Manufactured Ambiguity: Party-State Mobilization Strategy in March 1968 Crisis in Poland.*

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1 Introduction

In January 1968, Poland's communist government banned *Dziady*, a Romantic play by Adam Mickiewicz, Poland's national poet, from the stage of the Warsaw National Theater due to its alleged anti-Russian and anti-Soviet undertones. After its last showing on January 30, a couple hundred students gathered to protest government's decision, ending with a demonstration in front of the poet's monument. The police responded with force, beating the protesters and arresting 35 participants. Two students, Adam Michnik and Henryk Szlajfer, were expelled from the University of Warsaw. On March 8th, students from UW organized a rally at the university in their defense, expressing their solidarity and condemning government's cultural policies. This protest also ended violently - the People's Militia (Milicja Obywatelska, MO) and plain cloth Workers' Militia (ORMO) dispersed the demonstration and brutally beat up participating students and bystanders.

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Figure 1: Student Protests, Warsaw. Photo Source: Institute of National Remembrance (IPN)

This repressive action triggered a protest wave that swept through the country - in the following few weeks, university students and high school students came out in solidarity with Warsaw students in cities all over Poland (Eisler, 2008). Students won support of part of the country's academic and intellectual elite, the Polish Church, and members of the Catholic caucus in the Polish parliament. Yet, facing state's strong-minded repressive actions, protests gradually died out with the last student rally staged at the Warsaw University on March 28th.

The communist state responded to protests with coercion and repressions. Student gatherings everywhere were brutally dispersed by uniformed and plain cloth security forces and party activists. In the process, hundreds were arrested and thousands expelled from universities. Those supporting the students were purged or ostracized. The party authorities threatened to close down universities and, in fact, faculties of Economics, Philosophy and Sociology at Warsaw University were disbanded and professors who supported student protests lost their positions. The state relied not only on repressive police actions against students, intellectuals and members of country elites. It launched the biggest wave of mobilization against its real and imagined enemies in which hundreds of thousands of ordinary people participated. These state mobilized events ranged from street demonstrations and rallies in factories and public institutions to petitions and letters in support of the country's leadership. While the state and party involvement in organizing these mass events is apparent, the participation of the masses was not entirely coerced and staged. The Polish party-state employed a complex framing strategy to legitimate repressive actions, settle conflicts within the top communist elite, and secure a modicum of genuine popular support.

Was the state-led mobilization in response to student protests a case of a classic communist strategy using the bureaucratic transmission belts? How was it organized and coordinated? Who participated in counter-protests? What was the framing strategy employed by the Polish party-state? In this paper, we will show that actions of Polish authorities were strategic, nuanced, and designed to activate genuine political preferences and identities that persisted in Polish society. As Roszkowski (2003) stated: "The communists tried to mobilize in Poland in March 1968 the darkest forces dormant in each society - chauvinism, racism, xenophobia - to settle their scores and cover up important causes of a permanent social crisis in the Polish People's Republic." However, we will also show that, unlike in other communist campaigns, actors behind the mobilization were not following central directives, and the campaign relied to a large degree on initiatives taken by lower-rank officials and horizontal communication within party structures, taking a form that some party leaders in the Central Committee found worringly extreme.

2 Literature and Theory

March 1968 crisis in Poland is a case of defensive counter-mobilization by the authoritarian (communist) state challenged by mass protests in the situation of deepening intra-elite conflicts and divisions. The state-mobilized contention was very swift, it took a number of specific forms, and it was structured by a hybrid political frame combining a traditional nationalist discourse with elements derived from the communist ideology and classic populist rhetoric. While state-led mobilization was coordinated by bureaucratic mobilization and enforcement networks of the party-state, there was a significant room for local experimentation and bottom-up initiatives. Contentious events were also not evenly distributed across the country indicating the significant role of local agency. Moreover, specific mobilization agents and nature of participation in these events were not fully transparent, reflecting the state strategy we describe as manufactured ambiguity. This specific nature of state-led mobiliza-

tion in Poland does not fit well the classic image of a mobilizing communist totalitarian state.

In the classic literature on totalitarianism, high mobilization capacity is considered to be a defining characteristic of communist totalitarian regimes (Linz, 2000). Communist mobilization strategies are usually conceived as highly centralized, top-down, and bureaucratically managed campaigns coordinated either by the communist party or by state-run mass organizations, such as trade unions or youth organizations (Selznick, 2014). Participation in such campaigns was seen as coerced and ritualistic and their ideological framing as non-resonant. Scott (1990) described this as maintenance of the "public transcript" in which subordinate classes are forced to participate in the ritual of power legitimization.

This simplistic view of state mobilization was challenged in the subsequent literature on state socialism. Far from being a straightforward top-down strategy, state-led mobilization efforts not only interact with popular challenges from below but also reflect different and often contradictory goals of the mobilization agents. Analyzing strategies of the Hungarian party-state, Hankiss (1988) describes the dynamic interaction among four processes: mobilization, demobilization, self-mobilization, and quasi-mobilization that are inherent in any state-led mobilization efforts. Simultaneously fostering mobilization of state-sponsored collective actors and pursuing de-mobilization of collective actors who challenge the state is a balancing act with multiple unintended consequences. In short, state-led mobilization strategies need to be considered as taking place in the interactive field with boundaries that often go beyond state-society relations and include outside actors as well. Moreover, such mobilization efforts are often decentralized and weakly coordinated as they originate not necessarily from the top of the party-state hierarchies but from competition among bureaucratic agents from multiple structural locations. Finally, both technologies and framing of mobilization involve innovations, crafting, and diffusion.

The 1968 campaign in Poland represents well strategic dilemmas of state-led mobilization, as well as crafting by mobilizing agents and innovative framing mostly done by state-

controlled media. It also involved multiple mobilizing actors with often contradictory goals. Although the agency was clearly embedded in the party-state mobilization and enforcement networks, including hierarchies of the communist party, mass organizations and media, the campaign was not a strictly top-down process. It was decentralized, with many local initiatives, featuring diffusion of strategies across different locations, as well as experimentation by local party and mass organizations agents. It also involved sophisticated use of various framing strategies that borrowed not only from the communist arsenal of ideas but also from resurrected and reformulated historical and national discursive elements and populist idioms in order to appeal to various groups in the Polish society. In fact, it was based on genuinely resonant cultural frames and activated identities that have been shared among the Polish population. Mass participation in contentious events was not fully coerced but had a significant element of volunteerism based on interests for some and identities for others. In short, mobilized contention was not only designed strategically, involved a complex framing strategy, and was implemented with a high degree of precision to make an impression of spontaneous and wide support for the communist party but it was also to a large degree spontaneous, voluntary, decentralized and diffused across the country.

While the state-led mobilization in 1968 is not a simple case of a top-down strategy, it nevertheless shares affinity with mobilization campaigns in bureaucratic and highly repressive communist one-party states. Although the process of mobilization was not strictly top-down or centralized, existing bureaucratic and organizations mobilization and enforcement networks were used, following a familiar pattern. This created the conditions for almost instant mobilization and demobilization of state-mobilized actors when the state goals were accomplished. Our event analysis shows this dimension of state-led contention very well. Moreover, the role of media and framing strategies, involving resurrection of collective memories, resentments and hybridization, were at the heart of mobilization efforts.

In the following sections, we place March 1968 in the larger context of state-led mobilization campaigns in communist Poland, a comparison that highlights the unique features of

this case. Then, we analyze this state-led mobilization strategy by discussing the unfolding of the campaign over time, its organizational patterns, and the framing strategy.

3 Context

March 1968 was one in a series of crises of the communist regime in Poland. Waves of protest challenging the state organized by different social groups swept through the country in 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1976. Occassionally, the party also engaged in mobilization campaigns against real or perceived international and domestic enemies such as the 1965 campaign against American imperialism in Vietnam or the 1966 campaign against the Roman Catholic Episcopate. Among these campaigns, party-state response to student protests in 1968 stands out as unique on a few dimensions: the scale of propaganda and mobilization, its relatively decentralized character, the channeling of popular discontent to scapegoat political enemies, expand party support, and make drastic personnel changes, as well as an innovative and resonant framing strategy based on "historical work" activating genuine cultural preferences and pre-existing resentments.

