Bolesław Piasecki as the victim of post-modernist historical revisionism

Mikołaj S. Kunicki, *Between the Brown and the Red: Nationalism, Catholicism, and Communism In 20th-Century Poland – The Politics of Bolesław Piasecki*


Abstract

In the following review, Dr. Wojciech J. Muszyński offers a critical analysis of Mikołaj Kunicki’s book on Bolesław Piasecki. As an iron pragmatic who began his political career as a nationalist radical, and ended it as a communist collaborator, Piasecki fascinates his ideological enemies to this day. Furthermore, they mirror image and reduce him to the role of the antithesis of what they themselves are: liberal or leftist ideologues, usually of an internationalist bent. It is a striking phenomenon that Bolesław Piasecki – a politician of secondary importance who never exerted a decisive influence on Polish history – became the subject of two ostensibly comprehensive biographies in English. This is all the more amazing, since Poland and the great personages in her history – with perhaps the exceptions of Pope John Paul II in the 1990s, and Lech Wałęsa – are generally not of much interest to Western historians. Piasecki, however, became the subject of an English-language biography well before his death in the form of Lucjan Blit’s *The Eastern Pretender* (1965). More recently, in 2012, he became the antagonist of a second work in English: Mikołaj Stanisław Kunicki’s *Between the Brown and the Red: Nationalism, Catholicism, and Communism in 20th-Century Poland: The Politics of Boleslaw Piasecki*. Blit’s publication, however, was a political pamphlet, which the author never denied; just as he did not deny his open, fierce antipathy toward Piasecki. Kunicki’s biography, on the other hand, is presented as a work of objective scholarship. In essence, the latter represents efforts by post-modernist, neo-Stalinist academics to depict Polish nationalists as communist collaborators, which serves to whitewash Marxism by pinning much of the blame for the crimes of communism on “nationalism.”

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Bolesław Piasecki, an iron pragmatic who began his political career as a radical nationalist, continues to fascinate his ideological foes to this day. It is quite astonishing that this admittedly second-rate politician who did not play any significant role in Polish history, has already been

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the subject of two quite substantial biographical publications in English. This is all the more astounding given that famous personages in the history of Poland have not attracted much interest on the part of Western historians, except perhaps for Pope John Paul II during the 1990s and Lech Wałęsa. Upon investigating the shelves of American and British book stores, it is difficult to find any books on important Poles. Piasecki, however, became the subject of an English-language biography many years before his death, i.e. Lucjan Blit’s *The Eastern Pretender: The Story of Bolesław Piasecki*, which was published in 1965. In 2012, another work appeared: Mikolaj Stanisław Kunicki’s *Between the Brown and the Red: Nationalism, Catholicism, and Communism In 20th-Century Poland – The Politics of Boleslaw Piasecki*. But whereas Blit’s publication was a political pamphlet—which the author did not really disguise, nor did he deny his sharp antipathy towards Piasecki—Kunicki’s biography is presented as an objective work of scholarship.

**General comments**

Kunicki’s book is a somewhat expanded and improved version of his doctoral dissertation, written under the direction of Professor Norman Naimark at Stanford University. The work was greeted by sympathetic, and sometimes even enthusiastic reviews in some North American journals and periodicals. A pundit of the liberal *Cosmopolitan Review* described it as “original, and partly intentionally provocative,” and that “it belongs to the best studies on the complex nature of the relations between Catholicism and politics in the modern history of Poland.” Among periodicals heaping praise the *Polish American Journal* and *Choice* magazine were foremost. What is characteristic, however, is that all the review articles were extremely perfunctory. An excellent critical review was published by Professor Ewa Thompson in the *Sarmatian Review*, where she pointed out the most glaring errors and distortions. It appears, however, that the mistakes pinpointed by Professor Thompson are only a small part of the problems encountered by a scholar of modern Polish history upon reading Kunicki’s book. They are, in fact, only the tip of the iceberg.

*Between the Brown and the Red* is advertised as “the result of research on the relations between nationalism and communism, and between authoritarianism and religion in twentieth-century Poland.” In the publisher’s introduction, John J. Bukowczyk called it a “brave book revealing all the dark, authoritarian currents which seeped into postwar Polish politics and which continue to enable the rebirth of the Polish right in the post-Solidarity epoch.” Referring to this publication as “brave” must be a joke on Bukowczyk’s part, for it is a typical product of the post-modernist university where bona fide research is very hard to come by. Where is the “bravery” in
regurgitating and repeating the sentiments embraced by liberal and left-wing professors who dominate post-modernist academia?²

At all events, the author declared his intention of demonstrating how the Marxist-Leninist regime in postwar Poland attempted to adapt communism to local traditions, including ethnocentric nationalism and Catholicism.

Kunicki claims that *Between the Brown and the Red* is a political biography of Piasecki, but, in reality, he tells the reader very little about his subject. Apart from the book’s introductions and the bibliography, the work consists of 188 pages of text and 43 pages of footnotes. For an attempt to describe Piasecki’s almost fifty-year political career, it is a paltry number of pages. This is not a product of the author’s brilliant gift for synthesis, but an unfortunate reflection of the insufficiency of his research. In general, the work fails to offer any new findings, while in the biographical realm Kunicki summarizes—more or less aptly—what historians Antoni Dudek and Grzegorz Pytel wrote over twenty years ago.

But is it true that during the past two decades scholars have been unable to say anything new about Bolesław Piasecki and his political activities? Furthermore, as Professor Thompson writes (and it is difficult to disagree with her): “When I read Kunicki’s work, I do not know what kind of a man Piasecki was, or what motivated his actions at different stages of his life.” This is an important observation, for Professor Thompson is not a specialist in this field. Since Kunicki proved unable to explain such essentials to a renowned intellectual and scholar, then his methodological problems are serious. It appears, therefore, that Kunicki did not master his topic, and that he wrote not about Piasecki but about his own leftist ideological preferences. He also embarked on numerous tangents of little relevance. Thus, we see some dates, events, and names (without too many details), but the most important things are missing: i.e. the book’s subject-antagonist, his life, private matters, and other non-political aspects. Kunicki also offers a substantial amount of political punditry—the author’s personal musings about the Law and Justice Party of Poland (the right-of-center anti-communist opposition), Jarosław Kaczyński (the leader of Law and Justice and the twin brother of the late President Lech Kaczyński), and Father Tadeusz Rydzyk (the head of the conservative Catholic station Radio Maryja)—which has next to no relevance to his topic. Already in the introduction, the author emphasizes his political antipathies from the final days of communism, stating that “I was very angry whenever I saw a student wearing a miniature Chrobry’s Sword [the symbol of Polish Endek nationalism—

² Post-modernist academia frequently views “nationalism” in unequivocally negative terms. At best, it is seen through a Marxist prism as a kind of “false consciousness,” although it is now more fashionable to label national identity a “social construct” or to describe a nation as an “imagined community” (following Benedict Anderson’s famous work). Quite commonly, post-modernist scholars portray “nationalism” as a monolith—failing to differentiate among the many strands and currents of nationalism—and as an ideology that is inherently exclusionary, thereby logically leading to war, genocide, and ethnic cleansing.
translator’s note)” (pg. 1). This confession may lead a concerned reader to wonder whether the author maintained the sufficient analytical distance vis-à-vis his subject and how he managed his anger when writing about Bolesław Piasecki, who was considered an ultra-nationalist in his time.

An analysis of this book clearly demonstrates that it does not belong to the category of publications aiming to expand our knowledge on the subject matter, but rather to the realm of works regurgitating already known and available facts with the aim of partially reinterpreting them. It therefore represents the typical post-modernist historical revisionism *par excellence*. There have been plenty of Polish-language publications on Bolesław Piasecki, the “Falanga,” the Confederation of the Nation, or PAX; a great deal is known about this subject matter. There is no evidence that the author is familiar with most of these works, but I’ll address this problem further below.

In general, the publication appears to be a political denunciation, dressed up somewhat in the form of a historical work, of Piasecki as simultaneously a fascist and a communist. This is phraseology, not historiography. Furthermore, the author abuses the “fascist” adjective without defining it precisely or explaining its Polish context. As a result, such passages likely bring forth in the minds of English-language readers associations with Nazism and the crimes of the Third German Reich. In the US, branding someone a “fascist” is often a tool used by left-wing academics or their supporters to silence anyone daring to question their assertions. Piasecki uses this invective to describe not only Piasecki and his actions and followers, but also the entire interwar Polish Second Republic, which is a blatant distortion. Assertions such as his reference to “proto-fascist Poland” were probably employed by the author to ingratiate himself with the powerful and influential neo-Stalinist *milieu* among Western historians; it is mainly their works that Kunicki lists in his bibliography. Sometimes, the author also uses the terms “fascism” and “nationalism” interchangeably, which is also a misrepresentation. Even more striking is his manipulation of a famous declaration by Józef Piłsudski who, according to Kunicki, stated that he “got off the tramway called ‘socialism’ at the stop called ‘nationalism’” [!] (pg. 140). In reality, however, interwar Poland’s leader said that he exited the “socialism” tram at a stop called “independence” [translator’s emphasis], a fact known well even by high school students in Poland. Based on such a manipulated quote, Kunicki continues his argument. I’d like to believe that this was merely a poor choice of words on the author’s part, rather than the identification of Poland’s independence with “nationalism” – something hated by his thesis advisor, Professor Norman Naimark of Stanford.3 Curiously, none of the reviewers noticed this.

Apart from this—and the question of whether it is adequate and appropriate to label Piasecki a “fascist”—is the author’s astounding claim that the PAX leader’s initially fascist and later pro-communist affiliations were a product of his Catholic worldview. Kunicki, borrowing from the

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school of historical revisionism, claims that “the birth of organic nationalism often had its roots in religious revival and enthusiasm” (pg. 3). Thus, anything can be tarred with the brush of “nationalism,” including the liberal Clubs of Catholic Intelligentsia (Kluby Inteligencji Katolickiej) in Poland. Kunicki fails to recognize that in the Western world, the vast majority of people remain influenced in some way by Christianity. He prefers to deny this, seeing it instead as a source of “nationalist” aberrations.

