

näre Tätigkeit wieder aufgenommen (obwohl er als revolutionärer Propagandist in die Tschechoslowakei delegiert wurde, kehrte er zu seiner alten Lebensweise als anarchoischer Bohemier, Satiriker und ewiger Ironist zurück).

- 11 R. Pytlík, Jaroslav Hašek und der brave Soldat Schwejk, zum 100. Geburtstag von Jaroslav Hašek, Praha 1983, S. 35.
- 12 J. Hašek, Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk, Berlin (DDR) 1960, Bd. 1, S. 221.
- 13 Ebenda, S. 273.
- 14 Ebenda, S. 100.
- 15 Ebenda, S. 25.
- 16 Ebenda, S. 216.
- 17 Ebenda, Bd. 2, S. 145.
- 18 P. Petr, Hašeks 'Schwejk' in Deutschland, Berlin 1963, S. 84.
- 19 R. Pytlík, a.a.O., S. 56.

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On the Paradoxes

of the Reception of Orwell's Works in Poland

The title of my paper seems to be a paradox as well, for hardly any work of Orwell has been published through the official channels in People's Poland. Yet both the name of the writer and some of his works are known, and have acquired some specific significance which reflects not so much what Orwell actually wrote but the political attitudes prevailing in Poland.

Most of my readers certainly know the simple facts I am going to present. Still, it seems worthwhile to look at these facts and possibly to draw some conclusions.

First of all, it seems important to distinguish between the availability of Orwell's works in Poland and in Polish. Leaving the former question for further discussion, let us have a list of his works which the Polish reader can theoretically obtain.

The Polish translation of Animal Farm was, together with the Ukrainian one, among the earliest translations of Orwell's book. Translated by Teresa Jeleńska, it appeared as Zwierzęcy folwark in London in 1947, published by the Światowy Związek Polaków z Zagranicy, with illustrations by Wojciech Jarzębowski. Orwell waved aside his fees in this case, for as he wrote to his literary agent, Leonard Moore: "I did not want any fee for Animal Farm from the Poles or any other Slavs."¹ In fact, he was very keen on having the book published in Slav languages and circulated among the OPs from Eastern Europe, as his letter to Arthur Koestler of 20 September 1947 testifies.² The later editions, although the translation was the same, appeared under the title Folwark zwierzęcy. The second edition, published by Radio Free Europe, came out in 1956 (it was also broadcast by the same radio but I am unable to establish the exact dates). The third

edition was published in London by Odnova in 1974 and reissued in 1984. 3) The latter version was used by clandestine publishers in Poland to produce at least three editions (the exact number would be difficult to establish): in 1979 NOWA in Warsaw with illustrations by Andrzej Krauze, in 1981 by the Akademicka Agencja Wydawnicza in Szczecin, and by the Biblioteka Historyczna i Literacka, in the same year.

1984, translated by Juliusz Mieroszewski, was published as 1984 in Paris by the Instytut Literacki in 1953. The second edition appeared in Paris in 1972, and the third, with an introduction by Maciej Bronski, in 1979, and was reissued in 1983. Parallely with the third edition, a miniature facsimile version was also published in 1979, for distribution in Poland. The Paris editions were used by clandestine publishers in Poland to produce a certain number of editions, of which the catalogue of the Orwell exhibition in the British Museum lists three: Rok 1984, published by Głos in Warsaw in 1980, 1984 printed in Cracow (publisher uncertain), and Rok 1984 published by Krag in Warsaw in 1982. This work of Orwell was also made available on the air: it was serialized and broadcast by the Polish Section of the BBC throughout 1984 in the evening programmes once a week, to celebrate "Orwell year."

