

3-6-2018

Dignity Takings in Communist Poland: Collectivization and Slave Soldiers

Ewa Kozerska
Opole University

Piotr Stec
Opole University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cklawreview>



Part of the [Comparative and Foreign Law Commons](#), [European Law Commons](#), and the [Property Law and Real Estate Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ewa Kozerska & Piotr Stec, *Dignity Takings in Communist Poland: Collectivization and Slave Soldiers*, 92 Chi.-Kent L. Rev. 1115 (2018).

Available at: <https://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cklawreview/vol92/iss3/19>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Commons @ IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chicago-Kent Law Review by an authorized editor of Scholarly Commons @ IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law. For more information, please contact jwenger@kentlaw.iit.edu, ebarney@kentlaw.iit.edu.

DIGNITY TAKINGS IN COMMUNIST POLAND: COLLECTIVIZATION AND SLAVE SOLDIERS

EWA KOZERSKA*
PIOTR STEC**

I. INTRODUCTION

The end of World War II meant huge political changes in Poland. The country—whose population was decimated, whose elites were deliberately murdered, and whose government was exiled—became part of the Soviet Bloc. In other words, the country, crushed by the Nazi totalitarianism, became part of a communist totalitarian system. It is not our goal here to explain the nature of both totalitarianisms; however, a short explanation of the communist version of “law-in-books v. law-in-action” dichotomy is needed.

In the communist doctrine, law was a tool of domination by the ruling class. That meant, among other things, that the judge or a party or government official could disregard black letter law if she saw fit. It also meant that the government could use any rule against a citizen if the citizen was a “class enemy”—a person belonging to a social group considered dangerous for stability of the state.¹ Since the communists claimed to have a winning formula for a perfect society, anyone who could prove otherwise was a potential threat. Other potential threats were people who could be leaders of opposition; in a supposedly perfect society, a person who wants to set things differently must be a natural enemy. However, class enemies have not always been persecuted or put on trial just for being enemies. Usually, there was a completely imaginary reason for persecution supported by false evidence. So one could be tried for anything from sabotage to espionage, but rarely for not approving communism. Sometimes, laws aimed at persecution of certain social groups seemed neutral and legitimate. And often it was not the law on the books, but the way it was applied, that made persecution possible. Thus, a lawyer or legal historian working with legal docu-

* Assistant Professor, Opole University Faculty of Law and Administration.

** Professor extraordinarius and Dean of Laws, Opole University Faculty of Law and Administration

1. Krystyna Trembicka, *Kategoria Wroga Klasowego w Komunistycznej Polsce w Latach 1956–89*, 21 ANNALES UMCS LUBLIN-POLONIA 105, 109 (2014).



ments of this era must be aware that what he reads is not always what really happened.

The concept of dignity takings developed by Bernadette Atuahene can be used to explain part of what happened in Poland during the Communist era. The idea of illegal or unconstitutional takings is something with which lawyers in Europe are more than familiar. Throughout the twentieth century, many European countries had authoritarian governments, and many were occupied by what we refer today as “rogue nations.” Illegal takings were only a part of this period of history. Continental lawyers dealing with the aftermath of illegal takings focus mostly on the technical and procedural methods of returning illegally seized property.² The value of Professor Atuahene’s method of analyzing and defining illegal takings is adding the dignity component to this debate. Dignity takings are defined as situations “when a state directly or indirectly destroys property or confiscates various property rights from owners or occupiers and the intentional or unintentional outcome is dehumanization or infantilization.”³

In this paper, we would like to focus on two forms of dignity takings under communism in Poland: military service of “class enemies,” and collectivization, i.e., forcing farmers and landowners to surrender their property to the state. Both forms of takings have led to treating “class enemies” as second-class citizens; the latter case also unintentionally led to infantilization of workers in state-owned and cooperative farms.

“Class enemy” is a term used in communist newspeak.⁴ It corresponds well with the notion of the “objective enemy” introduced by Hannah Arendt.⁵ An objective enemy can be defined as a person or group of persons (including but not limited to social classes, as well as ethnic and religious communities) declared by the state as the ultimate enemy of the government and social order. The criteria for labelling someone as an objective

2. Cf. e.g., Piotr Stec, *Reprivatisation of Nationalised Property in Poland*, in 1 MODERN STUDIES IN PROPERTY LAW 357 (Elizabeth Cooke ed., 2002); LIVIU DAMSA, *THE TRANSFORMATION OF PROPERTY REGIMES AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE: IN SEARCH OF A THEORY* (2017); DARIUSZ WALENCIK, *REWINDYKACJA NIERUCHOMOŚCI KOŚCIOŁA KATOLICKIEGO W POSTĘPOWANIU PRZED KOMISJĄ MAJĄTKOWĄ* (2008); DARIUSZ WALENCIK, *NIERUCHOMOŚCI KOŚCIOŁA KATOLICKIEGO W POLSCE W LATACH 1918–2012: REGULACJE PRAWNE-NACJONALIZACJA-REWINDYKACJA* (2013).

3. Bernadette Atuahene, *Takings as a Sociolegal Concept: An Interdisciplinary Examination of Involuntary Property Loss*, 12 ANN. REV. L. & SOC. SCI. 171, 178 (2016); see also Bernadette Atuahene, *Dignity Takings and Dignity Restoration: Creating a New Theoretical Framework for Understanding Involuntary Property Loss and the Remedies Required*, 41 LAW & SOC. INQUIRY 796 (2016); BERNADETTE ATUAHENE, *WE WANT WHAT’S OURS: LEARNING FROM SOUTH AFRICA’S LAND RESTITUTION PROGRAM* (2014).

4. See Krystyna Trembicka, *Walka z Wrogiem—Cecha Konstytutywna Komunistycznej Myśli Politycznej*, 19 HUM. & SOC. SCI. 169, 173 (2014).

5. See generally HANNAH ARENDT, *ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM* (Harcourt 1994) (1951).

enemy are arbitrary, yet may be disguised as politically or scientifically rational. Objective enemies are stigmatized as sub-humans or non-humans, which justifies their annihilation.⁶

A non-exhaustive list of potential class enemies of the communist state includes entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, rich farmers, priests, people receiving their degrees before communists took over, people receiving their degrees abroad, and even communists who did not notice that an ideological line of the communist party had changed.⁷

It should also be noted that the notion of a “second-class citizen” can sometimes be misleading. In contemporary Polish, strongly influenced by the totalitarian experience of Poles, “*obywatel drugiej kategorii*” means not only a person of lower social status, but also (mainly nowadays) a person who was marginalized and made a social outcast, deprived of dignity, freedom, property, and sometimes life. We should also remember that, in the period covered by this paper, Poland was either under direct Soviet rule (until 1956), or ruled by Soviet-trained apparatchiks.⁸ The country lost six million of its citizens during WWII, including practically all Jewish and Roma populations.⁹ With a decimated population and an infrastructure largely destroyed by war, Poland was not able to resist Soviet-imposed rules. This helps explain the relatively low level of resistance against property takings.

