

# Lysenkoist Propaganda in *Trybuna Ludu*

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The press was an important part of the front in the ideological struggle of the Communist party in Poland during the Stalinist period. A qualitative content analysis of articles relating to Lysenkoism appearing in the official daily newspaper of the Polish United Workers' Party (Communist party), *Trybuna Ludu* [Tribune of the People], and its predecessors *Głos Ludu* [Voice of the People] and *Robotnik* [The Worker], is presented. In 1948–1956, at least 125 articles on Lysenkoism were published. Their subject matter reflected the successive stages of Lysenkoist propaganda. The aim of this study is to show the dynamics of the presentation of Lysenkoism by official press organs of the Communist party in Poland, and to analyze the content of published articles, thus enabling the precise correlation of Lysenkoism in Poland with political events. As soon as the faction of orthodox Stalinists came to power, articles related to Lysenkoism began to appear on the pages of the official organ of the Communist party. This fact uniquely connects Lysenkoism with the Polish political situation: the victory of the pro-Moscow faction in the apparatus of the Polish Workers' Party was the most important determinant of the appearance of Lysenkoism in Poland. Similarly, the disappearance of Lysenkoism as a topic from *Trybuna Ludu* is also correlated with political events: the rapid loss of political power by the pro-Moscow Stalinist faction.

**Keywords:** Lysenkoism, Poland, *Tribuna Ludu*.

During the Stalinist period, the mass media, mainly the press, was “an important part of the front in the ideological struggle” of the Communist party in Poland (Petrušewicz, 1949, p. 10–11, for wider study see also: Kozieł, 1991). The purpose of this article is a qualitative content analysis, in terms of Lysenkoism, of the official daily newspaper of the Polish United Workers' Party (Communist party) which was *Trybuna Ludu* [Tribune of the People]. The direct predecessors of *Trybuna Ludu*, namely *Robotnik* [The Worker] and *Głos Ludu* [Voice of the People], were also incorporated into the present research.

Biological and agricultural ideas created by Trofim D. Lysenko (1898–1976) were then called “Michurinism”, “theory of Michurin-Lysenko”, “new biology”, “creative Soviet Darwinism” etc. Only after the fall of Lysenko, his “theories” were called Lysenkoism<sup>6</sup>. In its developed form Lysenkoism was to be a Soviet modern evolutionary theory which formulates — from point of view of all previous output of biology and agricultural praxis, and basing on philosophy of dialectical materialism — problem of development of living matter, laws govern with the development, and regularities which rule of coming into being biological species and transforming of these species. The main assumptions of Lysenkoism were as follows: species is a biological unit which objective exists, species as a whole conducts a struggle for survival, a source of variability and inheritance is a dialectic unity of conflicts between an

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<sup>6</sup> The term ‘Lysenkoism’, coined as a designation for the Lysenko affair immediately following its conclusion, is used in this article in accordance with the meaning given to it by international studies, the results of which were presented, *inter alia*, at international congresses of the history of science in Beijing and Manchester and at international Lysenkoism workshops in New York and Vienna, with the participation of leading researchers on this topic such as Nikolai L. Kremontsov, William deJong-Lambert, Nils Roll-Hansen and others.

organism and conditions of its existence that are obtained by the organism from its environment, variability of an organism is adequate to conditions of its existence, characters acquired by organism during its lifetime are inherited, evolution is a chain of fluctuational, qualitative transformations that are conditioned by accumulating of quantitative changes in species (Köhler, 2009, p. 45). At its August 1948 session, the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VASHNiL) adopted Lysenkoism as the only correct theory in biological and agricultural sciences as practiced in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The resolution ended a period of disputes lasting over a decade between Lysenko and his supporters on one hand and opponents (i. e. supporters of the existing study of genetics and biology based thereon) on the other. For 16 years, Lysenkoism became a component of Stalinist ideology and the official direction of science in the USSR. Even before World War II, the “new biology” had crossed the borders of the USSR. In some countries, e. g. in Japan, it had been known as early as the late 1930s. In Poland, Lysenkoism was officially presented for the first time on 30 March 1949 at a major conference of biologists in Warsaw. Scientists in Poland, in contrast to the Soviet Union, did not have to completely subordinate themselves to ideology, and repression against nonconforming biologists was not as significant. In Poland, criticism of Lysenkoism began as early as late 1955, and by mid-1956 the “new biology” had been completely abandoned.

### **The political situation in Poland after World War II (to 1957)**

From 1945–1948, Poland was ruled by a coalition of two parties: the Polish Socialist Party and the Polish Workers’ Party. The former was established in 1892. Its goal was independence and socialism. After World War II, this party’s press organ, issued from 1944–1948, was *Robotnik* [The Worker] (Stefanowski, 1992, p. 21). The latter party, playing a more decisive role, was a communist, Marxist-Leninist party founded in 1942 in Warsaw by the so-called “initiative group”. This group consisted of activists trained in the Soviet Union, dropped by parachutes into German-occupied Poland (Gontarczyk, 2003, p. 82, 91–92). As demonstrated by recent research, many of these activists were members of the NKVD (the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union). The press organ of the party’s Central Committee in 1944–1948 was *Głos Ludu* [Voice of the People]. Until August 1948, Władysław Gomułka (1905–1982)<sup>7</sup> was the First Secretary of the Party. In August 1948, the faction of Stalin’s ardent supporters, headed by Bolesław Bierut (1892–1956)<sup>8</sup>, won control of the Polish Workers’ Party and ultimately seized power in the country. Gomułka’s

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<sup>7</sup> Władysław Gomułka in the interwar period was an activist in the Polish Communist Party and a graduate of the Lenin International Academy in Moscow. During World War II he joined the Polish Workers’ Party, in which he blazed a meteoric career. After 1944 he was a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party and Deputy Prime Minister of the Polish government. He opposed the one-party system in Poland.

