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AROUND “THE WATER BATTLE OF FRANKFURT” ON THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF THE POLISH FOOTBALL TEAM’S PERFORMANCE IN THE 1974 WORLD CUP

The Poland vs West Germany match played in the 10th FIFA World Cup in July 1974 in Frankfurt am Main, frequently called “the Water Battle of Frankfurt”, plays a special role in the Poles’ collective football and historical memories. In this respect, it can only be equalled by Poland’s historic draw with England at Wembley Stadium in October 1973, which sent the Polish football team through to West Germany (FRG), to its first World Cup since 1938. The legend of “the victorious draw” turned into a myth in purely sports terms. The events around the Frankfurt game, in turn, became the basis for a myth with a strong political dimension. That myth was rooted in the political context of the Polish football team’s performance in the 1974 World Cup and was generated by the then communist government. The success of the team managed by head coach Kazimierz Górski was to serve current political purposes in Polish-West German relations. More importantly, though, it was designed to be politically exploited as part of the propaganda scheme called “the Second Poland”. That project was the flagship of the Polish communist regime, which was at the time headed by Edward Gierek, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR).

Poland’s most famous and best remembered football clash with Germany, which went down in Polish sports history, took place on July 3, 1974 in Frankfurt am Main in the presence of 62 thousand spectators. That game decided which of the two teams would advance to the World Cup final: the Poles needed a win while Germany could settle for a draw. As it turned out, the key player in the event at the Waldstadion was the weather, specifically a rainstorm which delayed the game scheduled to kick off at 4 pm by half an hour. When the storm stopped, the hosts tried to remove the water from the field, but to little effect. In the popular view in Poland, the waterlogged grass favoured the Germans, who could more efficiently resist Poland’s fast and creative efforts. As a result, ‘the white and reds’ lost 0:1.¹

¹ Interesting reasons for the poor state of the field were given by the then Poland’s attaché to the World Cup Organizing Committee, Henryk Loska: “At the beginning of the tournament, each country had to present its culture at the opening ceremony. There were Polish artists there. Maryla Rodowicz

What raised controversy in Poland were the reasons why the Germans refused to reschedule the game. Such a decision would have disturbed the previous arrangements, such as hotel bookings, tickets sold or TV broadcasts ordered. According to the Germans, there was no extra date available in the tight schedule of the 1974 World Cup. In Poland, those explanations were regarded as not very credible. Poles were convinced that the genuine reason for not rescheduling the game was the intention to give the German team an advantage due to the abnormal conditions on the field. Besides, according to football historian Andrzej Gowarzewski, “there were doubts about Austrian referee Erich Linemayer who spoke the same language as Poland’s opposition. Two Polish players, Deyna and Gadocha, remembered that the same official had cheated the Legia Warsaw team in its club game against Újpest FC in Budapest. The Górnik Zabrze players remembered that four years earlier Linemayer was a linesman during their Cup Winners’ Cup final match against Manchester City in Vienna (which they lost 1:2 – RJ)”². There were also rumours, which were soon denied in the press, that some of the German players tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs.³

This kind of atmosphere in Poland was generating an anti-German myth of ‘the Water Battle of Frankfurt’. Its followers could not accept the following facts: 1) that football is unpredictable and it cannot be assumed that in normal conditions the result would have been different, 2) that the criticisms by the Polish and world media came after the match had already been contested, and 3) that FIFA’s (the International Federation of Association Football) official report justified the referee’s decision.⁴ Instead, they assumed that the unsporting behaviour (in the organisational sense) of ‘bad’ Germans prevented the Polish team from winning the World Cup (objectively, in Polish football history, the 1974 team came closest to winning the trophy).⁵ At the same time, the Frankfurt game triggered another component of that myth: the conviction that Poles would never be able to beat real Germans (i.e. those from West Germany because East German citizens did not enjoy that status in Poland) in a competitive football match. Future football clashes between Poland and West Germany (and re-united Germany as well) seemed to support that point.

performed her famous hit »Futbol, futbol«. The ceremony took place at the Waldstadion and the jumping, dancing and all that commotion caused damage to the pitch. Unluckily, just before our game against Germany a downpour flooded the stadium. The pitch was so destroyed that the water had nowhere to drain.” Quoted after K. Apiecionek, *Mundial '74. Dogrywka*, Ożarów Mazowiecki 2012, pp. 121-122. This is how Poland’s coach, Kazimierz Górski, commented on the negative impact of the pitch on the final result: “We against the Germans, but for that water in Frankfurt... Now we can only speculate. I don’t know whether we would’ve won on a dry pitch, but we would’ve had better chances. We were the attacking side. They needed a draw because they had a better goal difference. The water prevented our efforts”. Quoted after: J. Szczerba, *Górski i Gmoch o kulisach mundialu - wywiad-rzeka*, October 16, 2003, <http://www.sport.pl/pilka/1,65029,1727340.html> (last accessed February 6, 2016).

² A. Gowarzewski, *Bialo-Czerwoni. Dzieje reprezentacji Polski (3) 1971-1980*, Encyklopedia Piłkarska Fuji, Vol. 16, Katowice 1996, p. 72.

³ *Kto to słyszał?*, Trybuna Ludu, No. 186, July 5, 1974, p. 10.

⁴ A. Gowarzewski, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁵ Cf. T. Urban, *Czarny orzeł, biały orzeł. Piłkarze w trybach polityki*, Katowice 2012, p. 209.

Did the communist regime favour the creation of that myth? It appears that its approach to that process was balanced. Even though the press was highly critical of the German organisers of the game, that criticism was not politically motivated.⁶ According to the decision-makers, the Polish footballers, having played very well in the previous games of the 1974 FIFA World Cup, and having advanced to the top four, achieved a success they themselves had not expected. That accomplishment was perceived by the communist regime not so much as a great sports achievement but as a propaganda success, also in the context of the new relations with the FRG which had been established not long before.

The early 1970s saw a breakthrough in the relations between Poland and West Germany. It was initiated on December 7, 1970 by signing the Treaty of Warsaw, which normalized the relations between the two countries and, most importantly, confirmed Poland's western border – along the Oder-Neisse line. That agreement was an essential component of West Germany's new eastern policy (*Ostpolitik*) launched in the late 1960s by Chancellor Willy Brandt and his ruling Social Democratic Party. The policy was a departure from the so-called Hallstein Doctrine. Under the new approach, it was believed that the normalisation of the relations with the Soviet Union and its satellite states would contribute to the future reunification of the two German states, which was a key issue in German politics. *Ostpolitik* was viewed favourably by the Soviet decision-makers, who were becoming less dogmatic in their approach. The Soviet leaders were eager to restrict their confrontational policy towards western countries, including West Germany with its burgeoning economy. Naturally, the Soviets had economic interests in mind. Thanks to 'the green light' from Moscow, Poland was also willing to normalise its relations with West Germany. The process was launched by the First Secretary of the PZPR Central Committee Władysław Gomułka, and, after his removal, was continued by his successor, Edward Gierek. Two highly important events occurred in 1972. First, the Polish Council of State and President of West Germany Gustav Heinemann simultaneously signed the treaty of normalisation on May 26. Then Warsaw and Bonn resumed diplomatic relations on September 13.⁷

⁶ Criticism was targeted at match organisers, "who normally pride themselves on the high technological developments in their country, but on that particular day, in front of an audience of one billion viewers worldwide, they demonstrated primitive solutions that were totally absurd. Like in a Chaplin comedy, the water was removed from the field area with two rollers. They could as well have done it with soup spoons to get the same result. It was only later, when fire engines arrived, that some of the water was removed, but one half of the pitch was left untouched." A. Jucewicz, *Niesłuszna decyzja...*, *Przegląd Sportowy* (the biggest Polish sports daily), No.134, July 5, 1974, p. 3. A less critical story about the background of the game was published in *Trybuna Ludu*, the propaganda outlet of the PZPR. *Pojedynek dwóch równorzędnych partnerów. Tomaszewski znów obronił rzut karny*, *Trybuna Ludu*, No. 185, July 4, 1974, p. 10.