Kunicki also ties Catholicism to anti-Semitism, which he ascribes to Piasecki. Indeed, Kunicki frames anti-Semitism as the overarching factor conditioning the PAX leader’s politico-ideological activities. Since this is hard to prove—especially during the communist period—the author diligently searched for any evidence of Piasecki’s negative attitude towards Jews. Some of these seem quite far-fetched, such as Piasecki’s reference to some Communist Party (PZPR) members as “Jewish comrades,” or the case of an intoxicated Zygmunt Przetakiewicz (Piasecki’s close collaborator in PAX), who—during an event or meeting in the Journalists’ Club—verbally attacked the communist Roman Zambrowski (who was ethnically Jewish) as a “Jew.” Kunicki also attempted to psychoanalyze Piasecki’s thinking, asking rhetorically: “Did Piasecki believe that a Jew could become a Pole? In all probability, no” (pg. 144).

What is the basis of such an allegation? If Kunicki is right, why did Piasecki’s PAX Publishing Institute publish several editions of books by Roman Brandstadder, a Polish writer of Jewish descent, a poet, dramatist, and a translator of and an authority on the Bible? Piasecki had no problems with patriotic Poles of Jewish ancestry, or people the left accused of such descent, e.g. the main ideologue of the “Falanga,” Wojciech Wasiutyński. According to Kunicki, however, Piasecki “doubted the possibility of Jewish assimilation, even within the communist movement,” in which case the author has a point, since a Pole could only become de-Polonized through communism while a Jew could de-assimilate, i.e. de-Judaize himself. How could they become acculturated into Polishness in the atmosphere of Party meetings and briefings (“operatywki”), while hearing and using “new-speak” slang, and while being detached from the Polish intelligentsia and interacting with vulgar apparatchiks – the beneficiaries of communist “[upward] social advancement”? All of this occurred in the dialectical din of Marxism-Leninism, which had nothing in common with traditional Polishness, not to mention servility towards Moscow and the Kremlin of Lenin, Stalin, and Khrushchev. Piasecki, even if he privately succumbed to anti-Jewish prejudices, did not base his political decisions on sympathies or antipathies, but on iron pragmatism and expected benefits. Thus, the ethnic descent of the political actors with whom he waged conflicts or formed alliances played only a secondary role.

Just as Kunicki fails to grasp the nature of the Jewish question in communist Poland, he also does not understand either the approach of Piasecki or that of the communists towards this issue. The scholar contradicts himself, in fact, by stating that after 1945 “the treatment of anti-Semitism by Stalin’s communists was ‘mild’” (pg. 78) while claiming further on that anti-Jewishness was considered a “serious crime” at this time (pg. 126).
In his section on the Jewish issue, Kunicki attempts to juggle the meaning of words. Thus, for example, he claims that the antithesis of the phrase “true Pole,” allegedly so commonly used by the nationalists, was the “Jew” (pg. 2). Yet, an examination of this from the viewpoint of logic would indicate that the opposite of a “true Pole” is a “non-true” or “false” Pole, i.e. a traitor who disavowed his Polishness, not a non-Pole or a member of the Jewish minority. The Judeo-Communists (“Żydokomuna”), as Professor Paweł Śpiewak argued, were traitors to both Poland and the Jews, which—in this sense—made them the antithesis of Polishness and Jewishness. This simple logic was lost on the author, however.

Kunicki demonstrates his left-wing historical revisionism by attempting to pin all the blame for the crimes of communism on nationalism (pg. 2). If communism was like nationalism, and if both tendencies mutually propelled one another, then—as he claims—“this undermines the Cold War concept of totalitarianism.” Kunicki rejects the understanding of communism as a totalitarian system and, repeating after the revisionists, “presents nationalism as a living and diverse phenomenon, constantly evolving under the influence of everyday practice, not as a rigid set of beliefs imposed by ideologues.” Thus, communism becomes identical with nationalism—which allegedly debunks the totalitarian model because, as this new theory asserts, the communists were not totalitarians because they were nationalists—and their “nationalism” was the cause of the crimes and errors they perpetrated.

The totalitarian model referred to the aspirations and attempts by the communists (and other totalitarians) to fundamentally transform and completely subordinate society to their rule. That some managed to survive the Gleichschaltung [“forcible coordination, bringing into line”], and even to survive and avoid repressions, is not testimony of the regime’s tolerance, or of its acceptance of allowing some to remain outside of its destructive pale, as the revisionists argue. It only shows that the totalitarian system was never completely effective. In spite of fanatical attempts—including mass murder and repression—the communists proved unable to build paradise on earth. But is this a reason to blame the crimes of communism on nationalism?

Using his own logic, Kunicki might as well claim that Nazi Germany was not totalitarian because—despite the racist ideology of the totalitarian National Socialist state—some Jews survived and even fought in the Wehrmacht for Hitler. Kunicki, like other revisionists, simply mistakes the ideal for everyday practice. Even Mao Tse Tung was unable to destroy the remaining diversity within China, but does that mean his system wasn’t totalitarian? Interestingly, Kunicki is not consistent even in this regard, for, on page 175, he refers to the communist system in Poland under Edward Gierek (1970 – 1980) as totalitarian. Or perhaps he is attempting to remain compatible with the enunciations of KOR (Committee to Defend Workers, a mostly leftist, post-Trotskyite dissident group) activists, who—treating “totalitarianism” as an invective—eagerly employed the term to describe the final two decades of the Polish People’s Republic in their anti-regime political punditry. Kunicki writes:
The communists not only utilized nationalism, but—as Piasecki’s case shows—also prolonged the existence of the nationalist right. Indeed, I argue that PAX was the nationalist right within communism. Piasecki’s story thus questions the commonly-accepted view that fascism in Eastern Europe was destroyed by the victorious Red Army and the rise of communism (pg. 4).

The author thus believes that the exception proves the rule. Indeed, if we assume hypothetically that PAX was a radical nationalist organization (which it was not), then it was the only such outfit in the entire Soviet Bloc. The practice was not new, however. After 1917, the Bolsheviks accepted *ancient régime* specialists into their state machinery with the intention of using them to recreate time-tested institutions, albeit in a new form. For instance, former Tsarist army officers were recruited or impressed into the Red Army. Most of them would later be murdered by the Soviets.

The communist goal was not to save the “nationalist right” in Poland, but to conserve structures which could be utilized to accelerate the victory of communism in that country. This was a simple dialectical operation, but Kunicki apparently fails to recognize this. It was only a lucky coincidence that Stalin died in 1953, which meant that a likely future purge—during which Piasecki and his associates would certainly have been killed—did not occur. The post-1945 story of Piasecki is similar to the early post-revolutionary Bolshevik model of cooptation and continuity, but without the eventual wave of extermination. There were many others similar to Piasecki, although they never achieved his relatively high position. We can list, e.g., Jan Stachniuk and the neo-pagans from “Zadruga” who were active within the regime’s satellite party, the Democratic Party (SD). This was an openly anti-Catholic and liberal *milieu*, however, which made it much less useful to the communists. It is amazing that the author cannot grasp these phenomena and mechanisms.

Summing up the conceptual part of this book, we can conclude that it is quite lacking and fails to rise above the propagandistic enunciations of left-liberal punditry. The factual deficiencies of *Between the Brown and the Red* are even more problematic.

**Detailed comments**

Kunicki’s work divides Piasecki’s career into three periods: the two interwar decades of independence, underground resistance during the Second World War, and communism after 1945. The book is divided into seven chapters, of which five deal with the postwar period.

The author dedicated only two chapters—a total of about forty-five pages—to events prior to 1939. This constitutes about one-fourth of an already short publication. It also seems to be the weakest section. Kunicki’s grasp of the reality of the era is rather poor, which leads to many false particular and general conclusions. To begin with, the author perpetuates many inaccurate views about the Polish National Democratic movement. He states that its activists promoted
ideological ethnonationalism (pg. 7), whereas the organizations affiliated with the NDs accepted anyone who declared himself a Pole, regardless of his ethnic descent, which included the descendants of German burghers, in addition to Poles with Czech, Tatar, Russian, French, and Jewish roots.

The author also frequently mentions the ideological conceptions of the prewar Endecja, attempting to associate them with the political and propaganda lines of the communist regime. Both of his claims—one about the ethnically homogenous People’s Republic as an alleged fulfillment of the National Democratic program, the other about the communist exploitation of Piast traditions, which also supposedly had an Endek pedigree—is a complete misrepresentation (pg. 212). Neither Roman Dmowski, nor the young nationalists of the 1930s, who promoted a program of a nationalist Poland, never postulated the total national Polonization of the entire population. The fact that such a homogenization took place is the result of the Second World War. The claim that the creation of an ethnically homogenous Poland by Hitler and Stalin was the realization of Endek dreams is simply false (pg. 78). The nationalists expressed no gratitude for this to either the Nazis or the Soviets. Adam Doboszyński echoed this sentiment in 1947, when he wrote that “Poland had to wait for a thousand years for the appearance of the slogan that Poland should be inhabited only by Poles. This slogan was employed and implemented by the Soviet agentura [the Communists]. We will not find it among the statements of any Polish thinker.”

Polish nationalism had a spiritual, not an ethno-racial character. It was based on the voluntary accession of the individual to the national community. It was open to the descendants of German burghers and Polish Armenians, and, in fact, many nationalists had foreign roots. Thus, theories on the Piast character of Poland as the “only right” one are divorced from reality, especially since Endek propaganda and political literature also invoked the Jagiellonian tradition, using it to encourage nationalist activism in the Eastern Borderlands, a region where slogans about Piast traditions would not find fertile ground.

Kunicki’s knowledge of the history of the Endecja is quite deficient in general. According to him, “Dmowski respected Italian fascism” (pg. 10), which was true; he forgot to add, however, that this respect constituted a very short episode, and that Dmowski became a critic of the Italian governmental system already during the late 1920s. Elsewhere Kunicki writes that “Dmowski’s integral nationalism also negated class struggle among ethnic Poles; that is why the Endeks tended to avoid supporting workers’ grievances” (pg. 12). The truth was quite the opposite: the

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Endeks were very active in the workers’ movement, precisely because they opposed class warfare.