<sup>8</sup> Bolesław Bierut, an NKVD agent trained in Moscow, was, beginning in August 1948, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party. From December 1948 until his death he was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party. From 1947–1952 he was president of Poland, and from 1952–1954, prime minister. In 1947–1954 he led the Commission of the Politburo of the Central Committee for the public security for (first) the Polish Workers’ Party, followed by the Polish United Workers’ Party, supervising Stalinist repressions in Poland.

faction, which formerly steered the party, was accused of rightist-nationalist deviation and was, with the consent of Stalin, ousted from power by the end of the month (Bierut, 1948; Karpiński, 1985, p. 164–165). In December 1948, the fate of the Polish Socialist Party was sealed by the so-called “Unification Congress,” during which the party formally merged with the communist Polish Workers’ Party, but in fact it had been absorbed by it. At this point the Polish United Workers’ Party was established. Following the unification of the two parties, their press organs were also combined, and from 16 December 1948 the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party published *Trybuna Ludu*. The tasks of the new journal were the following:

- 1) to present the position of the Communist party regarding events in the country and the international situation,
- 2) to publish materials and speeches of the Communist party,
- 3) to support propaganda activities of the Communist party in economic matters (such as 6-year plan, collectivization of agriculture),
- 4) information on personnel changes in the party and comment on its policies.

Bierut, after coming to power, started the implementation in Poland of totalitarian Stalinism, of which Lysenkoism was already a component (Davies, 2008, p. 1030–1033). In science, it manifested its “manual” (total) control through the rule in Poland of a communist Polish United Workers’ Party entirely dependent on the Kremlin<sup>9</sup>. The Communist party, wishing to direct science, actually did so through studies, organization, personnel policy and the whole front of the ideological struggle in journalism, radio, and education (Köhler, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2013, 2014).

### Bibliographic basis of this study

While conducting research for this paper, all postwar issues of *Robotnik* and *Głos Ludu* (until these papers were discontinued) were consulted, along with all numbers of *Trybuna Ludu* from the years 1948–1957. For the purposes of this paper the broadest definition of Lysenkoism-related articles was adopted. Thus the scope of interest included not only articles about the lives and activities of Michurin and Lysenko themselves, but also about other leading figures of “the new Soviet biology” such as Lepeshinskaya or Boshyan. Articles falling within the scope of this study also included: works describing the theoretical assumptions of Lysenkoism and its successive modifications/innovations, explaining the reactionary character of Western genetics (and contrasting to it the progressive “creative Darwinism”) and its importance for imperialism, indicating the enormous positive results of methods proposed by Lysenko for the Soviet Union’s agriculture and economics, reporting on Michurinism studies and their results in the USSR and Poland, the Michurin movement in Poland, conferences, at which the principles of Lysenkoism were lectured on, and conferences on various branches of biology introducing “new genetics”, and even on individual issues.

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<sup>9</sup>This “manual” (total) control over science was also spoken of at a conference of biologists organized by the editorial team magazine “Po Prostu” on 17 April 1956 (Anonym, 1957; Chałasiński, 1957, p. 9, 42; Petruszewicz, Michajłow, 1955, p. 737, 740).

## Qualitative content analysis of Lysenkoist issues in Trybuna Ludu and its predecessors

In the years 1945–1947 not even a single article about Trofim Lysenko, his achievements, the “new genetics” or related issues appeared in *Głos Ludu*. The year 1948 was particularly important for the establishment of Lysenkoism as the only acceptable direction in Soviet biology. In the Soviet Union, very significant events for the further development of Lysenkoism took place. Extensive discussion, started after World War II by Lysenko’s opponents, was conducted both in the USSR Academy of Sciences and other scientific institutions. This debate reached its peak in April 1948. As part of his defense, Lysenko used his personal contacts with Stalin, whom he extensively informed both on his own views and on the “damage” caused by “Mendelism-Morganism,” or traditional genetics. Until that point, Stalin had been an observer in the clash between Lysenkoists and geneticists. In May 1948, he became a player, and a principal one. In May 1948, the Political Bureau of the VCP(b) discussed “the Lysenko affair”. Stalin suddenly supported Lysenko<sup>10</sup> and ordered him to prepare a report “On the situation in Soviet biology”. The report was to be delivered during the summer session of VASKhNIL. Lysenko prepared the report and sent it to Stalin, who personally made numerous improvements and changes in the text. The famous VASKhNIL session was held from 31 July to 7 August 1948 in Moscow. Lysenko presented a paper which was known to have the approval of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)<sup>11</sup>. As a result of the VASKhNIL session, Lysenkoism became the only officially sanctioned direction of not only Soviet genetics, but Soviet biology as a whole. Shortly after the August session of VASKhNIL, a campaign “on the Michurin biology” swept through Soviet institutes connected not only with biology, but also with medicine, pedagogy, psychology and even linguistics. Everywhere it was declared that the studies at the given institution were “the quintessence of Michurinism”. In less than a month after the VASKhNIL session, the Presidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences dissolved all scientific institutions dealing with genetics. This area was completely forbidden to be taught. Books on genetics “disappeared” (i. e., were removed) from bookstores and libraries. At universities and research institutes related to microbiology, histopathology, animal husbandry, veterinary medicine or psychiatry, the machinery of staff verification was started. Special committees were created to disclose “Mendel-Morgan deviations” by individual employees of these institutions.

In October 1948, Stalin, without the benefit of any preliminary findings, announced a “plan of transformation of nature”. The thirty-year plan presupposed afforestation of large areas in the south of the USSR, in order to prevent the dry winds from the desert of Kazakhstan and steppes of Central Asia from penetrating deep inland. These forests were also to protect the fields. In addition, the plan introduced seven belts of state forest with a length of several thousand kilometers each, extending from north to south in the arid steppes of the Volga basin. Stalin’s belief that these oak forests could help to fertilize the Volga barren and salty, semiarid areas of the Caspian Sea was not based on any science. He simply expected that young trees would adjust more easily to a new environment if they grew there from the beginning, instead from

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<sup>10</sup> This could be because Stalin shared the same views on issues of inheritance as Lamarck. The decision might also have been affected by other factors in the era of the beginning of the Cold War, such as the desire to oppose Western science with Soviet science.

