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The Film Director Who Was a Spy. Jadwiga Plucińska (1908–1999): A Forgotten Pioneer of Polish Documentary Film

Zarys treści: Celem artykułu jest przypomnienie Jadwigi Plucińskiej – przedwojennej aktorki, w czasie II wojny światowej – sekretarki w warszawskim biurze Die Deutsche Wochenschau, a w latach 1946–1959 – reżyserki około dwudziestu filmów dokumentalnych oraz felietonów do Polskiej Kroniki Filmowej, ukazujących zmiany społeczne, kulturowe i obyczajowe najpierw w Polsce odradzającej się po zniszczeniach wojennych (zwłaszcza na tzw. Ziemiach Odzyskanych), a potem w czasie październikowej odwilży. Jej karierę przerwał w roku 1959 aresztowanie i następnie pięcioletnie uwięzienie na skutek oskarżenia o szpiegostwo na rzecz wywiadu amerykańskiego. W rezultacie Plucińska została niemal zupełnie zapomniana i wykreślona z kart historii polskiego kina, a jej wycofana z rozpowszechniania od końca lat pięćdziesiątych twórczość pozostaje praktycznie nieznaną.

Outline of Content: This article aims to recall Jadwiga Plucińska – a pre-war actress, during the Second World War, a secretary in the Warsaw office of Die Deutsche Wochenschau, and between 1946 and 1959, a director of some twenty documentaries and features for the Polish Newsreel, showing the social, cultural and moral changes first in Poland recovering from the devastation of war (especially in the so-called Recovered Territories), and then during the '56 October Thaw. Her career was interrupted in 1959 by her arrest and subsequent five-year imprisonment on a charge of spying for US intelligence. As a result, Plucińska was almost completely forgotten and erased from the pages of Polish cinema history, and her work, withdrawn from distribution since the late 1950s, remains virtually unknown.

Słowa kluczowe: film dokumentalny, kinematografia polska po 1945 r., reżyserki filmowe, procesy polityczne

Keywords: documentary film, Polish cinematography after 1945, women film directors, political trials



With this article, I would like to initiate the process of restoring the memory of Jadwiga Plucińska in both the history of Polish cinema and the public sphere in general. She was an unconventional personality and a beautiful woman, a theatre actress, film director and culture facilitator, whose fortunes especially reflected the complicated history of twentieth-century Poland and who, for political reasons, has remained almost completely forgotten and unappreciated to this day. In this article, I intend to collect, sometimes correct and organise basic information about Plucińska and provide an account of the first stage of my research on her life and work, which I hope will be further continued and expanded.

On the one hand, I intend to emphasise Plucińska's all-important role as a director of short documentary films in which she recorded History (with a capital H), *in statu nascendi*, at key points in the development of the Polish People's Republic, initially in the first years after the end of the Second World War and then during the so-called Polish thaw, after Władysław Gomułka took power in October 1956. On the other hand, I would like to demonstrate how the wheels of that same History crushed Plucińska and destroyed her in both professional and apparently also personal terms.

I rely primarily on information obtained during queries in the archives of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance,¹ the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute in Warsaw,² the State Archives in Warsaw,³ the State Archives in Łódź,⁴