Unlike other campaigns such as for example, the Vietnam campaign, which could be characterized as "merely state-driven, controlled" mobilization, "routinized and emptied of meaningful political content" (Mark et al., 2015), March 1968 campaign was innovative in discourse, repertoire, and organization. "The regular top-down procedure of preparing and launching campaigns was altered" with a much more bottom-up, horizontal organizational style, in which the "initiators employed other channels of communication with lower-level echelons." In fact, in the beginning there was no central directive: "there apparently were no specific instructions from the party's Central Committee departments as to who in particular was to be targeted and what the exact content of the slogans should be" and instead "the press in particular provided models of behavior to be adopted" by publicizing descriptions of early rallies, which were then imitated throughout the country (Stola, 2005). This decentral-

ized organizational pattern, which activated horizontal structures in the party and in which spontaneous diffusion and imitation played a more important role than instructions from the top, differentiates the March campaign from previous and subsequent state-led mobilizations in Poland.

Another unique feature of the March 1968 campaign is the defensive character of the mobilization in reaction to a threat posed by student protests. It is important to note, however, that at that point in time, the party, though threatened, was still acting from a position of dominance. That the party did not fear that the mobilization it organized and encouraged might spiral out of control and turn against it, speaks to its strength.[1] After 1980, when the party realized that the mobilizational capacity of the opposition exceeded its own, such campaigns were no longer undertaken. The March 1968 campaign is also the last mass campaign, which might be characterized as a hate campaign. Subsequent campaigns took a more positive tone and did not create a powerful image of an enemy, perhaps because campaigns fueled by anger, frustration, and prejudice are more difficult to control than routine calls for increases in production, and can only be managed by a party with a firm grip on power.

The student rebellion in March 1968 unfolded against the background of a deeper political crisis within the Polish communist elites. During the previous ten years concessions offered to various groups in the Polish society as a result of de-Stalinization crisis of 1956 were gradually withdrawn. Gomulka's leadership reversed liberalizing trends and their "small stabilization" program brought economic and political stagnation. Thus, the revisionist forces within the party, emboldened by the reform movement in neighboring Czechoslovakia, hoped for policy changes and return to October 1956 promises of liberalization and reforms. At the same time, a nationalist and conservative faction within the party led by Mieczyslaw Moczar (so called "Partisans" since they were members of the communist underground during the war) sensed the opportunity to strengthen and consolidate their power within the party leadership

[1] Although notes from the meeting of the Political Bureau do reveal concerns among top leadership that the rhetoric used against the students might also place the party in a negative light (Garlicki, 1993).

and oust Gomulka and his allies. Therefore, the 1968 crisis comprised of two rebellions: first, by a generation of disaffected university students supported by a part of the intellectual and academic elite demanding cultural and political liberalization and second, by the generation of party activists in their forties representing various political options whose upward mobility was blocked by the stagnant political and economic system (*Interview with J. Eisler*, 2013).

4 State-led mobilization - event analysis

The state-mobilized response to events at the University of Warsaw on March 8th and 9th began with mass rallies and resolutions on March 11th. On the same day, the first article with the party's interpretation of events appeared in Trybuna Ludu, the regime's official daily, and on March 12, the newspaper began reporting on counter-mobilization events. From mid-March to mid-April the country was engulfed by a wave of official rallies, manifesting support for the party and calling for punishment of the protesters. Relying on an enormous party apparatus and organizations infiltrating all aspects of life, the party went on an offensive, not only countering (or rather denouncing) criticisms issued by the protesting students and intelligentsia, but also mobilizing society against the challengers and in support of the party. Figure 3 plots the number of counter-protest events between March 8th and June 24th - the duration of the campaign - across the country as reported by Trybuna Ludu (with dates signifying date reported). Figure 4 plots the counter-protest events by type of event starting on the date of the first report of a counter-mobilization rally - March 12th.

Figure 2: Mass rally, Gdansk. Photo Source: Institute of National Remembrance (IPN)

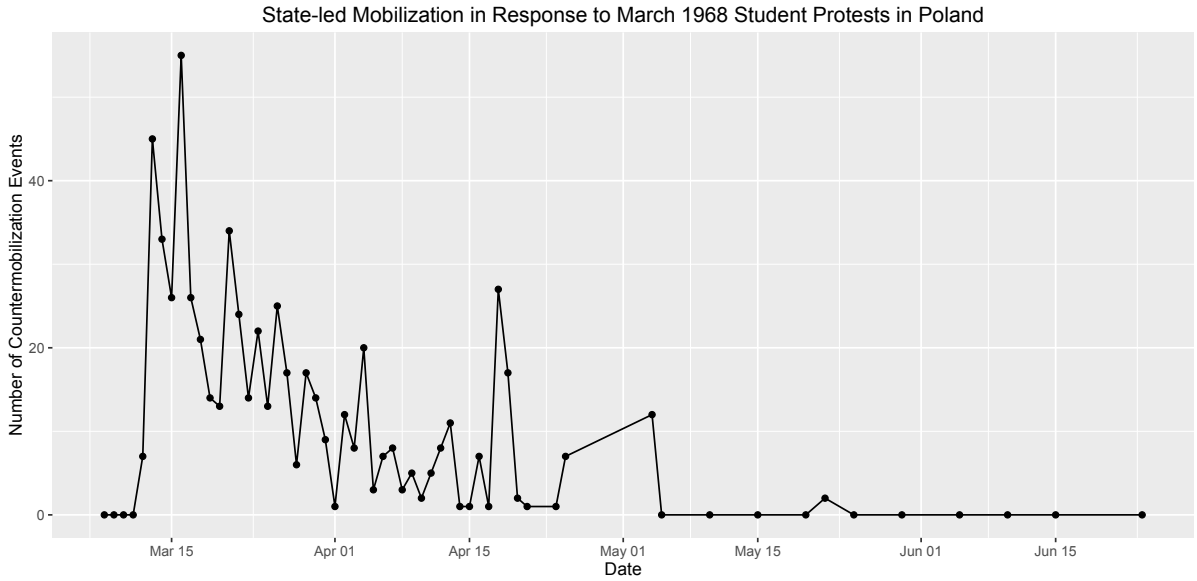

Figure 3: State-led mobilization: March 8 to June 24, 1968

One of the main forms of counter-mobilization to student protests was a mass rally, usually organized in factories and workplaces. Most rallies culminated in an adoption of a resolution condemning the protesters and expressing support for the party line. This is why in Figure 4 incidences of rallies and resolutions trend together with differences likely stemming from reporting: resolutions were not always mentioned in reports about rallies and vice versa. However, party organizations in workplaces across the country continued issuing resolutions even after rallies had died down following about a week of fervent activity.

The rallies began with the meeting of Warsaw party activists on March 11, which gathered about 6,000 people coming straight from work. The protests diffused quickly: "in a span of a week, similar rallies were organized by all voivodeship secretaries, and in addition to them hundreds of lower-level party organizations." Remarkably, "similarities between rallies and speeches in the first days of the campaign most likely did not stem from centrally given directions, but from mimicry and information exchange among different party committees." This involved an activation of horizontal structures in the party, particularly given "a kind of political vacuum caused by the silence of the leadership" (Stola, 2000). Diffusion happened without instructions from the party's Central Committee, mostly through officials at the

