

Brewing Studies no. 1, 2026

pp. 77-103

[https://doi.org/
10.12797/BrSt.2026.01.04](https://doi.org/10.12797/BrSt.2026.01.04)

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Marian Belerski's Work as the Director of the Board of the Brewing and Malting Industry in Bydgoszcz from 1945 to 1948

Introduction

Marian Belerski was born on 3 January 1904 in Krotoszyn, a small town near Lviv, to a Jewish family. His family name was Beller, and he started using the surname Belerski after his return from the Gross Born PoW camp. He had used the first name “Marian” during his work for the Lviv Breweries Joint Stock Company (LTAB).¹ He was the only person in his family to attain higher education. Having graduated from primary and secondary school, as well as the Foreign Trade College in Lviv,² Marian Belerski also completed a programme in law at the University of Lviv. During his studies, he earned a living by giving private lessons, working as an administrative clerk and proofreader.³ From 1929 to 1932, Belerski was employed as a trainee lawyer in a Lviv law firm. In 1932, he won the competition for the post of the manager of the legal and credit department in LTAB. While working for the Lviv brewery, he acquainted himself thoroughly with all aspects of its operations, including process engineering. At that time, Belerski was already an active member of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), to which he would remain loyal in the post-war period.⁴

¹ Belerski T. 2023, p. 21.

² The Foreign Trade College was one of the four Polish higher education institutions in Lviv during the inter-war period. The college used the name from 1922 to 1937 but later, in 1937-1939, it was known as the Academy of Foreign Trade; Redzik A. 2006, pp. 106-107.

³ Belerski T. 2023, p. 21.

⁴ PPS was established in 1892 during the so-called “Paris Convention.” In the inter-war period, it played a major role in political life, participating in several coalition governments. Following its split after World War II, the resurgent PPS (or its Lublin faction) formed part of the government. The fate of PPS, with its 500,000 members, was sealed in December 1948 at the unification

The last meeting of the LTAB's supervisory board was held in late August 1939 in Krynica. Belerski used the opportunity to visit Zakopane. On his hike to Kasprowy Wierch, he suffered an accident (leg injury), which forced him to return to Lviv. When he came to work on 1 September, the day when the Second World War broke out, he was the highest-ranking officer of LTAB in the brewery.⁵ In his autobiography, he wrote: *When the Soviet Army entered Lviv, I was selected by company employees as the director of this industrial establishment*⁶. His unpublished journal contains the following entry: *We had to secure the establishment's property, start production and sales, but, first and foremost, take proper care of the families of the drafted ones and provide food for the workers, as the market simply ceased to operate. To this day, I remain in awe of the discipline and sacrifice of my colleagues in the office and blue-collar worker teams (ca. 2,000 people) in the plant.*⁷ Belerski effectively managed product sales and financial matters. At some point, the demand for the brewery's products proved so high that the plant faced production backlogs. The pre-war debt at Bank Dyskontowy, amounting to six million dollars (on which the company regularly paid interest) was paid off in barely six months. Travelling on business in the USSR, Belerski met Anastas Mikojan, the then minister of the food industry, who offered him the position of the director of a combined food collective in Georgia.⁸

On the night of 21/22 June 1941, Belerski took part in the commissioning of a malt house in Dobromil near Przemyśl.⁹ It was in Dobromil where the start of the Soviet-German war found him. He followed some side roads to return to Lviv. When the Germans took the city, he miraculously avoided being arrested; he left with his family to Otwock and then to Warsaw.¹⁰ Aided by Major Ignacy Lubczyński, the family was able to obtain Aryan documents; Belerski and his wife Matylda be-

congress, at which PPS formally joined the Polish Workers' Party. In fact, it was absorbed by the latter to create the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), which ruled the country until 1989. The unified party did not accept a large number of former PPS members (who it considered enemies of the working class), while some of ex-PPS affiliates did not declare their intention of joining the newly formed PZPR, altogether withdrawing from political life; see Stefanowski R. 1992.

⁵ Some men had been drafted and sent to the front, whereas some had not returned to Lviv after the meeting in Krynica.

⁶ At some point Belerski left for Zbarazh. However, when he learned that the Soviet Army had crossed the border, he came back to Lviv, where he immediately reported for work; Belerski T. 2023, p. 26.

⁷ Tadeusz Belerski's Archive, file: Życiorys (Autobiography), n.pag.

⁸ Belerski T. 2023, p. 30.

⁹ The construction of the malt house in Dobromil was a major project carried out by Lviv breweries during the Soviet occupation.

¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 31-39.

came involved in underground resistance work for the Home Army (AK).¹¹ Acting under the nickname Tadeusz, he managed the "Syrena" air drop retrieval team at the AK Headquarters. He also took part in the Warsaw Uprising. For his deeds of valour during the war, Belerski was awarded the Cross of Merit with Swords and the Order of Virtuti Militari.¹² After the fall of the uprising, he was taken to the Gross Born camp, from which he escaped on 16 February 1945, only to reappear in Warsaw.¹³

The early structures of the brewing industry

On the night of New Year's Eve 1944 the State National Council (KRN) appointed the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland. This was a decision fraught with consequences. Acting under the patronage of the USSR, Polish communists established their own government, alternative to the Polish government-in-exile. The latter had its seat in London and functioned as a legitimate continuation of the internationally recognised government of the pre-war Republic of Poland. Simultaneously with the establishment of the Provisional Government, the Polish communists controlled by the USSR asserted authority over the territories west of the so-called Curzon Line occupied by the Red Army.¹⁴ 1 January 1945 saw the establishment of the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers (which replaced the Economic Bureau headed by Hilary Minc), responsible for the country's economic policy. On 1 February 1945, the government moved from Lublin to the almost completely destroyed Warsaw.¹⁵

The system-founding rules of the future Polish state were formulated in the Manifesto of the Polish Committee for National Liberation of 22 July 1944. The Manifesto was a propaganda document which emphasised values such as liberty, equality and democracy, with no mention of the true nature of future changes which ultimately led to the imposition of a political system based on the Soviet playbook.

¹¹ Lieutenant Colonel Lubczyński (1896-1964) was a friend of the Belerski family. During the German occupation, he led the "Syrena" airdrop retrieval team under the nickname Andrzej Krzemień. For his acts of courage, he was awarded the honorific Righteous Among the Nations. He died in emigration to Boston; *ibidem*, p. 250.

¹² Towards the end of the Warsaw Uprising, he was also put forward for the Cross of Valour; Tadeusz Belerski's Archive, file: Pamiętnik (The Journal), n.pag.

¹³ The exact date of his flight from the camp is not exactly known; in his autobiography Belerski mentions that it happened in late January; *ibidem*.

¹⁴ For Joseph Stalin and his Polish communist subordinates, it was obvious that the lands east of the Curzon Line which had belonged to Poland pre-war would be annexed by the USSR.

¹⁵ Baziur G. 2003, p. 19.

The document anticipated two key changes with far-reaching socio-economic consequences. The first one was the announcement of the land reform which was to be implemented on the territories liberated from the Nazis; the other one introduced plans for the future nationalisation of industry. The tenets of the manifesto turned out to be inconsistent with practice as early as late 1944/early 1945. The domination of a single party controlled by the USSR was furthered, despite the assurances of democracy and civil liberties.¹⁶

Soon after the establishment of the Provisional Government along with its first ministries, industrial boards were set up to manage individual industries or services. This was in line with the expected nationalisation of most branches of industry and the takeover of all industrial plants in former German territories, which were to be merged with the new Poland.

