

A hand in salvation or cool calculation? The role of the US humanitarian aid in shaping the American policy towards Poland (1956 -1965)

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Abstract

The article will present the role of the humanitarian aid in the process of creating the US foreign policy. The study will examine two interesting case studies: the Polish Medical Aid Project and the creation of the American Research Hospital for Children in Poland. The work will show the most important aspects of the planning and implementation of those initiatives. This approach will be aimed at answering the title question and will try to define the extent to which the humanitarian aid offered to Poland within a certain period was a political calculation. The final analysis of the congressional hearings conducted in 1962 presents and confirms the complexity of the process of helping the “Captive Nations” in Central Eastern Europe.

Keywords: American – Polish relations, humanitarian aid, psychological warfare, People-to-People diplomacy, Operations Coordinating Board, Cooperative for American Remittances Everywhere

1. Chance

The destalinisation period was seen as a great chance for significant change. Rapprochement might have led to a serious breakthrough in the Cold War. Historians are still discussing whether this chance would have been lost or if there was simply no possibility to “win” anything more. The year 1956 and Khrushchev seemed to create an environment for extending the autonomy of Eastern European countries. In Poland, after a period of turmoil, including strikes in Poznan resulting in 58 civilians killed, Wladyslaw Gomulka was able to secure his power and diplomatically prevent a Soviet intervention. Some limits regarding the Soviet tolerance of independence movements were defined in Hungary where, due to the actions of the Soviet and Hungarian forces, over 3000 people lost their lives. After the “Polish October” of 1956, which

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resembled refreshment in the internal politics, a vision of chance for a breakthrough came to people's minds. Ten years after World War II, Poland was still struggling to rebuild the country - in some cases, it was a start from the ground up. One of the main ideas of how to resolve this hard situation was an attempt to redefine relations with Western European countries. The stimulation of trade was a *sine qua non* condition for a secure and stable development. On the other hand, Poland was still on the other side of the Iron Curtain and help from the Western hemisphere, from a strategic standpoint, was not easy. From the US perspective, helping Poland was closely related to the possible advantages which the new Polish authority might bring. Americans were considering if Gomulka was willing to or if it would be possible for him to take a course towards "national communism" (similar to the Yugoslavian model), thus causing another crack in the Eastern bloc. After the Hungarian Uprising, Poland became the only power which had a chance to move towards the balance between East and West. Since October 1956, the United States, especially President Eisenhower, had been interested in providing some kind of help to Poland. After negotiations taking place between June and August 1957, two agreements were finally signed. The first one provided 300 million USD in credits through Export – Import Bank mainly for purchases of Polish capital goods (mining and agricultural machinery) and 18.9 for agricultural surpluses. The second one was based on the liberal interpretation of the 1954 Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act PL 480 (Wandycz, 1980, p. 365). This was the first sign of American engagement. Another test of American will to change the existing stalemate was yet to happen. On October 2, 1957, the Polish Foreign Affairs Minister, Adam Rapacki proposed the creation of the nuclear free zone in Central Eastern Europe.

Analyses of the US response to Rapacki Plan explain the American "grand strategy" towards Poland or Central Eastern Europe as a whole. First of all, we can say that the United States or the Eisenhower administration, and John Foster Dulles in particular, were not interested in discussing any form of disengagement. Dulles feared that any significant sign of openness to neutralisation would result in pushing the United States away from Europe. On the other hand, during his meeting with advisors, he mentioned that the USA must conduct some PR activities to show its devotion to peace and to the reduction of the arms burden (Department of State, 1958). In 1958, the National Security Council issued a document - NSC 5808/1 "US Policy towards Poland" - meant to systematise and verbalise this strategy. This document clearly shows that, in April 1958, the United States decided to pursue a track, which was calculated on using "soft" methods of supporting possible independent tendencies in Poland. The "hard" methods in this case consisted in making diplomatic efforts to promote the neutralisation of Central Europe or the creation of any other special status for countries such as Poland. Disengagement had

supporters such as George Kennan, James Warburg or Walter Lippmann, who believed that such initiatives as the Rapacki Plan might only create a framework for future discussion. The above-mentioned “soft” methods refer to economic and humanitarian aid and cultural exchange, as well as promoting cooperation between the two countries.

