.

chamber' complete with German inscriptions, and the lack of Polish text particularly troubled the inspectors.[1049] Though the curator (one Jakub Rokicki, a pre-war employee of the museum in the famous Wilanów Palace on the outskirts of Warsaw) had been in his post for over three years, the inspectors found many German inscriptions accompanying prehistoric and natural history exhibits, while other objects lacked any kind of interpretation whatsoever.[1050] What few Polish inscriptions there were did not always relate to Polish objects either; in the storeroom the inspectors found a Polish sign bearing the text 'old Norse and German tombs', which apparently had been on display until December 1948.[1051]

Indeed, German artefacts appeared to dominate the exhibitions, much to the disgust of the inspection committee. In one room, they took exception to the presence of 'two portraits of German women representative of the German aristocracy', which shamefully hung 'in full view of the general public'.[1052] Elsewhere, they were troubled by German stained glass, statues, tiles, and other pieces they deemed to be of Teutonic origin.[1053] Particular opprobrium was directed towards an 'oil painting depicting Martin Luther's house in Saxony with a German inscription', which was 'supposed to represent a Polish house'.[1054] Relatively modern artefacts were in evidence too; the inspectors remarked disdainfully on a bronze sculpture of a 'typical woman of the German race', which the beleaguered curator claimed was a representation of the wife of the famous boxer Max Schmeling.[1055] In conclusion, the commission decided that 'the collection located in the Municipal Museum in Koszalin depicts, with the exception of a few objects, a collection of German culture and art', where – in the sarcastic phrasing of the report – the 'working masses were free to explore Germanness during opening hours'.[1056] Only a handful of items – such as a Hutsul-style chair

[1049] Ibid., p. 5.
[1050] Ibid., pp. 5-7.
[1051] This was particularly problematic in that it presented ancient burials as non-Slavic. Ibid., p. 6.
[1052] Ibid., p. 5.
[1053] Ibid., pp. 5-6.
[1054] Ibid., p. 5.
[1055] Ibid., p. 6. If this was indeed the person represented in the sculpture, then the comment about it showing a 'typical woman of the German race' is even more problematic; Schmeling's wife was the film star Anny Ondra, and her parents were actually Czech.
[1056] Ibid., pp. 5, 7.

made by the museum's caretaker, Jan Panteluk – served to counterbalance the overriding *niemieckość* by providing a little Slavic flavour.[1057]

Responsibility for this state of affairs was laid squarely at the door of the museum's curator, and it was heavily implied that the museum's political failings were not down to mere carelessness but rather a result of the former curator's apparent pro-German sympathies. In the museum's stairwell, the inspection committee found 'an ordinary desk cabinet of no museological value' which Rokicki was said to have restored using 4,000 złoty of the museum's funds.[1058] This in itself was enough to arouse suspicion, and, upon opening the cabinet, the inspectors found a selection of German books from the Nazi period which seemed to confirm their worst fears. Among the forbidden texts secreted in the nondescript bureau were works like *Wir zogen gegen Polen* (We Went Against Poland) – an account of the Wehrmacht's VII Army Corps' exploits during the 1939 invasion of Poland – and an anti-Polish text written by the Nazi propagandist and SS member Walther Blachetta entitled *Das wahre gesicht Polens* (The True Face of Poland).[1059] Their presence was, it was suggested, no accident, and the commission members expressed their opinion that the curator had purposefully stored them away from the main museum rooms keep them safe from prying eyes.[1060] In the light of such findings Rokicki's future at the museum appeared bleak. He was accused of failing to correctly execute his duties, and – by displaying a 'negative attitude to the current reality' – engaging in activity harmful to the state.[1061]

In the aftermath of the inspection Rokicki was summarily dismissed, and his position as curator was assumed by the former caretaker. Panteluk had strenuously denied any knowledge of the aforementioned German texts, declaring in a signed statement that he had never seen them before that day, and his first reports as museum manager condemned his

[1057] Ibid., p. 5.
[1058] Ibid.
[1059] Ibid.
[1060] Ibid.
[1061] Confidential communication from the Municipal Council in Koszalin to the Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments at the Ministry of Culture and Art in Warsaw, March 31, 1949, APK17/0/2/87, p. 10.

predecessor's conduct in scathing terms.[1062] Under Rokicki, Panteluk maintained, the Municipal Museum in Koszalin 'officially had the character of an apolitical institution', but this was merely a front, beneath which the erstwhile curator 'secured, restored and exhibited German historical memorabilia and Germanic works of art'.[1063] Apparently, the only selection criteria were that these artefacts be 'no younger than the date of the Führer's death', and Panteluk accused Rokicki of being especially careful 'not to let any documentation concerning the liberation of Poland or the existence of Democratic People's Poland…even enter [the museum's] archive'.[1064] Other than 'the repainting of the signboard and a few rooms', nothing had been altered since German times, though as Panteluk made clear, that would all soon change now that he was in charge.[1065]

Nonetheless, despite this damning indictment, we should be careful of accepting the committee's findings at face value. Clearly, there were many 'traces of Germanness' present in the museum's displays, but the idea that Rokicki was some kind of dangerous pro-German sympathiser who had deliberately cultivated a museological shrine to the German past is patently absurd. Rokicki was not working in total isolation, but as part of the broader museological network emerging in post-war Poland. In late 1946, the main board of the Union of Museums in Poland admitted the Municipal Museum in Koszalin to its membership, and the following year Rokicki attended the Union's XVIII Congress in Poznań.[1066] This brought him into contact with the most senior figures in the world of Polish museology, and if something was amiss, it would no doubt have been raised at the time of the museum's accession to the Union, or at the congress in 1947. Even Panteluk admits (albeit with clear scorn) that earlier observers from the Ministry of Culture and Art praised Rokicki's work, although he implies that these visitors – the curator's 'friends from before the war' – likely

[1062] Witness statement by Jan Panteluk, February 21, 1949, APK 17/0/2/87, p. 8.
[1063] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for the second quarter of 1949, APK 1153/15, p. 42.
[1064] Ibid.
[1065] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for 1949, APS 493/0/1/10.
[1066] Skrzypek, 'Z historii muzealnictwa środkowopomorskiego', p. 71. Rokicki participated in various museological events across Poland; in 1948, for example, he attended a course in Cracow organised by the Union of Museums in Poland, the Union's Congress in Toruń, twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of the museum in Bydgoszcz and the opening of the Copernicus Museum in Frombork. See Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin, March 20 – April 20, 1948, APK 1153/15, p. 32; Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin, August 20 – September 20, 1948, APK 1153/15, p. 35.

shared his apparent reactionary tendencies.[1067] Moreover, if the museum's displays were as seriously problematic as the inspection report claimed, then surely this would have been obvious at the time of the museum's grand opening in June 1947. An array of dignitaries were present at the ceremony, including the mayor and representatives of the PPR and PPS, and the event was reported in the local and national press with no mention of anything untoward.[1068] The following month saw the visit of Władysław Tomkiewicz, an important figure within the Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments at the Ministry of Culture and Art in Warsaw, and, though he proposed certain alterations to the layout of displays, there is nothing to suggest that he thought anything was seriously amiss.[1069]

With this in mind, it seems highly probable that the charges levelled against Rokicki were exaggerated, or at the very least strongly distorted so as to show the former curator in an extremely unflattering light. Instead, his downfall can be more readily understood as a reflection of the increasingly oppressive political climate that marked the transition to high Stalinism at the end of the 1940s. Following the creation of the PZPR at the 'unification congress' of December 1948, the party's grip on local and national politics tightened further still, and – coming a mere two months later – the inspection at the Municipal Museum in Koszalin was probably connected to these developments. It is notable, for example, that the inspection was carried out not by representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Art, but by local party functionaries. In higher party circles the ministry had already been criticised for displaying 'excessive liberalism', and, by removing a curator who had been working with the approval of the ministry and replacing him with their own candidate, local party officials effectively challenged the authority of the ministry at municipal level.[1070] Certainly, ministerial officials seem to have seen it this way. Following the inspection, Władysław Tomkiewicz from the Chief Directorate of Museums in Warsaw wrote to the Municipal Council demanding an explanation, which suggests that – despite having personally visited

[1067] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for the second quarter of 1949, APK 1153/15, p. 42.
[1068] Skrzypek, 'Z historii muzealnictwa środkowopomorskiego', p. 72.
[1069] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin, June 20 – July 20, 1947, APK 1153/15, p. 23.
[1070] Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, p. 37.

the museum in 1947 – he was unaware of any major impropriety.[1071] He complained that the council lacked the competence to make managerial changes on its own, and that as a result the ministry would for the time being withhold all subsidies for the museum in Koszalin.[1072] The situation was eventually resolved, but only after a terse exchange of correspondence between Warsaw and Koszalin which left Panteluk fuming at what he termed the Chief Directorate's 'reactionary stance in connection to our museum'.[1073]

Moreover, we should not overlook the fact that Panteluk very likely had a hand in his predecessor's downfall. Not only does he emerge unscathed from the inspection report, but he is in fact presented as a victim of Rokicki's mismanagement. One of the very first issues highlighted in the report is the matter of Panteluk's living quarters, a one-room apartment located in the museum itself.[1074] In the inspection committee's opinion, this accommodation was not suitable for a member of staff. The ceiling leaked and there was damp on the walls, but – despite numerous requests from Panteluk – Rokicki had 'failed to take into account the improvement of [his] employee's living conditions' when carrying out renovation work in the museum.[1075] Indeed, it may even have been Panteluk himself who provided the tip-off which led to the inspection in the first place. The reasoning behind it remains unclear, but Panteluk refers cryptically to 'local socio-political factors' who drew attention to the situation in the Municipal Museum.[1076] Such 'factors' could easily include Panteluk, who was an active communist with a pre-war pedigree (in the inter-war period he had been a member of the Communist Party of Western Ukraine).[1077] His record also shows a tendency to draw official attention to behaviour which he regarded as unacceptable. In 1951, for example, he wrote to the management of the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin to complain about the

[1071] Communication from the Chief Directorate of Museums and the Protection of Monuments at the Ministry of Culture and Art in Warsaw, to the Municipal Council in Koszalin, March 25, 1949, APK 17/0/2/87, p. 12.
[1072] Ibid.
[1073] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for the second quarter of 1949, APK 1153/15, p. 43.
[1074] Copy of the protocol from the inspection carried out in the Municipal Museum in Koszalin on February 21, 1949, APK 17/0/2/87, p. 6.
[1075] Ibid. The fact that renovation work is mentioned is in itself telling, given Panteluk's accusation that the extent of Rokicki's work was limited to the repainting of a few walls.
[1076] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for the second quarter of 1949, APK 1153/15, p. 42.
[1077] Ignacy Skrzypek, 'Niezauważony jubileusz Muzeum w Koszalinie', *Rocznik Koszaliński*, Vol. 45 (2017), p. 142.

curator of the museum in Białogard, who was accused of making abusive statements about the management of the former institution and being regularly drunk during working hours, as well as engaging in financial fraud.[1078]

All of this does not necessarily mean that the charges levelled against Rokicki and his museum were total fabrications; it is certainly plausible that Panteluk's living conditions were substandard, and his criticism of his predecessor may well have been motivated by an ideological zeal that was entirely authentic. Nonetheless, it is not hard to feel a certain degree of sympathy for Rokicki, who had to execute his duties in difficult circumstances with little support. Almost seventy years of age at the time he began his work at the museum in 1945, the curator only had the support of one other staff member – the janitor – and, before they could even begin to think about arranging displays and 'de-Germanising' the collections, they had to clear out a collection of over 30,000 German books which had been stockpiled in the museum by the School Inspectorate.[1079] This task kept them occupied until the end of 1946, and subsequent work in the museum was complicated by the presence of the municipal library, which was housed in the museum until its relocation in mid-1948.[1080] Lack of funds was also a recurring problem, while the scarcity of basic supplies such as fuel for the central heating created a further obstacle to the effective functioning of the museum.

