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POLICY OF GREAT BRITAIN TOWARDS POLAND BETWEEN 1956 AND 1970

The events of October 1956, which culminated in Władysław Gomułka coming to power and a simultaneous resignation of the Soviet Union from military intervention in Poland, had a decisive impact on the shift in Polish–British political relations between 1956 and 1970, as well as during the next decade. Even though both countries were members of opposing political and military blocks, they tried to develop mutual cooperation and act within their alliances towards preventing a nuclear conflict between Moscow and Washington.

That Poland and Great Britain became enemy states after World War Two, stemmed from the fact that the Polish territory was towards the end of the war occupied by the Red Army. This situation created favourable conditions for Stalin to establish in Poland a puppet communist regime, which on the 5th July 1945, after Stanisław Mikołajczyk was appointed as one of deputy prime ministers, was recognized by the British government. Between 1945 and 1947 the British hoped, although less and less every year, that the Provisional Government of National Unity would call a free general election in Poland, following the resolutions of the Yalta Agreement. The core of the British policy towards Poland of the day was to support the Polish Peasants Movement (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe — PSL*), which was in opposition to communists. After the fraudulent general election of January 1947, British diplomacy, like the American, had no intention to break off diplomatic relations with the authorities in Warsaw, and looked for a *modus vivendi* with them. For a while, they were labouring under the illusion that the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna — PPS*) would counterbalance the Polish Workers Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza — PPR*). However, after

the so called unification congress of both parties took place in December 1948, which in fact meant the elimination of the former party, the chances for London to influence events in Poland became completely illusive¹.

However, the development of British — Polish relations after the end of World War Two was greatly influenced by the diplomatic contacts between the Stalinist USSR and Western Powers, and these as such systematically deteriorated until 1948, when they assumed the status of a Cold War. From the perspective of London, the so called Polish People's Republic, which was subservient to the USSR, was an obvious foe. However, Poland was not treated subjectively, even though for Moscow it was located in a strategically important area, where in case of war western powers intended to interrupt, through concentrated nuclear bombing, transportation between western and eastern parts of the Soviet block².

In the memorandum *British Policy Towards Soviet Communism* of the 28th July 1949, which was prepared by the Foreign Office, the following goals of the British policy towards Eastern Europe were set: preventing Soviet expansion and reducing the influence of Moscow on the countries which it subjugated. The British intended to achieve these targets through propaganda and secret operations in the territories of the Soviet satellites, but not through triggering-off a premature uprising. Poland was not in the centre of these plans, irrespective of a joint action taken by American and British Secret Services, which was intended to establish on its territory an anti-communist resistance movement. It was separating Albania from the communist block, which seemed to be, from the perspective of London, the most promising operation. A long-term target of the British policy was to limit the sphere of influence of the USSR to its territorial borders only, and to bring about the establishment of a local government which would be inclined to friendly cooperation with the West³.

¹ On the Polish — British relations in the post-war period see: M. K. Kamiński, *Polska i Czechosłowacja w polityce Stanów Zjednoczonych i Wielkiej Brytanii 1945–1948 (Poland and Czechoslovakia in the Policy of the United States of America and Great Britain 1945–1948)*, Warszawa 1991.

² J. Tebinka, *Służby specjalne Wielkiej Brytanii i Polski w XX wieku. Problem współpracy i rywalizacji (Secret Services of Great Britain and Poland in the 20th Century. The Problem of Cooperation and Rivalry)*, in: *Czas XX wieku — nie tylko w polskiej perspektywie*, ed. by R. Wapiński, Gdańsk 2000, pp. 224–225.

There was a particularly unfavourable atmosphere in political relations between Great Britain and Poland in the period of 1949–1953. It was created, in addition to the tense international situation, by bilateral conflicts regarding, among other things, the issue of restitution of Polish property in Great Britain on the one hand, and British demands for compensation for nationalized property in Poland on the other hand. The anti-British propaganda in the Polish People's Republic was facilitated by the policy of London, which questioned the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse, and gave its support for the remilitarization of West Germany.

Inseparable elements of mutual relations included different diplomatic incidents caused by the arrest (by the Security Office) of staff members of the British Embassy who did not possess a diplomatic immunity. Together with mutual accusations regarding work of diplomatic services for the intelligence, these circumstances further deepened systematic deterioration in relations between the two states.

The problem which was impossible to resolve, at least until 1956, was the case of British women, wives of the Poles who came back to their country after the war. A number of those who were disappointed with communist reality, tried to go back to Great Britain, but they encountered difficulties from the Polish authorities, which regarded the women as citizens of the Polish People's Republic, and therefore refused to grant them permission to leave the country⁴.

Another sign of deterioration in bilateral relations was closing down the British consulates on the Polish territory, except for Warsaw and Gdańsk. In 1950 consulates were closed in Poznań, Łódź and Katowice, and in February 1951 the vice-consulate in Szczecin, which reduced the chances for the British to get information on the internal situation in Poland. The British Council survived almost "miraculously", even though in January 1953 the Polish Ambassador in London, Jerzy Michałowski, suggested closing down its branch in retaliation for the sentence

³ The National Archives, Public Record Office, Kew (quoted below as: TNA, PRO), FO 371/77622, N 11007/1051/38, memorandum *British Policy towards Soviet Communism* of 28th July 1949. My research in London was made possible thanks to the support by Clifford and Mary Corbridge Trust.

⁴ TNA, PRO, FO 371/116519, NP 1052/2, Noble to Hohler on 29th March 1955; NP 1052/5, a note by Hohler of July 1955.

passed by the British court which admitted the right of the Polish Veteran Society to the funds left by the Second Corps⁵. A cultural exchange practically ceased to exist in the Stalinist period, and the activity of the British Council was restricted to running a library in Warsaw. Nevertheless, Poland was the only Soviet satellite of the period where this institution was not closed down.

On the economic side, mutual relations also deteriorated. The Western Powers established during 1948 a system of control to limit the export to communist states of strategically important goods, which contributed to this situation. The final result was founding the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM), an agreement of western states in which the USA and Great Britain played the key role⁶. This, however, did not prevent the British from signing a five year trade agreement with Poland in January 1949, which anticipated a significant growth in the trade exchange, yet, one and a half years later it was hindered by the outbreak of the Korean War. The state of mutual economic relations at that time was best exemplified by the confiscation by the British authorities, for the needs of the Royal Navy, of two Polish tankers, which were built in British shipyards. Even though London eventually paid compensation, this could not improve the economic relations⁷.

Due to a strategic embargo imposed on Poland, the authorities in Warsaw encountered substantial difficulties in purchasing modern equipment for industry and new technology in Great Britain, even though this country was in favour of less restrictive policy towards trade exchange with the communist block than the USA wished it to be. First of all, this attitude stemmed from the British difficulties in keeping their balance of

⁵ J. Tebinka, R. Techman, *Ostatni raport brytyjskiego wicekonsula w Szczecinie Henry'ego F. Bartletta o sytuacji w tym mieście (6 III 1951) (The Last Report of the British Vice-consul in Szczecin, Henry F. Bartlett on the Situation in this Town, 6 March 1951)*, "Przegląd Zachodniopomorski", 2000, z. 4, pp. 213-217; J. Linowski, *Wielka Brytania w polityce zagranicznej Polski w latach 1945-1956 (Great Britain in the Polish Foreign Policy between 1945 and 1956)*, Toruń 2001, pp. 234-235.

⁶ I. Jackson, "Rival Destrabilities". *Britain, East-West Trade and the Cold War 1948-51*, "European History Quarterly", 2001, № 2, pp. 273-282; F. M. Cain, *Exporting the Cold War. British Responses to the USA's Establishments of COCOM 1947-1951*, "Journal of Contemporary History", 1994, № 3, pp. 501-522.

⁷ W. T. Kowalski, *Polska w świecie 1945-1956 (Poland in the World 1945-1956)*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 418-419.

trade, caused, among other things, by the deficit in sales in foreign trade with the dolar zone countries. Trading with communist countries created for Great Britain favourable conditions to cheaply procure raw materials and food in return for industrial goods. No wonder that Poland reached the highest level in export of bacon to the United Kingdom not in the epoch of detente in mutual relations but in 1953, when political contacts between London and Warsaw did not go beyond mutual accusations and incidents⁸.

Stalin's death in March 1953 initially did not bring a breakthrough in Polish — British relations, but it opened a perspective to change the direction in the policy in Moscow towards the West, which in the long run created favourable grounds for their improvement. For the next two years Poland still played a secondary role in British foreign policy. However, on the 11th of November 1954 in Warsaw, an agreement was signed which clarified the issue of the British claims concerning the nationalized property of the citizens of this country in Poland. Polish diplomacy managed to negotiate an accord which stipulated that 6 million pounds of compensation should be paid by installments until 1967, which turned out to be very advantageous for Warsaw in the face of initial claims by London for the sum of 25–30 million pounds. It was the first understanding of this sort between Great Britain and a Soviet block country, which facilitated an improvement in mutual trade relations in the years to come, especially after October 1956⁹.

