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Youth Culture in the Polish People's Republic of the 1960s: The Pedagogy of Big Beat

Abstract

The main topic of this article is the functioning of youth music (so-called big-beat music) in the Polish People's Republic in the 1960s. The educational impact of the music offered was a significant context, as was the subjection to political pressure and the rules of party cultural policy. To this end, it was necessary to reconstruct the social situation and historical specificity in relation to the facts described. The methods employed included analysis of song lyrics, analysis of selected aspects of cultural policy, and examination of historical processes influencing youth culture.

Keywords: youth, youth culture, youth music, big beat, cultural policy, People's Poland.

The purpose of this article is to explore the pedagogical, educational, and political contexts in the social functioning of Polish youth music in the 1960s and early 1970s. Polish big beat, as a counterpart to Western rock, was under the special tutelage of government institutions and was often charged with various educational and propaganda tasks. In this article, I will attempt to demonstrate the manifestations and consequences of this tutelage. Lyrical analysis will be crucial here, as will tracing the ad hoc shifts in cultural policy aimed at shaping youth attitudes.

Undoubtedly, three turning points are significant: the first (1956–1962) marks the beginning of the history of youth culture in the Polish People's Republic, and thus the history of big beat; the second (1968) marks the beginning of

the waning period of Władysław Gomułka's government after the events of March 1968; and the third, after 1971, when Edward Gierek took power and changes began in the structure of the youth organizations overseen by the party. These three turning points mark three distinct periods of the state's cultural and educational policies, and also illustrate how the authorities' approach to the phenomenon we call youth culture has changed.

The term "youth culture" is imprecise. Within its semantic field, it includes "youth" as the subject of cultural creation, but it can just as easily be interpreted as "culture for youth," which ignores or at least marginalizes that subjectivity. In fact, we are dealing with a linguistic construct that conceals two distinct worlds: institutional culture and spontaneous culture, or in other words, the aforementioned culture for youth and culture of youth. Barbara Fatyga pointed this out, suggesting in her book *Dzicy z naszej ulicy. Antropologia kultury młodzieżowej* (*Savages from Our Street: Anthropology of Youth Culture*) suggests that the entire sphere of youth subculturality should simply be called "youth culture" (Fatyga, 1999; Wertenstein-Żuławski, Pęczak, 1991).

Nevertheless, the history of youth as a distinct social group—assuming we are referring to the broadly understood Western Civilization, occidentalized forms—reveals a clear division between "official" (institutional) youth culture and "unofficial" (spontaneous) youth culture. To explain this situation, the example of the United States is often cited. In the early 1950s, media executives, entertainment industry managers, producers, and fashion designers concluded that American teenagers (especially those from the white middle class) and so-called young adults were becoming a marketing-attractive target group, and thus deserved attention in various business plans. Efforts were made to "top-down" respond to the real, presumed, and culturally manufactured needs of young people. As a result, a new popular cinema emerged aimed at youth audiences (e.g., dramas starring James Dean, comedies with Elvis Presley), fashion trends were promoted e .g. jeans (Fiske, 1989), and most notably, there was an explosion of a new genre of popular music known as "rock'n'roll".

Essentially, this entire offer reflected the main features of commercial popular culture (mass culture), except that its recipient was considered specific (young, hedonistic, more emotional than reflective). Daniel Bell explained the cultural shift in post-WWII America:

> The old American value system emphasized the quality of their achievements judged success, and a person's character. In the 1950s, success still mattered, but it was measured by status and taste. Culture no longer cares about how to work and achieve success, but how to spend and enjoy. Despite still using the language of Protestant ethics, American culture in the 1950s became hedonistic, focused on fun, entertainment, and extravagance, and—as is often the case in America—there was something compulsive about this attitude.

Furthermore,

> the success motive found its fulfillment in sex. In the 1950s and 1960s, the cult of Orgasm replaced the cult of Mammon, which had previously been America's main passion (Bell, 1976, p. 120).