More to the point, it is worth asking whether it was even possible to fully 'de-Germanise' a former *Heimatmuseum* like the one in Koszalin, and, as evidence from Jelenia Góra shows, this question created problems for curators across the 'Reclaimed Lands'. Again, the issue was the display of German cultural heritage – in this case paintings – which the cultural section of the Wrocław Voivodeship administration had demanded be removed from public view. Unlike his counterpart in Koszalin, the manager of the museum in Jelenia Góra was

[1078] Confidential communication regarding personnel issues at the museum in Białogard, January 2, 1951, APS 493/0/1/10.
[1079] Report from the curator of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for December 1946, APK 1153/15, p. 18. Could the books that were discovered by the inspection committee have been part of this collection?
[1080] Ibid.; Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin, May 20 – June 20, 1948, APK 1153/15, p. 34.

able to count on the backing of the municipal authorities, and the town's mayor wrote to the Ministry of Culture and Art in mid-1949 in an attempt to intercede on his behalf. The paintings in question were, in both the curator's and the mayor's opinions, of 'artistic value only'; none of them showed anything that could be regarded as a German 'patriotic moment', and there was nothing that could 'evoke hatred or contempt for the Polish state'.[1081] Neither did they display the hallmarks of art that could be seen as 'fascist' or connected to the 'Hitlerite regime', but rather reflected the fruits of German painting more generally.[1082] Moreover, given the presence of works by famous Polish painters in foreign galleries – which was 'proof of a full understanding of Polish art' – it was suggested that the paintings opened up the opportunity for future international cultural exchanges.[1083] Alongside these moral arguments, however, there were also practical considerations; 95% of the museum's collections consisted of 'post-German' objects, and should the paintings be removed, it would leave 'gaps on the wall that could not currently be filled'.[1084]

The appeal appears, however, unsuccessful, and the museum in Jelenia Góra had already been threatened with closure if it failed to remove the German paintings from display.[1085] Ultimately, when it came to the administration of former *Heimatmuseen*, Polish curators found themselves caught in a complicated situation in which political demands for 'de-Germanisation' had to be balanced against the day-to-day reality of running institutions in which the vast majority of the collections were of German origin. If they were 'de-Germanised' too ruthlessly, then they ran the risk of depleting their holdings to the point where they could no longer function as museums, whereas if the process was deemed too limited, then they could open themselves up to serious criticism of the kind directed at Rokicki. His downfall also shows how the intensification of Stalinism penetrated into the world of local museology, opening up opportunities for individuals like Panteluk, and

[1081] Letter from the Mayor of Jelenia Góra to the Ministry of Culture and Art in Warsaw appealing against the removal of certain post-German exhibits, August 23, 1949, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, (loose untitled file with no further archival signature or pagination).
[1082] Ibid.
[1083] Ibid.
[1084] Ibid.
[1085] Urgent communication from the Mayor of Jelenia Góra to the director of the Municipal Museum, August 19, 1949, APJG 83/168 – *akta luźne*, (loose untitled file with no further archival signature or pagination).

allowing the local party hierarchy to challenge the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Art. While some curators might have attempted to adopt a sensitive (or at least practical) approach toward the process of 'de-Germanisation', the changing political situation brought greater scrutiny to bear on goings-on in provincial museums. Henceforth, they would have to depart more sharply from the museological patterns of the old *Heimatmuseen* and emphasise new historical narratives which served the needs of contemporary Polish politics.

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By the early 1950s, local museums were becoming more closely incorporated into a growing museological network which spanned the entire nation. The driving force behind this development was the nationalisation of almost all Polish museums at the start of 1950, described by the country's most senior museologist as 'a legal act of fundamental importance for the future' which 'laid the foundations for the planning of a single state museum policy'.[1086] Previously, most local museums had been run by municipal or provincial councils, who mostly lacked the funds or necessary expertise to support them effectively, and the fortunes of individual institutions often depended on the attitude of their local government overseers. Though technically the Ministry of Art and Culture assumed overall oversight in the field of museology, the extent of its authority in local matters was not always clear. As the aforementioned example from Koszalin shows, this could be a potential source of conflict with the local councils who provided de facto administration on a day-to-day basis. This kind of 'grey area' made it more difficult to supervise the activity of provincial museums, and – at a time when Stalinist demands for centralisation and uniformity were being increasingly forcefully felt across the whole of Polish society – disparities in museological practice between different institutions could no longer be tolerated. Moreover, there was a feeling that local institutions were lagging behind their larger counterparts, partly due to a lack of trained personnel. 'Young academics', noted Stanisław Lorentz, 'are

[1086] Most institutions came under state control, but there were a few notable exceptions, such as museums which were run by the Catholic Church and the Jewish Institute. See Lorentz, *Muzea i Zbiory w Polsce*, pp. 68, 70-71.

reluctant to go to the provinces, usually trying to get employment in large centres of cultural life'.[1087]

Nationalisation was intended as a remedy for these problems. As Wanda Załuska wrote in the pages of *Muzealnictwo* in 1952, it would help 'accelerate the growth of institutions that were underdeveloped and, in many cases, even neglected', in large part through the introduction of a new 'district' system which would directly subordinate local museums to their larger regional counterparts.[1088] Key museums – such as the Silesian Museum in Wrocław, or the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin – now took on a supervisory role as 'district museums', overseeing the activity of provincial institutions.[1089] Writing from a central perspective, Stanisław Lorentz lauded the local-level initiatives which had brought smaller museums into being, but gently pointed out that such institutions 'often need help in arranging their methods of work and the range of their activity, which…is the duty of the district museum'.[1090] Specialists from these larger museums would help with administration, research, conservation, and educational work, visiting local museums as necessary and assisting in the presentation of displays.[1091] Furthermore, local institutions could benefit from the extensive resources of the district museums. As well as being able to use their libraries and conservation facilities, they could also use borrow artefacts for display, both in the form of specially curated temporary exhibitions, and individual long-term loans with which to plug gaps in their own collections.[1092] The introduction of this new structural framework, would, hoped Lorentz, 'achieve great results and saturate the area of our country with truly useful regional institutions of scientific and educational work'.[1093]

Clearly, the periphery was out of step with the centre, and bringing museums under state control was a significant step toward synchronisation. It allowed the introduction of what

[1087] Ibid., p. 70.
[1088] Załuska, 'Wytyczne do programu prac muzealnictwa', p. 7.
[1089] Załuska noted that this organisational structure was far from ideal, but that it was necessary due to the lack of trained personnel who would be able to independently run local museums efficiently. Ibid.
[1090] Lorentz, *Muzea i Zbiory w Polsce*, p. 69.
[1091] Ibid.
[1092] Ibid.
[1093] Ibid., p. 70.

Załuska called 'a uniform museum and personnel policy', meaning that museological work could be more effectively controlled from the centre and directed toward areas that were deemed politically expedient.[1094] In the 'Reclaimed Lands', one of the key issues on the agenda was the matter of Polonisation (*polonizacja*) – or, in the contemporary parlance, 're-Polonisation' (*repolonizacja*) – which, as Gregor Thum points out, was the 'flip side' of 'de-Germanisation'.[1095] While the latter was destructive and focused on obliterating all traces of the region's former identity, 're-Polonisation' was a more constructive process which sought to promote the idea of the inherent 'Polishness' of the Western Territories and more generally imbue them with a Polish flavour.[1096] On one level, this would help create a cultural climate conducive to long-term resettlement, but its significance was deeper. It would be 'obvious nonsense to re-Polonise something that is not Polish', wrote Eryk Skowron in the Western Union's weekly paper *Polska Zachodnia* in 1946, but he urged his readers to remember the 'fact' that – despite the obvious differences between the region and Polish territory to the east – the 'land and its people once belonged to the Polish community'.[1097] Intimately bound up with the narrative of the 'Reclaimed Lands', 're-Polonisation' thus helped breathe life (of a sort) into the largely mythical figure of the 'Pole-autochthon', who – according to Czesław Pilichowski, the General Secretary of the Western Union – was the 'living proof of the Polishness of these lands'.[1098]

In chapter two, we explored the way in which the Silesian Museum in Wrocław presented a museological narrative framed around 're-Polonisation'. This issue – most clearly expressed in the Silesian Museum, but also visible in the displays of the Pomeranian Museum in Gdańsk and the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin – was initially more pronounced in these institutions for several reasons. Firstly, as large museums located in the regional capitals of the Western Territories, they were subject to a higher level of scrutiny and political control than their smaller provincial counterparts. Moreover, despite the fact that

[1094] Załuska, 'Wytyczne do programu prac muzealnictwa', p. 7.
[1095] Thum, *Uprooted*, pp. 214-215.
[1096] Ibid.
[1097] Eryk Skowron, 'Zagadnienie repolonizacji i zasady jej przeprowadzenia na Ziemiach Odzyskanych', *Polska Zachodnia* (May 19, 1946), p. 4.
[1098] Czesław Pilichowski, 'Polski Związek Zachodni - organizacja dla wszystkich, *Polska Zachodnia* (November 10-17, 1946), p. 2.

they could trace their roots back to pre-war German institutions (particularly true of the museums in Gdańsk and Szczecin, which were located in former German museum buildings), there was much that was 'new' about them. The level of destruction sustained by all three cities meant that the revival of museology entailed a major reconstruction effort, with museums being rebuilt and reorganised – and, in the case of Wrocław, laid out from scratch – meaning that they could be more effectively oriented towards 're-Polonisation' efforts. On top of this, their seniority in the regional museal hierarchy meant that they had the pick of the best artefacts which had survived 'revindication' and removal to central Poland.

In contrast, local museums were much more closely connected to their previous identity as German *Heimatmuseen*, which in turn created specific challenges. The fundamental 'Germanness' of these institutions – which, according to Martin Roth, should be seen as a 'connecting link' between the 'nationalistic museum politics of Wilhelmine Germany' and the '*Volkstum* ideology of National Socialism' – was rooted in their origins in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century.[1099] They differed from larger 'universal survey' museums in several ways. As the products of 'bottom up' initiatives driven by local history enthusiasts (*Heimatlers*), they represented attempts to present the histories of specific communities and places, and two key issues – that of the community's origins, and the history of everyday life within it – provided the guiding principles which organised the displays.[1100] Unlike their larger urban counterparts, these might be laid out in a way that might horrify sniffier museum professionals (a critical observer might deem them 'unscientific' or even 'chaotic') but their meaning and significance was clear.[1101] *Heimatmuseen* linked regional history to the national whole; as Alon Confino puts it, they 'came to represent a historical narrative that stood for the nation as a whole, offering a key to understand German history as a story of everyday life history of origins'.[1102]

[1099] Cited in Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, p. 135.
[1100] Ibid., pp. 140-143.
[1101] Ibid., p. 152.
[1102] Ibid., p. 147.

As the examples discussed in this chapter suggest, other than changes brought about by the depletion of their collections – the result of wartime damage, post-war plundering and 'revindication', and latterly a limited process of 'de-Germanisation' – these institutions still retained a not-insignificant measure of their original character at the end of the 1940s. Simply restoring some semblance of order consumed a great deal of their extremely limited resources, and the idea of creating brand new historical narratives out of the remnants of 'post-German' collections was, at this point, rather unrealistic. For one thing, the general ransacking of former *Heimatmuseum* collections meant that the raw materials needed for such an endeavour were often lacking. In 1946, for example, the Mayor of Słupsk wrote to his counterpart in Szczecin to raise the issue of a 'Slavic idol' housed in the Municipal Museum in Szczecin, which had been featured in an issue of a local weekly.[1103] It was, Słupsk's mayor claimed, so characteristic that it he immediately recognised the image as an object described by German archaeologists as the *Götzenstein von Stolp*, and – though unsure as to whether it depicted a Slavic god – he was positive that it was of Slavic origin.[1104] He enthusiastically encouraged his counterpart in Szczecin to 'share this stone with our town', where it would undoubtedly 'become one of the most interesting exhibits from the history of the Słupsk region' due to the fact that the local museum was 'almost completely devoid of Slavic monuments'.[1105]

Moreover, as Tadeusz Zelenay had noted in *Odra*, the lack of close ministerial supervision and – prior to nationalisation – the absence of any overall plan for the development of regional museums meant that their collections initially evolved in a rather haphazard manner.[1106] Curators often worked hard to secure cultural heritage from the territory around their museums, but they were not necessarily gathering objects with a view to presenting a Polono-centric view of the past. For instance, among the last additions made by Jakub Rokicki to the collection of the museum in Koszalin before his dismissal in 1949 were a decorative table of 'eastern gold plate' with 'Egyptian drawings', an 'old pistol' and the head

[1103] Letter from the Mayor of Słupsk to Piotr Zaremba, Mayor of Szczecin, APSł 341/63, p. 27; 'Bożek Słowiański', *Szczecin: Tygodnik Miasta Morskiego* (September 15, 1946), p. 106.
[1104] Letter from the Mayor of Słupsk to Piotr Zaremba, Mayor of Szczecin, APSł 341/63, p. 27.
[1105] Ibid.
[1106] Zelenay, 'Organizacja muzealnicta', p. 5.

and skin of a hippopotamus.[1107] His successor's disparaging comments about inheriting a disorganised museum with a 'palatial-decorative' style, in which the more recently acquired objects 'lacked any connection with the town of Koszalin, and least of all with the history of the Polish nation' were not, perhaps, that wide of the mark.[1108] Even two years later, the museum in Koszalin was being described in *Muzealnictwo* as resembling a 'cabinet of curiosities'; clearly, from the perspective of contemporary cultural politics, there was still much that needed to be done.[1109]