We adopt a top-down approach to show how the idea that some people—because of their social background or moral convictions—were not considered worthy enough to survive in the Brave New World of real socialism that was transformed into a formally valid but immoral law and policy.

6. Tomasz Scheffler, *Przestępstwo Publicznego Propagowania Faszystowskiego lub Innego Totalitarnego Ustroju Państwa (art. 256 k.k.). Analiza Doktrynologiczna Wybranych Wypowiedzi Piśmiennictwa I Judykatury. Część Ogólna*, 34 STUDIA NAD AUTORYTARYZMEM I TOTALITARYZMEM 97, 101–02 (2012).

7. We include a statutory (and incomplete) list of class enemies drafted as slave soldiers later in this paper.

8. For an account of current state of the debate on status of communist Poland as a Soviet Union-dependent state, see Andrzej Friszke, *Spór o PRL w III Rzeczypospolitej*, 1 PAMIĘĆ I SPRAWIEDLIWOŚĆ 9, 13–14 (2002).

9. There is an ongoing research project aimed at identifying all Polish WWII victims. Currently the database contains names of over 5 million identified victims. To access the database, see Baza Danych, STRATY OSOBOWE I OFIARY REPRESJI POD OKUPACJĄ NIEMICKĄ, NIEMICKA, <http://www.straty.pl/index.php/baza-programu> [<https://perma.cc/SRC6-JE8K>].



II. SLAVE SOLDIERS BETWEEN EXTERMINATION AND BRAINWASHING

The story of slave soldiers is not a long one, but it is a bloody one. As a result of post-war political changes, Poland signed a treaty with the Soviet Union regarding reparations.¹⁰ A part of this agreement was Poland's obligation to supply the Soviet Union with coal.¹¹ Poland was a country that lost more than twenty percent of its population after the war, and the country was literally in ruins.¹² As a result, Poland had a limited labor force. Initially, the communists decided to reach for German POWs and use them for slave labor. According to various accounts, they were either prisoners from Eastern provinces of Germany attached to Poland after WWII, or POWs imported from the Soviet Union.

Since the Soviet Union had not signed the Geneva and Hague conventions on rules of war, the Soviets were not obliged to treat German prisoners in a humanitarian way.¹³ The Soviets had no moral obstacles against exploiting them for slave labor or trading them in exchange for coal.¹⁴ The Polish government, almost completely under Russian control,¹⁵ could not do much about it. Having considered the magnitude of German atrocities in Poland, there was not much sympathy for the devil on the Polish side, so German facilities for Polish- and Jewish-forced labor were used this time to host German POWs working in the mines.¹⁶ This period, however, was relatively short, and German POWs soon returned to Germany. But be-

10. Jan Sandorski, *Nieważność Zrzeczenia Się przez Polskę Reparacji Wojennych a Niemieckie Roszczenia Odszkodowawcze*, 66 RUCH PRAWNICZY, EKONOMICZNY I SOCJOLOGICZNY 53, 58–70 (2004).

11. Rafał Paweł Kieszek, *Posłowie*, in *TAJEMNICE CZARNYCH BARONÓW. ŻOŁNIERZE-GÓRNICZY 1949–1959*, at 208–09 (2013). See generally JAROSŁAW ZWOLIŃSKI, *BATALIONY ROBOCZE-BUDOWLANE W LUDOWYM WOJSKU POLSKIM: DOKUMENTY-FAKTY-WSPOMNIENIA* (2001); Dariusz Burczyk, *Żołnierze-górnicy z Powiatów Elbląskiego i Braniewskiego (1949–59)*, 1 PAMIĘĆ I SPRAWIEDLIWOŚĆ 269 (2012); Edward J. Nalepa, *Wojskowe Bataliony Górnicze w Polsce w Latach 1949–1959*, 85 PRZEGLĄD HISTORYCZNY 123, 124 (1994).

12. The exact numbers are hard to establish. The estimates vary from 600,000 to more than 6 million victims, depending on counting methodology (some scholars count Nazi victims only, some include people killed and/or deported by the Soviets). The most recent accounts estimate the global number of victims at 6.8 million. Cf. *POLSKA 1939–1945: STRATY OSOBOWE I OFIARY REPRESJI POD DWIEMA OKUPACJAMI* (Tomasza Szaroty & Wojciech Materskiego eds., 2009).

13. This went both ways, since Germans mistreated Soviet POWs as militants not protected by the rules of war.

14. It should also be noted that Soviets conducted real slave hunts in the Southern part of contemporary Poland, kidnapping and deporting to Russia miners and skilled workers, both Poles, Germans and people of mixed ancestry. See generally Dariusz Węgrzyn, *Górnoślązacy Jako Forma Reparacji*, 35 ZESZANIEC 51 (2008).

15. E.g., some members of the government and the army, including the Commander in Chief, were so called “acting Poles” (*pełniący obowiązki Polaka*)—Soviet military and apparatchiks allegedly with Polish roots sent to Poland as colonial officers.

16. Nalepa, *supra* note 11, at 124.

cause Poland was still obliged to pay reparations in coal, the labor gap had to be filled somehow.

One of the obvious solutions was to employ soldiers. Since there were no volunteers, the government decided to draft recruits and form miner and construction battalions (also called substitute military service units).¹⁷ These units were based on the Soviet model of *stroibatalion*, which was basically the military version of Gulag. This model was adopted in the entire Eastern Bloc, and was probably part of a concerted action because *stroibatalions* in various Central and Eastern European (“CEE”) countries were consecutively numbered.¹⁸

The question this paper explores is whether mining and construction battalions were dignity takings. Given that we are dealing with a system where official policy and real policy were often completely different, this is not an easy answer.

Prima facie, the battalions were a normal part of military service. Even in modernity, many armies feature specialist units focusing on engineering or logistic support for the field units.¹⁹ It is not unusual for an army to help with the harvest, or to provide help during emergencies or natural disasters. Many legal systems also have substitute military service for people who, for religious or moral reasons, do not want to serve in the army.²⁰ Throughout debates over the law on compensation and retirement benefits for victims of communist persecution, army lawyers argued that mining and construction battalions were simply auxiliary engineering units not connected with the communist system of political repression.²¹ This was not the case for several reasons.

