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British Policy Towards Poland 1947-1956

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United Kingdom's policy towards Poland between 1947-1956 is a complex issue that has not been comprehensively described yet. This dissertation aims to discuss the main problems and determinants of the relations between the Labor government of Clement Attlee and conservative prime ministers Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden with the communist government in Poland. In order to reflect, one should answer a number of questions detailing the main research problem. The most important of them is concerned the political program of individual British governments towards Poland. Was Poland an independent entity in the foreign policy of Great Britain, or was it within the general assumptions concerning the entire Eastern Bloc? Considering this issue, it is necessary to answer the question whether and how the events of 1947-1956 in Poland determined the shape of British policy and influenced its political, economic and cultural relations with Poland. International events were important for the discussed issues: the blockade of West Berlin, the creation of German states, the war on the Korean Peninsula, the death of Joseph Stalin and the assumption of power by Nikita S. Khrushchev, and thus the changes that took place in the politics of the Soviet Union.

In the dissertation, the lower caesura was placed in 1947, and the upper one in 1956. The last of these dates does not require any comment, as it marks a clear reevaluation in British politics, which began with the military action of the British against Egypt. It was then that the utopian aspirations to rebuild the imperial power of Great Britain and the illusory nature of joint political actions with the United States emerged. Moreover, there are many important arguments in favor of adopting the first date 1947, such as the announcement of the Truman doctrine, the Marshall Plan, as well as the Conference in Szklarska Poręba.

The work consists of five chapters with a subject-chronological order. The adoption of a division according to such a criterion justifies a comprehensive approach to the problem, coherence of the discussed and analyzed issues. The first introductory chapter presents a description of the British constitutional organs responsible for foreign policy. Great Britain had

one of the most extensive networks of diplomatic missions in the world. The main institution dealing with maintaining relations with other countries was the Foreign Office (FO). This ministry was established in March 1782 from the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Departments of the Secretary of State, each of which initially dealt with both domestic and foreign affairs. The foreign obligations of both Departments were assigned to the Foreign Office, which, under the leadership of the Secretary of State, developed unique assumptions and directions of international policy. At a lower level there was the Northern Department of the Foreign Office, which was responsible, inter alia, for direct contacts with the so-called "Soviet bloc". The structure and activities of entities implementing London's foreign policy will also be discussed. First of all, it was the British Embassy in Warsaw and consulates, the location and scope of which were dynamically changing. The second chapter is devoted to the concept of British policy towards Poland in the years 1947-1952. It consists of two parts, the first of which, entitled "The Strategy of Ideological Compromise", covers the years 1947-1948. It was a period of aggravation of the Cold War and escalation of tensions between the West and the countries of the Eastern bloc.

The next part deals with the "Cold War confrontation" in mutual relations in the period from 1949 to 1952, ie at the height of the Cold War and Stalinism in Poland. The third chapter discusses British policy towards Poland in the years 1953-1956. Here, too, two parts were distinguished, in the first, attention was focused on presenting the events and processes accompanying the the thaw and normalization that followed the death of Stalin and the evolution of Cold War politics. In this context, the events of 1956 were of utmost importance. They were reflected in the section entitled "The landmark year 1956 and its aftermath". The fourth chapter of the dissertation concerns the place and role of Poland in the economic policy of Great Britain. The expansion of trade between Warsaw and London proceeded as early as 1946, but the first significant agreement was not signed until June 1947 for a period of three years. By focusing on the economic relations between Great Britain and Poland, efforts were made to present not only their character, but also internal and international factors influencing their current shape. The last chapter of the dissertation is devoted to British cultural and information policy towards Poland. Cooperation on the basis of culture between London and Warsaw in the post-war years developed at a relatively fast pace, and was initiated, among others, by the reopening of the British Council institute in Warsaw and the development of various forms of cultural activity at British diplomatic posts. This part of the work also presents the profile of George Bidwell, director of the British Council in Poland, who on June 5, 1949 decided to resign from his post and adopt Polish citizenship.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the work, research methods characteristic of historical and social sciences were used to verify research hypotheses and questions. Thanks to the system method, a comprehensive analysis of the discussed issues was carried out in the context of all changes and processes in British policy towards Poland. The adopted solution also allowed the use of a comparative method where necessary. However, the description of the factual sphere was dominated by historical methods related to the criticism of sources and direct and indirect establishing the facts.

Despite the then yoke of socialism, control and freezing of relations with the West caused considerable discomfort in the work of British diplomats in Poland, they were often the source of suggestions to make more decisive political decisions in relation to the communist government, because Poland is ready to resume broadly understood cooperation. Perhaps this was due to the fact that they felt the frostbite of relations and the gradual normalization "on their own skin", while politicians in London were more skeptical about this type of relationship. Additionally, at the Foreign Office level it was difficult not to take into account various political and economic obligations towards the allies. Undoubtedly, the years 1953-1955 were the foundations of the real changes that took place in this field in 1956 with the 20th Congress and the 8th plenum. A symbolic moment was December 28, when the British ambassador in his letter to the Foreign Office suggested that Poland should no longer be described as a "satellite" of the Soviet Union. Until the end of 1956, mutual relations were determined by the Cold War factors and the lack of independence of the Polish government. Despite conservatism in introducing a reevaluation of its policy towards Poland, long-term disregard for the role of the changes taking place and initial conservatism in reactions to the so-called "Polish October", Great Britain gradually increased its involvement in building relations with Poland.

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