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Articles

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Anna Citkowska-Kimla
Jagiellonian University, Poland
ORCID: 0000-0003-2804-8383
anna.citkowska-kimla@uj.edu.pl

Piotr Kimla
Jagiellonian University, Poland
ORCID: 0000-0002-3346-8748
piotr.kimla@uj.edu.pl

Greek and Macedonian Political Refugees in the Polish People's Republic and the Current Migration Crisis on the Polish-Belarusian Border*

Greccy i macedońscy uchodźcy polityczni w Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej a obecny kryzys migracyjny na granicy polsko-białoruskiej

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to conduct a comparative analysis of two different approaches to the migration problem. The first one refers to the government of the Polish People's Republic, which agreed to accept several thousand Greek and Macedonian political refugees fleeing from Greece after the communist side lost the civil war. The policy of the Polish communist authorities brought success in the form of successful coexistence between Greeks and Macedonians with Poles. The second ap-

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS: Anna Citkowska-Kimla, PhD, Prof. Dr. Habil., Full Professor, Jagiellonian University (Kraków), Faculty of International and Political Studies, Institute of Political Science and International Relations, Reymonta 4, 30-059 Kraków, Poland; Piotr Kimla, PhD, Prof. Dr. Habil., Full Professor, Jagiellonian University (Kraków), Faculty of International and Political Studies, Institute of Political Science and International Relations, Reymonta 4, 30-059 Kraków, Poland.

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proach is presented by the current Polish government. This is a policy of not admitting any migrants brought to the Polish-Belarusian border by the Belarusian and Russian regimes that are hostile to Poland. The presented comparison is an original attempt to draw conclusions regarding the sources of these different approaches and their political and social consequences. The topic discussed in the article is important not only for Poland and the eastern countries of the European Union, but for the entire EU, because the destination of migrants is not countries such as Poland, Lithuania or Latvia, but wealthier Western countries.

Keywords: civil war; political refugees; migrants; Polish People's Republic; Polish-Belarus border

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the article is a comparative analysis of two approaches to the issue of accepting political refugees and migrants, which were presented by the Polish authorities after World War II when faced with the migration problem. The research question that arises in this context is: Why the ruined Polish People's Republic emerging after World War II was able to accept and take care of 13 to 15 thousand Greek and Macedonian political refugees,[1] while the modern, much wealthier Republic of Poland – which is a member of the European Union – does not want to accept to its territory any refugees and migrants brought from Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria to our eastern border by the Belarusian authorities in consultation with the Russian ones?[2]

There are several important books in Polish literature dealing with the issue of Greek and Macedonian political refugees in the Polish People's Republic. The most important is Mieczysław Wojecki's work, published in 1989, *Political Refugees from Greece in Poland 1948–1975*. The bibliography of this book includes, among others, a number of items that have never been officially published and remain in typescripts. Their list is therefore an additional, valuable contribution of this lover of Greece to understanding the situation of Macedonian and Greek refugees in

[1] Sources vary regarding the number of refugees who came to Poland. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece indicates the number of 15,000 refugees, the Polish researcher of this issue, Mieczysław Wojecki (*Uchodźcy polityczni z Grecji w Polsce 1948–1975*, Jelenia Góra 1989), indicates the number of 13,000. Resolving these discrepancies and the sources of their origin are not important for our considerations. They result, among other things, "from taking into account (or not) the migration movement as part of the Polish Red Cross family reunification campaign" (M. Semczyszyn, *Wprowadzenie*, [in:] *PRL a wojna domowa w Grecji*, ed. M. Semczyszyn, Szczecin 2016, p. 9).

[2] The article ignores the so-called "visa scandal", i.e. the sale of approx. 600,000 Polish visas to people from Asia and Africa (from 21 countries in total) with the knowledge and consent of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the participation of intermediary companies. As we know, the case ended with the resignation of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Piotr Wawrzyk. On 31 August 2023, agents of the Central Anticorruption Bureau entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in connection with possible corruption in the issuance of Polish visas.

