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A Ship Emerges in the Distance... People Stand and Applaud. The (Un)obvious Contexts of the Wrocław Sea Festival Celebrations in June 1945

Keywords: “Recovered Territories,” Lower Silesia, Wrocław, Sea Festival, Maritime League, Oder River

The capitulation of Fortress Breslau marked a new era in the history of the old town on the Oder. The post-war establishment of Wrocław was accompanied by the rubble of hundreds of houses, the flames of the burning cathedral, and the pain and suffering of thousands of people... Zofia Skrowaczewska, who would later become a professor of chemistry at the Wrocław University of Science and Technology, arrived in the city in the first weeks after the fall of the “fortress,” as a young girl, and she recorded the image of the place in her memory as follows: “(...) I looked towards the Grunwald Bridge. There was an eerie silence, I saw no one, only the street covered with rubble and broken glass, fragments of destroyed tenement houses. I looked in horror and thought: «Can we restore life here?».”¹

Andrzej Jochelson, a remarkable figure in the city on the Oder, one of the most active municipal officials and a leader in the social and cultural life of post-war Wrocław, echoed her sentiments. Even in June 1945, he described the city as “one big ruin.”² He also remembered its “traditional sounds” as the noise of gunfire and the explosion of mines.³

The apocalyptic realities did not deter the people under Bolesław Drobner, who, on 9–10 May 1945, began the process of transferring the city to Polish administration under his leadership. Along with them came settlers, mainly from Mazovia, Lesser

1 Zofia Skrowaczewska, “Ze Lwowa przez Kraków nad Odrę,” in: *Wspomnienia wrocławskich pionierów*, ed. Włodzimierz Suleja (Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 1995), 131.

2 Andrzej Jochelson, *Kronika Semipalatyńsk–Wrocław*, ed. and introd. by Stanisław Beres (Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej, 1997), 195.

3 *Ibidem*, 209.

Poland, Greater Poland, and the Kielce region, and over time, also from the Eastern Borderlands, particularly from Lviv and its surroundings, from Vilnius, Volhynia, Tarnopol, and Stanisławów. Life and work in a city in such extreme living conditions was a real challenge for its new Polish residents, who had to contend not only with the unprecedented difficulties of daily life but also with cultural unfamiliarity. Wrocław bore a clear mark of centuries of German culture, and until the spring of 1946, the Polish settlers' neighbours were still German citizens of the city.⁴

In such complex circumstances, two main projects were pursued consistently from the very beginning. First: creating basic conditions for the residents' existence. Second: the physical rebuilding and construction of the city's broadly understood urban substance, as well as developing its new identity on different levels. Regarding the latter, it involved both purely administrative actions by the authorities of Wrocław and grass-roots initiatives, often initiated by the City Management Board or active socio-cultural leaders. However, one must not forget the impact of the political and propaganda factors of the emerging communist power. On the map of the "Recovered Territories," the city on the Oder quickly became an important site for propaganda activities, serving both the political goals of the communists and the re-Polonisation of the city, as well as the construction of its new identity.⁵ One of the significant tools in the process of communist ideological influence, with a potentially considerable impact on society, were the celebrations and secular ceremonies sponsored by the authorities of the time. These were organised by the Ministry of Information and Propaganda and its agencies, as well as by organisations used by the communists in the latter half of the 1940s to legitimise Polish claims to the Western and Northern Territories. This includes, among others, the Polish Western Union and the Maritime League.⁶

This article attempts to answer the question of whether the aforementioned celebrations and secular ceremonies sponsored by the emerging communist governments in Poland can be reduced, as is often the case, solely to the fulfillment of ideological tasks leading to the political subjugation of the nation. How did this issue look from the perspective of the local society defined by the immediate post-war reality, full

4 Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel, "Pionierski czas nauki polskiej we Wrocławiu w świetle wspomnień," in: *Nauka w powojennym Wrocławiu 1945–1915. W 70. Rocznicę powstania polskiego środowiska naukowego we Wrocławiu*, eds. Wojciech Kucharski, Katarzyna Bock-Matuszyk, Grzegorz Strauchold (Wrocław: Ośrodek "Pamięć i Przyszłość," 2015), 33; Elżbieta Kościak, "Przemiany demograficzne na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1950," in: *Ziemie Zachodnie – historia i perspektywy*, eds. Wojciech Kucharski, Grzegorz Strauchold (Wrocław: Ośrodek "Pamięć i Przyszłość," 2011), 93–102.

5 Jakub Tyszkiewicz, *Sto wielkich dni Wrocławia. Wystawa Ziem Odzyskanych we Wrocławiu a propaganda polityczna Ziem Zachodnich i Północnych w latach 1945–1948* (Wrocław: Arboretum, 1997), 15–70.

6 Piotr Osęka, *Rytuały stalinizmu. Oficjalne święta i uroczystości rocznicowe w Polsce 1944–1956* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2007); Tyszkiewicz, *Sto*, 61–67; Tadeusz Białas, *Liga Morska 1944–1953* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo „KORAB,” 2006); Adam Makowski, *Między iluzją a realiami. Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Zachodnich w latach 1957–1970* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2019), 27–30.

of contradictions and still evolving, where a sense of celebration and joy, great hopes, as well as disappointments and fears intertwined?⁷ Marcin Zaremba writes that “Poland in 1945 was a country celebrating in various national, state, and church ceremonies.”⁸ Before the time of fear and dread fully takes hold, Polish society, driven not only by the propaganda slogans present in the public space from the very moment the guns fell silent, will devote itself to the work of rebuilding the country, reviving the economy, and initiating activities in the fields of education and culture. In the context of this text, it is also important to note that “after the period of initial chaos, the world depicted did not yet appear unequivocally negative. [...] The ideological constraints had not yet stifled cultural life, which was dynamically developing immediately after the war.”⁹ The realisation of the mentioned goal is designed in the form of a case study, which will present and analyse the diverse, (un)obvious contexts of the Sea Festival celebrations in Wrocław in 1945, an event that has not yet received due attention from historians. Generally, the issue of these ceremonies in the broader national context, not only in relation to the immediate post-war period, has not garnered significant interest from researchers (unlike the issues of ritualisation of celebrations in the People’s Republic of Poland and the PRL, such as the anniversaries of the Battle of Grunwald, Victory Day, Labor Day, the Polish Revival Day, Constitution Day on 3rd May, not to mention the Millennium of the Polish State celebrations).¹⁰ In monographic publications dealing with various dimensions of propaganda in Poland, the fact that the Sea Festival has been part of the official state ceremonies since 1945 is primarily noted. However, this topic is usually treated in a marginal or merely indicative manner.¹¹ Even in the monographic

7 Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2012), 13.

