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**FROM URBICIDE TO SOCIALIST METROPOLE.  
SWISS JOURNALISTS' VIEWS OF WARSAW  
AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1945-1960)<sup>1</sup>**

During the Second World War, Warsaw suffered immense destruction, both human and material. Proportionally, the city suffered most from the conflict<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, making this trauma visible became a crucial issue in Poland, in political, media, economic, and cultural terms. For Swiss journalists as well as for their readers, this situation was very different from Switzerland's reality during the conflict. Although this country had been affected by the war, it was largely spared violence and destruction. The communist takeover in Poland further widened the distance. The analysis of how Swiss journalists who visited Warsaw in the first decade after the conclusion of the war tried to bridge this gap is at the heart of this contribution. It focuses not only on the confrontation between two opposed experiences but also on the ways journalists obtained information that was subsequently disseminated in Switzerland.

This article on foreign journalists in post-war Poland is part of a history of foreigners' travels to dictatorships. Several historical studies have focused on trips

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2 *The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover From Disaster*, eds L.J. Vale, T.J. Campanella, New York 2005, p. 10.

to the USSR during the interwar period<sup>3</sup> and more recently to Nazi Germany and to Fascist Italy<sup>4</sup>. These studies often highlight the control exercised by official institutions over these travels (cultural diplomacy and propaganda, police surveillance, etc.) and the representations imported by travelers. Research on travels to the capitals of People's Democracies still remains very limited. As these cities were deemed closed to cultural exchanges, this foreign presence was frequently hidden. In his monograph comparing the representations of Warsaw and Bucharest, Błażej Brzostek analyzed some articles of travelers during the 19th and the 20th centuries. In particular, he showed how Warsaw, a colorful capital, became an exception among the Eastern Bloc capitals in the 1950s<sup>5</sup>. For Jerzy Kochanowski, Warsaw continued to be, if not cosmopolitan like in the interwar period, at least international: first as an exotic capital for refugees from the West and after 1956 as a "promises land" attracting citizens from the socialist countries<sup>6</sup>. In the post-1956 period, Russian students were shocked by the liberalism they met in the Polish capital, especially in the local student clubs<sup>7</sup>.

The presence of foreign journalists is also a question of truth and legitimation. While these journalists played the role of objective observers, guarantors of the truth, they legitimized the discourse of the inviting authorities. However, to strike a balance, they needed a freedom that could lead them to a heterodox discourse<sup>8</sup>. It was a subtle game between the ethics of the journalists and the political conditions of producing their articles.

By focusing on Swiss journalists traveling to Warsaw, this article first aims to understand the local production context of the articles they published in Switzerland. In the Cold War context, information on the situation behind the Iron Curtain was always subject to some control. This control was not only exerted by the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland, but also on the Swiss side, by governmental organizations or editorial boards<sup>9</sup>. Despite Switzerland's official policy of neutrality, its elites were joined in strong anticommunism, which created distrust of the journalists who visited the countries of the Eastern Bloc. To cross the Iron Curtain was already considered subversive, at least until the so-called political "thaw".

Second, this foreign perspective on Warsaw from the postwar period until the turn of the 1960s aims to demonstrate how different representations of this city were produced through interviews with inhabitants, guided tours, supervision by the Polish government and Swiss humanitarian organiza-

3 R. Mazuy, *Croire plutôt que voir?: voyages en Russie soviétique (1919-1939)*, Paris 2002.

4 F. Sallée, *Sur les chemins de terre brune: voyages dans l'Allemagne nazie, 1933-1939*, Paris 2017.

5 B. Brzostek, *Paryż w innej Europie: Warszawa i Bukareszt, XIX i XX wiek*, Warszawa 2015.

6 J. Kochanowski, "Foreign Residents in Warsaw, 1945-1956", *Acta Poloniae Historica* 2014, 110, p. 111-133.

7 P. Babiracki, "Two Stairways to Socialism: Soviet Youth Activists in Polish Spaces, 1957-1964", in: *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War. Exploring the Second World*, eds. P. Babiracki, J. Austin, MacMillan, 2017, pp. 79-105.