The verification of the article hypothesis or an attempt to answer the question in its title require a closer analysis on how those activities were coordinated, and what the mechanism of translating the humanitarian aid into political goals was. This brings the subject of propaganda and information warfare to the table. Thanks to the tremendous effort of Kenneth Osgood, we can easily understand this part of policymaking during the Eisenhower administration. The President himself was very interested in the potential and significance of psychological warfare and believed that its achievement might turn into a useful tool. The strategy towards Poland, which had been developed and presented in the NSC 5808/1 document, was about winning Polish hearts and minds; consequently, this battle had to be fought in a slightly different way than conventional conflicts. Since Stalin’s death, the United States has faced the “Soviet peaceful offensive”, which required decisive moves to avoid leaving the United States with a belligerent tag. For this purpose, Eisenhower had a strong team of professionals such as C.D. Jackson, Walter Bedell Smith, Allen Dulles or Frank Wisner, who were tasked to prepare the United States for a different action. From Eisenhower’s estimates, the Cold War was to last for a long time and the United States had to prepare for engagement not only at the military, but also at the economic and psychological levels. One of the conditions for conducting effective operations intended to achieve long term goals was to have well organised subject responsible for planning and coordination. In 1953, the Dwight Eisenhower administration created the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) that replaced the Psychological Strategy Board, which had been established under Harry Truman. The main goal of the OCB was to translate the U.S. Foreign Policy goals into operational policies (Osgood, 2006, p. 87). CIA was another important institution responsible for conducting this kind of operations (around 40-50 percent of the CIA budget in the 1950s was devoted to informational activities) (Department of State, 1958, p. 97); among them, we should mention Radio Free Europe which, since its beginning in the late 1940s had been receiving significant funding from the CIA. The other organisation (which cooperated with the CIA but was independent from it) was the United States Information Agency created in 1953 which had an operational role, for example, it supervised the radio-station Voice of America.

2. Medical aid to Poland

At the time of Gomulka’s thaw in Poland, the US government started to work on a possible solution to deter a potential Soviet aggression. On March 20,

1957 the Operations Coordination Board prepared a memo which stated that the United States should try to pursue activities to discourage Kremlin's potential invasion plans. At the same time, psychological warfare planning officers were trying to persuade the US decision makers not to create expectations or make any promises which, faced with Soviet invasion, would not be kept. Such a situation would have strongly damaged the US image at home and abroad. Of course, Americans did not let Polish people conduct any violent or unexpected moves, which might have led to Soviet intervention. The goal was to pursue long term activities, such as economic aid, to develop the necessary economic stability so that Poland would be able to go on in its own direction. OCB stated that, especially with reference to the government, the discussion had to be conducted very carefully. In this case, the great emphasis should be put on private individuals or companies, which could develop cultural, social or economic relations. The Catholic Church was also seen as a good point of contact. This way of thinking, which was actually confirmed in later documents, such as NSC 5808/1, created a framework for launching a wide range of "soft" activities, including humanitarian aid.

The Polish Medical Aid project is undoubtedly one of the most interesting and mysterious examples of initiatives focused on helping the people from Eastern European countries. American citizens would learn a little bit more about the initiative in 1958, when a short article in the press came out to light. In November 1958, Life Magazine (1958, p. 34) published two columns about the self-starting young Wall Street-er named John Richardson, Jr. who, after finding out about the hard situation in Poland, especially in terms of pharmaceutical shortages, decided to organise help. His activities were based on searching support from private organisations which would help to collect medicines. Referring to Life, Richardson was able to collect drugs worth around 2 million USD, including 900,000 vaccine shots. His initiative had been presented as an example of people to people diplomacy. In June 1958, New York Times (1958) mentioned John Richardson who, after his visit in Poland a year before, decided to resolve Polish "medical problems". Boston Globe (1958) tells a little bit more about the philanthropist, who decided to bring relief to Poles in cooperation with the Cooperative for American Remittances Everywhere humanitarian agency, which was founded in 1945. Richardson, a Harvard Law School Alumni, grew up in Milton, Massachusetts and, according to the newspaper, the gift he offered Poland was unique (Poland was the only Soviet Bloc country which received sets of polio shots for children). However, it is hard to find a logical explanation to why an American philanthropist became so interested in helping Polish citizens in Press publications. In an interview conducted in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, John Richardson mentioned that Eastern Europe was a matter of his interest which emerged after his meeting with Polish families and refugees.

After 1956, he tried to organise help for Hungarians and, after that, for Poles. In fact, we should remember that the PMAP was inspired by another humanitarian initiative called International Rescue Committee which tried to act as a moral support to the Polish people after the riots in Poznan in August 1956. The political aim of the IRC was to support and pursue free elections in Poland, which were supposed to take place in October or November. The other initiatives were aimed at sending medication and food to hospitals and people (DDEL, 1956a). This corresponded to the Operations Coordinating Board documents which discussed some possible further steps regarding the Poznan crisis, actions in the United Nations (General Assembly, UN Disarmament commission) and encouraging the Polish emigrant representatives to send surplus food and other supplies to Poland (including medication) (DDEL, 1956b). From this perspective, we can observe a clear connection between the IRC and PMAP idea. What is extremely interesting, the founder of PMAP knew Allen Dulles, Head of the CIA, in person (thanks to his father). In the interview, he mentioned that he used this contact to help his initiative get recognition and funds. Moreover, during his pre-philanthropy career, he worked at the law firm Sullivan and Cromwell, together with Karl Harr, who, in 1958, became special Assistant to the President for Security Operations Coordination and vice chairman of the Operations Coordinating Board. Richardson underlines that Harr, before joining the administration, had a crazy idea of using East European refugees to infiltrate and cause troubles to the Soviets (Richardson, 1999).