Apart from these two major works, Orwell's other works have earned much less space and attention from clandestine publishers in Poland. In 1983, "Biblioteczka miesięcznika studenckiego Głosy" in Poznań published as No 2 Esaje, which includes two essays: "The Prevention of Literature" and "James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution." BMW. Biuletyn Międzywydawniczy, Warsaw 1984, no 4 records the publication by the Oficyna WE of 3 esaje (Warsaw 1983), which includes "The Prevention of Literature", "The Lion and the Unicorn" and "Raffles and Miss Blandish". The British Museum catalogue lists also a publication of Orwell's essays: I ślepy by sprostozęq.... Wybrt esejów i felietonów. Z angielskiego przełożył H. Lewis Allways, published by the Biblioteka Historyczna i Literacka in Warsaw in 1981. A Cracow periodical Atka produced its Orwell issue (No 8, 1984) which contains seven essays: "A Hanging" (in a very amateurish translation), "Inside the Whale", "England Your England" (part I of "The Lion and the Unicorn"), "Looking Back on the Spanish War", "Politics

vs literature: an Examination of Gulliver's Travels", "Arthur Koestler" and "Reflections on Gandhi". The same volume contains also a calendar of Orwell's life and works compiled by Ian Angus, as well as three essays discussing Orwell's works.

"Orwell year" was also celebrated in Poland by the publication of numerous commemorative stamps and calendars, to mention just two Kalendarz poświęcony G. Orwellowi. "Rok 1984" published by the Wydawnictwo Liberta, and another one, by NOWA, Warsaw, 1983.

All publications discussed above were printed either abroad, in London and Paris, or by clandestine publishers in Poland, as they were strictly banned from the official press and publishing houses. Yet, strangely enough, recently some less controversial of Orwell's works have been allowed to appear in Cracow. Two chapters from his early novel Keep the Aspidochelone Flying appeared in the periodical Zdanie, No 11/12, 1983, in my translation, as Vivat aspidochelone! Some weeks ago, in spring 1985, Znak (No 8/9, 1984) printed "A Hanging" ("Powieszzenie", translated by Paweł Prokop) and "Politics vs Literature" ("Polityka a literatura", translated by Piotr Pińkowski), together with an essay by Maciej Bronski, "George Orwell jako krytyk literacki". These are the first publications of Orwell's works by official publishers in Eastern Europe, apart from Yugoslavia where his selected works are widely available (the Hungarian translation of Burmese Days was published in Budapest much earlier, in 1948, while the Czech translation of Down and Out in Paris and London as early as 1935).

There is no doubt that Orwell's major works have been repeatedly issued in Polish, and some of his essays have also been printed. Yet it remains a fact that they are not easily available to the Polish reader. Although a number of copies of the London or Paris editions have found their way into Poland, and an unspecified number of clandestine publications have been circulated, they are all hard to get, and only in big urban (and cultural) centres. They circulate from hand to hand, among the reading élite, and are not accessible to the reader in the place where he should find them - in public libraries. Only big university libraries have a copy or two of Animal Farm or 1984, and they make them available only in the reading room or on microfilm - and no wonder, as the books are extremely rare and irreplaceable. Thus the average educated Pole tends to know them only from hearsay, and although Orwell's name is known to him, he has a very vague idea of the writer's

books, let alone his views and ideas. 4)

Yet the average educated Pole, who does not read English and has no access to Western critical literature, cannot be blamed for his ignorance. For years Orwell officially did not exist in the mass media as there was a strict ban ("zapis") on his name, and even clever tricks attempting to smuggle through censorship some reference to Eric Blair were of no avail. Mielka Encyklopedia Powszechna, Warsaw, 1966, did mention him, but just in one sentence (7 lines). It referred to his "early left-wing inclinations" in connection with The Road to Wigan Pier (defined incorrectly as a novel), to his fighting for the Republic in Spain, and to his later anti-Communist works (Animal Farm is classified as a grotesque, and 1984, curiously, as a satirical novel). The shorter, four-volume edition of Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN of 1975 does not mention Orwell at all, nor does Maję słownik Disz-czy angielskich i amerykańskich, Warsaw, 1971. Powieść angielska XX wieku by Bronisława Bałutowa (Warsaw, 1983) mentions Orwell's name once and does not discuss him at all. Przemysław Mroczkowski's Historia literatury angielskiej (Wrocław, 1981) offers a more extensive treatment and gives to Orwell just over a page; it discusses briefly Animal Farm and 1984 as examples of Swiftian allegory and anti-utopia. Yet Orwell's family background and his political views have become curiously distorted. He is described as a son of a senior officer, which suggests a high social status, while in fact his father was a junior officer in the Opium Department of the Government of India, and his family, although not exactly poor, were very far from being well-off. More significantly, Orwell is presented as a follower of "left-wing radicalism" who fought for the Republic in Spain but who later "abandoned Communism". Yet he could not abandon Communism because he had never embraced it, as can be clearly seen in his early political writings, such as The Road to Wigan Pier, written before Spain, where his views are nearest to the anarchist position. In this presentation, analogy to W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender (whom by the way Orwell furiously attacked) must have imposed itself on the image of Orwell.