8 Ibidem, 14.

9 Ibidem, 410–411.

10 Ryszard Tomkiewicz, *Rocznice bitwy pod Grunwaldem w Polsce Ludowej* (Olsztyn: Towarzystwo Naukowe – Ośrodek Badań Naukowych im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego w Olsztynie, 2011); Grzegorz Strauchold, *Wrocław – okazjonalna stolica Polski. Wokół powojennych obchodów rocznic historycznych* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2003); Agnieszka Dytman-Stasienko, *1 Maja w PRL. Święto zawłaszczonych znaczeń. Ideologia, rytuał, język* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TVP, 2006); Paweł Sowiński, *Komunistyczne święto. Obchody 1 maja w latach 1948–1954* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2000); Jakub Tyszkiewicz, “Uroczystości obchodów państwowych i rocznicowych na Dolnym Śląsku w okresie stalinowskim (1949–1953),” in: *Piastowsko-komunistyczna satysfakcja? Obchody rocznic historycznych i świąt państwowych na Śląsku po II wojnie światowej*, eds. Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel, Grzegorz Strauchold, (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2008, 131–144; Adam Makowski, “1 i 3 maja – dwa symbole w walce o różne wizje powojennej Polski na przykładzie Pomorza Zachodniego,” in: *Piastowsko-komunistyczna satysfakcja*, 151–165; Marek Ordyłowski, “Obchody Tysiąclecia Państwa Polskiego na Dolnym Śląsku,” in: *Piastowsko-komunistyczna satysfakcja*, 167–180.

11 Osęka, *Rytuały*, 65–66; Paweł Migdalski, “Polityka historyczna na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach 1945–1989,” in: *Region czy regiony? Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne 1945–1989*, ed. Wojciech Kucharski (Wrocław: Ośrodek “Pamięć i Przyszłość,” 2022), 507–518; Hubert Wilk, “Święta, rocznice, obchody – oficjalne świętowanie w Kielcach (1945–1948),” *Studia Muzealno-Historyczne* 2 (2010): 7.

study of the post-war history of the Maritime League, the mentioned issue, especially in relation to 1945, is addressed rather modestly.¹² Some light on this issue is shed by texts published in 1983 in the periodical *Nautologia*. The presented articles, which contain many important pieces of information, are, however, heavily imbued with the ideological climate of the times in which they were written.¹³ A similar approach to the issue of the Sea Festival celebrations can be observed in research on the “Recovered Territories.” Most often, this topic is not even acknowledged, even in texts addressing propaganda issues.¹⁴ Oftentimes it is merely signalled.¹⁵ In the approach to the mentioned issue, there are also certain simplifications and inaccuracies.¹⁶ Regarding Lower Silesia, this topic has only been more extensively addressed in relation to Jelenia Góra, where the Sea Festival was first organised in the year 1946.¹⁷

In this situation, the aim of this text, while considering the role of Wrocław in the propaganda of the Polish State during the second half of the 1940s, is to address the mentioned research gap. The author’s intention is not only to highlight the political and ideological dimension of the Sea Festival celebrations in Wrocław in 1945 but also to equally focus on their social and cultural context. On these levels, the diverse cultures and people, in the specific (geo)political and ideological conditions, were creating an intriguing and constantly changing amalgamation of the city’s uniqueness/identity in the early post-war months. The author’s intention was not to conduct a comparative analysis of Wrocław’s case with other urban centres in Poland at that time. While the text clearly refers to Gdynia and Gdańsk, this was due to the fact that the “central”

12 Białas, *Liga Morska 1944–1953*, 242–251.

13 “Tradycje Dni Morza w Polsce,” *Nautologia* 1 (1983); Henryk Tetzlaff, “Geneza i tradycje Dni Morza w Polsce (ze wspomnień współorganizatora pierwszego Świąta Morza w Gdyni),” *Nautologia* 1 (1980): 16–25.

14 Zbigniew Mazur, “Obchody świąt i rocznic historycznych na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych (1945–1948),” in: *Wspólne dziedzictwo? Ze studiów nad stosunkiem do spuścizny kulturowej na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych*, ed. Zbigniew Mazur (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2000), 111–163; Ryszard Tomkiewicz, “Polityka historyczna na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych w latach 1945–1989. Wprowadzenie,” in: *Region czy regiony?*, 467–477; Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel, “Polityka historyczna na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1989,” in: *Region czy regiony?*, 487–497; Grzegorz Strauchold, *Mysł zachodnia i jej realizacja w Polsce Ludowej w latach 1945–1957* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2003), 112–114; idem, “The Maritime League. A Study of the Dissolution of a Social Institution,” *Studia Maritima* 34 (2021): 161–183, DOI: 10.18276/sm.2021.34-07; Tyszkiewicz, *Sto*, 61–67.

15 Migdalski, “Polityka,” 507–518.

16 Radosław Domke, *Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne Polski w propagandzie lat 1945–1948* (Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, 2010), 194–218.

17 Ivo Łaborewicz, “Działalność Ligi Morskiej w Jeleniej Górze w latach 1945–1950,” in: *Między Legnicą a Jelenią Górą. Prace dedykowane Stanisławowi Firsztowi w 40-lecie pracy w muzealnictwie i 65. urodziny*, eds. Ivo Łaborewicz, Marek Szajda (Jelenia Góra: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Jeleniej Góry, Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu Oddział w Jeleniej Górze, 2020), 261–279; Marek Szajda, *Między propagandą a turystyką. Dni Karkonoszy i 840-lecie Jeleniej Góry w 1948 roku*, (Wrocław: Ośrodek “Pamięć i Przyszłość”, 2023), 116.

celebrations of 1945 in those cities marked the beginning of a new post-war chapter in the history of the Sea Festival in Poland, simultaneously setting the standards that would apply for the coming years. Their broader discussion in the article primarily served to emphasise the (un)obvious contexts of Wrocław's celebration for the reader. The decision to elaborate more extensively on the Tri-City celebrations was also influenced by the fact that, as noted in the review of the state of research on the Sea Festival, there has been relatively modest interest in this subject among historians.

The proposed time frame is the year 1945. This date is defined by the end of World War II, the new role of the "Recovered Territories" in propaganda, the early post-war format of "socialist rituals," and finally, the organisation of the first nationwide Sea Week in the new geopolitical reality of Poland, held from 23 to 29. The culmination of the celebrations was the Sea Festival (29 June), which, according to the plans of the emerging communist authorities, was to be celebrated throughout the country, including in Wrocław.¹⁸

The source base for the scientific inquiry is varied in both quantity and quality. The research involved archival sources created by provincial and municipal authorities, political parties, and associations operating in Wrocław in 1945, which are held in the State Archives in Wrocław. Upon evaluating the collected material, it turned out to be relatively modest, except for a few documents from the collections of the City Management Board of Wrocław and the Wrocław Provincial Office. In this context, the press becomes of particular importance, with key titles including "Naprzód Dolnośląski" and "Gazeta Dolno-Śląska." Unfortunately, the transition from spring to summer 1945 in Lower Silesia also appears sparse in this regard.¹⁹ In that situation, memorials and journals became important.²⁰ It is also worth noting the ephemeral prints in the form of informational posters and proclamations from the collection of Social Life Documents of the Silesian-Lusatian Office, which are held in the University Library in Wrocław.

