

SELECTED ISSUES ON THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF THE UNDERGROUND PRESS

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The main role of the press published at any given time is to inform and form public opinion. The expectations are even higher from the press published in very specific situations, namely in its illegal form. It is because of such presence of the underground press, comprising around 70% of total published press that one can try to look for generalisations as to the role of the underground press, its place and the function it played on the Polish soil over the last 200 years.

The history of Poland has numerous references on theory and methodology of the underground press. It starts from Polish uprisings at the end of 18th century, goes through the occupation of Polish territories during the I World War, includes illegal publications printed between the two World Wars, the underground press during the II World War and ending with press published in the Peoples' Republic of Poland (PRL).

The underground press was always published in parallel with the official one. The latter however was always under variety of pressures from the invaders or authorities in occupation. This was by way of repression during the II Republic of Poland or using preventative censorship during the Peoples' Republic of Poland (PRL).

The underground press in Poland was always a fighting one. It came into existence in specific socio-political conditions and had to fulfil specific aims. The freedom of expression that it offered was a counterbalance for the official newspapers.

In the whole world's press history Polish secret and underground press before and during the January uprising of 1863 was a phenomena never seen on such a scale before. Especially, due to its level of coverage, influence and meaning to the whole society. To give an example only in 1863 there were 23 secret titles in circulation against 35 official ones. At that time it was a completely new way of expressing freely one's views, unknown until then. In total there were 304 issues published secretly.

It was impossible to convey the real attitude the society had towards the politics of the Russian annexer in the official titles, which were subject to preventative censorship. The national political postulates could not be exhibited there either.

Although the illegal press was published irregularly it found its way to wide audiences of Poles and played important role in political history of Polish affairs of that period through representation of variety of ideologies and political trends [1, 37]. In the later years the conspiring press was closely linked with working class parties activities and between the two World Wars with the communist movement.

Another example of such phenomena was the underground press published on occupied Polish territories during the II World War. There were 37 underground periodicals at the end of 1939 that grew to 500 by 1943 and saw over 600 periodicals published in 1944. There are estimates that between 1500 and 2000 different titles were published in total – the biggest number in Europe during the war [2]. Many of them were ephemeral in their character but some survived from the beginning of the German occupation until 1944.

That period in history of Polish underground press can be used to study the role and meaning it played for the occupied population where freedom of expression and flow of information were abused.

The beginnings of the underground press activities were typewritten copies or copied radio bulletins of purely informative character. With time however the journalists and the publishers widened their scope of interest. The war and political news appeared as well as commentaries on political and ideological articles. Many specialist periodicals were published covering such diverse topics as economy, theory on political programmes, military, the Scouts, literature, female interests, satire and many others. They were developing very quickly in their chosen areas for example there were 26 scout titles published aimed at different age groups.

The underground press played very important role in Polish resistance movement. It was a source of information mainly on fighting on the front, but also about political news, life in conspiracy and the fight of the civilian resistance [3]. The illegal print has become known as the best way to propagate notions to fighting groups and a platform to express views and attitudes. It also influenced formation of public opinion, strengthen the will to live and fight. The press was in that fight, like a sword and one of the main ways of communication through which the public learned about requirements set for them in times of war. The press was also an expression of vivified political thought in the situation where the Poles had to adapt to new conditions and create new directions in thinking taking them into the future.

In the beginning of the occupation published printed matters often became a centre around which the underground movement groups gathered. The press was the only forum where in systematic way the thoughts, political views and any instructions were expressed. It often presented a very high intellectual level. The variety of articles on political, social, cultural, and international situation could be found there as well as writings on art, economy, philosophy, history and morality.

The socio-political richness of Polish society during the wartime was the main influence on character of the Polish illegal press. Many initiatives taken to fight against the German aggressors were a specific kind of extension of pre-war political organisational structures for which the press title became a crucial element of the fight. Some of the following organisations had their own agenda on the pages of published papers: the Home Army (Armia Krajowa – AK) closely linked with the government in exile, the socialist and people's movements, the national camp, workers faction, former press of Pilsudski's camp, left wing and the Jewish groups.

The press closely linked with any political centre had twofold role to fulfil. On one hand it was a voice of one particular party on the other a universal voice directing ideas at the society as a whole. The crucial meaning of the first role was not to allow the underground party network to stiffen, to give a sense of participation in common fight and supply directions of conducting it [4]. The second role was to compete between the published titles for readers and to influence society; hence there were deformations in the printed information subordinated to the political cause. It has been visible especially at the end of the war when the underground press reflected deepening political division. It is well pictured in an appraisal formulated in 1943: "The secret press is visibly losing its character as a tool used to convey the information and apolitical fight with the enemy, moving into ideological and political tutoring of the society and clearly taking shape of political press" [5, 149].