A gradual liberalisation within the communist block states following Stalin's death had an effect in 1955 on an increased interest in Poland by London. The new British Ambassador in Warsaw, Andrew Noble, already in autumn 1954 took steps to make the Foreign Office pay attention to ongoing transformations in Poland, but initially with very few results. Not until October 1955 did the Foreign Secretary, Harold Macmillan order his

⁸ I. Jackson, *"The Limits of International Leadership": The Eisenhower Administration, East-West Trade and the Cold War, 1953–1954*, "Diplomacy and Statecraft", 2000, N° 3, pp. 121–136.

⁹ Protocols from the Polish-British talks concerning compensation, see: TNA, PRO, FO 371/111588, NP 1151/17; FO 371/111594, PN 1151/144, a note by Hohler of 9th Nov. 1954; W. Dudek, *Międzynarodowe aspekty nacjonalizacji w Polsce (International Aspects of Nationalization in Poland)*, Warszawa 1976, pp. 281–287.

subordinates to prepare new principles of the British policy towards Soviet satellites. The exchange of views between the Northern Department of Foreign Office, which dealt with Poland, and the Ambassador Noble did not bring common consent. London diplomats did not understand the dynamics of transformations which were taking place in Poland in spring 1956, and Poland was continuously regarded, until the October events, as a Soviet satellite, ruled by non-representative authorities. British diplomacy did not intend to take any steps that could strengthen the position of Soviet allies, or to give any credibility to local ruling communists¹⁰. Thus, no wonder that after the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (Pol. *KC PZPR*), Bolesław Bierut, who symbolized Polish dependence on the USSR, died on the 12th of March 1956, Noble was ordered to minimize the gestures of sympathy. His idea to fly the British flag on the Embassy at half-mast and send condolences to the Polish Foreign Ministry, was in London regarded as too far reaching¹¹.

The British did not intend to waste their time in establishing top level contacts with Polish authorities. The right counterparts seemed to be the rulers in the Kremlin. A visit by Nikita Krushchev and Nicolai Bulganin to Great Britain in April 1956 reflected the improvement in relations between Moscow and London, which for the time being did not translate into better British — Polish relations. In those talks the British, for the last time since World War II, made an unsuccessful attempt to discuss with top Russian officials the Polish case, indicating that the USSR was not complying with the Yalta agreement¹².

The ongoing political changes in Poland, which accelerated in 1956 and led to far-reaching internal liberalisation in comparison with the Stalinist state model, raised hopes in the Foreign Office that they finally would lead to widening the extent of the Polish sovereignty. This conviction was not even changed after the suppression of the riots in Poznań in June 1956. Under the

¹⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/111575, Noble to Hohler on 5th Oct. 1954; FO 371/122073, a memorandum *Special Consideration Applying to Contacts with the Satellites of* 10th Oct. 1956; W. T. Kowalski, *op. cit.*, pp. 496–500.

¹¹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122588, Noble to the Foreign Office (quoted below as: FO) of 13th March 1956; FO to Noble of 13th March 1956, Noble to FO of 20th March 1956, a note by Hohler of 28th March 1956.

¹² W. T. Kowalski, *op. cit.*, pp. 572–577.

influence of Noble's reports, the London officials considered how Great Britain could bring about loosening up ties between Poland and the USSR, but no specific plan was made before October 1956¹³.

After all, these discussions were held at a relatively low level in the Foreign Office. In the summer and autumn of 1956 the Conservative government of Anthony Eden was first of all preoccupied with a conflict with Egypt, which was supported by the USSR and other communist countries, and nationalized the Suez Canal on the 26th of July 1956. From the perspective of the British diplomacy, the events of October 1956 were overshadowed by the Suez crisis, and subsequently by the Soviet intervention in Hungary¹⁴.

The British Cabinet discussed neither internal changes in Poland nor Władysław Gomułka's appointment as First Secretary of KC PZPR on the 21st of October 1956, which was preceded by an unexpected visit of Nikita Krushchev to Warsaw, and associated with a threat of the Soviet military intervention. However, these events engaged a good deal of attention from British diplomacy, which finally noticed the importance of transformations in Poland. In London, Gomułka was sensibly regarded as "a communist hard-liner" and was not expected to become a second Tito, yet some opportunities for the western policy were seen in establishing in Warsaw, what they called, "a national communist regime"¹⁵.

A farewell to the doctrine of liberating satellite states, which the British were not convinced about anyway, took place at the meeting of the Council of Ministers of NATO in December 1956. The British Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, stated at its session on the 11th of December that after the Hungarian trauma, Western military intervention in Eastern Europe, in case of another uprising, should be ruled out, and also, there should be no action taken which could trigger an armed revolt. Lloyd noted that "In the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, the best hope for Europe lies in the policy of gradual changes on the model of

¹³ M. Kula, *Paryż, Londyn i Waszyngton patrzą na Październik 1956 r. w Polsce (Paris, London and Washington are looking at October 1956 in Poland)*, Warszawa 1992, pp. 88–123.

¹⁴ *The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden, Full Circle*, London 1960, pp. 521–522; S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956. A Personal Account*, London 1978, pp. 180–204.

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, CAB 159/ 25, JIC (56) 97th meeting 25 Oct. 1956.

the Polish way". The British intended to develop contacts with Warsaw in order to encourage Gomułka to maintain as much independence from the USSR as possible, and simultaneously tried to avoid provoking any violent reactions from the Kremlin¹⁶.

However, the shift in the attitude of London towards the Polish authorities was not accompanied by a willingness to offer Poland economic support. Even though the British in December 1956 agreed to sign a three year trade agreement, which anticipated the growth in the economic exchange, they did not intend to grant the Polish counterparts a loan which would be guaranteed by the government. This policy primarily stemmed from a bad financial situation of Great Britain and doubts whether such economic relief would permanently change the policy of the authorities in Warsaw, as well as the priorities of the British foreign policy, which required to channel limited funds into allied countries, not to a communist state, even though it favourably differed from the other Soviet satellites. In the Foreign Office an opinion prevailed that it was the USA which should mainly support Poland in terms of credit facilities and economic aid, which indeed happened. On the other hand, economic support for Warsaw from Western Germany did not fully come up to the British expectations. Lack of diplomatic relations between the two states and poor political Polish — Western German relations were the obstacles¹⁷.

Gomułka's rise to power, which was accompanied by a political thaw in Poland, as well as his attitude towards the USSR in the autumn of 1956, changed dramatically the way Poland had been perceived by London. A new British policy towards communist countries was agreed at the meeting between Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and President of the USA, Dwight Eisenhower on the Bermuda Islands in March 1957. Both politicians accepted a memorandum, which had been prepared by their diplomats,

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/124796, WU 10740/ 90, UKDEL NATO to London 11 Dec. 1956; WU 10740/109, the proposal for Lloyd's speech.

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/128429, N 1151/1, a note by T. Brimelow of 7th Jan. 1957; CAB 134/2351, ON (57) 1st Meeting, 10th Jan. 1957; R. M. Spaulding, *Osthandel and Ostpolitik. German Foreign Trade Policies in Eastern Europe from Bismarck to Adenauer*, Providence 1997, pp. 426–433; J. Tyszkiewicz, *Otwarte okno w "żelaznej kurtynie". Polityka administracji prezydenta Eisenhowera wobec Polski: październik 1956 — styczeń 1961 (An Open Window in "the Iron Curtain". The Policy of President Eisenhower's Administration towards Poland, October 1956 — January 1961)*, Wrocław 2003, pp. 34–60.

concerning the policy of the West towards European satellites of the USSR. This document still confirmed that a major far-reaching goal of Anglosaxon powers remained the liberation of those countries from the Kremlin supremacy, yet with neither applying force from the outside, nor triggering off internal disturbances or revolutionary movements. Two years later, when the British foreign policy was reviewed by the Foreign Office, it was confirmed to be right, and at the same time the so called “national communist regime”, which was regarded as an important step towards further evolution of the whole communist system in Europe, was noted with satisfaction to be existing in Poland¹⁸.

October 1956 was therefore an important turning point in the history of post war British — Polish relations, which until August 1968 were steadily improving, even though they were occasionally hampered by international crises between the East and the West. The Polish People’s Republic was treated in the British policy individually in comparison to other Warsaw Pact countries, except for the USSR, at least until the mid nineteen-sixties. This was expressed by ministerial visits, increasing sales, cultural cooperation, as well as a growing exchange of individual visitors between both countries, which in 1955 virtually did not exist.

