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Background and cases of nationalization in Poland in the Stalinist Era – an example of Lublin’s tanning industry

SUMMARY

Background and cases of nationalization in Poland in the Stalinist Era – an example of Lublin’s tanning industry

The nationalization processes in People’s Poland had already begun at the time of establishment of the Polish Committee of National Liberation. Enterprises were submitted under temporary state management and were expropriated on the basis of various regulations, including those enacted by Pilsudski’s sanitation. The food industry was nationalized as part of the land reform. Industrial enterprises which were able to employ more than 50 employees on one shift (it was quite indefinite) were nationalized by the act on nationalization of 3 January 1946. Next, factories were taken over by political decisions of the communist Polish United Workers’ Party. On the other hand, the reconstruction of industry after the Nazi and Soviet devastation, rescuing of work places, concern for inhabitants’ lives, supplies of food and goods, needed extraordinary measures. It is demonstrated by the example of the tanning industry in Lublin – where the Polish Committee of National Liberation had its headquarters. However, the nationalization in post-war Poland served the communists political interests and was one of the means used by the communist political class to introduce the totalitarian system.

Key words: nationalization, Stalinist Era, tanning industry

Słowa kluczowe: nacjonalizacja, przemysł garbarski, stalinizm

“The proletariat will use its political supremacy, to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible”¹ – those words

¹ *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, by K. Marx, F. Engels, transl. S. Moore, Chicago 1910, p. 41.

from the “Communist Manifesto” were one of the most important indications of the communist’s economic policies in the 19th and 20th centuries.

69 years later, in 1917, came the Bolshevik Revolution. In July 1944, the communists were installed in Poland. In the April Theses Vladimir Ilyich Lenin promised “Nationalization of all lands in the country”². Later the time came in Russia for nationalization of factories, expropriation of entrepreneurs and the party laid its “hands on the fabulous profits of the capitalists and bankers”³. The ruin for private entrepreneurship was brought by the Russian Civil War, but already in January 1920, David Lloyd George’s Cabinet signed an agreement with the Bolsheviks and the economic blockade of Russia was lifted⁴. The tsarist gold, treasures and antiques could flow to West European speculators and bankers, and the weapons could flow to the Red Army⁵. Western corporations invested in the Soviet Union⁶. In 1922 Russia and Germany signed the Treaty of Rapallo to cooperate “in a spirit of mutual goodwill in meeting the economic needs of both countries”⁷. The communists rebuilt their economy and built the totalitarian system. It was not the establishment of “the conditions for co-operative production on a social scale” – as Marx said⁸. The Marx’s idea of “social ownership” or “ownership by the people” was changed to “state ownership” – including nationalization⁹.

On the contrary, in the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation of 22 July 1944, there was no mention of nationalization¹⁰:

The property robbed by the Germans from citizens, peasants, merchants, craftsmen, small and medium-sized industrialists, institutions and the Church shall be returned to its rightful owners. German estates shall be confiscated. The existence of Jews, brutally exterminated by the invader, shall be rebuilt and their legal and actual equal rights shall be guaranteed.

² V.I. Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution*, In: *Lenin’s Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, vol. 24, Moscow 1964, pp. 19–26. Online: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm> (24.11.2016).

³ V.I. Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution (Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party)*, in: *Lenin’s Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, vol. 24, Moscow 1964, pp. 55–92. Online: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/tasks/index.htm> (24.11.2016).

⁴ M. Nowak-Kielbikowa, *Polityka Wielkiej Brytanii wobec Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1918–1921*, “Studia z dziejów ZSRR i Europy Środkowej” 1970, vol. 6, p. 100.

⁵ S. McMeekin, *History’s Greatest Heist. The Looting of Russia by the Bolsheviks*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2009.

⁶ A. Fedorowicz, *Jak Zachód dolarami uratował Lenina*, “Wprost” 29. June 2014, <https://www.wprost.pl/454096/mob.html> (24.11.2016).

⁷ *German-Russian Agreement; April 16, 1922 (Treaty of Rapallo)*, Yale Law School: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/rapallo_001.asp (24.11.2016).

⁸ K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Foreign Language Press, Peking 1972, p. 25. Online: <https://archive.org/> (24.11.2016).

⁹ S.H. Lee, *The end of communism*, Shinjuku-Tokio 2013, p. 438.

¹⁰ Dz.U. 1944, Nr 1.

The national property, controlled today by the German state and individual German capitalists, that is large industrial, trade, banking and transport enterprises and forests, shall go under Temporary State Management. In the course of regulating the economic relations, ownership shall be restored.

Furthermore, in the first weeks, the official guidelines of the new authorities ordered prompt return of real estate and enterprises confiscated by the Nazis¹¹.

For comparison: the Labour Cabinet nationalized civil aviation, coal mining, railways, water and long-distance road haulage, telecommunications, electricity, gas and the steel industry. The guidelines were similar and Clement Attlee issued an announcement about the nationalization of coal: "Today, January 1st, 1947, will be remembered as one of the great days in the industrial history of our country. The coal-mines now belong to the nation. This act offers great possibilities of social advance for the workers, and indeed the whole nation"¹².