Still, nationalisation in 1950 marked a turning point, and, under the guidance of the supervisory 'district' museums, interpretation in provincial institutions began to change. That year, the permanent displays in the Municipal Museum in Słupsk were completely reorganised in cooperation with representatives of the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin, and the first externally organised temporary exhibitions were staged.[1110] The latter tended to concentrate on broader Polish cultural themes – many of which we have already encountered in previous chapters – and most of them were organised by the Museum of Western Pomerania. Among those provided for the museum in Słupsk were exhibitions entitled 'Polish Painting of the Mid-Nineteenth Century' (1950), 'Matejko and Repin: Exponents of Humanism and Patriotism' (1953), and displays devoted to Nicholas Copernicus and Hugo Kołłątaj (1954).[1111] There were also temporary exhibitions which presented the famous landscape painter Stanisław Kamocki's depictions of the Cracow region (1953), and the works of contemporary Polish artists (1954), which were organised by the *Centralne Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych* (Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions).[1112] Such displays reflected the museum's integration into a wider national network, allowing for the dissemination of Polish cultural tropes which were unrepresented in the museum's own

[1107] Report on the activity of the museum in Koszalin, April 20 to May 20, 1948, APK 1153/15, p. 33; Report on the activity of the museum in Koszalin, August 20 to September 20, 1948, APK 1153/15, p. 35.
[1108] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for 1949, APS 493/0/1/10.
[1109] Załuska, 'Wytyczne do programu prac muzealnictwa', pp. 7-8. Interestingly, similar criticisms were levelled at *Heimatmuseen* during the imperial period by the prominent German museum expert Gustav Brandt, who described them as 'meaningless and useless unpleasant lumber-rooms' lacking 'insight and responsibility'. Cited in Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, p. 152.
[1110] Analysis of the activity of the Museum in Słupsk, 1945-1955, APSł 386/8, pp. 15-16.
[1111] Ibid., p. 16.
[1112] Ibid.

collections. This was hardly surprising, given the lack of any direct connection between the displays and the Słupsk region, but it meant that the museum could serve as a transmitter of a more general sense of *polskość* which was not grounded in any particular sense of locality.

Of course, this is not to say that local heritage was less important; indeed, it was quite the opposite. As well as replicating broader pan-Polish themes, provincial museums in the 'Reclaimed Lands' were also involved in the production and transmission of an idea of Polishness that was – at least in theory – directly connected to the specificities of regional history and culture. After all, the presence of Kashubians, Silesians and other groups deemed part of the 'autochthonous population' was one of the key arguments used by the Polish authorities to justify the integration of the new Western Territories into the Polish state.[1113] Though there were many cultural and linguistic differences between those deemed 'autochthons' and Polish settlers arriving from the east, these were brushed aside as the consequences of the Germanisation policies of the region's former rulers. Kashubians and Silesians were not to be seen as separate ethnic groups, but rather as 'Polish autochthons' whose 'sense of national cohesion' lay hidden beneath 'a thick veneer of Germanness'.[1114] Writing in *Przegląd Zachodni* in 1946, Władysław Rusiński argued that the 'extraction' and 'revival' of this 'true' Polish identity constituted 'one of our most important tasks in the Reclaimed Lands', and, as we have already seen, museums had an important role to play in this process.[1115] In chapter two we explored the new cultural 'master narrative' presented in the Silesian Museum in Wrocław, and, in the wake of nationalisation in 1950, elements of this kind of Polono-centric vision of the regional past became more visible in the humbler displays of provincial institutions.

[1113] Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity*, p. 72.
[1114] Władysław Rusiński, 'Autochtoni Ziem Odzyskanych – Stan dzisiejszy i perspektywa jutra', *Przegląd Zachodni*, Vol. 2. No. 10 (1946), p. 823. In Stalinist Poland Silesians and Kashubians could not be seen as be seen as ethnically or linguistically distinct from Poles in any way. See Tomasz Kamusella and Motoki Nomachi, 'The Long Shadow of Borders: The Cases of Kashubian and Silesian in Poland', *Eurasia Border Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2014), p. 41.
[1115] Rusiński, 'Autochtoni Ziem Odzyskanych', p. 823.

Such developments can clearly be seen in the museum in Jelenia Góra, which – having closed to the public in 1950 – reopened in March 1953 with newly reorganised displays. According to the museum's new curator, Zbisław Michniewicz, its new permanent exhibition sought to 'illustrate the Jelenia Góra region in historical and social terms', with particular emphasis being placed on the 'Polishness of the area and the development of local society'.[1116] Organised in conjunction with the Silesian Museum in Wrocław – Jelenia Góra's supervisory 'district' museum – the new display adopted an epoch-spanning historical narrative which mirrored many aspects of the Silesian Museum's own interpretation. Beginning in the Stone Age (the oldest exhibits were stone tools found not far from Jelenia Góra, and estimated to be around 50,000 years old), the exhibition followed a chronological path which led all the way to the twentieth century.[1117] As tour guides explained to visitors, it traced 'the local person in all aspects of life, cultural and economic', and, like its larger counterpart in Wrocław, a heavy emphasis was placed on constructing a narrative which highlighted the local area's age-old Slavic character.[1118] This is particularly evident in the script used for guided tours (again, created in cooperation with the Silesian Museum), which draws attention early on the presence of a 'proto-Slavic society' which existed 'in Silesia, as in other parts of Poland', more than three millennia previously.[1119]

The transition from 'proto-Slavic' to 'Slavic' – which, it was claimed, took place around the beginning of the Common Era – was illustrated by a variety of archaeological finds from the Iron Age though to the medieval period.[1120] Accompanying them was a plan which mapped out their location in relation to a central point – 'today's Jelenia Góra' – thus showing that 'the present city has evolved in this place over the course of thousands of years'.[1121] Exhibits relating to the area's former rulers, the Piast dukes of Świdnica-Jawor, continued the narrative of regional *polskość* into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with particular attention lavished on Dukes Bolko I and Bolko II for their 'consistency and endurance in

[1116] Publicity text supplied to the Municipal Press Control Office, March 24, 1953, APJG 83/168/2, p. 137.
[1117] Plan of the text for guiding around the main exhibition in the Museum in Jelenia Góra, 1954, APJG 83/168/9, pp. 110-117.
[1118] Ibid., p. 110.
[1119] Ibid.
[1120] Ibid., pp. 110-111.
[1121] Ibid., p. 111.

maintaining ties with Poland'.[1122] The district was said to have 'retained its Polish identity and political independence until the end of the fourteenth century', and its final Piast rulers – Bolko II and his wife Agnieszka – were described in the tour script as 'the last defenders of the independence of Silesia, loyal to Poland until death'.[1123] Admittedly, the Piast objects on display in Jelenia Góra were not perhaps the most impressive, comprising a plaster cast of Bolko I's head taken from his tomb in Krzeszów, some reproduction images of Piast coinage, and a handful of seals, but they nonetheless represented a sharp change of direction for the former *Heimatmuseum*.[1124] A mere three years previously, the museum's curator had despaired at the fact that 'de-Germanisation' threatened to empty the museum and make it unviable; now, it was home to an exhibition which documented an unequivocally Polish vision of the local past.

In particular, it is notable that a significant element of this Polish past was located in the surrounding rural environment of the Jelenia Góra region. Though the exhibition acknowledged the 'intensive influx' of a 'German element' in Silesia from the late thirteenth century onwards, this was seen as an urban phenomenon, and the incomers were said to have avoided the 'less profitable agricultural lands' in the foothills of the Sudeten Mountains.[1125] Here, the rural population 'maintained its *polskość* for a long time', with 'traces of this [Polish] culture lasting in the [Sudeten] foothills until recent times'.[1126] In this way, the exhibition's architects deployed a generalised vision of a Polish 'folk culture' which allowed examples from Silesia to be interpreted as evidence of the region's broader Polish character. For example, attention was drawn to local folk costumes, which, according to the constructivist approach pioneered by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, can be understood (in large part) as 'invented traditions'.[1127] In the museum in Jelenia Góra, visitors

[1122] Ibid., p. 112. In a previous draft of the tour script, a senior staff member from the Silesian Museum in Wrocław suggested that 'accents of Polishness/the Piasts of Świdnica should be further developed'. See Review of the guided tour plan for the Museum in Jelenia Góra, APJG 83/168/9, pp. 100-101.
[1123] Plan of the text for guiding around the main exhibition in the Museum in Jelenia Góra, 1954, APJG 83/168/9, p. 113.
[1124] Ibid., p. 112-113.
[1125] Ibid., p. 113.
[1126] Ibid.
[1127] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983). The 'invention of tradition' is a useful starting point, but a slightly different perspective can be found in the writing of Corrine Geering, who considers the broader social and economic application of 'invented tradition' in her exploration

were encouraged to observe apparent similarities between the depiction of peasant attire in in late medieval woodcuts and nineteenth-century costumes which 'survived here in the foothills', a comparison which helped to historicise more recent 'invented traditions' and connect them back to the Piast past.[1128] Moreover, as the guided tour script stressed, links could be drawn across space as well as time. Local peasant coats (*sukmany*) were said to resemble those in found in Mazovia and the Cracow area, while the embroidery on handkerchiefs was 'reminiscent of designs from Greater Poland', thus 'testifying to the kinship between material culture in Silesia and the central provinces'.[1129]

[Figure 6.1 – Display of local headgear in the Museum in Jelenia Góra, 1953. The plaque on the wall declares the Polish identity of medieval Silesian peasants, and claims that their national traditions survived in local clothing until recent times][1130]

of the way folk dress was transformed into an 'ethno-commodity'. See Corrine Geering '"Is This Not Just Nationalism?" Disentangling the Threads of Folk Costumes in the History of Central and Eastern Europe', *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (2022), pp. 722-741.

[1128] Plan of the text for guiding around the main exhibition in the Museum in Jelenia Góra, 1954, APJG 83/168/9, p. 111.

[1129] Ibid.

[1130] Collection of the Muzeum Karkonoskie in Jelenia Góra, courtesy of Robert Rzeszowski.

Another opportunity to highlight these purported connections was provided by the presence of a full-size reconstruction of a local peasant dwelling, which, to this day, remains one of the museum's principal attractions. Over the course of the later nineteenth century, such buildings became popular exhibits in the new ethnographic and folk museums opening across Europe.[1131] These structures served as important symbols of a newly imagined sense of national identity shaped by the contemporary 'nationalisation of folk culture', which, as Orvar Lofgren has observed, led to the production of a 'correct, authorised and timeless version of folk life'.[1132] Jelenia Góra's 'mountain hut' (*chata górska*) had been constructed in the wake of this trend in 1913, largely on the initiative of Hugo Seydel, the museum's founder.[1133] Though it represented a 'typical' eighteenth-century peasant home, the building was actually a modern creation, designed by the architect Karl Schurek on the basis of his own research and the insights of Seydel and another local history enthusiast, a physician named Oswald Baer.[1134] It therefore represented a vision of the local past as imagined by *völkisch-konservative* members of the early-twentieth century German provincial bourgeoisie, yet in Stalinist-era Jelenia Góra the cottage was being presented as an unequivocally Polish structure. According to the tour script, it helped show how rural houses in the region 'further testified to a Polish system of construction', with 'elements of Polish traditions visible' in the joints on the ceiling and wall beams and the timber-arcaded roof (*dach podcieniowy*) of the replica cabin.[1135]

[1131] Bjarne Stoklund, 'How the Peasant House became a National Symbol: A Chapter in the History of Museums and Nation-Building', *Ethnologia Europaea*, Vol. 29 (1999), pp. 5-18.
[1132] Orvar Löfgren, 'The Nationalization of Culture' *Ethnologia Europaea*, Vol. 19 (1989), pp. 11-12.
[1133] Rzeszowski, 'Historia Muzeum RGV do 1945 roku', p. 37.
[1134] Marta Ostrowska-Bies, 'The Karkonosze House at the Lower Silesian Crafts and Industry Exhibition in 1905: The Search for a Regional Form of Architecture around 1900', *Quart*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2020), p. 39.
[1135] Plan of the text for guiding around the main exhibition in the Museum in Jelenia Góra, 1954, APJG 83/168/9, p. 112.

[Figure 6.2 – The reconstructed peasant cottage at the *Museum des Riesengebirgsverein* in Hirschberg, probably around 1914. Today it is enclosed within a protective structure.][1136]

[1136] Collection of the Muzeum Karkonoskie in Jelenia Góra, courtesy of Robert Rzeszowski.

