

ADAM KONOPKA
University of Gdańsk

SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES IN DECOMMUNIZATION DISCOURSE ANALYSING THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF A CONFLICT OVER RENAMING OF JAN PIECHOCKI'S STREET IN BYDGOSZCZ

INTRODUCTION

After 1989 political transformations many post-communist cities have undergone significant changes regarding the heritage of the bygone regimes. The new municipal authorities had to rethink the existence of public objects commemorating the heroes and important events of the past and adjust to the new memory politics guidelines (Czepczyński 2008: 109–110; Drozdowski 2014: 76). Some of the old street patrons, however, have survived way longer than the first two decades after the transformation and in some cases — like Jan Piechocki — became an object of a heated debate on how they should be interpreted as historical figures and how the collective memory should be reflected in the public space.

Many studies showed that dealing with communist past in the linguistic landscapes of former Eastern Bloc cities might be an arena of a conflict of perspectives on collective memory (e.g. Dubicki 2018 [Łódź]; Karnikova 2022 [Ostrava]; Kovalov 2022 [Kalyny]; Ochman 2024, 2025 [Warsaw, Łódź, Katowice]). Through focusing on a specific conflict case, this analysis is aimed to find answers on how symbolic boundaries are constructed within decommunization discourse and in what dimensions they appear.

Following Michèle Lamont (1992), I define symbolic boundaries as conceptual distinctions that we make to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. The symbolic aspect comes from both implying multiple meanings for different people and different degree visibility of the boundaries for various actors (Cohen 1985). While in some case it is easy to determine, who is responsible for setting these boundaries, sometimes these arrangements might be seen as done by some invisible entity or “the collective behaviour of individuals acting in patterned responses” (Epstein 1992: 233). The sources of the boundaries might lay in both human experience and in the culture the actors live in, they “generally exist prior to situational interactions and are determined by available cultural resources and by spatial, geographic, and social-structural constraints, i.e., by the particular set of people with whom we are likely to come in contact” (Lamont 1992: 11). Boundary work might also serve developing group membership: “it creates bonds based on shared emotions, similar conceptions of the sacred and the profane, and similar reactions toward symbolic violators” (Lamont 1992: 12).

To answer the main questions, I reflect on how local media contribute to constructing the symbolic boundaries — how they situate themselves in a memory conflict, which stakeholders are allowed to voice their opinions in these titles, what are their positions on a specific case of renaming and how they justify them. By investigating the discursive strategies used in the analysed texts, I will also answer how these strategies sharpen or blur the boundaries. Analysing boundaries (including their contradictions and congruences) might be useful in the assessment of stability in change in various social distinctions (Gerson, Peiss 1985, in this case — the past versus the present, authoritarianism versus democracy, abstract political affiliation versus concrete local merit, and so on.

For this moment, only Ukraine (2013) and Poland (2016) have introduced laws, that force the municipal authorities to change the names of public utilities according to the existing memory politics (Fabiszak, Brzezińska 2020: 85). The decommunization process became a part of Polish legislation through an “Act on the prohibition of promoting communism or any other totalitarian system by names of buildings and objects and public utilities” (later referred to as Decommunization Act, issued on 01.04.2016¹). The main goal of the regulation was to reinforce the process of renaming “public utilities, including roads,

¹ *Ustawa z dnia 1 kwietnia 2016 r. o zakazie propagowania komunizmu lub innego ustroju totalitarnego przez nazwy jednostek organizacyjnych, jednostek pomocniczych gminy, budowli,*

streets, bridges and squares” that “commemorate people, organizations, events or dates symbolizing communism or other totalitarian system, or promote such a system in any other way”. The act specified that “names referring to persons, organizations, events or dates symbolizing the repressive, authoritarian and non-sovereign system of power in Poland in the years 1944–1989 are also considered to be promoting communism”. The inconsistency of a street name with the act has to be verified by the province governor and consulted with Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (Institute of National Memory, later referred to as IPN) — an institution strongly tied with then-ruling conservative party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice, later referred to as PiS) and their anti-communist perspective on collective memory (Dujisin 2021: 74). The municipal governments were obliged to remove the problematic patrons and in case of failure, the province governor had a right to do it through a substitute order. The inhabitants are assured that their documents with former street names will be still valid and any administrative proceedings (e.g. changes in land and mortgage registers) will be free of charge. Despite certain amenities the inhabitants were not so willing to give up their old patrons.

