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## THE RAPES OF POLISH WOMEN BY RED ARMY SOLDIERS IN 1945 IN THE POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP

**Abstract:** In January 1945, the Red Army launched an offensive and entered the future Pomeranian Voivodeship, encompassing Pomerania and Kuyavia territories. There have been publications presenting the end of the German occupation and the installation of the communist regime. What is missing, however, is a study discussing the crimes, including rapes and common offences committed by Red Army soldiers in the voivodeship. The author has attempted to determine whether it is possible to differentiate the nationality of the rape victims and to describe the Soviet soldiers' sexual violence against Polish women. The author's analysis also tackles questions about the scale of the phenomenon and the motives of the rape perpetrators. The analysis is based mainly on archival material, memoirs, and Polish and foreign literature.

**Keywords:** The Red Army, Pomerania and Kuyavia, Second World War, 1945, sexual violence

For Poles, the years 1944/1945 marked the end of the German occupation and the Second World War and the beginning of the installation of the communist regime in Poland. In Pomerania and Kuyavia, the Germans were still oppressing and exterminating the local population in the first weeks of January 1945. On 18 January, near Włocławek (Wieniec-Zdrój), they carried out the last execution in the region; in Brodnica and across the voivodeship, they shot ten people and conducted brutal investigations until 20 January. At the same time, during the evacuation from Inowrocław, they organized roundups and shot residents.<sup>1</sup> There have been several works describing the final days of

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<sup>1</sup> Władysław Kubiak, *Migdalszczyzna – zdrada i cierpienie*, Włocławek, 2006; Jan Sziling, 'Brodnica pod okupacją niemiecką (1939–1945)', in *Brodnica: Siedem wieków miasta*, ed. Jerzy Dygdała, Brodnica, 1998, pp. 279–300 (p. 286); Tadeusz Jaszowski, *Gestapo w walce z ruchem oporu nad Wisłą i Brdą*, Bydgoszcz, 1985, pp. 152, 158; Mieczysław Włodarski, 'Wyzwolenie Inowrocławia i utworzenie władz administracyjnych w 1945

the German occupation in Pomerania and Kuyavia, as well as the course of the Vistula–Odra (Oder) offensive and fighting in 1945. The period has been the focus of attention mainly in monographs of individual cities, towns and voivodeships.<sup>2</sup> Besides, scholars have produced publications discussing the most critical issues relating to the installation of the communist system and the emergence of the new reality. They have described, for example, the building of the structures of the regional security apparatus,<sup>3</sup> political and social life,<sup>4</sup> the judiciary and the activities of

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roku', *Prace Komisji Historii*, 13, 1978, 20, pp. 55–78 (p. 62); Jacek Matuszewski, 'Pierwsze chwile wolności', *Nasze Miasto Inowrocław*, 1985, 9, p. 4; it is possible to point to other places where in January and February 1945 the Germans committed crimes and resorted to repression, see for example Piotr Gałkowski and Błażej Krajewski, 'Zbrodnie popełnione przez Gestapo i żandarmerię niemiecką na terenie Ziemi Dobrzyńskiej w latach 1940–1945', in *Zbrodnie niemieckie na Ziemi Dobrzyńskiej (byłe powiaty Lipno i Rypin) w latach 1939–1945*, ed. Andrzej Szalkowski and Piotr Gałkowski, Rypin, 2019, pp. 67–120 (p. 94); iidem, 'Zbrodnie popełnione przez Jagdkommando na terenie Ziemi Dobrzyńskiej (jesień 1944–styczeń 1945)', in *ibid.*, pp. 121–53 (pp. 127–28, 131, 136–37, 142–43, 145, 148); Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, 'Mrocza w latach wojny i okupacji', in *Mrocza: Monografia miasta i gminy*, 2 vols, ed. Sławomir Łaniecki, Mrocza and Bydgoszcz, 2014, vol. 2, pp. 222–40 (p. 239); Remigiusz Ławniczak, 'Mieszkańcy Bydgoszczy wobec wejścia Armii Czerwonej do miasta w styczniu 1945 r.', *Świat Idei i Polityki*, 20, 2021, 1, pp. 140–59 (p. 143); Janusz Wierzba, 'Tuchola w latach 1920–1945/48', in *Tuchola: Zarys monograficzny*, ed. Jerzy Wojtowicz, Toruń, 1962, pp. 77–108 (p. 103).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Sziling, 'Brodnica', pp. 299–301; Wierzba, 'Tuchola'; Józef Borzyszkowski, 'Pod okupacją hitlerowską III Rzeszy Niemieckiej (1939–1945)', in *Dzieje Chojnic*, ed. Krzysztof Ostrowski, Chojnice, 2010, pp. 533–84; Krzysztof Ostrowski, 'W Polsce Ludowej i III Rzeczypospolitej', in *ibid.*, pp. 587–657; Kazimierz Sobczak, 'Wyzwolenie Bydgoszczy, Torunia i Grudziądza w ofensywie Armii Radzieckiej w początkach 1945 r.', *ZH*, 30, 1965, 1, pp. 7–37; Waldemar Rezmer, 'Walki o Grudziądz w 1945 roku', in *Historia Grudziądza 1920–1945*, 2 vols, ed. Ryszard Sudziński, Grudziądz, 2012, vol. 2, pp. 285–324; Edmund Kosiarz, *Wyzwolenie Polski północnej 1945*, Gdynia, 1967; Kamil Anduła, *1. Warszawska Brygada Pancerna im. Bohaterów Westerplatte na froncie (1943–1945)*, Warsaw, 2015; Łukasz Mamert Nadolski, *Bitwa o Bydgoszcz: 20–28 stycznia 1945 roku*, Bydgoszcz, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> *Twarze bezpieki 1945–1990: Obsada stanowisk kierowniczych Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa i Służby Bezpieczeństwa w województwach pomorskim/bydgoskim, toruńskim i włocławskim: Informator personalny*, ed. Marek Szymaniak, Bydgoszcz and Gdańsk, 2010; Marek Szymaniak, 'Pion walki z "bandytyzmem" WUBP w Bydgoszczy (1945–1954): Struktury — kadry — metody zwalczania zbrojnego podziemia niepodległościowego', in *Pion walki z podziemiem niepodległościowym RBP/MBP 1944–1954*, ed. Tadeusz Ruzikowski, Warsaw, 2016, pp. 169–256; Piotr Rybarczyk, 'Wstęp', in *Rok pierwszy: Powstanie i działalność aparatu bezpieczeństwa publicznego na Pomorzu i Kujawach (luty–grudzień 1945)*, ed. Beata Binaszewska and Piotr Rybarczyk, Warsaw, Bydgoszcz and Gdańsk, 2010, pp. 15–33.

<sup>4</sup> See for example *Rok 1945 na Kujawach i Pomorzu: Koniec wojny — początek nowej rzeczywistości*, ed. Zdzisław Biegański and Zbigniew Karpus, Bydgoszcz, 2006; Ryszard Kozłowski, *Partie polityczne w województwie pomorskim (1945–1950)*, Toruń, 1991; idem, *Przeobrażenia społeczno-polityczne w województwie pomorskim (1945–1948)*, Toruń, 1976, idem, *Polska Partia Robotnicza w województwie pomorskim 1942–1948*, Bydgoszcz, 1985; the

the anti-communist underground,<sup>5</sup> sports,<sup>6</sup> the economy<sup>7</sup> and culture.<sup>8</sup> We also have at our disposal two crucial sets of documents from 1945: reports of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Pomeranian Governor, as well as reports of the security apparatus.<sup>9</sup>

The 'People's Poland' period was marked by the existence of a cult of the Red Army, which was portrayed as a 'liberator' in official propaganda. Monographs and studies written at the time failed to mention the criminal activities of the Soviet troops after they entered Poland in 1944/45. It was only after the political transformation and the abolition of censorship that scholars were able to explore this topic. Since the early 1990s,

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construction of administration and revival of political life have been described in a number of monographs devoted to towns and districts, idem, 'Życie społeczne i polityczne w latach 1945–1959', in *Włocławek: Dzieje miasta*, 2 vols, ed. Jacek Staszewski, Włocławek, 1999–2001, vol. 2: 1918–1998, pp. 457–508; Krzysztof Halicki, 'Nowe nad Wisłą w latach 1945–1989', in *Nowe: Dzieje starego miasta*, ed. Krzysztof Halicki and Zbigniew Lorkowski, Nowe and Gdynia, 2016, pp. 283–322; Mirosław Golon, 'Początki ludowej niepodległości (1945–1950)', in *Historia Wąbrzeźna*, 3 vols, ed. Krzysztof Mikulski, Wąbrzeźno, 2005–2022, vol. 2, 2005, pp. 7–123; idem, 'Pierwszy rok w nowej Polsce (1945 rok)', in *Historia Golubia-Dobrzyń*, 4 vols, ed. Krzysztof Mikulski, Toruń, 2008, vol. 3: *Historia Golubia-Dobrzyń w latach 1945–1962*, pp. 7–37; Tomasz Kawski, 'Tuchola i okolice w latach 1945–1989', in *Tuchola: Od pradziejów do współczesności*, ed. Włodzimierz Jastrzębski and Jerzy Szwankowski, Bydgoszcz and Tuchola, 2010, pp. 497–628.

<sup>5</sup> Zdzisław Biegański, *Sądownictwo i skazani na śmierć z przyczyn politycznych w województwie pomorskim (bydgoskim) w latach 1945–1956*, Bydgoszcz, 2003; Krzysztof Sidorkiewicz, *Represje organów wymiaru sprawiedliwości w sprawach politycznych w województwie pomorskim (bydgoskim) w latach 1945–1956*, Toruń, 2005; Alicja Paczoska-Hauke, 'Okręg Pomorski (Bydgoski) Zrzeszenia WiN', in *Obszar Zachodni Zrzeszenia WiN 1945*, ed. Kazimierz Krajewski, Warsaw, 2019, pp. 139–58; eadem, *Szary, Ryś, Mściciel... Żołnierze podziemia niepodległościowego na Kujawach Wschodnich (1945–1947)*, Bydgoszcz and Gdańsk, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, 'Kultura fizyczna w Bydgoszczy (1945–1956)', in *Historia Bydgoszczy*, 3 vols, Warsaw and Bydgoszcz, 1991–2015, vol. 3, part 1: 1945–1956, Bydgoszcz, 2015, pp. 493–524; Konrad Mrozik, 'Organizacja kultury fizycznej w latach 1945–1986 w województwie bydgoskim/pomorskim', in *100 lat sportu na Kujawach i Pomorzu*, ed. Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, Bydgoszcz, 1993, pp. 74–93.

<sup>7</sup> Sławomir Kamosiński, 'Przyczynek do badań nad postrzeganiem nowej rzeczywistości gospodarczej i postawami wobec niej urzędników, pracowników i przedsiębiorców województwa pomorskiego w 1945 r.', in *Rok 1945 na Kujawach i Pomorzu*, pp. 155–70; idem, 'Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa w Bydgoszczy w latach 1945–1950', *Kronika Bydgoska*, 23, 2001, [2002], pp. 41–58.

<sup>8</sup> Anna Sucharska, *Obraz kultury w prasie bydgoskiej w latach 1945–1950*, Warsaw and Poznań, 1990; Stanisław Kunikowski, *Kultura, sztuka, nauka we Włocławku, na Kujawach wschodnich i w ziemi dobrzyńskiej w latach 1945–1998*, Włocławek, 2006; *Bydgoskie w dwudziestoleciu 1945–1965: Zarys społeczno-kulturalny*, Gdynia, 1967; Remigiusz Ławniczak, 'Czas wolny mieszkańców województwa pomorskiego w 1945 roku: udział w przedstawieniach', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 67, 2023, 4, pp. 255–79.

