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WESTERN EUROPE AS A MODEL FOR POLISH DEFENDERS OF ANIMAL WELFARE PRIOR TO 1939

Abstract: This article looks at how Western Europe served as a model for Polish animal advocates before 1939. France and Great Britain inspired the greatest respect among Polish animal defenders. Polish animal lovers, fascinated by the French and English treatment of animals, discovered the effectiveness of grassroots initiatives, rather than legal resolutions and acts, for the welfare of animals. This article attempts to explain why the endeavour to copy the treatment of animals by wealthy Germans, French, and above all English and introduce it to economically poor Poland proved to be utopian.

Key words: Western Europe, Poland, Polish Defenders of Animal, animals, interwar.

Introduction

There are no historical monographs about pre-war animal protection in Poland. Moreover, there is no research on the influence of Western Europe on Polish protectors of animal welfare. This article is therefore a pioneering work. It is based on archive materials, newspapers, and books. The situation in the countries of Western Europe was entirely different from that in Poland. In my article I refer to the works of authors such as Boria Sax, Hildy Kean and Éric Baratay. The main goal of the publication is to answer the question: Which countries of Western Europe were models for Polish defenders of animals, and why? Another subject of interest is how Western opinions about animal welfare (not necessarily commendable) were received in Poland prior to 1939. This article also discusses whether everyone in pre-war Poland was gullible enough to believe that the English, French, or Germans had a particularly good attitude towards animals. It was somehow assumed that the instant adoption of the high culture of rich Western Europe in relation to the welfare of domestic animals in poor

and agricultural Poland was a utopian task. I discuss this issue in more detail in a subsequent part of this article. In the first segment I explain, in a thread which deviates from the main subject of the paper, why Polish defenders of animals never sought inspiration for their activities in Russia or the Soviet Union.

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, Polish defenders of animal rights were concentrated mainly in the Animal Care Association (Towarzystwo Opieki nad Zwierzętami, TOZ); the Animal Care Union (Związek Opieki nad Zwierzętami, ZOZ); the Animal Protection League (Liga Obrony Zwierząt, LOZ); and the Polish League of the Friends of Animals (Polska Liga Przyjaciół Zwierząt, PLPZ). These were frequently headed by mayors, judges, attorneys, doctors, university professors, artists and well-known journalists and writers. Honorary members of the PLPZ included the President of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki, and his wife Michalina; Marshal Józef Piłsudski and his wife Aleksandra; and Minister of the Interior Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski. Many of the rich and active members of these organisations frequently travelled around the world and had friends and acquaintances throughout Western Europe. Some of the above-mentioned organisations were already active in the nineteenth century. TOZ was established in 1864 in Warsaw, which was then one of the cities of the Russian empire. TOZ's nineteenth-century collaborators included famous Polish writers (including Henryk Sienkiewicz, winner of the 1905 Nobel Prize for Literature). Even before Poland regained its independence in 1918, Polish writers such as Sienkiewicz, Stefan Żeromski and Zygmunt Bartkiewicz travelled a great deal throughout the countries of Western Europe. It was there, not in tsarist Russia, that these writers were enormously impressed by what they perceived as the better treatment of animals, and not only living ones. They were amazed by the affection that the Belgians, English and French expressed for animals that had died. Bartkiewicz, roaming about a Parisian animal cemetery in the early twentieth century, was deeply moved when he discovered the gravestone of a Polish dog. The Polish writer noted, 'I am moved by this compatriot dog and I can clearly see a friend from the days of my youth'.¹ During their travels through Western Europe, Polish intellectuals not only positively assessed the English, Belgians, Dutch and Swiss in terms of their positive attitude towards domestic animals, but were fascinated as well by their customs, culture and fashions. France, however, was the most admired country in the social, political and cultural spheres. The French Third Republic became a model for the development of the

¹ Zygmunt Bartkiewicz, *Psie dusze: Nowele i obrazy*, Warsaw, [c. 1919], p. 6.

Polish constitution in March 1921.² Nevertheless, Poland was unable to catch up with France or Great Britain in many ways.

Pre-war Poland was a typically agricultural country. According to the official census from 1921, as many as 75% of Poland's inhabitants lived in the countryside, and 64% subsisted exclusively on agriculture, horticulture, or forestry. These statistics had not changed much by 1931, as that census showed that 73% of the population lived in the rural areas of Poland. Nor did the data change much prior to the outbreak of World War II. In 1939 it was reported that 70% of the population lived in the countryside, and as many as 59% worked in agriculture. Poverty was widespread, especially in the villages of Poland's southern and eastern regions — in some places people suffered from hunger and the population's level of training and education was low. In the countryside the landowners, who enjoyed enormous prestige, lived in manor houses, and in Poland after 1918 it was emphasised that the great merits of these landowners had been demonstrated in the struggle to maintain Polish identity during the nineteenth century, when no Polish state existed. It is important to note that in the inter-war period many (former) inhabitants of the Polish countryside contributed to the increase in the population of cities.³ Nevertheless pre-war Polish society remained strongly rural in nature, and not particularly wealthy. For the majority of the inhabitants of the countryside, wild animals constituted a threat to crops and livestock. Contact with nature was naturally equated to a struggle for survival, in which the breeding of domestic animals was equivalent to their exploitation. The landed gentry, cultivating the hunting traditions of their ancestors, loved its dogs and horses used for the chase; however it had no interest in the plight of animals in cities. Likewise, most city dwellers focused on their work and their own lives. The fate of animals and concern for their welfare was therefore not a priority. In the present article I also put forward the thesis that those persons involved in the protection of animals in Poland comprised an elite community of affluent people, who travelled for business or tourist purposes to Austria, England, France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, or Switzerland and wanted to import their ways of treating animals to Poland. Unfortunately, this noble mission did not find broad public support due to the abovementioned circumstances.

² Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, Oxford and New York, 2001, p. 105; David Kirby, *The Baltic World 1772-1993: Europe's Northern Periphery in Age of Change*, New York, 2014, p. 285.

³ Czesław Brzoza and Andrzej Leon Sowa, *Historia Polski 1918-1945*, Cracow, 2006, pp. 104-06, 113-17.

Russia (and the Soviet Union) as a Model of a Country with No Empathy for Animals

Russia, Austria and Germany accomplished their final partition of Poland in 1795. Russia occupied the largest portion of the former territories of the Polish state; it was in the lands governed by the Russian empire that the Poles took up arms in the great uprisings of 1830 and 1863. In 1919–20, several months after regaining independence, Poland fought a bloody and victorious war against Bolshevik Russia. Following the end of that war, the conviction was born in Poland, as well as in many observers from the Western countries, that the decisive Battle of Warsaw in August 1920 had saved the ‘civilised world’ from ‘Eastern barbarism’.⁴ In Poland, people retained vivid negative memories, encompassing more than just the many murders of civilians and soldiers committed by the Bolsheviks during the war. The gloomy image of Russian cruelty towards the Polish landowner class was supplemented by spreading news of the thoughtless killings of hounds and Arab horses at manors and stud farms in the east of Poland. The Bolsheviks had deliberately killed over sixty Arab horses at a stud farm in Bila Tserkva (today part of Ukraine) because the animals of this breed were deemed representatives of the equine aristocracy.⁵ Bolshevik Russia (and subsequently the Soviet Union) was depicted in pre-Second World War Poland as a barbarian country, while Poland was seen as belonging to Western civilisation. At the same time, in the daily press defenders of animal rights condemned the malice of Poles towards animals and were happy to shame the perpetrators of such deeds by pointing out that they surpassed the Russians in cruelty. As an example, in November 1930 Jan Białasz, writing for *Świat Zwierzęcy* (Animal World), impressed on coachmen using whips that such behaviour did not take place even in ‘barely civilised Russia’.⁶ In order to support the thesis of Russian-Soviet barbarity towards animals, references were eagerly made to the Western press. In October 1930, the editorial board of the aforementioned *Świat Zwierzęcy* quoted information from the Norwegian magazine *Ibis*, which stated that in the USSR it had been decided to kill all dogs kept at homes and in yards that the state authorities did not consider useful. The Soviet authorities were believed to have done away with approximately four million so-called

⁴ Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: the Polish-Soviet War, 1919–20 and ‘the Miracle on the Vistula’*, London, 2003, Polish version: *Orzeł biały, czerwona gwiazda: Wojna polsko-bolszewicka 1919–1920*, transl. Andrzej Pawelec, Cracow, 2009, p. 320.

