

# BETWEEN COMPROMISE AND DISTRUST

## THE SOVIET INFORMATION BUREAU'S OPERATIONS IN POLAND, 1945–53

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**ABSTRACT** The article explores the Soviet Information Bureau's manipulation of the Polish press from 1945 to 1953, the interaction of Soviet and Polish officials and the meagre results achieved by these efforts. The article illuminates the operation of the Soviet foreign propaganda unit and the problematic character of the project to mould Polish opinion of the USSR. It also reveals the inherent early weaknesses of the Soviet East European Empire more generally.

**Keywords:** Soviet Information Bureau, press, propaganda, sovietization, Eastern Europe, Poland

### INTRODUCTION

Scholars studying the Soviet engagement with Poland from 1945 to 1953 have given much attention to the diplomatic game and party politics inside the Eastern bloc.<sup>1</sup> Some have also explored the Soviet-sponsored cultural restructuring of Poland and the domestic response.<sup>2</sup> Few have gone beyond high politics and institutional change, however, and those who have have focused chiefly on the repercussions of the Soviet military presence.<sup>3</sup> The story that emerges is of a largely successful Soviet intervention for which the Poles paid dearly. The chief scholarly debates involve Stalin's plans for Poland and Eastern Europe, the nature of the 'People's Republics' and the Soviet and Polish initiatives to advance the Soviet project. The hottest argument is between those who believe that until 1947 Stalin considered a limited, leftist parliamentary democracy for Poland with some private property, landownership and freedom of expression and those who argue that the Red Army and the USSR's People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (hereinafter NKVD) set the stage for the inevitable monopolization of power from the outset.<sup>4</sup> What is missing from this discussion is an inside view of Soviet–Polish contacts at the mid-level at which functionaries, enthusiasts and covert opponents worked out the day to day implementation of Soviet wishes.<sup>5</sup> At this level, the nature of the Soviet Polish project becomes clearer and the character of the alternatives or lack of alternatives apparent.

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*Cultural and Social History*, Volume 6, Issue 3, pp. 345–367 © The Social History Society 2009  
DOI 10.2752/147800409X445978

This article concerns the Soviet project to mold Polish public opinion. It examines how Soviet mid-level bureaucrats of the Soviet Information Bureau (henceforth *Sovinformbiuro*) intervened in the Polish press during two periods: 1945–7 and 1948–53. The article also examines the response of the Polish communist leaders and newspaper editors. My overarching goal was to understand the perspective of the Soviet officials and the mechanisms of Soviet–Polish interaction. The preponderance of Russian archival sources used for this study reflects that aim.

Free and competitive mass media are considered an essential element of a democratic system.<sup>6</sup> The *Sovinformbiuro* officials working for Poland actively strove to curtail this freedom. In that sense, their actions constitute evidence for direct Soviet involvement in Poland’s cultural ‘sovietization’. Soviet policy towards Poland in the immediate post-war period was a mixture of assertive involvement and hesitation; for example, Stalin provided military and police support to the local communists while simultaneously discouraging the overt popularization of communist ideals and especially those that carried the Soviet label. By examining the invasive aspect of the *Sovinformbiuro*’s work, this article seeks to throw into relief the rift between the two tendencies in the Soviet approach to Poland’s cultural transformation. It also adds an element to the ongoing debate about the intentions of the Soviet government in Eastern Europe in the immediate post-war period by pointing up the expectations of mid-level officials.

The Soviet policymakers considered Poland a key element in the new geopolitical constellation. It was the largest satellite state in the region, a buffer state between the USSR and Germany, a likely source of hostile Western influence, and a traditional historic enemy. By exporting print articles to Poland and planting them in the local press, the officials of the Soviet Information Bureau sought to disseminate the official Soviet vision of the new empire among the newly conquered population.<sup>7</sup> They also wished to promote a radically new relationship between the two countries. The press propaganda was to counteract the negative images of Russia and the Soviet Union that had accumulated in Polish society over centuries of conflict.

Ultimately, this is a study of an unknown aspect of the post-war Soviet expansion in East-Central Europe. I argue that, regardless of Stalin’s still undiscovered intentions, these officials acted from the outset on the assumption that they were the masters of Poland whose task was to create a Soviet-type state. The officials treated the centralization of the press as inevitable and became irritated at the Polish communists who, even if for tactical reasons, refused to accept this goal. Soviet officials feared a decentralized press market and everything associated with what can be described as the public sphere. Even in the period between 1945 and 1947 they affirmed their desire to help restructure the Polish press on the centralized model they were familiar with. Soviet officials’ enthusiasm for popularizing Soviet institutions and ideas in the Polish press was curbed only by their inability to get Polish journalists to replicate the Soviet press and by tactical considerations – that is, their wariness about shocking their Polish counterparts or Polish readers.

At the same time, the pattern of negotiation between Soviet and Polish officials figures more prominently in this story than in traditional narratives of the Soviet

takeover.<sup>8</sup> While certainly not defining of all Soviet–Polish interactions during Stalin’s last years, the existence of such a pattern is revealing in several respects. It suggests that there was a space in which the Poles enjoyed a considerable amount of agency vis-à-vis the representatives of the imperial centre. Even more remarkable were the roles and attitudes of the Soviet officials in Poland. Estranged from the recalcitrant Poles and unresponsive colleagues in Moscow alike, they had fewer means at their disposal than is usually acknowledged to enforce the explicit or assumed rules on the new empire. In order to overcome numerous obstacles, especially during the immediate post-war years, some of these individuals displayed a great deal of sensitivity to Polish sensibilities. Their approach formed a stark contrast to the more familiar patterns of Soviet officials’ behaviour in Eastern Europe, which various scholars and commentators have characterized either as absolute friendliness and altruism or as ideological inflexibility, material greed and great-power arrogance.<sup>9</sup>

## SOVIET INSTITUTIONS AND THE POLISH PRESS

The Soviet authorities intervened in the Polish system of news production through several different channels. Besides policy ‘recommendations’ at top government and party levels, they included a network of mid-level government, social and cultural institutions such as Glavlit (censorship), the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (also known as TASS), the All-Union Association *Mezhdunarodnaia Kniga* charged with the distribution of Soviet newspapers, the All-Soviet Society for Cultural Relations Abroad (or VOKS), the Red Army’s political department, as well as the Soviet Information Bureau, the main subject of this article. Most of these institutions cooperated with one another or exchanged staff members on initiative from above. The Soviet Embassy in Poland provided some administrative and political support to these organizations, mostly through the offices of its secretaries and cultural advisers, who also communicated Moscow’s policy ‘suggestions’ to cultural and political leaders.

The most important channel in terms of size, scope, continuity and political weight was the Soviet Information Bureau, established on 24 June 1941, three days after Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union. Its responsibilities included informing Soviet audiences about developments at the front and foreign audiences about life in the Soviet Union and the war effort, countering Nazi propaganda and providing financial and organizational support to five anti-fascist committees.<sup>10</sup> After a number of structural changes, in 1945 the *Sovinformbiuro* consisted of sixteen departments. It employed 350 people on a full-time basis and 161 field correspondents, a number that remained roughly the same during the following decade.<sup>11</sup> Among them were the brightest stars of Soviet journalism and literature, such as I. Ehrenburg, B. Polevoi, K. Simonov, M. Sholokhov, V. Grossman, M. Shaginian, N. Tikhonov and many others. In addition, the organization worked with about 1,500 freelance authors, about 100 to 140 per individual department.<sup>12</sup> In January 1945 the *Sovinformbiuro* produced materials for Soviet diplomatic posts, its own field offices and local social organizations in 42 countries, and a year later in 55 countries.<sup>13</sup>

In 1945 the Central Committee of the All-Union (Bolshevik) Communist Party (henceforth VKP(b)) restructured the *Sovinformbiuro* to serve the goals of Soviet foreign policy. Besides intelligence gathering, which officially became the organization's responsibility only in 1947, changes included new departments for socialist countries. The *Sovinformbiuro*'s goals, as outlined in June 1945, were: 'To inform the foreign audiences about the political and economic life of the USSR, about the national, social and cultural achievements of its peoples as well as propaganda to convey Soviet views of the more important questions of international life.'<sup>14</sup> The departments working for capitalist countries were much bigger, but large issues were also at stake for those working in the Soviet sphere of influence. 'We should take particular care,' continued the authors of the document, 'to inform about these issues: the government propaganda organs, democratic organizations and the press in Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, as well as press organs in Germany.'<sup>15</sup> The managers of the *Sovinformbiuro* tried to accomplish this goal by placing their own news articles in the local foreign presses through the institutional field offices.