In Russia, the decree on nationalization of large-scale industries was issued on 28 June 1918. Bolsheviks declared "all of the following industrial and commercial enterprises which are located in the Soviet Republic, with all their capital and property, whatever they may consist of, [will become] the property of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic"¹³. In Poland, the first step was the decree on land reform of 6 September 1944¹⁴. By expropriating the landed gentry, the people's government took over "industrial enterprises irrespective of their types, possessed capacity and size; their nationalization was based on location of the property encompassed by the land reform. Predominantly, it pertained to sugar factories, mills, breweries, distilleries etc."¹⁵. In other words, already in autumn 1944 the communists had taken over all food industry in rural areas. The people's government, with a series of legal acts, decided also on the properties which had been abandoned by their owners. It pertained to the properties of missing persons, including enterprises¹⁶.

¹¹ 1944, wrzesień 18, *bm*. Okólnik kierownika Resortu Administracji Publicznej PKWN, Stanisława Kotek-Agroszewskiego w sprawie przyspieszenia zwrotu obywatelom polskim majątku nieruchomego oraz przedsiębiorstw przemysłowych i handlowych skonfiskowanych przez okupanta, In: *Upaństwowienie i odbudowa przemysłu w Polsce (1944–1948). Materiały źródłowe*, ed. by H. Jędruszczak, vol. 1, Warszawa 1967, p. 51.

¹² *Nationalisation of coal*, materials of The National Archives, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/attlees-britain/nationalisation-coal/> (24.11.2016).

¹³ *Decree on Nationalization of Large-Scale Industries, June 28, 1918*, In: *Communist Decrees and Legislation*, http://college.cengage.com/history/primary_sources/world/communist_decrees.htm (24.11.2016).

¹⁴ Dekret Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego z dnia 6 września 1944 r. o przeprowadzeniu reformy rolnej, Dz.U. Nr 4, poz. 17.

¹⁵ J. Topiński, *Nacjonalizacja przemysłu w Polsce*, "Polska Ludowa. Materiały i Studia" 1967, vol. 6, pp. 101–102.

¹⁶ Ustawa z dnia 6 maja 1945 r. o majątkach opuszczonych i porzuconych, Dz.U. Nr 17, poz. 97; Dekret z dnia 8 marca 1946 r. o majątkach opuszczonych i poniemieckich, Dz.U. Nr 13, poz. 87.

The most important was the act on nationalization enacted on 3 January 1946¹⁷. The key norm established by that law was that “the State takes over the industrial enterprises when they are able to employ more than 50 employees on one shift” (article 3, passage 1, letter B). Formally, nationalization was compensated with damages, but in reality the damages were fictitious¹⁸. Additionally, the clause of full employment capacity was interpreted broadly¹⁹. In this way practically every business could be nationalized, even very small industrial enterprises²⁰. The propaganda literature said that “the government bill was not aimed at the nationalization of everything”²¹. In practice, private business was to be eliminated. More incredible, is that the communist law of nationalization is still in force today, along with the decree of President Bierut of 20 December 1946, which amended this law²². Therefore, the Polish literature and legal doctrine developed the rules of evaluation of validity of pre-war constitutional norms concerning property law obedience in the People’s Poland times²³. Thus, we can say that the Polish legislator after 1989 did not generally question the legal order of the Polish People’s Republic. On the constitutional basis of 1997, the judicial bodies do not have competence to independently evaluate the legal consequences of events that brought about the assumption of power by the authorities of People’s Poland. They cannot claim that it was unconstitutional. They do not have grounds for using regulations which were not accepted by the people’s government and they should appeal only to those regulations which were actually used by the people’s government and to such an extent in which they were really used.

The Polish act on nationalization was not as particular, as the Electricity Act or the Transport Act, and was not enacted by the parliament but by the State National Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*) – a parliament-like political body created by the communists under Soviet control. From the legislative perspective, the establishment of boards or committees came first in Poland, while the opening of state trusts was secondary. It was an effect of nationalization for finding favourable industry structures. The nationalization of individual enter-

¹⁷ Ustawa z dnia 3 stycznia 1946 r. o przejściu na własność Państwa podstawowych gałęzi gospodarki narodowej, Dz.U. Nr 3, poz. 17.

¹⁸ J. Beksiak et al., *Polska gospodarka w XX wieku. Eseje historyczno-ekonomiczne*, Łódź 2003, p. 26.

¹⁹ S. Szteyner, *Jak rozumieć „zdolne są zatrudnić”? Na marginesie ustawy o upaństwowieniu*, “Wiadomości Gospodarcze” 1946, iss. 12/13, p. 8.

²⁰ State Archive in Lublin, Collection 640: “Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa w Lublinie”, Unit 175, p. 44: *Chamber’s of Industry and Commerce in Lublin letter to Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Warsaw*, 12. March 1946.

²¹ J. Gołębiowski, *Nacjonalizacja przemysłu w Polsce*, Warszawa 1965, p. 312.

²² Dekret z dnia 20 grudnia 1946 r. o zmianie ustawy z dnia 3 stycznia 1946 r. o przejściu na własność Państwa podstawowych gałęzi gospodarki narodowej, Dz.U. Nr 72, poz. 394.

