

# The Other Marxists: Making Sense of International Student Revolts in Poland in the Global Sixties

by  
Malgorzata Fidelis\*

“It is easy to be a Marxist in the West.  
Try to be one here!”

A Hungarian joke from the late 1960s

This article traces the changing image of the West as “the other” in Poland during the Global Sixties. As Western historical and popular accounts tell us, the Global Sixties or “the Long Sixties” extended roughly from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, and were marked by unprecedented cultural liberalization and powerful political protests that erupted in almost every part of the globe.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere, youth and students stood at the forefront of these protests. In Western Europe and the United States, successive campus rebellions defined the era, starting from the student unrests at the University of Leuven in 1962, through the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964, to the wave of massive student revolts in 1968. Protesters often deployed the language of Marxism to attack the capitalist establishment, and to argue for the empowerment of marginalized racial, ethnic, and social groups. With the exception of the 1968 events, in particular the Prague Spring, Eastern Europe has been largely left out of the story of the Global Sixties.<sup>2</sup> How did the protest culture

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<sup>1</sup> Recent examples of the English-language literature on the Sixties include: KAREN DUBINSKY, CATHERINE KRULL et al. (eds.): *New World Coming. The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness*, Toronto 2009; AXEL SCHILDT, DETLEF SIEGFRIED (eds.): *Between Marx and Coca-Cola. Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*, New York 2006; ARTHUR MARWICK: *The Sixties. Cultural Transformation in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-1974*, Oxford 2000; and HOWARD BRICK: *Age of Contradiction. American Thought and Culture in the 1960s*, Ithaca 2000.

<sup>2</sup> For example, only two papers on Eastern Europe, including my own, were presented at a large gathering of international scholars titled “New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness” in June 2007 in Kingston, Canada. For articles on individual Eastern European countries see, for example, MARTIN KLIMKE, JOACHIM SCHARLOTH (eds.): *1968 in Europe. A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*,

of the Sixties affect perceptions of the West in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe? More specifically, how did Eastern European Communist elites and the public respond to student rebellions in the West and to the Marxist language they used? And what exactly did this new trend of “speaking Marxist”<sup>3</sup> by Western youth mean for the political culture of the Communist Bloc driven by the Cold War?

In Eastern Europe, the Sixties were marked by the political leadership’s search for a new identity for the Communist system after the death of Stalin. As the conventional narrative goes, this search took an increasingly nationalized form.<sup>4</sup> But in the process, the Eastern Bloc became more open to outside influences in harmony with post-Stalinist “peaceful coexistence” with the West. Consequently, political leaders and ordinary people were forced to confront the global culture of the Sixties. They found that the dichotomous, black-and-white picture of the Cold War became increasingly complicated by movements emerging in the United States and Western Europe that challenged the capitalist and liberal-democratic order. One such challenge came from the New Left, a powerful intellectual and political movement that criticized conservative elites, worked to expand “participatory democracy,” and protested against American “imperialism” abroad. This was not the American Cold War rhetoric of the late 1940s and 1950s that the East had grown accustomed to refuting. How, then, would they respond?

In the course of the 1960s, it became increasingly difficult for Communist propaganda to depict the West as a monolithic imperialist power. At the same time, Western protest movements and student revolts troubled Communist leaders on an ideological level. Despite their Marxist allegiances, the New Left did not fit the process of revolution dictated by Marxist-Leninist ideology. Instead of the working class, the rebellions in the West were primarily the work of young people with middle-class backgrounds. Instead of Marx and Lenin, Western students looked up to Mao, Trotsky, and Marcuse as their

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New York 2008; and a thematic volume of *Osteuropa: Das Enzym der Freiheit. 1968 und das halbierte Bewusstsein*, in: *Osteuropa* 58 (2008), 7. For recent transnational and comparative approaches to Sixties in Eastern Europe see ANNE E. GORSUCH, DIANE P. KOENKER (eds.): *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, Bloomington 2013; and VLADIMIR TISMANEANU (ed.): *Promises of 1968. Crisis, Illusion, Utopia*, Budapest 2011.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase builds on Stephen Kotkin’s concept of “speaking Bolshevik.” The term does not necessarily denote an ideological commitment, but rather describes a public identity. STEPHEN KOTKIN: *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, Berkeley 1995, esp. chapter 5.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, KATHERINE VERDERY: *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania*, Berkeley et al. 1991; WALTER A. KEMP: *Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A Basic Contradiction*, New York 1999; and IVAN T. BEREND: *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993. Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery*, New York 1996, esp. pp. 173-176.

main ideological leaders. They tended to argue for liberties from a more universal humanist position rather than from a class perspective.

Eastern European Communists confronted these “other Marxists” of the Sixties in numerous ways. In this article, I focus on Polish public reactions by looking at popular publications (magazines and books) addressed primarily to young people. First, I trace the evolution of public thinking about Western youth from a largely positive image to one of danger and disruption. The turning point in this shift came in the early months of 1968, when Polish students rebelled against the Communist regime, demanding intellectual freedoms and basic human rights. Then I demonstrate how in the late 1960s, this new image of threatening Western youth was used to redefine the terms of Cold War competition and to articulate the moral superiority of Communist societies. This also included an attempt to cast the shortcomings of the Communist system, such as the scarcity of consumer goods, as a source of moral strength.<sup>5</sup> Finally, I illuminate how official images of degenerate Western youth, ironically, contained subversive elements. They revealed, for example, the extent to which the Communist popular press succumbed to Western-style popular culture by emphasizing sexuality and sensationalism. Thus these images also point to the increasing vulnerability of the Communist system to contestation from all sides, including by the supposed propagators of the socialist culture: editors, journalists, and academics. I rely on state-sponsored popular print media, and to a lesser extent on unofficial sources of information, such as the Radio Free Europe (RFE), to reconstruct images that were easily accessible to the public. I use the Party daily press, archival documents, and interviews as supplementary sources to better understand the production of these messages. How did Polish audiences learn about Western student revolts and what were they asked to think about these movements?

My discussion presents preliminary arguments. Ultimately, I hope to initiate more research on the Eastern European encounter with global trends in everyday life, and on the impact of that interaction on the fate of the Cold War. The crisis of “Western identity” caused by radical leftist movements is at the heart of nearly all scholarly, journalistic, and personal analyses of the Sixties in North America and Western Europe.<sup>6</sup> But as I seek to demonstrate,

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<sup>5</sup> For similar discursive strategies regarding “the quality of life” by the post-1968 Czechoslovak regime see PAULINA BREN: *The Greengrocer and His TV. The Culture of Socialism after the 1968 Prague Spring*, Ithaca 2010, pp. 177-200.

<sup>6</sup> The Sixties are a particularly contentious era in American historical and political debates since the responses to leftist movements invigorated the conservative right. According to MARK HAMILTON LYTTLE: *America’s Uncivil Wars. The Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon*, New York 2006, p. X, at the time “American society fractured more completely than it had at any time since the Civil War era. That fracturing seemed almost infinitely compound, as society broke along generational, racial, class, ethnic, regional, ideological, aesthetic, and gender lines. Upheaval of one kind or another touched almost every aspect of private and public life.” See also NANCY CHRISTIE, MICHAEL GAUVREAU, STEPHEN J. HEATHORN: *The Sixties and Beyond. Dechristi-*

Western Marxists caused the Communist states—allegedly Marxist themselves—to reassess their sense of identity as well. Eventually, responses to global protests in the East and West shaped politics at home and on the international scene.

### 1 “The Other Marxists” at Home and Abroad

The Western Marxist movements that the Communists confronted in the 1960s are more commonly known under the umbrella term of the “New Left.” The term originated with a group of leftist intellectuals in Britain associated with the journal *New Left Review*. It is usually used to designate American and European movements of the 1960s aimed at redefining traditional socialist politics by departing from the concept of class and from principles of orthodox Marxism-Leninism. The New Left sought a wide spectrum of social, cultural, and political reforms, and was inspired by the writings of contemporary philosopher Herbert Marcuse and sociologist C. Wright Mills among others. The ideas of the New Left were crucial to forming student organizations such as the Students for a Democratic Society in the United States and Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS) in West Germany.<sup>7</sup> The student movement in Poland could also be considered a part of this transnational New Left, but this designation was rarely invoked by Polish social and political actors at the time.

I chose to use the term “other Marxists” rather than the New Left, because I focus on Polish official reactions to the language of Marxism employed by this movement, the language that was different from that of the ostensibly Marxist Eastern European regimes. This is not to say that I consider all activists of the New Left to be Marxists. Nor do I assign this identity to all Polish leftists of the era.<sup>8</sup> The question of Marxist allegiances is beyond the scope of

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anization in North America and Western Europe, 1945-2000, Toronto 2013; BELINDA DAVIS, WINFRIED MAUSBACH et al. (eds.): *Changing the World, Changing Oneself. Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s*, Oxford 2012; and GERD-RAINER HORN: *The Spirit of '68. Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976*, Oxford 2007.