⁵ Iwona Kienzler, *Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne: Czworożni i skrzydlaci przyjaciele*, Warsaw, 2014 (*Dwudziestolecie Międzywojenne*, 44), p. 23.

⁶ Jan Białasz, ‘Precz z batem!’, *Świat Zwierzęcy*, 1930, 11, pp. 128–29 (p. 129).

‘useless gluttons’’. The editors of *Świat Zwierzęcy* (the organ of the PLPZ) had no doubt that the regulation approved in Moscow was proof of an unheard-of degeneracy.⁷ In Poland, no one doubted that protection of fauna and flora in the Soviet Union was purely pragmatic in character and served the sole purpose of continuation of the exploitation of nature.⁸ Years later, authors from the former Soviet Union wrote about the same issues. Tatiana R. Zaharchenko stated that the Bolsheviks had decided that nature must be exploited, not preserved. Gifts of nature such as flora and fauna were to serve as building materials for a better future. Zaharchenko opined that paradoxically the Bolsheviks, like the nineteenth-century American pioneers, were confident that natural resources were inexhaustible.⁹ In the opinion of today’s Russian researchers, there were also other reasons for the lack of involvement in the protection of animals on the part of the Russians and other nationalities inhabiting the USSR. For example, all grassroots civic initiatives were suppressed in the USSR, while sporadic actions organised top-down by the state in favour of animals lacked emotional support from the population. Modern Russian researchers have concluded that from the USSR’s beginnings wild animals were treated better than domesticated ones. But they also allege that such treatment was not motivated by a selfless charity. ‘Wild animals, like wild plants, were considered precious natural resources that might be useful in the future or, if necessary, even immediately.’¹⁰ Certainly, it would be hard to find examples of any exceptional affection for animals among the apathetic non-affluent portion of Soviet society. Interestingly however, Russian intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries devoted a great deal of attention to the issue of suffering animals. These included the famous writer Fëdor Dostoevskii, who depicted human cruelty towards dogs in *Brat’ia Karamazovy* (The Brothers Karamazov, 1880),¹¹ and the vegetarian Lev Tolstoi. Among them were also the outstanding philosophers Vladimir Solov’ëv and Nikolai Berdiaev. These great Russian philosophers believed that animals had souls. In December 1898, in the preface to the second edition of his essay ‘The Justification of the Good’,

⁷ ‘Nakaz zabijania psów w Rosji Sowieckiej’, *Świat Zwierzęcy*, 1930, 10, p. 119.

⁸ K. Piech, ‘Z ochrony przyrody w Rosji Sowieckiej’, *Ochrona Przyrody*, 13, 1933, pp. 172–74 (p. 173).

⁹ Tatiana R. Zaharchenko, ‘Environmental Policy in the Soviet Union’, *Environmental Law and Policy Journal*, 14, 1990, 1, pp. 3–6 (p. 3).

¹⁰ Marina Andreevna Borovik and Dmitrii Viktorovich Mikhel’, ‘Dvizheniia po zashchite prav zhivotnykh: istoriia, politika, praktika’, *Zhurnal issledovaniia sotsial’noi politiki / The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, 8, 2010, 2, pp. 227–52 (p. 243).

¹¹ Fiodor Dostojewski, *Bracia Karamazov*, transl. Andrzej Wat, 2 vols, London, 1993, vol. 2, pp. 221–22.

Solov'ëv wrote that animals, because they possessed souls, longed for a better world, one that they did not know, but sensed.¹² Berdiaev was saved from despair following the death of his beloved dog Muri by the hope that animals would be resurrected like humans.¹³ For Solov'ëv and Berdiaev, humans and animals were equally capable of empathy and feelings such as loneliness, suffering, and sorrow due to rejection and, above all, the failure to achieve the fulfilment of their desires. As Berdiaev wrote: 'I often experienced piercing grief when I looked into the eyes of animals: there exists an expression in the eyes of suffering animals that is impossible to bear. The entire pain of the world penetrates us [...]. It seems to me that the greatest grief is caused by the unfulfilled hopes with which man and animal enter the world.'¹⁴

The similarity of the fate of humans and animals described by the Russian philosophers corresponds to the words from the scriptural Book of Ecclesiastes concerning the identical fate of animals and people.¹⁵ In his books *Novoe srednevekov'e* (The New Middle Ages, a.k.a. The End of Our Time, 1924) and *Sud'ba cheloveka v sovremennom mire* (The Fate of Man in the Modern World, 1934), Berdiaev cautioned that world civilisation was characterised by increasing cruelty and bestiality. In the opinion of the Russian philosopher, growing human bestiality stemmed from the social injustices of capitalism, the superficiality of Christianity, and the cruelty and demonic nature of communism and fascism. As a strong believer in God, Berdiaev not only rejected all political and social systems that had been invented by bestial man, but also stated that the type of sophisticated bestiality characteristic of 'civilised man' did not exist in the world of animals. Berdiaev wrote: 'The animal stands much higher than bestialised man.'¹⁶ Berdiaev's famous work was published in Germany (1924) and France (1934); during his forced political exile, the philosopher lived in both of these countries. Berdiaev's book was received with great interest in pre-war Poland; however, most Polish readers failed to take note of the Russian philosopher's empathy towards animals. Only a small minority in Poland knew (or wanted to know) that many Russian intellectuals in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth were

¹² Włodzimierz Sołowjow, *Uzasadnienie dobra*, transl. Paweł Rojek et al., Cracow, 2008, p. 9.

¹³ Mikołaj Bierdiajew, *Autobiografia filozoficzna*, transl. Henryk Paprocki, Kęty, 2002, p. 314.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁵ Ecclesiastes 3,19.

¹⁶ Mikołaj Bierdiajew, *Nowe Średniowiecze: Los człowieka we współczesnym świecie*, transl. Henryk Paprocki, Warsaw, 2003, p. 168.

anything but indifferent to the lot of animals. Paradoxically, this was admitted by Marian Zdziechowski, who was critical of Russian influences on Polish culture. I refer to Zdziechowski's thoughts in a later part of this paper. Most pre-war socio-political communities in Poland saw communist Russia as the successor of Tsarist Russia, which was thought to be much less developed than Poland in terms of civilisation and culture. The notion of Russian barbarism towards animals completed this image. Before 1939, relations between Poland and the Soviet Union were also influenced by history and stereotypes, and during the inter-war period there was a great deal of tension and mutual hostility between them. The relationship improved after 25 July 1932, when a mutual Non-Aggression Pact was concluded.¹⁷ The uncritical search for models in the countries of Western Europe — which characterised Polish animal protection organisations — was also due to one additional factor. The leadership positions in most of these organisations were occupied by people linked to Marshal Piłsudski, and in other organisations such people fulfilled honorary functions. This included, as I have already mentioned, Piłsudski himself, along with his wife Aleksandra (PLPZ). Piłsudski's influence on pre-war Poland was huge; his myth and the cult of his personality were cultivated during his lifetime. Piłsudski was presented as the 'creator of the Polish army', the 'victorious leader of the nation', and the 'builder of Poland's fame and guardian of Poland's power', as was very aptly noted by the German historian Heidi Hein-Kircher.¹⁸ It should be recalled that Piłsudski and his political camp continuously proclaimed that the greatest threat to Poland was Russia (and later the Soviet Union).

Germany and Austria

In the 1920s and 30s, Polish-German political relations were predominantly tense. This also affected Polish animal rights groups, which were reluctant to cooperate with the Germans. The branch of TOZ in Łódź was an exception. Its members maintained good relationships with animal protectors from Berlin, even in the 1920s. It is worth noting that pre-war Łódź was home to numerous Germans. Representatives of German and Polish organisations frequently visited each other. The symbolic culmination of these good relations was the presentation of a mechanical

¹⁷ *The Major International Treaties of the Twentieth Century: A History and Guide with Texts*, ed. John Grenville and Bernard Wasserstein, 2 vols, New York, 2013, vol. 1, p. 187.