²³ M. Wiącek, *Znaczenie stosowania Konstytucji marcowej w Polsce Ludowej dla orzecznictwa sądów i Trybunału Konstytucyjnego III RP*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 255–260.

prises was enacted by regulatory acts, not by statutory law. "Monitor Polski" – a journal for the publication of legal acts – published a lot of registers with the firms of work-places. The regulations were issued by ministers and chiefs of central boards and they were immediately enforceable. This method resembled the Soviet practice – as Silvana Malle wrote – "effective nationalization required the issue of individual decrees for each expropriated factory or industrial complex"²⁴.

There were no rules, and enterprises from the same branches or areas ended up in the registers at different times. All depended on a policy of local communist activists. For example, in February 1949 the committee of the Economic Department of the Polish United Workers' Party Voivodeship Committee in Lublin "chose to keep going, regardless of the sector's affiliation, 77 sawmills and to close 74 out of the total number of 151 existing state-owned, cooperative and private sawmills"²⁵. In practice, almost all private sawmills were closed and co-operative sawmills resumed work. The liquidation was irrational and in the face of transportation difficulties in the countryside, it reduced the possibilities of wood processing.

Furthermore, the communist government used at the same time various regulations of expropriation: the decree on forced state management of 16 December 1918²⁶ amended by the decree of 25 May 1927²⁷; the act on expropriation proceedings of 24 September 1934²⁸; the decree on state border of 23 December 1927²⁹; the act on the common duty of material services of 30 March 1939³⁰; the decree on extending of forced state management on the whole state area of 1 September 1939³¹; the above-mentioned act on nationalization of 3 January 1946; the decree on buying and handing over the real property which was in-

²⁴ S. Malle, *The Economic Organisation of War Communism, 1918–1921*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 61.

²⁵ State Archive in Lublin, Collection 1266: Komitet Wojewódzki Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej w Lublinie, Unit 2756, p. 1: *Protokół Komisji zwołanej w dniu 22.II.1949 r. w sprawie ustalenia statki rozmieszczenia tartaków na terenie województwa lubelskiego*.

²⁶ Dekret z dnia 16 grudnia 1918 r. w przedmiocie przymusowego zarządu państwowego, Dz.P.P.P. Nr 21, poz. 67.

²⁷ Rozporządzenie Prezydenta RP z dnia 25 maja 1927 r. o zmianie niektórych postanowień dekretu z dnia 16 grudnia 1918 r. w przedmiocie przymusowego zarządu państwowego, Dz.U. RP Nr 49, poz. 437.

²⁸ Rozporządzenie Prezydenta RP z dnia 24 września 1934 r. – Prawo o postępowaniu wyłączeniowym, Dz.U. RP Nr 86, poz. 776.

²⁹ Rozporządzenie Prezydenta RP z dnia 23 grudnia 1927 r. o granicach Państwa, Dz.U. RP Nr 117, poz. 996.

³⁰ Ustawa z dnia 30 marca 1939 r. o powszechnym obowiązku świadczeń rzeczowych, Dz.U. RP Nr 30, poz. 200.

³¹ Dekret Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 1 września 1939 r. o rozciągnięciu mocy obowiązującej dekretu w przedmiocie przymusowego zarządu państwowego na obszar całego Państwa, Dz.U. RP Nr 87, poz. 545.

dispensable in terms of realizing the national economic plans of 26 April 1949³². The regulation of the Chief of the State Commission for Economic Planning on issuing permits for export of work devices for emigrants of 17 November 1949³³ was based on the Council of Ministers' order on goods import and export ban of 1 September 1939³⁴.

As we can see, the communists in Poland used regulations which were enacted in various periods and by many rulers: Józef Piłsudski when he became Chief of State (*Naczelnik Państwa*) immediately after the Great War, sanation in the 1930s (the same sanation which the communists referred to as being fascist), war norms from the beginning of the World War II (still sanation) and socialist planning rules. They were dedicated to different aims not directly connected with nationalization. They realized Lenin's principles: the old forms were given new contents. What is important, the totalitarian communist system was based on the authoritarian sanation legislation. The nationalization was one of the basic methods of rebuilding of the political regime towards communism³⁵. It led to destruction of the authority of law, hypertrophy of general clauses (the act on nationalization is an example of that process), growth of repressive tendencies in law, "publicization" of private law, negating of property law, non-statutory amendment of law and finally the judicial reform of 1950³⁶.

In 1921 Lenin decreed the New Economic Policy (*Новая экономическая политика*), but following his death Stalin ordered the "exploiters" to be totally destroyed. In Poland, the post-war private sector, which right after the war experienced an economic boom, was gradually reduced and finally depreciated but not totally liquidated. Small entrepreneurs and craftsmen were regarded as petite bourgeoisie and had their own party: Alliance of Democrats (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*). The Alliance was a satellite party and a "transmission belt" between the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) and the intelligentsia, craftsmen and merchants³⁷. The Three-Year Plan of Reconstructing the Economy

³² Dekret z dnia 26 kwietnia 1949 r. o nabywaniu i przekazywaniu nieruchomości niezbędnych dla realizacji narodowych planów gospodarczych, Dz.U. Nr 27, poz. 197.