<sup>7</sup> For recent work on the New Left in the United States and Western Europe see, for example, VAN GOSSE: *Rethinking the New Left. An Interpretative History*, New York 2005; MICHAEL KENNY: *The First New Left. British Intellectuals after Stalin*, London 1995; and TODD GITLIN: *The Sixties. Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, New York 1987. For a transnational perspective on the student movement as part of the New Left, see MARTIN KLIMKE: *The Other Alliance. Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties*, Princeton 2010.

<sup>8</sup> The term “Marxism” is loaded with political meaning in present-day Poland. Most student activists of the 1960s underplay or deny their Marxist affiliations. Since the fall of communism in 1989, leftist activists in the Polish opposition have struggled to disassociate themselves from “Marxism,” a designation more commonly reserved for former members of the PZPR, the nominal Communist Party. Polish historian Andrzej Friszke has recently argued that student leaders of the 1960s were not Marxists, but used Marx-

this article. Rather, my aim is to look at the new movements through the prism of the Polish political elite, who often identified Western and Polish student protesters as Marxists, but saw their interpretation of Marxism as false and aberrant. This demonstrated a major contradiction in the Communist response to the transnational New Left: they recognized the New Left as Marxist in order to exclude the movement from Marxism. This act of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion inadvertently undermined the basic logic of the Cold War, where forces of good and evil were to be easily identified.

The Marxist discursive challenge was something of a novelty to political elites of the 1960s in the Eastern Bloc. Friszke has argued that the Marxist critique of Marxism deployed by leftist intellectuals and students in Eastern Europe was a particularly effective tool to challenge the legitimacy of the Communist regime and a major driving force behind the evolution of the system. "Criticism of communism that came from anti-Communist positions," Friszke contends, "had been formulated in different ways for decades, but had no influence on Communists. Criticism that stemmed from the same principles and used the same concepts and categories was difficult to ignore, and also difficult to refute."<sup>9</sup> The significance of the "revolt from within" in changing the Communist system is undeniable. This was evident already in 1948, when the first Eastern European revisionist—the Yugoslav leader Josip Bros Tito—left the Soviet camp. In doing so, he did not only change the geopolitical landscape, but also created his own brand of communism that inspired others in the Eastern Bloc and beyond.

The New Left emerged in the West at the same time as domestic actors in the East engaged in reinterpretations of Marxism after the trauma of Stalinism.<sup>10</sup> Both movements thus worked in tandem, and Polish domestic develop-

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ist language as an effective political tool to delegitimize the Communist regime. AN-DRZEJ FRISZKE: *Anatomia buntu. Kuroń, Modzelewski i komandosi* [The Anatomy of a Rebellion. Kuroń, Modzelewski and the Commandos], Kraków 2010, p. 11. The Western New Left relationship to Marxism is also a complex issue. Not all leaders who used the language of Marxism identified with this ideology. The American leader of the Free Speech Movement, Mario Savio, for example, has traced his intellectual origins to Catholic social teachings, Vatican II, and what he called "secular liberation theology." MARIO SAVIO: *Why I am not a Marxist*, in: *The Current Political Situation, FSM 30th Anniversary proceedings*, 3 December 1994, URL: [http://www.fsm-a.org/stacks/mario/savio\\_1994.html](http://www.fsm-a.org/stacks/mario/savio_1994.html) (20.05.2012). See also ROBERT COHEN: *Freedom's Orator: Mario Savio and the Radical Legacy of the 1960s*, Oxford 2009.

<sup>9</sup> FRISZKE (as in footnote 8), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> The chronology of new Marxist movements in the West and East has striking parallels. The rise of the New Left in the West was sparked by the Suez Crisis and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956. This was the time of de-Stalinization and the beginning of Marxist revisionism in Eastern Europe. For further discussion see, for example, TOM JONES: *Generations of Change. Student Movement and Student Politics in Communist Poland*, Ph.D. dissertation, K.U. Leuven 2011, p. 168; and DAVID OST: *Solidarity and the Politics of Antipolitics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968*, Philadelphia 1990, esp. pp. 4-6.

ments shaped images of Western students in the official media to a large extent. The origins of the revisionist movement in Poland could be traced to October 1956, when intellectuals and students, through newspapers and public gathering, engaged in the reevaluation of the Stalinist system, promoted reforms, and argued for greater participation of society in the political process. Sparked by liberalization policies in the Soviet Union, and in particular, by Khrushchev's Secret Speech condemning Stalin in February 1956, the reform movement in Poland brought to power Władysław Gomułka and his program of the "Polish Road to Socialism." Gomułka, a nationalist Communist, who had been purged from the Party and put under house arrest in 1951, now enjoyed genuine popular support. Many saw Gomułka as a "national leader" who would defend Polish cultural identity and state sovereignty against the Soviets as well as implement reforms to improve living and working conditions.<sup>11</sup> Leftist intellectuals and Party liberals hoped to implement a perfected version of socialism based on the principles of social justice and a genuine workers' democracy.

Such sentiments proliferated in East-Central Europe during de-Stalinization, with Poland and Hungary taking the lead in the reform movement. The Polish Communist system indeed underwent a significant change at the time. For example, Gomułka, in a decisive break with Stalinist policies, halted the process of the collectivization of agriculture and granted autonomy to the Catholic Church. Yet the intellectual revolution to create a more humane and open Communist system was not entirely realized. Already in 1957, Gomułka's government cracked down on civic freedoms granted to the population a year earlier. The closing down of the influential liberal periodical *Po prostu* sparked public protests, but they were not nearly as powerful and effective as those of October 1956. Thus the late 1950s saw the end of the revolution in the Eastern Bloc, symbolized by the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956, an event that also tempered the zeal of Polish supporters of a humanist Marxism.

The impetus for change in Poland, however, remained. Revisionist challenges emanated from intellectual circles, student clubs, and reform-oriented Party officials. In 1965, a Marxist philosopher and party ideologue, Adam Schaff, shocked Gomułka and other party leaders by publishing a seminal text of Polish revisionism, in which he claimed that Marxist-type alienation existed in a socialist society.<sup>12</sup> Schaff's critics from Party circles saw the book

<sup>11</sup> On popular demands and popular participation in the Polish October see PAWEŁ MACHCEWICZ: *Rebellious Satellite. Poland 1956*, Stanford 2009.

<sup>12</sup> ADAM SCHAFF: *Marksizm a jednostka ludzka. Przyczynek do marksistowskiej filozofii człowieka* [Marxism and the Human Individual. A Contribution to Marxist Philosophy of the Human Being], Warszawa 1965. For English edition see ADAM SCHAFF: *Marxism and the Human Individual*. Introduction by ERICH FROMM, New York 1970. For contemporary responses to Schaff see discussion in the Party's Central Committee monthly *Nowe Drogi*: Dyskusja nad książką Adama Schaffa pt. "Marksizm a jednostka ludzka" [Discussion of the book by Adam Schaff titled "Marxism and the Human Indi-

as fundamentally flawed since it talked about “an abstract individual” with no clear differentiation between the socialist and capitalist contexts. Moreover, rather than building on “the theoretical and practical achievements of our Party”, Schaff was accused of having fallen prey to American sociology and “various, often anti-Communist ‘marxologists’ from the West.”<sup>13</sup> But the real boost for Marxist revisionism came a year earlier with the drafting of “The Open Letter to the Party” by two young intellectuals, Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski. The authors came from families of Polish interwar communists. Kuroń started his career as a youth activist during the Stalinist era. Both became bitterly disappointed with the system. “The Open Letter,” addressed to the Polish Party, claimed that “the central political bureaucracy” kidnapped the leftist revolution of 1956.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Kuroń and Modzelewski saw their ideas as Marxist and global. They rejected parliamentary democracy and argued for a multi-party system that would seek support among workers, the privileged stratum of a genuine Marxist state. In their decisive vilification of capitalism, the authors expressed solidarity with revolutions in Cuba, Algeria, and other parts of the so-called “Third World.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1965, the authors of “The Open Letter” were sentenced to three years in prison, but their ideas reverberated with like-minded leftists throughout the world. Within just a few years, the letter was translated into several languages, and became a seminal text for the global Marxist renewal.<sup>16</sup> The interna-

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vidual”], in: Nowe Drogi (1965), 12, pp. 57-186. For further information on revisionist trends among Polish intellectuals see PIOTR OSEKA: Marzec '68 [March '68], Kraków 2008, esp. pp. 33-49; and TOM JUNES: Confronting the “New Class” in Communist Poland. Leftist Critique, Student Activism, and the Origins of the 1968 Student Protest Movement, in: Critique. Journal of Socialist Theory 36 (2008), pp. 257-272.