<sup>9</sup> *Rok 1945: Województwo Pomorskie: Sprawozdania pełnomocników rządu i wojewody*, ed. Ryszard Kozłowski, Warsaw, 1997; *Rok pierwszy*.

scholarly, popular and journalistic publications have been produced, with their authors considering the crimes of the Soviet military. The crimes are also highlighted in monographs of various regions of Poland.<sup>10</sup>

Characteristic and common crimes committed by the Red Army in 1945 in Poland included theft, looting, beating, deportation, dismantling, devastation, murder and rape. The topic of rape of Polish women has been present in Polish scholarship and journalistic writings for several years,<sup>11</sup> although the information given is often very general. So far, the

<sup>10</sup> See for example *Pod czerwoną gwiazdą: Aspekty sowieckiej obecności w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w 1945 roku*, ed. Sebastian Rosenbaum and Dariusz Węgrzyn, Katowice and Warsaw, 2017; *Armia Czerwona/Radziecka w Polsce w latach 1944–1993: Studia i szkice*, ed. Krzysztof Filip and Mirosław Golon, Borne Sulinowo, Bydgoszcz and Gdańsk, 2014; *W objęciach Wielkiego Brata: Sowietci w Polsce 1944–1993*, ed. Konrad Rokicki and Sławomir Stępień, Warsaw, 2009; Joanna Hytrek-Hryciuk, ‘Rosjanie nadchodzą!': *Ludność niemiecka a żołnierze Armii Radzieckiej (Czerwonej) na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1948*, Wrocław, 2013; idem, “‘Malowali tych Rusków jak... końskie kopyta, rogi i czerwony’”: *Ludność cywilna i żołnierze Armii Czerwonej w ostatnich miesiącach II wojny światowej i pierwszych miesiącach powojennych na Śląsku Opolskim*, in *Koniec wojny na Śląsku: Rok 1945: Studia i materiały*, ed. Ksawery Jasiak, Krzysztof Kawalec and Piotr Stanek, Wrocław, Opole and Warsaw, 2018, pp. 127–36; Nikolaï Iwanow, *Zajęcie Śląska przez Armię Czerwoną w 1945 r.*, in *ibid.*, pp. 100–10; Krzysztof Strykowski, *Poznań '45: Ostatni rok wojny, pierwszy rok odbudowy*, Poznań, 2013; Maciej Kościuszko, *Armia Czerwona w Wielkopolsce w latach 1945–1946 w świetle dokumentów polskiej administracji*, Poznań and Warsaw, 2023; *Armia Radziecka w Polsce 1944–1956: Dokumenty i materiały*, ed. Mariusz L. Krogulski, Warsaw, 2003; Mariusz L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu: Armia Radziecka w Polsce 1944–1956*, Warsaw, 2000; Ryszard Techman, *Armia radziecka w gospodarce morskiej Pomorza Zachodniego w latach 1945–1956*, Poznań 2003; *Teczka specjalna J. W. Stalina: Raporty NKWD z Polski 1944–1946*, ed. Tatiana Cariewskaja et al., Warsaw, 1998; Bogusław Tracz, *Rok ostatni — rok pierwszy: Gliwice 1945*, Gliwice, 2004; Radosław Gross, ‘Olsztyńskie “Dzikie Pola”: Rabunek i dewastacja wsi na Warmii i Mazurach przez wojska sowieckie w latach 1945–1948’, *DN*, 54, 2022, 3, pp. 109–30; Janusz Wróbel, ‘Wyzwoliciele czy okupanci? Żołnierze sowieccy w Łódzkiem 1945–1946’, *Biuletyn IPN*, 2001, 7, pp. 39–42; Janina Szych, ‘W niewoli i u wyzwolicieli’, *Biuletyn IPN*, 2005, 9–10, pp. 139–46 (pp. 145–46); Łukasz Kamiński, ‘Obdarci, głodni, źli — Sowietci w oczach Polaków 1944–1948’, *Biuletyn IPN*, 2001, 7, pp. 52–55; Krzysztof Lesiakowski, “‘Trofiejny” przemarsz’, *ibid.*, pp. 43–46.

<sup>11</sup> See par example Joanna Ostrowska, “‘Lepiej nie mówić”: Milczenie ofiar gwałtów wojennych z okresu drugiej wojny światowej w relacjach świadkiń”, *Narracje o Zagładzie*, 1, 2021, pp. 36–60; Joanna Ostrowska and Marcin Zaremba, ‘Czerwonoarmiści siali strach: Kobiety bały się gwałtów’, *Polityka*, 7 March 2009 <<https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/historia/284023,1,czerwonoarmisci-siali-strach-kobiety-baly-sie-gwaltow.read>> [accessed 29 October 2023]; Bogusław Tracz, “‘Gwałty, których skali i sadyzmu nie można sobie wyobrazić”: Gehenna górnośląskich kobiet w 1945 r.’, *Przystanek Historia*, 15 January 2021 <<https://przystanekhistoria.pl/pa2/tematy/armia-czerwona/77801,Gwalty-ktorych-skali-i-sadyzmu-nie-mozna-sobie-wyobrazic-Gehenna-gornoslaskich-k.html>> [accessed 28 October 2023]; Tomasz Słomczyński, *Kaszëbë*, Wołowiec, 2021; Jakub Gałęziowski has described the issue of rapes, termination of pregnancies resulting from rapes, and Polish children born of war, see Jakub

topic has been discussed extensively in the studies by Marcin Zaremba and Jakub Gałęziowski. In his monograph, Gałęziowski devotes a lot of space to the post-war stabilization of sexual violence, draws attention to the impact of sexual violence on the victims and their families, and examines the attitude of the authorities of post-war 'People's Poland' to the termination of pregnancies resulting from rape.<sup>12</sup> Authors of foreign literature have focused mainly on the rapes committed by Red Army soldiers against German women on German soil in the last phase of the war.<sup>13</sup>

The situation is similar regarding the presence of the Red Army in Pomerania and Kuyavia. It was not until after 1989 that books and articles discussing the topic began to appear. The Soviet army is the subject of studies by, above all, Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, Mirosław Golon and

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Gałęziowski, "The Sense of Justice and the Need for Eugenics Require Instant and Effective Intervention": Terminating Pregnancies Resulting from Wartime Rapes in Poland in 1945', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung / Journal of East Central European Studies*, 71, 2022, 2, pp. 235–59; idem, 'Researching Global Phenomena in Local Circumstances: Polish Children Born of War in the Context of CBOW Research', in *Children and Youth at Risk in Times of Transition: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Baard Herman Borge, Elke Kleinau and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard, Berlin, 2024, pp. 115–38; rapes of Polish women are the subject of a chapter in Kerstin Bischl, *Frontbeziehungen: Geschlechterverhältnisse und Gewaltdynamiken in der Roten Armee 1941–1945*, Hamburg, 2019, pp. 296–307.

<sup>12</sup> Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga: Polska 1944–1947: Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Cracow, 2012, pp. 170–95; Jakub Gałęziowski, *Niedopowiedziane biografie: Polskie dzieci urodzone z powodu wojny*, Warsaw, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> For example Antony Beevor, *Berlin 1945: Upadek*, translation from English 2005, Cracow, 2021, English version: Antony Beevor, *Berlin: The Downfall 1945*, London, 2002; Catherine Merridale, *Wojna Iwana: Życie i śmierć w Armii Czerwonej 1939–1945*, translation from English 2006, Cracow, 2020, English version: Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945*, New York, 2006; Norman Naimark, 'The Russians and Germans: Rape during the War and Post-Soviet Memories', in *Rape in Wartime*, ed. Raphaëlle Branche and Fabrice Virgili, Basingstoke, 2012, pp. 201–19; Kerstin Bischl, 'Seksual'noe nasilie i povsednevnaia zhizn': Rassuzhdeniia o Krasnoi armii', in *Malen'kii chelovek i bolshaiia voina v istorii Rossii: Seredina XIX — seredina XX v.*, ed. Tamara A. Abrosimova et al., St Petersburg, 2014, pp. 530–42; Johannes Kuber, "'Frisvolous Broads' and the 'Black Menace': The Catholic Clergy's Perception of Victims and Perpetrators of Sexual Violence in Occupied Germany, 1945", in *War and Sexual Violence: New Perspectives in a New Era*, ed. Sarah K. Danielsson, Paderborn, 2019, pp. 183–208; Mikkel Dack, 'Crimes Committed by Soviet Soldiers Against German Civilians, 1944–1945: A Historical-geographical Analysis', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 10, 2008, 4; Elisabeth Krimmer, 'Philomela's Legacy: Rape, the Second World War, and the Ethics of Reading', *The German Quarterly*, 88, 2015, 1, pp. 82–103; Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, New York, 1975, pp. 65–70; a Polish study devoted to the subject has been published as well: Tomasz Kruszewski, *Gwałty na kobietach niemieckich w schyłkowym okresie II wojny światowej (październik 1944–8/9 maja 1945 roku) i w pierwszych latach po jej zakończeniu*, Wrocław, 2016.



Remigiusz Ławniczak, who describe the dismantling of industrial plants, deportations of Poles to the USSR and crimes committed in the various districts (*powiaty*) of Pomerania. In regional monographs, the crimes and common offences of the Red Army are discussed mainly in the margins of political, social, and economic events. Rapes committed by Red Army soldiers in Pomerania have also been described by Gałęziowski, primarily in the context of the care and health of the victims as well as the terminations of pregnancies. So far, however, there has been no study devoted strictly to rapes committed in the region.<sup>14</sup>

In this article, I will discuss the issue of rapes of Polish women committed by Red Army soldiers in 1945 in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. I will try to answer some of the most important questions concerning the region: when analysing the rapes by Red Army soldiers in the Pomeranian Voivodeship in 1945, the question of how far it is possible to determine whether the victims of rape were Polish, as opposed to other nationalities; were rapes at that time and in that region mass-scale in nature, or rather were they an incidental and marginal phenomenon; and did the occupation conditions in Pomerania and Kuyavia during the

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<sup>14</sup> Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, *W dalekim, obcym kraju: Deportacje Polaków z Pomorza do ZSRR w 1945 r.*, Bydgoszcz, 1990; Grzegorz Baziur, *Armia Czerwona na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1945–1947*, Warsaw, 2003; Mirosław Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych na Pomorzu Nadwiślańskim w latach 1945–1947*, Toruń, 2001; idem, 'Polityka radzieckich władz na Kujawach i Pomorzu w 1945 r.: Aspekty społeczno-ekonomiczne', in *Rok 1945 na Kujawach i Pomorzu*, pp. 61–93; idem, 'Działalność radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych w Bydgoszczy w latach 1945–1946 (cz. 1)', *Kronika Bydgoska*, 17, 1995, pp. 85–116; idem, 'Działalność radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych w Bydgoszczy w latach 1945–1946 (cz. 2)', *Kronika Bydgoska*, 18, 1996, pp. 35–66; idem, 'Armia Czerwona (Radziecka) w Bydgoszczy w latach 1945–1947', in *Historia Bydgoszczy*, vol. 3, part 1, pp. 59–137; idem, 'Północna Grupa Wojsk Armii Radzieckiej w Polsce w latach 1945–1956: Okupant w roli sojusznika', *Czasy Nowożytnie*, 6, 1999, pp. 37–115; idem, 'Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych wobec ludności Torunia po zakończeniu okupacji niemieckiej (1945–1949)', in *Problemy narodowościowe i wyznaniowe na Pomorzu Nadwiślańskim i Kujawach w XX wieku*, ed. Ryszard Sudziński, Toruń, 1997, pp. 93–189; Remigiusz Ławniczak, 'Stosunek mieszkańców Grudziądza i powiatu grudziądzkiego do Armii Czerwonej w 1945 r. w kontekście przestępczej działalności czerwonooarmistów', *Rocznik Grudziądzki*, 29, 2021, pp. 119–44; idem, 'Stosunek mieszkańców Chojnic i powiatu chojnickiego do Armii Czerwonej w 1945 r. w kontekście działalności żołnierzy sowieckich', *Zeszyty Chojnickie*, 37, 2021, pp. 35–56; idem, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie świeckim (w województwie pomorskim) w 1945 roku: przestępcza działalność wojska i stosunek mieszkańców do czerwonooarmistów', *SDRE*, 58, 2023, 1, pp. 129–53; idem, 'Mieszkańcy Bydgoszczy wobec wejścia Armii Czerwonej', pp. 140–59; idem, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie szubińskim (w województwie pomorskim) w 1945 r.', *Aparat Represji w Polsce Ludowej 1944–1989*, 19, 2021, pp. 552–79; Kawski, 'Tuchola i okolice', pp. 497–628; Słomczyński, *Kaszëbë*; Ryszard Sudziński, 'Okres pierwszy (1945–1948/1949)', in *Historia Torunia*, 4 vols, Toruń, 1992–2020, vol. 4, part 1, ed. Ryszard Sudziński, 2020, pp. 19–396 (pp. 19–40, 128–232); Gałęziowski, *Niedopowiedziane biografie*.

Second World War have an impact on the fact that Red Army soldiers committed rapes?

Sexual violence will be discussed within the territory of the Pomeranian Voivodeship as constituted between 1945 to and 1950, with its capital city in Bydgoszcz.<sup>15</sup> The voivodeship was revived in early 1945, and the following months were marked by two crucial border changes: in March, six northern districts were incorporated into the Gdańsk Voivodeship, which was followed by the incorporation of the districts of Czluchów and Złotów in July. They were part of the Pomeranian Voivodeship for a short period, from July 1945 to May 1946, when they became part of the Szczecin Voivodeship. Although administratively, they belonged to the Pomeranian Voivodeship and were administered by the Pomeranian Governor, politically, they were subordinated to the Ministry of the Recovered Territories, which is why they have been excluded from this study. The Pomeranian Voivodeship will be discussed about the districts of Brodnica, Bydgoszcz, Chełmno, Chojnice, Grudziądz, Inowrocław, Lipno, Lubawa, Nieszawa, Rypin, Sępólno, Szubin, Świecie, Toruń, Tuchola, Wąbrzeźno, Włocławek, Wyrzysk, as well as the Cities of Bydgoszcz, Grudziądz, Inowrocław, Toruń and Włocławek.

The time frame encompasses the year 1945. It started with the entry of the Red Army into the voivodeship in January 1945, with the wave of rapes easing towards the end of that year because of the decrease in the number of Soviet troops present in the region. The study is based on archival materials, primarily those of the Polish security apparatus and various institutions, memoirs, and Polish and foreign literature.