³³ Zarządzenie Przewodniczącego Państwowej Komisji Planowania Gospodarczego z dnia 17 listopada 1949 r. w sprawie wydawania pozwoleń na wywóz narzędzi pracy dla emigrantów, Monitor Polski A Nr 96, poz. 1140.

³⁴ Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 1 września 1939 r. o zakazie przywozu i wywozu towarów, Dz.U. RP Nr 87, poz. 555.

³⁵ W. Dudek, *Od nacjonalizacji do prywatyzacji. Aspekty polityczne i ekonomiczno-prawne*, Katowice 1995, p. 23.

³⁶ A. Stawarska-Rippel, *Prawo sądowe Polski Ludowej 1944–1950 a prawo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Katowice 2006, pp. 142–146.

³⁷ A. Andrusiewicz, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w systemie politycznym Polski Ludowej*, Warszawa 1985; A. Czubiński, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (1937–1989). Zarys dziejów*, Poznań 1998; J. Wrona, *Zależni czy suwerenni? Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w województwie lubelskim 1944–1975*, Lublin 1998; W. Żebrowski, *Z dziejów Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w Polsce*, Bydgoszcz 1999.

of 1947 provided for the development of three sectors: state-owned, cooperative and private. The Six-Year Plan of 1950 was more rigorous. The construction of the foundations of socialism meant: "reining and limiting of the capitalist elements in those areas in which they still live, further gradual squeezing, and next their liquidation as a class"³⁸.

In contrast to Russia, Poland was characterized by the existence of individual agriculture, the Catholic Church and the remains of a private sector in the national economy. There was an interesting phenomenon of arranged transfer of private enterprises to large state industry between the enterprise owners and directors of state trusts, cooperating with each other, in order to save the factories from closing³⁹ and extending protection of state trusts on private business environment institutions, like Gdynia Cotton Association which appraised the quality of cotton for the state textile industry⁴⁰.

1950 was the critical year for judicial law and a symbolical year in the Polish economy, not only due to the Six-Year Plan, but also for the chambers of industry and commerce, and commodities exchanges. It was two years after consolidation of the Polish Workers' Party and the Polish Socialist Party to form the PUPP; three years after the electoral fraud of 1947 and the "battle of trade" in the same year which brought private merchants to fall, and forced the action of corn purchase during which the authorities closed private mills⁴¹. The people's government carried out the land reform, the Polish landed gentry was dispossessed and eliminated as a social group; during "Operation Vistula" the Ukrainian minority was resettled from the south-eastern provinces to the Recovered Territories in the west of the country; the anti-communist resistance movements were defeated. The control over the economy was a part of society's conquest. Elements of the economic life command strategy included not only the nationalization of industrial enterprises but also the liquidation or transformation of organizations which represented entrepreneurs' interests. They became a part of the socialist regime and were subordinated to the system which in the literature was described as totalitarian⁴². This process was crowned by the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic⁴³.

³⁸ Ustawa z dnia 21 lipca 1950 r. o 6-letnim planie rozwoju gospodarczego i budowy podstaw socjalizmu na lata 1950–1955, Dz.U. Nr 37, poz. 344.

³⁹ J. Pustola, *Wspomnienia o przemyśle elektrotechnicznym XX wieku*, Pommard, Kielpin 2011, p. 30.

⁴⁰ R. Pfeiffer, *Geneza i dzieje Izby Arbitrażowej Bawełny w Gdyni*, Gdańsk 1976, p. 202.

⁴¹ Ł. Kamiński, *Polacy wobec nowej rzeczywistości 1944–1948. Formy pozainstytucjonalnego, żywiołowego oporu społecznego*, Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2000, p. 213; B. Sekściński, *Ogniu terroru. Delegatura Komisji Specjalnej do Walki z Nadużyciami i Szkodnictwem Gospodarczym w Lublinie*, Warszawa 2012, p. 271–295.

⁴² A. Paczkowski, *Polacy pod obcą i własną przemocą*, In: S. Courtois et al., *Czarna księga komunizmu. Zbrodnie, terror, prześladowania*, intr. K. Kersten, Warszawa 1999, p. 351.

⁴³ Konstytucja Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej uchwalona przez Sejm Ustawodawczy w dniu 22 lipca 1952 r., Dz.U. Nr 33, poz. 232.

Czesław Bobrowski – director of the Polish Central Planning Office wrote: “industry socialization was settled by the facts: if we add pre-war state industry, post-German property, foreign enterprises, domestic enterprises disgraced by collaboration with Germans and enterprises of Jews who died heirless, they are the overwhelming industry’s capital”⁴⁴. In July 1944 most factories and work places were under temporary state management. This form of management was the initial phase of nationalization and already in 1944 had features of permanence⁴⁵. It should not be forgotten that the situation in Central Poland was different than in the Białystok region, the Polish territories annexed by Nazi Germany and the Recovered Territories. After the 1st and 17th of September, Nazi and Soviet occupiers expropriated the Poles, Jews, Ukrainians and entrepreneurs of other nationalities⁴⁶. As Samuel Herman wrote: “The firm pre-war relationships of property tides and rights had been drastically modified by the Nazi occupants to an unparalleled degree in the history of modern war”⁴⁷.