The first post-war Sea Festival celebrations in Poland, ideologically referencing the pre-war events (initiated in Gdynia in 1932)²¹, were organised as early as June 1945.²²

18 Oseka, *Rytuały*, 31–94; Tyszkiewicz, *Sto*, 36–40; Białas, *Liga Morska 1944*, 242–243.

19 Krystyna Bednarz, "Prasa dolnośląska," in: *25 lat prasy na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych*, ed. Andrzej Wakar (Kraków: Ośrodek Badań Prasoznawczych RSW „Prasa,” 1972), 37–54; Bronisław Winnicki, "Polpress-Naprzód Dolnośląski," in: *Trudne dni (Wrocław 1945 r. we wspomnieniach pionierów)*, ed. Mieczysław Markowski, vol. 1 (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1960), 235–255; Jan Kowalski, "Narodziny pierwszej gazety," in: *Trudne dni (Wrocław 1945 r. we wspomnieniach pionierów)*, ed. Mieczysław Markowski, vol. 2 (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1961), 83–88.

20 Włodzimierz Suleja, ed. *Wspomnienia wrocławskich pionierów*. (Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 1995); *Trudne dni (Wrocław 1945 r. we wspomnieniach pionierów)*, vol. 1, vol. 2.

21 Henryk Tetzlaff, "Tradycje obchodów Dni Morza i ich znaczenie," *Nautologia* 1 (1983): 18–22; idem, "Geneza," 16–25.

22 Białas, *Liga Morska 1944*, 242.

The main initiator and organiser was the Maritime League – a successor to the mass social organisation from the interwar period that promoted maritime issues and the idea of building a great-power country.²³ As Tadeusz Białas notes, both the revival of this association and its assignment by the communists, albeit under their control, to organise the aforementioned propaganda event was not a coincidence: “The new government, socially isolated, sought a platform that would attract people far from its program and even win supporters. Such a platform was certainly the «Western» program of the Polish Committee of National Liberation” from 22 July 1944, which called on Poles to fight for the “return to the Motherland of the old Polish Pomerania, [...], for wide access to the sea, for Polish border posts on the Oder!”²⁴ This manifest naturally aligned with the pre-war dreams of members and sympathisers of the Maritime League, who had previously emphasised the need for Polish expansion to the sea. Alina Hutnikiewicz also pointed out that a significant ideological element uniting the two formations was their strong anti-German sentiment. Additionally, the similar style of propagating the “maritime ideology” in the public sphere in a patriotic and emotional convention was not insignificant.²⁵

The first post-war Sea Festival celebrations, organised as part of Sea Week (23–30 June 1945), took place on 29 June, directly referencing the pre-war tradition.²⁶ It is worth noting that although the Gdynia celebrations of 1932 were held on 31 July, in subsequent years, the patronal feast day of Saints Peter and Paul was consistently highlighted as the event’s date.²⁷ To maintain the term of the celebrations already embedded in public memory after the intervention of Bishop S. W. Okoniewski (with the episcopate also involved), who emphasised the specificity of the church rituals and customs of Saints Peter and Paul, the name was changed from Sea Festival to Sea Day in 1935²⁸. In 1945, however, the original nomenclature was restored (the Sea Day later returned in 1950).²⁹

A specific reference to the pre-war period was also the choice of location for the post-war event. This refers to Gdynia, the city that organised the first central celebrations in 1932. However, this reference should be considered somewhat symbolic. Certainly,

23 Ibidem. The organization, which has operated since 1930 under the name Maritime and Colonial League, was founded on the basis of the Maritime and River League (1924–1930), which in turn was linked to the activities of the “Polish Shipping League” Society, established in 1919, and the Association of Workers for the Development of Shipping “Polish Flag” (since 1918): Tadeusz Białas, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930–1939* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1983).

24 Białas, *Liga Morska 1944*, 24.

25 Alina Hutnikiewicz, *Szczecin w Polskiej Polityce morskiej w latach 1945–1950* (Szczecin: Polskie Pismo i Książka, 1991), 21–22.

26 Osęka, *Rytuały*, 66.

27 Tetzlaff, “Geneza,” 22–23.

28 Ibidem, 20; Walenty Aleksandrowicz, “Dni Morza w powojennej Polsce 1945–1980”, *Nautologia* 1 (1983): 34.

29 Ibidem; Witold Bublewski, “Z tradycji dni morza w Polsce,” *Nautologia* 1 (1980): 29.

the choice of Gdynia was met with nostalgia and acceptance among pre-war Maritime League activists. It should be noted, though, that the original plan was to organise the first post-war celebrations in Szczecin – a city considered ideal for propaganda purposes.³⁰ The main issue that ultimately prevented this was Szczecin's uncertain geopolitical situation in the first post-war weeks of 1945.³¹

Ultimately, the national Sea Festival celebrations (spread over two days, June 28 and the main day, June 29) were organised in Gdynia – a city relatively less damaged compared to the port city and the cruelly affected Gdańsk. In Gdynia, events included a military parade and the casting of a wreath from the quay into the sea to honour fallen war heroes. The Gdańsk celebrations, on the other hand, took on a special patriotic and martyrological dimension, symbolised by the collection of blood-soaked Polish soldiers' soil from Westerplatte. This soil was then ceremoniously transported by motorboats to the city and embedded in the pre-war National Monument to the Fallen (erected in 1933 to honour German soldiers from World War I), which was reappropriated in 1945 for Polish memory politics. Until 1957, this monument, known as the Freedom Monument or the Monument to the Defenders of the Coast (both unofficial names), with the Prussian eagle replaced by the Polish one, remained a visible public symbol honouring the military heroes who fell fighting the Nazis. On 29 June, a solemn Mass was held at the then Freedom Square, followed by a march of its participants to 1 May Square, where, in the presence of provincial and municipal authorities, the Navy, other military formations, and the stationed Soviet Army, a parade took place. However, Bolesław Bierut was absent from the celebrations. The absence of higher representatives of the Polish People's Party (PPR) was due to the formation of the Provisional Government of National Unity in Warsaw during those days. Bolesław Bierut and Michał Rola-Żymierski arrived in the city only on 1 July, when the celebrations were repeated.³² It is also worth noting the events that took place in nearby, and importantly, war-undamaged Sopot. In addition to a military parade, Sopot hosted a Polish Music Festival, a tennis tournament, and a folk festival on the pier at the end of June. It is noteworthy that on St. John's Night, the Tri-City area did not forget to celebrate ancient Slavic traditions, including the "wianki" (wreaths), bonfires, and fireworks.³³ This way, the traditional repertoire of the Sea Festival/Sea Day, established in the interwar period, was almost entirely exhausted, including:

(...) parades, manifestations, and demonstrations often preceded by church services, (...) readings, lectures, concerts (...), school performances, and meetings with maritime people. Wreaths on the rivers, evening gatherings, folk dances, and sometimes even

