Chapter 5  
The Myth of Innocence (1960–69)

Clientelism: ‘We Have Been Able to Arrange It’

In the mid-1960s, the Main Directorate of ZBoWiD changed the location of its Warsaw headquarters; it moved from an inter-war townhouse at 15 Rutkowski Street to a palace on the corner of Ujazdów Avenue and Piękna Street.¹ The transfer to one of the most prestigious areas in the Polish capital, a neighbourhood of foreign embassies and major state offices, symbolized a growth in the significance of war veterans and former prisoners in Polish public life. Intellectuals who were observing these changes wrote with sarcasm about ‘rentiers of the occupation’.² This phrase highlighted an important demographic and material change that had come about within the two decades since the war: veterans were aging and increasingly drew benefits from their activity within the Union.

An important feature of the social reality of the 1960s was the modest, but nonetheless real, growth of a socialist welfare state. The reforms that took place within ZBoWiD after 1956 would not have been possible without a change in the state’s attitude to the issue of social welfare. In contrast to Stalinist times, the organization began to fulfil important functions in this area, thereby responding to some of the material demands that had been made during the Thaw. ZBoWiD became the distributor of its own financial resources and a lobbyist for the rights of memory groups. At the same time, it was also a monopolist: without membership in the Union, which essentially signified a declaration of loyalty to the communist state, it was impossible to claim any veteran social benefits.

Understanding the functioning of the socialist welfare state requires that we look into its grey zone. The formal activity of almost all state institutions co-existed alongside inter-personal bonds, which formed complex networks of informal influences. These comprised a parallel mechanism of social organization.

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² See e.g. comments made by Seweryna Szmaglewska, writer and former Auschwitz prisoner, during a session of the ZBoWiD Supreme Council in November 1963, AZGZKRPiBWP 3, 19.
which was secondary to the official structures of the socialist state, and which was spontaneous in nature. The ‘networks’ of power (układy) were a characteristic feature of the reality of the time: interest groups whose interaction was based on the principle of mutual favours, as well as bonds between patrons and clients, both undermined the state institutions and stabilized the system as a whole.3 ‘We have been able to arrange it’ (‘udalo się załatwić’) was one of the most common phrases in the everyday jargon of a state functionary, and also of the average Pole, at this time.

So how did veterans function under ‘really existing socialism’ in actual everyday practice? A group of Main Directorate representatives proudly declared in 1966 that ‘we are not alone in our work’; they were announcing that financial or organizational cooperation with party and state structures had been agreed. The party and the armed forces were the most important institutions with which ZBoWiD interacted.4 Officials from the various departments of the party regularly consulted with permanent employees of the ZBoWiD Main Directorate, and the Main Political Directorate of the Polish Armed Forces seconded its officers to work for the Union, thereby ensuring effective monitoring of ZBoWiD as well as providing assistance by reducing the number of employees on the Union’s payroll.

Officials of the PZPR Department of the History of the Party and the Military Historical Institute were in contact with the ZBoWiD Historical Commission. The Office of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Finance provided subsidies to support the functioning of the Union and its social welfare programmes. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare guaranteed the availability of places in sanatoria for ZBoWiD members, as well as priority access to hospitals and retirement homes, and assistance in obtaining foreign medicines. The Office of the Council of Ministers and the Social Insurance Institution considered applications for extraordinary benefits and special allowances. The Ministry of Agriculture cooperated with ZBoWiD to regulate issues related to military settlers. The Ministry of Culture and Art heeded the appeals of Union officials and supplied funds for museums and war-related monuments, and also helped in the promotion of ZBoWiD’s activity through the mass media. Whilst the national councils5 all over the country allocated funds for the maintenance of sites of battle and loss, they also worked with local ZBoWiD chapters to deal with everyday matters raised by former combatants and prisoners. The Ministry of Justice assisted ZBoWiD’s attempts to obtain reparations from West Germany. The Ministry of Education, the

5 National councils (rady narodowe) were local-level municipal governments.
Union of Polish Scouts, and the Union of Polish Teachers helped in establishing contact with the youth. The Main Commission for Research into Hitlerite Crimes in Poland, the Council for the Protection of Sites of Struggle and Martyrdom, and the Polish Red Cross were natural allies of ZBoWiD in the politics of memory (the former two institutions had, like ZBoWiD, been re-activated after suspension of significant portions of their activity in Stalinist times). Ties with the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society, the Orbis travel agency, and other public institutions were also important. In turn, the Union was drafted into state-organized events, such as the commemorations of the thousand-year anniversary of Polish statehood in 1966, or elections to the Sejm (parliament). ZBoWiD representatives sat on the committee of the National Unity Front and the All-Polish Committee of the Defenders of Peace, and they popularized the guidelines produced by congresses and meetings of the Party.

In this way ZBoWiD, which in Stalinist times had been an organization dependent on the discretionary power of the Political Bureau of the PZPR, became an organization with its own position in the network of state institutions. However, this period’s social reality was characterized not only by interaction between organizations, but by the fact of individuals occupying multiple positions in different institutions: this was what enabled the exchange of influences and explained the meaning of the aforementioned slogan that ‘we have been able to arrange it.’

Take, for example, the ZBoWiD chairmen: Janusz Zarzycki was, as already mentioned, the head of the Main Political Directorate of the Polish Armed Forces before becoming the Mayor of Warsaw in 1960; Mieczysław Moczar was Deputy Minister, later Minister, of Internal Affairs, a position that enabled him to entangle the Union with the most powerful state institution in the second half of the 1960s. The Secretary of ZBoWiD, Kazimierz Rusinek, was also the Deputy Minister of Culture and Art. Ryszard Nazarewicz and Leon Stasiak, frequent guests at ZBoWiD sessions, worked for the Propaganda Section of the PZPR. A lawyer, Janusz Wieczorek, deputy chairman of the ZBoWiD Main Directorate, was the director of the Office of the Council of Ministers and the chairman of the Council for the Protection of Sites of Struggle and Martyrdom. Henryk Jabłoński was the Minister of Enlightenment and Higher Education whilst also occupying the post of the chair of the Historical Commission of ZBoWiD. Bonds and networks also existed at the lower levels of the organization: between representatives of regional and county directorates and officials of local PZPR committees, national councils, museums, etc. For example, in 1966 the presidium of ZBoWiD in the town of Bychawa was composed of: the head of the local mill, an elder of the communal
cooperative, the head of the personnel department of the county council, a local police officer and the chairman of one of the district councils.6

These dependencies facilitated the ‘arranging’ of matters at multiple levels of the party-state hierarchy. Although serious attempts were made during the 1960s to provide a complex package of rights and benefits for former combatants and prisoners, it was only in 1975 that legislation was passed that made this a reality.7 Until then, specific demands could be met by ministerial decision, and for this reason, ZBoWiD’s most important role was that of a lobbyist which negotiated with government offices and tried to obtain concessions beneficial to its members.

Let us briefly examine what kind of benefits could be secured, and for whom.8 Those who did not work, did not receive pensions for the years that they had worked, or received only minimal pensions, could expect that ZBoWiD would help them to obtain welfare payments by endorsing their applications. Nonetheless, the granting of such assistance and the amount awarded were considerably differentiated. The most privileged groups were the veterans of the revolutionary struggles of 1905, those who fought in the Spanish Civil War, and communists who fought in the Second World War outside Poland; these groups received pensions at a special rate, which was determined by the Prime Minister himself. Participants of the Silesia and Wielkopolska Uprisings received a monetary supplement to their ordinary pension. Pensions were also available for the widows of men who died fighting in the Second World War and were considerably higher for widows of men who ‘died or were murdered in the struggle against the reactionary underground’ in the late 1940s. Everyone else, notably including the participants of the anti-Nazi resistance within Poland, could only apply to the Social Insurance Institution for the so-called exceptional pension (renta wyjątkowa), which could occasionally be increased to the level of the special rate.

6 ‘Arkusze ewidencyjne członków zarządzów oddziałów 1965/1966’, AAN, ZBoWiD ZG, 1, 16.
7 ‘Ustawa z dnia 23 października 1975 r. o dalszym zwiększeniu świadczeń dla kombatantów i więźniów obozów koncentracji.’ Dz.U. 1975 nr 34, poz. 186.
8 In the second half of the 1960s, a member of ZBoWiD could also hope to gain priority access to: (1) employment; (2) housing; (3) state subsidies for setting up a kiosk for the sale of newspapers, drinks, or lottery tickets; (4) places in sanatoria and other healthcare institutions; (5) consideration of applications to be recognized as physically disabled; (6) holidays; (7) various benefit payments; (8) places for one’s children in nurseries, schools and boarding houses; (9) veterinary help, agro-technical equipment, and banking advice; and (10) building materials. Elderly people who were not in the care of relatives had priority access to retirement homes administered by the healthcare and welfare departments of the national councils. Zbowidowcy, p. 375, 376, 382, 383. See also: ‘Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Głównego ZBoWiD w okresie od III Kongresu Związku do 31 grudnia 1965’, AZGZKRPIBWP 3, 29, pp. 200f.
Significantly, the exceptional pension also applied to members of ZBoWiD who owned their own farm or craft enterprise, i.e. those who were not entitled to a state pension through other channels because of their self-employed status. For this same reason, membership in ZBoWiD could also confer entitlement to free medical treatment for those who were not covered by social insurance – primarily smallholder farmers. Initially, this right was dependent on an individual’s income from farming or crafts-making. In 1968, all members of ZBoWiD became eligible if agriculture was their sole source of income.