It quickly became clear that the most important domain of expression defining the specificity of "youthfulness" **was music**.

Rock'n'roll stars such as Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, and Brenda Lee became not only "style dictators" for youth but also informal opinion leaders. Meanwhile, among older and more conservative Americans, the music gained a reputation as a miasma that unleashed the worst instincts. Record labels and media, therefore, tried to influence rock'n'roll creators and performers to soften their musical message, with Elvis Presley's voluntary enlistment in the army serving as a symbolic expression of this tendency. The idea came from Presley's manager, Tom Parker, who hoped that such a gesture would win the singer favor with more conservative and older audiences, or at least soften the views of rock'n'roll's harshest critics, who saw Presley as just another scandalous figure of the genre. In general, the goal was to associate rock'n'roll with harmless entertainment for youth.

Youth music was associated with seasonal musical fashion rather than with an aesthetic, let alone a moral revolution. The dangerous rebelliousness was seen especially in the form of this music, in its energy, which also had a performative expression during live concerts and television appearances. The entertainment industry wanted to prevent a situation in which youth music would become an element of a cultural war, and for a few years, this seemed effective, at least until the beginning of the so-called British Invasion and the emergence of American psychedelic rock in the mid-1960s.

Institutional youth culture in the USA during the decade 1955–1965 had a clearly systemic character, fundamentally consistent with the political mainstream. Apart from a few films, such as *Rebel Without a Cause* starring James Dean, there was no revolution in popular culture texts. Rock'n'roll songs mostly dealt with teenage heartbreak—joyful versions encouraged enjoying life, while sad ones reflected on the sorrow of lost love. This resembled earlier mainstream American popular songs, about which Samuel I. Hayakawa wrote:

> […] the lyrics of popular songs, mostly (though not all) the creation of white lyricists intended primarily for white listeners, are full of delusions, vague and meaningless nostalgia, unrealistic fantasies, self-pity, and sentimental clichés pretending to be genuine emotions (Hayakawa, 1955, p. 84).

There was little to no reference to social issues, let alone political ones—no wonder, then, that student audiences largely ignored this first wave of American rock'n'roll and instead gravitated toward politically engaged folk music (Denselow, 1989, p. 16).

Spontaneous youth culture in America, however, had earlier roots, developing since the early 20th century. It encompassed phenomena such as youth gangs, similar hooligan groups, youth equivalents of artistic bohemia, and communities of young hobos, which became particularly visible during the Great Depression. Except for the artistic bohemians, this entire sphere was usually labeled as deviant, criminal, or at least semi-criminal—requiring deep resocialization and triggering moral panic in mainstream public opinion (Thrasher, 1927; Cohen, 1955, pp. 24-25).

This variant of youth culture was not considered a potential segment of the cultural industry, nor a target for any marketing efforts. However, after the explosion of rock'n'roll, the world of subcultures increasingly began to influence "official," institutional youth culture.

In Poland at that time—the 1950s—the authorities, following the post-October "thaw" of 1956, began to liberalize the Stalinist-inspired political model and allowed selective access to Western culture. However, the principles of this selection remained unclear for many years and changed depending on the current domestic and international political situation (Walicki, 1995, p. 107).

Regardless, the West—and especially America—was for young Poles a supremely positive point of reference. From America also came models of youth subculturality. That is why the first Polish youth subculture, the *bikiniarze* (bikini boys), and much later the hippies, were accused—especially in party press—of succumbing to politically hostile influences.

Youth subcultures in Poland were often accused—especially in the party political press—of succumbing to politically hostile influences. (Pęczak, 1992, pp. 12–13). The first rock'n'roll band in Polish history, Rhythm and Blues, was founded in 1959 in Gdańsk by Franciszek Walicki, a journalist from the Tricity area, cultural activist, lyricist, and a key figure in shaping the emerging youth music scene. The band lasted only a few months, as it was banned from performing in venues with more than 400 seats (the reason cited was hooligan incidents during concerts). Given the low ticket prices, this restriction made concerts financially unviable and effectively ended the band's activity (Walicki, 2000).