According to the sources, John Richardson's "call" to help emerged suddenly. Relying on his personal interests and former experience with Polish people, he decided to start a project designed to deliver humanitarian aid to Poland. The key mechanism was to use the CARE organisation as a "manager" of the program (what is important, they had an office in Warsaw at that time), while Richardson and his Polish Medical Aid Project (PMAP), was responsible for providing medicaments and negotiating with Polish authorities, especially with the Minister of Social Welfare, Stanislaw Zawadzki. Indeed, the agreement which made initiative possible was signed by Minister Zawadzki and John Richardson, while the distribution of help was entrusted to CARE (DDEL, 1958).

The executive board of the PMAP was extremely content with the outcomes of their efforts to distribute pharmaceuticals in Poland. "The needs, humanitarian, psychological and political in Poland are as acute as ever – in some aspects much more so", said John Richardson in the report.

The satisfaction of psychological and political needs in this context does not clearly sound like a pure and innocent will to bring salvation to the Poles. However, although Richardson might have had the best intentions, it looks like he also understood the other sides of his activities. This statement can be supported by the fact that, in 1961, he became the President of the National Committee for a Free Europe which was, among others, responsible for

managing and coordinating Radio Free Europe activities. Moreover, C.D. Jackson, an expert on the psychological warfare in the Eisenhower administration, was a member of the PMAP board, which underlines the significance and political role of the charity organisation.

The positive effects of the joint (with CARE) medical/humanitarian campaign in Poland have been interpreted by the administration as one of the factors which improved the image of Americans among Polish people. The enthusiastic welcome of Vicepresident Richard Nixon in Warsaw in August 1959, characterised in reports as “the greatest welcome ever accorded a representative of the West behind the Iron Curtain”, was interpreted as an important argument to support the above thesis. Nixon was so content that he decided to accept and send an endorsement letter to Francis Boyer, Co-chairman of PMAP, to express his gratitude and confidence regarding the humanitarian activities. The PMAP was also taking a good care of their own business by producing folders and information sheets where people interested in the program could read excerpts of letters from various Polish welfare units and ordinary people thankful for the American help. Moreover, after receiving a letter from Richard Nixon, Francis Boyer immediately asked for permission to use it for publicity purposes. This shows one of the tactics of the PMAP - while they were trying to get pharmaceuticals from the companies, they were presenting credentials from high government officials (DDEL, 1959a). There is no strong evidence on whether the companies were trying to get something in return or whether the fact that the campaign was supported by the President was seen as a possibility to conduct lobbying activities. However, the strong approval from the White House certainly encouraged companies to contribute (DDEL, 1959b). On the other hand, Richardson stated that everything worked well thanks to his good connections in the drug industry and, with regard to Poland, he was sometimes receiving phone calls from their representatives with information on those willing to offer donations or help/surplus.

In the letters, which had been sent to companies to gain support, the PMAD board mentioned that the United States could not repeat its mistake (Hungarian case) and that, this time, it should use its resources to conduct a consistent policy. One of the most important messages in the documents was devoted to arguments showing that the post 1956 situation in Poland, which had been defined as an example of a relatively liberal political order, created serious and visible opportunities. In the author’s opinion, from a geostrategic point of view, those outcomes constituted a serious threat to the Soviet control throughout Easter Europe (DDEL, 1959c). They suggested that, by helping Polish people, Americans should not leave them alone and that this might support the process of changing the situation in the region, at the same time deterring the possibility of Soviet aggression. The value of this argument greatly

enhanced the after “Sputnik crisis” in 1957, when it seemed that the strategic balance turned to be in favour of Moscow.

In order to create a firm information policy, the Polish Medical Aid Project executives decided to prepare questions and answers (Q&A) documents, which is very interesting in the analysis process of their aims. First of all, they stated that the PMAP would not have any effect on the Polish economy (would not support it), and that the key factor in this case was the morale of Polish people, nothing else. Of course, pharmaceutical companies might have been afraid of losing potential customers, but in this case, there was a paragraph in the agreement signed by Zawadzki and Richardson which clarified that Poland could not decrease the level of medicaments import while receiving humanitarian aid. Fortunately, the documents answer the most important question: since help was so important, why did not the US government take care of that? (DDEL, 1957a).

The answer is very important in terms of identifying the role of humanitarian aid in the whole context of the policy towards Poland. At the time of the Eisenhower administration, one of the key roles in the process of creating a psychological warfare strategy was played by private cooperation which was later on named or identified as the “People-to-People” diplomacy. This approach could also be placed under the statement made by Kenneth Osgood: “Every man an Ambassador”. Activities conducted by individuals were believed to be more efficient from a psychological point of view while many of them only appeared like spontaneous acts of American goodwill, having their foundations in the USIA or CIA (Osgood, 2006, p. 241).

When analyzing PMAP, we find evidence that at the beginning of the program, in 1957, it was not fully supported by the whole US Government. In a letter to the Special Assistant to the President, Fred M. Dearborn, the US Secretary of Commerce, Charles Sinclair Weeks stated that, despite the fact that the initiatives conducted by PMAP might be interesting and helpful, he did not feel comfortable with creating the impression that the United States Government was encouraging or even pushing the drug industry to participate in the program (DDEL, 1957b). This argument meets Kenneth Osgood’s observations that, in the process of planning and implementing humanitarian initiatives, only a limited number of subjects were aware of its psychological meaning.