30 Aleksandrowicz, "Dni," 35.

31 Ibidem.

32 Białas, *Liga Morska 1944*, 242–243.

33 Osęka, *Rytuały*, 66.

balls were highlights closing the events associated with the celebrations. [One certainly cannot forget about the sports and tourism events or the special participation of scouts].³⁴

A characteristic feature inherited from the interwar period in 1945 was also that, to some extent, certain elements of the program (although not crucial from a propaganda perspective) were allowed to be adapted to regional preferences and needs.³⁵

When discussing the Gdańsk celebrations, it should be noted that among researchers of the issues addressed in the text, there is no unanimous opinion on their national-level significance (unlike the Sea Festival of 1946).³⁶ This view was clearly articulated in Tadeusz Białas's publication, where he stated that the first post-war celebrations had a "very limited character," which was a consequence of the "dramatic internal situation of the country at that time" and the still ongoing (until mid-November 1945) state of emergency in the country.³⁷ However, it is a fact that the first Sea Festival was celebrated in various organisational forms not only in Pomerania but also in many other places across the country (including Kielce and Kraków),³⁸ as well as in the "Recovered Territories."³⁹

The Sea Festival organised in 1945, with a significant logistical effort and in the complex post-war internal conditions of the country as well as the realities of dynamic geopolitical changes, was intended to serve several important political and propaganda purposes from the perspective of the communists.⁴⁰ It was another element embedded in the difficult process of legitimising their rule in Poland, and references to pre-war traditions were meant to serve as a smokescreen for the true intentions of seizing control of the state. At the same time, it was seen as a clear propaganda statement against the "minimalist" policy of the Second Polish Republic, whose successive governments, "satisfying themselves" with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, pursued a minimal maritime plan. Both in terms of reality and propaganda, the Sea Festival served to confirm Poland's rights to the "Recovered Territories," with a particular emphasis on broad access to the sea and Baltic ports. The theme of the Oder River – connecting the south and west of the emerging state with the Baltic and serving as a foundation for its western

34 Bublewski, "Z tradycji," 30.

35 Ibidem.

36 Domke, *Ziemia*, 205; Aleksandrowicz, "Dni," 35; Osęka, *Rytuały*, 66; Białas, *Liga Morska 1944*, 242.

37 Ibidem.

38 Wilk, *Święta*, 84.

39 Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu, *Dokumenty życia społecznego Gabinet Śląsko-Łużycki*, Odezwa do mieszkańców Dolnego Śląska w dniu 29 czerwca 1945. Wojewódzki Komitet Organizacyjny "Święta Morza" na Dolnym Śląsku, Lignica, 23.04.1945; Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu, *Dokumenty życia społecznego Gabinet Śląsko-Łużycki*: Afisze z hasłami propagandowymi [tzw. sztraify] związanymi z tematem odzyskania dostępu do morza w 1945 roku.

40 Anna Magierska, "Próby konsolidowania społeczeństwa wokół hasel powrotu nad Odrę i Bałtyk w myśli politycznej pierwszych lat Polski Ludowej," in: *Studia z dziejów polskiej myśli politycznej*, ed. Kazimierz Przybysz (Warszawa: Dom Wydaw. Elipsa, 1991), 62–83.

border – was also deliberately included. According to the communists, this fact demonstrated not only the realisation of historical justice but also a new perspective for building a strong Poland economically. This element was exploited for the purposes of social mobilisation towards the country's reconstruction, especially for the maritime economy. The first post-war Sea Festival had a distinctly anti-German tone. In the context of the recently concluded war, the heroism of the Polish soldier in the fight against Nazi Germany was emphasised, and patriotic and martyrological themes were particularly visible. It is also important to note the significance of these celebrations in the context of important propaganda elements that contributed to one of the main foundational myths of the People's Republic of Poland. This includes highlighting the contributions of the "fraternal" Soviet Army in "liberating" Poland from German occupation, emphasising the "Polish–Soviet alliance," and the "brotherhood of nations" (mainly Slavic).⁴¹

Wrocław also found itself on the map of the Sea Festival celebrations in 1945. Based on the rather modest archival material collected, it is difficult to determine where, apart from the aforementioned city on the Oder, such events also took place. According to a call issued by the Provincial Organising Committee of the Sea Festival in Lower Silesia, which encouraged not only active participation in events organised by local Organising Committees but also "decorating houses with national flags [original spelling – JNS] and greenery," it can be stated that political activists in the region took this issue very seriously. However, it is difficult to verify public reactions to this campaign during that period.⁴² Interestingly, even in places where the environment of pre-war Maritime League activists, visible in the new Polish social landscape, relatively quickly entered a process of reactivation – primarily referring to Jelenia Góra – the decision was made not to organise the mentioned event there in June 1945. The Sea Festival in this city took place for the first time only a year later.⁴³

Available sources allow us to conclude that, despite Wrocław being clearly chosen as the broadly understood centre of Lower Silesia, the celebrations there did not have a central significance within the entire region. This was largely due to the very serious problems faced by the city, caused by the extensive scale of destruction, and the fact that the emerging provincial authorities (at that time, the Representative of the Government of the Polish Republic for the Lower Silesia Administrative District/which later became the Provincial Office) were based in Legnica for several post-war weeks, until September 1945.

41 Nowosielska-Sobel, "Polityka," 490–492, 495–497; Tyszkiewicz, *Sto*, 33–38; T. Białas, *Liga Morska 1944*, 242–243; *Dokumenty życia społecznego*, Odezwa do mieszkańców Dolnego Śląska w dniu 29 czerwca 1945. Wojewódzki Komitet Organizacyjny "Święta Morza" na Dolnym Śląsku, Legnica 23 IV 1945; *Dokumenty życia społecznego*, Afisze z hasłami propagandowymi.

42 *Dokumenty życia społecznego*: Odezwa do mieszkańców Dolnego Śląska w dniu 29 czerwca 1945.

43 Łaborewicz, "Działalność," 265, 272.

The limited source base also complicates the unequivocal determination of the specific organisers responsible for arranging the Sea Festival celebrations in Wrocław. The archival materials do not allow for the precise identification of individuals, institutions, or organisations within the mentioned Provincial Organising Committee or its relationship with local Wrocław activists. The preserved documentation does not indicate the existence of a specific local organising committee in the city. However, it can be stated that the Maritime League was not among the mentioned groups, as it did not have its structures in the region at that time. Ivo Łaborewicz, a researcher of the discussed issues, points out that the first highly active branch associated with the Maritime League was established only in July 1945 in Jelenia Góra.⁴⁴ Wrocław Maritime League, on the other hand, was established with difficulty, as evidenced by several unsuccessful attempts to organise its structures in the city. It was only at the turn of 1945/1946 that it was possible to establish and activate the Maritime League's Regional Office in Wrocław, which immediately began the process of subordinating to itself, as the regional headquarters, the already existing branches.⁴⁵ Although in the following years the presence of the mentioned association in the organisation of the Sea Festival was almost a necessary condition, Tadeusz Białas notes that in 1945 it was often the case that the organisers of the festival were Polish settlers, not so much active members of the League, but rather its pre-war sympathisers or simply former citizens of the Second Polish Republic – participants in such events.⁴⁶