[Figure 6.3 – Interior of the reconstructed cottage, c. 1914. The furniture remains on display to this day; note the German text along the top of the bed][1137]

[1137] Collection of the Muzeum Karkonoskie in Jelenia Góra, courtesy of Robert Rzeszowski.

In reality, the process of 'inventing traditions' had created idealised images of an 'authentic' rural past which – though ostensibly shaped by national specificities – looked remarkably similar across East-Central Europe. The concept of 'folk culture' was thus a particularly useful tool for underlining claims about the 'true' ethnic character of the new Western Territories. According to the Polish ethnologist Bożena Stelmachowska, it constituted 'the strongest bond between people and land', and in two 1946 articles in *Przegląd Zachodni* she argued for the persistence of elements of Slavic folk culture in the 'Reclaimed Lands', which survived as 'ethnographic fragments' even when 'the mother tongue…[and] native consciousness has been lost'.[1138] In Lower Silesia, the absence of a sizable population which could be seen as true 'autochthons' meant that ethnographers had to 'delve deeper' in order to bring to light the 'venerable and indestructible remains of the native culture', but there were other parts of the 'Reclaimed Lands' where – claimed Stelmachowska – the thread of tradition had not been fully severed and could 'still be grasped'.[1139] Much of her ethnographic research focused on the Kashubians, and, in particular, a group referred to as the Slovincians (*Słowińcy*).[1140] They lived in 'hamlets lost among forests and moors' in the 'backwater between the Łebsko and Gardno lakes', where (according to Stelmachowska), there were 'whole villages which, to this day, maintain a native Kashubian character'.[1141] Once again, it was in the rural hinterlands where the 'true' character of the region could still be discerned.

In 1953, Stelmachowska's fieldwork in the area brought her into contact with Maria Zaborowska, the curator of the museum in Słupsk, who shared her passion for ethnography

[1138] Bożena Stelmachowska, 'Polska kultura ludowa czynnikiem zespalającym Ziemie Odzyskane', *Przegląd Zachodni*, Vol. 2, No. 12 (1946), p. 979; Bożena Stelmachowska, 'O styl i obyczaj rodzimy na ziemiach odzyskanych', *Przegląd Zachodni*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1946), p. 18.
[1139] Stelmachowska, 'Polska kultura ludowa', pp. 982, 990.
[1140] Defining the identity of the group referred to as 'Slovincians' is no straightforward matter. The name was first used by the Russian scholar Alexander Hilferding in 1856, and it later passed into more general usage to denote Protestant Kashubians, yet there is a lack of consensus as to whether the Slovincians can be clearly differentiated. Zygmunt Szultka refers to them as 'so-called' Slovincians, and the idea that the term simply refers to a construct imagined by nationalist ethnographers is certainly plausible. However, despite its baggage, for reasons of clarity I have used 'Slovincian' to refer to the autochthonous population north of Słupsk that the Polish authorities deemed 'Slavic'. See Wojciech Wróblewski, 'Badania etnograficzne w województwie koszalińskim w latach 1950–1975', *Słupskie Studia Historyczne*, Vol. 11 (2004), p. 228, n. 18; Zygmunt Szultka, 'Jak o tzw. Słowińcach przed pół wiekiem pisano. W związku z książką Słowińcy – ich dzieje i kultura (do 1956 r.)', *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2014).
[1141] Stelmachowska, 'O styl i obyczaj rodzimy', pp. 18-19.

and 'the search for traces of the Slavic past in Pomerania'.[1142] Słupsk lay only a few dozen kilometres away from the Slovincian 'preserve', and, in the museum's displays, Kashubian heritage – which, according to the official line, was also Polish heritage – assumed particular significance. On one level, this was very similar to the newer interpretation in Jelenia Góra, in the sense that ostensibly Slavic elements of the regional past were presented as evidence of its historical identity. For example, one of the first exhibits subjected to conservation treatment was a large painting of the seventeenth-century Lutheran clergyman Michał Mostnik.[1143] A chaplain to the Pomeranian dukes, Mostnik (also known as Michael Pontanus or Brüggemann) was hailed as a Slavic figure who had helped maintain the region's Kashubian character by publishing numerous works in the Slovincian/Kashubian language.[1144] Indeed, Stelmachowska cited the former presence of Mostnik's portrait in the church in Smołdzino – the same painting which later made its way to the museum in Słupsk – as evidence that the village had previously been 'a territorial centre of Slovincian ethnic group'.[1145] More recent scholarship has cast serious doubt on Mostnik's linguistic ability and purported Slavic identity, but, during the communist period, his apparent Kashubian credentials were important indicators of a deeper history supposedly uncovered through 're-Polonisation'.[1146]

However, when it came to developing interpretation, the museum in Słupsk could turn to a resource which was absent from the Jelenia Góra region. The presence of an 'authentic' autochthonic population nearby meant that folk culture took on additional significance, and, despite its small staff, the museum played an active role in ethnographic research aimed at promoting wider awareness of Slovincian-Kashubian heritage. This, it was hoped, could

[1142] Maria Zaborowska, 'Muzeum w Słupsku i jego rozwój w latach 1945-1964', *Koszalińskie Zeszyty Muzealne*, Vol. 1 (1971), p. 49.
[1143] Ibid., p. 57.
[1144] Małgorzata Mastalerz-Krystjańczuk, 'Ludność rodzima znad jezior Łebsko i Gardno w publicystyce polskiej w latach 1960-1989', *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2017), p. 181.
[1145] Cited in Szultka, 'Jak o tzw. Słowińcach przed pół wiekiem pisano', p. 267.
[1146] Szultka provides a sharp but plausible critique of Stelmachowska in ibid. Regarding Mostnik's Slavic identity, he remarks that 'this image of the Smołdzino pastor is very far from reality…He came from a typical German family…[and] received a German upbringing, as his guardians were very reluctant to speak Kashubian. He studied at German universities for ten years. When he was appointed pastor in Smołdzino, he probably did not know Polish and Kashubian, and in 1643 he knew them so poorly that he could not even dream of translating religious texts from German into Polish'. Cited in Mastalerz-Krystjańczuk, 'Ludność rodzima znad jezior Łebsko i Gardno', p. 181, n. 50.

serve as a foundation for the 're-Polonisation' of the region, but there was much about it that remained rather mysterious. Information had to be gleaned from whatever sources were available; for example, correspondence exchanged between Zaborowska and colleagues based at the Museum of Western Pomerania shows how pre-war German photographs were used to try and recreate traditional Slovincian costumes and dances which could be used in public ceremonies and by groups like the local amateur dramatic society.[1147] This was, however, no substitute for first-hand experience, and, in order to gather information and expand the museum's collections, attempts were made to cultivate ties with the Slovincian community. In March 1952 the curator reported that the janitor, Jan Knyba – 'who, as a Kashubian, can gain greater trust from the autochthonic population' – had already developed contacts amongst the fishing villages in the vicinity of Lake Gardno, and expressed her hope of accompanying him on a subsequent expedition.[1148]

The material gathered was to be utilised in a new ethnographic exhibition, developed in conjunction with the Museum of Western of Western Pomerania. It was intended to address failures in the existing interpretation – which was criticised for presenting unconnected 'fragments' of regional material culture from the late eighteenth to the twentieth centuries – and planning work began in 1951.[1149] In the event, however, ethnographic initiatives in the Słupsk area led not only to a new exhibition, but to an entirely new museum, an open-air 'Skansen' located in the Slovincian village of Kluki. Though it opened in 1963, and thus falls outside the temporal parameters of this study, it is nonetheless worth mentioning as it represents the culmination of work started in the 1940s and 1950s by – among others – Stelmachowska and Zaborowska. The *Muzeum Wsi Słowińskiej w Klukach* (Museum of the Slovincian Village in Kluki) was supposed to preserve elements of a traditional Slovincian village and 'gather the surviving remains of monuments of folk culture of this region' so they

[1147] Letter from Maria Zaborowska to the management of the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin, December 14, 1951, APSł 386/4, p. 5; Letter from Tadeusz Delimat to Maria Zaborowska, December 24, 1951, APSł 386/4, p. 4; Letter from Józef Marciniak to the management of the Museum in Słupsk, May 6, 1952, APSł 386/4, p. 7; Letter from Tadeusz Delimat to Maria Zaborowska, July 25, 1952, APSł 386/4, p. 3.
[1148] Communication from Maria Zaborowska to the management of the Museum of Western Pomerania in Szczecin regarding the matter of the ethnographic exhibition, March 12, 1952, APSł 386/4, pp. 1-2.
[1149] The ethnographic exhibition project at the Museum in Słupsk, APSł 386/3, pp. 69-72.

could be seen in their 'natural' context.[1150] Created through the exemplary 'team effort and social commitment of the inhabitants of this village' along with 'craftsmen, scientists, artists, administrators, and museum employees', it was presented as the result of fruitful co-operation between locals and outsiders.[1151] With their timber frames and thatched roofs, the buildings of the open-air museum seemed to reflect a timeless rural idyll, where, restored to the bosom of the Polish motherland, today's Slovincians continued the Slavic traditions of their ancestors.

Nonetheless, this rosy image masks an inconvenient reality. In their eagerness to draw attention to the Slovincians' purported Slavic past, Polish ethnographers and museologists tended to bypass the fact that their enthusiasm was not necessarily shared by the Slovincians themselves. As Violetta Tkacz-Laskowska has observed, the creation of the Skansen in Kluki was met by broad disinterest from the village's Slovincian population, of whom only a hundred or so remained by the time of the museum's opening in 1963.[1152] Many families had left in the immediate post-war years, largely as a result of the mistreatment they suffered at the hands of the Red Army and incoming Polish settlers, who had little awareness of the apparently 'Slavic' character of the autochthonous population.[1153] Alarmed by this exodus, Polish activists sought to deal with the 'Slovincian problem' by preventing autochthons from leaving and subjecting them to 're-Polonisation' initiatives, but these only served to further alienate the Slovincians, who showed little inclination to become Polish. Indeed, if anything, it reinforced their German identity; as one emigrant from Kluki later commented, despite its conversion into a Polish museum, 'the home where my German ancestors lived and died…was and will be German'.[1154] After the signing of the Treaty of Warsaw in 1970, emigration became much easier for the remaining Slovincians, and, even as the open-air museum grew, the living village around it began to

[1150] Zaborowska, 'Muzeum w Słupsku', pp. 42-43, 49.
[1151] Feliks Ptaszyński, 'Adaptacja obiektów zabytkowych dla potrzeb muzealnictwa w województwie Koszalińskim', *Koszalińskie Zeszyty Muzealne*, Vol. 1 (1971), p. 164.
[1152] Violetta Tkacz-Laskowska, ''Problem Słowińców'. Od Zagrody Muzealnej do Muzeum Wsi Słowińskiej w Klukach, in *Muzea Pomorskie: Twórcy, Zbiory i Funkcje Kulturowe* (Gdańsk; Słupsk, 2005), pp. 70-81.
[1153] Ibid., pp. 71-72.
[1154] Cited in ibid., p. 73.

die.[1155] By 1975 only 36 autochthons remained, and the gradual demise of the Slovincian settlement in Kluki reflects the broader failings of Polish policy towards the autochthonous population.[1156]

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The politics of regional museology during the period in question was not shaped by 'de-Germanisation' and 're-Polonisation' alone. As we saw in section two, there was another factor at play – Stalinist ideology – and, from the later 1940s onwards, the project of 'building socialism' became a much more noticeable part the day-to-day activity of local museums. In his memoirs, Aleksander Tarnowski remembered how the attitude of senior representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Art began to shift as the new political reality set it in:

In 1947, a senior official of the Ministry of Culture and Art visited the museum, and, though he expressed his appreciation for its organisation and cleanliness, his only objection was to the presence of certain propaganda inscriptions such as: 'People's Democracy has created academic cadres of worker-peasant origins'. 'Sir', said the inspector, 'the museum is a shrine of art, it is an apolitical institution, it should not be used for revolutionary propaganda; remove these inscriptions'. 'But, sir,' I tried to reply, 'this is a signum temporis*…' 'Please clean up these inscriptions as soon as possible', repeated the ministry official. The following year, this gentleman from Warsaw returned to the museum, and again praised the management for maintaining high standards of order and cleanliness, but this time, he was displeased by the lack of propaganda inscriptions. 'Sir', [he explained], 'the museum is not a shrine of art, but also a cultural and educational institution, after all, we live in a socialist state…in a country that is building socialism...' 'Yes sir', [I replied], 'the inscriptions removed last year will be replaced'.*[1157]

[1155] Ibid., p. 74.
[1156] Ibid. As John J. Kulczycki observes, Polish attempts to impose a rigid national identity on the autochthonous population often had the paradoxical effect of reinforcing German sympathies. See John J. Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Polish-German Borderlands, 1939-1951* (Cambridge, Mass., 2016), pp. 302-303.
[1157] Tarnowski '12 lat na Zamku', p. 37.