⁷ For more details see E. Cziomer, *Historia Niemiec 1945–1991. Zarys rozwoju problemu niemieckiego od podziału do jedności*, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace z Nauk Politycznych*, 1992, Vol. 47, pp. 120-122 and 151.

The latter event coincided with a highly successful, both in sports and political (propaganda) terms, performance by Polish athletes at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, held between August 26 and September 11, 1972.⁸ Especially celebrated was the gold medal won by the Polish football team. The day of the victorious final game against Hungary (2:1), September 10, was officially declared the Footballer's Day and has since been celebrated annually. Under the decision by the Press Department of the PZPR Central Committee, *Pilka Nożna* [Football], a monthly magazine addressed to professionals was turned into a popular weekly targeting a broad range of fans.⁹ Two years later, West Germany was to host a far more important football tournament, the 10th FIFA World Cup.

Poland secured its place in that tournament after the surprise elimination of Wales and England (the England team's exit was a great shock). The authorities approached the pre-tournament arrangements very seriously; however, they failed to take care of some things properly. The inefficiency of the communist apparatus could be seen in this department as well. The first problem that came up was the improper (untimely) submission of the national team for the World Cup: the Polish Football Federation (PZPN) sent the registration form to FIFA by... regular mail, and not registered mail. PZPN President Jan Maj had to personally appeal to FIFA Secretary General to prevent embarrassment.¹⁰ However, there were a few good decisions: in May 1974 H. Loska and K. Górski went to Germany to select hotel accommodation in the Ruhr area for the prospective games in the second round of the tournament.¹¹ Also, the PZPN signed an 18-year agreement with Adidas for the provision of sports equipment for the national team.¹²

To prepare for the upcoming World Cup, in the spring of 1974, the Polish national team played a few exhibition matches with West German teams, which was yet another indicator of the new opening in the relations with West Germany. From 1973 onwards, sports contacts with the FRG increased, largely as a result of business considerations of Polish decision-makers. The West German side offered many financially rewarding invitations for Polish athletes to take part in various sports events, and this fact could not be ignored by the government.¹³ In February, the Polish na-

⁸ At the 1972 Munich Olympics Poland won 21 medals, including 7 gold, 5 silver and 9 bronze, and was ranked 7th in the unofficial medal count. Polish communists viewed this event in terms of the political competition between the Western and Eastern blocs. Moreover, it was emphasised that Munich was home to the headquarters of the anti-communist Radio Free Europe. In the symbolic dimension, the Polish athletes' successes on German soil coincided with another anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. A. Pasko, *Sport wyczynowy w polityce państwa 1944-1989*, Kraków 2012, p. 306ff.

⁹ S. Szczepłek, *Moja historia futbolu*, Vol. 2 – Polska, Warsaw 2007, p. 123.

¹⁰ Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN) [Archive of New Files], Polska Federacja Sportu (PFS) [Polish Sports Federation], File No. 4/71, *Poufna notatka w sprawie wyjaśnienia okoliczności związanych ze zgłoszeniem piłkarskiej reprezentacji Polski do Mistrzostw Świata 1974*, Sekretarz generalny PZPN Adam Konieczny do Prezesa Polskiej Federacji Sportu, Stanisława Nowosielskiego, 14.01.1974, k. 42.

¹¹ AAN, PFS, File No. 4/91, k. 756 and 767.

¹² A. Gowarzewski, *75 lat PZPN. Księga Jubileuszowa 1919-1994*, Encyklopedia Piłkarska Fuji, Vol. 12, Katowice 1994, p. 125.

¹³ A. Pasko, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

tional football team played an exhibition match against Schalke 04 (2:1) in Gelsenkirchen.¹⁴ On March 27, Poland faced another German club, Fortuna Düsseldorf (1:1), in Warsaw. The club's stay was entirely financed by the PZPN with the approval of the Head Commission for Physical Education and Tourism (GKKFiT) and the Polish Sports Federation (PFS).¹⁵ From April 12 to April 18, the Polish national team played exhibition matches in West Germany and Belgium. During that trip, the team stayed in Murrhardt near Stuttgart to get acquainted with its base camp selected by the PZPN for the upcoming World Cup. The trip was not successful in sports terms (Poland lost to VfB Stuttgart 1:4), and on top of that there were some organisational and logistics problems.¹⁶ However, it was financially rewarding, bringing 22,000 marks in income from the German sparring partner.¹⁷

The communist regime made a huge effort to mount a propaganda campaign around Poland's first World Cup qualification after World War II. In the run-up to the event, in Poland and West Germany, a broad range of actions were taken to promote the achievements of communist Poland. To this aim, the Organisation Department of the PZPR's Central Committee appointed a special section chaired by the Department's deputy head, Jan Pawlak. The section discussed a schedule of activities that was approved at a May 10, 1974 meeting.¹⁸ The schedule provided for the organisation of "cultural and

¹⁴ AAN, PFS, File No. 4/71, *Notatka służbowa dot. aranżacji towarzyskich międzynarodowych meczy dla Repr. Polski - realizacja planu przygotowań do M.S. wg. stanu na dzień 30.01.1974 r.*, k. 55; A. Gowarzewski, *Biało-Czerwon...*, p. 56.

¹⁵ The PZPN covered travel costs and a three-day stay for an approximately 20-man team of players, coaches and other officials. It also paid a 4,500-dollar honorarium for the German club. AAN, PFS, File No. 4/91, k. 1073-1075; also *Pierwsza próba*, Polska Kronika Filmowa (PKF) 13/74, ed. B, 2'.

¹⁶ The head of the team and PZPN deputy president, Wilhelm Bąk, summing up the trip, said: "It is not a good idea to arrange such tours in the build-up period. You constantly change game venues, you cannot use wellness facilities (like saunas), you cannot run good training sessions. Travel, match, travel, etc." However, he praised the accommodation facilities in Murrhardt. AAN, PFS, File No. 4/91, *Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu do Stuttgartu i Liege*, k. 920-923.

¹⁷ AAN, PFS, File No. 4/71, *Pismo PPISiT „Sports Tourist” dot. aranżacji międzynarodowego spotkania w piłce nożnej - pomiędzy Repr. Polski a drużyną klubową NRF - VfB Stuttgart 1893 EV*, k. 112-115. There were plans to play a few more test matches with West German club teams: in West Berlin or in Poland against Hertha BSC (March 27) or in Germany just before the World Cup with VfB Oldenburg (June 3 or 8.), HSV Hamburg, Arminia Bielefeld or 1. FC Nürnberg (June 10). For various reasons, these plans failed. AAN, PFS, File No. 4/71, *Notatka służbowa dot. aranżacji towarzyskich międzynarodowych meczy dla Repr. Polski - realizacja planu przygotowań do M.S. wg. stanu na dzień 30.01. oraz 12.03.1974 r.*, k. 55-58 and 92-95.