The *Sovinformbiuro*'s field office in Poland was set up in 1944 and began working full steam in 1945. A 'Department of Poland and Czechoslovakia' was created in Moscow in February 1945 to serve offices in both countries, as well as newspapers published by the Red Army and, to a lesser extent, Polish radio.<sup>16</sup> The institution's work was structured vertically. The organization's representative in Poland reported to the head of 'his' department in Moscow. Simultaneously, he implemented his superior's decisions and advised him on their feasibility. The department heads as a rule reported to the deputy director of the *Sovinformbiuro* in Moscow. At the top of the chain of command was the director of the agency, who made his decisions on the basis of general policy and consulted with the Central Committee.<sup>17</sup> A verification commission found out in the summer of 1946 that the Soviet Information Bureau had been operating without the supervision of any Central Committee Department.<sup>18</sup> But, as we shall see later, one must be critical of such conclusions, given that the commission had been set up by Central Committee members who were looking for scapegoats.

The *Sovinformbiuro*'s initiatives in 1945 can be seen as early attempts to recast the Polish public sphere. As is well known, the Soviet authorities appealed for greater ideological uniformity in the Eastern bloc only in the autumn of 1947. Why, then, the early efforts by the Soviet Information Bureau? Although more research is necessary to establish his role in the process, it is likely that the person behind these efforts was Mikhail A. Suslov. Between 1945 and 1947 he was the director of the Soviet Central Committee's International Department. A clandestine successor to the Comintern, the institution also supervised the work of mid-level cultural organizations working for foreign countries.<sup>19</sup> In July 1948 he was put in charge of the Agitation-Propaganda Department, which shared this responsibility.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to his predecessor in the International Department (the director of the Communist International, Georgii Dimitrov), Suslov's political vision allowed foreign communist parties very little political autonomy. Some see his efforts to extend ideological control over East-Central Europe as a way of establishing long-term political control over this territory in a way that would replace the temporary influence of the Soviet military and police

intelligence forces.<sup>21</sup> This point of view may also explain the early involvement of institutions such as the Soviet Information Bureau in the cultural sovietization of Eastern Europe. Suslov's position as intermediary between the mid-level propaganda institutions and Stalin gave him some discretion as to the type of information he would forward to his boss.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, the inconsistencies in the Soviet post-war approach to Poland may derive not only from Stalin's views but also from Suslov's.

### **'NAVIGATING THE POLITICAL REEFS': SOVIET OFFICIALS AND THE POLISH AUDIENCE, 1945–7**

The *Sovinformbiuro*'s arrival in Eastern Europe was the first step in a long process of Soviet post-war ideological expansion. For the first time in history, Soviet authorities exported revolutionary ideals abroad as a globally recognized great power. At the same time, the empire had to learn how to use this power carefully; in order not to imperil the Polish communists' position, the Soviets had to act cautiously and avoid political blunders before their colleagues were in full control. The Red Army and the NKVD were the key instruments of the Soviet-sponsored regime change in Poland during 1944–7. It is therefore interesting to see that some officials in the *Sovinformbiuro* were willing to adapt to local circumstances during these years, without pressing for an immediate make-over of the Polish press.

Before 1947 the communist Polish Workers' Party (PPR) was the dominant political force in the country. They owed their pre-eminence to direct Soviet military support, the ambiguous provisions of the Yalta agreement and Stalin's ability to exploit its loopholes. But the communists still competed with other parties, particularly the moderate Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the pro-Western Polish Peasant Party (PSL). Even though the PPR effectively controlled the key 'hard' ministries in the post-war coalition government (including 'Information and Propaganda' and 'Public Security', Defence, etc.), the other parties, especially the PSL, constituted a serious political opposition and conducted fierce anti-communist propaganda that found much resonance among many Poles. After the PPR's victory in the rigged elections of 1947 and its swallowing up of the PPS in 1948 (after which it renamed itself the United Polish Workers' Party, or PZPR), the communists quashed these major voices of opposition.<sup>23</sup>

Between 1945 and 1947 the press was freer than it would be later under communist rule, though even then the communists actively strove to control it as much as possible without losing their official democratic credentials. They had the advantage of controlling paper distribution, which enabled them severely to restrict the PSL's press.<sup>24</sup> The national market was dominated by newspapers of various parties, mostly the PPR and PPS, as well as the cooperative *Czytelnik* (also known as 'The Reader'). The latter was set up by the PPR as a tactical move to win over the non-communists; as such, it promoted a broad range of democratic ideals until its submission to the party line in 1948.<sup>25</sup> There were also numerous local publications, which retained some independence for longer than the larger central ones.

In their efforts to promote a positive view of the USSR, the Soviet authorities tried to take into account the reading habits of the Polish audience and not to overtly

undermine the 'democratic' credentials of their Polish colleagues. The first *Sovinformbiuro* representative in Poland was Major K.I. Orlov. At the end of 1946 he reported to the organization's director, S.A. Lozovskii (deputy foreign-minister between 1939 and 1946 and member of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee), that, in following the general directives, he worked throughout the year to:

continually suggest to the Poles the thought that only in friendship with the USSR will they achieve peace and economic prosperity, that any other path spells trouble for them; ... to promote the economic and military power of the USSR; to dispel the slanderous statements about the backwardness of the Soviet culture and technology; ... to navigate political reefs, in order not to complicate the situation of the PPR with insufficiently considered articles (keeping in mind the question of the collective farms, life in Lvov, etc.); and to unmask the reactionary essence of the Anglo-Saxons' foreign policy.<sup>26</sup>

Orlov captured well the *Sovinformbiuro*'s general goals in Poland for the half decade after the war: that is, to use the press to convince Poles to look eastward for comfort and for an inspiring example in rebuilding their lives, culture and economy from the ruins of war.<sup>27</sup> He also aptly described some of the major constraints on the full popularization of the Soviet Union in the Polish press, as well as the political difficulties inherent in post-war Poland. Soviet officials' main concern was to avoid topics that might help lose potential votes. The sensitive questions included Poland's loss of its eastern territories and cultural centres, such as the cities Wilno and Lwów (later renamed Vil'na and Lvov), and Soviet collective farms, word of which trickled across the border. The *Sovinformbiuro* officials correctly surmised that mentioning collective farms would be seen as an attempt to impose the most unpleasant aspects of the Soviet system in Poland. In 1945 Orlov included the collective farms among unacceptable materials. He explained that: 'The collective farm is a bugbear with which the Home Army (AK) is scaring the Polish peasant. It's too early in my opinion to explain the role of the collective farms. It could bring the opposite results. Consequently, I ask that you avoid the words 'collective farms', 'collective farm workers', etc. Instead, write 'peasants', 'villages', 'peasant farms', etc.'<sup>28</sup> However temporary and interested some Soviet officials' attitudes may have been, their ability and willingness to see things from another perspective constituted a remarkable phenomenon. The circumstances for publishing material on collective farms, Orlov speculated at the end of 1946, would become 'more favourable' after the elections to the Sejm (the Polish legislative body) in 1947.<sup>29</sup> Stalin officially opposed introducing collective farms in the new satellite states until the autumn of 1947. The local communists adopted the policy in 1948–9 and began implementing it only in 1950.<sup>30</sup> Orlov was aware that collectivization was a sensitive issue in Poland and made efforts to alert the seemingly indiscriminate bureau in Moscow to this fact. Another compromise included a temporary concession to the Poles' reading habits and traditional anti-Soviet bias. The Polish intelligentsia, explained Orlov, 'consider us Russians to be Asians, and themselves to be the bearers of the high Western culture'.<sup>31</sup> For that reason, he added, the concept of the friendship of the Slavic countries was very unpopular among them. This was the official slogan under

which Stalin consolidated his empire in East-Central Europe. Consequently, Orlov suggested avoiding explicit praise of the Soviet government in order not to put the intelligentsia on guard. The *Sovinformbiuro*, he suggested, also had to consider the population at large, which the inter-war government had been ‘poisoning’ with anti-Soviet ‘slander’.<sup>32</sup>