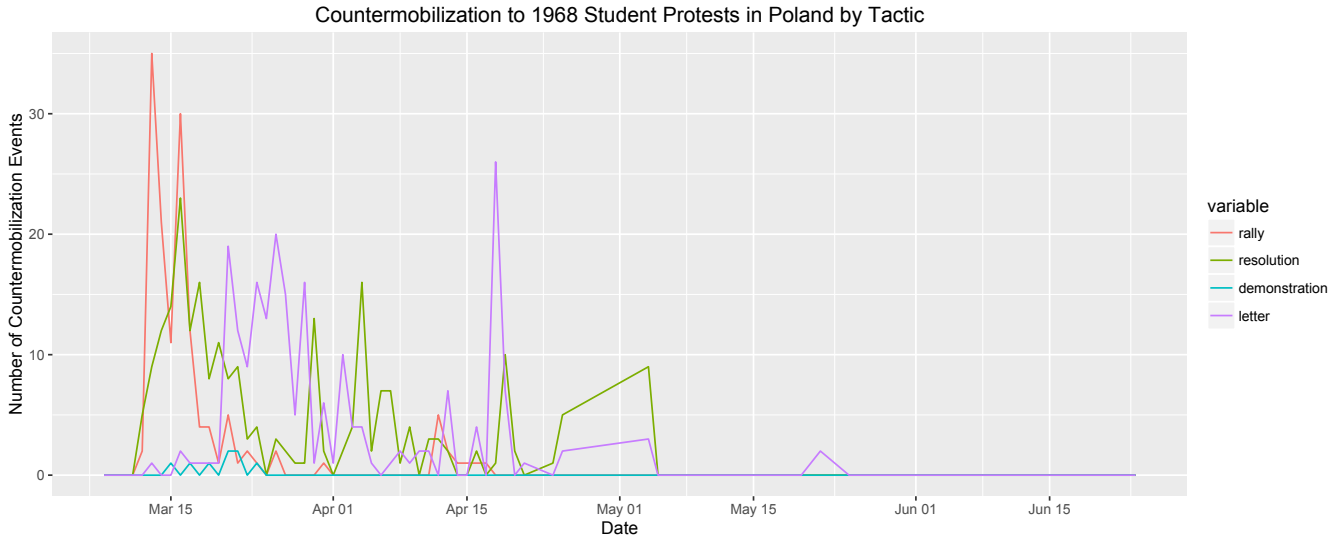

Figure 4: State-led mobilization by repertoire: March 12 to June 24, 1968

lower levels of the party, who - familiar with prior campaigns - could almost mechanically recreate previous patterns of behavior: "there were also telephone calls to trustworthy comrades in provincial committees and a good deal of imitation and 'horizontal' consultation between midlevel apparatchiks on what to do" (Stola, 2005). The speeches and slogans at local meetings throughout the country mostly mirrored the press propaganda and the initial Warsaw meeting (Stola, 2000).

For example in Katowice, the capital of Upper Silesia, Poland's industrial south-western region, "since March 12 - from the inspiration of Voivodeship Committee of the Polish Workers' Party - an action condemning student protests in Warsaw began. Neither in the press nor during organized mass rallies and meetings - what is very characteristic - was there a mention of demonstrations and gatherings of students that were taking place in the Katowice voivodeship" (Miroszewski, 2009, p.83-84). Only the state-led response was being covered. Mass rallies of workers in major steelworks, coal mines and factories were organized in solidarity with Warsaw workers, condemning "the culprits of irresponsible disturbances" and demanding "restoration of calm and order in Warsaw and consequences for the instigators." Workers would yell "Work! Calm! Work! Calm!" and express support for the party (*Trybuna Robotnicza, nr 62-63*, 1968).

The mass rallies, which took place on March 14 in a range of cities in the Upper Silesia region, were similar to each other in organization and slogans. At the end, participants were bused to Katowice, where about 100,000 gathered in and around a square in the city center to hear a speech by Edward Gierek, who was a party leader in the province at the time. Gierek's words made their way into the resolution read by one of the miners and adopted during the manifestation (Miroszewski, 2009).

Figure 5: State-led mobilization across the country: number of reported rallies and demonstrations.

Geographically, as Figure 5 shows, distribution of state-led rallies and demonstrations suggests that counter-mobilization was not a simple reaction to student protests. Some of the sites with multiple rallies - such as Lodz or Szczecin - are cities that did not experience substantial student protests. Rather than in places with high student mobilization, counter-protests seem to have taken place in largest, industrial cities, where coal mines and factories were located. It is possible that in many cities, for instance of the Upper Silesia region (Katowice and neighboring cities), organizing rallies and demonstrations was a signaling game in which potential contenders for power showed their ability to mobilize support.

On March 19, Wladyslaw Gomulka, First Secretary of the Polish Workers Party, gave a speech to the party activists in Warsaw. This is a point where - as Figure 4 shows (with a reporting lag), an increase in letters as a tactic began. Gomulka's address, according to the official propaganda, triggered an outpouring of support: party activists everywhere - in factories, mines, schools, villages - send letters to the party leadership and Gomulka

personally, expressing their support for the party line. Trybuna Ludu eagerly reported on those letters, some of them sent directly to their offices, coming from all corners of Poland, citing passages from them and highlighting their overwhelming number.[2] Headlines like "For Poland and Socialism - against the instigators" dominated the paper for weeks.[3]

According to the classified report of the PZPR Central Committee,[4] the countermobilization was massive - as of March 26, over 1,900 meetings of local party organization (Podstawowa Organizacja Partyjna, POP) and its subdivisions (Odzialowe Organizacje Partyjne, OOP) dedicated to the March events took place throughout Poland. In addition, close to 400 rallies and mass demonstrations and about 700 meetings of party and social activists were organized. About 1,150 resolutions were adopted by POP to condemn the organizers of the student protests and express support for the party (Kula et al., 1998, p.242). The report of the Gdansk Voivodeship Party Committee from March 14[5] states: "in workplaces, party organizations are still organizing party meetings and mass rallies. Since yesterday organization of meetings in groups and - on a large scale - individual agitation began. Party members are getting more and more engaged and taking on more combative and offensive stances" (Kula et al., 1998, p.101).

By early April, the countermobilization began to decline. Letters of support and, to a lesser degree, resolutions - as reported by Trybuna Ludu - spiked briefly in mid-April in response to a controversy over the behavior of Znak, the Catholic Caucus. On April 11, Znak used a parliamentary question to oppose the brutal use of force against the students. The party's propaganda machine responded by reporting on renewed outpour of support for the party's stance and letters and resolutions disagreeing with the position of the Catholic Caucus. But by the beginning of May, the press moved on to Labor Day parades, commemoration of victory over fascism, and production targets, striking a much more positive

[2]In interpreting Figure 4, is important to note that letters were likely reported in "bursts": even if they continuously trickled in over a number of days, the newspaper would report many of them in one article, demonstrating overwhelming support.

[3]See for example *Trybuna Ludu* (March 19 1968)

[4]Information nr 64/A/4402 from March 28, 1968, Warsaw

[5]Information Nr 34/A/4371

tone. Throughout May, articles about anti-Polish activities and Zionist propaganda in the West would appear periodically, peppered with testimonies of Poles who aided Jews during WWII,[6] and political speeches that drew on themes related to March events.[7] The counter-mobilization to March events did not fully end until June 24th when Gomulka made a speech, in which he officially condemned the anti-Zionist campaign, bringing it to a stop.

5 State-led mobilization - organizational patterns

> "From the communist repertoire of previous purges and hate campaigns," the March 1968 campaign took "in addition to some slogans and stereotypes of the enemy, also ready-made schemes for behavior of units and institutions, organizations practiced in their realization and the typical Orwellian newspeak. The resemblance to quasi-revolutionary campaigns organized in the 1950s is also visible in the March mismatch of goals and methods: the intensity of the hateful propaganda and the scale of mobilization were completely inadequate to the threat posed by Zionism, however understood" (Stola, 2004, p.66).

5.1 Party structures, trade unions and mass organizations

The party relied on unions and party activists in factories to organize mass rallies (so-called "masowki"), which were "carefully planned and staged by regional PZPR committees, closely cooperating with party organizations and the management of factories" (Eisler, 2008). Together, they ensured high attendance and strategic distribution of party activists in the

[6] See for example a call from the Polish diaspora in Canada "Pietnujemy akcje szkodzace Polsce" [We are condemning the actions hurting Poland] *Trybuna Ludu* (May 22 1969) for an article about anti-Polish campaign of the Western Zionist organizations. See for example "Swiadectwo prawdy" [Testimony to the truth] *Trybuna Ludu* (May 22 1968) for discussion of Poles helping Jews during the war intended to highlight the supposedly ungrateful and anti-Polish behavior of Jews involved in the events of 1968.

[7] See for example a speech by Marian Spychalski, leader of the Front of National Unity, on June 8th. "Rozwoj Polski Socjalistycznej celem wszystkich patriotycznych sil Frontu Jednosci Narodu" [The Development of the Socialist Poland the Aim of All Patriotic Forces of the Front of National Unity] *Trybuna Ludu* (June 8 1968)

room, provided banners, slogans, and text for the speeches, and created appearances of enthusiasm and engagement for the sake of televised reports. The practice of organizing the rallies *at the workplace*, often *during work hours*, presumably *under threat of job loss* and even *transporting* the demonstrators to the event is reminiscent of some the tactics still used in hybrid regimes where autocrats induce employers to mobilize their employees to vote for the regime's party (Frye et al., 2014).