¹⁸ AAN, Główny Komitet Kultury Fizycznej i Turystyki [the Head Commission for Physical Education and Tourism] (GKKFiT), File No. 24/11, *Informacja dotycząca oprawy informacyjno-propagandowej udziału Polski w Mistrzostwach Świata w Piłce Nożnej w NRF, Zespół KC PZPR do spraw Propagandy na Zagranicę, 05.1974*, k. 38. The meeting was chaired by the First Deputy Head of the Department of Propaganda, the Press and Publications at the PZPR Central Committee, Marian Kruczkowski, and was attended by GKKFiT Head, Bolesław Kapitan, head of the working group for German affairs at the PZPR's Central Committee team for international propaganda Ryszard Wojna, and members of departments at the PZPR's Central Committee: from the Censorship Department - Edward Dębicki (in the actual document, his name is misspelled; he was also managing director of the Polish national football team! - R.J.), from

propaganda events” in West Germany, involving many state institutions and companies, such as: the Ministry of Culture and Art, the GKKFiT, the Pagart agency, the Chief Board of Motion Pictures, the Cepelia agency, the Coopexim company, the Desa auction house, the Ars Polona company, the RSW Prasa-Książka-Ruch company and the Orbis travel agency. The schedule included events organised primarily in Stuttgart and Frankfurt am Main, including performances by Polish artists (Maryla Rodowicz and the Ballet of the Grand Theatre in Warsaw) in the World Cup opening ceremony and during the World Cup itself. There were plans to organise Polish film screenings, exhibitions, and Polish products markets (including Polish cuisine). For propaganda reasons, of special importance for the decision-makers was the appearance of ‘official guests’ alongside Polish artists in a special show aired on the German ZDF public television channel on June 12, 1974. Three TV studios were to host top officials from the GKKFiT, PZPN, the national football team, and the Polish ambassador to the FRG. The whole undertaking was to be coordinated by the Radio and TV Committee in agreement with Department 4 of the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Culture and Art, the PZPN, and the Orbis travel agency. Polish state television was commissioned to broadcast the World Cup opening ceremony. Special criteria were set for media coverage of the event: all press, TV, radio, and Polish Press Agency (PAP) journalists and reporters were carefully selected. Their number was to shrink after Poland’s exit from the tournament. The national team’s spokesperson was appointed. Interestingly, it was even planned that if Poland made it to the World Cup final, a special train would be arranged to transport Polish fans to that event.¹⁹ As far as publications were concerned, the PZPN was instructed to issue a special folder about the Polish national football team in Polish, English and German. The “Piłka Nożna” weekly was supposed to publish a special issue on the World Cup with a circulation of 200,000 (including 5 thousand copies in German). The “Przegląd Sportowy” daily was instructed to publish a special guide on football²⁰. There were other publication plans: books *Sport w Polsce* [*Sports in Poland*] and *Wielki Finał* [*Big Final*] as well as press materials by the Polish Agency Interpress.

Successful implementation of so many activities required substantial funding. As agreed, it was supposed to come from the GKKFiT, which drew revenues from the Totalizator Sportowy, the state-owned lottery company.²¹

the International Department - Z. Niciński, from the Culture Department – J. Rudnicki, and a member of the ZdsPnZ Secretariat – J. Bauer. *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*. The media team was to be composed of 19 press journalists, 9 TV and 3 radio reporters. In addition, another 15 journalists were to be sent to Germany on special trips organised by the Juventur travel agency. If Poland was eliminated in the first round of the competition, the number of media representatives in Germany was to be limited to 8 press journalists, and TV, radio and PAP teams.

²⁰ AAN, GKKFiT, File No. 24/11, *Notatka w sprawie przygotowania organizacyjnego i propagandowego do Mistrzostw Świata w Piłce Nożnej, Monachium* [sic! – R.J.] 1974 r., May 17, 1974, k. 4-5. Moreover, there were a number of other materials and souvenirs available: special flyers (10,000 copies), posters of the Polish national team (30,000 copies), 1974 World Cup stickers, metal pins, pendants and pennants (ca. 7,000 copies). For foreign officials, the PZPN prepared special gifts: 100 porcelain plates featuring the federation’s logo, glass sets, and cufflinks. *Ibidem*.

²¹ AAN, GKKFiT, File No. 24/11, *Informacja dotycząca oprawy...*

On the day of the departure for Germany, the GKKFiT hosted a meeting of the Polish footballers and Poland’s political and sports authorities. The communists were represented by Zdzisław Żandarowski, a member of the Secretariat and head of the Education Department at the PZPR’s Central Committee while the sports decision-makers were represented by B. Kapitan and J. Maj. During the ceremony the footballers received official nominations as members of the national team for the 1974 FIFA World Cup and took a special oath. On behalf of the team, it was read out by midfielder Zygmunt Maszczyk:

As a member of the Polish football team for the 10th football World Cup, I pledge to make the most of my skills and sporting willpower to achieve the best result for our team, to perform the honourable duties with utmost commitment as a member of the national team, and, by participating in the World Cup, to proudly represent our country and the sports community of the Polish People’s Republic.²²

A well-known journalist, and a member of the team’s management staff at the World Cup, Stefan Grzegorzczak, in his propaganda publication (a World Cup diary), described the ceremony as a historic event: “Never before have Polish footballers been dubbed members of the national team in such a ceremonious way”²³. While he made a disclaimer that Poland had made only one World Cup appearance before, which was a long time ago (in the interwar period), these words indicated the significance of the event to the communist regime. Interestingly, in their speeches, the political decision-makers did not make any ideological references. They wished the footballers to pursue their ambitions in a way that would satisfy a great number of Polish fans. Head coach K. Górski and the team’s captain Kazimierz Deyna “thanked the party and state authorities for their help in the World Cup preparations and assured that the players would do their best to meet fans’ expectations”²⁴.

Behind the scenes, government representatives warned members of the Polish team traveling to Germany against the threat of provocation, e.g. by Radio Free Europe reporters.²⁵ The government also took precautions to prevent any team member from defecting to the West. For these reasons, closer attention was paid to Henryk Kasperczak, who had previously had contacts with West German citizens.²⁶ There were also suspicions about Robert Gadocha, who had been under surveillance by the Security Service (Służba Bezpieczeństwa – SB) at least since 1971 (for example, during the match against the FRG in October that year). The regime was concerned about the Polish left winger’s contacts with Kazimierz Herman, a member of President Mościcki’s guard before the war, based in Munich, who – according to the

²² *Spotkanie w GKKFiT z reprezentantami*, Przegląd Sportowy, No. 114, June 11, 1974, p. 2.

²³ S. Grzegorzczak, *Polska na X MŚ. Murrhardt – dzień po dniu*, Warszawa 1974, p. 3.

²⁴ *Spotkanie w GKKFiT...*

²⁵ T. Urban, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

²⁶ G. Majchrzak, *Futbol pod specjalnym nadzorem*, in: S. Ligarski, G. Majchrzak, (eds), *Nieczysta gra. Tajne służby a piłka nożna*, Chorzów 2012, p. 22.

Security Service – was involved with the West German intelligence services and Radio Free Europe. The Polish secret service was interested in Gadocha's contacts with representatives of western football clubs in which he wanted to continue his career.²⁷ The regime's concerns were practically resolved by sending a few incognito SB officers along with the sports officials. Their mission eventually proved effective: after the World Cup all team members returned to Poland.²⁸

The Polish team composed of 22 players and 19 officials flew from Okęcie Airport to West Germany on June 10, 1974.²⁹ Among the fans who showed up to say goodbye was another government representative, Deputy Prime Minister Józef Tejchma, who approached K. Deyna with an ambiguous declaration: "We are expecting your victories, but even if you lose, it won't be a disaster for us"³⁰. These words suggested that government representatives, just like most of the football analysts and fans, were not aware of the real value of the Polish team. Regarding Poland's World Cup performance, they did not know what they could expect. This was also the predominant tone in the Polish press. Unofficially, the authorities were concerned about the team's preparedness for the World Cup. As K. Górski recalled:

At that time I had lots of working meetings with the presidents of various institutions, ministers and 'comrades' from the PZPR Central Committee. They were all grouching around, as they say, with chips on their shoulders about everything. No one would've said anything to my face, but I sensed that they had a grudge against me that I hadn't prepared the team well, or that I hadn't appointed the right squad and stuff. Another complaint was that I didn't give a damn about the situation because my hands weren't shaking like theirs were.³¹

²⁷ The footballer and his family were under constant surveillance. SB officers checked their correspondence, followed their banking operations and built up a network of informers around them. Moreover, after 1974, the player was followed by the command of Section I of the Military Internal Service (WSW), which was tasked with the counterintelligence protection of military units, such as, for example, CWKS Legia Warsaw, the football club for which Gadocha played. The section opened a special Operational Observation Case code-named "Piłat" [Pilate], which was the player's nickname. Gadocha was also suspected of being involved with a gang that smuggled stolen cars from West Germany to Poland. Linked with this was the fact that during the 1974 World Cup, Gadocha bought a new BMW. M. Kwaśniak, *Transfer pod okiem bezpieki*, W Sieci Historii, No. 1, 2016, p. 77; G. Majchrzak, „Kto handluje, ten żyje”, *czyli sportowcy, przemytnicy i handlarze*, W Sieci Historii, No. 1, 2016, p. 59.

²⁸ For more on backstage details of SB activity at that time in footballers' memories, see: K. Apiecionek, *op. cit.*, s. 153-156.

²⁹ AAN, PFS, File No. 4/91, *Skład delegacji 1.06.1974*, k. 603. Among the players who did not make the final squad was Joachim Marx, a forward born in August 1944 in Gleiwitz (Gliwice), then Germany, and a gold medal winner in Munich. Despite having the "right" name from the communist perspective, he was not allowed to continue his international career due to his place of birth. Rumour had it that before the 1974 World Cup, the PZPR decision-makers came up with an idea that the Polish football team would be composed solely of players born in liberated communist Poland. J. Marx was the only top player who did not meet that criterion, and for that reason was ruled out of the final squad. G. Bębnik, P. Czado et al., *Górnoślązacy w polskiej i niemieckiej reprezentacji narodowej w piłce nożnej – wczoraj i dziś. Sport i polityka na Górnym Śląsku w XX wieku*, Gliwice-Opole 2006, p. 74. Cf. A. Gowarzewski, *Biało-Czerwoni...*, p. 61.

³⁰ *W otoczeniu wiernych kibiców. Ostatnie chwile na Okęciu*, Przegląd Sportowy, No. 114, June 11, 1974, p. 2.

³¹ Quoted after: J. Atlas, *Cyrk straceńców*, Piłka Nożna, No. 1, January 2, 2006, p. 9.

What epitomized that state of anxiety or even fear was the banner displayed at Okęcie Airport just before the Polish team's departure: "Don't fly anywhere. Don't embarrass us".³²

On landing at Stuttgart airport, the Poles were welcomed by the representatives of the local government, the World Cup Organising Committee, the German Football Association (*Deutsches Fussball Bund, DFB*), the Polish diaspora, and Stanisław Nowosielski, the PFS President. Then the Polish team travelled to its main World Cup base, the Hotel Sonne-Post in Murrhardt.³³ Situated not far away from Stuttgart in Baden-Württemberg, the town had a population of 12 thousand at the time and, according to media representatives, was similar to Zakopane, the Polish winter resort.³⁴ Murrhardt turned out very friendly to the Polish team during their whole stay in West Germany, which was frequently emphasised in the Polish media. The way the Polish team was welcomed by Murrhardt residents and Mayor Helmut Voest was well received by the Polish press, which quoted the mayor's welcome address. He said that it was a great honour for the town to host the Polish team and that "all residents wholeheartedly wished the Polish players greatest success"³⁵. In its commentary, the Polish Newsreel (PKF) focused on the advantages of hosting the Polish players for the local community: "The town of Murrhardt – its reputation is growing, as is our team's. [...] The police are protecting our boys from the insistent fans, but the residents of Murrhardt are showing affection for the Polish players. They are living through them, and in some ways they are living off them".³⁶ At the beginning of the World Cup, Mayor Vest organised in the local town hall a special exhibition called "Poland – country and people". It was an important event for the Polish authorities from the propaganda

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ D. Luliński, *Powitanie w Murrhardt*, Trybuna Ludu, No. 162, June 11, 1974, p. 10. With its nearly 300-year history, the hotel was not shortlisted by the World Cup Organizing Committee. However, it was recommended to the Polish team by the head coach of the 1954 World Cup winners, Josef Herberger, who used this centre while preparing his team for the tournament in Switzerland. K. Apiecionek, *op. cit.*, p. 48; M. Skórzewski, *Pierwsze 24 godziny w całkowitym spokoju*, Przegląd Sportowy, No. 115, June 12, 1974, p. 2. In Murrhardt, the entire hotel had been booked for the Polish team members, who were staying in 20 single and 15 double rooms, and had access to the sauna, tanning salon, indoor swimming pool, massage rooms, and leisure rooms. Just a kilometre away were a hard surface football field, a grass football field with artificial lightning and an indoor sports hall. D. Luliński, *Murrhardt czeka na Polaków*, Trybuna Ludu, No. 157, June 6, 1974, p. 10. As was often emphasised, the conditions for the Polish team were just "perfect" while for some of the Polish journalists they were too luxurious. S. Grzegorzcyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 4 and 6.

³⁴ M. Skórzewski, *Polska armada już w Murrhardt! Serdeczne powitanie w hotelu „Sonne Post”* [*Polish armada already in Murrhardt! A warm welcome at the Hotel Sonne Post*] Przegląd Sportowy, No. 114, June 11, 1974, p. 1. Worth noting is the front page of that day's issue of Przegląd Sportowy. The overly emotional headlines, like the above, are followed by a sizeable caricature at the bottom of the page featuring three Polish coaches leading mounted footballers armed with sabres, who look like light cavalry and setting out to conquer... West Germany? *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Mile życzenia dla polskiej drużyny od burmistrza Helmuta Voesta*, Przegląd Sportowy, No. 115, June 12, 1974, p. 2.