Between 1951 and 1964 the conservative party was in power in London. After Lord Salisbury left the Cabinet in March 1957, among the ruling conservatives prevailed the supporters of the detente in relations with the USSR, which was, however, to be backed up by a nuclear deterrent. In theory, the most important voice in creating the British policy towards Poland belonged to Prime Minister and Head of Foreign Office. Such was the practice in strategic issues an example of which was the meeting between Macmillian and Eisenhower on the Bermuda Islands. In reality, it was the apparatus of the Foreign Office which was of prime importance for setting goals and leading the British policy towards Poland in that period, and during the rule of the Labour Party between 1964 and 1970. In economic issues, the interests of the Board of Trade most often clashed with those of the Ministry

¹⁸ J. Tebinka, *Brytyjskie zapewnienia w sprawie granicy na Odrze i Nysie Łużyckiej z 1962 roku (British Assurances on the Issue of the Border on the Oder and Neisse of 1962)*, in: *Gdańsk-Gdynia-Europa-Stany Zjednoczone w XIX i XX wieku. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana prof. A. Cienciala*, ed. by M. Andrzejewski, Gdańsk 2000, pp. 324–325.

of Agriculture. Inasmuch as the former one was ready to support the liberalization of trade with Poland through increasing import quotas on Polish agricultural produce, the latter department tried to protect British farmers from excessive, in their opinion, influx of Polish goods. Of considerable importance for creating the British policy towards Poland were also political and military alliances of Great Britain, especially the role it played in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), special relations with the USA, and also a regard for the interests of West Germany, whose position in the western alliance gradually grew between 1956 and 1970.

Seemingly, it is easier to determine who had a bigger influence in creating Polish policy towards Great Britain. Poland was at that time a dictatorship with Władysław Gomułka as the leader. It was he who, together with the members of the Political Bureau of the PZPR, took decisions both on key issues which concerned foreign policy, and in secondary ones, e. g. whether a given journalist would be granted permission to get a scholarship in the West. Great Britain was never of primary importance for Władysław Gomułka, who rightly considered its leaders to be close American allies. Of western countries, Gomułka usually attacked in his speeches West Germany and the symbol of imperialism, USA. Gomułka, like other members of the Political Bureau, except for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Adam Rapacki, did not understand what mechanisms ruled in the western world. Yet, the First Secretary of the KC PZPR was not able to effectively rule the country in person, and first of all, to have control over decision-making on every issue, thus the Polish — British relations were in practice better than as if Polish diplomacy merely pursued anti-western rhetoric. To a large extent it was the merit of Rapacki, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Józef Winiewicz, and the Polish Ambassadors in London, especially Eugeniusz Milnikiel and Jerzy Morawski, as well as the Polish industrial lobby, who saw in the development of contacts with the West the opportunity to gain new technology. On the other hand, even though Gomułka supported the USSR in all international crises, he was critical of Krushchev's policy, as he perceived the improvement in relations between the Soviets and Americans as advantageous for Poland. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw tried, as long as limited means permitted, acting towards detente

in relations between the East and the West, as it viewed Poland's role (as a small country) this way.

An example of such an initiative was a plan to create a nuclear-free zone on the territories of both German states, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, which was announced, after consulting the issue with the USSR, by Minister Rapacki at the General Assembly of the United Nations in October 1957, and subsequently submitted in a special diplomatic note to Great Britain, the USA, France and other interested parties. Rapacki's plan was unacceptable for the NATO members above all because, in the face of superiority of the Warsaw Pact ground forces, they based their defence strategy on a concentrated nuclear counterattack in case of an enemy offensive. The attitude of Great Britain towards Rapacki's plan, in comparison to other NATO countries, was relatively positive. Although in their official note the British refused to accept the plan, they tried to emphasize the importance of this initiative which was taken to ease the international tension. This stance created grounds for Washington to fear that the British reaction was not firm enough. After all, Macmillan himself was in favour of thinning down the zone of confrontation in Europe, which he proved during his contacts with Eisenhower at the beginning of 1958, when he spoke kindly of Rapacki's plan. Openly positive attitude towards the plan was represented by opposition Labour Party members, who had earlier put forward similar disarmament proposals¹⁹.

The Polish party did not give up their disarmament initiative despite the objection of the West. Rapacki brought up this subject in London in September 1958, during his unofficial visit, and before announcing on the 4th of November a modified two-part version of the plan, which was also refused by the NATO states. It was Krushchev who dealt a decisive blow to the Polish idea, as he triggered another Berlin crisis three weeks later. However, Rapacki's plan became a characteristic export good for the pro-

¹⁹ "Zbiór Dokumentów" (The Collection of Documents), 1958, N° 2: pp. 383–391, N° 5, pp. 920–922; P. Wandycz, *Adam Rapacki and the Search for European Security*, in: *The Diplomats 1939–1975*, ed. by G. A. Craig and F. L. Loewenheim, Princeton 1994, pp. 300–310; M. Pasztor, *Francja i Wielka Brytania wobec polskich koncepcji rozbrojeniowych 1957–1964* [France and Great Britain towards Polish Disarmament Strategies 1957–1964], "Dzieje Najnowsze", 2003, N° 1, pp. 92–100; on the British nuclear strategy see: M. S. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning 1955–1958*, Oxford 1991.

paganda of the Polish diplomacy, which continuously reminded the British counterparts about this issue, and met with a positive reaction. On the other hand the British continued to remind about the reasons why the plan could not be accepted²⁰.

The second Berlin crisis led to the growth of international tension between 1959 and 1961, and reduced the chances for the Polish diplomacy to act towards the improvement of relations between the East and the West. It did not, however, have a negative impact on bilateral Polish — British relations. A further evolution of the British policy regarding the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse, was made possible by Krushchev's demands, signing a peace treaty between the four powers and both German states, and the withdrawal of armed forces of western allies from Berlin. British diplomacy realized that one of the obstacles on the way to pull Poland out of the Soviet block were the fears for the future of this border, which was in practice guaranteed by the USSR only²¹. This did not mean, however, the readiness to recognize it. In this case, the British took the view consistent with the Potsdam agreement, which stated that the final marking out of the Polish — German border would take place at the peace conference (which corresponded with the German view openly questioning the existing border).

As a matter of fact, a conviction prevailed in London at the turn of the nineteen fifties, both among the Conservatives and the Labour Party, that Germany had to come to terms with the territorial loses in the east, and there was no intention to support the Christian-Democratic government in Bonn. The British diplomacy strayed away from the idea of September 1953, when the governmental sub-committee accepted the standpoint for possible peace talks with the USSR regarding Germany, which assumed that it would be useful to give Germans the area between the Lusatian Neisse and the Klodzki Neisse²².

The Polish authorities' endeavours for the recognition of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse by western powers, were one of the major goals of its diplomacy, which Gomułka gave

²⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/135079, NP 1051/24, a note by J. L. Taylor of 11th Sept. 1958; NP 1051/25, a conversation between Rapacki and Lloyd on 15th Sept. 1958.

²¹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/143689, ZP 12/3, a memorandum "UK Policy towards the East European Satellites Present Policy", SC (58) 46 Final, 5th May 1959.

²² TNA, PRO, FO 371/103684, C 1071/496, a memorandum by Lord Salisbury (he held a post as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) of 30 Sept. 1953.

a considerable amount of thought to. After all, it was a political issue which both the government in Warsaw and anti-communist Polish community in Great Britain, including the Polish authorities in-exile, treated unanimously. Yet, British diplomacy did not intend to act ahead of West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's policy regarding the border on the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse, so as not to hurt Bonn's pride. No wonder that this timid policy of London, despite the encouragement of the Ambassador in Warsaw, Eric Berthoud, and the Northern Department of Foreign Office, did not cause an expected alteration in the policy of the West German government²³.

The Polish Embassy in London made a lot of efforts about the border issue, trying primarily to combat, on British ground, revisionist actions of the West German Embassy, which after all had difficult tasks to perform, having considered two world wars and the long lasting aversion of ordinary British citizens to Germans. The left wing Labour Party's MPs aided Polish diplomacy through systematically questioning heads of the Foreign Office about the Polish western border, whose recognition they recommended²⁴.

Polish efforts led to a certain evolution of the British opinion, which was reflected in the response of the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, John Profumo, given on the 11th of November 1959 in the house of Commons to the enquiry of a Labour Party MP, Konni Zilliacus regarding the attitude of London towards the issue of the border on the Oder and Neisse. The Minister stated that "the final delimitation of the frontier cannot be formalized until there is a peace agreement". Even though in this speech there was no support for the revisionist policy of Bonn, the legal standing of suspension was preserved. From the Polish point of view, the progress was made by the fact that the British did not suggest the possibility of changing the Potsdam arrangement. The official British stance expressed by the Minister, acquired the

²³ J. Tebinka, *Brytyjskie zapewnienia w sprawie granicy na Odrze i Nysie Łużyckiej* (*British Assurances Regarding The Border on the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse*), pp. 325–326.