To wean the Poles from their anti-Soviet notions, Orlov suggested first sending general articles to ‘familiarize the Polish reader with how the USSR grew stronger, with our economy, strength of the Red Army, our attitude towards the “little peoples” etc.’, and to complement them with current news about the USSR.<sup>33</sup> In addition, Orlov requested that Moscow avoid sending articles by authors with Jewish names or at least to provide their pen names, since ‘anti-Semitism has deep roots here’ and might thus be an obstacle to promoting the Soviet Union.<sup>34</sup> This was the reality of post-war Poland which the Polish communists, some of whom were of Jewish origin, had to take into account.<sup>35</sup> The form of delivering the news also had to be changed: after ‘hundreds’ of meetings with editors in 1946, Orlov advised the Moscow office that the ‘political immaturity’ of the Polish reader required the articles to be short, clear and full of examples.<sup>36</sup> The Soviets continued the tactics of adjustments later, as they tried to gain the sympathy of new groups of readers such as peasants and women.<sup>37</sup> Increasingly at the time, Soviet institutions were subject to purges; fear of repression for unsolicited action effectively discouraged independent initiative in the bureaucratic ranks. Soviet society at large became the target of mounting nationalist propaganda that sought to eradicate empathy towards foreigners.

### ‘COWARDS’ AND ‘SABOTEURS’

The *Sovinformbiuro*’s representatives ran into obstacles on all sides in their attempts to place their articles in Polish newspapers. Lacking their bosses’ years of training in the Comintern, many editors resisted Soviet efforts. The most common reason for refusal on editors’ part was the potential political risk of provoking the Polish reader. In October 1946, for instance, Orlov reported to Moscow that he had recently met with the editor of *Czytelnik*’s central organ, *Zycie Warszawy* (*Warsaw Life*), [Wiktor] Borowski. When asked why the *Sovinformbiuro*’s materials had disappeared from his paper, the Pole replied with a ‘theory’ that involved deliberately not writing about the USSR in order to ‘neutralize’ the petty merchant before the elections to the Sejm.<sup>38</sup> This was a common excuse for rejections.

Orlov observed that another prominent communist editor ‘is as scared of the anti-Soviet citizen as is the devil of incense’.<sup>39</sup> Others, such as the powerful editor and director of *Czytelnik* Jerzy Borejsza, assured Soviet officials of their support but in fact dragged their feet when it came to publishing Soviet materials. Soviet reprimands had only a temporary effect, according to Orlov.<sup>40</sup> The Soviet representative also reported that some publications, notably those of *Czytelnik*, openly published ‘anti-Soviet articles’, although it is unclear what he meant by that.<sup>41</sup> All this made Soviet officials, and not only from the *Sovinformbiuro*, suspicious about the Polish communists’ good intentions.<sup>42</sup> They nevertheless tolerated the Poles’ insubordination, hoping that after

the elections in January 1947 things would change. 'It will become clear,' wrote Orlov, 'who was really worried about this and who used this excuse as a cover for his personal antipathy towards our country.'<sup>43</sup>

In the case of *Czytelnik*, Orlov did not have to wait long. In October 1947 the Secretariat of the PPR issued a decision excoriating the cooperative's work. Among other things, the cooperative was accused of the weak popularization of the Soviet experiences in building socialism. It is unlikely that the Poles issued the decision as a result of Orlov's interventions. If this were true, it would have come earlier. It is more probable that it resulted from a confluence of the interests of top Polish and Soviet leaders. The former saw Borejsza's power in the publishing world increasing and his concept of gradual ('gentle') cultural revolution as a threat to the communist party's political hegemony.<sup>44</sup> The Soviet authorities called for greater ideological uniformity in Eastern Europe in September 1947, thereby giving the Poles the green light to cut down further on autonomous activity in the public sphere.

Yet the way in which mid-level Soviet officials reacted to these obstacles shows how they understood their mission in Poland. While some, like the *Sovinformbiuro* representatives in Poland, suggested tactical waiting and accommodation, others favoured aggressive intervention in Polish state institutions. During a meeting with S.A. Lozovskii in September 1945 Colonel Zabolshanskii of the Red Army's political department raised two questions that he 'need [ed] help resolving'. One was the necessity 'to conduct a purge of the Polish state apparatus, as it has been penetrated by reactionary, anti-Soviet and anti-democratic elements that now produce their anti-Soviet propaganda from legal positions'.<sup>45</sup> Second, he said that it would be necessary to 'establish the Polish government's state control over the press. We had a number of cases in which newspapers published anti-Soviet articles.'<sup>46</sup> Similarly, almost two years later Orlov noted the 'curious fact' that nobody in the PPR's central committee 'was even thinking about' centralizing the press.<sup>47</sup> In each case, the prospect of retaining the diversity of the press did not appear to them to be a long-term option. Nevertheless, Soviet officials' competing ideas about how and when to curb the freedom of the press during 1945–7 are revealing.

Sometimes the *Sovinformbiuro* representatives directly pressured the editors to accept articles. In 1945 Orlov mentioned 'other Soviet employees' who helped him do this. He probably had in mind the officials at the Red Army's political department. The ambassador to Poland, Lebedev, many times refused to intervene when asked by the *Sovinformbiuro* representative, although occasionally it did happen.<sup>48</sup> Lebedev would feel no compunction in overstepping his competences and weaving top-level intrigues in the Polish Politburo a few years later.<sup>49</sup> His occasional refusal to assist *Sovinformbiuro* officials was probably due to lack of time, or perhaps had to do with the secondary importance of such action from the point of view of advancing Soviet state interests. Another time Orlov mentioned that the adviser Iakovlev tried to 'exert influence' on Borejsza through the PPR to get him to publish more about the Soviet Union.<sup>50</sup>

In fact, the *Sovinformbiuro*'s officials' suspicions with regard to most Polish editors, including Borejsza, were misguided. Most of the editors disagreed with him not on the ends, but on the means. As the communist fiction writer, party activist and editor of



*Dziennik Polski* (*The Polish Daily*) Jerzy Putrament pointed out in a letter to the Central Committee:

The mere recounting of the unquestionable services that the USSR has rendered Poland is pointless, since it magnifies the conviction, especially popular in the intellectual-bourgeois milieu, but also to some extent among peasants and even workers, that our government and party are only puppets in Moscow's hands.<sup>51</sup>

Other editors would have agreed with him wholeheartedly. In sum, the Soviets were on the mark when they pointed to anti-Bolshevik bias among the Polish population. But at the same time, their own anti-Polish prejudices prevented them from giving local communists the benefit of the doubt. A greater degree of Soviet confidence would have given the Poles more responsibility and freed the Soviets from direct supervision, and thus it would have helped streamline the management of the new empire.

When they failed to secure the publication of their material through the editors, the Soviet officials sought help at the top, in the Central Committee of the PPR/PZPR. When it came to intervening with the communists, they were on their own, for the ambassador refused to help at all. The cultural adviser at the Soviet Embassy, Iakovlev, also seems to have been unreliable; despite the fact that he had offered his help earlier, he was of no assistance when needed.<sup>52</sup>

The Polish communist leaders sometimes also frowned upon Soviet initiatives and at times tried to resist them. As a result, the Soviets sometimes failed to get what they wanted, particularly when it came to the popularization of a specific subject or its timing. Explicit refusals were more common before 1947. In March 1946 V.I. Sokolovskii, a reporter for *Wolność* (*Freedom*), the Polish-language newspaper of the Red Army's political department, interviewed Jakub Berman. He asked the Pole why the Polish press had been publishing so little about the Red Army's help to the population. Berman replied that this was old news and should something new come up, he would make sure it appeared.<sup>53</sup> Like the journalists, top communists refused to intervene on the Soviets' behalf before 1947. This infuriated Orlov, who described them as 'hiding their heads in the sand'.<sup>54</sup> When they did acquiesce to Soviet demands, they often did so only temporarily.<sup>55</sup>

## INSTITUTIONAL DIFFICULTIES

During the entire time, the *Sovinformbiuro* officials had to grapple with their organization's internal deficiencies, as did others working in Soviet institutions whose purpose was to shape foreign opinion.<sup>56</sup> Officials at all levels of the organization realized how poorly the Soviet Information Bureau was faring in comparison with Western channels of propaganda and information, including in the sensitive region of East-Central Europe.<sup>57</sup> Orlov's first problem was his inability to read Polish, which prevented him from translating the Soviet articles himself or fully appreciating the character of the Polish press. Inadequate funds precluded hiring more translators, which impeded the distribution of the articles among provincial newspapers, whose staff did not know Russian. The articles that arrived in Russian, about two-thirds of the

total in mid-1946, were often badly written.<sup>58</sup> Usually transmitted by teletype, they frequently contained typographical errors. If they were shipped by plane instead, they were notoriously late.