¹ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, Warsaw (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, hereinafter: AIPN), Dziennik archiwalny MSW – Dział I, 'Stara sieć', no. 44144–48204, AIPN 001519/9; *ibid.*, Agent wyw. USA J. Plucińska. Odpis aktu oskarżenia, ankiety, AIPN 01220/34; *ibid.*, Akta prokuratora Sądu Okręgowego w Warszawie w sprawie Jadwigi Plucińskiej, IPN GK 617/50; Sąd Warszawskiego Okręgu Wojskowego w Warszawie 1945–1996, Akta śledztwa i procesu reżyser Jadwigi Plucińskiej oskarżonej o współpracę z wywiadem amerykańskim, skazana z art. 7 MKK, AIPN 937/3150; Naczelną Prokuraturę Wojskową, Akta nadzoru w sprawie Plucińskiej Jadwigi, AIPN 765/245; Jadwiga Plucińska, AIPN 01251/382; Prokuratura Sądu Okręgowego w Warszawie, Akta w sprawie: Józef Kondrat i inni, oskarżeni o to, że idąc na rękę władzom nazistowskim wzięli udział w faszystowskim filmie propagandowym pt. „Heimkehr”, szkalującym Państwo i Naród Polski, w m. Warszawa, Wiedeń w latach 1940–1941; to jest o czynny z art. 2 Dekretu z dnia 31.08.1944, IPN GK 543/670; Stołeczny Urząd Spraw Wewnętrznych w Warszawie [1944] 1983–1990, Sprawa operacyjna kryptonim „Rodzina” dot. Michał/Andrzej Pluciński/Szalawski, AIPN 0423/5090. The Institute of National Remembrance also preserves raw, silent – and very moving – film materials from Plucińska's interrogation and trial: *ibid.*, Dokumentacja filmowa z procesu reżyser Jadwigi Plucińskiej, AIPN 2603/15585.

² Archiwum Instytutu Teatralnego im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, Warsaw (Archives of the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute in Warsaw), Pracownia Dokumentacji Teatru im. B. Krasnodębskiej: Winiarzówna-Plucińska Jadwiga [personal file], 1155; Plucińska Jadwiga [personal file], 2863; Plucińska Jadwiga [press cutting file]; Pluciński Michał [personal file], 143/705; Star Janusz [personal file], 1063; Szalawski (Pluciński) Andrzej [personal file], 3369; Szalawski-Pluciński Andrzej [personal file], 551/1188.

³ Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie (State Archives in Warsaw), Pałac Młodzieży w Warszawie, Protokoły z narad pedagogicznych – posiedzenia Rady Pedagogicznej 1966–1970, 72/3035/0/1/21; Pałac Młodzieży w Warszawie, Zarządzenia Dyrektora 1966–1978, 72/3035/0/1/39.

⁴ Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (State Archives in Lodz), Wytwórnia Filmów Oświatowych, Akta dotyczące filmu pt. „Sprawny do pracy i obrony”, 39/871/0/115.

the archives of the Educational Film Studio in Łódź,⁵ and the Stutthof Museum at Sztutowo.⁶ Very fruitful also proved conversations with the few living witnesses of Plucińska's life (including her nephew, Jerzy Moszkowicz,⁷ Andrzej Kaźmierczak,⁸ a war orphan adopted due to her efforts, and Halina Prugar-Ketling,⁹ a Polish editor who cooperated with her). I also used the press from before the Second World War and after the war (mainly theatre and film reviews from Poznań, Łódź, and Warsaw newspapers). The National Film Archive and the Documentary Film Studio (Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych) in Warsaw have not found any documents relating to Plucińska herself or her film work.

In literature, Plucińska's name and single titles of her films appear rarely, only in a few synthetic books, and this is casual information, most often limited to basic facts.¹⁰ In some exceptional cases of studies, we can read a little more about Plucińska's films, but this is accompanied by the irresistible impression that some of the studies' authors have never seen them.¹¹ The relatively best-studied episode of Plucińska's life is the period of her work for the Deutsche Wochenschau, thanks to Jadwiga Hera's book and articles about the artistic life in Poland during the Second World War.¹² Apart from the general dictionary of Polish

⁵ Archiwum Wytwórni Filmów Oświatowych in Łódź (Archives of the Educational Film Studio in Lodz), Akta osobowe Jadwigi Plucińskiej, 1070; Fotosy do filmu "Sprawny do pracy i obrony", 0004.

⁶ Archiwum Muzeum Stutthof (Museum Stutthof Archive), Sztutowo, Dossier Marka Orskiego, Oświadczenie Jadwigi Plucińskiej z 22.12.1983 r.

⁷ Conversation with Jerzy Moszkowicz, 1 Sep. 2020; letter from Jerzy Moszkowicz dated 9 July, 15 July, 17 July, 13 Aug., 28 Aug. and 11 Nov. 2020, and 24 Aug. 2022.

⁸ Conversations with Andrzej Kaźmierczak, 24 July and 14 Sep. 2020; papers and photographs received from the private archives of Andrzej Kaźmierczak in August–October 2020.

⁹ Conversation with Halina Prugar-Ketling, 19 March 2020.

¹⁰ J. Bocheńska, 'Rozwój polskiego filmu dokumentalnego w latach 1944–1958', *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no. 2 (1965), pp. 5–13; J. Lemann, 'Film dokumentalny', in: *Encyklopedia kultury polskiej XX wieku. Film, kinematografia*, ed. E. Zajiček (Warszawa, 1994), pp. 199–242; J. Lemann-Zajiček, *Kino i polityka. Polski film dokumentalny 1945–1949* (Łódź, 2003); *Historia polskiego filmu dokumentalnego (1945–2014)*, ed. M. Hendrykowska (Poznań, 2018); W. Świeżyński, 'Film dokumentalny', in: *Historia filmu polskiego*, ed. J. Toeplitz, vol. 3: 1939–1956 (Warszawa, 1974), pp. 101–43.

¹¹ I. Leśniewska, 'Wpływ polityki na filmy dokumentalne o tzw. Ziemiach Odzyskanych. Studium przypadków', in: *Kino polskie: reinterpretacje. Historia – ideologia – polityka*, ed. K. Klejsa, E. Nurczyńska-Fidelska (Kraków, 2008), pp. 15–32; R. Domke, *Ziemia Zachodnie i Północne Polski w propagandzie lat 1945–1948* (Zielona Góra, 2010); W. Malicka, *Wrocław w Polskiej Kronice Filmowej. Nowe miasto i nowi mieszkańcy w propagandzie państwowej 1945–1970* (Kraków, 2012); I. Leśniewska-Orlicka, 'Osadnicy, przesiedleńcy, autochtoni... Analiza obrazu mieszkańców Ziemi Zachodnich i Północnych Polski na podstawie wybranych kronik i dokumentów filmowych zrealizowanych w Wytwórni Filmów Dokumentalnych i Fabularnych w Warszawie', in: *Ziemia Zachodnie i Północne w polskiej kinematografii (1944/1945–1989)*, ed. M. Kowalski, T. Sikorski (Szczecin, 2019), pp. 65–93.

¹² J. Hera, *Losy artystów polskich w czasach niewoli 1939–1954* (Kraków, 2019); ead., 'Losy aktorów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie (wrzesień 1939 – 1 sierpnia 1944)', *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, no. 1–4 (1997), pp. 315–98; ead., 'Niepokorni – pokorni. Losy aktorów polskich 1944–1954', *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, no. 3–4 (2008), pp. 7–102.

theatre, there are no significant mentions in the literature of Plucińska's pre-war life as an actress.

Jadwiga Plucińska (née Winiarz) was born in Vienna on 18 November 1908 to a family of an Austro-Hungarian army captain. When World War I came to an end and the Polish state was re-established, the family moved to Poznań, where Jadwiga completed her secondary school education to later take up Polish Studies at the local university (today the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). But she dropped out two years later to study the art of acting, including with the famous Stanisława Wysocka, at the Drama School (Studio Teatralne) run by Nuna Młodziejowska-Szczurkiewiczowa. She graduated in 1930 and, after passing the qualifying examination at the Association of Polish Stage Artists (Związek Artystów Scen Polskich) that authorised her to work as an actress, she was engaged by the New Theatre (Teatr Nowy) in Poznań, while also appearing on the stage of the Polish Theatre (Teatr Polski). There she met Michał Pluciński, whom she married in 1936 and with whom, despite the couple divorcing as soon as in 1938, she remained in close and friendly relations until he died in 1978. In 1937–39, Plucińska performed at the City Theatres (Teatry Miejskie) in Łódź and, from the 1939/40 season, was to play at the Lublin-Volhynian Theatre (Teatr Lubelsko-Wołyński). However, the outbreak of the war, which found her in Łuck conquered by the USSR, prevented her debut on that stage and, as it turned out, put a definite end to her acting career.