DECOMMUNIZATION IN BYDGOSZCZ AND PIECHOCKI'S ST DEBATE

The first communist names in Bydgoszcz were removed during the post-Stalinist thaw in 1956 (Czachorowska et al. 2008). The renaming covered mostly significant streets in the city centre — the names associated with totalitarian Stalinist regime (e.g. Joseph Stalin St) and some communist military patrons (e.g. First Polish Army St). They were replaced with older names from before the Nazi occupation (e.g., respectively: Jagiellonian St, Bridge St). The second wave of renaming came with political transformation in 1989 and lasted until 1993, restoring the pre-war patrons in the older parts of the city and inventing new ones for the streets established between 1945 and 1989. The second task seemed challenging for the municipal authorities, since the number of streets increased rapidly during this period, from 457 in 1938 to 1047 in 1983 plus more developing household settlements on the outskirts, resulting in 1365 streets in 1997 (Czachorowska et al. 2008: 13). The new urban areas that obtained their toponyms during the communist period were at times problematic to reinvent and the more peripheral

obiektów i urządzeń użyteczności publicznej oraz pomniki, Dz.U. 2016, poz. 744 (<https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20160000744/U/D20160744Lj.pdf>).

was their location, the less politically important the street names were (Dubicki 2018; Czepczyński 2008: 127). Between the first years after transformation and the changes following the Decommunization Act, only one street in Bydgoszcz was renamed because of political reasons.

The former Piechocki's St is a relatively short street (ca. 100 m) consisting mostly of terraced houses, located in Nowy Fordon, a residential area on the North-Eastern outskirts of the city (ca. 10 km from the centre of the city). The patron — Jan Piechocki (1899–1978) — was a cultural activist, a teacher and a journalist (Błażejowski, Kutta, Romaniuk 1996: 112–113). He was also a member of Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (Alliance of the Democrats; later as SD, a satellite liberal party, which assured its ideological independence during the communist period, while at the same time remaining loyal to the ruling Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers' Party) (Wojciak, Wrochno 1983: 178). The political affiliation became a reason for IPN and the province governor, Mikołaj Bogdanowicz, to qualify Piechocki's street as an object of decommunization. In his substitute order, Bogdanowicz also pointed out Piechocki's involvement in other organisations favouring the communist regime, like Front Jedności Narodu (Front of National Unity), municipal Komitet Obrońców Pokoju (Peace Defenders' Committee) and Polish-Soviet Friendship Society. The province governor changed the name for Zbigniew Raszewski's, a theatre historian and writer, who spent his youth in Bydgoszcz and wrote a book about Polish-German relations in the city between 1930–1945 (Raszewski 1994).

The name was officially changed on 13.12.2017, a symbolic date — an anniversary of the introduction of the martial law in Poland. The renaming met with a quick response from the inhabitants who filed a protest letter to the province governor on 20.12.2017. The protest was backed by the Estate Council of Nowy Fordon and the ruling left-liberal coalition² from the City Council. Following the inhabitants' protests, on 25.04.2018, the City Council voted for a resolution to file a request to IPN and the province governor to reconsider Piechocki as a patron, due to the protests. The request met with a refusal from both in the beginning of May 2018. Since the protests continued, on 26.09.2018, the City Council decided to rename the street back themselves, basing on the "Act on

² The coalition consists of liberal Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) and an originally post-communist left-liberal Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Alliance of Democratic Left).

Municipal Government” from 1990, which gives the local authorities the competences to change the street names. This decision was invalidated on 25.10.2018, by the province governor, who considered it as incompatible with the Decommunization Act. On 7.11.2018, the City Council voted on filing a complaint against Bogdanowicz’s supervisory decision to Administrative Court. The Court issued a verdict on 09.03.2019, stating that the province governor’s decision was lawful. Since then — despite the inhabitants’ disapproval — the short street in Bydgoszcz has legally held the name of Zbigniew Raszewski.