The Soviet authorities responded to these problems, which were endemic in other departments of the *Sovinformbiuro* as well, by trying to evaluate the staff (*kadry*) and purging those who came up short. On Stalin's orders, a Central Committee commission was created in 1946 to verify the work and qualifications of the *Sovinformbiuro* personnel. It consisted of A.A. Kuznetsov, N.S. Patolichev and M.A. Suslov.<sup>59</sup> Between 28 June and 8 July these three conducted hearings of all the agency's department heads and Antifascist Committees' representatives.<sup>60</sup> The results of the investigation were sent to Stalin on 10 July.<sup>61</sup> On 9 September 1946 the Central Committee of the VKP(b) issued a decision entitled 'On the work of SIB' that deemed the organization's apparatus to be unsatisfactory. According to the document, a substantial percentage of the institution's employees had insufficient qualifications. Heads of departments were ignorant about 'their' countries' politics and economy, the report stated, and the *Sovinformbiuro* writers were frequently semi-literate careerists.<sup>62</sup>

Between 1 July 1947 and 1 April 1949 the Central Committee discharged 100 people from the *Sovinformbiuro*'s central apparatus for 'political and professional reasons' (many of whom, including S.A. Lozovskii, were arrested and later shot dead).<sup>63</sup> Some 142 new employees were appointed. As the number of employees went up from 154 in July 1946 to 198 in April 1949, the institution's ranks changed in favour of party members, individuals with higher education and ethnic Russians (as opposed to Soviet citizens of non-Russian ethnic background). By 1949, 92 per cent of the personnel had higher education (compared with 72 per cent in 1946), 71 per cent were Party members (compared with 55 per cent before), and 76 per cent were ethnic Russians (as opposed to 40 per cent before).<sup>64</sup> In the end, there were significantly fewer Jews in the organization; in 1946 they composed 48 per cent of staff and in 1949 only 12 per cent.<sup>65</sup> The contrast between ethnic groups was sharpest in the top ranks: Russians composed 80 per cent, Jews 7 per cent, Ukrainians 3 per cent and 'others' 10 per cent.<sup>66</sup> The most pronounced tendency was that Russians were being promoted and Jews were not.<sup>67</sup> In fact, some see the verification process as a prelude to the ensuing nationwide ethnic purges and, more immediately, a crackdown on the Jewish Antifascist Committee that began in 1946 and lasted until 1952, ending in the persecution of over a hundred of its members.<sup>68</sup> A scholar of Soviet anti-Semitism sees the purges in the *Sovinformbiuro* as a symptom of Stalin's deliberate, albeit 'secret', policy of discrimination against Jews in all areas of social activity after the Second World War.<sup>69</sup> The verification of personnel affected the Polish department as well. In a wave of firings induced by alleged incompetence, Orlov was replaced by Sokolovskii, a Soviet citizen of Polish extraction.<sup>70</sup>

## THE NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE, 1948–53

The Soviet approach to its East European satellites slowly evolved in the post-war years. Stalin took an increased interest in these countries' internal affairs in mid-1946.<sup>71</sup> As a

result of international developments, the rationale behind Mikhail Suslov's conservative thinking gained broader support in the upper echelons of the Soviet power structure in early 1947. Unexpectedly, several Western European communist parties lost parliamentary elections. In the new circumstances, those communists in East-Central Europe who openly embraced 'national roads to socialism' seemed like an additional threat to the global constellation of communist forces. The Soviet side increasingly pushed for centralization of the communist movement and institutionalized these plans through the formation of the Communist Information Bureau in the autumn of 1947.<sup>72</sup> The latter was a Soviet-led organization responsible for coordinating the activities of foreign communist parties; despite a nominal resemblance, its links to the *Sovinformbiuro* were only indirect. Soviet leaders quickly condemned any aspirations to autonomy on the part of the foreign communists. Among them was PPR Secretary Władysław Gomułka, who in 1948 was accused of a 'nationalist deviation', deposed and finally arrested in 1951.

Full-scale sovietization proceeded from the beginning of 1949 until a few months after Stalin's death. But even during the phase of the most overt and intense pressures from the Soviet side, the Poles were able to maintain a degree of autonomy in managing their own propaganda campaigns. The decisions about which Soviet articles to publish ultimately depended on the Polish communists' own strategy of coping with the current political situation and their ability to follow it. The Polish communists had a better sense of the mood of the local population since they had access to current reports of local security organs. The Polish leadership was also well connected with Moscow, which gave them some leverage with local officials of the Soviet Information Bureau. The Poles' strategy was characterized by a greater carefulness and restraint in comparison with the Soviet approach. This stemmed from the Polish leaders' sensitivity to local circumstances and sensibilities, as well as their fear of losing the political capital they needed to stay in power and carry out their political programme.

Although the PPR gained a decisive voice in matters of the press by mid-1947, even by mid-1948 party control was not absolute.<sup>73</sup> The frantic race to publish more newspapers than the opposition made it difficult for the communists to assess editorial staff carefully, especially in the provinces.<sup>74</sup> The provincial party journalists were the least qualified. Moreover, they enjoyed the most independence as a result of their distance from Warsaw. Some journalists tried to retain pre-war notions of journalistic professionalism. Such journalists resented the imperative to sugarcoat reality and tried to avoid doing so.<sup>75</sup> Sometimes the communists themselves rejected the *Sovinformbiuro*'s articles for political reasons – for example, in order not to pre-empt a propaganda campaign they had planned for a different time, or simply to avoid compromising the party newspaper with Soviet-looking or badly written journalism.

By undertaking various measures, the *Sovinformbiuro* officials secured a quantitative increase in the publication rates of their press materials (see section below). But even in 1950, 1951 and 1952, when all apparent obstacles to publication had been eliminated, they continued to face difficulties in publishing articles on agriculture, international questions, religion, the priority of Soviet science and the theory of the Soviet state.<sup>76</sup> According to Sokolovskii, the main problem was the questionable hiring practice of the

Polish editors, among whom were 'unreliable elements'.<sup>77</sup> Other institutions that operated in parallel to the *Sovinformbiuro* faced similar difficulties.<sup>78</sup>

The *Sovinformbiuro* officials, while eager to publish their articles in the Polish press, cared even more that Poles take the initiative. On 26 March 1949 Sokolovskii's boss A. Volozhenin congratulated him on recent successes. But he added that in the future 'we need to get the editorial offices themselves to start ordering articles on the subject of their interest'. 'Obviously,' he noted, 'it is up to you to suggest to them which aspects of Soviet life are important and should be publicized (*osveshchat*) in a given organ of the Polish press.'<sup>79</sup> In response to such pressures, and also in an effort to get factual news from the USSR, the Poles began ordering the *Sovinformbiuro*'s articles. But to the great dismay of Soviet officials the requests ignored the usual subjects. In addition, they concentrated on short news reports and not, as the Soviet officials preferred, on the feature articles that were both longer and presented more propagandistic value. The *Sovinformbiuro* officials were apparently uncomfortable with exerting pressure directly and tried to train the Polish editors to guess what they should want themselves, just as Polish party leaders had learned to ask Stalin for 'advice' on key political issues. It is likely that the *Sovinformbiuro* officials were bound by some internal statute that prevented them from telling the journalists directly what to do, much as Soviet advisers and diplomats had, at least on paper, a very narrow field for manoeuvre.<sup>80</sup> Soviet officials sometimes imagined that they could make their Polish colleagues see that promoting the Soviet agenda was their 'patriotic duty', but no successes on that front were reported.<sup>81</sup> Instead, based on the often poor results of their interventions with the Central Committee members and information from more forthcoming Polish editors, the Soviets became even more suspicious of the Poles' good faith and reported their doubts to Moscow through their own bureaucratic channels.<sup>82</sup>