¹⁸ Heidi Hein-Kircher, *Der Piłsudski-Kult und seine Bedeutung für den polnischen Staat 1926-1939*, Marburg, 2002; Polish version: Heidi Hein-Kircher, *Kult Piłsudskiego i jego znaczenie dla państwa polskiego 1926-1939*, transl. Zdzisław Owczarek, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 227-32.

Schermer device, used for humanitarian slaughter of animals,¹⁹ to a Polish delegate in Berlin. Representatives of TOZ in Łódź boasted that thanks to this German gift their city was the site of the most humane slaughter of swine and cattle in Poland. The pleasant relationship between animal defenders from Łódź and Berlin was, for a long time, unusual. The Germans were not particularly liked in most of pre-war Poland. However, Poles generally realised that the shortest way to the 'civilised West' led through Germany. Moreover, German care for animals drew ever more attention. The Poles enviously watched the development of German zoos. Among Polish animal protectors, the former distrust of Germany was mixed with admiration. This ambivalent mood that accompanied the end of the 1920s was expressed accurately in a column written in 1929:

One can either like or dislike the Germans; this is an individual matter and, in a way, it depends on national identity. We, the Poles, do not have many reasons for a special liking. Nevertheless, in certain respects, we must look at the Germans with admiration and envy: at their love and care towards animals.²⁰

The international congress of the Association of Animal Friends in 1929 had a significant influence on the maintenance of Polish relations with Austrian and German animal welfare organisations. The congress was held in Vienna from 12–17 May and attracted members and guests from around the world. Delegations of the Polish PLPZ and the Łódź TOZ were present. Polish representatives made rather radical speeches. Janina Maszewska-Knappe from Warsaw, in her paper entitled *Walka o duszę i prawa zwierząt* (A Fight for the Souls and Rights of Animals), demanded that all participants in the Viennese congress should be obliged to eradicate hunting in their countries. In his report entitled *Niekulturalne rozrywki cywilizowanych narodów* (Unmannerly Entertainment of Civilised Nations), Jan Heinrich, a speaker from Łódź and representative of the city's TOZ, strongly criticised animal training in circuses. His speech aroused controversy. Horst Kuhlwein von Rathenow from an animal protection association in Berlin reacted to Heinrich's speech by claiming that training animals for circuses and zoos did not necessarily entail their torment.²¹ Maszewska-Knappe, a representative of the PLPZ, in her recollection of

¹⁹ 'Protokół z II dorocznego walnego zebrania członków Łódzkiego Towarzystwa Opieki nad Zwierzętami', *Obrońca Zwierząt*, 1929, 2–3, p. 38.

²⁰ J. Barell, 'Zwierzęta patrzą na ciebie', *Przyjaciel Zwierząt*, 1929, 6–8, pp. 13–14 (p. 13).

²¹ Magnus Schwantje, 'Der Internationale Tierschutz-Kongress in Wien', *Mitteilungen des Bundes für radikale Ethik*, 1930, 21, pp. 2–20 (pp. 12–13). Cf.: *Obrońca Zwierząt*, 1929, 2–3, p. 22.

the Viennese discussions stated that Kuhlwein von Rathenow had reacted to her report differently, congratulating her personally on her speech and thanking her for the passage by the Polish government of a new animal protection law.²² This attitude was perhaps associated with the fact that Maszewska-Knappe was well known in Austrian and German animal welfare circles, having collaborated for several years with a Viennese journal, *Das Tier-Magazin*. The congress, with its principal topics of animal rights, vivisection, and vegetarianism, infused new energy into Polish animal defenders. It suffices to mention that on 17 November 1929, Animal Days were held for the first time in Warsaw.²³ This campaign rapidly became an annual street event in many Polish cities. By the 1930s Animal Days had become very popular, with events being organised in Lviv, Vilnius, Kielce, Łuck and Cracow, among others. This event became a great success, popularised by numerous newspapers and radio stations and attended by thousands of people. Its participants took their dogs, cats, ducks, geese, and even horses along on street marches. The event was accompanied by printed posters and informative talks at schools and clubs, and was eagerly awaited by its participants. For example, in 1939 in Cracow, several weeks before Animal Days, the magazine *Nasi Przyjaciele* was inundated with letters from its readers, asking about the schedule of this extremely popular and greatly anticipated event. The editors replied to the impatient readers that the event would be preceded by a special radio broadcast with more information on this topic.²⁴

Leon Malhomme, a Polish diplomat of merit, contributed to the strengthening of bonds between Polish and German animal rights organisations. He frequently informed the German press about Polish initiatives aimed at improving the fate of animals, mainly in the period 1929–31, when he held the position of Polish consul in Bytom.²⁵ The Polish press, which frequently disapproved of Germany, wrote ever more often about the extensive aid to animals in the country. A popular Cracow journal called *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, or *IKC*, was an example. For instance, in mid-July 1934 it published a photograph in

²² Janina Maszewska-Knappe, 'Wszechświatowy Kongres Towarzystwa Opieki nad Zwierzętami', *Świat Zwierzęcy*, 1929, 7/8, pp. 1–5 (p. 2). [On 22 March 1928, the President's act on animal protection was issued in Poland. At that time, these issues were not regulated legally in most European countries. — R.K.]

²³ Janina Maszewska-Knappe, 'Dzień Dobroci dla Zwierząt', *Świat Zwierzęcy*, 1929, 12, pp. 1–3 (p. 2).

²⁴ 'Zbliża się Dzień Dobroci...', *Nasi Przyjaciele*, 1939, 4, p. 4.

²⁵ Leon Malhomme, 'Człowiek i jego stosunek do zwierząt', *Świat Zwierzęcy*, 1929, 12, pp. 3–4 (p. 3).

which members of *Sturmabteilung* (SA, or Nazi Brownshirts) tenderly attended to a dog fastened to a kennel with a chain, also wrote that SA activists had ensured that the dog had a leak-proof kennel and a sufficient amount of food. The editorial comment stated that on one hand this was a propaganda trick, and on the other that the editors approved of such actions and that it was a model to be emulated. The paper underlined that many rural dogs in Poland suffered for hours in sweltering heat without a bowl of water.²⁶ Paradoxically, Poland began to view Germany as a role model in terms of animal protection after Hitler gained power. In April 1937, a LOZ monthly published in Lviv, called *W Obronie Zwierząt* (Protecting Animals), underlined the fact that penalties for animal maltreatment had been increased in Hitler's Germany: such a crime in Nazi Germany was punishable by two years of imprisonment and confiscation of the animal.²⁷ Moreover, Poles visiting Germany were impressed by how animals were treated there; this was true of both the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany. Luta Kulczycka, during a stay in Germany in the summer of 1937, was astounded that horses were not whipped or shouted at, and that cattle were remarkably well-tended and nourished. Her stay in Bavaria made a huge impression on her. Kulczycka related, with undisguised sadness, that foreigners still kept referring to Poland as 'the East', which was a synonym for savagery.²⁸ It would be difficult to accuse Kulczycka and other animal protection activists in Europe of being Nazi sympathisers. However many naively believed that the German law introduced on 24 November 1933 would serve only the noble-minded protection of animals as promised by its title. The following years, and especially the Second World War, proved that this law was actually derived from National Socialist ideology and constituted an expression of the ideological insanity which divided the population into superior Aryan and inferior Semitic Jewish portions. Within this madness, which undermined traditional Jewish and Christian values, a system was also developed dividing animals into superior and inferior categories. The superior group was symbolised by Aryan wolves and horses, the inferior group by Jewish pigs and monkeys. Boria Sax has brilliantly examined this process in his book.²⁹

In Poland, however, there were those who doubted German sympathy towards animals long before Hitler came to power, including those

²⁶ 'Szturmowcy w roli opiekunów zwierząt', *IKC*, 15 July 1934, 194, p. 10.

²⁷ *W Obronie Zwierząt*, 1937, 4, p. 8.

²⁸ Luta Kulczycka, 'Gdy się obcuje z Zachodem' *W Obronie Zwierząt*, 1937, 10, p. 5.