<sup>11</sup> Shorthand reports from this session were published. Soon they were also translated into Polish (Anonym, 1949b).

being replanted as near-adult seedlings. Once again, Lysenko acted to satisfy the expectations of the ruler. Following the indications of Stalin, Lysenko developed a method of nest-planting trees: young trees belonging to the same species planted in clusters, close together, were supposed to demonstrate altruism and to support each other, rather than competing. Lysenko's theoretical basis was his conviction concerning the absence of intraspecific competition (Koupryanov, 2011).

As can be seen, the year 1948 was full of important events for Lysenkoism in the Soviet Union. It was to be expected that those significant goings-on would be reflected in the content of the surveyed newspapers. Unfortunately, *Robotnik*, the press organ of the Polish Socialist Party, did not publish a single article on those consequential circumstances regarding Lysenkoism. It was hoped that at least *Głos Ludu*, the press organ of the Communist party, would contain up-to-date information about developments concerning Lysenkoism in the Soviet Union. But the results of our search in the *Głos Ludu* papers published in individual months of 1948 are as follows: January — no articles related to Lysenkoism, in February the same, and so on in March, April, May, June, July, even August and September. Clearly, the Communist party busy fighting among its internal factions which finally resulted in the Stalinists coming to power, did not even notice the August session of VASKhNIL, nor the enormous changes that were taking place in the biological sciences in the USSR. The first article on Lysenko was not published until 3 October 1948 on the occasion of his 50th birthday (Anonym, 1948).

From 7–11 October 1948, *Głos Ludu*, predecessor of *Trybuna Ludu*, published a series of five articles on the August session of VASKhNIL and a discussion on the biological sciences in the USSR (Michajłow, 1948). This series inaugurated Lysenkoist topics in this newspaper. In the final issue of *Głos Ludu*, published before its merger with *Robotnik* and the creation of *Trybuna Ludu*, the article “French scientists recognize the superiority of socialist science” (Daix, 1948) was published. It included a marginal discussion on the theories of Lysenko. The article was written specially for *Głos Ludu* by Pierre Daix, chief editor of the *Lettres Françaises*.

In 1949, thirty-two articles related to Lysenkoism were published. Among them, a large group was dedicated to the presentation of Michurin-Lysenko theory. For example: “Selected works of Michurin. The science of the transformation of nature” (Zieliński, 1949) offered information on Michurin and his theory based on the laws of materialistic development. “The creators of the new species” (Anonym, 1949c) informed that the Circle of Naturalists-Marxists at the editorial board of *Nowe Drogi* [New Roads], the ideological, theoretical and political monthly of the Central Committee of Polish United Workers' Party, organized an evening meeting devoted to discuss the situation in the biological sciences on the basis of the known resolutions of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), academician Lysenko, his theory, the inheritance of acquired characteristics, and imperialist genetics from Weissman to *Mein Kampf*. There were also: “New directions in biology. Lecture of prof. Jan Dembowski gathered leading representatives of Polish science” (Anonym, 1949a); five installments of the article “Michurin-Lysenko Theory” (Dembowski, 1949); and “Dialectical materialism and issues of Michurin biology,” an article translated from Russian, reporting that

the dialectical method shows that development is carried out in a dual form: evolutionary and revolutionary, writes Stalin. Darwin discovered only evolutionary development. The research of Michurin was a great step forward in the understanding of revolutionary changes (Stoletow, 1949).

Several articles were devoted to the giant achievements of the Soviet Union as a result of application of the theories of Michurin-Lysenko: “A man struggles with drought. Strategy for the great battles” (Życki, 1949) about the gigantic Stalinist plan, forest belts and ideas of the great Lysenko; “Siberia is transformed into a land of orchards and gardens” (Weber, 1949), whose title reveals the entire content of the article; and “The Soviet people change nature” (Wileński, 1949) about the great plan of Stalin and the discovery by Lysenko of the new nest method of planting trees.

The main topics in 1950 were the latest advances of the theory of Lysenko, i. e. non-cellular life forms by Lepeshinskaya, and Pavlovism. “Heredity and medicine” (Anonym, 1950b) argued that adoption of Lysenko’s theories entailed a revision of old views on diseases. “Medicine in the Soviet Union” (Hausmannowa, 1950) presented a progressive content, bold ideological struggle with all obscurantism, mysticism and backwardness. “Sensational discovery of Soviet science. On nature of viruses and bacteria” (Anonym, 1950g) was a short summary of Boshyan’s book. “New achievements of Soviet science. Non-cellular forms of life” (Anonym, 1950d) presented Lepeshinskaya herself and her works. “New perspectives for the development of Soviet physiology” (Biriukow, 1950) and “Application of Pavlov’s teaching in medicine” (Anonym, 1950j) informed about Pavlovism. “On biological species” (Łysenko, 1950) was a summary of Lysenko’s article in *Pravda* [Truth].

Still other articles presented the achievements of Soviet and Polish Lysenkoism-based science. “Grain harvest in the USSR exceeds the prewar level” (Anonym, 1950k) reported that a big role in achieving such great success was played by the leading Michurinist science, that the theory of gradual development of plants, developed by Lysenko, was a major step in solving the problem of increasing fertility, and that vernalization of seeds, crossing species, additional artificial pollination of plants, heating seeds and many other modern methods of agricultural technology were being used wholesale in Soviet agriculture. “New breeds of animal are created in the Soviet Union” (Anonym, 1950h) informed about positive results of application of Michurin’s theory in cattle breeding. “Attempts to grow lemons and pineapples in the State Farms” (Anonym, 1950f) described attempts to cultivate southern crops, such as pineapples, lemons and grapes on a large scale, initiated on the basis of Michurin’s theory and practice, which showed that southern plants could be moved to cooler areas, bringing positive results especially in the cultivation of lemons. “The amazing world (Impressions of staying in the USSR)” (Kamińska, 1950) informed readers about crops grown according to the instructions of Comrade Lysenko, and his correspondence with *kolkhozniks*<sup>12</sup>. The article also reported that

The great Soviet scientist Lysenko, a magician transforming nature, said on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his birth: I want two things: *not to* get away from the masses and not to become conceited. Thus says the great scholar, the pride of the Soviet Union, the pride of mankind. He and the working people who are building communism are one (Kamińska, 1950).