On October 2, 1957, the director of the United States Information Agency sent an enthusiastic letter to the Special Assistant to the President, Fred M. Dearborn, saying that Richardson’s idea was “an excellent one” and should be correlated with the “People-to-People” program (DDEL, 1957c). This statement displayed a desire of particular members of the US administration to connect PMAP to its flag “informational program” and undoubtedly showed that humanitarian aid was the crucial element in the psychological warfare,

especially since the range of possibilities to gain influence on the CEE was very limited.

The encouraging and supporting voices also came from the United States Department of State, but it was not (as neither was it in the case of PMAP) directly involved in planning and executing activities of this type on a regular basis (DDEL, 1957d). The other track leads to a memorandum from September 1957 (the document is undated, but other documents referring to it are dated September and October 1957), where Richardson was presenting background information on the program. He mentions the people he consulted while developing an idea, among them, prominent individuals from the CIA, OCB and USIA. Again, we can read that, despite saving lives, the program “would also have tremendous impact on the Polish public opinion” (DDEL, 1957b).

3. American research hospital for children in Poland

Officially, the idea of building a hospital in Poland had appeared and developed in Wladyslaw Biernacki-Poray’s mind since 1958. According to various sources, the 34-year-old Polish born architect came up with this idea after a traumatic experience with his sick daughter in the US. He then realised that he must do something through the aid of the US government and CARE to resolve this terrible situation in the medical system in his home country, where the quality of healthcare was a lot poorer.

The project of the hospital is a very interesting case study on how the US government, with the help of private and public organisations, tried to conduct programs which could lead to multidimensional profits. While the idea came from Biernacki-Poray, the startup of the project was possible thanks to the United States Department of State 50,000 USD grant for CARE to conduct the preliminary planning. The first outcome was the report issued in May 1960 which presented the final assumption and ideas. The hospital was planned to be donated to the Medical Academy of the Jagiellonian University of Krakow as a gift from the American people. The estimated cost of the project was set up at the 4,610,000 USD. The sum to be paid by ordinary US taxpayers via the US Department of State was not initially mentioned (in a separate column). At the beginning, the ground breaking was scheduled for spring 1960 and the project was planned to be completed in 1963, during the 600th anniversary celebration of Krakow University. The location of the hospital was not accidental because the investment was seen as a part of a long term (10 years) development plan. Accordingly, the US planners were confident that it might give some benefits, such as cost sharing, in terms of providing infrastructure and construction equipment from the local administration (through University). The building materials, especially steel structures, were planned to be supplied by Polish companies, the steel mill in Nowa Huta and by Mostostal.

Apart from the new medical equipment, which represented the state of the art in technology, the constructors planned to introduce new construction techniques. Referring to the report, even the very first basic drawings of the hospital stirred significant interest, especially the steel – cantilever frame, flat roof or curtain walls. American planners undoubtedly wanted to create, beyond a nation-wide, an international interest, especially since it was planned to be one of the most modern (if not the most modern) hospitals and research centres in the region. 320 hospital beds, diagnostic laboratories, a wide range of X-ray facilities – these are only some features which were aimed at creating the appropriate environment for conducting teaching and research in the field of children's diseases.

Of course, the demonstration of American “goodwill” played a key role, but in this case the designers tried to present their idea from a slightly different angle. In this case, the hospital was seen as something exceptional also due to its modern character and potential capabilities in academic “know how” and equipment dimension. Because of that, Americans believed “it will be easier to convince people that in fact there are no “strings” attached to the program”. The name and idea suggest that the project was a joint effort, but while the initial part of the construction was mainly financed by the United States, the whole administration and future governance of the new institution was planned to be in Polish hands (Alderfer, E.G., Biernacki-Poray, W. O., CARE Inc., 1960). One of the important facts from a legal standpoint is that the construction and the whole project could be started under the provisions of Section 400 of the Mutual Security Act of 1959 authorising the use of local currencies for the purpose of building hospitals. This regulation was very convenient because the US government could technically use Polish currency, which would have been acquired, for example, thanks to the sales of agricultural commodities under P.L.480 regulation. However, US dollars had to be used as well, for instance, to pay for the advanced medical equipment purchased from the US or for the salaries of the US personnel involved in the project.

The idea of constructing the hospital was very interesting but still needed strong support to reach the execution stage. The committee for the American Research Hospital for Children in Poland (AMRHC) consisted of people representing various government departments and entities (Frank Church – a Senator from Idaho, Walter Judd – a Congressman from Minnesota, Clement Zablocki - a Congressman from Wisconsin) and non-government institutions, as well as academics, private companies or magazines (Norman Cousins, Saturday Review, Gardner Cowles, Cowles Magazines). The architectural project and consultation were provided by Wladek Biernacki - Poray of W.O. Biernacki Poray and Associates (DDEL, 1959d). The main goal of the committee was fund raising (since it was designed as a non-governmental project) and creating a framework for cooperation between American and Polish governments.