²⁴ S. Lee, *Victory in Europe. Britain and Germany since 1945*, Harlow 2001, pp. 72–73; Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych RP, Warszawa (The Archives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, quoted below as: AMSZ), Department III, fasc. 9, v. 60, vol. 775. Notatka w sprawie aktualnego stanowiska brytyjskiego wobec granicy Odra–Nysa z 19 XI 1959 r. (A Note about the Current British Stance on the Issue of the Border on the Oder–Neisse of 19th Nov. 1959).

name of "Profumo's formula", and became the official interpretation of the policy of London on this issue for the next decade²⁵.

A growing political, economic, and military importance of West Germany aroused Gomulka's particular concern, and it did not make Macmillan enthusiastic either. Adenauer in any case did not trust the latter, especially during the Berlin crisis, as he suspected that Macmillan was too permissive in his policy towards the USSR at the expense of the interests of Bonn.

The British Prime Minister tried to show his West German ally a friendly gesture through defending him in September 1960, during the session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, against Gomulka's accusations of territorial revisionism, which led to the polemics between the two politicians²⁶. This clash, however, did not have a negative influence on long-lasting British — Polish relations, which developed quite well in the shade of the Berlin crisis and other conflicts between the USA and the USSR.

Although in the global foreign trade of Great Britain Poland had a low, unimportant position, its increasing economic turnover, which improved every year, constituted, from the point of view of both governments, the most important element in mutual relations. Poland was particularly interested in purchasing from the British market equipment for industry and whole technology lines, and it had surplus in trade with Great Britain in the nineteen sixties, but the obstacle for the exchange was the dependence of Poland on the export of agricultural produce, which the British limited through imposing quotas. The authorities in Warsaw tried, for political reasons, to give preference to the development of trade with Great Britain and France rather than with West Germany, but this policy did not protect British businessmen from losing in the competition for the Polish market with cheaper German producers. In addition to the restrictions imposed by COCOM, a substantial obstacle to the development of trade was the credit policy of the NATO countries towards communist states, which boiled down in the first half of the nineteen sixties to refusing long term credits guaranteed by

²⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/146127, WG 1082/48, a note by A. Rumbold of 7th Nov. 1959; WG 1082/52, a note by Profumo of 17 Nov. 1959.

²⁶ *ONZ. Rozbrojenie, kolonializm. XV sesja ONZ 20 IX — 21 XII 1960 r.*, Warszawa 1961, pp. 56–104 (*The UN. Disarmament, Colonialism. The 15th Session of the UN 20th Sept. — 21st Dec. 1960*); TNA, PRO, FO 371/151765, NP 1022/13, G. Clutton to R. H. Mason 5th Oct. 1960.

governments. Although the British gave themselves a free hand in this matter, due to their financial difficulties the Polish party could only take out commercial credits on the British Isles²⁷.

Despite these problems, Poland was, after the USSR, the second most important economic partner of Great Britain, from among the Warsaw Pact countries. Sales between the two countries exceeded in 1960 the level of 50 million pounds. The exports of industrial goods to Poland were for the British economy, which developed more slowly than its biggest competitors, an important issue. On the 20th of May 1960 other three-year trade agreements, which anticipated further growth in sales of goods between Poland and Great Britain, were signed in London²⁸.

Another threat to the Polish — British trade relations appeared when Prime Minister Macmillan announced on the 31st of July 1961 that his Cabinet intended to apply for the membership in the European Community. It aroused Polish concerns about the possibility of hindering agricultural exports to the British Isles, which was mentioned to the British Prime Minister by, among others, Stefan Jędrychowski, Chairman of the Planning Commission to the Council of Ministers, and Witold Trąpczyński, Minister for Foreign Trade, during their stay in London between the 24th and 28th of October 1961. At that time, however, British politicians preferred not to analyze the results of their country's accession to the European Community from the perspective of trade with Poland. Simultaneously, they did not make promises in relation to possible growth of Polish agricultural exports to Great Britain²⁹.

An intrinsic element of bilateral relations were cultural contacts, which developed relatively unhampered. Unlike the British cultural exchange with other communist states, they were not tied up by a formal agreement between the two states, though Polish diplomacy strove for one in the nineteen sixties. It was the British Council which was for London a means to propagate

²⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/178113, UEE 10415/7, a visit of L. Erhard 15th–16th Jan. 1964.

²⁸ AMSZ, Department III, N° 30/65, bundle 13, a report of 15th July 1961 from Polish–British trade negotiations; on 2nd July 1960 a Polish — British agreement, concerning air transport, was successfully signed, which as of April 1958 was provided by a regular connection between Warsaw and London, served by the PLL Lot and the British European Airways.

²⁹ AMSZ, Department III, N° 30/65, bundle 13, a note of 2nd November 1961 from comrade S. Jędrychowski and W. Trąpczyński's visit to Great Britain.

knowledge of Great Britain and English language. The British cultural presence after October 1956 also played an important role in popularizing models of American pop culture³⁰.

The role of the BBC radio cannot be forgotten either, and especially its Polish section, whose programmes were not jammed at that time, and they were of high quality and differed in their impartiality in showing the situation in Poland from the means of American propaganda, namely the radio stations Free Europe and the Voice of America³¹.

The Polish authorities in London and the Polish diaspora in exile on the British Isles were usually not able to exert any influence on the policy of her Majesty's Government towards Polish People's Republic, the more so the entire communist block. However, it was their activity which in spring 1962 led to an intrinsic shift in British policy towards the Polish western border. This problem was the subject of continuous endeavours of the Polish Embassy, yet it was not until the letter written by General Władysław Anders, one of emigration leaders, who persuaded Peter Thomas, the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, to issue a declaration which on the 29th March 1962 was submitted to the former Commander of the Second Corps and Count Edward Raczyński. In it Thomas stated that the British authorities did not regard the Polish — German border as the subject of haggling should the negotiations concerning the unification of German states take place in future. The bottom line of this statement was on a par with what the French President, Charles de Gaulle said in 1959, and which also Washington was inclined to acknowledge, namely that the United Germany would cover merely the area of West Germany and East Germany. This considerable modification of Profumo's formula was introduced on the 2nd of April 1962 to the counsellor of the Polish Embassy, Bohdan Tomorowicz, and 10 days later, through Ambassador George

³⁰ TNA, PRO, BW 51/21, a note for T. Brimelow of June 1966 on the activity of the British Council in Poland.

³¹ The BBC did not possess, unlike the Radio Free Europe, an extensive network of informants in Poland, but it received material from the Information Research Department. In the 1960s its radio transmitters were systematically modernized. In the autumn of 1968 the BBC broadcast to Eastern Europe through 17 modern transmitters. After the invasion in Czechoslovakia, the time of broadcasting in Polish was increased from 18 and a half hours to 20 and three quarters of an hour a week, see: TNA, PRO, FCO 26/20, IAB 5/557/3. H. Wilson to J. Dickens on 17 Sept. 1968.

Clutton to Vice-Minister Winiewicz, who immediately sent a note on this issue to Gomułka. However, the British did not inform the Polish diplomats that these British assurances, regarding the Polish western border, were directly caused by Anders's letter³².

The Foreign Office did not notify Bonn of these secret assurances, where during the Berlin crisis the British policy was approached with caution anyway. Irrespective of Polish efforts, made by both emigrant and domestic circles, of decisive importance for the modification of Profumo's formula were British — American — French diplomatic talks during the Berlin crisis, when there was a unanimous opinion among the western powers that the acknowledgement of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse could make a part of the agreement with the USSR, concerning Germany and Berlin³³.

The British had no illusions about the chances of influencing Krushchev by the authorities in Warsaw during the Berlin crisis but, trying in bilateral relations to emphasise the autonomy of Poland, they often applied the tactics of suggesting Polish diplomacy should soften Moscow. This policy, according to the British anticipations, could hardly change anything, as Krushchev did not consult his steps with his satellites when he brought about the two most serious crises during his rule: the Berlin and the Cuban ones. Even though Gomułka was not enthusiastic about these approaches, this does not change the fact that Polish diplomats did not criticise the policy of Moscow in its talks with the British, but they usually tried to show themselves as more liberal than the Russians. It is best exemplified by a conversation between the Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, with Ambassador Witold Rodziński on the 24th of October 1962, when the world found itself closest to the nuclear confrontation during the cold war. The Polish diplomat kept repeating Soviet lies that according to his government, the USSR did not place offensive weapons on the Cuban territory³⁴.

³² J. Tebinka, *Brytyjskie zapewnienia w sprawie granicy na Odrze i Nysie Łużyckiej* (*British Assurances Regarding the Border on the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse*), pp. 330–339.

³³ W. Jarzabek, *Problem niemiecki w polskiej polityce wobec mocarstw zachodnich i państw niezaangażowanych w czasie drugiego kryzysu berlińskiego 1958–1961* (*The German Problem in the Polish Policy towards Western Powers and Non-Aligned States during the Second Berlin Crisis*), in: *Polska — Niemcy — Europa. Księga jubileuszowa z okazji siedemdziesiątej rocznicy urodzin prof. Jerzego Holzera*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 215–237.