But let us discuss this problem on the basis of Lublin’s tanning industry. This city in Eastern Poland was the capital of post-war Poland until 1st February 1945. There the economic ideas were formed and methods tested which were then disseminated in other Polish regions⁴⁸. The tanning industry was characterized by a series of middle-sized factories which were all located in the city – not in the province, as for example sugar factories. Moreover, in pre-war Poland, since the time of the Great Depression, all the tanneries were in Jewish hands⁴⁹. This was unlike other branches of industry in the Lublin region, such as breweries, weighing scales, agricultural machinery, cement plants or sawmills. In 1929 there were five “bigger tanneries in Lublin’s area”⁵⁰ – “bigger” meaning that these enterprises employed over 20 workers and were partly or wholly mechanised. Between 1930 and 1937 there were on average between

⁴⁴ Cz. Bobrowski, *Wspomnienia ze stulecia*, Lublin 1985, p. 163.

⁴⁵ I. Caban, *Lublin w okresie PKWN*, In: *Historia Lublina w zarysie 1317–1968*, ed. by H. Zins, Lublin 1972, pp. 188–189.

⁴⁶ M. Wierzbicki, *Sowiecka polityka ekonomiczna na ziemiach wschodnich przedwojennej Polski (tzw. Zachodniej Ukrainie i Zachodniej Białorusi) w latach 1939–1941*, “Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość” 2009, vol. 1, p. 201.

⁴⁷ S. Herman, *War damage and nationalization in Eastern Europe*, “Law and Contemporary Problems” 1951, vol. 16, p. 500.

⁴⁸ *Materiały do historii samorządu przemysłowo-handlowego w okresie od dn. 22 lipca 1944 r. do marca – kwietnia 1945 r. to jest z czasów siedziby Rządu R.P. w Lublinie (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem działalności Izby Przemysłowo-Handlowej w Lublinie)*, In: State Archive in Lublin, Collection 640, Unit 71; *Sprawozdanie z organizacji Izby Przemysłowo-Handlowej w Lublinie i stosunków gospodarczych jej okręgu za czas 22 lipca 1944 r. do 15 czerwca 1945 r.*, in: State Archive in Lublin, Collection 640, Unit 63; T. Osiański, *Powojenne problemy społeczno-gospodarcze Lubelszczyzny lat 1944–1945 w świetle sprawozdania Izby Przemysłowo-Handlowej w Lublinie*, “Res Historica” 2015, vol. 39, p. 275.

⁴⁹ A. Kierek, *Rozwój gospodarczy Lublina w latach 1918–1939*, in: *Dzieje Lublina*, vol. 2, ed. by S. Krzykała, Lublin 1975, p. 62; T. Radzik, W. Śladkowski, G. Wójcikowski, W. Wójcikowski, *Lublin dzieje miasta*, vol. 2: *XIX i XX wiek*, Lublin 2000, pp. 185–186.

⁵⁰ *I-sze Sprawozdanie Izby Przemysłowo-Handlowej w Lublinie za rok 1929*, Lublin 1930, p. 86.

five and seven important tanneries⁵¹. In contrast, small enterprises operated in very primitive conditions, worse than in craft workshops under the control of craftsmen guilds' in the 16th and 17th centuries⁵². Edward Weigle, an expert from the Polish Tanning Industrialists Association, said in January 1937: "I had (...) accidentally a chance to see a local depot for raw skins. It was just a hole dug in the ground, without floor and any sewage system. Raw material laid in a swamp made by water and blood flowing down from the skins"⁵³. The decree on hygiene and safety in skin-tanning plants of 7 May 1937 was disregarded⁵⁴. Damp, stuffy air and hard work in tanneries fatally influenced "workers' lungs, shoulders and digestive tract. (...) Workers (...) often suffered from severe spots on hands with wounds from which blood trickled. In contact with dirty material these could easily be infected"⁵⁵.

The most serious problems were: the disproportionate prices of raw materials and skin dyes in comparison to the value of the final product, low quality of land materials, difficulty with imports, high duties which prevented land market development and fluctuation of skin prices⁵⁶. Curing, dryer plants and warehouses were lacking, the culture of animal husbandry and cattle breeding were at a primitive level and rural agriculture resembled the times of sojage. Edmund Zalewski explained: "due to poor breeding conditions domestic cattle provide deficient slaughter material as far as skin is concerned. We do not have well-furnished cowsheds and pastures; both on pastures and in farmyards there is often disarray and lack of elementary hygiene rules. The pastures are fenced with barbed wire which cuts the cattle's skin, and in cowsheds dirt from manure and urine inflames the cuts and causes permanent injuries and skin illnesses"⁵⁷. In the countryside there were no funds, little chance of curing parasites, and workers in slaughterhouses, by way of their sloppiness, added to the toll of damaged or destroyed skins. Losses arising from "Skin damaged by worms, scars and blemishes" were more than 75%⁵⁸.

In the regions of former Congress Poland and Lesser Poland, in the trade of raw skins "near absolute anarchy reigned"⁵⁹. Tanneries waged a competitive battle and seasonal fluctuations on the market made production un-

51 *Sprawozdanie Izby Przemysłowo-Handlowej w Lublinie za rok 1936*, Lublin 1937, p. 67.