When writing about anti-Jewishness at Polish universities, Kunicki claims that it constituted a “regional phenomenon” (pg. 13), in spite of the fact that it also occurred at universities in the United States and Western Europe, not to mention Germany. It was thus a pan-European phenomenon, or perhaps even a Western one. When mentioning the program-related brochure of the youth wing of the Camp of Great Poland (OWP), Guidelines on the Jewish Question [Wytyczne w sprawie żydowskiej], he claims that the novelty of the socio-economic and political solutions offered by this publication was the extent of the proposed anti-Jewish measures, which he argues sealed the fate of Jewish converts to Catholicism (pg. 18). The Guidelines, in spite of the great significance attached to them by some historians (e.g. Szymon Rudnicki), were the first, but also one of many political brochures attempting to shape the movement’s program published by the young nationalists. Further, the Guidelines never managed to receive the blessing of the Catholic Church, so the alleged role in sealing the fate of converted Jews ascribed to this pamphlet of a dozen or so pages is exaggerated, to stay the least. Kunicki says that the Endeks saw the nation as a “community of past, present, and future generations” – which is true. Yet, he fails to mention that the Endeks borrowed this conception from Edmund Burke, for such an admission would not fit the image he is attempting to frame for the Endeks as primitive and parochial backwater troglodytes. Indeed, the author displays a penchant to describe the Endecja in a caricature-like and comic-book manner, claiming that its main ideological underpinnings were “ethnocentrism, exclusion, and violence” (pg. 20).

Among the author’s factual errors, it is worth mentioning one that is very symptomatic: a quote from Sztafeta from May 1935, the aim of which was to demonstrate how Piasecki and his milieu viewed opportunities for political activism in Poland following the death of Piłsudski (pg. 34). The problem is that this quote is completely inadequate because the illegal nationalist radical periodical was the voice of Piasecki’s political competitors at the time, the ONR [Nationalist Radial Camp] “ABC” faction. The two factions—ONR “Falanga” of Piasecki, and ONR “ABC”—had functioned as separate outfits for quite some time, but the final split came in April 1935. Thus, a quote from Sztafeta as a window into the views of Piasecki’s group is a blunder. Another erroneous “discovery” of Kunicki’s is his claim that “the Colonels snuffed out the anti-Semitic riots which the Endecja was attempting to transform into local uprisings” (pg. 37). This further demonstrates the author’s poor grasp of the history of Poland during the 1930s.5

5 The claim that anti-Jewish riots occurring in Poland during the mid-1930s (e.g. in Mińsk Mazowiecki, Brześć, and Przytyk) were an Endek-organized ploy to foment an uprising against the Sanacja regime is simply absurd. Such incidents (e.g. Przytyk) were spontaneous and the nationalist activists had no influence over the rioting crowds. See Piotr Gontarczyk, Pogrom? Zajścia polsko-żydowskie w Przytyku 9 marca 1936 r. Mity, fakty, dokumenty [A pogrom? The Polish-Jewish incident in Przytyk on 9 March 1936] (Biała Podlaska–Pruszków: Rekonkwista, Rachocki i S-ka, 2000).
Elsewhere, Kunicki claims that during Piasecki’s military service, ONR “Falanga” was run by a team of activists (pg. 35). This is another misunderstanding. In an organization like the “Falanga,” and especially in such an organization, there was always only one leader. During Piasecki’s absence, it was headed by Witold Staniszkiis, which the author mentions elsewhere, albeit in a footnote (footnote 24, pg. 196).

Despite Kunicki’s suggestion, Piasecki neither organized nor participated in the blockade of Warsaw University in 1936 (pp. 37 – 38). It was also not carried out independently by his people, but was instead organized by the All-Polish Youth [Młodzież Wszechpolska], a part of the Nationalist Party [Stronnictwo Narodowe], which had a much broader base of supporters and followers among the university students. Kunicki also greatly exaggerates the strength and influence of the “Falanga.” He claims, for instance, that in 1938, the organization succumbed to a crisis, losing even “the earliest bastions of its strength,” i.e. student government bodies (pg. 46). In reality, the main power base of the “Falanga” were working-class and small-town youths, which formed about ninety percent of its membership. The intelligentsia was only a small section within the organization, and was limited mostly to the narrow group of Piasecki’s closest associates. The Falangists had little influence among university students—which was limited to Warsaw University—but even there they could only dream of winning a majority in the elections to “Fraternal Aid” [Bratnia Pomoc]. Student governments, “Fraternal Aid,” and other such student organizations were dominated almost exclusively by the All-Polish Youth during the late 1930s, but Kunicki seems unaware of this.

Kunicki’s problems with logic and his failure to understand his subject are also reflected in his attempts to prove the integral character of the “Falanga’s” nationalism by quoting a fragment (which he translated rather poorly) of Piasecki’s brochure, The Spirit of the New Times and the Youth Movement [Duch Czasów Nowych a Ruch Młodych]: “The good of the nation does not constitute the final criterion for what is good and what is bad, because the good of the nation is not the absolute. God is the absolute and the highest end of man. Thus [striving to achieve] the good of the nation is only the means of reaching this absolute goal” (pg. 31). The original Polish reads as follows: “Dla jednostki dobro narodu nie może być kryterium ostatecznym dobrego i złego, ponieważ dobro narodu nie jest jej celem najwyższym. Celem tym musi być dobro najwyższskie – Bóg. […] Dobro zaś narodu musi być środkiem dla jednostki do osiągnięcia jej celu ostatecznego”6 How is this subordination of the good of the nation to God an example of integral nationalism?

There are similar objections to Kunicki’s theory that the elements of Piasecki’s interwar ideology were: xenophobia, the exaltation of society’s ethnic homogeneity, religious fundamentalism, and a paramilitary style; all of which are supposedly representative of

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6 Bolesław Piasecki, Duch czasów nowych a Ruch Młodych (Warsaw: no publisher, 1935), pg. 36.
traditional rightist thought. Regardless of how characteristic these traits were of the “Falanga,” they may easily describe the regimes of the post-1935 Piłsudskiites or Mussolini’s Fascists, albeit it would be difficult to label these “traditionally rightist” (pg. 4). In fact, the basis of the worldview of the traditional conservative Right—both in Poland and elsewhere in Europe—was the defense of social, regional, cultural, and even religious diversity, which caused these traditionalists to view with concern attempts to adopt left-wing ideas aiming at social homogenization and xenophobic drives to forge ethnically homogenous citizenries. Such trends were, furthermore, antithetical to Christian universalism.

The few examples presented above represent only the most important factual errors requiring correction, but there are numerous other mistakes. For instance, Kunicki claims that Piasecki’s anti-Semitism was moderate in comparison to that of his other collaborators (pg. 50). A reader familiar with the punditry of the “Falanga” press, which was personally headed by Piasecki, may be shocked by this. Of course if we compare the activities of this organization with events in other European countries at the time—Romania and Germany especially—then the attitudes of the Polish “Falangists” towards the Jews may be viewed as far from extreme. In the Polish context, however, the anti-Jewishness of Piasecki’s people was indeed extreme, but—as Kunicki rightly emphasizes—they did not propagate racist theories, which they considered incompatible with Catholic teaching and scientifically doubtful.

A characteristic feature of Kunicki’s intellectual helplessness is also that—when lacking detailed knowledge of a certain subject—fills in the gap through mirror imaging. For example, when discussing the anti-Jewish stance of Roman Dmowski and the Camp of Great Poland (OWP), he projects his argument onto Romanian conditions, or onto Hungarian conditions when discussing the religious factor. Such parallels between countries in very different socio-historical circumstances lack scholarly merit. He also eagerly compares Piasecki with other European nationalist leaders, e.g. Leon Degrelle of Belgium or Ferenc Szálasi of Hungary: “The Hungarian [Szálasi] partly emulated the Nazi approach to religion, and the Pole [Piasecki] did not” (pg. 33). In the end, Kunicki himself comes to the conclusion that it is difficult to compare the ideological choices and political careers of the two. What is then the point of such contorted hyperboles?

In general, the historical context of the section of Kunicki’s book on the prewar era is extremely simplistic, while the reconstruction of the realities in which Piasecki operated is unidimensional and incomplete. An English-language reader who is not very familiar with the history of Poland will certainly find this quite unhelpful.

The section of the book devoted to the Second World War is equally deficient – both in terms of length (24 pages) and content. Kunicki summarizes the turns in Piasecki’s life during this crucial time are summarized on the basis of only a few publications, without bothering to delve into the details or to contribute new facts or insights. In his publication he also “forgot” to mention a few key facts. He omits to mention that Poland’s western allies failed to honor their
treaty obligations towards her, abandoning the country to the invaders in September 1939. When writing about the Soviet decision to sever diplomatic relations with the Polish government-in-exile, he neglects to point out that the background of this break was the discovery of the Soviet massacre of Polish officers and members of the Polish elite at Katyn (in fact, the word Katyn does not appear in his book even once). Describing the Nowogródek area, he writes (incorrectly) that its population included ethnic Lithuanians, and he refers to the collaborationist pro-German Lithuanian secret police, the Sauguma, as the “Sauguma,” demonstrating how precarious Kunicki’s grasp of the character of the Eastern Borderlands of Poland is. This is further reflected in his inappropriate comparison of the Polish Home Army’s struggle against the Soviets in the Eastern Borderlands with the Chetnik vs. communist civil war in Yugoslavia at the time. Yet, the Yugoslav communists were indigenous, whereas the Soviets in the Eastern Borderlands—conquered by the Soviet Union in the fall of 1939—were a de facto occupying force. The locals within Soviet partisan units were a minority. He also refers to the Soviet entry into Poland in 1944 as a “liberation” (pg. 83), although, to be fair, he does mention the repressions that the “liberators” inflicted upon the “liberated.” In light of this, his calling Major Zygmunt Sendzielarz “Łupaszko” a “colonel” (pg. 92) is a minor issue.

As far as the wartime fate of Piasecki is concerned, the author writes that he was categorically opposed to collaboration (pg. 48). If so, how can we explain the episode of Piasecki dispatching “Falangist” Andrzej Świetlicki to sound out the Wehrmacht? Apparently, the author is not very familiar with such meanders. He also writes that Piasecki’s organization remained “staunchly anti-Semitic” (pg. 64), does this mean that is supported the Holocaust? If so, then the author should have elaborated on this and showed the scale of the collaboration. If not, then writing about the “anti-Semitic ferocity” of a small underground organization in the context of the mass murder of millions of Jews by the German Nazi occupiers sounds like a bad joke.