²⁹ Boria Sax, *Animals in the Third Reich: Pets, Scapegoats, and the Holocaust*, New York and London, 2000.

who considered German initiatives to protect animal rights to be mere political promotion of their country. These people argued that Germany did not care about the good of animals at all, but solely about the advancement of their own species. German initiatives were criticised primarily by enthusiasts of the development of native dog breeds. The vast majority of Polish publicists attempted to persuade readers that the German Shepherd owed its global popularity to refined German propaganda. In 1929, Stanisław Koźmian-Rejcher stated that this advertising campaign was resisted only by England and France. In his opinion, the so-called *Deutscher Schaferhund* was a cowardly, capricious, corruptible and delicate dog. By contrast, the Polish Tatra Sheepdog, which since 1924 had been promoted by Koźmian-Rejcher in various publications, was a lively, strong, loyal, honest and remarkably incorruptible dog.³⁰ From the start, Koźmian-Rejcher attempted to persuade his readers that the Polish Tatra Sheepdog was better suited for military or police service than the German Shepherd. In subsequent years, advocates of the Polish Tatra Sheepdog tried to persuade not only the army and police but Poles in general that having this dog at home was the best choice they could make. In September 1936, the main slogan of the Lviv publication 'Dzień Psa' (Dog's Day) was 'A Polish dog in a Polish household'.³¹ The Polish Tatra Sheepdog lobby continued until the outbreak of Second World War. This was not the only case where an animal represented 'Polish national pride'. The European bison was highly esteemed in Poland, serving many Poles as a symbol of the historical greatness of the Polish state. In pre-war journalism, readers were frequently reminded that German soldiers had left hecatombs of bison in the Białowieża Forest in the wake of the Great War. In September 1929, the European bison returned to this forest, evoking enthusiastic reactions throughout the country. It was even stated that the re-introduction of the European bison into the Białowieża Forest had increased the authority and prestige of the Polish state.³² In both pre- and post-war Poland, eager references were made to the enormous ravages inflicted by the German armies in the Białowieża Forest during the First World War. To a large extent, these references were true, although local residents, taking advantage of the post-war chaos, also wrought enormous damage there. Holding other nations responsible for the wartime

³⁰ Stanisław Koźmian-Rejcher, *Pies w służbie wojskowej*, Warsaw, 1929, pp. 6–9.

³¹ "Dzień Psa" na placu Targów Wschodnich we Lwowie', *Łowiec*, 1936, 12, pp. 215–18 (p. 217).

³² Władysław Szafer, 'Powrót żubra do Puszczy Białowieskiej', *Bezpłatny dodatek do miesięcznika krajoznawczego dla młodzieży Orli Lot*, 1930, 1, pp. 1–2.

devastation of nature and cruelty to animals was also characteristic of nations other than Poland. As noted by David A.H. Wilson, a specific result of the First World War was the placement of blame for the cruelties committed on animals on foreigners, particularly Germans. In the United Kingdom, this was related to a commercial policy aimed at boycotting foreign products.³³ In Wilson's opinion, wrongful accusations of cruelty to animals against foreigners were made in the UK in later years as well. Animals often became a pretext for cynical political games.

Polish animal protectors were fonder of Austria than Germany. Some of the Polish press gullibly believed that Austria was a country where all citizens loved animals boundlessly. In August 1932, Cracow's informed its readers that every resident of Vienna was a member of the Animal Rights Association. Reports from Austria emphasised that in Vienna there was a special mobile 'animal emergency service', and that so-called 'inspection vets' constantly patrolled the city on motorbikes in search of any signs of an atrocity involving an animal. The greatest admiration was evoked by the fact that Austria had become a role model for various countries of Central Europe, wrote that the Austrian example was being followed in Hungary and Romania. As a result of agitation by the Austrian Animal Protection Association, King Carol I of Romania committed himself to creating a modern act on animal protection.³⁴ However, press releases such as those described above were very often completely unreliable. Many of the newspapers created a false picture of the socio-political reality. We should keep in mind that the aforementioned had been issued in Cracow as early as 1910, when the city belonged to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Nonetheless, compared with Russia and Germany the Austrian Partition ensured the greatest amount of freedom for the cultivation of Polish identity. Therefore, even after Poland regained independence in 1918, the times of Emperor Franz Joseph were still recalled with sympathy in Cracow and Galicia. Therefore, it is easy to understand that in Cracow and in Lviv readers still accepted news concerning Austria uncritically. There was a much greater aversion towards Germans; however, paradoxically of all national minorities in pre-war Poland, it was the Germans who enjoyed the Poles' greatest respect. It was not important whether the Germans were envied by their enemies, or admired by their friends; both groups respected Germans for their wealth, diligence, national solidarity, self-organisation, justifiable pride, and good

³³ David A.H. Wilson, 'Racial Prejudice and the Performing Animals Controversy in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Society and Animals*, 17, 2009, 2, pp. 149–65 (p. 150).

³⁴ Marian Lisowski, 'W kraju, gdzie ludzie są naprawdę przyjaciółmi zwierząt (od własnego korespondenta "I.K.C")', *IKC*, 29 August 1932, 239, p. 4.

education.³⁵ It is no wonder that sometimes this respect influenced assessments of the Germans' attitude toward animals.

France and England

In the end however, France and Great Britain were the most awe-inspiring countries to Polish animal protectors. Poles visiting these countries experienced culture shock. In one of the letters sent in November 1929 to the editors of *Przyjaciel Zwierząt*, a reader expressed his astonishment at never having seen horses whipped or overloaded in England. The author of the letter compared this impression with the tragic situation of numerous Warsaw horses which, as he wrote, were particularly abused and beaten, and stated bitterly that the Polish authorities did not react to such cruelty, while foreigners visiting Poland were indignant. 'I have heard foreigners who loudly commented on the Polish savagery, saying that such a nation "deserved disdain". I could not protest since such remarks seemed just at that moment, although the generalisation was surely unfair.'³⁶ In the autumn of 1930, Helena Rudzińska compared the situations of Polish and French animals. In her opinion, the everyday life of horses, dogs and cats in France was like an animal paradise compared to Poland. Rudzińska tried to demonstrate that pampered French cats lounged safely on warm sofas. She not only underlined the great liking of the French for cats, but also wrote approvingly that the French could freely go to cinemas, restaurants, hotels and cafes, and even board trams, with their dogs. Rudzińska found this enchanting and added that such behaviour would elicit violent protest in Poland.³⁷ Konstancja Hojnacka, a resident of Lviv travelling in England in 1933, was astonished to observe the existence of various animal hospitals and shelters in England. Surprised, she wrote that when the weather was poor, each individual considered it his or her duty to let in a dog or cat found on their doorstep. Abandoning an animal to its fate in the rain or cold was a signal that one was a foreigner. Hojnacka wrote: 'Whoever does not do that is surely a foreigner, usually from the East.'³⁸ In the same year, another resident of Lviv, Leonia Rosińska, took a coach trip

³⁵ Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, 'Narodowości', in *Spółeczeństwo międzywojenne: nowe spojrzenie*, ed. Włodzimierz Mędrzecki and Janusz Żarnowski, Warsaw, 2015, pp. 225–50, p. 246.

³⁶ P.R., 'Listy od Przyjaciół: W sprawie katowania koni', *Przyjaciel Zwierząt*, 1929, 9–11, p. 8.

³⁷ Helena Rudzińska, 'U nich i u nas', *Przyjaciel Zwierząt*, 1930, 10–12, pp. 4–6.