Although the social protection of soldiers of the armed forces was regulated by the Ministry of National Defence, military settlers were also involved in
the welfare-seeking activities of ZBoWiD. Responding to pressures from the Union in the early 1960s, the Ministry of Agriculture passed two resolutions that conferred additional rights to settlers. The first extended the duration of preferential conditions; these were previously supposed to expire in 1958. The second resolution extended the eligibility criteria for becoming a military settler to include soldiers of the 1939 defence war who had been interned in PoW camps or had lost at least 20 percent of their earning capability. It was also decided that the rights of the military settlers could henceforth be passed on by inheritance or ceded to close relatives.

It is important to note the background to these policies. Although Poland was a unique communist country where the initial attempt to collectivize agriculture was abandoned after the Thaw, those farmers who were not employed within the system of State Agricultural Farms (Państwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne, PGR) were still excluded from the state system of pensions and health insurance as self-employed. Thus, they were beneficiaries of the Union’s ability to ‘arrange’ social privileges beyond the relatively narrow group of ‘professional’ communists, to include a broader spectrum of rural residents and private entrepreneurs. In this way, sections of society that had been victimized by the Stalinist regime now gained access to important benefits. The cult of martyrdom of the civilian population and, to a large extent, the later wave of anti-Semitic propaganda were also intended to appeal to the rural masses. In such a way, the veterans’ union became a transmission belt carrying the legitimizing ideology from the party to the countryside.

Another demand of the Thaw that was met at this time was the return to the practice (abandoned in the 1950s) of awarding military honours for wartime deeds. Like in Brezhnev’s USSR, the conferral of decorations to veterans at state commemorations became one of the fundamental rituals of communist Poland. ZBoWiD was the only organization in the country that had the right to submit nominations to the State Council for military honours. Thus, the Union arranged for representatives from all of the wartime armed organizations to receive awards. The Main Honours Commission of ZBoWiD was also responsible for the verification of honours conferred during the war by the Home Army Main Command. This was one of the heavy ironies of socialist Poland: the AK commanders were initially demonized as traitors, and then, in the 1960s, they became ‘failed politicians’; nonetheless, the honours they had awarded were respected. By 1972, 10,670 military decorations had passed the verification procedure, including 1664 Virtuti Militari orders. In this respect, the year 1966 (the 1,000-year anniversary of the establishment of a Polish state) was the most ‘productive’: the commission approved almost 8,000 medals, including 6,500 for soldiers of the Home Army,
1,000 for soldiers of the Peasants’ Battalions, and 300 for soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in the West.9

The above examples illustrate that one of the results of the process of detotalitarization in Poland was a rupture in the formation of the social status of veterans. The metaphor of a ‘fighter’ (bojownik), which was used in Stalinist times, implied that people were not recognized as recipients of material compensation; the emphasis was on their devotion to the political issues of the present day. After 1956, the term kombatant entered into circulation, and to a large extent, it approximated the pre-war concept of the veteran – an individual who was accorded a privileged status and respect within society on account of his or her own wartime achievements. The myth of the unity of the resistance movement resulted in the expansion of the boundaries of the community of veterans: partisans of various armed formations, and even participants of the civilian resistance, were included. A new phrase, ‘a combatant of the Resistance Movement’ (kombatant Ruchu Oporu) entered usage.10

At the same time, the basic functions of the Union in relation to the party-state apparatus changed. Having been a sham organization that fulfilled three essential aims (controlling, atomizing, and mobilizing former combatants for the advancement of the ideological priorities of the state), ZBoWiD became a clientelistic organization. The formation of a patron-client relation between the state and the veterans had benefits for both sides. For the authorities, it facilitated the obtainment of legitimacy; loyalty to the state became ensconced in society, not by violent means, but via monopoly control over social welfare, the awarding of military honours, and the organization of anniversary celebrations. For the veterans and former prisoners, the fundamental benefits were an increase in social prestige and material privileges.

**The Partisans**

In September 1964, Mieczysław F. Rakowski, a sharp-eyed observer of political events and then editor-in-chief of the magazine *Polityka*, a weekly which enjoyed great popularity amongst the intelligentsia, wrote in his *Diaries* that:

> In Warsaw, the latest congress of ZBoWiD, the veterans’ organization headed in recent years by Janusz Zarzycki, has come to a close. Now [Mieczysław] Moczar has become the leader, as could have been foreseen. Meanwhile, a number of former partisans like [Stanisław] Wroński, [Mieczysław] Róg-Świętek, etc. have entered the organization’s central leadership. The makeup of this governing body is very interesting, as it features almost the entire party leadership alongside veterans from the most diverse political

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9 ‘Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Głównego ZBoWiD w 1966 roku’, AZGZKRPIBWP 3, 29, p. 35.
backgrounds. Artur S[arewicz] explains that this diversity reflects a desire not to turn ZBoWiD into a politically monolithic organization. Well, we shall see.11

The change of chairman at the Third ZBoWiD Congress was part of the political tumult of the 1960s, which culminated in the anti-Semitic campaign of 1967–68 and the youth rebellions of 1968.12 The departure of Janusz Zarzycki from ZBoWiD in 1964 was the result of an ideological conflict between the liberal and nationalist wings within the communist party. From this time, the organization was heavily influenced by Mieczysław Moczar, who by the end of the year had taken up the position of Minister of Internal Affairs. It was at this time that the Ministry of Internal Affairs became the venue for deeds that would return on a larger scale at the end of the decade: questioning the loyalty of officials with Jewish backgrounds, labelling them as guilty of the crimes of Stalinism, removing them from their positions, and more broadly manipulating anti-Semitic attitudes among the population as a means of legitimizing the regime.13 As ZBoWiD chairman, Mieczysław Moczar differed from his predecessor Janusz Zarzycki in his style of leadership. He loudly proclaimed that blood spilled in the name of Poland must not be divided; in this way, he expressed his acceptance of Home Army circles. He travelled throughout Poland, meeting veterans and spending time with them in informal settings, such as around the campfire with barbecued sausages and vodka. In Warsaw, he regularly received the representatives of various veterans’ groups. In his public performances, he told lively stories about the past that highlighted the heroism of Poles during the German occupation.14

Precisely because of Moczar’s profile, the year 1964 is an important juncture in the history of the formation of a consolidated veterans’ movement in post-war Poland. The political scene was filled by new people; the majority were individuals who belonged to what public opinion would come to identify as the

11 Mieczysław F. Rakowski, Dzienniki polityczne. 1963–1966, Warszawa 1999, p. 207. Stanisław Wroński (1916–2003) was a communist partisan and a historian. He rose to prominence in the 1960s as one of the ideologists of the party’s nationalist wing. In 1972 he replaced Moczar as the chairman of ZBoWiD. Similarly, Mieczysław Róg-Świostek (1919–2000) was a former AL partisan, party functionary and journalist who earned his visibility in the 1960s thanks to his ties to Moczar as well as his popularity in the countryside. He was editor-in-chief of the journal Chłopska Droga (‘The Peasants’ Way’). In contrast to the former two, Artur Starewicz (1917–2014), a close propaganda advisor to Władysław Gomułka, was a supporter of liberalization. Alongside Mieczysław F. Rakowski, he was one of the opponents of national communism.


13 Stola, Kampania antysyjonistyczna, p. 19.

14 Lesiakowski, Moczar, pp. 277f.
ruling party’s ‘Partisan faction’.

The phenomenon of the Partisans was a hot topic of debate among political observers during communist times. Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, the chief of Polish broadcasting at Radio Free Europe, described it as a mafia with ‘all of the sociological traits of the American gang’; and the aforementioned Mieczysław Rakowski wrote of a ‘red-black’ formation, meaning fascist tendencies in a communist party. Historians tend to consider the Partisans as the ideological heirs of the so-called ‘Natolin Group’, the representatives of a faction within the PZPR that vocally opposed the liberalization of the political system in 1956, and a group that was characterized above all by its anti-Semitic practices.

Sociologists have suggested that the Partisans’ supporters were often ‘frustrated civil servants’ who had little or no prospect of advancing up the social hierarchy. The Partisans attacked their opponents and thereby opened up career opportunities for individuals in their thirties and forties. The influence of the Partisans rose in parallel with, and in response to, the growing use of patriotic symbols by the party and governmental elite, and simultaneously contributed to the emergence of an informal and clientelistic structure of power.

The very term ‘Partisans’ was invented by Ernest Halperin, a correspondent for *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, and popularized firstly by Arthur Olsen of *The New York Times* and later by Radio Free Europe, which in the years 1962–71 broadcast a series of programmes dedicated to the ‘unveiling’ (*dekonspiracja*) of the faction, as Jan Nowak-Jeziorański put it in his memoirs. According to the popular narrative, the key event that pointed to the existence of a closely knit ‘group’ was the publication of a collection of interviews under the title *Ludzie, fakty, refleksje* (‘People, Facts, Reflection’), containing the memoirs of commanders of the People’s Army. The book, whose publication was initiated by Walery Namiotkiewicz, Gomułka’s secretary, was printed by the Ministry of Defence on the eve of the public celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the PPR (1961).