Every newspaper and magazine published during the occupation had very strong patriotic meaning too. They helped the public to survive with dignity – offering information, advice, and warnings and passing the orders. They also influenced opinion creations and did not stay indifferent where signs of collaboration and betrayal appeared. They condemned and fought negative phenomena within the community such as black market, alcoholism and bribery. The press did not allow any of the negative signs to go without commenting on them. On the other hand they also popularised examples of good moral and ethical behaviour and patriotic norms to follow. In order to form positive attitude in conspiring soldiers and ordinary citizens the press often appealed to the national tradition, examples of courage and dedication for the country and perseverance in fight as an expression of great citizens obligation.

Most of the published press aimed to target widest possible group of people not only to inform them but also to check public opinion and to observe public reaction to what was happening.

The underground press not only conveyed the information and commented on it but it also created various ideological and organisational links between those unified in conspiring against the enemy. It offered a bond and awareness of belonging to strong organisation.

More attention could be paid to a printed matter with propaganda and diversion in mind. Aimed at the Germans in Polish occupied territories especially in the General Province (Generalne Gubernatorstwo) and later at the Wehrmacht soldiers on the front line it used psychological warfare to weaken the oppressors' spirit.

One of the most important issues were finding methods and creating the system capable of obtaining needed information, which was not easy. Most of the press had three main sources of information – listening to radio transmissions (difficult due to the Germans prior confiscation of all radio equipment), press announcements (specially published press with news dedicated to the country and the world) and their own sources of information gained by them.

There appeared quite an important problem of 'deformed information' due to selective approach to the choice of information supplied to the reader. This deformation was connected to conscious or ignorant way the information was chosen. Where some facts through subjective opinion were strongly underlined by using specially chosen words or were placed in particular place within the paper to attract desired attention. The rules governing the conspiracy made it impossible to fully express the views, they supplied guidelines as to the way the information and commentaries should be presented which made the existence of the press possible. One of the characteristics is then use of insinuations, generalisations, codes of various kinds and symbolism through text and graphics.

The publishing of the underground press is connected inseparably with the whole technical backup. This concerns the secret print rooms, their technical hardware and securing the places, paper and ink used in the process. The technologies used for publishing included the print, copying, typewriting and handwriting. One of a major problem was how to finance the publishing, as it required a substantial investment.

The secret press was created by professional journalists, who worked in the profession before the war started, but also young writers who were connected before the war with various movements and unions gathering those interested in politics, sociology, science or writing. The younger generation started to make its contributions as well.

It would be worth paying some attention to the amount of control provided over prepared for print texts. The editorial teams of papers connected with the government in exile in London followed the rule that all main topics of every printed issue were discussed every week during meetings among those appointed within cells of the Headquarters of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa – AK). Every issue was critically scrutinised, it was here that discussions about the commentaries on what was happening, suggestions on promotion of behavioural aspects and emphasis on certain topics shaped the printed material. There was no other censorship in place. Other editorial teams had similar approach leaving the editor with more or less flexibility to create the final look.

All the underground press was distributed within the conspiracy system that worked as a chain: the print room – distribution point – individual distributor. The last link would sometimes include whole families and friends. Because of that not only printing but also distribution, were the weakest points of the underground structures.

Part of the issue was targeting accidental reader by scattering the material in public places. It is a fact that single paper would often be circulated among a few or even more people but there were cases that certain issues did not reach the reader at all.

The frequency with which the papers appeared differed but the most often were weekly, bi-weekly and less regular. One issue would normally be anything from a few to 50 thousand copies. But on average it was between 200 and 1000 copies. A characteristic element of the underground press is its small format, which then allowed it to be easy hidden or transported. Very often rather poor technically graphic and editorial side was compensated by high quality content.

The secretly printed press was a permanent element of everyday life of Poles during the occupation. It was almost as its creation was a historic necessity. The underground press fulfilled many functions including educational and informational. There was propagating element in its content as well, through its socio-political influence on the forming of the general opinion. It was a very important instrument in shaping the attitudes of the society as a whole in difficult conditions during the occupation.

The archived press is one of the most important sources of historical information on the underground activities. As such it should be critically verified. The questions about the underground press authenticity and credibility should be asked, especially that there had been a correspondence between published information and the reality. That is because in conditions of illegal work the information sometimes must be consciously manipulated or the reality unconsciously deformed. Some of the examples of such misleading information could be consciously placed false or hidden elements, misleading as to the place of origin of the printed matter, the editorial team, false numbering or overstated numbers in issue and distribution.

The research of the press as a source of archived information requires recreation of the history of a particular title, establishment of the ways it was financed and organisational links it had, availability of technical support, analysis of editorial team and those who co-operated with it, level of censorship, reconstruction of methods used for content selection and also its coverage.

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The underground press played very important role in Polish resistance movement. It was a source of information. It also influenced formation of public opinion, strengthen the will to live and fight. The press was in that fight, like a sword and one of the main ways of communication through which the public learned about requirements set for them in times of war.

Every newspaper and magazine published during the occupation had very strong patriotic meaning too. They helped the public to survive with dignity-offering information, advice, warnings

underground activities. As such it should be critically verified. The questions about the underground press authenticity and credibility should be asked.

The research of the press as a source of archived information requires recreation of the history of a particular title and establishment of the ways it was financed. Also organisational links it had, availability of technical support, analysis of editorial team and those who co-operated with it, level of censorship, reconstruction of methods used for content selection and also its coverage.

POGRINDINĖS SPAUDOS TYRIMO TEORINĖS IR METODOLOGINĖS PROBLEMOS

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Santrauka

Pagrindinis spaudos uždavinys yra teikti informaciją ir formuoti viešąją nuomonę. Šie reikalavimai dar svarbesni pagrindinei spaudai. Lenkijos istorija gali pateikti daugybę nuorodų pagrindinės spaudos tyrimų teorijai ir metodologijai. Gausybę jų pateikia XVIII amžiaus pabaigos Lenkijos sukilimai, Lenkijos teritorijų okupacija per Pirmąjį pasaulinį karą, nelegalių spaudinių leidyba tarpukario laikotarpiu, pagrindinės spaudos platinimas Antrojo pasaulinio karo metais ir pagaliau Lenkijos Liaudies Respublikos pagrindinė spauda. Pagrindinė spauda sudaro apie 70 procentų visos spaudos, todėl galima bandyti apibendrinti Lenkijos pagrindinės spaudos vietą ir tikslus per pastaruosius 200 metų. Pagrindinė spauda visada buvo leidžiama lygiagrečiai su oficialiaja. Tačiau pastaroji nuolat jautė užkariautojų ar okupacines valdžios spaudimą. Jis galėjo reikštis kaip represijos Antrosios Lenkijos Respublikos metais ar kaip prevencinė cenzūra Lenkijos Liaudies Respublikos laikais.

Pagrindinė Lenkijos spauda visada buvo kovinga. Ji atsirado ypatingomis socialinėmis politinėmis sąlygomis ir siekė tam tikrų tikslų. Jos siūloma saviraiškos laisvė buvo atsvara oficialiems laikraščiams.

Lenkijos pagrindinė spauda prieš ir po 1863 metų sausio sukilimo tapo ypatingu plataus masto reiškiniu, iki tol nežinomu spaudos istorijoje. Kitas tokio reiškinio pavyzdys būtų pagrindinė spauda Lenkijos okupuotose teritorijose po Antrojo pasaulinio karo.

Pagrindinė spauda vaidino ypatingą vaidmenį Lenkijos pasipriešinimo judėjime. Ji buvo informacijos šaltinis, veikė viešąją nuomonę, stiprino norą gyventi ir kovoti. Toje kovoje spauda buvo vienas iš pagrindinių komunikacijos būdų, kuriuo visuomenė sužinodavo, kokie reikalavimai jai keliami karo metu.

Laikraščiai ir žurnalai, išleisti okupacijos sąlygomis, taip pat turėjo didelę patriotinę prasmę. Jie padėdavo visuomenei išgyventi: palaikė jos orumą, teikė patarimų, perspėjimų ir perduodavo įsakymus. Jie populiarino moralinio etinio ir patriotiško elgesio normas, kartu siekė užkirsti kelią nemoraliam elgesiui.

Archyvuose laikoma spauda yra vienas iš svarbiausių istorinės informacijos šaltinių apie pagrindinę veiklą. Todėl ją reikia vertinti kritiškai, kelti pagrindinės spaudos autentiškumo ir patikimumo klausimą.

Spaudos, kaip archyvinės informacijos, tyrimui būtina išaiškinti kiekvieno spaudinio istoriją ir finansavimo šaltinius, ryšius su organizacijomis, priegarbę prie techninių pajėgumų, išanalizuoti redaktorių kolegiją ir bendradarbius, cenzūros lygį, rekonstruoti žinių rinkimo ir turinio atrankos metodus.