52 I. Turnau, *Garbarstwo na ziemiach polskich w XVI-XVIII wieku*, Wrocław 1975, passim.

53 E. Weigle, *Zaopatrzenie w surowiec przemysłu garbarskiego, przerabianącego skóry wierzchnie*, "Wiadomości Polskiego Związku Przemysłowców Garbarzy" 1937, iss. 1-2, p. 10.

54 Dz.U. RP Nr 53, poz. 419.

55 *Garbarstwo*, Warszawa 1941, p. 89-90.

56 *Sprawozdanie Izby Przemysłowo-Handlowej w Lublinie za rok 1937*, Lublin 1938, p. 70.

57 E. Zalewski, *Skóry: surowiec, garbarstwo, handel*, Warszawa 1938, pp. 8-9.

58 *Ibidem*, p. 12.

59 E. Weigle, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

stable⁶⁰. There were disputes about import quotas between organizations of tanning industrialists and chambers of industry and trade, and organizations protested against centralization of the tanning industry⁶¹. However, good partnerships existed between representatives of the tanning branch and the Ministry of Industry and Trade⁶². Lawlessness in the market caused lack of coordination in breeding, working, storage, purchase of domestic and foreign materials, production and the import of dyes and salt, railway transport, sale on stock markets, tax, customs, foreign exchange policies, cooperation with slaughterhouses, assurance of safety for workers, production conditions, environmental protection, high quality goods for consumers, specialization in production of various types of skins, building of vocational tanning schools and statistical reporting⁶³. What is interesting, is that already at the turn of the 19th to 20th century, the demand for dyes led to cutting down the quebracho trees in Argentina, resulting in extensive deforestation and devastation of the ecosystem⁶⁴. The example of the Polish pre-war tanning industry (and related global problems) clearly shows the shortcomings of the free market⁶⁵.

From the legal perspective, tanneries were qualified as industrial plants whose opening was approved by the voivodeship authority, in practice: by the Department of Industry in the Voivode's Office. If tanning was not run using industrial methods, it was regarded as craftsmanship⁶⁶.

Larger turnover was registered in the factories of Ajchenbaum, Biderman, Brikman, Domańscy⁶⁷, "Kośminek"⁶⁸, Lucht, Rubinstein, Silberstein and

⁶⁰ *Przemysł garbarski przeciwko decentralizacji podziału kontyngentów skór surowych*, "Wiadomości Polskiego Związku Przemysłowców Garbarzy" 1937, iss. 1–2, p. 1.

⁶¹ *Niefortunny projekt organizacji branży futrzanej*, "Wiadomości Polskiego Związku Przemysłowców Garbarzy" 1937, iss. 1–2, p. 20.

⁶² *Komisja surowcowa garbarska przy Ministerstwie Przemysłu i Handlu*, "Wiadomości Polskiego Związku Przemysłowców Garbarzy" 1937, iss. 1–2, p. 4.

⁶³ S. Kieniewicz, *Ścieki z garbarni chromowych i ich oczyszczanie*, "Wiadomości Polskiego Związku Przemysłowców Garbarzy" 1937, iss. 12, p. 13; *Krzywdzące opodatkowanie fabryk przerobowych*, *ibidem*, iss. 10, p. 1; *Notatki*, *ibidem*, iss. 7, p. 9; *Sprawozdanie z działalności Polskiego Związku Garbarzy za rok 1936*, *ibidem*, iss. 5, p. 7.

⁶⁴ *Argentyński przemysł quebrachowy w 1938 r.*, "Wiadomości Centralnego Związku Przemysłu Garbarskiego w Polsce" 1939, iss. 2, p. 12.

⁶⁵ See also: *Sprawozdanie Komisji Ankietowej Badania Warunków i Kosztów Produkcji oraz Wymiany*, vol. 15: *Przemysł garbarski*, Warszawa 1928.

⁶⁶ Articles 16 and 142 of the decree on industrial law: *Rozporządzenie Prezydenta RP z dnia 7 czerwca 1927 r. o prawie przemysłowym*, Dz.U. RP Nr 53, poz. 468.

⁶⁷ R. Orłowski, *Z dziejów przemysłu w Lubelskiem w latach 1918–1974*, in: *Z problematyki przeobrażeń społeczno-gospodarczych w Lubelskiem*, ed. by Z. Mitura, R. Orłowski, Lublin 1992, pp. 198–200.

⁶⁸ Kośminek was an industrial and working-class city district with characteristic simple (or even primitive) single-house buildings. Some tanneries were located in this district and one of the streets was given the name "Tannery Street" (*Garbarska*). One of the tanneries at this street was named "Kośminek".