According to the authors of *Kronika Przemysłu Piwowarskiego*, the beginnings of the future structures of the industry date back to 9 March 1945, when a unit headed by Henryk Oppenheim was created at the Ministry of Supply and Commerce.¹⁷ In reality, it must have been set up earlier, as clearly implied by Marian Belerski in his memoirs: after a short stay in Warsaw, he was posted to Bydgoszcz, wherein he arrived on 20 February.¹⁸ He reminisces that he was sent there with an extensive power to act and the overarching goal of his mission was *to transform two local ex-German breweries into public assets and appoint managers to make an inventory of property and start production*. The headquarters of the Board were set up in the rooms of one of such breweries in Zbożowy Rynek; in February, an accountant and an office assistant were hired. Belerski's second objective was to turn the brewing and malting establishments in Pomerania, Gdańsk and the western part of Greater Poland into state property. He writes: *Having acquired a three-wheeler, in early March 1945 I started taking over the facilities* in the region we were responsible for. Only the ministry could have granted Belerski such comprehensive powers of attorney. Although Belerski does not directly mention the name of his contact, he implies that it was Oppenheim with whom he remained in touch from the start of his mission. Thus, we should assume that the ministerial unit (presumably staffed by one-person) had functioned as early as 1945.

Formally speaking, the establishment of the Bydgoszcz branch of the National Board of the Brewing and Malting Industry (PZPP-S) is dated to 9 March 1945. Its structures, however, were subject to constant change in terms of organisation, and only residual sources from that period remain. The first major restructuring

¹⁶ Dryja S. 2024, p. 68.

¹⁷ *Kronika* 1995, p. 11; Belerski T. 2023, p. 57.

¹⁸ A different source cites 22 February; Belerski T. 2023, p. 55.

of the brewing and malting industry took place in autumn 1945. *Its course and the sequence of issuing consecutive regulations may be somewhat surprising, as regional Boards came into existence first (by the end of October), whereas the central Board in Warsaw was established later, on 12 November 1945*¹⁹.

Initially, the Bydgoszcz branch operated in Wielkopolskie, Pomorskie and Gdańskie provinces. By regulation of the Minister of Supply and Commerce of 3 September 1945, its territorial scope was extended to West Pomerania.²⁰ The worst conditions were in the former East Prussia, where a large brewery in Elbląg had been taken over and commissioned, but field work was neglected. The required efforts were made as late as March 1946, after the territorial competences were transferred to the Bydgoszcz branch.²¹

In 1945, the official name of the Bydgoszcz branch was yet to be determined. In October of the same year, Belerski wrote about the Board of the Brewing Industry of the West Provinces, adding “except for Silesia.”²² This was an abbreviated version of a more complex name: The Board of the Brewing and Malting Industry of Poznań, Pomerania, Koszalin and Gdańsk Districts. An alternative name was also used: The Board of the Brewing and Malting Industry in Bydgoszcz.²³ Starting 1 October 1946, coinciding with the reform of central structures, it was one of four local branches (referred to as the Southwest Branch) of State Fermentation Industry (PPF).²⁴ A fundamental change involved the merger of the boards which managed brewing, malting and wine-making establishments. The new board also assumed control of the producers of vinegar and mustard.

It should be noted that Marian Belerski was entrusted with preparations for this phase of the reform of industrial organisation. *He worked on the charter, the design and the organisational structure of the headquarters and individual divisions of the industry. In mid-September, the material was submitted to Czesław Nowiński, who had been long responsible for the coordination of various boards in the food sector. Belerski's guidelines were validated and approved with minor changes. Note, however, that all of those steps were taken at lightning speed, which in practice precluded any wide-ranging discussion.* The new structures were implemented from 1 October to the end of 1946.²⁵

¹⁹ Dryja S. 2024, p. 109.

²⁰ Wyjaśnić zakres województw; Belerski M. 1945, p. 7.

²¹ AP Olsztyn, Olsztyńskie Zakłady Piwowarsko-Słodownicze w Olsztynie, ref. 53, sheets 4-9.

²² Belerski M. 1945a, p. 1.

²³ The name is cited in the footer of “Biuletyn Piwowarski” in 1945 and 1946 (up to and including September), a periodical issued by the Board.

²⁴ Dryja S. 2024, pp. 122-124.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 122.

On 1 October 1946, Marian Belerski was appointed deputy managing director of the Central Board (CZ) of State Fermentation Industry (PPF) in Warsaw. Having worked in this position for several weeks, he resigned and, despite subsequent offers of employment in the ministry, he returned to his previously held post in Bydgoszcz.²⁶ Apparently, this surprising decision was motivated, among other things, with growing politicisation of the ministry's operations, which seemed unacceptable for an active member of the PPS faction opposing the union with the Polish Worker's Party (PPR).²⁷

Marian Belerski's views on the future of the Polish brewing industry

Marian Belerski's views on the future of the brewing and malting industry in the new political reality can be described based on his extensive editorial activity, correspondence and unpublished memoirs. Belerski had a clear and straightforward concept of the future of the brewing industry in Poland. He expressed his vision in the introductory article in the first issue of "Biuletyn Piwowarski" in September 1945. He wrote: *We must acknowledge that neither those in charge nor the general public appreciate the significance that the brewing industry can have in the new era in terms of the fulfilment of national and social tasks. As regards the brewing industry, there is not yet a single nationwide plan or a unified organisation. Some Boards have misunderstood their purpose and have not tried to coordinate or unify their economic policy.* He further noted that private breweries operated in the liberated territories, while some plants in the Lublin Province were assigned to cooperative organisations. Some of the facilities, taken over as a result of agricultural reform, including the largest and most modern ones (Żywiec, Okocim), were under the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reform.²⁸ *These organisational shortcomings adversely influence*

²⁶ Tadeusz Belerski's Archive, file: Życiorys (Autobiography), n.pag.

²⁷ The new management of PPF's Central Board was nominated in breach of a previous rule which required that one of its deputy directors be appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reform. In the Provisional Government of National Unity, this function was performed by Stanisław Mikołajczyk from the Polish People's Party (from 28 June 1945 to 6 February 1947, i.e. throughout the government's term of office. Mikołajczyk emigrated secretly on 20 October 1947). Failing to include Mikołajczyk in the government prompted him to transfer the breweries reporting to the minister to the cooperative sector (the fall of the government took place in the meantime). It appears that Belerski accurately predicted the consequences of the removal of Mikołajczyk's people from the Central Board of PPF. Wanting to avoid participation in a political fight, he chose to return to Bydgoszcz; Dryja S. 2024, pp. 160-161.

²⁸ Breweries associated with subdivided large farms were regarded as so-called "leftover plants," which, according to applicable law, were managed by the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reform; Dryja S. 2024, p. 69.

the beer market in Poland and the organisation of the industry. According to Belerski, *the entire industry should be placed under the jurisdiction of the relevant department of the Ministry of Supply and Commerce, which would administer its operation through regional boards.* This did not necessarily mean the nationalisation of the entire brewing industry – Belerski advocated for the nationalisation of large and medium-sized plants, leaving smaller facilities in private or cooperative hands, but *under strict technical and commercial control* [of the boards]. He also permitted leasing of small, nationalised breweries, but only to *specialists with the explicit consent of relevant regional board.* Thus, he preferred a mixed model of three-sector ownership: national, cooperative and private, with a clear dominance of the former and comprehensive control by central authority.²⁹ As can be guessed, this control was to include a common pricing policy (setting uniform prices for brewing industry products), procurement (raw material supplied through trade centres) and sales (in designated sales regions). In his concepts, Belerski attached particular importance to controlling trade margins. Bringing them down to a reasonable level was meant to ensure lower prices and greater availability of brewing industry products. His conviction for such a model stemmed from negative experiences during the inter-war period: *Before the war, brewing was at a relatively low level here, with widespread unhealthy competition that was destroying this industry; prices were relatively high, but consumption was terribly low.* Belerski's primary priority was increasing beer consumption among the broad masses of society (especially among workers and peasants). This could be achieved through the measures outlined above. Of course, higher consumption would mean greater output and, consequently, the growth of the brewing industry.³⁰

Belerski advocated the introduction of standardised pay in the brewing industry. In his view, this was the fairest arrangement, since *a worker received compensation based on their performance.* However, he was aware of the difficulties (lack of breweries with uniform parameters), hence his interesting quotas for beer and malt.³¹ He mainly suggested a system of standardised pay in the sales department, being aware that effective sales activities determined the brewery's sales figures and, in the long run, on overall consumption growth.³² Still, his postulates were not implemented in practice, even in a pilot form.

A model approximating Belerski's concept was implemented by mid-1948. The three-sector division of the brewing industry was maintained, although control

²⁹ Belerski M. 1945, p. 1-2.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 1-2.

³¹ Belerski M. 1946b, pp. 1-3.

³² Belerski M. 1947, pp. 3-6.

over the cooperative and private sectors significantly diverged from the original assumptions: the cooperative sector retained considerable independence, while private breweries were suppressed by all possible means. Some breweries (Żywiec, Okocim, Tarnobrzeg and Ciechomice) still fell under the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reform; inevitably, following an agreement, control over them was transferred to the Board in Warsaw. In return, the Minister of Agriculture appointed a deputy managing director, who supervised the departments responsible for the nationalisation of enterprises, as well as inspection and control.³³ Price control was only partially successful: fixed wholesale prices were established, but a substantial part of retail still remained in private hands. This was especially noticeable in the catering industry, where prices significantly exceeded expectations. Control over this sector was only achieved after the so-called “trade battle,” which began in May 1947. It led to fundamental changes in commodity trade. The role of the private sector clearly diminished. *Within two years, the number of private wholesale outlets decreased by almost two-thirds and retail outlets by nearly a half. With the still insufficient pace of socialised trade network development, this led to worsening conditions for purchasing goods and disruptions in distribution.*³⁴

The economic model implemented at that time had little in common with the concepts developed by Marian Belerski.

Achievements in the first period of reconstruction (1945-1946)

The Board in Bydgoszcz began to take control over breweries and malt houses in Pomorskie and Poznańskie Provinces around mid-April 1945 and the second half of that year saw the operations in West Pomerania and Gdańsk Province. It should be noted that the brewery takeover process in West Pomerania started slightly later, in October and November 1945. The breweries in the territory of the former Republic of Poland were the first to be nationalised.³⁵ This phase of the Board’s project was recounted by Marian Belerski: *As we all know, we took charge of breweries destroyed in wartime operations or simply looted or vandalised. There was shortage of raw materials, fuel, belts, ice and transport vessels.*³⁶ Another study reports that: *Only 5 small breweries [in Greater Poland] were able to start production immediately. We tapped the income from the active breweries and this money started gradually*

³³ Dryja S. 2024, p. 116.

³⁴ Kaliński J. 1977, pp. 196-197.

³⁵ Dryja S. 2024, p. 102.

³⁶ Tadeusz Belerski’s Archive, file: “Biuletyn Piwowarski” and “Przemysł Fermentacyjny,” n.pag.

*flowing into commissioning hitherto more or less damaged establishments and the reconstruction of destroyed production plants like breweries in Poznań, Kobyłepole, the Pneumatic Malt House in Poznań, Grudziądz Breweries, etc.*³⁷

A blessing ceremony of the newly rebuilt National Brewery No. 1 in Grudziądz took place on 23 September 1945 *and the establishment started regular beer production*. Plans to promptly reopen the former German breweries in Elbląg, Koszalin and Szczecin, *taken over by the management of the Board in Bydgoszcz*, was announced in October.³⁸

The greatest success was the reconstruction of the heavily damaged brewery in Poznań. The ceremonies marking the opening of the breweries in Poznań and Kobyłepole, as well as the pneumatic malt house in Poznań, renovated at a cost of more than 6 million zloty – were combined with the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Poznań brewery (the former Hugger Brewery). “Biuletyn Piwowarski” gave a detailed report of the event: *At 9 a.m. a holy mass was held in the parish church, followed by a gathering at the State Brewery in Półwiejska street. In the presence of the province governor, Dr. Wide-Wirski, representatives of industry, political and social authorities and employees of all three mentioned enterprises, the director of the State Brewery, Mr. Milczyński, welcomed those assembled. He emphasised the merits of both the workers, who with their selfless labour – without regard for the size of their salaries – successfully brought the reconstruction of the three enterprises to completion, and of the central supervisory authorities [the Board in Bydgoszcz], who facilitated this work.*³⁹ Such rapid completion of the reconstruction was also a personal success for Marian Belerski, who was honoured in a commemorative album prepared for the occasion.⁴⁰

The efficient commissioning of the newly acquired plants resulted in steadily increasing production. In the first half-year, from April to September 1945, it was proudly reported that 150,000 hectolitres of beer were produced, 125,000 hectolitres sold, turnover amounted to 117 million zloty and taxes paid totalled 40 million zloty. In that period, 50 trucks and 130 horse-drawn vehicles were put into operation. Productivity, calculated per employed worker, reached 15.1 hectolitres of beer per month, despite the fact that many of them were engaged in reconstruction work rather than directly in production. In the context of the postwar reconstruction period, this was a truly impressive result.⁴¹

³⁷ Belerski M. 1946a, p. 2.

³⁸ “Biuletyn Piwowarski,” 2, 1945, p. 11. The first brew in Koszalin was made in December 1945; in Szczecin, the same happened on 12 January, and in Elbląg on February 6, 1946 (Dryja S. 2023, pp. 383, 446, 537).

³⁹ “Biuletyn Piwowarski,” 3, 1945, pp. 14-16.

⁴⁰ *Jubileusz Browaru Poznańskiego* 1945.

⁴¹ Belerski M. 1945a, p. 2.

Beer distribution was fraught with even more difficulties, which were described as follows: *We hope that the authorities will assist us in this matter by combating usury, which has infiltrated the so-called free beer trade. The situation thus cannot continue any longer. Our brewing industry in this district produced beer most cheaply compared to other districts and sold beer at fixed prices, i.e., 7.00 zł per litre, yet consumers paid an average of 40 zł per litre. At this point, we would like to appeal to retailers, emphasising that they must break with the practice of paying off all expenses of a catering business by increasing beer prices. We demand that beer should be made available to the broadest possible segments of workers.*⁴²

To organise the beer sales market, the Board introduced mandatory contracts with wholesalers, so that only they were allowed to purchase beer from breweries. To eliminate competition from “black market” wholesalers (those without contracts with the Board), licensed wholesalers were granted significant discounts.⁴³

The decision of 10 October 1945 proved to be the right one: on its basis, all breweries subordinate to the Board in Bydgoszcz were ordered to make pale beer with an extract of 9% (with the exception of Grodzisk beer, *which was to maintain the prewar standard*).⁴⁴ Soon, a similar regulation was in effect throughout Poland. This did not exclude the production of small quantities of speciality beers such as porter or bock. Due to their price, however, demand for these products was very limited.

To name a few notable achievements in the first year of activity, Marian Belerski included the creation of organisational frameworks that later became a model *for all boards* (in practice – regional branches), of the brewing industry including opening balances, inventories, accounting principles, the organisation of central procurement and sales offices, and the introduction of technical and administrative-accounting control of plants. As already mentioned, in the early days of the Board’s operations, only five minor breweries were fit for immediate start-up. The resources generated from their operations were allocated to fund the repair and reconstruction of further plants, with over 12 million złoty invested in this way over a short period of time. In the first year of activity, 69 facilities were taken over, of which four were handed over to cooperatives. Five of them were industrial malt houses, three of which were put into operation and two preserved until export opportunities arose. A total of 52 breweries, malt houses and bottling plants were started up, four facilities were preserved and five were slated for dismantling. *The economic policy of our Brewing Industry does not allow for all breweries to be activated, and only political and social considerations led to as many as 52 plants being in operation*

⁴² Belerski M. 1945a, p. 2.

⁴³ Czubalski M.F. 1946, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁴ “Biuletyn Piwowarski,” 2, 1945, p. 11.

*within our board's remit.*⁴⁵ The aim was to concentrate production in the largest breweries, whose capacities were, in any case, utilised to only a small extent. This led to lower unit production costs, which in turn translated into lower prices and higher consumption that naturally drove increased production.

Legislative initiatives, discussion of the goals of the three-year plan

In 1945-1946, the Board in Bydgoszcz, through the Ministry of Supply and Commerce, put forward legislative initiatives concerning, among other things, the taxation of beer. Open criticism was also directed at solutions that did not prove effective in practice. For example, there was a debate around the establishment of a Supply Centre at one of the boards, a completely failed initiative which led to soaring beer prices and serious shortages in barley procurement. Another unsuccessful move was the introduction of a tax relief on beer – it was intended to lower beer prices but brought only additional profits for intermediaries and tangible losses for the state treasury.⁴⁶

The last broader discussion was connected with the assumptions of a three-year reconstruction plan, commonly called the Three-Year Plan and implemented in 1947-1949 according to goals set by the Central Planning Office, headed by Czesław Bobrowski, an activist associated with PPS (Polish Socialist Party). It envisaged raising the standard of living above the prewar level, modernising the economic structure, eliminating unemployment and reducing agrarian overpopulation.⁴⁷ Great emphasis was placed on the integration of the former German lands, annexed to Poland in 1945. *The plan did not provide for the construction of new industrial plants, assuming instead that resources would be concentrated on the reconstruction of the least-damaged factories. The Three-Year Plan is widely regarded as the only effective economic plan implemented before 1989. To a large extent, it contributed to the recovery of the economy from wartime destruction.*⁴⁸

The goals of the three-year plan were discussed at a meeting of the heads of planning departments of boards subordinate to the Food Industry Association on 14 November 1945 in Warsaw. In his commentary, Marian Belerski wrote: *the food industry is a key sector of the Polish economy and therefore it should take priority in the announced three-year economic reconstruction plan.* Later on, Belerski criticised

⁴⁵ Belerski M. 1946a, pp. 2-5.

⁴⁶ Belerski M. 1945b, pp. 1-3.

⁴⁷ Kaliński J. 1977, p. 22.

⁴⁸ Dryja S. 2024, p. 157.

the speech given by Hilary Minc: *Unfortunately, in his recent address during the Sunday session of the PPR congress Minister Minc failed to properly emphasise this point. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Minister Minc shares this view, as is evident from the fact that he devoted the lion's share of his arguments to issues of rebuilding the countryside and raising the living standard of the Polish peasant.*⁴⁹

The demands put forward by Belerski, at that time still an active member of PPS, postulated a complete reconfiguration of the perception of the brewing and malting industry. As the near future showed, they were almost visionary in nature. In mid-1945 Belerski forecast that beer consumption would grow to the level of 25-30 litres per capita and, consequently, that the production would go up to 6 million hectolitres. This was expected to bring tangible benefits to the economy and thereby contribute to raising the living standard of Polish peasants, whose products would be processed within the country. *We must use domestic beer and wine to drive out vodka, thereby contributing to the moral and physical betterment of the nation as well as the cultural and economic development of our country.*⁵⁰ Such a significant boost in production was to be made possible through maximum use of the existing production potential, that is, without the need for new investments;⁵¹ moreover, it was to materialise within the next ten years.⁵² Belerski, however, was perfectly aware of the uneven distribution of breweries across the country and therefore proposed that *a new brewery with state-of-the-art equipment and a production capacity of at least half a million hectolitres of beer be built in the capital.*⁵³

The approved goals of the three-year plan must have disappointed Belerski, as they were far more modest than his original intentions. It was anticipated that production would increase by 30% by 1949 (relative to the level in 1947) and there was no mention whatsoever of building a new facility in Warsaw or in the deficit-ridden eastern belt.⁵⁴ In reality, consumption growth surpassed even the boldest projections. The 6 million hectolitre milestone envisioned by Belerski was already achieved in the second half of the 1950s. Meanwhile, the reconstruction of breweries in Warsaw and Białystok – necessitated by the rapid growth in demand for

⁴⁹ Belerski M. 1945c, pp. 2-5.

⁵⁰ Belerski M. 1945a, pp. 2-3.

⁵¹ Belerski M. 1946a, p. 5.

⁵² Dryja S. 2024, pp. 158-159.

⁵³ Belerski M. 1945c, pp. 2-5.

⁵⁴ Journal of Laws 1947, No. 53, item 285. What is more, a mistake was made in the plan's assumptions by setting the baseline production level in 1947 at one million hectolitres. This meant not an increase but a decline to a level just over 83% of the 1946 output (and only 66.67% of the pre-war level); Dryja S. 2024, p. 159.

beer and the poor supply in these areas – was included in the objectives of the six-year plan and carried out in the first half of the 1950s.⁵⁵

Parallel to the goals set in the three-year plan (and perhaps even in connection with it), a project for a new model of the state enterprise was discussed. Ultimately, this concept was introduced by the decree of 3 January 1947 *on the establishment of state enterprises*, sparking a heated debate on the shape of the freshly reformed structures of the brewing industry. It concerned the newly imposed obligation to organise state enterprises, which had to be entered in the commercial register, with their own statutes, management and boards of social supervision.⁵⁶ According to the concept of the Ministry of Supply and Commerce, such enterprises (also referred to as “combines”), subordinate to individual branches of the Central Board, were to be created in early 1948. Marian Belerski proposed a solution that would make it possible to avoid profound organisational changes. The tone of his statement implied that the most important element of further policy should be stabilisation, which in 1947 had brought unexpectedly good results. He therefore suggested that regional branches should assume the competencies of enterprises by being granted appropriate organisational frameworks. The actual changes would thus have been minor: branches, transformed in the spirit of the law, would continue to manage the plants located in their area, but with a significantly stronger mandate and better means.⁵⁷ At the same time, the concept of separating production from trade was challenged, which, according to Belerski, was entirely wrong and harmful.⁵⁸ However, a broader discussion did not take place, because in April the so-called *beer scandal* broke out. The arrest of key officials (including Henryk Oppenheim – the Board’s managing director – and Belerski himself) halted the transformation process, which was resumed in 1949 according to the ministry’s concept. For a short time, hybrid structures emerged, preceding the proper reform, which came into effect on 1 December 1950.⁵⁹ The previous three-tier structure (Central Board – regional branches – individual

⁵⁵ The six-year plan also announced the construction of two independent malt houses and an increase in consumption to the 6 million hectolitres postulated by Belerski (Journal of Laws 1950, No. 37, item 344; Dryja S. 2024, p. 126).

⁵⁶ Journal of Laws 1947, No. 8, item 42.

⁵⁷ Belerski even proposed names for these enterprises, for example: Państwowy Przemysł Fermentacyjny (State Fermentation Industry), Zakłady Poznańsko-Pomorskie (Poznań–Pomeranian Plants), Państwowy Przemysł Fermentacyjny (State Fermentation Industry), Zakłady Śląsko-Dąbrowskie (Silesia–Dąbrowa Plants), etc. (Belerski M. 1948, pp. 1-3).

⁵⁸ Belerski referred to numerous foreign experiences, including the model in force in the USSR (well known to him firsthand), which was a clever move – after all, the solutions functioning in the leading socialist country could not be criticised (Belerski M. 1948, p. 3). A relevant article even appeared in the next issue of the journal: Chodźko M. 1948, pp. 38-40.

⁵⁹ See Dryja S. 2024, pp. 135-136, 210-211.

plants) was replaced by a two-tier model (Board – state enterprises). The regional branches were dismantled, while the enterprises, called Brewing and Malting Plants (ZP-S), were created on the basis of the aforementioned hybrid structures.

Industrial magazine

In postwar Poland, the lack of skilled labour was a frequent concern. The shortage stemmed from neglect during the interwar period, when vocational education in this field was largely abandoned,⁶⁰ compounded by the devastating impact of the war – many specialists perished on the front lines or in death camps, while others remained abroad. Following the 1945 annexation of former German territories into Poland, local plants made use of the skilled German workers who remained – though their departure was imminent and took place shortly thereafter.⁶¹ Marian Belerski's concept positioned vocational training as a top priority. Existing industry workers were required to upgrade their qualifications, while the next generation needed proper training to address workforce shortages across all roles in the fermentation sector. This goal was to be achieved by offering in-service training courses, opening a vocational secondary school and publishing educational materials, such as coursebooks and trade press.

The idea of publishing “Biuletyn Piwowarski” surfaced along with the formation of the structures of PZPP-S in Bydgoszcz in spring 1945.⁶² In a matter of months, the concept was developed and the content of the first issue of the magazine was compiled; it was published on 24 September 1945 – it appeared on a monthly basis throughout its existence. Until the end of that year, the magazine was copied on duplicating machines. It had small circulation and distributed mostly in the breweries in Bydgoszcz region.

Starting 1946, “Biuletyn Piwowarski” would be issued as an official magazine of the PZPP-S HQ in Warsaw. Accordingly, it was circulated among all state, cooperative and private plants, in a more elegant, “newspaper-like” format. The staff working for the magazine remained the same and the magazine was still edited in Bydgoszcz. In July 1947, its circulation reached 3700 copies.

⁶⁰ National Brewing School, established at the Industrial University in Krakow by prof. Andrzej Krzemecki, was an exception. It functioned for a short time towards the end of the 1920s; Dryja S. 2024, p. 221. Note: due to a proofreading error the surname Krzemecki was printed as “Krzemiecki,”

⁶¹ The process was completed in the first half of 1948, although in the majority of breweries the personnel had been exchanged by 1946, at the latest by 1947; Dryja S. 2024, pp. 58-64.

⁶² See Marian Belerski's article “Przemysł Fermentacyjny” w latach 1945-1949. *Przyczynek do historii prasy technicznej*, re-printed in the present volume.

The transition to the name "Przemysł Fermentacyjny" followed the founding of CZPF, which succeeded CZPP-S on 1 October 1946, and marked an expansion of the Board's operational remit to encompass wine and vinegar production. Although the journal continued to be edited in Bydgoszcz, the editorial correspondence address was given as Warsaw (at 7 Narbutta St.). Its substantive scope was expanded to include materials on viticulture, yeast production and related topics.

In issue no. 3 of 1948, Marian Belerski was listed for the last time as the editor-in-chief.⁶³ Starting from the following issue, the imprint carried only the enigmatic note: "edited by the Editorial Board." Obviously, the reason for this was Belerski's arrest and the onset of the so-called "beer scandal." It was presumably in response to those events that the new management of the Central Administration decided to move the editorial office (starting with issue 8/9 of 1948) to Warsaw, to its headquarters at 11 Elektoralna Street. The issue was only 18 pages long. However, it introduced a cardboard cover and on its inside page the renewed composition of the Editorial Committee was published. The journal was henceforth edited collegially. From January 1949 onward, there was no mention of the editorial line-up. Instead, there was an annotation "edited by the team."

Along with the imposed changes in the leadership of the Central Administration and the relocation of the editorial office of "Przemysł Fermentacyjny" to Warsaw, the character of the journal was also transformed. In place of relatively open discussions on the present problems of the fermentation industry, articles began to present the current political line. On 30 October 1948, the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) organised the first national congress of the economic cadres of the industry, during which *the fundamental deficiencies and shortcomings of the administrative apparatus* were discussed and subjected to criticism. The technical director of the Central Administration of the Fermentation Industry, Anatol Selecki, took the floor. The very first sentence of his speech illustrates the direction of the forthcoming changes: *The July and August plenary sessions of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party have deeply ploughed through the petty-bourgeois ideological strata which threatened to smother the sound and sole correct Marxist-Leninist principles underlying the ideological foundations of every genuinely working-class party. Free discussion* now came to be regarded as unwarranted criticism, while *constructive criticism* meant blind acceptance of the party line. Any deviations were stigmatised, as were previously pursued concepts (e.g., the tripartite economic model of state/cooperative/private sectors). According to this narrative, organisational inefficiency was caused not by

⁶³ The imprint stated: *Edited by the Editorial Board under the direction of Editor-in-Chief mgr Marian Belerski.*

mistaken decisions but by the protracted debate on reorganisation (the creation of the aforementioned enterprises).⁶⁴

In March 1949, the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) transferred responsibility for the entire technical press to the Supreme Technical Organisation (Naczelna Organizacja Techniczna, NOT). These decisions led to the liquidation of the editorial office of "Przemysł Fermentacyjny" in May 1949, while its publishing functions were handed over to the newly established Publishing House of Technical Journals (Wydawnictwo Czasopism Technicznych, WCT) under NOT. *The first issue of Przemysł Fermentacyjny i Rolny published by WCT NOT did not appear until 1958. Not only the title, but also the programme of the journal underwent a fundamental transformation; therefore, the periodical issued in the years 1945-1949 (under two different titles) must be treated as a distinct phenomenon.*⁶⁵

The publishing activity was supplemented by the release of translations of three books – two in on the subject of brewing and one on wine-making technology – as well as conversion tables used in the malting and brewing industry.⁶⁶

Despite the hiatus following the liquidation of "Przemysł Fermentacyjny," the work of Marian Belerski was not wasted. The demand for professional studies in brewing was sustained through a series of brochure-style publications issued in the first half of the 1950s. These discussed all aspects of the production of brewing cereals, malt, beer, as well as its storage and distribution.⁶⁷ Among the authors of these micro-manuals were individuals associated with "Biuletyn Piwowski" and "Przemysł Fermentacyjny." The tradition of publishing translations of respected foreign works was also maintained.⁶⁸ After his release from prison, Marian Belerski published the well-regarded textbook *Materiałoznawstwo piwowskie* (Brewing Materials Science), written partly during his imprisonment. The book was issued under the pen name "Marian Desz" (the family name of his second wife) in 1955.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Selecki A. 1948, pp. 141-144. In the final issue of the journal, the main theme was the celebration of May Day, marked by an atmosphere of unity and harmony following the December unification congress of the two workers' parties. A commitment was also made to undertake additional production (Karolak Z. 1949, p. 1).

⁶⁵ Tadeusz Belerski's Archive, file: "Biuletyn Piwowski" and "Przemysł Fermentacyjny," n.pag. Reprinted in the present issue.

⁶⁶ These included: K. Hennies, R. Spanner, *Piwowarstwo w zarysie*, Bydgoszcz 1946 and *Kontrola fabrykacji piwa*, according to N. Bulhakow, compiled by M.W. Chmielewski, Bydgoszcz 1947 and N.K. Mogilanskij, *Mikrobiologiczna kontrola fabrykacji win*, transl. by M.W. Chmielewski, Bydgoszcz 1948 (supplement to "Przemysł Fermentacyjny").

⁶⁷ E.g.: Kiriczek P. 1951; Kiriczek P. 1951a; Kiriczek P., Lurie J. 1951; Kosiorek H. 1952; Kosiorek H. 1955; Michniewski S. 1955; Pasek K. 1957; Rybak J. 1953.

⁶⁸ E.g.: Lintner C.J. 1950; Malcew P.M. 1953.

⁶⁹ Desz M. 1955.

Education and vocational training

As already mentioned, trade magazines and translations of foreign handbooks were published to educate staff. Not only did Belerski intend to train technical personnel but also (or rather primarily) the entire group of managers who would effectively run the plants they were entrusted with, since *the growth of an enterprise requires a manager with a creative mind and business acumen*.⁷⁰ Numerous technical conferences were held in the years 1945-1948, with participants including representatives of breweries belonging to the Board, as well as experts working for private breweries (e.g. Hipolit Lackowski from Poznań).⁷¹

Belerski's other initiative was the creation of a vocational secondary school with specialisation in beer-making.⁷² Despite multiple obstacles, at the end of the school year 1946/47, the Training Department of the Ministry of Supply and Commerce announced recruitment for the newly opened secondary school of beer-making in Bydgoszcz. The announcement read: *In addition to core secondary education subjects, the curriculum includes vocational training in brewing technology and materials science, as well as practical classes in breweries*. Press advertisements stated that education at the school and accommodation at the boarding house were free of charge. Applications from interested graduates of primary schools were to be submitted at the PPF office in Bydgoszcz in 43 Dworcowa St.⁷³ Państwowe Gimnazjum Fermentacyjne (State Secondary School of the Fermentation Industry) was opened on 6 October 1947. Exactly 40 out of 80 candidates were enrolled.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, in January and February 1949, two fires broke out, destroying two classrooms and the educational facilities (the school was housed in a former monastery building). This hardship was exacerbated by the absence of Marian Belerski, his drive and initiative. The Central Administration appealed to brewing plants for assistance. Its request met with the response of the management of the Brewing and Malting Plants in Tychy, who enabled the school to recommence classes in rooms at Obywatelski brewery in late April. According to the authors of *Kronika przemysłu piwowarskiego: a total of 28 persons graduated from the Secondary School of the Fermentation*

⁷⁰ Belerski M. 1946, pp. 1-2.

⁷¹ Koral B. 1946, pp. 10-11. The brewery was located in Jeżyce district, at 23 Kościelna St. It had been founded by Teodor Lackowski (who died in 1947). In the early 1950s, the brewery was nationalised, only to be closed in 1962. This establishment made the famous "Karmelickie" beer from unsmoked wheat malt; *Kronika* 1995, pp. 158-159.

⁷² Basic information on the school was supplied later on. This subject will receive a more comprehensive treatment in the near future.

⁷³ "Przemysł Fermentacyjny," 7-8, 1947, p. 1.

⁷⁴ "Przemysł Fermentacyjny," 9-10, 1947, p. 30.

*Industry in 1950; the number of graduates was 32 in 1951 and 30 in 1952 [of whom all had enrolled in Bydgoszcz and completed this stage of education in Tychy].*⁷⁵ The school's relocation to Tychy coincided with the closure of (pre-war type) secondary schools (Polish: "gimnazjum") and the opening of vocational technical colleges. Accordingly, the Tychy school became the Technical College of the Brewing Industry, a breeding ground for new talent for the beer-making industry, serving this purpose until the period of political transformation.⁷⁶

Advertising campaigns: Where do the famous beer stalls come from?

For Marian Belerski, it was obvious that proper advertising was the foundation of selling any product. This boiled down to a short maxim: *it is not the consumer who comes to us, but we who go to the consumer.*⁷⁷

Among key priorities Belerski considered the avoidance of unnecessary intermediaries and reaching the rural consumer (as well as women and youth) directly; breaking with the false notion that beer was a luxury product; running propaganda and advertising campaigns in cooperation with the media, schools and even the Anti-Alcohol League (promoting beer as a substitute for vodka); finally, as the most urgent expectation, reducing the price gap between factory and retail prices to a maximum of 60%. As for advertising itself, Belerski rightly observed that promotion should no longer focus on the Boards but rather on the product, that is, beer.⁷⁸

On the occasion of the 600th anniversary of Bydgoszcz, celebrated in the spring of 1946, the Board organised the so-called "advertising pavilions" in several parts of the city. *For example, in the pavilion at 79 1 Maja St., a narrow-gauge scientific-propaganda film about beer production and hop cultivation was screened in addition to displaying a number of charts, beer sales maps, etc.* However, the main function of the pavilions was the serving of beer from breweries belonging to the Board, sold at a minimal trade margin.⁷⁹ The success of this undertaking prompted the Board authorities to open several outdoor pavilions, which were given a uniform architectural form in the shape of a beer barrel.⁸⁰ This is how the famous beer stalls came

⁷⁵ *Kronika* 1995, p. 33.

⁷⁶ The legacy of the college is continued by the School Complex No. 7 in Tychy, which trains the students in the provision of gastronomy and hospitality services.

⁷⁷ Czubalski M.F. 1946, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁸ Belerski M. 1947, p. 3-6.

⁷⁹ Koral B. 1946a, p. 18.

⁸⁰ Stalls or kiosks of similar structure had already been present in interwar Poland. E.g. the brewery in Cieszyn ran a similar point of sale in the Kubalonka Pass.

into being, later on becoming a symbol of beer culture in the People's Republic of Poland.⁸¹ We may find a brief description of this type of stall in a novel by James Herriot (real name Alfred Wight), the creator of the TV series *All Creatures Great and Small*. In November 1965, he paid a short visit to Szczecin, supervising a consignment of sheep to the harbour in Klaipėda. During his brief outing on a public holiday, Herriot noticed many stalls from which festively clad people bought cigarettes and newspapers, sometimes keg beer (which he liked best). Although he was unable to purchase the beverage without local currency, he considered the solution immensely practical.⁸²

The construction of the PPF building in Sopot was a flagship project, supervised directly by Marian Belerski. The structure had a light, architecturally appealing form. Inside, beer from Gdańsk brewery was served. A special advertising postcard, which the visitors could send to their family or friends, was an extra attraction. A motto on the postcard read: *With a glass of beer man comes alive and sees no woe, only joy.*⁸³

Aside from marketing-oriented establishments serving beer, wine bars were opened (the oldest one in Toruń⁸⁴), as well as retail establishments offering products of the state fermentation industry. The most notable facility of this type was established in Poznań, at 11 Marcinkowskiego St. Its opening was attended by Canon Skowroński. The official report from the event emphasised that the *State Fermentation Industry sought to accustom society to the consumption of beverages that neither intoxicate consumers nor harm their health.*⁸⁵

Considerable attention was also paid to safeguarding the reputation of the products. In October 1945, at the initiative of Belerski, the Board in Bydgoszcz registered with the Patent Office the names of its main products:

- “Eksport Bałtycki” – for pale full beer brewed in Pomerania and Gdańsk;
- “Zdrój Wielkopolski” – for pale full beer brewed in Poznań;
- “Imperator” – for dark full beer;
- “Karamel” – for malt beer;
- “Kryształ” – for 6% semi-full beer (“Biuletyn Piwowski,” no. 3, 1945, p. 16)⁸⁶.

⁸¹ As early as mid-1950s, the concept of a “beer stall” assumed negative connotations, which could be attributed to the general demise of the culture of alcohol consumption and eating out; see Nehring P. 2019.

⁸² Dryja S. 2005, p. 12.

⁸³ Tadeusz Belerski's Archive, file: Fotografie różne (Assorted photographs), n.pag.

⁸⁴ Desz H. 1947, pp. 24-25.

⁸⁵ Desz H. 1947a, p. 25.

⁸⁶ “Biuletyn Piwowski,” 3, 1945, p. 16.

Graphic symbols of breweries were also registered, often drawing on prewar traditions (for example, the logo of the Połczyn-Zdrój brewery referred to the pre-war emblem of Fuhrmann's brewery; similar practices occurred in Elbląg and elsewhere).⁸⁷ Some of these names endured and continued to be used as late as the 1980s (see e.g., Dryja 2025, p. 29).

Commitment to quality: Establishing a research laboratory

One of the first initiatives undertaken by the Board in Bydgoszcz was the establishment of a research laboratory. This project was overseen by Maksymilian Chmielewski from Chodorów and bacteriologist inż. Henryk Brzeziński from Poznań, both employed for this purpose by Marian Belerski. The facility was set up around mid-1945 and operated under the official name: Research and Control Laboratory of the Fermentation Industry in Bydgoszcz. The facility's output includes a number of training-oriented studies, published in successive issues of "Biuletyn Piwowarski." After the construction of the new Board headquarters in Dworcowa street in Bydgoszcz, the laboratory was relocated there on a permanent basis. It is worth noting that the Board also established a Design and Construction Office, headed by architect inż. Stanisław Wojciechowski and designer inż. Władysław Pawlak, both from Vilnius. The office was responsible for renovation work at breweries in Poznań, Grudziądz, Elbląg and elsewhere, as well as for building the Board's headquarters in Dworcowa street in Bydgoszcz.⁸⁸

*The laboratory in Bydgoszcz was also used by staff of the Warsaw University of Technology, which had lost its own research facilities. Here, diploma theses were completed under the supervision of Assistant Professor inż. Paweł Wojcieszak of the Department of Fermentation Technology and Food Products. The laboratory's primary role, however, was the inspection of the breweries controlled by the Board.*⁸⁹ By the end of 1945 alone, more than 500 analyses of samples taken from the Board's breweries were conducted. Numerous infections and contaminations were diagnosed and corrective measures were recommended. Thanks to the laboratory's work, the quality of beer production improved significantly and major financial losses from the premature spoilage of finished products were avoided.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ See e.g. Dryja S. 2025, p. 29.

⁸⁸ Tadeusz Belerski's Archive, file: "Przemysł Fermentacyjny" w latach 1945-1949, n.pag.

⁸⁹ Dryja S. 2024, p. 220.

⁹⁰ For more on the laboratory and its activities, see: *ibidem*, pp. 219-223.

Health care and leisure

Concern for employees' health and proper recreation was another direction in the operations of the Board in Bydgoszcz. On 1 May 1946, a convalescent home was opened in Połczyn-Zdrój (situated at the corner of the then Dworcowa and Grunwaldzka streets) for Board employees suffering from *sciatica or rheumatism*. The Board covered the full cost of both accommodation and treatment.⁹¹ Health prophylaxis in the Board's establishments was also expanded. By 1947, the Board already operated four convalescent homes, two of which were located in spa towns (Wieniec-Zdrój and Połczyn-Zdrój). In the same year, thanks to the initiative of Belerski and with the assistance of Roman Sawicki, director of the brewery in Koszalin, a property in Mielno was taken over and developed. It was given the rather unrefined name: Housing Estate of the Employees of the State Fermentation Industry in Mielno. *As was noted at the time, the location of the estate was exceptionally attractive: on one side the open sea, on the other a lake with its own yacht club. The seaside beach was structurally regulated.*⁹² The expenses related to the development of these properties, as well as the costs of employees' stays, were closely scrutinised in the investigation following Belerski's arrest. For the Security Office, this constituted yet another example of wastefulness (or even embezzlement) of public funds.

As a result of structural transformations (the creation of multi-plant state enterprises), asset components such as holiday resorts, but also the advertising pavilions described above and even remnants of agricultural holdings (like all other resources which did not serve production directly), were detached from the sectoral structures and transferred to other organisational units.

Other areas of interest

The activities outlined above did not exhaust the range of Marian Belerski's interests. In "Biuletyn Piwowarski," he regularly reviewed global trends in brewing, drawing on foreign press (including the Swiss journal "Brauereirundschau" and the Czechoslovak "Kvas"). He also monitored international barley trade markets.⁹³

⁹¹ Dryja S. 2025, p. 17.

⁹² *Pokłosie sezonu w domach wypoczynkowych*, "Przemysł Fermentacyjny," 11, 1947, pp. 33-34.

⁹³ Belerski M. 1947a, pp. 26-28; Belerski M. 1947b, p. 4; Belerski M., 1947c, pp. 23-24; Belerski M. 1947f, pp. 29-32; Belerski M. 1948a, pp. 49-51.

With the broadening of the Board's substantive scope, Belerski devoted particular attention to fruit processing, focusing on the development of fruit juice production (referred to as *liquid fruit*). In his view, such production had been insufficiently taken into account in the Three-Year Plan; however, through *broader discussion* he perceived the possibility of changing this state of affairs.⁹⁴

Belerski also displayed historical interests, which prompted him to author studies (that might be described as micro-monographs) of the breweries in Elbląg and Zielona Góra.⁹⁵

In addition to his political activity (his repeatedly mentioned membership in PPS), Belerski participated in numerous organisations and associations, serving, for example, as deputy chairman of the Pomeranian Branch of the Association of Food Industry Technicians.⁹⁶ He took part in the reactivation of the Maritime League (becoming vice-president of the Pomeranian branch). He was also an active member of the Association of Participants in the Armed Struggle for Freedom and Democracy.⁹⁷

Circumstances of the arrests and the trial in the aftermath of the so-called “beer scandal”

In April 1948, the Security Bureau apprehended several high-ranking PPF officials, including managing director Henryk Oppenheim, his deputy Franciszek Stemler and head of the Bydgoszcz branch Marian Belerski. Several other representatives of the industry were placed in custody: Eugeniusz Smoliński – the director of the brewery in Gdańsk (sentenced to death in another trial),⁹⁸ Zygmunt Pacewicz – deputy director of Okocim brewery and private entrepreneurs Rudolf Herczka and Karol Humiński. The so-called “beer scandal” was one of the first economic scandals

⁹⁴ Belerski M. 1947d, pp. 1-3.

⁹⁵ Belerski M. 1947e, pp. 22-23.

⁹⁶ “Przemysł Spożywczy. Miesięcznik poświęcony sprawom technicznym i gospodarczym przemysłu spożywczego,” 3-4, 1947, p. 31; Archive of Tadeusz Belerski, folder: Życiorys (Autobiography), n.pag.

⁹⁷ Tadeusz Belerski's Archive, file: Życiorys (Autobiography), n.pag.

⁹⁸ Eugeniusz Smoliński was arrested 13 August 1947. On 13 October 1948, the District Court in Bydgoszcz sentenced him to death. The execution took place on 9 April 1949 in the prison in Rakowiecka street in Warsaw. The location of Smoliński's tomb remained unknown for many years. According to one account, he was taken to inland USSR and survived. His remains were discovered during an exhumation in the so-called meadow at the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw and identified on 6 December 2012; Dryja 2023, p. 585; <https://poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl/bbp/odnalezieni/502,Eugeniusz-Smolinski.html>, 21 IX 2024.

in communist Poland, undoubtedly less known than the “meat” or “leather” scandal, but still widely commented on by the general public.

The investigation was exceptionally brutal. Numerous lines of enquiry were followed, including those connected with the alleged illicit financing of the campaign of Stanisław Mikołajczyk and the Polish People's Party (PSL) during the election to the Legislative Sejm in January 1947. Although the communists had rigged the election, they tried to prove that the funds from the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reform (headed by Mikołajczyk), originally income generated by the operations of breweries (Okocim, Żywiec, Tarnobrzeg, Ciechomice), were diverted to finance the campaigns of candidates with connections to PSL or even PPS (a secret alliance between both parties was suspected). Ultimately, the prosecution focused on charges of fraud and malfeasance. The trial was covered by the state-controlled press, e.g. in a lengthy public notification titled *Proces o milionowe nadużycia w przemyśle piwowarskim* (a multi-million fraud trial in the brewing industry) printed in several newspapers.⁹⁹

The penultimate issue of “Przemysł Fermentacyjny” featured a detailed notice (printed entirely in bold) on the outcome of the fraud trial of the representatives of the fermentation industry, with names, positions and sentences. The article cited the prosecutor, emphasising that *enemies of the working class sneaked into managing positions in state-owned industry and acted to its detriment*.¹⁰⁰ Marian Belerski and Henryk Oppenheim were each given a life sentence.

Marian Belerski was released in 1954 due to ill health, having spent over six years in prison.¹⁰¹ Extraordinary appeals granted by the Supreme Court during the Polish October Thaw overruled the previous judgments, finding the defendants not guilty on all counts.¹⁰²

The circumstances surrounding the arrests remain shrouded in mystery. All of this came against the backdrop of Belerski's connections to PPS (he had belonged to the faction who opposed the party's union with PPR), involvement with the Home Army (AK) and the Warsaw Uprising, as well as his economic views, which were at variance with the standards of the communist government. This last remark was true of the entire PPF's management, which originated from the interwar managerial staff.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ “Gazeta Ludowa,” 59, 11 March 1949, p. 3; “Gazeta Lubuska,” 71, 13 March 1949.

¹⁰⁰ “Przemysł Fermentacyjny,” 3, 1949, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ After three years of his imprisonment in Sztum, the sentence was commuted to 15 years under an amnesty; Belerski T. 2023, p. 67.

¹⁰² Tadeusz Belerski's Archive, file: Sad Najwyższy (Supreme Court), n.pag., ibidem, file: Province Court, n.pag.

¹⁰³ Board director Henryk Oppenheim had worked in the brewing industry since 1920. The company Zjednoczone Browary Warszawskie Haberbusch & Schiele was founded in 1921. Among

This is distinctly confirmed by the following quotation: *The Fermentation Industry has definitively broken with the harmful and entirely unjustified so-called 'tradition' that persisted until recently, particularly at the higher levels of organisational structure. The ossified routine and medieval backwardness, so typical of guild-like systems and once triumphant within the Fermentation Industry, have dissipated like smoke. A vital current of progress has finally flowed through our ranks, cleansing the stale recesses of the Central Office and the industrial plants.*¹⁰⁴

Summary

In February 1971, shortly after the funeral of a colleague from the Board, Marian Belerski penned the following poignant words: *We set about the task of rebuilding an industry lying in ruins. At that time, we worked with complete absorption, selflessly, neglecting our own personal matters. We were full of hope; we dreamed of the day when we could take pride in the accomplishment of our work. Unfortunately, those dreams were never fulfilled; after more than twenty years we retired without ever experiencing that moment of satisfaction with the fruits of our labour.*¹⁰⁵ From a personal point of view, this bitter reflection is undoubtedly true. It may, however, be tempered by the overall assessment of the postwar reconstruction of the brewing industry, which must be regarded as positive. Belerski's inner dilemmas are aptly encapsulated by Fernand Braudel's maxim: *Man cannot escape history, which is both his creation and his prison.*¹⁰⁶

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shareholders were families of Haberbusch, Schiele and Lampe, Czarkowski, Oppenheim, Reych, Machlejd, Bogusławski, Patzer and Jung. The company ran breweries in Warsaw, Białystok, Kalisz, Łódź and Ciechanów. Henryk Oppenheim held the position of Technical Director and, from 1932 onwards, the Commercial Director of the company; "Przemysł Fermentacyjny," 9-10, 1947, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Karolak Z. 1949, p. 69.

¹⁰⁵ Tadeusz Belerski's Archive, file: Pamiętnik (The Journal), n.pag.

¹⁰⁶ Braudel F. 2020, p. 9.

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Abstract

Marian Belerski (born 3 January 1904 in Krotoszyn near Lviv) came from a Jewish family originally bearing the surname Beller; he adopted the name Belerski after returning from the Gross Born camp and used the first name Marian during his work in the Lviv brewing industry. After completing legal studies at Lviv University, he worked as a trainee lawyer and in 1932 became head of the legal and credit department of the Lviv Breweries Joint Stock Company. There he gained comprehensive knowledge of brewery operations, including technological processes. Following the Soviet entry into Lviv, he was elected director by the brewery's staff, but after the German occupation he moved with his family to Warsaw. With the help of Major Ignacy Lubczyński, the family obtained Aryan documents, and Belerski joined the Home Army (AK). Under the pseudonym "Tadeusz," he headed the "Syrena" airdrop reception unit at AK Headquarters and fought in the Warsaw Uprising, for which he received, among others, the Order of Virtuti Militari. After escaping from the Gross Born camp in February 1945, he was assigned to Bydgoszcz, where he oversaw the takeover of breweries in western Poland. He promoted a mixed ownership model of the brewing industry, with the dominant role of the state sector. His achievements included brewery reconstruction, legislative initiatives, vocational education and improvements in beer quality. Arrested in 1948 and sentenced to life imprisonment, he was released in 1954 and later fully exonerated, but never returned to the brewing industry.

Keywords: Marian Belerski, brewing and malting industry, the Board in Bydgoszcz, "Brewery Bulletin"