First, engineering units are specialist forces composed usually of highly skilled soldiers with appropriate training.²² Polish mining and construction battalions were composed of people with mixed qualifications—many of them without job-specific skills—and the army provided new recruits with no particular engineering training.²³ Second, recruits for these battalions were selected according to “class enemy” criterion, and were consid-

17. *Id.*; Kieszek, *supra* note 11, at 209.

18. KAZIMIERZ BOSEK, *TAJEMNICE CZARNYCH BARONÓW ŻOŁNIERZE-GÓRNICY 1949–1959*, at 84 (2013).

19. *Military Engineering*, ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/military-engineering> [<http://perma.cc/D9QX-VTET>].

20. *Cf. e.g.*, Marcin Mróz, *Odmowa Służby Wojskowej ze Względu na Przekonania I Służba Zastępcza Wybranych Państw Europejskich (Niemcy, Francja, Hiszpania)*, 92 RAPORT 1 (1996).

21. ZWOLIŃSKI, *supra* note 11, at 28.

22. *Id.* at 19.

23. Nalepa, *supra* note 11, at 132.

ered second-class citizens not worthy of undergoing normal military training or obtaining standard uniforms.

The legal (or perhaps illegal) ground for creating mining and construction military units was a secret order from the Commander-in-Chief, Marshal Konstanty Rokossowski.²⁴ According to this order, the following types of recruits (class enemies) were conscripted into mining and construction battalions:

- ❖ sons of rich farmers, expropriated landowners, merchants, businesspeople employing laborers, owners of larger houses in the cities, and “members of pre-September repression apparatus” (i.e., Polish pre-war government, police, military, judiciary, etc.);
- ❖ recruits who, according to assessments by political police, have a “hostile attitude towards present reality”;
- ❖ persons whose family members were convicted in Communist Poland (literally “People’s Poland”) for political crimes;
- ❖ recruits who have contacts with close relatives living abroad in capitalist countries who have hostile attitudes towards Communist Poland; and
- ❖ persons convicted for political crimes against Communist Poland.

This order specifically excluded members of the communist party from service in construction and mining battalions.

Specific problems arose with recruiting people from regions of Poland that were part of Germany before 1945 and that were assigned to Poland after the Potsdam Agreement, or that were in parts of Poland considered by the Nazis to be land populated by people of German descent.²⁵ These were border regions with strong connections to Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, and Germany.²⁶ Many of the inhabitants were classed as ethnic Germans and forced to sign the German Nationality List (*Die Volksliste*) and to serve in the German army.²⁷ Signing the *Volksliste* was considered high treason except in the above-mentioned regions, where declaring German nationality was not a voluntary act.²⁸ The above-mentioned order additionally distinguished between signatories with proletarian and “class enemy” backgrounds.²⁹ For recruiters, these subtle juridical differences must have been undistinguishable, since even contemporary historians

24. BOSEK, *supra* note 18, at 24–26.

25. See Węgrzyn, *supra* note 14, at 51–52.

26. For a detailed account of the region’s complicated history, see generally KAZIMIERZ POPIOLEK, *HISTORIA ŚLĄSKA* (1984).

27. Nalepa, *supra* note 11, at 125.

28. See generally ZYGMUNT IZDEBSKI, *NIEMIECKA LISTA NARODOWA NA GÓRNYM ŚLĄSKU*, KATOWICE (1946).

29. BOSEK, *supra* note 18, at 25.

wonder how a person with a German name and surname could sincerely declare Polish nationality.³⁰ Many Poles living in border regions had German first names and surnames, and many Germans were of Polish descent,³¹ although the general public is not always aware of this fact.

Soldiers of the construction and mining battalions formed three distinct groups. The first group were uranium miners—slave soldiers digging uranium for the Soviet atomic bomb project. We have limited knowledge of their service. What we know is that they worked with no safety protections and were basically unskilled miners. Due to exposure to radiation and harsh working conditions, out of the 3,000 military uranium miners, only a handful were alive in 1989 when they could safely tell their story.³² The second group were coal miners, and the third were construction workers. These two groups had much higher survival rates, and their working conditions were different. Being sent to a construction battalion was a milder sentence because construction workers had more personal freedom and had readier contact with the civilian population. According to accounts of the soldiers, civilians were generally sympathetic towards them.³³ On the other hand, miners were more insulated from the external world, and—due to the character of their work—had only limited contact with civilian workers.

Miner soldiers had no military or vocational training. What they recall are hours of mindless military drills with wooden carbines, or exercises with sticks.³⁴ There was a common conviction among the recruits: the drills were intended to either make them too busy to think, or to break their spirits. It had nothing to do with what one would expect from military training. Also, there was no practical or technical training connected with recruits' future work.

Working conditions were harsh, if not inhumane. Members of mining and construction military units were considered second-class people. They received low quality uniforms and sackcloth belts,³⁵ so it was easy to distinguish between them and “real” soldiers. There are reports of miner-

30. Burczyk, *supra* note 11, at 256. This particular soldier was Erich Koch, son of Reinhard Koch and Frieda Schmidt, born in Elbląg in 1930.

31. A good example of these complicated relationships is the fact that during WWII, Nazi general Erich von dem Bach Zelewski, born in contemporary Łębork, Poland, was of ethnic Polish descent, and that members of the Austrian royal family, the Habsburgs of Żywiec, Poland, were Polish officers.

32. BOSEK, *supra* note 18, at 32.

33. During WWII, many Polish citizens had been deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan in the USSR, and a large portion of Poland was under direct Soviet rule from 1939 until 1942.