The resolutions adopted by workers were often "presented for approval" and the directors would "receive" them prior to the meeting or rally, presumably from top party officials. Documents from the Ministry of Interior reveal that in some cases, informers reported that resolutions enjoyed very little support and there were voices in the crowd "undermining the critical text of the resolution draft." Names of those who criticized the resolution or party politics were carefully noted. An opposing vote on a resolution condemning student protests could cost a worker her job, as could expressions of support for Israel or a claim made "during the mobilization of party activists in case student riots needed to be put down" that one "will not follow party orders and go beat the students up"[8](Dabrowski et al., 2009, p.531-532). Both carrots and sticks were used to encourage workers' actions against students. At one point, Lech Walesa remarked bitterly that "a bonus for the willingness to beat up students at the time was two thousand per person," not a small amount considering that for many workers this was their entire monthly salary (Eisler, 2008, p. 117-118).

The party also took measures to control the content of speeches made during the rallies. Interviews conducted 20 years later by Marek Zieleniewski (a journalist from a weekly "Wprost") with two workers who spoke or read resolutions during March rallies and whose names made it into the newspapers reveal that the party ordered and staged at least some of the performances at mass rallies, even if the sentiment was indeed shared by a subset of workers. Jerzy Niedzialkowski who worked as a locksmith at the time describes: "a secretary

[8]The case of Helena Rey from CHZ "Minex" provides an example of the former, and of Stanislaw Malejonek from CHZ "Motoimport" of the latter. Steps were also taken to exclude Malejonek from the party. See document number 402 with notes from informants in the IPN collection. Source AIPN, 0236/160, k. 188-192, mps.

of the party organization (POP) approached me and said I had to make a speech. 'I don't have to but I can' - I responded. I did not use the paper that was slipped to me but in a few of my own words I expressed, what I thought [...] then I spoke with a clear conscience. I heard that the youth was listening to provocateurs and destroying the common good. The press wrote a lot about it" (Eisler, 1991, p.349).

The party apparatus also ensured that a sufficient amount of cheering and applause took place during the rallies. For instance, Hillebrandt (1986) notes that during Gomulka's speech in Warsaw's Congress Hall, cheers in support of Gierek were coming from groups strategically distributed among delegates of workers from Wola, a district of Warsaw. Hillebrandt (1986) also suggests that the subsequent career of the First Party Secretary in that neighborhood could be an indication of the source of first pro-Gierek demonstration. First Secretaries of the Voivodeship Committees would also often appear at mass rallies in factories and shipyards. "The tone was almost identical" across rallies all over Poland: "an attack on intellectuals" in which "a constant set of names" appeared and the "demand to cleanse the apparatus of Zionists" were recurring themes (Eisler, 1991, p.358).

In some cases, speakers were drawn from different socioeconomic groups to represent the breadth of support - e.g. at a rally in the Gdansk shipyard on March 16, speeches were made first by the First Secretary of the Warsaw Committee, then by a worker, an engineer, and a vice-rector of a university (Kula et al., 1998, p.129). Walesa's description of another rally as carefully planned with seating charts, including special forces, party secretaries, workers and directors, provides another clue for how scripted was the counter-mobilization to civil unrest at universities (Eisler, 1991, p.349).

Even if the workers agreed with the party's spin on March events - uninformed about the events, unaware of student postulates, influenced by the propaganda in the press or because it expressed some of their grievances - the party attempted to control the organization and the course of rallies. Moreover, as Oseka (1999) points out: "regardless of whether the gathered worker activists expressed their genuine feelings or whether they were forced to

act out a spectacle, organizing a manifestation of loyalty on such a broad scale serves as a testimony to a considerable efficiency of the party apparatus."

5.2 The Role of State Media

The mass rallies were accompanied by an intense propaganda campaign in the press - reporting on the demonstrations, printing speeches, resolutions and letters sent to the party executives, citing declaration of support, exposing the backgrounds and connections of organizers of student protests, and commenting on the events. Although evidence of party directives sent to the press is missing, there are many indications that the narrative was shaped, if not directly dictated, by the party.

First, the language of press articles and printed rally speeches was almost identical to that of internal party documents - be it reports from the Ministry of Interior or propaganda bulletins. "The materials used by March publicists" - writes Oseka (2010) - "in particular about the private lives of 'Zionists' and their family connections - did not come from investigative journalism. Today we know that some threads, and even entire fragments of March articles were word for word taken from reports and operational materials of SB." We can tell journalists copied them verbatim because "even syntax and grammatical errors were copied." Furthermore, the "compact and uniform image of the enemy, which emerges out of the propaganda discourse" makes it "hard to suppose that journalists out of their own initiative conducted such a large-scale campaign." This seems to be a case especially given the consistency and coherence of themes: "in different texts appear not only the same incarnations of the enemy or similar patterns of accusations, but even identical phrases, and even entire paragraphs" (Oseka, 1999, p.89).

Historian Dariusz Stola also makes a claim about language similarity as an indication of the origin of the documents - the comparison of anti-Zionist leaflets and newspaper articles with the "Internal Bulletin" of the Ministry of Interior makes it clear that the Ministry was the source of propaganda. The blueprint for accusations, information about involved

students and their families, and again common mistakes - such as including names of people who could not have been present or same misspellings of names (Stola, 2000) - can be traced back to Security Service (SB) and Ministry of Interior (MSW). Though internal propaganda bulletins of PZPR were not intended for wider circulation, they "were undoubtedly read by many journalists and lower-level party functionaries, and the concepts included in them were mimicked in rally speeches and hundreds of high-circulation articles" (Oseka, 1999, p.13). However, "we do not know how confidential documents were passed to the journalists and to what degree their contacts with security service were formalized" (Oseka, 2010, p. 153).

Second, even if there is no evidence of party orders directing the press to conjure a particular image of the enemy, there is evidence of pressure put on editors reluctant to join the hate campaign. For instance, Stanislaw Brodzki, assistant editor-in-chief of weekly "Swiat," which was not publishing anti-Zionist articles, was called in to the Press Bureau and instructed to participate because "the Fatherland calls" (Eisler, 1991, p.368). The Ministry of Interior created a special team to evaluate the positions of journalists, expressed not just publicly but even privately, on the Six Day War, resulting in dismissal of most of the journalists under investigation (Stola, 2000).

Also the anti-student sentiment was strongly shaped by the press propaganda. In the articles of the state's newspaper, Trybuna Ludu, students were always portrayed as not only not united with the workers, but also hostile to them.[9] Moreover, likely in an attempt to discredit the demonstrators, student protests were described as organized by "small but very rowdy groups of students" and their "anti-people and anti-nation" character was stressed, implying that it is "a party and national obligation to counteract it."[10] The allegedly small number of protesting students was contrasted with numerous declarations of support for the party, also from academic circles, and overwhelming turnout at rallies. The propaganda also juxtaposed descriptions of limos belonging to the protesting students' parents with

[9] "Wokol zajsc na uniwersytecie Warszawskim" [Around the events at Warsaw University], *Trybuna Ludu* (11 March 1968).

[10] "Co sie kryje za ulicznymi awanturami?" [What is behind the street fights?] *Trybuna Ludu* (12 March 1968).

workers' sweat; complaints of spoiled children with sacrifices made daily in factories; distant intellectuals with their gaze towards the West with patriotic workers and farmers toiling for a better future of the People's Republic. Students' militant and disruptive behavior was contrasted with restraint and calm of the workers; limited and mostly misguided support for the student demonstrators with unquestioning and broad support for the party.

Trybuna Ludu

Warszawskie załogi domagają się przywrócenia spokoju w Stolicy

Czyn produkcyjny robotniczej Warszawy

Nowe ataki sił wyzwoleńczych na bazy USA w Wietnamie

FULBRIGHT: nawet z półmilionową armią nie możemy wygrać wojny

Komitet Rozbrojeniowy kończy pracę

Uzgodniony projekt sprawozdania dla Zgromadzenia Ogólnego NZ

– przedstawiły delegacje ZSRR i USA

Narada aktywu społeczno-politycznego Warszawy

Represje izraelskie wobec ludności arabskiej

PO SPOTKANIU KONSULTATYWNYM:

Oświadczenie KC KPZR

Nowa zbrodnia w Salisbury

Figure 6: Front page of Trybuna Ludu on March 12, 1968. Headline in top left corner states: "Warsaw crews demand restoring peace in the Capital."