METHODOLOGY

The case study was based on analysis of discourse on the renaming of Jan Piechocki’s street in Bydgoszcz. The corpus consisted of totally 33 texts, published online between 20.12.2017, and 14.03.2019³. Almost half of the texts (16) came from a local Bydgoszcz division of “Gazeta Wyborcza”, a high-selling liberal daily newspaper and internet portal. Further texts were obtained from “Metropolia Bydgoska” (7, a local liberal internet portal, “Radio Pik” (3, a website of a radio based in Bydgoszcz, and other local media outlets: “Tygodnik Bydgoski” (3), “NaszeMiasto” (2) and “Portal Kujawski” (2). The research focused on discursive construction of memory in a local scale. For this purpose, I borrowed the analytical categories of strategies from Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl, Wodak 2001, 2009) and analysed how the actors justified being for or against renaming (argumentation strategies or *topoi*⁴, how they positioned themselves in the discourse, how they referred to the old and the new patron and what traits they attributed to the patrons and finally, how the actors mitigated or intensified their statements. The positions were reconstructed not only through analysis of the verbal layer, but also of the multimodal dimension (e.g. banners shown on featured pictures, however, most of the material was purely verbal. The research material

³ A list of the cited texts is provided in the second part of the “References” section. References to these items are in italics in the text.

⁴ I based my argumentation analysis on Kienpointner’s (1992) simplified model of argumentation, in which *topos* serves as the conclusion rule (*Schlussregel*) justifying the transition from the arguments to the claim. I also relied on Kienpointner while defining classical formal *topoi*, like *topos* of analogy and *topos* of definition. Following Reisigl’s (2014: 93) suggestion to use already existing typologies of content-related *topoi* while doing Discourse-Historical argumentation analysis, I drew on works by Reisigl and Wodak (2001; 2009) and Kindt (1992).

was coded for specific linguistic realisations of mentioned strategies in ATLAS⁵. All quoted fragments were originally in Polish and were translated with highest possible accuracy.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Actors in favour of renaming — IPN, the province governor and local PiS politicians

The utterances for renaming the Piechocki St present in analysed articles might be classified in two categories. The excerpts from the speeches of the City Council members affiliated to PiS carry more signs of actors' involvement in discourse (e.g. directly addressing the opponents, who they work with in the council, while the members of IPN, the province governor and his spokesman spoke in a very administrative, juridical style. A quoted statement of Adrian Mol, the province governor's spokesman, might serve as an example:

“According to the judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Gliwice, the opinion of the Institute of National Remembrance is not a mere statement of position in the case but is an act confirming the inconsistency of the street name with the decommunization act” (*Jaskot 2018a*).

The quoted IPN members positioned themselves as a part of the institution speaking on behalf of it in third person (“IPN indicates...”; “The Institute sees no point in...”) at the same time maintaining the impersonal character of their utterances. The primary way of argumentation in case of IPN was based on the topos of law, which follows a conditional “if a law or an otherwise codified norm prescribes or forbids a specific politico-administrative action, the action has to be performed or omitted” (Reisigl, Wodak 2001: 79). It is a specific form of the topos of authority, a category of formal topoi, which follow, in simplification, a formula “if X says Y, then Y must be right” (Kienpointner 1992: 394–395). To confirm that honouring Piechocki is against the decommunization act IPN members referred to him by means of organization and political party alignment and emphasizing his degree of involvement in their structures, e.g. “Piechocki was a member of the Municipal and Provincial National Council and an activist and member of

⁵ Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2020, *ATLAS.ti* (version 9.1.7.0) [Qualitative data analysis software].

the highest authorities of the communist party's satellite party, the Alliance of Democrats" (*Jaskot 2018b*). Any other aspects of Piechocki's activity aside from his affiliations were omitted. Because of "holding high party positions in the 1940s and 1950s and conducting politics during the period of deep Stalinism legitimized the totalitarian power in Poland", the IPN assumed that "Piechocki is a symbol of communism" (*Jaskot 2018b*). The activity of Piechocki's party as an ally of the communists served the IPN members to justify his decommemoration through the topos of disadvantage, which can be paraphrased in a following way: "if X's actions were on the disadvantage of Polish people, he should be removed as a patron" (Reisigl, Wodak 2001: 75).