If Orwell has been grudgingly allowed very little space in reference books, he has certainly not been given much more extensive treatment in newspapers and literary periodicals. Until recently they either ignored him entirely, whether by their own

choice or by the censor's decision, or poured abuse on him presenting him as an arch-reactionary and cold-war-monger. There is no need to quote third rate journalists who repeat hackneyed phrases without even bothering to read Orwell, as the purpose of their attack is pure propaganda. Yet one would expect something different from the eminent pamphleteer Daniel Passent who certainly has access to various books, studied at Harvard and seems to be well-read. However, in his article "Rekolokacje" (Po-lityka, 26.XI.1983) he says: "...w dziedzinie antykomunizmu największe zasługi miała już dawno burżuazja oraz jej intelektualistów. Kiedy Europa odkrywała, że ma serce z lewej strony, dla szeregów upartych otwarto Berżę i Buchenwald, a w pierwszym szeregu prawicy zli tacy robotnicy jak Orwell z Koestlerem". While obviously speaking about the 1930s, Mr Passent seems to overlook the fact that both writers mentioned went to Spain to fight against Franco, that Koestler was at the time a member of the Communist Party and was imprisoned by Franco, while Orwell received in Spain a serious wound in the throat which impaired his speech for life. If such were the leaders of the Right, then surely, according to Mr Passent, the interests of the workers and the Left must have been best defended by the other side, that is, by General Franco, Hitler and Col. Kostek Biernacki. Such peculiar logic is generally represented in the official mass-media.

Yet as two Orwell anniversaries (1983, his 80th birthday, and obviously 1984) approached, some more reasonable articles on Orwell began to appear. Zdanie prefaced two chapters of Vivat aspidistrat! with an introductory article signed WR (Włodzimierz Rydzewski) which offered an apology for the fact that the periodical had attempted to print such an unorthodox writer. It seems to be aimed less at the reader than at the censor, and in a very contorted and confused way argues that Orwell was not really a reactionary but a man of the Left. It attempts to dispell the myth obviously current in official circles, and also among the reading public at large, the myth of Orwell - an anti-Communist, a reactionary and a spokesman of the Right.

It is only fair to emphasise that Zdanie was unique among periodicals to attempt to publish a text by Orwell. It was the editors' initiative to approach me for the publication of Vivat aspidistrat! and they proved extremely stubborn to have it printed. Other periodicals, such as Literatura, Literatura na świe-cie, Nurt, Pismo Literacko-Artystyczne, which I approached

cie, Nurt, Pisom Literacko-Artyścicze, which I approached more for amusement than in hope of publication, refused without even seeing the text. The odium which surrounds Orwell's name quite effectively discourages editors and publishers from dabbling in a risky enterprise. The arrival of "Orwell year" has generally been given a low profile in the official press, without violent attacks, and occasionally some articles have argued, as one in Trybuna Ludu 28/29.I.1984, that his pessimistic vision has materialized in reality in the West where computers keep files on everybody, that Radio Free Europe is the best example of the Two Minutes Hate, and that the Pentagon might be called the Orwellian Ministry of Peace.

No wonder that while the official channels demonstrated hostility or kept silent about Orwell, it was mainly the Catholic press that managed to squeeze in some reference to the writer or even articles about him. Tygodnik Powszechny, 4 September 1983, published an essay by Sz. Kalinas which attempted to furnish the reader with some basic information about Orwell. Its informative value was, however, greatly diminished by the censor who massacred the text. Znak managed to print Maciej Bronski's valuable essay about Orwell as a literary critic. Yet the writer's advocacy by the Catholic press has its pitfalls. Sooner or later the critic must make it known (and he usually does) that Orwell was areligious and in fact hostile to the Roman Catholic Church (he was much more lenient towards the Church of England which he considered rather harmless and capable of coming to terms with Socialist revolution). However, the Catholic critic would be much more reluctant to admit that Orwell considered the Communist way of thinking and the Catholic way of thinking as very much the same. In The Road to Migan Pier he wrote: "The Communist and the Catholic are not saying the same thing, in a sense they are saying even opposite things, and each would gladly boil the other in oil if circumstances permitted; but from the point of view of an outsider they are very much alike."⁵ He wrote it in 1937 but did not change his opinion later in life. ⁶ Therefore I doubt the truth of the statement formulated by Jerzy Turowicz in his article "Rok 1984", intended for Tygodnik Powszechny, confiscated by the censor, and printed later in Arka, the statement that if Orwell lived today "he would have to admit

with considerable surprise that it is Christianity which is the greatest ally in defending man against enslavement". From the British perspective this truth is certainly not self-evident; it is enough to talk to some Britons of similar political views to Orwell to see it.

Orwell was a political writer and as such has suffered from being rammed into various moulds which suited those who have written about him. For the Communists he has always been an arch-reactionary and chief spokesman of the Right. Strangely enough, similar views have been voiced by some Conservative critics, particularly in America, although of course couched in different words. Orwell always saw himself as a democratic Socialist, as essentially a man of the left, with which he quarrelled violently, but where he belonged and whose basic principles he shared. This trimming of Orwell according to one's own measure has also happened in Poland. I have already mentioned the attitude of the official press. The Catholic press has been very moderate and tended to provide impartial information (particularly Bronski's essay in Znak). Yet the picture would be incomplete without mentioning the fact that some clandestine publications also emphasized those ideas of Orwell's which suited their own. The Orwell issue of Arka provides a most telling example of such a treatment. The introduction makes it clear that the editors represent the neo-Conservative trend and see Orwell as one of their own breed. It ushers in the idea, developed later by Norman Podhoretz in his essay, that if Orwell lived today he would be a neo-Conservative; he need not have abandoned his sympathy for the oppressed as Socialism does not have a monopoly for charity (the very word would make Orwell flinch), for capitalism recognizes it as well yet maintains that it would be much more effectively distributed "by individuals, religious orders or independent charitable associations than by centralized bureaucracy". In trying to prove their point the editors stretch facts to the limit. Furthermore, they are guilty either of blatant ignorance or deliberate dishonesty when they add a footnote to a statement in Turowicz's article concerning Orwell's Socialism and his claim that 1984 has been intended not against Communism but against totalitarianism either on the left or on the right. The editors say in this footnote that they

have no knowledge of any such pronouncement by Orwell. It is, however, enough to consult The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, vol. IV, p. 502, to find an extract from his letter to Francis A. Henson, exactly to this effect, the text much quoted in various works on Orwell. (It is only fair to add that such blindness to facts and carelessness are exceptional in this periodical, and that in a later issue of Arka No 10 - the editors apologized for this footnote and recognized that they had been in the wrong on this point.) The introduction is followed by the essays by Norman Podhoretz, Alain Besançon and Jerzy Turowicz. While the other two are serious analyses, the essay by Podhoretz "If Orwell Lived Today", originally printed in Harper's Magazine, January 1963, is a very curious piece indeed. To some who has read a bit of Orwell it may be merely amusing, perhaps irritating, but the trouble is that the reader who has read neither him nor about him may take it seriously, as a revealed truth. Its main arguments can be summed up thus:

1) If Orwell lived today he would be a neo-Conservative; the evidence can be found in his violent criticism of left-wing intellectuals and in his exposure of their shortcomings and crankiness.

2) If Orwell lived today he would share the neo-Conservative view regarding the East-West relations and the necessity of taking a firm stand on nuclear war. Podhoretz quotes copiously various isolated bits from Orwell, yet forgets to quote from his essay "Burnham's View of Contemporary World Struggle" (New Leader, New York, 29.III.1947) where he clearly mentions some possible developments in case war could be avoided for twenty or more years - such as the formation of the united Socialist Europe, the liberalization of the Soviet regime and the accumulation of atomic weapons by both sides which will act on them as a deterrent.

3) on the question whether Orwell would have abandoned all his Socialist ideas Podhoretz is much less certain, yet he claims that as most neo-Conservatives started as Socialists and have arrived where they are, Orwell would have accompanied them along the way. He forgets to mention that some of the people who used to be close to Orwell in politics have not turned neo-Conservatives, notably Willy Brandt, whom Orwell met in Spain, and Michael Foot, with whom he collaborated on the Tribune staff.

The essay abounds in such phrases as "undoubtedly", "certain-

ly", "without question" etc. Its tone suggests that the arguments are absolutely self-evident and legitimate, which is rather dubious in the article which attempts to prove what would be the political views in 1984 of the man who died in 1950. It seems to resemble remotely the argument that Kościuszko, had he lived in the 1920s and 1930s, would have supported Piłsudski against Dmowski, or vice versa. In fact, the essay and the editor's introduction represent the same kind of mythmaking as the one encountered in Trybuna Ludu and the like. Both attempt to present such an image of Orwell which best suits their political purpose, one fiendishly negative, the other gloriously positive. Both can be reduced to the simple statement: because Orwell did not like the Soviet Union, he was a Conservative. And both are entirely wrong. In result, the average Pole thinks of him as of a Conservative, if not a reactionary writer, and responds with an incredulous smile to an opinion stating his Socialist views. This widespread belief is common not only among the uninitiated reading public, but can also be encountered among English lit. specialists who have been, somewhat hastily, through Animal Farm and 1984. Orwell was in fact an unorthodox writer, he often made very mistaken judgements and often changed his views on particular issues, but there were some ideas he never abandoned. He believed in democratic Socialism, in liberty and in the right to say what people do not want to hear. He also felt respect towards common people, respect developed in his tramping days, daisy of poverty in Paris and in England, and in Spanish trenches. And he hated oppression and injustice wherever he saw it, not only in the enemy camp but also at home. Anyhow, any speculation concerning his political views had he lived beyond 1950 is quite arbitrary. We have to make do with what he actually wrote. And his ideological position is best explained in the letter he sent in 1945 to the Duchess of Atholl refusing to speak for an organization sponsored by the Conservatives:

I am afraid I cannot speak for the League for European Freedom. I could easily get out of it by saying that the date is impossible or - what is quite true - that I know nothing about Yugoslavia, but I prefer to tell you plainly that I am not in agreement with the League's ultimate objectives as I understand them. I went to the first public meeting, or one of the first, and wrote something about it in Tribune which you might have seen. Certain-

ly what is said on your platforms is more truthful than the lying propaganda to be found in most of the press, but I cannot associate myself with an essentially Conservative body which claims to defend democracy in Europe but has nothing to say about British imperialism. It seems to me one can only denounce the crimes now being committed in Poland, Yugoslavia, etc if one is equally insistent on ending Britain's unwanted rule in India. I belong to the left and must work inside it, much as I hate Russian totalitarianism and its poisonous influence in this country. 7)

Notes

- 1) Bernard Crick, George Orwell: A Life. Penguin Books, London 1982, p. 536.
- 2) The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell. Secker and Warburg, London, 1969. Vol. IV, pp. 379-380.
- 3) For information concerning the Polish editions of Orwell's works I am much indebted to the catalogue of an exhibition in the British Library, "The Works of George Orwell in the Languages of Eastern Europe", 17 August - 18 November 1984.
- 4) Czesław Miłosz and his works provide another telling example. Before 1980 his works were well known to the intellectual élite while the public at large had hardly even heard the name.
- 5) The Road to Wigan Pier, Secker and Warburg, London, 1980. p. 181.
- 6) See his essay "Politics and the English Language".
- 7) The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, vol. IV, p. 30.

ЛІТІСКОЗНАВСТВО