After they had monopolized power, the Polish communists lost their main argument for defying the Soviets. This meant that when the Poles did beg to differ on the publication of a particular article, the *Sovinformbiuro* officials made no effort to compromise. It is true that earlier in 1948, upon Soviet request, the Poles fired an editor who had refused to publish the bureau's articles on the grounds that 'the Polish journalists write better than the Soviet ones'.<sup>83</sup> But in other cases, the Polish communists tried to hold their ground. Sokolovskii complained about this in his report of 21 April 1949 to the Central Committee of the VKP(b). The Polish leaders, Sokolovskii stated, were afraid to describe the 'superiority of Soviet agriculture' in the party press and explicitly prevented the *Sovinformbiuro* from doing so as well. In consequence, the press published only 37 out of the 127 articles on the subject that the field office received from Moscow in the first quarter of 1949.<sup>84</sup> Another time Polish leaders refused (without success) to publish the article 'Popov, and Not Marconi', dedicated to the alleged Russian inventor of radio.<sup>85</sup> The Poles nevertheless continued to have their way in many cases by saying one thing and doing another. The Soviets occasionally discovered the Poles' duplicity directly from sympathetic editors, but they chose not to confront the top communists, perhaps lest their informants be compromised, and consequently suffered the humiliation in silence.<sup>86</sup>

The differences between the Polish communists and Soviet officials seem to have been more tactical than ideological. After all, most of the top Polish communists were hard-core Stalinists whose devotion to the Soviet leader helped them survive the Comintern purges of the late 1930s. On 15 June 1950 Sokolovskii reported that the previous day the Polish party's Central Committee had agreed 'for the first time' to publish material against the Vatican. He must have meant Soviet materials, since Jakub Berman had kicked off a general anti-clerical campaign as early as 21 March 1949 during an editors' conference in the Central Committee.<sup>87</sup> Yet a year and a half after Sokolovskii's message, the *Sovinformbiuro* representative Ivanov complained that during all of 1951 he was unable to publish anything disparaging about the Vatican or Polish Church leaders. Similarly, careful as the Polish communists were about discussing collective farms, they were surreptitiously introducing the Soviet farm model in several areas of the country as early as 1949.<sup>88</sup>

The directors of the Central Committee's Press Department were equally unwilling to publish an article about the world peacemaking mission of the Russian Orthodox Church. One of them, Stefan Staszewski, allegedly justified this refusal by pointing out the potential danger it might have posed: namely, that the Poles might take it as an attempt to impose Orthodox Christianity on Poland.<sup>89</sup> In an interview with Teresa Torańska three decades later, Staszewski explained his attitude towards Soviet news functionaries from *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and TASS: 'For correspondents I was the chief, so even if they'd wanted to make critical comments of any kind I wouldn't have had to take them seriously.'<sup>90</sup> The Soviet Information Bureau had a higher status than the other media outlets, but it appears that the Polish authorities refused to make this distinction. In the same interview, Staszewski expounded on his views concerning importing Soviet culture in general:

True, I did hold the view that the bathetic style of grand-scale building propagated in Russia should be grafted onto Poland and that the Polish society should be infected with it, but the forms that this grafting process was taking didn't seem effective to me. And I assure you that that's why we were able to reject and get rid of socialist realism with such relative ease: because first of all it was not inscribed in our cultural tradition, and secondly we weren't excessively enthusiastic in implementing it. Wherever it was possible to wriggle out of some act of servility, we wriggled out of it.<sup>91</sup>

Staszewski's account may be somewhat self-serving, but it does corroborate the story that emerges from the records of the *Sovinformbiuro*. There are few reasons to doubt that, as well-educated, discerning individuals, set on maintaining power at home, Staszewski and other top officials would try to filter out the carelessly written news materials from Moscow. It appears that, working on their own territory and with the eager support of numerous Polish journalists, he and others were, in fact, able to do so.

Finally, the institutional purges may have alleviated some of the *Sovinformbiuro*'s structural problems, but they did not eliminate all the difficulties. For example, Sokolovskii reported in 1949 that the work at the field office 'was improving', as was the overall quality of materials sent from Moscow.<sup>92</sup> During a closed meeting with Pozdeev in 1950, one of the department directors reported that the *Sovinformbiuro* staff

were generally well prepared theoretically, but that their journalistic skills were still far from the desired standard.<sup>93</sup> However, between 1949 and 1953 some materials continued to arrive late, and their quality was often low or they were written specifically for the Soviet audience.<sup>94</sup>

## MEASURING SOVIET SUCCESS

Quantitatively speaking, between 1945 and 1953 the Soviets made significant progress in getting their materials into the Polish newspapers (see Table 1). Yet despite this, the Soviet message reached the Polish reader in a refracted form. Articles on certain subjects, notably agriculture and Soviet science, but often also the economy and international news, were consistently filtered out. Other subjects, such as theory of the Soviet state, tended to receive intermittent coverage in accordance with the Polish communists' need. Similarly, since the Poles were likely to accept some themes and genres more easily than others, it allowed them to over-fulfil their obligation to the Soviet side as measured in terms of general percentages and quantities, while still being selective. This tendency was clearly evident in 1948. The acceptance rate of 81 per cent for that year was for original articles only. In fact, in 1948 the *Sovinformbiuro* experimented with duplicating articles before sending them off to Poland. As a result of this short-lived practice, as many as 5,864 articles were delivered to the Polish editors; given that figure, the publication rate was only 37 per cent.<sup>95</sup> Various newspaper editors, in other words, were likely to publish copies of the same articles, while at the same time shunning the printing of others. The nominal Soviet success between 1948 and 1953 seems even less compelling when we realize that these figures tell us only that a given article was published, but not in how many newspapers. Articles often appeared in one paper but not in others, which limited their propagandistic influence; for example, the provincial press was constantly off limits to the Soviet officials. The sudden drop in the Polish acceptance rate during the years 1954–5 (which were characterized by a decreased Soviet pressure on Eastern Europe) shows just how perfunctory the process had been until Stalin's death in 1953.

Finally, some Soviet articles meant to popularize the new empire in the Polish press sometimes misfired because they were either unconvincing or unimpressive. A study of the *Sovinformbiuro*'s articles as they appeared in the Polish press and of their reception belongs in a separate article. A few examples nevertheless can help us appreciate the range of complications and misunderstandings such articles caused. One such article, entitled 'A Distinguished Engineer' ('Znakomity maszynista'), appeared in *ycie Warszawy* on 13 August 1951 with the subheading 'from our own correspondent'. It told of a Stakhanovite feat of Soviet locomotive-operator Blinov, who was also a deputy to the Supreme Soviet and a hero of socialist labor.<sup>96</sup> In response, the editors received an incredulous letter from a Polish engineer named Kozłowski, who was so impressed by the described stunts that he did the maths and concluded the whole thing was a joke. It appeared that Blinov drove, at a speed of 150 km/h, a train that was four kilometres long and consisted of four hundred wagons. Kozłowski berated the editors for publishing the article without consulting specialists and advised that they should

**Table 1** Publication rates for the *Sovinformbiuro* materials in Poland; blank spaces indicate unavailable data.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Articles received</i>	<i>Articles published</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>% of original articles published – Soviet duplicates included</i>	<i>% of original articles published</i>
1944	495 <sup>a</sup>				
1945	2,531 <sup>b</sup>				
In April: 138 <sup>c</sup> In April: 60 <sup>d</sup>				43 (April only)	50 <sup>e</sup>
1946					
1947					
1948	2,703 (5,864) <sup>f</sup>		2,190 <sup>g</sup>	37	81
1949	2,839 <sup>h</sup>	2,232 <sup>i</sup>	4,738 <sup>j</sup>		79 <sup>k</sup>
1950					84 <sup>l</sup>
1951					92 <sup>m</sup>
1952	1,243 <sup>n</sup>	1,024 <sup>o</sup>			82
1953	1,279 <sup>p</sup>	1,106 <sup>q</sup>			86.5
1954	In July: 144 <sup>r</sup>				
Whole year: 1,410 <sup>s</sup>		In July: 57 <sup>t</sup>			In July: 40
1955	842 <sup>u</sup>	418 <sup>v</sup>			50

a. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 154, l. 34.