As Anna Idzikowska-Czubaj wrote:

> Since Rhythm and Blues could no longer perform, the band's name was changed—initially with the same lineup—to Czerwono-Czarni. The term 'rock'n'roll' was replaced with 'Big Beat,' and a game of hide-and-seek with the so-called official authorities began, all in the name of fulfilling the need for fun and expressing one's distinctiveness[1]. (Idzikowska-Czubaj, 2011, pp. 134–135).

Walicki himself recalled:

[1] All translations into English of the original texts are the author's own translations.

> We also stopped using the term 'rock'n'roll,' which irritated the decision-makers. They went crazy over that name, and there was no point in provoking them. I looked for a Polish term to replace the outlawed 'rock'n'roll,' but nothing came to mind. One day, I was browsing a French magazine devoted to popular music. I looked at the title: 'Big Beat.' That was it—I thought—Czerwono-Czarni: a band of strong impact! (Walicki, 2012, p. 71).

It's worth noting that while Rhythm and Blues performed almost exclusively English-language songs (mainly American rock'n'roll standards), Czerwono-Czarni and their rivals, Niebiesko-Czarni, soon after their debuts began to consistently promote Walicki's slogan: "Polish youth sings Polish songs." This slogan first appeared as the banner for a concert series at the Non Stop club in Sopot in 1962 and 1963, hosted by Niebiesko-Czarni. It overlapped with an earlier initiative by Czerwono-Czarni called "We're Looking for Young Talents," which led to two editions of the Szczecin Festival of Young Talents (1962 and 1963). (Idzikowska-Czubaj, 2011, pp. 136-137). Walicki was the impresario for both bands.

These efforts, launched shortly after the term "Big Beat" (soon polonized as "bigbit") entered public discourse, gave this domestic version of rock'n'roll a distinct character, embedding it in a specific pedagogical and ideological context. Undoubtedly, the authorities kept a close eye on the youth music scene.

The most emblematic example is Władysław Gomułka's speech at the Central Committee Plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in July 1963. The party leader thundered:

> […] a foreign style has crept into our cultural and entertainment life, promoting a model of life that is easy, brutalized, and dismissive of the culture of emotions and interpersonal relations. This model, unfortunately promoted until recently by our radio, television, and stage activities, has caused considerable harm in our educational work with youth. It spread among them an unhealthy cult of stardom, unsupported by honest work and study. The greatest blame for the cultural and moral damage resulting from… (Stańczak-Wiślicz, 2012, p. 64).

The speech left no illusions—the third edition of the Festival of Young Talents had no chance of taking place. It also became clear that Gomułka himself remained a staunch opponent of youth culture imitating Western fashions. As a result, the entire future of the newly established Big Beat as an official musical offering was thrown into doubt. Promoters of this scene, such as Franciszek Walicki, could no longer count on the "porosity of the system" or the confusion among cultural policy administrators that had characterized the atmosphere of the 1956 political thaw. A special "survival strategy" had to be devised—or simply, "Big Beathad" to be absorbed into the mainstream of popular music in the Polish People's Republic at the cost of abandoning its rock'n'roll identity.

There are strong indications that the latter option was chosen. Above all—echoing the process of taming rock'n'roll by the cultural industry in 1950s America—Big Beat was first reduced to the role of pure entertainment aimed at

youth. Its creators and performers had to abandon any ambitions of supporting the development of an autonomous youth culture. As a result, Big Beat bands frequently served up silly, infantile songs, such as the Niebiesko-Czarni's new version of the children's tune *Stary niedźwiedź mocno śpi* (*The Old Bear Is Sound Asleep*) or Czerwone Gitary's *Pluszowy miś* (*The Plush Bear*), which included lyrics like: "the little bear was afraid to go into the forest / he trembled like a leaf / the plush bear".