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Poland. One of the most important works in Polish and English is a collection of articles by Polish and Greek scholars, organizing the state of knowledge regarding the Greek Civil War and the fate of Greek refugees in Poland. This collection, titled *PPR and the Civil War in Greece*, was published in 2016. The co-author of this volume is, among others, Katerina Tsekou, whose main work was *The Greek Political Refugees in Eastern Europe 1945–1989*.[3] Izabela Kubasiewicz also deals with the issue of the Greek minority in the Polish People's Republic. The presence of her article in the mentioned collective work is completely understandable. An interesting work on the reception of the Greek Civil War by the Polish press in 1944–1949 was written by Sebastian Górski. Journalist Dionisios Sturis played an important role in publicizing the issue of Greek refugees in Poland. This concerns both his journalism and his work *New Life: How Poles Helped Refugees from Greece*. There are, of course, many studies by foreign authors concerning both the civil war in Greece and the fate of refugees themselves in individual Eastern Bloc countries. As for the first issue, it is worth mentioning *The Greek Civil War* by Spiridion Plakoudas, published in 2017, the slightly older book *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* by David H. Close, dating back to 1995,[4] as well as the collection *The Greek Civil War*, edited by Philip Carabotta and Thanasis D. Sfikas, which was published in 2004[5] and contains articles by both Greek and Anglo-Saxon scholars. Works by André Gerolymatos are also noteworthy.[6] Greek refugees in Czechoslovakia are dealt with by Nikos Marantzidis and Kostas Tsivos, and in Bulgaria by the previously mentioned Katerina Tsekou. In 2011, an important work by Lorin M. Danforth and Riki Van Boeschoten was published.[7]

The original research idea of the authors of this text is to compare the attitude of the Polish People's Republic authorities towards Greek and Macedonian refugees with the attitude of the current authorities of the Republic of Poland towards refugees and migrants on the border with Belarus. As for the crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, due to its "freshness", it is still waiting for serious academic studies. The presented comparative analysis includes basing and referring to press publications. The synthetic presentation of the context of the refugee wave of Greeks and Macedonians to Central and Eastern Europe is based on a historical method.

[3] Cf. K. Tsekou, *The Greek Political Refugees in Eastern Europe 1945–1989*, Athens 2013.

[4] Cf. D.H. Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War*, New York 1995.

[5] Cf. P. Carabotta, T.D. Sfikas (eds.), *The Greek Civil War: Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences*, London 2004.

[6] Cf. A. Gerolymatos, *An International Civil War: Greece 1943–1949*, Yale 2016; idem, *Red Acropolis, Black Terror: The Greek Civil War and the Origins of the Soviet-American Rivalry 1943–1949*, New York 2004.

[7] Cf. L.M. Danforth, R. Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory*, Chicago 2011.

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The analysis consists of two main parts and conclusions. The first part briefly presents the political context that caused the wave of refugees from Greece after World War II to the countries of the Eastern Bloc. Then, the reasons that determined the success of the process of assimilating refugees in Poland are indicated. Suffice it to say that the attitude of the Polish authorities and the attitude of the Poles themselves remain in the grateful memory of the Greek and Macedonian refugees and their families who are still alive. This still seems to have a positive impact on the perception of Poland and Poles in contemporary Greece.[8] Especially when you consider that most of these refugees and their families returned to their homeland when it became possible. More precisely, after the fall of the dictatorship of the black colonels, which lasted in Greece from 1967 until 1974.

The second part outlines the context of the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border and describes the reaction of the Polish authorities to this crisis.

In the conclusions we try to answer the question about the reasons for two different approaches to refugees and migrants – the approaches of the Polish People's Republic authorities after the end of World War II and the approaches of the Polish authorities in the 21st century.