Politicians involved in the project were obviously providing the necessary political help, using their connections and experience. Yet, the hospital was not only a complicated project because of its international or more precisely, trans-iron-curtain character. The investment needed government support; therefore, the Congressmen and Senators, who kept an eye on the initiative in Washington D.C., also played an important role. Logically, there were many politicians both in the Administration and Congress who had different ideas regarding the aid for the “captive nations” and who were even openly against it. In the report published by CARE, we find the final roster of the executive committee of the hospital project. Wladyslaw Biernacki - Poray, born in Lwow, studied architecture in Rome and London, and started to practice it in the United States to finally become chairman. He was supported by Stanley Nowak, Head of the Polish Institute of Arts and science in the USA and Richard Reuter, Executive Director of CARE, was one of the main executors of the project. The executive committee was supplemented by John Richardson, Jr. and his close partner from PMAP and later Radio Free Europe, John Cage. Undoubtedly, they knew how to conduct humanitarian aid projects in Poland, which for practical/administrative purposes were obviously advantageous. However, we should not forget about their knowledge and understanding of psychological warfare which, in this case, was undoubtedly essential.

The situation in Poland after the War was shocking. After fifteen years of reconstruction in a socialist manner, any form of help was still of an enormous value there. Poland did not have enough hospitals and 62% of the medical personnel in 1957 had got their qualifications after the World War II; consequently, most of them were under 30 years old (Alderfer et al., 1960, p.6). Thus, the hospital was meant not only to cure children but also to provide for qualified staff, which was extremely needed.

The American Research Hospital in Krakow was undoubtedly one of the priority humanitarian aid projects conducted by the United States in Poland; therefore, the change of administration and political turmoil did not hinder the idea (Alderfer et al., 1960, p.14). The primary aim of finishing the construction for the noble anniversary was not eventually achieved, but looking back at this initiative it should not be regarded critically. In 5 years (1960 – 1965), the US congress provided 10.4 million USD for the project, while the Polish government’s contribution (land and services) reached around 1 million USD. The American sponsoring committee, together with various private donors, provided the equivalent of 1 more million USD. The first children patients were admitted to the new hospital in January 1966 (Morgan et al, 1966, p. 2).

The official dedication of the hospital took place on December 11, 1965. From archive documents and various publications related to the psychological warfare and propaganda, we acknowledge that the initiatives such as building a hospital on the other side of the Iron Curtain was something significant enough

to prepare a good information strategy. In his speech, the US Ambassador to Poland, John Gronouski, mentioned that both sides, American and Polish, have “joined their hands to work together for the health of our children” (Morgan et al, 1965, p.9). Grounouski also stated that the hospital project might be the beginning of a new chapter in Polish – American relations. He seemed to be trying to point out that the world situation was complicated and that there were many issues causing dialogue problems. Besides, Gronouski appealed to both countries to focus on other dilemmas and on trying to defeat sickness and diseases. The speech he delivered was a very important message to the Polish people, and it could be interpreted as “do not focus on Cold War propaganda and do not think about future conflict because there are more important things that mark the beginning a new chapter”. The significance of this message is even greater if we consider that the United States did not have much more to offer, especially in a political sense. This was a very coherent move aimed at presenting the United States as a peace loving nation. In the letter sent by Senator Herbert Humphrey, he uttered a statement which fits Grounouski’s manifest - “Health for Peace” [it seems to be clearly referring to Eisenhower’s “Atoms for Peace”]. However, it is good to remember that Eisenhower’s program was mostly based on propaganda.

4. To help or not to help

The onset of the John F. Kennedy administration theoretically created a possibility to change or adjust the US policy towards Central Eastern Europe. A number of interesting documents related to the question of helping the countries from the other side of the Iron Curtain were issued during that period. In terms of humanitarian aid towards Poland, one of the most interesting sources would be a report prepared by the Congressman from Wisconsin, Clement Zablocki, who was seriously involved in the American Research Hospital Program, in 1961. In his report, Zablocki stated that indeed, the situation in Poland had changed since 1956 in favour of democracy, but that still in many cases democracy was mostly on paper. He provided interesting data related to the import and export from Poland in 1956. Poland imported goods for over 3 million USD in 1957 and this number rose to 143 million in 1960. At the same time, Polish export to the United States did not rise so dramatically, being estimated to 28 million in 1956 and to 38 million in 1960 (Zablocki, 1961). It is easy to calculate from these numbers that Polish export to the United States did not increase as dramatically as US export to Poland. After a quick calculation, the first idea coming to mind is that the United States had more money for aid and could fund various operations, including humanitarian ones, but should we consider the assistance to Poland as a US priority? The question of distribution and unwillingness to help the “communists” was still on the table.

Zablocki warned and reminded that aid should be directed only to certain subjects and definitely could not help or advance government initiatives such as “collectivisation”. In relation to humanitarian aid, the formula (PL 480) was considered to be the right option in pursuing the operations. The report once again proves that, from the US perspective, the most effective way to conduct exchange and assistance programs is continuous cooperation with private American organisations. This approach gives more chances for the aid to reach the desired recipient.

