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The Cold War and the Polish Question

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Poland appeared to be on the ‘wrong’ side of the Iron Curtain. While its communist government was imposed by the Soviet Union in 1944, the Polish people supported the Western world. They expressed this opinion in the referendum of 1946 and parliamentary elections of 1947, both of which were falsified in order to prove popular acceptance of the regime (Paczkowski 2010, 182). The anti-communist guerrilla movement was active until the 1950s despite the severe persecution suffered by its supporters. Communist propaganda was used in an attempt to make the Polish people identify with the Soviet bloc, and school education became one of the Soviet Union’s main tools. School textbooks from the period 1948—1989 left no doubt that the United States and Great Britain were to blame for initiating the Cold War (Wojdon 2017). However, two factors among many testify to both the durability of Polish ties to Western democracy and Poland’s distance from Soviet ideology: the authority of the Catholic Church in the country and the massive numbers enrolled in the Solidarity trade union of 1980 to 1981.

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The same findings apply to the historiography of the Cold War. Although officially Polish historiography adopted Marxism as its theoretical basis during the General Congress of the Polish Historians in 1948 in Wrocław, and this survived as an interpretative framework until the collapse of the communist regime, some Polish historians, in Poland and in the diaspora, participated in, or at least were aware of, historiographical debates in the West (Stobiecki 2007; idem 2005). The flow of information from the West into Poland was constantly increasing with the relaxation of the passport policy of the Warsaw regime, but also due to, for example, the book distribution programme initiated by the CIA in the late 1970s (Reisch 2013, 23ff.). Foreign radio broadcasts (such as Radio Free Europe) and the independent publishing movement (beyond the control of the censorship office) broadened the audience for those alternative historical narratives. At the end of the 1980s, in larger cities, unofficial history textbooks for secondary school were illegally published and distributed as supplementary materials among pupils. However, the state struggled to the very end to hold its official monopoly on historical interpretation, by means of both school curricula and the system of textbook approval, which permitted only one textbook for each subject and grade (Wojdon 2015, 185).

Textbooks

A reinterpretation of the Cold War was one of the first changes introduced in school history textbooks after the collapse of the communist regime in 1989. Already the first textbook of 1990 (the structure of which did not change if compared to the pre-1989 edition) stated that ‘the concept of the “Cold War” is closely related with the attempts to stop the Soviet expansionism undertaken by the Western powers’ (Pankowicz 1990, 195). Soviet plans for international expansion were presented in detail in these textbooks, and the authors argue that Winston Churchill’s speech in Fulton in 1947 ‘made the world realise the communist danger’ (ibid.), although it didn’t start the Cold War (an interpretation which can be found in textbooks under communist control (Szcześniak 1984, 335–336)); instead, it announced that the Cold War had begun. The speech

definitely ended the co-operation between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union – co-operation which had made it possible for the Soviet Union to continue its occupation of Polish territories after 1939, to subjugate Poland and to impose the communist system in East-Central Europe. A pupil might infer from the text that Churchill brought to an end the blindness of the West regarding Soviet policies and practices and that it was the Soviet Union which had started the Cold War by violating Western values, such as human rights or democracy; it just took Western leaders time to notice and articulate it.

The textbook adds, only in a final sentence, that Churchill also ‘questioned our [Poland’s] entitlement to the Recovered Territories¹ and the rightness of the decision of the big powers [USSR, USA, Great Britain] to resettle the German population from the territories of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary’ (Pankowicz 1990, 195). Altogether, however, it seems as if Poland profited more from the end of the co-operation between Stalin and the Western powers than it suffered from the Western support for German revisionism. This idea was never explicitly expressed in any textbook, but apparently it remained behind all post-1989 narratives.

The Western interpretation of the Cold War has prevailed in Polish school history textbooks, regardless of the changes in the system (and structure) of education and in school curricula. In the school year 2016 to 2017, post-Second World War history was taught in the sixth (last) grade of primary school and in the first grade of upper secondary school as a compulsory subject. In the third grade of secondary school it was optional and taught to those who chose to major in humanities. The first grade of upper secondary school therefore provided the last and most developed interpretation of the past to all schoolchildren. The aim of this chapter is to deconstruct the prevailing model of teaching the Cold War to the young generation of Poles as of 2016 and 2017 and to understand the main historiographical concepts of this conflict (traditionalist, revisionist and post-revisionist) which impact its teaching. Since a large-scale survey of the teaching practices of history teachers in Poland in 2014 proved that the textbook was their primary teaching tool, I start with a content analysis of four textbooks aimed at students in the first grade of secondary school and issued by the leading Polish publishers (Stola 2012;

Roszak and Kłaczko 2012; Brzozowski and Szczepański 2012; Dolecki et al. 2012). The conclusions drawn from this analysis are then compared with those drawn from observing a lesson in a secondary school in Wrocław, which provides an example of real school practice. The method of approaching the Cold War within this classroom serves as a case study, illustrating a more general vision of the discipline of history as taught in Polish schools.