³⁶ *Prosto z Murrhardt*, PKF [Polish Newsreel] 27/74, ed. A, 2'10".

perspective. The exhibition was highly popular with visitors to Murrhardt, including members of the Polish diaspora from the Union of Poles from West Berlin.³⁷

Back then in Murrhardt, a new tradition was born: whenever the Polish team returned from their World Cup game venue, its members, as they were getting out of the Mercedes coach with the inscription “Polen”, were greeted by the town’s residents, and on many occasions by the town’s mayor as well. The owner of the Hotel Sonne-Post, Wilhelm Bofinger, and his family were awaiting their guests with a bottle of champagne. They were accompanied by members of the Polish local community³⁸, who sang *Sto lat* [*May you live a hundred years*], a traditional Polish song which is sung to express good wishes. The hotel was also visited by special guests. After Poland’s opening game against Argentina (3:2), the legendary German coach Sepp Herberger showed up to express congratulations³⁹ whereas before the match against Italy (2:1), the team had another prominent guest, Hans Filbinger, a CDU politician, who was Minister President of Baden-Württemberg.⁴⁰

There was also an unexpected visitor to Murrhardt, who wanted to meet with the Polish team. From Karlsruhe came Ernest Wilimowski, the most outstanding Polish player of the interwar period, and one of the best in Polish football history. He was the only footballer to have played for both Poland’s and Germany’s national teams. As in 1941 and 1942 he was capped a total of eight times for the Third Reich team, the post-war communist regime regarded him as a renegade and a traitor of the Polish nation, and, under censorship, his name was banned from official use in communist Poland. Wilimowski was denied entry to the hotel; however, he bumped into K. Górski, who admired his talent before the war as he watched him in action in Lvov whenever his local club Pogoń faced Ruch Chorzów, for which Wilimowski played. Many years later, Poland’s head coach said that there was hardly any interaction between them as he knew he was being observed by SB officers. Górski was to ask: “Mr. Wilimowski, if you didn’t do anything wrong, as you said, then why didn’t you come back to Poland, maybe not immediately, but after a while, and try to explain your behaviour and clear yourself of the charges? ‘I was scared’, replied Wilimowski”. Interestingly, a short time later, Wilimowski was among the DFB’s honorary guests at the West Germany vs. Poland game in Frankfurt, where he served as an interpreter during the meeting of DFB and PZPN officials.⁴¹

³⁷ S. Grzegorzczak, *op. cit.*, s. 10.

³⁸ A. Gowarzewski, *Biało-Czerwoni...*, p. 64; also J. Tomaszewski, *Czy mogłem zostać mistrzem świata... Kulisy reprezentacyjnej piłki*, Łódź 1991, p. 54ff.

³⁹ Also after the Argentina game, in nearby Stuttgart, the PZPN officials were enthusiastically greeted at a special World Cup gala. S. Grzegorzczak, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴⁰ The politician had lunch with members of the Polish team, recalling their successful performance at the Munich Olympics and their game against England at Wembley. He wished that the World Cup final was contested between West Germany and Poland. As a gift from the Polish team, he received an autographed ball. *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁴¹ Quoted after: R. Kołtoń, *Dwie ojczyzny Wilimowskiego*, May 3, 2009, <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/159651/Dwie-ojczyzny-Wilimowskiego/> (last accessed February 6, 2016); and T. Urban, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

Until today, the Polish team members have very positive memories of their stay in Murrhardt and say they felt at home there.⁴² K. Górski, who had a sceptical approach to Germans after his Nazi occupation experiences in Lvov, his hometown, said many years later that back in Murrhardt he had met "people who were completely different" from the ones he got to know during the war years or from the images of communist propaganda.⁴³ Also ahead of the West Germany vs. Poland game, the approach of Murrhardt residents was surprisingly ambiguous, as Polish footballers say. Grzegorz Lato recalled: "Before our game against Germany, the whole town was undecided about which team to support. The fans would hold Polish and German flags together." Lesław Ćmikiewicz added: "[...] They had a moment of doubt when we played Germany, but after our defeat, their conduct was excellent."⁴⁴

To symbolically honour the Murrhardt community for their warm approach to the Polish footballers in the 1974 World Cup, the Polish sports authorities invited the owner of the Hotel Sonne-Post, W. Bofinger, and his wife to Poland.⁴⁵

It can be assumed that the predominantly positive comments in Poland about the World Cup hosts reflected the slowly evolving approach to West Germany after the December 1970 détente in the Polish-West German relations. However, there were some exceptions. Before the Poland vs. Haiti game (7:0), the German tabloid "Bild" published an untrue story about suspicions of using performance-enhancing drugs by two Polish players: Antoni Szymanowski and Jan Domarski. In actuality, however, those suspicions concerned Haitian players. In response, the Polish press wrote about "the outrageous attack of Springer's *Bild Zeitung* on the Polish players" with overt political undertones.⁴⁶ Another case involved the *Przegląd Sportowy* daily which right after the start of the World Cup published a reader's opinion that proved to be in line with the editors' views. The reader was outraged by the fact that the Polish players were brandishing the logo of Adidas, the German manufacturer of the national team's sports gear. He asked:

⁴² According to the second coach of the national team, Andrzej Streljau, "The Boffinger family, the atmosphere, utmost pleasure." J. Tomaszewski said: "At first, it was just a kind of courtesy on the part of Germans – Some Polacks arrived, for no clear reason, but then those folks identified with us [...]." Quoted after: K. Apiecionek, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁴³ *Drużyna wszystkich Polaków*, An interview with Kazimierz Górski by Krzysztof Guzowski, *Piłka w grze* part 10, a supplement to Rzeczpospolita, January 9, 2006, p. 10.

⁴⁴ Quoted after: K. Apiecionek, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁴⁵ The Bofingers stayed in Poland from September 17 to 30, 1974, including five days in the Zakopane sports centre. Interestingly, only their stay in the Polish mountains was financed by the PFS while the other costs were covered by the guests themselves. AAN, PFS, File No. 4/91, k. 215.

⁴⁶ M. Skórzewski, *Nieudana prowokacja! Ordynarna napaść springerowskiego »Bild Zeitung« na polskich piłkarzy*, *Przegląd Sportowy*, No. 121, June 20, 1974, p. 6. The managing director of the Polish national team, E. Dębicki, said in connection with this case: "We are all aware that this is a coarse provocation. We have no illusions about the objectives that have motivated the authors to publish this nonsense in Axel Springer's daily, which focuses on attacking socialist countries." *Ibidem*.

Who do our players represent in West Germany? [...] Because we feel they represent neither us, nor our country or sport but the company whose outfits they are wearing. [...] Showing Polish footballers with huge trademarks on their chests on TV (and to the whole world) – I think this has gone too far and this is a misunderstanding.⁴⁷

Such critical voices did not, however, affect the increasingly favourable Polish attitude to the FRG. The images of Stuttgart and Murrhardt residents cheering for the Polish footballers clearly had an impact. These positive feelings also resulted from the prevailing spirit of optimism, which continued to grow as the Polish team recorded successive wins in the tournament. The World Cup was by far the number one event for Poles. This was manifested in various ways: deserted streets during TV broadcasts of Poland's games, thousands of congratulatory and motivational telegrams sent to Murrhardt by authorities at various levels, sports organisations, authority figures (e.g. violinist Wanda Wiłkomirska) and ordinary fans.⁴⁸ Interestingly, already after their second game in the tournament, the footballers, with the substantial help of other team members, also sent special postcards from Murrhardt to Poland "with best regards to the state and party authorities, sports organisations and clubs, social and political institutions, people who were involved in preparing the team". They often added the following: "We report that the task has been completed, we keep fighting!"⁴⁹

However, the most important telegram that was sent to the Polish team after five consecutive wins came from Edward Gierek and Piotr Jaroszewicz. In their congratulatory message, the First Secretary and the Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the successes of K. Górski's team. The leaders viewed them as an essential contribution to enhancing the reputation of Polish sports and of Poland as a country. They also wished the team further victories.⁵⁰ It seems that the telegram was deliberately sent on the eve of the last game in the second round of the tournament, in which Poland faced West Germany. On that very same day, the Polish team met with two officials who came from Warsaw: J. Pawlak and S. Nowosielski. They conveyed E. Gierek's regards and emphasised the political dimension of the game.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Kogo reprezentują*, *Przegląd Sportowy*, No. 117, June 15, 1974, p. 3.