This peculiar trend was not limited to the early days of bigbit, as evidenced by Czesław Niemen's 1968 song *Baw się w ciuciubabkę* (*Let's Play Hide-and-Seek*). Undoubtedly, this could alienate the more demanding segment of the youth audience. Music journalist Wiesław Królikowski wrote about the causes of this situation:

> […] in the 1960s, that is, at the beginning of domestic rock's career, song lyrics could be described at best as 'for youth' rather than 'youthful.' The difference between the two lies in the fact that well-known rock performers mostly used lyrics written by a small group of authors. Their age exceeded the average age of the rock audience. Over time, many lyricists became semi-professional, and it was common for one author to collaborate with several performers or bands. It's possible that this unhealthy situation was the result of the actual weakness and imperfection of authorial songwriting in Polish rock at the time. Many young people with ambitions and potential to express themselves through their own musical and lyrical creativity were drawn in the 1960s and 1970s to the strong current of poetic song (Królikowski, 1882).

Andrzej Paweł Wojciechowski emphasized that

> the main theme of songs was love; direct, uncomplicated, and often silly or naïve, they spoke of the problems of girls and boys in love. Two recurring themes were difficulties at school and tensions between parents and teenagers (Wojciechowski, 1976).

Anna Idzikowska-Czubaj, referring to the hit *Niedziela będzie dla nas* (*Sunday Will Be Ours*) by Czerwono-Czarni, observed:

> Previous analyses of native Big Beat lyrics have always led to the conclusion that they had little in common with the general idea of rock'n'roll as music expressing youth rebellion and generational conflict. Youth slang was not adopted in them. The lyrical subject in the songs is no rebel, but rather a hardworking role model who doesn't even have time to meet his girlfriend between one meeting and another (Idzikowska-Czubaj, 2011, p. 142).

The quoted comments, of course, do not exhaust the topic, as they fail to consider the most crucial context shaped by cultural policy. Although party documents more often relied on ideological generalities than specifics, it was easy to infer that the leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), while allowing for a "safe" formula of youth culture, had no intention of permitting its autonomy or relinquishing its role as political gatekeeper and party educator. One reason was the enormous popularity of music bands and their presumed (but also real) influence on the attitudes of young people. Perhaps that is why

lyrics sung by big-bit bands began to show signs of distancing themselves from youth culture and youth fashion. A flagship example is the song *Nie bądź taki Bitels* (*Don't Be Such a Beatle*), written by Jacek Grań (artistic pseudonym of Franciszek Walicki) and performed by Czesław Niemen in 1964. Here is a fragment of the lyrics:

> "Don't be such a Beatle," says my dad to me.
> And mom, as always: Go to the hairdresser!
> Because the barber's chasing you with scissors.
> Cut that mop already, shame on you, son!
> And I say to Dad: Dad, you're backward,
> Dad doesn't even know—that's the fashion now.
> And as for mom, well, that's the mom we've got,
> She's never heard of Liverpool.
> Cut that mop, brother, and don't spite your mom.
> We know it's hard—we've got moms too.
> So when mom nags, there's only one solution:
> Go to the hairdresser, brother, go to the hairdresser! […].

In my book on subcultures in the Polish People's Republic, I wrote in reference to the lyrics above:

> Let's try to empathize with the situation and emotions of the person being addressed. As a fan of Anglo-Saxon rock, he has a clear vision of the world: the West is a space of freedom, the cradle of new music, and young people there look however they want. The People's Republic of Poland, on the other hand, wants to raise its youth according to the convictions of the communist authorities and the imaginings of a peasant-style conservative older generation. Polish youth music, as soon as it becomes an object of fascination, is immediately 'pedagogically corrected'. A comprehensive educational and repressive front is formed, comprising actions by schools, the militia, families, and the media. The message of this front is clear: this is the East, not the West—we will eradicate all foreign moral decay, noisy music, and 'mops' included. Yet those 'mops' seem very attractive to the young Pole, and all attacks on this appealing aesthetic are perceived as ideological, malicious interference and humiliation. (Pęczak, 2013, p. 78).