From June to September 1962, a Subcommittee on Europe, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, was conducting a series of hearings to review the current aid policy. This can be interpreted as one of the elements of the “Captive Nations” strategy verification process. Although the arguments presented in Congress do not display any secret tactics of psychological warfare, they present many interesting opinions on how the humanitarian aid was conducted and on its correlation with other initiatives. More importantly, those hearings also show a very important perspective of the Polish side on the American approach to the problem. They demonstrate that humanitarian aid also played an important role in other activities conducted by the radio station Voice of America – one of the most important tools of USIA – and Radio Free Europe.

First of all, we receive evidence that humanitarian aid and its achievements were important from the informational purpose perspective. The main task of the two broadcasters was to make sure that people from the other side of the Iron Curtain would understand whom the humanitarian aid was coming from. Poland was in fact a very good place to conduct such activities. According to Henry Loomis, director of the Voice of America, after the “Polish October” of 1956, Poland stopped jamming American broadcasters and the only jamming signals came from the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia (US Congress, 1962, p. 5). It is worth acknowledging Loomis’s statement in which he said almost directly that, in terms of broadcasting, there was not much room for any extracurricular activities since the radio had to pursue clear actions compatible with the US Government and the Department of State guidelines (US Congress, 1962, p. 17). Still, during Congress hearings, American diplomats were concerned that any form of liberalisation in Poland without direct military action would be impossible. What was missing here, from the strategic perspective, was again a clear plan or at least a statement on what the goals in CEE were and how they were supposed to be achieved. The basic idea in terms of winning hearts and minds was to preserve Polish nationalism which, for some Congressmen, was a significant factor for the national identity that did not accept communist supremacy. The core of this identity was related to religious beliefs and automatically to the Catholic Church and its powerful impact on society. From this perspective, one of the key values in understanding this process is connected to the statements of John Richardson, Jr. who switched

from humanitarian aid organiser to director of Radio Free Europe. This professional transition undoubtedly proves that Richardson not only performed his task “very well” but he also understood how the activities towards the “Captive Nations” should be conducted or simply how to prioritise and use factors, such as humanitarian aid, in the whole context of his information campaign. His statement, which has been previously cited, related to the positive “informational and psychological” effects of the PMAP shows that he had been thinking like an information strategist long before he joined Radio Free Europe. The chief of CIA, Allen Dulles, personally called Paine and Webber (employee of Richardson in 1961) to tell them that John Richardson should change his professional direction because of national security reasons (Richardson, 1999). I believe that Allen Dulles’ opinion on Richardson was based on a clear evaluation of the PMAP activities. In Congress, Richardson did not want to talk about specific tactics or the new approach to European problem, but he said something obvious and, to some extent, meaningless, in other words: “let’s do something, because we have to pursue the cause of freedom” (US Congress, 1962, p. 31). He might therefore have understood that the initiatives conducted by the United States were not efficient enough. Richardson mentioned that one of the best and “in spec” most successful project, which could be placed under the “People-to-People” diplomacy logo, was the American Research Hospital for Children in Poland. In his opinion, this initiative would clearly demonstrate Polish - American cooperation with regard to its most generous case. The strong point of this concept was seen not only in the “building” per se, but was understood as a solid fundament and longstanding symbol of the US dedication. Timing was also important because Poland, which was going through a real austerity period, would receive significant help. It showed that the Western world did not turn its back on Poland (US Congress, 1962, p. 47). The discussion conducted during this hearing was strongly related to the huge one on the US foreign aid between President J.F. Kennedy administration and the Congress. The first big threat to the future humanitarian aid was, for example, the resistance of Senators Frank Lausche and William Proxmire who opposed the administration’s request to help Yugoslavia under the Lausche - Proxmire amendment. For people like Richardson, the Senate’s limited assistance was a step in the wrong direction. Congressman Robert Barry from New York, who was present at the hearing, added that during his last visit to Poland, one of the “communist leaders” told him: “Do not forget us” (US Congress, 1962, p. 51).

The internal debates in Washington related to aid and humanitarian programs raised arguments which actually originated and supported initiatives such as the Lausche - Proxmire amendment. The most important one was still related to the question whether the US foreign aid supported communist regimes or helped ordinary people?

With reference to Poland, one of the discussed projects was the US help to acquire tin plating line for Lenin steel works in Nowa Huta. Obviously, this project had a firm economic character but humanitarian aid was correlated with other types of US foreign assistance. The question on what kind of help was within the framework was not easy to answer and required possibly independent opinions or simply some insight from the region.

To answer that question, the Committee on Foreign Affairs decided to invite Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, former Polish Prime Minister (1943-1944) in exile who, after the Second World War, was forced to flee to the United States because of the communists' plans to arrest him. Even though Mikołajczyk did not become a leader and did not enjoy any strong political support, he still had a great understanding of what was going on in Poland. Moreover, he knew secrets of the diplomacy at the highest levels since he had participated and witnessed the process of negotiations with the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Of course, his relations and ideas should be analysed with regard to their emotional character or, more precisely, to his personal approach to the issues.