The analysis should start with a discussion of the specificity of the post-war Pomeranian Voivodeship during the Second World War, as the conditions there at the time had consequences in the future. In the autumn of 1939, the region was incorporated into the Third Reich. The Germans planned to de-Polonize it. One element of this policy was the German People's List (*Deutsche Volksliste, DVL*), which encompassed four categories. Most Poles accepted Category III. Theoretically, it applied to partially Polonized people of German descent, people who did not oppose Germanness, people of foreign descent who married a German man or German woman, and Slavic-speaking individuals culturally related to Germans. To a large extent, the decision to take such a step was motivated by the fact that people remembered the cruel German terror of the first months of the war and feared the loss of jobs and housing or

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<sup>15</sup> See Ryszard Sudziński, 'Kształtowanie się granic i podziału administracyjnego województwa pomorskiego (bydgoskiego) w latach 1945–1950', *ZH*, 38, 1973, 2, pp. 51–80.

displacement.<sup>16</sup> In January 1944, in the Danzig-West Prussia Reich Region (*Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen*), excluding the Free City of Danzig (FCD), DVL Categories III and IV were accepted by 727,000 residents (44.4 per cent).<sup>17</sup> In Bydgoszcz, in January 1945, Category III was held by 62,783 Poles (66 per cent).<sup>18</sup> The situation was different in the Wartheland (*Warthegau*), where DVL enrollment covered only Germans as well as persons who were of partial German origin and largely Germanized — they were included in Category III.<sup>19</sup>

January 1945 was marked by the launch of the Soviet offensive to the West. Pomerania and Kuyavia were the operations theatre for the 1st Belorussian Front (1st BF), commanded by Marshal Georgii Zhukov, which included the 1st Army of the Polish Armed Forces (1st PA) under General Stanisław Popławski and the 2nd Belorussian Front (2nd BF), commanded by Marshal Konstantin Rokossovskii. The fronts moved from their respective bridgeheads towards Sochaczew, Kutno, Radom and Łódź, as well as Nasielsk, Płońsk, Pułtusk, Szczytno and Płock. The 1st PA began its operations in the triangle of the Vistula and Bug Rivers, and after the capture of Warsaw, it found itself in the second wave of the 1st BF. The capture of Bydgoszcz, Toruń and Grudziądz was of considerable military significance. The victories made it possible to take control of the Lower Vistula region and to launch the offensive towards the Baltic. The main forces of the 1st BF were attacking in the direction of the Odra (*Oder*) River. The German-Soviet battle for the territory of the future Pomeranian Voivodeship lasted from 20 January to March 1945. The city that resisted the longest in the region was Grudziądz, which was surrendered on 6 March.

After the Red Army entered the analysed region, the most essential power centres were the Soviet military commands established there. They

<sup>16</sup> On the occupation policy in the region in question, see par example Czesław Łuczak, *Pod niemieckim jarzmem (Kraj Warty 1939–1945)*, Poznań, 1996; Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, *Terror i zbrodnia: Eksterminacja ludności polskiej i żydowskiej w rejencji bydgoskiej w latach 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 1974; Włodzimierz Jastrzębski and Jan Sziling, *Okupacja hitlerowska na Pomorzu Gdańskim w latach 1939–1945*, Gdańsk, 1979; *Polityka germanizacyjna Trzeciej Rzeszy na Pomorzu Gdańskim w latach 1939–1945: Materiały sesji popularnonaukowej w Toruniu w dniu 18 listopada 2006 roku*, ed. Katarzyna Minczykowska and Jan Sziling, Toruń, 2007; Tomasz Ceran, Izabela Mazanowska and Monika Tomkiewicz, *The Pomeranian Crime of 1939*, Warsaw, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Waldemar Grabowski, 'Polacy na ziemiach II RP włączonych do III Rzeszy: Garść danych "ku pamięci"', *Biuletyn IPN*, 2009, 8–9, pp. 61–73 (p. 68).

<sup>18</sup> Marek Romaniuk, *Podzwonne okupacji: Deutsche Volksliste w Bydgoszczy (1945–1950)*, Bydgoszcz, 1993, pp. 41–42; slightly different data are presented by Jastrzębski, *W dalekim, obcym kraju*, pp. 23–25.

<sup>19</sup> Łuczak, *Pod niemieckim jarzmem*, pp. 57–65.



were responsible for security in the army's rear and supervised and controlled the establishment of the local Polish administration and security apparatus. They took part in the preparation of the deportation of Poles to labour camps in the USSR and the liquidation of the structures of the Polish Underground State.<sup>20</sup> The Soviet commands were set up in almost all cities and larger towns in the voivodeships. They were manned from a dozen to fifty men; the commanding officer's protection battalions were established with a maximum of 325 soldiers.<sup>21</sup> Historians assume that most of the commands ceased to operate in May–July 1945.<sup>22</sup> However, some of them were still active in the second half of the year (for example, in Chojnice and Brodnica),<sup>23</sup> or even in 1947 (Toruń) and 1948 (Bydgoszcz).<sup>24</sup> Sometimes, after the commanding officers left in 1945, several Red Army soldiers would remain.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout 1945, NKVD units were deployed in the districts: in February, the 63rd Rifle Division (RD) of the NKVD Internal Troops, operating as part of the 2nd BF, arrived in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie on 1 March in Bydgoszcz, and after two weeks in Czersk (Chojnice District (*Powiat*)).<sup>26</sup> In mid-1945, one regiment of the 64th RD of the NKVD was temporarily

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<sup>20</sup> Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych*, pp. 28–29, 54; see also Wojciech Skóra, 'Instrukcje dla komendantów Armii Czerwonej obejmujących władzę na terytorium Polski w latach 1944–1945', *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, 2, 2021, pp. 726–54; idem, 'Organizacja, struktura i obsada sowieckich komendantur wojskowych (wojennych) na terytorium Polski w latach 1944–1946: Rekonesans badawczy', *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio F*, 76, 2021, pp. 301–25.

<sup>21</sup> Skóra, 'Organizacja, struktura i obsada', pp. 308–09.

<sup>22</sup> *Pol'sha v XX veke: Oчерki politicheskoi istorii*, ed. Gennadii Filippovich Matveev, Al'bina Fedorovna Noskova and Larisa Semenovna Lykoshina, Moscow, 2012, p. 455; Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych*, p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Sprawozdanie dla Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Ziemskiego Pomorskiego w Bydgoszczy (Report for the Pomeranian Voivodeship Office), Bydgoszcz, 15 August 1945, Archiwum Państwowe w Bydgoszczy (State Archive in Bydgoszcz) (hereinafter: APB), Urząd Wojewódzki Pomorski w Bydgoszczy (Pomeranian Voivodeship Office in Bydgoszcz) (hereinafter: UWP By), 706, fol. 13; Sprawozdanie miesięczne starosty powiatowego w Brodnicy za czas od 1 do 31 sierpnia 1945 (Monthly report of the Brodnica district starosta for a period from 1 to 31 August 1945), Brodnica, 30 August 1945, APB, UWP By, 588, fol. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Golon, 'Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych wobec ludności Torunia', pp. 104–05.

<sup>25</sup> This happened in, for example, the district of Szubin, see Ławniczak, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie szubińskim', p. 554.

<sup>26</sup> Godovoi otchet ob operativno-služhebnoi deiatel'nosti chastei 63 strelkovoi divizii Vnutrennich voisk NKVD za 1945 god, 25 January 1946, CAW (Central Military Archives), Kolekcja akt z archiwów rosyjskich (grupa zespołów) (Collection of files from Russian archives (group of fonds)), Główny Zarząd Wojsk Wewnętrznych NKWD (Chief Directorate of the NKVD Internal Troops), VIII/800/36/11, fol. 20.

stationed in Pomerania.<sup>27</sup> From June 1945, units of the Northern Army Group were stationed in the analysed region, as were in 1945–46 units of the NKVD Forces for the Protection of the Rear of the 2nd BF, which guarded, for example, the NKVD prison in Grudziądz.<sup>28</sup>

Soviet troops were also stationed on farms in the voivodeship: between July 1945 and January 1946, the Soviets occupied a total of over fifty estates.<sup>29</sup> In cities, the Red Army seized public buildings, mainly schools, private buildings and flats. Many Red Army soldiers came to the region in the spring and summer of 1945 during the return of the Soviet troops from Germany to the USSR. Consequently, in Bydgoszcz, premises on twenty-seven streets, mainly in the Bielawki neighbourhood, were confiscated to be used as quarters for the Red Army;<sup>30</sup> in Włocławek, residents were evicted from twelve buildings.<sup>31</sup> In August, the authorities in Toruń conducted a registration survey, which showed that the Red Army occupied 202 billets in the city.<sup>32</sup> In Świecie, on the other hand, in the first few months of 1946, the Soviets, as the mayor reported, still occupied a large part of the city's lodgings and even demanded more.<sup>33</sup>

There are two noteworthy points: the permanent presence of the troops in the voivodeship was steadily declining; by the end of the year, a large part of them had left Pomerania and Kuyavia. In some cities, regular units were no longer stationed.<sup>34</sup> However, from the middle of the year, the

<sup>27</sup> Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych*, pp. 133–35; idem, 'Represje ACz i NKWD wobec polskiej konspiracji niepodległościowej w latach 1944–1946 (cz. 2)', *Czasz Nowożytny*, 2, 1997, pp. 107–36 (p. 119).

<sup>28</sup> Idem, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych*, p. 137.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>30</sup> A compilation of some known acts of terror, robbery by the Soviets in Poland and society's self-defence between 15 January and 30 June 1945, The Polish Underground Movement 1939–1945, Study Trust, PUMST Archive, Ministry of Home Affairs, 063/1, fol. 277; Report for a period from 20 May to 5 June 1945, Bydgoszcz, 7 June 1945, AIPN (Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance), 1550/795, fol. 43.

<sup>31</sup> Sprawozdanie miesięczne Zarządu Miejskiego we Włocławku (Monthly report of the Włocławek Municipal Authority), Włocławek, 30 June 1945, APB, UWP By, 586, fol. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Sprawozdanie miesięczne Zarządu Miejskiego w Toruniu za sierpień 1945 (Monthly report of the Toruń Municipal Authority), Toruń, 6 September 1945, APB, UWP By, 580, fol. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Pismo burmistrza Świecia (Letter from the Mayor of Świecie), 9 January 1946, APB, Zarząd Miejski w Świeciu (Świecie Municipal Authority), 17; Letter from the Mayor of Świecie, 27 February 1946, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> See, par example, Sprawozdanie z sytuacji politycznej i stanu bezpieczeństwa starosty powiatowego w Tucholi (Report on the political situation and security situation by the district starosta in Tuchola), Tuchola, 3 September 1945, APB, UWP By, 611, fol. 31; Report by the district starosta in Brodnica, Brodnica, 20 November 1945, APB, UWP By, 592, fol. 23; Monthly report of the district starosta in Chełmno for November 1945, Chełmno, 1 December 1945, *ibid.*, fol. 59; Monthly report of the district

Soviets drove seized cattle and horses through the region, with numerous Soviet units passing through it on their way from the West to the East and briefly remaining there.<sup>35</sup> With access to post-Soviet/Russian archives, it is possible to determine the number of Red Army troops stationed or passing through the voivodeship in 1945.

The first and fundamental issue to be examined is whether, when analysing the rapes committed by Red Army soldiers in the Pomeranian Voivodeship in 1945, we can discuss them concerning Polish women. Can we differentiate the rapes by nationality? In this context, we should refer to the statistical data on the national composition of Pomerania and Kuyavia. In the Second Republic period, in what was then the Pomeranian Voivodeship, Germans accounted for about 10 per cent of the total population (just over 100,000 people according to the 1931 census).<sup>36</sup> Then, during the Second World War, as a result of the German occupation policy, which included Germanization, extermination and displacement of Poles and settlement of Germans, the number of Germans in the area increased. In 1935, the Lipno District was inhabited by 17,100 Germans (15.7 per cent), Lipno — 1,000 (11.7 per cent); Rypin District — 5,300 (6 per cent), Rypin — 342 persons (3.9 per cent). There were 2,500 Germans (4.2 per cent) living in Włocławek in 1933 and 7,800 in the Włocławek District in 1935 (5 per cent). In contrast, during the occupation in the spring of 1944, there were 11,300 Germans (23 per cent) living in Włocławek, with the number of Germans rising by May 1944 in the Lipno District to 25,400 (17.2 per cent) and in the Rypin District — to 9,700 (13 per cent).<sup>37</sup> In Toruń in mid-1944, about 24,000 Germans (about 27 per cent) and over 61,000 Poles (about 73 per cent) lived in the city.<sup>38</sup>

However, already in mid-1944, Germans, fearing a Soviet offensive, began to leave Pomerania and Kuyavia, and in the autumn of 1944, plans were

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starosta in Sępólno for November 1945, Sępólno, 30 November 1945, *ibid.*, fol. 203; Situation report of the Mayor of Inowrocław for November 1945, Inowrocław, 3 December 1945, APB, UWP By, 582, fol. 81.

<sup>35</sup> See, par example, Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne starosty powiatowego w Bydgoszczy za listopad 1945 (Situation report of the district starosta in Bydgoszcz for November 1945), Bydgoszcz, 5 December 1945, APB, UWP By, 592, fol. 47; Monthly report of the district starosta in Lipno, Lipno, 30 November 1945, *ibid.*, fol. 157; Report by the district starosta in Grudziądz for September 1945, Grudziądz, 1 October 1945, APB, UWP By, 589, fol. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Ryszard Sudziński, 'Ludność niemiecka w województwie pomorskim w latach 1945–1950: Jej liczebność, rozmieszczenie i różnicowanie', in *Problemy narodowościowe i wyznaniowe*, pp. 53–91 (p. 54).