The intergenerational conflict over boys' long hair in the 1960s and 1970s thus grew into a symbol. Long hair was worn by the Beatles and other British rock bands that conquered America between 1963 and 1965; later, such hairstyles became associated with hippies and counterculture. In any case, these long locks—fought against by conservative parents, teachers, and of course the militia—were above all a sign of defiance and, naturally, a hallmark of Western youth culture.

Of course, there were exceptions. For instance, hits by Niebiesko-Czarni from the late 1960s referenced ecology (*Na betonie kwiaty nie rosną – Flowers Don't Grow on Concrete*) or, in a slightly veiled form, the ideology of flower power and the hippie symbolism of long hair (*Mamy dla was kwiaty – We Have Flowers for You*). A more direct manifestation of youth culture's independence

can be found in earlier songs by Karin Stanek—*Tato kup mi dżinsy* (*Dad, Buy Me Jeans*), *Autostop* (*Hitchhiking*), and *Trzysta tysięcy gitar* (*Three Hundred Thousand Guitars*). These songs celebrated youth fashion (jeans being its emblematic symbol in the 1960s), the practice of free movement via hitchhiking (Robotycki, 2005, p. 26) and, finally, the guitar—an instrument that became a symbol of youth music.

The guitar, as an emblematic instrument of youth music, became a symbol of generational identity. After the events of March 1968, the distrust of party officials toward Western pop culture intensified—ironically, in direct proportion to the growing interest of political authorities in youth music. A pivotal moment was the assessment of two Warsaw concerts by The Rolling Stones in April 1967. Following riots outside the Congress Hall, where the band performed twice, Minister of Culture Lucjan Motyka wrote to Władysław Gomułka the next day, informing him that he had issued a ban on "[…] inviting to Poland bands whose performances might cause similar public disturbances" (Bittner, 2017, p. 76).

In June 1969, the Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (KC PZPR) conducted a critical review of entertainment programming on Polish Television (TVP). In Karolina Bittner's book analyzing the cultural policy of the PZPR in the realm of musical entertainment, we read:

> Faced with the popularity of Big Beat, the Culture Department of the KC PZPR supported all initiatives promoting the so-called middle-of-the-road song. The Opole Festival, as well as television programs—*Kabaret Starszych Panów* (*The Old Gentlemen's Cabaret*), *Listy śpiewające* (*Singing Letters*), and Lucjan Kydryński's shows, such as *Giełda Piosenki* (*Song Exchange*)—shaped Polish musical tastes. Among the valuable and beautiful songs promoted by *Giełda Piosenki*, the Culture Department listed: *Niepewność* (*Uncertainty*), *Gondolierzy znad Wisły* (*Gondoliers from the Vistula*), *Zapomniałam* (*I Forgot*), *Opolskie dziouchy* (*Opole Girls*), *Jest bałałajka* (*There's a Balalaika*), and *Cała sala śpiewa z nami* (*The Whole Hall Sings with Us*) (Bittner, 2017, p. 193).

A clarification is necessary here: Lucjan Kydryński hosted the television program *Muzyka lekka, łatwa i przyjemna* (*Light, Easy and Pleasant Music*), while the creator and first host of the TV show *Giełda Piosenki* (*Song Exchange*) was Lech Terpiłowski. Kydryński occasionally appeared as a presenter on the radio show of the same name. Additionally, the authors (and main performers) of *Kabaret Starszych Panów* (*The Old Gentlemen's Cabaret*) were Jeremi Przybora and Jerzy Wasowski, and *Listy śpiewające* (*Singing Letters*) was created by Agnieszka Osiecka. The Department justified its evaluation as follows:

> We care about every new, good song that brings joy to people. We especially care about attractive and modern youth music that reflects the interests, joys, reflections, and sometimes even doubts of the younger generation. It must be said clearly that we particularly care about songs that speak not only of love and joy, but also embed in the subconscious of the listener such values as love of the homeland and pride in a job well done (Bittner, 2017, p. 76).