³⁸ Konstancja Hojnacka, 'Codzienne okrucieństwa', in *Otwórzcie serca: Jednodniówka Ligi Ochrony Zwierząt we Lwowie*, Lviv, 1933, pp. 10–11 (p. 11).

around France and Belgium. She was surprised not only by the fact that the driver stopped abruptly when he saw dogs playing on the road, but also by the shampooing of dogs in Paris and the existence of separate dog beaches along the Seine. It was thus no surprise that Rosińska, beguiled by the joyful life of French dogs, bitterly compared it with the sad fate of their Polish counterparts: 'These dogs have the civil rights that our poor martyrs cannot ever dream of in their boldest fantasies.'³⁹ Not only cats and dogs, but their owners as well could only envy such comforts. Polish animal lovers, fascinated by the French and English treatment of animals, discovered the efficacy of grassroots initiatives over legal resolutions and acts for the good of animals. It was observed that the involvement of children and teenagers from various social environments in the fight for animal rights played a huge role. Poles carefully observed how church communities of various denominations in both England and France jointly participated in campaigns aimed at improving the fate of animals. Attention was drawn to this fact by the previously-quoted Janina Maszewska-Knappe. On 19 February 1928, this meritorious activist for animal rights explained, over Polish radio, the operating principles of 'Mercy for Animals' groups among English youth. For the first time, a wide group of listeners was informed about the French 'Animal Day' was conducted by teachers and, primarily, by the clergy of many denominations.⁴⁰ Poles visiting Great Britain prior to 1939 were also astonished by the anthropomorphism applied to pets in numerous British households. In August 1935 Janusz Minkiewicz, a correspondent of Cracow's in London, noted that animals were considered to be among the closest family members in numerous households. In his opinion, in Poland dogs were loved for their loyalty and horses for their usefulness, whereas the English loved them simply because they existed. The Polish attitude toward animals was thus deemed self-centred, oriented towards material benefits, whereas the English approach was characterised by an unbiased love. For the English, animals were so-called 'mute friends', whereas Poles viewed them as servants to be exploited. Minkiewicz, fascinated by the profound relationships between animals and the English people, wrote that this friendship was genuine and pure, and therefore Englishmen did not feel the disdain towards animals which could frequently be observed in Poland.⁴¹ The Cracow columnist argued that the English were as equally interested in the fates of their pets as in

³⁹ Leonia Rosińska, 'Zagranicą', in *Otwórzcie serca*, pp. 15–16 (p. 16).

⁴⁰ 'Nasz stosunek do świata zwierzęcego' [A talk made on Polish Radio on 19 February 1928 by Maszewska-Knappe — R.K.], no. 2 in the library of the Polish League of Animal Friends, Warsaw, 1928, pp. 4–9.

⁴¹ Janusz Minkiewicz, 'Zwierzęta i Anglicy', *JKC*, 15 August 1935, 225, pp. 2–3 (p. 2).

grand political events. Thus the front pages of various opinion-forming papers published advertisements about changing houses for cats or dogs right next to reports of ongoing wars or visits of state leaders. Minkiewicz also shocked his readers with the information that English dogs were frequently called 'Baldwin', 'Hitler', or 'Mussolini'. He explained to his readers that no one protested or felt offended by this in Great Britain.⁴² It was unthinkable for a Pole of that time to go for a walk and call his or her dog 'Piłsudski'!

It is worth noting that for some English intellectuals, other nations' treatment of the Anglo-Saxon countries as a model for special care for animals was actually a reason for embarrassment. During a radio broadcast in early March 1943, George Orwell severely criticised Jack London's fascination with animals. London's adoration, visible in such books as *White Fang* and *The Call of the Wild*, was labelled unwise by Orwell, who said during the broadcast: 'Being sentimental about animals is almost exclusively a characteristic of the English-speaking nations, and this is no reason for pride.'⁴³ Undoubtedly, Orwell voiced his thoughts at a special time. The tragedy of the ongoing war led many people to believe that only the safety and well-being of people counted, not dedication to animals. It is worth recalling that the English writer was a participant in the civil war in Spain. In his autobiographical *Homage to Catalonia* Orwell exposed, among other things, the criminal role of the Soviet special services, the NKVD and GRU, in Spain. His famous book, published in 1938, that is while the Spanish Civil War was still raging, also addresses the issue of animals. Orwell wrote that the followers of the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (in Spanish: Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista; in the Catalanian original: Partit Obrer d'Unificació Marxista) branded the fur of a dog that followed the Republicans with the abbreviation POUM, using a hot iron.⁴⁴ While some animals suffered in this manner, the lot of others unexpectedly improved. As Orwell noted, 'It turned out that even in Barcelona no bullfights took place; by some freak coincidence, the best matadors were fascists.'⁴⁵ Could it be that Orwell himself was not free from sentimentality about animals?

Prior to 1939 France and England, in contrast to Germany, were considered unattainable models in more than just animal welfare. Many Poles and

⁴² Ibid., p. 2.

⁴³ George Orwell, *Selected Essays*, London, 1957; Polish version: George Orwell, 'Jack London', in *Gandhi w brzuchu wieloryba: Wybór esejów, reportaży, felietonów, szkiców i recenzji*, transl. Bartłomiej Zborski, Warsaw, 2015, p. 188.

⁴⁴ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, London, 1938; Polish version *W hołdzie Katalonii*, transl. Leszek Kuzaj, Gdynia, 1990, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Orwell, *W hołdzie Katalonii*, p. 17.

Polish politicians treated these countries as genuine friends and political allies of Poland. It is thus not surprising that in the 1920s animal protection circles in Cracow and Warsaw were more actively engaged in cooperation with, as well as being much more open towards, the French and English than the Germans. In 1929, the Warsaw branch of the PLPZ boasted about maintaining a cordial relationship and intimate contact with the Council of Justice to Animals in London. The PLPZ even sent their quarterly reports for the year 1927 to London as early as in 1928, the second year of the organisation's operation, claiming that these reports were published in English journals and that English radio informed the public about Polish initiatives. In 1928, the organisation expressed its satisfaction with the fact that its articles were being published in the prestigious French monthly *La Protection des Animaux*, issued in Marseille, and reminded Poles that they had appeared in a column called 'Lettres de Pologne'.⁴⁶ Thanks to the propaganda actions of Polish animal welfare organisations, including the dissemination of information on the unique nature of the Polish Animal Protection Act of March 1928, numerous English, French, Belgian, or Dutch citizens might have believed that Polish standards of animal care were not very different from Western European norms.

Pride or Shame? Polish Realities and Western Europe

At the end of 1927 and the beginning of 1928, it seemed that Poland would become a model for other countries in terms of the protection of animals. On 3 December 1927, President Mościcki signed a hunting act defining the concept of wild game and prohibiting the use of snare traps, nets and poison in hunting. Article 48 established strict protection from hunters for over a dozen species of animals, including the bison, chamois and marmot,⁴⁷ and on 22 March 1928 the Presidential Animal Protection Act was published. The very first sentence of Article 1 of the regulation stated: 'Abusing animals is prohibited'. In the second article, ten paragraphs defined the abuse of animals, which included beating,

⁴⁶ Polska Liga Przyjaciół Zwierząt (Polish League of the Friends of Animals, hereinafter: PLPZ), report for the second year of operation (1928), issued to the general assembly on 25 February 1929, Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (The National Archives in Cracow, hereinafter: ANK), Związek Opieki nad Zwierzętami (Animal Care Union, hereinafter: ZOZ), ref. no. ZOZ/2, c. 1991, pp. 10–11.

⁴⁷ Prawo łowieckie z komentarzami. Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 3 grudnia 1927 roku o prawie łowieckim (Dz. Ust. Nr 110), p. 30.

overloading, inadequate transportation, frightening and teasing. Any violation of these regulations was to be punished with a substantial fine or six weeks of detention, as well as combined penalties.⁴⁸ However, the Presidential Act of 22 March 1928 did not change the sad fate of many Polish animals. Throughout the subsequent years, emaciated and overloaded horses, starving cats, stray dogs hunted by dog catchers, or birds chased away with stones by teenagers remained a disgraceful feature of Polish villages and cities. These images suggested to foreigners that they were still in the barbaric East. Polish animal rights activists were aware of the country's poor reputation. The culture shock experienced by Western visitors at the ignoble treatment of animals was addressed in 1933 by Zygmunt Nowakowski, the president of the Cracow ZOZ. Poles should be ashamed, he said, mentioning a Frenchman who had taken pity on the fate of horses in Łódź. He also said that three years earlier, another renowned foreigner, the great English novelist John Galsworthy (who had since died), had noticed the same thing. When the novelist was leaving the country, he was asked if he had enjoyed his stay and what he thought about the Poles. He said he judged Poland based on the way the Poles treated animals which, as he observed, was barbaric.⁴⁹ Nowakowski's reflections completed, to some extent, the picture presented by other activists of the Cracow TOZ. In Cracow, which was popular among Western tourists, local animal protectors bitterly noted the way horses were whipped and beaten by coachmen or the way horse carriages were overloaded. Members of the Cracow ZOZ indicated that such behaviour was not tolerated in any of the civilised European countries and, in fact, was severely punished by police.⁵⁰ The situation was no better in the Polish capital of Warsaw, and seeing the way horses were treated there shocked not only tourists. In 1933–34, French diplomats watched attentively and sadly while their new embassy in Warsaw was being built. Heavy building materials were brought to the site by horses. An extensive article by Rudzińska addressed this problem and compared this treatment with the completely different way of treating animals in England or France. She wrote:

Let us look at these matters through the eyes of a foreigner staying in Poland. What do foreign embassies think of us? For diplomatic reasons,

⁴⁸ Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dn. 22 marca 1928, AAN (State Archives of Modern Records), Komenda Główna Policji Państwowej (Headquarters of the State Police), ref. no. 2106, [n. pag.].

⁴⁹ Zygmunt Nowakowski, *Różowa legitymacja*, Cracow, 1933, p. 7.

⁵⁰ To the City Governor of Cracow, a letter of Cracow ZOZ, Cracow, 2 September 1929, ANK, ZOZ 1, ref. no. ZOZ/1, c. 277.

it does not become them to start such discussions. The United Animal Care Association knows something about it. In 1933–34, the French embassy building was being built in Frascati, which was accompanied by well-known ‘family’ scenes from the construction site. At that time, the telephone of the Animal Care Association in Wiejska Street never stopped ringing. These were enquiries, demands, requests, cries for help. Finally, a foreigner who could not bear the sight outside his window offered to lend a horse to aid the tormented animals.⁵¹

Such interventions by foreigners who were shocked by the harm and suffering incurred by Polish animals were not rare. The consequences of such interventions were unknown; certainly they did not always end pleasantly or safely. Some tourists admitted that they had intervened in defence of oppressed animals more than a dozen times. One of them was a young Englishman who visited Poland in April 1935. On his way back to England, basing his opinions on observations made in Warsaw, he reproached the animal protection organisation there for lacking energy.⁵² Furthermore, the characterisation of the dehumanised attitude of the Poles toward animals was spread abroad by others, not only tourists visiting Poland. This negative opinion of Poland as a country that did not care about the fate of animals developed in one additional way. Trains with trampled swine, dehydrated cattle, and injured, starving horses arrived in Western Europe or in neighbouring Czechoslovakia. More and more often, Polish animal rights groups received letters of alarm and documentation of these incidents from friendly Western associations. The greatest number of notifications came from Austria. For instance, in February 1930 the Lublin branch of PLPZ received a protocol drawn up by Franz Singer, an inspector in the Viennese animal rights association. The letter was a horrifying description of the transport of horses from Poland to Austria. At the Hohenau station, the inspector found eight overloaded carriages with 177 densely packed, injured, and starving horses on their way from Lublin, Jarosław, Cracow and Sędziszów Małopolski to Vienna.⁵³ Singer immediately ordered all of the animals to be unloaded and fed immediately. Cases of trains overloaded with exhausted animals arriving in other countries from Poland were reported to the Polish authorities by branches of the PLPZ, ZOZ and TOZ. The Polish Minister of Agriculture

⁵¹ Rudzińska, ‘U nich i u nas’, p. 2.

⁵² Stanisława Goryńska, ‘Blaski i cienie propagandy: W drodze do Anglii’, *Czas*, 6 May 1935, 123, p. 2.

⁵³ A copy of the protocol prepared by Franz Singer, an inspector of the Animal Protection Association in Vienna, Vienna, 2 February 1930, ANK, Urząd Wojewódzki Krakowski (Voivod Office of Cracow), ref. no. 444.

received direct reports about such incidents. For example, on 14 August 1932, Czechoslovakian veterinary services at the Bohumin station found fifty-two suffocated pigs in a single overloaded carriage going from Lubartów at Lublin to Vienna.⁵⁴ Such incidents confirmed to Polish authorities that continuing to disregard them was harmful for Poland's image. At the end of November 1932, the Province Office in Poznań demonstrated the consequences of such incidents to presidents and governors of cities in the Wielkopolska province, stating that this state of affairs (that is the consequences of improper animal transport abroad) had frequently caused repercussions in the foreign press, which did considerable harm to Poland's international relations and reputation.⁵⁵ However, the interest of Polish authorities of various ranks rarely resulted from concern and empathy for animals. Rather, these steps were dictated by political considerations. Such drastic cases involving animals certainly damaged the image of Poland, which was struggling with various social, economic and political problems, as well as issues concerning national minorities. Even worse, they enabled comparisons between Poland and the allegedly uncultured Soviet Union. Norman Davies has correctly noted that Poland before 1939 was marked by a sense of strong ties to Western Europe.⁵⁶ The loss of these ties would prove to be a serious blow. Polish people were proud of the Act of March 1928. However, for many 'animal lovers' in the West, the Polish Act of December 1927 was much more important.

Poland: A Paradise for Western Hunters

Poland has long had great hunting traditions. A considerable segment of this costly hobby, which has little to do with liking animals, was reserved for the elites. In the case of Poland, hunting was the continuation of former chivalrous traditions. Cultivating the hunting ethos served as a reminder of the power of sixteenth-century Poland. Foreign visitors often eagerly took part in hunts organised by Polish aristocrats. The Dutch, French and English were enraptured by the richness of Polish forests.

⁵⁴ A copy of a letter of the Department Director [the signature is illegible — R.K.] acting as the General Veterinary Inspector at the Ministry of Agriculture to the Governor in Lublin, Warsaw, 6 September 1932, Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu (Poznań State Archive, hereinafter: APP), Archiwum Miasta Poznania (Archive of the City of Poznań, hereinafter: AMP), ref. no. 11758.

⁵⁵ A letter of the Province Office in Poznań concerning the cooperation of veterinarians in care over animals, Poznań, 28 November 1932, APP, AMP, ref. no. 11758.

⁵⁶ Davies, *Heart of Europe*, p. 134.

Some, like the English lieutenant general Adrian Carton de Wiart, were so enchanted by the hunting potential of Polish forests that they decided to settle in Poland permanently.⁵⁷ In the mid-1930s, Poland was considered a 'hunting paradise' among French hunters, a judgment which was flattering to Polish hunters. In April 1934, during an international hunting banquet in Warsaw, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, the president of the Polish Hunting Association, stated that hunting had been the Polish national sport for centuries. To encourage foreign guests to hunt in Poland, the General said: 'I am of the opinion that each statesman of every country should have a statutory duty to hunt.'⁵⁸ Polish national 'representative hunts' became very famous in Europe, gathering Polish presidents, ministers and ambassadors from all countries with which Poland maintained diplomatic relations. Towards the end of the 1930s, hunts in Poland also attracted foreign politicians, such as the Italian minister of foreign affairs Galeazzo Ciano, Hermann Göring and the Hungarian regent Miklós Horthy.⁵⁹ As has already been mentioned, President Mościcki, a passionate hunter, was an honorary member of the PLPZ, and his foreign hunting guests included representatives of those countries which Polish animal rights activists saw as worthy models to be emulated.

Viewed in this light, one can compare the situation in Poland with that in the United Kingdom, where the media campaigns against hunting conducted by the *Daily Herald* and *Daily Express* played a major role. In a poll conducted in 1936 by the *Daily Express*, 55.2% of respondents opposed hunting. British animal rights organisations joined forces in order to force members of Parliament to ban hunting. This campaign, however, failed to produce positive results before the Second World War.⁶⁰ In Poland, the situation was even more difficult. It was much easier for Polish animal rights associations and unions to defend horses, cats, dogs and domestic animals than to jointly and firmly defend the rights of bears, wolves and lynx. Certainly, hunters were criticised in the 1920s and 1930s by, among others, the previously-mentioned Maszewska-Knappe. This, however, did not change the fact that the PLPZ, TOZ and ZOZ focussed mainly on the fight for the rights of domestic rather than wild animals. This was true for two reasons. First of all, Polish animal rights activists were mainly of middle-class origin; thus the fate of

⁵⁷ Stanisław Dzikowski, *Egzotyczna Polska: Z myśliwskiej włóczędzy*, Warsaw, 1931, p. 29.

⁵⁸ 'O myślistwie i jego czarach', *Polska Zbrojna*, 24 April 1934, 110, p. 2.

⁵⁹ Iwona Kienzler, *Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne: Darz bór (myśliwi i leśnicy)*, Warsaw, 2014 (*Dwudziestolecie Międzywojenne*, 34), pp. 90–117.