To begin my analysis, I look at the amount of space devoted to the Cold War and its various components within each textbook, including political (domestic and international), economic, social and cultural aspects. I then proceed to look at the interpretation of the Cold War superpowers and their allies (extended East and extended West) within each textbook, the focus on (and silencing of) particular phenomena, issues of agency and the roles of individuals on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The similarities and differences between individual textbooks are singled out.

The differences may be due to design of individual textbooks (where the publisher often has a decisive voice), to space allotted for various elements (texts, images, tasks, comments) and, to a lesser extent, to the political views of the authors² or to the historiographical schools they belong (for example, Dariusz Stola is both a historian and a sociologist, so he pays more attention to social processes and everyday life than other historians might). On the other hand, the similarities between textbooks are not the result of political pressure or the political affiliation of their authors. Textbooks in Poland are approved by the Ministry of Education, but the approval is based on reviews by experts in history, teaching history and the Polish language, nominated by academic and professional societies. Publishers are free to propose as many books as they wish and there is no limit on the number of textbooks available on the market. The teachers then choose textbooks for their pupils³.

The findings from this analysis are then discussed against the historiographical models of the traditionalist, revisionist and post-revisionist interpretations of the Cold War. It should be noted, though, that in Poland the 'revisionist' model, which attributes negative moral values to the Western powers involved in the Cold War, preceded, in fact, the traditionalist Western interpretation (accusing the Soviet bloc); thus, it is hard to call it 'revisionist'. Moreover, revisionism is virtually non-existent

in the current narratives taught in schools and appears only in primary sources originating from the Soviet bloc during the Cold War era. This is why in this text it is referred to as the Soviet (rather than revisionist) interpretation of the Cold War.

Elements of these models and the issues raised in textbooks were then observed during an introductory lesson on the topic of the Cold War in one of the secondary schools in Wrocław on March 14, 2016. As the teacher mentioned during one of the lessons on Cold War that followed, she was a university student between 1982 and 1987, which means that the final stage of the Cold War constitutes a part of her personal experience. One should keep in mind, however, that the atmosphere at the history department in Wrocław in the 1980s was far from the expectations of the communist regime, despite initial hardships under martial law. As my older colleagues from the department recollect it, Samizdat literature proliferated and clandestine organizations reached students with their programmes and activities.

Textbook Analysis – Structure

The Cold War is not emphasised through the structuring of school textbooks. Only one textbook (by Dariusz Stola) has a separate section entitled ‘The Cold War: Europe and the world in 1945–1989’, which covers the whole period both in Poland and abroad.

The authors of another textbook, Brzozowski and Szczepański, start the post-Second World War chapter with a retrospective, going back to the conferences of the Big Three in Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam, followed by a series of international events (the San Francisco conference of 1945 included). This leads up to the Berlin crisis of 1948 and the formation of the state of Israel. Only then is there an eleven-page-long chapter entitled ‘The Beginning of the Cold War – The Split between East and West’ (171–181). The chapter starts with a description of Stalin’s policies, Churchill’s speech in Fulton, the Truman Doctrine, the arms race and the two military blocs: NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It then discusses the Sovietisation of the Soviet bloc on the one hand and the European integration within the Western bloc on the other, with a clear aim to juxtapose the two processes.

Another chapter mentioning the Cold War is entitled ‘The Cold War and the Main World Military Conflicts in 1945–1989’ and includes the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the attempts at ‘peaceful coexistence’ (197–205). The end of the Cold War serves as an introduction to the post-1989 world, only after the post-war section has been summarised.

The third textbook, by Dolecki et al., only has a short section (one page) dealing with ‘The Beginning of the Cold War’ in the chapter ‘Europe After WWII’, and it is not clear at all from this book when the Cold War ended. Moreover, Polish issues are presented as completely separate from the rest of world history⁴. As a result, having discussed the collapse of the Soviet bloc and even the problems facing the modern world, the textbook narrative jumps back to 1944 and the communist takeover in Poland.

The fourth book analysed in this chapter, by Roszak and Kłaczko, does not have any chapter or subchapter mentioning the ‘Cold War’. It introduces the term only in a summary of the section which deals with the organisation of world politics after the Second World War and begins with the Potsdam conference and founding of the UN in San Francisco. The chapter then discusses the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan and the OEEC, and it also mentions the independence of India and the beginning of the war in Indochina.

Segmenting the story of the Cold War diminishes its significance. Only in the textbook by Stola is it presented as a monumental event which shaped the world after the Second World War. In other books, the Cold War is mentioned alongside many other events which occurred during the same the period. There is thus little room left for any in-depth analysis of the Cold War and even less space in which to discuss its varying interpretations. The textbooks do not even mention that there are any historiographical debates on the Cold War. Despite the differences in structure, each textbook devotes about a hundred pages to the Cold War period and all the textbooks present a similar overall vision of the conflict, depicting the West in a positive light and taking a critical approach towards the Soviet Union and the communist regimes, which generally corresponds with the classical Western model of interpretation (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Table Showing Number of Pages devoted to the Cold War and its Various Aspects in Polish Secondary School Textbooks. The results for each textbook do not sum up to 100% because more than one issue may be discussed on one page