<sup>13</sup> Dyskusja nad książką (as in footnote 12), p. 185. The quote comes from Zenon Kliszko’s comments (Kliszko was deputy to Władysław Gomułka). For criticism of Schaff’s borrowings from American sociology see also JÓZEF CHAŁASIŃSKI: Rewolucja młodości. Studia o awansie młodego pokolenia wsi i integracji narodu polskiego [Revolution of Youth. Studies on the Advancement of Young Generation of the Country Side and the Integration of Polish Nation], Warszawa 1969, esp. p. 350.

<sup>14</sup> JACEK KUROŃ, KAROL MODZELEWSKI: Open Letter to Members of the University of Warsaw Sections of the United Polish Workers Party and the Union of Young Socialists, in: GEORGE LAVAN WEISSMAN (ed.): Revolutionary Marxist Students in Poland Speak Out (1964-1968), New York 1968, pp. 15-90, here p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed discussion of the letter’s content see FRISZKE (as in footnote 8), pp. 203-222.

<sup>16</sup> The original copy of “The Open Letter” distributed at the University of Warsaw was confiscated by the Polish Secret Police and has not been found. A slightly revised version of the Letter was smuggled to the West and published by the Paris-based Polish émigré periodical *Kultura* in 1966. RFE broadcasted the contents of the Letter in 1967. French Trotskyists translated it into French in 1966. The English and Italian versions came out a year later, and the German, Swedish and Japanese translations followed in 1969. In June 1968, “The Open Letter” was translated into Czech by the Prague Student Parliament. See FRISZKE (as in footnote 8), p. 222. For the English translation see KUROŃ/MODZELEWSKI (as in footnote 14).

tional impact of the Letter was best illustrated when Daniel Cohn-Bendit stated his name as “Kuroń Modzelewski” at the trial after the student protests and the general strike of May 1968 in France.<sup>17</sup> In that sense, Marxist revisionism was an international story of influences from West to East, and from East to West.

The global nature of Marxist revisionism was a source of particular concern for the Polish regime. The Security Apparatus constantly searched for evidence of foreign inspiration for “The Open Letter,” and was particularly interested in the Polish connection to Western European Trotskyites.<sup>18</sup> This transnational dimension of revisionism complicated the party strategy towards the movement. The Polish Communist establishment struggled with the unexpected face of “internationalism.” Instead of siding with the Soviet version of the Communist revolution, the new leftist international networks looked to transcend class categories and Cold War divisions. It may well be that the subsequent anti-Semitic campaign with the prominent term of “cosmopolitanism” used in the official media to describe Jews and Western-oriented youth that the Polish Party launched in response to student demonstrations of 1968, could be attributed, at least in part, to anxieties about the transnational nature of Marxist revisionism.<sup>19</sup>

When Polish students rebelled in March 1968, they spoke in the language of Marxism, pointing to contradictions in Communist policies, and demanding reforms and freedom of speech. The student demonstrations in Warsaw were sparked by a cultural event: a Party ban on the play *Dziady* (The Forefather’s Eve) by a national Romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz. This play depicted Polish struggles against czarist repression in the first half of the nineteenth century and was believed to generate anti-Soviet sentiments. Protests against the ban by students and intellectuals followed. On 8 March 1968 a massive student demonstration took place at the main campus of the University of Warsaw demanding intellectual freedoms and the liberalization of social and political life. It was violently suppressed by divisions of the Citizens’ Militia and the Voluntary Reserve Citizens Militia, the latter consisting mostly of

<sup>17</sup> ADAM MICHNIK: *Letters from Freedom. Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives*, Berkeley et al. 1998, p. 46. Daniel Cohn-Bendit was a legendary leader of the student protests during May 1968 upheaval in France, and now leader of the French Green Party and member of the European Parliament. Born to German Jewish parents in France in 1945, he was active in radical politics first in West Germany where he had moved in 1958, and then in Paris (upon his return in 1966), where he studied sociology at the University of Nanterre. For further discussion of May 1968 in France see, for example, DANIEL SINGER: *Prelude to Revolution. France in May 1968*, rev. edition, Cambridge/Mass. 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Charges of Trotskyism appeared at the trial of Kuroń and Modzelewski, but were not substantiated. FRISZKE (as in footnote 8), pp. 249-259.

<sup>19</sup> On 1968 anti-Semitic campaign in Poland see DARIUSZ STOLA: *Fighting against the Shadows. The Anti-Zionist Campaign of 1968*, in: ROBERT BLOBAUM (ed.): *Anti-Semitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, Ithaca 2005, pp. 284-300.



workers. The March revolt, however, was not an isolated event, but rather a culmination of a longer student activism inspired, to a great extent, by “The Open Letter,” and the rise of the so-called “Commandos” (Komandosi). This informal group of students had been openly and systematically challenging Party officials and the dominant political line at university gatherings since 1966.<sup>20</sup>

There were of course significant differences between the student rebellion in Poland (or elsewhere in Eastern Europe, such as in Czechoslovakia) and those in the West. For example, the fascination with Marcuse, Mao, and Trotsky was marginal to Polish student culture. Rather, their intellectual inspiration more often came from the critique of Marxism by the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski and the left-wing Polish émigré literary periodical *Kultura* based in Paris. Nevertheless, in the eyes of Party propaganda, the 1968 student leaders were dangerous Marxist revisionists, not significantly different from the misguided Marxist students in the West. From this perspective, they were all influenced by the same forces of Zionism, capitalism, and American lifestyles.<sup>21</sup> Before this message became prevalent, however, the popular press looked at Western youth with a great deal of curiosity and fascination.

## 2 Innocent Youth?

Prior to March 1968, Polish popular publications about Western youth tended to concentrate on everyday life and consumer culture rather than on political radicalism. At the same time, Party leaders, it seems, could not decide on how to interpret the growing leftist movements in the West. On the one hand, Communists welcomed student demonstrations directed against capitalism and imperialism. On the other hand, they were aware that Western students questioned the social order more generally: they spoke against both capitalism and communism and in doing so applied Marxist philosophies and movements that departed from the Soviet model. In an interview in 2011, Józef Tejchma, member of the Polish Politburo in 1968 and later the Minister of Culture, spoke about the “duality” of attitudes within the Party: “on the one hand, [Western student movements] seemed to indicate that socialism was better and capitalism was contested. On the other hand, forms of this contestation were such that under the slogans of Marxism, these [movements] ques-

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<sup>20</sup> Prominent Commandos included Adam Michnik, Teresa Bogucka, Jan Lityński, Jan Gross, Irena Grudzińska, and Barbara Toruńczyk. Many of them became leaders of the anti-Communist opposition in the 1970s and 1980s. For further discussion of the Komandosi see FRISZKE (as in footnote 8), pp. 456-467.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of official reactions to the Polish student movement as rooted in over-indulgent consumerism and Western lifestyles see MALGORZATA FIDELIS: *Red State, Golden Youth. The Student Culture and Political Protest in Poland in the 1960s*, in: TIMOTHY BROWN, LORENA ANTON (eds.): *Between the Avant Garde and the Everyday: Subversive Politics in Europe. 1958-2008*, Oxford 2011, pp. 145-153.

tioned everything that belonged to political power [kwestionowały wszystko co było władzą] [...], and this was what we feared.”<sup>22</sup>

What was then the official stance to these movements? What did Party actors, ambivalent and divided about the movements, want the public to think? A look at the popular and daily press reveals a decided lack of a monolithic “Communist propaganda.” Images of Western youth and Marxist movements in the periodical press and other popular publications were to some degree diverse and fluid. Contrary to conventional wisdom about the communist state monopoly on information, the media in post-1956 Poland displayed a considerable degree of pluralism. This is not to suggest that this pluralism resembled the freedom of the press practiced in contemporary Western societies, but rather to interrogate the idea of the monolithic “party-state” and the nature of its monopoly on information. The diversity of opinions was visible, in particular, in the periodical press addressed to young readers that mushroomed during and after de-Stalinization and was designed specifically to be “apolitical.”<sup>23</sup> The first such magazine appeared in January 1954 during the first wave of de-Stalinization; its title, *Dookoła Świata* (Around the World), signaled a new openness to global trends that contrasted sharply with the international isolation and war-like social and political mobilization of the Stalinist era.

The impact of this new type of press on the youth’s everyday life and on their imagining the self cannot be underestimated. Judging by contemporary reactions to *Dookoła Świata*, the first color magazine that did not explicitly urge youth to worship Stalin and beat production targets, it had a liberating impact on young readers. Contemporary writer and journalist Leopold Tyrmand recorded in his diary in January 1954: “Today, the third issue of this magazine [*Dookoła Świata*] came out and was literally snatched from newsstands within less than an hour.” Instead of the usual political propaganda, the magazine featured “sports, short stories, a lot of reportages from real life, [...] from entertainment, pictures from parties, cafes and restaurants, practical advice, gossip, funnies.”<sup>24</sup> All of this material proved to be enormously appealing to Polish youth. The “non-political” character of popular magazines such as *Dookoła Świata* was defended by their editors, and seemed to be a strategy to preserve a degree of intellectual autonomy.<sup>25</sup> The declared preoccupation

<sup>22</sup> Interview by author with Józef Tejchma, digital recording, Warsaw, 1.07.2011.