⁶⁰ Hildy Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800*, London, 1998, p. 186.

animals suffering in cities was something they could easily relate to, while they did not actively participate in the hunts organized and carried out by Polish elites. Second, it could not be expected that TOZ, ZOZ and PLPZ activists would criticise government representatives shooting at bears. The sight of foreign guests hunting with delight prompted various reflections. It was hard to believe that visitors from Western Europe who posed on one hand for photographs with the carcasses of wolves, lynx, and bears hunted down in Polish forests, and on the other caressing dogs and cats at home could serve as authorities for animal rights activists. There were very few people in Poland prior to 1939 who mentioned that the passionate hunters in African colonies were mainly rich Englishmen, French, Italians and Belgians. The Polish press remained silent about this aspect. The cause of this taboo was probably the fact that it was a great ambition of Poland, reborn in 1918, to have its own African colony, as evidenced by the dynamic operations in pre-war Poland of the Maritime and Colonial League, a lobbying organisation that collected funds to purchase Poland's own colony in Africa. Some Polish diplomats even assumed that offering animals from Polish zoological gardens to similar facilities in friendly countries would be most appreciated by local hunters there. In April 1935, Zygmunt Bieczkowicz, a Polish envoy in Riga, suggested that it would be advisable to supply the Latvians with a Polish bison, a Tatra chamois, or a Carpathian deer. In a letter to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the envoy insisted that such a gift would evoke a lively response from the Latvians, who were keen hunters.⁶¹ In July 1936, at the request of the Polish legation in Belgrade, Jan Żabiński, the director of the Warsaw Zoo, offered to provide a new facility being established in Yugoslavia with (among others) a dingo, some fallow deer, parrots, several species of monkeys, and a male and female leopard.⁶² The developing Belgrade Zoo expressed interest in having a male leopard and a female white fallow deer.⁶³ The fact is that during the 'representative hunts', guests liked to hunt large animals. In the Białowieża Forest, Göring most enjoyed hunting lynx and wolves.⁶⁴ 'Representative hunts' were not just a matter of passion and entertainment. During the hunts, political talks were conducted. Unfortunately, the price was the lives of many bears, wolves, lynx and other animals from

⁶¹ AAN, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (Foreign Office of Poland, hereinafter: MSZ), Riga, 11 April 1935, (microfilm) ref. no. 8160.

⁶² AAN, MSZ, Belgrade, 7 July 1936, (microfilm) ref. no. 8157.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ AAN, Ambasada Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Berlinie (Embassy of the Polish Republic in Berlin), 14 December 1935, c. 22, ref. no. 2842.

Polish forests. Such hunts in the Białowieża Forest, as well as a number of other similar hunting events in Poland, met all the assumptions concerning a then-fashionable hunting expedition, as described by Matt Cartmill. These were ceremonial events, and their victims were wild, free, unfriendly and untameable animals.⁶⁵ A greater number of guests from Belgium, Italy, England, France and Germany were coming to these hunts in Poland than to the Animal Days events in their home countries. This attitude of guests from Western Europe was a great disappointment for many Polish defenders of animal rights.

Insincere Love for Animals: Critics of the West in Poland

In light of the above hunting expeditions, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a widespread opinion circulated among Poles that the empathy of the West towards animals was strongly discriminatory. Poles observed that dogs, horses and cats, that is domestic or pet animals, were treated diametrically differently than wild or untamed animals. The former were approached with concern, gentleness, and affection; while the latter were exposed to the ruthlessness of people guided by hostile hunting instincts. Władysław Spausta, born in Sambor (today part of western Ukraine), a natural scientist, traveller, and writer who dealt with hunting, was very critical of this attitude. In the late nineteenth century Spausta wrote that English hunters who travelled to the Scandinavian countries were wreaking havoc among the elk there. In his opinion, even more extensive damage was caused by elk (and moose) hunting in the United States, the reason being excessive greed and thoughtlessness on the part of Americans.⁶⁶ Representatives of Polish academia showed much more courage, including Walery Goetel, a professor from Cracow who travelled in Africa from June 1929 to January 1930. Thereafter in February 1930, during a meeting in Cracow, Professor Goetel gave a speech in which he mentioned the shocking fact that thirty thousand elephants had been killed in the Belgian Congo within a single year.⁶⁷ Marian Zdziechowski was even more harsh in judging the attitude of the Western civilisation towards animals. In 1928, this eminent Polish historian of ideas and philosophy professor from the University of Vilnius published a famous book entitled

⁶⁵ Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History*, Cambridge, MA, 2009, p. 29.

⁶⁶ Władysław Spausta, *Na tropach: Obrazki przyrodniczo-łowieckie*, Lviv, 1896, pp. 176–79.

⁶⁷ A.S., 'Sprawy bieżące: Odczyt Prof. W. Goetla', *Łowiec*, 1930, 6, p. 95.

O okrucieństwie (On Cruelty) that provoked considerable interest. One of the chapters analysed the cruelty of humans towards animals. The Polish philosopher criticised Englishmen and Americans for their callous and brutal slaughter of seals and whales. However, it was the Spanish *corrida*, or bullfight, that received the greatest criticism. Zdziechowski said that it was 'a game shaming the Spanish people'.⁶⁸ The bullfight was the tradition most criticised and censured in the Polish press. Spain was depicted as an example of official and unhampered brutality towards animals. For instance, in November 1927, the socialist periodical *Pobudka* described a bullfight as a wild, cruel show that excited men as well as women and children. In the author's opinion, the events that took place in the arena surely disgusted decent foreigners. 'He [that is a foreigner watching a bullfight — R.K.] is ashamed that he also is one of the men enjoying the torment of animals and risk to the life of the contestants.'⁶⁹ In Poland this was judged not only in terms of cruelty to helpless animals. This 'inhumane butchery', as the *corrida* was often called, was, in the opinion of some, testimony to Spanish cowardliness, as well as a way to cure psychological complexes. It was believed that the cruel custom of killing bulls provided the lazy and kitsch-loving Spaniards with extra vitality, energy, and will to live. In 1932, Jalu Kurek wrote that, 'Spaniards, who are a lazy, sluggish and apathetic nation (those who have been to Spain confirm this), demonstrate great liveliness and interest for this tawdry and bloody game.'⁷⁰ In Poland the bullfight was inseparably associated with Spain. Many open-minded Poles believed that the Spanish treated all animals with exceptional disdain, forgetting or ignoring that numerous residents of Southern France also approved of this form of 'entertainment'. Even more shocking was that, as Éric Baratay wrote, most French residents tolerated this tradition.⁷¹ However, no one even mentioned this in Poland. In France, which in pre-war Poland was seen as one of the role models of humanitarian attitudes towards animals, the situation was thus not as good as it might have seemed. After 1919, the fate of horses working in French mines deteriorated in comparison with the nineteenth century. Hard-working animals were forced to drag a greater number of carriages. Moreover, these horses were given less time to rest than before. In the first half of the twentieth

⁶⁸ Marian Zdziechowski, *O okrucieństwie*, Cracow, 1993, p. 52.

⁶⁹ 'Walka byków w Hiszpanii', *Pobudka*, 1927, 46, p. 11.

⁷⁰ Jalu Kurek, 'Jak tam z bykami? Wrażenia z corridy', *IKC*, 3 August 1932, 213, pp. 2–3 (p. 3).

⁷¹ Éric Baratay, *Le point de vue animal: Une autre version de l'histoire*, Paris, 2012; Polish version: *Zwierzęcy punkt widzenia: Inna wersja historii*, transl. Paulina Tarasewicz, Gdańsk, 2014, p. 319.

century the obligation, introduced in 1898, to feed cattle being transported by rail was lifted.⁷² Such regression in regulations concerning animal treatment did not occur in Poland. However, the Polish TOZ, ZOZ and PLPZ did not note any improvement in the fate of horses working in mines. Pre-war organisations defending animals in Poland did not engage in political life. As already noted, they were led primarily by people with ties to the ruling establishment. Therefore it was hard to imagine these organisations criticising allied countries such as France or England. Only a few took the liberty to express independent and negative opinions, mainly individuals enjoying great social acclaim and scientific prestige. Their ranks included individuals such as Goetel and Zdziechowski.