At this point, it is necessary to ask who was responsible for organising the first post-World War II Sea Festival in Wrocław. Sparse archival materials, as well as memoir sources, indicate Adam Kabaja, a Wrocław pioneer who arrived in the city with a government-appointed operational group led by the PPS member Bolesław Drobner on 10 May 1945. Connected with Kraków, an experienced technical worker from the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre there, and, as demonstrated by his activity in Wrocław, also an excellent organiser and a man of many skills (driver and mechanic) very useful in the war-torn city.⁴⁷ Adam Kabaja's presence in the operational group rather than in the

44 Ibidem, 265; Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, IV 215, Urząd Wojewódzki Wrocławski, Protokół z Walnego Zgromadzenia Ligi Morskiej w Jeleniej Górze z 21 lipca 1945 r.; Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, IV 215, Urząd Wojewódzki Wrocławski, Pismo Zarządu Okręgu Ligi Morskiej w Jeleniej Górze do Urzędu Wojewódzkiego, Jelenia Góra, 26 września 1945.

45 Łaborewicz, "Działalność," 270–271. At this point, it should be noted that so far, no monograph has been written on the activities of the Maritime League either in Wrocław or in the entire Lower Silesia region. The monographic publication by T. Białas, which focuses on the central authorities of the organisation and its activities at that level, essentially overlooks the activities of local structures, except in coastal regions; "Kultura i sztuka," *Naprzód Dolnośląski* 1, 26.06.1945, 4. M.K., "Symbol łączności Śląska z Morzem," *Pionier* 3, 23.11.1945; "Liga Morska organizuje się," *Naprzód Dolnośląski* 31, 16.03.1946, 4.

46 Białas, *Liga Morska 1944*, 243.

47 Józef Kelera, *Wrocław teatralny 1945–1980* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich 1983), 7; Adam Kabaja, "Pionierski okres organizacji teatrów we Wrocławiu," in: *Trudne dni*, vol. 2, 193–205.

scientific-cultural group of Professor Stanisław Kulczyński was not accidental. Bolesław Drobner tasked him with “securing the assets of Wrocław’s theaters,” primarily referring to the buildings and their entire technical infrastructure. The delegation did not include tasks related to initiating cultural activities, as Adam Kabaja was not an artist. The first facility he took over was the German opera house on today’s Świdnicka Street. Relatively undamaged by the war, with a complete theatrical setup including decorations, costumes, and even a sewing room, it was well-suited to serve as the first cultural centre in Polish Wrocław. It is also noteworthy that, together with the German staff of the opera and members of its orchestra, he not only effectively defended the building from looting but also quickly brought it back into usability.⁴⁸ For his efforts and determination, he was appointed “Technical Director of the Theatres of the City of Wrocław.”⁴⁹

Adam Kabaja did not limit himself to merely restoring the historic building to the city. He was simultaneously establishing the first cultural institution in the literal sense of the term. With extensive contacts in Kraków, he tirelessly brought to Wrocław individuals qualified for the administrative roles of the future theatre and, importantly, artists. Among his most significant achievements was the “recruitment” of the Kraków conductor Stefan Syryła. Not only did Syryła, in June 1945, assemble the first symphony orchestra for the Polish Municipal Theatre primarily from German (and a small group of Polish) opera and philharmonic musicians, but he also proved to be an excellent organiser of the city’s musical life.⁵⁰

Sources, both archival and memoir-based, are largely silent on whether the initiative to organise the Sea Festival in June 1945 came from Adam Kabaja himself or if it was officially assigned to him. The fact is that such celebrations did take place. Kabaja received personal thanks from the head of the Provincial Office of Information and Propaganda “for the effort put into organising the Sea Festival in Wrocław.”⁵¹ Along with the congratulations, there was hope expressed that: “He would soon be able to expand his highly beneficial activities for our city, and that the Municipal Theatre in Wrocław would become one of the main centres of cultural life in Lower Silesia.”⁵²

This modest official letter should be considered quite significant in the context of what made the Sea Festival celebrations in Wrocław in 1945 unique compared to other

48 “Kultura i sztuka,” *Naprzód Dolnośląski* 1, 26.06.1945, 4.

49 Kelera, *Wrocław*, 7.

50 Kabaja, “Pionierski,” 197; Stanisław Drabik, “W operze wrocławskiej,” in: *Trudne dni*, vol. 1, 266; Kazimierz Kuligowski, “W ruinach,” in: *Trudne dni*, vol. 1, 153; Piotr Łabosz, “Pierwsze taktę muzyki,” in: *Trudne dni*, vol. 1, 230; Andrzej Jochelson, “Pionierskie dni Zarządu Miejskiego,” in: *Wspomnienia wrocławskich pionierów*, 42.

51 “Wojewódzki Urząd Informacji i Propagandy dziękuje Adamowi Kabaji za organizację akademii w dniu “Święta Morza,” document reproduction in: *Trudne dni*, vol. 2, 208.

52 *Ibidem*.

centres in the country, such as Gdańsk, Kielce, or Kraków.⁵³ Alongside the propagandistic aspect, these events primarily constituted the beginning of Polish culture in the city, which was not only a direct consequence of top-down administrative actions but also a result of the involvement, often ad hoc and “on the fly,” of a small group of people genuinely committed to the creation of a new city. Historical sources do not allow us to determine whether it was Adam Kabaja’s personal desire to initiate cultural events in Wrocław, specifically through the Sea Festival, or if it was a fortunate coincidence that he was able to utilise perfectly for his role as a cultural organiser. However, it is true that he managed to renovate the former opera building sufficiently and prepare its team to inaugurate, not coincidentally on 29 June 1945, the city’s first Polish cultural institution under the name of the Municipal Theatre.⁵⁴

Very limited financial resources allowed Adam Kabaja to organise the event as just an academy.⁵⁵ Thanks to his organisational skills and like-minded collaborators, particularly Stefan Syryła, Adam Kabaja successfully reconciled the political and propaganda aspects of the event with the potential artistic expectations of its participants. After all, the theatre was inaugurating its activities! Adam Kabaja later recalled:

On June 29, 1945, the first theater poster was published. The theater was opened to the public. The Sea Festival. The Festival of Wrocław Theater. The Festival of Polish Culture. The audience was packed. A gong. Silence. The curtain rises. The stage, shrouded in darkness, begins to lighten. The first applause. In the distance, a ship symbolizing the Polish sailing ship *Dar Pomorza* emerges. Chopin’s Polonaise in A-flat major. As its sounds play, the curtain falls. Applause. Nothing happens on stage. The audience is illuminated, people stand and applaud. I had the impression that the applause was primarily for the birth of Polish theater in Wrocław. Part two – an official speech. Part three – a concert.⁵⁶

The Wrocław Sea Festival must have been organised impeccably, as evidenced not only by the tone of the congratulatory letter sent to Adam Kabaja by the head of the Provincial Office of Information and Propaganda (which he himself also mentions in his memoirs) the day after the event – a sign of satisfaction with the political and propaganda expectations met by the authorities – but also by the expressions of appreciation from other circles. “The next day, the Rector of the University of Wrocław, Professor Stanisław Kulczyński, sent a delegation of students to the theater, who presented us with a bouquet of flowers, expressing their gratitude for this first event. [...] The military commander, Colonel Liapunov, sent 100 liters of wine,” recalled Adam Kabaja years later.⁵⁷

53 Wilk, *Święta*, 84; Aleksandrowicz, “Dni,” 35.

54 Kelera, *Wrocław*, 7.

55 Ibidem.

56 Kabaja, “Pionierski,” 197.

57 Ibidem.

Although it is difficult to unequivocally reconstruct the course of the second part of the aforementioned academy, filled with official speeches (Adam Kabaja himself also remains silent on this topic), examining the preserved printed materials, archival documents, and very few newspaper articles from that time reveals a party and administrative effort and mobilisation to strongly emphasise the political and propaganda dimensions of the Sea Festival celebrations in June 1945 in Wrocław (in the reviewed collection of leaflets from the resources of the University Library in Wrocław, there is no official program of the event; similarly, it is absent in other sources).

The ideological program of the celebrations was precisely outlined in the proclamation issued by the Provincial Organising Committee of the “Sea Festival” in Lower Silesia on 23 June 1945.⁵⁸ Alongside mobilising the region’s population to participate in the festivities, the proclamation also included criticism of the maritime and border policies of the Second Polish Republic:

We are facing historical changes that will determine the fate of not just one, but dozens of generations. What yesterday seemed an unattainable dream of poets, today has taken on flesh and blood – becoming reality. Our narrow 140 km maritime border, granted to us by the Treaty of Versailles, is now a thing of the past. We have firmly set our foot on the white sands of the Baltic coast across hundreds of kilometers. The small window through which we communicated with the world has transformed before our eyes into magnificent, wide gates through which a stream of salty sea air now flows throughout Poland.⁵⁹

The proclamation also highlighted the significant prospects for economic development in post-war Poland based on the maritime economy. The authors of the document believed that the success of this project required both changes in the society’s mindset and its full engagement:

The Baltic calls us to work, to effort! We must rebuild and expand our maritime economy as quickly as possible, on which 75% of our economy depends! Own shipyards and ships – these are the foundations of maritime independence, guaranteeing our sovereignty. We must quickly transform the “land-based Polish soul,” as Żeromski called it, into the “maritime Polish soul.” We must integrate the sea into our daily lives, tame it, and adapt it to the needs of the nation. On the streets of cities and villages, the sailor will cease to be a curiosity that children run after and will become a common guest, on par with representatives of other professions.⁶⁰

The document also included arguments reinforcing Poland’s historical and pragmatic rights to the “Recovered Territories,” with a particular focus on the Oder River

58 *Dokumenty życia społecznego, Odezwa do mieszkańców Dolnego Śląska w dniu 29 czerwca 1945.*

59 *Ibidem.*

60 *Ibidem.*

as a boundary river and emphasising the role of the new, appropriately propagandised government. The theme of political alliance with the USSR (here in the context of the “fraternal Slavic nation”) and the brotherhood in arms in defeating the Germans completed the narrative:

The “Sea Festival” day is especially solemn for us, citizens of Lower Silesia. We have returned to these ancient Polish lands, inextricably linked with the Baltic by the gray ribbon of the Oder, to unite them once and for all with the Motherland. We have returned here, as well as to the maritime coast, not due to some coincidence, but primarily thanks to the wise, foresighted, and genuinely national policy of the leaders of our state. Our nation is returning to the ancient Piast lands, to the white shore of the Baltic, after many years under the leadership of Polish democracy. Our nation is returning under the leadership of those patriots who understood that only an alliance with the fraternal Slavic nations, and above all, sealed by the blood of Polish and Soviet soldiers, the Polish–Soviet alliance, gives us the opportunity for truly great development.

Once again, history condemns us to greatness! Let us prove ourselves worthy of our great ancestors!

We will show the whole world that we will not be pushed off the path we have chosen, that like the heroes of Westerplatte, we will defend our ancient Piast lands along the Neisse, Oder, and Olza, our maritime coast from Szczecin to Kołobrzeg, Gdynia, Gdańsk, and Elbląg to the last bullet.⁶¹

In the public space of Lower Silesia, there were also so-called “sztrajfs,” which were posters with propaganda slogans that perfectly aligned with the aforementioned proclamation. On the walls appeared colourful prints announcing to the Polish people that “We were a land-based nation – we will be a maritime nation,” and “Wide access to the sea – a guarantee of Poland’s prosperity.”⁶² The society was also mobilised to work with the slogan: “With the effort of the whole nation – we will build a maritime economy!”⁶³ There were also references to the recent war and the idea of social unity: “The soldier fought for the sea – the worker will build the fleet!”⁶⁴ The sztrajfs were complemented by newspaper headlines. In the PPS-affiliated “*Naprzód Dolnośląski*,” the Sea Festival was commemorated with the slogans: “The Polish Sea is the foundation of Poland’s power! The sea – our gateway to the world!”⁶⁵

The preparations for the celebrations were accompanied by organisational mobilization manifested by various political environments as well as local authorities. Bolesław

61 Ibidem.

62 *Dokumenty życia społecznego*, Afisze z hasłami propagandowymi.

63 Ibidem.

64 Ibidem.

65 “Polskie morze podstawą potęgi Polski!”, *Naprzód Dolnośląski* 1, 26.06.1945, 1.

Drobner himself appealed to the heads of departments of the Municipal Management Board of Wrocław and the directors of municipal institutions and enterprises, urging them and their entire staff to participate in the academy organised to celebrate the Sea Festival in Wrocław.⁶⁶ The Representative of the Polish Government for the city of Wrocław justified his “request” as follows:

I need not emphasize that the manifest participation of the Municipal Management officials on this territory is a national necessity, and therefore incidents like those which have unfortunately already occurred, where employees have neglected the call of the City Presidium to participate in the ceremony, must not be repeated. The understanding of the necessity of manifest participation in Polish celebrations in the city of Wrocław must permeate every employee of the Municipal Management Board.⁶⁷

By Bolesław Drobner’s decision, supporting the logistics of the event, the Municipal Transportation Authority was involved in organising transportation for guests both to the celebrations at the Municipal Theatre and their return home.⁶⁸

Fundamentally, apart from Adam Kabaja’s memoirs, we do not have a broader account of the academy. Interestingly, none of the few Dolnośląsk newspapers of the time bothered to include information about the Wrocław celebrations. The aforementioned “*Naprzód Dolnośląski*,” apart from the quoted propaganda slogan, focused more on Adam Kabaja’s renovation activities and the organisational efforts of “Kraków’s Kapellmeister” Stefan Syryłło, rather than on the Sea Festival celebrations, to which no mention was made.⁶⁹ Similarly, the other title (like the aforementioned magazine associated with Legnica-Wrocław), “*Gazeta Dolno-Śląska*,” noted that 29 June was celebrated as the Sea Festival in the country, but the entire text was a propagandistic panegyric perfectly corresponding with the aforementioned proclamation of the Provincial Committee for the Organisation.⁷⁰

As noted, the Wrocław celebrations, compared to Kraków, Kielce, Gdynia, Sopot, or even war-damaged Gdańsk, were quite modest, limited to organising an academy at the Municipal Theatre. This specificity was also fundamentally different from what could be seen in the city a year later (due to preparations for the national referendum, the festival was moved to 27–28 July 1946), when the main co-organisers, the Maritime League, offered Wrocław residents nearly the entire traditional repertoire of events, including:

66 Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, 82/334/0/203, Zarząd Miejski Miasta Wrocławia, Pismo okólne Bolesława Drobner do Naczelników Wydziałów i Dyrektorów Zakładów i Przedsiębiorstw Miejskich, Wrocław 27 czerwca 1945 r.