The Cuban crisis did not halt the development of political and economic relations between Great Britain and Poland, the more so because of the awareness of how little separated the world in October 1962 from a nuclear catastrophe, caused a situation in which the two major antagonists, the USSR and USA, began with a reluctance to look for a *modus vivendi* between the two blocks, which made it easier for Warsaw politicians to act.

Towards the end of 1962 Poland still held an exceptional position in the policy of Great Britain towards the Soviet block, irrespective of more and more noticeable signs of diversification between European communist countries. The Foreign Office perceived Poland as the most liberal Soviet satellite, despite consecutive examples of Gomułka's dogmatism, who basically acted towards stabilization of the communist regime, but not its reform. In 1957 both the British and American diplomacy adopted the policy of discreet encouraging satellite countries to manifest independence from the USSR through, among other things, developing economic and cultural contacts with western countries, which since 1962 became the policy of the whole North Atlantic Pact³⁵.

A new aspect in British — Polish relations in 1963 were the round table conferences. The first one was held in Jabłonna between the 25th and 30th January 1963, and the second one in Ditchley Park in October 1963. These irregular meetings between politicians, journalists, and scholars from both sides were modelled after the British — West German conferences originated over a decade before in Königswinter. The initiative towards Warsaw was taken by the British, and it was accepted by the Polish authorities, who saw in the round table a counterbalance to Königswinter and the opportunity to promote their own policy, the more so because they appointed the Polish participants. Also, when the meetings were held in Poland, the authorities tried to influence the composition of the British delegation, and protested

³⁴ TNA, PRO, FO 371/162379, AK 1261/98, a note by Lord Home of 26th Oct. 1962; on the policy of Great Britain towards the Cuban crisis see: L. V. Scott, Macmillan, *Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Political, Military and Intelligence Aspects*, Basingstoke 1999.

³⁵ TNA, PRO, CAB 134/1772, a memorandum FO of 26th Jan. 1965 on the British policy towards Eastern Europe. On an interesting account of a British diplomat's stay in Warsaw and Moscow of the 1960s see: R. Braithwaite, *Across the Moscow River: The World Turned Upside Down*, London 2002, pp. 45–48.

against the presence of people critical to communist regimes. In turn, for the British party the roundtable created favourable conditions to exchange relatively unrestricted exchange of opinion with the representatives of the Polish establishment, and the attempts to exert their influence on them³⁶.

From 1961 onwards, the Polish diplomacy was concerned about the British efforts to join the European Community, worrying that in consequence this would have a negative impact on the volume of Polish exports. It was, however, General de Gaulle, who opposed the British membership in this organization, which moved away, as it turned out for 10 years, the problems of the Polish economy which stemmed from the expansion of the European Community³⁷.

The Polish party tended to receive permanent guarantees for the export of especially agricultural produce, to the United Kingdom. In turn, the British tried to encourage the Polish authorities to increase their imports of investment goods from Great Britain, and in this way decrease a deficit in trade with Poland, which intended its surpluses for financing imports from the pound sterling zone. The frameworks for yearly agreements which determined quotas on Polish export to Great Britain, were specified by another trade agreement signed for the period between the 1st of July 1963 and the 30th of June 1968. A important facilitation to the bilateral trade exchange was the liberalization in the trade with Poland, which was originated by the British conservative government in January 1964, and referred to lifting a part of quotas on imported non-agricultural goods³⁸.

June 1964 brought another intrinsic shift in the terminology, which was used by the Foreign Office and other British departments in their internal correspondence, to define the states which belonged to the zone of influence of the USSR in Europe. The name "Soviet Satellites" was replaced with a neutral term "East European Countries". This shift did not stem from political correctness, but from a gradual diversification of these countries,

³⁶ AMSZ, Department III, N° 21/66, bundle N° 25, E. Milnikiel to W. Rodziński on 29th Jan. 1963; a report of a reporting meeting of 10th Jan. 1964.

³⁷ R. DAVIS, *The "Problem of de Gaulle": British Reactions to General de Gaulle's Veto of the UK Application*, "Journal of Contemporary History", 1997, N° 4, pp. 453–464.

³⁸ TNA, PRO, CAB 134/1806, EP (64) 14, a memorandum "Imports from Eastern European Countries" of 21st Jan. 1964.

which was noticed by London. The policy of Romania, which was far behind the Poland of Gomułka in terms of its civil liberties but was openly disobedient to Moscow in its foreign policy, aroused more and more interest³⁹.

For the first eight years of Gomułka's rule, British policy towards Poland was shaped in London by the conservatives. This situation was changed in October 1964 when the general election to the House of Commons was won by the Labour Party, which came back to power after a thirteen-year break, and its leader, Harold Wilson became new Prime Minister. Earlier contacts between the Labour party members and the Polish authorities, including the visits the Labour Party leaders to Poland, Hugh Gaitskell at the turn of August 1962 and Wilson in June 1963, seemed to create favourable grounds for further development of Polish — British relations. The weight of their visits to Warsaw was augmented by the fact that they were received by Gomułka himself, whose meetings with western politicians were usually quite sporadic. These gestures were part and parcel of a strategy, which was run by the Polish diplomacy towards the Labour Party from at least 1956, and consisted of winning Labour politicians' hearts through disarmament proposals and supporting a dialogue between the East and the West. These activities seemed to be bringing results in the matters, which were important for the Polish party. While remaining in opposition, the Labour Party politicians supported the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse, and were against the Anglo-American project on Multi-lateral Nuclear Forces of NATO (MLF), which aroused Gomułka's fears that this would make it possible for West Germany to get access to nuclear weapons.

The formation of the new Labour Government in London turned out to be less meaningful than it was expected in Warsaw. Even though Wilson, after his appointment as Prime Minister, exchanged courtesy letters with Gomułka, in their foreign policy the new cabinet maintained continuity, allowing for the realities of the Cold War. It was also important that the Foreign Office was ruled by the politicians linked to the right wing of the Labour Party, such as Michael Stewart or George Brown, who were uncompromising against the USSR. The bureaucratic apparatus played an important role in creating Wilson's foreign policy. It

³⁹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177410, N 1051/2, a circular letter FO of 1st June 1964.

was the first Labour Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Patrick Gordon Walker, who learned that this was the case, when he came to the Foreign Office with a conviction that London should openly support the Polish border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse, like de Gaulle did in 1959. However, his subordinates in the Ministry and the British Ambassador in Bonn, Sir Frank Roberts, made him in November in 1964 to give up this idea for the sake of good relations with West Germany⁴⁰.

Gomułka's expectations connected with the Labour Party assuming the rule in Great Britain were far greater than its practical effects for the British — Polish relations. Wilson, irrespective of the presence of anti-Americanism in some circles of his grouping, maintained strong alliance with the USA, and supported it, among other things, in the Indochinese conflict. After Macmillan and Adenauer, who did not feel particular affinity for one another, left the political scene, the next generation of politicians both in London and Bonn found it easier to improve mutual relations, which did not cause enthusiasm in Warsaw. Polish diplomacy was also critical to the British idea of replacing the Multilateral Nuclear Forces (MLF) with a new, slightly modified structure of the Atlantic Nuclear Forces (ANF), as the Poles saw in this practice no protection from the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and, first of all, from a danger of possessing them and taking joint decisions on their usage by West Germany. Finally, however, it was the Labour Government together with the administration of Lyndon Johnson in the White House, who played a key role in discouraging Bonn on the concept of the MLF and burying this idea towards the close of 1965⁴¹.

The beginning of British — Polish contacts after the Labour Party won the election to the House of Commons was quite dynamic. In December 1964, Minister Rapacki went to London with another, unofficial visit. It took place after an idea to call an European conference on security and cooperation between the

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, PREM 13/1699, W. Gomułka to H. Wilson, 3rd Nov. 1964, Wilson to Gomułka on 17th Dec. 1964; J. Tebinka, R. Technań, *Szczecin w polityce brytyjskiej w latach 1945–1970 (Szczecin in the British policy between 1945 and 1970)*, in: *Polska w podzielonym świecie po II wojnie światowej do 1989 r.*, ed. M. Wojciechowski, Toruń 2002, pp. 313–314.

⁴¹ S. Schrafstetter, S. Twigge, *Trick or Truth? The British ANF Proposal, West Germany and UN Nonproliferation Policy, 1964–68*, "Diplomacy and Statecraft", 2000, N^o 2, pp. 161–184.

two blocks was put forward at the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, which was treated with reserve by Great Britain and the majority of the NATO states⁴².

On the economic side of mutual relations, the Polish party signed in London on the 26th of January 1965 a contract worth 16.5 million pounds with a group of western firms, where the share of British companies amounted to 8.5 million pounds, and was intended for the supply to the Chemical Fertilizers Plant "Puławy II". This contract, one of the biggest ones with a British share, became soon the reason of complaints for Polish diplomats because the western partners did not deliver on supply deadlines⁴³.