*Trybuna Ludu* reported on the return of a 230-member delegation of Polish peasants from the Soviet Union. At the head of the delegation were the deputy member of the Central Committee and the deputy minister of agriculture. Polish peasants visited the Experimental Base of the VASKhNIL in Gorki, which was headed by Trofim Lysenko. The peasant delegates, upon returning, were to tell Polish peasants about the excellent results achieved by the Soviet collective farmers who employed leading agricultural science in their work, namely, the teachings of Michurin and Lysenko. They were to show off the bushy ears of wheat which they had brought

<sup>12</sup> *Kolkhoznik* — worker in an agricultural production cooperative in the USSR.

with them, and they were to convince the Polish peasants that only a socialist economy would lead to wealth and cultural life in the villages (Anonym, 1950i).

In 1951, achievements of Lysenkoism in the Soviet Union were still being presented, for example: “Victory of great ideas” (Lepieszewska, 1951), in which Lepeshinskaya writes about her studies conducted in accordance with the principle of party science as marked out by Comrade Stalin; “The achievements of Michurin biology” (Sizow, 1951); “The Soviet method of rearing calves” (Anonym, 1951d) was about so-called “cold-reared calves,” which describes this method in Wilków State Farm: the calves are kept in the sheds until late winter. “Soviet man changes nature” (Dankiewicz, 1951) described Stalin’s plan to transform nature, including protecting forest belts. *Trybuna Ludu* published also an interview with Alexandr Nikolaevich Nesmeyanov, the president of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. The president declared, among other things, that “as a result of research on non-cellular forms of living beings made by the Stalin Prize winner prof. O. Lepeshinskaya, Soviet biologists have achieved a number of further successes” (Anonym, 1951c). The first results of the application of the Lysenko theory in Poland by Polish Michurinists were presented in a few articles, e.g.: “Michurinist school garden in Skierniewice” (Pieniżek, 1951), “Consultations of peasants– Michurinists” (Anonym, 1951a), “Harvests from experimental rice crop in State Farms near Zielona Góra” (Anonym, 1951e), and “Forest belts around Warsaw will protect the city from winds” (Anonym, 1951b).

The seventieth anniversary of the death of Charles Darwin, falling in 1952, was an opportunity to present Lysenkoism as a creative continuation of Darwinism:

The new Soviet biology created by Michurin and Lysenko was already consciously based on dialectical materialism. Qualitatively different from classical Darwinism, even if elevated to a much higher level of development and transformed from a descriptive, contemplative theory into a creative one, it nevertheless bears the name of creative Darwinism and it is to Darwin that it constantly refers (Petrusewicz, 1952).

Among the remaining 10 articles, several were related to Michurinist movement, for example: *Trybuna Ludu* informed its readers that the newly-established Polish Academy of Sciences (during its first General Assembly) had adopted the guidelines of a study plan which was particularly important for economic development and national culture; these guidelines concerned, among others, Michurinist movement (Anonym, 1952c), and windbreak forest belts (Anonym, 1952a). Achievements of the Michurinist movement were presented at an exhibition in the building of the Ministry of Agriculture:

Among the exhibits there are also exotic plants grown more and more frequently in the fields of State Farms, such as Abyssinian kale<sup>13</sup>, the Kazakh dandelion<sup>14</sup>, common perilla<sup>15</sup>, rice, etc. During the exhibition the Michurinist Circle at the Ministry of State Farms is organizing scientific readings about the works of Michurin-Lysenko and about the achievements of the Michurinist movement (Anonym, 1952e).

The eminent Polish fruit grower Szczepan A. Pieniżek, director of the newly created Institute of Fruit Growing, informed readers that

<sup>13</sup> *Crambe hispanica* L. subsp. *abyssinica* (Hochst. ex R. E. Fr.) Prina.

<sup>14</sup> *Taraxacum kok-saghyz* Rodin.

<sup>15</sup> *Perilla frutescens* (L.) Britton.

our new orchards, established on the basis of Michurin biology, can resist the whims of climate [...]. Soviet science showed us how to put the great scientific advances of Michurin into effect (Pieniążek, 1952).

Later, in an article about the Polish Academy of Sciences, readers were informed that

Polish scientists have already convinced themselves as well, with hundreds of examples from their own laboratories, of what beautiful results are being achieved through the use of methods, examples, and Soviet experience, how much effort was saved, how many errors avoided, thanks to the rejection of bourgeois theory (e. g. Virchowianism in medicine, Weismanism-Morganism in biology or resonance theory in chemistry), which was shattered by Soviet science (Anonym, 1952d).

Among twelve articles published in 1953 up to five of them concerned the Michurinist movement in Poland and its achievements, for example: “Teachers promote agricultural knowledge and popularize agricultural production cooperatives” (Anonym, 1953b) — about Michurinist gardens, “On the experimental fields of scientific-research stations” (Anonym, 1953a) — about cooperation between science and agriculture, including Michurinist circles; about new varieties of trees and flowers grown by Michurinists in Poland (Anonym, 1953c) and in the Soviet Union (Gorszkow, 1953). *Trybuna Ludu* reported on the front page (for unknown reasons, with a one-week delay) on the congress, which was attended by over 200 leading farmers of the three voivodeships of northeastern Poland (Białystok, Gdańsk and Olsztyn); also participating were assistants and professors of the Higher School of Agriculture in Olsztyn (Anonym, 1953e).