Elsewhere, Kunicki writes that anti-Semitism did not constitute the “cornerstone” of the ideology of the Confederation of the Nation (pg. 65). He also can’t seem to make up his mind whether Piasecki was a racist or not, sometimes answering in the affirmative, and sometimes in the negative (e.g. pg. 61). Regarding the National Armed Forces [Narodowe Siły Zbrojne, or NSZ], he is very consistent, accusing the NSZ of being “anti-Semitic and bestially anti-communist” (pg. 60). He also charges NSZ soldiers with denouncing Professor Marceli Handelsman, a Pole of Jewish descent, to the Gestapo (pg. 194), despite the fact that other historians have clarified and demystified this matter about two decades ago, showing that the denunciation was the fallout of intrigue within the Home Army, and the NSZ had nothing to do with it. Such dilettantism is simply astounding, which suggests that, during his university days in Poland, Kunicki was too busy being angry at students wearing Chrobry’s Sword lapel pins to study history.

While the first part of Kunicki’s book was based mostly on Szymon Rudnicki’s publication, the sections concerning the war and the occupation are limited mostly to Kazimierz Krajewski’s
monograph on the Cadre Assault Battalions [Uderzeniowe Bataliony Kadrowe] and ignores other authors, such as Mariusz Bechta. The author fails to understand Piasecki and the Eastern Borderlands, or the modus operandi of secret underground organizations for that matter. Sometimes intuition pushes the author in the right direction, but the post-modernist aversion to research prevents him from following up on his hunches. When writing of Piasecki’s arrest by the NKVD in 1944, he points to Ryszard Romanowski as the denunciator—which is correct—but, in spite of his query at the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), he failed to familiarize himself with the contents of Romanowski’s IPN file, which would have helped him clear up quite a few issues. This seems to be a serious omission.

The section on Piasecki’s postwar life, which began with his imprisonment by the NKVD, is the longest—numbering 111 pages of main text—and also the most controversial. As he describes this period, Kunicki eagerly grounds his narrative in the works of leftist and liberal historians, such as Marcin Zaremba, Dariusz Stola, and Jerzy Eisler.

One of the few merits of the book seems to be the author’s analysis of the motives propelling Piasecki’s collaboration after 1945. This is most likely the effect of the punditry of Jan Engelgard, who attempted to rationalize and defend the correctness of collaboration with the communists in the postwar era. Piasecki called for the recognition of the puppet rump state (controlled by the Soviets and deprived by them of forty percent of its territory) as the de facto Polish state. The path to regaining independence would first require the reconstruction of Poland’s economy from the ravages of war and the erosion of the communist system. Piasecki allegedly foresaw that the Soviet Union would lose its political, ideological, and economic dynamism, predicting that its collapse would occur in approximately fifty years. He believed that, in the conditions imposed on Poland after 1945, the priority was to focus on conserving and strengthening the cohesion, spirit, and discipline of the nation.

With the benefit of hindsight, we may add that Piasecki failed to foresee one thing: i.e. that the products of the People’s Republic (an entity only partly compatible with what Poland really was) would not be Poles faithful to his preferred values, but post-People’s-Republic types (post-communists), who were the beneficiaries of negative selection, people who were not only poorly educated but also indifferent toward patriotism and religion, and full of inferiority complexes masked by extremely large egos. They were the Polish-speaking anti-elite groomed by the Soviets to run Poland on their behalf. The traditional patriotic Polish elites and their descendants—or whatever was left of them—which were preoccupied with preserving the continuity of Polish national and cultural identity, were a milieu which Piasecki partly attempted to sponsor and protect, were unable to develop under the communist regime and to influence society. In this context, let us look at one more theme to which Kunicki alluded to, but failed to elaborate upon, i.e. the likely motive behind the Soviet decision to coopt Piasecki. “Piasecki’s PAX could direct his nationalist-Catholic constituency into the camp of the regime” (pg. 4). Kunicki does not tell us however who Piasecki was to direct, whither, and in what manner.
Kunicki attempts to argue against the theory that Piasecki was a Soviet agent, asserting that he did not find any evidence to support it. This is quite possible given the limited scope of his archival queries and, most important of all, his failure to check the crucial Moscow archives. One will not find materials proving that the Soviets recruited a given individual in Polish archives, so why not argue that Soviet intelligence did not operate in Poland after 1944 at all? Alas, the Soviet services did not adhere to “gentlemen’s agreements”; their modus operandi was to corrupt and subordinate anyone they wanted to take advantage of. Obviously this subordination would be very strong when a victim’s position was weak.

When confronted by the NKVD, Piasecki was deprived of any room to maneuver, which means that his agreement to collaborate could only be a precondition for any talks, a mere formality in fact. Like the post-communist researcher Krystyna Kersten, Kunicki attempts to challenge the credibility of the secret police defector Józef Świątło, who was the first to publically accuse Piasecki of collaborating with the NKVD. However, historians have recently set out to corroborate Świątło’s revelations, finding that much of his knowledge was genuine and that his statements are generally in line with the contents of declassified communist documents. Why would Świątło lie specifically in the case of Piasecki when laying bare the functioning of the communist regime?

What is puzzling is that Kunicki did not take any interest in the problem of Piasecki’s collaboration with the communist secret police in Poland (MBP). According to Piotr Gontarczyk’s findings, Piasecki took part in secret police (UB) operations and instructed his most trusted associates (such as Ryszard Reiff) to participate in them; all under the codename “Tatar.” It is difficult to unequivocally state, on this basis, that he was an UB agent because no registration document has been found, for example, but the ties are undeniable. Instead of delving further into this problem, Kunicki prefers to impress the reader by repeating gossip about Piasecki’s alleged romance with Julia Brystygierowa, for which there is no evidence save the gossip purveyed by Stalinists in Teresa Torańska’s long book of interviews with top communists, Them [Oni].

According to Kunicki, Piasecki’s collaboration with the Soviets and the communists was based on ideological motives. He claims that “Piasecki was not a chameleon. In reality, he was a man of the Right and his Catholic PAX Association constituted the nationalist Right under communism.” He also attempts to juxtapose Piasecki’s stance with the political line of Stanisław Mikołajczyk (pg. 86), but this seems far-fetched. The latter, as the leader of the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), attempted to create a political group in opposition to the communists. The position

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8 See Teresa Torańska’s interview with Stefan Staszewski, in Teresa Torańska, Oni (Warsaw: Iskry, 2004), pg. 166.
of Dziś i Jutro seems a lot closer to that of the liberal Catholic Tygodnik Powszechny [Universal Weekly], which Kunicki fails to acknowledge, most likely because of his political sympathy for the latter milieu. Thus, while analyzing the stances of Stomma and Turowicz, he asserts that their strategy helped Tygodnik Powszechny survive until 1953 (pg. 92). Such praise for the liberal Catholics distorts the reality of the time since having a political strategy meant very little in a context wherein the communists decided the rules of the game and decided who perished and who survived. At the same time, Kunicki criticizes the Primate of Poland, Cardinal August Hlond, for approving [zatwierdził] the activities of Piasecki’s group without concern about the latter’s “fascist past and biting anti-Semitism” (pg. 86). So, why doesn’t Kunicki apply the same approach to the liberal Catholic group of Turowicz and its compatibility with the communism of Bierut and Gomułka? Why doesn’t Kunicki condemn Cardinal Sapieha for approving of the activities of the Tygodnik Powszechny? Was the difference between the two collaborationist milieux really that great at the beginning? The communists were aiming to pacify society. Both groups served their purpose by channeling the activism of lay Catholics in their accommodation with the realities of the communist state. Why doesn’t the author contrast the fate of collaborationist outlets like Dziś i Jutro and the Tygodnik Powszechny with publications and organizations that were suppressed, such as the Tygodnik Warszawski or the underground Nationalist Party (SN)?

Kunicki seems not to understand the twists and turns of Piasecki’s political path, viewing his entire active political career (1933 – 1979) as the life of a man blinded only by “nationalist-fascist” ideology. According to Kunicki, he remained ideologically a Falangist (literally a “fascist”) even when he opted to collaborate with the communists. Perhaps this is how Piasecki rationalized his actions, but how feasible would be the implementation of the conception of the Catholic State of the Polish Nation from the 1930s in Stalinist conditions and with the acquiescence of the Soviets and their communist subordinates? This may seem highly improbable, but—according to the author—that was precisely the intended role and political strategy of PAX.

According to one of Kunicki’s arguments, the conception of PAX and Piasecki’s postwar activism was “socialist in form and nationalist in content because he always viewed Catholicism as the focal point of Polish national identity” (pg. 3). One thing is unclear: does Kunicki believe that Catholicism supplemented socialism as an element of Polish national identity? Soon afterward, Kunicki posits the “ideological kinship between nationalism and communism.” The fact that the communists utilized nationalism as a tool to mobilize the masses for their own ends is obvious and undeniable. But before capturing full power, they also utilized liberalism to undermine the foundations of traditional society. The kinship between liberalism and
communism is closer than that between nationalism and communism. This escaped Kunicki’s penchant for comparativism, however.

All such abstract historical theorizing notwithstanding, Kunicki’s claim about the right-nationalist character of PAX is contradicted by facts and by the testimonies of those close to Piasecki, not to mention his own publications. For the leader of PAX, ideology was only an instrument of political activivism: when nationalism was popular, he carried high its banner; during the war, he emulated Piłsudskiite insurrectionism; and after the war, when Poland was subjugated by the Soviets, Piasecki joined the communists. Stefan Kisielewski, who knew Piasecki well, explained these radical shifts were parts of the tactical aspect of the struggle for political power. However, Piasecki always attempted to salvage for himself at least a minimal degree of independence and maneuvering room. Thus, the Confederation of the Nation (KN) was not a continuation of the “Falanga,” and PAX was not another reincarnation of the KN. Some of Piasecki’s closest associates, such as Jerzy Hagmajer, wrote as much. Politically and ideologically, these were three very distinct entities which shared the person of the leader and his closest acolytes. Each organization operated in different historico-political circumstances, and each one had a different worldview and program. Only the main strategic objective remained unaltered – the capture of power. What motivated Piasecki was not any particular ideology, for his approach to the latter was strictly utilitarian; it was a means to an end. Thus, contrary to Kunicki’s vision, Piasecki did not base his politics on any ideological criteria, but on pragmatic considerations. He accepted whatever brought him closer to his goal, rejecting any unnecessary

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9 The thesis about this nationalist-communist “kinship” is currently en vogue and frequently exaggerated by liberal historical revisionists. Thus, according to Bob Kiernan, Pol Pot’s crimes had a racist, not communist character, because his regime happened to also kill members of ethnic minorities. See Bob Kiernan, The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79 (Yale: Yale University Press, 2002).