8 N. Domeier, J. Happel, "Journalismus und Politik. Einleitende Überlegungen zur Tätigkeit von Auslandskorrespondenten 1900-1970", in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Bd. 62, No. 5 (2014), pp. 389-397.

9 M. Gillibert, *Dans les coulisses de la diplomatie culturelle suisse: objectifs, réseaux et réalisations (1938-1984)*, Neuchâtel, Alphil, 2013.

tions in Poland. These reports show a common perception of the city, giving Warsaw a new identity. Lynch wrote that the perception of a city corresponds to a system of representations which is based on the uniqueness, the urban structure as well as emotional and cognitive perceptions<sup>10</sup>. How did Swiss journalists perceive the image of Warsaw after the War?

Moreover, I would like to add a second level of analysis by underlining that representations of otherness always hide representations and discourses about oneself. The historian Robert Frank emphasized that representations based on previous stereotypes reflect – by oppositions, analogies, allusions – a subject's concerns about himself and his background<sup>11</sup>.

This article addresses these questions during three successive phases after World War II. It starts by focusing on the first journalists who visited the ruins of the Polish capital in the aftermath of the war. In the second part, the analysis of reports and articles written on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Festival of Youth and Students shows that this event was a turning point in the representations of Warsaw in foreign media. Finally, the article focuses on self-representations in the texts about Warsaw written by Swiss journalists after 1956. The political and urbanistic changes in the Polish capital contrasted with the feeling of stagnation in Switzerland shared by some non-conformist journalists. Through these different reports, Swiss journalists consistently made a clear distinction between the communist regime and the Polish people. This could be explained by the radical changes experienced in Poland where the new government appears to the Swiss journalist as an import product from the USSR and by the fact that Polishness was never considered urban.

### How to report destruction?

The after-war period was indeed marked by an important change from the former system of depicting Warsaw. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the Second World War, there had only been a few publications about Warsaw in Switzerland. These articles highlighted the city's cosmopolitanism, its exoticism (especially with regard to its poor East-European Jewish neighborhoods) and its position at the European periphery, as a last outpost before the Soviet Union or Asia.

Edmont Privat was one of the most prolific Swiss authors writing about the Polish capital<sup>12</sup>. This Esperantist scholar was supportive of the Polish state

10 K. Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge 1973. See also: "M. Certeau de et la lecture du paysage urbain: M. Certeau de, Marches dans la ville", in: *L'invention du quotidien. I Arts de faire*, Paris 1994, pp. 139-163.

11 R. Frank, „Images et imaginaire dans les relations internationales depuis 1938”, *Cahiers de l'IHTP* 1994, (28), pp. 5-11.

12 P. Bednarz, „Szwajcarscy korespondenci wojenni w Królestwie Polskim 1914-1915”, in: *Ważna obecność. Przedstawiciele państw i narodów europejskich wśród mieszkańców międzyrzecza Bugu i Pilicy w XVII-XIX wieku*, eds. A. Górak, K. Łatawiec, Radom 2006, pp. 277-291; P. Bednarz, „Warszawa u schyłku zaboru rosyjskiego w oczach szwajcarskiego korespondenta”, *Le Temps* (April 1915), *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska - Sectio F*, 1998, 52/53, pp. 271-288.

before independence. During his journey, he was impressed by the multiculturalism of the capital where inhabitants could practice a kind of ethnography toward different ethnic groups<sup>13</sup>. For Privat, “Polishness” could be found in the countryside. Indeed, Swiss authors did not consider cosmopolitan Warsaw to be representative of Polish culture. This “Warsaw, the capital of Poland, this future dreamland, seems to be destined, in a not too distant future, to automatically supplant Berlin in many ways.”<sup>14</sup> These images were based on the rapid industrialization of this area and on the rise in 1918 to the status of an independent country capital city.

In the Swiss liberal and anticommunist press during the interwar period, Warsaw also appeared as the last western city before the communist world. For Pierre Frederix, the French journalist who wrote in the *Journal de Genève*, “The Poniatowski Bridge is, at the East of Europe, the last point from where we can see the West”<sup>15</sup>. Warsaw was located on the border of the Western civilization, while travel guides and novelists like Alfred Döblin were highlighting its exotic and strange character. Swiss writer Robert de Traz wrote: “as my first day ‘flânerie’ brought me over the Vistula, where church bells were tolling at dusk, I thought I saw as far as the eye could see the steppe mixing Europe and Asia.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1945, this perception – urban dynamism, ethnic mix, peripheral situation – was completely disrupted by urbicide. This concept emphasizes that this type of destruction was less a strategic goal than symbolic annihilation and suppression of the urban multiculturalism<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, it refers to a transitory moment. The war consequences on the city coexist with renewal of urban social life: it makes a dialectic moment between devastation and resilience. This multidimensional destruction could be found in the newspaper articles that related as much to the material destruction as to the disappearance of this inter-war metropolis.

In the aftermath of World War II, an increasing number of Swiss journalists traveled to Poland, mostly as part of longer trips through Germany and Eastern Europe to report on wartime destruction and consequences. There were three ways for foreign journalists to work in Poland.

The first way consisted in invitations extended by the Polish authorities as part of foreign propaganda. Polish Cultural Diplomacy was modest before the war<sup>18</sup> and remained scanty after 1945. The small Society for Artistic Diffusion Abroad (*Statut Towarzystwa Szerzenia Sztuki Polskiej Wśród Obcych*) that was founded after Piłsudski’s coup in 1926, did not exist anymore<sup>19</sup>. In 1945,

13 E. Privat, “À Varsovie”, *Le Temps*, 9.5.1915.

14 A. Langie, “Lettre de Varsovie”, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 17.4.1919, p. 1.

15 F. Pierre, “Au bout de l’Europe”, *Le Journal de Genève*, 17.9.1932, p. 1.

16 R. de Traz, “La Pologne aujourd’hui”, *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1.2.1933.

17 M. Coward, “Urbicide: the politics of urban destruction”, London 2009.

18 P. Duber, “La politique culturelle polonaise en Suisse: acteurs et liaisons informelles autour de la figure d’Henryk Opieński”, *Relations internationales* (169), 2017, pp. 39–52.

19 K. Pryt, “Befohlene Freundschaft: die deutsch-polnischen Kulturbeziehungen 1934–1939”, Osnabrück 2010, pp. 66–71.

there was intense discussion about this issue in Poland. For instance, an article published in *Dziennik Polski* "Propaganda w powijkach"<sup>20</sup> appealed to develop the promotion of the national image. The Propaganda Commission of the State National Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*) headed by Jerzy Borejsza discussed this article and supported a more intense foreign propaganda. Its goals were to legitimate the new regime abroad by developing a narrative of socialist reconstruction from fascist destruction. In addition to the legitimizing function, this discourse also aimed at obtaining humanitarian aid. In this way, the invitation to foreigners to travel to Poland rendered these stories credible, without making the propaganda goals too obvious: "Należy [...] raczej inspirować niż redagować", as mentioned in a note of this Commission<sup>21</sup>.

Paradoxically, the image of the country was restored by promoting representations of the destruction caused during the German occupation. These representations aimed both to commemorate the recent tragedy and to show the reconstruction progress in the country, especially in Warsaw. In April 1946, the Citizens' Warsaw Reconstruction League (*Obywatelska Liga Odbudowy Warszawy*) was created to raise funds for the reconstruction of Poland's capital domestically and abroad<sup>22</sup>. While the reconstruction of the capital served the geopolitical interests of the Soviet power, it was also a formidable tool for nationalist legitimization, as expressed by the slogan "The entire nation is building its Capital"<sup>23</sup>.

However, the new regime sought not only national but also international legitimacy, which was also a means of enhancing prestige internally. In 1946, international youth brigades, particularly from Yugoslavia<sup>24</sup>, came to Warsaw to show their solidarity. In general, this public diplomacy became a task of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, precisely the Department of Press and Information<sup>25</sup>, that organized several guided tours for different national groups of journalists from both socialist and capitalist countries<sup>26</sup>.

In this context, the Polish Legation in Bern invited a group of nine journalists to visit Poland for four weeks in 1946. Switzerland was neither an ally nor a superpower. However, Bern had played an important role during the war and remained central through its being a host country for international or-

20 "Propaganda w powijkach", *Dziennik Polski*, 19.9.1945.

21 Note from Propaganda Commission [1945]. Archiwum Akt Nowych, 2/168, 943.

22 Organization created on 10 April 1946 to raise funds for the capital reconstruction.

23 The authorship of this slogan is attributed to Z. Stepiński. J.S. Majewski, T. Markiewicz, "Budujemy nowy dom: odbudowa Warszawy w latach 1945–1952 = Bulding a new home : the reconstruction of Warsaw in the period 1945–1952", Warszawa 2012, p. 148.

24 Film "Młodzież Jugosłowiańska", 6.8.1946. Repozytorium Cyfrowe, PKF 25/46, url: <http://www.repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=pl%2Fnode%2F4650> [access: 9 IV 2019].

25 This department (Departament Prasy i Informacji – DPI) was created in 1945 and had many functions such as accounting for foreign policy issues in Poland, broadcasting information about Poland through journals and encyclopaedias and networking with foreign journalists at The Polonia Hotel and in the "Klub korespondentów zagranicznych". Note on DPI's history, [1946]. Minister of Foreign Affairs Archive, Warsaw (hereinafter: AMSZ), set 22, v. 1, vol. 2.

26 In December 1945, a group of French journalists were invited by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and in 1946, a group of Italian journalists.

ganizations and its humanitarian policy, especially toward Poland, whose several hundred soldiers were interned there<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, the Polish ambassador in Bern, Jerzy Putrament, was involved in an important offensive against Swiss newspapers which were considered hostile to the “new Poland”, especially on the vehement issue of its Western borders. The Polish embassy used many tools to protest, such as sending letters to the editors, showing movies about the “Recovered Territories” (*Ziemie Odzyskane*) and presenting in different places the exhibition “Warsaw Accuses” (*Warszawa oskarża*). For the diplomat, the visit of Swiss journalists was part of this action and was successful, bearing fruit with positive and even enthusiastic articles. Some journalists later continued to write about Poland in a positive sense<sup>28</sup>.

About ten journalists from the most important newspapers (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Journal de Genève*, *Basler National Zeitung*, *Volksrecht*, etc.) were directly invited by press attaché Frühling without warning the Swiss authorities. The latter learned about this visit informally and ordered the Swiss Legation in Warsaw to receive the journalists. Behind this operation, the Swiss authorities seemed to insist that the discourse distilled by the guided tour would be counterbalanced by the opinions of Swiss citizens in the field<sup>29</sup>.

The most important stops on this trip were Warsaw and the so-called “Recovered Territories”, which served to legitimate the new Western borders. Some official notes from Swiss diplomats emphasized the close supervision by the Polish organizers, which limited the journalists’ potential contacts with Polish citizens<sup>30</sup>. However, the articles show a large diversity of points of views and mention some interviews with them. John Witt from *Die Tat* highlighted that he felt free “in the entire country and could travel like in Switzerland”<sup>31</sup>.

Above all, ruins and destruction figured prominently in both texts and photographs. In general, reconstruction was not linked to the communist regime, but to the pride of the inhabitants. While the leftist *Volksrecht* took up word for word the official discourse on the uprising of 1944 that had been launched by optimistic chauvinists, it reported that the reconstruction was a matter of Warsaw residents<sup>32</sup>. Consequently, the goal of the Polish authorities seems indeed to have been only partly achieved. They could also note in the case of the French journalists that the majority of articles focused more on the popular impetus for the reconstruction of Warsaw than on the government action<sup>33</sup>. This popular impetus was reflected in the ingenuity of the inhabitants or the busy crowd that contrasted with the destruction.

27 In November 1945, 685 Poles (401 soldiers and 237 civilians) were repatriated from Switzerland to Poland. Letowski’s note, 5.12.45. AMSZ, set 22, v. 8, vol. 191.

28 Putrament’s report, 13.5.47. AMSZ, set 6, v. 77, vol. 1137.

29 Guido Keel’s note, 12.7.46. Swiss Federal Archive, Bern (hereinafter: SFA), E2001(E) 1000/1571/14.

30 Federal Political Department’s (equivalent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Switzerland) note, 27.8.1946. SFA, E2001(E) 1000/1571/14.