Importantly, the book did not feature the recollections of

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15 In order to retain clarity, the political grouping of the 1960s will be referred to as the ‘Partisans’, with a capital ‘P’. In contrast, the non-capitalized word ‘partisans’ refers to resistance fighters in general. [Translator’s note.]


17 Persak, p. 61.


20 Mieczysław Moczar, Grzegorz Korczyński, Hilary Chelchowski, Marian Janic, Franciszek Szlachciec, Mieczysław Róg-Świostek, Tadeusz Pietrzk, Zygmunt Duszyński, Józef Sęk-
key individuals from the wartime party leadership, but it did contain interviews with figures in important positions in the state power structures at the time of publication, and people who were known to be close to Mieczysław Moczar.21

The publication of *Ludzie, fakty, refleksje* was followed by the appearance of Mieczysław Moczar’s novel *Barwy walki* (‘The Colours of Battle’, 1962), a book which combines literary cliché with a cult of the communist partisan movement. Whilst it is not clear who the actual author was,22 this fictional account effectively fused political didacticism with literary devices, for example in its presentation of the model heroism of the patriotic ‘forest brothers’. This genuinely popular book was also aggressively promoted by propaganda. By 1970 it had gone through eleven print runs, been translated into seven foreign languages and adapted for the cinema screen, and Moczar had collected several prizes.23

Opinions are divided on whether the Partisans existed as an autonomous and readily definable faction, or whether they were invented by commentators at the time in an attempt to succinctly capture a nebulous social phenomenon. However, no matter who identified with the group and whether or not they could boast a wartime past in the resistance movement, the Partisans did function as a group in the political language of the era. Mieczysław F. Rakowski made observations in his diary about people who had come to him and encouraged him to ‘join the Partisans’, or about a general who found himself ‘out of favour’ with the Partisans.24 Correspondingly, the phenomenon of Partisan culture was also a social fact that characterized the 1960s, and an important one for understanding the functioning of ZBoWiD at this time.

‘Only ZBoWiD can speak in the name of the Home Army tradition’

‘I don’t know where Colonel Mieczysław Niedzielski25... is, or what he is doing. But from this rostrum, former Colonel ‘Zenon’, member of the People’s Army command staff in [the Warsaw district of] Żoliborz, sends his soldierly
greetings.’ This rhetorical gesture by Zenon Kliszko, secretary of the PZPR Central Committee and a close collaborator of Władysław Gomułka, addressed to an émigré who had led the Home Army in Żoliborz during the Warsaw Uprising (1944), was an important sign of the regime’s opening up to former soldiers of the Home Army. Kliszko’s speech was delivered shortly after the Fourth Congress of the party on 31 July 1964, during the twentieth-anniversary commemorations of the Warsaw Uprising, co-organized by ZBoWiD. Fragments of the address were published in *Za Wolność i Lud* under the suggestive title ‘Nothing Divides us any Longer’ (*Nas już nic nie dzieli*).27

It is almost universally accepted that it was Mieczysław Moczar who opened the Union to non-communist armed organizations, thereby establishing the veterans’ organization as an important social platform for his political activity.28 (Zenon Kliszko was speaking a month before Moczar was elected to the position of ZBoWiD chairman.) As shown in the previous chapter, however, the Union had been accepting former Home Army members under the chairmanship of Janusz Zarzycki. It seems that the key point of disagreement between Zarzycki and the Partisan faction was not the issue of whether or not to admit former Home Army soldiers into ZBoWiD, but the degree to which ideological concessions should be made to the martyrdom of the AK. At the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, the Home Army’s martyr myths were still considered to be a form of nationalist deviation inimical to the pacifist line of Marxism. However, the Partisans were prepared to accept many of the associated ideas and to put them to use.

One of the important innovations that Moczar made as the chairman of ZBoWiD was that the organization began to make overtures to émigré communities in the West. The ZBoWiD leadership founded commissions for cooperation with Poles abroad, with the aim of setting up joint activities for the building of memorials, exchanges of historical documents, and verification of ranks and military honours.29 These gestures had an important propaganda dimension: they polemicized with negative opinions about ZBoWiD and the Gomułka regime more generally that

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26 Zenon Kliszko (1908–1898) participated in the Warsaw Uprising, which had been often underlined by communist propaganda of this period.


were disseminated by the Polish branch of Radio Free Europe and other émigré media outlets. Both sides of the conflict – diasporic and Poland-based circles – considered themselves to be the exclusive representatives of the interests of the Home Army. One speaker at a session of the ZBoWiD Supreme Council in 1966, a former commander of the Home Army’s sabotage division in Kielce region, emphasized that the image of the Home Army soldiers as described by Radio Free Europe – that of a soldier who is ‘discriminated against, impoverished and terrified’ – did not fit the reality of the 1960s:

[This image] does not correspond to the former AK soldier who is now a university dean, or a valued doctor, engineer, mechanic, excellent civil servant or manual worker, or the owner of a private workshop. It doesn’t correspond to the former AK soldier who is now an active member of ZBoWiD and a patriot. Radio Free Europe tries to oppose the traditions of the Home Army to People’s Poland. But in this country we have a right to the legacy of the Home Army. We are the overwhelming majority. Only ZBoWiD, this Union of veterans and no-one else, can speak in the name of the Home Army tradition.30

The twentieth anniversary of the end of the war provided an important pretext for ZBoWiD to conduct activities that were intended to prove that veterans living abroad supported socialist Poland. Despite efforts, however, these initiatives were largely unsuccessful: of 33 invitations sent abroad, only a handful were accepted.31 Contacts with veterans’ groups in the diaspora did allow for the organization to expand the imagined, i.e. purely propagandistic, geographical limits of the veterans’ movement. In 1965, a ZBoWiD delegation carried out talks with Polish veterans in the United Kingdom.32 A year later, ZBoWiD’s publishing house issued a photograph of Zygmunt Berling (the former commander of the Polish Armed Forces in the East) and Marian Sołtysiak (a former Home Army partisan) laying memorial wreaths at the grave of General Władysław Sikorski at the Polish air force cemetery in Newark-upon-Trent, UK.33 The Union announced the unveiling in Warsaw of a memorial plaque at the symbolic grave for Polish soldiers of the Independent Parachute Brigade, which had been created in Scotland in 1941 in order to drop into occupied Poland.34 According to the official report, this event

31 ‘Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Głównego ZBoWiD w 1966 roku’, AZGZKRPiBWP 3, 29, p. 43.
32 Their major organization was the Polish Ex-Combatants’ Association in Great Britain. See e.g. Rafał Habielski, Życie społeczne i kulturalne emigracji, Warszawa 1999.
33 O działalności i aktualnych zadaniach ZBoWiD. Posiedzenie Rady Naczelnej ZBoWiD, Warszawa 1966, p. 46.
34 However, contrary to the hopes of the soldiers, the unit was used by the British Army in the West, at the Battle of Arnhem (1944), where it suffered severe casualties.
was attended by around 200 ‘parachutists and elite paratroopers [Cichociemni] from Poland and abroad.’\textsuperscript{35} Union officials also boasted of the arrival in Poland, albeit for a short visit, of Colonel Jan Falkowski, a commanding officer of RAF no. 303 Polish Fighter Squadron, which participated in the Battle of Britain.\textsuperscript{36}

Another point of disagreement between the two ZBoWiD chairmen was, in the terminology of the day, the ‘mass-ness [masowość]’ of the organization. Towards the end of the 1950s, Janusz Zarzycki explicitly objected to what he saw as the excessive numerical expansion of the ZBoWiD rank and file. He argued repeatedly that the opening up of the Union would lead to an influx of false veterans. Under Moczar, on the other hand, constant expansion was a stated priority of the Main Directorate, discussed at many meetings of the central leadership and passed on with clear instructions to local branches. In his speeches, Mieczysław Moczar pointed to the examples of France and Yugoslavia, emphasizing that Poland should aim to catch up with these countries in terms of the number of registered veterans.\textsuperscript{37} As a result, former members of the civilian resistance movement were invited to join ZBoWiD. A few months after the Third Congress, Henryk Matysiak stated during a plenary session of the Warsaw regional directorate: ‘We are thinking of the hundreds of mothers, of people who organized liaison points, of doctors and other people who cannot prove their eligibility via membership in a concrete veterans’ group.’\textsuperscript{38}

The number of people joining ZBoWiD grew steadily from the moment Moczar took up the role of Union chairman (see Table 5.1). The ‘massification’ (umasowanie) of the organization also affected the number of local branches and groups. The local chapters, which had effectively become bureaucratic fictions in the Stalinist era, gained a newfound significance in the 1960s, as they were the basic contact points for people trying to gain material assistance through ZBoWiD. Meanwhile, for the organization’s leadership, the local structures were an instrument for control, thanks to measures taken through the decade to improve the efficiency of the bureaucratic-administrative apparatus. Local branches (oddziały), formed at the county or city district level, had stabilized during Zarzycki’s chairmanship. Under Mieczysław Moczar, however, the group (koło) was promoted as the basic organizational unit; by 1967, ZBoWiD had over 3,000 groups of this kind.

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} ‘Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Głównego ZBoWiD w okresie od III Kongresu Związku do 31 grudnia 1965’, ibid., 3, 29, p. 191.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Mieczysław Moczar, ‘Jedność działania’ in O działalności i aktualnych zadaniach ZBoWiD. Posiedzenie Rady Naczelnjej ZBoWiD, Warszawa 1966, p. 14, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{38} ‘Stenogram z plenarnego posiedzenia zarządu okręgu warszawskiego ZBoWiD’, 28 March 1965, AAN, ZG ZBoWiD, 1, 387, p. 288.
\end{itemize}

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Table 5.1 Number of organization units and the total membership of ZBoWiD, 1959–69

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Branches (Oddziały)</th>
<th>Groups (Kola)</th>
<th>Members (thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>ca50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>1344</td>
<td>ca150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>1424</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>1628</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>2070</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>2219</td>
<td>170.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>2437</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>2773</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>3144</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is not clear, however, who exactly joined ZBoWiD. With the emphasis being placed on the unity of the ‘family of veterans’ rather than any natural divisions, membership statistics differentiated by memory group (partisans, prisoners, etc.) were compiled irregularly. Nonetheless, according to classified information held by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in 1965 ZBoWiD had more than 60,000 former Home Army partisans among its ranks.39 Records kept about local directorates are another source of information, as they provide an indication of the wartime past of their members. These are not representative for ZBoWiD as a whole, but they do supply a reliable reflection of the preferences of the Union leadership: whom they wanted to see (or tolerated) in positions of responsibility as the representatives of local-level veterans’ groups. A comparison of the compositions of county directorates in 1961/62 and 1968 shows that at both times, former soldiers (veterans of the 1939 defence war, the Polish Armed Forces in the West, and the pro-communist Polish Armed Forces in the East) were the most numerous group among local officials, followed by members of the resistance movement, with former prisoners in third place (see Table 5.2). The relatively high number of regular soldiers in county directorates suggests that the idea of Moczar’s ZBoWiD being dominated by partisans requires re-examination. It is also conceivable that active soldiers were delegated to ZBoWiD in order to help monitor and control the organization.

Table 5.2 Composition of county directorates (1961/62 and 1968)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of directorate</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1961/62</th>
<th>1968</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of members of county directorates</td>
<td>5674</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8947</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New individuals</td>
<td>2523</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3145</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioners</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional army officers</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans of the Revolutionary Struggles 1905</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>&gt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silesia and Wielkopolska Uprisings</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish activists in pre-war Germany</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>&gt;1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>&gt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dąbrowski battalion and brigade</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>&gt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners of Sanacja regime</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldiers of the 1939 Polish-German war</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3196</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Armed Forces in the East and West</td>
<td>1417</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance movement</td>
<td>1607</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2906</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration camp prisoners</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1148</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist power apparatus of late 1940s</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Declared by newly elected officials of county directorates are another useful source of information. For the years 1961/62 and 1965/66, these declarations contained information that was deliberately omitted from official data compilations, significantly including personal histories of individuals who belonged to underground organizations during the war. As this form of data requires a great deal of time-consuming processing work, Table 5.3 compiles information for two administrative regions only: Warsaw and Lublin voivodeships. It includes the chairmen, deputy chairmen, secretaries and treasurers of county directorates and the chairmen, deputy chairmen and secretaries of revision commissions. Wherever the individual has given two or more ‘titles’ of membership (e.g. participation in both the Home Army and the Second Army of the Polish Armed Forces), all entries are counted. Of course, it cannot be assumed that all declarations were fully truthful; however they do provide a good indication of the images that Union officials wanted to portray of themselves, as well as the limits of freedom of expression in matters concerning individual pasts.
Two important findings result from this data. Firstly, that a significant proportion of individuals openly admitted to previous membership in the Home Army: in the years 1961/62, Home Army partisans made up 25 percent of the county directorates in Lublin voivodeship and 36 percent in Warsaw voivodeship; for 1965/66, these figures are 23 percent and 26 percent respectively. Secondly, that the number of Home Army soldiers in county directorates was proportionally lower in 1965/66 than in 1961/62; in other words, the Home Army had a greater representation in the local power structures of ZBoWiD under Janusz Zarzycki than under Mieczysław Moczar. This fact, once again, casts doubt on the idea promoted by Moczar’s associates that ZBoWiD became an organization open to non-communist veterans under the new chairman’s watch.

Table 5.3 Composition of county directorates according to group, Lublin and Warsaw voivodeships (1961/62 and 1965/66)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Resistance movement – combined]</td>
<td>[108]</td>
<td>[63]</td>
<td>[106]</td>
<td>[63]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Army</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Army</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasants’ Battalions</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance movement – other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Regular soldiers– combined]</td>
<td>[27]</td>
<td>[16]</td>
<td>[30]</td>
<td>[18]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Armed Forces in the East</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Armed Forces in the West</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939 Polish-German war</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and No data</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>172</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>167</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* The relatively low number of people admitting to wartime participation in armed resistance in 1965/66 in Warsaw voivodeship is most likely connected to the large number of declarations in which no data is available.
So, did Mieczysław Moczar make ZBoWiD more accessible to people with a Home Army past? This question has no straight answer. Former Home Army partisans had joined the Union in previous years, and their representation in local directorates may have been higher during the chairmanship of Zarzycki. Nevertheless, Moczar presided over the formation of a more permissive climate in which a variety of armed formations gained wider acceptance, a fact that resonated with the rhetoric of national unity propounded by the Partisan faction.

**Partisan culture**

A popular anecdote of the 1960s: a personal notice in a Warsaw newspaper reads, ‘Will exchange participation in victory at Lenino for two weeks of partisan activity in Lublin region.’ As the myth of the resistance movement rose to prominence, the roles of the Polish Armed Forces in the East and the Red Army in the liberation of Poland were devalued. Furthermore, wartime narratives emphasized the commonality of the fates of all Poles with increasing regularity. The party’s ideological emphasis on the Polish nation and the ubiquitous popular interest in the Second World War contributed to a highly conducive atmosphere for the proliferation of military myths. From the middle of the 1960s, representations of the war that foregrounded the themes of military bravado and bold adventure,

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41 The war was one of the most important themes for Polish literature in the late 1950s and 1960s: some of the most popular books published in this period include works by Andrzej Brycht, Roman Bratny, Melchior Wańkowicz and Wojciech Żukowski. In 1957, the publishing house of the Ministry of National Defence founded the popular *Żółty tygrys* ('Yellow Tiger') book series, a large collection of narratives about the Second World War, often written in the simple style of an adventure story. A number of significant, and stylistically diverse, films were also produced and had a profound effect on the popular imagination of the war, such as: the existential dramas of Andrzej Wajda, including *Kanal* (1957), *Popiół i diament* ('Ashes and Diamonds', 1958) and *Lotna* (1959); Andrzej Munk’s *Eroica* (1957); Sylwester Chęciński’s *Agnieszka* ’46 (1964); comedies by Stanisław Lenartowicz, such as *Giuseppe w Warszawie* ('Giuseppe in Warsaw', 1964), and by Tadeusz Chmielewski, such as *Jak rozpętalem drugą wojnę światową* ('How I Unleashed the Second World War', 1969); and the celebrated television series *Stawka większa niż życie* ('More than Life at Stake', 1967–68), directed by Jerzy Morgenstern, and *Czterej pancerni i pies* ('Four Tankmen and a Dog', 1966–70), by Konrad Nałęcki and Stanisław Czekalski. Also of note is the fact that the cinematic adaptation of Henryk Sienkiewicz’s novel *Krzyżacy* ('Knights of the Teutonic Order', 1960), directed by Aleksander Ford, was released on 1 September 1960, the anniversary of the German invasion of Poland. The story narrates the defeat of the Teutonic Order by Polish-Lithuanian forces at the Battle of Grunwald (1410).
rather than individual suffering and trauma, were met with growing approbation by politicians. The conventions of this genre were most fully expounded by the novelist and screenwriter Zbigniew Załuski, a frequent guest at ZBoWiD meetings, in his famous book *Siedem polskich grzechów głównych* (‘The Polish Seven Deadly Sins’), which was first published in 1963 and which the author conceived as a defence of Polish history against the ‘falsifiers’ who were tarnishing the legacy of the war. Załuski rejected ‘cheap and tearful humanitarianism’ and ‘pacifism and superficial anti-militarism’, arguing that they usually accompany ‘philistine pusillanimity and egoism’. On the one hand, he cited the classics of Marxism-Leninism; on the other, he rejected the entire pacifist tradition of Marxism and its critique of war as an instrument of imperialism.

Amidst this cultural atmosphere, ZBoWiD sought to collaborate with writers and filmmakers. Union officials emphasized the importance of influencing public opinion by means of new technologies, especially television. A report from the mid-1960s gleefully highlights the fact that ‘a group of intellectuals and creative individuals for whom ZBoWiD’s activity is significant, interesting and always topical has emerged and is continually growing.’ At the same time, the report criticizes work that fails to conform to the hero myth.

In 1964, Wilhelm Mach was awarded a state prize for his novella *Agnieszka, córka Kolumba* (‘Agnieszka, Daughter of Columbus’), which describes the difficulties faced by soldiers in trying to return to civilian life. The story was immediately adapted for the cinema by Sylwester Chęciński. Whereas the film does contribute to the myth of the Polishness of the formerly German western territories, it was nonetheless criticized heavily by partisan circles. In 1966 at a session of the ZBoWiD Supreme Council, Załuski condemned both *Agnieszka* ’46 and *Pierwszy dzień wolności* (‘First Day of Freedom’, 1964) by Aleksander Ford for failing to feature heroic plot lines. Tadeusz Holuj disagreed with Załuski, defending the deceased Mach and other existentialist authors: ‘we cannot accept such a principle whereby literature or film cannot depict, say, a soldier raping a girl, or a soldier drinking vodka’; but his position was isolated.

Debates about culture were conditioned by an important social fact: a generation of people who had not experienced the war was entering adulthood. In previous years, the verisimilitude of any given representation of the war was not

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46 Ibid., p. 122.
a crucial issue for people who had actually lived through the war, as they could evaluate narratives in relation to their own experiences and memories. Young people, meanwhile, were not necessarily well-versed in the language of state propaganda concerning the war, and often were not particularly interested in the theme. Veterans understood this well, and they began a battle for the hearts and minds of the younger generation. It was argued that influencing the Polish youth is equally as important as counteracting West German propaganda.\textsuperscript{47} School visits by veterans and former political prisoners became increasingly more frequent, and ZBoWiD introduced initiatives for the transmittance of memory models: youth camps, scouts’ expeditions, group excursions, and outings on foot and by bicycle that retraced the histories of partisan detachments and regular army units.\textsuperscript{48} Youth education in war memory changed in line with political transformations, and its evolution reflected a gradual trend towards a strictly national focus.

The Partisans explained the need to engage artists and writers in commemorative activities, and also to suppress works about the war that were more contemplative or satirical, precisely in terms of protecting the younger generation. Załuski said in 1966 at a session of the Supreme Council: ‘It seems to me that there is an obstruction, a wedge … between the youth and us, our achievements. The attitudes of the creative circles in Poland are that obstruction.’\textsuperscript{49} The political conservatism of Partisan culture reached its apogee in the late 1960s. An article in \textit{Za Wolność i Lud} entitled ‘We will not endorse that’ (\textit{Tego rachunku nie podpiszemy}), by Jan Srebrzyński, acted as the guiding text for ZBoWiD. The author described the symptoms of ‘national nihilism’, and criticized the devaluation of positive heroes in literature and cinema. He echoed previous denunciations of the films \textit{Polipopł i diament}, \textit{Eroica}, \textit{Kanal},\textsuperscript{50} and even the comedy \textit{Zezowate szczęście} (‘Cross-eyed Luck’, dir. Andrzej Munk, 1960), arguing that ‘the description of real life, the universal truths of raw historical fact are replaced in these films by arbitrary constructions, manipulative tricks, subjective sufferings and marginal events.’ The harshest words were reserved for the documentary \textit{Byłem kapo} (‘I was a Kapo’, dir. Tadeusz Jaworski, 1963), the tragicomedy \textit{Don Gabriel} (dir. Ewa and Czesław Petelski, 1966) and the dramas \textit{Agnieszka ’46} and \textit{Długa noc} (‘The Long Night’, dir. Janusz Nasfeter, 1967). Srebrzyński wrote of \textit{Długa noc}: ‘There is not a single German, no shots are fired, and no-one dies ... There is one Pole who offers a helping hand to a Jew. Polish society, driven by the most repugnant

\textsuperscript{47} ‘Stenogram z posiedzenia Rady Naczelnej ZBoWiD’, 16 September 1963, AZGZKZRiBWP 3, 19, p. 107b.
\textsuperscript{48} See e.g.: \textit{Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Współpracy z Młodzieżą ZBoWiD} 1967, no 1, 2.
\textsuperscript{49} ‘Stenogram z posiedzenia Rady Naczelnej ZBoWiD’, 15 February 1966, AZGZKRPiBWP 3, 22, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{50} See footnote 41 of this Chapter.
concerns, helps the Germans carry out genocide; and a sentimental girl is torn by a moral conflict in her helpless despair.\textsuperscript{51} The author protested against these films in the name of public opinion, arguing that the creators were deliberately attacking patriotic feeling; he demanded that the artists’ obstinacy be punished.

Similar statements were made at ZBoWiD meetings. An official ZBoWiD declaration published in May 1968 stated that a ‘harmful phenomenon’ had existed for years, whereby literature, film and theatrical drama had ‘smuggled’ ideas that were ‘foreign to the spirit of the Polish people, anti-Polish and anti-socialist.’ According to the declaration, this state of affairs had resulted from the presence in cultural institutions of people who were ‘hostile to socialism and to People’s Poland.’ Benefiting from their privileged status, they ‘produced works whose contents were insulting to the Polish people, sometimes with a camouflaged message, but frequently overtly.’ These people had treated ‘the exhortations of ZBoWiD to reinstate patriotism and a sense of duty to the country as a ‘sign of provincial obsession with Polishness.’\textsuperscript{52} This leads to another pattern of the late 1960s: anti-Semitism as a significant feature of public discourse.

\section*{Rival Martyrologies}

\subsection*{Wartime martyrdom}

The 1960s were a time not only for the transformation of hero myths; the period also brought changes to the idea of national victimhood. This trend was the result of increasingly complicated international relations between Poland, West Germany and Israel, and the conflict of the PZPR with the Catholic Church. In 1967, after the Six-Day War in the Middle East, the USSR and other countries of the communist bloc who backed Arab countries (with the exception of Romania), severed diplomatic relations with Israel and opened another chapter of Cold War. In Poland of 1967–1968, the anti-Israeli (and anti-USA) propaganda was intertwined with the anti-Semitic attitudes within the party that resulted in the forced emigration of the remnants of Polish Jews.\textsuperscript{53} Additionally, some motifs of this propaganda had also to do with the Polish-German relations, and these in turn were affected by earlier events, started by a letter sent by the Polish bishops to their German counterparts (1965), in which they expressed forgiveness for

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item O zadaniach Związku Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację w okresie poprzedzającym IV Krajowy Kongres, Warszawa, May 1968, p. 13, 14.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the crimes committed by Germans during the Second World War and asked for forgiveness for the acts of revenge carried out by Poles after the war. Until that very moment, the expulsion of Germans from Poland in the late 1940s had been a taboo topic in public discourse. This letter, as well as the independent initiative shown by the Catholic Church in Poland, provoked anger among the highest party leadership, who were not prepared to dampen their anti-German rhetoric in view of the FRG’s continued refusal to recognize the Oder-Neisse border. The party and other organizations, including ZBoWiD, argued that the Poles have nothing for which to ask forgiveness of the Germans, and moreover, are not about to pardon the extermination of their own people. The dominant message in the politics of memory at this time therefore consisted in the myth of innocent victimhood: innocent because Poles could not possibly have committed crimes comparable to those of the Germans; they had fought and died exclusively in defence of a just cause and moral values. The conflict was heightened in 1966 during the millennial celebrations of Polish statehood, when the Catholic Church was commemorating the baptism of the country in 966. This was the time when both sides of conflict used the myth of Polish martyrdom, and some of its motifs reappeared in the following years.

From the point of view of national martyrdom, former German concentration camps were the most important sites of memory, as they had been in the early 1950s. By this time, however, museum infrastructure had improved, an increasing number of sites were adorned with monuments and museums, and the camps were no longer mere symbols that figured in accounts of the war but physical tourist destinations attracting large numbers of visitors. The wartime suffering of civilians gained an ever increasing significance. A cult of sites of execution developed. The martyrdom of the village, towns and cities and even entire regions was emphasized, such as Zamość region in Eastern Poland, from which the Polish population was deported to make way for German settlers. In addition to commemorating the resistance movement, ZBoWiD organized innumerable exhibitions, seminars and other events that bore characteristic titles: ‘The Crimes of Hitlerism in Poland’, ‘Never Again’, ‘Women and Children of Auschwitz’, ‘Crimes and Atrocities of the Hitlerites in Gdańsk Pomerania’, ‘Polish Women in Ravensbrück’, ‘The Lands of Białystok Accuse’, ‘Kielce Region Accuses’, ‘We Accuse – Hitlerite Crimes in Pomerania’, ‘On Hitlerite Crimes’, ‘The Children of Zamość Region Accuse’, etc.

55 See e.g. Bartłomiej Noszczak, Sacrum czy profanum? Spór o istotę obchodów Milenium polskiego, Warszawa 2002.
5.2 Typical propaganda motif spread by ZBoWiD during the millennial celebration of the Polish statehood: the caption runs: ‘6,028,000 murdered Poles. Murderers shall not be forgiven.’ The number is somewhat overestimated and the formulation does not indicate that it contains also Jewish victims. The vengeful caption epitomizes the reaction of the party to the pastoral letter of Polish bishops to German bishops (November 1965), where they used the phrase: ‘We forgive and ask for forgiveness.’ National Library of Poland.
The introduction to a book entitled *Przewodnik po upamiętnionych miejscach walk i męczeństwa lat wojny 1939–1945* (‘A Guide to Commemorated Sites of Battle and Martyrdom of the War Years, 1939–1945’) supplies a model of the kind of narrative that was reproduced in local variants throughout the country:

During the Second World War, it was Poland which, of all of the states involved in the fighting, suffered the greatest number of losses in relation to the number of residents. Six million victims – men, women and children – were tortured and murdered by Hitlerism, gassed in the chambers and burned in crematoria at Auschwitz, Birkenau, Majdanek, Treblinka, Sobibór, Belżec, Chelmno, the Seventh Fort in Poznań, Rogoźnica (Gross Rosen), Dzialdowo, Sztutowo (Stutthof) and dozens of other death camps, shot at sites of mass extermination in the streets of cities and towns. This is the price paid by the nation for its love of the country and of freedom. This is the monstrous record of brutal crimes.56

This quote shows that the wartime fate of Polish Jews was inscribed into the martyrdom narrative of the Polish nation as a whole. An individual reading this excerpt would receive no indication that, of the six million Polish victims, over three million died in circumstances that vastly differed from the rest. Before Janusz Zarzycki vacated his post as chairman of ZBoWiD in the mid-1960s, the lack of emphasis on the Jewish Holocaust can be explained by the reluctance on the part of some communists to employ ethnicity as a category in public discourse. This unwillingness was the result of a number of factors, including an anxiety about racist views and anti-Semitism becoming widespread, as well as the dominance within ZBoWiD in the years 1956–64 of the idea of the unity of all types of victims and heroes. Efforts were therefore made to show the ghettos (the Warsaw Ghetto in particular) as just one category of site where the people fought and suffered. It was rarely admitted that Jews, unlike non-Jewish Poles, faced certain and immediate death in the camps, and mention was hardly ever made of the relations between Poles and Jews – the only references tended to be in relation to crimes against Jews carried out by anti-communist formations such as the NSZ, which were considered marginal. Thus, statements that could bring into question of the innocence of Polish victims or the supposed unity of Polish society under occupation were avoided.

The special commemorations on the twentieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1963 provided a test case for this unity of memory. The event was marked by a conference in the Palace of Culture and Science, rallies by the monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto, commemorative ceremonies at Treblinka and Auschwitz, publications and theatrical productions. Around 600 delegates

from thirty countries participated. Janusz Zarzycki warned against attempts to ‘turn the struggle of the Warsaw Ghetto in the wrong direction, to separate … the struggle of the Polish people from the Ghetto Uprising, for after all, this was just one fragment of the struggle of the Polish people.’

However, in the latter half of 1960s and especially in the years 1967–68, the accent of this narrative changed. Ethnicity became an explicit criterion and, ironically at the height of the anti-Semitic campaign, the wartime martyrdom of the Jews increasingly became a theme for discussion. The logic of the argument of this time can be summarized in three steps: (1) the Poles were the greatest victims of the war, (2) the Jews also suffered, but the Poles rescued them heroically, (3) now the Jews are accusing the Poles of wartime atrocities committed against them, thereby showing their ingratitude for Polish assistance, because they are in league with West Germany, Poland’s greatest enemy.

**Anti-Semitism**

The political mechanism of the propaganda of the second half of the 1960s has been analysed by a number of scholars. Few would now dispute that the anti-Zionist slogans that entered public usage after the outbreak of the Six-Day War in the

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Middle East contained a thinly veiled anti-Semitism. According to Dariusz Stola, the strength of the propaganda of March 1968 was in its appeal for citizens to violate the party dictatorship: participants of the numerous meetings and rallies organized by the party and other state institutions were encouraged to voice their ‘honest, open and critical statements.’ They were permitted to express their displeasure and demand change, on condition that their complaints were expressed in terms that condemned the enemies of the system. Stola writes: ‘After years of timid silence, Poles were allowed to criticize the corruption and arrogance of the bureaucrats. Not all of them, of course, only the Jewish ones; but nonetheless, they could finally publically discuss bribery, clientelism and nepotism in the state apparatus.’\textsuperscript{60} Sociologists and historians have argued that a striving for the legitimization of the regime was the main motive behind the deployment of nationalist slogans. Nonetheless, the question still often repeated is: was the anti-Semitism of 1967–68 an artificial phenomenon that imposed a political language onto society with the aim to relate to the Israeli-Arab war, as well as to divert citizens’ attention from reformist movements in the countries of the bloc, such as events in Prague\textsuperscript{61} or protests of Polish students in 1968\textsuperscript{62}; or was an opposite mechanism at work, whereby the rhetoric of the authorities responded to public demands?

Different evaluations were offered at the time. Many foreign observers believed Polish anti-Semitism to be a socio-cultural fact.\textsuperscript{63} However, the thesis of universal anti-Semitism among Poles was questioned by many Polish voices, including Polish Jews such as the now world-famous sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, who then, as an émigré from Poland, ascribed the anti-Semitic campaign to mid-level party activists.\textsuperscript{64} Others noted the mobilizing potential of anti-Semitism. Another émigré intellectual, Konstanty A. Jeleński, called its relapse ‘one of the most painful issues in our history’. He wrote in 1968:

> It shocks me to see a photograph on the front page of Życie Literackie [‘Literary Life’, a newspaper] a photograph of a crowd of over 100,000 people rallying on Market Square in Kraków on 25 March, bearing hundreds of banners which all begin with the obsessive word ‘Zionists’... So the party can mobilize 100,000 Poles under the slogan of anti-Semitism.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{60} Stola, Antyżydowski nurt, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{61} See for instance, Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner and Peter Ruggenthaler (eds), The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Plymouth 2010.
\textsuperscript{62} See for instance, Tom Junes, Student Politics in Communist Poland: Generations of Consent and Dissent, Lanham 2015, pp. 63–122.
\textsuperscript{63} E.g. Paul Lendvai, Anti-Semitism without Jews: Communist Eastern Europe, Garden City, NY 1971.
The opening of the communist archives after 1989 has revealed that anti-Semitism was by no means marginal. Nationalistic brochures and flyers were distributed throughout Poland, and whilst these were mostly prepared by the Security Service, they did have their share of readers. Anti-Semitic statements were openly made in shops, public stairwells, factories, and in readers’ letters to newspapers. ZBoWiD in the years 1967–68 was one of the most important institutions propagating anti-Semitic comments. *Za Wolność i Lud* repeated ideas voiced in party newspapers such as *Trybuna Ludu* and *Żołnierz Wolności*, clamouring about the threat posed by Zionism. It is not clear from official records how many Jewish members of the Union were expelled from the organization, but fragmentary evidence shows that unrest among the grassroots was rife.

For instance, in April 1968 the Lublin-based newspaper *Kurier Lubelski* announced that the city directorate of ZBoWiD had removed five Jewish communists from its ranks: Grzegorz Wajskop, Marek Kuperman, Adam Drewień, Mojżesz Wajsbrot and Henryk Dorfman. In July of the same year, 62-year-old Marek Kuperman, a communist for the past forty years, who was physically disabled and had four school-age children, wrote a letter to Mieczysław Moczar. He asked for intervention, describing the events that had preceded his expulsion from the Union: in late June 1967, he had been expelled from the PZPR on the grounds that he had allegedly taken up an incorrect position in relation to the aggression of Israel against the Arab countries; he lost his party pension and then his job at the state press enterprise ‘Ruch’, having already been demoted to a lower position at an earlier juncture. He was refused treatment at the hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Lublin. He was afraid to pick up the telephone: ‘every day I received calls from the same troublemakers, telling me to leave the country, that I will be arrested if I don’t leave, that it could cost me my life.’

Marek Kuperman blamed several individuals for his removal from the party, his place of work, and ZBoWiD – a number of named activists from the Lublin branch of the Union, whom he considered to be alcoholics, the director of the Lublin branch of ‘Ruch’, and a group of unnamed ‘comrades from the Provincial Committee’. He wrote:

> On the critical day of 6 June [1967], I went into ZBoWiD, where I met F. [and] S., who were holding a discussion with comrade Wajskop. When I opened the door, S. pulled me in and said ‘here’s another one.’ I left straight away. And just a day after the speech

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69 Ibid.
of comrade Gomułka at the Trade Unions [Congress], on 20 June, F. and S. were telling people to denounce Jews. Then the City Commission for Party Control takes a decision without consultation to exclude me from the party.

The director of ‘Ruch’ was said to have justified the dismissal of Kuperman at a meeting of the collective using the following words: ‘Kuperman should not be allowed to move freely within the city of Lublin, to visit public institutions, so as not to spread the Zionist ideology.’

At this time, anti-Semitic statements were being made throughout the country at meetings of ZBoWiD’s local-level directorates. One individual to make his views known was an official of the Warsaw regional directorate, who in March 1968 argued that there were two categories of citizens – and that ‘citizens of Jewish extraction’ belonged to the ‘privileged class, who are in positions of power and receive very high salaries.’ He therefore proposed that ‘the party apparatus should be cleansed of them above all.’ A representative of ZBoWiD in Jadów, in Wołomin county, demanded that ‘Jewish citizens, Zionists’ should be expelled from the Union, the party, the government and armed forces, because ‘Poland should be governed by Poles.’

The innocent Poles and the ungrateful Jews

The so-called Encyclopaedists’ Affair was an important anti-Semitic event involving ZBoWiD. It was here that the competition between Polish and Jewish ethnic victimhood became a prominent feature of official memory practice. In July 1967, after the outbreak of the Six-Day War, the Ministry of Internal Affairs under Moczar’s rule sent ‘information concerning errors in the Great Universal Encyclopaedia [Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna]’, recently published by the most prestigious academic publisher Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe (PWN),

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70 In his speech given at the Trade Unions Congress on 19 June 1967 Władysław Gomułka suggested that Jews were a Zionist ‘fifth column’ in Poland who supported Israel against Arab countries. This speech is often considered by Polish historians as the official beginning of anti-Semitic campaign.

71 Ibid., p. 293.

72 Ibid., p. 288.

73 ‘Protokół z plenarnego posiedzenia Zarządu Okręgu Warszawskiego ZBoWiD’, 14 March 1968; AAN, ZBoWiD ZG, 1, 390, p. 47.

74 ‘Protokół z plenarnego posiedzenia Zarządu Okręgu Warszawskiego ZBoWiD’, 16 September 1968, ibid., p. 144.

to the PZPR Central Committee and the Ministry of Justice. A similar letter was sent by Czesław Pilichowski of the Main Commission for Research into Hitlerite Crimes in Poland. Both letters accused the editors of the encyclopaedia of not providing enough information about murdered Poles (and Slavs in general), and thereby suggesting that Jews and Roma were the main victims of German crimes.

A Ministry of Internal Affairs document suggested that historical research had essentially become an act of political subversion by Jewish academics:

Since 1965, research into the crimes of the Hitler regime in Poland has relied on criteria that have yielded the result that Hitlerite crimes against the Polish people have not been researched with the appropriate care. The Jewish Historical Institute has played a role in this neglect. A principle has been unjustifiably applied whereby only mass crimes are researched, numbering 100 murdered victims or more. The application of this principle has led to a preference for research into crimes against Polish citizens of Jewish descent.  

The most significant political repercussions were felt in the spring of the following year: the editorial board of the encyclopaedia was disbanded, and an article by the well-known publicist Tadeusz Kur appeared in the daily newspaper Prawo i Życie (‘Law and Life’) on 24 March 1968, entitled ‘The Encyclopaedists’ (Encyklopedyści). The Holocaust denying arguments presented in this article stirred public opinion to such an extent that the aphorism ‘Kur knows better’ (Kur wie lepiej) entered common usage; the author demonstrated scrupulously that in omitting Polish martyrdom, the editors had revealed their own excessive attachment to Jewish tradition.

Local ZBoWiD activists were encouraged to demonstrate their indignation at the encyclopaedia’s editors. The Secretariat of the Main Directorate advocated that ‘the dramatic and heroic actions of the Polish nation during the Second World War should be described more broadly and more truthfully.’ At the same time, significant effort was made to highlight the heroism of Polish victims of Nazism and thereby to support the thesis that Poles had rescued thousands of Jews, putting

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77 Ca 40 people lost their jobs, among them prominent communist activists of 1950s, such as Stefan Staszewski, Jerzy Baumritter, Paweł Hoffman and Tadeusz Zabludowski.
78 This phrase is a play on words. Whilst Kur wie lepiej means ‘Kur knows better’, the phrase can also have a completely different meaning if rendered as Kurwie lepiej: ‘the bastard has it better’ [translator’s note].
79 Osęka, ‘Encyklopedyści’.
80 ‘Protokół nr 7 z posiedzenia Prezydium Zarządu Głównego ZBoWiD’, 8 September 1967, AZGKZKRPiBWP 3, 89, p. 218.
81 ‘Bieżąca informacja z prac Sekretariatu ZG ZBoWiD’, 8 September 1967, ibid., p. 223.
their own lives at risk.\textsuperscript{82} In February 1968, the presidium of the Main Directorate of ZBoWiD decided to distribute a questionnaire, with the aim of documenting this wartime aid. It was sent in 4,000 copies to local branches throughout the country. At the beginning of April 1968, the presidium of the Main Directorate passed the following resolution:

The task of identifying individuals who provided assistance to Jews during the occupation period should be taken up by ZBoWiD in conjunction with the Council for the Protection of Sites of Struggle and Martyrdom, academic institutions, the Main Commission for Research into Hitlerite Crimes in Poland and its regional affiliates, and also with help from teachers’ associations, the scouts’ movement, etc. It is necessary to organize a broad coalition centred around ZBoWiD in which all interested parties can participate and provide assistance. We must collect all available materials (testimonies and analytical works) … In order to develop this initiative, the Secretariat will organize a conference for representatives of all interested institutions. We should not wait for the appearance of the final published version in book form, which Książka i Wiedza [‘Book and Knowledge’, a major publishing house] has agreed to undertake; instead, materials should be used for various publications in the meantime. These publications should also appear in foreign languages. Publishing on this topic is not an act of defence against Zionist attacks on the Polish people; it is directed at telling the historical truth about the attitudes of the Polish population to the Jewish population during the occupation period.\textsuperscript{83}

An announcement was made in the press about the issuance of the questionnaire. The ZBoWiD Secretariat also demanded that a film be produced that would ‘truthfully show the extent and costs of the efforts undertaken by Polish society and the Resistance Movement to save Jews from Hitlerite genocide.’\textsuperscript{84}

The myth of innocent victimhood facilitated the main paradox of the events of 1967–68: that the Jewish Holocaust in Poland became a topic of discussion during the anti-Semitic campaign. This was possible because the fate of the Jewish population of Poland served as a pretext for the activation of memory about Poles. In the late 1960s, when righteous Poles were being actively commemorated, no efforts were made by the Polish authorities to find Jewish survivors of the occupation; few Jews were invited to commemorative events as honoured guests or they refused to participate. In April 1968, the 25\textsuperscript{th} anniversary commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising took place, as did the unveiling of the Jewish


\textsuperscript{83} ‘Protokół nr 4 z posiedzenia Prezydium Zarządu Głównego ZBoWiD’, 5 April 1968, AZGZKRpiBWP 3, 90, p. 356.

\textsuperscript{84} ‘Informacja Sekretariatu ZG ZBoWiD o ważniejszych pracach w marcu i kwietniu 1968’, ibid., p. 364.
pavilion at the State Museum at Auschwitz, i.e. the first significant display about Jews in the history of the museum. Representatives from Israel did not attend the event due to the international conflict, and Jewish groups in the West boycotted it due to the anti-Semitic campaign.85

The discrepancy between the official pronouncements being made by ZBoWiD and its practice is clearly illustrated by the organization’s membership criteria: at a time when joining the Union was easier than ever before and almost anyone could become a member, people who had rescued Jews remained ineligible.

The works of Tadeusz Walichnowski, the best known ideologue of the anti-Semitic propaganda of the day, provide a clue as to the international context behind the public image of Jews as ungrateful beneficiaries of Polish help. The book Izrael a NRF. 1949–1967 (‘Israel and the FRG, 1949–1967’)86 was awarded the highest prize of the Polish Institute of International Affairs; the book went through five editions in Polish and was translated into eight other languages.87 Walichnowski argued that Israel and the international ‘Zionist circles’ which supported the country had started a campaign against the Polish state, in return for financial and military help from West Germany. The author provided numerous quotes from the Western press as evidence that the campaign’s central purpose was to discredit Poles as perpetrators of crimes against Jews:

The fact is that the territory of Poland during the occupation was covered by a Hitlerite killing network which created a Jewish cemetery. Despite the selfless, devoted activity of participants of the Polish resistance movement who worked to rescue Jews, despite the concealing of Jews by sections of the Polish population, the Hitlerites were able to murder (according to universally accepted figures) around 2.5 million Polish citizens of Jewish extraction and over a million Jews from other countries, in conditions of unparalleled terror. The leaders of Zionism are now manipulating this painful truth, unleashing in Israel and on the territory of many countries of Western Europe and in the USA a campaign of slander against the Polish nation, which was subjected to those very same torments by the Hitlerite occupiers. Through the press, the radio, the television and various publications, the Poles are being presented as the main helpers of Hitlerite Germany in the extermination of the Jews. At the same time, Germany is being whitewashed via a conspiracy of silence about its crimes, a failure to examine the system of killing and the mass participation of citizens of the Third Reich in the so-called ‘final solution to the Jewish problem’. The aim of the Zionist campaign is to distract the attention of

85 For details see: Huener, pp. 179f.
87 The author also published two more books within a short time, as well as several articles on similar themes. Tadeusz Walichnowski, Mechanizm propagandy syjonistycznej, Katowice 1968; idem, Syjonizm a państwo żydowskie, Katowice 1968. Cf. Stola, Kampania antysyjonistyczna, p. 67, 68.
the world away from Hitlerite crimes against Jews by trying to make the Polish nation co-responsible for these crimes.\textsuperscript{88}

According to Walichnowski, the ‘Zionists’ being paid by West Germany turned the world’s attention away from German crimes on Polish territory, and thereby devalued the claim that Poland had the right to demand the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line by the FRG.\textsuperscript{89} In this way, Walichnowski carried out one of the most fundamental symbolic juxtapositions of the propaganda of March 1968, demasking the supposed alliance between the sworn enemies of Poland, the Germans, and the ‘Zionists’ (i.e. Jews).

Walichnowski’s arguments were repeated frequently by representatives of the party, the state, as well as ZBoWiD. In January 1968, Kazimierz Rusinek explained that the Union should become more involved in international affairs, ‘especially German affairs, that is, opposing the anti-Polish propaganda being spread by the FRG, and also certain circles in Israel.’\textsuperscript{90} An article by an anonymous author entitled ‘History, Tailor-Made’ (\textit{Historia na obstalunek}) was printed in \textit{Za Wolność i Lud} in this same month. For the local chapters of the Union, it became an essential document which provided instruction on how to interpret the ‘Zionist assault’:

\begin{quote}
Millions murdered in the occupation period, people from many ghettos and camps ... If they could have foreseen that such a thing would happen now, 20–25 years later – that some of the very same people who survived the genocide would hand out olive branches to those who are guilty of the murder of their brothers, whilst holding us responsible to an ever increasing degree… And that the Israeli Jews would find themselves allied to the neo-fascists, that they would sing in unison, displaying an outright bestial hatred for Poles. No, not a single visionary prophet could have foreseen this.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

In a speech delivered in April 1968, Józef Cyrankiewicz, prime minister and still the chairman of the Supreme Council of ZBoWiD, stated that the anti-Polish campaign was being waged primarily by the press in West Germany, the United Kingdom, Israel and the USA. Its mechanism, according to Cyrankiewicz, was based on the propaganda methods developed by Joseph Goebbels. He emphasized that the campaign questioned the western border of Poland, and that the Poles were being blamed for the outbreak of the Second World War as well as accused of anti-Semitism and of helping Hitler to murder Jews.\textsuperscript{92} The Polish media frequently

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{88} Walichnowski, \textit{Izrael a NRF}, p. 164, 165.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Ibid., pp. 167f.
\item \textsuperscript{90} ‘Protokół nr 1 z posiedzenia Prezydium Zarządu Głównego ZBoWiD’, 8 January 1968, AZGZKRPiBWP 3, 90, p. 285.
\item \textsuperscript{91} W.K., ‘Historia na obstalunek’, \textit{Za Wolność i Lud}, 3 (1968), p. 4.
\end{itemize}
quoted the following words by Mieczysław Moczar, spoken at the May plenary session of the Main Directorate of ZBoWiD:

Israel’s shameful flirtation with West Germany, with the same people who for twenty years sent Jews to the gas chambers, has a political motivation. Israeli aggression against the Arab states is being accompanied by an anti-Polish campaign conducted worldwide by international Zionism. This campaign is being carried out using all of the contemporary means of mass communication, such as the press, cinematography, television, and literature – via all of the media on which the Zionists have an influence. This campaign must be met by us with protest and condemnation. In return for large damages being paid by the government of the FRG, International Zionism is seeking to perfidiously exculpate the Germans from the crimes they committed against Jews and perfidiously make the Poles co-responsible.93

In this way, the Polish collaboration with the Germans in the murder of Jews was made into a public affair, after firstly being filtered through propagandistic commonplaces. As a result, it was immediately subjected to public exorcism. This is why the Jews became, in the propagandistic imaginary of official Polish discourse, the ungrateful beneficiaries of Polish aid during the war. The image of the Jew-persecutor also featured from time to time in state propaganda; i.e., the Jewish people were blamed for the crimes of Stalinism, and contemporary Jewry and West Germany were identified as the joint enemies of the Polish nation. Moreover, the histories of two wars – the Second World War and the Six-Day War of 1967 – were fused together in public memory, in the same way that in Stalinist times, descriptions of American crimes in Korea were explicitly compared to the atrocities carried out by the Nazis (see Chapter 3).

Władysław Gomułka was the first to compare the Israeli attack on the Arab states to the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939, stating that Israel ‘looked to the Hitlerite Wehrmacht for models.’94 He called Polish Jews who sympathized with Israel a ‘fifth column’. Television programming on New Year’s Eve 1967 featured a puppet show in which General Moshe Dayan was the main character; the choir sang ‘Moshe, you are efficient like Heinz Guderian, wise like Keitel, brave as Rommel himself.’95 A reader of newspapers was likely to learn about Israeli Blitzkrieg, unjustified aggression, as well as lawless and brutal occupation. The press wrote about the introduction in Israel of bans on public assembly, persecution of the Arab population by the Zionists, the destruction of houses, numerous arrests on charges of sabotage and diversion, forced resettlement,

95 Eisler, p. 112, 113.
cash fines for sheltering Arab soldiers, and also for illegal trade in food supplies. Israel’s annexation of formerly Jordanian East Jerusalem was compared to the Third Reich’s Anschluss of Austria. The Arab population’s armed resistance was presented as inherently heroic; for example, a school strike by Arabs was praised, and successful skirmishes by the resistance movement were portrayed as glowingly positive. Allusions to the Third Reich’s occupation of Poland were completely transparent.

Mieczysław Moczar, speaking on the radio about the suffering of the Arab population ‘under the yoke of Israel’, described a country ‘on whose territory, even before last June, there existed ghettos for Arabs, ghettos organized by the same people who once worked as policemen in the Hitlerite ghettos of our cities.’ The media also presented cases of Jewish cooperation with the Germans during the war: articles were written about the Jewish police forces, the Judenräte and the Gestapo’s Jewish informers. It was openly claimed that Jews who had collaborated with the Nazis during the war were now responsible for the persecution of Arabs.

This aggressive anti-Semitic rhetoric abated towards the end of 1968. Nonetheless, the basic tenets of this propaganda were retained for a longer period. Alongside the myth of victory and the myth of unity, the myth of innocence became the third main narrative that told the story of the origins of socialist Poland. As a tale of the mass martyrdom of the nation in defence of a good cause, it sought to make sense of the suffering of the German occupation. It legitimized the system and, like the myth of unity, served an integrating function. Ethnic categories were employed in an attempt to show the martyrdom of Poles; at the same time, the possibility of Polish participation in the Holocaust was purged from public discourse. Suggestions that Jews had collaborated with the Germans were designed to deflect criticism away from Poles. The past was overlaid onto the present, with the war in the Middle East conceptualized through the prism of the Second World War. The myth of innocence was part of the discourse that attacked West Germany over its reluctance to pay reparations to victims, whilst accusing Israel of being in league with Poland’s enemy. Based on the conviction that ‘we Poles are being unjustly accused of crimes against Jews’, the myth of innocence became one of the most important memory mechanisms used for the creation of social consensus.

96 Jarosz, p. 102, 103. See also: Ośka, Syjoniści, pp. 53–58.
97 Interview with Mieczysław Moczar. Channel One of Polskie Radio, 12 May 1968, OSA, Radio Free Europe Collection, POL 116–2, 300/50/1/1438.
98 Jarosz, p. 119.
5.3 In 1968, an anniversary of liberating concentration camps was used as a propaganda opportunity to equate Zionism with fascism. Captions run: ‘No more war’, ‘No more Auschwitz’, ‘Stop Zionism’, ‘Stop fascism’. Rzeszów, April 1968.
In September 1969, the Union held its Fourth Congress in the Congress Hall of the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. It was a largely ritualistic event, which brought no significant changes in the composition of the Main Directorate. During the preparations for the Congress, ZBoWiD issued two important publications: a series of popular brochures about wartime events and a several-hundred page volume entitled *Zbowidowcy. Tradycje i zadania* (‘People of ZBoWiD. Traditions and Tasks’), which featured a wealth of photographic material. This book can be read as a poignant summary of the public memory models that became accepted at the end of the 1960s. Many of the articles were written by professional historians, and presented the principal narratives of war that have been described here as the three dominant myths.

In contrast to the war narratives that were prevalent in the Stalinist years, the war stories were more detailed, featuring individual names and concrete sites of battle. At the same time, an emphasis was placed on the ‘unity’ of the aims of the various armed formations. Some themes were retained from the Stalinist discourse (e.g. the leading role of the PPR), but the broader context in which they were presented meant that these ideas were not as prominent as they had been previously. The figures of Joseph Stalin and the Polish pro-Soviet communists Wanda Wasilewska and Alfred Lampe, who were amongst the most important figures of war narratives in the years 1949–57, were conspicuous in their absence. A multiplex image of the military activities of the Home Army emerged. Rhetoric concerning the inter-war Polish state, and even the Polish government-in-exile, became more moderate; after all, they had created the Polish armed forces. Hitlerism was no longer presented as the final, degenerate form of imperialism, but a purely German invention. In the 1960s, nationalism became conclusively enmeshed in the revolutionary myth.

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99 Mieczysław Moczar remained as chairman; Kazimierz Banach, Wojciech Jaruzelski, Włodzimierz Lechowicz, Jan Mazurkiewicz ‘Radosław’ and Zygmunt Netzer were re-elected as deputy chairmen (Janusz Burakiewicz, a former concentration camp prisoner during the war, and a high-level bureaucrat in the state economy structures after the war, was the only new face among the deputy chairmen); Kazimierz Rusinek remained as secretary, with Henryk Matysiak as his deputy.