From the articles translated from Russian readers could learn about the bankruptcy of bourgeois pseudoscience (Nużdin, 1953), about subjectivist’s distortions in the natural sciences (Żdanow, 1953), and about Stalinist strips of forest (Oparin, 1953). A conference of young biologists in Kortowo was an opportunity for recalling the history and the main assumptions of Lysenko doctrines (Anonym, 1953d; Petruszewicz, 1953).

In 1954, only 4 articles can be linked to issues of Michurin-Lysenko theory. Two of them were related to the Michurist movement: “Agronomist Chojnacki, practician and experimenter” (Kuczyński, 1954a), about the square-nest method of planting potatoes, and “Michurinists from Biegonice” (Kuczyński, 1954b). One article reported on the opening of the Warsaw Pavlovism Experimental Centre for the testing of reflexes in animals (Anonym, 1954).

In 1955 the centenary of Michurin’s birth was celebrated. On this occasion commemorative articles were published: “I.V. Michurin” (Michajłow, 1955) and “Swordsman of scientific outlook in life sciences. The 100th anniversary of the birth of I.V. Michurin” (Rycyn, 1955). “Every peasant-Michurinist is a proponent of modern methods of work. National Congress of Michurinists and scientists” (Anonym, 1955b) reported that the centenary of the birth of the great Russian scientist Ivan Michurin was marked in Warsaw by a two-day National Congress of Michurinists and Scientists. It was attended by “over 400 leading farmer-practitioners, innovators of our agriculture, and leading representatives of agricultural science” (Anonym, 1955b). The congress was attended by the General Secretary of the Society of Friends of Michurin in France, Prof. Dr. Claude Charles Matron. The Michurinist movement continued to be an issue in other articles: “From the demonstration plots — on the fields. Before the national congress of Michurinists” (Anonym, 1955c); “A 92-year-old Michurinist” (Anonym, 1955a); “Garden of Friendship” (Błońska, 1955) — about a circle of young Michurinists in Czudec (a village in the voivodeship of Rzeszów), which planted 3-meter-high “rice” sorghum.



The feverish period of 1956<sup>16</sup> is also certainly reflected in *Trybuna Ludu*. Initially there were articles attempting to defend Lysenkoism, or at least some of its assumptions: “For — or against Lysenko” (Makarewicz, 1956). As early as June 1956, there were articles published by previous promoters of Lysenkoism in Poland possibly reflecting their abandonment of the “new biology” and return to genetics. For example “On the margins of the new edition of *The Origin of Species* by Darwin”, about the development of the theory of evolution by Michurin and the present fierce dispute over Michurinism as a scientific direction:

The Michurinist direction was widely developed by Lysenko and his followers. In the course of this development, beside legitimate theses, many interpretations based on too weak facts, facts often uncertain or even downright false, were promoted. [...] One can only conclude that in the absence of an atmosphere of criticism and clash of views, the arguments and views of Lysenko — a talented biologist-practician, with a record of serious theoretical and practical achievements — increasingly went astray. These were no longer occasional errors or mistakes. Errors or unfounded claims proliferated to finally create a system with many progressive moments and surprising accuracy, but also a false or unjustified system contrary in some places to Darwinism and Michurinism (Petrusewicz, 1956).

One of the psychiatrists who had previously promoted theories of Michurin-Lysenko in psychiatry offered a similar comment. In the article “What hinders the appropriate development of Pavlovism in Poland?” (Jus, 1956) the author identified the main errors committed during attempts to apply the “new biology” to science and medicine:

...noncompliance with the implacable struggle for scientific truth, accuracy and clarity of experimental work led, as was known, to the creation of experimental evidence "at all costs", and to the formulation of unfair ideas in biology (Boshyan's works, some works of Lepeshinskaya's and even Lysenko's). Petrification and "canonization" of theory in our medical science led to distortions of the science of Pavlov (Jus, 1956).

This is the last article in the *Trybuna Ludu*, in which Lysenko affair and related issues was mentioned.

### ***Analysis of the place and role of Lysenkoism in Trybuna Ludu***

In the years 1948–1956, at least 125 articles were published on Lysenkoism, on average one every two weeks (Fig. 1). *Trybuna Ludu*, like every newspaper, printed the most important news on the front page. Articles on Lysenkoism appeared the front page of *Trybuna Ludu* eight times (Fig. 2, 3). According to what criterion were they published on the front page? It can be assumed that this was a party criterion: if an article was linked with the names of activists from the upper levels of the party hierarchy, it appeared on the first page. Less important items were printed on the following pages. Articles on Lysenkoism were published mostly on the third page (42 times) (Fig. 4). The choice of this page for this subject may indicate a high (but not the highest) rank of priority granted to this subject by the Central Committee of the Communist

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<sup>16</sup> Discussions and demonstrations (Poznań June), which eventually led to the collapse of the Stalinists in Poland and Władysław Gomułka's return to power.

party. Most other articles appeared on pages 4 and 6. The complete lack of appearances on page 7 was because this page was devoted to sport. The occasional choice of page 5 for materials related to Lysenkoism is curious. Almost every edition of *Trybuna Ludu* consisted of eight pages. Only in rare cases was the number of pages increased. Therefore, it is not surprising that only once did a Lysenkoist topic appear on page 10 and not at all on page 9.