b. *Ibid.*

c. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 146, l. 23.

d. *Ibid.*

e. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 385, l. 21.

f. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 264, ll. 553–554. During 1948–9 some articles were being duplicated in Poland. The data in parentheses refer to the duplicates.

g. *Ibid.*

h. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 277, l. 2.

i. *Ibid.*

j. *Ibid.* In this case the duplicates were made in Poland.

k. *Ibid.*

l. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 342, l. 16.

m. *Ibid.*

n. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 373, l. 8. The figures take into account 122 articles from the year before.

o. *Ibid.*

p. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 398, l. 25.

q. *Ibid.*

r. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 398, l. 130.

s. *Ibid.*, d. 402, l. 118.

t. *Ibid.*, d. 398, l. 130.

u. *Ibid.*, d. 402, l. 125 (includes cut-outs from the Soviet press to be reprinted).

v. *Ibid.*, l. 121.

quickly publish a commentary explaining that the article was a mistake, in order to save the paper's reputation.<sup>97</sup> Reactions such as this help explain why the Polish editors often dragged their feet in publishing the Soviet material.<sup>98</sup>

Another sympathetic reader politely complained that he did not understand the distinction between 'democratic' and 'undemocratic' music made by one Soviet author.<sup>99</sup> There were other readers who felt strongly about certain issues, such as religion and collective farms. 'Try to touch our Church, and you'll see what'll happen,' warned one, writing to *Wolność*. 'We'll slaughter our cows and won't go to the collective farms anyway.'<sup>100</sup> Similarly, the *Sovinformbiuro* representative F. Potemkin reported in 1953 that some articles on the Soviet Union boasted about the successes of the Soviet collective farms that were actually lower than Polish results.<sup>101</sup> Given the *Sovinformbiuro* representatives' constant complaints to Moscow, such thoughtless articles were not uncommon. They turned out to be another obstacle in the Soviet efforts to enroll the Polish public in its imperial project.

## CONCLUSION

In the context of the early Cold War, John Lewis Gaddis distinguished between the Soviet and the American empires in Europe on the basis of the degree to which each was able to align its own interests with those of the local populations.<sup>102</sup> The rigidity of their approach as well as political events outside of their immediate control prevented officials in the Soviet Information Bureau from effectively involving their Polish subjects in a common project. On the one hand, they were unable to produce high-quality journalism likely to be accepted by Polish editors, some of whom still clung to a pre-war sense of professional identity. On the other hand, the Soviets could not accommodate the Polish communists' tactical differences on matters of propaganda. Although they tried to meet the Poles halfway on issues of style and content between 1945 and 1947, and to a small extent afterwards, their patience was generally short-lived. Their Polish comrades seized power at the beginning of 1947; after that, the Soviets viewed most disagreements on the Poles' part with the utmost suspicion and struggled ever harder to have their own way. By doing so, they wasted considerable energy and certainly deprived the Polish leaders of whatever incentive they had left for cooperating with the mid-level Soviet functionaries.

From the perspective of overall Soviet policy, the *Sovinformbiuro*'s mid-level practices appear as a curious alternative to the main channels of cultural intervention. The organization's officials tried to reshape the Polish public sphere about two years before top Soviet leaders gave local communists the official green light to do so during the conference of the communist parties in the autumn of 1947. This chronological discrepancy suggests the relative autonomy of the mid-level project. Was the *Sovinformbiuro*'s work simply carried on by the momentum of the wartime effort and the habitual vigilance of its employees? Or was there a mid-level mastermind who pulled the strings in order to implement his own political vision in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe? More research is necessary to answer these questions, but a combination of the two factors seems to have been the driving force behind the



*Sovinformbiuro's* actions. On the one hand, officials in the Soviet Central Committee actively supervised the *Sovinformbiuro's* foreign operations, and they tolerated the efforts of the eager employees on the ground. But they also seem to have been ineffective in fine-tuning the ostensibly unresponsive propaganda machine in Moscow. This was a failure that ultimately undercut the *Sovinformbiuro's* success.

During the apex of Stalin's rule in 1949–53, Polish journalists and communists, who were generally dependent on their Soviet masters at the top level, were able to find some room for manoeuvre and occasionally to exercise their own will in the middle stratum of empire. In some ways, the Soviet–Polish relationship at the middle level resembled that at the top: both sides shared strategic goals, though they differed on which policies should be implemented and when.<sup>103</sup> In another sense, however, the Poles at mid-level had more freedom of negotiation, since they could more easily stand up to Soviet colleagues. No doubt, this was the case in part because the Soviet authorities who supervised the mid-level social and cultural institutions were more tolerant of the Poles' dissent than they would have been on more substantive issues involving high party politics.

Despite the fact that participants in the Soviet–Polish propaganda project did not appear to believe that vital Soviet interests were involved in the day-to-day fulfilment of their tasks, the issue at stake was no less than the long-term legitimacy of the empire among its new subjects. That Soviet officials failed to win over the Polish public was a significant defeat. Whether the task was achievable at all, however, is unclear, given Soviet institutional proclivities and practices, as well as the historical divide between the two countries, both recent and long-standing. In his discussion of the Soviet Information Bureau's western outreach, Vladimir Pechatnov aptly observed that a major obstacle for Soviet foreign propaganda was the Soviet system itself. The 'totalitarian system,' he writes, 'doomed propaganda to primitive ideologism, formalism, sluggishness (caused by endless "checking it with the authorities") and extreme stereotyping'.<sup>104</sup> Whether in the long run the Soviets squandered an opportunity to win over large parts of the Polish mass public to their own vision of empire is subject to dispute. Clearly, not all who read the Soviet articles would have been convinced. But if, as some argue, social representations can shape people's acceptance of reality by conventionalizing and prescribing their conceptualization of objects, persons and events, then the mere lack of exposure to the articles cost the Soviets something anyway.<sup>105</sup> Bad propaganda was not something the USSR could afford. After all, in trying to win the hearts and minds of the Polish mass publics the Soviets were competing against centuries of anti-Russian prejudice. Most Polish citizens appreciated having been liberated by the Red Army from the Nazi occupation, and many supported some kind of socialist order in post-war Poland. Yet for millions of people the word 'Bolshevik' continued to mean a threat to social order, their religion and their lives. Fresh memories of the violence and rape committed by some Soviet soldiers, as well as the NKVD arrests of the pro-London Home Army soldiers, reinforced these impressions.

The international agreements in Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam created a profound ambiguity with regard to the Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. Although they specified

that the smaller states should be both 'democratic and friendly' to the USSR, they never defined what the links between these two contradictory principles should be.<sup>106</sup> Clearly, the Soviet Information Bureau officials in Poland had few doubts that Soviet-dominated friendship would be the defining characteristic of the relationship between the two neighbours. They tried to translate this idea into practice by actively intervening in the Polish media apparatus and by shaping the content of the press. If they tolerated the Poles' dissent, as was the case between 1945 and 1947, they did so as a temporary tactical move designed to avoid jeopardizing their comrades' precarious political standing and not as a long-term alternative. Regardless, the Polish communists continued to differ on some issues even after they seized power, and in defying the impatient Soviet officials they gained some autonomy for action. Both of the above factors – the Soviets' inability to reach the Polish masses directly and their failure to accommodate the communist elites – help us understand yet another aspect of the Soviet imperial weakness, as well as a dimension of the perennial instability in Soviet–Polish relations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research for this article was supported in part by the Social Science Research Council and the Fulbright-Hays Program of the US Department of Education, as well as by funds provided by the US Department of State through the Title VIII Program and the IREX Scholar Support Fund. None of these organizations is responsible for the views expressed. I thank Jeffrey Brooks, Albert Beveridge III, Séverine Rebourcet, the participants at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Young Researchers' Conference at Miami University in 2006 and two anonymous reviewers for *Cultural and Social History* for reading subsequent drafts of this article and offering their valuable insights. I am grateful to Mr Jan Adamczyk from the Slavic and East European Library at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign for a last-minute bibliographic consultation.