The essence of the Department's position boiled down to the authorities' expectation that songwriters fulfill propagandistic functions. "Pride in a job well done" suggests a nostalgic longing among party ideologues for the socialist realist version of popular culture—an approach unlikely to enhance the appeal of songs built on such premises. However, "love of the homeland" quite often became a theme in Big Beat compositions.

In the second half of the 1960s, especially after the events of March 1968, a "partisan-soldier" trend emerged in youth music, most prominently represented by bands such as Czerwone Gitary and No To Co. The rise of this phenomenon was tied to immediate ideological demands and the influence of nationalist currents within the party apparatus. The goal was to highlight the younger generation's tribute to war heroes, counteract so-called cosmopolitan tendencies, and resist youth fashion imported from the West.

Songs serving this purpose included *Po ten kwiat czerwony* (*For That Red Flower*) by No To Co, *Niebieskooka* (*Blue-Eyed Girl*) and *Biały krzyż* (*White Cross*) by Czerwone Gitary, and the hit *Już lat 25* (*It's Been 25 Years*) by ABC, written to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the end of World War II. "Boys and girls walk the streets / Thinking of the soldiers who fought for them," sang Wojciech Gąssowski with a group ABC.

All these songs were hits at the Soldiers' Song Festival in Kołobrzeg, whose repertoire consistently reflected the current propagandistic definition of patriotism. It is worth noting, however, that these songs almost always wrapped their "patriotic" messages in a seemingly modern pop format. "Girls walk the streets / Thinking of the soldiers who fought for them" — sang Wojciech Gąssowski with ABC. All the songs mentioned above were hits at the Soldiers' Song Festival in Kołobrzeg, whose repertoire consistently reflected the current propagandistic definition of patriotism. It is worth emphasizing, however, that these songs almost always wrapped their "patriotic" messages in a quasi-modern pop format (Pęczak, 2015).

Nevertheless, the content of these works was most often derived from a heavily trivialized poetic style. In addition to the formulaic partisan ballad, we find here sentimental depictions of native landscapes. Perhaps the most striking example is the song *Najpiękniejsza jest moja ojczyzna* (*My Homeland Is the Most Beautiful*), composed by the band No To Co to mark the 25th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic:

My homeland is the most beautiful
When it awakens from sleep in spring.
Its day begins with birdsong
And the scent of jasmine and lilac.
By the roads, tall poplars
In summer nearly reach the sky,
Sad willows braid their tresses,

The sun ripens in the clouds like a lily.
When the hot summer passes
And storks fly across the seas,
Golden autumn in a leafy dress
Paints colorful pictures, paints.
Winter puts on white dresses,
Brings snow stars to the roof,
Bows with its branches in the wind,
As if inviting us for a walk.
Where forests and mountains are more beautiful,
Where the lark sings so sweetly in the fields,
Where clouds rush across the sky,
Where wheat ripens golden, ripens.
Our homeland is the most beautiful
When it awakens from sleep in the morning.
Its day begins with birdsong
And the scent of jasmine and lilac."