31 J. Witt, “Vier Wochen kreuz und quer durch Polen”, *Die Tat*, 2.8.46.

32 “Eindrücke aus Polen”, *Volksrecht*, 21.8.46.

33 Note of the “Polskie Biuro Informacyjne” in Paris, 31.12.1945. AMSZ, set 21, v. 4, vol. 49.

## Pour un stage d'un an à l'étranger

Premier rapport sur une initiative de L. Blättler

Plus intéressé par l'expérience que par la question pécuniaire, Jean Bührer, qui s'apprête à partir à l'étranger, a écrit dans le *L'Illustré* un premier rapport sur une initiative de L. Blättler. Ce premier rapport est intitulé "Pour un stage d'un an à l'étranger". Il est le fruit d'une enquête menée par le journaliste Bührer, qui a interrogé de nombreux jeunes suisses intéressés par l'idée de partir à l'étranger pour un an. Les résultats de son enquête sont présentés dans cet article, qui est divisé en deux parties. La première partie est intitulée "Pour un stage d'un an à l'étranger" et la seconde partie est intitulée "Le voyage du train spécial 682".



**NOUS EN SOMES EN POLOGNE**

Après le voyage en Italie, les journalistes suisses se sont rendus en Pologne. Ils ont visité les villes de Varsovie et de Cracovie, où ils ont constaté l'état de ruine de la ville après la guerre. Les journalistes ont également rencontré des habitants de la ville, qui leur ont raconté les terribles souffrances qu'ils ont endurées pendant l'occupation allemande.

## LE VOYAGE DU TRAIN SPÉCIAL 682

Le voyage du train spécial 682, qui a permis aux journalistes suisses de visiter la Pologne, a été organisé par le Comité suisse de secours aux victimes de la guerre. Le train a quitté Zurich le 15 septembre 1946 et est arrivé à Varsovie le 22 septembre. Les journalistes ont pu constater de près l'état de ruine de la ville et rencontrer des habitants qui leur ont raconté les terribles souffrances qu'ils ont endurées pendant l'occupation allemande.



1. Jean Bührer, "Le voyage du train spécial 682", in : *L'Illustré*, 2.5.1946, p. 4-5

The second way journalists came to Poland was by following humanitarian organizations. In order to get more support and money, such organizations needed to publicize their activities and the difficulties they encountered. Already in 1942, journalist Franz Blättler took part in a second Swiss medical expedition to the Eastern Front. Three years later, he published a book about his experience in Warsaw under German occupation. It was a shock: "I step out of the railway station hall. Some creatures stand around: in Switzerland we would scarcely call them humans"<sup>34</sup>. Humanitarian aid thus produced new representations of Warsaw.

After the war, the so-called *Swiss Relief to War Victims* (*Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten*)<sup>35</sup> launched different projects abroad. For example, Swiss citizens undertook reconstruction work in Warsaw, brought medical and clothing supplies and built an orphanage in Otwock. Some journalists accompanied them to report both on their actions and on the difficulties on the ground. In 1946, the press service of the Swiss Relief authorized two journalists, Fritz Heberlein and Jean Bührer, to accompany the Swiss Relief by train to Warsaw. Their publications focused on the contrast between destruction and life amidst the ruins. Bührer published this comprehensive photo reportage with his own photos and with Hans Reinhart's photos from the ghetto.

34 F. Blättler, "Warschau 1942: Tatsachenbericht eines Motorfahrers der zweiten schweizerischen Aerztemission 1942 in Polen", Zürich, Bruxelles 1945, p. 9 (translated by author).

35 P. Hug, "Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten", *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, 2011, url: <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D43513.php> [access: 10 IV 2019]. J.-C. Favez, "Le Don suisse et la politique étrangère", in: *Des archives à la mémoire*, eds. B. Roth-Lochner, M. Neuenschwander, F. Walter, Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Genève (SHAG), 1996, pp. 325-339.

Such publications were intended to arouse emotions and called for support among the Swiss population. These representations were also supposed to remind readers of the magnitude of the destruction and to underline that it was worthwhile to support the renaissance of the capital.

Furthermore, humanitarian organizations offered rare opportunities for journalists and photographers to travel to Poland from Switzerland. The photographer Werner Bischof seized this opportunity and worked for the *Swiss Relief*. Unlike Bühler, he was not a member of the organization and remained an independent photographer for the Magnum cooperative. However, like other Swiss journalists who worked under more official conditions, he chose to put destruction and ruins at the centre of his photo reportages. In this category of Swiss journalists traveling to Poland, Polish authorities did not seem to exercise special control over the content of the articles published. According to Carl Egger, the vice-director of this organization, their exceptional performance encouraged the development of this mediatization. However, the Federal Military Department that was in charge of train supervision firmly banned socialist journalist Werner Hugerbühler from traveling, while the *Swiss Relief* and the Polish authorities were in favor<sup>36</sup>. This precedent ended trips to Poland by journalists' with Swiss aid organizations.

The representation of the city's character was also modified compared to the interwar period. On the one hand, its features were simplified, as the photographs showed the same places in the centre of Warsaw. On the other, journalists codified a common narrative that needed recurrences in the represented motives. This can be explained by the goals of the Polish or Swiss institutions with which the journalists had to work but also by the fact that the Swiss public didn't know the former topography of Warsaw and needed a simplified image of the capital. In this way, the journalist introduced his readers to the mysterious world of ruins<sup>37</sup>. In the following years, some Swiss journalists became explorers of real socialism.

### **The 5th World Festival of Youth and Students as a turning point**

The World Festival was a Soviet means of internationalist propaganda that was assimilated in Poland. Besides communist goals, this mega-event was used to present the host country and city. As it happened in 1955, it was a turning point in the de-Stalinization process, which was illustrated by the Arsenal exhibition of young Polish painters, the promotion of consumption with a competition between stores or with the publication of colorful brochures for tourists<sup>38</sup>.

36 Egger's note, 27.4.46. SFA, E2001E 1000/1571/151.

37 See for example: J. Bühler, "La vie secrète des miséreux dans les ruines de Varsovie", *La Tribune de Genève*, [?].

38 A. Krzywicki, *Poststalinowski karnawał radości: V Światowy Festiwal Młodzieży i Studentów o Pokój i Przyjaźń, Warszawa 1955 r.: przygotowania, przebieg, znaczenie*, Warszawa 2009 (series: *W krainie PRL*); P. Osęka, "Sierpień '55: pierwszy karnawał wolności", *Polityka*, 04.08.2015.

This was the first time Warsaw had welcomed so many journalists, more than two hundred. The Polish authorities organized some tours of Warsaw and Poland for them. During these activities, the organizers still aimed to show the remains of the war: Auschwitz and some reconstruction sites in Warsaw specifically prepared for these visits. The ghetto was also a central point of these itineraries, but it met with little interest.

On the one hand, journalists continued to present this mix of destruction and reconstruction. On the other hand, a new story about changes in Poland emerged. For most Swiss journalists, this festival was unlike the others. The special correspondent of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* wrote: "While the hard wind of the Cold War was blowing in Bucharest in 1953, the mild climate of Lake Geneva prevailed in Warsaw"<sup>39</sup>. This was an allusion to the Geneva Summit on Peace, which took place in July of the same year. From this point of view, the Polish government's goals, namely to present an open and progressively more touristic Poland, werereached in these articles. However, it should be remembered that the press card for the festival was in some cases only a front. Thus, many young anticommunists easily became correspondents of well-established newspapers like the *Journal de Genève* or *L'Illustré*<sup>40</sup>. Some participants were indeed there to counterpropaganda, or even espionage. It was not yet counter-festivals as it would be the case in the further editions organized in the West (1959 in Vienna and 1962 in Helsinki).

For Swiss journalists, the Warsaw festival was also an opportunity to meet colleagues from the East and the West in the press area. Hundreds of journalists were able to share their views with colleagues from the opposite side of the Cold War Bloc. Johann Balvanyi, sent by the *Tribune de Lausanne*, emphasized: "To our surprise, colleagues who were strongly opposed yesterday now discussed problems relating to their job as international journalists. Furthermore, we noted a tendency among journalists from all countries and all political sides to express a desire to somehow restore relations broken by the Cold War, and to present to their public a more authentic view of events taking place in both worlds."<sup>41</sup>

Some journalists moreover perceived this festival as a turning point in the evolution of communist Poland and its image abroad. One of them was Franck Jotterand, editor-in-chief of *La Gazette de Lausanne*. During his trip to Poland two years after the festival, he considered this event to have heralded a big change for Warsaw: "From the way of dressing up to the most secret thoughts, the influence of the Festival has been huge". He also wondered about Poland's political orientation at that time: "Eastern wind, Western wind?"<sup>42</sup> Thus, the Festival modified the image of the Polish capital. In a certain way, it reactivated the representation of Warsaw as an in-between place that existed before the Second World War.

39 E. Halperin, "Eindrücke aus Polen", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 12.9.1944, p. 1.

40 Report of the Geneva canton police, 12.5.1955, SFA, E4320(B), 1981/141/11.

41 J.-F. Balvanyi, "Un espoir pour la presse mondiale", *Tribune de Lausanne*, 29.8.1955, p. 14.

42 F. Jotterand, "Comment ils vivent", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 11.9.1957, p. 1

## Traditional visions for the new Warsaw

In the second half of the fifties, Warsaw changed in the perception of Swiss journalists. Apart from the Festival experience, this was also due to significantly improved conditions in the city. This progress presented an opportunity to publish new articles about the Polish capital. Walter Weideli, editor of the *Journal de Genève*, was dispatched to assist at the inauguration of the new airline Warsaw-Zurich in 1959. His trip not only allowed him to publish interesting articles on Warsaw's cultural life, but also to establish personal contacts, for example with Maria Dąbrowska. This led to an innovative project. One year later, the *Journal de Genève* and *Życie Warszawy* simultaneously published a journal edition on the cultural scene in the other country<sup>43</sup>.

During this short period, the perception of the city thus depended more on personal contacts and on self-appropriation of the experience than on a codified discourse, as it happened after the war. Warsaw was more colorful and audiovisual documentaries showed a young and Westernized capital on jazz tunes<sup>44</sup>. This view is reminiscent of the articles published during the First World War by the journalist and Esperantist Edmond Privat in 1915.

Articles of non-conformist Swiss journalists like Jotterand or Weideli aimed to show that cultural life was developing in spite of both destruction and communism. They can be interpreted as an anticommunist perception of a people and a city whose communist authorities did not completely suppress freedom.

At the same time, these articles reveal their authors' real fascination with this alternative modernity. Rediscovering a city removed by the Cold War can be read as a form of political subversion. This modernity of the Varsovian Thaw contrasted with Swiss conservatism, which increasingly appeared like a "Swiss malaise" among non-conformist intellectuals<sup>45</sup>.

In this context, Jotterand wrote: "I felt freer in Poland than in Switzerland", I said, cutting off an interviewer who was harassing me with questions about 'the regime oppression'. After consideration, this apparent paradox contains some truth."<sup>46</sup> For his part, Weideli wrote in his diary: "This is the freest people I know. [...] A truly inner freedom. [...] At last a country where some questions are asked, an unsatisfied country."<sup>47</sup> In opposition to this Polish dissatis-

43 M. Gillibert, "Cultural Diplomacy of Switzerland and the Challenge of Peaceful Coexistence (1956-75)", in: *Beyond the Divide. Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe*, eds. S. Mikkonen et P. Koivunen, New York, Berghahn 2015, pp. 115-127; M. Gillibert, "The role of the press in east-west cultural relations", *Switzerland in the Mirror of the World*, 2010, url : <http://www.mirroroftheworld.ch/article/the-role-of-the-press-in-east-west-cultural-relations.html> [access: 10 IV 2019].

44 Documentary "La Pologne de 1957", RTS, url : <https://www.rts.ch/archives/tv/divers/documentaires/4047507-la-pologne-de-1957.html>. [access: 10 IV 2019]. The presence of the Supersam supermarket that was built in 1962 indicates that the production dates back to the sixties.

45 H. Lüthy, "Die Schweiz als Antithese", Zürich, ETH, 1962; M. Imboden, "Helvetisches Malaise", Zürich, EVZ-Verlag, 1964; J. Tanner, "Switzerland and the Cold War: a Neutral Country between the «American Way of Life» and «Geistige Landesverteidigung»", in: *Switzerland and War. Occasional Papers in Swiss Studies*, eds. J. Charnley, M. Pender, Bern 1999, pp. 113-128.

46 F. Jotterand, "Comment ils vivent", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 11.9.1957, p. 1.

47 W. Weideli, "Diary", Warsaw, 1959 (unpublished). Swiss Literary Archives (Bern), Weideli's papers, box 84, C-1-f.

Varsovie  
COU COUPÉ

Cette image du poète polonais *Gouffon de Kontrozwitz*, qui signa en français « *Affluente* », est la première inspection que je remets en versant à Gouffon. Ce poète est, d'ailleurs, par blocs alphabétiques, sans titre, s'adressant sans titre. Dans une telle situation il est aisé de découvrir un premier coup de théâtre, puis la question des affaires, les promesses, envenimées par l'insolence du poète, la question de la poésie, la question de la poésie. Où est le centre ? Ce n'est pas au Palais de la Culture, dans l'architecte d'une « *maison de Mincus* » ou non, mais pas du tout à une rue polonaise. Ce n'est pas la place de la Constitution, qui rappelle tout le monde de la grande ville, mais la place de la Constitution, qui rappelle tout le monde de la grande ville, et de la puissance de notre État, nous dit le poète architecte, et l'ensemble à nous ne nous exposez nous sans le poète français. Versée en coupe. Par opposition, la ville est, la place centre prend l'air d'un « *décor* » sans maître d'œuvre.

[illegible][illegible]

2. F. Jotterand, „Varsovie cou coupé”, *La Gazette de Lausanne*, 31.8/1.9.1957, p. 14

faction, we can read a Swiss satisfaction feeling that borders on conformism. To write about a changing Warsaw also meant to write about a Switzerland that still remained withdrawn and self-contained.

## Conclusion

Between 1945 and 1960, the presentation of Warsaw in the Swiss media changed. While early articles reported on the destruction caused by the war and aimed to arouse sympathy for the destroyed city and its population, they evolved into a quest for novelty and for new contacts. Jotterand wrote in 1957: "Warsaw is a city where you must have friends."<sup>48</sup> Such reports, based on personal meetings and exchanges, contributed to changing Swiss journalists' perceptions of Warsaw.

The production of representations of a place like Warsaw is always a mutual project involving foreigners and local inhabitants in a (geo-)political framework where several authorities were involved. Meetings and exchanges were at the origin of new representations.

Moreover, such a study contributes to understanding the Western, constructed perception of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe. Especially,

48 F. Jotterand, "Varsovie cou coupé", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 31.8/1.9.1957, p. 14.

it highlights the persistence of a vision where these countries would be quite strictly divided between communist authorities and the people that aspired to freedom.

**Od miastobójstwa do socjalistycznej metropolii. Spojrzenie szwajcarskich dziennikarzy na powojenną Warszawę (1945–1960) – streszczenie**

Warszawa drugiej połowy XX wieku była miastem, którego historia była całkowicie odmienna niż dzieje Szwajcarii w tym okresie. Podczas drugiej wojny światowej stolica Polski została w znacznym stopniu zniszczona, a tysiące ludzi zginęły, podczas gdy Szwajcaria skorzystała z ciągłości politycznej i względnego dobrobytu. Jak szwajcarscy dziennikarze i fotoreporterzy przedstawili tę inność – Warszawę i jej mieszkańców w latach 1945–1960? Celem tekstu jest podkreślenie, że zagraniczne obrazy Warszawy w rzeczywistości powstawały we współpracy szwajcarskich dziennikarzy oraz dyplomacji kulturalnej zapoczątkowanej w Polsce po 1945 roku.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Warszawa, zimna wojna, Szwajcaria, zagraniczni dziennikarze, dyplomacja kulturalna, Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa