



The Second Cold War from Polish perspective

In my research I would like to focus on the Polish perspective of “the Second Cold War”. Because of political and social situation in Poland in the eighties, there were no social forces that could have led to wide grass-root protests against nuclear arms race. The only Polish pacifist group *Wolność i Pokój* (Freedom and Peace - www.ruchwip.org/) was focusing mostly on developing methods for avoiding the draft. In their program nuclear arms race was mentioned as the most important danger to the contemporary world. However they wanted to avoid nuclear conflict not by protests against presence of nuclear weapons but rather by educating people with non-violence approach instead of education based on militarism which dominated in Polish schools. They had some contacts with western peace movements (CODENE, IKV, END). Its members were also in contact with ecologists, however the protests of Polish environmental protection groups against building the first nuclear plant in Poland, had their origin mostly in the Chernobyl disaster.

All information campaigns and protests against the presence of the Pershing missiles and SDI were organized exclusively by Polish authorities. There were even some peace organizations run and controlled by the authorities. In the eighties Poland also held a festival of visual arts *Against War* at the site of Majdanek concentration camp, where art pieces about atrocities of II WW were presented next to images of nuclear weapons. Polish media also provided very wide coverage of protests against the Pershing missile in Western Europe. I cannot even imagine (far more appropriate) any protests against deployment of SS-20 in the Western part of Soviet Union.

I would like to conduct a research on “institutional making of war”. I will focus mostly on Polish media materials: newspapers, magazines and TV programs to show how Polish authorities have created a media discourse in which the main protagonist was the Pershing missile – a symbol of aggressive politics of the United States. Apart from the media materials

I will analyze brochures published by the Polish Civil Defense as well as textbooks which include instructions on how to cover and protect oneself in case of nuclear strike. It was a Polish version of the “duck and cover” campaign for children, though the books were also full of texts about aggressive nature of NATO. I would also like to ask very interesting question on how the Soviet nuclear arsenal was presented by Polish authorities. I assume that this weapon – contrary to the wide representation of Soviet conventional forces – was non-existent in the Polish media. The Third World War was presented just as an American nuclear strike; probably there was no mention about the MAD doctrine because the only official Warsaw Pact’s purpose was self-defense and there was no place for nuclear weapon in this image.

I will also point out the interesting issue of creating a counter-strategy against the official propaganda; the Pershing missiles were perceived among Polish society not only as a deadly weapon which was aimed at Poland, but rather as an ultimate advanced American technology. There were even some jokes about building the Pershing missile in a private workshop - a proof of someone’s technical skills. What’s more, in the nineties, one of the Polish best known mobsters had a nickname “Pershing”.

There is also an interesting issue of perception of nuclear war, pictured in culture texts across the Iron Curtain. In this case I will analyze reviews of some movies about nuclear war and post-apocalypse in Polish film magazines, especially *The Day After*, which was screened in Polish TV few months after its premiere in USA. The eighties in Poland were the golden age of VCR and pirate videocassettes. Polish audience could also watch *Mad Max* and its numerous rip-offs, which were popular especially among Polish science-fiction fans.

I would like to publish results of my research as one or more articles in Polish historical and cultural studies journals.

Apart from the Polish perspective I am interested in discovering forgotten texts of popular culture, which belong to science fiction post – apocalypse genre, popular in the eighties. I can count at least a few dozens of movies produced in USA, Italy and Israel, and a few long novel series like *Survivalist*, *Endworld* and *Deathlands* which were depicting a world after nuclear holocaust. I am interested in the problem of how the whole sub-genre of science-fiction was created on the basis of the media discourse of the Second Cold War.