10 Kisiel said of Piasecki: “We were in touch constantly because he and his people came to Kraków frequently and tried to persuade us. They were some sort of intermediaries for the [Communist] Party, and they always kept demanding this or that. But he was a great speaker, and he was quite charming. I especially had very good relations with him because I didn’t listen to any of his silly statements, such as the one about socialism being the work of the Holy Spirit and whatever else they wrote. He told me: ‘Listen, the Bolsheviks will not leave, so … you know, fill in the rest for yourselves.’ And this is how our discussion continued for years. Later, after the Tygodnik [Powszechny] was closed down, they took over the publishing, which we considered a dirty trick. But I continued to have relations with him. I regularly traveled to Warsaw, and he even invited me to his house several times. Later, a complete split occurred between us after October [1956], and after that came the tragic death of his son, which is still a mystery to me. They [the PAX-ists] wrote stupid things in 1968. But I continue to maintain my old view that he had great political talent, but the way the cards were dealt at the time was to his disadvantage.” Stefan Kisielewski, Abecadlo Kisiela [Kisiel’s ABC’s] (Warsaw: Interim, 1990).

ballast. In the context of the Soviet occupation, Piasecki’s ballast was his prewar and wartime activism in the “Falanga” and the Confederation of the Nation, so he cut himself off from the past.

In spite of these obvious facts, Kunicki stubbornly defends his thesis according to which PAX was established by the Soviets and communists as an incubator for the Polish radical right. He proves unable to defend this rather absurd claim by resorting to quasi-philosophical musings about the alleged convergence of Soviet communism and Polish nationalism or by finding alleged common features to both ideologies, and especially about the role of Catholicism in all of this. While it is easy to build such abstract theories, particularly when they are divorced from reality, they begin to fall apart when applied to concrete facts or events. So it turned out that PAX did not fulfill any of the political roles the author ascribed to it: neither as an incubator of Endek ideology during the 1950s and 60s, nor as an organizational base for the resurging neo-Endek movement within the democratic opposition of the 1980s.

Piasecki undoubtedly deserves credit for saving 400 – 500 people imprisoned by the UB, which Kunicki writes about only in a footnote (pg. 210). PAX, in turn, provided employment for thousands of people—including nationalists—who, as a “politically suspect” element, were condemned to a miserable existence (along with their families) on the margins of society. The outfit also organized summer camps and vacations for the children of the employees of the INCO-Veritas firm as well as the kids of independentist families that lived in poverty. It is also important to point out that the PAX Publishing Institute was able to publish some books that to other publishing house in communist Poland would have. Such were the concessions granted to PAX by the regime in turn for the organization’s obedience and collaboration.

What Kunicki fails to grasp about Piasecki’s political game are the motives that guided him, or—more precisely—his strategy for survival in the form of playing for time in return for his agreement to collaborate. However, the author fails to put certain facts together and to draw logical conclusions from these. For instance, when assessing the policy of Primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Kunicki writes that the legal arbitrariness of the communists rendered any deals with them largely illusory, and that the Primate was well aware of this and played for time (pg. 96). But the very same situation applied to agreements with Piasecki. Why doesn’t the author recognize this? After all, he knows that the milieu centered around the weekly Dziś i Jutro could operate freely and openly, but it was officially legalized only in 1952. This meant that before 1952—but, in fact, also afterwards—Piasecki and his people could be arrested at any time and put on trial for trumped up offenses. This struggle for survival eventually turned into constant maneuvering to continually broaden the organization’s influence within the system.

Kunicki’s claim that Piasecki’s secret plan was for his Catholic conceptions to gradually seep into the ranks of the Communist Party, which would have allowed the nationalists of PAX to eventually “convert” the communists into Polish patriots, is sheer fantasy (pg. 88). What Kunicki
forgets is that the PZPR and its leadership in communist Poland were not sovereign entities, and—even if we make the quite doubtful assumption that such a shift would have been possible in the People’s Republic—the Soviet overlords in Moscow had plenty of means at their disposal to prevent such a heresy. Marxism-Leninism remained the Party’s official ideology to the end, and all ideological maneuvers—including pseudo-nationalism—were dictated by dialectics. Kunicki, however, does not understand the ideological foundations on which the system rested; otherwise, he would not repeat the claim that communism was not totalitarian, and that would allow him to grasp the game played by the communists and the reactions of PAX. It bears emphasizing that Piasecki and PAX could only react, for it was the communists who imposed the rhythm of political life, and while they were constantly on the offensive the PAX-ists could only accommodate themselves to the rules of this game.

PAX propaganda touted the principle of the pluralism of worldviews. This called for a historic *modus vivendi* between the Party and the Church, which was to allow Catholics to become an autonomous actor within the communist movement. Thus, for a share in power—in an unspecified form—Catholics were to subordinate themselves to the regime and to recognize Marxism-Leninism as the dominant paradigm. Did Piasecki treat this conception seriously, or was it only a pretext to justify the presence of PAX as a political actor indispensable to the communists? Kunicki does not explain this (in only one place he seems to consider that it may have been “possible” that Piasecki did not want to subordinate the Church to the communists).

Curiously, the author does not have much sympathy for the defender of the Church’s independence, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, either. Without bothering to analyze the Primate’s actual statements, he accuses him of being “a staunch believer in the ethno-Catholic narrative of the Polish nation,” which—issuing from the lips of the liberal historian—amounts to an invective. Kunicki does, however, sympathize with the *milieu* of the PAX “Fronde” (e.g. Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Andrzej Micewski), whom he praises for rejecting “Piasecki’s theological innovations, his anti-Church undertakings, and his admiration for the Party” (pg. 108). Perhaps the “Frondists” were less inclined to “improve theology,” but their pro-communist statements did not differ from the rest of the PAX-ists and their publications – such was the rules of the game in the People’s Republic. Unfortunately, Kunicki was selective also in his description of the “Fronde,” omitting to mention Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s role in the vicious Stalinist campaign against Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek in 1953 and against the independentist underground resistance.12

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12 Mazowiecki thus commented on the sentencing of Bishop Kaczmarek: “(…) the political stance of a bishop or clergyman can be as much a subject of assessment [ocenie] as that of any other citizen. That is why we are not only hurt by, but are also condemning the erroneous views of Bishop Kaczmarek, which have led him toward diversionary activities against People’s Poland and guided his stance in these actions. When we ask ourselves how this could have happened, we see the following explanation. He was motivated by hostility towards social progress, hostile towards social change, and stance in defense of the capitalist system. This stance was also reflected in seeing
Kunicki accuses Piasecki of being an obsessive, syncretistic ideologue who attempted to combine nationalism and Catholicism with socialism. When playing his game, however, Piasecki had to propose a concrete plan of action to his NKVD interlocutors to appear credible. The Soviets, and especially the communists, did not need another Polish Workers’ Party [PPR, i.e. the Communist Party] member with a politically suspect background; they needed a useful tool to legitimize their power and to conduct a political disinformation campaign against the independentist underground and the Catholic Church. Piasecki fulfilled these expectations. These were the real roots of PAX. Kunicki admittedly writes about this, but proceeds to supplement these facts with ideological musings about the kinship between nationalism and communism. He forgets that the Soviets had the last word in such matters and seriously underestimates Moscow’s influence on whatever happened within the structures of the Warsaw regime. For him, the “Polish road to socialism” during the Gomułka years was nothing more than a disguised version of the “Falanga’s” program, albeit covered with Marxist sauce for camouflage.

Piasecki endorsed all the major communist propaganda campaigns by: condemning the anti-communist underground; supporting the “struggle for peace”; developed contacts with “progressive intellectuals” from the West (“useful idiots” serving Moscow); and combatted the Polish “reactionary clergy.” It seems that the process of Piasecki’s Stalinist mimicry went too far. In 1953—during the crucial episode that was the arrest of Primate Wyszyński—Piasecki proved unable to defend the repressed head of the Polish Church, which, according to the universalist principles of Roman Catholicism, is a hierarchical institution. Thus, the removal of its head by an external opponent changes its institutional character. Ergo, the Church without the Pope is as untenable as the Polish Church without its Primate. The defense of the Primate was thus a test of Catholicism, and Piasecki failed. Kunicki, however, claims that he made some sort of gestures in defense of the Primate. Alas, the gesture was green-lighted by the regime and only served to increase the credibility of the PAX agentura in the eyes of the communists. Thus, the PAX-ist voices of protest were weak and unconvincing.

__the place of the Church and Catholicism only in the old conditions, which essentially meant the rejection of the Apostolic approach towards the new times and the new social epoch. (…) what propelled Bishop Kaczmarek and his accomplices towards these harmful views was the identification of faith with a regressive social stance, and the good of the Church with the durability and interests of the capitalist system. This led them to associate with the imperialistic and warmongering policies of the government of the United States. (…) the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek also proved clearly, and not for the first time, just how much American imperialism—which hopes to utilize a new war, i.e. the death of millions of people, to impose the rule of its system of exploitation and social injustice on countries that have chosen a new historical path—tempts to use various means to influence the clergy and the faithful and to push them to fight against their own country, which is the commonweal of all its citizens.”__

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, “Wnioski” [Conclusions], Wrocławski Tygodnik Katolicki, no. 5, 27 September 1953. Mazowiecki also wrote a separate piece slandering the underground, which he co-authored with Zygmunt Przetakiewicz (Piasecki’s right-hand man): _Wróg został ten sam_ [The enemy remains the same], published in 1952. See Sławomir Cenckiewicz, “Jak Mazowiecki zwalczał podziemie” [How Mazowiecki combatted the underground], _Do Rzeczy_, 27 February 2013.)
Given his experiences with political compromises and constant concessions to the communists, Piasecki did not appreciate the opportunity that accompanied Wyszyński’s *Non possumus* [“We cannot”]. He did not risk an open confrontation with the regime, which might have meant imprisonment or even death. This is somewhat strange because—having read Piłsudski’s writings and sometimes even emulating him—Piasecki failed to recognize the parallels between this situation and the so-called Oath Crisis of 1917, and that the price of sacrificing PAX, like Piłsudski’s sacrifice of his Legions, might have been worth paying to ultimately achieve a much larger return: popularity. The consequences were quite serious. Piasecki did not play any meaningful role during the final years of Stalinism. Thus, once October 1956 came, Piasecki was forced to struggle to survive politically—and to fend off attacks by Party reformers, the left-wing intelligentsia, and Catholics simultaneously—instead of celebrating the freeing of Primate Wyszyński and greeting the people along with him on Miodowa Street in Warsaw.

Kunicki fails to explain how PAX and Piasecki became the symbol of Stalinism in 1956—instead of the Party (PZPR), the Security Agency (UB), and the notorious Military Information [Informacja Wojskowa] agency. Even though Piasecki meant very little within the communist system in Poland, he became a very convenient whipping boy, particularly since it seemed that this time he made a mistake by supporting the losing Party faction. While interpreting these events, Kunicki attributes excessive weight to Witold Jedlicki’s pamphlet, *Chamy i Żydy* [Boors and Jews], which became an unquestioned authority explaining the struggle for power within the communist regime in 1956 as well as the participants and their motives. He forgets that Piasecki’s cautious attitude at the time might have been the function of his fear of a Soviet intervention. The author claims that Piasecki’s unpopularity was the result of several articles he published at the time in which he stressed his commitment to socialist principles and the alliance with the Soviet Union. But this doesn’t explain the problem because this was the style of the official and legal political punditry at the time, so Piasecki’s rhetoric would not have led to automatic accusations of Stalinism.

Whence the hatred for Piasecki? Was it the product of Radio Free Europe? That may explain some of the phenomenon, but certainly not everything. As far as PAX press articles are concerned, it seems that Kunicki does not understand the documents generated during this era: he reads and quotes propaganda statements literally and is incapable of extracting the hidden thoughts and intentions of the authors. That was also the situation concerning PAX in 1956. The author was unable to explain how such an eclectic and diverse informal coalition was formed against PAX. The author does not consider that this might have been the work, at least in large part, of the communist regime’s disinformation campaign. Shifting at least some of the blame for

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what the communists grudgingly acknowledged as the “errors and excesses” of the system prior to 1956 onto PAX would have been extremely convenient. Piasecki was an easy scapegoat.

There were other, additional causes, however. Piasecki’s position at this time was much weaker. First of all, he lost the position of the sole informal intermediary between the regime and the Church, for other competitors appeared, i.e. mainly the progressive Catholic intelligentsia (e.g. Stomma, Zawieyski, and a liberalized Mazowiecki) which treated Piasecki as a dangerous rival. This was especially the case because he continued to flatter and court Gomułka in the hope of forming a Catholic party that would become part of the People’s Republic’s system of government. This was not a new conception, however, since Piasecki worked to establish such a Catholic party already in 1946.\(^\text{14}\)

Both the progressives and Piasecki publicly accepted the regime and the country’s dependence on the Soviet Union, albeit the former did not aspire to win power. Kunicki quoted Stomma: “We do not want to govern Poland, nor to have a majority in the parliament” (pg. 117). Such a declaration was quite astounding, given that it was stated by a politician, for it meant that Stomma’s *milieu* was quite at peace with its assigned role as a controlled opposition and safety valve, fearing to antagonize the communists. They were docile and desired privileges, for the price of passively applauding—more or less loudly—the regime’s policies. They called their stance “neo-Positivism.” This is apparent in Zawieyski’s memoirs, which Kunicki failed to read.\(^\text{15}\) The complacent liberal Catholics were thus much more convenient for the communists than Piasecki, who wanted to actively achieve some political gains. The former thus attacked the leader of PAX because, if his maneuver to create a Catholic party succeeded, they would have found themselves politically irrelevant. Perhaps Stomma and his acolytes would have even lost their numerous concessions and privileges?

Kunicki attempts to excuse the “Znak” [Sign] progressive Catholic group, claiming that while the *milieu* may have been “naïve in its stress on political neutrality, at least it wasn’t opportunistic” (pg. 122). If so, then how would he explain the collaboration of these progressives with the communists against the Church, which the liberals dubbed “fundamentalistic” and “obscurantist”? Not only was this collaboration opportunistic, because the Church was being persecuted, but also ideological, because the progressives were hostile towards the traditionalist Church; the only difference was that the communists wanted to crush the Church while the progressives wanted to convert it into a liberal parody of itself. Here we see an example of

\(^{14}\) See Jolanta Mysiakowska-Muszyńska, *Zabiegi o legalizację Stronnictwa Narodowego w kraju w latach 1945-1947* [Attempts to legalize the Nationalist Party in Poland] (Warsaw: Neriton, 2011). This work was published over a year before *Between the Brown and the Red*, but Kunicki is apparently also unfamiliar with it.

liberalism overlapping with communism. Thus, the alleged nationalistic (or even “neo-Endek”) character of Piasecki and his milieu under communism, as posited by Kunicki, mirrors the propaganda of the progressive Catholics (e.g. Mazowiecki and Micewski), which makes the author’s interpretation a pretext and a political smokescreen (pg. 126). Kunicki attaches great weight to that propaganda, most likely because they dovetail with his ideological stereotypes.

Even more dangerous for Piasecki in 1956 were the attacks by the so-called “Puławy” reformist faction—which would eventually evolve into the so-called “lay left”—but was then still very well ensconced in the Party apparatus. They too—like the liberals—emphasized Piasecki’s “Falanist” past and accused him of nationalist and fascist sympathies. This leads to a question: did Party activists skeptical of religion, being unable to attack the Church, select Piasecki as an easier ersatz target? A few years afterwards, this milieu would openly attack the Church and Primate Wyszyński. Kunicki writes about this several pages later. Their attempts to remove Piasecki in 1956 seem to have been a battle with a phantom, a charade that could not change the political system in any meaningful way, although that was the overarching goal that the Puławians declared. In fact, attacking Piasecki played a key role in their strategy, for the Puławians wanted to legitimize their newly-found anti-Russianness and anti-Sovietism. There scheme ran as follows: Piasecki is an Endek, Endeks are traitors cutting deals with Russia, and the Puławians are reformers and patriots defending Polish dignity vis-à-vis Moscow. The Puławians were thus playing the card of anti-Soviet nationalism, using which they managed to defeat the “Natolin” faction and its anti-Jewish card. The assault on Piasecki therefore had a huge symbolic significance in this power struggle.

It was not Piasecki who declared war on the Puławians, but the other way around. Kunicki also doesn’t seem to recognize that Piasecki was not opposed to de-Stalinization as such, but the Puławian version of de-Stalinization. Ethnic descent had only a secondary importance, Kunicki’s almost obsessive emphasis on the “ethnicity” issue notwithstanding.

While describing the historical background of People’s Poland during the 1960s, the author seems not to understand the mission of the Catholic Church; he claims that the letter of the Polish bishops to their German counterparts, entitled “We forgive and ask for forgiveness,” had as its goal the “bolstering of the prestige of the Polish Church abroad, which convinced the Vatican to recognize that the western [ex-German] provinces of the country belonged to Poland” (pp. 135 – 136). By focusing only on political aspects, the author fails to recognize that the letter pertained first and foremost to Christian love and mercy. Kunicki has great problems comprehending anything related to the traditional religious beliefs of non-progressive Poles. When writing about the Church’s celebrations of the Millennium of Poland’s Baptism in 1966, he stated that they transpired in a peaceful atmosphere, and that clashes happened only in Warsaw (pg. 136). However, the militia clashed with and resorted to violence against Catholics, with the secret police (SB) staging provocations targeting the faithful, throughout the country.
Hundreds of people were arrested and the regime conducted a vicious anti-Church propaganda campaign. Once again, the author is unfamiliar with the basic literature on the subject.\textsuperscript{16}

Furthermore, when discussing the so-called “anti-Zionist” campaign of 1968, Kunicki attempts to impose his own, narrow interpretation without addressing the broader context, including Soviet inspiration. After all, the maneuvers in Warsaw were dictated by the anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish script written in Moscow even before the Six Day War (5 – 10 June 1967) between the Israelis and the Arabs. Kunicki omits all of this, treating the “anti-Zionist” campaign as a \textit{sui generis} Polish phenomenon and as a sudden fit of anti-Semitic fury springing from Piasecki’s head.

The events of March 1968—i.e. the student protests—constitute a turning point in Kunicki’s narrative of postwar Polish history. According to Kunicki, Gomułka and his comrades blazed the Polish path to communism in a “nightmarish” way – according to a blueprint prepared by Piasecki. “This final offensive [‘68] ultimately led to the deideologization of the Polish People’s Republic and its transformation into a nationalist-populist regime” (pg. 140). Thus, communism in Poland ended in 1968. A very similar claim is advanced by various post-communist nostalgics, who believe that the anti-Semitic purge ended communism (because, according to them, the only supporters of communism were, naturally, the Jews) and that the People’s Republic was converted into a Polish “nation-state.” Kunicki’s argument is quite reminiscent of this theory, albeit he naturally condemns the purge and labels the following two decades of the People’s Republic “nightmarish.” So, it is worth asking: was the situation in Poland really worse in the last years of Gomułka or the first years of Edward Gierek’s reign than in the late 1940s and early 50s? Kunicki, however, believes that “March 1968 was the beginning of the transformation of the People’s Republic into an authoritarian-nationalist regime with a weak ideological mandate” (pg. 161). Is the author suggesting that this ideological mandate was strong before March 1968 and that it had translated into broad support within society? That is a very weak claim borrowed from the punditry of the Committee to Defend Workers (KOR) \textit{milieu} during the 1970s, or, more precisely, from Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Perhaps the author’s ignorance on this matter stems from his failure to consult the only collective work published after 1989 on the 1966 celebrations throughout Poland. See Bartłomiej Noszczak, ed., \textit{Millenium czy tysiąclecie []} (Warsaw: IPN, 2006).