Plucińska managed to cross through the German-Soviet border and, from November 1939, came to live in Warsaw with her mother and two younger sisters displaced from Poznań. Owing to her fluency in German, she initially worked as a box office clerk and then as an accountant at a *nur für Deutsche* Casino and Helgoland cinemas. In the spring of 1941, she found employment at the Warsaw branch of the Deutsche Wochenschau German newsreel. Formally, she worked as a secretary, but, in reality, she was the right hand of the director, who permanently resided in Kraków, and was in charge of the day-to-day operations and film production of the entire branch. At the same time, from 1940, she was active in the Freedom Organisation for Socialism and Independence (Organizacja Socjalistyczno-Niepodległościowa 'Wolność'), an underground socialist organisation that was part of the Union of Armed Struggle (Związek Walki Zbrojnej), namely the Polish Underground Army (Armia Krajowa). It was with the organisation's permission that she started working at Die Deutsche Wochenschau, a Nazi propaganda institution, and it was on its behalf that she stole fragments of films (including those made at the Warsaw ghetto) which were later passed on to the Polish government-in-exile in London. Plucińska also made her apartment available to the organisation (for meetings as well as for housing escapees from the ghetto), and was a liaison and distributor of illegal underground press.

After the Warsaw Uprising broke out (1 August 1944) and the Germans captured the Nowy Świat district where she lived, Plucińska was deported in September

1944 to a labour camp at a munitions factory in Solingen-Ohlig. However, her former German employer managed to get her out of there and brought her to Kraków in December to work on the shutting down of the Generalgouvernement Wochenschau head office.

Nonetheless, just a few days after the liberation of Kraków by the Red Army in January 1945, Plucińska was employed as a secretary at the Polish Army Film Studio (Wytwórnia Filmowa Wojska Polskiego), which arrived together with that army and with which she moved to Łódź shortly afterwards, in March of that year. Here, she quickly changed her profession and gradually climbed up the ranks: in 1945, she became the director's assistant and, subsequently, the production manager on three documentaries made by Stanisław Urbanowicz, including the famous documentary on the razed capital city, entitled *Budujemy Warszawę* (We Are Building Warsaw, 1945), *Niewidzialny wróg* (The Invisible Enemy, 1945), and *Odrą do Bałtyku* (With Odra River to the Baltic Sea, 1946). In 1946, she made her debut as an independent director with the short documentary *Byliśmy na wczasach* (We Were on Holiday), in which she showed one of the post-war achievements of the working people: the so-called employee holidays, organised by state-owned companies at various attractive locations of Poland rebuilt at the time.

By 1951, Plucińska, who also used the pseudonym Jadwiga Wisnowska, made the following for the State Enterprise Polish Film (Przedsiębiorstwo Państwowe "Film Polski", the successor to the Polish Army Film Studio) and the Warsaw-based Documentary Film Studio: an unspecified number of unsigned features for the weekly editions of the Polish Newsreel (Polska Kronika Filmowa) and, notably, at least ten shorts, including *Wrocław, miasto studentów* (Wrocław, the City of Students, 1947), *W dworach i pałacach* (In Manors and Palaces, 1948), *Ratujcie nasze dzieci* (Save Our Children, 1948), *Osada nad Nysą* (Colony on the River Nysa, 1949), *Nasz dom* (Our House, 1949), *Jedna z wielu* (One of Many, 1950), *W uzdrowiskach dolnośląskich* (In Lower Silesia Health Resorts, 1950) and *Wszyscy na start* (Everyone to the Start Line, 1951). In her films, she showed the changes in post-the Second World War Poland ruled by the communists: the social advancement of the rural population, the emancipation of women, the life of war orphans, the development of education and student life, the seizure of former German property by the state, the development of areas annexed to Poland in 1945 by military settlers and people displaced from Poland's Eastern Borderlands (Kresy Wschodnie), etc. While documenting the revival and social changes in the liberated homeland, Plucińska focused primarily on the so-called Recovered Territories (Ziemie Odzyskane): almost all of her films at that time take place in those northern and western areas of the 'new' Poland. Therefore, it is no surprise that, in 1948, she also headed one of the film crews dispatched to record the events at the Recovered Territories Exhibition in Wrocław, which was the flagship propaganda project of the communist authorities in the early years of the Polish People's Republic.

In June 1951, for unknown reasons, Plucińska left the Documentary Film Studio and joined the Educational Film Studio (Wytwórnia Filmów Oświatowych) in Łódź where, however, she worked for only a year and made only one film, *Sprawny do pracy i obrony* (Fit to Work and Defend, 1951), which promoted physical fitness in the service of “the people’s homeland”.¹³ Afterwards, she withdrew from the film industry for several years; remember that these were the Stalinist years of increased ideological pressure and doctrinal socialist realism. In 1952–57, after returning to Warsaw, she worked as an instructor, artistic inspector and director at the “Argos” State Organisation of Artistic Events (Przedsiębiorstwo Organizacji Imprez Artystycznych “Argos”), the Central Board of Stage Events (Centralny Zarząd Imprez Estradowych), the Main Centre for Folk Creativity (Centralny Dom Twórczości Ludowej) and the Capital City Stage Event Enterprise (Stołeczne Przedsiębiorstwo Imprez Estradowych).

However, in February 1957, shortly after the October breakthrough and on the wave of the thaw, she returned to the Documentary Film Studio. Over about two and a half years, she made seven new short films there to document Poland’s social and lifestyle changes under the rule of Gomułka. In the films, she addressed the topics of modern socialist industrial design (*Piękno na co dzień* / Beauty Every Day, 1957) and women’s fashion (*Wieczna Ewa* / Eternal Eve, 1958), travelling theatres as a means for cultural education in the hinterland (*Teatr dla mas* / Theatre for the Masses, 1957) and the working conditions in a children’s hospital (*Noc minęła spokojnie* / The Night Passed Quietly, 1958). She also returned with her camera to the Recovered Territories to record the changes that took place in Kołobrzeg and Wrocław, among others, over the previous ten years (*Na przykład Kołobrzeg* / For Example, Kołobrzeg, 1958; *Wrocław 1959*, 1959 and *Magazyn dolnośląski* / Lower Silesia Magazine, 1959). In addition, she began working with Polish Television and was preparing to make her feature film debut.

These plans were foiled by the arrest of Plucińska on 11 August 1959 by the state security service, reported on the front pages by almost the entire Polish press,¹⁴ on charges of cooperating with American intelligence. But it was not her first time spent in a communist prison. Back in February 1949, she was detained together with a group of other former employees of the Kraków-based Film- und Propagandamittel-Vetriebsgesellschaft GmbH, which the Warsaw office of Die Deutsche Wochenschau was a part of, including with her brothers-in-law, actor Andrzej Szalawski and director Janusz Star. All were accused of acting to the detriment of the Polish nation and state during the war by working at a Nazi propaganda institution. Plucińska was eventually released after five months in custody

¹³ This film is unfortunately considered lost today.

¹⁴ For example: ‘Aresztowanie reż. Jadwigi Plucińskiej’, *Film*, no. 35 (1959), p. 2; ‘Aresztowanie agentki wywiadu amerykańskiego’, *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 193 (1959), p. 1; ‘Reżyserka filmowa Jadwiga Plucińska agentem wywiadu amerykańskiego’, *Dziennik Polski*, no. 193 (1959), p. 1; and later: ‘Wyrok w sprawie Jadwigi Plucińskiej’, *Film*, no. 51–52 (1959), p. 2.

when her sister posted very high bail, but the investigation was dropped due to insufficient evidence of guilt, only in early 1951.

In 1959, Plucińska was accused of having made contact with an American intelligence representative during her three-week stay in the Federal Republic of Germany at the beginning of that year on a professional fellowship programme funded by Poland's Ministry of Culture and Art and of collecting and sending encrypted espionage information, including on the deployment of military units, at his request. Plucińska's case was most likely part of a much larger, long-term operation of Polish intelligence directed against Jerzy Turbowicz, who took part in the reconstruction of Polish cinematography immediately after the war and was a prominent figure in the "Film Polski", but in 1958 emigrated illegally and settled in the West German Federal Republic. Polish security services suspected him of recruiting many Poles who went to the West to cooperate with American intelligence. Turbowicz died in mysterious circumstances in a car accident in 1964.

During the investigation of Plucińska, the filmmaking community turned away from her, the Documentary Film Studio terminated her employment almost immediately after the arrest, some of her former colleagues and associates testified unfavourably against her, while director Ludwik Perski even came up with a disdainful nickname 'Szmata Hari' ('Slutty Hari,' a pun juxtaposing 'slut' and Mata Hari). On 1 December 1959, the Court of the Warsaw Military District sentenced Plucińska to seven years in prison. She served her sentence mainly in the notorious Bydgoszcz-Fordon Penitentiary, where she worked sewing clothes and then in the prison's common room. Her repeated requests for early release, motivated, among other things, by her deteriorating health, were regularly rejected by the court. She was not released – on parole – until 11 November 1964, more than five years later.

From that point, Plucińska's life has been undocumented and so far unclear to me. False information can be found in various studies¹⁵ and filmography databases that she was the director's assistant on several films from the late 1960s. Sometimes she is mistaken for another Jadwiga Plucińska, a set and costume designer (Jadwiga Plucińska-Skrzypińska). But in fact, as confirmed by her nephew, Plucińska never returned to the profession and, apart from just a few people, did not maintain any contacts with the filmmaking community. Her films have disappeared from circulation forever, and even today, it is difficult for film experts to get hold of them.¹⁶ For some time in the 1960s, perhaps only until retirement age, Plucińska worked as a secretary at the Youth Palace community centre (Pałac

¹⁵ For example: 'Plucińska Jadwiga Helena', in: *Słownik biograficzny teatru polskiego...*, vol. 3, [part 2], pp. 215–16.

¹⁶ Plucińska's films are in the collection of the National Film Archive (Filmoteka Narodowa) in Warsaw, but only some of them have been copied to digital media. The rest are still available only in original copies on nitro or aceto film and can be watched at a specially organized screening in a cinema room of the NFA. The cost of it and longer study of them, e.g. on the editing table, is quite high according to the NFA price list and seems certainly not affordable for an individual researcher.

Młodzieży) in Warsaw. She died on 4 November 1999, at the age of 91, and was buried in a family grave in Poznań-Górczyn.

I would like to briefly point out several reasons why researching both the complicated twists and turns of the life, artistic activity, and creative output of Plucińska is, in my opinion, very important and sometimes even crucial to fill in the gaps and correct the existing narratives in the history of post-war Polish filmmaking, as well as in general to widen the area of discussion on specific aspects of twentieth-century Polish culture related, for example, to how it functioned under totalitarian rule.

Firstly, Plucińska was there at the very beginning of post-war Polish cinema, and as an active participant, too. Already in January 1945, she was part of a relatively small and elite group of people who organised the foundations for a new, nationalised cinematography in liberated Poland and made the first documentary films here now of great historical and cultural value. At the same time, Plucińska was one of the first employees of the Polish Army Film Studio, if not the very first, among those who survived the war under German occupation, rather than those who came from the Soviet Union together with the group of filmmakers known as the Film Leaders of the Polish Army (Czołówka Filmowa Wojska Polskiego). Despite multiple achievements, her further fate and precarious position in the industry show how permanent and career-defining those original divisions would be.

Secondly – next to Olga Mińska and Ludmiła Niekrasowa, albeit they followed their Polish husbands directors to Poland – Plucińska was initially the only woman among the builders of Poland's post-war cinematography. As early as 1945, she was the first one to assist in and manage the production of films directed by men and very soon began making her own documentaries. By doing so, she paved the way for, among others, Natalia Brzozowska, Joanna Rojewska and, in feature films, Wanda Jakubowska herself, not to mention the gradually increasing number of female film editors, newsreel editors, and assistants in the film industry. Therefore, the study of Plucińska's activity and work complements the traditional and predominant discourse on the history of Polish filmmaking with a forgotten or downplayed *herstory* which restores the memory of the role of women in the development of Polish cinema and introduces an enriching female perspective in its evaluation.

Thirdly, the textual research on the films made by Plucińska adds a new chapter to the history and theory of Polish women's cinema, especially documentary cinema: its specific style, shared motifs and themes, a different viewpoint and possibly its anti-establishment potential. In this respect, Plucińska should be seen as the 'founding mother' of the female line of Polish documentary filmmakers, marked out by subsequent generations of women directors, such as Jadwiga Żukowska, Krystyna Gryczelowska, Danuta Halladin, Maria Kwiatkowska, Irena Kamieńska, and Jadwiga Kędzierzawska, etc.

Fourthly, Plucińska's consistent interest in the Recovered Territories and her recording on film of the changes taking place in those areas over almost fifteen years right after the Second World War make her work unique also as a historical source

for researchers of material and mental culture, as well as social and political history. The historical images of the western and northern parts of Poland immortalised in film, may also become a way for their inhabitants to shape their local identity and identify with their ‘little homelands.’

Finally, Plucińska’s life and work constitute an interesting contribution to and a contradictory exemplification of how the communist authorities used and destroyed people, including those who, whether they liked it or not, engaged in some way in building the totalitarian system and in propaganda activities. The authorities would use against individuals whatever they had done in the past but may have also provoked them to actions that became the subject of show trials. A maker of documentaries that were, after all, accommodating to the authorities, an activist who significantly contributed to building cinematography could become an enemy and an imperialist spy overnight, and be thrown in prison for many years, with her career and personal life broken and made an example of.

Abstract

Jadwiga Plucińska (1908–1999) was a theatre actress before the Second World War, and during the war she worked in the Warsaw office of the Nazi propaganda *Deutsche Wochenschau* newsreel, at the same time collaborating with the Polish independence underground. At the beginning of 1945, she joined the so-called *Czołówka Filmowa Wojska Polskiego* (Film Leaders of the Polish Army), a group of documentary filmmakers active in the Polish Army allied with the Red Army entering Poland. She documented with her camera the life reborn in the liberated areas of Poland, especially in the so-called Recovered (Western) Territories. By 1951, she had made at least twelve short films at the Polish Army Film Studio, as well as features for the weekly Polish Newsreel, in which she showed the changes in post-war Poland governed by the communists. She was the first female documentary film director in post-war Poland (alongside Natalia Brzozowska) and paved the way for other women in the film industry.

In the early 1950s, the period of the height of Stalinism and socialist realism in cinematography, Plucińska stopped making films and, for several years, worked as an artistic instructor in institutions that organised stage performances in community centres and workplaces. She returned to documentary filmmaking in 1957 at the Documentary Film Studio and, in a little over two years, directed seven shorts in which she showed the social and cultural changes (e.g. fashion and new industrial design) in post-October Poland, i.e. after Władysław Gomułka took power. In 1959, she was accused of spying for US intelligence and sentenced to seven years in prison in a show trial. After her release from prison in 1964 (on parole), she never returned to work in film.

The text focuses on Plucińska’s significant role as a filmmaker who documented the making of History at the end and immediately after the end of the Second World War. At the same time, it shows how the cogs of that same History crushed and destroyed her professionally and personally.

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