## NOTES

1. For overviews, see Andrzej Paczkowski, 'Polish–Soviet Relations 1944–1989: The Limits of Autonomy,' *Intermarium* 6(1) (2003) at <http://www.sipa.columbia.edu/REGIONAL/ECE/vol6no1/paczkowski.pdf>; Norman Naimark, 'Post-Soviet Russian Historiography on the Emergence of the Soviet Bloc,' *Kritika*, 5 (2004), pp. 561–80.
2. The literature on the subject is enormous and shall be cited when directly relevant in the following discussion.
3. Exceptions to this rule include, for example, a balanced, albeit dated, work by Andrzej Korzon, *Polsko-radzieckie kontakty kulturalne w latach 1944–1950* (Warsaw, 1982); Mirosław Golon, e.g. 'Ambasadorowie Stalina – radzieccy dyplomaci w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej i na Bałkanach w latach 1944–1953,' *Czasy Nowo ytnie*, XVIII–XIX (2005), pp. 129–78; Albina Noskova, 'Sovetskie sovetniki v stranakh Tsentral'noi i Vostochnoi Europy, 1945–1953,' *Voprosy Istorii*, 1 (1998), pp. 104–13.
4. Albina Noskova, Tatiana Volokitina and Galina Murashko are the best-known supporters of the former view. See, for example, their *Narodnaia demokratiia – mif ili real'nost? Obshchestvenno-politicheskiye protsessy v vostochnoi Evrope 1944–1948 gg.* (Moscow, 1993).

5. A fascinating study of such day-to-day interactions in the German context is Norman Naimark's *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Boulder, CO, 1997).
6. Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2nd, revised edn (Cambridge, 1965), p. 130.
7. I rely on Dominic Lieven's definition of empire as a great, authoritarian power ruling over a vast territory without the consent of its peoples. See his *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven, CT, 2002), p. xi.
8. For instance, discussing the 'People's Democracies' between 1947 and 1953, Joseph Rothschild and Nancy Wingfield observed that they were 'characterized by ... absolute obedience to Soviet directives and even hints'. See *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*, 3rd edn (New York, 2000), p. 145.
9. The 'altruist' narratives belonged to the domain of communist historiography. On the opposite treatments, see, for example, Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union and the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007); Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York, 1990), p. 21; John Connelly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000).
10. Vladimir Pechatnov has treated the Bureau's western operations in the two post-war years: see 'Exercise in Frustration: Soviet Foreign Propaganda in the Early Cold War, 1945–47,' *Cold War History*, 1(2) (2001), pp. 1–27. Natalia Petrova focused largely on the Second World War period in *Antifashistkie komitety SSSR, 1941–1945* (Moscow, 1999).
11. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation; henceforth GARF), fond R-8581, opis' 2, delo 154, list 25–26.
12. *Ibid.*, d. 154, l. 27.
13. *Ibid.*, d. 133, ll. 4, 6.
14. Draft decision of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) entitled 'On the Work of SIB', signed by A. Vyshinskii and G. Aleksandrov and sent to V.M. Molotov and G.M. Malenkov on 29 June 1945. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (Russian State Archive of Social-Political History; henceforth RGASPI), f. 17, op. 125, d. 316, l. 18.
15. *Ibid.*
16. 'Otchet otdela pechati Pol'shi i Chekhoslovakii', 27 June 1946. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 387, l. 135. Beginning in June of 1948 it also began servicing Hungary, and the department was renamed accordingly: 'Otchet otdela pechati Pol'shi, Chekhoslovakii i Vengrii za 1948 god i pervyi kvartal 1949 goda', April 1949. GARF, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 245, l. 216. Later yet – at least in 1954–5 – it was called the Department of 'European People's Democracies'.
17. Based on Lozovskii's own testimony to the Party's Verification Commission in 1946, during an interrogation by A.A. Kuznetsov. 'Stenogramma soveshchania komissi ck vkpb ot 28 iunia–8 iulia '46 po voprosu o rabote SIB', RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 385, l. 41.
18. Pechatnov, 'Exercise', p. 11
19. Grant M. Adibekov, *Kominform i poslevoennaia Evropa, 1947–1956* (Moscow, 1994), pp. 1–17.
20. Petrova, *Antifashistkie komitety*, p. 261. The *Sovinformbiuro* chiefs reported to these two departments in the Central Committee from 1943.
21. Andrzej Skrzypek, *Mechanizmy uzale nienia: Stosunki polsko-radzieckie 1944–1957* (Pułtusk, 2002), p. 186.
22. See Adibekov, *Kominform*, p. 16.

23. Krystyna Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland, 1943–1948* (Berkeley, CA, 1991).
24. The PSL press dominated the populist/peasant press in Poland, which, even when taken as a whole, composed a fraction of the total press market: 7.1 per cent in 1944, 2.7 per cent in 1945 and only 1.9 per cent in 1949. Grażyna Kubicka, 'Charakterystyka statystyczna prasy ludowej 1944–1949', in *Materiały Pomocnicze do Historii Dziennikarstwa Polski Ludowej*, vol. XII (Warsaw, 1987), p. 40. On restrictions on the PSL's press, see Kersten, *The Establishment*, pp. 193, 195.
25. Alina Słomkowska, *Prasa w PRL: Szkice historyczne* (Warsaw, 1980).
26. 'Otchet o rabote predst: SIB v Pol'she za 1946 g.', December 1946. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 207, l. 9.
27. The head of the Department of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, Volozhenin, confirmed these goals in 1949, adding that, in the general work of the department, he was guided by the decisions of the Central Committee VKP(b) from 9 October 1946 to 25 June 1947. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 245, ll. 216–217.
28. 'Dokladnaia zapiska', 15 March 1945. GARE, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 158, l. 39. The Home Army was loyal to the Polish government in London and actively battled both the Germans and the Soviets.
29. Orlov's report to S.A. Lozovskii entitled 'O rabote predstavitel'stva SIB v Pol'she za 1946 g.', December, 1946.
30. Paczkowski, 'Polish–Soviet Relations', p. 8; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 97–100.
31. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 207, ll. 10–11.
32. *Ibid.*, l. 13.
33. 'Dokladnaia zapiska', 15 March 1945. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 158, l. 36.
34. *Ibid.*, l. 38.
35. Kersten, *The Establishment*, pp. 213–24; Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, NY, 1997), pp. 110–11.
36. 'O rabote predstavitel'stva SIB v iune, 1946', 12 July 1946. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 207, l. 28.
37. For example, letter from V. Sokolovskii to Volozhenin. *Ibid.*, d. 264, l. 563. Also see discussion below.
38. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 207, l. 16.
39. *Ibid.*, l. 16.
40. 'Dokladnaia zapiska ob osveshchenii v pol'skoi presse vnutrennoi zhizni SSSR', 9 June 1945. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 146, ll. 24–25.
41. 'Ob antisovetskikh tendentsiakh pol'skoi legal'noi pechati', 21 February 1946. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 172, l. 28.
42. P. Galdin, an employee of Glavlit made similar remarks about Borejsza: GARE, f. R-9425, op. 1, d. 308, l. 9.
43. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 207, l. 17.
44. See Barbara Fijałkowska, *Borejsza i Róla: Przyczynek do dziejów stalinizmu w Polsce* (Olsztyn, 1995), pp. 115–24.
45. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 148, l. 16.
46. *Ibid.*, l. 17.
47. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 207, l. 15.
48. *Ibid.*, l. 17.
49. 'Wstęp', in Aleksander Kochański (ed.), *Polska w dokumentach z archiwów radzieckich* (Warsaw, 2000), p. 13.

50. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 172, ll. 17–18.
51. Letter from Jerzy Putrament to the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the PPR, 12 July 1945. From Warsaw's Archiwum Akt Nowych (hereinafter AAN), sygnatura 295/X-24, karta 25.
52. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 207, ll. 18–19.
53. 'Beseda ministra pol'skogo pravitel'stva Bermiana s korrespondentom gazety "Vol'nost"', GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 172, ll. 12–14. The interview took place on 21 March 1946.
54. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 207, l. 16.
55. *Ibid.*, l. 15.
56. On other institutions, see A.S. Stykalin, 'Politika SSSR po formirovaniu obshchestvennogo mneniia v stranakh tsentral'noi evropy i nastroyeniia intelligentsii', *Slavianovedeniie*, 3 (1997), pp. 50–62.
57. Pechatnov, 'Exercise', pp. 3–8.
58. Untitled document dated 2 March 1945, GARE, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 158, l. 51; 'O rabote predstavitel'stva SIB v iiune, 1946', 12 July 1946. *Ibid.*, op. 1, d. 207, ll. 5, 6, 27.
59. He was the head of the Otdel Vneshnei Politiki from 1945 to 1947 and the secretary of the Central Committee from 1947 to 1982. 'Suslov, Mikhail Andreevich', in Iu.V. Gorjaev (ed.), *Tsentral'nyi komitet KPSS, VKP(b), RSDRP(b), 1917–1991: Istoriko-biograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow, 2005).
60. Petrova, *Antifashistkie komitety*, pp. 275–6.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
62. 'Otchet o rabote s kadrami v SIB s 1. 7. 1947–1. 4. 1949', April 1949. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 231, ll. 1–2.
63. *Ibid.*, ll. 2, 4; 'central apparatus' consisted of the following categories: top leadership, department directors and deputy directors, main editors, editors, correspondents, reviewers, translators, international network (*zagranset*).
64. Table reprinted in Petrova, *Antifashistkie komitety*, p. 277 (in report from 10 July 1946). Another table dated 25 June 1946 containing the same data but a slightly different breakdown can be found in 'Sostav sotrudnikov Sovinformbiuro po sostaianiiu na 25 iiuniii 1946 goda', RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 384, l. 24. For firing and hiring tendencies, see GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 231, ll. 2–4. Figures for April 1949 can be found in *ibid.*, l. 5. I tried to track the changes and came up with 196 (and not 198). I cannot account for the inconsistency. There is also evidence that there were cuts before the Commission convened; according to one report, by the end of October 1946 the Bureau's central apparatus consisted of 285 people, after 200 had been fired, 'Otchetnyi doklad o rabote Sovetskogo Informbiuro (s 1 oktiabria 1946 do 1 maia 1947)', RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 509, l. 232. In the mid-1950s the director of the staffing department in the *Sovinformbiuro* reported that since 1946 the turnover in the institution's apparatus had been of the following proportions: directors and deputy directors 85.5 per cent; main editors 83 per cent; senior editors and editors 90 per cent, senior editors-translators and editors-translators 60 per cent, correspondents and reviewers 90 per cent, translators 80 per cent, international network (*zagranset*) 96 per cent. 'Doklad o podbore i vospitanii kadrov SIB (sdelana na soveshchanii zaveduiushchikh otdelami u nachal'nika SIB 18 avgusta 1950)', GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 255, l. 10.
65. Table reprinted in Petrova, *Antifashistkie komitety*, p. 277; GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 231, l. 5.
66. *Ibid.*, l. 5. By 'top ranks' I mean the *Sovinformbiuro*'s director, deputy director, the heads of departments and their deputy directors.
67. It occurred mainly through hiring the former rather than firing the latter. For example, 53

- per cent of the 100 individuals who were discharged were Russians and 32 per cent were Jews. Conversely, 80 per cent of the newly hired staff were Russian and 7 per cent were Jewish. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 231, l. 4.
68. Petrova, *Antifashistkie komitety*, pp. 273, 276, 290.
  69. Gennadi Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina: Vlast' i antisemitizm* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 361–4.
  70. Document incomplete, title unavailable. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 132, l. 292; 'O rabote predstavitel'stva Sovinformbiuro v Pol'she za 1948 god', 9 January 1949. *Ibid.*, op. 1., d. 264, l. 560.
  71. Heryk Bartoszewicz, *Polityka Zwi zku Sowieckiego wobec pa stw Europy srodkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1944–1948* (Warsaw, 1999), p. 269.
  72. T. Volokitina, *'Kholodnaia voina' i sotsial'demokratiia v Vostochnoi Evrope, 1944–1948 gg.* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 42–68.
  73. Andrzej Kozieł, 'Koncepcje dotycz ce prasy i dziennikarstwa w latach 1946–1956', in Mieczysław Adamczyk (ed.), *Prasa regionalna w 40-leciu Polski Ludowej* (Kielce, 1987), pp. 45–59.
  74. El bieta Ciborska, *Dziennikarze z władz (nie zawsze) w parze* (Warsaw, 1998), pp. 52, 124; Kozieł, 'Koncepcje', p. 51.
  75. Jane Curry, *Poland's Journalists: Professionalism and Politics* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 39.
  76. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 305, l. 78; *ibid.*, d. 342, ll. 18, 21–22; *ibid.*, d. 277, l. 173.
  77. *Ibid.*, d. 305, l. 80.
  78. Letter from V. Kuźmenko to Iu.G. Safirov, 21 November 1950. GARE, f. R-5283, op. 22, d. 244, k. 206; letter from A. Volozhenin to V. Sokolovskii, 18 March 1949. *Ibid.*, d. 245, l. 49.
  79. Letter from A. Volozhenin to V. Sokolovskii, 26 March 1949. *Ibid.*, l. 55.
  80. Golon, 'Ambasadorowie Stalina', p. 132; Noskova, 'Sovetskie sovetniki', p. 107; Paczkowski, 'Wst p', in *Polska w dokumentach z archiwów rosyjskich 1949–1953* (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 12–13.
  81. 'Otchet predstavitel'stva SIB v Pol'she v 1950 godu', 10 January 1951. GARE, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 305, l. 81.
  82. *Ibid.*, d. 245, l. 52.
  83. *Ibid.*, d. 217, l. 51.
  84. The document, reprinted in Polish, can be found in Giennadij A. Bordiugow (ed.), *Polska-ZSRR: Struktury podległości. Dokumenty WKP(b) 1944–1949* (Warsaw, 1995), pp. 241–50.
  85. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 217, l. 53. AAN, syg. 295/X-27, k. 42.
  86. *Ibid.*, d. 245, ll. 51–52.
  87. Kozieł, 'Koncepcje', p. 53.
  88. In 1949 there were 243 cooperatives totaling 42 thousand hectares; in 1953, after the official collectivization campaign that began in 1951, there were 7.7 thousand cooperatives covering 1.2 million hectares of land. Wojciech Roszkowski, *Historia Polski, 1914–2005* (Warsaw, 2006), p. 215.
  89. GARE, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 342, l. 18.
  90. Teresa Tora ska, *Them: Stalin's Polish Puppets* (New York, 1987), p. 144.
  91. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
  92. 'Otchet predstavitel'stva Sovinformbiuro v Pol'she za 1949 god', 5 January 1950. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 277, l. 8.
  93. 'Protokol zakrytogo soveshchania zaveduiushchikh otdelami, provedennogo u nachal'nika SIB 18 avgusta 1950 g.', *ibid.*, d. 255, l. 1.

94. Ibid., d. 277, ll. 7–8; ‘Otchet o rabote predstavitel’stva SIB v Pol’she za pervyi kvartal 1950-ogo goda’, ibid. l. 173; ‘Dokladnaia zapiska’, 20 January 1951, GARE, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 305, l. 3; letter from F. Potemkin to P.A. Pozdeev, 18 November 1953, ibid., d. 373, l. 51–52. Also, ‘Protokol soveshchania u nachal’nika SIB t. Pozdeeva s zaveduiushchimi otdelami ot 2-ogo fevral’ia 1950 g.’, ibid., d. 252, l. 163.
95. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 1, d. 264, l. 553–554. The practice of duplication lasted for just a short time.
96. *ycie Warszawy*, 13 August 1951, p. 4.
97. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 305, l. 23.
98. The article author’s conversation with Mr Daniel Luliński (31 May 2006) confirmed this explanation. Mr Luliński began working for *Trybuna Ludu* in 1953.
99. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 245, l. 86.
100. Ibid., l. 87.
101. GARE, f. R-8581, op. 2, d. 373, ll. 51–52.
102. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 40–53.
103. Paczkowski, ‘Polish–Soviet Relations’, p. 8.
104. Pechatnov, ‘Exercise’, p. 16.
105. Serge Moscovici, ‘The Phenomenon of Social Representations’, in Robert M. Farr and S. Moscovici (eds), *Social Representations* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 3–70.
106. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, p. 32.