In the mid 1960s, Great Britain was for Warsaw still the most important political and economic state from among European capitalist countries. However, from London's point of view, the economic role of Poland was far smaller. Even though the British trade exchange with European communist states grew systematically in the 1960s, in percentage terms this trade was in 1967 only 3.7% of the overall turnover of Great Britain⁴⁴.

One of major ways the British used to maintain interest in Poland after 1956 were ministerial visits from London, which were popular among the Polish authorities. However, it was the ministers of economic departments who prevailed among the guests, and the Polish party could not wait to receive British Foreign Secretary, whose visit to Warsaw had been promised since the end of the 1950s.

It took place as late as between the 17th and 21st of September 1965, when (after almost ten years of Gomułka's coming to power) the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, paid his visit to Poland. The most significant result of his visit, though it was kept in secret, was the confirmation of the assurances of 1962, regarding the Polish western border, which Stewart had given during his meeting on the 17th of September 1965 with the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Adam Rapacki, his deputy, Józef Winiewicz, and the Polish Ambassador in London, Jerzy

⁴² TNA, PRO, FO 371/177582, NP 1051/49, FO to Warsaw on 22nd Dec. 1964.

⁴³ AMSZ, Department III, N^o 7/75, bundle 4, the Seym Chancellery to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10th Nov. 1967.

⁴⁴ J. Lutosławski, *Polska-Wielka Brytania, gospodarka, stosunki ekonomiczne (Poland-Great Britain, the Economy, Economic Relations)*, Warszawa 1969, pp. 65-68.

Morawski, before the official talks commenced. Yet, there was no room in the schedule of Steward's visit for a meeting with Gomułka, even though the First Secretary had been earlier available to meet Labour Party leaders, and even British journalists. Nevertheless, a year after the Labour Party came to power, Gomułka was getting more and more ill-disposed towards Wilson, regarding him as an American supporter, and a politician with a "colonialist" mentality⁴⁵.

Since 1965 mutual relations between the East and the West were overshadowed by the war in Vietnam, especially its new period which could be characterised by a growing military involvement of the USA in Indochina so as to prevent the authorities in Hanoi from uniting Vietnam through the elimination of the pro-American regime in the southern part of the country. Great Britain and Poland were on different sides in this conflict. Diplomacies of both countries, irrespective of the support given to their own allies in the conflict, made efforts to stop it, and they generally agreed that it did not serve detente in Europe. Warsaw took a serious diplomatic initiative in the conflict between Washington and Hanoi between 1965 and 1967, but it produced no results as both parties, and Northern Vietnam in particular, remained rigid in their policies. Indochina was not, however, a new place for meetings between Polish and British diplomacies. Poland was a member of the International Commission for Control and Supervision, while Great Britain, together with the USSR co-chaired the Geneva Conference. The activity of Polish diplomacy in the Commission was perceived by the Foreign Office as the one serving the interests of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and communist forces in Indochina, though Polish goodwill was not entirely denied⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182672, NP 1053/81, the record of a conversation between Steward and Rapacki at 15. 45 on 17th Sept. 1965; *Archiwum Akt Nowych* (the Central Archives of Modern Records), Warszawa (quoted below as: AAN), PZPR, XIA/64, a conversation between Gomułka and Kadar on 19th Nov. 1965.

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/175183, DF 103155/1, Clutton to J. E. Cable, 20th August 1964; FO 371/188762, NP 1052/8, FO to T. Brimelow on 10th Nov. 1966; on the Polish initiatives see: J. G. Hershberg, *Who Murdered "Martigold"? — New Evidence on the Mysterious Failure of Poland's Secret Initiative to Start U.S. — North Vietnamese Peace Talks*, 1966, Cold War International History Project, Working Paper N° 27, Washington 2000, and *idem*, *Peace Probes and the Bombing Pause: Hungarian and Polish Diplomacy during the Vietnam War, December 1965 — January 1966*, "Journal of Cold War Studies", 2003, N° 2, pp. 32–67.

However, not only in the case of international crises did the bipolar logic of the cold war leave its stamp on Polish — British relations in the second half of the 1960s. The policy of Warsaw towards Rodesia, where the white minority declared their independence, was to a large degree convergent with the stance of London. Therefore, the Polish authorities issued on the 18th of November 1965 a statement in which they refused to recognize the regime of Ian Smith in Rodesia. It is noteworthy that the Polish declaration did not blame Great Britain for Smith taking power in Rodesia, which was clearly emphasised in the Soviet statement⁴⁷.

Gomułka's tightening policy towards intellectuals and the Roman Catholic Church was not directly reflected in the worsening in the Polish — British relations. Yet, at least since 1964 Poland was not regarded by the Foreign Office as an example of an exceptional country within the Warsaw Pact. It was Romania, which tended to become a political favourite of London, although its economic and cultural relations with Great Britain were far from the ones which characterised links between Poland and the UK.

The latter ones also included further political contacts, which the Labour Party members developed between 1966 and 1968. Between the 14th and 16th of July 1966, a visit to Warsaw was paid by the British Minister of State for Disarmament, Lord Chalfont, who was there engaged in talks about European security. In turn, Vice-minister Winiewicz and the Secretary of the KC PZPR, Artur Starewicz, went to London. However, the most important in the timetable of those political journeys was the official visit that Minister Rapacki paid to London between the 21st and 27th of February 1967, during which a bilateral consular agreement, which is still binding, was signed. It guaranteed legal protection to the citizens of respective parties on the territory of the other state⁴⁸.

The Head of Polish diplomacy heard again an assurance, during his conversation on the 23rd of February 1967 with Steward's successor as Foreign Secretary, George Brown, that

⁴⁷ "Zbiór Dokumentów", *op. cit.*, 1965, nos 10–11, pp. 1125–1130.

⁴⁸ The text of the consular convention of 23rd Feb. 1967 see: *Dziennik Ustaw*, 1971, N° 20, position 192. This convention was not enforced until 17th July 1971 due to a long period of adjustment of the British law to its requirements.

the British party did not perceive the question of the border on the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse as a bargaining chip in case of the unification of East and West Germany. Yet, there were other issues that the two ministers could write down in the catalogue of divergences: the conference on European security, the British membership in the European Community, the Vietnam War and the policy of West Germany in Europe⁴⁹. The first official visit of the Polish Foreign Secretary to Great Britain after WWII was another sign of ongoing dialogue in the relations between the East and the West. The role, however, which could be played by Polish diplomacy in easing tensions between Washington and Moscow was very limited, which the authorities in London were aware of. This stemmed from the fact that the Polish People's Republic had very few opportunities to run its policy independent from the Kremlin, and also that Gomułka tended to become one of the most conservative within the whole communist block in his rule over the country.

Although Great Britain became on the European scene in the second half of the 1960s the symbol of the country with permanent economic difficulties, for the Poles it was a prosperous country, and besides, inhabited by a large Polish diaspora. The migration of people both ways was hampered on the Polish side by passport and financial restrictions, while on the British side — by visas. The Poles were interested in travelling to Great Britain, the more so in settling down there. The British authorities made efforts to discourage the Polish applicants from doing so by refusing to grant them the right to work, except for physicians. The British did not encourage the Poles to seek political asylum in their country either. Even though the Northern Department of the Foreign Office supported the idea of relaxing the visa discipline towards the Poles, there was no willingness to abolish them completely. It was the objections from the British intelligence services which prevailed: the Security Service (MI5) — counterintelligence, and the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) — the intelligence. These institutions received from visa application forms the information which made it possible to warn in advance against the guests from Poland, or indicate those who could be recruited as secret agents⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/271, NP 3/1, a conversation between Brown and Rapacki on 23rd Feb. 1967.

During the 1960s Great Britain, like the majority of West European countries, underwent intense moral and cultural transformations, which also echoed in Poland. The biggest impact on young generations of Poles was surely made by British popular music, including two bands in particular: the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. Although the Beatles never performed in Poland, the rock group of Mick Jagger played a concert in April 1967 in the Warsaw Congress Hall (where also conventions of the *PZPR* took place), which for the Polish fans of rock became a legendary event.

Rock music was regarded by both parties as a sign of commercial activity which was not intended by either the British or by the Poles to be included in the cultural exchange portfolio. During the visit of the Polish Minister of Education, Henryk Jabłoński, to London between the 12th and 20th of June 1967, a British — Polish protocol on cultural exchange was signed, yet the British managed to avoid accepting the document which would impose too many formal restrictions on the already existing exchange, which the British Council feared⁵¹.

An important target in the information policy of the British Embassy in Poland was to create the best possible image of Great Britain. Efforts were made in this direction through inviting press journalists from the Polish People's Republic to the British Isles, or maintaining close social relations with some of them by the British Embassy staff. The British were successful in getting permission to publish in Polish the magazine "Brytania", which was targeted at young readers, since 1967. According to the Embassy's estimates of 1972, one copy was read by as many as 10 people with the circulation of 15 thousand copies⁵².