	Stola	Rozzak, Kłaczkow	Brzozowski, Szczepański	Dolecki, Gutowski, Smoleński
Total:	98	124	117	112
National issues	43 (44%)	55 (44%)	56 (48%)	58 (52%)
International issues	55 (56%)	69 (56%)	61 (52%)	54 (48%)
Economy	18 (18%)	9 (7%)	6 (5%)	13 (12%)
Culture	10 (10%)	7 (6%)	8 (7%)	4 (3%)
Everyday life	17 (17%)	4 (3%)	10 (9%)	3 (3%)

Political history dominates without any doubt. In some textbooks less than ten pages are devoted to culture or everyday life in the Cold War period and as little to the economic issues. Altogether, all non-political issues occupy less than or around twenty per cent of space, with the exception of the book by Stola, where economic factors are considered alongside the political ones and discussions of everyday life and cultural issues are also integrated into the main narrative. The authors of two other textbooks (Rozzak and Kłaczkow; Brzozowski and Szczepański) chose to present non-political topics (such as Stalinist propaganda, post-1968 popular culture, the space race, everyday life in the West or in the USA between the 1950s and 1970s, the Catholic Church after the Second World War) in ‘infographics’, occupying one or two pages. These topics are illustrated with photographs and visually separated from the rest of the chapter. The textbook by Dolecki et al. mentions these topics at the end of the chapter on ‘The World after WWII: The Rivalry between the USA and USSR’ which also deals with military conflicts, decolonisation and even global terrorism (on one short page which treats the subjects of both the Red Army Faction and Al-Qaida). This domination of textbooks by political history has further implications for the image of both sides of the conflict, as shown below. It is also a feature of traditionalist historiography.

Moving to the geographical aspects of textbook analysis, the history of the Eastern bloc is covered in more detail than American actions or decolonisation. The anti-regime protests in Poland in 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, 1980, 1981 and 1988 are obviously dealt with in detail, but the

1953 uprising in Berlin, the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968 are also mentioned, with a seemingly sympathetic approach in all the textbooks, and these topics are accompanied by photographs. The Soviet Gulag is not discussed in the Cold War section since the Soviet system of labour camps is discussed in the chapters of the textbooks devoted to the inter-war years. The post-Stalinist 'thaw' is addressed, also in regard to Poland, although not all the books use this term, even if they present in detail political changes in the Soviet bloc, such as the struggle for power in the Kremlin, the new Soviet leadership under Khrushchev, his criticism towards Stalin and the hopes of countries of the Soviet bloc which were epitomised in the uprisings in Berlin, Budapest and the social protests in Poland.

The United States enjoy much less attention, especially regarding their non-European policies. American internal affairs are usually only briefly mentioned. All the analysed textbooks touch on the subject of the Civil Rights Movement, although sometimes only in a few sentences. The book by Dolecki et al. is the briefest. The sentence 'In the United States people refused, en masse, military service in Vietnam' is followed by: 'Apart from the peaceful movement of Pastor Martin Luther King, who fought for equal rights for coloured members of society, the movement of Black Panthers was also founded – the leftist groups of African-American fighters who physically fought for equal rights for the black population' (289–290)⁵. This statement ends the chapter. There is no real discussion of the problems faced by African Americans. The textbook takes the traditional WASP's perspective. Other textbooks concentrate on the positive results of the movement led by Martin Luther King, who eventually convinced the US administration to promote non-discriminatory practices (Roszak and Kłaczko 2012, 304; Stola 2012, 132). Thus, the textbooks emphasise how different countries overcame difficulties rather than the difficulties themselves. The narrative emphasises the political rather than the social or cultural. The depiction in these textbooks strengthens the positive image of the United States as a democratic country capable of solving its own problems.

Senator McCarthy does not appear in any of these textbooks. The 'red scare' is represented instead by the trial and execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, Americans accused of espionage for the Soviet Union and of

leaking information about the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union, thus significantly speeding up the Soviet nuclear programme.

The emphasis on the Rosenbergs instead of McCarthy corresponds with a traditionalist approach to the Cold War. The treatment of the arms race, the space race and the 'hot' conflicts of the Cold War period within these textbooks leans towards post-revisionism as the rivalry between the superpowers is presented without any moral judgments about either side involved in the conflict.

In the textbook by Stola the space race is mentioned as yet another aspect of the arms race (141). In the textbook by Dolecki et al. both are summarised on the same page (287). The portrayal of Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, varies between the textbooks. In some he is presented just as a pilot, and his words about saving the beauty of the Earth instead of destroying it are cited (Roszak and Kłaczko, 294), but Dolecki et al. claim that his communist views, alongside other skills, made him the first man in space. The textbook written by Roszak and Kłaczko mentions Gagarin only briefly but devotes a special insert of two pages to give a detailed account of the moon landing (320–321). The American space programme thus looks more attractive (also thanks to the large pictures in full colour) than its Soviet counterpart, even if no explicit comments are made on this topic.

The Cuban Missile Crisis is discussed in all the textbooks, though in one only in a caption accompanying a picture of the US delegate to the UN presenting the photographs of Soviet missiles in Cuba in October 1962 (Dolecki et al., 285). Both the picture from the UN and the aerial photo of Cuba are printed in the book, alongside a tiny portrait of Fidel Castro as 'the leader of the communist Cuba in 1959–2008'. The caption also says:

The Cuban crisis could have led to the outbreak of a nuclear war. As a response to the Soviet action, the USA announced the blockade of the island and preparations for the invasion of Cuba and for war with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev gave up and withdrew the nuclear weapons from Cuba. The USA gave up attempts to overthrow Fidel Castro.