<sup>23</sup> Popular periodicals that emerged as a result of de-Stalinization included *Dookoła Świata* (1954), *Filipinka* (1957), and *Ty i Ja* (1960). Their declared aim was to provide educational entertainment and advice on everyday life. For further discussion see MALGORZATA FIDELIS: Are You a Modern Girl? Consumer Culture and Young Women in 1960s Poland, in: SHANA PENN, JILL MASSINO (eds.): Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe, New York 2009, pp. 171-184.

<sup>24</sup> LEOPOLD TYRMAND: Dziennik 1954. Wersja Oryginalna [Diary 1954. The Original Version], Warszawa 1999, p. 92.

<sup>25</sup> Some editors insisted on avoiding “political subjects” in their correspondence with the Party’s Press Bureau. For example, in response to the Press Bureau’s criticism of the “Western orientation” of *Dookoła Świata*, the magazine’s editors claimed that changes

with educational entertainment rather than politics ensured less attention from Party censors.<sup>26</sup>

The popular press played a crucial role in exposing Polish youth to developments outside the Communist Bloc. For example, popular periodicals reported widely (and often with a degree of admiration) on cultural developments in the West from the beat poets to the “Twist,” while those devoted to the visual media, publications such as *Film* and *Ekran* regularly featured updates on the most recent Hollywood productions, and photos and gossip on Western stars. While theorists of mass culture in advanced capitalist societies have long denounced such content as anti-intellectual, manipulative, and aimed at subordinating the “masses” to profit-driven capitalist elites, popular culture could have a different meaning in non-capitalist societies with no profit-oriented entertainment industry. More recent cultural approaches point to the diversity of popular culture and the agency of audiences in appropriating images and texts. Along those lines, one could argue for a liberating quality of mass consumption (both material and cultural) in societies that were pressured for uniformity and austerity.<sup>27</sup> More important for the young audience, the Polish commentators wrote about the exceptionality of the baby-boom generation and often discussed the consequences of the demographic explosion in the East and West, including new trends in youth music, fashion, and sociability. Articles and popular books provided information and a commentary that ranged from concerns about moral decay to acceptance of new styles as more authentic and indicative of a positive change in Polish and Western societies.<sup>28</sup>

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could be implemented only gradually “to trace in more detail the reaction of the readers.” They also reminded the Bureau that “a magazine of this type cannot and should not engage in [political] agitation in a direct and imposing manner”. Dookoła Świata, Notatka informacyjna ze spotkania z kierownictwem “Dookoła Świata” poświęconemu ocenie pisma [A Note of Information from the Meeting with the Management of “Around the World” Devoted to the Evaluation of the Magazine], no date, in: Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warszawa (AAN) [Archive of New Documents in Warsaw], KC PZPR Biuro Prasy [Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party, Press Bureau], Sign. 237/XIX/210, pp. 1-4, quotation on p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> For further discussion of the hierarchy of censorship see JAN TOMKOWSKI: Lata 1961-70 [Years 1961-70], in: URSZULA JAKUBOWSKA (ed.): Czasopisma społeczno-kulturalne w okresie PRL, Warszawa 2011, pp. 169-234, esp. p. 183.

<sup>27</sup> Further research is needed on the meaning of the West and Western popular culture in Eastern Europe. For recent studies of perceptions of the West in Eastern Europe see, for example, GYÖRGY PÉTERI (ed.): *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, Pittsburgh 2010. For theories of popular culture see DOMINIC STRINATI: *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, London – New York 2003.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, RYSZARD DYONIZIAK (ed.): *Młodzież epoki przemian. Z badań polskich socjologów* [Youth of the Era of Changes. From Polish Sociological Research], Warszawa 1965; IDEM: *Młodzieżowa podkultura. Studium socjologiczne* [Youth Subculture. A Sociologica Study], Warszawa 1965; WŁODZIMIERZ SOKORSKI: *Współczesna młodzież* [Contemporary Youth], Warszawa 1963; and JERZY FELIKSIĄK: *Głos w sprawach młodzieży* [A Voice on the Matters of Youth], Warszawa 1966.

Despite a degree of pluralism, some patterns in the depiction of Western youth and students emerged. The turning point was March 1968. Shortly before the student revolt in Warsaw, the main party daily, *Trybuna Ludu*, lauded student demonstrations against the Vietnam War in West Germany as an expression of “class and international solidarity,” and encouraged readers to follow “with sympathy” the activity of “progressive youth in West Germany.”<sup>29</sup> A few days later such statements become difficult to find. Rather, the press put forward a clear and forceful ideological interpretation of student protests in the West that had not been in place before the 1968 demonstrations. The image of Western youth in popular publications, at least temporarily, evolved from innocence and harmless extravagance to political danger and immorality.

In the early 1960s, popular publications saw neither the New Left nor Western youth as particularly threatening to the ideological constitution of young Poles at home. Most Polish popular magazines depicted Western youth as somewhat silly and interested primarily in consumption and entertainment. Authors focused on fashion and leisure, all interpreted as innocuous (if not infantile) expressions of youth identity. On the Kungsgatan, the main street in central Stockholm, one correspondent saw crowds of teenagers, whose gender “was hard to identify.” He noted the long hair of the men and maintained that young Swedish men and women were “all dressed the same way: leather jackets, blue jeans, and high-heeled boots.”<sup>30</sup> Upon her return from a trip to Great Britain, Jadwiga Grabowska, a Polish countess and fashion designer, commented on a similar crossing of gender boundaries among teenagers in London: “Boys with curly hair, ruffles, their faces powdered; girls in mini-skirts, with no make-up, long hair or hair cut short in a geometrical fashion according to the instructions of Vidal Sassoon.”<sup>31</sup> In both cases, gender cross-dressing was depicted as an entertaining cultural curiosity rather than a threat to established social norms.

<sup>29</sup> MARIAN PODKOWIŃSKI: Spadkobiercy “Białej Róży” [Heirs of the “White Rose”], in: *Trybuna Ludu* from 28.02.1968, p. 8. It is interesting to note that the author, who was at the time a foreign correspondent of *Trybuna Ludu* stationed in Berlin and Bonn, compared the social-democratic SDS to anti-Nazi student resistance movement, the White Rose, of 1942-1943. See also an informative and positive article on the New Left in the United States: MAREK KONOPKA: Co to jest “the New Left”? [What is “the New Left”?], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 27.02.1966, pp. 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> LEOPOLD RENÉ NOWAK: Szwedzkie kłopoty z nastolatkami [Swedish Troubles with Teenagers], in: *Przekrój* from 5.09.1965, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Przeciw przesądom. Londyn bawi się [Against Prejudices. London is Having Fun], in: *Ty i Ja* (1966), August, pp. 30-31, quotation on p. 30. The publication was an interview with Jadwiga Grabowska by Teresa Kuczyńska, the editor-in-chief of *Ty i Ja*. On Grabowska’s aristocratic background and taste see ANNA PELKA: Wolność noszenia [The Freedom to Wear], in: *Polityka* from 4.11.2009, URL: <http://www.polityka.pl/historia/224140,1,wolnosc-noszenia.read> (12.07.2012).

Many popular accounts tended to de-politicize young people in the West. According to Grabowska, English teenagers did not intend to “overthrow class barriers; they are absolutely apolitical and strive for the most comfortable place at the highest echelons of society, and for getting a Rolls-Royce.”<sup>32</sup> The correspondent from Stockholm had a similar opinion about Swedish youth, whose nightlife was dominated by joyous car rides, and visits to night-clubs and movie theaters. The author, in fact, compared the Kungsgatan to the Mokotowska in Warsaw, noting that the only difference between the two was the lack of advertising on the Mokotowska.<sup>33</sup>

Most of the young people Grabowska met in London did not cause trouble or public disorder. The alleged immorality of the youth (which, as she admitted, was also described in the Polish daily press) was “only superficial, with no eroticism.” The youth, according to Grabowska, were interested in real feelings and relationships.<sup>34</sup> Editor Teresa Kuczyńska shared this opinion. She believed that the non-conformist appearance of the youth had nothing to do with social or political rebellion. Rather, it was adult-driven consumer culture that lured the youth into spending money on unconventional clothes and hairstyles. Moreover, she attributed this moderation in young people’s conduct to “the great culture” (*wielka kultura*) of the whole of English society, “which is expressed in an unheard of tolerance among adults.”<sup>35</sup>

Occasional ideological interpretations of the behavior of Western youth usually gave way to sober assessments of the natural and universal inclination of young people to rebel against the older generation. Some critics noted what they saw as youth radicalism, including subcultural trends and relaxed sexual mores.<sup>36</sup> They also argued that consumerism, driven by adult capitalist elites, served to distract the youth from political problems. But even those authors tended to see Western youth as fundamentally good and moral, however manipulated by the ruling elites.<sup>37</sup> One sociologist contemplated the possibility

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<sup>32</sup> Przeciw przesądom (as in footnote 31), p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> NOWAK (as in footnote 30), p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Przeciw przesądom (as in footnote 31), p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, LEON SZULCZYŃSKI: Skórzane kurtki [Leather Jackets], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 29.07.1962, pp. 20-21; and MAGDALENA ARSKA: Amerykańskie kilkunastolatki [American Teenagers], in: *Ty i Ja* (1962), July, pp. 66-67.

