

The Secret Police as a Means of Social Engineering in the Polish People's Republic: The University Enrolment Process in 1947–1956

La policía secreta como medio de Ingeniería Social
en la República Popular de Polonia: El Proceso
de matriculación universitaria entre 1947 y 1956

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Abstract: The part that security authorities played in the process of university enrolment was an example of how the social policy of the Party authorities got implemented. UB employees had been executing tasks connected with the negative selection of university candidates since the first decree of the Ministry of Education that regulated that issue came out (1947). Student profiles, prepared by the Policy Secret (UB), were one of the major factors deciding whether a given young person would be allowed to matriculate. In this case the aim was to “protect university communities,” which in fact meant that persons deemed by the authorities undesirable would be prevented from studying (preventive actions) and those with “proper class origins” (peasants’ and workers’ children) would have their academic future secured. Ministry of Public Security (MBP) officers, cooperated with the various actors: the party

Resumen: El papel que los servicios de seguridad jugaron en el proceso de selección de personal universitario es un ejemplo de cómo la política social del partido se practicó e impuso. Empleados de la Policía Secreta llevaron a cabo tareas relacionadas con la selección de los futuros estudiantes desde el primer decreto del Ministerio de Educación que reguló esta cuestión en 1947. Los perfiles de los estudiantes, elaborados por la Policía Secreta, fueron determinantes para saber si podrían o no matricularse. El objetivo era “proteger a la comunidad universitaria” pero en el fondo suponía señalar a las personas consideradas indeseables por las autoridades. Se les impedía estudiar (como acción preventiva) y los que tenían “orígenes de clase adecuada” (hijos de campesinos y de trabajadores) tenían el futuro académico asegurado. Los funcionarios del Ministerio de Seguridad Pública (MBP) trabajaron en esta

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structures of different levels (from central to local ones), political and social organisations. Employees of the security apparatus rejected a large percent of candidates. In 1953 about 47 percent of students they vetted were put on the proscription lists. Therefore one could risk a statement that the UB played crucial part in establishing the social origin of student communities in 1947-1956.

Keywords: communist security apparatus, universities in communist countries, education system in communist countries, communist social engineering, The Polish Peoples' Republic, the university enrolment process.

tarea junto con las estructuras del partido en sus diferentes niveles (desde lo central a lo local), así como con las organizaciones políticas y sociales. Los empleados del aparato de seguridad rechazaron un gran porcentaje de los candidatos. En 1953 alrededor del 47% de los estudiantes fue vetado e inserto en las listas de proscritos. Podríamos pues decir que la policía secreta tuvo un papel crucial en el establecimiento de los orígenes sociales de la comunidad estudiantil entre 1947 y 1956.

Palabras clave: aparato de seguridad comunista, universidades en países comunistas; sistema educativo en países comunistas, ingeniería social comunista, República Popular Polaca, proceso de selección universitario.

One of the aims of Communist social engineering was to create “people’s” intelligentsia.¹ The factors that facilitated these plans were losses among the Polish intelligentsia during World War II and the need to make up for these losses.² In addition, the Communist authorities did not trust members of that social group – even those favourable to the new regime – still perceiving them as affected by “bourgeois ideology.”

In this case, we deal with the negation of the spontaneous mechanisms of social stratification, since the communists believed that the social processes could be fully controlled and directed by them. Hence, the new stratification should be the outcome of cooperation between the various actors: the party structures of different levels (from central to local ones), security apparatus and political and social organisations. We may venture a thesis that the university enrolment policy was an element of centrally planned economy. Thus the main goal of the higher education institutions – called in propaganda “new factories” – was to provide the national industry with the predetermined number of the professionals.

¹ On the creation of the “new intelligentsia,” see e.g. H. Palska, *Nowa inteligencja w Polsce Ludowej. Świat przedstawień i elementy rzeczywistości*, Warszawa 1994; J. Lewandowski, *Rodzód społeczny powojennej inteligencji Polskiej 1944-1949*, Szczecin 1991; M. Mazur, *O człowieku tendencyjnym. Obraz nowego człowieka w propagandzie komunistycznej w okresie Polski Ludowej i PRL 1944-1956*, Lublin 2009.

² About 60 percent of lawyers, 39 percent of doctors, 27 percent of Catholic priests died during World War II. Enormous losses were caused by the Holocaust; before 1939, about a half of people employed in the so-called free professions were the Jews (P. Madajczyk, *Zmiany społeczne w Polsce pod wpływem II wojny światowej [in:] Rzeczpospolita utracona. Następstwa nazizmu i komunizmu na ziemiach polskich*, ed. J. Eisler, K. Rokicki, (Warszawa 2010), 80-81).

The student admissions policy was not based on prerequisites of knowledge and skills, therefore it created the mechanisms of negative and artificial social selection, the process fully controlled and directed by the communists. The “new”, “people’s” intelligentsia was the stratum without the roots, completely alien to the ethos of the former intelligentsia (especially to its independence from the government). Contrary to his predecessors, the “people’s” intellectualist should be “progressive”, devoted to the ideology, faithful, submissive and grateful to the regime. He ought to serve the proletariat, precisely to be at the full disposal to the Communist Party (the embodiment of the proletariat): Speaking at the University of Wrocław, the representative of the Ministry of Education T. Dowjat said, “We want to get the largest number of educated people, who would work with enthusiasm and gratitude for enabling them to get higher education”³.

Education was to become the major way of “producing” the “new” stratum. Schools, especially universities – although one may also consider the role of high schools as the stage preceding higher education – were to shape both the “new intelligentsia” and the new academic and party personnel, recruited mostly from among young workers and peasants. Party ideologues perceived those groups as the least affected by the remnants of the former system. They were supposed to be characterized by a weak link to the former axiology and worldview – the “symbolic universe”⁴ rejected by Marxists. Those people were considered the *blank page* to be filled entirely according to the Communist model of upbringing.

What is more, the stratum formed this way, after being subjected to a proper ideological education, was to pass on (without their own interpretation) the official doctrine to other members of society. Communists thus reserved for the intelligentsia a strictly instrumental role – to use the propaganda language of the time – of the “officers’ corps of the working classes, building socialism under the Party’s leadership.”⁵

³ After T. Suleja, *Uniwersytet Wrocławski w okresie centralizmu stalinowskiego 1950-1955* [University of Wrocław in the Era of Stalinist Centralism 1950-1955], Wrocław 1995, f. 117; H. Palska, *Ideologia komunistyczna a problem inteligencji* [Communist Ideology and the Problem of the Intelligentsia] [in:] *Rzeczpospolita utracona. Następstwa nazizmu i komunizmu na ziemiach polskich*, [The Lost Polish Republic. Consequences of Nazism and Communism in the Polish Lands] eds. J. Eisler, K. Rokicki, Warszawa 2010, p. 133 ff.

⁴ H. Świda-Ziemba, „*My nowe życie tworzymy i nowy ład*” [in:] *Do i od socjalizmu. Dwa przełomy w ciągu półwiecza w Polsce*, ed. A. Siciński, Warszawa 1998, p. 96-98.

⁵ After J. Szczepański, *Zakończenie* [in:] *Wykształcenie a pozycja społeczna inteligencji*, ed. *idem*, Łódź 1960, p. 464; H. Palska, *Nowa inteligencja...*, p. 47-48, 62, 64.

In this case, the goal was to artificially and under strict control create yet another social stratum, which for the Communist authorities would become –as noticed by Hanna Palska– one of the major ways to legitimize their rule and the new regime. For the aim was to create a group disinclined to rebel, since they would be “grateful” for the possibility of “social advancement” that was “given by the Party” and was impossible to obtain outside the socialist country.⁶ In addition, the new social group was to be deprived of its predecessor’s attributes (the so-called “capitalist burden”) such as independence and versatility.⁷ The group was to not fulfil a utilitarian function of professionals trained in narrow and specific disciplines.

These activities were accompanied by the reduction of universities’ autonomy. The most important tool in the implementation of that plan was the decree of 28 November 1947 regarding “the organization of science and higher education.” According to the decree, universities became subject to the Minister of Education (since April 1950 the Minister of Science and Higher Education) who “was in control of science, higher education and research institutions.” The act of 15 December 1951 summarized all the changes regarding the status and functioning of higher education, subordinating universities and their research workers to full control (in fact, surveillance) of the Party and the state.⁸ Simultaneously, the structure, activities, and ideology of all universities in the country got homogenized. The act of 1951 abolished the election of university authorities. Since then, vice-chancellors, pro-vice-chancellors, deans, deputy deans, and even heads of smaller organization units had been appointed by the Minister of Science and Higher Education. This way universities in Poland, similarly to those in the Soviet Russia and other communist states, became part of the state structure subordinate

⁶ H. Palska, *Nowa inteligencja...*, p. 7, 28-94; B. Gołębiowski, *Dramat awansu generacji zetempowskiej* [in:] *Zjednoczenie polskiego ruchu młodzieżowego i powstanie ZMP. Materiały z sesji naukowej zorganizowanej przez Komisję Historii Ruchu Młodzieżowego przy Zarządzie Wojewódzkim ZSMP w Białymstoku w 40-tą rocznicę powstania ZMP, 24 czerwca 1988*, ed. Z.J. Hirsz, Białystok 1990, p. 113-114. The Marxists defined so-called proletarian intelligentsia as “an elite, created by a process of upward social mobility sponsored and encouraged by regime” (S. Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934*, Cambridge 1979, p. 4).

⁷ Since “the liberal ideal of the independent-minded, morally autonomous individual was not compatible with the Bolshevik vision of civil society” (S. Finkel, *On the Ideological Front: the Russian Intelligentsia and the Making of the Soviet Public Sphere*, New Haven 2007, p. 3).

⁸ *Ustawa o szkolnictwie wyższym i o pracownikach naukowych z dnia 15 XII 1951 r.*, „Dziennik Ustaw” 1952, no. 6, item 38.

to central planning and supervision, including the number and structure of student community.⁹

At the same time many eminent scholars, especially humanists such as Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Maria and Stanisław Ossowski, Roman Ingarden, or Władysław Konopczyński, were either removed from their academic positions or deprived of the right to teach.

University enrolment (general rules)

The abolition of universities' autonomy did not mark the end of Party authorities' struggle to bring the university community under control. University enrolment policy, connected to particular levels of education, was aimed at implementing Communist social and ideological goals.¹⁰ According to the plan of 1949, in 1955 students with rural and working class origins were to make 75 percent of the student community. It was assumed, however, that these changes would take place at the cost of other groups, especially the "old" intelligentsia.

University enrolment simply became one of the elements of authority-controlled process of social stratification. An attempt was made at using and reversing one of the schools' functions, that is the solidification of social structure.¹¹ Communists' goal was to change particular elements of social reality and perform a *capitis deminutio* on the people with roots in communities and groups arbitrarily rejected by the Communist ideology (enrolment was part of Communist social engineering).¹² The major goal was to submit candidates and their relatives to a vetting process regarding their social origins and political stance.

⁹ On the Sovietization of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe see: J. Connelly, *Captive University. The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956*, Chapel Hill and London 2000, p. 22-70; P. Hübner, *Polityka naukowa w Polsce w latach 1944-1953. Geneza systemu*, vol. 1-2, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1992. On the control of universities by Party authorities in the USSR, see e.g. B. Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia. Universities and Intellectual Life under Stalin and Khrushchev*, Cambridge 2013.

¹⁰ On the rules of school and university enrolment during the Stalinist regime, see D. Gałaszewska-Chilczuk, J. Wołoszyn, *Od przedszkolaka do studenta. Kryteria selekcji społecznej i polityczne w edukacji lat 1947-1956*, Lublin 2012.

¹¹ P. Bourdieu, J.C. Passeron, *Reprodukcja. Elementy teorii system nauczania*, Warszawa 1990, p. 220.

¹² J. Goćkowski, *Komunistyczna technologia społeczna: doktryna i praktyka stworzenia „innego świata”* [in:] *Oblicza komunistycznego zniewolenia. Między nauką a literaturą*, ed. K. Brzechczyn, Poznań 2009, p. 48-50.

In the middle of 1947, before universities lost their autonomy, the Central Committee (KC) of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) ordered 30 percent of the seats to be reserved for working class youth, and 20 percent for rural youth. Primary admission was granted to the members of the Association of Youth Fight (ZWM) and those generally referred to as "democrats."¹³ In the future, special committees were to be responsible for vetting to-be students. As a result, the Minister of Education issued a decree (21 July 1947) in which Recruitment Commissions were appointed at each faculty. They consisted not only of academic teachers, but also of the so-called social factor (members of Trade Unions, the Union for Peasant Mutual Aid) and a delegate of the Ministry of Education.

At the same time, a candidate had to provide a certificate of his or her political and social attitude. These certificates were issued by numerous political, educational, and social institutions, including official youth organizations. *Proscription lists*, on which "the names of firm enemies of democracy" were placed, were supposed to be compiled during the Polish legislative election (January 1946) by regional boards of the University Association of Youth Fight "Życie." At first, the certificates were verified by delegates of the Ministry of Education and Regional Committees (KW) of PPR/Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). After 1949, this task was also entrusted to Party trios, appointed for that very purpose and consisting of, among others, members of the official Polish Youth Union (ZMP). It is worth mentioning that these subjects gathered information about students in numerous ways. In Lublin, trio members questioned janitors or asked the Citizens' Militia (MO) for help. Opinions of those *bodies* went through the proper KW PZPR straight to the delegate of the Ministry of Education, never seeing dean's office.

As a side note to these regulations, one may also mention the decree of the Ministry of Education of April 1949, which establish a two-month period for submitting applications and taking entry exams.¹⁴ The delay was supposed to give security authorities time to verify candidates' documents.

In 1950 the rules of student vetting got changed. According to the KC PZPR's instruction, these activities were to be performed by School and Poviats Recruitment Commissions. Their faculty counterparts were still operational,

¹³ On the control over the personal structure of student communities, see: J. Lewandowski, *op. cit.*, p. 87-126; D. Gałaszewski, *Zasady i formy selekcji kandydatów na wyższe uczelnie w Polsce w latach 1947-1956* [in:] *Studia i materiały z dziejów opozycji i oporu społecznego*, ed. Ł. Kamiński, vol. III, Wrocław 2000, p. 3-19; Cz. Lewandowski, *Kierunki tak zwanej ofensywy ideologicznej w polskiej oświacie, nauce i szkołach wyższych w latach 1944-1948*, Wrocław 1993, p. 193-15.

¹⁴ J. Lewandowski, *op. cit.*, p. 109-110.

and their goal was to verify candidates' knowledge. Political and social selection was entrusted to school commissions, which issued "a certificate of social background, talent, and social work" to high school graduates. These opinions were delivered to Poviats Recruitment Commissions, where they –together with opinions issued by security authorities– became the basis for an opinion whether a given student should be allowed to attend university. Negative opinions were to be issued "only regarding elements hostile to the People's Poland on political grounds, without considering their social background." However, representatives of Party authorities were afraid that too many candidates would get rejected. That is why the Ministry delegate in Lublin complained that about 30 percent of the candidates were given a negative opinion.¹⁵

In 1950 the so-called individual objection appeared, that is a negative opinion given by a Poviats Recruitment Commission or the Secret Police (UB), which prevented a candidate from attending university. At the same time, School and Poviats Recruitment Commissions were allowed to issue "diplomas of a science and social work leader" which exempted from entry exams. The instruction of 1950 made it clear, however, that such a diploma could be issued to no more than two students in a school.

In 1951, instead of the certificates, questionnaires and candidate cards got introduced. In the same year, regional Vetting Commissions would issue opinions regarding those candidates who reapplied to university and who previously had to acquire a "morality certificate," issued by proper regional authorities.

The final decision was made by the Faculty Commission, and since 1951 – the University Commission consisting of the vice-chancellor, a delegate of the Ministry of Education, and a representative of the University Party Unit. The activities of all these institutions were supposed to remain secret, for if rejected, a student was not given the reason.

The list of people who were given priority admission demands a separate treatment. Privileged candidates were mentioned in the decrees of the Minister of Education and circulars of the Prime Minister. In 1948, candidates were divided into three groups regarding their social background. The first group consisted of children of "medium-sized peasants and smallholders," workers, working intelligentsia, and autochthon youth from the "Reclaimed Lands"; these people were reserved 60 percent of all seats.¹⁶ The

¹⁵ The delegate wrote about cases when children of smallholders, technical intelligentsia or teachers got rejected if they were not members of the ZMP (D. Gałaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 8-9).

¹⁶ Decree of the Ministry of Education of 19 May 1948, "Dziennik Ustaw", no. 29, 1948, item 196.

second group included “participants of the 1939-1945 war,” “activists” of official youth organizations (mostly the ZWM/ZMP) and teachers. A year later “working intelligentsia” got moved to the second category, which also included “victims of the enemies of democratic Poland.” In 1949, the authorities decided to introduce a more strict selection and the trios mentioned before got created. In 1951 one could be assigned to the “privileged group” on the basis of a new criterion: parents’ contribution to the creation of the system. The third group consisted of all the people who did not qualify to groups one and two. They were given 15 percent of seats.

One got assigned to a particular group by technical secretaries of Faculty Recruitment Commissions under the supervision of the Ministry delegate. Those people’s role was mainly to eliminate universities’ administration from such parts of the recruitment process as accepting applications and not analyzing candidates’ social background.¹⁷

The system was directly borrowed from the Soviet Union. In 1928, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union agreed to a similar solution, introducing, among other things, contingents, especially in technical education. According to the accepted solutions, 65 percent of all seats –the number was later raised by 5 percent– was reserved for candidates with working class background.¹⁸

The mechanisms of vetting, which to some extent abolish the myth of common access to higher education in the Polish People’s Republic, had been in force until 1956. In 1956, the Ministry of Education abolished Poviats Recruitment Commissions, and a year later “class origin” ceased to be one of the criteria of privilege regarding access to higher education.

The role of members of the repression apparatus in the university enrolment action

Security authorities took part in the creation of “people’s intelligentsia” as well, especially by interfering in personal and social structure of student groups. As a response to the authorities’ demands, from 1947 to 1953 the

¹⁷ National Archive in Lublin, Regional Board of the ZMP, 754, ZG ZAMP Resolution on the organization of work during the summer of 1949, k. 14-15; *ibidem*, 758, Report on the university enrollment in the academic year 1949/1950 at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, b.d., k. 194-196.

¹⁸ K. E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin. Origins of Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917-1941*, Princeton 1978, p. 193.

Ministry of Public Security (MBP) had regularly issued instructions which specified the roles of members of the repression apparatus regarding university candidates' vetting. In this case the UB officers took part in the negative selection, forming opinions based on political and "class" criteria. Their opinions were binding for the authorities responsible for issuing "morality certificates" and members of Recruitment Commissions.

In case of university candidates, the repression apparatus' goal was to prevent the group that the state authorities for various reasons deemed undesirable from attending university. The MBP documents label the aforementioned activities "preventive actions."¹⁹ MBP officers took part in the negative selection of candidates, giving them opinions based on political and "class" criteria. The opinion formed by the Secret Police (UB) became binding for the members of state and school administration (in the latter case, for the members of the so-called recruitment commissions) whose task was to issue a certificate confirming whether a given student may attend university. Members of the Polish United Workers' Party at Łódź University of Technology stressed the impact the UB opinions had on the fate of young people. They informed that in cases when evaluations made by the repression apparatus and those conducted by the Party and education authorities were discrepant, the evaluation conducted by the UB was binding. Similarly in Toruń, all questionable cases were settled by a board with a member of the repression apparatus present.²⁰ Local recruitment commissions usually did not question opinions issued by the UB, even when almost all high school graduates got disqualified.

It is worth mentioning that the repression apparatus almost immediately applied solutions approved by the education authorities. First instructions regarding university enrolment the Ministry of Education issued in 1947. A candidate was required to present a "morality certificate" issued by a proper district governor. At the same time a proper act was issued by Department V of the MBP. That first document, accompanied by the complementary instruction, included all elements that would characterize the

¹⁹ Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance In Warsaw (AIPN), BU, 0649/4, vol. I, Report of the V Department of the MBP on 1948, Warsaw, 15 February 1949, k. 20.

²⁰ The author of the report wrote that "no candidate disqualified by the UB was admitted" (the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw (AAN), the Central Committee of the PZPR (KC PZPR), 237/XVI-128, The Report of KW PZPR representatives in Łódź on the proceedings of the University Recruitment Commission at Łódź University of Technology, Łódź, bd., 1949, k. 42; *ibidem* 237/XVI-123, Candidate selection at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń [1949], k. 9).

range of involvement of the repression apparatus in the process of university enrolment.²¹ The main goal was to subordinate decisions of the state administration to the UB, for district governors could issue “morality certificates” only after they got approved by a district UB office, which did not have to substantiate its decision.

In addition, already in 1947 first *proscription lists* got compiled and sent to local Secret Police offices (WUBP) in the cities with universities those who did not pass the evaluation wanted to attend (the application submitted in the local district governor’s office should include the name of the university). In this case officers of the repression apparatus, in order to prevent a given young person from entering university, could intervene directly with members of university committees.

The most important task of UB representatives was to gather information about students who were to graduate from high schools and were intending to continue education. The UB’s goal was to “catch” students with “hostile political tendencies” and determine their social background. “A student should not be allowed to enter university on the basis of the materials testifying to his hostile, reactionary activities. Students closely connected to their families and capitalist and kulak backgrounds should not be allowed to enter university as well.”²² In 1947, one of the goals was to prevent people connected to the Polish Peasant Party from entering university; a year later, the same rule got applied to graduates of monastic schools. The rejected groups became a peculiar example of social classification conducted by the Communist authorities, especially by the repression apparatus. The list included in the Ministry’s documents consisted of groups considered *a priori* “the concrete base for the class enemy where they the element deemed useful is recruited.” According to the recommendation of the director of Department V of the MBP, Julia Brystygier – lists “should primarily include foreign class elements [underlined in the original document] (sons of merchants, wealthy kulaks [sic!], high Sanacja officials), elements notorious for hostile propaganda conducted in schools.”²³ One should also add youths from Catholic organizations and those formerly linked to the anti-Communist underground. That is why the MBP reminded regional officials to include in their

²¹ See e.g. AIPN, BU, 01206/75, vol. 1, Instruction on issuing morality certificates to university candidates, Warsaw, 9 August 1947, k. 38.

²² *Ibidem*, Instruction no. 2/51 on the participation of repression apparatus employees in university enrolment, Warsaw, 1 February 1951, k. 225-227.

²³ *Ibidem*, Instruction no. 29/49 on the participation of repression apparatus employees in university enrolment, Warsaw, 24 August 1949, k. 175.

reports detailed descriptions of candidates' social background. The criteria of negative vetting got systematically broadened (for example, in 1952 candidates would be held responsible if their parents and relatives did not fulfil their obligations to the state).

According to Communists, people who belonged to the groups mentioned above should not receive free university education, which should be a privilege of "loyal" citizens. This way of thinking is best exemplified by the argument given by the PZPR City Committee in Siemianowice regarding the removal of a student of the Medical Academy (Akademia Lekarska) in Rokitnica (the Katowice province), supposedly a son of a "rich man" and a former member of the Hitlerjugend. Party authorities demanded the student to be expelled "in the name of principles and [sic!] universities are for workers' and peasants' sons, and democrats"²⁴.

It should be also pointed out that persons at the time referred to as "class related" would sometimes be put on the lists as well. During university enrolment in Poznań, half of the candidates the repression apparatus and PZPR structures deemed unfit for university education came from working class families.²⁵ All the lists – before they were sent to local UB offices – got approved by the KC PZPR.

Vetting model applied by the UB

It is also worth to know how regional offices were supposed – according to the MBP guidelines – vet candidates (the ministry instruction of August 1949 described the process on the example of a particular unit – the WUBP in Lublin²⁶). The Propaganda Department of a given KW PZPR was supposed to submit to the director of Section V of the WUBP (the unit responsible for youth control) lists of all university candidates, a separate list for each faculty. The lists, together with the forms filled by students, were delivered to Section V by the so-called trusted employees of boards of education.

During the vetting, the repression apparatus collaborated with local Party organizations. That is why in 1950 the MBP planned to appoint a special employee in each local UB office, who would be responsible for contacts

²⁴ AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVI-77, Note from the KM PZPR secretary in Siemianowice Śląskie to the KP PZPR in Siemianowice on expelling one of the students of Medical Academy in Rokitnica, Siemianowice Śląskie, 22 October 1949, k. 33.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 237/XVI-179, Report on the university enrollment [in Poznań], [1950], k. 52.

²⁶ AIPN, BU, 01206/75, vol. 1, Instruction no. 29/49..., k. 175.

with the Party. His task was to deliver to the representative of the local committee the list of “unwanted” persons.²⁷ On the other hand, local Party activists responsible for the enrolment process would receive proper instructions regarding constant contact with the UB, which would be the primary source of information about candidates’ attitudes and worldviews.²⁸

The materials about students would be delivered to the employees of proper departments of the WUBP, who would send them to powiat units. Then, the data provided by students (on special application forms) would get juxtaposed with the data gathered by the UB.

Information about students’ attitudes came from many different sources. In the Lublin district it would be provided, for example, by members of the so-called staff network. It was a system, created by the local repression apparatus, of collecting information about the attitudes of students, teachers, and catechists by staff members of local boards and designated representatives of school boards of the ZMP (in both cases “proven members of the Party”).²⁹

During the next stage, powiat authorities compiled lists of students who should be allowed (or not) attend university. The lists, accompanied by high school graduates’ profiles, would be delivered to the provincial unit. There, among other things, candidate catalogues would be compared with central registers sent from Warsaw. As a result, the UB would prepare a separate list to be delivered to a given KW PZPR. From there lists of students to be rejected would be delivered to Party members responsible for the working of university recruitment commissions. In 1951 the above-mentioned lists (after being approved by the head of a proper Department of the WUBP) would be delivered to the representatives of the KP PZPR who would use them during the proceedings of powiat recruitment commissions.³⁰

²⁷ *Ibidem*, Instruction no. 13/50 on the participation of repression apparatus employees in university enrolment, Warsaw, 13 April 1950, k. 226.

²⁸ AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVI-179, Report on the university enrollment [in Poznań], [1950], k. 46.

²⁹ AIPN Lu, 059/9, Report of Section VI of Department V of the WUBP in Lublin on catechists for the period 12 August-1 September 1949, *bd.*, k. 157. The “network” was created on the initiative of the WUBP in response to *Instrukcja nr 26 dyrektor Departamentu V MBP w Warszawie* płk Julii Brystygier w sprawie rozpracowania katechetów, Warszawa 10 VIII 1949 r. [in:] *Metody pracy operacyjnej aparatu bezpieczeństwa wobec Kościołów i związków wyznaniowych 1945–1989*, ed. A. Dziurok, Warszawa 2004, p. 133.

³⁰ AIPN, BU, 01206/76, vol. 1, General note no. 3 of the Associate Director of Department V of the MBP, Karol Więckowski, on the implementation of the instruction regarding university enrolment, Warsaw, 24 April 1951, k. 41.

The last recipient of local registers was the MBP, whose members would prepare the national *proscription list*. It would be delivered, by local Party authorities or KC PZPR delegates, to faculty recruitment commissions. On the basis of the instructions they received, members of that “body” would decide about the fate of young people. Sometimes the Secret Police would deliver the above-mentioned registers to trusted members of recruitment commissions.

It should be stressed that it was important for Party and security authorities to keep the part the secret police played in university enrolment a secret. Members of recruitment commissions were instructed not to refer during the exam to the materials provided by the repression apparatus.

However, the part the Secret Police played in the working of recruitment commissions is confirmed by a fragment of the document (probably) from the second half of 1949. Its author wrote that “This year we’ve put emphasis on fully including our apparatus (unofficially) in the working of admission commissions.”³¹

Practice

Numerous advices and comments included in the MBP instructions prove that members of local offices applied the criteria of candidates’ evaluation in a rather random and routine way. That is why in 1953 local employees were warned not to treat university enrolment as a “short-term action.”³² A common phenomenon – mentioned usually by members of local Party committees – became UB employees copying reports prepared by local ZMP organizations (which often used the vetting process as a means to get even with disagreeable organization members).

UB employees would often abuse the vetting process. Negative opinions were given even to ZMP activists, participants of the Rally of Young Shock Workers of the People’s Poland (1952). The WUBP in Wrocław put on the *black list* an “activist” leader of a scouting troop only because one of his protégés was a member of a Catholic organization. In 1947, the Lublin repression apparatus gave negative opinions to all doctors’ children who wanted to enter Medicine Faculty at the local Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (by the way, the former leader of the Bielsko Biała Hitlerjugend was

³¹ AIPN, BU, MBP, 491, Motions regarding the preventive-repressive action [1949], k. 32.

³² *Ibidem*, BU, 01206/75, vol. 1, Instruction no. 1/53, Warsaw, 16 February 1953, k. 351.

not put on the list). Sometimes a negative opinion was given to all members of a given school (for example, in Stargard Szczeciński – 28 out of 29 graduates) or to a large group (in 1950 in Sokołów Podlaski half of high school graduates).³³ That is why even the MBP leaders would admit that between 1947 and 1950 “a certain hastiness regarding rejecting university applicants”³⁴ had taken place.

Due to the negative propaganda effects of the situation discussed above (the rejection of a high percentage of young people contradicted the thesis about the common access to education and shown the People’s Poland in bad light³⁵), the MBP had to intervene. As a result, the order was issued to revise and – if necessary – change negative decisions made by local offices. In some cases the number of rejections that had to be changed reached 40-50 percent. In Brzozów (the Rzeszów district), out of 16 high school graduates rejected by powiat UB structures, after the consultations with the WUBP in Rzeszów, negative opinions were given to six persons.³⁶

In addition, normative acts issued by the MBP introduced many procedures whose aim was to reduce the significant number of negative opinions. The procedures were restricted to careful vetting of each candidate and detailed justification of each negative opinion. If district UB units were unable to find grounds on which a rejection could be based, they were required to return the profile to the local office recommending the person to be crossed out of the register. What is more, the centre in Warsaw kept reminding that opinions about high school graduates should be the result of systematic, year-long work of officers “responsible for supervising high schools.”³⁷ Before the process of opinion-making would begin, local units were supposed to monitor high school communities so that “hostile, suspicious element in

³³ AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVI-122, Note of the KW PZPR in Szczecin regarding university enrollment in the Szczecin district [1950], k. 83-84; T. Łabuszewski, *Działania represyjne UB wobec podziemia i społeczeństwa na terenie powiatu Sokołów Podlaski w latach 1945-1956* [in:] *Powiat Sokołów Podlaski. Materiały z sesji naukowej „Represje i opór przeciw rządowi komunistycznym w powiecie Sokołów Podlaski po 1944”*, ed. K. Krajewski, Warszawa 2009, p. 127).

³⁴ AIPN, BU, 01206/75, vol. 1, Instruction no. 2/51..., k. 291.

³⁵ Representatives of the MBP admitted that these phenomena “caused bitterness and distrust of the People’s Poland” (AIPN Lu, 055/43, Instruction no. 4/52 supplement to instruction no. 2 of 1 February 1951 regarding university enrolment in the country and abroad, Warsaw, 19 February 1952, k. 32).

³⁶ The *black list* of the Brzozów office consisted of students who – according to the UB – “came from alien class families and themselves are firm enemies,” after: P. Chmielowiec, *Urząd bezpieczeństwa w Brzozowie 1944-1956*, Rzeszów 2008, p. 283.

³⁷ AIPN, BU, 01206/75, vol. 1, Instruction no. 1/53..., k. 354.

high schools, which will become the subject of reports”³⁸ could be detected in advance.

At the same time, employees of the Ministry would reject a large percent of candidates. In 1953 about 47 percent of students they vetted were put on *black lists*. Five years before the MBP rejected 3000 candidates from the whole country.³⁹

Members of recruitment committees used various mechanisms to prevent students with negative opinions from entering university. The method that was used least often was aimed at making it difficult to submit documents that were required by the university. Usually, however, a candidate's name was removed from the so-called preferred group (persons with working class and peasant background) and moved to the last category, which limited one's access to university education. Such activities were explained by, for example, the lack of documents confirming one's social background. In that case students rejected by the repression apparatus were given the pretext of the “lack of seats.” At the beginning of 1948, the WUBP in Lublin informed about the list of 112 local high school graduates who would not receive their indexes (they passed the exam, yet were rejected under the pretext of the lack of seats).

The method that was used most often, however, aimed at preventing students from the *proscription list* from passing the entry exam. If members of the commission were Party activists or members of the so-called social organizations, they would often fail the written assignment. The next stage – compulsory since 1947 – was the ideological exam known as the knowledge about Poland and the Contemporary World (according to the Party instructions, this way “the youth openly reactionary” would get eliminated). Simultaneously, persons with negative opinions from the repression apparatus would be prevented from entering university. In Poznań, the examination board received the list of persons unfit for university education in advance. The KW PZPR in Szczecin informed about the compulsory “failing” of the youth with ties to Catholic youth organizations.⁴⁰ In addition, recruit-

³⁸ AIPN Lu, 055/65, Guidelines issued by head of the WUBP in Lublin, lieutenant colonel Bolesław Krzywiński, regarding university enrolment in the country and abroad, Lublin, 9 February 1954, k. 18.

³⁹ AIPN, BU, 01206/71, vol. 1, Report of Section IV of Department V of the MBP on July 1953, Warsaw, 11 August 1953, k. 95; *ibidem*, 0649/4, vol. 1, Information on spy-operational activities of Department V of the MBP and its field counterparts, Warsaw, 27 October 1949, k. 79.

⁴⁰ D. Gałaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 16; AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVI-179, Report on the university enrolment [in Poznań], [1950?]. p. 49; *ibidem*, 237/XVI-206, Evaluation of the recruitment and report on the execution of the KW PZPR's [in Szczecin] resolutions regarding universities, Szczecin, 20 October 1950, k. 136.

ment representatives attempted to “flunk” candidates indicated by the UB also during subject exams. That is why the representative (a mathematician) at Łódź University of Technology would prevent candidates from passing mathematics and physics exams. At the same time, knowledge deficiency of persons with “proper class background” would get overlooked. Members of recruitment committees at Łódź universities were instructed to show leniency to candidates who were less prepared but showed political and social engagement.⁴¹ However, in order to disguise the role of the repression apparatus in the enrolment process, a member of the Communist Party would get rejected. In 1947, the delegate of the Minister of Education at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (responsible for the enrollment) informed about the negative opinion given to a member of the Polish Workers’ Party whose name was previously put on the *proscription list*.

The fact that candidates were often well-prepared made it difficult to eliminate the unwanted ones. Simultaneously, the UB employees had to pacify the protests of university authorities and professors who objected to removing some of the students. In many cases, however, these disagreements were resolved in the repression apparatus’ favour. That outcome was facilitated by the attitude of those members of recruitment commissions who belonged to official organizations (Trade Unions or the ZMP).

The last sentence points to the important phenomenon connected with the mechanisms of selection, namely the cooperation of UB representatives and members of recruitment committees, especially on the level of particular universities. A case in point is faculty commissions responsible for conducting and grading entry exams. The cooperation usually went as planned. UB employees would praise especially the attitude of the members of recruitment commissions nominated by trade unions. The Party structures in Poznań gave to theirs representatives clear directions regarding the need to maintain contact with UB officers responsible for the enrolment process.

Another method of preventing students from continuing education required persons who passed the enrolment process to be crossed out from the admission list. This method was applied to the candidates who received negative opinions from the members of the repression apparatus. In many cases the above-mentioned situations were caused by the delays in the work of the repression apparatus – its employees would deliver *proscription lists*

⁴¹ AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVI-89, Protocol from the conference of members of university and faculty members of Łódź universities which took place at the Łódź Committee of the PZPR, 22 August 1951, b.d., k. 30.

too late, after the entry exams. In 1950, the WUPB in Poznań revised the list of candidates for the Faculty of Dentistry and Medicine at the local Medical Academy after the entry exams. 30 newly admitted students got crossed out from the admission list.⁴² A year later, the University Recruitment Commission at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, after receiving decisions from the Faculty Commissions, had to introduce a series of corrections in the admission catalogue. All these changes were aimed at “mainly correcting the social structure of first-year students.”⁴³ Therefore local Party structures would advise UB employees to get acquainted with candidate lists and remove the persons with negative opinions in order to “find a way to reject candidates on proper grounds.”⁴⁴

Another issue, mentioned by the representatives of the PZPR authorities, concerned the discrepancy between the lists prepared by local structures of the repression apparatus and the MBP catalogues. It meant that local offices would send their own lists before they got verified by the centre in Warsaw. Simultaneously, the Ministry would inform security offices about the changes in the opinions of high school students those offices provided. For example, similar cases took place in Olsztyn (Ryszard Pietrzyk got admitted due to the positive opinion of the local WUBP, but the decision was revoked after the MBP list arrived). A reverse situation took place in case of Wacław Dutkowski who applied to one of the Warsaw universities.

Employees' tardiness and the lack of consistency in opinions of particular units of the repression apparatus resulted in the negative evaluation of the apparatus' involvement in the enrolment process. In 1949, PZPR authorities reached a conclusion that the UB was lacking training to conduct “such an extensive task as opinion-making.”⁴⁵

Complaints of particular units of the PZPR regarding the tardiness of repression apparatus' employees provoked MBP's reaction. It remained its employees that profiles should be prepared in advance, even before recruitment commissions got appointed.⁴⁶

⁴² AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVI-179, Report on university enrolment in Poznań [1950], k. 46; J. Lewandowski, *Rodowód społeczny powojennej inteligencji Polskiej 1944-1949*, Szczecin 1991, p. 117-118.

⁴³ AAN, Ministry of Higher Education and Science (MSWiN), 1184, Report on the activities of the UMCS University Recruitment Commission regarding university enrolment in the academic year 1951/1952, b.d., k. 28.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, KC PZPR, 237/XVI-179, Report on university enrolment in Poznań [1950], k. 49.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 237/XVI-122, Report on enrolment in the academic year 1949/1950 in Warsaw, b.d., k. 43.

⁴⁶ In 1950 field offices were supposed to finish gathering profiles by July. A year later that

The above-mentioned procedures allowed repression apparatus' employees to discipline and control young people. In this case the aim was to "protect university communities," which in fact meant that persons deemed by the authorities undesirable would be prevented from studying (preventive actions) and those with "proper class origins" would have their academic future secured. Therefore it is worth to have a closer look at reasons behind candidates' rejection on the examples of the PUBP in Łańcut (the Rzeszów district) and Kraśnik (the Lublin district) in 1951-1952.⁴⁷ In the first town, the Poviát Recruitment Commission gave six negative opinions (out of 193 candidates) to persons applying to universities. In Kraśnik, ten students of High School in Zakrzówek were given negative opinions. Among them were persons considered to have "kulak origins." Students had to pay for their parents' and relatives' past or profession (fathers or brothers used to belong to the independence underground or political opposition, or were millers). Acquaintance with local priests was also to the young people's disadvantage. Among other factors one could list aversion to the communist ZMP or resistance to Communist propaganda and criticism of the current political situation, especially of the ruling Party. All students of the Kraśnik district who received negative references were unambiguously listed by the local UB offices as "the enemies of the People's Democracy."

It is worth mentioning that some of the students rejected by recruitment commissions were allowed to enter Catholic University of Lublin. In that case employees of the repression apparatus tried to use the opportunity to introduce at the Catholic university their agents recruited from among high school students.⁴⁸ That was the case of the secret UB associate from Łomża, code name "Anna" – a student of the local High School who, together with a dozen or so persons, was classified as the "alien class element" and thus deprived of the possibility of education at state universities.⁴⁹

period was shortened by a month (AIPN Lu, 055/41, Instruction no. 7/50 regarding the collection of profiles of students intending to enter university, Warsaw, 7 March 1950, k. 142; AIPN, BU, 01206/76, vol. 1, General note no. 3..., k. 41).

⁴⁷ The event described after: P. Chmielowiec, *Urząd bezpieczeństwa w Łańcutcie*, Rzeszów 2006, p. 84; AIPN Lu, 033/37, Report of Department V of the PUBP in Kraśnik on April 1951, Kraśnik, 27 April 1951, k. 282-283.

⁴⁸ In 1953, the MBP ordered secret associates, recruited from among future high school graduates, to be sent to KUL (AIPN, BU, 0649/4, vol. 1, Report of Section IV of Department V of the MBP on May 1953, Warsaw, 3 April 1953, k. 69).

⁴⁹ K. Sychowicz, *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa w Łomży – powstanie i działalność (1944-1956)*, Białystok 2009, p. 203-204.

Finally, the reports from 1954-1956 contain almost no information about the repression apparatus' involvement in the enrolment process or its role in the vetting process. It is difficult to give an unambiguous explanation of that fact. The possibility that the rapports have not been preserved or that these activities became routine procedures that UB employees would not even put in their schedules should not be ruled out.

Due to the lack of data it is impossible to estimate the exact number of people whom negative opinions of the state apparatus prevented from continuing education. Let us look at the numbers provided in 1951 by the representative of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science responsible for vetting candidates. That year, 35 thousand high school graduates declared that they wanted to continue their education. From this group, 600 people were not allowed to take entry exams due to the so-called individual objections (in most cases raised by UB employees). 8 thousand candidates failed entry exams, and 4 thousand were not admitted due to the lack of seats.⁵⁰ However, at this point one objection must be made. We do not know exactly how many out of those 12 600 persons were rejected on the UB's orders. We may only state that many "UB's negative candidates" could be among those 600 people with the so-called individual objections. The issue could not be explained by the case of the Cracow district, where in 1950 20 percent of high school graduates were given negative opinions. At that point the KC PZPR intervened and ordered the number of persons placed on the *proscription lists* to be reduced to seven percent (some of them should not be allowed to take entry exams, while the rest should be "flunk" during the exam).⁵¹ On the other hand, the representatives of the Party authorities believed those "objections" to be an important part of eliminating "hostile elements," which is why from time to time complaints would appear about the number of "negative opinions" being too small, especially regarding districts considered "hostile."⁵²

To sum up, it should be added that once the vetting process was concluded, the repression apparatus would still take part in controlling student

⁵⁰ AAN, MSWiN, 332, Information on enrolment in the academic year 1951/1952, k. 2.

⁵¹ AAN, KC PZPR, 237/XVI - 126, Evaluation of the university enrolment action in Cracow in the academic year 1950/1951, b.d., k. 59-60.

⁵² For example, recruitment commissions in Warsaw got negative evaluations. It was believed that not enough "objections" were raised regarding the young inhabitants of Śródmieście (1,3 percent), believed to be a "typically bourgeois-intelligentsia" district. The irritation was magnified by the fact that more negative opinions were given in case of Wola, inhabited by the working class (14 percent) (*ibidem*, 237/XVI-25, Information on the work of the Warsaw Committee regarding higher education [1950], k. 36-37).

communities. Shortly after the matriculation, representatives of the repression apparatus could conduct a full selection of students by deciding who should be expelled. In the second half of 1949, the MBP initiated the creation of a “central scholarship record,” whose aim was to “eliminate hostile elements” from academic communities.⁵³ A similar recommendation was repeated in the Ministry instruction of 1952. UB employees, after running a check on individual students and their families, should apply “various preventive measures.”⁵⁴ According to the Director of Department V, those measures should include expulsion or deprivation of scholarships.

Summary

The part that security authorities played in the process of university enrolment was a yet another example of how the social policy of the Party authorities got implemented. UB employees had been executing tasks connected with the negative selection of university candidates since the first decree of the Ministry of Education that regulated that issue came out (1947). Student profiles, prepared by the UB, were one of the major factors deciding whether a given young person would be allowed to matriculate. Due to the full cooperation of members of Recruitment Commissions, especially those being part of the so-called social factor, the exam results of the “unwanted” persons were influenced. Even if their grades were positive, they would not get admitted under the pretext of the lack of seats. Therefore one could risk a statement that the UB played crucial part in establishing the social origin of student communities in 1947-1956, making sure – in accordance with the declarations – that “the youth with working class, peasant, and working intelligentsia origins, ideologically close to the goals of the working class, capable of conscious, creative participation in all areas of socialist engineering”⁵⁵ would enter university.

To sum up, the creation of the “new” intelligentsia, as subservient to the regime, was not a uniquely Polish phenomenon. It was the factor of sovietisation of social and political environments in all the countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc. It was the attempt to transfer the Soviet system of higher

⁵³ AIPN, BU, MBP, 491, Motions regarding the preventive-repressive action [1949], k. 32.

⁵⁴ AIPN Lu, 055/43, Instruction no. 01/52 regarding fight against the hostile underground, sabotage, and youth hooliganism, Warsaw, 11 February 1952, k. 18-18v.

⁵⁵ IPN, BU, 01206/75, vol. 1, Instruction no. 2/51..., k. 287.

education and social and political role of the intelligentsia to these countries, even though those models were completely alien to the national cultures. In all these countries, the students' admissions politics favoured "worker-peasant" students. The communists regarded those young people as extremely malleable to ideology and weakly linked to the tradition – in contrast to "old" intelligentsia's daughters and sons⁵⁶.

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⁵⁶ Jan Dembowski (*Rozwój i funkcjonowanie nauki polskiej w ustroju demokracji ludowej* [The Development and Functioning of Polish Science under the People's Democracy][in:] *Dziesięć lat rozwoju nauki w Polsce Ludowej* [A Decade of the Development of Science in People's Republic of Poland], ed. B. Suchodolski, Warszawa 1956, p. 15) wrote explicitly, that that youth "would be used to dialectic thinking since their childhood".

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