The reasons for the Korean War are traced back to the dual occupation of Korea by the American and Soviet armies and the free elections which were

to be held across the whole country yet never actually happened. The military conflict was initiated by the North, supported by the Soviet Union and China, while the South was liberated by the United Nations forces led by the Americans. It is emphasised that the two superpowers supported opposing sides of the conflict but did not openly fight with one another. As the war progressed, the United States refrained from using nuclear weapons against China in order to prevent the war turning into a worldwide conflict. Stalin's death is presented as a factor facilitating peace negotiations in 1953. The division of Korea into two states, with the totalitarian communist regime in the North founded by Kim Il-Sung, still continues today. Personal stories from the war are never included in these narratives; it is a purely political event in all the textbooks (Stola, 172–173; Brzozowski, 197–199; Dolecki et al., 278–279; Roszak and Kłaczko, 278–279).

In the case of Vietnam, the anti-war protests and controversies in America are usually mentioned in the context of the student movement of 1968, hippies, and 'Flower Power' (and therefore as events which were not very serious), while US military intervention is justified by the doctrine of containment aimed at preventing the worldwide spread of communism (Stola, Dolecki et al.) or by the invitation from the government of South Vietnam (Roszak and Kłaczko). Some textbooks emphasise the role of the media in adding to the negative perception of the war by the American public and repeat that the USA lost the war at home (Brzozowski and Szczepański, 201–203; Dolecki et al., 282). The disastrous results of communist rule in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia usually follow, with an emphasis placed on the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; for instance, the text is paired with illustrations of rows of skulls, victims of the regime (Stola, 175; Roszak and Kłaczko, 280; Brzozowski, 201–203). The textbook by Andrzej Brzozowski also mentions the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, calling it the 'Soviet Vietnam' (203–205). In the textbook by Dolecki et al. numerous other 'hot' conflicts are mentioned, but only in the form of a table with dates, parties involved and the numbers of victims in each conflict (286). Thus, these wars become statistics, with no human faces.

Decolonisation is also rarely explored in any detail, probably because it has no direct connections to Polish affairs: Poland never was a colony and never had any colonies, at least in any 'traditional', straightforward sense.⁶

This may be one reason why this topic is treated rather marginally (Techmańska 2014). The issues of colonisation and decolonisation have little impact on the image of the West in Poland. The history textbooks both corroborate and continue this opinion. In the books by Roszak and Kłaczko and Stola, decolonisation is discussed in separate chapters (281–286, 177–181, respectively). Some textbooks give a more general overview of the process and see it as a result of the Second World War and the weakened position of colonial powers, of Japan's foreign policy which supported anti-colonialism, of the role of the UN (in which former colonies played an increasing role), of the USSR (with its anti-imperialist rhetoric) and the USA (a former colony itself) (Dolecki et al., 282; Stola, 177). Only Brzozowski and Szczepański mention the colonised peoples who wanted independence playing an active role in prompting the process and the tensions arising from the unwillingness of the colonialists and local elites to change the colonial status quo, which sometimes resulted in military conflicts (193).

As a rule, African colonies are just laid out in chronological order according to the year they gained independence (with an emphasis placed on the year 1960, 'the year of Africa') and sometimes the war in Algeria is mentioned. The book by Brzozowski and Szczepański only mentions the war in brackets: '(e.g. the civil war in Algeria lasted for a few years and ended in 1962 when the French left the colony)', while the textbook by Stola devotes a whole paragraph to this conflict. For Stola, Algeria serves as an example of an African colony with a large white population (about one fifth of all inhabitants) who opposed decolonisation. The author stresses the cruelties of the war, the death of almost half a million people and the sufferings of the civilian population. He appreciates the role of General de Gaulle, who came to an agreement with the National Liberation Front.

The apartheid system in South Africa is also sometimes part of the discussion of post-war Africa and the problems caused by a difficult co-existence of the white and black populations. India is discussed only in relation to Mahatma Gandhi and his successful policies, the text often accompanied by his portrait. The decolonisation of Indochina is usually mentioned in the context of the war in Vietnam.

The narratives on decolonisation in these textbooks generally sound as if the authors were dealing with some very distant (in space and time)

affairs. They usually conclude with the presentation of difficulties experienced by the decolonised countries and their peoples, such as deteriorating living conditions, declining health statistics, poverty, military conflicts and corruption. It looks as if decolonisation brought more problems than it solved, even though the textbooks also explicitly state that the overall results were positive. The terms 'The Third World' and 'neo-colonialism' are sometimes introduced.

Such an interpretation of the processes of colonisation and decolonisation leads into a traditionalist interpretation of the Cold War. Silencing the colonialists' abuses and marginalising colonial issues helps to maintain an idealised image of the West. The dominant narrative about the situation in Western Europe in all textbooks is one which stresses the development of a consumer society and European integration. Both changes are presented in the most positive light, bringing wellbeing and overall happiness to the people. However, only the textbook by Stola uses the term 'welfare state'. It is briefly characterised in the chapter 'The Golden Age of the West' (132–139).