The propaganda also focused on the theme of laborers working so that the country can provide universal education and the ungrateful students, brainwashed by Western media and pampered by learning conditions created by the People's Republic, engaging in anti-state activity. For example, Trybuna Ludu reprinted a speech by Edward Sanecki at the Warsaw Committee meeting, in which he stresses that: "we will make effort to ensure that those who study for our money do not have the opportunity to conduct hostile activities."[11] This discourse was reinforced by press articles about scholarships received by university students, outlining the percentage of students on stipends, the amount of money dedicated to student support, and scholarships granted by factories.[12]

In addition to articles describing the party's narrative of events, "exposing provocateurs," printing workers' resolutions and speeches by party officials, the press also published letters or fragments of letters of support, sent in large numbers to Gomulka and the Central Committee of the party, which resembled the resolutions

[11] "Glos aktywu partyjnego Stolicy" [The Voice of the Party Aktiv in the Capital] *Trybuna Ludu* (March 13 1968)

[12] With headlines like "Over 190 thousand students receive scholarships" (p.4) and "Milliard PLN for the student care" (p.9) on March 16th and 17th respectively. See also Gomulka's speech on March 20th: "Stanowisko partii - zgodne z wola narodu" [The Stance of the Party - in line with the will of the nation] *Trybuna Ludu* (20 March 1968).

in form and content - expression of solidarity with the party and disapproval of students' actions, often ending with a pledge to increase production above targets.[13]

6 State-led mobilization - framing

The propaganda offensive launched in response to student rebellion was founded on three interlocking political idioms: anti-Semitism, xenophobic nationalism directed against the West and in particular against Germany, and another employing Marxist populism, based on the glorification of productive labor versus unproductive one as well as distinction between the working class and the idle class.

6.1 Anti-Semitic/Anti-Zionist frame

The anti-Semitic campaign preceded March 1968 protests. First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, Wladyslaw Gomulka, used the Six-Day War (5-10 June 1967) in which Israel defeated Egypt, Syria and Jordan, and Soviet bloc countries' condemnation of Israel as a pretext to attack his real and potential competitors for power. On June 19, 1967 Gomulka gave a speech at the VI Congress of Trade Unions in which he condemned Zionism as a part of international imperialism and famously stated: "each and every citizen of Poland should have only one homeland - Polish People's Republic."

Figure 7: Mass rally, Gdansk. Photo Source: Institute of National Remembrance (IPN)

Gomulka's speech empowered nationalists within the Polish ruling elite and commenced

[13]See for example "Calkowite poparcia dla stanowiska partii" [Full support for the party stance] *Trybuna Ludu* (March 23 1968).

a wave of meetings and rallies condemning Zionists and cosmopolitans. Purges directed against the Polish citizens of Jewish origin in the party-state apparatus, the army and security police, media and cultural institutions followed. As a result, some twenty thousand people were forced to emigrate from Poland.

With the backdrop of Arab-Israeli War and USSR's support of Palestine in the conflict, Jews in Poland were portrayed as agents of Israel, unfaithful to their Polish fatherland and ungrateful for the sacrifices Poles made for Jews persecuted during the war. Some of the most popular slogans at the time were: "out with Zionism - agency of imperialism," "we will rip off the head of the anti-Polish hydra," "everyone has only one Fatherland," "purge the party of Zionists" (Stola, 2000, p.112, 115) or "remove Zionists from posts" (Kula et al., 1998, p.91).

Banners with slogans such as "Zionists represent Israel, not the Polish people" carried at rallies in Warsaw or statements by workers reported in propaganda newspapers such as "If someone cares more about the interests of Israel and West Germany than the interests of the People's Poland, then they should not usurp the right to speak on behalf of the Polish nation"[14] reveal that one of the main accusations was the lack of loyalty to Poland and suspicions that Polish Jews do not act in the best interest of the country. The allegation of serving foreign powers also provided an excuse for removing Jews from positions of power within the party.

The targeting of the Jewish population was a new and distinctive feature for a communist campaign in postwar Poland, where anti-Semitism was typically combined with anti-communism. The anti-Semitic campaign of March 1968 innovatively brought together symbols and slogans borrowed both from the Polish radical right and from the arsenal of early communist purges and hate campaigns (Stola, 2005). These historical elements activated pre-existing prejudice to create a new and resonant mobilizing frame.

[14] "Ludzie pracy Warszawy i calego kraju potepiaja inspiratorow i prowodyrow ekscesow" [The Working People of Warsaw and all the country condemn the instigators and leaders of the excesses"] *Trybuna Ludu* (March 14 1968).

6.2 Patriotism/nationalism frame

The patriotic frame comprised of three themes, which overlapped with both the anti-Semitic and the populist frames: the question of loyalty to the Polish nation; references to the destruction of Poland by Germany during World War II and Polish heroism; and everyday patriotism of hard work for the betterment of the nation. Within this framework, student protests were characterized as first, initiated and manipulated by foreign and hostile powers; second, as undermining and unappreciative of efforts to rebuild Poland; and third, as indulgent, ungrateful, and dismissive of hard, physical work. Thus, the protests and its organizers were condemned as "eagerly fulfilling orders from Tel Aviv," as anti-Polish and steered by foreign influences, taking advantage of the Polish solidarity with the Jews during common suffering of Nazi occupation.[15] Students were frequently portrayed as naive and susceptible to influence and manipulation by external forces, which were using them to advance their own agenda.[16]

The propaganda also often used heroic images from Polish past such as resistance against Nazism or post-war rebuilding of Warsaw, which had been leveled with the ground during wartime air strikes, to discredit "the instigators," "vandals," and "hooligans" who were destroying these achievements and disrespecting sacrifices made by the Polish nation[17] to play into feelings of national pride. For instance, First Secretary of PZPR Central Committee, Kazimierz Los, in a speech at a rally in an ironwork in Warsaw said: "We, the residents of Warsaw, who with our own hands raised it from ruins and brought to its current state, cannot look away indifferently from these acts of self-indulgence and vandalism."[18]

Moreover, the protesters were portrayed as "the enemies of People's Poland." For exam-

[15] "Potepienie inspiratorow i sprawcow zajsc" [The Condemnation of Instigators and Leaders of the Events] *Trybuna Ludu* (March 14 1968).

[16] 'See for example, 'Ludzie pracy Warszawy i calego kraju potepiaja inspiratorow i prowodyrow ekscesow" [The Working People of Warsaw and from all of the country condemn the instigators and leaders of the excesses"] *Trybuna Ludu* (March 14 1968).

[17] See for example, *Trybuna Ludu* (March 13, 14, 15 1968).

[18] "Potepienie inspiratorow i sprawcow zajsc" [The Condemnation of Instigators and Leaders of the Events] *Trybuna Ludu* (March 14 1968).

ple, a resolution issued by a coal mine in Katowice, ratified by a hundred thousand workers, proclaimed: "We are determined to cut off any hand raised against our beloved Homeland and trying to strike against the fruits of our labor. The enemy of People's Poland, the enemy of socialism, whether under the patronage of imperialism, revisionism, or international Zionism, or anyone else, cannot count on tolerance in our country."[19]

Figure 8: Mass rally, Warsaw. Photo Source: Institute of National Remembrance (IPN)

In the socialist discourse, patriotism was often equated with hard work. To be a good citizen meant to be a productive member of society. To disturb work and order, to disrupt production, was to engage in anti-state activities, to stand in the way of the progress of the Polish nation. This rhetoric permeates for instance Gierek's speech in Katowice: "the concept of work has been tied in one unbreakable whole with the concept of patriotism, the love of the fatherland."[20] These ideals could be used to turn the toiling working class - the backbone of the socialist society and its pride - against the intellectuals. They were additionally reinforced by extensive press coverage of industrial promises to increase production as a manifestation of solidarity with the party.[21]

6.3 Populism/anti-intelligentsia and anti-elite frame

Thus, using the communist ideals of hard work, the party sparked counter-mobilization through the provocation of class conflict. Much of the outrage directed against the students

[19] "Komunisci Gornego Slaska i Czerwonego Zaglebia manifestuja poparcie dla polityki partii" *Trybuna Ludu* (March 15 1968).

[20] "Jestesmy niezachwianie z narodem, za partia i jej kierownictwem!" [We stand unwavering with the nation, the party, and its leadership!] *Trybuna Ludu* (March 15 1968).