One of the main tasks of the articles published by *Trybuna Ludu* was to deepen, through appropriate selection of information, the transformation of the consciousness and ideological calculation of its readers. Under the influence of these readings, they were to acquire, then deepen, their materialist class-consciousness; the ideological outlook of the readers was to take

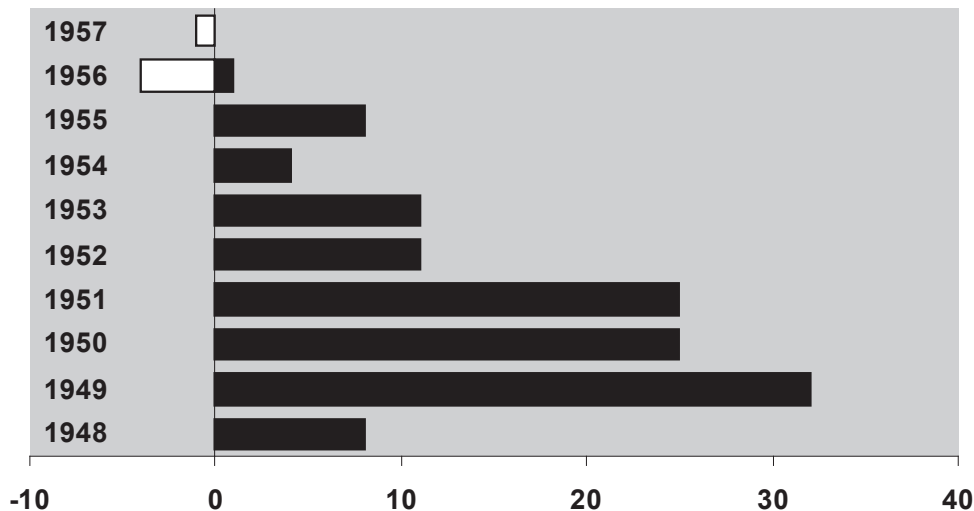


Fig. 1. Annual number of articles related to Lysenkoism in *Trybuna Ludu* (to 15 December 1948 *Głos Ludu*) — black bars. The number of articles opposed to Lysenkoism — white bars

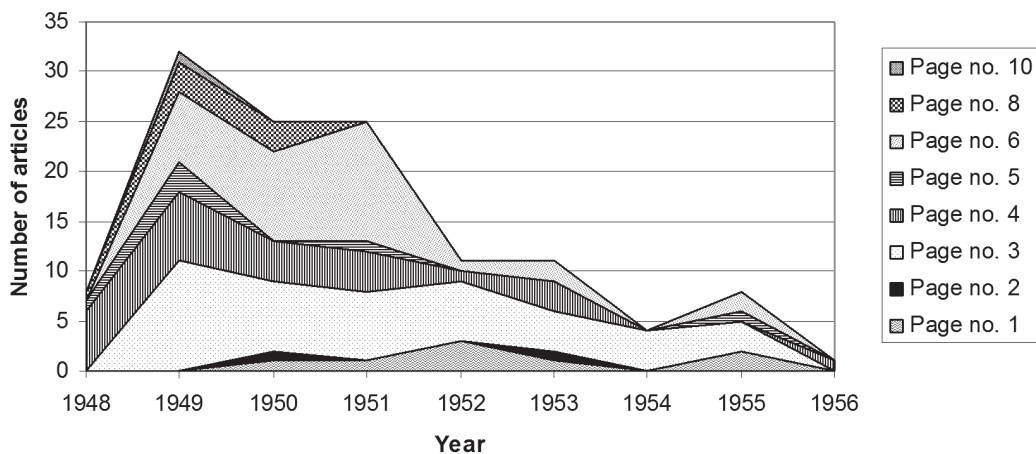


Fig. 2. Frequency of publication of articles related to Lysenkoism on each numbered page of *Trybuna Ludu* (to 15 December 1948 *Głos Ludu*)

on a Marxist character. To estrange them from the Western world and Western ideologies there were, among others, extensive coverage of strikes of the oppressed working class in Western countries, detailed reports of numerous trials of priests and spies, or information (often untrue) about hostile actions of the imperialists against socialist Poland, for example, infestation with the Colorado potato beetle (*Leptinotarsa decemlineata*) by Americans (e.g. Anonym, 1950e). These negative pieces of information were contrasted with news about the Soviet Union, the development of its industry, agriculture, and science, and its struggle for world peace.

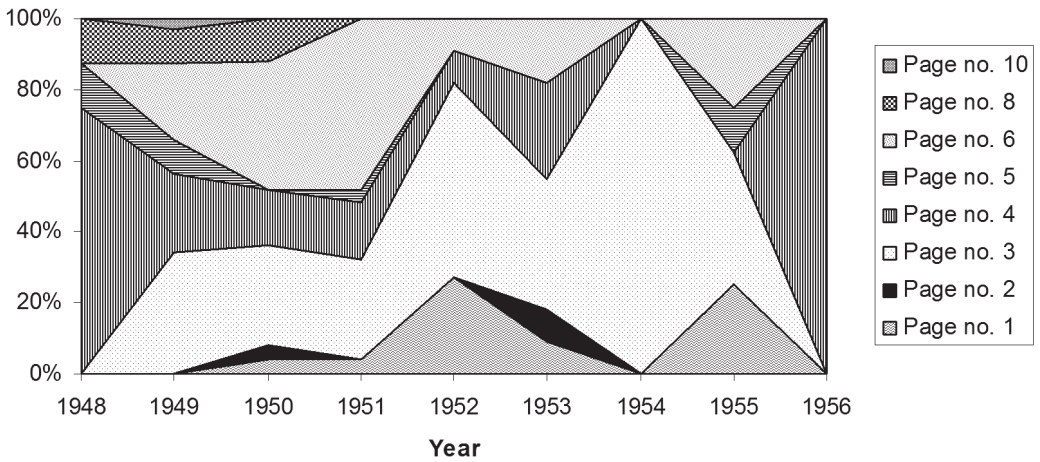


Fig. 3. Pages of *Trybuna Ludu* (in 1948 also *Głos Ludu*) on which articles related to Lysenkoism were published