67 Ibidem.

68 Ibidem.

69 “Polskie morze podstawą potęgi Polski!”, *Naprzód Dolnośląski* 1, 26.06.1945, 1; “Kultura i sztuka,” *Naprzód Dolnośląski* 1, 26.06.1945, 4.

70 “Święto Morza,” *Gazeta Dolno-Śląska* 4, 01-07/07/1945, 1–2.

lighting bonfires on the Bishops' Bank by the Oder, a service at the Bonifraters' Church on the then Klasztorna Street, parades of sports equipment on the Oder, a 3-kilometre race "Swimming through Wrocław," and a performance by the prima donna of the Warsaw Opera, not to mention the official political and propaganda manifestations.⁷¹

However, considering Adam Kabaja's organisational success and the demand from both municipal and provincial authorities and political parties for political and propaganda events, the Municipal Theatre became the central location for organising similar types of events in Wrocław over the following months of 1945. One of the prominent officials from the Municipal Management Board, Andrzej Jochelson, recalled:

In June 1945, the first artistic event took place in the Municipal Theatre Hall, formerly the "Operhaus" – "Maritime Academy" on the occasion of the Sea Festival. The preservation of the Municipal Theatre in quite good condition and the existence of the German symphony orchestra facilitated this. The initial period of theatrical and musical life also involved utilizing these two assets and frequently organizing academies with an artistic part, where Polish (and sometimes Soviet) soloists performed accompanied by the German orchestra, as well as arranging concerts.⁷²

Among the aforementioned events (including the Sea Festival, a total of six), the following took place: 1 August in honour of the "Polish heroes [fallen – JNS] in the Warsaw Uprising," 18 August in honour of the Polish socialist activist Norbert Barlicki, murdered in 1941 in the Auschwitz concentration camp, 13 October on the occasion of the Battle of Lenino (with participation of Soviet soldiers), 1 November in memory of the "Fallen," 7 November for the "National Holiday of the USSR" (also with the participation of Russians), and finally 2 December "in honor of the late Wincenty Witos," who died in October 1945 (organised by the Provincial PSL Department).⁷³

Adam Kabaja approached the role of the Municipal Theatre as a venue for propaganda activities very pragmatically. However, that was not his primary goal. Consistently striving to establish a professional artistic scene in Wrocław, he sought to make the most of the success of the Sea Festival. He recounted this in his memoirs: "Immediately after the academy, I sent a letter to the Ministry of Culture and Art, earnestly requesting further directives regarding the organization of artistic life."⁷⁴ Since such directives did not arrive, and due to unspecified organisational and financial issues, as well as the lack of a professional management, the Municipal Theatre, although it undertook various

71 Jakub Tyszkiewicz, *Od upadku Festung Breslau do stalinowskiego Wrocławia. Kalendarium 1945–1950* (Warszawa-Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000), 70.

72 Andrzej Jochelson, "Życie kulturalne i artystyczne polskiego Wrocławia (9.V.1945–9.V.1946)," in: *Trudne dni*, vol. 2, 86.

73 Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, 82/334/0/270, Zarząd Miejski Miasta Wrocławia, Spis imprez zorganizowanych w Teatrze Miejskim w 1945 r.

74 Kabaja, "Pionierski," 197.

artistic initiatives (guest performances by visiting ensembles and soloists of “sometimes dubious quality,” but also valuable presentations by the Kraków Rhapsodic Theatre), was still unable to define clear directions for its development.⁷⁵ The ambition of not only Adam Kabaja but also conductor Stefan Syryłło and the distinguished Kraków tenor Stanisław Drabik (who came to Wrocław at the invitation of Bolesław Drobner) was to create, alongside a network of theatres, a Polish opera scene in the city.⁷⁶ This was particularly significant given that the increasing number of Poles moving to the Silesian capital could potentially form a base of audience for local artistic activities. However, time showed that building a theatrical and operatic life was a labourious and lengthy process.⁷⁷ Similarly, the issue of expanding the “social base of Wrocław’s theatres” was problematic, with only eighteen percent of the city’s nearly quarter-million population in 1947 coming from large centres such as Warsaw, Lwów, or Vilnius. The rest of the new Wrocław residents (about forty percent) had previously lived in medium-sized cities or towns (with a clear predominance of the latter) or had come directly from the countryside (about forty percent).⁷⁸ As Józef Kelera noted: “Thus, it was necessary to attract such an audience to the theatre.” This, however, is a topic that extends beyond the main scope of this article. It should be noted that, in both cases, the academy organised as part of the Sea Festival on 29 June 1945, in Wrocław, inaugurated both processes.

In the majority of scholarly publications discussing the forms and significance of holidays and commemorative events in the People’s Republic of Poland and the PRL, there is a prevailing view, which the author agrees with, about the pronounced standardisation of these rituals serving specific purposes. This concerns the constant mobilisation of society by the emerging communist authorities, where “all citizens should be harnessed in various «actions» and «campaigns» [...] extending beyond daily work obligations.”⁷⁹ The mentioned activism was intended to give society the illusion of active participation in the construction of the new regime while simultaneously occupying its attention and consuming social time and energy that could potentially be directed against the authorities.⁸⁰ According to Piotr Osęka: “There is no doubt that the ruling elite suffered from a sense of alienation. Holidays were a form of affirming their own legitimacy, which could not be provided by falsified elections; they also created the appearance of a bond with society.”⁸¹

75 Kelera, *Wrocław*, 7–8.

76 Ibidem, 8.

77 Ibidem, 8–31.

78 Irena Turnau, *Studia nad strukturą ludnościową polskiego Wrocławia* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1960), 52–75.

79 Osęka, *Rytuały*, 243.

80 Ibidem, 245.

81 Ibidem.

They also served as a tool for exercising power, creating an “illusion of social unanimity.”⁸² Commemorations and holidays were supposed to also fulfil an integrative function around specific symbolism.⁸³

All these characteristics of secular/state celebrations were evident already during the first post-war Sea Festival in 1945. They were most clearly manifested in Gdynia/Gdańsk. However, the picture of the mentioned celebrations in Wrocław is more complex. Although the author of this text is far from concluding that the Wrocław phenomenon originated in 1945, it remains a fact that the events described in the article cannot be reduced solely to the propaganda dimension that dominated the national view of the event.

Politics and propaganda were indeed very visible throughout the Wrocław celebration. At the same time, almost on the same level, there was an aspect that is difficult to find in other regions of the country. This concerns the significance of the Sea Festival for the city in the context of the symbolic founding moment of Polish culture in Wrocław. Therefore, this judgement frequently emerges in the memoirs of pioneers who arrived in the city shortly after the fall of Festung Breslau.⁸⁴ It is primarily the voice of the then elites of the Silesian capital. It is difficult to speak of the mobilising and integrating role of the discussed celebrations in the context of the entire local society, as the number of Poles inhabiting the city at that time was relatively small (only several tens of thousands of Polish residents!).⁸⁵ A small group of Wrocław Polonia, former forced labourers, and prisoners from the Gross-Rosen concentration camp branch, as well as Polish settlers arriving from neighbouring regions of Lower Silesia from May as part of spontaneous settlement (a change in the settlement process only occurred in August following the Potsdam Agreements), represented a very modest community in June 1945. This new community faced both the foreign landscape of the city (severely damaged by the war!) and the German residents, as well as their own traumatic wartime experiences. Therefore, it is not surprising that Bolesław Drobner primarily activated the local elites, including the administrative staff of Wrocław, to emphasise the new Polish dimension of the city through their participation in the celebrations. In this context, it is also not surprising that the emerging academic community in the Silesian capital became involved in the project. The presence of representatives of the Soviet command during the June academy, given the political conditions of the time, should be considered almost natural.

82 Ibidem, 246–247.

83 Mazur, “Obchody,” 114.

84 Andrzej Jochelson, “Życie kulturalne w 1945 roku w polskim Wrocławiu,” in: *Wspomnienia wrocławskich pionierów*, 120.

85 Marek Ordyłowski, *Życie codzienne we Wrocławiu 1945–1948* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991), 24; Małgorzata Ruchniewicz, “Lata 1945–1948,” in: *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006), 646–648.

The situation described here changed starting in 1946, when in the markedly different reality of the city (evacuation of Germans in the spring, noticeable increase in the number of Poles, gradual and consistent reconstruction of the urban fabric), but also within the dynamically transforming political realities of the state increasingly taken over by the communists, subsequent Sea Festival celebrations (particularly between 1946–1948) would integrate Wrocław society into the nationwide ideological formation process through a standardised formula.

The author of this text proposes to treat this certain difference/atypicality in the model of the Sea Festival celebrations in Wrocław in 1945 as a polemical voice calling for a more individualised approach to the issue of pronounced “standardisation” in research on the creation of the new political-propaganda reality of the “Recovered Territories” in the early post-war years. The top-down assumption about the functioning of the phenomenon of Gleichschaltung in the dimension of ritualisation of propaganda practices across the country often prevents the recognition of specific regional characteristics, particularly in the early years after the war. Only a thorough confrontation with a specific research issue and going beyond the well-trodden paths of archival research allows one to perceive the distinctiveness of the problem concerning a particular location on the map of post-war Poland.

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English version: Aleksandra Rusiniak, Mark Atkinson

SUMMARY

The aim of this article is to attempt to answer whether the celebrations of secular holidays and ceremonies sponsored by the emerging communist governments in Poland can be reduced solely to the implementation of ideological tasks leading to the political subjugation of the nation. How did this issue appear from the perspective of the local society defined by the immediate post-war reality? The realisation of this goal has been designed in the form of presenting and analysing the (un)obvious contexts of the Sea Festival celebrations in Wrocław in 1945, which have not yet (similarly to other parts of the "Recovered Territories") received the attention they deserve from historians. In this situation, this text, while also considering the role of Wrocław in the propaganda of the Polish state in the second half of the 1940s, aims to fill this research gap. The author's intention in this case study is not only to highlight the

political and ideological dimensions of the Wrocław Sea Festival in 1945 but also to equally emphasise its social and cultural context. Through the analysis of archival sources created by municipal and provincial authorities, notes and press articles, memoirs, and leaflets, it has been determined that while propaganda was the dominant feature of these celebrations, their significance for the foundational moment of Polish culture in the post-German city was equally fundamental. The Sea Festival in Wrocław in 1945 also exemplifies grassroots awakening of authentic social activity, skilfully reconciling the propaganda needs of the authorities with the requirements of the devastated city.

Z dała wyłania się okręt... Ludzie stoją i biją brawa. (Nie)oczywiste konteksty wrocławskich obchodów Święta Morza w czerwcu 1945 roku

Słowa kluczowe: "Ziemie Odzyskane", Dolny Śląsk, Wrocław, Święto Morza, Liga Morska, Odra

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest podjęcie próby odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy obchody świąt i uroczystości świeckich firmowane przez konstytuujące się rządy komunistyczne w Polsce można prowadzić tylko do realizacji zadań ideologicznych prowadzących do zniewolenia politycznego narodu? Jak ten problem wyglądał z punktu widzenia społeczeństwa lokalnego definiowanego tuż powojenną rzeczywistością? Realizację wspomnianego celu zaprojektowano w formie przedstawienia i analizy (nie)oczywistych kontekstów obchodów Święta Morza we Wrocławiu w roku 1945, które do tej pory (podobnie jak w odniesieniu do innych części "Ziem Odzyskanych") nie spotkało się z należytą uwagą historyków. W tej sytuacji niniejszy tekst, bacząc równocześnie na rolę Wrocławia drugiej połowy lat 40. w propagandzie państwa polskiego, ma wypełnić tę lukę badawczą. Zamiarem autorki w niniejszym studium przypadku jest jednak nie tylko zwrócenie uwagi na polityczno-ideowy wymiar wrocławskich obchodów Święta Morza w 1945 r., lecz w takim samym stopniu na ich kontekst społeczny i kulturowy. Dzięki analizie źródeł archiwalnych wytworzonych przez władze miejskie i wojewódzkie, noty i artykuły prasowe, wspomnienia oraz druki ulotne, ustalono, że co prawda propaganda stanowiła dominantę tych obchodów, to ich znaczenie dla momentu założycielskiego kultury polskiej w poniemieckim mieście było równie fundamentalne. Święto Morza we Wrocławiu w 1945 r. stanowi również przykład oddolnego wzbudzenia autentycznej inicjatywy aktywności społecznej doskonale godzącej zapotrzebowanie propagandowe władzy z potrzebami zniszczonego miasta.

Citation

Nowosielska-Sobel, Joanna. "A Ship Emerges in the Distance... People Stand and Applaud. The (Un)obvious Contexts of the Wrocław Sea Festival Celebrations in June 1945." *Studia Maritima* 37 (2024): 113–136. DOI: 10.18276/sm.2024.37-06.