REASONS FOR THE EMIGRATION OF GREEKS AND MACEDONIANS TO THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

The reason for the emigration of Greeks and Macedonians to the Polish People's Republic and other socialist countries was the second phase of the civil war in Greece in 1946–1949.[9] "The civil war (…) was the most terrible conflict that hit this country in history. (…) Greek stood against Greek, and son against father. The fighting, which lasted for over three years, not only devastated the already poor country, but also caused deep divisions, the effects of which are still felt to this day".[10] The second incarnation of fratricidal fighting broke out, broadly speaking, because of the deep division of Greek society into supporters of the monarchy (supported by Great Britain and the United States[11]) and supporters of

[8] Obviously, there is no question of an overwhelming influence here due to the limited number of Greeks whose fate linked them to Poland. Today, the positive image of Poland in the eyes of the Greek public opinion is certainly influenced more strongly by the annual participation of the Polish Professional Fire Service in extinguishing fires both in mainland Greece and on the Greek islands.

[9] Cf. S. Plakoudas, *The Greek Civil War: Strategy, Counterinsurgency and the Monarchy*, London–New York 2017.

[10] S. Górski, *Grecka wojna domowa w świetle polskiej prasy krajowej lat 1944–1949*, Wrocław 2011, p. 75.

[11] It is worth remembering in this context that on 22 June 1947 the so-called Truman Doctrine entered into force, breaking with the policy of isolationism used by the United States in times of peace

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the National Front led by the Communist Party of Greece. It should be emphasized that the members of the communist party fighting against the Germans made an excellent record in the struggle against the occupiers, having the largest guerrilla force among all political forces in Greece.[12] On 10 March 1944, the communists established the Political Committee of National Liberation – a government competing with the Greek government in exile. Controlling almost half of the territory of mainland Greece, the communists began to create a new judiciary, local government, education and organized elections to the National Councils. However, in the course of further developments, due to, among others, an erroneous military strategy and lack of help from the USSR (and, as mentioned, British-American help for anti-communist forces), the communist camp suffered a defeat. Notabene, Stalin and Churchill already in October 1944 reached an agreement (the so-called "percentage agreement" in relation to the Balkans), under which Great Britain gained a free hand when it comes to actions in Greece.[13] However, the Moscow authorities issued a "request" for the socialist bloc countries to accept Greek and Macedonian political refugees with communist sympathies. In Greece, after losing the civil war, they faced very harsh penalties. Political trials often end with death sentences.[14] Concentration camps where communist soldiers and sympathizers of communist government were imprisoned. Among the camps, the one on the island of Makronisos, sometimes referred to as the Greek Dachau, had the worst reputation. There were 58,000 people in this camp, of which 30,000 were women and children. Importantly, you could be sent to the camp on the basis of an administrative decision. This did not require a court judgment.

Greeks and Macedonians associated with or sympathizing with the communist movement fled from the above and other repressions.[15] In total, about 100,000 people

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and stating that the United States would help nations that may be subjugated by armed minorities with authoritarian or totalitarian tendencies. The doctrine originally applied to Greece and Turkey. With its announcement, the Greek monarchical government received $250 million to support the military and the economy. Cf. Office of the Historian, *The Truman Doctrine, 1947*, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine (access: 11.9.2023).

[12] At its peak in 1944, it numbered over 100,000 people. Cf. E. O'Ballance, *The Greek Civil War 1944–1949*, New York 1966, p. 91; M. Tanty, *Bałkany w XX wieku. Dzieje polityczne*, Warszawa 2003, p. 251.

[13] Cf. S. Górski, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

[14] Data vary between authors. There is no doubt, however, that several thousand communists were sentenced to death and the sentences were carried out. It is worth noting that executions of communist members of the resistance continued until 1955. The symbol of communist resistance – Nikos Beloyannis – was executed in 1952. Notabene, in 1949 – after losing the civil war – Beloyannis emigrated to Poland. He returned to Greece in June 1950 to restore the Athens cell of the Greek Communist Party. The death sentence was handed down by a Greek military court, despite protests from all over the world.

[15] Polymeris Voglis, in his interesting work on political prisoners during the Greek Civil War, writes: "The practices of punishment used against political opponents in the Greek Civil War varied.

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emigrated. Twenty thousand of them were deprived of their citizenship. About 13,500 adult Greeks and Macedonians and 4,000 Greek children came to the People's Polish Republic between 1948 and 1960. The largest group of refugees came directly after the Civil War. In the years 1949–1950 alone, over 11,000 people arrived.

REASONS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL ASSIMILATION OF GREEK AND MACEDONIAN POLITICAL REFUGEES

Refugees brought to our country lived first next to Poles, then together with Poles. It must be admitted that the authorities of the Polish People's Republic chose a reasonable strategy and began to settle the new arrivals in the so-called recovered territories. Therefore, in areas where Poles themselves were immigrants. This made assimilation easier. Refugees did not receive any special privileges. Naturally, they were provided with medical care and, like the rest of Poles, they had free access to it. Field Hospital No. 250 in Dziwnów can be considered a symbol of medical care provided to refugees. Several dozen doctors and about 500 nurses and orderlies worked there. This facility not only treated and rehabilitated wounded Greek partisans – soldiers of the Democratic Army of Greece, but also taught (including the Polish language) and published a weekly in Greek "Demokratija".

The children were carefully looked after and, of course, like their Polish peers, they benefited from free education.[16] The memories of Risto Nichow, who came to Poland as a child, can serve as *pars pro toto* for this care:

> The boys first went to a hairdresser and then to another place, where we were told to undress. One by one we were led by the hand to the bath. (…) The woman took me to a room with bathtubs and showers. (…) She kept scrubbing me and saying: "Dear child". The first words I learned in Polish were "dear child". When she rinsed me off, she only used good soap. Now it was okay, I actually felt really good. I had never been washed by anyone before, not because I lost my mother at a very young age and there was no one to bathe me, but because we didn't have amenities like running water or a shower back home.[17]

Some were already dominant in the interwar era (exile), while some that had been secondary became equally important (prison). New forms of internment were improvised (mass internment camps), new forms of punishment were introduced (executions), and other practices that in the past had been employed against specific social groups (e.g. decapitation of brigands and public display of their heads) were employed against guerillas in the Civil War. Greece in the second half of the 1940s was an archipelago of punishment. The most modern practices of punishment, such as the mass internment camps, coexisted with the most obsolete, the spectacle of punishment" (P. Voglis, *Becoming a Subject: Political Prisoners during the Greek Civil War*, New York–Oxford 2002, p. 2).

[16] Expressions of gratitude towards Poland expressed by Greek refugees include thanks for the education and training that Poland gave to Greek children. On education aimed at refugees, see M. Wojecki, *Szkolnictwo uchodźców politycznych z Grecji w Polsce po roku 1950*, "Rocznik Lubuski" 2004, vol. 30(1).

[17] Cited after D. Sturis, *Nowe życie. Jak Polacy pomogli uchodźcom z Grecji*, Poznań 2022, p. 146.

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Greek refugees gradually entered the labor market. Apart from isolated incidents, Poles accepted the new arrivals, despite their different appearance and distinct culture. Gradually, friendships were formed and mixed marriages were concluded. Overall, the integration of Greeks and Macedonians was a success. As previously mentioned, refugees and their descendants maintain a grateful memory of Poland and speak of Poles with sympathy.[18]

Several reasons contributed to the successful assimilation of Greek and Macedonian refugees.[19] The first of them was, of course, the favorable attitude of the authorities of the Polish People's Republic. Meeting Moscow's expectations and accepting Greek fighters did not generate any resistance among communist political decision-makers. On the contrary, the ideological community of both the Polish authorities and the incoming refugees was an impulse to provide them with help and care. As is known, an important component of these views was atheism, which had the advantage that it did not cause any special religious tensions when compared to Polish Catholicism. Moreover, Catholicism in Poland in the first years after World War II was on the defensive due to the harsh course of the communist authorities towards the Church.[20]