Tarnowski, was, perhaps, a little ahead of the curve. A pre-war socialist, he joined the PPR at the start of 1947 and appears to have been genuinely committed to the new ideology, though his memoirs suggest that his support was not necessarily uncritical or sycophantic. The presence of such propaganda inscriptions in the museum pre-1948 was probably a reflection of Tarnowski's own political conviction rather than a ministerial imposition – indeed, his comments imply a mild criticism of the Ministry of Culture and Art for being slow to catch up with the changing situation – but by the beginning of the 1950s the idea of an 'apolitical' museum (i.e. one in which interpretation did not explicitly reflect state ideology) was becoming increasingly untenable.

One of the clearest examples of this transition can be found in the Municipal Museum in Koszalin, where the former janitor Jan Panteluk took over the running of the museum from the disgraced curator Jakub Rokicki in 1949. Panteluk had accused his predecessor of running an 'apolitical' institution, and, on assuming his new position, he began to energetically reform the museum in line with the needs of state politics. One of his first actions was the organisation of a new department dedicated to the 'most recent history'.[1158] Its key focus was on the 'creation and fighting path of the reborn Polish armed forces' and 'the liberation of Poland with the help of the USSR', with particular emphasis on the Soviet Army's role in liberating Pomerania and the town of Koszalin itself.[1159] Certainly, Panteluk could not be criticised for a lack of effort, and the new department was organised within a few months of his promotion.[1160] Panteluk engaged in extensive research in order to prepare its displays, corresponding with the local Soviet Army command in Legnica, the Museum of the Soviet Army in Moscow, and the Historical Bureau of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw, where he spent several days examining archival material.[1161]

[1158] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for the second quarter of 1949, APK 1153/15, p. 44.
[1159] Ibid.
[1160] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for 1949, APS 493/0/1/10
[1161] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for the second quarter of 1949, APK 1153/15, p. 44.

In October 1949, Panteluk organised his first temporary exhibition – 'The Soviet Press' – in which he presented '123 different journals and daily papers…in seven different languages of the nations of the USSR', and, due to the apparent interest it generated, the exhibition's run was extended until December.[1162] This marked a sharp departure from the museum's direction under Panteluk's predecessor – references to the Soviet Union in Rokicki's reports are conspicuous by their absence – and in 1950 a much wider-ranging exhibition was staged in the Municipal Museum in Koszalin, this time on the broad theme of 'Soviet Culture'. As the *Głos Koszaliński* reported, it allowed visitors to acquaint themselves with 'the achievements of the Soviet Union in all spheres of life', including science (where visitors could learn about the work of the Soviet pseudo-scientist Trofim Lysenko), literature, healthcare, technology, agriculture, building techniques and art.[1163] It was, of course, pure propaganda; according to one amenable visitor interviewed by the local paper, the displays showed how the Soviet people were building a 'new and better tomorrow' and encouraged Poles to 'follow the example of the builders of communism'.[1164]

While Panteluk's own conflict with the Ministry of Culture and Art suggests that the driving force behind the initial changes in Koszalin was the curator himself, the staging of displays which directly reflected core elements of state ideology soon became common practice in local museums.[1165] The nationalisation of Polish museums at the start of 1950 created a connected museological environment that brought national issues to bear at a local level. From a purely political standpoint, this meant displays similar to the ones discussed in the context of larger institutions in section two. These might include exhibitions devoted to themes of Polish-Soviet friendship, such as the examples from Koszalin mentioned above, or the 1953 exhibition 'Matejko and Repin: Exponents of Humanism and Patriotism', which was

[1162] Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for 1949, APS 493/0/1/10.
[1163] 'Inhabitants of Koszalin introduced to the world-leading achievements of Soviet culture and science at the 'Soviet Culture' exhibition', cutting from *Głos Koszaliński* (December 1, 1950), APS 493/0/1/10.
[1164] Ibid.
[1165] Panteluk rather pointedly notes in a report that his plans for a department of recent history illustrated by 'historical facts connected to socio-economic changes' would come to fruition 'as long as the Central Directorate of Museums did not apply its veto'. Report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Koszalin for the second quarter of 1949, APK 1153/15, p. 44.

supplied 'pre-curated' by the Museum of Western Pomerania and displayed in various locations across the region. According to the curator of the museum in Słupsk, it 'fulfilled the noble mission of promoting the traditional friendship of both [Polish and Soviet] nations on the basis of the struggle for the rights of man and nation', which were 'reflected in the presented works'.[1166] Another important theme was class conflict. For example, the 1954 script for guided tours around the newly reorganised main exhibition in Jelenia Góra emphasised a historical 'struggle for social liberation', drawing attention to the 'beginnings of a communist movement' in the vicinity of the town in 1844-45.[1167] The tour closed by reminding visitors that these 'dreams of profound social change were realised' only in 1945, with the beginning of Polish rule.[1168]

This kind of ideological content was part and parcel of Stalinist-era museology, but, when thinking about local museums, we should be wary of overstating both the efficacy of such content and the commitment with which it was delivered. While press material and official reports complied by individual institutions unsurprisingly tend to put a positive spin on things, Tarnowski's memoirs of his time in Darłowo provide a useful counterpoint to these often generic accounts. Take, for example, the following description of the installation of an externally supplied exhibition celebrating the Soviet Union:

On November 30 at 6pm, Comrade Urbaniak from the Museum of Western Pomerania bursts into the office [saying] 'I brought you a Soviet exhibition; I have twenty-five large crates on two trucks. Where are the comrades from the party who are supposed to help us unload them? The Voivodeship Committee in Szczecin did not reach an understanding with the Party Committee in Darłowo, we are supposed to get six comrades to help'. I call the committee, but in vain; there is no one there, and tomorrow is Sunday, the committee is closed! The driver helped us unload the heavy boxes from the cars and drove off. Comrade Urbaniak and I were left alone, exhausted and sweaty. 'Do you have any cash, comrade? We could hire a couple of workers from the mill, we can't do it alone, and the crates

[1166] Communication from the manager of the museum in Słupsk to the powiat board of the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society, APSł 386/4, p. 38.
[1167] Plan of the text for guiding around the main exhibition in the Museum in Jelenia Góra, 1954, APJG 83/168/9, p. 117.
[1168] Ibid.

can't stay outside all night in the rain. 'I have nothing, comrade' [I replied], 'we'll have to do this work ourselves'. We opened one chest and began to pull the heavy boards depicting the 'Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Union' to the Castle Chapel. 'Why the hell have you brought this, [I asked Urbaniak], 'after all, the exhibition is not up to date, this five-year plan has been carried out a long time ago'. 'And isn't it all the same?!' [Urbaniak replied]. 'We'll keep going and that's that, this is the order we have from the director'. 'But these huge boards will not fit in the chapel, what will this exhibition look like!'. At this point my wife came up to us, looked at our work and exploded. 'Stop Olek, or you will kill yourself!'. [She turned] to Comrade Urbaniak: 'Does the Directorate have at least a little conscience? Who has ever seen an old, sick man have to carry such heavy boards? Why does the M.P.Z.[1169] *not have any funds for this purpose, when other District Museums do? Anyway, you are tired too, drop it all and come for some supper, and during the night we'll take it in turn to guard these boxes; maybe tomorrow someone will help us'.*

After a sleepless night we started work on Sunday, unfortunately no one helped us except for the rather weak Herta [the museum's caretaker]. The young and strong comrade Urbaniak pulled the heavier boards, while Herta and I took the lighter ones, and I felt as tired as I had ever been in my life. The last and heaviest board depicted Joseph Stalin, and all three of us pulled it in – 'phew, it's damn heavy!'…Out of the 79 boards that constituted the entire exhibition, only 24 were installed. I look critically at the layout of the exhibition and make a suggestion to Comrade Urbaniak. 'Why did you put the milkmaid next to the meat processing plant? You could put her next to the agro-city, but the girl has a scratched nose, so we should take her down. You cannot deny that [the display] was damaged in Szczecin and not in Darłowo, we have to put it in order. So I propose we remove it from the exhibition'. Next to the agro-city we will set up a pig farmer, and at the meat processing plant we'll have the shepherd in Caucasian costume. 'I think, comrade,' Urbaniak objects, 'that both the pig farmer and the shepherd should be placed next to the meat plant. 'But understand, man' [I explain], 'the meat plant is to be built in the Caucasus, and what do they eat there? Shashlik dear comrade, shashlik made with lamb!'. Delighted with this irresistible argument, Comrade Urbaniak with the words – ale macie kepełę ['what a mind you have'] – rearranged the boards according to my instructions. We placed the unexposed boards on the floor, as well as twenty-five huge, empty chests. After this hellish job, my health began to fail again.[1170]

[1169] *Muzeum Pomorza Zachodniego* (Museum of Western Pomerania).
[1170] Tarnowski '12 lat na Zamku', pp. 54-55.

This little vignette suggests that the staging of such exhibitions constituted little more than a 'box-ticking' exercise. By preparing and circulating the display described above, the Museum of Western Pomerania could claim to be contributing to the process of 'building socialism', yet the circumstances surrounding its execution seem to indicate that – in some quarters at least – this commitment was largely performative. While Tarnowski's own political convictions meant that he felt compelled to devote some time and energy to getting the exhibition 'right', the offhand comment that he attributes to Urbaniak about five-year-plans being 'all the same' implies that this conviction was not universally shared. That the display was apparently out-of-date and obviously unsuitable for the cramped environment of the medieval castle in Darłowo – only around a third of it could actually be installed – can be taken as further evidence that organisation and the actual content was of lesser importance than the overall theme. In this regard, it seems to reflect Jan C. Behrends' judgement on the broader failure of Polish-Soviet friendship propaganda, which – though symbolically important – was 'ritualised and stagnant' in practice.[1171] This sense of merely 'going through the motions' limited its effectiveness, and, as Behrends notes, these relatively clumsy efforts to reshape collective memory failed to overcome deeply embedded anti-Russian sentiments in Polish society.[1172]

Even if the exhibition been put together with more dedication and finesse, it thus seems unlikely that it could have played a key role in reshaping mentalities. The pillars of the new ideology often provoked hostile reactions – Tarnowski cites several in his memoirs – or, at other times, a degree of confusion.[1173] One rather amusing example of the latter come from the May 1 celebrations in 1948, during which Tarnowski decorated the castle's frontage with

[1171] Behrends, 'Agitation, Organization, Mobilization', pp. 195-197.
[1172] Ibid., pp. 196-197.
[1173] The clearest descriptions of negative sentiments unsurprisingly come from 1956, when Tarnowski records how 'everyone curses Stalin' and there was widespread sympathy in Darłowo – as in Poland as a whole – for the Hungarian insurgents. There are, however, earlier examples, such as the time a group of slightly intoxicated visitors made jokes about the pictures of Bierut and Rokossovsky on the wall of his office. On another occasion, Tarnowski was accosted in a restaurant in Szczecin by a worker who took exception to his failure to remove his hat in the presence of a holy icon hanging by the bar. According to Tarnowski, the worker accused him of being a 'kulak' and an 'exploiter of the working class' on the basis of this act, proclaiming him an 'enemy of our socialist fatherland'. If so, this suggests a rather jumbled absorption of some elements of Stalinist ideology, or a sarcastic reappropriation of propagandistic discourse intended to imply resentment. See Tarnowski, '12 lat na Zamku', pp. 46-47, 48-49, 62-63.

'banners, greenery and portraits of revolutionary leaders: Lenin, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky, Marchlewski, Bierut, Gomułka'.[1174] According to Tarnowski, a group of townspeople came by on the evening of April 30 to observe the decorations:

The children, pointing to the portrait of Julian Marchlewski, cheerfully shouted: 'look, up there is a portrait of the old grandfather from the museum'. 'Indeed, the manager hung his own portrait', says one of the adults. 'Some praise the old professor, but this portrait is proof that he lacks modesty. After all, he is a party official, supposedly a modest, honest, devoted communist, and here is this portrait'…The group left the courtyard. I took off Marchlewski's portrait and hung Wilhelm Pieck in his place. 'Comrade Marchlewski', I murmur, hiding the portrait behind the wardrobe, 'I am proud that they take me for you; sit here until May the first next year, and then you will come out from behind the closet and from the height of the porch you will watch the movement in the courtyard for two whole days, and soon I will shave my beard and cease to be like you'.[1175]

Marchlewski might have been a prominent member of the newly approved pantheon of Polish heroes, but he hardly registered in the minds of many people in Darłowo, who saw the more familiar visage of Tarnowski in the veteran revolutionary's bearded features. Overall, the curator's memoirs suggest that people around him – including party members – often had a rather limited understanding of ideological matters. Still, it is important to remember that ideology shaped museological activity in different ways. The celebration of key political figures or the promotion of narratives of Polish-Soviet friendship reflected this process in its crudest from, but 'building socialism' hinged on much more than the articulation of these simplistic narratives. After all, Stalinists sought to build a truly mass society, and – as we saw in section two – in the museological realm this meant making institutions accessible to the wider audiences than ever before. Efforts were made to engage with particular groups, such as workers, peasants, and schoolchildren, and from the early 1950s we can see that local museums were keeping records indicating the social background of visitors.