The textbooks all note the sexual liberation of the Western world, the spread of feminism and the acceptance of new family models, and all these topics are treated in the context of modernisation and freedom, not as posing a danger to traditional values. The Second Vatican council and other changes within the Catholic Church are often presented as a response to those challenges but no criticism is attributed to either process. Some textbooks or individual chapters are openly enthusiastic about the West, and, in general, they all present a very positive image of the 'Free World' during the Cold War.

Contrary to that within the European community, the textbooks argue that co-operation within the Soviet bloc was only superficial, forced by the Kremlin. The term Sovietisation is used in this context. Economic difficulties, lack of freedom and other daily hardships behind the Iron Curtain are stressed (with special emphasis put on Poland).

Since the textbook narratives deal predominantly with political issues, politicians are the main actors, individually or collectively. The list of individuals presented in the textbooks is rather short (probably a result of the tendency not to overload school education with names and dates). Actors are usually mentioned by surname: 'Churchill said', 'Churchill proclaimed'

(Brzozowski, 171), 'Churchill publicly stated' (Stola, 124), 'President Harry Truman proclaimed' (Stola, 124) (but also 'Truman stated' – Kłaczekow, 224), 'Marshall presented' (Roszak and Kłaczekow, 225; Dolecki et al., 259), 'Stalin introduced the regimes' (Roszak and Kłaczekow, 224), 'Stalin took care' (Dolecki et al., 258) or 'denounced the West' (Brzozowski, 171). More often than not there is no human actor and the states or nations are the subjects in the sentences: 'the Americans offered' (Stola, 124), 'the countries benefited' (Dolecki et al., 259, 'NATO expanded' (Stola, 126), 'the Soviet Union rejected' (Stola, 124), 'blocked' (Stola, 125), 'decided' (Roszak and Kłaczekow, 249), 'avoided' (Brzozowski, 171), or 'annulled treaties of alliance' (Brzozowski, 173). In the textbook by Roszak, the Soviet bloc is represented only by political leaders, while in the Western bloc the textbook refers to the general public. The (lack of) agency of the citizens of the Soviet bloc is thus reflected in the textbook's presentation.

There are hardly any negative words associated with the United States and Western world in the context of the Cold War. For example, even when Brzozowski and Szczepański present a section on the life in the United States in the 1950s through the 1970s (just one page), which deals with the American problems (the 'Red Scare' and FBI, racial discrimination and Martin Luther King, Watergate), it turns out that a solution was found for each issue, and the words are printed in bold such as 'the real leader of the West', 'economic potential', 'cultural pattern'. Terms such as 'Golden age', 'American dream', 'democracy' and 'integration' also help to build on the positive image of the West. The attitude towards Soviet activities is usually more critical.

Let us compare two sentences from the textbook by Roszak and Kłaczekow. The first sentence reads:

In 1944–1948 Stalin imposed communist regimes in Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Yugoslavia [Czechoslovakia is mentioned later]. (224)

The second sentence states that:

In June 1947 American Secretary of State George Marshall presented a plan of economic assistance for ruined Europe. (225)

The first sentence is very short, in the form of a military order ('Stalin imposed regimes'), while the second uses analytical descriptions of American policies ('presented a plan of economic assistance') and objects ('ruined Europe') which emphasise the significance of the USA's role and their respect for Europe. Similarly, Stalin is just called Stalin while Marshall is referred to as 'American Secretary of State George Marshall'. 'Imposed' and 'regimes' are the words with negative connotations here, whilst 'assistance' carries positive connotations. The verb 'imposing' paints the Soviet Union in a negative light, a power to which the people of Poland and other countries are just passive victims. 'Presenting the plan' is only an offer to 'ruined Europe' which can be accepted or rejected – the agency is, thus, split between the participants.

The American assistance offered to Europe within the framework of the Marshall Plan is often emphasised in the Polish textbooks. Western European countries were 'systematically reconstructed' and managed to 'co-operate [...] as partners'. The refusal of Poland to participate in the Marshall Plan under Soviet pressure is (rightfully) presented as proof of Soviet dominance.

Conclusion

In narratives on the outbreak of the Cold War the traditionalist interpretation prevails. The Soviet Union is presented as a power with expansionist aims, against which the Western countries decided to work, which led to the Cold War. The image of the USSR within these textbooks contrasts with the presentation of the positive role of the United States who supported the countries and nations threatened by the Soviets. A task in the textbook by Brzozowski and Szczepański asks pupils to 'Explain the methods the Western countries used to oppose the expansion of Communism in the world after World War II' (181).

Roszak and Kłaczko mention the rivalry between the two blocs in their textbook, in which post-revisionist arguments can be seen, as well as in the presentation of the area of ideology and propaganda. The textbook by Stola traces the origin of the Cold War back to the debates over Soviet policy in Central Europe, which he argues was more brutal than

the Western allies could tolerate. But he generally characterises the Cold War simply as a rivalry of the superpowers, without mentioning ideological issues. The superpowers each had their own interests and ambitions, and their clash was a decisive factor in the triggering the Cold War.