The second reason was the already mentioned prudent decision of the Polish People's Republic authorities to place refugees primarily in the so-called recovered territories. Therefore, refugees arrived in areas where Poles themselves were a new population. So they did not collide with established, multi-generational moral structures, but could, thanks to their presence, shape these structures, even to a small extent. Some of the refugees previously performed jobs related to the sea. Therefore, their place of stay, such as the seaside town of Dziwnów, provided an opportunity for easier acclimatization.

The third reason for creating good relations between Poles and refugees is the empathetic abilities demonstrated by the war generations of our compatriots. Our compatriots who went through the hell of World War II perfectly understood those who were painfully affected not only by the war with an external enemy, but also by the civil war. The fact that post-war Poland was ruined and the Poles themselves were very poor did not prevent them from providing help and establishing good relations with the Greeks and Macedonians. A wise proverb says that a satisfied person will not understand a hungry person. It turns out that the hungry man understood the hungry man perfectly and shared with him. It turns out, which is quite

[18] Expressions of this gratitude can be found many times on the pages of the Dionis Sturis book (*op. cit.*).

[19] The title of Mieczysław Wojecki's work *Poles and Greeks: Cordial Relationships* (1999) confirms the successful assimilation.

[20] For example, see R. Łatka, *Prymas Wyszyński w realiach PRL*, Warszawa 2022.

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optimistic from a pedagogical point of view, that rich people do not necessarily have to share with others much more willingly than poor people.

SOURCES OF THE CURRENT CRISIS ON THE POLISH-BELARUSIAN BORDER

The authorities of Russia and Belarus, remembering the migration crisis in Europe in 2015, which was faced primarily by German Chancellor Angela Merkel,[21] brought migrants from various countries and regions of the world to the Polish-Belarusian, Lithuanian-Belarusian and Latvian-Belarusian borders in June 2021. Figuratively speaking, refugees and migrants have become a weapon in the hands of the leaders of Russia and Belarus, aimed at destabilizing the situation first in the eastern and later in the remaining EU countries. This move turned out to be – and will always turn out to be in the future – very troublesome for the EU countries, because it is a kind of dramatic test checking to what extent the values proclaimed by the community of EU countries are translated into real political actions. Authoritarian leaders are well aware of this. Unfortunately, the tragic protagonists of this test are people – migrants and refugees from different parts of the world.

The reasons for Russia and Belarus destabilizing Central and Western Europe became all too clear in the context of the subsequent Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The Kremlin hoped that European countries focused on the migration crisis would not be able to effectively engage in helping Ukraine. Moreover, President Alexander Lukashenko had personal reasons to "strike" EU countries because the European Union and the United States considered the 2020 Belarusian presidential elections to be fraudulent. Their real winner, according to Western governments and Western public opinion, turned out to be Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. As is known, the official election results triggered a wave of protests in Belarus, which were brutally suppressed by officers of the Belarusian OMON and the militia. As a result of the clashes, four people died, over 1,000 were injured, and over 30,000 demonstrators were arrested. A year after the rigged elections, additional sanctions were imposed on Belarus by the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.[22]

[21] This crisis, as we know, did not make Chancellor Merkel popular. It has become a problem in Germany's internal politics and a problem for the entire European Union. It led, among other things, to the resumption of random border checks between EU countries, e.g. between Austria and Germany. Moreover, it provided political fuel for the right-wing, anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD). A detailed record of the dramatic events is the work of "Die Welt" journalist Robin Alexander (*Angela Merkel i kryzys migracyjny. Dzień po dniu*, Warszawa 2017).