\textsuperscript{17} On the traumatic nature that March 1968 exerted on the “lay left” and communists of Jewish descent, see “10 lat po wydarzeniach marcowych (ankieta)” [Ten years after the March events (a survey)], \textit{Krytyka}, no. 16 (1978). According to Kuroń the post-March-1968 regime of the People’s Republic had a totalitarian character, but it lost its socialist legitimacy: “I am convinced that the totalitarian-nationalist ideology will be reborn in our country within both the opposition and the state apparatus. As an ideology, communism does not exist in Poland. Thus, I consider the totalitarianism of the nationalists as the main ideological enemy of the democratic opposition.”
When describing the “March events,” Kunicki clearly over-exaggerates the influence and participation of PAX. For the author this is necessary to maintain his shaky overarching thesis about the nationalist and anti-Semitic nature of Piasecki’s views. He argues that Piasecki was the spiritual father of many PZPR activists who called for the creation of a system communist in form and nationalist in content, but this is far removed from the reality. The reception of the publications and political-philosophical quasi-ideology of PAX was minimal, if not nil, among the Party membership. Very few among the low-level Party members knew who Piasecki was, and fewer still were familiar with his writings. Similarly, the functionaries of the mid- and upper-level Party apparatus hardly consumed the Słowo Powszechne and other propaganda claptrap generated by the leader of PAX.

Either way, Kunicki did not trouble himself to consult the sources on this subject, which means that his thesis about the process of the “nationalization” of the Communist Party under the influence of Piasecki remains an unproven, unsupported hypothesis. The same applies to his reference to the March purge as a “state-sponsored anti-Semitic pogrom” (pp. 148, 160), which is a repetition of the propaganda clichés of the left-liberal Gazeta Wyborcza of Adam Michnik. First of all, pogroms were generally sponsored by the state, which has its origins in Tsarist Russia, which makes his statement a pleonasm. Secondly, in 1968 no one of Jewish descent was killed in Poland, which further renders the term “pogrom” inappropriate. This is an example of Kunicki’s hysterical abuse of words. It would be more accurate to speak of a purge within the Party which, after impacting many comrades of Jewish descent, spilled over to concentrate on university students who—especially those in the provinces outside of Warsaw—became the most victimized group in 1968. Many were permanently expelled from their universities and had their career paths severed. They were not able to leave for the United States and receive a scholarship to study at Yale University, like Jan Tomasz Gross for instance. The communist regime had no mercy for ordinary students, as opposed to Adam Michnik, who was allowed to finish his education in the People’s Republic. 18

According to Kunicki, Piasecki’s participation in the 1968 purge was his personal and ideological victory, a success crowning all his years of collaboration with the communists. Yet, the author admits that the events were not inspired by PAX, but by the Party faction of General Mieczysław Moczar (born Mykola Demko to an ethnic Ukrainian father). Simultaneously, the author glosses over the fact that the “March talk” [marcowe gadanie] began after Gomułka’s return from a trip to Moscow. Here we once again see the degree to which the author’s failure to conduct queries in post-Soviet archives seriously undermines the value of Kunicki’s book. We

18 Adam Michnik—in spite of having a “wolf’s ticket” officially banning him from studying—was able to finish his education on an extramural basis during the early 1970s, earning a Master’s degree in history in 1975 from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. See Cyril Bouyeure, Adam Michnik: Biografia: Wymyślić to co polityczne [Adam Michnik: A biography: Inventing the political] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2009), pg. 143.
can assume that Gomułka would never have dared to launch such a storm without the permission or even inspiration of the Soviets. Kunicki’s failure to recognize Moscow’s role as the main decision-maker in the Soviet Bloc is a very grave weakness of his work. This shows that without consulting the archival materials documents generated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—and certainly also the KGB—it is impossible to write a compelling history of communist-ruled Poland, or, indeed, even a work as fragmentary as a biography of Piasecki. Thus, such comical statements as Kunicki’s claim that, in general, the Party press did not play a dominant role in the anti-Semitic propaganda, “except for the Trybunia Ludu [People’s Tribune]” (pg. 155). The problem is that this daily was the central press organ of the Party and set the tone and line of the regime’s propaganda. The regional dailies said the same thing about the “Zionists.” On this issue Kunicki once again neglected to check the archives or even the secondary scholarly literature on March propaganda.19

PAX participation in the “anti-Zionist” campaign did not necessarily have to stem from the anti-Semitism that he alleges was cultivated within the organization since its inception. For those participating in the political reality of People’s Poland, there was no possibility of taking a neutral stance; the regime demanded that they clearly declare themselves either “for” or “against.” Opposition would have probably entailed harassment or even reprisals, and PAX had not been known for resisting the regime. Certainly it is possible that support for the “anti-Zionist” campaign was broad among the PAX-ists, but can this be reduced to a single denominator? Since the author did not verify the sources, he cannot be sure whether all of the PAX-ists (approximately 9,000 members and employees of associated firms at the time) unequivocally supported the moves of Gomułka and Moczar. This is yet another example of methodological shortcomings.

It seems that Kunicki’s theory of anti-Semitism as the common point of convergence between communism and nationalism need not be the only explanation for the acceptance of the purge by Piasecki and PAX. Anti-Jewish prejudice aside, the political opportunism characterizing this organization also could have played a role. Perhaps Piasecki saw the anti-Semitic events of 1968 as an opportunity to take revenge on his political opponents from 1956 who were now pushed out of power, albeit it was not certain for how long. Perhaps the purge within the Party was seen as a kind of decommunization and even de-Stalinization—however

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19 This pertains to the classic work, which Kunicki did not reference: Michał Głowiński, Marcowe gadanie [March talk] (Warsaw: Pomost, 1991); and also the work of the left-liberal historian Piotr Osęka, Syjoniści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele: Obraz wroga w propagandzie marca 1968 [Zionists, provocateurs, saboteurs: The image of the enemy in March 1968 propaganda] (Warsaw: Zydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1999), and (by the same author), Marzec ’68 (Kraków: Znak, 2008); not to mention the authors from the opposite side of the March barricade, e.g.: Kazimierz Kąkol, Marzec ’68 inaczej [March ’68 from another perspective] (Warsaw: 69, 1998), Jerzy Brochocki [probably the pseudonym of Ryszard Gontarz], Rewolta Marcowa – narodziny, życie i śmierć PRL [The March revolt: The birth, life, and death of the People’s Republic regime] (Warsaw: Placówka, 2000).
imperfect and partial—and therefore the final conclusion of October 1956. If so, then this was a very mild form of decommunization, for the purged apparatchiks were not imprisoned or killed, but simply removed from high posts and even allowed to emigrate to the West, something which many ordinary Poles at the time could have only dreamt of. There are many possible explanations. Unfortunately, instead of analyzing all potential causes, Kunicki offers and pushes stubbornly only one which dovetails with his ideological bias: anti-Semitism. This is not to say that anti-Jewishness played no role in March 1968, but approximating any kind of certainty in this matter would have required a large amount of archival research.

Here we must emphasize that attempts to understand the motivations of Piasecki and his people are not an attempt to rehabilitate them or their “anti-Zionist” propaganda, as Kunicki probably feared and which was indeed nasty. We should note, however, that even Kunicki noticed the difference between the punditry of PAX and the primitive propaganda of the Moczarite Chamokomuna (“boorish communists”).

Everything else is in accordance with the author’s liberal paradigm. For example, Kunicki resents the fact that Primate Wyszyński did not protest against the “anti-Zionist” campaign (pg. 152). It might be worth asking, however, why would the Cardinal do so given that none of the persecuted Puławian communists had been open critics of any of the communist crimes—including repression against the Church and Wyszyński himself; against Polish patriots; against the defenders of the Cross in Nowa Huta; against the traders and entrepreneurs during the “battle for commerce”; against peasants resisting collectivization; or against Poles in general? Why would the Primate wish to involve himself in the internal conflicts within the Communist Party? In addition, a stand with one of the struggling Party factions would not have been a comfortable position for the leader of the Polish Church. Furthermore, the faction which Kunicki believes the Church should have defended would also have felt discomfort, becoming—in the narrative of Moczarite propaganda—not only agents of Israel, but also of the Vatican. In spite of this, the Primate was not indifferent, but actually defended the Jews.20

Further, Kunicki claims that among the 13,000 “March émigrés” there were many people of culture and science. For a proper balance, it might be appropriate to also mention how many among them had also been functionaries of the communist secret police, rubber stamp judges, rabid regime prosecutors, Party apparatchiks, propagandists, i.e. people who made invaluable

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20 According to Aleksander Szurek—a Jewish communist, and, during the Spanish Civil War of 1939-1939, a participant in the red International Brigades—the role of the Catholic Church during the March Purge was invaluable: “Thanks to the fact that Cardinal Wyszyński headed the political opposition, the Polish Church was the only organized political force capable of preventing the bloody pogrom in Poland in 1968-1969 carried out by the Party and Security.” Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Zagrabiona pamięć: Wojna w Hiszpanii (1936–1939) [Stolen memory: The war in Spain] (Warsaw: Fronda, 2010), pg. 146.
contributions to the imposition of the communist system on Poland. Such a juxtaposition would offer us a more accurate images of Poland’s real and alleged losses during the 1968 purge.

In general, PAX was not rewarded for its participation in the power struggle within the Party on the side of Gomułka and Moczar. Piasecki’s hopes for change and the establishment of a Catholic party failed to materialize and ended in a fiasco. During the end of the Gomułka period (1968 – 1970) and the entirety of the Gierek decade (1970 – 1980), PAX remained on the political scene merely as a frozen organization playing no significant role within the system. Piasecki’s death did not change this trajectory, for PAX survived until the late 1980s through sheer force of inertia, but died along with communism-proper. This contrasted with the fate of the liberal Catholic outlets—Znak, Więź, and Tygodnik Powszechny—which had no problems adjusting to post-communism.

The author also committed quite a few less serious errors. For instance, Klaudiusz Hrabyk was never a member of the Nationalist Radical Camp (ONR), as Kunicki claims (pg. 225, note 64). When writing about the Committee to Defend Workers (KOR), he fails to mention that among its co-founders were Antoni Macierewicz and Piotr Naimski, who are currently conservative parliamentarians in Poland (pg. 173). On page 232 (note 22) Kunicki refers to the former editor-in-chief of the respected daily Rzeczpospolita [The Republic], Paweł Lisicki, as “Lisiecki.” In several places, the author’s translation of Polish terms into English leaves much to be desired. For instance, he translates “Wydział Prawa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego” as the “Department of Legal Studies at Warsaw University,” whereas the “Law Faculty” or “Law School at Warsaw University” would be more accurate (pg. 15). He also translates “korporacje studenckie,” i.e. “student fraternities” as “student corporations” (pg. 87).

We can also question at least one of the titles of the sub-chapters (pg. 94), which Kunicki titled “The Broker,” i.e. an intermediary facilitating deals, whereas the content of the chapter suggests that he was referring to the “Messenger Boy.” On page 135, the author erroneously translated a quote from Marcin Zaremba’s work. When writing about anti-Germanism in the People’s Republic, he writes that it was “the only allowable manifestation of popular nationalism” (“tylko dopuszczalny przejaw popularnego nacjonalizmu”), but—since Zaremba used the term “usankcjonowany” instead of “dopuszczalny”—which would more correctly translate into the “only sanctioned manifestation of popular nationalism.”

The literature and the sources

Professor Neal Pease, in his review of Kunicki’s book for the Cosmopolitan Review, asserted that Between the Brown and the Red was written based on a wealth of archival sources and publications. However, even a very cursory glance at the book’s bibliography leads one to the opposite conclusion. While the author emphasizes twice in his introduction that he relied on the collections of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) and other Polish archives, but closer
scrutiny of his footnotes will show that his work is based primarily on archival documents. Many archival citations in the footnotes mention newspapers and other printed sources, as opposed to archival documentation (e.g. secret police dossiers, reports of state agencies, etc.). Thus, it seems that the author did not devote much time to archival research, basing himself instead on a randomly selected and limited collection of documents that is full of lacunae and cannot form a basis for scholarly conclusions.

Among the documents cited in the book there is nothing groundbreaking, nor are there any new findings of even secondary importance. The author’s research into primary sources on the history of the Polish nationalist movement before, during, and after the Second World War is also shockingly insufficient. There are no traces of, for example, the wartime memoirs of Marek Kolendo, Na szlaku imperium: Zapiski okupacyjne [On the imperial path: Occupation-era notes] (Warsaw: Instytut Norwida, 2004), or Ryszard Reiß’s Śmierć byla blisko [Death was close by] (Warsaw: self-published, 1998), or even the second volume of the latter’s memoirs, Gra o życie [The game for survival]. Kunicki’s book also lacks any references to the articles of Jerzy Hagmajer and other associates of Piasecki, in addition to collections of sources published after 1989 on the history of the independentist underground, the communist terror apparatus, or the Catholic Church.

Some shortcomings are so symptomatic that we can only attribute them to the author’s lack of interest in serious scholarly research. Kunicki refers to a report on the conversations between Piasecki and Soviet general Ivan Serov of Smersh, a document edited by Bartłomiej Noszczak and Romuald Niedzielko in the journal Przegląd Powszechny on 5 May 2006. This is an absolutely essential document to understand Piasecki’s actions at this crucial moment in his life. Yet, Kunicki did not bother to consult another version of the same document, co-edited by Professors Andrzej Friszke and Andrzej Paczkowski and published in Tygodnik Powszechny.21 Perhaps it would have been worthwhile to compare the views of different historians? In fact, Kunicki should have also read the original document.

The quantity of secondary sources in Kunicki’s bibliography—numbering 141 items—is quite insufficient given the scope of his topic. As mentioned above, Polish historiography has made great progress within the subject area that the book addresses. Noticeable strides were made even after the year 2000, which bore fruit in a plethora of studies on both the interwar period and the era of communist occupation. Thus, one can have numerous reservations as to the author’s selection of sources, which appears rather arbitrary and not very well thought out. The bibliography is dominated by English-language works that are often only loosely or not at all

21 Andrzej Friszke and Andrzej Paczkowski, “«Chcę współpracować»: Bolesława Piaseckiego memoriały więzienne” [“‘I want to collaborate’: Boleslaw Piasecki’s prison memoirs”], Tygodnik Powszechny, 12 April 2007.
relevant to the topic at hand. Polish-language works are few; most of these were published before 1989, and there are almost no books published in Polish after the year 2000.

An analysis of the body of the text and the footnotes demonstrates that the biography is based mostly on the monographs of other authors, and even these are not that numerous. Of these, the vast majority of Polish-language works was published under communism. Although works published before 1989 dominate, it would seem that the state of research done in free Poland on Kunicki’s topic in the past two and a half decades, which has conquered great swaths of new ground, was largely unnoticed by the author. It is, of course, impossible to enumerate all of the monographs ignored by Kunicki, so we will list only a few.

Very many essential books relevant to the interwar period—and especially the activities of “Falanga,” which Kunicki describes so sparingly—include: Andrzej Jaszczał’s *Ewolucja ideowa Bolesława Piaseckiego 1932–1956* [Piasecki’s ideological evolution] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2005); the biography of Wojciech Wasiutyński, one of Piasecki’s closest associates at the time, written by Wojciech Turek, *Arka przymierza: Wojciech Wasiutyński 1910–1994: Biografia polityczna* [The Arc of the Covenant] (Kракów: Arcana, 2008); or the document collection “Życie i śmierć dla narodu!”: *Antologia myśli narodowo-radykalnej z lat 30. XX w.* [Life and death for the nation!: An anthology of radical nationalist thought in the mid-1930s], co-edited by Patryk Tomaszewski and Arkadiusz Meller (Warsaw: Prohibita, 2011) [second corrected edition; first edition - Toruń: Biblioteka Historii i Polityki, 2009]; and a bevy of works by other authors: Maciej Urbanowski, Krzysztof Kawecki, Mariusz Bechta, Arkadiusz Meller, Miłosz Sosnowski, Remigiusz Broniarek, etc. In general, Kunicki’s bibliography on the Second Polish Republic is also missing a well-known biographical work by Piotr Cichoracki, *Droga ku anatemie: Waclaw Kostek Biernacki 1884–1957* [On the road to anathema] (Warsaw: IPN, 2009), and Janusz Mierzwa’s *Pułkownik Adam Koc: Biografia polityczna* [Colonel Adam Koc: A political biography] (Kракów: Historia Iagiellonica, 2006). There is no room to list scholarly articles missing from the bibliography of *Between the Brown and the Red*, but this seems to be a genre of academic literature particularly neglected by Mikołaj Kunicki.

The author also neglected the period of the Second World War, although—at least in this case—Polish-language sources predominate, albeit mostly ones published before 1990. One will not find Artur Paszko’s *O Katolickie Państwo Narodu Polskiego* [For the Catholic State of the Polish Nation] (Kракów: Nomos, 2002), the only lengthy publication on the ideological profile of post-ONR milieux, including the Confederation of the Nation. Works by Rafał Łętocha, Sylwester Fertacz, and Elżbieta Janicka are also missing. The bibliography on the Home Army in the Eastern Borderlands contained in the footnotes on page 205 is also dreadfully lacking. The author did not forget, however, to insert into his bibliography the infamous pamphlet, *Neighbors*, by Jan Tomasz Gross.
Although descriptions of earlier periods were characterized by great gaps in the bibliography, the postwar period is one large, gaping *lacuna*. One will neither find the works of historians—such as the late Paweł Wieczorkiewicz—who worked on syntheses of the communist period, nor those written by authors analyzing only the case of Piasecki, such as Piotr Gontarczyk and Jan Engelgard. Books on the history of the Catholic Church under communism in Poland are also missing. Since Piasecki functioned as a Catholic activist for several decades, perhaps it would have been worthwhile to consult the works by Jan Żaryn, which would have helped Kunicki understand that the Church was not an ethno-confessional organization and that the roots of its conflict with communism did not lie in nationalism. The same pertains to the foundational work by Bartłomiej Noszczak, *Polityka państwa wobec kościoła rzymskokatolickiego w Polsce w okresie internowania prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego 1953–1956* [The policy of the communist regime towards the Roman Catholic Church in Poland during the internment of Primate Stefan Wyszyński], which deals with the fate of the Church and PAX during Stalinism. The author also neglected the works of such historians as Jacek Żurek, Wiesław Jan Wysocki, Filip Musiał, Roman Graczyk, Antoni Dudek (aside from his biography of Piasecki), Roman Gryz, Andrzej Grajewski, Dominik Zamiatała, and many others. Since Kunicki’s book was published in 2012, we did not mention works published after 2010.

**Concluding remarks**

*Between the Brown and the Red* is not a contribution to the debate on Piasecki’s role in Poland’s politics or the history of PAX. It is much more reminiscent of a report by a communist political officer (*politruk*) discussing the dogmas of his own ideology. The author does not debate other scholars, and, in fact, his bibliographical *lacunae* make this impossible. He limits himself to presenting only a selected body of facts and interpreting them, nonchalantly disregarding anything other scholars may have said on the same subject. He has no interest in a professional exchange of arguments. Kunicki divides other authors into two groups based on non-scholarly criteria: he quotes, cites in footnotes, and includes in his bibliography those he agrees with while ignoring those he disagree with (i.e. the great majority), as if they didn’t exist. It seems that he utilizes only those sources which serve to support his thesis. He passes over debatable issues, which he apparently considers superfluous. He tailors his evidence to back a thesis he already formulated, rather than allowing evidence to lead him to a conclusion. Such an approach cannot be called serious history and possesses no scholarly value; it has much more in common with punditry or propaganda.

The above comments pertain only to the most serious errors. If not for limitations caused by a lack of room, a reviewer of Kunicki’s book might possibly voice reservations towards every paragraph of the work. *Between the Brown and the Red* is thus a very flawed as a scholarly monograph, and—given the state of research already done on the activism of Bolesław Piasecki, both before and during the war, and during the communist era—it is largely a regurgitative book written in a quite incompetent way. It resembles a student’s notebook than a serious scholarly
publication. Surprisingly, the author was actually granted a PhD on its basis. More recently, he was also hired as a professor at Oxford University. *O tempora, o mores!*