Lesson Observation

In the introductory lesson on the topic of the Cold War in the first grade of an upper secondary school in Wrocław, observed on 14 March 2016, I noted a post-revisionist approach towards the topic, with some inclination towards a traditional Western interpretation of the conflict.

The pupils were using the textbook by Dolecki et al. (2012), albeit only sporadically in the course of the lesson, which is not common practice at Polish schools (Choińska-Mika et al. 2014, 227), but in this case fully justified since the book does not address the origins of the Cold War satisfactorily. It approaches the topic from a traditionalist stand point and emphasises the actions of the Soviet Union which led to the Cold War, as the USA reacted to these actions. The textbook also discusses Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe, the growing influence of communist parties in France and Italy as a result of the Soviet influence, Soviet finances, the Greek civil war (as the only 'hot' conflict in Europe at that time, which was generally divided by the 'Iron Curtain') and the American doctrine of containment as a reaction to those circumstances.

The pupils had been asked to familiarise themselves with the Cold War chapter as their homework before the lesson and were expected to discuss the reading in the classroom. The teacher did not explicitly question the textbook narrative, but she used a totally different structure of the topic and introduced some elements of post-revisionist and even revisionist interpretation, but without ever naming any of them or mentioning the very existence of divergent historiographical interpretations. Thus, the textbook was only used to provide pupils (at least those who did their homework) with some background knowledge.

The topic was formulated as 'The Cold War – Its Origin, Characteristics, Problems'. Three main points of discussion were dictated by the teacher

at the very beginning of the lesson: '1) The Origin of the Cold War; 2) Features and Stages of the Cold War; 3) Bipolar Image of the World and Selected International Conflicts of the Cold War Period'.

The discussion started with the definition of the term 'bipolar', as understood by the pupils, as young people and as prospective scientists (reference to physics was made). The students agreed that bipolar meant divided. Then the teacher addressed some basic facts about the sides of the conflict (USA and USSR, but also Great Britain, NATO and the Warsaw Pact), its duration (from 1946 to 1989), and the reason why it is referred to as 'cold'. The definition of the Cold War was then decided on and written down by the students in their notebooks. They wrote that the Cold War was a conflict between the capitalist (Western) world and the socialist countries allied with the Soviet Union (in the following lesson this definition was re-formulated and the Cold War was defined as the conflict between the United States and Russia of a psychological rather than military nature). As no moral judgments were attributed to either side of the conflict, the teacher's definition of the Cold War can be regarded as post-revisionist. However, as we will see, in the course of the lesson the extended East was presented in a much more critical way than the extended West.

This can be seen in the very first tasks, when the students received two primary sources (text excerpts) in order to familiarise themselves with two views on the origins of the Cold War. The first one was authored in 1948 by Julia Brystygierowa, a high-ranking officer in the Ministry of Public Security of the People's Poland (quoted in Sobańska-Bondaruk and Bogusław Lenard 1998)⁷. The other excerpt was taken from the speech of Winston Churchill in Fulton, Missouri, on the Iron Curtain. The pupils' task was to 'compare the origins of the Cold War as presented by the authors [...] Underline, what elements of the origins of the conflict the authors point to'. The texts and the questions were prepared by the teacher. They did not come from the pupils' textbooks but instead from the selection of sources for secondary school use, published in the 1990s.

Each of the sources was analysed separately, students beginning with Churchill's speech. The teacher asked: 'What reasons for breaking the co-operation between the USA and USSR does Churchill see?' Pupils referred rather to their textbook than to the source, despite a few attempts

by the teacher to re-focus them on Churchill's speech. They concentrated on questioning the Polish-German border, the resettlement of the German population from Poland and also cited a fragment about 'very small [parties] in all these Eastern States of Europe, [that] have been raised to pre-eminence and power far beyond their numbers and are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control'. They did not assign any moral judgment to the speech or to the speaker but simply reworded the document. It thus became an 'objective', credible source of information about the origins of the conflict rather than about the views of Churchill. The role of this text was further confirmed in the next task, which was to 'draw the Iron Curtain' according to Churchill on a map displayed on the whiteboard and to note down the countries behind the Iron Curtain.

At this moment the teacher started filling in a scheme of the Cold War with the Soviet bloc on the left and the Western countries on the right (geographically, I would prefer if the sides were changed), labelled as 'USSR and the socialist countries' and 'USA and the capitalist countries'. The names of the military blocs followed, then the political systems (police control versus democracy and planned economy versus private property). The question over Germany's place regarding the Iron Curtain was also raised. After a short discussion and quotations from Churchill on the expanding Soviet influence on Germany, the students placed the name of the country on the line that represented the curtain.

Answering the question 'And what does Brystygierowa see?', pupils interpreted the second text as a propagandist statement accusing the United States of being to blame for the nuclear threat posed to the whole world. The teacher chose individual students who then quoted the sentences in which Brystygierowa named the countries particularly endangered by the United States (the Soviet Union and the 'countries of people's democracy'). This time attention was paid to the nature of the speech (propaganda) and the goals of the speaker rather than to the realities described. Brystygierowa was not regarded as a trustworthy speaker but as a propagandist and manipulator.