<sup>37</sup> *Dookoła Świata* often featured series of reportages on youth behavior in Great Britain, France, West Germany, and the United States by Polish correspondents. These texts focused on everyday life, education, and leisure with some discussion of political problems and obstacles that young people had to overcome to find personal fulfillment in capitalist societies. See, for example, a report on French youth, E.H.: Jaka jesteś młodzieży? [What are you Like, Youth?], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 10.07.1966, p. 13; and series of articles by Leon Szulczyński on youth in West Germany in 1962. LEON SZULCZYŃSKI: Co śpiewa Kathrin [What Kathrin Sings], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 8.07.1962, p. 15; and IDEM: Co czyta Kathrin [What Kathrin Reads], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 22.07.1962, p. 17. See also reports on British youth by MAKSYMILIAN BEREZOWSKI:

of a “youth revolution”, but believed that youth radicalism was “as old as the world.” Evoking examples from student life in early twentieth-century France and Germany, he claimed that premarital sexual relations, excessive drinking, and frequent dueling were all part of the early twentieth-century student culture. The author asked: “What has changed then in the life of young people besides the long hair, miniskirts, fun-protest [zabawa-protest], and a fascination with jazz?” According to this logic, youth movements were nothing more than a modern embodiment of the bohemianism of earlier times.<sup>38</sup> Journalists and sociologists optimistically argued that young people were bound to outgrow this rebellious stage. “In my modest opinion”, wrote one commentator, “a dozen years from now, our children will be able to say as much about rock-and-roll as we are now able to say about, for example, the lambeth walk.”<sup>39</sup>

In the wake of student demonstrations in Poland in March 1968, however, a new interpretation of Western student and youth movements emerged. For the first time, the issue of Western youth culture, so far thought of as a topic best fit for the popular press rather than political gatherings, entered the public language of Polish Communist leaders. Shortly after the student demonstrations in Warsaw, Zenon Kliszko, Władysław Gomułka’s first deputy, attacked youth rebellions in the West as the work of “leftist and anarchist” groups in a public speech in Gdańsk. These movements, according to Kliszko, were “revolutionary only on the surface, but in essence expressed the mood of conservative, but desperate social strata.”<sup>40</sup> A few months later, academics from the Central Party School in Warsaw warned the public about a “fundamental change” in the Western bourgeois approach to socialism: fighting Marx “under the banner of Marx.” They called for mobilizing all pedagogical and intellectual resources against the “bourgeois Marxology” that aimed at “the degradation of theoretical Communist thought in the eyes of society.”<sup>41</sup>

Kliszko and others set the tone for many journalistic reactions to Marxist movements in the West, including those in the “apolitical” popular press. New authors emerged to build their careers on explicitly anti-Western statements. The voices against new Marxist movements came from different di-

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Rozhuštane niedźwiadki [Swinging Little Bears] in: *Dookoła Świata* from 19.01.1964, pp. 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> RYSZARD DYONIZIAK: Czy dorosłym grozi “rewolucja młodzieżowa”? [Is there a Threat to Adults of “the Youth Revolution?”], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 10.12.1967, pp. 4-5, quotation on p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> WOJCIECH WRÓBLEWSKI: Big-bit – za i przeciw [Big-beat – Pros and Cons], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 19.06.1966, p. 3. “Bigbit” was a common term used to describe early rock ‘n’ roll music in Poland in the 1950s and 1960s.

<sup>40</sup> Speech by Zenon Kliszko quoted in HENRYK JEZIEŃSKI: *Rebelie studenckie na Zachodzie* [Student Rebellions in the West], Warszawa 1969, pp. 6-7.

<sup>41</sup> JAN GURANOWSKI: Pod sztandarem Marksa przeciw Marksowi [Under the Banner of Marx against Marx], in: *Trybuna Ludu* from 2.06.1968, p. 5.

rections: political leaders, journalists, writers, and professional sociologists. My aim in the following is not to dissect the different categories of commentators and their motives, but rather to provide a sense of multiple and sometimes contradictory voices to which the public was exposed. These voices, to some extent, reflected the genuine dilemmas of commentators that did not necessarily stem from the specific conditions of communism. Many authors may have been supportive of leftist movements, but were taken aback by the new trends in youth behavior, such as relaxed morals or unconventional fashion. Józef Tejchma's statement, quoted earlier, about the unacceptable form of protests that tended to question any "political power," and by extension any social hierarchy, could be read as representative not only of the Party elite, but also of a sizable portion of his generation. At the same time, this plurality of voices testified to the unique role of popular culture in facilitating diverse and often contradictory messages in a system that aimed, at least in principle, at a black-and-white interpretation of the world.

After March 1968, accounts of student rebellions in Western Europe and the United States often served as a more or less explicit commentary on domestic student turmoil. One journalist, Józef Łącki, argued in the popular student biweekly *itd* that Herbert Marcuse's ideology was "clearly geared towards attracting radical youth away from communism, to weaken the international workers' movement. [...] It does not matter if it is revisionism, Zionism, Trotskyism or Maoism, every weapon is good in the struggle of imperialism against the socialist camp, a struggle which [imperialism] will inevitably lose."<sup>42</sup> In 1969, Henryk Jezierski in his book titled *Rebeli studenckie na Zachodzie*, addressed to popular audiences, connected Western student revolts to Polish student demonstrations by claiming that both movements were inspired by the same forces of global Marxist revisionism.<sup>43</sup>

The emergence of "other Marxists" required new tactics for proving legitimacy. Thus in a new wave of anti-Western publications after the March demonstrations, two major discursive strategies served to discredit student movements in both the West and East: one focused on nationalism, the other on morality. Commentators attributed the instigation of revolts to "foreign powers," usually Israel, the United States, and West Germany. The May 1968 rebellion in France was depicted as the work of Israel and the United States, who wished to punish Charles de Gaulle for his public condemnation of the Israeli attack on the Arab countries.<sup>44</sup> Another commentary on the same events reminded the readers that Marcuse, the inspirational figure for French

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<sup>42</sup> JÓZEF ŁĄCKI: Grzech dziecięcej choroby lewicowości [The Sin of the Infantile Disorder of Leftism], in: *itd* from 8.06.1969, pp. 10-11, quotation on p. 11. The "infantile disorder of leftism" refers to Lenin's 1920 pamphlet "Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder" that repudiated early left-wing communism and anarchism.

<sup>43</sup> JEZIEFSKI (as in footnote 40), pp. 158-159.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 147.

students, had a German background.<sup>45</sup> In a similar way, a chapter in Jezierski's book was suggestively titled "Who are you, Herr Cohn-Bendit?"<sup>46</sup> The same book referred to Trotskyism as a movement connected to "big capital" and American universities, at the same time referring to Trotsky by his "real" name: Lejb Bronstein.<sup>47</sup>

The second strategy was to emphasize the sexual aspect of student rebellions. Allegedly, female students at the Sorbonne manifested their rebellion through "superminiskirts" and "demands for free contraceptives."<sup>48</sup> According to the Polish press, Marcuse's support for sexual liberation "was the foremost factor" of his popularity among students in France. This was also reflected in student demands for university policies that would "ease the practice of sexual freedom in student dormitories".<sup>49</sup> These pronouncements, in a way, tended to de-politicize student rebellions and to shift attention to morality and lifestyle. The message was clear: the student movement was not interested in gaining political rights or in the improvement of the socio-economic standing of the lower classes, but in hedonism and sexual promiscuity. The hippie movement, which in the words of one journalist sought "the purification of the individual and the salvation of the world through copulation and meditation", was frequently conflated with the student movement and Marxist revisionism.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, commentators stressed that protesters were a "statistical minority," and often juxtaposed the "long-haired and unwashed lovers of street fights and sit-ins" with the "normal youth" uninterested in radicalism.<sup>51</sup> According to one article, the leftist students' "fascination with Maoism, Trotskyism, anarchism and a couple of other -isms together with the goal of protest 'for the sake of protest'" was completely divorced from the "real problems" of class struggle in the West.<sup>52</sup>

These depictions of student rebels in the West as lascivious puppets appealed to feelings of patriotism (hence the frequent references to "Germans" and "Zionists") and prevailing sexual mores. In particular, the idea of liberation through sex was likely to shock traditional and overwhelmingly Catholic segments of Polish society, regardless of political attitudes. Western rebellions were cast in the more conventional mode of moral decadence, present in

<sup>45</sup> ŁĄCKI (as in footnote 42), p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> JEZIEŃSKI (as in footnote 40), p. 89.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 162.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 121.