Mikołajczyk's initial statement was based on countering the American assumption that by building up Poland "strong enough", its ties to Moscow would thus become loose. He also stated that he had witnessed discussions between the Polish prominent communist, Hilary Minc (Prime Minister of Economic Affairs in 1944-1949) and Josef Stalin. From Mikołajczyk's relations, Stalin told Minc that Poland should apply for American loans and then share potential incomes with its closest ally. This statement raises doubts on whether Poland actually rejected the Marshall Plan mainly due to the "advice from Moscow". It should be underlined that he might have heard this discussion (probably somewhere in 1944-1946), since then Soviet policy in this regard might change significantly. Mikołajczyk explained that even though Poland received significant help from the West, it would still need to be strongly involved in trade with the Soviet Union which, euphemistically put, was hardly profitable. According to his data, Poland paid 95,11 rubles for 60 tons of kerosene while, for the same amount, Soviets charged Italy 51,21 rubles, Japan 49,03 rubles and Argentina 44,24 rubles. This example was used to illustrate that even though western countries had provided significant aid of any kind, it would not have changed anything. According to previously analysed documents related to OCB activities towards Poland, the help should have been conducted via the "people to people" channel instead of through diplomatic initiatives which might have provoked the Soviet Union or „undermined” its control or influence in Central Eastern Europe. To Mikołajczyk, such a policy was terribly wrong, because any settlements between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries behind the Iron Curtain would create an impression of silent acceptance of the status quo. Such a declaration or statement would have or had significant consequences, including the endorsement of the Soviet governance in Poland.

Former Polish Prime Minister stated that this political and strategic stalemate could not be compensated by a food surplus delivery (US Congress, 1962, p. 64). This approach might sound a little bit naive for an experienced political leader who, to some extent, observed the negotiation path which left Poland under the Soviet influence. He should not have expected that the United States would put at stake an open conflict or a serious deterioration in the relations with the Soviet Union only to support Polish liberation. Given the access to primary sources which clearly show the American moderate and careful approach to the CEE politics, we should not look at this problem from today's perspective. Besides, Mikolajczyk's statement in front of the Congress Foreign Affairs committee had a very significant meaning because it indicated explicitly that the US government initiatives aimed at helping the Captive Nations were simply too moderate or too guarded.

I think that we should keep in mind the article by Walter Lippmann who aptly caught the most important sense of the situation showing that any kind of disengagement or a new opening in Central Eastern Europe would not be possible without sacrifice, although not necessarily seen as "boundless" sacrifice (such as war) (Lippmann, 1958). From a strategic point of view, changing the situation in Central Eastern Europe during the Kennedy Administration was related to lowering the Soviet influence in the region, which could not be achieved without a serious estimation of the possible profits and losses on the other fronts. The other question is if, at that time, such an agreement was possible, especially since after the Cuban Missile and Berlin Crises, the USA was considering "disengagement" with the Soviet Union, which did not leave much space for dialogue. Taking into account those circumstances - was the US humanitarian aid to Poland completely useless?

Before answering this question the focus should be placed on another problem raised by Mikolajczyk, related to its organisation and distribution. In his opinion, the United States should put more emphasis on the question of lowering custom tariffs on packages sent by American individuals from the United States. Inviting the Catholic Church to the process of aid distribution should also play an important role. He generally tried to convince Congress that the help they provide should be monitored and distributed without communist help, or their prerogatives should be lessened significantly. The same thing applied to credits for farmers and fellowships for students. The admission process (of candidates) should be done in the United States, in order to offer equal opportunities. The Committee invited Jan Karski to the following hearing. He was a Georgetown Professor and one of the most noble and best known Polish freedom fighters, who played a key role in unmasking German atrocities during the Second World War. Karski also pointed out that help should be directed towards the Catholic Church including the Catholic University at Lublin (KUL) and towards other non-communist social and cultural groups. He saw KUL as an institution with

independent scholarship programs which could be a start-up for Polish independent and critical thinking (US Congress, 1962, p. 5). In his statement, Biernacki - Poray emphasised the very important role of the cultural exchange as well. He shared his experiences and observations from his visits and lectures in Poland where he had received a great feedback from the scholars and engineers participating in various forms of cultural exchange programs. He also described the mechanism by giving the example of an engineer who had an opportunity to visit the United States in 1952 and who, 10 years later, became a leading specialist in the field of bridges and tunnels construction (US Congress, 1962, p. 101). These people were the force which might bring the “wind of change” or support this process in a decisive moment. What is even more interesting, Biernacki - Poray or other people like Congressman Zabłocki thought that the United States “should not be really concerned so much about who comes here to the United States from Poland so long as we make it possible for them to see what we want them to see, because the United States is like a clinic of democracy” (US Congress, 1962, p. 101). This kind of approach sounds a little bit arrogant and it is simply not true. The anti-American movement among scholars sharing their thoughts after their visit to the USA is a topic for a different publication, but an example might be Longin Pastusiak (1970) who studied at Woodrow Wilson School of Foreign Affairs and at the University of Virginia in the late 1950s. His book, entitled *What about America? Reflections from a trip to the United States*, shows that it could be seen as terminally ill patient who cannot be helped at the clinic of democracy (however Pastusiak changed his opinion after 1989, becoming a Polish delegate to various committees in NATO).