⁴⁸ A. Gowarzewski, *Bialo-Czerwoni...*, p. 69. Some telegrams were hilarious in tone, such as the following sent from...Accra, the capital of Ghana to the GKKFiT president via the Polish embassy. Here is an extract: "We, the members and fans of the Brong Ahafo United Football Club, are praying for you to beat West Germany tomorrow and reach Munich. May the gods of Brong Ahafo in Ghana be on your side in your campaign to win the World Cup. We love you and we will be on your side, no matter whether you win or lose. We will not have anything to eat or drink until your victory. You are great and wonderful. We will follow in your footsteps. Ampofo Manuh, Managing Director, Brong Ahafo United Football Club - Sunyani, Ghana" [spelling corrected – R.J.]. Interestingly, the content of that telegram was published in two top Ghanaian dailies and one of the officials at the embassy in Accra even suggested to the decision-makers in Warsaw that they consider publishing it in the Polish press. AAN, GKKFiT, File No. 24/11, k. 29.

⁴⁹ S. Grzegorzczak, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁵⁰ *Gratulacje E. Gierka i P. Jaroszewicza dla polskiej drużyny*, *Przegląd Sportowy*, No. 131, July 2, 1974, p. 1.

⁵¹ S. Szczepłęk, *op. cit.*, p. 142. The same author mentions elsewhere that when S. Nowosielski arrived in Murrhardt, he was accompanied by B. Kapitan. Ahead of Poland's game against the FRG, they

After losing out to Germany in Frankfurt am Main, Poland beat Brazil 1:0 in the third place match. Among VIPs attending the game was US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.⁵² After the game, on the eve of the World Cup final, Germany's new chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, gave a formal banquet in the hotel *Bayerisches Hof* in Munich in honour of the top four teams, including Poland. During the ceremony, the Polish team heard many words of praise from German politicians, notably from the SPD members, such as Vice-President of the Bundestag Hermann Schmitt-Vockenhausen and Lord Mayor of Munich Georg Kronawitter. The Chair of the Bundestag's Legal Committee Adolf Müller-Emmert addressed a *Przegląd Sportowy* sportswriter with the following words: "Look how everybody likes the Polish players. Look how much good these humble men have done to promote Poland in our society. You have achieved a lot of good things through sport, and I am very happy for this." A similar opinion was voiced by a well-known German industrialist, Berthold Beitz, President of the Supervisory Board of the Krupp group.⁵³ The Polish team at the 1974 FIFA World Cup was also highly praised for its sports and organisational achievements by the World Cup Organising Committee.⁵⁴

Positive comments on the Polish national team in West Germany, some of which were published in the press, made the Polish ambassador to the FRG, Waclaw Piątkowski, express the following view:

Poland's qualification for the World Cup, its great performance in the tournament, its excellent sporting behaviour (runner-up in the fair play ranking), and its third place finish are not only synonymous with a great sporting achievement on a global scale, but are also of great permanent political significance to the activity of the Polish embassy in the FRG and to winning support for the process of normalising the Polish-West German relations. These achievements are also an effective contribution to the promotion of the Polish People's Republic to celebrate the 30th anniversary of its establishment. [...] It can be argued that football has served the Polish cause in West Germany.⁵⁵

The 1974 World Cup observers also stressed the non-sporting significance of the excellent performance by the Polish national football team. Stefan Szczepek, who was a *Piłka Nożna* correspondent at that tournament, wrote many years later:

were quoted to say the following to the team members: "Listen, all people in Poland are happy, they congratulate you because you did your best or even more. Comrade Gierek is also impressed by your performance. Even if you lose now, Poland will welcome you as heroes". Idem, *Deyna, Legia i tamte czasy*, Warsaw 2012, p. 188.

⁵² A. Jucewicz, *Głosy prasy RFN. 'Przyjechaliście się uczyć, wyjeżdżacie jako nauczyciele'*, *Przegląd Sportowy*, No. 137, July 8, 1974, p. 6.

⁵³ A. Jucewicz *Polonez na przyjęciu u kanclerza Schmidta*, *Przegląd Sportowy*, No. 137, July 8, 1974, p. 3.

⁵⁴ AAN, PFS, File No. 4/91, *Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu H. Loski na MŚ do RFN*, October 16, 1974, k. 589.

⁵⁵ Quoted after: P. Długołęcki, *Sport w służbie ojczyzny*, *Polityka*, No. 29, July 13-19, 2011, p. 50.

A small number of Polish fans came to Germany, and a smaller number came back. We left for a hostile country, and even though we did not see any Teutonic Knights on the streets, contrary to what we had been told, nor did we hear anyone say *raus* [get out] to us, we could feel the atmosphere of mutual suspicions. We felt like inferior people from the East, Polacks, who accidentally won the war. And it was only thanks to Kazimierz Górski and his men that we knew that we were by no means inferior.⁵⁶

According to S. Grzegorzcyk:

The Germans gave us a very warm reception. It was a little bit of a surprise for us because after all we came to a hostile country. Those of us who remembered the war, especially the Warsaw Uprising, had a fixed attitude towards Germans. It soon turned out, though, that they treated us in a very friendly manner. I remember a Polish woman, who spent the war years as a forced labourer in Germany, got married there and eventually settled down. We asked: "How come? After all of this what these Germans did to us ...", to which she replied: "Gentlemen, these people are no Hitlers like they used to be!"⁵⁷

A similar opinion was voiced by defender Władysław Żmuda:

(...) I remember the inscriptions 'Polen' and older Germans who bowed to us or even knelt down in front of us. Through sport, they developed respect for Poles. It was a shock for a 20-year-old like myself.⁵⁸

The communist authorities added a special political dimension to the success of the Polish footballers. To this aim, they carefully planned welcome ceremonies for "the heroes of Murrhardt". Their scenario was prepared by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the PZPR Warsaw Committee and the GKKFiT. On July 9, 1974, the Polish team returned to Poland on board a special plane Il-62 named *Mikołaj Kopernik* (that same plane crashed six years later near Warsaw). At Okęcie military airport, the silver medal winners⁵⁹, were welcomed by top party and state officials: Z. Żandarowski, J. Pawlak, B. Kapitan, Chairman of the General Council of the Federation of the Polish Youth Socialist Unions Stanisław Ciosek, Secretary of the PZPR's Provincial Committee Antoni Juniewicz and Mayor of Warsaw Jerzy Majewski. At the airport, the footballers were applauded by a specially selected group of Warsaw residents, who represented all of its districts, young people from the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP) and the Socialist Youth Union (ZMS), a group of well-known athletes appointed by the PFS, PZPN representatives and the footballers' families. Overall, the Polish team was welcomed by a crowd of approxi-

⁵⁶ S. Szczepłek, *Polak, Niemiec, Rzeczpospolita*, No. 138, July 16, 2006, p. 18.

⁵⁷ Quoted after: K. Apiecioneck, *op. cit.*, p. 142-143.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

⁵⁹ In line with the 1974 FIFA World Cup regulations, Poland as the third-placed team was awarded silver medals. The victorious West Germany received gold medals, the runner-up, the Netherlands, gold-plated medals while the fourth-placed team, Brazil, bronze medals. A. Gowarzewski, *Futbolowa wojna światów. Mistrzostwa świata 1930-1978*, Encyklopedia Piłkarska Fuji, Vol. 44, Katowice 2014, p. 264.

mately 3,000 people. All of them had received special passes and entry cards issued by the GKKFiT. That event was covered by 26 carefully selected media representatives from the press, TV, radio and the Polish Newsreel (PKF).⁶⁰

Among many words of thanks for Poland's spectacular performance in the World Cup there were some ideological references made by one of the state officials, J. Majewski. He said that "this success was possible thanks to the comprehensive development of the Polish People's Republic. This progress provided opportunities for doing sports, which are available not only to you, but also to broad sections of young people and the whole society".⁶¹

Moments later, tens of thousands of people from Warsaw and other places cheered the footballers as they travelled on an open-topped bus to the Solec hotel. The route included Trasa Łazienkowska [Łazienkowska Thoroughfare]⁶², a nearly completed flagship infrastructure project of the Gierek era. It needs to be stressed at this point that that gathering was a spontaneous response which in no way resembled the airport set-up staged by the authorities. Such mass enthusiasm in 1974 could only be compared to the atmosphere of the welcome ceremonies for Pope John Paul II, when he made pilgrimages to Poland several years later.

In the late afternoon, the Polish team members met with E. Gierek and P. Jaroszewicz at the headquarters of the PZPR's Central Committee. In his special address the First Secretary thanked the footballers and the coaches for "this wonderful gift which you offered to our socialist mother country". This way, he referred to the 30th anniversary of the proclamation of the PKWN Manifesto (the founding agreement of the Polish People's Republic), which fell on July 22. Gierek then went on to say that

[...] what you have done will have a significant impact on bringing all living members of the Polish diaspora closer to their old mother country. It will also bring our country closer to other nations. Our country has been providing enormous financial support for the development of sports. [...] We will try to turn your success, which is also our common national achievement, into a weapon that will allow us to bring up young people to be great patriots, who will bet set on a goal that our nation intends to achieve, and achieves it on a daily basis through its work.

⁶⁰ AAN, GKKFiT, File No. 24/11, *Scenariusz powitania reprezentacji piłkarskiej Mistrzostw Świata*, k. 19-22 and 27.

⁶¹ *Bohaterowie mistrzostw świata już w kraju. Serdeczne powitanie*, Trybuna Ludu, No. 191, July 10, 1974, p. 10. In accordance with the welcome ceremony scenario (a special location plan for that event had been developed), the Polish team received bunches of flowers and small gifts from the representatives of ZHP, ZMS and Warsaw's major companies. The footballers reciprocated with postcards and autographs. As the band performed the World Cup anthem, the players gave short interviews. Besides J. Majewski's address, short thank-you speeches were delivered by K. Górski, K. Deyna, G. Lato, J. Tomaszewski and A. Szarmach. The ceremony took 50-60 minutes as scheduled. AAN, GKKFiT, File No. 24/11, *Scenariusz...*, k. 20; *Gorące i kolorowe pierwsze powitanie*, Przegląd Sportowy, No. 139, July 10, 1974, p. 2.

⁶² The route ran along Żwirki i Wigury Avenue, Raclawicka Street, Odyńca Street, Puławska Street, Bagatela Street, Jerusalem Avenue and Agrykola Street. *Ibidem*, k. 22.

In response to that, K. Górski “emphasised that the team’s success would not have been possible without the deep involvement in sports movement from the party and state authorities”.⁶³

A few days later, the footballers and the coaches were received at the Belvedere palace by Chairman of the Council of State of the Polish People’s Republic Henryk Jabłoński, who awarded them state distinctions. K. Górski received the 2nd class Order of the Banner of Work while his assistants, Jacek Gmoch and Andrzej Strejlau, the team doctor, Janusz Garlicki, and the best players were awarded the Orders of Polonia Restituta. The other team members were honoured with the Gold Crosses of Merit.⁶⁴

Besides congratulations from the authorities and ordinary people, there were also financial rewards. The team members received prize money in Polish zlotys and US dollars as well as material prizes awarded by the clubs, regional branches of the PZPN, sports departments, and companies in which “the heroes of Murrhardt” were formally employed. Experts in the field say that it was then that the romantic ideals in Polish football were discarded. Playing for the country with the white eagle on the chest (then without a crown) ceased to be a value in its own right.⁶⁵ Under the ‘sham’ system of amateur football in communist Poland, money became the key value, and

⁶³ *I Sekretarz KC PZPR - Edward Gierek i Prezes Rady Ministrów - Piotr Jaroszewicz przyjęli srebrnych medalistów X piłkarskich mistrzostw świata; Nasi piłkarze gośćmi Komitetu Centralnego, Przegląd Sportowy, No. 139, July 10, 1974, pp. 1-2.* The meeting was attended by other top PZPR officials: member of the Politburo of the Central Committee Jan Szydłak, deputy member of the Politburo of the Central Committee Józef Kępa, Central Committee Secretary for press and propaganda Jerzy Łukaszewicz as well as Z. Żandarowski, B. Kapitan and S. Ciosek. Another meeting between Górski’s team and the party and state authorities took place in the evening of the same day in the village of Jabłonna (originally, it was scheduled to be held in the Foreign Ministry headquarters on Foksal Street). The ceremony was closed to the media. As midfielder Lesław Ćmikiewicz recalls, during the meeting “many great words were said. I think it was Gadocha’s wife [she used to work as personal secretary to the former Minister of the Interior, Mieczysław Moczar – R.J.] who started it out by saying that her father had been killed in the Dachau concentration camp and that she was very happy that the Polish had been so successful on German soil, where fascism was born.” According to the World Cup’s best striker, G. Lato, “thanks to these words, Robert Gadocha probably arranged himself a transfer to a western club.” Quoted after: K. Apiecionek, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-180; AAN, GKkFiT, File No. 24/11, *Scenariusz...*, k. 22. After the World Cup, the 28-year-old Legia Warsaw player was offered a lucrative deal to play for Bayern Munich. Despite the 1.8-million-Swiss franc transfer fee, the offer was not approved by the Polish authorities, which pointed to the provision under which a Polish footballer was allowed to sign a contract with a foreign club only after he had turned 30. However, that refusal was probably motivated by non-sporting reasons. As already mentioned, Gadocha was followed by the Polish secret services. The footballer’s conflict with Poland’s sports authorities was extensively covered by the western press, which was monitored by the PFS. AAN, PFS, File No. 4/71, *Tłumaczenie z jęz. francuskiego artykułu w „Le Mond” z 20.08.1974*, k. 177-179. Finally, R. Gadocha, as the first Polish player, was permitted to sign a deal with a western club, FC Nantes. The decision was probably endorsed by E. Gierek himself, who was known to be a Francophile. The contract, which stood only at 50 thousand dollars, could not be blocked by WSW officers. M. Kwaśniak, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁶⁴ *Przewodniczący Rady Państwa Henryk Jabłoński udekorował bohaterów X MŚw. wysokimi odznaczeniami państwowymi, Przegląd Sportowy, No. 144, July 16, 1974, pp. 1-2.*

⁶⁵ A. Gowarzewski, *Biało-Czerwoni...*, p. 76.

real money could be made only through a transfer to a foreign (western) club.⁶⁶ On the other hand, was there anything unusual about the approach of the excellent athletes?

The communist media provided extensive coverage of all events celebrating and honouring the silver medal winners. These were top news stories not only in the sports media but also in political media outlets. To capitalise on that success of Polish sport, a special rhymed slogan was coined and strongly promoted. It read: "Srebro nam niesiecie na XXX lecie" [You bring us silver for the 30th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic].⁶⁷ Similar goals were set for director Janusz Kidawa, who a year later made a feature-length documentary entitled *Polska gola!* [*Poland, score!*].⁶⁸ More light-hearted and subtle in tone, it presented social moods linked with Poland's performance in the 1974 World Cup from the regime's perspective. The documentary showed the Polish team's unexpected success as a key component in the process of constructing a Polish national community by the communists. This was very much in line with the way E. Gierek's regime wanted to politically capitalise not only on the silver medal won by the footballers, but on all successes of Polish athletes.

Poland's performance in the 1974 FIFA World Cup, a global sports event featuring the world's most popular sport, was of considerable political significance to E. Gierek's communist regime. This was reflected by the abiding interest of the decision-makers in the national team's preparation for the tournament and by a wide range of information and propaganda measures that were taken in connection with the event. The regime did not spare financial support for those undertakings knowing that Poland's World Cup qualification generated measurable financial profits and that in case of a good performance in the tournament, they were likely to increase.⁶⁹ How-

⁶⁶ At that time, Deputy Prime Minister Józef Tejchma proposed introducing a system of semi-professional football in Poland. However, the proposal was rejected. S. Szczepek, *Moja historia...*, p. 145.

⁶⁷ *Powitanie medalistów*, PKF [Polish Newsreel] 28/74, ed. B, 5'. A similar tone prevails in the news story published in the *Trybuna Ludu* daily entitled *Bohaterowie mistrzostw świata już w kraju. Serdeczne powitanie* [*The World Cup heroes back home. A warm welcome*]. *Trybuna Ludu*, No. 191, July 10, 1974, p. 10. The GKKFiT files contain an interesting untitled document by an unknown author, with no addressee, which was produced just after the World Cup. It describes the success of K. Górski's team against the broad historical background of Polish football. The document is not free from propaganda references, e.g. "third-place finish was a wonderful gift from the footballers to their country to celebrate the 30th anniversary of People's Poland". Another such example is the claim that the meetings between the state authorities representatives and the footballers after the successful World Cup "[...] have shown that sport in People's Poland is under constant and consistent care and attention". What is worth emphasising, though, that overall the document is a thorough and balanced description of Polish football history with no ideologically motivated criticisms of the interwar period. Probably for that reason the text was never made accessible to the public. AAN, GKKFiT, File No. 24/11, k. 6-11.

⁶⁸ *Polska gola!*, directed by J. Kidawa, Film Polski, 1975, 1h 13'.

⁶⁹ For its 1974 World Cup participation, Poland received 3 million West German marks. After cost deduction, the net earnings totaled 2.7 million marks. From the Polish authorities, the footballers and K. Górski received 190 thousand zlotys in prize money and 1,500 US dollars, paid not in cash, but into deposit accounts in passbooks. S. Szczepek, *Deyna...*, p. 196.

ever, ahead of that event, the outcome for the Polish team was a big question mark, which was a matter of constant concern among communist officials.

The success achieved by the Polish team (its third place finish), albeit unexpected, was effectively exploited by the Polish communists. First and foremost, it was used for propaganda purposes in Poland in the context of the 30th anniversary of the birth of the Polish People's Republic, and was regarded as yet another success of the 'new' Poland. Externally, the favourable atmosphere around Poland in the FRG after the Polish footballers' performance, could be exploited in the negotiations with the West German side on key political issues. It might be far-fetched to conclude that the Polish team's accomplishments resulted in the Polish government receiving loans from West Germany after signing a package of bilateral agreements in 1975-1976.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, it can be hypothesised that such sports achievements contributed to the creation of a positive image of Poland and enhancement of the Polish negotiating position.

Moreover, as a result of the Polish team's success in the FRG, the attitude of Germans towards Poles began to evolve more positively. This trend was well reflected by the enthusiastic approach of the residents of Murrhardt and Stuttgart towards K. Górski's men.⁷¹ Interestingly, West Germans also began to be perceived differently by ordinary Poles, who had so far been strongly exposed to the communist propaganda stories about Teutonic-Prussian-Nazi revanchism. A key role in that process was played by the 1974 World Cup participants and observers: the Polish players, coaches and media representatives.⁷²

The process of socio-political rapprochement with West Germany initiated by the Polish authorities and society was at the time at the emerging stage and was thus

⁷⁰ The agreements endorsed by E. Gierek and H. Schmidt stipulated that the Polish government would allow ca. 120-125 thousand people of German descent to migrate to the FRG within the following four years. Further migration was additionally approved in 1976. In return, the West German government agreed to sign an agreement on disability and accident insurances, under which it paid the Polish government a flat rate of 1.3 billion marks to meet Polish citizens' disability pension claims. Finally, the two sides reached a compromise on granting loans to Poland and signed an agreement on the development of economic cooperation as well as 14 agreements on the cooperation between Polish and West German companies. Cultural cooperation was intensified by promoting partnership agreements between cities and universities, academic exchanges, the work of the Polish-German forum, the youth forum. There were also talks on the revision of content in school history textbooks and on the cooperation of church and union organisations. E. Cziomer, *op. cit.*, p. 151; H.-A. Jacobsen, *Niemcy i Polska w latach 1949-1989. Stosunki pod znakiem konfrontacji i kooperacji*, in: *Zbliżenia-Annäherungen. Polacy i Niemcy 1945-1995*, Warsaw 1996, p. 89.

⁷¹ The views published in the West German press also helped trigger that process. According to T. Urban (*op. cit.*, p. 228), "in the eyes of some West German commentators, these young people [K. Górski's players - R. J.] added credibility to the policy of détente, which was pursued by the then West German government, and which focused on overcoming national prejudices".

⁷² This trend was confirmed by PZPR-commissioned classified surveys, according to which in 1969, 54% of Poles believed that Germany could start another war. By 1975, that percentage fell to 13%. *Ibidem*, p. 229.

susceptible to emotions of the moment.⁷³ They were exposed after the Frankfurt game, creating an anti-German myth of “the Water Battle of Frankfurt”. It resulted from a continuous deficit of trust towards Germans. However, it should also be pointed out that the Polish authorities refrained from overly critical comments on the actions taken by the organisers of the Poland vs. West Germany game, who struggled with disastrous weather conditions. It seems that over the years, the myth was losing its political appeal, and survived only among football fans, who were long awaiting successes of Polish footballers, for example in their clashes with the German teams. However, following Poland’s first ever win over the *Nationalmannschaft* in a Euro 2016 qualifier on October 11, 2014 in Warsaw, one of the components of this myth was eventually abandoned.

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ABSTRACT

The match between the national teams of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) during the 1974 FIFA World Cup in Frankfurt am Main is often called the “Water Battle of Frankfurt” and plays a significant role in the collective imagination of Poles and in their historical memory. In this respect, it could only be compared to the draw earned by the Polish footballers in their game against England at Wembley stadium in October 1973, which sent Poland through to its first World Cup since 1938, held in West Germany a year later.

The legend of the “victorious draw” had become a myth only in sports terms while the Frankfurt game also carried political connotations. The latter were strongly connected to the political context of the Polish performance at the 1974 FIFA World Cup, created by the communist government of that time.

The success achieved by Kazimierz Górski’s team was politically capitalised by the then leader of Poland’s ruling communist party (PZPR) Edward Gierek and his associates. This was done on the one hand to implement a crucial domestic propaganda project, but on the other hand to enhance the pursuit of current political goals in relations with the FRG.

⁷³ In the sphere of politics, the Polish communist government was particularly distrustful of its West German partner after a 1973 ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court, confirmed two years later, which upheld the existence of the German Reich within its 1937 borders. That judgment was regarded by the communists as a manifestation of “legal aggression”. H.-A. Jacobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