[21] See for example, "Caly kraj w pelni popiera stanowisko partii wyrazone w przemowieniu towarzysza Wieslawa" [The whole nation fully supports the party position expressed in Comrade Wieslaw's speech], *Trybuna Ludu* (March 21 1968).

had roots in the perceptions of their privileged position, their access to university education and Western goods and travels (often through their parents' high posts in the regime). The workers' discourse in rallies and resolutions centered around the resentment of students causing unrest despite their superior living and learning conditions, particularly given the small portion of students of working class and farming background at universities. In the official party narrative and in the slogans of workers, students were continuously portrayed as idle, spoiled children of well-positioned parents who do not appreciate the toil of the working class and capriciously disturb public order (Kula et al., 1998, p.95).

Professors were described as remote from society, "living in the high intellectual Alps." The word "elite" was "used by the March propaganda as an insult," and intellectuals called "mafia" and a "clique" to emphasize their distance from physical workers (Oseka, 2010, p.151). Banners carried by workers during rallies bore slogans such as: "Writers to Their Pens, Students to Their Studies," "More workers' and farmers' children to the universities."[22] This sentiment was also expressed in resolutions issued by workers. For example, in a car factory in Warsaw (FSO), the resolution explicitly states: "With the efforts of the entire nation, with the efforts of our working hands - a universal education system was built in the People's Homeland (...) We stress simultaneously that among the main organizers of the provocative rallies and demonstrations there are no working class children, who know the best how much worker's sweat and effort it takes to cover the costs of education of each student." In the article in Trybuna Ludu, which describes the FSO rally (6,000 participants), the workers are portrayed as "knowing the best the value of human labor," as individuals who can "best evaluate the destructive activity of the sowers of unrest."[23]

Central Committee of the PZPR Information of the Organization Bureau,[24] when reporting on the situation in Katowice and other Upper Silesian cities, condemned students

[22]See for example "Warszawskie zalogi domagaja sie przywrocenia spokoju w Stolicy" [Warsaw crews demand restoring peace in the Capital] *Trybuna Ludu* (March 12 1968).

[23]"Warszawskie zalogi domagaja sie przywrocenia spokoju w Stolicy" [Warsaw crews demand restoring peace in the Capital] *Trybuna Ludu* (March 12 1968).

[24]Information nr 28/A/4365 from March 14, 1968, Warsaw

for disturbing public order and expressed a conviction that their actions were organized by external enemies, inspired by Zionists and "political bankrupts." In line with the rhetoric in the official press, it contained information that it was the well-off students spoiled by excellent learning conditions that stood behind the civil unrest and that students with worker and farmer backgrounds were not involved, concluding that increasing their percentage at universities would improve student attitudes in general. Approval for firing of the parents of protesting students employed in high official posts was combined with the stance that the government had so far been too tolerant of the "excesses" of students (Kula et al., 1998).

A similar stance was reflected in rallies and resolutions, in which full support for the party and Political Bureau and its actions was expressed. Calls for punishment of "instigators" and their parents and for "purifying" the party and the party apparatus of Zionists and hostile elements were common. For instance, on March 13, mass rallies took place in a number of ironworks, coal mines etc. with 800 to 3,000 participants each; "during each rally a few workers would speak, with the majority of physical workers" (Kula et al., 1998, p. 85). In a speech printed in Trybuna Ludu,[25] Jozef Kepa, the First Party Secretary in Warsaw (KW PZPR), describes an encounter of students with the workers, in which reminding students that their demonstrations are being watched by workers who toil for their comfortable lives was met with laughter and ridicule. The students also purportedly threw coins at the workers "like charity" and acted provocatively towards worker activists who showed restraint and "avoided physical clashes." Students' claims about students hurt or in one case killed by the police forces are discredited in the speech as lies and instead the wounds of workers and their sacrifice are highlighted. They are praised for keeping their calm "despite insults and physical attacks" with pieces of pavement, stones and chairs (p.4).

This anti-intellectual current can be understood as "clothing 'anti-Zionism'" in an egalitarian costume" to appeal to many ordinary people who were not particularly swayed by anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric but with whom anti-elitist messages found more reso-

[25] "Co sie kryje za ulicznymi awanturami?" [What is behind the street fights?] *Trybuna Ludu* (12 March 1968).

nance (Stola, 2006). But, even though the high proportion of Jewish professors and students was definitely emphasized, glorification of productive labor versus unproductive one also served another important purpose - preventing civil unrest from spreading to different groups of society (Stola, 2006). By presenting "degenerate intellectuals" as "traveling around the world, spread out in their daddies' limos, wearing the most expensive foreign clothes, full of distance and contempt for the hard labor of the workers" and putting them in stark contrast with the "people's patriotism" (Oseka, 2010, p.151), the newspapers were driving a wedge between the intelligentsia and the working class, making a coalition between the two impossible.

Protesting students at the time recognized the state's propaganda efforts to turn the workers against them by portraying them as advancing anti-Polish interests. This recognition found reflection in students' response and attempts to convince the workers that they were in fact on the same side. These efforts can be gleamed from postulates and student materials confiscated by the Security Service (SB). Students' slogans included calls such as "workers! Do note let them provoke you against us" in Gdansk and leaflets distributed in Krakow: "workers! Do not give in to the government's hostile propaganda." The students would protest against a "fabrication of nonexistent contradictions between the working class and students," assuring the workers that "it is not true that our activity has an anti-state character." In Gliwice, the president and the senate of the Silesian Polytechnic Institute issued a call on March 14th: "We ask to appeal to the relevant government organs not to drive a wedge between the workers and students by organizing rallies where the general student body is represented as opponents of the people's government and the Polish nation" (Instytut Pamieci Narodowej, n.d.).

In the official discourse, any attempts by the state to turn workers against students were denied. "It would have been preposterous nonsense for someone to claim that our party attempts to, or has intentions to pit workers against students or students against workers" - said Gomulka in his speech on March 19. He insisted that resolutions proclaimed by workers

are "not against students but against reactive instigators" as the overwhelming majority of students undoubtedly supports socialism.[26] The Ministry of Interior and the People's Militia (Milicja Obywatelska, MO) were carefully monitoring any attempts by students to contact the workers, be in through personal conversation or leaflets, intended to convince them to join them in protest. When such information was obtained, as for instance in the case of a radio plant in Warsaw, "the administrative-party units of the plant were informed and took adequate safety precautions"[27] to prevent contact (Dabrowski et al., 2009, p.404-405).

6.4 Frame makers: Party elites and lower ranking apparatus

A power struggle within the party was likely at least in part responsible for the escalation of the anti-Zionist campaign. Mieczyslaw Moczar, a Minister of Internal Security at the time, used regime's campaign against student protests to consolidate his power within the party and strengthen the "Partisan" faction. Anti-Semitic attacks in combination with denouncement of political tactics during Stalinism allowed Moczar to get rid of many political opponents (Kurlansky, 2005). According to Eisler (1991): "Moczar and his supporters then did not miss any opportunity to get rid of their opponents. Where obvious evidence was missing, they did not shy away from activity of provocative character, eagerly using delations and fabricated evidence" (p. 130).

Even though he might have used it to his benefit, there is no historical evidence that Moczar staged the anti-Semitic campaign or that he did so as a result of power struggle with Gomulka. Dahlmann (2012) points to the fact that in June 1967, anti-Zionism was not an important theme for Moczar-led Ministry of Interior. In his interpretation, it seems more likely that the campaign originated with lower- and mid-level bureaucrats. Voivodeship secretaries organized the mass rallies, and officials from party organizations in enterprises provoked the expulsion of party members with Jewish origins (p. 203).

[26] "Stanowisko partii - zgodne z wola narodu" [The Stance of the Party - in line with the will of the nation] *Trybuna Ludu* (20 March 1968).

[27] Document number 397 in the IPN edited collection. Source number AIPN, 0746/6, cz. I, k. 100-103, mps.

As Oseka (1999) notes: "the propaganda offensive in the spring of 1968, conducted under the banner of fighting 'Zionism' is in many aspects a mysterious event. We do not know who started the witch-hunt and how its course was being steered. Party guidelines written in documents from the time are surprisingly laconic and appear to restrain rather than incite the 'anti-Zionist' fury" (p. 149). In fact, the anti-Semitic or anti-Zionist theme of the March propaganda was initiated in an atypical manner, with an anonymous article, which appeared in "Slowo Powszechne," a second-rate newspaper, and portrayed events at Warsaw University in a language that soon dominated the party interpretation of the protests: as foreign-inspired, led by Jewish students, with Zionist and anti-Polish motivations. Until this date, the author of the article is unknown (Stola, 2009).