34. Cf. ZWOLIŃSKI, *supra* note 11, at 49–50.

35. Many soldiers recall that they got sackcloth belts, not leather ones like other soldiers, which they found humiliating and stigmatising. It was sort of like being branded with a sign saying “lower caste.” BOSEK, *supra* note 18, at 110.

soldiers with no access to decent clothing or clean underwear, and with limited access to baths.³⁶ Coal mining is a dirty job; under normal circumstances, miners end their shift in a bath. One of the miner-soldiers recalls that while on one of the rare leaves, he went dancing, and people showed him sympathy because they noticed coal dust tattooed into the bags under his eyes.³⁷

Untrained soldiers worked in the most dangerous parts of the mines where mortality and accident rates were very high.³⁸ Soldiers working in uranium mines were additionally exposed to radiation and had to drink contaminated water.³⁹ The fact that military doctors tended to cure everything from flu to pneumonia—and even broken ribs—with aspirin, and to treat soldiers as malingerers added to this count.⁴⁰ One of the soldiers of a construction battalion recalls that when he broke his toe, he received no sick leave and had to go to the construction site with only one shoe on his foot; in order to be able to walk, he had improvised a sandal out of a wooden box for his injured foot.⁴¹

The soldiers were theoretically paid for their work, but unlike normal soldiers in military service, they had to pay for their food, lodging, and clothing—paying the army for what the army should have provided them.⁴² They were undernourished, and the rations were often inedible,⁴³ but soldiers had no possibility of buying themselves decent food.⁴⁴ One of the soldiers reported that he had to come back home in an old uniform because his civilian garments were lost somewhere by the administration, and his salary was not enough to buy new clothes.⁴⁵

Another group of class enemies affected by communist policies were clerics. Traditionally, priests-in-training and other college students had been exempted from the draft, and had undergone reserve officer corps training in college.⁴⁶ This rule ceased to exist in the early 1950s when the government decided to deny theological seminaries college status and to

36. Miner soldiers in one of the mines had their working clothes unwashed for three months, and their underwear was “as dirty and black as soil.” ZWOLIŃSKI, *supra* note 11, at 65.

37. BOSEK, *supra* note 18, at 110.

38. *Id.* at 46.

39. Kieszek, *supra* note 11, at 224; Nalepa, *supra* note 11, at 131–32.

40. ZWOLIŃSKI, *supra* note 11, at 64.

41. *Id.* at 62.

42. Kieszek, *supra* note 11, at 227.

43. ZWOLIŃSKI, *supra* note 11, at 70.

44. Kieszek, *supra* note 11, at 226.

45. ZWOLIŃSKI, *supra* note 11, at 63.

46. Arkadiusz Czwołek, *Śłużba Wojskowa Alumnów w PRL (Na Przykładzie 54. Szkolnego Batalionu Ratownictwa Terenowego w Bartoszycach)*, 18 KLIO 103, 103–04 (2011).

draft clerics.⁴⁷ Initially, priests-in-training served with other soldiers. However, the army noticed that they had an unwelcome influence on other soldiers. Priests were officially “class enemies,” but they usually managed to win the respect and sympathy of other soldiers by selfless behavior, sharing food supplies, and supporting bullied colleagues.⁴⁸

The experiment of mixing clerics with criminals serving in penal military units (*Shtrafbats*) also failed for similar reasons. The clerics did not fit into the propaganda-inspired picture of a greedy, selfish priest preying on his naïve, innocent flock. So, the army created companies of priests-in-training coming from different parts of the country.⁴⁹ These companies served two different purposes. First, to separate clerics from other soldiers in order to limit their moral and spiritual influence, and also to facilitate untrue rumors such as priest-soldiers getting special stipends that they spend on “luxuries” (coffee, wine, and vodka), and living a life unbecoming of Catholic priests.⁵⁰ The second purpose was to create an environment suitable for brainwashing, and to subject clerics to psychical and mental torment.⁵¹ Unlike miner-soldiers and construction soldiers, priests had not been deprived of wages or property. This system was intended to deprive them of their dignity, making their lives miserable, and forcing the clerics to renounce their beliefs. Thus, it was not about physical deterioration of class enemies, but about breaking their spirits.

Like miner-soldiers, priest-soldiers were not real soldiers. The priest battalions were auxiliary units, responsible technically for territorial defense.⁵² Only technically because no one has ever dreamed of training these people how to be soldiers or even military chaplains.⁵³ We know, however, that they were used as a support in case of natural disasters, and sometimes to assist during the harvest.⁵⁴ Surprisingly, this was the only part of the

47. *Id.*

48. *Id.* at 106; Andrzej Lesiński, *Wojskowa służba alumnów w PRL*, 6 CZASY NOWOŻYTNE 320, 327 (1999), http://www.czasy-nowozytne.pl/Czasy_6.pdf [https://perma.cc/S35C-WD9P].

49. Michał Krawczyk, *Urząd do Spraw Wyznań A Funkcjonowanie Seminarium Duchownych I Służba Wojskowa Kleryków—Studium Historyczno-prawne*, 108 ZESZYTY NAUKOWE UNIwersytetu PRZYRODNICZO-HUMANISTYCZNEGO W SIEDLCACH SERIA: ADMINISTRACJA I ZARZĄDZANIE 31, 45 (2016).

50. Tadeusz Fitych, *Służba wojskowa alumnów w PRL*, NONPOSSUMUS, http://www.nonpossumus.pl/biblioteka/tadeusz_fitych/artykuly/swa.php [https://perma.cc/Z6BX-CT2U].

51. *Id.*; Lesiński, *supra* note 48, at 331; Czwołek, *supra* note 46, at 111.

52. Czwołek, *supra* note 46, at 106–07.

53. *Id.* at 118; Lesiński, *supra* note 48, at 331.

54. Czwołek, *supra* note 46, at 119.

clerics military service that was really connected with what one might consider military service.⁵⁵

As aforementioned, priest-soldiers were supposed to be brainwashed and convinced to renounce their faith or to quit the theological seminary and start lay life. This process was a multi-level operation that included both intellectual and physical denigration. Military personnel of cleric companies were composed of officers and non-commissioned officers selected for their aversion towards the clergy.⁵⁶ Recruits were under constant surveillance by undercover agents of the military's "information service" (i.e., political police) posing as recruits.⁵⁷ On a psychological level, priest-soldiers were constantly confronted with communist anti-church propaganda, compulsory meetings with ex-priests, promises of college scholarships, and guaranteed careers for those who drop out of the seminary. Although there was no direct prohibition of religious practices, the priest-soldiers' daily routine was designed in a way that made it impossible to attend the Holy Mass on Sundays, with clerics taking part in compulsory "educational activities" like Sunday excursions.⁵⁸ Priest-soldiers were also encouraged to become better acquainted with women during Sunday dance evenings, which were also compulsory.⁵⁹ Priests-in-training who organized or took part in various forms of religious activity were subject of disciplinary actions, usually not for practicing religion, but for denial to comply with an order either not to engage in prayer or to cease prayer.

As a *pars pro toto*, we will use the life story of one priest, Rev. Jerzy Popiełuszko, the future chaplain of the "Solidarity" movement who preached non-violent resistance against communists and who was subsequently murdered by the political police.⁶⁰ As a young cleric-soldier, he was imprisoned for refusing to throw away his rosary. He was forced to

55. Aleksander Ścios, *Odebrany Różaniec*, 13 GRUDNIA, <http://13grudnia.org.pl/artykuly/odebrany-r%C3%B3%C5%BCaniec> [https://perma.cc/MU63-RR2C].