The Six Day War in the Middle East and breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel by Poland on the 12th of June 1967 did not directly influence Polish — British relations, though Gomułka groundlessly perceived the Israeli offensive as inspired by "international imperialism", including Great Britain⁵³. On

⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/76, N 19/2, the meeting of 25th Oct. 1967 concerning the problem of employing doctors from behind the Iron Curtain in Great Britain; FCO 28/79, N 22/3, the meeting in the Home Office on 25th June 1968 concerning the issue of lifting visas.

⁵¹ AMSZ, Department III, N^o 19/75, bundle N^o 5, E. Milnikiel to M. Naszkowski on 5th March 1968.

⁵² TNA, PRO, FCO 34/120, PW 1/319/1, Information Policy Report, 23rd June 1972.

official grounds, the relations between London and Warsaw developed well in the second half of 1967, though not as a result of new agreements, but as the continuation of former issues. At the end of the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, George Thomson's visit to Warsaw between the 17th and 21st of July 1967, a convention was signed on medical services, which specified the scope of medical assistance given to the citizens of both parties in case of illness during their stay on the territory of the other state. The initiative to sign this agreement came from the British party already during the visit of the Minister Steward, and remained, until Poland joined the European Union in 2004, one of few understandings of this kind between Poland and Western European states. In turn, on the 10th of November 1967, an agreement was signed on scientific and technical cooperation, which opened for the Polish party new perspectives in gaining in Great Britain information needed to modernise the country⁵⁴.

The British closely monitored the President de Gaulle's visit to Poland between 6th and 12th of September 1967, and his remarks on the Polish western border, in which he supported the existing status quo. However, politicians in London did not intend to go ahead of Western Germany in the matter of support for the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse, as they noticed in the government of the great coalition among the CDU/CSU — SPD a chance for a new, more open eastern policy. Also, the Foreign Office took note with satisfaction of the French leader's fiasco in his attempts to induce Warsaw to adopt a role in the Warsaw Pact similar to the one France had in the NATO⁵⁵. General de Gaulle also had an indirect influence on further development of Polish — British contacts as he refused to accept on the 27th of November 1967 the British candidacy for membership in the

⁵³ W. Gomułka, *Przemówienia 1967 (Speeches 1967)*, Warszawa 1968, a speech for the Sixth Congress of Trade Unions on 19th June 1967, p. 189, 197; M. F. Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1967–1968 (Political Diaries 1967–1968)*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 59–66; on the attitude of Great Britain towards the Middle East conflict, in support of maintaining the status quo, see: R. McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Outbreak of the Six Day War*, "Journal of Contemporary History", 2000, N° 4, pp. 619–639.

⁵⁴ AMSZ, Department III, N° 7/75, bundle N° 4, a note by Winiewicz of 25th July 1967 on Thomson's visit; the text of the convention on medical services, see: Dz. U. 1970, N° 1, position 1, it was enforced on 10th Dec. 1969.

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/276, NP 3/8, H. W. King to G. Brown on 14th Sept. 1967; Paris to FO on 13th Sept. 1967.

European Community. His second veto was beneficial for Gomułka's Poland and moved away the danger of a crisis connected with exports of Polish agricultural produce to Great Britain, which indeed took place after this latter country joined this organization⁵⁶.

Year 1968 turned out to be a breakthrough in the political British — Polish relations. By no means this happened because of the March events. The British, like other observers of the Polish political scene, were surprised by students' protests in Warsaw, even though they had realized already a few years before that Gomułka's position in the PZPR was getting weaker and weaker, and less stable. Both politicians in London and in Washington were in trouble to precisely analyse the origins and results of the power struggle for the party's leadership. A part of the British public reacted with outrage to the anti-Zionist campaign which was incited by the authorities in Poland, but officially the Foreign Office had no intention to interfere with internal problems of another country. The importance of the March events was, from the point of view of the global policy of London, rather small, which is proven by the fact that this issue did not become a subject of the British Cabinet meeting⁵⁷.

That the British desired to maintain correct relations with the authorities of the Polish People's Republic, even though their major focus in this part of Europe was on ongoing transformations in Czechoslovakia, was proven by the visit to Warsaw of the Minister of Housing Development and Local Government, Anthony Greenwood, which took place between the 13th and 16th of May 1968. Also, a visit to Poland in the middle of June by the Undersecretary of State in the Board of Trade, Ms Gwyneth Dunwoody, was not hampered by the trial of the British spy, Adam Kaczmarzyk, who was sentenced to the death penalty and executed for having passed on, among other things, secret codes of the Polish army to the hands of the SIS⁵⁸.

A crisis in the political British — Polish relations was caused by the Polish participation in the invasion of the Warsaw Pact on

⁵⁶ AAN, PZPR, XIA/28, a conversation between Gomułka and T. Żiwkow on 6th April 1966.

⁵⁷ J. Tebinka, *The Attitude of British Diplomacy to the Events of 1968 in Poland*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", vol. 92, 2005, pp. 153–190.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 333 — 336; on Kaczmarzyk see: M. Urban, *UK Eyes Alpha. The Inside Story of British Intelligence*, London 1996, p. 100.

Czechoslovakia on the 21st of August 1968. A political dialogue with communist states whose troops participated in this military intervention (regarded by the British government as the violation of the United Nations' Card) in order to suppress the Prague Spring, was broken off. It meant the suspension, for almost a year's time, of the political contacts on the ministerial level between Great Britain and the Polish People's Republic. On the other hand, the British party was determined not to threaten trade and cultural relations with Poland, thus no sanctions in those areas were intended to be imposed on the authorities in Warsaw⁵⁹.

The withdrawal of the Polish troops from Czechoslovakia at the beginning of November 1968 seemed to remove a major obstacle on the way to improve British — Polish relations, but the first signs of their normalization did not appear until the middle of 1969, which could be observed in the Minister of State in the Board of Trade, Lord Brown's visit to Poland in June. The Polish — British talks within the joined commission for trade resulted in signing towards the end of July the trade protocol for year 1969. The British opened for the Polish party a long term credit line for the purchase of equipment worth 20 million pounds, which was in mutual relations the biggest ever credit granted by London to Poland. This did not, however, prevent Great Britain from losing its position in 1969 to West Germany, for good, as the biggest Polish economic partner among European non-communist states⁶⁰.

A political dialogue could be fully resumed after the decision which was taken on the 21st of July 1969 in the Foreign Office at the meeting chaired by the Foreign Secretary, Minister Stewart, on "a discreet return" to contacts with the Warsaw Pact countries as they had existed before the intervention on Czechoslovakia. This facilitated another visit of deputy minister Winiewicz to London in October 1969, who encouraged his British counter-

⁵⁹ J. Tebinka, *The Attitude of British Diplomacy to the Events of 1968*, pp. 153–190.

⁶⁰ *Idem*, *Próby normalizacji stosunków polsko-brytyjskich w 1969 roku (The Attempts to Normalize Polish–British Relations in 1969)*, in: *Wrocławskie Studia z Polityki Zagranicznej*, Wrocław 2002, pp. 158–160; in the face of the complaints by the Foreign Office about the Polish surplus in trade, the Poles indicated the mistakes in the British statistics, which caused understating the quantities of the exports to Poland, see: H. Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964–1970. A Personal Record*, London 1971, pp. 724–725.

parts to support the idea of calling a conference on European security. Great Britain, like other NATO states, was more and more inclined to accept such an idea, on the condition it would be properly prepared⁶¹.

Those positive trends in British — Polish relations were weakened by the rivalry of intelligence services of both states, which led to the expulsion by the British of three Polish diplomats on the 16th of January 1970, and this in consequence caused retorsions by the authorities in Warsaw, which demanded that three British diplomats leave Warsaw. This incident triggered a visa war between Great Britain and Poland, which lasted until 1971. Yet, the argument concerning the activities of intelligence services did not have influence on the economic exchange and bilateral cultural relations⁶².

Quite unexpectedly the Conservatives won the general election to the House of Commons in June 1970, and they returned to power after a six year break. The loss of the Labour Party was a surprise in Great Britain. No wonder that the news was received by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs with certain disbelief, especially that it obtained from the Polish Embassy in London information which indicated the preponderance of the Labour Party in the election polls. The victory of the Conservatives did not substantially influence the political goals of Great Britain towards Polish People's Republic and other communist states. Apart from maintaining special relations with the USA and strengthening the NATO, the Cabinet of new Prime Minister, Edward Heath, first of all prioritized negotiations which were supposed to lead Great Britain to the membership in the European Community. In these circumstances, the relations with Poland were placed in a remote position, which was proven by lack of any British ministerial visits to Warsaw in 1970⁶³.

⁶¹ J. Tebinka, *Próby normalizacji stosunków polsko-brytyjskich (The Attempts to Normalize Polish-British Relations)*, pp. 163–169.