[22] Cf. P. Wroński, *USA nakładają nowe sankcje na Białoruś w pierwszą rocznicę sfałszowania wyborów*, 10.8.2021, https://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,27434526,usa-nakladaja-nowe-sankcje-na-bialorus-w-pierwsza-rocznice-sfalszowania.html (access: 20.9.2023).

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The migration crisis caused by Lukashenko on the eastern border of the European Union was also a response to the economic sanctions that the EU imposed on Belarus after the scandal of 23 May 2021 related to forcing a Ryanair plane – flying from Athens to Vilnius – to land in Minsk.[23] In the media space, the actions of the Belarusian authorities have been described as state terrorism.[24] Raman Pratasiewicz, a Belarusian opposition activist and founder of the Nexta channel, was on board the plane. The oppositionist (together with five other people) was arrested. Then sentenced to eight years in a penal colony. However, he was pardoned when he decided to cooperate with the Lukashenko regime.[25]

THE REACTION OF THE POLISH AUTHORITIES TO THE MIGRATION CRISIS ON THE POLISH-BELARUSIAN BORDER

The indicated actions of the Belarusian authorities, and above all the import of thousands of migrants, undertaken in consultation with the authorities of the Russian Federation, constitute asymmetric, hostile – although below the threshold of war – actions in relation to three EU countries, including, of course, Poland. Our country has a border with Belarus that is over 400 kilometers long and protecting it against violations is a serious challenge. The Polish government decided to build a five-meter-high fence made of steel spans with razor wire on its top along a 186-kilometer stretch of the border. On the next 200 kilometers, at a cost of PLN 343 million, an electronic barrier (camera system with cabling) was built. The Polish Border Guard – in official statements – takes the position that the barriers erected are an effective way to prevent the illegal entry of migrants into Poland. Polish volunteers who help people who, despite barriers, managed to enter our country have a different opinion. Similarly, MEP and founder of the Polish Hu-

[23] The Ryanair plane registered in Poland was "escorted" by a Belarusian MiG-29.

[24] This term was used, among others, by Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki. See TVN24, *„Akt terroryzmu państwowego popełniony na rozkaz Łukaszenki", „szokujące", „całkowicie niedopuszczalne"*, 23.5.2021, https://tvn24.pl/polska/bialorus-samolot-z-opozycjonista-pratasiewiczem-awaryjnie-ladowal-w-minsku-reakcje-5102091 (access: 20.9.2023).

[25] Of course, it would be inappropriate to give moral judgments to Pratasiewicz due to the fact that he was "broken" by the Belarusian services. As Pratasiewicz's friend who studies in Poland points out, "Everyone can be broken. Every person has their own personal endurance threshold. It's just a matter of time. (…) For me it is obvious that he was tortured by the secret services and threatened with the death penalty" (A. Szczygielska-Jakubowska, *Znajomy Romana Protasiewicza: Żeby przeżyć, musi mówić to, co mu dyktują*, 5.6.2021, https://bydgoszcz.wyborcza.pl/bydgoszcz/7,48722,27164330,znajomy-romana-protasiewicza-musi-mowic-to-co-mu-dyktuja.html (access: 20.9.2023). It is also worth adding that his fiancée was arrested along with Pratasiewicz. It doesn't take much imagination to understand that Pratasiewicz could have been blackmailed by the services with what might happen to her if he refused to cooperate. Pratasiewicz's fiancée, Sofia Sapiega, also agreed to cooperate with the regime.

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manitarian Action Janina Ochojska, who questions the effectiveness of this type of very expensive solutions.[26] She points to the number of migrants who managed to reach Germany through Poland. Poland, of course, is not a destination country for migrants brought to the Polish-Belarusian border. In search of a better life, they want to reach Western countries. However, the burden of securing our eastern border, and thus the border of the European Union, rests on the shoulders of the Polish authorities. All the more so because the Polish government refuses to accept the aid offered by the EU, primarily from Frontex, in this respect.