Zorkraut⁶⁹. Only the Domańscy and Lucht factories were non-Jewish. Domańscy Tannery was the oldest: it was founded in 1874 but declared bankruptcy in the 1930s and was purchased by other owners. Finally, there was only one tannery left that was non-Jewish and this case deserves more attention: its owner was Hipolit Lucht. In the beginning of the 1930s he shutdown production, sold his declining factory and in 1934 the shareholders were Jewish (Zorkraut), but the company remained Polish (“Ciborski” or “Kołodziejczyk”)⁷⁰. Hipolit Lucht was of Czech origin and one of pre-war Lublin’s better-known businessmen: a local activist, member of the local government council and member of Lublin’s Chamber⁷¹. He voiced anti-Semitic opinions and was active in a right-wing nationalist party – National Democracy (*Endecja*)⁷². During the Nazi occupation he signed with his family *Deutsche Volksliste*, took a nobiliary particle “von” and called himself the receivership manager of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Lublin⁷³. In April 1940, as a usurper, he was dismissed and replaced by a new Nazi manager⁷⁴. Despite dismissal he collaborated with the Nazis and became a Gestapo agent, thus a traitor to the Polish nation. His post-war life is unknown, but one member of his family was probably deported to Siberia⁷⁵.

After the beginning of the Nazi occupation the receivership management was introduced in all seven Jewish tanneries, one tannery (ex-Lucht) was, at the beginning, probably free from the invader’s supervision⁷⁶. Later all factories were joined in a forced trust *Zentralstelle der Lederfabriken des Distrikts Lublin*. Key Cord built three companies: Brikman (Towarowa Street 41), Silberstein (Towarowa Street 7) and Zorkraut (Okólna Street 5)⁷⁷. Practically all of Lublin’s Jews were killed by the Nazis and the situation with the tanneries

⁶⁹ A. Kierek, *Rozwój gospodarczy Lublina w latach 1918–1939*, in: *Dzieje Lublina*, vol. 2, ed. by S. Krzykała, Lublin 1975, pp. 50–52.

⁷⁰ *Fabryka igieł do lamp “Carbo – Lumen”, garbarnia Luchta w Lublinie*, ed. by J. Studziński, P. Sugier, M. Śliwińska, http://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/node/2522/fabryka_igiel%C5%82_do_lamp_%E2%80%99Ecarbo_%E2%80%93Lumen%E2%80%9D_garbarnia_luchta_w_lublinie. See also: *Industrie, Handel, Handwerk der Stadt Lublin*, Lublin 1940, pp. 8–9. It is necessary to draw attention to inaccuracy of information about reorganization of the tanning companies, for example between Ajchenbaum and Zorkraut tanneries.

⁷¹ Z. Bownik, *Kupiectwo lubelskie w latach 1317–1959 i organizacja przedsiębiorstw usługowych 1950–1960*. Księga pamiątkowa, Lublin 1960, *passim*; J. Marczuk, *Radni Lublina w latach 1919–1939*, Lublin 1997, pp. 48–49.

⁷² E. Maj, *Narodowa Demokracja w województwie lubelskim w latach 1918–1928*, Lublin 2002, *passim*.

⁷³ State Archive in Lublin, Collection 498: “Urząd Okręgu Lubelskiego”, Unit 199, p. 139; Collection 640: “Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa w Lublinie”, Units 48 and 52.

⁷⁴ National Archive in Kraków, Collection 319: “Grupa Główna «Gospodarka Przemysłowa i Ruch» w Izbie Okręgowej dla Gospodarki Ogólnej w Krakowie”, Unit 35.

⁷⁵ Institute of National Remembrance in Lublin, Collection “Wojewódzki Urząd Spraw Wewnętrznych w Lublinie”, Unit Lu 035/3.

⁷⁶ *Industrie, Handel, Handwerk der Stadt Lublin*, Lublin 1940, pp. 8–9.

⁷⁷ “Das Generalgouvernement” 1941, vol. 9, p. 70.

sued Bobrowski's description. Polish people worked in factories and Germans became members of management boards.

The Soviets arrived in Lublin on 23 July 1944⁷⁸. The factories were abandoned by the Nazi invaders who took away cash and documents, wanted to destroy the inventory and had already murdered the legal Jewish owners along with their families⁷⁹. Civil guards from the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) protected work places from stragglers and looters⁸⁰. Thanks to the involvement of Polish employees, the tanneries started production five days later: on 28 July⁸¹. The "Kośminek" Tannery was launched first, and the factory committee was appointed there⁸². On 10 August 1944 the companies were restructured to the Headquarters of Lublin Tanneries (Centrala Garbarń w Lublinie)⁸³. In a report dated seven days later, the Chief of the Department of National Economy and Finance in the Polish Committee of National Liberation wrote⁸⁴:

The tanning industry in Lublin during the Nazi occupation was concentrated in one enterprise due to the fact that the tanneries belonged to Jews. Currently, the Department has ordered the Industrial Division of the Voivodeship National Council to form the Tannery Headquarters in Lublin, instead of the former management, and to introduce a trusteeship, consisting of one manager (an expert clerk), one representative of the staff and one representative of the Voivodeship National Council.

The factory is in arrears with payment of workers' wages – due to the lack of funds for running the enterprise the Department allowed as an exception to pay 50% of the delayed wages in goods for the government set prices (...). It was decided that cooperatives should distribute shoes for ration coupons among the workers (...)

The Soviet authorities were interested in the skin stored by the Headquarters. The Department declared orally to the Soviet purchasing department that the Headquarters can allocate a part of its production, but on condition that the Headquarters obtain raw skin from the purchasing department to secure further production and goods to be distributed among the working people.