⁶² TNA, PRO, FCO 28/1430, ENP 1/4, Henderson to Douglas-Home on 4th Jan. 1971. British diplomacy refused to grant visas to those Polish diplomats who, according to their knowledge, were officers of the Polish intelligence. In return, the Polish Foreign Office, influenced by the Polish Home Office refused visas to new British diplomats.

⁶³ AMSZ, Department IV, N° 28/76, bundle N° 12, M. Dobrosielski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10th and 16th June 1970; N° 27/76, bundle N° 6, Dobrosielski to Willman on 18th June 1970; PRO, PREM 15/64, B. Trend to E. Heath on 30th June 1970.

In fact, that particular year was in British — Polish relations dominated by London's reaction towards the dynamically developing *Ostpolitik* of the West German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, who presided over the government formed in the autumn of 1969 as the coalition between the *SPD* and the *FPD*. Even though the British discreetly encouraged Bonn to a bigger political openness towards Poland, then they had doubts whether Brandt was not going too far and too fast towards an understanding with Poland and the USSR, which could weaken the NATO. West German diplomacy, however, systematically informed the three western powers about the results of negotiations with Warsaw and Moscow, and consulted its allies on the most intrinsic issues. The British party, like the American and the French one, was primarily interested in guaranteeing rights for the four powers to decide on the future of Germany, which stemmed from the Potsdam agreement. The Foreign Office did not mind a possible recognition by West Germany of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse, but it tried to find a legal formula which would make it possible to avoid the impression that the agreement between Poland and West Germany substituted the peace treaty with whole Germany. In this matter there were no bigger differences of opinion between the three western capitals⁶⁴.

West Germany first confirmed the inviolability of already existing European borders, including the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse, in the treaty signed with the USSR on the 12th of August 1970. In turn, in the treaty on the foundations to normalize relations between Polish People's Republic and West Germany, signed on the 7th of December 1970, the parties agreed that "they affirm ... the inviolability of their existing borders"⁶⁵. The very fact of sealing this latter treaty received a warm welcome by the British government, and on the day it was signed, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs stated in the House of Commons that "we are glad to see the matter of the Oder-Neisse line settled between the Poles and Germans". Great Britain, France, and the USA had earlier made it clear that the treaty could not affect their rights concerning Germany, which were included in existing understandings and treaties.

⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 33/1034, WRG 3/513/1, R. Jackling to FCO on 19th June 1970; FCO 33/1029, WRG 3/303/1, a circular letter of FCO of 4th Sept. 1970; S. Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 129–133.

⁶⁵ "Zbiór Dokumentów", *op. cit.*, 1970, N° 8, pp. 1445–1448; N° 12, pp. 2034–2037.

However, the authorities in London did not perceive this condition as a willingness to maintain possible territorial claims of West Germany at the time of the unification of Germany. The treaty of the 7th of December 1970 also removed from the Polish — British relations the question of the Polish western border, though its ratification by Germany in May 1972 was predeceased by a period of uncertainty⁶⁶.

At least from the mid 1960s British diplomats in their reports from Warsaw seriously wondered who would become Gomułka's successor. The British noticed the growing importance of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Mieczysław Moczar, but they usually gave bigger chances to Edward Gierek, who was the First Secretary of the KC PZPR in Katowice. After riots in March 1968, the Polish authorities managed to ease internal tensions, and at the beginning of December 1970, there very few signs which would indicate an imminent crisis. Paradoxically, it was Great Britain which from the second half of 1968 experienced much bigger internal problems, connected with a growing conflict between the Unionists and Republicans in Ulster, which were after all covered by the Polish press and television much more objectively than by their communist neighbours⁶⁷.

In the second half of 1970, British diplomats reported with growing intensity from Warsaw on the deteriorating domestic market supply, especially in meat produce, and they anticipated the possibility of the outbreak of riots, though their scale and scope took all by surprised. The protests against the price rise announced by the Polish authorities on the 12th of December 1970 turned into violent street clashes between the crowd on the one side, and the militia with the army on the other side, which took place in Gdańsk, Szczecin, and Elbląg. As a result 45 people were killed. The use of weapons and shooting at people was criticized by the British press, but, beside the Polish immigrant community in London, it was quickly forgotten by the public opinion on the British Isles, and did not affect official relations

⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, CAB 128/47, CM 970, Conclusions, 19th Nov. 1970; A. Klafkowski, *Układ Polska — NRF z 7 grudnia 1970. Podstawy interpretacji w świetle prawa międzynarodowego* (*The Polish — West-German Treaty of 7th Dec. 1970. Fundamental Interpretations in the Light of International Law*), Warszawa 1973, pp. 47–48.

⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 87/94, WLU 2/1, N. Henderson to J. E. Cable on 21st Jan. 1972.

between Great Britain and Poland. However, the political developments in Poland were important enough to be mentioned briefly by the Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home at the Cabinet meeting on the 22nd of December 1970. The British were first of all afraid of the reaction of the USSR to the developments in Poland, which slow down the detente and negotiations with western powers concerning Berlin. These fears turned out to be groundless⁶⁸.

Gomułka's removal from power was in London welcomed with no bigger regret, as he was treated during the last years of his rule as a hard-line communist leader unable to undertake any reforms in his country. Edward Gierek, his successor on the post as First Secretary of the *KC PZPR*, was not a surprise to the British, who expected him to carry out reforms necessary to modernize the Polish economy. There was nobody in the Foreign Office to assume that it was Gierek who, within ten years' time, would lead Poland to the biggest crisis which in consequence would contribute to the collapse of communism in Poland and even the whole Eastern Europe⁶⁹.

The new *PZPR* leader chose, instead of reforms, the policy of large scale investment purchases in the West and taking bold credits to finance them. British industry in the first two years of Gierek's rule was not the biggest beneficiary of this policy, losing the battle for two large contracts, for a compact car with the Italian Fiat, and for a city bus with the French Berliet. Together with normalization of political relations, the role of West Germany in trade with Poland also grew. The diminishing of the position of Great Britain as not long ago the biggest exporter to Poland from among western countries, stemmed from the weakness of its economy against its competitors. This tendency was strengthened by the uncertainty connected with the future of the export of Polish bacon (which stood for almost 1/4 of the total value of the Polish export to the British market) after the expected acces-

⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/1029, ENP 1/2, H. T. Kennedy to S. Giffard on 13th August 1970; CAB 128/47, CM (70), Conclusions, 22nd Dec. 1970; M. Nurek, *Dyplomacja brytyjska wobec Grudnia 1970. Pierwsze reakcje i oceny (British Diplomacy towards December of 1970. Initial Reactions and Estimates)*, in: *Polska w podzielnym świecie*, pp. 279–294.

⁶⁹ However, after almost two years of the new rule, the British Embassy critically noticed that "Gierek did not find a magic key which would open the door to effectiveness and a continuous economic growth in Poland", TNA, PRO, FCO 28/1931, ENP 5/7, M. J. E. Fretwell to M. Z. Terry on 27th Sept. 1972.

sion of the United Kingdom to the European Community, which discouraged Warsaw from ordering industrial goods on the British Isles⁷⁰.

During his visit to London in January 1971, Winiewicz informed the British counterparts that Polish foreign policy would not change, and that the new Polish government was determined to continue to further develop political relations with Great Britain⁷¹. The next six months of bilateral political relations turned out to be largely lost time, despite the improvement in relations between the East and the West. In addition to the problems with agricultural produce which might be faced by the Polish exporters to Great Britain in the future, and a clear preference given by Heath's government to end negotiations with the European Community (which had further implications in no British ministerial visits in Poland), this impasse was fostered by the deterioration in mutual relations between London and Moscow, after in September 1971 the British expelled 105 Soviet diplomats who were accused of spying. As a result of this crisis Warsaw unambiguously hinted the Foreign Office that better Polish — British relations would largely depend on the improvement in relations between Great Britain and the USSR⁷².

Even though this negative tendency in Polish — British relations did not persist, this does not change the fact that Gomułka's removal closed an epoch when Great Britain was the biggest economic partner to the Polish People's Republic in the West, and the state which played a significant role in modernizing Polish economy. The British also lost their political position in Warsaw (which they tried to restore between 1969 and 1970), after mutual relations were frozen due to the Polish participation in the invasion on Czechoslovakia.

(Translated by Robert Bubczyk)

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/1676, EN 2/8, a note by S. W. Martin of 18th Jan. 1972.

⁷¹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/1425, ENP 1/1, a note by P. J. Weston of 25th Jan. 1971.

⁷² TNA, PRO, FCO 28/1925, ENP 3/348/10, J. Bullard to T. Brimelow on 21st June 1972; *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, ser. III, vol. I: *Britain and the Soviet Union 1968–1972*, ed. by G. Bennett, K. A. Hamilton, London 1997, pp. 382–392.