<sup>49</sup> ŁĄCKI (as in footnote 42), p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> ZBIGNIEW SIEDLECKI: Król Sex [King Sex], in: *Trybuna Ludu* from 9.06.1968, p. 3. See also ANDRZEJ ŁARSKI: Mit Hippies [The Myth of Hippies], in: *itd* from 16.03.1969, pp. 4-5.

<sup>51</sup> MIECZYSLAW ZIEMSKI: Nie wierz ludziom po trzydziestce! [Do not Believe People Who are over Thirty!], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 17.11.1968, pp. 8-9.

<sup>52</sup> RYSZARD DRECKI: Niespokojni [The Unquiet Ones], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 21.07.1968, pp. 10-11, quotation on p. 10.



the Polish public discourse at least since the Enlightenment, rather than as a specific threat to the Communist political system.<sup>53</sup> According to the Polish press, student protesters were challenging, above all, the essence of traditional national identity and morality. In this context, the socialist camp depicted itself as a defender of traditional patriotism and social order.

### 3 Perils of Prosperity

Images of “degenerate” Western youth allowed Polish commentators to present ethical values such as commitment to work and education as well as consumer restraint as markers of the moral superiority of Communist societies. The shift from political to ethical language in depicting student protests was common on both sides of the Iron Curtain. According to Kristin Ross, during and after the French May of 1968, a language centered on ethical values served to dilute the issue of class inequality.<sup>54</sup> In Poland, a de-politicized ethical language helped shift the focus of the Cold War from political to moral issues, and from material prosperity to spiritual values. In December 1967, sociologist Ryszard Dyoniziak warned that prosperity was as destructive to young people as poverty: “Prosperity kills [...] ‘the passion of life’, the normal calling of the human being at a young age, since he can only shape his character and skills through the overcoming of hardships.”<sup>55</sup> Such arguments were picked up and expounded upon by other commentators after the 1968 student rebellions.

A wave of articles in the periodical press attacked consumption as a potential danger to traditional social and moral norms. Not unlike contemporary Western critics of affluent society, many Polish commentators agreed that the abundance of material goods was at the root of moral crisis and youth discontent. This was a chance to attack the free market and affirm the socialist model of consumption. Most journalists did not reject the idea of consumption as such, but pointed to the superiority of the socialist model aimed at producing and distributing goods with the interests of society in mind rather than those of private interests.<sup>56</sup> Western media, driven by the profit motive, was blamed for the dissemination of hippie lifestyles, including the use of drugs and sexual promiscuity.<sup>57</sup> According to this logic, youth rebellion was a by-product of the capitalist imperative to maximize profit. Roman Dobrzyński wrote in *itd*: “The worldwide circus of youth music and fashion is a result of nothing more than the observation that young people have money at their disposal and that they want to spend it on ‘their own desires’; thus, ‘their own

<sup>53</sup> See JERZY JEDLIKI: *A Suburb of Europe. Nineteenth-Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization*, Budapest 1999.

<sup>54</sup> See KRISTIN ROSS: *May 1968 and its Afterlives*, Chicago et al. 2002.

<sup>55</sup> DYONIZIAK, *Czy dorosłym grozi “rewolucja młodzieżowa”?* (as in footnote 38), p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> ROMAN DOBRZYŃSKI: *Logika posiadania* [The Logic of Possession], in: *itd* from 23.03.1969, pp. 4-5, quotation on p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> ANDRZEJ ŁARSKI: “Dzieci kwiatu” [“Flower Children”], in: *itd* from 13.04.1969, p. 6.

desires' are being produced for the youth."<sup>58</sup> Such developments should inspire socialist societies to develop and perfect their own model of consumption that was not driven by market forces. Dobrzyński continued: "The imposition by the West of its own system of consumption should be considered sabotage."<sup>59</sup>

Wary of the attractiveness of Western prosperity to the Polish public, some journalists turned to criticizing the "apolitical" messages and images present in the Polish popular media since de-Stalinization. "Political arguments", journalist Andrzej Łarski argued, "are easy to discern." But how does an "average recipient" spot the enemy work in seductive images of Western glamor and material prosperity promoted by seemingly apolitical Polish popular media? These images "impress many people in our country" and for some they become "the symbol of the desired happy life." Moreover, consumer desire could have political implications. Alluding to the March 1968 revolt of Polish students, Łarski concluded: "This faith in the luxurious life of the West [...] shaped a worldview that had little to do with the idea of socialism."<sup>60</sup>

#### 4 Subversive Politics?

And yet, depictions of Western student rebellions in the Polish popular press also had the potential to subvert the prevailing ideological message. This testifies to the complexity of state-society relations under communism. Journalists and other commentators were actors "in between," situated in an only vaguely defined political terrain: on the one hand they were supposed to serve the regime; on the other hand they acted as representatives of public opinion. The role of journalists, sociologists, and other commentators as "political transmitters" is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is important to note the ambiguity and contingency of the public discourse they created.<sup>61</sup>

Public criticism of "apolitical" propaganda did not result in a decisive re-orientation in the Polish popular press away from Western models. Criticism and affirmation of the West existed side by side, often in the same publications. According to oral testimonies gathered by Kamil Sipowicz in the early 2000s, some Polish hippies only discovered that they were hippies upon read-

<sup>58</sup> DOBRZYŃSKI (as in footnote 56), p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>60</sup> ANDRZEJ ŁARSKI: "Apolityczna" propaganda ["Apolitical" Propaganda], in: *itd* from 2.03.1969, pp. 6-7, quotation on p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> JANE LEFTWICH CURRY: *Poland's Journalists. Professionalism and Politics*, New York 1990, esp. pp. 32-33, points to Polish journalists' surprisingly significant influence on policy decisions under communism. As she explains, this was due, in part, to political instability and frequent changes of the leadership, which allowed journalists to be allied with different factions within the party, and thus to contribute to the plurality of public discussions and the "quasi-pluralistic authoritarian" state that Poland had become after 1956.

ing articles in the Polish press about the hippie movement in the West.<sup>62</sup> The popular press provided no shortage of Western models to be potentially emulated by Polish readers. While writing about Western student movements, regardless of the specific commentary, journalists and correspondents provided detailed factual reports that often served as an inspiration for Polish youth. The careful reader could learn a great deal not only about the fashion and lifestyles of the hippies but also about specific protest tactics such as sit-ins and teach-ins.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, descriptions of police actions and brutal methods of suppressing student demonstrations in the West could prompt the reader to draw parallels between the militia attacks on students in Warsaw and similar actions undertaken by American or French police. Such images could only add to the feeling of student solidarity across borders.

In fact, within less than a year after the March 1968 rebellion, portrayals of student protest and youth culture had reverted to their original pluralism and complexity. While new popular magazines emerged to counter Western trends and promote a more ideologically explicit model of socialist popular print culture<sup>64</sup>, *Dookoła Świata* declared Western influences “unavoidable” because of the spread of the global mass media.<sup>65</sup> In 1969, readers’ letters in *itd* defended the hippies against accusations of immorality and instead saw the movement as a positive force against war and violence.<sup>66</sup>

That same year, *Dookoła Świata* also featured reports that depicted student unrest in the United States and Western Europe primarily as a struggle against imperialism and capitalism, while references to Marxist revisionism at home became rare. Rather, social commentators saw campus rebellions in the West as intellectually stimulating sociological and political phenomena that were difficult to interpret, but nevertheless rooted in their capitalist context.<sup>67</sup> In

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<sup>62</sup> See KAMIL SIPOWICZ: *Hipisi w PRL-u* [Hippies in the Polish People’s Republic], Warszawa 2008.

<sup>63</sup> I thank Tom Junes for bringing up this point.

<sup>64</sup> For example, the new popular weekly *Perspektywy* began publishing in 1969, and tended to emphasize political commentary. TOMKOWSKI (as in footnote 26), p. 182.

<sup>65</sup> Ameryka, kultura masowa, młodzież ... Rozmowa z Krzysztofem Teodorem Toeplitzem [America, Mass Culture, and Youth ... A Conversation with Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 16.11.1969, pp. 8-9, 12, quotation on p. 12.

<sup>66</sup> Hippies. Listy do Normy [Hippies. Letters to Norma], in: *itd* from 9.03.1969, p. 6; and W sprawie “Hippies” [On the Issue of “Hippies”], in: *itd* from 20.04.1969, p. 6. Interestingly, positive descriptions of the hippies could still be found in *Ty i Ja* during the most intense campaign against the degeneracy of Western youth in the wake of the March 1968 rebellion. See Hip, Hip, Hippies?, in: *Ty i Ja* (1968), May, pp. 16-17. The publication consisted mainly of drawings of hippie styles of dress and art in the streets of London. The short commentary described the British hippies as apolitical and interested primarily in “the visual side” of their movement.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, MAREK KONOPKA: Bitwa (nie tylko) o Berkeley [The Battle for (not only) Berkeley], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 13.07.1969, pp. 3-4. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Kraków student periodical *Student* was notable for devoting significant attention to Western and global student movements and their history. See, for example,

1973, the Polish diplomat Kazimierz Sidor wrote a popular book on global student revolts in the 1960s, but chose not to discuss student protests in Eastern Europe at all. According to his account, the revolts had their roots solely from “anti-colonialism” and “anti-imperialism” and took place in “almost all countries of Western Europe, Asia, and Latin America.” The book stood in sharp contrast with Jezierski’s publication of 1969, which situated the Polish rebellion in a global Marxist revisionist context.<sup>68</sup>

In the early 1970s, Western youth and especially counterculture movements became objects of sociological and scientific research. In 1972, the Polish psychiatrist Kazimierz Jankowski published a book about the hippie movement based on his field research in an American hospital. Three years later, the sociologist Aldona Jawłowska produced an insightful work on countercultures. Both studies provided a neutral and often sympathetic portrayal of youth rebellions with little ideological input. In fact, Jankowski and Jawłowska enjoyed an enthusiastic following among young practitioners of Polish counterculture in the 1970s, from rebellious social scientists to participants of avant-garde theater.<sup>69</sup> Yet both works highlighted differences between Western and Polish youth. Despite the visibility of the Polish hippies and their acknowledgment by the press, Jankowski insisted that the hippies were a distinct creation of the capitalist system and closely associated with “the crisis of American culture”.<sup>70</sup> In a similar vein, Jawłowska claimed that Western counterculture movements “grew on such a different cultural footing and in the

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WŁODZIMIERZ RYDZEWSKI: Bunt studentów czyli nowa opozycja [Student Revolt or the New Opposition], in: *Student* (1968), 15 May-15 June, p. 9; DANIEL PASSENT: Słabość i siła studentów [The Weakness and Strength of Students], *ibidem*, 15 czerwca-15 sierpnia, p. 2; ELŻBIETA GRZEGORCZYK: Dziś i jutro afrykańskich uczelni [Today and Tomorrow of African Universities], in: *Student* (1970), January, p. 16; WŁODZIMIERZ RYDZEWSKI: Anarchistyczny książę i robotnicy [The Anarchist Prince and Workers], in: *Student* (1970), April, p. 11; and MARIANNA BOCIAN: Bunt francuskich studentów [The Revolt of French Students], in: *Student* (1971), January-February, p. 4. According to Edward Chudziński, one of *Student*’s editors at that time, these reports reflected Polish students’ genuine fascination with global student rebellions. Interview by author with Edward Chudziński, digital recording, Kraków, 27.06.2012.

<sup>68</sup> KAZIMIERZ SIDOR: *Rewolta studentów* [Revolt of Students], Warszawa 1973. Description of events and the specific capitalist context dominated other publications on the topic. See, for example, JANUSZ GOŁĘBIEWSKI, JANUSZ JANICKI et al. (eds.): *Bunty młodzieży studenckiej na Zachodzie* [Rebellions of the Student Youth in the West], Warszawa 1972; JANUSZ JANICKI: *Oblicza studenckiego buntu. Francja 1968* [Faces of the Student Revolt. France 1968], Warszawa 1970; LESZEK KOŁODZIEJCZYK: *Paryskie noce barykad* [Parisian Nights of Barricades], Warszawa 1969.

<sup>69</sup> ALDONA JAWŁOWSKA, ZOFIA DWORAKOWSKA (eds.): *Wolność w systemie zniewolenia. Rozmowy o polskiej kontrkulturze* [Freedom in the System of Subjugation. Conversations about Polish Counterculture], Warszawa 2008, esp. pp. 67, 84-85.

<sup>70</sup> KAZIMIERZ JANKOWSKI: *Hipisi w poszukiwaniu Ziemi Obiecanej* [Hippies in the Search of a Promised Land], Warszawa 1972, p. 339.

struggle against such a different social reality from ours” that they had no chance to take root in Poland.<sup>71</sup>

The idea of returning “youth revolts” to their “natural” Western environment might have affirmed the success of socialism in giving its youth an important and satisfying place in society. But such arguments were a double-edged sword. The focus on protest movements as inherently Western facilitated a positive assessment of some aspects of youth rebellions and diverted attention from domestic rebels. Jawłowska, for example, openly admired Western youth’s active engagement in global politics. She thought that young Poles could learn a lesson from their Western counterparts by developing an interest in and a “greater sensitivity” to “the international situation, the Third World, centers of military conflict, and the struggle for the freedom of oppressed countries.”<sup>72</sup> A similar commentary that legitimized elements of Western rebellions and trivialized domestic non-conformists came from sociologist Dyoniziak, who ridiculed Polish men who grew long hair as meaningless imitations of the important Western “generation of the long-haired.” While the prominent “long-haired” men such as Bob Dylan or French popular singer Antoine led a cultural revolution “against conservatism and conformism” in capitalist societies, Polish men allegedly represented nothing but “an empty pose.”<sup>73</sup>

The focus on Western youth also allowed Polish writers to send ambiguous and potentially critical messages about the socialist system. While reaffirming the notion that counterculture was “a movement against the society of prosperity,” Jawłowska confidently predicted a continued poor consumer environment in Poland “for the foreseeable future,” and therefore saw no need to worry about movements caused by an “excess of consumer goods.”<sup>74</sup> Did such statements express support for a state that ensured the triumph of spiritual and intellectual values? It is possible that some contemporaries may instead have read it as an ironic commentary on the failure of the Polish state to deliver basic consumer goods as an effort to prevent “dangerous” overconsumption.

Moreover, the content of some popular writings often demonstrate the extent to which Polish print culture assimilated contemporary Western popular culture, including sensationalism and preoccupation with sexuality. For example, *itd* highlighted the radical and immoral character of the student protests in West Germany by featuring a photo of half-naked young women pro-

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<sup>71</sup> ALDONA JAWŁOSKA: *Drogi kontrkultury* [Ways of Counterculture], Warszawa 1975, p. 312.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 314-315.

<sup>73</sup> RYSZARD DYONIZIAK: Czy istnieje pokolenie długowłosych? [Does a “Generation of the Long-Haired” exist?], in: *Dookoła Świata* from 8.01.1969, pp. 6-7, quotation on p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> JAWŁOSKA (as in footnote 71), pp. 312-313.

testing the trial of one of their compatriots.<sup>75</sup> One wonders if the juicy details of youth defiance illustrated with an erotic photo did not divert attention from the ideological message of the article. In a similar way, detailed descriptions of sexual excesses accompanied nearly all publications about the hippies. Even semi-scholarly accounts, such as Jankowski's book, described in detail how a hippie girl, after taking narcotics, was able to have sex with multiple men, one by one, each time experiencing "infinite pleasure."<sup>76</sup> Such descriptions were not really necessary for condemning Western youth behavior and Jankowski himself admitted that sex was not central to hippie culture.<sup>77</sup> Yet it was a constant part of the public representation of Western youth and students.

Summing up, although the popular press joined in the attacks on Polish and Western "revisionists," it did so partially and on a temporary basis. This is especially apparent when one compares these publications to the more politically-oriented publications of the Party and youth organizations.<sup>78</sup> While 1968 was a turning point, it did not shatter the plurality of opinions or the relative autonomy of popular publications in the long run. At the same time, new images entered the conversation about global Marxism and Western youth. These images were there to stay and shaped Cold War divisions. One point was clear: there was no returning to the notions of innocent and consumption-oriented Western youth. Marxist trends in the West were no longer depicted as a potential prelude to the class revolution awaited by the Soviet Bloc. Rather, Western and domestic "revisionists" alike were now cast as dangerous

<sup>75</sup> HENRYK ZDANOWSKI: Ruch studencki w NRF. Czynny protest [The Student Movement in the FRG. Active Protest], in: itd from 9.11.1969, pp. 4-5. By the early 1970s, both *Student* and *itd* developed a practice of featuring a photo of a topless or a naked woman, not related to political events, on the back cover of almost every issue.

<sup>76</sup> JANKOWSKI (as in footnote 70), pp. 168-169. For similar sexualized descriptions and visual images of female hippies see also a series of articles published in *Student* based on a West German book by WOLF MEIN, LISA WEGEN: Die Pop-Kommune. Dokumentation über Theorie und Praxis einer neuen Form des Zusammenlebens, München 1971. J.Z.: Raport z życia komuny. Portrety uczestników [A Report on the Life of a Commune. Portraits of Participants], in: *Student* from 15.08.-4.09.1974, p. 4; IDEM: Raport z życia komuny. Public relations z wielkim biustem [A Report on the Life of a Commune. Public Relations with a Large Bust], in: *Student* from 5.-18.09.1974, pp. 4-5; and IDEM: Raport z życia komuny. Źródła klęski [A Report on the Life of a Commune. Sources of Failure], in: *Student* from 19.09-2.10.1974, p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> JANKOWSKI (as in footnote 70), p. 169.

<sup>78</sup> Attacks on Western youth, their immoral conduct and incorrect Marxist ideologies continued until the end of the 1960s in the more political dailies and weeklies. See, for example, FRANCISZEK RYSZKA: Marcuse i studenci [Marcuse and Students], in: *Argumenty* from 30.03.1969, p. 1, 11; and AW: Pigułka dla nastolatków [The Pill for Teenagers], *ibidem*, p. 10. Press attacks on Polish hippies intensified in 1969. See, for example, BARBARA GRADOWSKA: Hippiesi [Hippies], in: *Perspektywy* from 17.10.1969, pp. 20-24; and ANDRZEJ SALECKI: Prorok z Gałówka [The Prorok from Galowek], in: *itd* from 8.06.1969, p. 4.

rebels against not so much a particular political order as a more universal moral one.

## 5 Conclusion

The Global Sixties, although marked by worldwide fascination with diverse brands of Marxism, deeply troubled political elites in Eastern Europe. Ironically, depicting Western and domestic students as “the other” contributed to drawing clear lines between political leaders and youth rebels in both the East and West. Students and youth became almost a separate group, which stood against all social order. Jeremi Suri put it best when he argued that in the 1960s, ruling elites on both sides of the Iron Curtain reacted to internal disorder in strikingly similar ways. This reaction affected the international political environment in significant ways: the period of *détente* in the late 1960s “grew from a common urge for stability among leaders under attack at home.”<sup>79</sup>

By stigmatizing student rebellions as “foreign,” misguided, and sexually perverse, the Polish political elites took the side of Western political leaders who deployed a similar language against student rebels. Thus the terms of the Cold War were redefined by the global culture of the Sixties. One could argue that 1968 was the end of the Cold War as a competition between a clearly-defined East and West. The boundaries of ideological representation became more complicated and diluted. Ironically, the leaders of the Communist camp—once the self-appointed bearers of progress and internationalist liberation of the oppressed—became increasingly fixated on traditional morality and xenophobic nationalism. Moreover, one wonders if the East-West alliance in forestalling domestic protests may have had a more lasting impact on youth movements extending beyond the periods of *détente* and the Cold War. Since the closing of the 1960s, political and economic elites across the globe have consistently succeeded in de-politicizing and commercializing almost every aspect of youth protest culture, including clothing, music, and art.

The confrontation with global Marxist revisionism forged unexpected links between Western and Eastern European leaders, while also providing a new weapon to boost Communist legitimacy at home. The message to Polish society was clear: the Polish Communist regime might have been inefficient and dependent on the Soviets, but this was the only reliable force to preserve morality and stability in the face of a global cultural upheaval.

The Polish popular press revealed both the strengths and the weaknesses of this strategy. While many commentators insisted on the moral dimension of youth rebellions, a singular interpretation of protest movements was difficult

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<sup>79</sup> JEREMI SURI: *Power and Protest. Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente*, Cambridge/Mass. 2005, p. 2. For recent work on the different regimes’ responses to protest movements see KATHRIN FAHLENBRACH, MARTIN KLIMKE et al. (eds.): *The Establishment Responds. Power, Politics, and Protest since 1945*, New York 2012.

to enforce. Articles in popular magazines revealed the ambivalence towards the arguments of the ruling elites. First, commentators often expressed sympathies towards the ideals of Western students such as the desire for peace and social justice. Second, detailed descriptions of protest tactics demonstrated the extent of Western freedoms and opportunities to articulate dissent unavailable to citizens in the Soviet Bloc. Such, in fact, was the interpretation of student revolts voiced by RFE, to which an estimated one-third of the Polish population regularly tuned in.<sup>80</sup> One broadcast based on interviews with Polish students in Paris who witnessed the French May of 1968 commented: “Everyone [i.e. Polish students] dreams about such [free] discussions in Poland, although they tend to be pessimistic about such prospects.”<sup>81</sup> In general, RFE provided surprisingly positive images of student demonstrations in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Western Europe, and the United States with an emphasis on the global nature of these protests.<sup>82</sup> Finally, the popular accounts illuminated a growing fascination with Western popular culture focused on sexuality and sensationalism. In this sense it foreshadowed the commercial aspects of Sixties culture.

Meanwhile, the lessons of the Sixties were not lost on the young generation, creating an even greater wedge between its members and the ruling elites. The new Marxist language, although expressed in divergent forms and to achieve diverse ends, connected young people on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the search for an alternative social order, one not necessarily limited to the existing choices of capitalism and communism.

### Zusammenfassung

*Die anderen Marxisten: den internationalen Studentenrevolten der 1960er Jahre im globalen Kontext einen Sinn verleihen*

Dieser Artikel beschäftigt sich mit der Rezeption von westlichen Studentenrevolten und marxistischen Bewegungen in den polnischen Medien im globalen Kontext der 1960er Jahre und des innerpolnischen marxistischen „Revisionismus“. Die Autorin vertritt den Standpunkt, dass das Aufkommen einer transnationalen Neuen Linken – Marxisten, die sich deutlich von den marxistisch-leninistischen Regimen Osteuropas unterschieden – eine ideologische Identitätskrise im Ostblock auslöste. Dies geschah zu einem kritischen Zeit-

<sup>80</sup> The percentage of the RFE listeners comes from party estimates in 1965. FRISZKE (as in footnote 8), p. 68.

<sup>81</sup> J. PTACZEK: Studenci polscy o manifestacjach francuskich kolegów [Polish Students Talk about Demonstrations of their French Colleagues], in: Hoover Institution Archive (HIA), Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (RFERL), Box 4856, pp. 11-13, quotation on pp. 12-13.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, TADEUSZ MIELESZKO: Nowa siła – studenci [New Force – Students], Polish Broadcasting Department, Daily Commentary No. 650, 20.03.1968, in: HIA, RFERL 04594, unnumbered pages; and T. OLSZTYŃSKI: Demonstracje studenckie we Francji a w Polsce [Student Demonstrations in France and in Poland], 16.05.1968, ibidem.



punkt, als der Kommunismus nach Stalins Tod für eine Neudefinition offen war. Westliche und einheimische linke Bewegungen, die den Kommunismus nach sowjetischem Vorbild in der Regel ablehnten und die durch den Kalten Krieg hervorgerufenen Differenzen zu überbrücken versuchten, veranlassten die polnische Führung dazu, ihre Legitimation zu erneuern, die fortan stärker auf moralischer als auf politischer oder ideologischer Autorität beruhte.

Der Artikel zeichnet die Entwicklung im polnischen Verhältnis zu westlichen Studenten und Jugendlichen nach und beschreibt, wie diese Entwicklung das Wesen der Rivalität im Kalten Krieg beeinflusste. In den frühen 1960ern betonte das öffentlich verbreitete Bild der jungen Menschen im Westen eine entpolitisierte Kultur, die nach Konsum und Unterhaltung strebte. Dies änderte sich nach der Revolte polnischer Studenten gegen das kommunistische Regime im März 1968. Infolge dieser Revolte gingen öffentliche Kommentatoren dazu über, die politische Radikalisierung der westlichen Jugend zu betonen und auf die ideologischen und moralischen Gefahren hinzuweisen, die diese Bewegungen für junge Polen darstellten. Der neue Diskurs, der polnische wie auch westliche Studenten als gefährliche und häufig sexuell pervertierte Radikale denunzierte, welche die Vernichtung jeglicher sozialer Ordnung anstrebten, spiegelte die Reaktionen der politischen Eliten des Westens auf ähnliche Entwicklungen in ihren eigenen Ländern wider. Dies beeinflusste in einem nicht geringen Maße die politischen Entscheidungen im Rahmen des Kalten Krieges. Nach 1968 stellte sich die kommunistische Führung Polens verstärkt als Verteidiger von Patriotismus und traditioneller Moral im eigenen Land und nicht als international ausgerichteter Befreier der unterdrückten Klassen dar und handelte auch entsprechend.

Gestützt auf populäre Zeitschriften und Jugendbücher untersucht der Artikel zudem die Komplexität und Vielfältigkeit der öffentlichen Mitteilungen und die Rolle der Populärkultur bei der Gestaltung des gesellschaftlichen und politischen Lebens in Polen nach 1956.