⁷⁸ Z. Miazga, *Zdarzyło się. Lublin 1944*, Lublin 2004, p. 15.

⁷⁹ On 20 and 21 July the invaders transferred a lot of money from Lublin banks to accounts in the Bank of Issue (*Bank Emisyjny*) which remained under Nazi control. For example: State Archive in Lublin, Collection 647/5: Bank Spółdzielczy "Społem" Oddział w Lublinie, Unit: 5.

⁸⁰ *Sprawozdanie o sytuacji handlowej w okresie od 22 lipca 1944 r. do 15 września 1944 r.*, State Archive in Lublin, Collection 640, Unit 254; J. Wrona, *Lublin w okresie Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, in: *Lublin w dziejach i kulturze Polski*, ed. by T. Radzik, A.A. Witusik, Lublin 1997, p. 367.

⁸¹ G. Wójcikowski, W. Wójcikowski, *Kronika 1944–2000*, in: T. Radzik, W. Śladkowski, G. Wójcikowski, W. Wójcikowski, *Lublin...*, p. 319.

⁸² I. Caban, *Lublin w okresie PKWN*, in: *Lublin 1317–1967*, ed. by H. Zins, Lublin 1967, pp. 232–233.

⁸³ Archive of New Records, Collection 185: Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego w Lublinie, Unit VIII/10; State Archive in Łódź, Collection 813: Centralny Zarząd Przemysłu Skórzanego w Łodzi, Unit 822.

⁸⁴ 1944 sierpień 17, Lublin. *Sprawozdanie Kierownika Resortu Gospodarki Narodowej i Finansów J. S. Hane-mana z działalności Resortu za czas urzędowania w Lublinie do 15 sierpnia 1944*, "Polska Ludowa. Materiały i Studia" 1965, vol. 4, p. 186.

The Headquarters coordinated work in the tanneries, took care of the employees, distributed the materials (skins) among factories and ready-made goods for consumers. In November five tanneries were working and the Headquarters planned to open a sixth (Jankowski Tannery)⁸⁵. As a rule, the factories were managed by workers in factory committees, and the Headquarters provided administration and contact with people's authority. In the course of time this situation was brought under control by the communists, and workers' councils became fiction.

All Lublin tanneries were practically in state hands by July 1944 – nine months before Victory Day. The nationalization in this branch, in comparison with other industries in the Lublin Committee's area, was the simplest, because the enterprises before the war were Jewish owned. During the war they were expropriated by the Nazis, centralized and organizationally merged. In 1944, still during the war, they passed into state management, united in the Tannery Headquarters. In the 1940s and 50s these enterprises started a new company: Lublin Tanning Factories (*Lubelskie Zakłady Garbarskie*) and by 1959, together with the shoe factory created, the Lublin Factories of Leather Industry (*Lubelskie Zakłady Przemysłu Skórzanego*) came into being. Following the system transformation and founded on the Lublin Factories of Leather Industry, after overcoming certain difficulties, a joint-stock company "Protektor S.A." was established in Lublin. Now it is one of the largest producers and distributors of safety, military and specialized shoes (e.g. for fire services), in Europe. The parent company has two sister companies in Germany, one factory in Poland and two in Moldova. As we can see, the traditions of Lublin's tanning industry are expanding globally⁸⁶.

Until the time of nationalization, the tanneries were formally distinct enterprises in every respect, organizationally and legally. In the case of the Biderman Tannery, in 1950 the Chief of the Central Board of Small Production (*Centralny Urząd Drobnej Wytwórczości*) published an order regarding forced state management – five years after the end of the war⁸⁷. The status of those enterprises was specified in the act of 25 February 1958 on the regulation of legal status of property under state management⁸⁸. They had passed into state ownership. Article 2 stated: "Enterprises which are under state management as at the date this act became effective (...) become the State's property by virtue of law".

⁸⁵ *Przemysł garbarski pracuje (Wywiad z dyrektorem Centrali Garbarni, Wacławem Sawickim), "Rzeczpospolita" 14. November 1944, p. 2.*

⁸⁶ http://www.protektora.pl/strona/grupa_protektor,4.html (24.11.2016).

⁸⁷ Zarządzenie Prezesa Centralnego Urzędu Drobnej Wytwórczości z dnia 15 listopada 1950 r. w sprawie ustanowienia przymusowego zarządu państwowego nad przedsiębiorstwami, Monitor Polski A-129, poz. 1621.

⁸⁸ Ustawa z dnia 25 lutego 1958 r. o uregulowaniu stanu prawnego mienia pozostającego pod zarządkiem państwowym, Dz.U. Nr 11, poz. 37.

In the meantime, the order on concessions for fur tanneries was enacted, but it had no influence on the described companies. It pertained to the rest of small private tanneries⁸⁹.

* * *

Undoubtedly, the acts which regulated the legal sphere of the economy were necessary. Nazis and Soviets killed millions of Polish people, they massively changed state borders, all Jewish entrepreneurs disappeared, German entrepreneurs ran away from the Red Army and after the war they were re-settled. Polish citizens and taxpayers rebuilt the economy while living under a totalitarian system. They paid damages to foreign legal persons, but after 1989 they fell victim to "wild reprivatization". Now, in Poland, this is a real result of communism.

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