<sup>37</sup> Idem, 'Mniejszość niemiecka na Kujawach wschodnich i w ziemi dobrzyńskiej po 1945 roku', *Zapiski Kujawsko-Dobrzyńskie*, 13, 1999, pp. 96–125.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, 'Okres pierwszy', p. 19.

made to evacuate the local German population.<sup>39</sup> The escapes intensified particularly in the first few weeks of 1945. As Ryszard Sudziński notes, 'there is no doubt that the vast majority of Germans of all categories [...], who were in the lands incorporated into the Reich during the final period of the war, left these territories in the course of a hasty evacuation, together with the retreating troops or shortly after the liberation'. For example, nearly 39,000 Germans left Bydgoszcz even before the front arrived in 1945, with another 3,000 fleeing before the Red Army entered the city. Only about 3,000 Germans remained.<sup>40</sup> German documents describing the evacuation of Inowrocław mention several times that German women with children were leaving the city in January 1945. A 'small number' of the occupier's administrative staff remained, including 'a few' women.<sup>41</sup> As the author of a monograph on Toruń writes, even before the Soviets entered the city, 'German soldiers as well as a significant number of German civilians were already gone'; in mid-1945, the administration reported the presence of 2,645 Germans (4.4 per cent).<sup>42</sup> Witold Stankowski estimates that about 70 per cent of Germans were evacuated from Kuyavia and Gdańsk Pomerania (excluding the Free City of Gdańsk).<sup>43</sup>

After the end of the occupation, the Germans who remained in the voivodeship were imprisoned in camps and detention centres. Able-bodied Germans were hired by institutions or companies and sent to work on farms or industrial plants. At the same time, the communist government began a campaign to displace Germans. The authorities of the Pomeranian Voivodeship identified the campaign as one of the most important tasks for them to carry out. In the early autumn of 1945, even before decisions were made on the international level about the resettlement of Germans, the local administration encouraged them to leave the region. Some people received relevant passes and took advantage of this opportunity, while others crossed the border illegally.<sup>44</sup> According to calculations made at the time, in mid-1945, there

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<sup>39</sup> The plans to evacuate Germans from Gdańsk Pomerania and Kuyavia, as well as the course of the evacuation are discussed by Witold Stankowski, *Niemcy na Pomorzu Gdańskim i Kujawach w latach 1944/45-1950: Ucieczka, życie codzienne, wysiedlenie*, Bydgoszcz, 2000, pp. 65-106.

<sup>40</sup> Sudziński, 'Ludność niemiecka', pp. 57-58; see also idem, 'Mniejszość niemiecka na Kujawach wschodnich', p. 101.

<sup>41</sup> See Dariusz Matelski, 'Ewakuacja rejencji inowrocławskiej w 1945 r. w świetle dokumentów niemieckich', *Ziemia Kujawska*, 14, 2000-2001, pp. 151-209.

<sup>42</sup> Sudziński, 'Okres pierwszy', pp. 23, 132.

<sup>43</sup> Stankowski, *Niemcy na Pomorzu Gdańskim i Kujawach*, p. 87.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-98.

were about 55,000–60,000 free Germans left in the voivodeship, which accounted for about 4 per cent of the total population; in December 1945, there were approximately 45,000 Germans (excluding the districts of Człuchów and Złotów). However, as Sudziński points out, it was difficult for the provincial authorities, given the migratory movements of the Germans, to establish accurate data on this minority.<sup>45</sup>

It should be said, given the above, that while the increase in the number of Germans during the Second World War in Pomerania was relatively high, from January 1945, they were definitely a minority. Sometimes, columns of German refugees would be overtaken by Soviet tanks on the escape routes; some Germans gave up farther journeys, but when the Soviets entered a given town or village, German women accounted for a small percentage of the local population.

On the other hand, the number of women of different nationalities was marginal. It can be assumed that of all the Jews living in Kuyavia, the Dobrzyń Lands and Bydgoszcz before the Second World War, 900–950 people survived. 298 Jews returned to their pre-war hometowns (17 to Bydgoszcz and 240 to Kuyavia). After the war, the Central Committee of Jews in Poland compiled statistics on the Jewish community: from mid-1945 to the beginning of 1946, there were just over a thousand people registered in Bydgoszcz and Włocławek; more broadly, in January 1946, there were 976 Jews affiliated to sixteen committees in Kuyavia and the Dobrzyń Lands.<sup>46</sup> When it comes to other nationalities: in Mrocza (Wyrzysk District) in mid-March 1945 there were 2 Jews, 1 Belarussian and 1 Frenchman; in mid-1945 in Wąbrzeźno — 11 Ukrainians, 4 Belarussians, 2 Czechs and 38 people of other nationalities; at the same time in Toruń there were 96 Russians, 104 Ukrainians, 112 Belarussians, 4 Jews, 47 unspecified foreigners and 319 people of undetermined nationality; in

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<sup>45</sup> Sudziński, 'Ludność niemiecka', pp. 59, 61–68; according to Stankowski, in December 1945 there were 47,804 Germans in the Pomeranian Voivodeship, excluding the districts of Człuchów and Złotów, see Stankowski, *Niemcy na Pomorzu Gdańskim i Kujawach*, p. 103; see also Sudziński, 'Mniejszość niemiecka na Kujawach wschodnich', pp. 101–02; Witold Stankowski, 'Wysiedlenie ludności niemieckiej z województwa pomorskiego w latach 1945–1950', *Przegląd Zachodni*, 1992, 2, pp. 143–59; idem, *Obozy i inne miejsca odosobnienia dla niemieckiej ludności cywilnej w Polsce w latach 1945–1950*, Bydgoszcz, 2002.

<sup>46</sup> Tomasz Kawski, 'Żydzi z Kujaw, ziemi dobrzyńskiej i Bydgoszczy ocaleni z Shoah: Przyczynek do poznania struktury społeczno-zawodowej, zmian osadniczych oraz migracji ludności żydowskiej w Polsce po II wojnie światowej', in *Wrzesień 1939 roku i jego konsekwencje dla ziem zachodnich i północnych Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej: Studia*, ed. Ryszard Sudziński and Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, Toruń and Bydgoszcz, 2001, pp. 365–92 (p. 369); idem, *Kujawsko-dobrzyńscy Żydzi w latach 1918–1950*, Toruń, 2006, pp. 265–67.

September 1945 in Bydgoszcz there were a total of 357 people from at least several dozen countries.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, as a consequence of the war, women predominated in the Polish population: according to the available data, in March 1946 in Bydgoszcz, women accounted for 56.7 per cent of the population (80,534 individuals), while men — 43.3 per cent (61,560 individuals).<sup>48</sup> In 1945, the tendency was most likely similar. For the record, it can also be added that sometimes the documents produced by the security apparatus would say explicitly that Red Army soldiers raped a German woman or women; however, such precise details were sporadic.

The documents produced by Polish institutions and the Polish security apparatus lack precise information about the rapes committed by the Red Army. A surviving document from the Bydgoszcz Provincial Headquarters (*Komenda Wojewódzka, KW*) of the Citizens Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska, MO*), the national police, contains statistics on crimes, including rapes, committed by Soviet soldiers in the Pomeranian Voivodeship between 2 February and 15 May 1945. According to the report, the soldiers committed four rapes in the Bydgoszcz District, 1 in Chełmno District, 104 in Chojnice District, 1 in Rypin District, 5 in Sępólno District, 300 in Świecie District, 2 in Toruń District and 2 in Wyrzysk District.<sup>49</sup> This is the only known cumulative list that illustrates the issue of the Red Army's crimes in the voivodeship from early 1945. However, it covers only eight of the eighteen districts; two districts — Lipno and Tuchola — are listed as well, but without any figures. It is worth noting that there are also considerable discrepancies in the number of crimes.

Statistics compiled by the local state administration are incomplete and laconic as well. The Pomeranian governor, as well as the municipal, communal and district authorities, filled out reports. Still, the first formalised template — prepared by the Ministry of Public Administration — started only in June 1945. In the following months, only occasionally did starostas include lists of crimes committed by Red Army soldiers in their reports. To illustrate what the reports of the local

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<sup>47</sup> Number of foreigners, Bydgoszcz, 31 December 1945, APB, Zarząd Miejski w Bydgoszczy (Bydgoszcz Municipal Authority), 332; Tomasz Kawski, 'Mroczka w latach 1945–1989', in *Mroczka: Monografia miasta i gminy*, vol. 2, pp. 241–317 (p. 254); Golon, 'Początki ludowej niepodległości', p. 94; Sudziński, 'Okres pierwszy', p. 132.

<sup>48</sup> Sprawozdanie Zarządu Miejskiego w Bydgoszczy za czas od 1 IV 1945 do 31 III 1946 (Report of the Bydgoszcz Municipal Authority for the period from 1 April 1945 to 31 March 1946), APB, Zarząd Miejski w Bydgoszczy, 729, fol. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Raport za czas od 1 do 20 V 1945 (Report for the period between 1 and 20 May 1945), Bydgoszcz, 24 May 1945, AIPN, 1550/795, fol. 29.



authorities and information about rapes committed by Red Army soldiers in 1945 looked like, we can use selected examples: of four city mayors (of Bydgoszcz, Inowrocław, Toruń and Włocławek) and four district starostas (of Brodnica, Chojnice, Grudziądz and Toruń).<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that they are typical, and how they present their content does not differ from the reports compiled by other district and city authorities.

In his reports from June to December 1945, the mayor of Bydgoszcz mentioned rapes in August (one) and September (one), the mayor of Toruń — in August (four), and Toruń starosta — in August (two). Sometimes the authorities did not give specific figures but noted in their descriptions that rapes had been committed; this was the case in Bydgoszcz (July) and the districts of Brodnica (July, August, September), Chojnice (June, November) and Grudziądz (July). According to the mayor of Bydgoszcz, there were no rapes in October and December, and according to the Grudziądz starosta, there were no rapes in September. In the remaining cases, that is the overwhelming majority; officials did not provide any numerical or descriptive data on rapes.

Concerning the above data, the key point is that the reports prepared by the starostas and mayors, as well as the security apparatus, do not reflect the accurate scale of the rapes. Captain Aleksander Kaczorkiewicz, head of the Department of External Service of the Bydgoszcz KW MO, pointed out that the lower-level entities sent different statistics to district offices and different to the provincial MO.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, police reports often gave the total number of crimes committed in a given period but without specifying which were committed by local residents and which by Soviet soldiers.

The very nature of rape is essential as well. Writing about German women raped by Red Army soldiers in the final months of the Second World War, Elisabeth Krimmer observes that the number of stories of sexual violence told is limited. When rape does appear in a narrative, it is usually mentioned, with the fact itself being just referred to rather than described.<sup>52</sup> Andrea Pető concludes that the study of wartime rape is extremely difficult, as a 'conspiracy of silence' surrounds the phenomenon. This silence was reinforced by those concerned: victims, perpetrators, witnesses. According to Pető, everyone had a vested

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<sup>50</sup> APB, UWP By, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 585, 586, 589, 591, 592, 593, 595, 596, 599, 600, 602, 610; Ławniczak, 'Stosunek mieszkańców Grudziądza i powiatu grudziądzkiego', p. 139.

<sup>51</sup> Ławniczak, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie świeckim', p. 145.

<sup>52</sup> Krimmer, 'Philomela's Legacy', p. 84.

interest in hushing up what had happened.<sup>53</sup> In Pomerania, this is confirmed by administrative documents from 1945. In one report, the mayor of Grudziądz noted that he was unable to give the number of rapes because the women – for various reasons – did not inform the relevant agencies.<sup>54</sup> In addition, officers of the Grudziądz police stated that the residents did not trust them, which is why they did not report crimes committed by the Soviets.<sup>55</sup> In the Szubin District, the starosta and the police chief said that the rape figures they reported did not reflect reality, as residents did not always report the rapes.<sup>56</sup> In June 1945, the district commander of the MO in Brodnica noted in a report that thefts by Red Army soldiers were a daily occurrence, but the local residents did not report them at all.<sup>57</sup> At that time, the district MO commander in Toruń wrote to the district starosta that the local residents failed to inform the authorities about 80 per cent of the crimes committed by Soviet soldiers.<sup>58</sup> This shows the scale of the problem and makes us realize how huge a number of crimes, including undoubtedly rapes, were not recorded by any Polish institution or law enforcement agency.

Nevertheless, thanks to an extensive survey of the source material and the literature, we do have information about the rapes of Polish women by Red Army soldiers. Documents and memoirs show that they occurred from the first moments of the appearance of the Red Army in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. In January, Red Army soldiers raped women in the villages of Lubcza and Przepańkowo in the Sępólno District.<sup>59</sup> Zofia Łangowska from Cekcyn (Tuchola District) recalled that the Red Army hired young women to work in the military kitchen a few days after capturing the village. She

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<sup>53</sup> Andrea Pető, 'Silencing and Unsilencing Sexual Violence in Hungary', in *Continued Violence and Troublesome Pasts: Post-war Europe between the Victors after the Second World War*, ed. Ville Kivimäki and Petri Karonen, Helsinki, 2017, pp. 132–44 (p. 132); the silence of rape victims during the Second World War has also been discussed by Ostrowska, see "‘Lepiej nie mówić’", p. 37.

<sup>54</sup> Ławniczak, 'Stosunek mieszkańców Grudziądza i powiatu grudziądzkiego', p. 128.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, 'Nastroje, postawy oraz stosunek mieszkańców Grudziądza i powiatu grudziądzkiego do władzy komunistycznej w 1945 r.', *Komunizm: System – ludzie – dokumentacja*, 9, 2020, pp. 251–92 (p. 282).

<sup>56</sup> Idem, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie szubińskim', p. 573.

<sup>57</sup> Raport sytuacyjny za czas od 3 V do 4 VI 1945 (Situation Report for a period from 3 May to 4 June 1945), Bydgoszcz, 8 June 1945, AIPN w Bydgoszczy (Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Bydgoszcz) (hereinafter: AIPN By), 203/57, fol. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Pismo Powiatowej Komendy Milicji Obywatelskiej w Toruniu (Letter of the Toruń District Citizens' Militia), Toruń, 31 July 1945, APB, UWP By, 610, fol. 37.

<sup>59</sup> Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, 'Powiat sępoleński w latach 1939–1945 (okupacja niemiecka)', in *Powiat sępoleński 1920–2020*, ed. Leszek Skaza, Sępólno Krajeńskie, 2020, pp. 109–62 (pp. 152, 158).

said that ‘there were incidents of rape’.<sup>60</sup> According to various accounts, the Soviets attacked female residents as soon as they entered Świecie and other localities in the district (in Osie and Nowe), and the same happened in Chojnice.<sup>61</sup> Rapes in February in the Brodnica District and Toruń were reported by the deputy government plenipotentiary for economic affairs and the deputy provincial commander of the MO, respectively.<sup>62</sup> In Grudziądz, which was besieged for several weeks, rapes were committed when the fighting with the Germans was still going on. Lev Kopelev, a Red Army soldier who fought in the city, recalled that Red Army soldiers would drag women who were hiding during the siege out from the cellars.<sup>63</sup> Rajmund Lewandowski said that after the capture of the city, rape was the order of the day.<sup>64</sup> Tadeusz Kieper (b. 1929), who survived the siege of Grudziądz and the entry of the Red Army, recounted the events of that time in the following manner: ‘In the evening [...] Soviet officers entered the building, declaring that they were conducting a census [...]. The first to be called were young women [...].’

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<sup>60</sup> ‘Z kart historii Cekcyzna’, *Panorama Cekcyńska*, 2000, 2–3, p. 4; in Lubiewo, also in the Tuchola District, Red Army soldiers committed rapes immediately after entering the village, see *Lubiewo wczoraj i dziś (1344–2006)*, ed. Zygmunt Iwicki, Gdańsk–Pelplin, 2007, p. 288.

<sup>61</sup> Ławniczak, ‘Armia Czerwona w powiecie świeckim’, p. 134; Józef Borzyszkowski and Marian Miotek, ‘Świecie w XIX i XX wieku’, in *Świecie: Księga jubileuszu 800-lecia*, ed. Józef Borzyszkowski, Świecie and Gdańsk, 1998, pp. 135–385 (p. 324). Rapes and women fleeing from drunken Red Army soldiers during the entry of the Red Army into Chojnice were described by Halina Szymańska, see ‘II wojna światowa we wspomnieniach Haliny Szymańskiej z d. Jurgawka’, *Zeszyty Chojnickie*, 31, 2015, pp. 191–220 (p. 208); the Soviets in Chojnice at the time were also mentioned by Jan Malicki: ‘They looted, raped women [...]. We continued to hear about gang rapes’, see Jan Malicki, ‘Wspomnienia z wojny światowej 1939–1945 roku’, *Zeszyty Chojnickie*, 30, 2014, pp. 179–97 (pp. 190–91).

<sup>62</sup> Pismo zastępcy komendanta MO ds. polityczno-wychowawczych (Letter from the Citizen’s Militia deputy commander for political and educational affairs), Toruń, 11 February, 1945, AIPN, 1550/796, fol. 2; Situation Report No. 2, Toruń, 20 February 1945, *ibid.*, fol. 4; Raport o przeprowadzonej pracy w powiecie brodnickim za okres od 7 II do 23 II 1945 (Report on the work carried out in the Brodnica District for the period from 7 February to 23 February 1945), Brodnica, 24 February 1945, APB, Starostwo Powiatowe Brodnickie (Brodnica District Starosta Office), 244.

<sup>63</sup> Lev Kopelev, *Khranit’ vechno*, 2 vols, Khar’kov, 2011, vol. 1, part 1–4, p. 166.

<sup>64</sup> Rajmund Lewandowski, ‘Rusek, Ruskowi nie równy...’, in *Grudziądz 1945: Wspomnienia*, Grudziądz, 2007, pp. 93–94 (p. 94); a Grudziądz resident remembered the entry of the Red Army into the city as follows: ‘A terrible tragedy was the rapes of women by the soldiers [...]’, see Maria Daniel, ‘Byłam naocznym świadkiem kapitulacji’, in *ibid.*, pp. 39–46 (p. 45); see also Zofia Grajczak, ‘Gdy kończyły się zapasy żywności...’, in *ibid.*, pp. 47–49 (p. 48); Dionizy Simson, ‘Wspomnienia z wojny (fragment — oblężenie)’, in *ibid.*, pp. 81–89 (p. 85); Ławniczak, ‘Stosunek mieszkańców Grudziądza i powiatu grudziądzkiego’, p. 128.

The first woman to enter the room immediately ran out and ran to her mother and father, claiming that this was not a census but a rape. Behind her, a Soviet officer entered our cellar with a pistol in his hand and pointed at the women who had to leave the basement. Three or four women, including my mother, came out of the cellar. It is hard for me to say when these women returned to the cellar, it was a horrible experience for them; they threw themselves into the arms of their husbands and asked for help.<sup>65</sup>

Krystyna Barełkowska recalled the entry of the Red Army into Bydgoszcz: 'There was an absolute uproar in Bydgoszcz; it was a nightmare. First, the Germans murdered us, then the Russians came and wanted to rape even me, a little girl. Auntie tried to fight them. My cousins always mentioned this, as they were a little older than me. They said, "You remember how mom fought for you, how they tore you apart". Because they came with their big caps with the red star, we would always hide in the shelter because there were bombings, so my aunt would go down to the cellar with us. And where the Russians would come in and take the girls, they just snatched them away. Somehow my aunt managed to save me.'<sup>66</sup>

In the following months, after the fighting and the German occupation had already ended, the soldiers continued to rape local women. At the beginning of March, the deputy commander of the provincial MO reported on the situation in the voivodeship: 'There are v.[ery] frequent incidents of rape'.<sup>67</sup> In May 1945, the Office of Security (UB) in Brodnica was informed that in the village of Kruszyny, 'there were three Soviet soldiers who, at night, had engaged in theft and had been raping women since the entry of the first Red Army units'.<sup>68</sup> In mid-1945, a report by the Polish underground referred to the 'lawlessness of the Soviets': two hundred rapes and six hundred infections (it is not known for what period) in Grudziądz. The communists most likely regarded this information to be an act of sabotage by the Home Army.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tadeusza Kiepera, 8 November 1991 (Report on the interrogation of witness Tadeusz Kieper), AIPN w Białymstoku (Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Białystok) (hereinafter: AIPN Bi), 484/106, fol. 92v.

<sup>66</sup> Krystyna Barełkowska, 'Wspomnienia', *Poznańskie Archiwum Historii Mówionej* <<https://historiamowiona.poznan.pl/relacje/krystyna-barelkowska/>> [accessed 23 January 2023].

<sup>67</sup> Raport od dnia 15 II 1945 do 1 III 1945 (Report for the period from 15 February 1945 till 1 March 1945), Bydgoszcz, 2 March 1945, AIPN, 1550/795, fol. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Report, AIPN By, 069/21 vol. 1, fols 447–49.

<sup>69</sup> Continuation of the report from Składnica 2, AIPN, 0828/63, fol. 135; Continuation of the report from Składnica 2, AIPN, 0828/56, fol. 79.

From the late spring and summer of 1945, the number of Red Army soldiers staying temporarily in the region increased due to the passage of Soviet units through the area. This led to a wave of rapes in the voivodeship. The Chojnice starosta informed the governor that the rapes were frequent.<sup>70</sup> In August, a report from the Information and Propaganda Department in Chojnice mentioned that crimes by Red Army soldiers, including rape, 'were a daily occurrence'.<sup>71</sup> Much light is shed on the situation at the time by reports from the Polish communist security apparatus. In a report from the Bydgoszcz District for June and early July, the police commander reported that passing Soviet troops raped women 'everywhere they were quartered'.<sup>72</sup> Police chiefs from Szubin, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and Lipno said that rapes were common.<sup>73</sup> The prosecutor from the Regional Court in Bydgoszcz wrote in his reports for August and September that marauders 'were on the prowl' in the city and its environs, committing robberies, thefts and rapes.<sup>74</sup>

As a considerable part of the Soviet troops left the Pomeranian Voivodeship, the scale of violence against women became smaller. According to the prosecutor of the Regional Court in Toruń, in October, after the Soviets had left the nearby districts, incidents of rape 'disappeared almost completely'.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, crimes continued, such as those committed by soldiers from units passing through the region. In the autumn, an instructor from the KW MO estimated that Soviet

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<sup>70</sup> Ławniczak, 'Stosunek mieszkańców Chojnic i powiatu chojnickiego', p. 49.

<sup>71</sup> Sprawozdanie z działalności Miejskich i Powiatowych Oddziałów Informacji i Propagandy w miesiącu sierpniu 1945 (Report on the work of Municipal and District Information and Propaganda Departments in August 1945), AAN (State Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw), Ministerstwo Informacji i Propagandy w Warszawie (Ministry of Information and Propaganda in Warsaw), 316, fol. 13.

<sup>72</sup> Sprawozdanie Komendanta Powiatowego MO w Bydgoszczy za czas od 1 VI do 7 VII 1945 (Report of the District Commander of the Citizens' Militia in Bydgoszcz for the period from 1 June to 7 July 1945), AIPN By, 203/7, fol. 111.

<sup>73</sup> Raport sytuacyjny za czas od 2 VI do 5 VII 1945 (Situation report for the period from 2 June to 5 July 1945), Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, 4 July 1945, AIPN By, 203/9, fol. 5; Situation report for the period from 3 June to 1 July 1945, Lipno, 8 July 1945, AIPN By, 203/8, fol. 82; Ławniczak, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie szubińskim', p. 573.

<sup>74</sup> Pismo p.o. Prokuratora Sądu Okręgowego w Bydgoszczy (Letter by the Acting Prosecutor of the Regional Court in Bydgoszcz), Bydgoszcz, 3 September 1945, AAN, Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości (Ministry of Justice) (hereinafter: MS), 8626, fol. 30; Letter from the Acting Prosecutor of the Voivodeship Court in Bydgoszcz, Bydgoszcz, 3 October 1945, *ibid.*, fol. 39.

<sup>75</sup> Sprawozdanie Podprokuratora II Rejonu Prokuratury Sąd Okręgowego w Toruniu za czas od IV do 31 XII 1945 (Report of the Deputy Prosecutor of the 2nd District of the Prosecutor's Office of the Regional Court in Toruń for the period from April to 31 December), 1945, AAN, MS, 7205, fol. 47.

marauders frequently committed theft, robbery and rape in the Bydgoszcz District<sup>76</sup>. In November, starostas from Chojnice and Wyrzysk reported that rapes were taking place.<sup>77</sup>

Despite a lack of specific data on the number of rapes committed, the massive scale of the phenomenon was repeatedly pointed out in documents and memoirs. Regina Spławska from the Chełmno District recalled the entry of the Red Army: 'It was a time of cruel rapes, almost universal...'.<sup>78</sup> Melania Szulc from Bydgoszcz, recounting the rape of a neighbour of hers by a Red Army soldier, concluded '[...] this was not some isolated incident, but the norm'.<sup>79</sup> Henryk Klimek of the Wąbrzeźno District mentioned a village head warning his mother as she travelled through the voivodeship: 'And beware of the Russkis. They, he added with a warning, rape women...'.<sup>80</sup> The author of a mid-1945 report by the Polish Underground Information and Press Department of the Polish Government Delegation for Poland in Pomerania observed: 'Pomerania is constantly the scene of Soviet rapes and offences'.<sup>81</sup>

All this can be summed up by the annual reports for 1945 of the Regional Court prosecutors in Bydgoszcz and Toruń. The former wrote in January 1946 that there had been 'a significant number of homicides,

<sup>76</sup> Sprawozdanie z inspekcji KP MO Bydgoszcz przeprowadzonej w dniach 17, 19–24 X 1945 (Report on the inspection of the District Citizens' Militia Headquarters in Bydgoszcz conducted on 17, 19–24 October 1945), AIPN, 1550/752, fol. 29.

<sup>77</sup> Sprawozdanie miesięczne starosty powiatowego w Chojnicach (Monthly report of the district starosta in Chojnice), Chojnice, 30 November 1945, APB, UWP By, 592, fol. 67; Sprawozdanie miesięczne starosty powiatowego w Wyrzysku za listopad 1945 (Monthly report of the district starosta in Wyrzysk for November 1945), Wyrzysk, 30 November 1945, *ibid.*, fol. 333.

<sup>78</sup> Michał Damazyn, *Bydgoszczan portret własny*, 6 vols, Bydgoszcz, vol. [1], 2015, p. 299; Zdzisława Cholewińska from Szubin mentioned the high incidence of rapes as well, see Ławniczak, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie szubińskim', p. 567.

<sup>79</sup> Damazyn, *Bydgoszczan portret własny*, vol. 4, 2018, p. 196; This is how the Soviets in Bydgoszcz were described by Zbigniew Raszewski: 'The soldiers generally did not care at all about the homeland, in their mass they were gloomy, apathetic people, seeking vodka and women, see Zbigniew Raszewski, 'Rosjanie w Bydgoszczy', *Kujawy i Pomorze*, 1993, 5, p. 4; a similar view was presented by Jerzy Nowakowski from Bydgoszcz: '[...] they looked around for "souvenirs" for their families, and for young girls', see Jerzy Nowakowski, *Szczęśliwe lata, gorzki czas, czyli urodzony w Bydgoszczy*, Bydgoszcz, 1996, p. 182; see also Zofia Kępińska's account in Marcin Rudowicz, 'Wspomnienia Polaków', in *Bitwa o Bydgoszcz 1945: Walki, wspomnienia, relacje*, ed. Łukasz M. Nadolski, Bydgoszcz, 2015, pp. 141–78 (p. 167).

<sup>80</sup> Henryk Klimek, *Czas zniewalanej młodości (1945–1956)*, Wąbrzeźno, 2005, p. 34.

<sup>81</sup> 'Fragmenty meldunków Departamentu Informacji i Prasy Delegatury Rządu: Sytuacja na Pomorzu (do 10 VI 1945)', in Bogdan Chrzanowski, *Delegatura Rządu RP na Kraj na Pomorzu: Nieznane karty z frontu walki cywilnej podczas okupacji niemieckiej i po jej zakończeniu*, Toruń, 2011, pp. 326–40 (p. 333).



robberies and rapes committed mostly by Soviet soldiers and marauders'.<sup>82</sup> The prosecutor's office in Toruń reported that among the three most typical crimes committed in Toruń and Toruń District were rapes by Red Army soldiers. About 500 were recorded between March and August 1945.<sup>83</sup> In this case, we can refer to the previously cited report of the provincial police, according to which only two incidents of rape were recorded in the Toruń District between February and May 1945, and to the reports of the Toruń District starosta mentioning two rapes in August.

What is particularly helpful in determining the extent of violence against Polish women are documents produced by agencies and institutions responsible for post-war welfare and health care. The district physician from Świecie noted in his June 1945 report: 'When passing through Pomerania, the troops horribly raped local women, with many women being infected with the clap and syphilis'.<sup>84</sup> According to the Chojnice District Social Welfare Committee head, some 300–400 pregnant women in the Chojnice District required care. The head pointed out that the pregnancies were the result of rapes that took place during the war. They occurred in February 1945 at the earliest, so it can be assumed with a high degree of probability that the perpetrators were Red Army soldiers.<sup>85</sup> In this case, too, we can refer to the already mentioned report of the provincial police: for the period from February to May 1945, it lists 104 rapes committed in the Chojnice District; on the other hand, the Chojnice starosta did not mention a single rape in his reports from May to December. In addition, at a conference in November 1945, the deputy Plenipotentiary of the Bydgoszcz Branch of the Polish Red Cross (PCK) proposed that the PCK Board should raise with the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society the matter of caring for women with children born of rapes committed by Soviet soldiers.<sup>86</sup> Gałęziowski has examined this topic of

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<sup>82</sup> Pismo Prokuratora Sądu Okręgowego w Bydgoszczy (Letter by the Prosecutor of the Regional Court in Bydgoszcz), Bydgoszcz, 30 January 1946, AAN, MS, 7205, fol. 22.

<sup>83</sup> Sprawozdanie z pracy I Rejonu Prokuratury Sądu Okręgowego w Toruniu za 1945 (Work report of the 1st Prosecutor's Office of the Regional Court in Toruń for 1945), *ibid.*, fol. 40.

<sup>84</sup> Sprawozdanie Lekarza Powiatowego w Świeciu (Report of the District Physician in Świecie), Świecie, 18 June 1945, APB, UWP By, 5228, fol. 187.

<sup>85</sup> Pismo PKOS w Chojnicach do WKOS w Bydgoszczy (Letter from the Chojnice District Social Welfare Committee to the Provincial Social Welfare Committee in Bydgoszcz), Chojnice, 19 November 1945, *ibid.*, 5440.

<sup>86</sup> Protokół z konferencji Pełnomocników Oddziałów PCK Okręgu Pomorskiego dnia 10 XI 1945 (Minutes of the conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Polish Red Cross Branches in Pomerania of 10 November 1945), APB, UWP By, Polski Czerwony Krzyż Zarząd Wojewódzki in Bydgoszcz (Polish Red Cross, Bydgoszcz Provincial Board), 22.

caring for the victims of violence in Pomerania. During his research, Gałęziowski has established that it was in Pomerania, in Czersk, that the PCK ran a 'birthing facility' for raped women, unique in the country. Unfortunately, the researcher has been unable to access the statistics on the number of births in the facility.<sup>87</sup>

In his monograph, Jakub Gałęziowski notes that sexual violence against Polish women was at its most intense in the spring of 1945, after the victory over the Third Reich, when millions of Red Army soldiers were returning home. As he writes, 'In reality, the tragedy of Polish women had only just begun'. It should be said, however, that Gałęziowski refers primarily to former female prisoners migrating from the Third Reich to Poland and those moving from the Eastern Borderlands to the Western Territories.<sup>88</sup> While the observation is accurate concerning Polish women in general, an analysis of rapes in a specific area at a particular time — in the Pomeranian Voivodeship in 1945 — reveals that the tragedy of the Polish women began much earlier, with the entry of the Soviet army into the region's towns and cities.

It seems that for the soldiers, the age of the raped women played no role whatsoever: they attacked children, teenagers and older women. Wiesław Modrzyński claimed that in Chełmża (Toruń District), women were raped regardless of their age.<sup>89</sup> In May, the police recorded the rapes of three minors in Bydgoszcz and Bydgoszcz District.<sup>90</sup> In the Wyrzysk District, in April, senior lieutenant Skreptishenko raped an eleven-year-old girl in the village of Dębionek; in June, the victim was a five-year-old girl.<sup>91</sup> An eleven-year-old girl was raped in Grupa (Świecie District).<sup>92</sup> Underage girls were also raped in the districts of Chojnice, Szubin, Grudziądz, and

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<sup>87</sup> Gałęziowski, *Niedopowiedziane biografie*, pp. 110, 181–83.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 177.

<sup>89</sup> Wiesław Modrzyński, 'Kolumny Armii Czerwonej', *Pamięć bydgoszczan — Archiwum Historii Mówionej* (hereinafter: Pb AHM) <<https://kpbc.ukw.edu.pl/dlibra/publication/209317/edition/209073/content>> [accessed 7 October 2024].

<sup>90</sup> Raport za czas od 1 do 20 V 1945 (Report for the period from 1 May till 20 May 1945), Bydgoszcz, 24 May 1945, AIPN, 1550/795, fol. 30.

<sup>91</sup> Pismo starostwa powiatowego w Wyrzysku do Komendanta Wojennego Powiatu mjr Januszewskiego w Wyrzysku (Letter from the district starosta in Wyrzysk to Major Januszewski, Military District Commander in Wyrzysk), Wyrzysk, 21 April 1945, APB, Provincial Committee of the Polish Workers' Party in Bydgoszcz (hereinafter: KW PPR By), 20; Report for the period from 19 June 1945 till 28 June 1945, Wyrzysk, 28 June 1945, AIPN By, 064/1, fols 52–53; 'Wypadki grabieży, gwałtów, obław na mężczyzn polskich oraz gwałcenia nieletnich dziewcząt, a nawet dzieci przez żołnierzy sowieckich, Wyrzysk, 28 August 1945', in *Rok pierwszy*, pp. 159–61 (p. 160).

<sup>92</sup> Ławniczak, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie świeckim', p. 140.

the city of Grudziądz.<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, the memoirs of Eryka Okrój from Jabłonowo (Brodnica District) and a report of the Polish Government Delegation for Pomerania mention rapes of eighty-year-old women.<sup>94</sup>

Polish sources rarely provide information about military ranks of Red Army soldiers committed crimes, including rape. However, both ordinary soldiers and officers committed crimes. Iurii Koriakin, who fought on Polish soil as part of the 1st BF, recalled that he was summoned to help a local Pole one day during a stop. One of the tankers tried to rape his daughter. It turned out it was 'A captain, with decorations all over his chest'.<sup>95</sup> In Grudziądz a Soviet officer killed a man and raped his daughter. In Golub (Wąbrzeźno District) a commander shot dead a young woman, the daughter of the landlords of the house in which he was stationed. In Bydgoszcz, according to Edward Forycki, a member of the Polish underground during the war, Soviet officers 'walked around with sacks and robbed Poles'.<sup>96</sup>

Many times, during the assaults, the women were brutally beaten, sometimes dying because of their injuries and sometimes being killed on the spot. In the Szubin District, the condition of one victim was described as hopeless.<sup>97</sup> In June 1945 in Ł. (Bydgoszcz District) five Soviet soldiers severely beat and raped K. M., and six soldiers forced their way into the

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<sup>93</sup> Pismo Powiatowego Komitetu Opieki Społecznej w Chojnicach do Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Opieki Społecznej w Bydgoszczy (Letter from the District Social Welfare Committee in Chojnice to the Provincial Social Welfare Committee in Bydgoszcz), Chojnice, 19 November 1945, APB, UWP By, 3440; 'Fragmenty meldunków Departamentu Informacji i Prasy Delegatury Rządu', p. 333; Ławniczak, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie szubińskim', p. 568; Daniel, 'Byłam naocznym świadkiem', p. 45; Lewandowski, 'Rusek, Ruskowi', p. 93.

<sup>94</sup> Eryka Okrój, *By nie zatarł czas... Jabłonowo Pomorskie: Moje wspomnienia*, Brodnica, 2010, p. 38; 'Fragmenty meldunków Departamentu Informacji i Prasy Delegatury Rządu', p. 333.

<sup>95</sup> Yurii Koriakin, 'I was drafted in October 1941...', *I Remember* <<https://iremember.ru/en/memoirs/others/yurii-koriakin/>> [accessed 11 March 2024].

<sup>96</sup> Ławniczak, 'Stosunek mieszkańców Grudziądza i powiatu grudziądzkiego', p. 129; Golon, 'Pierwszy rok w nowej Polsce', p. 13; *Powojenna działalność Okręgowej Delegatury Rządu RP na Pomorzu kryptonim 'Zatoka'*, Fundacja Archiwum Pomorskiej Armii Krajowej w Toruniu (Foundation of the Pomeranian Home Army Archive in Toruń) (hereinafter: FAPAK), M: 340/951 Pom, Edward Forycki's file, p. 4; Soviet officers committing rapes in Grudziądz were mentioned by Tadeusz Kieper, see Report on the interrogation of witness Tadeusz Kieper, 8 November 1991, AIPN Bi, 484/106, fol. 92v.

<sup>97</sup> See par example Letter from the district starosta in Wyrzysk to Major Januszewski, Military District Commander in Wyrzysk, Wyrzysk, 21 April 1945, APB, KW PPR By, 20; Ławniczak, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie świeckim', pp. 140–41; idem, 'Armia Czerwona w powiecie szubińskim', pp. 567–68; idem, 'Stosunek mieszkańców Chojnic', pp. 44–47; idem, 'Mieszkańcy Bydgoszczy', pp. 149–50; idem, 'Stosunek mieszkańców Grudziądza i powiatu grudziądzkiego', pp. 127–28; 'Wy/padki grabieży, gwałtów', p. 160.

B. family's homestead, where they beat two women unconscious and raped them. All women needed medical treatment.<sup>98</sup> Elżbieta Darlak of Toruń recalled that Red Army soldiers gang-raped her neighbour, tormenting her until she lost consciousness.<sup>99</sup> Often, the Soviets would beat, sometimes even kill, men who stood up for the women; in Wąbrzeźno District in one village, a brother protecting his sister was beaten, and in another — killed.<sup>100</sup>

Over several years of very extensive surveys in Polish archives, I found only a few reports of rape to the local authorities in 1945. One woman did not file her report until two weeks after the fact out of 'consideration of opinions'. In February 1945, three Red Army soldiers raped thirty-something-year-old I. M. in the village of R. in the Brodnica District. The victim testified before a local policeman: the soldiers demanded food, trashed the furnishings, stole valuables and then forced the family members to go into a room. The Red Army men led the woman into another room, where one of them ostentatiously loaded a rifle and aimed it at the victim: 'Then he struck me on the chest with the rifle, so much that I toppled onto the bed next to me, at that moment one of these men threw himself at me, and another one standing over me with a rifle aimed at me, while the third one left the room. The first one [...] tore off my underwear, literally tore it and had forced carnal intercourse with me. When the first man finished, the one who stood with the rifle threw himself at me, forced me to have carnal intercourse, and the first moved to the side. When the second one finished, the third one came in [...]. I was sitting terribly tired, but the third one threw himself on me by toppling me on the bed and violated me'. At the end, she added: 'I can't say yet whether I became pregnant due to these intercourses'.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Pismo Komendanta Powiatowego MO w Bydgoszczy do starosty powiatowego w Bydgoszczy (Letter by the District Citizens' Militia Commander in Bydgoszcz to the Bydgoszcz district starosta), Bydgoszcz, 26 June 1945, APB, Starostwo Powiatowe Bydgoskie (Bydgoszcz District Starosta Office). The file reference has been anonymised.

<sup>99</sup> Elżbieta Darlak, 'Przeżywam to ponownie...', in *Wspomnienia rolników z ziemi chełmińskiej (1851–2012): Rodziny Łęgowskich i Semrau*, ed. Sylwia Grochowina, Toruń, 2014, pp. 13–92 (p. 62).

<sup>100</sup> Remigiusz Ławniczak, 'Postawy i nastroje społeczne w powiecie wąbrzeskim w 1945 r. na tle kształtującego się reżimu komunistycznego i działalności Armii Czerwonej', in *Wąbrzeźno i powiat wąbrzeski w latach 1945–1956: Szkice z dziejów politycznych*, ed. Remigiusz Ławniczak, Wąbrzeźno, 2021, pp. 17–68 (pp. 24–25).

<sup>101</sup> APB, UWP By, 4844. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter, I do not give a specific bibliographical reference, only a reference to the file containing the document in question. For the same reason I do not disclose the personal details of the victims and the names of the villages or towns.

A woman from the Grudziądz District gave an equally harrowing account. Late in one evening, Red Army soldiers came to the farm in search of alcohol. There, they found the forty-nine-year-old wife of the farmer, who later recounted what happened: '[...] a soldier grabbed me from behind and, putting a bayonet to my chest, demanded that I go behind the house with him. I resisted; the soldier poked me a few times with his bayonet and dragged me a few m[etres] away from the house. I pleaded that I was old, but he, putting his bayonet to my breast again and again, turned me over and, pulling my panties and dress off me, began to rape me. With short interruptions, the soldier tormented me for more than half an hour. He raped me by various savage means. Having finished raping me, he took me even farther away and stripped me of everything I was wearing; I was left as God had made me. Having pulled everything off me, he held me close for about twenty minutes, and having raped me once again, he let me go home'.<sup>102</sup>

It is worth considering, at least briefly, the most important motives indicated by researchers behind the rapes committed by Red Army soldiers in the Pomeranian Voivodeship in 1945. This is justified by the specificity of the region's occupation during the Second World War, which made it different from the areas of central and eastern Poland.

Scholars point to general brutalization as one of the main motives behind the Red Army rapes. According to the German researcher Kerstin Bischl, the Red Army's willingness to use violence went beyond a strict military framework and sometimes targeted civilians. Bischl concludes that for Red Army soldiers, violence became a practice they internalized, meaning that they did not use it solely on their commanders' orders or only in a combat situation that called for it. What may have also been of significance was the fact that members of a community that resorts to violence compete for victims, as well as in the level of brutality they use. This causes them to influence and urge each other to act.<sup>103</sup>

Another important issue relates to sexuality and attitude towards sex in the Red Army during the war. The Russian researcher Oleg Budnitskiy has observed that the army leadership did not care about the soldiers' sexual needs. Thus, a million-strong army of men longed for love or even a short-term relationship with a woman.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, Bischl believes

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<sup>102</sup> Protokół przyjęcia ustnego zawiadomienia o przestępstwie, 1 VIII 1945 (Record of reception of oral crime report, 1 August 1945), AIPN, fols 4–5. Due to the easy identification of the victim in this case, I do not give the file reference.

<sup>103</sup> Bischl, *Frontbeziehungen*, pp. 120–23, 127.

<sup>104</sup> Oleg Budnitskii, 'Muzhchiny i zhenshchiny v Krasnoi Armii (1941–1945)', *Cahiers du monde russe*, 52, 2011, 2–3, pp. 405–22 (p. 410).

the men and women serving in the Soviet military most likely did not establish longer relationships with each other and did not form bonds based on affection. The men were interested in having intercourse with the women, and the women, in turn, were aware that they were treated as objects. The soldiers viewed intercourse primarily as a biological fact. An important role was played by the roles assigned to the two genders. Women in the military ‘served’ men, performing auxiliary functions, for example. Of significance in this context is the phenomenon of field wives, that is, women who had intercourse with officers in exchange for protection. The soldiers viewed this as an unwritten right of a man with power over a woman. In addition, sometimes subordinates would be rewarded for their combat service with a chance to have intercourse with the commander’s field wife. In this way, a woman becomes a reward for the heroic soldier. This, too, contributed to the treatment of women as objects.<sup>105</sup>

A significant motive of rapes in 1945 was the widespread desire in the Soviet army to take revenge on the Germans.<sup>106</sup> What is particularly important, as some historians suggest, is that commanders encouraged or turned a blind eye to sexual crimes committed against German women.<sup>107</sup> A Soviet private, Lazar’ Rubinchik, recalled that before the start of combat operations within the territory of the Third Reich, an order was read out to soldiers in all companies. Many years later, Rubinchik could not say whether the order was from the commander of the front or the commander or the army commander. At the time, he said, the order seemed perfectly natural to him. It called for soldiers to avenge their wives, sisters, old people, and children. They were encouraged that when ‘Uvidev nemku-zhenshchinu, pomnite, ona — vasha’. He added that in Germany, he had witnessed Red Army soldiers taking revenge in various ways for the atrocities committed by the invaders in the USSR.<sup>108</sup> In addition, scholars point out that during

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<sup>105</sup> Bischl, *Frontbeziehungen*, pp. 222–26, 230–34; idem, ‘Seksual’noe nasilie’, pp. 536–41.

<sup>106</sup> See par example Al’bina Fedorovna Noskova, ‘Kem byli v Vostochnoi Evrope soldaty Krasnoi Armii v 1945 godu: svoboditeliami, okkupantami ili...?’, *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta*, 2010, 5, p. 68; Naimark, ‘The Russians and Germans’, p. 202; Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga*, p. 172.

<sup>107</sup> Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe*, London, 2008, p. 541; Bischl, *Frontbeziehungen*, p. 253; Boris Sokołow, ‘Współczesna rosyjska historiografia wobec zbrodni Armii Czerwonej popełnionych w Europie Wschodniej w latach 1944–1945’, in *Pod czerwoną gwiazdą*, pp. 42–62 (p. 51).

<sup>108</sup> Lazar’ Evseevich Rubinchik, ‘Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia serzhanta ob ot-del’nykh sobytiakh otechestvennoi voiny 1941–1945 godov’, *I Remember* <<https://iremember.ru/memoirs/pekhotintsi/rubinchik-lazar-evseevich/>> [accessed 24 January 2024]. Translation of the quotation: ‘When you see a German woman, remember, she is yours’.



an armed conflict, rape can be used as a weapon of war or a tool of war. Such situations humiliate the defeated, demonstrate the strength of the victors, and confirm the helplessness of the enemy.<sup>109</sup>

Did it matter in this context that Pomerania had been incorporated into the Third Reich during the Second World War? So far, this topic has not attracted the interest of researchers and requires a separate study — this is my research proposal for the future. I will share my findings so far. Some Red Army soldiers may have thought that when entering Pomerania and Kuyavia, they found themselves within German territory. The army used maps with German names of Polish towns and villages at the time. E. Forycki wrote in his memoirs in 1990: ‘The Soviets used maps of Pomerania and the city of Bydgoszcz with German names written in the Russian alphabet. I myself had such a map’. Military documents, too, repeatedly referred to Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), Nakel (Nakło nad Notecią), Graudenz (Grudziądz), Thorn (Toruń), Alt Marsau (Stare Marzy), Kulm (Chełmno), Gruppe (should be Gruppe, that is Grupa), Nieder Sartowitz (Dolne Sartowice), Tuchel (Tuchola), Krone (Koronowo) and Prust (Pruszcz). However, it should be noted that correct Polish names were used as well.<sup>110</sup> In addition, the Soviet paper *Krasnaia Zvezda*,

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<sup>109</sup> Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, ‘Becoming Abject: Rape as a Weapon of War’, *Body & Society*, 11, 2005, 1, pp. 111–28 (pp. 112, 118); Christopher W. Mullins, ‘Sexual Violence During Armed Conflict’, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Criminology and War*, ed. Ross McGarry and Sandra Walklate, London, 2016, pp. 117–33 (p. 120); Brigitte M. Holzner, ‘Wars, Bodies, and Development’, in *Experiencing War*, ed. Christine Sylvester, London 2011, pp. 42–63 (p. 42).

<sup>110</sup> *Ludzie z ODR ‘Zatoka’: O Okręgowej Delegaturze Rządu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej na Pomorzu ODR ‘Zatoka’*, Bydgoszcz, 1990, FAPAK, M: 340/951 Pom, Edward Forycki’s file, fol. 71; Jerzy Wultański, *Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1945*, Brodnica, 2006, FAPAK, K: 585/585 Pom, Łucja Wultańska’s file, fol. 18; Eugeniusz Gliwiński, ‘Wkroczenie wojsk radzieckich’, Pb AHM <<https://pamiecybydgoszczan.ukw.edu.pl/relacje/wkroczenie-wojsk-radzieckich-1>> [accessed 31 January 2022]; Telegramma. NKVD SSSR — tovarishchu L. P. Berii, September 1945, CAW, Kolekcja akt z archiwów rosyjskich (grupa zespołów) (Collection of files from Russian archives (group of fonds)), Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych ZSRR (d. NKWD ZSRR) (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR (former NKVD of the USSR)), VIII/800/19/20, fols 26–30; Nastupatel’naia operatsiia voisk 65A Visla, 7 March 1945, Tsentral’nyi arkhiv Ministerstva oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereinafter: TsAMO RF), fond: S422, opis’: 10496, delo: 867, fols 79, 82–88, 115, 118; Otchet ob inzhenernom obespechenii boevykh deistvii 65-i armii za period s 1 po 28 fevralia 1945, 15 III 1945, TsAMO RF, fond: S422, opis’: 0010496, delo: 0810, fols 18–19; Zhurnal boevykh deistvii voisk 70A s 1 I 1945 po 31 I 1945, 31 January 1945, TsAMO RF, fond: 427, opis’: 11105, delo: 457, fols 116–25, 131; Boevoi put’ 17 gv ot Varshavy — v logovo fashistskoi Germanii s 1 I 1945 po 31 I 1945, 2 II 1945, TsAMO RF, fond: 3467, opis’: 0000001, delo: 0045, fols 9–12; Zhurnal boevykh deistvii 76 gv., 4 II 1945 g., TsAMO RF, fond: 1006, opis’: 1, delo: 40, fol. 27; Zhurnal boevykh deistvii 76 gv. s 1 II 1945 po 28 II 1945, 15 III 1945, *ibid.*, fol. 55.

an official periodical of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR, made references to Konitz (Chojnice) or Tuchel.<sup>111</sup>

German place names were also used by Soviet soldiers in their private correspondence as the front was moving, as well as by veterans remembering the Second World War years later. One of the women serving in the Red Army wrote in February 1945 in a letter to a friend about Thorn (Toruń) and Bromberg (Bydgoszcz).<sup>112</sup> Iu. Koriakin, who fought against the Germans in Pomerania, said in an interview: ‘Before crossing the German border in the region of Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) the company *politruk* (political officer) came to a meeting and announced the following: “We are entering German territory”’.<sup>113</sup> Such a perception of Pomerania and Kuyavia may have been influenced by the fact that some of the troops came from lands that were indeed German — East Prussia.

Poles describing the entry of the Soviet troops into the voivodeship noted that the Soviets treated these lands as German. A member of the Polish communist party (Polish Workers’ Party) from the Brodnica District wrote in a report in February 1945 that the Red Army, when entering the region, was convinced that it was entering Germany. Tadeusz Rzeźniowiecki, the district starosta from Chojnice, informed his superiors in his first report of March 1945 that the Red Army viewed the local population as Germans.<sup>114</sup> When E. Forycki pointed out to the officers that ‘it’s Poland here’, the reply he received was ‘Everything’s German

<sup>111</sup> *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 16 February 1945, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> Elena Seniavskaia, *Protivniki Rossii v voynakh XX veka: Evoliutsiia ‘obraza vraga’ v soznanii armii i obshchestva*, Moscow, 2006, p. 223.

<sup>113</sup> Koriakin, ‘I was drafted in October 1941...’; Bromberg was mentioned also by a Red Army soldier, Batomunko Aiushievich Aiushiev, ‘Vospominaniia o voennykh dorogakh’, *I Remember* <<https://iremember.ru/memoirs/kavaleristi/aiushiev-batomunko-aiushievich/>> [accessed 24 January 2024].

<sup>114</sup> Raport z terenu powiatu brodnickiego (Report from the Brodnica District, Brodnica, 23 February 1945, AAN, Komitet Centralny Polskiej Partii Robotniczej w Warszawie (Central Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party in Warsaw), 295/IX-8, fol. 17; Pismo starosty powiatowego w Chojnicach do Urzędu Wojewódzkiego Pomorskiego w Bydgoszczy (Letter from the district starosta in Chojnice to the Pomeranian Voivodeship Office in Bydgoszcz), Chojnice, 10 March 1945, APB, Starostwo Powiatowe w Chojnicach (District Starosta Office in Chojnice), 21, fol. 1; Gliwiński, ‘Wkroczenie wojsk radzieckich’; Edward Forycki, ‘Powojenna działalność Okręgowej Delegatury Rządu Rzeczypospolitej na Pomorzu kryptonim “Zatoka”’, in *Armia Krajowa na Pomorzu i jej powojenne losy: W 50 rocznicę powołania AK: Materiały z konferencji w Bydgoszczy 26 lutego 1992 r.*, ed. Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, Bydgoszcz, 1993, pp. 111–22 (p. 112); Nowakowski, *Szczęśliwe lata*, pp. 181–82; the situation was similar in Silesia, see Marek Białokur, ‘Zanim wkroczyli na Śląsk: Podgrzewanie nienawiści do Niemców w szeregach Armii Czerwonej w okresie II wojny światowej’, in *Koniec wojny na Śląsku*, pp. 111–26 (p. 123).

here'.<sup>115</sup> This argument was often used by the military commanders, somewhat cynically, to justify deportations of the local residents or the dismantling of industrial plants.

The soldiers may have been convinced that when they entered the Pomeranian Voivodeship, they found themselves in 'Germania'. However, several circumstances forced them to verify their view after their arrival. First of all, the soldiers were quartered with Polish families. As the memoirs of the local residents suggest, the visitors and their hosts had conversations, exchanged experiences and ate meals together. Some Poles spoke Russian, which facilitated communication. In their correspondence sent from the front, the soldiers described to their families the terrible conditions the Germans had imposed on Poles in the region.<sup>116</sup> The writer and Soviet war correspondent Vasily Grossman described the conditions in the *Wartheland* in the following manner: 'The Germans had forced all Polish peasants to leave their houses, took away their land, livestock, household utensils, made them live in huts and forced them to work as farm labourers'.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, while the revenge motive can be referred to the Germans, it can hardly be used to explain the rapes of Polish women as well as women of other nationalities. The Soviets committed rapes even before they entered Germany (for example, in Hungary), and during their presence on German territory, they assaulted former female prisoners, including Russian women.<sup>118</sup> We should not forget that the Red Army soldiers were citizens of a totalitarian state. Throughout the inter-war period, Soviet propaganda presented Poland and Poles in a negative light. Nikolai Ivanov has said unequivocally that the Soviets sought to create the image of Poles as enemies.<sup>119</sup> This may have contributed to

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<sup>115</sup> *Ludzie z ODR 'Zatoka'*, fol. 71.

<sup>116</sup> *Rotarmisten schreiben aus Deutschland Briefe von der Front (1945) und historische Analysen*, ed. Elke Scherstjanoi, Munich, 2004, pp. 38, 77, 88.

<sup>117</sup> *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941-1945*, ed. Antony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova, New York, 2005, see Part Five: 'Warsaw and Łódź, January 1945'. Polish version: *Pisarz na wojnie: Wasilij Grossman na szlaku bojowym Armii Czerwonej 1941-1945*, ed. Antony Beevor and Luba Winogradowa, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 329-30.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331; Naimark, 'The Russians and Germans', p. 202; Bischl, *Frontbeziehungen*, p. 296.

<sup>119</sup> On the image of Poland and Poles in the Soviet Union before the Second World War, see Seniavskaja, *Protivniki Rossii v vojnakh XX veka*, p. 229; eadem, 'Soldaty Krasnoi Armii na pol'skikh zemliakh: Psikhologicheskie aspekty otnoshenii s pol'skim grazhdanskim naseleniem', *Istoriia*, 2001, 8 <<https://his.1sept.ru/article.php?ID=200100801>> [accessed 9 April 2023]; Nikolaj Iwanow, *Komunizm po polsku: Historia komunizacji Polski widziana z Kremla*, Cracow, 2017, p. 265; Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, *Pańska, szlachecka, fałszywostka: Polska w sowieckiej propagandzie, kulturze i historiografii 1917-1945*, Warsaw, 2020.

the ruthless attitude of the soldiers to the locals. In February 1945, a Red Army soldier wrote in a letter that as he passed through various countries, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, he was overwhelmed with hatred. Serving in the army, he sacrificed and risked his life fighting the Germans while people in these countries 'lived, made love'. He added that he did not believe in any friendship with Poles or other nationalities.<sup>120</sup> A Soviet officer, Iurii Uspenskii, wrote in his diary: 'Amongst ourselves, we speak of the Poles with great hostility'.<sup>121</sup> Documents of the Polish administration from the Grudziądz District record contemptuous statements by the soldiers to the locals: 'Poles sons of bitches — this land is ours' and 'just you wait, Lyakh, we'll show you'.<sup>122</sup>

Another likely motive for the rapes was the self-identification of Red Army soldiers, who regarded themselves as liberators. During the final phase of the Second World War, one of the most essential elements of Soviet propaganda in the military was explaining to soldiers that they were taking part in a 'mission of liberation'. This was the tone of articles published in *Krasnaia Zvezda* or *Izvestiia* on, for example, the liberation of Poland.<sup>123</sup> The belief in their 'mission of liberation' may have caused the soldiers to feel that they were somehow entitled to special rights because of it. In the Pomeranian Voivodeship, Lubawa District, Red Army soldiers would, for several months, take away milk from a woman living on her own. When she pointed out that she needed the milk, they replied that they deserved it because they had liberated Poles.<sup>124</sup> Similar reactions were observed in other parts of Poland as well. According to a March 1945 report by the Polish underground in the Świętokrzyskie region, '[...] the Soviets claim to be the saviours from the German yoke, they believe that everyone and everything should be at their service. Hence the frequent abuses of power, repeated robberies and rapes of women'.<sup>125</sup>

One of the most important problems in investigating rapes committed by Red Army soldiers is the lack of access to post-Soviet/Russian archives.

<sup>120</sup> Seniavskaia, 'Soldaty Krasnoi armii na pol'skikh zemliakh'.

<sup>121</sup> Joachim Hoffmann, *Stalin's War of Extermination, 1941-1945: Planning, Realization and Documentation*, Capshaw, 2001, pp. 285.

<sup>122</sup> Ławniczak, 'Stosunek mieszkańców Grudziądza i powiatu grudziądzkiego', p. 143.

<sup>123</sup> 'Torzhestvo sovetskogo oruzhiia', *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 17 February 1945, p. 3; 'Pro-dovol'stvennaia pomoshch' respublik Sovetskogo Soiuzu naseleniiu g. Varshavy, 27 ianvaria 1945 goda', in *Vneshniaia politika SSSR: Sbornik dokumentov*, 5 vols, ed. Solomon Abramovich Lozovskii, Moscow, 1944-47, vol. 5: (*Iiun' 1941-sentiabr' 1945 g.*), 1947, p. 530.

<sup>124</sup> Report of Wójt Municipality Krotoszyny, 18 August 1945, APB, UWP By, 4350.

<sup>125</sup> Situation report of 27 March 1945, 27 March 1945, AAN, Jan Rzepecki's files, 38, fol. 24.

According to Russian publications, information about the ‘deviant’ behaviour of Soviet soldiers can be found in documents kept in the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (Tsentral’nyi arkhiv Ministerstva oborony Rossijskoi Federatsii). It contains records from political departments, including reports and minutes of military, *Komsomol* and party meetings. According to the Russian historian Elena Seniavskaia, they are grouped thematically in files entitled ‘Extraordinary incidents and immoral phenomena’ (‘Cherezvychainykh proisshestviikh i amoral’nykh iavleniikh’) and dedicated to specific periods and specific units. In addition, Russian archives contain files of military tribunals (investigations, sentences), in which we can find many negative examples of Red Army soldiers’ behaviour. However, Russian historians, primarily those working in state institutions, claim that crimes, including rape, committed by Red Army soldiers in Europe in 1944/45 were a marginal phenomenon. Seniavskaia has stated that the perpetrators of common crimes accounted for no more than 2 per cent of the total number of soldiers.<sup>126</sup> Boris Sokolov, referring to the statistics concerning sentences for crimes against the civilian population, has pointed out that only a small number of them may have been recorded and dealt with by Soviet military prosecutors and courts. This is evidenced by, for example, the memoirs and diaries of Red Army soldiers, which show that they were very rarely tried for such crimes.<sup>127</sup>

Seniavskaia views the claims concerning mass-scale crimes of Soviet soldiers as an ‘anti-Russian’ myth that originated in the German Nazi propaganda from the Second World War, propaganda reproduced today by European countries. According to her, rapes did occur, as they were inevitable in an army of several million men, but, firstly, they were not indiscriminate, and, secondly, the perpetrators were severely punished.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Elena Seniavskaia, ‘Istoricheskaia pamiat’ ob Osvobozhdenii Evropy Krasnoi Armiei v kontekste sovremennoi informatsionnoi voiny’, in *Osvobozhdenie Evropy ot natsizma (1944–1945 gg.): Aktual’nye problemy nauchnoi interpretatsii*, ed. Iurii Aleksandrovich Nikiforov, Elena Seniavskaia and Boris Urazbekovich Serazetdinov, Moscow and St Petersburg, 2020, pp. 35–49 (p. 39); eadem, ‘Krasnaia Armiia v Evrope v 1945 godu: Starye i novye stereotipy vospriiatiia v Rossii i na Zapade’, *Obzrevatel’ — Observer*, 2012, 2, pp. 111–27 (pp. 116–17, 122).

<sup>127</sup> Sokolov, ‘Współczesna rosyjska historiografia’, pp. 52, 56.

<sup>128</sup> Seniavskaia, ‘Krasnaia Armiia v Evrope v 1945 godu: Starye i novye stereotipy vospriiatiia v Rossii i na Zapade’, *Obzrevatel’ — Observer*, pp. 112–14; eadem, ‘Krasnaia Armiia v Evrope v 1945 godu: Starye i novye stereotipy vospriiatiia v Rossii i na Zapade’, *Perspektivy: Elektronnyi zhurnal*, 4 May 2012 <[https://www.perspektivy.info/history/krasnaja\\_armija\\_v\\_jevrope\\_v\\_1945\\_godu\\_starye\\_i\\_novyje\\_stereotipy\\_vospriiatija\\_v\\_rossii\\_i\\_na\\_zapade\\_2012-05-04.html](https://www.perspektivy.info/history/krasnaja_armija_v_jevrope_v_1945_godu_starye_i_novyje_stereotipy_vospriiatija_v_rossii_i_na_zapade_2012-05-04.html)> [accessed 24 September 2023]; Elena Seniavskaia, ‘V Evrope pytaiutsia ochernit’ pamiat’ sovetского soldata’,

In Russia, publications describing rapes committed by Red Army soldiers have prompted attacks, especially on the British historian Antony Beevor.<sup>129</sup>

In summing up the material I have collected, I should say that the main obstacle to presenting numerical data on rapes committed by Red Army soldiers in the Pomeranian Voivodeship in 1945 is a lack of reliable statistics compiled on an ongoing basis by the Polish administration. Today, it is impossible to compile such figures. Information about the rapes is scattered across a variety of archival materials: documents produced by state institutions, the police and the secret service, the party, as well as in memoirs and personal accounts. Moreover, the modest calculations made in 1945 do not reflect the reality. There must have been more rapes than administration and security officials claimed. One of the reasons why information about rapes did not reach the authorities was the very nature of the crime. During the analysed period, sexual violence against Polish women was hushed up, and rape was treated as a taboo. Women were ashamed to talk about it because of, as one victim put it, ‘opinions’. Concerning these processes, Gałęziowski, who researches sexual violence, has observed: ‘That is why there are not enough sources, and the phenomenon is so difficult to study’.<sup>130</sup>

Despite the increase in the German population in Pomerania and Kuyavia during the occupation, the Germans began to flee en masse before the arrival of the front and the Red Army. As a result, in 1945, German women – as well as women of other nationalities – made up a small percentage of the population of the Pomeranian Voivodeship. An important finding emerges from this: in the face of mass-scale crimes, it was primarily Polish women who fell victim to rape, including in the first moments after the arrival of the Red Army in a village or town.

Various documents and memoirs show that rapes were common. They were recorded throughout the year, although it is possible to point to two periods in which they intensified. The first wave of sex crimes came after the capture of a town or village and the entry of the Red Army, while the second occurred during the summer months when Soviet units

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*Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 23 March 2015 <<https://rg.ru/2015/03/24/istoriya.html>> [accessed 20 June 2023].

<sup>129</sup> Elena Seniavskaia, ‘Krasnaia Armiia v Evrope v 1945 godu v kontekste informatsionnoi voiny’, *Istoriia.RF* <<https://histrf.ru/read/articles/krasnaia-armiia-v-ievropie-v-1945-ghodu-v-kontiekstie-informatsionnoi-voiny>> [accessed 29 October 2023]; ‘Germaniiu zastaviat “vspomnit” “nasil’nika-osvoditelia”’, *Pravda*, 21 October 2008, update: 7 December 2021 <<https://www.pravda.ru/news/world/288554-german>> [accessed 29 October 2023]; Sokołow, ‘Współczesna rosyjska historiografia’, pp. 43, 47.

<sup>130</sup> Gałęziowski, *Niedopowiedziane biografie*, p. 129.



were redeployed from Germany to the East. On the other hand, in late 1945, when most of the stationed troops had left the Voivodeship, the local Polish authorities noticed a decline in the number of rapes.

Eighty years later, it is tough to analyse the motives of rape perpetrators. A desire for revenge is widely believed to have been the main reason for the violence against German women. It seems that such a motive — revenge — can be rejected when analysing the situation in Poland. However, conditions in the Pomeranian Voivodeship, incorporated into the Third Reich during the war, may have created a unique situation far from the situation in central and eastern Poland. Some Red Army soldiers might have been convinced that, having entered Pomerania and Kuyavia, they found themselves in the hated 'Germania'. On the other hand, we see plenty of evidence showing that even ordinary soldiers were aware that the region was Polish, and its inhabitants were Poles.

The subject of rapes of Polish women in the Pomeranian Voivodeship in 1945 requires further, more in-depth research. So far, the process of combatting and prosecuting the crimes committed by Red Army soldiers has not been described. Nor have there been more detailed analyses of their consequences for the victims in terms of physical and mental health in the region. In addition, Soviet troops in the Voivodeship were still stationed in some localities after 1945, so it would be valuable to analyse sexual violence in the following years. It would also be necessary to compare the scale of crimes committed in the Pomeranian Voivodeship with other parts of Poland. A research proposal relating to the history of historiography concerns the issue of the small number of studies on the rapes committed by Red Army soldiers. Before 1989, such works could not be published due to censorship, but the scant interest in the subject among historians in the Third Republic of Poland is puzzling.

*(Translated by Anna Kijak)  
(Proofreading Jan Czarniecki)*

## Summary

Research on the Red Army present in the Pomeranian Voivodeship (Pomerania and Kuyavia) from January 1945 has been carried out for over a decade. Still, so far, the issue of rapes of Polish women by Red Army soldiers has not been examined in detail. The main obstacles were the inaccessibility of post-Soviet/Russian archives, and the lack of statistics prepared on an ongoing basis by the Polish authorities during that period. The local administration had no information about rapes: given the nature of this crime, a taboo in society, women did not report

incidents of sexual violence. For this reason, information about rapes is scattered across sources of varied provenance.

It should be noted that by the time the Red Army entered Pomerania and Kuyavia in January 1945, the vast majority of Germans had left the region as part of an evacuation campaign. In contrast, representatives of other nationalities accounted for a marginal percentage of the population. That is why the victims of rape in 1945 in the voivodeship were mainly Polish women. Archival sources, as well as memoirs and literature, suggest that rapes were common throughout the voivodeship for almost the entire year. The victims were women of all ages, from children and teenagers to older women. Sexual violence was particularly intense during the Soviet army's entry into the various towns and villages (from January to March 1945) and then from late spring and mid-1945, when the Red Army troops were returning through the region from Germany to the USSR. By the end of 1945, the number of rapes had decreased, mainly due to the departure of most Soviet units. The most important motives for the rapes committed by Red Army soldiers include general brutalization, attitudes toward sexuality in the army and a desire for revenge against the Germans. That last element may have been necessary because of the specificity of Pomerania and Kuyavia during the Second World War — the region was incorporated into the Third Reich in September 1939 and treated as German by some soldiers in 1945. The issue of sexual violence requires further research, especially about the question of combating crime. It is also worth considering why the subject of the rapes has not attracted the interest of Polish historiographers after 1989.

(Translated by Anna Kijak)  
(Proofreading Jan Czarniecki)

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