[1174] Ibid., p. 36.
[1175] Ibid., pp. 36-37.

These engagement initiatives were not just motivated by exigencies of contemporary politics, but had a wider significance, in that – if they wanted to survive in the long term – local museums had to attract a new audience. *Heimatmuseen* had been closely tied to surrounding communities, but their old visitor base had disappeared with the post-war population transfers. Meanwhile, museum-going was hardly an established pastime amongst the incoming Polish settlers who replaced them, many of whom hailed from rural areas where the opportunity to engage in this kind of cultural activity was severely limited. The annual report on the activity of the museum in Jelenia Góra in 1949 noted that 'the population which came here from the central voivodeships, and in large numbers '*za Buga*' [from beyond the Bug river] have not yet had the opportunity to come into contact with cultural monuments, and often are not even aware of the very concept of a museum'.[1176] It was quite common, the report claimed, for visitors to comment that they 'had no idea that there were so many beautiful things here', and that, inspired by their experience, they would encourage others to visit too.[1177]

In order to draw such people in, museums engaged in promotional campaigns using press and local radio, which appear in some cases to have been reasonably effective. After an August 1950 exhibition entitled 'Polish Painting of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', the curator of the museum in Słupsk emphasised the 'encouraging sign of awakening interest among workers and the rural population'.[1178] She observed how visits tended to be structured around the rhythm of the working week, with peasants coming predominantly on market days.[1179] Workers were more likely to be seen on weekdays, often arriving straight from work and still dressed in their overalls.[1180] Zaborowska was particularly interested in the way people interacted with the display, and, from her own conversations with visitors, she observed that those from rural communities showed most interest in topics that

[1176] Annual report on the activity of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra for 1949, APJG 83/168/4, p. 111.
[1177] Ibid.
[1178] Report on the Museum of Western Pomerania's travelling exhibition 'Polish Painting of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', organised in the Museum in Słupsk between 10 August and 31 August 1950, APSł 386/3, p. 36.
[1179] Ibid.
[1180] Ibid.

connected with their own lives.[1181] Among the paintings most popular with peasants were works like Józef Chełmoński's 'Market: Selling of the Horse' or Julian Fałat's 'Breakfast after a Hunt', which presented scenes familiar to many observers; Włodzimierz Tetmajer's 'The Engagement' – which depicted a rural betrothal – was another favourite.[1182] According to Zaborowska, workers and peasants were less enthused by impressionist and formalist art, though she was occasionally surprised by individual preferences, such as that of one 'typical indigenous villager' who expressed great appreciation for Jacek Malczewski's 'Portrait of Jerzy Mycielski with a Muse'.[1183]

Zaborowska's reports show that 1951 saw a substantial increase in workers and peasants visiting the museum, and though overall attendance dropped off in 1953 with the introduction of admission fees on most days, she was still pleased by the museum's engagement with key demographic groups.[1184] It seems clear that Zaborowska took such issues seriously; her biography shows a lifelong commitment to the popularisation of education and culture, and the satisfaction she derived from successful community engagement appears entirely authentic.[1185] A 1955 report, for example, describes how two workers who visited on a Friday (when admission was free) returned with others at the weekend, greeting the museum staff 'like old friends' and taking pride in showing their companions around.[1186] For Zaborowska, this was a source of 'much moral satisfaction'.[1187] Of course, engaging with new visitors – particularly those from the most sought-after demographic groups – was not always straightforward. In Jelenia Góra, the museum's management had to enlist the help of the local party's propaganda department, as it was

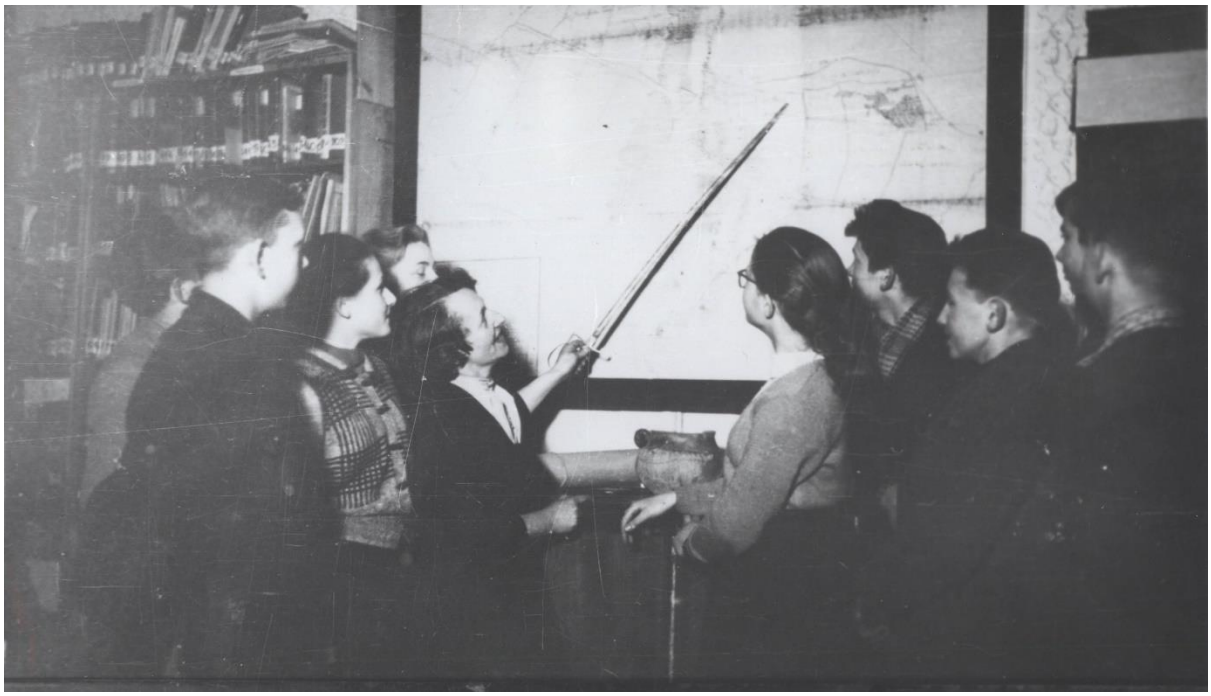
[1181] Ibid.
[1182] Ibid.
[1183] Ibid. It is, of course, entirely possible that Zaborowska's comments were merely a reflection of the stigmatisation of non-realist art in contemporary ideology (see chapter 3).
[1184] Analysis of the activity of the Museum in Słupsk, 1945-1955, APSł 386/8, p. 8.
[1185] As well as her work in education and her long-standing commitment to the Museum in Słupsk, Zaborowska was an active member of numerous organisations, including the Polish Historical Society, the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society, the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society, the Women's League, the Society of Stage Lovers, the Słupsk Social and Cultural Society and the Culture and Art Workers' Trade Union. She also served several terms as a local town councillor – like Stanisław Lorentz, she was a member of the satellite Democratic Party rather than the PZPR – and received numerous awards including the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, and the Gold and Silver Cross of Merit. See M. S., 'Maria Zaborowska', *Koszalińskie Zeszyty Muzealne*, Vol. 3 (1973), pp. 441-443.
[1186] Analysis of the activity of the Museum in Słupsk, 1945-1955, APSł 386/8, pp. 8-9.
[1187] Ibid., p. 9.

struggling to attract significant numbers of schoolchildren and workers.[1188] According to the museum, external bodies were to blame; educational authorities had apparently shown 'complete indifference' and a 'lack of understanding of the role of the regional museum', and the manager requested that the party intervene to resolve the issue.[1189] No reasoning is given for underrepresentation of workers among museum visitors, though again a plea for intervention was made – this time to trade union organisers – with the hope of boosting attendance.[1190]

Ultimately, however, it was young people who would constitute the future of these institutions, and one of the clearest attempts to specifically involve them in the life of the museum and generate enthusiasm about its work came through the formation of circles of 'museum lovers'. Predominantly aimed at schoolchildren, such groups were established in numerous local museums in the early 1950s. One of the earliest was in Darłowo, though its scope and success was rather limited. As Tarnowski recalled, his 'Circle of Museum Lovers' – which consisted of four boys aged 13 to 16 – was formed in May 1950, but after they absconded with an antique rifle and collection of German *Notgeld* he 'drove them to the four winds' and the circle folded.[1191] More successful, however, was the 'Circle of Friends of Słupsk Museum', which was established in 1953 and officially registered the following year.[1192] Its various activities included helping organise the museum's stores, supervising its displays during busy periods and occasionally taking tour groups round and promoting the collection of new exhibits.[1193] On top of this, the circle offered its members opportunities to borrow books from the museum library, go on trips to historic sites and also engage in various activities; in July 1955, for example, they were building a model of a 'proto-Slavic hut'.[1194] Though the circle itself no longer exists, its legacy resonates in the modern-day

[1188] Communication from the management of the Municipal Museum in Jelenia Góra to the Municipal Committee of the PZPR', 4 February, 1954, APJG 83/168/9.
[1189] Ibid.
[1190] Ibid.
[1191] Tarnowski, '12 lat na Zamku', p. 49. Once again, Tarnowski appears to be something of a trailblazer; an article in *Muzealnictwo* claimed that such initiatives began in 1951. See Kęszycka, 'O muzealnej służbie społeczno-oświatowej', p. 13.
[1192] Analysis of the activity of the Museum in Słupsk, 1945-1955, APSł 386/8, p. 9.
[1193] Ibid.
[1194] Ibid.

'Association of Friends of History and Tradition of the Słupsk Land', which continues to work closely with the museum in order to popularise its activity among contemporary inhabitants of the region.



[Figure 6.4 – Maria Zaborowska delivering a talk to the Słupsk Museum's youth group, c. mid-1950s][1195]

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Thinking about the way provincial museums helped turn German *Heimat* into Polish *mała ojczyzna* sheds valuable light on the way the cultural transformation in the Western Territories played out at a local level. The German past had to be painted over with a story of Polish nationalism, and – as in their larger counterparts in the region's symbolic capitals – this necessity went a long way towards defining the activity of the humbler local museums under consideration here. In the former *Heimatmuseen*, however, this process was shaped

[1195] From the private collection of Wanda Szpilewska and Stanislaw Szpilewski, available at http://bibliotekacyfrowa.eu/dlibra/publication/edition/19580 [accessed 27 March 2023]

by the particular dynamics of the local world encapsulated by the *Heimat* idea. The Polish identity they helped produce was firmly rooted in the specificities of locality, recasting the 'imagined traditions' of a broadly defined folk culture situated in the surrounding rural hinterlands as residual traces of an 'authentic' Slavic past. Where possible this was connected to the 'living heritage' of the autochthons, such as the Slovincians, while in the absence of such populations the heavy lifting was done by exhibits of material culture. Yet even so, the now-Polish museums could not escape their German origins. In large part, this was a matter of practicality. Fully 'de-Germanising' museums in which the overwhelming majority of the collections were 'post-German' (not to mention the actual buildings themselves) was clearly impossible if the institutions were to survive in the long term.

They lacked the means to start again from scratch, and instead had to repackage what they already had; thus a replica cottage built by German *Heimatlers* in the museum in Hirschberg in the early 1910s could, after 1945, become an exemplar of a traditional 'Polish' dwelling in the Jelenia Góra region. The world of the *Heimat* might have turned upside down, yet the degree of continuity in local museology post-1945 appears at times rather remarkable. Indeed, as the example of the Koszalin museum shows, in some cases the German character of local museums could still be quite clearly discerned until the very end of the 1940s. Of course, that particular episode is also tied to the changing political climate in the era of 'building socialism', and, as we have seen, the nationalisation of Polish museums at the start of 1950 pulled the former *Heimatmuseen* into a nation-wide museological network that was increasingly defined by the dictates of state ideology. Local museology thus had to be framed in accordance with the key elements of Stalinist museological policy, such as the emphasis on wider social engagement and the promotion of pro-Soviet and Marxist narratives. Nonetheless, the conflict between the local party hierarchy in Koszalin and the Ministry of Culture and Art suggests that thinking about the cultural sphere as a component of a Stalinist monolith, with all parts marching in lockstep towards a socialist future, would be an oversimplification, and the implementation of such agendas was sometimes marked by a degree of superficiality.