It is difficult to determine whether this was a conscious inspiration, but the character of the lyrics strongly resembles the poetry of "domestic" romantics—Pol, Syrokomla, Lenartowicz—whose depictions of rustic landscapes were intended, among other things, to evoke the "love of the homeland" cited earlier in the party document. There are, however, songs in the Big Beat repertoire in which the tradition of nature descriptions merges with soldierly and veteran themes. One such example is the song performed by Jacek Lech, vocalist of Czerwono-Czarni, at the Opole Festival in 1969: *Gdzie szumiące topole* (*Where the Whispering Poplars Grow*), with music by Piotr Figiel and lyrics by Janusz Kondratowicz. At the Opole Festival in 1969, Jacek Lech of Czerwono-Czarni performed the song *Gdzie szumiące topole* (*Where the Whispering Poplars Grow*), with music by Piotr Figiel and lyrics by Janusz Kondratowicz. The lyrics read:

Dust from the road beneath my feet
First green fields before my eyes
Once my father returned here from Oka river
Once he came back, back to this place
Where the whispering poplars
Reach high into the sky
Where the willow bows
To wandering clouds
Where on the Vistula's sandy banks
Nets tangle across the paths
Where birds seek shelter
Before flying on
Where every house
Has open doors
Where the whitewashed orchards
Bloom with colorful flowers
Where cornflowers and poppies

Guard the quiet by the roadside
Where a stranger passing by
Is a welcome guest

A spectacular culmination of Bigbit's political engagement on the side of the authorities was undoubtedly the song *Union of Polish Socialist Youth* from Czerwone Gitary's repertoire, composed in 1975 (music by Seweryn Krajewski, lyrics by Krzysztof Dzikowski). Here is a fragment:

From all corners of the land
A common song is heard;
From the factories, from vast steelworks,
From fields where bread grows:

The Union of Polish Socialist Youth
Unites, unites youth from towns and villages.
The Union of Polish Socialist Youth –
Our shared path, the slogan of our days.

The Union of Polish Socialist Youth
Leads us forward through work.
The Union of Polish Socialist Youth
Builds a better world through shared struggle […]

In Marek Gaszyński's book *Czerwone Gitary. Nie spoczniemy…*, We read that this anthem was written exclusively for a contest announced to celebrate the creation of the *Union of Polish Socialist Youth*. The song was, in fact, commissioned by Zdzisław Kurowski, a member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR and newly appointed chairman of the main council of the *Union of Polish Socialist Youth*. The offer was personally extended to Krzysztof Dzikowski, who later authored multiple lyrics and worked in UPSY as "the song expert." Marek Gaszyński adds that in 1975, another song by the Krajewski–Dzikowski duo was created on a similar theme: *Młodość naszą siłą* (*Youth Is Our Strength*). Both songs were performed at a ceremonial concert in Warsaw's Congress Hall, celebrating the unification congress of youth organizations, and both were included on a commemorative album. (Gaszyński, 2005, p. 151). 1960s Big Beat generally followed the mainstream of musical entertainment, coexisting on festival stages with more traditional genres. Moreover, as a highly popular genre, it felt ideological pressure and often succumbed to it. This was especially evident in moments when Big Beat performers were engaged in propaganda activities and tasked with fulfilling objectives set by the party apparatus. Such was the case after the events of March 1968.

One manifestation of this engagement was the practice of incorporating folk music into Big Beat repertoire. This practice dates back to the very beginnings of bigbit, when bands like Niebiesko-Czarni performed songs such as *Płynie Wisła, płynie* (*The Vistula Flows*), *Głęboka studzienka* (*The Deep Well*), and *Kawaliry* (*The Cavaliers*)—songs known from the repertoire of state folk song and dance

ensembles. Skaldowie boldly drew on highland folklore, while Trubadurzy modeled their songs on East Slavic, especially Russian, folk traditions. However, the greatest contribution in this field undoubtedly came from the band No To Co (full name: Grupa Skifflowa No To Co).