A series of questions and answers about the Fulton speech followed: 'What is the goal of the Cold War according to Churchill?' (broadening the influence of the Western powers in the world), 'What should the West do?' (keep working together and abide by the principles of the Atlantic Charter),

‘In which way? What will contain the Russians?’ (only strength). The pupils were asked to evidence their replies by quoting from the speech.

A more general question over whether poverty was the reason for social unrest (‘When do you think radical movements proliferate?’) opened the last section of the lesson in which the teacher very briefly mentioned the post-war economic crisis and the Marshall Plan. Then she asked pupils to note down ‘The origins of the Cold War. Point one: The expansion of the influences of the Soviet Union and the USA. Point two: The post-war economic crisis’, statements in which no judgements are made, but instead the parallel developments on both sides of the ‘Iron Curtain’ are highlighted, as in a post-revisionist approach.

The last lesson task was to pick up labels with various issues related to the Cold War and place them on the scheme on the whiteboard in order to show whether they referred to one or both sides of the conflict. The teacher proposed the different labels and six pupils were appointed to complete this task. The pupils chose the arms race, military actions and intelligence or spying as the common features. Posing a threat to one’s own society was a label given to the Soviet bloc while the pupils thought that the West particularly felt fear at the prospect of nuclear weapons being used. The pupils were asked to justify their choices. They mostly referred to the textbook or to their general knowledge (which they derived from spy movies, for instance) and gave examples of certain activities (such as instances of military conflicts in which both sides participated or statistics about weapon production). The classroom discussion did not result in any of the labels being moved to another place. Thus, the pupils agreed with the teacher’s seeming preference for a post-revisionist interpretation of the Cold War (since they argued that most aspects developed simultaneously in the East and in the West), although this opinion was combined with more of a critical attitude towards the East than to the West (since the pupils pointed out that the Soviets persecuted their citizens and posed a nuclear threat to the rest of the world).

The teacher only added media warfare (as a common feature) and propaganda (attributed to the Soviet bloc), which corresponded with the general picture discussed above. So did a short excerpt from the opening speech of Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, the director of the Polish Section of

Radio Free Europe appointed in 1952, which the teacher played to the pupils. Nowak-Jeziorański promised that the Section would present the facts, regardless of their political beliefs. The teacher also played a short propaganda film made in Poland in order to depict Radio Free Europe in a more negative light, presenting the views of both sides involved in the conflict. The teacher again wanted the pupils to identify the differences between these two messages. However, they looked tired and were busy packing their bags (the bell rang at the end of the Nowak's speech), and so they were not able to comment on the recordings.

As a homework task, the pupils were asked to explain the terms of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan and to interpret a poster presenting the Marshall Plan as a dairy cow (Fig. 9.1). The teacher did not introduce the poster in any way, and she neither mentioned that the cartoon approaches the Cold War from the perspective of someone in the East nor did she explain why she had chosen this particular image. Indeed, it did not correspond with the narrative of the Cold War presented thus far during the lesson.

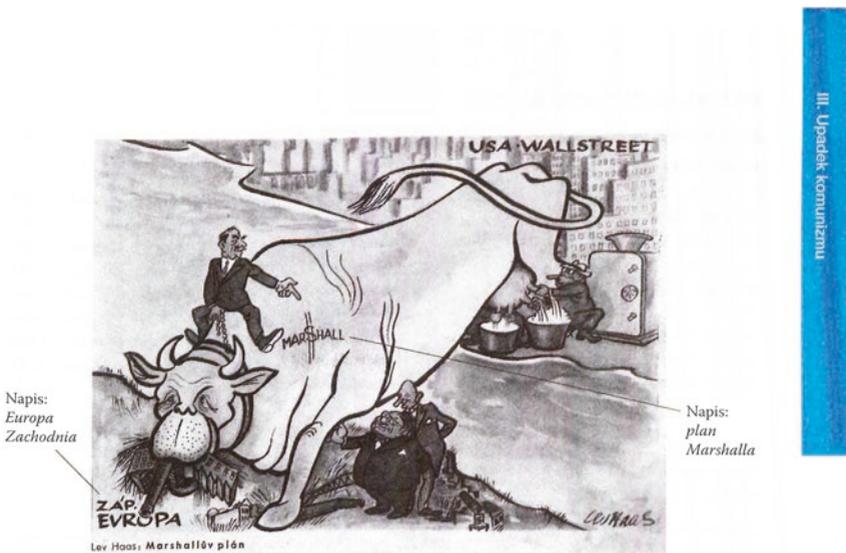


Fig. 9.1 A poster presenting the Marshall Plan as a dairy cow (Source: Izdebscy et al. 2015, 53)