The topos of disadvantage was also present in argumentation of a City Council member from PiS, Grażyna Szabelska. She repeated after IPN document that "Piechocki voted for the transfer of Lenin's works from the Bydgoszcz library to Joseph Stalin and for eternal Polish-Soviet friendship". She amplified the authority of IPN by questioning the knowledge of other City Council members, but at the same time mitigating her statement through assertion with "we/our" instead of "you/your": "We should rely on the opinion of specialists, i.e. historians from the IPN. Our knowledge is colloquial, emotional" (*Jaskot 2018d*). During the same City Council session, a single exception appeared within the PiS club — Paweł Bokiej, a City Council member from PiS, voted for returning Piechocki as a patron and justified the inhabitants' protest as "rational", referring to a negligence made during publishing the names for renaming and voicing admiration for the old patron. He used a topos of abuse against binary handling of decommunization ("I cannot agree that the biographies are so one-sided. I don't question the facts, but framing the matter in this way and showing only a negative role strips this man of his dignity" — *Jaskot 2018d*). However, seven months later, Bokiej argued against bringing back the old patron, using the authority of the decommunization law and *argumentum ad hominem* (see: van Eemeren et al. 2013: 63–64) against the ruling coalition in the City Council by referring to their parties voting for decommunization in the parliament (*Bembnista 2018a*).

Although none of the media outlets explicitly supported the renaming, two of them might be identified as sympathetic to changes or, at least, unsympathetic towards the protests. Authors writing for "Tygodnik Bydgoski", an independent newspaper and portal unsympathetic to the local ruling coalition, did not use any means of representation of Piechocki (aside from titulation "dr") in their original texts, while at the same time using them in case of the new patron. While maintaining the appearance

of neutrality, they quoted IPN's negative opinion on Piechocki ("There is no doubt that Jan Piechocki was a communist political activist and propagandist, he actively co-created a repressive, authoritarian and non-sovereign system after World War II") (*Ulica Piechockiego... 2018*, in which the seriousness of his engagement was stressed twice (bolded). Similarly, a news portal of a longstanding radio based in Bydgoszcz, Radio Pik, published the same quote without mentioning Piechocki's merits. Instead they stressed on a quotation from IPN's answer to the President of Bydgoszcz appeal, never mentioned in media outlets opposing the renaming: "Jan Piechocki, as a member of the Municipal National Council, in 1949 supported changing the name of Jagiellońska Street to Generalissimo Stalin Street, and Freedom Square to the October Revolution"⁶ (*Klich 2018*).

Actors against the renaming

The media outlets, which seemed to be more or less explicit about their disapproval for the renaming of Piechocki's street ("Gazeta Wyborcza", "Metropolia Bydgoska", "NaszeMiasto", "Portal Kujawski") were visibly more present during the debate. Some of them had their individual authors who informed about the progress of the case, like Remigiusz Jaskot ("Gazeta Wyborcza") or Błażej Bembnista ("Metropolia Bydgoska"). All of these titles quoted four groups of actors, who shared their position — the inhabitants, local authorities and the family and friends of the patron. Quoting the words of mentioned groups (as well as the opinion of an expert in the history of the region) served as the grounds for the topos of authority of people, who know their local reality better than the members of the IPN and the province governor. This specific case of decommunization was pictured as a general disadvantage for the residents of Piechocki's St and the reason for their protest. The scale of the inhabitants' involvement was emphasized by a topos of numbers in some articles: "The protest was signed by 34 residents, representing 15 out of 17 properties on Piechocki St" (*Bembnista 2017*). The protesting inhabitants were also evoked by their mostly medical professions (cardiologist, gynaecologist) to underline the intellectual character of the protesters. Piechocki's son (*Piechocki 2018*) and his friend,

⁶ Jagiellońska Street (from the Jagiellonian dynasty) is a historical and representative main street in the city centre; Freedom Square (Plac Wolności) is a representative and recreational square in Bydgoszcz city centre.

Stefan Niesiołowski (2018, also positioned themselves as intellectual and moral authorities, using their positions in their signatures (“professor of biology Stefan Niesiołowski, Member of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, political prisoner during the communist period”; “Prof. conv. Ph.D. Andrzej Piechocki, Retired academic teacher at the University of Łódź”).

The authors used several means of direct (“the inhabitants are outraged”, “resentful inhabitants”) or indirect (“arouses emotions”, “caused a stir”) means of affect (Martin, Rose 2007: 30) to describe the feelings expressed by the inhabitants facing the renaming. Similarly, means of affect were used by the inhabitants (“we are dissatisfied”) or Piechocki’s children (“it’s hurtful”). The media also pictured the inhabitants’ disapproval for the unwanted change by projection of the words from their banners: “Residents hung white banners on their houses with black inscriptions: ‘This is Dr. Jan Piechocki Street’ and the notes ‘We are protesting against the unjustified and unfair change of the patron of our street’” (*Jaskot 2018d*). Specific multimodal attachments to some of the texts are photographs of banners hung by the inhabitants on their fences.

The core argumentation strategy against renaming seemed to be based on a topos of advantage (Reisigl, Wodak 2001: 75) in *pro bono nobis* (for the advantage of us) variant, where the receivers of the advantages were metonymized as “the city”, “Bydgoszcz”, “the residents”, “the city community”, among others. Within this type of argumentation both the journalists and the cited actors created a positive representation of Jan Piechocki as a person of merit for the city. The most complex descriptions of his merits, mostly in the fields of education and culture, were presented by his children (*Bembnista 2018b*; *Borakiewicz 2018a*; *Piechocki 2018*, e.g.: “After the war, he organized schools in Bydgoszcz — exams were held in our house. He repolonized Bydgoszcz because it was Germanized, just like before the war after the Prussian partition” (*Bembnista 2018b*). Within this topos, the actors referred to Piechocki with various professionyms (Reisigl, Wodak 2001: 48, like “teacher”, “reviewer”, “school inspector”, “social/cultural/educational activist”, “journalist”, “lecturer”, or “editor”. His merits were amplified by the authors through various intensifying vocabulary: “he had unquestionable merits for Bydgoszcz”; “made a fundamental contribution”, etc. A frequent mean of Piechocki’s representation was a reference to his education through titulation, accompanied with formalisation or semiformalisation (van Leeuwen 1995: 53) of his name (“dr Piechocki”, “dr Jan Piechocki”). Even his children sometimes used this title in their statements instead of “father”.

Numerous authors and quoted actors did not see Piechocki as a supporter of communism — his son (Piechocki 2018) explicitly stated that his father was unsympathetic to the communist politics. Piechocki's anti-communism was also hidden through an implicature behind his religiosity, emphasized by his daughter: "father went [to church], received communion and pastoral visits" (Borakiewicz 2018a). In some cases, the authors or quoted actors put selected expressions in ironical quotation marks (Konopka 2019: 43) to undermine their meaning, e.g. "communist" or "commie", while speaking about Piechocki or "justification", "decommunization", "anti-communists" in relation to IPN's activity. A specific argumentation scheme, described by Walther Kindt (1992: 199) as "you can't have one without the other" topos was used by both inhabitants, City Council members and Piechocki's son to justify the patron's involvement in communist-aligned organisations. Being a part of them served as a warrant for someone's merit for the city: "Decisions important for Bydgoszcz and the voivodeship were made in these bodies, including directions of city development and expenditure on culture and education" (Jaskot 2018d).

Piechocki's involvement in SD was also toned down by Lech Zagłoba-Zygler, a City Council member, who positioned membership in SD as a lesser evil than in the communist party itself: "After the war, it often happened that if someone did not want to join the Polish United Workers' Party, they told him that he would find peace in the SD" (Jaskot 2018d). Piechocki's son also referred to the authority of law, stating that SD has always been a legal party and still exists as a legal organisation (Piechocki 2018).

The use of referential/predicational strategy of victimization might have also served an *argumentum ad misericordiam* fallacy (van Eemeren et al. 2013: 69, through which the authors assumed that the patron deserves honorification because of being persecuted by the nazis (Piechocki 2018). His moral soundness was also implied through his refusal of signing the *volkslist* in 1939 (Bembnista 2017).

By using a descriptive topos of definition (i.e. following a formula "What is said about the definition is also said about what is defined and vice versa" — Kienpointner 1992: 250, Niesiołowski (2018) concluded that the disputed patron does not fit the frames of decommunization: "Decommunization means removing communist criminals and people responsible for the communist system from prominent positions and collective memory". Some of the authors, including Piechocki's son (Piechocki 2018; Ł.R. 2018; rej, bor, geo 2018) incorrectly argued that

Piechocki became a patron after the fall of communism, in 90's, while the correct year (1985) was only given in a quotation of the mayor of Bydgoszcz (*Jaskot 2018b*).

In case of actions taken by IPN and the province governor, I identified several different uses of the topos of negligence, which I define as a kind of passive form of the topos of responsibility (see: Reisigl, Wodak 2001: 78): If an item/phenomenon/sphere of life belonging to X's competence is neglected by X, then X should take action to provide it with sufficient care. Several media outlets, both in the words of their own (*Sowińska 2017; ŁR 2019; Jaskot 2019*) or the quoted actors' (*Bembnista 2018b; Borakiewicz 2018a*), pointed out incoherencies in the decommunization process by mentioning patrons, who had stronger ties with the communist party, e.g.: "He [the province governor] did not remove Józef Twardzicki, a member of the Polish Workers' Party and the mayor of Bydgoszcz in 1945–47, as well as General Sylwester Kaliski. The latter stopped being the patron of the street in Warsaw, but Bogdanowicz decided that the name was OK in Bydgoszcz" (*Jaskot 2019*). Similar accusations towards the institutions responsible for renaming were articulated by the estate council president and the inhabitants, who also expressed their regrets for not having any social consultations about the changes:

"The plebiscite in which approximately 20,000 people voted. It took several months. The votes were accepted publicly. Residents hoped that their opinion would be taken into account. The decision was imposed on us from above. The name of the street, which was not even intended for decommunization, was changed. It was also not sufficiently justified how Dr. Jan Piechocki promoted communism" (*Leszczyńska 2018*).

DISCUSSION

Following Maoz Azaryahu (2011: 484), every political regime reinforces its version of history in the commemorative layer of naming public utilities. Signifying the public space according to the politically approved interpretation of the past might serve as a specific form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1991) if the inhabitants insist on their own perspective on memory. The results show a significant discrepancy in between the official national memory politics, perpetuated by IPN, PiS government and their regional politicians, and the local perspectives on the past. In Bydgoszcz the local media seemed to play a significant role in the course of the conflict by caring for perpetuation of the positive representations of the patron. Aside of the content of the argumentation present in local media outlets,

the structure of many texts itself suggests, which side the editorial teams took. A frequent use of constructed dialogue as a means of dramatization and authentication and therefore representing characters' speech as direct quotation instead of just reporting it (Georgakopoulou, Goutsos 2022: 137; Tannen 2007: 39) might prove the local media's involvement in this case.

A study of establishing symbolic boundaries in decommunization discourse proves that "in some periods and places, boundaries are mutually reinforcing or complementary, while in other instances they come into conflict" (Gerson, Peiss 1985). The case also provides an example of a situation when the distinctions take form of dichotomies, and their evaluative character contributes to social categorization (Epstein 1992). The binarity of the decommunization discourse might be seen in three dimensions, similarly as in Jeffrey Alexander's (1992) study on the polarizing discourse of civic society — motives, relations and institutions. In this case, although, instead of delineating only the democratic from undemocratic, the boundary divides between those, who believe Piechocki deserves a commemoration and those who think otherwise.

The motive boundary depends on whose interests Piechocki is credited with pursuing. The opponents of renaming saw Piechocki's motives as favourable for the cultural life and education in Bydgoszcz, as well for the city in general. They also justified his involvement in party structures as a rational move, without which his cultural and educational activism would not have been possible. The group on the other side of the boundary attributed him to pursuing the interests of the communist party or more broadly, the Soviet Union, while being a member of the City Council during the Stalinist era. Each side of the boundary positioned their authorities as the experts in the topic, creating a further symbolic boundary between expert and non-expert knowledge.

The relation dimension of the boundary involves several relations that let the addressee judge whether Piechocki should be a street patron or not. The key one seems to be the affiliation with the communist party and specific local executive organs of the communist government. Since Piechocki's involvement in SD is unquestionable, the renaming proponents clearly saw it as a reason for renaming, referring to the authority of the Decommunization Act. On the other hand, Piechocki's defenders tried to negotiate the boundary by mitigating SD's importance in the state apparatus and highlighting the political differences between the communists and liberals (and Piechocki as an individual as well). This group also emphasized Piechocki's martyrdom resulting from his resistance to the nazis, a relation that was not acknowledged by the

renaming proponents at all. Finally, Piechocki's right to be commemorated was justified by his relevance as a person, who contributed much to the cultural life of Bydgoszcz. This boundary was mostly set by the inhabitants of Bydgoszcz and Piechocki's family and friends. Although the new patron, Zbigniew Raszewski, also meets the requirements of deserving to be commemorated in Bydgoszcz, the boundary setting group did not want him to replace the more relevant old patron.

The institutional dimension regards mostly the democratic or undemocratic character of institutions. The proponents of renaming focused mostly on the undemocratic character of the organisations and institutions that Piechocki was part of. The defenders of Piechocki, although acknowledging the authoritarian nature of the bygone regime, seemed to see the democratic/undemocratic boundary in much broader sense. They pictured the whole decommunization legal procedure as incompatible with the rules of democratic decision-making. The decommunization policy might have created another division between undecisive and decisive social groups, from which the last consisted of the current conservative government and its supporters. A mean for sharpening this boundary was the analogy to the communist times, where the anti-communist conservatives reversed their roles with their former oppressors. Several actors also indicated a line between fair and unfair handling of decommunization process. This boundary was also the one that transgressed the political boundary of parties in the City Council, with the exception of a conservative council member judging the Piechocki's street renaming as unjust.

The media reaction in Bydgoszcz shows a visible tendency in the field of memory politics in Poland. Following Zoltan Dujisin (2021) the boundary could be drawn between two different approaches to the postwar history of Poland — the radically anti-communist coalition of PiS and IPN, who follow the "unfinished revolution" rhetoric and the advocates of the "thick line" solution, the post-communist left, but also the liberal dissidents. The conflict around Piechocki's St reflects this distinction. The dominance of liberal media in the coverage of the conflict and lack of involvement of any explicitly conservative, PiS-aligned titles might be interpreted both as disregarding the conflict as unimportant and the desire to hide the inconsistency of the official memory politics with vox populi by the latter ones. However, a boundary created by the binary anti-communist memory politics excludes Piechocki from the group of patrons that deserve to be commemorated. Instead, the conservative politicians and historians see him as one of those with who they "refuse to associate and those toward whom rejection and aggression are showed, and distance openly marked"

(Lamont 1992: 10). The distinctions constitute the identity of the group and mark the line between the “unconditional anti-communists” from the “regime apologists”.

CONCLUSIONS

If memory can be recognized as a resource, the boundary work in decommunization discourse serves as an “inter-group competition for resources” (Jenkins 2008). Therefore, boundaries produce inequalities as “an essential medium through which individuals [...] monopolize resources” (Lamont 1992: 12). Since the boundary work is used to “reinstate order within communities by reinforcing collective norms” (Lamont 1992: 11), the proponents of renaming perpetuated a black and white anti-communist perspective on memory to clearly indicate who can be commemorated in a post-communist society. However, their opponents did their best to negotiate the boundary (Gerson, Peiss 1985, so Piechocki might have crossed it and not been erased from the collective memory of Bydgoszcz’s inhabitants.

The study also showed how local media can participate in a conflict on memory politics by precise selection of actors to quote and taking a position incompatible with IPN’s and PiS’ vision of collective memory and its implementation into linguistic landscape of the city of Bydgoszcz. The tools of Discourse-Historical Approach prove themselves useful in analysing media coverage of a local conflict — they make possible to highlight specific discourse strategies (including argumentation) used to create positive representations of Jan Piechocki and assess the renaming as unjust and undemocratic. Although the patron was eventually erased from the street signs, the local media engaged a whole coalition of actors and gave them a platform to protest the province governor’s decision.

The research framework I presented in this article might be reused in conflicts around renaming other public utilities in different socio-political contexts. Systematic comparative analyses between different countries or regions might improve reflection on the sense of decommunization itself and help to improve the decisive processes on commemoration in the urban areas.

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Abstract

The article presents an analysis of media discourse on a dispute over the renaming of Jan Piechocki's street in Bydgoszcz. The case study aimed to answer the following questions: how are symbolic boundaries constructed in decommunization discourse in Poland, and how do local media construct these boundaries (specifically, what position do they take in a memory dispute, which stakeholders are able to voice their opinions, and what are their stances on this specific case of renaming and how do they justify them)? It also examined how specific discursive strategies contribute to the sharpening or blurring of these symbolic boundaries. For this purpose, the author used the analytical toolkit of the Discourse-Historical Approach to analyze discourse strategies occurring in local media articles and to present their linguistic realizations. He found that local media rejected the conservative, binary approach to decommunization and expressed their involvement in the defense of Piechocki as the street's patron, illustrating this conclusion with a careful selection of quotes.

keywords: discourse analysis, decommunization, memory politics, urban toponyms, Bydgoszcz

słowa kluczowe: analiza dyskursu, dekomunizacja, polityki pamięci, toponimia miejska, Bydgoszcz