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Abstracts


The project, which consisted of contacting twenty-four people who were asked to describe, in writing or orally, their attitudes toward the events in the FRG in 1968, has produced very modest results. Only six people responded. The conclusions from their responses, in brief, are as follows: 1) the interest in, and knowledge of, the events in the RFG were very slender; 2) the events in the FRG and Germany were not perceived as being related to one another, and that is how the situation remains. 3) the people who had closer connections with the then ruling party reacted more or less positively to the anti-German propaganda, while the reaction among the others was rather more negative. The manner in which the responses were articulated induces the view that they were frequently determined by the opinions the respondents hold today and they need thus very cautious interpretation.

Wanda JARZĄBEK, Rok 1968 r. a stosunki polsko-niemieckie w długiej perspektywie. The year 1968 and Polish-German relations in a long-term perspective

The events of 1968 were, on the one hand, a result of transformations under way in the societies of the time, while, on the other hand, they contributed to their further transformation. Some researchers treat them as one of the ‘revolutions’, a date of symbolic importance for world history. They can be looked at from the perspective of the societies of the divided Europe; while the character of the events in the two parts was not identical, this does not mean that they had no common features. In East Europe, in 1968, a crisis of the communist power had manifested itself yet again. In West Europe, criticism of the political and social system was voiced, moral transformations were occurring, and traditional systems of values and morality were being rejected. A factor common to both the events in the East and in the West, as widely understood, as well as in some developing countries, were the generational changes, the coming to adulthood of people born after the Second World War. 1968 was perceived in terms of factors helping modernisation and providing a new course for social and political life. In the FRG, it brought also a new wave of accounting with the national socialist part. The meaning of the events of 1968 may be observed in both the short-term and the long-term perspective. This also pertains to their influence on Polish-German relations. In the short-term perspective, the European and Polish events of 1968 had an impact on West Germany’s approach to the normalisation of relations with the countries of the Eastern bloc and on the reception of the German Ostpolitik in Poland, as well as on the then authorities’ field of manoeuvre. The results of the events of 1968 included the issues related to the Poles’ and the Germans’ mutual perception. The new generation, that of 1968, which, in due time, began performing an ever greater role in the cultural, social and political life of the FRG and Poland and in their media, also contributed new forms of perceiving reality and, not infrequently, different sets of values to all these fields.
Piotr MADAJCZYK, Reakcja zachodnioniemieckich mediów na wydarzenia Marca i kampanię antysemicką w Polsce. The reaction of the West German media to the events of March and the anti-Semitic campaign in Poland

The article analyses the impact of the events of 1968 on West German public opinion and politics. Following the first comments in the press, published on 11th March, the events of that month in Poland were watched attentively in the FRG. West German observers connected with the power struggles in the PUWP, while West German politicians were of the opinion that the best solution in such a situation would be to wait and see, and sustain contacts with Warsaw cautiously.

In view of the growing wave of anti-Semitic pronouncements, the PUWP leader, Mr Władysław Gomułka was judged relatively mildly, assuming that he wanted to restrain them but had to yield under pressure. These pronouncements, however, attracted the attention of the opinion-forming media in the FRG, which reacted with exaggerated comparisons to anti-Semitism in the Third Reich. Polish diplomacy, on the other hand, was effective in using the argument that an ‘anti-Polish campaign’ in the media was harmful to the detente in Europe. This effective tool of diplomacy was unable, however, to prevent the negative consequences of references to the stereotype of Polish anti-Semitism.

Joanna SZYMONICZEK, Polska opinia publiczna wobec Niemiec i wydarzeń 1968 roku w Niemczech. Polish public opinion toward Germany and the events of 1968 in that country

The media system formed in Poland after the Second World War was subordinated to political practice. The ruling communist party treated the radio, press and television as one of the most important tools for exercising power and controlling social processes. All the content being conveyed was scrupulously censored. The same applied to articles concerning the Federal Republic of Germany. Throughout the entire era of the People’s Republic of Poland, the RFG was ‘the villain of the piece’. The press published numerous articles in reminder of the Second World War and successive anniversaries of specific crimes, incessantly recalling their scale, the destruction and the number of victims. The texts frequently referred to the revisionist policy of the post-war RFG. West Germany was thus presented as a militaristic state, striving to obtain nuclear weapons and rockets, exerting pressure on her Western partners to push armament programmes and frustrating disarmament, a state where the left was suppressed and the German Communist Party was persecuted by the police while the Nazis (NDP) grew in strength. In view of Bonn’s obsession with regard to the re-unification of Germany, Poland, went the narrative, could not trust West Germany. Such an image of the RFG in the Polish media was congruent with the objectives of Poland’s foreign policy toward that country.

In 1968, the events occurring in the FRG, the youth’s protest on a mass scale, the brutal methods of the police, the passing of emergency laws which restricted citizens’ freedoms, were reported accurately, emotionally and with a propaganda bias. These reports were given an additional emphasis by their tone, which was alarmist, often hysterical and with no shortage of loaded headlines, which usually made reference to the Second World War and the perpetual threat posed to both Poland and the other Eastern Bloc states by the FRG. There were few references in the Polish press to 1968 in Germany. They were recalled, in principle, only when criticising the Western life style and the ‘moral collapse of the West’, reporting terrorism-related events in Germany, in particular, the Red Army Faction in the 1970s and the appointment of Joschka Fischer as foreign minister of the FRG in 1998. On the other hand,
mention was frequently made of the events related to the Second World War, associating them with the German expectations of apologies for the expulsions, statements putting a question mark over the Oder and Lusitian Neisse rivers, and so forth. Throughout these years, a relatively considerable amount of column space was devoted to the German political scene, expressing interest in particular elections. In the entire period analysed here, the Polish media were very eager to report German problems and troubles such as the titles. Pre-1989, this willingness to present the FRG unfavourably is highly visible; later it becomes less direct, though it can still be perceived in some of the titles.