In the course of searching for the image myself, I found a test on the post-war world published by a teacher-training centre in Gorzów Wielkopolski (*Test z historii*). The test juxtaposes our poster with another one depicting the Marshall plan as a scaffold placed near a tall building with various European flags that form the wall-tiles. Apart from asking students about the symbols in and meanings of the two pictures, the test has also a question about the origin of each of the posters: It asks which one was created in the West and which one in the East (apart from the general messages of each poster, we can see that the poster with the cow on it has a caption in Czech 'Záp. Evropa'). A similar task can be found in the 2012 state exam (*matura*): 'Explain the reasons for varying interpretations of the economic plan in the two iconographic sources'. This time the provenance of each source was clearly identified. The two sources also referred to the Marshall Plan, and one source came from the Western bloc, the other from the East: One was a (West) German poster from 1948 and the other was a cartoon drawn by Boris Yefimov, a Soviet, in 1951. Thus, the idea behind the task was not new or particularly original: The task has been used before to try to open up a new perspective on the Marshall Plan, perhaps quite a different perspective from the one primarily discussed during the lesson. Unfortunately, I was not able to see how the pupils interpreted the poster.⁸

The teacher might have intended this homework task to encourage the students to see views on the Cold War from both sides of the conflict, an attempt she'd made in showing both Brystygierowa's speech and the film on RFE to the pupils, which would bring their interpretation of the Cold War closer to a post-revisionist model (which seemed to be the teacher's own preferred model). It was difficult, however, for her to avoid a traditionalist Western approach when teaching the conflict, especially when it also corresponded with the history textbook her pupils were using and also with their general knowledge and beliefs. The main drawback of both the lesson and the textbooks I have analysed is, in my opinion, that there is still a lack of any debate on divergent historiographical interpretations of the Cold War. The discussion, if any, seems to relate only to the opinions presented in primary sources, whether from the East or West.

The selection of primary sources was supposedly intended to present the beliefs of those on both sides of the conflict, but as a matter of fact all of these sources seemed to show the Soviet bloc in a negative light,

emphasising that the messages from the East could be seen as propaganda and lies and that the actions of the Soviets threatened both their own citizens and the people in the West. At the same time, no arguments which might seriously undermine an idealised image of the West were brought to pupils' attention, either by the authors of the textbook or by the teacher herself. The last cartoon, used in the homework task, could question these ideas, but could also be interpreted as yet another manipulative act on the part of the communist regime.

Using the case study of how the Cold War is taught in Poland, we can see that both teachers and textbooks emphasise a classical, positivist vision of history as a 'scientific reconstruction' of the past. Even if textbooks vary in their interpretations of the events, they seem to ignore alternative interpretations and omit any historiographical debates. Even if a teacher designs her lesson herself, does not strictly follow any textbook and uses various primary sources, she wants to teach her students 'what happened', not 'what do historians say' happened.

Notes

1. The term 'Recovered Territories' referred in the communist propaganda to the pre-war eastern and northern provinces of Germany (mostly Silesia and Pomerania) that the Big Three decided to give Poland after the Second World War. The word 'Recovered' stressed their ties with Poland in the early Middle Ages when the Polish state had been formed (10th-13th century).
2. This was more the case in the previous generation of textbooks, published at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century when some authors tended to justify the communist rule in Poland and provided interpretations typical for the post-communist discourse.
3. In some grades of primary school textbooks are sponsored by the state but teachers still choose the books from the set approved by the Ministry (eventually, in a few years, all primary school pupils should get their textbooks for free). In secondary school pupils (parents) pay for textbooks themselves.
4. In Poland, national and international history is combined in one subject and in one textbook, but individual sections and chapters usually deal

either with Polish or international affairs. The Cold War issues are split almost equally between Polish and international affairs.

5. '[...] lewicowych bojówek Afroamerykanów, wzywający do fizycznej walki o równouprawnienie czarnej społeczności Stanów Zjednoczonych' (Dolecki et al. 2012, 289–290).
6. Grzegorz Chomicki presented the Polish Galicia (Austrian partition of Poland in the 19th century) as a colony of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in his conference paper 'Galicia in the 19th century in Colonial and Post-colonial Perspective', at the Annual Conference of the International Society For History Didactics (ISHD) on *Colonialism, Decolonization and Post-colonial Historical Perspectives - Challenges for History Didactics and History Teaching in a Globalizing World* (Tutzing, Germany, 2013). Some historians claim that Poland 'colonised' Ukrainian and Belarussian territories east of its borders in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.
7. 'Recently, great changes have occurred in the political system both on the international and national level. The changes were caused by a fierce attack of the American imperialism which desires to submit the peoples of Europe, Asia and the whole world to the power of dollar and to enslave them economically and politically. The attack is aimed in the first place at the Soviet Union and the countries of people's democracy. The American imperialists started their attack from an attempt to threaten the world with the "nuclear war". Then they proposed the so-called Marshall Plan that cynically tries to turn Europe into an American colony.

Further steps of the plan to subjugate Europe include crushing the struggle of the French people with the help and under pressure of the American capitalists, founding and subordinating Benelux, assembling the Western Union, preserving the fascist power in Germany with the former hitlerites in charge who act under command and according to the imperialist interests. Organising of the anti-Soviet military bloc becomes more and more apparent and unmasked'. The text comes from the selection of sources for teaching history: Sobańska-Bondaruk and Bogusław Lenard 1998, 383–385, trans. JW).

8. The task and the caricature of the Marshall Plan cow can be found on one of the Polish websites where pupils post their homework, albeit without suggested answers.

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