Founded in Łódź and led by Piotr Janczerski, the band was present at all major popular music festivals and consistently generated enthusiastic responses from audiences—thanks both to their musical craftsmanship and the specific nature of their songs, nearly all of which appealed to mass tastes. Press coverage also played a role. In July 1968, Krystian Brodacki wrote in "Polityka" magazine:

> I attended a concert featuring the group No To Co. What I saw and heard defied all expectations. No To Co took the stage dressed in… Polish folk costumes, and they even brought a *turoń* with them. Then they began singing Polish folk melodies in a Big Beat rhythm! And something even stranger happened—the youth gathered in the hall began singing along in chorus: *Zasiali górale* (*The Highlanders Have Sown*), *W murowanej piwnicy* (*In the Stone Cellar*), *Hej, górol, ci jo górol* (*Hey, Highlander, I Am a Highlander*). I do not hesitate to say that the boys from No To Co performed a miracle that no one in Poland had achieved before. Through Big Beat 'profanation,' they opened teenagers' ears to the beauty of our folk music and taught them to sing! And if they wanted to transfer this experiment to the realm of mass songs with social and educational themes, I believe they could succeed again (Michalski, 2014, p. 326).

The Lublin-based magazine "Kamena" reported with peculiar enthusiasm in June 1969:

> They dress colorfully, but when they took the stage! *Kierezyje*, *kapy*, *pasy słuckie*—a mix of styles, eras, and regions, yet somehow it all looked folk-like. Stefanek in a purple *sukmana*! Rybiński, who plays bass guitar and wears the hair and mustache of a typical peasant, in an embroidered peasant shirt. Piotrek in red trousers, boots with high tops, and spurs (Michalski, 2014, p. 364).

The idea of folklorism—or more precisely, *neo-folklorism*[2]—when applied to the social function of this musical genre, clearly had political and educational significance. Broadly speaking, it aimed to neutralize the "cosmopolitanism" expressed in fascination with Anglo-Saxon rock by opposing it with musical (and not only musical) "localness." These efforts were designed to incorporate the expectations and tastes of more traditional audiences, aligning with their "folk" taste, as Pierre Bourdieu would define it (Bourdieu, 2005, pp. 43–48). The authorities found it especially useful to exploit generational divides in musical preferences, particularly since this "folk taste" could—contrary to Bourdieu's concept and after appropriate ideological and aesthetic processing—serve as a "legitimate taste," that is, a hegemonic one.

[2] For distinction from the well-known and frequently described "primary" version of folklorism, I introduce this term assuming that neo-folklorism does not have to be based on so-called folk authenticity, but often turns to forms resulting from prior stylization (folklorization), or treats said authenticity as a purely symbolic or even entirely conventional frame of reference.

The folklorization (*neo-folklorization*) of Big Beat undoubtedly contributed to stabilizing the genre's place within the mainstream of Polish popular music. At the same time, however, it clearly distanced Big Bit from the universal idiom of rock. As a result, Big Bit ceased to be attractive to younger audiences and, by the 1970s, had become a musical relic—an element of the repertoire for less significant events or wedding receptions. A new era had begun: **the era of the disco**.

In the process, the concept of youth culture also lost its edge. It could be said that the term "youth culture" had outdated itself, just like the youth it originally referred to, and just like the concept of big beat. Furthermore, educational institutions were unsure how to cope with a situation defined on the one hand by disco, and on the other by the growing appeal of youth subcultures. The true effects of this situation, however, would come later – in the last decade of the Polish People's Republic.

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Kultura młodzieżowa w PRL lat 60. XX wieku. Pedagogika big-beatu

Streszczenie

Głównym tematem niniejszego artykułu jest funkcjonowanie muzyki młodzieżowej (tzw. big-beat) w Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej w latach 60. XX wieku. Istotnym kontekstem był wpływ edukacyjny oferowanej muzyki, podobnie jak poddanie jej presji politycznej i zasadom partyjnej polityki kulturalnej. W tym celu konieczne było odtworzenie sytuacji społecznej i specyfiki historycznej w odniesieniu do opisywanych faktów. Zastosowane metody obejmowały analizę tekstów piosenek, analizę wybranych aspektów polityki kulturalnej oraz badanie procesów historycznych wpływających na kulturę młodzieżową.

Słowa kluczowe: młodzież, kultura młodzieżowa, muzyka młodzieżowa, big-beat, polityka kulturalna, Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa.