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Foreign Policy of the Polish People's Republic on Mexico 1945-1989

In the period between 1945-1989, Polish-Mexican relations were determined by the Cold War rivalry. Poland remained in the Soviet sphere of influence and its sovereignty was limited by Moscow. Although controlled by the Kremlin, Poland had its own initiatives in foreign policy. Warsaw considered Mexico to be the most important partner in Latin America (not to mention the communist ally, Castro of Cuba), thus Polish diplomacy made many efforts to strengthen mutual political, cultural and economic relations. Mexico, with its independent foreign policy, progressive state ideology and tremendous market, seemed a particularly valuable partner in Latin America to the Polish communist leaders. The climax of Polish diplomatic initiatives occurred in the 1970s. Mexico was also interested in cooperation with Poland, especially in its economic dimension but the result of the efforts was mixed. The poor performance of Polish-Mexican economic relations when compared with the Mexican commercial exchange with other East European countries proves that the efforts of the Polish government in the economic sphere were rather futile. Political relations were good, however geopolitically both countries belonged to different spheres. The special, independent position of Mexico in world politics made such friendly relations possible.

Key words: Polish-Mexican relations, diplomatic history, history of international relations, cold war, foreign policy of Polish People's Republic, Latin America

Introduction

The end of the Second World War brought a fundamental and dramatic change to Poland. There was a new geopolitical situation, in which a new form of the Polish state emerged. However, in 1945 it was still not clear what the scope of Polish freedom under Soviet control would be and if Poland and other Central-European countries would be a subject of Stalinization. It was, nevertheless obvious, that Poland would not be an independent and sovereign country. The new position of Poland was a consequence of political decisions that were made by the Allies at the conferences in Teheran (1943) and Yalta (1945), later confirmed in Potsdam (1945). The

Western Powers *de facto* acknowledged Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, however US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister W. Churchill believed that countries of the region would be allowed to maintain some independence. For that reason, US and British leaders unequivocally endorsed the idea of creating a new Polish government. This new government was to be formed mainly from politicians of the pro-Soviet left in Poland and not the numerous politicians of the Polish Government in Exile in London who were acceptable for the Kremlin and accepted the offer of taking positions in the new Polish authorities. The agreement between the allied powers led to the creation of the Provisional Government of National Unity of Poland. In that situation, the US and Great Britain withdrew diplomatic recognition of the Polish Government in Exile. (*Historia dyplomacji...* 56-111; Wandycz 236-306)

A majority of countries did the same and diplomatically recognized the new, provisional Polish government. Only several states, such as the Holy See and Spain of General Franco maintained recognition for and diplomatic relations with the Polish government in London. In the same time, new authorities in Warsaw took efforts to build a new foreign service and establish diplomatic relations with countries where the previous Polish ambassadors and envoys still worked and represented the government which, in their opinion, was still the only legal one.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Polish Government of National Unity and Mexico

The decisions that were made by the participants of the Crimea Conference on Poland forced other countries to decide whether to accept the new Polish authorities or to continue the relations with the Polish Government in Exile. The Mexican Ambassador to London sent an urgent telegram to his Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking for instructions on March 1, 1945 (*Polska-Meksyk* 131). Initially, the Mexican government refrained from any action but recommended monitoring the British policy and the steps that would be taken by Britain and the government in exile in London (*Polska-Meksyk* 131).

The fact of establishing the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity was notified to Latin American embassies in Moscow by the Polish Embassy there. Only Mexico accepted that method of notification. In fact, it was an unusual deviation from diplomatic procedure (an act of notification belongs to the government). Moreover, since there were many Polish refugees in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, the Polish authorities should have paid more attention to the proper form of establishing of diplomatic relations (*Historia dyplomacji...* 241-242).

Through the recognition of the new Polish government, Mexico followed the decisions of powers. Consequently, since they withdrew recognition of the Polish Government in London and recognized the newly established government in Poland, the Mexican authorities took the same position and informed the Polish envoy to Mexico that his mission was finalized. The official announcement pointed out two reasons of the decision: the notification of establishing the new Polish Government of National Unity and the decisions of other governments that kept diplomatic relations with the Polish Government in Exile so far and withdrew their recognition (*Polska-Meksyk* 132-133).

However, the new Polish foreign service was established in difficult conditions of growing influence of communist ideology and in unfavorable conditions of emerging dictatorship, there were people of experience in public service of the Second Republic of Poland who became involved in rebuilding the Polish foreign service (*Historia dyplomacji...* 18). One of them was Jan Drohojowski, a well-educated diplomat with a good professional record who became the first post-war Polish Envoy to Mexico. As before the Second World War, relations between Poland and Mexico were organized at the level of Envoys (Legations). This was a lower rank of diplomatic representation, but still a very popular type of mission in diplomatic relations in the 20th century.

With the tightening of political and ideological constraints in Poland, communist authorities carried out a purge of foreign service (1949-1951). Poland lost experienced diplomats who were replaced by badly trained, indoctrinated officers, unable to take any initiative which was not even expected by Stalinist authorities (Tebinka 15). Drohojowski's mission to Mexico ended in 1951, in the climax of Stalinism in Poland.

It is worth noting that the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to nominate the first Polish representative in Latin America just to Mexico. Drohojowski was a great admirer of Mexico, its culture and people. From the very beginning of his mission to that country he was very active and his activity was not limited only to Mexico. He also became the Polish representative to several other Latin American countries that he keenly visited. Drohojowski was very social and he established good relations with many figures of Mexican political and cultural life (Drohojowski 270-278). This is, without doubt, a valuable feature of a diplomat. Anyway, he did not establish close relations with the Polish Diaspora in Mexico. There were not very many immigrants from Poland in Mexico. Those who came in the Interwar Period belonged mainly to lower social classes and a majority of them were of Jewish nationality (Łepkowski, "Z dziejów" 88). Drohojowski remained in contact mainly with those who sympathized with the new Polish government, rather a tiny group. However, in his opinion, even those who identified themselves with a direction of postwar transformation of Poland did not endorse the Polish position in Mexico (Drohojowski 280-281; Chmielewski 37).

The question of the Polish refugees camp in Santa Rosa was one of the first and most urgent problems that the new Polish representative had to face. The history of the Polish settlement there is one of the most decent examples of Mexico's humanitarian aid. It was a place where a group of over 1400 Poles found shelter. Their previous experience was horrible but illustrative for many Polish citizens after the occupation of Poland in 1939. Soviet authorities deported hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens from the Eastern territories of occupied Poland to the deep interior of the Soviet Union, where they were victims of violence, they suffered from starvation and became forced laborers. The situation of Poles in the "inhuman land" (following the title of Józef Czapski's famous book) changed after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, when the USSR joined the western Allies and reestablished diplomatic relations with the Polish Government in Exile in 1941. Both governments decided that the Polish Army in the USSR would be formed. However, when this Army was evacuated from the Soviet Union, civilians (many of them women and children) also had to be evacuated. The Mexican government agreed to admit a group of Polish refugees. According to an agreement between the Polish and American governments,

the Polish refugee camp in Mexico was to be financed by the US administration. The final decisions were made when Polish Prime Minister, General Władysław Sikorski visited Mexico in 1942. It is worth noting that the Mexican president expressed sincere admiration for the Polish war effort and relations between the two governments were really satisfying (Chmielewski 17-26; Jacewicz, 37-38).

When Drohojowski became an Envoy, he had to face the problem of the Polish refugee settlement's future. Before coming to Mexico, Drohojowski had a conversation with the US Department of State representative on that subject and was informed that the United States declared only to finance the camp during wartime but was going to terminate the aid. Drohojowski refrained from any decisions regarding the camp's future (Drohojowski 269). Eventually, the decision on closing the camp was delayed (Chmielewski 177). The US authorities decided that as long as the US administration financed the camp, only Americans would administer it and take care of Polish citizens. The problem of the future of the Polish community in the settlement remained in American's hand and a great role was played not by Mexico Drohojowski, the Envoy to, but by Jan Ciechanowski, the Ambassador to Washington who represented the Polish Government in Exile (Chmielewski 179). Even though the Polish Legation appealed to the Polish refugees in Santa Rosa to come back to liberated Poland, only a tiny group of refugees wanted to go back to the pro-Soviet Poland and it seems that their main motivation was the will to reunite with their families and not the acceptance of new system that was emerging in Poland (*Polska-Meksyk* 133-134; Chmielewski 209).

Relations between Poland and Mexico in the early period of the Cold War

The radical change of the political situation in Poland did not worsen the mutual relations between Poland and Mexico. On the contrary, political positions of Poland and Mexico after the Second World War became closer in important spheres. In the interwar period the relations between the two countries were, to some extent, determined by significant differences of official state ideology. Poland was a conservative country where the influence of the Catholic Church was tremendous while Mexico experienced revolutionary changes and became a country that implemented a strict separation of the church and state. However there were not many international issues that affected the interests of both countries to the same extent. The foreign policy of Poland and Mexico differed in the important question of the Spanish Civil War. Poland ruled by a right-wing, authoritarian government supported General Franco while Mexico remained one of the strongest allies of the Spanish Republic. The Mexican political elite was very critical on Polish clericalism and authoritarianism. Poland was also perceived as an underdeveloped country, with a very high number of illiterate people. In its review of Polish political, social and economic situation, the Mexican diplomatic mission emphasized Mexican superiority over Poland. There was a lot of exaggerated criticism of Poland in Mexican reports from Warsaw and they proved huge ideological differences between the two countries (Łepkowski, "Polska-Meksyk" 202-208). It is worth mentioning, that a picture of Mexico in Poland was also not appealing.

The fact that Communists established their rule in Poland could have been considered in Mexico as a chance to establish a definitely more progressive system that guaranteed social justice. In the postwar period, Poland had the closest relations with revolutionary Cuba among all the Latin American countries (since 1960), however the relations between Warsaw and Havana were not ideal, especially when one takes the differences of economic interests into consideration (Kula 110-113). Apart from the "special relations" between Warsaw and Havana, Mexico remained the closest partner among all Latin American countries (Łepkowski, "Z dziejów" 92-93).

This does not mean that the ideologies that dominated in the political and social life of both governments in the postwar period were identical. One should remember that the socially progressive Mexican government was anticommunist at the same time. Anticommunism strongly influenced Mexican political life and although Mexico traditionally opposed the US domination in the Western Hemisphere, this country was neither under Soviet influence nor looked for an alliance with Moscow.

Moreover, Polish diplomacy in Mexico had to take not only the official line of government into consideration. The position of the Catholic Church was undermined by progressive reforms of the Mexican Revolution, this institution still influenced the social life of this country and could also influence the Catholic opinion not only in Mexico. The Polish Envoy was concerned with very critical opinions on Poland that were spread by the leading Catholic daily newspaper. Thus he worked on improving relations with the Mexican Catholic Church (in the name of the "*Paris vaut un messe*," principle, as Jan Drohojowski wrote himself). According to his relation, he was able to persuade the archbishop of Mexico to abandon a criticism that was based mainly on the opinions of the Catholic Church in the US. Drohojowski argued that the Catholic Church in Poland had far more liberty than in Mexico. (Drohojowski 282-283). However, unbelievable as it may seem, the argumentation of the Polish Ambassador was somehow relevant to the Polish reality back then. In the 1940s, until the process of Stalinization began, some forms of public presence of the Church in Poland still existed.

The political and ideological challenges were not as important in Polish-Mexican relations as were economic issues. Latin America was definitely not a priority of the Polish foreign policy in the interwar period. After the Second World War, the Polish foreign policy became a subject of growing ideological pressure and the Polish foreign service was organized in very difficult conditions. In such circumstances, in the very first years after the war, Warsaw reduced its efforts merely to establish and maintain diplomatic relations with Latin American countries. The Polish authorities were interested mainly in a commercial exchange and Polish-Mexican relations were the perfect example of that tendency. Mexico was also interested in accelerating a commercial exchange with Poland. The Mexican Envoy to Poland questioned the Polish authorities whether there was a possibility of increasing the commercial exchange and received an answer that Poland was interested in "any kind of exchange", even if such an exchange was based on compensation (goods for goods). (*Polska-Meksyk* document 41 and 42). The main obstacle in the process of developing economic relations were caused by differences between the economies of Poland and Mexico. Poland did not want to accept the most favored nation clause in mutual relations since adopting it was risky for a centrally-planned economy. The Polish economy adopted the strict rationing of goods and for that reason the Polish

government refrained from accepting the most favored nation clause in commercial agreements with foreign countries then. The negotiations with Mexico that were conducted in Warsaw failed. (*Historia dyplomacji...* 400-401).

Polish foreign policy in the Cold War era was never independent, but the worst period lasted undoubtedly until 1956. The process of Stalinization that affected all spheres of political, economic and social life of Poland also embraced diplomacy. There was hardly any independent judgement and activity among the officers of the foreign service; the role of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Central Committee of Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) grew. The Department initially focused on Poland's relations with other communist countries but in fact controlled the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Polish foreign policy. (*Historia dyplomacji...* 287-289).

Polish foreign policy and Mexico in the era of post-Stalinist liberalization

Poland regained some independence due to the destalinization process that began in 1953 and climaxed in 1956. The death of Stalin opened a process of loosening ideological and political control of the USSR over its satellite states. It led to the change of political leaders in Eastern Europe: in Poland Stalinists were replaced by Władysław Gomułka, a doctrinaire communist but also a politician who believed that communist ideology did not cancel national interest and the national specific of the country. The author of a monograph devoted to the history of Polish diplomacy in that period claims that 1956 was a breakthrough year for Polish Peoples' Republic diplomacy. Gomułka's strong position and the changes that took place in the USSR significantly broadened the margin of independence of Polish foreign policy. (Tebinka 15-43).

Poland intended to use its more autonomous foreign policy to create and develop economic relations with non-communist countries. The question of Poland's western border and its international recognition remained one of the main priorities of the foreign policy. Poland wanted to establish diplomatic relations with Western Germany and gain the recognition of Bonn and the West (the US) for Poland's western borders (Tyszkiewicz 137-160). For that reason, Polish diplomacy undertook many efforts to achieve international support for this demand. Among countries that were the subject of Polish diplomatic initiatives were those that belonged to or sympathized with the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. What is interesting, the Soviet Union which attempted to gain influence in Latin America in vain, intended to use Poland and Czechoslovakia as a tool of communist penetration in that region (Tebinka 263).

Mexico's foreign policy during Adolfo López Mateos's presidency that adopted a more independent course in international relations, "invited" socialist Poland to such initiatives. The policy of López Mateos's administration aimed at achieving some kind of independence from the United States and take a position closer to non-aligned countries. (Pettina 742). Oskar Lange, the Deputy Head of the Polish Council of State paid a visit to Mexico to attend the presidential oath ceremony. In an interview for the Mexican daily *Exelcior* on 3 December 1958, Lange emphasized the progressive nature of both systems. Lange, who was a well-known and esteemed

representative of Marxist political economy, considered the socially progressive nature of the Mexican and Polish systems as a factor that made the cooperation of both countries possible and natural. (*Polska-Meksyk* 140). Lange also expressed the opinion that the Mexican Revolution and "ways of its implementation" were a subject of interest in Poland (*Polska-Meksyk* 141-142). Those words should not be considered only as the kindness of a politician that visited a foreign country. Mexico might have been a study case for Lange and other theorists of political economy in Poland as an example of a country that adopted many socialist mechanisms and experienced economic growth.

Lange's attendance during the President's swearing in ceremony proved Poland's will to deepen mutual relations, but it was a visit of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Winiewicz that was of real political significance.

Winiewicz was in Mexico in April and May 1960 and had talks with chiefs of foreign affairs and economic departments of the Mexican government. Winiewicz discussed the problem of Poland's western border hoping that the Mexican government would support Poland's position in the international arena. Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs Manuel Tello told Winiewicz "we share your view" but this declaration had no further consequences. (Tebinka 268).

The decade of 1960s seemed to bring progress in economic relations between the two countries. President Lopez Mateos paid a visit to Poland and Polish Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz visited Mexico in 1963. Those visits and talks led to the signing of a commercial agreement between Poland and Mexico. It is worth noticing that till that moment there was no such agreement between the two countries. Moreover, the economic exchange was on very low level and irregular. The agreement of 1963 was supposed to change the situation: both countries accepted the most favored nation clause. But Mexican Congress did not ratify the agreement with Poland and it remained only an expression of good will (Rapacki 244-245; Smyk, and Grudziński 93).

Definitely, one of the most important developments in mutual relations was the elevation of the status of the diplomatic mission to ambassadorship rank, which occurred on September 3, 1960. Poland made an initiative for such an advancement and Manuel Tello, Chief of Mexican diplomacy, expressed readiness to advance the rank in June 1959 (*Polska-Meksyk* 143-144). The 150th Anniversary of Mexican independence was an occasion to make such an agreement. (*Historia dyplomacji...* 581-582).

Efforts to strengthen the position of Poland in Latin America in the 1970s

Eventually, the significant change of mutual relations was possible in the decade of the 1970s. Both countries had new leaders. Additionally, the geopolitical situation in the world changed since the era of détente had begun. Polish foreign policy in that decade was determined by the growing economic demands of Poland. In the 1970s, Mexico was among the most important economic partners of Poland in Latin America (Smyk, and Grudziński 94). A new First Secretary of Polish United Workers' Party, *de facto* leader of the state, Edward Gierek announced and initiated an ambitious

modernization program. The leaders of the Party and the state aimed to achieve quick economic growth that should bring about an improvement of the standard of living in Poland (Leszczyński 352-358). There are many common traits of economic policy of the Polish communist government and Latin American governments in the 1970s. Poland, as Latin American countries, focused on investments aimed to accelerate economic growth and made the country less dependent on the "center" countries. As we know, the economic policy of that technocratic team ended with total failure. It was impossible to compromise a program of expansive development with the constraints of a centrally planned and socialist economy which was characterized by permanent economic imbalance (Kuczyński, 126-149).

In the first phase of Gierek's "great leap," the Polish society experienced an increase in the living standard that was unprecedented in the postwar period. Initially, optimism prevailed not only among people, but also among members of Gierek's technocratic team. To achieve the aims of that policy Poland sought for economic cooperation with non-communist countries. The ambitious program of development required capital that the Polish economy lacked. This led to cooperation with "capitalist countries" as the West was called in Marxist terminology. It is significant that the policy of the "great leap" in Poland led to similar consequences as in Latin America, namely to the debt crisis. Poland, as Mexico, fell into a debt trap in the beginning of the 1980s and similarly was unable to repay neither the capital of the debt, nor the interest rates. The mechanism of the debt trap was also very much alike in case of Poland and Latin American countries. Initially, the countries benefited from the very low interest rates. In fact, real interest rates were negative in that period. Poland and Mexico believed that their ambitious development programs would accelerate economic growth. Both countries adopted an assumption that an expected growth of GNP would provide the capital necessary to repay the loan. No one expected the radical growth of interest rates that was a consequence of the US policy of fighting stagflation. Polish and Mexican economies experienced dramatic crisis that suppressed both economies in the 1980s. (Franko 80-90; Kuczyński, 131-133; Sowa 407-409, 441-442).

Before the crisis occurred, the Polish government believed that the acceleration of economic growth required the development of international economic cooperation with countries that were potential markets on one hand and a source of raw materials on the other. There is no surprise that economic cooperation with developing countries was among the priorities of Polish diplomacy in that decade. The third world or developing countries remained one of the targets of foreign policy of Poland also for ideological reasons. As we pointed out, the Soviet Union and its satellites focused on Asia, Africa and Latin America as potential allies in global confrontation. The 1970s was a special decade in the cold war period (*Historia dyplomacji...* 662).

The prognosis of the Polish Embassy to Mexico relating to the future of mutual relations was very optimistic. Mexico was described as "one of the biggest developing countries, with great natural resources (...) and highly complementary with the Polish economy" (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1972* 419). The newly appointed Ambassador, Mieczysław Grad, cabled to Warsaw that Mexican economic contrasts and the long tradition of US influence in this country made Mexico particularly susceptible to leftist radicalism. Poland should observe this with sympathy (*Polskie*

Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1972 419). Grad claimed that Poland had a really good reputation in Mexico. But this popularity should be strengthened through economic cooperation. The Polish Ambassador complained that Eastern Germany ("without their own diplomatic mission") had far greater commercial exchange with Mexico (USD 4 million per year) than Poland (USD 1 million). Czechoslovakia had a commercial exchange with Mexico worth USD 6 million. This must have been frustrating for the Polish Ambassador (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1972 420). Grad bluntly stated that "it is true that it is difficult to trade with Latinos because they talk and don't do," but it was a problem that other countries dealt with successfully. Why not Poland? It seems that the poor record of Polish-Mexican commercial exchange was a consequence of Polish neglect. The Polish Ambassador pointed out that Poland should care more for its own promotion in Mexico. A "special infrastructure of commercial and general cooperation" should be created (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1972 421). The future initiatives of the Copernican Year proved that such initiatives were implemented, at least to some extent. Grad greatly hoped that Echeverría's presidency opened new possibilities for Poland in Mexico. He described that Mexican president as "closer to the left" and really interested in broadening relations with Poland. Even the anticommunist public declarations were, in the eyes of the Polish Ambassador, merely a rhetoric aimed to appease the radical right in Mexico (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1972 422). The full telegram proves Grad's fascination with the Mexican President and his deep belief in the perspectives that this presidency brought to Polish-Mexican relations. The ambassador called for new initiatives in Warsaw, to use the chance that Echeverría's new foreign policy had created.

Relations between Poland and Mexico were really correct if not friendly at that time. It is significant that when the Polish government decided to withdraw members of their diplomatic mission from Chile after the coup d'état of 1973, Poland intended to ask Mexico for diplomatic representation in that country and the protection of Polish citizens there (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1973 503). Eventually, Poland requested Switzerland to represent its diplomatic interests in Chile, but the fact that Mexico was considered in first order proves the really good relations.

The document that was worked out in 1974 by the Department of Foreign Affairs of the PUWP's Central Committee and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (which once again proves that the combination of the structures of the communist party and the state) gives us a very interesting view on the aims of foreign policy. The document was approved by the Politburo, which also made its own extra suggestions. The important thing is that the Politburo expected a more significant development of relations with African and Latin American states. The leaders of the PUWP pointed out that such a development of relations should be achieved by the frequent visits of politicians, scientists and experts. It should open the door for the development of economic relations, one of the priorities of the Polish People's Republic foreign policy (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1974 6). Leaders of party and the state understood that "(...) economic, scientific and cultural growth of Poland is linked to foreign policy" (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1974 7). Polish leaders valued the benefits of *détente*; they wanted this process of *détente* to be "irreversible" (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1974 8). It should have been achieved through the process of making interdependent relations.

In mid 1970s, Poland further developed relations with Mexico mainly in the area of economic cooperation. Mexico contracted ships in Poland and the commercial exchange between the two countries grew five-fold in 1973. Mexico ordered six tuna fishing vessels in Poland; the contract for the construction of the vessels was worth USD 15 million. The history of that contract gives us a view on the nature of mutual relations in that period. Polish economic diplomacy worked hard on that contract because, as we pointed out, the development of commerce with developing countries was a priority for Polish diplomacy. Poland sought for export markets in order to gain the US dollars and this contract was an example of cooperation in an area in which the economies of both countries could answer their demands. As the Polish Ambassador indicated, Mexico developed its fishing industry, especially in the context of problems in the agricultural sector. There were technical obstacles in the negotiations but the most important problem was of a political nature. Every agreement with a communist country required the political decision of the highest Mexican authorities and the process of negotiations provoked strong opposition of the anticommunist elements in the Mexican government. In that case the decision of President Echeverria himself was necessary and it was made after the visit of Polish Deputy Minister of foreign affairs (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1974 229-231). The decision was facilitated by the fact that the United States refrained from delivering a loan to Mexico. Americans did not intend to support Mexican's project of creating their own shipbuilding industry (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1974 232). One should agree with the Polish ambassador opinion that the entire mechanism proved a close interdependence of the economy and politics in commercial relations between Poland and Mexico (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1974 233). It is interesting that the Polish ambassador emphasized that Polish vodka was on the top of the list of imported goods to Mexico from Poland and only formal limitations were a barrier for the further growth of import.

Polish diplomacy was also active in the ideological and political area. Polish national heroes were actively promoted. The Copernican Year provided an occasion for unveiling a monument of the Polish astronomer in Mexico City. The Embassy judged that Polish Diaspora developed activity through creating a committee to commemorate 30 years of the Polish Peoples' Republic, but this opinion must be considered a traditional ideological phrase that was expected in documents worked out by the bureaucracy of the communist state. The list of activities that Polish diplomacy developed in Mexico as well as suggestions on further steps prove that Poland really focused in the early 1970s on the improvement of bilateral relations. The Polish ambassador emphasized that the visit of President Echeverria in Poland could greatly benefit in that area (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1974 236-238).

Understanding the possibilities of Polish-Mexican rapprochement in mid 1970s is possible when one takes the broader political context into consideration. Poland and Mexico were both interested in the policy of détente which greatly improved economic cooperation. Mexico did not belong to the most ardent anti-communist Latin American countries. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico declared in a conversation with the Polish Deputy Minister that the aims of Mexican policy were concurrent with those of the "socialist countries." What is interesting, Jose S. Galla-stegui positively commented on Kissinger's policy on Latin America. In his opinion, a new US policy would express more fair rules in Interamerican relations. In the

same conversation Mexican diplomat declared rapprochement with Cuba and was unequivocally critical towards Chile (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1974 394-395).

Poland continued the policy of rapprochement with Latin America in the end of the decade. Perhaps in a search of new initiatives that could revive the policy of a country that experienced growing economic problems and social tensions, Poland continued an active policy in Latin America. Henryk Jabłoński paid a visit to Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama in 1979. Jabłoński, a cultural and sophisticated university professor, was a Chairman of State Council, a formal head of a state. However, like in the Soviet Union, Jabłoński's formal position did not correspond with real power that belonged to the chief of a communist party, Jabłoński's visit should not be underestimated because it proved a real Polish interest in Latin America. Poland wanted to emphasize its political activity in the region. Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Józef Czyrek pointed out that Jabłoński's meeting with the Polish Diaspora in this country would be highly indicated. He stressed that it was an initiative of the diaspora in Mexico and "for political reasons (to avoid comments that we isolate ourselves from the Polish Diaspora, we think that we should comply to their request" (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1979 677). It is interesting that, according to Czyrek's account, the Polish Diaspora expected such a meeting and called the Polish Embassy to organize it. It may prove that those who lived in Mexico and had Polish identity did not reject the Polish government for ideological reasons.

The relations with Mexico were defined as a priority for Poland. In the opinion of the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister, Mexico belonged to the most important countries in the region and its role was going to grow because of the discovery of oil deposits. The Polish politician also pointed out that Mexico was held in great respect in Latin America because of its foreign policy. The diplomacy of communist Poland, a country of institutionalized anti-Americanism, valued Mexican independence in relations with the United States. The fact that Mexico did not break relations with Cuba in spite of Washington's pressure was an explicit example of Mexican independence. The Ambassador emphasized that Mexico had good relations with many European countries and this country was officially visited by Fidel Castro in 1979.

Poland aimed to involve Mexico more in a process of *détente* (that was actually in its final stage then). Polish leaders hoped that Mexico would be involved more in building friendly relations between the East and West. It should be understood as a general strategy of Polish diplomacy that aimed to create a world trend for cooperation. The leaders of communist Poland understood that it was in the political and economic interest of Poland to strengthen international cooperation that developed in the 1970s. In the area of political problems, Poland expected that Mexico would be active in peaceful initiatives, especially in an area of the non-proliferation of nuclear arms. But the economy remained the most important area of potential benefits. The Polish Foreign Affairs Office claimed that the economies of Poland and Mexico were complementary, but Czyrek pointed out that cooperation was discontinued even if some agreements were achieved. Mexicans withdrew from the contracts for vessels and the coal mine that was signed with Poles. Poland wanted to cooperate in an area of industry (joint venture), coal mining (*Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* 1979 679-680). Warsaw hoped that the production would be also for other Latin American markets and cooperation with Mexico would make it possible to explore those markets.

Weakening of Polish-Mexican relations in the 1980s

With the beginning of the 1980s, Poland's international activity was overshadowed by a deep internal crisis of the country. It was a crisis of both an economic and political nature. There is a very limited number of publications covering that period of Polish foreign policy. Andrzej Paczkowski, author of the chapter that covers the 1980s in the monumental *History of Polish Diplomacy*, pointed out that historiography focused mainly on the developments in Poland and the policies of foreign countries towards Poland. Even archival research did not provide satisfactory record (*Historia dyplomacji...* 821-825). Poland was immersed in a crisis (marshal law of 1981) and could not demonstrate initiative in foreign policy especially towards Latin America. Polish diplomacy tried to counteract the deteriorating position of Poland that was widely criticized because of the government's repressions towards the Solidarity Movement. Havana declared that the Cuban government would act for the improvement of Poland's reputation in Latin America (*ibidem* 846). Such a declaration proves that Poland's position in Latin America was tremendously deteriorating, especially when compared with the era of the 1970s initiatives. It is difficult to find any example of a significant Polish diplomatic initiative in Mexico in the 1980s. Polish parliamentary officials visited Mexico in 1984 and praised Mexican efforts in peace-building in Central America. Poland and Mexico also signed a consular convention what proved some activity in mutual relations (*Polska-Meksyk* document 72). Poland remained focused on its own problems and the activity of Polish diplomacy in Latin America rather declined. The first, partially free elections in Poland in June 1989 opened a new era of Polish-Mexican relations.

The foreign policy of the Polish People's Republic towards Mexico was determined and limited by the reality of the post-war world confrontation. Poland was not a sovereign country but after 1956 it was able to broaden its relations with Mexico. Poland sought economic cooperation and also tried to develop political and cultural relations. Polish authorities sought Mexican support in those initiatives and projects that were important for Poland. The effects of the Polish initiatives were mixed and definitely not satisfying. The economic cooperation never accelerated to the expected level and Poland was not able to improve its political position in Mexico permanently. It would not be realistic to expect revolutionary changes in the geopolitical situation of a non-sovereign communist country and a geographically distant Latin American country influenced by the United States.

The improvement of mutual political relations, commercial and cultural exchange was possible after the political change of 1989 that ended not only communism but the era of East-West rivalry.

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