Local museums found themselves caught between the broader demands of cultural policy and the particularities of everyday provincial reality. The wider drive towards 'cleansing memory' had to be balanced against the need to repurpose the cultural heritage previously used in the construction of German ideas of *Heimat*. In essence, despite the discourse around 'building socialism', the historical 'raw materials' presented in the now-Polish museums were in large part the fruits of collections assembled in the imperial and inter-war periods by *völkisch-konservative* German *Heimatlers*. Within the Polish communities developing in the region after 1945 their meanings changed; they were 'de-fanged' and purged of toxic *niemieckość* by being repositioned in new historical narratives. Yet their earlier meaning still lay under the surface.

In closing, it is worth drawing attention to an article on the museum in Darłowo, which appeared in the *Ilustrowany Kurier Polski* in late 1949.[1196] Extolling the virtues of the museum at some length, it perhaps surprisingly had nothing to say on the matter of *polskość*, regional identity, or indeed socialism. Instead, it highlighted a diverse selection of curios (including a two headed stuffed calf and a sixteenth century mummified cat), and spoke of the rather macabre 'thrill of…emotion' evinced by the executioner's sword and torture instruments housed in the castle's 'chamber of terror'.[1197] The museum, it claimed, could make you 'forget the era you live in' and 'take you to a different one'. [1198]Though the article probably meant travelling back to distant Middle Ages, it could just have easily referred to a much more recent past – the world of the pre-war German *Heimatmuseum* – whose unspoken presence continued to echo within the old castle's walls well after the last German inhabitants had left.

[1196] B. P. 'Miecz katowski, cielę o dwóch głowach i wiele innych rewelacyjnych eksponatów w muzeum w Darłowie', *Ilustrowany Kurier Polski*, 20 October 1949, p. 3.
[1197] Ibid.
[1198] Ibid.

Conclusions: Continuity and Change

At the beginning of Andrzej Wajda's 1977 film *Man of Marble* we see the young filmmaker Agnieszka visiting the National Museum in Warsaw. The camera pans through its halls, lingering on some of the classic paintings on display, but our protagonist has her sights set on some rather different material: a pile of long-forgotten socialist realist statuary locked in a dusty room far from the public eye.[1199] A museum employee attempts to dissuade her from investigating, dismissing the works as 'nothing interesting', yet Agnieszka is captivated. In the dim light of the storeroom, the statues appear eerie and grotesque, an effect which is amplified by the haunting and slightly distorted strains of a Stalinist-era propaganda song playing in the background. As L. P Hartley famously wrote, 'the past is a foreign country', and these sculptures appear to Agnieszka as mysterious relics of a bygone age which – though separated from the film's present by just over two decades – had already passed into the realm of memory. They came from the epoch of 'building socialism', a time when the vaulting ambition of Poland's Stalinist rulers was channelled into a radical attempt to reconfigure both society and the individual according to Marxist-Leninist principles. In this regard, argues Katarzyna Chmielewska, 'communism can be viewed as a performative practice that created social categories with the use of narratives, a practice that focused on oriented sequences of ideas rather than on alternation of forms, and that made great efforts to overcome the horizon of social imagination'.[1200]

As we have seen, museums were key sites for the construction and dissemination of cultural and historical narratives which underpinned the ideology of 'building socialism'. Drawing on Foucault's understanding of 'truth' as part of a 'a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements', Tony Bennett has highlighted the way that museums participate in 'regimes of truth' through which

[1199] Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius refers to this arresting image in her exploration of 'the oscillation between remembering and forgetting' socialist realism in Poland over the second half of the twentieth century, presenting the forgotten statue of Wajda's titular *Man of Marble* as a metaphor for socialist realism's subsequent fate. See Murawska-Muthesius, 'Curator's Memory', p. 905.
[1200] Katarzyna Chmielewska, 'Socialist Realism in a New Perspective: A Proposal of Literary History Analysis', *Studia Litteraria et Historica*, No. 8 (2019), p. 18.

knowledge is deployed in the service of power.[1201] This thinking is particularly apposite in the case of the historical materialist and realist trends which shaped museological interpretation under high Stalinism. Both approaches claimed to strive for an idealised 'objective truth', yet according to the Foucauldian formulation, such a thing cannot exist. Truth, maintains, Foucault, is 'a thing of this world', and Stalinist museology must be seen in the context of a particular 'regime of truth', which aimed at producing historical and cultural knowledge that could be deployed in the construction of a 'usable past' geared towards the particular needs of a nation engaged in 'building socialism'.[1202]

Many of the distinctive aspects of this 'regime of truth' appear to reinforce the widespread view that Polish Stalinism was, in its entirety, an external imposition that can only be seen as a rupture in the broader sweep of Polish history. The emphasis on class struggle and the articulation of historical materialist narratives of the kind that framed the 'Renaissance in Poland' exhibition, for example, had no precedent in earlier Polish museology, while the appearance of socialist realist art within Polish museums also marked a sharp departure from previous practice. The seeming 'unnaturalness' of these developments is further underlined by their rapid disappearance once the political climate changed in the middle of the 1950s. Even before the Polish October of 1956, notes Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, 'socialist realism vanished; it was as if it had never existed', while the ideological constraints surrounding historiography began to loosen.[1203] Jerzy Topolski has likened the latter process to the 'rejection of a transplant', and though Marxism remained important, it ceased to function as dogmatic ideology, serving instead as a theory and method which provided inspiration for historical study, but no longer completely defined it. [1204]

A similar shift could be observed in the propaganda of Polish-Soviet friendship. At its most basic, this simply consisted of the kind of adulatory pro-Soviet exhibitions we have encountered throughout this study, though there was also an attempt to present a kind of

[1201] Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge*, pp. 1-2.
[1202] Cited in ibid., p. 1.
[1203] Murawska-Muthesius, 'Curator's Memory', p. 908.
[1204] Topolski, 'Polish historians and Marxism', p. 178.

pan-Slavic vision which drew on cultural connections (real and imagined) in order to build bridges. In 1956, however, the TPPR almost collapsed; as one of its functionaries despairingly remarked, the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU in February 1956 – during which Nikita Khrushchev denounced the excesses of Stalinism in his so-called 'secret speech' – 'ended our flight through the spheres of mythology and brought us back down to earth'.[1205] Though the TPPR continued to function after 1956, its propaganda was no longer pushed as forcefully as it had been under Stalinism, a tacit acceptance of the fact that its messaging had failed to resonate among the Polish population.[1206]

The sea-change of 1956 was felt across Poland, and in small-town Pomerania the museum curator and committed party member Aleksander Tarnowski observed the effects of the thaw with mixed emotions:

After the eighth plenum, there was an uplifting atmosphere in Darłowo. Everyone enjoyed the renewal. Unfortunately, there were also negative phenomena. Workers and peasants filled pubs, sometimes drunkenly starting fights. Active PZPR members and former security officials were contemptuously called Stalinists. A significant part of the party's members voluntarily left its ranks. There was an outburst of religious sentiment. With the renewal of our lives, the aversion of part of society to the Soviet Union increased…Oh dear, how 'twisted' it all is. Everyone curses Stalin. Even those who were educated in the USSR, those who went there 'to bow down' and even the ultra-reds, for whom Poland was the fifth wheel on the cart. Everyone competes in expressing patriotic feelings…[maybe] all their previous activity was a straightforward lie, or perhaps they really were honest and it was only after our October that they started to put the lies away.[1207]

For the idealistic Tarnowski, 1956 was disorientating, yet his observation that the Polish October perhaps marked the moment of transition from 'deceit' to 'honesty' carries wider resonance. The idea that the Stalinist period in its entirety was a disturbing divergence from the 'proper' path of Polish history and that 1956 marked a 'course correction' enjoys a

[1205] Cited in Behrends, 'Agitation, organization, mobilization', p. 196.
[1206] Ibid., pp. 196-198; Behrends, 'Nation and Empire', p. 458.
[1207] Tarnowski '12 lat na Zamku', pp. 62-63.

certain degree of resonance[1208] (though of course many would argue that the aberration included the entire period of People's Poland, and the return to 'normal' only came in 1989). Either way, 1956 was an unmistakable turning point, and the abandonment of the organising principles that framed much museological activity under Stalinism can be seen as a reflection of this watershed moment.

At the same time, thinking about Polish museology during the first post-war decade suggests that considering Stalinism purely in terms of externality and rupture risks obscuring the various continuities and connections that transcend its temporal boundaries. Stalinism was not simply a singular deviation, hermetically sealed in an ideological cocoon from the broader currents of the past; as Michał Kozłowski and Anna Zawadzka have argued, rather than placing it to one side – an abnormality that somehow stands alone – it has to be properly integrated into the history of Poland in order to be understood.[1209] Obviously, that is not to deny that there were many things that make the period startingly different. It was an age when ideology was brought to bear on everyday life with an intensity and focus that had never been seen in Poland before, and never would be again. Moreover, as the forced narrative of Polish-Soviet friendship so crudely underlines, that ideology was indeed an external imposition which was largely unwelcome. No one could seriously argue otherwise; Stalinist Poland was shaped by the Soviet Union – it was because of the latter that the former was 'building socialism' – and the imbalanced relationship between 'teacher' and 'pupil' was one of the defining features of the new reality.

Even so, 'building socialism' was not something which took place in isolation. As we have seen, it was also connected to the wider nation-building project that was underway in post-war Poland, and in which Polish museums were deeply implicated. Undoubtedly, ideology applied a particular gloss to the process; in chapter three, we saw how museological

[1208] As Michał Kozłowski has observed, the key exponents of this position were 'so-called liberal reformers' like Andrzej Walicki and Bronisław Łagowski, for whom 1956 was possibly a more significant historical moment than 1989. See Kozłowski, 'Red nationalism?', pp. 2-3.
[1209] Ibid; Anna Zawadzka, 'Stalinism the Polish Way'.

narratives were framed in a way that aimed to connect Poland's post-war transformation to a perceived progressive/realist current stretching back into the national past. Yet the key element here is 'national'. This was a community that was framed in ethnic terms, whose heroes – figures like Copernicus, Mickiewicz, Chopin and Matejko – derived their meaning and resonance from their *polskość*. Under Stalinism they were situated within Marxist narratives emphasising ideas of 'progress', yet these interpretations were underpinned by a notion of evolutive historicity which can also be discerned in the traditional whiggish interpretations of classical liberalism. While the latter might understand 'progress' empirically rather than objectively, the similarity in temporal mechanics points to the way Stalinist museology built a 'socialist' representational edifice on top of familiar foundations. Indeed, as the example of the National Museum in Warsaw suggests, the museological contribution to nation-building was actually rooted in pre-war discourse. The cultural arguments used to legitimate the very different Polish state that existed pre-1939 were adapted and reconfigured to suit the changing circumstances; even the very appearance of Tołwinski's museum building on Aleje Jerozolimskie called to mind the hopes and aspirations of inter-war elites, who sought to claim their place at the table of Western European modernity with their very own 'universal survey museum'. After 1945 the tune might have been transposed, but the melody still remained easily recognisable.

Another issue that has been central to this thesis – the problem of the 'Reclaimed Lands' – also reveals a tendency draw on pre-war thinking to frame historical and cultural narratives. From the moment it opened in 1948, the Silesian Museum in Wrocław was, to all intents and purposes, an institution that existed to promote ideas associated with 'Western Thought'. In this regard it helped legitimate post-war borders, which could be seen as historically rather than politically determined, but, despite the fact that this clearly served the interests of the communists, this was by no means 'their' narrative. Its origins lay on the pre-war political right, and resonated across the political spectrum. One of the regime's most obdurate foes, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, showed as much when he delivered his famous sermon in Wrocław on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Polish Church in the Western Territories in August 1965. 'In the cathedrals', Wyszyński proclaimed, 'we read relics of stone…[which] say to us, 'We were here! Yes! We were here! And we are here again!'…These

churches are not and never were German artefacts. These are our own traces of the royal tribe of the Piasts. They speak to the Polish people in words that require no explanation'.[1210] In the Silesian Museum, other 'relics of stone' – tombs of the Silesian Piast dukes – spoke out in much the same way.

In the longer term, Poland's new borders would prove more enduring than the new Soviet-style political system. Around the same time that Wyszyński preached his uncompromising sermon, the Silesian Museum itself was gradually changing. Between 1959 and 1963 the two main permanent historical exhibitions discussed in chapter two – 'The Prehistory of Silesia', and 'Ten Centuries of Silesia' – closed, and the emphasis shifted away from grand historical narratives towards fine art. Yet the changing museal landscape was not due to the 'failure' of the earlier tendency to foreground the region's imagined ancient Polish character; rather, it had simply served its purpose, and, with the passage of time, lost relevance. By 1970 – the year in which the Silesian Museum became part of the National Museum network – an entire generation of children born in the Western Territories had already reached adulthood. The 'Reclaimed Lands' had been the only home they had ever known; they didn't need a museum to tell them that they belonged. Moreover, the signing of the Treaty of Warsaw between Poland and West Germany that year confirmed the Polish-German border along the Oder-Neisse line. In the subsequent era of *Ostpolitik*, there was much less need to continually stress the region's *polskość*.

In the first post-war years, however, the Silesian Museum had helped historically and culturally bind region to nation as part of a process of transformation which turned a part of Germany into a part of Poland. As a flagship institution, essentially created from scratch post-1945, it provides the clearest example of a large-scale attempt to create a museological 'usable past' in the 'Reclaimed Lands'. Yet as we saw in the final section of the thesis, the metamorphosis of *Schlesien* and *Pommern* into *Śląsk* and *Pomorze* unfolded in local communities according to its own particular dynamics, which are reflected in the fate of the former German *Heimatmuseen*. On one level, they were involved in cultural and intellectual

[1210] Cited in Thum, *Uprooted*, pp. 203-204.

exchanges which reveal the hierarchical relationship between periphery and centre. Cultural heritage flowed out from the former to the latter as the fruits of 'revindication', while ideas about the proper form and function of local museology travelled in the other direction. Such transfers, however, did not take place in synchronicity or on an equal footing. For the half decade or so following the end of the war it was largely one-way traffic, as the former *Heimatmuseen* were denuded of significant elements of their surviving collections with little financial or material support offered in return.

Instead, the revival of local institutions hinged on the efforts of motivated individuals, museological 'pioneers' of the 'Reclaimed Lands' like Amelia Łączyńska and Aleksander Tarnowski in Darłowo, or Maria Zaborowska in Słupsk. At a time when local authorities lacked the time and money to redevelop 'post-German' museums it was these figures who took the initiative, and, in so doing, wrote themselves into the history of their communities. After 1950, the nationalisation of Polish museums and the establishment of the 'district' system brought provincial institutions more closely into the orbit of national museology, and they became increasingly politicised as a result. This meant participating in 'building socialism', but also a more forceful attempt to rewrite the local past through a process of de-Germanisation and re-Polonisation. Yet the 'cleansing' of memory was not as clear-cut as we might imagine. Previous identities were not erased overnight, and the lingering cultural afterlife of the German *Heimatmuseum* post-1945 underlines the importance of thinking in terms of continuity as well as change. In Darłowo, for example, Karl Rosenow has become a figure who bridges the German and Polish chapters in the history of the town's museum. One wonders what this ardent *Heimatler* would have made of the fact that, in twenty-first century Darłowo, he has become part of a local heritage framed in terms of a shared German-Polish past. L. P Hartley's dictum about the past being a 'foreign country' acquires a literal sense in the context of the 'Reclaimed Lands', and the former *Heimatmuseen* now straddle its geo-temporal borders, linking different but intimately connected vistas of memory.

The theoretical literature associated with the 'new museology' has, quite rightly, foregrounded the museum as a tool of power, in large part due to its reality-shaping potential. Yet the re-emergence of the German past in Pomerania and Silesia post-1989 is an important reminder of the fact that this power is not limitless, and that – as with all 'sites of memory' – it can only be exercised within certain parameters. It is the museum's claim to 'authenticity' that provides the source of its power; compromising the former means undermining the latter. 'For the museum to be effective', writes Simon Knell, 'we must 'buy into' its offerings'.[1211] Did people buy into Stalinist-era museological narratives? This is a difficult question to answer. Unfortunately during the research for this study it proved difficult to source visitor books, which might have helped broaden our insight in this regard, and the few examples which I managed to locate proved generally formulaic. As a result, this study has largely remained confined to the issue of the production of museological knowledge, with less space given to the related issue of reception. Yet there is another point to consider here, which is the simple fact that all the museums analysed over the course of this thesis continue to function as popular attractions in the present. None of them suffered from the kind of legitimacy deficit which afflicted institutions like the Lenin Museum at Poronin, which existed purely to serve the interests of the regime and – through lack of interest and support – disappeared in 1990 soon after the collapse of the system.

In turn, this prompts us to look back at the way these institutions functioned under Stalinism, and to dig a little deeper into the connection between museums and the exercise of cultural and political power. We have seen how the ideology of 'building socialism' shaped the construction of museological narratives, and it is certainly clear that, during the Stalinist years, the centralised state exerted a forceful and restrictive influence over the cultural sphere. Yet to insist on the absolute power of a monolithic Stalinism – i.e. to emphasise a totalitarian paradigm – is to obscure the fact that Stalinist museology was shaped by negotiation as well as imposition. The figure of Stanisław Lorentz, who played such a central role in post-war museology, provides a case in point. On the one hand, he helped adapt the field to the new reality, and took a leading role in developing key exhibitions like 'The

[1211] Knell, 'National museums and the national imagination', p. 4.

Renaissance in Poland' which presented a vision of the past framed in unequivocally Marxist terms. On the other, he was a self-professed 'product' of the world of the nineteenth-century bourgeois intelligentsia, who was regarded with considerable suspicion by the security services.[1212] A 1951 report situated him within a group of prominent intellectuals whose commitment to state ideology was seen as distinctly dubious:

From the analysis of their class origin and upbringing…they are staunch, irreconcilable enemies of People's Democracy and all that is progressive…Particularly dangerous is the fact that in order to disguise themselves these people outwardly pretend to be democrats – socialists, ostensibly standing in solidarity with Soviet science, but in fact they practice political and economic sabotage and prepare the ground for various fascist putsches.[1213]

At the same time, this 'irreconcilable enemy of People's Democracy' was one of the leading lights of contemporary culture, who was able to exert a considerable influence over the shaping of museological policy across the entire nation both under Stalinism and in the subsequent Gomułka and Gierek eras.[1214] He worked with the system, but was not seen as 'of' it, instead carving out a space in which to operate.[1215] His colleague Janusz Durko remembered how, in the 1950s, Lorentz went 'from success to success':

Two magnificent exhibitions at the National Museum – Renaissance and Enlightenment – as well as a number of other excellent exhibitions strengthened his belief that the National Museum is the leading museum in Poland. Everything he did, he did with passion. He did not accept half measures. He had either friends or enemies. His great individuality undoubtedly had a positive impact on Polish museology.[1216]

[1212] Krzyżanowski, 'Profesor Stanisław Lorentz', p. 214.
[1213] Cited in Rutkowski, *Historiografia i Historycy w PRL*, pp. 357-358.
[1214] Lorentz's near half-century at the helm of the National Museum (1936-1982) makes him the human embodiment of the theme of continuity that runs through this study.
[1215] This position is also reflected in the fact that Lorentz never joined the PZPR, but belonged instead to the satellite Democratic Party (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*). For more on the SD's role in the politics of the PRL, see Timothy F. Kearney, 'Democracy's Long March Through the Institutions of a People's Republic', *The Polish Review*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (2012), pp. 45-68.
[1216] Durko, 'Lata pięćdziesiąte', p. 350.

Perhaps, as Gerard Radecki has suggested, we should view Lorentz's actions within the context of a kind of game he played with the authorities, in which, by co-opting elements of official discourse, he was able to negotiate an intermediate path for the museological field.[1217] Thus, implies Radecki, instead of thinking solely about the way Stalinists imposed their ideology into the cultural sphere, we can think instead about the way Lorentz and others like him adopted the 'rhetorical steel' of the new reality in order to impose their own ideas on the Stalinists.[1218] In this way, one could argue, they were able to maintain a degree of control over the museological agenda and minimise the extent of Sovietisation. Certainly, to say that Polish museology in the post-war decade was simply instrumentalised and completely subordinated to state ideology would be a gross exaggeration. The relationship between the two was more complicated, part of a mediated dialogue that played out in connection with the broader ebb and flow of state politics but also extended beyond it. Following Michał Kozłowski and Anna Zawadzka's exhortation to see Stalinism not as a historical cul-de-sac but as an integral element of Polish history, the story of museological practice during the Stalinist era shows how new ideas were mapped on to existing frameworks. Stalinist museology had much that made it distinct, but ultimately – just like the period it belonged to – its sits within a broader historical panorama marked by continuity as well as change.

This study has concentrated on museology in the specific context of Poland between 1945 and 1956, but, by addressing a heretofore largely unexplored area of the Stalinist cultural sphere, it has sought to add to our broader understanding of museological culture under communism. Unlike the issue of the museumification of communism post-1989, the realities of praxis in the satellite states during the socialist period has generally received little attention, with English-language scholarship on the topic largely limited to the work of Simina Bădică and Gabriela Petkova-Campbell on Romania and Bulgaria.[1219] In certain

[1217] Gerard Radecki, 'Kazimierz Malinowski–muzeolog', *Muzealnictwo*, No. 58 (2017), p. 63.
[1218] Ibid., p. 63.
[1219] Simina Bădică, 'National Museums in Romania', in Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, eds., *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010. Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28-30 April 2011* (Linköping,

respects, the story of Polish museology under Stalinism confirms some of Bădică and Petkova-Campbell's findings. In Poland, as in Romania and Bulgaria, the field was profoundly affected by the ideological demands of the party, which helped shape the content and narratives of displays. Museums in Bulgaria under communism, for example, were to be 'of a socialist type, with exhibitions built upon the principles of Marxism-Leninism', while Romanian museology of the period – which drew heavily on the many Soviet textbooks in circulation – also aimed to transform visitors into Soviet-style 'new men' through exposure to its ideologically-charged narratives.[1220]

These general similarities are hardly surprising, yet, on closer inspection, comparing the findings of this study with the insights provided by Bădică and Petkova-Campbell also suggests some surprising differences. As Bădică writes, in Romania the communist regime 'represents, initially at least, a definite break with bourgeois museums, national tradition and thus national museums', and it was not until the Ceaușescu era that museums began to bear the 'national' tag once again.[1221] In Bulgaria too, the continuities visible in Poland appear much less obvious. A 1955 'guidebook' which outlined the key criteria for the transformation of Bulgarian museology called for the eradication of 'all signs of the past by completely changing all museum content, essence and forms of previous activities – exhibitions, research and collecting'.[1222] Moreover, museum staff who had worked in the period before communism were to be gradually replaced with more 'ideologically sound' workers, further underlining the break with the past.[1223] There would be no Romanian or Bulgarian equivalent to Lorentz, and the ability of non-party affiliated figures like the director of the National Museum in Warsaw to shape museological narratives and policies does not (at least on the basis of work done so far) seem to be replicated elsewhere in the Soviet Bloc.

2011), pp. 713-31; Bădică, Curating Communism; Gabriella Petkova-Campbell, *A Place in Europe: Bulgaria and its Museums in the 'New' Europe* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 58-69; Petkova-Campbell, 'Communism and Museums in Bulgaria'.

[1220] Ibid., p. 403; Bădică, Curating Communism, pp. 148-151, 173.

[1221] Bădică, 'National Museums in Romania', pp. 716, 718.

[1222] Cited in Petkova-Campbell, *A Place in Europe*, pp. 61-62.

[1223] Ibid., p. 63.

Ultimately, these studies (along with this thesis) provide the starting point for a broader investigation of museology across the Soviet satellites of East-Central Europe, and – alongside the similarities – these differences point to the fundamental inadequacy of applying a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to cultural politics across the bloc. Communism – not least in its Stalinist variant – was not a monolithic experience, both within individual national societies and across the Warsaw Pact states as a whole. The story of Polish museology under Stalinism illustrates both the power and limitations of the party-state, reminding us of the need to take into account a variety of factors – including the specificities of the different contexts in which Soviet-style systems were implanted, the significance of older intellectual traditions, and the agency of individual figures – when reflecting on the nature of communist-era cultural politics. The wider history of museology under communism remains to be written, but it may be hoped that, in time, this contribution will be a small part of a greater whole, further deepening our understanding of an undeniably integral part of the East-Central European past.

[99,569 words including footnotes]

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Collection of the *Muzeum Karkonoskie* in Jelenia Góra

(various digital images courtesy of Robert Rzeszowski)

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