56. Lesiński, *supra* note 48, at 329–30.

57. Our colleague, Dr. Piotr Paweł Maniurka, who is a professor of ecclesiastical art history at Opole University, told us that during his military service, he learned not to take notes or write anything down, because everything they left in writing could have been used against them or against people whose names they carelessly wrote down.*

58. Krawczyk, *supra* note 49, at 45–46.

59. At that time, canon law forbade priests and clerics from dancing, as an activity unbecoming of priests. These rules date back to the Middle Ages. *See, e.g.*, Sylwia Konarska-Zimnicka, *Udział Duchowieństwa w Tańcach w Świetle Średniowiecznego Ustawodawstwa Synodalnego*, 18 LITURGIA SACRA 85 (2012). The latest act dealing with priest participation in dances issued by the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship states that even in the case of religious dance "the priests must always be excluded from the dance." *Dance in the Liturgy*, EWTN, www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDWDANCE.HTM [https://perma.cc/FX22-X7M8].

60. *See generally* MILENA KINDZIUK, ŚWIADEK PRAWDY: ŻYCIE I ŚMIERĆ Ks. JERZEGO POPIELUSZKI (2004).

exercise for hours with his gas mask on, and one of the officers tormented him during something he called “swimming lessons.” The young priest was made to wear a rope tangled around his waist while the officer responsible for this “training” would throw him into the pool. The officer would wait until the young man started to drown, and would then pull him out and throw him into the pool again. Another torment was forcing priest-recruits to exercise or to scrub floors and toilets while wearing gas masks.⁶¹

As a citizen of Poland, Stefan Wyszynski pointed out in his protest directed to the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army that the government’s main purpose of young priests’ military training was not to turn them into soldiers or army chaplains, but rather to discriminate against the priests’ religion.⁶² Whenever the army succeeded, young soldiers who dropped out of seminaries had their spirits broken and felt they had betrayed their calling. Both these priests and those who remained true to their calling were victims of religious persecution.

The main purpose of this military training was to take away young priests’ dignity and to denigrate them for their religious convictions, turning them into second-class citizens. But did this involve treating them as less than human or like children? In a way—yes. The official view was that, if you were a religious person, especially a priest in training, you must have been deluded by the priests using religion as “opium for [the] masses.”⁶³

For communists, religion was only a tool of social control, and official propaganda tried to expose the Roman Catholic Church⁶⁴ as a bunch of crooks cheating the flock with false miracles.⁶⁵ So anyone willing to become a priest must have been either a crook or a deluded child. Thus, it was natural for a communist state to take care of such a person and turn him into a model follower of the winning formula. Yet, throughout this “conversion,” priests were second-class citizens, treated as animals, dehumanized, and ostracized.

61. *Sluzyłem z księdzem Popieluszką*, PARAFIA BYSTRZYCA (May 26, 2010), <http://parafiabystrzyca.pl/artykuly/ad015.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/9B26-UACC>]; Ścios, *supra* note 55. Just by pure coincidence, Rev. Popieluszko died in a similar way—he was drowned in the river by members of the communist political police. *Id.*

62. Lesiński, *supra* note 48, at 330.

63. As to the metaphor of religion as an opium, see generally Andrew M. McKinnon, *Reading ‘Opium of the People’: Expression, Protest and the Dialectics of Religion*, 31 *CRITICAL SOC.* 15 (2005).

64. Other churches were of minor significance in Poland and it was easier to break them, given their local nature.

65. From our childhood days, we remember popular science books about fake miracles and ingenious ways the Church preys on its flocks.

III. COLLECTIVIZATION, OR WE WANT WHAT IS YOURS

Communist policy towards private ownership of land was a good example of the discrepancy between political declarations and real political intent (much like the discrepancy between the law on the books and the law in action in communist Poland).

The process of nationalization of agricultural real property started formally as a continuation of pre-war land use reforms with a decree on land reform.⁶⁶ According to this decree, the state nationalized large farms and later distributed plots of land to small farmers and so-called no-land farmers (*chłopi bezrolni*) because the communist vision of land ownership did not include independent farmers. According to the 1948 Bucharest resolution of the Komintern, all Soviet Bloc countries had to adopt the Soviet model advocating a state monopoly of land ownership.⁶⁷ The decree on land reform was a prelude to nationalization and collectivization (i.e., creation of state-controlled agricultural cooperatives). Expropriated land owners received no compensation for their property, and were forced to settle far away from their land.⁶⁸ This rule was aimed at impoverishing former land owners and destroying the social bonds of local communities. These individuals were persecuted even after expropriation, as they were stigmatized for being a *bezet* (i.e., former landowner) and were left with very limited possibility for gainful employment. Their children could be easily expelled from schools, and were often banned from access to higher education.⁶⁹

The situation that land reform beneficiaries faced was also far from perfect. They usually had no money, tools, or other resources required to run a farm, and they often had no experience in agribusiness. Moreover, all private farmers were obliged to deliver crops and other agricultural products to the state. The number of deliveries was usually set at an unattainable level, and the law provided severe penalties for farmers failing to deliver the state-specified quantity. In the case of settlers in Poland's Western provinces, additional burdens plagued the land they received from col-

66. *Dekret Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego z dnia 6 Września 1944 r. o Przeprowadzeniu Reform Rolnej*, POLISH COMM. OF NAT'L LIBERATION (Sept. 6, 1944), <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19440040017> [<https://perma.cc/V4UR-XL9U>].

67. Bogdan Sekściński, *Metody Kolektywizacji Rolnictwa Na Lubelszczyźnie w Latach 1950–1951 w Egzemplifikacji Powiatu Włodawskiego*, 19 *STUDIA IURIDICA LUBLINENSIA* 245, 246 (2013).

68. *Stec*, *supra* note 2, at 361.