On 2 September 2021, the government of the Republic of Poland introduced a state of emergency along the border with Belarus. The Supreme Court of the Republic of Poland ruled that this action violates the principle of proportionality contained in the Polish Constitution. The ruling was issued in connection with indictments against journalists residing in the border area and thus violating the provisions of the state of emergency.[27] It is worth adding that blocking the flow of information from the Polish-Belarusian border resulted from the belief of the leader of the ruling party in Poland Law and Justice Jarosław Kaczyński – expressed on 16 October 2021 in an interview for the RMF FM radio station – that the United States' defeat in Vietnam resulted from journalistic reports from this conflict flooding America. It resulted from the fact that "journalists were very close to the front line".[28] Undoubtedly, Polish public opinion could be influenced by images of Polish Border Guard officers using – probably not without the knowledge and approval of their superiors – the so-called "pushbacks" in relation to people who managed to cross the Polish-Belarusian border. The officers forcibly turned them back and pushed them back to Belarus, despite the fact that these people had declared their intention to apply for international protection. These actions were contrary to EU law. The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights reports that at least 55 people

[26] Cf. Gazeta Prawna, *Ochojska: Skuteczność muru na granicy jest zerowa*, 20.11.2020, https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/kraj/artykuly/8591371,zapora-mur-na-granicy-polsko-bialoruskiej-straz-graniczna-janina-ochojska.html (access: 15.5.2023).

[27] Cf. Serwis RP, *Sąd potwierdza: wypychanie do granicy sprzeczne z prawem*, 16.9.2022, https://www.rp.pl/cudzoziemcy/art37070381-sad-popowiedz-wypychanie-do-granicy-sprzeczne-z-prawem (access: 15.5.2023). On 12 October 2023, the court also acquitted a group of activists who provided food, drinks and clothes to migrants on the other side of the wall in Belarus. He found that they acted in a state of extreme necessity. See Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka, *Pomaganie jest legalne. Sąd uniewinnił osoby, które przekazywały pomoc humanitarną przez mur na granicy*, 30.10.2023, https://hfhr.pl/aktualnosci/pomaganie-jest-legalne-sad-uniewinnil-osoby-ktore-przekazywaly-pomoc-humanitarna-przez-mur (access: 21.9.2023).

[28] See Konkret24, *Kaczyński o wojnie w Wietnamie: została przegrana, bo na pierwszej linii byli dziennikarze. A jak było naprawdę?*, 19.10.2021, https://konkret24.tvn24.pl/polityka/kaczynski-o-wojnie-w-wietnamie-zostala-przegrana-bo-na-pierszej-linii-byli-dziennikarze-a-jak-bylo-naprawde-r1081493-ls5790759 (access: 21.9.2023).

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have died since the beginning of the humanitarian crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border until October 2023.

It seems obvious that hostile political acts by Belarus and Russia in bringing crowds of migrants to the Polish border were a smart political move. It is clear that any solution adopted by the Polish authorities would put them in a difficult situation. Problems would arise if the government decided to open the border. This would generate dissatisfaction and pressure from the conservative part of public opinion, which constitutes the majority in Poland regarding the issue of the influx of migrants from Africa and Asia. An open border policy would certainly cause dissatisfaction among Western EU countries, as they would undoubtedly be the destination of migrants and refugees. However, the policy of building the wall and the policy of not letting in a single migrant also raise serious humanitarian and legal problems. In this sense, the move of Presidents Lukashenko and Putin brings them political gain, regardless of the direction of defense chosen by the Polish side.

CONCLUSIONS

The old maxim says that you can only compare what is comparable, and the situation of Greek and Macedonian political refugees from the late 1940s is radically different from the situation of refugees and migrants brought to our border by regimes unfriendly to Poland. The authorities of the Polish People's Republic agreed to the arrival of the first ones. It was easy because the refugees had common communist ideas with those who ruled Poland at that time. In the eyes of the ruling party in Poland, these refugees wrote not only a great card in the fight against Nazism, but also in the fight against British and American imperialism. This fight was lost (probably temporarily in the eyes of the Polish and Greek communists), but its participants deserved the respect and protection of the Polish state. In the case of migrants on our eastern border, we are dealing with people deceived by the authoritarian regimes of Belarus and Russia, who were deceived by the vision of easy entry and settlement in the rich countries of the European Union. The Polish government absolutely did not want their arrival on the border with Belarus. Perhaps, to some extent, the government involuntarily transferred his hostility towards the unfriendly actions of the Belarusian and Russian states to manipulated and often desperate people. And yet, despite all the differentness of the events described, one can be tempted to draw certain conclusions.

It is striking to what extent the fate of refugees and migrants depended/depends on the policies adopted by the government. Refugees can find a warm welcome even in a poor country affected by six years of the most terrible war in the history of mankind. Such a country was the Polish People's Republic. An important condition for this is not to demonize newcomers as people who are radically different from

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the native population, even if they differ from them in appearance and customs. Moreover, when the newcomers begin to function alongside the indigenous population, it quickly turns out that they are people with the same needs and dreams as everyone else, and customs or skin color cease to matter. This was the case with Greeks who came to Poland and established friendships and even marriages as a result of their stay here. Very poor Poles were able to show a lot of empathy towards newcomers from a distant country at that time. Having experienced the war themselves, they had a lot of understanding for people who had experienced it equally. *A contrario*, the demonization of refugees and migrants leads directly to the development of attitudes of distrust or hostility towards them. This is even easier if there are *de facto* no migrants in a given country and citizens do not have the opportunity to see for themselves how ordinary they are. In this context, the now infamous statement about migrants by Jarosław Kaczyński from October 2015 comes to mind:

> After all, there are already symptoms of very dangerous diseases that have not been seen in Europe for a long time: cholera in Greek islands, dysentery in Vienna, various types of parasites, protozoa, which are not dangerous in the organisms of these people [refugees], but can be dangerous here. This does not mean that someone should be discriminated against… But you have to check.[29]

However, if Poles, as citizens of the receiving country, are free from prejudice, they can demonstrate true solidarity and generosity towards people carried by the migration wave. The reception of Ukrainian migrants after Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 may serve as an encouraging example of this.

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[29] Kaczyński said these words at an election meeting in Maków Mazowiecki. See Newsweek Polska, *Kaczyński: Pasożyty i pierwotniaki w organizmach uchodźców groźne dla Polaków*, 13.10.2015, https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/jaroslaw-kaczynski-o-uchodzcach/89mwbx3 (access: 20.9.2023).

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ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest analiza porównawcza dwóch odmiennych podejść do problemu migracji. Pierwsze z nich odnosi się do rządu Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej, który wyraził zgodę na przyjęcie kilkunastu tysięcy greckich i macedońskich uchodźców politycznych uciekających z Grecji po przegranej przez stronę komunistyczną wojny domowej. Polityka polskich władz komunistycznych przyniosła sukces w postaci udanego współżycia Greków i Macedończyków z Polakami. Drugie podejście prezentuje obecny polski rząd. Jest to polityka niewpuszczania żadnych migrantów sprowadzonych na granicę polsko-białoruską przez nieprzyjazne Polsce reżimy białoruski i rosyjski. Prezentowane porównanie jest oryginalną próbą wyprowadzenia wniosków dotyczących źródeł tych odmiennych podejść oraz ich politycznych i społecznych konsekwencji. Tematyka podjęta w artykule ma znaczenie nie tylko dla Polski i wschodnich krajów Unii Europejskiej, lecz także dla całej Unii, ponieważ punktem docelowym migrantów nie są takie kraje jak Polska, Litwa czy Łotwa, tylko bogatsze kraje Zachodu.

Słowa kluczowe: wojna domowa; uchodźcy polityczni; migranci; Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa; granica polsko-białoruska