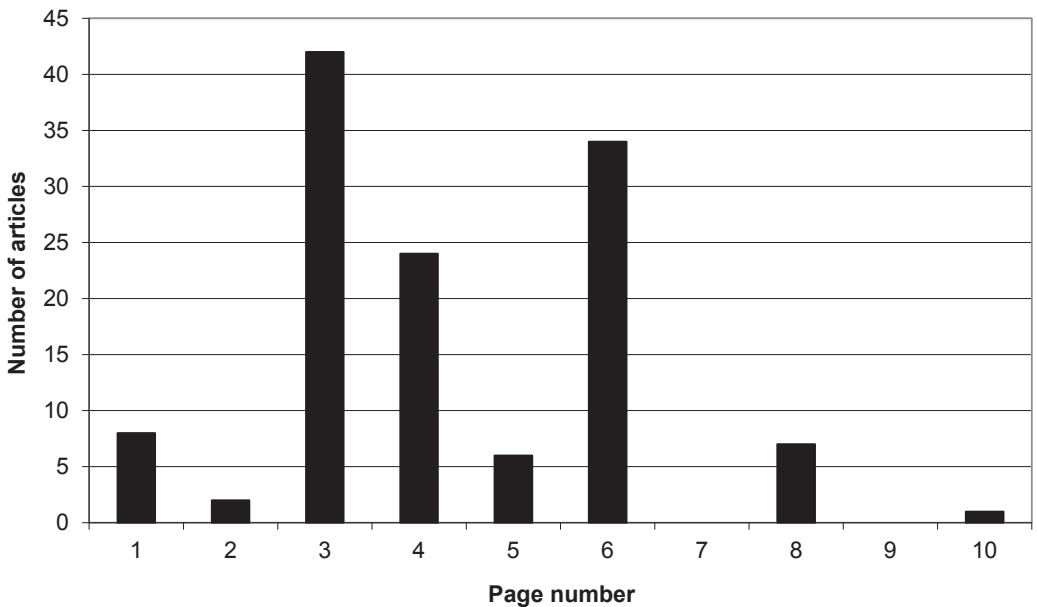


Fig. 4. The percentage of individual pages

This information was full of enthusiasm and admiration for the enormous Soviet achievements, and included the required hope for a better tomorrow that was within easy reach. It always indicated the source of these successes: the wisdom of Generalissimus Stalin, the leading role of the Communist Party and/or the ideological basis, namely, Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism.

Where in this whole complex ideological battle front was the place of Lysenkoism? What was the role of presentations of the issues of “new biology” in *Trybuna Ludu*? Lysenkoism was perfectly suited for the presentation of the ideological struggle on the scientific front and for victory of “progressive” scientific concepts over “retrograde”. Propaganda presented the various ideas of the “new biology” as if they had been created and then developed by the *kolkhozniks* or peasants, as opposed to laboratory (academic) science, which was incomprehensible for the general reader, detached from reality and the needs of the common man, and additionally very susceptible to bourgeois influences. Lysenkoism embodied the ideal of Soviet Stalinist science. It was created by a “barefoot scientist”, as Lysenko was portrayed. Lysenkoism was an emanation of Marxism in the biological sciences, as it immediately linked science and practice: the practice was dominant and inspiring, while science served only an ancillary service function. The presentation on the pages of *Trybuna Ludu* of various ideas of Michurin and Lysenko and then the “results” of their application in practice served to ensure that readers acquired and then deepened their materialist class consciousness.

It is difficult to compare the frequency and manner of presentation in *Trybuna Ludu* of Lysenkoist issues with those of other sciences. Questions of physics or chemistry were incomprehensible to the average reader, and therefore absent from *Trybuna Ludu*. On the other hand, achievements gained from the application of the theories of Michurin and Lysenko were understood by all and thus appeared in the pages of this newspaper relatively often. What is more, they were presented as if they conferred immediate benefits in the form of gigantic yields, all of which readers could take advantage of. (Another problem was the lack of actual achievements of Lysenkoism: in Poland, no cattle were bred with long, woolly fur; nor was cotton, rice, nor tea, etc., grown. But *Trybuna Ludu* remained silent about this.)

Apart from issues related to theories of Michurin and Lysenko, science was almost absent in *Trybuna Ludu*, with two exceptions. The first was the history of science, mainly Russian and Soviet. Articles marking occasions were sometimes published, for example, “Dr Kliment A. Timiryazev, great Russian physiologist. The 30th anniversary of his death” (Anonym, 1950c). The second exception was linguistics, but only thanks to the fact that Stalin himself spoke out on this subject, for example “Joseph Stalin’s article on Marxism in linguistics” (Anonym, 1950a), “Contribution to some issues of linguistics” (Stalin, 1950), or “Joseph Stalin on Marxism in linguistics” (Adler, 1950).

## Conclusions

The issues of Lysenkoism did not occupy very much space in *Trybuna Ludu* (or its predecessor, *Głos Ludu*). Altogether in 1948–1956, at least 125 articles positively related to Lysenkoism were published. These 125 articles are a small percentage — 0,06 % — of the total number (ca. 214 500) of all articles and notes published in that period by *Trybuna Ludu* (and *Głos Ludu*). These proportions reflect the importance of the Lysenkoist issues for the Communist party in Poland: Lysenkoism was one of the marginal issues which was not given any particular weight. At no point can a propaganda policy concerning Lysenkoism be identified. Rather, the topics

of the published articles create the impression of a lack of a coherent long-term propaganda plan. This may reflect the belief of its authors in the creative power of the printed word. The subjects of these articles were associated with the current propaganda campaigns of the Communist party. In 1949, these included presentation of both the Michurin-Lysenko theory and the gigantic achievements of the Soviet Union as a result of this theory. The main topics in 1950 were new developments in Lysenko theory, including the non-cellular life forms of Lepeshinskaya, and Pavlovism. In 1951, they included the achievements of Lysenkoism in the USSR and the first results of applying this theory in Poland, including the cultivation of rice. In 1952, the seventieth anniversary of the death of Charles Darwin was an opportunity to present Lysenkoism as a creative continuation of Darwinism. Among the articles published in 1953 and 1954, many of them concerned the Michurinist movement in Poland and its achievements. In 1955 was the hundredth anniversary of Michurin's birth. The controversial period of 1956 is also reflected in some way. Initially, there were articles attempting to defend Lysenkoism, or at least some of its assumptions. However, in June 1956, some articles by erstwhile promoters of Lysenkoism possibly reflected their abandonment of the "new biology" and return to genetics.