Conclusions

Animal treatment in Western Europe was considered a paradise by pre-war Polish activists. Poles who visited England, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Sweden experienced culture shock. They watched with astonishment as people entered cafes and restaurants with cats and dogs. They saw neat and tidy horses treated as friends rather than working tools. A large number of newspapers, which had not always demonstrated a positive attitude towards Germany, could not conceal their admiration for the efficiency with which German animal rights groups functioned. The cooperation of the Polish branches of TOZ, ZOZ and PLPZ with animal rights groups from Austria, Germany, Great Britain and France played a major role in making Polish society sensitive to the suffering of animals. The idea of Animal Days, organised in various Polish towns and cities in 1929–39, was derived from France. As in France, Polish activists managed to engage certain priests who delivered special sermons on these days. While most Catholic priests refrained from propagating the idea of animal protection, nevertheless some radical animal defenders could also be found in such circles. One of them was Jan Dziędzielewicz, a Catholic priest from Lviv. He believed that the disdainful treatment of animals represented a contemporary form of slavery. He underlined the purity of soul and sinlessness of animals which, in his opinion, deserved praise from people.⁷³ Such words could however be considered as heresy, even in the contemporary Roman Catholic church. Similar views were more typical of Protestant and Anglican theological thought. The ideas of Protestant

⁷² Ibid., pp. 95, 157.

⁷³ 'Kościół o ochronie zwierząt', *Świat Zwierzęcy*, 1930, 8/9, pp. 85–86.

theology played an important role in the evolution of animal protection in Great Britain. The paradigm of generosity, in which 'the stronger' always sacrifices himself for 'the weaker', was significant in this context. A well-known British theologian, Andrew Linzey, concluded that the Biblical credo 'For I was hungry, and you fed me' also referred to the relationships of humans and animals.⁷⁴ However, it would seem that even if all pre-war Polish priests had called for fair treatment for animals, little would have changed.

The problem lay elsewhere. Pre-war Poland was a poor agricultural country. Every year between 1918 and 1939 thousands of unemployed and homeless citizens awaited assistance. The situation was exceptionally bad in numerous overpopulated villages in which peasants cultivated small plots of land. The Polish nation thus kept fighting the forces of nature, and the animal-protection initiatives of TOZ, ZOZ, LOZ and PLPZ were considered whims of the mannered, mad, rich urban bourgeoisie. What's more, rural circles were very critical not only of the new act on animal protection of March 1928, but also of the new hunting regulations introduced on 3 December 1927. The ordinance of 1927 strictly regulated the protection of both transient and permanent animals and specified penalties for disobedience. The act on hunting applied, at least theoretically, to poaching, which prior to 1939 was a common phenomenon in many Polish villages. In January 1928, Józef Putek of the *Wyzwolenie* (Liberation) Polish Peasant Party compared the presidential decree issued in December 1927 with the philosophy of one of the American sects. 'There is a sect somewhere in America that observes a religious law that bans killing and eating animals. The authors of the decree on hunting could as well be priests in such a sect since their decree, providing legal protection to wild and dangerous beasts, is maximal sectarianism.'⁷⁵ Wolves, deer, boars, foxes and martens were the peasants' enemies, since they constituted a constant threat to frequently arid land, modest crops, and the lives of domestic animals kept for practical reasons. In pragmatic peasant thinking, the only animals that mattered were horses, cows, pigs, hens, ducks and geese. They were taken care of in villages, but only because of the benefits inherent in their exploitation. In the countryside, farm animals were treated better than dogs and cats, whose position on the hierarchical ladder was

⁷⁴ Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology*, London, 1994, vide Polish version; Andrew Linzey, *Teologia zwierząt*, transl. Wiktor Kostrzewski, Cracow, 2010, p. 62.

⁷⁵ Józef Putek, 'Opiekunowie wilków, dzików i niedźwiedzi', *Wyzwolenie*, 1928, 4, pp. 8-9 (p. 8).

considerably lower. Cats and dogs provided no eggs or milk. The poor Polish countryside was considerably anthropocentric and extremely pragmatic.⁷⁶ The residents of rural areas and the majority of the entire Polish society (including the majority of representatives of the working class and intelligentsia) shared a peasant origin. It is no wonder then that it was difficult to overcome 'peasant mentality', which postulated that an animal had only utilitarian value.⁷⁷ Attempts to copy the way the rich German, French, and primarily English people treated animals and introduce it into economically poor Poland turned out to be utopian. In those countries, dogs and cats were treated more as friends and companions than as subjects or slaves. Moreover, Western people also took better care of domestic animals. This reality could not be changed instantly, even through the best and most modern acts or regulations. Rigorous education and, above all, improvement of the living conditions for people was the only chance. At the same time some Polish defenders of animal rights, for example Zdziechowski and Goetel, approached the rich Western societies with anything but enthusiasm. A number of intellectuals knew very well that many of the English, French, Belgian, Dutch and German people who took pity on their horses, cats and dogs went eagerly and cheerfully on hunts to other places in the world. The uncritical enthusiasm of Polish animal lovers regarding France and England, which were impossible models to follow, is also an interesting study of how an insurmountable Polish inferiority complex is mixed with a feeling of superiority towards Western Europe. Polish activists were aware of the fact that the streets of Vilnius, Lviv and Cracow would not see a dog entering a cafe or cinema, as in Paris, for a long time to come. It was unimaginable that someone in Warsaw would find courage to call a dog or cat publicly by the name of a well-known politician, as in London. The awareness of the remoteness of the Polish lifestyle from that of the West, and at the same time a sense of belonging to the savage East, provoked frustration. However, there was only a short distance between admiration of and disdain towards the West, which sometimes assumed grotesque forms. Embitterment led to absurdity. How else can one regard the slogan 'A Polish dog in a Polish household' or the claim that a German Shepherd was less valuable than a Polish Tatra Sheepdog? It was also comical to interpret the return of the European bison to the Białowieża Forest as a symbol of the restoration of the former power of Poland.

⁷⁶ Bazyli Szmielew, 'Atawizm w permanencji', *Wiadomości Literackie*, 1938, 32, p. 6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Considering the many problems Poland struggled with in the years 1918–39, animal protection issues never became a priority. Thus it is even more significant that many people, organisations and periodicals tried — often based on an idealised and not always accurate image of Western countries — to change the attitude of Polish society towards animals. However, these initiatives were brutally interrupted by the outbreak of war, the years of occupation, and the communist enslavement of Poland. Therefore it is difficult to objectively assess whether and to what extent the pre-1939 initiatives exerted any significant effect in a country occupied and deprived of independence for sixty years. The situation changed after 1989. In the currently free and incomparably more affluent Poland, the fate of animals is significantly better than it was before the Second World War. Perhaps the struggle of pre-war animal advocates was not completely in vain.

Summary

In interwar Poland, there were numerous animal care organizations in which writers, journalists, lawyers, teachers, doctors and city mayors were active. Even before Poland regained its independence, Polish writers like Henryk Sienkiewicz, Stefan Żeromski and Zygmunt Bartkiewicz drew attention to the exceptionally cordial and caring attitude of Western European societies towards animals, and they dreamed of building such relations on Polish soil. That was the goal set by animal advocates in independent Poland during the inter-war period, as they strengthened their contacts with Western animal welfare organizations and participated in international conferences devoted to improving the welfare of animals. Poles returning to their homeland from visits to Austria, Belgium, Germany, and especially France and Great Britain were charmed by the friendly treatment of animals by the citizens of these countries. They appealed and called for similar treatment of animals in Poland. Writers such as Zygmunt Nowakowski tried in their books and journalism to shame Poles and make them aware that foreigners observed almost daily cases of cruelty to animals in our country. Following the example of France, between 1929 and 1939 Polish towns and cities celebrated an annual, so-called ‘Day of Kindness to Animals’, which Janina Maszewska-Knappe promoted on a Polish radio program in February 1928. However in Poland — which was poor and full of social and political tensions between the two World Wars — transferring the model of caring and brotherly treatment of animals from wealthy Western Europe was a back-breaking task. In addition, not everyone in Poland before 1939 considered the ‘West’ as a model of ideal behaviour towards animals. Walery Goetel, Jalu Kurek, and especially Marian Zdziechowski were critical of Western threatment of animals, which the latter expressed in his famous book *O okrucieństwie* (On Cruelty).

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