69. Agnieszka Łuczak, *Ziemiaństwo Wielkopolskie w Czasie Reformy Rolnej*, *BIULETYN INSTYTUTU PAMIĘCI NARODOWEJ*, Jan. 12, 2002, at 52.

lectivization.⁷⁰ Some of these settlers received land as compensation for land they had in former Eastern provinces of Poland annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939.⁷¹ It should be noted that private “ownership” of agricultural property of that era was not ownership in a classical, Roman meaning of the word. The land law was devised so that formal owners lost real control of their property and were in no better position than the hired workforce. The settlers in the Western provinces had their plots assigned on the basis of an administrative decision, often without the possibility of registering their title in a *Grundbuch* (court-run land registry).⁷² Having taken into account German claims to Western provinces of Poland,⁷³ they also had the fear of having to leave their new homes.⁷⁴

The Central Committee of the PPR (Polish Communist Party) started the collectivization process in 1948 following the Bucharest resolution. The Party had determined the number of cooperatives to be created and destroyed in their internal constitutions. The cooperatives were thus completely state-controlled, and were deprived of any characteristics of independence like those found in private business associations. Their structure was based on the Soviet concept of *kolkhoz* (*collective farm*) rather than European co-ops, although the name *kolkhoz* was not used officially. Farmers joining the cooperative lost control of their land, and were unable to control it, even as members of the association. In the land law theory of that era, even the right of a cooperative to own land was disputed. Some authors argued that the plots in possession of a co-op were de facto state property, and the co-op could use it as *usufructland*. Another theory was that these plots constituted a weaker form of state property called “social property.”⁷⁵

Given these facts, farmers were reluctant to join collective farms, so the communist party started a large campaign to convince the farmers to

70. Wojciech Zientara, *Spoleczny czy Ekonomiczny Charakter Reform Rolnych w Polsce w Okresie Między—I Powojennym*, 102 ROCZNIKI NAUKOWE EKONOMII ROLNICTWA I ROZWOJU OBSZARÓW WIEJSKICH 6, 41–42 (2015).

71. *Dekret Z Dnia 6 Września 1946 R. o Ustroju Rolnym i Osadnictwie na Obszarze Ziem Odzyskanych i Bylego Wolnego Miasta Gdańska*, POLISH MINISTRY OF PUB. ADMIN. (Sept. 6, 1944), <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19460490279> [https://perma.cc/6X8Q-SLGF].

72. See generally Anita Kwartnik-Pruc & Zofia Śmiałowska-Uberman, *Dokumenty Nadania Ziemi z Okresu Reformy Rolnej i Akcji Osiedleńczej*, 1 GEOMATICS & ENVTL. ENGINEERING 149 (2007).

73. Western provinces of Poland were former Eastern provinces of Germany assigned to Poland by the Potsdam Treaty in exchange for the land annexed by the Soviet Union.

74. See generally CZESŁAW OSEKOWSKI, *SPOŁECZEŃSTWO POLSKI ZACHODNIEJ I PÓLNOCEJ W LATACH 1945–1956: PROCESY INTEGRACJI I DEZINTEGRACJI* (1994).

75. For a detailed discussion of these two theories, see JAN WASILKOWSKI, *PRAWO WŁASNOŚCI W PRL. ZARYS WYKŁADU* 54 (1969).

join, willingly or not.⁷⁶ This was a concerted action of political police, civic militia (police core), and party propagandists. Since collectivization was a part of communists' winning formula, only "class enemies" would deny its benefits. These enemies were usually rich farmers (*kulaks*) who owned at least fifteen-hectare farms. Smaller farmers were tolerated, although looked at with suspicion. Private property was dangerous, and farmers were natural carriers of the "capitalist venom."⁷⁷

During the collectivization, *kulaks* were mostly affected. Presented as enemies of small-scale farmers, they were a natural target for "dekulakisation," which simply forced rich farmers to surrender their property to the state. *Kulaks* who failed to supply the required portion of crops were either forced to kneel for hours in the communal party center—with "enemy of the people" or "*Kulak*" written on their foreheads—or forced to wear labels with similar names. Beatings and other forms of harassment were also popular. Later, the party used more subtle ways of tormenting rich farmers, like excessive taxation, impossible delivery goals, paying for farm goods well below production costs, and limiting access to bank credits.⁷⁸ A peculiar form of chicanery was compulsory help—volunteers from an organization called "Serve Poland" came to rich farmers to "help" them with the harvest. Once the group finished, the farmers were subsequently billed for this unwanted help.⁷⁹

Kulaks were often arrested or fined for imaginary crimes. Those arrested were kept in inhumane conditions and put on *pokazukha* trials, which were witnessed by people brought in specifically to see what criminals rich farmers were. In many cases, farmers were additionally subjected to threats that members of their families would lose jobs, or that children would be expelled from schools or denied access to college educations. These humiliating procedures of "indirect nationalization"⁸⁰ were quite successful—many farmers surrendered their land to the state so their families would at least have a chance to survive.⁸¹

76. Dariusz Jarosz & Grzegorz Miernik, *Kobiety w Buncie Antykolektywizacyjnym w Okole w 1953 R. Wybrane konteksty interpretacyjne*, 14 POLSKA 1944/45–1989. STUDIA I MATERIAŁY 29, 31 (2016).

77. Tadeusz Chrobak, *Nienawiść Wywołana–nienawiść Odwzajemniona*, in NIENAWIŚĆ W ŻYCIU PUBLICZNYM 173 (2015).

78. Tomasz Rochatka & Barbara Rochatka, *Kolektywizacja w Polsce w Latach 1945–1956*, BIULETYN INSTYTUTU PAMIĘCI NARODOWEJ, Jan. 12, 2002, at 35–37.

79. Stanisław Jankowiak, *Wielkopolski Kulak Wrogiem Socjalistycznego Państwa*, BIULETYN INSTYTUTU PAMIĘCI NARODOWEJ, Jan. 12, 2002, at 32.

80. A term coined by professor Andrzej Stelmachowski.*

81. Jankowiak, *supra* note 79, at 30, 33; Rochatka & Rochatka, *supra* note 79, at 34–36.

There were also softer methods of collectivization. For instance, propaganda measures included attempts to explain to farmers the economic benefits of joining a cooperative, indoctrinations in schools, promises of priority for entry of co-op members' kids to kindergartens and nurseries, tax benefits, and higher wages. Harvesting help from "Serve Poland," school children, and the army was also promised.⁸² These practices both dehumanized and infantilized independent farmers.

IV. SELF-DEFENSE AND RESTITUTION

Miner-soldier and construction battalion conscripts had little if any opportunity for self-defense or dignity-protection. We know from the relations of soldiers working in the construction battalions that at least some of them used something we could call "The River Kwai self-defense." Both in Pierre Boulle's novel *The Bridge over the River Kwai*⁸³ and in the famous movie,⁸⁴ British POWs tried to survive the harsh conditions of a Japanese camp by maintaining military etiquette and professional integrity. As one of the soldiers working as a construction worker recalled, "[t]hey did all they could to have their hair well groomed, parade uniforms cleaner and trousers well-ironed so they would look better than real soldiers."⁸⁵ Many soldiers recall that the civilian population was sympathetic toward them, even though they were depicted by the government as dangerous, criminal elements.⁸⁶ This was especially true for the areas where people had previous experience with the Soviets and were aware of how the system worked.⁸⁷

What was true for construction battalions was not necessarily true for miner-soldiers. The miner-soldiers' work had been much harder and more dangerous. They worked underground, with limited, if any, contact with civilian populations.⁸⁸ We have little information so far about the way civilian miners perceived miner-soldiers. It was easier to separate forced laborers from the rest of the labor force, so we can only guess. Many miner-soldiers were untrained and inexperienced, and posed a threat not only to

82. Gerard Czaja, *Kolektywizacja Rolnictwa w Powiecie Bytowskim*, in PRZEGLĄD ZACHODNIOPOMORSKI 23–36 (2010), http://przegladzachodniopomorski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/PZ_2010_4.pdf [https://perma.cc/93KS-T9XA].

83. See generally PIERRE BOULLE, *THE BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER KWAI* (1954).

84. *THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI* (Columbia Pictures 1957).

85. ZWOLIŃSKI, *supra* note 11, at 59–60.

86. *Id.* at 74.

87. *Id.* at 62 (collection of memories of construction soldiers).

88. According to Kazimierz Bosek miner soldiers were stationed in former prisoner of war camps. BOSEK, *supra* note 18, at 75, 80.

themselves, but also to their companions. In the close-knit communities of miners in the Upper Silesia region, there is a very strong sense of camaraderie based on mutual trust between professionals. Unexperienced newcomers are usually perceived as a physical threat.⁸⁹ On the other hand, some miner-soldiers were professionals, able at least to try to ensure minimum safety of the team.⁹⁰

The situation of priests-in-training was completely different, giving them many ways of employing dignity-restoring self-defense. In the early period, when young clerics were mixed with other soldiers, they naturally took the role of spiritual leaders, helping their colleagues by comforting them, sharing food, etc.⁹¹ Consequently, a handful of priests could undermine the ideological training of young recruits and serve as a source of resistance against brainwashing.

In the later period, when the military decided to create priest-only camps, methods of resistance changed.⁹² In this case, the communists had to deal with a close-knit community sharing common values with members who were ready to support each other. Furthermore, they were members of the largest non-government organization able to confront the totalitarian state. That meant, among other things, that they at least had moral support from the Roman Catholic Church, whose head in Poland, Primate Stefan Wyszyński, was not afraid to intervene on behalf of those persecuted.⁹³

During times when military service of priests served as sort of a punishment and was aimed at humiliation and physical torment, this *esprit du corpse* helped them to survive and maintain dignity.⁹⁴ In the later period, the communists hoped to convert the clerics, force or convince them to renounce their faith, and to become political police informers. Clerics were forced to attend lectures on Marxism-Leninism and the benefits of atheist philosophy.⁹⁵ Since communist indoctrination often took a quasi-religious form, drafted students of theological seminaries found themselves in a posi-

89. *Id.* at 80–81.

90. Kieszek, *supra* note 11, at 224.

91. Lesiński, *supra* note 48, at 327–28.

92. *Id.* at 329.

93. *Id.* This was true especially after Stalin's death. In early Fifties, Primate Wyszyński was held prisoner by the communists. There was a series of *pokazucha* trials against high level priests accused of imaginary crimes, like espionage for Western powers, and an attempt to a communist controlled Patriotic Catholic Church that almost destroyed the Catholic Church in Poland.

94. Fitych, *supra* note 50; see JAN JANKOWSKI, ALUMNI-ŻOŁNIERZE: ELEMENTY FORMACJI SEMINARYJNEJ W ŚWIADOMOŚCI ALUMNÓW-ŻOŁNIERZY NA PODSTAWIE ANALIZY DOKUMENTÓW OSOBISTYCH (2007), <http://digital.fides.org.pl/Content/515/bds-11a.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/WNR9-D82F>].

95. Czwołek, *supra* note 46, at 115.

tion of missionaries debating religious issues with heathen priests of an atheist cult.⁹⁶ This strategy of self-defense had not only helped to uphold young priests' dignity, but also had an unexpected side effect. A report on indoctrination of clerics prepared by the political education department⁹⁷ of the Polish People's Army concluded that priests-in-training undergoing military training—supplemented by Marxist-Leninist indoctrination—came out not only spiritually stronger, but were prepared to rebut all potential arguments and to avoid political traps in their future careers as spiritual leaders.⁹⁸

The problem of statutory dignity restoration of slave soldiers after the fall of communism in 1989 is a very good example of the complexities encountered by a government trying to right past wrongs. The main problem was that the existence of slave soldier battalions was not a well-known fact. Military orders were secret, and the official names of the military units were misleading. The orders suggested that the battalions were specialist military units like engineering corps or commissariat.⁹⁹ Furthermore, former soldiers serving as forced laborers knew that they were in a Gulag¹⁰⁰ because they were class enemies; thus, they were stigmatized. So many of them did not mention that fact even to close friends and relations,¹⁰¹ fearing that the slave-soldier stigma could adversely influence their lives or the lives of their children. It took the former soldiers association¹⁰² about five years of campaigning before the public and the parliament noticed the problem. In 1994, an act addressing benefits for slave soldiers was passed, granting former soldiers of mining and construction battalions additional retirement benefits.¹⁰³

96. *Id.* at 118. Yes, that is an oversimplification, although the quasi-religious character of Marxism-Leninism has been discussed by political scientists. See, e.g., Anatoly Khazanov, *Marxism-Leninism as a Secular Religion*, in *THE SACRED TWENTIETH-CENTURY POLITICS: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR STANLEY G. PAYNE* 119 (Roger Griffin et al. eds., 2008).

97. Political education departments were responsible for communist indoctrination in the army and for identifying potential enemies within the ranks.

98. Mariusz Celmer, *Śłużba Wojskowa Alumnów Wyższego Seminarium Duchownego w Płocku w Latach 1965–1980: Zarys Problemu*, 40 *STUDIA PŁOCKIE* 289, 299 (2012); JANKOWSKI, *supra* note 94, at 228.

99. BOSEK, *supra* note 18, at 79.

100. "Gulag" is an acronym for a Russian agency called *Glavnoye upravleniye Lagerej* (Main Camps Administration). This agency was responsible for running forced labor camps in the Soviet Union. The name is often used to denote all forced labor camps in former Soviet Bloc.

101. As a matter of fact, one of the authors has learned that her father-in-law was a miner-soldier while doing research for this paper. It was not something anyone was willing to tell, and had it not been for our research, this part of Ewa's family history would have been lost forever.

102. This organization was known as the Związek Represjonowanych Żołnierzy Górników.

103. , *Ustawa z Dnia 2 Września 1994 R. o Świadczeniu Pieniężnym i Uprawnieniach Przysługujących Żołnierzom Zastępczej Służby Wojskowej Przymusowo Zatrudnianym w Kopalniach*

Surprisingly, for a primarily Catholic country, no particular way of compensating priests-in-training for denigration and dignity takings during military service has been provided. There is no evidence as to why¹⁰⁴ this is the case. There are, however, two possible explanations. One is that this form of dignity taking was only a small and relatively insignificant part of religious persecution in communist Poland. Another is that both the church and the state were more interested in righting property wrongs and returning illegally nationalized church property than in healing dignity wounds of the clergy.

The self-defense of farmers against nationalization took many different forms. Some farmers used passive resistance, some tried not to have contact with the state and its agendas. In a few cases, farmers tried armed resistance against collectivization.¹⁰⁵ Civil disobedience was also a popular form of resistance. Farmers refused to deliver agricultural products to the state, traded illegally in land, or sold their products on black markets.

The resistance against collectivization was so strong that the government had to abandon it. Only ten percent of the agricultural land was in possession of cooperatives and only twelve percent was managed by PGRs (state-owned farms). Both cooperatives and PGRs were economically ineffective and heavily subsidized. Ultimately, they were not able to achieve even pre-war levels of production of private farms.¹⁰⁶

It should be noted that collectivization has also led to infantilization and denigration of employees. Farmers working for the state-owned farms formed a special sub-culture of paid workers stationed in remote villages, often with no contact with the outside world. Prone to communist propaganda, yet being incapable of serving as model citizens of the communist state, they formed no strong social bonds, and had no loyalty towards their employers. They were working on state property, i.e., everybody's property, which translated easily into "nobody's property." They had no idea of accountability and almost no access to culture and education. Only vodka and moonshine were readily available in almost unlimited quantities. That

Węglu, Kamieniołomach, Zakładach Rud Uranu i Batalionach Budowlanych, POLISH DIET (Sept. 2, 1994), <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19941110537> [<https://perma.cc/4LCE-FCKB>].

104. To our knowledge, this issue has never been raised, neither by the press nor by the politicians. None of the acts granting compensation to victims of the communist persecution mentions priest-soldiers or priests in general.

105. Jarosz & Miernik, *supra* note 76, at 35.

106. ANTONI DUDEK & ZDZISŁAW ZBLEWSKI, *UTOPIA NAD WISŁĄ: HISTORIA PEERELU 102-03* (2008); ADOLF DOBIESZEWSKI, *KOLEKTYWIZACJA WSI POLSKIEJ 1948-1956*, at 54 (1993).



explains the high crime rates and above-average level of alcoholism in the population of PGR and co-op workers.¹⁰⁷

What was supposed to create a new, better type of human eventually led to creation of mindless puppets—able to follow orders but unable to take care of themselves, let alone become entrepreneurial. These people are probably one of two social groups strongly affected by the fall of communism.¹⁰⁸ They were unable to adapt, and unwilling to run the farms by themselves. They are now a stigmatized group, forming a natural ghetto and still, after twenty-five years, unable to get their dignity back.

V. CONCLUSION

The dignity takings in communist Poland took many different forms. This paper discussed only two forms, each having different effects and scope. It seems, however, that there are certain patterns common for all kinds of dignity takings. We can clearly see two different policies: one aimed at elimination of class enemies, and another aimed at converting them to communism. Some class enemies, like landowners or miner-soldiers, were clearly considered unconvertable, so they were not only second-class citizens, but also people who should cease to exist. In other cases, communists acted as “merciless missionaries” with a “convert or die” business model. This was most clearly visible not only in the case of priest-soldiers, but also in the case of collectivization, where the merciless missionary model was supplemented with other, more violent forms of persuasion. Of course, we are dealing only with a sample here—any generalization would require further studies.

In the case of both collectivization techniques and priest-soldiers, elements of brainwashing were strongly evident.¹⁰⁹ They were less noticeable, although present, in the case of miner-soldiers who were not expected

107. WOJCIECH ROSZKOWSKI, *NAJNOWSZA HISTORIA POLSKI 1914–1945*, at 243–47. This was characteristic also of other social and professional groups persecuted and indoctrinated in communist Poland. See Małgorzata Machałek, *Przemiany Polskiej Wsi w Latach 1918–1989*, 26 *KLIO* 55, 68–78 (2013).

108. The other being miners from the Wałbrzych area, but their fate is not directly connected with this paper.

109. According to Alicja Grochowska, who researched brainwashing in the Holocaust, principal traits of brainwashing are injury to body and health, low level of security, diminishing of a good vision of self, feeling guilty, personality regression and offer of the new life. Alicja Grochowska, *Holokaust Między Historią a Psychologią*, 4 *SAECULUM CHRISTIANUM* 129, 129–30 (1997); ALICJA GROCHOWSKA, *ELEMENTY PRANIA MÓZGU W PROCESIE ZAGŁADY ŻYDÓW* 59 (1996).

to convert to communism. This could lead us to further research on dignity takings in Nazi-occupied Poland and its comparison with communism.¹¹⁰

At this point, it would be too early to speculate, and this subject would require further study. It seems, however, that brainwashing, torture, and persecution were common tools utilized to achieve a harmonious objective. Nazis either wanted their enemies dead or turned into obedient children—a dehumanized people serving a master race. There was no option for conversion. Communists, on the other hand, were not interested in creating subspecies of slave workers.

What is also noticeable is the relatively high level of defiance in both cases. In the case of collectivization, the resistance forced the government to stop the process. In the case of priest-soldiers, the number of priests-in-training who dropped out of the seminary because of military propaganda was far lower than the number of clerics expelled from the seminaries by the Church itself for lacking progress in studies or being incapable of becoming priests.

This analysis confirms that dignity takings, both in their property-related and in more general sense, are an inherent part of the communist system. The communist government—through an arbitrary set of criteria—labelled some groups of people as sub-people that had to be eliminated by making them social outcasts or simply by killing them. This, in turn, made room for a new, imaginary, and “ideal” classless society. The rest of the society is subjected to a systemic expropriation leading to an infantilization of people who become like helpless children subjected to the will and mercy of the state that monopolized the distribution of basic goods and services.

110. *Id.* at 61. Alicja Grochowska’s methodology of brainwashing research could be used for this purpose, both as a tool for psychological and socio-legal studies.