After the first three years, the intensity of propaganda, as measured by the frequency of published articles related to Lysenkoism, slowed down markedly. It appears that Lysenkoism lost its novelty and became one of many topics. One gets the impression that the authors were convinced that any content published in *Trybuna Ludu* would be adopted without discussion.

Lysenkoist propaganda in *Trybuna Ludu* had a monolithic character of total propaganda: a reader had no opportunity to read other opinions on the "new biology", only completely probative ones, presenting the Soviet point of view. Prior to the spring of 1956, no articles were published containing any analysis of components of Lysenkoism, or even reporting the lack of results predicted by the theory such as thick long fur on calves, high yields of rice, or the cultivation of coffee or tea in Poland. Propaganda articles in *Trybuna Ludu* were intended first to convince readers of Lysenkoism, and then strengthen their belief that Lysenkoism was a new theory, generating enormous positive economic effects, and entirely consistent with the assumptions of Marxism-Leninism and dialectical materialism. Opposing Lysenkoism (as positive) to Western genetics (as negative) was a constant feature of the propaganda of *Trybuna Ludu*. Propaganda articles in this journal had an optimistic tone. Readers learned that the use of Lysenkoism in practice brought "severe" (propaganda almost always used such terms) economic effects. But precisely what those effects were was left to the perspicacity of the reader. Fed with six years of propaganda, the reader suddenly learned in the spring and summer of 1956 that Lysenkoism was a perversion, and that genetics developed in the West did not lead to new wars, famine nor to other disasters. An astonished reader could only ascertain that recognition of a scientific theory as true or false could be based on the current constellation of forces and influences in the leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party.

*Trybuna Ludu* (earlier *Głos Ludu*), as the official organ of the Communist party, presented not accidental materials, but the party line. Hence the presence or absence of Lysenkoist topics clearly indicate the attitude of the Communist party at that time to "the Soviet creative Darwinism". The silence of the official press organ of Polish Workers' Party on Lysenko and his theories was significant at a time when the party was led by Władysław Gomułka. This silence can be interpreted as the focus of Gomułka's wing on issues of "our own backyard" — Polish problems and references to Poland were primary within the scope of interests of that faction, and as a result, the Soviet Union and its affairs rarely appeared in the pages of *Głos Ludu*. The result of lack of interest in specific events in the Soviet Union (as well as theoretical issues of biology) was the total silence of *Głos Ludu* on Lysenkoism and the August session of VASKhNIL.

Polish readers of this official press organ of the Communist party could not find out about the August session of VASKhNIL earlier than October 1948. It was only after the coming to power of the wing of orthodox Stalinists led by Bierut (i. e. 31 August 1948) that articles related to Lysenkoism began to appear in the pages of the official organ of the Communist party. This fact uniquely connects Lysenkoism with the political situation in Poland: the victory of Bierut's pro-Moscow (and totally Kremlin-dependent) faction in the apparatus of the Polish Workers' Party was the most important determinant of the appearance of Lysenkoism in Poland.

The decline of Lysenkoist propaganda in *Trybuna Ludu* was also correlated with political events. The rapid loss of political power by the pro-Moscow Stalinist faction was reflected in a rapidly decreasing number of articles positively related to Lysenkoism. In mid-1956 appeared articles of previous supporters of the "new biology" criticizing the theory. This was clear evidence of the total abandonment of Lysenkoism by the Communist party in Poland.

Linking Lysenkoism with the political situation in Poland had, of course, been known previously. However, the analysis of articles related to Lysenkoism in *Trybuna Ludu* enabled the precise determination of the period of interest in the 'new biology' on the part of the Communist party in Poland: it was the period of the rule of Bierut's totally Kremlin-dependent pro-Moscow faction in the apparatus of the Polish Workers' Party. Based on the results of the analysis, it can also be concluded that the adoption of Lysenkoism was not an independent decision. The "new biology" was imposed along with the entire Stalinist totalitarian system.

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## Лысенкоистская пропаганда в “Трибуна люду”

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Пресса была важной частью фронта в идеологической борьбе коммунистической партии в Польше во время периода сталинизма. Представлен качественный контент-анализ статей, касающихся лысенкоизма, появившихся в официальной ежедневной газете польской Объединенной рабочей партии (коммунистическая партия), “*Trybuna Ludu*” [«Народная трибуна»] и её предшественниц “*Głos Ludu*” [«Голос Людей»] и “*Robotnik*” [«Рабочий»]. В 1948–1956 гг. были опубликованы по крайней мере 125 статей о лысенкоизме. Их темы отразили последовательные стадии лысенкоистской пропаганды. Цель данного исследования состоит в том, чтобы показать динамику представления лысенкоизма официальными органами прессы коммунистической партии в Польше, и проанализировать содержание опубликованных статей, таким образом установив точную корреляцию лысенкоизма в Польше с политическими событиями. Как только фракция ортодоксальных сталинистов пришла к власти, статьи, связанные с лысенкоизмом, начали появляться на страницах официального органа коммунистической партии. Этот факт уникально соединяет лысенкоизм с польской политической ситуацией: победа промосковской фракции в аппарате польской Рабочей партии была самым важным детерминантом появления лысенкоизма в Польше. Точно так же исчезновение лысенкоизма как темы в “*Trybuna Ludu*” коррелирует с политическими событиями: быстрой потерей политической власти промосковской сталинистской фракцией.

**Ключевые слова:** лысенкоизм, Польша, «Трибуна люду».