For Americans, the question of distribution was also important because the aim of winning Polish hearts and minds could only be conquered if aid recipients understood or identified the sender or provider. There is a big difference when somebody receives treatment or medication from an American hospital to when one uses or consumes a final product (such as bread) which has been produced thanks to the US support (US Congress, 1962, p. 84). That is why initiatives such as children’s hospital in Krakow seemed to be a “public relation” nugget. The project and construction became so popular that construction management had to set up a special office to conduct guided tours to the site. Polish people were approaching the offices of the construction committee, asking for materials regarding the United States. From the PR perspective, children summer camps were also seen as a great humanitarian investment. In this case, children who received food distributed by CARE knew (as well as their parents) that help came from the United States. At the same time, there was only a small risk that those kids were selected and sent to those camps on purpose (US Congress, 1962, p. 102). Moreover, Biernacki - Poray underlined the fact that food played an important role in terms of amending the moral

condition of the Polish nation. These observations came to his mind after several discussions with Polish church representatives who claimed that food shortage creates an environment that has a bad influence on the society.

Discussing any kind of aid, including humanitarian, there is always a question of its limits, frequency, scope and time frame. In the case of Polish Medical Aid Project, one of the fundamental statements to burst pharmaceutical companies' incentives was a message that the US humanitarian aid would not have any influence on the potential decrease of Polish medicament import. Karski also mentioned this case, showing that the humanitarian and economic aid to Poland made sense only under certain circumstances and should be immediately stopped as soon as it was clear that it would bring profits to the communist government for it should help Polish people, not government. However, in his testimony, he formulated a couple of controversial statements. Definitely, one of them should be analysed more carefully. Assuming that the United States would realise that the humanitarian aid to Poland had been used incompatibly with its former assumptions, the situation was not that simple. In Karski's opinion, in such a situation, the US Government should send a direct message to the Polish government and people in Poland to clarify that any help would be withheld: "We want to help you, we have plenty in this blessed country to help you but because of your Government we can't help you" (US Congress, 1962, p. 95).

His certainty that the Polish people would understand this is the most controversial aspect here. To prove or to simply illustrate the level of his nation's ability to sacrifice, he mentioned a story reaching back to the World War II when he was conducting courier missions of the highest priority for the Polish government in exile. He stated that despite the fact that Poland had suffered a lot during the War, in 1943, the Polish nation was still ready to sacrifice and continue to weaken Germany and Russia by extending war. The instructions he received, stated: "We don't want to impose our suffering on the allied strategy. The final goal is important. We have suffered much, but we will suffer more to make freedom and democracy safe" (US Congress, 1962, p. 95). This statement sounds like a great testimony, not only related to Polish patriotism, but also its dedication to fulfilling allied obligations in the fight for a common cause. Was it really legitimate, however, to say that this way of thinking was common for the majority of Polish people at that time? It is very doubtful.

5. Two sides of the coin

The answer to the question pointed out in the title of this article, is (not surprisingly) not going to be unequivocal, nor definite. Was the American humanitarian aid a hand in salvation? Undoubtedly yes! Indeed, the medical aid delivered to Poland saved many lives and the hospital in Krakow has been a

leading institution for paediatrics since 1965. The United States did not forget about the initiative and the hospital was visited several times by the US Presidents (Ford and Bush) or even by the Pope John Paul II. In 1974, the US government established HOPE foundation, which continued the US commitment to improve and upgrade hospital facilities. Was the American humanitarian aid an element of cool political calculation? The article consists in analyses based on a number of case studies which were bound to answer the above question. I decided to use multiple sources in order to see the issue from various perspectives. Summing up, we have to understand that this subject has many layers. As seen in the article, the most important humanitarian aid initiatives were conducted by organisations managed not only by philanthropists but also by psychological warfare specialists. The connections between John Richardson and the intelligence community are evident and not debatable. In most reports and top secret memoranda, the psychological benefits of the humanitarian aid were seen as a priority while the welfare of Polish citizens, on the other hand, was on the second place. The battle for Polish hearts and minds was an attempt to get “the biggest bang for a buck”, i.e. causing “the biggest crack” in the Eastern Block without risking serious political consequences. It is really hard to say if this policy was wrong because more resolute diplomatic movements might have led to confrontation. Because of the above assumptions and other various geopolitical factors, disengagement in Central Eastern Europe was definitely not a US priority. Humanitarian aid, as well as economic aid, was calculated on maintaining an impression that the United States did not forget about the Polish people, that even ordinary Americans wanted to help them. This approach was definitely correct from a psychological perspective, but coming back to Stanislaw Mikołajczyk’s statement, those activities could not bring significant change. The United States did not want Poles to think that “the Western world turned their back on them”. Humanitarian aid in the context of American foreign policy was undoubtedly an initiative to convince them to think the opposite.

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