Minutes from a meeting of the Party's Political Bureau on April 8th, 1968 indicate that the leadership also did not know the origins of the article. In the meeting, Artur Starewicz, Party Secretary responsible for the press, discussed his role in dictating an article for the official Party mouthpiece, Trybuna Ludu, which provided the same list of names of protest organizers as "Slowo Powszechne" but without the anti-Semitic tones. However, he expressed complete lack of knowledge and disapproval of the article in "Slowo Powszechne," saying that while it went through the Press Bureau, he personally did not see it and that it was "a one-sided article; it outdid the party press."[28]

The article spread like wildfire: "It was reproduced in many voivodships, even in the form of a poster in Kielce. Some polemical articles went through my hands, but many articles did not" - said Starewicz. Notably, as noted by another member of the Bureau, Stefan Jedrychowski, "in the first period, our propaganda trailed behind 'Slowo Powszechne,'" indicating that not only did the campaign originate at the lower levels of party organization - without the directive or even knowledge of the top leadership - and spread in a horizontal manner but that the Party was late in stepping in to control the message. Jedrychowski

[28]Of course, as multiple members of the Political Bureau noted, the article must have been approved by some party officials to go through censorship and appear in the press. See discussion during the meeting; minutes printed in Garlicki (1993).

saw this as a concerning phenomenon: "I think these are centrifugal tendencies, which are not helping us consolidate the party, and might negatively affect the life of the party, the attitude of members, also in the future" (see meeting minutes published in Garlicki (1993)).

Without doubt, the communist party was at the time facing a bureaucracy problem. The regime created a new middle class by promoting loyal supporters. But bureaucrats, in order to remain satisfied, need continued opportunities for advancement. Faced with too many employees and not enough posts, the regime would typically employ one of the two tactics - either the expansion of bureaucracy (and the overblowing of workplaces) or purges. In 1968, neither had been done in the previous 12 years, leaving the party with a number of ambitious, frustrated bureaucrats, many of whom became an important force in Moczar's Partisan faction (Eisler, 1991, p. 140). Thus, one of the motivations behind stoking the flames of anti-Semitic protest was turnover in the cadres, with young apparatchiks standing to benefit the most from these personnel changes.

As Stola (2004) puts it, party members were "allowed to loudly express their discontent and call for changes, under the condition that those expressions of dissatisfaction and demands fitted the permissible forms" - one of the discursive frames described earlier. The accusations against the apparatus of power - of "alienation, use of unjustified privileges, arrogance etc. - were in fact accusations against the establishment of Polish People's Republic (PRL) as such," formulated in a language sanctioned by the party.

The "old guard" rejected the campaign and in June 1968, Gomulka ordered the censorship office to ban the Zionist theme from the media because "the propaganda started having a negative influence on party activists and society" (Oseka, 1999, p.11). Minutes from the meeting of the Party's Political Bureau indicate that the party leadership was divided on the use of the anti-Zionist language,[29] but that it was this frame that allowed the party to generate an unprecedented response from party members. As Loga-Sowinski, one of the

[29]Especially Edward Ochab expressed concerns about the anti-Semitic propaganda, asking "Do we not have a possibility to defend Jewish comrades from wrongful insinuations on TV, in the press etc." (Garlicki, 1993).

Political Bureau members put it, if the party had taken a more moderate or nuanced stance on the anti-Zionist elements of the campaign as some members of the Bureau advocated, "we would have alienated the worker aktiv and would not have the current results (...) some might be annoyed by the word Zionism, but it played a large role" (Garlicki, 1993).

In the end, Gomulka's team, despite some reservations, did let the campaign run wild for over three months even though as another member of the Political Bureau expressed in the April 8 meeting: "in practice, the actions of the party organizations in TV and press went beyond the reasonable limits and proposals presented in Comrade Gomulka's speech" (Garlicki, 1993). Not until June 24 were instructions issued banning the "exposure and accumulation of publications about Zionism" (Paczkowski, 1995, p. 370). For the time from March to June, "Zionists, revisionists, and incorrigible 'reactionists', mixed in together became a classic 'scape goat,' blamed for the existing - and evoking popular discontent - state of affairs" (Paczkowski, 1995, p.370).

The immediate implementation of instructions from June 24 indicates that, with the ability to call off the campaign - at least in the press - at any time, Gomulka and surrounding officials chose to let the propaganda continue. At the same time, the fact that the Political Bureau considered the hysterical atmosphere of March to be detrimental to the party and that following the conference speech, the tone of the propaganda calmed down and mass firing of employees accused of Zionism ceased (Oseka, 1999, p.11) could indicate that the unrest was fermented by lower-level party apparatus whose careers benefited from personnel purges but which could be reigned in by direct orders from the top.

7 Manufactured ambiguity: Uncertainty around Levels of Support

We argue that the actions of the Polish state in March 1968 may be characterized as "manufactured ambiguity," that is the intentional creation of a significant level of confusion about

the mobilization (or rather counter-mobilization) strategy and support received from various social and professional groups. To this day, historical accounts cannot confidently assess how much of the support for the party was manufactured, whether participation in demonstrations and rallies was voluntary, and whether expressed anti-Semitic and nationalistic views were pushed from the top or were coming from local organizations.

For example, despite the official narrative, which placed the students (the protesters) in opposition to the workers (the counter-protesters), many workers mobilized with the students as arrest records from the time reveal. In fact, according to documents from the Ministry of Interior, at the height of protest mobilization, workers were the largest social group arrested during the demonstrations, more sizable than the students themselves. As Eisler suggests, in some ways the March mobilization could be characterized less as a student/intellectual mobilization, in which labor did not participate than as a generational rebellion of the young - students, and workers alike - against the state (Eisler, 2008). This is not the picture, however, that emerges out of the official documents, neither published nor internal, in which not even students of the of working class background, not to mention workers, support the protesting students.

The official narrative also contradicts accounts provided by some of the participants. For instance, worker *aktiv* was involved in dispersing student demonstrations, most famously during the March 8 rally at the University of Warsaw, where workers clashed with students. However, what percentage of them was actually comprised of workers is a contentious issue in the historiography of March events and it seems that workers who belonged to the militia faced social disapproval in their workplaces because of their involvement. According to one witness, during the March 8 protests, workers who didn't belong to the militia asked professors to hide on campus for the time of the rally because they did not want to confront the students (Eisler, 2008).

Not only the participation of different social groups but also the voluntary nature of that involvement may be disputed. Even though "in the reports to the PZPR's Central

Committee, the spontaneity of those events was described" (Miroszewski, 2009, p.84), some reports of the Secret Service reveal comments that seem to deny it. For example, one report documents a comment made by a worker taken to the square in Katowice: "They transport us like sheep because their jobs are uncertain and they want to clench to power through forced solidarity" (Miroszewski, 2009, p.85). Eisler (2008) cites Zbigniew Bujak, a foreman at Ursus factory at the time, later involved in Solidarity:

> "It was the hardest for them to find people willing to carry banners and slogans. They only managed to force them into the hands of party aktiv and youth aktiv. But even they, as soon as they reached the destination, tried to put all the slogans against the wall; the banners would later be overturned and trampled by others. Part of the aktiv would be gathered around the stage: those were the ones being filmed and only they applauded. Others, especially young people, running around on tin roofs and stairs (the rally took place in an old foundry), tried to drown out some of the speeches with noise. The rest standing around the stage would take in all what was said in deaf silence and practically none of it reached the people, and if anything, it made them feel hostile towards the propaganda employed at the time" (Eisler, 2008).

Many of the protesting students, the targets of the state offensive, saw the rallies as staged. Correspondence intercepted by the People's Militia (Milicja Obywatelska, MO) reveals this perception. A memo from MO's division in Warsaw dated March 14 cites excerpts from the documents: "Warsaw is indeed with us, despite anti-student agitation and attempts to drive a rift between us and the workers" and: "It's boiling also in the workplaces. All those resolutions adopted by the workplaces are products of agitation by the party. They want to pit the students and the workers against each other"[30] (Dabrowski et al., 2009, p.404-405).

A different memo[31] relates that an informant heard a lawyer working in the headquarters

[30]Document number 368 in the IPN edited collection. Source number AIPN, 0746/7M K. 37-42, mps.
[31]Document number 434 in the IPN edited collection. Source number AIPN, 0236/160, k. 232-234, mps.

(CHZ) of Polimex, a construction company, "condemn generally the government's strategy and the organization of so-called herded[32] rallies with uniformly pre-determined resolutions" (Dabrowski et al., 2009, p.628). Another intercepted document by an unknown author[33] from March 21 is even more telling:

> "What the workers are saying, what the newspapers are talking about, the workers aktiv at the rallies, it is just a big farce. They gather at the rallies grudgingly, get painted slogans and stand with expressionless faces, yet one can tell that it's not their opinion. I watched a few film reports from the rallies shown on TV. In an institute, where over 3,000 people work, an enormous rally takes place, at which about 300 people gathered, where is everyone else and what are the men in fur hats intermingled in the crowd doing - are they also workers? One can hear loud applause, but cannot see any clapping hands - yes, there is applause, but from an opening night at the Grand Theater" (Dabrowski et al., 2009, p.622).

Although Eisler (2008) notes that attendance was not an issue because rallies were organized during work hours[34] and allowed a respite from labor, the workers in televised rallies often seemed sad and tired of endless speeches from party activists. He also claims, in line with the memo recorded by SB cited above, that "TV crews filming the rallies had trouble with recording sound because there was not enough applause."

At the same time, many reports from the Ministry of Interior discuss anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist declarations and moods among the workers and statements of support for the party. Like with other sources from a non-democratic government, it is difficult to assess the veracity of these reports due to lack of, for example, credible public opinion polls. While many of those documents were internal or classified, clearly not intended for propaganda

[32]The Polish word is "napedzac," which could also be translated as 'to goad'.

[33]Document number 431 in the IPN edited collection. Source number AIPN, 0746/7, k. 55-58, mps

[34]Similarly, Paczkowski (1995) claims that the success of March propaganda "indicating the culprits for poor state of the economy and everyday troubles, condemning those 'living in luxury' at the expense of a hard working nation" ensured high turnout at rallies in factories, but "just in case they were organized during work hours."

purposes and hence perhaps more trustworthy, one should not forget incentives for members of the socialist bureaucracy to report favorable information to their superiors regardless of whether verified or not. Tendency to rely on delations and rumors and widespread preference falsification among the population (Kuran, 1987) further put into question the reliability of this information. It is thus very hard to determine the extent to which these sentiments were actually prevalent among the population.

Particularly in the case of the anti-Zionist campaign, the extent to which it was orchestrated as opposed to being driven by prejudicial sentiments among the population is debated both by scholars and emigres who left Poland following the repressive campaign (Stola, 2004). According to one survey (1970) conducted among emigres, the opinions split almost exactly half-and-half between those who believed it to have been a top-down campaign and those who thought it was a bottom-up mobilization.

It seems that the party did try to channel the current of discontent against external enemies allegedly involved in diversionist actions in Poland. By finding scapegoats for the numerous economic and political problems, by providing outlets to express anger, by reshaping the students' narrative, and by staging large scale demonstrations of support, the party attempted to achieve a number of goals: harnessing anger and prejudice to discredit and eliminate opponents; intimidating and deterring current and potential challengers through ostentatious shows of overwhelming support for the regime; mobilizing party members; and re-claiming legitimacy on the basis of socialist ideals and feelings of nationalist pride.

8 Conclusions

The reaction of the communist party in Poland to a challenge from student protesters in March 1968 follows some patterns discernible in both reactive and proactive responses of non-democratic regimes to current and potential challenges. A few of the comparative themes which can be identified in the case study and analyzed in a larger cross-national and cross-

national perspective are: 1) Framing strategy relying on political idioms that resonate in specific historical and cultural conditions. This took a form of commonly used nationalist mobilization against an external enemy and its domestic collaborators[35] as a means of strengthening the eroded ideological legitimacy of the regime, combined with a populist, anti-elite theme 2) Using a vast arsenal of resources available to the state. In the Polish case, the mobilization strategy relied on a vast party infrastructure in workplaces and industrial activity; and 3) Using mobilization as a tool against political opposition from below to settle conflicts within the ruling elite.

First, though one of the supposed goals of the campaign was to unload social tensions which arose due to difficult economic conditions and assign blame, "another plausible goal was strengthening the much weakened legitimacy of the regime (...) in the 1960s, there was a visible tendency to replace eroded utopian-communist legitimacy by the nationalist one" (Stola, 2000, p.142). This is not an uncommon problem for nondemocratic, often revolutionary, regimes built on ideology. As the revolutionary or ideological legitimacy fades and everyday politics begins, they often need to replace it by either performance legitimacy or nationalist legitimacy. Given the poor state of Polish economy in 1960s, the attempts to tap into nationalist feelings by striking exclusionist and prejudicial tones and even drawing on interwar right-wing, nationalist-ethnic themes, could be seen as efforts by the party - despite communism's foreign imposition on Poland - to tie patriotism with support for the party and hard work for the progress of the People's Republic.

Second, the forms of mobilization resemble tactics often used by the dual party-state throughout nearly fifty years of communist rule in the region. Mobilization of society with multiple campaigns, pledges to increase production targets etc. was frequently used (Hankiss, 1988), as were hate campaigns and purges, starting with show trials in the 1940s. Yet, the Polish case shows the transition from mobilization with a visible hand of the state to mobilization in which that state tries to make its involvement invisible and present mobilization

[35] Often one that has supposedly infiltrated or attempted to infiltrate society.

as widespread but spontaneous. We call this strategy manufactured ambiguity.

Third, state-led contentious mobilization against political opposition is also used for reforming and purifying the party and settling intra-elite conflicts. In the Polish case, March 1968 was an important moment for intra-elite conflicts and began the process of generational turnover in the party that culminated two years later with the ousting of Gomulka and a significant shift in communist policies. The sudden possibility of mass personnel changes played a role in both the escalation of the anti-Semitic propaganda by providing incentives for lower level party members to use it for their own personal goals and in mobilizing people by creating an opportunity to criticize members of communist bureaucracy for lack of efficiency and accountability. Some eight thousand people were expelled from the Party, including 80 high level functionaries and 14 current or former government ministers.

March events were not only associated with mass firings and personnel changes but also mass new entry into the party. According to the Central Committee of PZPR's internal documents,[36] over 600 people declared their desire to join the party in the two weeks of highest protest activity, between March 8 and March 25, 40% of which were workers (Kula et al., 1998, p.242). The inflow of new party members was eagerly reported in the press as an expression of support for the party and condemnation of protests in even higher numbers at the end of the month and in the following months.[37] On April 21, 1968, the regime's mouthpiece, Trybuna Ludu, reported that in the first quarter of 1968, party organizations in all of Poland admitted over 45,000 candidates, which was over 2,300 more than in the same time period the previous year. 44% of them were admittted in March.[38] This rush to join the party can be understood a rush to newly vacated state positions (instrumental) or belief that now that the party has been purged of all influences, it will genuinely represent

[36] Information nr 64/A/4402 from March 28, 1968, Warsaw

[37] See for example, the following articles in *Trybuna Ludu*: "Czuja sie potrzebni partii" [They Feel Needed by the Party] (March 20 1968), "Zwiekszony naplyw kandydatow do partii" [Increased Inflow of Candidates to the Party] (March 30 1968) or "Rosna szeregi PZPR" [The Ranks of PZPR are Growing] (March 31 1968).

[38] "Wyraz aktywnego poparcia dla polityki partii: Tysiace nowych kandydatow wstepuje do PZPR." [The Expression of Active Support for the Politics of the Party: Thousands of New Candidates Join PZPR] *Trybuna Ludu* (April 21 1968)

the working classes (ideological) (Oseka, 1999, p.88).

The case study of the communist state's response to 1968 student protests in Poland provides insights into some of the offensive ways in which nondemocratic regimes react to power challenges. The availability of many internal party and secret service documents, as well as press sources and witness accounts, provides rich material from which to draw to examine tactics that are likely often used in other contexts, where such information might not (yet) be readily available. Yet even in this case, nearly 50 years after the events, there is much ambiguity around the mobilization of society by the party apparatus - indirectly through propaganda, and directly through demonstrations staged using a mixture of persuasion, coercion, and rewards.

However, the examination of materials from the time indicates that the wave of counter-mobilization to unrest at universities was hardly as spontaneous and sincere as portrayed in the official propaganda and that the party strategically used its resources and infrastructure to lounge an offensive campaign in reaction to the challenge. Patterns of regime behavior in crisis, which can be discerned in this case study, open up fruitful avenues for future comparative research on forms of state-supported mobilization.

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